

VOLUME II, No. 1

JULY, 1954



THE AERO PHILATELIST ANNALS

★ ★ A QUARTERLY MAGAZINE ON AERO-PHILATELY ★ ★

This Issue Features:

● THE "BLACK" HONDURAS

THE RAREST

AIRMAIL STAMP

● INDEX OF

VOLUME I

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JULY 1954

THE AERO

PHILATELIST ANNALS

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INTRODUCING VOLUME II

This number of THE AERO PHILATELIST ANNALS starts with Vol. 2 of our quarterly magazine. Some maintain that the first year is the hardest. If this would apply to a philatelic magazine about air mails, your editor can smile happily because "we are over the hump". We hope so. One thing is known. This magazine represents the combined efforts and long hours devoted to this work by a few, done entirely as a labor of love. But it is often more work than a paid full-time job, a task that only those responsible for this production can properly evaluate.

Vol. 2 No. 1 of THE AERO PHILATELIST ANNALS contains an INDEX of the complete Volume 1 (see page 32). While doing this, we were once again reminded about the universality of air mail stamp collecting and why it has so great an appeal. It is believed that most collectors are general collectors at heart. They specialize only because they are forced to do it. Most all of the other philatelic specialties are limited in scope, while aero-philately is about the only world-wide one existing today.

As proof of this statement, a glance at the Vol. 1 Index shows that this new quarterly magazine offered 22 articles on the air mails from 19 different countries distributed geographically as follows:

North America: U. S. A., Canada and Newfoundland

South & Central America: Argentine, Brazil, Canal Zone, Honduras, Nicaragua and Surinam

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EDITORIAL

Europe: Iceland, Italy and Spain

Africa: Ethiopia, French Levant and Sudan

Asia: Azerbaijan and Philippines

Australasia: Australia and New Guinea.

So much for our freshman year. Now we are sophomores, which year is commenced with what is considered in all modesty a "bang"! We regard the feature article in this number by Irving I. Green on Honduras Scott C12, Sanabria 14, the rarest air mail stamp existing (only 2 copies are presently known) as a masterpiece in the line of philatelic writing. We hope that this high opinion will be shared. The fact that practically none of us will ever own a copy of this "gem" should not deter us from reading its history because this is full of human interest and adventure. The article does something that philately seldom can offer, a good story rather than the usual dry presentation of a limited interest to only a few very mature philatelists.

Before concluding, we beg permission to use a bit of this space to express our sincere appreciation to the many who greeted *THE AERO PHILATELIST ANNALS* in its first year so enthusiastically. Not only our members but prominent philatelists from all over the world had many kind things to say. Favorable reviews of all four numbers of Volume 1 were published in many magazines and many languages. All of this was not only appreciated but most encouraging. This magazine, as a baby, was cordially greeted by its elders. We can assure all that this baby will try not to allow all this to make him conceited. Instead we shall try to improve upon the first year so that we may sit in the company of the very fine veteran philatelist publications for many years on into the future. (*H. M. G.*)

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The Rarest Air Stamp—The Black Honduras

By IRVING I. GREEN



Honduras Sanabria No. 14, Scott C12, the famous Oscar R. Lichtenstein copy. Photograph courtesy of the owner and The Philatelic Foundation.

Foreword

After my article, *THE RED HONDURAS*, had appeared in *Aero Philatelist News*, of October 15, 1952, the editor, Mr. Henry M. Goodkind, advised me that a member upon reading it, had remarked, "Why all the fuss about the Red Honduras? The Sanabria catalogue says there are nine of these, but only *two* of Sanabria No. 14. Have you seen a genuine Sanabria 14, Scott C12 in all the years you have been collecting. I never have. Does it exist?"

In the same periodical, March 15, 1953 issue, Mr. Goodkind wrote about *THE RAREST AIR MAIL STAMP*,* an interesting preliminary account of this mystery issue, whetting thereby, one's philatelic appetite for further enlightenment. The editor, knowing my intense interest in Honduras, suggested I write something far more comprehensive. I willingly undertook this task with this treatise the result.

It is appropriate, at the outset, to express gratitude to the late Mr. John N. Luff (Fig. 1) for his painstaking investigations of the 1925 Honduras air mails that established the true surcharge settings. Mr. Luff had been associated with the Scott Stamp and Coin Company, New York, for forty-four years until his passing on August 23, 1938. Under his guidance, the Scott catalogue attained international recognition. As a foremost philatelic student and writer, he assembled, in the course of his work, a valuable collection incorporating surcharges, types, and varieties that are essential to a specialist. He sold this collection to the Scott Company who made it available to serious-minded philatelists.

Upon Mr. Luff's decease, control of the Scott Company eventually passed to Mr. Hugh M. Clark, long his business associate, who continued as editor of the Scott catalogue. In 1946, Mr. Clark sold his interest in Scott Publications Inc. and at the same time donated the Luff Reference Collection, intact, to The Philatelic Foundation, New York, of which he was one of the organizers.

* After publication, some correspondence was received and a few members remarked that "There was a scarcer air mail stamp than Honduras C12, San. 14." A Semi-official listed only in Sanabria or a minor listing was cited. This is wrong, because in defining "rare", a stamp had to both 1) be listed as a major number and 2) in a general catalog such as Scott. (H. M. G.)

HONDURAS

Mr. Luff frequently had remarked to Clark that Honduras was one of his philatelic favorites as its study encompassed a virgin field for research that posed many challenging problems. Aware of this writer's bent for Honduras, Mr. Clark graciously presented to me copies of Mr. Luff's personal correspondence file relating to Honduras. So from this authentic source comes considerable of the data herein contained.

The Finding

Nearly two years had elapsed since the printing and issuance of the 1925 air mail stamps of Honduras. Mr. Luff, its foremost inquirer, felt certain he had correctly catalogued all the known existing varieties. Imagine his surprise when he found something new, a 25c on 10c stamp was enclosed in the following letter dated March 5, 1927, from Mr. Julio Ustariz,* Puerto Cortes, Honduras, with these comments:

"By request of my friend, Mr. F. W. Budde of San Pedro Sula, I take pleasure in enclosing you a complete serie of the "Aero" stamps of Honduras as follows:

1st Issue

5 cts blue	1 block 6 stamps
10 cts dark brown	1 block 6 stamps
20 cts brown	1 block 6 stamps (tete-beche)
25 cts on 1c chocolate	1 block 4 stamps
50 cts orange	1 block 6 stamps
1 peso green	1 block 2 stamps

2nd Issue

10 cts dark blue surcharged 25	1 single copy
5 cts blue surcharged 25	1 single copy (torn)
20 cts brown surcharged 25	1 single copy
1st Issue — 20 cts brown	— single copy

These last 4 stamps were given to me by Dr. Pounds in a trip that I made to Tegucigalpa in March of last year. He informed me that he had no more in stock."

Mr. Luff proceeded to check the overprint on this new variety, a 25c on 10c dark blue, black surcharge, against the setting of the 25c on 1c, chocolate. He found that it matched exactly with position No. 2. He recorded this finding in his reference collection by an attached note in manuscript:

"Julio Ustariz, Tulian, Puerto Cortez, Honduras, C. A. In March 1927 sends various Honduras Air Mail stamps including 10c dark blue, surcharge in black, like No. 2 of my 25/1c chocolate. Says he got it from Pounds about March 1927."

There is an error in Luff's handwritten notation as Ustariz stated Pounds gave him the 25c on 10c stamp in "March of last year", signifying 1926, not 1927. Probably never again referring to Ustariz's letter, but instead, always checking with his collection, Luff,

*Mr. Ustariz was the owner of Tulian Air Field, across the marshes from Puerto Cortes and his hacienda, Los Angeles, was nearby. Dr. T. C. Pounds, a transplanted Brooklynite, had conceived the idea of an air mail service between Tegucigalpa, the capital, and the North Coast, thereby negotiating the intervening distance of about one hundred miles in an hour of flying that had heretofore required a week on mule-back. Pounds planned to make San Pedro Sula the North Coast terminus. But Morgan, his pilot, did not approve. Major E. A. Burke, famous in his own right and at that time proprietor of the Hotel Palm in Puerto Cortes, introduced Pounds and Morgan to Ustariz, who graciously offered them free use of the Tulian Air Field. The offer was accepted. So during March and April of 1925, Morgan and Pounds lived at the Ustariz home as his guests while engaged in the preliminary preparations for the air service, which included trial flights.



Fig. 1. The late Mr. John N. Luff. This illustration has been made from a photograph belonging to Miss Jean Koor of Scott Publications Inc., who kindly loaned it for our use. Miss Koor has been in the employment of the Scott Co. for years as Secretary to the Editor of the Scott Stamp Catalogues. She has just become Mrs. Hugh M. Clark.

consequently used the incorrect 1927 date in his subsequent correspondence. He does classify the surcharge as genuine, "like No. 2 of my 25c/1c Chocolate", although there was a question in his mind whether the stamp was placed on sale at the post office or if it merely constituted a trial printing. He indicated his quandary by entering this remark in his collection:

"C12—Trial Print? 25 on 10 c."

On March 19, 1927 Luff replied to Mr. Ustariz as follows:

"I am in receipt of your kind favor of the fifth and appreciate your sending me a fine lot of Honduras Air Mail stamps to see. Mr. Budde gave you a wrong idea of what I wanted and has caused you unnecessary trouble.

"I have been studying these stamps because of the dangerous counterfeits that have come from Honduras in recent months. I was trying to make up the various settings of the surcharges. I happen to have a fair lot of material so that I can make up the Aero Correo in black and in blue. Also the blue with '25', but I have not been able to get enough stamps to make up the 25c on 1c, which is not the same as the 25c on 5c, and 25c on 20c.

"I had a nice block of four of the 25c on 1c which Mr. Budde sent me two years ago. I regret to say that the block you sent me comes from the same position in the setting so that it does not give me any help to make up the setting.

"There is one stamp in your book that is new to me. That is the 25c on 10c dark blue. I have not before seen this stamp nor has it been listed in any catalogue. I think from your letter that you received it from Mr. Pounds. Did he say anything

HONDURAS

about it that it was a trial stamp or that it was actually put in use? I shall appreciate any information that you can give me about this stamp.

"I notice in your book that you make notes on many pages of the stamps that you have 'in stock'. I do not know if 'in stock' means that you have these stamps for sale or merely that you have them and you do not say anything in your letter about selling them or put any prices in your book. If any of these stamps are for sale, I would be interested to buy the block of 25c on 1c and the single copy of the 25c on 10c blue.

"As I said before, I have a similar block of the 25c on 1c, but if I could buy yours, it might help me to get copies that I need from collectors who would not sell but would be willing to exchange. I am returning your block enclosed and shall be very pleased to hear from you on the subject of possible sales at your convenience. I note that you say certain of the stamps in your book were given to you by Dr. Pounds in a trip that you made to Tegucigalpa in March of 1926 and that he informed you that he had no more stamps in stock. Within the last two months, I have had letters from a collector in Tegucigalpa enclosing first a certificate from Dr. Pounds that he was selling to that man 100 Air Mail stamps, giving a list of them. Secondly, another certificate from Dr. Pounds that during the past year he sold about 300 Air Mail stamps. I think both of these certificates were dated in or about December 1926 or January 1927. I have copies of them but they are at home, but it is quite evident that when Dr. Pounds told you he had no more in stock, he was mistaken, or else some more have been printed.

"There is something very queer going on down there in regard to the Air Mail stamps, but I have not yet gotten to the thing."

In the above letter, Mr. Luff carefully avoided conveying the impression that the 25c on 10c blue might be a rarity. Instead, he emphasized the counterfeit situation that had beclouded this entire issue. Actually, he desired to acquire the 25c on 10c stamp but shrewdly did not wish to reveal his intense interest.

Following up his letter of March 5, 1927 to Mr. Luff, even before he received a reply to it, Mr. Ustariz wrote Luff as follows:

"I beg to confirm to you my letter of the 5th inst., enclosing a collection of 'aero' stamps of Honduras.

"As I have had no time to write to our friend Mr. Budde of San Pedro Sula, to whom I had promised to send whatever news I should receive from the aviator, Mr. S. B. Morgan, and as the N. Y. boat is leaving to-morrow, I take pleasure in forwarding you the letter that I just received from the aviator with regards to the 'aero' stamps (1st issue).

"You will be able to judge by the contents of same that Mr. Pounds has some pretty good notions, for making money."

Pilot Morgan's letter, dated March 12, referred to above as being addressed to Mr. Ustariz read:

"I think I carried mail to the coast on the trips of June 26 and November 5, 1925, although I am uncertain about the latter date. I don't think Pounds used any new stamps on that trip but old ones that he had had for some time, for if I remember right, the Postmaster would not give him any more to cancel. And another thing, when Pounds said that he had no more in stock to you, he wasn't so close to the truth for he showed a bunch to a friend of his not so long ago and this man wanted to get some but Pounds wouldn't give him any. Just how valuable are these stamps and who is there that wants to buy them in the States, for Mr. Snow in Tegucigalpa has some and will sell them, so will I, the few I have.

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"Pounds now has with him another aviator who is going to Siguatepeque (How do you spell that place—it's the town half way to the coast from the capital) to-morrow or next day with a bunch of letters that he has written to himself so as to get them surcharged or cancelled by the postmaster of that town so that he can sell the stamped envelopes to collectors in the States. The aviator will fly down on the Aeromarine. He has more nerve than I have for they have cracked it up twice and have had a real hard time of it, harder than I had, and that was bad enough for me. If he can do this, why can't I take some of the stamps I have and address them to myself in Tela, have them surcharged here in Tegucigalpa, and then fly down and have them surcharged or cancelled or whatever the postmaster does to them when he gets them."

Morgan's letter obviously evidences no philatelic knowledge. It does indicate to the philatelist, however, that the pilot had air mail stamps and wanted to realize on them. By "new stamps" mentioned near the beginning of his letter, Morgan is referring to those of the second issue or printing these with blue ink. It is a fact that Morgan and Pounds disliked each other heartily. Pounds claimed that Morgan, without authority from him, had signed a receipt and obtained the "aero" stamps held by the Postmasters at Puerto Cortes and San Pedro Sula; but was unable to get those at La Ceiba as Pounds had warned the postmaster there not to deliver the stamps to anyone but himself, personally. It appears, borrowing a phrase from Sr. Ustariz, that Morgan, too, "had some pretty good notions for making money". Pilot Morgan and Sr. Ustariz appeared to be close friends.

Upon receipt of Luff's letter of March 19th, Sr. Ustariz, inherently impatient and suspicious, wrote his friend, Morgan, then employed by the United Fruit Company at Tela, requesting that he contact Snow, the actual printer of the air mail stamps, for first-hand information concerning the 25c on 10c, black surcharge variety. While awaiting a reply from Morgan, Sr. Ustariz wrote Mr. Luff:

"I have been expecting to hear from Mr. Morgan about the Aero stamps for over a fortnight but have not had any news from him. I suppose that he has been very busy lately, so that I shall not wait any longer to answer . . .

"With regards the counterfeits on the market, it must undoubtedly have been some private dealings between Mr. Pounds and the Postmaster in Tegucigalpa.

"I gave Mr. Budde, in March of last year, a list of the (emiss) aero stamps that had been issued. It was as follows, if I remember:

<i>First printing</i>	<i>Second printing</i>
500..... 5 cents blue	250.....20 cents brown
500.....10 cents	250.....25 cents on 20 cents
1000.....20 cents	250.....25 cents on 5 cents
500.....25 cents on 1 cent	250.....25 cents on 10 cents
200.....50 cents	
100.....1 peso	

"Mr. Morgan, I am sure, will get me the right information . . . Hoping to be able to give you soon some reliable information with regards the "aero" stamps . . ."

Sr. Ustariz's listing above disclosed that he did not consider the 25c on 10c variety of any more value than the other three that he had placed in the second printing, and besides, it belonged in the first printing. Luff was aware of these inaccuracies, but made no comment because this suited his purpose.

On April 23, 1927, Ustariz to Luff:

"I have just received the enclosed letter from the aviator, Mr. Morgan, which will interest you without any doubt.

HONDURAS

"I am writing to him this same day telling him to call on you when he is up in the States.

"As soon as I hear from the party that he refers to, Mr. Karl Snow, I will write to you"

The letter which Ustariz received from Morgan is dated April 18, 1927, and reads:

"Here is what Snow wrote for me to write you about the 25 cents on 10 cent dark blue. 'There was no 10 cent dark blue 1915 issue surcharged 25 cents that I remember. There might have been a few on the 1919 issue but these were never used. I think they must be fakes, so that should answer that question! Don't be a bit backward about writing Karl Snow, for he will help you all he can. You won't find a more willing man to help any other person'."

This information convinced Sr. Ustariz that his 25c on 10c was a counterfeit and, as such, it appears that he did not seem to care what Luff did with it.

On May 2, 1927, Mr. Luff wrote Sr. Ustariz:

"I am to-day in receipt of your letters of April 21 and 23 and am pleased to hear from you. . . .

"Thank you for sending me the list of the quantities printed of the Air Mail stamps. I had such a list at various times from various people. They are probably in my letter files at home. I think the total is about the same on all the lists but I believe no two agree on the quantities for the different stamps.

"I have never had any correspondence with Mr. Snow and I am wondering if he cannot supply a correct list. I would very much like to have his opinion of the stamps that have been coming on the market in the last year and also would like to know if he has any information about the maker. So far as I can tell, they all trace back to Mr. Pounds and I very much suspect that he has had reprints made to sell to stamp collectors and the trade.

"I have been interested in reading Mr. Morgan's letter. If he comes to the States, I shall hope to make his acquaintance and have a chance to talk with him."

After mailing the above, Mr. Luff sent Sr. Ustariz the following under the same date, May 2, 1927:

"P. S.: When I was at the office to-day, I dictated a letter to you. Now that I am at home, I recall something that I had intended to say, so I will try and type-write it myself.

"I suggest that you advise Mr. Morgan not to try having his air mail stamps cancelled. The Postmaster General stopped the delivery of the lot Mr. Pounds tried to put through, I was informed of this the day after the attempt. Mr. Morgan can get quite as good prices for his stamps uncanceled as cancelled, especially if they are in blocks. Collectors and dealers here know the dates the stamps were used and the towns from which they were mailed. Cancellations with other town names and dates will be rejected.

"Mr. M. may have to wait a little while before he can sell. Everyone has been scared by the dangerous counterfeits that have been on the market for about six months. Neither dealers nor collectors are willing to buy. When that trouble has been cleared up and the counterfeits removed, the market will probably be allright again. . . ."

Of importance is Mr. Luff's statement that "dangerous counterfeits have been on the market for about six months." Writing this on May 2, 1927, would fix the appearance of the counterfeits near the end of 1926. As Sr. Ustariz stated that Pounds had given him the 25c on 10c stamp during March 1926, Luff unwittingly authenticated its genuineness, Morgan heeded Mr. Luff's advice, as his stamps, when sold to the Scott Company, were mostly in mint blocks, though somewhat stuck together. I have no record of what, if anything, Mr. Luff had bought from Sr. Ustariz this time.

HONDURAS

Further Discoveries

There was to be more activity in the matter of the 25c on 10c air mail variety, but this time from another direction. Mr. Luff received a letter dated March 25, 1927, from his most active correspondent in Honduras, Sr. Raúl Durón Membreño. The letter contained sixteen Honduras air mail stamps of the 1925 issue and a memorandum from Dr. Pounds to Membreño, dated March 18, 1927, reading:

"Enclosed find 16 stamps which I found in a little book of addresses a couple of days ago."

Membreño's letter to Mr. Luff read:

" . . . Among the 16 stamps sent me by Dr. Pounds, you will note one pair of 25c/10c surcharged in black. I'd never heard or seen such a variety and am writing Dr. Pounds in order to get some information. I don't doubt for a moment of the genuineness of the 16 stamps as I have learned a lot, comparing the several counterfeits. . . ."



Fig. 2. The photo of "Membreno" pair which Mr. Luff had taken. Courtesy of The Philatelic Foundation.

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Mr. Luff, upon careful examination, found the enclosed horizontal pair of 25c on 10c to be genuine and had it photographed. (Fig. 2) He placed one photo in his collection, noting over it in manuscript the surcharge positions: "No. 3 and No. 4." The photo shows the pair somewhat separated near the top, but the alignment of the surcharges proves that the pair was intact at the time it had been overprinted.

On May 2, 1927, Luff acknowledged receipt of Membreño's note of the 25th expressing his growing disinterest in all air mail stamps of Honduras because of the plethora of counterfeits. Tucked away near the end of this letter is found:

"... Yes, I noticed the pair of 25c on 10c with black surcharge. About a month ago I saw a third copy of this unknown variety, which the owner stated he bought from Mr. Pounds, about January of this year. At least, I believe this was the date though I have left the letter at home."

Again Mr. Luff wanted to own the pair of C12 stamps but he cleverly did not wish to convey too much eagerness. This seems to account for the "discouraging act" for Membreño's benefit. Heretofore Mr. Luff had been able to buy most anything that Membreño sent him for examination. So probably he believed this instance would be no exception. Therefore, he deliberately devoted little space to the discussion of the 25c on 10c variety. Again Mr. Luff wrote "January of this year", implying January 1927, as the time the owner of the other 25c on 10c stamp (Ustariz) bought it from Pounds. This perhaps was nothing more than a slight mistake on Luff's part, although the January 1927 date co-incidentally is the time given for the influx of many dangerous counterfeits.

On May 10, 1927, Membreño wrote to Mr. Luff, enclosing a letter he had received from Pounds in reply to his inquiry of March 25th for information about the different varieties of airpost stamps, including the error, 25c on 10c. Pounds' letter delineates the trials and tribulations of the printings. It becomes a valuable pronouncement for philatelists. However, it runs to great length and for this reason, only the portion relating to the subject under discussion, the 25c on 10c stamp, is quoted:

"When we got ready to print the stamps, we had to separate the original sheets into smaller ones. The original ones came in hundreds,* that is, ten stamps on each side. The press we had would only accommodate 12 so we tore the big sheets into smaller ones of twelve stamps each. This left a strip of two wide on one side and one wide on the other. After printing the sheets of 12, we printed the strips as best we could, usually in twos and threes and even single ones. So you see that in trying to apply the usual system of 'plating' the stamps afterwards, one would meet difficulties if he tried to make some of these odd stamps fit into one of the sheets of twelve, for in all probability, it wouldn't fit.** And if it didn't, it couldn't be called a counterfeit. You mentioned having got a ten cent stamp that had been surcharged in black to 25 cents. I believe you said it was in the lot of some 16 that you got from me recently. I can't explain that, if it really came from me, unless it was one of those odd stamps, just mentioned, that got in with the one cent ones which were raised to 25 cents in the first printing. I never saw one of them, there might have been more than one, but it is certain that there couldn't have been very many of them."

On May 31, 1927, Mr. Luff to Membreño:

"In your letter of March 25, you send me, for my opinion, 16 stamps. I find 14

* The 1c, 5c, and 10c values of the basic stamps were made in sheets of 100 (10 x 10); whereas the 20c, 50c and 1 peso values were in sheets of 50 (10 x 5).

** A pencilled marginal notation by Mr. Luff reads: "This is stupid. If part of a setting of 12 was printed on two or three stamps, they could be plated. To 'plate' a surcharged stamp is to determine its position in the setting."

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of them to be genuine and am returning them with this letter. Two other stamps were the mysterious 25c/10c dark blue, black surcharge . . . I don't know what to make of this newly discovered variety . . . I think I have already written you, I have seen one copy of this which came from Mr. Pounds about last January or February. It may possibly be a trial or one of those things called 'Pounds stamps' that we have not been able to explain. I am taking the liberty of holding the pair because I wish to study it a little more, especially in connection with the letter of Mr. Pounds that he sent you with yours of May 10. It will take quite a little time to study his letter and prepare a careful answer, and in order to do it well, I would like to hold the pair just mentioned . . . Would you care to sell one or both of the 25c/10c blue, black surcharge? If so, please tell me the value you place on them . . . At the moment, I do not feel they are right, but at any rate Mr. Pounds has not explained them and why they differ from his other stamps. Even though I do not believe they are genuine, they would be of use to me in studying Air Mail stamps, so I would buy them at a small price but not at the price of genuine stamps . . ."

There was sound logic in Luff's remark, ". . . I do not believe they are right". This time Membreno is given the wrong date that the other copy was acquired (by Ustariz) from Pounds. As Membreno was aware that counterfeits flooded the market early in 1927, the mere mention of this date to him connoted illegitimacy. Despite this suggestion, coupled with Mr. Luff's opinion that the pair might not be genuine, Membreno's conviction that it was good remained unshaken.

On June 6, 1927, Membreno to Mr. Luff:

"I think you have forgotten to return the copy of the air mail error, 25c/10c (black), as I didn't intend selling those copies . . ."

From Membreno to Mr. Luff, June 16, 1927, the following appears:

"I received yours dated May 31 . . . I understand you are holding the pair of 25c/10c . . . I don't want to sell the 25c/10c . . ."

"Now regarding the quarantined (?) 25c/10c airpost stamp. I've discovered another copy, new, in a collection album and I've done my best to find any difference between it and the genuine 25c/10c and I can't see it, having examined it with a strong lens and measured it (the surcharge) to the best of my ability. Besides, it doesn't have the questionable 'clear' surcharge, being apparently a genuine surcharge come from the first blurred printing of the Air Post stamps. If I can talk to its owner, I'll gladly send it to you for inspection."

"Another copy in a collection album" that Membreno mentions sounds like a ruse to pry the pair of 25c/10c stamps away from Luff.

On June 30, 1927, Membreno wrote to Mr. Luff:

"You are holding the 25c/10c dark blue about which you haven't said the last word: that pair of stamps came in a bunch of 16 stamps which I sent you from Pespire and which, happily, didn't have any guarantee(?) mark. (I understand that Mr. Pounds' guarantees must be taken *cum granum saltis*). You returned 14 of them, declaring they were genuine: anyway, should the 25c/10c be genuine or not, I do not want to sell them as I need the pair for my collection, but I will get you one copy that I spotted in a friend's collection."

On July 25, 1927, Mr. Luff replied to Membreno as follows:

"In your letter of June 30, you insist that I return that pair of 25c/10c blue, and I am doing so. I note that you will get me a copy that you have seen in a friend's collection. I would like to have it though I do not care to pay an extravagant price for it. I have not been able to make up my mind what the stamps are. I can-

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not plate these with any originals or counterfeits that I have, but there are so many counterfeits that it is difficult to tell about anything. I have four settings of the 25c/1c and I don't know how many other things."

At last, Mr. Luff returned the 25c/10c pair, hoping that Membreno might yet be influenced to sell it to him. I cannot believe Mr. Luff lent much credence to Membreno's tale of the "other copy".

Knowing that the surcharges on the Ustariz single copy and the Membreno pair were genuine, Mr. Luff was desirous to learn if this variety was a "trial printing" or something that had been distributed to and sold by the post-offices. As a "trial printing," in the true sense of the expression, it would not constitute anything more than an essay. *But if regularly sold for air mail use, the variety was entitled to a catalogue listing.* No one could solve the problem better than the printer, himself, Mr. Luff logically concluded. Whereupon, he wrote to Karl Snow on August 6, 1927, requesting some general information. Also, in his letter was enclosed a separate sheet listing fifteen questions.

On August 24, 1927, Snow replied to Mr. Luff. He returned the question with his answers. Those relating to the 25c/10c variety were:

Luff's question No. 12. I have seen three copies of the 10c dark blue surcharged '25c' in black, like setting B. They seem to be genuine. Do you know them?

Snow's answer. Yes.

Luff's question No. 13. Were they printed in error?

Snow's answer. Was trying the ink.

Luff's question No. 14. Were they a trial printing?

Snow's answer. Was trying the ink.

Luff's question No. 15. Can you say if any were ever used in the air mail service?

Snow's answer. I suppose they were. They went in with the rest.

According to the record, Snow now reverses his opinion that the 25c/10c variety is not genuine, as expressed in his letter of April 18, 1927, wherein Morgan informed Ustariz that Snow could not remember any such stamp. Now what changed Snow's memory? At any rate, we now have Snow's latest version as compared with Pounds' contention that the 25c/10c "was one of those odd stamps that got in with the one cent ones which were raised to 25 cents in the first printing."

Mr. Luff now awaited a reply from Membreno in answer to his letter of July 25, when he had returned the pair of 25c/10c stamps. However, as no word arrived, Mr. Luff wrote him on November 7, 1927:

"I think there were one or two things in my recent letters that you have not answered. And how about the 10c dark blue, surcharged 25? You wrote me that you knew a collector who had a copy and that you thought you could purchase it for me. I shall be glad to hear something further about it."

On November 24, 1927, Membreno acknowledged Mr. Luff's letter of November 7 but made no reference to the specific questions relating to the 25c/10c.

On November 30, 1927, Membreno wrote again to Mr. Luff, the following part being the most important:

"Due to an accident, I practically lost all of my stamps, some days ago. I'll have to start again or quit."

On December 2, 1927, Membreno, in a postscript to his letter to Mr. Luff wrote:

"My two 25c/10c blue airmails were lost."

So finally, after a lapse of five months, Membreno acknowledges receipt of the air

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mail pair by breaking the disheartening news that it is lost. No mention whatever, is made of the other single copy that was, supposedly, in a friend's collection, and which Membreño had promised to try to secure.

On December 19, 1927, Mr. Luff replied to Membreño:

"I am in receipt of your letter of Nov. 30, in which I find one very unpleasant paragraph, 'Due to an accident, I practically lost all my stamps, some days ago. I will have to start again or quit.'

"I regret very much to hear this bad news. You do not say if the stamps were stolen, burned or whatever happened and whether there's a possibility of your recovering them. I certainly hope you have not lost them all without any chance of recovery."

On December 30, 1927, Mr. Luff wrote to Membreño, acknowledging his letter of December 2:

"I regret that you have lost so many fine things from your collection and hope that you can get many choice items to help make a new collection."

By "fine things" Luff probably had in mind that pair of 25c/10c, black surcharge, that he had returned to Membreño a few months previous after failing to effect its purchase.

The next reference to a 25c/10c variety that this writer encountered is in a letter dated April 30, 1930, from Mr. Luff to Sr. Ustariz, expressing thanks to the latter for his note of the 16th. Unfortunately I have no copy of this letter of the 16th. But that of April 30, reads:

"... Returning to stamps of the first air mail issue, you wrote me several months ago that you wanted to dispose of your holdings of these stamps. I gave your letter to our manager, Mr. H. M. Clark, who tells me he wrote you saying he would be interested in the lot and asking you to let him see or know what you had for sale and your prices for it. He has not, however, had any answer from you. Did you receive his letter and did you reply to it? There seems to be a good deal of interest in air mail stamps just at present and it is probable that if you care to sell your lot, we would like to buy it.

"Referring to the pair of 25c in black on the 10c dark blue, I remember having seen them but don't recall the name of the owner. In fact, had anyone else asked me the question, I would have said they belonged to yourself. I have a great many memoranda from various places about the first issue of the air mails, made at various times when I was studying them, and these 25c on 10c may be noted somewhere. It is difficult to know where to look for it. I will try to do so when I get a little time. Just at present, I am badly rushed with work on the Journal and the next edition of my Catalogue. I am not certain that I could be quite sure about those two stamps if I had them again. There were so many settings of the surcharge 'Aero Correo' and still more of the addition of the figures '25' and two square blocks that were supposed to fall over the original value, that it requires a lot of work to locate them. I think I have in my reference collection either nine or ten settings of the '25', most of them completely restored but a few only in part. All of these things were made by Mr. Snow. One setting on the original order and others on subsequent orders from Dr. Pounds, were made after the air mail service had been discontinued. Our feeling is that the latter lot may only be termed 'official imitations', as they were never used for postage and there was no air mail service by which they could be used.

"I had the pleasure of meeting your friend, Mr. Morgan, the air pilot, here in New York and would like to have seen more of him because he gave me some very useful information. I persuaded the Scott Stamp & Coin Co. to buy a nice lot of

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the air mail stamps from him, on which they made a reasonable but satisfactory profit. Since we have sold out, collectors have been very much interested in those stamps and have kept pushing up the prices. I wish Mr. Morgan had them back for, to-day, we could pay him more than we did and also make more for ourselves, so both parties would be benefited "

Commenting on the above, I would imagine that Mr. Luff was surprised that Sr. Ustariz should mention the pair of 25c/10c. How did he come to know of it? Perhaps this could be a clue to Membreño's missing pair. Caution was necessary lest Ustariz's suspicion be aroused. Mr. Luff was anxious to see this lot of stamps because possibly it contained the valuable pair of 25c/10c or perhaps some of the other rarer varieties purchased by Scott in the Morgan parcel. Mr. Luff presses Ustariz for a sale, hoping to duplicate, to a degree, the "reasonable but satisfactory profit" realized from the purchase of Morgan's stamps. Luff's appraisal of this profit is, to my mind, one of the philatelic understatements of this Century.

Another Discovery

A new development came with a letter dated June 3, 1930, addressed to Mr. Luff from H. A. Robinette, at that time a well known stamp dealer in Washington, D. C., reading:

" . . . I am enclosing herewith a Honduras air mail surcharged '25 on 10' blue. This came to me with a small collection of these stamps which are undoubtedly genuine and the original owner claims to have bought them all, right at the post-office in Honduras. I have compared the surcharges with No. 409 [C10] which is the only one identical thereto and it measures exactly. I would appreciate it very

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much if you could give me any information as to this particular stamp, as I am of the opinion that it is absolutely genuine."

Now another C12 has appeared and this one reputedly purchased at a post-office!

On June 9, 1930 Mr. Luff replied to Mr. Robinette:

"Your letter of the 3rd reached me on Thursday last, the 5th. I didn't have time at the office to go carefully into the matter of the Honduras air mail stamp, 25c on 10c dark blue, so I took it home, together with my reference material, to give it careful examination.

"Some years ago I paid a lot of attention to these first issue air mail stamps of Honduras and I used up a lot of time, eyesight, and money, in looking them up. I was trying to build up settings by means of pairs and blocks and found it difficult. I finally completed it and then, of course, had the opportunity to buy most of the things in unbroken sheets of twelve, which I promptly did. In all my searching, I only saw one pair of the 25c on 10c dark blue and that was shown me as being a trial printing and not as an issued stamp. I may add that when these stamps made their appearance, a correspondent in Honduras sent me a set of single copies together with an official statement as to the various stamps issued and the quantities of them. Another correspondent sent me a set of blocks of four which he stated was complete. Neither man showed me or made mention of the 25c on 10c. I have had an active correspondence with both of them ever since that time and with the first man did a great deal of studying of the issue and the settings. So far as I can recall, neither of them ever mentioned the 25c on 10c, so I infer it was not known to them.

"There were two original settings of the 25c and no less than five settings

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among the official imitations. In explanation, I would say that after the airplane crashed, and the service had come to an end, collectors were asking for these stamps, and a year or more later, the manager of the post, wishing to have something to sell, ordered new printings of the various surcharges, but all these were from quite new settings of nine instead of twelve. Most people call them reprints or even counterfeits, but they certainly were never placed in issue. I have compared your stamp with the various settings in my reference collection and I cannot locate it in any of them, so I can conclude that it belongs to the so-called trial printing and was never placed in issue.

"Now, having condemned your stamp to this extent, I will say that if at any time you decide to sell it as a trial printing or essay, I shall be pleased to have you quote me your price for it, as I would be interested in it for my reference collection. You may think this action is not entirely ethical and, of course, you are not compelled to accept my conclusion or sell it based on that idea. Please find your stamp enclosed."

The above letter indicates to me that Mr. Luff agreed that the Robinette single had a genuine surcharge. Therefore, I believe that it belongs in the same exclusive category as the Ustariz single and the Membreño pair. It appears that Robinette did not contact Mr. Luff again on the matter, at least I have no records.

Although I do not possess nor have seen correspondence to prove it, I am certain that upon reading Mr. Luff's letter, Mr. Robinette logically contacted another leading air mail stamp dealer, the late Mr. Nicolas Sanabria, and eventually sold him the stamp. Mr. Sanabria held the stamp for a while because he believed that Mr. Luff owned a similar copy and might decide to give the variety catalogue recognition. As Mr. Luff made no move in that direction, despite some likely prodding by Mr. Sanabria, the latter finally, in the early 30's, sold the stamp to Mr. F. W. Kessler, another well-known New York air mail dealer, who at that time was scouring the air mail stamp market for rarities in behalf of his client, Dr. Cole. This Robinette single was sold to Dr. Cole. It was shown in his grand-award exhibit at the 1936 TIPEX in New York.

Returning to Sr. Ustariz, he had received Luff's communication of April 30, 1930, evidencing a strong interest to purchase his stamps. Ustariz had learned that his friend, Dr. Paz Baraona, ex-President of Honduras, contemplated a trip to Europe via New York, and arranged for him to deliver the stamps in person to the Scott Company to possibly effect a sale. Accordingly, on August 4, 1930, Dr. Paz Baraona called upon the Scott Company, accompanied by Messrs. Altschuler, and Zepati, and negotiated a deal for the Ustariz stamps, selling them for \$1900.00. The lot comprised:

- 1—25c/20c blue surcharge
- 1—25c/1c black surcharge
- 1—20c aero correo black overprint
- 61—5 and 10 centavos values
- 1—block of 6 of 20c tete-beche
- 5—25c/1c chocolate
- 1—block of 12 of 20c aero correo black. One of this block of 12 the AFRO variety.
- 1—AFRO variety of 20c aero correo black overprint.
- 30—10c aero correo

Also included was one white envelope, greenish inside. Stuck to the front, top left hand corner, was a 25c/20c, blue surcharge stamp (C13), so affixed that the surcharge read upward. Next to this, to the right was a 20c black aero correo (C6), affixed so that the surcharge read down; and next to the C6 was a 25c/1c, (C10) so attached that the surcharge read up. At the left-bottom of the envelope face was a genuine Pounds cachet

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Fig. 3. The cover given to Sr. Ustariz by Mr. Pounds. The arrow points to the copy of the very rare Black Honduras (Sanabria No. 14, Scott C12). Courtesy of The Philatelic Foundation.

and at the right-bottom was a circular cancellation of Puerto Cortes, dated May 8, 1925. All the stamps were uncanceled and the envelope bore no address of sender or recipient.

The Stamp Is Questioned

Out of the clear, on September 24, 1938, the discovery of a cover (Fig. 3) bearing a 25c on 10c, black surcharge, was announced on a radio broadcast from New York, Station WEAF and the NBC—Red Network, under the auspices of the National Federation of Stamp Clubs. In the October 8, 1938 issue of "Stamps" newspaper an article written by Prescott Holden Thorp was titled, "The World's Rarest Air Mail Stamp", illustrating a cover captioned "Recently Discovered Cover Bearing Neatly Tied-on 'Black' Honduras Stamp (Scott No. 410c)." This article is quoted:

"Ask any well informed collector to name the world's rarest and most valuable air mail stamp and the chances are he would answer 'the 'red' Honduras'—meaning the five centavo light blue of 1925 surcharged in red 'Aero Correo' (Cat. No. 402d).

"But he would be wrong.

"The rarest air mail stamp, indeed, one of the top ranking stamps of all time, is not the 'red' but the 'black' Honduras, the 25c on 10c dark blue stamp of the first issue surcharged in black (Cat. Scott No. 410c), Airmail Cat. No. 15.

"There are eight copies known to exist of the red surcharged stamp, all unused. Because they were known to have been purchased at the Post Office the STANDARD CATALOGUE OF AIR POST STAMPS, when published by the Scott Stamp & Coin Co., carried a statement by the late John N. Luff which read:

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"In the first group of surcharges, there were two trial printings; the 5c light blue surcharge in red, and the 10c dull blue surcharged '25' in black. Of the former at least one sheet was sent to a post office and sold there. The latter is not known to have been put in use."

"In accordance with this thought the Air Post catalog while published by the Scott Company listed the red surcharge (No. 402d) but did not list the black "25" surcharge on the 10c dark blue stamp.

"Now there comes to light a cover, flown from Tegucigalpa to Puerto Cortez in May, 1925, and among the several stamps used to pay the necessary postage, neatly tied on, is one of the black "25" on 10c blue stamps!

"When shown to the Scott Company the last doubt which existed was removed and the so-called "trial printing" was given its rightful place in the catalog being assigned number 410c in the current edition of the Standard Postage Stamp Catalog. (This is a major listing, the prefixed letter was used so as not to disturb the existing numbers previously assigned to Honduras air post stamps).

"And how many of these "black" (the stamp is destined to be known by this sobriquet), Honduras air post stamps are known to exist?

"Exactly two!

"One, an unused copy which reposes in the collection that won a Grand Award at the TIPEX in 1936.

"The other, a used copy tied on cover which has recently been discovered. In the writer's opinion the copy on cover is the most important and desirable philatelic piece ever discovered. Until its existence became known experts would always have held divided opinion on the subject of "trial printings" of this issue. The cover is indisputable evidence that this stamp was issued, and, what is more, was actually used in the service for which it was issued.

Ponder what would happen if a 1c British Guiana were to be discovered tied on cover and you will begin to appreciate the reason why the announcement of the "black" Honduras cover has electrified the air mail collector's world.

"A new and brilliant star has been added to the diadem so proudly displayed by Air Mail Philately."

(Editor's Note: The announcement of the discovery of this copy of the "Black" Honduras was first made on the broadcast of the National Federation of Stamp Clubs over Station WEAJ and the NBC-Red Network, on Saturday, September 24, 1938.)

The Scott Stamp & Coin Company, shortly after the publication of the above article in "Stamps", received a letter dated November 5, 1938, from Sr. Ustariz, then in Hammond, Louisiana:

"On my return from Paris, having arrived in your city on the 'Normandie', September 26, I reached New Orleans on the 30th of the same month. During my stay here I met a friend of mine living there and who is a collector and he handed me the magazine of philately, "Stamps" issued on October 8, 1938, that has interested me very much. Please take note of the contents of the enclosed copy of your original letter dated April 30, 1930, signed by the late John N. Luff and let me know, if you please, what you have to say about the 'World's Rarest Air Mail Stamp' mailed from Tegucigalpa, to whom . . . in Puerto Cortez?"

On November 14, 1938, Mr. Hugh M. Clark, for the Scott Publications, Inc., wrote Sr. Ustariz:

"Your letter of Nov. 5th has been received. I had not read the article by Mr. Thorp in the Oct. 8th issue of "Stamps Magazine" but have done so since your letter arrived.

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I take it you question the status of this 25 cent on 10c Honduras air mail that has been listed by me as No. 410c in the Catalogue and it would appear from Mr. Luff's letter to you dated April 30, 1930, that he also questioned it. When these were submitted to me recently I felt their regularity had been satisfactorily proven, but would be glad to be corrected if you feel I have made an error in listing . . . "

On November 20, 1938, Sr. Ustariz wrote Thorp, care of "Stamps Magazine," New York:

"Referring to your article published in "Stamps" magazine of October 8, 1938, relating to airmail stamp—the rarest in the world—I am sorry to inform you but it is all a 'fake', as I have the necessary proofs to confirm what I say."

On November 23, 1938, Thorp replied to Sr. Ustariz but I have no copy of this letter. However, Ustariz answered Thorp on November 29, 1938, from New Orleans:

"Your letter of Nov. 23rd just reached me here this morning.

"I expect to be in your city about the 10th of next month and will give you all the information about that famous cover. In the meantime please take note of the copy of original letter that I received from Mr. Hugh M. Clark of the Scott Publications Inc. The original cover belonged to me as well as the 25cts. on 10 cts. blue, but it is not in the way I sold it, as far as all the stamps on it, some were added to it later and they made a 'mess' of it."

On December 3, 1938, Thorp wrote to Sr. Ustariz making an appointment to meet him in New York. Sr. Ustariz describes the meeting in an article he wrote for the November 1941-January 1942 "Revista Filatelica Centroamericana" published in Guatemala, as follows:

"We met in New York early in the month of December, some three weeks later. An appointment was arranged and a meeting held between Mr. Thorp, Mr. Emil Breuchig and myself at Breuchig's office, Room 610, 522 Fifth Avenue. I explained to these gentlemen the erroneous remarks in the 'Stamps' article with respect to the stamp, and that it lacked value philatelically according to Mr. Luff's letter of April 30, 1930. Mr. Thorp then arranged an appointment with Mr. Clark at his office, 1 West 47th Street, and here I repeated what I had stated in Breuchig's presence, pleading with Mr. Clark in the hope that my remarks would induce him to correct the mistake."

Despite Ustariz's pleading, it appears that neither Clark nor Breuchig took any action, and so the matter rested.

On October 27, 1939, the collection of Dr. P. G. Cole was sold at auction by Fred W. Kessler. Quoting from a resumé of the sale, as reported in the stamp papers, it read:

"One of the two known mint copies of the Honduras 25 centavos on 10 cent dark blue air mail stamp of 1925 was sold for \$5,300 to the Economist Stamp Company at the concluding sale of the famous airmail collection of Dr. Philip G. Cole of Tarrytown, N. Y. . . . at the Collectors Club of New York . . . The air stamps of Honduras proved the stellar attractions in the competitive bidding by collectors and dealers . . . "

"The American Magazine" of July, 1941, contained a story by Emil Breuchig, "A FORTUNE IN THE MAIL" which stated:

"One of the most precious stamps in the world to-day is the 'Black Honduras', an airmail printed in 1925 and currently quoted at \$15,000.00."

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On June 26, 1941, Sr. Ustariz, now at Puerto Cortes, wrote Mr. Clark of Scott Publications, Inc.:

"I have just read in 'the American Magazine' for the month of July, the very interesting article, 'A Fortune In The Mails' by Mr. Emil Breuchig. You know the proverb, 'He who laughs last, laughs best.' From the time of my return here, I have been busy gathering material, proofs, etc. . . . ' for the booklet that I am going to have printed in Guatemala City, telling the whole truth about the famous AIRMAIL issue of Honduras 1925. Those 9,000,000 collectors will surely get the surprise of their lives, as well as the other millions of Latin Americans, when they know how they have been duped. I am enclosing you 2 photos of Mr. Luff's letter that he wrote me April 30, 1930 You shall very likely take your vacations sometime this coming month. I think it would be very convenient for you to take a little trip to Guatemala City, if you have not done so before I intend to take residence over there next month and will send you my address."

On July 10, 1941, Sr. Ustariz wrote to Mr. Clark in Spanish, which I translate as:

"I confirm my letter from Puerto Cortes of June 26th last. I do not care to go into details on the subject of the stamp to which I made reference. As I stated in my previous letter, I have all the proof necessary on the subject to show the entire transactions and that those connected therewith did not act in good faith. For this reason, I kept Mr. Luff's letter. Based on the quotation in your catalogue, I expect that to be, for the time being, the value to place on the stamp, namely \$15,000.00. This stamp is, moreover, my property, and is valueless, as you well know, without my opinion as to its genuineness, and with that not withheld to increase its value from day to day, I, for this reason would be agreeable to make a settlement as follows: That the one now in possession of this stamp pay me \$7,500.00 by the 31st of this month to terminate this matter to my satisfaction, otherwise I shall be obliged to resort to the means indicated in my letter of June 26, 1941."

With no reply forthcoming from Clark to the above letter, Sr. Ustariz authored an article for the "Revista Filatelica Centroamericana", the official magazine of the Guatemala Philatelic Society, in the issues of August-October 1941 and November 1941-January 1942. This story, titled, "THE TRUTH CONCERNING THE 1925 AIR MAILS OF HONDURAS" is written in Spanish and is so lengthy that only his important comments relevant to the 25c on 10c, (C12) will be given here. Ustariz concluded that inasmuch as Mr. Luff never catalogued the 25c on 10c variety during his lifetime, it is not a genuinely issued stamp; that the cover illustrated in "Stamps" magazine of October 8, 1938, is a fraud and should not be the basis of proof for Clark's acceptance of C12 as an issued variety. To confirm his opinion regarding the illegitimacy of the cover he stated:

1. It shows no address of sender or recipient.
2. There is no cancellation indicating from whence it was sent.
3. The regular postage stamps are of an issue that was invalidated in 1924, the year prior to that of the air service.

The entire account is a scathing denunciation of the Scott Company and Mr. Clark, demanding that the listing of the 25c on 10c variety be withdrawn from the catalogue.

The Aftermath

Despite the accusations and denouements of Sr. Ustariz, the 25c on 10c dark blue, black surcharge variety continues to be listed by both the Scott and Sanabria catalogues.

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Here is its history in both catalogues. My thanks to Henry M. Goodkind who compiled this data from The Collectors Club Library.

Edition	Scott	Value	Sanabria	No. Issued	Value*
1954	C12	none given	14	2	\$15,000.00
1953	C12	none given	14	2**	\$15,000.00
1952	C12	none given			
1951	C12	none given			
1950	C12	none given	14	2	\$15,000.00
1949	C12	none given			
1948	C12	none given	15	2	\$15,000.00
1947	C12	none given			
1946	C12	none given	15	2	\$15,000.00
1945	C12	none given	15	2	\$15,000.00
1944	C12	\$10,000.00	15	2	\$15,000.00
1943	C12	<i>\$10,000.00</i>	15	2	\$15,000.00
1942	C12	<i>\$10,000.00</i>	15	2	\$15,000.00
1941	C12	<i>\$10,000.00</i>	15	2	\$15,000.00
1940	C12	none given	15	2	\$15,000.00
1939	410c	none given	15 (410c)	12	none given
1938	410c	none given	15	12	\$ 6,500.00 M&U
1937	Not listed		15	12	\$ 4,000.00 M&U
1936	Not listed		14	12	\$ 4,000.00

Scott's first listing in their regular 1938 edition is proof that Mr. Clark decided to legitimize the variety in the spring of 1937, when that edition was being made up. Mr. Luff, though inactive, was yet living and doubtless aware of Clark's decision. Mr. Nicolas Sanabria acquired the rights to "the Scott Air Mail Catalogue" sometime around 1935 and promptly listed the variety in his first (1936) edition. Foreign catalogues as Gibbons, Yvert, Champion, Silombra, and Michel have never listed this stamp.

Recent Information

And so this chronicle reaches January 1953, when Mr. Goodkind and this writer, by coincidence, began to inquire into the status of this mysterious "Black" Honduras rarity.

During mid-January 1953 I wrote Mr. Hugh M. Clark for information about C12 and received his reply by a letter of January 30:

"Now as to that Honduras C12 . . . I well remember that Luff could not satisfy himself that the thing was kosher but I do not remember the details as to why. After Luff's death Sanabria and Breuchig yammered at me so much and so long and with so many letters and statements that I must have felt convinced that it was worthy of listing, but for the life of me I cannot recall the details. I know that I never liked the thing nor did I feel at all happy about it . . . I was under the impression that there was only one copy known, but evidently I am wrong."

Searching for further information, I wrote Mr. F. W. Kessler on January 27 and received this reply, dated February 3, 1953:

" . . . Regarding the Honduras C12. I understand that there are two copies in existence. One of them was owned by Dr. Cole and when I sold his collection it

* Prices are mint unless marked M & U, mint and used.

** Indicates italicized in the catalogs.

HONDURAS

was purchased by Economist Stamp Company for Mr. Oscar Lichtenstein, who is still the owner of this stamp. Regarding the other copy, I am now quoting from very vague recollections. The late Emil Breuchig had this stamp at one time, and if my memory serves me correctly, it was a used copy on a postcard or envelope. He showed it at that time to the late Mr. Sanabria as well as myself. I understood that Mr. Breuchig had sold this stamp. . . . I remember that Mr. Breuchig talked to Mr. Clark, then president of the Scott Stamp Company, about this stamp and it was included in the catalog."

" . . . Regarding the copies of Honduras C3 and C12, both of these were purchased from Nicolas Sanabria and sold to Dr. Cole."

From the above two letters from Mr. Kessler, we have proof that Mr. Sanabria had sold him a C12 which undoubtedly was the Robinette copy.

In response to several letters, Mr. Prescott Holden Thorp replied to me on February 9, 1953:

" . . . I would advise that both the 'red' and 'black' Honduras came originally from the Scott Company. The "black" came from the Luff collection . . . Some years later, after I had left the Scott Co., Mr. Breuchig acquired the "black" Honduras from the Luff collection and at that time I wrote the article in *Stamps* which you have reference to. I do not know who purchased the stamp (it was on the cover shown in the article), so cannot help you on this score."

Still searching, I wrote to Mr. John W. Nicklin, formerly with the Scott Company and a past editor of the Sanabria catalogue. He replied on February 7, 1953:

"The variety referred to C12 was not included in the original lot I purchased from Morgan. That in itself should not be taken as a reflection on its status.

In the post-Luff era there was a copy of the stamp, on cover, in the Scott reference collection for a time. I do not believe that this was the 'Ex-Cole' copy. It would be interesting to determine what state the copy now is in."

So the C12 was "on cover" in the Luff reference collection! This indicated that someone may have bought it in that condition. Nicklin's remarks aroused my curiosity. When I wrote him again, he replied on February 26, 1953:

"The story is just this: The stamp on the cover, was sold; it was later cleaned and regummed and sold as mint".

To my mind, this would indicate that someone had removed the C12 from the cover, cleaned and regummed it, so that it could be sold to one who collected only mint stamps.

And now back to Sr. Ustariz. Early in January 1953 I wrote him, hoping, with my fingers crossed, that he was still alive. It was a pleasant surprise to receive his letter from Puerto Cortes, dated February 8, 1953 written in Spanish:

"I cannot go into detail at this time in reply to the questions in your letter as I am, at the moment, sick with a cold.

"I send you, however, two photostats referring to the C12 stamp. Indeed I have in my possession all proof necessary to judge the integrity of the Scott Stamp Company.

P. S. Look at "Stamps" magazine, issue of Oct. 8, 1938."

The photostats were of the Luff letter of April 30, 1930.

Promptly I replied to Sr. Ustariz, plied him with many questions and in answer received a letter dated March 3, 1953:

HONDURAS



Fig. 4. A photograph of Mr. Oscar R. Lichtenstein's stamp done scientifically to study the setting of the surcharge. Courtesy of The Philatelic Foundation.

"... The paragraph that refers to the *one copy* of C-12 I sent to Mr. Luff in my letter of March 5, 1927; he did *not return it*, and he did not *pay for it*. He said the stamp was a 'tentative issue' and that it had no value. At the time I took his word for what he said about the stamp. I am sure the attached copy of article refers to the sale of the above mentioned stamp which was mine, which Mr. Luff never returned and kept without any right. How is it that in Scott's Stamp catalog for 1951 the above referred stamp is catalogued, but not *priced*? This in spite of the fact that the stamp had been sold for \$5,300 in October 28, 1939.

"I am grateful for your information... I would like to extend myself on the subject, but I am quite busy and getting ready for a trip to Europe."

Sr. Ustariz enclosed a copy of the report on the Kessler auction of Dr. Cole's collection. His assumption that the C12 sold at that auction was originally his, is incorrect, it being the Robinette copy. The Ustariz single had gone from Luff to the late Mr. Breuchig, who is alleged to have sold it, but its present ownership is unknown.

Under date of April 20, 1953, I received this word from Ustariz:

"I wish to inform you that I expect to be in New York at the end of this month. And soon as I shall land, I will advise you."

Then came a letter dated April 29, 1953, written to me by Mr. Pedro Parades, a nephew of Ustariz, studying in New York, advising that Mr. Ustariz had just arrived in that city, was registered at the Hotel Croydon and that he would be pleased to have a personal interview with me in regard to the matters about which we had corresponded.

Without delay, I contacted Ustariz by phone, making an appointment for the morning of May 5th. We met as arranged, and for the entire day pleasantly discussed Honduras C12 and many other matters of mutual interest. I found Sr. Ustariz interesting, intelligent, and co-operative. He is a man of some seventy years of age, of slight stature, well tanned and healthy-looking. He is well connected in Central America being on intimate terms with many influential persons there, including some of the presidents, and other high government officials.

The Explanation

The sum and substance of my conference with Ustariz are important. He confirmed that he had met Pounds in Tegucigalpa during March 1926 while on a visit there as a guest of President Paz Baraona. Pounds had a parcel addressed to his wife residing in Brooklyn, New York, which he entrusted to Ustariz to mail when he returned to

HONDURAS

Puerto Cortes. In appreciation of this, and for his hospitality during the air service, Pounds gave Ustariz a souvenir gift of four airmail stamps and one envelope. The four stamps are those enumerated as such in Ustariz's letter of March 5, 1927, to Mr. Luff, and included the 25c on 10c variety. The envelope was of white paper, greenish inside and upon its face, in the top left-hand corner, were affixed two air mail stamps. The one to the left was a 25c on 20c variety (C13), attached so that its surcharge reads upward. Next to, and to the right of this C13 stamp was a 20c black "aero correo" (C6), so placed that its surcharge read downward. A genuine Pounds cachet was impressed at the left bottom of the face. This was the condition of the cover when Ustariz had received it from Pounds.

When Ustariz returned to Puerto Cortes he added to the envelope a 25c on 1c (C10) stamp, placing it next to and to the right of the already-attached C6, so that its surcharge read upward. He then persuaded the Postmaster at Puerto Cortes to apply a circular cancellation, dated May 8, 1925.* This envelope, with the three uncanceled stamps, the Pounds cachet, and the Puerto Cortes, May 8, 1925, circular cancel was retained by Ustariz until it was included in the lot of stamps that he sold to the Scott Company through Paz Baraona, on August 4, 1930. (See Fig. 3)

Upon reading the article in "Stamps", issue of October 8, 1938, Ustariz immediately recognized his original envelope, though it had been considerably altered. He assumed, and correctly so, that the C12 which it now sported was the copy he had sent to Luff in 1927. His action from that time on is a matter of record.

Top of sheet

				35					

Fig. 5. Chart showing how the complete sheet of 100 (10 x 10) of the basic stamps were broken up for the "Aero Correo" surcharges.

Conclusion

Having presented and commented upon the documentary phase of this study, now its

* Ustariz claims this to be the first day that mail was flown from Puerto Cortes.

CHILE

technical aspects will be discussed. The known stamps, will be called (four in all.) a.) the Ustariz single, b.) the Membreño pair, and c.) the Robinette single.

It is my studied opinion that the copy on cover, illustrated and discussed in "Stamps" of October 8, 1938, is the Ustariz single. I concur with Mr. Luff that the surcharge of this stamp is position No. 2 in the setting. Because of the indistinct photograph, I was unable to plate the basic stamp.

The Philatelic Foundation kindly gave me a copy of the Membreño pair photo as it appears in the Luff collection for my study. I agree with Mr. Luff, as he noted, that this horizontal pair bears surcharge positions No. 3 and No. 4. In this instance, too, I was unable to plate the basic stamps due to the faded condition of the photograph. (See Fig. 2.)

Through the courtesy of the owner, Mr. Oscar R. Lichtenstein, and *The Philatelic Foundation*, I was presented with an enlarged clear photograph of the stamp (Fig. 4) I believe was the Robinette single. I determined the surcharge to be position No. 1 and plated the basic stamp as position No. 35 in the original basic sheet of 100 subjects that were arranged 10 x 10.

A careful examination of the surcharge alignment of the above mentioned four stamps convinces me that they are numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4 from the same horizontal strip. By applying Pounds' usual manner of breaking up the original basic sheets of 100 before overprinting (Fig. 5), I find that basic position No. 35 always appears in a block of 12 area. As Pounds and Snow never broke down these blocks of 12 into smaller components prior to receiving the surcharge, I feel satisfied that the aforementioned strip of four was the top line of such a block of 12 (4 x 3), and that a total of twelve stamps, at least, was made of this C12 variety.

It seems immaterial whether the overprinting took place prior to or during the C10 surcharging, the important considerations being; 1): that at least one block of 12 received the overprint; 2): that Pounds retained no less than three of the stamps, positions No. 2, No. 3, and No. 4 of the setting; and 3): that the remaining stamps "went in with the rest" to the post offices, as stated by Snow.

Therefore it is my conclusion that the 25c on 10c dark blue, black surcharge variety of the 1925 airmail issue of Honduras is a genuinely issued stamp and as such is entitled to a catalogue listing as a major number. Who knows, but somewhere, unheralded and possibly unrecognized, reposes a cover which saw actual air mail service in one of the historic 1925 flights, and is graced with a not-so-black "Black Honduras" (C12).

CHILE

Air Mail Issue of the Year 1927

By ALVARO BONILLA LARA

(From *La Revista de La Sociedad Argentina Filatelica*, Nov.-Dec. 1953, No. 393. Reprinted by permission of the author. English Translation by Richard N. Cone.)

"The only forgery type that exists of the first air series (Testart)* is that made on the stamps called "Pro-Raza," origin as follows: Jointly with the stamps intended to commemorate the centenary of the battle of Maipu (April 5, 1918), there must have arrived at the Treasury Department an original die of this stamp, one which has disappeared, for it is not in their collection of dies.

The stamps, which were not issued, were approved in 1927 for the first air mail; but

* Sanabria Nos. 1-5, Scott C1-5.

previously, in 1925. The original die, now vanished, was used to make a propaganda label, without value, in which several of the original legends were altered: "CORREOS" (replaced) by "21 de MAYO," the value, "10 CTS," by the date "1925," and "CEN-TENARIO DE MAIPO (sic)" by "PRO-RAZA." The dates 1818 and 1918 were erased. The original of these corrections is found in one of the matrices in the Treasury Department.

By taking advantage of the similarity of the center and of the colors, someone forged the Testart stamps on the PRO-RAZA stamps, with the result that by reason of the above details no one can be said to be deceived. Nevertheless, these fakes have circulated outside of Chile. The author acquired a supposed 40c Testart, unused, at a well known New York auction house, an example which was returned in a hurry."

Thanks to Mr. Robert J. Lyon of Nicolas Sanabria Co., Inc. for calling the original Spanish article to our attention.

THE AIRMAIL BAG

(Under this heading a regular feature will be run with correspondence from Members. Names in full will be used unless a contrary request is specified when a correspondent will be identified by initials only. Nothing unsigned will be used.)

I was specially impressed by your Brazil article in "The Annals" on those mysterious holes in the Varig sheets. Frankly I can't feel that the explanation they were put there to make the gummed sheets of stamps lie flat during overprinting holds water. Now and then a printer does punch a hole in a sheet for that reason, but it's because air is imprisoned under the sheet and will make trouble if it doesn't have an escape. But the perforations of a sheet of stamps would give trapped air plenty of vents.

Overprinting stamps can be a mighty exasperating job. I can say that from the heart, for I've precancelled stamps in printing offices where I worked. But holes in a sheet of paper won't help any. I know, for I've tried it.

I know you don't accept the theory yourself, but just thought I'd add a bit on my own as one who has done some printing.

No, I have no theory on the whole business. Personally the idea that the holes were punched to eliminate errors sounds more tenable to me than any other. But I certainly hope your article brings out some definite facts.

Wm. W. Wylie, Editor
Western Stamp Collector

I have just received the April "Annals", and would like to write more fully on very many points, but am again tied up by illness. I am thus dictating this from the bedroom. I shall be very rushed when I return, so perhaps you will let me know if you would like me to develop any of these themes later.

p. 113: I supplied most of the Australian covers to the late Dr. Cole. I also had various press references and also dropped propaganda leaflets re these publicity flights. In addition to local flights, the "Pals" aircraft also made a stunt flight over the deserts of S. Australia, and, I think also a flight across the continent. I have never seen complete mint sheets of any of these stamps.

The "Herald" stamps pictured on page 114 exist in two different printings: in brown and in blue, and both are known on covers but it is many years since I have seen any. I repeat that I can probably find dates, etc., of covers in my records.

Francis J. Field,
Sutton Coldfield, England

CATALOG AND BOOK REVIEWS

Sanabria Air Post Catalogue, 1954-55 Edition

The 1954-55 edition of the Sanabria Catalogue has appeared in May, 1954. Its price is \$6.00 and the publishers are Nicolas Sanabria & Co., Inc., of 521 Fifth Avenue, New York 17, N. Y.

REVIEWS

The catalogue consists of 540 pages, 44 more than the last edition. It lists and prices air mail stamps, semi-officials, proofs and essays, de luxe presentation sheets, as well as specimens. Air mail postal stationery and aerograms are also listed and priced. Among the other listings are the air rate stamps of Great Britain, its Colonies, and its Commonwealth of Nations.

In comparing this work with other air mail catalogues, its outstanding excellence and superiority becomes apparent. While there are still some revisions and corrections to be made, they are becoming less and less apparent each year. The publishers welcome constructive criticism to achieve this goal of near-perfection.

The general price trend is decidedly upwards. Many more sets have been priced on cover. We list below some of the changes in prices:

The Graf Zeppelin set of the United States goes from \$100. to \$135., mint, and from \$80. to \$95., used. All first day covers from No. 1 to 20, except No. 19, have jumped quite sharply. No. 1 of Adelie Land goes from \$5. to \$10., on cover. No. 21, the 100 Lira of Aegean Islands, goes from \$15 to \$20., on cover. No. 9 to 12 of Alaouites from \$20. to \$150. Angola No. 1 from \$25 to \$35. The first issue of Argentine goes from \$16. to \$22.50, mint, and, from \$25. to \$50., on cover; No. 39 of the same country, from \$15. to \$25., both mint and used. In Australia, No. 501 jumped from \$25., mint, to \$50., and from \$35. to \$75., on cover; No. 502, from \$15. to \$45., mint, and from \$25. to \$55., on cover; No. 503 goes up in the same way. A new listing, No. 504, is priced at \$100., mint, and \$150., on cover. Austria No. 4-6, from \$5. to \$15., on cover. A new listing is 13 varieties of Azerbaijan, issued in 1944, and priced at \$225., mint. Another new listing is the 14a stamp of India, overprinted Kingdom of Bahawalpur, and priced at \$500., mint. Canada No. 2 shows one of the few drops, going from \$4., mint and used, to \$3.00 and \$2.00. On the other hand, No. 22, a 17c with perforated initials, O H M S, jumps from

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REVIEWS

\$5., mint, to \$17.50, mint and used. Canary Island No. 1 to 3, from \$13.50 to \$25.00; No. 86, from \$12.50 to \$35. Chile No. 1 to 5, jump from \$320 to \$500, mint. This trend continues throughout the entire catalogue. The Nicaragua Railroad issues, No. 85 to 89, and No. 90 to 94, are priced for the first time, on cover, at \$400. for each set. While these items are very scarce, it does not seem plausible to price them at this figure, while classics like the De Pinedo of New Foundland, on cover, is priced at \$600. and the Columbia stamp at \$700. Nicaragua No. 95 to 105, the Raza issue is more conservatively priced at \$200. on cover. The Airpost Week commemoratives, No. 130 to 133, are priced at \$100. on cover. These are, by no means, as scarce as the three other sets, and we feel they are priced too high. This last set is the only one priced used. The cataloguers have not priced the other three sets in used condition, as they are extremely rare with genuine cancellations.

In conclusion, we view the catalogue as an essential reference book for all aero-philatelists, and we can also recommend it to general collectors who include air mail stamps in their hobby. The future of our particular specialty is re-assured when we have an excellent catalogue like Sanabria. (Stanley R. Rice).

The Bull's Eye, a mimeographed pamphlet issued by the Friends of Brazilian Philately. Alfred J. Hillel, Editor, 925 West End Ave, New York 25, N. Y.

Vol. I, No. 4 of this specialty paper devoted to the stamps of Brazil will interest those collecting Semi-Official airmails because its feature article is "The Air Post Stamps of the Condor Syndicate". Collectors have been offered practically no background information about these issues. The most authoritative and comprehensive articles about the Condor and Varig Company's stamps come, of course, right from Brazil and obviously written in Portuguese. A most worthy contribution for the English-language aero-philatelist would be for some ambitious person to translate these works into English. Therefore, the great attraction of this article in "The Bull's Eye" is that it is written in English. We believe that if any member wishes to secure a copy of this article, a letter to Mr. Hillel, the editor, will receive a courteous and co-operative reply.

The New York Chapter

The famous philatelic photographer, Adrien Boutrelle, has been a longtime member of our organization. He visited the Chapter No. 1 regular meeting on May 27, 1954 at the Collectors Club, New York, N. Y. and, of course, brought along his camera. The result was this photo. We publish it, although its only connection with air mail stamps, is that every one shown collects them and the contented faces speak well for our specialty. Besides, others may wish to know what some with kindred interests look like, so we hope that no one will find fault with this in a magazine devoted only to stamps.



Seated front row, left to right: A. Scala, B. Fink, H. Seltzer, S. R. Rice, S. Rodvien, J. Kieferle, J. Hoffberg, H. Kraemer and L. Livingston.
Standing, l. to r.: L. Staub, F. Glanz, F. Bender, P. Silver, I. Seebacher, L. Sloan, Dr. Shradly, H. Holman, J. Van de Windt, H. Freymer, R. N. Cone, H. M. Goodkind and J. J. Britt.

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