

1898 POSTAL RATES OF THE SPANISH PHILIPPINES: INTERNAL MAIL AND MAIL TO SPAIN AND COLONIES

by Don Peterson

One of the real joys of philatelic writing is finding an original reference which can serve as a basis for presenting new information to the collector. It was with great pleasure that I recently received a copy of Spanish Royal Circular No. 13, dated November 9, 1897, Manila, from fellow collector, Antonio Cuesta of Barcelona, Spain. The Circular, issued by Ricardo Rey, Governor General of the Philippines, revised the postal rates and procedures for internal and overseas mail from the Philippines to Spain and colonies, effective January 1, 1898. Subsequently, Ernesto Cuesta (not related to Antonio), a Spanish Cuba collector and researcher from Maryland, translated the Circular and was helpful by providing other related philatelic orders and documents. The 1897 Circular did not address postal rates from the Philippines to non-Spanish countries.

Until now, the 1898 postal rates of the Spanish Philippines have not been fully described in the philatelic press. In "Postal History of the Spanish Philippines, 1565-1898" (2000), Geoffrey Lewis and I, after reviewing many covers and postal cards showing different postal rates, recognized that there must have been a change in the postal rates for interior mail and mail to Spain and colonies, beginning in 1898. However, until now, we were uncertain as to what those rates were. Thanks to Antonio and Ernesto, the new information from Spanish Royal Circular No. 13 brings those rates to light.

Circular No. 13 actually had its origin in a Spanish Royal Decree, dated October 8, 1897, Madrid, which described new postal rates for Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and other Spanish colonies, effective January 1, 1898. The new rates were

promulgated in conjunction with issuance of new stamps of a common design showing the effigy ("baby head") of King Alfonso XIII for use in each of the Spanish colonies, also effective January 1, 1898. Following the Decree from Madrid, Governor-General Ricardo Rey, in Manila, issued Spanish Royal Circular No. 13 on November 9, 1897.

The 1897 Circular provides answers to many questions about postal rates in the Philippines in 1898. For example, we now know that the overseas single-weight rate to Spain was 6 centavos; the internal single-weight rate within the limits of a Philippine town was 2 centavos; the internal single-weight rate between towns within the Philippines was 3 centavos; and the postal card rate to Spain was 2 centavos.

However, there were some inaccuracies in the Circular, which resulted by trying to apply the same rates to Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. In a February 15, 1899, Report by the U.S. Government, which translated the Circular, it noted several rates which were incorrect for the Philippines, although they were correct for Cuba and Puerto Rico. For example, the 1897 Circular cited a 5 *milesimas* periodicals (newspaper) rate for "within the limits of a Philippine town," when in fact, the 1899 report indicated it probably was meant to be 1/2 *milesimas*. However, neither rate was correct for the Philippines. The 5 *milesimas* rate was too high for "within the limits of a Philippine town." The 1/2 *milesimas* rate would have been appropriate for Cuba and Puerto Rico, which had stamps of that denomination, but would not have been applicable in the Philippines, which did not have stamps of that denomination. At this point, I am uncertain as to what the newspaper rate was for "within the limits of a Philippine town" in 1898.

Additionally, the 1897 Circular indicated that the printed matter rate and samples of medicine rate for "within the limits of a Philippine town" were 1 centavo and 5 centavos, respectively. The 1899 Report questions those rates and believes they actually

were 1 milésimas and 5 milésimas, respectively. I concur with that conclusion.

TABLE 1 is a summary of the 1898 postal rates of the Spanish Philippines, based on the information in the 1897 Circular, as amended by the U.S. Government Report, dated February 15, 1899. It addresses interior mail and mail to Spain and colonies only. This table amends **TABLE XIII-1** and **TABLE XIII-2** in Peterson and Lewis (2000) regarding the 1898 rates.

TABLE 1 1898 POSTAL RATES OF THE SPANISH PHILIPPINES: INTERIOR MAIL AND MAIL TO SPAIN AND COLONIES*						
Destination of Mail	Letter Rate	Postal Card Rate	Periodicals (Newspaper) Rate	Printed Matter Rate	Samples of Medicine Rate	Registered Fee
Within the limits of a Philippine town	2c	5m	?	1m	5m	5c
Between towns within the Philippines	3c	1c	1m	2m	1c	5c
To Spain	6c	2c	2m	4m	2c	5c
To Cuba and Puerto Rico	6c	3c	2m	4m	2c	5c

* From Spanish Royal Circular No. 13, Manila, dated November 9, 1897, as amended by the U.S. Government Report, dated February 15, 1899

These rates went into effect on January 1, 1898, and remained in effect until the defeat of the Spanish fleet in Manila Bay on May 1, 1898. However, sporadic use of Spanish Philippine stamps on mail, using these rates, continued until November or December 1899, when the last of the Spanish soldiers left the Islands. The vast majority of 1898 covers and postal cards known to me from various collections and auctions confirm the rates cited in the 1897 Circular.



FIGURE 1. 1898 (April 10) Manila to Cartagna, Spain showing the 12 centavos overseas double-weight rate to Spain (Don Peterson Collection),

I have found several 1898 covers and postal cards which do not conform to the rates cited in the Circular. Some of these were posted using the previous rates in affect between 1890 and 1897. For example, some correspondents continued to apply the 8 centavos registration fee for mail to Spain and colonies in 1898, instead of the new 5 centavos fee. The 8 centavos fee was applicable on all overseas mail from 1879 through 1897, but only on mail to non-Spanish countries in 1898. Other non-conforming rates included some postal cards that were probably philatelic in nature. Also, because there is a lack of surviving examples of newspaper, printed matter, and samples of medicine mail from 1898, it is difficult to confirm those rates indicated in the 1897 Circular.

If anyone has any additional information regarding these rates,

please contact Don Peterson at email: donpet4526@aol.com.

REFERENCES

Peterson, Don and Geoffrey Lewis. POSTAL HISTORY OF THE SPANISH PHILIPPINES, 1565-1898. Washington, D.C. 2000.

Spanish Royal Circular No. 13. Manila. November 9, 1897.

Spanish Royal Decree. Madrid. October 8, 1897,

U.S. Government. Report of the United States Postal Committee on the Condition and Needs of the Postal Service in Cuba. U.S. Government Printing Office. Washington, D.C. February 15, 1899.



IPPS MEMBERS: ATTENTION !

APS Stamp Show 2003 will be held in Columbus, Ohio, August 7-10, 2003. IPPS is planning on a MEETING on Saturday of the show. We are on the schedule for an afternoon meeting. The time has not yet been firmed up, nor has the program. If any member in that general area would be willing to serve as a contact person, or if you have some ideas for a program, please let me know.

...Bob Yacano