

An interesting (but not too deceptive) lot of fake Curaçao bisects.

by Dick Phelps

These look like Curaçao 1918 bisects, but they are completely bogus. I recently picked up six of them. They are all very good looking if you don't take too close a look. They are all frauds, most likely made to cheat collectors. They are made by simply cutting stamps in half and adding a Large Double Circle cancel. The thing that is so amazing is that the stamps they used were not even mint stamps. They used stamps that already had been canceled. What is even more amazing is that some of them are not even Curaçao stamps. Some are made with Dutch stamps.

The real bisects were made when stamp supplies were blocked by WWI. In May 1918 the supply of 1 cent stamps was all but exhausted so it was decided to use some of the generous stock of two cent stamps as bisects to serve as one cent stamps. This went into effect on June 1, 1918. What wasn't counted on was that the philatelic market started gobbling these up. Collectors were buying them up in large quantities. In a short while the supply of two cent stamps was becoming exhausted too. So, per July 6, 2 1/2 cent stamps were used for bisects too. This only lasted for a few more days as the philatelic market got out of hand and it was determined that the idea of bisects was just not working as hoped. On July 15 the bisects were terminated and the crude locally printed HAW stamps were put into use (HAW stands for Hendrik Albert Willemsen, deputy postmaster of Curaçao).

While the bisects were in use there were 32,000 2 cent bisects and 31,200 2 1/2 cent bisects sold. Today these bisects can be bought at a fairly low price because of the heavy philatelic ordering that was done. These bisects were supposed to be in use on all six islands but Curaçao was the one that got hit with the philatelic pressure. In addition to copies canceled at Curaçao there are copies existing canceled at the other islands.

However, they are much harder to find. The existence of copies canceled at Aruba has been rumored but not verified. Of course copies genuinely used are another matter and are very hard to find. This is made worse by the fact that the 1 cent rate was a printed matter rate and printed matter mail often ended up in the trash bin.

By checking the cancels that were on the stamps before they were used to make these fake bisects we can see that they were not made in 1918 as the Large Double Circle cancel says. One of the stamps has a cancel dated 8-8-23 which is five years later. Another has a cancel which seems to be dated in 1938 which is 20 years later. This gives us at least an earliest date for

the manufacture of these fakes. I think that given the consistency of these items that they were all made at about the same time by the same person. The fact that some of them are made out of Dutch stamps suggests that they possibly were made in the Netherlands rather than in Curaçao.

Because of space limitations I could not make the pictures as large as I would have liked to. The original scans are high-resolution scans in full color which makes it possible to see much more detail, especially of the old cancels that are on the stamps from before this was done. If you would like to see the higher resolution scans send me an email request and I will send them to you by email. My email address is dick.phelps@verizon.net.

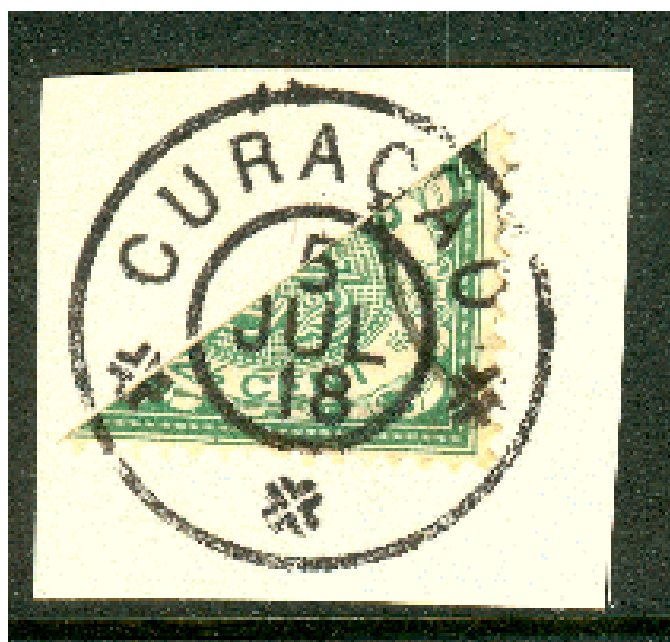


1. The first example has at least used a Curaçao 2 cent base stamp. It previously has been canceled by a cross type cancel dated 8-8-23.

2. This example is very interesting because it is not even a Curaçao stamp. It is a Dutch stamp. There are not many pieces of the original cancellation showing but there are a few. Most prominent is a circle segment at lower right and a five point star next to it. Then there is a thin and short line showing which cuts through the right leg of the U of JUL.



3. This one too has been made with a Dutch stamp. It shows several parts of a 'rader type' cancel.



4. Here at least a Curaçao stamp has been used . However, it has an underlying cancel of some unknown type. The cancel shows up as a curved line going from the second C of Curaçao down to the right cross of the Large Double Circle cancel. Also, even though a Curaçao stamp, it is not the stamp that was used for bisects. It is NVPH #31 while the 2 1/2 cent bisects were directed to be made with NVPH #48.

5. In this example a Dutch stamp is used again. It has three strikes of a 'rader type' cancel showing at the upper left, upper right, and toward the bottom. The upper right cancel includes the year, which looks like possibly (19)38.



One of the scariest things about these fakes is that although they are done in a thoughtless way (using previously used stamps and even Netherlands stamps to make them) the Curaçao Large Double Circle cancel is another matter. It looks like the Curaçao Large Double Circle type A and is near perfect. But it is not perfect. It is given away by the shape of the O which is too round. The letter R is also shaped wrong.

And I have never seen copies of the Large Double Circle so sharply and well struck as these. This was done with great care. Type A was previously presumed to have been used only in 1907, but I have found off cover copies and covers with type A that are in the 1911 - 1917 range. So we know that the real type A was used in later years and that it could have extended to 1918. But it did not make these impressions. Knowing that this Large Double Circle is a fake, it is scary to think about what else it may have been used on. The manufacturing of this fake handstamp must have been a considerable challenge.

If you find more of these in your collections I would appreciate it if you would send me an email and if possible, include a scan.

The information in this article is taken from many sources including the NVPH catalog and "The Postal History of Curaçao" by Julsen and Benders (1976).



6. This last example doesn't have much of the previous cancel visible, but you can find a somewhat weak numeral 8 near the O of Curaçao.