

## **THE POSTAL STATIONERY OF NICARAGUA** (Postcards and Envelopes to circa 1910 Period)

Nicaragua is an interestingly situated country with coastlines on both the Pacific and Atlantic sides of Central America. It was one of the first parts of Central America to come under Spanish dominion in 1524 and it stayed under Spanish rule until 15<sup>th</sup> September 1821 when the Captaincy General of Guatemala, of which Nicaragua formed a part, declared its independence from Spain. There was a very brief union with Mexico in the 1822-23 period before the United Provinces of Central America were federated on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1823. Nicaragua became a state of the United Provinces in 1826. this federation broke up in 1883 and finally Nicaragua became independent republic. During two periods, from 1740 to 1786 and from 1840 to 1867, the Mosquito Coast, on the Atlantic side, was a British Protectorate.

Nicaragua joined the U.P.U. on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1882.

### **Introduction**

This particular exhibit takes a specialized look at postal stationery cards and envelopes only that were issued from the inception through to the circa 1910 period together with their various overprints and surcharges. The exhibit does not include the local issues for the Bluefields and Cabo regions on the Mosquito Coast.

The first postal stationery item in Nicaragua was a 2c internal rate postcard produced by the American Bank Note Company in New York in 1878. Whether or not it immediately went on sale is open to debate as the earliest known usages of this card are in the early 1880's. This same company was also responsible for printing the following three issues of postcards and, in 1888, the first issue of postal stationery envelopes. From 1890 through to 1899 Nicaragua's postal stationery was produced exclusively by the Hamilton Bank Note Company of New York. Nicaragua was one of the famous "Seebeck" contract countries! This resulted in a different series of stamps and postal stationery being issued each year during this ten year period. In 1900 they reverted back to the American Bank Note Company for the 'Momotombo' series of stamps and postal stationery. In the early 1900's Nicaragua went through a very unstable period and there were numerous rate changes with both increases and decreases. This inevitably led to shortages with many surcharges and revalidations of existing stationery stocks as well as many usages with added stamps sometimes making up seemingly impossible rates. The full exact sequence and timing of the rate changes may well never be known as, unfortunately, all the Nicaragua Post Office archives were lost in the major 1932 earthquake in Managua. Possible problems with their American Bank Note Company contract in the early 1900's also led them to Waterlow & Sons Ltd. of London and resulted in the production of a 4c postcard and 10c envelope in the same 'Momotombo' designs. These items, however, were only ever issued in overprinted formats.

This exhibit contains a comprehensive selection of these issues and shows an excellent array of proof and specimen material throughout where such items exist. On the used material much effort has been put into looking for the rarer items, such as the legal size envelopes, as well as interesting usages with scarce and rare cancellations and unusual destinations being included wherever possible.

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