

The Postage Due Issues of Peru

1874 - 1948

Purpose

This is a traditional exhibit of all the postage due stamps issued by Peru. It includes essays, proofs, stamps, overprints and postal usages.

Scope

It covers all issues from 1874 until the use of postage due stamps was discontinued shortly after World War II. The latest cover seen by the exhibitor is from 1948. In certain circumstances, Peru allowed the use of postage due stamps to prepay mail and for use on judicial and official mail. Such usages are an important part of this exhibit.

In 1897 and 1916, postage due stamps were overprinted for exclusive use to prepay postage. These overprinted usages are included in this exhibit. Definitive stamps overprinted in 1896, 1902 and 1935 to use as postage dues are also included.

Research

In collecting these issues, the exhibitor was able to show that the date assigned to the un-grilled reprints of the first postage due issue was incorrectly listed by all major catalog publishers. It was subsequently corrected by Scott Publishing.

The exhibitor has also identified a new Deficit overprint on the 50 centavos rose of 1884, prepared by the American Bank Note Company. This overprint was not previously recognized by collectors.

By compiling a census of 430 covers with the 1874-1909 issues, the exhibitor has been able to document several aberrations in the way the Peruvian post office treated unpaid mail.

The exhibitor has documented that the overprints from 1896-1902 were applied by the Lecoq machine, one stamp at a time, and not from a plate of overprints.

Historic Context

Peru was only the 8th postal administration to issue postage due stamps and the first outside of Europe. In December 1873, an order was placed with the National Bank Note Company of New York to produce "...special stamps to pay deficient postage and to prepay letters". From surviving examples, it is believed that the prepayment usage referred to use on official mail, a special class of judicial mail and emergency prepayment of regular mail in the absence of regular postage stamps. The stamps were placed in service by May of 1874.

The design of this first issue of Peru is unique for postage due stamps. All other countries issued postage dues with simple numeric designs to show the amount of postage to be collected. Peru's design is an elaborate composition featuring two vignettes. The upper vignette is a transoceanic steamship and is identical to that featured on the United States 12 cent issue of 1869, also prepared by the National Bank Note Company. It has been proposed that the steamship represented delivery of foreign mail (almost exclusively arriving by steamship) since one of the early usages of these stamps were to collect internal postage on incoming foreign mail.

The bottom vignette features a llama, the traditional Peruvian beast of burden for inland transport of goods. The only previous issue of stamps printed outside of Peru, was an 1866 order to the American Bank Note Company, which also featured a vignette of a llama. However, it is not known how often llamas were actually used to transport mail during the early years of the Peruvian postal system.

Like the United States 1869 issue, these stamps were also grilled to prevent reuse. Peru was the only other country to utilize grills. In 1902, a new order of these stamps were produced from the same plates, but without grills. This issue remained in use until 1909, concluding a 35 year period, unusually long for any stamp issue.

In 1909, Peru replaced the original issue with a more conventional design printed by the American Bank Note Company, which featured numerical values. Stamps with the same design were later printed by Harrison & Sons and Waterlow & Sons. Sometime in the late 1940's Peru phased out the usage of postage due stamps.



Plate Proof Block of 4
United States 12 Cent
Issue of 1869 featuring a
steamship vignette



Plate Proof of
Unissued 2 Centavos
Peruvian Postage Due



Plate Proof Pair of 1866
American Bank Note Issue
featuring a llama vignette

Exhibit Organization

This exhibit is organized chronologically. Each issue is introduced with pre-production material and/or a description of the overprint. This is followed by domestic and foreign mail usages.

Outline

- 1874 Original Issue
- 1874-1879 Pre UPU Foreign Mail Usages
- 1874-1879 Domestic Mail Usages
- 1879-1883 War of the Pacific
- 1883-1896 Triangle Overprints
- 1883-1896 Triangle Overprints—Domestic Usages
- 1883-1896 Triangle Overprints-Foreign Mail
- 1897-1902 Deficit Overprints
- 1902-1909 Ungrilled Stamps
- 1909-1931 New Issue
- 1932-1948 Later Issues

Challenges

An important part of this exhibit is the various overprints on the first issue. Many of these were applied by hand, resulting in poorly struck markings. They have also been extensively counterfeited. This combination has made identification of legitimate overprints difficult. In fact, most of the double and inverted overprints are forgeries. Overprints on un-grilled stamps are always a forgery, since these stamps were not issued until after these overprints were discontinued. In addition to the largest assembly of on-cover usages, the exhibitor has assembled an extensive collection of forgeries. Through the preparation of overlays of both legitimate and forged overprints, the exhibitor has been able to successfully identify authentic overprints.

Rarity

Relative small quantities of these stamps were issued and they remained in use for a comparatively long time, making any covers quite scarce. This exhibit represents the largest collection of covers yet assembled and contains many unique and/or rare usages. Significant covers are enclosed in a red outline.

The December 13, 1873 contract with the National Bank Note Company does not mention other design possibilities nor a 2 centavos value, although proofs exist of each. The conclusion is that discussions regarding both the design and values to be printed must have preceded the contract.