A NEWLY DISCOVERED COLOMBIAN RED CROSS STAMP

by Larry Crain

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Colombia's first Red Cross postal tax stamp, according to Scott and Yvert, appeared May 27, 1935. This stamp in black-green and red, showing a mother-protector, figure 1, was required on all interior letters during one week in May. In 1948 the use of the Red Cross surtax stamps was extended to the entire month of May, and the yearly use continued to 1970.

In spite of the Scott and Yvert listings, the mother-protector stamp was not the first. Two Colombian specialized catalogs, Barriqa and Temprano, list stamps appearing in 1933. These are rubber stamp legends applied to perforated blank labels or to perforated anti-tuberculosis seals. Two rubber stamps were used. 5001 of these Red Cross stamps were prepared.

The Temprano catalog explains the circumstances of their issue. The national government on May 20, 1933, (Decree 970) authorized that all ordinary letters mailed in the Capital during Red Cross week at the end of May carry an additional 5 centavos stamp with the funds going to the Red Cross.

This decree affected all postal services in the capital: surface mail, air mail (which was authorized to SCADTA, The Colombian-German Society of Air Transport), the urban mail system and all authorized private posts (mostly organized by bus companies). Letters destined outside of Colombia were exempted.

The decree, however, applied only to mail posted in Bogota. On May 27, 1933, (Decree 1000), the provisions were extended to Medellin, the second largest city, and to Buenaventura, the principal port on the Pacific.

A year later Law 9 of November 15, 1934, extended Decrees 970 and 1000 to the entire country. It took effect in 1935 and resulted in the mother-protector stamp, Scott RA1. From the proceeds of the sale of the stamps 3000 pesos went to the Red Cross, the excess was retained by the post office. The government issued 180,834 (Temprano) or 250,000 (Barriga) of these stamps.

In 1933, however, the effect of the two decrees was that Red Cross officials in each of the three named cities had to arrange with the local postal authorities for a stamp to be used. Temprano states that this happened only in Medellin; that no Red Cross stamps appeared in Bogota or Buenaventura in 1933.

The Medellin Red Cross office created two four-line rubber stamps, one reading "Cruz Roja - sello adicional - valor 50.05 - Medellin 1933" and one reading "Cruz Roja - sello adicional - Medellin 1933." These were used on red bordered blank labels. In addition, the first rubber stamp was applied to seals of the Red Cross' anti-tuberculosis campaign.

This same seal was overprinted in 1950 to become the Red Cross stamp of that year, Scott RA46. Figure 2 shows a canceled copy of this seal without any overprint. While Temprano and Barriga agree on the total number of copies of the