

CUBAN STRAIGHTLINE TOWN MARKINGS OF THE STAMPLESS ERA

Internal mail service in the island of Cuba was first organized in 1756. The earliest recorded Cuban town marking (one example of a HAVANA in negative) dates from 1760 and is in the Cuban Postal Museum, but 18th century correspondence from Cuba is quite rare and most of it has maritime mail markings only, not town markings. To this date, less than a dozen covers from the 1700s are known with Cuban town postmarks, and at least four of them are in the Cuban Postal Museum. During the first half of the 19th century the use of straightline town markings steadily proliferated until the introduction of circular date stamps, also known as *Baeza* markings, late in 1842. For the purpose of this exhibit we define "straightline" markings as anything other than a circular date stamp, which includes circular, oval, and semicircular handstamps. The *Baeza* markings gradually replaced straightline town handstamps, but in the smaller population centers the latter were in use until the early 1860s. The first Cuban stamps were introduced in 1855 but their use was not mandatory until 1857. However, some official mail was allowed to circulate without stamps until the mid-1860s. Only 10 different types of Cuban straightline town markings have been recorded on covers franked with adhesives.

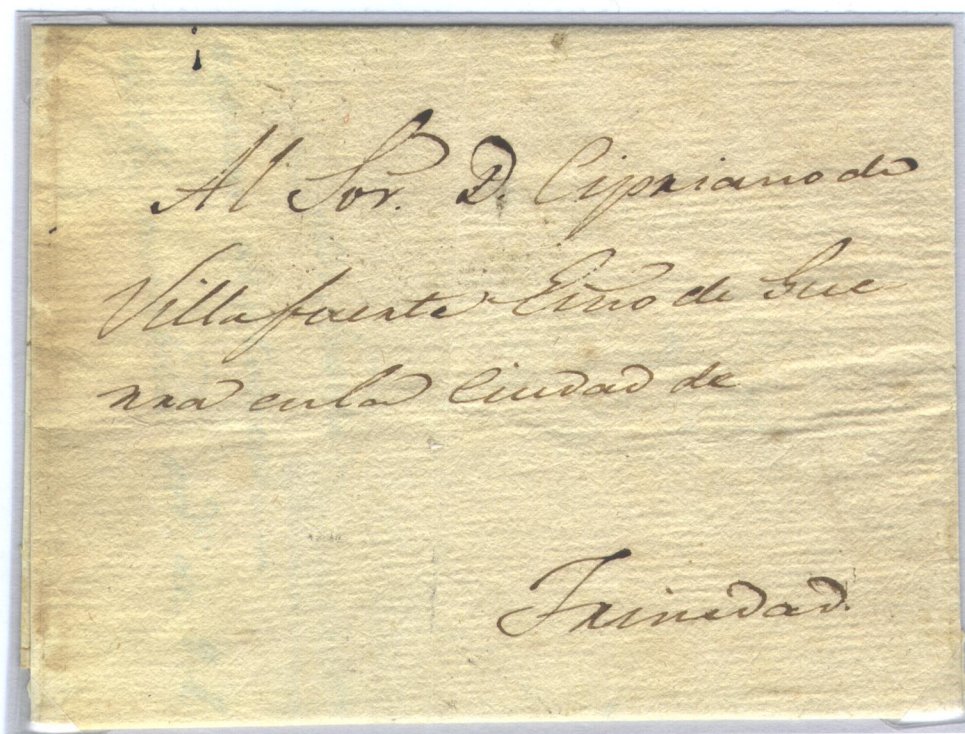
This exhibit displays the largest collection of Cuban straightline town markings ever put together. We first present the postmarks used in the 18th century in chronological sequence, followed by those of the 19th century, listed alphabetically, more or less. This is followed by covers with multiple town markings, in combination with maritime mail or demarcation postmarks, and straightline markings used on letters franked with adhesive stamps. In addition, we show several types of postmarks used predominantly on internal mail, such as those for certified, official, *abonado*, coastal, and railroad correspondence. Very rare examples of letters carried by a private express service, or *cordillera*, are also represented. Lastly, we end the exhibit with the earliest known use of a *Baeza* marking, which eventually replaced most straightline town markings. The rarity scale used here was taken from the most recent *Prefilatelia Española* (2004). Postal rates for internal mail in Cuba during the stampless era were issued in 1755, 1757, and 1824. They are described in the body of the exhibit. The lack of rate markings indicated an unpaid single weight letter. FRANCO means PAID.

The goals of this exhibit are to show the most complete gathering of Cuban stampless straightline town markings and their evolution over a period of almost a century, and also to illustrate the postmarks used on several different types of internal mail categories during the stampless era. The material is presented within the following sections:

- 1) 18th century town markings (chronologically).
- 2) 19th century town markings (alphabetically).
- 3) Covers with multiple town markings.
- 4) Straightline town markings in combination with maritime mail postmarks.
- 5) Straightline town markings in combination with demarcation postmarks.
- 6) Coastal mail markings.
- 7) Straightline town markings used in the adhesive era.
- 8) Railroad markings.
- 9) Government mail by private express or *Cordillera*.
- 10) Official mail markings.
- 11) *Abono* markings.
- 12) The first circular date stamp or "Baeza" marking.

1750 (Dec. 9). Privately carried official mail from the City Council in Havana to Trinidad de Cuba.

Earliest known letter from Cuba in a private collection.



18th Century Mail:

HA VA NA

The Royal Order of October 18, 1784, required that ship registers be treated as regular mail, but they had to be prepaid. There are only four ship registers recorded prior to the above Royal Order, ranging in dates from 1779 to 1783 (they all have postmarks but no rate markings).



1779 (May 1). Ship Register of the Paquebot *Nuestra Señora de la Merced* (Our Lady of Mercy) that sailed from Havana to Cadiz, Spain. It was signed by Raimundo de Onís, Postmaster General of the Island of Cuba from 1777 to 1788.

This is the only recorded example of the oval HA / VA NA. which is the second oldest town marking from Cuba (the earliest one, from 1760, is in the Cuban Postal Museum in Havana). It is also the second earliest known ISLAS DE/BARLOVENTO postmark, and the earliest reported Spanish ship register. [NOTE: there is a HAVANA. straightline marking reportedly dating from 1768 but this collector believes that its correct date is 1788].

18th Century Mail:

TRINIDAD



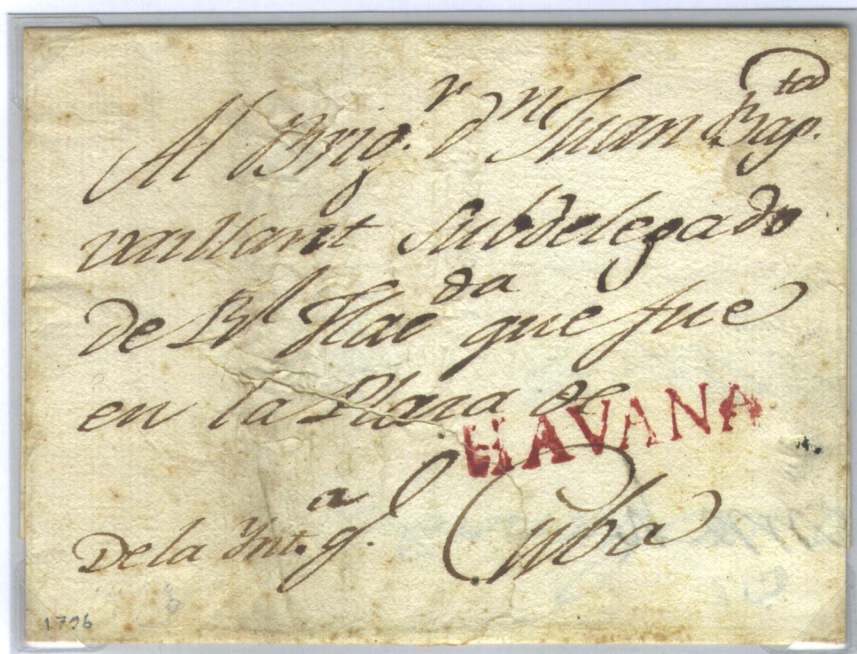
1783. Portobelo, now Panama, to Bristol, England, by way of Trinidad de Cuba, Havana, La Coruña, and Bordeaux. Sent to Trinidad, in the southern coast of Cuba, and then by ground mail to Havana. Carried by Royal Mail Packet into La Coruña and by overland mail to Bordeaux. Initially charged 16 sous, the single weight letter rate from Spain to Bordeaux, but later re-rated in England to 2N2 (1/6 from Spain to England via France, plus 8 pence for the inland rate from London to Bristol). Reached the addressee nearly five months after it was written and was only delivered after the peace treaty of September 1783.

This is the only reported example of the TRINIDAD marking, applied in transit at Trinidad de Cuba, and also the earliest handstamp from this town.

18th Century Mail:

HAVANA

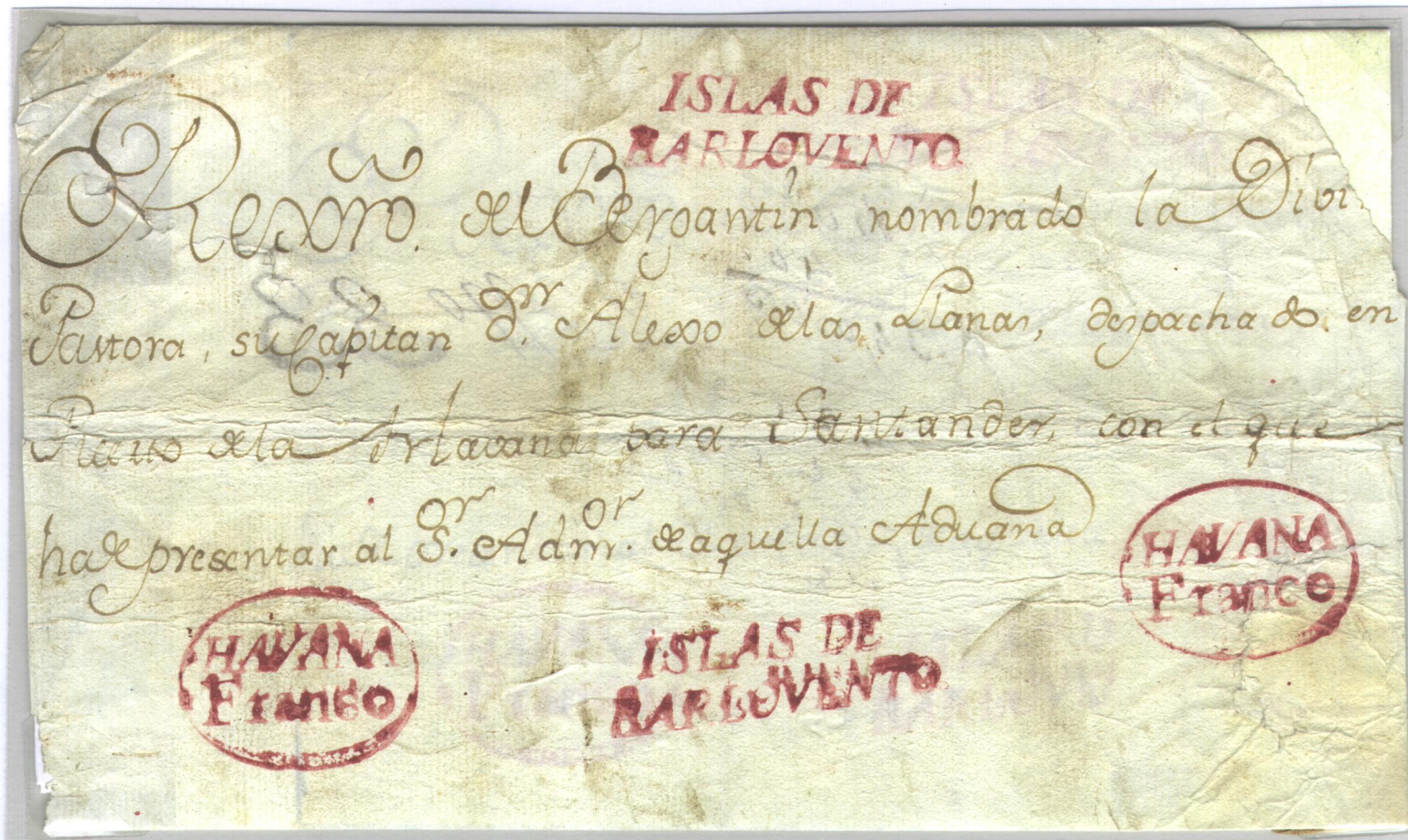
c1793. Havana to Matanzas.
Unpaid single-weight letter.
This 41 mm handstamp was
the fourth style of town
postmark used in Havana.
RRR.



1796. Havana to Santiago de
Cuba. Unpaid single-weight letter.
UNLISTED (in red).

18th Century Mail:

HAVANA / Franco

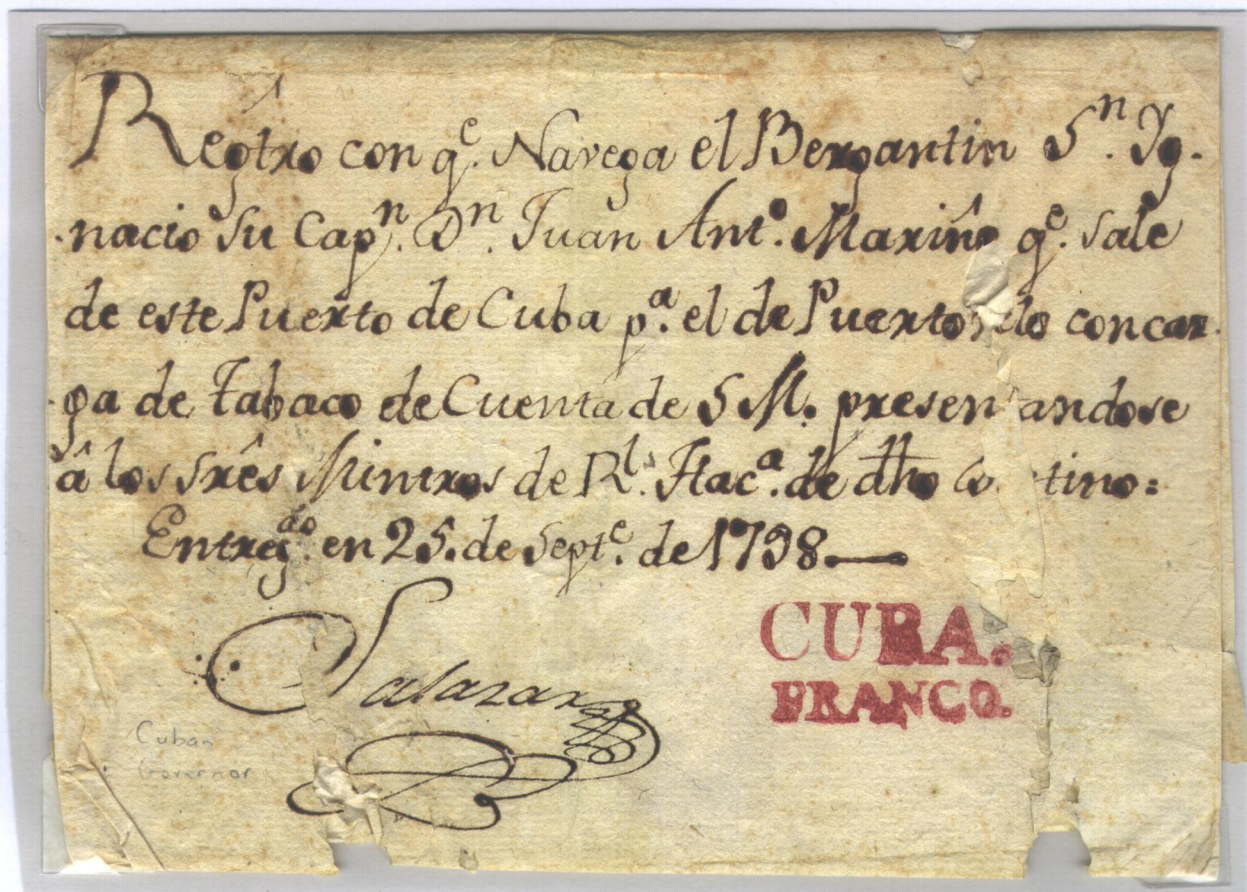


1796 (September 3). Ship register of the Brig *Divina Pastora* (Divine Shepherdess) that sailed from Havana to Santander, northern Spain. Sent prepaid as required of ship registers after 1784.

This is the earliest of the six reported examples of the oval HAVANA / Franco.

18th Century Mail:

CUBA (Santiago de Cuba)

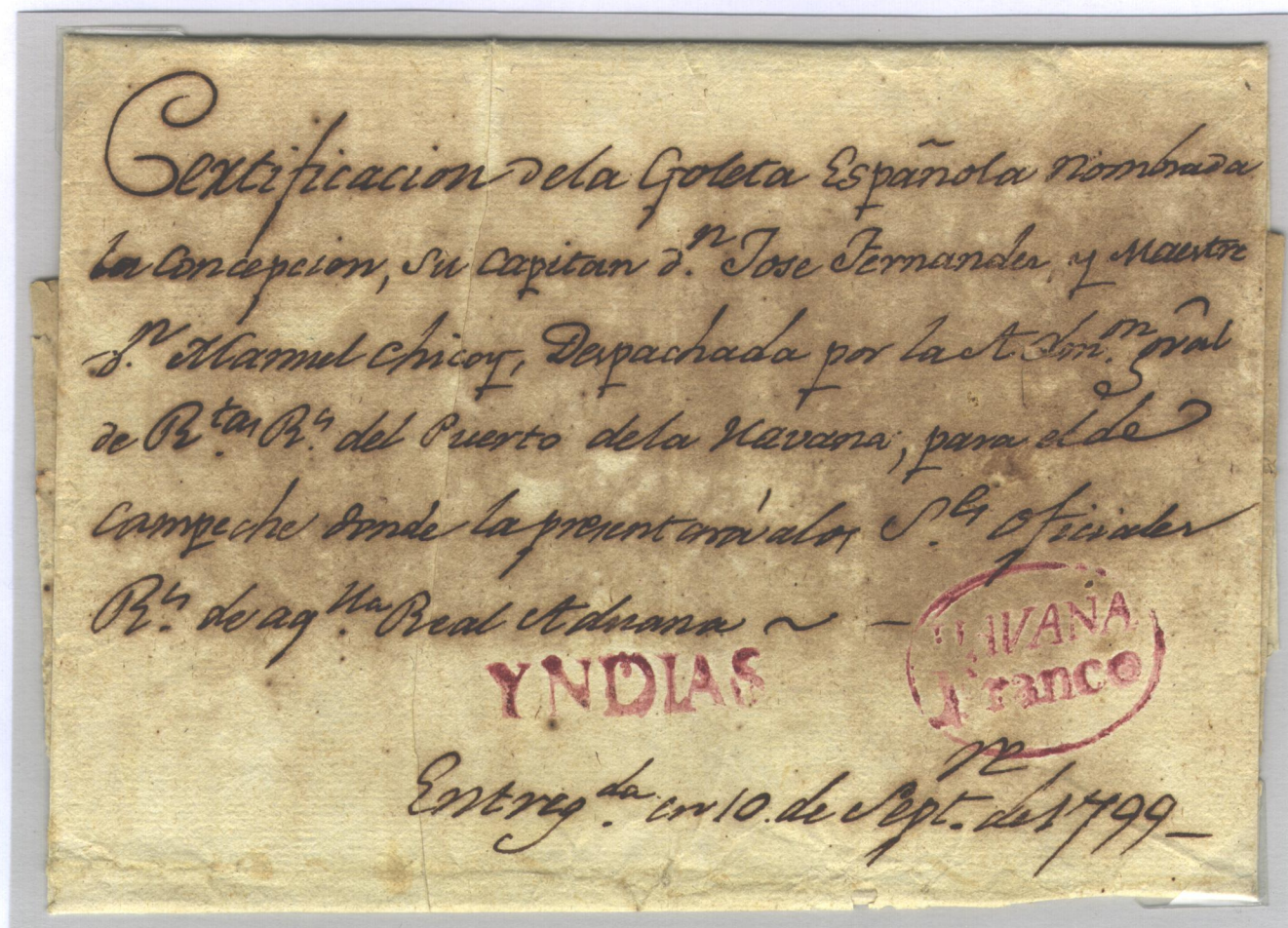


1798. Ship register of the Brig *San Ygnacio* that sailed from Santiago de Cuba to Portobelo, now Panama, with a load of tobacco. After 1784 ship registers had to be sent prepaid. Judging by this piece's weight, half ounce (manuscript on back), $\frac{1}{2}$ real must have been paid for this register.

These are the two earliest known postmarks from Santiago de Cuba.

18th Century Mail:

HAVANA / Franco



1799 (September 10). Ship register of the Spanish vessel *La Concepcion*, which sailed from Havana to Campeche, Yucatan Peninsula (now Mexico).

Only reported combination of the YNDIAS handstamp and the HAVANA / Franco oval.

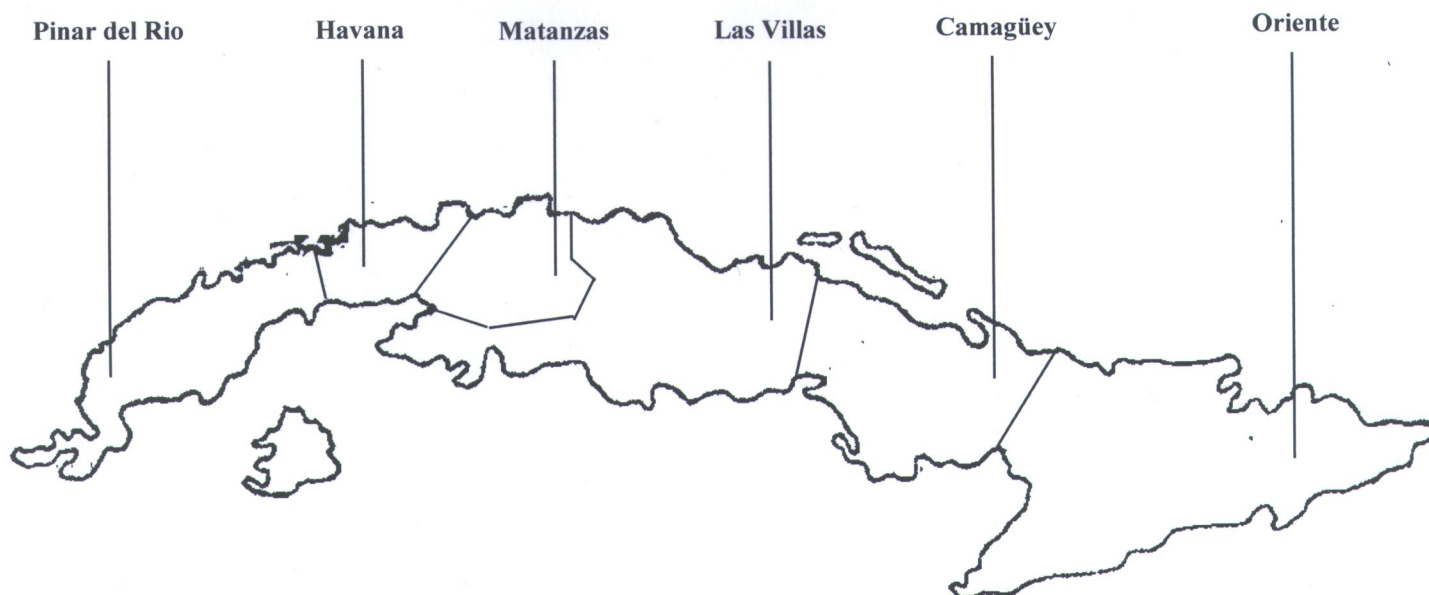
18th Century Mail:

SANCTI SPIRITUS

1799. Sancti Spiritus to Puerto Principe (now Camagüey). Official mail wrapper without rate markings, but undoubtedly a multiple-weight letter. Earliest known example of this marking which was used until 1829. RRR.



The next section presents the straightline stampless markings in alphabetical sequence by town, more or less, for easier identification. The following map identifies the island's six provinces, and the table below shows the domestic postage rates of September 17, 1824, which apply to the vast majority of the surviving mail with Cuban town postmarks. These rates were in effect until the beginning of the adhesive period in 1855. Other relevant rates are mentioned later within the text.



Internal mail postage rates in silver reales (weight in ounces).

	Under ½ o.	Up to ½ o.	Up to ¾ o.	One o.
Between the provinces of Pinar del Rio, Havana & Matanzas	1	1½	2	3
to Las Villas	1	2	3	4
to Camagüey and Oriente	2	3	4	5
Baracoa and other places near the eastern tip	2	4	6	8

The rarity scale used here was taken from the latest edition of 'Prefilatelía Española,' by Manuel Tizón (EDIFIL, Vol. III, 2004) and refers to the number of items recorded.

EXT - No more than three.

RRR - Between 4 and 12.

RR - Between 12 and 25

R - Between 25 and 50

ME - Between 50 and 100

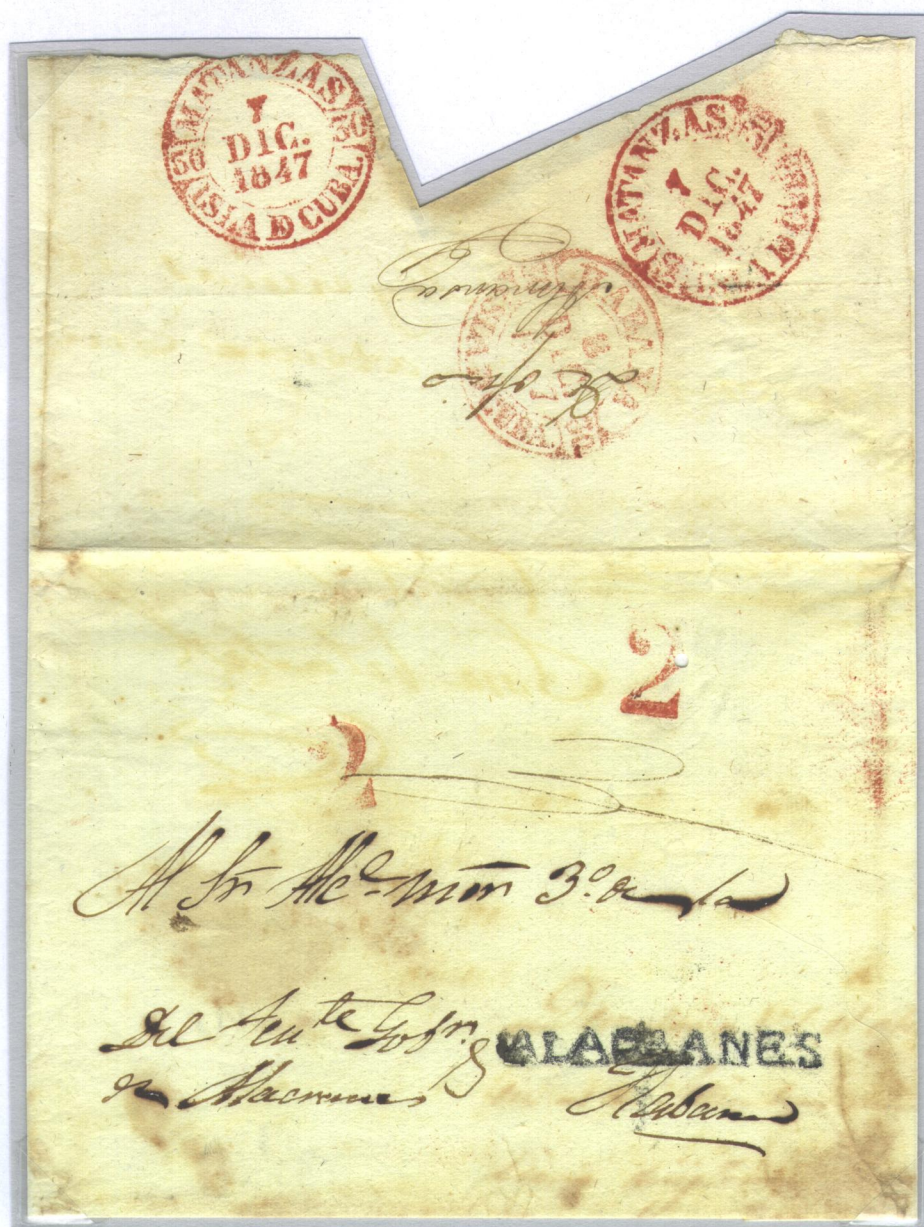
E - Between 100 and 200

C - Between 200 and 500

MC - Over 500

*In addition we classify other markings that have not been reported anywhere as - **UNLISTED**.*

There were a number of post office categories in Cuba during the stampless era. In addition to the central post office in Havana, there were several principal post offices (Matanzas, Puerto Principe, and Santiago de Cuba) and six other levels ranging from first to fifth class, followed by *carterías*, or letter handling places. The population figures, when available, refer to the mid 19th century, towards the end of the stampless period in Cuba.



1847. Alacranes to Havana. Unpaid official mail wrapper of up to $\frac{3}{4}$ ounce. This town's population was 472 inhabitants. This was the first of the three types of straightline markings used in Alacranes during the stampless period and has been recorded from 1841 to 1847. Very unusual use of the *Baeza* handstamp from Matanzas in transit. RRR.

1848. Alacranes to Havana. Unpaid official mail wrapper of up to 1 ounce. This is the second type of straightline marking from this town. The rim on this postmark quickly deteriorated as can be seen in the example below which is slightly more common than this one. RR.



1848. Alacranes to Matanzas. Unpaid single weight letter. This marking has been recorded between 1847 and 1849. RR.

**CARTERIA DE
ALACRANES**

*Matanzas Province
"Cartería"*

1850. Alacranes to Havana. Unpaid single weight letter. This is the third and last type of straightline marking from this town. It has been recorded between 1849 and 1850. RRR.



1850. Alacranes to Matanzas. Unpaid single weight letter. Like the previous postmark from Alacranes this one also deteriorated quickly. Note the missing letter S and period at the end of the marking. RRR.

ALBARES

Las Villas Province

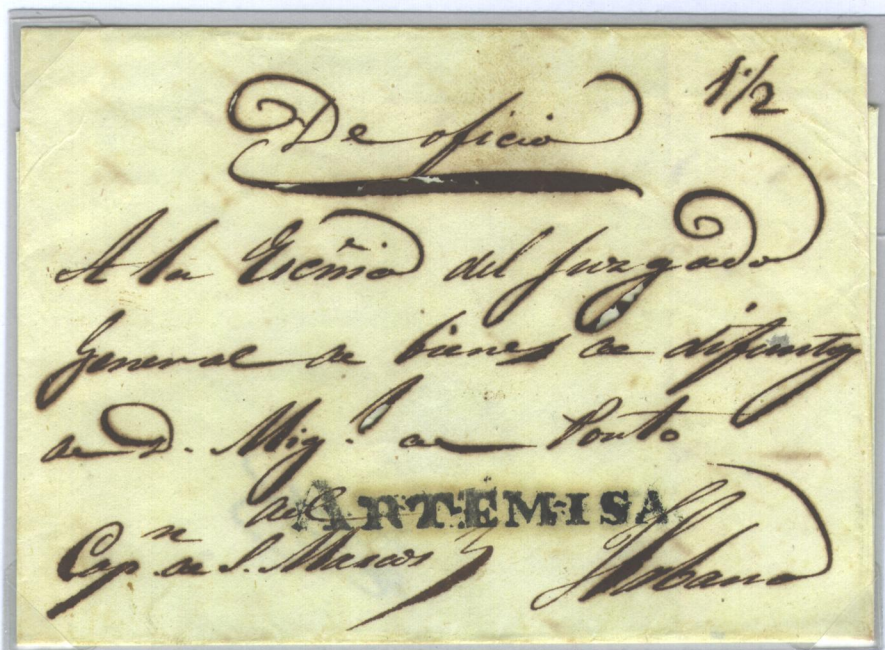
Fourth Class

ARTEMISA

Pinar del Rio Province

Fourth Class

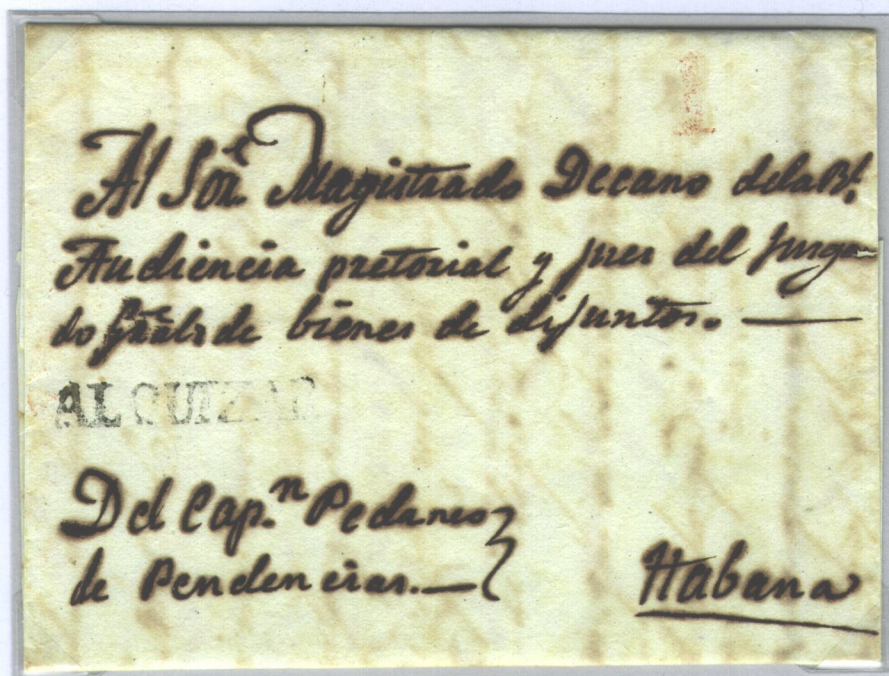
1844. Prepaid letter from Albares to Havana. This is the only recorded type of handstamp from this town which around the middle of the 19th century only had 130 inhabitants. It is also the only known FRANCO from Albares. EXT and UNLISTED (FRANCO).



c1834. San Marcos to Havana, privately carried to Artemisa where it was posted. Unpaid letter weighing up to ½ ounce. This is the only recorded type of handstamp from this town which had a population 930 inhabitants. EXT.

1836. Aquizar to Havana. Originally sent unpaid (single-weight). This is the first type of straightline marking from this town, recorded between 1836 and 1837. Its population was around 530. The last type of HABANA/ FRANCO oval was applied to indicate payment by the addressee. RRR.

There are about a dozen covers with the combination of town markings and the HABANA/ FRANCO oval and this is the only one in which the latter was used to indicate the payment of a postage due.



1844. Aquizar to Havana. Unpaid single-weight letter. This is the second type of straightline marking from this town, only recorded in 1844. UNLISTED.

1839. Bahia Honda to Havana.
Unpaid letter of up to ¾ ounce.
This is the only type of
straightline marking from this
town, recorded between 1839 and
1842. ME.



1839. Prepaid letter from Bahia Honda
to Havana. Bahia Honda's population
was around 890. The FRANCO
postmark has been recorded between
1839 and 1842. R (FRANCO).

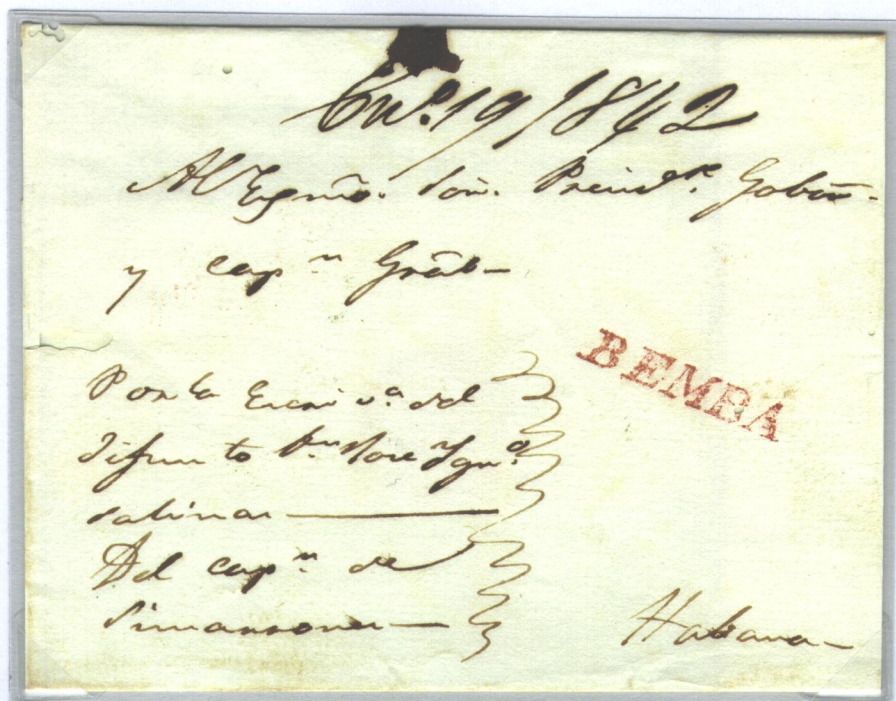
BARACOA

Oriente Province
Second Class

BEMBA

Matanzas Province
Second Class

1838. Cover from Baracoa, professionally restored. Its population was 2,850. This is the only type of straightline marking from this town, recorded between 1834 and 1840. RRR.



1842. Cimarrones to Havana, posted at Bemba (Jovellanos). Unpaid single-weight letter. Its population was around 450. This is the only type of straightline marking from this town, recorded between 1842 and 1845. RRR.