HANDSTAMPED OVERPRINTS FOR OFFICIAL USE

Starting in 1899 when the first U.S. stamp was overprinted "Philippines", the various government bureaus in operation in the archipelago applied an overprint to the stamps to be used on official correspondence: an "O.B.", "Official", "Official Business", "Official Mail" or similarly indicative mark which established its restricted use. Official orders were sent to all government bureaus requiring all stamps be surcharged as soon as purchased, thereby rendering them unavailable for private use or purchase. Beginning with the issuance of the Legislative Palace stamps in 1926, the Philippine government applied an overprint itself. However, many post offices received inadequate supplies of the Bureau overprinted stamps which were printed in relatively small quantities and continued applying the handstamps in varying types and multiple color inks, mostly black, blue, violet and red.

The following examples depict the major varieties of markings found on this issue, and were selected based on the clarity of the overprint and the variation of color employed.