

# The “In Peso” Tête-Bêche Pair



Lot 82

## History of The “In Peso” Tête-Bêche Pair

The “In Peso” tête-bêche pair is one of the most elusive and fascinating of all classic philatelic rarities. Indeed, it has been chosen as an Aristocrat of Philately on two occasions (Ameripex in 1986 and Anphilex in 1996), and it was a major highlight of the collections formed by Alfred H. Caspary, Lars Amundsen, Joseph Schatzkes, John R. Boker Jr. and Gabriel Sanchez.

The pair offered in this sale was once one of two extant, but is now generally accepted to be the sole surviving example. Its counterpart, the Ferrary-Lichtenstein horizontal tête-bêche pair, disappeared after its last appearance in 1940 and is presumed lost to philately.

To begin presenting the famous “In Peso” tête-bêche pair, we wish to reiterate a point made in the introduction to this sale catalogue. The *Barquitos* stamps were the first issues of the sovereign state of Buenos Aires. These stamps should not be considered a provincial issue of Argentina, because they were authorized and released in 1858 and 1859 when Buenos Aires was completely independent from the other provinces of Argentina. In this regard, the Scott Catalogue distorts the true nature of the *Barquitos* stamps by placing them in the Provincial Issues section that follows Argentina, along with the stamps of Cordoba and Corrientes.

### PRODUCTION OF THE FIRST *BARQUITOS* STAMPS

The *Barquitos* stamps were printed from metal plates created from stereotypes. The plates consisted of a thick piece of wood, on which 48 separate stereotyped clichés were mounted by hammering four small brass nails into the corners of each cliché. The small white holes in the printed design are the places where the nails were driven below the surface of the metal. To create the different denominations, the engraver produced one master die in metal with solid value tablets. Four separate matrices were made from the master die, and each was modified by cutting into the surface the 2, 3, 4 and 5-peso denominations: “Dos Ps”, “Tres Ps”, “Cuato Ps” [sic] and “Cinco Ps.” From these matrices, the 48 clichés for each denominating plate were stereotyped in the usual method. The process of making the clichés and hammering nails into each one introduced unique flaws that philatelists have used to identify the different subjects on the plate.

The first *Barquitos* stamps were issued in April 1858, comprising the 2, 3, 4 and 5-peso values in blue, green, red and orange, respectively. The lowest denomination corresponds to the basic single-letter rate of two pesos, which was authorized by the decree of April 9, 1858, and the other values were issued to prepay incrementally higher rates due to weight or special services, such as registration. In October 1858, the basic letter rate was lowered to one peso up to one ounce and four reales (one-half peso) for each additional half-ounce (weights were also expressed in *adarmes*; four *adarmes* being equal to approximately a quarter ounce).

### THE OCTOBER 1858 AND JANUARY 1859 ISSUES

Two new stamps were required for the October 1858 rates. Rather than produce new stereotypes and plates, which would require more time than was available, the Mint decided to modify two of the existing plates. The 4-peso “Cuato Ps” design was altered by cutting away the bottom of the oval of “P” to make it appear as “r” for “real.” This was done to each of the 48 clichés on the plate (actually, two escaped alteration completely, and two others were not fully altered, so that these stamps read “Ps”). The new One-peso denomination was created by taking the 5-peso “Cinco Ps” plate and cutting away the “C” and “co” to create the “In Ps” value. Again, all 48 clichés were altered in this manner.

The new “Cuato rs” (4-reales) and “In Ps” (One-peso) stamps were both issued in brown. Although the shades of the two stamps differed slightly, they were similar



The 4-peso (“Cuato Ps”, left) was first changed in October 1858 to a 4-reales value by cutting away the lower part of the oval of “P” of “Ps” to make it read “rs” (“Cuato rs”, center). In January 1859 it was altered again by removing “Cua” and “o” of “Cuato rs” to make it read “T rs” or “To rs”, a rough approximation of “1 ps” (“T rs”, right). Each of the 48 clichés was altered in the manner.

The 5-peso (“Cinco Ps”, left) was changed in October 1858 to a One-peso value by cutting away “C” and “co” of “Cinco Ps” to make it read “In Ps”(right). Each of the 48 clichés was altered in the manner. The “In Ps” stamps were first printed in brown, then changed to blue to avoid confusion with the 4-reales stamps.



enough to cause confusion. The color of the “In Ps” was changed to blue on January 1, 1859. Around the same time, the “Cuato rs” plate was modified again for the purpose of printing more One-peso stamps. The new value was created by cutting away the “Cua” and “o” to leave “T rs.” The old adage, “good enough for government work,” seems to have applied to the product, a very rough approximation of “1 ps,” but officials probably felt that the color of the blue stamp would prevent any confusion.

THE INVERTED CLICHÉ AND TÊTE-BÊCHE MULTIPLES

The “In Ps” plate started to show signs of wear, and clichés were removed and reattached to the wood base. During this process, one of the clichés was reattached upside-down relative to the others on the plate. This inverted cliché is the cause of the One-peso *Barquitos* tête-bêche error, which differs entirely from tête-bêche printing varieties caused by a work-and-turn printing method, in which two impressions are made on the same sheet of paper, one upside down relative to the other. Cliché errors are true mistakes, while tête-bêche printing varieties are the products of method.

The cliché in Position 33 on the plate of 48 was inverted during at least one printing. The positions of the tête-bêche pair offered in this sale are shown.

Position  
33

Position  
41





*The horizontal pair which first appeared in the 1923 Ferrary sale was acquired by Alfred F. Lichtenstein. It was last seen when exhibited by Lichtenstein in 1940 and has never appeared again, even after the complete dispersal of the Dale-Lichtenstein collections. It is presumed lost to philately.*

According to the Peplow book on the *Barquitos* issues, the first clue that an inverted cliché existed on the “In Ps” plate was the report of a single stamp with part of the adjoining stamp rotated 180 degrees. The horizontal tête-bêche pair appeared in the Ferrary sale held on June 13, 1923. It was lot 146 and realized FFr 37,600 (including the 17.5% surcharge), an extraordinary sum for the time. On the day of sale, the exchange rate was 6.34 cents per franc, so the pair realized approximately US \$2,400.

A comparison of the horizontal tête-bêche pair’s realization in the Ferrary sale with the prices for well-known United States rarities in the same sale shows how highly-regarded the “In Peso” tête-bêche pair was at the time. An extremely fine used 1c Type I (Scott 5), which would bring \$300,000 today, sold for FFr 3,290 (US \$208), and a 15c 1869 Invert (Scott 119b), the same unused copy that realized \$757,100 in a recent auction, fetched FFr 21,737 (\$1,378).

Around the time Ferrary’s pair reached the market and was acquired by Alfred F. Lichtenstein, another example of the “In Pesos” tête-bêche was discovered in Germany and sold to another great American collector, Alfred H. Caspary. The Caspary pair proved that Position 33 in the plate of 48 was upside down relative to all of the others. Position 33 is the first stamp in the fifth horizontal row. The stamp below is the bottom left corner position on the printed sheet (Position 41). There were two states of the “In Peso” plate, and both tête-bêche pairs came from the second state.

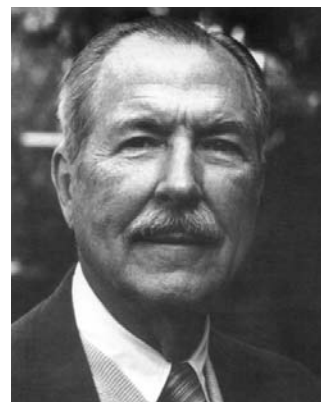


*Alfred H. Caspary*

again, nor was it offered in the series of Dale-Lichtenstein public auctions held by the H. R. Harmer firm. After the last of the Dale-Lichtenstein collection was sold, any hope for the pair’s survival was lost.

After Caspary’s death, H. R. Harmer sold his South American collection in June 1958. Following Caspary the “In Peso” vertical tête-bêche pair was owned in succession by Lars Amundsen, Joseph Schatzkes, John R. Boker Jr., and Gabriel Sanchez. It entered the Islander collection at the October 28, 1982, Corinphila auction of the Sanchez collection (lot 8148), realizing CHF 181,500 (approximately US \$89,000).

With the Ferrary-Lichtenstein pair lost to philately, the ex-Caspary pair survives as the unique example of this extraordinary error.



*John R. Boker Jr.*

1859 (JANUARY) ONE-PESO ("IN PS") BLUE  
THE ONLY SURVIVING TÊTE-BÊCHE PAIR



82

82° **1859, 1p ("In Ps") Deep Blue, Tête-Bêche (7d).** Positions 33/41 from the lower left corner of the sheet, top stamp the inverted cliché in second setting, minor faults but lightly cancelled with black *ponchito* leaving ship design clearly visible  
THE ONLY SURVIVING TÊTE-BÊCHE PAIR OF THE *BARQUITOS* ISSUE. ONE OF THE WORLD'S GREAT PHILATELIC RARITIES.

Ex Alfred H. Caspary, Lars Amundsen, Joseph Schatzkes, John R. Boker Jr., and Gabriel Sanchez. Exhibited in Aristocrats of Philately displays at Ameripex in 1986 and Anphillex in 1996. Illustrated in *Encyclopedia of Rare and Famous Stamps* by L. N. Williams.....  
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