

# Did You Know?

## SCADTA Stamps

By: Alex Gill



In 1919, a group of Colombian and German businessmen banded to form SCADTA (Sociedad Colombo-Alemana de Transportes Aereos) with the goal of creating airline service within Colombia. Using a small fleet of Junker's seaplanes to carry passengers, the small airline also carried mail and was capable of landing on Colombia's Magdalena River. In 1920, the airline was granted complete control over carrying Colombian airmail. To encourage airmail service, they produced their own stamps to prepay airmail fees and these stamps were sold abroad at Colombian consular offices and trade missions. Today, these stamps are found in the Scott Catalogue and share the same Scott numbers between the United States and Colombia.

The first two stamps (Colombian Scott #'s C14 & C16) were sold in New York under Gonzalo Mejia. These stamps are signed "G Mejia" (Gonzalo Mejia) in red ink. The stamps were authorized for mail sent from the United States. Later, in 1921, the Colombian post office issued 11 new stamps (Scott C25-C35) for international use. These stamps were overprinted with one or two letter abbreviations to show which country they were sold in. For example, stamps sold in the United States were overprinted "EU" or "E.U." abbreviating Estados Unidos (United States).

By 1929, SCADTA stamps were sold abroad for the equivalent of U.S. gold dollars which eliminated the need to initial and identify sales offices on stamps because of exchange rates. These stamps are found in the Scott catalogue as Scott #s CLC68-CLC79. These stamps and the initialed ones were valid on mail sent to Colombia. SCADTA airmail services continued until December 1, 1931 when the Government of Colombia took over all airmail services.

In its later years, SCADTA's position in the airline industry was eroded by the formation of Pan American World Airways' Grace Airways (Panagra). Prior to WWII, the airline's primary shareholder, Austrian-born industrialist Peter Paul Von Bauer was forced by courts to sell his shares to Pan American World Airways in an attempt to protect the airline from a hostile takeover by Nazi Germany. After the war, the airline was forced to cease operations and the Colombian government merged the remaining assets to create a new airline, SACO (Servicio Aero Colombiano). Today, SACO operates as Avianca (Aerovias Nacionales de Colombia), the Colombian national airline and holds the distinction as the 2nd oldest airline in the world and the first airline of the Americas.

For philatelists SCADTA stamps are popular amongst aerophilately collectors worldwide. Although the stamps themselves can be affordable (with exception of the high value 3 and 5-peso stamps), it is most interesting to collect these stamps genuinely used on covers sent between the two nations. It can also be interesting to collect overprints that were either handstamped or overprinted by a printing press. Handstamped overprinted stamps are scarcely found on cover.

Several formats of the stamps are known to exist today. Scott numbers 467 and 505 are perforated 10 and 11 respectively and the perforated 11 variety is the most common. These two varieties are found as blocks of 12 stamps containing a vertical pair of errors and are nicknamed a "double error." On the other hand, the block of 12 can also be found in imperforate format (Scott 485) which is the rarest of the three varieties. The error is also known to appear in blocks of nine stamps and contain 1 error stamp (nicknamed a single error). Today, these stamps are popular amongst collectors and are desirable if found genuinely used on cover.



Usage of SCADA stamps (Image source: HipStamp)