

COLOMBIA: THE 1920-1922 PROVISIONAL NUMERAL ISSUE

Part I of an article by Kenneth Rowe

This issue has been neglected for various reasons which is a pity because it is just as interesting as the earlier numeral issues. Studd (1) gave a very brief overview in 12946 and in 1973-75 Luis E. San Juan (2) wrote a complicated article on one value (One Centavo).

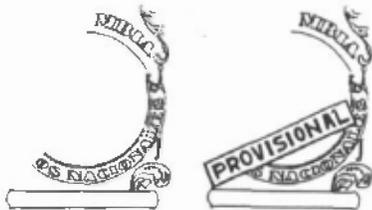
In 1918 the introduction of the three centavos rate and the difficulty of obtaining replacements for the 1917 definitive series persuaded the Colombian Post Office to order a locally printed provisional series.

The order was given to the Litografía Nacional which decided to use the existing dies for the 1908 issue, which were still in their possession, for the design with an inserted label inscribed "PROVISIONAL" and essays were prepared for approval.



This preliminary essay for the five centavos value show significant differences from the issued stamps both in the position of the label and its spelling.

Production involved the preparation of an intermediate transfer stone, clearing suitable space on each stamp image and the transfer of a label to the cleared area. This process resulted in differences in the angle and placing of the label and flaws within the labels themselves. In order to visualize these differences a skeleton background for each value was prepared and a standard label was placed in the actual position of each unit of the transfer stone.



In addition to the 1908 designs the values of three centavos which were copied from the 1920 engraved stamp by Perkins Bacon (Scott #359) and the fifty centavos of the 1902 series (Scott #271) were treated in the same way. It is difficult to understand why, when the three centavos was copied that the PROVISIONAL label was not included in the master die.

All of the papers used were manufactured in the United States and I have already commented on the types of watermark found on the issue (*COPACARTA Vol 17, #3, p59 2000*). Thanks to Robert Müller it is now known that the "Made in USA" watermark originally classified as Type 3 is, as I suspected, not a separate type, but a part of the Type 1 watermark.



The Canadian Postal Archives in Ottawa contain the official U.P.U. Specimen Books for the period and these include the complete Provisional series handstamped with the words "OFICIO" or "OFI".

The table on the following page shows each value and reviews each printing and the different settings within each printing. In all cases, except one, I have depicted the layout of the intermediate transfer stones and shown the sheet make-up for each setting. These layouts are confirmed by sheets, part sheets and large multiples in my collection.

The table is followed by detailed settings for each value. All major identifying varieties have been indicated by arrows and minor flaws have been marked on the skeleton frame and the label for each value. Comments on the settings, substituted clichés and significant varieties are made for each value if needed.