

Mostly Classics

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Beyond the Catalog

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Revised: March 2010.

ST. THOMAS — LA GUAIRA — PUERTO CABELLO SHIP LOCAL STAMPS

Among all the world's local stamps, perhaps the most fascinating and potentially exotic are ship locals. The ultimate has to be the famous 1847 "Lady McLeod" issue of David Bryce's Trinidad post. A decent pen canceled example will cost you around \$15,000.00, and one on cover will start around \$50,000.00.

Those of Captain Robert Todd's and later mail services from 1864 to 1870 —which operated along a vaguely triangular route from St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands to La Guaira / Caracas in Venezuela, to Puerto Cabello in Venezuela and Curaçao, and thence to back to St. Thomas —make an eminently possible collecting specialty. These stamps are scarce, but most of them are not hopelessly so, and they're fairly affordable. Many are less than \$100.00 (especially the most interesting issues) and the rarest cost around \$2,500.00, *much* less if faulty but decent looking..

Captain Robert Todd won his mail contract from the Venezuelan government in November 1863 and immediately ordered both a new steam sailboat, which he named *Robert Todd*, from Liverpool and postage stamps from Waterlow & Sons, London. The service ran its roughly triangular route twice per month. Todd set the charge for letters at 2 reales per half ounce. The half real denomination may have been intended for printed matter.

In July 1867, Todd sold his ship and the mail contract to Jesurun & Zoon of Curaçao. Jesurun & Zoon continued to use Todd's stamps until 1869, when they finally obtained their own stamps from Waterlow & Sons for letter mail and the centavos issues from Feliz Rasco in Caracas for use on printed matter.

Jesurun & Zoon continued the contract mail service along the route until May 1870, when the revolutionary government of Guzman Blanco seized their steam schooner.



Caribbean Ocean showing Curaçao, Puerto Cabello, La Guaira, Caracas and St. Thomas

NOTE: This annotated catalog is based on *The Private Ship Letter Stamps of the World, Part 1: The Caribbean* by S.Ringström and H.E. Tester (1976). Prices are in U.S. dollars for sound, very fine examples (December 2006).

THE REAL ISSUES

July 1864. *Lithographed by Waterlow & Sons, London. Perforated 13. Papermaker's watermark, "T H Saunders" in double line letters appears on some edge-of-sheet stamps, otherwise unwatermarked wove paper. The stamps were color-coded as noted below because the real was worth 25-30% more in St. Thomas than it was in the Venezuelan ports.*

For use at La Guaira, Caracas and Puerto Cabello on letters to St. Thomas

- | | | |
|---|-------|--------|
| 1 "MEDIO REAL" (½ real) red or rose | 55.00 | 100.00 |
| a with part watermark | rare | rare |
| b imperforate | rare | rare |
| 2 "DOS REALES" (2 reales) green or yellow green | 55.00 | 65.00 |
| a with part watermark | rare | rare |
| b imperforate | rare | rare |

For use at St. Thomas on letters to La Guaira, Caracas and Puerto Cabello

- | | | |
|---|-------|--------|
| 3 "MEDIO REAL" (½ real) bluish gray | 55.00 | 350.00 |
| a with part watermark | rare | rare |
| b imperforate | rare | rare |
| 4 "DOS REALES" (2 reales) orange yellow | 40.00 | 240.00 |
| a with part watermark | rare | rare |
| b imperforate | rare | rare |

FORGERIES: *There are four known types of forgeries of the Waterlow Real issues. The first, probably by the Spiro Brothers of Hamburg, show an extra line between the framelines and the perforations, bear an extra mast on the stern of the steamboat, show the top of the "S" in "TOMAS" as concave, and have a white space under the ship, not lines denoting waves. The second type, of unknown manufacture, show an extra frame line under the perforations, show very thin letters in the denomination, and show the bowsprit of the steamship not touching the right frame. The third type, also of unknown manufacture, has a short tail on the "Q" of "PAQUETE," shows a horizontal serif on the number "1" in the upper left corner, and has no flag on the rear mast. The fourth type, also of unknown manufacture — only of the ½ reale — is totally crude and looks nothing like the genuine stamps illustrated here.*

October 1864. *Local printings of the Waterlow design. Lithographed by Felix Rasco, Caracas, Venezuela.*

Stone I: "PAQUETE" shows tail on "Q" DOS REALES: there is no dot in the foresail.

Rouletted parallel lines at 45° angle

- | | | |
|---|--------|--------|
| 5 "MEDIO REAL" (½ real) rose | 450.00 | 450.00 |
| 6 "DOS REALES" (2 reales) olive green | 600.00 | 600.00 |

Saw tooth roulettes

- | | | |
|---------------------------|--------|--------|
| 7 "MEDIO REAL" (½ real) | | |
| a rose | 125.00 | 100.00 |
| b red | 125.00 | 100.00 |
| c pale red | 125.00 | 100.00 |
| 8 "DOS REALES" (2 reales) | | |
| a olive green | 150.00 | 150.00 |
| b yellow green | 90.00 | 125.00 |
| c deep green | 110.00 | 125.00 |



#1 MEDIO REAL rose, for use from the Venezuelan ports to St. Thomas



#2 DOS REALES green, for use from the Venezuelan ports to St. Thomas



#3 MEDIO REAL bluish gray, for use only from St. Thomas



#4 DOS REALES orange yellow, for use only from St. Thomas

Stone II: "PAQUETE" without tail on "Q" DOS REALES: there is a dot in the foresail.

9 "MEDIO REAL" (½ real)		
a red	rare	rare
b pale red	55.00	80.00
10 "MEDIO REAL" (½ real) blue.....	50.00	v.rare
11 "MEDIO REAL" (½ real) blue, stone III, "REAL" partially doubled	50.00	250.00
12 "DOS REALES" (2 reales)		
a bright green	125.00	150.00
b bluish green	125.00	150.00
c grayish green	100.00	125.00
d quadrisected on piece.....		500.00
e bisected on piece		v.rare
12X "DOS REALES" (2 reales) golden yellow.....	500.00	350.00



#8b DOS REALES yellow green with sawtooth roulettes.

NOTE: The quadrisected and bisected stamps were the result of a stamp shortage at La Guaira in 1866. A quadrisected stamp served as a 2 reales stamp. The bisected stamps paid the postage on double-rate letters.

1866-1867. Later printings from worn stones.

MEDIO REAL: all of the weak lines in the ship are missing, and there are few lines in sea and few to no clouds. "REAL" shows signs of doubling (stone III).

DOS REALES: all of the weak lines in the ship are missing, and there are few lines in sea and few to no clouds. "S" in "SAN" looks like an "8."

13 "MEDIO REAL" (½ real)		
a vermilion	40.00	v.rare
b red	75.00	v.rare
c pale red	75.00	v.rare
14 "MEDIO REAL" (½ real)		
a deep blue.....	45.00	v.rare
b pale blue	45.00	v.rare
15 "DOS REALES" (2 reales)		
a olive green	45.00	v.rare
b yellow green	60.00	v.rare
16 "DOS REALES" (2 reales)		
a olive brown (shades).....	45.00	v.rare
b olive yellow (shades)	55.00	v.rare

NOTE: It is advisable to purchase used reprints from worn plates only with a certificate of authenticity.

FORGERIES: There do not seem to be any forgeries of the sawtooth roulette local print stamps.

#15b DOS REALES yellow green reprint strip of four. Compare with 8b above to note worn details.



JESERUN ISSUES — CURAÇAO

1869. *Lithographed by Waterlow & Sons, London, and issued by J.A. Jeserun & Zoon, Curaçao (hence the initials below the ship). The design of the issued stamps shows 15 scallops outside the framelines at top and bottom and 17 scallops at sides.*

FIRST PRINTINGS: *Fine impressions with fine perforations.*

17 “MEDIO REAL” (½ real) green		
a line perforated 12½ x 12½.....	80.00	225.00
b line perforated 11½ x 11½.....	v.rare	v.rare
c line perforated 12½ x 11½.....	v.rare	x.rare
18 “DOS REALES” (2 reales) red,		
line perforated 12½ x 12½.....	80.00	325.00

SECOND PRINTINGS: *perforated 10 x 10.*

19 “MEDIO REAL” (½ real) green, blurred print.....	60.00	175.00
20 “DOS REALES” (2 reales)		
a deep red, fine print	75.00	160.00
b red, blurred print	75.00	160.00

NOTE: *It is advisable to purchase used perforated 10 x 10 stamps only with a certificate of authenticity.*

1876 REPRINTS: *Probably printed by Waterlow & Sons. Pale colors on white paper with thin, transparent gum. All are perforated 15 x 15.*

19X “MEDIO REAL” (½ real) pale green	v.rare	—
20X “DOS REALES” (2 reales) pale red	v.rare	—

NOTE: *Since it is possible to reperfurate perforated 10 x 10 stamps with gauge 15 and still leave believable margins, it is advisable to purchase the reprints only with a certificate of authenticity.*

FORGERIES: *There are a bunch of different forgeries in varying perforations. But none show 15 scallops at top and bottom and 17 scallops at sides. Sometimes one will encounter a genuine stamp which has had its perforations removed to make a plausible appearing imperforate stamp. But none of the Jesurun issues are known imperforate.*



#20, perforated 10 x 10, bearing indistinct Caracas cancellation.



Genuine #17 bearing genuine “CORREOS / LA GUAIRA.” town mark. Perforations have been dipped. This stamp could be convincingly reperfurate 15 x 15, thus seeming to be a very rare used 1876 reprint #19X.

NUMERAL ISSUES — LA GUAIRA

1870? Probably lithographed by Felix Rasco, Caracas, Venezuela. Sawtooth roulettes as with numbers 7-16.

DESIGN: four panels — reading, clockwise from top “PAQUETE” “SANTOMAS” “[Denomination spelled out]” and “LA GUAIRA” — surrounding the numeral of value decorated with arabesques in a central panel.

- 21 “Un centavo” with numeral “1” orange yellow x.rare —
- 22 “Medio real” with numeral “ $\frac{1}{2}$ ” yellow green x.rare —
- 23 “DOS reales” with numeral “2” rose x.rare x.rare —
- 24 “DOS reales” with numeral “2” dark blue x.rare —

NOTE: One copy of the 2 reales rose is known tied by indistinct blue town cancel to a portion of a newspaper.

FORGERIES: None noted.



Images of the numeral issue kindly supplied by Roberto Albán, Jr., and are used here with his permission.

**CENTAVOS ISSUES — CARACAS
INTENDED FOR PRINTED MATTER**

1864 and 1868-1869. Probably lithographed by Felix Rasco, Caracas, Venezuela. Imperforate on thin, poor quality paper.

1864 FIRST PRINTINGS: Sheets of 24 (4 across by 6 down).

$\frac{1}{2}$ CENTAVO STONE I: Cutting lines outside the outer framelines between the stamps frequently are irregular and/or show doubling. 24 different transfer types.

25 " $\frac{1}{2}$ Centavo" intense black on dead white paper . 350.00 —

$\frac{1}{2}$ CENTAVO STONE II: Vertical cutting lines are coarse but without doubling, horizontal cutting lines show partial doubling. 4 different transfer types.

26 " $\frac{1}{2}$ Centavo" black to gray black on white paper 150.00 1,200.00

1 CENTAVO STONE I: Made from transfer of $\frac{1}{2}$ centavo stone I with numeral "1" transferred in place of " $\frac{1}{2}$." 24 transfer types. All positions show lines across numeral of value. Position 19 shows numeral drawn in by hand. It is without horizontal lines in the numeral and the horizontal lines immediately around the numeral have been erased.

27 "1 Centavo" black on pink paper 525.00 rare
var: position 19 v.rare —

1 CENTAVO STONE II: Made from transfer of $\frac{1}{2}$ centavo stone I. 24 transfer types. Each numeral "1" shows three dots within, arranged vertically. No horizontal lines across numeral of value.

28 "1 Centavo" black on pink paper 350.00 1,200.00

1 CENTAVO STONE III: 4 transfer types. There are no horizontal lines through nor dots in numeral of value. Horizontal lines around numeral of value either touch or are very close to the numeral.

29 "1 Centavo" black on pink paper 125.00 1,000.00

2 CENTAVOS STONE I: 4 transfer types. No lines across figure of value. As the 2 centavos transfers were made from a transfer of the $\frac{1}{2}$ centavo design, the denomination is expressed as "2 Centavo" (singular).

30 "2 Centavo" black to gray black on green paper . 125.00 1,200.00

3 CENTAVOS STONE I: 4 transfer types. No lines across figure of value. As the 3 centavos transfers were made from a transfer of the $\frac{1}{2}$ centavo design, the denomination is expressed as "3 Centavo" (singular).

31 "3 Centavo" black on orange yellow paper 125.00 1,200.00

4 CENTAVOS STONE I: 4 transfer types. No lines across figure of value. As the 4 centavos transfers were made from a transfer of the $\frac{1}{2}$ centavo design, the denomination is expressed as "4 Centavo" (singular).

32 "4 Centavo" black to gray black on blue paper
a intense black on blue 125.00 1,200.00
b gray black on blue 150.00 rare



#26 $\frac{1}{2}$ centavo stone II, transfer type III, black on white paper.



#29 1 centavo, stone III, transfer type II, black on pink paper.



#30 2 centavo, stone I, transfer type IV, black on green paper.

1868-1869 SECOND PRINTINGS: Paper colors changed. Sheets of 25 (5 across by 5 down). All denominations show lines across numeral of value. As with the first printings, the 2 through 4 centavos values show "Centavo" in the singular. 5 transfer types of the 1/2 and 1 centavo; 4 transfer type of the 2 through 4 centavos.

33	"1/2 Centavo" black on grayish yellow paper	1,000.00	x.rare
34	"1 Centavo" black on purple paper	325.00	1,750.00
35	"2 Centavo" black on blue paper	325.00	1,750.00
36	"3 Centavo" black on brownish orange paper ..	1,100.00	x.rare
37	"4 Centavo" black on green paper	4,000.00	x.rare

FORGERIES: Forgeries of the Centavo issues are not particularly dangerous. Below I show an example. No forgeries show these consistent features of all genuine Centavos issues:

1. There is a vertical stroke of color on the horizontal bar of "L" of "LA GUAIRA"
2. Nearly all the horizontal shading lines continue across the vertical colorless line at right to touch the right "P^{ta} CABELLO" tablet.

"FACSIMILES": Photographic facsimiles of full sheets (24 or 25) printed via offset lithography were produced in 1976 of numbers 29, 32, 33, 34, 35 and 36. These should fool no one, as they are half-tone images comprised of dots. Below is an example.



#32 4 centavo, stone I, transfer type III, gray black on blue paper.



#32 4 centavo, stone I, transfer type IV, black on blue paper.



A typical wretched forgery of the 1 centavo



"Facsimile" of the 4 centavo showing coarse half-tone dots.