

The Medio Peso Rose Red Error

The Cause of the Error

The Medio Peso Rose Red Error is usually described as a “color error,” but actually resulted from the erroneous transfer of Medio Peso designs on the lithographic stone for the Una-peseta. The printer consistently used yellow ink for the Medio Peso and red ink for the Una-peseta. However, since the stone of the Una-peseta included at least five Medio Peso transfers, the resulting Medio Peso stamps were printed in red, not yellow. The first reports of the error appeared in June 1858, and post offices were instructed to treat the Medio Peso stamps printed in red as the normal Una-peseta. However, the decree of June 18, 1858, declared the Medio Peso value unnecessary, and the government stopped distributing the sheets printed in yellow. This might have been part of an effort to control the situation involving the errors. ¹



Type E Medio Peso Rose Red Error from the Smithsonian National Postal Museum Collection, dated 20 May 1859

Chacas is a small town in the Department of Ancash, Province of Asuncion. In 1792 the population was 1,657 and today it is approximately 6,000. The post office was established there in the early 1800's. The oldest cancel known is from 1808. Surprisingly in the postal reorganization of 1853 it was designated a Subprincipal office. On December 30, 1864 it was demoted to a Receptoría, a lower class of office where it remains today. The office has been in continuous operation for 200 years.

The Una-peseta Lithographic Stone

The exact composition of the Una-peseta stone is not known. It is possible more than one printing stone was used. By studying examples of the Medio Peso Error, specialists have deduced that at least one of the 10-subject bloc reports erroneously included a row of five of the Medio Peso denomination. Some believe that the bloc report containing the Medio Peso errors was transferred to either row 8, 10, 12 or 14 on a stone of 160 subjects. Without knowing the stamps' exact location in a printed sheet, examples of the Medio Peso Error are identified by the transfer types (Types A, B, C, D and E).

The normal Una-peseta bloc report consisted of two horizontal rows of five, all of the same denomination, which philatelists have classified as ten different numbered types, based on tiny distinguishing marks in each transfer. The

correct arrangement of the types in the bloc report became known after the type numbers were assigned, which accounts for the non-sequential order of the bloc report (top row 10 - 1 - 4 - 7 - 3, bottom row 5- 2 - 8 - 6 - 9).²



Type "C" (left) and Type "D" (right) Medio Peso Rose Red Error from the Smithsonian National Postal Museum Collection

The two errors, identified as Types C and D, were in the third and fourth positions of the bottom row of a 10-unit bloc report. Normally, the stamps above these two positions would be Types 4 and 7. However, they were Types 8 and 6, indicating Types 5 - 2 - 8 - 6 - 9 were in the top row of the error bloc report rather than their normal position at the bottom. This meant not only were the five Medio Peso denominations transferred to the stone, but the entire bloc report of ten was uniquely configured with the bottom row positioned at the top and the error transfers at the bottom.

Normal	10	1	4	7	3
Normal	5	2	8	6	9
Error	5	2	8	6	9
Error	a	b	c	d	e
Normal	10	1	4	7	3
Normal	5	2	8	6	9

Bloc Report Diagram Showing the Plate Positions of the Medio Peso Rose Red Error

Hausburg³ described the errors as:

- A colored spot below the lower right corner
- The right vertical frame-line projects slightly below the lower frame-line. There is a small colored spot in the lower margin below the "RE" of "CORREOS."
- There is a faint white line cutting the lines of shading and the frame-line below the second "R" of "CORREOS."
- There is a colored spot inside the lower frame-line below and to the right of the "E" of "CORREOS."
- This has no peculiarity.

Just one intermediate block of the Una-peseta printing stone was damaged and repaired. This repair gave rise to the most famous variety in Peruvian philately, the Medio Peso Red Rose Error.

Notes:

1. Bargholtz, Percy, 2001, *PERU: The 1858 Medio Peso Error of Colour, An Inventory*, A Mainsheet Special Edition No. 1, Brian Moorhouse, Peterborough, England.
2. Seigel Auction Galleries, *The Islander Collection of the Rarest and Most Outstanding Stamps of South America*, June 6, 2008, pp. 32 – 34.
3. Hausburg, L.L.R., 1917, *The “Plating” of the Early Lithographed Stamps of Peru*, *London Philatelist*, 26, 101-110.

This article was published in *Collectors Club Philatelist*, Vol. 88, No. 1:21 -22.

Thomas Lera
Winton M. Blount Chair in Research
Smithsonian National Postal Museum