

# **UPPanama Postal Stationery 1903 - 1940**

## **INDYPEX**

## **SYNOPSIS**

### **Background Information**

This is the most comprehensive exhibit on Panama stationery ever assembled. It's genesis dates to 1989 when gold medal exhibitor David Leeds sold me my first piece of Panama stationery – a registry envelope with the “CANAL ZONE” blacked out and subsequently used in Panama. I have exhibited Panama postal envelopes, postal cards, and registry envelopes as separate exhibits. I was waiting to acquire the two missing errors on the Panama registry envelopes before exhibiting the highlights of these three exhibits in one. These were acquired 5 months ago from the estate of noted collector David Zemer. This is the first time that many of these items have been on exhibit and is also the first time that examples of every piece of Panama postal stationery have been shown in one place. John Sinfield exhibited Panama stationery at the 2016 international show at New York City 2016, but he did not have many of the unique pieces that I either owned at the time or have subsequently acquired. This was last shown at NAPEX 2025.

### **Importance**

Postal stationery was especially important in Panama given the humidity. Postage stamps tended to become stuck together due to the heat or the glue was damaged due to tropicalization. In many of the smaller post offices in the interior, where few letters were mailed, stocks of stamps could be in the post office for years and become damaged and unusable. The non-gummed printed envelopes alleviated this problem. Most of the towns in Panama during the pre-World War 2 era had fewer than 1,00 people and the post office could have been the only location to purchase envelopes. It is also important because this is a complete showing of all of Panama's postal stationery in one exhibit.

### **Personal Study and Research**

I have been studying and collecting this material for almost 40 years and am editor of the Copaphil (Colombian Panama Philatelic Study Group) journal *Copacarta*. I have written over 50 published articles – the latest on the 2 and 5 centesimos American Bank Note issues of 1921 (see below) and the UPSS just released my catalogue of Panama's postal stationery. Access to the privately held American Bank Note archives has led to discoveries that change dates of issuance, the number of printings, and the quantities issued.

### **Condition**

The covers in this exhibit are in excellent condition given that they originated in a very humid tropical climate prior to air conditioning. Toning is commonplace. Letters addressed within Panama are difficult to find normally and the majority have condition issues. It is also important to note that historically collectors of Panama have not paid much attention to stationery, and most was not saved in a careful manner. In this exhibit I have placed an emphasis on destinations or smaller town originations over condition.

### **Rarity and Completeness**

It has taken over 30 years to acquire the pieces in this exhibit via direct purchase or trade from collectors (or their estates), dealers, and auctions. This is the finest Panama postal stationery collection ever assembled and given the large number of unique items is impossible to duplicate. To the best of my knowledge, I now have acquired examples of every production piece and every variety or error reported. The exhibit includes:

Every unique production piece (43 in all).

The only reported UPU specimens known (from Madagascar and Goa)

The only reported used 2 cent wrappers of 1907

The only reported usages to Australia, India, Japan, Portuguese East Africa and China

The unique miscut 1 centesimos envelope of 1921

The unique vignette only on 2 centesimos envelope of 1921

The unique vignette only on 5 centesimos envelope of 1921

The unique frame only on 5 centesimos revalued envelope of 1922

The unique inverted indicia on 2 centesimos postcard of 1929

## Panama: Postal Stationery 1903 - 1940

This exhibit shows all of the postal stationery issued by the Republic of Panama from 1903 until 1940.

The first pieces of postal stationery used in the Republic of Panama were Colombian postcards (issued prior to Panama's declaration of Independence on November 3, 1903) that were rubber hand stamped "República de Panama". In 1904 Panama ordered its first postal stationery that was designed specifically for the new republic - a 2 centavos postal card. These were followed by wrappers in 1907, postal envelopes in 1917, registry envelopes in 1918, and letter cards in 1929. Unlike many countries, Panama limited the number of new designs and it was not unusual for a stationery issue to be used up to 10-15 years.

Exhibit includes production materials (essays, proofs, and specimens), mint examples, errors/varieties, and postal usages.

The exhibit is arranged as follows:

1. Prologue
2. Postal Cards
3. Wrappers
4. Postal Envelopes
5. Registry Envelopes
6. Letter Cards
7. Epilogue



COPAPHIL (Colombia - Panama Philatelic Study Group). For more information on Panama philately please consider joining and receiving the quarterly journal COPACARTA. Information can be found at [copaphil.org](http://copaphil.org). Also see the Universal Postal Stationery Society's *Panama Postal Stationery* by Brad Wilde, 2025

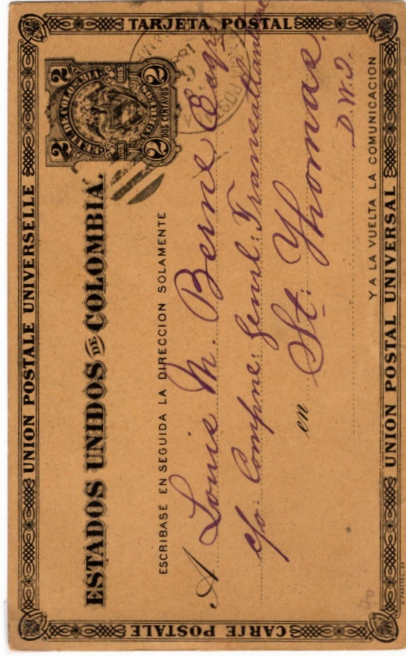
**Organization:** The sections are in order of when the category of stationery was first issued. Within each section the stationery is in chronological order and then arranged by mint copy, production pieces, and usage. \*Rare non-production items **bolded in red**. Section headings are in **blue**, with a black box containing information about stationery below heading. Within the section the various types of stationery are in headed in **green**. The description first has origination, destination and date of cover, then in italic print rate being paid and finally additional information. The first time a postage stamp is shown it is identified by printer and year issued. Rare items have the number of pieces/covers reported or the reason why scarce in bold type. Registered mail has the approximate number of registered items mailed in parenthesis after the name of the town.

**Rarity:** There are 43 unique production pieces and 9 earliest reported usages. Where censuses have been taken the numbers are reported. Scarcer destinations including Australia, China, India, Japan, Malta & Portuguese East Africa. Smaller post offices (most with under 1,000 inhabitants) include Aguadulce, Almirante, Bocas del Toro, Coiba, Concepcion, Divisa, Horconitos, La Concepcion, Las Minas, Los Santos, Ocu, Parita, Penonome, Pocrí, Rio Hato, Sixaola, and Tonosi.

The population of Panama was estimated to be 250,000 in 1903 and 620,000 in 1940.

## SECTION I: Prologue

Prior to independence the only stationery used in Panama were Colombian postal cards.



Estados Unidos de Colombia (1881 - 1886) stationery prior to independence. Panama City - St. Thomas, Danish West Indies. May 2, 1885.



Republica de Colombia (1886 - 1903) stationery prior to independence. Panama City - Guatemala City, Guatemala. May 18, 1900.