



1897-1898

Spanish Philippine Naval Marine Infantry Mail

Introduction and Historical Background

The existence of stampless Spanish Philippine naval marine infantry mail with naval marine infantry cachets has always been of interest to me. The focus of this article is on 1897-1898 naval marine infantry mail generated as a result of increased Spanish naval and infantry forces sent to the Islands in 1897 to quell local uprisings which began in 1896 (**Figure 1**).



Figure 1. 1897 (April) Manila to Cartagena mourning cover with violet marine infantry cachet from a Spanish naval ship. (Don Peterson collection)

The Spanish Navy Marines, or *Infanteria de Marina*, is a unique Army Corps within the Spanish Navy that provides an infantry-based amphibious force from the sea, utilizing Spanish Navy ships. The Corps, or *Cuerpo*, was formed in 1537 by Charles I of Spain (also known as Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor), making it the oldest marine corps in the world. The Army units in the Navy were also called *Cuerpo De Batallones* (or *Bon.*) de *Marina* (Navy Battalion Corps).

A recent book by Field (1998) provides interesting historical insight regarding these units and their uniforms during the Spanish American War. The Spanish Royal Order of December 29, 1841 (Madrid), established the National Corps of Marine Artillery or “*Cuerpo Nacional de Artilleria de Marina*” for Spain and her colonies. In 1848, the Corps

was divided into two parts: (1) Cuerpo Nacional de Artillería de Marina, and (2) Real de Infantería de Marina. Both units served together on Spanish Navy ships (Bueno, 1985). The ships also contained a contingent of regular Spanish naval officers and personnel.

A Royal Order of April 30, 1886, defined the uniforms for the marine Army infantry. Photos of marine Army infantry units in the Philippines show the distinctive blue or white barracks cap with naval insignia on the front, and deep blue or white trousers, depending on the function; whereas Spanish Navy personnel wore an all-white uniform and white cap (**Figure 2**). On April 5, 1897, the marine Army infantry in the Philippines was authorized a more comfortable summer uniform, to better accommodate Cuba and Philippine forces. A Royal Order of February 10, 1869, allowed marine Navy artillery units to adopt a nearly similar all-white uniform as the regular Spanish Navy (Bueno, 1985; Field, 1998).



Figure 2. 1897 Spanish Army marine infantry (marching soldiers with white caps) and Navy personnel (standing in white uniforms under tree) quayside on the Pasig River in Manila. (Museo de Ejercito, Madrid)

By Royal Decree of July 27, 1882, the marine infantry units were assimilated into the Spanish Army's Infantry, but continued to serve on Spanish naval ships (Field, 1998). Thus, from 1882 through 1898, a marine Army infantry unit, marine Navy artillery unit, and regular Navy were present on Spanish naval ships in Spain and her colonies, including the Philippines. There was only one marine infantry unit in the Philippines in 1897-1898 -- the 2nd Regiment of Marine Infantry. It consisted of 45 officers and 1,743 men (Hooker, 1997 and Nelson, 2009). As a result of U.S. Commodore Dewey's defeat of Spanish Admiral Patricio Montojo's fleet in Manila Bay on May 1, 1898, the remaining marine Army infantry, marine Navy artillery, and regular Navy personnel served on land with the regular land-based Spanish Army.

Postal History

In 1897-1898, the presence of a naval cachet on a cover permitted free franking for Spanish naval personnel. In the Philippines, the naval marine infantry cachets contained the words "infanteria de marina" and a decorative anchor in the center, representing the Spanish Naval Marine Infantry (Figure 1). Three types are known:

- Type I violet **CUERPO DE INFANTERIA DE MARINA 2o REGTo DE FILIPINAS 2o BON. COMANDANCIA**
- Type II blue-green **CUERPO DE INFANTERIA DE MARINA - REGIMIENTO DE FILIPINAS - PRIMER BATALLON - DETAIL**
- Type III black **CUERPO DE INFANTERIA DE MARINA DE FILIPINAS - SUBINSPECCION**

Only seven covers are known with naval “infanteria de marina” cachets. The cachets, approximately 35mm by 45mm in size, are believed to have been used primarily by the marine Army infantry units, although I suspect that marine naval artillery units and regular Navy officers and personnel may also have used the same cachets at times on their mail.

Not surprisingly, recruiting for naval units took place in Spain’s maritime towns of Cadiz, Ferrol, and Cartagena (Cromie, 1883), which as a result, became the overseas destination of most 1897-1898 Spanish Philippine naval mail. Of the three towns, the scarcer mail destinations are Ferrol and Cadiz. Interestingly, one of the five reported naval “marina” covers (Cover #4 in Table 1) has an additional Army cachet, “ESTAFETA DE COMPANA DIVISION DE MINDANAO”, thus confirming the marine infantry’s engagement in Spanish Army land operations – probably as a relocated unit.

Table 1. Known 1897 - 1898 Spanish Philippine Naval Marine Infantry Covers		
Cover #	Description	Owner
1.	1897 (April) P.I. to Juan Alcarriz Romero, Cartagena, Spain, w/ April 29, 1897, Cartagena receiving cancel. Mourning cover. Type I cachet	Don Peterson collection
2.	1897 (April 21) Manila (cds) to Juan Romero, Cartagena, Spain. Mourning cover. Type I cachet	E. N. Encarnacion collection
3.	1897-1898 Philippines to Pedro Zargoza, Cartagens, Spain. Mourning cover. Type I cachet	Antonio Torres Auction, January 31, 1991, and Soler y Llach Auction, May 22, 2002
4.	1897 Mindanao to Pedro Zargoza, Cartagena, Spain, with additional Spanish infantry cachet “ESTAFETA COMPANA DIVISION MINDANAO”. Mourning cover. Type I cachet	Antonio Cuesta collection
5.	1897 Philippines to Asuncion Cellier, Ferrol, Spain Type II cachet	Don Peterson Collection
6.	1897 Philippines to Luis Vives y Compania, Barcelona, Spain. Type II cachet	Antonio Cuesta collection
7.	1897 Philippines to Juan Romero, Puerto de Santa Maria, (Cadiz) Spain. Type III cachet	Antonio Cuesta collection

Other 1880s through 1898 covers are known with cachets with an anchor design, but are without the words “infanteria de marina”. These are believed to have been used by naval marine artillery units, regular Navy officers and personnel, or relocated naval units after the defeat of the Spanish fleet in Manila Bay; and are not addressed in this article. Naval marine infantry covers with “infanteria de marina” cachets are known from April 1897 through the end of 1897, and were probably in use in early 1898.

I wish to especially thank Antonio Cuesta for graciously sharing information from his extensive collection and philatelic files.

References

Bueno, Jose Maria. *La Infanteria y la Artilleria de Marina 1537-1931*. Malaga. 1985.
 Cromie, W. H. *The New Organization of the Spanish Army*. Pallas Armata (1966). Reprint of original article published in the United Services Magazine. 1883.
 Field, Ron. *Spanish-American War 1898*. Brassey’s History of Uniforms. London. 1998.
 Hooker, Terry D. *Spanish American War, 1898. The Cuban Land Campaign: Organizational Data*. El Dorado Books. 1997.
 Nelson, James. “Spanish Order of Battle, 1897: Philippines.” The Spanish-American War Centennial Website. www.spanamwar.com.

2009 Philippine Stamp Collectors Meeting Schedule (Sponsored by IPPS)		
Philippine Collectors Meeting, Date/Time/ Program **	Show Name/ Location/Show Dates	IPPS Meeting Contact
Saturday, June 6, 2009, Time: 1pm Program: Pete Sarmiento, “Autobiography of General MacArthur Through Philately”	NAPEX McLean Hilton, Tysons Corner, 7920 Jones Branch Dr., McLean, VA June 5-7, 2009	Pete Sarmiento pdsarm@aol.com 301-839-4463
Saturday, August 8, 2009, Time TBD. Program: Len McMaster, “Broken Letters on the Overprinted 1899 1c Franklin”	APS Stampshow David L. Lawrence Convention Center, 1000 Fort Duquesne Blvd., Pittsburgh, PA August 6-9, 2009	Isabelo and Jose Toledo itoledo37@yahoo.com 412-388-0293
Saturday, September 5, 2009	BALPEX Hunt Valley Inn Marriott Hotel, Shawan Rd, Hunt Valley, MD September 4-6, 2009	Don Peterson dpeterson4526@comcast.net 202-291-6229

* To schedule or revise a meeting, contact Don Peterson, IPPS Meeting Coordinator.

** All programs include “show-and-tell”.

Philippine Meetings
at APS StampShow and BALPEX in 2009

A Philippine meeting will be held at **APS StampShow** on Saturday, **August 8, 2009** at 1:00 pm, at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center, 100 Fort Duquesne Blvd., Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Featured speaker will be **Len McMaster**, who will discuss “Broken Letters on the Overprinted 1899 1c Franklin.” A dinner get-together will take place Saturday night at a local Filipino restaurant.

The last Philippine meeting for 2009 will be held at **BALPEX** on Saturday, **September 5, 2009** at Hunt Valley Inn Marriott Hotel, Shawan Road, Hunt Valley, Maryland. The time and speaker are TBD. Both meetings are sponsored by the International Philippine Philatelic Society and also include show-and-tell. For more information on Philippine meetings, contact Don Peterson at 202-291-6229 or dpeterson4526@comcast.net