

## 89 Years Ago in Mekeel's:

# Philippines Aguinaldo Stamps

by J. W. Longnecker (*From Mekeel's Weekly, January 25, 1937, with images added*)



Left, Sc. Y1, "2 cents" against red background; center, Sc. Y2, "2 cents" against clear background; Sc. Y3 "Telegrafos" 2 cents

We see by the stampish press that the question of granting philatelic recognition to the so-called Aguinaldo stamps of the Philippine Islands is again getting considerable attention. At long last, so I am told, there is a lively prospect that Scott's will list these adhesives, probably under the heading of the Issues of the Revolutionary Government, or as the stamps of the Republica Filipinas. Among the publications that have held a brief in favor of the listing of the Aguinaldo stamps *Mekeel's Weekly Stamp News* has a conspicuous place.

Writing as one who plays around a bit with old Philippine issues, I am rather sophisticated (using the word in its modern connotation of being "hard boiled") on the subject of the controversy. The fact that there might be a bar sinister across the escutcheon of the issues detracts not one iota from the kick I get from the pages of my albums housing my Aguinaldo items. But then I endeavor to be broad-minded on a few such matters.

Common report, or, to put it in the phraseology of the "blue haze" period of stamp club sessions, common report tells me that if *Mekeel's* could show that these Aguinaldo stamps ever did postal duty the fight would be as good as won—but where are the covers, where is the evidence?

Most of the evidence in this case has been destroyed and by no less authority than the United States Army of Occupation, or whatever they called the American conquering force that followed Dewey into Manila. These innocent covers, that is guiltless from a collector's point of view, were deliberately destroyed because they bore the mystic symbols of the terrible Katipunan Society (consult any encyclopedia for particulars), the K.K.K. [not to be confused with the Ku Klux Klan of K.K.K. infamy. JFD.] familiar to any collector who casually looking over the stamps of another and noting these strangers, ventured the opinion, "Interesting, eh, what".

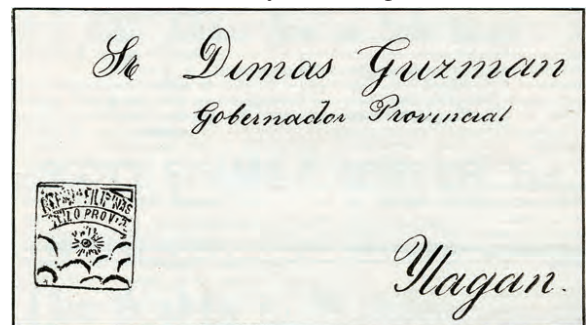
The wholesale destruction of everything bearing the insignia of the Katipunan Society, or even remotely resembling the K.K.K., or the sun with rays that fell into the hands of the army naturally made covers a bit scarce, and this circumstance, aided by the passing of nearly 40 years, the ravages of tropical weather, insects and the waste of an uninformed populace

prompts me to say that the small supply of used copies of Aguinaldo stamps and covers should be carefully treasured if future generations are to have any of these elusive items. And this fact, by itself, may be an argument in favor of listing them in the catalogue, for if Scott's fails to so list the stamps it may only hasten further destruction, for thousands think that any thing not listed in the latest edition of the collector's Bible is junk.

Another and quite different set of circumstances also mitigates against us as we study Aguinaldo covers and from them endeavor to reconstruct postal use and history. While these covers were used long after the postmarks, with dates and place of mailing came into use, dated Aguinaldo covers are not only scarce, they are rare. Such dating postmarking stamps were not furnished by the newborn and struggling Revolutionary Government in the Philippines. Then, too, the letters carried within these covers are not to be expected as the very nature of the correspondence hidden from enemy eyes by the senders of these old covers would likely have been enough to hang either the sender or the addressee, possibly both.

As I look at my own little accumulation of these K.K.K. covers, it seems to make no difference to me whether they were transported clandestinely by primitive boats, piloted by misguided patriots across the countless bays and inlets of the Island's coast, or carried at the end of a split stick by cunning, naked, native runners through the tangles of the jungle of tropical forests. To me they are philatelic items that did postal duty because they were franked by a governmental body which, in spite of being outlawed, had power sufficient to have the insignia of its franks, its stamps and marks, get a letter from one individual to another in a different community. What more, may I ask, does a block of Mr. Farley's Army or Navy stamps do for you or me?

So I give first place in my collection to the battle-scarred veteran K.K.K. provisional (shown, page 21) addressed by some unknown but obviously cultured person, with some au-



The face of a war time Aguinaldo Provisional cover with indicia stamped thereon addressed to a Provisional Governor at Illagan. (Illustration is from the original article.)



Left, a magnified view of the hand-stamp on the cover on page 21; right, the "Ilanga" backstamp



thority in the revolutionary affairs of that troubled time to Sr. Dimas Guzman, and addressed, please note, to Sr. Guzman as "Provisional Governor" at Ilagan, a variant spelling of the Ilangan on the back stamp that proves that by some means and in some manner the letter was transported and delivered to the addressee in the capital of the Province of Isabela, Luzon.

What of the stamp? Taking it at face value it was nothing in the world but the impression made by a rubber stamp or some other kind of die, printing its indicia in a faded greyish purple ink. I show a picture of the cover but draw no conclusions—except that I hold it dear.

Then skipping pieces of cover and bits with Aguinaldo stamps and cancels thereon as they show no backstamps or other conclusive evidence of delivery, we find the 2c carmine "Correos" (without the light horizontal lines across the 2 Cents) on an entire, cancelled with a



A cover addressed to the Colonel of the Revolutionary Army at Lal-loc, and the backstamp. (Illustrations from the original article.) (Illustrations from the original article.)

characteristic K.K.K. mark with the sun and rays on an inverted pyramid. I also picture that cover. Note the address, enough to damn the man to the firing squad. According to this cover Sr. Daniel Cirona was a Colonel in the Revolutionary Army at Lab-loc. The missive reached destination, and as the powers that rule our collecting destinies want proof, I show a tracing of the backstamp and hold the original for the inspection of any collector who finds it interesting.

Then I have another cover that I treasure, not for its intrinsic worth or market value, if any, but because it is a mystery to me. If any student wants to try to solve that mystery, I will supply photographs of the cover in exchange for the solution of

the enigma. [There was no photo of this cover in the original article. JFD.]

This cover with its story that I cannot read was addressed to the telegraph operator at Batangas. The stamps are cancelled by a "Mil. Sta. No. 1 Philippines Isls—San Francisco, Cal." circular postmark, dated Jan. 1, 1899. On the face of the cover has been rubber stamped "Postage Due 2 Cts.". I venture the opinion that this was placed by the United States postal authorities, as it looks familiar. The cover is backstamped with Military Station No. 1, Manila, Philippine—Received. This backstamp is dated April 5, 1900. I would like to know, just to satisfy a collector's driving curiosity, where that letter spent that year and three months and why.



A pair of newspaper stamps with cancel on part of cover. (Illustration from the original article.)

Another question often raised in regard to the listing of the various Republica Filipiana issues has to do with the use of all the various kinds of adhesives indiscriminately for letter postage—are the newspaper stamps and the telegraph stamps entitled to be classed as postage stamps? I can offer but little evidence. I picture [the corner of] a cover

franked by an imperforate pair of the newspaper stamps, and can show a companion piece, addressed to the same name, in the same handwriting and cancelled with the same Ylococ K.K.K. mark, but on the 2 cent violet Telegrafos stamp.

So, Mr. Editor of *Mekeel's*, if it is solely a matter of proving use in carrying letters, and thereby establishing franking qualities, perhaps these few covers may be of some help. But when it comes to the broader, more important question: "Are Aguinaldo items philatelic material"? I put that up to collectors.

[That same year, Scott added the Aguinaldo issues. They are listed in the



Revenue stamp, not mentioned in Scott



10c Revenue (Recibos) issue used as postage, tied by "Comunicaciones Filipinas Tuguegarao" postal seal cancel, on cover to Palanan, Ysabela

Philippines section under “Filipino Revolutionary Government” as Sc. Y1-Y3 (Postage), YF1 (Registration), and YP1 (Newspaper). Because they were used interchangeably as postage stamps, the Telegraphs issue is listed as Sc. Y3, a regular postage stamp issue.]



Registration stamp, Sc. YF1

Cover to Lac-loc with 2¢ red, Sc. Y1, and 8¢ green Registration stamp, Sc. YF1, tied by Bayombono postal seal cancel



Newspaper stamp, perf and imperf, Sc. YP1 and YP1a



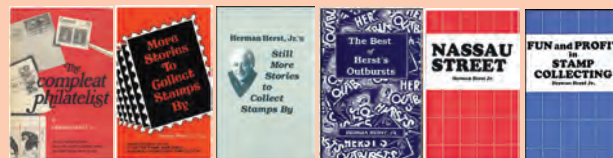
Telegraph stamp used as postage, tied to a cover to Calbayog, Samar by a Spanish period postmark. Stamp pays the single Local rate.



Telegraph stamp varieties, still not listed in Scott

We will also be covering the Aguinaldo issues, the history of this Revolutionary era and a controversy surrounding the leaders of the Revolution in a coming issue of Stamp News Online; to subscribe, see page 31

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And now for the rest of the story, or what I discovered in searching for images for the original article.

**First, the history.**

From

<http://www.nigelgooding.co.uk/Spanish/Aguinaldo/Aguinaldo.htm>  
we learn that “The Aguinaldo issues...were...issued by the Republicans under the leadership of General Emilio Aguinaldo. The Filipino Republic was instituted by Aguinaldo on June 23, 1898, at this time assuming the office of President. The Filipinos, under Aguinaldo’s leadership, had organised a Government which remained in force during the time of the overthrow of the Spanish Power in the Philippines; the Fall of Manila, and after hostilities had broken out between the Filipinos and the Americans on February 4, 1899.

“For at least ten months, the Filipinos were under control of neither the Spanish or American Authorities, but acknowledged the leadership and presidency of Aguinaldo. His Revolutionary Government had become recognised throughout the islands, except for Manila and some sea-ports.... In those ten months, civil governments were established, a native army was organised, telegraph lines which had



*The capture of Aguinaldo, March 22, 1901.\**

been destroyed during the insurrection were repaired, a postal system had begun, and a stamp tax enforced.... Aguinaldo was taken prisoner by United States troops on March 23, 1901.

“The devices composing the National Arms, adopted by the Filipino Revolutionary Government, are emblems of the Katipunan origin. The letters ‘KKK’, which appear on the stamps, are the initials of this society whose complete

\* <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/36542/36542-h/36542-h.htm>

name is 'Kataas-tasang, Kagalang-galang Katipunan ng mga Anak ng Bayan', translated to mean 'Sovereign Worshipful Association of the Sons of the Country'...."

And this from

<http://www.philippinephilatelist.net/Collections/Aguinaldo/aguinaldo/title.html>

"One of the main catalysts for the Philippine Revolution occurred in Cavite when in February 1872 a revolt by workers at Fort San Felipe implicated three Filipino priests...The execution of the three priests inspired Philippine national hero and novelist Dr. Jose P. Rizal to dedicate his second novel to them, the *El Filibusterismo*. During the start of the Philippine Revolution, many Cavitenos rallied to the Katipunan cause led by Andres Bonifacio. Caviteño leaders like Mariano Trias and Emilio Aguinaldo led the victory of the revolution in the province. Eventually, due to its successes, the Cavitenos of the Katipunan took charge of the revolution from



*The Aguinaldo Shrine, in Cavite, is the ancestral home of Emilio Aguinaldo, the first president of the First Republic of the Philippines. It was here that Philippine independence from Spain was proclaimed from a window of the home on June 12, 1898. The Philippine flag is raised here by top national officials every June 12 to commemorate Araw ng Kalayaan (Independence Day).*



*Sc. 1012 pictures Aguinaldo and the Shrine*

Andres Bonifacio and created a

revolutionary government that would lead to the first republic in Asia." [More about Bonifacio later. JFD.]

*Aguinaldo on Sc. 2520*



*The seal of the Municipality of Gen. E. Aguinaldo in the Province of Cavite*

1998 Centennial souvenir sheets, Sc. 2561-2565, issued during Pilipinas '98, depict revolutionary scenes as well as stamps of the Filipino Revolutionary Government.





An old news photo of General Aguinaldo at the age of 29 in Cavite, when the Philippines declared independence on June 12, 1898, and he became President.



A Registered cover from the German Offices in Manila to Aguinaldo as President of the Republic. Markings include, on the back, "Mil. Sta. No. 1, Philippine Isles / San Francisco, Cal., Registered / May 8, 1899".

**A Dissenting Opinion:**

While Emilio Aguinaldo is considered to be a national hero by most Filipinos, there is at <http://forthephilippines.blogspot.com/2010/01/devaluation-of-hero-promotion-of.html> we learn something very different. [If you are wondering why the small type, it is because we need to put the html address on one line in order for it to link properly. JFD.]

Following is an excerpt from that site, supplemented by images from that and other sites:

“From being the face of the P5 bill/coin to sharing half the theme of the P10 bill, the Philippine’s other national hero, Andres Bonifacio y de Castro, has suffered a devaluation over the last few decades. Corollary to the Supremo’s apparent (and unofficial) demotion is the promotion of his revolutionary nemesis, Gen. Emilio Aguinaldo. From having absolutely no presence in neither bills nor coins, the country’s supposed First President responsible for the Proclamation of Philippine



Andres Bonifacio, Sc. 900

Independence and, as well, the killings of at least two nationalist heroes, displaced Bonifacio from the No.2 spot in Philippine money....

“Andres Bonifacio was the founder of the...KKK...a secret revolutionary society aimed at liberating the Philippines from the yoke of Spanish colonial rule....

The Supremo [Bonifacio] has also been referred to in history as the Philippine’s First (Revolutionary) President. While certain historians have tried to downplay or dispute his formation and leadership of the earliest national government by and of the Filipinos, there have been clear evidence that Andres Bonifacio was Filipinos’ truly first President.

“After the Katipuneros launched the uprising against the Spaniards...[Bonifacio] became the president and formed a cabinet composed of men he trusted, including Emilio Jacinto, Secretary of State; Teodoro Plata, War; Aguado del Rosario, Interior; Briccio Pantas, Justice; and Enrique Pacheco, as Secretary of Finance. [Notice that Aguinaldo is not mentioned here.]

“Surviving official letterhead communications dated 1897 point to Bonifacio’s various designations that include being the ‘Supreme President, Government of the Revolution.’

“Perhaps the most telling proofs come from non-partisan sources of his period. Nineteenth century Spanish historian Jose M. del Castillo, in his 1897 work ‘El Katipunán’ or ‘El Filibusterismo en Filipinas,’ describes the first national elections in the Philippines from which Bonifacio emerged as the President....This is corroborated by the February 8, 1897 issue of the international publication ‘La Ilustracion Espanola y Americana’ in its article about the Philippine revolution and which featured an engraved portrait of ‘Andres Bonifacio, Titulado Presidente de la Republica Tagala’....

“At any rate, that Bonifacio is the ‘Father of Philippine Revolution’ is undisputed, and his courage legendary....

“Also referred to as the ‘Great Plebeian,’ he happens to be the Philippine’s ‘other’ national hero. According to

the National Commission for Culture and the Arts: Aside from Rizal, the only other hero given an implied recognition as a national hero is Andres Bonifacio whose day of birth on November 30 [Bonifacio Day] has been made a national holiday. [Jose Rizal, the most prominent advocate



*Andres Bonifacio and  
Emilio Aguinaldo*

for reform in the Philippines during the Spanish colonial era, is regarded as the foremost Filipino patriot and was executed by the Spanish in 1896, a date marked annually as Rizal Day, a Philippine national holiday.]...

“If there is a hero that perhaps historically deserves to be joined with Bonifacio, it is Emilio Jacinto, the ‘Brains of Katipunan.’ Jacinto was Bonifacio’s confidante and author of Katipunan’s moral code, the Kartilya. His principled loyalty to Bonifacio extended even after the Supremo was deposed and murdered: he continued to fight the Spanish soldiers while refusing to join Aguinaldo’s forces until his death in April 1899....

“Only nine days after American colonizers got him, Aguinaldo swore fealty to U.S. flag. His easy capitulation to the American imperialists was supposedly made under plea that his life be spared. His allegiance to Uncle Sam also caused the Anti-Imperialist League to drop him as their...rallying symbol for their opposition to the annexation of the Philippines. Aguinaldo’s swift betrayal of the First Philippine Republic sharply contrasted with [Apolinario] Mabini’s adamant, repeated refusal to swear allegiance to America, earning the latter the punishment of exiled in captivity in Guam.

“In fairness to Gen. Aguinaldo, his controversial support of the Japanese forces during World War II has been interpreted by some as an expression of regret or dissatisfaction over America’s annexation of the Philippines (which he, of course, did not fight to the end). Moreover, while on

his deathbed, he supposedly expressed regret, if not apology, for what he did to Bonifacio. His dying confession or apology is not officially accepted or hardly mentioned but this piece of information was



*A news photo showing President and Mrs. Emilio Aguinaldo (arrows) on the porch of their home, greeting Prince Akihito and Princess Michiko of Japan during World War II.*

broached no less by certain history professors from the University of the Philippines.”

Corroborating this, we find on Wikipedia:

[Following differences between Aguinaldo and Bonifacio]  
“A party of Aguinaldo’s men led by Agapito Bonzón and José Ignacio Paua met with Bonifacio at his camp in Indang. Unaware of the order for his arrest, Bonifacio received them cordially. The next day, Bonzón and Paua attacked Bonifacio’s camp. Bonifacio did not fight back and ordered his men to hold their fire, though shots were nevertheless exchanged. In the crossfire, Bonifacio was shot in the arm, and Paua stabbed him in the neck and was prevented from striking further by one of Bonifacio’s men....

“Bonifacio’s party was brought to Naik, where he and Procopio stood trial on charges of sedition and treason against Aguinaldo’s government and conspiracy to murder Aguinaldo. The jury was composed entirely of Aguinaldo’s men and even Bonifacio’s defence lawyer himself declared his client’s guilt. Bonifacio was barred from confronting the state witness for the charge of conspiracy to murder on the grounds that the latter had been killed in battle, but after the trial the witness was seen alive with the prosecutors.

“The Bonifacio brothers were found guilty despite insufficient evidence and recommended to be executed....They were executed on 10 May 1897 in the mountains of Maragondon.”