

100 Years Ago in Mekeel's: Republica Oriental del Uruguay

by C. A. Howes

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The “Eastern Republic of Uruguay,” whose full name has generally appeared on its stamps, is the smallest of the South American republics but has nevertheless loomed large in the eyes of stamp collectors. Its early issues have for years given food for thought and study to specialists, and its later issues, with few exceptions, have been so attractive in both design and execution that



they have proved general favorites and made the country popular among all classes of collectors.



Uruguay Sc. 1

The first stamps of Uruguay are not common enough to prove a puzzle to young collectors, with their simple inscription DILIGENCIA, but many have wondered on seeing them in the catalogue why they were so labelled. The answer has become generally known at the present day, for the early mail service of the country was carried on by stage-coaches (French, *diligences*) whose routes radiated from Montevideo, and the first stamps were thus appropriately inscribed. Mr.

Griebert, in his magnificent work, tells us that these first three stamps were lithographed in Montevideo and issued on October 1, 1856.

One die was engraved for the 60 centavos, and thirty-five transfers made to the stone, which printed sheets of seven horizontal rows of five stamps. All these impressions were naturally alike, but to print the 80 centavo stamps, the figures 60 were removed from the stone, and 80 substituted by hand, thus introducing 35 minor varieties into this value and enabling it to be plated.

The same thing occurred with the 1 real stamp, next printed, only the whole bottom label was removed in this case and a new one substituted which was apparently transferred 35 times from a new engraving. In transferring, the label was irregularly placed so that 35 minor varieties of this value can be detected.



*Uruguay design
type A1, Sc. 3*



*Uruguay design
type A1a, Sc. 3B*

A second variety of the 60c [Scott design Type A1a], which has had scant catalogue recognition, is given its proper credentials. This has larger lettering, fewer rays around the “sun,” and a series of parallel short dashes at the sides instead of the Greek fret. It seems to have appeared about a year after the first type, and was doubtless due to the stone hav-

ing been cleaned after the other lot was printed and the possible loss of the first die, as this one is an entirely new engraving. It is of great rarity. [In the 2011 Scott Classic Catalogue, it is valued unused at \$2,750 versus \$450 for the first type 60c. JFD.]

The above three values were the rates, respectively, for single, double and triple letters for inland correspondence. In November, 1857, rates of 120, 180 and 240 centesimos for similar letters to Buenos Ayres were published, and in March of 1858 stamps of the new values appeared. These were inscribed “Montevideo” at the top and “Correo” at the

sides in block letters. These stamps were also lithographed, the 120 and 180 centesimos in sheets of 78 (13 horizontal rows of 6 stamps each) and the 240 centesimos in a sheet of 204 (17 horizontal rows of 12 stamps each). The first two values have a tete-beche in the sheet—curiously enough it is number 8 in the top row in each case.



Uruguay Sc. 6

The 240 centesimos had something—which was removed. The sheet of this value was made up as follows: a block of 30 transfers (5 horizontal rows of 6) was made from the die; six blocks were then applied to the stone, two horizontally by three vertically; then the top two rows of a block were added below at the left, and the next two rows at the right. Now something was amiss with the 23rd stamp in each block, for it was erased from the stone! Thus there are blanks where stamps numbers 41, 47, 101,



Uruguay Sc. 6 block of eight with one position erased

107, 161, 167 and 203 in the sheet should be. It has always been said that the 180 centesimos existed as an error in the color of the 240, and the blanks would seem to prove that such was the case and that the error was discovered and corrected. [This error is listed as Scott 6c.] But the noted Dr. Wonner never believed in the so-called error and Mr. Griebert agrees with him. Yet the above described sheet shows that *something* once existed!



Uruguay Sc. 6c

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Uruguay Sc. 10

In 1859 prepayment of letters was made obligatory. The same tariffs were kept in force, but a new issue of stamps in one design and of the six values used previously made its appearance. The lowest four values were issued on June 26, the 180c, on Oct. 19, and the 240c on Nov. 1, 1859. The square design was similar to the preceding issue, but

had the lettering in much smaller and thinner Roman type. These stamps are quite familiar to the majority of collectors. They were lithographed as before in sheets of 204 stamps, seventeen horizontal rows of twelve. Mr. Griebert says the 60c and 100c were produced from the same stone by altering the figures, and the same was the case with the 120c and 180c. Each pair of values, therefore, shows identical minor varieties which do not appear in the other pair or in the 80c and 240c, which were printed from separate stones. A block of 20 transfers was used in making up the stones, so there are that number of minor varieties of type.

Evidently the thin figures of value were not distinct enough for practical use, for in 1860 the same stamps began to appear with heavier numerals—what would be called “bold face” in the printing office. The values and colors remained as before, save that the 240c was not included. The stamps were lithographed as usual, but were now printed in sheets having four panes of 48 stamps each, in eight horizontal rows of six. A block of twelve transfers was used this time in making up the stone, so there are but that number of minor varieties of each value. The 120c is found bisected and used as a 60c stamp, probably because of a shortage of the latter value.



Uruguay Sc. 16

A change in the currency of the country in 1862 was finally responsible for the new issue which, after nearly two

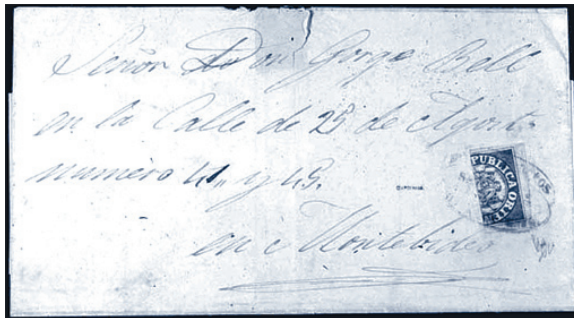


Uruguay Sc. 18

years' delay, appeared in 1864. It will be noted that the new centesimo values (06, 08, 10 and 12) bear the same ratios to each other as the former stamps of ten times their nominal face. The new design was anything but artistic or beautiful. The exact date of issue is in doubt, but Mr. Griebert considers it to have been about the end of February,

1864. [Scott now indicates April 13, 1864.] The stamps were lithographed by the firm who had done all the previous work for the Postal Department, Messrs. Mege and Willems of Montevideo. The 6c sheets were in four panes, each of 56 stamps (eight horizontal rows of seven), but the 8c had panes of 64 stamps (eight by eight). The 10c and 12c were doubtless similarly arranged, but details seem to be lacking.

The 8c sheets had several tetes-beche, one pane at least having the right half (32 stamps) inverted, giving eight pairs of tetes-beche down the middle. The 12c of this issue is known cut in two and used for its half value.



The horizontal half of a 12c used as 6c (23 var), tied by indistinct oval datestamp in greenish blue (of San Jose?) on undated folded letter to Montevideo.



Uruguay Sc. 27

Changes in the postal rates, by which they were made multiples of 5c, and which were published on Sept. 6, 1865, were responsible for the first surcharged stamps. A new issue was ordered in England, but as it could not arrive in time, the current set was overprinted, without regard to former values, with the new denominations. Thus the 12c became 5c, the 8c became 10c, the 10c became 15c, and the 6c became 20c. The new figures were printed in black

over the old figures of value, and thus appear twice on each stamp. The *tete-beche* varieties of the 8c stamp were taken into account and the surcharged figures properly placed. Many errors of surcharge occurred, as a glance at the catalog will reveal, but most of them are said to be very rare. For this reason there are many bogus varieties and surcharges in existence which should be guarded against. This provisional issue appeared on January 1, 1866, when the new rates went into effect, but were soon superseded by the new permanent stamps.



*Uruguay Sc. 25b, a *tete-beche* block with the surcharge placed properly on all four stamps.*



Uruguay Sc. 29 and trial color proofs of the numerals for Sc. 30, 31 and 33

This new set, which arrived and was issued January 10, 1866, was lithographed by Messrs. Maclure, Macdonald and Co., of London. The four values were first engraved, each stamp separately on its plate, and then transferred to the stone for printing the supply by lithography. The 5c was engraved in a plate of 100, ten rows of ten; the 10c in a plate of 50, ten rows of five each; the 15c in a plate of 35, seven rows of five; the 20c is still unknown. As a consequence of the separate engravings, as many minor varieties exist as there were stamps on the original plates. The most prominent of these are: in the 5c, the “white flag” (no lines in the top of the 5), CENTECIMOS without the initial C and also without the final S, as well as with a

small s, and the left side of the arms, below the horse, not filled in; in the 10c, the I omitted, and also an I for the T in CENTECIMOS. The sheets of the 5c contained 100 stamps, as engraved, but the size of the printed sheets of the other values is unknown. The 10c stamp was cut in



Left, Uruguay Sc. 30e, no S in Centecimos; right, Sc. 30f, small S in Centecimos. (For a closer look, use your pdf magnifier.)



Sc. 31a, 10c used as 5c

two and used for its half value, and even the 15c seems to have had one third of the stamp used for 5c occasionally, while the 20c, doubly unfortunate yielded a half for 10c or even a quarter for 5c rates.

On Oct. 1, 1866, the 1c stamp appeared, due to the inauguration of this rate for newspapers. It was produced by the same firm as the other numeral stamps, but was lithographed from two different stones apparently, one containing two panes of 72 stamps each, and the other one pane of 176 stamps (sixteen horizontal rows of eleven). Impressions from the two stones can be separated by several minor differences, but in general by the clearness of the first and the blurring in the second, or in pairs or more by the wider spacing (nearly 1 mm.) of the first stone.

Evidently the plates or transfers must have been sent to Montevideo, for we find the local lithographers supplying printings in 1868, according to Mr. Griebert, and with new sheet arrangements; thus the 5c is printed in sheets of 190, ten horizontal rows of 39, and the other three values in sheets of 200, ten rows of 20. Both the English and local printings were supplied imperforate and perforated, the first stamps thus treated having come from England in

March, 1866. The perforation gauges from 12 to 13-1/2, the larger gauges chronicled (8 to 10-1/2) being trial perforations, according to Mr. Griebert. The spelling of “centecimos” with a second “C” is stated to have been an error of the English engravers.



Uruguay Sc. 36



Uruguay 50c, Sc. 43, and 1p, Sc. 43A with proper quarterings

On January 8, 1877, a new and finely engraved set of stamps was issued which had been engraved on steel by the American Bank Note Co., of New York. It omitted the 15c value, but added a 50c and 1 peso. The latter value was

not issued until May 1, 1879, because of a curious error. The engravers had transposed the two sides of the coat of arms [top center], making the “quarterings” come on the wrong sides. The error was discovered and the stock burned, only a few specimens escaping. The sheets were of 100 stamps, (ten by ten), and were rouletted, instead of being perforated; a means of separation that seems to have appealed to Uruguay and Chile, for some reason or other. Both the 10c and 20c are known bisected for their half values.

The 1c stamp became exhausted, and on November 10, 1880, a lithographed copy was issued, produced locally by Sr. Pena of Montevideo. The sheet had 100 stamps, but they were arranged in twelve horizontal rows of eight, with four extra ones added at the bottom. The stamp is normally rouletted, but can be found wholly imperforate or partly imperforate—horizontally or vertically.



Uruguay Sc. 44a, imperf pair

To Be Continued