

## Prestamp Postal Markings.

### Colonial Period.



**Figure 1-1.** Entire letter from Santa Ana to Guatemala, July 30, 1780. Earliest known postal marking of El Salvador

Throughout the colonial era, El Salvador was part of the Captaincy General of Guatemala. Hence, its postal history during this period is directly related to that of the other provinces of the territory: Chiapas, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua.

After the Spanish conquest in the 1520's, the authorities started sending messengers to the ports in Mexico and Yucatan, from where all correspondence was sent to Spain. However, it was not until 1602, that the President of the Real Audiencia of Guatemala appointed Manuel de Esteves as 'Correo Mayor de Guatemala y sus Provincias' (Postmaster General of Guatemala & its Provinces).

Esteves died the following year, but it was not until 1612 that Baltasar Pinto de Amberes was appointed as the new Correo Mayor. Pedro Crespo Xuarez, who bought the title and office at a public auction, replaced him in 1620. After Crespo, only three individuals filled the office of 'Correo Mayor' by purchasing it: Francisco de Lira y Cárcamo (1646-1682), José Agustín de Estrada (1682-1730), and Pedro Ortiz de Letona (1730-1767). In 1767, the Correo Mayor system was abolished and replaced by a government monopoly. On March 1, 1768, the new office of 'Administrador General de Correos y Maestre de Hostes, Postas, y Correos' was created, a position occupied by Captain General Pedro de Salazar Herrera Natera y Mendoza. Under the new regime, Simon de Larrazabal (1768-1797) assumed responsibility of the royal mail in Guatemala. He was succeeded by Miguel de Ateaga y Olazaga (1797-1823), who was the last Spanish postmaster of the Captaincy.

Early in the Colonial era, the route for shipment of goods and supplies, including mail, was established between Spain and Central America. The Correo Mayor set up periodic routes across the Captaincy territory, and appointed deputies in Comayagua, San Salvador, Ciudad Real, Chiapas, Honduras, Leon, Matagalpa, and Cartago. Mail from and going to Spain was initially received and sent via Veracruz, but in 1615, the route was changed. Correspondence was sent by ship to ports in Yucatan (either Rio de Lagartos or Cizal), going overland either via Valladolid or Merida to Bacalar, a one-time Caribbean port, then by coastal vessel up the Gulf of Honduras, and finally overland to Guatemala City.

The first mail boat to Mexico and Central America departed from Spain on November 4, 1679, and arrived at Veracruz on March 28, 1680. By 1704, the route to

Central America was changed again, so the mail would first arrive at Veracruz, and from there, it would be sent inland to Oaxaca, and then successively to Chiapas, Comitán, Huehuetenango, Totonicapan, and Guatemala City. From Guatemala, the route continued south to cities in El Salvador and Nacaome (Honduras), then north to Comayagua and Tegucigalpa (Honduras), and south to Leon (Nicaragua) and Cartago (Costa Rica).

By 1754, regularly scheduled horseback or mule couriers went from Guatemala City to Leon, picking up mail along the way. By 1766, the service extended as far south as Realejo (Nicaragua) and Cartago. Likewise, from 1748, monthly courier trips to the north went as far as Oaxaca, which was the trans-shipment point for correspondence destined to or coming from Spain.

By August of 1764, a monthly maritime service has been set up by Royal Decree, and ships regularly sailed between La Coruña (Spain) and Havana, Cuba. From Havana, sloops trans-shipped mail and parcels primarily to Veracruz, but also to El Golfo or Santo Tomás (Guatemala) and Trujillo (Honduras); from there, mounted couriers took the mail to its final destination. Regarding mail sent through Veracruz, it was taken to Hacienda de Soto where the route to Oaxaca and Mexico City separated. There, mail for Central America was sorted out, and carried to Oaxaca.

On February 22, 1768 the Spanish Crown issued a proclamation that required all mail to be stamped and initialed as evidence that the legal postage had been paid. While postal markings existed in a few places in Spanish America prior to this date, it is probable that the impetus to prepare the initial postmark devices for the entire Central American area came from this decree.

In an order of 1796, the Captain General of Guatemala outlined the existing routes and established new ones to the south from Guatemala City. Two trips went to Leon on a monthly basis, with intermediate stops in Santa Ana, San Salvador, San Vicente, and San Miguel, all in El Salvador. From Leon, there was a monthly trip further south, ending in Cartago. From San Miguel, two trips went to Trujillo (Honduras), and one trip was made to Tegucigalpa. Finally, from Santa Ana, trips were made to Ahuachapán and Sonsonate. Return trips were made on the same routes with the same frequency; and were scheduled to coincide with the deliveries of mail made from the outlying regions.

Starting in 1809, hemispheric packet boat service was organized to run from Iztapa (Guatemala) via Cartago and David (Panama), and terminating in Guayaquil (Ecuador). The first sailing on this course was said to have occurred on March 10, 1810. During 1811, a tri-monthly mail route was established between Guatemala, Mexico, the Winward Islands, and Spain.

## Colonial Postal Rates.

From 1620 to 1748 the postal rates in effect to be paid on receipt of a letter in Central America were 2 reales for a single letter, 4 reales for a double letter (i.e. a letter folded eight-ply, but not thicker than a finger), 8 reales for letters two to six fingers thick, and 2 to 3 pesos for a thicker letter. In 1749, the so-called 'finger-system' was abolished, and by 1763, postage was charged strictly by weight. The 1764 royal order established the following tariffs for letters from all of the Indies to Spain: 4 copper-silver reales for a single letter; 9 copper-silver reales for a double letter; 12 copper-silver reales for a three-quarter Onza; and 16 copper-silver reales per Onza. In 1766, a 2 reales tariff was established for single letters sent from Guatemala to Comayagua, Tegucigalpa, Leon, and Costa Rica.

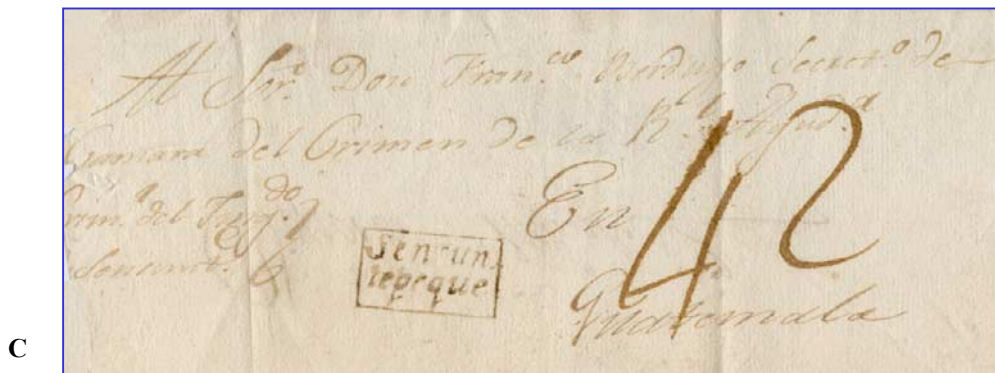
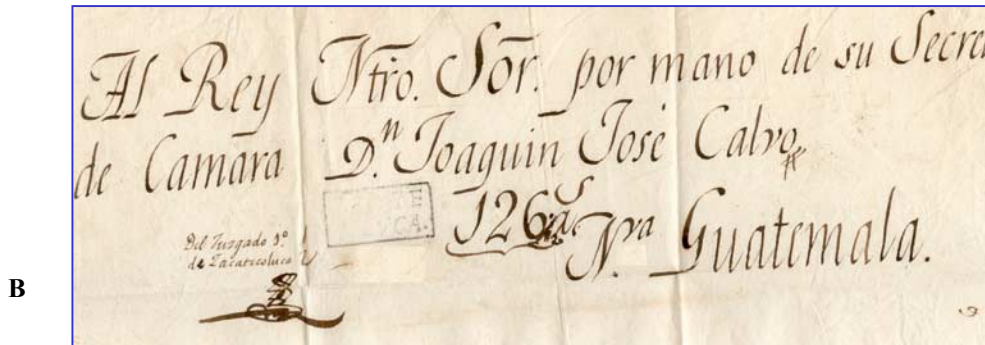
On November 3, 1796, Miguel de Ateaga, then Postmaster of Guatemala, adopted a new general tariff for postal rates, which is shown in the following table.

Rate / Origin	Central America, Mexico & the Caribbean Is.	Spain	Italy & Rome	Peru
Single letter of less than half an Onza	2 reales	3 reales	6 reales	4 ½ reales
Double of half an Onza, less than ¾	5 reales	5 reales	10 reales	6 ½ reales
Triple of ¾, less than 1 Onza	6 reales	7 reales	14 reales	8 reales
For the piece of one Onza	10 reales	10 reales	20 reales	12 reales
For one of an Onza ¼		13 reales	25 reales	
For one of an Onza ½		15 reales	30 reales	
For one of an Onza ¾		17 reales	35 reales	
For one of 2 Onzas		20 reales	40 reales	
For each additional Onza	3 reales	10 reales	20 reales	12 reales

**Table 1-1.** Postal tariff decreed in 1796.

The tariffs above were raised in 1807 to cover the costs of establishing a second trip to Oaxaca. These raises were of ½ real for single letters, 1 real for double and triple letters, and ½ real for each additional Onza for letters destined to territories outside the Captaincy General.

The next postal tariff, adopted on October 1, 1814 and promulgated in Guatemala City the following year by Postmaster Miguel de Ateaga, charged for a simple letter of less than one-half Onza, 3 reales within Central America, Yucatan, the north of Mexico, Tabasco, California, the Caribbean Islands, and New Orleans; 2 reales for various cities in the center of Mexico; and 4 reales for Peru, the remainder of South America, the Philippines, and Spain.



**Figure 1-2.** Prephilatelic mail during the colonial period:

- A. Front sent from Chalatenango to Guatemala, near 1810. San Salvador transit marking.
- B. Front sent from Zacatecoluca to Guatemala, 1810.
- C. Front sent from Sensuntepeque to Guatemala, 1816.

## El Salvador during the Colonial Period.

During the 53 years between the commencement of the Colonial government's mail service (1768) and independence from Spain (1821), a number of different Salvadorian 'estafetas' or post offices operated, from time to time. These offices included Ahuachapan, Ateos, Cojutepeque, Chalatenango, Gotera, Metapan, Mexicanos, San Salvador, San Miguel, San Vicente, Santa Ana, Sonsonate, Suchitoto, Usulután, and Zacatecoluca. Additionally, postal markings are known from Olocuilta and Sensuntepeque. Most of the letters or wrappers from this era were used for government purposes, primarily concerning indigo, coffee, tobacco, or other judicial matters.

The earliest known postal marking is from Santa Ana, used in 1780.



**Figure 1-3.** Prephilatelic mail from the colonial & federation period :

- Fragment of a letter sent from Santa Ana to Guatemala, near 1818.
- Letter sent from San Miguel to Tegucigalpa, 1818.
- Front sent from Olocuilta to Guatemala, with San Salvador transit mark, near 1812.
- Front sent from San Salvador to Metapan, near 1810.
- Letter from San Vicente to Guatemala, 1835.

## **Post Independence Period.**

### **Central American Federation.**

During the union of Central America with Mexico (1821-1823), no important changes were made to the postal system inherited from Spain. When the Central American Federation was proclaimed, Miguel de Ateaga, Spanish postmaster since 1796, was replaced by Antonio Batres y Naxera. The Federation issued its initial postal legislation on August 7, 1823, and the first definitive postal decree on April 24, 1824. This decree stated the following postal rates for a simple letter of less than one-half Onza: 2 reales for any destination in Central America, South America, or the Caribbean; and 4 reales for any destination in Spain, the Philippines, the United States, and any other foreign country. The legislation also granted free postal franking for all federation officials, but these wide exemptions from payment were voted out by the Federal Congress in 1826. The Federation continued the route to Oaxaca, having two trips per month from Guatemala City, and added a third trip south to Leon.

According to a post office listing of the Central American Federation, El Salvador had the following 'estafetas' in 1830 : Ahuachapan, Cojutepeque, Metapan, San Miguel, San Salvador, San Vicente, Santa Ana, Sonsonate, Suchitoto, and Zacatecoluca.

### **Independent El Salvador.**

Upon separating from the Federation, each state assumed the full responsibilities of handling their own mail system. However, the regulations of the Federation remained in use in each country until superseded by local legislation. For El Salvador, no information is available until 1849, when Mr. José Andrino was appointed as postmaster. On July 13th of that same year, El Salvador established weekly routes to Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. The first postal law was decreed on October 26th 1851, and three years later, on September 1st, 1854 the first route itinerary for the interior of the country was published. By 1857, all the country was again covered by the postal service.

During the 1850's, the San Salvador post office had the following dispatches:

- Mondays at 3 PM : to Sonsonate, Ahuachapan, and Santa Ana, including mail for Acajutla and Metapan.
- Fridays at 3 PM : to Guatemala, with the mail for Mexico and overseas destinations.
- Saturdays at 10 AM : mail for Suchitoto, Chalatenango, and Tejutla.
- Saturdays at 3 PM : to Leon, with mail for Cojutepeque, San Vicente, San Miguel, La Union, Nicaragua, Honduras, Costa Rica, and South America.

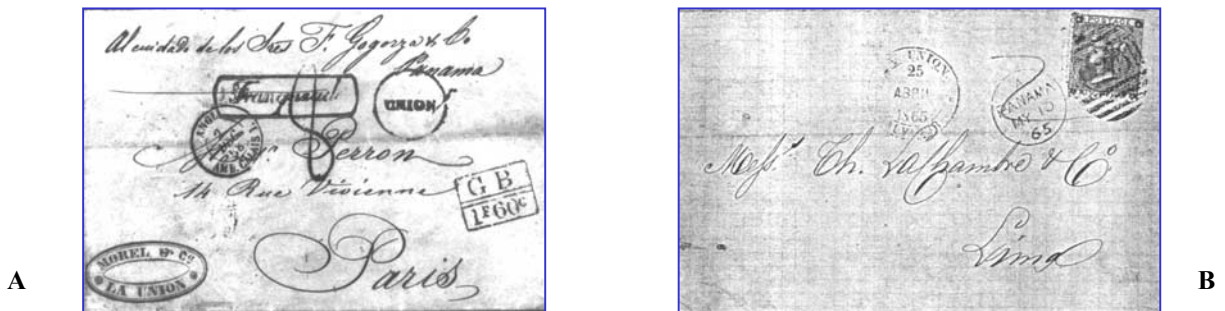


In 1852, a Postal Treaty was signed between Honduras, Nicaragua, and El Salvador. One practical effect of this Treaty was that in the free port on Tigre Island, near Amapala (Honduras), a postal employee exchanged mail between the three countries. Guatemala and El Salvador signed a further treaty in 1865 with Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela, providing for reciprocal exchange of mail and parcels, free postage on official and diplomatic mail, and other procedural matters.

It is believed that El Salvador, as the other Central American countries, retained the 2 real rate for domestic and inter-Central American postage for letters of less than one-half ounce until the issuance of its adhesive stamps. It is important to note that mail to and from any Central American destination could be marked prepaid or collect, at the option of the sender.

In 1853, El Salvador signed a contract with the Central American Steam Navigation Company (CASNC) to permit mail steamers to call at Acajutla, La Libertad, and La Union. This company ran a line of steamers once a month between Iztapa (Guatemala) and Panama, touching in turn at Acajutla, La Libertad, La Unión, Amapala (Honduras), Realejo and San Juan del Sur (Nicaragua) for the conveyance of mail, passengers, and freight. Each government paid a subsidy for the carriage of the mail. Service began in 1854 and later was continued by the Panama Railway Company steamers, and subsequently, by the steamers of the Pacific Mail Steamship company.

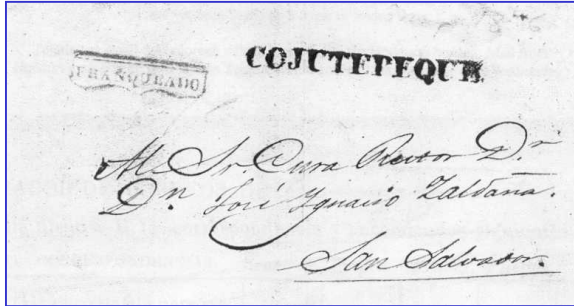
It can be assumed that because of these circumstances, post offices were opened in the three ports where the CASNC called (Acajutla, La Libertad, and La Union).



**Figure 1-4.** Mail sent from La Union:

- A. Letter to Paris. 'Union', 'Franqueado', and 'Morel & Co.' markings applied in La Union. With GB/1F60c. rate marking. Received in Calais, Dec. 2, 1858, and charged 8 decimes on arrival.
- B. Entire letter to Lima. La Union datestamp, Apr. 25, 1865. Great Britain 6d stamp added in Panama on May 10.

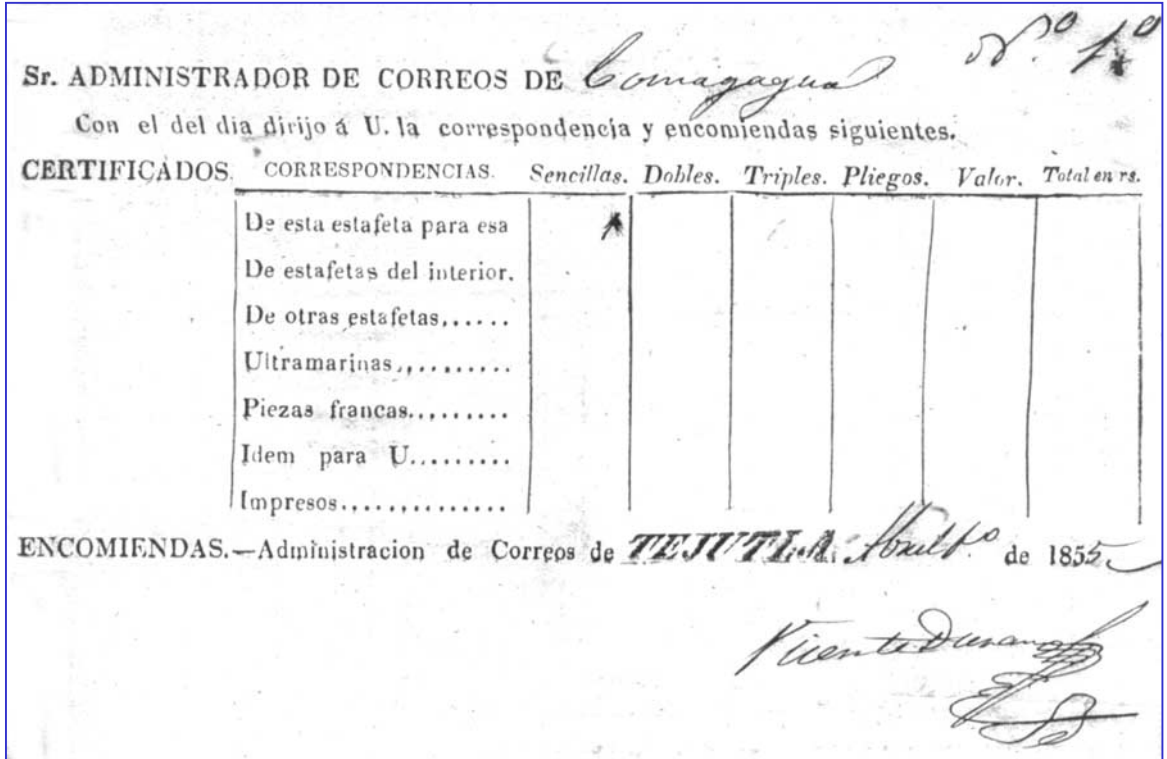
A



B



C



D



E



**Figure 1-5.** Prephilatelic mail during the independent period:

- Letter from Cojutepeque to San Salvador, circa 1856.
- San Jerónimo to Cedros, Honduras, 1854. Carried via San Miguel, Tegucigalpa, and Comayagua. With 'S. Miguel' and boxed 'Tegucigalpa' transit markings.
- Only known copy of the 'Tejutla' postmark, found on a postal way bill to Comayagua, Honduras, dated Apr. 20, 1855.
- Letter from San Miguel to New York, 1862. San Miguel circular datestamp and Steamship 20c. due marking.
- Letter from San Salvador to La Unión, Sep. 12, 1863.




## **Pre-Stamp Postal Markings List.**

In the following pages, a listing of the presently known postal markings for El Salvador is presented. However, some important facts should be stated before:

- The marking devices were made of cork, wood, or soft metal, and they usually deteriorated through time, so small variations to the drawings could be found on the pieces. Variations can also occur depending on how each mark was applied.
- Most of the letters mailed in or to most Central American destinations had manuscript rate markings applied in accordance to the postal tariffs valid at the time. However, for El Salvador, two handstamped rate markings are known. The first type, being approximately 5/8<sup>th</sup> of an inch high and found in orange, is in the 2 real denomination and was used circa 1837 from San Salvador. The second type, being approximately 3/8<sup>th</sup> of an inch high and found in blue or black, are known in 4, 6, and 8 real denominations, and were used in 1862 or thereabouts from San Salvador.
- The ink usually employed was made from carmine or red ochre dyes dissolved in an oil base. Indigo, blue, and green are also known postmark colors. A royal decree of 1716 dictated that black ink was to be used on all official legal correspondence. The effect of the tropics and the passage of up to two hundred years often render the color of a postmark as simply 'faded brown'.
- Dating is rather difficult, in some cases the date can be inferred from the name or the title of the Colonial Official the letter was addressed to. During the next decade after independence, it was a general practice not to use the title, most letters being addressed to 'Ciudadano' (citizen) or its abbreviation 'Cno.'
- It is important to note that most of the letters or wrappers now known from El Salvador (and from the other Central American countries) date from the colonial era, where financial support from Spain assisted with the operation of the mail system. After independence, there was a general breakdown in communications in the region, so letters and wrappers from this period are very scarce.
- Only one registered letter is known (San Salvador, 1813), since no prepared postal devices were used for registered mail, and post offices customarily kept a portion or all of the front or the rear of a registered letter as a receipt.
- The numbering system followed consists of two letters and a number. The letters used are generally the first two letters of the city if the name consists of one word, or the first letter of each word if the name is made up of two words. Ej; Ahuachapan - AH, Santa Ana - SA. For every city the numeration will begin in 01, therefore, for example, the oldest known marking of San Salvador will be SS-01. For comparison purposes, the Harris number will be in parenthesis next to these new numbers.
- The rarity factor used for the markings is a 1-to-10 scale in which 1 corresponds to the most common, and 10 to the most scarce, with intermediate numbers assigned to the remainder. This assignment is based on the relative scarcity or abundance of marks, based on the experience of the most important collectors in the field. It is also important to note that a complete, folded letter, which is dated and has a clear postmark in the front side is much more rare (and desirable) than a cut-out front of a letter, or a fragmentary wrapper.
- Finally, the illustrations on the list are presented in full-size.

## Pre-Stamp Postal Markings List.

Acajutla.	Number	Color	Date	Rarity
 <p>Figure 1-6. AC-01</p>	AC-01 (11)	Black	1854-1865 Used with OT-03 (193).	7
Single line 'Acajutla' tilted to the left. Not of reproducible quality.	AC-02 (12)	Black	1861	10
Single line 'Franco' tilted to the left. Not of reproducible quality.	AC-03 (13)	Black	1861 Used with AC-02 (12).	10

### Ahuachapán

**AHVACHAPA**

Figure 1-7. AH-01

**FRANCO.**

Figure 1-8. AH-02

AH-01 (1)	Brown Black	Circa 1798 - 1809	5
AH-02 (2)	Brown Red	Circa 1800 - 1809	6

### Chalatenango.

**CHALATENANGO**

Figure 1-9. CH-01

**Chalatenango**

Figure 1-10. CH-02

*Franqueado en  
Chalatenango.*

Figure 1-11. CH-03

CH-01 (21)	Black	1818	5
CH-02 (22)	Black	1805	5
CH-03 (23)	Black	1806 - 1810	8



Figure 1-12. Front sent from Chalatenango to Guatemala with CH-01, circa 1818.

Number	Color	Date	Rarity	Cojutepeque.
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CO-01 (31)	Black	1805 – 1851 From 1810 – 1812 used with No. OT-01 (191).	2	
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Figure 1-13. CO-01

CO-02 (32)	Black	1812 – 1852	9	
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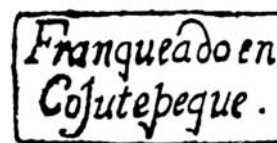


Figure 1-14. CO-02

CO-03 (33)	Black	1855 – 1858 Used with OT-02 (192) in red.	7	
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Figure 1-15. CO-03

CO-04 (34)	Black	1855 - 1857	10	
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Figure 1-16. CO-04

Libertad, La.

LL-01 (41)	Black	1866	10	
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Figure 1-17. CO-05