

# New Cuban Revenue Perfin: NG/ & C°

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Robert, an avid Cuba collector, purchased a previously unreported Cuban perfin, NG/ & C°, in an 1896 *giro* revenue stamp at a recent Perfins Club auction (Figure 1). He got right to work on discovering what company placed the perfin in it.



Figure 1  
1896 Cuban *giro* revenue stamp (William McPherson Jones Cuban revenue catalog No. CA195) with NG/ & C° perfin. (actual size)

8366. He sent a scan of the original impressions. The record is illustrated in Figure 2. Unfortunately, the name of the purchaser was not disclosed in the records. Michael reported that NG/ & C° is not a known British perfin.

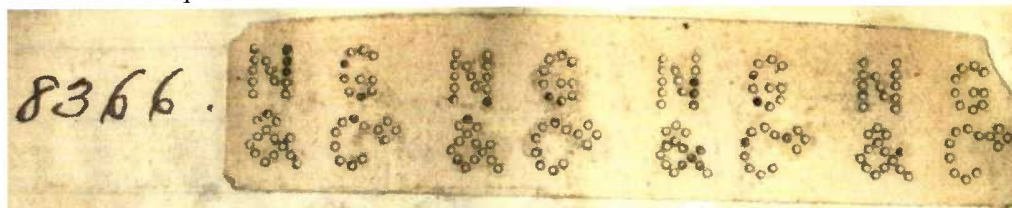


Figure 2  
Original James Sloper die record from late 1897 with the machine number 8366 followed by four NG/ & C° impressions.

That led Robert to look in the next logical place: Cuba. He started an Internet search with a fortuitously dated, searchable, 1896 Cuban Business Directory. In the whole island of Cuba there was but one company whose name fit the perforated initials: N. (for Narciso) Gelats & Co. The directory listed the company under "Banks and Banking" and "Commission Merchants – Importer and Exporter." An Internet search for "N. Gelats" yielded much more. *N. Gelats y Cía* was established in 1876, some 20 years before the perfin in question, and grew to become one of the largest banks owned by a

Spaniard in Cuba. He even found a picture of the impressive Gelats bank building in a Cuban photo archive (Figure 3).

After the initial writing of this article, Robert circulated it as an email attachment to his Cuban philatelic friends and found a fellow member of the International Cuban Philatelic Society, Juan L. García Tuñón, who is a great grandson of Narciso Gelats. Juan reports that he visited Havana in 2002 and that this bank building not only still exists, it is the main branch of the *Banco Nacional de Cuba*, having been nationalized by Castro in 1960.

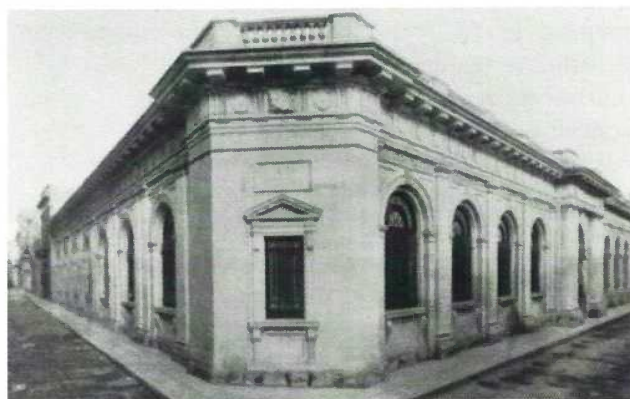


Figure 3  
Gelats bank building, Havana, according to the legend on the back of an undated photo.

A *giro* was a revenue stamp that was required to be placed on a bill of exchange or money order. In this case, for instance, the *giro* was placed on a financial instrument transferring 1000 to 1400 pesos for

which the transferor paid 80 centavos for that privilege. The use of that *giro* by an import-export bank would be exactly what one would expect.

What we have come to believe, short of seeing some instrument that names the company in the presence of the perfin, is that a substantial bank, N. Gelats & Co., bought a perfin machine from London in late 1897 and then proceeded to perfin the 1896 *giro* (which was not replaced until sometime in 1898). The result is illustrated in Figure 1 above.