

CUBA

THE STAMPS OF KING ALFONSO XIII

1890 to 1898

After the death of King Alfonso XII in 1885, his son Alfonso XIII was yet unborn and his mother, María Cristina, became Queen Regent of Spain and continued in that role after the new king was born on 17 May 1886 and until he was officially crowned at 16 years of age on 17 May 1902. The stamps bearing the effigy of King Alfonso XII continued to be used in Cuba (as well as in Puerto Rico and the Philippines) until 1890, at which time they were replaced with a new issue of stamps bearing the effigy of the Child-King Alfonso XIII. This same design was used repeatedly for both regular postage and newspaper stamps in the years 1891, 1894, and 1896, with variations in the colors in which the stamps were printed. These stamps are commonly referred to in English as the "Baby Faces" of King Alfonso XIII,; or in Spanish as the stamps of "El Pelón" (the bald one), because of the bald-appearance of the King's pronounced forehead.

The 1896 issue of these stamps circulated until January of 1898 at which time they were replaced by a new design showing the effigy of a now older Child-King. These stamps are referred to in Spanish as the stamps of Alfonso XIII, "Tipo Infante" ("Infante" meaning here "Son of the King"). In Cuba, these stamps knew a very brief period of use because of the Spanish-American War which Spain lost in July 1898. After the U.S. takeover of the Island's postal system shortly thereafter, these stamps continued to be accepted for postage, but were declared void after the end of the year. This issue is the same issue that gave rise to the famous "Puerto Príncipe" stamps surcharged by the U.S. authorities for use as a provisional issue in the city of "Puerto Príncipe" or Camagüey as it is known today.

This exhibit covers both types of King Alfonso XIII stamp issues from 1890 to 1898 and their postal usages, but does not cover the "Puerto Príncipe" provisional issue which is considered to be a U.S. Administration issue.