

The Filipino American War:

The Federated State of the Visayas

by Bob Yacano

Collectors of Philippines philatelic material are familiar with the story of Admiral Dewey's defeat of the Spanish fleet in Manila Bay in 1898. There are a number of collectors who have spent a great deal of time, money and effort to collect and study the stamps, covers and documents emanating from Dewey's action. As a result, there is a great deal of information available that helps explain the declining role of the Spanish Postal System and the creation and expansion of the United States Postal System in its place

Between 1898 and 1902, the date when the islands were considered "pacified", there were a number of parallel postal services in operation. Earlier philatelic writings together with a number of recent books dealing with the historical aspects of the period have given enough information to begin to understand the postal picture, accepting the possibility that additional information in the future may very well change that understanding.

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There are difficulties in dealing with this material. Covers of this period were not dated. It is not always possible to determine the succession of stamps or cancels. Equally important is that much of the material of this period has been destroyed. Possession of any document relating to the guerrillas was considered to be proof of compliance with the guerrilla cause and resulted in capture, interrogation, and possibly death. It is understandable that many destroyed this type of proof as soon as possible. Even captured material often was destroyed on the spot, with only those documents deemed relevant to guerrilla activity were retained and sent to military headquarters where they were later destroyed.

The attempt is to unify the material known, with examples, in the expectation that the readers will search their own materials and come up with supportive or contradictory information/material to add to the picture.

The Federated State of the Visayas was comprised of the islands of Cebu, Leyte, Negros, Panay and Samar. While declaring allegiance to Aguinaldo's Army of Independence, the local leaders considered the Visayan area as a separate entity determined to maintain its own independence. Bohol, Panay and Cebu are known to have had their own postal systems. Stamps are known from Negros: little else. No covers have been reported, nor any



Figure 1



Figure 4

information on its operation. (Fig. 1).

While no Panay covers have been reported, there is evidence of stamps and postal activity. Fig 2 (cover) is the only reported example of a postal cancel on Panay Provisional stamps. The cancel is from Iloilo, the largest town on the Panay Island. Estimates of the number of Panay stamps that exist have generally numbered under 20... until this partial sheet surfaced. (Fig. 3).

All in all, this particular surcharged stamp is really one big night-

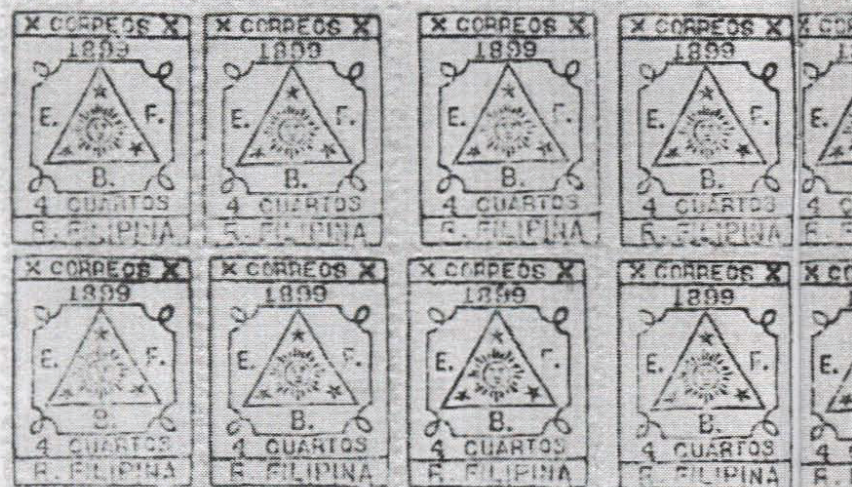
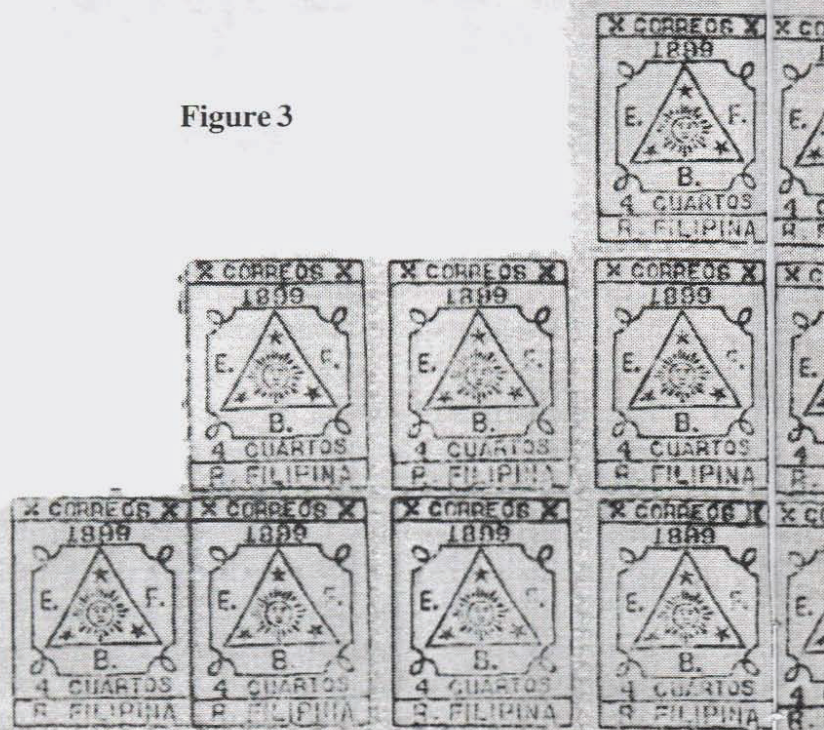
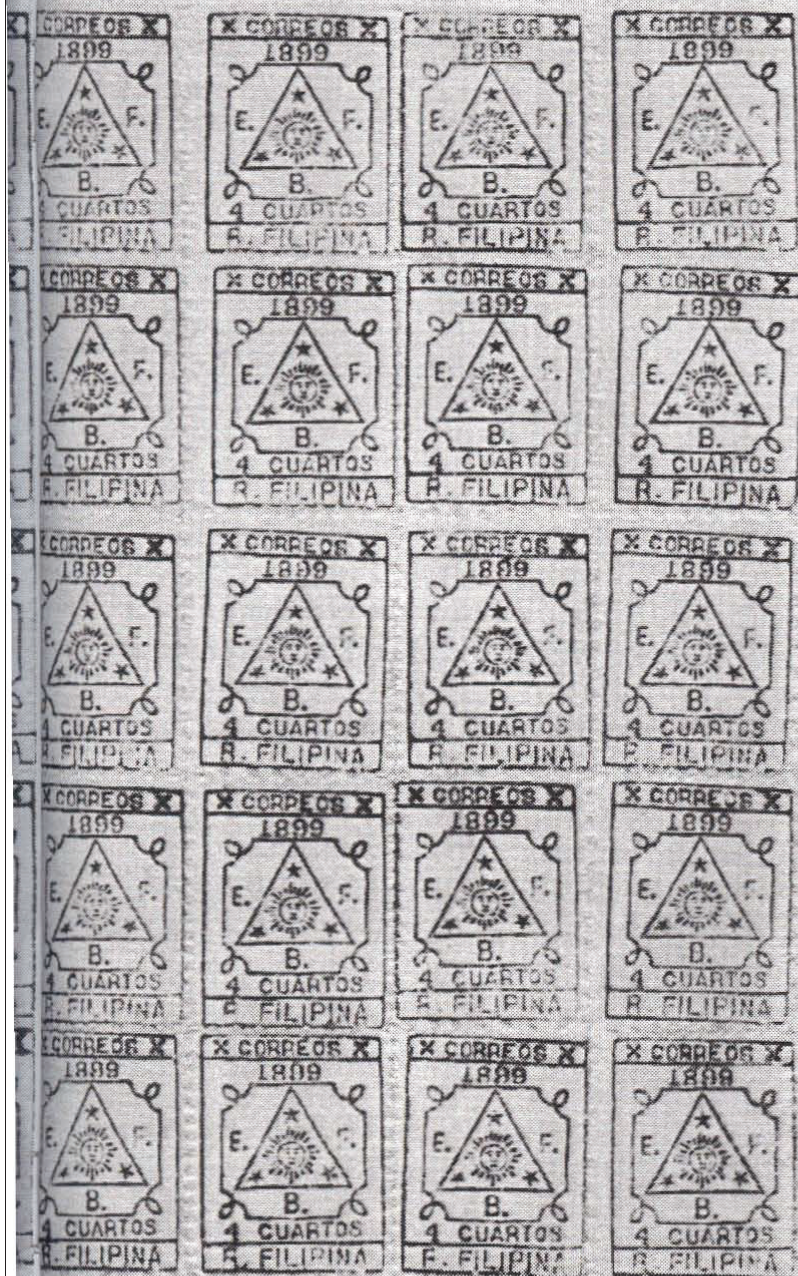


Figure 3





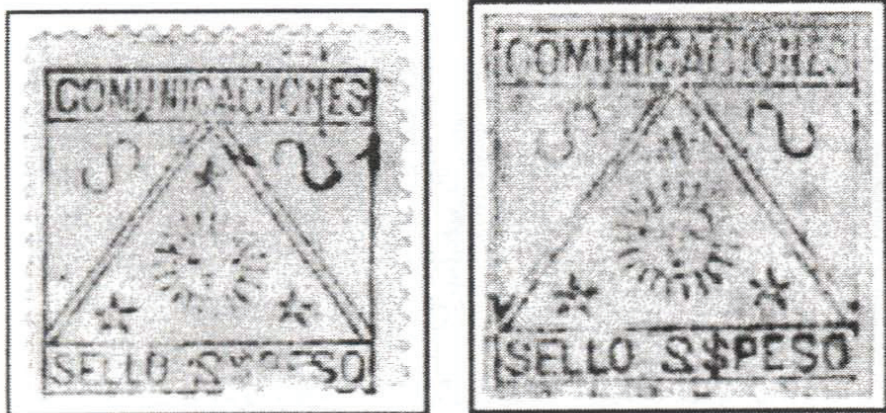


Figure 5

The first stamp of Bohol is believed to be an imprint made with a wood block (Fig 4). This was most likely followed by a set of two adhesive stamps (Fig. 5). Little is known of these fairly recent discoveries and nothing appears in philatelic literature of the period, but until more information is forthcoming, that is the most likely circumstance. The third adhesive has been documented. It is known in mint, on piece, and on cover. (cover, Fig. 6).

As US Military forces moved through the Visayas area, local guerrilla bands were driven onto the island of Cebu. Maintaining their postal system, they resorted to earlier Spanish period stamps canceled with a distinctive Cebu Revolutionary cancel. Earlier informational sources claimed that stamps and cancels were known only on piece. We now know that a few covers do exist.

The Visayas area was systematically overrun by US Military forces and assimilated into the expanding United States Postal System.

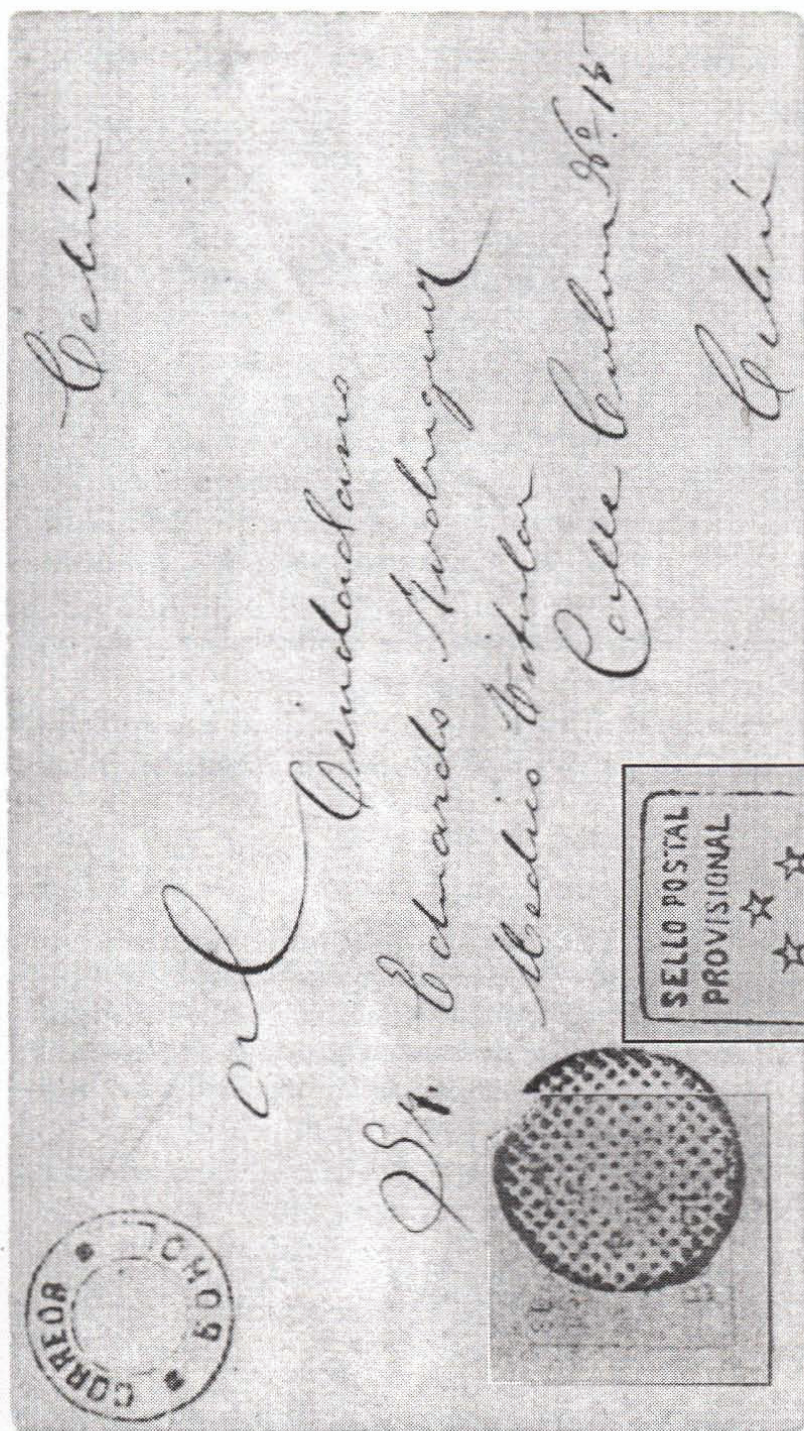


Figure 6

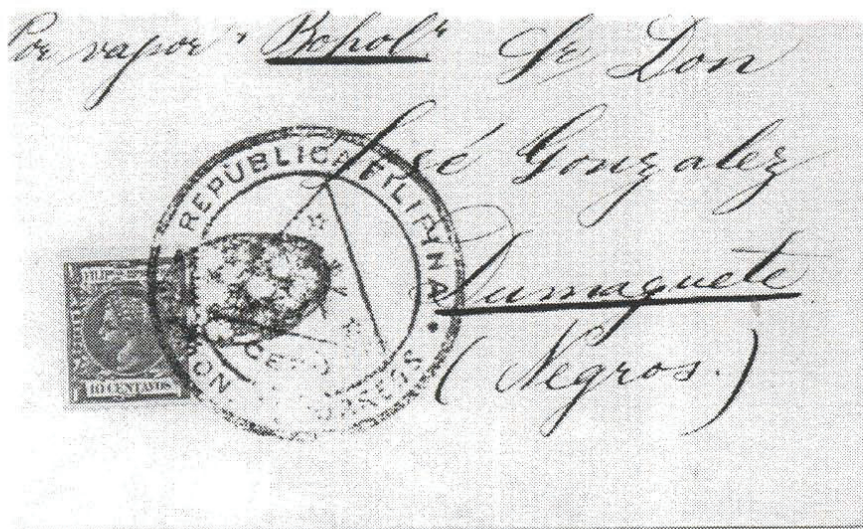


Figure 7

The Author's Note: This is the first article in a series on the Filipino American War. While information continues to be sparse, collectors have attempted to piece together information on various aspects of the period, trying to present a clear, concise philatelic history. I hope those of you who have information or further insight on the subject will share it.

Sources of Information:

Arnold, Richard, Section 21: Filipino Revolutionary Government or the "The Aquinaldo's", Articles from various Journals in compilations.

Lange, Fritz Walter: The Philippine Revolution—an exhibit