Dale Pulver Columns

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Mexico offers opportunity for challenge

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

This is the inaugural article in what will be a monthly feature in *Linn's* on the philately of Mexico.

My efforts will be well rewarded if I can generate new aficionados to collect and study the stamps of our neighbor to the south.

It is certain there are many who, having once started, became happily addicted.

There's really so much good, solid philatelic territory to be explored that we don't need to step on each other's toes.

There are some areas, however, where the competition gets rather heated at times.

For those readers who may be only superficially familiar with the stamps of Mexico, let's take a quick pass through the Scott listings.

The first five or six issues are a veritable gold mine for those inclined to specialized collecting.

The stamps come with a large number of district name overprints which, when combined with many different and distinctive cancellations, give rise to hundreds, even thousands, of collectible varieties.

These are truly classic stamps. Many of the varieties are very rare, with only one or two examples known to exist.

The later issues of the 19th century provide an equally challenging opportunity for specialization.

There are paper, watermark and perforation varieties in abundance, as well as an interesting array of cancellations.

Best of all, many of these stamps can be had for a very modest outlay, although anything approaching completeness in an issue will require a significant financial commitment.

Even 20th-century stamps provide many specific areas for serious collecting.

During the revolutionary period of 1914-17, dozens of provisional issues and overprinted varieties emerged at the whim of whoever was in command of the government at the moment.

True, some of these were philatelically inspired, but the well-informed and patient researcher will be amply rewarded with legitimate usages, many of which can be had for modest sums.

Regular issues of this design type, used for 25 years in Mexico beginning in 1950, have recently generated interest among specialist collectors. This pair of Scott 929a, issued in 1962, shows a printing freak.

A good deal of reliable reference material exists for this period to guide the novice or intermediate collector.

Some of the most beautifully produced Mexican stamps came out in the '30s and '40s when the commemoration of places, people and historical events gathered momentum.

For example, a modern design which appeared in 1950 and continued in use for more than 25 years (Scott type A189 and AP81, with varieties) has attracted a lot of attention from specialists recently.

There were many printings; a bunch of watermarks, gum varieties, recuts and perforation varieties; and everything else that makes the philatelic grist we love to grind.

Some of the stamps in this series are scarce, if not rare. Auction realizations attest to this.

Most of these stamps, however, can be purchased for small sums, and I have no doubt that a few "sleepers" of these issues lurk in dealer stock books for the hawk-eyed collector having the knowledge and patience to search them out.

Many collectors may be wary of Mexico, primarily of the classic issues, because of the reputation they have for fakes and forgeries.

True, some fakes do exist (and have for more than 80 years), but the majority will not fool the careful collector who has done his homework and doesn't try to get something for nothing.

Furthermore, Mexican collectors are fortunate to have a large and reliable body of literature and reference material available. This includes painstaking work on the fakes and forgeries.

Additionally, we have a specialist group, the Mexico-Elmhurst Philatelic Society (MEPSI), which offers a competent and reasonably priced expertization service.

MEPSI has also published much of the reference material on Mexico in its quarterly journal and newsletter. I will discuss this further in a future column.

Another aspect, important to me at least, is that Mexico is a philatelically clean country. Stamps have always been produced solely for legitimate postal purposes.

To my knowledge, there have never been any CTOs emanating from the Mexican Post Office, no deliberate "short" denominations, nor any intentionally produced "errors."

I presume some printers' waste has slipped out the back door once or twice, and probably there have been a few "inside" deals.

However, some of the modern rarities have cropped up under perfectly legitimate circumstances, and I know of no attempt to make them less rare by mass producing them.

At this point, I should forewarn the advanced collector of Mexico that he may not find too much new knowledge in this column.

It is not my intent to base these articles on extensive research. But I may slip something new in every once in a while to see if you're following along.

Also, I hope to get some feedback from readers that will be worth expanding upon and disclosing to a wider audience.

The format of this column will be casual and informal. To keep things interesting, I'll jump around quite a bit, at least from a chronological standpoint.

(Continued on next page)

Mexico

(From previous page)

There will be much coverage of 19th-century and classic issues, simply because that's the area I know most about and which I think is most interesting. I'll also look at some of the modern issues, too.

I will welcome comment on any topic. Please send correspondence to my attention at *Linn's*.

District overprints create area of study

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Mexico's first adhesive postage stamps appeared on Aug. 1, 1856. This was 16 years after the famous Penny Black made its debut and nine years after the United States issued its first postage stamps, but comfortably ahead of most of Mexico's Central American neighbors.

Five denominations made up the first issue: ½ real (blue), 1r (yellow), 2r (yellow-green), 4r (red) and 8r (red-lilac). There was a legitimate need for all these values since postage was based on weight and distance, and the series provided the combinations necessary to match these scaled rates.

The common design of the five stamps pictured Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, an early leader in Mexico's war of independence.

The stamps were engraved, quite well executed and printed in attractive colors. However, early collectors found something curious about them which they were unable to explain for many years. Nearly all of these stamps bore, in addition to cancellations, names such as those seen running vertically along the sides of the stamps in Figure 1.

They were neatly applied, for the most part, and anyone having a smattering of geographic knowledge about Mexico would assume they were towns and cities. Many had a common, familiar ring to them — Mexico, Puebla, Acapulco, Veracruz and Tampico — while others were veritable tongue-twisters — Huejutla, Ixtlahuaca, Polotitlan, Soyaniquilpan, Temascaltepec and Tlalpujuahua.

Some of the names were seen again and again; others were hardly ever encountered.

Before the turn of the century, when more and more of the early classic stamps of Mexico began appearing on the market, a British businessman named Samuel Chapman took keen interest in these markings and began the search for a logical explanation. At the time.

Figure 1. A pair of 1-real stamps from the district of Mazatlan used at Culiacan shows the overprinted district name.

Chapman was living and working in Mexico, which facilitated his studies immensely.

He discovered that the names were district overprints, a clever system of security devised by the Mexican postal authorities. In the mid-19th century, Mexico was rife with social and political upheaval. It was also a country with a widely dispersed population, due to its rugged geography, and communication, even between major cities, was difficult.

There was a fairly well-ordered postal system, however, much of its structure dating from the days of Spanish colonial rule.

The country was divided into postal districts, each having at least a principal office and often many suboffices.

A district office would order stamps from the main office in Mexico City in accordance with estimated local needs. These would be shipped, usually by stagecoach, unoverprinted. Once the stamps were received at the district office, they were handstamped with that district's name to validate them for use. Properly overprinted and canceled stamps are shown in Figure 2.

Stamps lacking the district name were presumed to be without franking power. In this way, the government hoped to control the unauthorized use of stamps and loss of revenue in the event they were stolen.

This is the way the postal directives read, but it didn't always happen that way. A number of offices misunderstood the directive or chose to ignore it. Thus we have stamps legitimately used without overprints, some of which are quite rare.

Also, in offices which handled a great deal of mail, the chore of applying the name to hundreds of stamps was a tedious job, so a tired or distracted clerk might miss a stamp or two along the way. Because of this, stamps

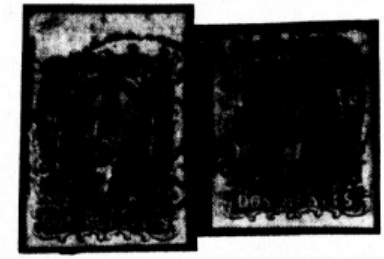


Figure 2. Bull's-eye strikes of circular datestamps on stamps overprinted for the districts of Mexico and Morelia (dates are May 4, 1858, on the left and June 26, 1857, on the right) show the proper usage of the stamps.

sometimes appear with no overprint but with a clear cancel from a district which usually overprinted its stamps. Figure 3 shows an example.

This should explain why this first issue of Mexico, and some of those immediately following it, are so popular with specialists. First, we have an attractive, well-executed series of stamps. Then, we have some 50 different district offices which applied name overprints and a number of offices which didn't, creating distinct, collectible varieties.

Futher, there were numerous small offices (subdistrict offices) which got stamps from the big offices but used different cancellations to permit them to be identified. Finally, there is a normal complement of printing flaws and varieties, usages outside of districts, fancy cancellations and fakes and forgeries.

Examples of stamps used outside the proper district are shown in Figure 4.

Fortunately, the scholarly and always precise Chapman spent many years sorting out the details of these issues, using original post office records as the basis for his work. In 1926 he documented his labors in a classic reference work, *The Postage Stamps of Mexico 1856-1868*. It is still available in a reprinted version.

It gives the relative scarcity of the stamps based on Chapman's tables of shipments to the various districts. Some values, particularly the 4r and 8r stamps, are exceedingly scarce for several districts.

Even some small districts used so few of the common values (1r and 2r) that they, too, are scarce.

The hunt for these scarce overprints is exciting, though often expensive. For examples bearing the more common district overprints, however, the Scott catalog prices for the first three stamps in the series are each $12 or less. This, in my opinion, is still a big bargain in the area of classic stamps.

Figure 3. Postally used stamps without district overprints. This pair of 1-real stamps has a boxed Huauchinango cancellation. The stamps should have been overprinted either Huejutla or Tulancingo, as both districts supplied stamps to this suboffice.

True, one will pay more for very fine copies if he is dealing with well-informed sellers or auction competition, and one cannot hope to assemble a representative collection without substantial outlay.

The numbers of stamps sold for Mexico

Figure 4. On the left is a stamp of the Tampico district used in Mexico City; on the right, a district of Acapulco used at Colima, which belonged to the district of Morelia.

Scott 1-3 were ½r, 992,000; 1r, 1.43 million; and 2r, 1.63 million — not an overwhelming emission by anyone's measure. ■

Beware of counterfeit Anotado overprints

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

In the spring of 1872, it was announced that there would be a new issue of stamps to replace those which had been in service since 1868.

Several interesting theories have been offered to explain this sudden change after barely four years of usage.

One popular suggestion was that functionaries within the postal agency were syphoning off supplies of stamps and manipulating them (by applying counterfeit overprints and consignment numbers) and selling them to large, commercial users for personal gain.

That's possible, but as yet it's an unproven theory.

The 1868 issue showed a full-face portrait of Father Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla. The new design showed him in profile facing left.

The new issue was to be put on sale March 1, 1872 (or perhaps somewhat later, it is not known for certain).

Also, the postal administration in Mexico City had already begun to recall surplus stamps of the old issue from outlying postal districts.

For some reason, the new stamps were not ready by March 1, and since many of the old ones had been demonetized and removed from the official accounts, it was feared that a severe shortage of stamps would arise.

Figure 1. This unusual strip of three returned from the Lagos district was validated for use with "Anotado" overprints.

Figure 2. A 25-centavo "Anotado" stamp with Gothic type district overprint of Mexico (1-72) franked this cover from Mexico City to Veracruz dated March 22, 1872.

Authorities decided to overprint some of the surplus stamps that had been returned with the word "Anotado" (which means noted or accounted for), validating them for temporary use until the new stamps were delivered.

Properly overprinted stamps are shown in Figure 1.

The overprinted "Anotado" stamps were intended for use only at the Principal Postal Administration in Mexico City. None were sent to other district offices in the interior.

They were to use whatever stocks of stamps they had remaining or revert to the "Sello Negro" (handstamp) system of indicating postage paid.

For this reason, it may seem unusual to see postmarks of districts other than Mexico on the overprinted stamps, but, among the few of these stamps that do survive, they are often found.

As noted, all of this occurred in a short span of time during the spring of 1872.

Since no one has yet found official records concerning this "Anotado" business, the period of legitimate use had to be established from dated covers or letters bearing the stamps.

Fortunately, a large business correspondence was found in Guanajuato which contained a fair number of letters bearing the "Anotado" stamps.

Since the sequence in the correspondence contained letters from nearly every day during the period, it was possible to deduce the time of use fairly precisely. The first date found was March 12; the last was April 25.

What we can conclude is that there was a period of only about 40 days during which the "Anotado" stamps were used.

Naturally, the net result is stamps and covers of considerable scarcity, and they are listed in all the major catalogs.

The new 1872 issue finally did make its appearance in the early days of April 1872.

Unfortunately, there are many fake overprints. Warnings to this effect are given in all catalogs and should be heeded.

Some of these fake overprints have been so poorly done that even an inexpert eye can detect them.

The overprint is illustrated in both Scott and Minkus. I like the facsimile shown in the Minkus catalog better. It is much closer to the form of what a clear, genuine overprint looks like.

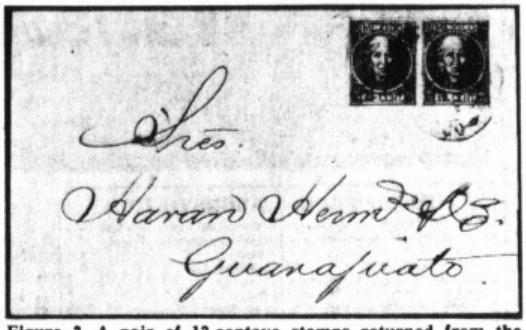


Figure 3. A pair of 12-centavo stamps returned from the Morelia district (10-71) were used on this letter dated April 9, 1872, from Mexico City to Guanajuato.

One should also note that many of the genuine overprints were not well struck, so an incomplete or smudgy overprint does not automatically relegate it to the bad category.

A couple of other quick tests will also eliminate many stamps and covers from the exclusive ranks of the genuine.

If one has a full, dated cover — and many purists will collect these stamps in no other way — it should fall into the time span noted: March 12 to April 25.

This does not mean there can't be a genuine cover outside this range, but it's bound to be a long shot.

The cover shown in Figure 2 has a faint business datestamp on its face with "March/22/1872" inside a blue oval and is also docketed March 22, so it falls right in the middle of the accepted period of use.

The cover in Figure 3 bearing a pair of the 12-centavo stamps is dated April 9, nearer the end of the estimated usage period. Both covers are unquestionably genuine.

The other test is whether or not a used stamp bears a contemporary cancellation of Mexico City. This will invariably be a double-ring circular datestamp, and most of the good ones I have seen were not particularly well struck.

From the standpoint of beauty's sake, this is unfortunate, but there is a bright side to the matter.

Figure 4. These two stamps have forged "Anotado" overprints and cancellations, Queretaro and Guadalajara.

Many of the forgers apparently decided their illegitimate cancellations should at least look attractive and are usually more clearly applied than the real ones. Beware of those neat cancellations.

The stamps with forged cancellations illustrated in Figure 4 bear postmarks of offices other than Mexico and are easily distinguished.

In these instances, the perpetrator obviously ignored the fact that the stamps were authorized for use only at the Mexico City office.

If a reader finds one of these and contemplates purchase, he will be well advised to buy only on the basis of a good certificate or the ability to get one.

And spurn like the plague any offers of "as yet unrecorded Anotado in blue, violet or reddish purple." The real ones were always black. ■

Pro-University set of 1934 remains popular

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

A Mexican issue of recent vintage that has always been one of my favorites from the standpoint of beauty is the Pro-University set of 1934.

Proceeds from the sale of the stamps were to go to the support of the University of Mexico.

In those days, the university was suffering from a severe cash shortage and hoped to solve this problem, at least partially, with an issue of desirable stamps for collectors.

There was no secret about it; authorities simply patterned the idea after similar successful attempts in Europe and elsewhere.

The series was similar to the concept of semipostals in which part of the revenue from the stamp sales went to worthy causes.

The set consisted of a regular postage series of 10 values ranging from 1 centavo to 10 pesos and an airmail series of eight values from 20c to 20p.

There has always been some question about the postal legitimacy of the issue, since 10p or more in those difficult economic times was quite a bit of money.

Considering the circumstances, though, the need for the stamps appears real indeed. The idea seems to have worked rather well, and it has remained popular with collectors, who picked up the stamps at new issue prices.

The success of the issue was partially guaranteed, since Mexicans were obligated to use the 1c stamp, of which 20 million were printed, on all letters mailed between Sept. 1, 1934, and December of that year. Sept. 1 was the day the stamps were released.

Thus, if all the stamps were sold, some 200,000p would be raised to offset the university's estimated 600,000p deficit. To what extent the deficit was paid off is not known.

The accompanying table lists the printing quantities for some of the regular postage stamps.

Clearly, the 10p denomination is the key value which limits the number of complete sets which can exist.

The low printing was intentionally designed to whet the interest of collectors and ensure a quick sale of the series.

It seems to have worked as planned. Reports indicate that all of the 10p stamps were sold by 10 a.m. of the first day of sale.

It can safely be assumed that most of the other limited issue, high value stamps were also snapped up so that the realization of a considerable return was almost immediate.

Mexico's 1934 Pro-University 1-centavo stamp was part of a set issued to raise funds for the University of Mexico. Success of the issue was aided by a ruling that the 1c stamp in the series would be required on all letters sent between September and December 1934.

The attractive designs, which depict various indigenous crafts and ceremonial poses, were not original to the issue, a fact many collectors do not realize.

Several of the designs were adapted from contemporary revenue stamps, many with only minor changes.

For example, the 10p Pro-University stamp has the same design, a youth burning incense, as the 50c value of the 1930 revenue series depicting Indian motifs and craftsmen.

Obviously the use of already engraved designs reduced the production costs and cut the preparation time for this issue.

The airmail series showed, in all instances, important and popular Mexican geographic features and architectural works.

All the airpost stamps also have an airplane worked into the design, although some are poised at the most improbable angles one could imagine.

But I guess we must allow stamp designers some leeway in this respect.

The key value of the airpost series is, of course, the 20p.

An attractive stamp in maroon and bistre-brown, it portrays an Indian girl standing in front of the famous Aztec calendar stone, which, next to the eagle in the national coat of arms, is the best known symbol of Mexico.

Only 1,500 copies of this stamp were printed, and a large number of them went to the Universal Postal Union (copies of new issues had to be sent to the UPU for reference purposes) or were reserved for various officials and the diplomatic corps.

It appears, though, that most of these found their way into the philatelic market.

Since 20p in those days was a sizable sum of money (about $5.68), dealers and collectors were committing a fair sum of money to possess the series.

Nevertheless, nearly all the stamps were sold within days of their appearance.

One can readily realize that a set of stamps where one of the denominations exists in such a small number would appreciate rather well over the years, assuming it has any popularity at all. Such has been the case with the Pro-University sets.

When I began collecting Mexico seriously some 20 years ago, the 10p value of the regular set cataloged $65 in Scott, and the 20p airmail was listed at $300.

At that time, well-centered sets were selling at auction for about 80 percent of catalog.

It seemed to me there would always be a basic demand by collectors intent upon filling out a major variety collection, notwithstanding their intrinsic beauty.

In the intervening years, they have indeed done very well. For example, the 1982 Scott catalog lists the 10p regular stamp at $1,250 — almost 20 times what it was in 1965.

The 20p airmail now lists for $2,000 — 6.7 times its 1965 price. Of course these are catalog values, not market values.

However, actual realizations during the market run-up of a couple of years ago were approaching catalog values, although they have fallen considerably in the past year.

Still, I feel these two sets represent sound philatelic property, apart from the fact that if one is to prepare a good collection of Mexico, the Pro-University stamps should be in it.

Finally, there is a subvariety of the 10p regular. As noted in the catalogs, the set was printed on watermarked paper (reading "Correos Mexico") in common use at the time.

It appears that one sheet of the stamp was printed on unwatermarked paper. If one owns this variety, he has a true rarity. ■

The design of the 10-centavo Pro-University stamp (left) was adapted from a 1931 1c revenue (right).

The rarest stamp in the Pro-University set is the unwatermarked variety of the 10p. Only one sheet of 100 is believed to have been printed.

Printing Quantities

5 centavo - 1 million	40 centavo - 20,000
10 centavo - 2 million	50 centavo - 10,000
20 centavo - 50,000	5 pesos - 2,000
30 centavo - 30,000	10 pesos - 1,000

This table shows the printing quantities of some of the Pro-University regular postage stamps.

Letter provides insight into Mexican War

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

The cover illustrated with this column, if it were still in a dealer's shoebox stock, might not even cause a collector of Mexican stampless covers to pause more than an instant.

From the philatelic standpoint it's quite pedestrian. The boxed MEXICO/date is one of the most common postmarks of the 1840s and it even isn't very well struck.

It's the fact that it was addressed to the U.S. consul at Veracruz that identifies it as a piece of historical interest, even if its philatelic charms left something to be desired.

Although this cover doesn't show us much about Mexican stamps or postal markings, it does demonstrate the fun one can have searching out the background of a single philatelic piece.

What we have is a letter written by one John Christopher Columbus Hill in June 1845 to F.M. Dimond, consul at Veracruz wherein Hill asks for protection.

Hill writes that he is a survivor of the Mier raid and that he and his father were taken to Mexico City as prisoners following their capture by Mexican forces.

After they gained their liberty he elected to remain in Mexico "at the request of General Santa Anna" and entered the Mexican National College of Mines, where he is presently studying.

The root of his consternation is the fact that Santa Anna has just left the city (he was exiled) and he is uneasy about his personal situation.

It's useful to back up a few years and set the stage for why the letter was written.

In the days before Texas statehood there were a number of nasty incidents between American citizens who settled and occupied what is now Texas and the Mexicans who claimed sovereignty over the area.

Everyone knows about the slaughter of a tiny American force at the Alamo mission in March of 1836.

Three weeks later some 300 American captives were executed (on orders from Santa Anna) at Goliad, Tex.

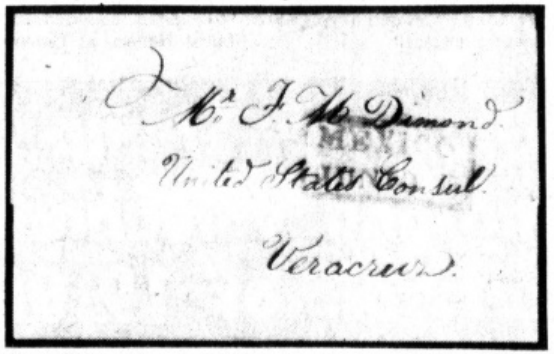
In April of the same year the Texans exacted their revenge at San Jacinto (near Houston), routing Mexican troops under the command of Santa Anna and killing hundreds.

Feelings of hostility persisted, and raids back and forth between the two countries continued.

When a small band of Texans entered Mexico and attacked the village of Meir on Christmas Day, 1842, the writer of this letter happened to be in that group.

Unfortunately, the Texans were all captured and imprisoned. Following an unsuccessful attempt to escape, all were ordered executed, again by Santa Anna. The sentence was later commuted, and one in ten were executed.

The unlucky ones were selected by drawing lots, and the survivors were marched off to Mexico.



The striking thing about this cover is not its postal markings, but its historical connection to the Mexican-American War. The writer is a Texan, captured by Mexican soldiers after an 1840 border raid, who decided to stay in Mexico. He wrote this letter in 1845 to ask the America consul in Veracruz for protection during the war.

Hill was 13 years old at the time and apparently found favor among the Mexican officers.

Only a year later the United States was at war with Mexico because of the two countries' inability to peacefully agree on the boundary line between Texas and Mexico when Texas accepted statehood.

This explains how I came into possession of this letter. It was acquired as a collateral piece to the formation of a postal history collection on the Mexican-American War.

John C.C. Hill came through all this, finished his schooling as a mining engineer and remained in Mexico to work.

He married a Mexican woman, and except for brief sojourns in Texas, lived in Mexico the rest of his life. He died in Monterey in 1904 at age 76.

There's another interesting twist to this story. Hill's brother, James Monroe Hill, had remained in Texas, raised his family and became important in Texas politics.

As a veteran of the Battle of San Jacinto, James Hill became interested in preserving the memory of that event and played a key role in acquiring for the state of Texas the property where the battle was fought.

James Hill's son, George A. Hill Sr., and grandson, George A. Hill Jr., carried on the tradition of maintaining interest in the battle and together with the Daughters of the Republic of Texas eventually arranged for the erection of a historical monument to mark the site.

The San Jacinto Monument, a limestone shaft a few feet taller than the Washington Monument (naturally) houses, conserves and exhibits artifacts of early Texas history.

It is operated by the San Jacinto Museum of History Association, a nonprofit organization, and is generally open to the public except for a few holidays and on Mondays during the winter.

George A. Hill Jr. formed an extensive collection of historical items related to Texas, and the collection was given to the museum following his death some 30 years ago.

The documents section of the museum from time to time displays interesting philatelic related items from the Spanish colonial and prestatehood periods of Texas. ■

Once scorned 'mules' now philatelic jewels

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

The 28th anniversary of Gen. Porfirio Diaz's victory over French troops at Puebla in 1867 was April 2, 1895, and the Mexican post office chose this day to introduce a new series of stamps known as the Mail Transportation issue.

It consisted of 13 denominations, from 1 centavo to 10 pesos, with 5 distinct motifs as the central designs. With the 5c, these designs depicted various contemporary methods for the transport of mail.

There is a foot postman with a knapsack, a mounted courier driving a pack mule, a stagecoach and a mail train. The oddball 5c pictures a statue of Cuauhtemoc, the last Aztec ruler of Mexico.

In the collector circles of Mexico, the stamps were affectionately known as the Mulitas (Figure 1). This is the Spanish word for small mules, which are in the vignette of the 4c and 12c stamps.

Figure 1. Mexico's Mulitas set gets its name from the design of the 4c and 12c stamps. Small mules, or "mulitas," were used to carry mail during the 19th century, and these were illustrated on those denominations.

The designs were the result of a contest sponsored by the Ministry of Communications. Of several proposals, those submitted by an engraver named Gilbert Lomeli were selected as the most appropriate. His reward or prize is unrecorded.

In any event, the reaction to these stamps by the Mexican public was mixed. A contemporary journalist complained bitterly about the poor impressions, bad colors and tasteless designs.

This, he said, was especially true of the 10c stamps, and he lamented that the stamps were poor representatives of the people and government of Mexico to grace letters destined for foreign lands.

He suggested a media crusade to have them withdrawn. This is strange, but we occasionally hear this same type of sentiment expressed in our own time.

For many years, the Mulitas were indeed considered a stepchild of philately by serious collectors. In the past couple of decades they have begun to receive considerably more attention. And well they should.

Casual inspection of the Scott or Minkus listings confirms that they are an eminently collectible issue. The Mulitas have plenty of breadth and considerable challenge.

Space here does not allow a lengthy discussion of the collecting possibilities, although one area that can be explored is watermark varieties. During the time the issue was current, papers with three different watermarks were used.

When the stamps came out in 1895, they appeared on paper watermarked "CORREOSEUM" (Figure 2). All or parts of the watermark characters are typically found on individual stamps.

Figure 2. Single letters from the watermark "CORREOSEUM" usually appear on copies of the Mulitas stamps due to perfect alignment of paper during printing.

In 1896-97, the watermark was "RM" in interlaced script characters. (Figure 3). The stamps of late 1897 were printed on paper watermarked with an outline of the Mexican eagle with the letters "RM" beneath (Figure 4). Finally, the stamps of 1898 came on unwatermarked paper.

A further complication during production of these stamps led to even more collectible varieties in the form of mixed perforations. Normally the stamps were perforated 12, but combinations such as 12 by 6, 6 by 12 and even 6 by 6 are readily found.

Most experts think these varieties resulted from defective perforating machines or improper operation of these machines. Both possibilities seem reasonable. Pairs imperforate between are not difficult to find.

Fortunately, there is now a great deal of specialized information available to anyone willing to tackle this issue. Numerous articles containing a wealth of information on the Mulitas have appeared over the past 20 years in *Mexicana*, the journal of the Mexico-Elmhurst Philatelic Society International.

Figure 3. Due to misalignment, only parts of the "RM" watermark usually appear on Mulitas stamps.

Many of the lower value stamps are not too expensive and can generally be found in retail stock books. Often one can purchase lots of unsorted stamps and enjoy looking for watermarks or elusive town cancellations.

Sometimes older collections can be the source of misidentified varieties of a somewhat rare stamp such as the 10c with sideways "CORREOSEUM" watermark.

Once a collector has worked his way through the Scott or Minkus listings he can begin looking for proofs and essays. Fortunately, a few of these items have survived in large, undivided pieces which are truly spectacular.

Mexicana has illustrated these over the years. Information on the journal is available from the MEPSI Secretary, 2402 E. Eighth St., Tucson, Ariz. 85719.

Figure 4. The Mexican eagle with the letters "RM" is the third type of watermark to be found on the Mulitas. It is often misaligned. A fourth variety of the stamps, on unwatermarked paper, also exists.

Sadly, most of us will never be able to own these large proofs and essays, since they have become exceedingly expensive and change hands only among the wealthiest collectors.

One set, however, which is near to the classification of proofs is definitely within reach of a serious collector. These stamps are known as the Black Mulitas (Figure 5).

The set consists of a complete series printed in black ink (none were regularly printed in that color) on "CORREOSEUM" watermarked paper.

Most experts call it a presentation set prepared for the Universal Postal Union but also given to the diplomatic corps and notable Mexican politicians at the introduction ceremonies.

The stamps illustrated with this article are from this set. They are identical in every respect to the issued stamps except for color.

Interestingly, the UPU did not accept these black stamps for their records, insisting that they be sent samples of the stamps in the colors of issue. Whatever happened to the Black Mulitas originally sent to Switzerland is not known.

However, in 1929, a surplus stock of these black stamps remaining at the post office was sold to dealers and collectors, and the stamps began appearing on the market.

Probably not more than a few thousand sets of the Black Mulitas were printed; no one has yet discovered records on this matter. Scott does not list them (Minkus does), but in my view they definitely belong in a decent collection of the issue.

There are a few very scarce stamps and one exceedingly rare stamp in the group.

As one might expect, the peso denominations were mostly used for heavy or valuable parcels, and not many were printed or sold.

Figure 5. The Black Mulitas, such as this 10p specimen, were identical to the regular stamps, except that all denominations were printed in black. The mail train in this design is similar to those that carried mail between Veracruz and Mexico City at the turn of the century.

From fragmentary postal records, it is estimated that about 50,000 1p stamps were sold and used.

For the 5p and 10p values, the estimates drop to well below 5,000. These totals include all watermark types. It's anyone's guess what the survival rate was.

The rarest stamp of all is the 5p of 1897 with the eagle and "RM" watermark. It's doubtful if more than three or four sheets were printed. Fewer than a dozen or so have been recorded and confirmed genuine.

I recall vividly attending an international exhibition many years ago in which a large collection of Mexico was shown containing a splendid array of Mulitas.

I was nearby when I overheard one of the judges ask to examine the 5p purported to be the eagle "RM" watermark variety.

The frame was dismounted and the stamp removed for inspection. Alas, it was not the rare variety, and I suspect the exhibit suffered severely from the attempted deception. ■

Schatzkes reprint contains vital additions

If one is to form a collection of the classic stamps of Mexico with properly identified handstamp markings, there is one reference book that is indispensable. This is *The Cancellations of Mexico 1856 — 1874*, by Josef Schatzkes.

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

It is the definitive work on the subject, first published by Robson Lowe, Ltd. in 1964 in a limited (165 copies) edition and out of print for about a dozen years.

Used copies have been known to fetch $200-$300 in the auction market, depending on condition.

But this situation has been rectified, at least momentarily. Bill Shelton, one of the few U.S. dealers who specialize in the classic stamps of Mexico, has just published a revised version of the book.

He was assisted by Karl Schimmer, serving as editor, who in turn had help from many contemporary experts in the field of Mexican philately.

Schimmer is no stranger to this field. Among his many credentials is authorship of the sequel to this work, *The Postmarks of Mexico 1874 — 1900*, which in its own right is an essential handbook for the student of the late 19th century period.

Much about the new book will be familiar to those who know the first edition. Page size and general format are identical.

Cancellations are organized by principal postal districts as they were constituted in 1856. The smaller towns, or suboffices, for which the principal districts were responsible, are alphabetically arranged under the main district headings.

These appear on the left-hand pages with the illustrations on the facing right-hand page.

A comprehensive index of town names and stamp valuation tables are located, as before, at the back of the book.

The most noticeable change in the new, hardcover book is its size, nearly double the thickness of the first edition. Some 109 pages have been added to accommodate new and revised informational entries, which number more than 2,000.

Another new and useful feature is the inclusion and identification of "Sello Negro" postmarks. These markings were used by postmasters to indicate prepayment of postage when stamps were not available.

They are often found on letters belonging to the classic stamp era, particularly during the politically turbulent days before and after the Maximilian affair (1864-1867).

This postal history area needs further study and offers opportunity for original research.

The new listings provide a good basis on which to build. Recent work on manuscript markings is likewise included.

A further improvement is rearrangement of the illustrations so they follow the sequence of the listings.

This canceling device, pictured in the Schatzkes book, was used in the district of Toluca, 65 kilometers west of Mexico City, by the stagecoach (diligencia) line which carried mail between the two cities in 1856.

In the original book these illustrations were shown in a symmetrical layout which had visual appeal but were hard to locate quickly.

The new format is much better. The order of postmark numbering system has been omitted; it served no useful purpose.

New entries, and there are many, have been assigned letter suffixes and inserted at the proper place in the numbering sequence, similar to the system Scott uses.

Thus, the original cancellation numbers, which are considered standard identifiers in collector and dealer circles, have been preserved.

Both listings and illustrations are less crowded, allowing space for notations or future additions by the user (or publisher).

There are more good things about the book. The paper is whiter and heavier than the original, eliminating distracting show-through.

Schimmer has reduced the introductory passages from four languages (French, German, Spanish and English) to two, English and Spanish.

The latter has undergone minor editing to make it smoother and more precise.

Bad or bogus markings appearing in the first edition have been eliminated, and a few have been moved to their proper places under different districts.

All of this adds up to a vastly improved reference book which even owners of the first edition should not hesitate to acquire.

I do have two minor criticisms. First, the color plates, now in the front of the volume, are uneven in color fidelity, at least in the copy I examined.

According to the publisher, reproduction was complicated by the unavailability of the original plates. Current owners of ex-Schatzkes material will be disappointed when they see their items in color, I fear.

Secondly, quality of the reproductions of the new postmarks is not up to par. Many are fuzzy and spotty.

San Felipe del Obraje was originally a separate district office but later became a suboffice of Maravatio. This cancellation, pictured in the Schatzkes book, is found only on the stamps of 1856 and is one of the rarest markings known.

As the editor points out, complete strikes were not available in some instances, and reconstruction had to be done according to the best of Schimmer's ability.

Nevertheless, Shelton and Schimmer have made a major new contribution to Mexican philately and are to be warmly commended for their effort.

A new generation of collectors of Mexican classics can now have their bible with spare change left over to buy a few stamps.

The book is available for $55 from W.E. Shelton, 5164 Broadway, San Antonio, Tex. 78209. ■

Readers point out CTOs, postal forgeries

I decided to dedicate this last column of the year to a series of notes prompted by letters or comments by readers. In general, feedback on this

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Mexico feature has been good and much appreciated.

While I've tried to answer all the letters received, this will serve to inform the balance of readers some of the new or unusual information others have provided.

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In my first column (May 9, page 14), I mentioned that I thought Mexico was a "clean" country philatelically: and devoid of CTOs (canceled to order stamps). Thanks to Brad Rylander of Oakland, Calif., I must modify that statement.

I still think Mexico is clean, but there were some CTO stamps prepared and sold, we're not sure when, of some of the issues of the mid-1940s.

Rylander has sent me examples of such stamps from the National Literacy set (Scott 806-11), United Nations airpost set (Scott C158-62) and Zacatecas 400th Anniversary set (Scott C163-66).

The stamps bear full, original gum and were canceled with what appears to have been a roller device with a circular datestamp of Mexico City and five wavy lines.

•

The article on the "Anotado" issue (July 11, page 26) prompted several letters.

Roberto Liera, a Mexican philatelic expert in his own right, has graciously provided further insight on these interesting overprints.

He also clears up some confusion concerning the stamps returned from offices outside Mexico City.

These stamps, commemorating the 400th anniversary of the founding of Zacatecas, have full, original gum and bear cancellations applied by the post office, presumably to permit their sale to collectors at less than face value.

According to information he has gleaned from reading some of the official records, employees within the postal system were caught producing stamps and selling them for their own profit.

They used the original plates and the legitimate and official invoice numbers but were obliged to print the stamps on unofficial paper.

Name overprints were forged. So what we have are postal forgeries, an instance Liera feels may be unique to philately.

Further, authorities did not, as might be inferred from my article, recall stamps from the outlying districts to use in the central office in Mexico where the forgers concentrated their efforts.

The officials did, however, use stocks of overprinted stamps previously returned, as well as stamps confiscated from the forgers on which to apply the "Anotado" overprints.

As noted, they forbade the use of the issue in the Mexico City district unless it bore the validating "Anotado" overprint.

•

John Hotchner, another *Linn's* columnist, sent me some very interesting Mexican stamps from the 1868 issue with unusual perforations. John has formed a most interesting and instructive collection on the subject of stamp separation.

Until the issue of 1868, Mexican stamps were supplied as imperforate sheets and had to be cut apart by scissors or some other device. (There is a known instance where a private individual used a perforating device on the issue of 1861.)

At this time the authorities seem to have been testing several different types of perforating pins in their machines.

On the stamps in question, there are perforations in a sawtooth pattern, some which appear to have been punched with square pins and examples of piercing such as one might do with a sewing machine (without thread).

As experienced collectors of Mexico know quite well, it took several years for the matter of reliable perforating to be resolved. Problems persisted as late as the Transportation issue of 1895.

In any event, the subject of separation methods used on Mexican stamps of the late 19th century fills several interesting album pages of one man's collection.

•

By the time this article is published, two noteworthy items of Mexican philately will have been sold at auction by Bexar Philatelics of San Antonio, Tex.

One is a half sheet of the 8-real stamp of 1856 overprinted with the district name "Victoria."

That something like this should exist is altogether remarkable in itself, and there's an interesting story behind it.

In the mid-1850s there was a lot of revolutionary activity in Mexico, and postmasters were frequently subject to harassment.

Perforation varieties are shown on these stamps from the 1868 issue: a sawtooth pattern on the left and the center: and pierced holes on the right.

Many grabbed their stamps, cancelers and records and ran when rebels approached. The agent at Ciudad Victoria fell victim to such a situation, but before he left he gave a large stock of 8r stamps to a friend for safekeeping.

In those days a sheet of 60 stamps represented a lot of money, roughly $60 in sterling.

Anyhow, the postal agent never returned to reclaim his stamps and it is presumed he lost his life in the struggle.

When the man who was guarding them became very old he made up his mind to try to sell them, having received assurances from the post office that it would not be a crime to do so. This was about 1925.

The hoard consisted of four whole sheets and a partial sheet of the 8r stamp with the district name overprint, four sheets without the name and some 4r stamps.

They were quickly snapped up by collectors and dealers of that era, including the English collector Samuel Chapman and the Mexican dealer Alfonso Aguirre.

Some of the sheets were cut up into small pieces, but at least two complete sheets of the overprinted stamps remain intact in private collections aside from the half sheet now being sold.

Obviously an item like this will titillate the collector of Mexican classics who lusts for a piece of such importance to be the centerpiece of his exhibit.

We're fortunate that spectacular things like this remain, and I trust the new owner will keep it intact.

The other item has been touted as the rarest stamp of Mexico, under the assumption that since only one has yet been discovered, it belongs in the same class as the 1¢ magenta of British Guiana.

This comparison will elicit

howls from the classicists, I suppose, but the stamp is unquestionably in better condition.

It is listed in Scott as 735B, a brown-lake stamp of the 1923 regular issue type which shows the Cuauhtemoc Monument.

It is a common design and denomination of which millions were printed except for one thing. The paper of this particular stamp was a watermark type normally used for revenue stamps and rarely used for postage stamps.

The late Aldolfo Eimocke, a very prominent Mexican collector, found the stamp in 1967, and thus far it is the only recorded example.

It was used in Mazatlan, although not enough of the cancellation shows to establish the date of its use.

Obviously there were others at one time, at least a sheet, so there's always the possibility another will show up.

But for now this falls into the category of unique stamps.

•

Response to this column on the stamps and postal history of Mexico has been gratifying and is very much appreciated.

Again, the aim is to stimulate interest in collecting and studying the stamps of our southern neighbor which, in my opinion, offer enormous opportunities for the beginning, intermediate and advanced collector.

As noted in an earlier column, suggestions, comments and criticism are most welcome and may be addressed to me care of *Linn's*.

Since this will reach *Linn's* readers just ahead of the holidays I'll conclude by wishing all Feliz Navidad y un Prospero Ano Nuevo! ■

Linn's 1984-1-9

Eagle series reflects Maximilian's empire

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

In this column, we return to the classic era of Mexico and discuss a stamp issue that has always been a favorite of mine, although I haven't collected it extensively.

Mexican specialists refer to the 1864-66 stamps as the "Eagles," although they are more properly called the first issue of the empire (Scott 18-25).

The central design is the Mexican coat of arms showing an eagle perched on a cactus holding a serpent in its mouth. But the eagle wears a crown!

The historical backdrop to all this was the attempt by certain Mexicans and Napoleon III, emperor of France, to establish a Catholic monarchy in the New World.

French troops were already in Mexico, and in April 1864, the Austrian Archduke Maximilian, together with his wife, Carlota, accepted the crown of the new "empire" in what was to be a rather short, and tragic reign.

These stamps first appeared in early May 1864, barely a month before the two young monarchs landed in Mexico at Veracruz.

Initially there were, as in the earlier Mexican issues, five denominations: ½ real, 1r, 2r, 4r and 8r. In late 1865, a 3-centavo stamp was issued which I'll describe later.

Most catalogs list several different overprint types, which are an intriguing feature of the issue.

These overprint varieties were really the result of changes in the security system used in the distribution of stamps. The major types corresponded to precise periods of use.

Stamps of the First Period, which were issued between May 8 and July 7, 1864, were overprinted with only district names.

These names, as readers of my early columns (June 13, page 42, in particular) will recall, were applied to Mexican stamps in the offices of the principal districts to which the stamps were sent to validate them for use.

As in the earlier issues, there were instances when the district name was not struck. Such stamps are quite scarce.

By midsummer 1864, the postal administration had devised a refinement to their method of controlling the accounts of stamps sent to the district offices.

Each consignment of stamps was thereafter sent from the head office overprinted with an invoice number and the year. When the stamps were received, the district agent was expected to apply the name of the office before sale and use.

For example, the first such shipment went to Guanajuato and carried the numbers "118 1864."

Stamps with this additional information (in large numerals) belong to the Second Period, which lasted from July 7 to Sept. 19, 1864.

Then there was a change to a smaller typeface which gives three more categories: Third Period, balance of 1864; Fourth Period, the entire year of 1865; and Fifth Period, 1866 from Jan. 1 until Aug. 1.

A new stamp issue, showing a profile of Maximilian, was used after that.

To complicate matters even further, many of the large principal district offices were responsible for distributing stamps to smaller, suboffices under their jurisdiction.

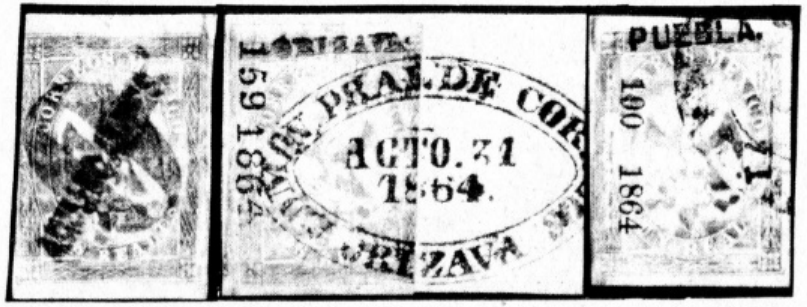
Again, to maintain the accounts, more numbers (usually one or two digits) were added to the stamps before they were dispatched.

These suboffice numbers are rather frequently seen on stamps from the districts of Puebla, Queretaro, Guanajuato and San Luis Potosi, all of which had several suboffices.

Once in a while, the suboffice name was applied, but not usually. By their nature, suboffices tended to be small towns or haciendas which received few stamps, so examples from these places might be scarce, if not rare.

Stamp shipments to the main offices would generally contain from several hundred to a few thousand stamps in con-

(Please turn to page 52)



Typical district overprint markings appear on these Eagle stamps. First Period markings (left) show the district name only, in this case Aguascalientes. In the Second Period, invoice numbers were added in large numerals, as shown on this stamp of Orizava (center). The Puebla overprinted stamp (right) shows the small numerals used in the Third, Fourth and Fifth overprinting periods.

signments of the much used denominations (1r and 2r).

The lesser used values, ½r, 4r and 8r, were frequently missing from consignments or supplied in very limited quantities.

This business of adding invoice numbers and year dates had the effect of creating virtually thousands of varieties, all of which are eminently collectible.

One should not attempt to tackle this issue without some good reference books at his elbow. Fortunately, there are several good works available.

Basic sources would include *The Postage Stamps of Mexico, 1856-1868* by Samuel Chapman (reprint available); *The Stamps of the Postal Districts of Mexico* by A. Odfjell; and numerous articles which have appeared in *Mexicana*, journal of the Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International.

Another book which is particularly helpful when it comes to the suboffice numbers and the towns to which they pertain is *Les Premieres Emissions du Mexique (1856 a 1874)* by Smeth and Fayolle. Although in French, most of the data is readily decipherable.

Armed with one or more of these works, the next difficult question might be what to collect and how to organize the collection. As noted before, there are thousands of varieties, but many of them are very rare, if they exist at all.

It is virtually out of the question for one to attempt forming a complete collection, or even one that is nearly complete. It is not, however, terribly difficult to assemble a rather comprehensive and interesting type collection of the issue.

One way to start is to secure copies of the five major denominations for each of the five periods. The toughest stamp will be the ½r of the Second Period, Scott 19a. Few exist, and it's seldom offered for sale.

The 3c stamp, Scott 18, only appears in the Fourth and Fifth periods. It is believed to have been an experimental value for use on printed matter or drop letters deliverable within Mexico City.

A fair number of unused copies have survived, and these do appear at auction from time to time. But genuine used copies are exceedingly rare.

A convenient way to expand on the basic types is to develop the collection by districts.

The larger districts can account for a great many varieties which are neither scarce nor expensive. Some interesting collecting possibilities also present themselves.

For example, I was able to form a collection of all the consignment number varieties for the principal district office at Orizava.

I chose this district because it had no suboffices, it handled a fair amount of mail and except for two or three cases received decent-sized shipments of stamps.

Even so, it took about ten years of searching to find them all!

Another interesting challenge is to find stamps with "first day cancellations" on them. It's possible to do this.

This 2-real stamp from Mexico consignment 25 of 1866 was used the first day it was available, Feb. 1, 1866.

Tables in the postal archives which Chapman and others have extracted show exact dates for most of the consignments.

In the case of Mexico City, it was possible for stamps to have been used the same day the consignments were sent. I have two such examples where a circular datestamp canceler shows the same date as listed for that consignment.

The issue also provides almost everything else the classic collector likes to study: plate varieties, flaws, colors and shades and errors in the overprints.

This Second Period stamp of the postal district of Puebla shows the number 47 near the margin. The number stands for the suboffice of Tehuacan where this stamp was sold and used.

Postal usage is also a wide open area for study and enjoyment. John Bash, who has collected and written extensively in *Mexicana* about this issue for many years, continually finds new and interesting information about the Eagle stamps. I highly recommend his articles.

Details on *Mexicana* are available from MEPSI, 2402 E. Eighth St., Tucson, Ariz. 85719.

As with the issues of 1856 and 1861, there has been some manipulation of these stamps with forged cancellations and overprints. Examples of fractional usage, i.e., bisects, quadrisects, etc., should be checked very carefully.

There was a fair quantity of remainders at the end of the issue, so raw material for fabrications was available.

To the timid, I again point out that good reference material exists, and there are experts to help in the difficult situations. Good hunting!

The Mexican Empire did not last much longer than the Eagle stamps. Napoleon III withdrew his troops from Mexico and left Maximilian without support. He was captured by troops loyal to Mexican President Benito Juarez and shot by a firing squad in 1867.

The second issue of the empire, the profile stamps of the young Maximilian (born in 1832), will be the subject of a future column. ■

Stamp-on-stamp motif popular in Mexico

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Topics and themes have enjoyed a great deal of popularity with collectors during the past two decades or so.

Topical collecting seems to afflict all of us sooner or later, once we conclude we cannot hope to gather examples of all the stamps of our collecting area.

One of the more popular topical subjects is stamps on stamps. There's an American Topical Association handbook on this subject, and many collections have been formed and exhibited.

Mexico, as a country, has certainly not neglected the area, and in fact, has produced enough stamps on the theme to fill several album pages.

The first ones were issued to commemorate the centenary of the world's first postage stamp, Britain's "Penny Black," in 1940.

There were two sets, one regular and one airmail, with identical denominations: 5 centavos, 10c, 20c, 1 peso and 5p (Scott 754-58 and C103-07). The sets have always been popular with collectors and have appreciated modestly over the past decade.

Since the printing order for the top value of each set was 10,000, this is the maximum number of complete sets which can exist.

Seven years later, in 1947, Mexico issued stamps in honor of the Centenary International Philatelic Exhibition in New York.

Five stamps, two regulars and three airmails, show facsimiles of Mexico's first postage stamp and the U.S. 10¢ 1847 stamp as well as Franklin Roosevelt, known worldwide as a stamp collector.

The next stamp on stamp came almost ten years later to mark the Centenary International Philatelic Exhibition held the first two weeks of August 1956 in Mexico City.

This event marked the 100th anniversary of Mexico's first stamp.

The commemorative is a large one (40 by 48 millimeters) and shows a facsimile of the ½-real 1856 stamp in the original blue color.

Other stamps and souvenir sheets issued for the event show Aztec designs and historical motifs, but no stamps.

At this point in the stamp-issuing sequence, it appears that the purchasing power of the collector and his influence on philatelic sales became recognized.

In 1960, the Elmhurst Philatelic Society celebrated, in Mexico, the 25th anniversary of its founding, and the postal authorities inscribed some stamps especially for the visit.

By the early 1960s, the tempo of our hobby had noticeably quickened, and more and more larger regional, national and international shows were staged.

In October 1963, the American Philatelic Society held its 77th annual meeting in Mexico City, and two stamps were issued for this event (Scott 937 and C274).

The high values of the two Penny Black sets issued by Mexico in 1940 to commemorate the centennial of the postage stamp had printing totals of only 10,000 each, setting a limit on the number of sets available.

The regular issue stamp is not just a stamp on stamp, it's a stamp on a stamp on a stamp! It shows a facsimile of the 1956 centennial stamp, which depicted the 1856 ½r stamp.

The airmail shows an allegorical "stamp" (not a real stamp) which has the EXMEX emblem and a postmark.

The next big philatelic event honored by Mexican stamps on stamps came right after the Olympic Games of 1968. This was the large international show, EFIMEX, held Nov. 1-9, 1968.

Stamps publicizing this event, however, came out in February. There were two airmails, an 80c and a 2p, showing Mexico's first official stamp (Scott O1) of 1884, commonly known as the Medallion type.

These apparently sold well and were used on all kinds of cacheted material in the eight months they were available before the show.

For the show itself, a souvenir sheet was issued displaying the emblems of the various sponsoring philatelic organizations surrounding an impression of a 5p stamp.

Two years later, a sheetlet publicizing SPORTMEX '70, a show devoted to sports philately, appeared. This came shortly after the World Soccer Championships (Jules Rimet Cup) were held in Mexico.

In the next five or six years, more philatelic events were commemorated with Mexican stamps and souvenir sheets.

In 1971 a stamp honored EXFILCA, held in Caracas, Venezuela; a sheet commemorated the third Interamerican Philatelic Exhibition, EXFILMA '71, in Lima, Peru;

In 1973 the fourth IPE was held in Brazil and rated a stamp; in 1974 the fifth IPE was back in Mexico and a sheet was issued.

These pieces typically show stamps of the participating countries.

A stamp on a stamp on a stamp was issued in conjunction with the APS annual meeting in Mexico City in October 1963. It shows a picture of Mexico's centennial stamp.

Mexico honored INTERPHIL '76 with a stamp, but it showed only a perforation gauge and the bicentennial symbol.

The next stamp on stamp appeared in 1978, marking the 50th anniversary of Emilio Carranza's goodwill flight from Mexico City to Washington, D.C.

One of Mexico's early airmail stamps (Scott C6) is shown flanked by Mexico's Independence Monument and the Washington Monument.

Rowland Hill, often called the father of the postage stamp, was immortalized on a Mexican postage stamp in 1979 in a stamp-like motif.

But the issue that year I find most exciting was produced in honor of MEPSIPEX '79, the third International Exhibition of the Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International.

The stamp has a reduced photo of an 1880 registered cover from Mexico to Rome bearing two copies of the 10c Juarez issue used for foreign mail.

Here is an instance where the subject for the stamp is still in public hands. And the cover was on display at the show for all to see.

It's a spectacular example of a usage rarely seen. (I'll discuss the Juarez issue in a future column; it's a most interesting subject.)

Mexico has truly taken the collector to heart and provided some fairly attractive, artistic and tasteful examples for the stamps on stamps collector.

Except for the Penny Black sets and the stamp honoring the first Elmhurst visit, all the ones I've described can be purchased for a modest amount of money.

Most of the stamps were not issued in exceptionally large quantities, though. Typically, we see runs of one or two million.

This stamp is one of a series of items produced during the 1970s in recognition of Interamerican Philatelic Exhibitions. It was issued in January 1973, some four months after EXFILBRA '72, the show it honored.

The EFIMEX sheet (1968, Scott C345) had a printing total of 200,000 but still catalogs reasonably at $3.50 unused.

The latest philatelic event to receive stamp-on-stamp recognition was HERFILEX '83, a philatelic exhibition of the Mexican Revolution held in March 1983 in Hermosillo, Sonora, Mexico.

This 6p stamp (Mexico has had terrible inflation recently) shows one of the Sonora provisional stamps issued by the state during the civil wars of 1913-16. ■

Local club chose to specialize en masse

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

In previous columns I have often made reference to MEPSI and its quarterly journal, *Mexicana*. MEPSI stands for Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International.

It's a long-handled name for a specialist society that wasn't always this way. This, in brief, is its story.

The nucleus of what became a recognized international organization began as a local suburban stamp club in Elmhurst, Ill., in 1935.

In December 1942, the club, which called itself the Elmhurst Philatelic Society (EPS), made a decision, as a group, to specialize in the collection and study of Mexican stamps.

That decision was not taken lightly. A committee had spent a great deal of time going through the Scott catalog in search of a country or topic which would have broad interest.

They also wanted something that would appeal not only to the well-heeled collector but also to those of more moderate means.

Their conclusions: 1) Of the world's major countries, Mexico probably had the greatest number of collectible varieties (a fact I've been touting in this column);

2) a major portion of catalog-listed varieties (even classics) were priced within the means of average collectors;

3) rarities, which might sell for a few hundred dollars were bargains compared to U.S. or European stamps of comparable scarcity; and

4) Mexico appeared to have been neglected by all but a few serious collectors.

There seemed to be something for everyone: curious, attractive cancellations; overprints; perforation and watermark varieties; errors; and "flyspeck" varieties.

For the postal historian, there were covers of every description from colonial to modern times. Many business archives had been saved, so they were rather plentiful.

In fact, covers from larger towns and cities with common stamps of the classic period did not carry large premiums over those same stamps off cover.

Mexico welcomed MEPSI members to celebrate their 25th anniversary south of the border in 1960 by adding special inscriptions to two current stamps.

After the decision to specialize, the collective knowledge of the group expanded rapidly, and another crucial decision was made.

In 1952, the club began publishing its journal, *Mexicana*. This served as a vehicle for reporting news and new discoveries, expanding on existing knowledge, most important, and filling gaps and correcting mistakes of predecessor philatelists.

Mexicana, issued continuously now for more than 30 years, is unquestionably the "glue" which has held the society together. More than 125 issues (filling almost a foot of shelf space in my library) have been sent to members.

It's one of the first places I look when a question on Mexican stamps comes up. I cannot imagine collecting Mexico without it.

No doubt the journal, once its existence was made known, stimulated membership growth. Specialists and experts from far and wide quickly associated themselves with EPS, and the early issues of *Mexicana* were full of meaty articles on the stamps of Mexico.

From three dozen or so original members, the society grew to boast more than 400 by 1965. Of these, 75 resided outside the United States, mostly in Mexico, Great Britain and Europe.

Current membership numbers about 900, drawing from 42 states and 20 foreign countries.

In 1970, the society changed its name to the present form in recognition of its truly international character.

Now there are 10 local chapters in various parts of the United States and Mexico where five or more members reside and wish to meet in the name of the society.

In addition to *Mexicana*, the society has published books on Mexican philately.

Four major handbooks immediately come to mind: *The Stamps of the Postal Districts of Mexico* by Abraham Odfjell (1960); *The Prestamp Postal Markings of Mexico* by Otto Yag and John Bash (1965); *The Revenue Stamps of Mexico* by Richard Stevens (1968); and *The Postmarks of Mexico, 1874-1900* by Karl Schimmer (1983).

Numerous smaller works, mostly on individual issues, also have been published.

The Odfjell book is the labor of a Norwegian collector while he was under house arrest by the Nazis in World War II. It classifies and summarizes a mass of data on early issues. It's a book I've found to be extraordinarily useful.

The society has never been bashful about the social side of the hobby.

At a 25th anniversary celebration held in Mexico during June 1960, the society not only received an official audience with Mexican president Adolfo Lopez-Mateos, it also got recognition on postage stamps.

Postal authorities added an inscription to the 10-peso regular and 20p airmail stamps of the current definitive issue (Scott 909 and C249).

While the translated inscription reads: "In honor of the collector of Mexican stamps — June 1960" this limited issue (5,000 of each value) has always been referred to as the Elmhurst issue.

During the '60s and '70s annual meetings in conjunction with major shows became the norm.

In 1979, the society again found itself in Mexico City at MEPSIPEX '79, a show devoted to Mexican philately.

To honor the event, Mexico issued a 1.60p stamp showing a transatlantic cover (Scott C605). It, too, bore an inscription, and this time there was no question as to whom the wording referred.

It read "Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International — Reunion Anual 1979."

The overseas cover illustrated on this 1979 stamp belongs to a private collector and was on exhibit during MEPSIPEX. It shows a scarce usage of the Juarez issue of 1879. The stamp was issued for the annual meeting of MEPSI held in Mexico City in 1979.

Member services such as new issues and circuit books have been tried with varying degrees of success.

In 1971, a formal expertization service for Mexican stamps was established under the direction of a MEPSI member, who is one of the foremost experts in his field.

This was an immediate hit with members, especially because turnaround time for items submitted was quite short.

Also, the opinions were regarded as the best obtainable in the world. Increasingly heavy traffic has forced some administrative changes in the process, but it still functions well.

MEPSI has undergone profound changes during the past decade. It is no longer the small, intimate group it once was, but it remains strong and demonstrates that a specialist group of fewer than 1,000 members can flourish in today's philatelic community.

Any serious collector of Mexico should join. I can almost guarantee the value of knowledge received in a year's worth of *Mexicana* will repay the annual dues ($15).

If you're on the fence, send $1 to Lois Deutschman, 4860 N. Camino Real, Tucson, Ariz. 85718, and she'll send you a sample copy of *Mexicana* plus an application form. ■

Pancho Villa prompted Torreon overprints

In the decade between 1910 and 1920, Mexico was racked with internal strife of a magnitude unmatched in this hemisphere since our own Civil War. Thousands of Mexicans lost their lives in this struggle, and the economic disruption was enormous.

It was also a difficult time for the postal system. Provisional and local issues of stamps abounded, and the use of overprints and surcharges became the order of the day depending on who was in power at any particular moment.

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

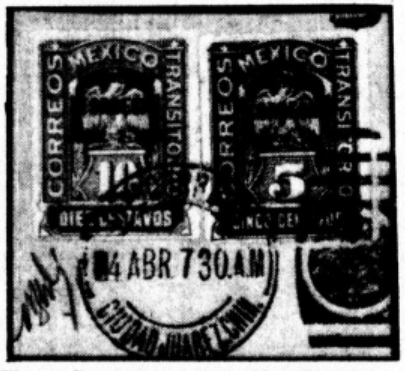
Casual inspection of Scott's listings between Nos. 321 and 607 reveals the extent of these civil war issues. And Scott lists only certain major varieties. It's another area of Mexican philately with plenty of room for specialization.

Seventy years ago this month, the first civil war overprint appeared. To me it's one of the most interesting. It's called and is listed as the "Victoria de/TORREON/ABRIL 2-1914" overprint used on the Transitory issue of 1914 (Scott 362-68).

The unusual aspect of this overprint is that its motive was to call attention to a noteworthy military event. Most of the subsequent overprints had the function of validating or legitimatizing certain general issues for a particular region of the country in control of individual warring factions.

The Battle of Torreon, subject of this issue, marked the emergence of the guerrilla fighter, Pancho Villa, as a bona fide military commander and a political figure to be reckoned with.

The fascinating story of Villa's rise to power is too long and too complex to be summarized here. However, in the spring of 1914 he led a force of mostly peasant soldiers known as the Division of the North in an attack on the important railhead junction of Torreon.



These five-centavo and 10c Transitory stamps with the "Victoria de/TORREON/-ABRIL 2-1914" overprint used on piece have the Ciudad Juarez circular datestamp cancellation. Virtually all legitimately used stamps bear this cancellation.

After a bitter fight, which lasted several days, he defeated a much better equipped Federal force and captured the town. It was an important victory for the Constitutionalist cause.

A holiday was declared in Ciudad Juarez, capital of the territory under Constitutionalist control, and the postmaster, Ponciano Cota, was authorized to prepare the overprints to mark the event.

The three-line overprint was applied by the Ellis Brothers print shop of El Paso, using a typeset form ten subjects wide. The impression repeated on each of the ten horizontal rows comprising the sheet. Quality of workmanship was excellent; no errors are known, although an apostrophe-like speck appears after the "de" on the eighth stamp in each row.

The overprinted stamps were issued April 3 and sold only that day and the following day. The number issued was strictly limited, amounting only to a few sheets of the lower values in the series and a half sheet of the 20-centavo and 50c values.

According to the best information available (and this comes from contemporary philatelists), only three sheets (300 stamps) of the 1c, 2c, 4c and 10c denominations were prepared.

Of the 5c denomination, some authorities say 10 sheets (1,000 stamps) were made. Others claim there must have been 15 sheets, citing the number of stamps actually seen.

As noted previously, only 50 copies of the 20c and 50c were overprinted, making them the key stamps in the set. In any event, all of these stamps are in the scarce category, but it's not too hard to find examples of the 5c variety.

An interesting variety of the 5c exists. The sheets of stamps used, which were rouletted for separation purposes, had a pair (positions 6 and 7) which were completely imperforate between.

Stamps in positions 16 and 17 were rouletted only part way up from the bottom. So, depending on which number we accept there can be only 10 or 15 such items. These can be considered rarities.

Some of these stamps were used on mail, both domestic and foreign. Nearly all legitimately used copies bear the circular datestamp cancellation of Ciudad Juarez, dated April 4. Complete covers are rare.

Unused stamps remaining unsold at the post office on April 4 were bought by an El Paso collector who in turn sold them to dealers and collectors for dispersal into the philatelic market.

Because of their scarcity, the overprints attracted the attention of counterfeiters and forgeries do exist. Collectors should be wary of this when purchasing these stamps and seek expert advice. If a set with the peso value is offered, be very suspicious. This denomination was not overprinted!

It is ironic that the man directly responsible for the battle victory that prompted this issue, Pancho Villa, has been conspicuously absent from being honored on a Mexican stamp until very recently (Scott C568).

Although Pancho Villa played a dramatic role in the civil disturbances of 1913-1920, he was not recognized on a Mexican stamp until 1978 when this one was issued on the centennial of his birth.

Perhaps it was because he was considered dangerous by the power brokers of his own country. In the power struggle between 1917 and 1920, Villa's influence was neutralized. Finally, after some mischief in 1920, he was given a hacienda in Durango and went into self-imposed exile.

Ultimately, he died as he had lived, in a hail of bullets from an ambush in the city of Parral as he rode through town in an open touring car with his bodyguards. The crime was never officially solved.

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The Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International will be special guest of WESTPEX '84, to be held in the Oakland Convention Centre, 550 Tenth St., Oakland, Calif., May 11-13. A varied showing of Mexican material is expected in the exhibit, and it might be worth a trip for collectors living in the area who have philatelic interest in Mexico. ■

Norway offers gift set

The Norwegian Post Office has produced a gift set consisting of the 16 stamps included in the Norwegian Buildings definitive series.

The price is 31 krone per set. Orders can be sent to Postens filatelitjeneste, Postboks 1085 Sentrum, 0104 Oslo 1, Norway.

Swap and sell session

The Green Mountain Stamp Society will host a swap and sell session at its April 11 meeting, 7 p.m., in the Crescent Manor Nursing Home, Bennington, Vt.

Classification key to revenue collecting

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Readers' letters frequently concern the revenue stamps of Mexico. In most cases, the stamp or stamps in question are recognized as coming from Mexico, but the collector is unable to locate them in Scott or any other catalog at hand.

More often than not there is an implication that he or she has found something of extraordinary (read — high!) value.

This column should help clarify some of the mysteries about these stamps.

First of all, they are plentiful. About twice as many varieties of Mexican revenue stamps exist as there are of all the other kinds of stamps listed in the regular stamp catalogs.

Over the years Mexico derived a large share of its public revenues from the sale of adhesive stamps which certified payment of taxes on all manner of commerical activities.

Part of the dilemma faced by would-be collectors is understanding the various classifications of stamps and their purposes. This is essential for a logical and orderly mounting sequence.

The Spanish inscriptions on the stamps are not always clear, even if one has a good bilingual dictionary at his elbow.

Documentary stamps come from the first series issued in 1874. Stamps were produced by the American Bank Note Company in New York City. The overprinted name in tablet beneath the portrait, in this case "Distrito Federal," was varied to indicate place of use.

For these reasons, I earnestly advise serious collectors to buy a copy of *The Revenue Stamps of Mexico* by Richard Stevens (1979).

It is available from the Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International. It will help immeasurably in the enjoyment of organizing and mounting the collection.

Back to the stamps. The first revenue stamps were issued in 1874, and there were two separate classes or series: Documents and Books (Documentos y Libros) stamps and Federal Tax (Contribucion Federal) stamps.

Here's how they were used: Each businessman or tradesman capitalized in excess of 2,000 pesos was obliged to keep precise business records.

Furthermore he was required to buy and affix revenue stamps, those of the Documents and Books series, to the pages of his account books in proportion to the value of the transactions recorded thereon.

The Federal Tax stamps covered a 25 percent surcharge levied by the federal government on all taxable items which towns, cities or states handled.

For example, if a merchant had to pay his city 10p for a license to operate his business he was actually charged 12.50p. The extra 2.50p for which stamps were affixed to his license went to the federal government

Customs stamps, such as this 10p from the first issue 1885, were affixed to appropriate documents and then dot-perforated with name of location of use. This one is punched "CAMPECHE."

Regulations governing these taxes were strictly enforced; carelessness resulted in stiff penalties. And the fines imposed were certified by the purchase of even more revenue stamps.

By 1885, two more classes of revenue stamps had been authorized and issued: Custom House taxes (Aduanos) and stamps for taxing commercial transactions (Renta Interior).

As expected, the Custom House stamps keyed to the value of imports as stated on invoices. The commercial transaction tax was ½ percent although some of the rates varied depending on the item involved.

Imported wines and liquors bore an 8 percent supplemental tax, and similarly higher taxes were paid on tobacco, cigarettes, cigars and snuff.

At the turn of the century, revenue stamps were introduced for other miscellaneous purposes: taxes for the benefit of primary schools, taxes on woven goods and textiles, taxes on the production of precious metals, and taxes for the benefit of public health.

States and fiscal districts produced and issued their own revenue stamps.

During the Revolution of 1913-20, Gen. Venustiano Carranza ordered revenues to be printed in the United States.

Since they arrived at a time when postage stamps were scarce, they were used temporarily for postage (see Scott 347-53).

Even the U.S. Armed Forces issued revenue stamps on behalf of Mexico during their occupation of Veracruz in 1914.

From this listing, one can get a picture of the diversity of revenue stamps available; each purpose required a different series.

And it didn't stop there. To keep track of receipts in each fiscal year, the designs were changed annually. These are the reasons why there are so many varieties.

This stamp is from the Internal Revenue series, 1895-96, overprinted and used in Veracruz. It is complete with talon. This was canceled with an oval handstamp, but many revenue stamps were pen-canceled.

But eventually some of the classifications were modified

and others disappeared altogether.

The early issues were typically in a large format, engraved and very well printed. Some of these were engraved and printed in the United States and England.

The Documents and Books stamps of 1874-75, for example, show a portrait of Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla (as do the first postage stamps) surrounded by elaborate machine engraving.

The series consists of ten denominations in 12 colors. Three paper varieties are known, and the stamps were overprinted with the name of the fiscal district where sold and used.

Customs stamps were issued and used at various seaports and entry points where goods were imported. These stamps were perforated with the name of the location where they were used and could, I suspect, be considered a form of perfins.

They came in denominations up to 1000p which, in themselves, are not especially scarce. But examples of Custom stamps from the smaller towns where there was little traffic are often quite rare.

The fact that the designs were changed annually kept the engraving and printing office busy.

The early stamps portrayed Mexican heroes and famous men. By the turn of the century, the designs had shifted to coat of arms types and allegorical figures. Stamps became smaller as usage increased and cost of production rose.

But by all standards of comparison, these 19th-century Mexican revenue stamps constitute some of the most elegant philatelic material printed in that era.

At the end of the Revolutionary period (1920), most of the special types of revenue stamps had been discarded. The Internal Revenue (Renta Interior) stamps were being overprinted to indicate the various tax motives for which they were used. This practice continued into the current era.

Modern Mexican revenue stamps are mostly of the small size (20 by 40 millimeters) including talon (a removable part sometimes used for a receipt or control purposes). They exist in a broad array of denominations, colors, overprints and designs.

They are eminently collectible and usually not too expensive, even for some that are quite scarce. So, if you're looking for something different, try Mexican revenues, but first, buy the Stevens catalog. ■

These two revenue stamps illustrate the type of allegorical motifs typical in the 1930s and '40s. The stamp at right is overprinted "COMPRA VENTA" (purchases sales), designating its intended use.

Shrinking empire doomed Maximilian issues

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

An earlier article (Jan. 9, page 50) described the series of Eagle stamps issued by Mexico at the start of a Monarchy briefly presided over by Archduke Maximilian.

This is the concluding episode on the stamps of that era, a series used during 1866 and 1867 which bear a profile portrait of the unfortunate Austrian prince.

Coincident with the Regency order authorizing the printing of the Eagle stamps was another decree announcing a decimal currency system to replace the old peso and reales system (8 reales equaled 1 peso).

It's unfortunate the engravers of the Eagles weren't advised of this secret beforehand. It might have saved a lot of confusion.

This new decimal system was in effect during most of the time the Eagles were sold, so the rates which worked out to fractional centavos had to be rounded up.

For example, ½r equaled 6¼c and was charged at 7c; 1r equaled 12½c and was charged at 13c.

When the city drop rate was tried in 1865, special stamps were printed with the correct decimal rate, 3c.

As noted in my earlier column, they were not at all popular and are extremely scarce, especially in used condition.

In June 1866, another decree was issued authorizing and ordering a series of stamps inscribed "Imperio Mexicano" and bearing a portrait of the emperor facing left.

The engraving is credited to a Senor Gavalon and may have been chosen simply because of the mature look it gave the youthful monarch.

We do know there were several other essay designs prepared, many of which show full or three-quarter face views, but these were all discarded for one reason or another.

These two stamps clearly show the difference in quality between the lithographed stamps (left) and engraved stamps (right) of the Maximilian issue.

The new stamps had decimal denominations: 7c, 13c, 25c and 50c. The 3c drop rate for city delivery was abandoned altogether, and it's puzzling why there was no peso or 100c value in the series.

The first stamps to appear were lithographed and printed in sheets of 70 subjects on a rather soft paper.

Ample supplies were printed and dispatched to the various post offices under French control employing the consignment number and district name overprinting schemes seen on previous issues.

Due to the chaos prevailing at the time, there are many unusual varieties involving mistakes and misinterpretations of postal regulations. The hasty printing resulted in numerous color shades and plate flaws.

Two values from the engraved remainders. The 25c stamp bears the consignment numbers for Orizava (124 866) but had not been overprinted with the town name to validate it for postal use.

By this time, Maximilian's forces were losing their grip on remote parts of Mexico, and not all of the shipments of stamps dispatched from Mexico City reached their ultimate destinations.

Some were intercepted by liberal forces under Benito Juarez and never saw valid postal use.

Further, there are many very scarce and rare usages to be found with the Maximilian heads.

By the middle of October 1866, the postal authorities had succeeded in obtaining engraved stamps of the same design to replace the temporary lithographed series.

These stamps were of much better quality but could not be distributed widely because of the ever shrinking area of influence under Maximilian.

The engraved stamps circulated during the final months of 1866 and up until April of 1867 when the last consignments were issued to Mexico City.

An indication of their scarcity is that less than a half million stamps were distributed for each series, including all denominations.

The engraved series also provides one of the great classic rarities of Mexico. The 7c value, whose primary use would have been for printed circulars, was consigned in very small numbers.

Starting in December 1866, only three major cities under royalist control received them: Mexico, Puebla and Veracruz.

Only 3,400 stamps were sent out. Of these, 2,000 consigned in a single shipment to Veracruz were lost or destroyed.

Of the remaining stamps sent to the other two offices, fewer than a dozen have been found genuinely used, and even unused examples are quite scarce.

A used copy recently sold at auction for well in excess of $3,500.

At the close of the issue, sizable quantities of surplus stamps remained for all denominations of the engraved issue, including a large number of the 7c stamps.

Many of these unoverprinted stamps have found their way into the philatelic market and may be purchased quite cheaply.

These remainders have been, unfortunately, rather a nuisance to the classics collector.

They have provided an abundant source of raw material for those who would create forged overprints and cancellations.

Use of the Maximilian stamps ended abruptly in June 1867 when Juarez' forces reoccupied Mexico City.

The unfortunate Maximilian, meanwhile, had been captured in Queretaro with his two Mexican generals, Mejia and Miramon, and was sentenced to death by firing squad.

Attempts to secure a pardon from Juarez failed and the execution took place June 19, barely three years after Maximilian had landed in Veracruz with his beautiful young bride.

It was several months before a formal postal system was restored.

However, the resourceful Mexican postal agents resorted to earlier used handstamp methods and limited use of stamps left over from the 1861 issue. ■

A pair of 7c engraved remainders. This denomination has been tampered with extensively with counterfeit names and consignment numbers added to deceive collectors.

Linn did extensive study on Sonora issues

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

This month's column really contains two stories; one concerns a very good philatelic reference book written by a familiar person, but rarely seen these days. The other concerns the stamps he wrote about.

Earlier this year *Linn's* celebrated the centennial of the birth of its founder, George Ward Linn. Editor Michael Laurence and feature writer Laura Lee Gahagan wrote some interesting reflections on his life and work (Feb. 6).

Linn is principally known for his philatelic news journalism, his stamp dealing and his lifelong efforts in promotion of the hobby.

But Linn had a much more serious side in the true philatelic sense. And this may be known to only a few readers of this newspaper.

In the second decade of this century, Mexico was undergoing a most intense political and civil upheaval.

Regular readers of this column will recall references to some of the stamps of those tumultuous times, most recently overprints commemorating a battle won by Pancho Villa (April 19, page 30).

This era spawned numerous other local and provisional issues classified by most catalogs as civil war emissions.

In 1916, some 12 years before he founded *Linn's Weekly Stamp News*, a youthful looking George Linn published a serious study of Sonora provisional stamps of Mexico.

George Linn became infatuated with these "Mexican War Stamps," as he called them, and did some serious philatelic studies on them. The "White and Green Seal Stamps of Sonora" (Scott 321-46) captured his attention early.

Linn formed an extensive collection of them through connections he had in Mexico. No doubt there were commercial motives behind his acquisitions, as he later began specializing in the sale of Mexican civil war issues.

In any event, the result of his careful study was a book, *Mexico, The White and Green Seal Issues of Sonora*, which Linn wrote and published himself in 1916.

It is still considered the definitive work on these stamps. Very little new or otherwise useful information has been added in the intervening years.

Being a publisher himself, it is certain that Linn was fascinated by the process used to print the stamps.

A row of five typeset forms constituted the basic design and layout. This was imprinted twice on the paper yielding a sheetlet of ten stamps, five pairs tete-beche.

Subsequently, the sheets were sent through the press a second time to add in red the literal and numerical values plus the word "Correos."

Typographical mistakes and the use of different type fonts and styles generated a host of varieties. At least two different kinds of watermarked paper were used.

This crudely printed stamp is an example of local provisionals used in the Mexican state of Sonora during the civil war early in this century. Invisible in the photo is the white embossing employed as a security measure.

To complicate matters further, after the printer delivered stamps the postal authorities decided some form of validation was necessary to guard against counterfeiting.

This was accomplished by embossing the word "CONSTITUCIONAL" across the face of each stamp. These are the white seal stamps.

Presumably because the embossing process consumed so much time, postal authorities quickly adopted a different procedure for validation.

A green facsimile of the seal of the State of Sonora was printed on each of the stamps. These stamps are the so-called green seal issue.

Further varieties resulted since there were slight variations in each of the seal impressions. All of the different combinations are what Linn studied and wrote about.

Scott tried to list these stamps in a simple, condensed manner by assigning nine major varieties (and eight subvarieties) to the white seal issue.

Similarly, the green seals were assigned 11 major varieties (and 12 subvarieties).

But as is so often the case, it wasn't that simple. Despite the facts Linn had brought to the attention of the collecting public very early in the game, Scott chose to ignore some of his information.

Mistakes in its listings have remained unchanged for more than 60 years. The difference may not be too important to the generalist, but a specialist will certainly want correct information.

The details are all in the Linn book. He lists the characteristics of the different printings, the typographical slips and the flaws in the seal overprints.

Forsaking the time consuming embossing process, postal officials in Sonora began overprinting the seal of the state in green over its provisional stamps.

Reproductions of all of the sheets issued and the varieties on them are included in the back of his book.

He even outlines a detailed checklist of all the varieties known to him, and this was a number in excess of 650! Many of these are exceedingly rare, if they exist at all.

For years, the Sonora stamps were not popular except to a handful of Mexican civil war buffs.

However, catalog prices for the more elusive pieces have marched upward rather smartly in the past ten years.

They seem to have become what George Linn said they were some 68 years ago: among the rarest of stamps from Mexico.

I have absolutely no idea how many copies of the book were originally printed, but I do know it is missing from the collection at the American Philatelic Research Library in State College, Pa.

It was originally printed on deckle edge rag paper bound in an attractive paper cover. As can be seen in the accompanying illustrations, Linn had elegant cuts prepared for the chapter and page headings.

Also note that he impishly autographed his photo "Sonoraly yours, George Ward Linn." He was about 32 years old when the book appeared, but he looks much younger in the portrait.

The book sold for $1 in 1917.

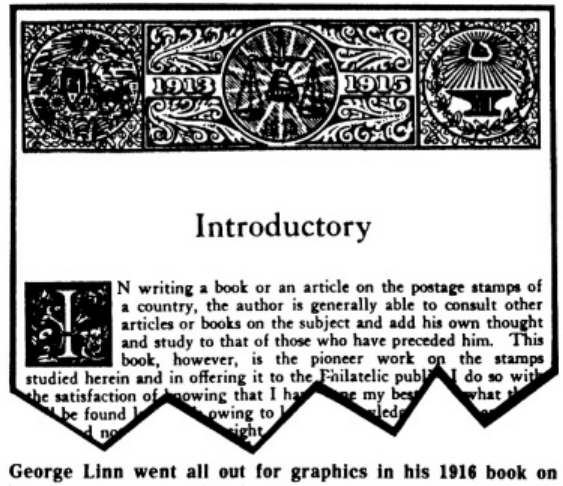
For readers who might be eager to get involved with the Sonora stamps, the Mexico-Elmhurst Philatelic Society International published a 24-page summary of the Linn book in 1971, which I imagine is still available.

It would strictly be a matter of luck or diligent searching to come up with an original. But all the important information is contained in the MEPSI booklet.

MEPSI publication information can be obtained from Tony Benz, Box 42165, Tucson, Ariz. 85733.

George Linn went on to engage in a rather brisk business with the war stamps of Mexico. In 1917 he published another book describing many of the other wartime issues and giving advice on how to collect them.

Linn also was involved in a project to produce stamps for Mexico during the civil war era. But these will have to be subjects of future columns. ■



George Linn went all out for graphics in his 1916 book on Mexico Sonora provisional stamps.

Long airmail series challenges collectors

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

A modern Mexican issue that lends itself to philatelic studies in the traditional sense is the definitive series of 1950-76. It is made to order for a modern specialist, with collecting challenge comparable to a 19th-century classic issue.

The main reason for the broad collecting potential is the long time span in which these stamps saw service and the numerous changes in the production schemes and postal rates in the period.

Since the airmail stamps of this series include some of the more interesting varieties, I will limit this column to the airmails.

There is a more-or-less uniform design to the airmails. They all have a horizontal format (about 40 by 24 millimeters) with the value tablet occupying the left two-fifths of the stamp and a selection of historical, architectural or cultural subjects filling up the balance of the stamp.

Even the ever present Miguel Hidalgo, leader of Mexico's independence struggle, was chosen as the subject of the 10-peso stamp.

There were 13 denominations in the first series starting with 5 centavos and running all the way to 20p.

This, combined with different papers, watermarks, retouches to printing dies, color shades, a variety of perforations, and the later addition of new denominations to old designs, makes the search for completeness quite exciting.

An example of the complexities of the long Mexican 1950-72 series can be seen in the 35-centavo value of the first emission of 1950. On the left is an original stamp, and on the right is a version of the stamp with retouched die. Note the detail in the house in the lower right and wall in the lower left.

The same architecture design is on the 2 peso of 1963.

Often bewildered by the apparent disorder in the Scott listings of these stamps, collectors wonder how best to organize their collections.

Perhaps the following notes will help. They are mostly a matter of chronology and the evolution of printing methods to meet the need for stamps.

The earliest emissions in 1950-52 all came from engraved plates printed in sheets of 30 on flat bed presses (Waite design) on pregummed paper of Mexican manufacture and watermarked "GOBIERNO MEXICANA" with the Mexican coat of arms eagle in a circle.

A sheet perforator of 10½ by 10 was used for the output from this press, and Arabic gum was used as the adhesive with a varying yellowish cast to it.

In fact, this characteristic makes it easy for one with a practiced eye to distinguish these stamps from other, similar ones. They have Scott numbers from C186-C198 with varieties.

In 1953, the Mexican bureau of printing began using a new supply of paper of English manufacture. This had a different watermark, "MEX — MEX" and the national emblem.

But the circles around the eagle outline were incomplete and were intersected by the first and last letters of "MEX — MEX."

This 50c stamp with horizontal "MEX-MEX" watermark (English paper) is one of the key stamps in the series.

This paper came in various thicknesses, and sometimes the watermark is hard to discern.

This paper also was used in the flat bed (Waite) presses and produced the stamps listed as Scott C208-C217. The watermark is horizontal and the stamps are perforated 10½ by 10.

These two Constitution stamps of 1956, issued to cover new airmail rates, belong in the definitive series, although it could be argued that they are commemoratives.

In about 1955, another type of printing press, a roll-fed Wifag rotary, came into service printing the airmail stamps. It could accommodate either recess engraved or photoengraved plates.

It had an 11 by 11, and an 11½ by 11 perforator associated with it and so contributed to the many varieties in the Scott listings between C218 and C221.

Plate size was 50 subjects, and the press cylinder held three plates.

At this point in the chronological sequence, we must introduce another issue which belongs in the series even though many philatelists called it a commemorative issue.

These stamps portray men involved in the drafting and passage of the constitution of 1857 and are Scott C236-C237A.

No presidential decree ever gave them commemorative status, and they were reprinted numerous times and even underwent denomination changes when postal rates were modified.

In the early '60s, still another printing press (a Goebel) saw action printing airmail stamps, and this coincided with a new supply of paper of American manufacture.

The paper was quite thick, bore a tropic resistant PVA (polyvinyl alcohol) gum and came with a new watermark design, an interlocking pattern of "MEX" and eagle in circle symbols of larger diameter than the two previously mentioned.

The Goebel press handled only photogravure plates and had a perforator of gauge 14 associated with it.

The press made numerous high speed printings as demand for certain denominations increased.

Scott listings of C265-C268 and C285-C298 show a mixture of engraved and photoengraved stamps, the latter being on the American paper.

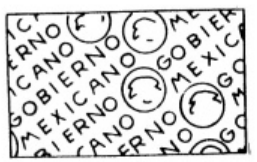
By the mid '70s, with inflation rampant in Mexico, postal rates rose rapidly, necessitating stamps with odd denominations.

The issue of 1975, Scott C444-C451, provided for these rates, including a 50p airmail, the highest airmail value issued up to that time.

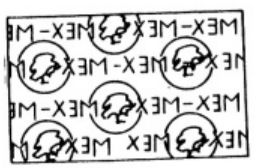
The last stamps of the 1950 designs came out in 1975-76, when eight denominations from 40c to 20p appeared on unwatermarked paper. This was another first, as all previous printings had been on security paper.

The lower values of the 1975-1976 printings were almost immediately supplanted by the so-called Exporta issue, a new definitive series in current use in Mexico.

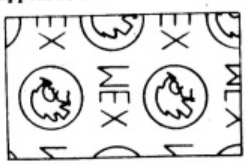
Inspection of the Scott listings I have noted will quickly give an idea of the breadth of collecting possibilities.



This watermark appears on Mexican made paper (Scott code 279) used for the early definitive printings.



English-made paper with this watermark (Scott code 300) appeared later in the series.



This watermark on American-made paper (Scott code 350) is the last of the three types used for the 1950-76 definitives of Mexico.

Except for a half-dozen key stamps now cataloging in the low $100s, the rest are fairly well within reach of the average pocketbook.

But some of them are very elusive, even though the catalog values are not high. This is especially true of the earlier printings when some of the minor varieties went unnoticed for quite some time.

A fairly complete collection of used stamps should not be too difficult to assemble. The denominations with the largest number of varieties were those which were used most abundantly.

This is especially true in regard to colors and shades. The 80c claret, a common airmail rate stamp for many, many years, was reprinted so many times that a small collection can be made of it alone.

Mounting a collection of these stamps may take some imagination, but there are many perfectly logical possibilities.

One could follow the chronological pattern I have outlined in the article, or the stamps might be arranged by designs or denominations.

For those readers who might want to look into this series in more detail I can once again recommend some articles from *Mexicana*, journal of the Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International.

A group of collectors in Mexico City, under the patronage of the Philatelic Society of Mexico, A.C., published a small booklet in 1973 assembling all the data they could find on the series up to that time.

I do not know if it is still available, but if readers wish to contact me through *Linn's* I will attempt to find out. ■

Early forgeries came from original plates

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

In previous articles I have made reference to the fact that the stamps of Mexico have suffered their share of manipulation by unscrupulous people.

Manufacturing rare stamps to deceive collectors seems to have been a popular, if not profitable, business since the hobby began.

Collectors and dealers often tell me they shy away from the classic stamps of Mexico because they are, as they put it, so "difficult" and there are so many fakes, forgeries and counterfeits to keep track of.

The same statement can be made for many other countries and other classic issues.

But I suspect the person responding this way may not have the desire, time nor drive to educate himself to avoid being taken, and more importantly, to be able to distinguish between the good stuff and bad stuff himself.

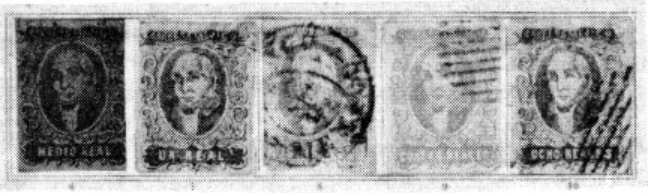
By relating some history about some forgeries of classic Mexican stamps, especially the first issues, I hope to help beginners or intermediate collectors feel a bit more comfortable in collecting Mexican classics.

In his book, *Album Weeds*, the Rev. Robert Earee describes seven different forgeries of the Mexican first issue (1856).

Most of the forgeries he defines, however, were so poorly and crudely done that there is absolutely no reason the observant collector who is familiar with the first design should be fooled.

But there have been two great waves of forgery activity which have proved to be much more troublesome. The first took place about 1895-1910; the second coincided with World War II and the two decades following.

About 1893, a man from St. Louis offered a well-known and respected British stamp firm at least three plates prepared for printing the 1-real and 2r first design stamps of Mexico (1856-1868).



In this strip snipped from a turn-of-the-century French stamp album, only the 2-real stamp at the center is genuine. The other four are crude forgeries.

How he gained possession of these plates was never revealed, but it is virtually certain they were taken from the Postal Museum in Mexico City.

In any event, the offer was rejected. As it turned out, plates for the other denominations also had been removed along with remainder stocks of the official colored papers used for the 1861 issue.

With this material, two essential ingredients were available for the forging of postage stamps. We now know what happened.

The plates were chiefly used to reprint the scarce 4r and 8r denominations of the 1856 and 1861 series, although many ½r stamps of the 1861 type also were made.

The stamps I am describing are Scott 4-6 and 9-12. These are the same reprints referred to in the italicized notes at the end of the first two catalog listings.

The forgers obviously had extensive knowledge of the stamps and how they had originally been used.

To complicate matters further, reprinted stamps were doctored with district name overprints and town cancellations to make them appear authentic.

In some instances, the forgers were able to use some of the original canceling devices which had also been purloined from the Postal Museum.

These fabrications were eased into the philatelic market and from the numbers of examples which have been definitely identified, they received eager acceptance from collectors all over the world.

However, some astute collectors and dealers from Great Britain and the Continent began to recognize these as forgeries, and articles started to appear in the philatelic press in the 1910s and early '20s.

Probably the best summary of information came out in 1935 in a book written by the French team of Paul de Smeth and Marquis de Fayolle: *Les Premieres Emissions du Mexique (1856-1874).*

The section on forgeries was translated and published by the Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International in early issues of its journal, *Mexicana.*

Forgeries of the 1856 issue: The 4r stamp at left carries the district name of Ometepec, which never existed as a postal district! Were it genuine, the 8r stamp from Acapulco would be a great rarity. But it shows all the standard fake characteristics: poor color, thick paper and stop (period) at the foot of the final "O" in the forged name overprint.

These experts, aided by many others, have unlocked most of the secrets used by the

reprinters so that we have a basis for distinguishing the reprints from the originals.

Some of the differences are not very profound. Even though original plates and paper were used in the printing, it was recognized that nearly all of the reprints of the 1861 stamps have the "grain" of the wove paper running in the wrong direction. It is vertical instead of horizontal.

Thus, the simple test of holding a suspect stamp to the light often suffices to identify bad stamps.

I should caution readers that horizontal grain is not an absolute check of authenticity; a few reprints are known with the grain running in the right direction.

Only reprints of the 4r and 8r denominations were made of the 1856 issue. There were plenty of genuine ½r stamps around, and they were cheap.

The reprinted '56 stamps were on a very thick, very white paper which is fairly easy to tell when compared side by side with an original.

Another clue is the ink. The red colors of the 4r reprints are usually dull and less vivid than the genuine stamps.

Similarly, the inks used to print the 8r forgeries tend to be grayer and often have a muddy appearance.

The colors are quite different from the clear lilac and lilac-purple shades of the genuine stamps.

Another tip-off is the impressions. The reprints were mostly produced from plates showing advanced wear and often exhibiting crude attempts at recutting weak lines.

The overprinting with district names and cancellations was so cleverly done in many instances that knowledgeable collectors and dealers were deceived at first. Part of the problem was that there weren't many references or accurate reproductions of the postal markings available at that time.

Forgeries of the 1861 issue: Both stamps are easily classified forgeries by the vertical "grain" test. The 4r stamp also shows the worn-plate impression and a district name that's too small. The cancellation would be hard to condemn. The 8r forgery has similar shortcomings, but again, has reasonably authentic looking postal markings.

This information had to be developed from reliable sources, such as full, dated letters, and then communicated to the collecting community.

W.T. Wilson's book, *The Postmarks of Mexico, 1856-1872* (1927) gave people something to use in checking cancellations; the Smeth-Fayolle book gave detailed characteristics of the fake district name overprints.

These brief paragraphs cannot transform readers into instant experts when it comes to looking at their high value 1856-61 Hidalgo heads.

There are many other factors to be considered, and the process of rendering an expert opinion is often long and arduous.

But I hope readers will exercise wariness when such items are offered to them for sale.

To summarize, there are several things to keep in mind: The 1r and 2r values of both issues and the ½r of 1856 were so common that few forgeries were made.

In fact, some specialists are willing to pay more for these forgeries than they would for the genuine stamps (of common districts).

A 4r or 8r stamp should be examined closely, and all that arouse suspicions should be examined by experts. This is particularly true for the scarce districts.

Most reputable dealers now take the precaution of obtaining certification prior to sale.

Furthermore, most of the really rare items in this category carry with them an established pedigree. That's often a big advantage.

Next month I'll delve into the second part of the forgery story: the activities of Raoul Ch. de Thuin. ■

De Thuin introduced creativity to classics

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Last time I promised to tell part of the story of Raoul Charles de Thuin, a rascal of relatively modern times who introduced a great deal of creativity to the classic stamps of Mexico.

Although de Thuin dealt in stamps from numerous countries the majority of his "creations" involved Mexican philatelic material.

He didn't counterfeit Mexican stamps; generally what he did was to alter genuine, but common, low value stamps and covers to make them appear more valuable.

He operated an approval service from a base in Merida, Mexico, for many years.

He approached his fabrications from a sound technical basis; he maintained an extensive philatelic library.

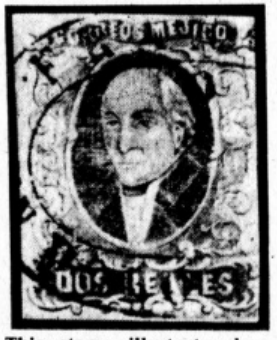
Apparently he studied his books on Mexican stamps and usages and did his best to adhere to the rules and chronology described in them.

He did some very interesting things. For example, he would take genuine stamps which might have all but escaped cancellation and add a much rarer, but forged, suboffice cancellation to deceive a collector.

He might take a remainder stamp (of intrinsically low value) and doctor it up with a rare name overprint and cancellation to make it look like a valuable piece.

One of de Thuin's fortes, and what he appeared to enjoy most, was preparing covers showing rare usages. Some claim he did this "to order."

He generally started with stampless letters or fronts



This stamp illustrates how tough it sometimes is to distinguish between a genuine stamp and a de Thuin fabrication. Polotitlan did not overprint its name on stamps of the first issue. De Thuin made several cliches of the commonest oval cancellation of this town, and this shows one used on a 2-real remainder.

(which were cheap) and added genuine remainder stamps and cancellations which he made himself and copies from real ones as best he could.

Another of his specialties was bisects and "splits" on cover. These he would make from damaged stamps he bought on the open philatelic market. Many of his fabrications in this area look deceptively authentic.

De Thuin sold his wares by mail to a widely dispersed clientele.

He prepared rather crude, hand-drawn approval sheets on which he usually mounted a number of his creations, very often including some common genuine stamps which were generally overpriced.

From the amount of material ultimately traced to de Thuin, he apparently had a decent sized list of eager buyers.

One of the most bizarre incidents relating to de Thuin concerns an auction that was planned, but never held.

A well-known and prestigious auction house in England received a large collection of classic Mexican material, broke it into lots, produced a well-illustrated catalog and sent it to an extensive list of customers.

Unfortunately the vast majority of material comprised pieces manufactured by de Thuin which, even to moderately competent Mexican specialists, were blatantly obvious from the catalog photographs.

A howl went up from the experts, and the sale was canceled immediately. This shows that even the professionals get fooled once in a while.

Authorities made numerous attempts to stop his business. Fraud orders by the U.S. Post Office would slow the volume of overtures for a while, but de Thuin would soon find another alias and be pushing his forged and overpriced approvals as vigorously as ever.

Although faced with legal action several times by the Mexican authorities, he always managed to slip through some loophole and avoid incarceration.

Finally, in 1966, as advancing age and declining health began to take its toll on de Thuin, he agreed following some delicate negotiations to sell his business to the American Philatelic Society.

This was the only effective way the APS could find to stop the sale of forged and manipulated philatelic items to unsuspecting collectors.

The most important assets of the business the APS bought were the books of tracings de Thuin had made of postal markings and the hundreds of cliches he had made to doctor his pieces.

Years later, in 1974, the APS published a full-sized reference book on the stamps and forged postal markings recovered from de Thuin.

Titled *The Yucatan Affair: the Work of Raoul Ch. De Thuin*, it is still available from the APS.

Fortunately, from this record philatelic experts and collectors have a much easier time identifying de Thuin material as it appears on the market than did the British auction house.

Little by little, progress in eliminating this material is being made.

For some specialists, however, it has become a new field to collect, and examples aren't all that plentiful.

Obviously, the rare items he forged cannot be considered in the same league with genuine examples.

But a few collectors are willing to pay nominal sums for de Thuin's work to add to their reference collections.

De Thuin died in 1975. Material he created will continue to show up for many years as collections are broken up, sold and reformed.

Unfortunately, collectors who may have had bad material in their holdings will ultimately suffer financial loss.

But again it points up the maxim I have repeated many times in these columns (and which is true also for any philatelic specialty): Rare, high-priced stamps and covers should either have certificates of authenticity from reputable committees or be submitted to them for expertization.

In absence of that, the collector should spend the time and effort it takes to gain the expert knowledge needed to make those decisions himself.

In either case a certain element of risk remains, but the odds are much better. ■

The illustrated airmail envelope shows the corner card most frequently used by de Thuin: Maya Shop in Merida, Yucatan. Enclosed in this cover was a lavishly illuminated letterhead and $137 in Congo and Belgian East African stamps with an earnest plea for "substantial purchase."

CTOs really receipts; Mexican market firm

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

My December 1983 article was devoted to brief notes and response to letters and comments by readers. It seemed like a good idea then so I've decided to repeat it again this year.

It also gives me a chance to recognize those people who have taken the time to write for additional information or to help set the record straight with information they might have on the subjects of these columns.

The first note last December described what I thought might have been CTO (canceled to order) Mexican stamps. Until a western collector sent me examples of canceled stamps with full gum, I was unaware of such material.

Immediately after the article appeared I received letters from two Canadian readers on the matter.

Piet Steen of Alberta suggested that the canceled stamps might represent some form of receipt for the payment of postage on bulk mailings.

Thanks to his prompting and expressed doubts that Mexico ever resorted to the offensive practice of CTOs, I did some further research.

This example shows a full gum, roller canceled Mexican commemorative stamp used as a receipt for postage paid on return envelopes used by business firms.

No mention could be found in any of the extensive literature I have gathered on Mexican philately, so I began writing philatelists I knew in Mexico.

Ernesto Fink of Mexico City provided an answer to this riddle. Large business firms use "postage paid" return envelopes for the convenience of their customers, much as business houses do in the U.S.

The post office collects these envelopes, and when they are picked up or delivered to the customer the total of return postage due is paid.

As a receipt for this payment, canceled stamps are given. This also keeps the account square between cash and stamps in the postal clerk's drawer.

In an attempt to recover something for all this postage (full sheets of stamps were often provided) some of the more enterprising merchants contacted stamp dealers, found out what items might be philatelically desirable and then asked for certain commemorative issues which were still in stock at the philatelic window.

This explanation ties in well with the observation of one reader that he once saw a dealer's stock containing many sheets and part sheets of fully gummed, but canceled, Mexican commemorative stamps.

•

Fink also gave added collecting dimensions to the Transportation issue (Mulitas) I wrote about in the October 1983 issue (page 27).

He noted that the various watermarks can be found with different orientations depending on how the individual sheets of paper were fed to the presses.

In other words, the letter in the watermark, when viewed from the back of the stamp, might face left or right, or up or down.

He has specialized in this issue for many years and has found that some of the positions are considerably scarcer than others. In several instances fewer than a dozen examples are known.

Those who may have begun collecting this issue as a result of that article can now add watermark orientation to the list of variables.

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In the article on George W. Linn and his writings about the Sonora issues of 1913 (July 9, page 24), I inferred that it could be exceedingly difficult to locate a copy of his original book, *The White and Green Seal Issues of Sonora*.

However, I noted that most of the important data still was available in a MEPSI (Mexico-Elmhurst Philatelic Society International) booklet.

Joe Stuart of Texas wrote to tell me that Linn's book was reprinted in Vol. 20 of *Billig's Philatelic Handbook* and is still readily available.

Stuart also mentioned that the late A.O. Tittman of New York formed one of the most complete collections of the White and Green Seal stamps.

It was bequeathed to the national collection in the Smithsonian Institution.

While many of us do not think highly of this practice, the collection remains there intact and I presume available for study by the serious student of philately.

•

The article on the definitive airmail series of 1950-76 (Aug. 13, page 46) generated as much mail response as I've received on any subject.

It is obvious that a lot of collectors either are specializing in this set or trying to complete a collection of all the varieties.

Many of the writers wanted to know where they could buy the study booklet I mentioned in the article which was published by the Philatelic Society of Mexico.

Unfortunately, I have been unable, in spite of many letters and a number of phone calls, to determine if it is still available and where to get it. I'll keep trying.

To those readers who write me, I've tried to acknowledge their requests (with a postal card) and will send them a written answer when I have it. I'll also footnote this column for those who may want one but haven't written.

Meanwhile, you might want to do what I did before the booklet came out.

I clipped an old copy of Scott's catalog and pasted the various listings in chronological order on notebook pages.

I left plenty of space and then added notes and tables of the new varieties I found or which were reported to me.

In some respects, this procedure might turn out to be better because it forces one to learn the characteristics of the varieties.

With practice, one can differentiate between them by quick inspection.

Another suggestion: Try to buy sheet margin stamps of the various types with selvage intact.

The selvage will show the hard-to-see watermarks and paper texture unencumbered by the stamp design!

•

Let me put in another plug for MEPSI. Serious collectors of Mexico should join this organization, and even intermediate collectors can profit from belonging.

Mexicana, the quarterly journal, is well worth the annual dues ($15), and it will contain information about Mexican stamps that cannot be found elsewhere.

I receive several letters a year asking about stamps which are not yet listed in the large catalogs or for which the listing is confusing.

Generally, the new issues committee of MEPSI reports new Mexican stamps within weeks or at most a couple of months from the time they come out.

Members also may report scarce varieties long before they reach Scott. This can mean the difference between having a stamp at reasonable cost or paying through the nose once its scarcity is recognized and established by catalog pricing.

To get MEPSI information, write Lois Deutschman, 4860 N. Camino Real, Tucson, Ariz. 85718.

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A note about the market for Mexican stamps: I am not an expert when it comes to pricing, but overall the market at the moment seems firm to strong.

Classic material, even the scarce early 20th century, is fetching record prices at auction.

A correspondent writes that a recent auction heavy in Mexican classic material was well attended by collectors from Mexico who participated vigorously in the bidding.

Recently, the weak peso has hurt collectors in Mexico. It's good to know they're back!

Modern material and anything in less than very fine to superb condition is being traded at large discounts from Scott prices.

Another word of advice: Always buy the best condition you can get within your budget.

Second grade material can be acquired cheaply, but it will prove hard to sell and certainly will not impress judges if shown in exhibition.

•

Finally, I'm beginning to plan topics for my columns in 1985. By popular demand it looks like I will tackle the current Exporta issue.

Several readers have sent questions about these stamps; there are ample varieties for a decent specialized collection.

The Exporta issue: Though barely 10 years old, this issue has already gone through a half dozen printings, and ample varieties exist for a specialized collection. It will be dealt with in a 1985 article.

Postal stationery will probably receive some attention and classics will grab the limelight a few times.

I do appreciate the interest expressed in letters from readers; keep them coming. Also, best wishes for the holiday season! ■

Pen and ink markings worth studying

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

The use of pen and ink for cancellations on stamps or postal notations always produces strong reactions from collectors. Many feel such items are substandard philatelically.

We're all familiar with the pen cancels seen on many early U.S. issues and the fact that specialized catalogs value them below stamps which received handstamp cancellations.

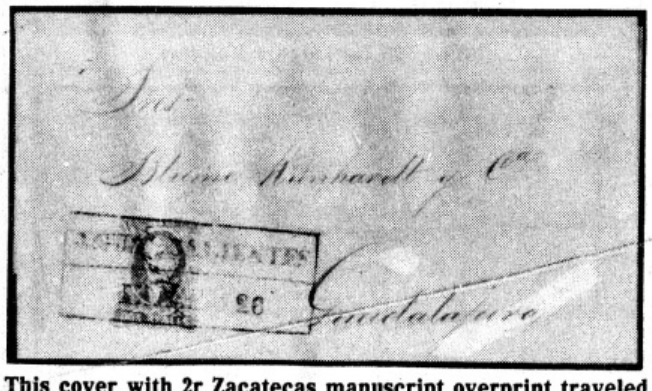
Manuscript cancellations are just not popular. On the other hand, postal historians tend to be much more forgiving.

Handwritten postmarks often are the only way one will get examples from small towns or offices which have long disappeared.

The situation with Mexico is similar. Pen-canceled Mexican postage stamps, though very infrequently seen, are not the magnets of attraction that some stamps with elegant and quaintly formed cancels are.

In this column I'll discuss three kinds of pen and ink work on Mexican stamps.

One of the most famous uses of handwritten markings on Mexican stamps involves the postal district of Zacatecas and stamps of the first issue of 1856.



This cover with 2r Zacatecas manuscript overprint traveled from Aguascalientes to Guadalajara Jan. 26, 1859.

Regular readers will recall that the overprinting of district names on early Mexican stamps was a security measure to discourage the use of stolen stamps.

These names, applied at the point of sale, validated the stamps for use.

During one of the many civil uprisings of that era, the postmaster at Zacatecas fled for his life to Aguascalientes and set up shop there for a short while in late fall 1858.

In his haste, he either forgot or lost his handstamp for the district name and was thus obliged to enter the name of his district on all the stamps by hand.

It was the only district to have done this, and while examples of all 1856 denominations are known, only the 1-real and 2r stamps are seen very often. The rest are exceedingly rare.

In the mid-1950s, the late Otto Yag made a thorough study of these stamps and wrote several articles about them for *Mexicana*, the journal of the Mexico-Elmhurst Philatelic Society International (MEPSI).

He concluded that the handwritten overprints were the work of several people, probably postal clerks, and confirmed the period of use from December 1858 to February 1859.

Nearly all covers, if dated, will fall within this period and bear a boxed postmark or cancellation of Aguascalientes that was common in the period.

There are several reasons to explain why few manuscript town cancels are found on Mexican stamps.

First, the postal system in Mexico was rather highly organized by the time stamps first appeared in 1856.

Most towns and villages had devices of some sort left over from the prestamp days and many of these were pressed into service as cancelers.

Pen markings originated from very small towns and haciendas (which lacked devices), according to those we can positively identify. Such places probably produced very little mail.

People didn't pay much attention to the manuscript markings, though stamps would show up on the market now and then with pen markings on them.

Manuscript cancellations on stamps of the 1856 issue. The 2 real from Jalapa was pen-canceled at Cerro de Leon, and part of the name appears on the stamp. The remaining stamps have mute cancels, some of which have yet to be placed.

I originally considered many of these as invalidation marks on remainders and thus not important philatelically.

But as is so often the case when serious collectors look for new areas to study, they find solutions to these puzzles.

Howard Frome dedicated himself to this task and published in 1982 a booklet titled *The Manuscript Postal Markings of Mexico, 1856 — 1878.*

In it he describes the marks he has located and gives other useful information a collector should have if he decides to

acquire some of these items.

I found the booklet helpful since I had a number of stamps relegated to the "what's this?" section of my stockbook.

What I thought were remainder cancels were, in fact, mute pen cancellations from small towns and haciendas.

Frome reports he has cataloged 80 percent of all manuscript postal markings offered for sale in the last 50 years; thus his listings form a solid base on which to expand.

I was glad to see that in the recent reprint of Josef Schatzkes' *The Cancellations of Mexico, 1856 — 1974* the editors elected to include the Frome-listed markings under the districts to which they belonged.

The third category of manuscript markings I'll deal with are those on Mexican revenue stamps.

In this area, pen cancellations are much more common, especially on the first issue of 1874 and right up into the early 20th century.

Since even the smallest of merchants and businesses had to buy and use revenue stamps, it's easy to see why some, who probably couldn't afford a handstamp, used pens instead.

Revenue stamps often were used in multiples, and while it's not a challenge to find stamps with the handwriting on them it is a bit of a challenge to find strips or blocks with the complete endorsement.

Some of the early series of revenues left space for over-printing location names.

This revenue stamp from the first issue (1874) was pen-canceled Jan. 31, 1874, by F. Gonzalez. It was used in the fiscal district of Michoacan

These names were fiscal districts or cities which are not always the same as postal districts. These names were almost always entered with handstamps.

I'm not ready to recommend a collection solely devoted to pen-canceled stamps (and covers) but when one encounters such items they should be treated with respect.

Manuscript markings are scarce on Mexican postage stamps and rare if part or all of the name is decipherable.

Readers may want to check their duplicates or odd material to see what they might have.

Anyone who took my advice and bought the Schatzkes reprint will have some basis for identification. ■

British helped the Mexican mail system

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Postal history buffs of the Caribbean area will readily recognize the names of two ports on the Gulf of Mexico, Tampico and Veracruz.

These two Mexican cities were important outlets for Mexican produce during the 19th century and focal points for increasing European business interests.

When Britain established diplomatic relations with Mexico in 1825 (following the ouster of Spanish rulers), it also set up a postal agency in the consulate at Veracruz.

The British legation in Mexico City also kept in frequent contact.

Since these two offices were looking after the interests of the British subjects doing business in Mexico, it was only natural that they developed fast and efficient freight and mail connections to London, Europe and many Caribbean ports.

All were welcome to use the mail service.

One of the earliest Mexican postal markings associated with this British conveyance opportunity was a double straightline, "FRANCA HAS/TA EL PUERTO," which meant: Postage paid to the port.

Letters deposited in the Mexican mails addressed to foreign destinations could be prepaid as far as the Mexican port of departure and no further.

A letter mailed in Mexico City, for example, would be carried by the courier of the British legation to Veracruz and put aboard a British ship there by the postal agent. It would then go forward by British packet toward its final destination.

As British interests grew, a similar agency was established at the consulate in Tampico in the early 1840s.

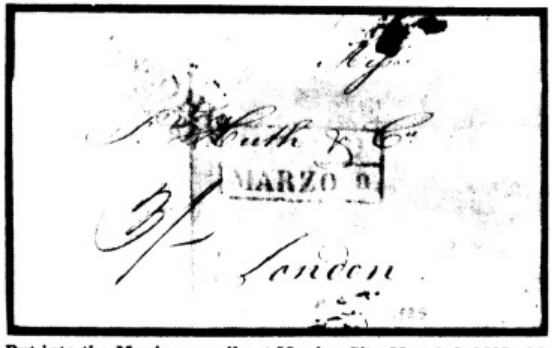
This coincided with the formation of the Royal Mail Steam Packet Co. which provided direct connections from both Tampico and Veracruz to Southampton via Havana, Nassau and St. Thomas.

As a result of all this, the British formed a virtual monopoly on foreign-bound mail originating in Mexico.

Thousands of letters were deposited with one or the other of these offices for handling. And the handling was, as we would expect, very efficiently carried out.

Both Mexican offices had their own distinctive handstamp devices used in processing mail.

What we call consular post office datestamps consisted of a double ring handstamp with the name of the office forming the top arc of the circle. This format was roughly the same for all British foreign offices.



Put into the Mexican mails at Mexico City March 8, 1835, this letter was prepaid as far as Veracruz as noted by the "Hasta el Puerto" handstamp. It reached London via British packet where the addressee paid an additional 3/- for delivery.

This Veracruz British consular post office marking is on the reverse of an 1846 letter from Mexico to London.

In addition to these datestamps, there were "Paid" stamps consisting of a crown at the top of a circle containing the words, "Paid at (name of city)."

These "crowned circles" were issued to numerous British outposts in the Americas and are highly prized by collectors.

Mail passing through these offices would receive appropriate markings. All got datestamps. Some got paid markings, rate marks and routings if appropriate. Transit marks were applied on the way.

Even though the two offices presumably operated under the same rules, there are curious differences between them.

The folks at Tampico usually used red for their handstamps, while the agents at Veracruz preferred black. If there was a reason for this, I am unaware of it.

Consular post office datestamps are not hard to find on foreign letters from Mexico, and they are not very expensive.

The "crowned circle" paid markings are another matter. They are quite scarce, especially from Tampico, and good strikes will often fetch hundreds of dollars depending on what else is on the letter.

Their scarcity stems partly from the fact that during the period they were used most letters were sent unpaid, or collect.

Since the packets steamed both north and south between Tampico and Veracruz, Mexicans frequently availed themselves of the mail service between the two ports instead of sending letters overland.

They did this in spite of the 1/- packet fee in addition to the 2 reales they paid for domestic postage.

Perhaps the speed and safety were worth it.

During the French invasion of 1862 and the subsequent short reign of Maximilian, responsibility for all civilian mail remained with the Mexican post office, and French and British packet steamers continued to be used freely for overseas mail.

In about 1865, British stamps came to Mexico to be used in the consular post offices on prepaid mail handled by them.

At the same time, "C" type cancelers were issued to the offices to use on the stamps.

This piece has a 4-penny British stamp which was used and canceled at Tampico with the "C63" handstamp. It was destined for Veracruz and most surely went on the Royal Mail Steam Packet Co. Approximate date is 1870.

Veracruz was recorded as having been assigned canceler "C64" but was never issued stamps nor, as far as we know, the canceler.

The "C63" handstamp was issued to Tampico, and here the story is quite different.

"Crowned circle" paid markings were applied in red ink at Tampico and black ink at Veracruz.

The C64 postmark is not known to have been used by Veracruz postal agents, but C63 saw extensive use canceling British stamps at Tampico during the late 1860s and early 1870s.

Numerous examples of its use have been recorded, and during the late 1860s and early 1870s we find many examples of letters which were sent from Tampico to Veracruz (and points inland) with attractive combinations of both British and Mexican stamps.

British stamps paid the packet fees; the Mexican stamps covered inland postage.

British consular post offices began to decline during the 1870s, and they were finally closed in 1876. They had served well for nearly 50 years, but viable alternatives for transferring mail abroad appeared.

The Universal Postal Union was being formed to simplify exchange of mail between countries, and Mexico joined in 1879. ■

Challenges make 2r green writer's choice

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Noncollectors often ask collectors a simple, well-meaning question, "What is your favorite stamp?"

Those of us who've been in the collecting game for many years are inclined to dismiss this as a rhetorical inquiry and are tempted to launch into a definition of philately, which soon makes the person who asked the question wonder why he ever did.

If the question had been "What are your favorite stamps?" we might be tempted to discuss one of our specialties.

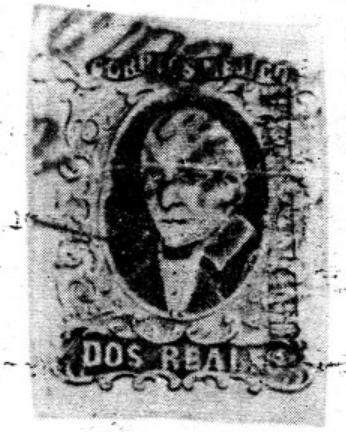
Since few of us collect the stamps of the world, some of our specialties may be narrow enough to talk about to the uninitiated.

But a narrow field won't be the topic of this article.

I'm going to write about my favorite stamp, which happens to be a Mexican classic, and which is the stamp that probably triggered the keen interest I've developed for Mexican stamps generally.

My favorite stamp is the 2-real green, Scott 3. When I started collecting Mexico, it was the cheapest stamp of the series (and still is) and about the only one in the first issue that could be seen in the retail stock of most dealers, if they had any early Mexico at all.

This stamp from plate I shows the enormous margins possible from the wide spacing of impressions. It was overprinted for the Cordova district and canceled at Huatusco.



This is a plate II stamp. One must develop an eye to discern these from plate I stamps by differences in color and texture.

It's still true. Fewer and fewer retail dealers attempt to stock 19th-century Mexico.

A glance at Scott's listing reveals that this stamp has several subvarieties.

If you include all the possible overprints, color shades, plates, printing flaws and cancellations that exist, an extensive and interesting collection can be made of just this one stamp.

I think it could rival any of the extensive one-stamp collections of U.S. material I've seen in exhibition.

Let's consider what we have. First, we know three different plates were used to produce the 2r stamps.

Such was not always the case; early philatelists thought only two plates were used, a small, 60-subject plate and a larger, 190-subject plate.

In the 1950s and '60s, John Bash studied this stamp carefully enough to conclude there were two 60-subject plates.

What he called plate I consists of widely spaced impressions with a frameline around the outside of the sheet, six stamps wide and ten rows high.

Vertical spacing between the rows was enormous, about 5-6 millimeters. The spacing between stamps in a row was about 2mm. As a result, we often see this stamp with beautiful, "boardwalk" margins.

Close vertical spacing is evident on this plate III stamp from the top margin which cuts into an adjacent stamp.

Plate II is similar but lacks the outside frameline, and the vertical spacing is roughly 4mm.

It's interesting to note that no vertical pairs nor blocks are known from plate I, and horizontal pairs and strips are scarce to rare. A few vertical pieces do exist from plate II.

The first two plates were responsible for some 285,000 2r stamps delivered by the engraver in July 1856 just before stamps went on sale.

The so-called emerald shade Scott lists as a subvariety came from these plates, as well as the "sap" green and some pale blue-green shades.

The postal rate schedule in effect in August 1856 when stamps were first used favored the use of ½r and 1r stamps. A 2r stamp was only needed for heavier letters.

This early rate was not generating enough revenue so in December 1856 postal rates were increased, and the 2r stamp became a common us-

age stamp, paying postage for single-weight letters.

Responding to the greater demand for 2r stamps, a larger plate with 190 subjects was prepared. This is plate III, and it was used for all printings after the July 1856 shipment including the stamps of 1861 and 1867.

Plate III was very different from the two smaller plates. It had 10 horizontal rows of 19 stamps each, and the impressions were packed rather tightly together, often touching each other.

Stamps from this plate are generally of the yellow-green shades, although the deep blue-green stamps in the Scott listing were made with it, too.

The 2r stamps have a broad color range, and a collector with a good eye can probably mount 25-30 stamps, each showing a slightly different shade. Color control of ink was not then what it is today.

Some interesting printing defects show up on the 2r stamps.

Plate I is known for a rather spectacular error involving the reentry of the value label in the "gutter" between two stamps in the far right vertical column. Most experts agree it is between positions 48 and 54.

It's a scarce item, since there could be only one example per sheet.

Plate I shows a couple of shifts in the top label and a stamp which has a partly doubled image in the portrait.

Plate II has some minor shifts and reentries, some scratches and a stamp where part of the bottom label is missing.

This plate II stamp illustrates the missing portion of the bottom label.

But the most dramatic plate flaws occurred in plate III. Since more than two and a-half million stamps were printed with this plate, it's not hard to understand why it became the worse for wear.

The crack in position 1 appears as a ⅜-inch dash of color opposite Miguel Hidalgo's mouth.

Position 189 shows a crack which entered the design between the "E" and "A" of "Reales" in the bottom label and grew progressively up through the face of the portrait.

The major crack in position 1 of plate III starts at the edge of the plate and cuts into the oval surrounding the portrait.

These two stamps show the major crack in position 189 of plate III. The left stamp shows the crack in its early stage (and also parts of three other stamps) and the right stamp illustrates a more advanced state.

These major cracks not only appear on the 1856 2r green but also on the 1861 and 1867 stamps.

Other sources of varieties are different district name overprints on 2r stamps.

The postal district names were applied, many readers may recall, as a security measure (*Linn's*, June 13, 1983, page 42).

A total of 49 districts were known to have used name overprints on 1856 stamps, and all districts, postal records show, used 2r stamps.

Some are much rarer than others, but it wouldn't be difficult to acquire 25-30 overprint varieties without too much strain on the pocketbook.

Also, some of the larger towns used more than one name handstamp device.

Mexico City had four (a fifth was used only on the ½r), and Guadalajara, Guanajuato, Puebla, Queretaro and San Luis Potosi each used three.

Cancellations are the largest source of varieties to add to a collection of 2r greens. Each district used one or more handstamp canceler, and the hundreds of suboffices usually had their own distinctive handstamps.

Mexico is noted for its early cancelers which included straightlines, boxes, ovals, wreaths and quaint acronyms. Most were handmade with a crude elegance that has fascinated collectors for years.

Considering the 2r is a classic stamp that's still moderately priced and has endless collecting possibilities, it can be understood why this is my favorite stamp. ■

'Flyspeck' philately provides hours of fun

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

"Flyspeck" philately is a term most of us profess to understand. It refers to the minutiae which would escape notice by the average viewer of stamps: unwanted color spots, plate defects, double impressions, ticks and scrapes which are not part of the designer's original intention.

Last month I wrote about some of the flyspecks in the 2-real green stamp of 1856, including reentries, shifts or doubling of parts of the design, and even missing portions of the impression because of a plate maker's mistake.

These things have always attracted the attention of both serious and general collectors. Some feel the discovery of something like an invert or a shift may transform their stamp into something much more valuable. Often it does.

In other cases, there are so many of the defects that they constitute just another subvariety of the stamp.

Catalog listings usually do not distinguish between the rare and the common except when it comes to the price listed. If something is excessively rare, a price may be missing altogether.

This is true when only one or two are known and where a price would have virtually no meaning. Others are listed with modest prices attached, and some are not even listed at all.

This article is about some "flyspecks" in 20th century Mexican philately I know about and which I've had fun searching for over the years.

All of the ones I'll describe are genuine varieties, have to do with the printing operation (rather than paper or perforation varieties), are within financial reach of most collectors, and are out there where they can still be found today.

So that definitions are clear, these are "constant" varieties, meaning they occur time and time again and do not change.

They are found one or more times on a full sheet of stamps so that their position could, if one had access to a full sheet, be fixed definitely.

One such flyspeck issue is the 1-peso stamp of 1923 showing the Palace of Fine Arts in Mexico City.

The left stamp shows the "spot in the handle;" the right stamp is the less common variation without the spot. The stamps are from the 1940 Presidential Inauguration set.

There is an eagle (Mexico's national emblem) on the dome of this building, except that on one stamp in the sheet it does not show.

This "missing eagle" variety is Scott 648a. This was a much-used stamp and thousands were produced, so it's not difficult to find one.

It's even possible to find a block of four from the upper right corner of the sheet which includes the variety and normal stamps.

Another variety occurs in a 1940 set of stamps commemorating the inauguration of President Manuel Avila Comancho.

The allegorical design of the three regulars and three airmails shows a man at the helm, referring to the task facing the new president.

Most of the stamps show a spot of color in the wheel handle in front of the man's biceps, but the top row on the sheet has stamps without this spot.

The variety is unlisted in Scott but is listed in some of the Mexican stamp catalogs.

Since there were fewer of these varieties than of the regular stamps they carry a price premium. The variety is found on all values of the regular and airmail series.

In 1942, Mexico issued a series to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the founding of the city of Guadalajara. The 20-centavo airmail (Scott C120), shows the church of Zapopan.

Some of these stamps have a reentry of the 20c value indicia in the lower right corner.

I have two or three copies of this variety but have never seen a sheet of the stamps to know where it actually occurs. I do know that it is a constant error.

The reentry or "doubling" of the 20c on the right shows clearly on this copy of the 1942 Guadalajara airmail.

Perhaps some reader can help establish exactly where on the plate it occurs.

One of my earlier articles (*Linn's*, Aug. 13, 1984, page 46) dealt with the definitive airmail issue of 1950-76.

This very popular set (I received a great deal of mail on this one) has some interesting varieties in what we generally call the second printing (Scott C218-C220H) that I didn't mention in that article.

On the 25c, 35c and 80c values, the "MEXICO" in the label at the left comes doubled. It's not too noticeable if you're looking at these stamps rather casually.

It looks bolder compared to other stamps. But under an 8-power glass the doubling is clearly discernible.

Again, Scott does not list these varieties, but the Mexican catalogs do and they attach a rather nice price premium to them.

Years ago, I purchased a corner block of the 25c which contained the variety, so I know this denomination had the doubling in position 42.

I have examples of the 35c and the 80c variety but am not sure of the positions. If I had to guess I'd say they were also position 42. Again, a reader may be able to help.

I know there are still some of these varieties floating around; I found one in an American Philatelic Society circuit book just last year priced as the normal stamp.

The last varieties I'll describe are rather dramatic and occur with the 1p and 5p stamps of 1916-1920.

These are bicolored stamps. They had to make two trips through the printing presses and come with the center designs switched.

In other words, the 1p stamp is known with the center design of the 5p stamp and vice versa.

These are listed as subvarieties in Scott and enjoy rather elevated prices. A few years ago they could be obtained for about $100 each; I doubt if that is possible today.

For those who would like to spice up their collections with a few "flyspecks," I hope I have put them on the trail of some.

I'm certain there are others I do not know about. If readers care to advise me of them, I'll try to get the information into one of my future columns. ■

The stamp in the upper right corner of this block shows "doubling" of "MEXICO" and is a rather scarce variety of a modern issue. Scott C220C is shown.

Poor roads, bandits hampered diligencias

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

The evolution and development of methods for transporting mail have always interested serious collectors. A fascinating area for me has been the use of diligencias for 19th-century postal purposes.

Diligencias, or stagecoaches, came into play after the end of the Spanish conquest when business and commerce began to penetrate the feudal system which existed while the Spaniards controlled Mexico.

The 1830s saw the formation of the first organized firms to transport people and goods.

In 1840 (or 1850), Don Manuel Escandon formed Las Diligencias Generales, the most famous of many private companies specializing in carrying passengers, merchandise and mail between the major cities of Mexico.

According to historical accounts, there were two original routes: The interior route connected Mexico City with Morelia, and the other ran east from Mexico City to the Veracruz on the Gulf coast.

One had to be an early riser to avail himself of this service. The Morelia coach left the capital at 4 a.m. and traveled westward through Toluca, Maravatio and Zitacuaro, arriving in Morelia the third day after it left Mexico City.

The Veracruz coach likewise left before dawn and took three days to make its journey, via Puebla, Jalapa and Puente Nacional.

These were arduous journeys. The roads were bad, especially during the rainy season, and travelers were constantly preyed upon by revolutionaries, highwaymen and bandits.

Despite these difficulties, Mexican postal authorities contracted with these firms to carry mail, and the competition that developed helped keep postal rates relatively stable.

I've previously described the district name overprint system designed to render valueless any stamps robbers might capture during a stage holdup.

We know, too, that once in a while the mails themselves were tampered with by these aggressive highwaymen.

I have a letter in my collection which was recovered from a robbery and sent on its way by postal authorities. It has an interesting endorsement which I'll write about in a future article.

Still other evidence of the chancy nature of mail delivery is the frequency with which one encounters duplicate, and sometimes even triplicate, letters dispatched (usually by different routes) to assure that at least one would arrive at the desired destination.

This stamp from the 1861 issue shows a large part of the oval cancel used at the diligencias office in Mexico City.

But the diligencias were so important to the postal system that the Diligencias Generales were authorized to receive and dispatch mail directly from their various offices.

They were even provided with distinctive canceling devices which were widely used.

Most of these were oval designs; some are rather attractive and quite scarce.

These examples are typical of the cancels used at the offices of the Diligencias Generales.

A favorite of mine is the cancel used at Toluca which shows a diligencia in motion, with the driver cracking his whip over his team of mules.

This elaborately detailed handstamp is difficult to find well struck on stamps and letters but is certainly a prize item for an exhibition collection.

The Transportation issue of 1895, which I wrote about earlier (*Linn's*, Oct. 10, 1983, page 27) has three stamps in the series showing the diligencias as the central design.

These were the 15 centavo, 20c, and 50c values. They're worth examining under an 8-power glass.

From the orientation of the Chapultepec Castle in the background and with a dash of imagination, we could speculate that this had to be the diligencia from Toluca enroute to the center of town.

As commerce expanded and much of the development centered on mining and selected exports, the coach lines prospered and the network grew.

A route ran to Tepic (nine days), through Queretaro, Guanajuato, Leon and Guadalajara.

Lines were established heading northward toward the United States and connecting with many of the mining towns along the way.

In one of my specialized fields, the issues of 1856 and 1861, I have assembled several album pages with stamps and covers showing the diligencia cancellations.

It's not easy to obtain a wide variety, but the diligencia ovals from Mexico City are not hard to find.

It's also fun to check the transit times on diligencia letters.

Most business letters were docketed with the date of arrival, and it's usually safe to assume the letter was posted on the day it was written or at worst, the day following.

Service wasn't bad, considering the conditions of travel in those days.

Eventually, however, the British interests started building railroads. These not only helped speed up communication but also made it safer.

The first railroad line connected Veracruz with the capital in January 1873.

The railroads took much of the mail business away from the diligencias.

In the latter decades of the 1800s, the diligencias gave way to the express companies, including Wells, Fargo. However, this is another longer story.

In the 1850s, '60s and early '70s, the diligencias provided mail service we can identify and examples of which are well worth adding to our collections. ■

An example from the Transportation issue of 1895 depicts a diligencia drawn by five mules. The Castle of Chapultepec is in the background.

Bull's-eye cancels preserve important data

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

I am attracted by well-centered and fully dated cancellations on individual Mexican stamps. They are eye-catching, and also provide important postal information about the stamps that bear them.

They definitely establish the time the stamps were used and where they were used.

In the case of issues with different printings or other subtle differences which are time related, such stamps can help fix the periods when these printings were actually used.

An Eagle stamp shows a small CDS from San Luis Potosi dated Feb. 15, 1866.

This 1868 issue has a CDS dated Dec. 19 of that year.

In the case of the first issue 2-real (see my article in *Linn's*, March 11, 1985, page 76), a dated cancellation can help establish whether the stamp belongs to a first plate printing or a later one. (Actually there are other differences which help do this, too.)

One might think the "socked-on-the-nose" phenomenon is a product of modern times. One also might consider that finding such items in the early issues of countries would be very difficult.

This is partly true. Centered, well-struck cancels on 19th century stamps may not be plentiful, but they do exist and they are fun to search out.

I think they represent an opportunity for collecting without enormous expense and which can lead to an interesting and important display.

A neat CDS was put on this Numeral issue April 4, 1894.

Many of the early Mexican cancelers were homemade and came in a large variety of shapes and forms. Some were used for a long time and were of such quaint beauty that they have been popular with specialists for years.

But circular datestamps also were used with the first stamps, so "socked-on-the-nose" stamps can exist for all the issues of Mexico.

Standard design cancelers came into use around the time of the Transportation issue of 1895, as these two examples show.

Double-ring CDS cancelers were used predominantly in the larger postal districts or cities, although dated ovals and other forms also were employed.

These large offices had double-ring CDS cancelers: Mexico City, Durango, Guadalajara, Guanajuato, Jalapa, Morelia, Orizava, Puebla, San Luis Potosi, Tampico and Veracruz.

In many instances, these devices were the most common cancelers employed.

Originally there was no standard with respect to size or format. Some were small enough that nearly all of the cancellation could fit on a single, well-margined stamp.

Others were too large for this. San Luis Potosi, for example, used a huge double-ring dated canceler (25 millimeters in diameter) during the 1850s, and it will not fit on a single stamp.

A pair or block is needed to show it entirely. This office later switched to a smaller canceler.

More and more CDS devices came into play in the 1860s and '70s so that stamps issued in those years are more easily found with CDS cancellations.

There are some beauties, such as the small CDS used at Puebla which is occasionally found perfectly centered on stamps of the 1868 issue.

This railway post office cancellation is dated 1938.

In the 1880s, Mexican postal officials attempted to standardize the design and size of canceling devices. These cancellations are not hard to locate on cheap stamps of those years.

The Medallion issues and Numeral issues of 1885-95 can provide good examples, as can the stamps of the Transportation issue.

However, it took a long time to get some of the smaller offices converted. Some continued to use the older cancelers right up to the turn of the century.

Designs of the standardized CDS cancelers were modified from time to time and also used to designate special classes of postal service.

We see them with notations for sucursales (branch post offices), ambulantes (traveling RPOs), certificacion (registry), and much later correo aereo (airmail).

Depending on stamp size, many CDSes can be found clearly struck and well centered so that with patience and perseverance several album pages of "socked-on-the-nose" specimens can be accumulated. ■

This large CDS (35 millimeters in diameter) is typical of those still in use.

Prolific Exporta issue types keep coming

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Ten years ago, Mexico introduced a new design format for its surface and airmail definitives. They were dubbed the "Exporta" issues because of the array of Mexican products depicted on the stamps which Mexico desires to promote.

Specialists predicted early that massive printings required to satisfy postal needs would make the Exporta stamps a prime field for serious collecting and study. This has certainly turned out to be true.

The major difficulty I have had with these stamps is categorizing the varieties. There now are well in excess of 200 major varieties, counting denominations, perforations, paper, watermarks and color shades.

If minor color varieties are included, along with the many instances of minor printing flaws ("flyspecks"), the number probably approaches 300.

While they have been in use, severe inflation in Mexico has rendered some of the early, lower denominations virtually useless. Current denominations now range up to 500 pesos ($1.70 U.S.).

A challenge to Mexican collectors because of its complexity, the Exporta issue promotes Mexican products (clockwise from top left) steel tubing, cattle and beef, tequila and shoes.

Unfortunately, Scott's standard catalog neither recognizes nor lists many of the subvarieties, color shades and papers, so it provides little help in arrangement for serious collectors.

Other catalogs are marginally better but not as generally available.

I owe thanks to many readers for motivating this introduction to a rather complicated field.

Two people have been especially helpful. Wolfgang Schoen of West Germany (staff member of Lighthouse Publications) sent a detailed listing and catalog cross reference table his firm had prepared to aid collectors in identifying and organizing Exporta stamps.

I am informed that Lighthouse has a well constructed section of album pages for them, but I have not seen them.

Enrique Sanchez of Mexico, a self-proclaimed "fanatic" of the Exporta stamps, also sent me a copy of an excellent checklist he had devised to keep track of the various stamps in this series.

What both had in common was that the stamps should be classified and mounted according to the characteristics of the paper on which they are printed.

The Exporta series also includes airmails, such as these picturing tomatoes and strawberries.

Since Mexican postal authorities rarely have preannounced issue dates for most of the varieties, it is virtually impossible to organize them in strict chronological order.

Separation by paper type will group them in a roughly consistent time sequence.

On the other hand, there are numerous varieties of the same denomination (and design), so this may not be a good way to sort them either.

Furthermore, there now are about 26 denominations of surface mail stamps and 15 different airmails, not all of which exist on the different papers.

Sanchez identifies seven issues (papers), each showing distinctive characteristics.

These include texture, thickness, type of gum, watermarks (most have none), and appearance under ultraviolet light.

He also notes design size differences and major color shades. Perforation measure is another variable.

Tools for serious study are a black light, a watermark de-

tector and a paper caliper.

Space constraints will not permit a tabulation of all this information here, but I will be glad to forward a composite checklist to anyone who sends me a stamped, addressed envelope in care of *Linn's*.

Another caution: Since the stamps are still in current use, no checklist can be entirely up to date.

And there's always the chance new varieties will come to light from earlier printings.

Typically such finds turn out to be the rarities of an issue. And some varieties are already considered scarce.

Another useful source of information is *Mexicana*, the journal of MEPSI (Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International).

Since the first announcement of these stamps in the April 1976 issue, it has tried hard to keep up with the series in a quarterly new issues column.

Also, several contributors have written short articles on the Exporta stamps. A recent one (January 1985) deals with some of the minor "flyspeck" varieties.

It's another good reason to join MEPSI if you become addicted to the Exporta stamps.

Information is available from MEPSI, 4860 N. Camino Real, Tucson, Ariz. 85718.

If there is a positive response from readers to this article, I will try to deal with some specifics in the future. ■

Early stamps chopped up to meet rates

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Legitimate use of parts of stamps to pay postage has always captured the fancy of serious collectors.

Bisects of the U.S. 1847 10¢ black on cover are among the most highly prized items in an exhibit of that issue.

They are exceedingly rare, and their market value reflects this rarity, running into five figures for decent and authenticated examples.

Most of us can never hope to possess such an item of U.S. origin, but with Mexico, the chances are better.

The use of fractional stamps almost always was dictated by a very simple fact: Postal agents ran out of stamps of the proper denominations and had to resort to other expedients.

In most cases such a practice was not covered in postal regulations. It was neither condoned nor prohibited.

During the time of the first three or four Mexico issues (1856-67), getting adequate supplies of stamps from the main office to the outlying postal districts was often a chancy proposition.

This we know from the security techniques I've described in some of my previous articles.

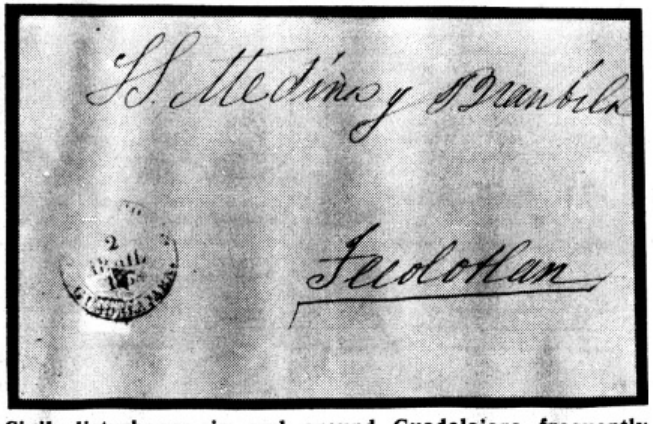
What usually happened was that when an office ran out of the 1-real and 2r stamps which paid the most common postal rates, they simply started chopping up 4r and 8r stamps into appropriate fractions to make the necessary postage.

Probably the most common fractional is a quadrisect of an 8r stamp.

Demand for a stamp of this high value (about $1 U.S.) was limited to occasional heavy letters or registry mail, so they were often in surplus anyway. Bisects of the 4r are the next most common.

Once in a while a postmaster would need to make a rate requiring a 1r increment with no 1r stamps on hand.

This was accomplished by splitting a 2r, quadrisecting a 4r, or perhaps taking a sliver from an 8r, though experts argue whether this was ever truly done.



Civil disturbance in and around Guadalajara frequently caused stamp shortages when communication with Mexico City was interrupted. This quadrisect of the 1856 8r on full cover dated April 2, 1858, was used to pay the 2r rate.

These last items mentioned are several times rarer than the 8r quadrisect or the 4r bisect.

Some other odd fractional usages fall into the scarce to rare category, such as three quarters of an 8r used for 6r, quadrisect of both an 8r and 4r used for 3r, etc.

Combinations of whole stamps plus fractions on cover are very desirable, but also rare.

Certain postal districts are known for fractional usages. Zacatecas, Guadalajara, Guanajuato, Morelia and their respective suboffices were the source of many covers bearing splits. This fact also helps in determining genuineness.

Some fabrications were made to look like one-of-a-kind rarities when we know that likelihood of fractional use from the location in question is remote to nil.

Fresnillo, a suboffice of Zacatecas, was a source of many attractive covers bearing fractions of the 4r 1856 issue in a rich vermilion shade

Likewise, other suboffices of this district produced numerous quadrisects of the 1856 8r.

The 1861 issue has a fairly abundant supply of splits, but as postal agents became more adept at forecasting needs (and receiving adequate supplies) the practice of splitting large denomination stamps declined.

This diagonal split of the 4r 1856 issue from the district of Veracruz was used and canceled at Cosamalopam suboffice.

Consequently, fractional usages of the Eagle stamps are much scarcer, and of subsequent issues, quite rare.

There are numerous variations in split stamps. A 4r could be bisected vertically, horizontally or diagonally.

A quadrisect could be cut in rectangular or triangular form, and they were.

Triangular quadrisects are somewhat scarcer than rectangular ones. So quite a number of different formats could be collected and displayed.

Most serious collectors like their fractional pieces on full cover, which is the form in which I prefer collecting them.

This way, dates can be checked (from docketing or datelines) to see if the item correlates with known periods of stamp shortages.

Unfortunately, when some of the old Mexican business archives were first found and looted for stamps, many were unceremoniously removed from the letters their postal history value destroyed.

A large number of splits were cut off, preserving at most the town postmarks.

As a result, there are many splits offered on piece. These are usually traded at deep discounts over the same, or similar, items on full cover.

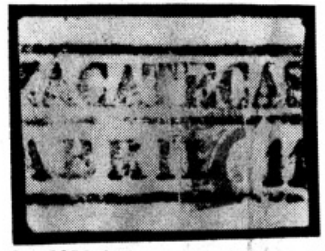
Collectors trying to form a representative collection of classic Mexican stamps should really try to add a cover or two bearing a split.

It will reflect more graphically than words some of the postal difficulties of the period and will not require a second mortgage on the house.

Such an item from a common district should be available between $100 and $200, depending on condition. A perfectly genuine split on piece can be purchased for much less.

A word of caution: In the case of covers, it's advisable to acquire items with a certificate of authenticity or with the provision that one will be obtained.

Most of the better pieces which come on the market already have them.



An 1856 8r was quadrisected to pay the 2r single rate at the Zacatecas district office.

Either the Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International or American Philatelic Society can provide acceptable certificates; their examiners are very familiar with the forgeries. ■

Paper key to collecting Numeral issue

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

The advertisement illustrated with this article was given me by a friend as a philatelic souvenir. It is an envelope stuffer used by a 19th-century stamp dealer to call attention to a then current Mexican stamp issue he had stocked for sale.

I never heard of Mr. Beard of Muscatine, Iowa, but the Numeral issue (Scott type A18) he was promoting offers some broad collecting opportunities and is a series neglected by specialists. Literature on it definitely is lacking.

The Numeral definitives were used between 1886 and 1896. They were designed and produced at the government printing office using a machine-engraved oval frame with numeral centers designating the values.

Various colors, papers and perforations were employed, and this is the root of some of the problems collectors have had.

There are many look-alike stamps with subtle, but important, differences. Even the listings in the Scott catalog are not altogether satisfactory, but they do form a basis for organization.

In my view, the best system is to use paper characteristics as the primary means for grouping, in much the same manner I recommended in my recent article on the current Exporta stamps (see *Linn's* July 9, page 30).

This approach originally was proposed by E.W. Fager in an article he wrote in 1958.

This 10-centavo stamp was one of those printed on ledger paper and shows the faint blue-green lines on both the face and back.

Design dimensions, colors, and perforations are secondary characteristics in the organization. Here's how it goes:

For the first half of the period, from 1886 to about 1892, four different issues were produced on unwatermarked paper.

The first stamps were printed on a hard, wove paper with clear designs about 28 millimeters tall in the various colors listed from Scott 174 to 183.

Dated cancellations show the greatest number were used in 1887.

Starting in 1887 stamps had with blue lines on the face and/or the reverse.

A paper shortage may have been behind this, as it appears surplus ledger sheets were used as printing stock.

This paper shows a clear wove pattern. Beware of these "blue-lined" stamps; fakes are many.

Genuine lines are blue-green or dull green and when viewed with transmitted light appear quite bright though sometimes almost invisible.

Faked lines generally appear dark against transmitted light. Dated cancellations will favor 1888.

The next issue is found on a very soft paper with a faint, indistinct wove pattern. These are plentiful and relatively easy to identify with a little experience.

Many stamps of this issue have developed a yellowish cast, indicative of poor paper quality. On these, the oval is about 28.5mm high and usage was between 1888 and 1891.

Still another coarse, soft paper can be distinguished for stamps of the same period.

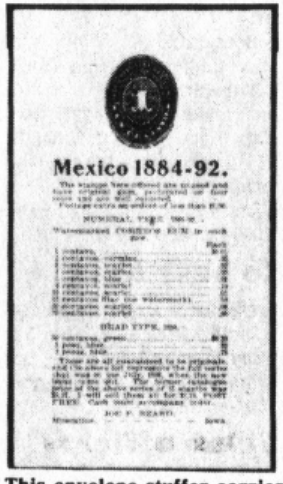
It is characterized by the presence of microscopic wood chips on the surface of the paper which are visible under strong magnification.

Dull colors are the rule with these stamps. They are quite common but difficult to find in good condition. The paper stains easily, and is so weak it tears readily.

The oval design height is 28mm, which helps distinguish this type from other soft paper stamps.

Between 1892 and 1896, there were at least two and possibly three distinct printings on watermarked paper. It is a hard-surfaced stock, with clear wove pattern.

The stamps come in a variety of colors, much like the first series (with some exceptions). Scott lists them as 212-221.



This envelope stuffer carries an ad from a 19th-century dealer of Mexican stamps.

The complete watermark pattern consists of ten letters, C O R R E O S E U M, in ten horizontal rows so that each stamp in the sheet usually shows all or part of one of the letters.

Occasionally stamps belonging to these issues are found without the watermark. These come from the edge of the paper sheet, printed in a selvage area outside of the watermark network.

Although listed by Scott in a separate grouping, the orange stamps are color varieties of this first batch.

They were from early printings on watermarked paper and are found bearing postmarks dated 1892.

Another characteristic is the height of the oval, 28mm or slightly less, which differentiates this type from the final issue, which was printed on a thinner, hard, clear, wove paper.

On these, the design oval is unmistakably taller, measuring 28.5mm or a fraction more.

These three stamps show the compound perforations so frequently found on this issue. These are 5½ by 11 or 11 by 5½. Note the typical ragged edges from separation.

A word about perforations: The normal perforation gauge for all stamps of this type was either 11 or 12.

The existence of the 5½ and 6 and compound perf varieties is the result of difficulties with the perforating process.

Most experts now agree that the perforating machines consisted of comb-type devices with alternating long and short teeth. This was done to equalize the force needed to pierce the paper.

It is probable that several sheets were stacked for perforating at one time and some of the sheets may not have been punched completely through.

Unfortunately, quite a few fabrications exist. I haven't yet mentioned the high value 5-peso and 10p stamps issued on the watermarked paper in 1892 (Scott 228 and 229).

These are the keys to a complete collection and are very expensive, consistent with their scarcity.

Even if one's budget won't allow for these, one can still have fun hunting for the others and separating them into their proper categories.

And it's a challenge to find nice copies of some of them. Many have ragged perforations, poor centering and straight edges.

The half perf varieties are particularly difficult to locate in fine condition, since many were badly damaged when first separated from their sheets. ■

Exporta flyspeck errors prove popular

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Nearly 100 collectors asked for the checklist of Mexican Exporta issues I offered in my July 8 column (page 30), reinforcing a feeling I had that there is considerable interest in these stamps.

So many people expressed a desire for more information that I decided to write this article on some of the "flyspeck" errors to be found on the Exporta stamps. "Flyspecks," too, are a popular topic with readers!

Printing mistakes and flaws always capture the attention of serious collectors. Evidence of this is the philatelic status enjoyed by the inverted "Jenny" airmail, U.S. Scott C3a.

Nothing of that importance is likely to emerge from these stamps, but there are some slips which can be fun searching for.

All Exporta stamps carry inscriptions, usually at the bottom or right side of the design, which identify the designer and end in the initials T. I. E. V.

(This stands for "Talleres de Impresion de Estampillas y Valores," which translated means the Mexican government printing office for stamps.)

Hawk-eyed collectors have found numerous instances where the periods following those initials are missing or where there are breaks in some of the letters.

They have determined that the missing periods and broken letters are repetitive and correspond to certain stamp positions on the sheet, which is essential for calling them constant errors.

One recognized variety of the Exporta issue of Mexico is the 1.60-peso airmail with an orange spot near the rim of the bicycle wheel. This and all illustrations in this article do not show actual errors; they are only simulated photographically.

Missing periods can be found for the following denominations and issues: 40-centavo (coffee), 1.60-peso (bicycles), 5p (autos) and 5.20p (farm machinery) of the first issue.

In the second, watermarked issue, similar omissions are seen on the 3p, 4p (both designs) and 10p stamps.

Space does not permit a complete rundown of the instances of this happening, but Donald Alexander has described the examples he knows about in *Mexicana*, the MEPSI journal, and is willing to correspond with any collector who wishes to exchange information.

His address is 809 Parchment, Parchment, Mich. 49004.

Jose Alvarez of Monterrey, Mexico, provided me several interesting examples of printing flaws which I think are worth looking for. These are somewhat more dramatic.

The "broken pipe" variety is evident on the second pipe from the right in the top row on the 6p stamp. Like other such varieties, it occurs only once in a sheet of 50 stamps.

One occurs in the 1.60p Bicycle airmail of the fourth issue. A small orange dot appears at 9 o'clock in the front wheel on stamps in position 48 of sheets which bear the registry pair numbers.

Another printing defect occurs in the 6p Iron Pipe surface mail stamps. There is a break in the circumference of the pipe in the upper right-hand corner opposite the Exporta insignia.

It could be called a "broken pipe" variety. It is seen on both the vermillion stamp of the sixth issue and the recent gray stamp of the same design. It occupies position 8 of the sheet.

Still another variety is found on the 20p Movie airmail. The stamp in sheet position 36 has a white spot at the base of the "0" of the "20."

All of these flaws occur only once in the sheet so you may have to examine a hundred stamps or so before you find one. But if you do, you will have something 50 times scarcer than the normal stamp.

A white spot can be found in the "0" of "20" on this Exporta airmail stamp.

The problems of classifying Exporta stamps still plague the various catalogers. This, in turn, is causing headaches for those people who are designing and printing albums for Mexican stamps.

Since my last Exporta article, I have secured Lighthouse album pages for the Exporta period and find they are quite comprehensive.

I have heard that Scott probably will revise some of its listings, and that a newly formed committee from MEPSI has offered to assist Scott.

Minkus also has produced album pages (and detailed listings) for the many types of Exporta stamps.

In any event, the situation is still quite confused, but several groups are working hard to achieve some order out of the chaos.

Personally, I prefer approaching this challenge with blank album pages and devising a mounting scheme adapted to the material and the theme I wish to develop.

It takes a little more time and thought, but will pay dividends in one's understanding and appreciation of the issues.

My basis is the paper type. This is an approach which many of the classicists use with 19th century issues. It is also a good way to separate stamps on the initial sorting.

For those who may have missed the earlier offer, I will still mail an Exporta checklist to anyone who sends a stamped, addressed envelope to me in care of *Linn's*. ■

Envelope fronts used as registry receipts

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

During the 19th century, most countries developed special methods of protecting important or valuable mail.

Mexico was no exception, and its procedures offer yet another interesting facet to the philately of that country.

When something important or valuable was mailed and the sender wanted assurance it was received he would send it "certificada" which has about the same meaning as registered.

For this class of service, the postal instructions called for the removal of the front panel of the envelope or wrapper covering a parcel, having it countersigned by the addressee (or his agent) on the reverse and returned to the sender as proof of delivery.

This procedure was followed for almost all of the so-called classic issues of Mexican stamps, at least until about the time Mexico joined the Universal Postal Union in 1879.

These registered mail receipts, or "fronts" as we call them, are much prized by collectors and generally fetch handsome prices at auction.

In fact, they are rather a hallmark of a good classic exhibit of Mexico. I always look for them when I see a collection on display.

Figure 1 shows such a "front." From the large amount of postage, 25 reales, it is safe to assume it was probably cut from a parcel wrapper, perhaps containing court documents or legal papers, the sender wanted to make sure were carefully handled.

Figure 1. This registered front — probably cut from a parcel wrapper — bears the first issue of Mexico and comes from a cover directed to Puebla from Mexico City Aug. 26, 1856.

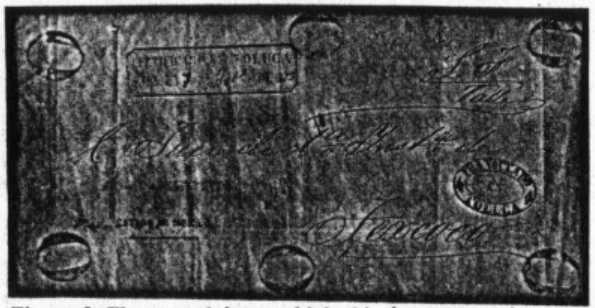


Figure 2. The parcel from which this front was taken was prepaid in Toluca for delivery in Texcoco (near Mexico City) in 1873. The rate is not indicated.

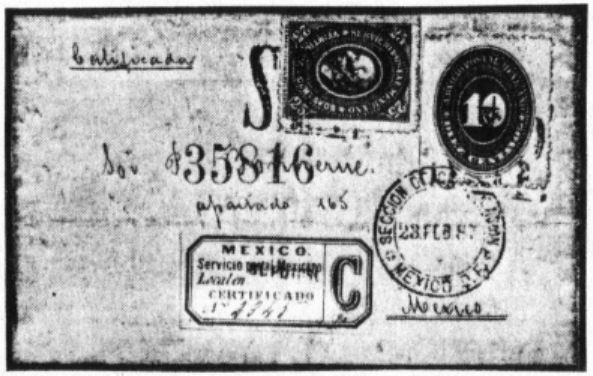


Figure 3. Two different stamps were used on this registered envelope from San Luis Potosi to Mexico City Feb. 20, 1887.

Note too, the use of a rectangular handstamp to record the city and date of dispatch. All large post offices had such handstamps to use with registered mail.

The other significant feature about this piece is that it is dated just a few days after the first stamps of Mexico were issued.

In fact, no other office except the main one in Mexico City had yet received stamps when this was mailed Aug. 26, 1856!

Space doesn't permit discussion of the registry rates; that is a story in itself.

But according to the first tariff in effect at the time the first postage stamps appeared, an 8r charge was added to the regular postage, except if a letter weighed less than one-half ounce.

In that case the 8r covered both postage and registry fee.

Another reason for the popularity of registry fronts is because they usually bear the high denominations of the early issues and are occasionally found in attractive combinations with the lower, more common values.

They often are the only way a postal historian will obtain those denominations on cover.

Figure 2 shows another characteristic common to early registered covers.

We know from the address and the countersignature (not shown) on this front from Toluca that court documents were involved.

The six large "O" cancellations around the perimeter of the piece call attention to the fact that it was a registered parcel and that it required special handling.

Such markings are frequently seen on the fronts of this period.

The registered cover in Figure 3 comes from the era after Mexico joined the UPU and illustrates a more sophisticated means of handling registered mail.

This letter was mailed in San Luis Potosi. It bears a registry label with a number corresponding to a log book entry used for control purposes.

A second control number was applied at Mexico (struck over the name of the addressee) in addition to the receiving datestamp below the 10-centavo stamp.

On the reverse is an oval handstamp across the closure flap applied in much the same manner as is done today.

Another attractive feature of this cover is that it carries a 10c stamp from the then current Large Numeral issue (1885-86) in combination with a 25c stamp from the previous Medallion issue (1884) paying the registry fee.

It has become easier (and cheaper) to acquire registered covers from the Numeral issue onward. Even the registered covers of the 20th century can add considerable interest to a collection.

Some people collect some of the rather curious labels and closure stickers the Mexican postal authorities used on registered mail.

The previously described cover has a registry label at the bottom which is typical of the many types used in that period and right on up to modern times.

I have seen older collections with these labels mounted among the stamps.

I guess 19th century collectors preferred the bits of paper to the full covers which are now much more desirable and valuable.

Figure 4 shows another attractive accessory of the postal department which many collectors have saved in their albums — closure seals for registered letters.

Issued by and available in the post offices, they were applied, in place of a dated handstamp or wax seal, across the envelope flap on the reverse of a letter.

They were intended to prevent tampering with the envelopes. They first came into use about 1912 and have been seen used on letters as late as 1954.

These closure seals came in a variety of colors — blue, red and green — all with numerous shades.

The designs and letter inscriptions were almost always embossed. The "sun-burst" borders were die cut, with differing numbers of points.

These seals, together with the registry labels have been collected and studied by a few Mexican specialists.

Several dozen distinct varieties exist which would make an interesting sideline challenge to anyone's collecting. Never mind that they aren't stamps. They are still part of philately and worthy of attention. ■

Figure 4. The designs and inscriptions are embossed on these three types of registered mail closure labels used about 1913.

Top exhibits, stable Scott prices mark 1985

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

As I've done in the past two years, I'll use this December column for "bits and pieces" on reader feedback and for subjects worth mentioning but which cannot justify a full article.

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In several of my articles I have given plugs to MEPSI, the Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International, a specialist group for collectors who concentrate on the stamps and philately of Mexico. This year MEPSI celebrated its 50th anniversary.

To mark this milestone, a group of Mexican collectors joined forces with MEPSI in sponsoring a show and party in Mexico City.

The show, called MEXIFIL '85, was staged June 8-30 and was organized under the auspices of the Mexican Federation of Philately, A.C. Exhibition entries were restricted to postal history and stamps of Mexico.

Mexico issued commemorative stamps, and numerous social affairs took place during the final week.

It is doubtful that an assemblage of Mexican philately such as the one at MEXFIL '85 ever again will be gathered in one spot.

Although I was unable to attend the show, one judge, who is a friend of mine, told me it was the finest and most comprehensive array of Mexican philately he had ever seen or ever expected to see. And he has seen a lot of Mexican stamps in his lifetime.

The collections on display covered the period from the earliest colonial mails up to the present time. Included were some of the most important collections known to exist.

We can only hope some of these collections will make their way to AMERIPEX.

MEXFIL, comprising some 41 entries occupying 185 16-page frames, was housed in the Biblioteca Nacional (National Library), a magnificent converted church structure dating from the Spanish period located in downtown Mexico City.

The latest issue of *Mexicana*, the MEPSI journal, arrived a few days ago and describes some of the 50th anniversary events. But it ends with an absolutely chilling piece of news.

In the earthquakes that hit Mexico City Sept. 19 and which measured 8.1 on the Richter scale, one casualty was the roof of the National Library. It collapsed into the very area where only two and a half months earlier some of the world's best collections of Mexican stamps were on display!

In the perspective of geological time that has to be a very "near miss" to what could have been a devastating loss to Mexican philately.

•

My 1986 edition of Scott's *Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue*, Volume III, came recently. Based on a quick scan through the section on Mexico, my suggestion is that readers may want to save money and not buy one if they already own the 1985 edition.

There are virtually no price changes in the key items (or the others as well) from the classic period up to the recent issues.

In fact, the first price change I spotted was for the Penny Black commemorative issue of 1940, which shows a $5 drop in the surface mail set and a $10 reduction in the airmail set.

The '86 catalog carries about 25 new entries for commemorative stamps (through October 1984) and an expanded listing for the Exporta series.

Several prices for Exporta stamps have increased, but I'm certain we will see a lot of activity with this series in the next few years.

Catalog listings have to be improved and prices adjusted to reflect market activity as collectors compete for the scarcer varieties.

Of course, if you don't have a recent Scott catalog, by all means get one; it's a fundamental tool needed to enjoy the hobby.

•

This is the time of the year when some of us think about resolutions. I have resolved to remount at least one of my collections which desperately needs it and to begin mounting some loose Mexican material I have been accumulating in a shoe box for a couple of years.

Perhaps I can urge some readers to make a similar resolution and work on an exhibit collection of Mexico.

I have been watching the winners lists from major shows published in *Linn's* and am amazed at how few exhibits feature the stamps and covers of Mexico.

I'm thoroughly convinced there are many opportunities to form prize-winning collections with patience, perseverance and not a great deal on money.

As noted in these columns, there are abundant 19th and 20th century issues which are cheap, which have the stuff of true philatelic research and which are showable.

•

Finally, my thanks for the many letters received regarding the articles, and especially for the notes contained with the requests for checklists.

It really was astonishing to learn how many people are interested in the stamps of Mexico and who would take the time to say so.

Good collecting and best wishes of the holiday season! ■

Overprints provide fascinating study

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

This month I would like to discuss some of the collecting opportunities in overprinted postage stamps issued during the Mexican Revolution of this century.

Earlier (*Linn's*, April 1984, page 30) I wrote about "Victory at Torreon" overprints, only available for a couple of days in a frontier post office, and have become quite expensive to own.

But they did mark the beginning of an era of overprints which, in some respects, rivals the complexity of overprinting seen on the early classic issues of Mexico.

The overprinted, and later surcharged, stamps of the period 1914-1918, are often referred to by Spanish speaking collectors as "gomigrafos," which roughly translated, means rubber stamp overprints.

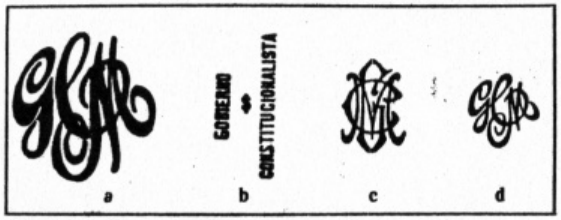


Figure 1. These overprints were applied to Mexican stamps by various revolutionary factions.

Figure 2. The government of Venustiano Carranza created these overprints.

which were essentially commemorative in nature, celebrating Pancho Villa's victory over federal forces at Torreon in April 1914.

They were issued in exceedingly small numbers, were

Many collectors are wary of embarking on a serious acquisition program because of the numerous manipulations which exist and the fact that many issues may have been created to meet philatelic demand.

Still, for those with the patience and the motivation to do their homework, the stamps can become a fascinating study.

A representative collection can be assembled without spending a lot of money. In fact, I have picked up quite a few nice examples from dealers' shoebox offerings and remainder collections.

An increasing number of collectors have begun to specialize in these stamps recently.

Just two years ago a meeting and exhibition in Hermosillo, Mexico, was dedicated exclusively to the stamps of the revolutionary period.

The good attendance and success of the exhibition indicate renewed interest in what once was an unpopular field.

The reasons for so many different overprinted stamps can be understood readily when one reads the history of the Mexican Revolution.

The movement got its start as a revolt against the government of Porfirio Diaz which extended favors to the rich, but which exacerbated the plight of the peasants and working class.

As the struggle wore on, various strongmen emerged, each in turn seizing control of the government. Internecine strife became the order of the day.

During this time the postal system continued to operate (more or less) but the people in power saw to it that postage stamps bore the mark of their party.

As a result, numerous overprints were used to "revalidate" stocks of stamps left over from previous administrations. The proliferation of overprints began in 1914, after the "Torreon" stamps.

Figure 3. Usually struck in violet or purple ink, large monograms were placed on 1910 stamps.

Figure 4. This overprint type is nicknamed "dollar sign."

Most of these originated with the Constitutionalist movement in northern Mexico. The first was a large, rubber stamped overprint of the interlaced letters GCM (Figure 1a).

Typically they were struck in violet or purple on the then current stamps of the 1910 issue.

The GCM stood for Gobierno Constitucionalista Mexicano (Constitutional Mexican Government).

A variety of other overprints used in cities or areas under the control of revolutionary forces soon followed.

Many of these never have been recognized by Scott but are listed in Minkus and other specialized Mexican catalogs.

The next Scott listings are for the so called "dollar sign" overprints (Figure 1b), where the words Gobierno Constitucionalista (typeset) were applied to the 1910 series and to a few copies of the 1899 issue.

Two more common overprints were monograms. The overprint shown as Figure 1c is known as the "Villa" type, ordered and applied at the end of 1914 during Pancho Villa's brief reign as supreme commander.

Figure 1d is the Carranza type, used after Venustiano Carranza gained control of the government.

During Carranza's reign, there were additional overprints, as shown in Figures 2a and 2b, often used in combination with the earlier ones.

The "corbata" (necktie) type, designated still another form of government (which I believe stood for Provisional Government of Mexico).

The other was a revaluation overprint. Figures 3-6 show the various overprinted stamps.

Some of these stamps are fairly common, but a few are scarce and have high catalog prices. These are the ones to be cautious of when buying.

I've always thought these stamps should be collected used and on cover.

Examples of such usages ought to be checked carefully to be sure the postmarks and the covers correspond to correct usage period.

In other words, they must be from towns and cities when they were under control of the issuing entity.

The situation was so fluid in Mexico from 1910-20 that control shifted rapidly from one faction to another.

A good history book is essential to track these events.

Another complication was that certain states and localities printed their own provisional stamps. Some of these are noted in the major catalogs; others are not.

They too can be a lot of fun, but many such types properly used range from scarce to very rare.

For example, provisional postage stamps produced for Oaxaca, Sonora and Baja California were used on mail, but many are very difficult to locate and fetch high prices.

Figure 5. A key to genuineness is determining whether a provisional was used in a location controlled by the issuer at the time of use.

Figure 6. Combinations of overprints exist, such as this example of a monogram of the Carranza government and a "corbata" (necktie).

This article only brushes the surface of the broad subject of Mexican revolutionary philately.

In future articles, I'll delve into some of the many facets of individual issues. ■

Postmark, stamps honor women patriots

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Portraits of women appear on the two low values in the 1910 Mexican postage stamp series commemorating the centennial of the War for Independence.

The 1-centavo has a profile of Josefa Ortiz de Dominguez; the 2c shows Leona Vicario. Both played supportive roles in the Mexican struggle to throw off the Spanish yoke of colonialism.

It may have been quite a shock to a generally male dominated society for women to be immortalized in such a fashion, the first time it occurred with Mexican postage stamps.

It also may have startled other countries to see female subjects on postage stamps, other than monarchs or those in direct line to thrones.

The two women's exploits are worth noting. Josefa Ortiz de Dominguez was the wife of Miguel Dominguez, who was the corregidor (mayor) of the city of Queretaro in 1810.

This city was the hotbed of the independence movement. Both Dominguez and his wife were sympathetic to the cause, even though he derived his power and livelihood from the Spanish crown.

Josefa Ortiz de Dominguez spied for revolutionaries.

In the months just before the declaration of independence by Father Miguel Hidalgo, the Dominguez,' as a result of their official connections, provided valuable information to the insurgents about the activities of the Royalist garrison at Queretaro.

In fact, Josefa was able to forewarn the insurgent leadership when the Royalists learned who they were. In other words, they were spies.

Soon after the uprising began with the "grito" (shout for independence) on Sept. 16, 1810, both Dominguez and his wife were arrested for complicity.

However, they were eventually set free because the agent of the viceroy could not garner sufficient evidence to hold them.

In 1813, the case was reopened. Josefa was held under house arrest for quite some time in several convents, the way upper-class women prisoners were detained in those days.

As the movement neared its successful conclusion, her husband secured her freedom and they both lived to enjoy some of the fruits of their efforts.

A statue of Josefa, often referred to as the "Corregidora" since she too served as mayor of Queretaro, stands in one of the principal squares of that city.

Dona Leona Vicario, the socialite daughter of a wealthy Spanish couple from Mexico City, also was a champion of independence.

Her parents died early, leaving her a considerable fortune.

She became romantically involved with another supporter, Andres Quintana Roo, a young lawyer working in partnership with her guardian, who was a staunch Royalist.

When Quintana Roo's request for her hand was refused, he moved to Queretaro and joined the insurgents.

Dona Leona Vicario gave her considerable fortune to the fight for independence.

They continued to correspond, and meanwhile, Leona began diverting some of her wealth to support the independence movement.

Her role eventually was revealed when her letters to Quintana Roo were intercepted.

She, too, was arrested and detained in the convent of Belen College.

Freed in a daring rescue by three insurgents, she rejoined and married her lover and became directly involved with the movement.

As a result, she was declared a traitor by the Royalists, and all her assets were confiscated. She then was obliged to suffer the same hardships as her compatriots.

When the struggle ended, her efforts and sacrifices on behalf of the movement did not pass unrewarded.

She was given a hacienda in the state of Hidalgo and 80,000 pesos as repayment for her seized properties.

There's another facet to the Leona Vicario story of philatelic significance.

On Nov. 5, 1827, a decree was issued changing the name of the town of Saltillo to the "City of Leona Vicario."

For about three years between 1835 and 1838, a boxed postmark with "LEONA VICARIO" was used on mail from that city.

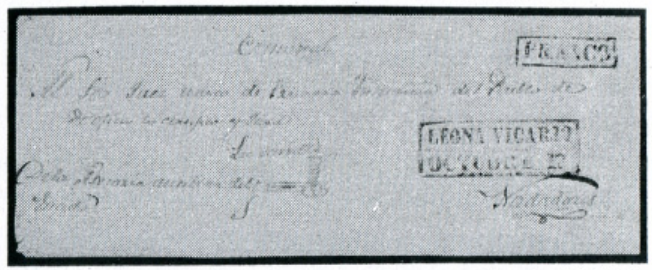
The receipted cover front illustrated here dates from that period.

However, for reasons I have not been able to discover, the name reverted to Saltillo about 1838 and has remained that to the present time.

Since 1910, Josefa Ortiz de Dominguez has been remembered twice again for her efforts. The 30c stamp of the 1923 issue depicts the monument erected in Queretaro in her honor.

In 1979 another stamp was issued to commemorate the 150th anniversary of her death.

So far, Leona Vicario has only the 1910 stamp and the short-lived postmark to remind us of her exploits. ■



This receipted cover from the city of Leona Vicario (Saltillo) to Nadadores, a small village north of Monclova, involved legal matters. It is countersigned and dated Oct. 22, 1835.

Gold rush spurred Wells, Fargo mail service

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

For most people, the name Wells, Fargo conjures up visions of stagecoaches lumbering over dusty Western roads and trails, or perhaps the express and banking operations for which Wells, Fargo became so famous.

This article will describe the activities of Wells, Fargo in the handling of mail and small packages in Mexico during the last two decades of the 19th century.

First, some historical background: Wells, Fargo was founded in New York City in 1852 and by July of that year had established an office in San Francisco.

Its early business included the transport of mail and parcels, with much impetus coming from the discovery and mining of gold and other precious metals in the West.

In 1853 it opened an office in Hawaii and by 1863 had extended service to the west coast of Mexico by way of a small, private steamship line which called at two Mexican ports.

Upon the completion of the Mexico City-Veracruz railroad in 1873, Wells, Fargo opened an office in Mexico City.

As an express company, it touted its ability to move mail and packages much faster, and probably safer, than other carriers. Official postal services in those days were erratic or lacking altogether.

For letters, Wells, Fargo prepared its own special "franked" envelopes.

The so-called "franks" bore distinctive designs, one could almost call them cachets, prominently showing the firm's name and in most instances citing the cost of the message service to be provided.

In addition to what Wells, Fargo charged for the franked envelopes, the sender was required to pay the corresponding Mexican postage.

In a way, Wells, Fargo acted like forwarders, expediting the movement of mail and parcels overland, particularly on the rapidly expanding railroad system.

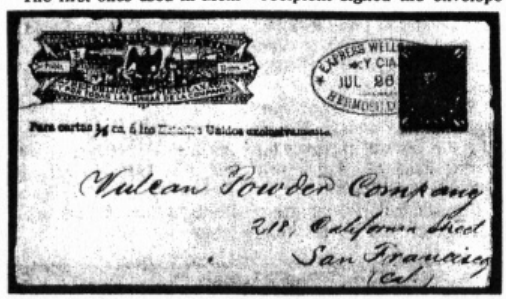
It operated under strict conditions of agreements signed with the governments of the United States and Mexico.

Evidently, operations in Mexico became so profitable that by the 1880s Wells, Fargo had agents in most towns and cities along the west coast from the U.S. border all the way to Mexico City.

The special franks prepared for Mexican service (see illustrations), had five denominations: 10 centavos, 15c, 20c, 25c and 30c, corresponding to the various costs of service offered.

These were sent to the government printing office where stamps of the correct denominations were printed on the envelopes.

The first ones used in Mexico about 1885 had stamps of the Hidalgo Head Medallion (Scott type A17) and were replaced in 1886 with the large numeral issue (Scott type A18).



An early Wells, Fargo frank (1886) with the Mexican 6-centavo Hidalgo Medallion Head was used for half-ounce letters to the United States. The frank cost 15c.

Different rates applied to mail Wells, Fargo delivered within Mexico, to the United States or to Europe.

In addition to the proper Mexican postage, Wells, Fargo added a line beneath the franking cachet (usually by handstamp) explaining the type of service for which the envelope was to be used. For example, "... ½ oz. letters exclusively for the U.S.," "... for the U.S. and Mexico," "... for Europe," etc.

When postal rates changed in 1895 and the Transportation issue (Mulitas) came out, envelopes were prepared bearing these stamps.

There also are instances where franks were struck with two postage stamps to pay for higher rated letters. And there is at least one recorded instance where the stamp was struck three times on the envelope.

Wells, Fargo franks make an interesting collection. Not only was there a large variety of usages, but the green cachets were printed in various shades and bore many different instruction lines.

Frequently, offices made handwritten changes to the values and weights when postal rates changed or when stocks of franks ran short.

Often, if the franks were used entirely within Mexico, they served as receipts. The recipient signed the envelope which was kept by the agent as proof of delivery.

In other instances, multiple franks were used to make up the postage on heavier items; these were affixed to the parcel, were overlapped so the stamps could be canceled, and are called "paste-ons."

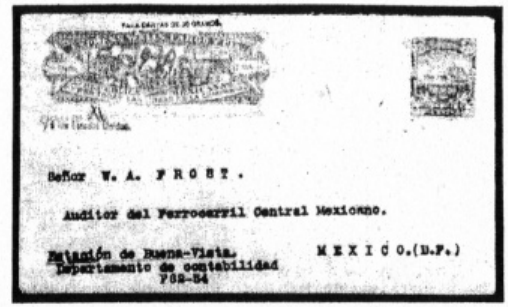
Typically these will not show an addressee, only a handstamp cancellation and sometimes a spot of glue.

Wells, Fargo even celebrated the 400th anniversary of Columbus' discovery of America by adding the inscription "1492 * EMISION COLUMBINA * 1892" above its regular frank. This is known as the Jubilee issue.

The year 1892 also marked the formation of two rival express companies in Mexico: Express Nacional and Express Hidalgo.

Under agreements similar to the one Wells, Fargo had with the Mexican government, these two firms concentrated their activities in an area along the east coast of Mexico between the U.S. border, Mexico City and the port of Veracruz.

Their methods of operation were almost identical to those of Wells, Fargo; they used their own distinctive franks and relied heavily on the railroads to carry letters and packages.



This July 17, 1897, frank has a 10-centavo stamp of the Transportation issue. The handwritten rerating of the frank covers one ounce, or 30 grams. This also is stamped above the frank.

I will write about them in a future issue. Both went out of business in 1899. Apparently, they could not successfully compete against the entrenched Wells, Fargo.

Wells, Fargo continued to prosper, and when the Mexican government took control of most of the foreign-owned railroads in 1909, it signed a joint express partnership with the government.

In the meantime, it had ceased carrying mail. The latest recorded Wells, Fargo franked envelope is dated September 1907.

Much information is recorded on the Wells, Fargo franked envelopes, particularly in the early issues of *Mexicana*, journal of the Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society.

Another very useful resource is the Higgins and Gage *World Postal Stationery Catalog*.

I frequently see Wells, Fargo covers in dealers' stock, so if you're looking for a new postal history subject to collect, you might want to try them. ■

Short lived Express companies carried mail

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

This is the sequel to an earlier article on the Wells, Fargo Express Co. (*Linn's* March 10, page 56), which carried mail in Mexico for some three decades before and just after the turn of the century.

It is not certain what prompted two other firms to enter the business in competition with the firmly established Wells, Fargo.

But the Mexican government may have encouraged competition by reserving certain regions for someone other than Wells, Fargo.

In any event, similar concessions were granted to the two companies for the transport of domestic and foreign mail. Their tenures in this business were short-lived, however.

Express Hidalgo was organized by Ramon Riveroll, a Mexican, in about 1890.

Riveroll's four younger brothers also were active in the enterprise in various capacities so that it became pretty much of a family business.

The Express Hidalgo operated in a territory much more compact than the sprawling domain of Wells, Fargo.

This included a region between Mexico City and Veracruz and important commercial centers in between.

The railroad connecting Veracruz and Mexico was complete, so there was a good volume of business to be had by the Riverolls.

Express Hidalgo printed franks in a format similar to Wells, Fargo.

This consisted of a cachet showing the profile likeness of Father Miguel Hidalgo (Figure 1) connecting with two circular ornaments at the ends.

The one on the left was inscribed with the name of the firm's founder, Ramon Riveroll; the other contained the price of the frank.

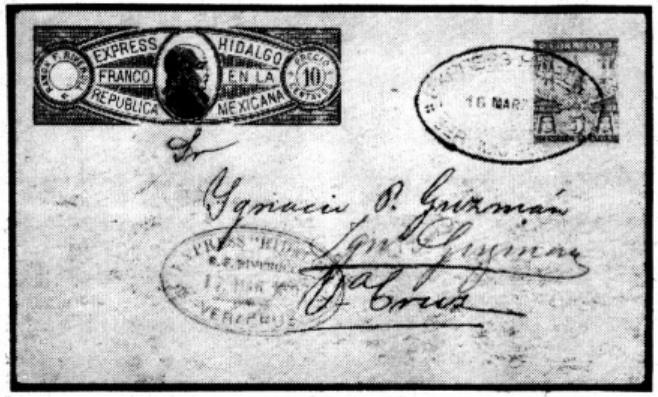


Figure 1. This Express Hidalgo franked envelope carried a letter from Jalapa to Veracruz and was used there as a receipt. It arrived March 17, 1897, after one day in transit.

As far as is known, there were only two denominations, 10 centavos and 15c.

The envelopes on which they were printed came in many different colors, mostly pastel and light shades. Over 30 distinct varieties have been cataloged, and more eventually may be found.

The 15c frank was used from 1893-95 in combination with an impressed 10c large Numeral stamp (Scott type A18), or a 10c rose stamp from the Transportation (Mulita) series (Scott type A23).

When postal rates were lowered in 1895, Express Hidalgo introduced the 10c frank which was impressed with a 5c Mulita stamp (Scott type A22).

This paid the Mexican postal rate for surface mail. This type is shown in Figure 1.

Although the territory in which Express Hidalgo operated was compact, it appears the Riverolls had agents in nearly every city and town of any consequence within that area.

In an early issue of *Mexicana*, Lawrence Ricks provided a list of some 100 distinct town cancellations on Express Hidalgo covers he had collected.

Express Hidalgo also maintained agents in New York and Havana for transferring foreign mail.

Such covers appear to be very rare. Such rapid expansion may have contributed to the early demise of the firm.

There are probably thousands of surviving Express Hidalgo franked covers, mostly with common rates and handstamps.

These handstamps nearly always contained the name of the town or origin, and covers typically received a similar handstamp strike at the destination. Thus, many covers carry two dated handstamps.

Express Hidalgo also used the envelopes as receipts, in much the same way as Wells, Fargo did.

On the cover illustrated, the original address directing it to Sr. Ignacio P. Guzman is written in ink.

Guzman (or possibly his agent) signed his name below in pencil and gave the envelope back to the Express Hidalgo agent.

The third express company I'll deal with is the Express Nacional (National Express).

It's operations also started in 1893 and its territory stretched north from Mexico City to the U.S. border along the Gulf Coast.

Very little has been recorded about Express Nacional.

There is record of the concession granted by the Mexican Government (October 1893) for it to carry mail in franked envelopes ". . . like those made for Wells, Fargo."

The National Express frank was larger and much more ornate than the other two.

The design consisted of a large Mexican coat of arms, and an eagle perched on a cactus holding a serpent in its beak, which filled the left third of the envelope (Figure 2).

The words "Express Nacional Mexicano" in an Old English type font surmounted the eagle. The Spanish words for "franked for letters" formed the base of the logo.

Prices for the franks were also indicated in the design.

All of the logos, which were printed in various shades of green, have either the words "Laredo Route" (English) or "Laredo Ruta" (Spanish) worked into the design just beneath the eagle's perch.

This is a reference to the National Railroad connection between Mexico and Laredo on which most of the mail was carried.

There were many more varieties of Express Nacional franks than Express Hidalgo and they carried a wide range of service endorsements as were used on the Wells, Fargo franks.

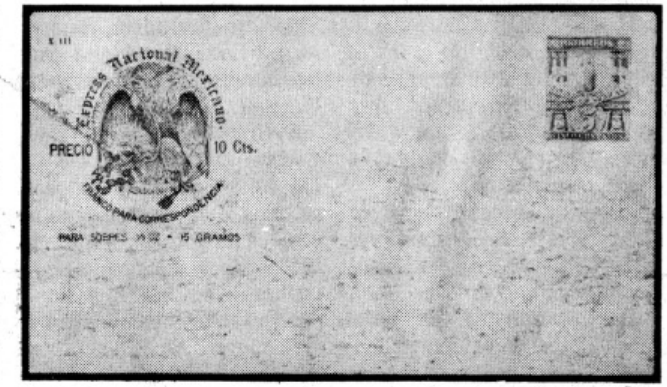


Figure 2. This unused Express Nacional frank was prepared for use after 1895 when the single weight surface rate was 5 centavos. The route inscription is in English.

Changes frequently were made with rubber handstamps, which obliterated old instructions and added new ones.

Another curious type were franks inscribed with the words "Negocio Oficial" (Official Business) where the stamp would normally be.

National Express appears to have been the only company to provide such franks for government use.

The latest recorded usage for the franks of both Express Hidalgo and Express Nacional is 1899, so it can be safely assumed that both went out of the mail carrying business at that time or shortly thereafter.

As noted in the previous article, the era of express company mail came to a close early in the first decade of this century.

But it left an attractive legacy for the postal historians in our hobby. ■

Perfins part of serious Mexican collecting

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Perfins are stamps which have been punched before use with initials, single letters or a monogram.

A collector friend of mine who's a bit of a wag refers to them as "holey" stamps.

Yet he collects them avidly and is always ready to facilitate an acquisition by claiming one could consider perfin stamps as damaged.

Many countries have perfin stamps, Mexico being no exception, and many philatelists are serious about them.

This idea of perfins arose because firms and agencies wanted to mark postage stamps used in their businesses as a deterrent to theft and use by dishonest employees.

Most of the Mexican perfins I have seen date from just before to just after the turn of the century.

This period of peak usage seems to coincide with use in other countries as well.

Perfins were produced by punching a pattern of small holes, perhaps a half millimeter in diameter, in stamps before they were used, probably just after purchase.

The devices initially used were hand operated punches containing dies or small pins in the proper arrangement.

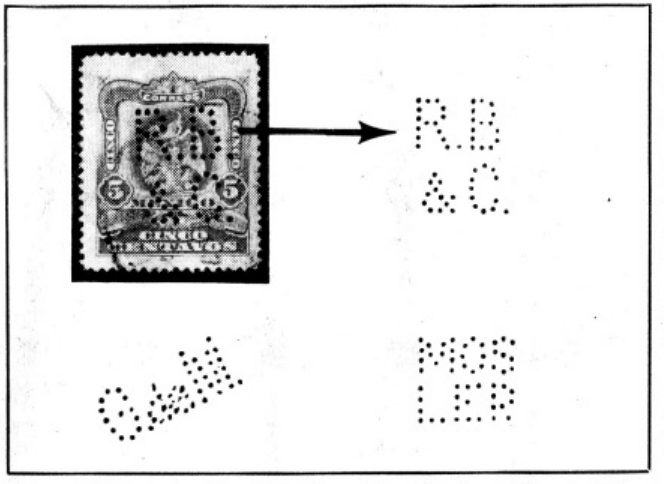


Figure 1. These perfins have been identified as Roberto Boker y Cia of Mexico City (top), government of Michoacan state (bottom left) and Mosler Safe Co. (bottom right).

A U.S. firm, B.F. Cummings of Chicago, was one manufacturer of such devices in the early 1900s.

Its successor, the American Perforating Co., remains in business today.

Other firms, notably British, French and German, produced similar machines but it is not known who provided the ones used in Mexico.

Cummings advertised hand operated punches capable of perforating single stamps, several stamps or even complete rows of stamps.

It also was claimed that punches could handle from three to six initials per stamp and up to four sheets, or thicknesses, per pass. The largest also were available in motor driven models.

The usual form of the punched patterns included either the initials of the firm name or some symbol readily associated with the firm.

Identification of a perfin stamp is relatively easy when it is found on cover with a company corner card.

But there are many loose stamps with punched initials, the origins of which remain a mystery.

Several years ago some Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International members cooperated in connecting names with perfin initials.

Those illustrated in Figure 1 have been identified as Robert Boker y Cia of Mexico City (R.B. & C.), Gobierno de Michaoacan or Government of the State of Michoacan (G. de M.) and Mosler Safe Co. (MOS/LER).

The companies using the perfins illustrated in Figure 2 are unknown.

An example in my early collecting awareness is what was known as the "Omega" perfin.

I had two high peso value stamps of the Transportation issue with it and feared that it depreciated the value of those two stamps.

Perhaps it does, but it is now known that the Omega was used by the Mexican government in some manner for administrative purposes.

I should add here that if any readers can identify some of the unknown perfins illustrated, I would be very grateful. Also, any new ones on Mexico stamps would be welcome.

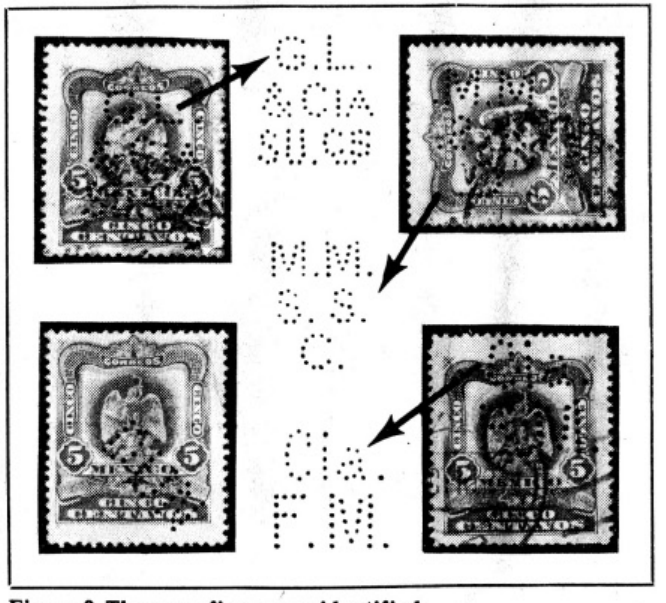


Figure 2. These perfins are unidentified.

When the revolution began in 1910, the use of perfin stamps appears to have dropped off sharply, if not disappearing altogether.

I can't imagine that employees suddenly became that much more honest; perhaps the business owners found other methods for safeguarding against the theft or misappropriation of stamps.

Anyhow, it's another small, but interesting facet of Mexican philately with enough different examples to fill two or three album pages.

Look for them the next time you're scanning a stock book with the 1899, 1903 and 1910 issues. You might want to try my friend's ploy in your dealings and get them at discount. ■

MEPSI has positive impact on philately

A scant ten miles from the site of AMERIPEX '86 is Elmhurst, Ill., a city with one of the most unusual philatelic tie-ins in the entire organized hobby.

To those of us who collect Mexico seriously, Elmhurst gained fame as the home of a stamp club that dedicated itself to the study and promotion of the philately of Mexico.

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

But it wasn't always that way. When the Elmhurst Philatelic Society was founded in September 1935, it started out like many other stamp clubs.

People interested in stamps met once a month to share their diverse philatelic interests.

Under good leadership the club prospered, but by 1942 the members of the EPS decided something was missing: a focal point for common interest.

They decided to select a country to study and collect together.

A committee was appointed, given a set of criteria and asked to make a recommendation for group specialization.

The chosen country would have to be well known with attractive stamps, sufficient variety and types to permit serious study and specialization, early stamps which weren't unduly expensive, and a clean stamp issuing record.

That is, all its stamps must have been produced to fill legitimate postal needs.

Ken Putnam, one of the early members, noted in a recent issue of *Mexicana* (the EPS journal) that the first country the committee suggested was the Dominican Republic.

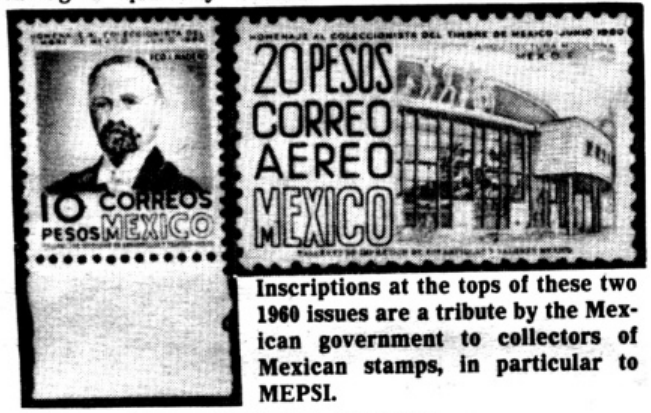
However, this immediately proved to be an unpopular choice, and Mexico was finally selected.

Once it was decided to specialize in the stamps and postal history of Mexico, it didn't take long for the club to be recognized as a focal point for Mexican philately.

Several local members began concentrating on various issues and eventually became experts in their fields.

Membership was opened to collectors beyond the environs of Elmhurst. Noted collectors of Mexico from all over the United States, England, Europe and Mexico soon joined the growing membership rolls.

In 1952, the club began publishing a quarterly bulletin which served as a vehicle for news and research articles, with members contributing generously.



Inscriptions at the tops of these two 1960 issues are a tribute by the Mexican government to collectors of Mexican stamps, in particular to MEPSI.

For those of us lucky enough to own a complete run, it serves as an invaluable resource for study and enjoyment of the stamps of Mexico.

Complementing *Mexicana*, the club sponsored numerous books on Mexican philately. Some of these are the definitive works on their subject.

John Bash and the late Otto Yag (one of the early pillars of EPS) collaborated on *Pre-Stamp Postal Markings of Mexico* in 1965.

Abraham Odfjell, a Norwegian collector, allowed EPS to publish his copious notes and charts on the classic issues of Mexico which he assembled while he was under house arrest by the Nazis during World War II.

In 1968, Richard B. Stevens, son of Byron Stevens, a founding member of EPS, published under EPS auspices *The Revenue Stamps of Mexico*.

Before his death in 1979, Stevens completed a revised edition which is unquestionably the most complete and up-to-date catalog on these interesting issues.

Meanwhile, Dr. Karl Schimmer's huge (448-page) work, *The Postmarks of Mexico: 1874-1900*, came out in 1977.

Other monographs have appeared over the years, either as adjuncts to *Mexicana*, or as booklets available to members at modest cost.

The society always has emphasized the social side of philately; the elegant annual banquets held by the original Elmhurst group are legendary.

In 1960, to mark its 25th year, a reunion was scheduled for Mexico City.

Local Mexican members handled the arrangements which included a special, limited issue of Mexican postage stamps (Scott 909 and C249). These two stamps have become known as the Elmhurst issue.

For MEPSIPEX '79, another stamp was issued honoring the society (Scott C605). Last summer at MEXFIL '85, the 50th anniversary of the club's founding was celebrated.

Since 1970, the society has been known as MEPSI, Mexico-Elmhurst Philatelic Society International.

This name change came about in recognition of the true international nature of its current membership, some 700 strong representing 20 countries.

Also, by the late 1960s, administrative leadership of the society was widely dispersed.

But much of the spirit of those early charter members remains. *Mexicana* flourishes, and society services have expanded.

When the Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International, founded in nearby Elmhurst, Ill., visited Mexico City in 1979, the Mexican government issued this stamp in its honor.

Members freely exchange information with one another and cooperate on research projects. And no one will decline the opportunity to have a good time.

Annual meetings now are held in conjunction with major shows. The last one took place in March at San Antonio, Tex., at TENANEX-TEXPEX '86.

Collectors interested in MEPSI membership should contact Lois Deutschman, 4860 N. Camino Road, Tucson, Ariz. 85718, for details.

It's difficult to gauge the positive impact MEPSI has had on Mexican philately, but it has been enormous.

I am certain those 25 or so collectors of Elmhurst, Ill., who met for the first time in Byron Stevens' home in September 1935 could not have imagined where it would all lead by the year 1986. ■

Mexico well represented at FIP shows

International stamp exhibitions like AMERIPEX '86 invariably attract outstanding collections which compete not only for medals and trophies but also for the prestige accorded to the collection owner for simply being part of such an event.

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

My first taste of an international exhibition came in 1968 at EFIMEX, a large show staged under International Federation of Philately authority in Mexico City immediately following the Olympic Games.

There were some 2,000 frames of material on display, and from the quality of collections shown, I was able to appreciate the time, effort, and yes, the financial commitment necessary for an exhibitor to qualify for such competition.

Furthermore, viewing those outstanding displays of postage stamps and postal history gave me the incentive to become even more serious about my hobby.

I also had the chance to meet and talk with many collectors and exhibitors who attended that show, some of whom have become fast friends in the intervening years.

Because EFIMEX '68 was held in Mexico, a number of fine collections of Mexican stamps were exhibited.

Seeing the great variety to be found in Mexican stamps convinced me that this was the country in which to specialize, a decision I had been wrestling with at the time.

Since 1968, I have read about and attended many stamp shows and exhibitions, and always have been keen to see how exhibits of Mexican stamps and covers fared.

As it turns out, until recently, few collectors exhibited Mexican material in international competition.

That is not to say there aren't serious philatelists with this as their specialty, just that not many entered the competitive arena.

This seems strange because, as I have been pointing out in my monthly columns in *Linn's*, Mexican stamps and postal history offer numerous areas for specialization every bit as important from a philatelic standpoint as material from the other so called "classic" countries.

But within the last decade or so, exhibits of Mexico have been cropping up with increasing frequency on the local as well as the international scene.

Another reason is that there is a small fraternity of collectors in Mexico who have begun to exhibit internationally with increasingly positive results.

To me, this represents a healthy situation. Many of the early, large holdings of classic Mexican material were assembled by Americans, Europeans and especially the British.

Most of these vast collections, formed in the early decades of this century, have now been broken up and dispersed, with much fine material finding its way back to the country of its origin.

At CAPEX '78, two Mexicans garnered three major awards. A vermeil went to Alberto Leal for an exhibit of Imperial Eagles (1864-66).

Two golds were awarded to Isaac Backal for "Maritime Mail" and "Mexican Registered Fronts."

LONDON 1980 and WIPA (Vienna, 1981) had a few Mexican collections, but the pace really began to quicken with ESPAMER (San Juan, Puerto Rico, 1982).

Viewing the exhibits at EFIMEX '68 helped the author decide to specialize in Mexican philately. This stamp publicized the show.

Since then, nearly every major international show has had important collections of Mexican philatelic material.

Fortunately, Ameripex visitors can see some of these. Backal's marvelous maritime mail exhibit is here, looking for its third large gold to boost it into the championship class.

Backal has continued to work hard on the exhibit. It contains several unique usages.

Another treat is Alfonso Tena's well-traveled "Classic Issues of Mexico," which has won six large golds in as many outings. He, too, is going for championship qualification.

Tena's collection is thought by some to be among the top two or three exhibits in its field worldwide, ranking with a magnificent collection of Mexican classics belonging to a German collector.

The German collection, if my memory serves, comprised 40 frames at EFIMEX '68 and won the president of Mexico award, top prize in the national class.

I was hoping we might see portions of it at AMERIPEX, but such will not be the case.

Another favorite issue of mine, "The Imperial Eagles," is being shown by Quintus Fernando.

Lately, this exhibit has been winning grand awards at national shows in the United States.

For the airmail buffs, Alberto Varon is exhibiting "Mexico Airmails." This has not been shown extensively but is probably the most complete of its type in existence.

It has one of eight known copies of the Plan of San Luis (Scott C76B) plus numerous proofs, errors and other airmail rarities.

Another 19th century collection worth viewing is David Warman's "Mexican Revolution 1913-1916," a constantly improving display of a very complex and difficult subject.

This type of material has enjoyed a resurgence in popularity in recent years.

Finally, one collection I will personally spend some time with is Armando Rubio's "Diligencias Generales."

This is new to the international scene and will no doubt contain some very rare usages of Mexico's distinctive "Stagecoach Mail."

These stagecoach cancellations have always fascinated me and were the subject of one of my *Linn's* columns (May 13, 1985, page 58).

There are some fine Mexican collections at AMERIPEX, and I urge all readers to take advantage of the opportunity, and a rare one at that, to see some world class stamp exhibits of our neighbor to the south. ■

'Out of district' stamps exceptions to rule

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

In one of my first *Linn's* articles (June 13, 1983, page 42), I described the system of postal district name overprinting on the early stamps of Mexico.

This procedure was used to control and secure the revenue due the post office from the sale of adhesives.

Stamps without a district name were supposed to be without franking power since they might have been stolen or otherwise illegally obtained.

But legitimate usages of such stamps are known, either by oversight or disregard of regulations on the part of local postmasters.

This overprinting scheme is the basis for a multitude of varieties which make the classic Mexican stamps so popular with specialists.

Another factor contributing to the collectible melange are the distinctive, and often quaint, cancellations used by small town post offices (we call them suboffices).

These suboffices were subordinate to the principal district offices and received stamps from them.

Old postal records have given philatelists data to know which suboffices reported to which districts.

Figure 1. This stamp from the district of Mexico was used in the village of Iguala, a small place about halfway between Mexico City and Acapulco. Tixtla Guerrero was normally the parent district.

As a result we have handbooks picturing nearly all the postmarks to be found on stamps of this era.

So the majority of stamps, as long as they have part of a clear postmark, can be assigned a point of usage.

Occasionally one encounters stamps with identifiable cancellations from cities or towns which were not subordinate to the district whose name is on the stamps.

These items are generally referred to as "used outside of district." Some examples appear in Figures 1, 2 and 3.

Such stamps are not necessarily great rarities but are scarce and certainly enhance a collection of postal usage.

We cannot be certain why this happened, but there are several plausible explanations.

It is known that in some instances civil disturbances prevented remote offices from receiving new stamps through normal channels.

Postal regulations required name overprinting to validate the stamps, i.e., assure it had been accounted for on the fiscal books, but there was no rule requiring that a properly overprinted stamp had to be used in the district of issue.

Figure 2. A stamp from Zacatecas was used at Catorce, a suboffice of San Luis Potosi.

Thus, we know that some early 1856 stamps from Guadalajara were used at Lagos (also designated as a principal district) when it could not be supplied directly from Mexico City.

Figure 3. Another stamp from Zacatecas was used at Valle del Suchil, which normally was a suboffice of Durango.

The official "loan" of already overprinted stamps from one district to another when stocks ran short is probably the basis for most of the "used out of district" specimens we see.

The vast majority of stamps were probably purchased and affixed at the post office where letters entered the mail system.

But there could have been instances where a traveler on business carried stamps from one district to another to use on letters he wished to mail while he was away from home.

I am not familiar with the availability of "used out of district" stamps for the issues after 1867.

In my own collection of the first design, I have about 30 examples of such stamps and a few covers.

In most instances the location of use is not far from the principal district designated on the stamps.

For example, I have stamps from Mexico City used at Cuernavaca (90 kilometers distant) and vice versa.

The State of Veracruz had several principal district offices: Cordova, Orizaba, and Jalapa besides Veracruz itself.

There are a number of stamps from this area on which the same town cancel can be found on at least two different districts.

In the instance where a town was located near the boundary line between two postal districts, the likelihood that the town cancel will be found on the stamps of both districts increases.

Mineral del Monte officially belonged to the Pachuca district, but the cancel also can be found on the stamps of Tulancingo, which was about 30 kilometers to the east.

Also, in the sparsely populated mining region of north central Mexico, stamps from several districts may be found with the same town cancel.

Another type of unusual usage occurs, presumably with the transfer of stamps from one district to another, when the receiving office added its name overprint in addition to the one already there.

Thus there are stamps bearing two district name overprints. Two examples are illustrated (Figures 4 and 5).

I suppose most stamps and covers with this anomaly have already been identified for what they are and plucked from dealer stocks.

However, serious collectors of Mexico should always be vigilant for such usages when perusing stock books.

Within the past year I have discovered two such items in remainder collections at bourse dealer's tables. I would not be surprised if there weren't others awaiting a keen eye.

In next month's column, I plan to devote some space to a review of the Mexican collections shown in competition at AMERIPEX. ■

Figure 4. A stamp originally overprinted for Mexico City was sent to Guadalajara where it was again overprinted and used.

Figure 5. District names of both Maravatio and Morelia appear on this stamp. It was used at Morelia.

Outstanding Mexican showing at Chicago

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

What a show! There's no question AMERIPEX will go down in history as one of the most successful stamp events ever staged.

And for those of us lucky enough to attend, we will, from time to time, bask in the memories we carried from it.

I wrote an article for one of the special show editions of *Linn's* calling attention to the fine Mexican exhibits slated to be in competition.

Several came from outside the United States and were known to me only by reputation. They were tremendous, and I was not disappointed.

In the championship class, Fernando Camino (Spain) showed his exquisite collection of postal markings used in Mexico during the Spanish colonial period.

This period ended in 1821 with the beginning of the War of Independence.

The exhibit began with a 16th century Papal letter and went on from there.

I had always wondered about the origin of tracings for the beautifully clear postmark reproductions in Jorge Guinovart's *Prefilatelia Espanola*, the authoritative work on early postmarks for Spain and Colonies.

It is now clear that many examples must have come from Dr. Camino's collection. He was a collaborator in the Indias section.

His pre-1800 material, which is scarce to rare anyway, was especially attractive and a delight to see.

The exhibit took a large gold and special prize.

The rest of the exhibits of Mexico were in the regular competitive sections. There were four in traditional philately, Americas, excluding U.S.

Alfonso Tena's "Mexico: Classic Issues, 1856-67," has appeared frequently in recent international exhibitions. It was chock-full of spectacular pieces from this era.

A few from the 1856 issue were two blocks of four of the ½-real (different shades) on the same cover paying the 4r rate and ½r stamps and covers from the rare districts of Ciudad Bravo, Isla del Carmen and Sultepec.

A 1r (Cuautitlan District) canceled at Zumpango; a 1r pair from Polotitlan; a pair of 4r Tlalpujahua District, canceled Angangeo; and numerous 8r stamps, including a strip of four on cover, Mexico to Veracruz, were shown.

The exhibit contained various rare usages of the 1861 issue and examples of first design stamps with the Gothic Mexico district name on regular and watermarked paper. There were scarce examples of the latter on cover.

Tena's collection contained all values of the 1864 Juarez stamps (Scott 14-17) overprinted Saltillo. All were legitimately used except the very rare 1-peso value.

The exhibit earned a large gold, which moves it into the championship class at future internationals.

Quintus Fernando (U.S.) displayed his "Imperial Eagles 1864-1866." This is an elegant display containing several large blocks and many rare usages.

It has won grand awards at national shows in the United States and is always a pleasure to see because it is so tastefully mounted and annotated.

It took a gold award, which in my view was richly deserved.

A used copy of the Plan of San Luis stamp with "Hacienda" watermark (Scott C76B) such as this one was featured in the lone Mexican airmail collection, that of Alberto Varon, at AMERIPEX. Only six used copies of Mexico Scott C76B are known.

Next to the Eagles was David Warman's "Revolutionary Issues, 1913-1915." The exhibit contained all covers.

This can be difficult material to obtain in eye appealing condition, as the stamps themselves are not especially attractive.

But Warman has done a very nice job with his organization of the exhibit.

He covers his subject very well, showing representative usages, many of them rare, from a very troubled and uncertain period in Mexican history.

The judges obviously recognized this and awarded a gold.

I was awarded a vermeil for my exhibit, "Mexico: The First Design, 1856-1867."

I felt lucky, since the exhibit had to be drastically reduced from its normal nine-to-ten-frame format to fit the six frames allotted me.

There were two Mexican exhibits in the postal history section. First was Isaac Backal's "Mexico: Maritime Mail, 1549-1890."

Also a much traveled exhibit on the international circuit, it is packed almost to overflowing with rare maritime usages.

It begins with a 1549 letter to Rome (I couldn't discern what, if any, postal markings might have been on it).

There were several transatlantic letters from the Spanish colonial period, including one from Manila to Rome which crossed Mexico and received the red, double straight-line "NUEVA ESPANA" (New Spain) postmark which also is seen on letters originating in Mexico during this time.

While most people have difficulty acquiring one or two examples of the British crowned circle postmarks used at Tampico and Veracruz, this exhibit contained more than two dozen.

In this group were examples of domestic mail carried between the two ports, having both the crowned circles and Mexican stamps.

Something else which caught my eye were two different circular datestamps used by the U.S. Army Garrison at Tampico during the Mexican American war, 1846-48.

These were used on letters addressed to San Antonio and are exceedingly rare.

The French occupation period (1864-67) was well represented. A cover bearing a Spanish stamp used at Veracruz (1861-62) and covers with legitimate usages of the seldom seen Porte de Mar stamps also were present.

I counted 34 covers with the 1879-1883 Juarez issue. This series of stamps was for exclusive use on foreign mail.

One piece was a wrapper with 20 copies of the 24-centavo value in combination with three other stamps from the domestic issue.

The exhibit earned a well-deserved large gold.

Following the maritime exhibit was Armando Rubio's exhibit of diligencias generales (stagecoach) cancellations.

This is a new exhibit to the international scene and was very well done.

He has a good introduction and a clear write-up which was well worth the time to study. And his material was clean and attractively displayed.

Numerous examples of scarce, small office usages were shown. The exhibit garnered a vermeil.

A large silver medal was awarded Alberto Varon's Mexican airmails, the only Mexican collection in the aerophilately section.

This exhibit contained all known airmail varieties up to about 1953, including a used copy of the San Luis Potosi (Scott C76B) on revenue watermarked paper, of which only eight copies have been recorded.

The Amelia Earhart goodwill flight overprint was represented on an autographed cover addressed to her husband, George Putnam. Rarely seen essays and proofs rounded out the exhibit.

So the box score on the eight Mexican exhibits boils down to three large golds, one with special prize; two golds; two vermeils and one large silver.

Not too bad for a country which until recently has never been shown extensively on the international circuit. ■

Beyond the catalog: 20th-century imperfs

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

After we have filled the spaces in our albums for the major catalog-listed varieties, some of us turn to the minor varieties or the unlisted material for the areas we collect. Imperforate Mexican stamps of the 20th century are examples of this.

The time period spans the years between 1916 and the late 1940s.

Nearly all Mexican stamps of this century, with the exception of some revenues, were meant to be issued perforated. As we all know, some sheets occasionally slip through the inspection process at the printing plants and find their way into the market, philatelic or otherwise, in an imperforate state.

We can reasonably assume some of these "slips" were intentional; designed to fill a collector demand. We might even call these a controlled release.

And since philatelic needs definitely were catered to during the Mexican revolution, what happened afterward wasn't immune to this influence.

What we may have is a mixture of contrived imperforate stamps and stamps which got into the philatelic mainstream by simple oversight.

In the Scott catalog, a number of references are made, either in the listings of the major issues themselves or in footnotes, about imperforate varieties.

The so-called "Carranza" commemorative stamps issued in 1916 (Scott 574-75) are the first examples I know of with minor variety imperforate listings (Figure 1).

These beautifully engraved stamps, issued to mark Gen. Venustiano Carranza's triumphant entry into Mexico City April 14, 1916, went on sale June 1, the same year.

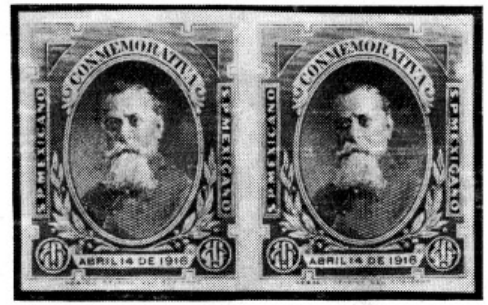


Figure 1. The "Carranza" issue imperforates includes Scott 574a.

Figure 2. This imperforate pair of the 10c Madero stamp comes from the 1916 series.

There was only one denomination, 10 centavos, but the stamp was printed in two colors, blue and brown. The brown stamp had a much smaller printing than the blue one and reportedly sold out on the day of issue.

They both were available imperforate, and a pair or block makes a very attractive addition to an album page.

It appears some collectors made philatelic covers with these varieties; I have an imperforate pair of the blue stamp with a contemporary cancellation.

The regular definitive issue of 1916-20, a series of portraits of revolutionary heroes, also is known to have imperforate stamps.

These do not rate minor variety listings in Scott, nor do they get any special attention in other major catalogs. However, Celis Cano's catalog (Mexico, 1968) lists them as subvarieties from 10-40 times the price for a normal unused specimen of the same denomination.

An imperforate pair of the 10c Madero stamp (a Scott 614 variety) is illustrated in Figure 2.

In 1921, two stamps commemorating the centenary of one of the final events of the War of Independence were issued. Both were bicolored, meaning two passes through the press and an opportunity for mistakes.

Scott lists the inverted center variety of the 10c, of which only two or three have been recorded. But they also exist imperforate, and are very scarce in this state, too.

The next regular issue, the so-called Monuments and Public Buildings series of 1923, is likewise available in the imperforate state. These, too, receive no more than a footnote listing in Scott.

A note of caution should be given here. Extreme care should be exercised in the purchase of imperforate varieties of this and the previous issue. Such stamps should be examined very carefully to make sure they are not lightly rouletted stamps with trimmed edges. I have seen a few such items which could fool an unwary collector.

No further imperforate varieties of regular issues are known to me until the issue of 1934. Two values of the large-size, engraved stamps were issued without perforations, the 50c and the 1 peso. These are listed in Scott as 718a and 719a.

When this same design was reduced in size and redrawn in 1937 for production by the photogravure process, imperforate stamps were again available in what appear to be fairly generous quantities. Scott lists these for four of the five denominations printed on the regular "CORREOS MEXICO" watermarked paper.

These are illustrated and are not too hard to find in auctions or dealers' stocks.

Much scarcer are the 1c, 6c and 50c denominations of the same design printed in 1947-50 on paper watermarked "GOBIERNO MEXICANA" with an eagle.

Except for an imperforate variety of the 10c value of the three-stamp set honoring the 400th anniversary of the founding of the San Nicolas de Hidalgo College (1940), very few regular issue stamps have escaped the government printing plant unperforated.

During roughly the same period cited previously, certain airmail stamps were issued without perforations. Disregarding proofs and essays, the first regularly issued stamp which is found imperforate is the 35c denomination of the 1929 set depicting the Mexican coat of arms and airplane (Scott C15a).

Figure 3. Smaller, redrawn types of the 1934 series include (clockwise from upper left) Scott 729a, 730a, 731a, and 733a. Quantities of this photogravure issue have reached the market.

This stamp is rare. Only one sheet of 60 is believed to have existed.

The next stamp to be issued imperforate was the 25c Aeronautic Exposition of 1931. Pairs of this are not too difficult to secure. The same stamp, revalidated with a 20c surcharge in 1932, was likewise issued imperforate.

It was reported that 1,000 copies of both the imperforate varieties were released.

The commemorative airmail stamps honoring Capt. Emilio Carranza with the 1932 "Habilitado" surcharge were issued imperforate, and these items are rather pricey. Only 500 were sold, and they were snapped up by the airmail specialists.

There are a few other instances of imperforates in the airmail section of the catalog. The series of 1934 has two: 15c and 50c. The 20c "Eagle Man" stamp printed by photogravure in 1937 (Scott C81) comes imperforate, and is not too expensive to own.

Among the commemorative airmail issues, the 40c value of the set honoring the 400th anniversary of printing in Mexico is known without perforations. This is probably a true error, that is, a sheet or two of imperforates escaping quality control at the printing office.

Similarly, the 30c from the CIPEX set (1947) exists imperforate. Also in 1947 the engraved reprints of the 1934 airmail series on the "GOBIERNO MEXICANA" watermarked paper had two imperforate varieties; 50c and 1p.

From time to time since 1947, imperforate varieties have cropped up among Mexican regulars and airmails. Most of these are rare and command prices in the hundreds of dollars.

There have been a few instances of "printer's waste" making it out the back door of the printing office to be acquired by willing and well-heeled collectors. However, the controlled issue of imperforate stamps seems to have ceased during the late 40s.

Not every collector wants these items. Many cannot, or will not, pay the high prices these varieties demand. Still, they form a part of the collectible material of a country, and Mexico has a nice selection of 20th century imperforates. ■

Control codes liven latter Hidalgo Heads

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

For nearly 30 years following the introduction of stamps in 1856, portraits of Father Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla were the invariable motif of Mexican stamps except during the monarchy (1864-1867), when the Mexican Imperial Eagle and Archduke Maximilian were the subjects of stamp design.

The two lithographed issues immediately following the monarchy period weren't especially attractive, although numerous varieties make them good material for the serious specialist.

These issues certainly did not compare favorably with contemporary stamps of other countries from the standpoint of design and workmanship.

This probably inspired the Hidalgo Head issue of 1874-1883 which went on sale May 5, 1874, the seventh anniversary of the Mexican victory over the French in the Battle of Puebla.

Mexico was struggling for a new, more modern identity. It had the 1874 issue designed, engraved and printed by the American Bank Note Company of New York, and the stamps were of very good quality.

There were five denominations, from 5 centavos to 100c, all showing Hidalgo's profile facing left.

Figure 1. These two stamps show the normal "wide number" format used for overprinting up to 1877.

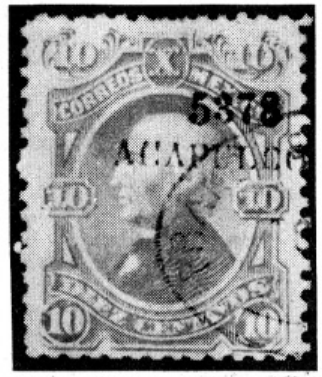


Figure 2. The usual way control numbers were overprinted after 1878 has the district number (53 in this case) and year (78) together.

The stamped envelopes of this issue will be dealt with in a future article.

Like their predecessors, these stamps underwent an elaborate control treatment with overprints to forestall unauthorized use in the event of theft or misappropriation.

But this issue and a companion series, the Juarez stamps (1879-1882), issued exclusively for foreign mail, were among the last ones to suffer this cumbersome process.

The system involved imprinting control numbers and year dates on the stamps before shipment to the outlying district offices.

Once the stamps were received there, local postal authorities were supposed to add district name overprints before selling them.

As I've noted in many of my earlier articles, this business of overprinting on the early issues of Mexico generated countless varieties.

Collectors can't seem to resist the temptation to search for as many as they can find.

In this instance there are plenty of different names and numbers to look for.

From 1874 to 1877, the dispatch overprint, consisting of a control number (a different one for each district) and the last two digits of the year date, was applied near the middle of the stamp.

These have become known as the wide apart, or separated, numbers (Figure 1).

There was a system to the control numbers, too.

Mexico City was assigned the control number 1 and successive numbers were assigned to the rest of the districts in alphabetical order: 2 to Acapulco, 3 to Aguascalientes, and so forth.

There is a complication to this, since after 51 was assigned to Zacatecas, at the end of the usual list of districts, several more districts were added up to control number 61.

Many of the added names had been suboffices in earlier times, although for some reason, Guanajuato, which was a large principal office, was skipped in the normal sequence and given number 52.

Commencing in 1878, the control number and the last two digits of the year were printed together, resulting in the so-called "close number" varieties (Figure 2).

Furthermore, the alphabetical listing order was reversed. Thus, in 1878, the numeric designation for Zamora was 178, Zacatecas was 278, Veracruz was 378, and so forth.

Figure 3. These are examples of "bottom" numbers.

Mexico City, the largest district, was given the control number 5478. Colima must have come as an afterthought and got 5578.

Normally, the unseparated numbers were placed near the top or upper right corner of the stamps.

However, for a short period in 1878, some were imprinted near the bottom (Figure 3).

These are considerably scarcer, and such stamps from

some districts are unquestionably rare.

Experts feel this probably happened on only one, perhaps the first shipment and this would explain their scarcity.

Other changes occurred. In 1878, the color of the 10c stamp was switched from black to orange.

And, to cover a change in postal rates, a 4c in orange was added to the series in 1880. These are noted in the Scott catalog listings.

Near the end of 1877, the American Bank Note Co. transferred the printing plates to the Mexican government printing office, and the stamps were henceforth produced in Mexico.

This transfer coincided with the appearance of the numerous paper and watermark varieties, since the Mexicans apparently used paper from various sources.

These varieties include the so-called horizontally laid paper, the "LA + F" (La Croix Freres, a French papermaker) watermarked paper, and the "PAPEL SELLADO" (Mexican) watermarked paper.

In the final two years of the issue, virtually all stamps were printed on a distinctive thin, unwatermarked wove paper.

All these combinations created hundreds of collectible varieties (Figure 4).

As in the earlier issues, the two high values, 50c and 100c, are scarce to begin with since few were needed for normal mail.

The smaller offices often received none, or at most a few hundred copies. Some

Figure 4. Note that the number on this stamp has been applied inverted.

years no stamps were sent, inventory stocks being adequate.

Common denominations are likewise scarce to rare for post offices like Texcoco, Tacubaya, Huejutla, Soyaniquilpan and Cuautitlan.

These same offices are the tough ones to find on the preceding issues as well. Small towns like these just didn't generate much mail.

In fact, five small districts (Guadalupe Hidalgo, Otumba, Tepeji del Rio, Tlalnepantla and Tlalpam) which received stamps directly in the initial 1874 distribution were dropped from the list because of low sales.

Only a few stamps have ever been found from these towns and can be considered great rarities.

For would-be specialists, there are a few reference works on this issue.

Bruce L. Chittenden published a monograph (Collectors' Club Handbook No. 1) in 1918 which deals with the papers and watermarks quite extensively.

Calvert Steir wrote some articles in 1950 for the *Collector's Club Philatelist* which simplify and clarify the Chittenden work.

Probably the best source of information on the varieties which exist is a book by R.R. Billings titled *Mexico — Postal Issue of 1874-1883.*

I believe Billings published it himself privately in 1960, and it may be a bit difficult to locate. The American Philatelic Research Library should have a copy.

From various sources, including some of the Mexican official postal records, Billings tabulated all the various stamps known to have been issued and the total shipments to (and returns from) the district offices.

He also included data on the scarce to rare stamps he was able to locate in important collections around the world.

Unfortunately, some postal records were not complete, so estimates had to be made.

But the Billings data does give a good basis to judge whether a given number and overprint name is run-of-the-mill or something special.

Until a few years ago, this group of Hidalgo heads was not as popular as the engraved stamps issued prior to 1867.

However, they have received more attention lately, probably because they are still less expensive than the earlier classics and offer a similar collecting challenge.

Another advantage is that to my knowledge there have been no reprints or forgeries which might scare some collectors.

The aspect of postal history shouldn't be overlooked.

As noted, the Hidalgo heads represent the last major issue to receive number and name overprints, which track usage, routing and so forth.

The stamps also were used on foreign mail up to the Juarez issue (1879).

Thereafter their use was confined to domestic mail, but foreign usages generally required more than one stamp and some eye-appealing combinations exist.

To me, the bottom line on this issue is that it offers a broad scope for serious philatelic study just as interesting as the earlier classic stamps with one important difference — it can be done at less than half the price. ■

Linn failed to get stamp printing business

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

In my article about George Ward Linn (*Linn's* July 9, 1984, page 24), I noted, besides a keen interest in the Civil War issues of Mexico, his unfruitful attempt to secure a contract to print stamps for that country.

This is the story of that unlucky episode.

The year 1913 found the Constitutionalist movement concentrated in the northern states of Mexico.

Because the equipment and sophisticated printing skills for anything beyond crude adhesives were lacking, provisional stamps already were being produced abroad (such as Scott type A50) and were being used in areas controlled by these forces. And the supply of postage stamps on hand was running low.

During the summer of 1913, a business relationship began to develop between the W.M. Linn & Sons Co. of Columbus, Ohio, and postal authorities of the Constitutionalist government of Mexico.

It is clear from surviving correspondence that Linn was anxious to become a supplier of stamps. This probably sparked George Linn's lifelong affection for these war issues.

An early letter from the Mexicans (July 1913) requested samples and prices of stamps patterned after the ones then in use, Scott type A50.

These show the Mexican eagle coat-of-arms and contain the word "transitorio" (transitional) in the design.

Figure 1. The first Sonora Transitory issue (Scott 357, left) was lithographed by the Maverick-Clarke Co., of San Antonio, Tex. Linn's redrawn stamp (Scott 369, right) has many design differences, particularly the taller letters in "CINCO CENTAVOS." It is perforated 12 rather than rouletted.

Linn replied that it would be very expensive and next to impossible to duplicate exactly the desired design.

As alternatives, he submitted some essays showing a female figure of Liberty holding the scales of justice and brandishing a sword. The state name of Sonora also was part of the design.

To this proposal, Cosme Hinojosa, postmaster general at Hermosillo, Sonora, answered to the effect that the workmanship was satisfactory but the design had to conform to the coat of arms stamp in current use.

He also inferred that "millions" of stamps might be required and that samples would be welcome. This letter was dated Feb. 14, 1914.

Linn proceeded to have an artist, A. Blanc of Philadelphia, copy the desired coat of arms stamp as closely as possible. From this the firm prepared a zinc etching and an electroplate of 100 subjects for the 5-centavo denomination.

Linn then wrote Hinojosa advising him that a full plate was in production, that the first 100,000 stamps would be supplied gratis, and that subsequent stamps would be charged at 25¢ per thousand.

Furthermore, he wrote that he would send various color proofs so that the question of what to use for the other denominations could be resolved as soon as possible.

On March 23, another letter from Linn enclosed a full, unperforated sheet of the 5c stamp and noted that Linn had just completed a sizable printing which was awaiting perforation with "round holes" (the current issue was rouletted) and a shipment of 50,000 stamps would be dispatched in a few days.

The next day, another letter was sent advising that three packets containing 75,000 stamps were on their way to Mexico and again raising the question about colors.

This shipment constitutes the actual stamp Scott lists as 369, type A51, in gray-green (Figure 1).

The March 24 letter also improved on the earlier price quotation: "We find after completing this lot . . . we can supply you with stamps in any quantity for 12½ cents per 1,000 stamps . . ."

On April 2, Hinojosa acknowledged receipt of the 75,000 stamps but used the dodge that the secretary of communications, Ignacio Bonillas in Ciudad Juarez, was the one who must decide whether or not Linn would get the contract.

But he enclosed a copy of a letter he had sent to Bonillas, together with samples endorsing Linn as a suitable supplier.

Time dragged on with no reply, and two more letters, this time to Bonillas directly, went out from Linn repeating the offer and seeking some sort of response. The correspondence file ends here.

Apparently, Bonillas did not like or approve of the stamp and requested no further design proposals.

However, the stamp shortage prevailing at the time caused the Linn's samples to be put into service, and they were legitimately used over a period of several months.

Numerous covers exist, and it's not too diffi-

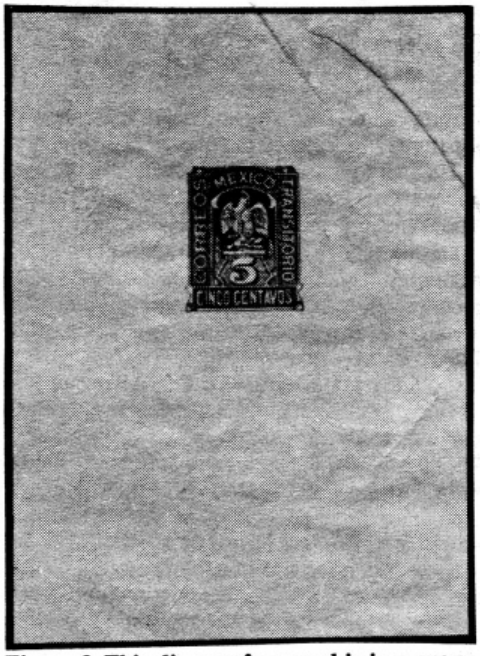


Figure 2. This die proof on card is in a gray-green close to the issued color.

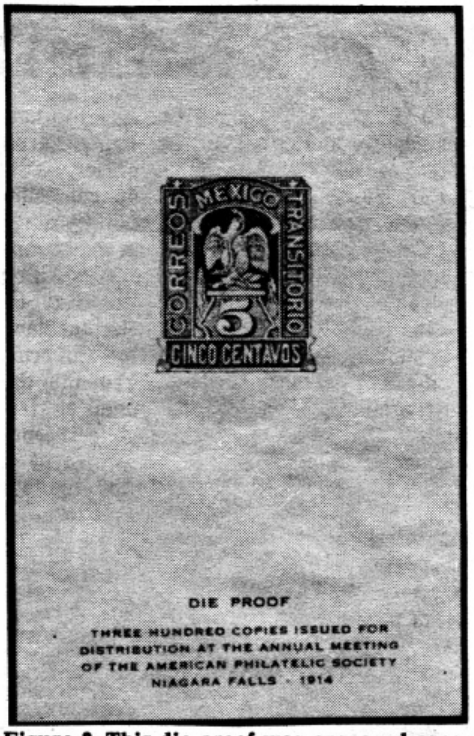


Figure 3. This die proof was prepared especially for the American Philatelic Society's annual meeting of 1914.

cult to find loose stamps with cancellations from the area where it was used.

Ultimately, the Mexicans were forced to go outside their country for stamps, and contracted with a printing firm in Denver for a series which Scott lists as 386-393. (This so-called Denver issue also has an interesting story.)

Furthermore, no payment was ever made for the 75,000 stamps sent to Hinojosa.

As a final blow to the ill-fated Linn stamp issue, Cosme Hinojosa issued a postal circular on July 31, 1914, allowing a 10-day grace period for the full exchange of the first Sonora issue for the new Denver stamps but specifically excluding the 5c denomination, which he stated had been counterfeited.

Hinojosa had further and extensive involvement in philatelic exploitation, but that, too, is another story.

George Linn saw to it that numerous examples of card proofs in various colors (the Essay Proof Society lists more than 25) of this stamp found their way into the philatelic market, including a die proof especially prepared for the 1914 annual meeting of the American Philatelic Society at Niagara Falls (Figures 2 and 3). ■

Early high values difficult to locate

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

When I peruse dealers' stocks or general collections of Mexico, the stamps of the 1856-68 era which invariably are missing or which are represented by only one or two examples are the two top denominations; the 4-real and 8r.

This is not surprising. They are key stamps of the classic issues and have always been expensive. In the currency of the period they were equivalent to 50¢ and $1, respectively.

Most collectors who begin to form collections of major Scott varieties have no problem finding the ½r, 1r and 2r values of the first three or four series.

Even collectors not frightened by the Scott catalog prices listed for the 4r and 8r stamps soon discover that securing sound, well-centered examples takes a bit of searching.

To acquire them, one must often disregard Scott as a price guide. Part of this problem is a simple numbers game.

For the issues of 1856, 1861 and the Eagles (1864-66), the aggregate total of 4r stamps printed and issued was less than a half million (500,000). The corresponding number for the 8r stamps was around 250,000.

We are talking about three major issues spanning a period of ten years.

Quantities for individual issues range from 110,000 to 183,000 in the case of 4r stamps and from 69,000 to 102,000 for the 8r.

The large Gulf port of Veracruz was among the Mexican postal districts that received the largest consignments of stamps. Thus quantities of 4-real 1856 stamps with the Veracruz district overprint are relatively large.

It may surprise some readers to learn that the largest number of 8r stamps was printed for the first issue of 1856.

In contrast, 1r and 2r stamps, which covered the usual letter rates, were issued in quantities at least ten times greater.

The reason for low printings is clear. High value stamps were meant for heavy letters, small parcels and especially registered mail. Not as many were needed.

Further, many 4r and 8r were cut into fractions as substitutes for low denominations when these ran short.

To me, the ten-to-one ratio does not seem consistent with general offerings in the marketplace.

These two denominations, especially the 8r, are hard to find. Several factors no doubt contribute to this situation.

Most experts in Mexican philately use 3-5 percent as the probable survival rate for stamps (including stamps on cover) from the so-called classic period.

Simple arithmetic shows that between 15,000 and 25,000 4r stamps should still be around and from 7,500 to 12,500 8r stamps.

Granted, we have to discount the stamps that were cut to make smaller rates, but these figures still seem excessive to me.

Those who specialize in these issues also recognize that the much sought after registry fronts often were franked with multiples of the high denominations.

We could argue that a higher loss factor should be used for these documents compared to the low rated letters from business archives.

Parcel wrappers would have been a source for high values, and it is doubtful that many of these were saved.

Anyhow, the search for 4r and 8r stamps is a challenge.

Recall, too, that these first issues received name overprints designating the postal districts where they were sold and used. This further complicates the scarcity story.

In my collection of the first design stamps of 1856-67, I have tried, over the years, to acquire 4r and 8r stamps which allow me to show complete sets from the intermediate to large district offices.

This 8-real 1856 stamp, also from the Veracruz district, shows the quality collectors should seek in this issue.

District size correlates with quantities of stamps consigned and used. Large districts would be Mexico City, Veracruz, Guadalajara, Zacatecas, Morelia and possibly a few others like Puebla, Queretaro and Mazatlan.

In the category of intermediate, or medium size offices, we would put Durango, San Luis Potosi, Jalapa, Orizaba, Chiapas and so forth.

Getting complete sets from the Mexico City district is easy. It was, by far, the largest office in the postal system and for the '56 issue received 45,000 4r stamps and 24,000 8r stamps.

Veracruz, as the major seaport on the Gulf coast, also was well supplied.

Guadalajara, Zacatecas, Puebla and other medium size offices aren't too tough either. But then it gets difficult.

Top values of the '61 issue are hard to find; the duration of the issue was shorter than the '56 and fewer stamps were issued.

For medium size offices, actual quantities of 4r stamps sent and sold were around 5,000, give or take a few hundred.

For the 8r stamps, it was never more than 5,000 and usually in the 2,000-4,000 range.

Multiply that by the 3 to 5 percent survival factor and one can appreciate how scarce these stamps can be.

This 8-real black on brown paper, 1861 issue, is from the district of Guadalajara. It was used in Tepic, has the distinctive "flower" cancel and is extra fine.

The problem is compounded in the case of small districts. These offices almost never received more than a few hundred high denomination stamps, and in a few instances, none at all!

The high values of the Eagle issue constitute another special situation.

Specific consignment num-

bers were applied to nearly all shipments from the main office to the various districts.

Since 4r and 8r stamps were never sent in large quantities, there are many instances where only a handful of stamps are known from some offices.

These, and the tiny districts of '56 and '61 are the source of major rarities.

There were some exceptions, of course. Acapulco, a scarce district for all these issues, accounted for some leftovers of high values which ultimately reached the philatelic market.

The 4r and 8r from Tixtla Guerrero and a few other districts are known unused.

And there's the case of Cuidad Victoria, where several sheets including 4r and 8r stamps were stashed away during the mid-19th-century civil uprisings.

These came out of hiding around 1925, providing some of the very few large pieces we have of the '56 issue.

I always have believed that a collector who is serious about the classic issues of Mexico should waste no time in obtaining the best copies he or she can afford of any high denomination stamps issued before 1868.

Steer clear of close cut or damaged copies which languish in dealers' stockbooks or sell at heavy discounts in auctions.

Both the 4r and 8r stamps were printed from plates of 60 subjects which had ample spacing between impressions.

So there's no reason to compromise on margins (except in the case of rare districts).

For reasons I don't understand, many 4r and 8r stamps from the Mexico City district were trimmed close, frequently having the design cut into.

Also, careless use of the double ring canceler used in the Mexico City office has left us many poor specimens.

In my experience, 4r and 8r stamps from other large offices like Guadalajara, Veracruz or Zacatecas are apt to have good margins and clear cancellations.

Finally, do not be fearful of paying full catalog for sound, full margined copies of either of the two top denominations from any but the large district offices. They do not appear on the market often.

Also, be cautious of forged cancels and overprints; however, most scarce items now carry certificates. ■

'Denver Eagles' videotape impressive

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

I typically end the year with a wrap-up article covering a number of items related to Mexican philately which are not big enough for a single column. I also use this opportunity to throw a few bouquets.

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Last September, the stamp club I belong to in Cleveland (Garfield-Perry) had as the entertainment for one of its weekly meetings, a videotape program; *Mexico, 1914 — The Denver Eagles*. This videotape is the creation of Ron Mitchell of Aurora, Colo., who's a professional in the TV industry.

He's also a very competent philatelist who has collected and studied the Denver Eagles for many years.

By combining these two talents, he has come up with an absolutely outstanding videotape. It is first class in every respect: well conceived, well produced and well narrated (by Mitchell himself, naturally).

From my perspective it is the best philatelic media presentation I have seen and should be a model for what can be done for our hobby in this era of electronic communications.

Obviously, not all of us have access to the kind of facilities Mitchell used. But I have seen a large number of the American Philatelic Society and Philatelic Foundation slide shows, and it struck me that the videotape medium offers enormous possibilities.

Also, the programs can be more personalized.

This show lasts about 35 minutes and moves briskly, keeping the viewer's attention.

The story is about a series of Mexican stamps (Scott 386-93) which was ordered from and produced by the Smith-Brooks Co. of Denver during the height of the Mexican Revolution.

Revenue stamps and paper currency also were involved.

Mitchell has thoroughly researched his subject and has spiced up the videotape by including rare contemporary newsreel clips, old photos, maps, portraits of the principal players in the business and so forth.

Still, there is enough solid philatelic information to delight any specialist of this period. The tape has been entered in philatelic literature competitions, among them COLOPEX in Columbus, Ohio, where it took a well deserved gold.

I am not aware of what kind of loan arrangements might be possible, but I can strongly endorse this film.

Next year I hope to do a column on the Denver Eagles.

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None of us who attended can ever forget AMERIPEX. It was, without question, the show of the decade. One of the highlights of my visit was the chance to see some unusually fine Mexican collections. I wrote about them in *Linn's* July 14 issue, page 35.

AMERIPEX convinced me there is still keen interest in Mexico as a collecting area and proved what I've been writing about the broad spectrum of philatelic challenge. At AMERIPEX we saw some outstanding work in diverse areas.

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Mexico's Exporta series continues to be very popular with collectors. At least eight new varieties have been reported to me during 1986, ranging in denomination from 6 pesos to 90p. All repeat earlier designs.

I was intrigued by a letter written by Walter Widmaier to the editor of *Mexicana* relative to the Exporta stamps.

He made the point that while these stamps offer the opportunity to apply most of the basic mechanical tools of philately, that is, perforation gauge, watermark detection, paper thickness, tagging, and so on, we should not overlook the postal history side.

Questions such as these arise: What are the rates which have been in effect during the tenure of the issue? Why all the denominations? Were some issued for specific tariffs, and if so, what were they?

A few people probably are aware of these details, but I certainly have seen nothing in the philatelic literature on the subject. Here's a good area for some serious work.

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Now, a little plug for ARIPEX '87 and the Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International (MEPSI).

The 6-peso Steel Tubing stamp in the Exporta series was issued in gray (top) as well as the earlier orange (bottom).

ARIPEX, an APS accredited national show, will take place in Tucson, Ariz., Jan. 23-25. Venue is the Tucson Community Center.

It will be of special interest to collectors of Mexico because MEPSI will hold its annual meeting there.

MEPSI publishes *Mexicana*.

Besides plenty of educational and social activities, the organizers hope to have about 100 frames dedicated exclusively to the stamps and postal history of Mexico.

For those readers living in the Southwest or others anxious to flee for a few days to a milder climate, here is an opportunity to check out Mexico.

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Thanks to the many readers who have taken time to write me. I appreciate the feedback. Many times it stimulates thought which leads to an article or motivates me to do some deeper research. Best wishes to all for the holidays! ■

Illustrated advertising covers scarce

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

For the last dozen years or so, illustrated advertising covers almost have become a new rage in philately.

Many dealers have a box or two of them at stamp bourses; a few dealers even tout advertising covers as a specialty.

Strictly speaking, an exhibit of these items usually cannot excel in competition since the fanciful designs (for which they are collected) are not truly philatelic.

But nearly all good exhibits of stamps and postal usage will contain specimens combining eye appeal and appropriate franking.

During the same time period when U.S. illustrated ad covers have soared in popularity, I have sought similar covers originating in Mexico.

Preferably, these should have designs or illustrations touting local products or services.

However, my pickings through dealer boxes have been slim indeed.

The fad of illustrating products or services on mailing envelopes by Mexican merchants and businesses simply did not parallel the practice in the United States and other more developed countries.

There are probably several good, logical reasons why this didn't happen.

First, Mexico was far behind the United States in its industrial development, and many products were manufactured elsewhere and imported.

Second, there was not a high level of literacy during the late 19th and early 20th centuries when this form of advertising was in vogue.

Third, there was practically no middle class to be the target market for the type of products so advertised.

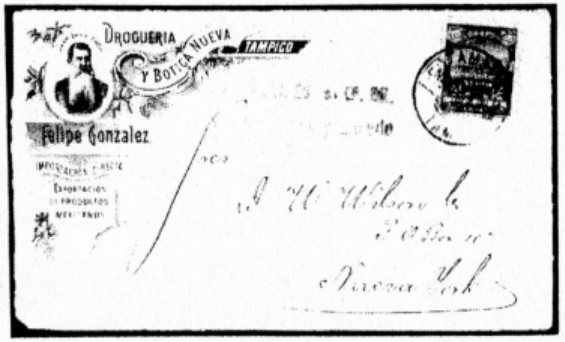
And finally, I presume the uneasy civil situation, with uprisings and revolution, played a role against the use of such items.

Persistence has paid off, though, and I have found a few nice illustrated covers.

The oldest one in my small collection dates from 1899 and is the corner card of a drug firm in Tampico.

The main part of the design is a portrait of a Felipe Gonzalez, a distinguished looking gentleman with a magnificent flowing beard. I assume he was the owner of the business.

A few sprigs of the hemp plant (marijuana), a native source of narcotic drugs, form part of the elaborate design.



The oldest Mexican advertising cover in the author's collection dates to 1899 and was used by a Tampico drug firm.

It is an engraved cut which was probably produced outside of Mexico.

A favorite item of mine, which is also illustrated with this article, is an all-over advertising design of the famous Moctezuma Brewery of Orizaba, in the state of Veracruz.

It is a registered cover used in July 1924 and directed to Chicago, where it arrived (via Laredo) eight days later.

On the face is an aerial view of the factory against a backdrop of the city and distant mountains.

The reverse of the cover is also interesting. It shows numerous medals won in competition, including one from a contest in Paris.

The letter was sealed with a blue "sunburst" registry closure (see my article, *Linn's* Nov. 11, 1985, page 27) and two colored labels cut to the shape of bottles of Superior beer, a brand that is still being brewed.

The envelope design, which is very elegantly done, was produced in a Paris print shop.

This stationery could not have been cheap, so we conclude that the profit margin in beer was sufficient to justify its expense.

I have yet to find anything significant in the way of illustrated advertising covers during the period of the Mexican revolution.

However, during the '20s more companies and businesses, particularly branches of American firms, started using illustrated envelopes for their correspondence.

Music emporiums (records and instruments), office equipment firms, tire companies and automobile distributors had pictures of their products printed on envelopes.

These are not too difficult to find. Corner cards of resorts and hotels, picturing the establishments themselves, are often seen.

Many of the latter, especially if they were located in downtown Mexico City, no longer exist, having fallen victim to redevelopment.

So here's another niche to explore. I would very much appreciate hearing from readers who have illustrated advertising covers from Mexico, particularly from the 19th century.

But any envelopes which show a product, preferably a locally produced one, or a service which can be pictured would be interesting to hear about.

Photocopies are welcome and all letters will be acknowledged.

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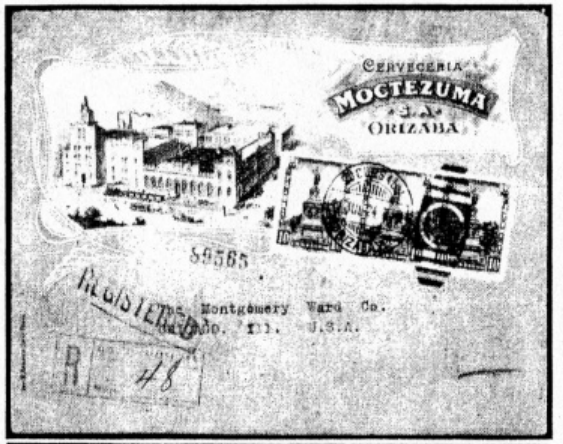
Kitty Wolsiffer, assistant to the executive director of the American Philatelic Society in State College, Pa., wrote to tell me that the video *Denver Eagles, 1914*, which I discussed in last month's column, is among the many audio-visual programs in the APS lending library.

The hitch is that it can be borrowed only by APS chapters.

But since there are more than 750 that are APS chapters, it still represents an opportunity for program chairmen to schedule first-class philatelic entertainment for a local club meeting.

It's available in both VHS and Beta format. If interested, write the APS office, Box 8000, State College, Pa. 16803. ■



Although Mexican advertising covers seem to have relatively few varieties, at least one very elaborate design exists. This cover (front and back shown) was used by the Moctezuma Brewery of Orizaba. The back has two labels picturing bottles of Superior beer, a brand still brewed today.

Early provisionals now extremely rare

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

If you look near the end of the Scott catalog listings for the stamps of Mexico, you will find a special section devoted to provisional issues. These items, for the most part, constitute some of the aristocrats of Mexican philately.

Provisional stamps of the post-Maximilian period are seldom seen because of their extreme rarity.

The only exceptions to this are the provisional stamps issued in the large city of Guadalajara. It takes very deep pockets to collect this material, but it is interesting, nevertheless.

The reasons provisionals exist are not too hard to explain. As royalist forces began losing their grip on the country, particularly on remote areas which were never strongly held, postmasters were faced with the dilemma of what to do about franking mail.

It would be unthinkable to use stamps of the monarchy, even if such were available. Many of the remote offices did not even receive stamp shipments in the last months of French control.

But handling mail without stamps would be cumbersome, too. Still, most postmasters reverted to prestamp franking practices to indicate postage had been prepaid, which was then a postal requirement.

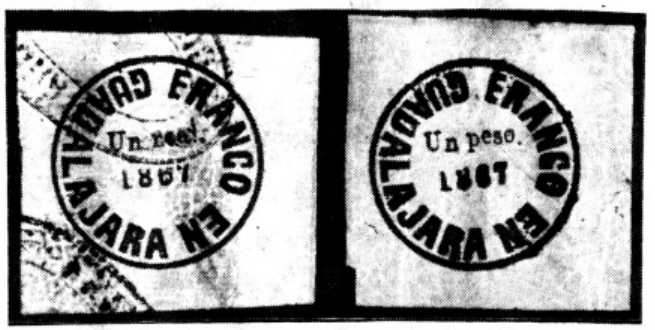
This involved reviving the use of old handstamps (sello negro) containing the words: "Franca," "Franco," or "Franqueado." But some offices decided to produce a form of stamps on their own.

The postal district of Chiapas was the first to do this, printing a typeset stamp of the design Scott illustrates as A1. This happened in 1866, well before the demise of Maximilian in June 1867.

Four denominations were printed on thin paper in light pastel shades. Few of these stamps survive intact because it was customary to affix them to the back of a folded lettersheet across the joint.

When a letter was opened they were destroyed, or at least badly torn. The handful that escaped this fate usually fetch prices very near or above catalog whenever they appear on the market.

The provisionals of Cuautla and Cuernavaca were like handstamps struck on paper and trimmed to resemble stamps. These were then put on envelopes or folded lettersheets as stamps would be and subsequently canceled.



These provisional stamps were issued by Guadalajara in 1867. The used 1-real stamp (left) is printed on gray-blue paper. The unused 1-peso (right) is on lilac.

I have seen a few of the Cuernavaca provisionals. They are not particularly attractive, but a lucky owner does not hesitate to mount only one, either on or off cover, on a single exhibition page.

The Guadalajara provisionals of 1867 have sufficient varieties (Scott uses 51 numbers to list them) so that a fairly decent collection can be made. And they're not entirely out of reach of the moderately endowed collector.

These stamps appear frequently in the philatelic market which is more than you can say for the others.

I am aware of at least one exhibit-grade collection of the Guadalajara provisionals. Like the Chiapas provisionals, the stamps were mostly printed on thin, colored papers. They were issued either imperforate or with serrate perforations in a circle.

Experts have defined several printings, the last of which was in the early months of 1868.

It's worth noting again that, except for 1856-1861 remainders used in the capital, Mexico was without a valid issue of postage stamps from the early summer of 1867 (Maximilian was executed June 19, 1867) until the Hidalgo full-face issue (Scott type A6) appeared on Sept. 8, 1868.

Unfortunately, all 19th century Mexican provisional stamps have been extensively counterfeited. This is not too surprising since many of them were fairly crude fabrications to begin with and easy to copy.

Luckily, numerous experts have examined this false material, so buyers can expect reasonable protection with certificates of authenticity.

Many years ago Scott listed provisionals from Monterrey, Morelia and Patzcuaro and provided spaces for them in their specialized Mexico album. These have since been thoroughly studied and declared bogus.

There are two other provisionals in the Scott listing for the 1800s group. The Campeche provisional has long been known and recognized.

Again, it is one of those which was handstamped on paper, struck again with a denomination numeral and validated with an initial (rubrica). There were three denominations and all are rare.

The Chihuahua provisional of 1872 has been recognized and listed for only about 10 years.

With the exception of a couple of obscure items, this summarizes the major Mexican provisional stamps up to the turn of the century.

I will continue next month with some of the 20th century provisional issues. They are somewhat more accessible to the average collector. ■

Dubious origins belie cataloged provisionals

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Continuing the theme of last month's column on 19th-century provisional stamps, there is another side to the story of Mexican provisionals, a side that brings us much closer to the present time.

When regular stamps could not be obtained through normal channels or were unavailable because of political upheaval, certain Mexican factions solved the problem by printing their own stamps.

This was particularly true during the turbulent years of the revolution, 1910-16.

The provisionals of that era are recognized as more than back-of-the-book material. Several Scott-listed regular issues are clearly provisionals, authorized and prepared by temporary or provisional governments. These were not available or not recognized outside local spheres of influence and usually were valid only for brief periods.

These issues, between Scott 321 and 607, appear in many catalogs, but some nevertheless have dubious credentials.

There is no question about the legitimacy of the White and Green Seal issues of Sonora (*Linn's* July 9, 1984, page 24).

These were used extensively to frank mail and have been the subject of recent philatelic studies.

The same can be said of many of the overprinted varieties of regular engraved Mexican stamps of the 1899 and 1903 series.

However, caution must be used when dealing with the Baja California stamps (Scott 401-4), the "Sonora" and "Plata" overprints and the Oaxaca stamps (Scott 414-19).

Yucatan provisionals of 1924 exist imperf and perf 12. There are three denominations. While they are said to have been used locally, few, if any, copies are to be found.

To be sure, there are legitimate uses of these stamps, but not so many as the used prices in the catalogs would suggest.

A block of four 10-centavo Sinaloa 1923 provisionals includes two tete-beche pairs. These stamps were never put into use.

The problem is that stamp collecting was an active hobby at the time of the revolution, and this fact did not escape the parties responsible for stamp issues.

Overprint varieties had always been popular with collectors, and there was plenty of material in post office inventories.

The distribution of some items was controlled to the extent that certain overprints are much scarcer than others.

These scarce items were never made available to the general public and usually reached the philatelic market by virtue of "inside" deals.

Scott uses italics to price some of the questionable items.

The Oaxaca provisionals hold a special fascination for collectors of the revolutionary period.

They were printed, somewhat crudely, on the backs of post office forms. Many errors, which resulted in collectible varieties, were made.

The quantity printed seems to be abundant, perhaps enough for several generations of collectors. However, copies properly used during the time they were valid from towns where they were accepted are definitely scarce.

On the other hand, thousands of remainders, many canceled to order after the fact, flooded the stamp markets of the United States and Europe.

Two back-of-the-book listings for provisional issues from Sinaloa (1929) and Yucata (1924) resulted from momentary uprisin against the entrenched government in Mexic City.

At Sinaloa, the Federals regained power quickly that the provisionals could not eve be used.

While reports indicate the Yucatan stam were used locally, I have never seen any us examples.

Mexico's provisionals, like other facets the country's stamps, offer both opportuni and challenge.

Few of us can afford the 19th-century pro sionals, such as those from Chiapas, Cuaut and Cuernavaca mentioned last mon (*Linn's* Feb. 9, page 26), although those Guadalajara are more reasonably priced.

While the revolutionary issues are muc more accessible, collectors must be wary an do their homework.

Fortunately, there is plenty of referenc material. Heed the footnotes in Scott, and cor sider acquiring a late edition of the Minku Latin America catalog for it has more to sa about the revolutionary issues than does Scott

There are rewards for one's efforts. Th convention of the Mexico Elmhurst Philateli Society International brought 100 frames o Mexican material, including four exhibits o the provisionals I've described the past tw months, to ARIPEX '87 in Tucson Jan. 23-25.

Two exhibits dealt with the 1867-68 Gua dalajara stamps, and the other two were stud ies of the Sonora issues. All four exhibits wo gold awards. ■

Catalogs useful to beginners, specialists

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Readers occasionally write me with a simple question, "What is the best catalog to use in building my collection of Mexico?"

Usually this is in regard to specialized areas that have captured their interest. Unfortunately, there is no simple or direct answer. Is the main objective philatelic information or up-to-date prices?

Some of my previous articles have noted specialized literature sources; this one deals with catalogs available in English and Spanish for beginners as well as specialists.

Without a doubt, the best known and probably the most universally used catalog of Mexico is published under the Scott name. It has been around for more than 100 years and in the United States is considered the "bible" of philately.

With few exceptions, auctioneers, philatelic writers and collectors use the Scott numbering system to identify stamps. Even when the Scott number does not distinguish between well-known varieties, it is still used and supplemented with added description.

The Scott catalog comes out every year with current prices. So most of us start with Scott and go on from there.

My library contains two other catalogs in English which treat Mexico fairly well. One is a 20-year-old edition of Stanley Gibbons and the other is a Minkus catalog.

I don't use the Gibbons very much, although it contains information missing from Scott about certain varieties, particularly the overprinted issues of the Mexican Revolution (1916-1920).

The Minkus catalog is especially useful since it contains numerous historical notes interspersed with the philatelic data. These help the collector understand the significance of certain issues as well as the background of stamp designs. It is excellent with respect to the classic era, too.

Both Gibbons and Minkus list all stamp emissions in strict chronological order. Airmails, Officials and so forth do not appear in separate sections. And the numbering is completely different from Scott.

For the collector who has some facility with the Spanish language, there have been several catalogs over the years dedicated solely to the stamps of Mexico.

Many are no longer in print and have themselves become collector items. One of the most famous was a catalog published by the noted Mexican philatelist and dealer, Eduardo Aguirre.

I do not know the date of his first edition, but I do have a copy of his third catalog, published in 1928. This pocket-size book also was used as a price list.

It contains a paragraph on "Conditions of Sale" beginning with the statement that all prices are in "oro Americano" (dollars).

Many collectors of classic Mexico will recognize the Aguirre name, as he frequently stamped his guarantee mark on the backs of scarce and rare stamps he handled.

His 1928 catalog (128 pages) contained a great deal of supplementary information on various classic issues, and it appears he drew heavily from the work of Samuel Chapman who had just published his famous *The Postage Stamps of Mexico, 1856-1868* (1926).

Stamps from the postal districts were listed and priced separately, so it is possible to get some idea of how rare such items were even then.

The Aguirre catalogs continued to be issued from time to time up to about 1960. The latest one I have is the eighth edition, 1957, edited by Aguirre's son, Alfonso. By that time, it had grown to a hardcover book of more than 300 pages.

In 1965, the first edition of a new catalog was published in Mexico. Edited by Guillermo Celis Cano, this, too, was a hardcover book of about 400 pages and was based, in large part, on information extracted from other catalogs and various articles.

Celis Cano worked very hard to include listings of all subvarieties known to him at the time, particularly those of the revolution.

There were numerous footnotes, too.

The prices in this catalog were quoted in Mexican pesos, which at that time were stable and worth 8¢ U.S. Only 2,000 copies of the

CATALOGO ESPECIALIZADO

DE LOS

TIMBRES POSTALES DE MEXICO

CONTIENE POR ORDEN CRONÓLOGICO TODAS LAS EMISIONES ESPECIALIZADAS, CON LAS VARIEDADES DE PAPELES, COLORES ERRORES, PERFORACIONES ETC., ASI COMO LOS PRECIOS CORRIENTES A QUE SE PUEDEN COMPRAR EN EL ESTABLECIMIENTO FILATÉLICO DEL EDITOR

1928.

Tercera Édición profusamente ilustrada y corregida

por

EDUARDO AGUIRRE

Filatelista Experto.

CASA FILATELICA

MERIDA, 108.—MEXICO, D. F.

DESPACHO PARA VENTAS AL MENUDEO:

CAPUCHINAS 21.—MEXICO, D. F.

The third edition of the Aguirre catalog of Mexico contains supplementary information on classic issues. As this title page shows, the catalog was published in 1928.

catalog were printed.

A second edition (1,000 copies) of the Celis Cano catalog appeared in 1968. This contained an update on stamp issues, new prices, corrections from the first edition and new data on the number of stamps issued for many of the modern issues. The catalog has a following in Mexico, but is not too often seen outside of that country.

Also in 1968, a Mexican dealer, S. Vackimes, produced a commercial catalog on the stamps of Mexico. It was quite well done, with clear photos on glossy paper, and ran to about 100 pages.

All of the major varieties and most of the generally accepted subvarieties were included. Prices for material he could supply were quoted in pesos except for the major rarities.

Presumably, they weren't normally in stock and subject to price negotiation, anyway.

The Vackimes catalog is now in its 11th edition (1987) and appears about every other year.

It is still quite well produced, though no longer on coated stock. It does have one big advantage for those collectors who want to keep up-to-date on new issues.

My 1987 edition, which arrived the first week in February, lists and illustrates stamps issued through the end of 1986.

Prices are now in U.S. dollars; the peso has been depreciating rapidly for several years. This catalog sells for $7 postpaid (S. Vackimes, Londres No. 106, 06600 Mexico, D.F.).

The Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International has just embarked on a project to produce a catalog of Mexican stamps which they expect to publish by the end of this year.

I have no information yet on price or exactly what will be included. I do know that the collaborators include some of the foremost experts in Mexican philately.

In summary, there is probably no one catalog which will meet the needs of all who specialize in Mexico. For example, varieties of the Exporta stamps, a current issue, are not well covered in any of the catalogs currently available.

Some of the older, out-of-print catalogs might be worth hunting for if one is looking for additional philatelic information. If you must have price information year by year, Scott is probably your answer.

If you do not know Spanish and have a heart for adventure, you might want to track down an Aguirre or Celis Cano and try your hand at them. They may contain just the information you're looking for. ■

Full-face Hidalgos a specialist's dream

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

In many respects the issue of 1868-72 offers almost everything a specialist could want.

These are the stamps which Scott lists between Nos. 46 and 80. Most Mexican specialists refer to them as the full-face Hidalgos. Miguel Hidalgo, pictured on the stamps, was the father of Mexican independence.

They came out after a period of about a year when posttage stamps were unavailable and postal authorities had to revert to prestamp franking practices.

This situation was forced by the sudden end of the Maximilian affair, with insufficient time to design and produce a suitable stamp for the restored Republican government.

Some old stocks of the first design were used in Mexico City (validated by a name overprint in Gothic characters), but the rest of the country went without stamps from about July 1867 to September 1868.

Some collectors claim the full-face Hidalgos are Mexico's ugliest stamps. That may be true, but in this case appearance has not discouraged interest in their philatelic charms.

They were a favorite of many early Mexico specialists and are enjoying a revival in popularity.

Scott divides them into two main groups: stamps with thin figures of value and those with thick figures. Some of these issues receive "Anotado" overprints, but since those were covered in *Linn's* July 11, 1983, issue, page 26, I'll overlook them here.

This 50-centavo stamp is a subvariety listed by Scott as 62a. There is no period after the "50" in the denomination label. The overprint shows the district name, "Veracruz"; the consignment number, "2" (over "O" in "MEXICO"); and the year, "71" (just above the "T" in "CENT.").

Within the main groups are listed imperforate stamps and perforated stamps. Actually, there are several perforation varieties because of experiments with stamp separation at the printing office.

Scott's list of subvarieties calls attention to a few of the notable printing mistakes, flaws, and paper varieties, but these barely scratch the surface of what's available if you enjoy this sort of thing.

As with the preceding issues, the system of district name overprinting and consignment numbers gives an opportunity to form a specialized collection. There were 41 numbers with abbreviated year dates and 43 district names.

Stamps from some of the smaller districts are difficult to locate, and many are rare. Also, the high values — 50 centavos and 100c — are, as expected, somewhat pricey, especially the brown on brown 100c stamps with thin figures.

An array of lithographic transfer types and retouches attracts serious philatelists to this issue.

This was only the second Mexican issue to be produced by lithography. (The Maximilian profile stamps were first.) Printers were still learning how best to prepare their stones (plates) for large quantities of stamps. This led to numerous varieties.

There are ten transfer types for each of the five denominations. These occurred when the lithographic transports were made to form the plates.

The types have been studied and written about extensively, so it is not difficult to categorize them.

It's a simple matter of "flyspeck" philately: careful examination of hundreds of stamps under moderate magnification.

A booklet by Roberto Garcia-Larranaga and published by the Mexico-Elmhurst Philatelic Society International, 4860 N. Camino Real, Tucson, Ariz. 85718, will steer you through this maze.

The area of retouches is a vast field for study. Retouches were attempts to correct minor flaws in the design which occurred during the transfer process.

Because of the large number of stones needed and the number of transfer operations for each stone, retouches become quite numerous.

Swedish philatelist Gunnar Benson spent many years working on these stamps. The handbook he and John Heath are putting together will be a welcome addition to the reference libraries of serious Mexican philatelists.

The major portion of Benson's studies deals with the 25c thick-figure stamp and the seven stones used in its printing. Since 25c was then the most common rate, these stamps are plentiful and not terribly expensive.

However, one needs a large number of them to get started on any serious plating studies and so should look for job lots or a specialized collection with which to begin.

These should not be too hard to find; I have noticed some in recent auctions of Mexican material.

Remainder collections are another source, since a dealer usually will not take the time to sort through for scarce types or retouches and be content with picking out the more desirable Scott-listed items.

There is a fair amount of literature on the 1868 Hidalgos. Overprinted consignment number varieties are well covered in *Catalogo Especializado de los Sellos Postales de Mexico* by Eduardo Aguirre. This also has the advantage of showing the relative scarcity of district varieties.

This graphic was developed by Roberto Garcia-Larranaga to describe locations of plate flaws and retouches on the 1868-72 full-face Hidalgo issue of Mexico.

If one is intent in pursuing the types and retouches in depth, I recommend first the specialized study by Garcia-Larranaga. One should also obtain Benson's articles, numbering about 14, which have appeared from time to time in *Mexicana*, journal of MEPSI, since January 1982.

A comprehensive listing of older literature relating to the 1868-72 Hidalgo issue can be found in Vol. 17, No. 3 (page 115) of the *Philatelic Literature Review* published by the American Philatelic Research Library.

Most, if not all, of these references would be available to American Philatelic Society members at the library. ■

Classic Mexico-Canada covers prove elusive

By Dale Pulver

During my years of seriously collecting the classic issues and postal history of Mexico, I have been alert for uncommon usages to foreign destinations.

These are always appropriate to include in an exhibit and usually enhance the interest for the general viewer as well as for the judges.

Surprisingly, covers from Mexico directed to Canada during the 19th century seem to be rather elusive.

It is not difficult to find mail destined for the United States, England, France, or even Spain. There were strong commercial ties between Mexico and these countries during this time.

But Canada seems to have been outside the mainstream of business, perhaps because it was just beginning the change from a British colony to an independent nation and did not yet have an established industrial base.

Some years ago I did obtain a few letters written in Mexico and addressed to a small town in southern Quebec near the U.S. border.

They were from a correspondence of Emily Bacon, a teacher who had gone to Matamoros, Mexico, to establish a school.

Matamoros is on the south bank of the Rio Grande near its mouth on the Gulf of Mexico. The letters were addressed to Miss Bacon's mother in Hatley, Quebec.

Figure 1. Only 27 days were required for this letter to travel from Matamoros, Mexico, to Hatley, Quebec, Canada, in 1848. It was sent by a teacher, Emily Bacon, to her mother.

The earliest letter in the group, Figure 1, was written during the final months of the U.S. occupation of Mexico during the Mexican-American War.

It is of particular interest to me because it fits nicely in my postal history exhibit of Mexican-American War mail.

This letter, datelined Matamoros, March 26, 1848, began its journey in the provisional mail system established by the U.S. Army.

The first postal marking it received was applied at the Army post office in Brazos. This was a straightline "BRAZOS" with the month and day in a separate line below.

In this example, the "BRAZOS" is struck so weakly that it probably will not show in the photograph, but the "AP 1" (April 1) should be visible.

Although most letters in those days were sent collect, in this instance the writer elected to prepay the U.S. portion of the postage.

Figure 2. Ten months later, Emily Bacon sent this letter by the same route, but it took 37 days to reach Hatley, probably because of unlucky steamer connections.

Thus, the letter was endorsed in manuscript "Paid 10." This amount would cover postage to any U.S. destination beyond 300 miles, but not to the final Canadian delivery point.

Consequently, the writer addressed it "Care C.G. Johnson Esq., Derby Line, Vermont," for special handling.

Many readers will recognize Derby Line as a much-used transfer point for mail going between the United States and Canada.

Johnson, or his agent, carried the letter across the border and put it into the Canadian mails at Stanstead, complying with the writer's note in the lower left corner, "Please forward to Hatley, C.E. (Canada East)."

At Stanstead, a red datestamp with "APR 22/1848" was struck on the face of the letter. I also believe it was here that the "4½d" notation was added to indicate the amount of postage due for the Canadian service.

Finally, on the back of the letter, the postal clerk at Hatley added his handstamp as a receiving mark.

It is inscribed with the handwritten date: "22/Ap/48." Hatley is only about 20 miles northeast of Stanstead, so the final leg of the journey was completed in one day.

Most of the time it took to deliver this letter was probably in the transfer from Brazos to New York where it would have gone overland to Derby Line.

The first segment would have been from Brazos to New Orleans on a contract mail steamer servicing the Army.

From there it would have entered the normal mail system which normally involved a steamer trip from New Orleans to New York.

In all, 27 days were required for delivery of this letter. This wasn't too bad for those days.

Another letter Miss Bacon mailed almost a year later (Figure 2) using identical routing took 37 days to reach its destination.

The extra time was probably a result of unlucky connections with the steamers.

This postwar cover shows a fairly clear strike of the blue, double-ring datestamp the Brazos post office began to use at the end of the war.

The handstamped "10" rate marking is also in blue. Again, we see the "4½d" due notation for Canadian postage (up to 60 miles).

As always, I would be interested in hearing from readers who may have Mexico-to-Canada covers from the pre-stamp or classic period. ■

'Dead letter' covers generally inexpensive

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

If you would like to have some fun with modern postal history, you might want to search for Mexican "dead letter" covers the next time you're browsing through your favorite dealer's shoe boxes.

Lots of auxiliary postal markings, handwritten endorsements and "rezago" (dead letter) seal labels are the tip-off to these covers.

Generally, dead letters are quite inexpensive. They usually are in pretty scruffy condition after all the traveling and handling they have been subjected to.

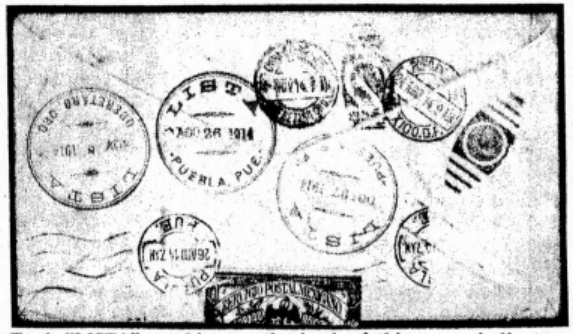
Besides, I'm not sure many people understand what they are or are inclined to collect them.

But each cover has its own story, and they do give interesting insight on the extent to which the postal administration went to track down an addressee and deliver a letter.

The cover shown is from the revolutionary period (1914-16), when there was tremendous civil dislocation throughout Mexico. I'm sure a great deal of mail ended up being undeliverable.

This item began its journey in Queretaro on Aug. 23, 1914. To make the 10-centavo rate, a 5c Denver Eagle stamp was added to the 5c stamped envelope.

The front of this dead letter shows cancellations of Aug. 23, 1914, when the letter was mailed, and Dec. 21, 1914, when efforts to deliver it ceased.



Each "LISTA" marking on the back of this cover indicates when the letter was advertised. The seal at the bottom was used after the letter was opened to try to identify the sender.

Perhaps the letter was destined for trouble from the beginning, since the address reads: "Sr. Jose Morales, A Lista de Correo (General Delivery), Puebla, 'urgente.' "

This means the writer was anxious to contact Morales, did not have the exact address, and wanted the letter to be advertised at the main post office in Puebla.

Postal markings on the reverse of the letter show that it passed through Mexico City Aug. 24, was received in Puebla Aug. 26, and was immediately posted on the list for general delivery.

This is affirmed by the large circular handstamp inscribed "LISTA/Ago 26 1914/PUEBLA, PUE."

For two months, Morales failed to call at the post office or did not receive notice his name was on the general delivery list.

Once again he was included on the list of Oct. 27, a fact recorded with another strike of the "LISTA" handstamp.

When this did not produce results. the face of the letter was marked "NO RECLAMADO" (not claimed) and the letter was turned over to the dead letter office in Mexico City for processing.

There, the letter was opened with a slit along the bottom edge. Since there was no return address, the contents were examined for some clue to the identity of the sender. It was determined that a Carmen Martinez was the writer.

The letter was resealed using a stamp-like label designed expressly for this purpose. This was affixed across the open slit and received a special "rezagos" cancellation.

These ornate postal seals measure about 30 by 46 millimeters and contain the words (which I've translated) "Mexican Postal Service/Officially Sealed/Dead Letter Department."

At that point, the letter was re-addressed for return to the sender. This was normally done with red ink on the face of the letter, in this instance between the lines of the original address.

Once the letter reached the Queretaro post office, it was again advertised on the general delivery list and so noted with the "LISTA" handstamp of Queretaro (Nov. 8, 1914).

Presumably, Carmen Martinez did not expect the letter to be returned, and she did not check the list.

After six weeks, further attempts at delivery were abandoned. The letter was marked, again on the face, "CUMPLIDO" plus a datestamp of the Queretaro office (Dec. 21, 1914).

This meant that all provisions of the regulations concerning attempted delivery had been complied with.

The letter was then returned to the dead letter office where the contents were removed, breaking the original seal, and destroyed.

In theory, envelopes were supposed to be destroyed, too, but obviously many weren't and eventually found their way into the philatelic market.

The three numerical notations on this cover probably relate to the various lists on which it appeared or perhaps a log book. All my dead letter covers have numbers of one sort or another.

I have described the travels of but one dead letter. There are numerous variations, and some can turn into very interesting puzzles.

And there is a broad range to the types of markings which will be found on dead letters. The "LISTA" markings are similar in design and were struck in blue or purple ink.

"Rezagos" is another word regularly stamped on dead letters. Handstamps indicating directory service at the various post offices also are quite common.

Attempted delivery often resulted in curious notations by individual letter carriers: "No hay numero" (no such number), "No esta" (not here), and so forth.

I have another dead letter which bears a very ornate "pointing finger" handstamp containing the Spanish words for "Return to Sender" and instructions to check the local directory and then advertise.

This letter was opened and resealed twice, once with the label described earlier and the second time with a crude label used by a local post office. ■

Amelia Earhart story elicits new interest

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

The inspiration for this article comes from the front cover of the Christie's/Robson Lowe auction catalog for June 25. It is an airmail cover flown from Mexico City to the New York City area by Amelia Earhart on May 8, 1935, and bears one of the special Mexican commemorative stamps issued for this event.

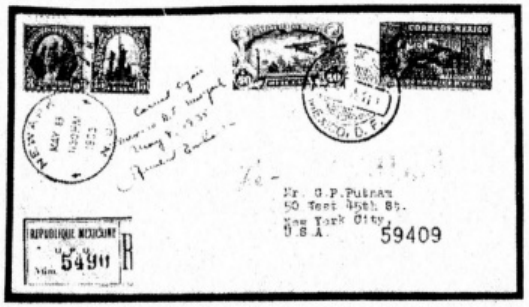
This rare and choice item for airmail specialists reposed in the famous airpost collection of Lt. Col. John F. Rider which is now being dispersed at public auction.

The Amelia Earhart story has been told a number of times but seems to elicit renewed interest at each retelling.

In the spring of 1935, arrangements had been made for Amelia Earhart, the noted American aviatrix, to make a goodwill flight to Mexico. In honor of this event, the Mexican government authorized, in the form of a handstamped overprint, a special commemorative airmail stamp.

This was the first time Miss Earhart's flying talents had been recognized in this manner by any of the many countries she had visited.

Her flight into Mexico began April 19, 1935, from Los Angeles. She carried a number of covers on this flight.



Mexico's Amelia Earhart overprint appears on this autographed registered cover addressed to Amelia Earhart's husband, George P. Putnam.

As near as collectors can determine, the Mexican overprinted stamp was to be valid on April 16, which suggests her arrival might have been later than expected.

The stamp itself was the then-current 20-centavo airmail (Scott C68) which was overprinted in violet ink with the words (translated) AMELIA EARHART/GOOD WILL FLIGHT/MEXICO/1935. Scott, which did not recognize this variety until 1956, now lists it as C74.

It is reported that 780 such stamps were prepared; 480 were to be sent to the Universal Postal Union (these had the additional word "Muestra," i.e., Sample or Specimen, in the overprint). The remaining 300 were for sale to philatelists.

Enter George Palmer Putnam. Putnam was Amelia's husband, and he apparently had some extracurricular business ideas of his own.

It has long been believed that he made an "inside" deal with the Mexican postal officials to purchase 250 of the 300 stamps reserved for collectors.

Some he would use on special covers that he would dispatch with his wife on her flight back to the United States; the rest he would keep for sale later on.

Evidence supports the fact that Putnam did have a large measure of control over the issue.

Many of the flight covers Miss Earhart carried on her various trips, and which she usually autographed, were addressed to George Putnam, 50 W. 45th St., New York, N.Y. And the ones to and from Mexico were no exception.

The Earhart non-stop return flight from Mexico City to Newark, N.J., took place on May 8, and she is supposed to have carried about 85 letters. Of these, about 35-40 were franked with the commemorative overprinted stamp.

My own observation is that many of the flown covers with the Earhart stamp that I have seen in collections or illustrated in auction catalogs were indeed addressed to Putnam.

Putnam's special arrangements with the postal authorities infuriated philatelists, especially the Mexicans, who, until then, had been very cordial to Miss Earhart and her project.

Some collectors went so far as to have 20c airmail stamps privately overprinted with their own derogatory message (translated): AMELIA "WITHOUT" HEART/BAD WILL FLIGHT/TEXCOCO/1935.

A black cat was worked into the overprint design. These cinderellas are usually referred to as the "Black Cat" overprints.

Most feel the message was not so much directed at Miss Earhart as to her husband and the Mexican bureaucrats.

Also it is doubtful that she knew about the special arrangement, and certainly would not have condoned it if she had.

There is another story. When the Mexican postal agents showed the overprinted stamps to Putnam, he objected to them, stating the ink used for the overprint could be counterfeited.

Somehow he was able to convince them to destroy the original batch and to redo them using a special non-counterfeitable ink he had brought along for that purpose.

It was rumored that these extreme precautions were motivated by the fact that Putnam had made a 50-50 deal with an unnamed New York stamp dealer.

None of this has been proved conclusively, and most of the parties to the event have long since passed away. But the legend lives on.

The stamps themselves are key to a complete Mexican airmail collection. And flown covers from the Earhart flight, despite the circumstances surrounding their origin, are a must for the serious airpost collector.

Because of their rarity, the stamps have been widely counterfeited (in spite of Putnam's precautions).

Some years ago, an article from the *Members Bulletin* of the Philatelic Foundation reported that among the stamps submitted for certificates, the Amelia Earhart overprint had one of the worst records for falsification.

More than 50 percent of the stamps sent in during a 15-year period were bad.

A forged overprint appears on this used copy of the Amelia Earhart issue.

The fake overprints are usually somewhat blurred and not as clean as the genuine ones, but this is not a do-it-yourself situation.

Anyone contemplating purchase should definitely obtain a certificate from the PF or the Mexico-Elmhurst Philatelic Society International.

All flown covers with this stamp are fairly well documented so anyone with enough money to own one would certainly spend a little more to check the pedigree of a prospective acquisition.

It has always been somewhat amusing to me that the Earhart stamp, even with its publicized rarity, is usually on the market a few times each year.

Other modern Mexican rarities, many of which do not have nearly as high a catalog value, are seldom offered and much more difficult to locate.

Early flight covers are tough, too. And one of the famous Earhart/Putman flown covers will, by the time you read this, have a new owner. ■

UNITED NATIONS: Mint, NH, VF

Year	Scott	Net
1951	1-11	14.00
1952	12-14	2.66
1953	15-22	14.98
1954	23-30	39.90
1955	31-40	23.50
1955	38	POR
1956-60	41-87	16.06
1961-65	88-153	21.00
1966-70	154-214	16.85
1971-75	215-266	16.25
1976-80	267-342	35.86
1981	343-367	9.12
1982	368-391	9.50
1983	(25 stamps)	10.33
1984	(26 stamps)	10.81
1985	(24 stamps)	14.77
1986	(28 stamps & 1 S/S)	14.99
	GENEVA	
1969-70	1-14	15.00
1971	15-21	7.94
1972	22-29	10.83
1973	30-36	8.01
1974	37-45	8.40
1975-80	46-97	60.57
1981	98-104	5.46
1982	105-112	6.69
1983	(8 stamps)	6.21
1984	(8 stamps)	5.34
1985	(10 stamps)	5.77
1986	(13 stamps & 1 S/S)	9.77
	VIENNA	
1979	1-6	3.55
1980	7-16	11.87
1981	17-23	4.67
1982	24-29	4.99
1983	(9 stamps)	6.50
1984	(9 stamps)	5.47
1985	(8 stamps)	5.00
1986	(13 stamps & 1 S/S)	10.69
	AIRS	
1961-69	C1-4	6.75
1972-77	C15-23	8.01

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Some Mexico cancels used 100 years

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

One of the remarkable things about Mexican philately, as I've noted in many previous articles, is the number of diverse aspects which can be the subject of serious study and/or a first rate collection.

Recently I had the opportunity to examine a fairly large holding of stampless covers. It was the source of considerable excitement because there is always the chance of seeing some postal markings in the flesh for the first time. And such was the case here.

Except for an article shortly after the start of this column in 1983, I have not written about Mexican stampless covers. Some people feel stamp columnists concentrate on stamps exclusively. But many of us do enjoy collecting letters or covers without stamps because they are just as much a part of how mail was handled as are letters with stamps. So here is a brief overview.

Mexico offers some interesting, if not unique opportunities in this area. Until the introduction of stamps in 1856, all domestic and outbound foreign mail moved, obviously, as stampless letters.

As most of us know, the idea behind postage stamps was a means for prepaying postage fees. Prior to that time, nearly all mail was sent "collect," with the addressee being responsible for postage.

The earliest stampless letters we know from Mexico date from the Spanish colonial era. That would be before 1820 and going back into the late 1700s. The Spanish had established a pretty good mail system in their colonies of the Western Hemisphere.

Their methods were adopted by most of the independent countries which formed later. Marking devices were used to indicate the origin of letters. These quaint and attractive town marks are much sought after by collectors.

Postage rates, usually following some obscure tariff, were marked on the letters in manuscript most of the time. In some instances, letters dealing with official government business were sent free of postage and so marked. This could be considered a form of free franking. All covers from the colonial period are scarce, and most are beyond the means of the average collector.

When the War of Independence ended in 1820, Mexico entered what most historians call the Republic period. Until stamps appeared, mail continued to be handled in a manner similar to that prevailing in colonial times. Handstamps, many of which were the same ones the Spanish used, marked the names of towns where the mail was dispatched.

As business and commerce expanded, so did the postal system. This meant there were more towns of enough importance to have post offices, so the list of collectible town marks grew correspondingly. And since there seemed to be no set standards as to the form of these postmarks, they came in all shapes and sizes, which further endears them to collectors.

There are, in addition to the common straightline names, boxes, ovals, fancy wreaths, ribbons and numerous other ornate, handcarved designs. Some are quite common, others are scarce.

Handstamped numerals were used more and more to indicate the amount of postage to be collected. Prepayment of postage was still the exception, but in those cases where it took place, the larger post offices usually had supplementary handstamps containing the words: "Franco, Franca, or Franqueado" to indicate postage had been paid.

During the first months of the stamp period, beginning August 1856, letters could go either paid or unpaid. To encourage prepayment, the rates for unpaid letters were higher.

Still, a few people sent letters collect, especially if they had reason to suspect the mails might not get through because of the ever-present highway bandits. But this did not end the stream of Mexican stampless letters.

Even after stamps, there were many instances where small or remote offices did not receive stamps. So they simply used the pre-stamp franking methods they knew so well. Once in a while such letters were marked with an explanation: "No hay estampillas," Spanish for "There are no stamps," Figure 1.

At other times during the turbulent years following the introduction of stamps, mail was routinely carried without them. For example, during the waning years of the Maximilian period (1864-67), postal agents in the cities and towns controlled by the Republican forces under Benito Juarez refused or were forbidden to use the current issue of stamps bearing the likeness of Maximilian.

Old "Franco" handstamps were brought out and used to indicate postage had been paid (prepayment was still obligatory).

Postal historians refer to this type of usage as "sello negro," Spanish for "black handstamp." Sello negro covers from this period are fairly common, especially from the cities which were never strongly held by the monarchists.

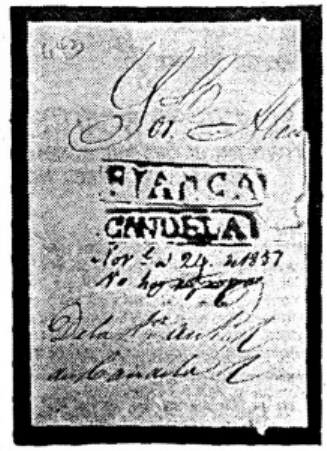

Figure 1. A small fragment of a cover on which a postal agent in Candela, a small village in the postal district of Saltillo, used the "Franco" handstamp Nov. 24, 1857, with the handwritten explanation that "there are no stamps."

Another time from which stampless covers are occasionally seen was in 1871-72 when the Mexicans were having trouble with postal forgeries and the new, 1872 issue, was late. See my article on "Anotado" stamps, *Linn's*, July 11, 1983, page 26.

Finally, most foreign-bound Mexican mail was sent stampless right up until 1879 when Mexico joined the Universal Postal Union. Only then could letters be sent completely prepaid with postage stamps to other member countries of the UPU.

Some letters left Mexico with stamps. The stamps paid the domestic portion of the postage. Also, covers exist with combination usage: Mexican stamps paying the internal rate and British stamps, for example, paying the sea rate to England or some port on the continent. But these usages are

quite scarce, and very expensive.

Still, a representative collection of Mexican stampless covers can be assembled within the budgets of most serious collectors. Large correspondences from the 1830s-1860s have survived and provide the philatelic market with stampless material.

Generally, stampless covers, except those from small, scarce districts and towns, are much cheaper than those with stamps. That doesn't make them any less desirable or less interesting from a philatelic standpoint.

The abundance of attractive designs and forms, combined with the fact that they come in various colors, are further lures to the collector.

Some postmarks sustained a long period of use. They can be found used on colonial pieces, on letters from the pre-stamp era, and right up into the stamp period.

A small town in the postal district of Puebla, for example, used a device to cancel stamps more than 100 years after its first recorded use on a Spanish colonial letter! See Figure 2. There are other marks with extended usage if you enjoy searching for them (and I do!).

Stampless foreign covers from Mexico aren't terribly hard to find, and some aren't too expensive either. Normally these items will have other postmarks on them, too: United States, British, French, and so on.

Figuring out the routing and rate structure on these covers can sometimes turn into a pleasant evening of research (assuming you have or can get to basic references).

A few words of advice if you decide to collect stampless covers. Do spend some time

Figure 2. The 1884-85 stamp pictured at the top is canceled by a Cholula handstamp dating to circa 1780. It is shown below the stamp.

with two basic reference books. First, *The Pre-Stamp Postal Markings of Mexico*, by Otto Yag and John Bash, published by the Mexico-Elmhurst Philatelic Society International (MEPSI) in 1965 and updated in 1971.

The second is *The Cancellations of Mexico* by Joseph Schatzkes and revised by Karl H. Schimmer in 1983 and published by W.E. Shelton.

The second book is still in print and both items would be available on loan to American Philatelic Society members from the library in State College, Pa.

Although I know of no attempts to forge or counterfeit Mexican stampless covers, watch for attempts to alter or enhance scarce markings.

Finally, try to secure the best possible strikes of common markings. You may have to compromise a bit on the scarce to rare ones, but I have seen many medium to poor grade stampless covers being pushed by dealers or at auction. ■

Beal's passing is a loss to all collectors

This article is dedicated to the memory of James H. Beal, who passed away very suddenly at his home July 29. Jim was a close personal friend and contributed, perhaps more than anyone else, to my interest and knowledge in the philately of Mexico.

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Readers who are members of the American Philatelic Society will readily recognize Jim's name as the chairman of the APS theft committee. But his work to combat stamp theft, and even more importantly, the counterfeiting and manipulation of stamps and postal markings to deceive stamp collectors, goes back much further than his tenure as theft committee chairman.

Also, he constantly preached the fact that acquired knowledge is the absolute defense against being taken in the stamp market.

Jim and I began our friendship at EFIMEX, an international stamp show held in Mexico immediately following the Olympic Games of 1968. I was working in Mexico at the time, and although I had collected on and off since childhood, that event was the first really big stamp show I had ever attended. Jim was one of the judges.

He also gave a seminar on the falsification of postal markings on the classic stamps and covers of Mexico.

One of the things that impressed me most about his presentation, apart from his obvious depth of knowledge and a sincere desire to impart it to less experienced collectors, was that he conducted it bilingually. He spoke Spanish almost as easily as he did English. In that venue it was a decided advantage.

After my return to the United States the following year, we began to see each other quite regularly. In those days, Jim was deeply involved with the APS project to put the notorious Raoul de Thuin out of business.

De Thuin, who had been living and operating out of Mexico for many years, was a philatelic scoundrel. He had bilked dozens and dozens of unwary collectors by producing and selling faked overprints and cancellations on Mexican stamps and covers.

Jim and other Mexican specialists knew these all too well.

Since the Mexican authorities seemed unable to put a stop to his activities, Jim was fearful that Mexican philately would be irreparably harmed. APS had made the decision to purchase all of de Thuin's tools and paraphernalia and in this manner stop the flow of spurious material.

De Thuin's advancing age, declining health and failing eyesight seemed to make this a likely option. Jim played a major role in this planning, and because of his fluency in Spanish, acted as one of the primary negotiators.

In December 1966 the deal was consummated. All of de Thuin's stock in trade was shipped to the United States for study and eventual destruction.

The other half of the APS-de Thuin project involved the publishing of a comprehensive reference book describing the de Thuin work. This would provide students and serious collectors a basis for the study of suspect material.

Jim was one of the principal authors of this work, which the APS published in 1974 under the title *The Yucatan Affair — The Work of Raoul Ch. de Thuin.*

The section on Mexico contains more than a thousand reproductions of overprints, cancellations and surcharges de Thuin had used to create fraudulent philatelic pieces. It was organized and written almost entirely by Jim Beal. The section fills 140 pages, about one quarter of the finished book. I recall vividly the hours he spent telling me about this master counterfeiter.

I was also aware of the hundreds of hours he must have spent giving some order to the artwork and cliches recovered from de Thuin's workshop. Frequently he would hand me a batch of stamps and say, "See if you can identify which of these are de Thuin's work." Some of the items were very difficult to place in either the good or bad category.

The first edition of the de Thuin book sold out fairly quickly. A second printing was ordered a few years ago. So it's probably safe to assume that many serious collectors of Mexican classics have it to use when it comes to discerning de Thuin fakes. But Jim wasn't only interested in the de Thuin fabrications.

He collected fake stamps and fake markings broadly. He had, until it was stolen, one of the most outstanding reference collections of bogus material in this country. Certainly his holding of Mexican fakes and forgeries was unmatched. And he put this to good use.

He wrote and lectured extensively about fakes and counterfeits in an effort to forewarn and educate less experienced collectors.

Jim Beal has left his mark on Mexican philately.

He also served as an APS expertizer for circuit books and stamps submitted for certification. In this capacity he was able to help purge much bad material from the philatelic marketplace.

His own collections of Mexico, from the Spanish colonial period through the classic era, were both extensive and exquisite. He did not exhibit too often, but when he did, you could be certain you would see something extra special.

My first exposure to a Beal exhibit was in 1971 when he mounted an exhibit of classic Mexico for the APS summer convention in San Antonio. It won the grand award.

Three years later he was a commissioner to EXFILMEX, the Fifth Interamerican Exhibition, in Mexico City. He entered a similar exhibit, but freshly remounted with annotations in Spanish. It won the grand prix national. After that he elected to give his collections a rest from the competitive arena.

Then came a devastating blow, one which can strike any of us if we do not exercise extreme caution. On a snowy evening in January 1977, while Jim was dining out with friends, thieves compromised his security system, broke into his home, peeled his heavy safe, and carried off his entire collection. No trace of it has been seen since. Such a disaster would, I fear, drive most of us completely from the hobby.

In Jim's case, it seemed to intensify his determination to combat some of the bad elements he saw in stamp collecting. He began devoting more time to the activities of the APS theft committee. Obviously, he had a personal stake in seeing to it that stolen collections were recovered, if at all possible.

And through his organization of a dealer/collector network, he helped assure that stolen material would be very difficult to dispose of by fences.

During Jim's tenure as theft chairman some dramatic recoveries of stolen stamps have occurred. Regrettably, Jim's collection of Mexico was not one of those success stories.

Until the time of his death, Jim continued to devote uncommon energy and time to his role as a watchdog against philatelic theft. To me it represented a true labor of love on behalf of all collectors — not just those of us who collect Mexico, or who are members of the APS, but everyone who enjoys the hobby.

And even though he lost all of his stamps, he continued to encourage and help collectors in all stages of their development, from beginning to advanced. He never lost his love of Mexican stamps, either.

Although he did not attempt to re-form a collection suitable for exhibit, he did buy classic Mexican stamps from time to time. He would often tell me, "this one really caught my eye, and I got it for a fair price."

I'm convinced Jim had a great deal to do with my selection as author of this column in *Linn's*. When first approached, I told *Linn's* I felt Mr. Beal was eminently more qualified to write on the broad aspects of Mexican philately. I was informed he had declined.

In any event, Jim was a frequent resource and critic, so my readers and I owe him thanks for this behind-the-scenes help.

While his many philatelic friends mourn the loss of one of the great champions of Mexican philately, we can all take comfort that through his writings and work with the APS, he has left an indelible imprint on our hobby. ■

Mexican 1916-20 regulars fun to study

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

One of the 20th century issues of Mexico which I have felt would be fun to study in depth is the regular issue of 1916-20 (Scott 608-28).

The lower denomination stamps have the theme of famous men, mostly heroes of the revolution.

The three top denominations, 40 centavos, 1 peso and 5p, are in a larger horizontal format and show a map of Mexico, the lighthouse at Veracruz and the main post office in Mexico City.

They remained in use for about seven years in the post-revolutionary era. The earliest printings, which, except for the 40c, 1p and 5p, were sold in rouletted form, and were printed on a soft, thick, and unwatermarked paper.

I have never discovered exactly when this series was made available for public sale. Most catalogs show the date 1916, but stamps and covers with 1916 postmarks are very hard to find.

There was a severe inflation in Mexico during the latter half of 1916. Postal rates were raised several times and there was widespread usage of surcharges on earlier stamp issues. This may partially account for the scarcity of this issue used during its first year.

In any event, most of the rouletted stamps are plentiful and quite inexpensive in used condition. Only the imperf between pair of the 5c, and the unused 20c and 30c stamps will take a significant nip at your pocketbook.

I have found numerous shades for many stamps in the series, so this would be a good area to explore. The perforated stamps (Scott 618-25), present a greater challenge.

It is reported that there was a small early printing on rather thin paper.

This thin paper presented some handling difficulties for the post office, so a switch was made to medium-to-thick paper.

The perforated 3-centavo value is one of the key stamps in the 1916-20 Mexico definitive.

The printing of stamps on the thin paper, at least the 1c to 10c denominations, was turned over to the philatelic office for sale to collectors. As a result, used copies of these stamps are considered to be mostly favor cancellations.

The top value stamps are readily found on thin paper. Since fewer of these were required in the normal shipments, they did not present the handling problems the low denominations did.

A key stamp in the perforated series is the 3c brown, showing a portrait of Jose Maria Pino Suarez, a martyr of the revolution. This has always been a difficult stamp, in stark contrast to the rouletted 3c, which is one of the most common stamps of that series. I do not have a good explanation for this.

In 1917, when the 3c was issued, postal rates had been restored to more normal levels after a year of inflation. But rates were such that there really wasn't any big need for a 3c stamp. And there may have been ample inventories of the 3c rouletted stamp on hand.

Collectors should exercise caution when purchasing a 3c perforated stamp. There have been instances where large margin copies of the rouletted stamp have been perforated to resemble the scarce ones. Obtain a reliable certificate or examine the stamp carefully under high magnification to make sure there are no traces of roulette marks on the perforated tips.

The perforated 20c and 30c stamps in unused condition are tough to come by, too, and should be acquired with care.

The 1p and 5p stamps provide some remarkable varieties. Both stamps were designed to be bicolor, requiring two separate printing operations.

As a result, the 1p is known with the vignette of the 5p, the central post office; and the 5p is known with the Veracruz lighthouse as its center. There has always been some suspicion that these were more than just pure accidents.

The other variety Scott lists for the 1p is one of my favorites, the blue frame with a somewhat darker blue vignette. Scott formerly cataloged this stamp as No. 627, a major variety. They have since renumbered the series between the 4c and 5p so that this is now listed, and correctly, I believe, as No. 627b. It is now called an error. The blue on blue is not difficult to find in used condition and well-centered copies are easily within reach of most of us.

But a genuine unused blue on blue is quite another matter. When I was searching for one many years ago, several times I was presented with examples of the normal stamp, blue frame, black center. Usually the vignette was weak or somewhat underinked so that it appeared to take on some of the bluish color of the surrounding frame. But inspection under a strong glass always resolved this false perception.

Eventually a good one was found, but it required a bid very near full catalog. I have always considered this to be one of the dozen or so really difficult 20th century Mexican stamps. Its catalog value has risen six-fold in the past 20 years, and that pretty much tells the story.

Besides the color shades mentioned earlier, there are numerous other collectible varieties. As noted in Scott, the 10c stamp comes with and without imprint at the base of the design. The 40c stamp has been reported without imprint, but I have never seen one. The 5p stamps were sometimes overprinted with control numbers, usually in red.

The rouletted series is available in imperforate state, but a collector should purchase pairs, and examine the space between the impressions very carefully. If traces of roulette indentations are found, it is not imperforate. Double entries and other engraving mistakes are reported for the 1c and 2c denominations.

I suspect there may be other flyspecks for those who enjoy looking for them. Devotees of postal history could certainly have some fun looking for early usage and unusual rates for this issue.

I have only a couple of stamps which, from cancellations, I can postively ascribe to 1916. It would be most interesting to hear from readers on this subject. And I promise an answer to everyone who writes. ■

French army had own mails in Mexico

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Two of my previous articles (Jan. 9, 1984, page 50 and June 11, 1984, page 66) dealt with the postage stamps used in Mexico during the brief monarchy of Archduke Maximilian, 1864 to 1867.

Throughout that period Maximilian was supported by a substantial army of French soldiers, including small contingents of Belgians and Austrians. This column will be about mail handled by the French forces.

French military presence in Mexico actually began two years before Maximilian and Carlota stepped ashore at Veracruz on June 12, 1864.

Originally, the French had been joined by British and Spanish units to force collections of a large foreign debt the Mexicans had refused to repay on time.

When it became evident that the French had designs on extending their empire into the Western Hemisphere with this debt collection pretext, England and Spain quickly withdrew their forces.

To facilitate communication between dispersed units of the army and to expedite mail from the military back home, the French established post offices in the major cities under their control, as well as in certain other field locations. These were called bureaus. Each of them was supplied with contemporary French stamps together with appropriate datestamps and canceling devices.

It was really a mail system within a mail system, since the Mexican post was operating at the time, too.

The identification of letters that were handled in this system is really not difficult although finding them is.

They nearly always bear a double-ring datestamp inscribed "Corps Exp Mexique," which stands for the Mexican Expeditionary Force.

At the base of the handstamp will be "Bau" plus a letter, which designated the bureau or post office at which the letter was mailed. There were 12 such bureaus, each identified by a letter. "A" was the bureau situated at Mexico City. "B," "C" and "D" designated French army headquarters at Veracruz, and so on.

Killers used to cancel the stamps consisted of a rhomboid of dots. There were eight rows of dots each way, with four initials in the center of the rhomboid.

Postal rates were such that the denominations used were mostly the 10 centimes, 20c and 40c.

This Jan. 9, 1866, cover is from the French army post office in Mexico City and was sent to Bordeaux, France, where it arrived Feb. 6. The datestamp shows the words "Corps Exp Mexique" and the letter "A." The killer is a rhomboid of dots with the letters "CEMA." The "A" identifies the Mexico City office.

Again, the initials tell us where the letter originated. The first three, always "CEM," stand for Corps Expeditionaire Mexique. The fourth letter, as noted above, signifies the bureau where it was used.

The French stamps used on these letters were from the two issues of the so-called Napolean Head Empires, either imperforate or perforate (Scott 12 through 28).

All examples of mail of this type that I have seen were directed to places outside of Mexico, usually France. I know of one cover that went to Algeria.

Unfortunately, Corps Mexique covers are scarce and fetch high prices in the philatelic market.

There were stampless letters, too, and these usually trade for somewhat less than covers with stamps.

Once in a while a loose stamp is found with the "CEM" and letter initials but I suspect that by now most of them have been picked out of everyone's bulk stock.

The "CEMA" covers mailed at Mexico City are by far the most plentiful. One of these is illustrated. Next come those from Veracruz, with "CEMB" or "CEMC."

When you get to the lower ranking letters like "H," "K" and "M," which were assigned to the smaller bureaus, they are true rarities.

Another thing that enhances the desirability and demand for Corps Mexique covers is their suitability for many different types of collections or exhibits.

They will fit nicely in a collection of classic Mexican postal history, or in a collection of French classics and offices abroad.

And since most of the letters bear additional transit and ship markings, they are ideal for a collection or exhibit of maritime mail. I realize that not too many of my readers can aspire to own many such covers, but I have always been fascinated with this small segment of Mexican postal history. And it makes a good story, too.

There are other items in what I call my "French-Mexican Connection" exhibit that are just as interesting and a lot more affordable.

A great deal of mail flowed between Mexico and France in the 1860s and 1870s. I'll discuss some of these in a future article. ■

A triumphant year for Mexican collecting; new Mexican stamp catalog coming in 1988

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

This will be the fifth time that I have used the December column to catch up on short items which in themselves do not merit a full-length article. It is also an appropriate way to call attention to people and events in Mexican philately which deserve mention.

I consider 1987 as a banner year for those of us who specialize in Mexican philately.

In August, a collection of Mexican classics won the Champion of Champions award at STAMPSHOW in Boston.

Bob Paliafito's exhibit of Mexico, "The First Designs, 1856-1867," took the honors in what I am told was rather stiff competition.

This did not surprise me. I saw his marvelous showing at ARIPEX in January among some equally keen competition from his Mexico-Elmhurst Philatelic Society International colleagues.

Winning the grand award at Tucson qualified him for Boston and, although Bob is a seasoned exhibitor, it was the first time he had shown this material.

His triumph also underscores the fact that a choice array of stamps and covers of Mexico, well organized, mounted and annotated, can stand up against any of the other philatelic powerhouse countries we are accustomed to seeing at this level of competition.

ARIPEX also brought forth some other fine exhibits of Mexico, a few of which were by contestants new to the scene. This I view as a healthy trend.

Some of the more seldom seen areas deserve attention, and they are getting it, especially late 19th-century and early 20th-century issues. Let's hope we see more of them.

(Editor's note: Out of modesty, Dale has not mentioned his exhibit of Mexican forwarded transatlantic mail that won the grand award at NAPEX 87 in Arlington, Va., at the end of May (Linn's, *June 22, page 53). In a field of 14 other gold-award winners, such a feat merits recognition here.)*

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I am waiting for someone to come up with an exhibit of the current Exporta issue of Mexico.

There is plenty of material now, some common and some scarce, so creating a substantial display should not be a problem. However, usages and commentary on Mexico's fast-changing postal rate structure during the years of the Exporta issue will be an important part of a successful exhibition.

Speaking of the Exportas, new printings keep coming.

My supplier has sent me 22 varieties so far this year. The experts are still discussing whether the most recent issues are distinctive enough to warrant separate status as an eighth issue.

As of the end of 1986, seven such issues had been generally accepted, with paper, colors, and gum characteristics being the principal controlling factors.

From time to time, I still receive letters from readers about the Exportas. There were about a half-dozen requests in this year's mail for the checklist I offered over two years ago. (Apparently, some collectors really get behind in reading their *Linn's*.)

In service since 1975, Mexico's Exporta issues, such as Scott 1125, boast numerous varieties. If there is enough reader response, the author will prepare a revised and updated list of these stamps.

I wasn't planning to do this again, but there still seems to be a demand among the general collectors of Mexico as far as an up-to-date listing for Exporta varieties.

If there is enough reader response (a postal card to me in care of *Linn's Stamp News* is sufficient), I will attempt to put together an updated version in the next two or three months and make it available to readers for a stamped, addressed envelope.

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My article on Mexican advertising covers (*Linn's*, Jan. 12, page 34) elicited a surprising amount of interest and reader response. I received about 25 letters, most of which contained photocopies of items in the writer's possession.

While I make no pretext of trying to maintain a complete listing of reported designs, I am now aware of well over 150. My thanks to all readers, too many to mention here by name, for taking time to write me on this subject.

By the way, it's not too late to begin collecting illustrated Mexican advertising covers. Recently I found several in the cheap cover boxes of a dealer in a local stamp show bourse.

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MEPSI continues working hard on their new catalog of Mexican stamps.

It was originally hoped that this ambitious undertaking would be finished sometime near the end of this year, but it is now certain that this deadline cannot be met. However, good progress is being made, and several sections are nearing completion.

I am confident that once this catalog is available, it will be a boon to collectors wishing to specialize in Mexico. The final product may not be so much a catalog as a handbook.

As I pointed out in my article on page 36 of the April issue of *Linn's*, none of the catalogs currently available covers the field adequately in all respects. One is obliged to secure several to get a rounded picture.

The MEPSI catalog may solve this problem in large measure.

Furthermore, it is hoped that many past mistakes will be corrected. The editorial staff for the MEPSI catalog contains many of the foremost experts on Mexican philately.

And now for an annual plug: If you have a keen interest in the stamps of Mexico and are not yet a member of MEPSI, join now.

The organization's quarterly journal, *Mexicana*, continues to be packed with useful information for the generalist and specialist alike.

Additional services, such as expertization, periodic auctions, publications and stamp circuits, are valuable adjuncts to membership. For more information, write to John Kordich, 1014 37th St., San Pedro, Calif. 90731.

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Finally, sincere holiday wishes to all readers of the Mexico column. Let's hope that 1988 will be a good year for stamp hunting. ■

Mexico's fascinating Porte de Mar stamps

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

The stimulus for this article came from a bonus that Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International members received in November with a copy of *Mexicana*, the society's quarterly journal.

Figure 1. This 138-page book was a bonus for MEPSI members with a recent issue of the journal *Mexicana*.

Figure 1 shows the bonus, a new book written by Karl H. Schimmer on another of Mexico's curious philatelic facets, the Porte de Mar stamps of 1875-79.

The expression "Porte de Mar" roughly translates as sea-mail postage. The term first appears in the 1862 postal convention between the United States and Mexico, and relates to fees for the transfer of mail by U.S. steamships.

The history behind this concept is interesting, and merits a brief description.

In those times, Mexico had practically no commercial maritime fleet. Virtually all communications with the United States and Europe depended on foreign-owned mail packets and steamships.

As I noted in an earlier article in *Linn's* (Feb. 11, 1985, page 20), the British established post offices in conjunction with their consulates in Tampico and Veracruz as early as 1826.

These consular post offices handled the bulk of the mail in and out of Mexico until the French arrived in 1862. The system worked well, since British and French packets were regular and reliable.

However, the system rankled the Mexican authorities. They didn't like the control that foreigners had over the mails. Foreign postal agents were the first to get their hands on the mailbags as they came off the packets, and only later were letters bound for the interior turned over to the Mexican post office.

This awkward situation became even more tense during the French occupation of Mexico, since the British gave recognition to the unpopular Maximilian Empire. There was more rumbling about these foreign post offices, and matters finally came to a head in January 1875.

Mexican postal authorities sent instructions to all post offices dictating the treatment of mail addressed to foreign destinations.

Such letters were to be charged the normal domestic postage using regular stamps, and would be assessed an additional charge for sea postage according to a specific tariff.

This extra cash payment was to be accounted for separately, and represented by special Porte de Mar stamps affixed to the back of each letter. The sum of these extra cash payments was then to be paid directly to the captains of the steamships.

Figure 2. The lack of ornamentation in the corners marks this stamp as one of the first 1875 Porte de Mar designs, Scott JX2.

This new scheme effectively cut the foreign postal agent out of the picture. Within a couple of years, both the British and the French closed their consular post offices permanently.

Three separate series of Porte de Mar stamps are recognized, although only the second issue was ever legitimately used. In the Scott catalog, these stamps are listed before the Official stamps of Mexico, and carry the numbers JX1-31.

Figure 2 shows the 25-centavo value from the first series (JX1-8). These designs in eight denominations were printed on yellow paper.

There is no record of why these stamps were not authorized for use. Some say they simply did not please the postmaster general.

The second issue (JX9-19) is very similar to the first, except that there is a background of horizontal lines, and ornaments appear in the spandrels at the corners of the design. A genuine, used 35c stamp from the second issue is shown on the left in Figure 3.

Both the first and second issues were lithographed in composite sheets seven subjects wide by seven subjects deep, producing a 49-stamp sheet.

Later lithographic stones used in printing some stamps of the second issue, which displayed somewhat larger numerals of value, had 56 subjects.

As the footnote in the Scott catalog reveals, each sheet contained all Porte de Mar denominations in quantities consistent with their expected usage. Complete sheets could thus be sent to post offices as needed without complicated bookkeeping or the bother of breaking sheets into smaller units.

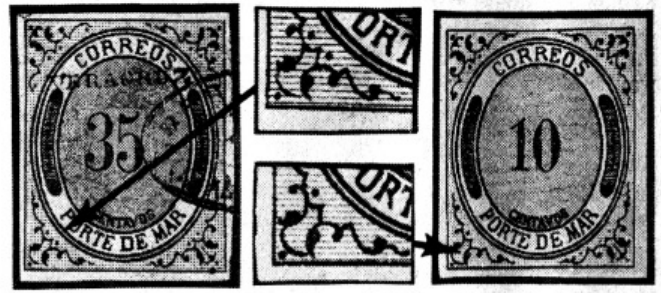

Figure 3. An authentic second series 35-centavo Porte de Mar stamp used at Veracruz (left) and a common forgery of the 10c value (right). One test to find the forgery is that it has only one dot between the bottom left corner ornament and the oval frame around the numeral. Genuine stamps have two.

Exemplified in Figure 4, stamps of the third Porte de Mar series (JX20-31) exist in six denominations, printed in various colors on white paper. These stamps were much smaller than those of the first two series.

The third designs were prepared for 1879, the year Mexico joined the Universal Postal Union, but these stamps were never officially put to use. That same year, the Juarez regular issue (Scott 123-45) was introduced for exclusive

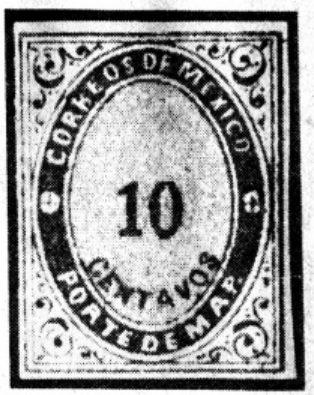

Figure 4. Never issued for use, stamps of the third design, such as Scott JX28, are the only ones on which the name of Mexico appears.

use on mail to foreign destinations.

Except for the 35c and 60c large numeral values (J22, J24), unused examples of Porte de Mar stamps are readily available and cheap.

When their use was discontinued in 1880, large stocks remained in the post office, and these eventually found their way into the stock books of stamp dealers.

Early albums had spaces for the stamps, and they became favorites in packet mixtures. In fact, demand was so great that several forgeries were made of the second issue, one of which is common. It is illustrated on the right in Figure 3.

While unused stamps are plentiful and inexpensive, genuine used examples are quite the opposite. There are probably several reasons for this, despite the fact that postal records show that thousands of these issues were used from 1876 to 1880.

To begin with, the first and second series stamps contain no mention of Mexico. Many early collectors probably considered them labels, which in a sense they were.

In addition, these stamps were placed on the backs of letters, where they may have escaped notice and preservation. Further, stamps were usually affixed over the closure of the letter, like a seal, and many were destroyed when the letters were opened.

In any event, sound used Porte de Mar stamps are valuable and hard to find. The situation regarding Porte de Mar covers is even more desperate.

In researching his recent book, Schimmer searched diligently for such covers for many years, with the aim of either acquiring them or simply recording their existence. Even so, to date his registry lists only 49 items that meet his criteria to be considered as genuine.

An authentic Porte de Mar cover is a true rarity. Unfortunately, I cannot show one with this article other than the one on the front of Schimmer's book.

Between the scarcity of legitimately used stamps and covers on the one hand, and the relatively ample supply of inexpensive unused stamps on the other, a great deal of monkey business has gone on over the years.

Though mint forgeries are fairly easy to detect, approach both used Porte de Mar stamps and covers with caution.

I realize that few readers will share Schimmer's deeply rooted interest in the Porte de Mar stamps of Mexico. However, most longtime collectors may have a smattering of these stamps in the back of their albums. It's also likely they have a few forgeries of the second issue.

For those whose curiosity about Porte de Mar issues has been piqued, you may want to consider getting Schimmer's book and reading the whole story.

The book is quite a bargain at $10, and goes into much detail about the different issues, settings, plate varieties, retouches, transfer types and more.

The final section of *Porte de Mar* is an appendix that, among other things, contains Schimmer's registry of the 49 covers known to him. He readily admits that there must be others out there, still waiting to be discovered.

Perhaps the book will help these obscure yet fascinating stamps finally receive the attention they richly deserve. ■

Official stamps of Mexico offer challenge

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Back-of-the-book items are attracting more attention these days, so this month's column takes a look at the Official stamps of Mexico.

Mexico's decision to issue Official stamps probably came as a reaction to the fact that the United States, as well as other countries, were producing special stamps to frank official government mail.

The first Mexican Official stamp appeared in 1884. The design resembles very closely the so-called Medallion issue of the same year that was used on regular domestic mail.

That series shows a left-facing profile of Father Miguel Hidalgo in an oval surrounded by a machine-engraved design.

One difference between the definitive and the Official stamps is that the latter have no denomination. In the lower part of the oval that displays the denomination on the definitives, the inscription "CORRESPONDENCIA OFICIAL" is substituted.

Further, the outer frame and the ornamented spandrels on the regular issues are completely omitted on the Official stamps.

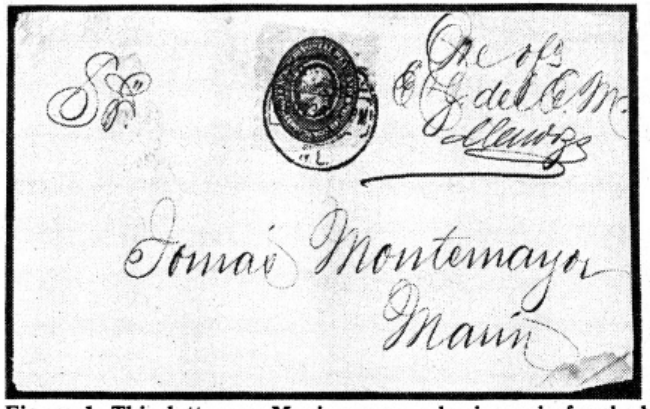

Figure 1. This letter on Mexican army business is franked with the perf 5½ Official stamp of 1894, Scott O6.

It is interesting to note that the design of Mexico's first Official stamps was chosen as the central motif for two airmails issued in 1968 to publicize EFIMEX, an international stamp show staged in Mexico City immediately following the Olympic Games.

The Medallion design remained in use on Mexican Official stamps for about 10 years. The Scott catalog recognizes eight major varieties, although they may have stretched the point a bit. Other catalogs list some of these as subvarieties.

Figure 1 shows a cover displaying correct use of one of the first Official stamps. The stamp is Scott O6, the 1894 ultramarine issue perforated 5½.

The dated cancellation shows that the cover was mailed from Monterrey on Aug. 24, 1894, to Marin, a short distance away.

The handwritten endorsement to the right of the stamp needs some explanation because it typifies correct usage of Official stamps. It reads: "De of/El J. de E.M./Mendoza."

A rough translation of this abbreviated endorsement would be: "On official (business)/Commander of the Mexican Army/(signed) Mendoza." Further, there is a handstamped seal on the back of the envelope with an inscription that translates as "Commanding General of the Military Zone."

Although one occasionally sees plain envelopes franked with Official stamps, it is my understanding that postal rules required that the envelopes bear evidence of their official nature to qualify for use of Official stamps.

I suspect that a fair number of favor cancellations were applied for collectors in violation of this rule.

As shown in Figure 2, beginning in 1895 Mexican Official stamps were created simply by overprinting regular postage stamps with the word "OFICIAL." A quick glance at the Scott catalog shows that, with few exceptions, every major definitive issue up to 1937 is also found with "OFICIAL" or "SERVICIO OFICIAL" overprints.

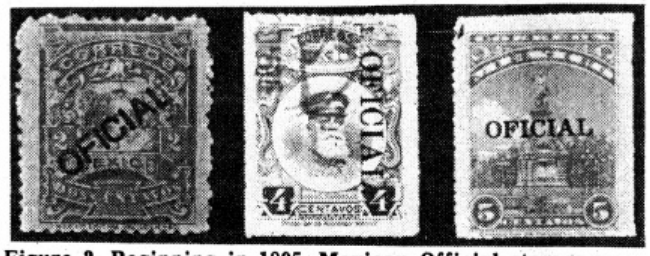

Figure 2. Beginning in 1895, Mexican Official stamps were created by applying an "OFICIAL" overprint to contemporary definitives. The examples shown are, from left to right, Scott O11 of 1895, Scott O165 of 1924, and Scott O214 of 1934.

Until recently, Mexico's Official stamps were not too popular and could readily be purchased at large discounts from catalog prices. However, it seems that they are now being discovered as a neglected area, and they aren't as easy to find as they once were.

There are a number of key stamps in the listings of Mexican Officials that fetch high prices whenever they are sold. Generally these are the top denominations in a set or series.

Probably the two toughest Official stamps are Scott O101 and O112, both issued in 1916. Neither stamp was ever legitimately used and it is speculated that no more than one sheet of 50 of each of these 5-peso stamps was overprinted.

From time to time these stamps do appear in auctions, if one has the money to go after them, but bidders must be sure to buy them with certificates. As you might suspect, these overprints have been forged.

Another scarce stamp is Scott CO18, an airmail Official. This one can be dangerous, too, because another cheaper stamp, Scott C1a, has been the object of fraudulent overprinting.

Another airmail Official to be wary of is Scott CO30. Attempts have been made to fabricate fakes of this stamp by perforating its cheap, rouletted cousin, Scott CO26.

Including the airmail Officials, there are about 270 major varieties of Mexican Official stamps. Add to this misspelled overprints, different colored overprints, double strikes, inverted overprints and so forth, and you come up to about 500 or so collectible items.

Many of these stamps are still available for pennies. When I left Mexico about 20 years ago, the philatelic window at the main post office still had a substantial stock of what were then 30-year-old Official stamps that they sold at face value.

True, you had to buy the key items separately, or sometimes as part of a set, but you really didn't have too much to lose when you purchased stamps from the post office. Even if you ended up with a few duplicates, at least you knew you had genuine overprints to use for reference purposes.

Finding really fine copies of some of the older Officials presents a challenge, and the same holds true for some 20th-century issues as well.

I once wondered if the post office deliberately chose poorly centered stock to overprint as Official stamps. I'm sure this was not the case, but a collection of well-centered Officials will require patience and diligence.

I've never had too much luck locating Official stamps on cover. Every so often a few crop up, but I suspect that the vast majority were simply thrown away by the government officials who received them.

Mexican Officials offer a serious collector plenty of opportunity to work in a field that still isn't too crowded. A modest amount of money is needed, but perhaps the toughest part will be finding sources of material. Let me know how you make out. ■

Ultraviolet exposes new Mexican varieties

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

In an earlier article in *Linn's* on Aug. 13, 1984 (page 46), I focused on Mexico's long series of definitive airmail stamps used between 1950 and 1976, popularly called the Architecture and Archaeology series.

This series not only contains attractive stamps, but offers opportunity for serious philatelic study of the varieties of papers, gum, watermarks and printings.

The contemporary surface mail stamps of Mexico are similarly challenging, but were omitted from discussion to keep the article to a reasonable length.

However, one important aspect of these stamps that did not receive attention in the earlier article was the sequence of late printings on light active paper.

Light active paper is paper which contains optical brighteners, or which has been coated with light sensitive material, so that it reacts to ultraviolet light.

For the past 20 years or so, many countries have produced postal paper with these characteristics, both for security reasons and to facilitate high-speed mail handling in rapid sorting and canceling machines. Mexico is no exception.

In the long wave ultraviolet light range (3200-4000 angstroms), which I have found best for studying Mexican stamps, there are two phenomena of interest: fluorescence and phosphorescence. Both terms refer to behavior of substances under ultraviolet light.

Fluorescence is the result of chemicals, called optical brighteners, which are added during the paper-making process.

Ordinary fluorescent paper glows, mostly in white to bluish violet shades, but shows no afterglow when the ultraviolet light source is removed.

Since optical brighteners permeate the paper, fluorescence is normally visible on both the front and back of stamps. "Hi-Brite" is a term often used to refer to a particularly light active type of this paper.

By contrast, phosphorescence is usually a yellow or amber glow from a surface coating which will persist for a fraction of a second after the ultraviolet light source is removed.

Mexican postal authorities began experimenting with phosphorescent tagging and fluorescent papers in the late 1960s. It seems there was no public announcement of this fact, so it took a while for stamp collectors to

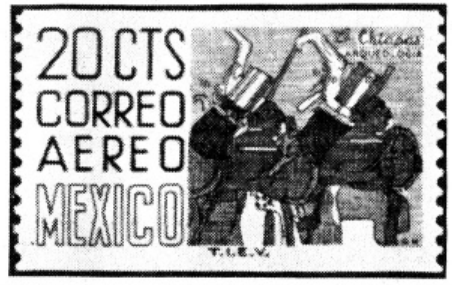

Figure 1. Some of Mexico's experimental coil airmail stamps of 1969, such as Scott C347, were printed on fluorescent paper, while others had a phosphorescent coating.

stumble upon stamps with light active markings.

As a result, collectors who thought they had obtained all stamp varieties discovered they were missing many of those printed on light active papers.

For example, the photogravure reissues in 1963 of the 80-centavo, 5-peso, 10p, and 20p stamps (Scott C265-68) were first issued on ordinary papers. However, later printings show both fluorescence and phosphorescent coatings.

Since the 80c denomination comes with two die sizes and two different perforation formats, the four Scott-listed stamps actually embrace more than 20 varieties. A couple of these are not easy to find.

The next airmail stamp series in the Scott catalog (C285/C298) is split about half and half with respect to light-active papers.

The engraved 20c, 40c, 50c, 80c, and 2p stamps are on slightly fluorescent paper; the photogravure stamps are not. The 40c stamp in this series is quite scarce.

When experimental coil stamps, such as the 20c issue shown in Figure 1, that first appeared in 1969 (C347-49) were examined carefully, some were found to have been printed on ordinary fluorescent paper, while others carried a phosphorescent coating on the face of the stamp.

In the 1971-73 time frame, there were some printings of several engraved denominations on paper with the vertical "MEX-MEX" watermark (Scott type 300) that looked like they belonged in the 1955-65 series (Scott C218-21).

On closer inspection, there were three notable differences: the paper had an almost laid like appearance, there was blotchy phosphorescence on the face of the stamps when viewed under ultraviolet light, and the perforation holes were smaller than those of the earlier issues.

Scott C422, the 80c airmail stamp, is an interesting variety printed on paper normally reserved for revenue stamps. It shows a beehive pattern of fluorescent lines on either the front or the back of the stamp.

The final printings of the Architecture and Archaeology stamps in the mid-1970s, including the two values shown in Figure 2, were all on a chalky surfaced phosphorescent-coated paper. Some of them (Scott C444-51) had the "MEX-MEX" watermark; the rest (C471-80) did not.

All but three of these stamps were printed by photogravure, and many were in contemporaneous use with stamps of the then new Exporta series.

Unfortunately, the Scott catalog does not differentiate between the light active paper varieties, and it should be obvious from this outline that the total picture is quite complex.

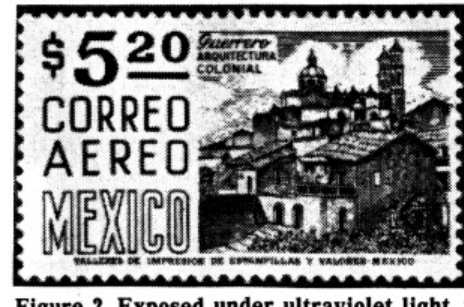

Figure 2. Exposed under ultraviolet light, the phosphorescent coating on 1975 Architecture and Archaeology airmail issues, including Scott C449 and C451, is readily apparent.

The 1982 fifth edition of the catalog of Mexican stamps by Celis Cano contains a table which is very helpful to anyone attempting to search for these varieties.

You must understand or translate a few Spanish words, and become accustomed to a numbering system entirely different from the Scott listings, but the effort is well rewarded with a comprehensive picture of what exists.

I know of no album which provides spaces for all these varieties, although the Lighthouse album for Mexico does a rather good job of annotating and including the major varieties. A showing of the complete series would require mounting on blank pages.

Most of the varieties are still available from dealers specializing in modern Mexican issues, but prices for some have been volatile, and others are beginning to appear on buy lists. It might be well to try to complete your collection before the scarcest of these stamps gets out of reach.

If you are one of those collectors who have not yet experienced the joys of working with ultraviolet light, you really should get with it. I feel it will soon be an indispensable tool for collecting modern stamps of almost any country, and it can also be most useful in detecting repairs, fugitive hinge marks and filled thins.

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By popular demand, next month we will revisit the Exporta series of stamps, which remains an extremely popular facet of modern Mexican philately.

In this area, a good ultraviolet light is essential, because it is practically the only way to detect subtle differences among the varieties.

If you're in the market for one, a dual range ultraviolet light is recommended, with long wave light for Mexican stamps and a short-wave setting for stamps of the United States.

Collectors who would like to find out more will do well to refer to Wayne L. Youngblood's Stamps that Glow column in last week's issue of *Linn's* (March 7, page 16). ■

Endless variety in Mexico's Exporta series

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Unquestionably, the Exporta stamps of Mexico are now among the most popular stamps of that nation.

Earlier columns in *Linn's* on July 8, 1985 (page 30), and Oct. 14, 1985 (page 56), introduced readers to some of the interesting aspects of these issues.

More recently, my offer in December of a rough checklist of the Exporta issues generated more than 200 requests. This was far more than I had expected, and attests to their continuing appeal.

A brief review of these fascinating stamps is in order.

As the name implies, Exporta stamps depict products manufactured or produced within Mexico, and serve as miniature advertising labels on mail leaving the country.

The illustrations show the standardized design. The product occupies the left three-fifths of the stamp, with the export logo, denomination and class of service filling the balance of space. The designs are clean, the stamps are well printed, and they come in a variety of attractive colors.

Up to now, 28 subjects, or products, have been featured on Exporta stamps. Continuing inflation in Mexico has caused postage rates to rise sharply, creating a need for even higher denominations.

As a result, many of the product motifs have been recycled one or more times.

New use of an old design has often produced perceptible differences in color, paper or perforation between original stamps and subsequent reprints. There are also several dozen varieties simply as a result of the redenominating of various designs to keep up with Mexico's skyrocketing postal rates.

This doesn't even begin to account for the many, many varieties serious collectors have identified and seek.

During the 13 years that these stamps have been available, assorted papers, with and without light-sensitive coatings, have been used in the many printings.

In a few instances, more than one die size exists for a given design. Imperfect control of printing inks has caused a number of color shades.

When all these aspects are thrown together, you have a specialist's paradise. As a bonus, there are also some interesting constant plate flaws.

Stamps with the Cattle and Meat design, including the two shown in Figure 1, are typical of the diversity to be found among the Exporta issues.

The 80-centavo denomination seen on the left debuted with the series in the mid-1970s. The five varieties listed in the Scott catalog are among 13 recognized by specialists in these stamps. A recent reissue of the Cattle and Meat design, now in a 10-peso denomination, appears on the right.

To bring some order to the 260-plus major varieties now recorded for the Exporta stamps, most specialists divide them into issues.

These issues, which follow a rough chronological sequence, are segregated according to the characteristics of the paper on which the stamps are printed. Paper thickness, gum texture and color, and behavior under ultraviolet light are the distinguishing factors.

To be able to make these distinctions, you should possess certain philatelic tools. A paper caliper and a watermark detector are useful.

You might be able to get by without the caliper once you get the feel for these stamps, but a ultraviolet light is an absolute necessity. As noted in last month's column, a long-wave ultraviolet lamp works best with Mexican stamps.

Further key tools for intelligent collecting are catalogs and albums, and here we begin to run into problems. The Scott catalog does not break the Exporta listings into the issue types adequately, and so it is of little use to the specialist.

The 1.60p Bicycle airmail stamp is a case in point. The current Scott catalog recognizes the unwatermarked 1975 stamp (Scott C491), a 1981 thin paper variety (Scott C491a) and a watermarked 1979 version (Scott C596).

In fact, there are seven recognizably different varieties of the stamp in the first four issues of the series.

Figure 2 depicts the semi-transparent paper variety of the third issue 1.60p Bicycle on the left, and a recent reissue of the design as a 20p surface mail stamp on the right.

Most of the well-known albums are found wanting, too. At present, I feel the best job of providing for the Exporta stamps has been done by the publishers of the Lighthouse specialized albums.

Lighthouse has taken a keen interest in these issues, providing pages with spaces for most major varieties. Annual supplements often include revisions of previously issued pages to accommodate new denominations or discoveries.

Incidently, you may be able to secure through a Lighthouse dealer a pamphlet titled *Over-*

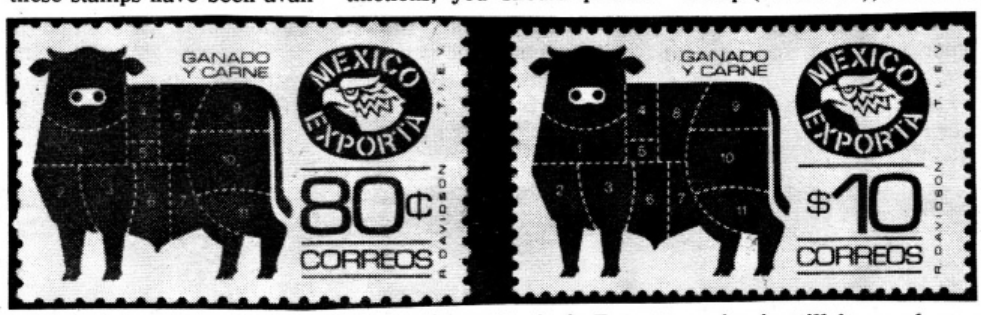

Figure 1. The Cattle and Meat design from Mexico's Exporta series is still in regular use today, a dozen years after it was first issued. The original 80-centavo design is seen on the left, and a recently issued 10-peso value on the right.

Figure 2. Seven varieties of the 1.60p Bicycle airmail stamp (left) can be recognized by specialists. A new 20p surface rate value (right) continues this design in the Exporta series.

view of the Exporta Issues.

This pamphlet cross-references major catalog listings and gives very detailed information on the stamps, maybe more than most people need.

As far as mounting my own Exporta collection goes, my preference is to use blank album pages, which gives me maximum flexibility.

Without catalogs, how can we know what is available in the various issue groupings of the Exporta stamps?

As promised in my Dec. 14, 1987, column, for a stamped, addressed No. 10 envelope sent to me in care of *Linn's*, I will send you a copy of a recently updated and expanded checklist that I put together to help me sort out the issues.

It is really a composite of information generously supplied from several sources, including collectors and dealers. It contains notes that should enable anyone to determine what is present or missing from his Exporta collection.

One difficulty in trying to produce a universal checklist is that the experts can't agree on how many distinct issue groupings there should be. In some cases differences are so subtle that people ignore them.

In my list, I have tried to strike a balance that should be acceptable to all but the most picky collectors. My checklist of the Exporta stamps has eight groupings in all.

Judging from questions I received from readers, it is apt to take some time and practice to become adept at sorting Exporta stamps with the ultraviolet light. The difference between phosphorescence and fluorescence continues to confuse some collectors, and was dealt with in last month's column (March 14, page 10).

The watermark in the second Exporta issue is usually hard to see clearly, and I don't have a good solution to that problem. Again, experience is the best teacher.

One useful tip with stamps like the Exportas, where minor differences in the character of the paper are important, is to deliberately buy a few sheet margin stamps. The blank margin selvage gives you an area of paper that is clear of the stamp's design for careful scrutiny.

In summary, the Mexican Exporta stamps are prime candidates for an attractive collection involving some fairly serious philatelic study.

Most of the varieties are still available at modest prices, though there are some scarce ones that require a larger financial commitment.

One error, in which the phosphor coating appears on the back of the stamp, is already well into the three-figure range. Fortunately, there are but a handful of varieties in this more expensive category.

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With regret I add a postscript to this column announcing the passing of another of the giants of Mexican philately, John K. Bash of Port Republic, Md. He died on March 5.

John was mainly known for his authoritative articles on early Mexican postmarks, which led to the book co-authored with the late Otto Yag entitled *The Pre-Stamp Postal Markings of Mexico.*

In recent years, John also wrote extensively in *Mexicana*, the quarterly journal of the Mexico-Elmhurst Philatelic Society International. His articles dealt mostly with the stamps of the classic era, and particularly those of the Maximilian monarchy, of which he was an ardent collector.

For years he served as the chief examiner on the MEPSI expertization committee. He received all the top honors awarded by MEPSI, including election to the Hall of Fame, the Irwin Heiman memorial award and the Distinguished Service award.

We will miss both John's expert knowledge and his wise counsel. ■

Gothic-overprinted stamps of early Mexico

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

This month we will consider one of the many interesting interludes in Mexican postal affairs during the 19th century. These are the Gothic name overprints on stamps of Mexico's first design used during 1867-68.

These stamps are listed in the *Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue* as Scott 35-45, a group that includes three of the rarest classic stamps of Mexico.

First, some historical perspective is useful.

In the spring of 1867, the French-supported monarchy collapsed completely. Archduke Maximilian was executed on June 19.

The Mexican army occupied the capital on June 21, and President Benito Juarez arrived in the city on July 15.

On Aug. 6, a decree was issued to the secretary of the treasury for reorganization of fiscal matters including the collection and distribution of revenue.

New postage stamps would be designed and printed, but these would not appear until September 1868. Continued use of stamps of the deposed monarch was unthinkable. Meanwhile, postal authorities located remainders of the 1861 issue, mostly 1-reale and 2r stamps.

Because the relatively small quantities were insufficient to service the entire country, it was determined that these remainders would be reissued for local use only. The rest of the post offices in the republic would revert to the Sello Negro handstamp system for franking letters.

The first of Mexico's first-issue remainder stamps appear to have been issued and used without a name overprint. We might speculate that postal clerks, aware that the stamps were intended for use only in the Mexico district, considered the overprinting unnecessary.

Numerous covers bearing non-overprinted stamps with June and July 1867 dates have been recorded.

At about the same time, an order was given to clean up the plates of the 1861 issue and reprint the four low denominations, excluding the 8r value.

This order gave rise to the

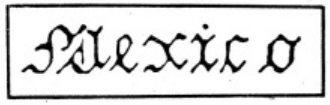

Figure 1. An enlargement of the stamped impression of the 1867-68 Mexico overprint. The style of lettering gives the Gothic overprinted issues their name.

1867 reissues printed on thin, gray revenue paper with the large R.P.S. (Renta Papel Sellado) watermark, Scott 42-45.

The watermark appeared only once in the center of each sheet of stamps, so about half of the reissued stamps will show parts of it.

It was not a large printing. Only 15,000 ½r stamps, 26,200 1r stamps, 81,320 2r stamps and 13,470 4r stamps came off the presses.

Postal records indicate that most, if not all, of these thin-paper stamps were sold. Unused examples, particularly the 1r and 4r denominations, are scarce and high-priced, suggesting that the majority were used on mail.

Name overprinting, the normal Mexican post office practice to validate stamps for use, seems to have resumed in earnest at about the time the thin-paper stamps were issued, and continued until the full-face Hidalgos came into use 13 months later.

Figure 1 shows the stamped impression of the Mexico name in Gothic letters, applied with the same device used for overprinting the Eagle and Maximilian issues. The earliest recorded usage of the Gothic Mexico overprint is Aug. 9.

Collecting these Gothic overprints can be frustrating for the fussy collector. Much of the 1861 remainder stock, especially the 1r and 2r stamps, had been poorly printed and clear impressions are hard to find. The thin-paper reissues generally gets better marks in this respect.

Figure 2 shows the difference in printing quality between these issues. The vertical "Mexico" overprint is barely visible on the 2r remainder issue on the left, beginning at the OS of "DOS" on the stamp's design and running upwards. It is easily seen on the 1867 reissue on the right.

Further, the name overprints and cancellations are often found smudged, reflecting carelessness on the part of postal workers.

Since use was limited to Mexico, the usual cancellations were the double-ring datestamp types common to the period.

These Gothic overprinted stamps are the source of a fair number of varieties printed on both sides, especially among the 1861 1r and 2r remainders.

These are not common, to be sure, but are relatively more plentiful than similar varieties on the regular issues of 1856 and 1861. This is another indication that the remainder stock was of substandard quality to begin with.

Figure 2. Two 2-reale stamps with the Gothic Mexico overprint: a printing on pinkish paper from the 1861 remainders (left) and a printing in green on thin paper of the 1867 reissue (right). Characteristic of the remainders, the overprint is extremely difficult to see on the stamp on the left.

While the vast majority of Gothic overprinted stamps are found with Mexico City cancellations or on covers originating there, an occasional letter crops up from a nearby town.

Figure 3 shows a cover from my collection bearing a pair of the 1r Gothics, mailed from and canceled in Chalco, a small village southeast of Mexico City. It is dated Sept. 9, 1868, at the very end of the usage period.

In fact, the full-face Hidalgo stamps were already on sale in Mexico City. At this time, all but the 1r Gothic overprinted stamps had been sold out.

The scarcest of these Gothic overprinted stamps, and the key stamps in any collection of first design varieties, are the ½r black on buff, the 4r on white paper, and the 8r green on brown.

There was no record of these denominations in the remainders inventory of May 1864, when use of the Eagle stamps became mandatory.

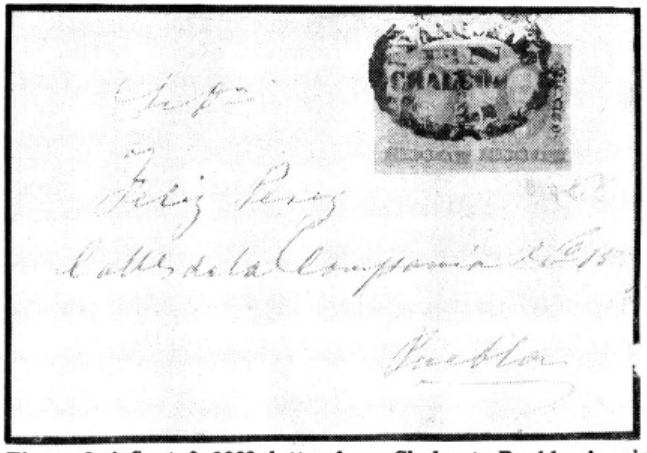

Figure 3. A Sept. 9, 1868, letter from Chalco to Puebla. A pair of the 1r Gothic overprints is canceled with an oval wreath "Franqueado/EN/Chalco" handstamp.

It is generally assumed that the ½r stamps were probably among returns from outlying post offices received later. The rare 8r stamps may have been part sheets mixed in with the returned 8r black on brown stamps. In any event, so limited were their numbers that no separate record of them was kept.

The 4r on white paper is a special case. Some experts believe that these stamps were made when a new printing of 4r stamps on normal paper was ordered in the summer of 1867.

The Scott catalog formerly priced this stamp, but discontinued the listing in the early 1980s. So many of the stamps purporting to be this variety turn out to be 1856 remainders with forged overprints that genuine copies rarely appear on the market.

Over the years, some students have refused to accept the Gothic overprints as regular issues. They claim, with a certain logic, that these stamps were strictly limited in their use and should be classified as provisionals.

In this same time period, the district of Guadalajara issued an extensive series of provi-

sional stamps. The state of Chiapas and the town of Cuernavaca did too, but authentically used copies are very rare.

As you would expect, the forgers have been at work with the Gothic overprints, especially the rare values. Many are rather crudely done and not too hard to distinguish.

A few cheap 2r Eagles with clear name overprints can serve as good examples for comparison to detect the more obvious fakes.

Still, the valuable Gothic overprinted stamps should always be acquired with extreme care as many dangerous forged overprints do exist.

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I knew it would happen eventually, and it did. There are two glaring omissions on page 2 of the first group of Exporta checklists that I mailed out.

In the 50-peso category a violet, silver and black Jewelry stamp, perf 14, 36.0 millimeters, exists in issues 2 and 4.

Another 50p stamp, the blue and yellow Books design, perf 14, 36mm, exists in issues 5, 6, 7 and 8, with color varieties reported in 5 and 7.

These omissions apply only to those Exporta checklists mailed out before April 21. Lists sent out after that date are complete.

I apologize for this mistake made by an inadvertent slip of the scissors. I will be happy to mail a corrected page to any of the recipients who drops me a postal card requesting one.

My sincere thanks go to Civia Tuteur, an alert Exporta fan in Chicago who first brought this omission to my attention.

Response has been most gratifying, as well over 100 readers sent for Exporta lists within two weeks of the offer. ■

Postmarks track growth of Mexican railroads

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

The postal history of the railroads of Mexico is a broad field that I have not previously discussed in this column.

This area has been the object of study by a few serious philatelists. Still, there is much about the railroad mail system that is not known, providing considerable opportunities for the inquisitive collector.

The history of the railroads in Mexico is fascinating, very much intertwined with the development of rail systems in the United States and abroad.

Concessions to build railroads in Mexico were granted as early as 1850, with most going to British and American capitalists.

The first line, a link between Veracruz and Mexico City with a branch to Puebla, opened in 1872 although parts of it were in use before that time. The most expansive railroad building programs occurred between 1876 and 1910, during the tenure of Porfirio Diaz, when numerous grants were given to promote business and commerce.

For the railroad people this was an exciting era. Lines sprang up everywhere, many of them in non-standard rail gauges. The mining interests were particularly active in this regard because of the difficult terrain and remote locations where efficient freight service was needed.

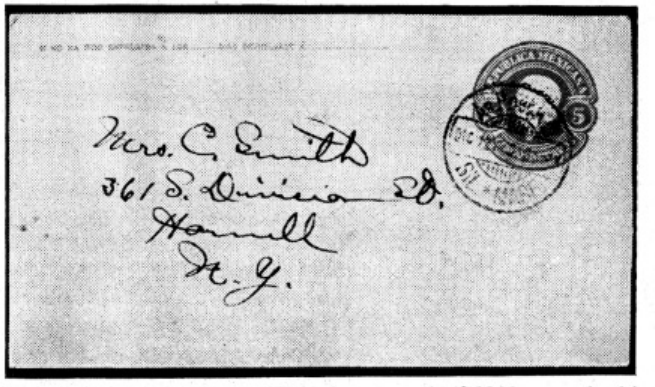

Figure 1. An agent type railway postmark of 1910 cancels this Mexican stamped envelope.

The Mexican railroads carried mail almost from the beginning, but designating postmarks are not known until the early 1880s, when railway post offices were officially authorized.

There is a vast array of markings associated with the railroads. The earliest of these are the so-called conductor types. These are oval or circular handstamps containing the name of the railroad line, a date slug and the word "conductor," sometimes with a numeral designation.

Then came the ambulante handstamps. These display similar information, except that the word "ambulante" replaces "conductor."

"Ambulante" is a shortened form of "Oficina Postal Ambulante" or "Administracion Ambulate," which means traveling post office in Spanish, the equivalent of the railway post offices in contemporary use in the United States and Europe.

Figure 1 shows a cover with another type of railroad postmark called the agent type. Since the datestamp is weakly struck, I will describe the important elements.

At the top is "Ag. Post. * 21." This stands for Postal Agent 21. The central panel contains the date and time the letter was processed, "Dec 12, 1910 3:00 PM."

At the bottom the cancel reads "SIL * MARF." In marks of this type, this normally indicates the route on which the letter was processed.

The agents in charge of the traveling post offices applied their own cancellations on mail that did not receive processing at the town post offices, or which was handed directly to them along the route.

In the example shown in Figure 1, "SIL * MARF" stands for a segment of railroad between the towns of Silao and Marfil in the state of Guanajuato. This was a branch line of the Central Mexican Railroad which ran from Mexico City, through Chihuahua, to Ciudad Juarez on the U.S. border.

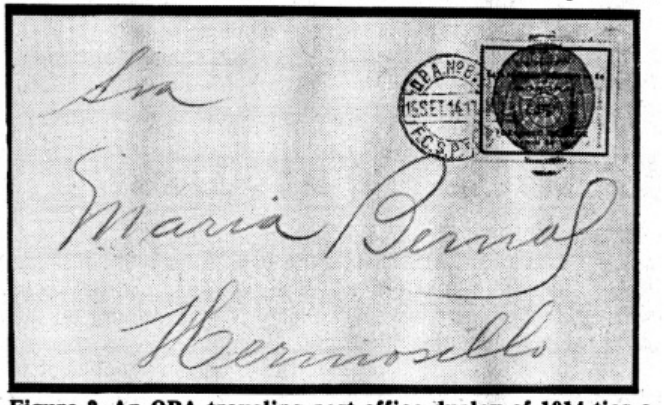

Figure 2. An OPA traveling post office duplex of 1914 ties a Sonora provisional stamp to a cover to Hermosillo, Mexico.

There are numerous agent type postmarks. They are fairly easily identified because they contain either the word "Agente" or the abbreviation "Ag."

Although the agent markings continued to be used after 1900, they were mostly replaced by Oficina Postal Ambulante, or OPA, devices. These came into general use about 1903 and are found in many types.

Figure 2 shows a cover with a typical OPA cancellation. The OPA initials and route number are at the top of the datestamp, and the initials of the railroad appear at the bottom.

This postmark shows that the letter was handled on the Southern Pacific Railroad of Mexico during the time of the revolution. It is franked with a provisional stamp of Sonora State, and a backstamp shows it was delivered to Hermosillo on the same day it received

the OPA cancellation.

The canceler is a duplex type with killer containing the initials EUM, for the United States of Mexico.

Figure 3 shows part of a cover with an even more modern type of railroad handstamp. Here the rim inscription has been reduced to simply read "SERVICIO/AMBULANTE."

The office number appears both above and below the date panel and also at the center of the killer bar.

This letter was posted aboard a traveling post office in the state of Veracruz on Feb. 20, 1928, and was received in Mexico City the following day.

I know of no single consolidated source for information on all the railway-related postal markings of Mexico.

The Mexico-Elmhurst Philatelic Society International quarterly journal, *Mexicana*, has carried articles on railway postmarks from time to time, notably those by the late Robert Evans in 1961, and by Peter Lerpiniere in 1964. The latter article was simultaneously published in *HPO Notes*, journal of the Mobile Post Office Society.

Thomas Todson also published a preliminary listing of authorized ambulante routes in the April 1981 issue of *Mexicana*, and indicated plans to publish a monograph on the

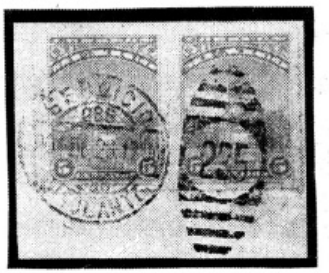

Figure 3. This Servicio Ambulante duplex from a 1928 cover clearly shows the traveling post office number, 235.

subject, but I do not believe it has been completed yet.

Reproductions of the first railway postmark types are shown in Dr. Karl Schimmer's definitive book, *The Postmarks of Mexico 1874-1900*, published in 1977 by MEPSI. This book also contains post office maps that are very useful for tracking down the obscure location markings in some of the handstamps. I used these maps to pinpoint where the postmark on the cover in Figure 1 was applied.

Ambulante markings have been used right up into the modern era, and recent examples aren't too hard to find.

Many of the reproductions in the references cited were based on single recorded examples. One author estimated, based on a survey of an unpicked lot of Mexican stamps and covers from the 1890-1910 period, that less than 1 percent of regular mail received railroad cancellations.

It seems to me these items are well worth looking for when you are rummaging through cover boxes at the next bourse you attend. Also check your loose Mexican stamps too for railroad post office cancellations. ■

Early agents moved Mexico's mail abroad

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

This column deals with a facet of postal history that has always been a favorite subject of mine, forwarding agents.

Before the Universal Postal Union provided the basis for official linkages between the postal systems of various countries, there were problems in transmitting mail across national boundaries, especially when the transfer involved a long ocean voyage.

How could a merchant in the interior of Mexico, for example, ensure that his letter to a business contact in London would be delivered quickly and efficiently?

This is where a forwarding agent could help.

The best definition of a forwarding agent is probably found in Kenneth Rowe's definitive 1984 book on the subject, *The Postal History of the Forwarding Agents.*

Rowe defines a forwarding agent as "A person, or firm, who undertakes to see that the goods or correspondence of another are transported without himself acting as the carrier."

In the majority of cases forwarding agents had other principal occupations. They were merchant bankers, import and export agents, consular officials, ship owners, and even coffee house proprietors.

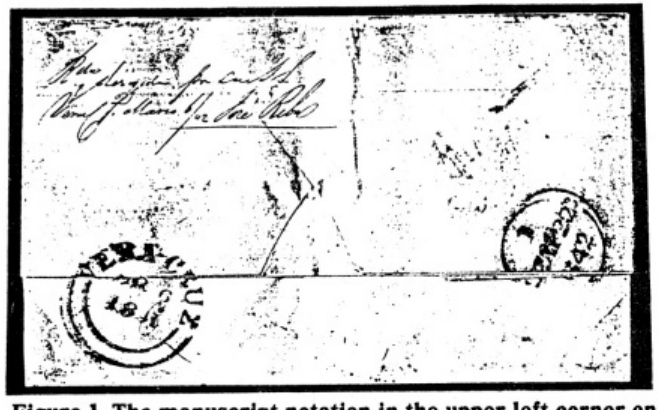

Figure 1. The manuscript notation in the upper left corner on the back of this 1842 letter from Mexico to London records the services of Jose Riba, a forwarding agent in Veracruz.

What they all had in common were connections to the transportation links that could facilitate and expedite the movement of letters and goods. They saw to it that the mail moved smoothly from one mail system to another.

The practice of forwarding letters began as early as 1810, although the first recorded examples in Mexico date from the 1820s. It continued right up until the late 1870s when Mexico joined the UPU and such special handling became unnecessary.

The peak of forwarding activity was between 1830 and about 1870. While some forwarding has been noted on letters moving entirely within Mexico, most involved the transit to or from the United States and Europe.

How do we know when letters have been handled by forwarding agents? The usual practice was to apply, either in manuscript or by handstamp, endorsements to that effect.

Endorsements in English contain such words as "Forwarded by . . .," "Received and Forwarded by . . .," "Rec'd & Forw'd by your ob't (obedient) servant . . ." and so forth.

Depending on the nationality of the forwarder, other languages were used.

The phrase "Acheminee par . . ." was in French, "Befordert . . ." was the German phrase, and "Dirigida por . . ." or "Encaminada por . . ." were employed in Spanish.

Numerous abbreviations occur, too, which sometimes make deciphering a bit of a challenge. Most endorsements were signed by the forwarder and many were dated.

Figure 1 shows the back of an 1842 cover forwarded from Veracruz. The two manuscript lines at the upper left translate from the Spanish as "Received and forwarded by your servant, VeraCruz, March 6/42, Jose Riba."

Forwarders' handstamps, or cachets, come in a variety of forms and colors. There are straightlines, boxes, ovals and circles, struck in black, red and blue.

Figure 2. The French-language handstamp of another Veracruz forwarding agent, Leverger Brothers.

Figure 2 supplies another example drawn from the city of Veracruz. Originally struck in blue on the back of a letter to Paris, this is the French-language forwarding agent's handstamp of Leverger Brothers.

Although the majority of forwarders who used handstamps had them made especially for the purpose with appropriate wording, there are instances where a simple merchants' handstamp was used. In such cases, forwarding must be deduced from the letter contents, routing, or the fact that the handstamp is that of a known forwarder.

The vast majority of forwarding handstamps and endorsements are found on the backs of letters, and this complicates the matter of displaying them in an exhibit. Most of us would prefer to show the address side, too, but this is not always possible.

Figure 3 illustrates the centerpiece of my Mexican forwarding agents' exhibit. It is a rare example of triple forwarding involved in the transmittal of a single sheet letter from Oaxaca, Mexico, to London, England.

The first forwarder, Manning, Marshall & Co., of Veracruz, recovered the letter from the Mexican mails, paid the

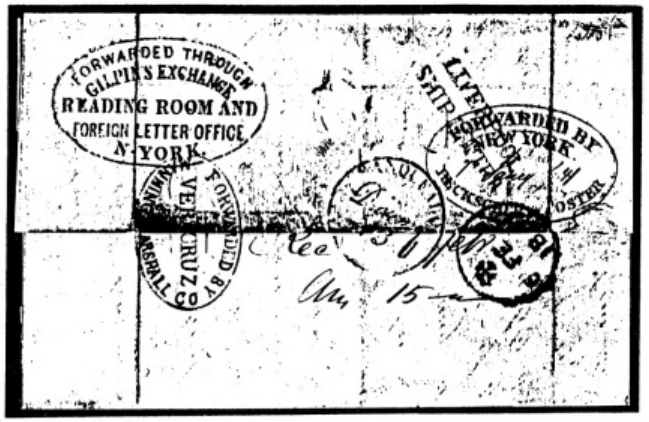

Figure 3. No fewer than three oval forwarding agents' handstamps from Veracruz and New York appear on the back of this scarce 1841 letter from Oaxaca to London, England.

domestic postage due, and forwarded it to New York, possibly in private hands or in a bundle containing other letters since there are no United States markings.

In New York, it passed through Gilpin's Exchange and on to Heckscher & Coster for final forwarding to London.

The cover could not be mounted to show the obverse of the letter, but luckily, there were no important markings on the face. The fact that the two New York forwarders' cachets are in red, and the Veracruz forwarder struck his mark in blue, adds visual appeal to this exceptional letter.

Covers with multiple forwarding are always exciting. Letters with markings of two forwarders are scarce enough, but beyond that they become noteworthy rarities.

There are less than a half dozen recorded examples of triple forwarding covers from Mexico.

The only known example of quadruple forwarding in the world involves a letter from Mazatlan, Mexico, to London that passed through the hands of two Mexican and two U.S. forwarders.

There has always been a question as to whether the forwarding agents charged for their efforts in expediting the mail they handled. If they did, it was never noted on the letters.

We know that some of them kept logs or registers because of serial numerical notations recorded within or near their handstamps. But most postal historians believe the forwarders did this as a means of advertising their names, and as a service to regular customers.

While the prestamp era and the period when stamps were not mandatory provide most of the examples of forwarded letters to and from Mexico, there are also attractive covers bearing stamps.

In nearly all cases, the stamps paid only a part of the cost to carry the letter. Postal fees for the final delivery had to be extracted from the addressee. I have several examples where the forwarder bought and affixed appropriate postage stamps.

Although we will probably never know the number precisely, there appear to have been upwards of 100 forwarding agents who operated in 19th-century Mexico. Typically they were located in the centers of commerce and the major seaports.

New names come to light from time to time, so the lists can never be complete.

For those whose appetite for more information on the forwarding agents has been whetted by this column, I strongly recommend the Rowe book, which is worldwide in scope.

It is available for $35 from Leonard Hartmann, Box 36006, Louisville, Ky. 40233. A. Basurto wrote a nice review (in Spanish) limited to the Mexican forwarders in the March-April issue of *Amexfil*, the bimonthly journal of the Mexican Association of Philately.

A more difficult question is that of where to find letters with forwarding agents' markings.

My best sources have been those dealers who specialize in postal history and carry stocks of 19th-century stampless covers. Forwarded covers also crop up in auctions from time to time. Don't forget to check letters going into Mexico; forwarders handled them in both directions.

Until postal history became such a hot topic a decade or so ago, these covers weren't in great demand. Now, they are becoming tougher to find, not because there are so many collectors of forwarders' markings, but because the transatlantic mail that normally bears bunches of interesting postal markings has become so very popular. ■

New Exportas released in record values

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

We all knew it had to happen sooner or later. Mexico had to issue more Exporta stamps.

With continued inflation, the United States dollar now equals 2,290 pesos.

Postal rate increases have left scarcely enough room on postcards from Mexico to accommodate the stamps required for postage and still leave room for a message. I have one with 750p franking where the sender overlapped three Exporta stamps to maximize the space for his greeting.

On about June 1, nine new Exporta stamps appeared with face values ranging from 600p to 5,000p. There were no new designs on the stamps, all of which depict Mexican export products that have been previously shown.

Figure 1 is a chart listing the salient characteristics of the new Exporta stamps.

The Exporta stamps are a 13-year-old series of horizontal-format definitive and airmail issues depicting products manufactured or produced in Mexico. There are now 270 or more collectible Exporta varieties.

The newly issued 600p through 900p denominations appear to be printed on the same paper used for the most recent series, which many collectors identify as the eighth issue of the Exporta series.

The paper is very thick, about 0.10 millimeters. It is unwatermarked, has bright fluorescence on the face (more so than on the gum side of the stamp), and has a dull, somewhat creamy-colored polyvinyl acetate (PVA) gum.

The 1,000p to 5,000p high denominations are printed on entirely different stock, also about 0.10mm thick. The paper is not so white and is what is referred to as granite paper, with randomly embedded fine bluish threads.

The high values are watermarked "MEX — MEX" with the Mexican eagle, identified in the Scott catalog as watermark type 300.

Value (pesos)	Description of Design	Colors	Width (millimeters)
600p	Jewelry	violet, silver & black	36.0mm
700p	Movie Film	black, red & green	35.5mm
800p	Tiles	brown & reddish brown	35.5mm*
900p	Auto Parts	black	35.5mm
1,000p	Farm Machinery	red & black	36.5mm
2,000p	Wrought Iron	black	36.5mm
3,000p	Electrical Cable	blue-black & orange	35.5mm
4,000p	Honey	brown & yellow-brown	35.0mm*
5,000p	Cotton	orange & yellow-green	36.0mm*

All stamps are perforated in gauge 14.
* Design width can vary slightly depending on register of colors during the printing process.

Figure 1. This table presents the characteristics of nine stamps added to the Exporta series in early June to keep pace with Mexico's spiraling inflation. Important paper and gum differences between the high and low denominations are also detailed in the accompanying article.

As on previously issued high denominations of the Exporta series, there is a printed burelage or background of fine gray lines that curve to the lower left on the five new high values. The gum is shiny and, under ultraviolet light, the stamps show a low level of splotchy fluorescence.

Figure 2. The Exporta Jewelry design of 1983 was recently revived for use in this new 600-peso denomination issued in June.

All of the nine new Exporta stamps released in June are perforated 14.

Even though these stamps have a total face value of 18,000p, or roughly $8, I suspect that they will prove to be popular with fans of Exporta issues.

These stamps feature the highest denominations ever issued by the Mexican post office. Except for the Antonio Caso commemorative of 1983, Scott 1342, the five high values are Mexico's first extensive use of granite paper.

Of the nine Exporta motifs used, six should be very familiar, having been prominent in the last two issues. But it is good to see some of the early, less well-known designs brought back.

Figure 2 shows a three-color Jewelry design, last used on the 1981 50p stamp of the fourth issue, now used for the new 600p stamps.

The 700p stamp shows a strip of film in three colors. This Movie Film motif was used only once before, on the 1981 20p airmail stamp of the third issue.

The 1,000p Farm Machinery stamp depicts a stylized disc harrow in red and black. The stamp repeats the design of the 5.20p airmail stamp of the 1975-79 first Exporta issue, which hadn't been used on any stamp since since.

Figure 3 shows the 5,000p top denomination of the nine new issues, which uses the cotton boll for its theme.

This is the same design selected for the 500p stamps of the seventh and eighth issues. I have to wonder if the very strong similarity in designs and denominations may not cause some confusion among the clerks dispensing stamps at the sales counters.

True, the green of the 5,000p stamp has more yellow in it than the 500p stamps do, and there is an extra zero in the value. However, at a fast glance the stamps do look pretty much the same.

We'll wait and see if identification problems develop. Check the covers you see for accidental overpayment or underfranking.

Figure 3. This new 5,000p Exporta is the highest Mexican denomination ever issued.

For the time being, there will be no updating of my checklist of the Exporta stamps of Mexico.

Some of my contacts feel we will see some minor varieties in this new group of nine Exportas as time goes on.

I obtained a set from each of two different sources and found that one of the 4,000p stamps displayed a brighter fluorescence than

the other, but probably not enough to be considered a new variety.

Any feedback and information on the Exporta varieties encountered by readers is always welcome.

Incidentally, I still have a number of the previously revised Exporta stamp checklists available for interested collectors.

A copy of the Exporta checklist can be obtained for free by sending a 25¢ stamped, addressed No. 10 envelope. Write to me in care of *Linn's Stamp News*, Box 29, Sidney, Ohio 45365.

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Last month's mail brought a copy of the 1988 price list of the postage stamps of Mexico published by Bill Shelton Philatelics of San Antonio, Texas.

Shelton has made a market in Mexican stamps for many years and is one of only a few dealers attempting to maintain a retail stock of Mexico in depth, especially the classic material.

Shelton's new price list tabulates every major Scott-listed variety, as well as many of the recognized subvarieties that Scott does not include.

As one might expect, most of the very scarce items are not priced, which means they are not in stock. These are best acquired by means of private treaty purchase or at public auction.

What makes Shelton's list valuable to the serious collector of Mexico, in my opinion, is a series of fairly detailed introductions to the various issues.

These write-ups give important information, including the background of the issue, brief details on printing and production, how to distinguish some of the common forgeries, general information on overprinting and so forth.

It is certainly not the last word for those who intend to specialize extensively, but it does summarize a great deal of information that until now had to be gleaned from various separate sources.

The substantial 164-page paperbound list is available for $4.95 from Bill Shelton Philatelics, Drawer 39838, San Antonio, Texas 78218.

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While on the subject of philatelic literature about Mexico, the Mexico-Elmhurst Philatelic Society International currently has in stock about a dozen publications available to interested collectors.

These include definitive works on Mexican revenue stamps, the late 19th-century postmarks and Mexican postal stationery, along with smaller studies on a variety of other subjects.

For a MEPSI philatelic literature price list, send a stamped, addressed No. 10 envelope to Carl LeMar John, 4337 E. 5th St., Tucson, Ariz. 85711. ■

The challenging Juarez issues of 1879-83

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

One of the quirks in the history of Mexican postal affairs is that for a period of about four years, there were two distinct stamp issues in simultaneous use.

I told half the story in my column in the Sept. 8, 1986, issue of *Linn's* (page 34), which dealt with the Hidalgo issue of 1874-83.

The Hidalgo issue was used to frank both domestic and foreign mail until 1879 when Mexico joined the Universal Postal Union.

After Mexico gained UPU membership, another set of stamps was prepared called the Juarez issue, Scott 123-45. It was so named because the stamps bore the portrait of Benito Juarez, hero of the War of Reform and president of the Mexican Republic during and after the period of French occupation, from 1863 to 1867.

These stamps were for exclusive use on foreign-bound mail, while the Hidalgo stamps were reserved for use on domestic mail.

The reason for this dual system was quite simple. One of the objectives of the UPU was to standardize mail rates among the member countries.

At that time a half-ounce foreign letter was to be charged at 25 French centimes or 5¢ in United States currency. Since the peso was almost at par with the U.S. dollar, Mexico wanted to adhere to a 5-centavo rate.

However, Mexico's internal postal rates were extremely high. For example, a domestic letter weighing one-half ounce was charged 25c up to 45 miles and 35c beyond that distance.

The idea of separate issues for foreign and for internal use was a neat solution to this problem. The stamps would clearly signal foreign-bound letters to postal workers, and also facilitate sorting and accounting.

Figure 1. An unoverprinted 25-centavo Juarez from the 1879 thick-paper printing has a plate crack at the top left.

There were eight values in the first Juarez series, from 1c to 100c, cataloged as Scott 123-30. These were printed on fairly thick wove paper.

Figure 1 shows an unoverprinted 25c Juarez from this first 1879 printing, Scott 127a. This copy has a plus for the collector in the form of a hairline plate crack to the left above the top of the design.

Between 1881 and 1883, new printings appeared on a much thinner wove paper, including some color changes and new 12c and 24c denominations.

Although listed separately, the Numeral stamps of 1882, Scott 146-49, belong to the foreign mail issue too, and included two denominations not found in the Juarez series.

These stamps have all the features of the earlier classic issues, including overprinted district names and consignment numbers. The numerical overprints are a combination of an account number assigned to each of the various postal districts plus the last two digits of the year.

The overprint 5479, for example, designates the Mexico district, No. 54, and a stamp issued in 1879.

Mexico was the last district on the list of accounts. The other 53 districts were assigned numbers from 1 (Zamora) to 53 (Acapulco) in reverse alphabetical order.

Collecting the Juarez stamps presents the would-be specialist with a formidable challenge. Legitimately used copies are not rare, but are scarcer than one might suspect.

In those days there was not a great deal of foreign mail to begin with, and most of it emanated from the few Mexican port cities and towns of commercial importance.

Low-denomination stamps from these places are not too hard to find. Figure 2, for example, shows a 5c Juarez obliterated with the datestamp of Veracruz.

Although all of the smaller districts were issued Juarez stamps, usage in many of these areas was extremely limited, and some are indeed extremely rare.

Higher denominations, particularly those above 25c, are likewise scarce to rare in used condition, even from the larger districts.

R.R. Billings, who made a lifetime project of collecting these issues, noted that the busy seaport of Acapulco sold a total of only 84 copies of the 100c stamp. Only one used example has ever been recorded.

Covers bearing the Juarez stamps are highly prized by collectors and have become rather pricey. A spectacular array of them was seen at AMERIPEX 86 in Isaac Backal's Mexican maritime mail exhibit, which won a large gold award. The highlight of this group was a portion of a wrapper bearing 20 copies of the 24c Juarez, plus three stamps from other issues.

Figure 2. Though most Juarez stamps display mute cancels, this copy of the 5c has a Veracruz circular datestamp.

Unused Juarez stamps both with and without overprints are fairly abundant in certain denominations. At the expiration of the issue in 1883, relatively large stocks of unused remainders were returned to the main post office, and most of these stamps eventually found their way into the philatelic market.

A few had been invalidated with pen cancellations, but unfortunately many of the clean stamps and those with overprints have since been used as raw material for favor cancellations or, in some instances, outright forgeries.

Complicating the matter further is the fact that mute cancels were supposed to be used on the Juarez stamps. These are not too difficult to duplicate.

As the Scott catalog notes, the 1882 10c brown, 25c orange brown and 85c red violet on thin paper were never placed in use and will never be found with genuine overprints or cancellations.

Mexico's consignment overprint system provides some interesting varieties. For example, you will occasionally find a Juarez stamp with two consignment overprints, including one usually in red, and with perhaps two district names.

This demonstrates an in-

stance in which surplus stamps returned to the main post office were reassigned to another district.

Figure 3 shows one such stamp, referred to by collectors as a "habilitado," or revalidated stamp.

Figure 3. This revalidated 1c Juarez stamp, or "habilitado" was first given the district name and consignment number for Guadalajara, then later overprinted with a new number in red and the district name of Campeche.

This 1c thin paper Juarez originally received the consignment overprint 3782 and "GUADALAJARA" district name. Returned to the post office, it was given a new 5083 overprint in red along with the "CAMPECHE" district marking for use there.

Many collectors are apt to be discouraged in their search for thin paper Juarez stamps in good condition. This paper was very difficult to handle, the majority of stamps were poorly perforated, and used copies generally suffered further deterioration during the soaking off process.

The printing of the Juarez stamps, which was carried out in Mexico, was carefully done. The stamps represent examples of fine engraving and a high level of workmanship achieved at the government printing office. However, there are some fairly dramatic plate flaws to be found by the sharp-eyed collector, such as the plate crack in Figure 1.

The 24c Juarez shown in Figure 4 displays another breathtaking variety, a remarkable double transfer at several points in the left of the design, most easily seen in the upper left corner of the stamp. Such flaws are worth looking for.

Figure 4. A 24c Juarez shows a striking double transfer in its design, most notably in the top left corner of the stamp.

The philatelic literature on the Juarez issue is pretty skimpy. There are a few articles in the older issues of *Mexicana*.

In 1937, Jose L. Cossio wrote and published a small monograph in Spanish on the Hidalgo and Juarez issues of 1874-83. I am unaware of any other such definitive works.

The Juarez issue, together with its contemporaries, the Hidalgo and Small Numeral stamps, marked the end of Mexico's era of district name and consignment number overprints. Though name overprints crop up on later stamps, Mexican postal regulations no longer required them.

These issues may not be to everyone's collecting taste, but I have found them to be interesting and not without great challenge and opportunity. ■

Colorful Mexican cover has much to offer

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

STAMPSHOW 88 did not have any exhibits of Mexican stamps or covers, so I spent quite a bit of time there visiting the dealers to see if any of them had Mexican material of interest. This column is about a fortunate acquisition at that show.

Since the classic material I favor is becoming more and more difficult to find, and consequently much more expensive, I have begun looking for unusual 20th-century usages such as advertising and registry covers.

Figure 1 shows the face of a cover I bought in Detroit at STAMPSHOW. The attractive corner card was the first thing to catch my eye, but then I noticed that the cover was registered, too.

The illustration and printing on the envelope are in blue. The address and most of the Chinese pictographs are in black, and the postal markings are in purple. The result is a very colorful item.

But its philatelic charms don't end there.

The reverse of the cover, shown in Figure 2, bears a strip of six of the 5-centavo denomination of the 1910 Centennial issue, Scott 314, which paid the 30c postage and registry fee.

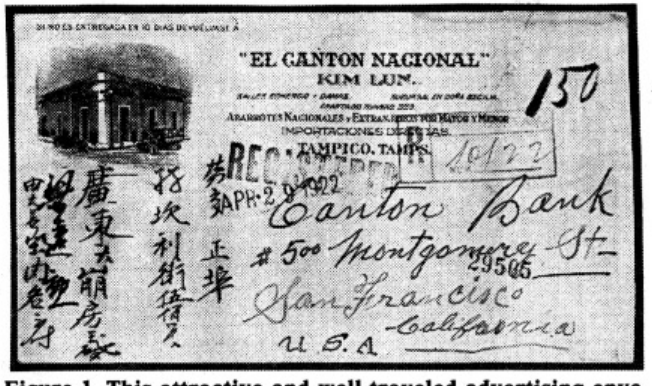


Figure 1. This attractive and well-traveled advertising envelope was mailed in 1922 by a wholesale and retail grocer in Tampico, Mexico, to the Canton Bank in San Francisco, Calif.

Figure 2. The reverse side of the cover shown in Figure 1 displays transit markings and is franked with a strip of Mexico's Centennial stamps, originally issued in 1910.

The stamps are tied by three clear strikes of the duplex registry canceler of Tampico.

There are also two faint impressions of the certification handstamp of Ciudad Juarez, a clear strike of the El Paso registry handstamp, applied when the letter was transferred to the United States postal system, and a San Francisco receiving handstamp, applied in the registry section.

All of these handstamps, except the Tampico marks, are in purple or magenta.

With this evidence, it is fairly easy to track the route that this cover followed from Tampico, where it was mailed, to its final destination in San Francisco.

At Tampico the cover was dispatched on the direct train to Monterrey. From there it went west to Torreon, where it caught the central Mexican railway to Chihuahua and thence to Ciudad Juarez.

This thousand-mile journey within Mexico required four days. That's not too bad when you consider that there were at least two transfers involved and the Mexicans were still rebuilding railway services devastated by the revolution.

The U.S. portion of the journey, west from El Paso and then north to San Francisco, took three days more. So the letter was just a week in transit, which is comparable to the time it often takes now for letters from Mexico to reach me.

Another very interesting feature of the cover that caught my attention is the use of the 1910 Centennial issue to frank this 1922 letter.

A glance at your Scott catalog will show there were several intervening definitive issues between 1910 and 1922, so this represents a fairly late usage of these stamps. I have no good explanation for this.

We do know that the 1910 Centennial issue was printed in massive quantities, and that large stocks were distributed to the major cities of Mexico.

During the revolutionary era, various warring factions applied overprints and surcharges to these stamps, which were then used in the areas under their control.

We could speculate that the Tampico post office ran out of certain denominations of the then-current issue and dipped into its stock of remainders.

On the other hand, perhaps the merchant who sent this letter had a supply of pre-revolutionary stamps that he was anxious to use up.

At one time, philatelists thought there had been a general demonetization of early issues of postage stamps late in 1916, when currency depreciation in Mexico was such that it cost 7½ pesos or more to mail a registered letter.

It is now known that this did not happen, or at least I am unaware of any postal regulation to this effect.

There are numerous legiti-

mate post-revolutionary letters, like this one, franked with pre-revolution postage stamps. These covers are important items of early 20th-century postal history and are well worth watching for.

It is also interesting to ponder what the cover in Figure 1 may have originally contained.

The sender was a Chinese grocer who advertised that he dealt in local and imported foodstuffs on both the retail and wholesale level.

There is a good chance that he didn't trust the local Mexican banks and maintained his accounts at the Canton Bank in San Francisco, to which this cover is addressed.

One of these days I may try to find someone who can decipher the Chinese on the face of the envelope, which could provide a clue as to the subject or contents of the letter.

Another mystery is the handwritten "150" at the upper right in Figure 1.

It is written in the same purple ink as the second column of Chinese characters, so I suspect it does not have postal significance. It may have been docketing applied by the bank.

Any ideas that readers might have would be welcome.

To me, this is a gem of a cover. And if there is a lesson to be learned from it, it is that you should never underestimate the chances of finding something of philatelic importance in the cover boxes of non-specialized dealers.

I did not pay very much for this cover. In fact, I would have given two or three times what the dealer was asking in return for the pleasure and fun I have had unraveling its secrets.

It is also probably fair to say that had the dealer known the full story of this item, his asking price might have been much, much higher. ■

Postclassic stamps prosper in Scott Vol. 3

In recent months there has been a lot of fussing about the 1989 Scott catalog values so I decided to see what happened with Mexico listings in Vol. 3 compared to those of 1988. I

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

normally would not devote an entire column to this subject, but in this case there are a number of interesting points to be made.

First, if all you collect are the 19th-century issues of Mexico, the good news is that you won't need to buy a new catalog for price revisions. As far as I can tell, there aren't any catalog value changes up to the issue of 1899 — and that may be the bad news.

Nothing has moved in either direction.

That should not be too disturbing to those of us who specialize in the issues of Mexico's classic period.

Except for the everyday varieties of the overprinted stamps of the first eight or nine issues, Scott values have minimal bearing on what one might expect to pay for a given desirable stamp.

Stamps from the large districts and bearing common cancels are normally obtainable for some fraction of Scott in the 30-percent to 50-percent range.

But if you are keen on having a stamp from one of the smaller, so-called rare districts, or even a stamp from a large district bearing a cancellation from some seldom-used sub-office, you will have to disregard the catalog completely.

Figure 1. This 20-centavo Ejercito of 1914, Scott 351a, is a revenue stamp that was pressed into provisional postal use. The value of this copy with its attached coupon at the bottom shot from $3.50 to $15 in the 1989 Scott catalog.

Prices at auction for these items are frequently multiples of the Scott-listed values. This is why you must learn a lot more about the market than you can possibly get from Vol. 3 of Scott, or any other catalog for that matter.

The news releases for the new Scott catalog noted that there were 406 price increases and 80 decreases for Mexico. I had a tougher time finding the decreases than the increases and few declines if any were connected to popular items.

I will try to summarize those issues for which the Scott pricing editors felt catalog value increases were merited.

As noted, the 1899 issue enjoyed a general increase of about 10 percent for all denominations in used condition. This is probably a fair move since these are getting tougher to find in fine condition, especially the top denominations.

There were numerous increases, and just a couple of decreases, in the 1913-16 Civil War issues.

The Ejercito issue, Scott 347-53, a series of revenue stamps pressed into postal service, shows substantial increases for copies with the talon or coupon attached, both in used and in unused condition.

Figure 1 shows a typical example of a used copy with the intact talon at the bottom.

Most denominations of the Transitorio issue, Scott 354-61, also show healthy increases, especially the partially imperforate subvarieties.

Figure 2 shows two stamps from the large number overprinted in 1914-15 for use in Mexico, most of which do well in this year's Scott catalog.

The Independence issues of 1910 overprinted in 1914 with the large "GCM" (Gobierno Constitutionalista Mexicano) monogram, such as the 20-centavo Abasolo on the left in Figure 2, were raised an average of almost 20 percent in unused condition.

Similarly, the revolutionary stamps with the Villa overprint, an example of which is seen on the 20c Abasolo on the right in Figure 2, also rise in value. Substantial increases are noted for overprints on the early issues of 1899 and 1903, even though the latter were made primarily for collectors as suggested in the footnote in the Scott catalog.

Figure 2. Values for many Mexican revolutionary era issues increase in Vol. 3 of the 1989 Scott catalog. The 20c "GCM" overprint (left) rose 20 percent to $6, while the 20c Villa monogram overprint (right) increased 10 percent to $5.50.

I have no quarrel with these price changes, as some of these overprinted stamps are very difficult to find. Acquiring them can be a dangerous game too, because the overprints were extensively forged.

One specialist I know claims to have identified upwards of a dozen different types of forgeries of the large script "GCM" monogram, including two that can scarcely be distinguished from the genuine item even by the experts.

And don't rely on the overprint reproductions in Scott. They are close to what you see, but are deficient in several important details.

Another comment on the large script "GCM" monogram is that it is often found very faintly struck or sometimes smudged from overinking. While the overprints may be perfectly good in these cases, I consider such examples as uncollectible because the details necessary to establish genuineness cannot be seen clearly.

There are numerous other price increases scattered among the stamps issued during Mexico's revolutionary era. Most of these apply to high-denomination stamps and subvarieties that always have been elusive.

Surprisingly, Scott also saw fit to advance quite a few price listings for Mexican issues of the 1930s and '40s.

The unwatermarked variety of the 10-peso University surface mail stamp, Scott 706a, of which only 100 copies can exist, rose by $250 to $3,250.

Several commemorative sets issued just prior to or during World War II also enjoyed selective increases.

Another category of stamps on the rise are Mexico's definitive issues. Not all stamps in each series got favorable treatment, but the higher denominations and the ones that have had a history of difficulty of acquisition increased.

If some of these are missing from your album, I would not put off trying to get them. They will not become less expensive and many of them already trade at nearly their full Scott catalog value.

There were few changes in Mexico's airmail listings. The 1934-35 series in unused condition went up about 20 percent. The rare Amelia Earhart overprint, Scott C74, rose $250 unused to a full $4,000.

Some better modern airmail stamps in used condition got a boost as well, including Scott C296-98 and C471-80. These will continue to climb, I feel.

Numerous changes are to be found among Mexico's back-of-the-book listings.

In the portion of the catalog listings devoted to Official stamps, a dozen or so new subvariety listings have been add-

ed along with some selective price increases.

Scott Publishing Co. confirmed that there is a typographical error in the unused price listing for the 1919 20c special delivery stamp, Scott E1. The unused price should be $40, not the $4 listed.

While classicists such as myself may lament the fact that early Mexican issues did not gain ground, I cannot find much to complain about in the changes that were made. At least most of us will not have to adjust our thinking very much regarding the appropriate percentage of Scott catalog value to use in auction bidding.

The new, larger catalog format Scott has adopted is fine with me, except that I will have to use a taller shelf to store my catalogs.

However, I do have one criticism that I feel is serious, and only grows worse from year to year.

Scott really ought to redo the illustrations for all items prior to about 1945.

As Figure 3 shows, the depictions of stamps from the classic era are especially bad. Virtually no background detail can be seen on any of them.

Some of the watermark illustrations are atrocious. Those for watermarks 150 and 154, which show little more than blackened rectangles, are of no use whatsoever.

Overprint facsimiles have, for the most part, become so distorted that they may be of more harm than help to the collector.

Let's hope these matters receive some attention before the Vol. 3 of the 1990 Scott catalog is published. ■

Figure 3. These depictions of various 19th-century stamps of Mexico photographed from a copy of the 1989 Scott catalog underscore the serious need for improved illustrations.

Taking a topical tour of Mexican stamps

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

The popularity of thematic collecting has surged in recent years, and the formation of a first-rate topical exhibit has been reduced to a fine science.

Mexico, like many countries, has produced a multitude of stamps that fit into popular thematic collections. I thought it would be interesting this month to examine some of the topical possibilities if you are tired of just plugging spaces in a general album.

The fine and the applied arts have always been attractive subjects for modern Mexican stamps. There is enough material so that several distinct themes could be developed.

The churches and cathedrals of Mexico are among the most beautiful in the Western Hemisphere and many have been portrayed on stamps. For example, the main cathedral in Mexico City appears on the 5-peso denomination of the general issue of 1899, Scott 303.

The cathedral of Guadalajara stands prominently on Scott 773, one of the stamps issued for the 400th anniversary of the founding of that city.

Figure 1 shows the widely used 35-centavo airmail stamp of 1950, Scott C191. The stamp depicts the Churrigueresque-style church of Santa Prisca in Taxco, which thousands of tourists visit on motor tours from Mexico City to Acapulco each year.

Figure 1. The church of Santa Prisca in Taxco, seen on this common 1950 airmail issue, is only one of many depicted on the stamps of Mexico.

Churches, monasteries and convents continue to be prominent subjects of Mexican stamp design. In fact, there are enough church stamps so that several album pages could be prepared tracing the evolution of church architecture in the Spanish New World.

Of course, the architecture theme could be expanded far beyond the confines of religious edifices. Other stamps show civil works dating from pre-Columbian times right up to those of recent decades.

There are also dozens of stamps depicting Mexican art and artists. Pre-Columbian artifacts were chosen as subjects for a set publicizing the 1968 Olympic Games, which would be equally appropriate for a sports topical.

I have always been fascinated with the work of a group of Mexican painters and muralists who were active during and after the Mexican revolution: Diego Rivera, Geraldo Murillo "Dr. Atl," David A. Siqueiros, Jose Orozco and Juan O'Gorman.

These artists, and many others, have themselves and their works immortalized on numerous postage stamps of Mexico.

Figure 2, for example, shows a 1975 commemorative for the Mexican patriot Juan Aldama. The portrait of Aldama is an adaptation from one of Diego Rivera's famous murals recounting the history of Mexico.

Music has been well served by Mexican issues too. Mexican composers featured on stamps of their native land include Agustin Larr (Scott 1036), Manuel Ponce (Scott 1059), Juventina Rosas (Scott C407) and Carlos Chavez (Scott 1331), to name a few.

Figure 2. This 1974 commemorative for Juan Aldama was adapted from a historical mural by Diego Rivera, Mexico's best-known artist.

Other famous musicians have also been honored, such as J.S. Bach (Scott 1377), Ludwig von Beethoven (Scott C375), Pablo Casals (Scott 532), Franz Schubert (Scott C587) and Antonio Vivaldi (Scott C589).

Figure 3 shows a 1970 airmail issue, Scott C375, portraying Beethoven's signature and the opening bars of his immortal "Ode to Joy" from the *Ninth Symphony*.

The serious music topicalist will also want related items such as the stamps depicting the Palace of Fine Arts, including Scott 649, where many world-famous artists and orchestras have performed.

A musician friend of mine has been searching for commercial covers bearing stamps of the 1933 Palace of Fine Arts airmail issue, Scott C51-53, but has not had much luck.

Stamps on stamps of Mexico was the subject of an earlier article in *Linn's* Feb. 13, 1984, issue (page 28). Mexico's first use of a postage stamp as the central design was with a 1940 set of regular and airmail issues, Scott 754-58 and C103-07, to mark the 100th birthday of Great Britain's Penny Black.

The stamp on the left in Figure 4 is one of my favorites in this category, Scott 937, which is really a stamp on a stamp on a stamp.

Issued in conjunction with the 77th annual meeting of the American Philatelic Society in 1963 in Mexico City, it shows an earlier 1956 stamp which in turn commemorated and portrayed Mexico's first postage stamp of 1856.

Figure 3. Beethoven's manuscript music and signature were featured on this 1970 Mexican airmail stamp.

Since my earlier article, three 1985 stamps and a souvenir sheet, Scott 1382-85, were issued to commemorate an exhibition in Mexico City dedicated exclusively to stamps and postal history of Mexico.

Collectors of maps on stamps will find several items in their field beginning with the map of Mexico on the 40c stamp of the 1915-16 series, Scott 512.

Those who collect trains on stamps can begin with the transportation issue of 1895, in

which the three highest peso denominations, Scott 254-56, show a steam locomotive.

Unfortunately, if you feel the need to have all the varieties of this design, you will be faced with the challenge of acquiring one of the great Mexican rarities of the 19th century, the 5p Mail Train with the Eagle and RM watermark. This stamp, Scott 278A, now catalogs $10,000.

The other peso varieties are rather expensive, too, but at least they are not too difficult to find.

Those who collect birds may wish to consider the many varieties of the Mexican eagle.

In fact, a rather large collection could be formed of the eagle coat of arms by itself, and this could become a major topical if stamps from other nations that use the eagle as a national symbol are included.

For Americana buffs, there are several stamps with direct ties to the people and events of the United States. President Franklin Roosevelt appears on three Mexican stamps issued in 1947 for the centenary of U.S. postage stamps. President John Kennedy is shown on

Figure 4. An unusual 1963 stamp on stamp on stamp design is featured in the stamp on the left (Scott 937), while the Mexican airmail stamp of 1939 on the right depicts an Oklahoma statue saluting the settlement of the West (Scott C95). Both were issued in honor of philatelic conventions.

Mexican airmail stamps of 1962 and 1964.

The Wright brothers were honored on two 1978 airmails marking the 75th anniversary of manned flight. You can even find the Washington Monument on another Mexican airmail stamp issued that same year, Scott C569.

Another set of stamps with a U.S. connection that I have always liked is Scott C94-96.

The stamp on the right in Figure 4 is one of the three that were issued for a 1939 philatelic convention in Tulsa portraying a statue of a pioneer woman with children that is located in Ponca City, Okla.

I doubt that many Americans, save those who live in the immediate area, are aware that such a monument to people who settled the West exists. And it may seem a bit ironic that some of the lands these settlers occupied originally belonged to Mexico.

If you are looking for a change of pace in your collecting approach, try building on a theme or topic. I am sure you will agree that there are a lot of good prospects among the stamps of Mexico. ■

Used Civil War local stamps prove elusive

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

The second decade of this century found Mexico embroiled in a bloody revolution wherein the working classes and certain professionals rose up against the entrenched aristocracy.

In this period of chaos, there were many instances of provisional postal procedures, some of which I have mentioned in previous columns.

Regular stamp issues were overprinted by political factions for local use, and regional authorities even contracted with firms in the United States to print stamps for use in areas under their control.

For me, some of the most interesting stamps of the era are the so-called local issues. The state of Sonora, for example, where many of the civil uprisings began, issued several sets of such stamps.

Figure 1 shows examples of the first of these, the White and Green Seal issues, Scott 321-46. These were followed by the Coach Seal issue, Scott 394-404, and the Anvil Seals, Scott 405-13.

There were further varieties including a set overprinted for use in Baja California, and another with the added word "Plata." The latter referred to the fact that in an environment of monetary instability, the stamps were denominated in hard silver currency.

Far to the south, the revolutionary government of the State of Oaxaca issued some local provisional stamps with a Coat of Arms that the catalog lists as Scott 414-19.

Figure 1. Postally used Sonora White Seal (left) and Green Seal (right) issues created for use during Mexico's civil war.

With the exception of some of the scarce varieties of the early Sonora locals, it is not too difficult to assemble a full complement of these stamps in unused condition. When they were no longer needed, unused stocks of these locals quickly found their way into the philatelic market.

But I like to collect used stamps, too — used, rather than merely canceled — and herein lies a problem. With an ample supply of cheap unused material available, how can one be sure that obliterated stamps actually performed the postal service for which they were intended?

Many of these stamps did not, and Scott has recognized this fact with footnotes and italicized pricing. Favor or backdated cancellations are rather common for some of these issues, and one has to be careful to avoid them.

I look for stamps bearing enough of a cancellation so that location, date of mailing, and cancellation type can be determined.

The White and Green Seal locals of Sonora were used extensively, and it isn't too hard to find them with legitimate town or railway post office cancels. The examples in Figure 1 are readily seen to be correct usages with proper and largely complete circular datestamps.

The Coach Seal stamps also were used rather widely, but it is fairly obvious that the overfranked registered cover in Figure 2, which bears a complete set, was a philatelic creation even though it unquestionably passed through the mails.

By contrast, the business letter in Figure 3 shows an example of a Coach Seal cover properly franked.

The Baja California set, Scott 401-04, is readily available in unused condition and is quite cheap. You will see purportedly used stamps from time to time, but the vast majority of these were made for the trade and never did postal duty.

The same is true for the Anvil Seals, Scott 405-09. The stamps with "PLATA" (silver) overprints were never officially put into use, but unused copies of Scott 401-13.

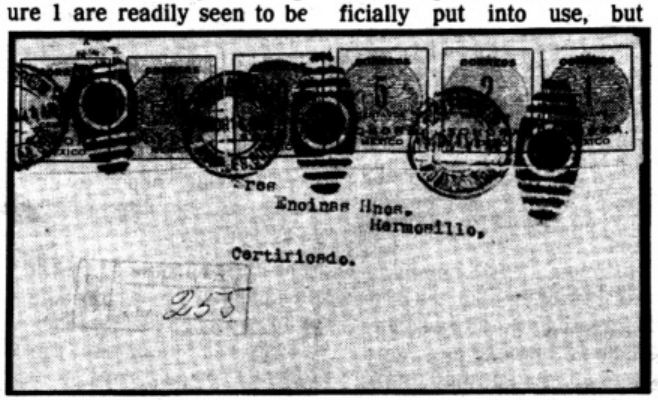


Figure 2. This heavily overfranked registered cover bears a complete set of Sonora's Coach Seal stamps.

forged cancels abound.

Unless you want to get deeply involved in the meticulous study of these issues, it might be safest to settle for

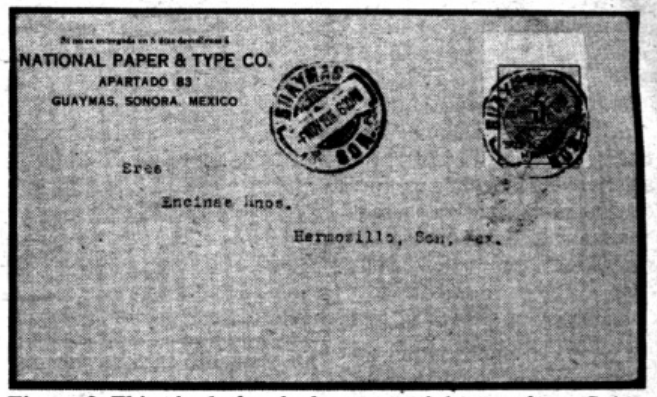


Figure 3. This single-franked commercial cover from Guaymas to Hermosillo with a 5-centavo Coach Seal stamp went to the same addressee as the philatelic cover in Figure 2.

The Oaxaca provisionals, Scott 414-19, have always intrigued me. As the catalog notes, these crude but quaint stamps were printed on backs of postal forms because of a shortage of paper. There is much more to the story of how these stamps came to be printed, as we will see in a future column.

The Oaxaca locals bear the word "TRANSITORIO," which indicates they were meant to be a temporary expedient. However, records show they were valid for use from about June 1915 to June 1916.

It is apparent from reports of genuinely used copies that few of these stamps were in fact used to frank letters. Covers are very scarce and many of the used stamps seen in the market are believed to be canceled-to-order remainders.

Here again, I look for stamps with enough of a cancellation to confirm the stamp's location and date of use, and even that may not be enough.

Figure 4 shows the two types of used 5-centavo stamps from my collection. The type I with the thick "5" bears almost half of a railroad agent's handstamp. It is dated within the authorized period of use, so I think it is probably an authentic cancellation.

The other stamp bears part of a registry cancellation dated (19)16, but I can't be absolutely sure about it. I intend to keep looking until I find a copy with all or most of

a proper dated town cancel.

Readers should be warned that the type I stamp with the thick "5" — the expensive variety — has been the object of a clever forgery.

Figure 4. The thick "5" type I (left) and thin "5" type II (right) 5c Oaxaca provisional stamps. The dated railroad agent's cancel on the stamp on the left indicates that it was probably postally used, but too little of the date and design appears in the cancel on the right-hand stamp to be sure.

Copies of the common type II stamp have been altered by painting a thick figure directly over the thin figure "5" so that it appears to be a type I stamp. Usually, inspection under a strong glass will reveal such a deception.

Also, remember that the type I stamp is somewhat darker in color, and that the eagle is more clearly defined than on the type II stamp.

If you wanted a challenge in Mexican stamps for the new year, here you have one. Try to find as many legitimately used civil war locals as you can. I'll be happy to learn of any unusual discoveries. ■

Gutter varieties add to one's collection

Did you know that there are a total of almost 300 collectible Mexican gutter pairs and blocks of stamps?

I didn't. And then I heard from George Platner of Riverside, Calif.

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

I had not realized there was a significant number of these varieties available until Platner sent me his checklists of them. Since then, I have also found reference to a couple of dozen more.

A gutter piece is a pair or larger block of stamps with an unprinted band of selvage between stamps. This selvage, or gutter, can vary in width from several millimeters up to two or more centimeters.

Figure 1 shows a typical Mexican gutter pair. The 10-centavo stamps show Antonio de Mendoza from a 1939 set marking the 400th anniversary of printing in Mexico.

The gutter is the part of the original large printing sheet where a cut is made to separate the postage stamps into smaller panes.

When sheets are cut correctly there usually is no gutter. It ends up instead as narrow strips of selvage on the edges of individual panes.

A dealer or collector with access to uncut sheets can separate them so that the gutter remains intact. Such gutter pairs or blocks of stamps would not otherwise be available from normal post office stock.

The first group of Mexican

Figure 1. A gutter pair of a 1939 10-centavo commemorative for the 400th anniversary of printing in Mexico.

gutter pairs on Platner's list involves the 1913-14 Sonora locals I wrote about last month (Jan. 9, page 8). Forty-four varieties are tabulated between Scott 321-413.

To call these items gutter pieces as I previously defined them may be stretching the term a bit.

The white and green Sonora seal stamps were printed in sheetlets about 3½ inches by 8 inches in size.

Five typeset impressions were printed along one edge of the sheet. Then the sheet was rotated 180 degrees and five more impressions were made on the opposite edge.

The result was five pairs of stamps, with a large gutter between each pair.

These gutter pairs are also tete-beche pairs. This means that one design in the pair appears to be inverted with respect to the other.

The Sonora coach seal stamps were similarly produced in 40-subject sheets.

Two rows of 10 stamps were printed along the long edge of a piece of paper 5½ inches by 12½ inches.

The paper was then turned and the process repeated, yielding 10 gutter pairs and 20 additional stamps.

These are not the usual gutter material, but they are collected avidly nevertheless.

Conventional gutter pairs and blocks are fairly abundant among the Mexican definitive issues of 1916-34. Figure 2 shows two examples.

On the left is a gutter block of four of the 1923 20c Dominiguez Monument issue, Scott 656. Because these stamps are rouletted, they appear to be imperforate in the illustration. On the right is a perforated gutter block of four of the 1934 4c Columbus Monument definitive, Scott 689.

There are perhaps 100 different Scott-listed postage stamps available in this form, and another 100 or so among Mexico's airmails and other back-of-the-book issues.

Interestingly, there are some gutter subvarieties, too.

Multiples of the rouletted 1927 4c Columbus Monument, Scott 653, can be found with gutters in widths measuring 14.5mm, 22mm and 25mm.

An extra row of perforations was put through the 22mm and 25mm gutters. This was presumably to prevent

Figure 2. Mexican definitive gutter varieties include these blocks of four of the rouletted 1923 20c Dominiguez Monument (left) and the perforated 1934 4c Columbus Monument (right).

the unprinted gutter from being used to make postal counterfeits.

Frankly, I was quite surprised to find so many Mexican stamps in Platner's lists. But when I checked the 1988 Bill Shelton Philatelics catalog, the only other place I could find these items listed, there was good agreement between the two.

How many varieties are there altogether? Is there a source that lists them all?

I know of none. Perhaps some reader can supply a different answer. I would be happy to report that fact in a future column.

Where did these gutter pieces originate?

Although I am not certain, I suspect that most of them entered the market through the philatelic window at Mexico City's main post office.

Large quantities of remaindered obsolete issues were turned over to the philatelic outlet for sale to collectors. I believe that it would have been very easy for the philatelic window supervisor to get uncut sheets.

With a few cunning cuts, such sheets could have been converted into something collectors would find different and desirable: gutter blocks.

Retail prices for these items seem to be all over the map. Platner's comparison of six unnamed dealers shows prices varying by as much as 30 percent to 50 percent for the same gutter multiple.

I have also seen gutter material offered in the American Philatelic Society circuit books. Prices for these are

usually considerably below those shown in dealers' lists.

In a short article in *Mexicana* several years ago, one writer deduced that a reasonable price for gutter pairs should be about six times the catalog value of an unused normal stamp. His logic was not altogether convincing.

In any event, most of the items I've noted sell for less than $10. Many gutter pairs can be had for $1 to $3.

Gutter varieties may not be the sort of thing you would want to spend a lot of money and time chasing. However, a few gutter pairs would certainly add interest to a general collection of Mexico.

The Shelton Philatelics price list probably has the most complete listing of these items currently in print.

Copies of the list may still be available for $4.95 from Bill Shelton Philatelics, Drawer 39838, San Antonio, Texas. 78218-6838. ■

The fascinating first issues of Mexico

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

When I began this column almost six years ago, I promised readers I would jump around quite a bit from a chronological standpoint. I said that I would probably write more about the classic era and 19th-century Mexican philately since that was the focus of my own interest and specialization.

Reviewing my columns since then, it ironically seems that I actually may have fallen short on articles about pre-1900 stamps and postal history. In the course of writing for *Linn's*, my own interest in the philately of the modern era has grown considerably.

This month we'll reconsider the first postage stamps issued by Mexico. They are among my favorites, and I have collected them seriously for more than 20 years.

Scott 1-5 of Mexico were authorized and printed in the summer of 1856, and were first placed on public sale Aug. 1. The five stamps in the set were denominated to cover all possible rates in a postal system that was based on letter weight and distance traveled. The common design in the set is an elaborately framed portrait of Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, the father of Mexican independence.

The stamps were generally well printed from locally engraved plates and were issued in attractive colors. Over their years of service, repeated printings gave rise to interesting color varieties, especially of the 2-reale stamp. Wear and tear of the plates caused flaws and other collectible varieties.

With a widely dispersed population in a generally mountainous country, communications in Mexico were difficult at best. Bandits and highwaymen often waylaid travelers and took goods in transit.

Because of this, Mexican postal authorities devised an unusual security scheme to prevent loss of revenue due to stamp thefts.

For administrative purposes, the country was already divided into postal districts. It was decreed that stamps dispatched from the main office in Mexico City should be overprinted, following their arrival at the district office, with the name of the district office to validate them for use. Stamps lacking this district name overprint would be presumed stolen and without franking power.

The two stamps illustrated in Figure 1 show the correct usage under the district name overprint system.

The 1r stamp on the left came from Chihuahua, as indicated by its overprint. The 2r stamp on the right shows the district name and the main post office cancellation of Veracruz.

Figure 1. Used correctly, these 1-reale (left) and 2r (right) first issues display both a district name overprint and a cancellation.

The problem was that some offices misunderstood or misinterpreted the rules. Stamps were sold and legitimately used with no district name overprint.

A further twist in the system was that many large district post offices had smaller, suboffices that were dependent on them for stamps. While the name of the principal office normally appears on stamps from such suboffices, the stamps' point of use can be established from the postmark.

Such is the case of the stamp on the left in Figure 1. Validated in Chihuahua, it shows the last letters in a boxed handstamp used in Parral, a mining center in the south central portion of that state.

With these facts in mind, we have all the elements in the first issue of Mexico to titilate even the most fastidious collector.

The classicist can search for color shades, printing flaws and plate varieties. There is enough material of this sort to fill several album pages with ease.

The collector who enjoys studying stamp usages can have a field day with the district name overprints alone.

Nearly 50 separate offices followed the regulations and applied their names to the stamps. Several districts were so small and used so few stamps that some denominations are so far unreported. Others are exceedingly rare.

Overprints of the large district offices, like Mexico, Puebla, Guadalajara, and Veracruz, are common and easy to find. In fact, these offices usually had more than one handstamp for printing names, so that different settings of the overprint can be collected.

Figure 2, for example, shows two overprint types from the Mexico district. The plain, unattractive solid-letter overprint on the 2r stamp on the right is actually much scarcer than the fancy hollow-letter "MEXICO" overprint on the 1r value to the left.

Perhaps the most interesting and challenging collecting involves the postal markings used to cancel Mexico's first issues.

While there were a few standardized designs for cancelers, mostly among the big post offices, Mexican postmasters were exceptionally creative when it came to postmarking devices.

Apart from the usual straightlines, boxes, and oval and round datestamps, one finds wreaths, ribbons, acronyms and mute markings of enormous variety. Many handstamps from the colonial and stampless periods were used as cancelers, especially in the small towns.

Postmark color is another variable. Black is by far the most common color seen, but red and blue were used generously, too.

Postal history buffs report and pursue a wide variety of usages on cover. There is an ample supply of single letter rates and routings, but there are also more elusive items.

The most fascinating of these include stagecoach letters, registered letter fronts, ship mail to the United States and Europe, and letters franked with bisects and other fractional usages of the high-denomination stamps.

Figure 2. Large districts sometimes had more than one type of name overprint, such as these two different "MEXICO" overprints.

Figure 3 shows one of the latter, a diagonal bisect of the 4r stamp on a large piece cut from a folded letter. The bisect was used to pay the 2r rate at Cosamaloapam, a suboffice of Veracruz.

Using fractions of higher denominations to pay lower rates was authorized when supplies of the common values were exhausted. Indeed, the Scott catalog lists nine such fractional usages for this five-stamp set.

Figure 3. A bisect of the 4r first issue paid the 2r rate on this large piece from a cover with the boxed postmark of Cosamaloapam.

I have always touted 19th-century Mexico for offering the many collecting opportunities just cited. But there are a couple of other good reasons why a serious philatelist should consider this field.

Thanks to earlier generations of collectors, there is a substantial body of literature concerning classic Mexican stamps and postal history. That literature can steer you through and around some of the danger zones.

While the monetary stakes in collecting the first issues are substantial, the cost is not nearly as steep as it is for popular United States or European material of similar age and rarity.

The Scott catalog sets $100 as the value of a used copy of Britain's first issue, the Penny Black, of which 72 million were printed. Some 4.4 million copies were printed of the United States 1847 5¢ Franklin, which catalogs $700 used. But used copies of Scott 1 of Mexico, the ½r Hidalgo, have catalog values of just $17.50. Only 992,000 of these ½r stamps were issued.

Of course, there are many spectacular Mexican first issues and first-issue usages that most of us can never hope to possess. They are simply beyond our reach.

On the other hand, there are plenty of stamps and covers that have philatelic importance and are within the budget limit of many serious collectors.

Although this quick tour has focused on just five stamps, many of the same collecting possibilities hold true for many 19th-century Mexican issues that followed. District name overprinting continued for another 30 years.

Still, it is Mexico's first issues that have always had a special fascination for me. Start collecting them and I think you'll agree. ■

Eagles abound on many stamps of Mexico

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

When avid collectors of Mexico speak of Eagle stamps they are usually referring to a set of stamps issued in 1864.

Figure 1 shows one of these, a 1-real value. As a central motif, these stamps show an eagle, perched on a cactus, with a serpent in its mouth. The eagle also wears a crown, which marks it as the symbol of the Maximilian monarchy.

Figure 1. Eagles first appeared on stamps of Mexico's 1864 issue, including this 1-real value with a Mexico district overprint.

This was the first time, but certainly not the last, that the coat of arms of Mexico was to be used as the central theme for a Mexican stamp.

The coat of arms symbol of the eagle and serpent is pre-Columbian in origin, and dates to the very early days of the Mexican nation.

The Aztecs, a tribe of wandering Indians, had been guided by their chief deity, Huitzilopochtli, in search of a permanent homeland. They were told they would recognize this place by the sign of an eagle resting on a cactus and devouring a snake.

Legend has it that this is what the Aztecs saw when they arrived in the Valley of Mexico near the end of the 13th century. The island in the middle of the lake where the omen was observed became the site of the great city-state of Tenochtitlan, which thrived until the Spaniards arrived in 1519.

Figure 2. The eagle and snake are prominent on this 1897-98 5-peso tax stamp.

After the War of Independence with Spain, the eagle and serpent symbol was soon adopted as the coat of arms of Mexico.

The so-called Imperial Eagles of the Maximilian era provide a tantalizing challenge to the collector of classic issues.

There are five types, keyed to the time of issue and use. Furthermore, there are hundreds of varieties stemming from the different overprints of district names and consignment numbers.

Among these Eagles are some of the rarest stamp varieties Mexico has to offer. These would be stamps from consignments to post offices where only a handful of adhesives were ever used. Several outstanding exhibits of these have been formed.

It was nearly 35 years before the eagle again appeared on Mexican postage stamps. It contributed to the basic design for the centavo-value stamps in the issue of 1899.

Meanwhile, Mexican postal stationery from 1884 to the end of the century had numerous examples of the eagle and serpent coat of arms, both engraved and embossed.

Mexican revenue stamps of this period utilized the eagle motif rather extensively, too. These attractive stamps are outstanding examples of the engraver's art, as witness the 1897-98 5-peso federal tax stamp in Figure 2.

Commencing with Mexico's Civil War issues, the eagle is seen on postage stamps with increasing frequency. Several provisional and transitory issues of 1914-16 use the eagle design. So do the Oaxaca provisionals that I wrote about in my Jan. 9 column (page 8).

Figure 3. A rendering of Mexico's national symbol as it originally appeared in an Aztec pictograph was the basis of the design on the left in this 1920 airmail issue.

If you scan the Scott catalog you will find the eagle in the designs of many modern Mexican postage stamps.

The first airmail stamps of Mexico show an eagle in full flight, but this representation lacks the snake and thus cannot be considered linked to the coat of arms. It is probably an allegory to symbolize fast mail service.

The coat of arms does appear on airmail stamps beginning with the issue of 1929-34. The 30c value of the set is shown in Figure 3.

Figure 4. A revised version of the national symbol appears on this 1934 1p stamp.

If you are a flyspeck collector or a very dedicated topicalist, diminutive eagles may be found on some Mexican stamps. For example, the 1p regular issue of 1923, Scott 649, shows the Palace of Fine Arts with its dome crowned by an eagle. There is also a variety of this stamp without the eagle, Scott 649a.

An eagle also tops a dome on a 1945 set commemorating the reconstruction of the Peace Theater in San Luis Potosi, Scott 801-04 and C148-52.

Even the U.S. eagle can be found on a Mexican stamp. It appears in the presidential seal included in the airmail issue that honored President Kennedy's visit to Mexico in 1962, Scott C262.

There seem to have been no rigorous standards set for eagle and coat of arms designs. In some presentations the wings are only slightly spread; others show open wings or wings very widely extended.

The eagle's head may face left or right, although the latter seems to be preferred. In some examples the eagle's plumage is very finely detailed, while others display little more than outlines.

After the revolutionary government settled into power in 1916, a presidential decree attempted to standardize the Mexican national emblem. It was to conform to its depiction in an original Aztec codex: a sidewise view of the eagle with the snake gripped with the beak and the right claw. This was the basis for the depiction on the airmail stamp in Figure 3.

This design received some curious criticism. Biological experts claimed the snake was grasped too far from its head and would have attacked and killed the eagle.

Once more the design was modified by decree, and this latest revision seems to have persisted more or less unchanged up to current times.

Figure 4 shows it as it first appeared on the 1p regular issue of 1934, Scott 719.

From time to time the eagle has been cleverly worked into the designs of modern issues. For example, the 1934 20c and 1p airmail stamps show the Eagle Man, an important figure in Aztec folklore.

An eagle is also found on the 5p value of the 1960 Independence set. It shows three important national symbols: Father Miguel Hidalgo, the bell of liberty, and the eagle.

In addition, the eagle has appeared several times in the watermarks of papers used to produce Mexican stamps.

The first such occurrence was in the 1897-98 printing of the Transportation series, also called the Mulitas. The watermark is an outline of an eagle with the initials of "Republica Mexicana" beneath it.

The 5p stamp with this watermark is a major rarity of Mexican philately, currently cataloging $10,000.

In 1944, paper normally reserved for revenue issues was used for postage stamps. The revenue paper carried a watermark with the words "MEXICO/S.H.C.P." and an eagle outline in a circle. Scott lists it as type 272.

Figure 5. An adaptation of the eagle and snake motif is seen on this portion of a 1972 Mexico City meter imprint.

Three more Mexican eagle watermarks are listed by Scott, commencing in the mid-1940s: types 279, 300 and 350.

These watermarks are all illustrated in the catalog and show a side view outline of the eagle in a circle with various inscriptions. The last two watermarks are found on many stamps issued in the 1950s-70s but are sometimes difficult to discern.

Even postage meters from Mexico have made use of the eagle and snake motif. An example is shown in the denominated box from a 1972 meter imprint in Figure 5.

The design is appealing to many collectors, and you might want to consider a thematic or topical collection of Mexican eagles. A few will take a moderately sized bite out of your stamp budget, but most of them cost as little as a few cents to a few dollars. ■

New additions to Mexico's Exporta series

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

It's time to bring you up to date on what is going on with Mexico's popular Exporta definitive issues.

A few weeks ago Guillermo Wilkins, a reader in Mexico City, sent me a short note together with a dozen Exporta stamps. Most of these were varieties I had not yet seen, and there were some surprises among them.

In my last column on these stamps (*Linn's*, Aug. 8, 1988, page 28) I tabulated nine new denominations ranging from 600 pesos up to 5,000p, the latter being the highest denomination of any postage stamp ever issued in Mexico.

The 1,000p, 2,000p, 3,000p, 4,000p and 5,000p values were printed on granite paper and constituted a new, so-called ninth issue. So far, these are the only current stamps I've seen printed on this type of paper.

The other four stamps I mentioned (600p to 900p) belong in the eighth series, which now has more than 30 recognized varieties.

Ten of the new stamps just received have characteristics unlike any of their predecessors. The table in Figure 1 summarizes some of the important data about them.

The paper of the stamps is fairly thick (approximately .11 millimeters), is somewhat opaque and has no watermark. All of the stamps are perforated in gauge 14.

Several of the stamps are multicolored and the printed surface is smooth and slightly shiny. They have a matte gum that is off-white, tending towards a cream color.

Figure 2. Among the most recently introduced Mexican Exporta definitives are two stamps in each of these two designs.

Some of the stamps, when viewed from the gum side against low-angle incident light, show a pattern of very fine parallel lines.

When the paper is held up to transmitted light it might appear to some observers that the paper is a laid variety, but I believe this perception is simply the result of the manner in which the gum was applied, as if with a finely grooved roller.

Finally, the stamps exhibit absolutely no ultraviolet-sensitive properties. Under long-wave UV light, the face of the stamps appears tan in color. The backs of the stamps show a lighter shade.

Four of the stamps in the group share two designs, which are shown in Figure 2.

The 700p and 750p stamps depict movie film. They are fairly easily differentiated. The logo, the numerals of value, and one of the film cell colors on the 700p stamp are bluish black in contrast to the 750p issue where these same items are gray. The 900p Piston stamp is printed in black, while its twin, a 950p denomination, is dark blue.

The dealers I have heard from list this group as a separate 10th series.

The surprises I alluded to involve the two odd stamps, the first of which is shown in Figure 3. This 500p Valves issue is identical to the one in the 10th series in every respect except that its gum is smooth and semiglossy.

One dealer assigns this stamp to a new 11th Exporta issue. Clearly, it does not fit into any of the earlier groups as far as I can tell, but perhaps we should wait to find out if other stamps with the same features are printed.

Figure 4 shows the other surprise, a 200p stamp with the Citrus Fruit design.

At first I thought it might be a subtle color variety of the 200p 10th-series stamp. But on closer examination it has all the characteristics of the rather limited third-series set.

The stamp's thin, semitransparent onionskinlike paper is fluorescent throughout, and it has a glossy, dextrin gum. The green color is slightly paler than that of the 10th-series stamp, and the inscriptions at the foot of the design are less clear.

Figure 3. Only its gum differentiates this 500-peso Valves stamp from an earlier Exporta definitive.

This 200p Citrus stamp also lacks the burelage background of gray curved lines, so there is no risk of confusion with any of the other 200p stamps in the fifth, sixth, seventh or eighth issues.

So there you have it — 12 new varieties to look for, probably with more to come.

Postal rates in Mexico took another healthy jump the first of the year due, I suspect, to the continued slippage of the Mexican peso against other world currencies. As yet, I do not have a schedule of the new rates, but recent first-class letters I have received from there have frankings exceeding 1,000p.

Figure 4. This 200p Citrus Fruit design has many characteristics in common with much earlier Exporta issues.

For example, the registered letter I received from Wilkins bore stamps totaling 4,400p — roughly $1.86 U.S. I am very grateful for his kindness in sending me these new issues so *Linn's* readers might share this news early.

Another question regarding the Exportas that readers repeatedly ask is how to tell the difference between the seventh and eighth issues. They are very similar and I'm sure many collectors have difficulty with them.

For unused copies of these stamps, I use three tests.

Compared to the seventh is-

Value (pesos)	Description of design	Colors	Width (millimeters)
50p	Tomato	red & sage green	36.0*
200p	Citrus Fruit	mustard yellow & bright green	35.5*
300p	Autos	dark blue & red	35.5*
450p	Electronics	bistre & cerise	36.0*
500p	Valves	gray & dark blue	36.0*
700p	Movie Film	green, red & black	35.5*
750p	Movie Film	green, red & gray	35.5*
800p	Tiles	light brown & dark brown	36.0*
900p	Auto Parts	black	35.5
950p	Auto Parts	slate blue	35.5

* Design width can vary slightly depending on register of colors during the printing process.

Figure 1. This table presents the characteristics of 10 new Exporta stamps recently received by the author from a *Linn's* reader in Mexico City. Important characteristics of these new issues in the popular Mexican series are examined in detail in the accompanying article.

sue, the eighth issue stamps have gum that is less splotchy when viewed against low-angle incident light. They have slightly less intense fluorescence on the face and are slightly more opaque when viewed from the back looking into a light source.

These checks seem to work for me but I do admit they have not been applied to hundreds of unsorted stamps. I know those of you who collect used stamps will continue to have a lot of trouble making these distinctions.

Will there be another revised Exporta checklist? Many loyal readers have written asking that question.

Except for the information presented in my article last August and this one, I believe that there is nothing more to be added to my checklist of March 1988. I'm going to sit tight for the moment and see what the rest of 1989 brings.

The album makers are having difficulty keeping up too, at least those who try to provide spaces for varieties. Perhaps I will do a single-sheet addendum late this year if the flow of new varieties has stabilized by then.

Incidentally, there are still a couple of dozen copies of the 1988 checklist on my shelf. This list ends with most of the varieties of the eighth issue.

A copy of the checklist can be obtained for a stamped, addressed envelope sent to me in care of *Linn's*. ■

The Hidalgo Medallion issues of Mexico

If you love finely engraved postage stamps and are looking for a rather compact field in Mexican philately in which to specialize, you might want to consider the Hidalgo

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Medallion head stamps of 1884-85.

Except for denominations, the designs of all stamps in the series are identical. Each features a broad machine-engraved central oval containing the portrait of Father Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla facing towards the left.

Figure 1 shows a 1-peso Hidalgo Medallion stamp. Within the machine work are the words "SERVICIO POSTAL MEXICANO" (Mexican Postal Service) with the denomination spelled out. Numerals of value appear in boxes at all four corners of the stamp.

The stamps are somewhat larger than any previous Mexican issues, measuring about 25 millimeters by 31mm.

A rather thin wove or laid paper was used to print them. While it accepted the printing impressions well, it proved very difficult to perforate with the equipment at hand.

The first series of Hidalgo Medallion stamps in 1884 had 15 denominations, ranging from 1 centavo to 10p. The centavo stamps were printed in green and the peso denominations in blue.

The next year a second set of these stamps was issued in different colors, perhaps because 15 denominations in

Figure 1. A 1-peso Hidalgo Medallion of 1884, Scott 161.

only two colors made checking for proper franking hard.

These two issues mark Mexico's departure from the cumbersome system of district name and invoice number overprinting used on all previous issues. Still, a wayward district name may occasionally be found.

Although the Hidalgo Medallion issues were used for barely two years, there are enough varieties to provide considerable challenge in a specialized study.

The vast majority of the stamps were perforated in gauge 12. However, most of the centavo stamps and the two low peso values also are encountered in perf 11.

Figure 2 shows a left margin copy of a 10c perf 11. These perf 11 stamps are much scarcer than the usual perf 12 and command a substantially higher price from a knowledgeable dealer. However, you can occasionally find one included among the cheaper stock.

There are also imperforate Hidalgo Medallion stamps, but heed the warning in the Scott catalog. These should invariably be purchased in pairs or blocks since perforated singles with jumbo margins can be trimmed to make them appear as though they are imperforate.

Another variable that can be pursued by the specialist is color, especially among the green stamps of 1884.

The late Abraham Odfjell, a famous Norwegian philatelist who specialized in Mexico, found a correlation between color and time of issue.

Early printings were generally bronze green, the middle

Figure 2. Perf 11 Hidalgo Medallions, like this left-margin copy of the 10-centavo stamp, are desirable.

printings were green to dark blue green, and the last stamps to be printed were a sea green, the lightest shade of all. Odfjell noted that some shades were very scarce for

Figure 3. This 12c stamp displays the usual state of the perforations on these issues.

certain denominations.

The perforating difficulties mentioned earlier mean that obtaining a well-centered, cleanly perforated example of any given denomination will require patience and a great deal of searching.

Figure 3 shows a 12c stamp with typical perforations for these issues. Ragged edges and adhering blind perfs are the rule, and this can be discouraging to the fastidious collector. But that's the way these stamps and many subsequent Mexican issues are generally found.

A glance at the Scott catalog listings will show that most of the centavo stamps and two of the peso stamps are valued from pennies to a few dollars. This makes it fairly easy to assemble a rather good showing of the Medallions without spending much money.

A more complete collection of the major varieties requires a considerable outlay. The two key items are the 5p and 10p stamps issued later in 1892, Scott 230 and 231, printed on paper with the "CORREOS E.U.M." watermark.

These two stamps are among a select group of true Mexican rarities seldom seen or offered for sale. The current combined catalog value for the pair in used condition approaches $4,000.

Other Hidalgos can be pricey, too. The 1c blue error of 1884, Scott 150b, now lists at $275, but it hasn't risen as steeply in recent years as the 1892 blue-green rarities.

One anomaly of note is the

Figure 4. Higher-denomination 1884 stamps such as this 50c, Scott 160, are believed to have come from large stocks that were remaindered when the stamps became invalid.

Mexico 1884-92.

The stamps here offered are unused and have original gum, perforated on four sides and are well centered. Postage extra on orders of less than $1.00.

NUMERAL TYPE, 1884-92.

Watermarked CORREOS EUM in each row.

	Each
1 centavo	$0.01
2 centavos, carmine	.03
3 centavos, scarlet	.02
4 centavos, scarlet	.06
5 centavos, blue	.01
6 centavos, scarlet	.10
10 centavos, scarlet	.01
12 centavos lilac (no watermark)	.50
20 centavos, scarlet	.08
25 centavos, scarlet	.06

HEAD TYPE, 1884.

50 centavos, green	$0.30
1 peso, blue	.85
5 pesos, blue	.75

These are all guaranteed to be originals, and the above list represents the full series that was in use July, 1896, when the new issue came out. The former catalogue price of the above series of 13 stamps was $8.07. I will sell them all for $1.75, POST FREE. Cash must accompany order.

JOE F. BEARD,
Muscatine, — — — — — — Iowa.

Figure 5. An 1896 price list suggests that large quantities of the 50c, 1p and 2p Medallions may have been sold to stamp dealers, explaining their relatively low catalog value today.

apparent undervaluation of the 50c, 1p and 2p stamps of the first issue. The 50c value is shown in Figure 4.

When issued, these three stamps would have been equivalent in face value to about 50¢, $1 and $2 U.S. But all of them are still cataloged at less than a dollar in either unused or canceled condition.

I am not certain why this is so, but I suspect when the issue was superseded there must have been thousands of remainders that were sold at

deep discounts to dealers.

Figure 5 shows an 1896 flyer from a stamp dealer in Iowa offering perfect, unused copies of these stamps for 20¢, 35¢ and 75¢, respectively.

The oval Hidalgo Medallion design was also used without the rectangular frame and denominations for Mexico's short-lived first Official stamps, Scott O1-9.

This set was the only instance in which a special Mexican stamp was produced for official correspondence. Subsequent Official issues consisted of regular postage stamps overprinted with the word "OFFICIAL."

There are many other interesting variations on these Medallion designs too, including printed private franks for Wells, Fargo & Co., Official envelopes and wrappers for printed matter.

The Hidalgo Medallion head issues provide an opportunity for research and collecting in an area that, to my knowledge, has not received too much attention. ■

Mexico's TB seals often misunderstood

A three-frame exhibit of Mexican tuberculosis seals did not fare too well with the judges at Aripex 89 last January. It was said to be interesting but of no philatelic value.

This last point may be arguable, but I suspect only a handful of philatelists, including

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Mexico specialists, know much about these adhesives. I hope this brief article can remedy that situation.

Mexico was late among world nations joining the battle against the ravages of TB, and a national committee was not organized until 1940. The committee quickly adopted a proven fund-raising method and in 1943 the first TB seals were put on sale to the public.

Figure 1 shows Mexico's first TB seals, which exist in two types. The one shown on the left has a single outer frameline around the design, while the one on the right, a much more common type, has a double frameline.

Whereas TB seals of the United States and most other countries were printed by private

Figure 1. Mexico's first tuberculosis seals of 1943 were produced in both a scarce single-frameline variety (left) and the more common double-frameline variety (right).

firms, Mexican seals were produced in the government printing office, the same institution responsible for postage stamps and other government paper. In addition, the seals were printed on the same watermarked postal paper used for contemporary postage stamps.

This practice continued until 1954. These early Mexican seals can be found with three different watermarks, listed in the Scott cata-

Figure 2. A Mexican TB seal of 1955 is well tied to this commercial airmail cover.

log as types 272, 279 and 300.

Furthermore, with the exception of the first two issues, all Mexican TB seals were denominated and were sold primarily at post offices.

A single stamp design was used from 1943 through 1955, which was the first year TB seals were printed by a private contractor. Figure 2 shows a cover with a copy of the 1955 seal tied to the left of a 25-centavo airmail stamp.

Curiously, for the years 1949 and 1950 Mexico used surplus 1948 seals with special revalidation overprints. Five different types of these overprints have been recorded.

Figure 3 shows two stamps photographically cropped from a commercial airmail cover to New York. Though mailed to New York in 1950, this cover shows a curious usage of an unoverprinted 1948 TB seal.

The barely visible inscription just below the design of both the airmail stamp and the TB seal reads: "TALLERES DE IMP(RESION) DE EST(AMPILLAS) Y VALORES MEXICO."

With that inscription marking this adhesive as printed by the government, and a "5¢" denomination shown, is it any wonder some collectors treat Mexico's TB seals as stamps?

The design theme of the early seals was clearly focused on the eradication of tuberculosis. During the last three decades many of the seals have been devoid of designs or inscriptions relating to health matters except for the familiar double-barred cross, the international symbol for TB agencies.

Commencing in 1956, Mexico's TB seals were printed in sheets with multiple designs, the first displaying 50 different Christmas motifs. Since then, more than 1,000 distinct designs have been used, including tropical fish, butterflies, monuments, churches, military uniforms, popular art, regional costumes and so forth.

Figure 4 shows three seals of the 1960s, conveying some idea of this range of subject matter. If these were bona-fide postage stamps they would be a gold mine for topicalists.

Over the years the face value of the TB seals has increased steadily. It was 5c in the beginning, from 1945-52. It was then raised to 10c and remained there until 1977, when it doubled once more to 20c.

In 1984-85, when Mexico's currency devaluation became severe, the price for seals was pegged at 1 peso. It rose to 2p in 1986, took a fivefold jump to 10p in 1987, and then doubled to 20p for 1988-89.

The official philatelic status of these TB

Figure 3. The 1948 TB seal on the left was produced by the same government printing office that issued the airmail stamp on the right, both from a 1950 cover to New York.

seals of Mexico is not clear.

There have been several instances of the use of a postal tax in Mexico to generate funds for special causes. A locust plague, child welfare, and malaria eradication through mosquito control were all supported by the obligatory use of special tax stamps on mail. But I have been unable to find evidence to indicate that this has ever been the case with the TB seals.

However, we know seals are aggressively sold by the Mexican postal service, which for years constituted their major retail outlet.

A.W. Bork is a life member of the Mexico-Elmhurst Philatelic Society International and a onetime resident of Mexico. He has observed that post office window customers were often the subject of mild coercion by the clerks to take their change in TB seals and use them in

Figure 4. Starting in the 1960s, the emphasis on health came to be replaced by a wealth of colorful topics on Mexico's TB seals.

addition to the regular postage on letters presented for mailing.

This was especially true during the Christmas holiday season when the seals were actively promoted. Bork also notes that unsuspecting tourists have used such seals in the belief they were valid for postage, since they were purchased at the post office window and displayed denominations.

In any case, TB seals are used extensively on mail during the holidays, and often receive cancels just like the regular stamps. Finding covers bearing them is not too difficult.

Are Mexican TB seals collectible? Apparently so, because there is a small but avid group that takes them quite seriously.

Most of the seals are available for pennies.

Even full sheets of the multiple design issues are traded for just a few dollars.

The early issues printed by the Mexican government are getting tougher to find, and the 1945 stamp is especially scarce, now selling for well above $10 a copy. The only other pricey items are the 1943 stamp with single frameline and the 1950 issue, a 1948 remainder with the "campana/1950" (campaign/1950) overprint.

Where can you find information on these seals? In 1972, MEPSI published a short monograph by Henry Irwin titled *The Tuberculosis Seals of Mexico*. As far as I know it is still available. Irwin obtained some of his information from the long-out-of-print *Green's Catalog of the Tuberculosis Seals of the World*, originally compiled by Dick Green.

If you are interested in MEPSI literature, contact Carl LeMar John, 4337 Fifth St., Tucson, Ariz. 85711. And if any of you have further insight on Mexican TB stamps I would be delighted to hear from you. You can write to me in care of *Linn's*.

My thanks to Carl L. John and A.W. Bork for some of the background used in this article. ■

Mexico's Hidalgo Profile issue of 1872-74

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Among the regular issues of Mexico I have not covered in this column are the Hidalgo Profile stamps that appeared following the "Anotado" fiasco in the spring of 1872.

For some collectors, the Hidalgo Profiles represent the nadir of Mexican stamp design. They have rarely been shown in exhibitions.

The eminent British philatelist J.H. Barron described these stamps in the May 1915 issue of the *Philatelic Journal of Great Britain* as follows:

"Faultily drawn, the portrait of Miguel Hidalgo stands up uncertainly from a muddy background surrounded by a miscellany of conventional ornaments which are crowded into every available space."

Figure 1 shows the 100-centavo high value of the issue.

True, this stamp and the others of the issue are certainly not beauties, but they do have charms for the collector. Considering the circumstances in which they were issued, we may understand and forgive the Mexican postal authorities for this hastily produced set.

The previous issue, which showed a full-face portrait of Hidalgo, had fallen unto disrepute because of a postal fraud wherein post office employees sold counterfeited stamps to enrich themselves. Mexico's top postal officials wanted a new set of stamps as quickly as possible, with safeguards against a recurrence of the private printings by postal workers.

Figure 1. The 100-centavo high value of Mexico's 1872 Hidalgo Profile issue.

A directive specified the month of April 1872 for the changeover from the old stamps to the Hidalgo Profiles, but it is clear that the two issues were in use simultaneously during May and probably early June.

The designer of the Hidalgo Profile stamps is unknown, probably an employee of the government printing office. It is believed that one master die with blank panels was made from which were produced five copper cliches for the various denominations.

Each of the five denominations shows some differences in the printing of all the wording. On the 6c stamp the word "SEIS" appears in the left panel, though on all others the inscribed denomination is in the right panel.

Lithographic transfers were taken from the five cliches to make up the stones that printed each sheet of stamps. The final layout pattern was a 100-stamp sheet printed 10 by 10, although there is evidence that at one point in production there were sheets with only 90 subjects.

Transfer types have been identified, as well as numerous retouches and other plate flaws. This area can give hours of enjoyment to the collector who loves to look at stamps through a strong glass.

Plating studies of most of the lower denominations have been completely reconstructed. Those of the high values have not been, so far as I know, because of the cost and difficulty of obtaining the needed multiples.

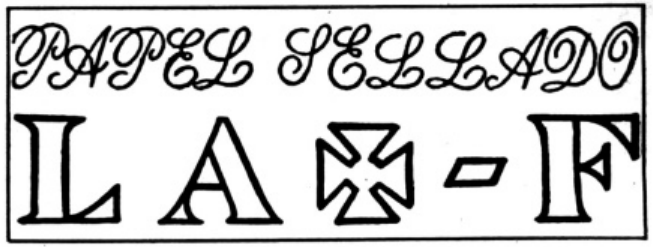


Figure 2. Parts of these large watermarks are sometimes found on Hidalgo Profiles. The revenue paper watermark (top) is two-thirds actual size, and the papermaker's watermark (bottom) is shown at seven-eighths actual size.

There seems to have been considerable difficulty in procuring adequate stocks of white paper needed for this issue. The stamps display an astonishing range of paper thicknesses ranging from very thick to extremely thin.

Even fiscal paper was used for printing the stamps, which gave rise to the "PAPEL SELLADO"-watermarked varieties. The top of Figure 2 shows this large watermark. It appeared only once or possibly twice on a single sheet of stamps, so stamps that show it are relatively scarce.

Figure 2 also shows a watermark with "LA F" in large double-line block letters and a heraldic cross and a hypen between the "A" and the "F."

This watermark is a rebus for LaCroix Freres, a French papermaking firm, and is often seen on lettersheets of the period. Its presence on Mexican postal and revenue issues of 1872 suggests that postal authorities may have purchased ordinary writing paper in order to print stamps.

Stamp separation was another problem. There were numerous schemes being tested at the time, most of which were not too successful.

The Mexico district was supplied regularly with perforated stamps, but the outlying district offices usually received imperforate stocks.

Figure 3. Perforated 1872 issues most commonly originated in Mexico City, including this 6c (left), crudely perforated in gauge 13, and a pin-perforated 50c Hidalgo Profile (right).

As Figure 3 shows, perforations of various shapes and sizes were tried, most between gauges 13 and 15 as seen on the stamp on the left.

Pinhole perforations, as seen on the right-hand stamp, proved largely ineffective. Most stamps with them were cut apart when used.

Consignment numbers and district name overprints offer an interesting and challenging field of specialization. There were 51 different consignment numbers used on the Hidalgo Profiles, one for each district office. Mexico City was No. 1, for example, and Zacatecas was No. 51.

Although these stamps were in service for little more than two years, three different year dates are found in conjunction with the consignment numbers: (18)72, 73 and 74.

A few numbering errors are known, and there was at least one reported case in which shipments to two districts, Morelia and Orizava, got switched. Since the stamps were used anyway, they appear to carry the wrong invoice number.

The smaller post offices received and sold few copies of these relatively short-lived issues. Examples from some can be quite hard to find.

However, the issue also includes an interesting color error to tantalize collectors.

It seems that the 50c denomination was printed in blue, the correct color of the 12c stamp. Although most of these errors were found be-

fore they got into circulation, a few sheets slipped into the distribution system. Some of these were legitimately used.

For all the criticism of the 1872 Hidalgo Profiles, they did have one advantage over the issue they replaced. On the back of each stamp was a security printing device, a blue pattern of rippled lines referred to as moire (pronounced mwa-RAY).

Figure 4 shows the design as it appears on the back of the 6c stamp in Figure 3.

While the moire pattern may have helped prevent postal forgeries, it curiously failed to deter those who forged stamps for sale to collectors. The best known of these counterfeits are those produced by the Spiro brothers of Hamburg, Germany.

Ironically, the Spiro forgeries show much better craftmanship than the authentic issues, though they differ in minor details. Also, the moire pattern, though closely matching the genuine stamps, appears too bold and too blue.

Figure 4. This moire pattern, from the back of the 6-centavo stamp from Figure 3, was intended to deter forgers.

Unfortunately, there are still many examples of the Spiro fakes in circulation, particularly in older collections, since they were widely marketed and actually looked better than the genuine article.

For reference material on the Hidalgo Profile issue, I recommend a series of articles by Franco Vanotti that appeared in the Mexico-Elmhurst Philatelic Society International journal *Mexicana* between 1984 and 1986.

In Vanotti's treatment, the work of Barron and other specialists of this issue has been added to, updated, and corrected. These articles would be especially useful for plating studies. ■

Mexico's Architecture and Archaeology series

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

In the Aug. 13, 1984, edition of *Linn's* (Page 46) I wrote about the airmail stamps of the long-standing series that preceded the current Exporta stamps. Those stamps were in use for some 25 years and provide very interesting collecting opportunities for the would-be specialist in 20th-century Mexico.

Many collect the postage stamps of this era as a unit, including not only definitives and airmail stamps, but also those printed for special delivery, postal insurance and parcel post. I will confine this article to the regular definitive stamps issued for use on surface mail.

This group of stamps, used between 1950 and 1975, is usually referred to as the Architecture and Archaeology series. While this description pretty well covers the range of subjects chosen for the stamp designs, there were exceptions.

As shown in Figure 1, two Mexican patriot leaders, Benito Juarez and Francisco Madero, were portrayed on the 15-centavo and 10-peso stamps of the issue. Juarez is also seen on a 50p stamp issued late in the period.

As in the current Exporta series, many of the designs of early Architecture and Archaeology issues remained in use virtually throughout the life of the series.

Figure 1. Mexico's Architecture and Archaeology series also includes stamps depicting Mexican patriots, such as Benito Juarez (left) and Francisco I. Madero (right).

Figure 2 shows a good example, two stamps depicting La Purisima, a modernistic church in Monterrey. The 3c stamp on the left was introduced in 1951. Its 3p counterpart on the right was released in 1975.

It also must be noted that a short set of stamps issued in 1956 to honor the centennial of the Mexican constitution, Scott 897A-900, is customarily included in collections of this issue. Figure 3 shows the three designs used.

Figure 2. The 1951 3-centavo stamp on the left and the 1975 3-peso stamp on the right use the same design depicting a church.

These stamps were issued in denominations needed to meet specific new postal rates. In addition, there was no presidential decree limiting the quantities of these stamps to be printed, as is customary with Mexico's commemoratives. Further, new denominations of these Constitution designs were issued at later dates.

All of these surface mail stamps were printed in a small format, with the designs measuring roughly 17 millimeters by 20mm and overall stamp dimensions of 20mm by 24mm.

Two printing processes were employed. In the early printings, the photogravure process was used for denominations up to 50c. Engraved plates were produced for the peso values. By the end of the 25-year time span during which these stamps remained in service, all values were being printed by photogravure.

As expected, the numerous printings give rise to a rich range of colors and shades, and there are plenty of minor plate and printing varieties to add excitement to the hunt.

With very few exceptions, the surface mail stamps were perforated in gauge 14. The three that are not are perf 11: a 1p stamp produced in 1958 (Scott 822b), and two 1969 coil stamps that are perf 11 vertically (Scott 1003-04). Examples are illustrated in Figure 4.

A number of different papers figured in the production of these stamps, and this has been the basis by which many catalogers and collectors categorize stamps of the series.

Figure 5 shows the three different watermarks to be found on Architecture and Archaeology surface mail issues.

The "GOBIERNO MEXICANA" paper of Mexican manufacture was the first type to be used on stamps of the 1950-52 printings. The English-made "MEX-MEX" paper came into use in about 1953 and the American-made paper with a noticeably larger watermark design was introduced about 1963.

Readers familiar with Mexican stamps know that the English "MEX-MEX" watermark saw extensive use. Like other English watermarks, it is sometimes difficult to discern.

In about 1966 light-active components were incorporated into the manufacture of Mexican security paper in the form of optical brighteners and phosphorescent coatings. These characteristics can help one sort out the later printings. Finally, in the printings of 1975 — the last hurrah for the series — watermarked paper was abandoned altogether.

Figure 3. Though they were issued to mark the centennial of the Mexican Constitution in 1957, these similar designs were used for almost two decades thereafter.

The severest challenge facing a collector who aspires to form a collection of this definitive issue is how to best organize it.

Figure 4. The only Architecture and Archaeology regular issues not perforated in gauge 14 are the 1958 1p issue on the left and two 1969 coils including the pair on the right.

The Scott catalog listings are somewhat confusing since the chronology of series gets mixed up and the differences in light-active properties of the late printings are completely disregarded. English and European catalogers and album makers are better in this regard.

Lighthouse is my personal choice for a preprinted album. The Lighthouse publisher has pretty much sorted out all the nuances in papers, gums and light-active aspects of the Architecture and Archaeology stamps.

Another advantage to Lighthouse is that the regular, airmail, special delivery, postal insurance and parcel post stamps are all grouped together in the chronological album sequence.

Just after my 1984 article, there appeared a special supplement to the journal of the Asociacion Mexicana de Filatelia, A.C. (AMEXPHIL), which deals with the Architecture and Archaeology series in meticulous detail. This study, written by Ignacio A. Esteva M., divides the total series into 11 distinct issues plus the Constitution stamps. With full color illustrations he notes the key characteristics of the stamps in each issue.

If you can read Spanish this study would be a very good resource, especially if you plan to mount your stamps on blank album pages. There are no prices given, but the scarce and rare varieties are noted. I do not know of the availability of this supplement, but if interested I suggest writing to AMEXFIL, Apartado Postal 1313, 06000 Mexico, D.F.

Architecture and Archaeology

(Continued from previous page)

Even though the Scott listings are deficient in defining all the varieties that would attract the attention of a specialist, they do give some idea of the collecting possibilities.

Regardless of how one organizes his or her collection, there is much to look for. Colors and shades and printing and paper varieties combine to make for an exciting search.

Figure 5. These watermarks appear on Architecture and Archaeology stamps printed on paper produced in Mexico (left), England (center) and the United States (right).

Certain denominations of the early printings are becoming tough to find. For example, the 20c Puebla Cathedral stamp of the first printing, which paid a very common domestic rate, is quite cheap as a used stamp but rather expensive in unused condition.

Most of the high values of all printings have exhibited firm pricing in dealers' stock books from the beginning. While it is a temptation to defer their purchase in favor of the more abundant cheaper varieties, these high values are the stamps that climb ever higher in catalog value and retail price year by year.

Have fun collecting Mexico's Architecture and Archaeology series, and let me know how you make out. ■

Mexican semipostal and postal tax issues

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Many collectors tend to overlook the stamps that languish somewhere behind the regular issues in catalog listings and in specialized albums. But these back-of-the-book issues are often interesting and worthy of attention.

Our focus this month is on the semipostal stamps and the postal tax stamps of Mexico.

The only two semipostal stamps Mexico ever issued were produced in the waning days of the revolution in 1918. They were intended to raise funds for the Red Cross and are often referred to as the Red Cross overprints.

The 5-centavo Hererra and 10c Madero definitives of 1916 were overprinted with a red cross and red surcharges of 3c and 5c, respectively, to create Scott B1-2.

I do not believe the semipostals saw widespread use. Both mint and used stamps have become fairly scarce in the past 20 years or so.

The postal tax stamp listings for Mexico are tucked between those for the Official stamps and the provisional issues close to the end of the Mexico section of the Scott catalog. About 20 major varieties plus a number of subvarieties are listed.

The difference between the semipostals and the postal tax stamps is a significant one.

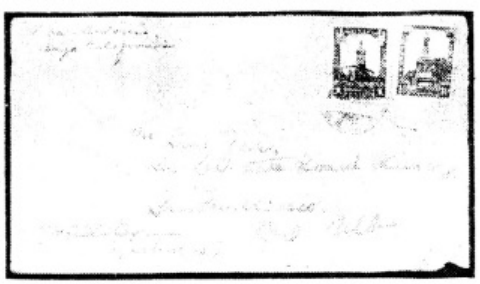


Figure 1. A 1-centavo postal tax stamp and a 10c postage stamp of a similar design on a 1925 Mexican cover to San Francisco.

The purchase of semipostal stamps was presumably a voluntary action on the part of the mailer. The cost of each individual stamp covered both the postage and the charitable contribution.

By contrast, the purchase of postal tax stamps was in most instances obligatory. Postal tax stamps were applied independently of the postage stamps that were needed to prepay whatever service the sender desired.

Figure 2. Two Mexican Mother and Child postal tax stamps of 1929, Scott RA6-7.

All but a few of the Mexican postal tax stamps can be purchased for pennies in either unused or used condition. It isn't too difficult to find them in the stock of dealers who specialize in Mexico.

On the other hand, I like covers that demonstrate the correct usage of such stamps. These are not as easy to come by as one might expect. They should be lurking in dealers' boxes of inexpensive 20th-century Mexican covers, but you must know what you are looking for.

The first postal tax stamp, which showed the Morelos monument, was issued and sold in 1925 to generate funds to fight a locust plague.

Among specialists, these postal tax issues are called the locust stamps. There are three Scott-listed varieties, with the unwatermarked stamp being the scarcest of the trio.

Figure 1 shows this stamp used correctly on a cover sent from San Antonio, a small town in Baja California, to San Francisco, Calif. This is one of the very few covers that I have seen bearing the first postal tax stamp. I suspect the obligatory use of these stamps was often overlooked by post office clerks.

When the locust campaign ended in the early 1930s, the surplus stamps were put to postal use paying the rate for intracity drop letters and circulars. This is noted in the Scott catalog footnote following the listing for No. 687A.

Pay careful heed to the gauge of perforation on used copies of the stamp. If it is perforated in gauge 12, the stamp was used to pay postal tax. If it is perf 10½, it was probably used for postage. The usage of this stamp is often misidentified in dealer stock books and club circuit books.

The next group of postal tax stamps raised money for child welfare work, particularly the support of orphans.

Initially, the drive for funds was launched with the Morelos monument stamp vertically overprinted in red with the words "Proteccion Infancia." As Scott notes, there were two settings of this overprint, both of which are equally abundant. This stamp with the overprint reading down instead of up is considerably scarcer, but beware of forgeries.

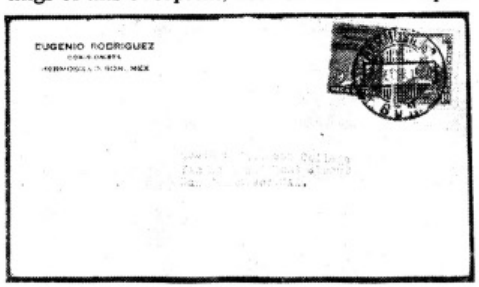


Figure 3. The first Mother and Child postal tax stamp is tied next to a 10c definitive on a 1930 cover from Hermosillo to California.

Figure 2 shows two of the Mother and Child postal tax stamp designs issued in 1929. The lithographed stamps have a number of interesting variations, none of which are particularly scarce. It would be quite a challenge to find them all properly used on cover.

Figure 3 shows one such cover bearing Scott RA5. I located it in a dealer's bargain cover box. If you are looking for completeness, try to find the booklet panes and imperforate varieties of these issues as well.

In 1930, the 2c and 5c Mother and Child postal tax stamps were revalued to 1c with an "HABILITADO/$0.01" surcharge. With a world financial crisis then in full swing, there probably wasn't much demand for higher values.

Figure 4. Mexico relied upon special tax stamps to help fund the fight against the mosquito and malaria in 1939 (left) and a drive to reduce illiteracy in 1946-47 (right).

In 1931, remainders of an overprinted revolutionary era stamp, Scott 423, were given an added "PRO INFANCIA" overprint in red and became Scott RA13. This was the last postal tax stamp issued to support the children's welfare fund, and I have yet to find one on cover.

A special stamp was issued in 1939 to finance a drive to eradicate malaria in Mexico.

As shown on the left in Figure 4, the design of the stamp was most striking — a monstrous mosquito preying upon a man with outstretched arms. Once again the use of these stamps was obligatory, and examples on covers from the World War II period are plentiful.

This stamp exists with three different watermarks and can be found imperforate, too. It is probably the most common of all of Mexico's postal tax stamps.

Rounding out the short list of Mexican postal tax stamps are a 1c bright red Miguel Hidalgo stamp issued in 1941 and a 1c pro-literacy

stamp that appeared in 1946. A used copy of the latter is shown on the right in Figure 4.

The Hidalgo stamp was sold to support resto-

Figure 5. The 1c Hidalgo postal tax stamp on this 1941 airmail cover supported restoration work in the Mexican city of Dolores Hidalgo.

ration work in Dolores Hidalgo, the city where Father Hidalgo launched the Mexican independence movement in 1810. Figure 5 shows a contemporary use of this stamp on cover.

The 1946 pro-literacy postal tax stamp, showing hands removing a blindfold and pointing to an alphabet chart, was a companion to the set of regular and airmail stamps issued in 1945 to publicize the national literacy campaign in Mexico, Scott 806-11 and C153-57.

The 1947 printing of the pro-literacy stamp on "GOBIERNO MEXICANO" and Eagle in circle fiscal-watermarked paper, Scott RA18, is probably the scarcest variety of any postal tax stamp. It is tough to find in mint condition.

For the thrill of the hunt in modern Mexican postal history, the next time you are thumbing through cheap foreign covers at a dealers' bourse, see if you can find some postal tax stamp usages. They are good items to add to your collection of Mexico. ■

Mexican stamp folders and souvenir pages

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

For the past year or so, an avid *Linn's* reader from Mexico City, Guillermo Wilkins, has been sending me news of the stamp scene in Mexico.

Wilkins' letters have included several first-day-of-issue souvenir panels, prepared by the Mexican Postal Service for commemorative issues. Since the existence of these items is probably news to many *Linn's* readers, I thought they might make a good topic for this column.

But first a bit of background on how Mexico attempts to publicize its stamps.

When I lived in Mexico during the 1960s, I first became aware of small folders that were printed and distributed free by the Ministry of Hacienda — the Mexican Public Treasury, of which its postal service is a part. The folders were issued to announce new commemorative stamp issues.

These folders, which measure about 4 inches by 5½ inches, typically showed artwork on their covers that related to the subject of the stamp.

Inside the folders was a brief summary of data about the stamp issue itself. Details included the name of the designer, color, size, perforation gauge, total number of stamps issued, and so on.

In most cases, there was also a full-color enlarged illustration of the issue in question and a box in which to affix a copy of the real stamp with space for a first-day cancellation. If a set of stamps was involved, there were additional fold-out panels to accommodate them all.

I do not know exactly when these folders were first introduced.

Figure 1 shows the cover of the earliest one I have, produced in 1965 to announce Mexico's first pre-Olympic stamp series, Scott 965-66 and C309-11. The folder contains spaces for all the stamps in the set.

At that time, my main interest was focused on the classic issues of Mexico, so I did not bother to obtain serviced folders containing the stamps.

These folders were available ahead of the issue date and one could take them to the main post office, buy the newly issued stamps, and have them canceled with a special first-day datestamp.

Somehow, my name found its way onto a mailing list maintained by Hacienda. I continued to receive the blank stamp folders for several years, even after my return to the United States.

While I am not a big fan of this type of material, my collection of folders has provided me with useful information not found in the catalog listings.

As best I can determine, the folders continued to be printed until about the end of 1976. Although I do not have them all, correspondence with other collectors indicates there were probably about 200 different folders prepared during the 1965-76 period.

Figure 1. This folder for a commemorative set of 1965 is one of about 200 or so prepared for Mexican commemorative issues of 1965-76.

I have not been able to find any further information on what happened after that date, or even if the project was dropped altogether.

The first-day souvenir pages supplied by Wilkins are quite similar in function to the earlier folders, but there are a number of obvious differences in format.

Figure 2 shows the earliest souvenir page I have, for a 1987 commemorative marking the 50th anniversary of the University of Puebla.

All information about the stamp and the event or subject it commemorates appears on one side of a sheet that, in some cases, is watermarked "LEDGER FEDERAL."

There is a space for the stamp where it is tied by a highly ornamented first-day cancellation. The illustrated sheet measures 6.6 inches by 9 inches. Another standard size, roughly 9½ inches by 9 inches, is used when there is a set of stamps or when the text is too much for the smaller sheet.

The cancellation on the page in Figure 2 is struck in black, but the vast majority of the ones I have are canceled in red.

The ornate cancellations of all the 1987 and 1988 souvenir pages include the city name of Monterrey, N.L. Those for 1989 have Mexico, D.F., cancellations, which suggests that the servicing location has been moved to the capital.

The souvenir pages are numbered serially at the bottom. The number at the top left is the number of the souvenir page for a given year.

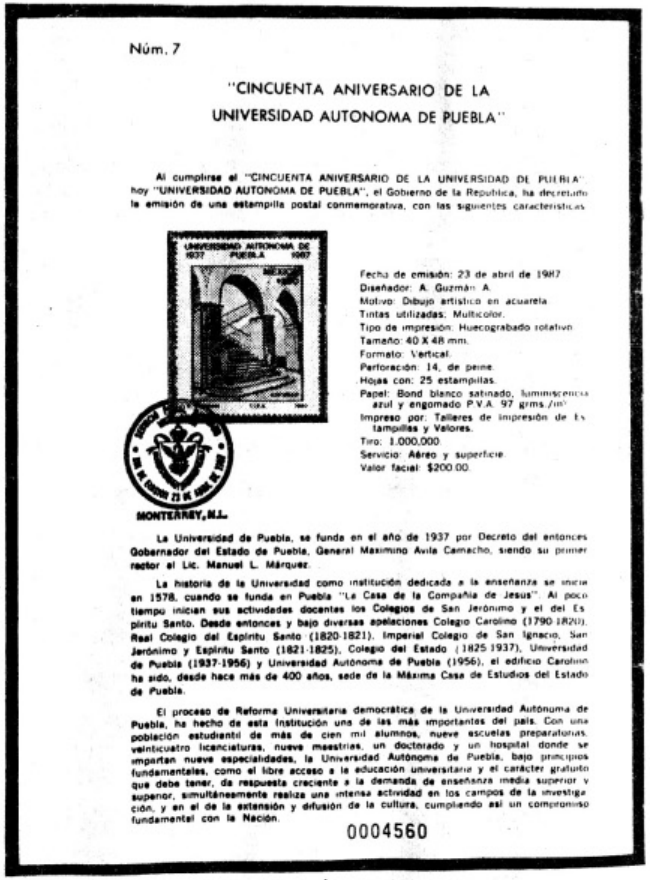
On the back of the sheet is an English translation of all the information, complete with space for a stamp, but without the serial number.

The English translations are rather poorly done, and sometimes bewildering. For example, one sentence on the reverse of the page in Figure 2 reads as follows:

"The Autonomous University of Puebla under basis as the free accession to the universitary (sic) education and its obliged gratuitous nature, gives plentiful answer to the secondary and higher education claims."

According to Wilkins, 12,000 of these first-day souvenir pages are prepared for each new Mexican commemorative issue or stamp set.

Though these are available from the Philatelic Office of the Mexican Postal Service,


Núm. 7

"CINCUENTA ANIVERSARIO DE LA UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA DE PUEBLA"

Al cumplirse el "CINCUENTA ANIVERSARIO DE LA UNIVERSIDAD DE PUEBLA" hoy "UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA DE PUEBLA", el Gobierno de la República, ha decretado la emisión de una estampilla postal conmemorativa, con las siguientes características

UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA DE PUEBLA 1937 1987

Fecha de emisión: 23 de abril de 1987
Diseñador: A. Guzmán A.
Motivo: Dibujo artístico en acuarela
Tintas utilizadas: Multicolor.
Tipo de impresión: Huecograbado rotativo
Tamaño: 40 X 48 mm.
Formato: Vertical.
Perforación: 14, de peine.
Hojas con: 25 estampillas.
Papel: Bond blanco satinado, luminiscencia azul y engomado P.V.A. 97 grms./m²
Impreso por: Talleres de impresión de Estampillas y Valores.
Tiro: 1.000.000
Servicio: Aéreo y superficie
Valor facial: $200.00

MONTERREY, N.L.

La Universidad de Puebla, se funda en el año de 1937 por Decreto del entonces Gobernador del Estado de Puebla, General Maximino Avila Camacho, siendo su primer rector el Lic. Manuel L. Márquez.

La historia de la Universidad como institución dedicada a la enseñanza se inicia en 1578, cuando se funda en Puebla "La Casa de la Compañía de Jesus". Al poco tiempo inician sus actividades docentes los Colegios de San Jerónimo y el del Espíritu Santo. Desde entonces y bajo diversas apelaciones Colegio Carolino (1790-1820), Real Colegio del Espíritu Santo (1820-1821), Imperial Colegio de San Ignacio, San Jerónimo y Espíritu Santo (1821-1825), Colegio del Estado (1825-1937), Universidad de Puebla (1937-1956) y Universidad Autónoma de Puebla (1956), el edificio Carolino ha sido, desde hace más de 400 años, sede de la Máxima Casa de Estudios del Estado de Puebla.

El proceso de Reforma Universitaria democrática de la Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, ha hecho de esta institución una de las más importantes del país. Con una población estudiantil de más de cien mil alumnos, nueve escuelas preparatorias, veinticuatro licenciaturas, nueve maestrías, un doctorado y un hospital donde se imparten nueve especialidades, la Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, bajo principios fundamentales, como el libre acceso a la educación universitaria y el carácter gratuito que debe tener, da respuesta creciente a la demanda de enseñanza media superior y superior, simultáneamente realiza una intensa actividad en los campos de la investigación, y en el de la extensión y difusión de la cultura, cumpliendo así un compromiso fundamental con la Nación.

0004560

Figure 2. This souvenir page for a 1987 commemorative includes information about the stamp and space to affix a copy and apply a first-day cancel. The same information and format are displayed in English on the back of the page.

Tacuba Num 1-2o. Piso, 06000 Mexico, D.F., Wilkins does not recommend this as a source for foreign collectors. The service is bad and one can never be sure of receiving pages of acceptable quality. It is much better to buy through a dealer, paying the normal markup.

I am unaware of any U.S. dealers who handle these souvenir pages, but I do know that Filatelia Mussot, Tiber 99, 06500 Mexico, D.F., can supply them. If material like this piques your interest you might want to check the firm out.

It is doubtful that these items will ever enjoy substantial appreciation in value. The run of 12,000 should be quite sufficient to meet any foreseeable growth in demand.

Probably the most compelling reason to buy these pages is to get the additional background on the subject matter of the stamp, even though the text is poorly written and occasionally contains errors of fact. The data on the printings might be of use as well.

If any reader has information which could fill the obvious gaps in this article, I would be delighted to hear of it. You can write to me in care of *Linn's*, Box 29, Sidney, Ohio 45365. ■

Scott Vol. 3; TB seals; new Exporta varieties

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

As in past years, I have used this December column to discuss several subjects, none of which quite merits a full-length article, and to acknowledge the helpful feedback I receive from readers.

First on the agenda are the listings for Mexico in Vol. 3 of the 1990 Scott catalog.

Readers may recall that I devoted the entire November 1988 column to this subject under the headline, "Post-classic stamps prosper." The bottom line was that not much happened to the 19th-century classic era and that most of the changes, which were largely upward, had to do with the post-revolutionary period 1914-19 and certain issues of the 1940s.

The prosperity I noted then may have been short-lived. Scott's pricing editors went to work on quite a few of the classic items.

While I have not made a meticulous, item-by-item comparison between the 1989 and 1990 editions, here's the general impression I get.

First, there have been some modest increases and decreases in the catalog values for a number of items in the first five or six issues.

If the Scott listings are truly reflective of what went on in the market during the past year we can accept them as reasonable. Several large holdings of classic material came on the block during the 1988-89 season, so presumably there was adequate basis for the value changes.

Figure 1. Used copies of the 1856 1-real and 2r issues typify the modest changes and lack of an overall trend in the 1990 Scott catalog Vol. 3 listings for classic Mexico. The 1r stamp, Scott 2 (left), decreased in value about 20 percent while the 2r issue, Scott 3 (right), gained by about the same proportion. Both of these stamps are now valued at $2.50.

Figure 1 shows used copies of the 1-real and 2r first issues of 1856, stamps that seem to typify the nature of the changes in Scott catalog.

The 1r stamp on the left, Scott 2, declined in value about 20 percent between the 1989 and 1990 editions of the catalog. The 2r Hidalgo shown on the right, Scott 3, gained 20 percent over the same period.

Both stamps now have a Scott catalog value of $2.50.

Second, I noticed that a few of the rare so-called "split" listings have been deleted. These include such items as three-quarters of an 1856 8r stamp on cover used to pay the 6r rate, and one-eighth of the 1861 8r stamp used on cover for the 1r rate.

I can't quarrel with these deletions. It has always been questionable whether genuine examples ever existed in the first place.

Finally, the prices for other very scarce split frankings, of which perhaps three or four copies are recorded, have been raised substantially. Examples are the 1856-61 half-real rate paid with a bisected 1r stamp, and three-quarters of the 1881 4r and 8r stamps also used to pay proper rates.

Covers with these usages would be priced far beyond the means of most of us, but they are the sort of thing that gives sparkle to a world-class exhibition of classic Mexico.

Scott also introduced selective value adjustments in the balance of the 19th-century issues. The 1883 6-centavo blue Small Numeral stamp, Scott 148, went up a couple of dollars in both mint and used condition. The very rare 1892 10-peso Hidalgo Medallion stamp, Scott 231, dropped quite a bit. Its values are now listed in italics, meaning that there were too few sales of this item for the stamp to be valued accurately.

Some stamps of the modern era that saw increases in last year's listings have fallen back again, in some instances to levels below those in the 1988 Scott catalog.

Both pro-University sets, for example, took a pretty good beating in unused condition. Value changes for used copies were mixed, with the regular issues losing and the airmail issues gaining.

But the collector must be careful here. With the top denominations in used condition cataloging more than unused copies, make sure that the cancels on your stamps have the right dates, and were not just added later to increase their apparent value.

Mexico's back-of-the-book items do not appear to have received much attention, but I did note a couple of adjustments. The black Official airmail set of 1929, Scott CO3-O9, was cut about 10 percent and some Porte de Mar stamps were given a modest boost.

All in all, there is not too much to cause concern to the average collector of Mexico, or any of the dealers for that matter. It seems to be a case of fine tuning.

If you haven't bought a current Scott Vol. 3 for a few years you might want to get this one to have a set of benchmark values; I do not foresee large movements in the market anytime soon.

But as I said last year, I do wish Scott would redo the graphics in the Mexico section — some of them are just horrible!

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After my article in *Linn's* July 10 issue (Page 16) about Mexico's TB seals I did hear from several readers. Some liked it, others said such items could never be considered philatelic, and still others felt that one should collect what gives pleasure and not worry about what the experts say.

Near the end of the article it was noted that Green's *Tuberculosis Seals Catalog of the World* was out of print. Not so, wrote Joe Wheeler. Wheeler is the president of the Christmas Seal and Charity Stamp Society.

Copies of the 1983 and 1979 editions are still available from John B. Denune, 234 E. Broadway, Granville, Ohio 43023, for $30 and $15, respectively. The CSCSS also has an extensive stock of Mexican TB seals.

My thanks to Joe and John for putting me straight on this score.

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The Exporta stamps of Mexico continue to roll on, but there may be a new definitive issue in the offing.

According to an article in *El Financiero* by Guillermo Wilkins, one of my regular Mexican correspondents, the postal authorities are considering a new definitive series focusing on tourism in Mexico.

This theme has been seen several times on modern Mexican stamp issues, but

Figure 2. One of the three Exporta issues that recently surfaced in a newly recorded printing on the thin, semi-transparent, highly fluorescent third-issue paper.

Wilkins hopes that the designs, graphic treatment and workmanship will be superior to that of many recent Mexican stamps.

The Exportas have been in use for 14 years now and remain popular with collectors who like to specialize. The series can be separated into 11 distinct issues, based on paper and gum characteristics.

There is also an abundant

array of varieties, including some printing mishaps that are quite scarce. I have written several articles on the Exporta stamps during the six years in this column.

Since my last article in May of this year, little new has come to my attention. Postal rates have remained steady so there hasn't been the need for changes in denominations.

I have received a few previously unreported stamp varieties, printed on the very thin, semitransparent, highly fluorescent paper of the third issue, with shiny gum. Check your holdings and make sure you obtain these.

Figure 2 shows the 450p value in this new variety. The other denominations are 200p and 950p. These were not among the values that were originally printed on this paper back during 1981-82.

Keep working on the Exportas. The end of this series may be just around the corner.

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Finally, best wishes for the holiday season to all my readers. I really do appreciate the letters and feedback I receive from you. Many times your comments provide the stimulus for articles you read in this space. ■

Stamp postcards offer a colorful sideline

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Shortly after the turn of the century, postcards depicting postage stamps of various countries became the rage with genteel world tourists. Among stamp collectors the postcards are called stamp cards. They have always had a small but avid following.

Such cards were produced by a number of publishers, but the best known of these was Ottmar Zieher of Munich, Bavaria. Zieher began printing and marketing these cards around 1903 and his so-called first series contained almost 100 different colorful designs.

The cards are of a standard size, 5½ inches by 3½ inches. The vast majority bear a series number specific to the particular country whose issues are shown. Collectors have grouped them into four major design types.

The cards with Mexican stamps, for example, are Nos. 30 and 94 in the series. The first of these, No. 30, is shown in Figure 1 in one of its several varieties.

Figure 1. This embossed turn-of-the-century stamp card produced by Ottmar Zieher of Munich, Bavaria, depicts Mexican definitives of 1899-1903 and the Mexican coat of arms.

This is a type III card. This type shows an array of overlapping stamps, which happen to be a mixture of the Mexican definitive issues of 1899 and 1903, with the Mexican coat of arms displayed in the lower-left corner.

There is an open area for a message in the center of the postcard. The outer border on three sides consists of two parallel lines filled in with alternating bands of color like a barber's pole. In this instance the three colors are red, white and green, which are the national colors of Mexico.

This card is embossed, with simulated perforations around the stamps and the Mexican eagle in relief.

Printing in Spanish on the address side tells us that it is a postcard of the Republic of Mexico (although there is absolutely no connection with the Mexican government) and that only the address is to appear on that side. The printing is dark blue, but this can vary.

Along the left margin on the illustrated side of the postcard, just between the edge and the border is the inscription: "Carte philatelique deposee. D.R.G.M. 222744. Ottmar Zieher (Baviere)."

This inscription is not visible in Figure 1 since it is printed in the same pale gray as the background. Almost half the inscription has been cut away by close trimming, but it is there.

This inscription identifies the card as having been printed by Zieher in Bavaria, and also gives evidence that the card design was covered by something resembling a copyright. The initials "D.R.G.M.," for "Deutsches Reichs Gebrauchsmuster," translate roughly as a "German Imperial Design Protection."

Along the right edge of the Figure 1 card illustrated is the inscription: "Publisher Fr. Muller, San Francisco (Cal.) Made in Bavaria."

The precise reason for this is not clear. Several other Zieher cards, including those for Canada, are found with the same inscription, so it is presumed that Zieher may have sold remainders to Muller or had an arrangement with him to act as sales agent for certain cards.

Also, the names of other firms are found on cards of other countries. In some cases where the Muller inscription exists, the original Zieher inscription has been blacked out. This may help explain why the inscription on the one illustrated is all but cut away.

The card in Figure 1 was used, having been mailed from Long Beach, Calif., Aug. 11, 1906. As can be seen, all that appears in the message area is the town name "San Pedro, Calif.," located in Los Angeles County, the date and the initials of the sender.

Used cards are desirable and most collectors aspire to have one mailed from the country whose stamps are depicted. This one is close, but I'm still looking for an example actually mailed out of Mexico for my collection.

There is another card in the first Zieher series, No. 94, which is an entirely different design displaying some of the early, classic stamps of Mexico. It is classified as a type IV

card, which means it is similar to the type III card with the outer border of stripes and an open message area, but a small map of the country has been added to the design in the lower-right corner.

This No. 94 type IV card seems to be scarcer than No. 30. I have seen only two or three during the years I have been checking dealers' boxes.

If these items appeal to you, there are a number of variations to look for.

I have already noted the inscription varieties. The serial number, as well as the printing on the address side, can be found in different colors. All Zieher cards I own have embossing, but I would not be surprised if some exist without it.

Figure 2. Probably produced later than the card in Figure 1, this smaller stamp card showing Mexican issues was one in a series of 48 given away as part of a cigar promotion.

Another kind of stamp card that is quite different from the Zieher cards is illustrated in Figure 2.

It is much smaller, measuring about 4.15 inches by 2.75 inches. The inscriptions do not give us a clue, but it is probably a product of a much later era, perhaps the 1930s.

Again, facsimiles of stamps from the 1899-1903 issues are shown on the face of the card. These rather poor renditions surround a view of a mule-drawn mail coach.

The Mexican coat of arms is at the top center of the postcard, and at the base of the oval are the words: "The Mail in Mexico."

The stamp illustrations bear parts of crudely drawn bridge-type cancellations, which were contemporary with these issues. At the lower left is the inscription "Series 5470.2"

The address side of the card is of a split format — the left "For Correspondence," the right side "For Address Only" — with a box supplied for the postage stamp. On the back of the card we also learn that it is from a series of 48 given away as individual premiums with the sale of each Pulliam cigar.

Stamp cards were produced by other printers during the first half of this century, but I am not aware of any others portraying Mexican stamps.

I would be delighted to hear from any reader who could add to this story. Depending on how much response there is, I could add a footnote to a future column.

For those who would like to find out more about Ottmar Zieher cards in general, I recommend an article written by the late George T. Turner in the November 1978 issue of *The American Philatelist* (Page 1066).

Turner admitted, as we all must, that there is much more to learn about these curious but colorful items. While they are not truly philatelic, they will add some interest to your collection of Mexico or, for that matter, to a collection of any other country for which the cards exist. ■

Cancels perk interest when budget reduced

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

The outline for this article was pretty well worked out when I read the guest contribution by Henry I. Christ in Wayne L. Youngblood's Collecting on a Shoestring column, in the Jan. 15 issue of *Linn's* (Page 27). Christ is a collector after my own heart, and his thesis that postal history can be found on postage stamps off cover could not be more correct.

If you read that piece and think you may be in for another dose of the same arguments in this one — you're right!

For the past several years, my retirement income has allowed me a very much reduced stamp budget, so I have been spending more time looking for interesting cancellations on the less expensive stamps.

Sure, I'll buy a moderately expensive stamp or cover once in a while, when it enhances one of my exhibits. But I have just as much fun finding a curious combination of stamp and cancel for 25¢ as I do with a $100 classic.

As I have written so many times before in this column, there are plenty of opportunities for this sort of collecting with the stamps of Mexico. In my column of June 10, 1985 (Page 60), I wrote about the possibilities of socked-on-the-nose cancellations. These seem to be popular with all collectors, and there is even a society for those who specialize in this field.

Figure 1. This 10-centavo Numeral stamp has a handsome 19th-century oval cancel from the small Mexican town of Hecelchakan.

Many Mexican towns and cities had circular or oval datestamps, almost from the beginning of the adhesive period, so classic stamps with well-centered cancellations can be found.

Figure 2. Cancellations on common stamps can reveal exotic usages. The one on the left was used on a Wells, Fargo & Co. Express cover. The stamp on the right was canceled on the steamship *Antonio Lopez*.

You can sharpen your knowledge of geography in the search for stamps canceled in smaller Mexican towns. Figure 1 shows a 10-centavo stamp with a full, socked-on-the-nose oval cancel from Hecelchakan in Campeche.

Hecelchakan had a population of less than 5,000 in 1960. It takes a few minutes to find it on a map of Mexico. But the Figure 1 cancel is typical of many to be found on Mexican issues of the last two or three decades of the 19th century. They show up particularly well on large orange Numeral stamps of the 1880s.

Though the stamp on the left in Figure 2 shows only part of a cancellation, it is still enough to tell us a great deal about the postal service that it provided.

This 5c Juarez stamp of the 1882 series was issued exclusively for use on foreign mail. The cancellation reveals that it was used on a piece of mail handled by the Wells, Fargo & Co. Express, which had a franchise to carry mail along the west coast of Mexico.

It would be a good guess that the letter that was franked with this stamp was headed north toward San Francisco. The local overprint indicates that its starting point was Mazatlan.

The stamp has minor faults, including a rounded corner, but if it were still on its original cover, it would be priced far beyond what most of us could afford. Yet I was able to pluck it out of a circuit book for pennies.

The stamp on the right in Figure 2, dating from about 1916, likewise bears only a partial cancellation. However, that cancel informs us that the letter it prepaid was carried by or possibly mailed on the steamship *Antonio Lopez*.

I have not yet found out where this vessel operated. Perhaps some reader can help me.

The pair of 5c stamps in Figure 3 bearing a socked-on-the-nose circular datestamp is desirable because of the postal information the cancel provides. This includes the city and state of origin, plus the month, day, year and even the hour the letter entered the mailstream.

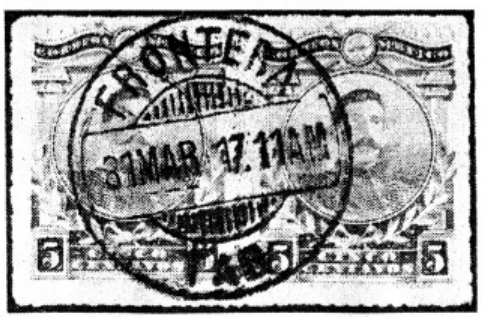

Figure 3. The socked-on-the-nose cancel on this pair of 5c stamps tells us they were canceled at the town of Frontera in the Mexican state of Tabasco at 11 a.m. on March 31, 1917.

This style of cancel, with minor variations, was used throughout Mexico from the late 1880s up to the present time. Stamps bearing such datestamp information are quite common, although perfect socked-on-the-nose pieces such as this one are not too plentiful.

At one time I tended to prefer lightly canceled stamps for my used collection. Lately, however, I have been seeking copies with neat, dated cancellations, even though they may not all be perfect bull's-eyes.

The information in the cancel can also be used to determine whether or not the usage was truly contemporary with the issue. This is an important consideration if you want to keep canceled-to-order copies out of your collection.

Figure 4. This cancel on a high-value stamp shows that it was used to mail a parcel.

Other useful information appears in datestamps, particularly details about the type of service that the stamps prepaid.

Although it might not show too clearly in the photo, the stamp in Figure 4 bears a socked-on-the-nose cancellation inscribed "PAQUETE POSTAL," indicating that it was used to mail a parcel. Since the stamp is a high 50c denomination from the 1899 issue, this represents a perfectly reasonable usage for this value.

The cancels on the two stamps in Figure 5 also tell the story of their former letters.

The 5c Cuautemoc stamp on the left, from the Transportation series of 1895, was processed by a postal agent aboard a mail train, shown in the cancel as "AG(ente). Post(al). *6*." Such markings were discussed in detail in my column of June 13, 1988 (Page 12).

The stamp on the right in Figure 5, from the revolutionary period, was used on a letter col-

Figure 5. The cancels on these stamps reveal that the one on the left was processed on a mail train and the one on the right was mailed in a public letter box in Mexico City.

lected from one of the many public letter boxes, or "buzones," scattered about the city of Mexico. Similar cancels are found with "sucursal" (branch post office) inscriptions.

Buzon cancels from Mexico City were used as early as 1868. They consist of a large letter "B" and a single-digit number in a 17-millimeter circle, and they are much sought after.

I also like to find stamps bearing slogans or commemorative inscriptions. Mexico has had quite a few of these over the years.

The English translations of many of the Spanish slogans makes interesting reading. These include: "Alcoholism destroys the home"; "Don't use square envelopes — they're hard to handle and can be damaged"; "Buy and use domestic products"; and so on.

There are numerous other collectible aspects to cancellations. Stamps used on second- and third-class mail bear cancels that show they were used to prepay these services, and Official stamps have Official cancels.

Then there are those stamps that escaped cancellation in the country of origin but were canceled along the way or at their destinations. I have one from Mexico, but I haven't figured out which country canceled it.

Try to find contemporary Mexican stamps with clear, well-struck and readable cancels. They're tough to come by because of the careless way in which mail is processed in Mexico. I suspect that future collectors may have to pay dearly for specimens of top quality.

As Christ points out, there's some serious philately and good fun to be had beyond just filling the blanks in your album with used stamps. Such stamps can spark a rewarding search for more information and, I hope, help you derive more enjoyment from your hobby.

The best part is that it won't cost you a great deal. For all the stamps I used to illustrate this article — including three I didn't have room to show — the total I paid was less than $4. ■

Lindbergh flew FAM-8 covers to Mexico

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Since I began writing these articles in 1983 I fear that airmail enthusiasts have not been well served, so this column is for them. It was prompted by the acquisition of a couple of airmail covers which, when I finished my research, had an interesting story to tell.

"FAM" stands for Foreign (Contract) Air Mail. FAM routes were arranged by the U.S. Post Office Department with private airlines to carry mail between the United States and foreign destinations.

The first of these FAM routes dates from 1926, but the initiation of regular airmail service to Mexico began in 1929 when the eighth such route, FAM-8, was established.

Figure 1 shows a cover carried on the first outbound flight of FAM-8. Actually, the flight originated in Mexico City on March 9, 1929, and ended in Brownsville, Texas, that same day.

On the following day, March 10, mailbags were made up for Mexico and it was in one of these that this cover traveled on the first return trip from Brownsville to Mexico City.

There was an intermediate mail stop in Tampico called for on this route but all first-flight mail for that city was carried on a separate airplane. Tampico was important because of the booming oil industry there and the need for fast, reliable mail service.

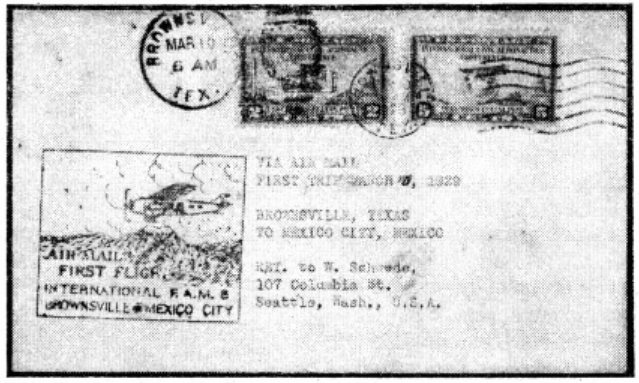

Figure 1. A first-flight cover flown March 10, 1929, from Brownsville, Texas, to Mexico City on Foreign Air Mail route No. 8. Charles A. Lindbergh was the pilot.

The original contractor for this mail route was Pan American Airways Inc., but the service actually was performed by its Mexican subsidiary, Compania Mexicana de Aviacion. The pilot for the Mexico-Brownsville-Mexico first round trip of this FAM route was none other than the renowned Col. Charles A. Lindbergh.

It is reported that nearly 540 pounds of mail was carried on the two first flights into Mexico. There is no question the event received a lot of advance publicity and that many philatelic items, such as this cover, were ready to be serviced.

This cover appears to have been prepared by the addressee, W. Schwede, of Seattle, Wash. Once it reached Mexico City it no doubt was returned to him by surface mail, but it was flown for part of its long journey.

The rubber-stamp cachet, struck in purple or magenta ink, at the left of the address is the typical one used for the southbound leg of the trip. A similar but somewhat larger cachet was used the previous day on mail that made the inaugural northbound flight from Mexico City.

The cover also bears a March 10 Mexico City airmail backstamp. There is no clue as to why the Brownsville post office used two cancellations, a machine cancel and a duplex, both applied at "6 AM."

There is little doubt that the sender wanted a cover with the two-stamp set of the 1928 U.S. Aeronautics Conference issue. This resulted in a 2¢ overpayment of the postage, although the mailer may have felt the extra 2¢ was required to convey the cover back to the United States.

There is an interesting story that several mailbags stowed in the wing of Lindbergh's plane for this first flight were overlooked in Mexico City and not removed with the rest of the mail from Brownsville. They were discovered a few weeks later when the plane made a stop in Tampico.

To preserve the philatelic value of the many first-flight covers included in this "lost mail," the bags were sent to Mexico City and given the same March 10 arrival backstamp that the original mail had received.

Unless there is a supplementary commercial or post office receiving mark, there is no way to differentiate covers of this delayed mail from those that were actually delivered on March 10.

The cover in Figure 2 looks much like the first one. It was prepared by A.C. Roessler, one of the famous cover servicers of that era. He no doubt intended to send it aboard the return leg of the first flight.

It received the usual first-flight cachet, but the other postmarks indicate it probably never saw the inside of an airplane.

The Brownsville cancel is dated March 9 — the day Lindbergh flew from Mexico City to Brownsville. This cover was not on that flight.

It also displays a March 9 backstamp from Matamoros, Mexico, that is not the usual airmail cancel type.

It's likely this cover went into a bag for surface mail, took the short trip across the bridge over the Rio Grande, and went to the Matamoros post office for local delivery.

The cover also could have been fully processed at Brownsville. It is well known that all Brownsville and Matamoros airmail was dispatched by way of the Brownsville airfield. A Mexican clerk could have canceled it there.

Figure 2. Though prepared for the southbound first flight of FAM-8, this cover was probably never handled as airmail.

Although this second cover was sold as a FAM-8 FFC, it is obvious that it is not. Roessler is known to have stretched the rules a bit sometimes, and it looks like this cover gives fair evidence of that fact.

Although these two covers come from its northern end, the FAM-8 route continued south through Mexico, with stops at Veracruz, San Geronimo and Tapachula. It continued on into Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras where it joined the FAM-5 route, terminating in Panama.

Eventually, the two routes were combined and collectively designated FAM-5, the title by which this route was known until a few years ago.

Covers postmarked in other cities along this route are available and would make an interesting study.

The field has already been well researched and most of the data needed by a specialist collector can be found in the *American Air Mail Catalogue*, published by the American Air Mail Society. ■

More about stamp cards; rate increase

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

For some reason or other my column on stamp cards in the Jan. 8 issue of *Linn's* (Page 12) provoked more reader response than I have received in quite some time.

More than a dozen collectors wrote with information and comments about their holdings. As can be imagined, some of this data would have been most helpful in preparing my January article.

But that is how it often is in this game. You write the story and, after it is published, you get the information you wish you had had beforehand.

With my thanks to those kind individuals who shared their knowledge and photocopies from their own collections, here are some additional details about the stamp cards of Mexico.

First, the No. 30 card produced around the turn of the century by Ottmar Zieher of Munich, Bavaria, came with the series number printed in at least three different colors: blue, red and brown.

If there is a chronological order associated with these colors I haven't been able to find it. Red and blue numbers appear on cards mailed as early as 1906, the earliest usages that I have seen or had reported to me. The only used card with a brown number was mailed in 1911 from a United States border town.

My Jan. 8 article made note of inscription varieties. Ottmar Zieher evidently developed a franchise system whereby the German-printed cards were sold through other publishers to local markets. This gave rise to the different inscriptions.

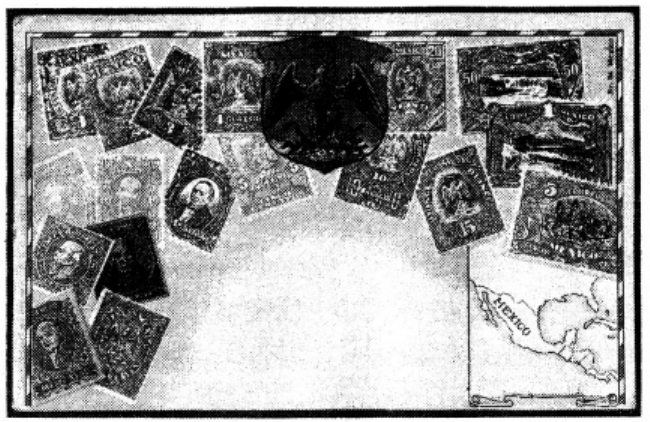

Figure 1. This second and scarcer Mexico stamp card produced by Bavarian Ottmar Zieher, No. 94, displays more Mexican stamps than did Zieher's first design, No. 30.

Fr. Muller of San Francisco, Calif., enjoyed one of these arrangements. The card illustrated in the earlier column was inscribed as having been handled by that firm.

There were other agents as well.

Henry S. Beach of Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, sold Zieher cards along the U.S.-Mexican border. I now have records of several cards with his inscription. On some his name is printed in the left margin over the original Zieher inscription, which shows up poorly anyway.

Walt Erikson of Massachusetts reports that he has a No. 30 card with the Henry S. Beach inscription printed in the lower-left corner along the bottom edge. The original Zieher inscription in the left margin is completely obliterated.

I have since found another No. 30 card with the Zieher inscription crosshatched out and "J.C. Hatton, Mexiko" printed just below the emblem in the lower-left corner. The German spelling suggests that Hatton may have served as agent for Zieher cards in the Mexican capital.

Erikson also reports a card with no marginal inscriptions whatsoever. I'm inclined to believe that the card probably had the original Zieher inscription, but that it was either trimmed off or is too faint to be readily seen.

Figure 1 shows the Zieher Mexico stamp card No. 94 that was not illustrated in the Jan. 8 article. The Mexican coat of arms appears at the top center with a small outline map of Mexico added in the lower-right corner.

Zieher card specialists refer to this as a type IV card. The series number is in the upper-right corner.

The only imprint on the reverse is "Made in Germany" in the lower-left corner. In one variation, this slogan is marked out and "J.G. Hatton, Mexico" is added, with the heading, "Republica Mexicana/Tarjeta Postal."

In this card seven classic stamp designs were added to the 11 designs of the 1899-1903 issues shown on card No. 30. The Figure 1 card was used in 1912, suggesting that it appeared much later than the first one.

These No. 94 Zieher cards are encountered much less frequently than the other, earlier No. 30 design.

David Baugher of Houston, Texas, sent me the card shown in Figure 2.

This example is labeled "Made in the U.S.A." The printing quality is inferior to the Zieher No. 30 card, but the very same 11 stamps are portrayed. Weakly embossed perforations appear around each of the stamp designs.

This card was mailed from Matamoros in 1910 to an address in Houston.

So there you have some more on the story of Mexican stamp cards. I'm sorry space doesn't permit mention of all the good people who took the time to write me on this subject, but I do thank them. And I will be glad to hear of any more variations.

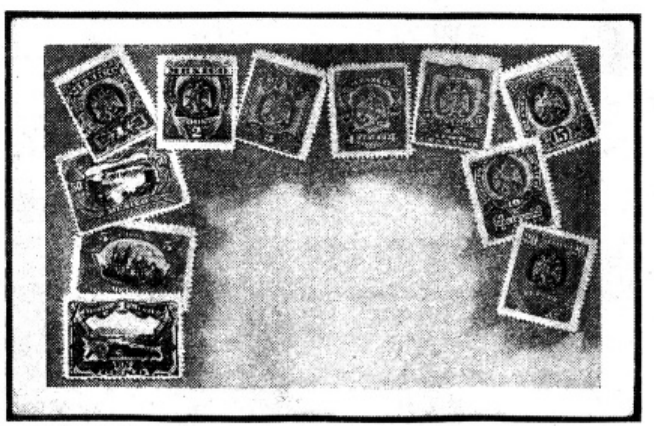

Figure 2. Produced in the United States around 1910, this card used a different design but showed precisely the same stamps as Zieher's first Mexico stamp card.

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Those who have regular correspondents in Mexico probably already realize that there has been a recent increase in postal rates in that country. The increase took effect Feb. 1, and you might want to check for any misrated covers from the early days of this new rate period.

In 1989 airmail letters of not more than 20 grams cost 1,100 pesos to send to the United States. It now costs 1,500p, a 36-percent increase.

Correspondingly large rate hikes have also been imposed for special postal services such as registry, return receipt and so forth.

Since Mexico's last wholesale change of postal rates, which took effect Jan. 1, 1989, the peso has continued to slip in value against other strong currencies. While letter rates, as expressed in U.S. dollars for example, have only gone up by about 13 percent, that is certainly small consolation to Mexico's postal patrons.

Domestic rates, on the other hand, have shot up more than 50 percent, a painful bite for Mexico's business people and other postal patrons.

In spite of our own problems with the United States Postal Service at times, including complaints about rising rates, there are clearly others who suffer more. ■

Papers vary on Mexican issues of 1856-83

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

This begins a two-part treatment of one of the fundamentals of stamp collecting: the paper on which stamps are printed.

It amazes me sometimes how many collectors disregard this aspect of philately. In the classification of their stamps, they tend to rely mainly on the design or other visible factors, such as color, perforation and watermark.

But knowing the characteristics of the paper is another very useful philatelic approach. It will not only help in stamp identification but also in avoiding the inadvertent purchase of fake material. I feel it also adds another interesting dimension to the enjoyment of the hobby.

This quick-and-dirty review of the papers of 19th-century Mexican stamps can't cover everything — there is too much for that — but I do hope you will find something useful here and perhaps be stimulated to do your own research.

You can find some standard paper-making terms defined in the introductory pages of the Scott catalog. Paper thicknesses have these approximate measurements: thin, 0.002 inches to 0.003 inches; medium, 0.003 inches to 0.004 inches; and thick, 0.004 inches and above.

There was no such thing as a standard security paper in Mexico in the 1850s. In all probability, stamp paper was secured from several sources.

The first-design Hidalgo issues of 1856 and 1861 occur on a variety of papers. They are mostly on a hard, wove paper of medium thickness and varying opacity.

Figure 1. The front and back of Mexico's 1856 2-reale Hidalgo showing the typical pattern of wove paper.

The 2-reale stamp in Figure 1 shows an example of this wove paper printing.

Occasionally these stamps are found on a wire-wove paper that shows a definite grain when held to light. This grain appears as a pattern of light, elongated dots that result from the woven wire mesh that is used in the production of the paper.

This grain pattern is always vertical on 1r stamps of 1856, and horizontal on the ½r, 4r and 8r denominations. It can be either way on 2r stamps, but it is always horizontal on the blue-green color varieties.

For the 1856 issue, paper can help detect forgeries.

The paper used for most of the forgeries is usually whiter and thicker than the authentic stamp paper. It may show a laid or ribbed pattern that did not exist on the genuine issues.

On the high values of the 1861 issue, which were printed on wove, colored papers, the paper grain of the faked stamps is usually vertical instead of horizontal, as it should be. This test can be used as a quick check by the non-expert collector, but scarce to rare items should still have certificates or be subjected to expertization before they are purchased.

The reprints of the first design in 1867 deserve brief mention. They were executed on thin, grayish, wire-wove paper with the R.P.S. watermark (Renta Papel Sellado) in large script letters across the center of the sheet.

Only the stamps from the central rows of the sheet show this watermark. These are, naturally, the more desirable stamps of the printing, but there is no mistaking the stamps of this issue. Their paper and colors are distinctive.

The 1864-66 Eagles were printed on papers of varying characteristics similar to those used for the 1856 stamps. The paper is hard and fairly opaque, with moderate variations in thickness.

Some values can be found on a smooth, quadrille paper, although I have not had luck in finding any of these.

Perhaps the most famous paper variety among the Eagle stamps is the 3-centavo value printed on laid paper. Listed in all the catalogs, it is one of the key 19th-century Mexican rarities.

Where the laid paper came from and how it came to be printed is not known, but one sheet of this rare 3c variety was issued. All genuine laid-paper stamps bear the gothic Mexico name overprint and the 157-65 consignment and year-date numbers.

The Maximilian Heads that followed the Eagle stamps were printed on a rather soft but smooth paper of medium thickness, possibly of French origin.

Unfortunately, this paper was of rather poor quality, so that used copies are often thinned or otherwise damaged. Sound examples are scarce and desirable.

Paper continued to be a problem for the Mexicans throughout the next several stamp issues.

The 1868-72 issue of full-face Hidalgo Heads was printed on a wide range of stock, from a very thin, almost pelurelike paper 0.002 inches thick, to what is called carton paper, well above 0.005 inches in thickness.

The subsequent 1872 Hidalgo Profiles, hastily prepared because of the postal fraud incident with the 1868 issue, have some interesting paper varieties, too.

Most of these stamps were issued on unwatermarked paper with a moire pattern printed on the back. But paper shortages apparently forced the use of some revenue paper watermarked Papel Sellado, and locally purchased paper manufactured by La Croix Freres, watermarked with the initials L A + F. Stamps showing portions of these watermarks are scarce to rare, and are listed in separate sections in the Scott catalog.

Early printings of the 1874-83 Hidalgos were made by the American Bank Note Co. in New York on a crisp, medium wove paper. After the plates for this series were transferred to Mexico, local printings appeared on several types of paper, including wove, vertically laid, horizontally laid, thin wove and thin vertically laid papers.

These stamps are also

Figure 2. The thinness of the wove paper used to print this unissued 10-centavo Juarez stamp is clearly seen on the back, where the stronger lines of engraving from the front of the stamp almost appear to have been embossed.

found on paper watermarked Papel Sellado and on paper watermarked L A + F, although the latter is different from the 1872 issue.

Likewise, the accompanying issue of Juarez stamps for use on foreign mail came in a thick-paper variety from the earlier printings and a later thin-paper variety. Both are unwatermarked.

These two issues offer a fertile field for paper study.

Figure 2 shows one of the thin, wove-paper Juarez stamps that were never issued for postal use. So thin is the paper that portions of the engraved design give the appearance of embossing when the back of the stamp is viewed.

We will resume our look at the papers of Mexico's 19th-century stamps next month with a look at the Medallion Head Hidalgo stamps, the Large Numerals and Mexico's Transportation issue. ■

Stamp papers of Mexico's 1884-98 issues

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

This is the second part of my examination of the papers of 19th-century stamps of Mexico that began with my column in the May 14 issue of *Linn's* (Page 8).

We take up the story with the first Mexican stamps that were not regularly overprinted with postal district names and invoice numbers. The regular overprinting of stamps with postal district names and invoice numbers was abandoned by decree at the end of 1883.

The Medallion Hidalgo Heads and the Numeral stamps of 1884-95 offer the would-be specialist an outstanding opportunity to collect paper varieties.

During this period, stamp paper varied greatly, and much stock was clearly of inferior quality. Some of it was so bad that unrefined bits of wood can actually be seen embedded in the paper.

With the printings of 1890 collectors see the first use of security paper that displays the "CORREOSEUM" watermark, Scott Wmk. 152.

The letters were repeated in 10 rows, so that — in theory at least — each stamp in a sheet of 100 would receive part or all of a letter in the watermark.

As Scott notes, the paper can be wove or laid, but the use of laid paper was restricted, so far as we know, to the 1-centavo stamp of the 1890 issue.

For some time (*Linn's*, Sept. 9, 1985, Page 8), I have touted this issue as a good one for specialization, since many of the basic varieties are cheap. And there is considerable challenge in finding good, collectible copies, even though these usually don't carry a premium price.

Figure 1. This Eagle and RM watermark, Scott Wmk. 154, is one of two found on Mexican stamps of 1896-98.

The last 19th-century issues in this brief review are the so-called Transportation stamps of 1895-98. Most collectors of Mexico affectionately refer to these as the Mulitas, a reference to the pack mule portrayed on the 4-centavo and 12c denominations.

Although the Mulitas were in service for but four years, the number of different papers used in their production is quite remarkable.

The first printings of 1895 came out on the same watermarked, wove paper used for the previous Numeral issue.

One expert, Karl Schimmer, believes this stamp paper was of United States manufacture, since it is so similar to the paper used in contemporary U.S. stamps.

It must be pointed out that while the matrix of watermark letters was designed so that one would fall on each stamp in a sheet, this rarely happened in practice. If the paper was not perfectly centered in the press, a whole row of stamps might show no trace of a watermark, and this frequently happened.

Schimmer says that miscentering of 4 millimeters to 5mm could cause complete stamps to be printed outside of the area of the watermark.

These seemingly unwatermarked stamps of the first printing have confused many collectors, who mistakenly believe that such copies are from the 1898 printings.

Two more watermarked papers also found their way into the Transportation series.

In 1896, an issue appeared on paper watermarked with an interlaced "RM," Scott Wmk. 153. Except for the five lowest denominations and the 15c blue, these stamps are all rather pricey.

Within a year another watermarked paper appeared. This time the watermark consisted of an outline eagle above block letters "RM," Scott Wmk. 154.

Figure 1 shows the design of the watermark. The illustration of it in the Scott catalog has been completely illegible for the last several years.

Why these two paper changes came in such quick succession remains a mystery. The paper for these two monogram watermarks is hard and generally somewhat thinner than the paper for the 1895 printings. That may be why the watermarks are often hard to distinguish, particularly on stamps with intense color, such as the 4c value.

The Eagle and RM-watermarked issues provide another of the great rarities of the 19th-century Mexico. This is the 5-peso scarlet, Scott 278A, which Scott currently values (in italics) at $10,000.

In 1898 the final group of Mulitas made its debut on unwatermarked paper. This paper is thicker than the others, almost 0.005 inches thick, and smooth to the touch. If you have good eyesight or a good magnifying glass, you may be able to see a faint mesh pattern on these stamps, oriented horizontally.

As noted earlier, copies of all denominations of the 1895 printing can be found in which the stamp escaped the watermark, and many of these have been assumed to be from the more valuable unwatermarked printing. But the papers of these two issues are completely different and, placed side by side, they are not difficult to distinguish.

I am certain there are many collectors who have a 10c lilac rose that shows no watermark in the album space reserved for Scott 284, the unwatermarked variety that now has a used catalog value of $75. I am equally certain that most of those stamps are copies of the 10c lilac rose of the 1895 printing, Scott 248, that is illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Even knowledgeable collectors can confuse this common 1895 10-centavo stamp, Scott 248, for its scarce 1898 counterpart, Scott 284. Knowing the distinct papers on which these two issues are printed is the key to telling the $75 variety from the 20¢ stamp.

Such an understandable case of mistaken identity will be even more deflating when it comes time to sell and the dealer reveals that what you thought was a valuable stamp is only worth pennies.

The real unwatermarked 10c stamp is a scarce bird, as you will find out when you try to acquire a genuine example.

Another way to sort canceled copies of these confusing, no-watermark stamps is by date, if they bear a readable datestamp, as many used stamps do.

There can be no truly watermarked stamps before 1895. There is always the possibility of a misdated town mark, of course, but this is unlikely. So here we have a perfect example of the importance of knowing your papers.

It is not an easy task to find all the information on stamp papers that you need, because it is usually missing from the standard catalogs. I have no quick solutions. There is no standard reference where it is all written down.

But you can measure, study under magnification and feel your stamps until you develop a familiarity with the paper characteristics of the various issues. This can be done with cheap or even damaged stamps, and I believe it is time well spent.

Furthermore, it is part of being a true philatelist. So good luck, and let me know how you make out. ■

Capt. Carranza's ill-fated goodwill flight

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Here is another story for Mexican airmail enthusiasts. My thanks to my friend Jim Adams for the idea and some of the research needed to tell the tale.

At Ropex in Rochester, N.Y., this spring, Jim showed me the Mexican postal card illustrated in Figures 1 and 2, and asked me what I could tell him about it.

The card is unusual in several respects. The markings on the front of the card in Figure 1 indicate that it was carried on the inaugural Contract Air Mail (CAM) route 16 flight, Aug. 1, 1928, from Cleveland, Ohio, to Louisville, Ky., with intermediate stops.

It is interesting that the United States post office would permit the use of a Mexican postal card for a flight entirely within the United States. But I suspect in their zeal to accommodate stamp collectors, postal clerks must have overlooked numerous irregularities like this.

Figure 2 shows the message side of the card, which proves to be even more interesting.

The upper-right corner reads, "Greetings by our First Air Mail Flight Aug. 1st/28."

Below that salutation is glued a piece of Class-A airplane fabric, to the left of which is written "Souvenir of Carranza Good Will Plane." Traces of a Louisville backstamp tie the silvery fabric to the postal card.

This small swatch of airplane covering and its explanatory note link this card to one of the sad footnotes of early Mexican aviation.

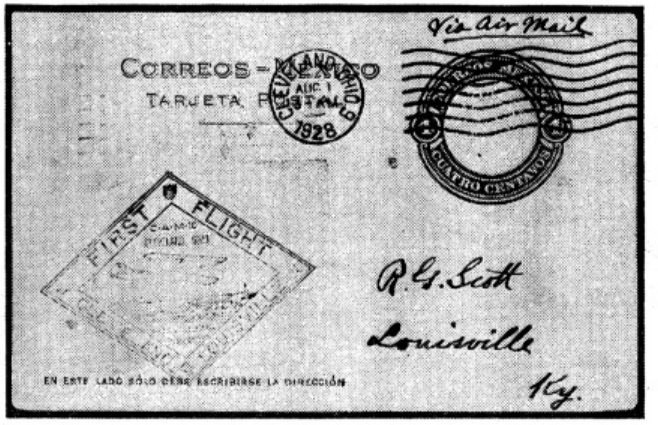

Figure 1. The address side of a cacheted Mexican postal card carried on the first flight of United States Contract Air Mail route 16 from Cleveland to Louisville Aug. 1, 1928.

Emilio Carranza was among the pioneer aviators of Mexico. At age 16, he enrolled in the Military School of Aviation in Mexico City. By the time he was 21, Carranza had graduated as a lieutenant in the Mexican air force.

In 1927, with help from his brother Sebastian, he built an airplane and flew it non-stop from Mexico City to Ciudad Juarez, on the U.S. border, in 10 hours.

That same year, Charles Lindbergh made a goodwill flight to Mexico — a feat Carranza wished to duplicate as a further gesture of friendship between the two countries.

So in 1928, with support of Mexico's major newspaper, *Excelsior*, he flew from Mexico City to New York City in a Ryan Model B-1 aircraft similar to the one Lindbergh used. The plane was appropriately christened *Mexico-Excelsior*.

The recently promoted Capt. Carranza was warmly received by the American public in both New York and Washington, D.C. The press compared him to Lindbergh, which pleased him greatly.

Carranza went about preparing for his return to Mexico City on July 10. He hoped it would be a non-stop flight, since he had been forced to stop briefly in South Carolina for mechanical reasons on his flight into New York.

Bad weather forced Carranza to delay his departure twice, but he grew impatient.

On the evening of July 12, Carranza drove to Roosevelt Field on Long Island, where his plane was tethered. Thunderstorms were still rolling over the area, but at 8 p.m., between advancing storm fronts, he took off for Mexico.

About an hour later, residents of the hamlet of Chatsworth, N.J., heard his plane overhead. Suddenly there was a flash of lightning, a tremendous peal of thunder and the plane was heard no more.

The next morning, the pilot was found in the wreckage of his airplane still clutching a flashlight, with a map nearby. It was presumed that he lost his way and was looking for a level spot to land when the storm struck.

Carranza's death was a shock to Americans and Mexicans alike. His body lay in state briefly in New York, and the United States offered the battleship *USS Florida* to convey the body back to Mexico. Eventually, it was carried by train to the Mexican capital, where it arrived July 24.

Carranza was posthumously promoted to the rank of general and buried with full military honors the following day.

Carranza's popularity was such that it was soon decided to erect a monument in his memory at the spot where he crashed, some seven miles southeast of Tabernacle, N.J.

With money raised from Mexican schoolchildren and others, a simple 10-foot concrete shaft with appropriate inscriptions in both Spanish and English was built at the location of the disaster.

It now lies within the boundaries of the Wharton State Forest in southern New Jersey. Each year, the Mexican government through its consulate in New York City and the American Legion hold a brief memorial service at the site.

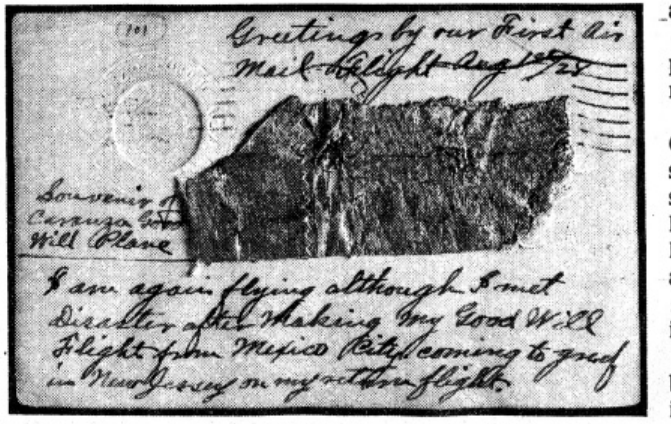

Figure 2. The message side of the postal card in Figure 1, showing airplane fabric from Capt. Emilio Carranza's plane.

The Mexicans extended further homage to their fallen eagle on June 19, 1929. A commemorative issue of six airmail stamps, Scott C5-C10, was released in his honor.

Four of the stamps in this set are shown on the cover in Figure 3, which was prepared by A.C. Roessler and presumably carried on a special flight from Mexico to New York on the first anniversary of Carranza's death.

These Carranza commemorative airmails were around for several years. They were reissued with "Habilitado" (reauthorized) overprints three different times between 1930 and 1932, listed in the Scott catalog as C29-30, C31-36 and C40-44.

In 1947, Carranza was again portrayed on a 10-peso airmail stamp, Scott C178.

To my eye, the portraits of Carranza on the early airmail stamps and the 1947 stamp show him as a rather mature-looking, older person. Actually, he was barely 23 years of age at the time of his death.

But back to the postal card in Figure 2.

The written message at the bottom reads, "I am again flying although I met Disaster after making my Good Will Flight from Mexico City, com-

Figure 3. This cacheted cover franked with 1929 Carranza commemorative airmails was flown on a special flight marking the first anniversary of the pilot's fatal crash.

ing to grief in New Jersey on my return flight."

This cryptic message refers to the cloth from Carranza's plane, which flew for the last time on this Mexican postal card from Cleveland to Louisville aboard CAM 16.

We still don't know who wrote the message or what connection there might have been between the writer and the addressee, R.G. Scott. But it is assumed that the author of the card was one of the four pilots that the *American Air Mail Catalog* lists for the initial CAM 16 flight: Ross Arnold, J.E. Hart, H.L. Kindred or William M. McConnell. ■

Mexico's Pro-Universidad stamps of 1934

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

It was almost exactly seven years ago, shortly after I began this monthly column for *Linn's*, that I wrote on Mexico's Pro-Universidad issue of 1934 (*Linn's*, Aug. 8, 1983, Page 22). This modern issue has always been a 20th-century favorite of mine from the standpoint of beauty and workmanship, and it is well worth another look.

The Pro-Universidad issue consists of a 10-value set for regular surface mail and eight airmail stamps.

The stamps were issued to raise money for the University of Mexico. The principle behind these stamps was not too different from that of the semipostal stamps European countries were issuing to support worthy causes.

The world was in an economic depression, tax revenues were suffering and a stiff deficit had been forecast for the school. But in spite of the hard times, stamp collecting remained an extremely popular pastime. Affluent collectors seemed ready to buy almost any attractive and well-executed stamp set that came on the market.

The subjects of the 10 stamps in the regular-mail set are indigenous Mexican crafts and ceremonial poses. Many collectors do not realize that these motifs are not original with this issue. They were copied from contemporary Mexican revenue stamps, often with only minor changes.

Figure 1. The designs of Mexico's 40-centavo and 50c Pro-Universidad stamps (left) were adapted from those of two Mexican internal revenue issues of 1930 (right).

The 40-centavo and 50c stamps on the left in Figure 1 were clearly derived from the corresponding revenue issues shown on the right. Adapting their designs from revenues unquestionably reduced the time and cost of producing these stamps.

The designs for the Pro-Universidad airmails feature popular Mexican scenery, such as mountains. An airplane was worked into each design, though often in a very awkward flight position.

It is worth noting that the three peso-denominated issues of the regular-mail set and all but one of the airmail stamps are bicolor. The printing registration for the frames and vignettes is almost perfect in all copies I have seen.

Both sets were a strictly limited edition. Except for the 1c, 5c and 10c surface-mail stamps, printing quantities of the rest of the denominations were 50,000 or less.

A complete rundown of the numbers issued appears in the chart in Figure 2.

The rationale for these low quantities was that collectors and dealers would snap them up in hopes of quick appreciation in value and perhaps a fast profit.

Only 1,000 copies of the 10p surface-mail stamp were issued, and but 1,500 of the 20p airmail stamp. Both these high values sold out almost immediately. It was reported that the 10p surface-mail stamp was sold out at 10 a.m. on the first day of sale.

At that time the Mexican peso was worth hundreds of times more than it is today, so the 1934 cost at the post office for the two top values came to sightly more than U.S. $8.50 — quite a bit of money for the Depression era.

But Mexican authorities had already taken a step that guaranteed at least partial success to the venture.

It had been decreed that between Sept. 1, the day the stamps were released, and Dec. 31, 1934, all domestic letters were to bear a 1c Pro-Universidad stamp in addition to the regular franking.

I am reasonably confident this rule wasn't rigorously enforced, but collectors frequently find covers from this period with the extra stamp.

Figure 3 shows a slightly unusual usage of the 1c, added not to a domestic letter, but to a commercial airmail cover from Michoacan to Chicago.

The printing of the 1c stamp was so large that it is almost always present in a general Mexican collection, sometimes accompanied by the 5c and 10c stamps as well.

By contrast, there is a subvariety of the 10p regular issue that is printed on unwatermarked paper. It is easily the scarcest of the Pro-Universidad issues, since it is believed that only one sheet of 100 originally existed.

As one would expect with any sets of stamps available in such limited quantities, catalog prices can be volatile.

From the early 1960s, when I began specializing in Mexico, up to the early 1980s, the catalog value of these stamps rose tremendously. The two high values increased by factors of six times and 20 times, respectively.

Since then, prices have slipped, reflecting the general slump in the stamp market. For example, the 20p airmail stamp, which peaked at $2,000 unused in 1982, has fallen to $1,100 in the 1990

1934 Pro-Universidad — Number of stamps issued

Scott No. (value)	No. Issued	Scott No. (value)	No. Issued
697 (1 centavo)	20,000,000	706 (10p)	1,000
698 (5c)	1,000,000	C54 (20c)	50,000
699 (10c)	2,000,000	C55 (30c)	20,000
700 (20c)	50,000	C56 (50c)	10,000
701 (30c)	30,000	C57 (75c)	10,000
702 (40c)	20,000	C58 (1p)	10,000
703 (50c)	10,000	C59 (5p)	3,000
704 (1 peso)	10,000	C60 (10p)	2,500
705 (5p)	2,000	C61 (20p)	1,500

Figure 2. Except for the lowest three values of the surface-mail stamps, the printing quantities of Mexico's 1934 Pro-Universidad issue were extremely limited, as this table indicates.

Scott listing. The 10p surface-mail stamp reached its zenith of $1,400 a little later, but settled back to $1,000 in 1990.

But that rare, unwatermarked subvariety, Scott 708a, just keeps climbing. It now lists for $3,250.

It has been my experience that Pro-Universidad sets usually sell at auction for some discount below the catalog value. But fresh, well-centered mint or very lightly hinged copies often still command a respectable 75 percent to 80 percent of their catalog values.

If you do not yet own these sets and are keen on having them, it is wise to be patient and search for the best quality you can find.

Centering is often a problem, especially with the 1p surface-mail stamp, the design for which is about 1 millimeter wider than all the other stamps in the set. It is hard to find copies where the perforations do not cut the frameline on one side or the other.

Figure 3. This 1934 cover from Michoacan to Chicago bears a 1c Pro-Universidad stamp to comply with a postal decree.

Beware also of multiple hinging. Many Pro-Universidad sets moved between albums several times before the era of hingeless mounts, with each new owner applying a fresh hinge. Regumming does not yet seem to be a big problem with this issue, though it can occur.

Collectors of used stamps will find it extremely hard to complete sets in that condition. Most were collected unused. Of the surface-mail stamps, only the 10p value catalogs more used than mint. The reverse is true for all but one of the airmail stamps.

Check closely to make sure that cancellations are contemporary with the period of issue. Stamps with heavy hinging or spoiled gum are raw material for fakers tempted to add modern cancels.

It is doubtful that the top denominations of either set were ever used on anything other than philatelically contrived covers. They represented too much postage for normal, everyday mail rates.

I like the Pro-Universidad stamps. They represent some of the best designs and engraving work to come out of Mexico during the 1930s.

They may seem a bit expensive for the average collector, but there is little doubt that the Pro-Universidad stamps were one of the most popular Mexican issues with serious collectors around the world.

I believe these stamps represent a sound philatelic property. With prices down, now could be a good time to consider acquiring them. ■

Mexico marks Penny Black anniversaries

On May 6 this year, several countries of the world took note of the 150th anniversary of the world's first adhesive postage stamp, the Penny Black, issued by Great Britain in 1840 to prepay the delivery of ordinary letters.

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

To celebrate this memorable event the British organized Stamp World London 90, a grand philatelic exhibition attended by stamp enthusiasts and noted philatelists from throughout the world.

Mexico issued a stamp in honor of the event, as well. Thanks to my faithful correspondent in Mexico City, Guillermo Wilkins, I received a copy just a few days after it made its appearance at the post office windows.

Figure 1 shows the stamp. It is hard to say whether this black and white illustration looks better or worse from the real thing.

I must agree with Wilkins, who writes a sometimes saucy weekly stamp column in *El Financiero* (roughly the Mexican equivalent of our *Wall Street Journal*) that this stamp is deficient in several aspects of its design.

While the Penny Black jumps out at you from the stamp, the designer unfortunately chose a rather poor copy of that stamp for his model. The illustrated stamp has virtually no margins. The intricate machine-turned engraving that forms the side panels and background for Victoria's portrait has been reduced to a big, black blur.

The name "Mexico" is clearly seen on the Figure 1 stamp, but the commemorative inscription, printed above it in gold against a mauve background, is difficult to read because the two colors lack contrast.

In addition, it almost could be suggested that the denomination was added as an afterthought. It is tucked on its side between the lower-left corner and "Mexico" in numerals so small that you need a magnifying glass to read it.

This is the second time that Mexico has issued stamps depicting the Penny Black. In 1940, at the 100th anniversary of the world's first stamp, two sets were printed with much more favorable results. The sets are cataloged as Scott 754-58 and C103-07.

Figure 1. This stamp was issued by Mexico May 6, 1990, to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Great Britain's Penny Black, the world's first adhesive postage stamp.

Figure 2. Surface (left) and airmail stamps (right) issued by Mexico in 1940 to commemorate the centennial of the postage stamp. Except for the denominations and service inscription, the designs are the same for all 10 stamps.

Each set, one for surface mail and one for airmail, contained five denominations, ranging from 5 centavos to 5 pesos. These 1940 commemoratives are in a vertical format measuring 24 millimeters by 40mm — exactly half the size of Mexico's 1990 Penny Black stamp.

Figure 2 shows one of the surface mail and one of the airmail stamps from the Mexican issue of 1940.

The central design of the 1940 issue is a facsimile of the Penny Black on a white background, with crisp lettering in the surrounding inscriptions and numerals.

The 10c surface mail stamp was printed in dark violet. The rest of the stamps were produced in attractive combinations of two colors.

These stamps gained early popularity with collectors for a number of reasons. They are examples of clean, well-executed design. The subject matter is appealing, especially for those specializing in the stamps-on-stamps theme.

The top denominations of these 1940 sets rose substantially in catalog value over the last half century, though prices are somewhat depressed at the moment.

Figure 3 is a table showing the printing quantities of Mexico's 1940 Penny Black stamps. With printings of but 25,000 and 10,000, respectively, it is easy to see part of the reason why the 1p and 5p denominations gained value.

By contrast, the 10c surface mail stamp had an extraordinarily large printing for a Mexican commemorative. As a point of comparison, the printing order for the recent Penny Black commemorative was 1 million copies, just one-fifth the size of the order of 10c stamps printed in 1940.

Since 10c was Mexico's ordinary letter rate in 1940, the 10c commemorative saw extensive use.

Stamp collecting was near a

1940 Penny Black Centennial — Number of stamps issued

Scott No. (value)	No. Issued	Scott No. (value)	No. Issued
754 (5 centavo)	500,000	C103 (5c)	100,000
755 (10c)	5,000,000	C104 (10c)	100,000
756 (20c)	500,000	C105 (20c)	500,000
757 (1 peso)	25,000	C106 (1p)	25,000
758 (5p)	10,000	C107 (5p)	10,000

Figure 3. A table shows the quantities issued of Mexico's 1940 Penny Black commemoratives.

peak in popularity 50 years ago, and I suspect the Mexican postal service of 1940 had little trouble selling huge quantities of these Penny Black stamps to dealers.

The denominations were such that the stamps could be conveniently grouped into so-called short sets containing the three low-value stamps for sale to beginners and young collectors at low cost. For the more serious collectors, complete sets were offered with a face value somewhere around $3 U.S.

Although the printing of the key 5p surface and airmail stamps was limited to 10,000 copies, this seems to have been an ample supply for the philatelic marketplace.

General worldwide auction sales almost always have one or more sets of these commemoratives listed. And it isn't too difficult to find an original gum, never-hinged set, which I would highly recommend in view of the prevailing collecting tastes.

Finding Mexico's 1940 Penny Black issues used on personal or commercial correspondence will prove considerably more difficult.

The 10c is seen once in a while, but the balance of the stamps are very scarce on cover. (I have a couple of covers with complete sets, but these are purely philatelic.)

Dealers used the 1940 stamps on envelopes containing orders and the like, but I suspect that business houses rarely got any of them to use on their mail. (Most of the better stock was being sold to, or held for, stamp dealers!)

In future years, the 1990 Penny Black commemorative may also be tough to find, other than on domestic letters and philatelic mail going abroad. Its 700p denomination pays the single-letter rate inside Mexico, but is an awkward denomination to use in making up the higher international airmail rates.

Mid-21st-century Mexican postal history buffs could face a challenge finding envelopes with non-philatelic usages of what is now a new issue.

Would it be a good idea to hunt up some and put them away so your great-great-grandchildren might have something to apply against their college tuition bill? Only time will tell. ■

PMG Hinojosa was a philatelic rogue

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Unless you happen to be a keen student of the civil war stamps of Mexico, the name Cosme Hinojosa will probably mean nothing. But he, perhaps more than any other individual or factor, was responsible for the bewildering array of Mexican stamp varieties issued between 1913 and 1917.

As a native of the state of Sonora, Hinojosa became involved politically in the early stirrings of the revolutionary movement in northern Mexico. He was elected to the state legislature in 1910.

In 1913 he was named director general of the posts by Venustiano Carranza, who had formed a revolutionary cabinet in Hermosillo in opposition to the federal government in Mexico City. They called themselves the constitutionalists.

For Hinojosa, it was the beginning of a long tenure as one of the top postal officials of Mexico. In the tumultuous years that followed, he developed the uncanny knack for picking the right side to be on among the various warring factions.

When Carranza finally established himself as chief of the central government in Mexico City, Hinojosa became the postmaster general, a position he held continuously until 1928.

It was even before he attained this latter post that he discovered the potential of selling postage stamps to collectors, who were always on the lookout for new varieties. Hinojosa was also keenly aware of the possibilities of personal gain in providing those varieties.

Figure 1. When he was director general of posts in Sonora, Cosme Hinojosa procured and used (but never paid) for 75,000 copies of this stamp, Scott 369. The aggrieved creditor was none other than George W. Linn, who later founded *Linn's Stamp News*.

As director general of posts in Sonora, he authorized nearly all of the local issues of that era. These included the White Seal and Green Seal provisionals (Scott 321-46), the temporary use of revenue stamps for postage (Scott 347-53) and the various transitory issues (Scott 354-61).

Hinojosa was also behind the order of samples from George Linn of the perforated 5-centavo Transitorio stamp.

Figure 1 shows the stamp, Scott 369. Its full tale was told in my column in *Linn's* Oct. 13, 1986 issue (Page 18).

A printer before he was a philatelic publisher, Linn shipped some 75,000 copies of the stamp, expecting payment since they were eventually put to use. But not only did Hinojosa's department refuse to pay, it later disavowed those stamps that had seen postal service as counterfeits!

The reason for these local and provisional stamps is easily explained.

When the constitutionalists seized control of the federal offices in Sonora, nearly all the federal postmasters fled the region, mostly to the safety of border towns in the United States, taking their stamps with them. What few stamps remained were woefully inadequate for postal needs.

Carranza's army marched south and took control of the capital and Hinojosa took the top job in the central post office. There he issued several decrees authorizing use of various monogram overprints to validate stocks of stamps found in the vaults, mostly the 1910 Centenary issue.

This overprinting assured that postal revenues would accrue to the government then in control, since the federals had carried off quantities of stamped paper when they were driven from the city.

For a brief time in late 1914, Carranza and his followers were forced from the capital by the agrarian reformer, Emiliano Zapata. Hinojosa transferred his operations to Veracruz.

When the short-lived alliance between Zapata and Pancho Villa collapsed, during which time the so-called Villa overprints appeared, the constitutionalists returned to Mexico City.

Hinojosa brought with him a fresh supply of 1910 stamps, which had just been received from the English printer. With this ample supply of raw material at hand, the frantic overprinting resumed.

Facsimiles of the overprints used during this period can be seen in the Mexico listings in the Scott catalog for the years 1914 to 1916. Nearly all of the overprints can be ascribed to Hinojosa's authority.

Figure 2 shows three of the overprints to good effect as they appear on the 1910 5-centavo orange Hidalgo stamp.

From left to right, the stamps show the 1914 dollar-sign overprint of the constitutionalist government (Scott 427), the 1915 Carranza monogram overprint (Scott 488) and the 1916 "Barril," or barrel surcharge, (Scott 579).

There is no question that many overprint varieties were produced for the express purpose of boosting sales to collectors and dealers. Hinojosa saw to it that some of them were intentionally printed in very limited quantities so they might command higher prices.

Figure 2. A few of the 1913-17 Mexican overprints that owe their existence to Cosme Hinojosa.

He even traveled to the United States in 1915 to sell Mexican stamps. He brought remainder stocks of many of the war issues including the Sonora locals, and the small printings of the overprinted 1899-1903 issues, plus high denominations that were particularly sought after.

Hinojosa often told a dealer he was selling his entire holding of certain remainders to him (at large multiples of face value, of course). Then he would move on to the next dealer, with the same story.

Hinojosa made a similar selling trip in 1916, but in the meantime had formed an alliance with Javier J. Favela, proprietor of Bolsa Filatelica de Mexico (the Mexican Stamp Exchange). This, in effect, became Hinojosa's largest retail outlet.

This maneuver did not sit well with Hinojosa's U.S. customers. Most honest collectors and dealers had nothing but disdain for his actions.

In the space of just a few short years, Hinojosa had besmirched the philatelic reputation of what had been considered a relatively reliable stamp-issuing nation.

It is perhaps unfortunate

that Scott chose to list so many of Hinojosa's contrived issues in the normal numbering sequence. While all the stamps listed could have been used for postage, most of the scarce varieties were never offered for sale to the public, and few were ever used.

Nick Follansbee, one of our contemporary experts in the revolutionary era, has written extensively about these stamps in *Mexicana*, journal of the Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International.

Follansbee prefers to call the stamps the "Hinojosa special printings." He warns collectors to be very, very wary of the many counterfeit overprints that exist, particularly in the short printings.

Hinojosa himself wrote a short book in English on the 1913-17 revolutionary stamps. It makes absolutely no mention of the scarce varieties for which he was responsible, but does contain excellent translations of the various decrees dealing with the issues, which makes the book quite interesting and useful. ■

Auction catalogs add to philatelic library

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

In past articles I have repeatedly emphasized the importance of philatelic literature to the enjoyment of our hobby. I own a rather extensive library of the classic and definitive works on Mexican philately, and am eager and prepared to acquire any new ones that come along.

But there is another important source of information, the stamp auction catalog.

This was brought home most forcefully to me when a friend gave me a copy of the Soler & Llach catalog in which that Barcelona, Spain, auction firm announced the Nov. 7 sale of Isaac Backal's marvelous collection of Mexican maritime mail.

It is a lavishly produced 80-page book, with color photographs of all the covers being offered. It is similar to other recent catalogs produced for the sale of important properties in this country, such as the David Jarrett collection of United States postal markings or Bob Paliafito's collection of U.S. 1861-68 30¢ issues, to pick two at random.

These are important books for the specialist. To the best of my knowledge, Jarrett never exhibited his covers in competition, although he often gave slide-illustrated talks so that people got to see the material.

Paliafito and Backal exhibited extensively, so their material enjoyed public exposure. But the importance of these exhibits in the flesh, scanning the catalogs is like another opportunity to walk the exhibit aisles in the comfort and unhurried atmosphere of our own homes.

Figure 1. One of the gem covers in the Isaac Backal collection of Mexican maritime mail, which will be sold by the auction firm of Soler & Llach in Barcelona, Spain.

this type of auction catalog, as I see it, is the preservation of a written and photographic record of a cohesive accumulation of important philatelic pieces that may never be together again.

Auctions like this usually result in the wide dispersal of material. Also, for those of us lucky enough to have seen these exhibits in the flesh, scanning the catalogs is like another opportunity to walk the exhibit aisles in the comfort and unhurried atmosphere of our own homes.

For others who could not attend shows where these collections were on display, the catalogs are a chance to see a world-class exhibit photographically. But I digress.

Backal's maritime mail is truly one of the great Mexican exhibits of our time. Painstakingly assembled over probably 20 years or so, it contains some of the most spectacular Mexican overseas covers in existence. It is no wonder that within seven years it won three large gold medals at international shows and finally was seen in the championship class at Stamp World London 90 this past May.

I first saw the exhibit at Ameripex in 1986. I was so impressed that I spent more than an hour looking at it. In fact, it became clear that Backal had been successful in sales where I was among a host of underbidders!

Another remarkable thing about his exhibit is the diversity of material present. This augurs well for its successful sale, for it will appeal to a wide spectrum of collectors.

There are covers with stamps from all the classic Mexican stamp issues up into the 1880s. Most of the covers represent scarce to rare usages. A couple of items are considered to be unique, and no other similar usages ever have been reported.

I have struggled to obtain two covers for my collection with the crowned circle paid postmarks of the British Consular post offices in Tampico and Veracruz used during the middle of the 19th century. Backal showed about two dozen in his display.

Figure 1 shows an outstanding example, the crowned Veracruz handstamp tying a 4-real Juarez stamp to an 1858 cover sent from Guadalajara to Madrid, by way of Havana. This cover is estimated at the equivalent of $16,000 U.S.

Backal also had two double-ring U.S. postmarks of the Mexican-American War of 1848 used in Tampico on soldiers' letters bound for Texas via New Orleans. Only one other example of one of these marks is recorded, and the other is presumed to be the only example extant.

There are numerous other gems. One is a Balloon Monte cover to Veracruz from Paris, sent by hot-air balloon during the Prussian siege of 1870-71. Also present are letters from the British, Spanish and French intervention of 1862, the precursor to the short reign of Maximilian. One cover, sent from Paris to Veracruz and franked with a 5-franc Napoleon, is believed to be the only one of its kind.

There is a splendid array of covers to overseas destinations with the Juarez issue of 1879-83. One of these covers was used as the subject of the Mexican postage stamp illustrated in Figure 2, Scott C605.

This stamp was issued to commemorate Mepsipex, the third international exhibition of the Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International, in Mexico City.

The cover depicted on the stamp is an 1880 registered letter from Puebla to Rome, franked with two of the 10-

Figure 2. Another rarity from Backal's collection was featured on Scott C605, this Mexican airmail stamp honoring the Mepsipex stamp show in Mexico City in 1979.

centavo Juarez stamps that were used only on foreign mail. The letter went on an English packet by way of Southampton.

If you collect Mexican covers and have always wanted to own the original artwork used in a stamp design, the Backal sale is your chance to kill both birds with one stone.

There are numerous maritime covers with mixed franking, most of which have outstanding eye appeal.

Finally, I should mention a group of covers with Porte de Mar stamps. These Mexican adhesives denoted fees paid to ship captains to carry mail abroad, deliberately bypassing the foreign postal agencies that had traditionally handled this kind of mail.

Most of us are lucky if we have one or two genuine used examples of Porte de Mar stamps off cover in our albums. Here we can see what may be the largest group of such stamps on cover in private hands.

In perusing the catalog, which contains about 160 lots, I did note that a few items I saw at Ameripex were missing, but only a few. I don't know if this represents a final refinement of the exhibit on Backal's part or not. Perhaps some items were held back or sold privately before the bulk of the exhibit was consigned for auction.

Few collectors can afford the kind of material offered at this sale. For many of us, our entire collections may not equal the estimated selling price of one of the scarcer Backal maritime covers.

Still, if you are a true collector you can appreciate and enjoy the beauty and development of a world-class exhibit like this one.

The auction catalog is a must if you are a maritime postal history devotee. For the general collector, it's a chance to see many wonderful things and increase your knowledge at the same time. The lot descriptions are in Spanish but they're not hard to decipher.

Soler & Llach is asking $10 to defray postage. The Nov. 7 catalog may be ordered from the firm at Bori I Fontesta 7, 08021 Barcelona, Spain. ■

MEPSI at Chicagopex; future Exportas

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

In my Dec. 9, 1985, column (page 34) I wrote that Mexfil 85, a Mexico-only exhibition held in Mexico City in June of that year, might never be duplicated for the depth of the material shown. Having just returned from the annual meeting of the Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International held at Chicagopex 90, I may have to retract that prediction.

The Chicagopex organizers, and particularly local MEPSI representative Jim Mazepa, took special pains to lure Mexican exhibits to the show for the open competition.

What an exciting show it turned out to be.

There were 18 Mexican exhibits on display. While this showing wasn't as large as the 41-exhibit array at Mexfil, Chicagopex clearly boasted some of the finest Mexican philatelic material to be found in the world today. Viewing them all was a great treat for the Mexico collectors.

Although three exhibits contained prephilatelic covers and one showed postal stationery, the emphasis was definitely on stamps and covers bearing them.

By design, it seems, the exhibits featured all of the major classic issues of 19th-century Mexico, but there were some great showings of 20th-century material, too. And the results of the competition gave a clear measure of the quality present, too, as eight gold and six vermeil awards were won by the Mexican group.

Alfonso Tena's "Mexico Classic Issues, 1856-67" was one of the highlights of the show. Since it is already an international large gold exhibit, it was shown non-competitively, but it was a joy to see.

Bob Paliafito won the grand award with his exquisite showing of "The Imperial Eagles of Mexico." It has just about everything from that issue, including some amazing covers to foreign destinations.

The Maximilian Monarchy was represented with two displays: a study of the difficult and scarce ½-real denomination, and a very nice exhibit of the Maximilian Heads of 1866-67. Both exhibits won vermeil medals.

There were three single postal district studies that demonstrate what can be done in an exhibit of somewhat narrow scope. These tracked the development of the postal system from Spanish colonial times well into the stamp period.

Owners of the Chihuahua and Monterrey district collections won gold awards. A Victoria district collection, which was being shown for the first time, won a very respectable vermeil award for its owner.

Two fine collections of Mexico's sometimes-maligned 1868 issue were shown, winning top awards plus special recognition by MEPSI and a local club.

Exhibits of "Hidalgos, 1874-1883" and "Hidalgo Medallions, 1884-85" also won well-deserved gold awards. Although not strictly considered classic issues, these areas offer great potential for detailed study.

Jay Bard, owner of the Hidalgo Medallion collection, has spent a lifetime in a meticulous study of this issue, including a great deal of original research on plate varieties. I found this to be fascinating. Bard received a special award from the Chicago Philatelic Society for his efforts.

Extensive research was also demonstrated in Nick Follansbee's exhibit of "Sonora White and Green Seal Issues," a collection of 20th-century local civil war stamps. This fact was not lost on the judges, who gave Nick the American Philatelic Society research award in addition to Chicagopex and MEPSI gold awards.

Another 20th-century Mexican exhibit did well, too, and I was glad to see some action in the area.

"The Regular Issue of Mexico, 1950-1976," shown by Cal Whitsel, could use some work to improve its visual appearance, in my opinion. But it is definitely one of the most comprehensive displays of the issue I have seen.

Whitsel's exhibit won a vermeil and two other special awards — not bad for a modern issue that has been out of the post office drawer for barely 15 years.

The Mexican postal service had a booth at Chicagopex and issued, in very limited quantities, two booklets with commemorative stamps as gestures of support for the show's emphasis on Mexican philately.

The booklet, inscribed in English and with a special MEPSI logo, sold out minutes after Chicagopex opened. Before the weekend was over, it was being offered by one dealer for $25 against the original $2.10 the Mexican post office charged.

The other booklet didn't last long either, but was still available on the second day of the show.

The Mexicans also produced a special souvenir card for Chicagopex, but the cards failed to arrive in time for distribution at the show.

A total of 25 copies with a "MUESTRA" (sample) overprint were given to the MEPSI committee. Some of these were sold for the benefit of the society, including the sample shown here.

About 50 MEPSI members signed in during the weekend, including several from Mexico, at least two from England and one from Spain.

It proved to me once again the value and joy of belonging to a specialist society in one's collecting field. Not all of us are social animals, but to those of us who are, these get-togethers are truly rewarding.

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San Antonio stamp dealer Bill Shelton gave a most interesting lecture on the Mexican Exporta issues at Chicagopex. Slides that he took on a recent visit to the Mexican government printing office made it easy to understand some of the reasons we have seen so many minor varieties, especially color shades, on modern stamps printed there.

Ink mixing appears to be less than a perfect science, and paper shortages also contribute to the unusual number of Exporta varieties we have tracked for the past 15 years.

Previously, I reported persistent rumors that a change of Mexico's definitive issues was in the offing. Shelton says his conversations with Mexican officials in the post office and the printing office convince him that this cannot and will not occur for some time.

While it is true the Mexican postal service has a number of design ideas worked out, these have not been approved by the top men in the department, nor have they been discussed with the management of the printing bureau.

With the probability of considerable bureaucratic wrangling, actually putting new

Souvenir cards were prepared by Mexico's Postal Service to honor Chicagopex 90 for hosting the annual meetings of the Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International and the China Stamp Society, but did not reach Chicago in time for the exhibition. Only 25 cards, overprinted "MUESTRA" (sample) like this one, were available to a lucky few at the show.

Mexican definitives into print could take two to three years.

Until then, there are more Exporta varieties on the way.

Shelton, who has been quietly stocking Exporta stamps for years, has just published a 40-page specialized price list for this series.

He subdivides the stamps according to the various issues most of us have come to recognize, cross-indexed with the basic Scott catalog numbers. For the casual Exporta collector, this sophisticated list may prove to be too much of a good thing.

There is much useful text interspersed with the listings and the number of minor varieties runs into the hundreds. Nearly all are priced, meaning that Shelton currently has them in stock, but he admits that many of these are in very short supply.

If you are a dyed-in-the-wool Exporta stamp enthusiast, you should write for one of these lists. They are available for $2.50 from Bill Shelton Philatelics, Drawer 39838, San Antonio, TX 78218-6838.

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Finally, I take this opportunity to wish all my readers best wishes for the upcoming holidays.

My thanks for reading this column. I do appreciate the time many of you take to send your questions and views in letters and I hope 1991 proves to be a good collecting year for you. ■

Mexico's intriguing 1864-66 Eagle issue

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Mexico's classic Eagle issue of 1864-66 is a longtime favorite of mine. I wrote about these stamps in my Jan. 8, 1984, column (page 50), but I suspect there are enough new *Linn's* readers to warrant a reprise on this interesting series.

The Eagle stamps capture the attention of collectors because of the enormous number of varieties that exist. There is also enough rare and outstanding material so that a first-rate exhibit can be formed. This was demonstrated by Bob Paliafito's "Imperial Eagles of Mexico," which took the grand award at the Nov. 9-11 Chicagopex show amid very stiff competition.

The issue was the product of the short and tragic French intervention into Mexico, a bold attempt to establish what amounted to a French colony in the Western Hemisphere. In the Mexican Coat of Arms design on the stamps, the eagle perched on a cactus with a snake in its beak wears a crown — a reference to the recently established monarch of the Austrian Archduke Maximilian.

The stamps were engraved and, like their predecessors, were initially printed in five denominations ranging from ½ real to 8 reales. (A 3-centavo value came later.) Bright, attractive colors were used for all but the lowest values, which came in various shades of gray and brown.

It is worth noting that while there are clear, crisply printed specimens, a great many of the stamps will be found poorly printed, either from underinked, worn plates, or displaying blurred patches of extraneous color between impressions.

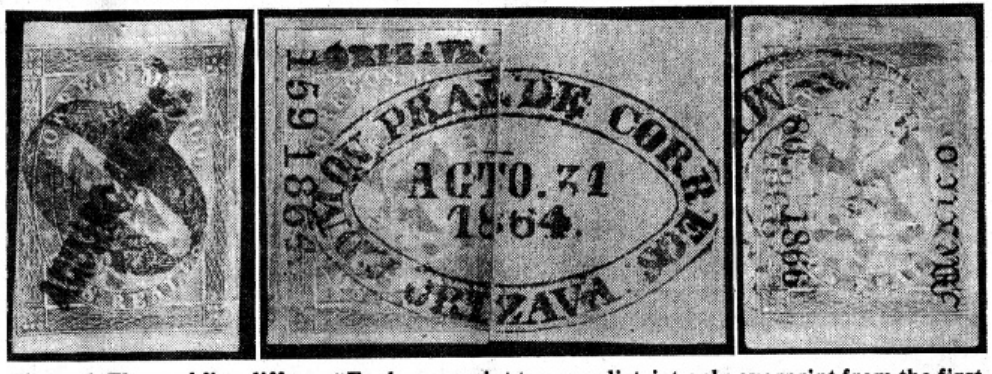

Figure 1. Three of five different Eagle overprint types: a district-only overprint from the first period (left); a second-period large-numeral consignment number overprint tied to piece with an Orizava datestamp (center); and a fifth-period 1866 Mexico City overprint (right).

What makes the Eagles especially fascinating are the overprints of district names and consignment numbers, not to mention a vast array of unusual and quaint cancellations.

The district names were handstamped at the point of sale. The Eagles were also the first Mexican stamps to bear a consignment or invoice number with a year date. These numbers were applied at the general post office on each shipment sent to the various district offices.

Many large district offices had jurisdiction over smaller, nearby post offices and supplied them with their stamps. So, in many instances, an additional suboffice number was added to the stamps as a further control measure. Occasionally a suboffice name was also used, but this was the exception rather than the rule.

The very first Eagle stamps, issued during May and June 1864, generally received only the district name overprint, such as the Aguascalientes-overprinted 2r Eagle on the left in Figure 1. The consignment and date-numbering system took effect July 7.

In addition to the name-only period, there were four other discreet use periods that can be differentiated by the type font or year date of the overprint. These overprint types are responsible for the huge number of collectible varieties of the stamps.

Figure 1 shows some typical overprint varieties on 2r Eagle stamps. The stamp on piece with the oval Orizava cancel shows the large consignment numbers typical of the second period. The Mexico district stamp on the right with the 1866 dates is typical of fifth-period Eagles.

With such a vast and complex array of overprint possibilities, how does one go about organizing a collection or exhibit? Fortunately, most of the post office records from that era have survived, and philatelic scholars have abstracted and published the necessary basic information.

The late Samuel Chapman's definitive work, *The Postage Stamps of Mexico, 1856-1868*, contains a wealth of data on the Eagle shipments to district and subdistrict post offices. A reprint of this rare reference is currently available.

Abraham Odfjell summarized post office shipment data in tabular form with notes in *The Stamps of the Postal Districts of Mexico*, a Mexico-Elmhurst Philatelic Society International publication.

The 1982 fifth edition of the specialized Mexican catalog by Celis-Cano will also be very useful if you are willing to work with its Spanish text.

I believe all three of these references are available from Bill Shelton, the San Antonio, Texas, dealer who specializes in Mexico.

Large districts generally received shipments of commonly used stamps in the thousands, and these are not scarce and are relatively inexpensive. Even some of the suboffices handled a great deal of mail, and their stamps can be readily acquired.

Other locations, especially the tiny towns and haciendas, received and used very few stamps. Examples of these are frequently scarce to rare.

A general type collection, consisting of the five denominations from the five periods of usage, will not be too difficult to assemble with the exception of the type II ½r Eagle, Scott 19a.

This stamp is rare and seldom offered for sale. In fact, it may be harder to find than a 3c Eagle, Scott 18, which was issued during the fourth and fifth periods in Mexico City for use only on drop letters and circulars.

The 3c stamp used has the highest catalog value of all the Eagles. Few were used, and the class of mail requiring them would have been quickly discarded. Unused examples of the 3c are expensive, but appear regularly in auctions.

Since it is next to impossible to accumulate anything approaching a complete collection of Eagle varieties, a satisfying alternative could be to concentrate on one or several larger districts. Stamps from these offices are more plentiful and even the inherently scarcer ½r, 4r and 8r values may not be too hard to find.

However, getting a representative sampling from suboffices (if the district chosen had them) can provide considerable challenge.

I tackled the district of Orizava, searching for a used stamp from each consignment it received. This district had no suboffices, handled a fair amount of mail, and there were few instances of small shipments of fewer than 500 stamps.

There are only about 35 consignment number varieties from this district including a couple of number errors, yet it took me almost 10 years to find them all. But what a feeling of accomplishment I had when the set was complete.

Another pleasant challenge

has been a search for first-day cancellations on stamps consigned to Mexico City. This is possible only when the delivery occurs the same day that the stamps are listed as consigned. In 20-odd years of looking, I have discovered two such items.

Figure 2. Won at a modest price in a small auction, this handsome 8-real Eagle later proved to be from a consignment of only 86 stamps.

Equipped with the foregoing cited references, it is still possible to make worthwhile and interesting discoveries. The acquisition of what is perhaps the rarest stamp in my small holding of Eagles was a pure case of serendipity.

About 15 years ago I was the successful bidder in a small mail sale on an 8r Eagle described simply as Scott 25a in fine condition. When the stamp arrived, I checked the Mexico City consignment number, "165-1864." It corresponded to a shipment of a partial sheet of but 86 stamps.

Taking into account a probable 3- to 5-percent survival rate for such stamps, it was, if genuine, a truly rare item. Figure 2 shows the stamp.

I immediately sent it to my friend John Bash, the renowned Mexican Eagles expert, and he quickly responded that in his opinion it was perfectly genuine. In fact, he wrote, it was a stamp he did not have in his own collection — nor had he seen an example from this shipment in 30 years of collecting Eagles. This was surprising because at that time he owned probably the most complete collection of Eagles in the world.

He was anxious to have it and offered to trade me three times full catalog from his duplicate Eagles, which he had priced quite reasonably.

Since I felt it really belonged in his collection rather than mine I agreed to the deal. I cherry-picked some lovely items from his stock books and was thus able to add a couple of dozen good stamps to my meager holdings.

John passed away in 1988 and his Eagles were sold at auction shortly thereafter. The 8r Eagle that I had traded him years before was lotted as a single item, and for sentimental reasons I entered a rather generous bid. For some reason, this rare stamp was overlooked by the heavy hitters at that sale and it came back to me well below my top bid.

I guess it proves the point that rare does not always mean expensive, at least if you are armed with both knowledge and patience. ■

Early machine cancellations of Mexico

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Collectors of Mexico usually develop a fondness for 20th-century cancellations, which are found in so many quaint and unusual forms.

At the turn of the century, machine-applied cancellations came upon the postal scene in Mexico and these can be very interesting, too. Furthermore, some of them are just as elusive as their earlier counterparts.

The first canceling machine to be used in Mexico was manufactured by the Barr-Fyke Machine Co. of Kansas City, Mo. Put into service in Mexico City in August 1900, it came equipped with two dies, one to mark outgoing mail, the other to apply a receiving mark.

I do not have examples of these two postmarks, but they are easily described. The regular cancel consisted of single-ring datestamp about 22 millimeters in diameter, followed by 16 vertical bars which formed the killer. Similar marks were in contemporary use in the United States.

The receiving mark had the same circular datestamp, but the first half of the killer contained the word "RECIBIDA" (received), with two horizontal bars above and below it, the final half of the killer consisting of six vertical bars.

The receiving mark is the more common of the two Barr-Fyke Mexico City machine postmarks, although both are quite scarce. These two dies appear to have been used for just over six months before they were replaced.

Part of the reason for this brief tenure was damage suffered when careless mail clerks ran letters or thin parcels containing hard objects through the machines, damaging the printing surfaces.

The replacement dies were of an entirely different style that printed a flag killer with the initials "R.M." (for Republica Mexicana).

Figure 1 shows an interesting 1903 2-centavo postal card bearing two of these flag cancels. The one on the face simply records the origin of the card (Puebla) and the date and time it was mailed. The Mexico City flag

Figure 1. This 1903 postal card received an "R.M." machine flag cancel when it was mailed at Puebla (top) and a Mexico City "R.M." flag receiving mark on the back (bottom), while en route to San Luis Potosi.

cancel on the reverse is the receiving type, used here as a transit mark since the card's ultimate destination was San Luis Potosi.

The flag design proved to be very popular. Within two years, about 10 such machines were in service, mostly in Mexico City and at post offices in other large cities.

This type of flag cancel comes in at least two sizes. The flags on the Figure 1 card measure 15mm in length. On another example I have the flag is only 45mm long. Flag cancellations with the "R.M." inscription are fairly common.

Perhaps the most intriguing of the Barr-Fyke-prepared dies are those that appeared in April 1903, with an open space in the first two-thirds of the flag that holds a brief weather forecast.

Figure 2 shows a tracing of one of these weather-forecasting postmarks, which predicted "Cloudy tomorrow."

The use of these so-called weather cancellations was confined to Mexico City. As far as we know, they were always used as receiving marks on inbound mail, so they usually turn up on the backs of envelopes and cards.

According to records of the Mexican weather service, 40 different killer slugs were created with wording to cover all kinds of weather situations.

Sixteen dies, predicting what the afternoon weather in Mexico City would be, were used to mark mail processed before noon. Another 24 dies had wording to forecast the weather for the following day. (It's unfortunate that we cannot determine how accurate these predictions turned out to be.)

Mexican weather flags have always been popular with collectors, particularly those who specialize in machine cancels. Good, clear specimens can command fairly high prices. But, for some reason or other, 20 of the wording types listed in the records remain unreported.

For those of you who might want to delve into this field in detail, a good reference article by Alicia Gutierrez appears in the April 1988 issue of *Mexicana*.

The weather cancels stopped rather abruptly at the end of 1904, after having been used for about 20 months. This has puzzled stamp collectors, but it may have something to do with the fact that Barr-Fyke lost its support from the U.S. Post Office Department in 1905, and ceased making postal equipment for the U.S. and Mexican markets. Replacement dies therefore became unavailable.

Figure 2. One of 40 special flag cancels designed to mark weather predictions on Mexico City's inbound and local mail. This postmark calls for clouds tomorrow.

Although use of the Barr-Fyke machines persisted past 1905 they were eventually replaced by canceling machines manufactured by the Krag Machine Co. of Oslo, Norway.

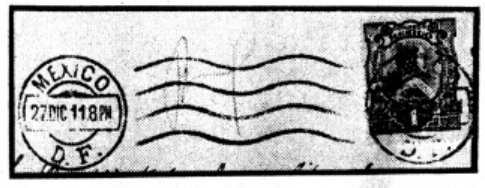

Figure 3. Photographically cropped from a small cover, this postmark shows the continuous pattern of multiple double-ring datestamps and wavy lines that is typical of Krag machine cancels used in Mexico.

The distinctive feature of the Krag cancels is that they run continuously across the card or cover, and consist of a modified double-ring datestamp followed by four (usually) wavy lines.

Figure 3 shows a example of this cancel photographically cropped from a small cover.

Cancels from the Krag machine are rarely seen after 1915, although a few machines continued to be used into the early 1920s. The reason most often given for their disappearance is that World War I made spare parts and maintenance virtually unobtainable.

At least one Krag slogan cancel is recorded, touting a large fair in Guadalajara.

The next generation of canceling machines used in Mexico were those of the Pitney-Bowes Co. of Stamford, Conn., and the International Postal Supply Co. of New York, N.Y. These began to be used in the early '20s.

With the arrival of more modern devices, collectors begin to see more examples of slogan and message cancellations.

This is another fascinating field for collectors of Mexican machine cancels. I plan to take up the story in a future article. ■

Detecting the early forgeries of Mexico

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

In 1984, a year and one-half after I began writing this column for *Linn's*, I devoted two articles to forgeries of the classic stamps of Mexico.

Within the last few months I have encountered several examples of these fabrications in dealers' stocks and circuit books. That is why I feel it is appropriate to review this area now, alerting new readers and reacquainting old ones on the dangers that may be lurking for the unwary buyer.

It's a broad and complicated field, so I'll concentrate on first-design forgeries that appeared around the turn of the century.

Some unscrupulous dealers always have endeavored to fulfill the demand for rare stamps — even if it meant manufacturing them themselves. Because of the low printing quantities and limited use of the high values of Mexico's first and second issues, these 4-real and 8r stamps were frequently the focus of their efforts.

The first deceptive forgeries of these were recognized as early as 1893.

In the *Philatelic Journal of America* for that year, several references can be found concerning "reprints" of the 1856 and 1861 issues of Mexico. Many of these also bore name overprints and cancellations closely resembling those of genuine stamps.

But there were differences, too, which did not go unnoticed by astute collectors.

Figure 1. The paper and color of these forged 1856 stamps do not match those found on genuine copies. The 4-real stamp (left) also is overprinted for use in "OMETEPEC," a non-existent postal district, and the period after "ACAPULCO" on the 8r (right) shows it to be a total fabrication.

Probably the most damaging evidence that something was afoot was a letter received by the prestigious English stamp firm of Stanley Gibbons from a certain Eduardo Cottilla of St. Louis, Mo. He offered to sell Gibbons three original plates prepared for the Mexican first design.

Gibbons rejected the offer, but presumably those plates, plus others as well, found a home elsewhere.

The proffered plates were for the 1r and 2r denominations, which were decidedly common, so there would have been little demand for any stamps printed from them. But plates to produce 4r and 8r stamps would have been quite useful to a dishonest dealer since these denominations were scarce and sought by collectors.

Forgeries soon appeared in quantity in the stamp market at that time.

The flood of fakes was due, in large part, to the lack of knowledge by collectors as to how the first Mexican issues were printed, how and where they were used, the significance of the name overprints, and so on.

This was compounded by the fact that the forgers knew just enough about these details so their products deceived all but the most knowledgeable specialists. Some even suggested that the forgers had help from expert philatelists!

The modern-day Mexico specialist has the advantage of enormous reference resources to help him steer clear of these annoying forgeries.

Throughout the first half of this century frequent articles appeared in the philatelic media on the work of the turn-of-the-century manipulators.

Today we also have competent expertization groups to pass judgment on questionable items.

For the general collector of Mexico, here is a quick rundown of the simple, telltale signs you may recognize when looking at a forged stamp of this era.

As noted, the 4r and 8r denominations of the 1856 and 1861 issues were forged extensively. The ½r stamp of 1861 is also found forged, but not as frequently as the others. The 1r and 2r denominations of 1861 are believed not to have been reprinted, and those of 1856 are so scarce they are rarely encountered.

You must remember that the forgeries we are discussing were printed from original plates believed to have been stolen from the Mexican postal museum — the impressions, although showing signs of plate wear, appear normal.

Therefore, we have to look elsewhere for clues to their illegitimate origin.

In the case of the 1856 stamps, the paper of the forgeries is too thick, too white and too smooth compared to that of a genuine stamp. The forged 4r and 8r stamps in Figure 1 are good examples.

The colors are off as well, and they are less vivid. The 4r reds are dull and the 8r lilacs are decidedly darker and have a muddy appearance compared to authentic examples.

With the 1861 stamps we have an additional feature to help sort the good from the bad. The colored wove paper on which these stamps were printed displays a grain pattern of elongated dots when held to the light.

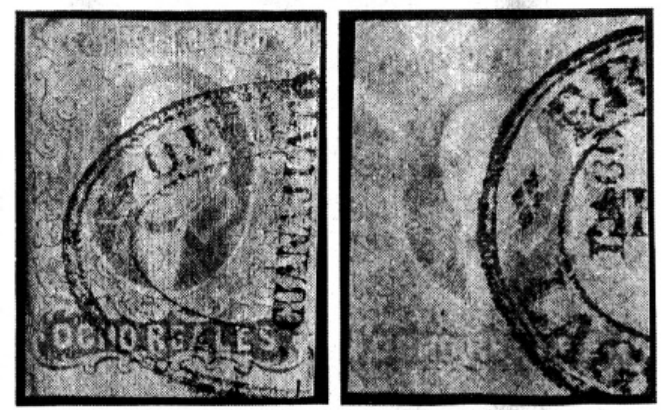

Figure 2. Two forgeries of the 1861 8r stamp. The paper grain of the fake on the left has a vertical orientation; on authentic stamps it is horizontal. The grain of the paper on the 8r forgery on the right is horizontal, but both the stamp's district name overprint and its cancel are forged.

On genuine ½r, 4r and 8r stamps, the orientation of this grain pattern is horizontal. If you have one of these denominations where the grain runs vertically, as it does on the stamp on the left in Figure 2, you can immediately dismiss it as a forgery.

Although they possessed stocks of the original paper, the forgers made a mistake in its orientation when they created their fakes. However, some forgeries are known with horizontal grain, such as the one on the right in Figure 2. For these, other tests must be applied.

Figure 3 shows an enlargement of small portions of the paper from the two stamps in Figure 2, lit from behind to

show the grain of the paper. Its appearance is not unlike that of a piece of household paper toweling.

Again, the grain of the paper on the left is vertical, which is incorrect for this issue. The paper on the right shows the correct horizontal orientation.

On both the 1856 and 1861 issues, the best method to detect many forgeries is a careful examination of the district name overprint and the cancellation.

While the forgers appeared to have access to some of the original cancelers, the district name handstamps had to be created from scratch and exhibit discernible differences from the originals. Many of these are fairly easy to detect with moderate magnification.

The 4r stamp on the left in Figure 1 is overprinted "OMETEPEC." No postal district of that name ever existed, thereby confirming what the paper and color of this stamp already showed — that it is a forgery.

Another characteristic is that the ink used for the forged overprints and cancellations often has a grayish cast to it, distinct from the jet-black inks of the mid-19th century.

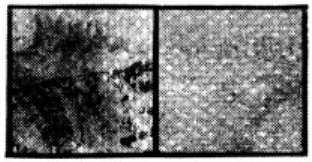

Figure 3. Back-lit enlargements from the stamps in Figure 2 show the vertical paper grain found only on forgeries (left) and the horizontal grain found on all genuine stamps and some of the forgeries as well (right).

You should carefully examine all 4r and 8r stamps from the 1856, 1861 and 1867 issues, but you should be especially wary of those from the smaller district offices. These have always been scarce and some were the object of the forgers' attention.

The forgery on the right in Figure 2 has the correct paper grain for the 1861 issue, but shows both a forged cancel and a forged district name overprint. The right-leaning "A" in the "LAGOS" overprint is a telltale sign.

In all, forgeries are known with names and cancellations from 30-odd districts, many of which were large offices. So a common district name is no guarantee of authenticity, either.

A case in point is the "ACAPULCO" overprint on the right-hand forgery in Figure 2. Though hard to see, the overprint on the 8r forgery is followed by a period. The authentic district name overprint was not.

Dangerous forgeries and manipulations exist of the 1867 reissue of the first design on watermarked paper. These will be dealt with in a future article.

For those of you who wish to delve deeper, I recommend a translation of the chapter on forgeries in Smeth and Fayolle's *Premieres Emissions du Mexique, 1856-1874.* This was serialized in *Mexicana*, the Mexico-Elmhurst Philatelic Society International quarterly, during 1954 and 1955.

The Smeth and Fayolle work, published in 1935, consolidated all the important knowledge written up to that time. Since then new information has appeared from time to time in the pages of *Mexicana.*

In summary, it is probably fair to say that most of the spurious material created by the St. Louis group and their contemporaries has been identified for what it is by honest dealers and collectors and removed from the market. But, as I recently found out, some of it is still at large, and newcomers need to be aware of its presence.

When in doubt, insist on competent certification or the time to obtain an expert opinion before plunking down hard-earned dollars for a seemingly rare stamp. ■

Slogan cancels are fun and affordable

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

If your stamp budget is limited, as mine is, you have to get creative when your collection reaches the point where everything you need costs too much.

Since my retirement a few years ago I have been paying a lot more attention to the 20th-century stamps and postal history of Mexico, a field I almost completely ignored before that time.

Lately I have been searching for Mexican slogan cancellations. By their very nature these are a product of the modern era when machine cancelers came into general use. And, for the most part, covers with slogan cancels are not expensive.

I am far from being an expert on Mexican slogan cancels. However, as near as I can determine, slogan cancels first appeared there in the early 1920s.

In my Feb. 11 column on Mexico's early machine cancels (page 8), I mentioned a slogan used in Puebla on a Krag canceling machine to advertise a fair in Guadalajara in October 1923.

The full wording was "VISITE USTED GRAN/FERIA GUADALAJARA, JAL./DICIEMBRE PROXIMO," or, in English, "Visit the big fair in Guadalajara next December." It's interesting that the promotion was being made in Puebla for an event several hundred kilometers away.

Figure 1 shows a cover with an interesting early slogan cancel used in Mexico City during February 1923.

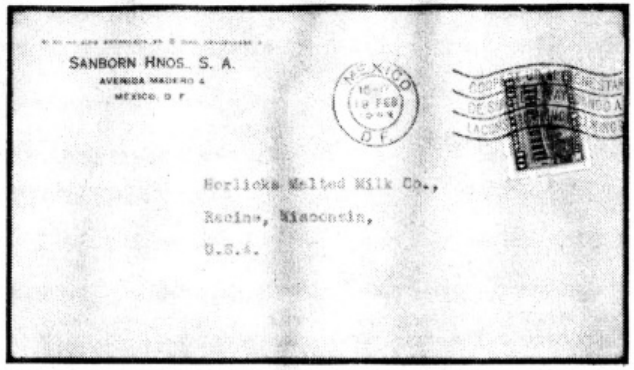

Figure 1. The Mexico City slogan cancel on this 1923 cover translates as urging citizens to "Cooperate in the well-being of your country, assisting in the construction of roads."

The three-line slogan translates as "Cooperate in the well-being of your country, assisting in the construction of roads." Such slogans were used to stimulate public support for an issue of national importance.

A 1927 slogan cancel also applied by the post office in Mexico City translates as "National products compete well with those that are imported." Another nudge in favor of the mother country!

These early slogan cancels generally come in one of two forms. In the first of these, the message is printed between the wavy lines of the killer portion of the cancel, as seen in Figure 1.

The other form has the wording in several rows, with or without separating lines, as demonstrated by the cropped cancellation shown in Figure 2.

The crime-fighting slogan in this Mexico City continuous machine cancel of 1930 admonishes the public, "Don't expose your money by carrying it with you; use postal money orders."

You will rarely find slogan cancels from any but the largest cities of Mexico, even today. Only these centers of commerce and industry generate the volumes of mail to justify the expense of canceling machines and the special dies they need.

Labor was, and is, cheap enough so that the mail from small Mexican towns and post offices was usually processed by hand, and hand cancelers do not lend themselves to the complexities of a slogan or other message.

I have not yet found too many different slogans from the 1930s, but a few I have seen deal with what must have been a serious social problem in Mexico at that time, alcoholism.

Certain meter markings of the era carry the message "Alcoholism destroys the home." Another Mexico City machine cancellation used in the late 1930s and early '40s touts the virtues of temperance.

Figure 3 shows a postcard with this three-line cancel, which translates as "Temperance: for the good of country and the human race."

A 1939 slogan cancel alerted the Mexican population to the upcoming 1940 census.

During the 1940s Mexico's secretary of labor and the social security offices of the federal government publicized their missions with slogan cancellations. Again, these slogan cancels emanated from Mexico City.

Figure 2. This machine cancel warns postal patrons, "Don't expose your money by carrying it with you; use postal money orders."

The Mexican post office also used slogan cancels to try to help solve some of its own problems.

One of my favorites goes like this: "Do not use square envelopes. They are hard to manipulate and can be damaged (by handling)."

This message was used for several years during the late 1940s and '50s, and was, I suspect, aimed at users whose mail would be subject to machine processing. The squarish envelopes popular in Europe were sold widely in Mexico at that time.

Interestingly, I have such a cover from 1927 with the post-office-applied supplementary marking, "REMITA SUS CARTAS IN SOBRES OBLONGOS." This translates as "Send your letters in oblong envelopes," so this problem was not something new.

Another inspired message from the post office beseeched writers to use the correct delivery zone number when addressing letters to the Federal District. This was during the 1950s when the zone system was being established in Mexico.

Tourism received attention in the form of slogan cancels, too. During the years immediately before the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico City, tourists and natives were asked to use and collect the special Olympic stamps Mexico had issued. I have seen this boxed slogan cancel on letters mailed as late as 1971, almost three years after the games ended.

This is a sampling of slogan cancellations I have been able to find while rif-

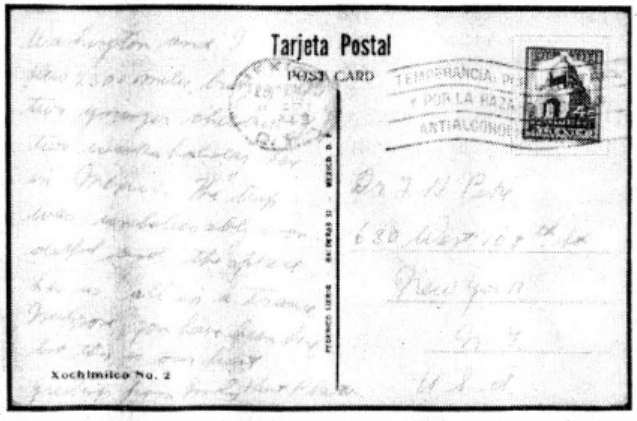

Figure 3. Sponsored by an anti-alcoholism organization, the three-line slogan cancel on this postcard translates as "Temperance: for the good of country and the human race."

fling through boxes of inexpensive covers. As noted earlier, most of the slogans originated in Mexico City, and I am rather surprised at the limited variety I have been able to discover.

It would be interesting to hear from readers of this column of their experiences in this area. It seems to me there should be many more Mexican slogan cancels with different messages used to publicize national interests or concerns.

If you have some favorites and would care to send me clear photocopies in care of *Linn's*, perhaps I can share them with readers in a future article.

Slogan cancels are a field of Mexican philately that provides fun and challenge at a modest cost. ■

What makes this little stamp so scarce?

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Every so often, when scanning the Scott catalog listings for Mexico, one encounters what should be a common stamp that instead has a very high catalog value. Such is the case for Scott 795A, the 15-centavo greenish blue stamp of the 1934 series as reissued in 1946.

Figure 1 shows the stamp. To understand its scarcity, it helps to know the background of Mexico's issue of 1934-50.

This well-executed series of stamps, which features views and monuments of Mexico, had been in use for 12 years by the time the 15c stamp in question appeared on the scene.

There had been numerous printings of the stamps in the series, including the 1937 redesign wherein the five low values were redrawn and printed by photogravure in a smaller 17.5 millimeter by 21mm format (Scott 729-33).

The balance of the set, from the 15c stamp on up, remained in the larger 20mm by 26mm format, as originally printed.

In 1944, Mexico's government printing office began using a new type of security paper for stamps. It was watermarked diagonally with repeating impressions of an eagle in a circle and a two-line "S.H.C.P./MEXICO" inscription in between. Scott designates it as watermark No. 272.

The initials in the watermark stand for Mexico's "Secretaria de Hacienda y Credito Publico" — the Secretary of the Treasury and the Public Debt.

Figure 1. Would you recognize this plain-looking 15-centavo stamp as valuable?

Figure 2 shows the watermark as highlighted on a margin block of stamps. Most of the high values of the 1934 issue were reprinted on paper with this watermark in 1945. These reprints are cataloged as Scott 795-800.

But the 15c and 5-peso denominations were not among these. Presumably, the large post offices in Mexico reported ample stocks of the 15c stamp. It was then being used to cover a new rate that, for example, included surface mail between Mexico and the United States.

In 1946, however, it was discovered that shortages of 15c stamps existed in the smaller post offices of Mexico's interior.

To meet the shortage, completely without warning or prior announcement, the 15c Independence Monument stamp of 1934 was reprinted on S.H.C.P.-watermarked paper and immediately sent out.

It has been suggested that perhaps millions of such stamps were distributed throughout the country, but this estimate may be very much on the high side. In any event, the variety escaped notice by collectors for many months.

No 15c stamps with the new watermark had been given to the philatelic agency at Mexico City's main post office, which is where most dealers and many collectors secured their new issues.

Meanwhile, a new 15c stamp portraying a postman, Scott 825, had been released to meet the heavy requirement for that denomination.

By the time the existence of the S.H.C.P.-watermarked 15c variety was publicized, nearly all of these stamps, issued through normal channels, already had been purchased, used on mail and probably relegated to the trash bin by most of those who received them!

Dealers scrambled to the smaller post offices of Mexico's interior searching for stock and were able to recover a few, but this watermark variety has always been much, much scarcer than the other stamps in the series.

When I began collecting Mexico as a specialty in the mid-1960s, this stamp cataloged about $20 unused and $2.50 used.

I had no difficulty picking up three or four unused copies at about 50 percent to 60 percent of catalog value.

However, I wanted a used copy with a dated cancel — preferably from early 1946 — and that was another matter.

I finally found a canceled copy that shows the major portion of a circular datestamp. I believe this cancel was applied at some town in the Mexican state of Michoacan, but the town name is missing. The date is "13 FEB 46," although the year is a bit indistinct.

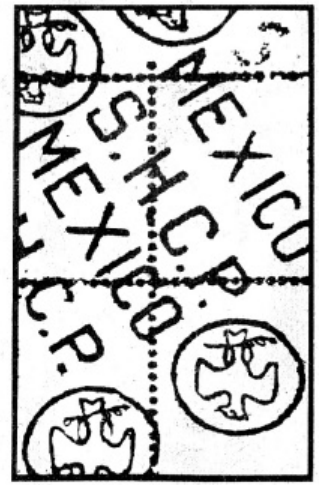

Figure 2. This watermark is what distinguishes the elusive 1946 stamp in Figure 1 from its extremely common cousin first issued in 1934.

Since then I have seen used copies of this stamp, but none with a dated postmark. By contrast, unused copies of Scott 795A are offered regularly at auction but have 5½ times the catalog value of canceled stamps.

Used or unused, the stamp's scarcity has moved the catalog values up rather smartly in the 20-odd years since I acquired my copy.

In the 1988 and 1989 Scott catalogs, the stamp was listed at $240 unused and $35 used. The 1990 price for unused stamps dropped back to $190, but the used value stayed the same. There were no price changes for Scott 795A in the 1991 edition.

If this stamp is missing from your album, now might be a good time to try to get one. I suspect that an unused, hinged copy might be had for in the neighborhood of $125, but you will likely pay near full catalog for a mint, never-hinged example.

Also, if you have access to large numbers of post-World War II covers from Mexico, you might want to check those bearing the Scott A113 design to see if it could be the scarce variety I've described.

Covers likely to bear this elusive stamp will, in all probability, be dated 1946, and most likely will have come from a smaller Mexican town or village.

Off cover, the Figure 2 watermark is easy to see and identify. Detecting it may be somewhat harder if the stamp is on cover, but with good back lighting, it should be recognizable.

Good hunting!

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There was gratifying response to my April 8 column on Mexican slogan cancels (page 8).

Two readers wrote to me directly to report on substantial holdings of slogans. One of these does not even collect Mexico, other than such items as might fit into his worldwide interest in machine cancels.

I am seriously considering the project of preparing a checklist of early slogans and would welcome further input from readers. The cutoff date is undecided, but I will probably include everything I can find up to 1960.

If you have good clear strikes of complete slogans and wouldn't mind sharing them with me in the form of photocopies, I would be happy to hear from you. Send them to me in care of Linn's, Box 29, Sidney, OH 45365. ■

Introduction to Mexican postage meters

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

In recent months this column has discussed the slogan cancellation made possible by the advent of canceling machines in Mexico around the turn of the century. Another example of mechanization that crept onto the postal scene not long thereafter was the postage meter, used by commercial firms handling large volumes of mail.

We are all familiar with the advantages postage meters hold for businesses: no need to stock large numbers of postage stamps with the possible consequences of theft; the ability to rapidly account for postal costs since postal meters automatically tally the amount spent; and the sheer speed with which thousands of envelopes can be franked and made ready for mailing.

The first postal metering machines used in Mexico were supplied by Universal Postal Frankers Ltd., of London, England. It is believed their use began about September 1929, although a November usage is the earliest I yet have been able to find.

Figure 1 shows a typical impression of the town mark and frank from these so-called Midget model Universal franking machines.

Most meters are in red ink and it will be useful to review the anatomy of such markings. In the bottom panel of the frank on the right are two codes: "LIC. No. 58" and "MAQa. No. 2538." These refer to the post office authorizations under which each meter was operated, and are unique to the machine that applied this imprint.

These codes are always present somewhere in each meter mark, and are the means by which specialists differentiate the various manufacturers and types.

The Midget machines were equipped to print different values by changing the value slug in the frank, and 1-, 5-, 10-, 20-, and 25-centavo denominations are known.

In later models of the Universal machines, as well as in those from other manufacturers, the values could be changed by the operation of keys connected to number dials. This permitted rapid and easy changes for different postage rates.

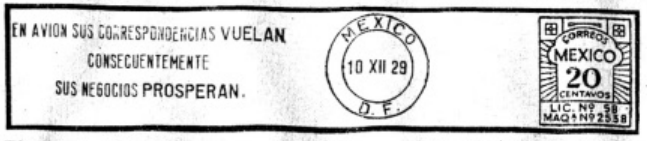

Figure 1. The first meter machine used in Mexico, Universal Postal Frankers' Midget model, applied this Dec. 10, 1929, meter paying the airmail rate to the United States.

Another interesting characteristic of covers bearing early meter impressions is the presence of a supplementary postmark inscribed "MAQUINAS FRANQUEADORAS" (franking machines), which was struck at the main post office.

Figure 2. Handstamps of this type were used on metered mail going through Mexico City's main post office during the early 1930s.

Figure 2 shows one such handstamp from Mexico City. It is presumed that this mark was added to validate the meter frank so that sorting clerks would not reject metered letters as unpaid.

This postmark might also have been a measure to indicate when letters entered the official mailstream, since there could be no guarantee that the date on the meter was the date that the letter was mailed.

A few of the Midget machine meters can be found with a government slogan, usually added to the left of the town mark. The one that appears in Figure 1 touts airmail service as a means for speeding mail delivery (and commercial prosperity).

A second generation of Universal meter machines showed up in Mexico about 1932 and printed the design shown in Figure 3.

The frank on the right is of an entirely different form with a single-circle town mark. The wide setting between the town mark and frank easily accommodates a government slogan that translates as "Visit Mexico: a land of legendary hospitality."

"LIC. No." has been changed to "PERM. No." The private slogan inscription beneath the frank is that of the Bank of London and Mexico, the franking machine owner.

This high-value 75c frank paid airmail postage to Germany, and a different "MAQUINAS FRANQUEADORAS" handstamp is also seen, struck sideways overlapping the frank.

Although I have shown only two typical early designs in this article, the field of Mexican meter impressions is vast and offers almost unlimited possibilities for specialization.

In addition to the British Universal machines, Mexican business firms and government offices also used U.S. and British Pitney-Bowes, German Postalia and Francotype, Swiss Hasler and French Satas meter machines. These can easily be differentiated by the shape and form of the markings and by the various inscriptions they carry.

Slogans, both government and private, are abundantly displayed in conjunction with meter marks. Certain special wordings and pictorial designs are especially sought by topicalists.

Figure 3. This 1933 airmail letter shows the second type of Universal meter machine impression. The slogan between the datestamp and the frank promotes Mexican hospitality.

In such a large and diverse field, it is obviously next to impossible to approach completeness. But a somewhat more limited "type" collection of the various machine impressions is a very reasonable goal, as is assembling a group of different denominations from early machines.

Another interesting pursuit would be a collection showing Mexican meter marks of the 1970s and '80s.

For those who would like to read more about Mexican meters, I recommend a series of articles written by meter expert Werner Simon in *Mexicana* between July 1970 and July 1971.

You might also want to consult *The Meter Postage Stamp Catalogue*, the bible of meters by S.D. Barfoot and Werner Simon, which I believe was published in 1953. It is worldwide in scope but has a good section on Mexican meters up through 1951.

Finally, although early meters can be hard to locate, this specialty will be easy on your pocketbook. The field is legitimate modern postal history and can be very rewarding if you enjoy the hunt for elusive material. ■

Lots to like about San Antonio's Texpex

This column departs somewhat from my usual practice of writing about some stamp or postal history aspect of Mexico. I have just returned from Texpex 91 and thought

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

it would be good to tell *Linn's* readers what an exciting affair it was for those of us who attended. It seemed to me there was something for everyone.

The Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International picked this show, held in San Antonio, Texas, as the site for its 1991 annual meeting. As a consequence, extra effort was made to secure attractions for those members who would attend the June 14-16 show.

Among the more than 400 frames that comprised the exhibition, 100 were devoted exclusively to the stamps and postal history of Mexico. We were able to view some old friends again, such as the single-district studies of Victoria, Monterrey and Chihuahua seen last fall at Chicagopex, as well as a display of the 1914 United States intervention in Veracruz.

All of these exhibits were bigger and better. But there were also some brand new exhibits, too: Jim Mazepa's lovely display of the 1856 issue and Karl Schimmer's "Mexico: Entering the 20th Century." Both of these garnered gold medals at their maiden showings.

Another interesting display was Augusto Eichelmann's exhibit of stampless covers taken from a single archive he acquired from an old hacienda at Rio Verde, in the district of San Luis Potosi. Such finds are truly exceptional these days.

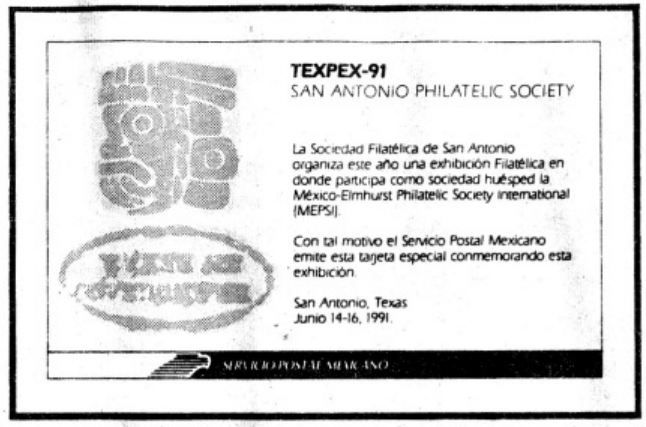

Figure 1. Mexico's postal service issued this souvenir card for Texpex, which took place June 14-16 in San Antonio.

For the collector of the modern era, Carl LeMar John showed 10 frames of first-day covers containing many handpainted cachets. The latter may be one-of-a-kind covers since he has been unable to find duplicates, or anyone who even knows of such items.

The Mexican printing bureau, TIEV (Los Talleres de Impression de Estampillas y Valores) mounted a most interesting display of material from its archives, consisting of full sheets or panes of various engraved postage stamps printed during the 1930s and 1940s.

Texpex showgoers were able to view a full set of the Pro-Universidad issue of 1934 in complete panes up through the 10p surface mail and 20p airmail stamps. This was rather like looking at full sheets of the U.S. Zepps, although the Mexican stamps are vastly more elusive. Only 1,000 copies of the 10p and 1,500 copies of the 20p stamp were sold to the public in all. All the sheets on display had been devalued with a large "MUESTRA" (Specimen) perfin, which touched every stamp.

TIEV personnel were on hand to answer questions and gave attendees a rather attractive souvenir folder containing full-color illustrations of three Pro-Universidad stamps and reproductions of 14 19th-century handstamps used in Texas when it was still part of Mexico.

The Mexican post office, SEPOME (Servicio Postal Mexicano) also sent representatives who sold current postage stamps and souvenirs prepared for the show.

For $2 you could buy the souvenir card pictured in Figure 1. It bears a gold imprint of a pre-Columbian glyph and of one of the early postal handstamps used at Bexar, the Spanish name for what is now San Antonio.

Also available were very unusual booklets — if that's the right word for them — of Mexican stamps.

These were curious items: strips of current stamps torn from sheets and mounted in small cardboard folders decorated with reproductions of two Mexican-Texas letters with Bexar handstamps. Both of the early covers used as models were displayed at the show by the Texas man who owns them.

The back of each folder was inscribed "1492-1992/500 ANOS DEL/ DESCUBRIMIENTO/DE AMERICA" (500 years of the discovery of America), suggesting that SEPOMEX may have future plans for these covers.

A bone of contention with buyers was that the stamps included in the folders had a face value far below the selling price of $4. I should also note that the two booklets I bought each contained five copies of the 1987 Mexican stamp commemorating the Meeting of Two Worlds, Scott 1519. These stamps had a small red overprint commemorating Texpex 91.

In the social arena there were plenty of opportunities to renew old friendships and talk stamps.

Unquestionably, for me, the most memorable event occurred Friday evening. San Antonio dealer Bill Shelton and his wife Betty invited all MEPSI members and wives to a Texas barbecue at their home on the north edge of the city. The photo in Figure 2 shows about 40 of the more than 60 people I counted at this wonderful party.

The entire evening was spent eating a delicious array of typical picnic fare, talking stamps and even dancing to the music of a Texas country combo. And, as if the gods were smiling upon this gathering, as darkness settled we were treated to the spectacular display of a new crescent moon and the rare conjunction of Mars, Venus and Jupiter in a clear western sky.

Mexico collectors who attended Texpex to acquire material were amply served. Fully one-third of the 30 dealers in the bourse had Mexican material for sale and some seemed to be fairly well stocked.

There were two called floor auctions, one of which consisted entirely of Mexico. My observation was that while prices were spotty, the better material, as always, was in good demand and sold well.

I know that many of my *Linn's* readers elect not to at-

Figure 2. Some of the 60 or so Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International members who enjoyed a Friday-night Texas barbeque at the home of stamp dealer Bill Shelton.

tend shows such as Texpex, or to join the organized side of philately for one reason or another. That's fine; one should practice the hobby as he or she sees fit.

But I do want to make the point that an affair such as the MEPSI meeting at San Antonio and the showing of so many Mexican stamps and covers provides a rare opportunity for the serious collector to learn and associate with people pursuing a common interest.

With few exceptions I find that these collectors love to share: their knowledge, their time, their concern, their enthusiasm, and sometimes, even their duplicates.

If you don't already belong, why not consider membership in MEPSI? Write to John Kordich, 1014 37th St., San Pedro, CA 90731. He'll be happy to send you all the information.

Perhaps I'll see you in Guadalajara, the tentative site for MEPSI's meeting in 1992. ■

Questions and answers on Mexican FDCs

In the review of Texpex last month I made note of a Mexican first-day cover exhibit. While I have never seriously collected FDCs, I found this 10-frame showing intriguing in several respects and took the opportunity to visit with its owner, Carl LeMar John.

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

I thought this collecting field would make a good topic for this column, and Carl promised some further information, which I have since received. The subject is much too broad to cover in a single article, but I can at least make a good start at presenting an overview. Besides, Carl's exhibit raised questions that perhaps some reader can answer.

Figure 1 shows the earliest first-day cover in my own small holding. Bearing a copy of the 1-peso Estadistica airmail stamp (Scott C53), the cover was canceled in Tampico Oct. 1, 1933.

The cover is obviously grossly overpaid and is no doubt philatelic even though it appears to have been carried through the mails to its San Antonio destination. Such an item would surely be handled on a hand-back basis today; the stamp is much too scarce to trust to the whims of the postal services of Mexico or the United States.

Figure 1. Only the Oct. 1 Tampico circular datestamp marks this as a first-day cover of the 1-peso high denomination from a three-stamp Mexican airmail issue of 1933.

Note, moreover, that the cover carries no printed notice that it is an FDC. That fact must be determined from the datestamp.

This seems to be the case for most Mexican issues up to about 1950. There was no parallel in Mexico to the FDC craze that swept the United States in the 1930s and '40s.

Another of my FDCs has the 2-centavo stamp from Mexico's 1945 national literacy campaign set (Scott 806). Though it is likewise on a plain envelope, it bears the corner card of a known Mexican stamp dealer and has been stamped "FIRST DAY COVER" in purple ink.

Figure 2. This airmail FDC with a steel-engraved cachet commemorates U.S. President John F. Kennedy's 1962 visit to Mexico.

To mark the centennial of the first U.S. postage stamps in 1947, an international stamp show was staged in New York City. Mexico issued five stamps to commemorate that event and also to honor late President Roosevelt (Scott 826-27, C167-69).

Cacheted FDCs exist with this set, which overpays any rate current at that time. My cover franked with this set (which, incidentally, was sent by registered airmail with a peelable label) shows backstamps of transit through Brownsville, Texas, and a receiving mark of Pleasantville, N.Y. It took three days for delivery from Mexico.

The lithographed cachet design focuses primarily on FDR, but does mention the New York stamp show as well. All inscriptions are in English, though the spelling suggests that the cachet may be of British origin.

According to John's investigation, cacheted envelopes with Spanish inscriptions — either "Primer Dia" (First Day) or "Primer Dia de Emision" (First Day of Issue) — probably came into general use around 1950. I find no evidence in my reference files to dispute this.

The earliest cover in his exhibit with a "Primer Dia" inscription is dated May 21, 1950, and his first "Primer Dia de Emision" cachet dates from December 1956. John is quick to point out that these may not be actual first usages.

Before the 1950s, first-day covers were prepared and taken to the post office for processing, either on a hand-back basis or to be dispatched through the normal mailstream. In the 1960s, however, post office cancelers (usually rubber handstamps) carried specific wording designating them as devices for first-day-of-issue use.

I have a pair of covers franked with the 1960 joint U.S.-Mexico issues commemorating the sesquicentennial of Mexico's national independence.

The Mexican FDC, franked with the 30c surface-mail stamp (Scott 910), is canceled with a large "Mexico D.F." datestamp and a wavy, four-bar killer. Beneath it are the words "Primer Dia de Emision." The envelopes, incidentally, are House of Farnam products with beautiful, steel-engraved cachets.

For President Kennedy's goodwill visit to Mexico in 1962, not only was a special stamp issued, but cacheted airmail envelopes were prepared locally with a steel engraving of the U.S. presidential seal and the words: "Visita Presidencial/29 Junio de 1962/Primer Dia de Emision."

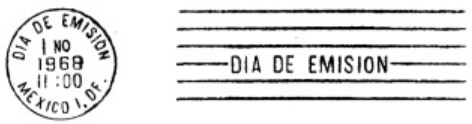

Figure 3. A typical 1968 first-day machine cancellation, with "Dia de Emision" shown in the datestamp as well as the killer bars.

Figure 2 shows an example with a Mexico City main post office cancellation.

A year later, the American Philatelic Society held its 77th annual convention in Mexico City. Another special stamp was issued (Scott 927), and a rubber-stamp canceler was provided with "Primer Dia de Emision" between the killer bars.

Figure 4. This early handpainted Sienra cachet approximates the design of the issued stamp on this vertically formatted FDC for Mexico's 1956 Exmex commemorative. Are Sienra's covers the only handpainted Mexican cachets that have ever been produced?

Also during the '60s the words "Dia de Emision" were inserted in the 22-millimeter circular datestamps then being used, and often in the killer bars as well, for use on FDCs. An example is shown in Figure 3.

As a further variation, killers of this era often carried slogans appropriate to the theme of the stamp issue.

When Mexico issued the 1965 Olympic stamp sets, thousands of cacheted covers were serviced at Mexico City's main post office using a handstamp with a particularly verbose message in the killer portion of the cancel. Unfortunately, the vast majority of these were carelessly struck. It is hard to find a legible example.

One of the interesting parts of Carl John's FDC exhibit is a series of handpainted cachets. They are all signed "Sienra," and cover a time span from 1956 to 1973.

Figure 4 shows an unaddressed, vertically formatted Sienra cacheted cover for the 1956 30c stamp-on-stamp issue (Scott 897). The stamp was issued for Exmex, an international stamp exhibition in Mexico City, and commemorates a century of Mexican postage stamps.

Although they are not common, handpainted cachets have long been a part of the U.S. FDC scene. But these Sienra creations are the only ones of their kinds that any of us have ever seen from Mexico.

In many years of searching, John has found no duplicates of the Sienra cachets. Are they unique? Perhaps one of our readers can help solve this mystery.

Perhaps we can continue the Mexican FDC story in a future column. Meanwhile, input and comments about this special collecting niche are needed, and would be much appreciated. Write to me in care of Linn's, Box 29, Sidney, OH 45365. ■

Mexico's postmarks were first in America

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

On June 19, Soler and Llach of Barcelona, Spain, auctioned perhaps the finest group of Spanish colonial covers from Mexico the market has seen in many, many years. I'm only sorry the catalog arrived too late for me to alert readers in advance.

I am not certain whose collection was sold, but I suspect it may have been that of the noted Spanish collector Fernando Camino Zamalloa. While the scope of this offering included all former Spanish entities in the Western Hemisphere, the section on the viceroyalty of New Spain — encompassing all of what is now Mexico — was especially complete and remarkable.

I recall vividly Camino's magnificent showing of these postmarks in the championship class five years ago at Ameripex. Most of his covers bore clear strikes of these very rare postal markings, and were a joy to see.

From the historical perspective, the formal handling of the mails in America dates back to the 16th century.

In 1580, the fourth viceroy of New Spain (Mexico) appointed Martin de Olivares as correo mayor (chief of mails). In time, de Olivares proceeded to establish post offices in Mexico, Veracruz, and a few other major Mexican towns that existed then.

Carrying mails under the viceroys was a private (and usually lucrative) endeavor — in fact, a monopoly.

Figure 1. Correo mayor handstamps of 1736-66 were used in Mexico before the Spanish Crown took control of the mails. Shown from left to right are markings for Guadalajara, Celaya, Queretaro and Vera Cruz. The latter, 255 years old, is the first recorded postmark to have been used in America.

This system of successive correos mayores persisted until 1765 when Spanish King Carlos III put the mails under control of the Spanish crown, which brought an end to its private character. The last correo mayor was Don Antonio Mendez Prieto.

But before the mails went governmental, the use of postmarks was initiated. The first one of these known dates from 1736, an intaglio device inscribed "COREO/ MAYOR/DE VERA/CRUZ."

Figure 1 shows the design of this postmark on the far right. Experts believe it to be the first postal marking used in the Americas.

In the years between 1736 and 1765, numerous other postmarks were being used at correo mayor offices. Markings from Guadalajara, Celaya and Queretaro, traced from the 1971 edition of *Prefilatelia Espanol* by Jorge Guinovart and Manuel Tizon, also are shown in Figure 1.

Strikes of these quaint and attractive devices from the final years of the correo mayor era have always been eagerly sought by collectors, and are rightfully considered the aristocrats of Mexican stampless markings.

As you might expect, they are both rare and expensive. The Soler sale contained 19 such items, several of which were claimed to be the only examples thus far recorded — truly a formidable array.

One of the prettier items is reproduced from the auction catalog in Figure 2, a 1766 cover from Durango to Mexico City. The Durango postmark is struck in violet.

Rate markings are virtually unknown during the correo mayor period, although a few covers addressed to Mexico City received a large red "2," denoting two reales due.

When the government assumed control of the mail, postal affairs were organized geographically according to regions of local administration, or intendencias, as they were called in Spanish. Thus we have the intendencias of Guadalajara, Oaxaca, Puebla (de los Angeles), Mexico (City), and so forth.

Each intendencia had at least one post office, and there were generally several others in the important towns of the region. They ultimately evolved into the so-called postal districts of 19th-century Mexico.

Like those of the correo mayor era, many government handstamps were fashioned in the form of intricate designs, always popular with collectors.

As the 18th century ended, the number of postal entities was increasing and so was the volume of mail. Consequently, postal markings from 1800-20 — the last two decades of Spanish colonial rule — are scarce but not nearly as difficult to locate as items prior to 1800. Still, examples from the smaller towns that used handstamps can be tough to find.

Rate markings were a hit-or-miss proposition. On most covers bearing them, they are handwritten, though several larger offices had handstamps for common rates, such as "2," "3" and "4."

Considerable mail in Mexico from this period was of an Official nature, and Official handstamps are seen in addition to the town marks.

Figure 2. A 1766 letter from Durango to Mexico City with the only recorded correo mayor postmark from that town.

Figure 3 shows two of these elaborate Official markings, the one on the left dating from roughly 1801, the one on the right from about 1820. These rather ornate markings make for attractive covers to display.

Sometime after 1800 a system of registration was introduced. This required that the front of the letter (or wrapper) be cut from the cover, signed by the addressee and returned to the sender as proof of delivery. Post office monograms usually were applied at the corners and edges of such cutouts.

Registered fronts have always been scarce, and are much desired by Mexican postal history collectors.

As I have noted in previous articles about the early postal history of Mexico, dozens of handstamps from the late colonial era survived to be used long after Mexico gained its independence as a republic. In fact, some devices whose usage can be traced prior to 1820 saw service for decades thereafter.

Correo mayor markings, however, disappeared almost immediately after the crown took over the mails in 1765.

In 1979 Mexico commemorated the 400th anniversary of its postal system by issuing three stamps and a sheetlet, Scott 1192 and C618-

20. The stamps portray the main characters who figured in the royal decree of 1579

Figure 3. Two similar devices used during 1801-20 for Official franking of Mexico's government mail.

establishing the correo mayor: Philip II, king of Spain; Martin Enriquez, fourth viceroy of New Spain; and Martin de Olivares, first correo mayor.

The sheetlet reproduces a 17th-century map of the New World as the backdrop for a simulated stamp showing a contemporary Spanish galleon.

It would be nice if I could sincerely encourage you to be on the watch for letters with markings from the mid-1700s, but it is fair to caution that only a handful of such covers exist. Most are in museum collections, and few reside in private hands.

I hope that the new owners of the elegant correo mayor handstamps just sold in Barcelona will exhibit them so we can view these ancient postal artifacts again from time to time.

If you are really interested in the colonial Spanish postmarks, you may want to secure an edition of *Prefilatelia Espanola*, by Guinovart and Tizon from your favorite philatelic book dealer. It will be expensive, but is very well done and is the definitive work on this subject. ■

Ham radio gives rise to interesting cards

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

This summer I had the good fortune to acquire several dozen ham radio cards that originated in Mexico. I had seen one or two of these previously, but this group gave me the opportunity to learn more of the whys and wherefores of these fascinating items.

The cards I have came from the estate of a gentleman who plied his hobby of shortwave radio operation from about 1937 up to the early 1970s.

Shortwave radio buffs developed the custom of exchanging postcards to confirm their radio contacts and to advise each other of the characteristics of their equipment and the quality of reception. Some of this friendly exchange, I am told, is necessary for the operators to achieve and maintain levels of competency necessary for license renewal and so forth.

Also, much like us stamp collectors, they have a hobby jargon with symbols, acronyms and abbreviations all their own. This permits meaningful communications even when two ham operators don't speak the same language. For example, the number "73," used when signing off a communication, means best wishes.

I suspect philatelic purists will claim there can't be much about ham cards to qualify them as pieces of postal history. But I find them attractive and interesting, and I thought you might like to hear about them, too.

The card illustrated in Figure 1 is typical of the early cards in the group. I believe it was prepared by a Mr. Siringer, the local ham operator, and sent to the station he contacted in Mexico to be countersigned and returned as proof of the radio contact he made Dec. 17, 1938.

The card is canceled in "COL(onia) GUS(tavo)/MADERO, D.F.," a suburb of Mexico City. On the reverse, Siringer took pains to print the call letters and frequency of radio station "XEB/Mexico City, D.F./1030 Kcs."

By international agreement, the letters "XE" were reserved for stations broadcasting from Mexico.

Figure 2 shows an interesting usage of an international postal reply card for the confirming message. Again, on the back of this card, Siringer printed the large call letters for station XEBF, a commercial broadcaster in the city of Jalapa in the state of Veracruz.

The radio station's commercial handstamp was used to sign off, and a two-ring carrier's handstamp in purple, "CARTERO No./7," was also applied on the back of the card.

For some unknown reason, the sender added a contemporary 2-centavo stamp to create what might be called a modern combination cover. I am certain that this extra franking was not required, as there are several other examples where the 2¢ reply card postage was perfectly adequate.

There aren't too many cards from the World War II years, suggesting that Siringer may have been working too many extra hours to spend much time with his hobby.

Most of the postwar cards from Mexico were preprinted by local ham operators, with a somewhat standardized text and spaces to insert the data they wished to exchange with the hams they contacted.

Figure 3 shows a striking example of the front and back of one of these cards.

The Mexican ham operator, Enrique Lobo of Monterrey, uses his surname to advantage in the design of the card face. Lobo in Spanish means wolf, and the card face depicts a wolf howling his call letters, XE2W, with Monterrey's famous landmark, Saddleback Mountain, in the moonlit background.

The card also bears a neat slogan cancel and demonstrates a 2c third-class postage rate that was permitted for ham operators exchanging confirmation cards.

With respect to this special third-class rate, one Mexican ham had a small handstamp made citing the paragraph of this regulation that he applied to cards he mailed to ensure they would not be returned for added postage by some unknowing mail clerk.

Another curious item in the group is a 1939 card Siringer sent to Merida, Yucatan, for confirmation of a radio message. A boxed blue two-line handstamp, with the Spanish equivalent of "X.E.F.C./The Voice of the Yucatan from Merida," was applied to the back of the

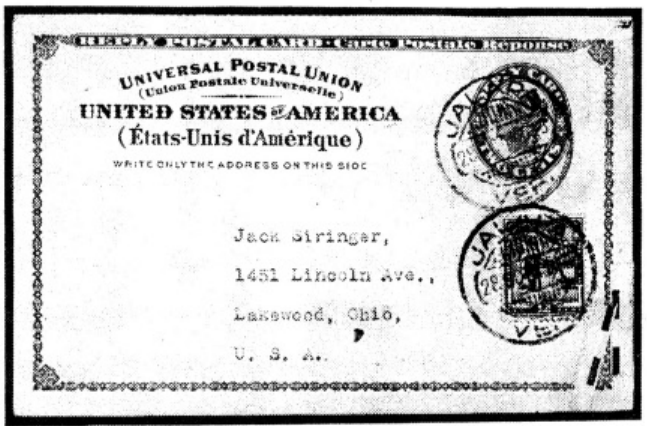

Figure 2. A commercial radio station in Jalapa, Veracruz, added a 2-centavo stamp to this U.S. international postal reply card when it returned it to the United States in 1941.

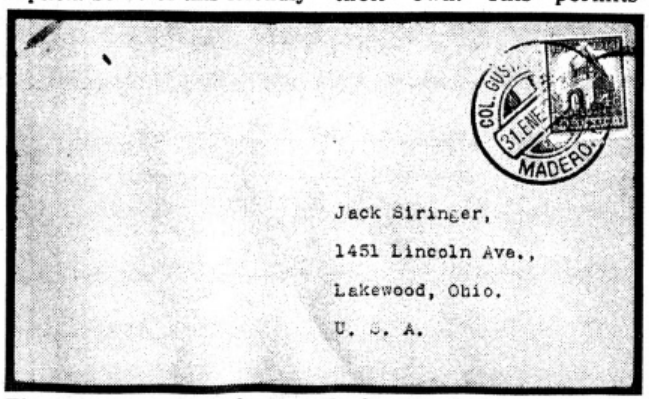

Figure 1. A postcard from a Mexico City ham radio station in 1938 confirming reception by a shortwave buff in Ohio.

Figure 3. The picture (left) and message sides (right) of a card from Enrique Lobo, ham operator of station XE2W in Monterrey. Because this and other ham radio confirmation cards were largely preprinted, they were eligible to be sent at a special 2c third-class rate.

card, which was duly signed. Then this same radio company handstamp was used to cancel the stamp.

There is no post office cancellation. I can imagine the frustration of some future postal historian trying to figure out this pseudo-postmark should the stamp ever become separated from the card.

My batch contains cards from the length and breadth of Mexico, with a surprising number from small cities and towns.

I had not imagined there would have been so many Mexican shortwave radio operators, especially in the late 1930s and early 1940s, when this equipment was scarce and expensive. But I am told it has always been a popular pastime for people in relatively remote areas. One ham operator with whom I spoke thought there may be as many as 50,000 ham operators in Mexico today.

So here's something else to look for when you're riffling through those dealers' boxes at the next bourse. There should be some that date back to the late 1920s if you are seeking an example from the earliest era of shortwave radio in Mexico. ■

Notes on early mail useful to collectors

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

A circuit book that came my way recently contained a group of covers mailed from Mexico City to the mining town of Durango during the final months of 1865.

All the covers were from the same correspondence, and there really wasn't anything special about them from the standpoint of appearance. All bore a common 2-real Eagle stamp of that era, which paid the single-weight rate for the distance traveled.

Figure 1 shows one of the covers. Hundreds of such covers are floating around in dealer or collector hands, and few of them would be the sort of items one would use to enhance an exhibit.

But, as I always do, I carefully opened each one to scan the contents for any unusual information that might be present. All the letters dealt with various business matters between the writer and the addressee, and all had been dutifully docketed by the recipient.

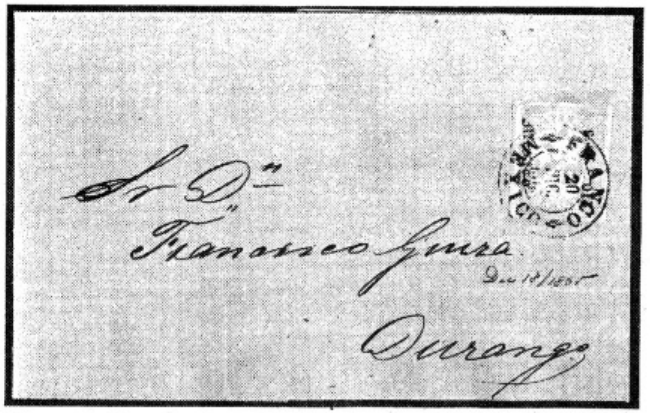

Figure 1. Though of a relatively common type and franking, this letter, written Dec. 18 and mailed from Mexico City Dec. 20, 1865, took the fast route to Durango, traveling in just nine days a route that usually took twice that time.

Docketing refers to the brief notations added to the letter by the recipient. It usually includes the name of the writer, the origin and date of writing (which also is the date of mailing in most cases), the date the letter was received and the date the letter was answered.

Much as we do today, business houses kept their commercial correspondence on file. These brief notations made on the back flap of the folded letter sheets made it easy to locate a given letter for reference at a later date.

Figure 2 shows an example of docketing from one of these covers. The clerical shorthand involved in such notations can initially intimidate some collectors, but it is usually easy enough to decipher with a little patience.

In Figure 2, the top line tells us when and where the letter was written, "Mexico [City] 11 de Noviembre de 1865," and the second line names the correspondent, one "Isidoro de la Torre."

The concluding two lines, "R —— 28," followed by "C —— 1o Dbre.," indicate that the letter was received Nov. 28 and answered Dec. 1.

Docketing also provides useful information to the inquiring philatelist, too, which brings me to the main theme of this column.

I decided it might be interesting to examine the docketing for information on how fast the mail moved in those days, determine the normal days of dispatch and delivery, and so forth.

All five letters in the group were mailed between Oct. 3 and Dec. 20, 1865. They were spread out evenly over the period and, except for one, were sent by the same business firm in Mexico City. I tabulated all the docketed information for easy reference and went to work.

My modern road atlas puts the distance between Mexico City and Durango by the

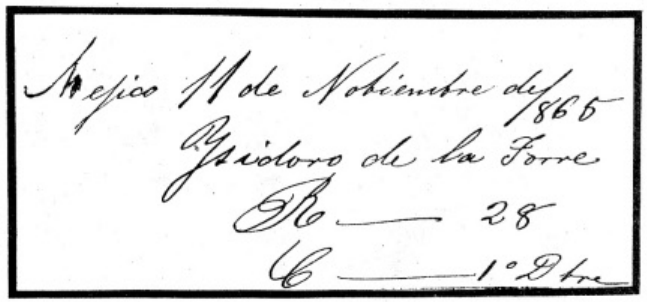

Figure 2. Docketing notes from a cover like that shown in Figure 1. Added to an internal fold of the letter on receipt, dates and other details recorded for business purposes can convey valuable information to the postal historian as well.

most direct route at a little over 900 kilometers, or about 565 miles. A late 19th-century reference states the distance to be almost 1,400km, but this seems unreasonably high in spite of all the crooked roads that existed then.

I also summed up the distances listed between all the major towns along what I believe was the postal route. This came pretty close to the 900km cited earlier, so I used it for my calculations.

These five letters took anywhere from less than two, to slightly more than three weeks, to make the trip.

Three letters required either 17 or 18 days. Of the remaining two, the one shown in Figure 1 took an incredibly short nine days, and the other took 23 days.

Converting this data to speed, we find the mail moved between 40km and 100km per day, or 25 to 62 miles per day — not bad for an era when horses and coaches were the major means of rapid transit.

I'm fairly certain the mail routing for these particular letters followed the central Mexican plateau between the two major mountain ranges and passed through the cities of Queretaro, San Luis Potosi, Zacatecas and thence to Durango.

Even today, there are some difficult passages along the roads connecting these towns. I can well imagine that 125 years ago weather conditions could have made a big difference in the transfer times along the route.

Some other interesting facts also arose from the docketing data. When I checked the dates on my universal calendar, I found that two of the letters were written on Sunday.

This seemed odd, but was soon explained when I found in my files photocopies of contemporary postal regulations showing that mail bound for Durango was received at the Mexico City post office until 9 p.m. on Sundays, Tuesdays and Thursdays only.

In other words, while mail went north from the capital every day of the week, connections with mail coaches to Durango were available only on those three days.

There is nothing in these regulations to indicate when mail arrived in and departed from Durango, but again the docketing provides a clue.

Three of the five letters were logged in by the recipients on Tuesday. Of the other two, one arrived on Friday, the other on Saturday. (The Saturday letter probably was delayed en route or was late in being picked up.)

With respect to the days letters were answered, three were Fridays, one a Thursday and one a Monday. My guess is that the mail coach arrived in and left Durango on Tuesdays and Fridays.

Referring back to the postal regulations, I found that mails from Durango were scheduled to arrive in Mexico City on Thursdays and Saturdays only. That make it pretty certain that Du rango, which had a popula tion of 26,000 in 1888, prob ably had mail service bu twice a week.

I also checked the dates i the Mexico City handstam canceler with a list of vari ous Eagle stamp consign ments to see if there migh be a first-day usage, bu there wasn't.

There were, however, tw letters bearing stamps can celed only two days afte that consignment was put o sale — second-day usages!

In summary, there is a lo of useful evidence to be har vested from a simple three or four-line docketing nota tion on early business letter from Mexico.

Not all covers have thes notations. And, unfortunately in too many cases the inne page of a folder lettershee that bears this informatio has been discarded. But th docketing on those letter that remain intact can be lot of fun to figure out. ■

Early postcards show 1899 stamp designs

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

During the past year a couple of fortuitous finds piqued my interest in Mexico's definitive issue of 1899.

I have found that, for some reason, these stamps seem to have escaped the attention of practically everyone insofar as philatelic research is concerned. In my considerable file of clippings I can find no reference whatsoever to this issue, and virtually nothing exists in the so-called standard philatelic literature.

Most collectors of Mexico probably don't even know that these stamps and the Independence commemorative issue that followed in 1910 were produced by Bradbury, Wilkinson & Co., of London, England. This is not mentioned in Scott; you must consult some of the foreign catalogs to determine this fact.

The 1899 issue consists of 10 denominations, from 1 centavo to 5 pesos (Scott 294-303).

The seven low values, up through the 20c stamp, were printed in a 22-millimeter by 27mm vertical format showing the Mexican Coat of Arms. The 50c, 1p and 5p high values display pictorial scenes in a 35mm by 26mm horizontal format.

These stamps represent outstanding examples of the engraver's art and are a joy to examine under moderate magnification. The printing is first-rate, the perforations are clean and uniform and the stamp impressions are usually very well centered.

Yet, until recently, this was an issue largely ignored by specialists.

In themselves, the designs of the stamps are not remarkable. It appears that a single master die was made for the eagle holding a serpent in its beak, which serves as the central design for the seven smaller stamps, each of which has a different frame.

The subject matter of the three scenic views brings me to the fortuitous finds I mentioned earlier.

Last spring I was browsing through a dealer's small stock of Mexican covers when I came across a postcard mailed from Oaxaca, Mexico, to Belgium.

Figure 1. This 50-centavo stamp from Mexico's 1899 issue (top) depicts a view of the Salto de Juanacatlan waterfall near Guadalajara as it is also shown on a turn-of-the-century picture postcard (bottom).

It bore as a transit marking a strike of a Barr-Fyke "Recibida" machine cancel, which was used in Mexico City around the turn of the century, as detailed in my Feb. 11, 1990, column (page 8).

This caused me to take a second look. The cancellation ran over the edge of the card somewhat but, since I then did not own an example, the price was attractive enough so that I bought it anyway.

Only later did I examine the picture more carefully and realize that it was a photo of the famous waterfall near Guadalajara called Salto de Juanacatlan.

The pictorial side of the postcard is shown at the bottom of Figure 1. The Juanacatlan waterfall was the subject of the 50c stamp in the 1899 issue, which is shown above the card.

A careful comparison of the stamp with the picture on the postcard convinced me that the photo from which the postcard was produced was probably used as the model for the engraved vignette of the postage stamps.

Some of my collector friends argue there must have been hundreds of photos of this landmark — how could I be sure it was the one?

Obviously, I cannot prove this to be the case. But I believe that the perspective, the breaks in the falling water and the plume of mist are too much the same to be mere coincidence.

Unfortunately, the card lacks markings or inscriptions to identify who the publisher was. But, as an added bonus, the postal markings, the routing, the writer and the message proved to be so interesting that I can use it again as the basis for a future article.

A few months after I acquired the waterfall card I found another picture postcard, shown at the bottom of Figure 2. This time the postcard scene is the one depicted on the 1p.

There are three peasants and two burros in the right foreground of the postcard photo, and they have been faithfully engraved in exactly the same positions for the stamp design. There can be no doubt that the photo used for this card was the model for the stamp.

The Figure 2 card bears a number of inscriptions. On the face of the card is a description of the scene, "Mexico. El Popcatepetl." (one of the two dormant volcanoes overlooking Mexico City). Beneath that is the following: "111. La a i y Bert. Apartado 922 Mexico."

Figure 2. The burros and peasants in the right foreground on this postcard showing an inactive volcano near Mexico City (bottom) establish the photograph as the design basis for Mexico's 1899 1-peso stamp (top).

It appears that this card is one of a series published by La a i y Bert., a firm unknown to me. Printed in Spanish and French on the reverse is "Post Card" (at the top) and "Universal Postal Union" (one language along each side). There also is the admonishment that only the address may appear on that side.

I am not sure what the UPU reference signifies; perhaps some reader can help me.

Both of the postcards described here were used during the early years of the 1899 stamp issue. The waterfall card is dated November 1900 and the Popocatepetl card is post-

marked November 1903. And, yes, both cards were franked with appropriate stamps from the 1899 Coat of Arms issue.

You can be sure I am searching for a contemporary postcard depicting the National Cathedral, the subject of the 5p stamp of this issue, to complete the set. The view of the cathedral on the stamp seems to be somewhat stylized, so perhaps I will not find a postcard with a perfect match, but I'll keep looking.

Serendipitous finds like these are perfect examples of why stamp collecting can be so much fun.

I almost rejected the postcard with the Barr-Fyke cancel because the postmark was not complete.

If I had, there could have been no story about the design model, or tracking the journey of the waterfall card, which has given me as much satisfaction as acquiring an example of one of Mexico's earliest machine cancellations. ■

Paper puzzles on 1867 emergency issue

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Four years ago in this column (May 9, 1988, page 34) I wrote about the gothic "Mexico"-overprinted stamps of the first design that were used in 1867-68 after the fall of the Maximilian Empire.

This week, I want to expand on one of the groups of those stamps, the thin-paper printing with the "R.P.S." watermark. These stamps are cataloged as Scott 42-45.

To review briefly the situation in Mexico at that time, the French-supported monarchy had crumbled in the spring of 1867. Maximilian was captured and executed. There were stamps available with the Maximilian profile portrait (Scott 26-34), but it was unthinkable that these be used on the mail of the newly liberated republic.

Postal officials rooted around in the vaults of the printing office and found a small supply of stamps left over from the 1861 issue. Many of these were of substandard quality but nevertheless they were pressed into service.

Most were used in Mexico City, validated with the "Mexico" name overprinted in a gothic font, using the same devices that had overprinted Eagle and Maximilian stamps of the monarchy.

Then there was a new printing of all but the 8-real denomination of the first design on the thin watermarked paper. The quantities of the four stamps reported as having been issued were 15,000 of the ½r, 26,200 of the 1r, 81,320 of the 2r, and 13,470 of the 4r denomination.

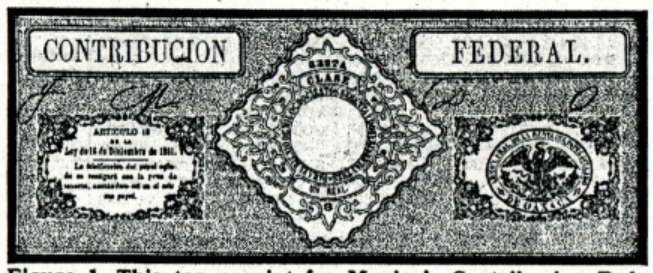

Figure 1. This tax receipt for Mexico's Contribucion Federal of 1862-63 is printed on the same security paper as was used for the emergency stamp issue of 1867, Scott 42-45.

It was certainly not a large issue by anyone's measure.

The watermarked paper upon which these stamps were printed almost certainly came from stock used for revenue receipts, such as the one shown in Figure 1.

The paper is a grayish blue, very thin and shows the characteristic mesh pattern of wove paper. It bears the watermark "R.P.S." in large script letters.

These initials stand for "Renta Papel Sellado," which has no really good English translation other than "Stamped Revenue Paper." Such paper was used for all manner of fiscal receipts and documents, and even for stamps on occasion.

The receipt in Figure 1 is for the Contribucion Federal, a federal surcharge of 25 percent on fees and taxes charged by the states. In this case the state was Oaxaca, the official seal of which is handstamped in the box on the right side of the receipt.

In my 1988 article, I stated that this "R.P.S." watermark appeared once in the center of a sheet of stamps, which accounted for the fact that not all thin-paper examples have a watermark, or even part of one.

This is wrong — or, at least, part of it is.

It is true that not all stamps show evidence of the watermark. But the revenue paper was made so that the "R.P.S." watermark repeats from top to bottom.

When receipts such as the one in Figure 1 were printed in multiple impressions, a complete watermark appeared on each one.

I have a vertical strip of four receipts. In this sheet, which measures roughly 230 millimeters by 370mm, the watermark appears four times. So a sheet of stamps printed from such paper should have had at least three watermarks.

The dimensions of the watermark itself are about 115mm by 35mm. A tracing of it appears as Figure 2.

From the inspection of several receipts, I have determined that the watermarks are about 60mm from the natural edge of the paper and spaced about 60mm apart vertically. With this arrangement, and taking into account the plate layout of the 1856-61 stamps, you should find watermarks on less than half the stamps in a representative sample.

About a year ago, West Coast collector Gene Tinsley and I exchanged notes on these watermarked stamps: what portions of watermarks appeared on stamps, how they were oriented, and so on. Gene was interested in acquiring enough 2r stamps to reproduce the watermark completely, and was well on the way to his objective when we last corresponded.

We discovered that watermark orientation was random. Viewing the stamp normally, we found that the watermark could be upright or inverted, or reversed in those two positions.

We also found that, on nearly all of the 2r stamps we encountered, the watermark touched either on the top half or the bottom half of the stamps.

We surmised that when this paper was positioned in the press, the watermarks were naturally aligned along the horizontal gutters between the rows of stamps.

The only stamp I have seen that lies squarely on a letter in the watermark is a margin copy of a ½r stamp in my own collection. I suspect this can occur with the ½r stamp, and possibly the 4r, too, because of differences in the plate layout for the various denominations.

Figure 2. This "R.P.S." watermark was impressed into the thin security paper that was used by the Mexican government for fiscal documents and postage stamps in the 1860s.

The 1r and 2r stamps were printed from the so-called closely packed plates of 200 and 190 subjects, respectively, while the ½r stamp was printed from an original 60-subject plate with very wide horizontal gutters.

Interestingly, I have yet to see a 4r stamp from this group with a decent amount of the watermark showing. At present, I have no theories on why they seem so scarce.

The majority of these thin-paper watermarked stamps were used on mail. Genuine unused copies of all but the 2r value are quite scarce, and Scott acknowledges this fact with its catalog values.

Multiples are rare as well, and examples on cover are seldom encountered.

Unless you have rather deep pockets, it would be hard to reconstruct the watermark on any but the 2r stamp, used copies of which can usually be picked up for about two-thirds of their $7 catalog value or less. You'll still have to search through a lot of stamps, because more than half will not show any trace of a watermark.

Naturally, I would be delighted to hear from anyone with a holding of these stamps, to learn how their watermarks appear.

If you will send me a stamped, addressed No. 10 envelope, I will send you a full-size reproduction of the watermark illustration in Figure 2, so you can check your own stamps for its location and orientation. ■

Intriguing civil war era mixed frankings

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

From time to time, we encounter covers from the Mexican civil war era that bear stamps of two different issues, and even covers addressed to the United States with U.S. stamps in addition to those of Mexico.

These certainly can be interesting additions to one's collection, but sometimes the explanation of why these mixed frankings came into being is elusive.

The cover shown in Figure 1 is a case in point.

It is a mourning letter from Magdalena, in Sonora state, to Los Angeles, franked with a 5-centavo Transitorio stamp (Scott 369).

These stamps came from a shipment of samples that a youthful George W. Linn, founder of *Linn's*, sent to the rebel Constitutionalist government in his quest for a printing contract to do their postage stamps, as I detailed in my column of Oct. 13, 1986, page 18.

On the Figure 1 cover, the explanation of why the envelope also bears a 2¢ U.S. postage due stamp is fairly simple and straightforward. When the letter crossed the border into the U.S. mail system, the Transitorio stamp was judged not to be valid for international mail, so the item it franked was treated as an unpaid letter.

This handling is typical for many of the so-called local issues, particularly those of northwestern Mexico.

Figure 1. Because the 5-centavo Transitorio was a local issue produced for Mexican rebels, it was not recognized as legitimate franking on this 1914 mourning cover to Los Angeles, and the addressee was assessed 2¢ postage due.

These locals were produced by various factions seeking to unseat the Federal group then in control of the government, and in response to stamp shortages that developed when regular stamps could not be obtained from Mexico City.

Figure 2. Though many such usages were assessed postage due, this 20c Transitorio was accepted and passed serenely through the U.S. mails on its trip to Karlsruhe, Germany.

Mexican locals, such as Sonora's White Seals and Green Seals (321-46), the Transitorios (354-61), the Denver Eagles (386-93) and many of the later civil war overprints, had not gone through the validation procedures prescribed by the Universal Postal Union.

There were no specific directives from the U.S. Post Office Department in Washington, D.C., regarding these issues, so U.S. postmasters along the border were more or less on their own in deciding whether to accept or reject such franking. Many opted for the latter.

There was, of course, no problem if letters bore stamps of Mexico's 1899, 1900 or 1910 issues. These were still perfectly valid for postage — if anyone had a supply of them.

Naturally, there were exceptions to this practice of non-recognition. Occasionally, letters franked only with Mexican local issues went through the international mails unhindered.

Figure 2 shows an example of this in the form of a 1914 registered letter to Germany with a 20c Transitorio, paying 10c for the foreign rate and the 10c registry fee.

A backstamp (not shown here) attests to the fact that this letter crossed into the United States at Nogales, Ariz., and cleared the New York foreign mail office on its way abroad. But I have seen many similar letters where the Transitorio stamps were not recognized.

Mexican mailers of that period tried to cope with these problems in several different ways. Some reverted to a method of forwarding, sending their U.S.-bound letters to friends or agents living on the border who would carry them to a U.S. post office, affix U.S. stamps and send them on their way.

Others were able to secure a small supply of U.S. postage stamps to use in combination with their local stamps, relying on the locals to get their letters to the border and the U.S. stamp to carry them beyond. This practice produced mixed frankings, even if one of the stamps could be said to have had limited postal validity.

Figure 3 shows a cover that displays yet another way to solve the problem.

This letter from Chihuahua to the British ambassador in Washington bears two 5c stamps: one of Mexico's 1910 Independence issues (314) and a 1914 5c Denver Eagle (389).

There is a temptation to say that this cover represents a double-letter rate, requiring 10c postage. But I am convinced that the writer was simply covering all of the bases, ensuring that a letter of some importance to him would reach its destination.

Since the Constitutionalists

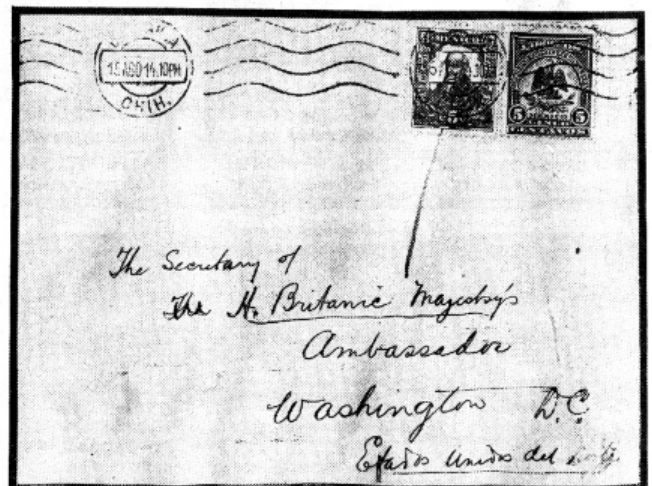

Figure 3. The combination of a 1910 Federal stamp (Scott 314, left) and a Denver Eagle local used by rebels in Chihuahua (Scott 389, right) assured normal handling of this 1914 letter sent to the British embassy in Washington, D.C.

were in control of the state of Chihuahua, they were certain to recognize their own stamp (the Denver Eagle) as valid for domestic carriage as far as the U.S. border, even if they didn't like the Federal stamp. At the border, U.S. postal officials would honor the 1910 5c stamp, which had been recognized by the UPU.

Unfortunately, I could not readily locate a cover with Mexican and U.S. stamps used across the border to show with this article.

I do have one such cover, mailed from Vera Cruz about the same time that the U.S. Marines were in command of the post office there. However, in that instance, I believe that one stamp would have sufficed, because stamps available at the Mexican post office were not considered to be locals.

There are many combinations of the usages described here to be found, which should make the search most interesting. Better still, such items are not so scarce that they are beyond the reach of a collector of modest means.

This situation with Mexico's locals probably spanned a period of about three years, from 1913 to 1916, so there should be plenty of material floating around for the informed and persistent buyer.

I would be happy to hear about any unusual examples that you may possess. Write to me in care of *Linn's*, Box 29, Sidney, OH 45365. ■

Mexican postage due stamps and usages

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Tucked in the back of the Scott catalog listings for Mexico, between the insured letter issues and the Porte de Mar stamps, are five postage due stamps, Scott J1-J5.

These are the only postage due adhesives ever issued by Mexico and, although it appears that huge numbers were printed, they saw only limited use for their intended purpose.

These stamps have been largely ignored in the standard philatelic literature. I could find very little about them in the references and file clippings I have at hand.

Appearing as they did in 1908, in between the 1903 regular issue and the Independence issue of 1910, it is almost certain they were produced in England by Bradbury, Wilkinson & Co., the same firm that printed the regular issues of that era.

Except for the denomination, the design features of all five stamps are identical. They were printed from engraved plates, with an abundance of fine lathe work, a characteristic of stamps of that period.

Figure 1. A lightly canceled copy of Mexico's 10-centavo postage due stamp, Scott J5.

The inscription "TIMBRE" (stamp) appears at the top, flanked by ornate corner ornaments, with "COMPLEMENTARIO" (complementary) in an arc below it. "CORREOS MEXICO" is printed in a wide V pattern beneath the oval that contains the numeral of value.

Standard watermarked paper was used (Scott Wmk. 155). The stamps were perforated in gauge 15.

Figure 1 shows a lightly canceled copy of the 10-centavo high value of the five-stamp postage due set, Scott J5.

Used examples of these stamps are not terribly scarce, but specimens on cover are quite elusive. I leafed through a number of recent auction sale catalogs dealing with mostly Mexican material and I spotted only a handful of postage dues on cover.

Curiously, when cancellation dates were mentioned, most were from 1914, or the early days of the civil uprising in Mexico.

After valuing all five stamps, used and unused, at $2 apiece for some 15 years, the Scott catalog decreased values across the board to $1.25 in 1991, and to $1 in Vol. 3 of its 1992 catalog.

Some time ago, while browsing through a prominent cover dealer's stock, I found and borrowed the unusual cover illustrated in Figure 2, which shows usage of Mexico's postage due stamps on a domestic letter.

The city of origin of this cover is unknown (the postmarks are too faint to read) but the 2c Federal stamp from the 1910 issue would normally have paid the rate for a local drop letter. The 2c stamp is perforated with the initials of the addressee, making the cover, in effect, a prepaid business reply envelope. I suspect it was used in Mexico City.

Figure 2. The perfined 2c stamp on this business envelope was not accepted as valid, possibly because Mexico's post office had changed hands during the chaotic civil wars of the early 20th century. A 4c postage due charge was assessed, paid with a pair of Mexico's 2c postage due stamps.

The "No franqueado" handstamp suggests that the Federal stamp was rejected by the local postal authorities, as would have been quite probable if the Constitutionalists were in control of the post office when this letter passed through.

A 4c postage due charge was assessed. This is confirmed by the "T" handstamp and the addition of a pair of 2c postage dues. I am convinced that the usage is legitimate and an interesting example of postage due use.

General collectors of Mexico probably encounter post-

Figure 3. A 4c postage due with the Carranza overprint.

age due stamps for the first time as they attempt to fill the spaces in their albums that are provided for the civil war issues.

Beginning in 1914, there are at least six instances when these same postage due stamps — obviously in ample supply — were subjected to various overprints and surcharges to substitute for regular postage stamps. The Scott catalog lists these so-called emergency issues as Nos. 381-85, 435-38, 466-70, 495-99, 593-602 and 603-07.

There are plenty of these overprinted varieties available to collectors in unused condition, but if you wish to collect them used, beware of favor cancellations. Covers bearing these stamps should be scrutinized carefully, too, to see that cancellations agree with the historical facts of their usage.

Collectors should also be aware that the 1914-15 monogram and "GOBIERNO/$/CONSTITUCIONALISTA" overprints had mainly to do with validating stamp inventory for whatever rebel force was in control of the post office at the time.

Figure 3 shows one such overprint, the Carranza monogram overprint on a 4c postage due, Scott 497.

The large Hermosillo "GCM" monogram, the Constitutionalist "$" overprint, and the Villa and the Carranza monograms are all associated with the various rebel movements.

The last two groups of overprints used on these stamps in 1916 are actually surcharges, wherein the face values of the stamps were altered to provide for needed stamp denominations.

The reason for this is that during the latter half of 1916, there was such severe monetary deflation in Mexico that postal rates rose sharply to unheard-of levels.

For a brief period during November 1916, the postage for a single first-class letter was $2.50, which probably explains the rationale behind the "GMP/$2.50" surcharges lists as Scott 603-07.

Figure 4 shows the two different types of 1916 surcharges. On the left is a 2c postage due stamp with a 10c violet Barril surcharge (Scott 594), and next to it is a canceled 1c postage due with the "GMP/$2.50" surcharge (Scott 603).

Rates soared even higher as the year ended, but the peso was restabilized in early 1917. This ended the need for the civil war overprints.

Figure 4. Among the many surcharged Mexican stamps created in 1916 was this 10c violet Barril surcharge on a 2c postage due (left, Scott 594) and this canceled copy of the "GMP/$2.50" surcharge on the 1c value (right, Scott 603).

With the return of peace, most of Mexico's manipulated postal paper was declared obsolete, postage had to be paid in hard money and new stamps were soon on the scene (Scott 608-17).

If you enjoy 20th-century postal history, be on the lookout for Mexican postage due covers. An example of one of the surcharged stamps used as regular postage in late 1916 would make a fine addition to anyone's collection.

I would be glad to hear of any unusual covers in this field that the readers of *Linn's* might possess. ■

The 19th-century postal cards of Mexico

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

In the nine years I have been writing this column, I fear that Mexican postal stationery has not received its fair share of attention.

The postal stationery of Mexico has never been a very popular collecting area. This is unfortunate, because there are vast opportunities for serious specialization without a tremendous outlay. Experience shows that postal stationery usually does not command nearly the price levels that stamps on cover do for material of comparable scarcity.

My interest in Mexican postal stationery was piqued a few years ago when I encountered a group of reasonably priced 19th-century postal cards addressed to some rather interesting foreign destinations. I bought several, and have been adding to the pile ever since in hopes that one day there will be enough to put together an interesting exhibit.

So far, my collection is limited to postal cards used prior to Mexico's Civil War era of 1910-14. The cards that I have acquired are the basis of this short review.

Even restricting the focus to postal cards, I find that the scope of the available material is remarkably large and complex.

Most regular stamp catalogs do not list any postal stationery, so a serious collector must find other information sources.

Fortunately, the postal stationery of Mexico is fairly well documented in two reference works: Section 12 (covering nations from Macao to Muscat) of the *World Postal Stationery Catalog* by Higgins and Gage; and the *Catalog of Mexico Postal Stationery* published by the Mexico-Elmhurst Philatelic Society International.

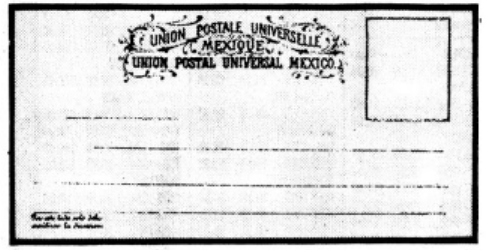

Figure 1. Unfranked formula cards were first issued by the post office in 1879, when Mexico joined the Universal Postal Union.

The latter work, if you can still find it, can be purchased in sections, so you won't have to spend money for what you don't need or want. Either or both of these references are a must if you plan a serious excursion into this area.

The first cards officially printed in Mexico for short communications were formula (also called formular) cards issued in 1879, the year Mexico became a member of the Universal Postal Union. These cards measure 140 millimeters by 70mm, as specified by UPU rules. They have inscriptions in both Spanish and French, and a rectangular box for affixing a postage stamp.

Figure 1 shows an illustration of an unused formula card. According to Higgins and Gage, there were at least 29 varieties. They were widely used for foreign mail, which was, in theory at least, their sole intended purpose.

In 1882 Mexico issued its first denominated postal cards, produced using stamp designs adapted from the postage stamp dies of the Juarez issues of 1879-83. By that time, the new standard UPU size for postal cards was 140mm by 90mm.

Figure 2. When a 2-peso Hidalgo Medallion die (instead of the intended 2-centavo die) was inadvertently used to print this Mexican postal card, authorities salvaged the result by trimming the right edge of the card and the stamped design, including "PESO."

The first of these postal cards had two impressions of the 1-centavo stamp die, making a 2c denomination. Many of these first-issue postal cards received the customary control number overprints of the districts in which they were sold.

Subsequent issues — and there were a great many of them — generally had designs identical to those of contemporary postage stamps, at least up through 1900. So, in addition to the Juarez heads, there are Small Numeral, Hidalgo Medallion, Large Numeral and Transportation issue (or Mulitas) postal cards as well.

For a would-be specialist there are literally dozens of collectible varieties, taking into account the inscription format, size and shape of the Mexican coat of arms, printing varieties and paper colors.

There is even a celebrated postal card error in the Hidalgo Medallion issue, wherein a 2-peso die was mistakenly used instead of the 2c die in one card position.

To compensate for this mistake, issued cards were trimmed so that only the left half of Hidalgo's head remains, the word "PESOS" having been completely cut off. The resulting card is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 3. Inscribed for use within Mexico, this 1896 3c Transportation postal card traveled from Cuernavaca to Alexandria, Egypt.

Since I am more interested in usage than card production, my small holding consists almost entirely of items that have gone through the mails.

The 1896 Transportation issue postal card in Figure 3, for example, though inscribed for "SERVICIO INTERIOR" (domestic use), nevertheless found its way from Cuernavaca to Alexandria, Egypt — not one of your everyday destinations. At the time that it was mailed, the 3c domestic postal card rate in Mexico was the same as the 3c foreign postal card rate prescribed by the UPU.

I have a similar 2c Transportation issue card, with side inscriptions that translate as "Universal Postal Union/ For the United States and Canada."

Like the card in Figure 3, it, too, was used in defiance of its inscribed purpose. The mailer in Tampico simply added a 1c Transportation stamp and sent the card on its way to Renfrew, Scotland, with a handwritten "Via Laredo & N. York" note for its routing.

These intended service inscriptions, added to assist users (and, perhaps, post office clerks) in the proper direction of mail, seem largely to have been ignored, if my sampling of used cards is any indication.

Manuscript routing instructions, however, were frequently added by the mailer to cards and letters. That is the explanation for the "Via New York" note toward the top-left of the postal card in Figure 4.

The card, addressed to Anvers, Belgium, bears 1897 transit marks of both Laredo, Texas (on the message side), and New York City, confirming that this was one of the standard routings for that era.

Figure 4. Transit markings on this card from Mexico City confirm that it passed through Texas and New York City in 1897 en route to an address in Anvers, Belgium.

So if you're looking for something new in Mexican philately, you might want to consider postal stationery.

For the flyspeck enthusiast, there is plenty of opportunity here. And there seems to be quite a bit of unused postal stationery floating around in the stamp market, which should be ideal since there are no postmarks or stamps to obscure the view! ■

Lots of potential in 1899-1903 definitives

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

There is more to be said about the Mexican definitive issue of 1899. I surveyed the 50-centavo and 1-peso values of the series in an earlier column this year in *Linn's* (Jan. 13, page 8).

By way of review, production of this final stamp issue of 19th-century Mexico (as well as that of the Independence issue that followed) was consigned to Bradbury, Wilkinson & Co., the well-known firm of engravers and printers in London, England.

The reason for farming out such an important government responsibility is not readily apparent. It could be that the regime of President Porfirio Diaz, which at that time was at the peak of its power, decided to curry favor with some of its British business friends who were investing heavily in Mexico.

It is also known, however, that the designs of the preceding 1895-98 Mulita definitives had not been popular in some quarters. That issue had been the exclusive responsibility of the local government printing office.

The first seven stamps in the 1899 definitives, up through the 20c value, display the Mexican Eagle Coat of Arms as the central design surrounded by different frames. Typical examples of these stamps are the monochrome 2c and 5c values shown in Figure 1.

The four lowest values were printed in a single color, but the 10c, 15c and 20c were bicolored stamps. This meant that they were more expensive to produce, since two passes through the presses were required.

Figure 1. Single colors were used to print the low values in Mexico's 1899-1903 definitive issue, including the 2-centavo green (left) and 5c orange denominations (right) of 1903.

Figure 2 shows the design of the 20c rose and dark blue bicolor, Scott 300. It is fairly certain that a single master die was employed for the Eagle in all the bicolored stamps, as this design feature is identical for all denominations below 50c.

The three top 50c, 1p and 5p values of the issue were large stamps of horizontal format portraying popular scenes in Mexico.

The Salto de Juanacatlan, a waterfall near Guadalajara, is depicted on the 50c value. A view of Popocatepetl is the central design of the 1p stamp and the National Cathedral is shown on the 5p high value. The latter is illustrated in Figure 3.

In 1903, new printings of certain values were made and a new denomination was added to the set.

The colors of the 1c, 2c and 5c stamps were changed to conform to UPU requirements when Mexico modified its postal rates. The new denomination, a 4c stamp, was printed in red (or carmine, as Scott describes it), when such a value became necessary for certain domestic and foreign rates.

The frame of the 10c stamp, a value mostly used to pay registration fees, was changed from violet to blue.

There was also a subtle color change in the frame of the 50c stamp. The 1899 printings are a reddish lilac while the 1903 stamps are decidedly more red or carmine in color. Genuine 50c stamps from the 1903 printing are definitely more elusive than their 1899 counterparts, a fact rightly reflected in their respective values.

Incidentally, both series are printed on a fairly hard, wove paper, diagonally watermarked in repeating parallel lines with the words "SERVICIO POSTAL DE LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS MEXICANOS." This watermark is usually visible by holding the stamps to a light or placing them face down on a dark background.

Curiously, this issue has not attracted the attention of many exhibitors, even though there are plenty of interesting avenues to pursue and there is a fair amount of rather rare material to search for.

Numerous proofs are available in both the colors of issue and many other shades. There are die proofs with the name of the printing firm inscribed beneath, and others with "SPECIMEN" perfins mounted on card stock.

Figure 2. The 20c rose and dark blue bicolor, Scott 300.

These items are so scarce that on those infrequent occasions when they appear at auction they attract spirited bidding. Some sell for hundreds of dollars.

The Scott catalog lists booklet panes for the 1903 1c, 2c and 5c printings. The catalog values for these items, shown in unused condition only, increased rather sharply about 10 years ago, but have since remained constant at $50 each.

Prepared by hand from sheet stock, these booklet panes are actually much scarcer than the catalog would seem to indicate. A collector would be very fortunate indeed to obtain a pane at even two or three times today's catalog value.

About seven years ago, Bill Shelton, the noted San Antonio dealer who specializes in Mexico, offered a previously unrecorded, unexploded booklet of stamps from the 1899 printing. It contained a pane of six 1c stamps and three panes of the 5c denomination, for a total face value of 96c.

Shelton described the booklet as a major Mexican rarity and the only one known to him in his many years of selling Mexican stamps. I was told this booklet sold for $1,000 against an estimate of $1,250 to $1,500 — still a rather nice realization for a turn-of-the-century item from Mexico.

There are other rarities to be found as well.

Dr. Karl Schimmer, a renowned specialist in Mexican philately, recently formed a rather nice exhibit of the 1899-1903 issues. He titled it "Mexico: Entering the 20th Century."

In his search for unusual and scarce material, Schimmer found a wrapper fragment paying a 21c package rate to a foreign destination with a 20c stamp and a bisect of a 2c stamp!

Figure 3. This 5-peso high value of the series depicts the National Cathedral in Mexico City's main plaza.

He is convinced that the bisect usage is legitimate. If so, this would certainly rate as an outstandingly rare usage in light of the fact that post offices nearly always had a large stock of 1c stamps on hand.

Around the turn of the cen-

tury, various departments of the Mexican government used regular issues with "OFICIAL" overprints.

It is interesting to note that Official stamps of the 1899-1903 issue appear with the "OFICIAL" overprint in two similar but slightly different type fonts. One consists of plain block letters of constant thickness, the other of letters that vary in thickness and have very small serifs.

Both of these overprints are reproduced reasonably well in the Scott catalog's back-of-the-book listings of Mexico's Official stamps. Low value stamps with the two overprint types are shown in Figure 4.

In all, 26 major varieties of Official stamps exist for the issue. They are cataloged as Scott O49-74.

For collectors who want a comprehensive collection, used Official stamps are somewhat elusive but relatively affordable, though a complete showing of all 26 in unused condition catalogs more than $1,500.

But for those who would build a competitive exhibit of this issue, Official stamps must be well represented on cover, too — a far more difficult proposition.

Figure 4. Subtle variations in the typeface used to apply the "OFICIAL" overprints marks these Official stamps as having been produced in 1900 (O49, left) and 1910 (O65, right).

Schimmer tells me that covers bearing these Official stamps are very difficult to find, and those with high values are next to impossible to locate. Generally, these would have been used on wrappers for packets or bundles of court documents, and such items are invariably discarded by the recipients.

All in all, the underappreciated Mexican definitives of 1899-1903 can provide the would-be specialist hours of enjoyment at a fairly reasonable cost, even though completeness may strain the pocketbook and require a lot of patience. ■

Host of gems in sale of rare provisionals

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

In a 1987 column, I reviewed the classic provisional stamp issues of Mexico that appeared after the collapse of the Maximilian Empire in 1867 (*Linn's*, Feb. 9, page 26). That column was followed by a survey of the provisionals spawned by the civil wars of this century (March 9, 1987, page 80).

Except for the very few instances I noted, these 19th-century gems, which are listed at the end of the Scott section for Mexico, are of such rarity that they seldom appear on the market. When they do, they command prices far beyond the reach of the average collector.

Little did I realize that a scant five years later we would be treated to an extensive offering of these items — an array of such breadth that it is doubtful that collectors of this generation will ever again see this many in a single auction.

On June 12, Christie's Robson Lowe of New York held an auction titled "The Emperor Collection of Mexican Provisionals." It consisted of 58 lots of provisionals issued during the period 1856-76.

Unfortunately, the sale catalog arrived too late for mention in my column. But a review of this rare offering is, I believe, worthwhile for fans of Mexican philately.

Figure 1. The 25-centavo Campeche provisional stamp on this 1876 folded letter to Merida was made by applying oval post office and revenue office handstamps to white paper.

From the historical perspective, these provisional stamps were a product of the severe political unrest that prevailed in Mexico at that time. For some 20 years after the first postage stamps appeared, various ideological factions vied for control of the Mexican government. There was also substantial intervention by foreign powers, most notably the French.

This political instability had a profound impact on postal affairs. Postmasters in areas disrupted by these events, and in full compliance with postal decrees, resorted to improvised adhesives or other means of franking local mail when regular stamps were unavailable. These improvisations became known as the Mexican provisionals.

Christie's sale was remarkable in that examples of all the provisionals listed in Scott for that period were present. (The auction catalog, incidentally, was not organized chronologically, but according to the order of Scott listings.)

All prices include the 10-percent buyer's premium.

Much, if not all, of the group that was offered was originally from a collection formed over many years by the late Eric Koenig, a wealthy Mexican businessman. It contained some of the finest known examples of provisional usages.

The sale began with seven covers of the so-called Revolutionary Juarez issue of 1864 (Scott 14-17).

While these stamps may be considered provisional in the broadest sense of the term, they have always been included in the catalog sequence of regular issues. They will be the subject of a future column.

Next came 13 lots of the 1876 provisionals of Campeche, all but five of which were on complete covers.

These stamps, like many of the other provisionals, were produced by making impressions of appropriate handstamps on plain paper, adding desired denominations and perhaps a validating rubric, and then snipping them apart to be pasted on letters like regular stamps.

Figure 1 shows a 25-centavo Campeche provisional (2) on an 1876 folded letter to Merida.

The oval on the right, struck in gray blue, was a contemporary post office canceler. The oval on the left, struck in blue, was a revenue office handstamp.

Two covers in this group did exceptionally well.

A letter to Bordeaux with a vertical pair of the 25c provisional, brought $47,300 against a $30,000 estimate.

Figure 2. This used 1866 1-real provisional of Chiapas includes the vertical district overprint, seen on the right.

The other cover, a local usage to Merida, is one of two known covers franked with the 50c provisional (3). Used in combination with a 10c Hidalgo definitive (107), it sold for $40,700.

The 1866 Chiapas provisionals were represented by 24 lots. These popular items are rather elaborate typeset designs printed on thin paper of pastel shades in ½-real, 1r, 2r, 4r and 8r values.

Figure 2 shows a canceled 1r black on light green paper with a Chiapas district overprint on the right.

Undamaged Chiapas provisionals are exceedingly rare in used condition. Because it was customary to affix the stamps over the closure of a folded letter, they almost invariably were torn when the letter was opened.

Noteworthy covers included the only recorded pair of the ½r provisional (used, incidentally, in combination with a 2r), as well as the unique 5r franking, and a cover with an exceptionally rare bisect of the 8r.

Rounding out the post-Maximilian era small-town provisionals were four lots of the Cuautla adhesives on cover, including multiples, and two lots of the Cuerna-

vaca provisionals.

The 1867-68 provisional issues of Guadalajara were sold as a complete collection. This lot contained about 340 stamps and 56 covers and cover fronts, covering the entire range of values, paper types and colors.

off-cover example of the Tlacotalpan ½r provisional did not reach the reserve price, and the stamp was not sold.

However, the exquisite cover shown in Figure 3, bearing an almost identical copy of the ½r stamp, sold for $110,000.

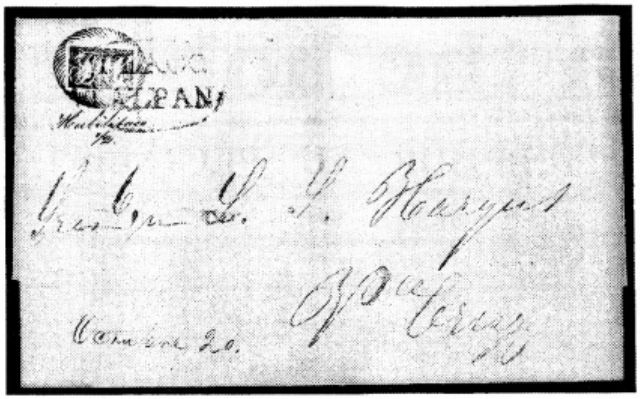

Figure 3. This rare cover bearing the 1856 ½r black Tlacotalpan provisional sold for $110,000 — a new record price for Mexican philately — in Christie's June 12 auction of the Emperor collection of Mexican provisionals in New York.

Estimated at $50,000, the lot was hammered down for $44,000, or more than $100 per item — not too shabby for a group of stamps most of which individually catalog well below that figure!

The spectacular sale concluded with two examples of the legendary Tlacotalpan provisional of 1856.

According to Christie's, bidding on the only recorded

In my memory, this figure has to be the highest amount ever paid for a single philatelic item of Mexico. It would certainly rank this piece among the world's top aristocrats of philately.

Christie's considered this sale as a pioneering effort in a seldom-offered and underappreciated philatelic area. However, it may have been too much of a good thing.

There were a great many unsold lots, reflecting either an over-ambitious setting of reserves, or a lack of interest on the part of those collectors who had sufficient means to acquire such rare and unusual items.

However, Christie's is to be roundly commended for producing an outstanding catalog that can be considered an important reference source for these issues.

Besides sending it to regular clients, Christie's offered free catalogs to members of the Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International who replied to an early announcement of the sale.

I do not know how many took advantage of this generous offer. I did, and I now have a nice addition to my philatelic library.

The catalog contains a map, a short historical sketch of events surrounding these issues, detailed descriptions of the items, including their provenance, and some wonderful full-color photos of many of the items.

There are still copies of the June 12 Emperor auction catalog available for $15, including postage and a list of the prices realized, from Christie's, 502 Park Ave., New York, NY 10022. ■

Controversial stamps from private firms

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Many collectors have noticed rouletted stamps produced by private printers appearing with increasing frequency on mail from Mexico.

Perhaps we can best ease into this sensitive area by reviewing the subject matter of a set of stamps that made its appearance earlier this year. But first, we need to go back and review a bit of philatelic history.

During the 1930s and '40s, while Mexico was struggling to improve its image after the devastating years of civil war, stamp enthusiasts were treated to some interesting and innovative designs from our neighbor to the south.

Social issues, patriot heroes and anniversaries were popular subjects during those years. Long a favorite of mine is the Pro Universidad series of 1934, issued to raise funds for a cash-strapped National University.

Mexico was proud of its cultural and national heritage, and used the postage stamp to advertise this fact to the world. In 1942, for example, the 400th anniversary of Guadalajara, Mexico's largest city, was commemorated with three surface mail and three airmail stamps (Scott 771-73, C120-22).

The stamps were beautifully executed: engraved, carefully detailed and printed in two colors. If you have them in your album, take a moment and examine them under magnification. You will see what I mean.

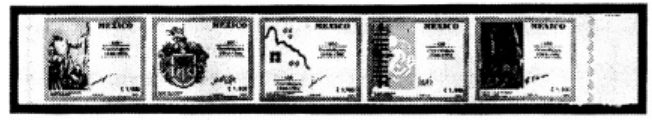

Figure 1. A se-tenant, rouletted, horizontal strip of five 1992 privately printed Mexican stamps issued to mark the 450th anniversary of the founding of the city of Guadalajara.

The designs included a 2-centavo stamp showing the Independence monument dedicated to the memory of Father Hidalgo, a 5c stamp depicting the main entrance to the municipal government palace and, on the 10c, a low-altitude view of central Guadalajara and the city's cathedral, one of the most beautiful in all of Mexico.

The 20c airmail stamp depicts the church at Zapopan, the 40c airmail shows Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, and the 1-peso airmail illustrates Guadalajara's coat of arms.

In 1992, 50 years later, Mexico again issued stamps in honor of Guadalajara, for the 450th anniversary of its founding. This time there are five stamps in a se-tenant strip — three 1,300p and two 1,900p denominations — as illustrated in Figure 1.

These stamps are quite different from their 50-year-old antecedents. First, they are jumbo size (48 millimeters by 40mm) and rouletted. Their appearance contrasts starkly with that of the earlier commemoratives, which measured 25mm by 40mm and were cleanly perforated.

The 1992 stamps are printed in color photogravure on a very white, chalk-surfaced paper. Under ultraviolet light, the stamps fluoresce brightly front and back. Viewed under oblique light, the semiglossy gum exhibits shallow, irregular ridges running in the long direction of the stamp.

The designs chosen for the 1992 issue are reproductions in miniature of artworks that tie in with the city of Guadalajara, presumably from the work of past and present Mexican artists.

Interestingly, however, three of the five motifs on the new commemoratives repeat design material used on the bicolored 1942 set — though not, to my taste, with the same satisfactory results.

Figure 2 contrasts the Coat of Arms stamps of the two sets. The highly embellished 1992 1,300p Coat of Arms stamp (bottom) looks overdone by comparison with its 1p predecessor of half a century ago (top).

Figure 2. A 1-peso airmail stamp from the 1942 Guadalajara issue shows the city's coat of arms (top), as does this year's rouletted 1,300p commemorative (bottom).

In the 1992 issue, Guadalajara's municipal government palace on the stamp second from the right in Figure 1 is depicted sideways, literally standing on end, in order to show the entire facade. Because the other four designs in the strip are conventional in orientation, this one stamp looks unusually awkward.

Finally, a 1992 stamp displays a dark, shadowy rendition of the Guadalajara Cathedral, silhouetted against a night sky with light streaming from its portals.

Figure 3 shows the 1992 stamp on the right. In my opinion, this ominous and rather muddy-looking adhesive contrasts markedly with the handsome 10c stamp of 1942, shown on the left.

Figure 3. A 1942 10-centavo bicolor (left) and a multicolored 1992 1,300p stamp (right). The old and new styles contrast markedly in their rendering of the Guadalajara Cathedral.

The balance of the 1992 set includes a stamp with an allegory of the founding of the city in 1542. It contains three human figures that I take to be a settler, a military officer brandishing a sword and a priest bearing a cross.

The fifth 1992 stamp reproduces a piece of modern art purported to be a symbol of the anniversary. What I see is a squiggly line and four clusters of paint daubs, symbolism I don't quite understand or appreciate.

These stamps, produced by the private printing firm Amate Mexico, get us back to the original premise of this column.

According to reports from Mexico, Talleres de Impression de Estampillas y Valores (TIEV), the government printing office responsible for stamps and other government obligations, has had difficulty maintaining timely production schedules for Mexico's postal service.

Years of inflation have taxed TIEV's printing capacity. Its repeated requests for newer and faster machinery to replace old, overworked presses have been rejected.

As a consequence, contracts were negotiated with Amate Mexico for production of commemorative stamps. From about June 1, 1991, until the end of that year, Amate was responsible for 11 issues involving 40 different stamp designs, including some issues with multisubject sheetlets.

Since Amate has no perforating machinery, all of these stamps have been rouletted in gauge 6½.

To many observers, these

Amate-printed commemorative stamps give the appearance of nothing more than colored labels. Their designs have been roundly criticized.

Furthermore, there are many complaints that preannounced issue dates have been missed in several instances. Yet timely stamp production was the ostensible reason for moving the production of commemoratives from TIEV to Amate in the first place.

At the moment, my information on the deals with Amate is admittedly sketchy. I hope to have much more for a future article.

Meanwhile, it is worth noting that rouletted stamps are not new in Mexico's philatelic history.

The . Transitorio issue of 1914 (354-61) — again a contract printing, by Maverick-Clarke of San Antonio — was rouletted 9½ by 14. Many other local provisional issues were rouletted as well, and even the regular issues of 1915 (500-05), 1916 (608-17), and 1923 (634-41) were first sold rouletted 14 or 14½.

Still, I agree with critics to the extent that modern postage stamps just don't look right unless they are perforated. One thing is certain; we will see many more Mexican stamps from Amate! ■

Pluses, minuses for Mexico in Scott Vol. 3

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Last week, I picked up Vol. 3 of the new 1993 edition of the Scott *Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue.*

Like many collectors, I don't buy one every year, because usually there are not enough price changes to warrant the expense. But this time the revisions for Mexico are fairly far-reaching, so if you haven't bought one for a while it might be a good time to take the plunge.

Now for the good news and the bad news.

I like the smooth, supple paper, and the fact that my softcover edition lies open nice and flat on my desk. I can read the two inside columns (next to the spine) without much difficulty.

A new topical listing up front on the subjects of birds and trains will please thematic collectors.

Referring specifically to the Mexico listings in Vol. 3, I like the idea of putting all the watermark illustrations in one spot at the beginning of the listings. They can be quickly found without the need to riffle through many pages searching for them mixed in with the text — a commendable move!

My criticisms begin with one that I've had for years, and one that unfortunately remains as true as ever.

Several of Scott's watermark illustrations, especially for the Eagle and RM watermark, Scott Wmk. 154, have been reused so many times that they are virtually incomprehensible.

Most of the depictions of the earlier stamps of Mexico have suffered a similar fate. They have lost so much detail, and are so dark, that a beginning collector could have difficulty matching up real stamps with the correct catalog illustrations. And he would certainly not be able to distinguish even the poorest of counterfeits if one were encountered.

Mexico is not the only country for which new art is sorely needed in the catalog. Scott really ought to embark on a program to redo most if not all artwork for stamps and watermarks introduced prior to 1940. There are a few illustrations of stamps since then that could be usefully upgraded, too.

It's probably my advancing age, but the print gets tougher year by year for these tired eyes to bring into focus clearly. I know it's the same size it was 20 years ago, but it still seems too small.

Another observation — neither a criticism nor a compliment — is that in the past 25 years the number of pages devoted to Mexico has more than doubled. Current stamps are bigger, and there are more of them.

And now to the reason that most people buy a new catalog: prices.

At the Mexico-Elmhurst Philatelic Society International board meeting last winter in Guadalajara, San Antonio stamp dealer Bill Shelton reported that Scott had accepted suggestions for about 2,000 value changes in this edition.

Figure 1. Catalog values for Mexico's 1868 Hidalgo issues are extensively revised in Vol. 3 of the 1993 Scott catalog, including significant increases. Values for these used, perforated thin-figure 12-centavo and 25c stamps (Scott 53-54) rose from $3 and $2.25 last year to $6 and $4, respectively.

I certainly did not spend a lot of time counting to confirm or deny this figure but, unquestionably, there are many changes. From my cursory examination, most of those changes in value appear to be upward.

On the other hand, there are some significant reductions in value for some of the benchmark stamps that I always check whenever I acquire a new catalog.

Looking at the classic stamps up to 1867, there are scattered increases (and a couple of decreases, too), mostly among the high values and scarcer subvarieties. Many of the first design Gothic "Mexico" overprints (Scott 35-45) see increases, some of them quite healthy.

It is worth adding that there have been few value changes for most of these early issues of Mexico for several years.

The various stamps of the 1868 Hidalgo design probably underwent the most extensive price adjustments of any group in this period, and most prices went up.

The thin-figure early printings (46-57) enjoy the biggest gains. The 100-centavo brown printed on brownish paper (51) jumped from $800 to $1,200 unused, and from $265 to $400 used. It is probably time these scarce varieties got some of the price recognition that they deserve.

Figure 1 shows used, perforated thin-figure 12c and 25c Hidalgos (53-54).

Even these stamps, which are relatively common in used condition, saw significant increases in catalog value. They rose from $3 and $2.25 in the 1992 Scott catalog to $6 and $4, respectively, in the new 1993 edition.

Catalog values for the handstamped "anotado" overprints (71-80) are likewise boosted by a hefty amount. I'm particularly fond of these varieties because of their role in a postal fraud situation, but they are tricky, too, in that hundreds of counterfeit overprints, in many different types, exist to snare the unwary buyer.

There are a few increases among the 1895-98 Mulitas (242-91). However, the rarest of them all, the Eagle and RM-watermarked 5-peso scarlet Mail Train (278A) holds steady at $10,000.

Some of the scarcer civil war issues go up. Examples are the two top values of the "Victoria de Torreon" overprints (367-68), which enjoy sizable jumps to $1,750 and $2,000, respectively.

Several key stamps of recent vintage did not fare well in this year's listings. Both the 1934 5p and 10p Pro-Universidad surface mail stamps in unused condition fell sharply. The 10p (706) is now $800 unused, a loss of $200 from its previous listing, though the unwatermarked variety (706a) remains unchanged at $350.

The same is true for the Pro-Universidad airmails (C54-61), which catalog less now than they have in many, many years.

I have touted these stamps in this column for their beauty and scarcity, so if you haven't completed your sets, now might be a good time to do some serious shopping. I feel that eventually values for these stamps will resume an upward trend. Remember, there were only 1,000 10p surface-mail stamps printed, and 1,500 of the 20p airmail.

Continuing in the same vein, the Amelia Earhart overprint (C74) lost $250 to drop to $3,000 in unused condition, but held its ground at $4,000 used.

Here again, the official overprinting was strictly limited to 300 stamps, with perhaps 35 to 40 of these used on special flight covers carried to Newark, N.J., by Earhart on the return leg of her goodwill flight. Virtually all of these used stamps would be still affixed to these ex-

pensive souvenirs, with very few loose, used stamps available to fill album spaces.

In a fast pass through the modern commemorative issues, both regular and airmail, I found no price changes, which is not altogether unexpected.

It has been the custom in recent years for Mexico to issue about a million or so of its commemoratives, more than enough to fulfill present and future collector demand. And, obviously, dealer inventories are ample.

In the back-of-the-book category, there was also a lot of

Figure 2. The 1993 Scott catalog features some sizable value increases for Mexican Official stamps, including this "OFICIAL"-overprinted 1-peso definitive from 1900.

price movement, particularly for Mexico's Official stamps, which have been rising rather smartly.

I suspect this may be due to the fact that serious collectors who neglected these stamps, for which Scott album pages have long been provided, are waking up to their possibilities and exerting strong buying pressure on a very limited supply.

Figure 2 shows the 1p Mount Popocatepetl from the 1899 definitives with the diagonal "OFICIAL" overprint added in 1900 (O57). This used stamp went from $7 last year to $10 in the 1993 Vol. 3, a 42-percent increase.

Mexico's Official stamps are another good area to work on if your album is only sparsely filled in this category. I believe that back-of-the-book Mexican material will continue to appreciate in the next few years. ■

Old Mexican mining town still going strong

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Nestled in the mountains to the west and northwest of Mexico City are several ancient mining towns: Angangueo, Ixtlahuaca, Sultepec, Temascaltepec, Tlalpujahua and El Oro de Mexico (the latter now known as El Oro de Hidalgo).

These names, some of them veritable tongue twisters, will probably be familiar to serious collectors of the classic issues of Mexico.

Ixtlahuaca, Sultepec, Temascaltepec and Tlalpujahua are all known as small, independent postal districts that received direct shipments of Mexico's first postage stamps in 1856. However, the number of stamps sent to these offices was in most instances so small that correctly canceled examples with the district names are scarce or rare, off or on cover.

Sultepec, for example, was a principal office for less than two years. Stamps from there are truly rare, commanding high prices whenever they appear on the market.

But this column is about El Oro de Mexico.

Figure 1 shows a picture postcard from the 1940s showing a panoramic view of the town. The discovery of this card gave me the inspiration to explore its philatelic past.

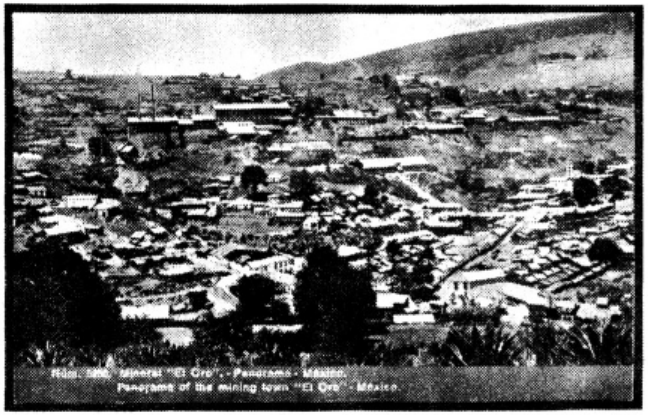

Figure 1. A 50-year-old picture postcard gives a panoramic view of El Oro de Mexico, a mining town in the mountains.

El Oro de Mexico is a mining town located about 56 miles northwest of Toluca, which, in turn, is about 37 miles due west of Mexico City. It is virtually on the border between the states of Mexico and Michoacan at an elevation of nearly 9,000 feet.

The town was named for a mine located in a cluster of rich gold and silver deposits near the town of Tlalpujahua, about 6 miles west.

Tlalpujahua was one of the oldest and most productive mining regions in Mexico. Its La Borda mine, for instance, is reported to have yielded more than $36 million in gold and silver during an eight-year period in the mid-18th century, an astonishing volume of precious metal considering the rather primitive mining methods of that time.

El Oro de Mexico was designated as a sub-office of the postal district of Tlalpujahua, and would have received postage stamps from that office after 1856.

However, the postal historian first encounters El Oro de Mexico in the 1840s and '50s, when the first of several straightline postmarks were used in this small but important town.

Figure 2 is a cover from my stampless collection docketed 1855 and bearing an El Oro straightline. Struck in red, it is typeset in two lines, and reads "M. DEL ORO DEL/E. DE MEXICO." This stands for "Mineral del Oro del Estado de Mexico," which roughly translates as "The Gold Mine in the State of Mexico." (This should not be confused with another town called "Mineral del Oro," which was in the Mexican state of Durango.)

The name was usually shortened to "El Oro de Mexico," later modified to "El

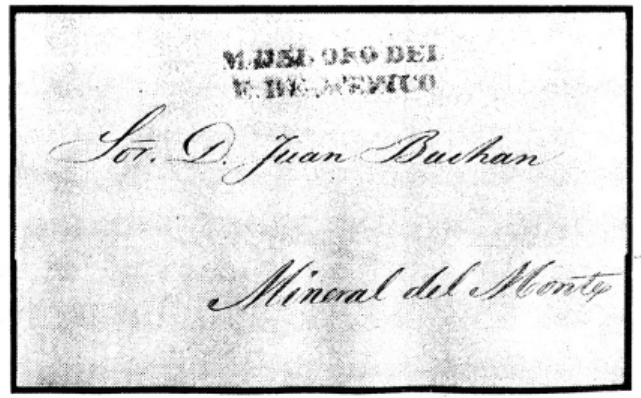

Figure 2. A stampless cover of the mid-1850s with the first style of postmark to be used in the mining town. The red "M. DEL ORO DEL/E. DE MEXICO" handstamp translates approximately as "The Gold Mine in the State of Mexico."

Oro de Hidalgo" in honor of Father Miguel Hidalgo de Costilla, the hero of Mexican independence who appears on so many Mexican postage stamps.

There were other versions of two-line handstamps from El Oro. "FRANCO EN EL/ ORO DE MEXICO" is occasionally found on stamps and covers of the first issue, and "FRANCO EN/MINERAL DEL ORO," was first used on stamps and covers in 1868. These two handstamps from the classic era are depicted in Figure 3.

By 1867, all of the small district mining town post offices I've mentioned had been relegated to sub-offices of Toluca, capital of the state of Mexico.

If you search for cancellations of Mineral del Oro after 1867 or 1868, you will have to focus on material from the Toluca district, and examples won't be easy to locate.

Mining is an up and down business, dependent not only on the extent and concentration of ore veins but also to a great degree on a fickle demand and volatility of world precious metal prices.

Several of the mining towns listed here, such as Sultepec and Ixtlahuaca, ac-

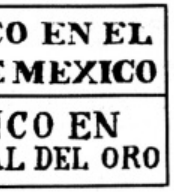

Figure 3. Other early handstamped postmarks used on stamps of Mexico's classic period in El Oro de Mexico.

tually lost population between the mid-1800s when their mines were active, and 1960, the most recent census year for which I have population figures.

El Oro, on the other hand, appears to have survived (if not prospered) as a mining town more or less continually over that time span.

In the mid-1880s, El Oro was home to about 800 people. By the 1960 census, its population had grown to more than 3,500.

The Figure 1 postcard pictures extensive mining works on a hillside above a rather crowded jumble of buildings in the foreground. The church, with its three-tiered bell tower, is seen at the right. More spacious homes (of the mine supervisors, probably) appear on the hilltop above it.

On the postcard, all seems peaceful and quiet.

The card was sent by an American to his girlfriend in Ohio. Unfortunately, the card escaped cancellation, but the stamps and franking amount fix its probable date as just following World War II.

It is obvious that at the time the card was printed, quite a bit was happening in El Oro: the buildings are in good repair; smoke is streaming from the factory stacks; and, with a strong magnifying glass, people can be seen in the streets of the town. I wonder just how much gold or silver was being produced at that time.

Here's another example of how a casual find from a dealer's 25¢ box can lead to a fascinating bit of Mexican postal history.

Perhaps one day I'll do columns on some of the other mining towns I've mentioned, whose stamps and postmarks are so keenly sought by specialists.

I would be glad to hear from any readers who might own cards or covers with El Oro postmarks. Write to me in care of Linn's, Box 29, Sidney, OH 45365.

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New Exportas and a text to go with them

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

When I reworked some of the articles selected for my just-published *Introduction to the Stamps of Mexico*, the folks at *Linn's* thought it would be a good idea to include, as an appendix, an updated version of a checklist I developed some years ago for the Exporta definitive stamps of Mexico.

At the time, my most up-to-date version was dated March 1988, so there was quite a bit of work to do. Many new varieties in the 17-year-old series had to be included in the list.

To make the list as current as possible, I contacted several friends who specialize in Exporta stamps for the latest information they had on the series.

Even as I revised my listings I had some qualms that by the time the book was published new varieties would surface to render the list incomplete. And such has turned out to be the case.

Within weeks after the book went to the printers, my ever-faithful correspondent in Mexico, Guillermo Wilkins, sent me a handful of new Exporta varieties.

Then, just last week, he mailed me a booklet published by the Associacion Mexicana de Filatelia, A.C. (AMEXFIL), titled *Mexico Exporta — Emision Permanente 1975-1992.*

Sure enough, it lists a dozen or so varieties not included in my list. All appear to have been issued within the past three or four months.

1a $1.00

CONDUCTORES ELECTRICOS (caja 37.5 mm.) 1978
Colores azul y naranja
Perforación 14
Papel norteamericano, satinado
Peso 85 grms. x m²
Sin marca de agua
Fosforescencia anverso
Goma brillante blanca y/o crema, sintética
100,000 planillas

Figure 1. The format of data listings in AMEXFIL's new Spanish-language booklet about Exporta stamps of Mexico.

Before I describe these new stamps, I should tell you something about the AMEXFIL publication, which will be a very useful addition to the reference files of Exporta specialists.

Well printed in Spanish and profusely illustrated, its 45 large-format 8½- by 11-inch pages list every major Exporta variety from the inception of the series in 1975 up to approximately August of this year.

This represents 235 surface and airmail stamps (not counting color varieties), one special delivery stamp and 24 postal insurance stamps.

The arrangement may prove to be a little awkward for some collectors, who tend to mount their collections by issues and denominations. Still, it is a straightforward alphabetical listing, arranged according to the design label in Spanish that appears on all stamps and identifies the Mexican export featured in each stamp design.

Abulon (abalone) is first, followed by Algodon (cotton), Bicicletas (bicycles), Cafe (coffee), and so forth.

Figure 1 shows a typical entry from the text.

The numbers to the left of the data block (above the stamp illustration) refer first to the so-called issue, which generally follows the chronological order in which the stamps were produced and put on sale in post offices, and to the paper and gum characteristics by which the groups are generally known and identified.

"No. 1a," for example, means the first issue. The second number is obviously the stamp denomination.

The list of data includes stamp design width, year(s) of issue, color(s), perforation gauge, paper description (including weight per square meter), watermark (if any), ultraviolet light response and gum type.

The final and perhaps the most interesting entry of all is the number of 50-subject sheets that were printed, according to records kept by the Talleres de Impression de Estampillas y Valores (TIEV), the government printing office.

Until now, collectors were unaware that such data were available and could only guess the extent of the stamp printings based on the observed frequency of use for common rates.

On a quick scan of the regular and airmail Exporta stamps, I found that the smallest printing was for the 1978 10-peso Tequila stamp of the first issue.

Only 6,000 50-stamp sheets, or 300,000 stamps in all, are recorded for that run. This 10p stamp has not been particularly difficult to find, although some price lists I have do price it higher than any other stamp in the set.

Several other varieties show printings of 20,000 sheets or less. These are apt to become scarce, too, as dealers' stocks are depleted and collectors begin looking to fill holes in their Exporta holdings.

In all, the AMEXFIL reference recognizes 14 issues, four more than my checklist. But its issue Nos. 11, 12 and 14 are each represented by a single stamp, and most of issue No. 13 is included in my list as a subset of the 10th Exporta issue.

There is really very little to distinguish between the two, only a slight difference in the fluorescent properties when observed under ultraviolet light. The printing, paper and gum are virtually identical, which is why some of us group the two together.

As to the new Exporta stamps, these are mostly denominated in thousands of pesos, presumably issued to match multiples of the postal rates now in effect.

Figure 2 shows seven of the recent Exporta stamps. The new 6,000p and 7,200p denominations, equal to about $2 and $2.30 U.S., respectively, surpass the previous high value of the Exporta series, a 5,000p stamp.

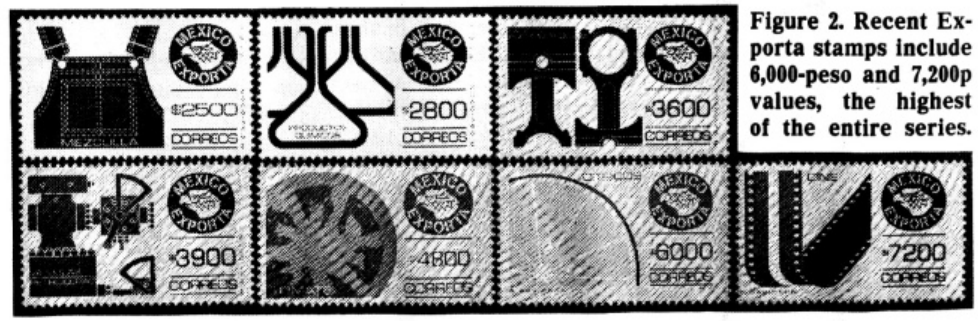

Figure 2. Recent Exporta stamps include 6,000-peso and 7,200p values, the highest of the entire series.

It is interesting that the curved background lines on the 3,900p stamp arc to the upper left, which is the opposite of most previous burelage patterns. And it would seem that these difficult-to-copy patterns, which were once used on stamps with face values as low as 100p, now have been eliminated from all but the very highest denominations.

Although no author is listed in the title of the AMEXFIL booklet — ostensibly it was an AMEXFIL group project — Wilkins comments that Carlos Fernando Teran was the driving force behind this reference work.

Despite minor shortfalls in known data he might have chosen to include, Teran is to be commended for the results of his efforts. I do not know the booklet's cost or

availability at this time, but I will attempt to have this information for my December column.

If, in the meantime, there are readers who can't wait, I suggest you write directly to AMEXFIL, Apartado 1313, 06000 Mexico, D.F., Mexico.

Meanwhile, I will work on my out-of-date checklist and see if I can get an addendum ready in case buyers of *Introduction to the Stamps of Mexico* want an update. I'll have more details soon.

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Mexican socked-on-the-nose cancellations

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Those of you who have followed this column regularly for some time no doubt have sensed my fondness for single stamps or multiples bearing clear and reasonably centered cancellations.

In fact, about seven years ago I wrote an article on socked-on-the-nose (SOTN) cancels. It brought a surprising and gratifying amount of favorable response. I trust my longtime readers will forgive me if I reprise that topic.

Many collectors will settle for nothing less than a "face free" or as-faint-as-possible obliteration, but not I. Give me a good clear SOTN cancellation and I'm ecstatic.

Figure 1. The clearly struck cancellation on this 1856 1-real stamp enhances its appearance, and conveys information about its printing and its probable use as well.

One of the rewards of searching out stamps with SOTN cancels is the postal history information that invariably accompanies them.

Figure 2. A knowledgeable collector will recognize the April 9, 1865, cancel on this Eagle as that of the first day of issue of stamps with this consignment number.

Such cancellations can reveal important facts about the stamps on which they are found, so my preference is for complete circular or oval datestamps whenever they are available. Luckily, Mexico has used many of these devices over the years.

Figure 1 shows a 1-real stamp from the 1856 issue canceled at Mexico City Dec. 10, 1856. From this data we can infer a couple of fairly significant facts.

First, the stamp must be from an early printing of the 60-subject plate, even though this might be obvious to the practiced eye. (Stamps from the large, 200-subject plate were not printed until later.)

Secondly, this stamp was used during the period of the first postal tariff (which ended Dec. 19, 1856), when 1r paid the rate for a ½-ounce letter up to 30 leagues (about 90 miles), or a letter of less than ½-ounce beyond that distance.

Only a few district post offices were supplied with canceling devices with changeable dates during the early period of Mexican stamps.

The post offices that had them were located in larger cities or towns. Guadalajara, Guanajuato, Morelia, San Luis Potosi, Tampico and Veracruz are prime examples. Thus, a small collection of SOTN cancels on the first issue of Mexico would not be an impossible objective.

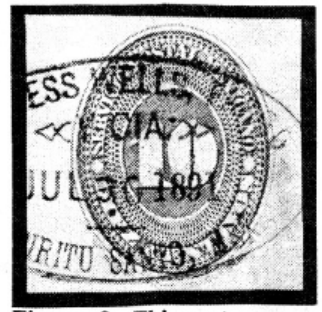

Figure 3. This cut square with most of a Mexican Wells, Fargo cancel shows that SOTN cancels are not limited to adhesive stamps.

Later on, during 1864-67, the stamps of the monarchy incorporate a complication that offers even more interesting collection possibilities. With the Eagle issue, postal authorities began overprinting consignment numbers and year dates on postage stamps dispatched to the various district offices.

Meticulous records were kept of the dates and quantities of stamps in these shipments, and these data are available to the serious collector. Because of this, we know precisely when certain consignments were available at the mail windows in the Mexico City post office.

Incredible as it may seem, it is possible to find examples canceled on the first day that these stamps were put on sale.

Figure 2 shows one of several such examples in my collection, a 2r orange Eagle from consignment No. 60 of 1865. We know that stamps of this consignment were placed on sale first in Mexico City April 9 — the same date that clearly appears in the "FRANCO MEXICO" circular datestamp.

It's always fun to go through circuit books and poke around dealers' stocks in anticipation of locating more such examples.

Cancelers with changeable date slugs became much more prevalent during the last two decades of the 19th century, and the frequency with which SOTN stamps are encountered increases. Such cancels are commonly seen on the Numeral issues and stamps from Mexico's Transportation series, or Mulitas.

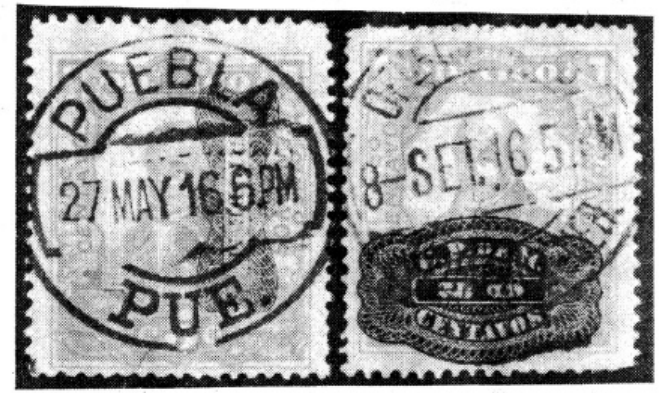

Figure 4. The SOTN cancels on these Mexican civil war-era stamps not only look attractive, but identify them as having been postmarked within their intended period of use.

For specialists, these items can be extremely useful in helping to establish dates when certain watermarks appeared, or in pinpointing when certain paper varieties first came into use.

And don't overlook postal stationery as another potential source of SOTN cancels.

Figure 3 shows a cut square taken from a Mexican Wells, Fargo & Co. 10-centavo stamped envelope.

Although the left side is trimmed so that part of the company handstamp is unfortunately missing, the large portion that remains tells us that the envelope to which it originally belonged entered the mailstream at Espiritu Santo, in the state of San Luis Potosi, shortly after Wells, Fargo opened its express office there.

I often rely on dated cancellations to confirm postal usage during the time that postage stamps were current.

Figure 4 shows two stamps from Mexico's civil war era (Scott 521, 579). With the dated 1916 cancellations they bear, these stamps demonstrate they were properly used during the time they were supposed to be in use.

As specialists know all too well, numerous civil war overprinted stamps, especially the odd denominations, exist only unused, or with favor cancellations.

As the Mexican postal system evolved, so did the complexity of dated cancelers. We frequently find them with

Figure 5. Well-struck postmarks can also identify special postal services. The "AMBULANTE" in the cancel on the left identifies the stamp as having been canceled in a railway post office. "BUZONES," in the cancel on the right, means this stamp franked a letter picked up at a post box.

service-related inscriptions such as those illustrated in Figure 5.

"SERVICIO AMBULANTE," visible in the outer ring of the cancel on the 1929 postal tax stamp on the left, marks it as having been canceled in a railway post office.

In the stamp on the right, "BUZONES MEXICO D.F." in the outer ring of the handstamp indicates that the letter this stamp franked came from a pick up at a Mexico City post box.

Fortunately, much of Mexico's mail was and still is canceled by hand, so the opportunity to find SOTN cancels persists.

It seems as if 19th-century postal clerks took pride in striking stamps squarely with their cancelers. However, in recent years, the combination of glazed stamp paper, smeary inks and careless handling has increased the difficulty in finding clear SOTN markings.

I often have to pick through several hundred stamps before I find a presentable SOTN cancel, like the 1981 handstamp on the 4-peso Exporta airmail stamp shown in Figure 6.

Another interesting twist to the collection of SOTN stamps is to look for dates that have a special personal significance, such as birthdays and anniversaries.

I have yet to find one with the exact date of my birth, but I do own a nice 1865 Eagle with the correct month and day. I have also found stamps with important holiday dates, such as Christmas and New Year's Day.

The best part of all of this is that over the past dozen years or so I have been able to accumulate several hundred stamps with beautifully centered cancellations for practically no premium over what one would expect to pay for lightly canceled or "face free" used copies.

Figure 6. It is tough to find modern stamps with legible Mexican cancels like this one on this Exporta stamp.

If you want a new challenge in collecting stamps of Mexico, look for stamps with SOTN cancels!

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MEPSI has lots to offer Mexico collectors

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Later this month, Jan. 22-24, the Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International will convene at Aripex in Tucson, Ariz., for its annual meeting.

Known by its initials as MEPSI, this international specialist society will be familiar to regular readers of this column as an association of collectors devoted to the philately of Mexico. I mention it quite frequently in my articles because it has played a key role in my development as a collector, and I have consistently touted it as a means for gaining greater enjoyment from the hobby.

It all began back in the late 1930s when a group of stamp collectors in Elmhurst, Ill., near Chicago, started a stamp club called the Elmhurst Philatelic Society.

After a few years, it was decided they might create more interest among members if they could adopt some philatelic theme or central idea to work on cooperatively. It occurred to them that focusing on stamps of one country might be a workable approach, and a committee was formed to study the catalogs and suggest possibilities.

I understand there were several false starts before Mexico was picked, but the selection was made for several good reasons.

First, Mexico seemed to offer something for both well-to-do and less-affluent collectors.

Then there was the vast number of minor collectible varieties, overprints and surcharges, which would appeal to advanced collectors and philatelic scholars.

Further, while there were rarities, most were found to be considerably less expensive than U.S. or European stamps of comparable scarcity. Moreover, the vast majority of Scott-listed stamps of Mexico were within the means of average collectors.

Finally, it appeared that Mexico had been neglected by all but a few serious collectors.

The idea caught on immediately and interest in this concept surged. In fact, it was not long before collectors of Mexico outside of the Elmhurst area heard about the club and began joining. Some of the foremost experts in Mexican philately were among those early members.

In 1952, the club began publishing *Mexicana*, a quarterly journal containing news and research articles about Mexican philately. This magazine, which has been published regularly ever since then, has been the conduit through which numerous important discoveries and theories have been communicated to the membership and the world of philately at large.

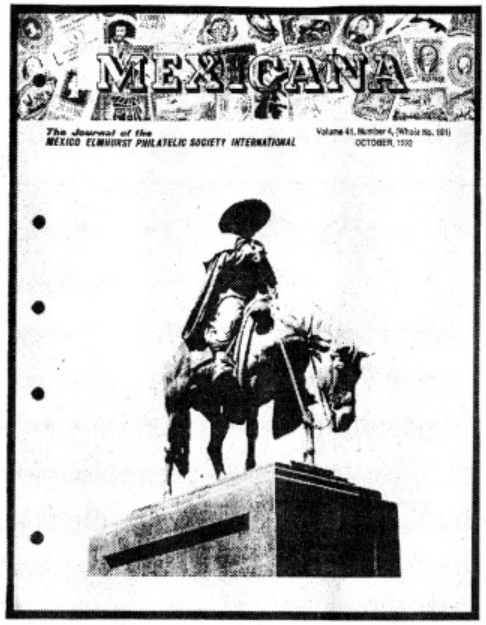

Figure 1. The cover from a recent issue of *Mexicana*, quarterly journal of the Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International.

Figure 1 shows the cover from the final issue of 1992.

Mexicana is recognized as one of the leading philatelic journals in the world and has won many top awards in literature competition. I have always felt, too, that this publication was the glue that has held the group together so well for so many years.

Because of its rapid growth well beyond the environs of Elmhurst, the group changed its name in 1970 to Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International, in keeping with its membership mix and activities. The Elmhurst name was retained in recognition of the society's roots; it also helped make a pronounceable acronym.

By that time many of the original members who had run the organization so well for so many years were retiring and leaving the Chicago area. In fact, MEPSI's center of gravity, as far as membership is concerned, shifted to the Southwest where it remains today.

Current members number about 750, representing collectors in 45 states and some 18 foreign countries. As you would expect, the largest foreign contingent resides in Mexico.

Over the past 25 years or so, the society has published numerous handbooks and philatelic references on Mexican stamps.

MEPSI is currently in the process of coordinating a massive and comprehensive handbook, to be published in sections, covering the whole gamut of Mexican philately. Emphasis is on gathering, correcting and updating all available information on a given subject into one basic source.

Another useful service to members has been MEPSI's expertization service. This came into being in 1971 and has evolved steadily into one of the most widely recognized and authoritative agencies on Mexican stamps and covers in the world today.

MEPSI members have long known how to have a good time, along with transacting necessary society business, at their yearly get-togethers. Some annual meetings have been extraordinarily noteworthy.

In 1960, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the society's founding, the members met in Mexico City. Not only did they secure a private audience with then-president Adolfo Lopez-Mateos, they were able, through some influential local members, to get special postage stamps issued in honor of the event.

Figure 2. These two high-value Mexican stamps were issued in 1960 with a special inscription honoring stamp collectors in red at the top of each stamp on the occasion of a MEPSI convention in Mexico City in 1960. The inscription from the 10-peso stamp has been enlarged for clarity above the stamps.

Figure 2 shows Scott 909 and C249, the top denominations of Mexico's then-current regular and airmail stamps redesigned to include a salutatory inscription. Only 5,000 of each of these stamps were printed and they have long been known in philatelic circles as "the Elmhurst issues."

In 1979, the society again traveled to Mexico City and another stamp was printed to commemorate the event (C605). It depicts a rare cover owned by a MEPSI member.

This year's meeting is bound to be fun. The exhibition will be well sprinkled with Mexican stamps and covers, and auctioneer Nick Follansbee is running a sale dedicated to Mexican material. Two important collections formed by members of the society will be featured in the auction.

Virtually all of the original EPS members have passed on to their ultimate reward, but they organized well. The present society is a monument of their labors.

I had the pleasure of knowing and corresponding with many of the early members. In 1968 I met Byron Stevens, considered the father of the EPS, at Efimex, an international show held in Mexico City just after the Olympics.

If you are serious about collecting Mexico, and are not already a member of MEPSI, I urge you to join. Doing so will enhance your enjoyment, not to mention knowledge, of your chosen specialty.

My membership goes back over 25 years. I honestly don't know how I could have kept going without the association with the wonderful people I have come to know in MEPSI.

Dues are $17 per year, including a subscription to *Mexicana*. Write to John Kordich, 1014 37th St., San Pedro, CA 90731 for details.

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Veracruz 1914 mail was colorful, chaotic

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Inspiration for this column came from a reader's request for information on a postmark presumably used aboard one of the U.S. Navy ships that stood off Mexican shores during the civil uprisings early in this century.

The story of these ship postmarks will have to wait for a future column. Instead, and as an important prologue, let us examine how the United States first became involved with Mexican postal affairs in 1914.

It is not an easy situation to explain in a few words.

In spite of its stated intent to remain neutral in the Mexican situation, the United States became alarmed when Victoriano Huerta (called "The Usurper") seized control in 1913.

Huerta became cozy with the Germans because the United States refused to supply him with arms. As a result, the United States sided with the Constitutionalists, who were attempting to remove Huerta from power.

On April 21, 1914, U.S. Marines landed at Veracruz, seized the customs house, and within a day or so were in complete control of the city and its functions, including the post office. Huerta's forces retired without so much as firing a shot.

And so, between May 3 and Nov. 22, 1914, U.S. personnel managed the Mexican post office in Veracruz.

For readers wanting more details, an interesting summary of this operation was written about two years ago by my good friend and fellow *Linn's* columnist, Richard B. Graham (*Linn's*, April 8, 1991, page 36). I credit Graham with some of the information repeated here, but my emphasis will be on Mexican covers and the collecting possibilities they offer.

H.M. Robinson of the Railway Mail Service in New Orleans was appointed the first professional U.S. mail agent at Veracruz. He arrived there May 3 with a supply of U.S. stamps. These were immediately applied to all mail originating at that office.

Figure 1. Although U.S. stamps and stationery were introduced in Veracruz just 12 days after U.S. Marines captured the city in 1914, Mexican cancels including this duplex handstamp remained in use in early May.

Before U.S.-made canceling devices were available, post office personnel merely continued to use the Mexican cancelers they found there. A May 3 Veracruz duplex handstamp cancels the imprinted design on a 2¢ U.S. envelope in Figure 1.

Around May 10, the first covers were postmarked with U.S. cancelers. There were several types, including a flag cancel, a rectangular box cancel and circular datestamp killer duplexes.

Some of these cancels include the initials "U.S.M.AG., which stand for United States Mail Agency. A mute target cancel also was used, invariably on registered mail.

Figure 2 shows an assortment of four of these U.S. markings used in Veracruz, adapted from Harry M. Konwiser's revised 1946 edition of *Norona's General Catalog of United States Postmarks.*

Postal regulations imposed by the Americans appear not to have been well understood by everyone. This resulted in some interesting covers.

According to a report written by the U.S. consul at Veracruz, mail directed to the interior of Mexico was supposed to have Mexican stamps, and mail to the United States and abroad was supposed to bear U.S. stamps purchased at the post office. Evidence from covers that I have seen indicates that this was the way the system worked at first.

However, one of my references says that mail agent Robinson at one time insisted that U.S. stamps be used on all mail, including letters to domestic destinations. Although this order was later rescinded, one of its consequences was that the Mexican postal authorities outside of Veracruz refused to recognize the U.S. stamps and assessed postage due charges to recipients.

Figure 3 shows one such cover, sent from Veracruz to a bank in Mexico City. The manuscript notation in the boxed handstamp that was added above the address records that this letter was penalized "10 CS.," or two times the normal 5-centavo domestic letter rate.

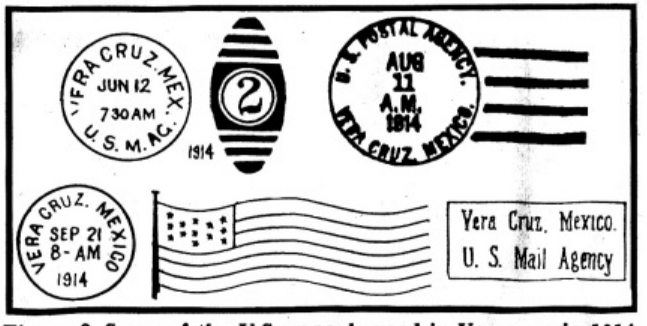

Figure 2. Some of the U.S. cancels used in Veracruz in 1914.

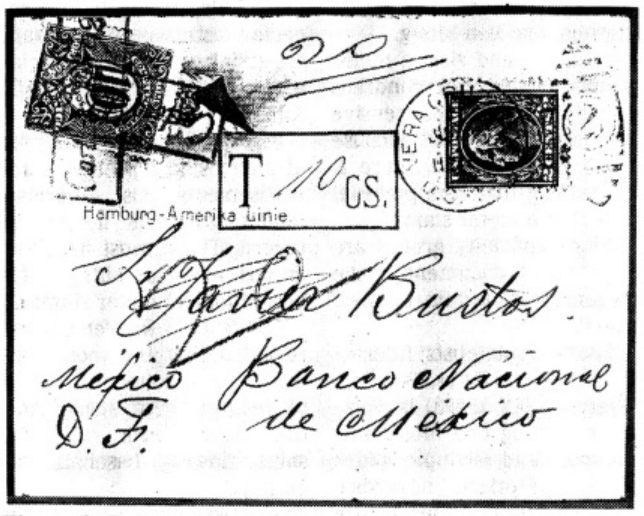

Figure 3. Because Mexico did not recognize U.S. stamps as valid on domestic mail, this cover was assessed as unpaid, and a 10-centavo postage due stamp added (top-left corner).

On the Figure 3 cover, the postage due is paid by the 10c Mexican postage due stamp in the top-left corner. It was canceled by the mail carrier with two strikes of a boxed "Cartero 92" handstamp.

One rarely sees Mexican postage due stamps used on cover. In fact, the majority of Mexican postage due stamp usages I am aware of are from the civil war era, even though the stamps had been issued officially in 1908.

To save their correspondents the annoyance of having to pay for letters addressed to them, many writers in Veracruz bought and used both Mexican and U.S. stamps on domestic letters.

Again, this practice resulted in some very interesting covers with mixed franking. Luckily, these are not so scarce as to be beyond the reach of collectors with limited stamp budgets.

The U.S.-operated post office was a full-service establishment and examples of both domestic and foreign registered mail exist. Insured and certified mail also were handled there, but legitimate examples of these services are a bit more difficult to find and acquire.

The fact that the United States was operating a post office on foreign soil in 1914

certainly did not escape the attention of American philatelists. There are many covers from Veracruz with examples of contemporary commemorative and earlier issues that obviously were not part of the stamp stock taken ashore by Robinson.

Some of the earliest covers from Veracruz bear the hallmarks of philatelic inspiration. It is even reported that stamp dealers sent stamps and covers to friends in the armed forces who were stationed there to be serviced at the Veracruz post office.

The period of operation ended Nov. 22, 1914, when U.S. personnel evacuated the port and its administrative office, taking, as far as we know, all of its remaining postal paraphernalia.

Before concluding this brief coverage of the Veracruz affair, I want to give some credit to Mark Banchik, another friend, who has formed a very respectable collection and exhibit of 1914 U.S. occupation of Veracruz. His study has won some high awards in national competition.

Banchik kindly supplied me with a photocopy of his exhibit. That has been the source of some of the details mentioned in this article, including the cover in Figure 3.

It's not too late to look for examples of this brief event in postal history to round out your collection, whether of Mexico or the United States.

After all, the United States was in charge of Veracruz for seven months. During that time, tens of thousands of letters passed through the city's post office during that period. Happy hunting.

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Key authority on late 19th-century cancels

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Mexican cancellations have always held a great fascination for me. I have dedicated several of my *Linn's* columns to that subject.

This fascination unquestionably underlies a decision I made many years ago to specialize in this country. It also motivated me to form two exhibits that focus directly on postmarks and cancellations.

The beginning of Chapter 6 of my recent book, *Introduction to the Stamps of Mexico*, is really an overview of collecting possibilities of cancellations from the so-called classic period.

One can approach the field by acquiring stampless covers bearing early postmarks, or go after stamps and covers after 1856, when the first adhesive postage stamps appeared.

This latter route, however, puts a serious dent in the pocketbook. This is especially true when all of the common marks have been obtained and the search narrows to those of the smaller postal suboffices.

But the latter two decades of the 19th century, after the end of the so-called classic period, offers an equal opportunity to explore for cancellations with a lot less financial outlay. There is also an excellent chance of finding something new and as yet unrecorded.

This era, from the 1880s to the end of the century, was a time of great change in the Mexican postal system, with plenty of puzzles to work out and explain.

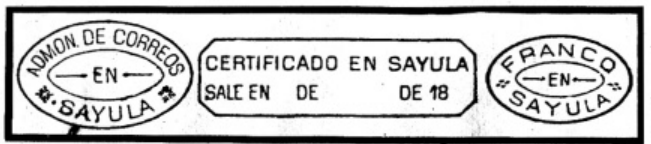

Figure 1. These handstamps from the town of Sayula in the state of Jalisco are typical of the standardized postmarks introduced by Mexico's General Post Office beginning in the late 1870s. The "FRANCO/EN/SAYULA" oval is the marking most frequently used to cancel stamps.

And, as for the earlier periods of Mexico's postal history, we are blessed with excellent reference material.

In 1977 the Mexico-Elmhurst Philatelic Society International published a large work titled *The Postmarks of Mexico, 1874-1900*. Assembled and written by Karl Schimmer, it is truly a remarkable compendium of postal information for the final two and one-half decades of the 19th century.

Among the things that were going on in Mexico at that time that make postmark hunting so exciting was that the country was undergoing rapid growth. Railroads were being built, mines were being opened and industrialization were in 1874, at the beginning of the period covered by the Schimmer book.

There also was a concerted attempt by Mexico's general post office to standardize the shape and form of cancelers.

Figure 1 shows the direction in which this standardization was moving, in the form of three handstamped markings from the town of Sayula. Sayula is located south of Guadalajara in the state of Jalisco.

Each post office was to have at least one device for canceling stamps, and possibly one or two others — a postmark for Official correspondence, and a postmark for registry items. These devices were to be made for and distributed from the Mexico City General Post Office.

But some changes occur slowly in Mexico. Many smaller, older towns did not receive new handstamps promptly, and continued using their stampless era postmarks as cancelers.

It's always exciting to find a stamp or cover canceled in a small town in the 1890s or even the early 1900s, bearing one of the familiar handstamps of Mexico's classic era.

Other postal changes gave rise to interesting postmarks, too. A great deal of mail of this period was handled by contractors — privately owned railroads, steamships, express companies, and so forth.

Figure 2. Postmarks used by private-contract mail carriers in Mexico, including a Wells, Fargo marking from San Luis Potosi and one from the steamship *City of Alexandria*.

Such mail is often graced with distinctive markings, such as the magenta ovals of Wells, Fargo y Cia., which had dozens of offices along Mexico's west coast, or the handstamps used by the steamships ("vapores") that plied the coastal waters of Mexico and carried mail. Examples of both types of markings are shown in Figure 2.

Larger cities created branch post offices ("sucursales") and placed post boxes ("buzones") in busy neighborhoods for the convenience of postal customers. Mail deposited in these facilities often bore postmarks noting that fact, including those shown in Figure 3.

Schimmer's bilingual book handily guides one through the intricate postal workings of the era. While most of its 472 pages are devoted to the reproduction of postal markings, the stamp issues on which they are found and their relative scarcity, there is a wealth of information on post office operation, rates and mail routes.

Postmarks are grouped geographically by states (the headings read "estado"), as opposed to the postal district arrangement used in earlier postal history studies.

There is also a series of state maps taken from original sources that show mail routes, and how the mail was carried by foot, horseback, coach or rail. These maps are even useful to students of the classic era, because they locate small towns often missing on many larger maps.

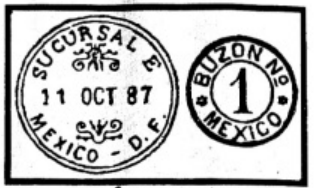

Figure 3. Markings used on mail deposited at Mexico City branch post offices (left) and street mailboxes.

As Schimmer stated in his introduction, a catalog like this one can never be said to be complete. Schimmer urged readers to report new findings, which he would publish from time to time in the MEPSI journal, *Mexicana*.

Apparently, collectors have had a field day searching out new entries to add to the 4,000-odd that were in the original book. Since January 1978, more than 100 pages of additions, corrections and modifications have appeared.

I'm confident there are still more to be found, each one a fresh opportunity to experience the thrill of finding something previously unrecorded in the philately of Mexico!

Schimmer's remarkable book is still available from MEPSI for $50, a wonderful investment for anyone intent on exploring the postal his-

tory of late 19th century Mexico. And there is a 20 percent discount for MEPSI members — surely an incentive for those readers who have not previously heeded my recommendation to join this group.

Book buyers should write Carl LeMar John, 5063 E. North Regency Circle, Tucson, AZ 85711-3000 for details. For information on MEPSI membership, contact John Kordich, 1014 37th St., San Pedro, CA 90731.

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Enjoy the engraving detail on your stamps

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

How long has it been since you've looked at your stamps? I mean really looked at them, with an 8x loupe, or even something stronger?

Most of us grab a glass when we're trying to check for a hairline plate crack or a double transfer, but I'm not sure too many of us gaze at the fine detail of an ordinary engraved stamp under moderate magnification just to see what's there. Perhaps all those years our stamps have reposed in their albums there's something we've missed seeing.

I write this as the blizzard of '93 swirls about the house, and I needed an excuse to take a trip to sunny Mexico, where it's usually very pleasant this time of year. So I started by checking some of the engraved regular issue stamps of the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s that portray many of the sights tourists spend a fortune nowadays to visit.

The Mexican government printing office that was responsible for producing stamps and other revenue paper employed some very good engravers in those days, and their work deserves close inspection, if not admiration.

Take, for example, the 40-centavo slate-colored map stamp of 1915, Scott 512, illustrated in Figure 1. If you have a cleanly printed copy you will be amazed at the amount of detail visible under 8x magnification. Boundaries

Figure 1. A remarkably detailed engraved map of Mexico is the featured design of Mexico Scott 512.

of all Mexican states appear with their names, albeit often in abbreviated form. The major rail lines and steamship routes are clearly shown. In fact, one could almost use it for a tour map through the country.

When this stamp was reissued in 1923 in violet (Scott 647), some of its companions in the set were famous statues and other attractions frequently visited by tourists. The Chapultepec Castle and the Pyramid of the Sun at Teotihuacan are beautifully reproduced on two other stamps in the set, perhaps from perspectives that are no longer possible because of tree growth and new construction. The detail obtained by the engravers, even to the point of including the complete names of the subjects in the designs, is truly astonishing.

I have already written a couple of times about the 1934 Pro-Universidad set, which is one of my favorites. It is an exquisite series of stamps portraying Indian crafts. These designs, long-time readers will recall, were adopted from revenue stamps of the early 1930s, and obviously saved the folks at the printing office a great deal of money.

But that's OK; had they not done so, much of the philatelic world could have been deprived of these wonderful designs, considering how few collect revenues. They, too, are worth examining under strong magnification.

I wonder how many people have noticed the two faces at the top of the pillars on either side of the potter depicted on the 40c Pro-U stamp? The one on the left seems to be eyeing his counterpart on the right, and vice versa. Only the 5-peso and 10p values have inscriptions describing the subject of the stamps, and they are identical: "la ofrenda" (the offering). Scott chooses to label only the 5p such, calling the 10p figure a "Worshiper." Perhaps that's not too bad, but it suggests the original cataloger may not have checked the stamps closely with his glass.

Figure 2. The Independence Monument pictured on Scott 713 is one admired by visitors to Mexico City.

Also in 1934, Mexico issued a new series of surface mail definitives (also airmails) that were engraved and well executed, too. Several new subjects were introduced with this set, including the famous Angelita (Independence Monument) shown in Figure 2. Everyone who visits Mexico City sees this monument on his first drive down the magnificent Paseo de la Reforma.

The 4c value in the same set, featuring the Arch of the Revolution, also reveals remarkable engraving detail under magnification. Shown in Figure 3, this edifice, which dates from the last years of the Porfirian era (prior to 1910) was the first construction in what was originally to have been a new government headquarters center. But the civil wars began and those grandiose plans were abandoned.

If you look at this stamp carefully you can almost read the inscription on the face of the structure above the arch. Furthermore, in the two circles below the "4" are the letters "A" and "D." I don't know for sure, but these may have been the initials of the engraver. Neither of these details would be visible to the unaided eye.

By the late 1930s photogravure and lithography had been adopted as a regular means for producing postage stamps at lower cost. The 1934 definitives, for example, were reissued in smaller format (Scott 729-33), and not surprisingly, some of the detail of their engraved forerunners was lost.

Figure 3. When viewed through a magnifier, specific details on the Arch of the Revolution stamp become much more apparent.

Still, Mexico continued to produce engraved postage stamps, both regular and commemorative, and many were brilliantly executed.

For some time I have wondered who these craftsmen actually were, but have never found references to them or mention of them in any of the philatelic literature I have studied. Some day I hope to track them down; they deserve credit for their fine work.

So, if you have a good imagination and an 8- or 10-power magnifier, you can

(Continued on next page)

Mexican engraving

(From previous page)
easily make quite a tour of Mexico, its heroes and its monuments by simply looking closely at its postage stamps.

You might want to include some of the 20th-century revenue stamps in your itinerary, too. There are some very attractive scenes and vistas portrayed on the Renta Interior stamps of the 1920s and early 1930s before modern allegorical subject matter became fashionable. Most of them are labeled, too, so you will know what you are viewing.

Bon voyage!

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Research materials are varied and useful

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

A recent letter from a reader suggested that I dedicate an article to summarizing what literature, besides stamp catalogs, is available to help the would-be serious collector of Mexico.

Longtime fans of this column know that I frequently refer to the standard references available to help us enjoy the study of Mexican stamps and covers. Just two months ago I finally got around to praising a wonderful book by my good friend Karl Schimmer, *Postmarks of Mexico 1874-1900* (*Linn's*, March 15, page 32).

The reader's suggestion is a good one, but the scope of what's available is much too large for a single article. I'll begin by running down some of the better resources for 19th-century stamps and postal history, and perhaps we can deal with the 20th century in a future column.

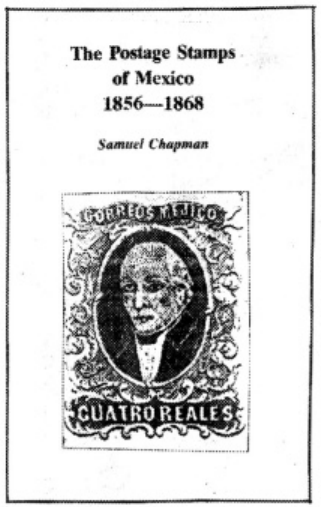
By now, most people know that in Mexican philately my first love is the classic stamps of the first design. Probably the best book in English for facts and figures about these stamps is *The Postage Stamps of Mexico, 1856-1868*, by Samuel Chapman. It originally was published in 1927 under the auspices of the New York Collectors Club as Handbook No. 4 in a limited edition of 150 copies, and for years it was tough to come by.

As collecting Mexico became more popular, such literature disappeared from the market into the tight clutches of a small group of Mexican specialists, only to trade hands at high auction prices. Fortunately, a 1976 reprint by Quarterman Publications makes it available again, at reasonable cost from philatelic book dealers.

Another rare, but useful, book for the classic issues is one written and published by two eminent French collectors, Paul de Smeth and Marquis de Fayolle: *Les Premieres Emissions du Mexique (1856 a 1974)*. Published in 1935, it built further on the knowledge base established by Chapman and his friends.

The book contains a wealth of information but suffers two shortcomings: It is difficult to locate, and is written in the French language. There is a recent Spanish translation, but this may not overcome the reluctance of English-speaking collectors to use a source in other than their own native tongue.

In a way, I have found both the Chapman work and the de Smeth and de Fayolle cumbersome. I have relied instead, for facts and figures on stamp production and distribution, on a compilation by the late Norwegian collector, Abraham Odfjell, entitled *The Stamps of the Postal Districts of Mexico*. Based on Chapman data, it was published by the Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International in convenient loose-leaf form that allows easy use as a checklist.



Samuel Chapman's study *The Postage Stamps of Mexico 1856-1868* contains substantial data compiled from official post office records.

The aforementioned references embrace the majority of Mexican stamp issues bearing overprints of district names and consignment numbers. They also contain some background on the printing processes and post office operation.

Serious researchers will want to consult early specialized stamp catalogs — those by Phillips (1917) and Aguirre (1957) come to mind — and articles in the philatelic media, particularly *Mexicana*, for further detailed information.

For the later issues of the 19th century, the choice of literature is more limited. R.R. Billings dealt with the Hidalgo heads printed by the American Bank Note Co. (Scott 105-22) in a small volume he apparently published himself in 1960. The complete title is *Mexico Postal Issue of 1874-1883*. It might be hard to locate, but the American Philatelic Society and other philatelic libraries should have it.

I know of no definitive works on the medallion and numeral issues of 1884-87. These stamps represent an opportunity for some budding philatelic research author.

The Transportation issue (Scott 242-91), or Mulitas, as seasoned Mexico collectors call them, have been well covered in Karl Schimmer's monograph published as a supplement to MEPSI's journal, *Mexicana*, in 1972, with additions from time to time in the pages of that publication.

Finally, there is no single book on the 1899-1903 issue, which lately has been receiving collector attention, although we might see something soon from the prolific Schimmer who has been studying and exhibiting this issue recently.

Postal history students with a keen interest in Mexican postmarks of the 19th century will find that the field is well served from start to finish. For markings of the prestamp era we have the Yag-Bash work: *The Pre-Stamp Postal Markings of Mexico* (MEPSI 1965, updated 1971). It is presently undergoing further updating and a revised edition is due in the next couple of years.

Postmarks found on Mexican stamps of the 1900s are well covered in two books: *The Cancellations of Mexico, 1856-1874*, by Joseph Schatzkes (1964), revised, updated and republished by William Shelton in 1983, and the Schimmer book, *The Postmarks of Mexico, 1874-1900*, noted at the onset of this column. These two books are definitely still available and I would judge that a copy of the Yag-Bash book could be located without too much difficulty.

There really is no simple list of books that deal with all the aspects of Mexican philately. The search for information is similar to looking for elusive stamps; it takes time and persistence.

Good literature on Mexico does exist, and hopefully this summary can put collectors on the trail of reference works that will aid them in their chosen specialties.

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Mexico special delivery worth exploring

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

If you want to embark on the study of an underappreciated, yet interesting facet of Mexican philately, I've got the perfect suggestion for you: special delivery stamps and usages.

True, these are back-of-the-book items eschewed by many collectors, but that's precisely the point. As far as I can tell, they have been all but neglected by serious philatelists. While searching for background in my rather large collection of Mexico-related reference material, I found virtually nothing written about them in the standard sources. The subject matter appears ripe for original research.

I want to thank two collector friends, G.H. Davis and Nick Follansbee, for sharing much of the basic information that appears in this article; they are already becoming experts in the area.

A complete collection of Mexican special delivery stamps — there are 27 major varieties — will probably cost you less than $100 in very fine, unused condition, and much, much less than that if used. Only an unused Scott E1, the first issue, and a 1951 redrawn variety, Scott E12, will set you back dollars in the double digits.

More challenging will be the acquisition of unused multiples (blocks, etc.) of the first issue and proper usages on cover. The latter may not be expensive, just hard to find.

Special delivery service was initiated in Mexico May 1, 1919. The first special delivery stamp, illustrated in Figure 1, featured a postman driving a motorcycle with a sidecar. It is an engraved bicolored stamp with the frame in red and the vignette in black, and printed on unwatermarked paper. This same design was reprinted in 1923 on watermarked paper (Scott type 156) and is much more common than the earlier emission.

Figure 1. The first-design Mexico special delivery stamp had three issues: 1919, 1923 and 1940 (overprinted).

According to Follansbee, who has been studying these stamps for more than a decade, there are two distinct papers for E1: a thin, wove type showing the characteristic mesh pattern when viewed against a strong light, and a much thicker paper in which the mesh pattern is barely visible.

Happily, at least for serious specialists, this first design is available in the form of trial color proofs, both perforated and imperforate, in numerous combinations.

Generally, the perforated proofs have frames in dark red (distinct from the issued stamp), brown, blue, green and orange, with vignettes printed in black. The imperforate trials, on thicker paper and overprinted "MUESTRA" (sample), exist in an even broader array of colors, with perhaps as many as 20 combinations.

Follansbee notes that the philatelic aspects of E2 are even more complex, with several variations of the watermark, minor color shades, and paper differences. Fortunately, the stamps are also more plentiful, and therefore much cheaper to the specialist. Two plate formats were used, 25 and 50 subjects, with the latter being the rarer of the two.

The motorcycle stamps persisted until 1934 when the special delivery rate was lowered to 10 centavos, requiring a new stamp (E3). It portrayed a Toltec runner, famous in folklore for rapid delivery of royal messages in the pre-Spanish conquest era.

Then came the photogravure "archer" stamps, E4-E6, the first of which appeared that same year.

This design was used right up to 1950, with some denomination and color changes. In 1940, when the special delivery rate returned to 20c, old stocks of E2, the second motorcycle stamp, were overprinted "1940" in violet, and saw extensive use until the archer stamp could be issued with the proper denomination.

Motorcycles came back in 1950, followed by other designs suggestive of rapid delivery service, such as the "hands and dove" motif and a jet plane encircling the globe.

The final special delivery stamp Mexico issued, E27, showed a pocket watch, but apparently came too late for proper usage since special delivery service, as originally constituted, ceased in the mid-1970s. I have never seen a correct usage on cover of this final 2-peso special delivery stamp, so Scott is probably justified pricing it in italics.

As noted earlier, usages of special delivery stamps on cover can be frustratingly elusive for the first issue, but they do appear once in a while. Figure 2 shows an interesting item from G.H. Davis' collection. It's a 2c postal card addressed to a destination only a mile or two from the sender. The sender was willing to pay the

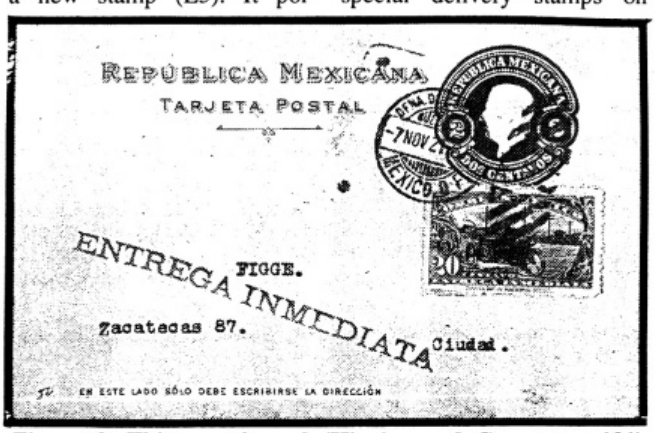

Figure 2. This postal card (Higgins and Gage type 121) was mailed Nov. 7, 1921, and processed at 6 p.m. It is likely that delivery occurred later that same evening.

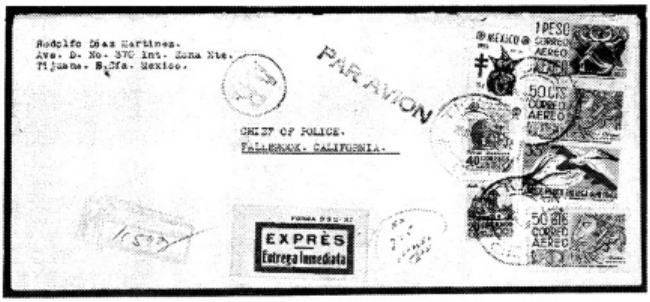

Figure 3. This airmail special delivery letter with return receipt request was mailed in Tijuana Dec. 26, 1959. It is backstamped Fallbrook on the following day. Total postage on this piece was 2 pesos 95 centavos ($0.236 U.S.).

rather stiff 20c "immediate" delivery fee to assure its arrival the same evening it was mailed.

During the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, the special delivery service appears to have been used frequently. Business covers demonstrating its use are plentiful; the extra cost to speed delivery was certainly reasonable.

Very often there were other postal services involved with special delivery letters, and these can combine to produce a rather interesting and colorful cover, to say nothing of the fun one can have analyzing the rate breakdown.

The cover shown in Figure 3 is a case in point. It was mailed from Tijuana, in Baja California, Mexico, to Fallbrook, Calif. Although only 65 miles separated the two towns, the Mexican sender specified airmail, which poses the interesting question of whether the letter was actually transported in this manner.

It was also sent registered, and a return receipt was demanded (indicated by the AR in the circle directly above the address).

Franking consisted of the 35c special delivery "hands and dove" stamp, three airmails (two different), and two different surface-mail stamps. There is also a 10c tuberculosis stamp, but this does not figure into the postage requirement. All in all, it makes a very attractive modern postal history item.

So here you have another opportunity in Mexican philately for the moderately endowed collector. One can find fascinating covers like the one in Figure 3 for a couple of dollars or less by checking the foreign cover boxes almost every bourse dealer has on his table. I know. I've found dozens of interesting items in this manner. Good hunting!

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One-frame exhibits highlight Mexico topics

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

In April of this year, the Collectors Club of Kansas City and the American Association of Philatelic Exhibitors co-sponsored Ameristamp Expo 93, the first of what is hoped will be a large annual show devoted exclusively to one-frame (16-page) exhibits.

Among the 159 entries at this event were five devoted to the stamps and postal history of Mexico. When the awards were posted, all five had achieved medals in the top two categories, either platinum (highest level) or gold (next highest level).

I have always found the one-frame format appealing and have mounted several such exhibits, one of which was entered at Kansas City. Three other experienced collectors of Mexico joined the competition. The themes, or subject matter, of these displays are illustrative of the many possibilities in Mexican philately suitable for this treatment.

In two separate exhibits, Ralph Herdenberg selected two stamps from his larger coverage of the 1874-83 Hidalgo issue (Scott 105-45) for detailed study. The first dealt with the 10-centavo black of 1874-78, shown in Figure 1, a common stamp in those times. His 16 pages examined the stamp in great depth, showing a plate proof, trial color overprints, a large sample of the district name and invoice number overprints, blocks, watermarked papers, errors, and many rare usages on cover. In the latter group were covers to foreign destinations, many with due notations (Mexico was not yet in the Universal Postal Union), and a spectacular bisect.

Figure 1. Single-frame exhibits shown at Ameristamp Expo 93 were developed based on the 10-centavo black (left) and the 100c stamps of the 1874-83 Hidalgo issue.

The other exhibit focused on the 100c denomination, also in Figure 1, the top value in the set. This stamp paid the basic registry fee, although it was liberally used in the franking of heavy letters. Again, Herdenberg used the classic approach in his exhibit, showing color proofs, overprint varieties, a page of rare consignments and a broad assortment of covers bearing the stamp.

One of the cover highlights was a rare example of a quadrisect of the 100c used to pay a local rate. He also displayed several registered fronts always popular with the classic-era collector. Both exhibits received gold medals.

Another gold medal winner, Nick Follansbee, took a slightly different approach and showed the postal history of what the Scott catalog lists as the Yucatan Revolutionary issue (the last stamps listed in Scott's Mexico section).

His exhibit title, "The Stamps of the De La Huerta Revolt," alerts us to the fact that while some philatelists label them as provisionals, these stamps were originally conceived as a general issue for the 1924 rebellion in southern Mexico.

But the man behind the putsch, Adolfo De La Huerta, was quickly defeated by loyal federal forces, and precious few of the stamps were ever used. Those that were, invariably on local letters within Yucatan and part of Campeche with March and April dates of that year, are keenly sought by specialists.

Follansbee, noted for his love of the unusual back-of-the-book material, has assembled a truly impressive study of these scarce items. He displayed some of the largest known blocks, did one page on plate flaws, another on perforation varieties, and included a total of nine covers in the exhibit. This is particularly impressive considering that experts believe only 50 to 60 such items have survived.

Follansbee's concept of the one-frame exhibit is, I feel, an ideal one. He has chosen a subject of narrow scope, which offers insufficient material for a multiframe exhibit, and lends itself to a fairly thorough treatment in the limited space available.

One of my favorite displays on the exhibition circuit is Armando Rubio's "Diligencias Generales," a study of the so-called stagecoach mail of mid-19th century Mexico. Stagecoach (diligencia) offices sold stamps and also had special self-designating cancelers.

Figure 2. This cut shows the fancy diligencias (stagecoach) cancellation used in Toluca from circa 1856-60.

For Ameristamp Expo, Rubio selected material from this large exhibit and tastefully arranged it in an interesting one-frame summary of this facet of Mexican postal history. He included examples of the earliest-known cancels and elusive postmarks from offices from which only one or two examples are recorded.

Two pages were devoted to the famous diligencias oval from Toluca shown in Figure 2, in which a stagecoach and team forms the design. His material spanned the time frame of 1853-78.

This form of treatment is not always successful — that is, picking gems out of a larger body of material — but in this case it worked and was well rewarded. The exhibit won a platinum medal and one of the four reserve grand awards (postal history).

My own exhibit, which also took a platinum award, is titled "Making the 2-reales Rate, 1856-68." My approach was to show, using

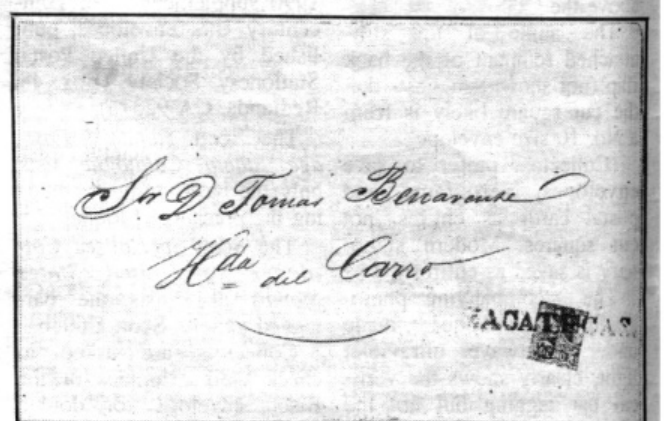


Figure 3. Small-town post offices frequently cut their little-used 8-reales stamps into quarters to pay the common, everyday 2r rate. It was a legal improvisation.

covers, the many ways a common postal rate was paid with stamps of the first design.

This involves not only the obvious use of 2r stamps, but also strips and pairs of lower values, and fractions, or "splits," of the 4r and 8r stamps as is illustrated in Figure 3. Whenever possible, I chose unusual usages to add interest.

My display, like the diligencias exhibit, was formed with material from some of my other exhibits, so I am able to get "double duty" out of these pieces. And, I feel that the title amply alerts the judges that the scope of the exhibit can be restrictive rather than comprehensive.

The popularity of one-frame exhibiting seems to be on the rise. Not only are there attempts to recognize this on a national scale like Ameristamp Expo, but also several of the World Series of Philately qualified shows now allocate a section for one-frame exhibits.

In my view, collectors of Mexico have numerous opportunities to compete in this field. Quite apart from the exhibits reviewed here, there are dozens of other philatelic niches ideally suited for this format: Gothic "Mexico" overprints on watermarked stamp (1867), "Anotado" overprints (1868 issue), foreign mail issue (1879-84), civil war locals (many possibilities), the inflation year (1916), aviation week (1929), insured letter stamps and usages, and postage due stamps and usages, to name but a few.

Might it be time for you to think about an exhibit along these lines?

Introduction to the Stamps of Mexico by Dale Pulver, a compilation of *Linn's* Mexico columns, is now available in softcover edition for $14.95, or hardcover for $30. The third book in the Linn's Handbook series, it is available from selected dealers, or from Linn's, Box 29, Sidney, OH 45365. ■

Essays and proofs of 19th century Mexico

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

General collectors often don't pay much attention to essays, proofs and other trial printings of the stamps they collect, but it is an area of utmost interest and importance to specialists.

This class of material is usually quite scarce and rarely found in the average dealer's stock. Seasoned exhibitors, on the other hand, know that it is a vital part of a good showing and, if available, it is necessary for top awards in the study of a specific stamp issue.

This column will explore some of the specialized material that exists for classic 19th-century Mexican issues, including stamp designs or suggestions for designs that were never adopted. Unfortunately, so little material is available that cost of acquisition can be an obstacle for many collectors. Still, it is possible to obtain a few representative examples at prices within reach for most serious hobbyists.

Mexico's first stamp design, which includes the issues of 1856, 1861, and the expedient usages of remainders from those issues in 1867-68, had only a few proofs that survived for later generations of philatelists. No essays or other preliminary designs are known.

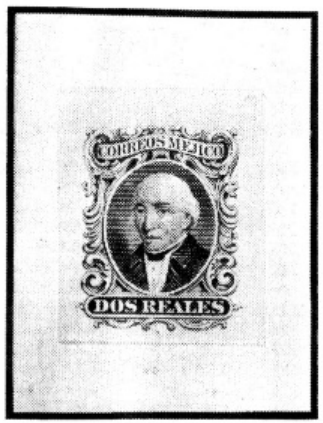


Figure 1. This engraved die proof from the so-called Juarez issue of 1864 is printed on India paper and mounted on a card.

All denominations are found printed in black on thin, white wove paper, including a strip of five of the ½-real. These items are all rare and expensive, and the strip may be unique.

A 1912 issue of *Mekeel's* reported colored die proofs of all five values, but the whereabouts of any of these pieces is unknown. A 2r plate I proof is occasionally seen in red (I have an example in my exhibit). There is also a strip of six of this same stamp in olive-green on soft paper adorning a frequently exhibited collection of the first issue.

The so-called Juarez issue of 1864 (Scott 14-17), printed by the American Bank Note Co. of New York, has a number of proofs. This issue really never saw postal use, except for a few still disputed covers purportedly canceled in Monterrey.

Die proofs with blank name and value tables are known, but are very rare. Engraved die proofs on India paper mounted on cards (35 millimeters by 47mm) are known in colors as issued and other shades.

Figure 1 shows the 2r pale blue, mounted on a card on which is printed the number "230," possibly too faint to show in the illustration. I have several others on the thin India paper, perhaps soaked off their original card mounts.

As one might expect, the engraving is first rate, and a joy to inspect under magnification. The stamps themselves, originally shipped in huge quantities to the Juarez revolutionary government, eventually found their way into the philatelic market and are very common indeed. So much so, in fact, that numerous attempts were made to enhance their appeal to collectors with bogus overprints, revaluations and forged cancellations.

During the Maximilian monarchy, 1864-67, there were two major stamp designs. The first was that of what philatelists call the Imperial Eagle, actually a slight modification of the Mexican coat of arms. An eagle holding a serpent in its mouth, perched on a cactus, wears a crown. The second design was a profile portrait of Maximilian.

Figure 2. Apparently Emperor Maximilian was not pleased with the rendition on this essay, and it was eventually discarded.

There are plate proofs of the eagles in the colors of issue on thin, wove, quadrilled paper. They are fairly scarce and may fetch $50 or more (each) when they appear at auction.

There are two other eagle items that crop up occasionally: a 1r stamp in ultramarine and a 2r stamp in orange.

They differ from the actual stamps in that the upper corners contain rosettes instead of square ornaments. Most philatelists classify these as essays, but there is some feeling that these items may have been made after the fact for display at the 1893 Chicago Columbian Exposition.

One of the most sought after die proof items of the Eagle issue has two misaligned strikes of the 3-centavo on thick white wove paper. Only two copies of this rarity have been recorded, and if sold, would no doubt fetch a price in the thousands of dollars.

A great flurry of activity in essays and other proposed designs occurred before the Maximilian profile heads were accepted (Scott 26-34). Many suggested designs, for which essays exist, show three-quarters or full-face views of the young emperor.

One of the best known is an engraved essay attributed to the Belgian artist Delpierre. Illustrated in Figure 2, this essay exists in many colors, but these portraits apparently were not to Maximilian's liking and were discarded.

Essays and numerous proofs of the profile stamps exist as well. One such item contained six engraved essays, each of a different color, printed side by side as a strip on stiff white paper. It included two values (3c and 100c) that were later dropped from the series. This priceless gem was in the Beal collection when it was stolen in 1979 and has not been seen since.

The stamp in Figure 3, from my collection, is a plate proof of the 25c denomination. The proof is lightly printed in pale blue; the stamp as issued is orange brown.

Proofs and rare essays are known for both the issues of 1868 and 1872. It should be noted that the 1868 proofs are found engraved and printed on thick papers, both white and colored, whereas the actual stamps were produced by lithography.

Figure 3. The plate proof shown here is printed in light blue, while the issued stamp is orange brown.

The hastily prepared 1872 issue is often cited as Mexico's worst stamp of the 19th century from the standpoint of both design and production.

We frequently encounter examples that, under magnification, appear to be more

clearly printed than the originals and could be taken for some sort of proof. However, in most cases these turn out to be the so-called Spiro forgeries, which are indeed much better executed than the real stamps.

This takes us through the early classic issues. More essays and proofs worthy of attention exist for the balance of the century, but they will need to be addressed in a future column.

For those readers who might want to delve further into this area, I suggest *Proofs, Essays, Sample, Specimen & Test Stamps of Mexico*, a priced catalog written by Fred Ingham. It is a very good guide to what was known about the subject in 1979, the year of the last edition.

It was published by the Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International (MEPSI), and still should be available for about $10. Contact Carl LeMar John, 5063 N. Regency Circle, Tucson, AZ 85711. ■

New reference for Eagles is comprehensive

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

The collecting possibilities of Mexico's Eagle stamps (Scott 18-25) have been touted several times in this column since its inception 10 years ago. These classic stamps have much to commend them for specialization: a host of collectible varieties, a reasonable floating supply in the stamp marketplace, and a good assortment of philatelic literature available to guide the beginning or intermediate collector.

We are soon to have a new reference work that will become, without any doubt, the bible for collectors of these interesting stamps. I recently received a prepublication copy of *Imperial Eagles of Maximilian's Mexico* by Leo V, Corbett, longtime collector and student of this issue.

It is truly an encyclopedic treatment of the subject, and its 400-plus pages are packed with more information than has ever before been assembled in one source. In fact, some collectors may contend that it is a case of overkill for a stamp issue that saw postal service for only slightly more than two years.

The Eagle stamps are a special case for collectors of classic Mexico, however, and this fine work, an eight-year labor of love for Corbett, will be warmly welcomed by that small, but loyal band of aficionados.

Although I have not yet seen the published edition (due at the end of August, after I write this column), the book itself is organized and written to be user friendly.

An excellent seven-page table of contents with sufficient entry detail quickly directs the user to the object of his interest. At the opposite end of the volume are two fine indices, one with citations according to an alphabetical listing of the postal agencies, the other a general index by subject matter.

The early chapters and sections concentrate on the book's format and basic information such as the political situation in Mexico at the time, the mail system and how it operated, rates, and definitions.

After that there is a thorough discussion of the actual stamps: designs, denominations, printing, invoice (consignment) and district name overprinting, subconsignments, colors, plates, and all the other minutiae of keen interest to the specialist. Still, this material is presented in a manner that will appeal to the novice and advanced collector alike.

The major portion of the book is devoted to tabularized records of the individual stamp shipments from the main post office to the outlying district offices and suboffices.

A typical postal district listing (there are more than

A new and highly recommended reference work for collectors of Mexico's first issue of the empire provides complete information for the eagle issues of 1864-66.

300 pages of them) will include a short historical note, usually with some reference to mail service, a table listing invoice numbers, dates, quantities of stamps shipped, valuation estimates, and notes on postal matters related to that office. As a bonus, illustrations of relevant stamps and covers accompany many of the listings.

Historical postal records have made this meticulous analysis possible, work that earlier occupied a number of noted philatelists including Samuel Chapman, Eduardo Aguirre and John Bash. These men have all passed to their just rewards but left important documentation upon which Corbett has built.

Stamp valuation is often a preoccupation of collectors, and Corbett deals with this aspect rather neatly throughout his book. He assigns 15 price ranges, designated by letters from A to P, which he uses to indicate the approximate amount one would expect to pay for average copies of the many varieties. For example, A is $1-$3, B is $3-$5, and so on. A P-rated stamp should, according to Corbett, fetch more than $10,000, but I could not find one such example in any of his tables.

These literal codes appear in a value strip wherever stamps are listed, and provide a handy guide for the reader. The book, therefore, is a price catalog as well as an encyclopedic listing of what exists in the Eagle series.

Another useful feature is a seven-page summary of available references and recommended reading material (in four languages).

In a work so large and complex it is not surprising to find some flaws. In the photocopied sample edition sent to me, I encountered numerous typos and other miscues that I trust will be corrected in the final editing.

Another distraction was the use of double spacing throughout the book for paragraph and header breaks. This results in a lot of wasted space. Since it was obvious the book was computer generated, a suitable macro could have been used to reduce paragraph spacing and render the text more pleasing to the eye.

Also, tiny print is used for captions, footnotes and the like, possibly causing difficulty for older collectors with weakening eyesight.

Despite these minor criticisms, this book will be a useful and important addition to the philatelic literature of Mexico. The price of $85 plus $4.50 shipping and handling will no doubt scare some people off, but it is not an outrageous figure for such a comprehensive treatise. Further, only 300 copies are being printed, so that ultimately there may be a good chance for value appreciation. The author has promised no reprints or second editions.

In my view, this book is a must for all serious students of the monarchy issues, and a good value for specialists of the classic era because of its general content. Corbett has assembled a formidable record and is to be complimented for his long and patient labors on this complex and difficult subject.

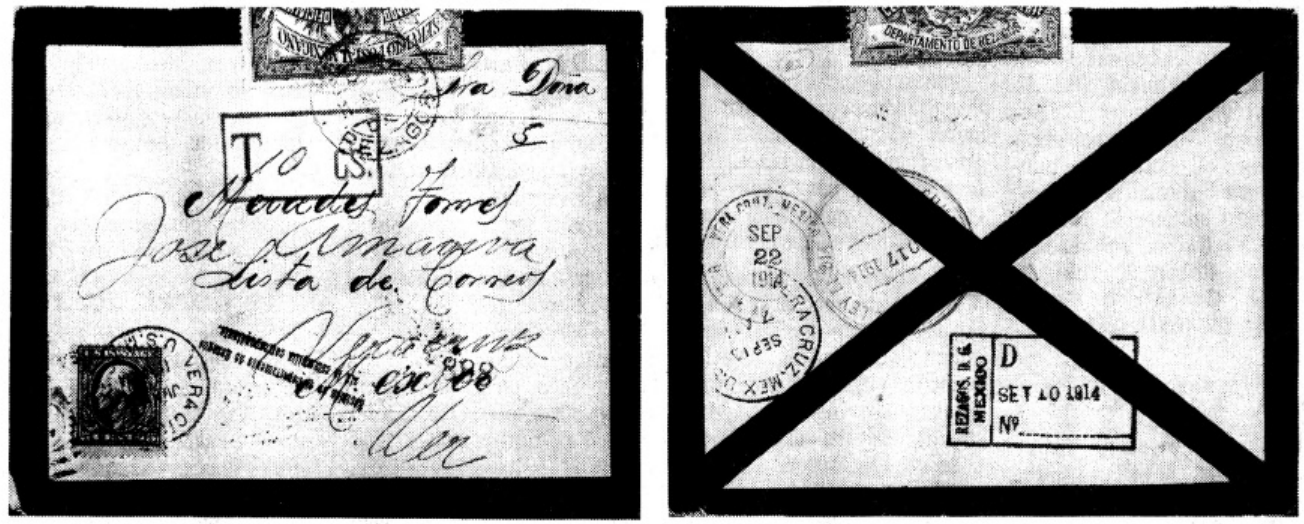
The book is available from Mexico Philatelic Library Association, Box 577, Stanton, CA 90680. ■

Markings tell story of dead letter odyssey

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Some years ago I did an article on Mexican "dead letters" of the revolutionary era. Because of its inherent interest, it was selected for inclusion in my book, *Introduction to the Stamps of Mexico*. Thanks to input from a loyal *Linn's* reader, I would like to do a reprise on that subject.



For reasons unknown, this mourning cover mailed from Veracruz never reached its intended addressee, and eventually it was sent to the dead letter office. Despite the fact that the letter is nearly 80 years old, it is possible to trace its journey by studying the markings on the back of the cover (shown at right), and several clues visible on the front.

The mourning cover illustrated here front and back belongs to David Savadge. A while back he sent me a photocopy for analysis and comments. It is quickly identified as a dead letter from 1914 that was neither delivered to the addressee nor successfully returned to the originator.

I have several similar covers from this time frame. There was a lot of dislocation because of the civil war, and such letters had to be common.

This example is somewhat unusual in that it bears a solo U.S. 5¢ stamp applied during the U.S. occupation and supervision of the Mexican post office at Veracruz at that time. This is the first such cover I have seen with only a U.S. stamp, but there is no reason to believe there aren't more floating around just like it.

The analysis of the cover is fairly straightforward. It was originally mailed June 13 (1914) from Veracruz to a lady, Dona Mercedes Forrel, c/o General Delivery (Lista de Correos), Mexico (City).

The U.S. stamp, although adequate for postage abroad, shouldn't have been used on mail directed to the interior. It was not recognized by the government in control at the Mexican capital, so a 10-centavo due marking was applied to the face of the letter.

Although the letter was probably listed both at the post office and in local newspapers, Forrel missed seeing the notice, had left town or for some other reason failed to call for it. So, on or about Sept. 10 the letter was sent to the dead letter office (Depto. de Rezagos), where it was officially opened in search of the name of the sender.

It was determined that Jose Amaviva of Veracruz was the originator of the letter, so his name and address were written in red ink between the lines of the original address. The letter was resealed with a special stamplike adhesive across the opened edge, and the letter was returned to Veracruz. This was a standard procedure for unclaimed mail.

Backstamps tell us the letter arrived there Sept. 13, and was listed as a returned letter. The Sept. 22 U.S.M.A.G. backstamp gives evidence of this.

After a period of time, probably about 60 days, when no one there claimed the letter, it received yet another handstamp, struck over the black borders of the closure.

The inscription "cumplido con la ley," or some such wording, indicated that all lawful provisions for undeliverable letters had been complied with, and the letter was ready for disposal.

The official seal was broken, the contents were removed and presumably destroyed. I have not yet found the official regulation on this point, but I believe the envelopes were supposed to be destroyed, too.

However, a large number eventually reached the philatelic market, perhaps, as they say, "through the back door at the P.O."

In any event, this probable breach of regulations has provided philatelists with some very interesting and collectible examples of modern postal history.

The cover in question bears some other interesting markings that I did not describe in the above analysis.

The two-line handstamp (in purple) immediately to the right of the 5¢ U.S. stamp says (in Spanish) that the letter was received at the dead letter office without proper postage; in other words, the U.S. stamp was not recognized.

Also, the "888" struck over the last few letters of "Mexico" probably refers to a log entry number at the dead letter office used to keep track of such letters.

This lost letter no doubt announced the death of a friend or relative of the addressee, and we can only wonder how long it was before that fact became known to her.

During those terrible years of civil war in Mexico, many such letters were sent that never reached their destinations.

Savadge did not tell me where he acquired this most intriguing item, but it could easily have been from a dealer of U.S. covers who was perhaps unsure of exactly what he had.

It makes for a very unusual addition to Savadge's collection of mourning covers. It also confirms the fact that each and every postmark has a meaning and a reason for being on a letter. And it behooves the serious collector to search for an explanation behind such markings. My thanks to Savadge for sharing his cover with us.

Perhaps you can find something just as interesting in your next tour through the bourse tables at your local show. Good hunting! ■

Two varieties of Mexico's first airmail stamp

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

The fact that there are two listings for the first airmail stamp issued by Mexico probably doesn't arouse much concern from most general collectors. To the airmail specialist, however, it is of some importance. There is also an interesting story about how these two varieties came to exist.

Scott C1, illustrated in Figure 1, was issued in 1922 for a genuine postal need. Following on the heels of numerous experimental flights, Mexico was about to initiate airmail service, and wanted a distinctive, high denomination stamp to signal the requirement for special handling. With much fanfare, an inaugural airmail flight from Mexico City, bound for Tepic on the west coast of Mexico, by way of Guadalajara, was set for April 8, 1923.

Because of bad weather and mechanical problems with the aircraft, the flight was never completed as scheduled. This failure caused postal officials to rethink the whole idea of airmail, with the result that no further official flights were made until many years later.

In the meantime, the airmail stamps were pulled from general sale. A few local aerophilatelists and general collectors seem to have acquired for themselves whatever first-issue airmail stamps they needed. First-flight covers exist, even though part of the journey was made by other means. Stamp dealers, however, appear not to have laid aside any extensive stocks.

Incidentally, it is not known exactly how many C1s were actually issued; most catalogers report 20,000 being printed. How many were sold is debatable.

In the late 1920s, when airmail flights resumed in earnest, airmail specialists and dealers who had neglected Mexico C1 in the beginning began flooding Mexican dealers and the general post office with orders that could not be filled from available stock.

To satisfy this demand, the post office opted to reissue the first airmail stamp using the original plates that had been kept on file in the postal museum. Meanwhile, a stamp of identical design, C2, printed on watermarked paper, had made its appearance.

In spite of diligent efforts to duplicate the earlier printing, the result was not altogether satisfactory and there were noticeable differences in the two emissions. The differences were substantial enough that the philatelic world quickly assigned subvariety status to the new stamp.

The Scott catalog emphasizes color differences, but these may be difficult for the average collector to distinguish. The originals are described as blue and red brown, with the reprints defined as dark blue and claret. Viewed under oblique incident light, the dark blue has a sheen to it, whereas the first-issue blue exhibits a dull, chalky appearance. If the stamps are unused (as most are), C1 gum is yellowish and quite thick; the C1a gum is white and thin.

Perhaps the best way to tell the two apart, and the only way if the stamps have been used, is to compare paper. The C1 stamp is printed on a somewhat thick, closely grained wove paper. It is the same paper as was used for Scott 632, the 10-centavo blue and brown stamp commemorating the "Abrazo de Acatempan," design A77.

Mexico's first airmail stamps show an eagle in full flight over the valley of Mexico City. The 1929 reprinting of the original 1922 issue is the scarcest variety of the stamp.

C1a, printed seven years later, was on a thinner paper of the type used for the Carranza commemorative airmails, C5-10, etc.

Another useful test, if one has both varieties, is to lay them face down on a dark surface. On the original, the face design shows through faintly, but on the later issue it can be seen quite clearly from the back. This is a subjective test, and one can be deceived if both varieties or their counterparts aren't available.

The 1994 Scott *Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue* also offers this comment: "The vignettes of Nos. C1a and C2a fluoresce a bright rose red under UV light."

There have been some interesting price dynamics over the years. In 1931, for example, shortly after C1 was reprinted as C1a, Scott priced the original 1922 stamp, then listed as Scott 901, at $12 (unused) with the reprinted variety (901a) at $4. These represented enormous price appreciations for stamps that a few years earlier had been easily obtained for just a few multiples of their face values.

According to the *Celis Cano Catalogo Especializado* for Mexican stamps, only 3,000 of the thin paper variety were printed and issued. What has happened price-wise to the two stamps over the years since the early 1930s seems to underscore their relative scarcity.

In the 1965 Scott catalog, C1a had switched places with C1 as the most valuable, $30 vs. $26.50 (unused). This difference has grown even more pronounced with time so that the 1994 catalog pegs C1a at $90 against a $60 figure for C1.

If you own a first issue, you may want to check to see if it is a C1 or C1a. Depending on your collecting objectives, securing examples of both varieties may be something worth considering. The later printing is certainly not so abundant as to be viewed as common.

Now could be a good time to hunt for whichever one you need; stamp prices are beginning to firm and I think Mexican airmails, many of which haven't been moving in the right direction lately, may be ready for a resurgence.

There are still some bargains to be found, and a stamp from a printing of only 3,000 could, for some of you, be one of them. ■

Exporta series ends; special delivery usage

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

As I have done several times in the past, this year-end article will address several subjects that by themselves may not merit a full-length feature. It also gives me a chance to recognize a few loyal readers who have written to comment or expand upon past offerings.

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In my column of exactly four years ago (*Linn's*, Dec. 11, 1989, page 8), I suggested, as the result of intelligence received from a Mexican correspondent, that the long and popular Exporta series of definitive stamps would soon end, to be replaced by a set touting tourism in Mexico.

The following year I had to admit that I might have been premature in my prediction, but still the rumors persisted.

Events in the Mexican postal service are sometimes slow to develop, and I can report now that the Exporta series has finally ended, and stamps with a tourism motif (as shown in Figure 1) have replaced them.

Denise Hatton scooped me on this announcement in her World of New Issues column, (*Linn's*, Aug. 30, page 12), even though I had previously received a slick promotional booklet, sponsored by the Mexican postal service and other government agencies.

The new series is denominated in new pesos, which

Figure 1. The 1.90-peso value of the new Tourism definitives is one of two in the 12-stamp set designed in a vertical format.

are each worth 1000 of the old pesos, and which came into use at the first of the year. Denominations range from 0.90 pesos (about 26¢ U.S.) to 6p (U.S. $1.93).

The 12 new stamps have a face value totaling 33.20p, which works out to about U.S. $10.65. One Mexican new issue dealer is asking about $18 for the set, although you might save a dollar or two if you shop around.

The stamps appear to be printed on the same domestic paper used for the final Exporta printing and I have not heard of any varieties yet.

Curiously, although I receive letters from Mexico fairly often, I have yet to see one of these new definitives used on my mail. According to reliable sources, some of the Tourism stamps have been available since June or even earlier. The listing of the Tourism set in the December issue of *Scott Stamp Monthly* does not specify a date of issue.

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Hopefully I will find time this winter to update my informal Exporta checklist, the latest version of which appeared in my book, *Introduction to the Stamps of Mexico*.

That list was current up to about July 1992, and many new varieties have appeared since it was last revised. Now that the Exporta series has ended, I can attempt to work up a final listing of all major varieties.

Incidentally, certain stamps in some of the earlier printings are becoming quite scarce and dealers have had trouble maintaining them in stock. You know what happens next: higher prices. If you've procrastinated in filling some of those empty spaces in your collection you may want to get busy.

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In my article on special delivery service, (*Linn's*, June 21, page 28), I made an ill-advised speculation that Scott E27, the final Mexican special delivery stamp issued in 1976, probably came too late to have seen proper usage.

G.H. Davis, who is credited in the article for providing me with much of the information reported, came back with not one, but two 1978 examples showing attempted use of this stamp to expedite delivery. One example is shown in Figure 2. Both letters were addressed to the United States.

One wonders if the U.S. Postal Service recognized their function and provided appropriate service. There is no way to ascertain this. All we know is special delivery stamps were purchased and affixed to properly franked letters by Mexican correspondents. Do any other *Linn's* readers have examples?

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Like the United States and other large populous countries, Mexico has a numerical postal code system to facilitate the movement of mail. A California reader, Ken Flagg, was keen on obtaining a directory of Mexican post offices, both large and small, to guide him in a postmark project he was undertaking.

Thanks to contacts in Mexico, I was able to obtain a copy of a Mexican postal code directory that I recommended to him.

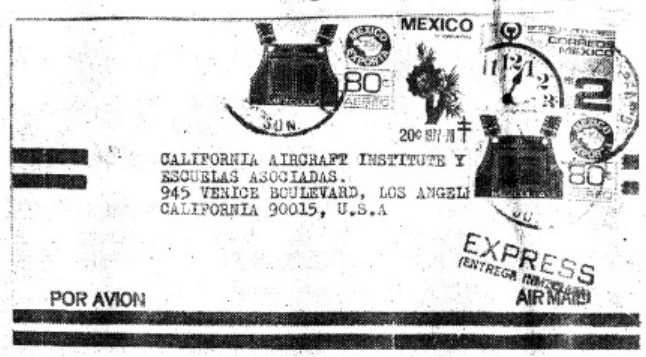

Figure 2. This special delivery cover included two 80-centavo stamps for the correct air rate to the United States, and a 2-peso special delivery stamp. The 20¢ tuberculosis stamp was incidental, and paid no postal fees.

This softcover book, about the size of a small-town phone directory, is equivalent to a U.S. ZIP code directory, and lists virtually every post office and its corresponding code number in the entire country.

It also contains other information relative to the mails that the modern postal historian will find useful, provided he possesses a modest familiarity with the Spanish language.

Flagg had considerable difficulty securing his copy. Several letters to the publisher (Directorios Profesionales, Rio Panuco No. 38, Col. Cuautemoc, 06500 Mexico D.F.) went unanswered. We eventually located a used 1990 edition that should serve him well.

I mention this because collectors attempting to locate towns or villages based on modern postmarks may, due to heavy duplication of certain popular Mexican names, get thoroughly confused.

Such a listing, coupled with the numeric codes that usually appear in contemporary postmarks, can solve a lot of these problems. I'll be interested in hearing what luck other readers might have in acquiring and using this resource.

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Finally, since this is my last opportunity to address you before the holiday, I extend best wishes of the season, and hope all of you receive some great philatelic gift to cap off another year of stamp collecting! ■

Historical finds add to collecting mystique

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Few of us are lucky enough to be involved in an original find of philatelic material, and fewer still of anything that is truly significant. True, every once in a while we may stumble across an item in a circuit book or dealer's stock that is unusual or even rare which has not been recognized as such by the seller.

Perceiving such an item for what it is because of our knowledge, and acquisition at a bargain price can be rewards for our insight, but can you imagine the thrill of being party to the discovery of a truly important philatelic property?

This month's column will recap a few such discoveries that have had a profound impact on Mexican philately.

The first story deals with overprinted stamps of the first issue. Prior to the 1920s, the 4-reales and 8r high denominations of the 1856 issue from the postal district of Ciudad Victoria were virtually unknown. Even the largest and most extensive collections of Mexican first issues were lacking them.

It was about that time that an old Mexican who had lived in Ciudad Victoria in the 1850s came forward with a remarkable story. As revolutionists were about to overrun the city, the postmaster of that city had entrusted to him for safekeeping a large inventory of stamps. In those days of civil upheaval, postal employees were often forced to flee their posts under such circumstances.

When things quieted down, the man entrusted with the stamps expected them to be reclaimed, but the postmaster never came. It is presumed he lost his life in the fighting, and no one else knew about the stamps.

Finally, when the man reached old age and was in need of money, he wrote to the postal authorities in Mexico City to determine if it would be a crime to sell the stamps he had so carefully guarded. Granted permission to do so, he proceeded to look for buyers in the philatelic market.

The inventory he had preserved consisted of four complete panes (60 stamps each) of the 8r stamp with name overprint, plus a partial sheet, and four sheets without the name. There was also an overprinted sheet of the 4r value, from which a few stamps had been clipped.

The total lot had a face value of more than 500 pesos, a huge sum, especially in those days.

It is reported that the famous British collector Samuel Chapman and the Mexican stamp dealer Eduardo Aguirre each purchased a complete pane at the time. It is not known who acquired the balance of the stamps, but it is certain that all reached the philatelic market.

The man who had saved the stamps all those years was amazed at the sums he received from collectors for what he assumed had only modest value.

In the intervening years, most of the original sheets were subdivided into small blocks and single stamps. Unused VICTORIA overprinted 8r stamps similar to the example in Figure 1 still crop up in auctions from time to time. While scarce, they are not as rare as many other first-issue stamps, yet the mystique of their discovery, which is generally known to specialists, keeps prices high.

One complete sheet still exists — or did as recently as

six years ago. The late Jim Beal in his collection had the former Chapman pane, which I believe fetched more than $7,000 when it was sold by Harmers of New York in January 1988. There are probably a few other blocks floating around, too.

In 19th-century Mexico, most merchants and businesses kept correspondence on file for possible inspection by tax collectors. This fortunate practice preserved a lot of stamps and covers that might otherwise have been discarded.

However, early collectors coveted stamps more than envelopes with stamps on them, and dozens of business archives were destroyed when that portion of the letter bearing the stamp was torn or cut off.

Chapman realized the importance of complete letters for postal history information,

Figure 1. Unused 8-reales stamps with VICTORIA overprints, similar to the one pictured here, spring from a find with an amazing story be it.

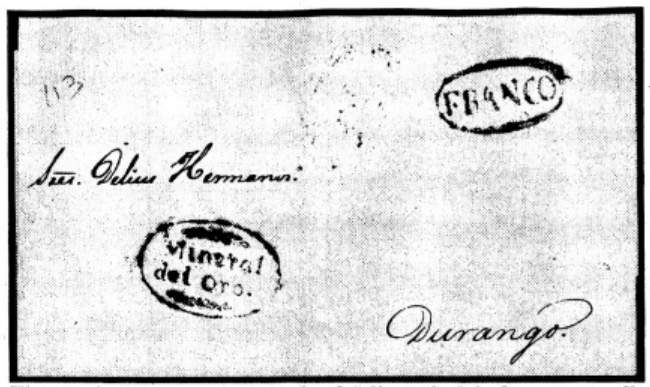

Figure 2. The town cancel of Mineral del Oro, a small mining town 150 miles north of Durango, adorns a stampless cover from the Delius Brothers archives.

and aggressively sought out intact archives. The fact that the same names are repeatedly encountered on early Mexican covers signals that many such archives did survive.

In 1949 a large archive of the commercial firm Delius Hermanos (Delius Brothers) of Durango, Mexico, was sold at auction in New York. There were 4,500 covers in this archive, many from small towns in the Durango postal district and nearby states from which few examples had previously been reported. There were also inbound covers from Europe, where members of the Delius family resided or traveled for business reasons.

The Delius archive was particularly strong in stampless material, and provided some very fine examples of small-town cancels, like that shown in Figure 2. Delius covers can be found in nearly every major exhibit of Mexican classic material.

Another important archive was that of the German consulate in Guanajuato, which was in charge of the firm Meyenberg & Co.

This hoard consisted of about 8,000 letters dated between 1868 and 1873. Luckily, the finder realized the postal history importance of these letters, which were arranged in perfect chronological order (bless those Germans), and useful information was gleaned from the sequence.

For example, since there were letters from Mexico City postmarked virtually every day of the period, the dates bracketing the use of the "Anotado" overprinted stamps of 1868 were confirmed from this file. The 40-day span during which "Anotado" stamps were sold and used began about March 12 and ended about April 25, 1868.

The last find I'll describe happened less than 25 years ago.

A Mexican stamp and coin dealer was searching for old coins in a small town near Mexico City when he stumbled upon a small archive consisting of some 475-odd covers, most of which were from the Apam postal district. This district originally straddled the junction of the states of Mexico, Tlaxcala and Hidalgo.

Again, the find was important because even though stamps from the Apam were relatively common, covers were not. The lot was broken into sections for sale to specialists.

One group was obtained by Mexican collector Alfredo Basurto, who proceeded to make a careful inventory of the pieces in his portion. He subsequently wrote a short article on the find for *Mexicana*, summarizing the chronology and other significant aspects of the covers.

Most of these covers were in the one-of-a-kind category since no other significant archives from this district had been reported.

Incidentally, this is known as the "Vertiz" archive, named for the businessman to whom the letters were addressed.

All of us dream of locating a find or untouched archive some day but, of course, the likelihood of this happening is remote, and the chances diminish as time goes on. However, the possibility always exists, and this is but one aspect of our hobby that makes it so exciting.

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Postal cards helped collectors trade stamps

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

To stretch a somewhat cramped stamp budget in recent years, I have become rather intrigued with Mexican postal stationery, particularly postal cards.

Items in this collecting field are still available at moderate prices. As a result, whenever I am browsing through the dealers' boxes at stamp bourses I am alert for Mexican postal cards, especially those addressed to somewhat exotic, out-of-the-ordinary destinations.

This month I will share a couple of recent finds with you, to suggest yet another way for those with limited funds to still have some fun with their hobby.

From a philatelic standpoint, the 2-centavo postal card illustrated in Figure 1 is not terribly unusual, nor does the fact that it is addressed to the United States make it a prize exhibition piece. But it does have several things going for it.

For specialists, the card is Higgins & Gage catalog No. 42, from Mexico's 1891 series of postal stationery. It's in excellent condition considering that it is more than a century old, and it bears an interesting double-dial New York "PAID ALL" transit mark.

I am not entirely clear on the Mexican rates to the United States at that time, but 2 centavos seems to have satisfied the U.S. postal officials.

The postmark of the sending office is struck twice: once, faintly, over the embossed stamp; and again, alongside to the left, wherein we see that the card entered the Mexican mailstream at Veracruz July 11, 1892. Seven days later it cleared the New York post office on its way to Lowell, Mass.

One interesting consequence of collecting used postal cards and postcards is that you get the opportunity to read other peoples' mail. In this case we find from the message, written in Spanish, that the card is from one stamp collector to another.

The sender, having first heard from Ralph Wheeler (the addressee), is interested in stamps of Asia, Africa, and Oceania, and is willing in exchange to provide stamps of Mexico, some of which he claims are quite scarce. He signs off with an elaborate rubber handstamp of his name, Rafael Cortina, in purple — an example of international stamp trading going on in 1892.

Figure 1. A Mexican 2-centavo postal card mailed 102 years ago from a collector in Veracruz who was seeking to trade stamps with a collector living in the United States.

The second postal card, illustrated in Figure 2, has pretty much the same flavor to it as the first. Two stamp collectors (or perhaps dealers) are involved.

The 4c card, from the postal stationery series of 1910 (Higgins & Gage No. 122) was mailed May 27, 1926, to a collector in "Batavia . . . Oceanie."

Where on earth is Batavia, one might ask? A specialist in Dutch colonial stamps would know, but here is an instance where the uninitiated must do some geographic sleuthing.

Other than a few listings of U.S. towns, a foreign Batavia is not found in the current gazetteers.

But at the time this postal card was mailed, the modern city of Jakarta, Indonesia, was known as Batavia, capital of what was then the Dutch East Indies. It is located on the island of Java, and currently has a population of about 7 million. However in 1912, the closest year to the date on the card for which I have data, Batavia's population was only 115,000.

The short message on the card is worth reproducing in full:

"Monterrey, N.L. Mexico — Dear Sir: Send me rare stamps of your country and receive same quantity and quality in Mexico. Centenaire 1910. I also exchange postal cards and envelopes. Yours truly, Ernesto Garcia Leal."

"Centenaire 1910" refers, of course, to Mexico's so-called Independence issue (Scott 310-20).

One can only speculate whether an exchange of stamps ever occurred between these two collectors, living nearly 10,000 miles apart. One can only wonder how they became acquainted in the first place.

But in the early years of philately, stamps seem to have been traded much more than they are today. Classified ads in the philatelic journals carried names and addresses of many collectors seeking correspondents with whom to swap stamps.

It is also quite remarkable that this postal card survived at all. Jakarta had, and still has, a hot, humid climate that is unquestionably hostile to philatelic material. Nevertheless, I'm certainly glad that it did endure and I count it among the unusual destinations represented in my collection of Mexican covers.

These are but two of the early Mexican postal cards in my holdings written and sent by collectors with the objective of developing trading partners. Others I own went to Alexandria, Egypt; Christchurch, New Zealand; San Salvador; the United Kingdom; and to other countries in Europe.

Philatelic purists might have a hard time accepting these as non-philatelic (i.e., commercial) usages, since there is obviously a collecting motive involved.

However, I am quite content to view them as legitimate postal usages, and I would not hesitate to include them in an exhibit. After all, examples of personal correspondence are often found in top displays and may, in some instances, be the only way in which covers representing certain types of postal service are to be found.

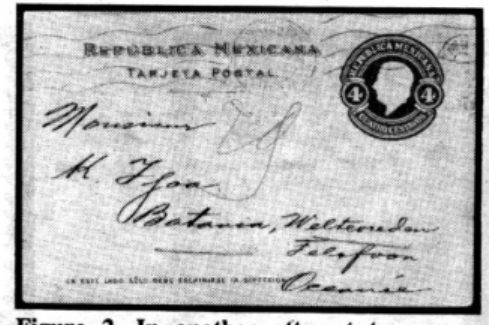

Figure 2. In another attempt to arrange long-distance stamp trading, a man in Monterrey mailed this 4c Mexican postal card in 1926 to a correspondent in Batavia, then the capital of the Dutch East Indies.

So let's see what you have, or can find hidden in those shoe boxes. I would be very pleased to hear from any readers who may possess examples of Mexican postal cards sent to exotic destinations, whether or not stamp collectors were involved.

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A century of time-dated Mexican postmarks

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Regular readers know of my fascination with and affection for stamps that have been properly used, particularly those bearing clear cancellations, which in themselves tell interesting stories.

For several years I have been plucking so-called "socked-on-the-nose" specimens from dealers' stock books and stamp circuits that come my way. These stamps, which have dutifully performed their postal chores, have a lot to offer the curious postal historian.

First, dated cancellations can confirm a stamp's use in the correct time period for which it was intended. This may help the serious collector avoid canceled-to-order remainders that may have been expressly produced to separate unwary collectors from their money.

Cancellations also can tell us a great deal about how a postal system operates, especially those cancels that contain service-specific inscriptions.

But something else that has always intrigued me are time-dated cancellations that reveal more or less precisely when a letter actually entered the mailstream (or, more correctly, when it received its first postal processing). Such cancels have been the norm in Mexico for more than 100 years.

No one is certain exactly when Mexico first began using datestamps including the time, though some have been noted from as early as 1886.

Figure 1. This Mexico City Sucursal (Branch) E postmark dated "[F]EB 27 [18]89. 1 PM" is an early example of a timed circular datestamp from Mexico.

In his definitive work on late 19th-century cancels, *The Postmarks of Mexico: 1874-1900*, Karl Schimmer shows several circular datestamps that provided space for a time slug in the center panel. These were the third or fourth generation of handstamps designed with an eye to standardization.

According to Schimmer, the first recorded timed circular datestamp shows a date of December 1888.

Figure 1 shows the earliest example of this type in my collection. It is dated Feb. 27, 1889, 1 p.m., and was used to cancel a stamp in a Mexico City branch post office, Sucursal E. The stamp is the 4-centavo value from the Large Numeral issue of 1887 (Scott 186).

Such handstamped markings often are referred to as "bridge type" cancels because of the arched segments with vertical lines above and below the center panel, which look like miniature bridges. This type of cancel eventually became a standard device for all Mexican post offices, but it took many, many years before it was in common use throughout the country.

It is interesting to note that in virtually all of the early time-dated cancelers I have seen (at least up to 1892 or so), the date is expressed in the order of month, day, year and time.

Figure 2. Datestamps from Mexico showing times between midnight and 6 a.m., like this 1914 Monterrey handstamp ending with "4-AM," are hard to find.

After the advent of Mexico's Transportation issue in 1895, the prevalent form changes. The day is given first, then the month, year and time, following the European system of dating.

I suspect the first devices were American made, and may have been used on a trial basis until local standards were established. In any event, the day, month, year and hour time system persists to this day in Mexico.

Many interesting facts emerge from collecting and studying time-dated cancels.

First of all, the vast majority of times recorded fall between 6 a.m. and midnight. This is not too surprising, as it is the time span in which most mail would be collected and processed.

In my collection, I also note that even-numbered hours appear far more frequently than odd hours on these postmarks.

Figure 2 shows a stamp with a very unusual 4 a.m. time cancel.

This stamp, one of the so-called Denver issues (named for the city where they were printed), was used at Monterrey during the civil war period. It is dated Aug. 25, 1914, and I suspect the early hour represented the time mail was gathered and sorted to make up a bag for an early morning train. At that time, trains carried nearly all mainline mail in Mexico.

Occasionally one finds cancels dated to the nearest half hour or quarter hour, or even 10 minutes, but not very often. Such hair-splitting probably correlated with a regularly scheduled mail pickup or transfer.

Figure 3 shows two such finely timed cancellations. The Mexican stamps on which they appear have been oriented to make the datestamps easier to read.

Figure 3. Some early 20th-century Mexican cancels show the date to the nearest 10 or 15 minutes. These two Mexican stamps have been oriented to make the time markings easier to read: "1120" in the 1916 Merida, Yucatan, postmark on the left; "315" in the 1913 Nogales, Sonora, handstamp on the right.

The 5c Corbata on the left (521) shows a Merida, Yucatan, handstamp that is dated "20OCT1916 1120AM."

On the right is a Sonora Green Seal issue of the civil war era canceled in Nogales "23JUL1913 315PM."

Sometime during the 1920s there appears to have been another change in the time notation method. "AM" and "PM" were eliminated in favor of so-called military time, in which 14:00 means 2 p.m., 21:00 means 9 p.m., and so forth.

Figure 4 shows a 1c Morelos Monument definitive (687A) with a Leon postmark of September 1935. The date "19-30" displayed on the cancel (7:30 p.m.) shows this 24-hour timekeeping system.

More recently, cancellations are found wherein a span of time is apparently indicated: "20-21," for example. I believe this means that the mail upon which the cancel containing this notation appeared was processed between 8 p.m. and 9 p.m. I'd be glad to hear a clarification of this if some reader

Figure 4. The "19-30" on the right in this Leon datestamp from September 1935 records Mexico's transition to the 24-hour military-style clock for timekeeping.

knows better.

Regrettably, the era of precise time dating seems to be slipping away, at least on current covers I see from Mexico. Many cancellations omit this extra information, and most of the older devices that contain it are so badly worn and poorly struck as to be virtually unreadable. (Here in the United States, just try to find a current postmark with anything other than "PM" stamped in it.)

Time-dated postmarks are yet another collecting niche where you can have some fun and end up spending only nickels and dimes.

As an adjunct, there are plenty of service-specific datestamps, some of which are quite elusive, to make the chase interesting.

Examples include: "Servicio Urbano" (City Service); "Serv. Interl." (International Service); "Cert. Interl." (International Registration); "Recibo de Imps." (Receipt of Printed Matter); and "Paquete Postal" (Parcel Post), to name a few.

Look for cancels showing times between midnight and 6 a.m. The one in Figure 2 is the only one I have encountered, so they must be scarce.

For starters you might try collecting one for each hour of the day.

I am on an American Philatelic Society Mexico circuit and frequently find stamps with clear, SON cancellations to go into my collection. And I almost never pay a premium for them. I hope you enjoy equally good hunting!

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Quetzal stamps portray endangered species

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

When I began collecting as a youngster, I recall vividly a Guatemalan stamp that caught my attention because of its bright colors and clear detail. It pictured the quetzal bird, and was probably Scott 274, then a current issue.

Only later did I find out that the quetzal (a shortened form of Quetzaltototl, the ancient Nahuatl name of this marvelous bird), held special significance for that country.

Like the American bald eagle, it had become the symbol of the nation of Guatemala and had been the subject of stamp designs more than a dozen times since adhesives were first introduced there. The quetzal is also the name of a coin, as well as a basic monetary unit.

Figure 1 shows two of the many Guatemalan stamps portraying the quetzal.

The quetzal (Pharomacrus mocino) is one of the most beautiful tropical birds known. It has brilliant plumage, a red belly and bronze-green tail feathers. On male birds, this magnificent tail may measure up to 3½ feet in length. The female's tail is short.

A member of the trogon family, the bird is about the size of a turtle dove. Before the Spanish conquest, only chiefs and nobles of high rank were permitted to wear its feathers.

But the quetzal is not native to Guatemala alone. It also is found in tropical forests of several Central American republics and Mexico.

Even though the hunting of this beautiful bird is officially prohibited, in recent years its numbers have dwindled due to logging and the destruction of its natural habitat. As a result, the quetzal now appears on the endangered species lists, and efforts are under way to prevent its potential extinction.

Last October, Mexico released two stamps calling attention to endangered native fauna. The quetzal was featured on one of the stamps, and a red-horned peacock on the other.

Figure 2, which shows the quetzal stamp, is as far as I know the first time that this bird has ever been the subject of a Mexican stamp, even though Mexico's neighbor to the south, Guatemala, had used the bird repeatedly on its stamps over the years.

Figure 1. Two of the numerous stamps released by Guatemala depicting that country's national symbol, the colorful quetzal.

The Figure 2 stamp measures 49 millimeters by 40mm, and is denominated at 2 new pesos, equivalent to about 65¢.

The four-color offset stamp was printed in sheets of 25 and perforated in gauge 10 by Amate Mexico, a private contractor that is now producing most of Mexico's commemorative issues.

According to an official Mexican postal service announcement, the stamp was produced in a quantity of 300,000 copies. This number may seem small to United States collectors, accustomed to the tens of millions in which our U.S. Postal Service orders commemorative stamps, but 300,000 has been a standard printing quantity for most Mexican commemoratives for quite some time.

It is interesting that the stamp design, which shows a quetzal perched high on a shady limb in a typical cloud forest, was adapted from a painting by Robert Bateman, the noted Canadian nature artist and conservationist. This fact emerged from research stimulated by an inquiry from John Peebles, a *Linn's* reader in Canada.

Peebles edits *The Canadian Connection*, the journal of the Canadiana Study Unit of the American Topical Association. He sought my help in finding out if the "R. Bateman" credit printed on the stamp was the Robert Bateman of Canadian fame. I contacted Guillermo Wilkins, my ever-reliable colleague in Mexico City, and determined that he was.

Wilkins not only sent me a sheet of the stamps, but also a booklet that told me more about the Bateman painting.

Bateman painted and donated the quetzal work to a Mexican conservation group that aims, in cooperation with other entities, to preserve and maintain tropical forest areas to save animal and plant species on the brink of extinction.

Bateman also permitted production of a limited edition of 500 art prints that will be sold to raise funds in further support of this effort.

The focus of the immediate project is a cloud forest park named El Triufo in the Sierra Madre mountains of the Mexican state of Chiapas. This area has been in the news lately as one of the poorest states in the republic, where natives live and survive in the forests much as their ancestors did in pre-Columbian times.

Three conservation groups are involved in this work: the Mexican Institute of Natural History; the Sierra Madre Group; and United for Conservation.

The 1993 quetzal stamp is only one of many Mexico has issued in recent years on the subject of conservation.

And Mexico is not alone in calling attention to endangered species; the United Nations has just issued a dozen stamps for the same purpose. Undoubtedly these items will be very popular with certain topicalists and thematic collectors.

Figure 2. A 1993 2-new peso Mexican commemorative portrays the quetzal as one of the endangered species of Central America.

If you are interested in more information on El Triufo, or where to write for details on the Bateman print, write to me in care of *Linn's* with a stamped, addressed envelope.

It's not often one has an opportunity to acquire a print of original artwork used for postage stamp design, support a worthy cause, and own a beautiful painting by one of the world's foremost wildlife artists, all at the same time.

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Canceled to order in 19th-century Mexico

Consider this column a caution to collectors who search for presumably used stamps to fill their album spaces for issues of Mexico between 1874 and 1895.

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Many stamps from this time frame bear cancellations that appear genuine enough but never did postal service. Here's the story.

In mid-1895, when the Transportation issue appeared (known to many as the "Mulitas"), previous issues of Mexican stamps were demonetized. Postal patrons, including commercial mailers, who had inventories of the older issues were given three months to exchange them for the new stamps. After that, the obsolete stamps would be worthless.

With huge inventories of stamps (some going back to the 1874 issue) that were of no value to the post office, someone apparently got the brilliant idea of recouping at least some money by selling the surplus stocks to stamp dealers. This obviously happened.

In 1912, the famous German stamp dealer, Louis Senf, writing in his stamp journal about remainder stamps of the world, claimed that a New York dealer, Henry L. Calman, possessed an enormous stock of the 1884 Hidalgo Medallion issue remainders.

Calman was said to have 300,000 sets of the 1-centavo through 6c values, and between 10,000 and 25,000 of the other centavo stamps, including the 1-peso and 2p denominations. (The postal administration withheld the 5p and 10p stamps.)

Did you ever wonder why the 1p and 2p Hidalgo Medallion stamps, Scott 161 and 162, were so plentiful and so cheap? Unused copies are found in nearly every circuit book I see covering that era.

I suspect most of these could be traced back to the Calman stock, or the 1895 sale of remainders. Senf also stated that Mexican speculators had purchased ample stocks of the Large Numeral issues of 1886-95.

There was even the suggestion that the Mekeel firm of St. Louis was a large buyer of the obsolete stamps. Since Mekeel later advertised in the *Philatelic Journal of America* that he could supply dealers with these stamps in quantity, it seems clear there was some truth to the suggestion.

And now to the subject of cancellations. At the time this flood of Mexican issues reached the philatelic market, mint stamps were not at all popular and were considered by some stamp collectors to be uncollectible.

Collectors wanted used stamps for their albums. This fact did not seem to hinder the purveyors of the unused

Figure 1. This bogus cancel of Ecatzingo is frequently found on Medallion and Large Numeral issues, such as the block of four below.

Mexican hoard; they simply obtained Mexican handstamps and began canceling to order.

The Mexican cancel most frequently encountered on the Hidalgo Medallions and the Large Numerals is a 40-millimeter by 25mm single-line oval inscribed "OFNA DE CORREOS / EN ECATZINGO / E. DE MEXICO." It is illustrated in Figure 1 and shown canceling a block of four of a 10c large numeral issue.

Ecatzingo was a tiny town southeast of Mexico City on the Morelos state line, and there was no possible way this place could have accounted for the amount of mail consistent with the number of stamps on which the cancel appears. So what we have is a bogus cancel.

There existed at one time complete sheets of stamps where the Ecatzingo oval was carefully stuck on the center of each block of four in the sheet.

Whether the Mexican post office did this prior to selling the stamps or simply provided the canceler to the buyer is not known. Because of the tedious work involved in accomplishing this task, the latter is suspected.

There were several other similar cancels used to devalue stamps. A few of these are shown in Figure 2. The ovals from Ziracuaretiro (Michoacan), Venadito (Coahuila), and Barranca del Oro (Tamaulipas) are occasionally found on the large numeral stamps.

But the Ecatzingo seems to show up everywhere, often on stamps with full gum. I would venture that hardly a Mexican collection exists that doesn't contain at least one or two Ecatzingo ovals.

Earlier I noted the abundance and cheapness of the 1p and 2p unused Hidalgo Medallion stamps. Up until 1990, the Scott prices for used copies of these two stamps were pegged at a low level, too, but most used copies found in the market are of the canceled-to-order variety, created long after the stamps were withdrawn from service.

There are genuine used copies, to be sure, but the collector must be careful to select ones that give ample evidence of contemporary use. Current Scott prices, higher now and shown in italics, are much more reflective of the difficulty in acquiring these two stamps.

Hopefully, this short treatise on common bogus cancels of the Hidalgo Medallion and Large Numeral issues will be of some value to the serious collector of 19th-century Mexico.

Next month, I plan to continue the theme with information on bogus cancels appearing on the 1874 Hidalgo and 1879 Juarez issues, from which large remainder stocks also flowed to the philatelic market. ■

Figure 2. Other bogus cancels used to devalue stocks of remainders. Of these three, only Ziracuaretiro is listed in modern gazeteers.

More bogus cancels of 19th-century Mexico

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

In last month's column (May 23, page 40) I discussed some of the bogus cancels to be found on the Mexican stamps of the 19th century. I concentrated on the so-called Medallion and Large Numeral issues of 1884-95.

We know there also were abundant remainders of the 1874 Hidalgo issue and the 1879 Juarez foreign mail issue. These remainders also pervade the stamp market, but there are a few twists that make the bogus cancellations on some of them a bit more difficult to identify.

Many of the remainders of these two issues that were returned from district offices were devalued by adding ruled pen lines vertically and horizontally through each row and column of stamps, or diagonal lines from opposite corners. Alternatively, one often sees an "X" penned on individual stamps.

Some remainders will bear the consignment numbers and abbreviated year date, as well as district names (about half the time), depending on whether the stamps had been shipped and prepared for sale at the district offices. But you can rest assured that, with rare exceptions, stamps canceled with pen strokes never performed postal service.

Figure 1 shows typical examples of an 1878 Hidalgo and an 1879 Juarez demonetized with pen cancels.

Figure 1. This 1878 10-centavo Hidalgo (left) and 1879 1c Juarez have been demonetized with pen cancellations.

A somewhat more subtle bogus cancel often found on the Juarez issue is illustrated on the stamps in Figure 2.

These stamps are canceled by a rectangle comprising 17 fine, wavy lines. The rectangle measures about 24 millimeters by 20mm. One rarely finds the entire cancel on a stamp, and it seems to be more prevalent on the higher denominations, which would normally be scarcer in genuine postally used condition.

Another cancel used on the Juarez stamps that I judge to be questionable in certain instances is a circular mark made up of 13 parallel lines. It is similar to, but somewhat larger than, a remainder cancel (one used to cancel remainder stamps), which is listed in Schatzkes' *Postmarks of Mexico, 1856-1874* as Apam cancel No. 39.

Figure 3 shows an example of this marking used on a 5-centavo Juarez from the district of Acapulco.

This same handstamp is found struck on stamps from various districts. In many instances it cannot be matched with known cancellations from those districts. For that reason I feel that it is one device, and perhaps one of several, used to devalue remaindered stamps.

There are other mute cancels consisting of circles of dots (actually tiny squares or rhomboids) that are suspect, too.

If I decided to collect the Juarez issue seriously, I would steer clear of stamps with those nondescript postmarks, except for reference purposes, and acquire only used stamps bearing enough of a cancellation to permit verification of known use in a district during the proper time frame.

The 1879 Juarez issue was reserved for mail bound to foreign destinations. That meant that genuinely used copies would have been on letters headed for the United States, Great Britain, Europe and so forth. Covers bearing the Juarez stamps are therefore much sought after by maritime mail specialists and command high prices.

Part of the reason these covers are so dear is that, when they were current, collectors preferred stamps to covers. They no doubt removed the vast majority of these stamps from the envelopes that bore them.

I feel that there are probably many more purportedly used Juarez stamps in collections and in the floating market supply than there should be. Post office remainders make perfect raw material for mischief by unscrupulous stamp dealers. One has to be very cautious when collecting these stamps.

This is as good a place as any to call your attention to the note in the Scott catalog at the end of the listings for the Juarez foreign mail stamps (Scott 145): "Used values for the 50c, 85c, and 100c of type A15 [Juarez] are for privately canceled copies. Postally used examples sell for several times as much."

Call them what you will, the vast majority of these stamps in the market today that are offered as "used" are not what they seem to be.

Still, the alert collector willing to do his homework can have a lot of fun with these issues.

Figure 2. A pattern of 17 fine wavy lines arranged in a rectangular form cancels these two Juarez definitives.

Figure 3. A circular obliteration of 13 parallel lines cancels this 1879 5c Juarez.

These stamps were the last to sustain Mexico's complex and cumbersome system of invoice numbering and district name overprints. In addition, their use coincided with Mexico's entrance into the Universal Postal Union, which permitted correspondents to prepay, with adhesives, letters to member countries throughout the world.

A representative collection of covers overseas would be quite a challenge, but the stamps themselves should be considerably easier to find. Good hunting!

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Rompex was the place for Mexico collectors

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

The Mexico-Elmhurst Philatelic Society International, the specialist group for collectors of Mexico, held its annual meeting at Rompex 94 this year and I attended. The memories are still vivid and deserve to be reported to those who enjoy Mexican philately.

In my book, Rompex is one of the top national-level shows in the United States. Its committee does a good job and went to considerable lengths to make MEPSI members feel at home. This was appreciated.

Some 15 exhibits of Mexican material were mounted for viewing, four of which were not in competition.

Alfonso Tena's marvelous 10-frame display of 1856-67 issues was among the noncompetitive exhibits, brimming with rarities and always a treat for the serious collector of Mexican classics.

James Mazepa put up a five-frame exhibit of the 2-real stamp of 1856 (Scott 3). It was a fine example of how an experienced exhibitor can work around a single stamp, and a great display.

Competitive exhibits showcased material spanning 200 years of postal activity. A first-time exhibitor showing a comprehensive postal history study of the Yucatan walked off with a gold medal.

Karl Schimmer exhibited the seldom-shown issue of 1872-74 in such depth and detail that it captured the reserve grand award. Schimmer's other exhibit, "Mexico Entering the Twentieth Century," focused on the issues of 1899 and 1903. It was a gold winner, too.

Perhaps the happiest exhibitor of all was Ron Mitchell, one of our local hosts who acted as coordinator for MEPSI activities. His exhibit of the so-called Denver issue of 1914 took a gold medal, plus several special awards.

Mitchell, a television newsman, has made a lifetime project of these stamps, and some years ago produced a wonderful videotape tracking their history. The tape was played at the show and a copy resides in the American Philatelic Society slide program library.

A Denver stamp served as the cachet for the Rompex show cover in Figure 1. The U.S. 29¢ Eagle self-adhesive stamp on the cover also is canceled by a special Rompex 94 postmark. It reproduces the design of a mobile post office duplex handstamp used on the Southern Pacific Railroad of Mexico as early as 1902.

At Rompex, Mitchell also introduced a new video he recently produced on Mexican prestamp postal markings.

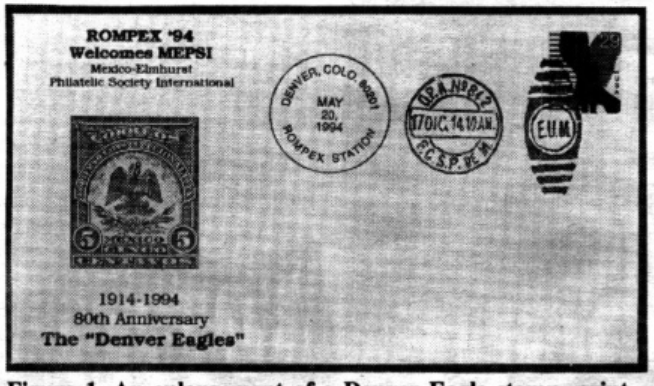

Figure 1. An enlargement of a Denver Eagle stamp, printed in Denver and used in Mexico 80 years ago, is the cachet on this Rompex 94 show cover. The 29¢ stamp is canceled by a special show postmark reproducing the design of a turn-of-the-century duplex handstamp used in mobile post offices of Mexico's Southern Pacific Railroad.

Other exhibits at Rompex demonstrated that modern 20th-century material can be exhibited, too.

A five-frame display of first-flight covers was most interesting but only earned a silver-bronze award, probably because nearly all of the covers were philatelic. Mounting such an exhibit with true commercial covers would be nigh on impossible.

A colorful exhibit of Mexican first-day covers of the modern era contained some fairly scarce items and was popular with casual viewers. It received a bronze from the judges.

The Mexican Postal Service (also known as Sepomex) sent two representatives to Rompex with goodies for collectors of contemporary material. As the service had done for the MEPSI convention at Chicagopex 90, special booklets containing strips of stamps were prepared and sold as show souvenirs.

The Rompex booklet cover in Figure 2 shows a partial view of Guadalajara from an 18th-century lithograph upon which is superimposed in gold a Guadalajara postmark from the 1850s. The regular booklet for which this cover was designed contained the se-tenant strip of five different stamps issued in 1992 commemorating the 450th anniversary of Guadalajara's founding (*Linn's*, Aug. 24, 1992, page 10).

Because of the early sellout of the Chicago booklets, I went to the Mexico Postal Service table as soon as the show opened Friday morning.

Once again, I was too late. A new-issue dealer from the Denver bourse had already purchased a large stock of the booklets for his regular subscribers.

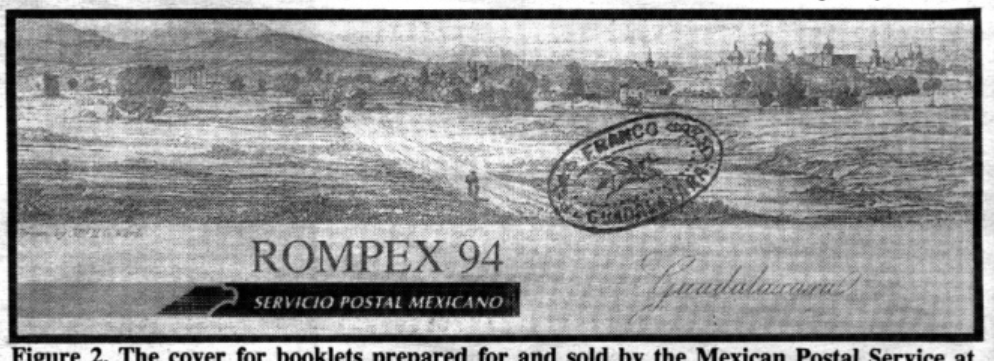

Figure 2. The cover for booklets prepared for and sold by the Mexican Postal Service at Rompex. This basic design was prepared for use with 1992 Guadalajara commemoratives, but other stamps were found in the hand-assembled booklets at the Denver show.

It turns out that, although the booklet covers are the same, there were several different stamp strips inserted into the booklets.

Apart from the Guadalajara strip, the only other variety then available contained five stamps from the Mexican Idols of the Cinema issue of 1993. In this case it was the stamp portraying Mario Moreno, the very popular comic actor of the 1930s and 1940s who is best known to millions of Latin Americans as "Cantinflas."

When I inquired of the postal service ladies why the other booklet varieties had sold out so quickly, one of them explained that they had been advertised in their philatelic releases, and a Mexican dealer had bought all that weren't reserved for the Denver show. Finally, the Denver dealer purchased all of the several booklet varieties that

Figure 3. The author used a Mexican Movie Idol stamp from one of the Rompex booklets on this special cacheted Rompex 94 cover canceled by the Mexican Postal Service.

she originally had.

I have no idea how many of each booklet variety were made — the strips were obviously all inserted in the covers by hand — but taking into account the number that the Denver dealer bought, and going by past indications, I would guess somewhere in the range of 200 to 250 of each.

I have since received booklets from my Mexican new-issue supplier and can advise that stamps were used depicting at least five other Mexican movie stars: Maria Felix; Pedro Armendariz; Jorge Negrete; Dolores del Rio; and Pedro Infante.

It's worth noting that these five Movie Idol stamps were expected to be immensely popular, and 5 million of each were printed. That is more than 15 times the usual printing order of 300,000 for most Mexican commemorative stamps.

Will the booklets become valuable? That is a tough question to answer.

The Sepomex table also had stocks of recent commemoratives and the new definitives. Special envelopes honoring Rompex were also available and a fancy show cancel was there, too.

As Figure 3 shows, I used one of the Cantinflas stamps from the booklet I bought to make a souvenir cover from the show. The envelope cachet seems to show a 19th-century horse-drawn postal vehicle.

I have no inkling how much business the Mexican Postal Service table did, but the early dealer purchase of all those booklets probably made the trip worthwhile. And it's good to see the Mexican Postal Service taking an interest in collector events.

All in all, Rompex 94 was a great weekend for many of us who espouse Mexican philately. It was wonderful seeing so many old friends again, and making a few new ones.

If you do not belong to MEPSI and are into or about to get into Mexican stamps, you are missing an opportunity for rewarding knowledge and enduring friendships. Write to John Kordich for an application and more information at 1014 37th St., San Pedro, CA 90731.

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One-cent stamp franked month-long odyssey

Normally, I would not choose a United States cover as the subject for this column, but the convoluted tale behind this one is so unusual that it deserves to be told.

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Kent Johnson, a member of my local stamp club, found the cover shown here at a small bourse and asked me to help him decipher its cluster of Mexican postmarks.

To begin with, it is not a particularly handsome piece. The stamp is torn and the envelope is ragged around the edges, for reasons that can be attributed mainly to its arduous journey.

Both the front and back of the cover are illustrated in Figures 1 and 2, respectively. To aid the reader, I have numerically coded the postmarks on the reverse of the cover, detailing them in the table that is Figure 3.

Let's trace the cover's wanderings.

The cover originated in Brooklyn, Ohio, which at the time this was mailed was a small town five miles south of Cleveland. It is an illustrated advertising envelope bearing an overall design of some sort of machinery that I have not yet identified. It might be a belt-driven mixer or blender tank.

The cover is franked with an 1894 1¢ blue Franklin stamp, Scott 247, which paid a contemporary circular rate.

The address is written in a fine Spencerian hand to one "Edward Carney, Chillicothe, Mexico." Herein lies the reason for its extended, somewhat belabored journey, and why I found it so interesting and unusual.

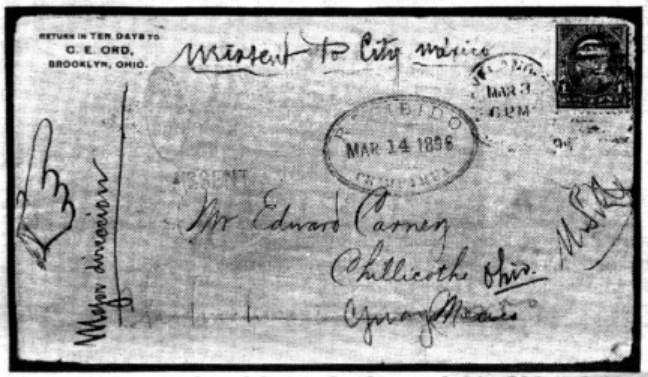

Figure 1. Battered and bent, the front of this Ohio advertising envelope reflects the many miles it traveled in 1896.

The last line in the address, "Mexico," obviously was a mistake.

There is, incidentally, in Wyandot County, west of Cleveland, a small Ohio town by that name, which had a post office at that time. So we might conclude that a secretary, working from a list of customers was momentarily distracted and wrote another Ohio client's hometown in error.

Whatever the reason, it is doubtful the mystery behind this address can be resolved.

The cover entered the U.S. mailstream at Cleveland March 3, 1896, and appears to have gone straight through to Mexico City, arriving March 9, as recorded by postmark 1 in Figure 2. Mail clerks there were no doubt puzzled by this strange address. There are not now nor were there ever any Chillicothes in Mexico.

Perhaps the sender meant "Chihuahua." This, apparently, was the reasoning of the clerk who scratched out "Mexico" and added "Chihuahua" in pencil below the illustration on the front of the envelope. Off it went back north, likely by the same railway route that brought it to town in the first place.

A purple oval on the face to the left of the Cleveland dispatch cancel in Figure 1 tells us the cover was received in Chihuahua March 14. Another Chihuahua datestamp appears on the back (2), but it is obscured by a coincident datestamp added later.

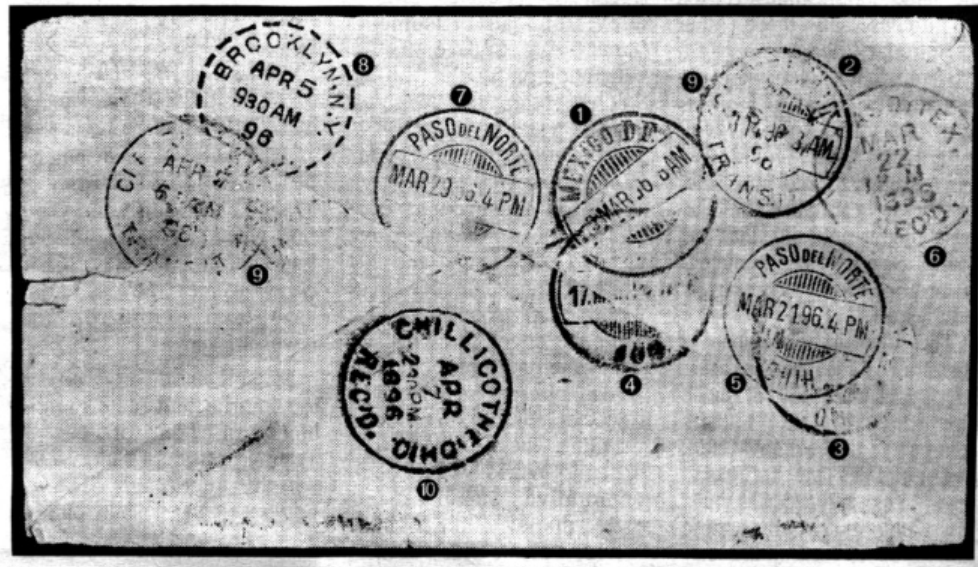

Figure 2. Nearly a dozen United States and Mexican datestamps from the back of the envelope enable the collector to reconstruct the wayward journey of the Figure 1 cover.

Again, there was no Edward Carney in town, so another redirection was attempted. "Guaymas" was penciled over "Mexico" beside a crossed-out "Chi-

Postmarks on a wayward 1896 cover

Postmarks	Post Office	Date and Comments
---	Cleveland, Ohio	March 3 — cancels 1¢ stamp on front of cover
❶	Mexico City	March 9 — letter is redirected to Chihuahua
---	Chihuahua	March 14 — oval receiving mark on front of cover
❷	(indistinct)	March 14 — probably Chihuahua circular datestamp
❸	(indistinct)	March 16 — probably a Sonora circular datestamp
❹	(indistinct)	March 17 — probably a Sonora circular datestamp
❺	Paso del Norte	March 21
❻	El Paso, Texas	March 22
❼	Paso del Norte	March 29 — pointing finger redirection marking
❽	Brooklyn, N.Y.	April 5 — "MISSENT," "Ohio" endorsements
❾	Cleveland, Ohio	April 7 — two 6 a.m. transit markings
❿	Chillicothe, Ohio	April 7 — 2:30 p.m. receiving mark

Figure 3. This chart plots the postal markings in Figures 1 and 2 *in* chronological order.

huahua'' in Figure 1.

This presents an even bigger mystery to me. Guaymas is situated on the west coast of Mexico in the state of Sonora, some 250 miles south of the U.S. border. I cannot imagine why it was sent there, unless someone in the post office knew there was a gringo named Carney in that location.

Further, I cannot guess what route it took, since the Sierra Madre mountains had to be crossed and there was no direct east-west connection between the two cities. Possibly it retreated to Durango and then went west.

In any event, there is reasonable evidence from two indistinct postmarks that the letter did indeed go to the state of Sonora, as customary abbreviations for that state appear at the base of the two datestamps (3, 4).

The letter is now some 13 or 14 days into its odyssey. Not finding Carney or Chillicothe in Sonora, the letter was then sent north to Paso del Norte (now Ciudad Juarez), which lies opposite El Paso, Texas, on the Rio Grande River.

It was first postmarked there March 21 (5). Then it crossed the river to El Paso and was hit there with a receiving mark the following day (6). For some unknown reason the letter seems to have languished in the El Paso post office for a full week before being returned to Paso del Norte March 29 (7).

On its second visit to Paso del Norte (and this is a bit of speculation on my part) the Mexican mail clerk, having grown tired of handling this postal orphan, added the pointing finger and pen endorsement at the left margin of the front of the cover, requesting ''Mejor direccion'' (a ''better address''), and directing it back to the sender in Brooklyn, Ohio.

But you might have known that this jinxed cover was in for one more misadventure, and it was. Instead of heading home to Ohio, it went instead to Brooklyn, N.Y. (8).

Along the way, at one of the many post offices that handled it, additional handwritten instructions were applied from time to time. The manuscript endorsements ''Missent to City Mexico'' and ''Ohio'' on the front of the cover are in the same purple ink and may have been written at the same office. ''U.S.A.,'' in a different hand, was added elsewhere.

From Brooklyn, N.Y., the letter returned to Ohio passing through Cleveland (postmark 9, struck twice) at 6 a.m. April 7, and was placed on a train via Columbus to Chillicothe, arriving the same day at 2:30 p.m. (10).

And so it ended its journey more than a month after it was first mailed. I estimate that it traveled in excess of 7,000 miles.

Of the 35 days en route, 19 were spent in the U.S. system, and the balance, 16, with the Mexicans.

I find it quite curious that throughout its travels, no one seems to have questioned the 1¢ franking. It is obviously correct for a U.S. circular rate. But I was not aware that the Mexicans would handle such correspondence for that amount, nor can I find any evidence to support such a contention. Perhaps some reader can help me on this score.

Finally, the most amazing aspect of this much-traveled cover is that it shows the extraordinary lengths that two separate postal systems went to in trying to deliver a misaddressed piece of 19th-century junk mail.

Could such service be expected today? Hardly. A penny simply won't buy what it used to — nor would the corresponding 1994 circular rate, I fear.

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Mexican TB seals add zest to any collection

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

One of my earlier columns (*Linn's*, July 10, 1989, page 16) presented an overview of Mexican tuberculosis seals and their close association with the Mexican post office during the first dozen years or so of their existence.

This column was among those published by *Linn's* in *Introduction to the Stamps of Mexico*. Since a detailed summary of these labels is available there, I will spare you a lengthy rehash.

Mexican TB seals first appeared in 1943 and have been issued and sold, in one form or another, ever since.

Until 1956, the stamplike labels were made by Talleres de Impression de Estampillas y Valores (TIEV), the same government agency that printed the postage stamps.

Starting in 1956, private firms were contracted to print the seals. That year also marked the beginning of an era in which different designs (usually 50) appeared on the seals in a sheet.

The design motifs featured a broad range of Mexican historical and cultural topics that no doubt enhanced sales.

Except for a few years in the early 1980s, most sales of the TB seals were made by postal clerks through the same windows where the public retrieves mail and buys postage stamps.

The TB seals often are affixed to the fronts of envelopes along with regular stamps. In the mind of the Mexican public, the postal service is closely connected with these seals, even though they have no franking power.

This top-left corner block shows 10 of the 50 different trees depicted on 1994-95 Mexican TB seals. The fourth seal in the top row is a giant Sequoia, the middle seal from the bottom row is an oak, and the seal on the far right in the bottom row is a silver maple — all three species native to the United States and familiar to Americans.

At the recent Stampshow in Pittsburgh, I had the good fortune to meet Alejandro Grossman, an avid stamp collector from Mexico.

Grossman also is manager of promotions for the Mexican National Committee in the Fight against TB and diseases of the respiratory system. He brought me up to date on the current situation with TB seals in Mexico.

First of all, the TB seals for 1994-95 are out. Here is a block of 10 from a sheet of them that Grossman gave me.

The subject matter this year is trees and 50 different world species are featured in a rather attractive silhouette format. As regenerators of oxygen in the atmosphere, trees are a perfect subject for an agency concerned with respiratory disorders.

The seals are printed in black on silver, with the prominent red Lorraine cross that has long been the worldwide symbol for this charity.

Spanish and scientific (Latin) tree names are printed on each adhesive, as well as a number that is cross-referenced to a three-page key that comes with the purchase of a full sheet of seals. This key gives other pertinent information about the trees.

The seals are denominated 20 centavos, or slightly more than 6¢ U.S. That gives a full sheet of 50 a face value of 10 pesos, about $3 U.S.

For the first time in 38 years, the 1994-95 seals were again printed by TIEV, at no cost to the committee. The printing and perforating of this year's seals are first-rate, clearly superior to the output of former contractors.

Unfortunately, TIEV only produced 5 million of the 12 million seals requested. Grossman does not know how the balance of the order will be filled.

Tragically, the incidence of TB is increasing in Mexico, particularly among people infected with AIDS. Grossman's committee is under considerable pressure to raise more money by selling more seals. In 1993, 10 million were printed, and the majority of these were sold.

Grossman also revealed another interesting aspect of the sales of these seals. As an incentive to sell, postal clerks keep 20 percent of the proceeds as a sales commission.

This may explain reports of tourists having been pressured to buy the seals when they attempted to purchase postage stamps to mail postcards and letters home.

Another ploy is for the postal clerk to claim there are no coins available to make change — so why not take the change due in TB seals?

How many collectors of Mexican TB seals there are I can't say, but the response I got from my first article indicates there are plenty.

Surprisingly, Grossman told me that there is still inventory at the committee's headquarters of almost all the seals back to 1943. Seals from then until 1955 are usually sold singly, most for $2 U.S., although a few sheets are available for $100.

From 1956 to date, full sheets of 50 are available at prices from $2 to $10, depending on the year.

The current sheet of 50 tree seals is being sold for $4. You might want to watch for these seals on mail from Mexico between now and the end of the year.

If you want a price list in English of material available, write to Comite Nacional de Lucha Contra Tuberculosis, Alvaro Obregon No. 74-108 Col. Roma, 06700 Mexico, D.F., Mexico.

In my 1989 article I noted that there are several scarcer Mexican TB seals. The 1945 seal, for example, is priced at $5, and I've seen it offered elsewhere for more. The 1950 seal (an overprinted version of the 1948 issue) now commands a price of $10.

But the priciest of all is a souvenir sheet issued in 1975 showing the National Cathedral against a background of the Aztec calendar stone. This sheetlet, which measures about 4 inches by 6 inches, can be yours for $65.

Perhaps none of these items belong in the philatelic purist's stamp collection, but I have always found them quite interesting.

Used on personal or commercial letters, these seals provide colorful insights on the lifestyles and culture of our neighbor to the south, and add a bit of zest to the covers they adorn.

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This 1916 first-day cover has a story to tell

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

My bourse browsing at the American Philatelic Society's Stampshow in Pittsburgh this summer yielded an interesting cover. To really appreciate it, we need to set the stage with the full historical backdrop.

The year was 1916 and Victoriano Huerta ("The Usurper") had been driven from power. Venustiano Carranza had neutralized Pancho Villa, consolidating his grip on the Mexican government.

Carranza called himself "the First Chief of the Constitutionalist forces," but his tenure, too, did not last. Many of his erstwhile supporters eventually turned on him. By 1920, he was gone, assassinated by some of his own men, with Alvaro Obregon taking his place in the president's chair.

However, on April 14, 1916, Carranza enjoyed his moment of glory as he rode triumphantly into Mexico City at the head of his band of Constitutionalists.

This event was commemorated by two 10-centavo stamps portraying a bust of Carranza (Scott 574-75). Except for their color — one is blue, the other brown — the two stamps are identical, showing a finely engraved and rather flattering likeness of the general.

There is little doubt that Carranza himself ordered the stamps to be prepared, and that the order was carried out by another figure who should be familiar to Mexico specialists, Cosme Hinojosa.

Figure 1. A registered 1916 Mexican first-day cover with both 10-centavo stamps portraying Venustiano Carranza.

Hinojosa served as postmaster general under Carranza. But, unlike his mentor, he managed to survive a much longer and varied political career as a revolutionary bureaucrat.

Figure 1 shows the face of the envelope, bearing each of the two Carranza stamps. The handstamped duplex cancel is dated (somewhat indistinctly) Mexico City, June 1, 1916 — the day the stamps were first put on sale.

The cover also was registered, perhaps signaling that it had valuable contents. A large purple oval handstamp dated June 1, 1916, which just barely catches the stamp on the left, tells us it was an Official registration, or government mail piece.

Even more interesting is who this cover is from and to whom it is addressed.

The return address at the top-left translates as "Private Correspondence of the Director General of Posts (Postmaster General)," a post then occupied by Cosme Hinojosa. It is addressed to "G.(eorge) W.(ard) Linn & Company, Columbus, Ohio," the founder of this newspaper.

Figure 2 shows the backstamps, and the two striking blue embossed certification seals that cover the seams in the envelope.

These backstamps indicate the cover traveled directly from Mexico City to the Chicago registry room, where it was received June 7, and thence to Columbus, arriving there the next day. That's pretty fast service, considering that equal or greater time would be required for a similar letter today!

The registration further suggests that Hinojosa (or one of his lackeys) may have enclosed samples of the new stamps for Linn, whom we know was keenly interested in Mexican philately at the time, particularly the so-called war issues.

These adhesives inspired by Mexico's civil war already had been the subject of serious study by Linn, and the subject of a survey book Linn was then writing to be issued the following year in 1917. Linn had already published a book on the White Seal and Green Seal stamps of Sonora.

In his 1917 book, *The War Stamps of Mexico* Linn discussed the varieties of the Carranza commemoratives on this cover. Evidently, there were two dies made, one in which the shading in the oval surrounding the portrait consists of horizontal lines, and the other (as issued) where the shading lines are diagonal. The stamps also exist imperforate.

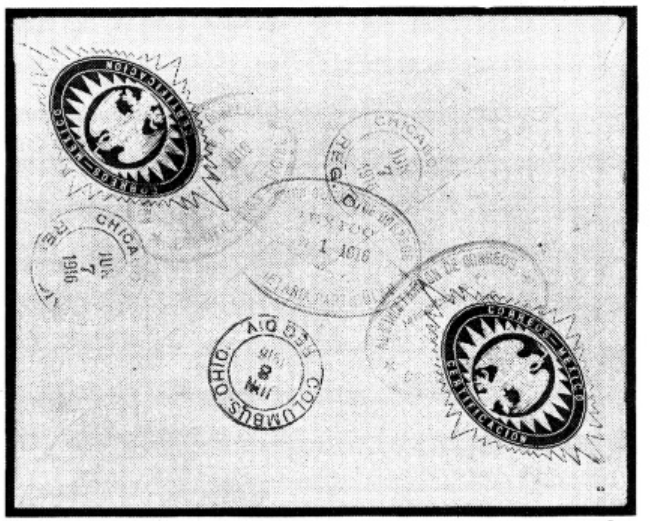

Figure 2. Embossed blue seals cover the seams on the back of the Figure 1 cover, while backstamps trace its trip from Mexico City to Columbus, Ohio, by way of Chicago.

The number issued was reported to be 150,000 of the blue stamp and 10,000 of the brown variety. But copies also are known to exist in various other colors: gray blue; green; carmine; and black. These odd-colored stamps are usually labeled essays or proofs.

It is not surprising that such special varieties quickly reached the philatelic market. By that time PMG Hinojosa knew all about stamp collectors and how to please them, at the same time extracting suitable compensation for his efforts.

I would be very interested to know what George Linn's reaction was to this letter from Hinojosa. It had been a scant two years since the very same man had stiffed Linn for payment on 75,000 copies of the Transitory stamp (Scott 369), which Linn had designed and printed for the Constitutionalist movement.

The stamps had been received, Hinojosa admitted in a letter to Linn, and we know for certain that many of them saw legitimate use in the northern states of Mexico that were under Constitutionalist control. But Hinojosa later disavowed the stamps, calling them counterfeits!

It was a pleasant surprise for me to find this piece. It

proved once again that there are hundreds of covers out there with their own special stories to tell about this fascinating hobby of ours. All one has to do is find them!

Introduction to the Stamps of Mexico by Dale Pulver, a compilation of *Linn's* Mexico columns, is now available in softcover edition for $14.95 or hardcover for $30. The third book in the Linn's Handbook series, it is available from selected dealers or from *Linn's*, Box 29, Sidney, OH 45365. ■

Stamps on Mexican National Lottery tickets

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

The National Lottery has been an integral part of Mexican life for well over 200 years. It was established as a government monopoly in 1770, while the Spaniards were still the masters of the country.

With a small investment, even the poor could buy the dream of untold riches with the right number. Of course, as we all know, the odds of winning are enormously against the player.

The lottery is everywhere. When our family lived in Mexico City during the 1960s, lottery ticket vendors could be found at nearly every major intersection of the metropolis, more often than not splitting their time between hawking tickets and selling newspapers and periodicals.

But what, you may ask, has this to do with stamps?

It turns out that the Mexican National Lottery, which occupies its own building and employs hundreds of workers in the Mexican capital, is also home to a small but dedicated and active employee's stamp club.

Since modern Mexican lottery tickets usually bear attractive artwork designed to appeal to buyers, the club thought it might be worthwhile to suggest Mexican stamps as a possible adornment for the tickets.

In 1988, club president Laura Gordillo proposed this idea to the higher-ups at the lottery. To her surprise, the suggestion was warmly accepted.

Figure 1. The first of 60 Mexican National Lottery tickets to depict stamps in 1989 depicts a 1971 stamp honoring the 200th anniversary of the Mexican National Lottery.

Gordillo showed them about 200 Mexican stamps spanning the period from the classic era to modern times. Since the lottery owns and operates its own modern, multicolor presses, it opted to reproduce mostly modern stamp designs to show off its sophisticated printing capability.

The first ticket illustrating a postage stamp was issued for the lottery drawing of Jan. 10, 1989. There were 60 stamp designs in all, the last one appearing for the Dec. 8 drawing.

I won't go into the intricacies of the Mexican lottery. Suffice it to say that normally there were two drawings each week: on Tuesdays and Saturdays, with 20 tickets (fractions) bearing the same number, each of which sold for 1,000 or 1,500 pesos (then worth about 45¢ or 70¢ U.S.).

It is probably no accident that the first postage stamp lottery ticket, illustrated in Figure 1, reproduces the Mexican stamp of 1971 that commemorates the bicentennial of the national lottery (Scott 1031). The reproduction on the ticket is a little bit larger than the original stamp, but the colors and printing match the original reasonably well.

The second lottery ticket for that week in January 1989 shows the 40-centavo value of the first stamp series publicizing the 19th Summer Olympics, which were later held in Mexico City during 1968.

Figure 2 shows a used copy of that 1965 stamp (966), illustrating a prehistoric clay figure of an athlete. These stamps paid the ordinary domestic surface rate, and were very familiar to me, as I bought sheets of them at our nearby branch post office to use on local mail. This was also one of the earliest Mexican stamps to be portrayed on lottery tickets.

While no classic issues were chosen for use on the tickets, Figure 3 shows a ticket for the March 28 lottery reproducing the 1981 stamp that marked the 125th anniversary of the use of postage stamps in Mexico (1242).

Figure 2. The second Mexican National Lottery ticket in 1989 showed this 1985 40-centavo stamp, one of the earliest Mexican stamps illustrated on the tickets.

Figure 3. This ticket for Mexico's March 28, 1989, lottery shows a 1981 stamp that, in turn, illustrates the first Mexican postage stamp (left), which was issued in 1856.

That stamp, in turn, shows a Mexican first issue from the district of Chiapas, canceled in Tuxtla. (If you aren't able to discern this clearly from the Figure 3 illustration, please take my word for it.)

By September, as a consequence of currency devaluation, ticket prices have risen to 1,500 pesos for the Tuesday drawings and 2,500 pesos for Saturdays. By then, all stamps selected for illustration were of the large commemorative types, which measure roughly 48 millimeters by 40mm.

I must admit that the tickets are attractive graphic art, even though their connection to philately is tenuous. Still, it would be surprising if this concept, first promoted by a local stamp club, did not indeed have a positive effect for philately.

It certainly brought stamps to the attention of millions of lottery players, and may even have drawn some players into the hobby.

As a footnote to this theme, one of the prize pieces in my 1856-61 exhibit of Mexico is a registered front originally part of a wrapper used to mail lottery ticket stubs from Puebla to Mexico City in 1862.

The cover's 4-real franking puzzled me at first, since 8r was the basic registry rate. I thought possibly that stamps were missing, or had been removed.

Then I read the fine print in the postal tariff for the period and discovered that the lottery enjoyed a special rate

that was one-fourth the normal postage that others paid. It seems that, in addition to the monopoly the National Lottery enjoyed, it also got a break on the cost of its mail!

My thanks again to Alejandro Grossman, president of Amexfil, for supplying much of the background for this story and the tickets used in Figures 1 and 3.

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Scott album, new stamp printer for Mexico

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

I like to devote the December column to philatelic odds and ends that do not merit a full-length column but should be of interest to regular readers of this space. It also gives me the chance to recognize and thank folks who took time to write to me in response to subjects covered here.

First, and perhaps of greatest importance to collectors of Mexico is the announcement by Scott Publishing Co. that, after a hiatus of 18 years, the Specialty series album pages for Mexico are being reprinted.

They will appear in two volumes. Part I has spaces for stamps issued from 1856 to 1978 and consists of 151 pages. Part II contains 74 pages for stamps from 1979 to 1992.

Although Scott issued annual supplements after discontinuing the original Specialty album about 1976, newcomers to the field were often hard pressed to find an adequate album to house Mexican stamps of the first 100 years.

This move by Scott should be warmly received by those collectors wishing to assemble a showing of Scott-listed varieties, and I believe it will stimulate further interest in this fascinating country.

I personally began my own collection with Scott Specialty albums and kept two going simultaneously, one for used and another for unused stamps.

At the moment I do not know the price, but have written for further particulars and plan to review this and other albums available for Mexican stamps in a future article.

•

A year ago I noted the end of the Exporta series and the advent of a new definitive series promoting tourism.

Even though these new definitives theoretically have been available for well over a year, their use, at least on mail I receive from Mexico, has been strictly limited.

Most parcels I receive from friends south of the border requiring heavy franking still bear stamps of the Exporta series. And speaking of Exportas, I still have not found time to update my informal checklist that appears in *Introduction to the Stamps of Mexico*. I hope to get to it this winter.

Interest in the Exportas remains keen, and the scarcer varieties keep climbing in price among the dealers who offer them.

Back to the Tourism stamps for a moment. If you collect contemporary postal history, you may want to seek out covers bearing them now. I believe first-year usages will become difficult to find as time goes on.

•

The article on the Quetzal stamp (*Linn's*, May 25, page 36) drew a surprising response from readers seeking further information on the Bateman art print that served as a model for the stamp, and the El Triufo rain forest, object of the conservation effort for which the stamp was issued.

I was able to steer several readers to the source of the artwork. At least one, Bob Cohen, of New Jersey, reported that he bought the litho print and was absolutely delighted with it.

Figure 2. Mexico's newest stamp printer, Grupo Grafico Romo, produced this 1.30-peso stamp for the 350th anniversary of the city of Salvatierra. "ROMO" (enlarged in right inset) identifies it as a product of the new printer.

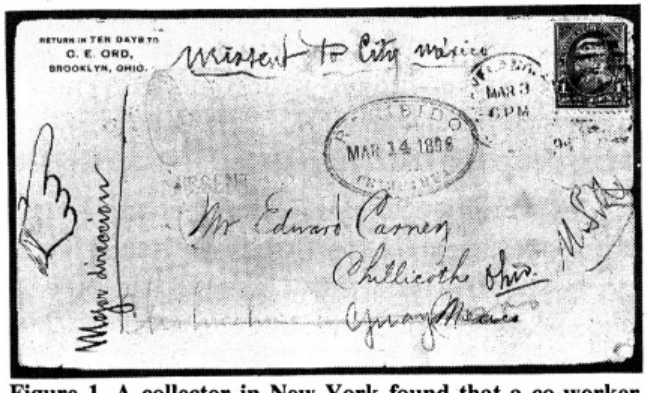

Figure 1. A collector in New York found that a co-worker was the nephew of the machinemaker who had mailed this 1896 cover featured in an earlier column, and recognized the device illustrated on the envelope as a rendering tank.

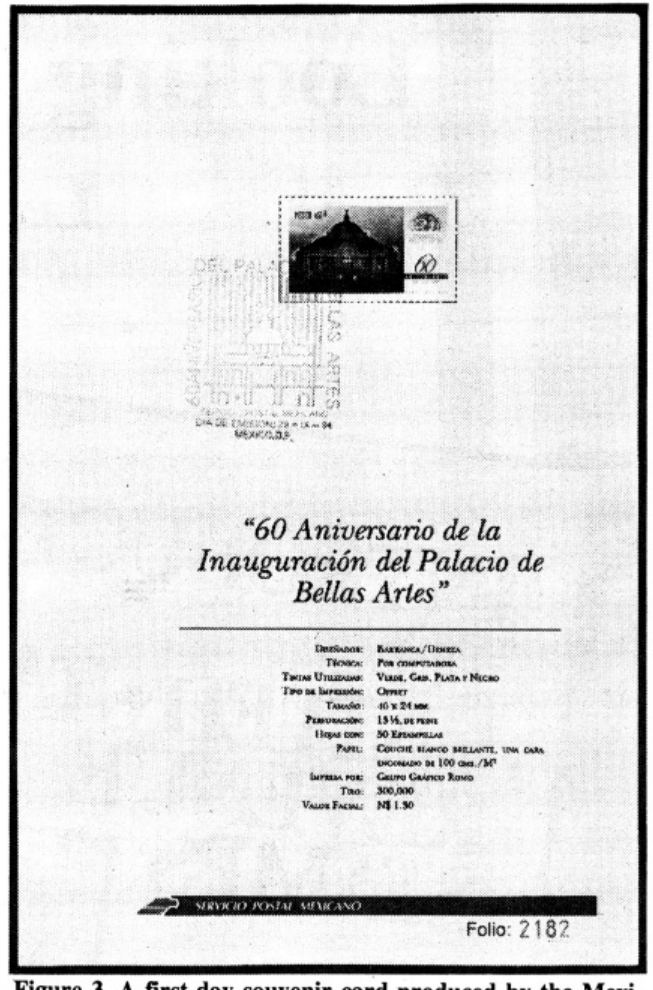

Figure 3. A first-day souvenir card produced by the Mexican Postal Service for a Sept. 29 commemorative honoring the 60th anniversary of Mexico City's Palace of Fine Arts.

Another article that elicited several letters was the story about the 1-centavo illustrated advertising envelope that journeyed to Mexico and back in 1896 (*Linn's*, Aug. 22, page 14). It is shown here again in Figure 1.

I was gratified that most respondents concurred with my explanation. But perhaps the most interesting letter of

all was from David Smith, a collector from East Aurora, N.Y., who was able to identify the machine pictured on the cover (though it's hard to see clearly). He also provided information on the original sender, "C.E. Ord, Brooklyn, Ohio."

It seems one of Smith's co-workers is named George Ord, originally from Cleveland, of which Brooklyn, Ohio, is now a suburb.

When asked if there was a possible relationship, George replied, "Oh yes, that was my Uncle Charlie. He lived in Brooklyn when I was a boy." He went on to say that the elder Ord was a machine-maker.

The item illustrated on the envelope was a rendering tank of a type Ord manufactured and sold at the turn of the century for extracting useful fats and oils from all manner of garbage.

Incidentally, Uncle Charlie's daughter still lives in Cleveland.

•

In my September column on the 1994 tuberculosis seals, I noted that the official Mexican government printing office, T.I.E.V., produced the initial order of 5 million seals, but the remaining requirement had not yet been arranged.

Information just received from my contact in Mexico indicates that the second part of the order — a printing of 3 million — had to be placed with the private contractor that produced previous issues of Mexican TB seals.

This second run was rouletted (the printer does not have a suitable perforator) and the gum appears to be more glossy than that of the T.I.E.V. issue.

If these TB seals are your cup of tea, you will want to be sure to get both types.

•

Servicio Postal Mexicano, (the Mexican Postal Service, often abbreviated as "Sepomex"), has contracted with a new printer for its commemorative issues. You may have already noted this if you have a standing order with a new-issue dealer and receive shipments automatically.

The new printer is Grupo Grafico Romo and the word "Romo" will be found on each issue printed by this house.

Figure 2 shows a 1.30-peso stamp produced by Grupo Grafico Romo depicting the cathedral in the Spanish colonial town of Salvatierra, in the state of Guanajuato, now celebrating the 350th anniversary of its founding. An inset, to the right of the stamp, enlarges the inscription "ROMO" in the stamp's bottom-right corner.

The Romo-produced stamps that I have received thus far, including this one, appear to be very well done, and they are better perforated than those formerly produced by Amate.

•

Finally, the Mexican Postal Service also has resumed the practice of preparing souvenir cards for each new commemorative with first-day cancels for collectors.

Figure 3 shows one of these cards for a 1.30p commemorative stamp marking the 60th anniversary of Mexico's Palacio de Bellas Artes.

The stamp is tied by a red first-day handstamp showing the building and date of issue, Sept. 29, 1994.

Text below the stamp and cancel gives complete details about the issue. At the bottom-right corner of the card is its serial number, 2182. About 2,500 such cards are printed for each stamp.

The cards measure about 140 millimeters by 215mm. Stories about each stamp appear on the back of the cards in Spanish only. That's probably just as well, as the English versions on earlier cards were poorly translated.

Other readers have suggested intriguing topics I plan to deal with during 1995.

Meanwhile, hearty thanks to the many readers who wrote encouraging letters and best wishes to all for the holiday season. I hope the New Year provides some great collecting opportunities for each of you!

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Eppens left lasting mark on Mexican stamps

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

As stamp collectors advance in the pursuit of their hobby, many develop a special interest in stamp designs and the artists who created them. For those who exhibit, particularly in the realm of thematic material, a few well-chosen words about the artwork used for stamps and their designers will usually score some points with a perceptive judge.

One of Mexico's premier stamp designers of the 1930s and 1940s was Francisco Eppens Helguera (1913-90). Almost single-handedly, Eppens raised Mexican stamp design to a level that commanded critical acclaim worldwide.

As a young artist at age 22, he began designing revenue stamps for the department of "Hacienda," or office of government finance. His approach departed from the usual stiff and staid treatment of the subject matter for stamps, and instead emphasized liberal doses of pictorial symbolism, or iconography.

Some of the earliest designs he created for postage stamps appeared in the 1938 set commemorating the 16th International Congress of Planning and Housing (Scott 740-45, C85-90). In this set architectural concepts for urban development were used as stamp designs — a first, at least for Mexico.

In 1940 Eppens was responsible for the stamp motif known to Mexican collectors

Figure 1. "El Timonel" (the Helmsman) on this 2-centavo stamp designed by Francisco Eppens Helguera symbolized President Comancho, who led Mexico in the Second World War.

as "El Timonel" (the Helmsman), the central figure on a set of six stamps, three regular and three airmail (764-66, C114-16).

The Helmsman is an iconographic representation of Manuel Avila Comancho, the then-newly elected president destined to lead Mexico from the harsh economic conditions of the Depression through World War II.

There is, incidentally, a minor variety of this design showing a small apostrophe-like spot of color in the handle of the ship's wheel in front of the allegorical figure's left biceps. This is illustrated in the 2-centavo stamp from the set that is shown in Figure 1.

Another famous Eppens design, and one of my favorites, is found on the 2c stamp of 1942 in another six-stamp set. This one commemorates the Second Inter-American Agricultural Conference (777-79, C126-28).

Figure 2 shows the stamp. Its symbolic focus is a reclining female figure (Mother Earth) clutching a sheaf of wheat in her left hand, a tractor in the right hand, with hair flowing into furrows as if awaiting the arrival of farm hands. This representation, as well as the balance of those in the set, received many accolades at the time.

Some of Eppens' best work emerged at the end of and following World War II.

In 1945 he conceived the designs for the issue honoring

Figure 2. Mother Earth shares her bounty with man on another 2c stamp designed by Eppens for the Second Inter-American Agricultural Conference.

the Inter-American Conference on problems of war and peace (792-95, C143-47), and also those marking the national literacy campaign of the same year (806-11, C153-57).

The latter set carries the strongly worded slogan: "Quitemos la Venda!" (Remove the blindfold!). The 2c value is shown in Figure 3.

Most Eppens designs are signed, his autograph usually appearing as a cursive signature near the bottom-right corner of the artwork. His style, in many ways, was so distinctive that it is not difficult to identify his work. Many contemporary critics said his designs were like miniature murals, concepts of high precision and full of unmistakable symbolism.

In all, Eppens is credited with no fewer than 72 stamp designs, spanning the period from 1935 to 1951. His output included definitive, commemorative, airmail, special delivery, parcel post, insured delivery, postal tax and revenue stamps.

Eppens also created a number of design essays for stamps that never were selected for issue.

Figure 4 shows one such essay for a revenue stamp with a message that rings as true today as it did in 1947 when the design was proposed.

The inscription, just below

Figure 3. In this 1945 2c stamp promoting a national literacy campaign, Eppens exhorts his fellow Mexicans to "Remove the blindfold!"

the 500-peso denomination near the top of the stamp, "Evitemos la tala de bosques," translates as "Let us avoid the destruction of (our) forests." The ax wrapped in chains symbolizes the struggle to preserve the trees.

The 12c Liberty stamp (790) and the 25c Male Torso airmails (C141, and later C185) issued in 1944, are probably the two Eppens designs most widely used.

In the early 1950s, Eppens, by then a recognized artist of the first order, gave up stamp design and dedicated himself to murals and large easel works. His murals can be found in numerous public and private buildings — the College of Dentistry and Medicine at University City (Mexico City), the post offices in Zacatecas and Poza (Veracruz) and Celulosa de Chihuahua are but a few examples.

Emulating many of his contemporary muralists, he sought to convey strong social messages in his paintings. But he did not divorce himself completely from the field of stamp design. During the 1960s he served on a commission that suggested, reviewed and approved themes to be used as subjects for postage stamps.

Over his lifetime he received countless citations for his unique art. As late as 1973, his work in stamp design was recognized in the

Figure 4. Text and symbolism in this rejected Eppens essay for a 1947 revenue stamp urged the preservation of Mexico's forests.

form of a distinguished service award from the Aerophilatelic Federation of the Americas.

It seems to me that the stamps designed by Francisco Eppens, as well as some significant covers bearing them, would make an ideal subject for a one-frame exhibit.

I doubt if any original artwork is available to show as collateral material since most of Eppens' output during this period seems to be safely secured in the archives of the Mexican stamp printers, T.I.E.V. But I believe that a little research could lead to a most interesting display.

Best of all, the stamps Eppens designed are readily available and, for the most part, reasonably priced. I would be pleased to hear from anyone who undertakes such a project.

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Mexican gems in Sotheby's Koenig auction

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

On May 30-31 in a single-owner sale, Sotheby's of New York will auction the Erich Koenig collection, one of the few remaining great old-time collections of Mexican stamps and covers.

The news release announcing the sale, which I received several weeks ago by way of *Linn's*, listed the sale date as March 13. But a call to Robert Scott, head of Sotheby's New York stamp department, revealed that Sotheby's had postponed it in view of the peso crisis in Mexico, hoping for a more settled financial situation at the later date.

Although the release is written to imply it is the entire Koenig collection, we know that a few, rare individual items from this holding have already reached the market.

Most notable is the so-called Tlalcotalpan provisional 1856 ½-real stamp on cover, a unique item that was sold by Christie's in June 1992 for $110,000, including the buyer's premium.

This was, perhaps, the priciest piece in Koenig's collection, which has been kept substantially intact since Koenig's death in the fall of 1980.

Although I have not yet seen the Sotheby's sale catalog, there should be many attractive and desirable classic-era pieces that could add luster to any collection or exhibit of Mexican material.

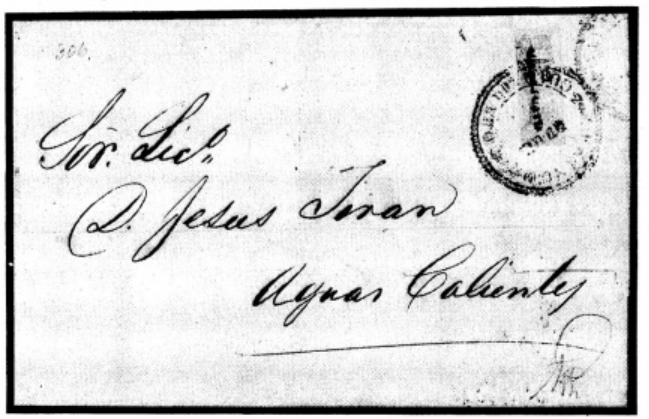

Figure 1. The vertical bisect of a 1-real yellow stamp on this address sheet from a folded letter of the 1850s is one of the "splits" — stamps quartered or bisected to pay a lower rate — of which Erich Koenig was especially fond.

The release makes special note of a vast array of "splits" on cover, some 350 in all.

Seasoned collectors of Mexico know the story of these "splits," or fractional usages, well. These were expedients created at many district post offices when supplies of the common, low-denomination stamps ran out.

The 4r and 8r values, for which there was scant need, were bisected or quartered to use for the more prevalent 2r franking.

In rare instances, 2r bisects were used to pay a 1r rate. Rarer still is the usage of a 1r bisected 1r to make a ½r rate.

Koenig owned what appears to be one of the latter usages, a vertically bisected 1r on the front sheet of a folded letter from Guanajuato to Aguascalientes, as shown in Figure 1.

Although it bears the guarantee mark of a Mexican expertizing group, the authenticity of this item is questioned by several current specialists.

The rate does not compute, and Guanajuato — a large post office — had an ample inventory of ½r stamps when the letter was mailed, obviating the need to use such a bisect.

Koenig obviously was very fond of these fractional usages — so much so, the story goes, that he frequently ordered an agent to buy items against the advice that some of the covers were obvious manipulations. As a result, many purchases were later pronounced examples of fakery and had to be purged from Koenig's collection.

In 1959, the late John K. Bash, a renowned expert in Mexican philately, was invited to Mexico City by Koenig to view and pass judgment on his holdings.

Koenig loved his specialty but, as a busy man, he evidently didn't have the time or the inclination to become expert himself in the field he collected. Bash apparently set him straight on a number of questionable items in the collection.

When Bash returned from that trip he wrote a short note for the journal *Mexicana* in which he enumerated a few of the other classic gems in the Koenig hoard.

Mentioned were two full sheets of the 1856 8r lilac stamp, one with the "VICTORIA" district name overprints, and one without.

Also noted by Bash was a letter front with 17 copies of the 1856 4r red stamp canceled in Silao.

Another exceedingly rare piece was a folded letter bearing a single copy of the ½r brown Eagle (Scott 18). This may be unique, since so few of these stamps ever were legitimately used. (Koenig also had accumulated about 50 other ½r brown Eagles, four of which were the even rarer varieties on laid paper.)

Bash also mentioned the famous ½r Tlalcotalpan provisional on cover cited earlier. At the time of Bash's visit, Koenig had amassed about 250 covers with "splits," so he was not yet finished with his acquisitions.

Regarding the current Sotheby's sale, conversation with Scott confirmed that the foregoing cited items are indeed among the material to be sold.

Also included are many rare pieces after the classic era, in the form of essays, proofs, errors and varieties missing from many of today's great Mexico collections.

Figure 2. One of four mint and used blocks of the 10-peso Pro Universidad stamp from the Koenig collection.

Among the noteworthy 20th-century items are four blocks (used and mint) of the 10-peso Pro Universidad surface mail stamp (706). One of the mint blocks is shown in Figure 2.

Blocks are rare, yes, but the stamp itself — even though only 1,000 were printed — is rarely missing from any good auction of Mexican material, and ownership requires nothing more than a decent balance in the checkbook.

However, there is another 20th-century rarity being offered that is definitely worth a second look.

It is a lightly canceled example of the 1921 bicolor 10p stamp commemorating the Abrazo de Acatempan with an inverted center (or an inverted frame — take your pick. The order of the two-color printing is unknown).

Figure 3 shows the stamp (632a). Listed in used condition only, it is valued at $6,000 in the 1995 edition of the Scott catalog.

The news release mentions that this offering is the first in 40 years and the finest of three copies known. In a quick look through my references I could find nothing to dispute this claim. In fact, a brief note in the January 1969 *Mexicana* stated at that time that only two copies were known.

In any event, this is an exceedingly rare stamp, even though the possibility still exists that more examples of

this 74-year-old error could surface.

The section of Mexican airmails in the Koenig collection is touted to be particularly strong, including a full sheet of the 1922 first-issue 50-centavo Eagle (C1), two examples of the very scarce imperforate-between error of the 1927 second issue (C2b) and two copies of the rare scarlet 10c Madero on revenue paper (C76B). The last two items catalog $10,000 and $15,000 each, respectively.

The catalogs for the May 30-31 auction have not yet been mailed, but I'm looking forward to receiving one.

It will be a useful reference, I'm sure. If you are interested in acquiring a copy, contact Sotheby's, 1334 York Ave., New York, NY 10021.

According to the auctioneers, the collection filled 22 albums, certainly an ample volume of material to satisfy more than a few specialists.

If most of the rare classic items that Koenig is known to have had at the time he passed away is present, it will be a rare and unusual opportunity to acquire material that has not been in the market for many, many years.

Figure 3. Said to be the finest of only three recorded copies of a rare 1921 Mexican invert (Scott 632a), this gem from the Koenig collection will be offered in a Sotheby's sale now scheduled for May 30-31 in New York City.

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Albums for the postage stamps of Mexico

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Occasionally my mail brings a perfectly reasonable request from a reader who is getting serious about collecting Mexican stamps, and wants to know if I can recommend a suitable album.

This seemingly simple question became somewhat easier to answer with the recent announcement by Scott Publishing Co. that it is reprinting the Specialty album for Mexican stamps after a interruption of some 18 years. Until that announcement, choices were few, especially for 19th- and early 20th-century issues.

I consider the revival of the Scott album as very good news for those of us who love and collect Mexican stamps. And it should please those recent newcomers to our field who have been denied a fresh, new single-country album for Mexico by America's largest album maker for so long.

When I began collecting Mexico as my main specialty some 30 years ago, I purchased a Scott Specialty album. In fact, when I decided to save both mint and used stamps, I bought a second album so that I might mount the two kinds of stamps separately.

Over the intervening years, several more such albums came my way in the course of buying remainder collections and the like. I saved each album to be recycled.

Much of this column will be devoted to a brief review of the new Mexico Specialty album, a copy of which was kindly supplied me by the folks at Scott. But I will also mention one other album which I believe can be useful to the collector who reads some Spanish, and who is seeking something less expensive than the Scott album.

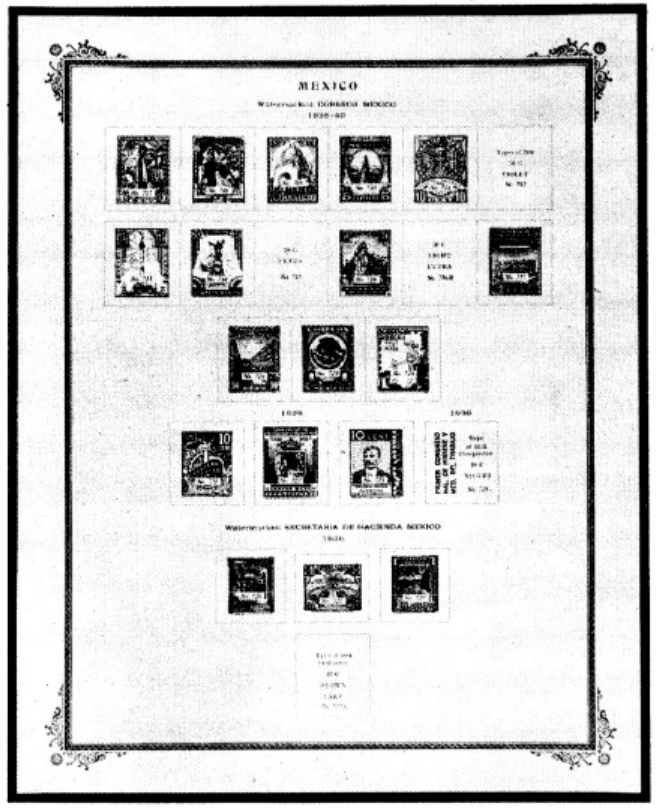
In a follow-up column, I will introduce another Mexico album concept in the works that I consider very exciting.

It will appeal to a small, more sophisticated group of collectors who desire a preprinted album with spaces for the many subvarieties found among the classic issues. These are mentioned in the Scott catalog but not provided for in the Specialty album.

Mechanically, the reprinted Scott album is similar to the original ones. Pages are the standard 10-inch by 11½-inch light cream color, with fancy border and corner ornaments.

According to my calipers, paper thickness is about a thousandth of an inch thicker than pages in my older albums. This minor improvement results in added page stiffness and virtually eliminates show-through when pages are viewed from the back.

Album illustrations of typical stamp designs are adequate, although many of them (like those in the Scott catalog) lack detail or appear muddy.



An album page for 1935-40 definitives from the Scott Specialty album of Mexico, returning after an 18-year hiatus. The binding edge, punched for both two-post albums and three-ring binders, has been photographically cropped to make the page and illustrations easier to see.

A plus is that each space contains the Scott catalog number for the stamp belonging there. These catalog numbers were not present in the older Specialty albums.

In fact, one of the first things I did after purchasing mine years ago was to pencil in Scott catalog numbers. It made it much easier to keep track of the stamps I was missing.

Shown nearby is a Scott specialty album page for Mexico's 1935-40 definitives. About an inch of the page on the far left (where it is punched to go into the album) has been cropped to make the album illustrations easier to see.

In comparing the new album page-for-page with one of my old ones, at least up through the 1940s, I'm happy to see some positive editorial changes. For example, several dates in the classic era have been corrected and appropriate changes have been made in the layout.

Pages are unnumbered, but the imprinted catalog numbers make it fairly easy to correctly relocate a page that might get out of order. I have never understood why Scott does not consider some form of pagination in its Specialty albums as other album makers have done.

I also found that spaces for a few of my favorite stamps have either been dropped or relocated to be consistent with recent renumbering in the catalog.

Space for the 1-peso blue and dark blue Veracruz Lighthouse error of color (Scott 627b, formerly 627) is omitted, and the 1-centavo dull orange Pro Universidad stamp is moved to the back-of-the-book postal tax section, where it is listed as Scott RA13B.

The blue and dark blue error in used condition is not all that rare, cataloging only $20, and will usually be present in well-developed collections mounted in the older Specialty albums.

Although the reclassification of the 1c Pro Universidad stamp is probably technically correct, since its use was obligatory for some three months following issue, its design was consistent with the rest of the set and it seems out of place where it now resides.

But these are minor quibbles. Overall, the new album deserves a good grade, and I predict it will spark renewed interest in one of the world's most philatelically interesting countries.

The pages, which are punched for the Scott two-post album and three-ring binder, are presented in two volumes.

Vol. I, covering stamps issued from 1856 through 1978, consists of 151 pages; Vol. II, from 1979 to date, has 74 pages.

List prices for the pages alone are about $83 (Vol. I) and $40 (Vol. II) — not unreasonable, since I know one dealer who was asking more than that for older used Mexico Specialty albums. Furthermore, most supply dealers who advertise in *Linn's* grant discounts of as much as 30

percent on these products.

Until Scott reissued its Mexico Specialty album there was, as far as I know, only one other album in print that provided space for Mexican stamps issued since 1856. This was an album designed and edited by S. Vackimes, longtime stamp dealer of Mexico City.

As you might expect, the album notations are in the Spanish language, and the stamp spaces are keyed to Vackimes' own catalog (price list) of Mexican stamps.

This album, too, is published in two volumes, the first spanning the first century of Mexican stamps from 1856 to 1956 (71 pages), with the second volume bringing us to the present time.

Pages are about the same size and color as Scott, but probably a bit lower in quality.

The albums come with a vinyl-covered two-screw post binder. I consider them to be fully adequate for the intermediate specialist, and the price is certainly reasonable.

When I secured a copy of the first-century album a couple of years ago, it was about $30. The second-century album was then priced at $43.50. The latter could also be had in a hingeless edition (two volumes) for $210.

If you are interested, contact Filatelia Vackimes, Reforma No. 418, 06600 Mexico, D.F.

As a footnote, I have known Steve Vackimes since 1964, when I frequented his little stamp shop on Hamburgo Street in the so-called "pink zone" of Mexico City where tourists shopped for souvenirs. I acquired my first Scott Specialty album from him, as well as many of my first Mexican stamps.

Introduction to the Stamps of Mexico by Dale Pulver, a compilation of *Linn's* Mexico columns, is now available in softcover edition for $14.95 or hardcover for $30. The third book in the Linn's Handbook series, it is available from selected dealers or from *Linn's*, Box 29, Sidney, OH 45365. ■

Specialized albums for collectors of Mexico

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

My column on albums for Mexican stamps in *Linn's* March 27 issue (page 40) concentrated on two possibilities for 19th-century and early 20th-century issues — the newly republished Scott Specialty album for stamps of Mexico and a similar Mexican album published by S. Vackimes of Mexico City.

Both of these albums are limited to spaces for major stamp varieties. However, that degree of detail may not be enough for the specialist aiming to collect the interesting and abundant subvarieties of Mexico's classic early issues.

Following the initial mention in my December column that I planned to review the Scott album, I received a very interesting letter from Nicholas Follansbee, West Coast auctioneer and a recognized expert on Mexican stamps.

Nick described to me a new album concept that he and an associate are developing. Their aim is to provide a much more specialized preprinted album for those ambitious collectors who, after getting the major varieties, decide they would like to differentiate colors, plate printings, papers, stamps with and without district names and so forth.

Follansbee's approach to this type of offering is unique, as far as I know.

In contrast with the usual process of design, production and distribution of a finished album, Follansbee's album design and layout will be stored on a computer disk.

When an order is received, a set of pages will be individually produced on a fast laser printer, shrink-wrapped and shipped out. In that way, a major investment in an initial edition and mass-marketing efforts to recapture its large costs can be avoided.

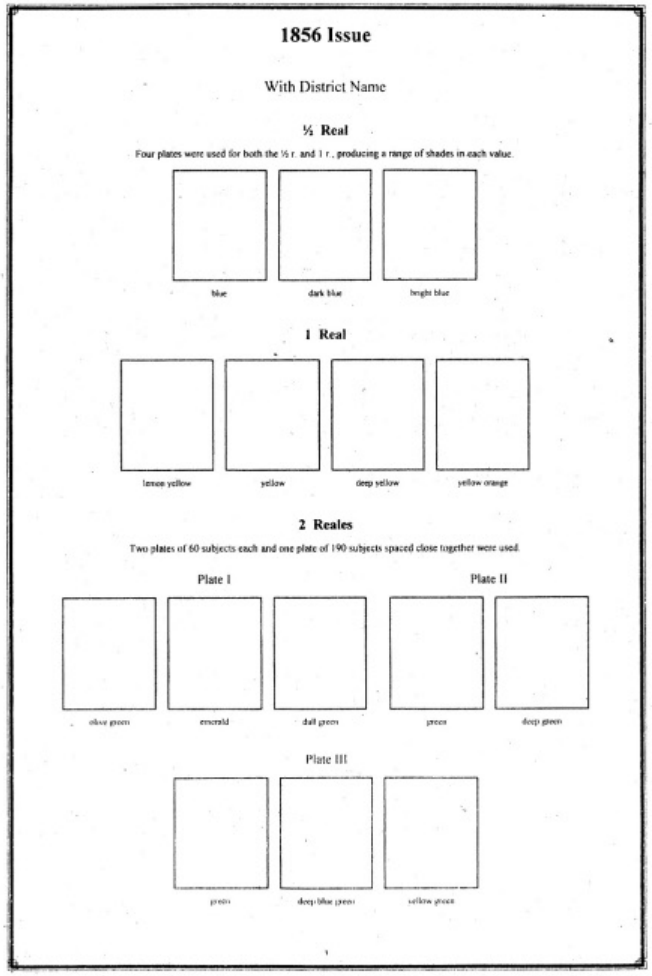


Figure 1. Page 1 from an 1856-1940 Mexico specialized album, which may be available by this summer, provides spaces for a host of varieties of classic Mexican stamps.

Follansbee expects the price for his album will be quite reasonable, considering the depth of coverage provided. The album is designed for a narrow niche market and is expected to generate a small but steady return over many years.

The basic album will contain between 100 and 125 pages, and stop at the year 1940. Collectors of subsequent issues can use Scott, Lighthouse or other available albums.

But this basic album will be far more detailed than any other album currently on the market and, since it provides spaces for dozens more varieties, it is not a direct competitor with the established albums.

Additionally, supplements are being designed and will be available for still more layers of detail, such as the district name overprints, as well as the errors, paper varieties, plate varieties, perf varieties and so on that are not covered in the basic pages.

Follansbee sent me proofs of the first 40 pages, covering the period 1856-94. I find his layout and treatment very impressive. These aspects of the new album are well represented by the two pages that are illustrated here.

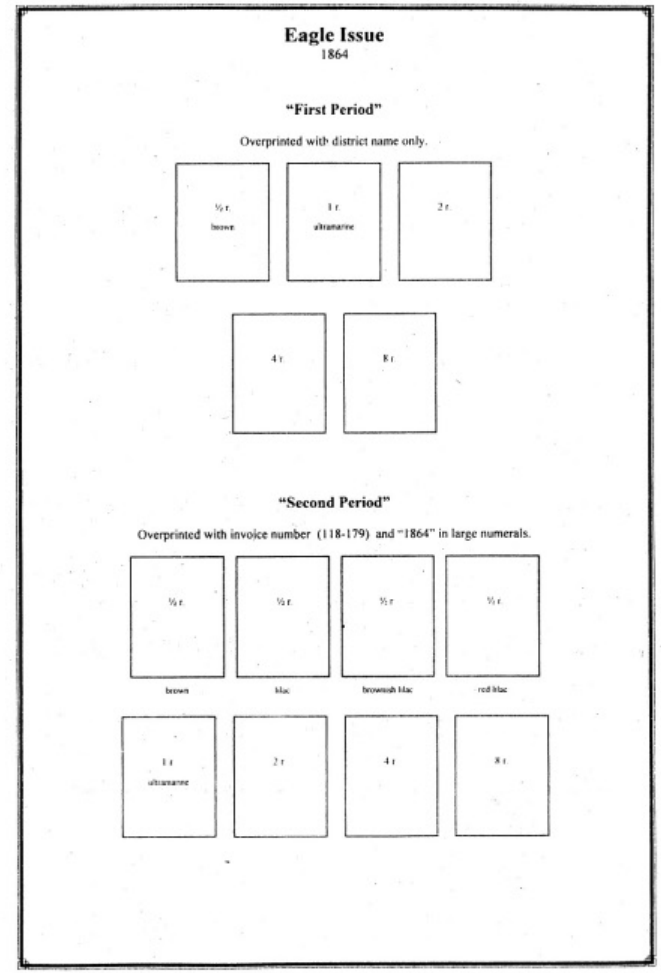


Figure 2. The first of three pages in the Follansbee album for Mexico's 1864-66 Eagle issues organizes the stamps by period and has places for four shades of the ½-real Eagle.

Figure 1 shows page 1 of the album, which provides 15 spaces for color and plate varieties of the ½ real, 1r and 2r values of the 1856 issue. Page 2 carries on with spaces for the various shades of the

4r and 8r stamps, stamps without district names and the meshed paper varieties.

The album's coverage of the 1864-66 Eagle stamps (Scott 18-24) include three pages for the basic complement of stamps issued during five philatelically identifiable periods. Also included are spaces for stamps without overprints, which are quite scarce in legitimately used condition.

Figure 2 shows the first of the three Follansbee album pages for the Eagle issue, with spaces for stamps of the first and second periods of 1864. Note again the provision of spaces for mounting ½r stamps printed in four different shades: brown, lilac, brownish lilac and red lilac.

Follansbee puts his vast knowledge to good use with short but informative notations throughout the pages.

There also will be several pages of illustrations and other explanatory detail for each issue. These notes provide all the guidance needed to identify the correct stamp for each space in the album.

Price and date of availability have still to be established, but Follansbee and his associate are pushing to have the album ready by early summer. (One of the problems that remains is to find suitable paper combining adequate wear properties and acceptable archival characteristics.)

In any event, I will keep readers apprised of progress on this project.

Another stamp album I consider to be superb for modern issues of Mexico is the one produced by Lighthouse.

I bought one about 12 years ago when I could not assemble all the supplements I needed to keep my Scott Specialty album current. As a result, my general collection of Mexico from 1970 finds its home in Lighthouse albums.

I have been pleased with these albums. The pages are well designed and there is sufficient notation (sometimes including Scott and Michel catalog numbers) to assure correct mounting of look-alike stamps.

A further plus for the Lighthouse album, to my mind, is the comprehensive treatment afforded the long and complicated Exporta issue of 1975-92. Lighthouse provides spaces for all the recognized issues in this lengthy series, accounting for the various papers, watermarks, light-active properties, gums, and so forth.

The Lighthouse editors have taken a keen interest in this series, and yearly supplements often contain revised pages for earlier editions in which new Exporta varieties have been identified.

Lighthouse albums are not cheap, however, and their coverage of Mexico only goes back to 1934. But if your Mexico collection is limited to modern issues, you will not find a better album in which to house them.

Hingeless pages are available too, but, as you might suspect, they are considerably more expensive.

I hope these short reviews will be useful to readers who may be trying to decide what albums will best meet the needs of their collection.

Comments on these and any other albums of Mexico that readers may have found and used are welcome. Write to Dale Pulver, c/o *Linn's*, Box 29, Sidney, OH 45365.

Mexican expert Alfredo Basurto of Antioch, Calif., called attention to three flagrant blunders in stamp identification in my column on the Koenig auction in the Feb. 27 issue of *Linn's* (page 36).

Scott 18 is obviously the 3-centavo brown Eagle, not the ½-real as written in the text.

The inverted-center Abrazo de Acatempan stamp is a 10c stamp, not a 10-peso stamp, and the Madero stamp printed on revenue paper (Scott 76B) is a 20c stamp.

The blame for these mistakes is clearly mine, since the folks at *Linn's* faithfully copied the text I sent them. I apologize to my readers for these errors.

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The 8-centavo Juarez and the elusive 8c rate

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Chicago-area Mexico specialist Don Sabo has puzzled for some time over an anomaly in Mexico's postal rates during the 1920s.

Sabo phoned me several months ago to see if I could shed some light on the reason for, and the duration of, a reduction in Mexico's first-class letter rates in 1927.

Since he caught me somewhat off guard, I had to defer. But his inquiry led to an interesting exchange of correspondence about a situation that deserves further study.

Sabo and I have not yet completely solved this riddle but readers may be interested in what is known thus far.

Perhaps the best place to start is with the stamp catalogs. Often, clues to rate changes can be found there.

If you study the Mexico section of your Scott catalog carefully, you will note that an 8-centavo orange stamp portraying Benito Juarez is listed as issued in 1926 (Scott 666). The stamp is illustrated in Figure 1.

This stamp is roughly in the same format as the regular issue of 1923. Discounting the "OFICIAL" overprint variety of the same stamp (O182), this is the first and only stamp of the 8c denomination you will find in the Mexico listings until 1947.

While Scott lists the date of issue simply as "1926,"

Figure 1. The 8-centavo orange Benito Juarez stamp released in 1926 (Scott 666).

several other catalogs, including Gibbons and Michel, pinpoint it more precisely as Jan. 8, 1927 (not 1926). This discrepancy has existed since at least 1931, and neither Sabo nor I found anything in the standard literature to explain which date is correct.

Usually, postal authorities do not order stamps to be printed unless there is an established need for them, and this is where the story becomes even more intriguing.

Sometime during 1926, Mexican postal authorities apparently decided to reduce the rate for first-class domestic letters from 10c to 8c. This lower rate also was to apply to letters to the United States.

How do we know this? Lacking a reference to any official directive, we determined this fact from covers mailed during the period in question.

But there are several other unanswered questions. Why was the rate reduced? When, exactly, did the reduced rate take effect? And when was this rate discontinued, and the first-class rate restored to 10c?

In any event, a new 8c postage stamp was the first requirement.

The Jan. 8 date cited in Gibbons and Michel as the issue date seems suspect.

As Figure 2 shows, Sabo has a special delivery cover dated Jan. 3, 1927, bearing a 8c Juarez (the top-left stamp), which passed through the mails unquestioned. I also have a photocopy of a cover with the 8c Juarez postmarked Jan. 4 in Guadalajara.

On the Figure 2 cover, the 8c Juarez pays the first-class postage. The 1c stamp at top-right is an obligatory postal tax issue (RA1) and the 20c stamp below (E2) pays the special delivery fee.

Sabo's Jan. 3 usage is the earliest we have thus far recorded, and suggests that the rate change may have been scheduled to take effect Jan. 1 — New Year's Day. Since that day was a holiday, and the day following (Jan. 2) was a Sunday, this could explain why we have yet to see covers postmarked with those dates.

Figure 2. An 8c Juarez is among the franking on this commercial cover postmarked Jan. 3, 1927 — five full days before some catalogs say that this stamp was issued.

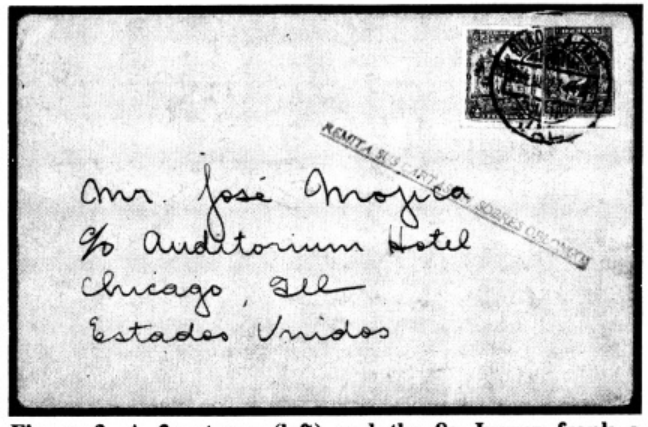

Figure 3. A 2c stamp (left) and the 8c Juarez frank a cover from Guadalajara dated Jan. 5, 1927. Does the 2c stamp reflect overpayment of postage, or could it be that the 10c rate was not officially reduced to 8c until Jan. 8?

There are, however, instances where this presumed start of the lower rate was not duly noted.

Figure 3 shows a cover postmarked in Guadalajara Jan. 5, 1927, bearing the new 8c stamp plus an additional 2c stamp. Was it overpaid, or was the rate indeed announced to take effect Jan. 8, as Gibbons and Michel suggest?

Whatever the case, covers mailed throughout 1927 are normally franked with 8c postage, either using the 8c Juarez stamp or combinations of other values to make up that rate.

The end of the 8c first-class rate has been similarly difficult to pin down.

It would be logical to suspect the lower rate might have been established for a year, ending Dec. 31, 1927. But the latest 8c cover in Sabo's collection is dated Nov. 9.

I have an 8c cover mailed from Acapulco to San Francisco, dated Jan. 12, 1928. I also know of another cover mailed from Guadalajara, which is clearly dated Jan. 4, 1928.

Unfortunately, I have no other 1928 covers earlier than March to provide clues about the end of the rate period — and by March the rate had definitely returned to 10c.

As far as the 8c Juarez stamp is concerned, there seems to have been an ample printing of it. Examples are found used (with the necessary additional postage) well into the 1930s.

In fact, if memory serves, mint copies of this stamp

were still available to collectors at the philatelic window in Mexico City's main post office when I left Mexico in 1969.

There is another possible angle to the selection of Juarez for the stamp's design. Mexico's own 1989 Celis-Cano catalog puts the stamp under a 1926 heading with a footnote that translates as, "In remembrance of the 120th anniversary of Benito Juarez's birth." My Mexican history book records the Juarez birth date as March 21, 1806.

Obviously, it takes time to prepare a stamp once the decision is made to issue it. So we can speculate that since a new denomination was needed, the timing was appropriate for the use of Juarez as the subject for the stamp.

But, if this explanation of the stamp is correct, why was the stamp not issued March 21, or at least earlier in the anniversary year?

Still, the questions of why and for what specific period the first-class rate was reduced remain unanswered. Reductions in postal rates are rare events, so there had to be a good reason.

Also, could there be some covers bearing the stamp dated 1926?

Perhaps some of our readers can help us resolve this matter. Furthermore, the answers may lie buried in the Mexican postal archives, possibly accessible to some of our Mexican readers.

In an event, further input, comment or clarification will be appreciated and duly noted in a future column. Send your thoughts to me in care of Linn's, Box 29, Sidney, OH 45365.

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A look back at the Exporta series of Mexico

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

In my humble and oft-stated opinion, the Exporta stamps of Mexico are one of the most interesting series of issues the modern world of philately has to offer.

Issued over a period of almost 18 years, these stamps gave serious collectors almost everything they could want in the way of challenge.

The Exportas include at least 112 face-different designs, a wide variety of papers, gums, and light-reactive characteristics, numerous color shades typical of such multicolor emissions, and even flaws and print shop errors to titillate the sharp-eyed stamp hunter.

Since this column began 12 years ago, Exporta stamps have been featured in five articles. To help readers sort their varieties, I even developed a checklist, which attracted much more attention than I had expected.

My most recent column on Exporta stamps appeared in *Linn's* Nov. 16, 1992, issue (page 34), shortly after my *Introduction to the Stamps of Mexico* was published. Included as an appendix to the book was my latest edition of the Exporta checklist.

However, by the time the book was available to the public, even more varieties of Exporta stamps had appeared, some of which were described in that November 1992 column.

The series now has definitely ended. This fact was announced by the Mexican Postal Service (Sepomex) some time ago, and new definitive stamps touting tourism have taken the place of the Exportas.

In spite of this, Exporta stamps continue to be used extensively, at least on mail I see from Mexico, indicating that there still must be plenty of unused inventory at post offices around the country.

If you're one of those bent on specializing in this complex issue, I feel it would be helpful to review the listings and information sources that you can use to develop your Exporta collection.

First, if you desire a preprinted album for your Exporta stamps, the only one I know of that does a decent job of providing spaces for the many varieties is manufactured by Lighthouse. This firm also produces an overview of the Exporta issues from time to time in the form of a guide that details the various printings and cross-references catalog listings.

In the fall of 1990, San Antonio stamp dealer Bill Shelton assembled a specialized price list for Exporta stamps. It was published in the July 1991 issue of *Mexicana*, the quarterly journal of the Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International.

Shelton's price list contains a wealth of information he uncovered during his attempts to build a stock of these stamps. There were some minor mistakes in his original list, but he corrected these in subsequent installments.

Figure 1. The beginning and end of the Exporta series: a 1.60-peso Bicycle stamp printed Oct. 14, 1975 (left); and the 2,000p Wrought Iron stamp (right), printed April 27, 1993.

This price list can be a valuable resource, although it may prove awkward for those not thoroughly familiar with the stamps, since Shelton's listings do not describe the stamp designs.

In October 1992, the Asociacion Mexicana de Filitelia, a Mexican philatelic group, published a 45-page booklet on the Exporta stamps as a supplement to its bimonthly journal, *Amexfil*. I described this booklet in my November 1992 column.

The booklet is well illustrated and would be helpful to collectors who can read the Spanish language. Perhaps its greatest value lies in the initial reporting of actual numbers of stamps printed, data obtained by the author directly from the Mexican government printing office.

About a year after the Amexfil study appeared, another stamp dealer, James O. Vadeboncoeur of Los Altos, Calif., issued his own survey titled *The Exporta Issue of Mexico*.

This 80-page work is somewhat easier to use than either the Shelton list or the Amexfil list, although some of Jim's issue designations are at odds with other dealers' lists.

The Vadeboncoeur report contains much helpful information about perforations, paper characteristics, hints on sorting the stamps using ultraviolet light and other technical aspects of the series.

In March of this year yet another valuable reference came my way from Mexico.

Titled *Catalogo de Produccion de la Serie Mexico Exporta, 1975/1993*, this splendidly printed 58-page booklet was produced at Talleres de Impresion de Estampillas y Valores (TIEV), the government department responsible for printing the Exporta stamps.

All of the Exporta designs are reproduced in full color. Actual production figures are summarized year by year for the entire series.

There is a table characterizing the 14 distinct papers used in the production of these stamps. Happily, it agrees with the 14 issue categories that are now accepted by most experts.

A brief introduction reveals additional information not widely known until now: the first stamp off the presses was the 1.60-peso Bicycle stamp printed Oct. 14, 1975. The last of them was a 2,000p Wrought Iron stamp finished on April 27, 1993.

Those two stamps are shown in Figure 1.

Four presses — three Goebels and one Wifag, all equipped with integral perforators — were used for the printing.

Total Exporta production was about 4.24 billion stamps (the most ever for a Mexican definitive issue), with a combined face value in excess of 1.2 trillion pesos.

The TIEV booklet was mailed to all members of Amexfil. Since the edition was limited to 500 copies, it likely will become a collector's item in itself. The front cover of the TIEV booklet is shown in Figure 2.

Other resources I have used over the years are price lists published by Filatelia Mussot, a stamp firm in Mexico City. The most recent edition I have came to me in July 1994 and appears to be complete as far as major varieties go.

It is interesting to note that retail prices for certain stamps from the early issues have soared, in particular for stamps from the sixth series. The wide-design (37.5 millimeter) 20p Wrought Iron stamp is now quoted at $400, and many other individual stamps have reached the $10 to $50 price range.

In response to requests from several readers as to whether I will update the checklist that appeared in *Introduction to the Stamps of Mexico*, the answer is yes.

For those who have relied on this incomplete list, some

comments are in order.

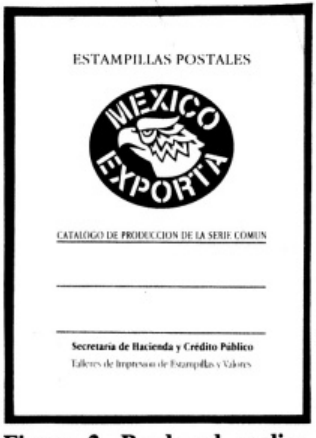

Figure 2. Produced earlier this year by the government department that printed the stamps, this 58-page booklet is the latest addition to the specialist's library on the Exporta series from Mexico.

First, the subseries B column under the 10th issue is really a separate issue, now designated as No. 13. This group is not complete; about 10 new varieties (mostly high values) must be added.

Column A under my 10th issue is likewise missing three values.

The 11th, 12th, and 14th issues — printings on distinct types of paper — do not appear in my list. Each is represented by only one stamp.

If you are interested in receiving this Exporta checklist update, write to me in care of *Linn's* and include a stamped, addressed No. 10 envelope. My update will be formatted so that it can be tipped into your copy of the book. (If you do not own the book and would like the complete Exporta checklist, be sure to indicate that fact.)

I hope that this brief review of information sources I use will be useful to fans of this complicated series.

In a future article I will examine the many postal rates that came into effect during the long tenure of the Exportas, to explain why so many stamp denominations were necessary. Meanwhile, any questions or comments about the Exporta series are always welcome.

•

As an afternote to this column, I want to pay homage to Col. William S. "Bill" Shelton, who passed away May 11 at his home in San Antonio after a long, long battle with cancer.

In the 20-odd years he was in the stamp business (following his retirement from a distinguished career in the Air Force) he became known worldwide as an expert in Mexican philately and as a fair and thoroughly honest businessman.

I knew Bill personally for most of that time, bought many of my better collection items at his auctions and turned to him many times for information and advice in philatelic matters. He honored me by writing the foreword to *Introduction to the Stamps of Mexico.*

Those of us who collect and love Mexican stamps have lost a true friend indeed. ■

Koenig sale signals Mexican market strength

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

My Mexico column in the Feb. 27 issue of *Linn's* (page 36) previewed an important collection of rare Mexican stamps and covers to be sold at the end of May by Sotheby's in New York City.

This was the legendary Erich Koenig collection, the bulk of which was formed more than 30 years ago. It had remained largely undisturbed since Koenig's death five years ago.

When I did the February column, auction catalogs had not been mailed. My review was based largely on a Sotheby's news release and information I dug from my files or from conversations with collector friends.

The catalog eventually did arrive, and the sale was held May 30-31. Its results were so astonishing that many of us are still pondering what it all means.

Although I did not attend the sale personally, I have heard from several of those who did, including dealer Nick Follansbee who sent me an extensive write-up of his observations.

Since we both believe the results bode well for those who collect Mexico seriously, I decided to do this follow-up column on the dispersal of Koenig's important holding. My thanks to Nick for the use of his notes on the sale, and his perceptive assessment of its significance.

As noted in the February column, Koenig was especially keen on "splits" — bisects and other fractions of high-denomination Mexican postage stamps used to pay the common, lower rates. Koenig had amassed more than 350 such items and these were the first 300 lots in the sale.

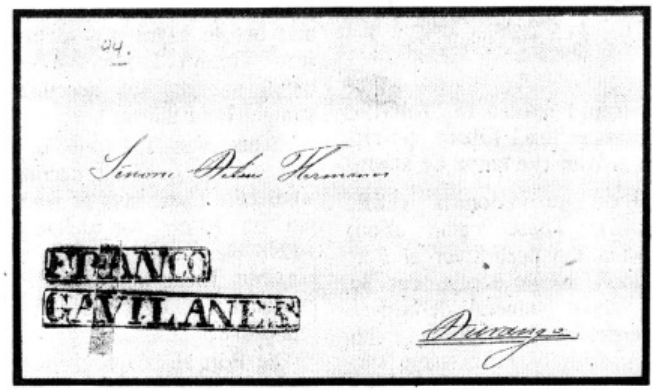

Figure 1. The first 300 lots of Sotheby's May 30-31 New York City auction of the Erich Koenig collection of Mexico consisted of covers franked with "splits" — stamps bisected or otherwise divided to pay lower rates. Though common "splits" sold well below catalog value, prices were strong for scarcer ones. A quadrisect of an 8-real Eagle paying the 2r letter rate on this cover (Scott 25f) sold for $14,375, against its $3,000-$4,000 presale estimate.

Despite the fact that there were many mediocre examples, the group as a whole did very well indeed, with total realizations exceeding the high end of Sotheby's estimate ranges. And all but a couple of dozen "split" lots found eager buyers.

Highlights follow, with prices shown including the 15-percent buyer's premium.

Three-quarters of an 1857 4-real Hidalgo on cover paying the 3r rate was estimated at $2,500 to $3,000 because of heavy staining. It brought more than $6,600, against a Scott catalog value of $7,000.

Figure 1 shows a much finer cover with a 2r quadrisect of the 8r Eagle. It fetched $14,375 against an estimate of $3,000 to $4,000, and a Scott catalog value of $3,000. (This same cover sold for $300 in 1960!)

Koenig did not collect district overprints of the first issues in any depth, but his collection did have a few desirable items, including two full, unused sheets of the 1856 8r. One sheet with the "VICTORIA" district name overprint sold for $7,187, while the other without the district name brought $4,887. These prices were considered bargains by some observers.

Other 1856 first-issue items worth noting include a cover front used in Baja California, with a 1r Hidalgo pen-canceled with a large "X." It brought $2,070, just over the top estimate.

Another first-issue cover, addressed to France with two 2r singles and the very rare 4r Zacatecas manuscript name overprint, sold for $3,335, about three times Sotheby's estimate.

Finally, an 1856 2r emerald with the "C(IUDAD) BRAVOS" name overprint on cover, probably the only example in existence, sold for $2,415 against an estimate of $300 to $350, even though the stamp was cut into on the left side.

These last items would have looked great in my exhibit had I been in a position to win the competition!

Figure 2 shows Mexico's 3-centavo brown Eagle (Scott 18). More than 50 examples of this rare stamp were offered in the Koenig sale, and some of us felt this many could result in depressed prices, especially since several of the stamps had condition flaws of some sort.

This was not the case. Bidding competition forced prices to levels higher than has been seen in other recent auctions for similar material.

Only the laid paper 3c Eagles, which are much rarer than the stamps on normal paper, went for a lower percentage of catalog value.

The celebrated 3c on cover, reputed to be the only one known, caused considerable excitement by opening below the estimate, but within a minute or so of heated bidding it was hammered down for $31,050.

Figure 2. The 3-centavo brown Eagle. Despite fears that the presence of more than 50 copies of this scarce stamp in the Koenig sale would depress prices, the stamps brought good prices, crowned by the price of $31,050 paid for the only known example on a cover.

Even more excitement was generated in the modern stamp section when the 10c Abrazo de Acatempan invert reached the block.

Figure 3 shows this bicolored stamp, with inverted vignette (Scott 632a). It can be considered as Mexico's counterpart to our inverted Jenny, but it's much, much rarer, since only two or three copies are known.

Though the stamp is held by many to be Mexico's greatest modern rarity, when the copy in this sale reached a final price of $25,300, it surprised even the most sanguine market watchers. Scott's 1996 catalog value of $6,000, up from $4,000 just last year, was ignored completely in the bidding.

The airmail section of the auction contained some great rarities, but many failed to attract even reasonable bids. The 1917 postcard sent by way of the first experimental airmail flight was an exception, bringing $1,380 despite the fact that similar items have recently sold for much less than $1,000.

The total sale results were about 80 percent of the high end of presale estimates, topping $560,000. This was achieved even though numerous high-ticket modern items remained unsold.

It is of further significance

Figure 3. The finest of three known copies of Mexico's rarest 20th-century stamp, this rare 1921 inverted-center error from the Koenig collection sold for $25,300 — more than four times the recently increased Scott catalog value.

that this sale was the third major auction of Mexican material in a three-month time span.

Contrary to some predictions, prices on select items equaled or exceeded even the most optimistic expectations. Better rare items invariably brought spirited bidding and many sold at record levels.

Several dealers came well prepared to scoop up bargains for resale, but most left with only a small fraction of their intended buy lists fulfilled. Collectors (and possibly some investors) held them at bay.

Another important result of this sale will be the information it contributes to enable Scott to overhaul its catalog values.

The results on the "splits" alone should induce extensive revisions in Scott catalog pricing up through Mexico's 1868 issue. Prices realized for other seldom-seem rarities also should provide benchmarks for even more realistic catalog values.

Happily, these adjustments should call further attention to the philatelic importance and enduring value of choice Mexican material.

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New and improved Mexican postal products

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

For several years, a loyal correspondent in Mexico City, Guillermo Wilkins, has kept me apprised of Mexican new issues, special offerings from the Mexican Postal Service and many of the goings on in the stamp world south of the border. His latest dispatches included several items that I thought *Linn's* readers might find interesting.

Perhaps the most intriguing is a rather unusual new product being promoted and sold by the Servicio Postal Mexicano (Sepomex).

Figure 1 shows this item, a small box containing a standard audio tape cassette. The illustration shows the top edge and the face, or address side, of the box.

Dotted lines define space for the addressee (''Destinatario''). A stamplike imprint in the top-right corner reads ''CINTA POST'' (tape mail) and shows a value of 7 pesos, the postage needed for the international service specified in the top edge panel.

This ''CINTA POST'' logo, rendered much larger in white on pale buff, forms the background of the address box, though it cannot be seen in this illustration.

Beneath the address box and the stamp imprint is a gray and dark blue band with one of the Sepomex logos.

The reverse side displays a similarly ruled box for the sender's address (''Remitente''), below which is the inscription ''Hecho en Mexico'' (Made in Mexico).

Figure 1. The top edge and address flap with a printed 7-peso stamp for Servicio Postal Mexicano's new ''CINTA POST'' (tape mail) service box, designed to carry a cassette tape. This one was carried in the mails, but only received a partial U.S. Customs handstamp on the front.

The tape box in Figure 1 came through the mail in fine shape, although the time from mailing to arrival was almost two weeks. Not shown here is the somewhat smudged red July 6 postmark on the sender side of the box, which has a slick, coated surface.

Perhaps the long transit time can be attributed to U.S. Customs. Its faint, diamond-shaped, red ''PASSED FREE'' handstamp appears toward the bottom on the face of the box in Figure 1.

There was no indication from Wilkins of what these tapes sell for at post office windows in Mexico or if they are widely available. The 7-peso postage converts to about $1.15 U.S., so I imagine the selling price with tape could be in the range of $2.50 to $4 U.S.

Another packet of goodies came from Wilkins a few days after this tape arrived. The items it contained were much more focused on the philatelic market.

In past years, Sepomex has issued souvenir cards coinciding with its new stamp issues, but not always with particularly praiseworthy results. I reviewed some of these earlier items in my *Linn's* column of Nov. 13, 1989 (page 12).

But matters have improved of late. Both the quality of the cards and the care exercised in applying cancellations to them are far superior to earlier efforts.

Figure 2 shows a recent example, a card bearing the 1.80p stamp honoring former Mexican President Lazaro Cardenas. The card stock is sturdy, pale gray in color, with a textured surface.

[Editor's Note: Much of the unprinted gray selvage around the 8½-inch by 5½-inch card has been photographically cropped in order to make the printed detail easier to see, although this does give Figure 2 a somewhat lopsided appearance.]

The printed text, which may not be fully legible in the illustration, announces that it commemorates the centenary of Cardenas' birth, and lists details about the stamp and its production.

Included are the designer's name, design technique (''by computer'' in this example), ink color, type of printing, stamp size, number of stamps per pane, gauge of perforations, paper specifications, the printer (Romo Graphics Group), the total emission (300,000) and the face value.

The stamp is tied clearly with a special first-day cancellation in red. The card is serially numbered in red ink in the bottom-right corner.

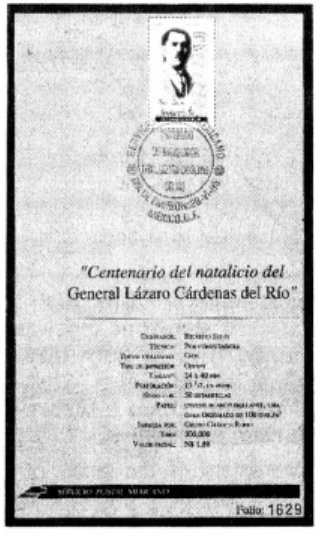

Figure 2. This first-day-canceled Sepomex souvenir card for a recently issued Mexican 1.80-peso Lazaro Cardenas commemorative is a considerable improvement over some earlier offerings.

The reverse of the card contains a brief biography of Cardenas and, as a footnote, mentions that the card is from a limited-number edition of 2,000 copies.

Curiously, the first day of issue of the stamp was June 26, 1995, more than a month later than the 100th anniversary of Cardenas' birth, May 21, 1895. Perhaps the printer was unable to meet an earlier deadline.

The other half of Wilkins' packet consisted of first-day covers. These, too, were produced by Sepomex and are of excellent quality.

Figure 3 shows the corresponding FDC for the Cardenas stamp. The motive for the stamp is given at the top-left with a very brief biographical recap at the bottom of the cover.

The simple cachet of three oil derricks calls attention to what Cardenas is best remembered for outside his own country, the nationalization of Mexico's oil industry in 1938. This was undoubtedly one of the more significant domestic events to provoke nationalist sentiment in the first half of this century in Mexico.

A Sepomex logo appears on the envelope flap, and a four-digit serial number is printed in the bottom-right corner of the back. I do not know the number of FDCs Sepomex produces, but numbers on the covers sent to me ranged from 0712 to 0822.

These philatelic items may be available from dealers who specialize in Mexican stamps. But I presume the philatelic department of Sepomex could also be a source for readers who seek this

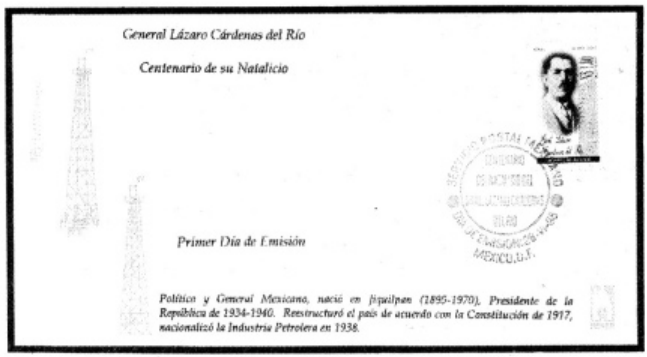

Figure 3. A cacheted June 28 Sepomex first-day cover for the 1.80p Cardenas stamp on the Figure 2 souvenir card.

type of material.

If you're interested, try writing to Department of Philatelic Promotion/Nezahualcoyotl No. 109, Piso 6/ Col. Centro/C.P. 06080 Mexico, D.F./Mexico.

I am very grateful to Wilkins for keeping me up to date on Mexican philatelic matters, and I was hoping there might be a verbal message on the Cinta Post cassette he sent me. Alas, I ran the tape through both ways and there was none.

Introduction to the Stamps of Mexico by Dale Pulver, a compilation of *Linn's* Mexico columns, is now available in softcover edition for $14.95 or hardcover for $30. The third book in the Linn's Handbook series, it is available from selected dealers or from *Linn's*, Box 29, Sidney, OH 45365. ■

Coils tried but never caught on in Mexico

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Coil stamps, especially the recent United States Transportation issues, have become such a hit with a sizable number of serious philatelists that they are now one of the fastest-growing specialties of our hobby.

If you collect modern Mexican stamps you may wonder why that country has all but ignored this form of stamp distribution and use.

A scan of the Scott catalog will yield only five face-different varieties of what we normally classify as true coil stamps — long strips of side by side stamps with perforations only between the stamp impressions.

All five of these Mexican coil stamps listed were issued in 1969. They consist of 20-centavo and 40c definitives (Scott 1003-04), and 20c, 80c and 1-peso airmails (C347-49).

A complete collection of these items could be easily displayed on a single album page, or for that matter in the illustration shown here, which includes the definitives in coil pairs.

I do not know why coil stamps never caught on in Mexico as they have in so many other countries. My guess is that currency problems associated with the onset of rampant inflation were a major factor.

However, Mexico's 1969 coil issues did signal at that time the rather ambitious campaign by postal authorities to promote their use.

These five face-different designs from 1969 were Mexico's only regular-issue coil stamps.

Thanks to an article by Earl Wellman in the October 1969 issue of *Mexicana*, quarterly journal of the Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International, I can provide some background on this matter.

As early as 1956, hand-operated coil stamp vending machines of Mexican manufacture were tested using strips prepared by hand from sheet stock. Sometime later, additional coil vending machines were purchased from a British firm, Automatization of London.

At the peak of the coil stamp experiment, it is estimated that Mexico City had 400 machines in service (evenly split between the Mexican and the British machines). Another 200 machines were installed in major cities throughout the republic.

Although the Mexican post office owned the machines, they were serviced mostly by private businesses, such as hotels, which received a commission or stamps at discount for keeping the machines filled and operating.

Prior to the 1969 issues, all Mexican coil stamps were provisional in nature, laboriously prepared by joining, end to end, strips of five or 10 stamps separated from sheets. These coils usually were made up in rolls of 100 and 200.

While most of these hand-made coils were definitive issues, some of the then-current Olympic stamps were coiled in this manner as well. Usually, such items cannot be distinguished from ordinary stamps unless they still have the attached leaders used for the initial threading of the machines or show paste-up joints from the way in which they were produced.

For a time during the early 1970s, one could occasionally obtain these provisional coils from dealers of Mexican stamps, but I rarely see them offered any more.

I suspect that collectors considered Mexican provisional coils as curiosities rather than as worthy collectibles. They are, however, quite scarce, so one must be wary of fabrications and fakes.

The coil dispensing machines used during this period were nearly all actuated with 20c coins — ubiquitous copper pieces about the size of a U.S. quarter. These 20c coins, and the silver-colored pesos (then worth about 8¢ U.S.), constituted most of the Mexican coinage in use at the time.

This proved convenient in that the commonly used postage stamps, and Mexican postal rates, were in increments and multiples of 20c.

For example, the airmail rate to domestic points and the United States was 80c and to Europe 1p. Most surface mail required 40c in postage, although circulars and unsealed envelopes could be mailed for 20c. Because of these rates, buying the right stamps from a vending machine was a simple matter of inserting however many 20c pieces each stamp required.

Wellman reported that the coil dispensing machines often malfunctioned, resulting in torn or undelivered stamps, and were an annoyance to the businesses that serviced them.

This fact, plus the unrelenting increases in postal rates that began taking effect in the mid-1970s, eventually made stamp vending machines impractical.

But back to Mexico's 1969 coil stamps once again. Although five designs constitute a complete showing of regular-issue Mexican coils, variations in light-sensitive characteristics are apparent when these stamps are viewed under longwave ultraviolet light.

Both the 20c and 40c surface-mail stamps and the 20c and 1p airmails have been described as existing with "brilliant luminescence." All of the coil stamps I have examined are luminescent under UV light, although some are more brilliant than others. It may be a matter of subjective judgment as to whether these deserve to be called true varieties.

The modern postal historian also should find Mexican coil stamps of interest. Covers bearing them appear to be rather elusive. It might be worthwhile searching for them, as I have not found any in my browsing through cheap Mexican cover stocks.

Since many Mexican coil-dispensing machines were located in hotels and souvenir shops, tourist mail would seem to be a good prospect.

A useful goal might be to try to obtain examples of all five stamps, used singly, paying the proper rates. This could turn out to be quite a challenge!

I'd be glad to hear from any readers owning covers properly franked with Mexican coils.

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Celebrate the centennial of Mexico's Mulitas

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

It would be remiss of me to let this year slip past without a salute to a controversial but most interesting issue of postage stamps — Mexico's Mail Transportation issue of 1895-99 (Scott 242-91).

The Mail Transportation issue is so named because four of the five designs depict 19th-century methods used in Mexico to transport mail. Among the Mexican stamp-collecting fraternity, the issue is more often referred to as the "Mulitas" (Spanish for "mules"), one of the means of mail carriage portrayed.

I wrote about the Mulitas shortly after this column started (Oct. 10, 1983, page 10), and that article, with minor editing, was included in my book, *Introduction to the Stamps of Mexico*. In fact, the 4-centavo brown Mule stamp was chosen as the book's cover illustration.

Another reason for addressing this topic now is to give a tip of the hat to my good friend Karl Schimmer, who earlier this year celebrated the centenary of these stamps by authoring a new, comprehensive monograph on the Mulitas. With this book, Schimmer, a 1988 Luff award winner and a tireless proponent of Mexican philately, adds still another useful work to his long list of written contributions to the hobby.

A brief historical recap of these stamps is appropriate.

Figure 1. From left to right, the four basic designs used in Mexico's Mail Transportation issue of 1895-99: a 1-centavo stamp picturing a postman in sombrero and knapsack; a 4c stamp showing a mounted mail carrier and the mules that gave the issue its Spanish nickname; a 10c stagecoach stamp; and a Mexican mail train as illustrated on a 1-peso stamp.

The Mulitas were the first pictorial designs issued by Mexico. Inspiration for such an issue may have roots in the United States Columbian issue of 1893, or other contemporary stamps that departed from the tiresome subject matter of reigning monarchs, machine-ornamented numerals and the like.

The motifs chosen were the result of a design contest, the winner being Gilbert Lomeli of Queretaro, one of eight contestants. After some substantial adjustments to the essays submitted, the final designs approved for the four transportation subjects are those shown on the four stamps in Figure 1.

From left to right, the stamps depict a foot postman with his knapsack, a mounted mail carrier with mules, a stagecoach and a mail train.

Figure 2 shows a 5c stamp picturing a fifth subject, the Aztec ruler Cuauhtemoc. Because of prevailing postal rates, this 5c stamp enjoyed the widest use of any value in the set.

The Mail Transportation issue was not popular with the public, and lasted only four years. For the serious collector, however, the issue has everything one could hope for.

There were 13 denominations in distinct colors and dozens of shade variations.

The stamps were printed on at least four different papers, three of which were watermarked. Although the vast majority of stamps were perforated gauge 12, the 10c can be found in gauge 11.

More remarkable are the perforation varieties owing to faulty perforators, pin breakage and careless processing. Such varieties, long popular with specialists, present special challenges to neophytes, because many if not most of the listed varieties have been extensively faked.

For the advanced exhibitor, the existence of forerunners and special printings offers the opportunity to score important points with judges. There is an essay, various proofs, trial color proofs, the well-known black presentation stamps and other esoteric items available to dress up an exhibit.

While the majority of the Scott-valued varieties can be obtained without too much difficulty if one has the time and money, there are a few stamps in the issue that will tease even the most persistent stamp hunter.

The unwatermarked 10c stamp of the 1898 printing (Scott 284) is particularly elusive and frequently misidentified. What is usually offered purporting to be this stamp is a sheet margin copy of Scott 248, also a 10c stamp, lacking the watermark. (Paper grain and texture are the keys to correct identification.)

The 20c brown rose on script "RM"-watermarked paper of 1896 (264) is likewise scarce and expensive, but fairly easy to identify properly.

By far the rarest and most expensive Mulita is the 5-peso Mail Train with the Eagle and "RM"-watermark (278A). This stamp, now cataloging $15,000, is believed to be from a printing of not more than two or three sheets.

The watermark is hard to see and hopeful candidates submitted for expertization are more often than not returned without credentials. Recorded genuine copies number fewer than 10.

All this and more is amply covered in Schimmer's new book in up-to-date detail.

A prolific author of philatelic research material on Mexico, Schimmer has studied these stamps assiduously for more than 25 years. In 1972 he teamed up with Constantine Bulak in writing a 40-page supplement on the same subject in *Mexicana*, the quarterly journal of the Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International.

The current effort is far more comprehensive, with the infusion of new information that Schimmer has gathered in the intervening years.

Especially interesting are the fascinating insights on a long-running battle with Scott to reinstate the 12c orange-brown stamp as a true color variety (not an error) and to include a stronger warning to collectors regarding irregular perfs. These perforation vari-

Figure 2. The 5c stamp, the most widely used denomination of the issue, depicts the Aztec ruler Cuauhtemoc.

eties always should be collected in pairs or larger multiples as a defense against fakery.

Unfortunately, Schimmer's book was a desktop-published private edition of only 75 copies — unfortunately, because there may well be more than 75 collectors who would love to own one.

Members of MEPSI were alerted to the book's availability in the April *Mexicana*, so I suspect it's already sold out. If you are one of the unlucky Mulita collectors who missed out, perhaps you can borrow it from the American Philatelic Research Library or the MEPSI library.

At least Schimmer has preserved for future collectors much of his vast knowledge on these stamps, and for that we are very grateful. The hobby is not always the recipient of such generosity.

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Mexico's first issue 4-real and 8r stamps

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

By the time this column appears it will be over, but on Nov. 4, enthusiasts of Mexico's first issue of postage stamps from 1856 were treated to an acquisition opportunity unlikely to be repeated for many, many years.

On that date, Nicholas Follansbee Philatelic Sales auctioned one of the most complete arrays, from the standpoint of districts, of 4-real and 8r stamps of that series to come on the market in a long time.

In previous columns, I described how the Mexican general post office distributed stamps to the various district offices throughout the republic; how these offices were obliged to overprint their names on the stamps to validate them for use (a measure to thwart loss of revenue in case of theft); and how many of the smaller offices were supplied so few stamps that their overprinted stamps are either great rarities or altogether unknown.

The 4r and 8r values are generally scarce to rare from all but the largest district offices and are eagerly sought by specialists.

The two stamps illustrated with this column from the district of Veracruz represent the common varieties. Shipments to this district (15,740 of the 4r and 9,820 8r) were greater than to any other office except Mexico (City).

Only about 157,000 4r stamps and slightly more than 100,000 8r stamps of the 1856 issue were distributed. Not all were used; many were returned to be later destroyed at the general post office.

These numbers pale in comparison to quantities issued for the three low values: more than 800,000 of the ½r; more than 1.4 million of the 1r; and more than 1.6 million of the 2r. So, the 4r and 8r denominations were considerably less abundant to begin with.

Furthermore, the large, commercially important districts received and used the lion's share of these high values for registered letters and heavy packets.

Of the 55-odd districts from which shipment records are available, only 26 received more than 1,000 4r stamps, and only 22 received more than 1,000 8r stamps.

Many of the smaller district offices received only a few sheets (60 stamps each),

The 4-real (left) and 8r (right) stamps from Mexico's first issue of 1856 with overprints for the district of Veracruz.

and seven offices were apparently sent but one sheet of the 8r stamp.

Mexican specialists have long argued about a reasonable survival rate for these first issues, with an average between 3 percent and 5 percent being suggested as reasonable. So it is quite clear that some of these survivors constitute the truly great classic rarities of Mexico.

The 1856 collection in the Follansbee sale was formed over a period of years by a British collector who concentrated on acquiring stamps from as many of the various districts as possible.

Many of the key pieces in this offering are traceable back to some of the great Mexico collections of the past, such as Chapman, Taylor, Fayolle, Quast, Hamilton, Schatzkes and Bash. And several of the items truly merit that sometimes overused description, "finest copy known."

Some of the highlights are 4r stamps from the districts of Apam, Campeche, Chiapas, Hermosillo, Huejutla, Maravatio, Temascaltepee, Tixtla Guerrero, Tlalpujahua and Tulancingo.

Among the 8r stamps are seldom-seen examples from Acapulco, Apam, Chiapas, Chihuahua, Hermosillo, Huejutla, Maravatio, Saltillo, Tabasco and Toluca.

Desirable rarities abound in lots containing the lower denominations, too. But my primary focus here is on the 4r and 8r stamps.

Great collections of Mexico are often measured and judged on the depth achieved with the difficult stamps (covers, too). This collection had 8r stamps from 29 of the 37 districts from which 8r stamps are recorded. Only the legendary collections of Garcia Larranaga, Quast, Hamilton and Schatzkes equalled or exceeded this showing (Schatzkes had 31 8r districts).

In almost 30 years of collecting this issue, I have only managed to scrape together 8r stamps from 15 or 16 districts. But part of that is due to timid bidding and lack of opportunities. I hope to fill a few voids from this sale.

This brings me to another theme I have often touted in this space: the opportunities Mexican classics offer in the way of shouting rarities that can be acquired without mortgaging the house. Some of the stamps I have alluded to will probably fetch prices near the middle to high hundreds. A few will carry into the low four figures, depending on bidding competition.

Were these United States or certain European stamps of comparable rarity they would easily soar to levels far beyond the reach of most of us.

No doubt the matter of taste and popularity drives stamp pricing, but I feel Mexico still offers the chance to assemble a first-rate collection or exhibit and not go broke in the process. It has been done with increasing frequency in recent years.

During the past 20 years, exhibits of Mexico have won numerous grand awards at national shows, and one exhibit won the American Philatelic Society's Champion of Champions competition.

Mexico has been prominent in international exhibitions as well.

As far as I know, the 1856 collection in the Follansbee auction was never shown competitively, but I am certain many of the items sold will soon grace exhibits that are. ■

Year-end recap of stamp news from Mexico

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Traditionally, I devote my December column to shorter philatelic news items about Mexico and to recognition of useful feedback from loyal readers. The year 1995 was an unusually exciting one for Mexico collectors.

Just when I thought there could be nothing new on the oft-featured and now-expired Exporta definitive series, a note from a regular correspondent in Mexico alerted me to the fact that early centavo-denominated Exporta stamps are being used at 1,000 times their original value to make correct frankings on current mail.

An example on a cover from Mexico's equivalent of the American Lung Association is pictured in Figure 1.

The cover in Figure 1 needed 1.80 new pesos for the domestic postage. In this instance, an Exporta stamp of 1,600 old pesos is joined by a 20c stamp of the old currency as if it were based on the new peso.

The explanation for this is somewhat contorted, but it goes like this.

When the Bank of Mexico established the new peso (1,000 times the old one) at the beginning of 1993, it decreed that during a transitional period, the symbol for the new currency would be N$ (nuevo peso). Stamps and currency were to be denominated in N$ and bear this symbol.

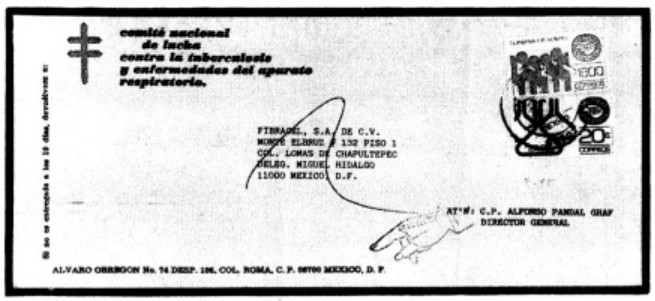

Figure 1. This cover from Mexico's equivalent of the American Lung Association bears a 20-centavo stamp of the old currency used as if it were based on the new peso. It also bears a 1,600p stamp in the old currency.

Meanwhile, in the runaway inflation of the 1980s, centavos had been abolished in 1987 as a virtually valueless monetary subdivision. And, there was nothing in the decree redefining the traditional sign for centavos, a "c."

So, the Mexican Postal Service was given leave to use the once-useless stamps of 20c, 50c, and 80c at 1,000 times their original face value in old pesos. Imagine the monetary windfall to anyone who possesses a large stock of these previously useless stamps.

Since the revalued peso went into effect, only the 20c stamp has appeared on mail directed to me. My last bimonthly journal from Amexfil, the Mexican specialist society, came in a 9- by 12-inch envelope franked with 75 copies of the 20c Productos Quimicos (Chemical Products) stamp.

The envelope bears a half sheet pasted on the front and a full sheet on the back. At current exchange rates, the total franking of N$15 converts to about U.S. $2.40. The stamps were canceled with 29 strikes of a dated handstamp.

It is reported that the obligatory use of the "N$" symbol will end this month. So, we may see more of the older, low-value Exporta stamps, presumed to be in ample supply at the main post office.

On the same subject, at least one reader, Tim Carroll of California, was successful in securing the TIEV (the government printing office) booklet on Exporta stamps mentioned in my June column directly from the TIEV.

Also, requests for my Exporta checklist and update still drift in; I've sent out more than 150 so far this year. Most collectors want the complete list, signalling continued interest in the series.

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The 1995-96 tuberculosis seals for Mexico depict fancy 19th-century earthenware from Sayula, the famous craft center for fine china. The seals feature 25 truly beautiful pieces, including pitchers, vases, plates, sugar bowls, and the like.

Figure 2 pictures 10 of the 25 designs.

The items shown on the seals are from the collection of Banamex, the largest banking institution in Mexico.

TIEV produced the seals using two processes, offset and photogravure.

The offset printing was a first for TIEV, a successful test comprising 1,000 sheets out of a total print order of 200,000 sheets.

TIEV also plans to print postage stamps using this process.

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G.H. Davis of Cincinnati has focused his attention on Mexico's special delivery stamps and usages. His persistence and dedication paid off quite handsomely during the past year.

Davis reports finding a block of Scott E5, the 10c violet Archer special delivery stamp unwatermarked. This variety previously had only been reported in a little-used Mexican catalog.

Figure 2. Ten of the 25 designs for Mexico's tuberculosis seals showing 19th-century earthenware from Sayula.

Davis received a Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International (MEPSI) certificate for his stamp and subsequently convinced Scott to list it. Look for it in the 1997 edition.

Davis also found a clearly dated 1951 cover with the second redrawing of the 25c special delivery stamp, E13, which Scott shows as a 1952 issue. He hopes to get this chronology corrected, too.

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In my column in the Aug. 28 *Linn's*, page 30, I described boxed recording tapes sold by the Mexican post office. Illustrated with the article was one of these boxes designed for international use that I had received from a correspondent in Mexico.

Later, another friend in Mexico informed me that there is a domestic version of the package (N$5 franking) for use within the country. These tapes have proved to be very popular, particularly among families of workers who travel to the United States for employment.

The Mexico column in the May 22 *Linn's*, page 44, dealt with the 8c orange Juarez stamp of 1927 and its use. A few additional bits of information came in from readers.

The first possible day of

usage was agreed by all respondents to be Jan. 3, 1927. No covers have yet been found to dispute this.

As far as the expiration date for the 8c rate is concerned, Marino Riosa of England wrote that he has evidence that it was Jan. 21, 1928, with 2c of the restored 10c rate slated to help the development of domestic airmail service.

Further, a presidential decree of March 1, 1928, stated that if the public would provide enough support (i.e., massive use) to make the airmail service self-sufficient, the 2c increase on first-class mail would be revoked. This, of course, did not happen.

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My best wishes to all for safe and happy holidays, and thanks to all who have written positive and kind words of encouragement. ■

Where and how to obtain Mexican stamps

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Occasionally, collectors ask me where they might buy certain stamps missing from their collections. The recent advent of the updated Scott specialized album for Mexico may also have spawned a new group of collectors who are seeking reliable sources in order to fill in empty spaces.

This month's column will provide some useful ideas, particularly for collectors just beginning or early in their development of this fascinating specialty.

I began to focus on Mexico back in the 1960s while I was living there on a temporary business assignment.

In Mexico City, where I was stationed, there were perhaps a half dozen walk-in retail stores where stamps could be purchased. However, not all of these were exclusively stamp dealers.

One of my earliest purchases was a Scott specialized album, and that, together with the Scott catalog, constituted all the basic literature I had on Mexican stamps. So, like most collectors, I began filling spaces.

A trip to the philatelic window at the main post office was moderately fruitful. I bought one of everything in stock, and those stamps went quite a way in plugging holes for the first half of the 20th century.

But, I soon found, as serious collectors always do, that key stamps and particularly scarce stamps from the classic era had to be ferreted out one by one. And even then, the elusive items were rarely found in dealers' stocks.

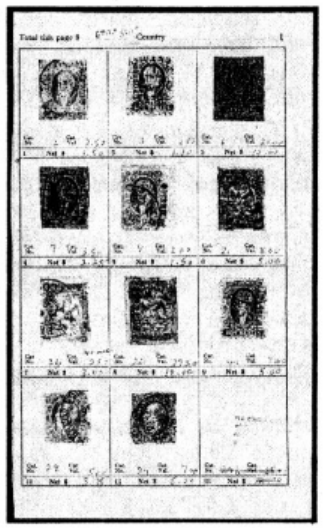


Figure 1. A page from an American Philatelic Society circuit book with Mexican stamps from the classic era.

Fast forward 35 years, and we find the situation where the walk-in retail stamp store is becoming a fading memory of the past. And, it is still difficult to locate needed material if the collection is reasonably advanced.

My membership in MEPSI (Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International), which I took up soon after I began getting serious about Mexico, opened up new avenues for procuring stamps.

I learned that advanced collectors relied heavily on public auctions for key pieces (they still do).

I also found out that collectors often traded among themselves and advertised among the membership for their needs.

During my last year in Mexico, 1968, an international stamp show, Efimex, was held following the Olympic Games, and I was introduced to the concept of a stamp bourse.

This bourse was crowded with dealers from the United States, Mexico and Europe, who eagerly offered attractive stocks of Mexican stamps. I was like a small boy in a candy store with a big appetite, but only so much money. So, hard choices had to be made.

Another worthwhile source of stamps for the beginning collector is circuit books. MEPSI operates a circuit for its members, as does the American Philatelic Society.

I have not had much experience with the MEPSI circuits, but I have subscribed to APS circuits of Mexican stamps for many years. A sample page from an APS circuit book with classic-era Mexican stamps is pictured in Figure 1.

Circuit booklets, in which members mount and price duplicate stamps, generally will not yield many rare or expensive varieties. But for the general collector of Mexican stamps, they can be an excellent source of low-to-medium priced stamps, and sometimes, covers.

Net price lists from stamp dealers provide further opportunities for acquisition.

Depending on your collecting objectives, you may find some of these sources to be more productive than others. Regardless of how you acquire material for your collection, here are some considerations I strongly recommend taking into account.

First, buy the very best condition you can find within the limits of your pocketbook.

With a sparsely filled album, there is a temptation to acquire the first copies of needed stamps that come your way. Use a bit of self-discipline if you can and wait until material that truly meets high standards is found. This maxim is especially true with circuits, which frequently contain low-quality stamps.

You may have to compromise occasionally, but do so with truly scarce items you're unlikely to encounter for a long time. Take my word for it, there are plenty of top-quality Mexican stamps available.

Developing relationships with dealers of your specialty are worthwhile. They often receive material for direct sale you might not otherwise see. If you buy from dealers regularly, most will be happy to work with want lists, too. And, dealers also are very useful when you have material to dispose of.

The truly rare gems of Mexican philately generally must be purchased at auctions or by private treaty. Figure 2 shows the cover of a Mexican auction catalog featuring Mexican stamps from all eras.

Figure 2. The cover of a Mexican auction catalog featuring Mexican stamps.

Last year, several important sales included items not seen in the market for many years.

These sales focus on the higher priced material, so you'll have to be prepared to commit decent sums of money.

If you are unable to attend these auctions in person, you can always submit bids by mail or use an agent. I have found agents to be worth the modest expense, especially where some feel of the floor action is needed, such as when you wish to submit "either, or" bids, or want to limit your expenditures to a specified amount.

The use of an agent also allows the bidder to remain anonymous.

If you attend stamp shows, don't be timid about working the dealers for your wants. I have occasionally stumbled onto interesting pieces from dealers not known for Mexican material. These dealers often acquire large, general holdings that may contain Mexican stamps and covers, and once in a while you can find worthwhile, and reasonably priced sleepers.

And don't forget to scan the display ads and classified section of *Linn's* for offerings.

If you're just getting started with Mexico or haven't been at it for very long, do join MEPSI (write to John Kordich, 1014 37th St., San Pedro, CA 90731, for more information).

MEPSI's quarterly journal, expertization service, literature offerings, and potential for enjoyable and useful friendships are well worth the modest annual dues.

The MEPSI membership directory also lists dealers who specialize in Mexican stamps.

Finally, make a conscious effort to read and learn as much as you can about Mexican philately. Knowledge will, in the long run, pay handsome dividends, especially in the area of stamp acquisition. ■

Mexico's Tourist definitives offer challenge

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

If you were one of those collectors who, through brute force and perseverance, mastered the intricacies of Mexico's Exporta stamps regarding paper, gum and light-sensitive properties, another opportunity is at hand to practice those hard-won skills. The new Mexican definitive series touting Mexican tourist attractions appears to be headed down the same path as the Exportas.

These stamps, referred to by specialists as the "Turistico" series, were officially announced early in 1993, although their advent had been rumored for at least three years prior to that time.

Linn's associate editor Denise Hatton reviewed them in her World of New Issues column Aug. 30, 1993 (page 12), and I included a short reprise as part of my December 1993 column touching on a number of news items related to Mexico.

There were 12 designs in the initial group, each with a different denomination ranging from 90 centavos to 6 new pesos.

The table in Figure 1 is an attempt to summarize the varieties that have been reported to me. The first column in the table lists the designs, arranged by denomination, comprising the initial issue. They were not printed in this sequence, however. According to a folder published by TIEV (the state mint), three stamps were produced in 1992 and the balance in 1993 in the order designated by the "TS-" code.

The rest of the columns in the table list stamp denominations found on various papers. Stamps in columns one, two and three are printed on paper of Mexican origin, fairly thick with PVA gum displaying faint, irregular ridges running the long dimension of the stamp.

The column one (original issue) stamps show fairly intense, but even, luminescence on both the front and back when viewed under UV light.

The column two stamps have strong luminescence, but have a somewhat speckled, or mottled, appearance.

The column three stamps are much whiter on the back.

The stamps in columns four and five were printed on Spanish-made paper, slightly thinner with smooth PVA gum. Column four stamps are reported to exhibit slight luminescence on the reverse, in contrast to those listed under column five. Under UV light, they appear cream colored.

Stamps in column six are purported to have been printed on the same paper (Mexican) used for one of the late printings (10th issue) of the Exporta stamps. It is fairly thick paper with dull, ivory-colored dextrin gum that may show faint ribbing and appear to be around 40 recognized varieties.

Since the release of the stamps, dealers and collectors have reported several paper varieties with varied response to long-wave ultraviolet light. Also, there have been several new denominations dictated by changes in the postal rates.

The number of basic designs of the Turistico series remains at an even dozen. But counting the other aforementioned factors, there appear to be around 40 recognized varieties.

Design	Paper Desig.>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
CAMPECHE	TS-9	0.90				1.80*		
GUANAJUATO	TS-12	1.00*	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.10		
COLIMA	TS-7	1.30	1.30		1.30	1.80 2.00		
MICHOACAN	TS-11	1.90		1.90				
COAHUILA	TS-10	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	1.80 2.00		
QUERETARO	TS-8	2.20						
SONORA	TS-6	2.50				6.50		
ZACATECAS	TS-2	2.80						
SINALOA	TS-3	3.70				2.30	3.40	3.40
YUCATAN	TS-4	4.40				2.40 3.80		
CHIAPAS	TS-1	4.80				1.80*		
MEXICO (STATE)	TS-5	6.00				2.70*	2.70	2.70

Figure 1. This table summarizes varieties of Mexico's new definitives, called the Turistico (tourism) series.

pears medium tan under UV light.

The column seven varieties are on similar paper, with slight, blotchy luminescence front and back, like issue 13 visible without or with UV enhancement.

Figure 2 depicts the 1993 original-issue of two of these stamps, those for Guanajuato and Campeche.

If you are keen on obtaining the minor varieties of these stamps you might be well advised to pick them up soon. I have noticed steady increases in asking prices over the past few months in the specialized lists I receive, particularly for those stamps in columns three and six.

Also, eight of the 12 designs have undergone denomination changes in the three short years the stamps have been out.

I suspect the choice of these new denominations was very deliberate. It provided stamps for common frankings so that all the tourist states might benefit from whatever advertising value the use of such stamps would have.

There is little doubt we will begin to see more of the Turistico stamps on mail from Mexico. However, as I have noted before, covers franked with these stamps during the first of their existence are hard to come by. During that time, Exporta stamps continued to be widely used on both domestic and foreign mail.

I wish to give credit to Guillermo Wilkins, a regular source of stamp news from Mexico, and Jim Vadeboncoeur, who edits the new issue section in *Mexicana*, for much of the basic information upon which this article is based.

I would be pleased to hear comments from readers who may have further insight on this subject. This is admittedly a first stab at discussing what is apt to become a stamp series rivaling the Exportas in scope and complexity. ■

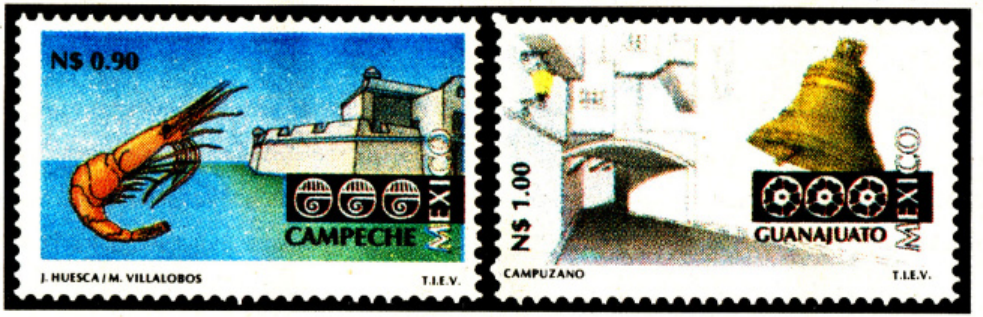


Figure 2. Color varieties exist for Mexico's Turistico series definitive stamps for Guanajuato and Campeche. On the Guanajuato stamp pictured on the left, the bell can be tan or yellow. On the Campeche stamp shown on the right, the shrimp can be red or orange.

of the Exporta series.

A note of caution: I have not personally examined all of the varieties included in this table and am relying on lists provided by dealers and other collectors. Be advised that there is always some subjectivity in descriptions used.

At least four of the stamps, those marked with asterisks, come with color varieties,

The bell in the Guanajuato stamp (column one) can be tan or yellow. The latter is scarce.

The shrimp in the Campeche stamps (column five) can be red or orange. The red shrimp seems scarcer than the orange one.

These color varieties probably owe their existence to imperfect control of ink color during the printing process.

Topical material can be found in Mexico

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

During the past 20 years or so, topical or thematic collecting has probably become the fastest growing branch of our hobby. Once the province of youngsters and beginners, it has captured the attention of many serious and first-rate collectors.

Thematic exhibits are now taking top awards at many of our national level shows even when up against some high-powered stamp and postal history collections.

The fact that topical collectors seek stamps portraying such things as ships, birds, paintings and the like is not lost on authorities in charge of choosing subject matter and printing postage stamps.

Some countries go overboard catering to these people. I do not include Mexico in this group, since the vast majority of its stamps are closely tied to the history, culture and wildlife of that country.

Figure 1. One of four 1988 stamps from Mexico featuring monarch butterflies.

Still, I believe that the thoughtful thematic collector is well served in Mexican philately.

Take butterflies, for example. A fellow stamp club member, Vincent Lucas, has been eminently successful over a period of years with a marvelous thematic study of butterflies titled "The Lepidoptera." His collection consistently wins gold medals, and at times has earned grand awards.

Lucas became quite excited when, in 1988, Mexico issued four stamps in honor of the monarch butterfly (Scott 1559-62). One of the stamps is shown in Figure 1.

Here was an opportunity to add four more items to his collection and perhaps even a cover or two bearing these beautiful stamps.

But long before Mexico's Monarch stamps appeared, Lucas' knowledge of this butterfly's life cycle sparked a search for another significant item from Mexico to enhance his exhibit.

In 1974, a prominent Canadian zoologist confirmed the discovery that the indefatigable monarch butterflies migrate thousands of miles from their summer habitats in the eastern United States and Canada to a remote area in the Sierra Madre mountains of Mexico.

Figure 2. A 19th-century straightline postmark from Angangueo, Mexico, a town near where monarch butterflies spend their winters.

The monarchs converge in a very small area at 9,000 feet elevation near the small town of Angangueo, in the Mexican state of Michoacan. The butterflies spend the winter there before heading north once more.

A seasoned thematic collector like Lucas knew that an early cover or postmark from this place would provide a useful tie-in to the theme of his exhibit. I think it is called a significant philatelic element. He asked me for advice in this search.

Luckily, Angangueo was important enough in the mid-19th century as a mining town to warrant postal service. The straightline postmark illustrated in Figure 2 is known used on stampless letters as early as 1855 and as a canceler up through the first Mexican stamp issues until 1867. This marking was supplanted by others after that time.

Unfortunately, it is a rather scarce marking. Angangueo was then home to only 6,000 souls, most of whom were illiterate, so the mail flow had to be quite small. (As late as 1964, the population was even less, around 5,000.) So any cover from this era would help Lucas score in the difficulty of acquisition category for his exhibit.

The monarchs still return to Michoacan, but their wintering quarters appear threatened by encroaching humanity and perhaps too many tourists.

Figure 3. Mexico's Tourism stamp for Michoacan includes monarch butterflies as part of its design.

Among the stamps in the

Tourism series discussed in this column in the Feb. 26 *Linn's*, page 26, the Michoacan stamp has monarch butterflies as part of its design. Figure 3 shows this stamp.

Another, and similar connection, could be made for a thematic collector interested in alcoholic beverages. Mexico's best-known intoxicant, tequila, was one of the subjects depicted in the Exporta series. The brilliantly executed monochrome (green) design by Rafael Davidson shows bottles and the maguey cactus. Tequila is extracted from fermented sap from this cactus.

This stamp pictured in Figure 4 was one of the early Exporta designs. The design appears on almost all of the recognized issues, although the denomination was changed from 10 pesos to 1,700p.

Again, we find the possibility of combining the stamp subject with a relevant postmark or two.

Figure 4. Bottles of tequila and the maguey cactus are pictured on this Mexican Exporta stamp. Tequila is extracted from the fermented sap of this cactus.

Figure 5. The earliest recorded postmark from the town of Tequila, located in the state of Jalisco.

Two Mexican towns are named Tequila. One is located about 37 miles west of Guadalajara in the state of Jalisco on the road to Tepic. The other is in the state of Veracruz, a few miles south of Orizaba.

However, only the town in Jalisco had a post office in the mid-19th century. The earliest-recorded postmark is illustrated in Figure 5. I have it neatly struck on a pair of 1856 1-real stamps in one of my exhibits.

Also, a modern cover with the tequila Exporta stamp clearly postmarked in the town of Tequila would make an interesting item for a topical collection on beverages.

In the realm of other philatelic elements for thematic exhibits, I'm reasonably sure there are Mexican meter postmarks used by local distilleries to advertise tequila brands and other alcoholic products.

Many other topical subjects can be found on the stamps of Mexico.

Horses, another popular collecting theme, can be seen pulling the diligencia (stagecoach) on the stamps of the Transportation issues of 1895-98.

Although some of Mexico's illustrious leaders have been portrayed on horseback, such as Emiliano Zapata on a 1994 stamp, the only other stamps showing horses without riders were included in a set of six also issued in 1994.

If you're into ships, what better connection could there be than Mexico's stamp commemorating the Spanish galleons plying the trade routes from the Orient (C300), and a 19th century cover or postmark from the port city where they landed — Acapulco?

I hope if you are a thematic collector or exhibitor, you have found something from Mexico to spice up your collection.

Drop me a line in care of Linn's, Box 29, Sidney, OH 45365, if you have any unusual examples. ■

Out-of-district uses of early Mexican stamps

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

From 1856 up to the 1880s, the Mexican post office required the names of postal districts to be applied to their stamps at the point of sale to validate them for use.

This practice, designed to thwart the unauthorized use of stolen or lost stamps, protected post office revenue.

Commencing with the Eagle stamps in 1864, invoice numbers and abbreviated year dates were also printed on stamps prior to distribution.

Classic Mexican stamps, especially the 1856-61 issues, often bear cancellations of post offices not belonging to the postal district whose name appears overprinted on the stamp. This phenomenon is generally referred to as out-of-district usage.

Almost 10 years ago, I devoted a column (*Linn's*, June 9, 1986, page 10) to this subject that has long fascinated me.

Thanks to the reference works of Chapman, Wilson, Schatzkes, and others, we have the means of assigning postmarks to the main district offices or the suboffices for which they were responsible.

So, it becomes an interesting challenge to find stamps, and occasionally covers, that appear to have been canceled outside their normal districts.

In the 1986 article, I illustrated several examples of such usages, all belonging to the 1856-61 issues, my principal collecting field. Since then, further examples have come to hand, two of which are illustrated in Figure 1.

The first, an 1856 2-real stamp from Mexico (district) bears the fancy diligencias generales (stagecoach) cancellation of Queretaro.

Figure 1. Two out-of-district uses of Mexico's 1856-61 issue. The stamp on the left, intended for use in the Mexico district, has a Queretaro "Diligencias Generals" (stagecoach) cancel. The stamp on the right from Jalapa was canceled at Paso del Macho in the Cordova district.

The second, a 2r 1861 stamp from Jalapa has the cancel of Paso del Macho. This post office's normal parent district was Cordova.

Several reasons can be cited to explain these apparent aberrations.

Civil disturbances often prevented some remote offices from obtaining stamps through normal channels. These post offices might borrow stamps from another nearby district. This is probably the basis for most out-of-district usages.

Another reasonable explanation would be where a traveler buys stamps in one district and uses them on letters he mails from another district. There was no postal regulation preventing such expediency.

The first stamp in Figure 1 likely falls into this category.

Shortly after my 1986 column on this subject appeared, I received an interesting letter from Roberto Liera, noted Mexican stamp expert and longtime associate of Bill Shelton, a dealer, now deceased, who handled many important Mexican stamp properties.

Liera added some further insight to the out-of-district scenario.

He has seen letters from towns in one district addressed to a second district, wherein the stamp was canceled at the receiving end. This presumably was done to prevent reuse and resulted in an out-of-district cancel.

Once such a stamp is removed from its original cover, there is no way to know exactly what happened. So I suspect some of my out-of-district stamps fit this category.

Liera also pointed out that several cities that eventually became main districts, for example Lagos and Colima, were subordinate to and dependent on other offices for stamps prior to 1858. So, one had to be careful about assigning out-of-district status in these instances.

Colima, in fact, presents a special case. Because of military actions in the area in those years, Colima had to borrow stamps from Acapulco, Morelia and Guadalajara even after it became a district.

For the 1856 issue, out-of-district usages from Colima are the rule rather than the exception. Only a few 1856 stamps were sent directly to Colima, and these are quite scarce.

Out-of-district usages exist for the Eagle issue stamps but they are not too plentiful. However, the 1868 issue is often found used out-of-district owing to a propensity to use stamps in lieu of currency when sending small sums of money through the mails.

Figure 2 illustrates two out-of-district usages for this era. This practice probably obscured the postal forgery problem with the 1868 issue.

The presence of numerous out-of-district usages, many of which turned out to be stamps forged by post office employees and sold to users at discount, did not arouse suspicion from the postal authorities until thousands had been sold.

This fiasco, which I discussed separately (*Linn's*, July 1983, page 26), caused the rules on stamp usage to be severely tightened.

As a consequence, the hastily prepared 1872 issue was printed on security paper. Also, stamps were not sold to the public per se, but had to be applied to letters in the post office at the time of mailing, and out-of-district stamps were not accepted.

The only exception to this was an occasional stamp sold by the dilgencias generales (stagecoaches) en route and used on a letter posted at a Dilgencia office outside the district whose name appeared on the stamp. These are quite scarce and worth looking for.

Figure 2. Out-of-district uses often are found on Mexico's 1868 issue. Two examples are shown here with an Acapulco stamp used at Guanajuato on the left and a Morelia stamp used with a cancel from Mexico City on the right.

Liera also commented on a curious procedure the postmaster of Veracruz used in the mid-1870s to bend the rules regarding out-of-district stamps.

When the postmaster encountered such a stamp on a letter deposited in his office, he would erase both the name and number overprint and apply those assigned to him. As a result, the numbers did not match the fonts used for overprints at the main office in Mexico, and the stamps were roughed up from the erasures. These, too, are worthy objects of a careful search.

A few properly annotated examples of out-of-district usages will certainly add interest to your collection or exhibit.

I hope this column stimulates you to be vigilant for such anomalies when browsing through dealers' stocks. Most of the ones I've found were not identified as out-of-district usages and were priced as normal stamps. ■

Mexican Official stamps on cover are elusive

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

A few years ago (*Linn's*, Feb. 8, 1988), I touted back-of-the-book material, particularly Official stamps, as worth pursuing for those looking for a specialty with potential that had not received much prior attention.

In the intervening years, Mexican Official stamps have indeed received attention.

Catalog prices for them have risen remarkably, often more than doubling their values of 20 years ago. This contrasts with classic 19th-century stamp values, which have been stagnant except for the rarer districts and usages.

I'm not sure I can claim any credit for this activity. But lately, serious collectors seem to be looking beyond the regular postage stamps for areas to collect and study.

Mexico issued Official stamps for exclusive use on government correspondence.

During 1884-94, Mexican Official stamps showed no denomination.

From that time until they were discontinued in 1937, Officials consisted of regular stamps overprinted with "Oficial" or "Servicio Oficial." They are listed near the end of the section on Mexico in the Scott catalog.

In the 1988 column, little was said about covers bearing Official stamps, except to mention that they are rather elusive. That is still true — I search for them whenever I attend stamp bourses, usually without any luck.

Figure 1. This cover from Mexico's National Museum of Archaeology, History and Ethnography was sent to Denmark in June 1932. The postage was paid by a 10-centavo stamp with an "Oficial" overprint. The cover traveled from Mexico City to the United States to Denmark.

At the recent Garfield-Perry March Party bourse in Cleveland, Ohio, I found two covers from the early 1930s that more than made up for the many dry runs I've experienced. They are illustrated here as Figures 1 and 2.

Apart from their somewhat unusual destinations (Denmark), these covers also bear thought-provoking postmarks.

Both covers originated at the National Museum of Archaeology, History and Ethnography. This was the forerunner of the Museum of Anthropology, which opened in the 1960s and is the new home of the famous Aztec sun (calendar) stone, portrayed on these covers.

The cover in Figure 1 was mailed in June 1932. Near the bottom is the handstamp of the museum and a Mexico branch post office (Sucursal "P") circular datestamp of June 6. The Official stamp, Scott O183, is tied with a circular datestamp of June 7, denoting Official mail.

The Figure 2 cover, mailed in January 1933, bears similar markings, except the two Official stamps, Scott O181 and O203, were applied on top of the branch office circular datestamp and museum's handstamp.

What caught my eye was the fact that there were two distinct Mexico (City) postmarks on each cover, with those inscribed "Oficial" dated one day later than the branch office postmarks.

The rules and regulations governing Mexican Official mail are murky at best. And I could find nothing in my extensive files on the subject. But the evidence presented on these two covers strongly suggests that government departments, at least in Mexico City, could deposit unfranked mail in any post office.

When such mail reached the main post office, appropriate stamps were applied and canceled with a large circular datestamp inscribed "Oficial/Mexico, D.F."

I have noticed this same postmark on many used Official stamps from the 1920s and '30s. Could this procedure have been the means by which the authorities deliberately withheld the overprinted Official stamps from the various departments to prevent unauthorized private use by government employees?

The two covers, addressed to the same individual, traveled by rail to the United States, crossed the border at Nuevo Laredo and were backstamped there. That trip, according to the postmark dates, took about four days.

From there, I presume they went to New York to catch a fast steamer to Europe.

It's a pity neither cover has a Denmark receiving mark. I have another contemporary cover to Germany (April 1932) marked "via New York" that required exactly 14 days to reach its destination, Berlin. This seems to be fast service indeed considering the letter had to travel almost 10,000 miles.

Figure 2. Another cover from the National Museum of Archaeology, History and Ethnography to Denmark bears 10c and 5c Official stamps. It was sent in January 1933.

Present-day mail from Mexico often requires that much time to make the trip to Ohio, where I live.

It would be interesting to know the nature of the letters these covers carried. Could Erik Petersen, the addressee, have been a Danish anthropologist working on the lost civilizations of Mexico?

Two rates are demonstrated on these covers. I believe the 10-centavo rate to Europe shown on the 1932 cover was increased to 15c in 1933.

My analysis of how these Official covers were handled in Mexico is educated guesswork. I cannot substantiate my interpretations, but I'd be glad to hear from anyone who might have better information. Write care of Linn's, Box 29, Sidney, OH 45365.

In any event, Official covers are certainly worth looking for. I scanned a rather large pile of auction catalogs featuring Mexican stamps and postal history and found only a handful of lots that listed Official covers. Most of the estimates on these lots were rather high, leading me to believe that dealers, too, know Official covers are far from common. Good hunting. ■

Mexico's Klussendorf postage strips

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Postal history happens every day. But sometimes many of us, even when we think we are alert to what's going on, ignore it. Here's a story of some modern postal history I did not, regrettably, pay much attention to.

On April 16, 1990, Mexico issued its first printed-to-order machine-vended postage strips, following the lead of numerous European and other world postal administrations.

Perhaps best known for these printed-to-order items is Frama, a Swiss firm whose name had become synonymous with this type of postage strip. Following the successful introduction of the Frama strips in 1978, their use quickly spread to several other European countries.

Close on the heels of Frama, a German firm, Klussendorf, developed its printing machines in 1981.

The Klussendorf machines also received wide acceptance; these were the ones the Mexican postal authorities chose for their initial trials.

Before going further, I should credit Walker Widmaier and Guillermo Wilkens, whose articles in *Mexicana* on this subject serve as the primary sources of published information I have found.

Further, I want to point out that this column will deal only with so-called first-design Klussendorf postage strips of Mexico. Other formats came later but I will reserve discussion of them for a future column.

In Mexico, these postage strips are called "etiquetas para franqueo," loosely translated from the Spanish as "franking labels." Two of these first-design Klussendorf postage strips are shown in Figures 1 and 2. The strip in Figure 2 does not have an imprinted denomination.

The horizontal lines in the top half of the strip and the dark areas of the lower half

Figure 1. Mexico introduced Klussendorf postage strips in 1990. The denomination was printed to order.

are printed in a deep reddish brown. The lighter area surrounding the eagle's head is dark orange. The denomination is cloth-ribbon printed in black.

Three of the first four

Figure 2. This Klussendorf machine-vended postage strip from Mexico does not have an imprinted value.

Klussendorf machines used in April 1990 were installed at the postal station in the main airport in Mexico City. Two were wall-hung types to service walk-in postal patrons, the other was a counter model for use by post office personnel.

The fourth machine, a counter type, was located in branch post office No. 10 in Colonia Chapultepec.

According to information provided to Wilkens by Sepomex (Servicio Postal Mexicano, or the Mexican Postal Service), the machines could dispense postage strips in 12 fixed values from 500 pesos (old pesos) to 5,850p. The machines accepted coins starting at 50p.

Variable denominations could be obtained up to the sum of coins inserted by pressing a special button. The machines tendered no change; any unused balance came out as postage strips.

Apparently, Sepomex made no prior announcement of the April 20 test run, or if it did, local dealers and collectors failed to take notice. But according to Widmaier, one or more European specialized dealers were aware of the test (perhaps alerted by Klussendorf) and they, or their agents, attended and bought postage strips and also created first-day covers.

It was later reported in the *Amexfil* bulletin that 4 million (old) pesos worth of postage strips were sold in one day, but it was not clear if this was the amount sold on the first day or on some other day.

It is also reported that a Klussendorf test roll of cream-colored paper with yellow fluorescence (visible under longwave ultraviolet light) was loaded into one machine, and numerous postage strips were produced and sold before the mistake was discovered.

The normal plain paper was substituted, and it is this paper that accounts for most of the other early impressions. The "yellow" stamps on cream paper are quite rare and have been offered in Europe for up to $300. I have seen no offers of such material in the United States.

It would not surprise me if the entire world's supply of these rare first-day postage strips is either in the hands of dealers or collectors who paid dearly for them. The odds of finding any specimens used on mail or in casual dealer stock are astronomical.

According to Wilkens, paper with blue luminescence was used in Klussendorf machines beginning in mid-June 1990. By November, a third paper variety with pale yellowish UV light response came into use. The postage strip without a denomination in Figure 2 appears to be of this type, whereas the example in Figure 1 is of the early blue varieties.

Sepomex reported in 1990 that the rolls of paper used for the postage strips were imported from Germany.

I cannot report with certainty how successful the usage of the Klussendorfs has been for the Mexican post office. The post office originally predicted that many more machines would be put into service and new designs would be forthcoming.

On the mail I have received from Mexico, I have found only a couple of instances of the Klussendorf strips being used. And, I have not seen any either used or unused in dealers stocks I have examined.

Widmaier argues, with some justification, that these should be considered stamps and a sampling belongs in any general collection of modern Mexico. They should not be confused with meter strips, as the postage strips are purchased, applied to envelopes, and canceled just as normal stamps would be.

The Lighthouse Mexico albums now contain three pages with spaces for these postage strips. However, no attempt is made to describe what values or formats are to be mounted therein.

I would be interested in comments on this subject, especially from those who specialize in this material.

There is much we don't know about them, particularly how many of the rare first-day postage strips exist and who has them?

Finally, I wish to thank Paul Franklin of Beaverton, Ore., who shared his experiences in searching for these Mexican postage strips and who convinced me they would make a good topic for this column. ■

Forwarding agents in 19th-century Mexico

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Many years ago, at the urging of my good friend and philatelic mentor Herbert Strauss, I became interested in the practice of mail forwarding. It was my initial foray into serious postal history, and, with his help, I assembled a rather nice showing of forwarded covers to and from Mexico.

I wrote about this interesting means of mail handling eight years ago in *Linn's* (July 11, 1988, page 14).

What prompts my return to this subject is the arrival of a new book, *The Postal History and Markings of the Forwarding Agents* by Kenneth Rowe. This is the fourth time Rowe has surveyed the subject since 1966, and this work is clearly the most comprehensive and up to date of them all.

A forwarder is "a person or firm who undertakes to see that the goods or correspondence of another are transported without himself acting as the carrier." This definition is right out of the Rowe book.

Forwarders were a vital element in and wielded great influence on international communications during the 19th century.

Prior to the formation of the Universal Postal Union, they often provided the only link between official mail systems. The forwarders were capable of expediting mail along routes where no official carriers operated.

A letter from the interior of Mexico addressed to London goes to Veracruz in Mexican mails. There, it is recovered by a forwarder who pays the domestic postage due and dispatches it by the fastest and most direct service across the Atlantic.

Figure 1. Tracings of Mexican mail forwarders' markings.

Generally, forwarders were merchant bankers, commission agents or others familiar with land and sea transport. Most of the time, no fee was charged; it was a free service to regular customers and probably also served as a means of advertising.

Mexico was among many developing countries where forwarding was used extensively, especially on commercial mail to and from the United States and Europe.

Here is a brief explanation of one way mail forwarding could work.

When there were alternative routings, the agent would bring his knowledge to bear to make the best choice.

Most forwarders marked the mail they handled. In the early years, endorsements were handwritten with words such as "forwarded by," "dirigida por" (Spanish), "acheminee par" (French) or variations.

Later, the use of handstamps containing appropriate wording became common. Tracings of some handstamps used by Mexican forwarders are shown in Figure 1.

One of the things I found attractive about collecting covers forwarded to and from Mexico was the variety of routings used, and, hence, markings available.

Mail to Europe could pass through the United States by way of Havana, to or through the United Kingdom, or directly.

Ships of various nationalities carried the letters. And since much of the forwarded mail was stampless, it usually was not too expensive.

According to Rowe's latest tally, 139 forwarding markings from 23 locations in Mexico have been recorded. In fact, the list for Veracruz includes 56 entries.

Owing to the variable routing on mail in and out of Mexico, you can find forwarder's markings from the United States, especially New York, and other major exchange points, such as Havana. Forwarders in Havana handled a lot of Mexican mail bound for Europe since British packets made regular calls to that port.

Another interesting aspect of forwarded mail is that it occasionally passed through the hands of more than one forwarder. I have several covers where two forwarders intervened.

The cover illustrated in Figure 2 bears the marks of three forwarding agents.

In this instance, it was first forwarded at Veracruz, having reached that city from Oaxaca in the Mexican mails. From there, it appears to have gone directly to New York, probably in private hands.

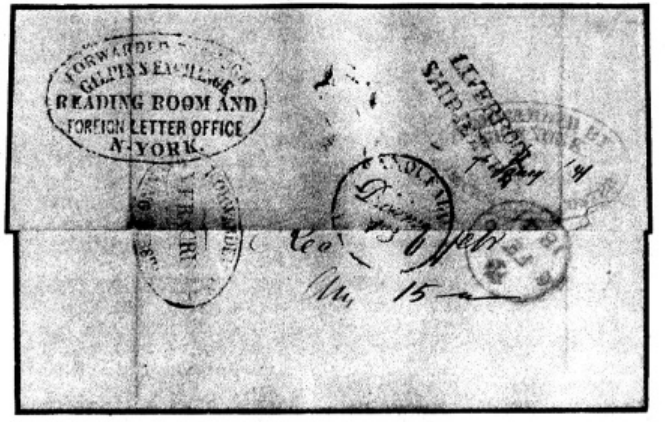


Figure 2. A letter sent from Oaxaca, Mexico, to London was handled by three forwarders. The Mexican postage was paid at Veracruz by the first forwarder, whose oval mark in blue appears in the left corner. The two New York forwarders struck their marks in red.

From New York, two different forwarders were involved in its transfer, Heckster & Coster, and the famous Gilpin's Exchange, Reading Room and Foreign Letter Office. The latter was a professional forwarder as opposed to many who did it as an adjunct to their regular business.

Covers exhibiting triple forwarding are quite rare, especially when the forwarders were responsible for different legs of the route.

The involvement of more than three forwarders on a single letter is even rare. Only two examples of quadruple forwarding have been recorded, and one involves a letter originating in Mexico.

The cover and its routing are illustrated in the Rowe book.

The 1844 letter addressed to London began its long journey in Mazatlan.

It was first forwarded in Mexico City, again in Veracruz, once more in New Orleans, and finally in Boston.

It is the only known letter bearing the endorsements of

four different agents in four different locations.

While the majority of forwarded letters do not involve stamps, there are some examples in the later years where stamps were used to pay part of the postage. For some reason, they seem to be more desirable to collectors (i.e., more expensive), even though they may be less interesting.

Unpaid overseas letters from this era always bear enough varied and obscure postal markings to make deciphering them challenging, if not downright difficult.

Obviously, the new Rowe book is a must for anyone desirous of delving further into this subject, and I can recommend it highly.

The listings for Mexico make up only a small part of the compendium. But even for the general specialist of Mexico, a forwarded cover or two would make a fine addition to your collection. And they won't set you back an arm and a leg.

The book is available from the publisher, Leonard Hartmann, Box 36006, Louisville, KY 40233, in hardcover for $47.50, or $52.50 with 3.5-inch search file disk. ■

Design errors and goofs on Mexican stamps

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

An article on errors in stamp design on Mexican stamps was featured in the July/August issue of the Amexfil (Asociacion Mexicana de Filatelia, A.C.) journal.

Since 1984, I have been a member of Amexfil, which, to my knowledge, is the largest organized stamp collecting group of our immediate neighbor to the south.

The society was formed a few years earlier than that and began publishing a journal six times a year in 1983. This publication (in Spanish) was one of the main reasons I elected to join the group because I felt it could provide useful background for my own writing and enjoyment of the hobby.

The journal has measured up quite well, presenting a balance of news, feature writing and quite often, new research. Its production has been improved constantly. For example, since the November/December 1994 issue it has featured full-color illustrations.

Ernesto Fink compiled the list of stamp design mistakes in the July/August issue. With full credit to Fink, I'll review some of the errors that happen to be my favorites, too.

Figure 1. The plane on Mexico's 1929 Aviation Week stamp appears to have only one landing wheel and no stabilizers.

Most of Mexico's early airmail stamps picture airplanes in the designs, sometimes in seemingly awkward flight positions.

Several of the planes drawn into the designs of the 1934 University airmail set (Scott C54-61), for example, appear to be poised for an imminent crash.

Figure 2. The Swiss flag is included on this 1946 Mexican stamp honoring the United Nations. Switzerland has never been a member of the United Nations.

But, Fink calls attention to the plane depicted in the Aviation Week commemoratives of 1929 (C26-27). The plane appears to have only one landing wheel, and no stabilizers. Figure 1 pictures the 20-centavo stamp.

Another mistake he notes crops up in Mexico's United Nations sets of 1946 (813-18, C158-62). The flags that make up the letters "O N U" (Spanish initials for U.N.) include a Swiss flag in the upper-right corner of the "U." Switzerland never was, nor is, a member of that body.

However, in this instance, I think artistic prerogative may have prevailed. The designer, Francisco Eppens, had, I believe, Swiss ancestors. The 5-peso stamp is illustrated in Figure 2.

Another fairly blatant mistake is found on the 2.25p airmail stamp (C319), of the 1966 Olympic promotional set based on drawings by renowned Mexican artist Diego Rivera. It shows outline figures playing American football, not an Olympic sport.

In 1969, Mexico issued a stamp to commemorate Father Junipero Serra (C346), the Franciscan missionary who founded San Diego and several other missions along the West Coast. Similar to the Legends of the West mishap, the man actually portrayed on the stamp was Francisco Palou, a companion of Serra on his explorations.

Figure 3. This 1973 stamp marking the 25th anniversary of Mexico's main college of chemical engineering should have four hydrogen atoms, not three.

The mistake was discovered early on, but there was no attempt at rectification.

An apparent mistake in design that has amused me, a retired chemical engineer, occurs on the 1973 stamp (1056) issued to mark the 25th anniversary of Mexico's principal college of chemical engineering. What appears intended to be a methane (CH^4) molecule, shows only three hydrogen atoms. There should be four. Perhaps we are to imagine one directly behind and obscured by the carbon atom. The stamp is shown in Figure 3.

Pancho Villa, a Mexican revolutionary general who is purposely ignored in the post-revolutionary era, finally

Figure 4. On the stamp on the left, Pancho Villa is wearing a sombrero, a type of hat he is not known to have worn. He preferred a fedora, shown on the right.

found his way onto a postage stamp in 1978 (C568). The stamp marked the centennial of Villa's birth. He is shown wearing a traditional broad-brimmed "charro" sombrero.

The problem is that he was never known to have worn this type of headgear, preferring instead a felt fedora. He is more correctly pictured on Scott 1415, the 35p value of the set commemorating the 75th anniversary of the 1910 revolution.

Figure 4 depicts the two Pancho Villa stamps.

On two airmail stamps from 1980 showing colonial churches (C628 and C629), the inscriptions inadvertently were interchanged. The Actopan church is labeled Tlayacapan, and vice versa. No corrections were printed. This mistake and the one involving Serra are noted in the Scott *Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue*.

Fink mentions several other design mistakes, but I will conclude with another recent goof that really jarred those of us who collect Mexico's classic stamps.

In 1985, the local Amexfil group in Mexico City organized a large stamp exhibition, Mexfil 85, and convinced the postal authorities to issue three stamps in honor of the event (1382-84). This they did, but the designers failed to consult with stamp collectors.

The 22p stamp portrays the 8-real stamp of 1856. This was certainly appropriate subject matter, but the stamp is shown with perforated edges. As all serious specialists of

Figure 5. A 1985 Mexican commemorative for Mexfil 85 features a stamp-on-stamp design of Mexico's 1856 8-real stamp. The 1856 stamp is shown with perforations, but it was only issued imperforate.

Mexico know, this stamp only exists imperforate.

The 1985 stamp-on-stamp design is pictured in Figure 5.

Looking for design errors seems to be a growing sport among collectors. It can provide many hours of diversion, if not pleasure.

However, it usually requires a great deal of research and an instinctive awareness of possible mistakes in fact or context.

This can be especially difficult for foreign stamps, where reference sources may be hard to come by.

So, good luck in your hunt, and I'll be interested in hearing about any other design goofs readers can identify on Mexican stamps. ■

The story of Mexico's Sarabia flight stamp

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

The decade of the 1930s was remarkable for many reasons. As the world staggered through a deep economic depression and Europe poised for war and serious political upheaval, aviation enjoyed almost universal appeal and stamp collecting was touted as the world's most popular hobby, thanks to examples set by a British monarch and an American president.

Aviation and philately seemed to be meant for each other; and here is yet another example of that fortunate union.

On May 1, 1939, at the behest of a Mexican pilot attempting to beat a nonstop record flight time between Mexico City and New York set in 1934 by Amelia Earhart, Mexico issued a special, limited edition stamp, Scott C93A.

The idea was that most of the stamps would go to the pilot, who in turn would sell them at a premium to offset the costs of the flight.

There are two parts to the story. One concerns the pilot, his plane and the flight; the other deals with the uproar the stamp caused in philatelic circles.

The pilot was Francisco Sarabia, a native of the state of Durango in Mexico. He was engrossed with airplanes and flying from an early age.

In 1938, he purchased, through an aircraft broker, the last racing plane built by the Granville brothers of Madison, N.H. These planes were known in aviation circles as the "GeeBees."

The planes were built strictly for speed and by some thought to be unsafe in less than ideal flying conditions. Seven were produced by the Granville brothers. All of them eventually crashed, and four carried their pilots to their deaths.

Figure 1. Mexico issued a limited-edition airmail stamp for Francisco Sarabia's attempt to make a record-breaking nonstop flight from Mexico City to New York in 1934. This stamp is shown on the left. It is similar to the 20-centavo airmail stamp issued by Mexico to honor the New York World's Fair, pictured on the right.

The Sarabia plane, designated model R-6H and originally named *Q.E.D.*, was larger and faster than the rest, having been designed around a 675-horsepower Pratt and Whitney engine, one of the most powerful at the time.

This plane had raced several times in the United States prior to Sarabia's ownership, but, owing to mechanical failures, had never finished in any of those races.

Sarabia refitted, repainted and renamed his plane *Conquistador del Cielo* (Sky Conqueror) in preparation for his record-breaking attempt.

The flight was timed to coincide with the opening of the Mexican pavilion at the New York World's Fair.

And so, on the morning of May 24, 1939, laden with all the gasoline he could safely carry, official greetings from the Mexican president to his U.S. counterpart, and a mail sack of flight covers, Sarabia took off from Mexico City on the 2,400-mile flight to New York.

Unknown to those gathered at New York to await his arrival, including Sarabia's wife and children, he encountered stiff head winds and a couple of storms along the way and ran behind schedule.

The delay sparked rumors among the media present that he had gone down along his route. Finally, at about 5:40 p.m., the plane appeared, circled the field, and immediately landed downwind.

This unusual maneuver startled the experienced aviators present, but the reason was soon clear — only about a gallon of gas remained in his fuel tanks.

Sarabia had indeed broken Earhart's record, by almost four hours. His time was 10 hours, 48 minutes vs. Earhart's 14 hours, 19 minutes.

He became an instant hero, and was wined, dined, feted and paraded by New York's Mayor LaGuardia and other dignitaries.

Sarabia flew to Washington and was a guest at the White House, where he presented President Roosevelt with a block of four of the special stamp.

His fame, unfortunately, was short-lived. Immediately after takeoff on his return flight to Mexico June 7, his plane lost power and flipped into the Potomac River as Sarabia made a frantic attempt at an emergency landing. The plane sank at once. Nearby emergency crews were unable to rescue Sarabia before he drowned.

Later, it was discovered that a careless mechanic had left a wiping rag inside the engine cowling, and this had been sucked into the carburetor, killing the engine instantly.

The Sarabia stamp is virtually the same as the 20-centavo airmail stamp issued by Mexico to honor the New York World's Fair (C91). Figure 1 shows the Sarabia stamp on the left, and the 20c New York World's Fair airmail stamp on the right.

The Sarabia differs from the other 20c stamp in that it was printed in two colors, blue and red, and bears an inscription at the upper right — "Sarabia Vuelo (Flight) Mexico-Nueva York" in scarlet. The wording was engraved into the plate as opposed to a rubber stamp overprint like the one applied to the famous Earhart flight commemorative of 1935.

Sarabia had suggested a limited printing of 1,200 stamps, of which he was to get 1,000 to sell at a premium to pay for the flight.

However, Mexican President Cardenas ordered a printing of 2,100, with 1,000 going to Sarabia, 400 to the Universal Postal Union and

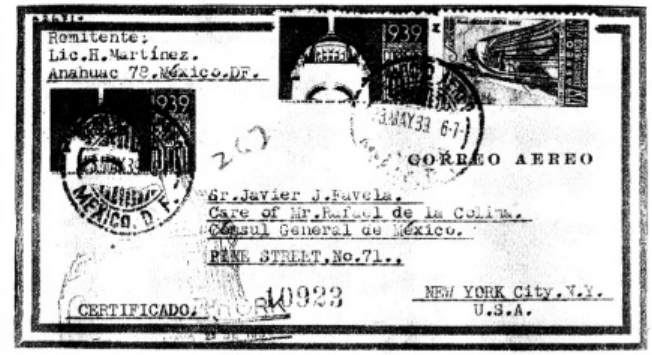


Figure 2. A cover bearing Mexico's Sarabia airmail stamp and carried on the flight from New York to Mexico City.

the rest to the Mexican philatelic agency and to a lottery sale.

This scheme of distribution infuriated local collectors who expected to buy stamps at face through post office windows.

Meanwhile, prices in the market soared. It was suggested that listing in the Scott *Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue* be withheld because of the circumstances surrounding its issue.

Some dealers and collectors were able to secure copies of the stamp early on, and approximately 400 covers were prepared for transport on the flight to New York.

Figure 2 shows one of these covers. It is postmarked in Mexico May 23, and bears New York backstamps of both May 24 and May 25.

The cover is addressed c/o Rafael de la Colina, Consul General de Mexico. Colina was among the Mexican dignitaries in the welcoming committee for Sarabia at Floyd Bennett Field.

Somehow the Stamp Center at Macy's department store managed to acquire about 100 copies of the Sarabia stamp and quickly sold most of them to eager buyers for $29.50.

A few weeks ago, a fellow club member offered me a never-hinged sheet corner copy of the Sarabia stamp he had purchased in a job lot. It was in a hingeless mount on a preprinted album page by itself. Beneath the stamp was the penciled notation: "Sarabia/Macy's/5-31-39/$29.75."

The page came with something even more interesting — a yellowed clipping from *The New York Times* of May 28, 1939, (a Wednesday) with an article describing the controversy sparked by this stamp, as well as information about other stamps issued to honor the World's Fair.

Regrettably, Sarabia was never ascribed enduring fame for his record-breaking flight. He is not mentioned in the *Book of World Records*, although Earhart is.

The onset of World War II pushed aside the news and notoriety his feat might have enjoyed. But *Conquistador del Cielo* did survive (at least most of it) and was eventually restored. It resides in a small museum near Sarabia's hometown in Durango, Mexico.

Perforce, this had to be a very brief overview of the Sarabia incident.

Readers wishing more details are referred to an article by John T. Chapin reprinted in the April 1990 issue of *Mexicana*.

If you can't get access to this, send an addressed, stamped envelope with 55¢ postage and $1 for copying costs (seven pages) to me, Dale Pulver, c/o Linn's Stamp News, Box 29, Sidney, OH 45365. I will see that you get it. ■

District overprints of Mexico's classic era

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

For the first 27 years stamps were used to prepay postage in Mexico, the Mexican post office employed a unique system to help safeguard revenues from their sale. District post offices were obliged to overprint their names on stamps prior to their sale or use.

In theory, stamps lacking such names were to be considered invalid. This would apply to those stamps, for example, that were lost or stolen.

There were exceptions, of course. Some postmasters did not understand the rules, or chose to ignore them. So, we have perfectly legitimate examples of stamps without these names.

I've covered these procedures in previous columns and in my book *Introduction to the Stamps of Mexico*, which is part of the Linn's Handbook Series.

The eminent British philatelist Samuel Chapman brought these stamps to the attention of serious collectors in the 1920s. Since that time, the intricacies of the name overprints have been pretty much explained over the years. It would seem that the field has been studied so thoroughly that there is little opportunity for new discoveries. Yet, sometimes it still happens.

Stamps from the large districts are fairly plentiful. However, the tiny district offices, such as Sultepec, Ixtlahuaca, Ciudad Bravos, and Iguala, for example, were supplied so few stamps that overprinted examples are very rare and much sought after.

Figure 1. Two of the five name overprints for the district of Mexico City on Mexico's 1856 issue. The overprint, which reads "Mexico," is in outlined letters on the left, and has dashes on both sides of the name on the right.

The same is true for several other offices that did not apply their names, such as Guadalupe Hidalgo, Tepeji del Rio, Polotitlan, Texcoco, and San Filipe del Obraje, to name a few. These stamps must be identified by their cancels.

We specialists search for examples from as many of these districts as we can afford, and that's usually not very many. But other games can be played with the district name varieties.

The large districts, because they handled so many stamps, generally had more than one name overprinting device. Mexico (City), for example, used five different ones on the stamps of 1856. Two were in solid Roman type fonts, and three consisted of hollow (or outline) letters. An example of the latter is shown on the left in Figure 1.

One of the name overprints, "-MEXICO-," between dashes is fairly scarce and so far has been recorded on only the ½-real stamp. It is pictured on the right in Figure 1.

The large districts of Guadalajara, Guanajuato, Puebla, Queretaro, and San Luis Potosi each had at least three different name stamps. A collector can have a lot of fun looking for the less common varieties.

Where do you find the overprint dimensions and font characteristics?

They are described in *The Postage Stamps of Mexico, 1856-1868* by S. Chapman (Quarterman reprint, 1976); the specialized catalog of Mexican stamps by Celis Cano, fifth edition, 1985 (Spanish); and the rare *Les Premieres Emissions du Mexique, 1856 a 1874* (1935), by Smeth and Fayolle (French).

They also are listed in Odfjell's book on the postal districts and in the Aguirre stamp catalogs (Spanish).

Another variable in the name overprinting, at least for the 1856 issue, is color. Black is normal. But Campeche and Pachuca are known in red; and Apam, Chiapas, Guadalajara, and I(sla) del Carmen can be found struck in blue.

Figure 2. The overprint for the Mexican district of Zacatecas is handwritten diagonally on this stamp.

Some of the colored name overprints are scarcer, more desirable and, naturally, more pricey.

The use of color seems to have increased somewhat in the late issues that bore names; and red was often used, as was violet/magenta.

One of the more celebrated stories about name overprints is the case of Zacatecas.

In late 1858, the postmaster fled to Aguascalientes to escape the fighting between conservative and liberal forces. He apparently left his name stamp behind and, for three months, he and his clerks dutifully wrote the name, Zacatecas, by hand on the stamps he sold.

Several distinct handwritings exist on the Zacatecas overprints, and both stamps and covers are keenly sought.

The 1r and 2r values with the manuscript name can be found occasionally, but all other denominations are rare.

Fewer than a dozen examples of the 1½r stamp are recorded, and fewer still of the 4r and 8r value. Figure 2 shows a 1r stamp with the handwritten name.

On the 1861 issue, the super large (24 millimeters by 4½mm) name overprint of Puebla has been known for years, with examples shown in Figures 3 and 4. Usages of the large Puebla begin in mid-1863. Collectors were at a loss to explain why this device appears so late in the issue (when at least three others were known to exist).

Writing in the April 1995 issue of *Mexicana*, James Mazepa, noted collector and exhibitor of the 1856-61 issues, came up with a plausible explanation. His theory suggested another instance of lost, or misplaced, name handstamps.

Figure 3. The overprint of Puebla is large, measuring 24 millimeters by 4½mm, on this 1-real stamp.

Mazepa deduced that when the French, during the 1861-64 intervention, laid siege to Puebla in March 1863, the postmaster fled to Mexico City. Upon his return, he could not find his original

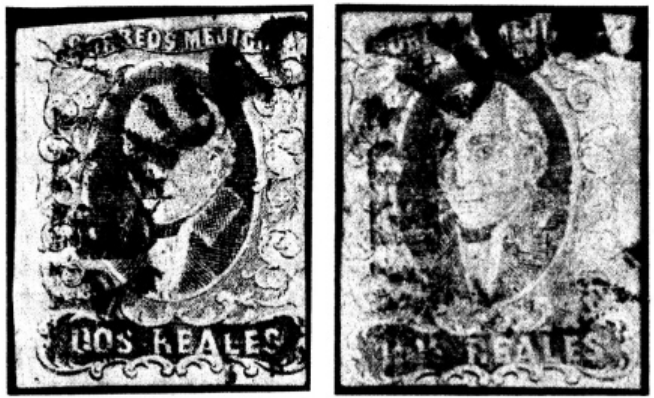


Figure 4. The suboffices of Tehuacan (left) and Yzucar (right) with the large Puebla overprint on 2-real stamps.

handstamps and began using a colonial era canceler — "PUEBLA" inside a rounded box — to validate his stamps.

Since a stamp appearing on cover with this overprint might give the impression of reuse of a canceled stamp (a postal fraud), the postmaster trimmed off the surrounding frame.

This large name was used on many stamps from Puebla until the Eagle issue appeared in 1864. Such stamps are not scarce.

The large name is likewise found on stamps sent to and used at several of Puebla's subordinate post offices. Examples from Acatzingo, Acatlan, Atlixco, Chalcamula, Huamantla, San Martin, Tehuacan, Yzucar, and a few other offices are recorded.

Figure 4 shows the Tehuacan and Yzucar suboffice stamps with the large "PUEBLA" from my collection.

This case amply demonstrates that there are still unresolved questions about Mexico's classic stamps. And that there is always an opportunity for some new, enlightening research.

Sometimes we don't know what the questions are until we stumble across some anomaly or aberration that is not explained or answered in the available literature. But for me, that's one of the joys of this hobby.

If you're ready for a new challenge, why not check out the district name overprints? You never know what you might discover. ■

Three Mexican postal cards' stories

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

A little over four years ago, in the May 18, 1992, *Linn's*, page 12, I briefly reviewed some of the collecting opportunities in Mexican postal cards.

The area is fairly extensive and complex, well suited for those collectors with lots of serious curiosity but limited resources.

This field has attracted more of my own interest during retirement.

Some recent acquisitions, which demonstrate how interesting these cards can be, prompts this return visit to the subject. This month's column tells the story about three of those cards.

By way of background, Mexico issued its first postal cards the year it joined the Universal Postal Union, 1879. The first cards were smallish (140 millimeters by 70mm) and unfranked. They generally are referred to as formula (or formular) cards.

The first franked cards appeared in 1882 and were somewhat larger (140mm by 90mm), following a new UPU standard.

The Mexicans did something I have not seen in any other country. Mexico's ornately printed cards included two spaces for stamped impressions to indicate the card's value. And furthermore, these franking designs were the same as contemporary postage stamps.

Figure 1 shows the second issue, incorporating the small numeral dies (Scott type A16), representing values that were added to Juarez foreign mail series in 1882 (see Scott Nos. 146-49). The two stamp imprints, totaling 5 centavos (the rate to Europe), are reproduced in their normal colors, 3c carmine and 2c green. The text and ornamental work are printed in a pale blue on coarse buff stock. It all makes for an attractive piece.

At the time this card was issued, the Mexican post office was still using district name overprints and invoice control numbers. Overprinted names are seldom seen on postal cards, however.

This card does have a control number, 1782, in the upper-left corner. The number tells us that the card was from stock shipped to San Luis Potosi, district No. 17, in 1882. This fact is also confirmed from the writer's dateline on the back. The mute cancels obliterating the stamps are similar to some recorded from that district.

The card, dated Jan. 17, 1883, is addressed to Santander, Spain. A manuscript notation at the lower left directs that it be sent on the "first steamship: by way of Veracruz and Havana."

The circular datestamp just above this notation shows the card went by way of New Orleans. That mark was applied 14 days after the card was written. Whether it passed through Havana is open to question.

Figure 1. An 1882 Mexican postal card with two stamp imprints, 3 centavos and 2c, was sent to Santander, Spain.

The card bears a weakly struck Santander receiving mark on the reverse, indicating the balance of the journey took another 14 days.

So all told, the card required about a month to reach its destination.

The second example, shown in Figure 2, is half a double postal card designed for prepaid replies. This card originated in Hamburg, Germany, Dec. 6, 1899, and reached Mexico City Dec. 22, pretty fast service, actually.

The card is endorsed to go by way of New York and Laredo, Texas. Although addressed in care of a German firm in Mexico City, it appears to be a personal message in German.

The curious thing about this card is that it is not the return half of the original double card, but the portion on which the outgoing message would normally be written. This didn't seem to bother the German post office.

Further, this was a new design listed as first issued in 1900. But clearly, the card was used in the last month of 1899.

Note that the postal instructions on this and the previous card appear in both Spanish and French, per UPU rules.

The final offering, pictured in Figure 3, is a 3c card from Veracruz to Hamburg relating to consular invoices and bills of lading for goods being shipped on the Interoceanic Railway of Mexico.

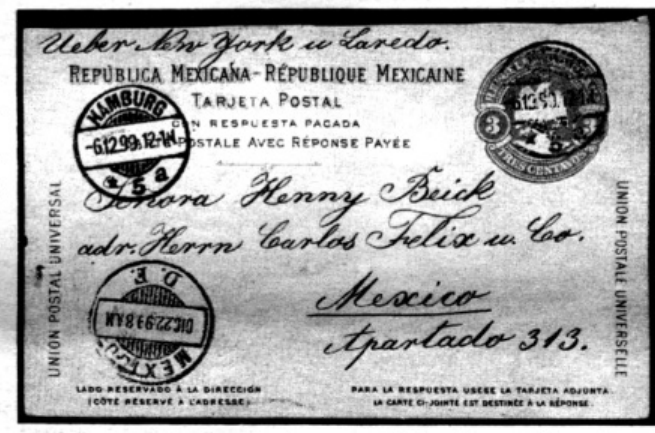


Figure 2. Half of a Mexican prepaid-reply postal card sent from Hamburg to Mexico City in December 1899.

Routing was Veracruz to Mexico City, to the United States (presumably), to Hamburg. The card took 17 days to reach its destination.

The back of this card has a printed message by the railroad in English with spaces to insert appropriate data relative to the shipments. I have another similar card used for the same purpose with Spanish text.

Note that inscriptions at the side of this card signal it was for domestic service ("servicio interior"). These designations seem to have been widely disregarded.

My card with the Spanish text was issued for local service ("servicio urbano") with 2c franking. The 3c foreign rate was met by simply adding a contemporary 1c stamp to the address side of the card. These cards for domestic usage have only Spanish inscriptions.

Figure 3. This Mexican postal card was sent to Hamburg although it originally was intended for domestic service.

As I wrote in the aforementioned 1992 column, the many, many design varieties of postal cards during the first 20 years of their existence. This, added to the fact that they were readily accepted by a diverse public anxious for a cheap, handy means of sending short messages, spawned a vast array of usages to tantalize serious collectors.

The postal cards were widely used by merchants and salesmen, and, as in the case of the third example, by large business enterprises.

Examples sent to remote foreign destinations are especially exciting when you find them — and they do exist.

I know of two reference sources for the serious collector: Section 12 (Macau to Muscat) of *World Postal Stationery Catalog* by Higgins and Gage, and *Catalog of Mexico Postal Stationery* published by the Mexico-Elmhurst Philatelic Society International (MEPSI).

My Higgins and Gage catalog is the 1969 edition, and I think there was a pricing update for it in 1979. I do not know its current availability.

The MEPSI catalog, which can be purchased in sections, such as postal cards, letter cards, envelopes, and so forth, is still available and perhaps a bit more user friendly. The whole set, six sections and a supplement, will set you back about $35. It is available only in 8½- by 11-inch loose-leaf format.

If interested, contact Carl LeMar John, 5063 E. North Regency Circle, Tucson, AZ 85711-3000.

From my vantage point, this is a field where one can satisfy intellectual curiosity, have a lot of fun, and not spend an arm and a leg doing it. Good luck. ■

Update of news from Mexico; postal rates

A tradition for my December column is to recap news items not worthy of a full-length article and to recognize loyal readers who have provided noteworthy feedback

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

to my various columns during the year.

•

The lead story in my column last December (*Linn's*, Dec. 25, 1995, page 30) reported the use of centavo-denominated Exporta stamps on current mail at 1,000 times their value before the revaluation of the Mexican peso. I thought I had explained fairly carefully how that process worked, but a number of readers wrote that they were still confused. And I admit, it is not an easy concept to grasp.

At that time, I predicted more old Exporta stamps from post office inventories would be pressed into service and that, indeed, has come to pass.

When I wrote the 1995 column, I had seen only the 20c Chemical Flasks stamp used in this manner. Since then, mail has arrived from Mexico with a wide array of the early low-value Exportas: 50c Pistons, 1-peso Electric Cable, 2p Abalone, 4p Construction Materials, 5.20p Farm Machinery (airmail stamp), 7p Overalls and 10p Tequila.

Figure 1. A portion of a recent cover from Mexico to the United States franked with a 1.10 new-peso stamp and a 1,600p pre-revaluation Exporta stamp. In this case, the 1,600p stamp is treated as if it were a 1.60p stamp.

All were used as if the devaluation never occurred.

A recent letter from a correspondent in Mexico was franked with a 10 new-peso stamp and a 1,600p pre-revaluation Exporta stamp. The portion of the cover with the stamps is shown in Figure 1.

Obviously, the 1,600p Exporta stamp is treated as if it were a 1.60p stamp, since the correct franking is 2.70p. Still, such a combination could confuse a postal historian 50 years hence if the circumstances of fiscal reform had been overlooked.

•

From time to time the philatelic section of the Mexican Postal Service (Sepomex) publishes a schedule of anticipated stamp issues for the year. According to the latest one I received (dated Aug. 28), 36 issues involving 84 separate designs were planned for 1996.

One issue consists of a sheet of 24 stamps urging conservation of native plant and animal species. These se-tenant stamps make a colorful and attractive composite in sheet form. This issue is bound to be popular with topical collectors.

All but one of the new stamps pay either the domestic rate (1.80p) or North American/Caribbean first-class letter rate (2.70p). The exception is a souvenir sheet with a single 7.40p stamp commemorating the 400th anniversary of the founding of the city of Monterrey.

The sheet, shown in Figure 2, was released in conjunction with Filrey 96, a large stamp show held in that city during September.

The total face value of all the stamps planned for the year is slightly more than 170p, or about U.S. $21.50 at the current rate of exchange.

•

Tourist definitives continue to crop up with new and subtle paper characteristics.

One attempt at classification I have received lists eight different printings involving four distinct papers.

Two of the listed varieties apparently are scarce enough so that dealers already have priced them in the three-figure range.

Jim Leggett of Worthington, Ohio, sent me two 2.70p Estado de Mexico Tourist stamps that appear completely different under an 8-power magnification. He suggested that one was printed by photogravure and the other by lithography.

At first, I agreed with him as I knew the printer TIEV had produced some of Mexico's 1995 TB seals by lithography. But, I have since been informed that there were two different photogravure printings of this stamp, one a fine-grained impression with a violet cast to it, and the other, a rather coarse impression, or as the Mexicans list it — "porous," with more blue. Has anyone else noticed this?

•

I thought my column on the Klussendorf postage strips (*Linn's*, June 24, page 34), would elicit a fair measure of response. But, the only feedback I received was a note from Paul Franklin of Oregon, who nudged me to write the article in the first place.

And then, a few weeks later, I received a letter from Guillermo Wilkins, my ever-faithful Mexican correspondent, who enclosed an approval card with 16 unused postage strips to augment my pitifully meager sample of these items.

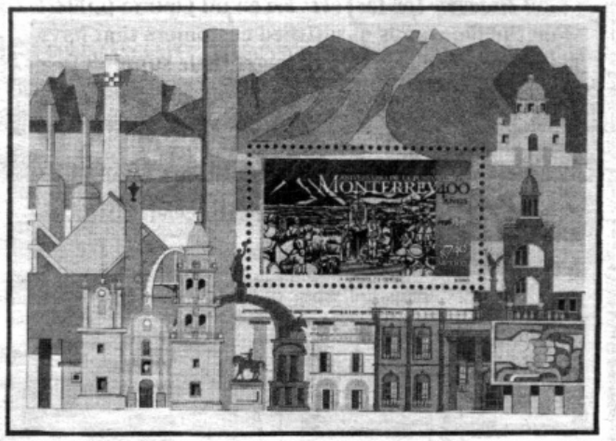


Figure 2. Mexico issued this souvenir sheet with a 7.40-peso stamp to mark the 400th anniversary of Monterrey.

This windfall provides material for another column on this subject, if, in the meantime, I can secure more information on when types were first sold to the public.

•

The column on the two official covers to Denmark (*Linn's* May 27, page 20), triggered an interesting exchange of letters with a curious reader.

In the article, I mused whether the addressee, Erik Petersen, could have been a Danish anthropologist.

Gregory Finnegan, associate librarian and head of reference at the Tozzer Library at Harvard University, took up the chase and did an extensive search for Peterson in the library's computerized indexes. The Tozzer collection constitutes one of the world's leading anthropology libraries with particular focus on middle American culture.

Sadly, he was unable to find any reference to Erik Petersen, so we are still in the dark as to the possible nature of the official correspondence these envelopes carried.

However, it was a good try and I thank Finnegan for his time and effort.

•

And now to one of my special projects. For more than a year now I have been assembling information for a comprehensive compendium on Mexican postal rates. This should be of use to postal historians of all eras. And, as far as I know, no such unified source exists.

My ultimate objective is a loose-leaf guide covering the period from the early 19th century when the Mexican postal system became organized up to the present.

It has been slow going because I want to use original sources, such as official postal tariffs. Some of these are particularly hard to come by.

Thanks to many friends in the hobby, and particularly to Alejandro Grossmann of Mexico City who is researching the archives at the Postal Museum in Mexico City, I now have a substantial file of official rate information. But gaps remain.

If you have, or know the whereabouts of Mexican postal tariffs, especially of the late 19th century, I would be delighted to hear from you. Write to me in care of *Linn's* and I will answer at once with what I am still seeking. Full source credits are promised.

•

Finally, sincere best wishes for the holidays and may your Christmas stocking be filled with at least one or two items missing from your collection (even if you have to buy them yourself). ■

Supplementary markings on Mexican covers

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

I find envelopes that bear in addition to the usual postal markings other messages or brief explanations related to them fascinating.

These are sometimes referred to as auxiliary or supplementary markings. However, I could find no clear definition of either of these terms in a philatelic glossary I have.

So, I will use these terms in the sense of words or phrases added to covers explaining delays, special handling or other unexpected events. This would include things such as train wrecks, plane crashes, reroutings, or perhaps even warnings or instructions by the post office.

I'll share a few unusual items from my small collection in this column.

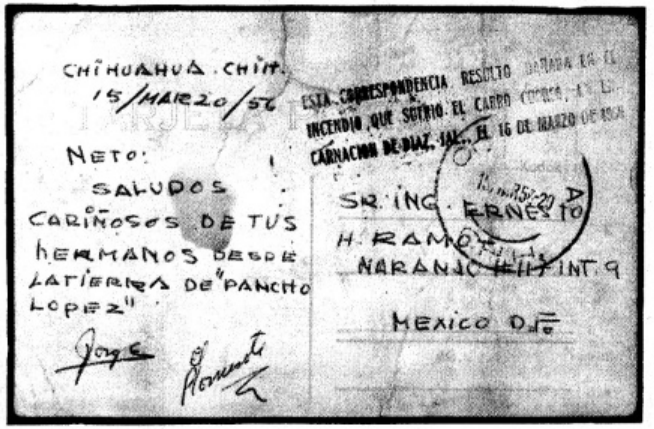


Figure 2. The message side of a 1956 postcard from Chihuahua to Mexico City with a rubber handstamp stating that the card was damaged in a fire in the mail car.

Figure 1 shows one of the earliest examples I have of a supplementary marking.

This marking is on the reverse of an 1859 first stamp issue cover from Orizaba to Puebla.

The handwritten message on the back flap of the letter reads, "Esta carta fue abierta por los bandidos en el camino." The translation is: "This letter was opened by bandits on the road."

This cover illustrates a problem of mid-19th-century Mexico, wherein the mails were often raided by highwaymen seeking money or other valuables.

In this case, the letter, which probably contained nothing of substance, was recovered and sent on to the addressee.

The double oval handstamp suggests the message was probably written by a clerk in the Puebla post office, where the handstamp was applied.

I also have a cover from the same era that was returned to sender with a handwritten note regarding insufficient franking.

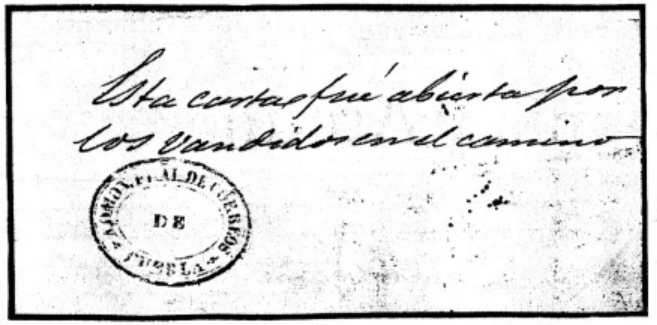


Figure 1. A handwritten message on the back flap of a Mexican 1859 first stamp issue cover translates to "This letter was opened by bandits on the road."

Figure 2 pictures another interesting example of an added message. Illustrated is the message side of a photo postcard sent from Chihuahua to Mexico City.

The rubber handstamp message at the upper right reads, "Esta correspondencia resulto danada en el incendio que sufrio el carro correo in Encarnacion de Diaz, Jal., 16 Marzo 1956." Translated: "This correspondence was damaged in a fire suffered by the mail car at Encarnacion de Diaz (State of), Jalisco on March 16, 1956."

Although not clearly visible in the illustration, the card is slightly charred and the stamp was washed away, presumably by the water used to extinguish the fire.

Almost a month elapsed, before the postcard was reprocessed and reached Mexico City.

Similar items should be available from mail involved in aircraft accidents. But, so far, I haven't been able to acquire one.

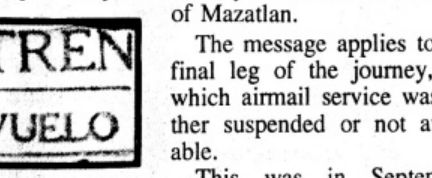


Figure 3. A two-line handstamp from a September 1941 airmail cover sent from New York to Mazatlan, Mexico, indicates that the cover was sent on its last leg of its journey by train because of suspension of the flight.

The next example, Figure 3, shows a two-line handstamp applied to an airmail cover sent from New York to Mazatlan.

The handstamp reads, "Remitida por tren/por suspension de vuelo," which translates to "Sent by train, owing to the suspension of the flight."

Piecing together what happened from looking at the other postmarks on this envelope, the cover was flown from New York to Mexico City and then to Durango on its way to the west coast port of Mazatlan.

The message applies to the final leg of the journey, for which airmail service was either suspended or not available.

This was in September 1941. Up to that time, the letter had moved quite rapidly, two days to Mexico from New York and one more to Durango. The final train ride took three days, probably due to roundabout routing.

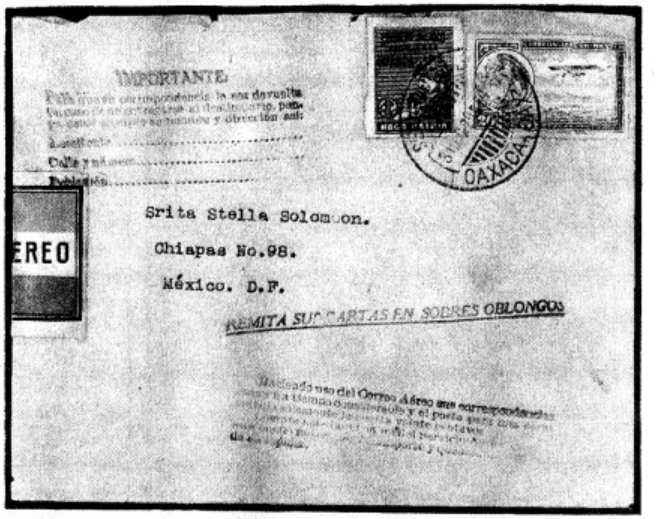


Figure 4. The handstamps on this airmail cover urge the inclusion of a return address, promote the use of airmail service and ask letter writers to use oblong envelopes.

Censored covers often bear

interesting auxiliary markings, as do covers passing through the customs offices when suspected of containing goods that are subject to a duty. They are worth searching for in this context.

The Mexican post office and other government departments often used the mails for messages of encouragement, instruction or warning.

Figure 5. A handstamp promoting literacy was applied at the behest of Mexico's secretary of public education.

The airmail cover shown in Figure 4 originated in Oaxaca bound for Mexico City. Postmarks indicate it was mailed on and reached Mexico the same day, Dec. 31, 1929.

Three handstamps were applied to the front of the letter, probably in the Mexico post office.

The one in the upper-left corner ("Importante . . .") urges that a return address be applied in the event the letter is undeliverable.

The six-line message at the lower right touts airmail service as a good way to save time, certainly demonstrated in ample fashion by the service tendered to this letter.

The final handstamp, "Remita sus cartas en sobres oblongos," translates to "Send your letters in oblong envelopes."

This handstamp admonishes writers not to use the popular European-style envelopes that often were almost square in form, usually measuring about 6 inches by 4¾ inches.

Apparently, these envelopes caused problems for the machine cancelers the large Mexican post offices were beginning to use. In fact, similar warnings were embodied in several machine cancel slogans used in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s.

The final example, Figure 5, shows a handstamp message applied to mail at the behest of the secretary of public education. It was struck in magenta ink and translates to "Cooperate in the Literacy Campaign."

Raising the level of literacy was a major priority of the Mexican government during the 1930s and 1940s (this letter is dated July 1936).

Its importance was further underscored by a series of stamps issued in 1945, Scott 806-11, C153-57.

So once again, we find another niche in Mexican philately to explore at low cost and with abundant collection opportunities.

I've told you about only a few of the many markings available, and I'd be glad to hear of any unusual finds from readers. Write to me in care of Linn's, Box 29, Sidney, OH 45365. ■

Cover provides details about shipping silver

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Every once in a while I stumble across a cover where the contents prove to be as interesting as the cover itself. This was the case with the cover shown nearby, which came my way in an American Philatelic Society Mexico circuit.

I did not buy it, mostly because the postmark is weakly struck and I already have several similar items in my collection. Still, the cover is not lacking in philatelic charms.

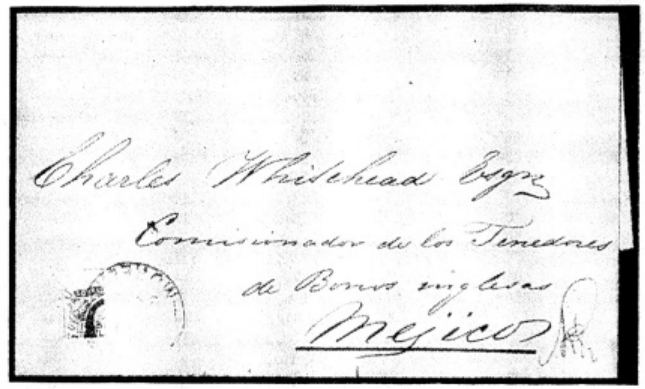
First, it demonstrates fractional usage of the first issue, showing how high-value stamps were often cut up to make frankings for the more common lower rates.

This example is a quadrisect of the 8-real stamp and pays a 2r rate.

Such usages, at least of the first and second issues of Mexico, were legal and are not terribly scarce. Clean examples always add luster to a collection or exhibit.

Another favorable aspect of this particular cover is that it contains a complete letter, even including a loose, extra page that was part of the original communication. Many such items contain only the outer sheet of a folded letter, the message half having been cut or torn off and discarded.

Since my Spanish is pretty good, I make it a practice to read the contents of complete letters like this one.



An 1860 Mexican folded letter franked with a quadrisect of an 8-real stamp. The letter deals with a silver shipment.

The letter, dated Sept. 10, 1860, came from a commission agent, Oetling and Co. of Colima, and deals with the shipment to London of silver valued at $2,700. It also contains a copy of the bill of lading detailing fees and shipping charges totaling $68.65.

The letter is directed to Charles Whitehead Esq. who was, as the address states, the commissioner for British bond holders. He maintained his office in Mexico City.

The 8r stamp fragment was probably applied at Morelia, where it was canceled.

Although in 1860, Colima enjoyed the status of a principal district post office, it previously was subordinate to Morelia (until 1858) and most of its stamps were supplied from that office.

I suspect Colima had no stamps when this letter was written, so it probably was carried to Morelia unfranked.

Whatever the case, the first evidence of the letter being handled in the Mexican mail system was at Morelia.

Since I have a similar cover addressed to Whitehead, I was curious about the situation to which the contents of this letter refer. So, with the aid of some coin books and the encyclopedia, I did a bit of research.

British businessmen were in Mexico looking for commercial opportunities soon after the 1810 Mexican War for Independence. They were attracted to the mining industry, left in shambles after the ouster of the Spanish.

As early as 1824, the British began investing in and restoring the silver centers of Mexico, especially the mines in Guanajuato and Pachuca. One of the famous mines in the latter location that the British capitalized was the Real del Monte. Investors in England eagerly bought shares in many of these ventures, even though some of them ultimately failed.

The business overseen by Whitehead (I could not determine its exact name) seems to have been one of the successful holding companies. And, it is to that company that the silver is going.

The shipment is described as consisting of two boxes of "specie," which I take to mean that Mexican coins were being sent. And just what were they? Undoubtedly they were Mexican 8r coins, or, as they were called in those days, pieces of eight.

These and similar coins also were referred to as Spanish dollars, piasters or pesos. The symbol designating them was the dollar sign. Millions were minted in Mexico during the 19th century.

Mexico was, and still is, the world's foremost producer of silver bullion. Much of the metal that was mined and reduced in Mexico ended up in coinage. It has been said that the so-called piece of eight had the greatest circulation of any coin in the history of the world.

The coins were roughly the size of a silver dollar, 1½ inches in diameter, and weighed about 27 grams, or slightly less than an ounce.

The silver content had to be at least 90 percent. The balance was copper.

A little simple math tells me that the coins in the two boxes weighed about 160 pounds, not counting the weight of the containers. So each of the two boxes would be about all that a man could comfortably carry.

The loose bill of lading accompanying the letter gives some interesting insight into the costs of the shipments.

Nearly everything is based on the value of the shipment. Bags, plus boxes and packing, for example, was 0.125 percent or $3.38. Freight from Colima to the port was calculated as 0.4 percent of shipment value plus sea freight plus lighter fee and packing.

Then, there were customs fees, agents fees (both land and sea), storage awaiting arrival of the steamship and so forth. When all was said and done, the shipper owed $68 and change. This did not include $13 due Oetling for preparing the paperwork and arranging the transportation.

The shipment was consigned to the steamship *America* under command of Capt. F.R. Baby. It went to London by way of Panama.

There was no canal in those days, so the boxes had to be transported overland to connect with another ship on the Atlantic side.

Although we can't know the exact origin of the silver, one might logically ask why it did not leave Mexico by way of Veracruz, where steamers to Europe called regularly. The British-operated mines at Guanajuato and Pachuca were certainly a lot closer to the east coast.

My guess is the reason was safety. At that time, bandits and highwaymen preyed on the transport routes throughout the country, especially on the road from Mexico to Veracruz.

It was probably much easier to safeguard a valuable shipment to a west coast port than to the east. And, it may have depended on where the coins were minted.

What happened to the silver once it reached England? Some of it may have ended up as hard currency reserves. However, most of it probably was converted to jewelry, hollowware and flatware.

This story about silver arose from a letter having unusual franking. So it seems only fitting that the required postage was satisfied with one-fourth of a stamp equal in value to a piece of eight, a main topic in the article. ■

A 1928 Mexican airmail first-flight cover

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Mexico has a lot of good airmail postal history. I have touched on it a few times in this column over the years, and a lucky find at a recent local stamp show bourse provides an opportunity to revisit the area.

The cover, which is shown in Figure 1, is a first-flight cover carried on the Mexico-Nuevo Laredo airmail route inaugurated Oct. 1, 1928. These covers are not exceptionally scarce; I have a similar one in my collection.

But, for a philatelically contrived cover in the early period of airmail, it has a lot going for it. Perhaps, best of all is that it came with its original contents. This helps tell its story.

The letter was written by R.E. Patterson of White Plains, N.Y., to a relative in Pittsburgh.

The letter began: "Dear Uncle Edwin: I will endeavor to send this letter to you by way of Mexico City via the new air-mail route to be inaugurated on October 1st.

"I recently learned that the Postmaster General of Mexico offered to accept for mailing any letters which were accompanied by International Money Order for postage (60 cents Mexican). I am sending one addressed to myself and this addressed to you, and hope that they come through alright. Please let me know if you receive this.

"Be sure to keep the entire envelope, as this is known in philatelic circles as a 'first-day flight cover' and should be worth a couple of dollars in a very short time, as the number carried will be entirely too few to supply the demand.

"The postmark should be dated October 1st and will probably bear a special 'cachet' or postmark indicating that the letter was carried on the initial trip."

The letter concludes with other news.

I had often wondered how collectors obtained first-flight covers in the early days of airmail. This letter reveals how some of them came to be.

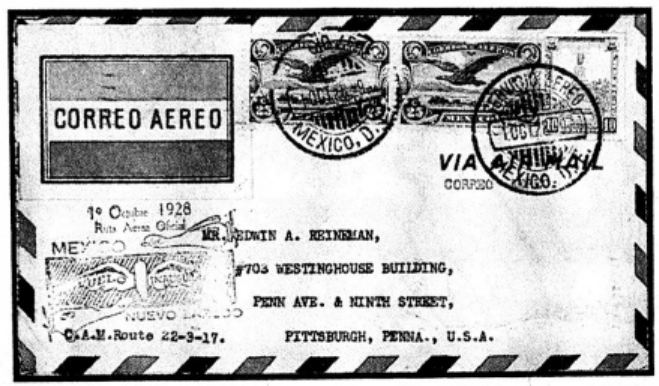


Figure 1. A first-flight cover from the Mexico-Nuevo Laredo airmail route, which began Oct. 1, 1928.

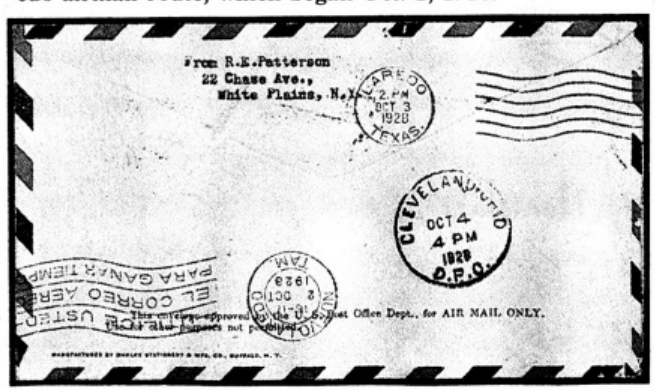


Figure 2. The backstamps on the reverse of the cover shown in Figure 1 show how the cover traveled.

Two 25-centavo airmail stamps and a 10c surface mail stamp comprise the 60c franking. This is rather curious since effective on the day of this flight, airmail postage to the United States was reduced to 35c.

My other first-flight cover from the same flight was sent at the lower rate. Even if the new, reduced rate hadn't been communicated to the airmail fans wanting such covers, I'm surprised the clerks processing these covers didn't apply the appropriate postage and pocket the difference.

As predicted in the text, the cover bears a special cachet, in black, marking the inaugural flight. It was stamped in the lower-left corner. It is dated "1 October 1928" and marked as the official air route.

Below this cachet is typed "C.A.M. Route 22-3-17." This extra endorsement, added by the sender, indicates the contract airmail routes to be followed to the cover's ultimate destination, Pittsburgh. C.A.M. 22 was Dallas-San Antonio; C.A.M. 3 was Dallas-Chicago; C.A.M. 17 was Chicago-Cleveland-New York.

Backstamps, illustrated in Figure 2, show that the cover was processed in Nuevo Laredo Oct. 2, passed through the Laredo, Texas, post office Oct. 3, and through the Cleveland, Ohio, DPO (distribution post office) Oct. 4.

At Cleveland, it probably went aboard a mail train for Pittsburgh.

Although no receiving handstamp was applied, the letter was likely delivered the next day, Oct. 5, four days after it went on board an airplane in Mexico City.

Between the wavy lines of the Nuevo Laredo transit mark is the message: "Utilice Usted el Correo Aereo para Ganar Tiempo." This slogan translates to "Use air mail to save time."

Despite the technical advances in mail processing and the increased speed of aircraft to carry the mails, such quick service cannot be expected today. In fact, letters from my correspondents in Mexico City usually require seven to 10 days to reach me.

And, of course, airmail, as a distinct class of service, has long disappeared from the scene.

The reverse of the envelope carries another interesting message. In fine print underneath the transit handstamp for Nuevo Laredo is, "This envelope approved by the U.S. Post Office Dept., for AIR MAIL ONLY. Use for other purposes not permitted." Would such an admonishment be heeded today in these times of permissiveness?

Uncle Edwin did receive the first-flight cover and it eventually made it to the philatelic marketplace where I bought it — almost 70 years after it was mailed.

And, yes, it became worth a couple of bucks. I paid $4.50 for it. However, that certainly is not a very good long-term investment yield if one had hoped to make a killing with such merchandise.

The letter closes with a final interesting news tidbit from nephew Rob.

He writes, "I am going up to the Polo Grounds today to see a double-header between the N.Y. Giants and the St. Louis Cardinals. As these two baseball teams are the contenders for the honor of participating in the next World's Series, they should be very interesting games."

The Cardinals did represent the National League in the World Series that year but lost four straight to the New York Yankees.

See how much fun you can have with a modest purchase from a dealer's shoe box. ■

Specializing in a single Mexican definitive

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

A small three-frame exhibit built around a single Mexican stamp design was on display at the recent Garfield-Perry March Party show held in Cleveland, Ohio.

I admit it was at my suggestion that Alejandro Grossman, a friend who lives in Mexico, entered this exhibit.

Although it did not earn him a major award, it demonstrated once again what can be done with a modern inexpensive stamp.

This was the first time Grossman's exhibit had been shown in the United States, and further development, heeding suggestions made by the judges, will certainly improve its ratings.

Figure 1. The 20-centavo denomination of Mexico's Archaeology and Architecture definitive series shows the Puebla Cathedral.

Grossman selected the 20-centavo value from the Archaeology and Architecture definitive series of 1950-75 for his exhibit. This stamp shows the Cathedral of Puebla, the title selected for the exhibit.

This stamp has much to commend it for an in-depth study. It was one of the true workhorses of the series, initially paying the surface rate for a single-weight letter. Moreover, it served as a useful denomination to complement other values to meet much-used frankings.

Although I do not ha. records at hand to prove it, it is probable that this stamp was among the top four or five most-used denominations in the series.

Several variables in its production make the stamp attractive to specialists. Scott assigns five numbers to varieties: Nos. 860, 878, 946, 1003 and 1054. But one could argue that there are more major varieties than those listed.

Two design sizes, sometimes referred to as plates, exist.

In the early printings, the printed design measures 17.25 millimeters by 21mm, as shown in Figure 1.

Later, the stamp was redrawn and the size reduced to 17mm by 20.75mm.

Scott makes a note after Nos. 943-52 that the clouds were almost eliminated in the redrawn 20c Puebla Cathedral stamp. This is misleading because this visual aspect depends on inking and roll pressure applied at the moment of printing.

The redrawn version of the 20-centava Puebla Cathedral stamp of Mexico, pictured at the left, has a smaller design area than on the original. Shown on the right is an orginal-version stamp with a portion of the redrawn version placed over the design at the bottom to compare size. Notice how the word "Correos" doesn't line up properly.

Many of the small, redrawn stamps show the clouds quite clearly.

Figure 2 shows this point. Stamps of about the same color density show the clouds weakly. The stamp on the right is the large design; the one on the left is the small one. The two also are shown overlapped on the right to compare the design sizes.

Another variable is that, with one exception, the stamps were printed on watermarked paper. Papers with three different watermarks are cataloged.

The first printings used paper with Scott Type 279 watermark, "Gobierno/Mexicano" with an eagle in a circle. This watermark runs diagonally. Four orientations have been identified.

When a stamp is viewed from the front, the watermark can read from upper left to lower right, or read upward (upside down) from lower right to upper left. Also, it reads backwards (mirror image) from upper right to lower left or vice versa.

Two other watermarks exist. Scott Type 300, "MEX-MEX" cutting a circle surrounding an eagle, came along in 1953, and the Type 350, a single "MEX" between encircled eagles, was first recorded in 1963. These last two watermarks generally read down but early printings of the "MEX-MEX" (type 300) can be found reading up.

Color and gum are two other variables easily studied using mint stamps. The gum and paper varieties generally go hand in hand, but the blue hues of the stamps vary all over the palette, from pale gray blues to rich, deep Prussian blues.

Inking and printing roll pressure probably are at the root of most of the color variations. Color control was not a strong attribute at the printing plant.

In any case, there is plenty to look for in the color department. The stamp in Figure 3 has rich, deep color. It is one of the small, redrawn varieties and shows the clouds in the background quite clearly.

In the last few years of this issue, papers reactive to ultraviolet light and with added coatings were employed. Stamps exist with phosphorescent (yellowish) and fluorescent (bluish white) response under UV light.

Except for a general note, Scott ignores these varieties in its listings.

The 20c Puebla Cathedral stamp is one of only two stamps in the series that was printed on fiscal paper. This is listed as Scott 1054. The basic paper is not watermarked but has fluorescent printing on the back reading "Secretaria de Hacienda y Credito Publico" with a beehive pattern.

Figure 3. This 20c Puebla Cathedral stamp has a rich blue color. It is one of the redrawn varieties and shows the clouds clearly.

This is sometimes referred to as a false watermark. It washes off when stamps are soaked. An example of this variety is shown in Figure 4.

The Puebla Cathedral theme found its way onto postal stationery, too. Hand-fed flat-bed presses were used to produce 20c envelopes, giving rise to many printing errors and varieties.

Letter cards and postal cards also were produced with the 20c Cathedral design. And a wrapper for printed matter exists.

Most everything I've de-

Figure 4. The front and reverse of the 20c Puebla Cathedral stamp with fluorescent printing on the back in a beehive pattern (Scott 1054). The reverse side of the stamp was photographed under ultraviolet light.

scribed in this column was displayed in Grossman's exhibit, together with some printing freaks and postal usages.

For me it served as a very instructive display, but it probably was not appreciated fully by the viewing public, since all the captions, save the title page, were in Spanish.

I know the judges were impressed with the range of material available for a single modern stamp. But they felt that usages were seriously underrepresented in view of the number of unused varieties displayed. This exhibit is certainly one worth working on, especially the postal history aspects.

Only the unused stamps of the first two printings have appreciable Scott catalog value.

The rest are quite low in price, although I suspect locating some usages, for example, the coil versions and the fiscal printings, may present a real challenge. But these are precisely the things that will impress judges in the competitive arena.

Modern Mexican material can offer exceptional opportunities for a significant and worthwhile collection. ■

New Mexican Revolution reference

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

It's always exciting when a new and substantial reference book appears on the scene. A month ago, I received from the publisher, the Collectors Club of Chicago, a review copy of *The Stamps of the Mexican Revolution 1913-1916* by Nicholas Follansbee.

This is an important work. And it has been a long time coming.

Follansbee, one of the foremost students and experts on the stamps of this era, began the actual writing about 12 years ago and had a manuscript pretty much ready by 1990.

The book was to have been the initial offering in a handbook series published by the Mexican Elmhurst Philatelic Society International (MEPSI). But politics and the death of key personalities behind that enterprise scotched the effort. Eventually, the Chicago group agreed to undertake the project.

Mechanically, this book is made to last and sustain heavy use. It is printed on coated acid-free buffered paper with sewn signatures in a stout clothbound case.

The end papers have reproductions of a contemporary map of Mexico showing railroads and many of the important towns and cities involved in that historic struggle.

The book opens with a detailed table of contents and a 15-page introduction. The latter serves to list acknowledgements, outline the book's organization, cite information sources and give brief descriptions of the sections to follow.

These seven sections (or chapters) deal with the main groupings of revolutionary issues.

The Sonora issues are

Figure 1. A 1910 2-centavo Mexican stamp overprinted "E S" for "Estado [de] Sonora" during the Mexican Revolution of 1913-16.

treated first. Figure 1 depicts a 1910 2-centavo Mexican stamp overprinted "E S" for "Estado [de] Sonora."

The Constitutionalist general issues follow the Sonora issues. Figure 2 shows two of the unissued Madero series stamps, one perf and one imperf, that are included in the second section of the book. These stamps were prepared by the Ellis Brothers Printing Co. of El Paso, Texas, but were never issued.

The third chapter examines the many local provisional overprints, an area completely ignored by Scott save a brief note following Scott No. 320.

Figure 3 pictures a Monterrey overprint from 1914. The overprint reads "Gobierno/ Consitucionalista" (government/Constitutionalist."

The book includes three appendices. Two reproduce articles Follansbee previously wrote for *Mexicana*, the quarterly journal of MEPSI.

The first article provides a useful recitation of postal rates during the period. The second is a minibiography of Cosme Hinojosa.

Hinojosa was the opportunist postmaster general of the civil war era who is suspected of lining his own pockets by ordering limited printings of overprinted stamps and selling these rare varieties to stamp collectors.

The third appendix is a lengthy (70 pages) and detailed summary of the revolution.

Some readers may question if such an in-depth historical review belongs in a philatelic handbook. But Follansbee, with help from David Warman, now deceased, weaves in a great deal of philatelic connections and, in my view, provides invaluable background for the serious postal historian.

The book is touted as a handbook and catalog. Scott numbering has been used wherever possible, and every listed item has either a price quotation or "R's" where sales have been too few or too infrequent to establish a numerical figure.

But, the real value of this book is that it carefully examines and explains the stamps and postal history of what has always been a difficult and confusing area of Mexican philately. The civil war issues were manipulated and doctored for years by unscrupulous dealers and, yes, even collectors.

The forged overprints are a plague, and Follansbee shows how these can be detected.

He also advises the reader on what he calls "manufactured covers" and items of uncertain status.

Another useful feature is the last section, a bibliography. This comprehensive compilation lists virtually every important article, book or study written on the Mexican civil war issues.

It even includes eight entries by the founder of *Linn's Stamp News*, George Ward Linn, who was fascinated with the war issues and made important literary contributions to the subject.

The only criticism I have with the book is the lack of a topical index. But this is probably not too important owing to the presence of a detailed table of contents and the logical organization of the text material.

Once a collector becomes familiar with the contents, he will have no problem utilizing the valuable information it has to offer.

However, with all this good news, there is some bad news. By the time the review copy arrived at my desk, the initial printing of the book was already sold out from the publisher. Contrary to early publicity promising it would not be reprinted, a second printing was ordered in response to the strong demand.

I have it from a reliable source that only 300 copies were ordered initially plus 200 more in the second printing. That is my major beef. A book like this one could, should and probably would spur renewed interest in Mexico's war issues, which many collectors have avoided for want of an authoritative handbook and a sour reputation for manipulation.

This work certainly serves the purpose, but if an aspiring collector can't buy one or has to pay more in the secondary market, it will be a turn-off.

I do not know how the Collectors Club of Chicago came up with the original print order of 300. It did not consult me or some of the other MEPSI folks who have a feel for collector interest in Mexican philately.

An early sellout certainly helps the cash flow of the publishing agency, but does it really serve the hobby's best interests? Hard to say. But I don't think so.

The book is still available from a few philatelic book dealers. At last reports, Leonard Hartmann and Jim Lee had them in stock, and the MEPSI publications manager laid in a supply to serve society members. The price is $35, a real bargain considering the book's quality and value of content.

In any event, if you have had a latent interest in Mexico's stamps of the revolution, you should waste no time in ordering your copy.

I suspect that even 500 copies may be absorbed rather quickly by those who are looking for a useful reference, plus those who collect philatelic books just as some of us collect stamps. ■

Figure 2. Two of the Madero series stamps, one perf and one imperf, that are included in Nicholas Follansbee's book *The Stamps of the Mexican Revolution 1913-1916*. These stamps were prepared by the Ellis Brothers Printing Co. of El Paso, Texas, but were never issued.

Figure 3. A local Monterrey overprint from the Mexican Revolution. The two-line overprint reads "Gobierno/ Consitucionalista" (government/Constitutionalist."

Mail delivery times in 19th-century Mexico

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

One aspect of mail conveyance that fascinates me is how long it took letters to go from point A to point B.

Mail delivery is a hot topic these days. See Bill McAllister's Washington Watch column in *Linn's* May 25 issue, page 8, where he describes the United States Postal Service's less-than-stellar performance meeting two- and three-day delivery objectives.

My commentary here, however, will focus on the Mexican mails. Even a brief overview of this subject would be too much for a single article, so I will divide the subject into at least two columns.

Tracking time of transit for Mexican mail in the mid-19th century is usually not too difficult. Many surviving business letters from that era are carefully docketed with the dates of dispatch and receipt.

The tracing becomes more difficult later on when envelopes came into general use and their dated contents are rarely found. But transit and receiving marks, both on general and registered mail, often give us clues to the time a letter took to be delivered.

In an earlier *Linn's* column (Nov. 11, 1991), I discussed docketing and related how several contemporaneous covers from Mexico City to Durango provided enough data to deduce the likely schedule of deliveries to this remote town and also to establish the speed with which they were carried.

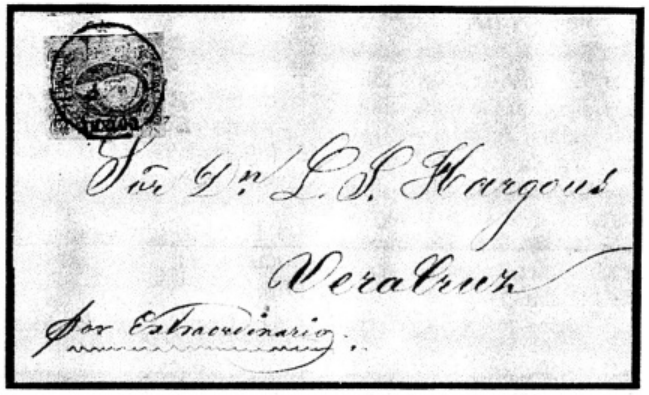


Figure 1. Letter carried from Mexico to Veracruz by Extraordinario, an express service. It was written and probably mailed Sept. 29, 1861, and was received Oct. 1.

Mexico City was the central hub of transport routes, linking the major towns and cities of the country in the middle of the last century. A stagecoach company, Diligencias Generales, operated in the central section of Mexico and probably carried most of the mail distributed within this region.

More remote locales were serviced by pack mules and human mail carriers. Despite poor roads and the dangers posed by bandits and highwaymen, some letters reached their destinations rather quickly. The post office took its charge seriously in those days.

Mail from Mexico to Puebla (80 miles) usually took one day, while the continuing route to Veracruz required two more for a total of three days to cover about 265 miles.

That's not too bad, allowing for the fact that the coaches only ran during the 14 to 16 hours of daylight, the route crossed mountains and there were stops for meals and changes of the teams.

However, between other major cities of the central plateau, delivery times were much longer. Mexico City to Guadalajara was at least five days, as was the trip to San Luis Potosi.

It required more than two weeks time, generally 16 to 18 days, to reach Durango, the famous mining town in the Sierra Madre. Rainy weather could add several more days to that journey.

Mail to locations not on the stage routes or remote from the major towns and cities often took weeks to be delivered. It was an age of difficult and slow communication.

One bright spot for merchants and businessmen in Mexico and in cities on the route to Veracruz was the Extraordinario. This express service operated under the auspices of the British ligation to rapidly transport letters arriving on steamships up to Mexico City and back again. Twice the normal postage rates were charged.

Under favorable conditions, answers to inbound letters carried by the steamers could reach the port in time for their departure. Reportedly, the courier, Rafael Beraza, made his journey in 36 to 38 hours as opposed to the usual three or four days required by the regular post.

The letter illustrated in Figure 1 was carried by this means. Note the "por Extraordinario" written at the bottom. Docketing indicates it left Mexico City Sept. 29, 1861, and was received in Veracruz Oct. 1.

A similar stampless letter in my collection from an earlier date (1855) confirms the speed of this service was no fluke; it was marked received the day after it was sent out from Mexico.

Figure 2. This cover was sent from Mexico City to Wooster, Ohio, by railroad. It was mailed Sept. 25, 1888, and received Oct. 1. The cover contains a letter from a stamp collector requesting approvals and trade information.

Simple arithmetic reveals that a 38-hour transit means the courier with his pack mules was averaging about seven miles per hour, a remarkable rate of travel indeed.

The movement of mail improved substantially with the advent of railroads, although these were slow in coming to Mexico and few in number.

Attempts were made as early as the 1830s to link Mexico City with Veracruz by rail. But it wasn't until December 1872 that the line was fully completed.

Even then, schedules were such that two days were still needed for letters to reach the coast, not significantly faster than the extraordinario service. An 1874 letter in my collections demonstrates this.

In the 1880s, two roughly parallel railroads were completed from Mexico City to the U.S. border. These had a significant effect on expediting northbound mail, since before that time, the fastest service to New York, for example, invariably relied on steamship service from Veracruz.

I have two interesting examples from this era carried on the railroads to my home state of Ohio. The first, illustrated in Figure 2, is an 1888 letter from Mexico City to Wooster via Eagle pass. It

made it in six days.

Contained in the envelope is a letter from a stamp collector requesting approvals and trade information.

A 1900 registered letter from Monterrey to Cleveland via Laredo took but four days.

Compare those times with today's service. The improvements in mail handling during the last decades of the 19th century were unquestionably tied to President Porfirio Diaz's efforts to modernize and develop a backward country. In this endeavor, efficient communication was paramount.

So, by the end of the century, the speed by which long-distance letters were being delivered had improved and was probably approaching the best it could be until the coming of airmail.

I will continue this theme in a future column dealing with mail transport in the 20th century.

Meanwhile, check your 19th-century covers for evidence of swift delivery. I'll be happy to hear of unusual examples — and even of some that took an especially long time to reach their destinations. ■

Condition factors for classic Mexican stamps

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

A month or so ago, Harry Spahr, a *Linn's* subscriber from Pennsylvania, wrote that he would like to see a column discussing the condition of Mexican classic stamps.

He was especially concerned with centering and margins, and suggested the time frame of 1856-83.

This is a reasonable period for this subject because, except for some stamps in the issue of 1868 and those of 1874 and 1882-83, it embraces all the imperforate stamps of Mexico. These stamps have their own special grading problems.

Figure 1. Jumbo margins on a 2-real stamp from Mexico's 1856 first issue. The stamp, which is from plate I, has a light cancel and a Veracruz overprint.

When asked, I advise people to pay strict heed to condition when purchasing older Mexican stamps.

Buy the best condition you can find, even if it means acquiring fewer stamps because of budget limitations.

Better-grade stamps are desirable, easier to sell when the time comes and, if exhibited, mark you as a discriminating collector.

But there's another side to the story, and that is, what condition can you expect of certain issues? You cannot, unfortunately, apply a uniform standard for all the stamps in the time frame Spahr proposed. A great deal depends on how the stamps were produced.

The first printings of the 1856 stamps came from 60-subject plates. The layouts of impressions were such that copies with full margins exist for all denominations and can be found quite easily.

Figure 1 shows a 2-real stamp from the so-called early, wide-spaced plate (I) that will delight even the most fastidious collector. It has broad margins all around and a light cancel to boot. The cancel and the district overprint are from Veracruz.

The other four denominations were printed with similar layouts, but space between impressions was less generous than the first 2r plate. Even so, nice copies exist, and Figure 2 shows representative examples of the ½r and 1r stamps.

Large plates for the 1r and 2r stamps were made soon after the issue began in an effort to reduce printing costs.

Figure 2. Sixty-subject plate examples of Mexico's 1856 ½-real and 1r stamps with nice margins and light cancels.

The 1r plate had 200 subjects, and the 2r plate had 190 subjects.

The stamp transfers were tightly packed on these two plates with small gutters. In many cases, the impressions touched one another. Here, the opportunity for securing clear margin copies is much reduced. Still, careful selection will yield good stamps.

Now consider the complication of district name overprints. While the large, common districts left plenty of fine+ stamps, many of the so-called rare districts did not.

The small post offices did not receive many stamps to begin with, and most of the premier copies are securely locked up in high-powered Mexican exhibits.

You may have to compromise a bit on quality to own such rarities. There are just not enough fine stamps to go around.

With the exception of the widely spaced 1r and 2r plates, the 1856 issue plates were used for the 1861 issue. So again, you have the same problem with rare districts.

Thinned stamps are not too prevalent in the early issues, but you should be alert to this defect.

Heavy, obscuring cancellations are sometimes the norm for certain offices.

The 1867 provisional uses of the 1861 leftovers (Scott 35-41) almost always have smudged, illegible Mexico City cancels.

Figure 3 shows a typical example. This 4r stamp has nice, even margins but also has a smudged double strike of a Mexico City circular datestamp. The Gothic name overprint is difficult to see.

Clear and readable examples are highly prized.

Generally, the Eagles (18-25) will have tight margins since the transfers on these plates were closely spaced, too. Similar rules of thumb as those cited for the 1856 and 1861 issues apply with respect to scarce districts and or suboffices.

Centering quality may force you to compromise from time to time.

The Maximilian issue has similar problems, although with patient searching you can generally find examples with clear margins. The paper for some of the lithographed stamps is quite soft and fragile. I have seen many thinner examples, so beware.

The 1868 issue was lithographed, and the stones were carefully prepared so that spacing between the stamp impressions in both directions is quite uniform.

It is not difficult to find well-centered copies of the imperforate stamps.

The perforated stamps are a different story. This was the first Mexican issue to receive serious attempts at a means for easier separation of stamps from sheets. The early trials of perforating machines were not eminently successful.

Figure 3. Mexico's 1867 overprinted stamps usually have smudged, illegible cancels from Mexico City. The 4-real stamp is shown here.

It's hard to find well-centered perforated stamps. Pin-perforated stamps with very rough edges or separated with scissors are often encountered.

Also, don't forget that some districts did not receive any perforated stamps.

The 1874 issue was initially produced by the American Bank Note Co. in New York, and its work is of top quality.

Stamp centering is usually very good, too.

This is one issue where the

Figure 4. This copy of the 24-centavo value of Mexico's Juarez foreign mail issue is on thin paper, is off center and has blind perfs.

collector should hold out for top quality.

The companion issue, the Juarez foreign mail stamps (123-49), was produced in Mexico, and there were some quality control problems with perforating. These are fairly obvious if you've examined a large number of these stamps.

The thin paper was difficult to perforate cleanly, and specimens with blind perfs or hanging bits of paper abound.

Figure 4 shows one of the poorly perforated 24-centavo stamps on thin paper. This stamp was used at Veracruz.

But again, there are enough stamps around (thousands of remainders were sold) so that you can pick and choose for quality.

For this issue, I concentrate on canceled stamps I know were legitimately used.

The foregoing is a broad brush review of major condition factors for what is regarded as the classic issues of Mexico. Quality standards have to reflect what the issue has to offer, and it's not always easy to define what's fine or very fine. After you have collected for a while and seen a lot of stamps, it gets easier.

Don't be in too much of a hurry to fill all those empty spaces; take some time to survey what is available. But do remember that if you decide to specialize, you will be faced with difficult choices.

Sometimes, you may have to swallow hard and pay your $50 or $100 for a stamp with a rare district overprint in spite of the fact that it is cut in on one or more side. That may be the only way you can afford one.

A clear, four-margined copy may add another "0" to the price! And such an item may not come to the market for years. ■

We ther predictions c n Mexican flag ca cels

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Everybody talks about the weather, but nobody knows how to do much about it. Forecasting weather has become a mammoth industry, even though it sometimes seems more of an art form than a science.

Before the advent of radio and other mass media channels, Mexico and certain other countries tried using the mails as a means of spreading news about the weather to the general public.

In February 1991, I devoted about half my column on Mexican machine cancels to the so-called weather flag forecast postmarks used shortly after the turn of the century. In these dog days of summer, the story of these popular machine-applied markings is worth retelling.

In Mexico, it began in the spring of 1903. According to most authorities, Mexican Postmaster General Manuel Zamacona e Inclan, perhaps inspired by contemporary United States experiments, ordered canceling devices to imprint forecasts of weather in the Federal District (Mexico City) on mail received at the main post office.

Figure 1 demonstrates the anatomy of these devices.

The canceler dies consisted of a 22-millimeter dial containing "Mexico D.F./the date and time/recibida." The replaceable killer was a tasseled flag with a box containing one, two or three lines of weather information, and a tail of seven wavy lines.

On the Figure 1 example, the July 1, 1903, weather flag predicts good weather in the morning, rain in the afternoon.

The cancels were applied to mail with Barr-Fyke machines, first introduced into Mexico in 1900. They were struck mostly on the backs of letters and, very infrequently, on the stamp.

Figure 1. A July 1, 1903, weather flag cancellation from Mexico City predicts good weather in the morning, rain in the afternoon — an easy call for the rainy season.

These cancels usually served as receiving marks on arriving mail, although they can be found as transit marks on letters that passed through the Mexico City post office. They often are seen on inbound foreign mail.

Figure 2 shows the address site on a postcard from my collection that originated in England and was bound for Chihuahua. As it passed through Mexico City, it was struck with a weather flag cancel dated Aug. 24, 1903. This was about five months into the usage period for them.

The weather message translates to "Good weather A.M./Rain P.M./(and) Tomorrow."

A week or so ago, I received an American Philatelic Society circuit book containing some covers with weather flag postmarks. Most had already been purchased, but I did find one to pair up with the one I just described. The front of this postcard is shown in Figure 3.

The weather message is the same, but the date is a year and a month later. It shows what can happen from long use. Note that only the date and time are readable, the rest of the dial has either been worn away or so badly damaged so that it is illegible.

Figure 2. The address side of a postcard sent from the United Kingdom to Mexico. It received a flag cancel with a weather forecast as a transit mark Aug. 24, 1903.

The card was sent from Montreal, Quebec, Canada, to Mexico City.

According to the 1904 report of the Mexican Weather Service director, 40 dies were authorized with various weather predictions. They have been classified into three general groups.

There were 16 dies for canceling mail processed in the morning. They describe current weather conditions and forecast what was in store for the afternoon.

The forecasts were supplied by the central Mexican weather office an hour or two before the canceling was to take place.

Fifteen weather message dies were made for use on mail processed after noon. These generally tried to predict weather for the following day.

The cancellations in Figures 2 and 3 fall into the latter group.

Finally, nine messages could be used either before or after noon.

Of the 40 different weather forecasts, only 21 have thus far been recorded. And but three of the third group have been found.

Some machine cancel specialists suggest that perhaps many of the killer dies, though prepared, were never used. Still, there is always the possibility that more will be found, as many examples in the current census are dated within very short periods or are one-of-a-kind discoveries.

In the March 1994 issue of the American Philatelic Society's magazine, the *American Philatelist*, Alfredo V. Basurto, much-published author on Mexican philately, wrote a feature article on the so-called weather flag forecast cancels of Mexico.

Figure 3. The front of a postcard sent from Montreal, Quebec, Canada, to Mexico City in September 1904. The dial of the flag cancel shows extreme wear.

Basurto has long championed these interesting postmarks in various stamp hobby publications. His checklist included with the *American Philatelist* article is probably the most complete one available at this time.

The checklist gives the various weather forecast wordings, their English translations, and, if reported, the earliest and latest dates of use.

The weather flags ceased to be used in late 1904, with Dec. 17, 1904, as the latest recorded date.

Why they were abandoned so suddenly is not known. One collector who responded after my earlier article said that he had read somewhere that the predictions were so far wrong that they became an embarrassment to the authorities, not unlike some predictions we receive today.

In any event, these intriguing postal markings have always been popular with serious postal history collectors.

They are rather scarce and covers with clear strikes fetch good prices. Some messages are much scarcer than others and command hefty premiums.

If you are interested in delving into this area further, I strongly recommend the article by Basurto in the *American Philatelist*. The checklist is a useful tabulation to have at hand.

There are earlier articles on weather flags in *Mexicana* and in the literature available from the Machine Cancel Society. But it all seems to be based on the same sources summarized by Basurto, or on his articles. ■

Mexico's brief flirtation with semipostals

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Semipostal stamps are much in the news these days.

President Clinton recently signed a bill ordering the United States Postal Service to issue the first United States semipostal stamp to help underwrite breast cancer research.

This was in spite of opposition by the U.S. Postal Service and a vain attempt at dissuasion by American Philatelic Society president Randy Neil.

While some European countries, Switzerland, for example, successfully have funded worthy causes with the sale of semipostals, many observers see the U.S. effort as another ill-conceived gimmick that will not produce the desired results, while draining a lot of money from stamp collectors.

Our neighbor to the south did issue semipostals many years ago. On Christmas Day, 1918, Mexico released two semipostal stamps to raise funds for the Mexican Red Cross. They are identified in the Scott catalog as B1 and B2, and can be found tucked unobtrusively between the listings for regular issues and the airmails.

Contrary to what is expected with the impending U.S. issue, the Mexican semipostals were low-budget productions. Two regular-issue stamps from the 1916 definitive series, Scott 614 and 622, were subjected to Mexico's time-honored process of overprinting.

Figure 1. Mexico issued its only semipostals Dec. 25, 1918. To produce the semipostals, two stamps from the 1916 definitive series were overprinted in red with a cross and with a premium of 3 centavos and 5c, respectively.

The 5-centavo stamp carried a premium of 3c and the 10c stamp had 5c added.

The imprints consist of a block cross plus the surcharge, fittingly printed in bright red.

Unused copies of the two semipostal stamps are illustrated in Figure 1.

I searched my extensive files, but no one seems to have reported any information as to the number that were overprinted and offered for sale or about how many were actually sold.

Plenty of empirical evidence suggests that the project was not very successful.

The stamps are not terribly difficult to find in the marketplace, although their catalog price has increased sharply from what it was when I began collecting Mexico in the mid-1960s.

In the Scott 1967 catalog, they were both listed at $1 used and $1.50 unused. The 1998 Scott catalog has them valued at $15 used and $14 and $17.50 unused, respectively.

But, I believe the used prices belie their actual scarcity in this condition if genuine. I would go so far as to suggest that many, if not most, used semipostal stamps bear favor cancels.

Further, in more than 30 years of specializing in Mexico and after pawing through thousands of covers at bourses, I have never found or seen a cover with these stamps that was not philatelically contrived.

I know of only one, offered in a Nick Follansbee sale a few years ago, that could be considered a bona fide nonphilatelic usage.

This cover was sent to Peru by way of New York, where it was censored. It had a presale estimate of $300 to $400. I do not know what the cover actually realized, but it does show what a knowledgeable dealer thinks such a cover might be worth.

My good friend, the late Jim Beal, owned a cover overfranked with both stamps that bore the corner card of the well-known Mexican stamp dealer, Eduardo Aguirre.

Aguirre apparently applied these stamps often to his business mail, such usages seem to be most of what we see in the marketplace. Even so, these covers fetch good prices when they are offered for sale. However, usage of semipostal stamps by the general public seems to have been virtually nil.

You can draw your own conclusion about Mexico's success with semipostals, but from my vantage point it doesn't appear to have been good.

This wasn't the end of Mexico's use of stamps to promote charitable purposes. A series of postal tax stamps issued from 1925 to 1947 focused on various worthy causes. See the listings at the end of the Mexico section in Scott, RA1 to RA19.

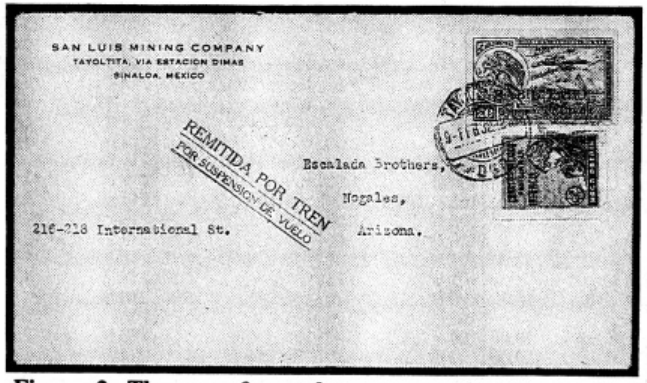


Figure 2. The use of postal tax stamps is obligatory, at least for a specified period of time. A Mexican postal tax stamp for child welfare appears below the airmail stamp on this cover mailed Feb. 9, 1932, to Nogales, Ariz.

In the majority of these emissions, use of the stamp was obligatory, at least for some specified period of time. Figure 2 shows a cover bearing one of the so-called Pro Infancia stamps issued to support child welfare work.

This Feb. 9, 1932, cover was sent to Nogales, Ariz. The service was reduced from airmail to surface (train) when the flight was canceled.

Compared to the semipostal (voluntary) approach, postal tax stamps appear to have been far more effective in generating funds for charities.

Still, there are many examples of letters posted without the required tax stamps. Such covers can be fun to search for when you know the time periods these tax stamps were supposed to be used.

We'll have to wait to see how the U.S. semipostal story plays out. Perhaps warm-hearted Americans will queue up to the post office counters and make the semipostal project a rousing success.

But if they do, it will be in stark contrast to what seems to have happened when the same opportunity was offered to Mexican postal patrons almost 80 years ago. ■

Stamps mark Mexican-American War battles

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

If you were to ask an American high schooler the significance of the words Padierna, Churubusco, Molina del Rey, and Chapultepec, I doubt if one in 50 could identify them as important battle sites in the Mexican-American conflict of 1846-48. Their Mexican counterparts would certainly score much better.

Despite the fact that the Mexican army was defeated in each of these engagements, their memories are cherished and celebrated as examples of a brave, though futile, defense against an aggressor nation.

As I write this column (September), it has been exactly 150 years since the final battle of that war took place near Mexico City.

The terms of settlement eventually forced Mexico to relinquish nearly half its northern area to a stronger, more determined neighbor bent on expanding its territorial borders from ocean to ocean.

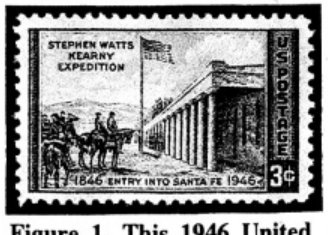


Figure 1. This 1946 United States 3¢ stamp related to the Mexican-American War is based on a painting titled *Capture of Santa Fe*.

Figure 2. This 1947 Mexican stamp depicts Juan Escutia, one of six young Mexican officers-in-training that leapt to their deaths from Chapultepec Castle rather than surrender during the last conflict of the Mexican-American War.

The Mexican-American War seems to be one historical event we Americans would just as soon forget. As near as I could determine, the United States has issued only one stamp with a feeble reference to this campaign of acquisition.

Figure 1 depicts this 3¢ stamp issued Oct. 16, 1946 (Scott 944). According to the inscription on the stamp, it commemorates the entry of Stephen Watts Kearny into Santa Fe (New Mexico).

Scott notes the design is taken from Kenneth M. Chapman's painting *Capture of Santa Fe*, but the word "capture" is conveniently omitted from the design text on the stamp.

Mexicans, on the other hand, feel no chagrin in commemorating a war that ultimately resulted in loss of a vast area that now constitutes Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, California and parts of other adjoining western states.

In 1947, on the 100th anniversary of the Battles of Chapultepec, Churubusco, and Molina del Rey, Mexico, issued seven regular and five airmail stamps to commemorate those events (830-36, C180-84).

Perhaps the best remembered conflict was the final one, the Battle of Chapultepec Castle.

This fortress, once the residence of viceroys, then housed the Mexican military college. When it became certain the American assault would succeed, six young Mexican officers-in-training, rather than surrender, gained immortality by leaping to their deaths from the ramparts of the fort.

One of them, Juan Escutia, shown on the stamp in Figure 2, is said to have wrapped himself in the Mexican flag before jumping.

Each of these brave young men is pictured on a stamp in the set, as are four generals who played prominent roles in the various battles. The Chapultepec fortress is shown on the 50-centavo airmail stamp pictured in Figure 3.

Figure 3. This 50-centavo Mexican airmail stamp shows Chapultepec Castle.

Gen. Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, who was president of Mexico at the time and commander-in-chief of the armies responsible for the defense of the capital, has been ignored on commemorative stamps. Many Mexicans of that era blamed him and his ineptness for the American victories.

This year, for the 150th anniversary of the war, Mexico has again used stamps to honor events of those final weeks preceding the surrender of the capital.

Four $2.30 stamps have been issued thus far. They bear the notation "in defense of the nation" and recollect four pivotal engagements: the Battle of Padierna, the Battle of Churubusco, the Battle of Molina del Rey and the Battle of Chapultepec Castle.

Each of the four stamps was released in August or September on the exact 150th anniversary of the battles they commemorate.

Figure 4 depicts the inside panel of an elegant and elaborate presentation folder prepared for each of the four stamps. The one shown is for the Chapultepec Battle stamp.

The folder features an enlarged facsimile of the stamp design featuring oval portraits of the six young men who jumped rather than risk capture. These portraits are overlaid on a scene depicting the battle that took place on the approaches to the castle.

Mexican history has bestowed upon the six officers the sacred mantle of "Ninos Heroes" (boy heroes). Their names are immortalized on monuments in a park at the foot of the Chapultepec Hill.

Beneath the facsimile is the stamp itself tied with a Sept. 13, 1997, first-day cancellation. Some other useful data beneath the stamp is no doubt too small to be read in the Figure 4 illustration.

This data reveals that Sergio Barranca designed the stamp on a computer; the colors are cyan, magenta, yellow and black; the size is 48 millimeters by 40mm; the perforations are 13½ gauge; it was offset printed on pregummed paper by Grupo Grafico Romo; and the quantity printed was 300,000 in sheets of 25.

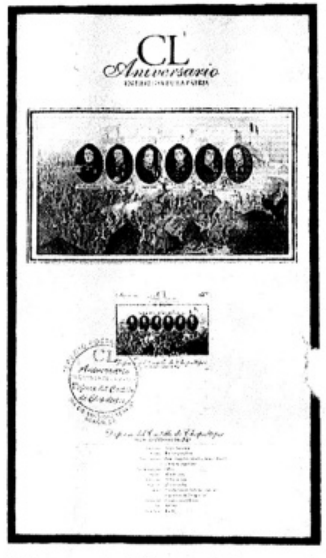


Figure 4. The inside panel of a folder prepared for a Mexican commemorative issued Sept. 13 of this year for the 150th anniversary of the battle at Chapultepec.

I found in examining these stamps under long-wave ultraviolet light that the Mexican coat of arms appears centered on each stamp in a light-active coating. It also can be discerned by holding the stamp to an oblique light source. This feature is alluded to in the descriptive data as a security measure. ■

Mexican fancy cancels came in many shapes

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

I find handstamped cancellations a most fascinating and interesting aspect of 19th-century Mexican philately. This is one of my own favorite fields, and I am constantly looking for new examples to add to an already sizable collection.

I recently heard that certain fancy cancellations on U.S. stamps and covers, for example the so-called Waterburys, are unique in the annals of philately for beauty and originality. Well, I'm not certain that a similar case can't be made for the cancellations used by Mexico up through the last century. After this brief review, see if you don't agree.

Before stamps, letters were postmarked in the office of origin, usually with the name of the town or city where the letter entered the mailstream. If the letter was unpaid, it also received a numerical due marking, often a "2" since this was the most common rate.

Figure 1. A postmark from Tepic, Mexico, has cursive lettering inside a rectangle.

Occasionally, the word "Franco" or "Franqueado" is found in the postmark. This denotes prepayment of postage, a rare occurrence, since most letters were sent collect.

Figure 2. One of five oval postmarks known from the Mexican town of Culiacan.

Figure 3. A wreath frames a "Franco" (prepayment) marking from Mazatlan.

Early Mexican postmarks took a myriad of shapes and forms. Straightlines, with or without outlines or boxes around them, were quite common.

Cursive lettering is often seen, too, as illustrated in the postmark of Tepic, a suboffice of the Guadalajara district, shown in Figure 1. This is not a particularly scarce marking, but it is attractive nevertheless because of its design and red color.

While circular datestamps were common in some of the large post offices, such as Mexico, Veracruz and Guadalajara, I have always been amazed at the number of different oval postmarks used by the Mexicans. They come large and small, with single and multiple surrounding lines, with and without inscribed dates and in general in any oval form you can imagine.

There must have been something especially captivating about the oval form to Mexican postmasters. In the 1840s and 1850s, for example, the town of Culiacan (Mazatlan district) employed no fewer than five different oval cancels, all but one of which were highly ornamented. I have a stampless cover bearing two of the five. Figure 2 shows one of the ovals whose use persisted into the stamp era.

Wreaths were another popular subject. Typical of these is the one shown in Figure 3. This postmark was used to indicate prepayment ("Franco") at Mazatlan.

This mark usually occurs in combination with one of the town name cancels and was current at the end of the stampless era and the beginning of the stamp era.

There were many other postmark designs that collectors find irresistible. The "tombstone" postmark for San Louis Potosi illustrated in Figure 4 is an example. Although it's not rare, who would pass on an opportunity to add a well-struck example to his or her collection of fancy postmarks?

Figure 4. A postmark shaped like a tombstone from San Louis Potosi.

One of my favorites is the oval cancellation illustrated in Figure 5. This is from the postal district of Toluca and is inscribed "Diligencias Generales/Linea de Toluca" (stagecoach line of Toluca).

The design shows a coach with the driver cracking his whip over the heads of his team of horses.

This cancel is tough to find in clear, well-struck condition. Prime examples do command high prices in the marketplace.

Figure 5. A stagecoach marking inside an oval from the Toluca district.

While we're on the subject of the diligencias, some of the cancellations used by this firm (Diligencias Generales) contained an eagle, representing the Mexican coat of arms. The eagle motif was invariably present, too, in devices used by government offices to mark mail.

The so-called "Cap of Liberty" surrounded by rays is used in a few postmark designs. The strike shown in Figure 6 is an example recorded used during the issue of 1868 at the office of Texcoco, near Mexico City. It is quite scarce.

Figure 6. A postmark from Texcoco shows a cap of liberty surrounded by rays.

Figure 7. A ribbon postmark from Ciudad Guzman on a 1-real Mexican stamp.

Town names in ribbons comprise another scarce category of fancy postmarks. Ciudad Guzman in the postal district of Guadalajara is a good example. A partial strike of this one on a 1-real stamp is shown in Figure 7.

Other ribbon names include Huamantla (Puebla district) and Amapa (Veracruz district).

Most of the fancy postmarks I have shown here had their greatest use during the mid-19th century, in the late stampless period and early stamp era.

As I have noted in previous columns in *Linn's*, many of the postmarking devices, particularly from small offices, continued to be used for many, many years. Some examples have been found on stamps and covers up to the turn of the century.

By the early 1870s, the Mexican post office undertook a program of postmark standardization, and much of the quaint and sometimes crude artwork in postmarking devices gradually disappeared.

Fortunately, enough material in the form of stampless letters, stamped covers and stamps themselves survives so that serious postmark collectors can assemble significant showings of these unusual markings.

While some of the more exotic markings may tear a hole in your wallet, there is a

(Continued on facing page)

Mexican fancy cancels

(From previous page)
good supply of beautiful strikes of some of the more common postmarks that can be had for a fraction of what U.S. material of comparable rarity might fetch.

If you like postmarks and cancellations, 19th-century Mexico has much to offer. ■

Flight cover mix-up; postal tax stamp usage

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

As I write this, it's hard to believe its almost December again, but here in northeast Ohio we've already had plenty of evidence that our long, and spectacular fall season is finally over. As it is my custom, this last column of the year will touch on several subjects and recognize a couple of readers who responded to columns I wrote in *Linn's*.

•

In my column in the March 24 *Linn's*, page 34, I related how some collectors obtained Mexican first-flight covers.

In that story, the addressed cover was sent, with appropriate remittance in the form of an international money order to the postmaster general for the desired service. In the noted example, it worked fine.

Marino Riosa of England read the article and sent me a related and amusing story.

In 1930, when international airmail service was established throughout the Americas, those enthusiastic individuals who sought and serviced first-flight covers faced many problems.

One problem was how to get outbound covers back. There were but a few foreign correspondents available to return flight covers sent to them, and many of the smaller towns or refueling stops had no one to contact.

So, an enterprising Mexican collector conceived the idea of preparing registered covers, using bogus names and addresses for the desired destination points, with instructions to return to sender promptly if not delivered.

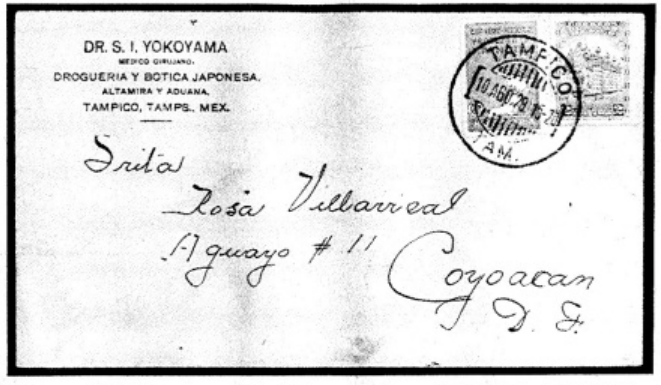


Figure 1. This domestic letter, postmarked Aug. 10, 1929, shows proper use of a Mexican postal tax stamp.

However, in one instance on a letter addressed to an intermediate stop in Colombia, when the addressee could not be found, it was forwarded to Bogota and advertised on a "Lista de Correos."

Then, a funny thing happened. Somebody with the same name as the bogus addressee stepped forward to claim the letter. He must have been surprised to find nothing inside but a stiffener.

He returned the cover to the post office with this statement on the flap: "Opened because it carried my first name and surname. Jose Fernandez."

Eventually, the cover made it back to the sender in a round-about way, with many more markings than he originally bargained for.

•

In my Sept. 22 column, page 32, on Mexico's flirtation with semipostal stamps, I illustrated a cover addressed to the United States (Nogales, Ariz.) to demonstrate use of one of the postal tax stamps issued by Mexico between 1925 and 1947.

A letter from my friend G.H. Davis, an avid collector of Mexican special delivery usages, suggests this example was probably not a proper use of the postal tax stamp.

It was his understanding that the postal tax was required on domestic mail only; letters abroad were not obliged to have them. I think Davis is right.

I have copies of quite a few official rate tariffs from the 1930s and 1940s and I went back to them to see what they say about this.

The 1941 tariff (No. 22) is the earliest one I have that mentions obligatory use of the postal tax stamps on domestic mail. Mention of the tax is absent from the rate charts for international mail.

I suspect that rules on tax stamp usage may have been handled earlier by way of supplementary orders.

In any event, a domestic cover with proper use of a tax stamp is illustrated here as Figure 1. The envelope is postmarked Aug. 10, 1929.

•

I was glad to see Mexico was the subject of the Kitchen Table Philately column in the Oct. 27 *Linn's*, page 34. E. Rawolik purchased and analyzed a mixture of modern Mexican stamps.

The mixture was advertised as containing large commemoratives, stamps issued to mark special events, anniversaries people and various subjects, but it also contained ordinary-issue stamps known as definitives.

The earliest-issued stamp in the mix was from 1988.

Two statements that appeared in that Kitchen Table Philately column prompt some comments here.

The reviewer reported that heavy cancels rendered a few stamps uncollectible. I can sympathize with that observation.

Figure 2. The stamp on the right on this Mexican Tourist pair shows the "N" for the denomination new pesos that was not erased when the plate was reworked.

Many times in this column I have lamented the difficulty in obtaining light but clear cancellation strikes on contemporary mail.

Much Mexican mail is still processed by hand, probably as a way to employ unskilled labor, and I suspect the pressure to process as fast as possible precludes any attempts to handstamp carefully.

Believe me, clear strikes are the exception rather than the rule.

The second point involves the low representation of commemorative stamps in the mixture.

Most issues of Mexican commemorative stamps are limited to printings of 300,000 copies. For a country of its size and population, this is really a small number.

I suspect commemoratives do receive wide distribution, so the period of their availability from post office windows is probably short, and this can explain why so few turn up in on-paper mixtures gleaned from commercial establishments.

The Kitchen Table Philately report noted that lookalike stamps can actually be different. The example given is where the value is expressed in N$ units (for new pesos) or simply with a $.

The N$ symbol was in general use when the new Tourist definitives first appeared a few years ago. The "N" later was dropped as part of the peso symbol.

An interesting error occurred on one of the Tourist stamps when the folks at the Mexican security printer,

T.I.E.V., were revising the printing plates from the old to the new value designation, missed one of the "Ns." This anomaly occurs on the 3.40p Sinaloa stamp of the Tourist series.

Figure 2 shows a pair of these stamps, one with, and one without the "N."

According to Wenceslao Maldonado, a Mexican dealer, the error occurs in position 37 of the second plate. He also estimates that 15,000 panes were printed with this error.

•

As I was putting the final touches on this column, I received a review copy of Nick Follansbee's new book, *A Catalogue of the Stamps of Mexico, 1856-1900.* It looks like a fine resource, especially for the intermediate to advanced collector of the classic issues.

If you are scouting about for a Christmas present to give yourself, you can't go wrong here. It's $35 postpaid in the United States. Contact Nick at Box 3210, Ashland, OR 97520.

I plan to review the book in detail next year.

•

In December 1996, I mentioned my project to produce a listing of postal rates over the years for Mexico. Some progress was made but I am still missing some of the official tariffs for the early part of this century. If you can help, please contact me in care of *Linn's*, Box 29, Sidney, OH 45365.

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Finally, I wish everyone the best for the holidays and success in the coming new year. May you have as much fun with this wonderful hobby of ours as I have had over the years. ■

Mexican postcard mystery from 1911 race

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

I start off the new year with what I hope will be a reader participation project.

The postcard illustrated in Figures 1 (front) and 2 (reverse) has been on my desk for some time now, awaiting what I expected would be a full explanation of its mysteries and an all-revealing column for *Linn's*.

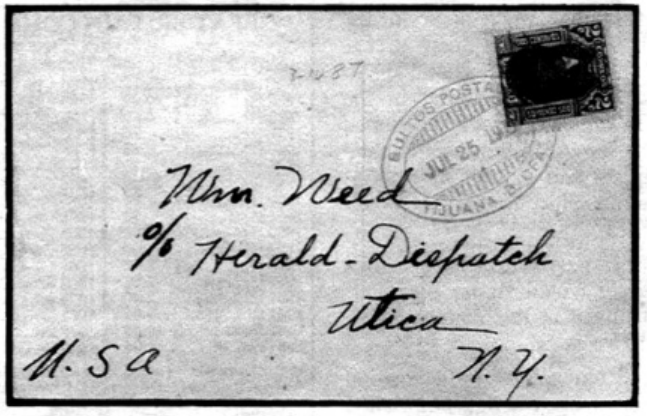


Figure 1. This postcard from Mexico is addressed to a Utica, N.Y., newspaper. It bears a 1910 Independence 2-centavo stamp with a black blot on it and a July 25, 1911, red oval cancel reading "Bultos Postales/Tijuana B. Cfa."

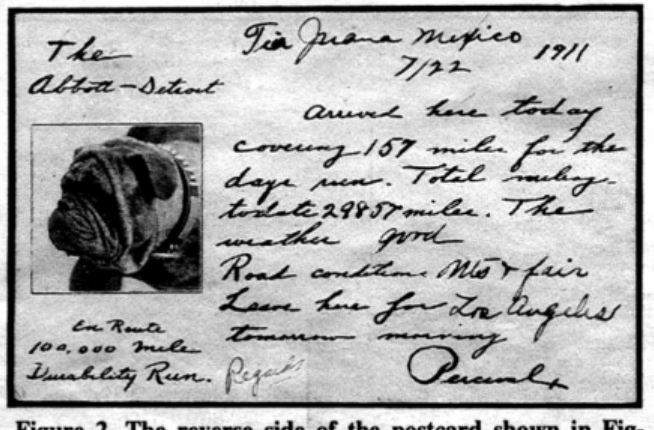


Figure 2. The reverse side of the postcard shown in Figure 1 depicts a bulldog and contains information about the Abbott-Detroit 100,000-mile durability run. Some of the information, including the signature, is preprinted.

I retrieved this interesting item from a dealer's cheap cover box at a local show. Like many of my fellow columnists, I scour the stamp shows not only for items that will fit into my various collections and exhibits, but also for my monthly columns for *Linn's*.

What this card appears to be is a brief progress report to a journalist from an automobile driver competing in a race or an endurance run in 1911. He writes from Tijuana, Mexico, just across the border from San Diego, Calif.

The card is addressed to W(illia)m Weed, c/o Herald Dispatch, Utica, N.Y.

It is franked with the 2-centavo value of the 1910 Independence issue of Mexico (Scott 311).

The stamp is canceled with a solid black circle about 8 millimeters in diameter and is tied with a red oval cancel inscribed: "Bultos Postales/ Tijuana. B. Cfa." and the date, "Jul 25 1911."

When I first saw this card, it occurred to me that the black blot might be some sort of precancel. Yet, a thorough search of my files and references yielded nothing to support this theory. Also, this is a curious use of the Bultos postmark, normally used on parcels and bulky packages.

Most of the message on the reverse side of the card appears to have been preprinted, presumably to facilitate the dispatch of multiple postcard reports.

Even the signature, "Percival" was printed beforehand.

This is probably not clear from the illustration, but the origin, date, mileages, weather and road conditions, and the next destination are all handwritten by the sender.

My curiosity was piqued by this message, and I spent a few hours at our local library searching for information that might reveal what this Abbott-Detroit 100,000-mile durability run was all about. I found some references to early races and distance runs of that era, but nothing tied into this particular item.

And, what about the bulldog on the reverse of the card? Was that symbolic? As a youngster I remember the Mack school buses our district owned had a hood ornament resembling a bulldog. Could the test vehicle here have been an early prototype of that firm?

The information reported on the card poses some more interesting questions.

Where did the 157-mile leg of the journey of that day begin? If Percival was traveling east to west, it was probably somewhere near Calexico or Mexicali.

Also, how had he accumulated the nearly 30,000 miles logged up to that time? Certainly not with a simple transcontinental crossing. At the rate he was traveling, it would take him almost two years to reach the goal of 100,000 miles.

So we have many unanswered questions, both philatelic and historical. Can *Linn's* readers help? I would be delighted if someone could shed some light on these matters.

Of special interest to me is the black blot cancel like the one seen on this card. It is the only example I have encountered for this time period.

Any thoughts on the use of a Bultos package cancel on postcards or information on the Abbott-Detroit durability run would be welcome, too.

Write me c/o Linn's Stamp News, Box 29, Sidney, OH 45365.

I'll do a follow-up column if I receive significant replies.

•

I want to pay tribute to an old friend who passed away at the end of November. Charles W. Brock, who was 89 when he died, began collecting Mexico seriously in 1937 and joined MEPSI (Mexico-Elmhurst Philatelic Society International) soon after it opened its membership to collectors outside the local area.

One of his many contributions to the MEPSI cause was a translation from the French, with help from the late Jim Beal, of the chapters in the Smeth and Fayolle book, *Les Premieres Emissions du Mexique (1856-1874)*, dealing with the counterfeits of Mexico's 1856 and 1861 issues.

Published in 1954 in *Mexicana*, the MEPSI quarterly, the translation was of great help to serious collectors of those issues.

Brock was a joiner, and proudly maintained his membership in the Texas Philatelic Association for more than 70 years. He held every elective office of that group and chaired its conventions seven times.

I remember Brock best as a gravelly voiced Texas gentleman who relished attending philatelic meetings and get-togethers just to visit with his many friends. He collected Mexico actively until the very end and was partial to the classic issues.

Brock willingly shared his considerable knowledge of Mexican philately, and during the many years we corresponded gave me constant encouragement for these articles. I will miss him. ■

New Follansbee catalog of Mexico

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

I noted the arrival of a review copy of Nick Follansbee's new *A Catalogue of the Stamps of Mexico, 1856-1900* in my column in the Dec. 29, 1997, *Linn's*, page 40. I promised to review it in detail later.

I will put my final verdict right up front in this column.

If you love Mexican stamps, especially those of the 19th century, do not hesitate to acquire this splendid resource immediately.

For the beginning, intermediate or advanced collector of Mexico, it's the best thing to come along in years. Your $35 (cost postpaid, see address given near the end of this article) will be repaid many times over with the knowledge gained from poring over its pages.

And now for the details. Mechanically, it is printed in an 8½-inch by 11-inch format on reasonably heavy stock bound in a card cover. There are 122 pages of clearly printed text. The illustrations are good, not outstanding, but certainly more than adequate for the purposes intended.

The organization of the book is, as one would expect, chronological by issue. It begins with a short introduction followed by an explanation of the postal district system and the overprints, so necessary and important for the intelligent collecting of the classic stamps of Mexico.

Follansbee then sets forth his own logical numbering system, which includes more major listings than Scott. A cross reference key to the Scott system is given.

Next, he discusses the pricing bases, which are derived from his own long experience in the stamp business together with input from many other specialists.

We then get to the meat and potatoes of the catalog — listings by issue, of the stamps and their varieties, with the values assigned to them.

In my particular area of interest, the stamps of the first design, the stamps are priced by district and by major color varieties. A pricing table for the "splits" (fractions of higher value stamps used for franking when correct values were unavailable) is included. There's also a table listing the premiums that can be added for certain common plate flaws.

Twenty-one pages are devoted to the issues of the monarchy (Eagles and Maximilian heads), again with tables pricing the stamps by district.

While the pricing is not as detailed as that found in Leo Corbett's *The Imperial Eagles of Maximilian's Mexico* (1993), it would be more than enough for the average specialist.

The pricing by district tables continue for the various stamp issues until the 1884 Hidalgos, when the practice of overprinting control numbers and names ended.

To my knowledge, this is the first time such detailed pricing has been attempted since the Aguiree catalogs (in Spanish) were last published in Mexico about 40 years ago.

The last four definitive issues of the 19th century are covered in useful detail, especially when it comes to distinguishing some of the tricky papers used in their production.

Finally, the catalog closes with the traditional back-of-the-book issues (Porte de Mar and Officials).

The various rare provisional stamps for which Mexico is famous are included in the catalog where they belong from a chronological standpoint.

The confusing Guadalajara provisionals are organized and treated in an expanded and wonderfully logical fashion.

Tables and prices constitute only a small part of the information contained in the catalog. Abundant notes are interspersed among the pricing tables that explain, illuminate and caution the collector.

The common forgeries of all the early issues are described, allowing the user to make a coarse sorting of questionable items that might be in a collection.

Follansbee also sprinkles in a good measure of anecdotal information, making his book much more readable than a catalog. Frankly, I had a tough time putting it down once I got into it.

It is obvious from what I have written here that I find the catalog worthy. It represents years of work and an investment of effort that may never be fully repaid by sales.

Others are also impressed by the catalog. The latest sale catalog from Pyramid Auctions (Roberto Liera) that I received a month ago already contains valuations taken from the Follansbee catalog. When dealers climb on the bandwagon, it's a good sign.

If you wish to order a copy, write to Nick Follansbee, Box 3210, Ashland, OR 97520. Again, the aforementioned $35 price includes shipping and postage.

There is more good news. The comprehensive stamp album for Mexican stamps designed by Follansbee and Mark Johnston and keyed to this catalog is also ready and available for purchase.

I plan to discuss this album in my next column. ■

New album for Mexico's 1856-1900 stamps

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

In last month's column (*Linn's*, Feb. 23, page 26), I reviewed the new Nick Follansbee *Catalogue of the Stamps of Mexico, 1856-1900*. I hope anyone who is hooked on the classic issues acquired this new tool to help with the complexities of those early stamps.

This month, as promised, I will review a companion project of Follansbee and graphics designer/publisher Mark Johnston, a new stamp album for Mexican stamps.

This album perhaps breaks new ground in the area of philatelic accessories. As a highly specialized product aimed at a limited market, it is produced on order.

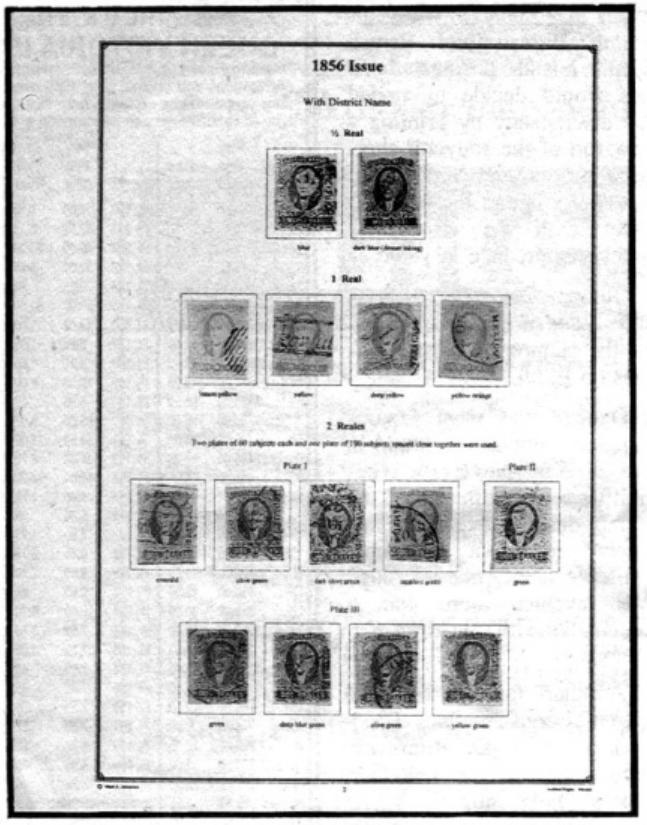
The design and layout reside in computer disk memory and are brought to bear only after an order has been received.

When that happens, album pages are generated with a high-speed laser jet printer.

This scheme has advantages.

It avoids the heavy initial expense of book production — a first-edition inventory.

It also permits the flexibility of various page formats geared to the wishes of the buyer, such as centered or offset borders, and, in the case of the offset borders, punched or unpunched pages.



The initial page for Mexico's 1856 issue from Nick Follansbee and Mark Johnston's new album for Mexico.

The pages are available in two parts: a basic album (66 pages) with spaces for more than 775 varieties of the stamp issues between 1856 and 1900, and specialized supplementary pages.

There are 58 supplementary pages for more than 400 of the lesser varieties of color, paper, plate flaws and perforations.

Blank pages with and without issue headers also are available.

I judge that most serious collectors wanting a comprehensive showing of the 19th-century issues will find the basic album quite adequate.

The specialized supplement contains spaces for many of the rarest Mexican classics, and most of these would no doubt remain unfilled even for the most assiduous collector.

The page layout of this album is clear and tasteful.

The example shown nearby depicts the initial page for the 1856 stamps — my field of interest. It has spaces for all of the major color varieties for the ½-real, 1r and 2r stamps. It also notes the plate numbers for the important 2r varieties.

Each box is numbered according to the listings in the Follansbee catalog.

Also, the page includes brief descriptions of color and characteristics of the stamps to be mounted.

The pages are numbered unobtrusively at the bottom. This feature will help those who purchase the supplementary pages to collate them properly into the basic album.

For example, the basic album page numbered 39 is to be followed by supplement pages 39A, 39B, 39C, etc.

In my 1856 issue area, a supplementary page, 3A, was made for the mesh-paper varieties of late printings and two errors, and 3B for varieties involving the plate cracks, double transfers and re-entries.

A similar extra page exists for 1861 plate varieties.

Another example of the typical expanded coverage this album offers for stamp varieties is in the 1874-83 Hidalgo Profile issue. Scott covers this group with 18 major varieties on a half page of its specialized album.

But, the story of these stamps is more complex and deserves a more logical development.

There were four distinct emissions: stamps with overprinted control numbers spaced wide apart (1874-78); those with numbers close together at bottom (1878); numbers close together at the top (1878-83); and those without numbers (1883). There were other variables, too, such as paper and watermarks.

In the Follansbee/Johnston album, the collector is challenged with nine pages for mounting these varieties.

Some of these varieties can be rather dear if purchased from a well-informed dealer, but many can be acquired inexpensively, especially if the collector is willing to do his homework, knows what he is looking for, and has the patience to search for them in circuits or poorly sorted dealer stocks.

The catalog provides a user-friendly means to organize and mount a moderately specialized collection of Mexican stamps without going into deep specialization of any single issue.

And, I found the notation and brief descriptions well chosen and helpful.

There is one minor distraction. The set of pages I received, offset and drilled for a three-ring binder, had a slight horizontal curl for about an inch in at both the top and bottom of the sheets so they do not lie perfectly flat.

Johnston informed me that the paper he uses, a high-cotton- content archival stock, takes a bit of a "set" from the temperatures inherent in the printing process.

He is working to resolve this anomaly. I found that by drawing the paper over the sharp edge of my desk, this curl could be eliminated. It is also mitigated by using page protectors.

For those of you interested in purchasing the album pages, the basic set is $65, postpaid in the United States, and the supplementary pages are $70. Blank pages with border are 10 for $2.50.

Make your check out to Mark F. Johnston and send the order to Archive Philatelic Publications, 5728 Main St., No. 133, Springfield, OR 97478. Allow a couple of weeks for delivery and you will have the closest thing there is to a Mexican custom-made stamp album.

The bottom line, in my view, is that is a thoughtful, well-crafted product that will serve a serious fan of 19th-century Mexican stamps well indeed. A hearty thumbs-up from this corner. ■

Details and postcards from endurance run

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Thanks to input from several obliging *Linn's* readers most of the questions raised in my Jan. 26 column (page 26) on the Abbott-Detroit 100,000-mile durability run have been answered.

In that column, I featured a postcard sent from Tijuana, Mexico, in 1911 to a newspaper in Utica, N.Y. The front of the card is shown here as Figure 1.

The card is franked with the 2-centavo stamp of the 1910 Independence issue of Mexico (Scott 311). The stamp is canceled with a solid black circle and tied by a red oval cancel reading: "Bultos Postales/Tijuana. B. Cfa." and the date, "Jul 25 1911."

The card also bore a preprinted message and the printed signature of "Percival."

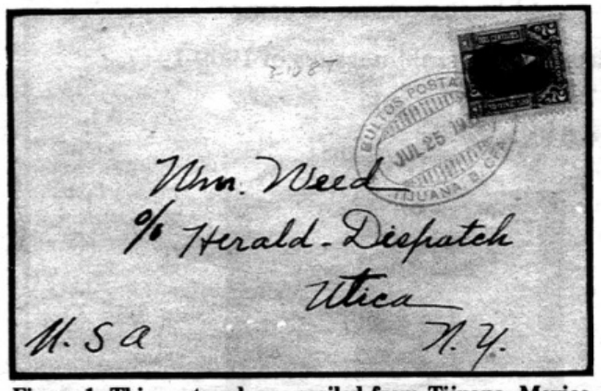


Figure 1. This postcard was mailed from Tijuana, Mexico, during a 1910-11 endurance run across North America sponsored by Abbott-Detroit Consolidated Car Co.

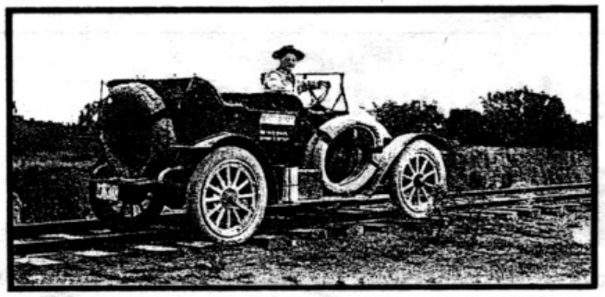


Figure 2. Charles G. Percival at the wheel of his car "Bull Dog" in 1911 riding a railroad line in west Texas.

Jim Elliott of Richfield, Minn., both a car enthusiast and stamp collector, wrote to tell me that Abbott-Detroit was one of many short-lived automobile manufacturers that produced cars prior to 1920.

From a photocopied page of the *Standard Catalog of American Cars, 1805-1942*, I learned that Charles G. Percival took a stock Abbott-Detroit Model A touring car and embarked on what was supposed to be a 100,000-mile endurance run.

Elliott provided other leads for information that I pursued.

Eventually, I amassed more than enough background to follow up on this fascinating story of typically American determination and derring-do.

Percival, who was well known as a publicist, author, and adventurer, began his journey in Kansas City, Mo., in July 1910.

The Abbott-Detroit Consolidated Car Co. sponsored this undertaking as a means of promoting sales of its automobiles.

Percival gave the name "Bull Dog" to his car as recognition of its mechanical strength and durability. That explains the picture of the bulldog on the postcard illustrated in the January column.

For the balance of 1910 and well into 1911, Percival, his traveling companion, George Brown, and the Bull Dog motored extensively throughout the eastern half of the United States, stopping at towns and cities to show off their intrepid convertible-top touring car.

In the summer of 1911, they crossed the border into Mexico and visited Monterrey. From Monterrey, their travel plan led to El Paso, but the journey proved to be more difficult than expected.

A cloudburst had washed out the road along their chosen route, so they found a railroad, straddled the rails and proceeded on what must have been an uncomfortable, bumpy ride.

They frequently had to abandon the rails quickly when trains approached.

Figure 2 depicts a photocopy of a photograph of Percival riding the rails.

Fearing arrest for interrupting so many train schedules, they took off cross country, got stuck in a sandy desert some 60 miles southeast of El Paso, used all their water and almost perished from heat exhaustion and thirst, but were eventually rescued by U.S. cavalry forces.

Not long after that they reached Tijuana, Mexico, from where the postcard I have was mailed. They, then, motored up the west coast to Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, and boarded the ferry to Skagway for a side trip into Alaska.

Once again, they took to the rails, using the road bed of the White Pass and Yukon Route Railroad and then the Canadian post roads across the tundra to reach Carmacks, a fur trading outpost about 200 miles north of Skagway.

It was an arduous journey, and extraordinary that it was accomplished without serious mechanical problems.

From there, the Bull Dog retraced its route back to the United States, crossed the Rockies eastward as winter set in, and arrived in New York in time for the auto show in Madison Square Garden in January 1912.

Percival's exploits were the talk of the show.

He also retold his experiences in at least two small booklets, *Lost on the Desert* and *Motoring in the Arctic Regions*, published by the Abbott-Detroit folks as sales promotions. The illustration in Figure 2 is from *Lost on the Desert*.

My references end with the New York show, leaving one major question unanswered. Did Percival ever achieve his goal of 100,000 miles? By that time, he probably had logged about 35,000 miles on the Bull Dog.

On his best days, he would average 100 to 150 miles, so simple arithmetic tells us that he needed another 500 days of strenuous driving to get there. I'm inclined to believe the 100,000 was a sales gimmick.

Figure 3. The front of a postcard mailed from Charles G. Percival's 1910-11 endurance run depicting Main Street in Tijuana, Mexico, including the post office.

Whether he did or didn't is perhaps not too important; he unquestionably demonstrated the strength and durability of a 1910 automobile that carried a factory price tag of $1,500.

Incidentally, the Abbott-Detroit Co. underwent several ownership changes, moved to an expensive factory site in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1916, and when sales income could not keep pace with manufacturing costs, declared bankruptcy in 1918.

My thanks, too, to Joan Klimchalk of Dearborn Heights, Mich., who made a special trip to the Henry Ford Museum Archives to dig out some useful information for this story.

On the philatelic side, fellow Mexican-Elmhurst Philatelic Society International (MEPSI) member Michael Hart of Burlingame, Calif., wrote that he has two postcards in his extensive card collection with identical postal markings (except for date) as the card shown in my article.

Figure 3 illustrates the face of one of Hart's cards. It shows Tijuana's Main Street with the post office (Oficina de Correos) on the right.

Another card was reported by my friend Karl Schimmer. Including mine, all four cards bear dates between July 20 and July 27, 1911.

Since there seems to be no philatelic inspiration involved — all are in different handwriting to diverse addresses — we theorize the "bultos" (packages) cancel may have been used provisionally owing to damage or loss of the regular one.

Hart remembers seeing two or three other cards with similar markings but cannot recall the dates of the handstamps. Nor has he seen any other examples of the black blot killer usage except these.

Can any reader produce a letter cover in this time frame with this combination of postal markings? It would help support our theory.

This closes out the Bull Dog story for now. For me, it really turned into a fascinating study of an all but forgotten odyssey that no doubt captured the imagination of thousands of Americans during the infancy of automobile travel.

Unquestionably, Percival's accomplishment, even though he may have fallen short of his announced objective, was remarkable. Considering the logistics, road conditions, and mechanical sophistication of that era, it is a wonder he achieved as much as he did.

For those who enjoy a good chase, I can't help but believe there ought to be more Bull Dog reports out there in postcard stocks. Perhaps a few were mailed from his Alaskan excursion. Let me know if you find any by sending details to me c/o Linn's Stamp News, Box 29, Sidney, OH 45365. ■

New Mexican maritime mail book published

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Within the past 12 months serious collectors of Mexico have been generously favored with important and worthwhile literature to enhance their knowledge and collecting enjoyment.

First there was Nick Follansbee's definitive work, *The Stamps of the Mexican Revolution 1913-1916*. This fine book, already out of print, leads the collector through one of the treacherous mine fields in Mexican philately.

No sooner had that book been absorbed when Follansbee's *A Catalogue of the Stamps of Mexico, 1856-1900* appeared on the scene.

This wonderful new resource was quickly followed by a specialized album for 19th-century Mexican stamps, edited by Follansbee and published by Mark Johnson. All of these have been reviewed in previous Mexico columns in *Linn's*.

Now we have another, and I dislike overusing the phrase, monumental work focusing on another complex and neglected area in Mexican philately. The new book is *Mexican Maritime Mail, A Postal History from Colonial Times to the 20th Century*, written jointly by two experienced and capable collectors, Karl H. Schimmer and John M. Heath.

Both Schimmer and Heath have collected and studied this area for decades.

With a field so vast and complex, I was anxious to know how the material would be organized. The authors divided everything into 15 chapters beginning with the Spanish Colonial period and carrying through to the end of the 19th century, when Mexico joined the Universal Postal Union in 1897 and the transfer of overseas mail became simpler.

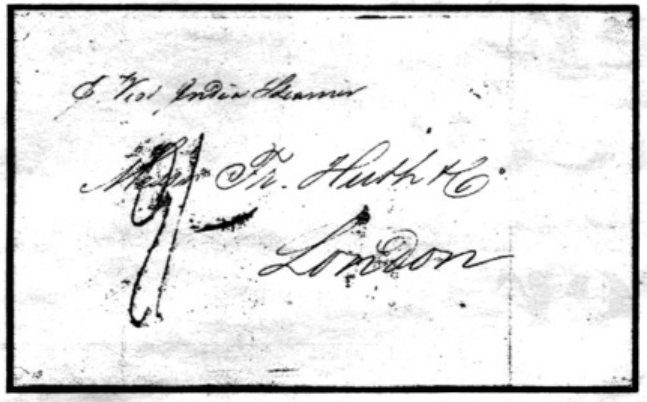


Figure 1. The front of an 1846 seamail letter sent Dec. 7, 1846, from Tabasco, Mexico, to London, England.

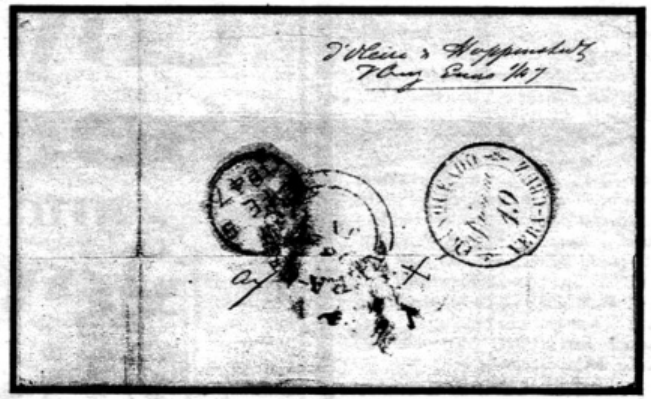


Figure 2. The reverse of the Figure 1 cover, which traveled from Tabasco to Veracruz and then on to London.

James Bendon of Limassol, Cyprus, published this book. As those familiar with Bendon's publications can surmise, it is absolutely first-rate. It is printed on coated stock in a hard, cloth binding that should withstand the rigors of regular use.

The attractive dust cover shows a reproduction of a mid-19th-century lithographed view of Veracruz harbor with the fortress of San Juan de Ulua in the background.

The end papers are facsimiles of 16th-century maps.

Eight color plates show covers that are scarce overseas uses. The book also includes 300 other illustrations of covers, postmarks and relevant archival material.

In the early chapters, you learn how Great Britain, France, the United States and Germany were involved in the transport of Mexican overseas mail.

These channels were essential to local businessmen and commercial interests because Mexico never really had a mercantile marine fleet capable of carrying mail until almost 1900.

The rating and route analysis of pre-UPU covers to and from Mexico has rarely been simple, but this book will help for a number of reasons.

First, a great deal of widely dispersed information on the subject has been gathered in one spot.

Second, among the wealth of covers and postmarks illustrated, you are likely to find an example similar to one you are attempting to resolve.

The cover illustrated in Figures 1 and 2, which is from my own collection, is similar to the kind of material you will find explained by Schimmer and Heath.

Figure 1 shows the front of this seamail letter sent from Mexico to London, England. The reverse is pictured in Figure 2.

The letter was mailed from Tabasco Dec. 7, 1846. The forwarder, d'Oleire and Hoppenstedt, interceded it at Veracruz, paying Mexican postage on Dec. 19 and depositing it with the British consular post office for transfer to London via (as it is written on the cover) "West India steamer" on Jan. 1, 1847.

It was received in London Feb. 6 with 9/- due.

In later chapters of the book, you are enlightened about Mexico's maritime mail contracts, special services on the east and west coasts; the work of the Wells, Fargo agencies in Mexico; the "Porte de Mar" system used just before UPU membership; and the role forwarding agents played in the movement of international mail.

Five useful appendixes round out the book. They deal with postal tariffs, U.S. ship letter rates, British and French due markings, currency conversions, and ships and shipping lines that carried Mexican mail.

There are still areas requiring further study. But as Gene Tinsley points out in his forward to this book: "The gap which existed for Mexican maritime mail has now been filled for the first time by Karl and John. No doubt more on the subject will be discovered and reported in the future, but this book will be the authoritative study for years to come."

I concur and am happy to give it my highest recommendation.

The book is not cheap. It is priced at $97.50 plus $2 postage to the United States from James Bendon, Box 6484, 3307 Limassol, Cyprus.

However, if you have 19th-century maritime covers to and from Mexico and have not yet figured them all out, this book may not only help you make sense of them but also may repay its cost many times over in saving time and money with library visits and photocopy costs.

Dale Pulver's *Introduction to the Stamps of Mexico* is based on approximately 40 of his Mexico columns. The book is available from dealers or from the publisher, Linn's Stamp News, Box 29, Sidney, OH 45365. For ordering information, see the "Linn's Library" near the back of this issue. ■

Four types of Mexico's Klussendorf stamps

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Just two years ago (*Linn's*, June 24, 1996, page 34), I wrote an article about Mexico's first experiment with printed-to-order franking labels that the Mexicans call "eitquetas para franqueo."

You could obtain these machine-vended stamps in Mexico by putting coins into a machine containing a coil of gummed labels and by punching in the denominations desired (within certain limits). And then out would come stamps ready to be affixed to a letter.

These first machines were made in Germany by the Klussendorf firm, and, so by custom, the stamps it produced are referred to as Klussendorfs. Later on, Swiss machines printed similar stamps known as Framas.

I will confine this column to the Klussendorf adhesives.

When I wrote the June 1996 column, I had little information on the stamps themselves. In fact, I owned only two examples, both of which were illustrated.

Most of the information reported came from articles by Walter Widmaier and Guillermo Wilkins in *Mexicana*, the quarterly journal of the Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International. These articles focused on the machines and their use.

This column discusses the stamps in greater detail.

A few weeks after my June 1996 article appeared,

Figure 1. The first type of Mexico's Klussendorf stamps is orange and brown with 16 horizontal lines in the value field.

Wilkins sent me 16 examples of Klussendorfs with a brief note stating that they were all the different types he could find during the few years the Klussendorf machines were in operation.

Such a group would permit a much more comprehensive study of the various characteristics of these interesting labels, so I set them aside for future reference.

Figure 2. The second type of Mexico's Klussendorf stamps is the same orange and brown colors as the first but is self-adhesive.

Meanwhile, Paul Franklin, of Corvallis, Ore., who alerted me to the Klussendorfs in the first place, received a similar set from Wilkins and began to probe their fine points. He, in turn, sent his set to Cal Whitsel of McAllen, Texas, who undertook a meticulous analysis of their characteristics.

Whitsel recently sent me a copy of a report on his findings. This report may appear in a future issue of *Mexicana*.

Whitsel's classifications probably represent overkill for all but the most avid students of the hobby. However, he did highlight some differences that should interest the ordinary collector.

I previously had grouped my Klussendorfs into three types. Whitsel prefers four types to describe them, and I will defer to him because his reasoning is sound.

Figure 1 shows a type I. The design is printed in shades of orange and brown. There are 16 horizontal lines in the field designated for the value imprint, which the machine applies with a carbon ribbon. The lettering is about 2 millimeters tall, and the overall dimensions of the label are slightly more than 37mm by 19.5mm.

The type II stamp, and there was only one in the group, is also brown/orange. It is a self-adhesive label with a peelable back. It is illustrated in Figure 2.

Type II also has 16 lines in the background, but the printing is grainy and the line spacing somewhat irregular. Notice, too, that the lettering is smaller, about 1.5mm tall.

Types III and IV strips are printed in shades of gray and dark blue. Figure 3 shows type III. There are only 13 lines in the value field, and the eagle's beak is not so sharply hooked as in the type I and II stamps. The lettering is slightly smaller than type I (1.7mm).

Although measurable, the differences between type III and type IV are small and probably insignificant to most collectors. The type IV designs are about a half millimeter taller than type III, and the type IV paper is about 0.001 inches thicker.

There are discernible differences in colors and their intensity, especially with the gray/blue labels. Whether this was intentional or a random printing variable is not known.

The gum on all 16 items is glossy, although on the two type III labels it is a bit less shiny.

All the labels respond to longwave ultraviolet light. Generally, the brown/orange labels, with three exceptions, show yellow luminescence, while the gray/blue labels react in shades of tan.

Two brown/orange labels glowed bluish, and the self-adhesive label behaved like the gray/blue labels.

As I noted in my first article, I suspect most collectors have overlooked these

Figure 3. The third type of Mexico's Klussendorf stamps is gray and dark blue with 13 horizontal lines in the value field.

adhesives because they do not look like postage stamps. But, as Widmaier and others have argued so convincingly, they truly belong in the realm of postage stamps.

Furthermore, none of the regular catalogers or album makers, with the exception of Lighthouse, have paid much attention to them, either.

This situation can dampen the enthusiasm and demand for a given issue.

I am interested in reports of legitimate uses. I thought there might be some response after my first article, but I did not receive a single reply.

As far as is known, the period of use was from April 1990 to probably about the beginning of 1995, when the era of new peso designation, N$, ended. The machines were designed to issue stamps in old pesos and apparently were not modified for the new rates.

Everything we know suggests that Klussendorf machine-vended stamps are scarce both in their unused state and on cover. There were, after all, only four machines used during the early years of the test.

I would be grateful to hear from *Linn's* readers who might have covers bearing Klussendorf stamps, or from those who have searched for them with or without success.

Write me in care of Linn's, Box 29, Sidney, OH 45365. And include some photocopies if you can. I promise to answer all replies and will circulate information if enough is forthcoming. ■

Pancho Villa's reign led to 1914-15 overprints

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Seventy-five years ago this month, on July 20, 1923, to be precise, one of Mexico's most famous revolucionarios, Francisco "Pancho" Villa, met his death in a hail of bullets as he and his bodyguards left Parral, Chihuahua, on his way home to his hacienda at Canutillo, some 45 miles to the southeast.

I do not know what the Mexicans will make of this anniversary. His exploits and memory were downplayed officially for years, though he was immensely popular with the masses.

Only recently has he gained a modicum of recognition at high government levels.

But it is an opportune time to review the minor and interesting impact he had on the postal affairs of Mexico.

First, a historical recap. Villa was born Doroteo Arango, oldest son of a large and poor Mexican sharecropper's family. The father died young, leaving the family to fend for itself.

In the course of defending his sister's honor against his employer's unsolicited advances, Arango shot the assailant and was obliged to flee to the mountains. Subsequently, he alternated between episodes of banditry and civilized employment and took the name of Francisco Villa after his biological grandfather.

When Francisco Madera opposed the repressive and favor-dispensing government of Porfirio Diaz, Villa perceived an ally with whom he could identify and who could rectify the many injustices he had suffered.

Figure 1. This 1914 5-centavo Mexican stamp from the Transitory issue was overprinted to celebrate Pancho Villa's victory at Torreon, Coahuila.

He joined the movement and within a short time became one of the strongest and most feared leaders of revolutionary forces.

Villa formed the Division del Norte in September 1913 and proceeded to outwit Federal forces garrisoned at Ciudad Juarez, which he seized in November 1913.

His exploits so captured the admiration of observers on both sides of the border that the Mutual Film Corp. of Hollywood offered $25,000 for rights to film battle action, which Villa quickly accepted.

He even agreed to reschedule hangings from 5 a.m. to 7 a.m. and conduct battles during daylight hours for better lighting conditions.

Hundreds of feet of documentary takes, plus some staged footage led to *The Life of General Villa*, which opened at the Lyric Theater in New York City, May 9, 1914.

But a month before the film's opening, Villa had fought and won another and perhaps his greatest victory, the retaking of Torreon, Coahuila, April 2.

The battle lasted for several days, with substantial losses on both sides. But whoever held Torreon, the junction of railroads running east and west and north and south, controlled central Mexico.

In honor of the event, the Transitory stamps (Scott 354-60) were overprinted with the words: "Victoria de/TORREON/ABRIL 2-1914."

The overprints were prepared and applied by the Ellis Brothers Printing Co. in El Paso, and the printings were very limited, amounting to only a few sheets of the common values, and half sheets of the 20 centavo and 50c.

Figure 1 shows the 5c stamp, the most common, of which 10 sheets are believed to have been prepared.

Scarcity and collector demand has prompted some deceptive forgeries of this overprint. Buyers should be cautious.

The Constitutionalist forces, as those headed by Venustiano Carranza and Villa were called, continued their push south, with Villa capturing Zacatecas after soundly defeating Federal forces commanded by Victoriano Huerta.

Figure 2. The monogram on this Mexican stamp overprinted in 1915 is known as the "Villa" monogram.

However, Villa had a falling out with Carranza, titular head of the Constitutionalist movement, whom he considered too ambitious.

The break was complete when Carranza bestowed the honor of occupying Mexico City on his own favorite, Gen. Alvaro Obregon.

But Villa was not yet through. His enemy was no longer the Federals (they had been defeated), but the Carrancistas, as he called the followers of Carranza. And he fought them savagely.

Teaming up with Emiliano Zapata, Villa occupied the Mexican capital in December 1914 and early January 1915, supporting Eulalio Gutierrez, the interim president.

In early December, Gutierrez ordered the overprinting of postage stamps with the "GCM" (Gobieno Constitutionalista Mexicana) monograms. This apparently was not implemented until sometime after Dec. 28 when final authorization was given.

There were two varieties, a script version known as the Carranza monogram and a Gothic one as shown on the 5c stamp in Figure 2, known as the "Villa" monogram.

Ample supplies were distributed to areas controlled by Villa and his compatriots. In spite of this, there are abundant and difficult-to-detect counterfeits of both these markings.

During Villa's brief stay in the capital, he appears to have carried on some correspondence. The cover in Figure 3 is addressed to the British vice consul at El Paso. The corner inscription translates: "Personal Correspondence of General Francisco Villa."

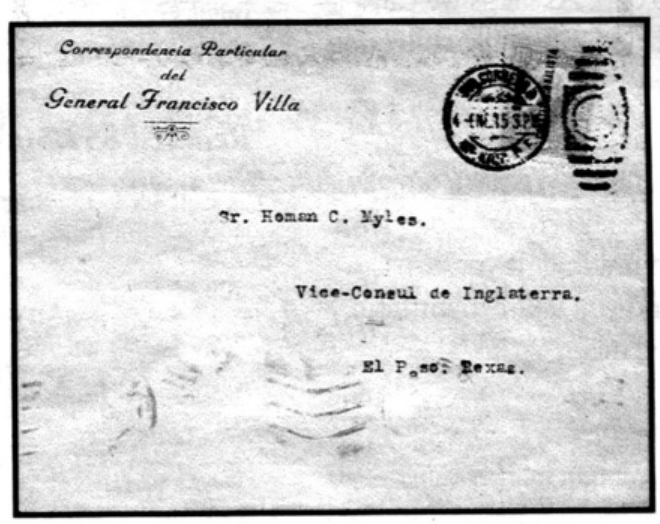


Figure 3. A Jan. 4, 1915, cover with a corner inscription saying that it is the personal correspondence of Gen. Francisco Villa, also known as Pancho Villa. The cover is addressed to the British vice consul at El Paso, Texas.

The cover is postmarked Mexico City, Jan. 4, 1915, just days before he left the capital for good, and his fortunes began to turn south with a vengeance.

This fortunate find came out of a dealer's box of cheap covers, and I've often wondered what message it carried.

I do not think Villa was too popular with the king's foreign service.

In early 1914, Villa's aide had shot down William Benton, an English rancher, for no apparent reason.

"An unfortunate mistake," was the aide's only comment.

During the next few years, Villa lost influence and was constantly harassed by Obregon's forces, losing battle after battle.

He retreated to his favorite haunts in northern Mexico and became a guerrilla fighter with the few loyal followers who remained at his side.

After the United States recognized the Carranza government, Villa became incensed and launched the infamous raid March 9, 1916, on Columbus, N.M.

The United States dispatched Gen. John Pershing on a punitive expedition to capture Villa, the most expensive and unsuccessful manhunt in U.S. history. Even Carranza's forces couldn't find him.

Finally, in 1920, a negotiated settlement was reached. About 750 men, all that remained of the once proud Division del Norte, laid down their arms in return for a year's severance pay.

Villa was given an abandoned hacienda in Canutillo and a sum of money thought to be 500,000 pesos.

He charged into his new life with the same intensity he employed in leading his famous cavalry attacks, plowing the land, raising crops, repairing fences, restoring buildings, setting up schools, and spending time with his family that included six children.

His enemies, however, were still plotting against him. And on that fateful July day in 1923, they accomplished what seemed to many to be impossible, catching the great Pancho Villa with his guard down.

Although an official inquiry was announced, the perpetrators were never named or brought to trial. It has been long believed there was involvement at the highest levels of government to rid the country of a worrisome troublemaker.

Figure 4. On a 1978 Mexican airmail stamp marking the 100th anniversary of Pancho Villa's birth, Villa is shown wearing the ornamented sombrero of the flashy Mexican gentlemen cowboys, the charros, that he so intensely disliked.

Only in 1978 were Villa's contributions to the revolution belatedly recognized with a 1.60-peso airmail stamp commemorating the 100th anniversary of his birth.

And then, in perhaps the unkindest cut of all, he is portrayed wearing a huge ornamented sombrero of the charros, the flashy Mexican gentlemen cowboys he is known to have disliked intensely. The stamp is shown in Figure 4. ■

Mexico City's main post office on stamps

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Readers occasionally write that I seem to ignore the contemporary stamps of Mexico, and they are probably right.

Mexico, like so many stamp-issuing entities, produces so many commemoratives these days that it's hard to keep up. (Commemoratives are stamps issued to note special events, anniversaries or subjects. They usually are available for only a limited time.)

And most modern stamps, except some of the longer-running definitive (regular-issue) series, lack the philatelic elements that interest me.

On the other hand, those collectors who pursue topical subjects can find many attractive items to add to their collections. This month, I'll review a theme that has been well served by the Mexican postal authorities.

Monuments and public buildings often have been chosen as subject matter for Mexican stamps during this century at least. If you were to choose architecture as a topic to collect, for example, you could fill several pages with Mexican stamps relating to various aspects of this discipline.

The main post office in Mexico City is a good example. Just last year a souvenir sheet was issued to mark the 90th anniversary of its opening.

This ornate edifice, described as being in the Italian Renaissance style, was one of the major public works projects during the final years of the Porfirio Diaz regime.

Figure 2. The exterior of the Mexico City post office is shown on a 1916 stamp.

Meant to demonstrate to the world Mexico's arrival to the company of modern nations, it was one of the architectural jewels to be displayed to foreign visitors and diplomats at the sumptuous celebration fiestas of 1910 marking the 100th anniversary of Mexican independence from Spain.

No expense was spared in its construction, and it housed some of the most modern mail-handling machinery available at that time.

The 1997 souvenir sheet is shown in Figure 1. It contains only one stamp, face value 7.40 pesos, laid against a view of the building itself and surrounded with a collage, including views of mail handling and distribution plus a geometric sculpture representing a postal messenger by the famous Mexican artist Sebastian.

Below the stamp is a slogan that translates: "The Mexican Postal Service, yesterday, today ... and always."

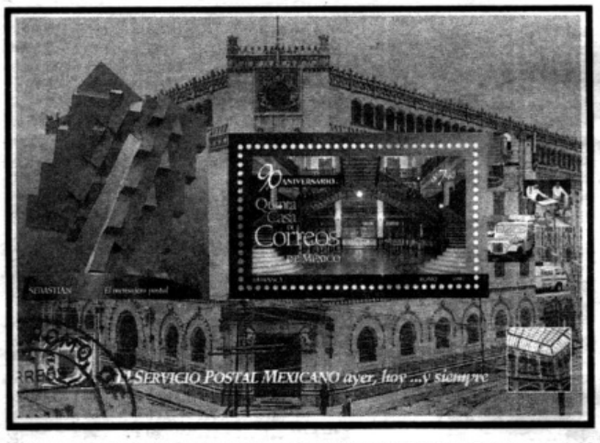


Figure 1. A 1997 souvenir sheet from Mexico features the main post office in Mexico City. The stamp portion shows the double staircase in the lobby to the upper floors.

The stamp itself depicts the magnificent double staircase leading from the lobby level to the offices on the mezzanine level and second floor.

I remember well when I lived in Mexico during the 1960s climbing this remarkable set of stairs to reach the office of the philatelic agency.

Figure 2 shows a much earlier stamp featuring the post office.

This 5p stamp (Scott 514), from the regular issue of 1915-16, was released in 1916. It is a bicolor printing with a claret frame and an ultramarine vignette (central design).

The stamp is readily available in unused condition, but since 5p was so much money in those days, legitimate covers bearing this stamp are virtually unheard of. The stamp would have been used on heavy parcels.

The same design appears again as a 5p stamp in the series of 1917-20 (628). This time the frame is green, and the vignette is black.

Both Scott 514 and 628 have some interesting varieties. The earlier stamp exists with the vignette inverted with respect to the frame, and the later stamp exists with the vignette of the 1p stamp (Veracruz lighthouse). Both are rare and pricey.

A less-expensive variety of 628 shows overprinted control numbers, usually five digits, in either red or violet, as illustrated in Figure 3.

In 1926, a set of stamps was issued to honor the second Pan-American Postal Congress. This set included the main post office again, this time as the 1p value.

At first glance, it appears the same die was used for the vignette as on the earlier 5p stamps. But if you examine a 1p stamp closely, you can see that the engraving is much sharper, and clouds have been added to the sky.

The Pan-Am stamps were revalidated in 1930 and 1931 with overprints reading "HABILITADO/1930 & HABILITADO/1931" (674, 682). Figure 4 depicts examples. These overprints have been forged, so caution is advised.

Figure 3. Control numbers are on this variety of Mexico's 1917-20 5-peso stamp.

Figure 4. The post office is pictured again on a stamp in Mexico's Second Pan-American Postal Congress set. This stamp was overprinted "Habilitado/1930."

Also, the Pan-Am set was printed in black, and overprinted in red "HABILITADO/Servicio Oficial/Aereo." These are among the few Official airmail stamps issued by Mexico (CO3-10). It is reported that only 128 examples of the 1p Post Office stamp were sold. In a recent auction, a rare used set of these stamps brought $1,800, plus buyer's commission.

After all this early activity, the post office disappeared from stamp designs for about 50 years, although other public buildings and architectural examples were used frequently. Even the 50th anniversary slipped by unrecognized in 1957. But, during the 1950s, Mexico issued few commemorative stamps.

However, on Feb. 17, 1982, exactly 75 years after the post office was originally opened, Mexico issued a 4p stamp showing the post office in green and ocher. It was assigned Scott 1266 and is illustrated in Figure 5.

Unless I've missed something, this completes the book on varieties of Mexican stamps depicting the main post office.

As a subject, the main post office offers enough possibilities to fill several pages. Some items will be tough to find, especially covers or wrappers. But a successful chase should provide pleasure and satisfaction.

Figure 5. In 1982, Mexico commemorated the 75th anniversary of the opening of the Mexico City post office.

Finally, it is interesting that the 1997 souvenir sheet had a printing of only 100,000, one-third the quantity of a normal commemorative stamp, and perhaps fewer than the quantities of the regular-issue post office stamps of 1916 and 1917. ■

Postal history from Mexico's 1916 inflation

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Periods of rampant inflation pose serious problems for postal systems that are generally not geared for rapid change.

For example, during the recent inflation of the Exporta-stamp era in Mexico, the printing of higher and higher denominations barely kept pace with the soaring postal rates.

Other countries experienced similar problems with hyperinflation, for example, Germany in 1923 and Hungary in 1945-46.

While these times often leave misery and hardship in their wake, they also leave interesting opportunities for the postal historian.

Mexico had another inflationary period that had a big impact on the postal service in 1915-16, but especially during the last half of 1916.

The major battles of the civil wars had been fought, Pancho Villa was in retreat, and Venustiano Carranza of the constitutionalist movement was struggling to gain control over the government.

The national treasury was all but depleted, and the value of the Mexican peso was sinking fast.

From August 1915 until early December 1916, six changes in postal rates occurred, all upward. The table in Figure 1 summarizes these rate changes for first-class letters and registry fees.

It soon became clear there were not enough of the higher-denomination postage stamps, usually printed in smaller quantities, to meet the new higher rates.

Postmaster General Don Cosme Hinojosa ordered that appropriate surcharges be overprinted on obsolete issues to meet this demand.

The first of these surcharges were produced about June 7, 1916, after the June 1 rate change. The overprints consisted of an intricate engraved design (to discourage counterfeiting) containing the letters "G.P. de M." (Provisional Government of Mexico) and a denomination.

Because of its shape, this surcharge became known as the "barril" (barrel) overprint.

This initial printing included surcharges of 10 centavos, 20c and 60c on the 1c, 5c, and 2c stamps of the Independence issue (Scott 578, 579 and 581).

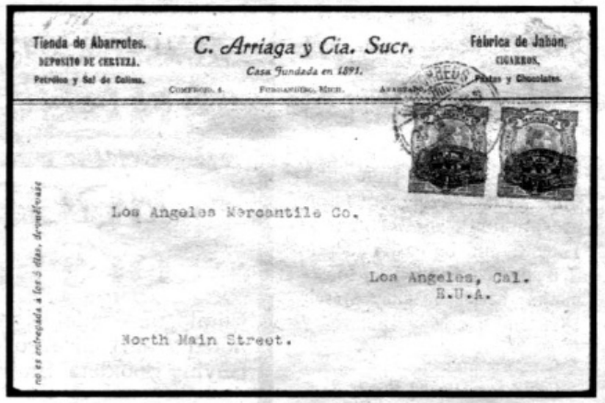


Figure 2. This cover from Mexico to Los Angeles was mailed Aug. 31, 1916, the last day of the 20-centavo rate period that started June 1 of that year. The cover is franked with two surcharged 10-centavo on 1c stamps.

Later, other overprinted stamps of this era were similarly surcharged.

The new surcharged stamps paid the first-class rate for regular and drop (local) letters, and, in the case of the 60c surcharge, regular postage plus registry fee.

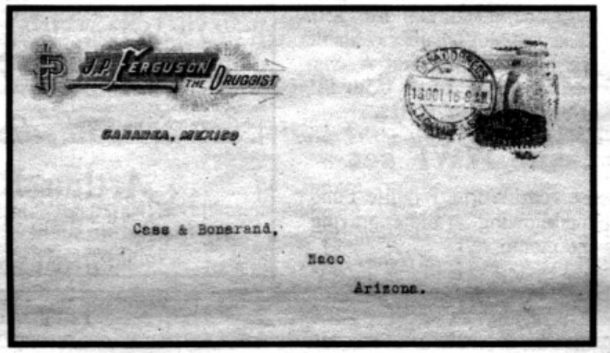


Figure 3. This cover sent at the end of Mexico's 25-centavo rate period bears a surcharged 25c stamp.

Figure 2 shows a cover mailed Aug. 31, 1916, the last day of the second, or 20c, rate period.

The cover was destined for Los Angeles. As near as I can determine, the postal rate was the same as for domestic mail. The cover is franked with two 10c-on-1c stamps (578).

On Sept. 1, 1916, postal rates were raised again, and two more surcharges were prepared, a 5c and 25c.

The first could be used with the earlier 20c to make the common interior rate. The 25c found use not only on regular letters but also in multiples to meet the much higher registry fee.

Figure 3 demonstrates the 25c surcharge on a letter posted Oct. 18, 1916. This cover was sent from the northern state of Sonora to the border town of Naco, Ariz.

Technically, the franking on this letter may have been insufficient since another boost in postal rates had occurred at mid-month, but with rates changing so rapidly postal clerks were apt to overlook these short-paid letters.

By Nov. 20, first-class letters to the interior of Mexico required 2.50-peso franking and the so-called "complementario" (postage due) stamps of 1908 were overprinted with the monogram "GPM" and "$2.50" to satisfy this rate (603-07).

Only the 2.50p-on-1c stamp (603) saw any substantial use. Most used examples of the other values probably bear favor cancellations.

Figure 4 shows the back of a cover from this same period bearing a block of 10 of the 10c surcharged 1c Independence issue.

In this case, the 1p franking pays the drop rate for Mexico City. The postmarks canceling the stamps are dated Nov. 27, 1916.

Use of multiple copies of the barril surcharged stamps is quite common during this period, and covers may be found literally covered front and back with postage stamps.

One final increase occurred Dec. 2, 1916. For a few hours that day, the rate on a single-weight letter rose to 5p. But this did not last long.

Long-running negotiations for a United States-backed loan to prop up the peso were finally concluded and announced. Before the day ended, it was ordered that postal rates would return to their preinflation levels but that postal fees had to be paid with the new silver-based currency.

Covers dated Dec. 2 with the high frankings are known, but nearly all of them are of philatelic origin.

Assuming that the public knew about the impending change to preinflationary rates, there was little incentive for them to suffer the 5p franking if they had the wherewithal in silver-backed currency for the lower rate.

This inflation period provides an interesting opportunity for collecting and philatelic research. Covers are still available at reasonable prices, although some, such as registry uses and covers to foreign destinations, may cause you to wince a bit.

At a recent auction, a well-mixed lot of 30 inflation-period covers, including some very scarce rates, was snapped up by a collector for $410. This, with commission and handling costs, works out to about $15 per cover. Not dirt cheap, but certainly not outrageous when the potential for an interesting exhibit or just plain enjoyment is taken into account.

And oh yes, it is still possible to find sleepers from the inflation era in dealers' cheap cover boxes. ■

Mexican postal rates in the 1915-16 inflation period

Dates	First-class letter local	interior	Registry fees
Aug. 1915-May 31, 1916	4c	10c	20c
June 1-Aug. 31, 1916	10c	20c	40c
Sept. 1-mid-Oct. 1916	10c	25c	75c, 1p, 1.25p*
mid-Oct.-Nov. 20, 1916	40c	1p	2p
Nov. 21-Dec. 1, 1916	1p	2.50p	7.50p, 10p, 12.50p*
Dec. 2, 1916	?	5p	

*fees include postage

Figure 1. Table of rates of Mexico's inflation period.

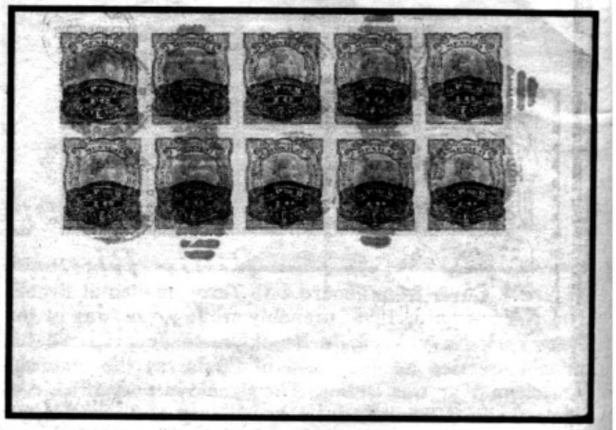


Figure 4. The back of a Mexican cover mailed Nov. 27, 1916, bearing a block of 10 of the 10-centavo on 1c Independence stamp to pay the 1-peso drop rate.

Mexican War anniversary souvenir covers

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

I devoted my October 1997 *Linn's* column to Mexican stamps issued to commemorate the 150th anniversary of important battles in Mexico City during the 1846-48 war with the United States.

The memories of this conflict, which stripped Mexico of almost half of its territory, have been all but ignored by the United States, postally or otherwise.

The Mexicans, on the other hand, have repeatedly called attention to what they call "The War of Northern Intervention."

One West Coast collector and fellow member of the Mexico-Elmhurst Philatelic Society International, Tim Carroll, undertook a two-year project to create a series of 150th anniversary mementos.

Armed with a list of dates of important events in that long-ago war, Carroll prepared covers to be mailed to locations in both the United States and Mexico on the exact 150th anniversary of those events.

Since he had no friends or contacts in most of the towns from which he desired postmarks, Carroll used the ruse of addressing his covers to fictitious parties in care of general delivery or, in the case of Mexican destinations, the equivalent counterpart, "Lista de Correos."

He figured that the covers would be returned eventually, and, with luck, they might bear postal markings of cities or towns to which they were sent.

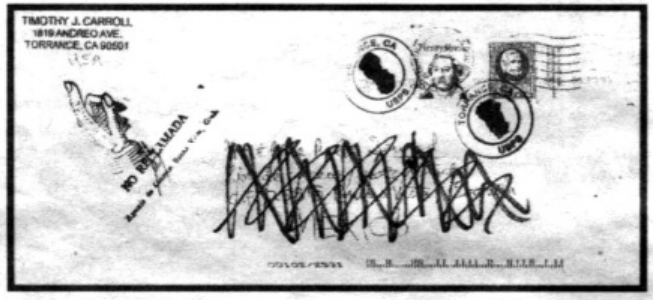


Figure 1. Collector Tim Carroll mailed this cover to a fictitious address in Buena Vista, Coahuila, Mexico, Feb. 22, 1997, on the 150th anniversary of the last major battle of the northern campaign of the Mexican War.

For franking, Carroll used 32¢ James K. Polk stamps (United States Scott 2587) to add further relevance to his souvenirs, plus others when required to make up the rate to Mexico.

It was during President Polk's administration that war was declared, and it was sometimes referred to by his detractors at the time as "Mr. Polk's War."

Brief descriptions of the events to be commemorated were enclosed in the envelopes in case someone opened them, but the contents of returned letters were never examined.

Figure 1 shows one of the more interesting covers.

It originally was mailed to a nonexistent family in Buena Vista, Coahuila, Mexico, Feb. 22, 1997. This date was exactly 150 years from the start of a two-day battle in which Gen. Zachary Taylor's forces repulsed a much larger Mexican army under the command of Gen. Santa Anna.

This turned out to be the last major battle of the northern campaign.

The cover was ultimately returned but the dates in the circular handstamps from Torrance, Calif., as well as the names and address, had been marked out with a felt-tip marking pen.

There is no Buena Vista datestamp, but the pointing finger return order plus the "NO RECLAMADA" (unclaimed) markings do include the town name. It also appears that the mail clerk's initials are included between the two lines of text.

Carroll wonders if whoever handled this cover may have had an inkling of what he was trying to do, for no other envelope had postmarks so thoroughly obliterated.

Although there was no evidence of tampering, there are three sets of staple holes around the edge of the cover that remain unexplained.

A similar cover, shown in Figure 2, was mailed to Veracruz on the April 8 anniversary of the day Gen. Twiggs led the first column of U.S. troops from Veracruz toward the capital city of Mexico in 1847. Again, a fictitious addressee was used.

This letter was advertised and when the specified period for claiming it was up, it was struck with words to that effect, "Devuelto por haber cumplido el termino de ley" (Returned [unclaimed], having complied with the law) and the pointing finger.

On the reverse is a machine datestamp applied at Veracruz April 16, the date it presumably first arrived in that city.

Also, both covers bear faint bar codings in either pink or orange on the front and back. They may not show up in the illustrations but they glow strongly under ultraviolet light. I think these were applied in Mexico to aid in routing and delivery.

Most of the several dozen envelopes sent out over the two-year period eventually found their way back to Carroll, some within a month, others requiring up to a year.

Figure 2. This cover was mailed to Veracruz, Mexico, April 8, 1997, 150 years after American troops began marching into central Mexico. It was listed for pick-up in general delivery before being returned to the sender.

Carroll told me that he had a lot of fun doing it and feels his project was eminently successful.

For a very modest investment he was able to secure a colorful array of interesting markings from Mexico, as well as from stateside post offices. And while they may never become valuable postal history rarities, they are certainly unique items.

This project demonstrates what a curious collector on a limited budget can do with a little imagination to increase his enjoyment of the hobby.

It also provides an opportunity to learn a great deal about some rather obscure historical events.

Carroll read several books during the course of his undertaking and now considers himself fairly well informed concerning the 1846-48 war between Mexico and the United States. ■

Identifying Hidalgo Heads by the overprints

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Early in the cycle of these columns (*Linn's*, Sept. 8, 1986, page 34), I wrote about the Hidalgo Heads of 1874 through 1883, emphasizing the possibilities for specialization. I'm revisiting this issue because there is a fine, new resource available to the serious collector.

The Hidalgo Head issue is noteworthy for a number of reasons. First, the design and initial printings were produced in the United States by the American Bank Note Co., although the plates were later transferred to Mexico in 1877.

Mexico's two previous general issues, the 1868 and 1872 stamps, were not particularly distinguished at a time when Mexico was striving for its place among progressive nations of the world.

In 1879, Mexico joined the Universal Postal Union, while the Hidalgo Heads issue was current.

And finally, it was the last issue on which the cumbersome practice of overprinting of district names and invoice numbers were employed. And these final overprints, owing to apparent nonuniformity, have long confused collectors.

Part of the problem lies with the note at the end of the listing for these stamps in the Scott catalog.

The note states: "The stamps of 1874-81 are found with number and date wide apart, close together or omitted, and in various colors."

Would-be specialists soon discovered it wasn't that simple and that the listing itself does not offer a sound framework or basis for logical organization of a large assortment of stamps.

We now have a much more thorough analysis of these stamps in Nicholas Follansbee's new *A Catalogue of the Stamps of Mexico, 1856-1900*. He divides the stamps into four distinct issues, each defined by the time when they were made and used.

The key to assigning a stamp to one of his four categories is the form and placement of the overprinted control number.

These control numbers consist of three or four digits identifying the postal district and year of issue. For example, "1 75" stood for Mexico district and the year 1875, and "2078" designated Puebla from 1878.

The first issue bore separated numbers, usually placed from the middle to the lower part of the stamp. This placement lasted from 1874 to 1877. Figure 1 shows two examples of this type.

The 5-centavo stamp on the left is from Veracruz, although that name isn't overprinted on it. The 25c stamp on the right is from Zamora.

In 1878, the overprinting scheme was modified to unseparated numbers (digits close together) applied to the bottom half of the stamp.

Figure 3. The third type of overprinting on the Hidalgo Heads of Mexico features unseparated control numbers on the upper part of the stamp. Note that the control numbers are inverted on the 50c stamp shown on the right.

This is illustrated in Figure 2.

Shown on the left in Figure 2 is a 10c stamp from Monterrey without the district name. Pictured on the right is a 100c stamp from Mexico.

When the original shipments of these close-together/bottom stamps ran out, they were replaced with yet another format.

The third issue had unseparated numbers overprinted in the upper half of the stamp, as shown in Figure 3. This overprint position was used from 1878 until the overprints were abolished near the end of the series in 1883.

On the 50c stamp shown on the right in Figure 3, the numbers were applied upside down.

There was one exception to this placement. District Mexico continued to have its control number printed near the bottom of the stamp beneath an arched district name that often formed a cap on the portrait of Hidalgo.

The name and number overprints for Mexico were probably applied simultaneously by letter press.

An interesting example of this anomaly is shown in Figure 4. This 25c stamp, used in Mexico in 1880, bears a Buzon 8 (collection box No. 8) cancel.

The fourth and final group includes stamps issued starting Oct. 1, 1883, without the district or year numbers and with or without district names. They were sold into 1884, and genuine used examples are quite a bit scarcer than the previous overprinted stamps.

Figure 5 depicts an unused stamp from the district of Jalapa.

My earlier column on the Hidalgo Heads discussed the district numbering system in much more detail and was included in my *Linn's* handbook *Introduction to the Stamps of Mexico*. It explained the sequence of assigned numbers and how it was inverted at the time of the 1878 issue with unseparated numbers. There is no need for further discussion here as the subject is also covered fully in the Follansbee catalog.

Figure 4. Stamps for the Mexico district had the control numbers printed at the bottom of the stamp. This stamp was used on a letter posted at a collection box.

Figure 5. After control numbers were abolished Oct. 1, 1883, a few districts continued overprinting their names as shown on this 5-centavo stamp from Jalapa.

The variable that preoccupied the Scott editors when their original listings were set up was paper. Many different papers were employed during the years these stamps were produced, and it is possible to correlate most of them with fairly well defined periods of use. This, too, is dealt with in detail by Follansbee.

One should be aware that in addition to the "LA CROIX FRERES" watermarked varieties noted in the Scott listings, there are also examples with the "Papel Sellado" watermark like those found on the previous 1872 issue.

I have never understood why Scott ignores these.

Stamps with a portion of the watermarks were special — probably numbering no more than 10 per sheet. Roughly 90 percent of the stamps showed no trace of the watermark but were printed on the same paper.

This issue offers immense possibilities for specialization, both as stamps and postal history.

Like the other classic issues of Mexico, the rare varieties will drain your wallet, but one can still put together a very respectable showing of these stamps on a modest budget. And there is yet the opportunity of finding scarce stamps in mixed stocks if you know what to look for. ■

Figure 1. The first type of overprinting on Mexico's Hidalgo Heads of 1874 to 1883 has a large space between the district code and the year date. The stamp on the left is from Veracruz. The one on the right is from Zamora.

Figure 2. The overprinting scheme was changed in 1878 to unseparated numbers applied to the bottom half of the stamps as shown on the stamp from Monterrey on the left and on the stamp from the Mexico district on the right.

Review of 1998 columns; Mexican TB seals

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

In looking back over my Mexico columns in *Linn's* for this year, I see they covered a rather broad spectrum.

Three dealt not with stamps or postal history but with valuable aids to enhance the enjoyment of our hobby.

In the Feb. 26 column, I reviewed the new *A Catalogue of the Stamps of Mexico, 1856-1900*, assembled and published by Nick Follansbee.

If you are into 19th-century Mexican stamps, I hope you have acquired your copy by now. I find I use it almost every time I work on my early Mexican stamps.

The catalog is a bargain at $35 postpaid from the author (Nick Follansbee, Box 3210, Ashland, OR 97520).

My March 30 column reviewed a new specialized Mexican stamp album, a companion to the catalog, designed by Follansbee and Mark Johnston.

Not so essential as the catalog, the album is still a fine product if you are a general collector of the classic issues.

Finally, *Mexican Maritime Mail* by Karl Schimmer and John Heath was the focus of my May 25 column. This book is an excellent resource for those who enjoy unlocking the secrets of 19th-century covers and letters that traveled beyond the boundaries of Mexico.

Figure 1. This self-adhesive Klussendorf machine-vended stamp from Mexico is believed to be genuine.

Again, as time goes on, I appreciate more and more the value of this reference.

I had the most fun with the articles I did for the Jan. 26 and April 27 columns.

In these columns, I wrote about the endurance run of Charles Percival's Bull Dog, a 1911 Abbott-Detroit Model A touring car that he and a companion drove around the perimeter of the United States with side trips into Mexico and Alaska.

The genesis of this story was a postcard reporting Percival's progress mailed from Tijuana, Mexico, bearing an unusual cancel.

Many *Linn's* readers got into the act on this project.

I now have a thick file on details of the expedition, but why a "Bultos" (package) canceler was used on the card remains a mystery.

The pot is still boiling on the Klussendorf preprinted franking labels I covered in the June 29 column. The denomination is printed at the time of purchase on these stamps that are vended by Klussendorf machines.

The self-adhesive stamp reported as a type II, shown here in Figure 1, was examined by a European expert in this field who believes it may be genuine (officially produced). There had been some question about this.

But since he cannot get confirmation from Mexican postal authorities that such types were issued, it will not be included in the German-language Michel catalog listings for Mexico.

I would like to correct a statement in the June 29 column in which I implied that Mexico's printed-to-order Klussendorf stamps were not listed in stamp catalogs. This is wrong. The Michel catalog does cover them because this type of material is very popular with European collectors. They are not, so far as I know, to be found in English-language catalogs.

•

I recently received from Alejandro Grossmann, my loyal Mexican correspondent, a sheet of the TB seals issued for 1999-2000. While these are in no way considered postage stamps, they are frequently found used during the holiday season alongside whatever postage stamps are chosen for franking.

And for a number of years they have been produced by the T.I.E.V., the Mexican government printing office responsible for postage stamps, banknotes and government security paper.

The theme this time is the Mexican marketplace: produce and related items one would find in a typical Mexican grocery store.

The sheet of 50 seals (25 different) shows pinatas, fruits, vegetables, flowers and other bulk staples.

Figure 2 depicts a block of eight of the seals from the upper-left-hand portion of the sheet.

There is an interesting twist to the sheet's layout. The block of 25 designs (five by five) on the left side of the sheet is a mirror image of the right side.

The designers of this colorful array are Guadelupe Norma and Cecilia Vergara, who also collaborated in the design of the Conservation of Marine Species postage stamps issued by Mexico last summer.

Figure 2. Eight se-tenant Christmas seals from Mexico show produce and other items from a Mexican market. The seals are in sheets of 50 with 25 different designs.

There was another change this year, in that the face value of the seals increased from 20 centavos to 50c. The lower price had been in effect for five years and was not providing the desired cash flow.

A sheet of this year's seals would be equivalent to about U.S. $2.50.

Net proceeds from the sale of these stamps support the fight against tuberculosis and other respiratory disorders.

The TB Committee in Mexico was created by presidential decree in 1939 and has issued seals annually since 1943. Even though the seals are not valid for postage, they are sold at post office windows throughout the republic and seem to be popular with many stamp collectors worldwide.

The National Committee (Alvaro Obergon 74, Desp. 108, Col. Roma, 06700 Mexico D.F., Mexico) has an inventory of past issues for those interested.

With this last column for 1998, I wish all my readers a peaceful and joyous holiday season and extend thanks for the continuing support. ■

Mexico's postmarks of the classic stamps era

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

I love used stamps and covers because in the performance of their duty there is always a story, often revealed by the postmarks they bear.

Mexico had a rich tradition of unusual and attractive 19th-century postmarks. When postage stamps first came on the scene in 1856, many of the devices used to cancel them had been around for years. They were the same handstamps used on prestamp mail.

Although numerous postmarks were similar in form, for example, the rectangular name and date devices used in Mexico, Puebla, Veracruz, and Zacatecas, there seems to be no evidence that the main post office imposed rules on designs until late in the century. It was left to the imagination and ingenuity of local postmasters.

Many post offices created and used quaint devices of extraordinary charm. Some Mexican fancy postmarks rival those of Waterbury, Conn., whittler John W. Hill. My Mexico column in the Nov. 24, 1997, *Linn's* reviewed some of my favorites.

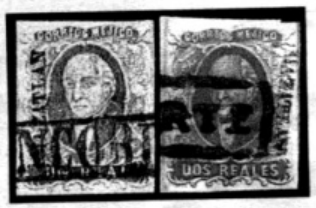


Figure 1. Fragments of postmarks identify the origin of these 1556- and 1861-issue Mexican stamps as being from the Mazatlan district.

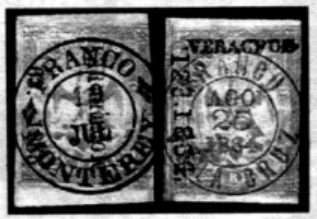


Figure 2. Two Mexican Eagle stamps with well-crafted circular date cancellers.

These early postmarks have been studied in-depth, resulting in two fine reference books: *The Cancellations of Mexico, 1856-1874* by Joseph Schatzkes, revised in 1983, and *The Postmarks of Mexico, 1874-1900* by Karl Schimmer, from 1977. I highly recommend both books.

Knowledge of postmarks is a useful and valuable tool for the specialist. Even a small portion of a marking can often be used to pinpoint where the stamp originated.

The two stamps shown in Figure 1 came from the postal district of Mazatlan. One was used in the small town of Fuerte; the other originated in Concordia San Sebastian.

Both are fairly scarce uses, but they were cheaply priced in circuit books I receive.

Some small postal districts failed to overprint their names on first-issue stamps. The only way you can tell if a stamp is from those districts is if it bears an appropriate postmark from the district. Usually stamps from these small offices are rare and expensive.

Unfortunately, crafty forgers have been at work, and many presumed rarities turn out to be products of their illicit trade.

Apart from the sometimes crudely fashioned postmarks of the early stamp era, you occasionally run into professionally made devices. The two Eagle stamps shown in Figure 2 were socked on the nose with double-ring date-stamps that were probably imported, most likely from France. Neither is recorded used prior to 1864 when the French-supported Maximilian monarchy came into power in Mexico.

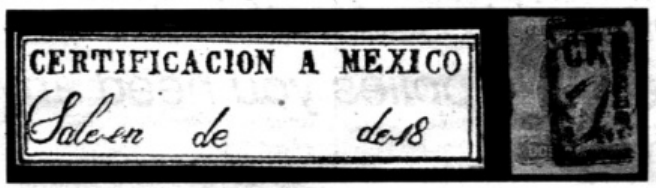


Figure 3. A Mexican stamp with a part of a registry postmark is shown on the right. A fascimile of a certification handstamp with spaces for inserting the date is on the left.

Few special-service postmarks existed in the early years of stamps. Most large cities had handstamps for designating certified mail. They were designed for inserting date of mailing and other information, as shown on the left in Figure 3.

In rare instances, stamps may be found with a portion of a certification handstamp, but these were usually struck clear of the stamps.

Shown on the right in Figure 3 is an 1856 stamp with a portion of a registry postmark.

The first use of a 18-millimeter circle surrounding a "B" and a numeral started with the stamp issue of 1868. These postmarks, found on stamps of Mexico City, signal that the cover was deposited in one of several "Buzones" or letter boxes situated around the city. These cancels are not terribly scarce, but they are fun to look for.

Figure 4 shows two such markings on 1872-issue stamps.

Up to the early 1870s, postmasters continued using whatever handstamps they had on hand or could obtain when the old ones wore out. Many postmarks, especially from places handling little mail, saw use for many years.

For others, the usage period could be short, perhaps only a few years.

Figure 4. Two 1872-issue stamps with the "B" for "buzones" or letterbox, which signifies that the cover was deposited in a letterbox.

This fact sometimes helps specialists detect bogus uses — stamps bearing postmarks not contemporary with the stamps.

Around 1872, attempts were made by the postal authorities to standardize cancel devices. The new handstamps were to be oval in shape and inscribed according to the type of mail to be canceled.

Some were for ordinary first-class mail, others for Official mail and for certified mail, although not all offices had the latter type.

These ovals varied in size, some being single-line and others double.

Two examples on the Hidalgo-head issue of 1874 are shown in Figure 5. The cancels are from Chietla (Puebla district) and Tuxtla (Chiapas district). The latter stamp also bears a handwritten date of Aug. 21, 1881.

The transition to these oval cancelers obviously took some time as the older handstamped postmarks continued to be used in smaller, remote towns right up to the end of the Large Numeral issue.

Figure 5. Two 1874 Hidalgo-head stamps with oval cancels. The example on the left is from Chietla in the Puebla district. The stamp on the right from Tuxtla in the Chiapas district has a handwritten date of Aug. 21, 1881.

The timing here also coincides with what stamp collectors consider to be the end of the classic era.

As noted in my column in the Nov. 23, 1998, *Linn's* on Hidalgo heads of 1874, it also marked the end of district and control number overprints.

In a future column, I plan to look at postmarks of the last three decades of the 1800s and the turn of the century.

Stamp collecting was becoming a popular pastime, and it prompted some interesting tactics by dealers pressed to meet an ever increasing demand. ■

Mexico's Aviation Week: a tale of two covers

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

In 1929, airmail in Mexico was still in its infancy.

That year several regular-service schedules were inaugurated, linking major cities in Mexico with the United States border.

And by year's end, it was possible to send letters from Mexico City to northern U.S. cities in two days or less.

The promotion of airmail, to boost its use and thus support its higher cost, became an official government priority.

It was decreed to set aside a week in December to be known as Aviation Week.

The post office issued two airmail stamps to commemorate the event, a 20-centavo and a 40c stamp (Scott C26-27).

As a further stimulus to use airmail, the rate for a 20-gram letter was reduced Nov. 1 from 25c to 20c.

Two Chicago-bound covers from my collection illustrate typical markings used during that promotional period.

Figure 1 shows a cover mailed Dec. 10, the first day of Aviation Week, using one of the special stamps.

The stamp is inscribed "Semana de Aviacion — Conmemorativa" (Aviation Week — Commemorative) and shows a single-engine monoplane flying over Mexico City with the words "CORREOS — MEXICO" (Mexican Mail) in bold letters on its wing.

Letters processed in Mexico City received a large purple triangular handstamped cachet calling further attention to the event. The double-ring datestamp used as a canceler contains the words "Semana Aerea."

Covers similar to the one shown in Figure 1 are not rare. Nearly 74,000 20c stamps were issued, and there must have been hundreds, perhaps thousands, of such covers processed on the first day.

Figure 1. A typical cover prepared on the Dec. 10, 1929, first day of Mexico's Aviation Week. The cover bears a 20-centavo stamp and a purple cachet promoting Aviation Week.

The Figure 1 cover, despite its seemingly commercial address, has a philatelic provenance. Robert Rubsamen, a Mexican stamp dealer, prepared and mailed the cover.

A datestamp on the reverse suggests it was received in Chicago Dec. 12.

The other stamp in the Aviation Week set, the 40c value, is rarely seen on cover. Only 3,000 stamps were issued, and it has always been a pricey philatelic item.

I find the airmail cover illustrated in Figure 2 more desirable than the first item. It is a truly commercial use, and a modern postal historian would probably declare, "It has everything going for it!"

Figure 2. A business envelope showing early meter usage in Mexico and Aviation Week markings. Like the cover in Figure 1, this cover also was mailed Dec. 10, 1929.

It, too, was mailed Dec. 10, the first day of Aviation Week. It features an illustrated corner card of La Consolidada S.A., a firm that dealt in top-of-the-line fasteners and other high-grade steel products.

Instead of an Aviation Week stamp, it bears one of the earliest meter franks used in Mexico. It was imprinted in red by a machine produced by the Universal Postal Frankers Ltd. of London, England.

Postage meters were new to Mexico, and the earliest-recorded examples date from November 1929. I discussed early meters in my column in *Linn's* of June 10, 1991.

Some examples of the first meter imprints are quite rare, but if you are lucky enough to find one, it may not cost you very much.

Many dealers won't know what they have, and meter envelopes still don't command the respect from collectors that covers with stamps do.

Since my aforementioned 1991 article, Doug Kelsey, *Linn's* Meter Stamps columnist, wrote a small but useful catalog on Mexican meter stamps that was published by the Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International, also known as MEPSI.

The meter on this second cover includes a slogan that ties in nicely with the airmail promotion. Translated, it reads "By airplane your correspondence will fly, consequently your business prospers."

The envelope also received the triangular Aviation Week cachet.

A double-ring datestamp struck just above and to the left of the address is inscribed "Maquinas Franqueadoras" (franking machines). This was applied at the main post office, probably to alert clerks that this new machine franking was truly valid postage.

Unfortunately, there is no backstamp to show when this letter arrived in Chicago. But if it made a timely connection with the U.S. mails in Brownsville or Laredo, it probably made the journey in two, or at most, three days.

Airmail did speed up communications, particularly for long hauls. It enjoyed its golden age from the 1930s to the 1960s. But it has been abolished almost everywhere as a separate service class.

Even though much of today's mail does move by air, quick delivery, as shown here, is probably a thing of the past.

I find the inscription above the corner card rather amusing. It says that if the letter is not delivered in six days, return to sender.

That would have to be revised for today's situation. Mail I receive from Mexico City requires eight to 14 days in transit to arrive. ■

Recent Mexican stamp promote conservation

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

The Mexican postal system has made a deliberate and continuing effort since 1990 to support the cause of conservation, both of species in danger of extinction and of the habitats where they thrive.

If you scan the Mexican section of the Scott *Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue,* you will find many stamps calling attention to conservation. I think that they are some of the most attractive Mexican stamps to be issued in recent years.

I focused on a 1993 Mexican stamp picturing the quetzel (Scott 1838) in the Mexico column in the April 1994 issue of *Linn's.* This bird, a beautiful denizen of the tropical rain forests, has an uncertain future because of continuing destruction of its natural habitat.

In this column, I will feature three more of my favorite stamps from this Conservation series. Figure 1 shows the 1991 Conservation stamp (1696) that portrays a jaguar (Panthera onca). Although I would have appreciated inscriptions and text in a larger font, it still is an

Figure 1. A jaguar is shown on a 1991 Mexican stamp issued to promote conservation.

elegant design. The subject seems suspended with a three-dimensional quality.

The jaguar, the largest member of the cat family native to Central American forests, was once plentiful and played a significant role in the culture of the prehispanic residents of the area. Its pelt has always been highly prized, and today its numbers are declining.

The main inscription on the stamp, "Unidos Para La Conservacion," stands for United for Conservation, one of the major initiatives involved in the conservation efforts.

The conservation focus in this case is the Lacandano Forest, a traditional home of the jaguar and one of the tracts being designated for wildlife preservation.

Figure 2. A painting of pronghorns by Bob Kuhn is pictured on a 1992 Mexican stamp.

This stamp was produced at Mexico's main government printing plant, T.I.E.V. (Talleres de Impression de Estampillas y Valores). According to the official release information, 1 million stamps were issued.

The denomination is 1,000 pesos, the first-class rate for a domestic letter at the time.

In 1992, the subject chosen for the conservation message on a stamp was the pronghorn deer (Antilocapra americana), or prongbuck, as it is sometimes called. This graceful animal was once plentiful in the western United States and throughout the elevated plains of Mexico. But its numbers have been severely reduced, again by hunting and loss of habitat.

The 1992 stamp (1778), shown in Figure 2, was produced by Amate Mexico, one of the contractors used by Mexico to print stamps in recent years. The design is from a painting by American artist Bob Kuhn showing a group of five pronghorns in a desert setting. The value was 1,300p, reflecting Mexico's continuing inflation. A total of 300,000 stamps were issued.

This stamp design was, in my view, much more successful than the Jaguar stamp. The inscriptions are well positioned, clear and eminently readable.

The final stamp in my selection was issued in 1995 and calls attention to one of the most beloved mammals of Central America, the ocelot (Felis pardalis). It, too, is a member of the cat family and once lived in forests that extended from Texas to Paraguay.

Smaller than the jaguar, the ocelot's spotted pelt is also highly sought after, and the animal is known to have been used in various rites by the prehispanic cultures.

The ocelot is portrayed on the stamp (1946) illustrated in Figure 3. It was issued Dec. 4, 1995. By that time, Mexico had developed its peso and the denomination is stated in new pesos, 180 pesos. TIEV printed 300,000 stamps.

I find the design attractive, but the main inscription lacks clarity.

With the exception of a sheet issued in 1993 containing 24 different designs, nearly all Mexican stamps touting the conservation theme are in a large format, 48 millimeters by 40mm. The stamps produced by TIEV were perforated gauge 14½ and those by Amate were perforated slightly less than gauge 10.

The Amate perforations are rougher and not always well aligned.

Mexico's Conservation series stamps and their usages could be the basis for an interesting topical display. And this theme easily could be extended using stamps of other countries.

The United Nations has promoted this theme too. And I'm sure other countries have done so as well. The subjects portrayed, various wildlife forms, would fit nicely in other thematic collections.

I can also vouch that these Mexican stamps are immensely popular with young collectors.

It's not too difficult to obtain unused stamps from new-issue dealers. Used stamps are quite another story. The problem here is that with printings of 300,000, which is a normal run for

Figure 3. An ocelot is featured on Mexico Conservation postage stamp issued in 199

most Mexican commemoratives, they will n be abundant in on-paper mixtures. I am to Mexican kiloware is not a great source for cu rent commemoratives.

This also begs another question. With su limited printings, does the conservation me sage really get out to the general public? Wha ever the answer, the stamps do signal a reco nition at high government levels of the need f conservation efforts. And that may be the mo important result of their existence. ■

Franklin Roosevelt and Mexican philately

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Prompted by the release of *Linn's* new book, *Franklin D. Roosevelt: the Stamp-Collecting President* by Brian C. Baur, I decided that FDR's connections to Mexican stamp collecting might be worth exploring.

The two stamps illustrated in Figure 1 would be considered by experienced collectors of Mexico to be common and ordinary.

The stamp shown on the left in Figure 1 is the 10-centavo Cross of Palenque design in violet from the general issue of 1934 (Scott 712). The Scott *Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue* gives a used copy of the stamp its minimum catalog value, 15¢.

Pictured on the right in Figure 1 is the 1-peso airmail stamp from the same general issue (C72). It likewise catalogs at 15¢.

What sets these stamps apart is that they purport to be from the collection of one of America's best-known stamp collectors, Franklin D. Roosevelt. It says so on the back of the stamps.

Each bears the handstamp illustrated in Figure 2.

How this handstamp came about makes for an interesting story. Roosevelt died in April 1945, just as World War II was drawing to a close.

Practically everyone in America knew of his interest in stamps, and no doubt he provided inspiration to thousands to pursue the hobby

Figure 1. These two common Mexican stamps of 1934 are from the collection of President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Figure 2. A handstamp stating that the stamp is from President Roosevelt's collection is on the reserve of the stamp shown on the right in Figure 1. A similar overprint also appears on the reverse of the other Figure 1 stamp.

When I began collecting stamps as a youngster in 1938, my parents felt that if the president of the United States collected stamps in his spare time, it had to be an acceptable and worthy pastime.

After FDR's death, the Roosevelt family decided that since the late president derived so much enjoyment and relaxation from his stamps, the right thing to do was to sell his philatelic holdings so others could enjoy them too.

The H.R. Harmer firm in New York City was chosen to dispense the collection and did so in four sales conducted between February and December 1946.

Many items, such as proofs and complete mint sets, were lotted individually, but much of the material was sold in bulk lots.

It was estimated that Roosevelt had more than 20,000 stamps in 30 albums when he entered the White House in 1933, and the collection grew immensely while he was in office.

One enterprising firm, the Ideal Stamp Co., bought some of these large lots of cheap stamps and proceeded to mark them on the back with the Roosevelt collection provenance.

I believe that it is Ideal Stamp Co.'s handstamp illustrated in Figure 2.

This was a ploy to sell low-value stamps at inflated prices to collectors coveting stamps previously owned by the president of the United States.

Other dealers did this too.

Ideal Stamp even published a catalog of what stamps were available.

So I suspect my two stamps followed this route into the stamp market. True, I had to pay a bit more than 15¢ for them — they were picked out of American Philatelic Society circuit books. But what interesting souvenirs I have of the golden age of stamp collecting, when even a U.S. president took time from his heavy responsibilities to enjoy the hobby.

Figure 3. Mexico pictured Franklin Roosevelt on this stamp issued in 1947 for an international stamp exhibition held in New York City.

Figure 4. Two airmail stamps from Mexico's 1947 Centenary International Philatelic Exhibition set depict President Franklin Roosevelt and a stamp from Mexico's first issue.

Roosevelt's avowal of the Good Neighbor Policy shortly after assuming office won widespread admiration among the Latin American nations.

During WWII, Roosevelt's meeting with Mexico's president Avila Comancho at Monterrey in 1943 did much to assuage the sour relations prevailing between the two countries as a result of the oil expropriation act in 1938.

So, when the Centenary International Philatelic Exhibition in New York City came around in May 1947, Mexico's set of five stamps honoring that event included two vertical-format stamps portraying the late stamp-collecting president together with a facsimile of a 15c stamp from Mexico's first issue of 1856.

Figure 3 shows the 10c surface-mail-rate stamp that was printed in a yellow-brown color (826). Although a half million of this denomination were printed, its popularity and heavy usage combined to drive its catalog value to the highest for any stamp in the set. In the 1999 Scott catalog, it is listed at $1.65 mint and $1 used.

The two airmail stamps depicting Roosevelt are in a horizontal format. The 25c value is blue-violet (C167). The 1p denomination was printed in two colors, carmine and blue (C169). Figure 4 shows the two stamps.

Both had printings of 250,000. They currently catalog 90¢ mint, 50¢ used, and $1.25 mint, 40¢ used, respectively.

The other two stamps in this 1947 set show the Mexican coat of arms and the U.S. 10¢ black stamp of 1847 (2).

An imperforate subvariety exists of the 30c airmail (C168). Although this may be one of the many cases of res-

cued printer's waste, it has always had a high catalog value, now listed at $325 for a pair.

The Roosevelt stamps, even though they are well past 50 years old, are still readily available from dealers in Mexican stamps or from circuit books.

The Roosevelt theme certainly can be developed with stamps from other countries. Monaco, for example, issued several stamps honoring Roosevelt. One 1947 airmail stamp from Monaco (C16) depicts Roosevelt working on his collection.

I would be interested in hearing from collectors who may own Mexican stamps that were formerly in the FDR collection. He had a good collection of Mexico.

Have you inspected the back of all your stamps lately? You may have one of these souvenirs and not know it. ■

Examining a V-Mail letter from Mexico

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

At my club's recent show, the Garfield-Perry March Party held March 12-14 in Cleveland, I made the perfunctory round of dealers hoping to find something useful for my various Mexican collections.

Rarely do I uncover anything really great, but occasionally I do find something that provides a story for this column. Such was the case this year.

Figure 1 illustrates the item, a 1945 V-Mail letter that originated in Mexico City. It is addressed to an Air Force master sergeant in care of a San Francisco APO (Army post office).

Although not obvious from the return address — the names are different — it is a letter from a mother to her son scolding him for not writing more frequently and asking for news of his condition and well-being.

The letter is properly franked for delivery in the United States with Mexico's 25-centavo brown Allegory of Flight stamp, Scott C141, that had been issued the previous year, 1944.

This V-Mail letter immediately raised several questions.

Was it legitimate? It is the first instance I have encountered of a V-Mail letter from Mexico, although the dealer from whom I bought it had two others in his stock, each directed to a different person.

This one seemed most interesting to me because of the address, so I chose it over the other two.

I also wondered if this letter had been microfilmed and handled the way V-Mail was supposed to be, and then perhaps spirited through the back door of the processing center by a zealous stamp collector? Or was it sent on as an ordinary letter? And if so, why no censoring? Certainly there were V-Mail facilities at the San Francisco APOs.

Figure 1. This V-Mail letter was sent from Mexico in 1945 and bears an airmail stamp. The letter is opened partially to show the instructions on the back, as well as the front.

I also was curious about the address and where Master Sgt. Robert H. Hynds might have been located in May 1945.

Thankfully, my good friend and fellow *Linn's* columnist Richard B. Graham was able to help me out on some of my puzzlement.

First, Graham confirmed that there were many cases where V-Mail letters were sent without microfilming, in some instances, by design of the participants.

He added that, as far as he knew, there was no limitation on who could write to overseas GIs by V-Mail, though he, too, was unaware of any letters originating outside of the United States.

Graham also was able to determine the location of the addressee from WWII references he possesses. The 421st Squadron, 504th Bomb Group, to which Hynds was assigned was located on the island of Tinian in the Marianas group.

According to Graham's source, the 504th was based at the north airfield from Oct. 29, 1944, to June 24, 1946. It flew bombing raids with B-29s over Japan and nearby islands the Japanese still occupied.

This proved an exciting revelation for me. It was from this same airfield that Lt. Col. Paul Tibbets and his crew flew the *Enola Gay*, a specially equipped B-29, to drop the world's first atomic bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima Aug. 6, 1945.

I don't presume any connection between this letter and that historic event. Tibbets was commander of the 509th Composite Bomb Group, and their raid was two and a half months after the date of this letter. But the fact that Master Sgt. Hynds may have been at the same base as the Tibbets' crew is nonetheless interesting.

I feel that there may still be unanswered questions about this V-Mail cover. If it did indeed follow the path of an ordinary letter for delivery, it is remarkably well preserved for having traveled halfway around the world and back again.

There is a penciled notation, "LT 74/4-5," on an inside flap, that neither Graham nor I can explain. Could it have been docketing applied at the V-Mail processing office? Was this an indication that the original letter, after microfilming, was not destroyed?

And what about censoring? I know ordinary letters from Mexico were censored at the time this one was mailed. Perhaps, with the war winding down, this precaution was no longer deemed necessary. The V-Mail form itself provided a special space above the written message for a censor's mark, but this is blank. This blank circle can be seen at the top right of the letter in Figure 2.

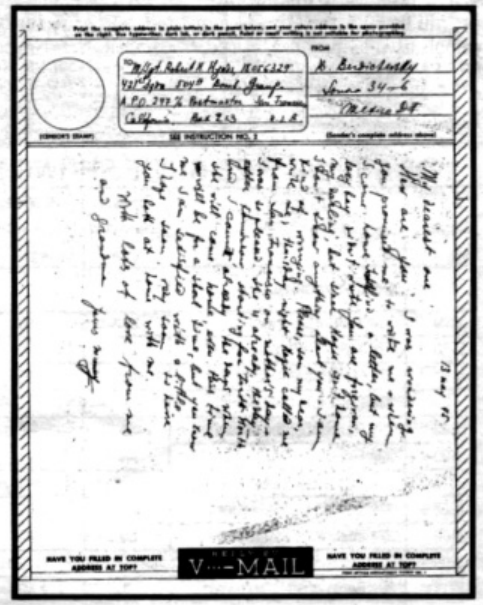


Figure 2. The message portion of the V-Mail letter shown in Figure 1. The circle for the censor's mark in the upper left is blank.

And finally, could the letter have been intercepted and returned to sender in a government envelope as being an illegal use? I don't think this was likely, but when you're guessing, one tries to think of all angles.

Readers who may be able to shed further light on this interesting piece of Mexican postal history are encouraged to drop me a line. Write to Dale Pulver, in care of Linn's, Box 29, Sidney, OH 45365. I will acknowledge all communications. ■

Mexico's late 19th-century postal markings

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

This month I'll continue the exploration of Mexican postal markings that I began in my Mexico column in the Jan. 25 *Linn's*.

The time frame will embrace the last two decades of the 1800s, when the Mexican postal system was undergoing wrenching changes to keep pace with the modernization dictated by Mexico's president, Porfirio Diaz.

To recap from the January column, the cumbersome overprinting system used since the first Mexican stamps of 1856 was abandoned in 1883.

Attempts to standardize cancelers and postal markers, underway since 1872, had made progress, but many smaller post offices continued to use the crude but quaint devices from earlier times.

Perhaps the most profound change occurred with the reorganization of the postal bureaucracy. In place of a regional hierarchy, as had existed from colonial times, new pyramids of authority were drawn strictly within state boundaries.

Initially, three levels of offices were established: "oficinas principales" (administrative offices in the state capitals), "estafetas" (administrative sub-offices), and "agencias" (small town offices).

The estafeta category was eventually dropped, and the subordinate offices were designated local administrations.

Ideally, each post office received three handstamps: One to mark official communications, another to indicate payment of postage and cancel stamps, and a third to designate registered letters. Figure 1 show typical examples of the three types.

The first type usually included a designation of the office status — principal, administrative or agency.

It took a long time to convert to the new handstamps with the consequence that small offices were, as noted, obliged to use their old handstamps. If they lacked a registry marker, the required endorsement would be written by hand.

During the transition years, from the mid-1870s to 1890, the majority of new official and canceling handstamps were ovals. Various styles and sizes are recorded. These postmarks are eminently collectible, and they show up beautifully on the orange and vermilion stamps of the numeral issue of 1886-90. Figure 2 depicts representative examples from two small villages, Hecelchakun in the state of Campece and Topia in the state of Durango.

Figure 2. Oval handstamps were used in Mexican post offices from the mid-1870s to 1890. These examples are from two small village post offices, Hecelchakun and Topia.

Figure 3. A tracing of a handstamp used in Mexico starting in 1888. This circular datestamp is known as the bridge type.

Most stamps of this era bear at least a portion of the oval canceler, and a few exhibit well-centered strikes. The office seal is rarely found used on stamps.

The 1880s saw a marked increase of oval cancelers equipped with daters. While most of the large offices had used dated cancelers all along, the sub-offices and agencies were quite apt to omit this feature. But as railroads spread across the country, the movement of mail became easier and quicker, and it seems the post office took a measure of pride in substantiating its faster delivery times.

Around 1888, a circular datestamp appeared that was to become a standard design for many years to come. Figure 3 shows a tracing of it, and Figure 4 shows two stamps from the mid-1890s with centered strikes. This handstamp has been named the "bridge-type" datestamp owing to the bridgelike appearance of the two semicircular segments between the dater panel and the inside ring.

Figure 4. Two Mexican stamps with bridge-type cancels from 1895. The stamp on the left is from Monterrey. The one on the right is from Muzquiz (now Melchor Muzquiz).

This canceler format slowly took its place in post offices throughout the republic. On the two stamps in Figure 4, the datestamp was used from a large office, Monterrey, which then had a population of about 35,000, and from a much smaller Muzquiz (now Melchor Muzquiz) that was then home to fewer than 3,000 souls.

Also during this era more and more instructional and directional handstamps appeared.

With the expanding role of railroads in the conveyance of mail, route agents were put aboard and were provided with self-designating handstamps to use on mail delivered directly to the mail cars. The stamp on the right in Figure 5 shows a 5-centavo Mulita bearing an agent's cancel. The inscription "Ag. Post *6" stands for Postal Agent 6. Although not visible, I believe the lower inscription named the Zacatecas-Chihuahua railroad as the line on which this agent operated.

The Mulitas ("little mules") are the stamps in the 1895-98 Mail Transportation series.

Bridge handstamps were devised for other post office chores and were so inscribed. They marked lower mail classes as well as mail directed to foreign addressees (servicio internacional). Figure 5 shows two stamps bearing bridge datestamps, one with the international mail designation and the other inscribed "paquete postal" (parcel post) in the center and right, respectively.

Special datestamps existed for urban delivery and night mail.

As population and mail volume grew, larger towns, and especially Mexico City, found it necessary to establish branch post offices.

This bridge cancel format, with and without vertical bars, and in various sizes, endured well into the 20th century. I've seen it used as late as 1945, and there may well be later examples.

Hundreds of other handstamps in various shapes and sizes were employed during the last days of the 19th century, and it can be fun searching for them too.

All of the examples illustrated with this article are from my small collection of socked-on-the-nose stamps that I have been gathering for many years. For the most part, these stamps cost pennies, far out of proportion to the interest and pleasure they have provided me.

I suspect many collectors do not pay much attention to the inscriptions found in the post-classic cancellations. But they can reveal a great deal about the postal duty the stamps provided and are, in my opinion, every bit as interesting as the early ones.

If you are looking for something to collect that doesn't require a huge bankroll to fund, try bull's-eye strikes of turn-of-the-century cancels.

There is great variety and reasonable challenge. To assist you, try to obtain a copy of Karl Schimmer's 1977 book — *The Postmarks of Mexico: 1874-1900*. It is the definitive work on the subject. ■

Figure 5. A Mexican route agent's cancel used aboard a train is shown on the left. Shown in the center and right are cancels used for foreign-bound mail and parcel post, respectively.

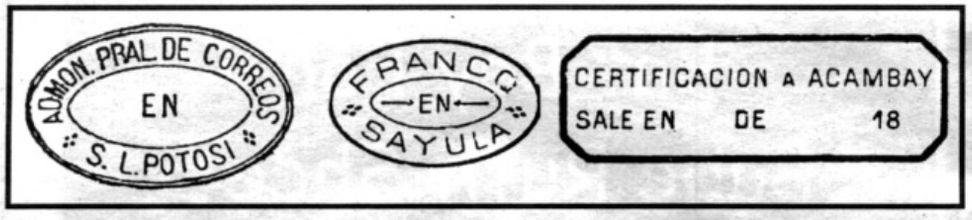


Figure 1. The three types of handstamps used by Mexican post offices in the late 1800s: the example on the right was for official communications; the one in the middle was for canceling stamps and donating payment; the one on the left was for registered letters.

Mexican stamps honor artist Diego Rivera

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

For two and a half months this spring, works of art by Diego Rivera were on display in Cleveland, Ohio, near where I live.

In the world of art, Rivera is perhaps Mexico's best known native son. The exhibit at the Cleveland Museum of Art included 120 examples of his prolific output, providing a rare opportunity to view masterpieces from public as well as private collections.

Rivera's art also is abundantly reproduced on the postage stamps of Mexico, although he did not live long enough to see it so utilized.

He was born in Guanajuato in 1886, one of twin boys (his brother Jose Carlos died in 1888). After his family moved to Mexico City in 1892, his aptitude for art was nurtured at the Academia de San Carlos from 1898 to 1905.

The following year, Rivera entered 26 works in the annual art competition of his alma mater before embarking (in 1907) on a 14-year sojourn to Europe to cultivate his considerable talents.

His years abroad were defining, not only with respect to his artistic versatility but also his lifestyle preferences.

He joined the cubist movement of Pablo Picasso. Eventually, however, he broke with Picasso and the cubists as his art form took a different turn.

While in Europe, stormy relationships with at least two women set a pattern he was to follow with the opposite sex for the rest of his life.

Rivera returned to Mexico in 1921 bringing with him a soaring artistic reputation and definite ideas on the direction Mexican art should take. His first important commissions were murals, for which he ultimately gained enduring fame. He also continued to produce notable easel paintings, including many portraits.

Figure 1. Diego Rivera painted this self-portrait when he was 68 years old. Mexico issued the stamp in 1986 to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the artist's birth.

His style was unmistakable, reflecting keen insights on his revolutionary ideals and an uncanny ability to portray vividly the earthy lifestyles of the masses.

If my count is correct, his work is the subject of at least 17 Mexican stamps, beginning in 1965 with a commemorative honoring revolutionary patriot Jose Morelos (Scott 967).

A year later, outline sketches of athletes by Rivera were chosen for the first of several special issues promoting the 1968 Olympics (974, 975, C318-20).

Several more stamps reproducing Rivera's work appeared during the 1970s and 1980s. The subject matter invariably focused on Mexican patriots and heroic events, and most of the designs for these stamps were excerpted from his many murals.

Over his lifetime, he also painted numerous self-portraits. The stamp shown in Figure 1 reproduces a self-portrait Rivera created in 1954 when he was 68 years old, three years before his death.

One thing that could always be said of Rivera was that he painted true to life, as demonstrated here. The self-portrait reflects the wear and tear of his many years and his lifestyle excesses. This self-portrait stamp was issued in 1986 on the 100th anniversary of his birth.

Earlier that same year, the Mexican postal service began a series of pictorial art stamps honoring Mexican artists. The first set of three stamps was dedicated to the art of Rivera, and the examples selected were some of his greatest works.

The first stamp in the series is shown in Figure 2. This 50-peso stamp reproduces a 1915 painting by Rivera titled *Paisaje Zapatista* (Zapatista landscape). This work was painted in the cubist style, while Rivera was still in Paris. Its elements reflect aspects of the Mexican revolution, then in full swing, and for which Rivera had begun to show great sympathies.

The second stamp in the set depicts a typical easel painting from a later era showing a nude against a background of flowers. Figure 3 illustrates this 80p stamp. Rivera created several similar works with this flower theme in the middle years of his career when he also accepted a number of portrait commissions. At the time of this work (1944), he had been named professor at the National School of Painting and Sculpture, and he was exerting considerable influence on the Mexican art movement.

Figure 2. Diego Rivera's cubist painting of a Zapatista landscape is reproduced on this 50-peso stamp released by Mexico in 1986.

The subject of the high value of the 1986 set is the central portion of one of Rivera's great murals titled *Suena de Una Tarde Dominical en la Alameda Central* (Dream of a Sunday afternoon in the Alemeda). In this somewhat autobiographical and satirical work, he emphasizes the contests between the disparate groups that make up Mexican society. This fresco measures 5 meters by 15 meters.

Many of Rivera's murals were so controversial that they spawned virulent criticism and sometimes noisy demonstrations by those who believed they were unfairly portrayed or who disagreed with his depicted philosophies.

In one famous incident involving a mural, when Rivera was commissioned to paint in the lobby of the new Rockefeller Center (1933), he refused to remove the figure of Lenin he had incorporated into the work. The project was halted by the Rockefellers, and the unfinished fresco was later completely destroyed. (Rivera espoused communism his entire life.)

Figure 3. This 80-peso Mexican stamp depicts a painting by Diego Rivera of a nude with flowers. The painting is from 1944.

Figure 4. A controversial mural by Diego Rivera is reproduced on this stamp issued by Mexico in 1986. The mural originally included words saying that God doesn't exist.

In 1947, when a mural commissioned for a Mexico City hotel was found to contain fine print to the effect that God does not exist, demonstrations by the devout against Rivera were so disorderly that the archbishop of Mexico had to intervene.

This is the *Dream* mural shown on the aforementioned 1986 stamp. The mural was screened from public view for eight years until Rivera agreed to modify the offending text.

For those collectors who dote on art-topical stamps, Rivera's work thus illustrated would form a wonderful basis on which to develop a number of themes. Probably no other Mexican artist became so competent or recognized in diverse styles and mediums as did Rivera. With compatriots David Siqueros and Jose Orosco, the mural art form, especially in Mexico, was elevated to heights never before achieved. It was art to be appreciated by the masses and always carried a forceful message.

Here's another opportunity for an interesting thematic at modest cost. Mexico's art stamps are readily available and quite attractive. If you are interested in further details of Rivera's life, there are two excellent biographies, one old and one new. *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera* by Bertram Wolfe (1963) is a near contemporary account by a man who knew and traveled with Rivera. *Dreaming With His Eyes Open — A Life of Diego* by Patrick Marnham (1998) examines the man and his art from the perspective of a later generation. ■

The risks and hazards of 19th-century mails

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

The subject of securing and safeguarding the mails in 19th-century Mexico has always fascinated me.

Historical accounts of life in that vast and provincial land during the mid-1800s reveal that communication and travel between the large population centers was a hazardous and chancy business.

Madame Calderon de la Barca writes in her epic book, *Life in Mexico*, that her extensive travels during the 1840s were always under the watchful eyes of protective companions or armed escorts.

She and other writers of her era have described the ever-present dangers of bandits and highwaymen that preyed on travelers and merchants transporting goods in the interior.

I read the contents of all the old Mexican letters I acquire. Many examples I have are duplicates or triplicates of the same message sent by alternative routings to guarantee that at least one made it through. This is but one means used to insure written communication.

When Mexico's post office decided to use stamps to confirm the payment of postage, it no doubt had the bandit/highwayman danger in mind, too. Stamps were like money and, if stolen, could undoubtedly be profitably disposed of in a number of ways.

The postal authorities came up with a clever scheme to protect the revenue represented by these adhesives.

Figure 1. This Mexican first-issue stamp shows the validating name overprint from Chihuahua above the value.

They decreed that stamps shipped to the various principal postal district offices would have no franking power until overprinted with the name of the receiving district. In theory, lost or stolen stamps would be worthless.

Figure 1 shows an 1856 first-issue stamp with a clear name overprint demonstrating the procedure followed. This overprint is from Chihuahua.

The consequence of such a measure is evident when you consider that the first shipment of stamps to the large district office of Veracruz in August of 1856 represented a face value equal to 4,905 pesos, a huge sum of money in those days.

But the overprinting regulation wasn't uniformly followed.

While most offices obeyed the directive to the letter, a few others, usually small offices, misunderstood or ignored the rules and sold stamps without the district names.

Examples of such stamps must be identified by cancellations from places known to have done this.

Postal records show that some stamp shipments were lost (presumed stolen) en route to their destinations. I am unaware of any proven instance where such stamps were used illicitly, although it would be hard to tell if this were so.

One of my favorite covers in my first-design collection speaks to the risks and dangers of mail transport in mid-19th-century Mexico. It is illustrated in Figure 2.

The handwritten message on the back flap of this folded letter reads (translated from Spanish) "This letter was opened by bandits on the road."

Obviously it had been in some sort of pouch that was rifled by robbers looking for valuables. The oval marking in the lower-left corner indicates that the letter was subsequently recovered and delivered by the post office in Puebla.

In my search for similar items, I have stumbled on several other examples.

One, a stampless letter from the early 1850s, shows how the mails became a pawn in the struggle for power by opposing parties. An endorsement similar to the one in Figure 2 states that the letter was delayed because it was held up by "the protesters" of the other side.

When the French-supported monarchy was in power, 1864-67, letters within and between cities and towns strongly controlled by Maximilian's forces usually moved quickly and securely. But out on the fringes of royalist control, the situation could be quite different.

I have an interesting letter mailed from Silao to Guanajuato in April 1866. The writer laments that there is no mail collection between Silao and La Piedad, some 85 miles southwest of Guanajuato, owing to skirmishes between royalist forces and the liberals under Juarez.

The letterwriter advises that mail addressed to his brother at La Piedad should be sent to him, and a mozo (house boy or messenger) will deliver it.

It seems that locals could pass freely through the lines, but not the official mailman.

There is no way to estimate how much mail was lost to these dangers of the highway and ended up being undelivered. Judging from references I have seen within letters and the prevalence of duplicates directed by different routings, it must have been substantial.

Figure 2. The endorsement on the flap of this 1859 Mexican letter translates to, "This letter was opened by bandits on the road." The letter was recovered and delivered by the Puebla post office, as indicated by the oval handstamp.

After Juarez succumbed in 1872 and Porfirio Diaz rose to power in 1876, the issue of communications became one of the government's chief priorities, with the speed and security of the mails improving immensely.

The cumbersome overprinting system was abandoned as the postal system underwent reorganization. And, a nationwide police force maintained order so stagecoaches and trains could move unmolested.

By the end of the century, mail service in Mexico was as safe and reliable as it ever had been. ■

Postcards show Mexican interurban railway

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

I found interesting material to add to my Mexico collections at the American Philatelic Society's Stampshow Aug. 26-29 in Cleveland.

I acquired not only a few gems from the classic era but also some inexpensive items that appear to have stories behind them.

The postcard shown front and back in Figures 1 and 2 is one of these finds.

From the philatelic standpoint, it is unquestionably a pedestrian item, but the view it portrays captured my attention and curiosity. It's not a great photograph to begin with, and certain details may not show up in the illustration here.

The card features the interurban railcar route that ran between Matamoros and Santa Cruz, two neighboring Mexican towns just across the Rio Grande from Brownsville, Texas.

The car, which has departed the primitive station shown at left, is a hundred yards or so down the right-hand tracks. Horses grazing on the open range and a group of buildings can be seen in the distance.

This card pairs up with a similar postcard I picked up at a stamp bourse a few years ago that gives a clearer picture of the interurban in question.

Figure 1. The front of a postcard showing a Mexican interurban railcar route between Matamoros and Santa Cruz.

Figure 2. The reverse of the Figure 1 postcard, mailed to the United States in 1908 with a 2-centavo Coat of Arms stamp.

Figure 3 pictures the front of this card. It shows the railcar with a complement of well-dressed passengers presumably ready to leave one of the stops along the route. I can count 13 people, passengers, operators and onlookers.

A rather forlorn-looking mule is hitched to the starkly appointed railcar.

The two cards have much in common. Both were addressed to United States destinations and bear 2-centavo frankings of Mexico's 1903 Coat of Arms stamps. The first, mailed in 1908, goes to the writer's sister in Geneseo, Ill. As shown in Figure 2, it bears a single 2c green stamp (Scott 305).

The short message on the card reads: "Dear Sis — We are now in Mexico. I never seen anything like it. Am well."

The second card is addressed to Delaware, Ohio. It bears a pair of the 1c violet Coat of Arms stamps (304) to make up the 2c franking.

There is no message except the brief endorsement on the front: "12/14th 1906 D.T. Williams."

Both cards were printed in the United States, and they appear to have been promoted by local drugstores. The caption on the Figure 1 card is in Spanish and includes the wording "Botica Nueva" (New Pharmacy). The second card has a caption in English mentioning Williams Pharmacy.

I could not place the exact location of Santa Cruz, but I suppose it must have been a small village or settlement not too far from Matamoros and of such importance that a rapid transit connection could be justified.

By now, I assume it has been assimilated within the urban sprawl of Matamoros, with a population today ap-

Figure 3. This postcard showing the Matamoros-Santa Cruz railway was sent to the United States. It bears no message.

proaching a half million.

The current postal zone guide for Mexico assigns a separate code number (87370) for Santa Cruz within the Matamoros regional postal district (87300).

Matamoros has had an interesting history, including events of postal significance. It was founded in 1765 as San Juan de los Esteros Hermanos, a cattle ranching colony far from the mainstream of Mexican culture and commerce.

It was renamed in 1826 after a Mexican hero of the War of Independence, Mariano Matamoros. The city became, with its coastal sister town Bagdad, an important port of entry in northern Mexico.

Gen. Zachary Taylor began his invasion of Mexico in 1846 through Matamoros, and several early battles were fought in the area.

The town gained even more fame and prosperity during the U.S. Civil War when it served as a conduit for supplies and communications to the Confederate forces in Texas, thus circumventing the Union blockage of gulf ports.

Several so-called blockade covers are known bearing the Matamoros boxed postmark shown in Figure 4.

I have a pre-Civil War cover from the United States directed to Zacatecas bearing this mark plus a large "2" denoting the amount due from the addressee (2 reales = 25¢ U.S.). Full prepayment was not possible at the time.

Incidentally, the "H." preceding the name in the postmark stands for "Heroica," a term denoting heroism, loyalty and patriotism during the American incursion of 1846.

Matamoros is one of only

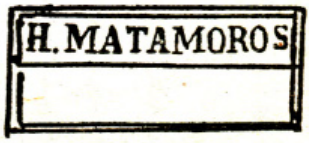


Figure 4. This boxed postmark of Matamoros, Mexico, was used on some Civil War blockade covers.

four Mexican towns bestowed this honorific designation.

Today, Matamoros is one of the main entry points along the U.S.-Mexican border. It is the home of more than 80 firms that assemble U.S. goods from U.S.-supplied parts without imposition of custom duties by either country. Matamoros also is a terminus of the Union Pacific Railroad.

Bagdad disappeared long ago, the victim of hurricanes, bandits and pirates.

As far as I know, there was never a post office in Santa Cruz, nor any evidence that the railcar plying the crooked tracks to Matamoros carried any mail. But it's fun fantasizing that it might have. ■

Mexico's 1934-50 issue

Mexico
By Dale Pulver

A new series of general-issue postage stamps was introduced to the Mexican public coincident with the assumption of office by newly elected president Lazaro Cardenas on Dec. 1, 1934.

This set includes some interesting varieties and has much to commend it for study by a serious and persistent collector.

Initially, 12 values from 1 centavo to 5 pesos, each with a separate design, were issued. Color changes occurred with three of the original values, so the first listings for the issue in the Scott *Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue* (Scott 707-20) show 15 major varieties.

These engraved stamps call attention to important aspects of Mexican culture.

Figure 1 shows six of the 12 designs. The 1c, 4c, 10c, 15c, 40c and 5p values are pictured.

The 1c and 2c denominations portray Indian women of the Yalateca and Tehuana clans.

The 4c shows a huge arched tower in central Mexico City that was to have been the centerpiece of a massive federal palace envisioned by President Porfiro Diaz.

The project was abandoned, and, in 1935, the structure was renamed Arch of the Revolution as a shrine to the 1910 civil uprising that ousted Diaz.

The Tower of Los Remedios on the 5c stamp marked the terminus of a 16th-century aqueduct.

The cross of Palenque, a relic of the lost Mayan civilization in the state of Chiapas, adorns the 10c value.

The next three stamps in the series depict monuments marking important events in Mexican history.

Figure 1. Six of 12 designs of Mexico's regular issue of 1934 are shown here. The designs show aspects of Mexican culture.

Independence monuments in Mexico City and Puebla grace the 15c and 20c values, and the 30c depicts the monument to the child heroes of the 1846-48 war with the United States.

The 40c stamp shows the sacrificial stone of Tizoc. Pictured on the 50c is the temple wall at the ruins of Mitla (Oaxaca), center of the Zapotec civilization.

The bicolor 1p stamp has the Mexican coat-of-arms in brown and orange. The 5p denomination depicts a man in the typical garb of a charro.

The stamp designs measure about 20 millimeters by 26mm, and the first printing is on paper watermarked "CORREOS MEXICO" and perforated 10½.

The imprint at the base of the design reads "Oficina Impresora de Hacienda - Mexico."

Over the next 16 years, through 1950, the series continued with the stamps that Scott numbers with a low of 729 and a high of 851. There's also the overprinted 728A.

In 1937, for reasons not entirely clear, but presumably for economy, the much-used low-value stamps were redrawn in a smaller size, 17½mm by 21mm.

The new, smaller stamps were printed by photogravure at the reorganized government printing office, Talleres de Impression de Estampillas y Valores (TIEV), the same plant that prints some Mexican stamps today.

The imprint at the bottom of the new stamps reflects this change.

This is the only instance I know of in Mexican philately of using the same designs in two sizes.

The smaller stamps were first printed on the "CORREOS MEXICO" watermarked paper, but the perforations were punched to what was becoming a new standard of

Mexico: varieties of 1934-50 regular issue

	Designs: Scott A108-A119	
Scott watermark type, wording	**Large, 20mm by 26mm approximately perf 10½**	**Small, 17½mm by 21mm approximately perf 14**
No. 156 — Correos Mexico	(1934-40) Scott 707-20, 728*	(1937) Scott 729-33
No. 260 — Secretaria de Hacienda — with lines	(1937) Scott 735	(1937) Scott 733B
No. 272 — SHCP/Mexico + eagle in O	(1945-46) Scott 795A-800A	(1944) Scott 784-88
No. 279 — Gobierno/Mexicano + eagle in O	(1947-50) Scott 846-51	(1947-50) Scott 837, 838, 840, 841, 844

*10c violet with overprint "Primer Congreso Nal. de Higiene y Med. del Trabajo."

This table lists the watermark varieties found on stamps of Mexico's 1934-50 issue.

offers opportunities

gauge 14.

Many subsequent printings of these stamps occurred in the 16 years they were current.

Four different watermarked papers have been identified, which are defining features of the separate emissions.

Use of the watermark showing the slanted "Secretaria de Hacienda Mexico" between lines must have been accidental or a brief emergency measure because only two varieties are known with this watermark, and both are scarce (Scott 733B and 735). These are the only really expensive stamps in the group.

In the first series from 1934, unwatermarked varieties exist, but they were not regularly issued. Most known examples are in used condition. It is believed they were printed in 1936, just before the small stamps of 1937 came out and again they may represent a stop-gap measure.

Because watermarks are so important in identification of the varieties and the listings are so scattered in the catalogs, I devised a table that may be helpful in sorting stamps of this issue. The table is shown nearby.

To determine watermarks, I use a Signoscope, a German-made device that examines stamps without immersion. This seems to work well

Figure 2. Poorly centered stock was often used when Mexico's 1934-50 issue stamps were overprinted for use as Officials. The 2c overprinted stamp is shown here.

enough, although the old-fashioned way with a safe fluid detector is effective too.

This stamp series served as the basis for the last set of Mexican Official stamps used to frank government correspondence. The Officials, Scott Nos. O224 to O232, are overprinted with the word "OFICIAL" in a black, serif typeface.

Poorly centered stock often was used for the overprinting, as shown by the 2c stamp pictured in Figure 2.

Mint sets are rather easy to find. When I lived in Mexico during the 1960s, they were still available at the philatelic window of the main post office at face value.

Legitimately used Official stamps can be rather elusive, and covers bearing Official stamp frankings are scarce. You should be alert when browsing through cheap cover boxes. A really worthwhile find could be your reward.

Although listed in Scott, it is alleged that the imperforate stamps of the large and small redrawn series, as well as some of the so-called rare color varieties, slipped out the back door of the printing office exclusively for sale to collectors.

They were never sanctioned by the authorities or sold to the public for general use.

Finally, postal rate revisions prompted the addition of new stamps that are usually grouped in this general-issue series. These include a 12c (790) from 1944; a 3c (805) from 1945; and an 8c (812) from 1946. All were printed in the small format.

The large size continued to be standard for the higher value stamps.

I know of no one who has studied these stamps in depth. But they are still plentiful and cheap, and they offer interesting opportunities for collectors willing to invest the time and effort in careful examination.

As with other long-running series, I would suspect many varieties remain undiscovered or unreported. ■

President Roosevelt; V-mail; mule car line

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

By custom, I use the last column of the year as a chance to recognize loyal readers who provide useful feedback that often adds interesting background to the stories I write.

This year provided another good crop of responses.

After the article on Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Mexican philately appeared in the April 26 *Linn's*, page 50, two readers sent photocopies of material they found in their holdings that once graced the White House stamp albums.

Ed Nierenberg of San Bruno, Calif., has a 1940 foreign service cover addressed to the "Honorable Secretary of State" franked with three contemporary Mexican airmail stamps that was passed along to FDR. The cover included the standard H.R. Harmer authentication stamp.

Apparently, knowledge of the president's collecting interest among the upper government echelons prompted staffers to be alert for material that could be of interest to him.

I also received several responses to the article in the May 24 *Linn's*, page 36, about V-mail that originated in Mexico. A couple of readers reported covers similar to the one I illustrated in the column. One example appeared to have been sent to a San Francisco APO (Army post office) linked to a transfer station for replacement troops headed to the Far East command. Nevertheless, it had been opened and bore a censor's mark.

No one was able to explain how or why my cover escaped examination. Nor was there any further insight on how V-mail might have been handled at the time of my example.

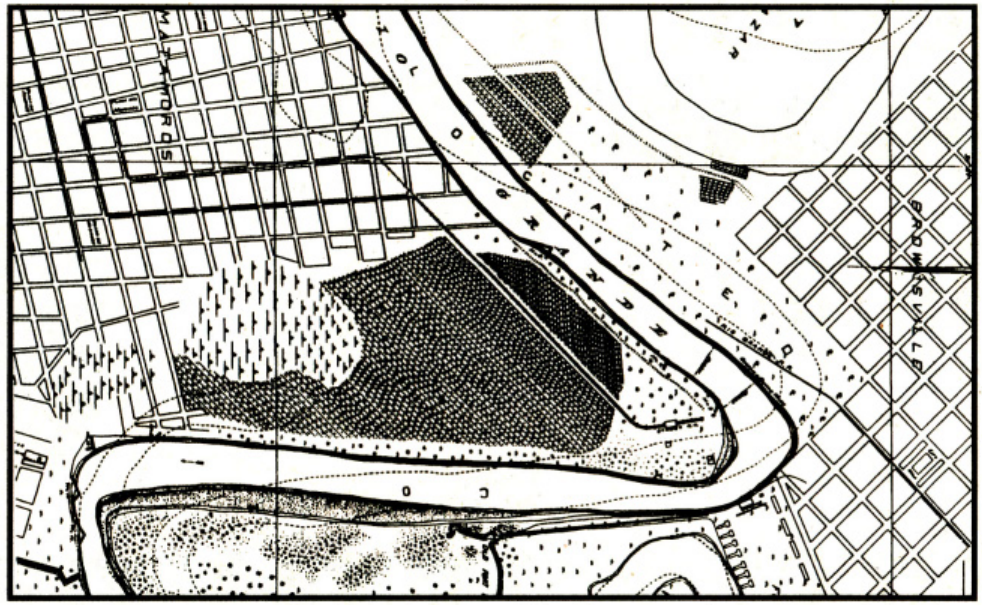
Mike Cherrington of Midland, Texas, sent along an interesting piece prepared by the Confederate Air Force on the 201st Mexican Fighter Squadron. The 201st squadron, which was made up entirely of Mexican nationals, mostly from the Mexican Air Force, received advanced training in the United States and ultimately was dispatched as the Mexican Expeditionary Air Force to the Far East.

The squadron ended up in Manila, Philippines, where it was attached to the 58th Fighter Group of the U.S. 5th Air Force. Equipped with P-47D Thunderbolt fighters, the squadron served valiantly against Japanese forces in northern Luzon and later made long range reconnaissance flights over Formosa (Taiwan). In all, they flew nearly 100 missions.

If I could find a piece of mail to or from this group, it could be the basis for a more complete account of this interesting wartime unit. I'll keep looking.

Also noted in this short report was the fact that nearly a quarter million Mexican nationals served in U.S. military units, so V-mail exchange between relatives and these service people should not be too surprising.

By far the biggest response of the year came as the result of the article in *Linn's* Oct. 11, page 44, on the Matamoros-Santa Cruz mule car line.



Turn-of-the-century map that shows the route of the Matamoros-Santa Cruz mule car line.

Michael Hart of Burlingame, Calif., sent color photocopies of some lovely postcards showing various views of the car line. Whereas the one I illustrated in the article had a one-mule hitch, two of his cards showed fairly elaborate open-side cars being drawn by two mules.

John Rowin answered the question about Santa Cruz' location. Rowin lives in McAllen, Texas, some 50 miles upstream from Brownsville/Matamoros. Santa Cruz was simply the terminus of the railcar line at the Rio Grande directly opposite Brownsville, Texas.

In those days, no bridge connected the two towns and one was obliged to ferry across the river.

Rowin sent along photocopies of two turn-of-the-century maps (1890-94) that clearly show the route the car followed. Tracks ran north and south a block apart from the center of town to a point about a block and a half from the river and then veered to the northeast across open fields until they reached the sharp bend in the river where the ferries docked. This may be seen in the map shown nearby.

It is possible that the crude station shown in Figure 1 of the Oct. 11 column was the Santa Cruz station at the riverbank.

Rowin, who was born and raised in Brownsville, reported that his mother recalls that during the Great Depression and Prohibition, the "Norteamericanos" would ride the ferry and car line to Matamoros for 2¢ or 3¢ where they could buy beer for a nickel or a shot of tequila for a dime.

According to notes on the reverse of Hart's postcards, the line was established in 1872.

Wes Leatherock of Oklahoma City surfed the Internet and found out that plans were made in 1908 to electrify the line and extend it across the river. Nothing came of this. But during the 1920s, the line acquired a gasoline-powered car that started the phaseout of mules. When the line ceased operation is not known.

With this new information on the Matamoros and Santa Cruz railcar line, I strongly suspect that mail between the two towns was carried on the cars. There were no special markings, but it is not unreasonable to assume that when required, the postmasters would dispatch mail pouches containing cards and letters for the other side. What could be simpler and more direct?

Let me take this opportunity to thank all readers who took time to write to me on various subjects. I especially appreciate the many kind comments about these articles. Also I extend to everyone my best wishes during the holiday season. ■

Mexico issued Little Eagles series in 1899

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

More than one hundred years ago, in 1899, Mexico introduced a new series of definitive (regular-issue) stamps, Scott 294-303.

In Mexican collector circles, this set of stamps often is referred to as "the Aguilitas" (little eagles). This nickname came about because the first seven values of the set depict Mexico's coat of arms showing an eagle perched on a cactus and holding a snake in its beak.

Engraved and printed by the London firm of Bradbury, Wilkinson and Co. Ltd. (the same firm that produced the Independence issue of 1910), the stamps were very well done on a hard wove, watermarked paper, cleanly perforated and exceptionally well centered.

The top three values, 50 centavos, 1 peso and 5p, depict three familiar Mexican landmarks: the Juanacatlan Falls near Guadalajara, the volcano Popocatepetl and the Cathedral of Mexico City.

This was the first time that Mexican postage stamps had portrayed anything other than former leaders, coats of arms, or numerals of value.

The three high-value stamps are in a large horizontal format.

This issue has never caught on with specialists, even though it offers interesting collecting possibilities.

Although the printing is relatively free of defects and unintended varieties, some rare and attractive essays and proofs exist, and the postal history aspects can be challenging.

Figure 1. The embossed design of Mexico's coat of arms featuring an eagle, from postal stationery issued about 100 years ago.

Two of my 1992 columns (*Linn's*, Jan. 13 and June 15, 1992) discussed the origin of the scenic designs and went into some depth on the collecting opportunities and what is available.

I also noted that my friend Karl Schimmer had mounted an attractive and interesting exhibit appropriately titled "Mexico: Entering the 20th Century."

Schimmer's is the only exhibit I know of that deals exclusively with these stamps.

Another aspect of this definitive issue has probably attracted even less attention but is nonetheless captivating — a full complement of postal stationery was issued along with the adhesive postage stamps.

This included postal cards, letter cards, wrappers and envelopes. The frank on these items consists of an embossed design about 30 millimeters in diameter also featuring the Mexican eagle as the central subject. Figure 1 shows this design.

The various denominations were printed in colors consistent with the Universal Postal Union conventions.

For several years, I have been accumulating turn-of-the-century postal stationery, especially postal cards, seeking interesting rates, routes and destinations.

This field has not been extensively studied, and material is still available at reasonable prices. This means good opportunities and reasonable challenge for the serious collector.

The card shown in Figure 2, is a very unusual use.

First, although most postal stationery catalogs note that these postal cards were officially issued in 1900, it is quite clear that this card was used in December 1899.

It also is a misuse of a 3c paid-reply card. The message portion, which should have originated in Mexico, was written and mailed from Hamburg, Germany, Dec. 6, 1899, to Mexico City. It arrived there Dec. 22, after 16 days in transit.

Figure 2. The message side of a Mexican paid-reply postal card was mailed from Hamburg, Germany, Dec. 6, 1899. The card arrived in Mexico City 16 days later, Dec. 22, 1899.

We can only speculate how this happened. Perhaps the other half, the reply portion was used first on an outbound mailing from Mexico. Or perhaps the card was hand-carried to Germany.

Figure 3. This Mexican postal card issued for overseas use was revalued when the rate increased. It was sent from Tampico, Mexico, to Hamburg, Germany, in September 1904.

In any event, neither the German post office nor Mexican authorities objected, and it went through unmolested. The handwritten note at top directs it by way of New York and Laredo, Texas.

The example pictured in Figure 3 is a regular postal card issued for overseas use. This card, dated Sept. 11, 1904, originated in Tampico, Mexico, and headed to Hamburg.

By 1904, the rate to Germany had been raised to 4c so the original 3c values were blotted out and "cuatro centavos" printed below the impression.

The card provides an additional clue to its routing with the transit circular datestamp of "N(ueva) Laredo, Tam(aulipas)" above the address.

This card went from Tampico by train to North Laredo, crossed the border, then on to New York, also by train, where it caught up with a steamer bound for Europe.

Again, the total transit time is very good. According to the Hamburg receiving mark, the trip took 15 days.

Official revaluation, as demonstrated by the card shown in Figure 3, wasn't the only way to satisfy a higher rate.

For cards to pay same-city drop service (1c) or domestic use between Mexican towns

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or to the United States (2c), users could and often did add stamps to make the proper rates.

Nor did it seem to matter if message-reply pairs were cut apart and used as regular cards as long as the franking was correct. I have several such examples.

Postal cards were immensely popular at that time, especially within the business community.

They were used to advertise, request payment, trace rail cars, confirm shipments and advise customers of import-export action. And from every indication I have, they were handled as expeditiously as were sealed letters, which required higher rates.

In retrospect, one cannot help but be impressed with the efficiency and timeliness of mail handling in Mexico at the end of the 19th century.

These early Mexican postal cards provide an accurate overview of an evolving postal system that was progressive and well run.

The Aguilitas stamps and postal stationery marked an optimistic and hopeful entry into a new century.

But there were political storm clouds on the horizon, and by the time the issue was replaced in 1910, the country was on the brink of the most disastrous civil revolution it has ever known.

What a difference a hundred years can make. ■

Mexican meters offer collecting opportunities

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Today's commercial correspondence usually is franked with a meter stamp instead of a postage stamp.

Meter machines can process thousands of envelopes in a short time and accurately tally the total cost of postage. They avoid the need for stocking stamps and evade the possibilities of theft.

They also permit companies that use them the opportunity to expose their name and corporate logos to the public, as well as to display short sales messages.

I wrote about meter stamps in my Mexico column in the June 10, 1991, issue of *Linn's*.

I am in the midst of mounting a long-dormant collection of these items for exhibit, so I thought it might be appropriate to explore their collecting possibilities again.

Universal Postal Frankers Ltd., a British firm, was the first to lease meters in Mexico, doing so in 1929. Figure 1 shows one of the firm's meter stamp impressions from 1930.

This 20-centavo meter stamp is on a 1930 cover sent to Hamburg, Germany.

The Pitney-Bowes Company and the Swiss firm of Hasler arrived in Mexico next.

After World War II, the German companies Francotyp G.m.b.H. and Postalia, and Satas, a French maker, got into the act. National Cash Register also made meter impressions in Mexico, but these meters were never as dominant as the others.

Figure 2 shows the general anatomy of a meter stamp. Essentially, there are two parts: a town mark that includes the city and state of origin and date of processing; and the frank, that indicates the prepaid postage for the letter.

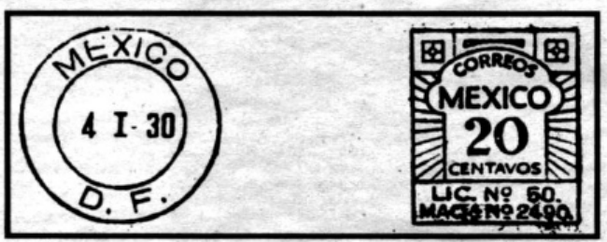


Figure 1. A 1930 meter stamp from Universal Postal Frankers Ltd. This British firm was the first to lease meters in Mexico.

Because meters are operated under the strict control of government postal authorities, the impressions also must show a license or permit number and the registry number of the machine itself.

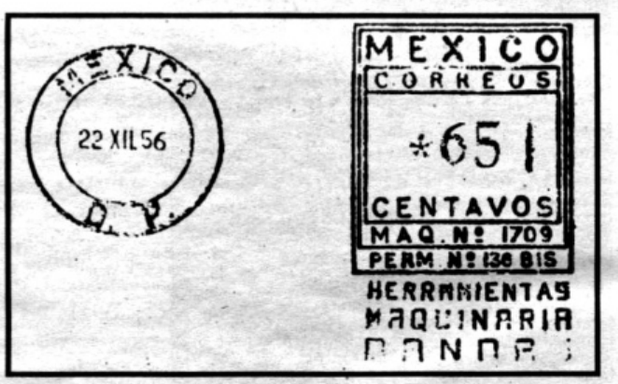


Figure 2. The two basic parts of a meter stamp are the town-mark (left) and the frank (right). The machine and permit numbers on this example are in panels below the frank.

In the sample illustrated, these are located in panels at the base of the frank.

Later on, it was decreed that the permit number should appear at the bottom of the town mark, and efforts at this rearrangement gave rise to numerous and sometimes curious collectible varieties.

In the early days of Mexican meters, letters received supplemental postal markings with the words "MAQUINAS FRANQUEADORAS" (franking machines) at the main post office to alert clerks that the postage indicated by the meter stamp was valid.

At least two different formats existed for these supplementary postal markings.

The cover shown in Figure 3 pictures a late design of the supplementary marking. It probably was used because the meter stamp was quite faintly struck and could have escaped notice by the sorting clerks.

The Figure 3 cover was sent from Mexico to Akron, Ohio, in 1943 and was censored.

No design standards seem to have existed for Mexican meter stamps, and some of them, especially those of the European firms (Hasler, Francotyp and Postalia), cleverly worked Mexican cultural elements into their designs.

Figure 4 shows a good example of this. This 1964 Francotyp meter stamp depicts an eagle perched on a cactus with a snake in its beak (the Mexican coat of arms). The Mexican eagle also is featured in all of the Pitney Bowes impressions.

Certain quasi-official slogans were included in meter stamps. These touted tourism, use of postal insurance, proper packaging of parcels and other subjects.

Private firms also used their logos and trademarks liberally in their meters, and some of these are eagerly sought by topical collectors when the mark fits their favorite theme.

The variety of meter designs and art elements is so vast that one is usually obliged to specialize in some way or other.

One manageable approach is to assemble a type collection of Mexican meter stamps, which is what I have done. My collection includes examples from all the meter companies that operated in Mexico, including most of the subtypes that are recognized by meter specialists.

Other specialized collecting areas could include town marks, rates, destinations, logos, and trademarks and slogans.

In my 1991 column about meter stamps, I noted as information sources articles by Werner Simon in *Mexicana*, June 1970-71, and *The Meter Postage Stamp Catalogue* (circa 1953) by S.D. Barfoot and W. Simon. The catalog is considered the bible for meter stamps up to 1951. There may be a later edition; I am not certain.

However, for those interested in Mexican meters, Doug Kelsey (*Linn's* meter stamps columnist) has written a concise and useful compendium on the subject, *Mexico Postage Meter Stamp Catalog* (1994).

Kelsey's catalog builds on the Werner Simon knowledge and touches on the inflation period of the 1980s. This catalog, published by the Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International, is still available. If interested, contact Carl LeMar John, 5063 E. North Regency Circle, Tucson, AZ 85711.

Metered envelopes usually don't cost very much. Unfortunately, though, you may need to search hard for the early meter types or find a dealer who has put some aside. I have found many just browsing through bulk stocks of inexpensive covers.

Figure 3. This 1943 censored cover sent from Mexico to Akron, Ohio, bears a circular marking reading "Maq. Franqueadoras," indicating that it was franked by a meter stamp.

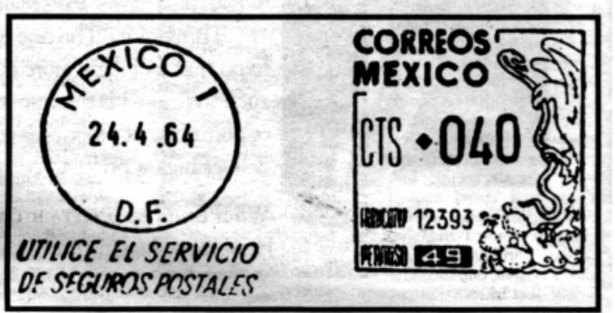


Figure 4. This Mexican Francotyp meter stamp features the eagle, cactus and snake from the Mexican coat of arms.

It helps to know what you're looking for, but careful study of the Kelsey catalog will prepare you for your quest.

I have skipped over all the mechanical details of postal meters that some specialists find so interesting. The actual designs, varieties and uses are more to my liking.

If you are interested in the machine technicalities, by all means look up the older Barfoot and Simon literature and check out the International Machine Cancel Society (Secretary Gary Carlson, 3097 Frobisher Ave., Dublin, OH 43017-1652). The society and its members will set you straight. Meanwhile, good hunting. ■

FDCs for U.S.-Mexico Conservation stamps

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Both Mexico and the United States have issued numerous stamps with conservation themes. These attractive stamps seem to command a lot of attention from stamp collectors as well as from the general public.

My Mexico column in the March 22, 1999, *Linn's* highlighted efforts to promote conservation using stamps to stimulate public awareness of this important issue.

Recently, I received an interesting letter from a *Linn's* reader whom I had helped connect with a dealer of Mexican stamps. The letter writer, Victor Ohman of Missouri, is keen on first-day covers of joint issues. His story may inspire others in finding new twists to our hobby.

On Oct. 2, 1996, the U.S. Postal Service issued a pane of 15 32¢ Endangered Species stamps calling attention to 15 animal species.

Mexico issued a pane of 24 1.80-peso Endangered Species stamps at the same time.

Although this coincidence was not considered a joint issue in the strictest sense (there were no equivalent designs), the Oct. 2, 1996, first-day ceremonies in Mexico City, Mexico, and San Diego, Calif., were attended by representatives of both countries.

Both the U.S. and Mexican stamps were featured in a front-page story in the Sept. 9, 1996, issue of *Linn's*.

The U.S. stamps were modeled after photographs of the subjects in the wild. The 15 subjects were chosen from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's endangered species list.

The 24 Mexican stamps, however, depicted endangered flora and fauna against a cleverly linked and continuous backdrop of their natural habitat. The pane was a seamless composite of many environments, from the cloud forests of the tropics to the deserts of the Mexican plateau.

This was the first time such a complicated se-tenant design had been attempted in Mexican stamp production, and it was generally received with high praise in both public and stamp hobby circles.

Ohman had no difficulty obtaining a pane of the Mexican issue (300,000 were printed), but he really wanted FDCs bearing both the U.S. and Mexican stamps, and none of the dealers he contacted could help.

Eventually, he turned to the Internet, which is becoming ever more popular as a source for difficult-to-find items.

He learned of an FDC auction and, by way of telephone bids, was able to acquire 15 covers, each bearing a different U.S. Endangered Species stamp plus two (usually) of the Mexican stamps. Figure 1 shows one of his covers.

According to Ohman, the cachets were handtinted, and all the covers were of different sizes.

Carefully applied cancellations mark the Oct. 2, 1996, first day of issue for both countries.

The U.S. stamp on the Figure 1 cover shows an ocelot (Felis pardales). This member of the cat family also is pictured on the right-hand Mexican stamp on the cover, just above the word "Niebla."

Butterflies are featured on the U.S. and Mexican stamps on the cover pictured in Figure 2.

Delighted with his acquisition, Ohman displayed his newly mounted treasures at his local club's show-and-tell night.

He wrote me that he was pleased to receive many kind comments about his showing, which amply rewarded all the effort he put into the project.

When first announced in *Linn's*, the Mexican pane was to consist of 12 1.80p stamps and an equal number of 2.70p values, plus a nondenominated label to make up the five-by-five format of the pane. However, when issued, it appeared with 24 1.80p stamps for a total face value of 43.20p. At the time, this would have converted to about $5.65.

The U.S. pane, on the other hand, cost a collector $4.80.

The Mexican pane bears a surface coating with prehispanic designs visible only under black light. Presumably, this treatment was added for security reasons.

My serious collecting interest focuses predominantly on the early classic issues of Mexico, but I have reached the point where significant additions to my collections are few and far between. Items I can use rarely surface, and when they do there is usually a conflict with the limits of my stamp budget.

I'm not yet ready to capitulate totally to the more affordable new issues, but I can appreciate why many collectors are attracted to them and devise ways of having fun with them.

Ohman has certainly found a wrinkle to challenge himself, and, from the tone of his letter, he is obviously having a lot of fun doing it.

I close with one observation that I have probably made before. Mexico usually prints about 300,000 of each of its nondefinitive, or commemorative, stamps. The printing of this Conservation pane was no exception to this rule.

Assuming that a good share of these panes ended up in the stamp market to be saved by collectors, it doesn't leave a whole lot to be used to spread the message on conservation.

It is, however, a start and there is no doubt that we shall see more such issues in the future. ■

Figure 1. A joint first-day cover for United States and Mexican Conservation stamps issued Oct. 2, 1996. The stamps are not considered a joint issue because the stamp designs differ.

Figure 2. This FDC is similar to the one in Figure 1, except it bears other stamps from the U.S. and Mexico's 1996 Conservation panes. Butterflies are shown on the stamps and cover.

Early Mexican airmail flights to the U.S.

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

I have started work on a small accumulation of early Mexico-to-United States airmail covers to see if there is enough material for a one-frame exhibit. My arbitrary cutoff for early airmail service had been the end of 1930.

However, I may extend that a year or two to include some of the interesting rate gyrations that occurred in the early 1930s.

The period between 1927 and 1932 was a complex and confusing era in Mexican airmail postal history.

First, the airmail rates rose sharply, then fell, only to rise again.

Thanks to Marino Riosa's article in the February 1994 issue of the American Air Mail Society's *Airpost Journal*, these rate changes are conveniently sorted out and summarized.

It is assumed that the abrupt changes reflected the tug-of-war between low rates to encourage airmail use and the realities of cost to provide that service.

For most of 1927 and up to April 14, 1928, a first-class letter (weighing less than 20 grams) to the United States carried by train in Mexico and flown in the United States required 50 centavos.

On April 15, 1928, a sender was offered two additional options: flown in Mexico and surface mail in the United States for 60c, or flown in both countries with priority rail service between Tampico and San Antonio for 75c.

This choice of service lasted only until May 31, 1928. The next day, June 1, the rate for airmail service, for as much as could be provided, was pegged at 60c. This lasted until Sept. 30.

On Oct. 1, 1928, the airmail rate to the United States was lowered to 35c.

This remained in effect for more than a year until Nov. 1, 1929, when it was reduced still further to 20c. During the 35c rate period, airmail usage really took off.

The 20c rate ended Sept. 1, 1930, with a further reduction to 15c.

On April 26, 1932, the 20c rate was restored, and on July 6, of the same year it went back to 30c.

Because some of the rate periods were quite short, finding covers to demonstrate them presents considerable challenge.

Business correspondence prior to 1930 is quite scarce for understandable reasons.

First, the expense of airmail often was not justified by the small amount of time saved. Surface letters, requiring 10c postage, were carried quickly and reliably by the mail trains, and those trains could run at night.

And, in the beginning, only a limited number of Mexican cities had airmail service.

Owing to the popularity of stamp collecting, philatelic covers (collector- or dealer-made souvenir covers), such as first-flight covers, are considerably more common, although even some of these are becoming more difficult to find as time goes on.

As I was sorting my covers according to the rate periods to identify items I still need to acquire, I was struck by the fact that in many cases, proper franking could not be achieved with a single stamp.

The 1922 50-centavo Eagle airmail (Scott C1), or more likely the 1927 50c Eagle (C2), could be used to make the early 50c rates. But the high rates of 1928 had to be met with multiple stamps, usually one or more of the 1928 25c airmails (C3-4), plus regular surface-mail stamps.

This provides many opportunities for interesting franking combinations.

I recently acquired a 1929 cover marking the March 9 inaugural contract airmail flight from Mexico City to Matamoros. Figure 1 shows the cover.

This is not a difficult first-flight cover to find, and I have several others. What set this one apart is that it is an airmail postal stationery envelope with a correct-rate 35c imprint.

These letter envelopes bear government service imprints applied diagonally between green and red bands on the upper-left and lower-right corners.

According to the Mexico-Elmhurst Philatelic Society International's postal stationery catalog, several varieties of these envelopes exist.

No corresponding adhesive stamp of this design (Scott AP1) was ever printed. The first 35c airmail stamp issued by Mexico was the Coat of Arms and Airplane design, (C15, design AP3), that appeared in August 1929, nearly a year after the 35c rate went into effect.

Figure 2 shows a sister cover with the same cachet, except this item, addressed to San Antonio, boarded the northbound flight at Tampico. The franking on this cover is the more typical combination of a 25c airmail stamp (C3) and the common 10c surface-mail stamp, 655, to make up the 35c rate.

Collecting these early Mexican airmail covers can make for a pleasurable chase.

Airmail was quite a novelty at the time, and the majority of the available items were flight covers made expressly for stamp collectors. For some flight segments, these collector-inspired covers may be all that exist.

In certain instances, it is estimated that fewer than 100 covers were carried, so there are true scarcities to be found in this field.

Any lucky finds of business correspondence carried on these early flights should be especially cherished, as they are truly quite scarce.

They will generally have the cachets corresponding to the various special flights, but some may not and will have to be identified by dates and the use of the "Servicio Aereo" cancellations.

I will have more to say about these early airmail flights in future columns. Meanwhile, good hunting. ■

Figure 1. A first-flight cover for the March 9, 1929, inaugural contract airmail flight from Mexico City to Matamoros, on 35-centavo Mexican airmail postal stationery.

Figure 2. This first-flight cover for the inaugural contract airmail flight from Mexico City to Matamoros is franked with a 25-centavo airmail stamp and a 10c definitive.

Provisional uses of Mexico's first stamp issues

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

A fascinating aspect of the classic stamps of Mexico is the variety of ways in which the stamps were used. Much of this stems from the unsettled political situation that prevailed when Mexico's first adhesive postage stamps came into use in August 1856.

In this column, I will give a brief overview of provisional usage of Mexico's first issues, a subject that has been receiving quite a bit of attention in recent years.

My dictionary defines provisional as "provided for the time being, pending permanent arrangements." In the philatelic sense, a provisional refers to the emergency use of stamps until new stocks of regular stamps could be obtained. Such provisional stamps often were overprinted or surcharged. Some were bisected, or cut in two.

However, the Mexican provisionals of the classic period sometimes are not quite as easy to distinguish from the nonprovisional stamps.

Most provisional usage in the Mexican classic period is a direct result of the disruptive factors of the French intervention in 1863. But documented examples of provisional use between 1864 and early 1867 are quite rare.

For the collector, the situation improves considerably later in 1867.

Following the execution of Maximilian in June 1867, the post office faced a serious dilemma. It would be unthinkable to continue using the stamps of the empire picturing Maximilian's portrait, and the government was in such disarray, that a quick issue of new stamps was impossible. In fact, it would be more than a year before the new stamps made an appearance in September 1868 (the Hidalgo full face issue, Scott 46-57.)

Figure 1. The large name on the right side and the monarch-era cancel mark this stamp from Orizava, Mexico, as a provisional.

Meanwhile, most smaller cities and towns reverted to the handstamp practices employed before adhesive stamps. These handstamps included a town mark plus a numeral denoting postage paid. This is often referred to as the sello negro (black seal) period.

Some innovative postmasters concocted their own provisional adhesives. These stamps from Guadalajara, Cuernavaca, Chiapas and Cuautla and other cities are found at the end of the Mexico listings in the Scott *Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue*. With the exception of those produced and used in Guadalajara, they are quite rare and pricey.

Other postmasters appear to have located unreturned remainders of the 1856 and 1861 issues, and, although the stamps were technically invalid because they had been demonetized, their provisional usage was permitted.

Provisional uses have been identified from several towns, including Acapulco, Aguascalientes, Cordova, Guadalajara, Jalapa, Orizava, Perote, Pichucalco, San Luis Potosi and Zacatecas. Again, with one or two exceptions, all of these provisional uses are firmly ensconced in the category of rare stamps.

One exception is Orizava. All of the 1861 values, except for the 8-real green (12) are recorded used provisionally. In absence of a dated cover, these stamps can be distinguished by the presence of a large name overprint (18 millimeters by 2.5mm) and one of two oval cancellations unknown before the monarchy period.

Figure 1 shows such an example that I recently found in a circuit book. It was listed as an ordinary stamp.

In many cases, the clue that alerts you to a provisional is a name overprint (or lack of one) and a cancellation not normal for the period in which the stamps were originally issued and used.

Figure 2. Perote, in the postal district of Jalapa, Mexico, was the source of several 1867 provisional issues. The illustrated stamp is probably a provisional.

The stamp shown in Figure 2 was probably used provisionally. The district Jalapa sent old stamps to several of its suboffices, including Perote, where this stamp was used. Although the cancel is well known on 1856 and 1861 stamps, the small district name is from the monarch era.

In Mexico City, the central post office still had significant quantities of 1861 stamps on hand at the time of Maximilian's fall. Most of these remainders were overprinted with a gothic style "Mexico" and were used within the capital, although a few seem to have been sent to nearby post offices.

Figure 3 pictures one of these first-design stamps with the gothic Mexico name. The names and cancels during this gothic-overprint era often appear poorly struck or smudged.

Later in summer 1867, a small printing of the first four values was made on thin, watermarked paper (42-45) and used.

Most Mexican collectors agree that these and the 1861 remainders represent true provisionals and probably should be grouped with the Guadalajara and other provisionals at the end of the Scott section on Mexico.

So the key message here is, when you're browsing a dealer's stock, be alert for seemingly innocent covers bearing 1861 stamps with and without district names and with datelines or docketing of 1867. You might get lucky and find a provisional use.

If you are really interested in delving into the subject further, read James Mazepa's excellent article on the provisional usage of the 1856 and 1861 stamps of Mexico in the January 1997 issue of *Mexicana* or in the *Congress Book 1998*.

Mexicana is published quarterly by the Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International. For information on back issues, contact the publications manager, Carl LeMar John, 5063 E. North Regency Circle, Tucson, AZ 85711.

Figure 3. "Mexico" is overprinted in gothic letters on this 1867 provisional stamp. The gothic-style overprints often were poorly struck.

The American Philatelic Congress publishes the *Congress Book*. These books are available from dealers in philatelic literature.

For information on the American Philatelic Congress, write to the secretary at American Philatelic Congress, Box 32858, St. Louis, MO 63132.

Mazepa's articles go into much greater detail than the space here allows, and they have the most complete census of provisional uses compiled to date. ■

Small Numerals part of Mexico's foreign-mail issue

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Mexico's Small Numerals stamps of 1882-83 were designed to be used on foreign mail.

When Mexico joined the Universal Postal Union in April 1879, Mexican postal authorities faced a serious dilemma. Domestic postal rates were higher than those specified for the exchange of letters with UPU member countries.

To resolve this issue, Mexico adopted a two-tier rate system, and it designed and printed stamps expressly for mail addressed abroad. These stamps are known in specialists circles as the Juarez foreign mail issue.

The stamps feature a portrait of Benito Juarez. They come in eight denominations from 1 centavo to 100c (or 1 peso), although the first five denominations are about the only ones ever found genuinely used.

In 1882, a rate change necessitated denominations not part of the original series. So the Small Numerals, as they are called, Scott 146-49, made their debut in 1882-83. The designs include small digits in the corners. The Oval Numerals stamps of 1886 do not.

The four 1882-83 stamps, a 2c red, 3c green, 6c blue and 6c ultramarine, correspond to postcard and letter rates then in effect. Figure 1 shows used examples of the three different values.

The 3c and 6c were the new denominations.

Figure 1. Used examples of the three denominations, 2-centavo, 3c and 6c, of Mexico's Small Numerals issue of 1882-83.

Of the two shades of the 6c, the blue commands a much higher price than the ultramarine because of its relative scarcity.

Even if the design itself is rather pedestrian, the Small Numerals stamps are beautifully engraved, and their colors are vivid. They are somewhat smaller than their sister Juarez stamps. The name Small Numerals stamps sets them apart from the Oval Numerals issue of 1886.

Several problems exist for the collector of the Small Numerals. The printing was made on very thin, brittle wove paper, the same paper used for the later printings of the Juarez stamps. Most stamps were generally not well centered, and they were poorly perforated. This makes it a challenge to find sound, undamaged examples.

A few years ago when I purchased a small mounted collection of the Small Numerals stamps, I found that 25 percent of them were faulty in one way or another.

It seemed to me that most damage was caused by careless separation by the initial users or by improper soaking when the stamps were removed from the paper to which they were affixed.

But these damaged stamps are still worthy of attention because some varieties are quite scarce. Often they can be picked out of circuit books and dealers stocks at reasonable prices.

The foreign-mail issues were the last to bear the cumbersome district-name and invoice-number overprints.

The overprints consisted of district name and an assigned number plus the last two digits of the year. This gives rise to upward of 250 varieties for the two years the Small Numerals were in use.

As with the immediately preceding issues, the invoice number list was inverted alphabetically, with Zamora and Zacatecas being assigned numbers 1 and 2, and Aguascalientes and Acapulco having numbers 52 and 53.

For some unknown reason the largest district, Mexico, was assigned number 54, and 55 went to Colima, perhaps as an afterthought.

The scarce to rare districts are pretty much the same as those of the earlier issues: Texcoco (district No. 11), Tlaxcala (13), Jilotopec (32), Cuautitlan (46), C. Bravos (48), and Apam (51). Used stamps from these offices are truly rare.

However, it is important to keep in mind that in 1888 returned stamps and unused remainders in the post office inventories were sold to stamp dealers.

As a result, unused stamps from some rare districts show up from time to time, but they are considered to have no more value than the common Scott-listed varieties.

While these stamps are relatively free of forgeries, number overprints and cancels that strongly influence value have been faked using remainder stock that had no overprint. Valuable overprinted stamps should always be submitted for expertization.

Covers bearing the Small Numerals stamps are fairly scarce, but not nearly as difficult to find or as pricey as covers bearing the Juarez stamps.

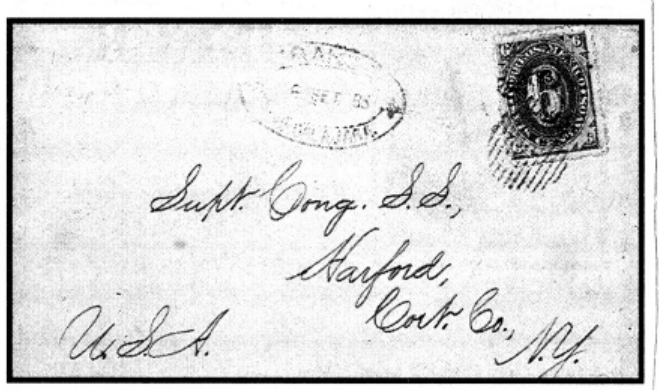


Figure 2. This cover, franked with the 6-centavo blue of Mexico's Small Numerals issue, took 20 days in September 1883 to reach its destination in Cortland County, N.Y.

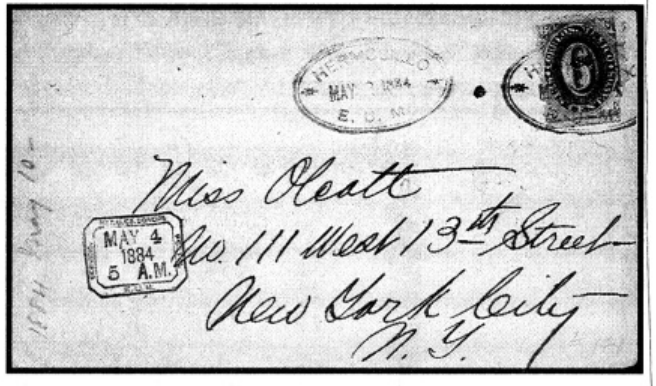


Figure 3. This 6c cover from Mexico took less traveling time than the Figure 2 cover did. It was sent May 2, 1894, and arrived May 10. The stamp has a missing lower-right corner.

Figure 2 shows a cover bearing the 6c blue franking addressed to Harford, a small town in Cort(land) County, N.Y. The backstamp indicates a 20-day duration for the cover to reach New York. It was sent Sept. 6, 1883, from Guadalajara, and it arrived Sept. 26.

A similar cover, shown in Figure 3, was much speedier. It left Hermosillo May 2, crossed the border at Nogales

into Arizona Territory May 4, and reached New York May 10. Note that the stamp has a missing lower-right corner, a typical fault.

Covers (or cards) bearing single 2c or 3c stamps aren't encountered too often, although the 6c rate is occasionally found satisfied with three 2c or two 3c stamps.

If you need a new field to explore you might try the Small Numerals. And if you don't already have one, buy Nick Follansbee's *Catalogue of the Stamps of Mexico 1856-1900.*

It will help you sort out, identify and value the many varieties you will find among the Small Numerals stamps. ■

Mexico issued many stamps for 1968 Olympics

In mid-September, the world's top athletes will gather in Sydney, Australia, for the celebration of the 27th Olympic Games. It was 32 years ago, in 1968, that Mexico City hosted the Summer Games.

From a stamp viewpoint, Mexican postal au-

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

thorities went all out, not only to publicize the Games, but also to provide collectors with a wide variety of collectible items.

Before the Games were over, 40 Mexican stamps and 16 souvenir sheets had been issued with the Olympics theme. I do not know if this is a record for an Olympic Games host nation, but it certainly must be close.

Figure 1. This souvenir sheet includes the two surface-mail and two airmail stamps of Mexico's first set of stamps from the 1968 Summer Games. The set was released Dec. 17, 1965.

Add to this the numerous theme cancellations and meter slogans promoting the Games, and you have a rich field for specialization.

The first stamps, in what was called a Pre-Olympic series, appeared Dec. 17, 1965. These stamps depict prehistoric clay figurines in what were assumed to be athletic poses. There were two large surface-mail stamps (20 centavos and 40c), and three airmails (80c, 1.20 pesos and 2p), Scott 965-66, C309-11.

Figure 2. Sprinters and a high jumper are pictured on the 20-centavo stamp from Mexico's 1966 set of stamps for the 1968 Games.

The denominations were useful for both domestic and foreign mail. Designs of four of the five stamps were gathered together on one of two imperforate souvenir sheets. Figure 1 shows this souvenir sheet.

A second Pre-Olympic series, again with two surface-mail stamps and three airmails, made its debut Oct. 15, 1966, 974-75, C318-20. These stamps show outline drawings by Diego Rivera of athletes participating in various sports.

The 20c low value of the set is illustrated in Figure 2. Sprinters and a high jumper are shown on this design.

Curiously, the 2.25p airmail stamp depicts what appears to be American football, which was not an Olympic sport.

Again, there were two souvenir sheets, one for the regular stamps and one for the airmails.

Stamps in both of the foregoing series display the year of issue as well as the reference to the Games scheduled for 1968.

Stamp dealers were delighted with these popular stamps, and many created rather elaborate first-day covers. Unfortunately, the first-day cancels often were carelessly applied or incompletely struck.

Mexico's next Olympic stamp series consisted of five regulars and four airmails, plus four souvenir sheets, 981-85, C328-31. The set was released Oct. 12, 1967, almost exactly a year after the previous issue.

The designs, created by graphic artist Lance Wyman, employed some interesting elements. Solid colors were used for each value overlaid with silhouettes of athletes engaged in various Olympic sporting events.

The action pictured repeats laterally, with portions overlapping adjoining stamps, as seen in the pair of 20c stamps illustrated in Figure 3. This stamp pair features two-man kayak teams.

Also, for the first time, the official Mexican logo for the Olympics is used at the top of each stamp, to the right of the denomination and service designation.

This solid color format was used again on stamps released March 21, 1968, just seven months before the Games opened. This time there were 10 stamps and four souvenir sheets, featuring different colors, sport topics and a couple of values not previously issued, 900-95, C335-38.

By now, 19 Olympic competition events had been displayed on these Mexican colorful stamps.

The two series are easily differentiated. The early one has the date 1967 at the bottom, the other has 1968.

The final group of Mexican 1968 Olympic stamps appeared Oct. 12, 1968, coinciding with the opening-day ceremonies. There are 11 stamps and four souvenir sheets, once again, the work of Wyman, 996-1001, C340-44. They are probably the most colorful of all the Mexican Olympic issues.

Figure 3. Kayak teams race across this 20-centavo pair of Mexico's third Pre-Olympic stamp set for the 1968 Games. Lance Wyman designed these stamps, which were issued in 1967.

The subject matter is varied, ranging from Olympic symbols to some of the venues and buildings erected especially for the Games.

The building shown on the 2p stamp, pictured in Figure 4, served as the venue for basketball. This newly built arena, with its unusual roof of formed copper panels, might have been an architectural marvel. But on the afternoon I attended to watch the U.S. team play, there was a fierce thunderstorm, and the roof began to leak on the playing surface.

This may have been the first and only time an Olympic basketball game was interrupted because of rain.

All of the Mexican Olympic souvenir sheets were issued without perforations and, in the case of the sheets of the first pre-Olympic series, without gum.

All were numbered serially, and, although print quantities are not recorded for the earliest sheets, the later ones had press runs in the hundreds of thousands.

Only those of the final series, Scott 998a, 1000a, C342a, and C344a, have more than nominal catalog value.

The 1968 Olympic stamps provide a wonderful opportunity for specialization, especially if you go after the postal history aspects.

With so many stamps and different values, any collector seeking contemporary use covers bearing Mexico's Olympic stamps faces a real challenge.

Particularly difficult will be the high values issued in the later sets, which I suspect were ordered to bulk up the revenue from the sales of stamps to souvenir hunters.

After the flood of Olympic stamps for the 1968 Games, Mexico's stamps output for succeeding Olympiads dropped off to a trickle.

For Munich in 1972, only one stamp was issued, 1046, and none for 1976 Montreal or 1980 Moscow Games.

For the 1984 Games in Los Angeles, Mexico issued seven stamps, six of which depicted Olympic sports. The inflation period was in full swing and the stamp denominations ranged from 14p to 40p, 1351-37.

Figure 4. This Mexican stamp issued Oct. 12, 1968, the opening day of the 1968 Summer Games, features the basketball arena.

For the Games at Seoul, South Korea, in 1988, Mexico issued two items, a stamp of 500p and a pane of 700p, 1154-55, the denominations again reflecting the rampant inflation in Mexico at the time.

Mexico commemorated the 1992 Summer Olympics in Barcelona, Spain, with two stamp sets. The first, two stamps of 2,000p face value, came out in February and March 1992. These were produced by a contract printer, Amate, and are rouletted, 1718-19.

A second set consisting of 10 stamps, varying from 1,300p to 2,000p with a souvenir sheet of 7,000p, was issued July 30, 1992, 1738-48. These stylized line sketches of various sports were produced by TIEV, the government printing office.

I am not aware of what Mexico has in mind for this year's Olympics, although I suspect, that as a one-time host nation, it will issue something, if it has not done so already. ■

Mexico wins Champions award for third time

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

At Providence, R.I., in August, a collection of classic Mexico took center stage to claim for its owner, James P. Mazepa, what every serious U.S. exhibitor covets — the American Philatelic Society Champion of Champions award. (See *Linn's* Sept. 11, page 9.)

The Champion of Champions competition took place Aug. 24-27 in conjunction with APS Stampshow 2000.

Mazepa's exhibit, "Mexico: First Issue, 1856-1861" was judged the best of 29 grand-award winners from national-level shows for the 1999-2000 season.

This was Mazepa's seventh attempt to win the top award. He won five grand awards earlier with a classic Poland exhibit before switching to Mexican classics about 12 years ago. And Mazepa has two show grands with his Mexico.

Two previous Champion of Champions winners also were exhibits of Mexican classics.

In 1977, Edward Dormer won the competition with the exhibit "Mexico — Selected Pages, Period of Spanish Domination Through the Republic and Maximilian Periods."

As the title implies, his showing was much broader in scope, and it probably reflected Dormer's feeling that he needed to show more than just a single design.

When Robert Paliafito won the Champion of Champions 10 years later in 1987, his focus was confined to the stamps of the first design, those of 1856, 1861 and the emergency printings of 1867.

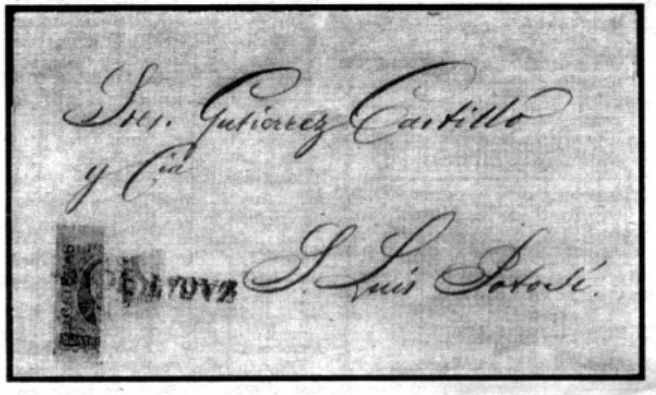


Figure 1. Mexican first-issue stamps were split into fractions to make up lower rates. This cover from the Zacatecas district bears ½ and ¼ fractions of 4-real stamps to pay the 3r rate. This cover is from James Mazepa's Mexican exhibit that won the Champion of Champions award.

Both collections have since been dispersed, and many of the key pieces that were in them have been acquired by Mazepa to augment his run at U.S. collecting's highest reward for exhibiting.

In my view, this latest Mexican first-issue exhibit is, from the standpoint of including major rarities, the strongest of the three. It won the grand award at the Garfield-Perry March Party this spring (my club's show) where I had a chance to go through it rather thoroughly with its owner at my side.

Virtually every one of the 160 pages has one or more items of exceptional interest and rarity. A great many of the items are unique. Others have fewer than three or four examples reported.

For example, Mazepa shows a proof strip of six of Scott 1, the ½-real value, which is the only one known.

The exhibit also includes a cover bearing a strip of four of the ½r with the handwritten district name Zacatecas. Only nine of this variety are reported, and here are four of them.

Another spectacular piece is a full sheet of the 1861 ½r (6), again believed to be the only one known.

Mazepa has a lovely strip of four of the 2r emerald variety, (3c), which is the largest multiple known of this variety. The largest known franking using 4r stamps (4), is another outstanding item present in the exhibit.

Many rare examples of the popular split uses are included in Mazepa's exhibit. These were instances where high-value stamps were cut into fractions to match rates for which lower value stamps were unavailable.

The exhibit contains several one-of-a-kind split combinations, such as the cover shown in Figure 1. This Zacatecas-district cover bears ½ and ¼ sections of 4r stamps to pay the 3r rate. This is the only such cover known.

Figure 2 shows another Zacatecas-district cover franked with similar fractions of 8r stamps to pay the 6r rate. This cover is the better of the two such uses known

Another strong area is that of provisional usage of the 1856 and 1861 stamps after they had been demonetized.

Mazepa has studied this field extensively and written about it in both *Mexicana* (the journal of the Mexico-Elmhurst Philatelic Society International) and *The Congress Book, 1998*.

Finally, you can see in this exhibit stamps from some of the rare postal districts. These include Lerma, Ixtlahuaca, San Felipe, Ciudad Bravos, Zitacuaro, Polotitlan, Cuautitlan and Tepeji del Rio, tiny towns that received exceedingly small shipments of stamps and from which only a handful of examples has survived.

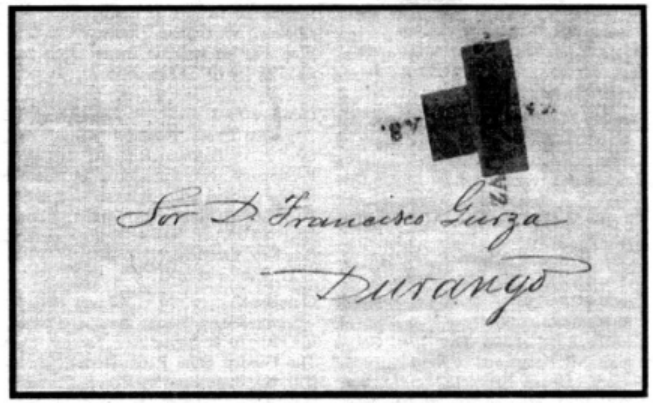


Figure 2. Another cover from the Zacatecas district of Mexico franked with fractions of the first-issue 8-real stamps to pay the 6r rate, also is from James Mazepa's exhibit.

Assembling and mounting an exhibit of grand-award caliber is not easy. Modern exhibiting has become very sophisticated and exacting. It is even more difficult, once the grand-award level has been achieved, to make the final step to the top of the pyramid.

It takes determination, some luck, and usually a great deal of financial sacrifice (money). In most instances, it will require several tries.

It pleases me that Mexican first issues have scaled the difficult climb to the top once again. For years, I have touted Mexico as one of the world's best and most challenging areas for serious collectors.

I, too, have been a long-time fan of the first design, and while my collection will never win the Champion of Champions, it has afforded me much pleasure and satisfaction.

Mazepa's achievement gives another boost to Mexican stamp collecting. It demonstrates that a smallish country, often underappreciated and avoided by earlier generations of serious collectors, can be collected and exhibited head-to-head against the perennial favorites of the past.

While United States and Confederate States exhibits have dominated the Champion of Champions competition for the past 33 years, Mexico is now tied for second place with Danish West Indies in number of wins — three. ■

Stamp-on-stamp designs on Mexican stamps

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

You could form a nice one-country collection of Mexican stamps that depict other stamps. These are known as stamp-on-stamp designs.

I wrote about Mexican stamp-on-stamp designs in two previous *Linn's* columns, Feb. 12, 1984, and Sept. 10, 1990, and thought that it was time to revisit the topic.

The first Mexican stamp-on-stamp emission, and perhaps, the best in my view, appeared in 1940 to mark the 100th anniversary of the British Penny Black stamp.

Mexico issued two five-stamp sets, one for surface mail and the other for airmail (Scott 754-58, C103-07).

Figure 1 shows one stamp from each set. These stamps, naturally, feature a stamp-on-stamp design of Great Britain's first stamp.

The print order for these 1940 stamps varied from a high of 5 million for the 10-centavo surface mail stamp to a low of 10,000 for each of the 5-peso high values. My Sept. 10, 1990, column included a table showing the print order for each value.

Figure 1. Two of the 10 stamps Mexico issued to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Great Britain's Penny Black and featuring a stamp-on-stamp design of the 1840 stamp.

Five million commemorative stamps may seem like a lot for a Mexican issue, but stamp collecting then was near its peak in popularity as a pastime, and I believe the low values were widely distributed and extensively used.

The 10c stamp paid the common domestic letter rate.

Figure 2. This registered first-day cover bears a complete set of Mexico's stamp-on-stamp commemoratives issued in 1947 to mark the 100th anniversary of the first U.S. stamps.

Three other values had printings of a half million, which is more than the usual 300,000 ordered today for new commemorative stamps.

Mexico honored the Penny Black again in 1990 (1646) on the 150th anniversary of its issue, but the result was not nearly as satisfactory as the earlier stamps.

The printing (lithography) did not do justice to the fine engraving of the original stamp, and the colors were rather drab.

At the time, Mexico had suffered incredible inflation, and the denomination, 700p, appears to have been added as an afterthought, in fine print reading upward, hidden at the lower-left corner of the stamp.

The next large group of stamp-on-stamp subjects after the 1940 Penny Black series came in 1947 when the United States stamp-collecting fraternity celebrated the 100th anniversary of U.S. stamps with a large stamp exhibition in New York City.

To show support of this event, Mexico issued five stamps, two regulars and three airmails (826-27; C167-69). Three depict the Mexico 1856 ½-real (1), and two show the U.S. 1847 10¢ George Washington (U.S. 2).

I don't know why the Washington stamp was chosen over the 1847 5¢ Benjamin Franklin. Perhaps it was because the Mexicans equate our first president with their liberation hero Miguel Hidalgo, remembered as the instigator of the War for Independence in 1810.

Franklin Roosevelt, friend of Mexico and noted stamp collector, is portrayed on the three stamps with the stamp-on-stamp design of Mexico Scott 1.

Figure 2 shows an overfranked registered first-day cover bearing the complete set.

This cover appears to have gone through the mail (the address label has been removed), since it bears backstamps of Laredo, Texas, and Pleasantville, N.Y., the presumed final destination. The transit time was three days.

The stamps of this set are lithographed, reasonably well printed but not so well perforated. Most examples have perforation waste adhering or blind perforations in the case of blocks.

When Mexico celebrated its own stamp centenary in 1956, another stamp exhibition was staged in Mexico City with the government authorizing a stamp that fit the stamp-on-stamp theme (897).

This large-format stamp, measuring 40 millimeters by 48mm, has an ornate border surrounding a Mexico Scott 1 facsimile in almost full size.

This time the printing is quite sharp, making for an attractive stamp, one of my favorites. It is illustrated in Figure 3.

The next 30 years saw a number of stamp shows staged in Mexico, and usually special stamps were issued for these events.

In 1960, the Elmhurst Philatelic Society of Mexico, collectors specializing in Mexican stamps, celebrated the 25th anniversary of their founding in Mexico City. The government printing office honored the event with special inscriptions on two high value stamps, (909 and C249).

Printed in very limited quantities, they are known in collector circles as the Elmhurst issue.

For the American Philatelic Society 77th convention and annual meeting held in Mexico City in October 1963, the Mexican centennial design, Scott 897, was resurrected for a special 1p commemorative issue (937) in what could be called a stamp-on-stamp-on-stamp issue. The stamp is shown in Figure 4.

Figure 3. Mexico's first stamp of 1856 is featured on the design of this 1956 stamp.

After the 1968 Mexico Olympics, another large international stamp show took place in Mexico City, and two stamps plus a souvenir sheet (C333-34 and C345) were prepared with a stamp-on-stamp design of an 1894 Hidalgo Official stamp.

Several more Mexican stamp events during the 1970s and 1980s prompted postal adhesives with stamp motifs. I plan to review these in a future column.

We probably have the late Emilio Obregon to thank for the abundant stamp-on-stamp issues of this era. He held an influential position in the post office hierarchy, promoted a number of multinational stamp shows, and was probably responsible for the generous attention given to the hobby by postal authorities.

Figure 4. The 1956 stamp shown in Figure 3 is the basis of this stamp-on-stamp design of a 1963 Mexican stamp honoring an American Philatelic Society convention.

Although Sepomex (Servicio Postal Mexicano) maintains an interest in the supply of stamps and other philatelic material to collectors, the use of stamp-on-stamp motifs seems to have waned in recent years. This is evident as you peruse the Mexico listings in the Scott *Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue*.

Still, as I noted at the onset, there are enough stamp-related adhesives already to make up an interesting and attractive display. Have fun. ■

A tale of two 1914 covers sent from Mexico

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

The year 1914 was significant in Mexico's struggle to establish a stable government following nearly four years of intense civil wars.

It was the year of the big battles, with various power factions pitted against each other and what was left of the federal regime of Porfirio Diaz. And it was the year that the United States became entangled in the Mexican struggle.

The unsettled situation caused the United States to deploy a large naval force in the Gulf of Mexico.

On April 9, 1914, when a small contingent of U.S. Marines from the *USS Dolphin* put ashore in Tampico to buy fuel, they were arrested.

The Mexican government, then under Gen. Victoriano Huerta, quickly released the men with an apology, but it stoutly refused a salute to the American flag demanded by U.S. Adm. Henry Mayo.

This rebuff provided a convenient excuse for the United States, already at odds with Huerta, to occupy the Mexican port of Veracruz April 21.

The official reason for the invasion was to prevent an arms shipment arriving on the German vessel *Ypiranga* from reaching Huerta.

These 1914 events had interesting philatelic ramifications.

Mexican rebel forces were issuing their own stamps for use in territory they occupied.

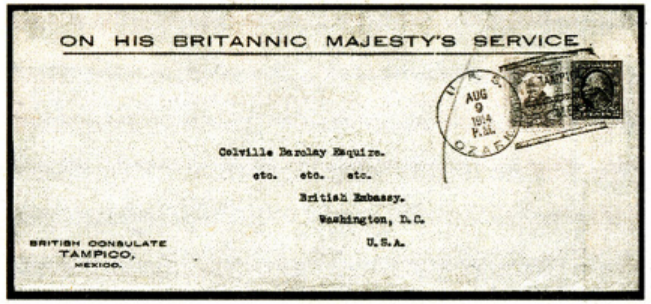


Figure 1. Both Mexican and United States stamps were affixed to this cover mailed in 1914 from the British consulate in Tampico, Mexico, to the British embassy in Washington. The cover is canceled Aug. 9, 1914, aboard the *USS Ozark*.

When the United States took control of the Veracruz post office, it installed U.S. supervisory personnel with U.S. stamps to be used on mail originating from that office.

These actions caused some confusion and difficulties in transferring mail across the so-called battle lines.

Figure 1 shows a cover that originated with the British consulate in Tampico after the Americans blockaded the east coast of Mexico. Addressed to the British embassy in Washington, it was franked with a 5-centavo Miguel Hidalgo Mexican stamp of the 1910 Independence issue (Scott 314) and a 2¢ U.S. George Washington stamp from a booklet pane (425e).

It then appears to have left Mexico by way of a U.S. Navy vessel, the *USS Ozark*.

Both stamps are canceled with one of the standard handstamps (type 3) used aboard naval ships, consisting of a 31-millimeter circular datestamp and a killer with "TAMPICO/MEXICO" inserted between the three bars. The cancel is dated Aug. 9, 1914.

Owing to the state of affairs between Mexico and the United States, I presume the sender was taking no chances. The Mexican post office would recognize the 5c stamp, and since the 2¢ stamp would suffice for its journey in the U.S. mails, both were used.

No Mexican cancellation appears on the cover, so it is possible that it was handed directly to U.S. naval personnel and avoided the Mexican mailstream entirely.

I suspect that the *USS Ozark* was one of the supply ships supporting the Atlantic fleet concentrated in the Gulf of Mexico at that time. The ship had a mail clerk and seems to have offered a full complement of postal services, including registry.

I was surprised to discover that the 2¢ U.S. stamp appears to be Scott 425e, a perforation gauge 10 example from a booklet pane that was first issued in January 1914. The regular gauge 10 stamps were not released until September, a month after this letter was mailed.

The second cover, shown in Figure 2, mailed six days after the Figure 1 cover, demonstrates a different challenge for the sender. I've explained this cover in a previous column and in my book *Introduction to the Postage Stamps of Mexico*.

It, too, is addressed to the British embassy in Washington. But it originated in Chihuahua, in the middle of territory already controlled by the Constitutionalist rebel faction, and it was carried overland by rail.

To assure undelayed passage, the sender used a 5c Denver Eagle, Scott 389, which the local government would surely recognize, and a 1910 5c orange Hidalgo, Scott 314, a stamp the U.S. authorities would accept.

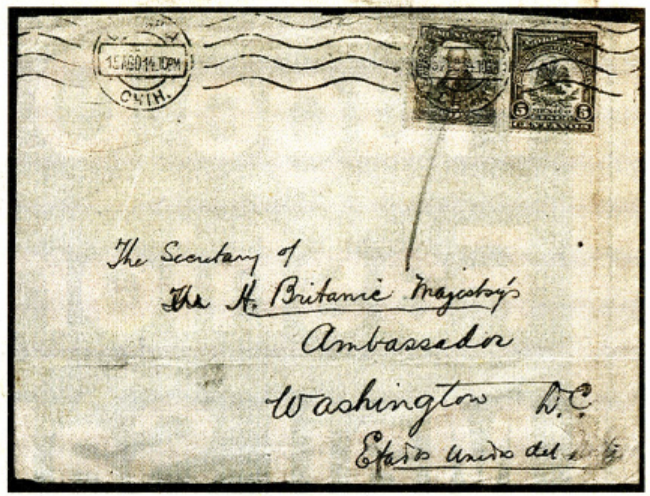


Figure 2. This 1914 Mexican cover from the Constitutionalist-held city of Chihuahua was carried overland through the United States. The 5-centavo rate is paid by two stamps, a 1910 Federal Independence 5c and the Denver Eagle 5c.

The letter might have gone through unhindered with only the Denver Eagle. I have examples where this happened. But acceptance of the local provisionals seems to have been at the whim of the U.S. postmaster at transfer points along the border.

Combination uses, such as the two examples shown here, are not especially rare. But to work out the circumstances surrounding their use requires some attention to the political situation at the time the letters were mailed. And in the case of Mexico during this era, the course of events was anything but straightforward.

Still if one has the time and patience, unraveling the rationale behind such covers can provide many enjoyable hours. ■

Mexican airmail, auction and ship update

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

With this column I continue a tradition of recognizing readers who generously provided feedback on the articles I wrote during the year. I will also comment on some other happenings relative to Mexican philately.

My Mexico column in the April 24 issue of *Linn's* on the Endangered Species stamps issued jointly by Mexico and the United States in October 1996 (Scott Mexico 1995, U.S. 3105) drew a response from Philip Sandler of Potomac, Md.

He advises that the first-day ceremony programs prepared by the U.S. Postal Service were similar to the Mexican covers I illustrated with the column in that each had one Mexican and one U.S. stamp tied by cancels of their respective countries.

The Mexican issue comprises 24 se-tenant 1.80-peso stamps, so this means that a collector must acquire 24 programs to own all of the Mexican stamps, although there will be some duplication of the U.S. stamps.

Finding these 24 programs seems like a daunting challenge.

Following my column in the May 22 *Linn's* on early Mexican airmail, Austin Paul of Walnut Creek, Calif., shared photocopies of 1928 first-flight covers from Mexico City to Laredo, Texas.

These covers contained fascinating letters written by functionaries of the pioneer airlines involved in these inaugural flights.

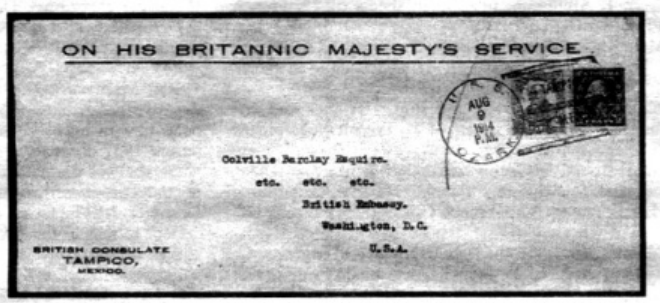


Figure 1. This cover was carried from Mexico to the United States aboard the ship *USS Ozark* in August 1914.

One letter relates how the planes, heavily loaded with passengers, mail and full tanks of gas, barely got off the ground in the thin air of Mexico City. Those had to be exciting times for devotees of airmail and air travel.

The column in the Sept. 25 *Linn's* celebrated James Mazepa's winning of the American Philatelic Society's Champion of Champions title with his exhibit of Mexican first issues.

Within just a few days of that column, the philatelic grapevine was crackling with the news that the collection would be sold before the year was out.

I telephoned Mazepa and he confessed that, yes, Regency Stamps Ltd. had made him an offer he could not refuse and that the collection was slated for auction in a single property sale in early December.

While he did not reveal the details of the deal, it appears to have involved a guaranteed bottom-line figure for Mazepa, plus other considerations. And Mazepa was obliged to write the lot descriptions and assist in setting price estimates.

A lavishly illustrated sale catalog was sent out with a sale date set for Dec. 10.

The catalog is a valuable reference for 1856-61 issue specialists because of the enormous amount of information that it contains.

Nearly all of the better items are reproduced in color and most of the rest are illustrated too.

What is bothersome to me, at least, are the price estimates. They seem extremely high in comparison to similar material sold at recent auctions. I appreciate that many of the Mazepa pieces are the only ones known or one of very few known, and it is difficult to assign values to such items.

I am certain there are reserves for most items, if not all of the lots. And assuming they are pegged at the usual high percentage (70 to 75 percent) of the estimates, it may be difficult to find buyers willing to go the full distance on much of the rare material.

By the time this column is published in *Linn's*, the sale will be over. It will be most interesting to see how this auction played out, and I look forward to a report from someone who attended the auction.

The Nov. 27 column discussed two covers dispatched from Mexico in 1914 during the civil wars in that country. One was handled aboard a Navy ship, the *USS Ozark*. This cover is shown here in Figure 1.

Without knowing exactly, I suggested that this vessel might have been a support ship.

Meanwhile, my good friend and *Linn's* Postal History columnist Richard Graham came through with the full story on the *USS Ozark*.

Graham reports that the ship was a single-turreted monitor, a late state-of-the-art design of steel warships built from the mid-1880s until after the turn of the century. These warships were odd-appearing vessels with two 12-inch guns in the single turret.

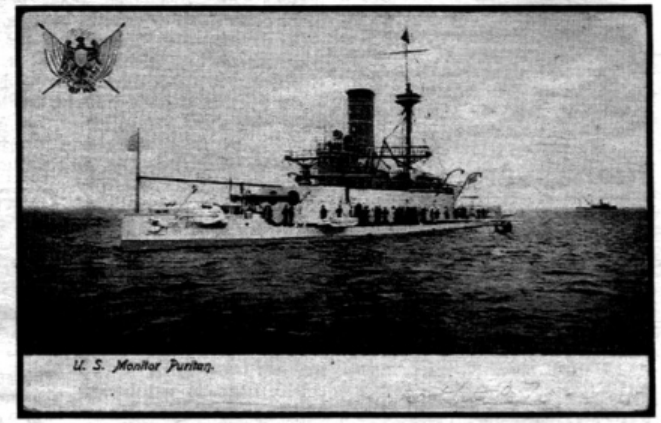


Figure 2. This postcard pictures *USS Puritan*, a sister monitor to *USS Ozark*, which carried the Figure 1 cover.

Figure 2 pictures *USS Puritan*, a sister monitor that had the same basic appearance as *USS Ozark*. The illustration is from the picture side of a postcard.

Ozark originally was named *USS Arkansas*, but it was renamed in 1909 so that one of the new battleships, then under construction, could carry the *Arkansas* name.

The following year, *Ozark* was refitted as a submarine tender (its low-freeboard design suited it for this service), and it subsequently joined the Atlantic fleet in this capacity.

The ship spent most of the year 1914 in special duty in the Gulf of Mexico, where my cover was processed. It played no significant role in World War I except to patrol the Gulf of Mexico waters and the coastline to the Panama Canal Zone.

Ozark was decommissioned in 1919 and sold for scrap in 1922.

Graham suggests that covers processed by the *Ozark* during the Mexican blockade could be quite scarce. I would be happy to hear from any of my *Linn's* readers who may own such covers.

Finally, I take this opportunity to wish all readers of the Mexico column best wishes for the holiday season and a prosperous New Year. ■

Mexico issued many revenues in the 19th century

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Every so often my mail brings an inquiry from a *Linn's* reader about a Mexican stamp that he cannot find in the Scott *Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue*. Almost invariably the mystery stamp is a Mexican revenue, which, of course, Scott does not list.

It has been more than 15 years since I last wrote about these interesting adhesives in *Linn's*, so I thought it would be appropriate to visit the subject once again.

Figure 1. Mexico's 5-centavo documents and books revenue of the 1874 first issue.

Figure 2. This 1-peso Mexican contribution federal revenue stamp depicts a cap of Liberty and book of laws.

There are perhaps twice as many varieties of Mexican revenue stamps as there are postage stamps.

A number of reasons contribute to this anomaly.

Revenue stamps were issued more or less as receipts certifying the payment of various taxes, and, because Mexico derived much of its federal income from levying such taxes, the use of revenue stamps was extensive in business and commerce.

Another reason for their abundance is that new revenue stamps were generally issued for each fiscal year, and this, too, contributed to the proliferation of varieties.

In this column, I will focus on the beautifully engraved 19th-century revenue stamps that I find to be both interesting and attractive. The 20th-century revenues I will leave for a subsequent column.

Mexico issued its first revenue stamps in 1874. There were two sets: "documentos y libros" (documents and books) and "contribucion federal" (federal tax).

Businessmen used the books and documents revenues in their accounts books.

Any businessman with capital in excess of 2,000 pesos was obliged to keep precise books recording his business transactions. Further, he was required to buy and affix documents and books stamps to the pages in his account records in an amount proportional to the value of those recorded transactions.

Figure 1 shows the 5-centavo documents and books stamp. This large stamp (30 millimeters by 45mm), is part of a series in 12 colors and 10 denominations. The stamp shows a portrait of Miguel Hidalgo, hero of Mexican independence.

In the panel below the portrait, the name of the fiscal district is handstamped, in this case, the Federal District (Mexico City).

Figure 3. A 10-peso stamp from Mexico's 1885 first issue of special customs revenue stamps called "aduanos."

Fiscal districts were distinct from postal district names seen on early Mexican postage stamps.

Figure 2 pictures one of the early contribution federal revenue stamps. This 1-peso revenue shows a liberty cap and a book of laws.

The way these revenues were used is interesting. If a merchant was required to obtain a 10-peso city license to operate his business, he was charged 12.50p: 10p for the license plus 25 percent federal contribution. The revenue stamp shows that the federal contribution was paid.

Government inspectors strictly enforced these and other regulations. Violations were severely penalized with fines that were likewise certified with even more revenue stamps.

Another important source of federal revenue was the customs duties levied on imported goods. Special customs revenue stamps, called "aduanos," were first issued in 1885 and continued for eight series.

Figure 3 shows the 10p stamp from the initial issue. This example was pen-canceled and name-punched in Frontera.

Customs stamps were affixed to the documents covering the importation, and then dot-perforated with the name of the location where the goods entered Mexico.

Thus, most of the examples of used aduanos reveal a readable perforated name when held to a light.

Some of the punched names, for example, Isla del Carmen, Paso del Norte (El Paso), and Ocampo are much scarcer than say, the larger ports of Tampico or Veracruz.

Another revenue series, "renta interior" (internal tax), was introduced in 1885. This commercial transaction tax persists as a tax classification in Mexico.

Figure 4 pictures an early example of such a revenue stamp. This 10c revenue shows a woman bearing a shield as its main design.

After 1888, the interior tax revenues were issued with talons, or attachments. In this way the revenues could be placed across the separating line of a receipt so both the receipt and its stub would bear

portions of the stamp.

Used revenue stamps with talons are preferred by collectors and sell for more than those without.

Early on, this commercial tax was set at ½ percent of a transaction value, although some rates, such as those on wines, liquors and tobacco products, were much higher.

These 19th-century revenue stamps I have described are easily distinguished from Mexican postage stamps since most of them are much larger than any postage stamp issued in that era.

Revenue stamps did get smaller as time went on, however.

Another test is that postage stamps generally bear the word "correos," the Spanish word for "mails," whereas revenue stamps will often have wording that includes "timbre" (fiscal stamp), implying some sort of tax.

Also, Mexican revenue stamps will almost always bear year dates designating the time for which they were valid.

For collectors interested in delving further into this field, I recommend *The Revenue Stamps of Mexico* written by Richard B. Stevens and published by the Mexico-Elmhurst Philatelic Society International. The first edition came out in 1968, and it was subsequently revised and re-

Figure 4. This Mexican 10-centavo internal tax revenue shows a woman with a shield.

published in 1979.

I believe the later edition is still available from MEPSI. Contact Carl LeMar John, MEPSI Publications Manager, 5063 E. North Regency Circle, Tucson, AZ 85711.

If not, I'm reasonably certain one of the philatelic book dealers can find a copy for you.

There is much more to the story of Mexican revenue stamps that I will defer for a future column. The stamps are eminently collectible and, when you find them, not terribly expensive.

The book cited above can provide additional details for the many varieties that exist in the revenue stamps of the 19th century. ■

Some Mexican postal adhesives aren't stamps

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

You won't see them listed in the catalogs, and you won't pay much for them if you find some in dealers' stock. They have their origin in post offices, were widely used, and came in a wide variety of shapes, sizes and colors. And they are the focus of a small, yet avid group of collectors, but they had no franking power whatsoever.

I refer to the Mexican ancillary adhesives applied to covers to signal special handling within the postal system.

First, I'll discuss the so-called registry labels. These adhesives marked letters where strict security measures needed to be taken to assure safe delivery.

In the classic era of Mexican stamps, up to about 1870, special handstamps designated registered mail. The outer edges of a letter were repetitively struck with mute markings to alert carriers of its nature.

Upon delivery, the letter had to be opened immediately, and the front of the letter was countersigned by the addressee. This front was then returned to the sender as proof of delivery.

I do not know exactly when registry stickers, such as those illustrated in Figure 1, were first used. The earliest one I have is on a cover dated 1887, but I suspect they were in use long before that.

The two examples shown in Figure 1 have the letter "R" (for registry) at the right side of the label.

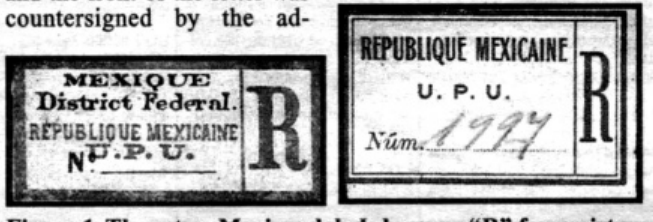


Figure 1. These two Mexican labels bear an "R" for registry.

In Mexico, the word "certificado" was widely used to indicate registration, so some of the early registry labels contain the letter "C."

The registration labels come in many formats.

Some were designed for insertion of the name of the originating post office.

Others from large offices, such as the one shown on the left in Figure 1, had the office (Federal District) printed on the label. The registry number could be applied by a rubber stamp, or be handwritten.

Frequently, new labels were applied as the registered item moved through the intermediate post offices to its destination.

Invariably, if a letter crossed the border to the United States, it was handstamped and assigned a new U.S. registry number.

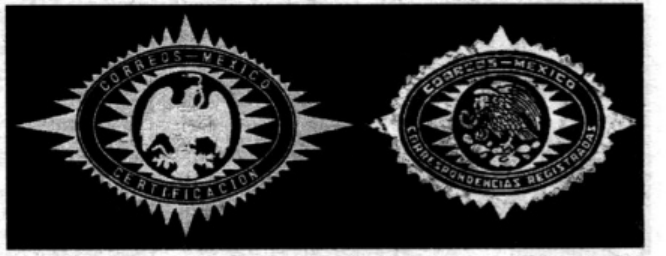


Figure 2. These two Mexican seals from the early part of the 20th century were designed to be used to seal registered letters. Because of their shape, they are called sunburst seals.

In the early days, registered letters were sealed across the closure flap with sealing wax. Usually, these wax seals bore impressed monograms identifying the sender.

Most post offices could apply seals if necessary. Often, in such cases, the sender was obliged to add an endorsement to the back of a letter that he had witnessed the sealing procedure.

Eventually, this wax process became so cumbersome that paper seals were devised and applied across the closures.

Handstamps were then added to tie the seal and pre-

clude tampering.

Figure 2 shows two seals that date from the early part of the 20th century. They are called sunburst seals because of their shape.

They were produced in many styles and colors. Note that the inscriptions vary. Most of the seals, such as the one on the left, bear the word "certificacion" but others, such as the seal on the right, were imprinted "correspondencias registradas."

Other common post office stickers are the "cerrado y sellado" (closed and sealed) adhesives, such as the one shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3. This Mexican postal label reads "cerrado y sellado" (closed and sealed).

Figure 4. This type of stamplike closure label was for use on mail processed at Mexico's dead letter office.

These labels came in a wide variety of designs starting in the late 1800s.

They were used to seal letters and packages that arrived at the post office unsealed or that had to be opened for inspection.

The wordings on these labels call attention to the action taken at a local post office. Space is provided for a name to be inserted, or alternatively, it could be preprinted, as shown.

Most of the sealing labels were brown in color, but a few can be found in red. Early designs were quite elaborate, often including the Mexican eagle coat of arms and heavy ornamentation.

In recent years, these labels have become quite plain and straightforward.

Figure 4 shows a fancy, stamplike closure label that I have seen used only on letters processed at the Mexican dead letter office (departamento de rezagos). This type of label was used extensively during the civil conflicts of 1910-20 on letters that were undeliverable and lacking a return address.

Figure 5. This red, green and white label was used on early Mexican airmail letters.

Many times the named sender could not be located either, so the letters ended up in limbo. I still don't understand why they weren't destroyed, but many such covers survived for the philatelic market.

It is difficult to find this particular label in good used condition. The label was applied to reseal the opening slit made by the examiners, so most were ultimately destroyed on the final opening. But once in a while, you will see a fair specimen that someone salvaged.

Figure 5 pictures a red, white and green adhesive label used during the early years of airmail. Such labels were employed extensively on airmail letters, presumably to facilitate sorting.

There are a couple of ways to collect these nonfranking adhesives. You can search for off-cover examples that sometimes crop up in packet mixtures. Or, you can look for them properly used on cover. On-cover collecting would be challenging but probably the most interesting.

Finally, my thanks to Ted Showers of Camp Verde, Ariz., who, a couple of years back, put me on to the immense variety of these nonstamps, especially the cerrado y sellado labels. ■

Ancillary markings found on Mexican mail

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

In the Mexico column in the Feb. 26, 2001, *Linn's*, page 46, I discussed ancillary adhesives used in addition to postage stamps on letters in the Mexican mail system. In this column, I'll discuss a few ancillary markings found on Mexican covers.

I define ancillary markings as any messages applied to covers other than a normal cancellation, meaning the usual town mark and killer.

The 1929 cover shown in Figure 1 was a cheap find that caught my attention because it bore three ancillary markings.

The first, and one of my favorites, appears just below the address. It pleads to writers: "Send your messages in oblong envelopes."

I have seen this message or similar ones on envelopes dated as early as the first decade of the 1900s right on up into the 1950s. Sometimes this admonishment not to use the large, nearly square European-type envelopes contains wording mentioning that such items impede the rapid handling of mail and that the covers can be easily damaged in the process.

Two other ancillary markings appear on the Figure 1 cover, which is an airmail cover. The one at the bottom-right corner of the cover encourages the use of airmail to speed delivery of correspondence. It notes that the 20-centavo airmail rate (twice the surface rate) is a small price to pay for such rapid service.

Finally, a handstamp at the upper left exhorts the public to add a return address in case a letter cannot be delivered and must be returned to the sender. This handstamp also tells the form the return address should follow.

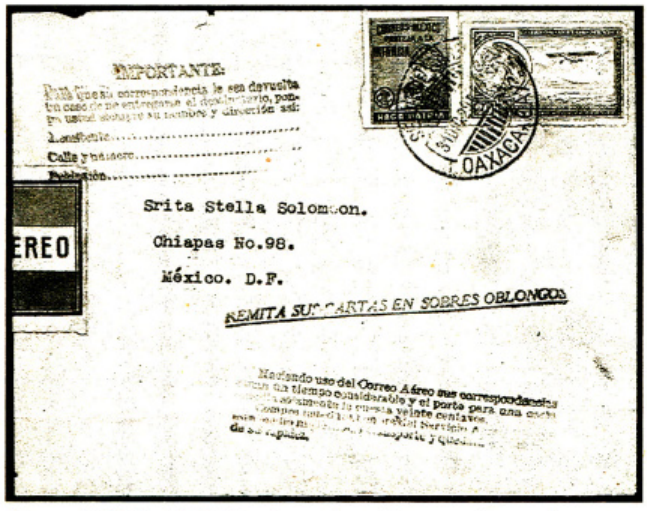


Figure 1. This 1929 Mexican airmail cover bears three ancillary handstamped markings: one about using oblong envelopes, another about the speediness of airmail and the third about the importance of including a return address.

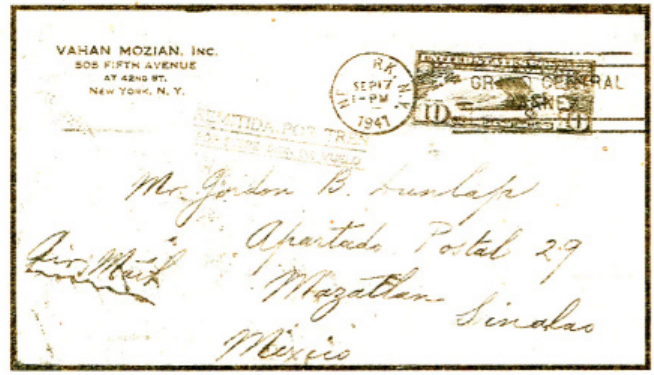


Figure 2. This 1941 airmail cover sent from a New York City stamp dealer to Mazatlan, Mexico, bears a supplemental marking reading "Sent by train, owing to flight cancellation."

A supplemental marking added to the 1941 airmail cover illustrated in Figure 2 reads, "Sent by train, owing to flight cancellation."

Backstamps allow us to plot the path of this cover sent, according to the corner card, by New York stamp dealer Vahan Mozian. It is franked with the 1927 10¢ Lindbergh airmail stamp (Scott C10). The cover left New York Sept. 17, 1941, arriving in Mexico City Sept. 19. It was then flown to Durango, reaching that city Sept. 20.

At Durango, the reduced service marking was applied, and the letter went aboard a train, presumably the one headed west from Durango toward the Pacific coast. But that railroad does not go all the way through to Mazatlan, so for the final 90 miles the letter probably traveled by mail truck over the twisting roads of the Sierra Madre mountain range.

Whatever conveyance was used, it took three days for the Durango-Mazatlan connection.

I once thought that this "Sent by train" marking was peculiar to Durango and probably rarely used. However, I have since seen several other examples applied at different locations.

Many date from the early days of airmail service, when equipment problems and foul weather often grounded the mail flights.

Mexican postal authorities apparently supplied these handstamps to offices where such interruptions were likely to occur.

Another marking that has nothing to do with mail delivery is shown in Figure 3, on a cover pictured only in part. This marking is applied to a 1936 cover originating in San Luis Potosi and sent to New York City.

The handstamp urges the citizenry to cooperate in a literacy campaign. The urging seems to have originated with the secretary of public education, and I assume this was initiated at the federal level.

Collectors familiar with Mexican philately will recall a series of stamps, both regular and airmail, issued in 1945 to publicize the battle against illiteracy (806-11, C153-57). It

was an ongoing problem.

Finally, the handstamp marking struck on the postcard shown in Figure 4 is probably the scarcest of the bunch. It explains that the picture postcard was damaged in a fire aboard a mail car near the town of Encarnacion de Diaz, state of Jalisco, March 16, 1956.

The card is obviously damaged, but it was repaired and ultimately delivered to the addressee in Mexico City.

A Mexico City machine cancel on the face of the card includes an April 12 date. So we must assume it took almost a month to sort things out, dry the water-soaked correspondence (the stamp floated off this card), and arrange for delivery.

These are but a few of the ancillary postal markings you can find on covers from Mexico. Most of them deal with everyday problems in handling the mails, but a few address larger issues, such as the promotion of education.

Perhaps the best thing about these interesting add-on markings is that you can collect them with little strain on the pocketbook. None of the covers shown in this column cost me more than a few dollars.

I continue searching for unusual postal messages struck or written on covers. I would enjoy hearing from collectors who possess what they consider to be uncommon markings. Write to Dale Pulver, in care of Linn's Stamp News, Box 29, Sidney, OH 45365. ■

Figure 3. An ancillary handstamped marking promoting a literacy campaign is shown here, one of the markings on a 1936 cover sent from San Luis Potosi, Mexico, to New York.

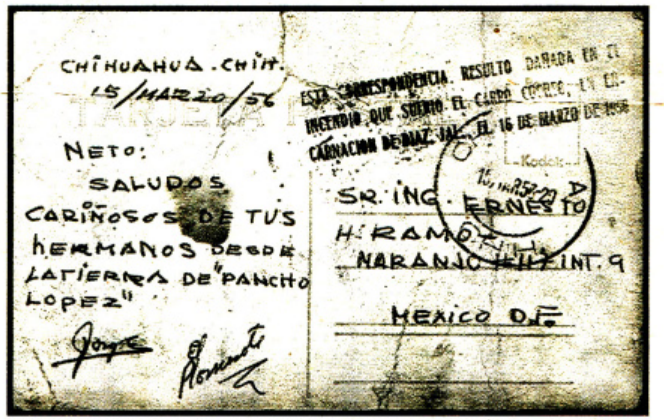


Figure 4. The handstamp on the reverse side of this Mexican picture postcard explains that the card was damaged in a fire aboard a mail car near Encarnacion de Diaz March 16, 1956.

Searching for miniature covers of Mexico

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

For several years I have been hunting for small, or miniature, covers mailed in Mexico. I define these miniatures as any cover measuring about 2½ inches by 4 inches (65 millimeters by 105mm) or smaller.

Such items usually are not expensive, but they are scarcer than you might think. So far, my entire collection can be counted on the fingers of one hand.

Recently, at my stamp club's annual exhibition and bourse, the Garfield-Perry March Party held March 23-25 in Cleveland, Ohio, I found the cover shown in Figure 1.

This cover now holds the record of being the smallest in my meager collection. It measures only 2 inches by 3½ inches (53mm by 90mm).

Besides being overfranked with a 1916 10-centavo Venustiano Carranza commemorative stamp (Scott 574), it possesses other philatelic charms as well.

The datestamp and killer are from one of the branch post offices in Mexico City, and it is dated the first day these stamps were available to the public, June 1, 1916. So, it is a first-day cover as well.

The dealer from whom I purchased this cover might have made a strong case for a much higher price had he known that fact. However, the majority of covers bearing this stamp and available in the market are dated June 1.

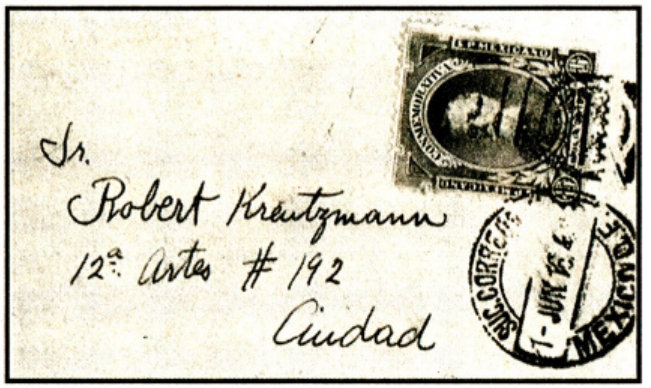


Figure 1. This cover, measuring only 2 inches by 3½ inches, is a first-day cover of Mexico's 1916 10-centavo Carranza stamp.

This is because the entire issue sold out on the first day. This issue comprised 190,000 blue stamps, just like the one affixed to the Figure 1 cover, and its scarcer color variety in lilac-brown (10,000 stamps printed).

Most of the stamps went to stamp dealers, who prepared and mailed many covers at the time. So, in effect, stamped covers mailed after June 1 are much scarcer. But many collectors are enchanted with first-day uses and buy them by choice.

Why were such small envelopes produced and used?

The Figure 1 cover is almost exactly the size of a standard business card, so my guess is that these small envelopes were used to send such cards publicizing one's business or profession.

In this instance, the sender could have been a stamp dealer and the addressee a collector, because the franking was excessive and the stamp had just been issued. The contents of the envelope are missing, so this is just my guess.

The cover shown in Figure 2 is about the same length as the one shown in Figure 1, but it is about ¼-inch wider. This would have been about the right size for European-style business cards.

This use is reinforced by the fact that it is addressed to a Milton Flynn at the "Princess Hotel, fronting on the Alemeda, on the street of Famous Men, in the city (ciudad) of Mexico."

Flynn probably was a visiting foreigner, and perhaps the envelope contained a short note confirming an appointment.

Here, the 5c franking is correct, paid with a stamp from the Independence issue of 1910 (314). The cancellation reads Oct. 14, 1921, so we have a very late use of this stamp.

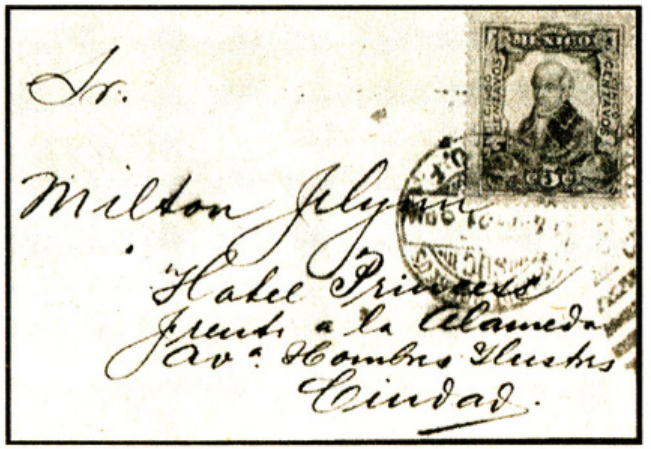


Figure 2. Late use of Mexico's 1910 Independence-issue 5-centavo stamp on a business-card-size cover mailed in 1921.

Both small covers described so far are handcanceled.

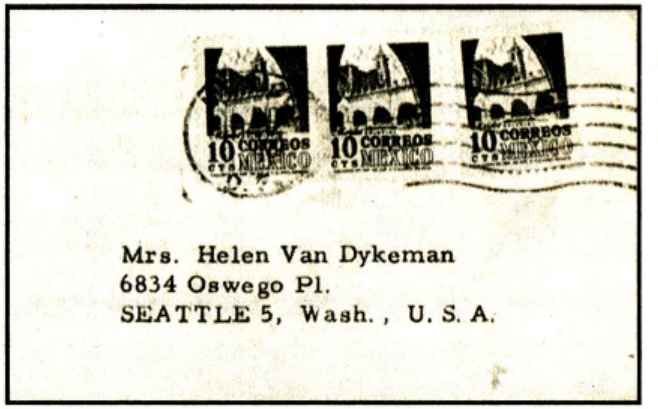


Figure 3. This cover, sent Dec. 22, 1959, from Mexico to the United States, may have contained a small Christmas card.

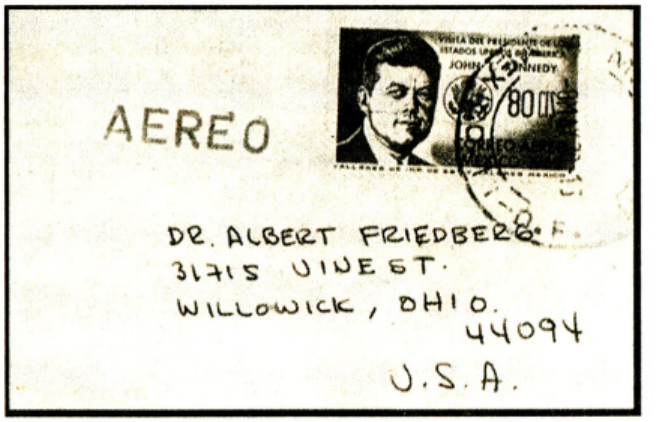


Figure 4. This small Mexican airmail cover bearing a Kennedy stamp was sent from one doctor to another May 8, 1970.

Figure 3 shows a small cover just barely within my dimension limits for a miniature cover. Franked with three 10c definitive stamps of the period (858) paying the surface rate, it is addressed to the United States and is canceled

www.zillionsofstamps.com

Dec. 22, 1959.

The date of use suggests that this envelope may have carried a diminutive Christmas card.

This small cover was machined canceled and went through the processing step without mishap. Usually, such small items end up with misaligned cancels or, at worst, damage to the envelope itself.

Figure 4 pictures an airmail cover sent from Mexico City May 8, 1970. It is franked with a 1962 80c airmail stamp commemorating President John F. Kennedy's visit to Mexico (C262).

The cover was processed by hand. It almost certainly carried a business card, since it is from one doctor (address on back flap) to another. Its size is just slightly larger (60mm by 95mm) than the Figure 1 cover.

Small covers such as these are probably now considered nonmailable items. The United States Postal Service levies an additional charge for nonstandard-size items and something this small could be refused service today, according to a clerk at my post office. The minimum size for standard mail in the United States is 3½ inches by 5 inches.

But in the years before mechanization played such a dominant role in the handling of mails, miniature envelopes were accepted as just another piece of mail.

Look for them, and you may be surprised how few of them are to be found. ■

Many Mexican stamps honor colonial cities

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Mexico reveres its colonial past even though those 300 years of Spanish rule were, in many respects, harsh and oppressive.

Buildings and architecture dating from the colonial era are frequently found pictured on Mexican stamps. One of the most repeated themes of Mexican commemorative stamps is to note the founding dates of the nation's oldest colonial towns and cities.

Up to 1931, commemorative stamps were rarely issued by the Mexican post office. On May 1, 1931, Mexico released a 10-centavo stamp to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the founding of Puebla, a city of colonial origins some 80 miles east of Mexico City.

Figure 1. Mexico issued this bicolor stamp in 1931 to honor the 400th anniversary of the founding of Puebla.

Figure 2. A stylized pirate ship is pictured on a 1940 Mexican stamp commemorating the city of Campeche.

The stamp (Scott 675), shown in Figure 1, is somewhat larger than the definitive (regular-issue) stamps of the period. Printed in two colors, it pictures the coat of arms of Puebla.

This stamp began a long parade of commemoratives that honored the 400th anniversaries of events, participants and architecture of the early years of the Spanish conquest.

The next colonial city to receive recognition on a Mexican stamp was Campeche.

Again, the city's coat of arms was chosen as the motif for a 10c bicolor stamp used for the surface-mail letter rate. It was issued Aug. 7, 1940, along with three airmail stamps (763, C111-13).

The 20c, 40c and 1-peso airmail stamps show a stylized pirate sailing ship and notable landmarks in the port city of Campeche. Figure 2 depicts the 20c stamp.

Figure 3. A doubling, or re-entry, can be found on the "20c" denomination in the lower-right corner of this Mexican airmail stamp saluting the city of Guadalajara.

These large airmail stamps, measuring about 40 millimeters square, appear to have been very popular among collectors.

Figure 4. This 1942 Mexican 40-centavo stamp honoring Merida's 400th anniversary was overprinted to indicate that it was for airmail use.

Guadalajara, Mexico's second-largest city, reached its 400-year anniversary in 1942 . It was honored with six stamps, three surface-mail stamps and three airmails (771-73, C120-22), all engraved. A statue, colonial churches and, once again, the coat of arms for the city make up the designs.

An interesting printing flaw is found on the 20c airmail stamp shown in Figure 3.

The 20c value imprinted in the lower-right corner displays a re-entry (doubling). This occurs on one stamp in the sheet.

Merida also became 400 years old in 1942 and likewise received homage with six stamps, three surface and three airmail (768-70, C117-19).

It's curious that the 40c airmail stamp appears to have originally been intended as a surface-mail stamp, because the stamp is labeled "Correos Mexico." However, there probably was little demand for such a high value, so it was overprinted in red "servicio aereo," and it became part of the airmail set. Figure 4 shows the overprinted stamp.

The stamp exists without the overprint (C118a), at about three times the catalog value for the overprinted stamps.

San Miguel de Allende, a rather small city in the state of Guanajuato, and known in recent times as a mecca for artists, writers and pensioners, turned 400 in 1943 and somehow rated six stamps honoring that event (781-83, C129-31).

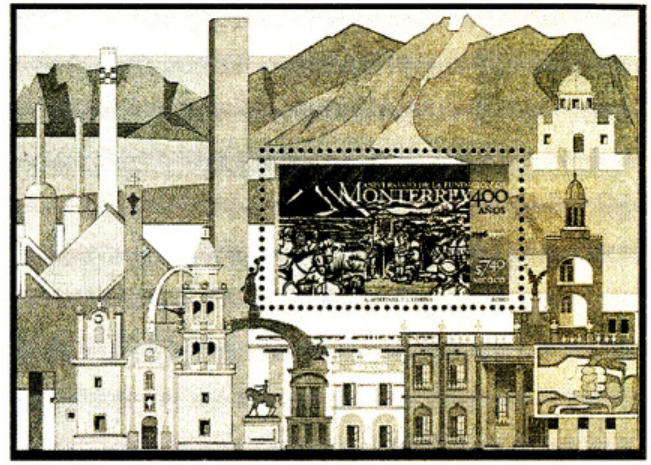


Figure 5. Mexico released this 7.40-peso souvenir sheet in 1996 to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Monterrey.

In 1946, the venerable mining center of Zacatecas reached its 400th birthday, and nine stamps were issued marking that event.

The set includes five surface-mail stamps and four airmail (820-24, C163-66).

Three of the surface-mail stamps are denominated 1p, 5p and 10p, certainly values that would rarely be needed on ordinary mail.

Looking at this multiple stamp set, I can't help but wonder if the postal authorities had begun to realize that such issues could provide a lucrative revenue stream from stamp collectors.

Most of the stamps would never be used, and the hobby was certainly on the rebound after the dark days of World War II with collectors once again buying aggressively.

Following a lull during the late 1940s and 1950s, anniversary stamps of founding dates resumed their place among Mexican new issues with Durango in 1963 (935), Celaya in 1970 (1029), Monterrey's 375th anniversary in 1971 (1037), Leon in 1976 (1145), Saltillo in 1977 (1154), San Luis Potosi in 1992 (1777) and Monterrey again at its 400th year in 1996 (1992).

Figure 5 pictures the 1996 Monterrey souvenir sheet created and produced by Grupo Romo, a contract printer used

by the Mexican postal authorities.

Stylized multicolor scenes of Monterrey surround a single 7.40p stamp showing what the founding group of Spanish explorers and missionaries may have looked like on the day they arrived at the future site of the city.

If you study the Scott stamp catalog closely, you will find numerous other Mexican events and historical figures commemorated on their 400th anniversaries. You could easily make a nice grouping or thematic collection based on these commemorative issues.

The Spanish crown was indeed busy in the Mexican area during the 16th century, and much of the infrastructure it established and built remains intact today. The area was originally known as Nueva Espana (New Spain).

Figure 6 shows a table listing Mexican towns and cities that were established in the 16th century and that have been honored with Scott-listed postage stamps commemorating their founding dates. The list is ordered based on the date a city first had an anniversary stamp issued.

This practice of issuing stamps marking founding dates continues up to this day.

For example, in October 2000, a 3p stamp was issued to mark the 250th anniversary of Ciudad Victoria in the Mexican state of Tamaulipas.

By my count, and this may not include some of the more recent emissions I have not yet seen, more than 50 Mexican postage stamps are associated with the establishment of Mexico's ancient cities.

Mexico's preoccupation with this theme seems to be a point of national pride.

The United States does not usually publicize such events. The only similar U.S. issues I can recall offhand are the 1907 set commemorating the founding of Jamestown in 1607, the 1949 stamp for Annapolis, the 1950 stamp for Kansas City and the 1951 stamp for Detroit.

Most of the oldest U.S. cities were just getting started when those in Mexico were already in their second or third centuries. ■

Mexico's ancient cities — anniversary stamps of founding dates

City	Year of issue	Anniversary	Scott numbers
Puebla	1931	400	675
	1981	450	1230
Campeche	1940	400	763; C111-13
	1990	450	1664
Merida	1942	400	768-70; C117-19
	1992	450	1716
Guadalajara	1942	400	771-73; C120-23
	1992	450	1720
S. Miguel de Allende	1943	400	781-83; C129-31
Zacatecas	1946	400	820-24; C163-66
	1996	450	1990
Durango	1963	400	935
Celaya	1970	400	1029
Monterrey	1971	375	1037
	1996	400	1992
Aguascalientes	1975	400	1140
Leon	1976	400	1145
Saltillo	1977	400	1154
Queretaro	1981	450	1240
Oaxaca	1982	450	1273
Morelia	1991	450	1715
San Luis Potosi	1992	400	1777
Salvatierra	1994	350	1892
Loreto	1997	300	2063
C. Victoria	2000	250	2207

Figure 6. This table lists stamps commemorating Mexican towns and cities that were founded under colonial rule.

Mexico's photo postcards show stamp subjects

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Postcard collecting boasts an avid following and is really akin to stamp collecting.

I know several stamp collectors who pursue this field in a big way, but because the postcard field is so vast, they focus their interests on subjects related to their stamp specialties.

I remain alert for postcards myself, since these often complement my stamp pursuits. I'm especially partial to photo cards, cards with real black-and-white photographs of scenic views, architectural monuments or indigenous subjects.

Photo cards appear to have had their heyday from about 1910 until the early 1950s when printed color cards essentially took over the market.

Whenever possible, I look for cards that show subjects that also are displayed on Mexican stamps. One of the earliest photo cards I have, illustrated in Figure 1, is a bird's-eye view of the main plaza of Cuernavaca, an area fronted by government buildings and the palace of Cortez, who used this town as his summer home.

There is no stamp showing this particular view, but it does resemble the views used in a 1938 commemorative series to mark the 16th International Congress of (Urban) Planning and Housing held in Mexico City.

I am interested in this card because it is an early photo card, used and mailed in 1922 to California.

Figure 2 pictures a postcard showing the Church of San Sebastian and Santa Prisca in the Mexican town of Taxco, a quaint village nestled in the mountains of Guerrero state. The area is noted for its silver mines and, more recently, its silver artisans.

Figure 1. This Mexican photo postcard shows the main plaza of Cuernavaca. This card was mailed in 1922 to California.

Figure 2. This Mexican postcard depicts the Church of San Sebastian and Santa Prisca, also is pictured on Mexican airmail stamps.

This church, a spectacular example of colonial architecture in the baroque style, is found on several stamps, most notably, the 35-centavo and 2-peso values of the regular airmail issue of 1950-73 (Scott C191, C220H and others).

The view on the card is not the same as that on the stamp, but there is no mistaking the identity of the church.

Figure 3 depicts a night view of the so-called Arch of the Revolution in downtown Mexico City. Construction on this massive structure began in the final years of Porfirio Diaz' reign. It was to be the keystone of an elaborate complex of government buildings that were never completed owing to the civil uprisings of 1910 and the ouster of Diaz from power.

Figure 3. The front of a photo postcard featuring a night view of the Arch of the Revolution in Mexico City.

Originally the arch was to have been named in honor of the centennial of independence, but in the final analysis it became a monument to the revolution of 1910-20.

This card, mailed in 1940, was franked with a 4c stamp of the regular issue, a stamp depicting the arch itself. The canceled stamp from the card is shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4. The postcard shown in Figure 3 is franked with a 4-centavo stamp showing the Arch of the Revolution.

The Arch design was first used on the regular issue of 1934, in a large format measuring 20 millimeters by 26mm. In 1937, for economy measures, the series was redrawn in a smaller size (17½mm by 21mm).

The Arch stamp, which paid the postcard rate to the United States is seen on many souvenir cards mailed during that period.

The arch was used again in the design of a 10c stamp issued in 1939 (746) to commemorate the opening of the World's Fair in New York City.

Figure 5 features a dramatic view of the volcano of Paricutin spewing smoke and ash. The photo was taken from a small village in the Mexican state of Michoacan.

This volcano, located on the spine of the Sierra Madre mountain chain, literally grew out of a peasant's cornfield in the 1940s. It was the object of intense study by geologists and vulcanologists at the time.

In 1956 the event was commemorated on a 50c airmail stamp (C235) marking the meeting of the International Geological Congress in Mexico City.

I am certain there are many other photo cards that could be associated with subjects used in stamp designs, and I would be delighted to hear from anyone who may have such items.

The picture sides of postcards cannot be considered philatelic in nature, but the cards do provide interesting acquisitions. Also, they are usually fairly reasonably priced. ■

Figure 5. This Mexican postcard depicts the Paricutin volcano spewing smoke. A 1956 airmail stamp also shows the smoking volcano.

Watermark makes Mexican stamp scarce

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Just more than 10 years ago (*Linn's*, May 13, 1991), I wrote about an innocent-looking Mexican definitive, or regular-issue, stamp that escaped notice by experienced collectors and when discovered was almost impossible to find.

The stamp is Scott 795A, the 15-centavo greenish blue definitive showing the Independence Monument in Mexico City, Scott design A113 of the 1934 series. The stamp is illustrated in Figure 1.

Its discovery was clearly a lesson not to take anything for granted and to be aware that changes often lead to the unexpected.

Figure 1. This 1946 15-centavo definitive, if printed on paper with the watermark shown in Figure 2, is one of the scarcer Mexican stamps of the 20th century.

The story, ferreted out by a collector living in Mexico, merits retelling.

In 1944, the Mexican printing plant for stamps introduced a new watermarked paper for its regular stamps. It is designated Scott watermark type 272, and it replaced security paper watermark type 156 that had been in use for 12 years.

Figure 2 shows the new watermark, which features eagles in circles separated by "S.H.C.P. MEXICO."

The initials S.H.C.P. stand for Secretaria de Hacienda and Credito Publica (Secretary of Treasury and Public Debt).

In 1945 and 1946, many of the higher value stamps of the large-size 1934 series were printed using this paper and duly listed in the Scott *Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue*. However, two stamps, the 15c and 5-peso, values appeared to have been skipped in the initial new printings.

The 15c denomination fulfilled a common franking, paying the rate for intercity letters and surface mail to the United States. At the time, ample stocks of the 15c stamp (on 156 watermarked paper, Scott 713) were on hand in the large city post offices.

However, such was not the case for the smaller post offices in the interior, so a printing on the new paper was made and distributed to those offices needing the stamps.

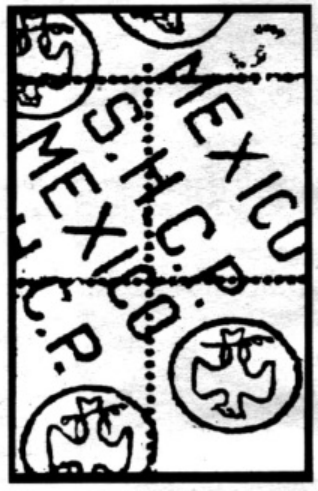


Figure 2. This watermark showing eagles inside circles and "S.H.C.P. MEXICO" was used on Mexican definitives issued in 1945 and 1946.

This was accomplished without fanfare or public announcement.

Even the philatelic agency, on which many collectors and dealers depended for their new issues, received none of the new printing and was unaware of it.

Eventually, the variety was discovered, verified, and assigned Scott No. 795A, so that it could be placed in the proper sequence in the catalog with the other values.

By this time, virtually all of the new stamps had been sold, used on mail and the envelopes bearing them discarded.

Dealers and collectors aware of the variety were able to find a few by scouring smaller and out-of-the-way post offices.

Meanwhile, a new 15c Postman stamp (825) made its appearance and was shouldering the burden of 15c frankings.

The large 15c stamp watermarked with Scott watermark type 272 stamp is, in my view, one of the truly scarce Mexican stamps of the 20th century. No one knows for sure how many were printed and sent out.

When it was originally found, it was estimated that several million went into circulation, but, if this were the case, it would seem that many more should exist. But they have always been elusive.

The value of the stamp in the Scott catalog over the years is rather interesting. In the mid-1960s when I first focused on Mexico as a specialty, the stamp cataloged $20 unused and $2.50 used.

As I recall, I purchased my first 795A for about 150p, which was U.S. $12.

Since then, the Scott value has moved upward rather steadily. By 1988, it had reached $240 mint and $35 used.

After the Scott valuing adjustments in the 1990 catalog, the unused value was set back to $190, but the used value held at $35. (Good used examples are tough to find.)

The stamp surpassed the level it had in the 1988 catalog, and the 2001 Scott catalog lists it at $250 mint and $60 used.

Acquiring an unused example of this stamp should not be too difficult.

Most auctions of predominantly Mexican stamps offer one or more of this stamp as a separate lot.

I think that it is more difficult to find the stamp used and in good condition than it is to find an unused one.

I searched for many years before locating one, and not a pristine stamp at that, with a dated cancel proving it was a contemporary use.

My stamp, from an unidentifiable town in the Mexican state of Michoacan, bears the date Feb. 12, 1946. The town name was off the stamp.

When browsing through boxes of cheap covers, be alert for covers bearing the 15c A113 design stamp postmarked in 1946 and from small towns. You might get lucky and find one of these gems.

The watermark is not hard to read with the usual methods for loose stamps, using fluid or holding it to light.

On cover, the watermark will offer more challenge, but with strong back lighting it should be discernable.

Good luck with your search, and please let me know if you find one, either used or on cover. ■

Ultimate reference source for Mexico Scott 1

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Serious collectors of Mexico have been blessed with a number of worthwhile reference works in recent years.

In 1993, Leo Corbett released his encyclopedic treatment of *The Imperial Eagles of Maximilian's Mexico*. Three years later, Nick Follansbee's definitive work, *The Stamps of the Mexican Revolution*, was published by the Collectors Club of Chicago. An initial edition of 300 sold out almost immediately, forcing a reprint of another 300 copies.

In 1997, James Bendon published *Mexican Maritime Mail*, an in-depth postal history review of complex mail-transport systems. This work was jointly authored by Karl Schimmer and John Heath.

Later that same year, Follansbee's superb and eminently useful *A Catalogue of the Stamps of Mexico, 1856-1900* was published.

I recently received a review copy of the first significant work on Mexican philately of the new millennium. *Mexico Plate Varieties of the Medio Real, 1856* was published under the aegis of the Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International.

This incredibly detailed study by Vernon Turnburke was 15 years in the making and comprises 240 pages illustrated with more than 950 color photos.

The book deals entirely with the stamp itself, rather than the usage and postal history of an issue that captured the attention of so many students in the past.

Its 16 chapters discuss and illustrate virtually every imaginable plate variety of Mexico's first stamp, Scott No. 1, a blue ½-real value.

The book is truly a gold mine of information for those who love the so-called flyspeck aspects of line-engraved stamps.

In the opening chapters, Turnburke describes the printing process, the three plates used and the papers used for this popular stamp.

Next comes terminology, definitions and framelines.

The author of this column used Vernon Turnburke's new reference book on Mexico's first stamp, the 1856 ½-real blue, to find out this pair was printed from plate III.

Turnburke then begins a systematic examination of a myriad of printing varieties; plate flaws, including multiple transfers, short transfers, overlapping ribbons and curls, scratches, and extraneous dots; and other plate-position characteristics.

Using enlarged photos of portions of the stamps he studied, Turnburke shows all of the varieties he describes in the text.

He also identifies each specific position in the three plates. With careful examination, and assuming adequate margins to show the telltale marks, you can determine the plate number and position in that plate.

For many this is a far too tedious task, but there are a few collectors who revel in this approach to the hobby.

How was such a meticulous study accomplished on a 150-year-old postage stamp? It was possible because large blocks and full sheets of this stamp still survive and what pieces Turnburke did not have himself were made available to him by fellow collectors.

I tested his descriptions with the pair of stamps illustrated nearby. It was obvious from the framelines that the stamps were positions 1 and 2. But what plate were they from?

With careful comparison to Turnburke's illustrations, I was able to determine this pair was printed by plate III.

I'm anxious to see if I can identify positions and plate numbers for other ½r stamps in my collection, but that will take more time than I have to spare at the moment.

Mechanically, the book is produced in loose-leaf format to permit future updates and corrections.

It is printed from a computer by the author upon order, so there is little money tied up in inventory. Desktop computer publishing has been a boon to important literature where there is only limited demand.

The photos in this book are scanned images. Also, almost all are enlargements, showing the design elements, spots and flaws with surprising clarity. The illustrations are closely keyed to the text so it's fairly easy to see what the flaws described look like.

The book includes two powerful aids for collectors willing to tackle the difficult task of plating their stamps.

Chapter 15 presents a matrix where you can match up characteristics of a given impression with a plate number and position within that plate. I haven't used this feature yet, but it appears to be a workable method.

Four appendixes are the second aid. These consist of tables setting forth the precise up-and-down and side-to-side distances between impressions on the three plates. Such data will be useful for those owning multiples.

This book is not for everyone, and would no doubt be labeled a case of overkill by even many serious collectors of Mexico's first issue. Still, it is remarkable in both scope and detail and a fine addition to the literature of Mexican philately. Turnburke deserves thanks for recording the results of his personal studies.

For those who would dare to enter this fascinating, but arcane world of plating and plate-flaw study, I can recommend it highly.

You may order it directly from the author, Vernon P. Turnburke Jr., 19111 Vista Bay Drive, No. 601, Indian Shores, FL 33785. The price is $60 postpaid to United States addresses, certainly a great bargain considering the time and labor invested in this project. ■

One man's junk yields another's treasure

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

A few years ago, a local stamp dealer who didn't have long to live because of a severe illness, asked me if I would buy his sizeable inventory of cheap Mexican covers.

I had picked through this group from time to time at local shows. There were perhaps 1,000 covers in all, mostly common, ordinary material.

I could imagine my wife's comment, "Your stamp room is already jammed with stuff. How could you want more?"

Feeling sorry for the man, I did buy the lot at a price that was certainly not excessive and that seemed to satisfy him.

Once I got the box of covers home and could examine them at leisure, my purchase became much more appealing.

I do not know the complete story behind this accumulation of mostly 20th-century covers. I believe it came from a dealer in Chicago who had milked it for all he could there.

My evidence for this reasoning is the predominance of Chicago and Illinois addresses.

There were 100 or so covers addressed to a Margaret Anderson who, based on notes in letter cards, apparently advertised and marketed a cure for alcoholism.

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, she operated out of Hillburn, N.Y. Then the business was either bought out or merged with a similar enterprise called Physicians Co-Operative Association of Chicago. There were hundreds of covers addressed to that firm.

The interesting thing about this trove is that the covers originated from towns and cities all over Mexico. It proved to be a gold mine for postmarks from small and obscure towns and villages.

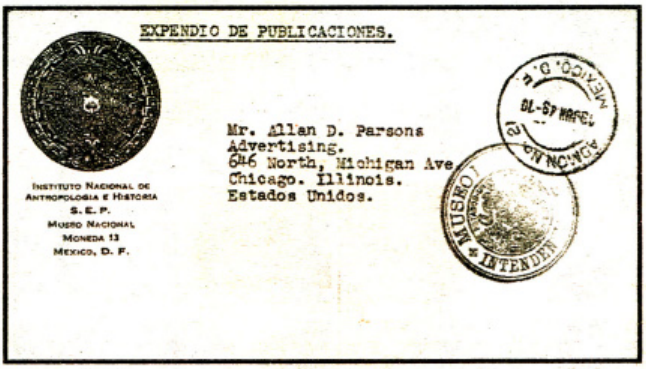


Figure 3. Stampless cover from the Mexican National Museum. The franking is provided by the official seal stamped on the cover to the right of the address.

Figure 1 shows an airmail letter mailed June 6, 1931, from Xicotencatl to New York with a Tampico transit handstamp on the reverse. Xicotencatl had a population of about 5,000 in 1980.

The time span covered by these letters also provided examples of some scarce, short-lived airmail rates.

Somewhere along the way, envelopes addressed to R.B. Evans were incorporated into the lot.

R.B. "Doc" Evans served as an officer and auction sales administrator for the Mexico-~~Elmhurst Philatelic Society~~ International for many years. He saved the covers he received from society correspondence. I even found one I had mailed to him from Mexico when I lived there in the 1960s, shown in Figure 2.

This lot yielded numerous other fascinating uses.

There was a No. 10-size business envelope addressed to "The Honorable Secretary of State" in Washington. It had a corner card of the U.S. Foreign Service American Consulate in Merida, Yucatan.

There is nothing too unusual about that except this envelope found its way from the State Department to the White House in 1940 and is rubber stamped on the back "From the Franklin D. Roosevelt collection authenticated by H.R. Harmer Inc. N.Y." It is a nice artifact from the golden age of stamp collecting.

Figure 1. An airmail letter mailed June 6, 1931, from the small town of Xicotencatl to New York. There is a Tampico transit handstamp on the reverse of the cover (not shown).

Figure 2. Double-weight cover bearing 1968 Olympic stamps mailed by the author to Mexico society official "Doc" Evans.

Another unusual item that emerged from this hodgepodge is a business-size envelope from the U.S. secretary of foreign relations to the Mexican consulate in Port of Spain, Trinidad.

It is franked with a pair of 10-centavo Cuauhtemoc Monument stamps, Scott type A85, overprinted "OFICIAL." Such stamps were issued to government offices to thwart pilferage and unauthorized use by employees. While loose Official stamps are not scarce, they are seldom found on cover.

In a similar vein, some quasi-government agencies such as museums were authorized mailing privileges that did not require the use of stamps. Figure 3 shows such a use, a cover from the National Museum.

The corner card depicts the famous Calendar Stone, and the museum's official handstamp inscribed "Museo Nacional Intendencia" is struck to the right of the address.

The hoard also provided me with numerous examples of advertising corner cards, some illustrated, and slogan cancels. None of these items are particularly valuable, but they can be interesting and are not often included in the cover boxes of show dealers.

I found one rather rare item in this lot of covers.

The Mexico column in the July 23 *Linn's*, page 14, discussed Scott 795A, a very scarce watermarked variety of a common design and denomination issued in 1946.

This stamp paid a common rate and, while big city post offices had adequate stocks of 15c stamps, smaller, out-of-the-way offices needing to be resupplied received the rare watermarked variety.

I suggested that the best chance to find one of these on cover would be to look for uses from small towns in the interior.

After I submitted the July Mexico column to *Linn's*, I decided to look through this box of covers I had. Sure enough, I found a nondescript envelope addressed to a religious group in California bearing a 15c stamp that looked promising, shown in Figure 4. The cover had been mailed from Ticul, State of Yucatan, in May 1947.

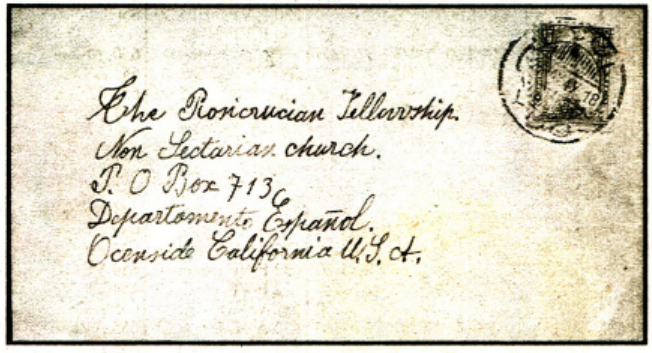


Figure 4. Cover mailed from Ticul, Yucatan, to Oceanside, Calif., franked with the rare 15-centavo light greenish blue Independence Monument stamp watermarked "SHCP."

Lifting the stamp from the cover to check the watermark revealed that it was, indeed, Mexico Scott 795A. The stamp is hinged back in place.

So this is the latest of the treasures to be found in what I originally considered to be a pretty junky lot of covers. ■

New edition of Follansbee's Mexico catalog

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Three and a half years ago (*Linn's* Feb. 23, 1998), I reviewed in this column a new, comprehensive catalog of 19th-century stamps of Mexico written and published by Nicholas Follansbee.

In late summer, Follansbee, a well-respected dealer and collector, published a second edition of this fine reference work, *A Catalogue of the Stamps of Mexico 1856-1900*, that is certain to please dedicated collectors of Mexican stamps.

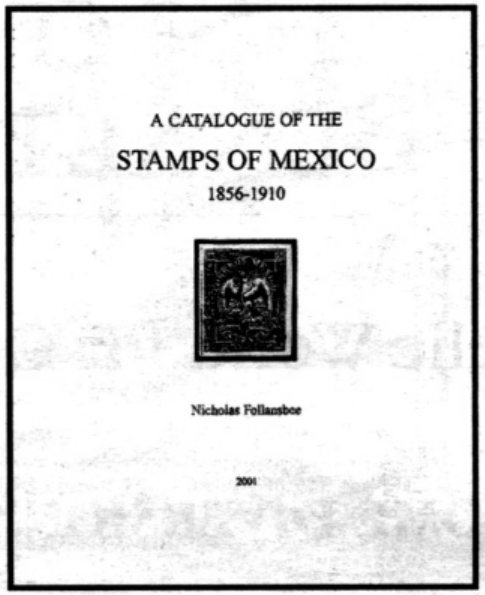
The catalog is an 8½-by-11-inch format, printed on fairly heavy stock and bound in a card cover. The text and listings of stamps follow the chronology of issues from the first Mexican postage stamp of 1856 up through the definitives of 1899-1903. The "OFICIAL" overprints of 1910 on those definitives constitutes the final listing in the catalog.

Each stamp issue is covered in a separate chapter, with listings, where applicable, of each of the various postal districts that sold stamps overprinted with that district's name. Color varieties also are specified.

This breakdown detail goes far beyond the scope of the listings in the Scott *Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue*. For example, the complex Eagle issue of 1864-66, Scott 18-24, with its five types (really periods of use) occupies 15 pages, with another nine pages devoted to the Maximilian heads, Scott 26-41, of the same era.

My field of interest, the 1856-67 first design, fills 17 pages.

Follansbee uses his own numbering system (cross-referenced with Scott numbers), and he assigns values to virtually all of the varieties of the classic issues, including the rare districts for which only a handful of examples are recorded.



The new edition of Nicholas Follansbee's *A Catalogue of the Stamps of Mexico 1856-1900*.

Copious notes and anecdotal information make the catalog a truly useful resource, and it is eminently readable.

The new edition contains 132 pages of text and listings, 10 more than the first edition, representing new and expanded information. This includes value listings for multiples, such as blocks and strips, that were not covered in the original catalog.

Also new are values for some of the subprincipal administrations, often referred to as suboffices, of the larger districts such as Guadalajara. According to Follansbee, the number of new listings is about 175.

The photographs this time have more contrast and are clearly better than before. This was a minor criticism I made in my first review, although illustrations in the first edition were certainly good enough for most purposes. Anything better would probably have driven the cost up, and therefore the price of the book, beyond what many collectors would be willing to pay.

The new volume features more than 400 price changes, mostly on the up side. Many are quite substantial. These are concentrated among the rarer district varieties of the 1856-67 and 1872 issues.

Most of these increases can be tied directly to auction realizations obtained when James Mazepa's collection, "Mexico: First Issue, 1856-61," came to the auction block last year. I, for one, was quite astonished at the prices some of that material fetched, although much of it was admittedly one-of-a-kind, or nearly so. Mazepa's collection won the Champion of Champions award at the American Philatelic Society's Stampshow in Providence, R.I., in 2000.

Those of us who collect Mexican first issues were initially shocked at the auctioneer's estimates, which, in turn, established the level of reserves. But most of the better items did sell — and at never-seen prices.

Counterbalancing the lack of bidding success many of us experienced was the comforting feeling that our own collections probably enjoyed a boost in market value as a consequence of those auction results.

Follansbee notes that there are a few reductions in the listed values, but one might have some difficulty finding them. And, he says he thinks he has found and corrected all of the editorial mistakes that were present in the first edition.

I find this new edition to be first-rate and essential for the libraries of all who love and collect the classic stamps of Mexico. There is so much useful information here that I can't imagine a serious specialist not wanting a copy.

And, even if you have the original edition, don't hesitate to add this updated version to your bookshelf. The new listings and additional information are worth the price.

On the final two pages of the catalog, Follansbee makes a case for collecting Mexico, particularly the early classics. He compares the quantities issued and catalog values of Scott No. 1s for some of the world's most popular countries. In a list of 22 stamp issuing-entities including the Netherlands, Great Britain, France, Austria, the United States, Roman States, Russia, Poland, and so on, Mexico offers more rarity for the money than any of them.

Follansbee's new catalog can be obtained for $45 postpaid, directly from him: Nicholas Follansbee, Box 3210, Ashland, OR 97520.

In view of the information crammed into this modest-size book, and the dedicated effort behind it, I regard it as a real bargain. ■

Celebration of Christmas, Jan. 6 in Mexico

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Over the years, several collector friends have prepared and sent me Christmas cards depicting some facet of their stamp-collecting interests.

This certainly adds a personal touch to their greetings, and I enjoy receiving them.

From these, and with the inclusion of some Mexican stamps, I have formed a small collection relating to Christmas in old Mexico.

One friend, Constantine Bulak, now long gone, touted his interest in Wells Fargo covers of Mexico.

Figure 1 shows a photo Christmas card Bulak made, depicting a prize item from his collection.

Wells Fargo operated up and down the west coast of Mexico, expediting the transfer of both mail and packages. The firm used postal stationery with a Wells Fargo corner card and Mexican franks. Wells Fargo charged an additional handling fee for its services.

The postal stationery pictured on Bulak's Christmas card was used in 1892. It commemorated the 400th anniversary of Columbus' landing in the Western Hemisphere.

The postal markings are probably too faint to show up in the photo, but this cover originated on Christmas Day in Magdalena in the Mexican state of Sonora and was directed to a business firm in El Paso, Texas.

Figure 1. Collector Constantine Bulak made this photo Christmas card showing a Wells Fargo postal stationery cover mailed Christmas Day 1892 from Magdalena to El Paso.

The sender paid a total of 15 centavos (5c stamp and 10c Wells Fargo fee) for delivery.

Beneath the Wells Fargo corner card is a handstamped inscription in magenta which translates to "For ¼ oz. letters addressed exclusively to the U.S."

Another Christmas card from Bulak is shown in Figure 2. The picture on this card shows a Mexican lady dropping a letter into the mouth of a face cemented into the wall of a stone building, perhaps the local post office.

This ornately carved hardwood face dates from the 18th century and is now on display in the postal museum of Mexico City. It is part of what is referred to in the Spanish language as a buzon, or collection box.

Figure 2. Another Bulak card pictures a Mexican woman dropping letters into a collection box shaped like a face.

As the use of postal services grew, such boxes were dispersed around the larger cities to facilitate the posting of letters by the public.

It might be quaint to think that the lady in the sketch is posting a Christmas card. But at the time represented by this picture, such was probably not the case. In those days, Mexico did not celebrate Dec. 25 as the world does now; it was just another church holiday.

More significant was Jan. 6, the day of Los Santos Reyes honoring the three kings (also called the three wise men or the magi), arriving with gifts for the newborn Christ child.

The three figures on the card represent the three kings bearing their gifts.

Figure 3. This 1864-66 Mexican 2-real Eagle stamp bears a Dec. 25, 1865, cancel.

On the morning of Jan. 6, Mexican children would find small, homemade gifts in their beds, brought to them by the three kings.

Adults rarely participated in the gift exchange.

Santa Claus did not become a part of Mexican culture until much later.

Christmas Day was not observed in Mexico as a special holiday until early in the 20th century. Stamp collectors occasionally encounter items bearing Dec. 25 postmarks confirming that it was business as usual at the post office on that day.

The stamp in Figure 3, an 1864-66 2-real Eagle (Scott 23), bears a clear "Dicbre 25" circular town mark applied at the port of Veracruz. The invoice number printed on the stamp reveals that it was from a shipment dispatched almost a month earlier, Nov. 28, 1865.

Another feature of the Mexican advent season was the traditional posada, a symbolic procession with two participants playing the roles of Joseph and Mary, carrying a small figure of baby Jesus, and seeking a place to spend the night. They would be denied entry several times until one kindly host took them in and a celebration ensued.

The word "posada" means lodging, but, in recent times, it has come to mean a Christmas party.

Figure 4. Poinsettia blooms are featured on this 1990 Mexican Christmas stamp.

In Mexico, the posada season lasts from the middle of December until Christmas Day, and many take full advantage of this tradition.

Christmas trees and decorative lights are relatively new to the Mexican culture, arriving to the country about 1920. But Mexico had its own floral Christmas tradition that has been adopted with enthusiasm in our own country.

In olden times, it was customary in Mexico to decorate on Christmas Eve with a showy red tropical plant called flor de noche buena (flower of Christmas Eve).

The plant is more common-

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ly called poinsettia, derived from the fact that it was discovered and promoted by Joel R. Poinsett, the United States Minister to Mexico appointed by James Monroe in 1823.

Figure 4 shows Mexico's 700-peso Christmas stamp of 1990 (1674), which features the poinsettia.

Perhaps you have your own little collection of Christmas-related material. It's fun to seek out such items.

Meanwhile, I extend holiday greetings to all who read this column and who have written from time to time with support or questions. I am grateful for that. ■

Mexico's 1910 high values picture events

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

In 1910, Mexico issued a series of postage stamps to honor the 100th anniversary of its war to gain freedom from Spanish rule.

Known as the Independence issue (Scott 310-20), this was the last set of postage stamps authorized by the regime of Porfirio Diaz. Diaz was driven from power shortly thereafter.

The stamps were printed by the London firm of Bradbury, Wilkinson & Co. The well-crafted, cleanly perforated (gauge 14) stamps are exquisite examples of the engraver's art.

The eight lowest values (1 centavo to 20c) pay homage to heroes and heroines of that war for independence. For the first time on Mexican stamps, two women, Josefa Ortiz and Leona Vicario, were included among those selected for commemoration.

I'll defer comment on the low values for now and focus on the three top values, 50c, 1 peso and 5p (318-20).

These stamps were designed in a horizontal format, about 34 millimeters by 25mm, and were printed in two colors. The black vignettes, or central designs, of these three stamps portray significant historical moments in that struggle for independence that began in 1810 and lasted until the early 1820s.

Figure 1. The 50-centavo stamp in Mexico's 1910 Independence issue shows Miguel Hidalgo inciting the Mexicans to war against the Spanish crown Sept. 16, 1810, in Dolores.

Prior to the time these stamps appeared, Mexican stamp designs usually focused on national heroes, the coat of arms, country scenes or, in the case of the Transportation issue of the 1890s, the means for conveying the mails.

The Independence issue was a first attempt to actually picture significant events.

To enjoy these captured moments of Mexican history, you need to examine the stamps with a strong magnifier. Otherwise, the fine details are lost to the unaided eye.

The 50c stamp illustrated in Figure 1 records the Grito, or shout for independence voiced Sept. 16, 1810, by Father Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla in the town of Dolores, some 200 miles northwest of Mexico City.

It was there that Hidalgo's followers, a ragtag army of peasants, mine workers and a few sympathetic middle-class friends, initiated their campaign to overthrow a Spanish-dominated government after nearly three centuries of colonial rule.

The scene depicts Hidalgo, a priest, standing before the parish church, surrounded by a few turncoat soldiers and townsfolk.

From Dolores, Hidalgo's army moved quickly to capture San Miguel (de Allende) and then Celaya, on its way to the silver-mining city of Guanajuato, where a major battle took place.

At both San Miguel and Celaya, the undisciplined forces sought out and killed as many Spaniards as they could find and pillaged their homes and shops.

Chronologically, the next significant moment of history is found on the 5p stamp shown in Figure 2. When Hidalgo arrived in Guanajuato Sept. 28, the Spanish intendant (town leader) had heard about the depredations of the insurgent mob.

Figure 2. The 5-peso stamp in Mexico's 1910 Independence issue pictures El Pepila setting fire to the door of the granary at Guanajuato as insurgents battle the Spanish garrison.

Although Hidalgo offered protection to the Spanish townspeople in exchange for their surrender, their leader, Juan Antonio Riano, reasoned that Hidalgo could not prevent his forces from killing and plundering.

Riano therefore moved his small force and the Spanish population to the Alhondiga de Granaditas, the public granary, a massive stone structure situated in the center of town.

Figure 3. The central design for the 1p value of Mexico's Independence issue shows Mass being offered for the insurgents at Monte de las Cruces (Mountain of the Crosses).

Although heavily outnumbered, Riano believed he could hold out until reinforcements from Mexico City arrived.

Hidalgo's initial assaults on the fortress were ineffective, and many insurgents were killed trying to batter the stout wooden doors barring access to the fortress.

Finally, a mine worker, nicknamed El Pepila (turkey), strapped a paving stone to his back to protect him from the rifle shots raining from above and succeeded in setting fire to the door. This is the scene depicted in the vignette of the 5p stamp. Pepila is pictured at the upper left with his torch, crouching against the massive door to the granary.

Once the door was breached, the masses poured into the building, massacring everyone in sight. They then moved into the town, burning homes and stores. Riano's prediction was correct: He was killed early in the battle by one of Hidalgo's riflemen.

History is unclear on the true identity of El Pepila. Some sources list him as Jose Barajas, but others record his name as Juan Jose de los Reyes Martinez. This hero for a day is remembered with a statue in the converted granary, which is now a museum.

After Guanajuato, Hidalgo's forces surged on toward Valladolid (Morelia), capital of the state with the same name, which was captured easily.

With an army now numbering 80,000, Hidalgo headed back to the capital by way of Toluca. He caught up with Royalist forces at Monte de Las Cruces (Mountain of the Crosses) Oct. 20. The Spanish forces were outnumbered and after a pitched battle were forced to retreat to Mexico City, some 20 miles distant.

The 1p stamp, pictured in Figure 3, depicts a Mass held for the insurgents at Monte de las Cruces, presumably after their victorious battle.

Hidalgo rested his troops on the hills overlooking the capital city while he decided what to do next. Had he opted for a decisive attack

Buyer beware: detecting a fabricated cover

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Many of the classic issues of Mexico have been counterfeited or manipulated, mostly to deceive collectors.

This could dampen the enthusiasm of some people to collect Mexico. But if you are careful and use the resources available, the danger of getting taken is minimized.

Over the years I have accumulated a small collection of bogus items relative to Mexican philately.

The cover illustrated in Figure 1, is one of them, an example of when caution is necessary.

The cover was given to me recently for my reference collection. It was a returned lot from a long-ago auction. The lot never was reclaimed by its original owner, perhaps because he knew it to be fake.

The lot sheet bears a penciled note "bad" and the signature of Herbert Bloch (1907-87), one of the hobby's most prolific expertizers during the middle decades of the 20th century.

I am in full agreement with Bloch's assessment, and although his reasons were not noted, I am sure my analysis has some of the same points that led him to his opinion.

The cover, a folded letter sheet sent from Mexico City to Pueblo, is franked with a single example of the 25-centavo 1872 stamp, Scott 101, plus a vertical bisect of the same stamp, ostensibly to make a rate of 37½c.

Figure 1. The bisected Mexican 1872 25-centavo stamp on this cover probably was added and canceled long after the cover was mailed to make it more desirable and valuable.

To an unwary postal history collector, this would appear to be a wonderful find, for such on-cover bisects or "splits" of the late classic-era stamps are exceedingly rare.

In my view, however, the cover is a contrivance. The fractional stamp was added and canceled at a time different from the date the original letter was canceled.

I carefully measured the two cancellations, and while they are deceptively similar, the inner ring of the one canceling the half stamp is about a half millimeter smaller than the one on the other town mark. Neither cancel has inscribed dates, as was customary, so I don't have many other points to compare.

But the cancel tying the bisect looks fishy to me.

I have other reasons to suspect this fabrication.

The letter is on a beautifully engraved letterhead of the Bank of London, Mexico and South America, see Figure 2. It is a short note confirming a deposit made to the addressee's account in a commercial transaction at Mexico City.

There is no indication of any enclosures to push it to a higher weight category, so it was not a heavy letter.

The rate at that time for a single sheet letter up to ¼ ounce was 25c. This letter weighs 5 grams, substantially less than a quarter ounce, so there was no need for the extra 12½c represented by the bisected stamp.

Another reason to distrust this as an original franking is that the main post office in Mexico City was always well supplied with stamps of all the available denominations.

Fractional stamps representing legitimate use are usually found in small, out-of-the-way post offices where the timely resupply of stamp inventories did not occur.

If 37½c had truly been required for this letter, a 12c stamp, Scott 100, would have been paired with the 25c stamp. That would have paid for a letter weighing ½ ounce up to ¾ ounce, three times the weight of this piece.

I own another cover similar to this one from the previous issue, Scott Type A6.

It, too, is a single-weight letter bearing a 25c whole stamp and a bisected 25c.

The weight of that letter did not merit the high rate, either. But the fabricator tried to make it even more appealing by adding scarce "Anotado" overprints.

This compounded his hoax, because he used as raw material a cover that was dated almost a year before the "Anotado" overprints were authorized.

I do not know who was responsible for these fabrications or when they were made.

They resemble the work of Raoul de Thuin, the famous Belgian forger who worked for many years in Merida, Mexico.

He was famous for taking cheap, but genuine, covers and manipulating them so that they appeared to be much more desirable and valuable than they originally were.

He was very clever, and some of the cliches he made to apply forged cancellations were difficult to discern from genuine ones.

But he was known to slip up on his postal history from time to time. That often signaled his fabrications for what they were.

Collectors who encounter items such as the ones described here would be well advised to insist on certificates of authenticity signed by reliable experts.

And it doesn't hurt to question items that seem to be unreasonable uses and do a little research on your own.

I have found in many instances that odd frankings are the first clues to bogus items.

I'll be happy to hear from any readers who have been offered items that seem to be too good to be true or who have suffered the annoyance of not obtaining a good certificate on an item originally thought to be genuine. Write to me, Dale Pulver, in care of Linn's, Box 29, Sidney, OH 45365. ■

Figure 2. The cover illustrated in Figure 1 is a folded letter sheet with an engraved letterhead from the Bank of London, Mexico and South America. The letterhead is shown here.

Many paper varieties of Tourism definitives

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

A reader gently chided me recently for not writing much about modern Mexican stamps.

It is true: I find the older stamps of Mexico more interesting to collect, though not entirely.

When the Exporta stamps were current (1975-93), I wrote several columns about them and even developed a checklist of varieties. Several hundred *Linn's* readers obtained this list by sending in an addressed, stamped envelope.

The Exporta issues were replaced with a new series known as the Turisticos, or Tourism stamps. Whereas the Exportas promoted Mexican exports, the Turisticos stamps, as the name suggests, were designed to promote tourism.

Figure 1. Course (left) and smooth (right) printings of the 4.20-peso Zacatecas stamps in Mexico's Turisticos series.

Twelve of Mexico's 31 states participated in this stamp venture with up-front money to pay for original artwork and start-up costs. That is why there are only 12 different designs showcasing tourist attractions of those 12 states.

I first wrote about the Turisticos stamps in my *Linn's* column of Feb. 26, 1996. I predicted that the Turisticos might eventually rival the Exportas in complexity and collector appeal. This appears to have been a sound prophecy.

Figure 2. The 2.70-peso Mexico State stamp in Mexico's current definitive regular-issue series, Turisticos, also exists with a course printing (left) and with a smooth printing (right).

While there are only 12 designs and no watermark or perforation varieties, students of the issue, and particularly dealers, have, at last count, defined 17 paper types.

Also there are numerous printing flaws and color shades to tempt collectors.

My reader friend sent me two 4.20-peso stamps of Zacatecas that appear to be quite different, as can be seen in Figure 1.

The stamp on the left has what many call a coarse, or porous, appearance. Under a strong glass, many dots that make up the fields of the various objects appear to be missing, giving the overall stamp a blotchy look.

The stamp at right has a much smoother appearance.

Also, the color of the colonial building on the left is grayer and the agave plant in the foreground is a dark, blue-green. The building in the right-hand stamp is an even-textured brown and the plant a truer green.

I have no explanation for these differences in appearance. It could be a screen shift, use of different presses or perhaps something on the surface of the paper.

Obviously, the printer experienced some problems main-

Figure 3. A pair of the 3.40-peso Sinaloa stamp in Mexico's Turisticos series showing the error of the "N$" (right) in a pane of stamps with "$." The error occurred in position 37.

taining consistent colors. According to information published in the Mexican collectors journal *Mexicana*, these 4.20p stamps were probably printed in late 2000 or March 2001.

An almost identical situation occurred early in the issue with the 2.70p Mexico State stamp.

Examples of these varieties are shown in Figure 2. The stamp at left has the porous appearance, most visibly pronounced in the sky and water of the lake. The sky and water in the right-hand stamp are much more evenly colored.

Although these differences were noted by collectors early on, dealers had trouble obtaining stocks of the varieties, and they have become rather pricey.

This scarcity is understandable. The 2.70p stamp was used for a standard rate for destinations in North America and Central America, and most of the early printings showing these anomalies were probably used up rather quickly.

A spectacular error in the Turisticos issue was discovered during 1996 when the currency symbol "N$" was changed back to a simple "$." For some reason, during the retouching of the printing plates for the 3.40p Sinaloa stamp, the "N" in plate position 37 was not removed.

The result is an instance where a pair of stamps can show both currency symbols.

Figure 3 shows such a pair, positions 36 and 37 in the pane. About 15,000 panes of these stamps had been delivered and were being sent out to post offices before the mistake was discovered.

In theory, 15,000 examples existed, but how many were sold or used is not known.

Dealers have been asking up to $100 for singles of this error and more if in pairs or blocks.

The three examples shown with this column demonstrate what alert collectors can find by carefully examining their stamps.

Although I have not studied this permanent series as closely as I did the Exportas, it certainly presents a challenge to the serious stamp collector.

The biggest variable is paper. It comes from many sources (including leftover Exporta stock), displays varied reactions to longwave ultraviolet light, carries many different gums and exists in different thicknesses.

For serious study of these variables, advanced stamp-hobby tools are needed.

Postal rates have changed several times during the nine years these stamps have seen service, and that introduces still more variables.

All of the designs can be found with two or more denominations.

Even if all you want are the 50-odd face-different varieties listed in Scott, it should be an interesting, if not daunting, search. I hope to explore further aspects of the Turisticos issue in future columns. ■

De Thuin produced many Mexico forgeries

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

In the Mexico column in the Feb. 25 *Linn's*, page 37, I wrote about detecting fabricated covers from Mexico and showed an example. I ended the column with the suggestion that the cover might have been the work of Raoul Ch. de Thuin, as it bore the earmarks of his modus operandi.

Several collector friends urged me to expand on the activities of this rogue of the stamp hobby.

It has been many years since Raoul Charles de Thuin (pronounced de-TWEEN) shared headlines in the philatelic media, and many younger collectors are probably unaware of his impact on the hobby.

De Thuin was a clever con artist who forged and contrived all manner of philatelic material and sold it to unsuspecting collectors.

He seemed to take great pleasure in his ability to evade attempts by authorities to shut down his deceptive, if not illegal, trade.

The extent of these deceptions was not fully known until December 1966 when Col. James De Voss, then executive secretary of the American Philatelic Society, and James Beal, noted collector of and expert in Mexican philately, succeeded in purchasing all of de Thuin's philatelic paraphernalia, thus effectively stopping his operations.

Prior to that time, de Thuin operated on the fringe of the law and evaded numerous fraud orders issued by United States postal authorities by simply changing his business name or relocating it.

Figure 1. A forged cancel on a Mexico 2-real Hidalgo stamp with a rare Polotitlan district overprint. The forgery was probably created by Raoul Ch. de Thuin.

Figure 2. Raoul Ch. de Thuin forged both the Yguala district name and the overprint control number on this Mexico 50-centavo Maximilian head stamp.

It was clear at the time of the APS buyout that he had defrauded hundreds, if not thousands, of collectors over several decades.

His place of business (in his home) was in Merida, Yucatan, and he was known under numerous names: Belgian Export Co., French Philatelic Agency, Merida Philatelic Agency, and perhaps the most intriguing of all, the Maya Shop.

Most had one thing in common, the same mailing address: Apartado 404, Merida.

Although de Thuin made spurious material from a host of countries, the one that received most of his attention was Mexico.

After the APS finished taking inventory of his tools, they counted more than 1,200 cliches (small printing units) he had prepared to forge overprints and cancellations specific to Mexico.

It is believed he never actually counterfeited Mexican stamps, but he did make a die of the first design showing Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla to produce printed-on-both-sides varieties.

I began specializing in Mexico about the same time the APS was forcing de Thuin's hand. Fortunately, I was never victimized by his offerings, although I have deliberately obtained a few pieces of his work for my reference collection.

The stamp illustrated in Figure 1 is probably a de Thuin creation, and it demonstrates one aspect of his scam methods.

The stamp, the 1856 Hidalgo 2 reales (Scott 3), has no district name but purports to have been used in the district of Polotitlan, according to its cancellation.

If genuine, it would be a very rare item, with a current value in excess of $1,000.

I found it in an odd lot of Scott 3s, mostly common districts, that only cost me a few dollars.

After close inspection and comparison with a de Thuin cliche, I am fairly well convinced it is a faked cancellation. But it is dangerously close to the real thing.

The ink is somewhat grayish, another de Thuinlike feature, and the stamp is a weak impression. It may have been from remainder stock, a favorite raw material source for de Thuin.

Figure 2 shows another trick de Thuin would use to upgrade a cheap stamp into something seemingly more valuable. It is an engraved 1866 50-centavo Maximilian head from a rare district, Yguala.

The basic stamp itself is genuine, but both the name and the overprint control numbers have been forged. No 50c stamps from this district are known.

I am certain it is de Thuin's work because it came from one of his approval sheets of grossly overpriced stamps.

Where did de Thuin get so many good stamps to work with? In this instance, after the collapse of the Maximilian empire in 1867, there remained large unused, and unoverprinted stocks of the engraved Maximilian heads (31a to 34a). These eventually reached the stamp-hobby market and could be obtained quite cheaply.

Another clever attempt at deception appears in Figure 3. The stamp is a not-so-common lithographed variety of the 50c Maximilian head (30) on piece. The invoice/date

Figure 3. Both the cancel and the suboffice number of "26" on this 50-centavo Maximilian head are de Thuin forgeries.

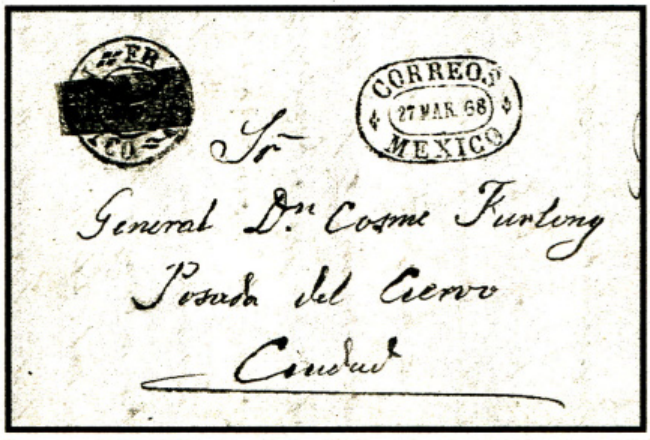


Figure 4. This Mexico 1-real bisect cover is a total contrivance created on the inner sheet of an 1868 folded letter.

overprint, which is probably legitimate, is from Queretaro. However, the suboffice number "26," and the cancellation of S(an) Miguel Allende are clearly de Thuin forgeries.

The final example I will show is another trick de Thuin perpetrated on careless collectors. The cover shown in Figure 4 bears a bisect of the 1r thin, watermarked issue of 1867 (43). This is immediately suspect, because ½r is a rare rate authorized only for circulars.

Business letters of this era comprised a large sheet folded in half on which the message was written. It was then refolded to approximately 3 inches by 5 inches and sealed with wax. The address was written on the clear side.

What de Thuin did here was to take a genuine letter from 1868, tear off the outer sheet that had the address, and readdress it, adding the bogus franking and cancellations.

The original letter was slightly more than one page, with some of the message and the sender's signature overflowing to the back of the first page near the top.

Mexicans generally added a flourish below their signature. If you look closely, a couple of pen strokes from the flourish of this writer's signature are visible at the right edge of the letter.

This was probably one of de Thuin's late creations, as the handwritten address is a bit shaky and does not match the hand of the original writer.

As I noted in the Feb. 25 column, de Thuin loved to make silk purses out of sow's ears, and he succeeded to a remarkable degree.

Dozens of collectors were scammed before he was put out of business and none, so far as I know, ever recouped their losses.

Much of the material he created has been purged from the philatelic market, but items do crop up from time to time.

One of the provisions of the APS settlement with de Thuin was a promise not to re-engage in philatelic manipulation. That promise appears to have been kept, as his physical faculties were already in decline.

De Thuin retired to Ecuador and died there in 1975.

For those who would delve further into the work of Raoul de Thuin, I suggest *The Yucatan Affair: The Work of Raoul Ch. de Thuin, Philatelic Counterfeiter*, the book published in 1974 by the APS (and a 1980 reprint) that chronicles and illustrates the work of this master forger.

The book may provide more information than you need to know, but there is some interesting reading. If you insist on expertizing your own stamps, it is a must for your reference shelf. ■

Mexican issue of 1914 called Denver Eagles

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Collectors of Mexico gathered May 17-19 at the Rompex show in Denver for the annual meeting of the Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International. I have mentioned this fine society in the past because it provides collectors of all levels good value for their annual dues of $20.

The society publishes a quarterly journal with interesting and informative articles dealing with all aspects of Mexican stamps and covers.

The group also maintains a library and operates an expertizing service that is recognized worldwide.

For more information, write to the MEPSI Treasurer, Box 451233, Los Angeles, CA 90045.

Many MEPSI members reside in California and other southwestern states, so the annual meetings and conventions are usually held in a western location in the United States and sometimes in Mexico.

The 2003 meeting is scheduled to take place Feb. 28-March 2 in the colonial city of Oaxaca, Mexico.

There is always good fun and fellowship at these get-togethers, and I'm sorry I was unable to attend this year's meeting in Denver.

I recall vividly the last time the meeting was in Denver in 1994. The group had arranged a guided tour through the new Denver airport, but the tour was canceled because the horrendous problems the airport was having with the baggage-handling facilities.

And to add even more discomfort for the show organizers, the show hotel lost power for more than 12 hours the evening of set-up day.

Figure 1. These Mexican stamps of 1914 were printed in Denver and are called the Denver Eagles. The stamps shown bear postmarks of Mazatlan, San Luis Potosi and Merida.

Denver has a significant place in Mexican philately. One of the regular stamp issues of the Mexican civil war era, Scott 386-93, was printed in Denver.

The design shows the Mexican coat of arms of an eagle with a serpent in its beak, and it bears the legend "Gobierno Constitutionalista" (Constitutional Government).

In specialist circles, this 1914 issue is usually referred to as the Denver Eagles.

The stamps have a clean, straightforward design and were lithographed by the Smith-Brooks Printing Co. There are eight values, ranging from 1 centavo to 1 peso.

The stamps were printed in sheets of 200, which were subsequently divided into two panes of 100. The date of printing is reported as July 31, 1914.

The Denver Eagles appear to have been widely distributed throughout areas controlled by the Constitutionalist government faction. Their use was authorized Aug. 10, 1914, in a circular issued by Cosme Hinojosa, chief postmaster for the Constitutionalist forces.

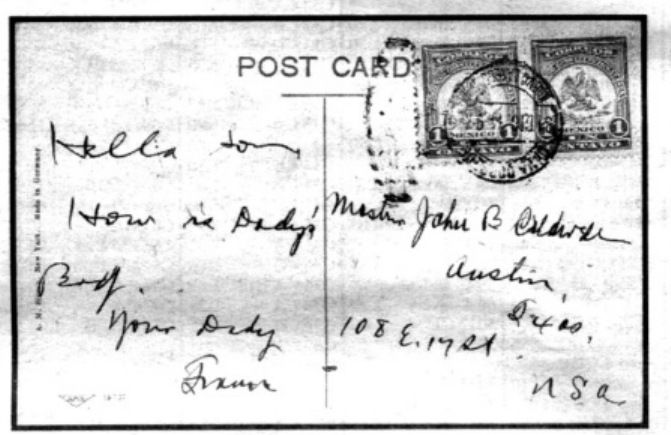


Figure 2. Postcard franked with a pair of the 1-centavo Mexican Denver Eagle stamps to pay the 2c postcard rate to the United States. The card is postmarked Dec. 31, 1914.

The range of usage can be deduced from the postmarks on the three stamps illustrated in Figure 1.

The postmarks include the west coast port of Mazatlan, the interior plateau city of San Luis Potosi and the southeastern city of Merida (stamp shown upside down).

The vast majority of stamps were used in the towns and cities of northern Mexico. The period of heavy use was from September 1914 until the end of the year.

Covers franked by the Denver Eagles are not too difficult to find.

Those bearing multiples of the low values to make the normal 5c rate do command a premium from specialist collectors.

The same is true for less common circular rates, registered items and letters destined abroad at the 10c Universal Postal Union rate.

Figure 2 shows a picture postcard from my collection addressed to Austin, Texas, and mailed in Nueva Laredo.

The card is franked by a pair of the 1c stamps, to meet the 2c rate to the United States.

I showed this card to Ron Mitchell, a Denver collector who specializes in the Denver issue, and he said that postcard frankings are quite scarce. In fact, he had recorded only six examples prior to seeing mine.

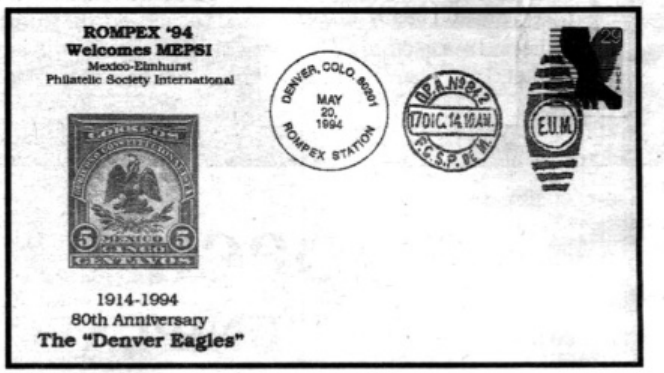


Figure 3. Cacheted cover for Rompex 94 show, celebrating the 80th anniversary of Mexico's Denver Eagle stamps.

The message reads: "Hello Son, How is Dady's [Daddy's] boy. Your Dady, Frank."

The card is postmarked Dec. 31, 1914.

For the truly serious specialist, two trial-color proofs are available, one in yellow and the other in orange.

Both are imperforate, ungummed and were printed on a somewhat rougher paper than that used for the regular issue.

There also are imperforate examples of the regular stamps, although they were never issued.

Double perforation varieties exist as well.

Collectors of postal history should be wary of covers with the 5c rate made up from 1c, 2c and 3c stamps.

Many exist unaddressed, bearing postmarks dated between Aug. 1 and Aug. 10 from northern towns.

These are considered to be made-to-order for dealers to sell. They never passed through the mail.

Going back to Rompex 94, the show committee prepared a souvenir for the visiting MEPSI members. Figure 3 depicts the cacheted cover. The cachet, the illustration on the left side of the envelope, commemorates the 80th anniversary of the issuance of the Denver Eagles.

The postmark on the cover replicates a duplex canceler used on the Ferrocarril Sud Pacifico de Mexico (Southern Pacific Railroad of Mexico), which ran between Guaymas, an important west coast seaport, and the border town of Nogales.

Cancelers of this type were assigned to offices, clerks and superintendents and used in the railroad mail cars.

For anyone with a deeper interest in the Denver stamps and the history of that era, I highly recommend the videotape *Mexico, 1914, The Denver Eagles*.

This is a first-rate program that can be borrowed by American Philatelic Society chapters from the American Philatelic Research Library, Box 8000, State College, PA 16803.

Ron Mitchell, a professional television announcer, produced this 35-minute videotape in 1984. ■

1950 Baja California cover took month-long odyssey

A couple of months ago, a Canadian reader of *Linn's*, Basil Hunter of Vancouver, British Columbia, wrote asking for help in unraveling the routing of a Mexican cover he had been given.

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

The front and back of his cover, which made various stops in Mexico and the United States in March and April of 1950, are illustrated in Figures 1 and 2, respectively.

As can be seen, the cover is literally covered with stamps, carefully tied with various postmarks.

Five Mexican airmail stamps are on the front of the cover. They are the 1934-35 20-centavo Eagle Man (Scott C68), the 1-peso Eagle Man and Airplanes (C72), the 1940 20c Pirate Ship (C111), the 1944 25c Symbol of Flight (C141), and the 1934-35 50c Allegory of Flight and Pyramid of the Sun (C71).

The reverse of the cover bears a Mexican 25c special delivery stamp of 1950-51 (E10), the 1950-52 20c Puebla Cathedral (860), and a pair of the United States 2¢ John Adams stamps of the 1938 Presidential issue.

I immediately suspected that this cover never was carried in either the Mexican or U.S. mails, but was most likely an interesting curiosity created for a stamp collector by a traveler who sought out favor cancels, or perhaps it was created by the collector himself.

Figure 1. Front of a cover that traveled around Mexico and the southwestern United States in March and April of 1950.

Figure 2. Reverse of the cover pictured in Figure 1.

The first thing I did was to make a list, in chronological order, of the postmarks and other handstamps that appear on the cover. That resulted in the sequence shown in the table in Figure 3.

I then consulted my *Guia Roji*, a Mexican gazetteer and road atlas.

Surprisingly, I found that there are four San Ignacios in Baja California. But I'm fairly certain this cover's odyssey began in the one located in the center of the peninsula about 46 miles west of Santa Rosalia, a port town on the Gulf of California.

The next stop was Santa Rosalia. Then the cover transited post office 517, the only postmark I was unable to identify.

From there, the envelope stopped in San Jose Comondu, a tiny backwater town about halfway down the peninsula on the way to La Paz.

Five days later, it was postmarked in La Paz and remained there for some time.

The next marking is a merchant's marking that seems to indicate that the cover traveled by boat up the Gulf of California to Santa Rosalia again.

Ferries do operate in those waters, and a boat ride was probably more comfortable than bouncing along the poor roads of the territory. Enrique Garayzar appears to have operated a motor boat named *Anita* between La Paz and Santa Rosalia.

The next leg of the journey was by air, from Rosalia across the Gulf to Guaymas, arriving there the same day.

The cover then headed north through Hermosillo (note faint pencil inscription left of U.S. 2¢ John Adams stamps of the 1938 Presidential issue) to Nogales on the U.S. border, receiving a "1 Apr." postmark.

From there the cover went to Tucson, turned west and headed to California. Redlands is a town a few miles east of Los Angeles.

Date (all 1950)	Handstamp
3 March	San Ignacio, B. Cfa.
4 March	Santa Rosalia, B. Cfa.
7 March	Oficina de Correos 517
8 March	San Jose Comondu, B. Cfa.
13 March	La Paz, B. Cfa.
30 March	Merchant's cachet — Enrique Garayzar (back of letter)
30 March	Transp. Aereos Rosalia, S.A. de C.V., both front and back
30 March	Guaymas, Son(ora)
1 April	Nogales, Son.
3 April	PAC Greyhound, Tucson, AZ

Figure 3. A list of the postmarks and handstamps found on the cover pictured in Figure 1 (front) and Figure 2 (reverse).

This cover is almost certainly an interesting souvenir of someone's travels in Baja, Calif. The franking of multiple stamps, of course, makes no sense whatsoever. A single Mexican 25c stamp would have sufficed to carry the letter to its destination.

I believe the creator of this curiosity carried the letter from post office to post office along his route to obtain postmarks. Because clerks are often reluctant to handstamp blank paper, he simply purchased a stamp and had the clerk cancel it. It was all done on a handback basis.

Three of the handstamps have no postal connection whatsoever. The motor boat owner's oval, the air transport rectangle marking, and the Greyhound box marking struck over the U.S. stamps are commercial handstamps, not postal ones. In all cases, these devices were most likely used to validate travel tickets.

Had the cover been left at the originating post office, it probably would have arrived at the addressee's door in four, or at most, five days. That might not happen today, but in 1950 postal service out of Mexico was reasonably fast.

While this item has no real value, it is, nevertheless, representative of what some collectors did in the golden age of stamp collecting.

It would probably be difficult to duplicate such a cover in today's hectic world.

Many post office window clerks are generally too busy to play the games. And someone trying to do it might arouse suspicions that could prove embarrassing. ■

Kordich compiles 50-year 'Mexicana' index

The annual meeting of the Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International was held in Denver May 17-19 in conjunction with Rompex, the American Philatelic Society

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

national-level stamp show of that city and area.

From all reports both the meeting and show were successful.

An event of special significance to the MEPSI group was the debut of a 50-year index to its quarterly journal *Mexicana*.

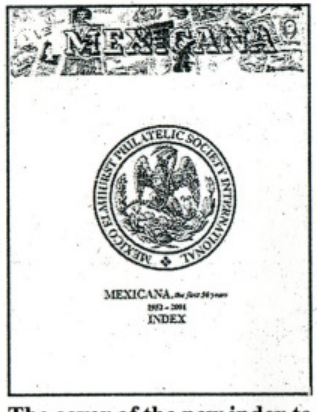
This project had been talked about for several years, but it seemed to go nowhere. Previous indexes prepared by former journal editors Fred Ingham and Ed Nissen were out of date, and the year-end volume indexes were tedious and cumbersome to use.

John Kordich, past president of MEPSI (pronounced MEP-see), decided to tackle the project a few years back. It would prove to be an enormous task.

I have a complete run of *Mexicana*, and the issues occupy almost four lineal feet of shelf space in my stamp den. I haven't made a meticulous count, but the journal runs to more than 5,000 pages.

Kordich's task was further complicated by the fact that the page-numbering system in the journal has not always been uniform.

In the beginning back in 1952, *Mexicana* was a series of



The cover of the new index to MEPSI's *Mexicana* journal.

mimeographed sheets sent out to members. Pages with news of members, social events and the like were numbered separately from articles dealing with Mexican stamps and covers.

The articles were called reference pages and were numbered consecutively up to October 1977, when the page count had reached 831.

Beginning with the January 1978 issue, no distinction was made between the news (or chit-chat pages, as they were called) and reference pages. Each year was designated as a volume with consecutive page numbering from the first through the fourth issue of each year.

In designing the format for the index, Kordich had to take these anomalies into account.

After consulting with experts in the field, Kordich decided to create the index in three sections.

The first lists all the articles or items dealing with philately in chronological order, starting with the first issue of *Mexicana* (February 1952) up through the October 2001 issue. This section has 35 pages.

In section II, the listing is by author. This is really helpful if you remember that a specific person wrote about a given subject but can't recall the exact title. This section has 41 pages.

Finally, section III organizes the listings of articles by subject matter. This section will probably be most useful to students of Mexican stamps.

This index has some interesting features.

At the beginning, articles dealing with a single stamp, or predominantly one stamp, are listed by Scott number. Under the subject heading (first column) No. 0001 means Scott 1, the 1856 ½ real; No. 0004 is Scott 4, the 1856 4r; and so on.

This subsection goes on for 14 pages. Articles are listed in order of appearance in the journal.

Kordich then includes a listing of the so-called classic stamp issues. The first group is the 1856 issue, the second the 1861s and so on. Entries in this group also are chronological. Articles found in the Scott-number lists appear here too.

After the numerical sorting (by Scott number and issue), which occupies 22 pages, the rest of the section proceeds by subject wording.

Each article listed was reviewed for content and at least one subject or keyword was selected that best describes the contents of the article.

In many instances, more than one, but not more than six, keywords were chosen, and the article is listed under each of those keywords. If an article was assigned the maximum six keywords, it would appear six times in the index. This feature helps assure that a given article can be found one way or another.

Some examples of keywords with numerous entries are: airmails, cancellations, forgeries, history, maritime, overprints, papers, plating, provisionals, revolution and watermarks.

This index section has 99 pages, so it is evident that many articles appear several times.

Depending on the section, the column headings include: subject, year and quarter of issue, title of article, author and page number where it may be found. There are no subject headings for sections I and II.

Since my copy of the index arrived just days before I wrote this column, I have not had the opportunity to put the index to a severe test, but my initial impression of it is positive. It is certainly superior to anything we have had previously. Also, Kordich explains his approach in a well-crafted introduction.

Not everyone has a complete run of *Mexicana*. However, the issues are available at the American Philatelic Research Library in State College, Pa.; the Western Postal History Museum in Tucson, Ariz.; the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.; the Royal Philatelic Society in London; and of course, at the MEPSI library.

Many society members do have long runs of the journal, and nearly half of the page volume of articles has appeared since 1990. Specifying the correct title, year and volume of issue will facilitate library loans or ordering photocopies.

The index has 186 pages and is printed in an 8½-inch-by-11-inch format with a card cover.

It is available to both MEPSI members and the general collecting public for $20 postpaid from the compiler, John Kordich, 1014 37th St., San Pedro, CA 90731.

I highly recommend it. ■

Ad covers from turn-of-the-century Mexico

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

For years I have enjoyed searching for business envelopes bearing pictorial advertisements. Originally, I sought United States covers related to one of my other hobbies, woodworking.

Covers picturing hand tools were particularly appealing to me, and I accumulated a rather large holding of them.

For my Mexico collection, I did not restrict my interest so narrowly, but looked for covers with especially intricate designs and those that might have a story connected to those designs. In this column, I share a few of my favorites.

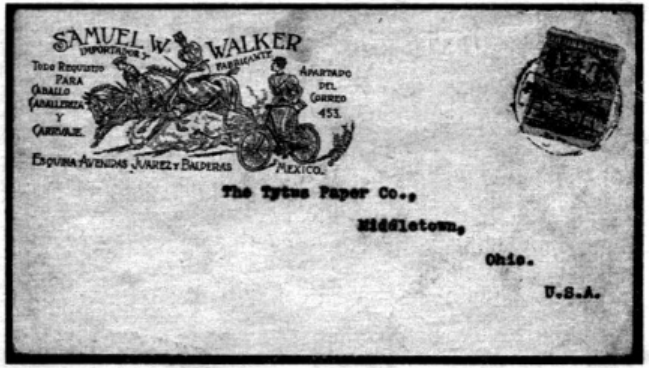


Figure 1. This 1897 cover from Mexico advertises riding equipment to meet all needs. It was sent to the United States.

The cover shown front and back in Figures 1 and 2 is from the Porfirian era (1897). Send from Mexico to the United States, it is franked with a 5-centavo stamp from the 1895 issue (Scott 247).

The cover bears an ornate corner card of Samuel Walker, an importer and purveyor of equipment and furnishings for the upscale carriage trade.

As pictured in Figure 2, an elaborate design covers the entire back of the envelope, depicting a diligencia (stagecoach) and two people on bicycles. I found the inclusion of bicycles in these designs to be interesting.

Figure 2. Reverse of the advertising cover pictured in Figure 1. The design depicts a stagecoach and two people on bicycles.

Mexicans are noted for their riding prowess. Riding was a predominant means of getting around in the rugged country, and horsemanship among the privileged class was elevated to almost an art form. Long standing customs governed demeanor and attire.

But I did some research and discovered that bicycles were immensely popular among the gentry in the late 1800s.

The first bicycles were imported in 1869 from Paris and Boston. Initially, they were objects of ridicule by the lower classes, and it took a while for them to catch on. The high wheel devices (called "ordinaries") were difficult to ride, and those who tried frequently suffered painful falls.

By 1890, so-called safety bicycles (those with two wheels of equal size) were being sold in ever-increasing numbers, and the upper classes were demanding appropriate and stylish clothing to wear while pedaling about town.

Apparently, this is where Samuel Walker came in, using the Mexican mails to adver-

tise his outfitting business.

The lady pictured on the front of the cover wears a smart, if somewhat cumbersome, riding outfit.

The advertising cover shown in Figure 3 also is from the final decade of the 19th century.

It bears a beautiful engraving touting the Felipe Gonzalez Drug Co. of Tampico.

This long-lived firm not only imported drugs and medicines from foreign sources but also exported Mexican drug products.

I presume the pictured distinguished bearded gentleman is Felipe himself, founder of the enterprise.

The leaf fronds intertwined in the design are those of the hemp plant, cannabis sativa, or marijuana, which many cultures long ago found useful for medicinal purposes.

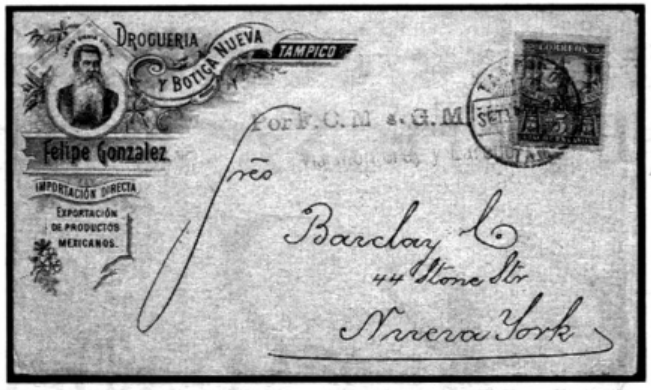


Figure 3. This advertising envelope from the Felipe Gonzalez Drug Co. of Tampico, Mexico, took five days to reach New York by rail. It was sent Sept. 3, 1898, and arrived Sept. 8.

Using such leaves for decoration on envelopes today would no doubt arouse suspicion and perhaps prompt a visit from a narcotics agent.

This cover has the added attraction of a faint supplementary marking directing its dispatch on the Mexican railway by way of Monterrey and Laredo. Maritime transport would have taken longer.

The cover took five days to reach New York by rail, from Sept. 3, 1898, to Sept. 8 (per the backstamp).

The cover shown in Figure 4 depicts an elaborate desk model telephone. In very small print at the foot of the design is the name of the firm advertising — Ascorve and Gayosso Co., Box 11B, Mexico City — however, the telephone dominates the cachet.

This cover is dated 1907 and is franked with the 1903 5c orange Coat of Arms (307).

At this time, telephone service was in its infancy in Mexico. Only the largest cities had phone exchanges, and service was limited to important businesses and wealthy individuals.

The phone set illustrated was unquestionably an imported design the upper-class user would find appealing.

Note the hand wheel for cranking up the operator.

Locating interesting and attractive covers such as these can be a refreshing challenge should you tire of searching for the elusive stamps that are usually missing from bourse stocks, price lists and online.

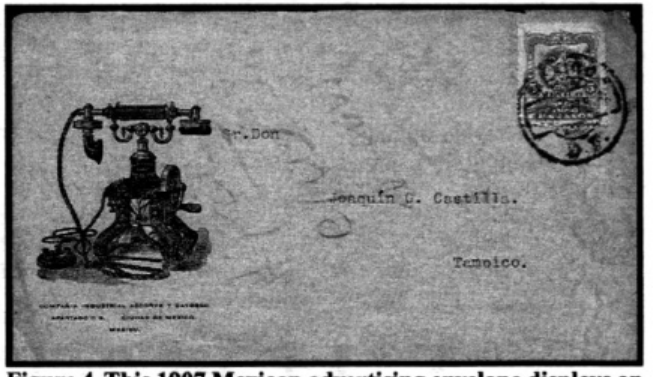


Figure 4. This 1907 Mexican advertising envelope displays an ornate telephone of the type sold in the early 20th century.

The three covers illustrated with this article were found at stamp show bourses and were acquired at reasonable prices.

In the new American Philatelic Society exhibition categories, advertising covers can be shown in national competition in the illustrated-mail class. This opens up many possibilities for those who enjoy this area of collecting.

I have not yet tested the waters. But I hope to soon.

I will be happy to hear from any readers who have found unusual ad covers from Mexico, especially those from the golden age of advertising designs from the end of the 19th century. ■

Mexico's Madero stamps were never issued

I occassionally receive inquiries about Mexican adhesives that can't be found in of standard stamp catalogs. These items look like legitimate stamps, so what's the story? An

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

example of such an item is illustrated in Figure 1.

It is known in specialist circles as the so-called Madero issue. These cinderellas, or stamplike labels, have no official status but are collected by many specialists of the Mexican civil war era of 1910-20.

These cinderellas get their name from the portrait of Francisco Madero, one of the leaders of the movement to overthrow the Porfirian dictatorship. Madero served as the first revolutionary president from mid-1911 to Feb. 22, 1913, when he was assassinated.

The outer frame duplicates the frame of the Transitorio Denver issue, Scott 386-93, except it is about 1 millimeter smaller in width and height.

The Madero issue includes five values: 1-centavo green, 2c purple, 3c red, 5c blue and 10c orange. They were printed by lithography on white, unwatermarked paper with white gum and perforations gauging 11.5 by 12. The Figure 1 example is imperforate.

The lithographic stone had 25 settings (five by five). Four passes through the press were needed to make a pane of 100. This procedure produced some interesting se-tenant color shade combinations.

Figure 1. This Madero stamp was ordered by Pancho Villa but was never issued. This example is imperforate.

Figure 2 shows a Madero adhesive next to a Denver stamp to show how closely the frames match. Some early collectors thought that the stamps were printed by the same firm that did the Denver issue: the Smith-Brooks Printing Co. of Denver, Colo. However, the Ellis Bros. Printing Co. of El Paso, Texas, produced them.

A principal of that company reported that Pancho Villa came to the firm with a sample of the Denver issue and asked if it could replicate the design, substituting a portrait of Madero for the Mexican eagle. At the time, Villa and his troops were massing at Ciudad Juarez, a Mexican town across the Rio Grande opposite El Paso. By the time the stamps were ready, Villa had battled his way south to the Mexican capital, located ample supplies of stamps and was no longer interested in those he had ordered.

Meanwhile, Villa and Venusianno Carranza had had a falling out, and the Constitutionalist government wording in the arch above the Madero vignette would have been inappropriate for the Villa faction. The Madero stamps were never taken up nor paid for.

This is the second time a U.S. printer had been stiffed on an order for Mexican stamps. Earlier, George W. Linn, founder of *Linn's Stamps News*, had prepared 75,000 stamps, the redrawn and perforated 5c Transitorio stamp, Scott 369.

This order had been placed by Cosme Hinojosa, chief postmaster for the state of Sonora and later postmaster general of the Constitutionalist movement. Many of these stamps were used legitimately, although when Linn pressed for a formal order, Hinojosa disavowed the stamps he had used and declared that they were counterfeit.

The Ellis firm attempted to recoup some of its expense by selling stamps to collectors. One of the brothers visited the El Paso stamp club and sold some, but once this tiny market was saturated, there appeared to be little further interest in them. Most contemporary collectors ignored the Madero stamps, and some prominent collectors denounced them.

Neither Scott nor Minkus acknowledge their existence. The Celis-Cano catalog (published in Mexico) assigns them a number, 391X, and states tersely "ordered by the Madero government but never used."

They are illustrated and assigned numbers in Stanley Gibbons (1951 edition), but they are priced only in unused condition. Nicholas Follansbee devotes a half page to them in his book *The Stamps of the Mexican Revolution, 1913-1916*, valuing a set at $2.

Figure 2. The frame for the Madero cinderella (left) is almost identical to that of Mexico's Denver issue (right) but smaller.

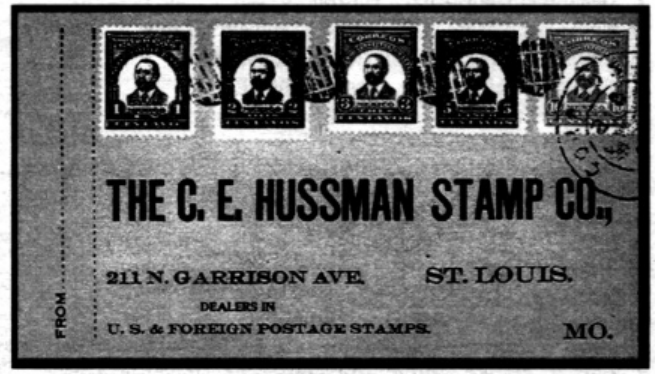


Figure 3. A complete set of the Madero cinderella stamps on a cover with the preprinted address of a St. Louis stamp company. This cover did not pass through the U.S. mails.

Examples of the stamps on cover are illegal uses and have been ascribed to attempts by the Ellises to dispose of their worthless stock. Some of these covers might have moved through the mails. Mexican postal agents could often be persuaded with a small gratuity to overlook such irregularities.

Figure 3 shows a cover overfranked with a set of the Maderos. This cover, with a preprinted address of the C.E. Husman Stamp Co. of St. Louis, is an obvious contrivance, and it could not have passed through the U.S. mails. U.S. postmasters were alert to provisional issues that had not been cleared through the Universal Postal Union.

This cover is from the collection of Carl Le Mar John of Arizona, who sent me a color photocopy of it several years ago. The cover has no markings on the back, and he could not identify the cancel.

Neither can I. The doublering datestamp could be a facsimile from any Spanish language country where the word "CORREOS" (Posts) appears at the top.

I'd love to hear from any Linn's readers who own covers bearing the Madero issue. Write to me, Dale Pulver, in care of Linn's Editor, Box 29, Sidney, OH 45365. ■

Oaxaca's role in history of Mexican philately

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

In February 2003, the Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International will conduct its annual meeting in the Mexican city of Oaxaca (pronounced wah-HA-kah), located some 290 miles southeast of Mexico City.

This quaint town, dating from before Spanish colonial times, is situated about a mile above sea level. It enjoys a wonderful climate and is surrounded by mountains and fertile valleys.

The Spanish conquerors first arrived in the area in 1532 and found deposits of gold in the mountains.

This wealth was the basis for rapid development of the city and impressive architectural works, many of which survive. More recently, the area is noted for agriculture.

Oaxaca also is the site of a fine philatelic museum, which was another drawing card for holding the MEPSI meeting there.

At the time Mexico's first postage stamps were issued in the mid-19th century, Oaxaca had about 30,000 inhabitants and was the capital of a state of the same name. It was designated a principal postal district, and it held authority over some 34 subordinate postal offices in the surrounding towns and villages.

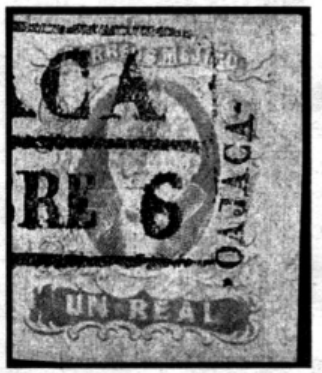


Figure 1. Mexican 1856 first-issue stamp with "OAJACA" spelling in overprint of district name.

During the classic era of Mexican stamps (1856-83), principal offices were obliged to overprint the name of the district on stamps to validate them for use. This was a security measure. Nonoverprinted stamps were presumed to have been lost or stolen and were devoid of franking power.

Figure 1 shows a 1-real Hidalgo stamp from the first issue of 1856 bearing the district name and a portion of a boxed straight-line cancel used at Oaxaca.

The third letter of the overprint is a "J," representing a spelling used in colonial times. In the Spanish language, the "J" and "X" have approximately the same sound.

Several different handstamps were used over the years to apply the district name, with different font varieties. Also, there is a variety with the district name enclosed in a box.

While stamps overprinted and used in Oaxaca from the first issue and from the second issue of 1861 can be found without too much difficulty, the same is not true for the period of the French intervention (1864-67).

Figure 2. Front and back of a Oaxaca provincial stamp printed on post office forms by teenage girls at a local orphanage.

Maximilian's forces never held strongly many of the remote cities, or they were late in consolidating their control.

Oaxaca is a good example of this situation. Only the Eagle stamps (Scott 19-25) of the fourth and fifth periods are recorded for Oaxaca, and the 8r stamp from the fifth period is especially scarce.

Also, only lithographed Maximilian heads were sent to Oaxaca, and uses of that issue are likewise elusive.

Fast forward to the civil wars and 1915. Two rebel movements, the Constitutionalists and the Conventionalists were locked in a struggle to achieve control of the Mexican government.

Oaxaca state officials decided to remain neutral, but in so doing they incurred the enmity of the Constitutionalists who imposed a siege on the city and the surrounding area.

During this siege, authorities in Oaxaca ordered stamps to be printed. These provisional stamps, listed in Scott as 414-19, were produced in the print shop of an orphanage by teenage girls under the supervision of a nun.

They were printed on the backs of post office forms from cliches (stereotypes) assembled from printer's type, rules and ornaments.

Figure 2 shows the front and back of a 5c stamp.

Over the years these rather crude stamps have captured the attention of several stamp collectors who attempted to sort out a host of varieties and printing anomalies.

Figure 3. This small cover is franked with the 1-centavo Oaxaca provisional stamp to pay the drop-letter rate.

These provisional stamps saw use in only a small area, the city of Oaxaca and some of the nearby towns. Figure 3 shows my favorite cover that bears a Oaxaca 1c provisional for drop-rate franking. This small cover probably carried a calling card or party invitation.

Unfortunately, thousands of remainders found their way into the stamp marketplace, and some of these have been manipulated to represent genuine uses. Buyers should exercise caution and demand certificates or obtain certification for high-priced items.

In 1982, Oaxaca was honored with a 1.60-peso stamp marking the 450th anniversary as a city (1273).

Actually there was a settlement there prior to the Spaniards' arrival in 1532, but that is the date from which the modern name applies.

The Museo de Filatelia de Oaxaca (Philatelic Museum of Oaxaca) referred to in previous paragraphs will host some of the events of the MEPSI meeting.

The museum opened in July 1998 with the purpose of encouraging stamp collecting among both adults and children.

A second building adjacent to the first was subsequently acquired and opened in October 2000, more than doubling the space for temporary exhibits, a library, study room and a permanent collection.

As would be expected, the collection features items specific to Oaxaca.

There is also a boutique that sells new Mexican stamps and other philatelic items. ■

Financial aspects of collecting classic Mexico

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Most stamp collectors will profess publicly that they collect stamps for the pleasure it affords and do not focus on the financial aspects of their holdings. But if you have devoted substantial resources to your collection, it's hard to escape pondering the financial implications of the property you have accumulated.

This is especially true if you have collected for a long time and put fair amount of money into your collection.

My favorite area in Mexican philately is the classic period, especially the issues of 1856 and 1861. These stamps generally bear overprinted names of the postal districts and can occasionally be found bearing cancels of small towns and haciendas.

I'm past the point in my specialization where Scott catalog values mean very much, but I thought it might be interesting to see what has happened to the listings for my area in the past 10 years.

Comparing the values given for Mexico's first issue of 1856 (Scott 1-5) for 2002 against those listed for 1992, I found increases from 20 percent to 43 percent for used stamps and about 30 percent to 50 percent for unused.

These percentages are for the major Scott number varieties. A few of the subvarieties performed somewhat better.

Also, keep in mind that Scott values are guides for only the common, large districts that sold and used many stamps. Scott values are of little use to those who collect these stamps in depth, including small districts and the cancellations from them and other small offices.

Figure 1. This Mexican 1856 2-real stamp from San Luis Potosi, a common district, would sell for less than $5.

For the 1861 issue, the story is much the same, although the value for a nice 4-real stamp (9) unused rose a respectable 65 percent.

So, a large, diverse holding of stamps from the major district offices of Mexico probably will not have appreciated much in the past 10 years or so, and it cannot be considered a good investment, other than an investment in fun.

But if you have sought out and acquired a respectable array of stamps from the scarce and rare districts (for which a substantial outlay of real money is usually required), you might have enjoyed substantial appreciation in value. A few examples make the point.

Figure 2. This Mexican 1856 2-real stamp from Cuautitlan, a rare district, sold for $800 in a recent auction.

In 1995, Nicholas Follansbee, a West Coast dealer specializing in Mexican properties, conducted an auction of a beautiful holding of 1856 stamps.

This collector had gathered together fine specimens from many of the very rare districts. A 2r 1856 stamp (3) from Cuautitlan fetched $440, plus commission. The basic used stamp catalogs in Scott at $3, a fair value for one from a big district office.

A similar Cuautitlan 2r stamp on piece in the Mazepa sale conducted by Regency Stamps in December 2001 brought $800. And yet another sold a few weeks ago in a Follansbee auction for $850.

More than 2,500 2r stamps were sent to the Cuautitlan office and were presumably sold and used, but few survive, hence prices nearly 300 times Scott value.

Shown in Figures 1 and 2 are two 2r stamps. Figure 1 pictures a common San Luis Potosi stamp that would sell for less than $5. Figure 2 shows a stamp used in Cuautitlan that brought $800 in a recent auction.

High denomination stamps, the 4r and 8r (4-5) are in demand, and only those from the major offices can be acquired for anything near Scott values.

An 8r from Chihuahua sold in the 1995 sale for $490, thought to be somewhat high, since Chihuahua was a medium-size office. Only 1,080 8r stamps were sent, and they are elusive. The same stamp was resold at the recent Follansbee auction for $1,500.

My final example is the 1r (2) stamp from the tiny office of Polotitlan. Only 360 1r stamps were sent. The stamps were never overprinted with a district name and must be identified by the cancel used to deface them. This handstamp is distinctive and usually well struck.

In the 1995 sale, an example sold for $105 against an estimate of $200. The stamp had a minor corner crease and was cut close on two sides.

Five years later in the Mazepa sale, another Polotitlan 1r brought $400, even though its condition was poorer. At the most recent Follansbee sale, a very fine stamp fetched $550, possibly a bargain in view of its condition. This stamp lists in Scott at $15 (no overprint). Similar stories can be told for many other first- and second-issue rarities.

These examples demonstrate a number of truths about the economics of stamp collecting. Run-of-the-mill stamps might not represent a good monetary investment, but rare varieties can offer opportunities for appreciation.

After James Mazepa won the Champion of Champions award with his exhibit of Mexico 1856-61 issues, Regency Stamps bought the collection, broke it down and offered it at auction.

Many collectors of Mexico felt the estimates were too high even though many of the stamps and other items were either unique or one of just a few examples known.

Numerous items went unsold in the original sale, and many that did sell did at or near the reserves. Still, some lots went for higher than the estimates. The unsold material was reoffered at a later auction with lower estimates (and reserves) and much more of it found buyers.

The Mazepa sale did boost the level at which rare first- and second-issue material is traded, although this is not yet reflected in the Scott listings. The auction also prompted some adjustments in Follansbee's catalog, *A Catalogue of the Stamps of Mexico, 1856-1910*. This is the best guide for valuing the myriad of varieties in the classic issues of Mexico, and anyone intent on investing serious money in this field should not be without it.

Condition is another factor to consider. In the low-to-medium-priced material, anything less than very fine would be a poor choice. As rarity increases, condition remains important, but diminishes somewhat as an item approaches the only-one-copy-known status.

Less than perfect margins are forgiven when only two or three examples are known.

If a monetary return is in the back of your mind, it's better to focus on the rarities. A well-bought $500 item has a better chance to appreciate than four $125 items. But you have to be careful not to spend too extravagantly. Attention to Follansbee's values is advisable.

Still, I'm a sucker for those $10 and $20 1856 1r and 2r (2-3) that have clear overprints and cancels that I do not yet own. *Good hunting.* ■

Mexico's Exporta series; trade cards; auctions

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

As I have done in the past, I will use this final column of the year to respond to input I received from readers and offer a comment on a holiday-related item.

The Mexican definitive (regular-issue) stamps picturing Mexican export products and commonly referred to as the Exporta issue persists as a popular subject with *Linn's* readers. This is true even though this series of 1975-93 has been gone for nearly 10 years.

The Exporta series offers an unrivaled challenge for the specialist, both in the stamps and postal history. The stamps were issued during a long, chaotic economic period with ever-changing postal rates.

Many of the inquiries I received pertain to varieties that emerged near the end of the series. In my book *Introduction to the Stamps of Mexico*, published by *Linn's*, I included a checklist for the Exporta stamps in an appendix.

Unfortunately, that list was incomplete, as further printings of stamps occurred after the book came out in 1992.

After the series ended, I compiled an addendum to the checklist and offered it to anyone who would send me an addressed, stamped envelope by way of *Linn's*. This addendum is in the same format as the one in the book, and it can be tipped into it to complete the story. That offer is still open to anyone who has purchased the book and would like a copy.

Just mail your request to Dale Pulver, in care of Linn's, Box 29, Sidney, OH 45356. Sufficient return postage (37¢) or a stamped return envelope will be appreciated.

You can collect the Exporta stamps using the Scott catalog as a guide, but Scott makes only superficial reference to the subtle paper varieties that exist. There is no mention of the ultraviolet light properties of the stamps, and gum properties are ignored, too.

Many dealers break down the issue by the paper characteristics (there are 14 distinct varieties). Also, one album maker, Lighthouse, provides preprinted pages with spaces for these varieties.

•

A while back (*Linn's* issues of Jan. 8 and April 9, 1990), I wrote about postcards or trade cards depicting Mexican stamps. These cards are usually colorful and have a high degree of eye appeal. They have minimal philatelic importance, but they are fun to collect.

Linn's reader Doug Dovers, of Smyrna, Ga., sent me color photocopies of several cards he has found over the past couple of years. Figure 1 shows the design of one of his cards. Figure 2 shows the reverse side.

The card pictures Mexican stamps of the Coat of Arms issue of 1899, one in each corner, with a central scene of a mule-drawn diligencia (stagecoach) and the caption "The Mail in Mexico."

Technically, this card is what is called a trade card, given as a premium with the purchase of merchandise, a method of promoting sales of commercial products.

I found a card with the identical face design in my odds-and-ends shoebox.

Dovers' card was offered "compliments of the Donmeyer, Garden Co.," a Peoria, Ill., manufacturer of high-grade flour, according to the inscription on the back of the card.

The card I have is different. The back of my card was printed for use as a postcard and was inscribed "This is one of a series of 48 cards. One given with each PULLIAM CIGAR." Another distinction between the two cards is that Dovers' card has rounded corners, and my card has square, sharp corners.

I suspect there are more examples of this same design out there, touting different products.

•

I am always on the lookout for unusual covers linked to the holidays to include in these year-end reprises. Figure 3 depicts a postal card sent to Egypt by a Mexican stamp dealer residing in Cuernavaca.

In the elegantly printed message on the reverse, he wishes the addressee best wishes for the New Year (1897) and offers his services as a buyer and seller of postage stamps for collectors.

As best as I can determine from the postmarks on the of the card, it was mailed from Cuernavaca a few days before Christmas 1896. It arrived in Alexandria Jan. 24, 1897.

Curiously, the sender used a 3-centavo card inscribed for domestic service. The Universal Postal Union rate to Europe, and presumably to the adjacent countries of northern Africa, also was 3c.

I find this card a rather unusual item, even thought it has philatelic roots.

•

The year 2002 has been good for Mexican philately. Buyers of high-ticket items were favored with at least two important auction sales during the last months of the year.

The Follansbee sale of Oct. 26 in Reno, Nev., carried some seldom offered items of the classic era, especially from the issues of 1856-61.

On Nov. 20, the Afinsa house, with the collaboration of Soler y Llach, conducted a sale in Barcelona, Spain, with more choice items from the first issues of Mexico.

I do not yet have the results of the later sale, but the prices at Reno were strong for rare material in good condition.

I close with best wishes for the holidays to all and thanks for your support. ■

Figure 1. The front side of a Mexican trade card picturing Mexico's Coat of Arms stamps of 1899 and a stagecoach.

Figure 2. Reverse side of the card shown in Figure 1. The card was offered by an Illinois manufacturer of flour.

Figure 3. A New Year's greeting sent in December 1896 from a Mexican stamp dealer in Cuernavaca to Egypt.

'Futbol' stamps: World Cup, Jules Rimet, more

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

As I write this column we Americans are in the midst of a professional football frenzy. The regular season has ended and the surviving teams are battling it out to see who will make it to the Super Bowl. American football is perhaps the most watched sport on television in the United States these days, according to the Neilson ratings for the past couple of weekends.

But the rest of the world goes crazy over another form of football. We call it soccer, and our Spanish-speaking friends call it futbol. It is played in almost every civilized country of the world, probably because of its simplicity and minimal equipment requirements.

An air-filled ball and an open area are the primary requisites.

The game is so popular in Mexico that numerous postage stamps have been issued over the years marking tournaments and other important soccer events.

The topical collector can find ample opportunities with the various stamps, special-events covers and ordinary uses.

Figure 1. This Mexican airmail stamp depicting a soccer goalie was issued in 1967 to promote the 1968 Summer Olympics in Mexico.

Figure 2. Two Mexican stamps issued for the 1970 World Soccer Cup hosted by Mexico.

The earliest Mexican soccer related stamp I found in my collection was a stamp issued in 1967 in a series promoting the 1968 Olympics held in Mexico.

This 5-peso airmail stamp (Scott C331) is part of the so-called silhouette issues because it shows the athletes in silhouette. These stamps also feature continuous designs running from side to side. They were designed by Lance Wyman and were quite popular at the time.

The soccer stamp, shown in Figure 1, depicts a goalie lunging for the ball.

The soccer stamp also is included in a souvenir sheet with the 2p value. These sheets sold for 9p.

Finding a solo use of a 2p stamp on cover will be difficult, however, because it did not match a common rate.

Following the Olympics, Mexico was chosen to host the ninth World Soccer Championship games in 1970 for the Jules Rimet Cup. This trophy is considered to be the holy grail of soccer, and the competition for it brings together the finest soccer players and teams of the world.

In anticipation of this prestigious event and to promote the games, Mexico issued two airmail stamps in August 1969 (C350-51). The graphics employ the stylized Mexico logo adopted for the Olympic publicity. Again, the stamps were designed by Wyman.

The World Cup games opened May 30, 1970, and on the following day two more airmail commemorative stamps were issued. (C372-73). These stamps, also designed by Wyman, show a soccer ball superimposed over an array of masks. Figure 2 pictures the 80-centavo and 2p stamps.

A few years ago while browsing through a box of inexpensive covers, I found the cover illustrated in Figure 3.

This Aug. 16, 1969, first-day cover of the two 1969 stamps features a colorful cachet using a portion of the Wyman design for the 80c stamp. There is an added feature, though. It appears that the original owner kept the cover for almost a year and during the period of the games purchased one of the 1970 stamps, added it to the cover and had it canceled at a Mexico City branch office June 6, 1970.

An additional handstamped marking at the cover's lower left indicates that this was the day Russia defeated Belgium 4-1.

Two days before the 1970 Jules Rimet Cup competition ended, a philatelic exposition opened in Mexico City devoted to sports — mostly soccer — called Sportmex 70.

In honor of this gathering, the post office issued a souvenir sheet containing one imperforate 2p airmail stamp flanked on two sides with various philatelic logos including that of the American Philatelic Society. Each sheet bears a serial number. The souvenir sheet pictured in Figure 4 bears No. 55511.

Figure 3. First-day cover of Mexico's Aug. 16, 1969, stamps promoting the World Soccer Cup matches of 1970. A 1970 80-centavo stamp was added almost a year later, on June 6,

Figure 4. This souvenir sheet issued for the Sportmex stamp expo held in 1970 in conjunction with the World Cup championship includes the American Philatelic Society logo.

Mexico continued to issue stamps honoring soccer. In 1977, two stamps came out commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Mexican Soccer Federation (C534-35). In June 1978, a three-stamp set (C565-67), drew attention to the 11th World Cup Competition scheduled for Argentina during June.

Even the difficult economic crisis of the 1980s did not dampen the enthusiasm for soccer stamps. In 1985, Mexico's two huge soccer stadiums, the University Olympic Stadium and the Stadium Azteca were commemorated on two stamps (1424-25). Monetary inflation drove the face value of these stamps to 26p and 45p.

The following year an attractive set of five stamps (1439-43), designed after paintings by sports artist Angel Zarraga (1886-1946) were issued to mark the 1986 World Cup competition. The face values of these stamps are 30p, 40p, 65p, 70p and 90p.

Also a souvenir sheet depicting a publicity poster of seven soccer-related vignettes was issued with a face value of 110p.

In 1992, at the peak of the inflation period, a set of stamps issued for the Barcelona Summer Olympics contained one soccer-related stamp, with a face value of 1,900p (1746). There might be other Mexican stamps that one can tie to soccer, but I ended my search with this one.

None of the stamps mentioned here are difficult to find or are expensive. Philatelic covers are common too.

However, locating good commercial uses for a postal history study is a challenge. ■

Bull's-eye cancels on early Mexican stamps

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

For years I have been accumulating stamps with socked-on-the-nose or, as some collectors refer to them, bull's-eye strikes. They are fun to search for, and most of the time they do not carry a price premium.

So when your stamp budget is a bit tight, you can still indulge yourself in the hobby.

When Mexico's first adhesive postage stamps were issued in the summer of 1856, most of the devices used to deface the stamps were holdovers from the prestamp era.

The devices came in a variety of formats: straight-line town names with and without boxes, ovals, ornate wreaths and many primitive art designs.

Some of the larger towns and cities used circular datestamps with moveable type to indicate the proper dates. I will focus on these CDS markings in this column. Figure 1 shows two first-issue stamps with CDS cancels that were too large to be accommodated on a single stamp. With experience and a postmark handbook, they can be readily identified.

Both stamps were canceled in 1857, the second year of issue. The large double-ring cancel with "FRANCO" at the top and the date May 25, 1857, is from San Luis Potosi. The town name at the bottom of the device missed the stamp completely. Still it is nice to have a full date well centered.

Figure 1. Two Mexican 1856 first-issue stamps with circular datestamps from San Luis Potosi and Santa Anna de Tamaulipas.

The other stamp (shown upside down) bears the CDS of Santa Anna de Tamaulipas, the main city in the postal district of Tampico.

Figure 2. This 1856 Mexican stamp, shown on piece, was validated for use in Mexico City, but as the circular datestamp indicates, it was used from Guadaljara instead.

Figure 2 shows a stamp on piece that originally was validated for use in Mexico City, as evidenced by the Mexico name overprint along the right edge. But the stamp ended up being used in Guadalajara, as proven by the CDS, with that town name overprinted directly on top of the Mexico overprint. How this came about is anyone's guess. Perhaps a traveller carried stamps in a purse on a trip there and a zealous postmaster applied the extra name overprint at the moment of mailing for good measure.

Figure 3 shows a similar array of stamps from the Mexican Eagle series used during the French intervention of 1864-67.

This group contains a neat CDS from Veracruz; a somewhat larger double-ring datestamp from Huamantla, a small post office subordinate to the district office in Puebla; and another Veracruz stamp canceled on Christmas Day, 1865.

The fourth stamp in the group was used in Mexico April 9, 1865. Usually, this would not be considered a noteworthy example because of its rotated datestamp. However, April 9 was the day that stamp consignment "60 1865"

Figure 3. Bull's-eye circular datestamps on stamps in Mexico's 1864-67 Eagles series.

(imprint along left side) was delivered to the main post office. So what we have is a first-day-of-use cancellation.

Figure 4. This Mexican stamp of 1868 bears a Puebla CDS.

I always check Eagle stamps against the stamp delivery records (S. Chapman's *The Postage Stamps of Mexico, 1856 - 68*), and I have found a number of such first-day uses. They are scarce but usually are not expensive.

Finding bull's-eye cancels becomes somewhat easier on the remaining 19th-century Mexican stamps because more and more post offices obtained circular datestamps.

Figure 4 shows a neat CDS of Puebla struck on a stamp of the 1868 issue. Several other cities used devices of this same size.

An indication of service is included in a few late 19th-century postmarks. Registry marks were large boxed inscriptions that rarely touched the stamps. They are seldom seen today.

Figure 5. What looks like a Veracruz CDS on this 1879-85 stamp is not a Mexican postmark but a French packet boat marking.

Figure 5 shows a stamp from the so-called Foreign Mail series of 1879-85, which was issued expressly for mail addressed abroad. The stamp bears a CDS inscribed Veracruz, but it is not a Mexican postmark. It is a French packet boat (paquebot) marking used on mail bound for Europe out of Veracruz. You can see the letters "PAQ" in the lower-left corner of the stamp. This stamp was a fortuitous find from

Figure 6. This pair of stamps bearing a Tonala CDS has a plate crack between the stamps.

(Continued on next page)

Mexican markings

(From facing page)
an American Philatelic Society circuit book.

The orange and vermillion stamps of Mexico's large numeral issues of 1885-95 are perfect for socked-on-the-nose collecting because the postmarks show up well.

Figure 6 pictures a pair of stamps with a CDS from Tonala in the state of Chiapas. There is a plate crack between the stamps.

By this time, Mexico's postal service also had begun to standardize canceler design. These cancels are often called the bridge type because of the arched design immediately above and below the date-and-time panel.

The Mulita stamps (the Transportation issue of 1895-98) also are good candidates for socked-on-the-nose cancels, but the colors of common uses are not as good as those of the Large Numeral stamps.

In the next column, I will delve into varieties of the turn-of-the-20th-century postmarks that can be collected with bull's-eye strikes. ■

Type-of-service cancels easy on stamp budget

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

In the Mexico column in the Feb. 24 *Linn's*, page 28, I discussed the opportunities for collecting stamps with well-centered strikes of circular datestamps. These bull's-eye cancels can be a lot of fun because they often show interesting facts about a stamp's use and they usually will not make a big dent in your pocketbook.

Most of the examples illustrated in the Feb. 24 column were of common everyday postmarks used in many post offices throughout the republic.

In this sequel, I will explore postmarks used during the late 1800s and early 1900s that indicate the type of mail service rendered. In my experience, these are somewhat more elusive, although, again, not apt to carry high price tags.

Figure 1. This Mexican stamp bears a well-centered oval, eagle-design cancel from the Diligencias Generales stagecoach office.

Figure 1 shows a stamp with a well-centered and neat strike of a cancel used at the office of Diligencias Generales (the stagecoach lines) in Mexico City. This company carried passengers and mail between many of the larger towns and cities in central Mexico.

Stagecoach offices were provided with both postage stamps and cancelers and would accept last-minute postings up to departure time. All of the diligencia canceling devices recorded to date are oval in shape.

Covers and stamps bearing these diligencias cancels are popular with specialists, especially those with the Mexican eagle design, such as the cancel on the stamp in Figure 1.

Figure 2 depicts two stamps originally affixed to letters that entered the mailstream by way of letter boxes (buzones).

Figure 2. The cancels on these two Mexican stamps indicate that they entered the mailstream by way of letter boxes (buzones).

Letter boxes for depositing mail were located in various neighborhoods of Mexico City and at least eight different devices are recorded. The "B-8" handstamp, shown on the stamp on the left in Figure 1, is the most common. The small circles surrounding the "B" plus a

Figure 3. A circular datestamp from Sucursal F, Mexico City's branch office F, was used to cancel this pair of 10c stamps.

Figure 4. This stamp bears a "Serv. Intern." (international service) circular datestamp.

numeral are seen as early as the general stamp issue of 1874, which Mexican specialists refer to as the Garbancitos.

The stamp pictured on the right in Figure 2 again indicates mail that was recovered from a letter box. The cancel is from 1915.

An expanded mail handling system appears to have been instituted in the 1890s with the establishment of several branch post offices in the capital. These offices had identifying cancelers. One is shown on the pair of 10-centavo stamps pictured in Figure 3.

The inscription at the top of the cancel, "Sucursal F," means branch office F. These CDSs are fairly common. Note this one also has the time noted at the end of the cancel's date belt, "4 P.M."

Soon after Mexico joined the Universal Postal Union in 1879, the Mexican post office issued a special series of stamps for franking foreign-bound mail. These stamps are referred to as the Foreign Mail, or Juarez, issue. It has long been felt that the main reason for the separate issue was for accounting purposes. (Domestic mail rates were higher.) Also, the distinctive stamps helped clerks sort mail.

Post offices also used special devices to cancel foreign mail. An example is shown in Figure 4. The inscription at the top of the CDS reads "Serv. Intern." (international service). The cancels can be found on both the Foreign Mail issue and contemporary domestic issues. Another earlier variety is inscribed "Union Postal."

Railroads played an ever-increasing role in handling the mails in Mexico during the late 1800s. Letters that formerly went by steamer from Veracruz to the United States could move rapidly on the rail lines that connected Mexico City to the U.S. border.

Figure 5. This stamp was processed aboard a Mexican train and bears a cancel from postal agent No. 6.

Figures 5 and 6 show stamps that received mail processing aboard trains.

The stamp pictured in Figure 5 bears a cancel reading "AG. Post. * 6" (agente postal), postal agent No. 6.

Figure 6. The cancel on this pair of Mexican stamps is from the Mexican National Railway (Ferrocarriles National de Mexico).

In the lower quadrant of the cancel on the stamp pair shown in Figure 6 are the letters "F.C.N de M." (Ferrocarriles National de Mexico), the Mexican national railway.

Postal agents were authorized to accept properly franked mail at the various stops along a route, and the stamps shown in Figures 5 and 6 bear the types of markings such mail received.

The bull's-eye strikes on the stamps pictured in Figure 7 depict another type of postmark

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found on Mexican stamps of this period. These CDSs are inscribed "Paquete Postal," which stands for "parcel post."

As evidenced by the examples shown, you would expect to find these markings on high-denominated stamps. The stamp on the left is a 15c Mulita (Transportation issue of 1895), and the stamp on the right is the 50c denomination from the Independence issue of 1910.

Other classes of service should provide bull's-eye cancels. Karl Schimmer's compilation, *The Postmarks of Mexico 1874-1900*, includes a number of CDS devices that were

Figure 7. Two examples of Mexican "Paquete postal," or parcel post, postmarks.

used on second-, third- and fourth-class mail.

Examples of such CDSs appear to be fairly elusive. I could not locate any in the several hundred socked-on-the-nose stamps I have in my collection.

As I concluded in the Feb. 24 column, this is a collecting field that you can pursue when your stamp budget is stressed and there isn't much relief in sight.

I would be happy to hear from anyone who has found some unusual Mexican socked-on-the-nose cancels.

Contact me by way of Linn's Stamp News, Box 29, Sidney, OH 45365. I promise to acknowledge all letters. ■

The tale of Tijuana and the Red Flag Revolt

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Five years ago (*Linn's*, Jan. 26, 1998), I wrote a Mexico column about a postcard mailed from Tijuana, Mexico, during the summer of 1911.

That card reported progress of a 100,000-mile endurance run by an Abbott-Detroit automobile. Since I lacked information about such an endeavor, I asked *Linn's* readers for help.

They responded splendidly, and with their knowledge provided enough background for a second column (*Linn's*, April 27, 1998).

Another intriguing question posed by that card was the unusual nature of the cancellation and postmark. It consisted of a round black blot defacing the stamp and a red or pink oval handstamp usually reserved for large bundles or packages (bultos postales) that ties the stamp to the card.

Figure 1 shows another postcard with a similar black-blot killer marking and a bultos postales handstamp.

A couple of readers suggested that the blot could have been some sort of precancel, and the oval a favor cancellation applied by the postmaster on behalf of the many tourists who visited the town from the United States.

But the more I thought about it, the less likely these explanations made sense.

Thanks to information sent by Nicholas Follansbee, a West Coast auctioneer and student of Mexican philately, the mystery surrounding these marks seems to be largely resolved.

Figure 1. Address side of postcard with black-blot killer and package (bultos) canceler used after 1911 Red Flag Revolt.

In the catalog for his Oct. 26, 2002, auction, Follansbee illustrated a similar item and described it as an artifact of the "red flag revolt." I wrote to him for further particulars.

He supplied the following background information.

In a largely forgotten episode of the Mexican Revolution, partisans of the Liberal Party of Mexico under the leadership of Ricardo Flores Magon, a Mexican firebrand and political activist, took over Mexicali and then Tecate and Tijuana.

This ragtag army comprised Anglo-American radicals, Wobblies (Industrial Workers of the World), socialists and anarchists.

Under a red flag emblazoned with the slogan "Land and Liberty," they soundly defeated the small Mexican federal garrison at Tijuana.

Meanwhile, the 100 or so civilian residents of Tijuana slipped across the U.S. border and took up temporary residence in what today is San Ysidro. This all took place in early May 1911.

The Liberal Party of Mexico's occupation of the town was short-lived. On June 11, Mexican federal troops recaptured the town, ending the so-called Red Flag Revolt.

Although we can't be absolutely sure, when the Tijuana postmaster fled to the United States he very likely took his principal postmarking devices with him. There is ample precedence for such action in Mexico.

And for the brief time the Liberal Party of Mexico was in control, the post office appears to have been used as its headquarters.

After the rebels were ousted and the postal operations resumed, the only handstamps on hand appear to have been the black-blot killer and the oval datestamp for marking packages (bultos postales).

As a result of my first column on the subject, I was informed of three or four similar items by Mexico collectors. Since then, I have information on two more, including one that I found while browsing cover boxes at a local stamp show.

My curiosity is now aroused to learn how long this provisional marking system was used until regular handstamps were again available. I am hopeful that *Linn's* readers will again show their willingness to help with this task.

The earliest use of the bultos postales datestamp I am aware of is July 15, and the latest is Aug. 7.

Since the town was retaken by federal forces June 11, it would seem that normal postal handling could have resumed shortly thereafter, but obviously it did not happen that way.

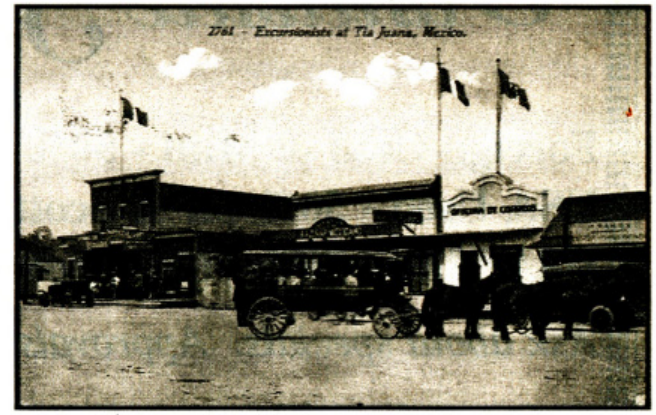

Figure 2. Picture side of a 1913 postcard showing a scene of Tijuana, including the post office (Oficina de Correos).

Another question is whether any mail was handled during the period of the Liberal Party of Mexico's occupation, from May 10 to June11, 1911.

A collector friend who specializes in picture postcards tells me that many cards depicting scenes of Tijuana were being published and sold during the time in question.

Postcards were especially popular with tourists who would make the short drive from San Diego to the Mexican border for an afternoon's outing. They often bought and mailed postcards as souvenirs.

The postcard pictured in Figure 2 dates from 1913 and shows a scene of Tijuana, including the post office (Oficina de Correos). The post office can be seen behind the horses.

I suspect there are dozens of postcards bearing this combination of postal markings.

I will be interested to hear from readers in this regard to see what time limits can be established for the use of the bultos oval. Contact me by way of Linn's Editor, Box 29, Sidney, OH 45365. I will acknowledge all responses. ■

Postcard announced birth of a stamp club

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Ottmar Zieher of Munich, Bavaria, printed and promoted postcards picturing stamps in the early 1900s. The Mexico column in the Jan. 8, 1990, *Linn's* discussed these colorful postcards.

The cards are collected avidly by many serious collectors.

Zieher began selling his stamp postcards about 1903, and his so-called first series had almost 100 different designs.

The cards were of a standard size, 5½ inches by 3½ inches. Each colorful design illustrated a selection of postage stamps from a given country. The designs were numbered.

The cards showing Mexican stamps were Nos. 30 and 94. The card illustrated in Figure 1 is a No. 30. It shows a mix of the Coat of Arms issues of 1899 and 1903 and a shield bearing an eagle. The card is embossed with simulated perforations around the stamps, and the Mexican eagle is in relief.

The No. 94 card design is similar, but it also has a few stamps from the classic era and an outline map of Mexico at the lower right.

Both designs had various printings, characterized by subtle differences in color shades, marginal inscriptions and ruling on the backs.

I will not go into detail about these here, because they are of interest primarily to those who wish to specialize. My article of 1990 has more information in this regard.

Figure 1. This picture postcard showing Mexican stamps was sent Nov. 13, 1930, to announce the formation of a stamp club.

When browsing through dealer stocks at stamp shows, I always take a moment to check for any Mexican Zieher cards.

Such cards mailed from the country whose stamps are depicted are desirable, and I have accumulated a fair number addressed to the United States, mostly from tourists.

What caught my attention with the card illustrated in Figure 1 was that it was mailed in Mexico to a local address.

Also of interest was the message typed on the face of the card.

Under the heading "Mexican Philatelic Association," it translates briefly: "You [the addressee] are invited to a champagne lunch for the purpose of inaugurating a local [stamp collecting] association at such and such address, to take place Saturday evening, the 15th [November 1930] at 8 p.m. President, Guillermo Fuentes, Secretary, Miguel J. Coarasa."

The card was addressed to Gustavo Struck, Atenas No. 63, City (Mexico, D.F.)

The card is postmarked Nov. 13, so the sender must have had every confidence it would reach the addressee prior to the time of the meeting.

I immediately wondered if this endeavor ever got off the ground.

Before he passed away in 1987, Jim Beal (a collector of Mexican classics and postal history) gave me a shoebox full of various Mexican stamp society publications.

Sure enough, among that hodgepodge, I found a small stack of journals of the Asociacion Filatelica Mexicana (Mexican Philatelic Association) including issue No. 1 published in the group's first year.

Its front cover, illustrated in Figure 2, shows a picture of the main post office in Mexico. The header contains the statement that the group was founded Nov. 15, 1930.

The magazine is well done and on coated paper. It runs to 28 pages, including about five pages of ads by various local stamp dealers.

A photograph of 30 men who attended the initial meeting is shown in the magazine's page 3.

One lady is listed as a member of the society's official family and of the publication committee, but she is not included in the photograph. (She is pictured with the officers in the second issue of journal.)

The lady authored the opening editorial in the first issue that concludes with the association's motto of "One for all, and all for one!"

There also is an article on specialization by the noted Mexican stamp dealer Eduardo Aguirre and the first installment of an interesting rebuttal by Aguirre to the book by Walter Clarke Bellows on the stamps of Campeche.

Figure 2. Cover of the first issue of the Mexican Philatelic Association's magazine.

Aguirre claimed that there are many errors of fact in Bellow's book, and he was right.

In the magazine, a section on new issues written by another Mexican dealer, Teofilo Guerrero, occupies several pages. In addition, the magazine includes a list of airmail rarities of the world.

The United States 24¢ Inverted Jenny airmail stamp of 1918 is included in this list, but there are no stamps from Mexico.

The rare and pricey Amelia Earhart stamp with the goodwill-flight overprint came later in the decade (1935).

The journal also lists the founding members, plus those who joined after the initial meeting. At the time the first issue was published, the association had 59 members.

Gustavo Struck, to whom the card was addressed, is not on the list, and apparently he elected not to join.

Among the advertisers, I found other names that might be familiar to longtime collectors of Mexico.

In addition to those already mentioned, there is Alfonso Ruidiaz, whose name often appears as a guarantee mark on many Mexican airmail stamps. Julio Fabian is another dealer old-time collectors might recall. The back cover of the magazine has a full-page ad of noted French dealer Theodore Champion.

I do not know how long the Mexican Philatelic Association lasted under that name or whether it eventually reorganized as one of the groups that exists today.

It was still going strong in 1937, which is the last year for which journals exist in the hoard bequeathed to me. Perhaps some *Linn's* readers can help in this regard.

Once again we have an example of how an innocent find can lead to an interesting story. How appropriate that an invitation to join a new stamp club was extended on a postcard depicting stamps. ■

Mexico's special delivery service and stamps

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Mexico's earliest attempts at expedited mail delivery occurred in the 1840s.

Under the auspices of the British legation, a fast mail service operated between Mexico City and the gulf port of Veracruz.

The service was established to convey inbound letters brought by foreign ships to the Mexican capital and to relay answers to those letters back in time to catch the same vessels prior to departure.

The turnaround was four to five days, remarkably fast for those times. Postage was charged at double the normal rates.

Surviving letters that received this service usually can be identified. They bear a handwritten endorsement "por extraordinario."

Examples of domestic mail carried between major cities along the route are known, but most usage was between Mexico City and Veracruz.

Fast forward to 1919. In that year, despite the lingering disruptive effects of the local civil wars, the Mexican post office issued its first special delivery stamp: a 20-centavo bicolor stamp (red frame, black vignette) depicting a postal carrier mounted on a motorcycle with sidecar emblazoned with the Mexican coat of arms (Scott E1).

Figure 1. This 1922 Mexican cover, sent from Irapuato to Mexico City, bears Mexico's first special delivery stamp and straightline "ENTREGA INMEDIATA" (immediate delivery) handstamps on both the front and the reverse.

A new printing of the stamp was issued in 1923 on watermarked paper (E2).

Figure 1 shows a 1922 cover from my collection bearing the first-design special delivery stamp (E1). The cover originated in Irapuato and was addressed to Mexico City.

There is a smudged receiving mark on the reverse, but neither the cancels on the front nor the receiver on the back are clear enough to determine the exact time en route. I assume that the cover did receive special handling because a straightline "ENTREGA INMEDIATA" (immediate delivery) is struck on both the front and back of the cover.

The next special delivery stamp design appeared in 1934 (E3). According to the Scott *Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue*, it shows a Toltec messenger with a quipu.

A quipu was a system of knotted strings used by the Aztecs to send messages. The runners were supposed to carry these messages in all haste and not stop until they reached their final destination.

It is rumored that tardy messengers with especially bad news were sometimes executed.

A second design from 1934 (E4) depicts an Indian archer shooting an arrow with an attached message to the next man in a relay system. I cannot imagine how this system could have worked very well. But perhaps the bowmen were more skillful than I imagine.

These three designs, with some minor design enhancements, account for all Mexican special delivery stamps through World War II.

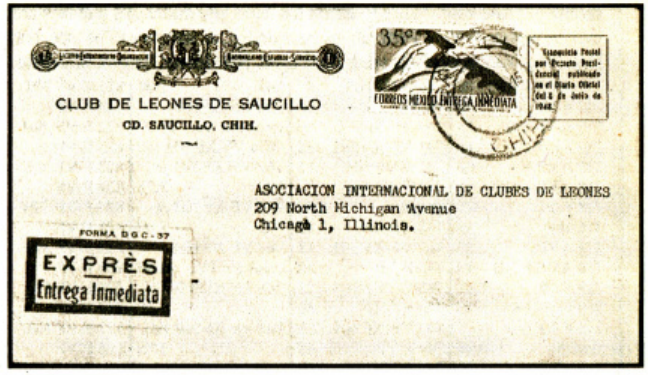

Figure 2. This cover was mailed July 1, 1958, by the Lions Club of Saucillo, Mexico, to Chicago. No regular postage was needed because the club had a special franking privilege, as explained in the upper right of the cover. The cover bears only a 35-centavo special delivery stamp of 1956.

From 1950 until the last Mexican special delivery stamp was issued in 1976, five more designs were used.

Counting colors, different values and redrawn varieties, Scott comes up with 27 listings. Except for Scott E1 and E12, which will put a moderate dent in your wallet, the complete series of special delivery stamps can be assembled easily for just a few dollars.

But I like to collect legitimately used stamps and covers, and that presents quite a bit more of a challenge.

Some of the used values in Scott are printed in italics. That means such stamps are traded so infrequently that a good value can not be established. It also means that while such stamps were issued for legitimate rates, correctly used examples are scarce.

For example, I have never seen a proper franking using the 1976 2-peso Clock stamp that paid the domestic special delivery fee (Scott E27).

In my search for interesting special delivery uses, howev-

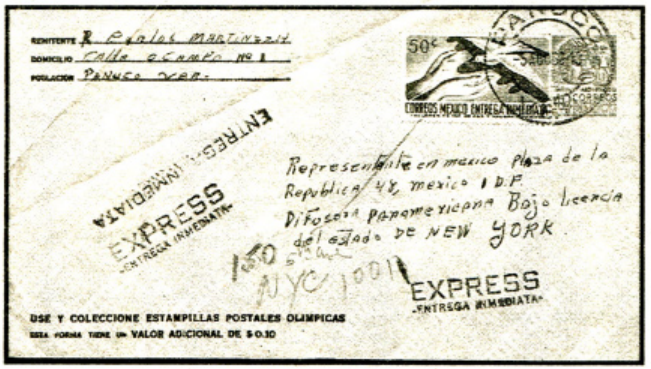

Figure 3. This 1968 cover bearing a 1962 Mexican special delivery stamp was mailed from Panuco to Mexico City and then forwarded to New York City. The cover bears three backstamps, two applied Aug. 11, 1969, and one on Aug. 12.

er, I have had some luck.

Figure 2 shows an illustrated cover from the Lions Club of Saucillo to the home office in Chicago. In this example, the Mexican organization enjoyed a special franking privilege, which is explained in the box at the upper right of the cover, so no stamp for regular postage was needed.

The special delivery fee was satisfied by a 1956 red-lilac 35c stamp (E16), used frequently on mail of that era.

The letter was posted July 1, 1958. A special delivery label appears at the cover's lower left.

There is no receiving backstamp so it remains a mystery whether the letter enjoyed special delivery service once it reached Chicago.

Figure 3 illustrates a 1968 cover originally mailed from Panuco, Veracruz, to a Mexico City address.

The sender used a 40c stamped envelope bearing a slogan urging the purchase of Olympic commemorative postage stamps. A 1962 50c special delivery stamp (E18) was added.

The cover entered the Mexican mails Aug. 5. In Mexico City, it was forwarded to New York City, headquarters of the radio station to which it was originally addressed.

This cover bears three interesting backstamps. The first, dated Aug. 11, indicates it was received at the Grand Central special delivery mail station at 6:30 p.m.

It then moved to the Madison Square special delivery station and was handstamped there at 10 p.m.

The third and final handstamp appears to indicate it went out for delivery at 10 a.m. the following day, Aug. 12.

So in this case, we have proof that the letter did receive special delivery handling at the destination.

Considering the roundabout routing of this example, the seven-day time lapse seems reasonable.

I often wonder whether Mexican special delivery franking was respected at the destination end of a letter's journey. At prevailing exchange rates, the 50c special delivery fee on the Figure 3 covers works out to 4¢. Not much for extra service.

Because of the cheapness of Mexican special delivery stamps, many merchants and businessmen bought the service as a matter of course.

As a result, business envelopes bearing special delivery franking from the 1950s and 1960s are fairly plentiful.

Collecting special delivery covers of Mexico offers an interesting challenge, especially covers bearing stamps having limited use. Let me know what you find. ■

Huge revenue document bears 3,219 stamps

Collector George J. Kramer, recently crowned Champion of Champions exhibitor for his exhibit "United States Domestic Mails 1776-1869," pursues an unlikely sideline to

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

his eclectic philatelic tastes. He collects the revenue stamps of Mexico.

I have touted Mexican revenues over the years as fun to collect for a number of reasons.

First, there are more varieties than regular postage stamps.

Taxes were imposed on certain products and business transactions with appropriate revenue stamps issued for each category.

The revenue stamps used as proof of taxes paid were valid for only the fiscal year in which they were issued, so new series appeared on a yearly basis.

Another plus factor is that revenue stamps are not in tremendous demand and will usually not put a big dent in your pocketbook. The high values are sometimes a bit expensive, though.

Most Mexican revenue collectors who intend to exhibit their revenues also try to find full documents with revenue stamps affixed to demonstrate usage. It's like collecting stamps on cover to show postal history.

This monster revenue document from Mexico is more than 19 feet long. It bears 3,219 revenue stamps totaling 414.10 pesos.

Both Kramer and I have shown Mexican revenues in competition, but these exhibits usually do not command the top awards.

One of the most spectacular items in Kramer's collection is illustrated nearby.

It is a document bearing the so-called Hilaza y Tejidos (Yarns and Fabrics) revenue stamps of 1897-99.

The size and contents of the document boggle the mind.

It is a strip of paper 19 feet, 1 inch long to which are affixed 1,790 5-centavo stamps, 1,420 20c and four 10-peso revenue stamps of the 1897-98 series, plus two 5c and two 20c stamps of the 1898-99 series. Also included is a 10c Renta Interior (Internal Revenue) stamp, a possible misuse of that stamp. There was no 10c denomination in the Hilaza y Tejidos series, but two 5c stamps could have been used.

The Durango handstamp defacing the stamps is dated Oct. 31, 1898.

Normally, the 1897-98 revenues by that time would have given way to those dated 1898-99, but the tax agent evidently saw a way to clean out his stock of old stamps and save himself the trouble of having to return them to headquarters.

Unfortunately, the business section of the document has been lost so we cannot be sure what the transaction really was.

We do know that the total tax represented by the stamps was 414.10p, a rather handsome sum in those days.

This long tail attached to the original document was made up of sheets of paper pasted end to end and completely covered on both sides with the 3,219 stamps.

Rates of taxation on goods and transactions varied from 0.25 percent to 25 percent. We do not know what rate applied here, but if it were on the high end, we are talking about a transaction worth perhaps as much as $1,500 more than 100 years ago.

The Hilaza y Tejidos series was issued in seven denominations varying from 5c to 500p, so it would have been easy to pay this tax with fewer stamps. But in doing what he did, a long forgotten tax agent accomplished two results: he used up his remaining inventory of old revenue stamps and he created a most remarkable artifact for a hobbyist of a future generation.

The lavish use of little-used values of revenue stamps on documents is not all that unusual. But in this instance, it was clearly carried to the extreme.

Kramer displays this unwieldy document in his exhibit by folding it back on itself several times.

It occupies a full frame and always prompts a double take by those show attendees who spend time looking at exhibits.

It is truly a monster document.

A catalog of Mexican revenue stamps, Richard Stevens' *The Revenue Stamps of Mexico*, was published in 1979. It is still available from the Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International. For more details, write to Carl LeMar John, Publications Manger, 5063 E. North Regency Circle, Tucson, AZ 85711.

My thanks to Kramer for allowing me to share this story with *Linn's* readers. ■

Market strong for early stamps of Mexico

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Nicholas Follansbee, a West Coast auctioneer who specializes in Mexican stamps, conducted his 15th auction Sept. 20 at the Reno Hilton Hotel, in Reno, Nev. Follansbee averages one or two sales per year.

His sales are eagerly anticipated by a loyal band of clients not only as opportunities to acquire key pieces for their collections ,but also as social gatherings. His latest auction was no exception.

Although more than 20 consignors were represented in 944 lots, the bulk of material came from the estate of Charles Brock of Fort Worth, Texas.

Brock collected Mexico seriously for almost 65 years. He joined the Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International (member No. 127) shortly after the club was formed in the 1940s.

Although Brock had his favorite areas of specialization, such as stampless covers, airmails and the 1856 issue, he built a huge holding that covered all periods of Mexican postage.

Most of the collection was carefully mounted and annotated.

Brock was not a wealthy man. But knowledge and a keen eye for rare stamps at bargain prices enabled him to acquire outstanding pieces when Mexican stamps and covers were neglected fields.

The sale was an outstanding success. There were 33 active bidders on the floor, representing themselves or acting as agents for 32 other would-be buyers.

Figure 1. This 1864 1-peso Jaurez stamp with the Saltillo district name was hammered down for $3,000 in a recent auction of Mexico.

Additionally, there were 92 mail bidders in the book, of which 54 won one or more lots.

Virtually all of the lots sold, because Follansbee often refuses to accept material with unreasonably high reserves.

When the last lot was hammered down after about five hours of action, the gross realization was slightly more than $275,000, close to $100,000 more than Follansbee's presale estimate.

As expected, the classic material from prestamp through the 1885 issue did exceptionally well.

Stamps from the so-called rare districts of Cuautitlan, Polotitlan and Sultepec, for example, were very strong, often fetching more than the generous estimates Follansbee assigned to them.

The large lots of classic-era stamps from the more common districts also showed surprising strength.

Follansbee had purposely grouped good material in this manner, and it paid off.

Collectors and dealers are enamored with lots containing multiple stamps. Such lots provide material to fill in holes in collections, and duplicates can be resold to offset the original cost.

Spirited bidding often sent these lots to near their total catalog valuations, and the values used were from Follansbee's own specialized Mexican catalog.

This catalog, *A Catalogue of the Stamps of Mexico 1856-1900*, values stamps by district according to rarity. (Scott catalog values are for only the most common districts. They are meaningless in the realm of district specialization.)

Brock had an unused example of the 1-peso Juarez stamp of 1864 (Scott 17) bearing the Saltillo overprint, shown in Figure 1. In his catalog, Follansbee values it at $2,000.

This item went quickly to $3,000, where it was hammered down.

Figure 2. The ½-real Chiapas provisional of 1866 brought $5,000 in Nicholas Follansbee's Sept. 20 auction.

Another rarity offered in the sale was an unused Chiapas ½-real provisional of 1866 (1), that Scott values at $2,000. This brought $5,000, even though it had a minor area of gum soak visible on the face of the stamp. The provisional stamp is pictured in Figure 2.

Another choice item, a 1770 registered front from the colonial era and possibly the earliest Mexican registered item, soared to $8,000, well beyond the $3,000-to-$5,000 estimate.

Late 19th-century stamps did reasonably well, as did stamps and covers from the civil wars of the early 20th century.

Postal history of this era is receiving more and more attention, owing in large part to the recent availability of good literature on the subject.

Even the airmail section of the sale sold out, although typically, many auctions end with unsold lots in this field.

Follansbee told me that he was truly surprised by the strength of the demand for Mexican stamps across the board.

He reported that the floor bidding was vigorous and sometimes intense.

Many collectors who entrusted bids to agents and set conservative limits were disappointed. A few failed to win a single lot.

I sent about a dozen bids by way of an agent and succeeded on only two lots.

One stamp I really wanted and for which I bid nearly twice the estimate failed by two or three increments.

But such is life, and not being in attendance is a hindrance too. You cannot judge the mood of the floor bidders if you're not there.

But I will cherish the two lots I did win as mementos of an old and good friend.

It might seem from the examples I cited above that this sale was for rich collectors only.

Not so. There were plenty of lots that sold well within reach of collectors of moderate means.

The results from this auction indicate that the market for good Mexican material is healthy and definitely showing value appreciation.

In my view, Follansbee's sales are a much more accurate gauge of where the market truly stands than some of the recent offerings by the larger houses.

Flashy offerings with sky-high estimates might find a wealthy buyer willing to reach for them, but much of this type of material remains unsold until reserves are adjusted to reasonable levels. ■

Tourist postcards show many Exporta rates

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Basil Hunter, a Canadian correspondent in Vancouver, British Columbia, sent me a stack of picture postcards recently.

Hunter reads my Mexico column in *Linn's*, and we had corresponded previously on several Mexican philatelic matters.

I wrote him that I was always on the lookout for foreign-bound covers bearing Exporta stamps, and apparently he took the challenge to heart.

The stack he sent me contains about 150 postcards. They span the years from just before the Exporta stamps were issued in 1975 up to the mid-1990s when the Mexican peso had been revalued but old inventories of Exporta stamps were still being used to frank mail.

All of the cards are from Canadian tourists, or "snow birds," Canadians who spend their winters south of the border, mostly along Mexico's west coast.

Figure 2. This postcard mailed from Mexico to Canada shortly after a rate change was underfranked by at least 20 pesos.

For fun, I decided to see how many rate periods were represented in the lot.

By way of review, from December 1975 when the first Exporta stamps were issued up to the last issues in 1992, 20 postal rate changes occurred.

For most of that period, it was a time of financial crisis in Mexico. The peso sank from U.S. 8¢ to less than 0.03¢.

Postage rates soared, at least numerically. For example, in 1974, an airmail letter to the United States or Canada required 1.60p in postage. By 1992, it took 2,000p.

After I finished sorting the postcards, I found that all but two rate periods were represented. This was an excellent sampling because some of the rate periods lasted for only three months.

I also discovered some interesting uses brought about by the rapidly changing rates.

The first rate period of the Exporta era lasted more than four years. Most of the postcards from this period are franked with the 1.60p Bicycle stamp or two of the 80-centavo Cattle stamps.

At the time, a 1.50p surface-rate for postcards was in effect, but this rate is seldom seen and was not present in this group.

The severe inflation that began in the late 1970s presented problems for both the post office and mailers. Rates were established that were not easily matched to available stamps. And when a single stamp was available to pay the rate, inefficient distribution often created shortages in many post offices.

As a general rule, two or more stamps were required to make the correct rates.

This did not cause too much of a problem with large business envelopes. But a small postcard had little room for more than one or two of the large-format Exporta stamps.

The card shown graphically cropped in Figure 1 shows how mailers usually solved that problem.

Four stamps totaling the correct rate of 13p were overlapped so that only the numerals of the denominations show.

Other mailers would wrap the stamps around the edge of the card to save space for their messages.

Another problem was lack of stamps for correct combination frankings. The postal rates changed so rapidly that post offices were forced to use whatever stamps they had on hand.

This usually resulted in cards and letters that were overfranked, although occasionally an underfranked piece made it though without penalty.

Figure 1. Four stamps totaling 13 pesos in postage are overlapped on this postcard (shown cropped) so that they would all fit. Figures 2, 3 and 4 also are postcards shown cropped.

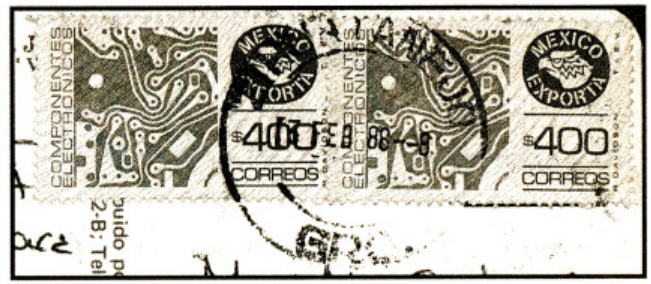

Figure 3. This postcard is overfranked by 50 pesos. No single stamps were available to pay the correct 750p rate.

Figure 4. This postal card sent from Mexico to Canada at the 1,500-peso rate bears a registry handstamp from Rincon de Guayabitos, although it was not sent by registered mail.

Figure 2 depicts a postcard that is at least 20p underpaid. According to the datestamp, it was mailed 10 days after a rate change.

The deficiency was caught in the Mexican postal system and noted by the rectangular handstamp to the left of the stamp.

But many more instances of overfranking exist than underfranking.

For 1988, the postcard and letter rate to Canada was 750p. Of the six cards in the group from that period, only one is correctly franked. It bears a 400p, a 300p and a 50p stamp.

All the rest of the cards, from various towns, bear 800p franking, 50p more than necessary. The cards often are franked with two 400p Electronics stamps. Figure 3 pic-

www.zillionsofstamps.com

tures one of these cards.

An Exporta stamp with a 750p denomination was not issued until 1989, so no single stamp was available to match the rate.

This problem seems to have persisted into the next year.

On Jan. 1, 1989, the card and letter rates rose to 1,100p. This was the first time a franking this high was required for a single-weight piece.

Early in the year, combination frankings were the norm, but by midyear a 1,100p Minerals stamp was issued to satisfy the rate.

In 1990, the zone system for international mail was simplified, and letter rates again were increased rather dramatically. At the same time, postcard rates, which for six years had been pegged at the same level as letters, were reduced.

The postcard rate was 1,000p from February to December 1990, when it was raised to 1,500p, a rate that persisted until the end of the Exporta era.

Even so, the confusion continued on the part of mailers who occasionally affixed more postage than was necessary or who might have received bad advice from hotel clerks or perhaps even a postal agent at the post office.

Figure 4 shows an interesting example of a 1,500p-rate postcard.

It bears a neatly struck registry handstamp from the small town of Rincon de Guayabitos in Nayarit state.

Obviously, the card was not meant to be registered mail. It just became the target of a handy handstamp.

The card was mailed just 14 days prior to the postal decree invoking the use of the new peso (N$), which was equivalent to 1,000 of the old pesos.

Postal rates remained the same, but the decree ushered in a new era of stamp usage denominated in both the new and old pesos.

I don't know where my friend Hunter found this cache of cards, perhaps at a postcard collectors' show.

But I use this as an example of how a collector can spend a pleasant evening with the hobby for what had to be a modest cash outlay. ■

Remnants from an early Mexico collection

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Many years ago, when I began specializing in the first stamps of Mexico, I would bid on auction lots containing multiple stamps. These lots rarely had any of the scarce district overprints, but at the time it was a good and relatively economical way to obtain material to flesh out my growing, but still rather puny, collection.

Often the stamps in these lots were left mounted on the original owner's album pages with a hole here and there where better stamps had been removed and lotted up as single items.

I recall being successful on several such lots in the sale of the Byron Stevens collection in 1971. Stevens was one of the original founders of the Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International and an avid collector of the first issues.

Stevens and I first met in Mexico City at the big stamp show held after the Summer Olympic Games of 1968. From the old school, he used large Godden albums with gilt-edge leaves.

I removed the stamps from the lot, placing some in the exhibit I was building, while the rest went into my stock book of duplicates.

Another time, I was successful on a couple of lots described by the auctioneer (a large New York City firm) as remainders from the Fayolle collection, a name probably not familiar to newcomers to Mexican stamps. The Marquis de Fayolle was a wealthy Frenchman who became infatuated with the Mexican classics and built an extensive collection of them in the early 20th century.

He had money, a keen eye for stamps and even a chateau on the Dordogne.

My purchases from this sale arrived loose in auction sheet pouches. Each stamp was carefully mounted on a small card, as illustrated nearby.

These cards, measuring about 1 inch by 1½ inches, have a border surrounding two adjoining boxes, a large one for the stamp and a smaller box for recording data on the mounted stamp.

Various tiny handstamps, including abbreviations for French philatelic terms, were used to identify the characteristics that were inserted by hand. In the upper-left corner of the small box is a number. I have a notion that the marquis might have assigned a number to each stamp in his collection.

If his Mexico first-issue stamps were mounted in alphabetical order of the districts, this numbering would seem to be sequential.

The two Guanajuato stamps (on the left) bear Nos. 159 and 161. The Veracruz ½ real (third from left) has No. 536 and the 2r 1861 from Puebla (right) has No. 844.

To the right of a number is "Coeff." (coefficient). This refers to a relative rarity scale Fayolle used — the higher the number, the scarcer the stamp.

The Guanajuato stamps were judged to be five times scarcer than overprinted stamps of the Mexico (City) district, which were the most common of all and had a coefficient of one.

The inscription "Surch." (surcharge) refers to the name overprint, and its dimensions were written on the cards.

In the case of the Guanajuato stamps, "av. Points" (avec Points, or "with points") was added to the entry, indicating there were stops (periods) before and after the name.

The abbreviation "PL." designates the printing plate, when known.

The first Guanajuato stamp is labeled a "PL 1 (?)." We now know it is actually an example from plate No. 2.

Finally, "OBL. (obliteration) W" identifies the postmark that was used to cancel the stamp. The "W" refers to *W. T. Wilson's Postmarks of Mexico, 1856-1872* (published in 1927), the only such reference available at the time the marquis was mounting his collection.

This work, though a remarkable effort for the time, was completely supplanted in 1983 by *The Cancellations of Mexico, 1856-1874*, by Schatzkes and Schimmer.

Although Wilson did not number his postmark reproductions, "W 4," for example, would mean the fourth mark in the Wilson listing for the town or city in question.

All of the cards in my lots, including larger ones for pairs and strips, bear hinge remnants on the back. This indicates that they were once mounted in some sort of album.

This mounting scheme was an ingenious way to save wear and tear on the stamps themselves. They could be moved around without any danger of causing thins by repeated hinging.

Although I didn't obtain any great rarities in the lots I purchased, I was pleased to have this historical link with one of the early and truly great collectors of Mexican classic stamps.

The Marquis de Fayolle collection must have been spectacular. In the early 1930s, he collaborated with knowledgeable Belgian collector Paul de Smeth on an authoritative study of Mexico's first issues, *Les Premieres Emissions du Mexique, 1856-1872.* It was published by Yvert and Tellier in 1935 in an edition of 200.

Unfortunately, it was printed on soft paper and bound with card covers, so most copies are a bit worse for wear. But if you can handle the French language, it remains a useful reference to have on your library shelf.

It's a pity it was never translated into English, although it recently was translated into Spanish.

I missed out on Fayolle lots containing 4r and 8r stamps in that long-ago auction. I often wonder if the successful bidder kept any of the pieces on their original mounts, or whether they have all been pulled off and the card mounts discarded. Perhaps some *Linn's* reader can answer that question.

Since this is the last Mexico column for 2003, I'll take the opportunity to wish everyone a happy holiday season and a great new year. And I thank all who have written in response to the articles — the feedback is much appreciated. ■

These stamp cards bear first-issue Mexican stamps and include notations by the Marquis de Fayolle, who assembled an extensive collection of classic Mexico in the early 20th century.

Mexico's 1864-66 Eagles can be addictive

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

I have reached the age where I'm about to dispose of some collections that really aren't going forward anymore.

One of these areas is a modest holding of the stamps called the Mexican Eagles, Scott 18-25.

Early in my collecting career, I became thoroughly fascinated with this issue. Had I not gotten hooked on the first-design stamps of 1856-61, I probably would have developed the Eagles much further than I did.

The Eagles were a product of the ill-fated Maximilian monarchy of 1864-67, that tumultuous era when Mexican conservative factions attempted to install a Catholic European prince as head of state.

The monarchy was short-lived. As soon as the French occupation troops were withdrawn, the empire collapsed.

Maximilian and two of his supporting generals were captured by Republican forces under Benito Juarez and executed in June 1867.

Figure 1. Non-overprinted 1-real Mexican Eagle stamp.

Several improvements in post office procedures occurred during the tenure of the Eagle stamps and that is what makes them so interesting.

First issued in May 1864, the stamps display the Mexican coat of arms motif, an eagle perched on a cactus with a serpent in its mouth.

The stamps were engraved and printed in sheets of 100.

They come in an array of attractive colors with quite a few subtle shades, especially of the ½-real and 1r denominations.

Initially, there were five denominations: ½r, 1r, 2r, 4r and 8r. A 3-centavo stamp was added in 1866 to cover a local rate in Mexico City. Figure 1 shows a fairly clear, early printing of the 1r stamp.

As was the case with their predecessors, stamps dispatched to district offices had to receive the handstamped name of the district to validate them for use at point of sale.

Figure 2. Mexican Eagle stamps from Durango and Cordova.

Later, in 1864, accounting control was further enhanced by the addition of an invoice number and year date to the stamps. This overprint was applied at the main post office prior to shipping.

The size and format of these control number overprints were changed several times.

For classification purposes, specialists and catalogers have divided the Eagle stamps into five use periods, although the Scott *Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue* refers to them as types.

Stamps issued in the first period, from May 8 to July 7, 1864, bear only the district name overprints.

During the second period, from July 7 until Sept. 19, 1864, stamps received an invoice number and year date in a large type.

From Sept. 20 until the end of 1864, the third period, the invoice number and year date is overprinted in small Roman type.

Fourth-period stamps have 1865 as the year-date imprint, and fifth-period stamps have 1866.

These control numbers, together with the district name overprints, combined to produce literally hundreds of varieties. This is one of the things that intrigues specialists in this issue.

Figure 2 shows typical examples of stamps bearing district names and control overprints.

The stamps were used in the

Figure 3. A Mexican Eagle stamp sent from Puebla to the Huajuapam suboffice.

cities of Durango and Cordova.

There were further aspects of the postal system that yielded collectible varieties of the Eagle stamps.

Large district offices usually had administrative control over post offices in smaller towns near them.

These subordinate offices received their stamps from the larger office, and in many instances the dispatches were handstamped with a suboffice number of one or two digits representing an identity code for the smaller office.

In a few instances, a suboffice also would apply its name to the stamps it received. Stamps with the suboffice numbers (or names) are scarcer than the regular stamps from the district and fetch higher prices.

Figure 3 shows an example of a stamp with a suboffice number. This Puebla stamp was sent to the Huajuapam suboffice.

The distribution and use of the Eagle stamps of the monarchy was limited to areas firmly in control of the royalists.

At times, some of the towns in northern Mexico loyal to the Juarez movement did not receive or use Eagle stamps. Later, as the royalist sphere of influence shrank, other towns ceased to use the Eagle stamps.

This all adds up to a complex, but challenging situation for would-be specialists of the Eagle issue.

Figure 4. A Mexican Eagle stamp with a Mexico district overprint used Nov. 16, 1864, the first day it was available at post offices.

Fortunately, the Mexican post offices kept good records, and many records survive. Samuel Chapman was the first to examine the records, and he gave guidance to serious collectors with *The Postage Stamps of Mexico, 1856-1868*, published in 1926.

This work, reprinted by Quarterman in 1976, is still useful with its summaries of stamps sent to, and returned from, the various districts.

Another excellent reference is *A Catalogue of the Stamps of Mexico, 1856-1910* by Nicholas Follansbee. He explains many of the intricacies of the Eagle stamps and gives price estimates of most of the varieties known to exist. He also tabulates the invoice numbers for the various districts.

But the definitive work on the Eagle issue was published in 1993 by Leo Corbett: *The Imperial Eagles of Maximilian's Mexico*. This monumental 400-page work not only lists virtually all known Eagle varieties with price range estimates but also provides a historical backdrop to postal affairs in the various districts at the time they were in use.

As you might expect, many rare Eagle varieties are quite expensive, such as the 3c brown stamps issued in 1865 and 1866, of which only a few hundred were issued.

But many others are well within reach of the collector with a moderate stamp budget. And it is still possible to find worthwhile stamps in American Philatelic Society circuit books and job lots.

For example, I always check Eagle stamps with clear, dated cancellations from the Mexico district. Chapman's data records the dates these stamps were transferred from the headquarters account to the main post office for sale to the public. Stamps sold and canceled on those dates can be considered a first-day of use.

Over the years, I have found several such stamps. I consider them scarce, but they were not expensive, being priced as ordinary stamps.

Figure 4 shows one of these first-day uses I plucked out of an APS circuit book. This stamp with a Mexico district overprint was used Nov. 16, 1864.

If you are looking for an area of classic stamps to ease into, you might want to consider the Eagles. One can become addicted to them. ■

Mexico's short-lived Maximilians of 1866-67

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

The previous Mexico column (*Linn's*, Feb. 2, page 44) discussed the Mexican Eagle stamps, relics of the early years of the monarchy of Maximilian. Near the end of his short-lived reign, the post office managed to issue stamps portraying the young emperor.

It seems surprising that such stamps were not pressed into service sooner, but there appears to have been delays in agreeing on a suitable design.

Several essays of unadopted designs exist, notably a frontal rendering by a Belgian engraver named Delpierre. But the young monarch disliked full-face likenesses.

The image ultimately chosen and illustrated on the two stamps shown in Figure 1, features a bearded portrait of Maximilian facing left in a central oval. The design measures approximately 18 millimeters by 21mm.

Figure 1. Lithographed (left) and engraved (right) stamps from Mexico's Maximilian issue of August 1866 to June 1867.

Two printing methods were used: stone lithography and recess line-engraving. In the Figure 1 illustration, the 50-centavo on the left was produced by lithography, and the 13c on the right by engraving.

The stamps were printed in sheets of 70 (seven by 10) and came in four denominations: 7c, 13c, 25c and 50c.

At the time of issue in 1866, the Mexican monetary system had converted to a decimal basis, putting to rest the awkward system of reales (or bits).

The new denominations corresponded roughly to the previous fractions of the peso as follows: 7c was ½r (6.5c); 13c was 1r (12.5c); 25 was 2r; and 50c was 4r.

The lithographed series (Scott 26-30) went on sale to the public in August 1866.

Because of poor color control, the stamps are found in a wide array of shades, especially the 7c and 25c values.

For collectors fond of printing flaws, the 13c and 25c stamps offer abundant possibilities. Several of these are noted in Nicholas Follansbee's *A Catalogue of the Stamps of Mexico, 1856-1910.*

As with their predecessors, invoice numbers and year dates were printed on each stamp when they left the main post office, and they received overprinted district names at the point of sale.

Because royalist control was shrinking at the time, however, fewer districts received Maximilian stamps than those that were supplied with the Eagle stamps. Suboffice varieties exist but are scarce.

Figure 2. This Maximilian stamp with a district name of "Mexico" but no invoice number was given in exchange for an Eagle stamp.

A Maximilian stamp that has the district name "Mexico" but lacks an invoice number is occasionally found. These, too, are scarce items and represent stamps that were exchanged for the then-obsolete Eagle stamps.

Figure 2 illustrates one of these varieties. This 25c lithographed stamp was given in exchange for an Eagle stamp four days after the Maximilian stamps were placed on sale.

The engraved version of the Maximilian heads (31-34) first appeared Oct. 16, 1866. These stamps are easily differentiated from the lithographed stamps by the stops (periods) on either side of the value inserted below the oval. They are square. They appear simply as dots on the lithographed stamps.

Another difference is that the year date overprints on engraved stamps are abbreviated to three digits, either 866 or 867.

This also holds true for all lithographed stamps with invoice No. 107 or higher. These were among the last stamp shipments made by the monarchy.

The engraved series embraces one of the rarest stamps of Mexican philately: the 7c value used.

This stamp paid the rate for business circulars or prices current, items usually discarded. That explains why so few survive.

Genuine used 7c lithographed stamps are quite scarce, but genuine uses of the engraved 7c stamps are outright rarities.

Only 3,400 7c stamps were distributed for use, and it appears that most were never used and were returned or lost.

A genuine unused 7c is easier to come by, but the used ones are rarely seen at auction.

Two used 7c stamps sold in 1995 at the Sotheby's sale of the Erich Koenig collection. One stamp sold for slightly more than $4,000; the other, which had some minor thins, went for just under $3,000.

John Bash, an eminent philatelist and student of the Mexican classics, wrote an article about the 7c engraved stamp for the January 1963 issue of the journal *Mexicana*.

He explained the history of this stamp and why it is so scarce. In an informal survey at the time, he accounted for six used examples he deemed to be genuine.

While some individual classic Mexican stamps can be considered extremely rare by virtue of district overprint and cancellation, this major Scott-listed variety certainly ranks as one of the rarest.

Figure 3. Pair of engraved Mexican 7-centavo Maximilian stamps from remainder stock sold to collectors and dealers.

The monarchy fell apart rather quickly during the winter and early months of 1867. As a result, usage of the Maximilian-head stamps was not as widespread as the earlier Eagle issues.

Postmasters in those towns under control of the Juarez forces would not think of using stamps bearing the image of the emperor. And as soon as Maximilian was captured, their use ceased altogether in favor of provisional stamp issues, limited stocks of old pre-monarchy stamps and pre-stamp-era handstamps indicating postage paid.

A sizeable inventory of the engraved stamps remained after usage was discontinued.

Most of this stock eventually found its way into the philatelic market, and that is why nonoverprinted Maximilian heads, or stamps with only the control overprints, are so prevalent. Even the 7c stamp can be had at a low cost.

Figure 3 shows a pair of the nonoverprinted 7c stamp from that stock of leftovers. This pair has neither a control numbers nor a district name.

While these remainders permit hundreds of collectors to fill spaces in their albums with genuine stamps, they also have provided unscrupulous manipulators with a cheap supply of raw material with which to deceive collectors.

The notorious Raoul de Thuin (died 1975) created hundreds of Maximilian stamps with bogus control numbers and fake cancellations. They still crop up in the marketplace from time to time.

This era of the monarchy is a most interesting one from a stamp-collecting standpoint and offers great opportunities for serious collectors. But you need to be careful and make sure that high-priced purchases either come with appropriate certificates or are allowed to be sent for expertization. ■

Watermarks on 19th-century Mexican stamps

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

In his interesting column on stitch watermarks in the March 1 issue of *Linn's*, editor Michael Schreiber does not list Mexico as a primary source of this anomaly. Perhaps it is among the "others" he refers to, but Mexico does have classic stamps with stitch watermarks.

Illustrated in Figure 1 are two examples from my collection. The 1-real stamp, shown on the left, is from the 1856 issue, and the watermark runs horizontally along the bottom edge.

On the ½r stamp from the 1861 series, pictured on the right in Figure 1, the watermark runs vertically just inside the left edge.

The watermarks are quite faint and could be easily missed if you weren't looking for them.

A variety of papers were used in the printing of these early stamps. Both stamps illustrated in Figure 1 are on what specialists call wove paper, where a mesh, or grain pattern imparted by the woven wire dewatering belt is visible. This fact leads me to believe that stitch watermarks are probably found only on this type of paper. I have never seen them on the smoother, more opaque papers.

Stitch watermarks were accidental, occurring where the paper came off the wire belt at the point where the belt was repaired or where its ends were joined together with wire or heavy thread.

Figure 1. Two examples of stitch watermarks on early Mexican stamps. On the 1856 1-real stamp on the left, the watermark runs horizontally along the bottom edge. On the 1861 ½r stamp on the right, it runs vertically inside the left edge.

Figure 2. The letters "RPS" are watermarked on Mexico's 1867 emergency issue.

Normal watermarks occur when wire or thin metal designs are deliberately soldered to the mesh web or the dandy roll of a paper machine.

Mexican stamps showing stitch watermarks must be very scarce. These are the only ones I have encountered in all my years of collecting.

Nicholas Follansbee in *A Catalogue of the Stamps of Mexico, 1856-1910* says they are worth a premium of $100 over their normal value.

The next Mexican stamps with watermarks were the emergency issue of 1867 following the fall of Maximilian (Scott 42-45).

These four stamps were printed on a thin, grayish wove paper normally used for revenue forms. The watermarks were large letters in script "R P S" (Renta Papel Sellado) arrayed across the middle of the paper.

They are easily visible when the stamp is viewed against a strong light source.

Portions of the watermark can appear on only about half the stamps in a sheet. The Figure 2 stamp shows some of this watermark.

Watermarks also are found on the issue of 1872, when revenue paper was used once again. This revenue paper bore a string of watermarked letters that spell "PAPEL SELLADO" (security paper), impressed only once across a sheet. No more than 14 stamps from a sheet will show portions of the watermark, so such specimens are priced considerably higher than stamps without the watermark.

A second watermark also appears on this issue. It consists of large characters "LA+F." This stands for La Croix Freres, the French firm that made the paper.

Once again, only a small number of stamps will show the watermark, so they, too, carry premium pricing.

A similar situation prevails for the definitive issue of 1874-80. Revenue paper with the "PAPEL SELLADO" watermark was used for a few stamps, most of which are overprinted with the year dates of "76" and "77."

French paper with the firm's name spelled out "LA CROIX FRERES" in a watermark consisting of large letters in two lines exists, and invariably it was used for stamps year dated "77." These stamps were distributed to many districts.

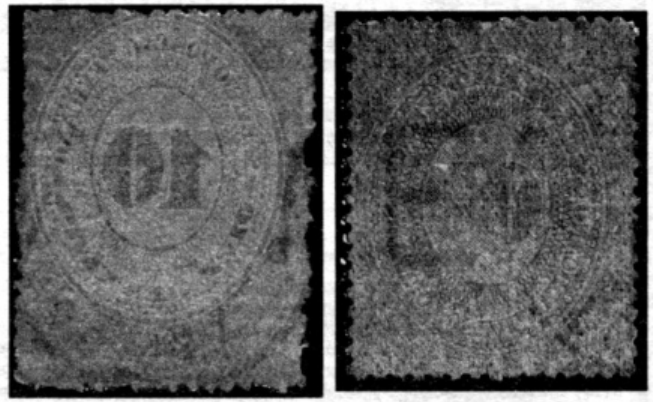

Figure 3. Mexico's Large Numeral issue has a watermark with the 10 large letters spelling "CORREOS EUM."

All watermarked stamps of this issue carry premiums. Those from scarce districts can be especially pricey.

The next Mexican stamps with watermarks are the late printings of the Large Numeral issue, Scott Type A18. (The early printings of this type are not watermarked.)

The watermark pattern was a string of 10 rather large letters forming the letters "CORREOS EUM (Estados Unidos Mexicanos)," arranged in rows so that one letter would fall on each stamp in the sheet, assuming the paper was properly aligned in the press. There are no premium varieties in this group. Figure 3 shows examples of this watermark.

The issue that followed, the so-called Mail Transportation issue, or Mulitas as they are known to specialists, is a different story.

Four separate papers, three with different watermarks, were used: the aforementioned "CORREOS EUM," an interlaced script "RM" (Republic de Mexico), and block letters "RM" surmounted by the eagle coat of arms.

A smooth, unwatermarked wove paper was used in the final printings of this stamp.

The "CORREOS EUM" stamps are straightforward and carry no premiums when the letters are upright.

Sometimes paper was fed to the presses so the watermarks

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are sideways. Varieties with these sideways watermarks carry modest premiums. But little-used denominations, the 1-peso brown stamp, for example, will fetch several hundred dollars when offered.

As noted earlier, each stamp printed on "CORREOS EUM" watermarked paper will normally have one watermark letter if the paper was properly aligned during the printing operation. Sometimes the sheets were shifted so that stamps along the sheet margin evaded the watermark.

Most of the time this is not a problem. However, the unwatermarked 10-centavo stamp (284) has a high catalog value. Often sheet-margin examples of this stamp are offered as the unwatermarked variety. Buyers should be alert to this possible substitution.

The watermarked 10c stamp (284) is on medium thick, wove paper with horizontal grain or mesh pattern, while the watermarked stamp (248) is on thin wove paper with vertical grain.

Many interlaced "RM" watermarked stamps and the eagle and "RM" watermarked stamps are quite scarce and carry high price tags.

One of the great Mexican rarities is the 5p stamp with eagle and "RM" watermark. Only a handful of these are recorded, suggesting that only one or two sheets were printed.

In his catalog, Follansbee values this stamp at $20,000. I cannot recall one changing hands in recent years.

The watermarked varieties of 19th-century Mexican stamps offer a special challenge for collectors. Most of the watermarks I have described are strongly impressed on the papers used in printing and can be discerned by holding stamps up to a light or placing them face down on a black surface. I use fluid as a last resort.

In the next Mexico column, I will look at some watermarked Mexican stamps of the 20th century.

I highly recommend Follansbee's *A Catalogue of the Stamps of Mexico, 1856-1910* if you are serious about hunting for watermark varieties, especially with the Mulitas. His valuing will help in your acquisition efforts. ■

Some 20th-century stamps on wrong paper

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Last month's Mexico column on watermarks of 19th-century Mexican stamps (*Linn's*, March 22, page 30) concluded with the Transportation issue of 1895-98. Technically, this was not the final watermarked Mexican stamp issue of the 19th century.

That honor goes to the 1899 Coat of Arms issue printed by the London firm of Bradbury Wilkinson and Co. The stamps saw most of their usage during the 20th century.

This well-executed series of stamps was printed on wove paper with a long watermark reading "SERVICIO POSTAL DE LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS MEXICANOS" (Scott watermark type 155).

This watermark was impressed on the paper diagonally in echelon, meaning that each row was displaced about one character width in such a manner that when a sheet of stamps was viewed, the watermark could be read in two directions 90 degrees apart.

As shown across the strip of three stamps pictured in Figure 1, this watermark is easy to see when the stamps are face down on a dark surface.

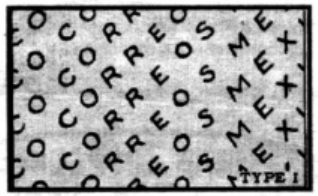

Figure 2. Arrangement of the letters in the "CORREOS MEXICO" watermark first used on the Independence-issue stamps of 1910.

The Centennial of Independence stamp issue of 1910 (Scott 294-309) was printed on paper with a new watermark reading "CORREOS MEXICANOS" (type 156). This watermark also was impressed diagonally in echelon.

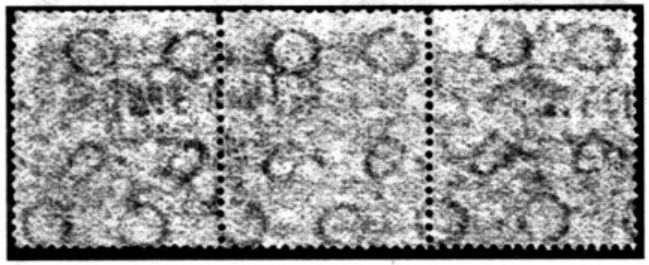

Figure 1. Long watermark on strip of three Mexican stamps from Bradbury Wilkinson Coat of Arms issue of 1899.

Figure 2 shows the arrangement of the letters in that watermark.

Papers with the two aforementioned watermark patterns were used extensively for postage stamps during the first three and a half decades of the 20th century, although provisional issues during the Mexican civil wars of 1910-20 generally appeared on unwatermarked paper.

No rare watermark varieties are known on the early 20th-century watermarked issues. Some of the most interesting Mexican 20th-century watermark varieties, however, have roots in the 1930s.

The general government printing office was responsible for not only postage stamps but also revenue stamps and forms. Ideally, it would use distinctive papers for each of these categories.

The papers with watermark types 155 and 156 and, much later, types 279, 300 and 350, were designated to be for postage stamps. Those with watermark types 248, 260 and 272 were supposed to be reserved for revenue stamps and paper.

There were several occasions when revenue stamp paper was inadvertently used to print postage stamps.

The reasons for this are not clear, but they could involve accidental use, temporary shortages or untimely paper deliveries. The occurrences of this were during the Depression years and World War II. Paper was a critical wartime material and sometimes was in short supply.

Rare 20th-century Mexican stamps, watermark varieties

Scott No.	Year printed	Scott wmk. type	Denomination, design description	Catalog value unused	Catalog value used
727A	1936	248	10c brown-lake Cuauhtemoc statue	$2,500	$ 650
733B	1937	260	5c olive-brown Tower of Los Remedios	1,250	200
735A	1937	260	2c scarlet Salta de Aqua	—	4,000
735B	1937	260	10c brown-lake, Cuauhtemoc statue	—	—
736	1937	260	10c claret Cuauhtemoc statue (rouletted)	3,000	140
C76A	1936	260	20c lake Eagle Man airmail	4,500	60
C76B	1936	260	20c scarlet Madero airmail	—	12,500

Figure 3. Mexican stamps of the 20th-century printed on the wrong watermarked paper.

One of the most celebrated paper misuses involves a 2-centavo stamp from the 1923 definitive issue (Scott design A79). The stamp shows the public fountain of El Salto de Aqua.

This inexpensive, much-used denomination had been printed several time since its introduction on unwatermarked paper, Scott 634.

Later printings were on watermarked paper (type 156) and had various perforations.

In 1953, noted Mexican specialist John Havemeyer received a 2c stamp for examination, one that the owner could not find in the then-current catalogs. It had the wrong watermark, Scott type 260, reading "SECRETARIA DE HACIENDA" between lines.

The submitter had a second stamp like it that Havemeyer bought for his own collection, while he searched for more examples of the error.

He eventually arranged to examine a huge stock of 2c stamps (estimated at 4,000) with a Mexican dealer. In the stock he found nine more.

Furthermore, Havemeyer was successful in getting the Scott catalog to list the variety as 735A.

The table in Figure 3 lists details for this and other rare stamps of that era that were issued on the so-called wrong paper, including their Scott catalog values.

For most of the stamps in this table, considerable time elapsed before they were found and properly identified.

By then, it was too late to search for them in post office stocks. It took almost 20 years for the 2c El Salto de Aqua stamp to be identified.

In a number of other instances, the watermark makes a big difference in the rarity and value of a stamp.

The 10-peso stamp of the 1934 Pro-Universidad issue (706) exists on unwatermarked paper.

One sheet of this stamp on unwatermarked paper was printed, and an unwatermarked stamp has a catalog value of $3,250.

The 15c greenish-blue Independence Monument stamp of 1934 (design A113) was printed again in 1946 on revenue-watermarked paper (type 272).

Several months went by before collectors and dealers took note of this anomaly. A few unused examples were found, but most of the stamps had been used and discarded.

Scott assigns No. 795A to this variety, and it catalogs $250 mint, never-hinged and $60 used.

A similar thing happened to the 50c airmail stamp of the 1950 issue. At the time, this stamp paid the airmail rate within Mexico, to the United States and to the Caribbean islands.

Being a high-usage denom-

ination, the stamp was printed numerous times to meet demand.

In 1953, a new watermarked paper was introduced (type 300). While most of the airmail values were printed on this paper with the watermark oriented horizontally, only a limited number of sheets of the 50c value were printed and sent out.

Collectors and dealers alike thought that because this stamp paid a common rate, it would be readily available for a long time. No one laid aside any substantial quantity for stock.

The government printers moved this value to a different press, however, where the paper was fed with the watermark running vertically. Another scarce variety was born. Scott lists it as C212, and it has a catalog value of $250 mint, never-hinged and $150 used.

These instances demonstrate how a watermark, which is almost a latent characteristic of a postage stamp, can make a big difference in its scarcity and value.

Many of the stamps cited in this and the previous column were not discovered until long after they came into existence. They came to light as the result of the careful and perhaps tedious examination of hundreds of stamps.

It is not too likely, but it is still possible to find rare stamps similar to those described in these columns. Not too long ago while browsing through a box of cheap covers, I found a cover bearing a 15c Independence Monument stamp on revenue-watermarked paper (795A).

When I first saw it, I could not be certain that it was the scarce variety. I had to buy the cover, take it home and lift the stamp to be sure. The result was thrilling.

Good luck in your search. If you ever find one of these rarities drop me a note in care of Linn's Stamp News, Box 29, Sidney, OH 45365, and let me share in your elation. ■

Eppens designed Agriculture Conference set

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Mexico hosted the second Interamerican Conference on Agriculture in Mexico City in 1942. In honor of that event, six postage stamps (three surface mail and three airmail) were issued (Scott 777-79 and C126-28).

The folder shown in Figure 1 contains the six stamps.

Such folders are known in the stamp hobby as presentation booklets.

During the 1930s and 1940s when Mexico was trying to promote its image as a stable and progressive country, the postal authorities would sometimes order a special issue of stamps to mark a noteworthy international meeting being held in Mexico. They would then prepare folders containing the stamps as souvenirs for the attending delegates.

Figure 1. The cover of the presentation booklet for Mexico's 1942 Interamerican Conference on Agriculture in Mexico City stamps.

Many of these folders eventually found their way into the philatelic market.

Figure 2 shows the three surface-mail stamps in the 1942 set, and Figure 3 depicts the airmail stamps.

The originality and clever symbolism of designs of the stamps fascinate me. I consider them to be true gems of graphic artistry.

They are the creations of one of Mexico's preeminent and respected artists, Francisco Eppens Helguera.

Eppens worked as a designer for the Secretaria of the Hacienda in the government printing plant, and he is credited with dozens of stamp designs during the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s.

These stamps are jumbo size, measuring 37.5 millimeters by 37.5mm. They are printed on watermarked paper reading "CORREOS MEXICO," Scott type 156, and are perforated gauge 12 by 13.

The stamps were printed by lithography in six vivid and appealing colors, with each stamp featuring a different design. Similar jumbo stamps of that era were often patterned around a single design, with only the colors and denominations varying.

Figure 2. The three surface-mail stamps in Mexico's 1942 Interamerican Conference on Agriculture set. Francisco Eppens created the symbolic designs for these commemoratives.

The 2-centavo surface mail stamp depicts a reclining Mother Earth clutching a sheaf of wheat in her left hand and a tractor in her right hand. Her hair flows into furrows as if awaiting the peasant sowers.

The theme is carried further in the 5c stamps picturing a female figure casting seeds into furrows flowing from her lower garments.

A head of a wheat plant appears below her left knee. This design is reminiscent of the French Sower stamps of 1903-38.

The 10c stamp shows hands emanating from the two American continents and carrying forward a flaming torch.

These iconographic renderings are typical of Eppens' style, a style evident in the diverse themes of other stamp designs he created.

The three airmail stamps represent a departure from abstract symbolism and depict three agricultural products important to the Mexican economy.

The 20c denomination depicts two hands holding an ear

Figure 3. The three airmail stamps in Mexico's 1942 Interamerican Conference on Agriculture set. The designs feature three agricultural products: corn, coffee and bananas.

of corn, or maize, Mexico's most important food staple.

The 40c stamp shows a hand picking coffee beans. It is the only stamp of the three that identifies the product in the design.

The 1-peso high value pictures a farm worker wrestling a full stem of bananas against a backdrop of banana plant fronds.

Coffee and bananas were two important Mexican export products of that era.

Printing totals for the airmail stamps were 1 million for the 20c, 150,000 for the 40c and 100,000 for the 1p.

I could not find numbers for the surface-mail stamps, but it was customary to print 3 million, 2 million and 10 million, respectively of the 2c, 5c and 10c denominations of that period.

Used stamps from this set are plentiful, but I have had little luck finding covers franked with them. A complete unused set catalogs about $13.

Eppens was a renowned graphic designer, muralist, painter and sculptor. He was born in San Louis Potosi, Mexico, in 1913.

He trained at the Mexican School of Painting and at age 22 joined the art staff at the government printing office.

He is credited with designs of 150 postage and revenue stamps and more than 250 original sketches.

Most of his work, at least with stamp designs, bears his signature, a neat cursive usually found along the bottom edge of the design panel. But his style is so recognizable that it becomes easy to identify his creations.

Check your Scott stamp catalog for stamps issued between 1938 and 1960, and you will see what I mean.

Eppens' designs include the Planning and Housing issue (740-45, C85-90), the Helmsman stamps (764-66, C114-16), the Literacy issue (806-11, C153-57) and the United Nations issue (813-18, C158-62).

He also designed the 50c Bas-relief (C193) and 1p Dance of the Half Moon (C195) airmail stamps of the Architecture and Monuments series of 1950.

In the Mexico column in *Linn's* issue of Jan. 30, 1995, I went into more detail on Eppens' contributions to Mexican stamp design.

On the Internet, you also can find more about the broad scope of his artistry.

He was truly one of the most talented artists of that era and did much to make Mexican stamps of the period attractive to collectors.

Not until Rafael Davidson came to the forefront with his designs for the Exporta series have Mexican stamp designs enjoyed such worldwide acclaim.

As I suggested in the aforementioned 1995 column, a collection or an exhibit built around the stamp designs created by Eppens would, in my view, be a worthy project for some ambitious collector. ■

Women patriots of the revolution, revisited

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Josefa Ortiz de Dominguez and Leona Vicario appear on the first two stamps in Mexico's 100th Independence Anniversary issue of 1910.

A few years after I began writing this column for *Linn's* in 1983, I wrote an article about these two women patriots of the Mexican War of Independence of 1810 (*Linn's*, Feb. 10, 1986). Their story bears retelling because they reappeared on more recent stamps of Mexico.

The 1-centavo stamp of the 1910 issue depicts a profile portrait of Dominguez, and the 2c stamp pictures Vicario in a similar pose (Scott 310-11). The stamps are shown in Figures 1 and 2.

Both women played crucial roles in the domestic uprising that eventually led to the overthrow of 300 years of rule by the Spanish crown.

Ortiz was the wife of Miguel Dominguez, who was the corregidor (mayor) of the city of Queretaro. Both she and her husband were strong supporters of the cause for independence, even though Dominguez relied on the crown for his power and livelihood.

And in those days, Queretaro was a stronghold of sympathizers for the independence movement.

In the months before the declaration of independence (known as the "grito") by the Rev. Miguel Hidalgo, the Dominguezes, capitalizing on their official connections, provided useful information to the insurgents concerning the activities of the royalist garrison at Queretaro.

Figure 1. A 1910 Mexico stamp honors Josefa Ortiz de Dominguez, who spied for the insurgents during the 1810 War of Independence.

Figure 2. Dona Leona Vicario, shown on this 1910 Mexico stamp, used her considerable wealth to aid the insurgency 100 years earlier.

After the Sept. 16, 1810, independence declaration, the Dominguezes were arrested on suspicion, correctly as it turned out, of complicity with the insurgents. When sufficient evidence could not be found by the royalist agents, they were set free.

Josefa was rearrested in 1813 and was detained under house arrest in several convents, as was the custom for upper-class women. Eventually, near the end of the independence struggle, her husband secured her freedom, and they were able to enjoy life under local Mexican rule.

A statue of Josefa, usually referred to as "La Corregidorra," since she, too, served as mayor of Queretaro, stands in one of the plazas of that city.

This statue is depicted on the 20c value of the Monuments and Public Structures issue of 1923 (640), shown in Figure 3.

Vicario was the daughter of a wealthy Spanish couple from Mexico City and early on became a champion of the cause for Mexican independence.

Her parents died when she was young, leaving her a considerable fortune. She fell in love with another independence sympathizer, Quintana Roo, a young lawyer who worked in partnership with Vicario's guardian, who himself was a staunch royalist.

When Roo's request for her hand was refused, he left Mexico City and joined the insurgents at Queretaro. He and Vicario continued to correspond with each other, and she began diverting some of her wealth to support the independence movement.

Unfortunately, this diversion was discovered when royalist agents intercepted her letters. She was arrested and detained in the convent of Belen College.

Freed in a daring rescue operation by three insurgents, she rejoined and married Roo in Queretaro and became directly involved in the movement.

This action caused her to be declared a traitor by the royalists who confiscated all her remaining assets, forcing her to suffer the same hardships as her compatriots.

When the movement reached its successful conclusion, she was compensated with a hacienda in the state of Hidalgo and with 80,000 pesos in repayment of her seized properties.

Her husband, Quintana Roo, was forever memorialized when his name was given to the easternmost state of the republic, an area bordered by Yucatan, Campeche and the Caribbean Sea.

Figure 3. This 1923 Mexican stamp shows a monument to Josefa Ortiz de Dominguez, mayor of Queretaro.

By a decree dated Nov. 5, 1827, the village of Saltillo officially changed its name to Leona Vicario.

For about three years between 1835 and 1838, a rectangular boxed handstamp inscribed with the name "LEONA VICARIO" and a date was used to mark letters emanating from that city. All recorded examples are struck in red.

It is unusual that these two remarkable women would be memorialized on stamps so early in what has always been a male-dominated society. They have been pictured on additional stamps as well.

In 1979, Dominguez was commemorated on an 80c multicolor stamp (1182) marking the 150th anniversary of her death. In my view, it is a rather unflattering rendition.

Figure 4. Leona Vicario, heroine of the War of Independence is remembered on this 1985, stamp marking the 175th anniversary of the war.

In 1985, on the 175th anniversary of the War of Independence, Vicario was one of five patriots selected for remembrance of that struggle. The 36-peso stamp (1401) is pictured in Figure 4.

Vicario was honored again as a heroine of the independence movement on a 450p stamp (1610) in 1989, during a period of severe inflation.

The poses for the 1910 stamps and the modern stamps appear to use the same early portraits for reference. Dominguez faces right on the in 1910 and 1979 issues. Vicario faces left on the 1910 and 1989 issues but was flipped for the 1985 stamp. ■

Several stamps honor Mexico's 1968 Games

From Aug. 13 to Aug. 29, athletes from all over the world will convene in Athens, Greece, for the 28th Olympiad of the modern era. It doesn't seem possible that it has been nearly 40 years since the Summer Games were hosted by Mexico, in 1968.

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

I was living in Mexico at the time on what would turn out to be a five-year foreign assignment with my employer.

This assignment spanned the years 1964-69, during which elaborate preparations were being made prior to the actual competitions scheduled for Oct. 12-27, 1968.

As a stamp collector, I was amazed at the number of stamps the Mexican postal officials authorized to promote and commemorate the Games.

If my count is correct, Scott lists 56 Mexican stamp items directly associated with the 1968 Summer Olympics. This includes 21 surface-mail stamps, 19 airmail stamps and 16 souvenir sheets.

Figure 1. Mexico issued this and four other stamps in 1965 to promote the Summer Olympics of 1968.

Figure 2. Diego Rivera designed this Mexican stamp for the 1968 Summer Games.

Such philatelic attention for one national event was unprecedented. But Mexico was determined to put the best face on an undertaking many thought to be impossible, if not wasteful of national resources.

The first stamps issued to promote the Games appeared in December 1965, almost three years before the Games were to take place. Five stamps comprise the set, two for regular mail and three for airmail (Scott 965-66, C309-11).

The designs depict clay figures from prehispanic times in poses thought to be of ancient athletic events. Figure 1 shows the 40-centavo surface-mail stamp, printed in a large format. The subject appears to hold a bat as if to strike a ball.

The set also includes two souvenir sheets issued without gum (C310a-11a).

Ten months later, a second set of promotional stamps was issued (974-75, C318-20). Famous Mexican artist Diego Rivera created the designs for these stamps, showing outline figures of athletes competing in various events. Figure 2 depicts the 20c stamp picturing runners and a jumper.

Curiously, the 2.25-peso airmail stamp shows men playing the American form of football, which was not an Olympic event.

Again, two souvenir sheets were issued (975a, C320a).

A year later, in October 1967, a third set of stamps came out (981-85, C328-31). Vance Wyman's designs for these stamps depict the individual competitive Olympic sports.

Figure 3 pictures the 20c Canoeing stamp. This stamp, like the others in the set, shows silhouette figures in action against a colored background. The designs are repeated from side to side, with parts of the images straddling the stamps' perforations.

Figure 3. Silhouette figures canoeing are pictured on this 20-centavo stamp also bearing the logo of the Mexico 1968 Summer Games.

These stamps also prominently display the official Mexican logo "MEXICO 68" at the top of the designs.

The set includes five stamps and two souvenir sheets for the surface-mail issues and four stamps and two souvenir sheets for the airmail ones (981-85, C328-31).

These stamps appeared to be popular with the general public. Whether this had influence on future issues I do not know, but five months later, in March 1968, 10 more stamps in the same format, six regular and four airmail stamps, were issued (990-95, C335-38).

Figure 4. Logos for various sports are shown on this airmail stamp issued Oct. 12, 1968, the opening day of the Summer Games in Mexico.

Once again, souvenir sheets containing the issued stamps were made available, two for the regular stamps and two for the airmails.

Although Olympics mania reached a fever pitch during the summer of 1968, this second issue was not as evident on my office mail as the first stamps of this design.

Finally, on the day the Olympic Games opened, Oct. 12, 1968, a new and different style of stamps commemorating the Summer Games came out. These stamps, in both large and small formats, show some of the various venues used for the Games, Olympic symbolism and logos for the various sporting events (996-1001, C340-44).

Figure 4 shows the 5p airmail stamp featuring logos, and Figure 5 depicts one of the souvenir sheets.

The sheet sold for 5p more than the 15p face value of the stamps it contained.

Figure 5. This Mexican 1968 Summer Games souvenir sheet sold for 5 pesos more than the 15p face value of the stamps.

Although the stamps in the souvenir sheets lacked perforations and the early sheets were without gum, the stamps were still valid for postage.

I think that a specialized stamp collection or an exhibit of the 1968 Mexican Summer Olympics would be a fun project to undertake.

I even began to acquire some of the many, many stamps other countries issued in honor of the Mexican Games. Shortly after the Games ended, however, I found out that I would be returning to the United States

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the following year and had other obligations to fill my spare time.

Virtually all of the Mexican stamps were issued in denominations to meet specific postal rates in effect at the time. For example, cards and letters mailed domestically called for the 20c and 40c stamps. Airmail letters to the United States needed 80c, and airmail to Europe 2p, I believe.

To find commercial or private envelopes using all of the various values available would be a real challenge.

Mexico also had a number of machines that applied Olympic slogan cancels. These would add spice to any showing. Some of these continued to be used long after the Games ended.

I would be happy to hear from anyone who has tackled the Mexico Summer Olympics as a collecting specialty. Write to me, Dale Pulver, in care of Linn's Editor, Box 29, Sidney, OH 45365. There is certainly ample material for a most interesting display. ■

Mexican perfins flourished at turn of the century

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Perfins are stamps that have been perforated with initials, monograms or logos. Business, government and commercial establishments used this practice to discourage unauthorized use of stamps from the office inventories.

The word perfin is an abbreviation of "perforated initials."

An old friend who collected perfins avidly referred to them as "holey" stamps and often bargained with dealers claiming that such stamps were damaged and should be sold for a discount from stamps without holes.

Stamps with perfins exist from many countries, including Mexico.

They have captured the attention of some serious collectors and occasionally have been the subject of published studies.

Most of the Mexican perfins I have in my collection date from the early years of the 20th century. Usage appears to have peaked during the so-called Coat of Arms issues of 1899 and 1903 and the Centennial of Independence issue of 1910.

Perforated initials were produced by punching into stamps an array of small holes in the shape of the desired letter or symbol. These holes are about ½ millimeter in diameter.

It is not known for sure who sold the perforating devices used in Mexico, but a United States firm, B.F. Cumming of Chicago, and its successor, the American Perforating Co., aggressively marketed perforators during the time in question. English, German and French firms also were active in the field.

Cummings touted the ability of its machines to accommodate single stamps or complete rows of stamps in stacks up to several sheets.

Figure 1 shows three typical perfin stamps with a pattern of initials punched into them.

Sometimes the name of the user is fairly obvious. On the stamp on the left, "DUN" stands for R.G. Dun & Co., a credit reporter in Mexico City.

The other two perfins shown in Figure 1 are from well-known businesses of that era: Mosler Safe Co. and Roberto Boker & Co. (a hardware dealer).

Figure 1. These typical perfin stamps of Mexico include patterns of punched initials. The stamps were for, left to right, R.G. Dun & Co., Mosler Safe Co. and Roberto Boker & Co.

In examples when the user is less well known, the task of identification is more difficult.

The best way to identify the perfin user is to find a cover with a company corner card (return address) bearing one of the perfins in question.

Over the years, members of the Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International have collaborated in identifying most of the Mexican perfins that have come to light.

After I wrote about perfins in a 1986 *Linn's* article (May 12, page 37), there was a resurgence of interest in the subject, and many of the un-

known perfins I presented in that article were quickly identified.

A good summary article was published in the July 1987 issue of MEPSI's journal *Mexicana*. In that article, more than 20 perfins are listed, and most are identified.

If you cannot gain access to this article through the American Philatelic Society library or other sources, send an addressed, stamped No. 10 envelope, to me, Dale Pulver, in care of Linn's Editor, Box 29, Sidney, OH 45365, and I will send you a photocopy of the article's table listing the commercial perfins in the study.

Up to now I have discussed perfins assigned to business firms. Figure 2 shows two stamps with perforations of a single character.

The 50-centavo stamp in the Coat of Arms issue shows a perfin in the shape of a horseshoe, or as it was later called, the "Omega" perfin.

Figure 2. The 50-centavo Mexican Coat of Arms stamp on the left has a perfin shaped like a horseshoe, and the 1-peso stamp on the right has the number "5" punched into it.

This perfin invariably is found on stamps with a high face value. The reason for its use remained somewhat of a mystery until a MEPSI member called attention to a footnote in the German-language Michel catalog that said the perfin was used for administrative purposes.

By whom? The post office? I am not certain, but wrappers from the Bank of London in Mexico bear stamps with this perfin.

The perfin often was punched twice on the large-format stamps, and a few instances of triple punching are known.

Another mystery was the perfin "5," as punched into the 1-peso stamp shown on the right in Figure 2.

Based on empirical evidence, it is concluded that this perfin was used by the post office to designate stamps to be used on second-class mail. This was reported in a short article in *Mexicana*, and when I re-examined my stamp, the one shown in Figure 2, I found that it bears a cancel used only on second-class mail.

Figure 3. This Mexican customs-duty revenue stamp has the name of the city of "Laredo" punched into it.

Complete words were occasionally punched into stamps, although the punch pattern was often too large to fit on a single stamp.

The word "PAGADO" (paid) is recorded punched on postage stamps, as is the word "ANULADO" (annulled).

Perfins of entire words also are found on revenue stamps used to confirm payment of customs duties.

Between 1885 and 1895, 11 series of customs-duty revenue stamps (aduanas) were issued.

The full name of the transfer city was punched after the stamp was affixed to the bill of lading or other transfer document. In effect, the punched name tied the stamp to the document.

Most customs stamps were of ample size to accommodate the full name of the various towns and cities designated as import or export points.

Figure 3 shows a 5p customs stamp of the 1887 series used at the office of Laredo.

The larger office names are not hard to come by. The challenge arises with the smaller, less-busy transfer points, such as Isla del Carmen (Yucatan) and Sta Rosalia (Baja California).

These "holey" stamps do not appeal to everyone, but it's another small niche in Mexican philately where you can have a lot of fun chasing stamps and not spend a lot of money.

And I have found that most sellers do not ask for premium pricing, even though the perfins are much less common than the nonperfinned varieties.

Look for them on the turn-of-the-20th century issues. For whatever reason, the practice of using perfins seems to have disappeared during 1910-20, the years of Mexico's civil wars. ■

Stamps show tourist sites of Mexico City

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

The season is approaching when many northerners contemplate escape from the snow and cold to warmer climates. Perhaps, you are planning a winter vacation to Mexico, the land of sunshine and hospitality, as one of the slogan cancels in my collection advertises.

While the beaches and coastal towns are powerful magnets, cities in the interior can be interesting too.

If you are planning a stop in Mexico City, your stamp collection can alert you to some of the attractive tourist sights of that city. Also, if you are not actually going to Mexico, looking at the stamps can help you imagine what it is like to be there.

Figure 1. This stamp shows the Monument to Independence in Mexico City.

Let's say you book a hotel on the Paseo de la Reforma, the boulevard connecting the center of town to the upscale residential section of Lomas de Chapultepec. If you have a front room at the Maria Isabel Sheraton, you will look out upon the traffic circle containing the Monument to the Independence.

Figure 2. These stamps depict the Fountain of Diana, the statue of Aztec emperor Cuautemoc and the Arch of the Revolution. All three monuments are located in Mexico City.

This monument is pictured on several Mexican stamps, including the 15-centavo value of the 1934-40 issue, Scott 713; the two 1938 20c 16th International Congress of Planning and Housing stamps, Scott 744-45; and the 1960 1-peso 150th Anniversary of Mexican Independence commemorative, Scott 911.

This tall shaft surmounted with a gold covered, seminude female human figure with wings is affectionately referred to locally as "the angel."

Figure 1 shows the 1938 20c brown-lake stamp.

A short distance away at another somewhat smaller traffic circle stands another monument, the Fountain of Diana, the huntress. This is depicted on a 1945 3c violet-blue stamp, Scott 805, shown on the left in Figure 2.

At the intersection of Reforma and Insurgentes stands the statue of Cuautemoc, the last of the Aztec emperors, who was murdered by the Spaniards in 1525.

He was first commemorated on the 5c stamp of the 1895 Transportation series, Scott 247, pictured in the center in Figure 2.

If you were to walk several blocks west from your hotel, you would encounter Chapultepec Park, a favorite gathering spot on Sunday afternoons for the Mexican residents of the city.

At the crest of a steep hill overlooking the park is Chapultepec Castle, another favorite spot for tourists. It appears on several stamps, including the 1923 4c green shown in Figure 3, Scott 636, and on the 1947 1p airmail, C183.

In the early 1800s, this castle served as a Mexican military academy. When it was besieged by the invading United States forces in 1847, the castle was one of the last bastions used in defense of the city.

Six young Mexican cadets leaped to their deaths from this fortress rather than be captured by the Americans.

The cadets and the battles fought during the invasion are commemorated on a set of stamps issued in 1947, Scott 830-34 and C180-84.

Monuments in the park remember the young cadets as Los Ninos Heroes (the boy heroes).

Archduke Maximilian and Carlota converted the castle to a palatial residence during their short tenure in Mexico.

Figure 3. Chapultepec Castle is pictured on this 4-centavo stamp issued in 1923.

It subsequently housed the Mexican presidents up to 1940.

Stamp collectors should certainly visit the main post office, an ornate building in the renaissance revival style. It was erected during the regime of Porfirio Diaz to celebrate the centennial of independence in 1910.

The post office is pictured on several stamps, including the 1916 5p, Scott 514, depicted in Figure 4 and a 1982 4p, Scott 1266.

Make sure to visit the postal museum on the second floor of this building.

Another relic of the independence celebration is the Arch of the Revolution, featured on the 1934-40 4c carmine, Scott 709, shown on the right in Figure 2, and the redrawn version of 1937, Scott 731. This 4c stamp saw extensive use on domestic mail and postcards during the 1940s and 1950s.

The arch, ordered by Diaz as the initial step toward new parliament buildings, was all that was ever built for the project.

Among other landmarks worthy of attention is the Salto de Agua Fountain.

This remarkable example of Spanish colonial stone work is shown on 1923 2c stamp, Scott 834.

In 1985, the Mexican post office issued a set of stamps calling attention to other landmarks of Mexico City, again, prime examples of Spanish Colonial era architecture,

Figure 4. A 1916 5-peso stamp features the main post office in Mexico City.

Scott 1427-30.

You would probably need a resourceful cab driver and a good map to find these sites: the College of the Vizcainas, the Palace of the Courts of Heras and Soto, the Palace of the Courts of Calimaya, and the San Carlos Academy. And I do not know if these buildings are open to tourists.

With its Tiffany glass curtain, the Palacio de Bellas Artes (Palace of Fine Arts), found on the 1923 1p stamp, Scott 649, and other, newer issues, is certainly worth visiting.

And you would be well rewarded to attend a performance of the Ballet Folklorico there.

Many tourists take the short trip out of the city to visit the pyramids at Teotihuacan, monuments to a lost civilization.

These enormous structures were first pictured on a 3c stamp issued in 1923, Scott 635 and 651. They are pictured again on the 30c airmail stamp of the 1934 University

Figure 5. This 1934 airmail stamp depicts the pyramids at Teotihuacan, a short distance from Mexico City.

set, Scott C55, depicted in Figure 5. Much archaeological restoration work has been done at the site over the intervening years.

On the way to or from the pyramids, you could make a short stop at San Augustin Acolman.

This 16th-century church and former convent in the plataresque style is featured on a colorful set of airmail stamps issued in 1980, Scott C627-31, depicting architectural jewels of that era.

Many other attractive buildings and monuments in Mexico City are featured on stamps. A sampling of modern Mexican architecture is pictured on the definitive series of 1950, Scott 856-67 and C186-98.

These stamps are not fully identified in the Scott *Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue*, and the sites present a challenge to those who would seek them out.

A trip to your local library to consult books on modern Mexican architecture and detailed travel guides will be helpful.

Tourism is important to Mexico's economy, and recent series of stamps continue to promote the industry.

In a future Mexico column, I plan to continue the stamps and tourism theme beyond the borders of Mexico City. ■

Auction confirms strength of Mexican market

Mexico
By Dale Pulver

Nicholas Follansbee, an Oregon stamp dealer, conducted his 16th Mexico auction Oct. 23 in Reno, Nev. His catalog arrived a bit late at my address, so I didn't have a chance to write about it an earlier column in *Linn's*.

Follansbee has a loyal following, and I'm sure most Mexican specialists were aware of the event.

I look forward to Follansbee's infrequent sales because they serve as a good barometer of the market for Mexican stamps and postal history.

He deals exclusively in Mexico, and the material he offers usually runs the gamut from old to modern. He knows the material, and his catalogs are well crafted, with complete and accurate descriptions of the items offered. They become useful reference sources.

I did not attend this sale but sent a handful of bids by way of an agent.

In a brief phone interview with Follansbee after the sale, he gave me some interesting insights. First, this was his biggest sale ever, topping his last sale, held in September 2003, by almost 10 percent.

Gross realization, not including buyers' fees, was just more than $300,000. That is an impressive number considering there were only 1,100 lots.

About 120 people competed in the sale, most through the mail. About 25 to 30 people attended the auction, many carrying bids for others who could not or chose not to attend.

The auction material spanned a range of interests but was strongest in the classic and other 19th century.

The sale contained 121 lots of stampless covers, including 30 from the Spanish colonial period and a rare, specialized holding of covers from the Mexican state of Sonora.

Mexico's 1856 issue, my specialty, was represented by 56 lots, including some exceptionally rare items.

The 1861 issue filled 142 lots, one of the best and largest offerings to be seen in recent years.

The Imperial Eagles of 1864-66 comprised 57 lots and, like the 1856 issue, contained some outstanding pieces.

An unusually large group of 164 lots of Maximilian Heads of 1866-67 featured a used 7-centavo engraved stamp, one of six known of this rarity to be in private hands.

The rest of the 19th-century issues were well represented, especially the foreign mail issue of 1879-83, with 75 lots.

With only one or two exceptions, all of the prestamp material and classic issues brought good, solid prices, with many of the rarest items breaking previous records.

A cover from Zacatecas,

Figure 1. The stagecoach cancel is found on 1856 stamps from Toluca, Mexico.

Mexico, to France bearing two 1856 2-real stamps and a 4r with the district name in manuscript, brought $7,500, the most paid for any item in this group. The presale estimate was $5,000 to $7,000. This choice piece would be a highlight of any specialized showing of the first design.

A second blockbuster item was an nonoverprinted 1856 1r stamp used in Zitacuaro, a small town that received a shipment of 1r stamps from the main post office in 1859. The location of use has to be determined by the cancellation.

This stamp (Scott 2c), which has a catalog value of a few dollars in the Scott *Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue*, was originally part of a horizontal pair that was canceled "FRANCO EN ZITACUARO." Sadly, the pair, believed to be a unique survivor of that office, was divided many years ago.

The stamp fetched $5,500, more than twice the valuation assigned to it in the Follansbee catalog.

Through an agent, I had bid on several lots in the auction. Even though I had given him some flexibility to increase my limits if the floor (people attending the auction) began to bid strongly, I was surprised to learn that none of my bids was successful, and on only two lots was I the underbidder.

I was particularly interested in two stamps with fancy cancellations. The first was an 1856 1r stamp (Scott 2) used at Toluca with a well-centered strike of the famous Toluca stagecoach cancel. The cancel is shown in Figure 1.

The basic stamp has a Scott standard catalog value of $3.50 ($5 in Follansbee's *Catalogue of the Stamps of Mexico, 1856-1910*), although the cancel makes the stamp more valuable.

I felt safe in bidding 60 percent more than the auctioneer's estimate of $100, but it wasn't nearly enough. The stamp sold for 210 percent of estimate, not including buyer's premium. That's 60 times greater than the Scott valuation.

The second stamp was a similar item from the 1861 issue. This 2r stamp (Scott 8) valued at $3.25, was on a small piece with a complete strike of the fancy Liberty-cap-in-wreath cancel used at Irapuato in the district of Guanajuato. Figure 2 shows the cancel.

The cap of Liberty surrounded by rays was a symbol of the independence movement of the early 1800s.

Figure 2. This Mexican fancy cancel shows a cap of Liberty surrounded by rays.

Only a handful of complete strikes of this cancel are known, and the auctioneer correctly placed a high estimate of $500 to $600 on the item. The lot drew fierce bidding and was finally hammered down at $725, far, far beyond my bid limit.

These two examples demonstrate the strength of today's market for fine material and why Scott catalog valuations for used stamps apply only to the basic cancels.

Follansbee told me that the bidding was exceptionally strong for classic material, with a few exceptions. The Eagles are especially hot in today's market. Large lots with multiple stamps or covers did well too. Dealers and beginning specialists eagerly seek out these large lots because they provide material to break down and sell, to trade or to build collections around.

The literature section contained one big surprise. A copy of Leo Corbett's *The Imperial Eagles of Maximilian's Mexico* sold for $600.

This 413-page book, first published in 1993, is an encyclopedic treatment of the two stamp issues of the monarchy. It is a must-have for the collectors of those issues. It was published in an edition of 200 and has long been out of print.

The book has traded in recent years for about $300, but no one expected it would go double that so soon.

Follansbee was pleased with the results, even though some lots of the modern era did not sell. Buyers seemed reasonably pleased with their acquisitions, particularly the classics collectors who have too few buying opportunities.

If you are interested in the classic stamps of Mexico and not already on Follansbee's mailing list, you should sign up for his auctions (Nicholas Follansbee, Box 3210, Ashland, OR 97520-0307), and you should obtain a copy of his *Catalogue of the Stamps of Mexico, 1856-1910*. It is a gold mine of information and an excellent aid (most of the time) for bidding. ■

Champion of champions; Olympics; perfins

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

As has been my custom from time to time in the past, I am devoting the last column of the year to events and feedback I have received during the past 12 months. It gives me the opportunity to recognize some of my loyal readers and to comment on happenings that, in themselves, are insufficient for a full column.

Mexican philately got another shot in the arm when Omar Rodriguez' spectacular collection of the first issues of Mexico won the Champion of Champions award at the American Philatelic Society's Stampshow in Sacramento, Calif., in August.

This is the fourth time an exhibit of Mexico's classic stamps has captured this coveted philatelic honor. Previous winners competing with Mexican collections were Edward Dormer, Robert Paliafito and James Mazepa.

Mazepa's award came in 2000. Within a year his collection was on the auction block to be dispersed among other would-be champions, including Rodriguez.

My column in the July 26 *Linn's*, on the 1968 Olympics stamps issued by Mexico, drew a few responses from readers, but the most interesting came from Ray Soldan of Oklahoma City. Soldan, as a sports reporter for Oklahoma City's *Daily Oklahoman*, was sent to Mexico City in 1968 to cover side events having Oklahoma connections and feature items not reported by the major news services.

Figure 1. This 1968 10-peso Mexican stamps honors the arrival of the Olympic torch for the Summer Games.

As a result of this assignment, he became intensely interested in the broad support provided by Mexican postal authorities to the Games.

Mexico issued some 40 stamps and 16 souvenir sheets over a four-year span to publicize the event.

From material he received in a press kit and stamps he purchased, Soldan created an array of commemorative covers for his thematic collection dealing with the Olympics.

In 1999, he wrote two articles for the Sports Philatelists International's *Journal of Sports Philately* on what he euphemistically calls the "ole Olympics."

The first article dealt with the stamps, souvenir sheets and cancellations used during the lead-up to the Games. The second focused on the journey of the Olympic torch from Piraeus, Greece, to Athens, through Spain, across the Atlantic Ocean and the final trek from Veracruz to Mexico City.

Figure 1 shows the 1968 10-peso stamp issued for the Mexican leg of this long journey (Scott 1001). Because of its high value (approximately U.S. 80¢), it saw little use.

A flame also was flown to Acapulco where the yachting events were staged.

I highly recommend both of Soldan's articles, which are entertaining and instructional.

Soldan sent photocopies of some of his cachets and several of the whimsical postcards supplied to the press corps.

These cards, depicting a portly Mexican with an oversized Groucho Marx mustache and sometimes a huge charro sombrero, spoof various sporting and cultural events. The card shown in Figure 2 spoofs the pistol marksmanship event.

I had previously seen only one or two of these cards. Apparently a whole series with 20 or more cards was created.

Soldan's articles also alerted me to a machine cancellation with two nearly square killers used on the opening days of certain sporting events. Figure 3 shows one of these cancels, cropped from a cover I recently purchased at a local stamp bourse. This marking was prepared for the cycling competitions.

For the ambitious collector, there is plenty of material to create a comprehensive and interesting exhibit of the ole Olympics.

My Sept. 27 column on perfins also generated a fair amount of response. In the column, I offered photocopies of an earlier, more comprehensive summary of perfins from *Mexicana*, the journal of the Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International.

Figure 2. This spoof postcard was created for the Mexico City Olympics of 1968.

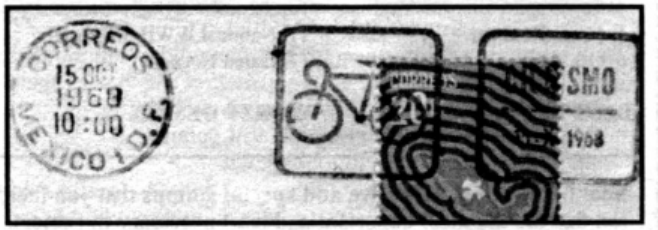

Figure 3. A postal marking prepared for a cycling competition at the 1968 Summer Olympic Games in Mexico City.

About a dozen readers took advantage of this offer, including one collector who said his local club was interested in delving into the subject further.

Joe Arce, a MEPSI member, wrote that he has discovered perfins that appear to have been used to invalidate sheets of Exporta stamps that went into the Mexican postal archives. He did not explain how he came by these two sheets, one a 700-peso Film stamp (Scott 1498) and the other a 1,600p Steel Tubing stamp (1595).

The sheets were punched repeatedly with the word "MUESTRA," meaning "sample" or "specimen."

Some had clean, complete perforations. Others had chad remaining in the holes. This suggests that several sheets were fed to the perforator at once and that the pins did not penetrate the entire stack.

Arce asked if other examples had shown up in specialists' hands. I was of no help, but perhaps if you have encountered such items, write to me, Dale Pulver, in care of Linn's Editor, Box 29, Sidney, OH 45365.

The big question is: are they real or bogus?

In the Mexico column in the Nov. 29 *Linn's*, I reviewed the Follansbee auction of Mexican stamps and postal history. This highlight event for Mexican specialists gave convincing evidence that the market for fine material remains strong.

I have since heard from other Mexican collectors who attended the auction that even the so-called middle-grade stamps showed surprising strength, another good sign.

Finally, I take this opportunity to extend to all best wishes for a peaceful and most joyous holiday season.

I appreciate the friendly and supportive feedback I receive from *Linn's* readers. ■

New resource for Mexico 1868 specialists

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Santa Claus came a few days early this past Christmas.

Just a week or so before the holiday, a package arrived in my mailbox that turned out to be one of the most interesting items I received.

The package contained a review copy of the just published *Mexico — The 1868 Issue, A Specialist Handbook.*

I knew this book was in the works. I just wasn't sure when it would appear. It joins a number of first-rate books on Mexican philately published in recent years.

I haven't read it word for word, but it is the sort of book you use as a reference, not as a entertaining read in front of an open fire on a cold night.

The book is a culmination of nine years work by two seasoned collectors: John Heath, a retired British diplomat, and Doug Stout, the owner of a California software company.

Figure 1. A new handbook was published in 2004 on Mexico's 1868 issue. The 25-centavo 1868 stamp is shown.

Both are long-time specialists of the Mexico 1868 issue, and they probably know as much about that complicated set of stamps as anyone living.

The 1868 issue features a full-face portrait of Miquel Hidalgo, the leader of the Mexican independence movement, and specialists refer to the stamps as the full-face Hidalgos. Figure 1 depicts the 25-centavo stamp.

The book comprises 262 pages broken down into 10 chapters and seven annexes.

While there is much original material, the authors have gathered together a broad array of disparate records not easily accessed by newcomers to the field.

The 63 pages in Chapter 1 are devoted to the shipments of stamps both to the main post office in Mexico City and from there to the various principal district post offices in the outlying population centers. The data was discovered in official government archives during the 1980s.

Figure 2. The dust jacket for *Mexico — The 1868 Issue, A Specialist Handbook* by John Heath and Doug Stout.

Also included in the listings are the suboffices that are known to have reported to, and received stamps from, the larger district offices.

Subsequent chapters deal with cancels and the "sello negros" (handstamps); the lithographic plates with their various settings; retouches and types; errors and varieties; proofs, essays and color trials; methods of stamp separation; and paper varieties and ink.

The middle section of the book includes a brief account of the great postal fraud, where employees of the post office contrived to secretly print stamps using the original plates.

The employees sold the stamps to volume users for their own personal gain. This problem also is dealt with at length in an annex.

Chapter 10 assigns estimated rarity values to stamps from the various districts. As expected, these rarity values are high for the small offices that received and sold few stamps, but they also reflect the authors' long experience in the acquisition of stamps for their own specialized collections.

The annexes include several useful accounts dealing with the 1868 stamps by other authors, including a translation from the French of the chapter on the 1868 issue from *Les Premieres Emissions du Mexique 1856-74.*

This book, published in 1935 and coauthored by Paul de Smeth and the Marquis de Fayolle, is quite scarce. It gives early specialists a first glimpse of how complex this stamp issue really is.

It is perhaps ironic that this chapter, until now available only in the French language, was largely based on the work of a British stamp dealer, L. M. Josling.

Other notable annexes include details of the fraudulently produced stamps known to specialists as the type of Mexico stamps, or tipos. These nonofficial printings, together with stamps recalled from other districts led, to the the "Anotado" (which means

noted or accounted four) overprints of 1872, a measure undertaken to revalidate postage stamps in inventory at the main post office.

"Anotado" overprints deliberately faked to deceive collectors also are discussed and illustrated.

Another annex contains translated post office regulations that were distributed in postal circulars, giving further insight to the difficulties faced by postal authorities at that time.

The final annex, a work still in progress, is a checklist of known uses of 1868 stamps by location and cancel.

This census of postal uses that have been found and identified, in the collections of various individuals, runs to some 22 pages.

Readers of the book are challenged to examine their holdings for new discoveries to add to these listings.

The book is hardbound, printed on good quality paper and profusely illustrated. Eight color plates show the major stamp varieties and several interesting usages on cover.

The dust jacket, shown in Figure 2, depicts a serape-clad horseman astride a pony at full gallop. I couldn't decide whether this represented a mounted mail carrier fleeing from highwaymen or one of the bandits that preyed on the mails during that era.

As the title states, this is truly a handbook for this complicated issue, and I recommend it without reservation. Everything you need to know about the 1868 stamps is there.

The book was published in an edition of 300 by James Bendon of Limassol, Cyprus, and is priced at $60, plus $4 for postage and handling. That's a bargain considering the information it contains.

Its availability here in the United States is unclear at this time because Bendon is transferring distribution rights.

Anyone seriously interested in procuring a copy can contact the U.S. author, Doug Stout at 2021 Sperry Ave., Suite 20, Ventura, CA 93003, e-mail doug@mepsi.org. He expects to have the situation clarified by the time this issue of *Linn's* is published. ■

Mexico society to meet at show in Cleveland

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Every few years I make a point of promoting the Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International, or MEPSI for short, a collectors' society whose members specialize in the stamps of Mexico.

The society logo is shown in Figure 1.

MEPSI has a long and rich history. It all began in 1935 in Elmhurst, Ill., when a group of collectors formed the Elmhurst Philatelic Society. They met in members' homes on a monthly basis.

After a few years, some members suggested their time together might be more interesting if, as a group, they would specialize in one country.

A committee was appointed to consider possibilities. The committee's first choice, the Dominican Republic, was rejected.

The second choice, Mexico, was accepted.

This choice was based on a review of Scott catalog listings for the following characteristics: a wide range and abundant varieties of classic-era stamps that were not overly expensive, many areas that offered opportunities and challenges for research, and a government stamp-issuing policy not predicated on gouging the collector but based on providing for legitimate postal needs.

As the Elmhurst group prospered and its focus became better known, it opened its membership to serious collectors of Mexico, wherever they lived.

Many of those early Elmhurst collectors are still remembered for their contributions to the field, including founding member Byron Stevens, shown in Figure 2, his son Richard Stevens, Otto Yag, Langdon Longwell and Duncan Ferguson.

Outside of Elmhurst there was John Bash, James Beal, Charles Brock, Abraham Odfjell and Franco Vanottti, to mention but a few of those early members.

Figure 1. Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International logo. Its members collect the stamps of Mexico.

In 1970, the society changed its name to the Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International to more accurately reflect the breadth of its membership.

The old guard had mostly retired. Many had moved to retirement colonies in warmer climates. Younger members became more active and took over the administration of society affairs.

The society's quarterly periodical *Mexicana*, founded in 1952, continues to publish informative articles on Mexican philately by members who are experts in their fields.

This journal provides a broad spectrum of useful information and keeps getting better every year.

The society also has an expert committee that examines and certifies rare and questionable items.

The expert committee can help collectors be sure that rare gems are the real thing. Fakes and forgeries have always cast a shadow over Mexican classics but should not with the help that is available through MEPSI.

At one time, MEPSI even operated a circuit book system where members could buy and sell duplicates. This is no longer active, but member auctions are conducted from time to time.

Figure 2. Byron Stevens, the founding member of the Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International.

The society also maintains an excellent library.

Each year, MEPSI members gather for an annual meeting. Because the current membership is heavily concentrated in the Southwest and the West Coast, the sites chosen for the meeting are usually the American Philatelic Society national-level shows in those areas.

Every five years or so, the meeting crosses the border into Mexico, in deference to a large number of members who reside there.

This year, the meeting will be held in conjunction with the Garfield-Perry Stamp Club's annual March Party, to take place March 11–13 at the Holiday Inn Lakeside, 1111 Lakeside at E. 12th Street, Cleveland, Ohio. This is the first time the group has come this far East.

While I didn't have anything to do with this decision, I am proud that my home stamp club is hosting this get-together.

The location ought to attract some of the many members that live in the Northeastern states and along the Atlantic seaboard.

In my role as the exhibits chairman for the March Party, I am happy to report that 35 percent of the exhibit space in the show will be filled with Mexican material.

The subject matter ranges from the early classics into the modern era, including metered mail.

The Meter Stamp Society is also meeting in Cleveland. It should be an interesting show.

I always encourage collectors who want to test the waters of specialization in Mexican philately to join MEPSI. The services it provides to members make collecting much more enjoyable.

MEPSI also has chartered chapters in areas where there are sufficient members to support such a group. Of the 10 chapters now active, five are located in Mexico, one in Europe and four in the United States, mostly in the West.

The Southern California chapter, for example, meets monthly. Each meeting features speakers or programs of interest to its members. This chapter will be well represented at the annual meeting in Cleveland.

My membership in MEPSI is approaching 40 years, and I consider it one of the smartest moves I made when I started collecting Mexico.

Apart from the obvious utility of the quarterly journal, access to a first-rate expertizing service and the opportunity to acquire good reference books, the best part has been the contacts and friends I have made over the years.

I have found these people to be generous with their time and whatever information they have, and many have become fast friends. And so I say once again, if you have a serious interest in Mexican philately, and are not a member of MEPSI, join now.

For information, visit the society's web site at www.mepsi.org or write to the secretary, Peter Taylor, 1441 Abernathy Creek Road, Longview, WA 98632. ■

New Mexican TB seals show cowboy lifestyle

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

A few weeks ago I received several sheets of Mexican tuberculosis seals from my Mexican friend Alejandro Grossmann, who was an apprentice judge at the Garfield-Perry March Party stamp show held March 11-13 in Cleveland.

I wrote about the seals in two previous Mexico column in *Linn's*, the most recent being in the Sept. 28, 1994, issue.

In Mexico, TB seals help fund the Comite Nacional de Lucha Contra la Tuberculosis y Enfermedades del Aparato Respiratorio. This translates roughly to the National Committee in the Battle Against Tuberculosis and Respiratory Diseases. The committee is similar to its sister agency in the United States, the American Lung Association.

Grossmann serves the committee as director for the seal program. His duties include theme selection, design and production.

Since 1943, the committee has issued and sold stamplike labels or seals to support its work. These seals feature historical, cultural or everyday objects of Mexican life.

Each seal bears a red Lorraine cross, a longtime symbol of TB charities.

The labels generally are issued in sheets of 50, each label having a face value of 50 centavos, or a little less than U.S. 5¢. The batch I recently received included labels issued since 1999.

Figure 1. These Mexican TB seals show a man and a woman in fancy outfits for a charro (cowboy) parade or ball.

Earlier seals feature a single design repeated 50 times. More recent designs portray a variety of objects. This would encourage purchase of full sheets or large blocks to obtain a complete set of seals. Most of the sheets I received have 50 different seals.

Figure 2. An elaborate saddle is pictured on this Mexican TB seal for 2005-06.

For example, the 1999-2000 sheet depicts an array of fruits and vegetables native to and grown in Mexico.

The 2000-01 sheet commemorates Cantinflas, the Mexican comic actor known to millions of Spanish-speaking movie fans.

The 2001-02 seals illustrate 25 traditional Mexican toys, each seal appearing twice.

The 2002-03 sheet deals with Mexican numismatics, again with 50 different designs depicting the metal coinage of Mexico over the years.

The 2003-04 sheet honors the Franz Mayer Museum of Mexican cultural art and focuses on Mexican ceramic art.

The sheet I found most interesting is the latest, issued for 2005-06. It deals with charreria, or Mexican horsemanship. In some Hispanic circles, the word "charro" has negative connotations, but in Mexico it means horseman, or cowboy.

Men and women gather at charro clubs to practice and hone their horsemanship skills and participate in the traditional activities of Mexican cowboys and ranch hands. The clubs often stage public events called charreadas, which are similar to American rodeos.

The charros wear distinctive clothing: tight-fitting trousers, short jackets and huge sombreros.

Figure 1 depicts two 2005-06 labels, one showing a man in a highly ornamented charro outfit, and the other picturing a woman clothed in an elaborate dress. Both outfits would be worn at classy public events, such as a parade or fancy ball, but not by participants in the rough-and-tumble contests of the charreada.

Figure 3. Roping is featured on these four Mexican TB seals.

Ordinary and less elaborate working outfits are illustrated on other seals in the sheet.

The se-tenant pair of labels shown in Figure 2 pictures a elaborate saddle used by Mexican charros. Some of these monturas, as they are called in Spanish, display intricate leather tooling and are encrusted with silver decorations. Such saddles can sell for thousands of dollars. Three other saddles are illustrated on the sheet.

At charreadas, the charros show off their abilities in numerous events, such as rope twirling, lassoing and difficult riding tricks. Figure 3 pictures four se-tenant stamps featuring roping. Roping a running steer or horse by its front legs requires great skill on the part of a rider with a highly trained mount.

In another popular charro event, the coleada (tail twisting), a young steer is released from a chute as a mounted rider gallops alongside. Leaning down and away from his horse, he grabs the animal by its tail (cola) and spurs his horse to veer sideways. If the rider hangs on, this move causes the steer to lose its balance and tumble to the ground. But sometimes it's the rider who is unhorsed.

This event and others are pictured as part of the TB charreria sheet.

The 2005-06 sheet would be an ideal memento for a rodeo lover or someone interested in horsemanship.

This year's sheet was printed by Grupo Grafico Romo, a firm that also prints many of Mexico's postage stamps. The government printing office, TIEV, also has produced the TB seals from time to time.

Mexican post offices sell the seals as an adjunct to their regular services. Postal clerks are awarded 20 percent of the proceeds from the sales they make, which provides incentive for promoting the seals. When stamps are paid for with large bills, buyers are urged to take their change in TB seals.

Although the TB seals have no franking power, they look so much like stamps that confused tourists often try to use them in lieu of regular stamps. This sometimes works.

Since the advent of e-mail, I do not receive as much regular surface mail from Mexico as I once did. But in earlier times, especially near the year-end holidays, TB seals often were added to envelopes franked with regular postage stamps. These stamplike labels not only added color but also gave interesting glimpses into Mexican culture.

If you would like to begin or add to a collection of Mexican TB seals, I recommend visiting the web site located at www.tbsealsmexico.org or writing directly to Comite Nacional de Lucha Contra Tuberculosis y Infermedades del Aparato Respiratorio, Alvaro Obregon No. 74 Desp. 108, Colonia Roma, CP 06700 Mexico, D.F. Mexico. Except for a few rare varieties, the committee has nearly all seals in stock back to 1943. ■

Mexico's early airmail service of the 1920s

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Mexico issued its last airmail stamp more than 20 years ago, ending an era of 60-some years when letters designated for air transport were franked with stamps issued especially for that purpose.

Attempts to establish airmail service in Mexico began in the early 1920s. These early attempts were met with little public acceptance and were eventually abandoned.

A few early flights carried mail, but most envelopes bore no special markings. Almost no mail has survived from these flights.

Mexico's first airmail adhesive stamp was issued in 1922. The 50-centavo bicolor stamp shows an eagle flying over the valley of Mexico (Scott C1). It was intended to pay the domestic airmail rate, but it arrived too late to be used on those early pioneer flights.

A planned 1923 flight from Mexico City to Tepic that was to carry letters franked with this stamp never materialized.

These souvenir covers, each bearing a 50c stamp, often appear in the pioneer section of Mexican airmail exhibits, but they never were flown, instead making the trip by train.

By 1928 and 1929, matters had improved and regular airmail service was established between Mexico and towns on the Texan border.

Figure 1 shows a private letter envelope sent from the United States Embassy in Mexico City to Cleveland in February 1929. It traveled by way of Nueva Laredo, Mexico, and Laredo, Texas.

Figure 1. This cover from the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City was flown on the Mexico-Nueva Laredo route in 1929. The cachet at the upper left announces a new route via Matamoros.

Service from Mexico to Nueva Laredo had been established the previous October.

At the time, the airmail rate was 35c, but since there were no 35c airmail stamps available, the cover was franked with a 25c airmail stamp and a regular 10c postage stamp.

A cachet in the upper-left corner of the envelope calls attention to the upcoming inauguration of airmail service between Mexico City and Matamoros and to the resulting possibility of 24-hour postal communication with New York City.

The cancel indicates the letter entered the Mexican mail system Feb. 12.

Backstamps note that it reached Nueva Laredo Feb. 13 and that it entered the U.S. mail at Laredo, Texas, on the next day.

Routing and carriage to Cleveland is unknown, but a connection with U.S. CAM (Contract Air Mail) route 22 in Laredo is likely.

The airmail service hinted at on the cover shown in Figure 1 did get underway in early March 1929. It took the form of U.S. FAM (Foreign Air Mail) route 8. It linked the United States and Mexico through Brownsville, Texas, and Matamoros and Tampico in Mexico to Mexico City.

The initiation of this service was highly publicized, and first-day flight covers from it are plentiful.

Figure 2 shows a southbound first-flight cover serviced March 9 in Brownsville and addressed to the postmaster of Mexico City. The cover bears a U.S. 5¢ Aeronautics Conference commemorative of 1928 (Scott 650).

A blue crayon was used to cross out the Mexico address and redirect the letter (with an arrow) to its original sender in Washington, D.C.

The cover was backstamped with the usual airmail cancel used in Mexico the following day (March 10) for the return flight to Matamoros.

I have no explanation why two cancels were used at Brownsville, a duplex handcancel and a machine cancel, but I have seen many other covers like it.

Col. Charles A. Lindbergh piloted the plane carrying the mail on the first FAM route 8 flight, no doubt one of the main reasons for the popularity of this flight.

The cover shown in Figure 3 has an air of mystery about it. It appears to have had typical first-flight handing at Mexico City. It bears the cachet for the Mexico City-Matamoros flight and the usual airmail cancels dated March 10.

Figure 2. First-flight cover from Brownsville, Texas, to Mexico City franked with a 5¢ Aeronautics Conference stamp.

Figure 3. A possible survivor of the lost mailbags incident from Charles Lindbergh's first flight on FAM route 8.

The cover is overfranked by 3c, but that should not have mattered. It is backstamped received at Albuquerque, N.M., March 30, and therein lies the mystery.

Why would a letter that no doubt reached the U.S. border on March 10 or March 11 need almost three weeks to make it to its destination in a Western border state?

Several bags of mail stowed in the wing of Lindbergh's

plane apparently were overlooked on his initial flight into Mexico City. The bags were discovered some time later when the plane made its intermediate stop at Tampico.

So as not to diminish the collector value of the covers in the bags, they were returned to Mexico City where they received the March 10, 1929, cancellation.

Could the cover shown in Figure 3 be one of those delayed-mail covers? Although there is no way to prove it, the evidence does point that way.

FAM route 8 did not terminate at Mexico City but continued south, with stops at Veracruz, San Geronimo, and Tapachula. It reached into Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras eventually joining FAM route 5 that terminated in Panama. Later, the two routes were combined, keeping the FAM route 5 designation.

The patient and persistent searcher should be able to find covers postmarked at the other cities on this route, but the search won't be easy.

Still, such a search could be an interesting and rewarding challenge. Let me know of any unusual finds.

Write to me, Dale Pulver, in care of Linn's Editor, Box 29, Sidney, OH 45356. ■

Mexico's definitives offer many challenges

Mexican definitive (regular-issue) stamps provide many opportunities for testing your stamp-hobby skills, including identifying watermarks, probing the subtleties of paper differences and distinguishing responses to ultraviolet light. These challenges began with the

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Monuments and Architecture stamps of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s.

Next, came the Exporta stamps in 1975, my personal favorites, for their strong, simple designs featuring Mexican exports and for their hundreds of collectible varieties.

Figure 1. A margin copy of the 50-centavo Mexican Conserva definitive showing the flora and fauna found in a mangrove habitat.

The Exportas were followed in 1993 by an eight-year run of Tourist stamps, that like the Exportas before them, rely on paper differences for their many varieties.

The Tourist stamps also marked the conversion to a revalued peso that had sunk so low during the Exporta era.

The current Mexican definitive stamps are called the Conserva series (Spanish) or the Conservation series. Collectors refer to the stamps as the Conservas.

The designs on these colorful stamps focus on flora and fauna, especially natural environments that deserve conservation attention.

The Conservas first appeared in February 2002. They were produced in a horizontal format (40 millimeters by 24mm) in panes of 50. The initial printing included 22 designs on American paper.

A continuous repeating design runs across a row of stamps, beginning about 4mm inside the left selvage and ending about the same distance inside the right selvage.

This pattern can be seen on the stamp shown in Figure 1, a margin example of the 50-centavo stamp picturing a mangrove habitat (Scott 2253).

The stamps also feature invisible ink overprints for security purposes. Pre-Columbian glyphs or pictographs are printed on the face of the stamps. These images are not visible looking at the stamp straight on, but the transparent overlays are easily seen under long-wave UV

Figure 2. The monarch butterfly is featured on this Mexican Conserva definitive stamp.

light or by holding the stamp so that low-angle incident light reflects off its surface.

Microprinting, very small printing visible with strong magnification, was applied above each design as an additional security measure.

The perforating operation was done separately and involved two machines: a Gammerler perforator of Spanish manufacture and a Maschinenbau perforator from Germany. This resulted in two perforation varieties: gauge 14 by 14¼ for the Spanish perforator and 13 by 13¼ for the German one.

Early surveys of large stamp inventories reveal that nearly all values and designs exist with both perforations.

Four different artists collaborated in the designs, which were executed with the aid of computers. Some of the designs are striking, although the subject matter at times appears crowded.

Figure 3. Two perforation varieties of the Mexican Conserva definitive stamps. The 5-peso Rivers stamp (left) was printed by TIEV and is perforated gauge 14 by 14¼. The 10.50p Cats stamp (right) was produced by Grupo Grafico Romo and is perforated gauge 13½ by 13¼.

The stamp designs were chosen to show typical ecosystems, such as rivers, forests, deserts, tropical jungles, lakes and lagoons. Groupings also were made for certain animal families, such as cats, reptiles and eagles. One of these groups depicts butterflies, including the monarch butterfly.

This amazing insect, featured on the 6p stamp shown in Figure 2, migrates annually from the United States and Canada to breed in the high-altitude forests of the state of Mexico. It is considered moderately endangered.

Although prohibited by the government, people harvest for firewood the trees the monarchs used for resting and breeding.

I recently read that the authorities have had some success convincing local residents that they can make more money guiding tourists to the butterfly trees than they could by cutting them down. Conservationists hope this approach can continue.

The ocelot, included on the 10.50p Cat stamp shown on the right in Figure 3, once was abundant in Mexico. Its diminished numbers are a direct result of poaching and loss of habitat.

Paper varieties and the reaction to UV light pose the greatest challenges for the serious collector of the Conserva definitives. The subtle differences might be more than what the average collector wants to deal with, but for the brave and hearty souls who love a difficult chase, it is there.

A major paper change occurred in 2003 with printings on a rather thick matte paper with bright semigloss gum. New printings of 18 denominations were made on this paper. These stamps are perforated 13 by 13¼.

Many minor flaws and mistakes occurred during this printing. They include mismatches of the invisible ink overprints, spots, scratches and so forth, all strongly indicative of carelessness at the printing office.

In 2004, both the government printing office (TIEV) and Grupo Grafico Romo (a private contractor) were given orders to print stamps to replenish declining inventories.

Grupo Grafico Romo also received the order to print panes of 36 stamps arranged in two large blocks of 18 stamps (six by three) separated by a large gutter. These panes were then broken into blocks of six and made up as booklets. Only two denominations, $8.50 Sea Mammals and $10.50 Cats, were made into booklets.

In 2004, TIEV produced three different

printings of the definitives: a first printing with 12 denominations, a second printing with eight, and a third with 24, for a total of 44 new varieties.

Figure 3 shows stamps printed by the two printers. The 5p Rivers stamp on the left was printed by TIEV. It is perforated gauge 14 by 14¼. The 10.50p Cat stamp on the right, printed by Grupo Grafico Romo, is perforated gauge 13½ by 13¼.

I have intentionally avoided getting into too many details in this column, mostly because such coverage would require several installments. But I hope this overview convinces you of the collecting possibilities for the current definitive issue of Mexico.

Mexico has settled down financially, so the wild inflation of the Exporta era is not expected. No doubt more values in the Conserva series will be added from time to time as required by new postage rates.

The series has been out long enough that new-issue dealers, both in the United States and in Mexico, have developed some logical organization to their price lists for the Conserva stamps.

I think it would probably pay to shop around. I have seen some rather significant differences in pricing from one dealer to the next.

Certainly, you can plunge as deeply into this new area as your pocketbook will permit. Some of the so-called errors already carry price tags in the high two to three figures. Whether stamps actually change hands at these prices I cannot say.

Still, many moderately priced and attractive stamps are available in this series, and some of them will appeal to topical collectors who specialize in plants and animals. ■

Is there a connection between quantity and price?

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

At the end of June, Mexico issued a set of five stamps commemorating a cartoon character named Memin Pinguin.

Memin is a black child with exaggerated features who appears in a popular comic book that has been around Mexico for almost 60 years. Figure 1 shows one of the new 6.50-peso stamps.

Figure 1. Mexico issued this and four other stamps in late June showing the comic book character Memin Pinguin.

United States activists decried the issue as racist, and newspaper stories sprang up in the United States like dandelions in a spring lawn. Efforts to have the issue withdrawn were not successful.

Even though 150,000 stamps were printed of each of five designs in the set, the issue sold out within days.

Obviously, many of the buyers were collectors and dealers, but it appears there was a hoard of speculators who believed the flurry of publicity would drive up prices for the set as a desirable, if not controversial, collectible.

One newspaper article I read reported that people were bidding more than $125 in eBay auctions for the stamps.

This is absurd. The face value of the stamps is 6.50p each, or about 60¢, so the five have a face value of about $3.

A price of $125 is an instance of mob psychology overriding basic economics and common sense.

I expect to obtain my set from a new-issue dealer, and because of all of the hubbub I might have to pay a bit more than usual.

But I cannot believe that with a printing of 150,000 sets there won't be enough stamps to satisfy all requirements, including the nonstamp collecting community. The Memin Pinguin stamps will never be rare or even scarce.

This is not the first time adverse publicity has played a role in the sale of Mexican postage stamps.

In 1935, Amelia Earhart made a goodwill airplane flight to Mexico. Stamps specifically commemorating the flight were not issued, but the existing 20-centavo Allegory of Flight airmail stamp was overprinted in honor of the flight (Scott C74). The stamp is shown in Figure 2.

The issue, which consisted of only 300 overprinted stamps, was manipulated by Earhart's husband, George Putnam, and only a token few were made available to the general public.

Mexican stamp dealers were furious and raised so many objections that the overprinted variety was not officially recognized for several years. Still, the first of these stamps to reach the philatelic market sold for high prices.

Prices continued to climb because collector demand was strong, and the supply was relatively small.

The Scott *Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue* values the overprinted stamp at $3,250 for unused, hinged and at $4,000 for used.

It cannot be considered a rare stamp. Scarce, yes, but it is generally available in the larger auctions of Mexican material. All you need is a robust checking account balance.

A similar situation exists for the Pro-Universidad issue of 1934. These stamps were deliberately issued to raise funds for the National University of Mexico.

The top denominations in the surface- and airmail-rate series were intentionally limited in quantity to make them desirable for collectors. The 10p surface-rate stamp was issued in a quantity of 1,000, and the 20p airmail stamp in a quantity of 1,500. Figure 3 shows the 10p stamp.

Figure 2. Few of the stamps overprinted for Amelia Earhart's 1935 goodwill flight to Mexico were made available to the general public.

One sheet of the 10p stamp was printed on unwatermarked paper (Scott 706a), so it is the scarcest variety.

The high-denomination stamps sold out the first day they were on sale, according to reports. Again, some dealers were upset that more were not available. But 10p and 20p was a lot of money in those Depression years, and many collectors could not afford such an indulgence.

The 1934 Pro-Universidad stamps have proven to be popular and have appreciated substantially over the years. Prices peaked during the speculative run-up of the early 1980s but have since subsided somewhat.

Again, the key stamps in the set are scarce but not rare. They are offered in most large Mexican sales, and you can buy them if you have the money to compete.

Quantity and price are fairly closely tied in the classic era of Mexican stamps. Collectors of these stamps tend to be more measured and serious in their approach to the hobby.

Nonetheless, a stamp can change hands at multiples of Scott catalog value that astonish the uninitiated.

First-issue stamps of 1856 from postal districts where only a handful are recorded routinely bring prices in the high three to four figures.

The only recorded example of the 1856 2-real yellow-green Miguel Hidalgo stamp (Scott 3) from the postal district of Baja California is rumored to have changed hands at more than 2,000 times its Scott catalog value.

Here is a clear instance of a willing, well-heeled buyer realizing he might have only one opportunity in his lifetime of acquiring this stamp.

Other instances of the quantity-price ratio at work arise from the discovery of stamps that are different from what they are supposed to be.

In previous Mexico columns in *Linn's*, I have discussed postal issues printed by mistake or by accident on paper normally reserved for revenue stamps. Examples include the 10c Monument stamp (Scott 727A), the 5c olive-brown of the 1934-40 issue (733B) and the 10c violet of the same issue (735A).

Figure 3. The 10-peso 1934 Pro-Universidad stamp was issued in a quantity of 1,000.

These rare varieties were found by patient and meticulous stamp collectors some time after the stamps were issued.

The 15c light greenish-blue from the same issue, but issued in 1946 on paper watermarked "S.H.C.P. MEXICO" with an eagle in a circle (Scott 795A), falls into this after-the-fact category.

It is probable that several thousand examples of this va-

www.zillionsofstamps.com

riety were printed. As soon as it was identified, collectors and dealers scrambled to check inventories in post offices likely to have been supplied with the variety, but few were found.

That is why the $325 Scott catalog value for a mint, never-hinged stamp is so much greater than the $60 value for a used stamp.

The 50c Head in Profile green airmail of 1953 (Scott C212) is another example of a scarce variety that was totally unexpected.

The 50c stamp paid a common airmail rate. Inventory stocks were adequate from the issue of 1950-52, so when the initial printings of the 5c, 10c, 30c, 40c, 80c, 1p, 5p, 10p and 20p stamps (Scott C208-11, C213-17) were reordered and printed on paper with the multiple "MEX"-and-eagle-in-circle watermark oriented horizontally, the 50c denomination was not among them.

How the 50c value of 1953 came to be printed remains a mystery, but a few sheets were produced and distributed to a few post offices.

The 50c watermark variety was discovered by a collector who never imagined that it would be scarce because of its common usage.

Once the word got around, virtually all of the stamps had been sold and used. Another rarity was born.

Finally, there are the printing mistakes that create desirable and collectible varieties. The most famous error in United States philately is the 24¢ Inverted Jenny airmail of 1918 (Scott C3a). This error happened because it was a bicolor printing, and the vignette is upside down with respect to the frame.

The same thing occurred with a few Mexican stamps. The 1915-16 1p and 5p bicolor stamps are both known with inverted centers (Scott 513a-14a). It could be argued that these varieties were not completely accidental because Mexican postal officials were fully aware of the quirky desires of stamp collectors.

But there is a fully legitimate invert in the 1921 10c bicolor stamp commemorating the 1821 meeting of Augustin de Iturbide and Vincente Guerrero during Mexico's struggle for independence (Scott 632a). The Scott catalog values the stamp at $25,000. The value is listed in italics, however, meaning that the stamp is seldom on the market.

I can recall only one instance of this stamp changing hands publicly, so it is truly a rarity. I could not find the price realized, but I would judge it was well into the four figures.

A number of printing flaws and minor mistakes in modern issues bring premium prices in the market depending on the perceived importance of the error.

In many cases, the scarcity of an item cannot be accurately established, and early high prices might not hold. There is always the possibility that new examples will surface.

Savvy dealers often hold back on sales of items when they have several to see where the market levels off.

Going back to my first example of Memin Pinguin, I expect that early speculators might try to take their gains and run. If so, the reported prices on eBay will sink rapidly.

The serious collector might want to secure cleanly canceled examples of the Memin Pinguin stamps on or off cover. Covers would be desirable to future postal historians. They are probably not what the average speculator would think of creating.

Foreign leaders honored on Mexican stamps

Topical collectors focus on what stamps picture or what or who they honor rather than technical aspects of stamps and their usage.

Nearly every country has

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

postage stamps that appeal to this approach.

In browsing through the Scott *Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue*, I noted that Mexico has issued a number of stamps portraying political leaders of other nations.

I do not know if this is legitimate for a topical collection, but I am reasonably sure you could find ample material to pursue such a collection of stamps from a number of countries.

Figure 1. This Mexican stamp pictures Queen Victoria and honors the 100th anniversary of the first stamp.

In 1940, Mexico issued two

Figure 2. President Roosevelt is shown on this 1947 Mexican stamp honoring the 1947 Cipex stamp show.

sets of stamps, five surface mail (Scott 754-58) and five airmail (C103-07), featuring Queen Victoria of England. The stamps commemorate the 100th anniversary of the world's first adhesive postage stamp, the Penny Black of Great Britain.

The 20-centavo airmail stamp is shown in Figure 1.

These stamps were aimed at the stamp-collecting community, and the 5p high values of both sets were printed in quantities of only 10,000 each.

The 5p stamp would be required only on heavy parcels or registered valuables.

Still, the stamps were popular, and the lower values found wide usage within Mexico.

Queen Victoria appears again on a Mexican stamp in 1990 (Scott 1646), a 700p denomination marking the 150th anniversary of the Penny Black.

In June 1947, the international stamp convention named Cipex was held in New York City. This coincided with the 100th anniversary of the first United States postage stamps. To honor the event, Mexico issued five stamps, two surface mail (Scott 826-27) and three airmail (C167-69).

Three of the stamps include an image of President Franklin Roosevelt. The 25c surface-mail stamp is pictured in Figure 2.

Roosevelt was well known as a stamp collector. Because of his foreign policies, he also was revered as a good friend of Mexico and other Latin American countries.

In the 1960s, Mexico issued numerous stamps portraying world leaders from other countries, mostly on the occasion of state visits. Apparently Mexico, unlike the United States, had no rule against showing living people on stamps.

In April 1962, a 40c stamp was issued to mark a state visit to Mexico of Brazil's president Joao Goulart (Scott 921).

In December 1962, Jorge Allesandri Rodriguez, president of Chile, was similarly honored on a 20c stamp (Scott 927), as was Romulo Betancourt of Venezuela in February 1963 (932).

Figure 3 depicts the stamps commemorating the three state visits.

In the meantime, President John F. Kennedy, visited Mexico in June 1962, and his visit was commemorated with an 80c airmail stamp (Scott 262).

Kennedy also banked further political capital with the Mexicans as the president in

Figure 3. Three Mexican stamps from the early 1960s honor state visits of the leaders of Brazil, Chile and Venezuela.

Figure 4. Two Mexican stamps honor President Kennedy.

office when the Chamizal Treaty was ratified.

The Chamizal, a small chunk of land that was isolated politically from Mexico when the Rio Grande changed course and was developed as part of El Paso, Texas, was the subject of a century-long dispute between Mexico and the United States.

Under terms of the treaty, a parcel of this land was formally returned to Mexico. The ceremony was attended by President Kennedy and President Lopez Mateo of Mexico.

An 80c airmail stamp (Scott C282), issued April 11, 1964, after Kennedy's untimely death, shows the handshake between Kennedy and Lopez Mateo sealing the deal.

The two Kennedy stamps, are illustrated in Figure 4.

Mexico honored two more foreign leaders on stamps issued in 1963.

Marshal Tito of Yugoslavia visited in October and was honored on a 2p airmail stamp (Scott C275), and Victor Paz Estenssoro of Bolivia was commemorated on a 40c surface-mail stamp (940) for his visit in November.

The year 1964 brought still more Mexican stamps depicting foreign dignitaries. In February, a 80c airmail stamp honoring the 15th anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights (Scott C280) bore a portrait of Eleanor Roosevelt, long associated with the aims and objectives of the civil rights movement.

In March, a 2p airmail stamp was issued for the visit of French President Charles de Gaulle (Scott C281). In May, Queen Juliana of the Netherlands visited Mexico and was honored on an 80c airmail stamp (C283), shown in Figure 5.

Royalty again took center stage in 1965 when King Bauduin and Queen Fabiolo of Belgium traveled to Mexico. Their visit was marked with a 2p airmail stamp (Scott C306).

In 1966, United Nations Secretary General U Thant visited Mexico and was commemorated on an 80c airmail stamp (Scott C316).

Why were there so many

Mexican stamps honoring foreign dignitaries at that time? I can think of two reasons.

First, Mexico was about to host the Olympic Games in 1968, and great efforts were being made to burnish its image as an emerging nation capable of undertaking that huge and demanding project.

The idea of hosting such a complicated, elaborate and expensive international event had many local detractors, especially among university students and underprivileged classes who felt the money could be better spent improving the plight of Mexico's poor.

The second reason is that one of the advisors to postal authorities that selected stamp subjects favored stamp collecting, and he felt that the more commemorative issues the better.

He argued that sales to collectors represented substantial revenue for which service would never be required.

After the busy 1960s decade, stamps marking state visits all but disappeared from the Mexican postal scene. Had the rules changed regarding foreign dignitaries? I do not know.

Figure 5. Mexico issued this 80-centavo airmail stamp for the 1964 visit of Queen Juliana of the Netherlands.

Figure 6. A 1977 Mexican stamp honoring the resumption of diplomatic relations with Spain shows Mexico's president and Spain's king.

However, in 1977, a set was issued to mark the resumption of diplomatic relations with Spain.

Figure 6 shows the 4.30p stamp (Scott C5379), featuring President Jose Lopez Portillo of Mexico and King Juan Carlos of Spain. Both leaders were alive at the time, and King Juan Carlos is still living today.

Finally, the head of state of Vatican City, Pope John Paul II, visited Mexico in 1990 and was honored on a 700p multicolor stamp (Scott 1648).

If you want to delve into this topic further, acquiring the basic stamps will not be difficult and, with the exception of the more-expensive Penny Black stamp, will not drain your pocketbook.

I was able to find the stamps used to illustrate this article in a recent circuit book from the American Philatelic Society, and they cost less than $8.

What may prove to be a challenge, however, is finding contemporary covers with the stamps paying correct rates. That's where the fun begins. ■

Collector association produces fine journal

Stamp collecting appears to be alive and well in Mexico. Every three months, I receive a beautifully produced publication from the Asociacion Mexicana de Filatelia AC, also known as Amexfil. This group is probably the closest Mexican counterpart to the American Philatelic Society in the United States.

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

I have been a member of Amexfil for about 20 years, almost from the time it was founded.

Annual dues for a foreign membership are not cheap ($40), but because I write a regular column for *Linn's* about Mexican stamps, I feel it is important to keep abreast of the stamp scene south of the Rio Grande. Also, the association's quarterly journal is quite informative, with good articles, interesting news and often provocative opinions by its writers and editors.

Figure 1 pictures the cover of a recent issue (April-June). Amexfil 's logo, shown at the top of the page, reproduces an old postal marking showing a galloping horse with a wind-blown banner streaming from its mouth. The words on the banner are too small to read clearly, but I believe they tout the Mexican postal service.

The cover page of the April-June issue features a short editorial on the opposing politics of the Mexican postal system (Sepomex) and participants in the stamp hobby.

Two rather interesting covers are illustrated in the journal: an 1871 official letter carried by small boat from Progresso to La Laguna, both seaports on the Gulf of Mexico, and an 1899 registered commercial letter with a rather elaborate merchants cachet.

A regular feature of the Amexfil journal is a review of new issues. These thumbnail sketches, complete with color photos, are useful to collectors of modern stamps. The listings give the format of the stamp, the printing process used, the perforation gauge, the quantity issued, the date of issue and a short description of the subject matter.

The April-June issue also contains longer articles, mostly on Mexican stamps. One article discusses the perforation varieties of the 1966

AMEXFIL

EDITORIAL

Figure 1. The cover of the spring 2005 issue of the quarterly journal of the Mexican association of philately, known as Amexfil.

80-centavo UNESCO airmail stamp (Scott C321), and another treats in considerable detail the so-called Tourist definitive (regular-issue) series of 1993.

The later article includes text of the official directive authorizing those stamps. The article also lists the 78 face-different stamps and provides descriptions of the 12 distinct papers that were used in their printings.

Another useful piece is a translation of the notes on Mexican forgeries by Belgian expert Fernand Serrane.

Serrane was most active during the first three decades of the 20th century, and his observations and sketches outlining the differences between genuine stamps and forgeries are valid even today, especially on the early classics.

Figure 2. Stamps on a brown kraft envelope that contained a copy of the Mexican association of philately's journal, shown graphically cropped. The envelope was sent to the United States bearing four 6.50-peso and a pair of 2.30p stamps in the Tourist series.

Another article especially appealing to me deals with the blue ½-real stamp of 1856 (Scott 1). While that stamp was assigned the first number in the Scott *Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue*, there is no proof that it was the first Mexican stamp printed or sold. Four other denominations were issued at the same time. It was the lowest value so it took its place as first in line.

The magazine is a high quality, slick-paper publication in color produced by Grupo Grafico Romo, the same firm that frequently prints postage stamps for the Mexican post office.

Lately, the issues of the journal have been running to 24 pages, not including a loose bonus supplement with stories about some of Mexico's rarities or enigmatic issues. These engaging stories are published in three languages: Spanish, French and English.

Otherwise, the balance of the magazine is published in Spanish. This might be a deterrent to English-only readers. But if you collect Mexican stamps seriously, it would be a good opportunity to improve your skills with that language. Besides, philatelic terms and words are virtually the same in both languages.

Finally, the journal arrived in my mailbox in a brown kraft envelope franked with stamps of the Tourist issue. It was mailed Aug. 10 at Tlanepantla, a suburb of Mexico City, and reached me Aug. 24, not very fast for something marked "AIR MAIL." This, incidentally, is a class of domestic service no longer recognized in either Mexico or the United States.

The franking consisted of a neat block of four of the 6.50-peso Queretaro Tourist stamp and a vertical pair of the 2.30p Chiapas Tourist stamp, as shown in Figure 2. The stamps are shown graphically cropped from the envelope. The franking total of 33.60p is roughly equivalent to U.S.$3.85, so postage for the four issues each year consumes a substantial part of the membership fee.

If you are interestined in joining this association, drop a note to me, Dale Pulver, in care of Linn's Editor, Box 29, Sidney, OH 45365, and I will send more information. ■

Pleasant search through Mexican cover box

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Stamp collectors in northeastern Ohio where I live are blessed with an abundance of stamp shows and dealer bourses (sales areas) virtually year round.

Even in the summer months, when we are catching rays with visits to the beaches and parks along Lake Erie, dealers organize bourses to satisfy the ever-present longing for new acquisitions.

I visited one of these summer bourses a month or so ago, mostly to meet John Leszak, who edits *Mekeels & Stamps* magazine and whose lively weekly editorials I always find interesting. Leszak also is a stamp dealer, operating Cover Connection out of his home in Buffalo, N.Y.

After exchanging pleasantries, I asked Leszak if he had any covers from Mexico. And to my surprise, he set before me a long box from behind his table and said "have fun."

Generally I do not find too many things to add to my serious collections from such assortments. But I occasionally do find unusual items to share through my column in *Linn's*, such as the covers pictured in Figures 1, 2 and 4.

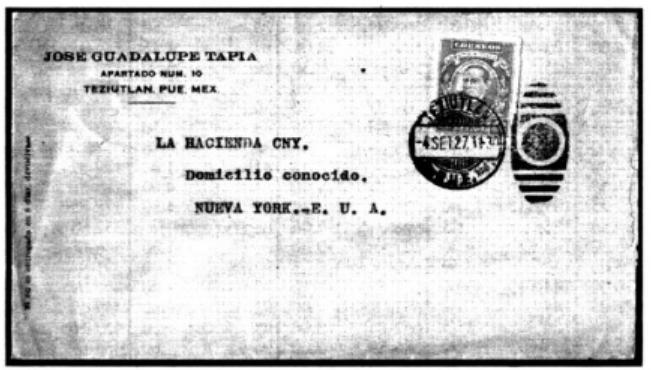

Figure 1. This 1927 cover from Teziutlan, Mexico, is simply addressed to the treasury of the city of New York.

The Figure 1 cover originated in 1927 in Teziutlan, a small town in the Mexican state of Puebla.

What first caught my eye was the 8-centavo franking using a 1926 Benito Juarez stamp (Scott 666). This stamp represents a first-class rate that was reduced from 10c. The reduced rate remained in effect for only about a year during 1927.

The reason for this reduction remains elusive. It is rumored it had something to do with encouraging airmail service, which was then just getting started.

How this reduction was supposed to help escapes me. And it appears it didn't help the postal service either, because the 10c rate was restored in early 1928.

The cover is addressed to "La Hacienda CNY, Domicilio conocida, NUEVA YORK, E.U.A." My rough translation is "The Treasury, C(ity of) N(ew) Y(ork), at a known address, New York, USA."

The address includes no street number, post office box, borough or other detail to facilitate its delivery.

The envelope gives every indication that it was duly delivered in a city that at the time had millions of valid addresses. I must assume that someone at the main post office was fluent in Spanish and figured out that it probably was intended for someone at city hall.

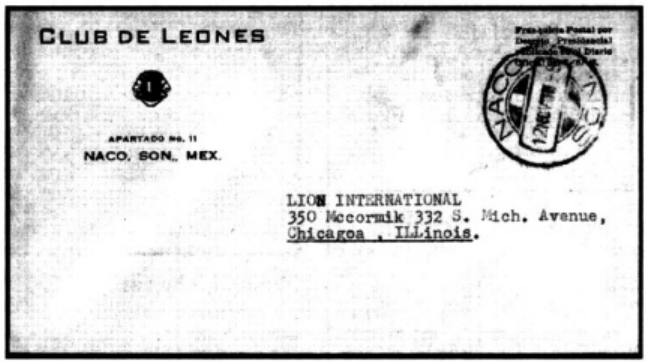

Figure 2. This stampless cover was sent from the Lions Club of Naco, Mexico, to the Lions headquarters in Chicago.

Would such a briefly addressed letter find its way to its recipient today? I doubt it.

The cover shown in Figure 2 was sent from the Lions Club of Naco, Sonora state, Mexico, to the Lions international headquarters in Chicago. It bears no stamp. But at its upper right is an imprint that reads, "Franquicia Postal por Decreto Presidencial publicado en el Diario Oficial 7/8/48." A close-up of the imprint is shown in Figure 3.

This inscription indicates that special postal privileges were extended to service clubs, universities and the like for

www.zillionsofstamps.com

Figure 3. The imprint on the cover shown in Figure 2 indicates that special postal privileges were given to service clubs and universities.

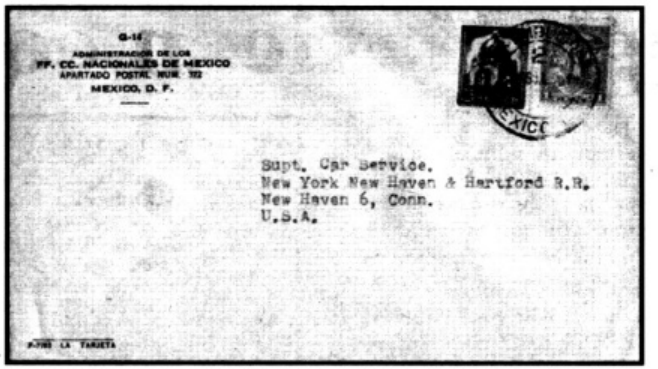

Figure 4. The cancellation on this cover sent from Mexico to New Haven, Conn., reads "DISTRIBUDORA 2." The cover is franked with the 1-centavo and 4c 1937 definitive stamps.

their official correspondence.

In many years of browsing through cover boxes, I've only encountered a few of these covers. Because they don't bear stamps, dealers probably feel there will be little interest in them. However, such covers are part of the postal history of a country, and in the case of Mexico, fairly scarce and worth looking for.

The envelope depicted in Figure 4 was sent from the national railways of Mexico to the superintendent of car service for the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad in New Haven, Conn.

This envelope probably contained a locator slip advising the home office of the whereabouts of a car owned by the railroad.

The unsealed cover has an attractive bicolor franking of the 1c orange and 4c carmine stamps of the 1937 small definitives (Scott 729 and 731). I saw several covers similar to this one in Leszak's box.

But what intrigued me on the cover shown in Figure 4 was the neatly struck cancellation. This "DISTRIBUDORA 2" marking was applied at the Mexican main post office.

This marking is new to me. I would guess that it was used in an office that sorted foreign mail by country or major destinations.

These three covers are a sampling of a pleasant search through several hundred moderately priced covers. ■

Market for quality Mexican stamps thrives

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Nicholas Follansbee's public auction Oct. 15 in Reno, Nev., showed market strength for quality Mexican stamps and covers.

As far as I know, Follansbee is the only auctioneer in the United States who restricts his sales exclusively to Mexican philatelic material.

The frequency of his auctions depends on the material consigned to him, but recently he has averaged about one sale per year.

I have touted Follansbee's auctions several times in previous columns.

His catalogs, although lacking the color and gloss of some of the bigger houses, are carefully crafted. They contain accurate descriptions with a great deal of anecdotal text that renders them valuable reference material in their own right.

Follansbee has a loyal following, and he consistently achieves good returns for his clients.

This sale, his 17th, was especially significant for me. In March of this year, I consigned my prestamp cover collection and exhibit to Follansbee for his next sale.

He did an outstanding job of lotting the material and setting estimates of what he thought the lots should bring. And when the sale was complete and the prices tallied up, the total realization came comfortably within the range of estimates he provided.

Figure 1. This 1856 2-real Mexican stamp from the district of Yguala caused a bidding war at the Oct. 15 Follansbee auction. It was hammered down for $1,700.

Follansbee had assured me that this year was an excellent time to dispose of stampless material because the market for it was hot and there were many eager buyers. His prediction was right on the mark.

The sale also contained properties of other owners, with material spanning the years right up into the late 20th century.

Prices for the 1856-61 first-design issues were especially strong, reflected in some outstanding examples of rare stamps from that era.

I was able to secure a few choice items for my own collection of these stamps but was outbid on several other items I had my sights set on.

Early Mexican stamps received overprinted district names at the point of sale, and many of the rare districts sold at or above Follansbee's estimates (or at the values in his own specialized catalog). Good examples would be an 1856 2-real Polotitlan hammered down for $2,200, just a bit less than the $2,500-$3,000 estimate. Prices cited do not include buyer's commission of 10 percent.

Two Sultepec stamps, the 1856 ½r and 1r went for $1,700 and $1,250, respectively, handily exceeding the presale top estimates of $1,000 and $800.

A 2r Yguala with name ignited a floor fight, with the winner paying $1,700 against the estimate of $1,200.

This stamp is shown in Figure 1. It is rarely offered for sale and demonstrates what serious buyers will do to own a stamp of which only a handful are known.

A 2r stamp from a common district would trade at between $2 and $5.

Prices realized for the Eagles and Maximilian stamps were not nearly as robust, although the small collection I consigned for this sale brought a satisfactory sum.

The offering of the 1868 issue was large and provided collectors of this issue opportunities to acquire many scarce to rare stamps for their collections.

Among highlights were full sheets of 50 of the 6-centavo thin figure from stone A, probably the only example known, and a full sheet of the 12c, also from stone A.

Individual stamps and multiples, which made up the bulk of this section, brought good prices.

The balance of the sale contained small but select groups of the later 19th-century issues and a smattering of better items from the 20th century.

Most of these modern-era stamps are no longer hot and can be acquired at substantial discounts from the valuations in the Scott *Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue*.

The key values of the 1914 Victory at Torreon overprints, the 20c and 50c, canceled on piece sold for $800 and $1,000, respectively, about one-third of their catalog values. Figure 2 shows the 50c stamp.

The 1934 Pro-University sets went for less than half catalog.

Every collection offered for sale at auction contains hundreds of stamps of low to medium value that do not merit individual listing.

Auctioneers usually set a value that must be met to justify a listing as a single lot. Obviously, there's no problem with stamps that will bring, say $100 or more. But the economics of catalog production and distribution do not permit a stamp expected to fetch $10, no matter how fine or beautiful, to have its own line in the auction catalog.

Figure 2. This Mexican 50-centavo Victory at Torreon overprint on piece sold for about a third of catalog value at an Oct. 15 auction.

This problem is solved by grouping stamps or covers into single lots, sometimes called job lots. The skill the auctioneer uses to form such lots has a large bearing on the results obtained.

Follansbee does an outstanding job at this, and the results show it.

Many of the stampless cover groups in the sale brought far more than I expected they would. The same can be said of the lots containing several stamps, covers or both.

The buyers of job lots are often dealers who break them down further and offer them to their customers. It's a ticklish game because one has to be careful not to spend too much so the individual items can be priced to sell quickly and not tie up capital by languishing in inventory.

Savvy collectors often buy job lots to pick over for items to enhance their own collections. They then plow what they don't need back into the market by way of circuit books, dealers or future auctions.

This was a tactic used by John Bash, who endeavored to amass as many of the thousands of varieties of Eagle stamps as he possibly could. Many of his duplicates came to me in trades.

In summary, what did this auction tell us?

First, the market for rare, top-grade Mexican stamps and covers is as strong as ever.

Collectors who have made steady purchases of higher-priced Mexican items over the years will find that their collections have probably appreciated in value quite nicely.

Also, there continues to be a eager group of buyers willing to open their wallets to acquire such material.

And finally, there is plenty of less expensive material moving in the market for those collectors on more modest budgets. ■

Mexican airmails; Memin stamps; butterflies

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

I generally use the December Mexico column to make brief comments on the state of Mexican philately and to respond to letters from *Linn's* readers who were kind enough to write. I appreciate input from readers because it often gives me ideas and background for future columns.

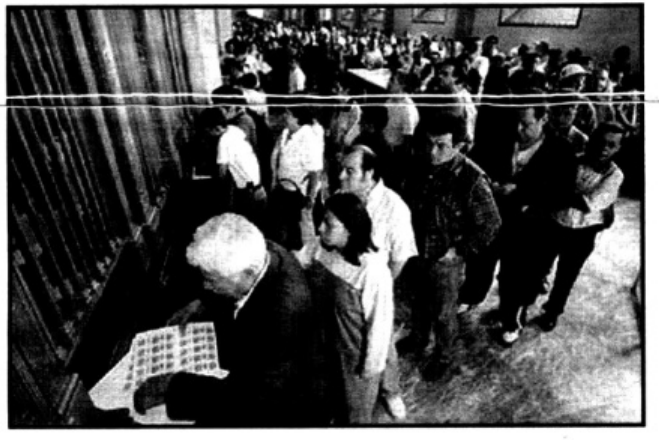

Figure 1. Mexico's Memin Pinquin stamps initially caused controversy and long lines at Mexico's post offices. The controversy and demand for the stamps soon quieted down.

In response to my column in the May 23 *Linn's*, page 50, on Mexican airmail, a longtime *Linn's* reader sent me a color photocopy of a first-flight cover.

This cover, dated Oct. 1, 1928, marked the inauguration of airmail service from Mexico City to the United States via Nuevo Laredo.

The event received a lot of advance publicity, and covers from this flight are not rare. What made this one so interesting was the enclosed letter. It was written by Alexander Weddell, American consul general at the U.S. embassy in Mexico City, to Lt. Col. Arthur Poillon at the Department of War in Washington, D.C.

Poillon was a stamp collector, and the first line of the letter reads, "Your only departure from normality and complete sanity and serenity of which I am aware is a regrettable weakness for stamps."

Weddell also states that he will dispatch the letter by the "first airmail out of Mexico to the U.S."

He added that as a result of four years of residing in Mexico he harbors some skepticism whether the event will take place as scheduled on Oct. 1. But it must have come close because there are backstamps confirming transit at the border Oct. 3 and receipt in Washington Oct. 6.

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In midsummer, Mexico issued a set of five stamps commemorating the cartoon character Memin Pinquin. This caused an uproar in activist circles focused on human rights and race issues.

Appeals to Mexican President Vicente Fox to order the withdrawal of the stamps fell on deaf ears, and eventually the matter seemed to subside almost as quickly as it arose.

I received several letters mostly containing clippings from local newspapers.

Figure 2. Monarch butterflies are shown on this Mexican joint issue with Canada.

Some of the photos with the news reports, such as the photo shown in Figure 1, pictured people waiting in line at post offices in Mexico to purchase the stamps.

I noted in the Mexico column in the July 25 *Linn's*, page 12, that eBay offerings of these stamps at outrageously high prices should be ignored as an ample quantity had been printed for the needs of legitimate collectors.

I received my set of Memin Pinquin stamps from a new-issue dealer for just under two times face value in U.S. dollars.

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Collectors who search for better classic material for their collections were well served in 2005.

I mentioned Nicholas Follansbee's October auction in the column in the Nov. 28 *Linn's*, page 58.

David Feldman, a European auction house, conducted a sale May 21-25 with some outstanding classic Mexican stamps and covers.

I have not bid in an overseas auction recently, because of the complexities of bidding through agents and settling accounts by foreign exchange,

and I feel that you must bid more money in foreign auctions to be successful.

San Francisco auctioneer Schuyler Rumsey offered a small group of spectacular classic Mexican stamps in a Dec. 2-4 sale. It is rumored that this property was assembled more than 40 years ago and has laid dormant since that time.

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A recent Associated Press report noted that 200 million monarch butterflies are expected to return to Mexico this year for their winter sojourn.

This is in contrast to the some 23 million monarch butterflies that succeeded in making the trip last year. Adverse weather and other causes kept the numbers down.

These remarkable insects migrate from throughout the United States and southern Canada to a small area in the mountains west of Mexico City near the town of Angangueo. For years, Mexican authorities have tried to convince local peasants to quit cutting the trees the monarchs use for roosting and instead cater to the many tourists who come to view them.

These marvels of nature have been pictured on several Mexican postage stamps, including a 1998 set (Scott 1559-62) and a 1995 joint issue with Canada (1924). The 1995 2.70-peso stamp is shown in Figure 2.

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I finally broke down and gave myself an early Christmas present in the form of a 2006 Vol. 4 of the Scott *Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue*. This volume includes Mexico.

I don't do this very often. The previous Scott catalog I owned was the 2000 edition.

The new 2006 catalog is in color on coated paper and weighs a ton. It has 1,430 pages, 69 of which are devoted to Mexico.

The volume is too limber to stand by itself in the bookcase — it has to be sandwiched between other books or stored on its side. But I am glad to see the color, despite certain shortcomings, which will help collectors of the modern issues especially.

I haven't had a chance to study it carefully, but I will and plan to make comments in a future column.

My sincere best wishes to all for the holidays and a great new year. ■

Revolutionary-era overprints of 1913-16 provide many challenges

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

One of the most difficult areas of specialization for the collector of Mexico is the civil war era of 1913-16. A quick scan of the Mexico section in Vol. 4 of the Scott *Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue* shows why.

This era was a veritable morass of provisional issues, local printings and confusing overprints.

Not only is there a multitude of puzzling emissions to confound the average collector, but there seems to have been a good measure of philatelic mischief going on as well.

Fortunately, about 10 years ago, Nicholas Follansbee wrote the book *The Stamps of the Mexican Revolution, 1913 - 1916*. It deals with this era in meticulous detail.

The Collectors Club of Chicago published the book in two printings totaling an edition of 600, and the book could be a bit difficult to find. But philatelic book specialists, such as Jim Lee and Leonard Hartmann, should be able to locate a copy given some time.

Figure 1. A genuine "GCM" overprint on the 5-centavo Mexican Independence stamp. "GCM" refers to the Mexican constitutionalist government.

I recommend this book highly and consider it to be an essential companion for those brave souls who would collect and study these stamps seriously.

I cannot cover the whole field of the revolutionary issues in one article, so I will focus on one of the early overprinted issues: the large "GCM" overprints on the Independence issue of 1910 (Scott 370-85).

"GCM" refers to the Mexican constitutionalist government, one of several validating overprints used by constitutionalist forces led by Venustiano Carranza.

Figure 1 shows a clear example on the 5-centavo stamp.

Two varieties of the overprint exist: the Hermosillo type and the Veracruz type, referring to the cities where the overprints were applied. The Hermosillo monogram is the slightly larger of the two. This difference is mentioned in the Scott standard catalog, but the would-be specialist needs to know more.

Scott does make a point in the footnote following No. 385: "Counterfeits abound," referring to the overprints. In fact, so many counterfeits of this overprint exist that it is sometimes difficult to find genuine examples

of even the most common values.

One of the quick tests for genuineness is to check them using circles inscribed on a clear plastic overlay. The Hermosillo overprint will fit perfectly inside a 20-millimeter circle, and the Veracruz overprint fits in a 19mm circle. Figure 2 shows a genuine Hermosillo overprint on the left and a crudely forged overprint on the right.

The monogram was often poorly struck, and because of this it will defy comparison with other aspects of the overprint used to determine whether it is good or bad. These shape characteristics are fully described in the Follansbee book, another good reason for owning the reference.

The Hermosillo overprint, first authorized May 27, 1914, is found in four colors: violet, magenta, green and black.

The Veracruz overprint, first issued in December 1914, when the Carranza movement used that city as its capital, is found only in violet. All other colors should be looked upon with suspicion.

The postage due stamps with the large "GCM" overprint are invariably those of the Hermosillo type.

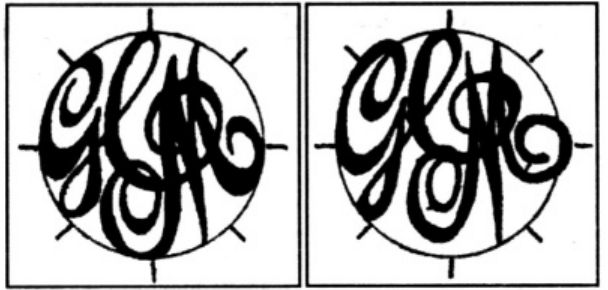


Figure 2. A genuine Hermosillo overprint is shown on the left inside a 20-millimeter circle. A forgery is pictured on the right.

A rather broad assortment of so-called errors (stamps with double overprints, overprints printed sideways, pairs with one monogram upside down with respect to the other and more), can be found.

These stamps, if the monograms pass the tests for genuineness, are most surely items made to order for collectors.

Collectors, especially those in the United States, have shown a lot of interest in the civil war stamps of Mexico. Among them was George W. Linn, the founder of *Linn's Stamp News*.

So if you've made a 2006 New Year's resolution to try something different, this group of stamps provides a good challenge.

The common values are cheap enough so you can put together an array of bad overprints without too much expense and learn to distinguish between the good, the bad and the ugly.

But be sure to buy or borrow a copy of the Follansbee book. The pages he devotes to these overprints will be of great help. And he also displays a group of fake overprints to assist in that area.

Unfortunately, the overprint specimen illustrated in the Scott catalog is not sharply defined, and I feel that it probably wouldn't pass muster as the real thing.

I plan to look at some of the other Mexican civil war stamps in future Mexico columns. ■

Markings reveal treatment of Mexican wartime cover from the 1940s

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

At first glance, the cover shown in Figure 1 does not appear to be anything too unusual. While not a rare item, it does bear an abundance of postal markings.

First to catch my eye was the band along the left edge indicating that the envelope was opened and examined by a censor.

This window envelope was sent from the National Bank of Mexico in 1944, during wartime, and virtually all foreign mail entering Mexico received this treatment.

The words "EXAMINED BY" are followed on the cover's reverse by a number designating who did the examining. The location also could be determined from this number. The reverse of the cover is pictured in Figure 2.

I also can deduce from markings on the reverse that the cover was addressed to New York City.

The envelope was franked with a Universal Postal Frankers type B meter stamp. Although the second digit is barely visible, the postage applied was 42 centavos (12c for the surface-mail rate and 30c for the registration fee).

Figure 1. The front of a metered and censored cover sent Oct. 16, 1944, from the National Bank of Mexico to New York City.

Registration is further confirmed by the label partially obscuring the meter town mark and the word "Certificado" in large red letters above the window.

Meter stamps consist of two, and sometimes three, elements. In this example, the box in the upper-right corner is known as the frank. It states the postage (adjustable), the machine number and the permit number under which the machine was authorized.

The double-ring marking, partially obscured on the cover, is known as the town mark. It gives the location and date that the meter stamp was applied.

Often found to the left of the town mark is a logo or slogan of the mailing entity. Although probably too faint to read in the Figure 1 illustration, the message touts the bank.

The round marking on the upper left of the cover was applied in black at the main post office. It calls attention to, and presumably validates, the meter franking as legitimate.

Similar markings appear on much of the metered mail out of Mexico City.

The markings on the reverse of the cover reveal quite a bit about how the letter was handled. It entered the Mexican mailstream at a Mexico City post office Oct. 17, one day after the meter date.

Two sunburst registry seals were applied across the closure and were tied with four strikes of a registry handstamp in blue.

A double oval New York, N.Y., registry office datestamp is dated Oct. 29. I assume that most of the 12-day interval between the time the cover left Mexico City and its arrival at New York City was spent in the hands of the censors.

Although airmail service was probably available, overland service by train was fairly quick too, taking at the most four or five days.

The magenta handstamp on the reverse, dated Oct. 30, is the registry datestamp of the Church Street post office in New York City. The Oct. 30 date probably represents the day the letter was delivered.

Figure 2. The reverse of the cover pictured in Figure 1.

A faint mark overlaps the censor tape. It was applied at the censorship office by the agent who examined the letter.

Much censor tape had a cellophane surface layer, and the adhesive has dried up in many cases and the cellophane has fallen off.

Two other inscriptions round out this examination. Beneath the window on the face of the cover are the words "SPANISH CORRESPONDENCE" in red. This marking might have been applied at the Mexican post office because the red ink appears similar to that of the certified handstamp.

A six-digit number was written in red pencil on the reverse of the cover under the New York registry oval. I suspect that this was the line item number in the registry log book.

This analysis show that even a mundane commercial window envelope can have an interesting story to tell. Thanks to Walter Bush for sharing the cover. ■

Good deal found in recent offer of 250 mint Mexican stamps for $5

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

A few weeks ago, Mystic Stamp Co. ran an advertisement in *Linn's* offering "250 Mint Mexico Stamps — Just $5/Special Offer — Save over 65%."

A quick mental calculation told me that the average cost per stamp would be 2¢, so how could I go wrong?

Figure 1. This 1974 Mexican stamp promotes exports.

I mailed my check on Jan. 5, and the stamps arrived on Jan. 20,

I took inventory, sorting the stamps chronologically by Scott number. It is fortunate that Mexico prints the year of issue in the lower-right corner of each stamp. This helped a great deal in identifying the stamps.

All 247 stamps (three short of the promised number) were mint, never hinged. There were 94 airmail stamps, 153 commemorative or special-event stamps and three souvenir sheets included in the mixture. There were no definitive stamps.

Figure 1 shows the earliest commemorative stamp included, a 1974 40-centavo Pointing Hand stamp promoting exports (Scott 1057). The stamp can be considered the precursor to the long-running Exporta stamp series that began in 1976.

There was a smattering of stamps from the late 1970s. Beginning with the stamps of 1980, nearly all of the Scott-listed varieties were present up through 1982.

Of the airmails, the first Scott-listed stamp included was the 1971 2-peso stamp

Figure 2. This 1980 Mexican 1.60-peso airmail stamp bears an anti-smoking message.

commemorating the bicentennial of the birth in 1770 of Mariano Matamoros, a revered Mexican patriot (Scott C388).

The airmails included in the offer ended in 1980 with the stamp shown in Figure 2. This 1.65p Skeleton Smoking stamp (Scott C635) admonishes against using tobacco products.

Only one more airmail stamp was issued by Mexico before this class of service was abandoned.

I did not run a tape on the total Scott value of the stamps, but it would have been substantial. Most of the stamps had Scott catalog minimum value (20¢), but many items were valued at more than $1.

For example, the souvenir sheet shown in Figure 3, has a catalog value of $3.50. It was issued in 1985 to mark the Mexfil stamp show in Mexico (Scott 1385). A 1974 airmail souvenir sheet for the Exfilmex stamp show (C434), also has a hefty catalog value of $3.50.

The most expensive item was a Colonial Monuments strip of four stamps with label, issued in 1982 (Scott 1303-06), which has a catalog of $15.

So from the standpoint of value, the headline tout "Save over 65% (off retail price)" was not an exaggeration. This offer would certainly please any collectors whose albums have a lot of holes in the time frame spanned by this mixture.

I was intrigued by the fact that the bulk of this mixture was concentrated in the years just before the Mexican peso began its free fall in the middle 1980s.

I would like to know the source of the stock that allowed Mystic to make this offer. Could it have been the postal service itself? The stamps were virtually useless for franking purposes after 1984.

This offer provided excellent value. Part of the company's purpose was to entice collectors to accept approval offerings. The approvals I received were all for United States stamps, which I no longer collect.

I thanked the company but added that unless it had good classic Mexican stamps, I was not a good candidate for approvals.

If this deal nudged a few collectors to begin collecting Mexico, I am thankful and give Mystic a thumbs up for doing so. ■

Figure 3. This Mexican souvenir sheet has a catalog value of $3.50.

Dealer Eduardo Aguirre created various 1928 Mexican first-flight covers

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

The postal card illustrated in Figure 1 was included among a stack of airmail covers sent to me by a *Linn's* reader.

The card immediately caught my eye because it is unusual to see a postal card with first-flight markings. But the message it bore was even more interesting.

The occasion of this flight was the inauguration of airmail service from Veracruz to Merida, with intermediate stops in cities along the Gulf Coast of Mexico. The flight occurred Oct. 15, 1928.

At that time, the roads in that part of Mexico were poorly maintained, and overland mail delivery was slow and arduous.

The large rectangular rubber handstamp cachet (design added to an envelope) on the front of the card shows a map of the route covered and the cities where mail was dropped off and picked up.

The datestamp, applied in Mexico City Oct. 14, 1928, cancels the imprinted and embossed 4-centavo stamp of the postal card and the 25c adhesive stamp added for airmail service.

The card is addressed to the postmaster in Campeche, one of the towns en route. A Campeche backstamp, dated Oct. 16, appears on the message side.

The gist of the message is that Eduardo Aguirre, a well-known and respected Mexican stamp dealer, has sent in the same mailing an additional five envelopes bearing first-flight markings. He is asking the postmaster that the first-flight covers be returned to him in Mexico City. He notes that they are for "filatelistas" (stamp collectors).

The postmaster obviously complied with Aguirre's request, and as an extra bonus, he folded and returned the original postal card along with the five covers sent to his attention.

Figure 1. This postal card was carried on a 1928 first flight between Veracruz and Merida, Mexico. The reverse of the card bears a message from stamp dealer Eduardo Aguirre.

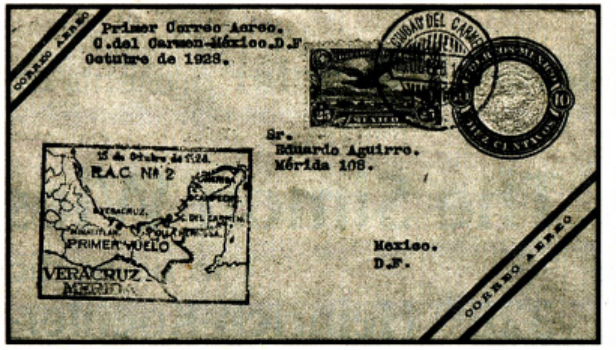


Figure 2. This postal stationery envelope was carried from Ciudad del Carmen on the return leg of the 1928 first flight.

Figure 2 shows an embossed postal stationery envelope flown from Ciudad del Carmen on the return leg of the Vera Cruz-Merida route.

It seems to confirm that Aguirre prepared many covers to be carried on this flight, some to and from the terminal cities as well as the towns in between.

This cover also bears an additional 25c stamp.

Mail prepared for this flight in Mexico City traveled on the overnight train that operated between Mexico City and Veracruz.

This airmail route is known to specialists as R. A. C. (Spanish initials for airmail contract route, Ruta Aereo Contratada) No. 2. It was operated by Cia. Mexicana de Aviacion using two Fairchild FC-2 planes, one to carry outbound mails, while the other was returning with inbound mail.

This route was temporarily suspended in spring 1929 because of a civil uprising in Veracruz state.

Fortunately for airmail collectors, information for this and other Mexican first flights is covered nicely in the *American Air Mail Catalogue* in a section about Mexican first flights authored by Mariano Riosa and Robert J. Wilcsek.

These two men are recognized authorities on the airmails of Mexico, and anyone contemplating collecting in this area would be well advised to obtain the catalog and study the authors' reports.

Except for souvenirs from the earliest experimental flights, Mexican first-flight covers are not outrageously expensive, and they offer an interesting challenge to the serious collector.

Dealer-serviced covers can be found quite readily.

Commercial covers sent from businesses are preferred by specialists, but such items are difficult to find.

Airmail was all the rage in the late 1920s and early 1930s, and it lured many collectors into the stamp hobby.

My thanks to Robert Reynolds of Arizona for providing these covers. ■

Dollar-sign overprint used on stamps during Mexico's 1913-16 revolution

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

The stamps of the Mexican revolution can be a difficult field for collectors.

There are a large number of confusing overprints, and many of the overprints have been deliberately forged.

The Mexico column in the Jan. 30 *Linn's*, page 38, dealt with the large "GCM" overprint that was applied by rebel forces to captured stocks of federal postage stamps during the Mexican civil uprisings of 1913-16.

"GCM" refers to the Mexican constitutionalist government.

The two stamps illustrated nearby bear what is known to specialists as the "dollar sign overprint."

This overprint was used to validate stamps to be circulated in areas controlled by the so-called constitutionalist forces under Venustiano Carranza. This would have included most of northern Mexico.

The used example shown on the right bears a cancel of San Luis Potosi, a city controlled by Carranza's forces.

The marking derives its name from the words "Gobierno Constitutionalista" (Constitutional Government) in two lines separated by a dollar sign ($).

It was applied vertically on the 1-centavo to 20c denominations of the Independence issue of 1910 (Scott 423-30) and horizontally on the 50c, 1 peso and 5p stamps (431-33).

On the high denominations, the words are separated by a "v."

Contemporary postage due stamps also were overprinted (Scott 434-38).

Two examples of Mexico's dollar-sign overprint used by constitutionalist forces. The used stamp bears a San Luis Potosi cancel.

Two values from the 1899-1903 issues were similarly overprinted, but these creations might have had philatelic inspiration. The same can be said for other abnormal overprint orientations.

The overprints were applied to full sheets of stamps by at least two electrotype plates, and this gave rise to some varieties that have attracted the attention of specialists.

The dollar sign is found printed normally or inverted in the overprint.

The inverted dollar sign is, by far, the most common.

In normal orientation, the two fine lines that cut through the body of the dollar sign extend further below the "S" of the marking than above.

When the sign is inverted, the longer extension is on top, such as on the overprints on the stamps shown here.

Another variety is the letter "G" substituted for the first letter of "Constitutionalista."

As the footnote in Vol. 4 of the Scott *Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue* points out, this variety occurs four times in one plate setting and is found on 12 stamps in the other.

In the first setting, the "G" variety is found on the third stamps in rows four and nine and on the last stamps in rows five and 10.

In the second setting, the "G" variety is found on the same stamps in the second column and on all stamps in the last column of the sheet.

Stamps with this overprint started to circulate in early September of 1914. I do not know the date and location of its earliest use.

Cosme Hinojosa, director general of post for the constitutionalist government, did not publish the order authorizing the overprint until Oct. 7, 1914.

Hinojosa was attuned to the desires of stamp collectors.

He arranged to have limited printings of certain stamps prepared, which he advertised to collectors at inflated prices.

Some collectors refused his overtures, but others succumbed to these rare varieties, which is probably why some of the high-priced Scott listings exist today.

Legitimate uses of overprinted stamps exist in ample quantity for the commonly used denominations.

Some of the higher values in used condition might be a bit harder to find.

Covers also are worth looking for. They will invariably be from towns and cities under constitutionalist control at the time the covers entered the mailstream.

I urge anyone interested in collecting this field to be careful, to read as much as you can about these markings and to insist on certificates for high-priced varieties.

I also recommend that serious students acquire the book *The Stamps of the Mexican Revolution, 1913-1916*, by Nicholas Follansbee and published by the Collectors Club of Chicago in 1996.

Not only does Follansbee tell you all you need to know about the dollar sign overprints, he also offers a comprehensive summary of the political events of that period and their significance for collectors. ■

Items resurface from Jim Beal collection stolen three decades ago

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

A few stamps and covers from the Jim Beal collection of Mexican classics seem to have surfaced in 2005, almost 30 years after the collection was stolen in January 1977 from Beal's home in Warren, Ohio.

The thief or thieves bypassed an elaborate security system, peeled a large cabinet safe, and made off with several dozen three-ring binders crammed with stamps and covers.

Beal died in 1987. In my tribute to him (*Linn's*, Sept. 14, 1987), I noted that his extensive collection remained unrecovered despite his vigorous efforts as American Philatelic Society theft committee chairman to find it.

In the weeks immediately following the theft, Beal reconstructed a detailed inventory list of his losses for the authorities and circulated it among collector friends and dealers.

Unfortunately, Beal had not insured his collection, so the theft represented a total loss.

Further, he did not have a complete photographic record of his major collections — photocopying was not as easy then as it is today.

He did prepare collages of important pieces he owned from sale catalog clippings, but the images were only fair.

In December 2005, Schuyler J. Rumsey conducted an auction that included a significant section of Mexican classics.

The owner of this material was not identified, and inquiries concerning its provenance revealed only that it was from the estate of a man long deceased.

This pair of Mexican 1856 4-real stamps overprinted for Morelia bears a cancel from La Piedad. The pair is believed to have been cut from a strip of five stolen in 1977 from the Jim Beal collection.

The collection contained some outstanding exhibition-grade items but none that were immediately recognized by the close fraternity of collectors of Mexican classics.

It was not until after the auction that Doug Stout, expert committee administrator for the Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International and I compared the items to the inventory lists Beal prepared almost 30 years ago.

A number of items were

easily recognized as originally part of the Beal's stolen collection.

After further study, we discovered that some items had been altered to disguise their appearance.

For example, Beal owned a beautiful strip of five of the 1856 4-real first-issue stamp (Scott 4) used at La Piedad in the district of Morelia. This strip had been cut into a pair and other pieces of unknown size. The facing page shows the illustration from the auction catalog.

A strip of three of the 8r stamp (Scott 5) from the same post office was similarly mutilated.

The cuttings obviously were deliberate, and they reduced the philatelic value of the stamps enormously.

Another example is a small cover fragment bearing two of the ½r (Scott 1), plus a 2r (3) with the Zacatecas district name in manuscript. The ½r with the manuscript district name is rare, with fewer than a dozen recorded.

This piece was illustrated in MEPSI's *Mexicana* in an article on the handwritten name overprints by Otto Yag in the 1960s. Yag later sold this cover fragment to Beal.

From the time the stamps were stolen to their offering in the Rumsey auction, the stamps were soaked off the piece to further obscure their identification. Once again philatelic value was seriously diminished.

Stout talked with Rumsey by telephone, discussing other items in the auction that might have been part of Beal's collection.

Stout said that items for which Beal had no images were tough to pinpoint as being part of the collection.

Law-enforcement authorities, including the Warren police department, the FBI and the APS theft committee, have been notified about the items.

As I write this column, I am unaware of any action on the part of these agencies or their interest in following the information. Investigations such as this tend to move slowly, and it is a 30-year cold case.

Another problem is one of ownership. Beal died intestate, leaving no direct heirs. His estate was probated and divided among cousins living in Indiana. The cousins have legal claim to any of the estate's property that proves to be stolen. Their interest in the matter, if they know anything about it, is unknown.

A further problem is that much of the material has been dispersed, making it difficult to assemble evidence.

There are some painful lessons in this episode. Perhaps the first and most important is that you should keep photo records of all important pieces, if not entire collections, in a safe and accessible place.

If you keep your collections in a bank vault, you might want to make two copies of your material, one to play with at home, and another to file with the collection, or better yet, keep in a separate box specific to that purpose. As new material is added, this should be recorded, photocopied and added to the original records.

Insure your collection. I was appalled to learn that Beal did not have insurance on his stamps. Coverage is easily available from at least two firms specializing in collectibles and at reasonable rates.

Finally, curb your desire to brag about how much your collection is worth. Your close associates usually can assess the depth of your holdings without being told. ■

Aviator Sarabia's 1939 nonstop flight to New York carried souvenir covers

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Mexico reveres its heroes. Many postage stamps are issued to commemorate anniversaries of the birth or death of these men and women. In 2000, Mexico issued a 3-peso stamp (Scott 2222) celebrating the centennial of the birth of Francisco Sarabia, a pioneer Mexican aviator. Figure 1 shows the stamp.

Sarabia is not remembered much outside of Mexico, but for a brief moment in 1939 he was the toast of the town, not only in Mexico but also in New York City.

On May 24, 1939, Sarabia flew nonstop from Mexico City to New York City.

It took him 10 hours and 48 minutes, beating by several hours an earlier record set by Amelia Earhart.

Sarabia's flight was highly publicized, and his wife and children had traveled to New York earlier to await his arrival.

But the flight was not an easy one. Sarabia had to fight headwinds and heavy weather the entire trip, which delayed his predicted arrival time. When he finally did land, he found he had less than a gallon of fuel left in his tanks.

Sarabia's plane was what enthusiasts called a GeeBee, a class of aircraft designed for racing. It was the last of seven such planes built by the Granville Brothers of Madison, N.H.

The planes had short, stubby wings, carried a huge 675-horsepower Pratt and Whitney engine called the "Hornet," and normally accommodated only the pilot. They were fiendishly difficult to fly, and several pilots lost their lives racing in them.

Figure 1. Mexico issued this stamp in 2000 to celebrate the 100th birth anniversary of aviator Francisco Sarabia.

A GeeBee plane is pictured on a 32¢ United States stamp (Scott 3142i) issued in 1997 as part of the Classic American Aircraft pane of 20.

The plane Sarabia used was somewhat larger than the earlier versions and had been raced unsuccessfully during the mid to late 1930s.

The plane's original name was *Q.E.D.*, but after Sarabia purchased it second hand, he gave it the Spanish name *Conquistador del Cielo* ("Conqueror of the Sky).

In preparation for his flight to New York, Mexican postal authorities issued an airmail stamp in a small printing of 2,100 (Scott C93A).

The stamp was patterned after the 20-centavo stamp issued to honor the opening of the New York World's Fair (Scott C91).

The overprint on the stamp for Sarabia's flight reads across the top "Sarabia" and down the right "Vuelo Mexico - Nueva York."

Figure 2. This cover was carried by Francisco Sarabia on his 1939 record-breaking flight from Mexico City to New York City.

The limited printing infuriated collectors. Of the 2,100 stamps issued, 1,000 went to Sarabia for his personal use; 400 went to the Universal Postal Union in Bern, Switzerland; 300 to Mexico's philatelic agency for advance orders; and 400 were sold by lottery.

This manner of distribution caused the editors of the Scott *Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue* to withhold listing the stamp as an official issue until a listing was later inserted (the reason its catalog number bears an A suffix).

Sarabia is reported to have carried 400 covers,

each franked with the special stamp and bearing a rubber-stamp cachet marking the event.

Figure 2 shows one of the covers. The cover was prepared and entered the Mexican mails May 23, according to the postmarks. The New York backstamps are dated May 25.

The stamp department at Macy's somehow acquired about 100 unused stamps and offered them at $29.50 each, an unheard of price for a stamp with a face value of about 10¢.

Despite the high price, Macy's sold out of the stamp in a matter of days.

The stamp now has a Scott value of $450 unused, hinged and $400 used.

Sarabia and his family were feted in New York and featured at the dedication of the Mexican pavilion at the World's Fair.

After New York, Sarabia flew to Washington, D.C., where he was guest of honor at the White House. He met with President Roosevelt, an avid stamp collector, and gave him a block of four of the stamp.

This story has an unhappy ending. On June 7, Sarabia prepared for his flight home to Mexico City. He took off from Bolling Field outside of Washington, headed for his hometown in the state of Durango.

After a smooth take-off, when he was about 100 feet off the ground, his engine stopped.

He glided towards the Potomac River and would probably have landed safely if he could have put the plane down in an open field. But the nonretracting landing gear caught the water, flipping the plane over on its back where it sank quickly in about 15 feet of water.

Frantic efforts by bystanders and crews from a nearby naval base could not pull the pilot from his cockpit before he drowned.

President Roosevelt sent official condolences to Sarabia's widow and Mexican President Cardenas. The United States arranged for an Army Air Corps plane to fly the body back to Mexico.

The *Conquistador* eventually was salvaged and was returned to Mexico. The plane is housed in a museum in Ciudad Lerdo, Sarabia's hometown. ■

Mexico issued its first postage stamps 150 years ago on Aug. 1, 1856

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Mexico issued its first adhesive postage stamps 150 years ago, on Aug. 1, 1856. Although the ½-real blue stamp illustrated in Figure 1 is considered to be Mexico's first adhesive and is designated Scott No. 1, four other stamps were issued at the same time: a 1r, 2r, 4r and 8r.

The designs are the same. Only the colors and value tablets vary.

Each stamp shows a portrait of Miguel Hidalgo y Costillo, a priest who led the 1810 rebellion against Spain for Mexican independence. He is considered to be the father of the Mexican Republic.

At that time, Mexican postal rates were based on weight and distance.

A letter weighing less than ½ ounce traveling up to 30 leagues (about 70 miles) could be sent for ½r.

Figure 1. Mexico's first-issue ½-real blue stamp of 1856.

Beyond that distance, a letter needed 1r postage.

More postage was required for each quarter ounce of added weight.

The 8r stamp paid the registration fee. This denomination also covered the postage if the letter weighed less than ½ ounce.

Compared to the contemporaneous rates of the United States and Canada, the Mexican rates were quite high.

A Mexican peso (8r) at that time was roughly equivalent to U.S. $1, so a single-weight letter required either the equivalent of 6¼¢ or 12½¢, depending on distance.

After less than five months, Mexican postal authorities found that postal revenues did not cover the costs of operating the system, and a new postal tariff went into effect Dec. 20, 1856.

The new tariffs doubled the previous rates and reduced the distance breakpoint from 30 leagues to 16 leagues. This effectively threw the bulk of letters into the 2r category, or 25¢.

That was quite a lot of money in those days, so it is easy to see why most early Mexican letters were limited to important business matters.

The interest and charm of Mexico's first adhesives lies with the overprints and cancellations they bear.

As part of a security scheme (bandits and highwaymen preyed on intercity transport), stamps were dispatched from the main post office in Mexico City to the outlying district post offices.

Once received at the district offices, they were overprinted with that district's name to validate them for use.

That is why nearly all first-issue stamps bear names of towns or states in addition to cancellations. Some name overprints and usages are rare.

In 1956, on the 100th anniversary of the first postage stamp, a large stamp bourse and exhibition was organized in Mexico City.

Figure 2. A souvenir from Exmex, a 1956 stamp show celebrating the 100th anniversary of Mexico's first stamp. The folded sheet bears a 30-centavo stamp marking the show and anniversary.

This stamp show, Exmex, attracted collectors and dealers from a wide area. In commemoration of the event, Mexico issued stamps.

A 30-centavo surface-mail stamp (Scott 897) was issued Aug. 1, 1956. This large stamp measures approximately 40 millimeters by 48mm.

The stamp is printed in two colors. The central design, in blue, replicates the original ½r stamp of 1856. The fancy scrollwork surrounding the facsimile stamp in brown touts the stamp exposition.

The facsimile stamp does not have a district name overprint, so it represents stamp inventory not yet distributed or validated for use.

Figure 2 shows the stamp affixed to a folded sheet, a souvenir from the event, with illustrations of the Mexico City post office of 1856 and the current central post office.

The stamp is tied at its lower-right corner with a cancellation patterned after a double-ring device in use in 1856.

Airmail stamps and a souvenir sheet (Scott C229-34a) also were issued for the anniversary. The airmails depict early indigenous objects and items associated with Mexican history and culture.

I do not know if Mexico's postal service, Sepomex, has any stamps planned for this year's 150th anniversary, but I would be surprised if it doesn't. ■

Ham radio cards can provide an inexpensive opportunity to have fun

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

About 15 years ago, I acquired several dozen postcards from the estate of an elderly gentleman named Jack Siringer. He had been a ham radio operator for most of his adult life.

Shortwave radio fans exchange postcards confirming radio contact with each other. These cards are known as QSL cards.

Cards in the lot I purchased spanned the years from 1937 to the early 1970s, and they originated from locations throughout the world.

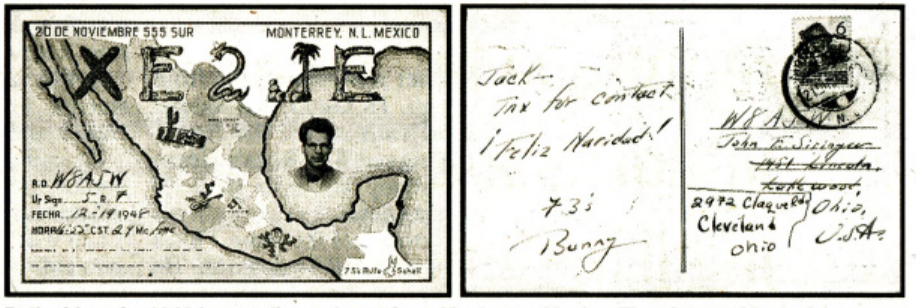
Of particular interest to me were the cards mailed from Mexico.

There were many such cards, and they were postmarked from towns both big and small. But most came from the larger cities in Mexico.

One of the more colorful examples is illustrated nearby. Both the front and back of the card are shown.

While many QSL cards were hand-drawn and hand-lettered, this card was printed commercially.

The card confirms a radio contact Siringer had with an operator named Rolfe Schell in Monterrey, an industrial city in Mexico located not too far south of the border with Texas.



Both sides of a 1948 ham radio card sent from Monterrey, Mexico. The picture side depicts a map of Mexico and a portrait of the ham radio operator. The card is franked with a 6-centavo stamp.

The card shows a map of Mexico and a small portrait of the operator. His address is at the top, and his call letters, "XE2JE," are in large, whimsical characters.

By international agreement, the letters "XE" were reserved for stations broadcasting from Mexico.

Two cactus stems make up the "X," the "2" is a snake wearing a sombrero and the "J" is a palm tree with coconuts piled at its base. Logs comprise the two "Es."

Data concerning the contact is entered into coded spaces at the lower left of the card.

The "W8AJW" represents Siringer's call letters.

The date and time of the contact was Dec. 19, 1948, at 16:55 hours (4:55 p.m.) Central Standard Time.

Below the data is a string of letters in Morse code, with "PIE/QSL/OT" on the first line and "TNX/FOR/QSO" on the second. I am not sure about the first half, but the second line is a thank you for the contact.

Ham operators have their own jargon and communication acronyms.

If anyone can help me decipher the first line, write to me, Dale Pulver, in care of Linn's Editor, Box 29, Sidney, OH 45365.

In the lower-right corner of the card is the inscription "73's Rolfe Schell."

In ham language, "73's" means "best wishes."

Rolfe Schell used the nickname "Bunny," which explains the little figure of a rabbit between his first and last names.

The message side reads simply: "Tnx (thanks) for contact. Feliz Navidad! (Merry Christmas) Bunny."

The card is franked with the 1940 6-centavo definitive stamp (Scott 759), which was equivalent to about U.S. 2¢.

In Mexico, QSL cards also could be mailed for 2c, a third-class rate authorized for shortwave operators. Both amateurs and commercial stations with numerous requests availed themselves of this lower rate.

Most of the cards I have from this era bear the 2c franking.

Mail service to the United States in those days was pretty good.

The card was mailed Dec. 21, and Siringer probably received it the day before Christmas or perhaps the day after.

Some purists may scoff at the idea that QSL cards represent collectible postal history, but I find them attractive and interesting.

What a thrill it must have been to Siringer to make contact with not only many Mexican ham radio operators but also a naval officer stationed in Manchuria, China, and a Royal Canadian mounted policeman on Baffin Island, Northwest Territory. QSL cards in the lot confirmed both contacts.

The card from Manchuria came out of China in a diplomatic pouch by way of a U.S. fleet post office in San Francisco.

Among the other cards in the lot were contact confirmations on international reply cards and government postal cards.

I occasionally see QSL cards for sale in dealer boxes at stamp shows.

If you are looking for something new to collect, the cards could provide an inexpensive opportunity to have some fun. ■

New edition of Follansbee catalog for 19th-century Mexican stamps

Mexico

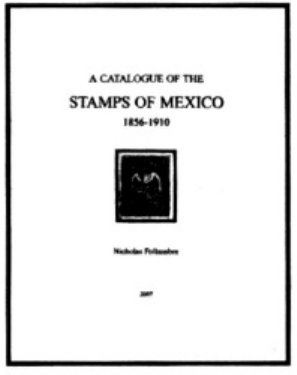
By Dale Pulver

When Nicholas Follansbee, an Oregon stamp auctioneer, first published *A Catalogue of the Stamps of Mexico 1856-1910*, in 1999, I wrote that it should become an indispensable companion for serious collectors of 19th-century Mexican stamps.

Because Follansbee was catering to a relatively small audience compared to that of the Scott *Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue*, which covers the stamps of the entire world, I wondered how well he would be able to keep his Mexican catalog up to date. He has convincingly dispelled that fear with the recently published third edition of the catalog. The second edition came out in 2001.

The latest edition is more comprehensive and better than ever. Follansbee incorporates more than 3,500 price changes and additions. The catalog's cover is shown nearby.

Most of the pricing movements are upward, reflecting realizations achieved in recent auctions. But there are a few downward revisions too.



New edition of Nicholas Follansbee's *A Catalogue of the Stamps of Mexico 1856-1910.*

What makes this work so useful besides the detailed pricing is the wealth of anecdotal information on the various stamp issues.

Follansbee, a student of the stamps of Mexico for many years, has amassed a mountain of knowledge on the subject.

He has probed various sources, many of which are scarce and not generally available to the average collector. He also has the first-hand advantage of assessing the market for such items through his regular auctions. His most recent auction was conducted Oct. 28 at the Grand Sierra Resort Hotel in Reno, Nev.

The Follansbee catalog goes way beyond the pricing in the Scott catalog.

In the classic era of Mexican stamps, hundreds of varieties arose from the post office's practice of overprinting information on the stamps that identifies where stamps were sent, sold and used. This procedure lasted for about 30 years.

The country was divided into postal districts. Accumulating examples from most or all of the various districts has long been the goal of many collectors.

Many districts received and sold only a handful of stamps, and examples from them can be quite pricey.

The Scott catalog makes no distinction between the value of stamps from the various districts, while this is where the Follensbee catalog excels.

He attempts to place a value on all varieties that have traded in the marketplace in recent years.

It would be impossible for me to undertake a detailed review of price movements in the new catalog in the space I have available, so I will make some general observations about what has happened in the five years since his last edition.

As might be expected, most of the stamps from the scarce or rare districts have seen healthy increases.

These increases spread across most all of the stamp issues that bear name and invoice overprints. This would include stamps from 1856 up to the 1880s.

It appears that more and more collectors have caught the bug on classic Mexico and are willing to open their wallets to satisfy their wants.

Also within the realm of overprinted stamps, the ½-real Eagle stamps of the first and second periods (Scott 19) have shown solid price appreciation.

This is a scarce stamp to begin with, having been used only on printed circulars or on in-city deliveries. Multiples occasionally were used to satisfy higher rates.

In the Eagle section of the catalog, Follansbee includes a new useful table listing the rare Mexico (City) consignments.

This table covers small consignments that were issued in their entirety to individuals, usually businessmen, or foreign entities — the Prussian Consul, for example. Examples from these consignments are exceedingly rare.

Another new feature is a listing of 1883-issue stamps on thin paper overprinted with only the district name and no invoice numbers.

Most of the watermarked paper varieties of the 1872 issue increase in value, as did some of the watermarked stamps in the Transportation issues (Mulitas) of the 1890s.

There are many changes, mostly for the better, in the so-called "close together at the bottom" invoice numbers on the 1878 issue. This is another area that seems to be attracting more collector attention.

In the back-of-the-book area, many changes are recorded for the overprinted Official stamps of 1895-1910. These stamps are identical to the regular issues but are overprinted "OFICIAL" for use in government offices.

The new catalog is similar to its predeccessors, printed on sturdy 8-inch-by-11-inch stock with a softcover. The new edition runs to 136 pages.

It can be ordered from Follansbee, Box 3210, Ashland, OR 97520 at $52 postpaid to addresses in the United States.

This may seem like a lot for a softcover book.

But I can assure you that if you use it as much as I do, it will seem like a bargain after a while. ■

Morse code on shortwave radio card deciphered; goodwill flight film

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

The Mexico column of Oct. 2 discussed QSL cards, which are postcards exchanged by shortwave radio fans to confirm radio contact with each other.

In that column, I asked for help deciphering a Morse code message on a card. I thought that the message was "PIE/QSL/OT." Almost 20 collectors responded.

Dave Popkin replied first. He explained that the "PIE" was probably meant to be "PSE" for "please." An "I" is two dots in Morse code while a "S" is three.

If the message starts with "PSE," it translates to "Please send QSL [acknowledgement] of our contact."

Popkin questioned whether the last two letters were "OT" or "OM" because a missing dash would make the difference between a "T" and an "M."

But either combination would qualify as acceptable amateur radio talk for either "old timer" or "old man."

Nearly everyone else who wrote provided the same or similar explanation.

Figure 1. This Mexican airmail stamp was issued June 19, 1929, in memory of aviator Capt. Emilio Carranza.

I was amazed to discover the number of people who share both hobbies: amateur radio and stamp collecting. One gentleman, obviously in his 80s or 90s, wrote that he had been collecting stamps and talking to his far-flung friends by radio for almost 70 years.

There is not space to name all of those who replied, but I do want to sincerely thank each and every respondent for taking the time to write. Best of all, some of the replies were on QSL cards, so I have more items to add to my collection.

•

A couple of years ago (*Linn's*, July 28, 2003), I highlighted a flight made by Capt. Emilio Carranza, a Mexican pioneer aviator. He flew to Washington, D.C., in 1928 on a goodwill mission to improve relations between the two countries.

He was abruptly ordered to return to Mexico by his commanding officer and crashed during a violent thunderstorm in the Pinelands of New Jersey. His body was recovered by members of a nearby Legion Post and shipped back to Mexico.

Subsequently, money was raised, in large part by Mexican schoolchildren, to erect a monument at the spot where his body was found.

Each July, a memorial service is held in remembrance of his fatal flight. These services attract a lot of local attention because members of the Mexican diplomatic corps and relatives of Carranza usually attend.

This year, *Linn's* readers Gene Fricks and Richard Zatorski, both of nearby towns in New Jersey, sent clippings from the *Philadelphia Inquirer* reporting on the story of the Carranza flight and his demise.

This time there was a new twist. A young filmmaker, Robert Emmons, is working on a documentary of the Carranza flight. Called *Goodwill*, the film is expected to be ready for previewing this winter. I will be anxious to see this film.

It also was reported that other producers are interested in making a film of the story.

Although Carranza's legacy seems to have faded in his own homeland, his memory is indelibly etched on Mexican stamps. On June 19, 1929, the first anniversary of his death, a set of six airmail stamps (Scott C5-10) were issued bearing a cameo portrait of Carranza on the left and a picture of his plane *Mexico Excelsior* on the right.

The plane's name was derived from *Excelsior,* the Mexico City daily newspaper that subsidized his flight.

Figure 1 shows the 20-centavo stamp from the set.

Overprinted versions of the Carranza airmail stamps were issued in 1930 and 1932 (Scott C29-36, C40-44), adding up to a total of 19 different stamps.

Figure 2. A 1947 10-peso Mexican airmail stamp pictures aviator Capt. Emilio Carranza.

I have seen many philatelic covers bearing these stamps, but few commercial envelopes. This could offer a challenging field for an ambitious collector to pursue.

Carranza was again memorialized in 1947 on the 10-peso bicolor airmail stamp (Scott C178) shown in Figure 2. This high-denomination stamp is seldom seen on letters, but it was used often on heavy packets and packages. Both used and unused examples are plentiful.

•

Specialists in Mexican stamps enjoyed two opportunities to acquire scarce items for their collections this fall.

On Sept. 9, dealer Fernando Perez Maldonado of Monterrey, Mexico, conducted an auction sale in Guadalajara, Mexico, in conjunction with Expojalfil, a well-regarded Mexican stamp show.

The auction comprised more than 1,300 lots and covered the period from prestamp times to the present. About half of the lots did not sell, probably because consigners insisted on reserves that were too high.

I obtained a couple of items for my own collec-

(Please turn to page 24)

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Mexican stamps in sales in Monterey and Reno

(Continued from page 22)

tion and offered bids below the reserves on two others. The consigner would not accept them and wanted his material returned unsold.

A second sale was conducted in Reno, Nev., Oct. 28 by Nick Follansbee. As always, this sale attracted a good floor, including a collector/dealer who flew in from Tasmania, Australia, and who bought heavily.

Again, I was lucky to capture three items for my collection at prices I felt were fair considering the rarity of the material.

According to a friend who acted as my agent, the bidding was lively on all of the choice items.

He said that the Imperial Eagles, which comprised a large share of the sale, were especially hot and drew spirited bidding.

•

In closing, I wish all the best for the upcoming holidays and I hope at least one or two of your presents will provide further pleasure and enjoyment of the wonderful hobby that we share. ■

Two-volume book illustrates the postmarks of Mexico's colonial era

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Linn's readers sometimes suggest topics they would like to read about in this column. For example, Ben Beede asked, "How about a discussion of catalogs for prephilatelic covers from both the Spanish and Mexican eras?"

Fortunately, there is a book that matches that request. In 1971, two eminent Spanish stamp collectors, Jorge Guinovart and Manuel Tizon, collaborated on the two-volume *Prefilatelia Espanola*.

The subtitle, *A study of the postal markings of Spain and her dominions of the Indies in the 18th and 19th centuries*, clearly defines the scope of the work.

More than 5,000 postmarks are illustrated in the two volumes. The book is written in Spanish, but this should not be too much of a problem for a serious collector with a Spanish-English dictionary.

Vol. I and much of Vol. II deal with the postal markings used at post offices in Spain. About half of Vol. II examines the rest of Spain's vast colonial empire. In the colonial part, Mexico is included in a section on the "Dominions of the Indies" under the vice royalty of New Spain.

The sections are grouped according to the hierarchies of the colonial empire as they existed at the end of the 18th century.

A typical page from the book is shown nearby. The various postmarks are reproduced in their colors of use. The illustrations were made from careful tracings of actual postmarks.

Listed at the left are dates or time spans recorded for the postmark's usage, and at the right are estimates of the value of the mark, invariably on cover.

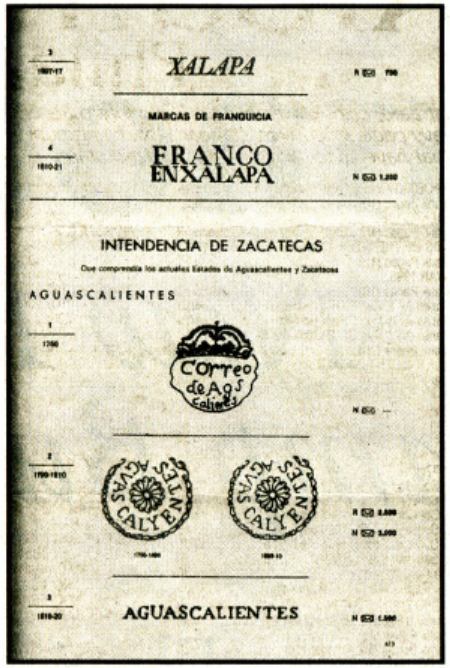
The values are given in pesetas, as of 1971. Current valuations would be much higher. When a stampless cover collection was sold at auction in 2005, clear markings from the Spanish colonial period fetched bids in the low to middle three figures.

Some of the earliest markings would command even higher realizations, especially from the correo mayor era, when mails were handled by individuals who purchased the monopoly to do so from the Spanish crown.

In the book, usage dates for Mexico end in 1821, when Mexico succeeded in wresting its independence from Spain.

Many of the devices used to mark mail in colonial times continued to be used well beyond that date. Stampless covers from between 1820 and 1856 bear postmarks from the colonial period. These markings also are found on stamped letters, especially from small towns that handled limited amounts of mail.

About 35 pages of the book feature postmarks from the area of New Spain, which encompassed the central part of modern Mexico. Other areas administered by Spain included the northern provinces (parts of which now lie within the states of California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas) and parts of the so-called Captaincy of Guatemala, which governed most of what is now the Mexican state of Chiapas. Many attractive markings emanated from the Chiapas area.



A page from a book on 18th- and 19th-century postmarks of Spain and its colonies.

An interesting one-frame exhibit could be mounted by tracking, with stamps and covers, postmarks from the Spanish colonial era that persisted in use from the late 1700s well into the 19th century.

Only 1,000 copies were printed of *Prefilatelia Espanola.* When I purchased my copies in the mid-70s, the book was priced at $25.

Where can you get the book now? I recommend searching on the Internet or contacting a dealer who specializes in stamp-hobby books.

The American Philatelic Research Library at Bellefonte, Pa., has a copy of the work. If you want to do research only on the New World area, this might be an option. The markings from this region are contained in fewer than 100 pages, and a few hours should suffice to glean the needed information.

A similar study, *The Prestamp Postal Markings of Mexico,* was published in 1965 by MEPSI, the Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International. Compiled by Otto Yag and John Bash, this work includes most of the relevant markings that appear in the Guinovart and Tizon study.

The MEPSI book also is out of print, but again, given time, a philatelic book specialist could probably find a copy. It, too, is available at the APRL, and it resides in the MEPSI library for loan to members.

Spanish colonial markings from Mexico offers a real challenge, but one with interesting and rewarding dividends. ■

Mexico issues pane of 33 to commemorate 150th anniversary of stamps

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

In my tribute to the 150th anniversary of Mexican stamps in *Linn's*, (Sept. 5, 2006, page 15), I wondered if Mexico's postal service, Sepomex, might do something special to mark this milestone. It did, albeit a couple of months late.

Mexican stamp collectors had hoped to organize an international stamp show in Mexico, but botched planning and local politics got in the way.

A Mexico City ceremony scheduled for Aug. 1, 2006, the exact anniversary date, was canceled by Sepomex at the last minute.

Finally, on Oct. 9, 2006, a pane of 33 stamps commemorating the 150th anniversary of Mexico's first stamps was issued in a ceremony at Mexico City's postal palace.

Thirty-two stamps in the pane of 33 show a full-face portrait of Miguel Hidalgo y Castillo, father of the Mexican struggle for independence and almost the exclusive honoree on 19th-century Mexican stamps. Each stamp measures about 1-inch square.

The portraits are in five colors, one for each of five denominations. There are seven each of the 6.50 peso and 7.50p stamps, and six each of the 9p, 10.50p and 13p.

Each stamp represents one of Mexico's 32 states, with the state's name inscribed below the portrait.

Text that explains what the stamp commemorates appears above the portrait. The country name and denomination are to the left, and the years "1856-2006" are to the right.

Shown on the left in Figure 1 is the 6.50p stamp with the state name "Aguascalientes."

Pictured on the right in Figure 1 is the 33rd stamp in the pane. This large 50p stamp is three times the width of the smaller stamps.

This stamp is located on the right side of the pane in the fourth row. It shows a partial portrait of Hidalgo.

The lower denominations correspond to common rates and supplementary fees. The large 50p stamp would find use only on a package that weighed a lot or was heavily insured.

The stamps were printed in the government print shop, TIEV. In the recent past, most Mexican stamps were produced by contract printers, but TIEV has resumed printing stamps.

The design for the portrait appears to have come from the TIEV archives.

Figure 2 shows a 10p airmail stamp issued in 1952 in Mexico's Monuments and Architecture series (Scott C197). Ricardo Venegas, the designer of the new commemoratives, used that same head design cropped slightly for the small-size stamps.

Venegas flipped the portrait horizontally and cropped it further for the 50p.

The total face value of the pane is a whopping 343p. That is equivalent to about $32 and represents a hefty chunk of money for the average collector.

Figure 1. Mexico honored the 150th anniversary of its first stamps with a pane of 33 issued Oct. 9, 2006. The small stamp at left is denominated 6.50 pesos; the large stamp at right is denominated 50p. The stamps show Miguel Hidaglo y Castillo, the father of Mexico's struggle for independence.

Figure 2. The designs of Mexico's commemoratives shown in Figure 1 are based on the portrait from this 1952 stamp.

The printing quantity of 200,000 panes is more than adequate for collector demand, as well as for those postal patrons who prefer commemorative stamps for their mail.

The presence of so many different denominations, however, especially 50p, could discourage sales of full panes to the average user.

As hinted in some stamp-hobby circles, this pane could have been created specifically for the philatelic market. The size is such, 7.7 inches by 8.6 inches, that it will fit handily on most album pages.

Another feature that might appeal to the serious collector is that the names of the 52 districts that comprised the postal network in 1856 are printed in security ink in the marginal selvage outside of the stamps. This ink is visible only under ultraviolet light.

The appropriate state seals also are overprinted in security ink on the individual stamps.

I'll be interested to learn if these stamps enjoy wide use on everyday mail. If you have some information on this, write to me, Dale Pulver, in care of Linn's Editor, Box 29, Sidney, OH 45365.

I think that it would be quite a challenge to assemble a collection of stamps from all 32 states legitimately used on regular or commercial mail.

A new-issue dealer is offering the pane to his regular subscribers at $57.95, slightly less than twice the face value. He speculates that the Scott catalog editors will probably assign the pane a valuation of about $65. So far, he has sensed no great demand for the pane. ■

Mexican revenue stamped paper book compiles 20 years of research

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

The new book *The Revenue Stamped Paper of Mexico, 1821-1876*, by Donald Scott and Frank Sternad, deals with a subject that has long puzzled serious collectors and for which little literature in the English language exists.

The book represents more than 20 years of research, organizing and writing.

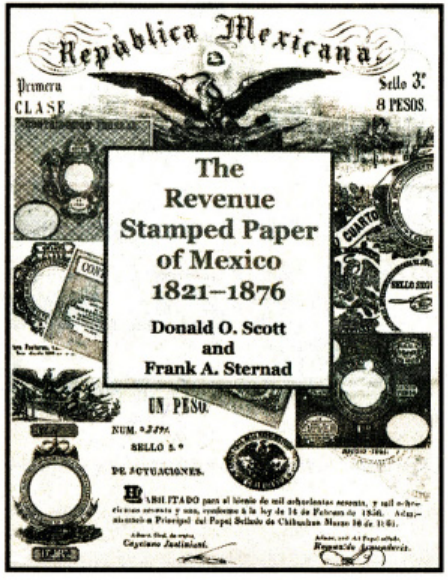
What is stamped paper? Basically, it was a system of taxation. For more than 200 years in Mexico, documents concerned with the transfer of money, such as deeds, contracts, bills of lading, bills of exchange and wills, had to be recorded on paper imprinted with a government seal to be considered legal and binding.

Such paper was purchased from the tax authorities with the cost (tax) dependent on the nature of the transaction. Big sheets were for large, complicated transactions. Small ones were for lesser deals.

This means of taxation was devised in Spain in 1636 (in Holland in 1624) and installed in the colonies.

Scott and Sternad confine their study to the period from the time of Mexican independence up to 1876 when the first adhesive revenue stamps were issued.

In Spanish, the paper is known as "renta papel sellado" (revenue stamped paper). Collectors of the classic stamps of Mexico encounter renta papel sellado early on with the emergency first-design issue of 1867 printed on a thin, grayish paper watermarked "R.P.S." (Scott 42-45) and again on some of the papers used for the Hidalgo stamps of 1872 (81-86, 87-92).



Cover of *The Revenue Stamped Paper of Mexico, 1821-1876* by Donald Scott and Frank Sternad.

The book is large, filling 367 pages. The various government imprints (seals) are pictured and discussed, as are the manufacture of paper, the papermakers and the watermarks this paper bears. To give some idea of the scope of coverage, 91 pages illustrate imprint designs, 63 pages are devoted to catalog listings, and there are 166 watermark illustrations.

The whole system of taxation is thoroughly discussed, using clear, easy-to-understand tables showing the classes of document and their values.

I feel that the chapter titled "Papel Sellado: Its Place in History," the Spanish-English vocabulary, the glossary and the list of abbreviations would be useful to all serious students of Mexican postal history. Even if you do not collect or plan to collect Mexican revenue stamped paper, these sections are almost worth the price of the book.

Also included is a conversion list for collectors who have used the Richard Byron Stevens revenue stamp catalog to classify their material. This catalog, *The Revenue Stamps of Mexico*, last updated in 1979, today is woefully out-of-date and incomplete.

The Revenue Stamped Paper of Mexico, 1821-1876 is available in two editions: one with all black-and-white pages except the color softcover and a deluxe edition with 100 pages of high-resolution illustrations and several interior color pages.

Both editions are in an 8½-by-11-inch format, perfectbound with a softcover.

The book's cover is shown nearby. The design features a collage of revenue stamped paper. The example shown to the right of Sternad's name includes an oval with an inscription that translates to "Counterfeiting papel sellado is punishable by death, noting same on this very same paper." They did not fool around in those days.

The black-and-white edition is $50 to any address in the United States, and the deluxe edition is $85. Write to Frank Sternad, Box 560, Fulton, CA 95439 or e-mail fsternad@sonic.net.

I received the cheaper of the two editions as a review copy and find it fully adequate for my use, which I expect will be substantial, since I have a bundle of unsorted documents to organize.

How many people collect the revenue stamped paper of Mexico? I don't know, but I would think it must be a small market. This leads to a second question, how can a book of this scope and size be published at this price for such a small market? The answer is that it is published through a print-on-demand service.

With print-on-demand, there is no large up-front investment, only the authors' time and effort. Orders can be filled as they come in. In fact, one of the authors told me that the printer can print and ship directly to the buyer.

I have no hesitation in giving this book a resounding thumbs up. It will be of great value to those who collect revenue stamped paper and even to those who do not but would like to know more. ■

Mexicana Airlines first-flight covers franked with commemoratives

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

A few weeks ago, a friend who is also a stamp dealer gave me a batch of covers commemorating the inauguration of new service flights by Mexicana Airlines.

He wondered if I was interested in them, either to purchase or to write about in *Linn's*.

The lot comprised 32 covers spanning a time frame from December 1974 to November 1985.

It was fairly obvious from the enclosures that the envelopes were meant to call attention to additional service on various routes between Mexican cities with many connections to the United States.

I do not recall previously encountering any covers quite like these when I was browsing through dealer boxes.

The covers measure about 6½ inches by 4½ inches (European jumbo size), much larger than the No. 6¾ envelopes used for commemorative covers in the United States.

Through my dealer friend, I was able to contact the gentleman to whom the covers were addressed, hoping to learn more background about them.

At the time the covers were mailed, the addressee was a director of and a writer for the American Air Mail Society and its *Airpost Journal*.

This 1983 Mexicana Airlines Mexico City-Philadephia first-flight cover bears a 10-peso Mexican airmail stamp issued in 1947.

The addressee could not remember how he came to be on the Mexicana Airlines mailing list, but he thought it might have had something to do with his position in the society.

He could give no estimate of how many covers were prepared for these flights or whether or not they were available to the general public or the collecting public.

From the tone of the enclosures, I suspect that the covers were meant primarily as souvenirs for airline bigwigs and as promotional pieces to travel agencies. If this is the case, I would conclude that the quantity was in the low hundreds.

All of the covers bear cachets and attractive Mexican commemorative stamps, usually relevant to aviation or to the cities involved in the routes.

For example, the earliest cover in the group, announcing the inaugural flight from Mexico to Kansas City, Mo., bears the 1974 80-centavo diamond-shaped airmail stamp celebrating the 50th anniversary of Mexican airlines (Scott C430).

Some of the covers bear U.S. stamps. The cover for the first flight from Los Angeles to San Jose del Cabo, Baja California, is franked with the 1977 U.S. 13¢ stamp commemorating Charles Lindbergh's nonstop solo flight across the Atlantic Ocean (Scott 1710).

All the covers were carefully struck with cancellations made especially for the occasion.

The cover shown nearby marks the inaugural flight from Mexico City to Philadelphia, with a stop in Cancun, the tourist mecca on the Yucatan peninsula.

The flight took place April 24, 1983. At that time, the airmail postage from Mexico to the United States was 13 pesos. The period of severe inflation in Mexico was in full swing.

The person in charge of preparing the covers must have had some knowledge of Mexican stamp history because the postage was paid with the 10p Emilio Carranza stamp of 1947 (Scott C178), plus the 3p 10th National Census stamp of 1980 (1200).

I wrote about Carranza, one of the early Mexican hero aviators, in the Mexico column in the Dec. 4, 2006, *Linn's*.

It seems amazing that stocks of a 36-year old stamp could be found at that late date for a mass mailing such as this.

My new friend went on to lament that first-flight cover collecting has fallen on hard time, although it was a hot specialty years ago. He did say that European collectors still actively pursue first-flight collecting.

The two most recent covers chronologically in the batch pose an interesting question. Both were mailed in 1985 but bear only 80c franking. At that time, a letter to the United States cost 35p.

I wonder how the underpayment was satisfied: Was cash paid at the post office where the envelopes were posted?

Backstamps on both covers confirm that they were handled in the Mexican mail, so it does not seem plausible that it was a case of a postal clerk overlooking the shortfall.

Another reason might be that appropriate stamps for a single-stamp franking were not available, and the Mexicana Airlines officials did not want to clutter the cover with several stamps.

If you have an explanation for this anomaly, write to me, Dale Pulver, in care of Linn's Editor, Box 29, Sidney, OH 45365.

I also would be interested in knowing if many of these flight covers are in collector hands. ■

Postmark collecting on late 19th-century Mexican stamps fun at low cost

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

The other day I stumbled across a small glassine envelope containing about a dozen loose stamps. Apparently, I had plucked them from circuit books and had not gotten around to merging them into my various collections.

Most of the stamps had what some call socked-on-the-nose cancellations.

I am rather partial to such cancels and buy them whenever I have the chance.

From the standpoint of postal history, a canceled stamp is not quite as good as a complete cover, but most canceled stamps do have a story to tell. They also have done their duty.

I find it relaxing to study the various bits of information they contain.

Figure 1 shows a 15-centavo Mail Coach stamp of the 19th century. It bears the upper half of a clearly struck double-ring datestamp reading "Tepeji," for Tepeji del Rio, a town located not too far north of Mexico City.

When Mexico's first stamps were issued in 1856, Tepeji del Rio received small direct shipments. Used stamps from this town are among the rarities of that first issue, and collectors are lucky if they can find one.

Figure 1. This Mexican Mail Coach stamp bears a double-ring datestamp of Tepeji del Rio, a town north of Mexico City.

There was no district name overprint for Tepeji del Rio used on the 1856 stamps, so any stamp must be identified by the cancel it bears. Some Tepeji del Rio stamps have the Mexico name overprint.

While the stamp shown in Figure 1 is not rare, it reminds me of one that is.

I also find it fun to search for stamps canceled at small, obscure towns that did not handle a great deal of mail. That's probably why I chose the stamp pictured in Figure 2. It was used in Altotonga in the state of Veracruz.

The double-oval postmark that translates to "Postage Paid at Altotonga" on this 25c stamp suggests that it might have been used on a parcel or heavy letter. This small double oval pattern was used at many small offices.

As the 19th century came to a close, mail handling and processing in Mexico became more systematic and sophisticated. Attempts were made to standardize postmarking devices to include more information than just the town and state of origin.

Figure 2. This Mexican stamp bears a double-ring oval cancel indicating that postage was paid at Altotonga.

Illustrated in Figure 3, left, is a stamp bearing a neatly struck double-ring

Figure 3. Two stamps postmarked with location (or service) and date and time: from Teziutlan (left) and one on government-business mail (right) bearing Mexico's bridge-type postmark

postmark of Teziutlan in the state of Puebla.

The postmark contains not only the basic data but also the day, month, year and time the mailpiece entered the mailstream.

Such standardized postmarks are often referred to as the "bridge" type, in reference to the designs above and below the central panel.

A similar postmark on the stamp shown in Figure 3, right, is inscribed "Correspa. Ofl." which means that it was used on a government-business, or Official, cover.

A faint "OFICIAL" overprint is on the stamp.

Other service-designating inscriptions found on bridge postmarks identify international mail, packages, branch post offices and mail handled on railroads by route agents.

Another small collection I started focuses on the time inscribed in datestamps.

Figure 4 shows a stamp processed Nov. 6, 1899, at branch office A. The branch is named in the base of the postmark.

Figure 4. This Mexican stamp was canceled at 11:30 a.m. Nov. 6, 1999. The half-hour designation is unusual.

The stamped time is 11:30 a.m., the hour the clerk began processing letters to be put into the main mailstream. It is a bit unusual to find the time designated to the half hour. It generally is indicated in even hours.

A challenge is to see how many different times you can find. Daylight hours from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. are not too tough.

Nighttime is another story, although the other day I found one marked at 2 a.m. I suspect that the night clerk was processing a last-minute collection for a mail sack to go aboard the night train.

Collecting clear, complete postmarks on Mexican stamps issued near the end of the 19th century and into the first half of the 20th century is not as difficult as it might seem. I always find a few in the American Philatelic Society circuit books that I receive.

Over the years, I have built up a nice showing.

Usually, no premium is asked for well-struck, well-centered postmarks on Mexican stamps, so you can form a decent collection without spending a lot of money.

Unfortunately, finding good canceled Mexican stamps issued in the past 20 years or so is difficult. Although much mail is still processed by hand, postmarks are carelessly applied, often with smudgy inks. Clear strikes are the exception rather than the rule.

But if you are a patient, strong-willed collector, this could be the challenge you need. ■

Cover bearing pair of Mexico's first-issue stamps found in sales circuit

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

I recently stumbled upon a cover that was too attractive to pass up. The cover is shown nearby.

It came to me a few months ago by way of an American Philatelic Society circuit book. I knew immediately that it belonged with good company in my collection of Mexico's stamps of the first design.

The cover actually is a folded letter. Before envelopes came into widespread use, sheets of writing paper measuring about 11 inches by 15 inches were folded in half, and the message was written on the outside of the doubled paper.

The doubled paper then was folded further into a cover measuring about 3 inches by 6 inches, and one end was tucked into the other and was sealed with wax.

Such a message would be considered a single-rate letter. If there were enclosures or additional sheets, extra postage was charged.

This cover bears a pair of the black-on-green 1-real stamps of the 1861 issue. The stamps pay the single-weight letter rate from Saltillo to Durango.

Despite a couple of minor age spots, the cover is in immaculate condition. It is addressed in a clear, cursive hand to Francisco Gurza, a well-known merchant of that city.

The author of this column found this Mexican cover in a sales circuit. The cover bears a pair of 2-real first-design stamps.

Business files are the source of most classic Mexican covers, and the Gurza archive is well known to specialists of stamps of the mid-19th century.

I have other Gurza covers in my collection.

The stamps on the cover are neatly canceled and tied with an oval postmark that translates to "Principal Administration of the Post Office Saltillo."

The inner half sheets of many early Mexican folded letters have been torn off and discarded, but this is a complete letter, and the completeness enhances further its desirability.

The contents, although faded, deal with some business transactions between Gurza and the writer, Jose Maria Arispe y Ramon.

The letter appears to have been written or dictated by Arispe's daughter, although the signature (in a different hand) is probably by Arispe himself.

Many merchants of that era used scribes or secretaries for their correspondences, and that could explain why the handwriting on the letter is so perfectly uniform.

Close examination of the postmark reveals that the inscribed date reads Jan. 26, (1863), but the letter itself is dated Jan. 27. This suggests that the clerk in the post office neglected to change the date slug in the postmarking device or the letter itself was misdated.

According to docketing on the flap of the letter, Gurza received it Feb. 2 and answered it two weeks later.

Durango and Saltillo are about 330 miles apart, with some difficult stretches of mountain roads to negotiate, so the five- or six-day delivery time is not unreasonable. In fact, it is quite remarkable.

Also, mail probably was dispatched two or three times a week, not on a daily basis.

Saltillo is one of the early postal districts that is not considered too difficult or rare, but first-design stamps from that office are rather elusive.

I had been searching for a finer example of the first-design 2r stamp from Saltillo to replace one in my exhibit, and I had not had much luck. Even recent specialized auctions did not include that stamp from Saltillo.

This cover would probably not rate listing as an individual lot in a dealer's auction. Nick Follansbee's latest *A Catalogue of the Stamps of Mexico 1856-1910* values the stamp alone at $15.

Even if you applied a small premium for the pair of stamps on cover, the cover is unlikely to fetch $100, which many auction houses use as a bare minimum estimate for a separate, single-lot listing.

Still, I consider the cover to be a good find, and I am happy to add it to my first-design collection. ■

Almost 4,600 covers carried on Mexican regular airmail service first flight

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

After a number of fits and starts during the late 1920s, government authorities inaugurated Mexico's first regular airmail service Oct. 1, 1928.

The service originated in Mexico City, flew north (with intermediate stops) to Nuevo Laredo on the United States border, where the mail could connect with surface or airmail service in the United States on CAM 22 (contract airmail route).

According to the *American Air Mail Catalogue*, published by the American Air Mail Society, that first Mexican flight carried almost 4,600 pieces of mail of which only 552 were addressed to Mexican destinations.

With airmail philately a red hot field in the 1920s and 1930s, I assume that most of the mail was collector inspired.

The covers illustrated in Figures 1 and 2 are typical of the philatelic mail carried on this flight.

The Figure 1 cover (a plain envelope) is addressed to Chicago. The Figure 2 cover, with red and blue perimeter lozenges, is addressed to New Hampshire. Figure 2 shows both the front and back of the cover.

Figure 1. This souvenir cover was carried Oct. 1, 1928, on the first flight of Mexico's first regular airmail service.

Each cover is stamped with an official cachet at its upper left.

Backstamps track the routing the covers took and the times they reached transfer points along the way.

The covers arrived at Nuevo Laredo Oct. 2 because delays en route forced an overnight stop at San Luis Potosi.

The Laredo, Texas, backstamps are dated Oct. 3, indicating that it took another day to cross the border. The Chicago-bound cover arrived there Oct. 4 and presumably was delivered the same day.

The New Hampshire cover went by way of Cleveland (Oct. 4) and Boston (Oct. 5) and probably did not reach the addressee until Oct. 6.

The delivery times demonstrated by these two covers give a hint why businessmen were reluctant to use early airmail.

For the substantially higher postage, there was no assurance the mail would move faster, and mail trains traveled both day and night.

Postal authorities, however, touted airmail as a time-saver. Slogan cancels to this effect were used in Nuevo Laredo as receiving marks on both covers. Figure 2 shows one.

Another curious aspect of the two covers is the 60-centavo franking.

Airmail postal rates to the United States were up and down during 1928 depending on service and

Figure 2. Front and back of another souvenir cover sent from Mexico to New Hampshire on the Oct. 1, 1928, first flight of Mexico's first regular airmail service. The cover reached its destination Oct. 6. The Nuevo Laredo slogan-cancel receiving mark, at the lower left on the cover's reverse, promotes the use of airmail to save time. The cover was routed through Cleveland and Boston.

routing. The rate from June 1 to Sept. 30 was established at 60c (10c for a first-class letter plus 50c for air service).

On Oct. 1, a new rate went into effect, reducing the airmail portion to 25c. It seems that the two covers were prepared ahead of time with the expectation that the rate would still be 60c. Covers exist with the correct 35c rate, but they are scarcer than those shown with this column.

The airmail stamp used on these covers appears to be the 1927 50c Eagle (Scott C2), the watermarked version of the first airmail design issued in 1922. The stamp was printed in a quantity of 200,000, which some believe was for an airmail service that never materialized.

The other stamp on the covers is the ordinary 10c Cuahtemoc Monument stamp (Scott 655) in general use during the 1920s.

Difficulties in maintaining schedules and other problems caused routing changes.

The Queretaro stop was discontinued early on but was restored March 1, 1929, the same day that Saltillo was designated as the route terminus. Mail was transferred by overnight train from there to the border without delaying the transfer to the U.S. postal system.

The route was discontinued in September 1929 and not revived until 1932.

This airmail route, MEX 8, as listed in the *American Air Mail Catalogue*, would make an interesting and challenging topic for an ambitious collector.

At its inception, the route served as the conduit for airmail destined for the United States, Canada, Great Britain, Europe and even South America.

Covers such as the two featured in this column are plentiful and reasonably priced. Covers to overseas countries are scarcer but can be found. Covers mailed and delivered within Mexico can be difficult to locate.

I would be interested to hear from any fans of this route. Write to me, Dale Pulver, in care of Linn's Editor, Box 29, Sidney, OH 45365. ■

Mexican stamps, postal history offer many ideas for one-frame exhibits

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Over the many years I have collected Mexico, I have enjoyed mounting and entering several medium-to-large-size exhibits in stamp show competitions.

Recently, I shifted my focus to one-frame exhibits. This category of exhibiting has seen a tremendous growth in popularity in the past 20 years.

One-frame exhibits not only appeal to seasoned exhibitors but also are useful to those who are creating their first exhibits for competition.

At the American Philatelic Society's Ameristamp Expo show in Riverside, Calif., in February, 52 one-frame exhibits vied for the single-frame champion of champions. More than 80 exhibits were entered in the special competition for one-frame exhibits.

I feel that Mexico offers many opportunities for appropriate one-frame treatment.

One of my first one-frame exhibits was a study of Mexico's 1872 "Anotado" overprints on the Hidalgo issue of 1868.

The exhibit deals with a fraud perpetrated by employees of the post office who printed and sold stamps to large users for personal gain. This chapter in Mexico's postal history is aptly suited for one-frame treatment.

Years ago, I acquired a job lot of "Anotado" overprinted stamps. Items from this lot form the core of my exhibit. Later, I added a few pieces to round it out.

Figure 1. An 1856 2-real green stamp used at the district office of Puebla. The author of this column created a one-frame exhibit of 2r green stamps.

A favorite one-frame exhibit of mine is called "Making the 2-reales Rate, 1856-67." In this exhibit, I use covers to show the many ways the 2r franking was satisfied with either multiples of lower-denomination stamps or fractional parts (splits) of the higher denominations, a practice that was permitted by the postal authorities when the correct denomination was not available.

Both the aforementioned exhibits scored well in one-frame competitions at local and national stamp shows.

When the American Air Mail Society came to the March Party stamp show in Cleveland some years back, I worked up another one-frame exhibit showing the roller-coaster ride airmail rates took during the first few years that airmail service struggled to establish itself in Mexico.

This exhibit contains covers demonstrating the ups and downs of surcharges for airmail handling while the post office tried to find the right combination of rates that would induce more people to use the service.

About four years ago, I prepared a one-frame exhibit for a local show on the 2r green Hidalgo stamp of 1856 (Scott 3).

The 2r stamp paid the most common postal rate in effect at the time. It was printed in the largest quantity of any stamp in Mexico's first series, slightly more than 1,600,000.

The exhibit shows the production of the stamp, examples from the three plates that were used, various plate flaws and the validating postal district name overprints. Figure 1 shows a 2r green stamp used at the district office of Puebla.

Figure 2. The author thinks that Mexico's Exporta definitive series would make a good one-frame exhibit. The stamps show Mexican exports, such as tequila on the 10-peso stamp.

The greatest challenge is finding examples from the so-called rare postal

districts that received few 2r stamps from the main post office.

I have collected Mexican first-issue stamps for more than 35 years, so I had a large number of the common to scarce districts in my duplicate stock.

I also had to borrow stamps from my main exhibit to put in this one-frame display.

My ultimate goal is to obtain the best stamps I can find and afford from as many districts as possible. But it won't be an easy task.

Everyone wants the scarce stamps, and at auctions, where such items appear from time to time, bidding sometimes becomes brutal.

My latest one-frame project is a study of the blue stamps issued by Mexico during the 19th century. I call it "Mexico: The 19th Century Blues."

With the exception of the first-design stamps issued in 1861, every other regular issue had one or more blue stamps.

The exhibit contains not only individual stamps but also proofs, provisionals, postal stationery and covers bearing blue stamps.

This exhibit has not fared too well with the judges who have criticized its unorthodox approach, but I had a lot of fun putting it together.

I will be showing it again at the Greater Houston Stamp Show Sept. 14-16 in Humble, Texas. The show will feature a special one-frame blue-theme competition.

The show prospectus said: " 'Blue' exhibits must be based in some way on the color blue, whether by the actual color of some element of the material or by a theme or topic related to the color blue."

While most of my attention so far has been directed to older material, I believe there are good opportunities for one-frame exhibits among the more modern Mexican stamps.

For example, the Exporta definitive (regular-issue) stamps spring to mind. Figure 2 depicts the 10-peso Exporta stamp touring the Mexican product of tequila.

A large, multiframe exhibit emphasizing Exporta stamps and uses could be assembled. But a smaller study showing the 28 face-different designs, the 13 papers used in the printings, various errors and the reuse of designs in new denominations to match rates in a soaring inflationary climate would fit nicely in a 16-page one-frame display.

The Tourist and the Conservation definitive series are similar candidates for one-frame studies.

There are many other possibilities. Remember, that in one-frame exhibiting it is important to chose a subject or area that can be conveniently covered and not underdeveloped in a single frame.

If you have never exhibited competitively before, one-frame exhibits might be more economical, will not require as much work and will give you a sense of pride in accomplishment.

Perhaps best of all, if you enter an APS-accredited national show, you will receive a written critique of your exhibit that usually contains suggestions for improvement. ■

Gutter pairs can spice up album pages, collections of Mexican stamps

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Some years ago a fellow Mexico collector sent me a list of Mexican stamps that exist as gutter pairs and blocks.

I was amazed to learn that there are more than 250 varieties of such multiples. I am not sure how many people collect gutter varieties, but I still see them offered in circuit books. They were once a popular collecting sideline.

A gutter piece is a pair or larger block of stamps with unprinted selvage between the stamps. This selvage can vary in width depending on the layout and format of the stamps on the printing plate. The selvage can be either horizontal or vertical.

Figure 1 shows a typical horizontal gutter pair. The 10-centavo stamp commemorates the 400th anniversary of printing in Mexico. The design shows a portrait of Antonio de Mendoza, the viceroy of New Spain who was responsible for bringing the first printing press to Mexico. The stamp was issued Sept. 1, 1939 (Scott 750).

Figure 1. Horizontal gutter pair of 10-centavo stamp issued in 1939 to mark the 400th anniversary of printing in Mexico.

In the days when large flat-bed or rotary presses were used to print stamps and fiscal paper, these gutters served as cutting lanes for subdividing the large sheets into smaller, more easily handled panes.

You normally would not be able to find gutter pieces at your neighborhood post office. But if you had access to uncut sheets, they could be divided so that the gutter remained intact.

The earliest stamps on my specialist friend's list are the 1913-16 Sonora locals, with 44 varieties (Scott 321-413).

To some collectors, calling these items gutter pairs might be stretching the definition a bit because the locals were printed on small sheets with one or two rows of stamps along one edge, after which the sheet was reversed and the process repeated.

Gutter pairs from the Sonora sheets are tete-beche, meaning that one design in the pair is inverted with respect to the other.

Beginning with the regular issues of 1923-34, a host of stamps are available as gutter items. More than 100 varieties are recorded. Even airmail stamps and back-of-the-book material are available as gutter pieces.

The vertical pairs of the 1929 series 35c and 50c airmail stamps (Scott C11 and C19) illustrated in Figure 2 clearly demonstrate the different gutter widths encountered.

The 50c pair shown on the left has 15-millimeter spacing, while the 35c shown on the right has 28mm spacing. Other gutter widths exist too.

The wide 28mm spacing implies an inherent danger. Such material could be the source of mischief on the part of would-be counterfeiters. On some 22mm- and 25mm-width gutters I've seen, an extra row of perforations was punched in the unprinted selvage.

Where did all these gutter pieces originate? I feel that most of them entered the market through the philatelic window at the main post office in Mexico City.

Huge quantities of obsolete stamps were transferred from the main vaults to the philatelic office, and this stock could have been in uncut sheets. It would have been reasonable for dealers to convince the philatelic window supervisor to separate the sheets in a manner that would appeal to and enhance sales to collectors.

Figure 2. The 50-centavo Mexican airmail gutter pair on the left has 15-millimeter spacing. The 35c pair on the right has 28mm.

After all, such sales represented pure profit to the post office because it is unlikely they would ever be used on letters.

Is there one source that lists them all? Unfortunately, I know of none, nor do I know of any dealer in Mexican stamps that stocks them.

When dealer Bill Shelton (1923-95) was in business as Bill Shelton Philatelics, he published a price list in 1988 that contained the most complete listing of gutter material I had found up to that time. He also had many of the items in stock. His listings agreed closely with my friend's list.

The pricing of gutter material is varied, but many items can be purchased for a few dollars. The items illustrated with this column cost me less than $5, but that was quite a few years ago.

I do not recommend spending a lot of money on gutter material, but if you focus on the Scott-listed varieties, you might find that spicing up your album pages with a few gutter pieces will add some interest to your collection. ■

19th-century Mexican postal cards: good, inexpensive field to collect

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

Mexican postal stationery is an economical and challenging area to explore. The fastidious collector can find dozens of varieties, and the field is not yet crowded with spend-thrift buyers. Also, useful literature exists.

Mexico's first postal cards were issued in 1882, three years after Mexico joined the Universal Postal Union.

The early cards are ornate, with engraved imprinted stamps based on contemporaneous stamp designs.

Benito Juarez is pictured in the imprinted stamp on the first cards. Subsequent cards show Hidalgo medallion heads, large numerals and eventually the so-called Mulitas or Transportation issue designs.

The designs of the cards for the Numeral and Mulitas series are less ornate than the design of the first issue. The cards bear inscriptions and ratings for either domestic or international service.

The 3-centavo imprinted stamp of the card illustrated in Figure 1, for example, uses the design of the 3c Transportation-issue stamp of 1895.

Figure 1. This ornate Mexican postal card is imprinted with an engraved 3-centavo stamp. The card is addressed to Germany.

The 3c denomination paid the UPU rate to Europe. The card was sent from Mexico City to Germany. It appears to have reached its destination in about 14 days.

The Mexican eagle and the wavy "Servicio Postal Mexicano" inscription is the typical background used for many of the cards of the era.

Mexico's postal service also provided double cards, with a prepaid reply half. Figure 2 shows an example of a reply half mailed back to Mexico, from the Coat of Arms series issued at the end of the 19th century. Its 3c imprinted stamp is embossed.

The card was mailed from Hamburg, Germany, directed by way of New York City and Laredo, Texas (see inscription at top), eventually reaching Mexico City 16 days after it was mailed.

The fancy design embellishments on Mexican postal cards ceased with the Coat of Arms issue. It and subsequent issues have simple, plainly written headings and service inscriptions.

I can only guess how much the public used postal cards, although I think they were popular. Postal rates were such that a mailer could save a centavo or two by using a card. Drawbacks included the limited length of the message and a lack of privacy.

If you want to study all the minor variations in background designs, and there are many, unused cards are probably best.

I am partial to stationery that has done its duty, so I actively search for it in dealer stocks.

In my modest collection of cards, a large number fall into the business or commercial category: requests for catalogs or price lists, offers of merchandise and advices of shipment. I also have several cards from stamp dealers.

Figure 2. This prepaid reply half of a double Mexican postal card embossed with a 3c imprinted stamp was sent from Germany.

Some of my most interesting cards were sent from one stamp collector to another offering or requesting to trade stamps.

Most of these cards were exchanged between Mexico, the United States and Europe, but I found one addressed to the Dutch East Indies and another to South America.

I am always hunting for cards mailed to exotic foreign destinations, although such cards are elusive and dealers think they deserve high prices.

In 1968, the Elmhurst Philatelic Society, now MEPSI (Mexico-Elmhurst Philatelic Society International), published a series of looseleaf catalogs about Mexican postal stationery called *Catalog of Mexico Postal Stationery*. The catalog is still available from the society. For information, contact Tim Carroll, MEPSI Publications Manager, 5454 Allott Ave., Sherman Oaks, CA 91401-5219. ■

How to form a collection of a single Mexican postal district of the mid-1800s

Mexico

By Dale Pulver

When stamps were first issued in Mexico in 1856, they were distributed and sold through a network of postal district offices. Many districts included a large city or town, although a few did not.

Examples of the large offices include the cities of Durango, Guadalajara, Guanajuato, Morelia, Puebla, Queretaro, Veracruz and Zacatecas.

For administrative purposes, the large offices were responsible for distributing stamps to smaller nearby towns within their districts. These towns were called suboffices.

The name of the main district office was overprinted on the stamps to validate them for sale and as a security measure to thwart and discourage the theft of stamps. Without the name overprints, the stamps had no franking value. The system did not always work, and legally used stamps without district names exist.

Over the years, I have viewed many Mexican exhibits where the scope was limited to a single postal district. This provides an interesting approach to forming a collection or an exhibit.

Many large districts had numerous suboffices. Abundant material, both stamps and covers, exists for these large districts, enough material to form an extensive postal history exhibit or collection.

The district of Puebla is a good example. The city lies about 80 miles east of Mexico City on the road to Veracruz.

Figure 1. Mexican stamps of 1861 bearing markings of the Pueblo district office.

Pueblo was an important commercial center in the mid-1800s.

Between 1856 and 1885, the main post office used approximately 20 different devices to cancel stamps and mark letters bearing the name-overprinted stamps. Figure 1 shows two stamps of 1861 bearing examples of the devices used at the main office.

The Puebla district office oversaw about 54 suboffices, and each suboffice used one or more marking devices.

Figure 2 shows stamps from the suboffice of Tehuacan. This suboffice handled a fair amount of mail, so stamps canceled there are not difficult to find.

Figure 3 pictures two stamps, each with half of the oval cancel inscribed "TECAMA CHALCO" for Tecamachalco, a smaller and somewhat scarcer Puebla suboffice.

The overprints were not confined to a single stamp issue. This opens the field for searching significantly, and it adds to the variety of postmarks that are possible to find.

New postmarks were added to the mail clerk's drawer after the volume of mail increased and older validating devices wore out. Some devices, especially those from the small suboffices, were used for long periods of time and their markings can be found on stamps and covers from several issues.

Assembling a showing of the common postmarks on the regularly used stamps from large districts should be relatively easy, especially for Guadalajara, Morelia, Puebla and Veracruz. Also, many of their suboffices would be fairly easy to find.

I have had good luck finding such material in cheap job lots and American Philatelic Society circuit books.

Figure 2. Two Mexican stamps canceled at Tehuacan, a suboffice in the Puebla district.

Figure 3. Two Mexican stamps, each with half a cancel from the small suboffice Tecamachalco.

Quite a few suboffices are truly scarce, and there are some from which no examples have been reported. This presents an opportunity for discovery.

If you choose to venture down the road of a district office postmark collection, some guidance is needed. I highly recommend *Cancellations of Mexico, 1856-1874*, by Joseph Schatzkes, originally published in 1964 by Robson Lowe, and revised and updated by Karl Schimmer and republished by Bill Shelton in 1983. The Schatzkes book lists offices and illustrates postmarks for the years covered.

Both editions are long out of print but often show up at auction. Your favorite philatelic book dealer also might have it.

Get the later edition, if possible. It has much more information than the first. ■

Auction results reveal Mexican market remains strong; updates

Nicolas Follansbee conducted his 19th auction Oct. 20 in Reno, Nev. Follansbee specializes in Mexican stamps and covers, and averages about one auction per year.

I have not heard how the sale fared from the standpoint of attendance or the number of active bidders. But from the prices realized report I received, it appears the overall market for Mexican material is still reasonably strong.

As usual, the better items drew strong bidding. Although some lots did not reach the presale estimates, other lots surpassed them.

A large lot of the 1856 issue (my favorite) containing almost 1,200 stamps brought $8,000. Including dealer's commission, this works out to about $7.50 per stamp, not bad for a well mixed lot with presumably heavy duplication.

Some very fine, seldom-offered back-of-the-book lots (Official and revenue stamps) brought strong bids. I am not well versed in these areas, but I did see items that were new to me.

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I like to end each year with a column that shares responses from readers.

One reader confirmed that the Mexicana Airlines souvenir covers I wrote about in the April 2 *Linn's*, page 26, were indeed available to collectors who requested them. No one has yet commented on their abundance or scarcity.

In the Sept. 3 column, page 50, about Mexican gutter pairs, I suggested that the main source of this material probably was the philatelic window at the main post office in Mexico City. Mike Hart wrote to tell me my supposition was correct. In his letter, he also described how Mexico promoted the sale of surplus stamps in the early 1980s.

The Scott catalog values this Mexican 15-centavo carmine airmail stamp mint, never-hinged at $1.35. The same stamp with a "SERVICIO OFFICIAL" overprint has a catalog value of $350.

In 1981 and again in 1984, the post office published a list of obsolete stamp stock available at face value (or with a slight premium) in Mexican currency. This period was the beginning of Mexico's rampant inflation. The United States dollar eventually became equivalent to hundreds of pesos.

Hart and a friend placed substantial orders and were able to secure huge quantities of stamps at cheap prices. They ordered sheets, knowing that most Mexican stamps were printed in sheets of 60 or 100 stamps consisting of two panes of 30 or 50 separated by a gutter, so they could separate the stamps into gutter pairs or blocks and sell them at a premium.

Hart added that certain stamp dealers were given first opportunity to go through the material. Bill Shelton (1923-95) found some rather pricey material, including a sheet of the 1932 15-centavo "SERVICIO OFICIAL" overprinted airmail Official stamp (Scott CO21). The Scott *Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue* values it mint, never-hinged at $350.

The overprint is on the 1929-34 15c carmine airmail stamp showing an airplane and Mexico's coat of arms (Scott C12). It has a catalog value of $1.35 for a mint, never-hinged stamp, and 20¢ for used. The stamp is shown nearby.

Bert Woodruff wrote to tell me about his fascination with the Exporta definitive (regular-issue) stamps. His interest was kindled after reading about them in my book, *Introduction to the Stamps of Mexico* published by *Linn's* in 1993.

Woodruff wanted the addendum to the table of Exporta varieties that appears in the book as an appendix. I was happy to oblige because I have touted the Exportas as a rewarding challenge for a serious collector.

After the series ended in 1995, I compiled the addendum with the help of information published by Sepomex, the Mexican postal service. If you want a copy, send an addressed, stamped envelope to me, Dale Pulver, Linn's, Box 29, Sidney, OH 45356.

I wish you a happy holiday season and a rewarding New Year. ■

MEXICO BY DALE PULVER

Mexican postage due stamps rarely used for that purpose

Mexico issued its first and only postage due stamps 100 years ago in 1908. The London firm of Bradbury & Wilkinson Co. designed and printed the postage dues. The same firm also printed Mexico's 1899 definitive (regular-issue) stamps.

The design of the postage dues consists of elaborate machine work with a central oval containing one of five denominations: 1 centavo, 2c, 4c, 5c and 10c, all in a deep blue hue and printed on watermarked paper (Scott J1-5).

Unused stamps are plentiful, selling for a $1 or less each.

Legitimately used examples are somewhat more elusive, usually fetching $2-$5 each. The catch is that unless the stamp bears a dated postmark of 1908-13, you cannot be sure whether it was used as a postage due stamp or as a substitute for regular postage during the 1913-15 civil war period.

The postal card shown nearby bears a 2c postage due stamp used for its intended purpose in 1908. It confirms payment of a franking shortage on a drop card mailed at Mexico City.

Close examination provides clues to the mechanism used to collect postage due on underpaid items.

The shortage was noted at the main post office, and the card was marked with a rectangular box with the letter "T" and space for a handwritten number showing the amount due.

The postage due stamp, which partially obscures the name of the addressee, is tied with a double-ring magenta postmark. The postmark is inscribed "Cartero (letter carrier) Mexico, D.F." with the carrier's registry number, 122, in the center. This suggests that the carrier collected the 2c due upon delivery, affixed the postage due stamp and canceled it on the spot.

A 2-centavo blue Mexican postage due stamp used on an underpaid drop-rate postal card mailed in 1908 at Mexico City.

In my many years of browsing through cover boxes at bourses and perusing auction catalogs, I have encountered few such covers. Because of this, I believe they are quite scarce.

I do not know why the postage dues were not more widely used as receipts for postage collected on short-paid envelopes. Perhaps the postmasters felt that keeping the necessary accounts was too cumbersome and time-consuming.

The postage due stamps were widely distributed and eventually were pressed into service during the civil war when stocks of regular stamps ran out.

If you look at the footnote in the Scott *Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue* below the listing of the postage dues, you will find the catalog numbers of postage dues that were overprinted so they could be used as regular postage. Various overprints were applied to the postage dues to validate them for postage during the reigns of whichever general held the upper hand in the Mexican government.

Genuine examples of the overprinted postage due stamps fetch good prices. Be warned that many counterfeits of the overprints exist. In-period usage is important for used stamps.

In 1916, at the start of a period of rapid inflation in Mexico, the postage due stamps were overprinted with surcharges to match soaring postal rates (Scott 593-607).

Keep an eye out for legitimate postage due uses on cover. They might be lurking in the cheap cover boxes at your local dealer or show. ■

MEXICO BY DALE PULVER

Provisional uses of Mexican postage dues as postage stamps

Mexican postage due stamps sometimes were used in place of regular postage stamps during the civil war period of 1913-15.

In my Mexico column in the Jan. 7 *Linn's*, page 34, I might have implied that such provisional uses of postage due stamps could be easier to find than true postage due letters. Such is not the case. Legitimate provisional uses are scarce too.

The situation is further complicated by the array of overprints that appeared during the period.

The overprints can be broadly classified into two groups: overprints applied to validate the stamps for postal use in an area and overprints applied to modify the franking value of the stamps.

Included in the first group is the so-called dollar sign overprint reading "Gobierno $ Constitutionalista" printed vertically on stamps. Figure 1 shows the overprint on the 1908 2-centavo postage due (Scott 435).

Figure 2 pictures the 5c postage due with the so-called Villa monogram (Scott 469). The monogram features the Gothic letters "G C M" (Constitutional Mexican Government). Many deceptive forgeries of the Villa monogram exist.

A smaller cursive monogram with the same letters is known as the Carranza overprint.

Figure 1. The so-called dollar sign overprint on Mexico's 1908 2-centavo postage due stamp.

In the final months of 1916, Mexico's treasury was depleted, and inflation set in. Postage rates began to rise sharply, and new stamps were needed. Again, postage due stamps were hauled out of the post office vaults and surcharged to match the new rates.

The first surcharge used is known as the barril (Spanish for barrel) overprint. The overprint was applied in different colors and denominations on postage due stamps (Scott 593-602).

A second overprint of 2.50 pesos (printed as "$2.50" on the stamps) was applied to postage due stamps in 1916 (Scott 603-07).

Few of the surcharged stamps were actually used. Most experts feel that many of the uses that do survive were probably made for or by stamp collectors.

Thumbing through auction catalogs of Mexican material, I found only a half dozen or so lots of provisional uses of the surcharged postage dues stamps.

In Nicholas Follansbee's Oct. 20, 2007, auction, one lot contained two covers with the surcharged postage dues paying the short-lived 5p rate. One cover was franked with five 1p-on-4c postage dues (Scott 600). The other bore two 2.50p-on-1c postage dues (603).

Follansbee suggested that the two covers, although rare, were probably philatelically inspired. The lot received spirited bidding and was hammered down at $380 against an estimated price range of $200 to $250.

If you have Mexican postage due stamps on cover, I would be happy to hear your opinions about these covers. Write to me, Dale Pulver, in care of Linn's Editor, Box 29, Sidney, OH 45356.

Figure 2. Mexico's 5-centavo postage due stamp with the so-called Villa overprint with a Gothic-letter Constitutional Mexican Government monogram.

If you are thinking about entering the perilous waters of Mexican revolutionary war philately, I recommend securing Follansbee's book *The Stamps of the Mexican Revolution, 1913-1916*, published by the Collectors Club of Chicago in 1996. However, the book may be hard to find. ■

MEXICO BY DALE PULVER

Many Mexican stamps honor stamp shows and conventions

Stamp collecting has never been pursued by large numbers of Mexican citizens, but there have been avid collectors there since the 19th century.

The early collectors traded stamps with each other and also generated enough business to spawn a cadre of dealers.

As time passed and collecting became more sophisticated, stamp shows and exhibitions were staged in Mexico.

Figure 1 shows a label touting a stamp exhibition held in 1935. The label looks like a stamp depicting traditional Mexican subject matter. It is well executed, well printed and has full gum.

Such labels and stickers were popular in the mid-20th century and were created for many stamp shows.

As the hobby became better known and large shows and exhibitions were staged, governments would often mark these events with special stamp issues. Mexico was no exception.

Five stamps were issued by Mexico in 1947 to recognize Cipex, the international show held in New York City (Scott 826-27, C167-69). The 10-centavo low-value of the set shows President Franklin Roosevelt, a well-known stamp collector. The commemorative also includes a stamp-on-stamp design of Mexico's first stamp.

Figure 1. This stamplike label was created for a 1935 stamp exhibition held in Mexico.

Mexican postal authorities issued another stamp-on-stamp design in 1956 to mark the 100th anniversary of Mexican stamps. Figure 2 shows this 30c commemorative (Scott 897), which also promotes a stamp exhibition held in Mexico City.

In 1960, the Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society International, known as MEPSI, held a convention in Mexico City, and the post office overprinted a 10-peso surface mail stamp and 20p airmail stamp (Scott 909, C249) in limited quantities. The overprint translates to "in honor of collectors of Mexican postage stamps."

The Scott *Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue* gives a valuation of $100 mint and $75 used for the overprinted 10p stamp and $100 both mint and used for the 20p airmail.

The American Philatelic Society presented its 77th annual convention in Mexico in October 1963, and a commemorative stamp was issued depicting, in much reduced size, the 1956 stamp for the 100th anniversary of Mexican stamps. It's a curious example of a stamp-on-stamp-on-stamp design (Scott 937).

Mexican commemorative stamps issued during the 1970s and 1980s recognized numerous shows and exhibitions.

Most of these shows are known by acronyms, such as Venezuela's Exfilca 70 (Scott C385); Peru's Exfilima 70 (C391), Mexico's Exfilmex 74 (1065, C429) and the United States' Interphil 76 (C521). The Interphil stamp shows a clever design of a perforation gauge by R. Davidson, designer of the Exporta series.

Figure 3 depicts a 1.60p stamp issued in 1979 for Mepsipex 79, another MEPSI annual meeting (Scott C605). The stamp shows an 1880 registered letter sent from Mexico to Rome. Yet another MEPSI meeting, Mepserrey 88, was honored on a set of three in 1988 (1545-47).

Figure 2. This 1956 Mexican commemorative honors a stamp exhibition and the 100th anniversary of Mexico's first stamp.

Figure 3. A 1.60-peso airmail stamp honors a 1979 MEPSI meeting. The stamp shows an 1880 registered letter sent to Rome.

The Herfilex 83 show was dedicated to the stamps of the Mexican revolution of 1913-16. One of the show promoters, Carlos Lucero, designed the 6p stamp promoting the show (Scott 1311).

Three stamps were issued for Mexfil 85 (Scott 1382-85). The 22p low value features a stamp-on-stamp design of the 1856 8-reis stamp (5). The design shows the 8r stamp perforated, although it was only issued imperforate.

This is not a complete list of Mexican issues honoring the stamp hobby. However, the aforementioned stamps give an idea of the willingness of Mexican postal authorities to print stamps promoting philately.

I think that you could assemble a nice one-frame exhibit of such stamps displaying both stamps and covers.

Many collectors who attended the stamp shows prepared covers using the stamps, and some dealers prepared cachets for the shows. It might be a challenge to find some of these stamps used on cover, but I think you could have a lot of fun chasing them down. ■

MEXICO BY DALE PULVER

'Mexicana' takes a look at fancy postmarks of mining towns

Most serious collectors of Mexico belong to the Mexico-Elmhurst Philatelic Society International, known as MEPSI. My membership stretches back more than 40 years, and the society has been of enormous benefit to me.

The society provides a wide array of services to its many members. Perhaps the most important is the quarterly journal *Mexicana*, which provides news, research and a forum for the exchange of knowledge and ideas.

The January issue of *Mexicana* arrived the other day and that, in part, is what prompts this column.

The table of contents lists 27 items ranging from comments by the editor to the results of the recent election of officers. A dozen members provided fresh bits of research or commentary on a variety of Mexican subjects.

Figure 1. This fancy postmark for Muleros, Mexico, was used in the middle of the 19th century.

An article by Jaime Benavides on three early mining towns in the state of Durango caught my interest. The towns, Muleros, Guanacevi and Guichapa, are noted for large, fanciful postmarks used on mail from the middle of the 19th century. The postmarks are eagerly sought by collectors.

Muleros is Spanish for "mule drivers." The town originally was a hacienda that raised mules for the early stagecoach line. Figure 1 shows a postmark used at the hacienda.

Muleros was renamed Vicente Guerrero in 1920.

Guanacevi, located high in the Sierra Madre Occidental, was the source of ores rich in silver, gold, lead, copper and zinc.

Figure 2 shows one of three postmarks recorded for the town. In my collection of stampless covers, I had examples of this marking struck in four brilliant colors: red, blue, green and black.

Figure 2. One of the three recorded fancy postmarks for the Mexican mining town Guanacevi.

Guanacevi is still small, with only about 10,000 inhabitants.

Guichapa (Huichapa), also a hacienda, is located roughly in the center of the state of Durango. The town saw some important mining in the early days, but

the ore deposits are now exhausted. Minor agriculture is carried out in the flat areas of the region.

Specialists search for the large cursive Guichapa postmark shown in Figure 3. It is especially desirable on cover.

Another interesting article in the January *Mexicana* deals with the 1856 2-real stamp, my favorite Mexican stamp.

Jesper Anderson attempts to solve the mystery of where the small plate crack of plate I of the 2r is located. This flaw has been known for a long time, but the non-existence of vertical multiples from the plate has long thwarted attempts to fix its location.

Anderson has found evidence to place the flaw between positions No. 24 and No. 30 in the right-hand column of the 60-subject (six by 10) plate.

Among the other articles in *Mexicana* were corrections by Nick Follansbee to his book *The Stamps of the Mexican Revolution*; details of a new Exporta find; and an update by Salomon Rosenthal on the Porte de Mar stamps, a rather difficult area to collect.

Mexicana received a gold award in the literature class at the Monterrey show in November 2007. Mike Roberts, who took over the editor's position a couple of years ago, has done a wonderful job in improving the journal.

Membership in MEPSI has further rewards.

The society has an expert committee that is well-recognized in the stamp world. For modest fees, the committee can assist members in determining whether stamps are real, and if the postmarks they bear are genuine. Since forged items abound for Mexican classic issues, certification of rare and high-priced items is a must.

Figure 3. This large cursive postmark of Guichapa, Mexico, is especially desirable on cover.

The society also maintains a library, has an inventory of books for sale on Mexican philately, conducts auctions and operates a circuit-book service.

Perhaps, best of all, joining MEPSI connects you to a worldwide fraternity of serious collectors who stand willing to help and answer the many questions newcomers to the field usually have.

Collectors meet and socialize at the society's annual meetings.

Have I convinced you to join? If so, write to Pete Taylor, Secretary, 1440 Abernathy Creek Road, Longview, WA 98632, for an application. ■

Dale R. Pulver, 1929-2008

Dale R. Pulver, a prominent philatelic researcher and authority on the stamps and postal history of Mexico, died March 26 in Cleveland, Ohio. He was 78.

Mr. Pulver originated the Mexico column in the May 9, 1983, issue of *Linn's Stamp News* and had written the monthly column continuously for 25 years. His final column appeared in the issue of April 5.

Mr. Pulver also wrote *Introduction to the Stamps of Mexico*, published in the *Linn's* Handbook series in 1992.

In the introduction to Mr. Pulver's book, *Linn's* then-editor-publisher Michael Laurence recalled that a reader once wrote: "I've never collected Mexico, but I always read Dale Pulver's column because it's so interesting. I learn something new every time."

Fred Baumann, Mr. Pulver's editor at *Linn's* during the 1980s and 1990s, described Mr. Pulver as "a natural writer . . . leaving an editor like me with very little to do.

Dale R. Pulver

"He was an award-winning exhibitor who was always willing to take the time to explain the fine points of any subject in stampdom, with a humble, genial manner that belied his great depth of knowledge and expertise.

"As such, he was a superb choice to explain the bewildering complexities of 19th-century Mexican philately and postal history, and to unravel the Exporta series of modern Mexican definitives that he did so much to popularize."

Mr. Pulver was born June 18, 1929, in Rochester, N.Y., and started his education in a one-room stone schoolhouse in Spencerport, N.Y. His interest in stamps began at age 8 (in 1937) when he received a stamp album as a Christmas gift from his aunt.

He attained a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering at Cornell University, where he was a member of the Big Red marching band.

Mr. Pulver was a United States Army veteran who served a 17-month tour in Korea. After his service, he was employed as a chemical engineer at the former Diamond Alkali Co. in Painesville, Ohio, for 34 years, retiring in 1986.

He and his wife of 50 years, Christine, met at a church social group. They had three children.

His career included a five-year assignment in Mexico, from 1964-69, where he moved with his family, and it was there that his interest in the philately of Mexico was kindled.

He wrote a series of articles in 1978 for the U.S. Philatelic Classic Society's *The Chronicle of the U.S. Classic Postal Issues* on the postal history of the Mexican-American War, winning the Ashbrook cup.

Some of his many exhibits were shown internationally, and won awards at Israphil 85 and Ameripex 86.

His article on "The Analysis of Postal Markings on Pre-Stamp Covers of Mexico" in *The Congress Book* of 1987 won the McCoy award for the best article in the annual publication.

In addition to his love of philately, Mr. Pulver was a lifelong fan of woodworking and carpentry. He also devoted time to community volunteer work.

Mr. Pulver was preceded in death by his wife Christine and parents Arthur and Inez Gertrude (Stamp).

He is survived by daughters Emilie Grace Pulver of Chicago, Ill., and Clara (Brian) Wilson of Elyria, Ohio, and son Dale A. Pulver of University Heights, Ohio; grandchildren Maria, Elizabeth, Evan, Timothy and Stephen Wilson; sisters Joyce Bennett of Lyndonville, N.Y., and Marylou (Charles) Stage of Spencerport, N.Y; and brother Merle (Margot) Pulver of Whitehall, Mich.

Memorial services were held April 1 at Advent Lutheran Church in Mentor, Ohio, with inurnment at Mentor Cemetery.

The family suggests contributions be made to the Advent Lutheran Church Memorial Fund, 7985 Munson Road, Mentor, OH 44060; or to the American Philatelic Research Library for acquisition of Mexican philatelic research material, 100 Match Factory Place, Bellefonte, PA 16823. ■