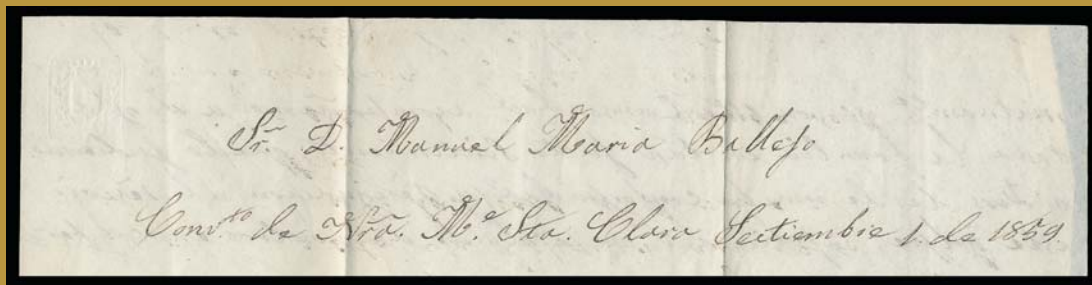


The First Issue First Day Cover



Lot 181

History of The First Issue First Day Cover

The cover offered here is certainly an Aristocrat of South American Philately, but its significance was not widely appreciated for over a century. This is not surprising, in view of the fact that the issue of 1860 was believed to be the first issue of 1859 and was listed in the stamp catalogues as the issue of 1859.

In an important article in the *Collectors Club Philatelist* in November 1951, Federico Larsen pointed out the blunder, but it was not until around 1960 that the sequence was corrected in the catalogues and the true first issue was established. Additional research by Leo Temprano, based on documents in the government archives, confirmed the issue of 1859 and the first day of issue as September 1, 1859. The folded letter offered here is clearly dated September 1, 1859. The 5-centavos and 10-centavos stamps are tied by the “Bogota Franca” oval in blue.

PRODUCTION OF THE FIRST ISSUE

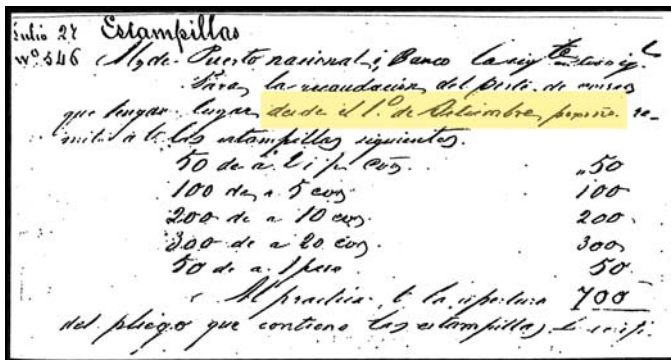
The Colombian postal reform law was passed by Congress on April 27, 1859, and it authorized a “system of stamps” for postage. On July 23 the Secretary of the Treasury issued a decree that specifically defined the first issue of postage stamps. On the next day, July 24, the printing order was given to the Martinez Brothers, and just three days later, on July 27, the new stamps were printed and ready for distribution, to be placed on sale on September 1, 1859, as evidenced by the form shown below (reproduced from the Bortfeldt handbook, page 1).

The First Issue, comprising five denominations—2½, 5, 10, 20-centavos and One-peso—was printed by lithography from stones of 55 or 100 subjects. Multiple orders were filled by the Martinez Brothers, and more than one stone was made for all values except the 2½-centavos and One-peso. Differentiating between the stones has been and continues to be one of the fascinating challenges for students of Colombia’s First Issue.

The First Issue First Day Cover bears the 5-centavos, printed from Stone A in a beautiful Reddish Violet, and a 10-centavos in an equally rich shade of Red Brown, also printed from Stone A. These stamps were part of the first sheets supplied by the Martinez Brothers.

CLASSIC FIRST ISSUE FIRST DAY COVERS OF THE WORLD

Covers bearing a classic imperforate First Issue postage stamp used on the first day of issue are limited to only a few countries. In Europe there is Great Britain and several other countries. In the Americas, including Canada and the Maritime Provinces, the United States and all of Latin America, there is only one country represented by a cover, and that is Colombia. A few examples of Brazil’s Bull’s Eye stamps are known postmarked on August 1, 1843, the first day of issue, but no country in the Americas other than Colombia has a First Issue First Day Cover to show. This fact is all the more remarkable when one considers the rarity of Colombian First Issue covers, compared with the ubiquitous First Issue covers of many other countries; for example, the United States 1847 Issue.



Notice of despatch dated July 27, 1859, for the first stamps to be issued on September 1, 1859.

THE FIRST ISSUE FIRST DAY COVER



181 with detail of dateline

181° ✉ **1859, 5c Violet, 10c Red Brown (3, 4).** Each stamp has large margins all around, beautiful early shades, both stamps tied by blue "BOGOTA/FRANCA" oval handstamp on folded letter to Rio Negro, datelined "Sr. D. Manuel Maria Ballejo, Convto. de Nra. Me. Sta. Clara Setiembre 1 de 1859" on **September 1, 1859, the official first day of issue**

EXTREMELY FINE. THIS IS THE ONLY RECORDED COVER WITH CLASSIC COLOMBIAN STAMPS USED ON THE FIRST DAY OF ISSUE. MORE IMPORTANTLY, IT IS THE ONLY FIRST DAY COVER OF ANY AMERICAN FIRST ISSUE, INCLUDING THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA.

This cover is illustrated in Dieter Bortfeldt's *Colombia Philatelic Handbook and Catalogue 1859-1860* (page 4), where it is described as "Cover dated 1 September 1859 - The ONLY known cover from the FIRST DAY." The handstamped postmarks on early Colombia covers usually did not have a date (except for the Medellin receiving mark).

Ex Larsen E. 200,000-300,000