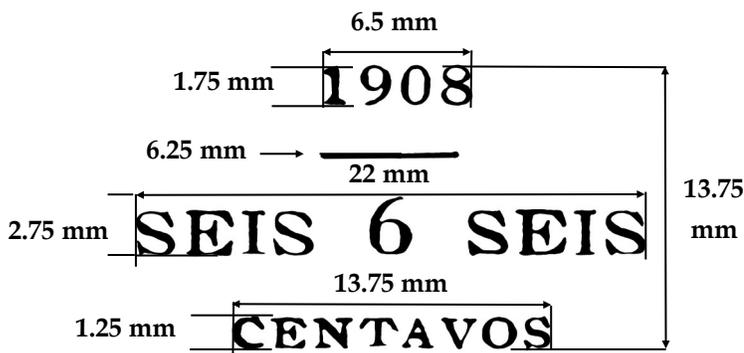
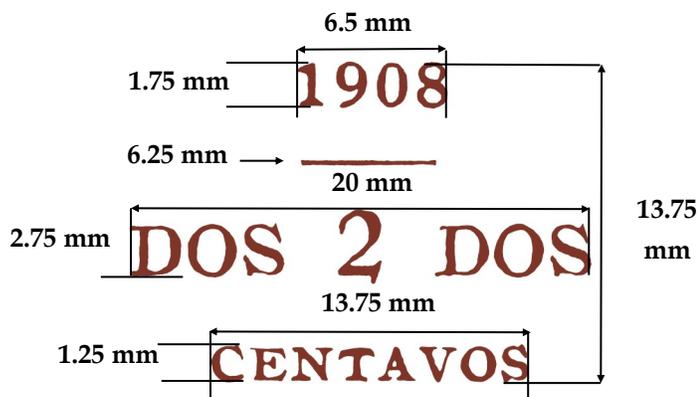
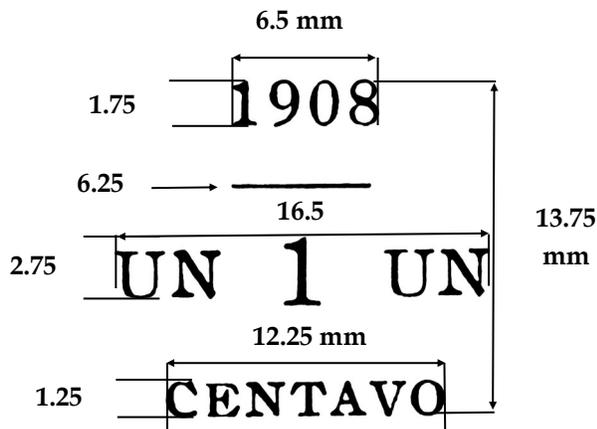


# GUATEMALA FORGERIES AND FAKES 1908 SCOTT 133-5

By David Reitsema ISGC No. 803

The year 1908 heralded a flow of provisionals which appeared every year but five from 1908-24, and were required to meet shortages of much-used denominations. These surcharged stamps were extensively faked, to the detriment of Guatemalan philately. Genuine surcharged stamps with gum are difficult to find and catalogue values are irrelevant. The 1908 issues were all low value surcharges on higher value basic stamps, and thus there was no financial benefit in forging these for postal use; all non-genuine are fakes or bogus.

As with all surcharge overprints, the quickest way to determine if the surcharges are genuine is to measure them. This will eliminate almost all fakes. The second way is to compare the stamp with the listings in *Guatemala 2* ("G2"); any variety not listed there is probably a fake.<sup>1</sup> If any question remains it will be necessary to verify that the stamp corresponds with the particular printing of the basic Waterlow stamp used in the production of the 1908 surcharges.



The measurements of the genuine surcharges are illustrated here. The surcharge images were produced by Eric Dyck using color separation technology, but have been enhanced due to the difficulties inherent in this process, and therefore the individual letters may not be 100% accurate. Kerry Kearton-Gee studied the 6c surcharges and states that the measurements of the third line vary from 2.25-2.5mm rather than the 22mm stated in G2 and illustrated here.<sup>2</sup>

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The 1c and 6c genuine surcharges are clean-cut and are usually a deep, glossy black. The fakes are often in a grayish black with a somewhat blurred impression. Fakes of the surcharges were often printed at an angle.

G2 lists many fakes of these issues, as well as bogus items, and reference to that is a starting point for detailed study of these issues. The list of fakes in G2 is not all-inclusive, as shown by the study of the 6c surcharge by Kerry Kearton-Gee who found 21 different fakes of the 6c on 20c surcharge compared to four listed in G2.<sup>3</sup>

Bogus surcharges include 1c on 1902 1c, 2c on 1902 6c, red 2c on 1911 25c, all 1c on 10c handstamped 'ENSAYOS' across two stamps, and the 1c and 2c 1902 issues with a boxed "PROVVISORIO". Further details are contained in G2.

The John N. Luff collection was formed in the early twentieth century and included highly specialized Guatemala material of that period. The collection included not only full sheets of

most issues, but many of the fakes as well. Luff identified three forgers, Wenck (first name?), Reinoso & Sons, and Joaquin A. Torres, all from Guatemala City, who were responsible for most of the fakes of this issue, and Wenck was said to have arrived in New York in the early 1910's with a suitcase of fake material. The collection indicates that Wenck produced 1c fakes and Reinoso 6c fakes, and contained many examples of these fakers' handiwork.<sup>4</sup>

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## A Practical Example

When viewing these stamps on-line where it is not possible to examine them closely, it pays to use common sense based on your awareness of the existence of fakes. Common sense means that any unusual factors make a stamp immediately suspect. In this series of articles I have frequently mentioned that surcharges which are not level are suggestive of a faker's handiwork. So too are blatant flaws in the type. So for example, the stamp illustrated here, offered on Ebay for \$18, is a fake. We know this because the surcharges are not level, and because of the flaws in the '8' of '1908' with breaks at the bottom and upper left. Kearton-Gee's study of the 20c fakes of this issue illustrates numerous types of fakes with this flawed '8'. A variety described as "unlisted in catalogues" should lead you to G2, and you will inevitably find that it is not listed because it is a fake.



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## Footnotes

1. Goodman, Roland A., *Guatemala 2*, pp. 359-61, Robson Lowe, Ltd., London, 1971.
2. Kearton-Gee, Kerry, "The 1908 Fake Surcharges Found on the 1908 Waterlow 20c Frame Plate 2 Stamps," *El Quetzal*, Vol. 29, No. 379, pp. 14-7, International Society of Guatemala Collectors, 2019. The article describes 21 types of fakes of Scott 135 with color illustrations.
3. Kearton-Gee, *ibid.*
4. This information is contained in the editorial notes and correspondence of Roland Goodman, Editor of *Guatemala 2*, which are located in the Society archives. In preparing this section of the Society's handbooks, Goodman often referenced the Luff collection which he had personally examined in 1959. I have been unable to verify that the Luff collection including the sheets with genuine surcharges remains in the custody of the Philatelic Foundation.

*The International Society of Guatemala Collectors was formed in 1948 and is Affiliate No. 38 of the American Philatelic Society. The Society is committed to assisting everyone interested in collecting Guatemala. Its award winning journal El Quetzal is published quarterly. Membership levels include a US\$10 online membership which includes access to most society publications including its two award winning handbooks, and the electronic version of the journal. If you collect Guatemala you will find much more information available on the society website:*

[www.GuatemalaStamps.com](http://www.GuatemalaStamps.com)

