

The Argentina 1935-51 Definitives



Notes

Papers, Watermarks, Proofs, and Errors

1

Antonio Rubiera

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Introduction

In these notes I serialize the work I have done to understand the Argentina 1935-51 definitives. The work shown here is incomplete and somewhat incoherent. It also has some gaps. I have opted to publish these notes now, instead of waiting an indefinite and most likely long period of time until I am able to write a cohesive and coherent book on this most complicated definitives issue.

Beginning collectors to this series encounter several stumbling blocks when deciding which stamps to acquire from this series. The first stumbling block, which applies mostly to the Scott catalogue, is that the stamps have been grouped using a scheme that is based on the major watermark types; ignoring the difference for the same watermark of the various papers. The second stumbling block, which applies mostly to the Argentinean specialized catalogues, is that the various issues have been grouped in a loosely chronological scheme that separates Argentinean papers from imported papers.

Referring repeatedly to the Argentina 1935-51 Definitives lengthens the text needlessly. From here onwards I use the descriptor Arg3551 to refer to this series. It is difficult to discuss Arg3551 without being forced to mention several aspects of a stamp: the colors, papers, gums and watermarks vary throughout the issue. For this quick guide, I state the basic aspects of each stamp, and progressively increase the complexity of the discussion until I arrive at a complete description.

These stamps were issued in denominations from ½ centavo to 20 pesos. There is a remarkable factor of 4,000 between the largest and the smallest denomination. Arg3551 was in use from October 1, 1935 to as late as 1961, by which time only one value was in postal use. Arg3551 was also issued as Departmental Officials and 'Servicio Oficial' officials. I discuss the officials in this guide. I discuss the extensive postal history of Arg3551 only for the purpose of how it can be used to identify the various printings.

There are several printings that are constrained to a single paper, or have a unique set of characteristics that make this printing most useful as a guide to a beginning collector. In this guide I use these constraining printings to describe a process by which a random sample of Arg3551 can be easily catalogued.

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Design Review

In this section I give a brief tour of the designs, and show tables with the most significant features. These tables summarize information that I present in more detail in later sections.

Regular Issues



Value	Scheme	Printing	Theme	Colors	In Use
1/2 c	05c	Offset	Belgrano	Purple	1935 to 1940s
1 c	1c	Offset and Typographed	Sarmiento	Orange Brown	1935 to 1950s
2 c	2c	Offset	Urquiza	Dark Brown	1935 onwards
2 1/2 c	2p5c	Offset	Braille	Dark Green	1939 to 1940s
3 c	3cSM	Offset	San Martin	Green	1935 to 1938
3 c	3cSM	Offset	San Martin	Gray	1939 to 1940s
4 c	4c	Offset	Brown	Green	1939 to 1940s
4 c	4c	Offset	Brown	Gray	1935 to 1938
3 c	3cM	Offset	Moreno	Olive Green	1943 to 1940s
5 c	5c	Offset	Moreno	Red Brown	1936 to 1938
5 c	5c	Typographed	Moreno	Red Brown	1937 to 1940
5 c	5c	Clay paper	Moreno	Red Brown	1941 to 1940s

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Value	Scheme	Printing	Theme	Colors	In Use
6 c	6c	Offset	Alberdi	Olive Green	1935 to 1940s
8 c	8c	Offset	Avellaneda	Orange	1939 to 1940s
12 c	12cBR	Offset	Mitre	Brown	1935 to 1938
12 c	12cR	Offset	Mitre	Red	1939 to 1940s
10 c	10cR	Typographed	Rivadavia	Red	1935 to 1938
10 c	10cBR	Offset and Typographed	Rivadavia	Brown	1939 to 1961
15 c	15cSC	Offset	Cattle	Blue	1936 to 1940s
20 c	20cSC	Offset and Typographed	Cattle	Blue	1951 to 1950s
20 c	20cJMG/MG	Offset	Guemes	Blue	1935 to 1942
15 c	15cMG	Offset	Guemes	Blue	1942 to 1940s
20 c	20cLC	Offset	Cattle	Greenish Blue	1942 to 1950s
25 c	25c	Offset	Agriculture	Pink Red	1936 to 1950s

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Value	Scheme	Printing	Theme	Colors	In Use
30 c	30c	Offset	Wool	Orange Brown and Yellow Brown	1936 to 1950s
1 peso	1pL	Offset	Map with boundaries	Brown and Blue	1936
1 peso	1p	Offset	Map without boundaries	Brown and Blue	1937 to 1940s
40 c	40c	Offset	Sugarcane	Purple and Reddish Purple	1936 to 1950s
50 c	50c	Offset	Oil Rig	Red and Orange	1936 to 1950s
5 pesos	5p	Offset	Iguazu	Navy Blue and Dark Green	1936 to 1950s
2 pesos	2p	Offset	Fruits	Red Brown and Blue	1936 to 1950s
10 pesos	10p	Offset	Grapes	Brown and Black	1936 to 1950s
20 pesos	20p	Offset	Cotton	Green and Brown	1936 to 1950s


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Departmental Officials



There are eight overprints representing departments, or ministries of the Argentinean government. These are:



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M.J.I.: Justice and Public Instruction	M.M.: Navy
	
	
M.O.P.: Public Works	M.R.C.: External Relations and Culture
	
	

The two earliest papers were used for these overprints, the 1E1, in use between October 1, 1935 and all of 1936, and the 1E2, used in 1937.

1E1	1E2
	

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The 10cR, the Rivadavia Red value, is found in two types, as shown below.



For the 1 peso stamp without map boundaries, the overprint is found along the top or the bottom of the stamp, as shown below.



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There are 128 departmental official major issues, shown as gray boxes in the table below. There are additional color varieties for the 10c Rivadavia Red, since types I and II were each printed in dark red, and then a lighter red. The 50 centavo and 1 peso with map boundaries (1pL) are very rare used or on cover and were issued in small quantities. I will use the contraction DEPOF to refer to these officials from here onwards. The 25c DEPOF is only found on the 1E2 paper, making it an ideal stamp to study and uniquely determine this paper.

Value	Paper	M.A.	M.G.	M.H.	M.I.	M.J.I.	M.M.	M.O.P.	M.R.C.
1c	1E1								
2c	1E1								
3cGr	1E1								
5c	1E1								
5ct	1E1								
10cR-I	1E1								
10cR-II	1E1								
15cSC	1E1								
20cJMG	1E1								
20cMG	1E1								
30c	1E1								
50c	1E1								
1P top	1E1								
1P bottom	1E1								
1PL	1E1								
25c	1E2								
30c	1E2								
1P bottom	1E2								

Servicio Oficial

There overprints replaced the departmental officials in 1937/38. There are several types of placement of the overprint relative to the stamp design and two types of overprint. The earlier type is slightly wider (12 mm) than the later type, both shown below. I discuss these in a chronological review left for later sections of this quick guide.



My reference scheme

I use my own reference scheme to describe Arg3551. This reference scheme enables me to have a more complete listing of the issues. I consider it a temporary scheme until I am able to arrive at a fairly complete listing.

The scheme combines:

1. The denomination in a computer-friendly format: For example, instead of 1/2c I use 05c, and instead of 2 1/2 c, I use 2p5c.
2. Mention of the person on the stamp (optional) or name acronym: I need this naming convention for the 3 centavos stamp, which was issued with the San Martin (SM) and Mariano Moreno (M) designs. The 20c Martin Guemes was issued with (JMG) or without (MG) the middle name shown.
3. Reference to the paper if I know of more than one: There are 30c1E1, 30c1E2, etc. If the stamp was only issued on one paper, there is no need for this naming convention, as is the case for the 3cSMGr, which was only issued on the 1E1 paper.
4. An additional reference for a specific plate: This naming convention is required for the 10c Rivadavia red, with types I and II, and the 10c Rivadavia Brown, with types A and B.
5. An additional reference for a specific color: This naming convention is required for the 15c Small Format Cattle, issued in dark blue and only on the 1E1 paper, as 15cSC-D, and also issued in light blue and on a later paper, as 15cSC-L.

I mention several examples that show how my naming convention works:

1. The 8c value was issued in one design, on one paper, on one plate, and on one color. Reference: 8c.
2. The 10c Rivadavia was issued in red and a range of browns, on many papers, and on at least four plates. Example references: 10cR-I, 10cBRCL1-A.

For the 18 papers I use the following scheme:

1. The early papers with the first watermark are the 1Ex papers, with x as of this edition being 1 to 4.
2. The clay papers were printed in two groups, CL1A and CL1B in 1943; and CL2A and CL2B in the 1950s.
3. The un-watermarked papers are of two types: grid from 1945 (NGR), and opaque from approximately 1948 (NOP).
4. The paper with the second watermark is found in three types: clear (2C), diffuse (2D), and with narrow rays (2N).
5. The late papers with the first watermark are the 1Lx papers, with x as of this edition being 1 to 5.

How this series came about

Thanks to a reference provided by one of the 'Foreros,' or members of the Argentinean Philately Forum, I learned about the existence of the book published by the Argentinean Post Office, Volume I, in 1939, by Antonio Deluca, and titled "Stamps and other postal and telegraph issues." This book contains key information about Arg3551, about which Deluca mentions the following:

The decision to replace the San Martin issue by a new series came from 1931, but was abandoned due to the Argentinean Post Office's economic hardship. Its director, Mr. Carlos Risso Dominguez, sent a memorandum to the Ministry of the Interior, dated November 28, 1932, in which he outlines basic facts about this series that I did not know before I obtained this book. The basic facts contained in this memorandum are:

1. There were several postal forgery incidents that cost the Argentinean Post Office a large loss of revenue. "In 1921 a postal forgery of the 5c stamp was found, and it incurred a loss of approximately 1 million pesos of national currency in a few months. There seems to be an additional forgery of higher quality and affecting the 2c and 5c values. It is then without doubt that the prolonged use of the same stamp type conspires against its legitimacy and affects adversely our collection of revenue."
2. Four categories were proposed for the new issue:

"a) Publish the likenesses of those signing the Declaration of Independence..."

"b) Publish the likenesses of those signing the 1853 Constitution..."

"c) Publish a selection of the likenesses of important military and civilian figures...and in addition add symbolic figures representing the Republic as shown on our currency, and mainly the Argentinean shield in its authentic model."

"d) Finally...use the stamps for an increased awareness of our products and therefore put in effect a news-worthy promotion in its favor, just as other countries do..."

There then take place several bureaucratic steps typically required for a new stamp series: authorization by the Ministry of the Interior, design contest, and authorization by the President of the Republic. The second memorandum containing facts about this series was sent by the commission making recommendations on this new issue to the Argentinean Post Office on July 4 1933:

1. "The commission proposes the portraits for the following important figures to be featured in as many issues: San Martin, Rivadavia, Moreno, Belgrano, Sarmiento, Mitre, Urquiza, Rodriguez, Guemes, Velez Sarsfield. Within the context of promoting, the commission indicates, of course, the map of the Argentinean Republic, and the following industries: Cattle, Agriculture, Oil, Wine-making, and Sugar Cane."
2. This memorandum recommends the use of paper without watermark, somewhat thicker than the one being used at the time for typographed printing, and with white gum. It is interesting that the characteristics in this recommendation correspond to only one of the 18 papers for Arg3551: the NOP, or opaque paper not in the catalogs from approximately 1948.
3. The recommended dimensions are: 19 by 24 mm, and 21 by 28 mm.
4. The designs and initial printing quantities recommended are:
1/2c Urquiza (50 million); 1c Guemes (30 million); 3c Rodriguez (120 million); 5c

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Agricultura (60 million); 6c Sarmiento (40 million); 10c Belgrano (300 million); 15c Mapa (20 million); 20c Mitre (10 million); 30c Sugar (12 million); 35c Cattle (6 million); 40c Wine-making (10 million); 50c Velez Sarsfield (6 million); 1p Oil Industry (2.5 million); 5p Rivadavia (50000), 10p Moreno (20000), 20p San Martin (10000).

5. Only one design is recommended for the official issues, with each denomination having its own color: "The current system, is unappealing and very costly, because it forces specialized printings of the overprints. In addition, the wide range of papers and printings of the stamps and of the very same overprints, cause that collectors seek them, causing a disfunctional inventory, given that they cannot be acquired at post offices..." This memorandum includes other details about the official issues, including proposed values and printing quantities.

The Casa de Moneda (the Argentinean Treasury, in charge of printing stamps) makes the following design and respective denomination recommendations to the Argentinean Post Office on May 23, 1934:

Mitre 1/2c y 1c; Sarmiento 2c; Moreno 10c; Belgrano 5c y 20c; Southern National Park 12c; Sugar 10c; Argentinean Republic, wheat 15c; America and the Argentinean Republic, fruits of the country 5c; Oil 2c; Agriculture 10c; Republic and the farmer 5c; Christ of the Andes 2c; Republic and Shield 12c; Wheat Stalks 5c y 10c; Allegorical figure and wheat 10c; Iguazu Falls 50c. The most interesting fact in this memorandum is mention of Iguazu Falls. This memorandum mentions many designs that were not adopted.

Deluce mentions documents that relate to collaboration between the Argentinean Treasury and the Argentinean Post Office, in which the adopted characteristics are outlined: the use of a small format for the values up to 20c, and of the large format for values 25c and up.

On July 16 of 1934 the Patriot values as we know them from 1/2c to 20c were finalized. Durante the period spanning October 25, 1934 and February 13, 1935 the Resources values as we know them from 25c to 20 pesos were finalized.

On September 14, 1935, the Argentinean Post Office took the following actions:

1. Decides to issue on October 1, 1935 the 1/2c, 1c, 2c, 3c, 4c, 5c, 6c, 10c, 12c, y 20c (fullname version: JMG) values.
2. Demonetizes from January 1, 1936 onwards the previous (San Martin) issue.
3. Allows the exchange of San Martin stamps for the new stamps during the first 90 days of 1936.

On November 22, 1935, the Argentinean Post Office decides to issue the 15c, 25c, 30c, 40c, 50c, 1p with map boundaries, 2p, 5p, 10p, and 20p values January 1, 1936.

According to Deluca, public notice of the new issue "was made by special announcements, and the printing of 5000 stamps for each value." I speculate that these stamps are the ones we come across with specimen ("MUESTRA") overprint.

Two proofs?

Here is how I classify all errors and stamps that were not regularly issued:

1. Overprinted specimen, "muestra"
2. Printing proofs. I still have doubts in case some proofs may have been printed on regularly issued papers and colors. The following example is printed on unwatermarked india paper, commonly used for US proofs in the 19th century.



3. Not perfed
4. Poorly perfed
5. Printed on the gum side
6. Double impresions
7. "printer's waste" and the example below seems to be, but I am not sure. It is printed on both sides on india unwatermarked paper.



The Papers

Here are the papers as I currently understand them. There are a few gaps in my current study of these...the numbering scheme is my own given that there is no published scheme that addresses the papers correctly/completely.

(1) 1E1: The first early paper with wavy lines from October 1935, which I find in use throughout 1936.



(02) 1E2: Mostly used in 1937/38.



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(03) 1E3: Mostly used in 1939. At times easily confused with the 1E1 paper.



(04) 1E4: Mostly used in 1940. I show specimens of this paper later in these notes. The specimen shown here is actually a 1E5 paper I have been able to type after this section was posted to the forums.



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(05) CL1A: The first clay papers from 1943. The watermark is similar to that of the 1E4 paper.



(06) CL1B: Watermark is perpendicular to the previous paper.



The watermark on the clay papers is difficult to see, making these stamps very difficult to type. It can be easily determined if a stamp is a clay paper stamp, it is very difficult to tell which clay paper it is.

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(07) NGR: unwatermarked grid



(08) NOP: opaque, thick, unwatermarked, and un-catalogued. Easiest to distinguish for the high values (5, 10, and 20 pesos).



Paper 9 is on the second and diffused watermark, and Paper 10 is on the second and clear watermark. I show these papers later in these notes. I originally had a paper 10 as the second watermark with narrow Straight Rays paper, but do not currently know how to tell this paper apart from the other second, or Straight Rays watermark papers.

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(12) CL2A: thin, plastic-like clay paper



(13) CL2B: thin, plastic-like clay paper, opaque and almost imposible to back scan!



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The five late papers from the 1950s

(14) 1L1, porous white paper:



(15) 1L2, large to gigantic RA:



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(16) 1L3, bright white medium thick paper:



(17) 1L4, with visible but muddy RAs:



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(18) 1L5, so called Zarate because of the city where the paper was made, found white and grayish:



(19) Official clay paper, similar to CL2A, thinner, and easy to back scan for the 50c, and slightly thick and with poor perforations for the 25c.



Watermark Variations

These two variations are cause of doubt. Both appear to be single instances in the respective watermark screen.

The first one looks like the 1E1 screen, but has narrower rays.

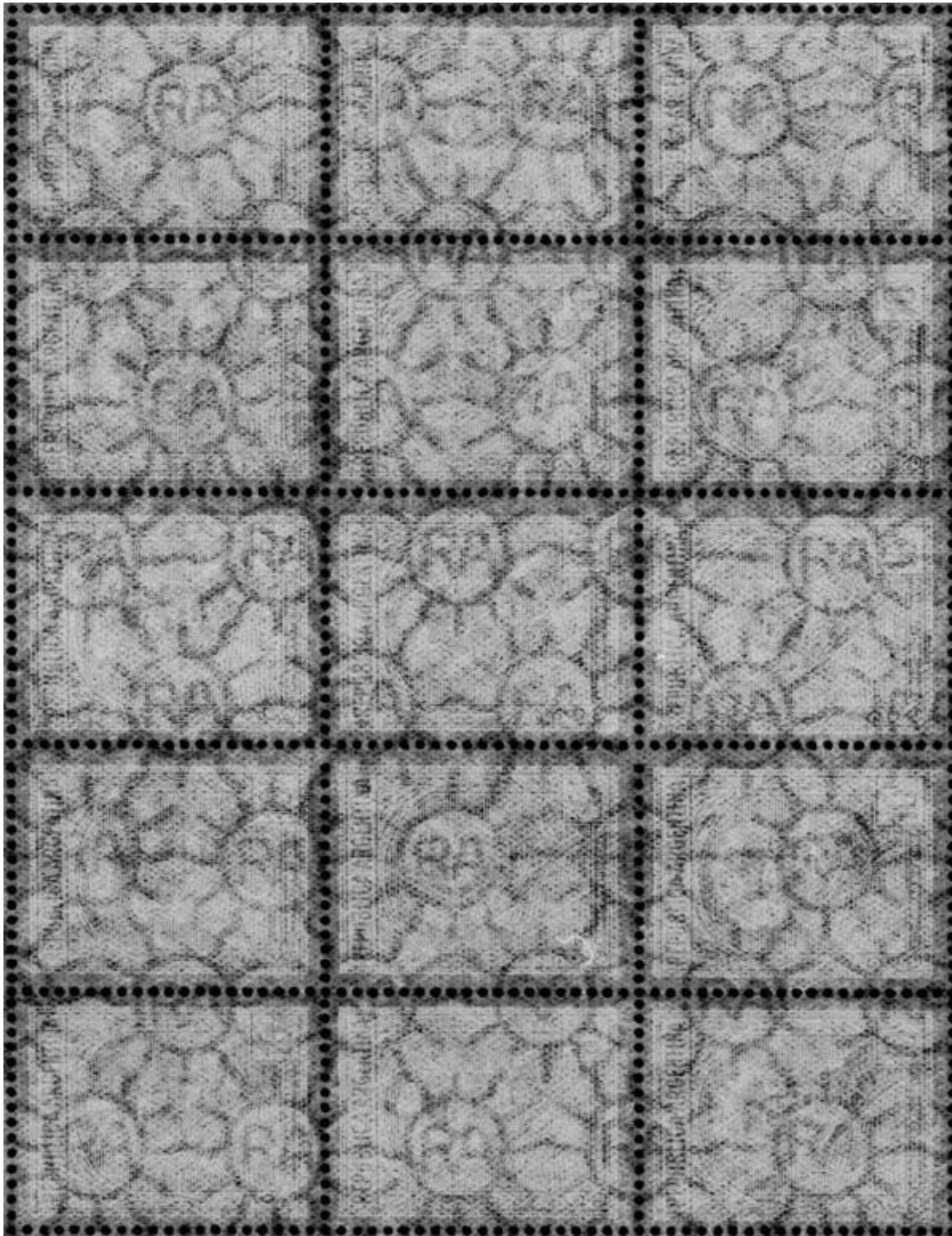


The second one has a small RA and looks like its on the 1E3 screen. Since I have only seen this small RA as a single, I am assuming it is 1E3. [Note: this is a candidate 1E5]



A reference scan of the 1E1 watermark

Now that I am sorting out all of the issues chronologically, it is a good starting point to have a reference scan of this paper.



Notice that the dimensions of all of the features vary slightly, and especially, that there are small, medium, and large RA's.

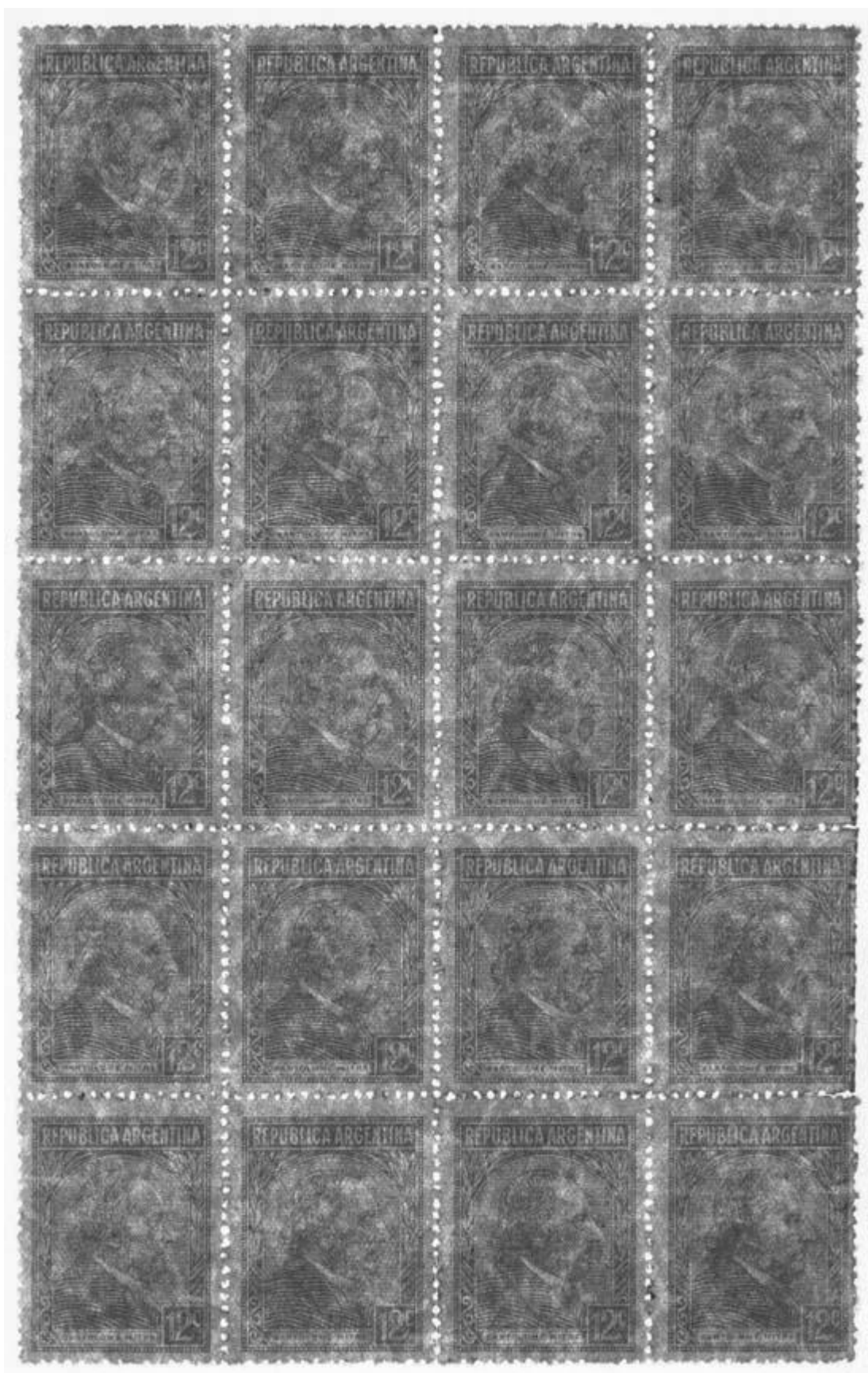
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The Straight Rays Diffused Watermark

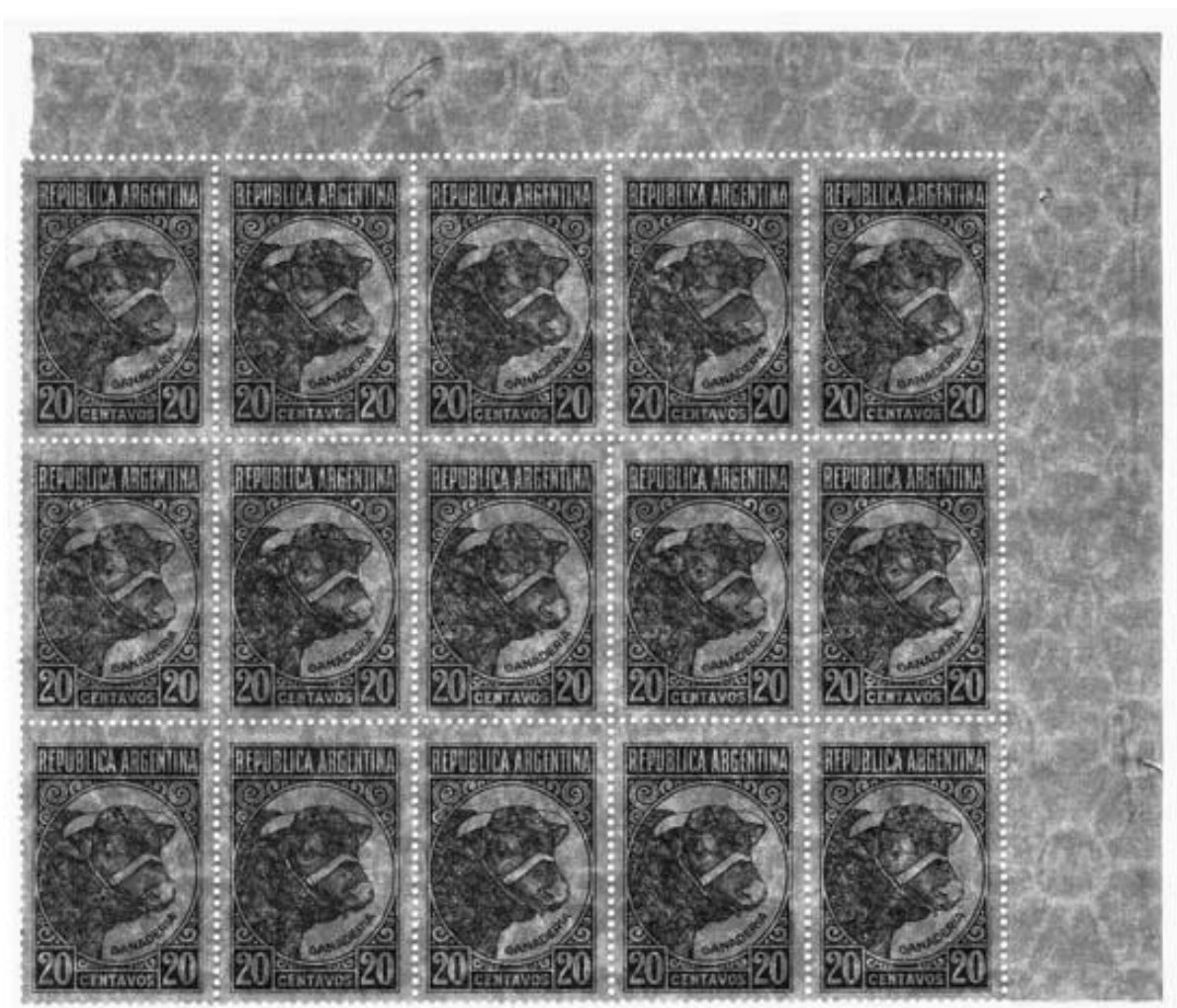
These two blocks are over the paper I refer to as 2D, with the straight rays diffuse watermark. The first block is a 12c Red. The second block is a Large Format 20c Bull (20cLC).



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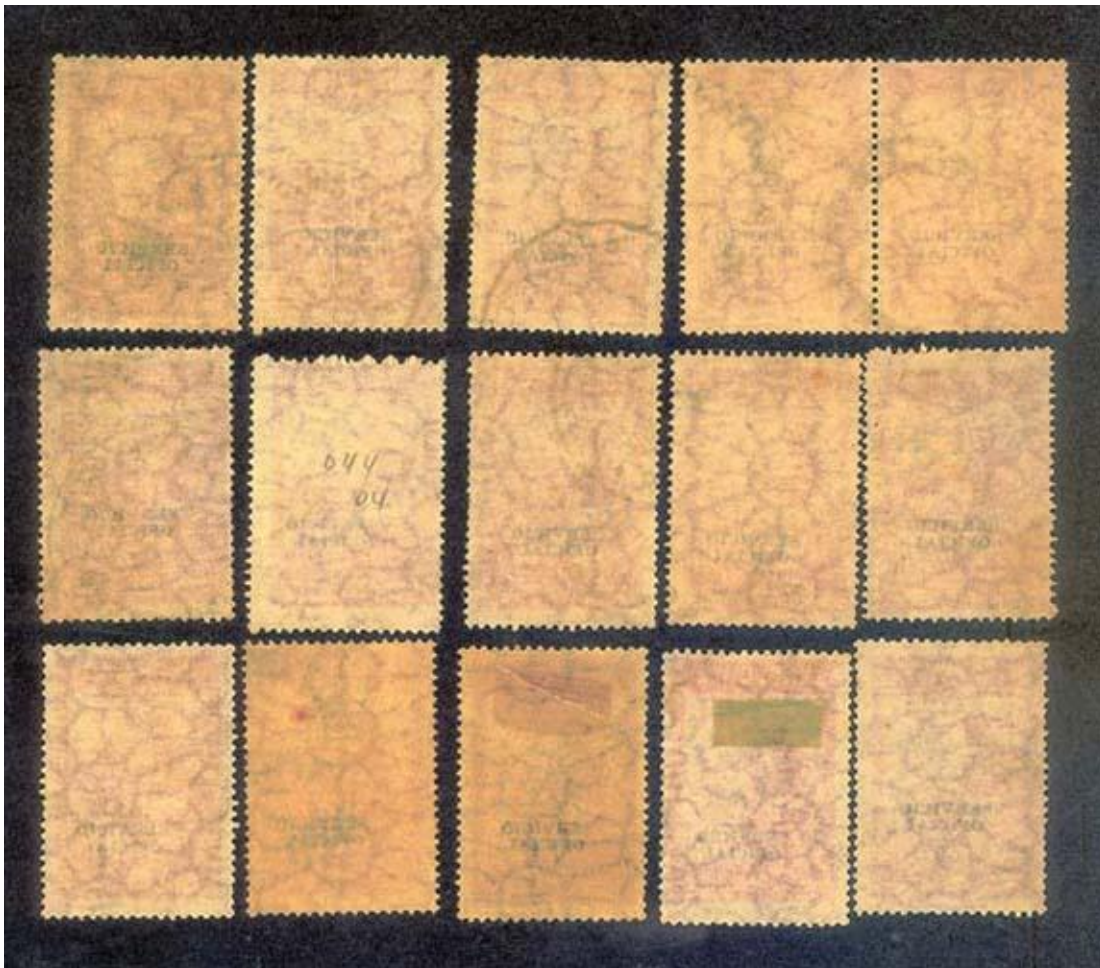
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Watermarks/Papers 25c 'Servicio Oficial'

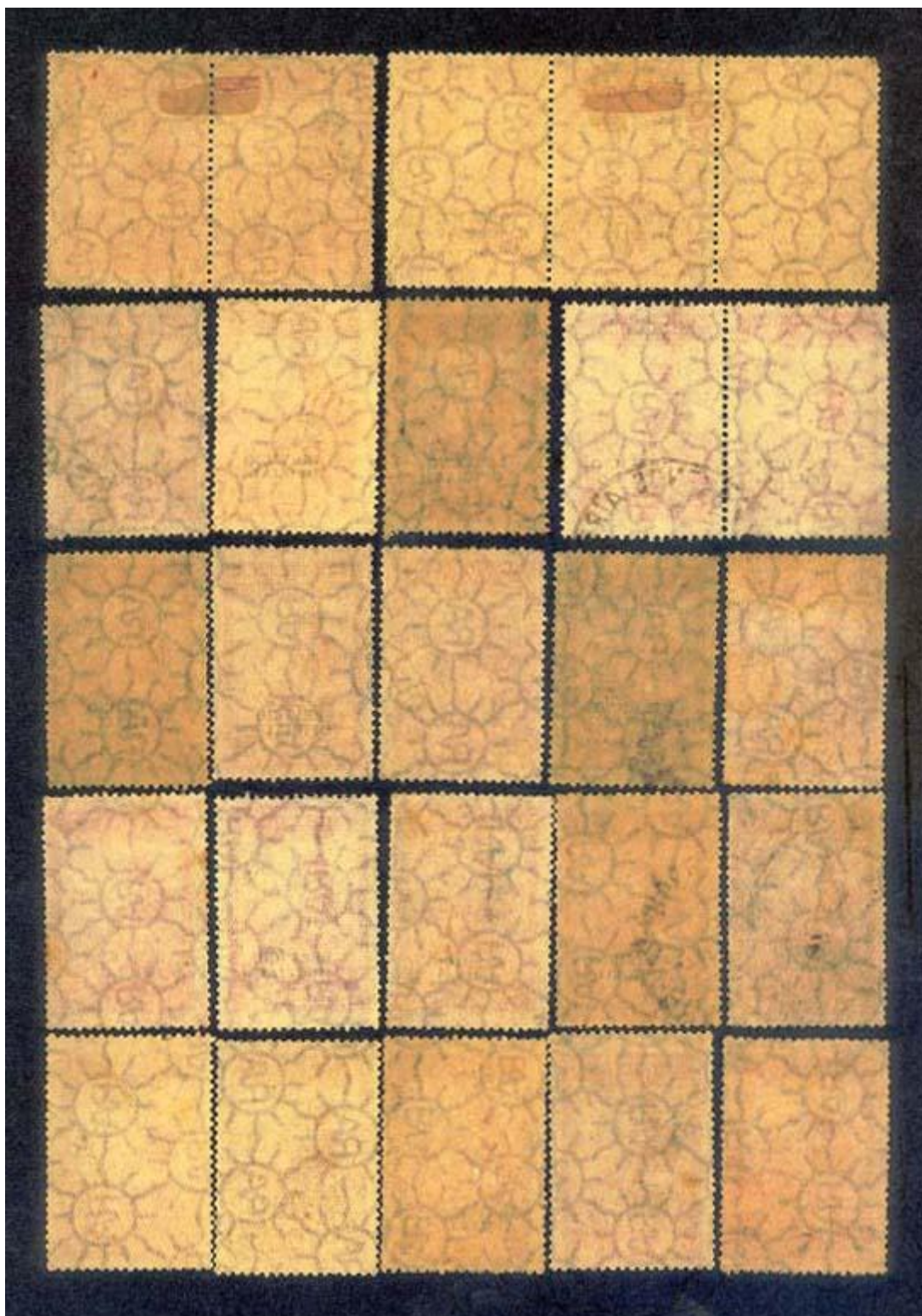
I have taken a quick look at a sample of these stamps. Here are the images. All are with the 12 mm, or wider overprint, with the exception of the 1L, which has the 11 mm, or narrower overprint.

1E2, thin, very porous, white paper.



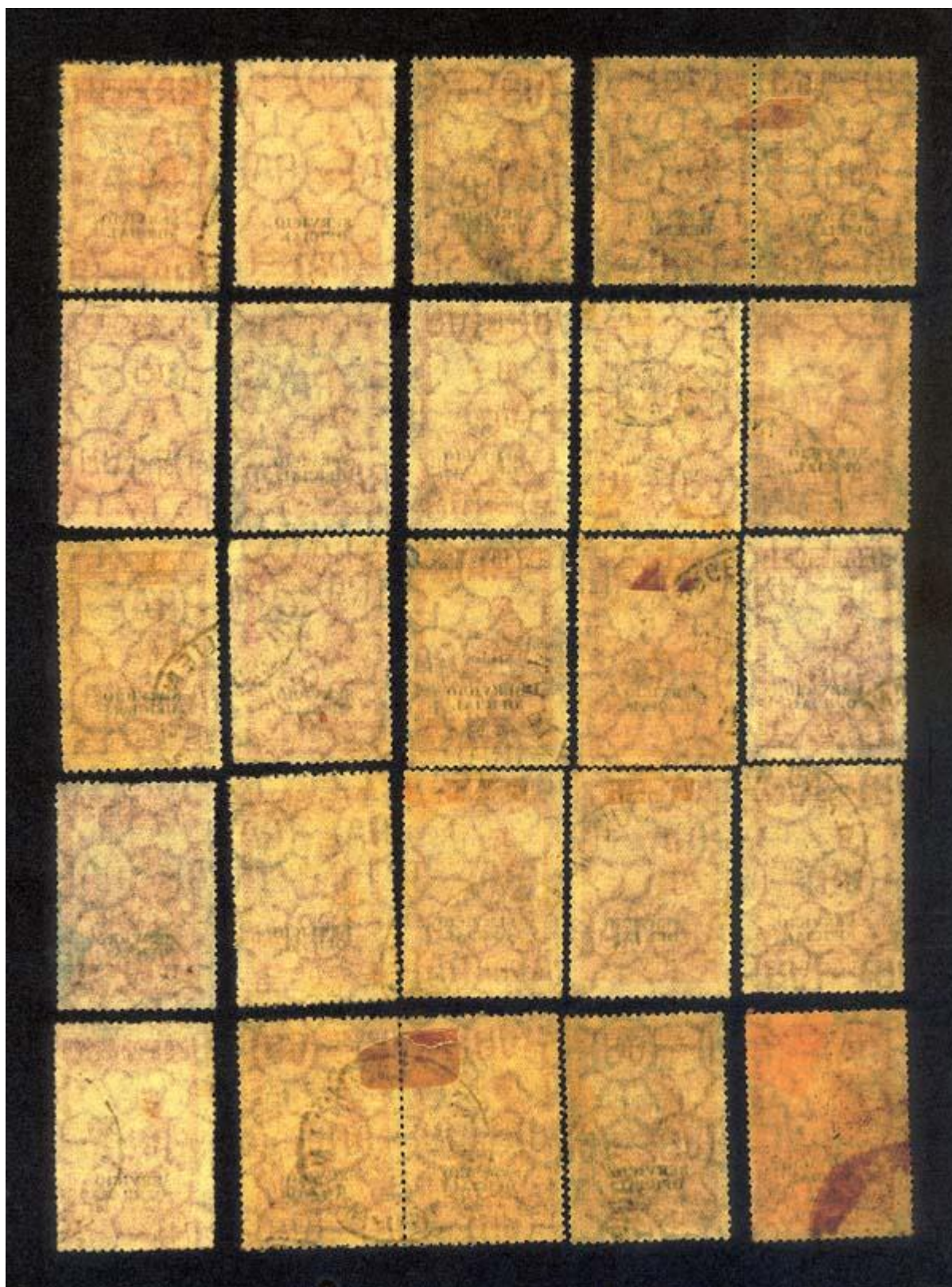
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1E3, white to cream, medium thickness paper.



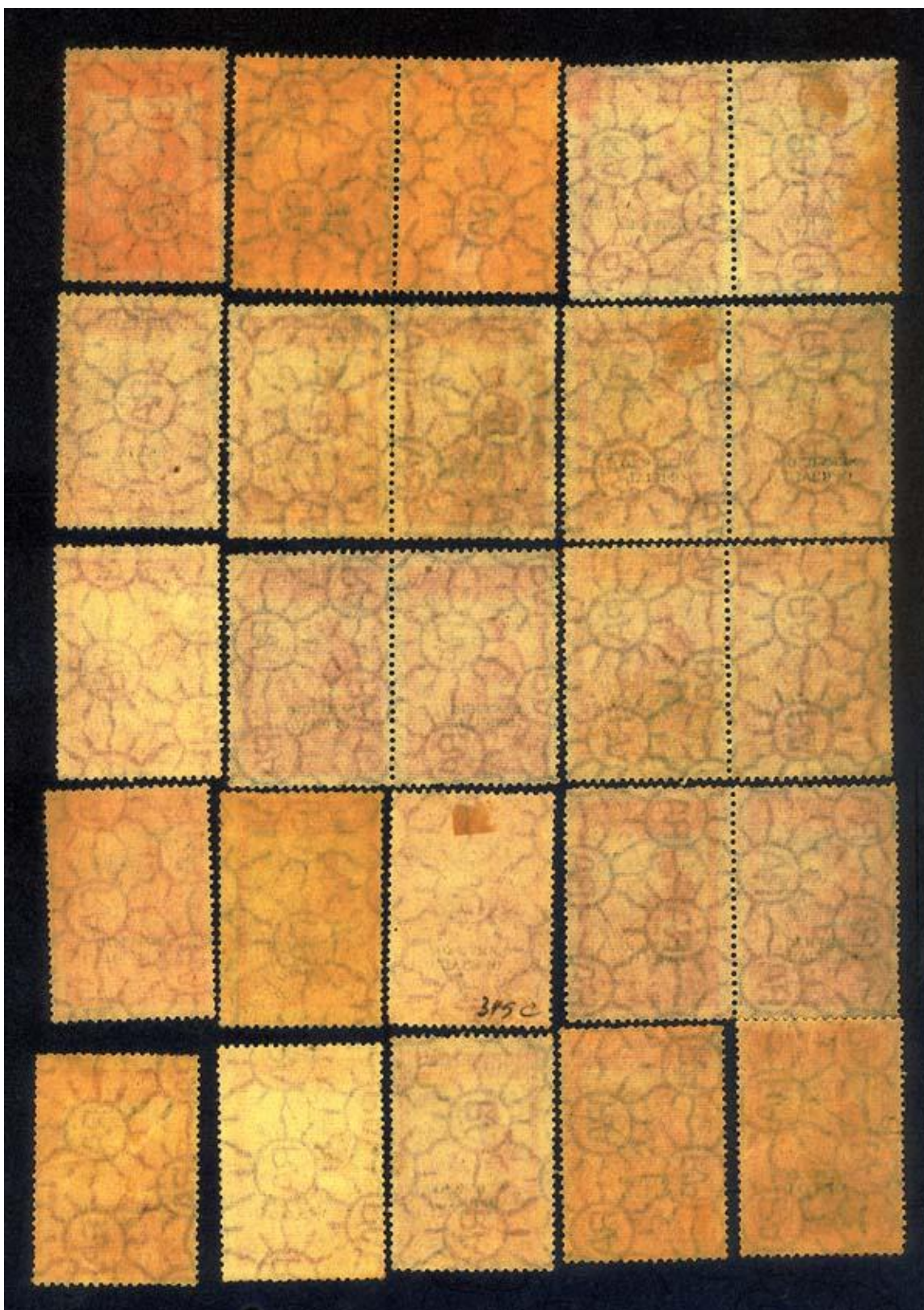
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1E4, white, thin, porous paper.



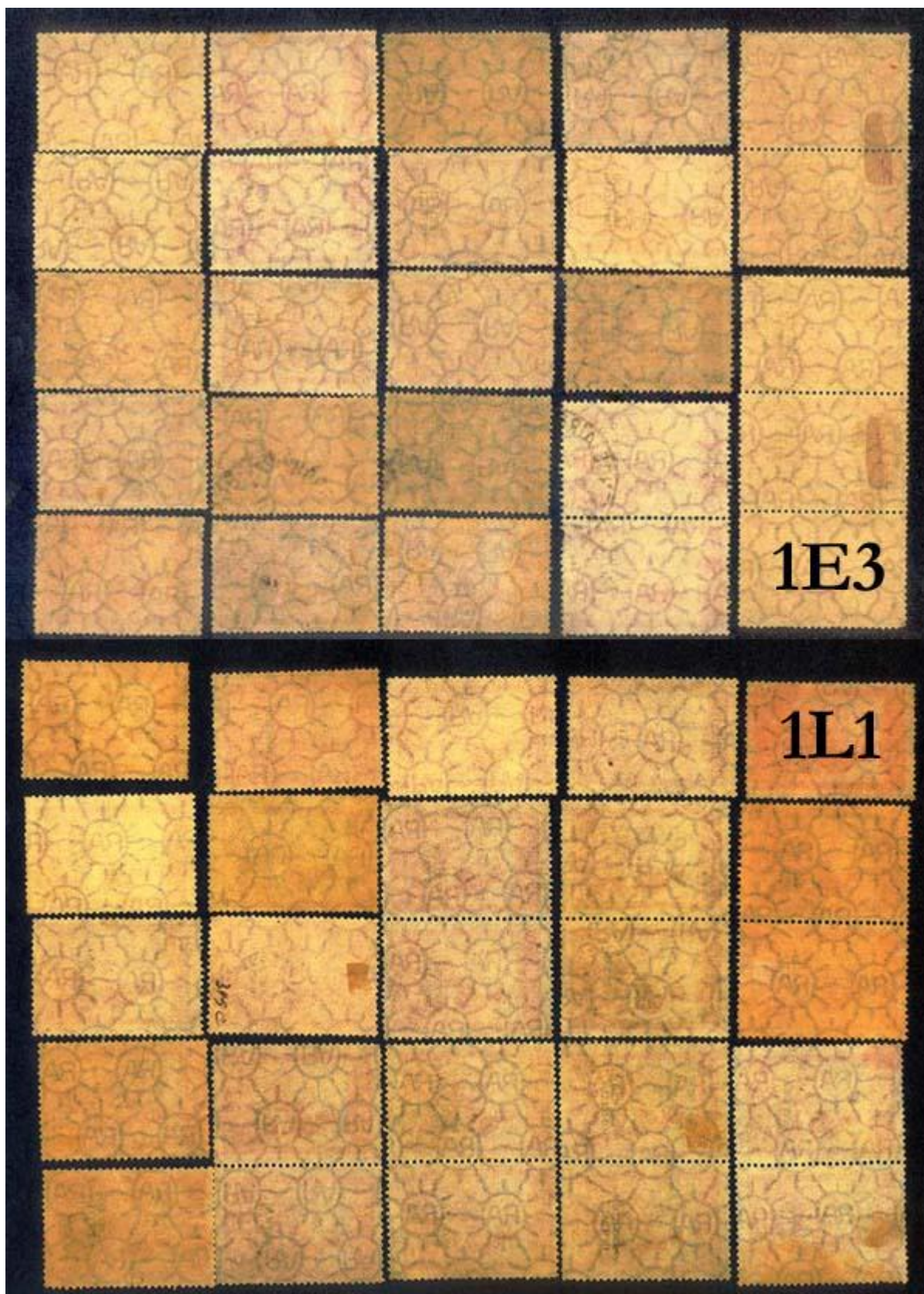
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1L1, looks a lot like 1E3, used for the 11 mm overprints of the 1950s



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Here is a comparison on the 1E3 with the 1L1

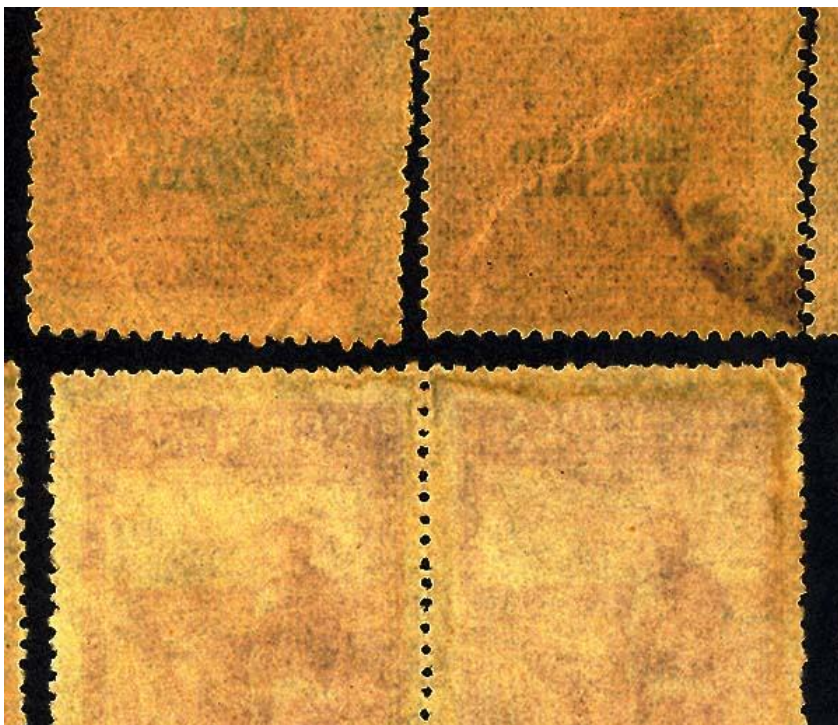


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I also find a few with the A in the watermark partially missing the legs-lower stamp at top middle edge. This pair is printed on the 1E3 paper.



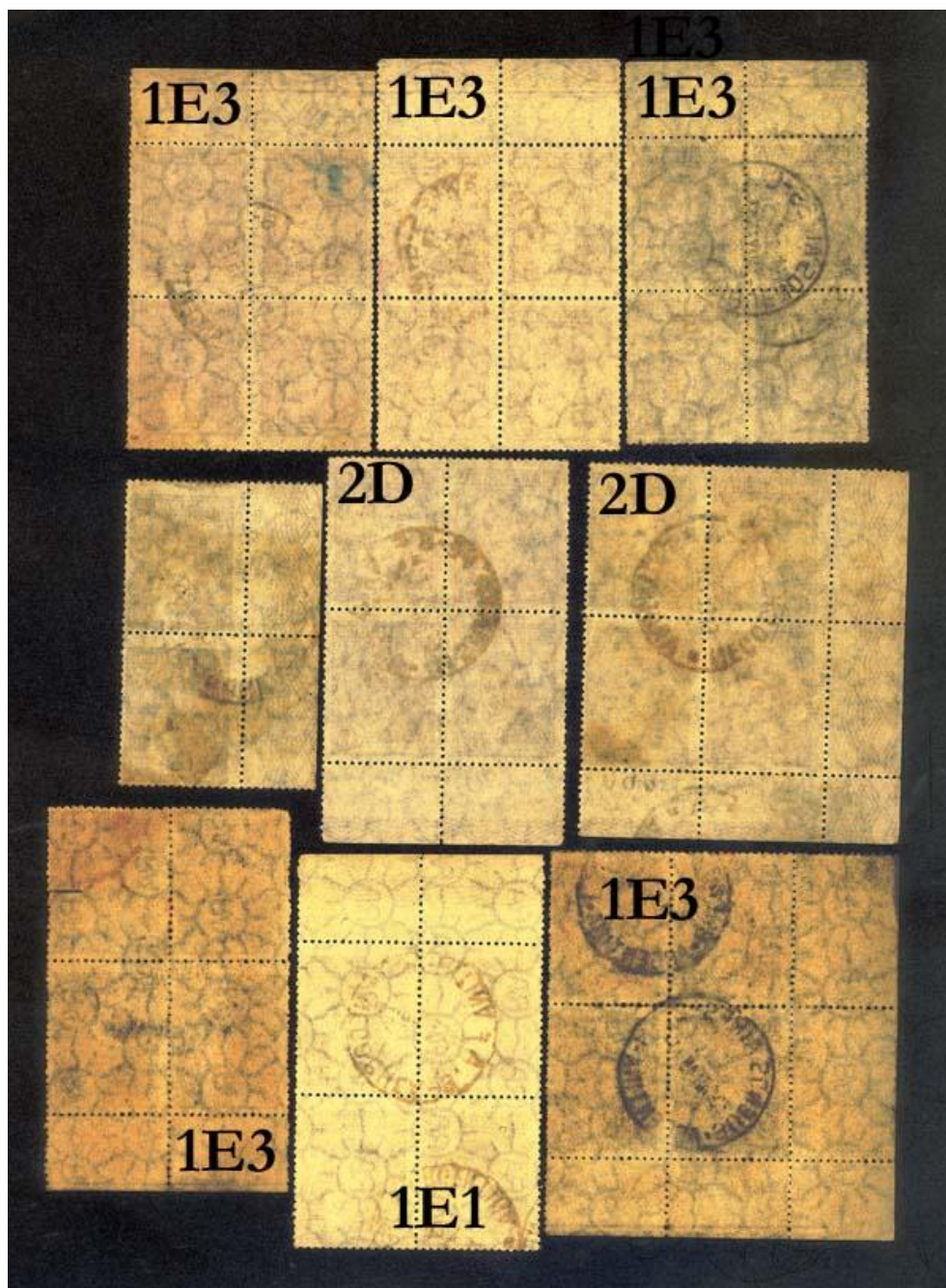
The un-watermarked grid, NGR, is the top two rows of the scan below, and the un-watermarked opaque NOP, is the bottom two rows. Here is a comparison scan. The NGR is grayish, and the NOP is white, but this difference is not obvious in an untreated back scan. With higher contrast, using the 'equalize' filter in Photoshop, I am able to show the difference.



'cents' Papers

Papers on the 1/2 c value

Here I show several blocks. The watermarks are clear for the 1E3 of 1939, the 1E1 of 1935, and the rare Straight Rays diffused (2D) of 1943. These colors are the result of applying the 'equalize' function in Photoshop.

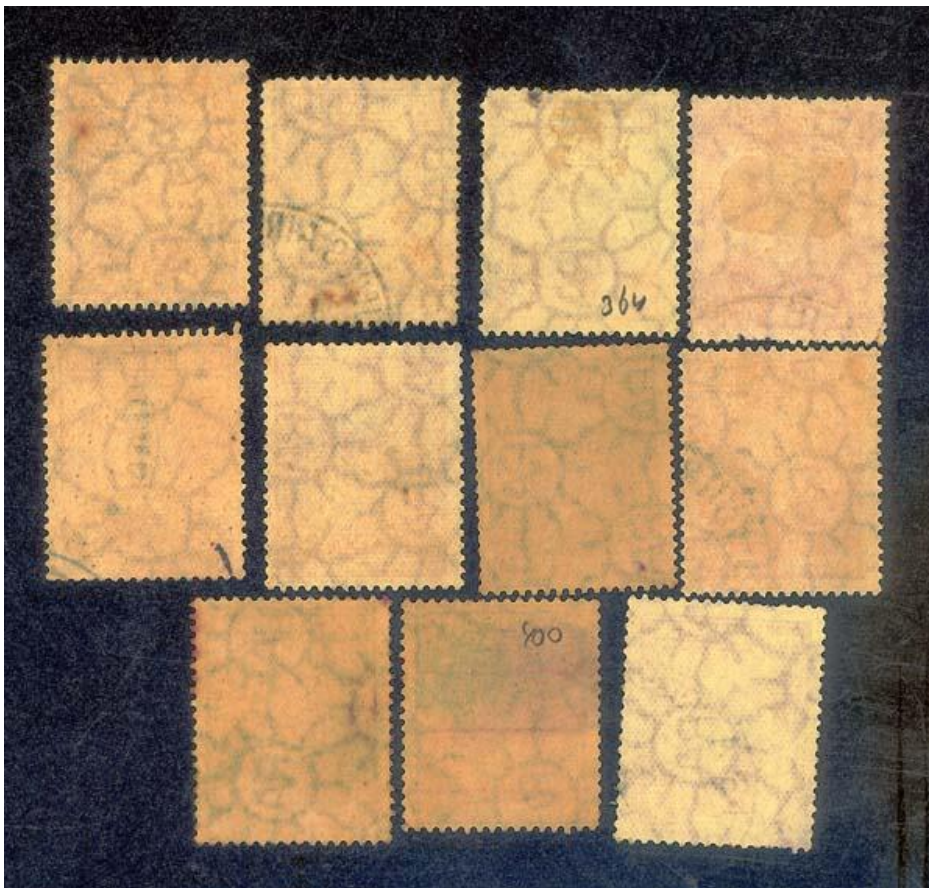


Papers on the 1 c value

This is one of the most difficult values to type on account of how little the colors varied through the years. The least common printing is the typographed stamp on 1E1 paper.



Here I show a sample of these stamps showing the watermark. Notice that the middle stamp is short, maybe from a perforation error sheet.



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Here I show a few blocks of four on several papers. The colors are filtered by the Photoshop 'equalize' function. The 1E1's after this filter look golden, and the 1E3's look darkened, even though the latter paper is white.



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The 1c 1E4 is bright white and thin, and is usually perfed comb. This perforation format is found on the other 1E4 values.

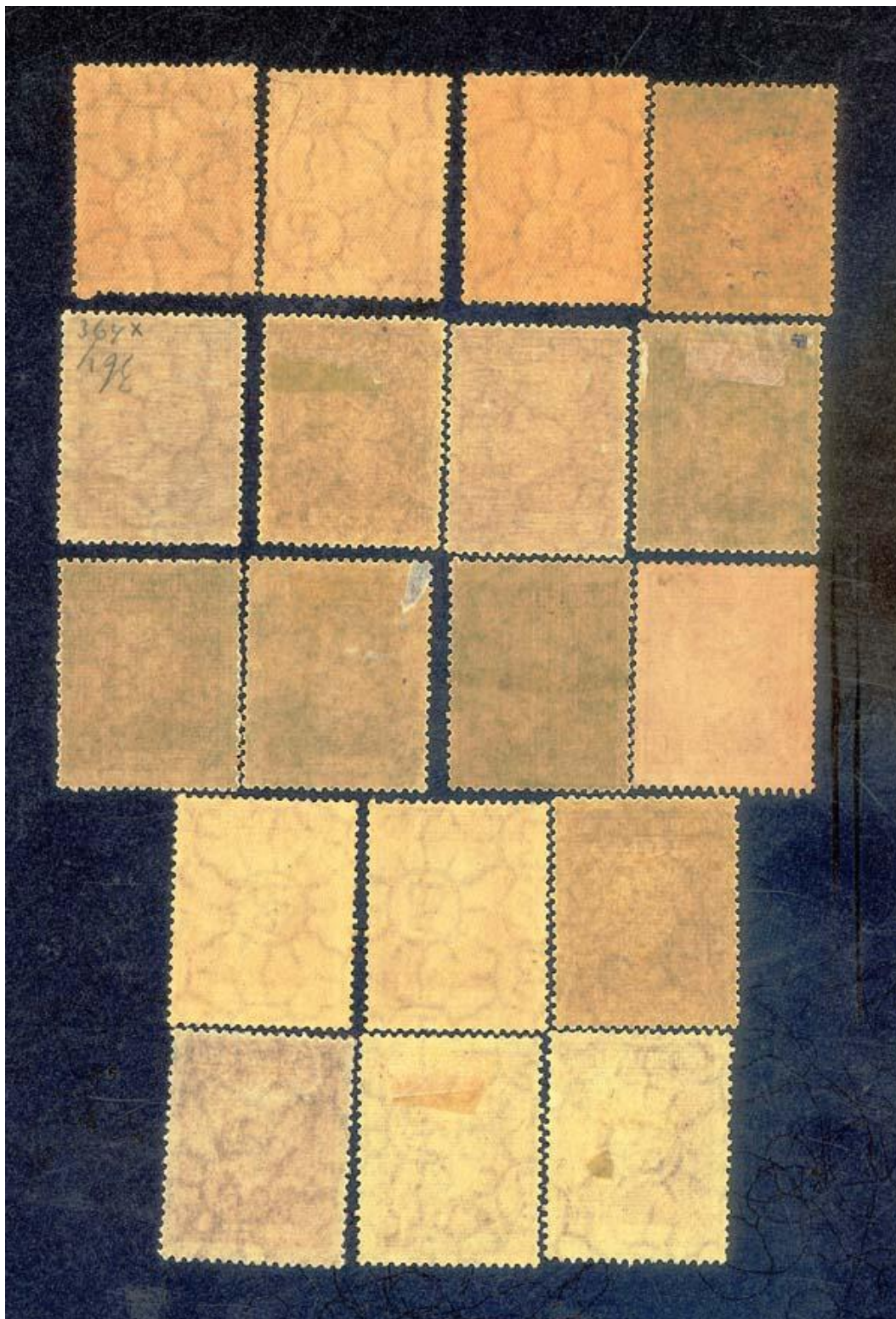


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I show here a mint selection. First image is front, second is back filtered for watermarks, and third is back showing the gum, all stamps matching their relative positions.

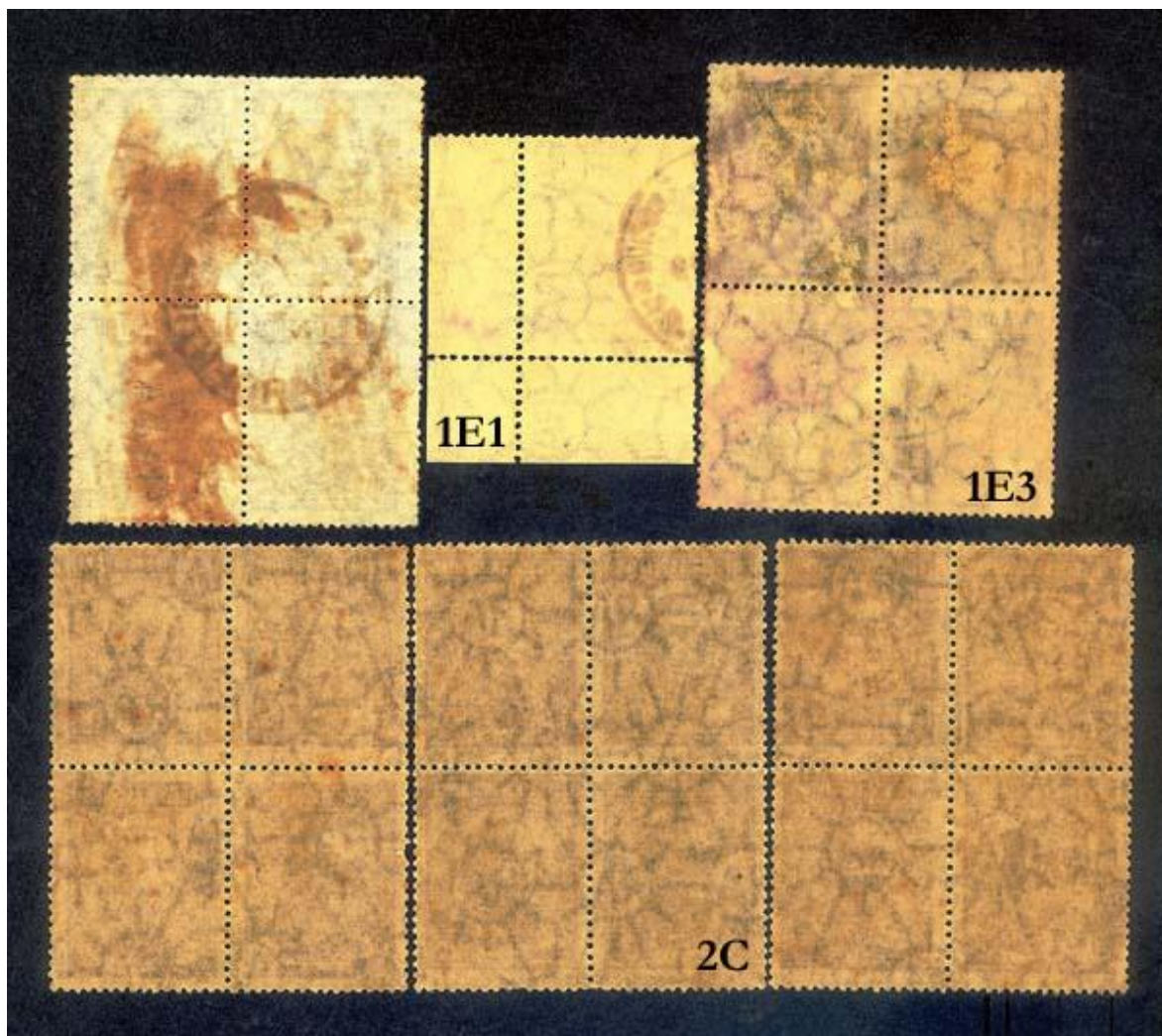


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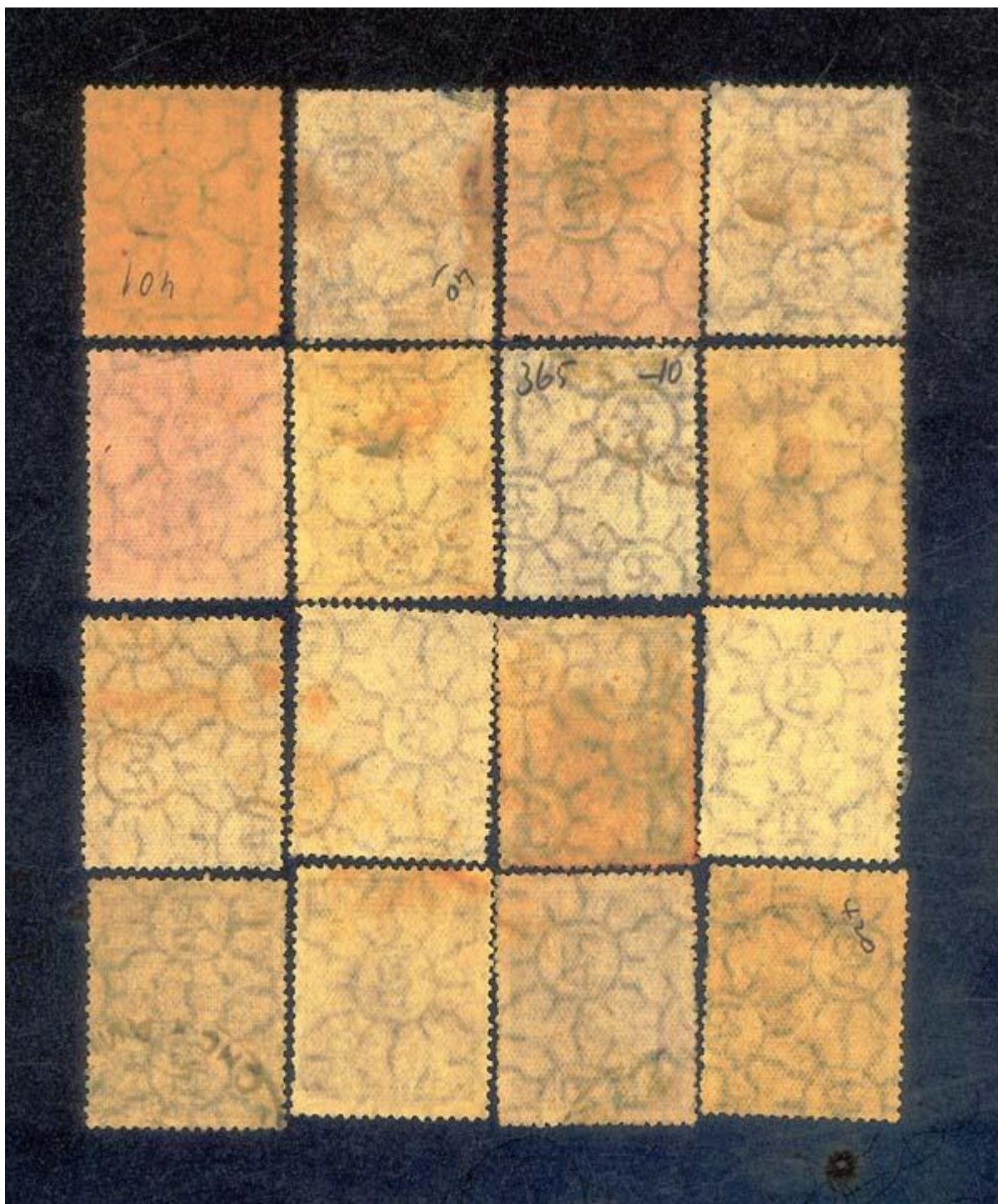
Papers for the 2 c

This is a relatively easy stamp to type. I find 1E1 and 1E3, and straight rays clear (2C), latter commonly found mint.



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I show a few wavy rays specimens for reference.



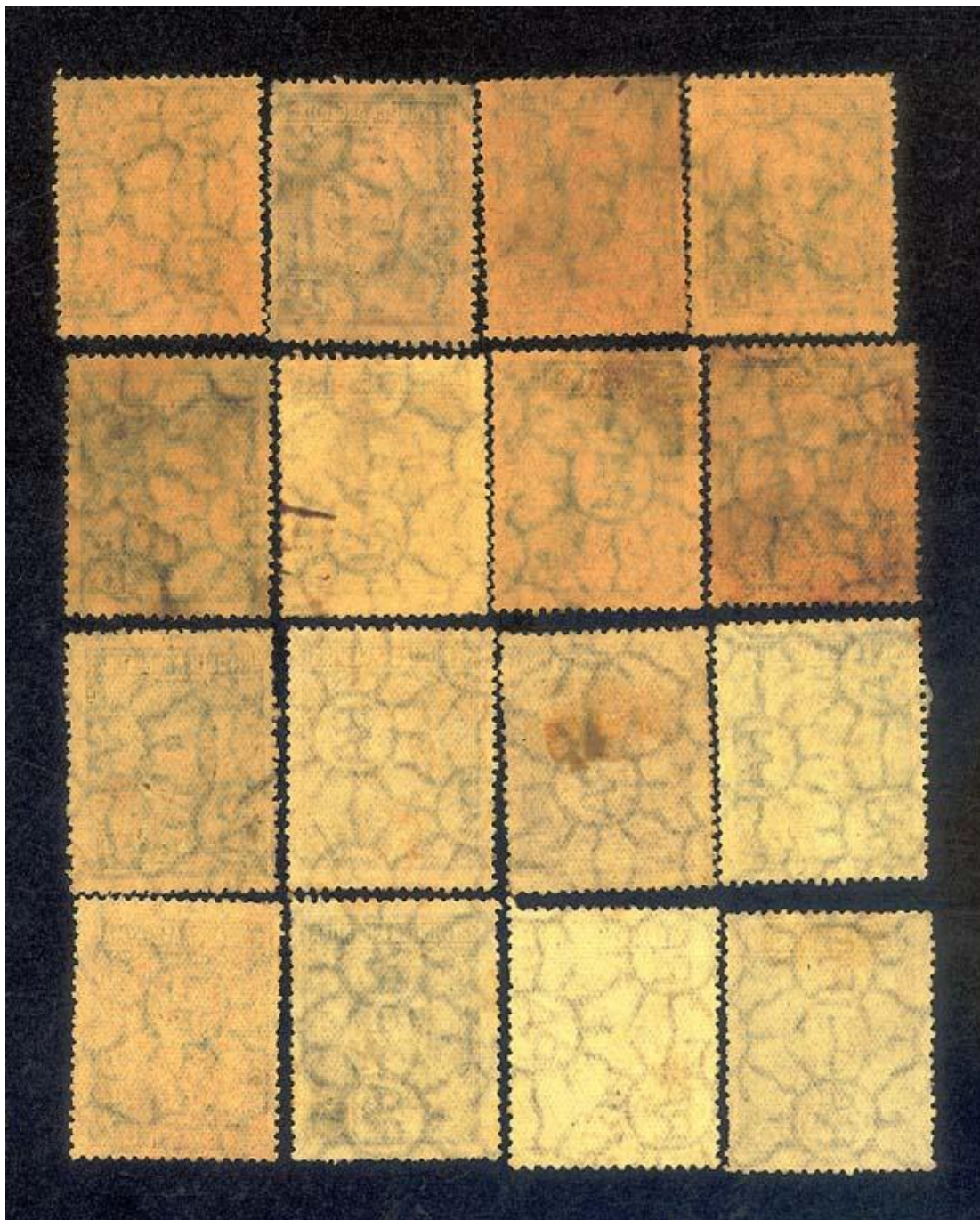
'cents' issues that saw little postal use

These stamps saw very little postal use. I show a few specimens for future reference. Here is the 2 1/2c 1E3 and 1E4 (it is curious that such a seldom-used stamp was printed on two papers).



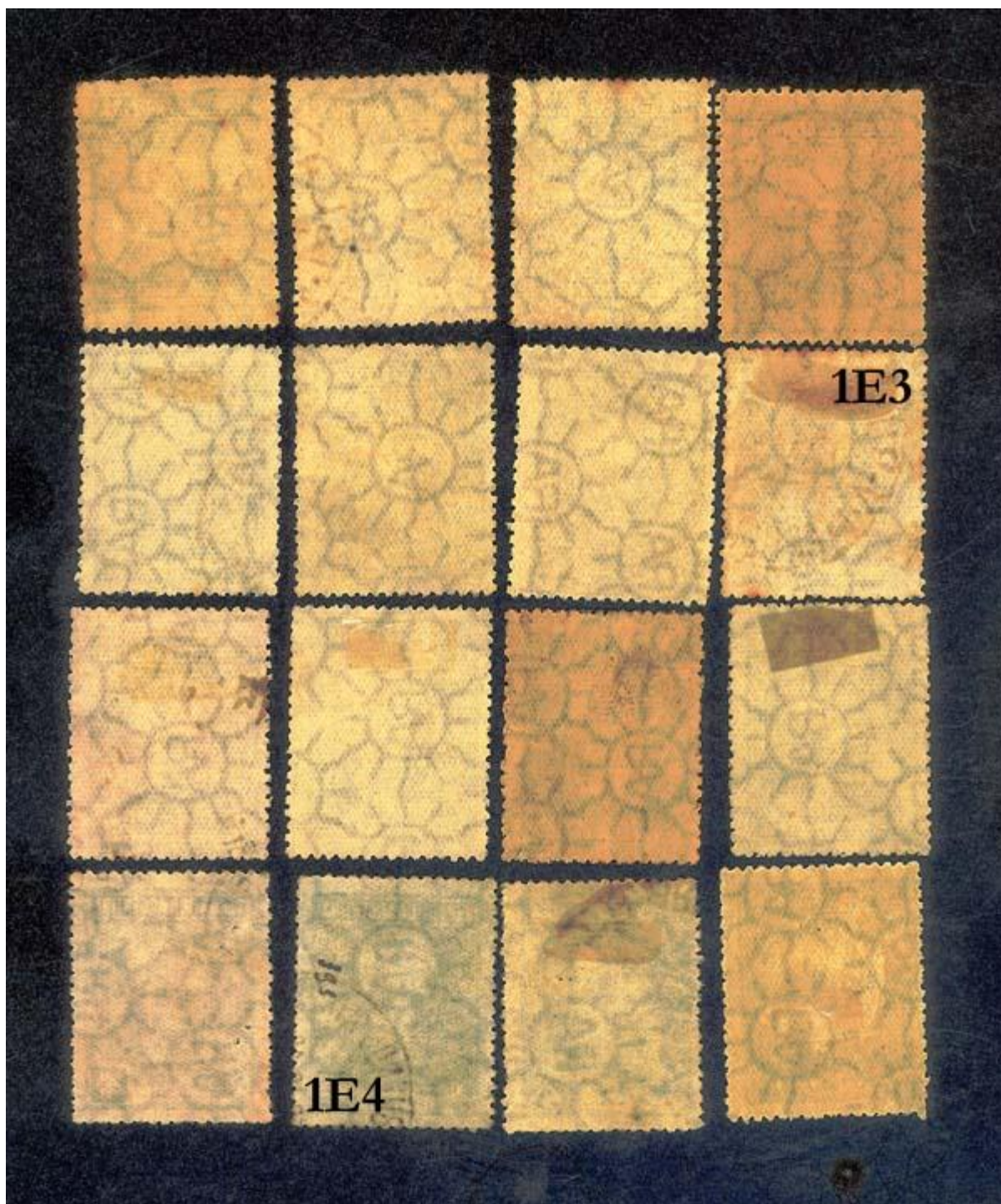
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Here is the 3c San Martin Green



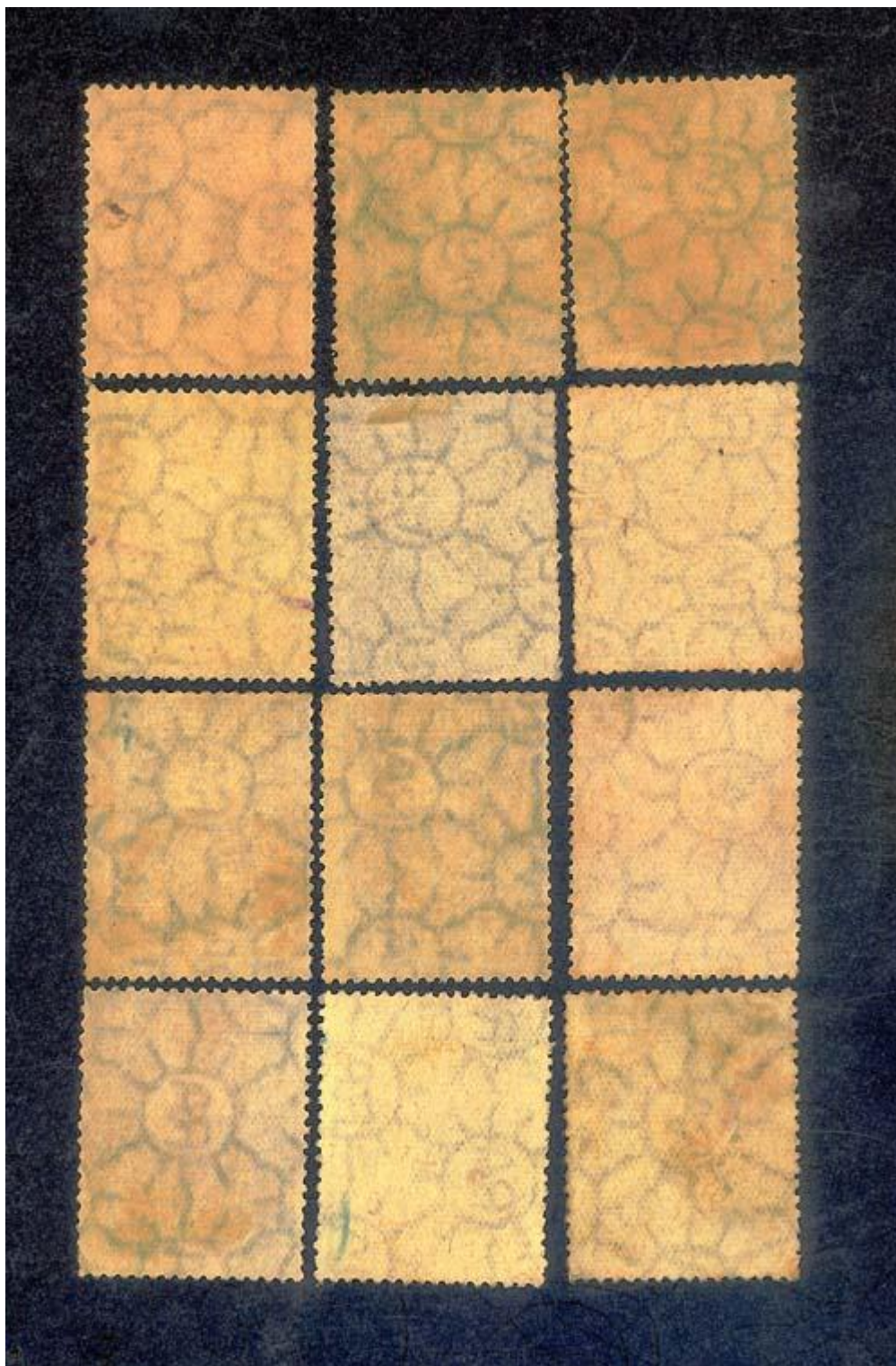
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Here is the 4c Gray (a rare stamp, and scarcer still on the 1E4 paper)



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Here is the 4c Green.



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Here is the 6c Wavy Rays.

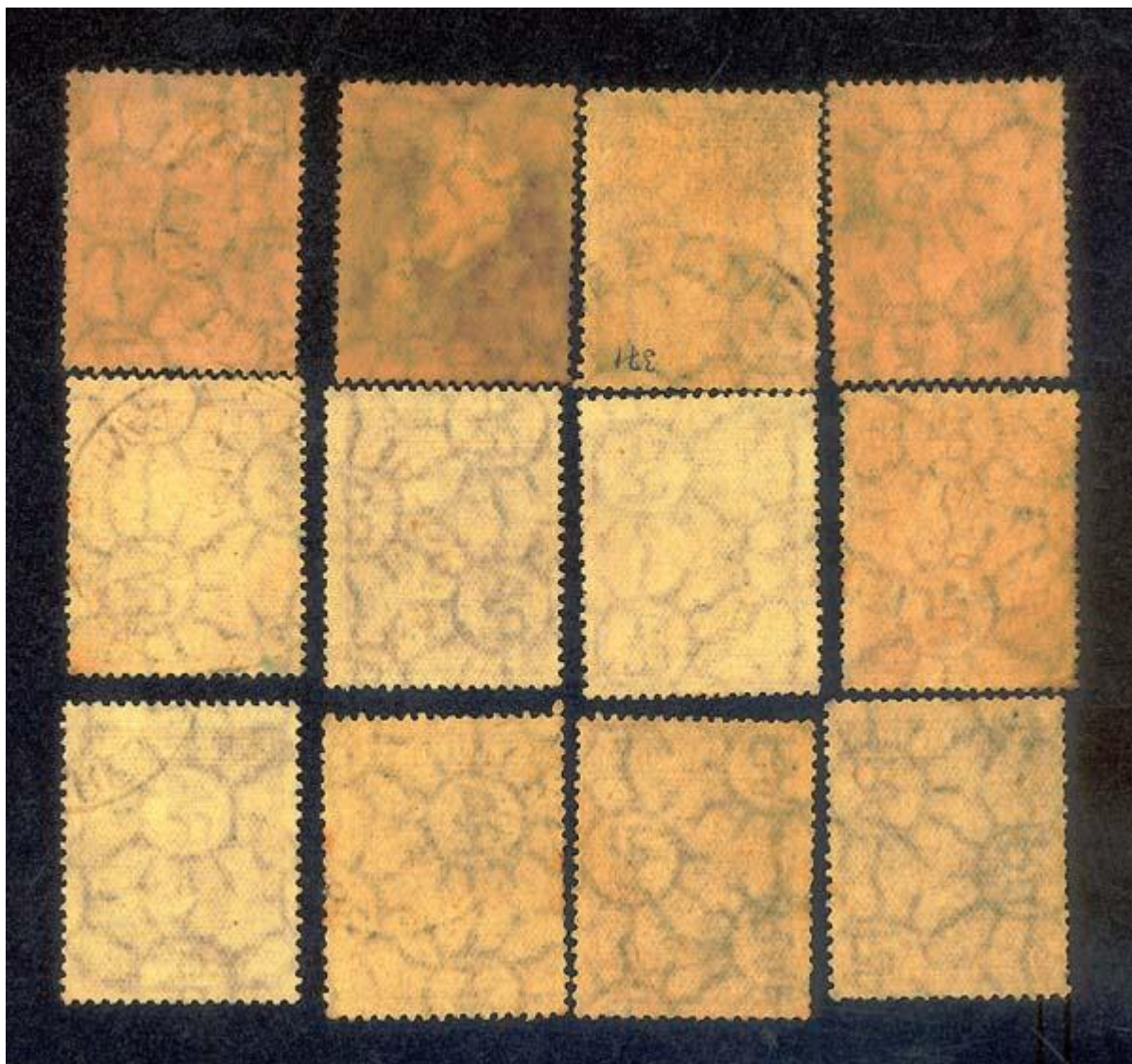


Here is the 8c.



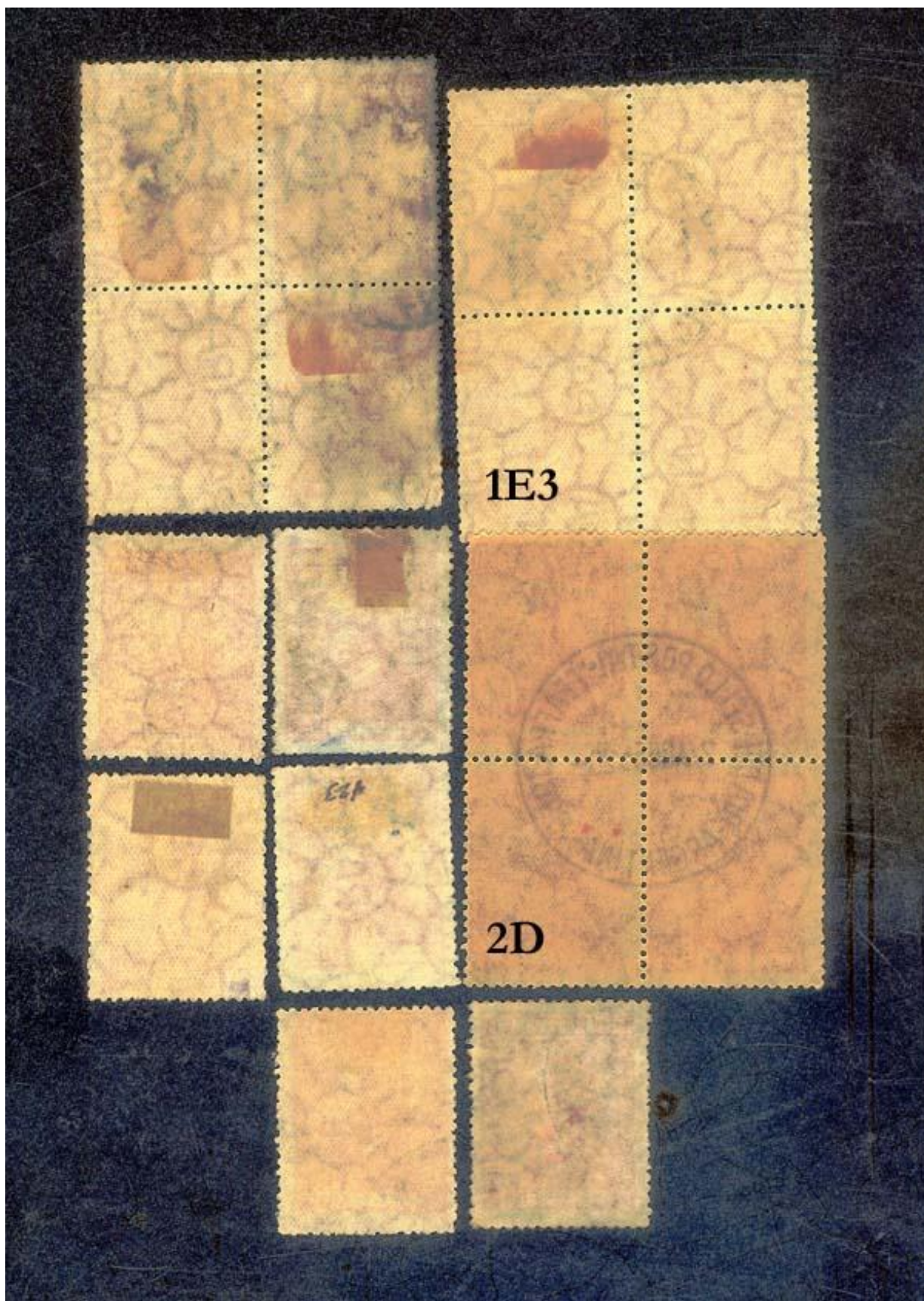
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Here is the 12c Brown.



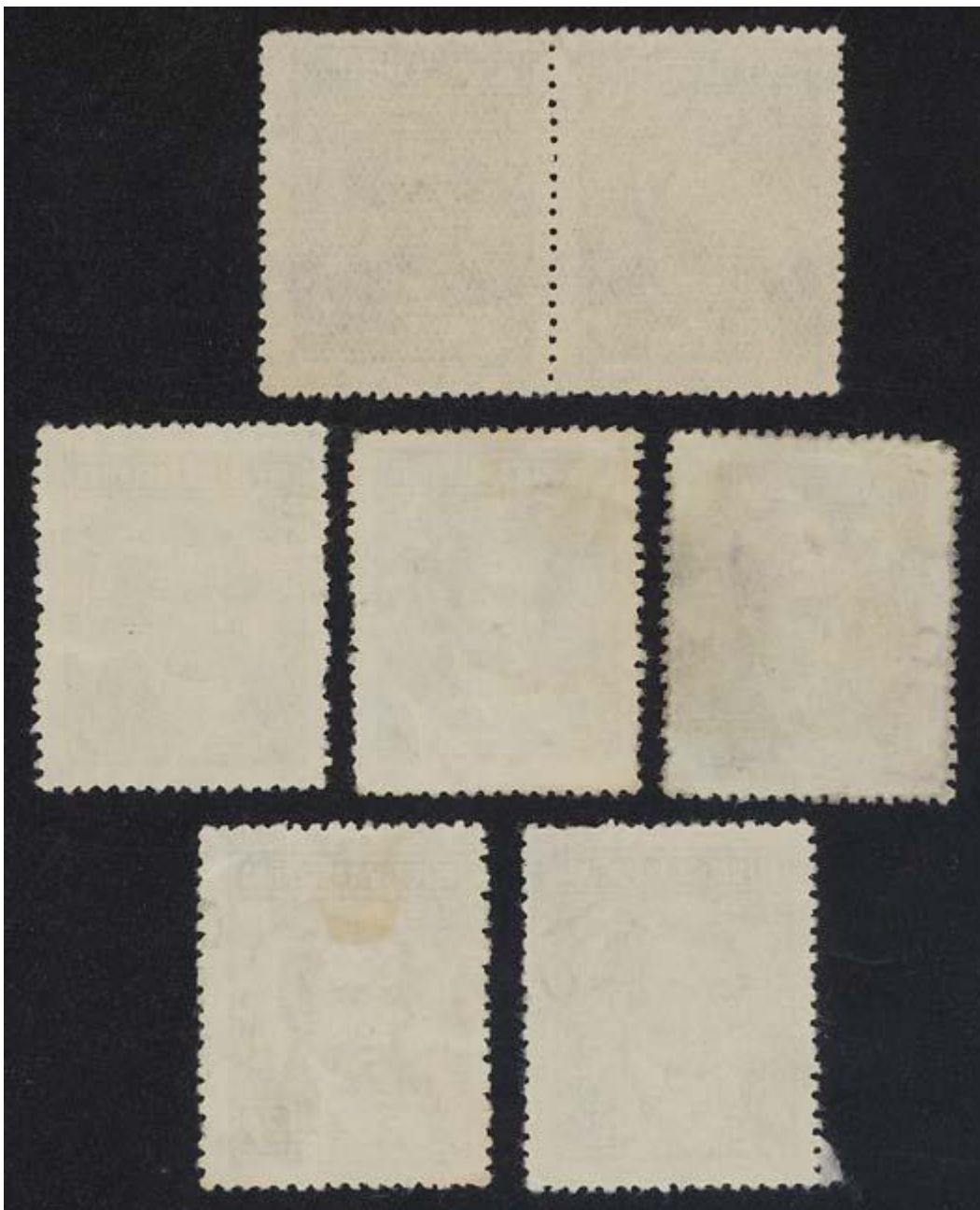
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Here is the 12c Red wavy and straight rays.



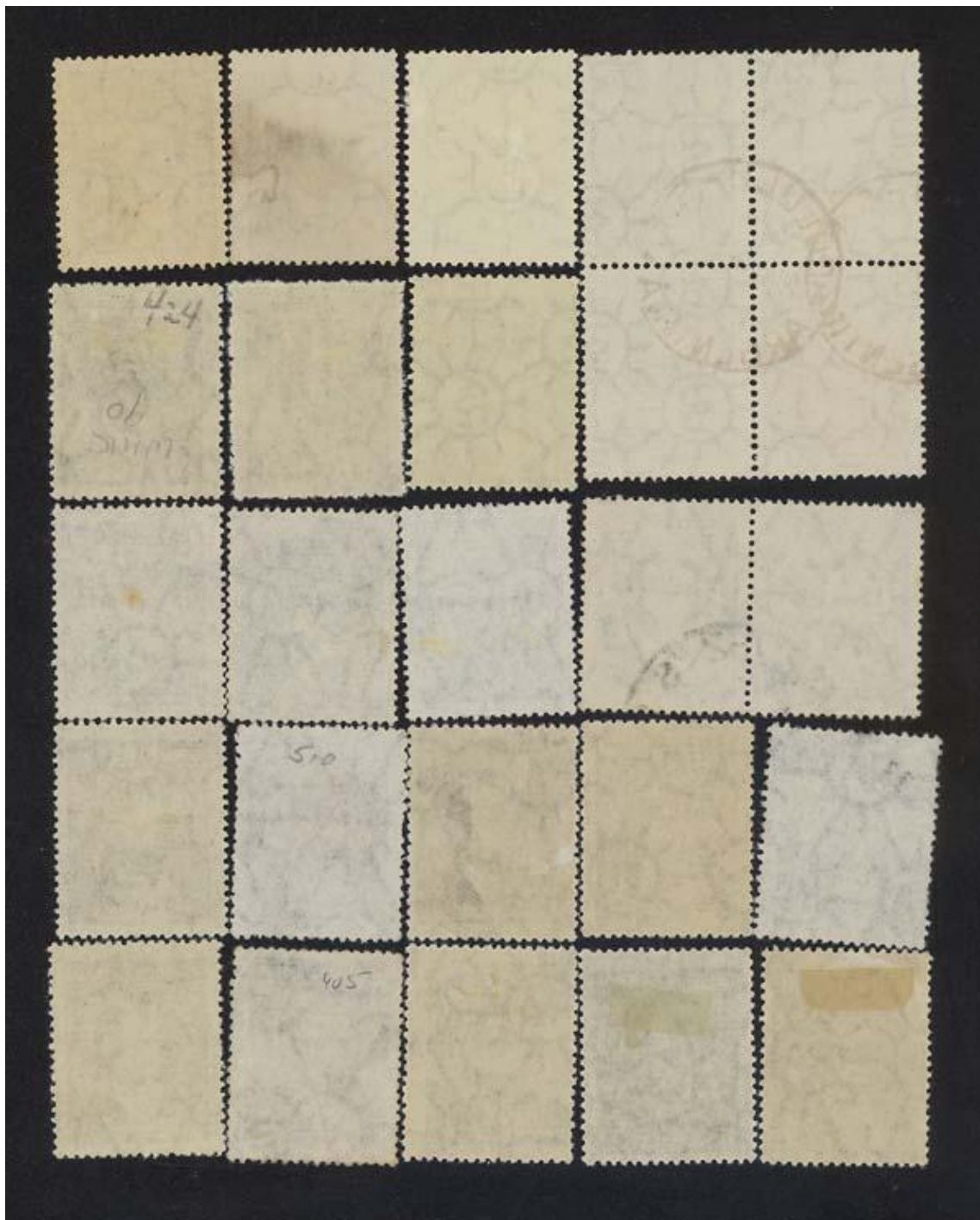
3c Moreno value

I find the two un-watermarked papers, grid (NGR), and white opaque (NOP). The top pair in this image is a comparison NGR pair, and the five specimens below it are NOP, very rare.



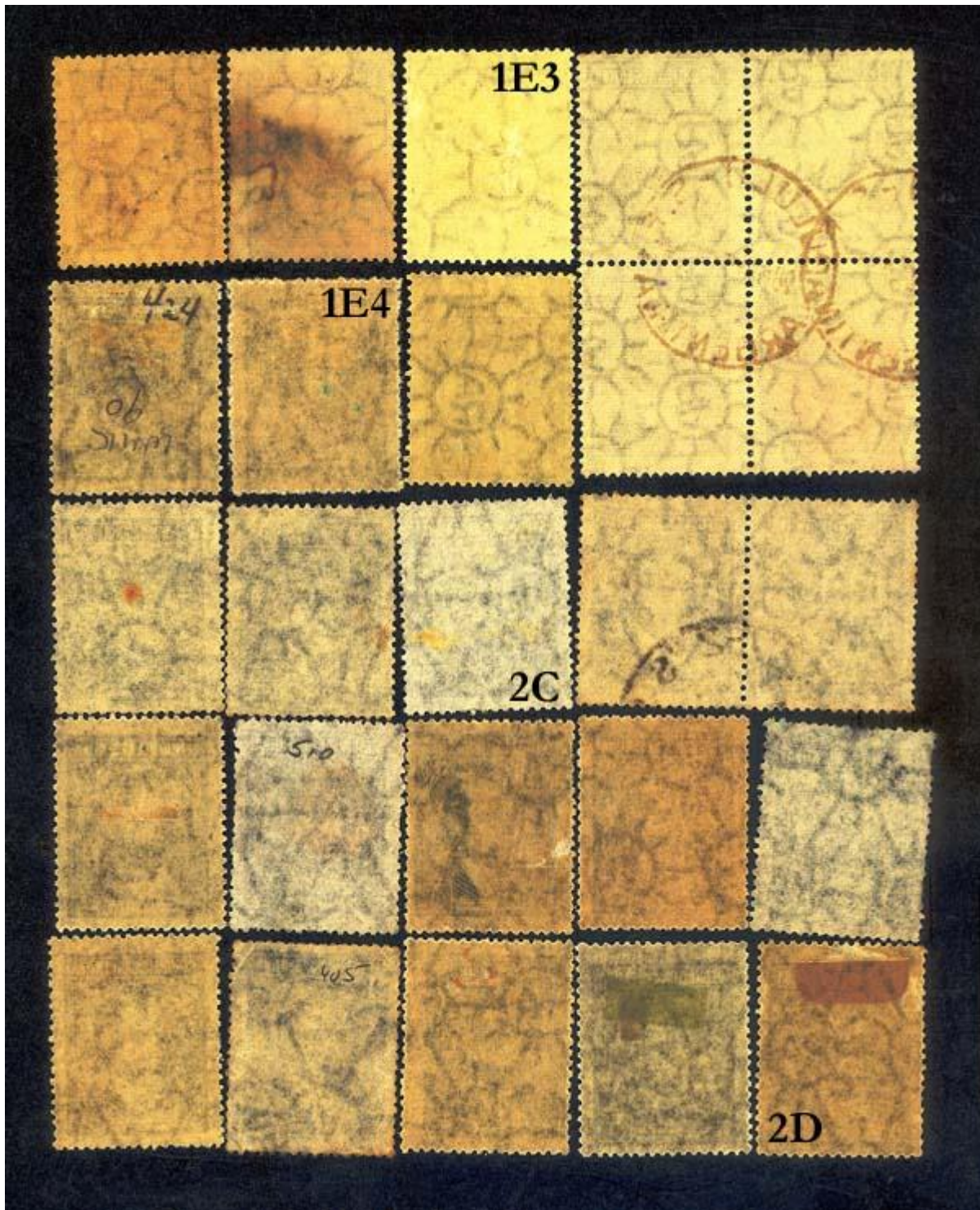
The Argentina 1935-51 Definitives

With more time, I would like to study the Straight Rays printings. I wonder if this stamp was printed on the diffused paper of 1943. I find it used in the 50s, when the clear printing (2C) took place. This image is in true colors.



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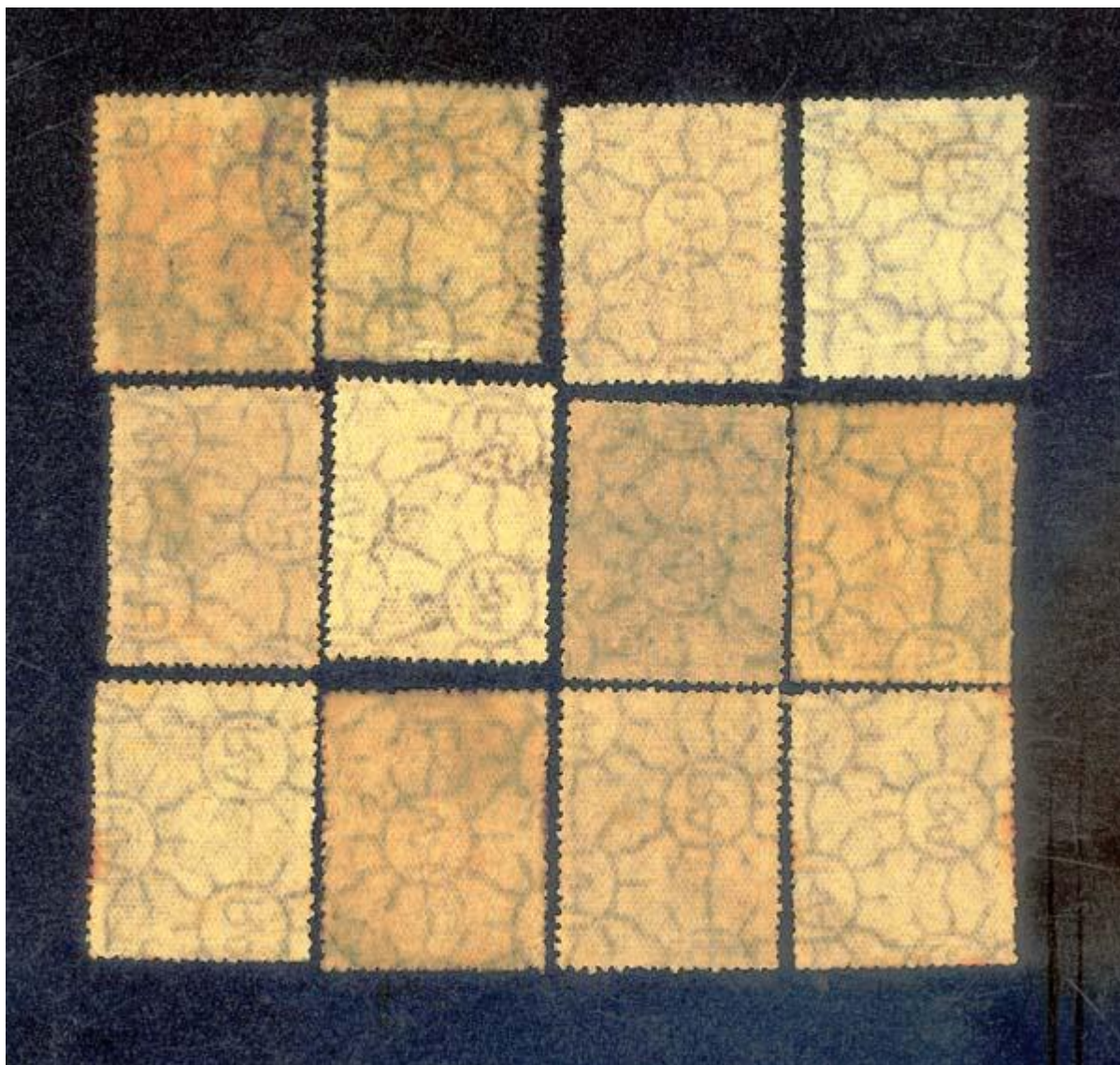
And this one shows the watermark more clearly thanks to the Photoshop 'equalize' filter. I only find one stamp on 1E4 paper.



3c San Martin Gray

I am surprised by how complex this stamp is. In addition to unwatermarked grid (NGR) I find it on three other papers:

The 1E3 of 1939:



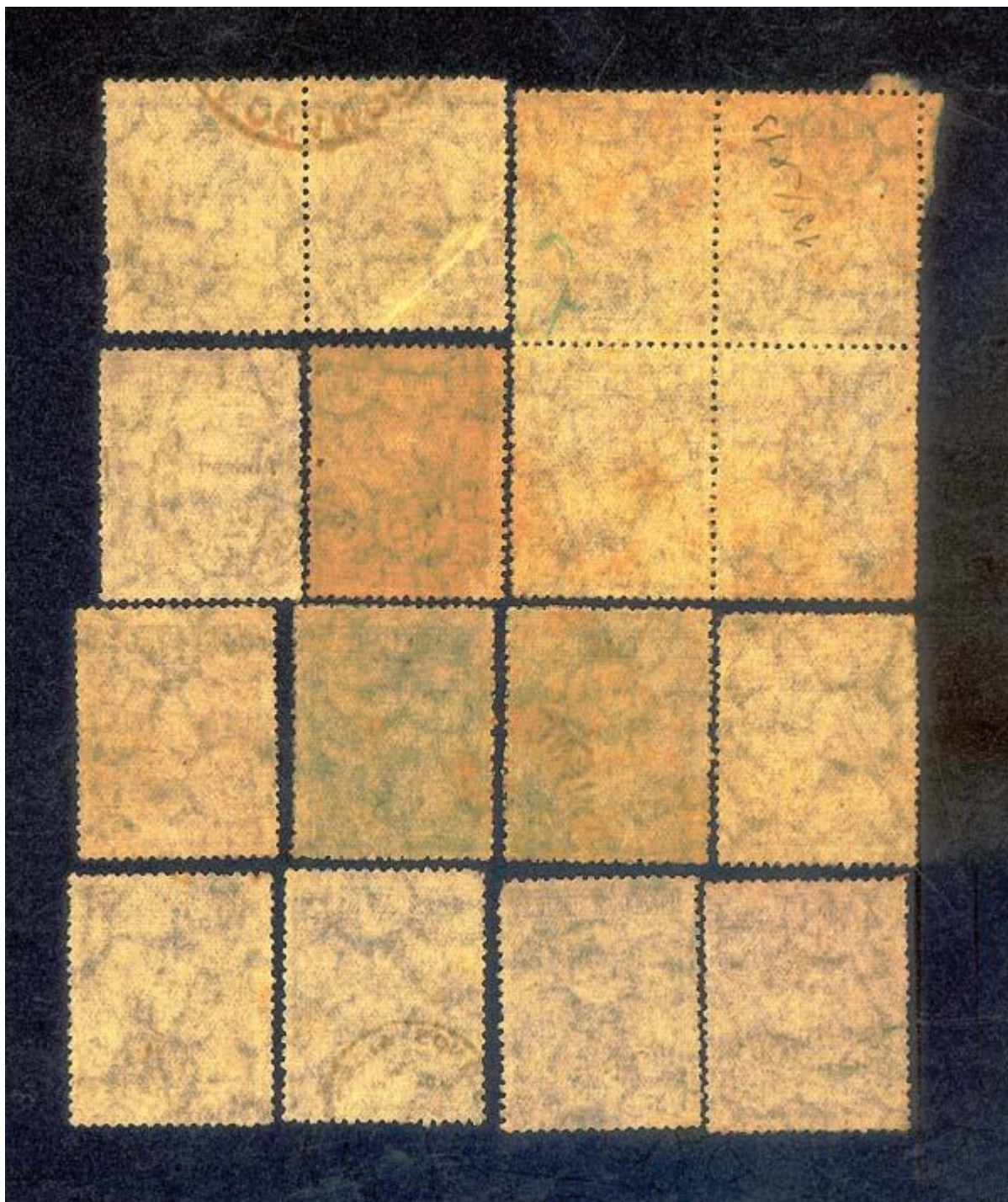
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The 1E4 of 1940, thin and bright white:



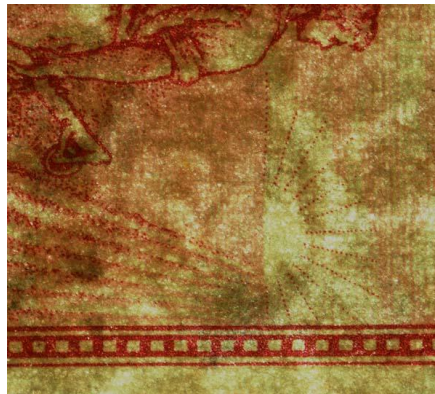
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And the diffused straight rays of 1943 (2D)



25c and 50c bundles part 3: watermark varieties

I find two distinctive watermark varieties. The first one, on a 25c1E3, has a filled in A in RA.



The second one, a 50c1L1, has a combination of large RA and small RA, with the latter displaced towards the bottom of the circle enclosing the letters RA.



30c 1E1 displaced center

Poor register of the plates for the bi-color values cause relative shifts in all directions. For the 30c, the shift causes vertical lines in the background plate to be seen.



This one shows an even larger shift.



Tiny ink dots on a 30c1E1

These tiny ink dots are similar to the ones I found earlier on a 1 peso without map boundaries.



The dots can be seen along the top edge on the left and the right corners of the stamp.



This stamp has a small plate flaw.



A 1p1E with an interesting printing variety

The following cover makes me pose two questions:

1. How small is the town Cruz Chica? I haven't come across this postmark elsewhere.
2. Does anyone have additional specimens like this 1p1E, with a splatter of blue dots covering the entire stamp?



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