

Viewing the Islander South America Collection

by John F. Dunn

On the pages that follow we bring back our Viewing of the June 5-6, 2008 Robert A. Siegel Galleries auction of the “Islander Collection” of South America, separated into five sales by country—Brazil, Buenos Aires, Chile, Colombia and Peru. At that time, the auction had not been held, so I have updated that coverage with the realizations, net of the 15% Buyers’ Premiums that are added on to these hammer prices. I have also added some lots that I did not include in my original viewing.

The Siegel auction catalog opened with this declaration:

“The postage stamps of Buenos Aires are listed erroneously in the stamp catalogues as provincial issues, like Corrientes, which they are not. Corrientes was one province in the Argentine Confederation, which used its own stamps in its local postal system and the confederation stamps in the completely separate national postal system.

“On the other hand, Buenos Aires was an independent country in 1858, not part of Argentina. If there had been a United Nations in 1858, Buenos Aires would have been a separate member which issued its own stamps. The early stamp catalogues recognized this distinction and listed the stamps under Buenos Aires in the B’s, not under Argentina....”

The Scott Classic catalogue places Buenos Aires in the back of the Argentina section, but describes Buenos Aires as “The central point of the Argentine struggle for independence. At intervals Buenos Aires maintained an independent government....” That sounds like an argument for a separate listing to me.

The first, 1858, issue of Buenos Aires are the Barquitos (“Little bark,” or ship) stamps, named after the image of a steamship on the stamps. They are described in the auction catalog as “one of the rarest regularly-issued series in classic imperforate philately immediately after the ‘Post Office’ Mauritius, Hawaiian Missionaries and British Guiana Cotton Reels.”

This section opened with one of the two recorded unused pairs—being the only known unused multiples—of the 2 pesos, Sc. 2, estimated value \$2,000-3,000, hammer price \$5,250. (The next lot contained the other pair, of lesser quality, estimated at \$750-1,000, sold for \$1,900.)



These were followed by the 2p uncanceled on a folded cover to a street address within Buenos Aires, next column. The backflap bears a bold strike of the “Nuevas Mensagerias Nacionales de Jose Merlino” (translated: Jose Merlino’s New National Messenger Service). The receipt docketing is April 16, 1859. The estimated value is \$2,000-3,000, realization \$3,500.

Still in this same stamp, we come to the finer of the two known examples of the 2p diagonal bisect, used as 1p, Sc. 2b, beautifully tied all around by a “Correos de Buenos Aires 26 Abr 59” circular date stamp. One peso was the domestic rate in effect in



1859. Estimated at \$15,000-20,000, it went for \$57,500.

Next we view the only recorded cover with a combination of the 3p, Sc. 3, and 4p, Sc. 4. These are the two highest values of the Barquitos to be found on one cover, which is described as “undoubtedly the most outstanding cover of Buenos Aires” and estimated at \$75,000-100,000, the folded letter to Rosaria bears a “Correos de Buenos Aires 31 Ago 58” c.d.s. The lot description explains that the 7p total prepaid the 5 peso “heavy” rate for letters weighing 12 to 16 andarmes, 16 andarmes being the equivalent of one ounce, plus 1p for each additional 4 andarmes, resulting in a total weight of 1-1/4 to 1-1/2 ounce. It soared to \$180,000.



On page 2 we view the 4p chestnut brown error of color (instead of the normal red to vermilion shades or the later brown shades). One



of two known unused examples, it is an unlisted variety of Scott 4.

This lot was followed by the only known used example, which was described in the auction catalog as “evidence that the errors reached the post office.” This would also sound like support for listing these rare errors, which are estimated at \$20,000-30,000 apiece. The unused example went for \$26,000, the used sold for \$32,500. Since then, the unused has been added to the Scott listings, the unused priced at \$30,000, the used at \$40,000.

The 5p Barquitos (Sc. 5) was represented by this rejoined pair, described as “the closest philatelists can come to a multiple of the



three high values of the first Barquitos issues,” there being no intact multiples of the

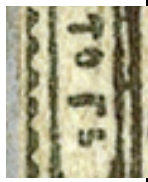
3p, 4p and 5p. Estimated at \$20,000-30,000, it realized \$42,500.

In October 1858 and January 1859, two new stamps were required. A 4 reales (Sc. 6) was created by cutting away the bottom part of the oval in the “P” in the “Ps” running down the left side, thus making it an “r.”



A new 1 (“in”) peso stamp (Sc. 7) was created by taking the 5p plate and cutting away the “C” and “co” in “Cinco” so that it read “In P.”

No surprise, not all of the 48 cliches in the 4p die were properly changed, so we have this strip of three with the top stamp still reading “Cuato Ps,” while the other two read “Cuators”—estimated value \$500-750, hammer \$950.



Next, at the top of the next column, we view a possibly unique example of the 4r (Sc. 6) on a locally addressed cover, estimated value \$2,000-3,000, realization \$5,250.

Following that, we present the most valuable lot in this field, the only surviving tete-beche pair of the 1859 1p deep blue, Sc. 7d. Described as “one of the world’s great philatelic rarities, the extensive lot description and background information explains that the plate consisted of a thick piece of wood on which 48 separate stereotyped cliches were mounted by hammering four brass nails into the corners of each cliche—the small white holes in each corner of the stamp being where the nails were driven below the



surface of the metal.

When the plate started to show signs of wear, individual cliches were removed, but one was reaffixed upside down. This inverted cliche resulted in the tete-beche error (as opposed to tete-beche varieties that result from intentional placement). The top stamp in this pair, positions 33 and 41, was the one that was printed upside down. It’s a fascinating story, well told in the Siegel auction catalog, where a \$400,000-500,000 estimated value was assigned to this rarity, and it drew a top hammer price of \$575,000.



An attractive lot is this 1859 1p Blue (7), uncanceled but tied by light blue ink smears on a folded letter to a street address in Buenos Aires, the backflap with a clear strike of blue “Nuevas Mensagerias Nacionales de Jose Merlino” (Jose Merlino’s New National



Messenger Service) ornately framed oval handstamp with detailed illustration of four-horse stagecoach and passengers, opened up for display, letter dated Jan. 12, 1859, which makes this a very early use of the “In Ps”. Estimated at \$1,500-2,000, it went for \$3,000.

Next we view the 1859, 1p (“In Ps”) blue, printed on Both Sides (7b), Position 39 and an inverted impression of another position on back, unused (no gum), large margins



to slightly in along top and left frameline only, the only recorded example of any Barquitos issue printed on both sides, estimate \$7,500-10,000, realization \$25,000.



Finally, we complete the Barquitos issues, and this section, with the 1859 1p blue, Sc. 8, in the largest uncanceled multiple, a strip of four on cover but uncanceled—estimated value \$15,000-20,000, realization \$50,000.

As noted in the Siegel catalogue, Brazil can arguably take credit as being the second nation in the world—after Great Britain—“to issue stamps for use by all of its citizens,” with the 1842 New York City Despatch Post and the 1843 Zurich Cantonals having been limited in their areas of use.

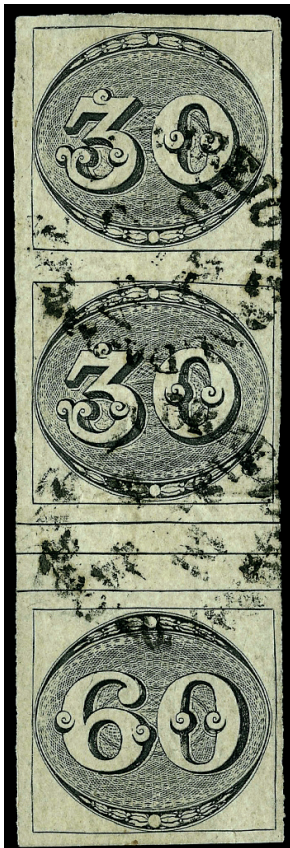
This first lot is a Brazil Bull’s Eye 60 reales, Sc. 2, with a “Correio Geral da Corte 1/8/1843” first day of issue postmark—with the added appeal that it is position 1, the first stamp in the pane and, therefore, possibly the very first Brazil stamp to have been used—estimated value \$7,500-10,000, realization \$15,000.



Next we view one of the most important pieces in all of philately, the “Pack Strip,” with two of the 30r, Sc. 1, and one 60r, Sc. 2. Some of the Bull’s Eyes were printed from composite plates with all three values (18 of each, in three rows of six) on one plate, and a horizontal gutter and interpanneau (interpane) line between each section of the pane.

This unique piece also has been called the “Xiphopagus Triplet,” a bit of a misnomer, since “xiphopagus” is a medical term for symmetrical joined twins, which makes this a “twin triplet.” Be that as it may, this great piece—counted in the May 1954 Life Magazine as among the world’s rarest stamps—had an estimated presale value of \$1-1.5 million and sold for \$1,900,000.

While still on the subject of the plate configurations, at the top of the next column we see the 60r and 90r, offered as one lot, each with the interpanneau dividing line and outer frameline from the adjoining pane at top



(90r) or bottom (60r). As a lot, they were estimated at \$5,000-7,500 and went for \$7,000.

Next we view the 1843 30r Black, Late Impression (3) Large Plate, State A, Positions 23-24/29-30/35-36, block of six, large to huge margins including sheet margin and outer frameline at right, tied by one of four strikes of “Correio Geral da Corte 1/4/1845” circular datestamp on



a folded cover to Rio Pardo, affixed over the backflap and carefully opened so as to preserve the block in perfect condition. This is the only block of any Bull’s Eye known on cover, and is regarded as one of the top five philatelic items of Brazil and one of the world’s greatest Classic Imperforate covers.

Estimated at \$150,000-200,000, it realized \$160,000.

Finally, from the Brazil sale, we view a complete pane of 18 of the 90r, showing the outer frame line around the block of 18 stamps. This unique unused pane of the 90r, Sc. 3, was estimated at \$100,000-150,000 and soared to \$260,000.



The Islander Chile Collection focused on the 1854 Lithographs. The most important item in Chilean philately is the cover on page 4, bearing a block of 14 of the 5c red brown, Sc. 7a. The largest of the three known 5 centavos blocks (the other two being blocks of six) and the only one on cover, the stamps are tied by multiple strikes of a four-ring cancel, the cover also with a red “Santiago 10 Agosto 54” c.d.s.



This Chilean leader was estimated at \$400,000-500,000 and sold for \$550,000.

Next we show a combination cover, with the 5c chocolate

brown Lithograph (Sc. 7d, left) and 5c burnt sienna, Gillet print



engraved stamp (Sc. 4), the cover with "Copiapo 8 Abril 55" c.d.s., and an estimated value of \$10,000-15,000 went for \$10,000.

The final lot we view from the Islander Chile Collection is this unusual "Big Squeeze" variety of the 5c red brown (Sc. 7, left stamp). You can see at the bottom of the stamp how the word "Centavos" is compressed. The stamp also is not as tall as it should be, as seen in comparison with a normal stamp at right, Sc. 7a. The variety was caused by an improper transfer. This unusual stamp had an estimated value of \$20,000-30,000 and sold for \$25,000.



The Islander Collection of Peru was a specialized study of the 1858 issue, Scott 3-6. We view first this cover with the 1 dinero blue cancelled by a "Callao" dotted oval handstamp. Although



the cancel does not overlap from the stamp onto the cover, the auctioneers note that it "ties by impression thru paper").

Also with a "Callao Mar. 12, 1858" c.d.s., this is the earliest recorded use of the 1858s, which were issued March 10. The folded letter is dated March 11, was estimated at \$5,000-7,500 and fetched a top bid of \$26,000.

One other interesting aspect is the sender's "Urgente" notation upper right and the "7-1/2" lower left. The lot describer explains that the "7-1/2" denotes a 7:30 a.m. train departure and that the cover was carried on the morning train to Lima.

Next we come to an unlisted bisect of the 1p rose red, Sc. 4, on a cover front. Tied by a Lima dotted oval cancel, also with a "Lima Ju. 28 58" c.d.s., this is the only known example of the 1858 1p bisected. It paid the 1 dinero short-distance rate between Lima and Callao, was estimated at \$2,000-3,000 and sold for \$3,250.

This next cover is the Medio Peso Error Combination Cover, the most important piece in the Islander Peru Collection.



The Medio (1/2 peso) Error is a color error, printed in the rose red color of the 1 peseta, Scott 4, instead of the yellow, or buff, color of the 1/2 peso, Sc. 6. As explained in the auction catalog, it was caused by the erroneous transfer of at least five medio peso designs onto the lithographic stone for the one peseta.

The folded cover shown here is the only recorded two-color franking with the Medio Peso Error, in this case used with a pair of the 1858 1 dinero blue—all other known covers being used along with the 1 peseta rose red. The letter is dated September 5, 1858, months after the error was discovered and postmasters were instructed to treat the errors as 1 peseta stamps. The auctioneers calculate that the error stamp on the cover above was treated as a 1 peseta to pay the double rate of 2 pesetas. The cover was estimated at \$75,000-100,000 and went for \$65,000.



Finally we view the only unused example of the Medio Peso error, also stated as "150 Centimos" on the right side of the stamp. Unused with no gum, it was estimated at \$5,000-7,500 and realized \$6,250.

The Islander Colombia Collection focused on the 1859 Coat of Arms First Issue, Scott 1-8. The first lot in this section was this Trial Color Proof of the 1859 2-1/2 centavos, Sc. 1TC. With an estimate of \$200-300, this lot got the section off to a strong start by realizing \$900.



Next up for Viewing is this choice example of the 5c blue violet in a tete-beche error pair, Sc. 3a. Estimated at \$5,000-7,500, it sold for \$5,250.



Another error of interest was this “50” centavos transfer error, showing the numeral 50 (arrow) instead of 5, Sc. 2b. Although it was estimated at \$7,500-10,000, it could do no better than \$5,750.

Next up was one of the feature lots in



Another multiple error was this block of eight of the 20c showing an inverted 20c, second from left in the bottom row of this top left sheet margin block. Forming a tete-beche pair with the stamp above it, Sc. 6c, this “aristocrat” sold for \$95,000 against a \$75,000-100,000 pre-sale estimate.



the Colombia section, the First Issue First Day Cover, with the 5c violet and 10c red brown, Sc. 3, 4. The stamps are tied by a “Bogota/Franca” oval handstamp on a folded letter datelined September 1, 1859, the official first day of issue. Estimated at \$200,000-300,000, it realized \$180,000.

Another important lot was this se-tenant error, Sc. 6b, showing a 5c transfer error in the left stamp, center row of this 20c multiple. Described as “one of the famous aristocrats of South American Philately, and one of only two known blocks, it sold for the high end of its \$100,000-150,000 estimate.



Finally, we view what doesn’t look like much, but is described by the auctioneers as assuming “a role of great importance in Colombian philately and postal history,” the reason being that this judicial wrapper is the only known example of the one peso on cover. The wrapper bears, left to right, three examples of the 1p, Sc. 7, and singles of the 5c and 2-1/2c, Sc. 1, 2. It also is one of only two covers with the 2-1/2c.

The auctioneers added “it is in the same condition as found, but it deserves the attention of a skilled restorer, who can prevent further erosion and possibly bring the stamps’ colors back to life.” If successful, it would probably be worth considerably more than the \$5,000-7,500 estimate and the \$4,250 hammer price.