

THE POSTAL SERVICE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF BOYACA

by Jim Cross

This article contains more mystery than history. As I have written previously, there are no references in the literature to the stamps or postal service of the Department of Boyaca. In the May 1988 COPACARTA, I suggested that the national government probably suspended postal service on the Northwest Route to Venezuela which passed thru Boyaca soon after the outbreak of "The 1000 Days" in October 1899. It is known that Cucuta and the surrounding area were in the hands of the rebels from that month until June 1900. Since an alternate route to Cucuta existed via the Northeast Route to Bucaramanga and Pamplona, it is possible that service on the Northern Route was not resumed even when Cucuta was retaken in June 1900.

The first issue of Boyaca was chronicled in the American Journal of Philately in June 1902, although it was probably issued earlier. Since it consisted of only a 5 centavos stamp, it was probably issued prior to 1 March 1902 when the national government raised the rate for internal letters to 10 centavos. Most of the departments seem to have followed the rate schedules of the national government. The Temprano catalog lists the date of the first issue as 1899, but this may be too early. The 10, 20, and 50 centavos and 1 peso stamp of the second issue of Boyaca were reported in the July 1903 issue of the American Journal of Philately. A postal card in my possession from Antonio Rincon addressed to the New York Philatelian and dated July 1903 announced: "the government of the Department of Boyaca is planning to put into circulation stamps in the denominations of 5 and 10 pesos in quantities from 25,000 - 35,000." Possibly these stamps were issued to support a resumption of parcel post service. Unfortunately the Rincon postal card does not show a dated cancel. Receipt of these two high values was announced in the American Journal of Philately for September 1903.

I previously reported that I knew of no covers from Boyaca. Brian Moorhouse has sent me a photocopy of a letter from Cocuy to Bogota, shown below, franked with a perforated copy of the 5 Pesos stamp. The cancellation of the Agencia Gutierrez, Cocuy also appears at the lower left without a date. Since this appears to be inflation franking, the cover probably was mailed in 1904. This marking is also found on used single stamps and is the only marking other than Tunja which has been reported on stamps of Boyaca.

