

## PURSUING THE VARIANT

### Plating the "Dropped N" Variety on Chile's Second Airmail Etiquette

**VARIANT** (noun) - a form or version of something that differs in some respect from other forms of the same thing or from a standard.

**Purpose:** This exhibit presents **new personal study** of the "Dropped N" variety on Chile's second governmental airmail etiquette. Pane formats are described and the variety's placement within them is indicated. Constant printing flaws are identified and noted enabling concise position plating of each example. All 11 position-identified "Dropped N" etiquettes are shown and described used on cover.

Appearing in 1931, Chile's second airmail etiquette includes a variety I'm calling the "Dropped N" displaying a 1 mm obvious typographical downwards shift of the N at the end of the first line. The etiquette was produced in panes of 50 consisting of five columns and ten rows. Two configurations of the pane are known with different incidences of the variety. POR AVION and PAR AVION are Spanish and French for "By Airplane."



The original study here presented allows us to confirm that the Dropped N etiquettes in this multiple and on the cover are from Pane 2 and Position #4.

|  |                           |
|--|---------------------------|
| May 28, 1931 - Valparaiso to London, England |                           |
| UPU Single rate                              | \$0.70 ≤ 20g.             |
| Airmail Surcharge                            | \$9.60 (\$3.20 per 5g x3) |
| Total  | \$10.30                   |

**Key to Abbreviations:**

**UPU = Union Postale Universelle** (Universal Postal Union)  
Established in 1874 with Chile joining in April of 1881.

**UPAEP = Union Postal de las Américas, España y Portugal**  
(Postal Union of the Americas, Spain and Portugal)  
Established in 1911 with Chile ratifying membership in January of 1912.



**Treatment and Importance:** As airmail was becoming more commonplace, etiquettes and markings were an integral part in facilitating the rates and routing. Albeit unusual, this exhibit presents a unique yet traditional study of Chile's Dropped N etiquette.

**Knowledge and Research:** Although the variety was known, the discovery of multiple panes, placement of the variety within those panes, and printing flaws and characteristics enabling plating is all based on original study on the part of the exhibitor. This study was published in *Chile Filatélico* magazine #307 in April 2025. Although focus is on the etiquettes, rates on the covers have been studied and described.

**Condition and Rarity:** An indication of how many examples are known on cover is provided in red on the pages showing uses. This is based on a census maintained over decades by the exhibitor. Condition is excellent taking into account the thin and fragile airmail envelopes of the period.

**References:**

Mair, Günter – *Airmail Labels of the World* 1991  
Towle, Ross – *Postal Rates of Chile 1766 – 1959* Published by ChileCollector 2003

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**Variation** (noun) - a form or version of something that differs in some respect from other forms of the same thing or from a standard.

The purpose of this exhibit is to present this specific “Dropped N” variety on Chile’s second airmail etiquette following a traditional approach and treatment.

The etiquette and sheet format are described, the printing variety and placement within the sheets (panes) are identified, and details of the varieties are described (original study) to enable position plating once they’ve been used on a cover. Covers with all 11 position-identified etiquettes make up the balance of the exhibit. The normal etiquettes are neither plated nor featured.

Although official postal documentation about Chile’s airmail etiquettes has yet to be discovered, according to Günter Mair, author of *Airmail Labels of the World*, Chile’s postal authorities issued the first airmail etiquette in 1929 (CHL-A-1). The etiquette presented in this exhibit is the second issue (CHL-A-2a), which Mair states as issued in 1930. I have yet to see an example used in 1930 and the earliest usage dates I have found are in early 1931. Mair has been working on updating his catalog for the last few decades, and personal correspondence with him has been very helpful in the study of this etiquette.



CHL-A-1



CHL-A-2a

The variety presented as the “Dropped N” consists of an easily discernible typographical shift downwards of the “N” at the end of the first line (approx. 1mm). Mair lists this variety (CHL-A-2b).



CHL-A-2b

The etiquettes are gummed and were produced in sheets/panes of 50 with five columns, ten rows, and imperforate outer borders. They are perforated 11¾ and perforation placement varieties are known. In the process of acquiring material relevant to CHL-A-2 I was eventually able to find a sheet of 50 and noted the placement of the varieties. I found a second sheet that had a different number of the variety, and placement in the sheet varied. They may have been printed in sheets of 100 and cut into panes of 50. In this exhibit, they are referred to as Pane 1 and Pane 2. (Mair states that CHL-A-1 was produced in a sheet of 100).

In Pane 1, only 2 of the 50 etiquettes exhibit the “Dropped N” variety (4%). Pane 2 has 9 examples of the variety (18%). Combined, 11 of the 100 positions exhibit the variety (11%).

Seeing the positions on the sheets, it occurred to me that one might be able to find and identify repeating printing flaws in the 11 etiquettes that would enable one to identify these specific etiquettes, whether loose or used on cover. Albeit very small, these details have been identified and illustrated (original study).

The remainder of the exhibit features examples of all 11 position-identified “Dropped N” etiquettes used on covers from Chile to a variety of destinations. Although the etiquettes are the focus, care has been taken to provide all relevant rate details.

Finding these varieties on cover is challenging considering the 11/100 ratio in their production. Etiquettes from Pane 1 (2/50) are found less often than from Pane 2 (9/50). The flimsy paper used for the airmail envelopes of the period lends itself to transit and opening damage. The focus of the exhibit is on the etiquettes.

These CHL-A-2a and CHL-A-2b etiquettes were used for several years, and according to Mair the next etiquettes were issued in 1935.

#### Organization of Exhibit:

Pane 1 – including variety positions

Pane 2 – including variety positions

Plating of “Dropped N” variety etiquettes with uses on cover

#### References:

- Groten, A. “Airmail Etiquettes” *American Philatelist*, November 2021  
Mair, Günter *Airmail Labels of the World* 1991  
Towle, Ross *Postal Rates of Chile 1766-1959*. ChileCollector 2003  
Vergara, Carlos “Persiguiendo la variante...” *Chile Filatélico* #301 2025  
[www.postal-label-study-group.info](http://www.postal-label-study-group.info)