

The Third Printing of the First Issue for the Spanish Antilles

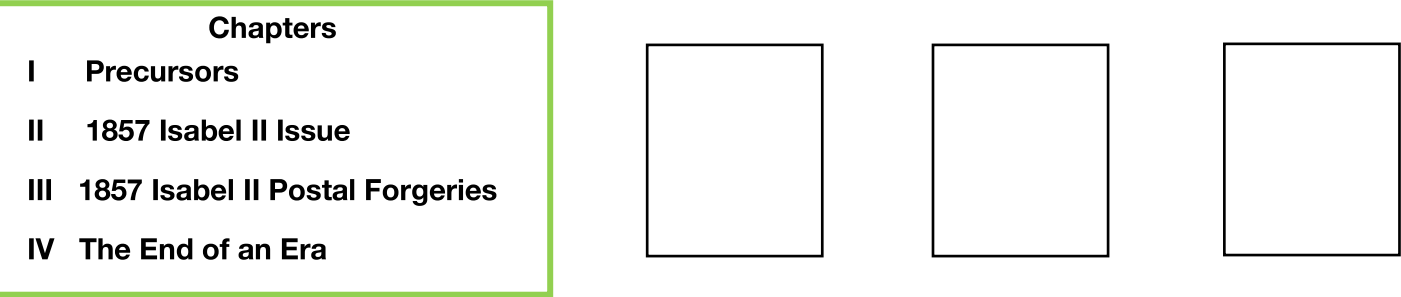
PURPOSE & SCOPE

This traditional exhibit presents a comprehensive study of the third printing of the first stamps of the Spanish Antilles and their postal uses. These were printed and distributed for use in Cuba and Puerto Rico. This exhibit covers the eight-year period from their issuance in 1857 to their replacement in 1864.

BACKGROUND

In May 1840, Great Britain issued the first postage stamp. Other countries soon followed. Spain, following the Postal Decree of 1849, issued its first stamp on January 1850. On December 19, 1854 a Royal Decree called for the use of stamps to prepay postage in the Antilles, i.e. Cuba and Puerto Rico, starting in March 1855. The first Spanish Antilles stamps were placed in circulation in late April 1855.

ORGANIZATION The exhibit consists of four chapters, covering the years 1855-1864



IMPORTANCE

The 1857 printing of the Isabel II issues were the first postage stamps printed on un-watermark machine made paper for the Spanish Antilles These were issued during the classic period of the most important Spanish possession, and the most revenue productive colony at the time. The use of un-watermark paper became the standard for all stamps produced during the Spanish colonial period. This paper opened the door to forgers to defraud the government. To counter-act the forgers, Spain from 1864 onwards, issued dated stamps every year to reduce the impact of forged stamps and indirectly created the security in stamp printing.

Designator Keys

Unique and/or rare items are framed in Red, scarce and/or significant items are framed in BLUE

Rarity is based on the opinion of members of the Cuban Philatelic Societies.

In the ROUTE box, GREEN dates are estimated. In the RATE box, RD stands for Royal Decree; GREEN RATE BOX Domestic Mail, BLUE RATE BOX Overseas Mail

Items accompanied by certificates from experts are indicated by a lower case ‘e’

Items new to philately are shown in CYAN

Bibliography

Reference material used in the exhibit includes;

“Catálogo Especializado Sellos De Cuba Tomo I, 1855 – 1958”; third edition;. Edifil SA

“Postal History of Cuba, The First Issue of Spanish Antilles and Isabelinas Emissions 1855. 1864 – 1869”, Echenagusia Garcia, Carlos; Philatelic Society of Madrid (SOFI)

“A Handbook of Cuban Stamps”; McP. Jones, William & Roy Jr., Rudy J.; Cuban Philatelic Society of America

“La Primera Emision Postal de Antillas Española's”, Guerra Aguiar, J. L.; Cuban Postal Museum.

“Diario de La Marina”, Habana , Cuba. various newspapers from 1857—1864

Section 1 – Precursors

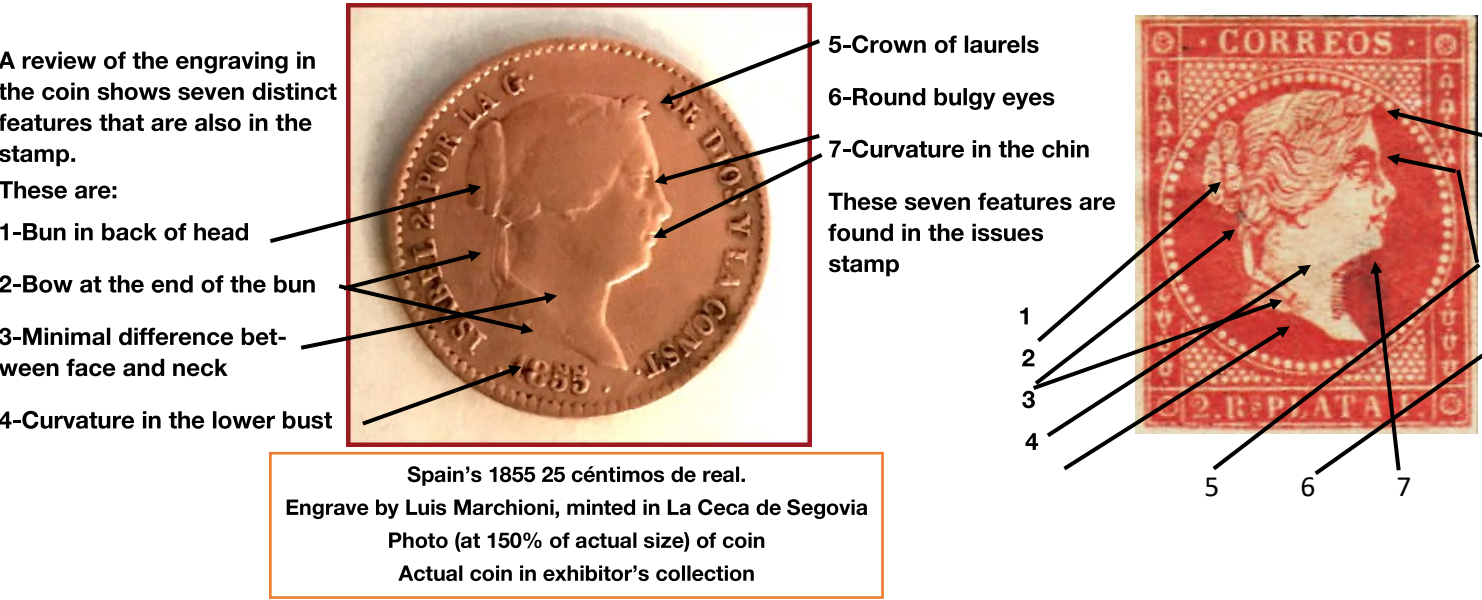
1854-1856

Design of the 1855- 1857 Issue

1854 - 1855

Spain’s Royal Decree of December 19, 1854, called for the use of stamps to prepay postage in Cuba and Puerto Rico, Spanish Antilles, starting in March 1855. These stamps were engraved by Jose-Perez Varela and share their design with Spain’s April 1, 1855 issue. Even though the Royal Decree had set March 1 as the starting date, the stamps did not arrive until the 21 of April 1855. The stamps were placed on sale in Cuba on April 24, so that they could be dispatched in the mail steamer that was scheduled to depart the port of Habana on the 25th of April. This is the earliest known date of usage. The same stamps were placed on sale in Puerto Rico sometimes in June 1855.

Similar to Great Britain's stamp, the stamps bear the effigy of the reigning monarch, Isabel II, and its based on an engraving of the queen. It is though that the design was based on an engraving by Luis Marchetti, used for the 25 centimos de real coin. The same master die was used to create secondary dies where the value was added.



Both the stamps for Spain and the Spanish Antilles, i.e. Cuba and Puerto Rico, were printed at the Fabrica Nacional del Sello in Madrid, Spain.

The difference between the issues for Spain and those for the Antilles was in the value of the currency. Spain’s currency was based in the Reales de Vellon and the Antilles in the Reales de Plata Fuerte. A Real de Plata Fuerte was worth 2 1/2 Reales de Vellon.

The 1855 – 1857 Queen Isabelle II Issues

The same master die was used for the 1855 –1857 stamps of Spain and the Spanish Antilles.

