

POSTAL STATIONERY OF NICARAGUA: THE AMERICAN BANK NOTE COMPANY POSTAL CARDS OF 1878 - 1889

This exhibit shows used and unused all the postal cards manufactured for Nicaragua by the American Bank Note Company and issued in late 1878, 1884, 1885 and 1888, plus the 2-centavo message-reply card known as the 1889 issue. It is not documented used as a half card or a double card.



1878 2-centavo postal card, sent in 1883 from Managua to Masaya, with "6M" Managua killer and dated postmarks of each city.

Nicaragua purchased its postal stationery from the American Bank Note Company for a period of 12 years before signing a 10-year contract with Nicholas Seebeck in 1889 that Seebeck fulfilled through the Hamilton Bank Note Engraving and Printing Company.

The ABNC postal cards were engraved in recess. For each issue, impressions from a working master were transferred to a lithographic stone. The transfers were not clean, and the cards can be plated by searching for repeated distinct flaws and spots. The two 2-centavo single cards of 1878 and 1888 exist unused in large enough quantities that the number of stones employed can be estimated based on the number of different positions and on an estimate of stone size.

The ABNC cards of 1878-1889 were in use in a period that saw five major postmark types and witnessed the opening of the new railway, the Ferrocarril del Pacifico de Nicaragua. The railway linked Corinto and the western cities to the Lake Managua port Momotombo and by lake steamer to Managua, then by rail again to Granada, the major port on Lake Nicaragua.

The organization of the exhibit is chronological by issue.

Viewing guide for pages

plating concepts	2-5, 9, 12-13, 15
postmarks	1, 3-6, 8-11, 16
impact of railway	7, 14
see this if nothing else	3 the card used in 1879

2c INTERIOR CARD OF 1878
die proof in black

AMERICAN BANK NOTE COMPANY ISSUE

1878 die proof
on India paper
on card



2c INTERIOR CARDS OF 1878 AND 1888
2c REPLY CARDS OF 1885 AND 1889
composite die proof

Composite card proof of
1878 single card and
elements used with 1885
and 1888-89 cards.

"Respuesta pagada"
legend for reply cards
of 1885 and 1889.

"Tarjeta Postal Para el
Interior" legend for
single card of 1888
and reply card of 1889.



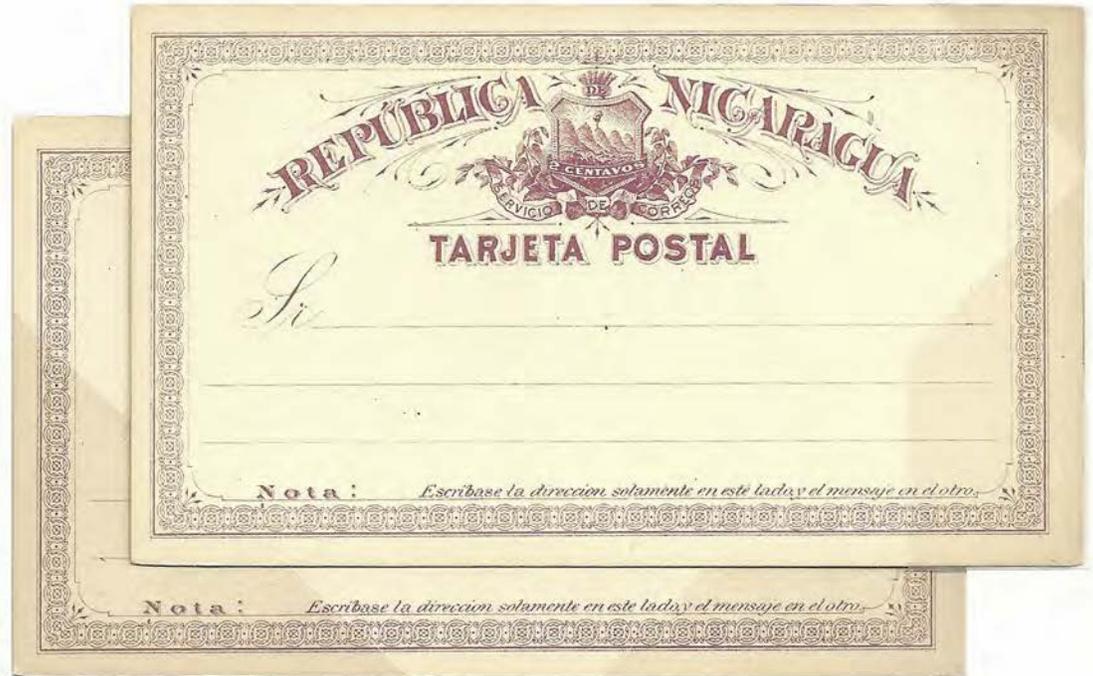
The large "Para el Interior" legend at bottom is an essay. It was not used for postal stationery of Nicaragua.
The composite was struck in 1924 to check the condition of the dies. The dies were canceled in 1949.

The composite proof is ex ABNC archives, 1990.

2c INTERIOR CARD OF 1878
lithographic printing and plating
earliest documented used card

AMERICAN BANK NOTE COMPANY ISSUE
brown on buff

The master die for the 2-centavo postal card was engraved in recess, but the issued postal card was printed by stone lithography. Transfers from the master die were used to lay down each reverse-reading production stone. The various transfers applied to a stone include small spots and other imperfections that allow the cards to be plated.



One major imperfection is a spot opposite the "N" of the word "Nota," above the upper-left arm of the third roundel from the left in the bottom border.

The card below includes the same imperfection opposite the word "Nota."

This gem is the earliest documented Nicaragua postal card. It is among the earliest used postal cards for all of Central America and South America.

The card was issued in December 1878.

Earliest documented card, postmarked Managua July 17, 1879, to Leon, the only documented postal card used during 1878-1881.

Postmark reads "CORREOS de NICARAGUA / MANAGUA."

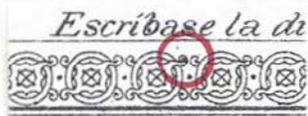


Individuals and businesses gained no advantage from the new postal card until the Nicaragua Pacific Railway, built during 1879-1883 from Corinto to Momotombo, became a reality. Few cards were used prior to late 1883, when the line was completed to the steamer dock at Momotombo, providing a connection by lake steamer to Managua.



2c INTERIOR CARD OF 1878
plating: two positions

AMERICAN BANK NOTE COMPANY ISSUE
brown on buff



Spot in roundel below
"S" of "Escribase."

Speck at
lower right
between
border lines.



Dot and dash
at left in
sixth roundel
from lower-left
corner.



Line under "Escribase" is
a progressive flaw.



The engraved design was transferred in a multistep process to the printing base, which was a lithographic stone, probably large enough for 12 to 28 card positions. The transfers resulted in numerous flaws in the images on the stones and on the cards printed from them.

Fifty-one positions are identifiable (based on the exhibitor's study of a population of nearly 400 cards, about 350 of which are unused). Two 28-position stones and up to five 12-position stones could have been used to print the single 2-centavo card beginning in 1877.



Die flaws:

gap in roundel at top
(8th roundel from
upper-left corner).
spot in roundel at left
(6th roundel from
upper-left corner).

Position flaws:

large spot in roundel
at left (4th roundel
from lower-left corner),
dot above 1st roundel
at left attached to
upper-left corner.

Progressive flaw:

large hole in "E" of
"Republica."



Top: Chinandega
to Leon 1887.

Middle: unused.

Bottom: Managua
to Masaya 1883
with Managua 6M.

2c INTERIOR CARD OF 1878
postmarks

AMERICAN BANK NOTE COMPANY ISSUE
brown on buff

Framed fancy numeral
"8 CH" for Chinandega.

Fancy cancels were
sometimes used
with the old
double-ring postmark.

Chinandega to Leon
Jan. 8, 1886
(incorrectly "85"
in postmark),
received same day.

Framed cancels
(16 varieties from
13 towns) and
double-ring postmarks
were used circa 1869
through the mid-1880s.
About a dozen
are documented
on postal cards.



New double-ring
postmarks with
stacked date elements
were used mid-1886
through mid-1888.

Managua to Masaya
Sept. 23, 1886,
received same day.

Crisp strikes from
new devices.



Ocotal (in the interior
highlands near
Honduras)
Feb. 19, 1887,
to Managua,
transit time 7 days.

On back,
large Managua
duplex receiving
postmark with
target killer.

2c INTERIOR CARD OF 1878
mail along the railway

AMERICAN BANK NOTE COMPANY ISSUE
brown on buff

Manuscript "Tarde"
on card transported
by train.

Corinto to Leon
Feb. 26, 1885.

Rail line open
to Leon as of
Nov. 15, 1882.

Granada to Masaya
April 17, 1885,
received next day,
transported by
mule or cart.

Railway not open
to Granada until
March 1, 1886.

Managua to
Masaya
Dec. 16, 1886,
received
same day.

Railway open
to Masaya
April 5, 1885.

"FRANCO en CORINTO" postmark is believed
to have been used at Corinto for a few months to
date mail offloaded from traveling box on train.

Dateline Chinandega July 5, 1887.
Postmarked Corinto July 5, 1887.



The railroad line was first built from Corinto to Chinandega, opening Jan. 1, 1881. It next reached Chichigalpa, and the section from there to Leon opened Nov. 15, 1882. The section from Leon to Momotombo (on the north shore of Lake Managua) opened Dec. 30, 1883. From 1883 until 1903, five lake steamers plied a route from Momotombo to Managua (on the south shore of Lake Managua) connecting the two towns. The rail line from Managua to Masaya opened April 5, 1885. The extension southeast from Masaya to Granada (on Lake Nicaragua) opened March 1, 1886. The main line from near Momotombo (Momotombo Junction) to Managua did not open until February 1903.

2c INTERIOR CARD OF 1878
late usage: transition to the Seebeck era

AMERICAN BANK NOTE COMPANY ISSUE
brown on buff

Dec. 30, 1889,
Managua to Granada
(Managua postmark on
back), used two days
prior to the beginning
of the Seebeck era.



April 9, 1890,
Bluefields to Barbados
via New Orleans.
Late use from the isolated
Caribbean coast.
Underpaid interior card
not charged postage due.



[Handwritten text, likely a postscript or address correction, including the word 'SHIPMENT']

From a Moravian missionary on the Mosquito Coast to a missionary in Barbados.

According to an American Bank Note Co. Summary Order Book in collector hands, the 2-centavo postal card of 1878 was ordered in December 1877 in a quantity of 100,000.

2c INTERIOR REPLY CARD OF 1884

same position -- top half used
Franco en Corinto postmark

AMERICAN BANK NOTE COMPANY ISSUE

red brown on buff

"FRANCO en CORINTO"
fancy marking believed
used for a short time to
postmark mail offloaded
at Corinto from traveling
box on the rail line.

used example
of top half

Jul. 4, 1887,
Leon to Corinto.

Uneven cut
at bottom
of card where
it was separated
identifies it as
a top half of a
reply card.

Top card has no
"Respuesta pagada"
legend.



different position
bottom half used

scissors cut at top

Dec. 2, 1884,
Managua to
Masaya.

"Respuesta pagada"
legend at top
of bottom card.

Higgins & Gage
World Postal Stationery
Catalog states that the
issue year is 1885.



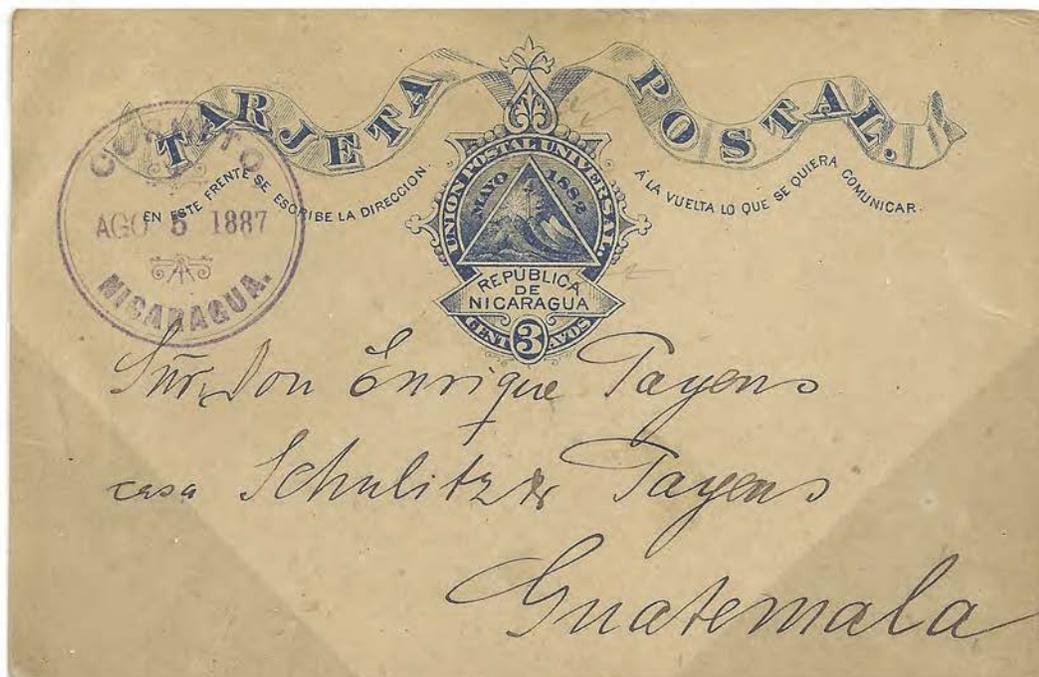
3c EXTERIOR CARD OF 1884
used to Europe or Central America

AMERICAN BANK NOTE COMPANY ISSUE
blue on buff

Nov. 25, 1887,
Leon to Germany
via Corinto and Panama.



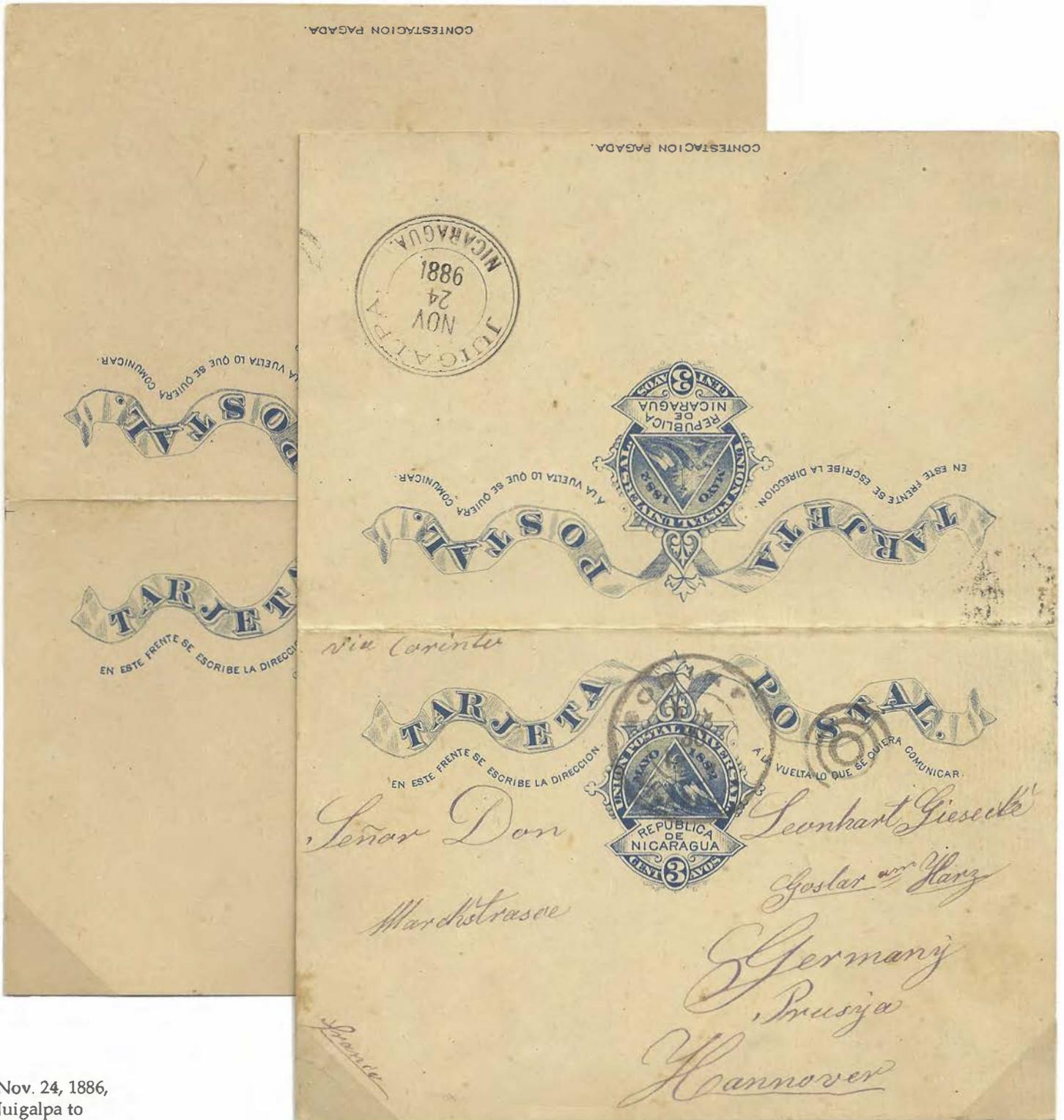
Aug. 5, 1887,
datelined Leon
to Guatemala
via Corinto.



Nicaragua joined the Universal Postal Union in May 1882, and its first card reads "Mayo 1882."
Quantity issued not stated in Summary Order Book. Plating this card is futile because few examples survive.

3c EXTERIOR REPLY CARD OF 1884
double card used to Germany

AMERICAN BANK NOTE COMPANY ISSUE
blue on buff



Nov. 24, 1886,
Juigalpa to
Germany
via Corinto
and Panama.

Addressed or
message half

Datelined
Nov. 20, 1886,
at Acoyapa.

2c INTERIOR CARD OF 1888

AMERICAN BANK NOTE COMPANY ISSUE

new design: inscribed 'Tarjeta Postal Para el Interior'

brown on buff

three cards from same plate position

Nov. 10, 1888,
Chinandega to Leon.

Cards were trimmed as stacks of sheets. As a result, cards from same plate position often were delivered to the same post office.

Basic position flaws at top and bottom.



Oct. 4, 1889,
Chinandega to Leon.



Oct. 11, 1889,
Chinandega to Managua.
Postmarked Momotombo (on the northern shore of Lake Managua) and likely posted on train. Lake steamer took card across lake to Managua.



Summary Order Book records 75,000 cards ordered in April 1888.

2c INTERIOR CARD OF 1888
new design: two other plate positions

AMERICAN BANK NOTE COMPANY ISSUE
brown on buff

July 17, 1889,
Managua to Masaya.



May 27, 1889,
Granada to Leon.



Quantity ordered: 75,000, according to the Summary Order Book.
Enough cards exist to determine characteristics of some lithographic plate positions.

2c INTERIOR CARD OF 1888
new design: fast transit time

AMERICAN BANK NOTE COMPANY ISSUE
brown on buff

May 27, 1889,
Leon to
Corinto.

Same day
via railroad.

Westbound.



Aug. 23, 1889,
Chinandega
to Leon.

Same day
via railroad.

Eastbound.



Dec. 19, 1888,
Managua to Corinto.
Arrived next day.

The trip across
Lake Managua
northwest to
Momotombo
often added a day
to transit time.



Dec. 10, 1888,
Managua to Corinto.
Arrived next day:

Carried to landing
then by steamer
across lake
the next day
to Momotombo
and from there
by train to Corinto.

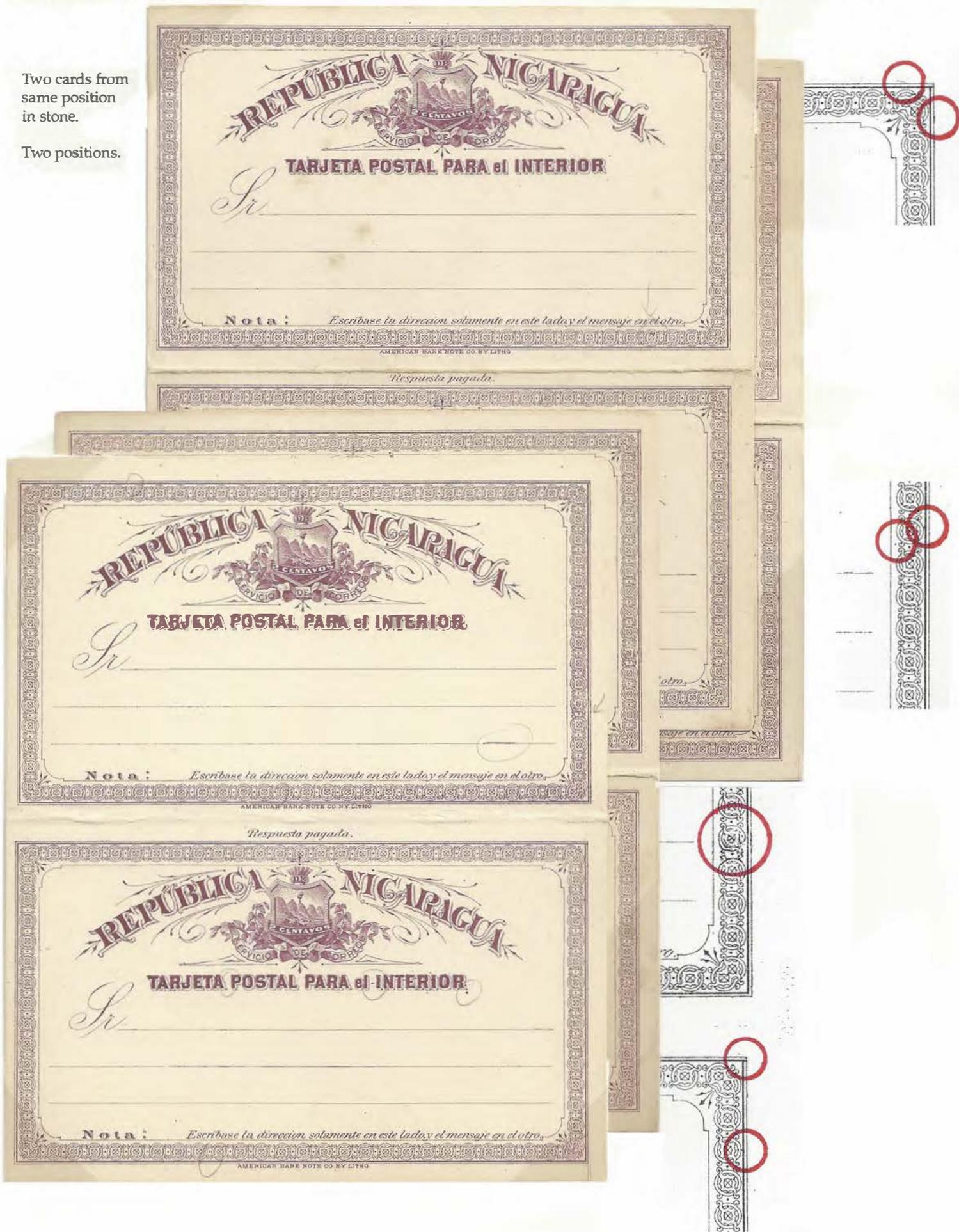


2c INTERIOR REPLY CARD OF 1889
same position in stone

AMERICAN BANK NOTE COMPANY ISSUE
red brown on cream

Two cards from
same position
in stone.

Two positions.



3c EXTERIOR CARD OF 1889
used in January to Europe

AMERICAN BANK NOTE COMPANY ISSUE
blue on buff

Jan. 7, 1889,
Managua to Germany
via Corinto and Panama.



Jan. 17, 1889,
Managua to Belgium
via Corinto and Panama.



The Summary Order Book does not record this card.