

# The 1924 Arms Issue of Panama

The exhibit details the production and use of the Coat of Arms issue produced by the American Bank Note Company (ABNCo) for the Republic of Panama in 1924. The issue was the primary definitive from 1924 until the mid-1940s and was commonly utilized into the early 1950s. The issue was used prominently on first flights of the 1920s-1930s and correspondence from tourists and military personnel traversing the Panama Canal.



## Treatment

The 10-frame hybrid traditional and postal history exhibit opens with the development of the Arms issue for use in Panama. This is demonstrated with a display of the sunken die proofs (**1 of 4 sets**) and proofs of the ten denominations produced by the American Bank Note Company (ABNCo).

The need for the issue was discussed in the Republic of Panama in January of 1923, with an official request for designs and pricing issued on May 28, 1923. The issue would be used within Panama and overprinted for the United States Panama Canal Zone (CZ). At the time of design and issue, Panama provided postage stamps to the CZ at 40% of face value to satisfy the Taft Agreement of December 3, 1904, with the United States of America (USA).

This issue became an important line in the sand for the ABNCo as they attempted to maintain their dominance in secure document production for Panama and the CZ.

Competition with Waterlow & Sons of England resulted in ABNCo taking the initial printing at a loss to maintain the relationship. This was discovered by the author through a review of the ABNCo-Panama communication archive obtained through the sale of ABNCo material. The article was published in both the *Canal Zone Philatelist* and *COPACARTA*.

The look at production closes with specimens from the 37 different print orders Panama placed with the ABNCo from 1923 to 1945. Previous reports by Cross listed 33 printing.

**Through the personal review of the ABNCo communication archives, I determined there were 37 orders and associated order numbers.**

The use of the Arms issue to pay domestic, Postal Union of the Americas and Spain (PUAS), and Universal Postal Union (UPU) rates of the time is reviewed. From the early 1900s and reaffirmed with a decree in 1920, Panama, the USA, and the CZ exchanged mail at the domestic rate. On April 1, 1929, the local rate was extended to all members of the PUAS.

Seven of the ten values had additional print runs as late as September 1945. The issue was used as postage into the early 1950s and overprinted for commemorative and functional purposes over the 20-year period. One major overprint error occurred when 3 sheets of 1/2 centesimo orange were overprinted instead of 50 centesimo orange in 1936. **One of the few available copies used on piece is displayed.**

## Importance

The two major metropolitan areas of Panama bordered the CZ at the openings of the canal. Panama City was adjacent to Ancon, CZ on the Pacific coast, while Colon and Cristobal, CZ were found at the Atlantic entry. Ninety percent of

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## Purpose:

This is a ten-frame traditional and postal history hybrid exhibit of the 1924 Arms issue of Panama beginning with production by the American Bank Note Company (ABNCo) in 1923, first use in

## Scope:

Although the issue was overprinted for use in the United States Panama Canal Zone (CZ) in 1924, the scope of this exhibit will be limited to the issues on mail originating in Panama. Rates will be discussed as related to the use for the Arms issue, but this is not a comprehensive rate study

## Plan:

Page 1—8	I. Production
Page 9—16	II. Domestic Use
Page 17—34	III. US and Possession Use
Page 35—48	IV. Postal Union of Americas and Spain
Page 49—67	V. Universal Postal Union
Page 68—75	VI. Flight Covers
Page 76—79	VII. Special Use and High Denomination

## Background:


The Isthmus of Panama has served as a connector between the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans since the 1500s when the Spanish constructed a road across the isthmus. With the development of a railroad in 1855 and the opening of the Panama Canal in 1914, Panama solidified its importance as a maritime hub of trade and communication. This continued as



Unfinished die proof printed on watermarked tracing paper

Vignette missing stars, background, and 'PRO MUNDI BENEFICIO' on banner. Frame design value not completed and American Bank Note Co. missing from bottom as compared to finished proof below.

Items considered significant are noted with a red frame.

 A magnifying glass denotes original discovery or research.

Trial Color Proof on card from ABNCo.  
**Only known 1c black copy not cut down for ABNCo files.**

Original center (vignette) die in 1923 was C-1487, with the 1924 renumbering of the dies, the number was changed to 33955

