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## Perfin Substitutes of Droguería Sarrá

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Droguería Sarrá was established in 1853 in Havana by Dr. José Sarrá to provide pharmaceutical and homeopathic products. Under his son, Dr. Ernesto José Sarrá, Droguería Sarrá expanded to become the largest pharmaceutical and distribution company in Cuba and in Latin America until 1960 when the government confiscated all private businesses.

Collectors of Cuban stamps at one time or another encounter SA/RRA perfined stamps. They are everywhere. For a period of thirty years, 1914–1954, Droguería Sarrá used a perforating machine to protect their valuable stocks of postage stamps from theft. Thereafter, at least in theory, the stamps could not be mailed by anyone other than an authorized agent of the company.



Figure 1 – Timbre Nacional revenue stamps issued in the period from 1919–1924 (blue stamp); 2¢ & 1¢ issues of 1937; and surcharged overprint issue of 1956 (light red stamp), all bearing the printed legend “SARRÁ”. –

But if they had a perforation machine already in use, why would they *print* SARRÁ on their revenue stamps? (See Fig. 1). This author cannot provide the answers – he can only note that this occurred in the same time period. Perhaps perforation of the revenue stamps invalidated them. Perforation after all was a common form of cancellation of revenue stamps, so this appears to be the most likely explanation.

OK, then, why do you see perfins on the first issues of the Timbre Nacional revenue stamps? (See Fig. 2) Perhaps they did this initially until some government official told them that the perforations invalidated the stamps. An interesting mystery remains.



Fig. 2 – SA/RRA perfins on early *Timbre Nacional* revenue stamps.