

Stamp Chronicles

Punctured German Stamps



Fancy cancel from Bolivia



It was once a common practice for stamp dealers to purchase package parcels cuttings in bulk, and resell them to collectors or soak off the stamps, and resell them to collectors. Since postage fees for parcels were typically higher than for letters, this became a valuable method for collectors to acquire stamps with higher face values. However, not all postal authorities viewed this practice favorably, especially when parcel cuttings were sold by foreign postal services. To prevent the resale or reuse of high-denomination stamps, many countries, including Germany, adopted the practice of puncturing stamps with large holes, particularly on international parcels. The punctures used to deface these stamps were typically round, similar to those seen on telegraph stamps. This method was especially prevalent during periods of inflation and post-war transition, when postal services needed to manage obsolete or devalued stamps. While these punctured stamps were defaced and rendered unusable, they remain of interest to collectors due to their historical significance, shedding light on the postal measures taken during challenging economic and political periods.

For example, this 5000-mark stamp from 1923, depicting Wartburg Castle, likely suffered such a fate. Yet, despite the defacement, it seems there was a collector who valued it enough to preserve it, allowing it to survive to this day.

In the 19th century, post offices often created unique cancellations using hand-carved cork, wood, or rubber stamps. These "fancy cancels" were not only practical, but also decorative, and they come in a wide variety of shapes and designs, including stars, hearts, flags, and geometric patterns. Some postmasters got very creative, and their designs are highly sought after by collectors today.

To accurately determine the location or origin of these cancellations, they must be observed on an entire cover or envelope, as the local postmark is often placed in an open area on the envelope, separate from the decorative cancellation on the stamp. Bolivian covers from this era tend to be quite expensive. There are existing reference works available, including one compiled by Julius H. Kirzsan, which can be accessed through the ELASCA website (<https://www.elasca.eu/>). This particular cancellation is from Antofagasta, a city founded by Bolivia in 1868. Antofagasta and the surrounding region were conquered by Chile during the Saltpeter War (1879-1883). As a result, Bolivia lost its access to the Pacific coast, leading to an ongoing territorial dispute. Bolivia still refers to the area as Litoral Boliviano (Bolivian Coast). There are quite a few Bolivian fancy cancels whose origins remain unidentified. The document I have access to lists several of these cancellations with unknown origins, and they have not yet been conclusively linked to any specific city or location.

Semi Postal and Postal Tax Stamps: Purpose and Distribution

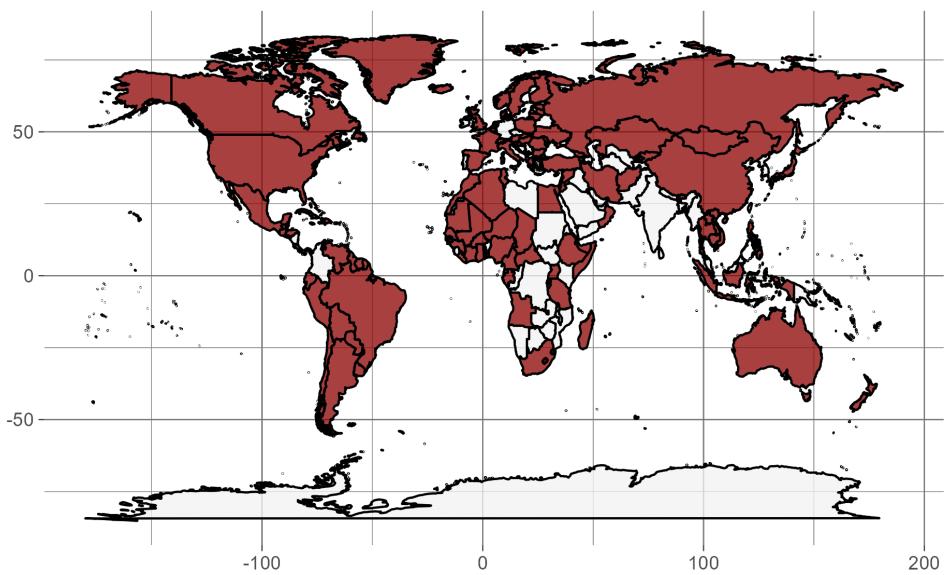


Semi-postal stamps are special postage stamps sold at a premium above their face value, with the additional amount directed toward a charitable cause, social welfare, or governmental purpose. These stamps have a dual function: they serve as regular postage for mailing letters or parcels, while also raising funds for a specific initiative. The additional amount collected, known as the surtax, is typically earmarked for a designated charity, relief effort, or social program. A semi-postal stamp generally displays two values: the face value, which represents the postal rate, and the surcharge, which indicates the contribution amount. For instance, France issued a series of five surtaxed stamps on November 20, 1944, featuring famous French cathedrals. The surtax from these stamps supported the Entraide Française (French Mutual Aid Society). This series was released during the peak period of semi-postal stamps. The first stamp in the set had a total value of 2 francs, with 50 centimes allocated for postage and an additional 1 franc 50 centimes as the surcharge. In this case, the surcharge exceeded the postal value, which is unusual since the extra fee is typically kept modest to ensure affordability while still meaningfully supporting the cause.

A noteworthy deviation from the traditional semi-postal design is the U.S. Breast Cancer Research Stamp, introduced in 1998. Unlike most semi-postals that display numerical values, this stamp simply bears the inscription "First-Class." When it was first issued, it had a value of 32 cents for postage, with an additional 8 cents allocated to breast cancer research.



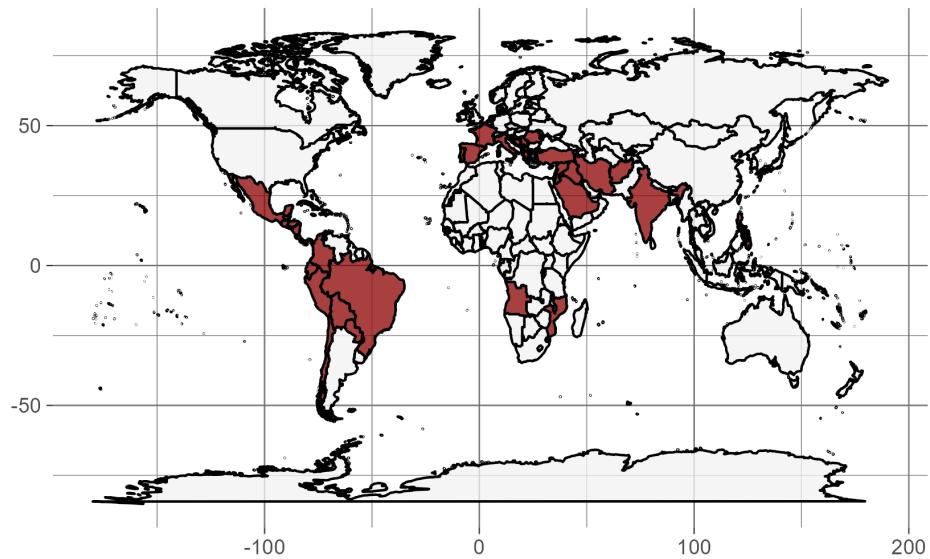
While many modern stamps bearing Somalia's name are counterfeit creations intended to deceive collectors, the country has historically issued stamps that genuinely reflect its rich cultural heritage, historical landmarks, and unique wildlife. One such example is this 1976 semi-postal stamp, which depicts a family with fish and produce. It is the third stamp in a series issued to support famine relief efforts.



The distribution of Semi Postal Stamps

Postal tax stamps are special postage stamps that were used in some countries as a way to collect taxes for the government and have seem a geografically more limited distribution than semi postal stamps. They were often used for specific purposes, such as for sending money or for sending letters abroad. The design of the stamps often reflected the purpose for which they were intended, and they were sometimes printed in a distinctive color or with a specific symbol or emblem to indicate their status as a

tax stamp. In many cases, postal tax stamps were used in conjunction with regular postage stamps to cover the cost of sending a letter or parcel, with the tax stamps providing the additional funds needed to cover the tax. The use of postal tax stamps declined in the 20th century as other forms of taxation became more prevalent, and they are now relatively rare. However, they remain of interest to stamp collectors.



The distribution of Postal Tax Stamps



Letter for postal tax stamp from Brazil

Postal tax stamps, while traditionally appealing to back-of-the-book collectors, can also attract topical collectors. The letter shown above features a triangular Brazilian postal tax stamp, depicting Icarus, which may be of particular interest to airmail enthusiasts. Issued on November 15, 1947, this stamp was mandatory on all domestic correspondence for one week. A special winged postmark was used for the first day of issue.



Classifying this stamp can be somewhat challenging. The Scott Catalogue lists it as a Postal Tax Semi-Postal Stamp, while the Brazilian FILABRAS society classifies it as a commemorative stamp. This aligns with the stamp's theme and purpose. In 1935, the Touring Club of Brazil, with support from the Brazilian Aeronautics Department, established the 'Semana da Asa' (Aviation Week) to honor Santos-Dumont, who made aviation history on October 23, 1906. On that day, he flew his No. 14-bis aircraft for 197 feet (60 meters) at a height of 10 feet, earning the

Archdeacon Prize for the first sustained flight of over 25 meters. The 1947 stamp commemorates that year's Semana da Asa.

Aviation and the myth of Icarus also served as the theme for Brazil's very first postal tax stamp, issued in 1937, which honored the aviation pioneer Santos-Dumont. The stamp was compulsory on all correspondence sent to South America, the United States, and Spain, while its use on mail to other countries was optional. The funds raised from this tax were directed toward the construction of airports across Brazil, reflecting the country's growing commitment to aviation infrastructure.



Leprosy, or Hansen's disease, has a long and significant history in Brazil, where it has been both a medical challenge and a social issue. Brazil has one of the highest rates of leprosy in the world, though significant efforts have been made over the years to control and eliminate the disease. Leprosy arrived in Brazil during the colonial

period, likely brought by Portuguese settlers. The disease was deeply feared due to its disfiguring nature and lack of effective treatment at the time. Individuals with leprosy were often isolated in leper colonies (leprosaria), which were essentially quarantines to prevent the spread. By the early 1900s, leprosy was widespread, especially in poorer regions of the country. At that time, Brazil adopted a segregation policy, forcibly isolating patients in leper colonies. This approach was driven by public fear and the absence of effective treatments, leading to stigma and discrimination against those with the disease. By the mid-20th century, treatments for leprosy became more effective with the development of sulfones, followed later by multi-drug therapy (MDT), which was introduced in the 1980s by the World Health Organization (WHO). Brazil began to transition from segregation policies to treatment in local health centers, though the stigma of leprosy persisted. In 1962, the Brazilian government officially abandoned its policy of forced isolation, but many patients remained in the colonies, either because they had nowhere to go or because they had formed communities. Some of these colonies continued functioning in various forms even into the 21st century. Colônia Padre Bento, was one of Brazil's largest and most well-known leper colonies, located in the city of Guarulhos, in São Paulo. Named af-

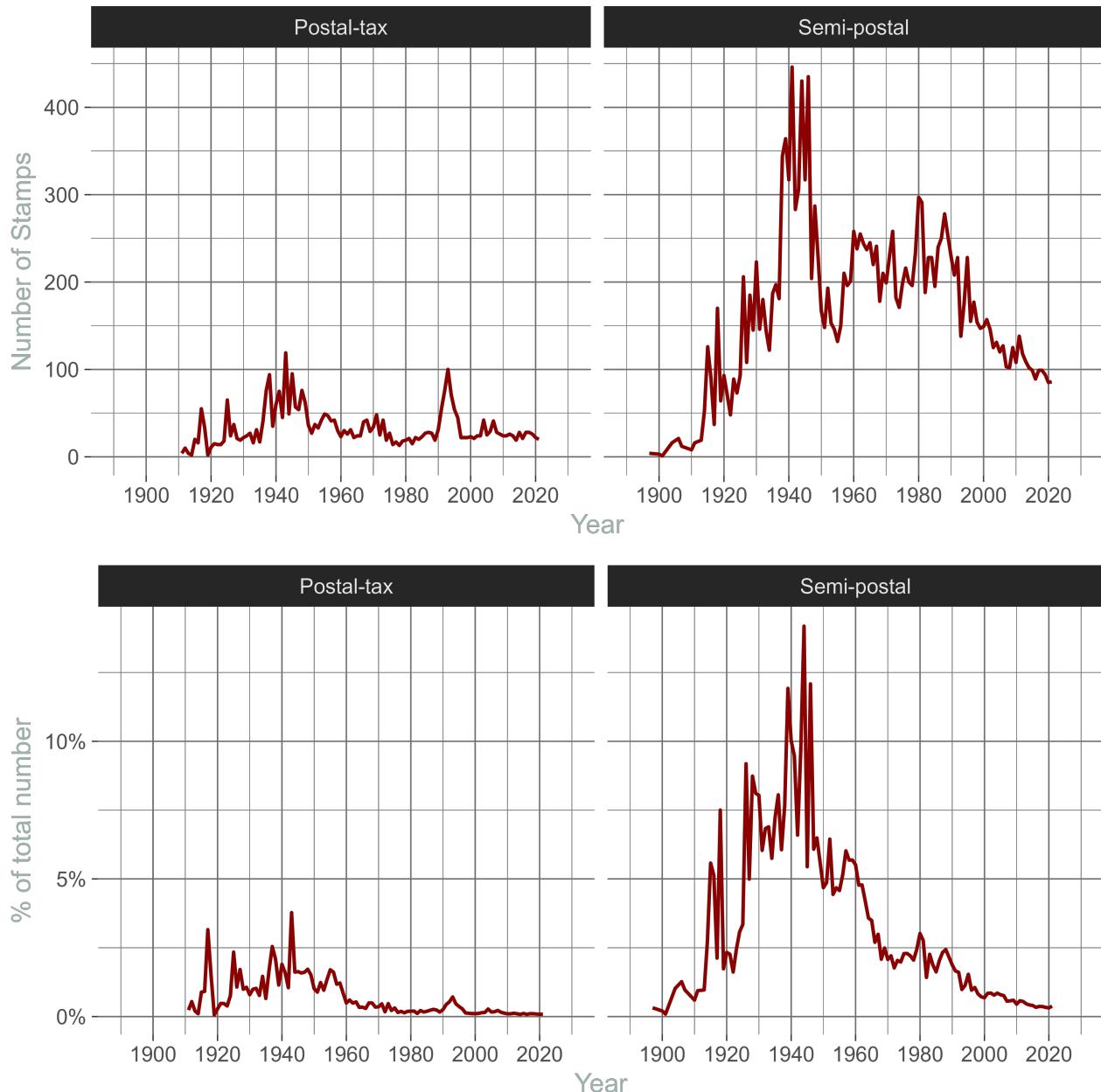
ter Father Bento Dias Pacheco, a Catholic priest known for his work with people with leprosy. The fight against leprosy is heavily featured on the Brazilian Postal Tax stamps.



Postal tax stamps issued to raise funds for refugee aid have played an important role in several countries, particularly during times of conflict, such as wars or political upheavals. These stamps acted as a form of mandatory charity, where a surcharge was added to regular postal fees, with the additional revenue specifically directed toward assisting displaced persons, refugees, or war victims.

While such postal tax stamps for refugee relief are less common today, the concept of charity stamps remains relevant. Postal administrations continue to release special issues of stamps to support international refugee relief efforts or address humanitarian crises, with a portion of the proceeds from these stamp sales going to charitable organizations.

Cyprus introduced postal tax stamps following the 1974 Turkish invasion and the resulting displacement of Greek Cypriots. Initially, the Cypriot government overprinted existing postage stamps to meet the urgent need for refugee aid. Starting with the issuance of three dedicated postal tax stamps in 1977, the design remained largely unchanged in subsequent years, reflecting the ongoing need for refugee assistance and commemorating the humanitarian effort.



The quantity of postal tax and semi-postal stamps issued over the years, along with their percentage of the total number of stamps issued

We can observe a steady decline in the number of Postal Tax and Semi-Postal stamps issued as the years have passed. These types of stamps saw their heyday in the decades following World War II. While the number of Postal Tax stamps has remained relatively stable over time, only a small number are issued each year. In contrast, the decline of Semi-Postal stamps has been more pronounced. This may be due to the additional costs associated with them, which likely made them less popular among regular postal users. Even selling them to collectors couldn't justify their continued production.

If we examine the percentage of total stamps issued, the decline in these types of stamps becomes even more

evident. The global decline of traditional mail, a trend driven by technological advancements and shifting communication habits, has profoundly affected postal services worldwide, reshaping how mail is used and how postal systems operate.

In response to this decline, some postal authorities have significantly increased the number of stamps issued, often featuring attractive themes aimed primarily at stamp collectors rather than regular postal users. This strategy attempts to balance the reduced use of traditional mail with the sustained interest in philately, appealing to a niche audience in an era of diminishing postal demand.

Focus on Romania

Romania, located in southeastern Europe, is known for its diverse cultural heritage and rich historical legacy. Its landscapes range from the Carpathian Mountains to the Black Sea coast, while regions like Transylvania are famed for both their medieval architecture and associations with the Dracula myth. The capital, Bucharest, showcases a blend of neoclassical and communist-era architecture, including the monumental Palace of the Parliament. Romania's history of Roman, Ottoman, and Austro-Hungarian rule has shaped its unique position between Eastern and Western Europe. The Bull's Head (Cap de Bour) stamps, issued in Moldavia (a historical region of present-day Romania) in July 1858, are among the world's rarest and most historically significant stamps.



Introduced in the late 19th century, postage due stamps were part of an effort to streamline postal operations by providing a formal way to collect unpaid postage. Romania introduced its first postage due stamps in 1881, following the general design conventions of postage due stamps from other countries. These stamps featured a relatively simple design, with the nominal value prominently displayed at the center. The particular stamp in question was canceled in Iasi, Romania's third-largest city. Interestingly, the cancellation mark omits the year, which is an unusual detail for postal history collectors.

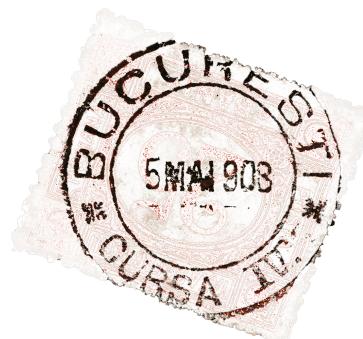


In 1932, the numeral-type postage due stamps were supplanted by a new design prominently featuring the

"Steel Crown" as its central motif. The Romanian Steel Crown holds substantial historical significance, having been utilized during the coronation ceremonies of Romanian monarchs. It was cast from steel extracted from a Turkish cannon captured by the Romanian Army during the Siege of Plevna, a pivotal engagement in the Romanian War of Independence (1877–1878).



A few years later, in 1895, Romania introduced its first parcel post stamps. The design closely mirrored that of the postage due stamps, with the inscription "TAXA DE PLATĂ" replaced by "TAXA DE FACTAGIU." Only five such stamps were issued. The first four maintained the same design but differed in shades of red and perforations. The fifth and final parcel post stamp issued by Romania was an overprinted postage stamp.



The stamp in question appears to have been affixed to a parcel sent from the capital, Bucureşti. The postmark

indicates that the parcel was transported by train, specifically on "Cursa IV."

The subsequent stamp under consideration is classified as a postal tax stamp (or, as designated by Scott, a postal tax due stamp) and represents an overprinted numeral type postage due stamp (the second variety). The overprint reads **Timbrul Aviației** which translates to "Aviation Stamp," and serves as a revenue stamp intended to finance the advancement of aviation in Romania. In response to the need for enhanced air defence, civilian airline services, and the general development of Romanian aviation, the National Aviation Fund was established through legislation enacted on April 4, 1931. This fund was initially supported by the issuance of a revenue stamp by the Ministry of Finance, which, effective May 1, 1931, with the following rates:

- 50 bani on postcards and printed materials, in addition to periodicals
- 1 leu on letters, illustrated postcards, and all petitions submitted to public authorities
- 2 lei for telegrams, packages, and documents subject to the stamp and registration law

The National Aviation Fund Stamp remained in circulation from May 1, 1931, until April 1, 1942.



The postmark on this stamp is particularly noteworthy as it is classified as a "survival postmark." Following the territorial changes that occurred after World War I, the city of Lugoj was incorporated into Romania, having previously been administered by Hungary, where postal matters were handled by the Hungarian postal system. The postmark in question is originally a bridge-type Hungarian canceller. Remarkably, the Romanian postal authorities opted to retain this canceller in service with minor modifications, such as re-engraving the city name from the Hungarian spelling "Lugos" to the Romanian "Lugoj." Notably, the Hungarian crown located just beneath the city name was not entirely removed, although efforts were made to render it less recognizable.



A striking socked on the nose cancellation can undoubtedly enhance the appeal of an otherwise common stamp, making it quite collectible. This particular stamp from 1908, featuring King Carol I, bears an impressive postmark that indicates it was applied to a recommended letter.



Lastly, we have a perfin belonging to the **Schenker & Co Carrying Company** in Bucharest. This perfin was in use from 1892 to 1918 and is considered rare. According to the Romanian Stamps page (www.romaniastamps.com), it is classified as rare, with only 6 to 20 examples reported.

Schenker & Co was founded by Gottfried Schenker in 1872 in Vienna, Austria. By 1874, branch offices were established in Budapest, Hungary; Prague, Czech Republic; and Bucharest, Romania. The company experienced rapid expansion in Romania, opening offices in most major cities. Although the cancellation on this stamp is

only partial, it can be inferred that it was indeed canceled in Bucharest, despite the postmark showing the old spelling "Bucuresci." Interestingly, the perfin itself indicates "Wien," or Vienna, the capital of Austria. This may have been a temporary solution, as the Bucharest subsidiary used at least five different types of perfins without any indication of the city name, some of which are quite rare, with fewer than five examples reported.

Today, Schenker operates as a division of the German rail operator Deutsche Bahn, focusing on logistics under the name DB Schenker.



What ChatGPT told me

Many of us have stamps in our collections that are hard to identify. I've had one such stamp in my curiosity album for quite some time, unable to determine its purpose. I initially assumed it was from South Korea, but beyond that, I had no solid hypothesis. So, I decided to give it a shot and ask ChatGPT for help. I uploaded the image, and here's the response I received.



This is an image of a vintage Korean stamp or tax stamp, featuring Korean text and an image of what appears to be an architectural structure, possibly a pagoda or observatory.

The text includes:

- "백 원" (Baek won) , which means "100 won"
- "대한민국정부" (Daehanminguk Jeongbu), meaning "Government of the Republic of Korea"
- "수입 인지" (Suip Inji), which translates to "Revenue Stamp."

The design and imagery likely suggest that this stamp was used for government or official revenue purposes, such as taxes, fees, or legal documents, during an earlier period in Korean history. The architectural structure depicted might be Cheomseongdae, an ancient astronomical observatory from the Silla dynasty, often featured in Korean stamps and cultural representations. Cheomseongdae is one of the oldest surviving astronomical observatories in the world, built in the 7th century during the reign of Queen Seondeok of the Silla Kingdom in Korea. The stone structure stands about 9 meters tall and consists of 362 granite blocks, symbolizing the days of the lunar year. It was used to observe celestial events, guiding agricultural and religious practices in the kingdom. Cheomseongdae is recognized as a National Treasure of South Korea and is part of the UNESCO-listed Gyeongju Historic Areas. Today, it stands as a symbol of Korea's advanced scientific knowledge and rich cultural heritage.

Rather interesting, but not much new information.

I made another try, this time with a cinderella.



The image you uploaded appears to be a religious-themed stamp or artwork, possibly depicting Saint Anthony of Padua holding the infant Jesus. The letters "S.D.G." below the image likely stand for Soli Deo Gloria, a Latin phrase meaning "Glory to God Alone." The initials "J.F.L." on the lower left might refer to the artist or printer. I pointed out that most likely is "S.A.G.", which lead to the following correction: "You're right again! If the inscription is "S.A.G." rather than "S.H.G., S.A.G." could stand for "Saint Anthony Guide". This would align with common prayers and devotions to Saint Anthony, who is often invoked for guidance and help, especially in finding lost objects or during personal difficulties." This is in line with a description i saw in HipSatmp, but I could not find any other relevant information.

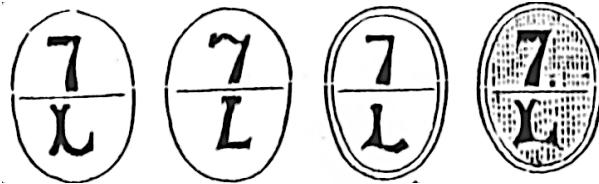
Numeral Town Cancel from Nicaragua



At times partial cancellations can be rather misleading. This Nicaraguan stamp from 1882 has a partial cancellation that for a superficial observer might look as a swastika. The swastika, historically, is an ancient symbol with deep cultural and religious significance that predates its more modern, politicized associations. In Sanskrit, "swastika" translates roughly to "well-being" or "good fortune," and it has been widely used as a symbol of luck, prosperity, and auspiciousness across various cultures and religions, including Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. The symbol also appeared in ancient Greece, Rome, and Native American cultures, often as a decorative motif symbolizing movement, life cycles, and the sun. In many of these contexts, the swastika carried exclusively positive meanings related to luck, balance, and cosmic order. So perhaps it is not completely outlandish assumption, Central and South American nations are known for having, "killer" cancels of various shapes and forms. However, after consulting the nomography by Kilian E. Nathan generously provided in open access format by the the Nicaragua Study Group it was evident that this assumption was wrong. What we have here is a numeral town cancel. Partly because as monograph highlight "killer" cancel were in use up to 1880, in later years in association with steal date-location cancels. Thereafter, in at least 13 post offices received numerical town cancels. These cancels had two identifying marks, a number possibly identifying the post office number and the first letter in the cities name. Generally the numeral town cancel was applied on the stamp, and was accompanied by the date-location cancellation on the cover, away form the stamp.

In all likelihood the stamp in question was canceled in León, and the visible part is L. The monograph notes that possibly four different numerical town cancels were used

in León, however some of different looking cancellations might come from the same canceler that was slightly deformed due to wear and tear.



The postmark in question bears most resemblance to the first type, alough this is up to debate. León, one of Nicaragua's oldest cities, has a rich history dating back to the early 16th century. It was initially founded by Spanish conquistadors in 1524, led by Francisco Hernández de Córdoba, near Lake Managua. However, in 1610, following a series of earthquakes, the original site was abandoned, and the city was moved to its current location near the Chiquito River, where it was reconstructed. The ruins of the original León, known as "León Viejo," are now a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Reference

Nathan K.E. – The Postmarks of Nicaragua from the prestamps era through circa 1920.