

GUATEMALA FORGERIES AND FAKES 1881 SCOTT 21-5

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The 1881 quetzal issue includes 3 error stamps with inverted centers. These are the 2c, 5c and 20c. The 1881 issue was demonetized in 1886 and at some subsequent time the remainders were sold to New York stamp dealer H.L. Calman. These remainders included several sheets of the 2c inverted center and an unknown number of the 20c. The current catalogue prices approximate the relative scarcity of these, with the 2c having the lowest catalogue value and the 5c having the highest catalogue value. Not many collectors are able to afford one of the inverted center stamps, but if you should buy one this article will provide simple methods to determine if they are genuine.

There is one famous forgery and a group of similar fakes. The famous 2c inverted center forgery was produced by the French forger Jean Sperati. This forgery was described by Roger Frigstad as an 'art rarity', noting that the excellent forgery is much more rare than the actual error stamp. An enlargement of the forgery, originally prepared by ISGC founding member Joe Mandos is shown here. On the illustration arrow number 1 points to the white line that cuts into the left numeral tablet. In the original printing this is not just one white line but four separate lines that are easily seen with a low power glass. Arrow number 2 points to the prominent feather in the back of the head. In the original printing the feather curls upward.¹

The major group of fakes ("forgeries") exist for the 2c, 5c and 20c inverted center stamps, not just the 2c. They are either crude lithographic printings, or were created by replacing the engraved centers of genuine stamps. The replaced centers were either genuine engraved centers cleverly cut out and pasted onto genuine normsl stamps, or were lithograph forgeries likewise cut out and pasted on genuine stamps. A variety of these are listed in *Guatemala 1* and two are illustrated here.² The stamp with the heavy cancel, shown here, is a very good and clever fake, needing a high power microscope to see the center which was shaved from an engraved stamp and then pasted upside down. The cancel, which is not a genuine Guatemala cancel, is representative of many forged stamps which used an obliterating cancel to make identification difficult.



Forgeries with paste-up inverted centers (ISGC F24a-B)

1. Frigstad, Roger K., "Saureck and Sperati", pp. 33-36, *El Quetzal*, Vol. 22, No. 186, International Society of Guatemala Collectors (1971).
2. Goodman, Roland A., *Guatemala 1*, p. 113, Robson Lowe, Ltd., London (1969).