

PHILIPPINE COMMERCIAL POSTAGE STAMPS 1910-1936

by *Arnold H. Warren*

Between 1912 and 1935, certain large users of Philippine postage stamps were permitted the exclusive use of postage stamps which could be identified in case of theft and unauthorized use. These commercial postage stamps, in accordance with their distinguishing characteristics, may be classified as follows:

A. Stamps upon which the user perforated its initials after the stamps were obtained from the Bureau of Posts.

B. Imperforate postage stamps issued in 1925 for the exclusive use of one commercial firm.

C. Stamps upon which the user handstamped its initials, or name, after the stamps were obtained from the Bureau of Posts.

D. Stamps bearing a commercial overprint in black which was applied by the Bureau of Posts prior to delivery of the stamps to the user, who was granted exclusive use of stamps bearing a specified commercial overprint.

A. Perforated Initials

Prior to 1925, three users perforated their initials upon the postage stamps which they purchased. The stamps upon which perforated initials occur indicate that the use of perforated initials as a means of identification was begun by two users prior to 1914, and possibly as early as 1912. Perforated initials occur upon all regular issues of Philippine postage stamps from 1911 to 1926 and upon the Legislative Palace Issue of 1926. The perforated initials which occur on Philippine postage stamps are: A R C, C B I and P E Co.

About 1940, in reply to the writer's inquiry, the Director of Posts stated that, although stamps bearing perforated initials were in use for several years, he believed the use of such stamps was never authorized by the Bureau of Posts. He then produced an order of the Director of Posts prohibiting the use of stamps bearing perforated initials. This order, the writer believes, was dated early in 1925. But the date cannot now be verified. The records of the Bureau of Posts were lost when the Manila Post Office was burned during the Battle of Manila in 1945. And the writer's notes concerning Philippine postage stamps bearing perforated initials were lost when his home was bombed and destroyed in 1945.



Type 1. Perforated A R C. - The perforated initials, A R C, are credited to the American Red Cross. The writer was unable, however, to obtain confirmation of the use of these perforated initials by the American Red Cross. About 1940, in a letter addressed to the writer, the Manager of the Manila office of the American Red Cross stated that he was unable to find any record of use by the American Red Cross of

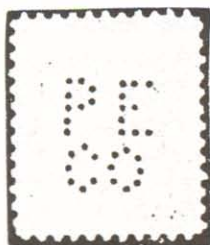
Philippine postage stamps perforated with the initials, A R C.

These perforated initials occur upon stamps of all regular issues from 1911 to 1926 and upon stamps of the Legislative Palace issue of 1926. The fact that these initials occur upon the 2-centavos denomination of both the 1911-14 and 1914-23 regular issues, indicates that the use of the perforated initials, A R C, was begun not later than 1914 and possibly as early as 1912.



Type 2. Perforated C B I. - The writer has been unable to identify the user of the perforated initials C B I. About 1940, he addressed a letter of inquiry to the Chartered Bank of India, Australia, and China. The manager of the Manila Branch of this bank replied that he was unable to find any record of the use by his bank of Philippine postage stamps bearing the perforated initials, C B I.

These perforated initials occur upon stamps of the regular issues of 1911-14, 1914-23 and 1917-25. The fact that these initials occur upon the 2-centavo denomination of both the 1911-14 and the 1914-23 issues, indicated that the use of the perforated initials C B I was begun at least as early as 1914 and may have been begun as early as 1912. The initials, C B I, occur upon the 16-centavos (Sampson) of the 1917-25 issue, but do not occur upon the 16-centavos (Dewey) issued in 1923. It may be inferred, therefore, that use of the perforated initials, C B I, was discontinued not later than 1923. It is probable that the perforated initials C B I may occur upon stamps of the regular issue of 1918-26, but the writer has seen no stamps of this issue bearing the initials C B I.



Type 3. Perforated P E CO. - The perforated initials, P E Co, were used by the Philippine Education Company of Manila. About 1940, in answer to the writer's inquiry, the manager of this firm wrote that for a number of years the postage stamps used by the Philippine Education Company were perforated prior to use with the initials, P E Co, but that this practice was discontinued in compliance with an order of the Director of Posts. The manager of the Philippine Education Company had no record of the year in which use of the perforated initials, P E Co, was begun. He believed that use of these initials was discontinued about 1925. These perforated initials occur upon stamps of the 1917-25 issue and upon the 16-centavos (Dewey) issued in 1923. The fact that the initials, P E Co, do not occur upon the 16-centavos (Sampson) of the 1917-25 issue, indicates that the perforated initials, P E Co, may have been in use only during the years from 1923 to 1925.

B. Imperforate Stamps



Type 4. Imperforate Stamps. - In 1925, the Philippine Bureau of Posts issued for the exclusive use of the Lambert Sales Company of Manila a series of imperforate postage stamps. These stamps were printed by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing in Washington, D. C., from the same plates as were then in use for printing the current series of perforate postage stamps. The colors of these imperforates were the same as the colors of the current series of perforate stamps.

The Lambert Sales Company was owned by Leon Lambert, Sr., and his son managed the Manila office of this firm. The son, Leon Lambert, Jr., was also a philatelist.

In a letter to Mr. Whipple S. Hall, dated Aug. 31, 1940, Mr. Leon Lambert, Jr., stated that, out of a total of 10,180 pesos worth of the imperforate postage stamps purchased by his firm in 1925, fully 8,000 pesos worth were actually used on the mail of his firm. Mr. Lambert wrote that for several months during 1925 his firm used no other stamps but, "because of the annoyance of cutting the stamps apart with scissors, no more were ordered and most of the remainder, amounting to some 2,000 pesos, were disposed of." The remainder, he stated, was sold to a stamp dealer in Philadelphia.

Mr. Lambert saved used specimens of all denominations of the 1925 imperforates. He was able to do this because many of these stamps were used on mail which was sent from the Manila office to the New York office of his firm. He has never stated how many used specimens he saved. But he has said that many of the used specimens were so damaged in transit, or were so heavily cancelled, as to be unsuitable for collection. A few collectors have obtained used specimens from Mr. Lambert.

One hundred sets of the 1925 imperforates were delivered to the Bureau of Posts in Manila as "samples." What disposition was made of the samples is not known. These "samples" disappeared from the archives of the Bureau of Posts prior to 1940. It is possible that they were stolen by an employee of the Bureau of Posts and were sold to collectors in the Philippines.

Concerning the reason for the issue of the 1925 imperforates Mr. Lambert wrote: "As you know, the 1925 imperforates were issued for postal use. Any large firm could buy them in lots of 10,000 pesos...The Philippine Bureau of Posts did not permit large firms to perforate their initials through the face of national personages such as Rizal, Dewey, Lawton, etc., and therefore, in order to permit such firms to have stamps which would be distinguishable from the ordinary stamps, in the event of theft, imperforate stamps could be obtained, providing these were ordered in lots of not less than 10,000 pesos. This regulation remained in full force for several years before it was finally revoked."

The appearance of the 1925 imperforates evoked a storm of protest from philatelists, both in Manila and in the United States, who resented the fact that these imperforates could not be purchased from the Bureau of Posts by philatelists.

In answer to the charge, made by the *Asociacion Filatelica de Filipinas*, that the Lambert Sales Company had been granted a monopoly of these imperforate postage stamps, the Director of Posts stated that he had not granted a monopoly to the Lambert Sales Company and that imperforate postage stamps would be issued to any entity which ordered at one time a lot of not less than 10,000 pesos worth and made full payment for the stamps at the time the order was given to the Bureau of Posts.

No other firm ordered imperforate stamps, however. Hence, the imperforates of 1925 were used exclusively by the Lambert Sales Company.

The writer has been unable to determine the exact date on which the Lambert Sales Company ordered these imperforate postage stamps from the Bureau of Posts. The order must have been given, however, very early in 1925. The major portion of the stamps was delivered to Mr. Leon Lambert, Sr., in New York on May 5, 1925.

The 1925 imperforates may be distinguished by their colors from a similar series of imperforate postage stamps which was issued in 1931. Some used specimens of the 1925 imperforates bear cancellations which identify the stamps as used prior to 1931.

C. Commercial Handstamps



Type 5. Handstamped R.S. - Prior to June 20, 1925, the Rambler Shoe Company of Manila applied to the postage stamps which it purchased a rubber handstamp consisting of the initials "R.S." within a single-line rectangular frame of about the same dimensions as the design of the stamp. The stamps upon which this handstamp occurs indicate that it was in use at least as early as 1924 and may have been in use earlier. It is probable that this handstamp was not used subsequent to June 20, 1925, the date on which the Rambler Shoe Company first obtained from the Bureau of Posts postage stamps over-printed "MANILA P. I." The writer has been unable to determine whether or not the use of the handstamp "R.S." was authorized by the Bureau of Posts.

This handstamp occurs upon the 12-centavos denomination of the 1911-13 issue, upon the 30-centavos denomination of both the 1914-23, and the 1918-26 issues, and upon the 2c, 4c, 6c, 10c, 12c, 26c and 30c denominations of the 1917-25 issue.



Type 6. Handstamped HEACOCK'S MANILA. - The H. E. Heacock Company of Manila, probably in 1929, applied to the 2-centavos (yellow green) and 20-centavos denominations of the current 1917-25 issue a rubber handstamp, in violet, consisting of the words, HEACOCK'S MANILA, in two lines of Gothic capitals. A specimen of the 20-centavos in the writer's collection bears the concentric circles cancellation which the writer has not seen on stamps used subsequent to 1929. The yellow green shade of the 2-centavos first became current about 1929.

Stamps bearing this overprint are rare. It probably was in use only during a very brief period when the H.E. Heacock Company had exhausted its supply of the 2c and 20c denominations overprinted H MANILA P.I. (Type 9) and had not yet received from the Bureau of Posts the stamps of these denominations bearing the overprint. HEACOCK'S MANILA (Type 12), which superceded the overprint, H MANILA P.I. The writer has been unable to determine whether or not use of the handstamp HEACOCK'S MANILA was authorized by the Bureau of Posts. (Note: The illustration of Type 6 is not an exact replica of the actual handstamp, but indicates style and approximate size.)

D. Commercial Overprints

Philippine postage stamps bearing commercial overprints are sometimes erroneously identified as "Pre-cancelled" stamps. The commercial overprints are in black and are very similar to the pre-cancel overprints on stamps of the United States. But the commercial overprints applied to Philippine postage stamps were not intended to serve as a pre-cancellation. All Philippine postage stamps bearing commercial overprints either were, or should have been, cancelled in the usual manner when the mail bearing these stamps passed through the post office. The commercial overprint was applied solely to enable the user to identify its stamp in case of theft or unauthorized use.

Most of the commercial overprints which occur upon Philippine postage stamps have been listed by M. Galvez in his *Catalogo Especial de los Sellos de Correos y Telegrafos de Espana, Colonias y Ex-Colonias* (Published in Madrid, Spain).

During the Japanese Occupation of the Philippines, Mr. Ramon Catala searched the records of the Bureau of Posts for information concerning the commercial overprints. The information which he obtained was compiled in two pages of typewritten notes. In June, 1942, when Mr. Catala visited the Red Cross Hospital where the writer was interned, the writer obtained from Mr. Catala a copy of his notes concerning the COMMERCIAL OVERPRINTS. More than two years later Mr. Catala was executed by the Japanese; and the records of the Bureau of Posts were destroyed when the Manila Post Office was burned during the Battle of Manila in 1945. Hence the writer has been unable to verify the information given by the notes of Mr. Catala.

The postage stamps bearing these commercial overprints were issued by the Bureau of Posts for use exclusively by certain specified users. The user applied to the Bureau of Posts for permission to use postage stamps bearing an overprint by which the stamps be identified in case of theft. The Bureau of Posts required full payment for the stamps at the time the order was placed. The overprint was applied by the Bureau of Printing (Manila) to stamps furnished by the Bureau of Posts from its stock of the current issue. The overprinted stamps were delivered by the Bureau of Printing to the Bureau of Posts, which issued the stamps to the user. Thus the stamps bearing commercial overprints were authorized and issued by the Bureau of Posts. In this respect the commercial overprints differ from the perforated initials and the commercial handstamps. Both the perforated initials and the commercial handstamps were applied by the user after the stamps were obtained from the Bureau of Posts.



Type 7. Overprinted MANILA P. I., in two lines of capital letters. - According to Mr. Catala, the first commercial overprint authorized by the Bureau of Posts was issued in 1925 for the exclusive use of the Rambler Shoe Company "and its sister organization, the Howard Lux Company," both of Manila. Mr. Catala states that the first order for stamps bearing this overprint was placed with the Bureau of Posts on May

27, 1925, and that the overprinted stamps were delivered to the Rambler Shoe Company and the Howard Lux Company on June 20, 1925. The overprint in black was MANILA P. I. in two lines of Capital letters. It occurs upon the 2c, 4c, 6c, 8c, 12c, 20c, 26c, and 30c denominations of the 1917-25 issue, upon the 16c (Dewey) of the 1923 issues, and upon the 1-peso denomination of the 1914-23 issue. Apparently this overprint was not applied to stamps of the 10-centavos denomination. Mr. Catala states that this overprint remained in use until 1929, when it was superseded by the overprint, RAMBLER MANILA, issued for the exclusive use of the Rambler Shoe Company. (See Type II).

Type 7a. Overprinted Manila, P.I., in two lines of capital and lower-case letters. - Mr. Catala states: "On February 24, 1926, Brias Roxas, a large mail-order house (of Manila), inquired from the Post Office if it could be allowed to use its trade name, "BRIROX," on its stamps. ■

To be continued...

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