

Sarasota Stamp Show 2026

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THE HALF REAL OF 1855-57 PLATING ON COVER

SYNOPSIS:

In this exhibit I have plated the First Stamp of Cuba, the half Real on cover. There were three printings of this issue, the First in 1855 watermarked "loops" (Scott #1), the Second printing in 1856 watermarked "crossed lines" (Scott #9), and the unwatermarked Third issue of 1857 Scott #12. The original plate was cleaned and repaired two times later, in 1858 and in 1861, as this issue was reprinted and in use for almost a decade until 1866.

Exhibition pages are layout by the numeric position of the stamps in the PLATES, example:

position I-1 starts the first frame and position X-17 ends the last frame of the exhibit.

In case of multiple positions in a page, usually the lower number plate position will be used to sequentially place the page when possible.

Most of the covers that make up this exhibit bear the Half Real of 1857 issue, the most common of all. These were printed 170 stamps to the sheet, 17 stamps horizontally by 10 rows high. This creates 170 positions, but because there were two additional platings as previously mentioned this increases the possible positions to almost double the quantity. Many stamps remained in their original positions, but in the Second plate 40 positions changed places and on the Third plate 12 were replaced with new clichés. Printings also vary by ink color & cleaned and dirty Plates.

This stamp was used also in Puerto Rico, but not in the Philippines because the minimum postal rate there was One Full Real.

The singles of course common on cover, but pairs are not that common to find. Strips of three or more are very uncommon, blocks of four and larger multiples in Cuban covers start to border on the very rare. Please note that large usages in Puerto Rico are VERY common, but NOT in Cuba.

In this collection I have tried to highlight the plating position of the stamps, but special attention has been given to **rarer markings, routes and rates**. Also whenever possible to bring out postal history aspect of the collection this has been mentioned.

Highlights of the collection:

1. Positions I-10 + 11, pair used with BPO crowned circle combination, very few known.
2. Positions I-10 & II-11, + "new Cliché" on Registered cover, with the rarer register oval.
3. Position I-10, oval "DM" only known reported cover with this marking from the North coastal mail steamer.
4. position II-3, elusive "Vapor Correo" marking, only 4 covers recorded.
5. Position II-7 of 1857 in Combo usage with a One real of 1855, mixed issue & bi-color usage.
6. Positions II-7 – 8 -9, strip on registered cover.
7. Position II-13, oval "P.A." marking for the Northern coastal steamship, only known reported cover with this marking.
8. Study of Position III-4 "Broken Corner" variety showing VARIOUS covers and stamps with progressive growth of the error, in both Plates 1 & 2 and Plate 3 replacement cliché. This variety is rare on cover.

9. Positions III-9 & 11- "Held for lack of Postage Stamps" at P.O. & stamps used as "Postage Due" only known recorded cover showing for this type of usage.
10. Position III-7, piece with very rare "FERROCARIL" pre-philatelic straight line less than five covers reported.
11. Position III-13 Cuba stamp used within Spain, very few covers known.
12. Position III-13, Combination cover sent via the BPO in Havana, very few known.
13. Position IV-4, Combination cover sent via the BPO in Havana, very few known.
14. Positions V-10-11 & I-13-14, with very scarce "double weight" Registered cover.
15. Position V-13, combination with US stamped envelope, unusual, only one known.
16. Positions, VI-1, IX-2 & IX-12, Registered cover. Scarce.
17. Position VI-12, Vertically bisected stamp, re-joined on the cover, First time bisect reported for this issue.
18. Positions VI-16 & VII-16, vertical pair, 1855 issue, sent via BPO to France.
19. Position VII-12, elusive "Vapor Correo" marking, only 4 covers recorded.
20. Position VIII-9, Cuba stamp used in Spain to Habana, very few covers known.
21. Position VIII-17, Variety "Pinocchio's Nose" extremely scarce/rare on cover only a handful number are recorded.
22. Position IX-14, Combination cover sent via the BPO in Havana, very few known.
23. Positions X-10, III-8 & IX-12, Registered cover with the 1856 issue.

LITERATURE REFERENCE:

1. Estudio Sobre La Primera Emision Postal de Antillas Españolas, J.L. Guerra Aguiar, Cuban Postal Museum Publications 1976.
2. EDIFIL, Cuba Specialized catalog, Madrid, Spain, 2002. Pages 1 through 16. Complementary Study for the First Issue of the Spanish Antilles: pages 8 through 16.
3. Catalogo Historico Postal de Cuba 1855-1898, Jose Ignacio Abreu Perez, Spanish Federation of Philatelic Societies, Madrid, Spain, 1996