

How to Easily Identify the Early Stamps of Ecuador 1865 to 1872

by Tom Hoke



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Are You a Stamp Collector or a Garbage Collector?

Looking over my collection of some 18,000+ Ecuador stamps I realized there were weaknesses in my collection, especially when I reviewed the first stamps of Ecuador from 1865 to 1872. I had paid fairly hefty prices for a few of the stamps, especially the UN REAL green and the CUATRO REALES red. I decided to research the early stamps of Ecuador to help me decide if my stamps were original or copies. When I finished my research I had to ask myself: “Are you a stamp collector or a garbage collector?”

Checking on *The American Philatelist* articles, I discovered an article entitled: “Ecuador The First Stamps 1865 – 1872” published in the May, 1960, Vol. 73, No. 8 issue and completed in the June, 1960, Vol. 73, No. 9 issue and written by Dr. Roberto Levi-Castillo, A. P. S., Philatelic Editor (Relecas), El Telegrafo, Guayaquil, Ecuador. I ordered a copy of the article and I devoured it with much interest as I realized most of my prized, expensive stamps were probably copies.

Most stamp collectors who buy on the internet do not have sufficient information to evaluate the stamp being offered. The early stamps of Ecuador were imperforate, and according to the literature there has been a lucrative market for the last 125+ years in creating copies to sell to unsuspecting stamp collectors worldwide. With a high demand for the first stamps of Ecuador, most of the early stamps have been copied over and over to the point where there are possibly more fake and counterfeit stamps than originals, and the trick and trade business proliferates.

The information gleaned from The American Philatelist article was interesting, but from a practical standpoint it would not be possible, for example, to count all the pearls in the circle surrounding the coat of arms on the MEDIO REAL and UN REAL stamps, or for a stamp collector to count the number of rays projecting from the sun in the center of the coat of arms, especially on a blurred and out of focus image. Only the color and the clarity seemed to be important possible clues as to whether the stamp was an original or a copy. What I needed was original copies of the early stamps of Ecuador for comparison purposes.



Figure 1 – Honoring the First Stamps of Ecuador

Scanning my collection for potential examples of the Ecuador MEDIO REAL and UN REAL stamps, I realized the Ecuador stamp (Figure 1), issued in 1965, honoring the first stamps of 1865 contained three very vivid and detailed photos of the MEDIO REAL and UN REAL stamps. I carefully cropped and then scanned in the images for these “original” stamps. It never occurred to me these three stamps honoring a Century of Ecuadorian postage stamps were *not authentic*.



Figure 2 – Honoring the Stamps of 1865 and 1920

Looking through my collection for a CUATRO REALES example, I discovered an airmail stamp from 1958 which showed what appeared to be an “original” of the red CUATRO REALES stamp from Ecuador. The stamp shown in Figure 2 honored the stamps of 1865 and 1920. It first appeared at the National Philatelic Exposition (EXFIGUA) in Guayaquil, Oct. 4-14, 1958.

Great! I decided to use this as an example of the FOUR REALES stamp. After all, it apparently had the blessing of the National Philatelic Exposition back in 1958.

The Ecuador FOUR REALES stamp is perhaps the most desired of all the early stamps. Also, it is one of the most often faked and copied stamps for the collector.

I used these stamps in my first publication as examples of what the early stamps should look like. These stamps were honoring the first stamps of Ecuador, so they must have been taken from original stamps.

My first publication died an early death. All the stamps chosen were simply *artistic attempts* to recreate the early stamps of Ecuador. In other words: they were not originals.

I finally obtained some “original” jpegs showing the four original stamps of Ecuador. When these stamps are compared to the fuzzy and often indistinct poorly printed copies available on the internet it is easier to make a decision to buy or not to buy.

Those imperfect early Ecuador stamps with a corner cut off or torn are not worth buying. Those stamps where the seller fails to provide an enlargement are possibly not worth enlarging, because they are often copies, not originals. ***The original stamps were clearly printed in vivid colors.*** The poorly printed copies which abound on the internet are not worth your time, or your money.

The chances of actually buying an original of the MEDIO REAL, UN REAL, or CUATRO REALES stamps of early Ecuador are very poor, especially if you don't know what you are doing.

When you see one of the early Ecuador stamps listed on the internet, it may or may not be listed as a copy, a reprint, a forgery, an imitation, or a counterfeit. It would be best to always compare what you see to what it should be.

Over the past 140+ years the Ecuador stamps have gone through fires, fuzzy reincarnations, and in many cases pathetic adulterations which make you wonder if any original stamps still exist..

The internet is swamped with a horrendous amount of fakes, forgeries, and funny looking blurbs called Ecuador original stamps. Before you buy any of them, please use the page-size original stamps below as a guide. If what you are comparing doesn't compare, especially in color and clarity, keep your money in your pocket.



Figure 3 – Ecuador MEDIO REAL original ultramarine blue stamps were 19 x 23mm, the sun's face was indistinct, and the sun had 17 rays, the olive branch (left) had 13 leaves, the left flag had 4 stripes, the right flag had 5 stripes, there were 70 pearls (not touching) around the circle, the crosses in each corner were engraved and normally had no gaps where the X was formed (in the graphic above a buildup of sulfide from handling may have caused the appearance of a gap), and the fine lines of the condor wings were visible. In the graphic above a white dot separates MEDIO and REAL. A total of 500,000 originals were made.



Figure 4 – Ecuador UN REAL original yellow stamps were 19 x 23mm, the sun had 17 rays, the olive branch (left) had 13 leaves, the left flag had 4 stripes, the right flag had 5 stripes, there were 78 pearls around the circle (not touching, with one pearl on the middle right slightly offset left), the crosses in each corner had no gaps where the X was formed, and the fine lines of the condor wings were visible. In the graphic above both white dots, before and after "UN REAL" are shown. A total of 500,000 originals were made.



Figure 5 – Ecuador UN REAL original olive green stamps were 19 x 23mm, the sun had 17 rays, the olive branch (left) had 13 leaves, the left flag had 4 stripes, the right flag had 5 stripes, there were 78 pearls around the circle (not touching, with one pearl on the middle right slightly offset left), the crosses in each corner had no gaps where the X was formed, and the fine lines of the condor wings were visible. In the graphic above one of the white dots before "UN REAL" is missing due to a sulfide buildup, possibly from handling. A total of 500,000 originals were made.



Figure 6 – Ecuador CUATRO REALES original stamps were distinct, and the color was a vivid red or a red brown (not brick colored). In the upper right corner the scroll work handle, composed of two lines, opens into the very visible scrollwork (it is not a round circle attached). Parallel lines go to both sides of the sun. The flag on the back of the boat hangs down, but looks normal (it is not a blob). The mast has a cross member which tilts slightly downward to the left and three lines leading up to it. The stamp design was taken from Mexico’s 1864 stamp. The “S” in CUATRO REALES looks more like an “8” than an “S”. There were 400,000 original CUATRO REALES stamps printed in Quito from plates made in France.

Hopefully the originals shown in Figures 3-6 will help you decide what you want and what you don't want. You don't have to buy junk just because someone is selling it. Pick out a stamp which will enhance your collection, and then be proud you weren't duped by the dupes!

You are not alone: I am still looking too!

Good luck.

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