

ALAN ANYON'S CINDERELLA CORNER

## COLOMBIA: THE BOGUS 1921 RETARDO (LATE FEE) STAMPS

In the period 1886 to 1918 special stamps inscribed *RETARDO* were employed in Colombia to collect an additional charge for mail that had missed normal collection. The final issue in 1914 comprised values of 2c and 5c. The discontinuation of special stamps for the service was promulgated in Diario Oficial No. 16565 of December 12, 1918 which ordered that remaining stocks should be destroyed.

An employee of the Medellin Post Office and part time stamp dealer, Joaquin Arbelaez, realising that the general public was confused by the disappearance of the stamps, saw the opportunity of producing bogus stamps inscribed *RETARDO*. Initially 2c red stamps of 1908 and of 1917 were surcharged by Remington typewriter. These were issued in 1919 and will be covered by a future article.

In 1921 the 2c red of 1917, the 3c red on yellow of 1920 and the 3c green, 5c blue and 10c violet of the 1920 Provisional issue were overprinted *Retardo 1921* in two lines of fancy type in Medellin, probably also on the instructions of Sr. Arbelaez. The surcharge was applied in black in horizontal strips of five stamps on a hand press. Although the font of the date is constant on all stamps there are two distinct types of the initial *R*, with a short tail and a long tail (Figures 1 and 2). The surcharge with a long tail to the *R* has the lower half of the final *o* of *Retardo* thickened (Figure 1). The

surcharge with the *R* with a short tail has this *o* (Figure 2), but also exists where the *o* is thickened at the bottom left and top right quadrants (Figure 3). All values except the 10c violet have been found with the three types of surcharge inverted.

These surcharged stamps proved so popular with collectors that they were subsequently forged. In one forgery the *R* differs from the two original types, there is an open *9* in *1921* and the *2* is unlike that of the genuine overprint, (Figure 4). A second forgery has the *R* similar, but not identical to the long tailed original, a shorter tail on the figure 1 and the verticle stroke of the *o* has a flat top unlike the angled top of the original (Figure 5). This forgery has been found on all values except the 10c violet, whereas that first described has only been seen on the 1917 2c.

While the 1917 2c and the 1920 3c on red on yellow stamps only exist perforated 13.5, the other three values of the 1920 Provisional issue are found perforated 13.5, 10x13.5 and 10.

As can be appreciated from this article the number required to complete a full collection of these bogus stamps, including the forgeries, is very considerable. However, it is hoped the detail provided will enable collectors not to overlook the various varieties that may come their way. Any additional information on these stamps will be appreciated.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5