

The Art of Collecting Mexico

Introduction To Mexican Philately



By the time I had started to collect Mexican stamps and postal history, I had already been a collector of other countries for many years. When I was trying to decide what my next series of messages would be, I thought about the art on stamps and how my own connection to the art world may have formed my love of this particular country. Having parents that decided to retire in Mexico in the early 1980s and my own travels there surely may have had something to do with my collecting Mexico. Those things are easy to point to in why Mexico interest me. As I sit here writing this, I also think about how interesting I found Mexico's stamp history and particularly the unique system of district overprints on the early stamps was to me. I also quickly realized when I had just started to acquire my first Mexican stamps, that these stamps were not easy to find, but

the prices were so much less than those that I was paying to fill needed stamps in my other countries of choice. So, today, I hope I can cover the first things that sparks the collector's interest in collecting Mexico. My future messages will deal with all the aspect that relate to collecting stamps, covers and philately in general that pertain to Mexico.

Most people who collect stamps are drawn first to the appearance of the stamps. Mexico is an odd country for this aspect to our appreciation of art. Surveying the wide variety of stamps produced from Mexico we will find the normal colorful, nicely printed, interesting designs and the absolutely beautiful stamps. We may then notice that there are also some of the ho-hum and sometime plain ugly stamps in this country. For me, Mexico produced some of the most beautiful stamps I have seen from any country. The colors, design and connection to the collector is all there for the most ardent critic to be pleased. So, if the first thing a collector looks for, is the art of the stamp, it is all there.



Interestingly, most of the early classics pale when compared with some of the other countries of the world. On the other hand beauty is in the eyes of the beholder. My good friend, Doug Stout, took some offense when I made a remark that the 1868 stamps were second only to the ugliness of the 1872 issues. Before Doug passed away, he had assembled one of the greatest collections of the 1868 issues that has ever been formed. He loved those Full Face Hidalgos, just as much as an art patron would appreciate a Rembrandt.



So, art is one thing that attracts us to collecting Mexico, but history has been one of the things that attract Mexico to a number of collectors. Learning the history of Mexico, one has the opportunity to not only appreciate all the recent modern issues that retell the stories of Mexico, but when collecting periods like the French intervention of 1862-66 or Revolutionary period of 1910-16, the stamps become part of the appeal that turns them into a connection with the past that we can appreciate each time we open up our albums. Polynesians have a term, "Mana", for spirit and strength that is attached to physical objects. So, each one of those stamps or covers the collector acquires in a sense is a connection to the spirit and strength of the

past.

Challenge is the defining word for many collectors and what other country has such a challenge. When the Elmhurst Philatelic Society, in Elmhurst, Illinois, decided to have all members start the study and collecting of a common country, after a little trial and error, they settled on Mexico. The reason that most of them gave for accepting this country was the challenge and the opportunity to spread this activity over many years. Due to the

engagement of Mexico with the collectors of this small club and the expanding interest of others to join the club, it grew into what has become Mexico Elmhurst Philatelic Society, International, the largest one country stamp society in the world. I personally know collectors that have spent most of their life collecting Mexico and never regretted it. There seem to always be something else to be found and something else to be learned about these stamps we love.



In future messages, I will cover a number of the things we do in collecting Mexico from a various number of topic. It may be appreciation of the stamps to buying and selling, making albums and the study of cancel or various areas of stamp production. I hope that you will enjoy this series and that my writing will not only help us learn more about Mexico's philatelic background, it will fill in information that will make our hobby more rewarding to all of us.

Enjoy!

September 9, 2015

Decisions, Decisions, Decisions

When we decide to begin a collection of Mexico, there seem so many directions to take. Of course, the collector may just be adding stamps to their Mexico section of Latin American stamps. There are also "general" collectors filling in all the blanks in their albums. Most collectors start their Mexico collections after they have collected other countries for years. Collecting Mexico may just be a side venture while they slowly fill in the last remaining and more costly examples in their primary collection. Some collectors shy away from the stamps and only collect something like postal stationery or covers. Then there are the collectors that are only interested in one issue or one type of stamps, like Airmails or Officials. To each their own as the old saying goes will follow what most collectors do.



Today, we will explore why you may have started your collection of Mexico and where you would like to go with it. For the most part, if you are reading this message, you have been collecting and have your pattern of philatelic study already set. In my previous messages regarding the *Overlooked Issues*, I attempted to point out ways of improving what you were collecting with making an issue or a type of stamps a new adventure in collecting. This approach indeed can lead to a much more interesting and rewarding collection; however, as collectors we tend to go our own way and other options are out there.



Personally, I quickly turned to collecting one issue design in one denomination. I did so because of other reasons than most collectors. Initially, my interest in Mexico was like most collectors, getting one of each. This followed years of being a stamp collector of other countries. I was also interested and still do collect covers in conjunction with the same issue. But, each collector needs to decide just where to start. Sometimes our start into a deeper study happens by chance. By happenstance, I bought a nice group of 1856 Dos Reales. Due to my work in plating US classic issues, I was intrigued with the idea of plating these bright green stamps. My quest was filled with desire when I found out that it was almost impossible. Knowing that nothing is impossible, maybe unlikely, but not impossible, I was on my way to picking up every Dos Reales of the first design I could possible find.



My advice for any collector, novice to well seasoned, is to picture what you would like your collection to look like. If the image that comes to mind is thumbing through your album filled with as many stamps as you can find for each catalogue listing, that certainly is the way to go. This can be both rewarding in the time spent and also the hunt for just the right stamps for each section of your collection. Taking a step further into adding other items to your collection can enhance the total look. As a dealer buying collections of stamps, I often find additional sheets added to these albums holding blocks of stamps, imperforated items, proof and essays, covers and other interesting philatelic material. This really does improve the collection and obviously for the collector's enjoyment.



If your vision is one thing, you may find out that over time that vision can be expanded into a number of different areas. I have a good friend that started out collecting stamps of the United States, but when he discovered the world of Postal Stationery he was hooked. It was not long before he was adding the Mexican material to his quickly expanding collection. He is now far more interested in the Mexican section of postal stationery. I know that he now has one of the better collections of Mexican Postal Stationery in the world today. So, things do change as we grow in our interest. My only caution is to keep your first vision strong and let that guide you as you step into another direction. This way, you will not only find more enjoyment in your travel through Mexico's philatelic possibilities, you will also look back and see the accomplishments of your efforts to bring those visions of your hobby into reality.

September 17, 2015

Where do I start?

For collectors new to Mexico, the decision has been made to dive into this country that they have little experience with, and the first thing that happens is they find out that acquiring good genuine examples is easier said than done. Where are all these stamps that you want to add to your collection? You are starting out fresh and have a nice new Scott album with plenty of blank spots to fill. Or, in the case of someone wanting to try a specialized collection and even the advanced collector wanting to branch out into another speciality, there is the unanswered question of how do I find the items you need. To illustrate the process of finding material, I will tell my own story of making Mexico my stamp collection.

When I started into Mexico as a new collection, this was before I had internet or joined eBay, Nick Follansbee's great catalogue was a thing of the future and joining MEPSI had not happened. There were very few stamp stores still open, and if I did visit them, they lacked anything but the most common Mexican stamps and rarely more than a handful. I would visit the local stamp show and I found a few dealers that had Mexican stamps, but often the early issues were not available and many of the stamps were priced at full catalogue regardless of condition. It was not until I went to the large stamps shows here in Southern California that I met Doc Ameen, whom had a large inventory of Mexican material. I also met guys that were members of MEPSI and I joined the society, where I found more reference material and help about what I was starting to collect.

Fortunately, not long after I decided to start my collection of Mexico, I bought my first computer, joined the internet where found material that I had not imagined on this new sellers and buyers site called eBay. Wow, now I could buy stamps directly from sellers all over the place. Each week brought more auctions and sometimes disappointments that I would be out bid. I worked at trying to put up a bid at the last minute, second or as soon as I could. There were no store fronts with 'Buy It Now' stamps, nor was there any snipe program and feedback. There was no PayPal and sending out checks for purchases meant slower delivery. But, there were stamps I wanted and prices I could easily pay.



So, my story winds up where I started to sell stamps on eBay to buy the stamps I wanted on eBay and at the occasional stamp show Doc would attend. Now, as a member of MEPSI, they had auctions and circuit books. As a member of the American Philatelic Society, I also had circuits of Mexican stamps coming to my house from time to time, but as I improved my collection I dropped their service due to the many stamps I did not need or want. Over the years I started to send in bids to main line auctions that had Mexican material, but I was too often disappointed in finding out the lots were sold out at just above my bid, or worst, when I received the stamps won, they failed to meet my expectation. I now only go to auctions in person to view lots before I bid on the floor or later at home over the internet.

My story of the ups and downs of collecting Mexico points to several things I have learned over these past 20 years that may be helpful to you.

Know what you want. Buying anything can be difficult if you do not keep your sites on what really interest you. Unless something comes up that really looks interesting and you feel it will fit into your collect, it is best to stick with your plan.

Use all the options available to you. Whether it is an auction, circuit book, stamp show, mail order dealers or eBay, all these sources should be considered.

Know the seller that you can trust. Sellers that are dealing with Mexico, should be members of MEPSI where there are requirements of dealings with the client should be done with ethics in mind. APS and the ASDA have ethic standards for sellers as well, but you are more likely to have a seller that knows what they are selling in Mexican material if they are a member of MEPSI.

Learn as much as you can about what you are buying. This alone will help you find stamps or postal history that may look common to the average collector or seller, that will be far more scarce than the people recognize. I have bought stamps from other collectors and dealers that have turned out to be extremely scarce, because my studies lead me to seeing them for what they are, not what others see as common.

Do not get suckered into buying something that is just too good to pass up. If something looks like it is too good to be true, it likely is not true. This is where fakes attract the unsuspecting buyers. There are some really great looking early classics that have rare postal district overprints that are bogus, which when offered from time to time as genuine at very low prices will lead the unsuspecting collector to buy these bogus items. These are filling collectors albums that never learned to see the easy methods of separating the good from the bad. This is another part of self education I will take up in a later weekly addition.

There are more tips I will write about in my future messages. The journey you take to make your collection the best it can be will be filled with special finds and sometimes disappointments, but in the end, it will be a trip well traveled.

September 24, 2015

So what should I pay for Mexican Philately?



Last week I tried to advise you on where to find the stamps you are looking for, but that is only part of the equation. This begs the questions of what do you collect, what condition, how do you want to form your collection and how much should you pay. The first is one of the most personal answers you will have to tackle. Deciding what you want to collect is important in many aspects, such as cost, availability and condition. Cost many depend on your budget but condition can mean a lot of things when considering availability and cost. So, condition will also shape your collection in many ways. This may also change your ideas of how you want to form your collection and how will it evolve as you work on it. So, if we are talking about cost, it may be the major factor of almost everything you do with any stamp collection.

Back in the 1930's, at the height of the "Great Depression", the average family had three things that entertained them at home; radio, reading, and hobbies. So evenings were spent listening to radio shows, reading books or newspapers and often pulling out stamp collections. In those days the collector could go to the local 5 & 10 cent store and for a dime pick up a large bag of stamps on paper. Sorting, soaking and placing the ones that went into their albums. Trading the duplicates with friends became a passion of the young and old in those times. Yes, there were also people that actually spent large amounts of money on stamps during those times, and today, those stamps are some of the most desirable stamps on the market. Even the average collector would at times buy a high budget item that would be something special in their album.

It was the willingness to spend money on stamps that has always promoted stamp collecting. The reason is obvious to some and not so much to others, but if it were not for the dealers bringing the stamps to the market there would not be any stamps for the collector to collect. We no longer have the stamp shops of the past and stamp shows are not near as common today, but we do have the Internet. On the Internet we can find thousands upon thousands

of lots each week on sites like eBay, Delcampe, bidStart, Stamp Auction Network and others. Obviously, eBay is the thousand pound gorilla for internet stamp sales, but I am sure that a seeker of stamps may find a lot more than my short list holds. So, today, finding stamps has taken on a whole new meaning. Sometimes it is disheartening to wade through so many lots to find what you are looking for. It is the time when you find something special at a price you feel is fair that makes the hunt worthwhile.

This all brings us to full circle to the question of what should I pay for the things I do find. Remember that the dealer sets their price, not catalogue, whatever it may be. It depends on the seller's business plan or lack of plan. I know dealers that price their lots at such huge prices that one would wonder if they ever sell anything. Yes, they do, but the buyers are normally looking for something very specialized or they are naive in thinking they are getting a good deal. There are other sellers that are just trying to move stamps and will start everything as such low prices, like 99 cents, to attract buyers. Often those sellers are actually making their profit on material they paid little to nothing for and at a high postage cost. Other dealers will ask some percentage of catalogue regardless of condition, genuineness or rarity. Then you have some dealers that will start their lots out at a reasonable amount that will insure them a working profit, overhead cost and original cost of the goods based on condition and rarity.

Mexican stamps can be divided into several groups depending on when they were issued, varieties and conditions. The eras of Mexican stamps start with the Classics with their district overprints and consignment numbers, the Post Classic that start at the ending of the district overprints and last until the Revolutionary issues of 1913-16. Then we have the Early Modern from the 20s to the 50s, and the Modern issues from the 50s to the present. Postal History is generally covered by the stamp categories including the stampless era, either in whole or in part. The following are some of my tips on what price to pay for different eras of the stamps, and Postal History or Stationary will also depend on much of the same criteria I use for the different eras.

Pre-Stamp and Sello Negro covers are the prelude to stamps and they fall into Colonial, Independence Pre-stamp and Sello Negro (black mark) cover 1856 forward. Colonial can be very expensive, often in terrible condition and rarely complete. The pre-stamp covers are more valuable for the cancelation and the Sello Negro are valued by the district. These covers can be found for a few dollars to hundreds of dollars. No collector should be buying these unless they have acquired some knowledge of these subjects



Classic stamps are valued by district and cancel. Mint stamps are not generally as desirable as the used examples, unless used are prohibitively priced in this condition. Interestingly, physical and centering condition is not as important as district and cancel, once you have moved past the common districts and cancels. Some items are scarce or rare that may appear to be common depending on what may have been happening during their use. Study is so important and owning a copy of Nicolas Follansbee's catalogue on 1856-1910 issues is a necessity. A copy of Schatzkes cancel catalogue is important as is reaching out to more experienced collector with your questions will pay off many folds. Even a simple question can give up wonderful answers in evaluating these stamps. Condition make a lot of difference in price of common issues, districts and consignments, but unlike many stamps of the world where a faulty stamp may only bring 5% of catalogue value, in Mexico the price for a faulty common stamp, depending on how faulty it is, will cost anywhere from 10% to 30% of catalogue value. Sound very fine common stamps can exceed catalogue values. The scarcer the stamp can elevate in price for even faulty stamps and better condition examples depend on the collectors interest. Rule of thumb for on cover for nice common classics is about 10x catalogue of the singles. Values increase many folds for better examples.

Post Classic is an era where many of the more common stamps can be found at what I consider really great prices. Many of these stamps used are very inexpensive if used. Even in mint condition, common issues are fairly inexpensive. Condition make a lot of difference, since perforations are generally poorly done, straight edges were also used on the outer sheet margins and these stamps are high in number. Priced for common, off centered or straight edge stamps generally are around 20-30% of catalogue in decent condition. Faulty stamps are generally undesirable and very low in cost, with exception of better varieties and scarce issues, watermarks or perforations, etc. Gum on mint is rarely an important consideration of value on these issues up to the Mulitas and the 1899-1910 issues. Mulitas and up bring prices of 50-60% of cat if nice. Never Hinged stamps are scarce except the very most common issues.

Revolutionary stamps are inexpensive for most of the issues, and are generally collected in mint condition. Used stamps are common for mostly the low denomination issues. Gum is generally missing on many of the mint stamps and is rarely a consideration for most collectors. Special printings and some local issues are really scarce to rare. On cover most of the revolutionary issue stamps in nice condition are very desirable and bring good prices, especially for the Local issues.

Early Modern stamps are generally collected in mint condition with hinges, due to the few stamps that were saved from album hinging. Never hinged examples are the collectors choice. On resale they do not bring much difference to the buy price regardless of higher values in the catalogue. They should sell at about full cat for hinged examples. Hinged stamp should sell at about 40 to 60% of cat depending on perforation centering. Values of early modern stamps on cover depends on how they were used.

Modern issues are far more desirable in Mint condition, either lightly hinged or never hinged. However, good prices can be found with Mint hinged (hinge shows or may have light remnants of the hinge). Prices should be around 40-50% of catalog for lightly hinged and 50-75% of catalog for never hinged, depending on centering. Many of the common commemoratives during the 70's and 80's are rarely worth catalogue values let alone face value, due to overprinting of these issues. Modern stamps on cover are rarely valuable, unless they are one of the few really valuable stamps of this period.

Enjoy collecting, learn about your stamps and remember that very few of these stamps are unique. If you pass up something that seems too high priced, likely you will find the same at another time for less. Just knowing about what you are buying will help you determine what you should pay.

October 1, 2015

What Condition Should I Accept In Mexican Material?

We talked mostly about the cost of Mexican stamps last week. My message gave different values for different periods of philately in Mexico. Today the question is about conditions acceptable for philatelic material from Mexico. This is a very interesting and important part of collecting for all, novice to advanced collectors. Unlike almost any other country in the world, Mexico has a huge volume of stamps that are collectable in the classic period due to the district overprinting and wide variety of interesting cancels from large to small communities. So, for the collectors of Mexico with such a large pool of material to be found, there is also the difficulty of finding many of the stamps we wish to collect.



Common Mexico flawless Un Real / Rare 1864 (Zacatecas) provisional Dos Reales w/ minor hinge thin

One of the most attractive things in collecting stamps and covers are the vast number of possibilities. The possible districts turned the 5 first issues into a search for around 250 different issues. Likewise the district system does the same for all the issues through to the cut off year 1883. Schatzkes has a list of over 1900 cancels from both the district headquarters, smaller towns, villages and haciendas. This turns the possible into thousands of stamps that the average collector of classics will spend years of acquiring for each of the issues. Each stamp or piece of postal history or stationary will pose a problem when you add all the other periods of philatelic material to the list of things collectors are looking for in Mexican material. As we approach such a problem of high volume and short supply, the availability to find what we are looking for can present a huge problem when physical condition and centering are figured into the equation.

This reminds me of a story about two friends. The old friends were meeting for the first time in a long while. When they met, the first friend was introduced to his old friend's new wife. He was horrified that the woman was the ugliest he could ever remember seeing. Later when he took his friend aside, he ask him as gently as he could, "I do not mean to be harsh, but your wife is not as attractive as I expected." Well, his friend looked at him and said, "Yes, I know she is not as beautiful as some women but I love her anyway." Sometimes, a stamp may not be beautiful, but they may be beautiful to the collector.



Common Sound 5th period Mazatlan 2R / Rare Mexico Tres Centavos w/ light bend

There are two sides to condition. One is the centering of a stamp. Traditionally the range goes from average where the design is cut into by the separation to Superb where the margins are large and perfectly even. As I have talked before about the early issues of Mexico, the margins are generally poor for most of the classic stamps because the perforations were done so poorly that scissor separation was necessary. Some stamps were aligned so closely together on the plate that margins will cut into the design regardless of how careful the clerk may have been in clipping them apart, such as the early Un and Dos Reales issues or the side margins of the Eagles. Poor quality of margins has always been a problem for Mexico up into the 1920s. This does not mean that there are no nice examples, but what it does mean is that the pool of Very Fine or Better stamps is low compared to lesser quality centered stamps.

The second side of condition is the physical qualities of the material you wish to collect. I know collectors that will not even accept a stamp with a minor corner crease or a missing perforation tooth. Horrors that the stamp may have a light hinge thin or a dealers mark on the back. The bottom line for collecting Mexico is that very few stamps can be found with the high physical qualities of many of the other countries of the world, because mintages for Mexico are much lower when coupled with possibilities of so many stamps from any one issue in the classics. Years ago Dale Pulver wrote in his column found in Linn's Weekly about Mexico, and one in particular column he wrote about condition where he said if you are looking for Classic Mexico you can find high quality stamps.

Yes, you can, but aside from the most common items the chances of high quality becomes lower and lower as they become more and more scarce. This is the reason why I have always looked first for appearance. I would rather have a slightly faulty stamp, such as light hinge thin or a clerks fold on a nice appearing stamp than a stamp that has a less appealing cancel or poor centering that is sound in other respects. It is not hard to pass up buying a common stamp that you know you can find in nicer condition, but when you are looking at a nice appearing stamp from a better district or with a better cancel, that has a small fault it is much harder to say, "I am not interested because a fault of any kind trumps rarity."



Sound Common 6ctv SLP / Thin figure 12ctv Mexico light cancel w/ minor Hinge thin

How will condition effect my material's value when I get ready to sell? This is a question every collector will ask when reflecting on the time there collection will be sold. First, one must consider how much are you paying for the material you buy. Do you pay as much for a faulty stamp as you would for one that is totally sound? No, of course you would not. Are you expecting your common perfect stamps to sell for more because they are perfect? Think again, because common stamps will not be prized just because they are nice, and you will likely never see them in main line auctions due to the low values. Nice rare stamps, yes, they will bring high dollars in an auction and will also increase the value of what a dealer may pay. Be realistic, and realize that very few stamps wind up being showcased at auction houses. Most auction houses will only list a single item for around \$100 start. All those other stamps under that value will be grouped together into collection lots and the prices fall to a low fraction of catalogue value.

Personal satisfaction is important and I can tell you that I am always looking for nicer examples for my own collection. In my sales I try to offer the best quality and the nicest looking material I can find. I will have stamps that are far better than the average listed in common items, because I know this is where my clients like their material to be. On eBay I can afford to do this. Sometimes the stamp or cover may be faulty, but I what I am looking for in selling any lot is attractiveness and if faulty, only with slight faults that do not destroy the value of the stamp or cover. Occasionally, an item may only be a space filler, but with low price it reaches my client that has a small budget and just wants to fill a hole in their album until another comes along that is better.

Of all the things I say about condition, one thing runs true, and that is the fact that you, the collector are determining what your collection what your collection is and the way you want it to be. So, look for what pleases you, be realistic in what you can find and afford and lastly try to have fun hunting for those special items that make your collection interesting and fun.

How do I find out more about Mexican stamps?

I list a lot of stamps each week on the internet and their description will have odd notations about them. Things like Sz, NF, DP come to mind. Each one of these means another reference material. Most of my collectors use Scott Catalogue for their basic number reference, some by collect using Stanley Gibbons or Michel or other catalogues that list stamps of the world. Mexico has had a lot of catalogues produced over the years and some have come from Mexico, such as Celis and Vackimes, but few of any have had in-depth information on the Classics though the modern outside of Celis's "Sellos Postales de Mexico" done in Spanish. This last reference catalogue is no longer available as far as I know, but, so much has been learned over the years that an old copy is of little use for values and other things that have been updated.

The one catalogue that stands out for all collectors of Mexico is Nicholas Follansbee's "Stamps of Mexico 1856 - 1910", where he covers all the early issues by both district and denomination. Paper varieties and much more are covered and the breakdown of many of the issues. My friend Nick has put out three volumes since the late 1990s and the last one was released just this past year. If you are a collector of the early issues or not, this is a very good reference, simply, because when collecting Mexico you are bound to purchase some of the early issues, and this is where you will find out if you have something or value or just another common district issue. It is a great read for the early collectors.

Mexico	119	9	Jul	1864	Eagle II	500	700	2000	800	500
Mexico	122	14	Jul	1864	Eagle II		6000	1000		
Mexico	123	15	Jul	1864	Eagle II		600	2500		
Mexico	130	23	Jul	1864	Eagle II		2000	4000	1000	800
Mexico	138	1	Aug	1864	Eagle II	120	418	3246	3	6
Mexico	142	6	Aug	1864	Eagle II		400			
Mexico	144	9	Aug	1864	Eagle II	100	600	2000	400	
Mexico	149	16	Aug	1864	Eagle II	200	800	3200		
Mexico	153	22	Aug	1864	Eagle II		200	400		
Mexico	154	23	Aug	1864	Eagle II		2000	3000	1200	800
Mexico	163	30	Aug	1864	Eagle II	100		1000		
Mexico	165	1	Sep	1864	Eagle II	198	252	3256	46	86
Mexico	173	9	Sep	1864	Eagle II	600	1500	2000	800	

Detail from a page of Nicholas Follansbee's catalogue on 1856-1910 issues

Detail from a page of Dale Pulver's handbook of Mexican stamps ▶

In the early 1990s, Dale Pulver wrote a handbook published by Linn's that covers a lot of what I am writing about on these weekly messages, called "Introduction to the Stamps of Mexico". This booklet is still being sold by Linn's Amos Press and many of the stamp supply firms carry this at under \$20. A great read with a lot of information for the novice collector, but also a lot of reminders for the more advanced collectors. Dale did this book mostly from the articles he wrote for Linn's each month about Mexico. The full set of those messages have been digitized by Tad Mackie, our Librarian and can be downloaded without charge. Contact him at tad.mackie@gmail.com.

Samuel Chapman ▶

1859-1943

So, I have pointed out a few references that you may need to look for, but there are more that are very helpful to the general collector or for those that want to know more about things like the Eagles by Dave Pietsch, 1868 issues in depth

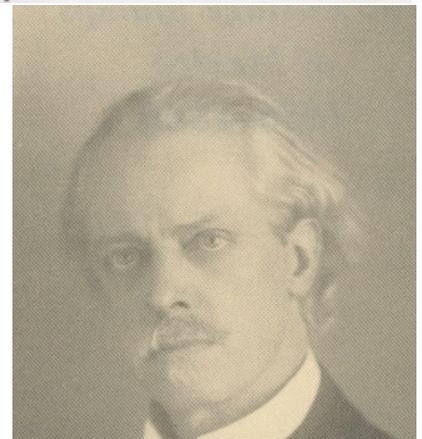
Classic Era 1856-83

thick figures. Some of these will be discussed later. Imperforate stamps and several perforation varieties exist at the printing office. Attention to a few of the rarer varieties, but these barely you enjoy this sort of thing. 50c stamp. There is no period after the "50" in the denomination label. The overprint shows the district name "Veracruz," the consignment number "2" (over the "O" in "MEXICO") and the year "71" (just above the "T" in "CENT").



Figure 14. This 50c 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 the "O" in "MEXICO") and the year "71" (just above the "T" in "CENT").

Opes and retouches attracts attention. The second Mexican issue of profile stamps were the first to prepare their stones. This led to numerous varieties. Some of the five denominations were made to form a set written about extensively. It is a simple matter of flyspeck



study by Heath and Stout, Revolution of 1913-1916 with Nick's book on that subject, Postmarks of Mexican stamps by Schatzkes and Taylor, pamphlets by Schimmer on the 1872 issues as well as the Mulitas and even Revenues by Michael Roberts are just some of the books that will give you a huge amount of information on so many of these stamps.

Samuel Chapman, an Englishman living in Mexico in the late 19th Century developed his magnificent collection of Mexico. As a student of philately he was able to research the Mexican National Postal archives. He found out a great deal about the district stamp sent, used and returned. He was also able to piece together much of the philatelic history of Mexico and with his study of the documents he accumulated knowledge that still has a great value to our present day philatelist. This information went into his book published in 1926 that became a landmark publication for data on 1856-68 issues. The reprint to this book was published by Quartermain Publication, Inc in conjunction with the Collectors Club of New York in 1976. Realizing that much of this material would need updating after all these years, Mark Banchik wrote his Handbook of the data the stamps the district received in 2002, "Handbook of Classic Mexico" (Colonial era through 1874 Issue). Available from Mark at mebanchik@gmail.com, and a good updated source of this data of the early issues. MEPSI was also able to copy a large percentage of the Postal Archive data a number of years ago, first in photocopies, and later Tad Mackie was able to take the photocopies and turn them into digital form. These are available for research of both districts and sub offices. Not totally complete, but they have a great deal of information for a true student of the classic Mexican stamps.

1861 ISSUE BY DISTRICT (Used)							
District	½r	1r	2r	4r blk	4r red	8r blk	8r grn
Acapulco (1)	150.00	80.00	80.00	300.00		1,000.00	
Aguascalientes	350.00	100.00	100.00	350.00		1,750.00	
"Aguascaltes"		120.00	100.00				
Apam (2)	100.00	40.00	75.00	300.00		300.00	
B. California	*	*	*	*		*	
Campeche	70.00	15.00	20.00	90.00		350.00	
Chalco	70.00	20.00	60.00	350.00		1,750.00	
Chiapas (3)	80.00	20.00	18.00	110.00	600.00	750.00	600.00
Chihuahua	60.00	10.00	10.00	250.00	1,500.00	1,750.00	2,000.00
Colima (4)	80.00	50.00	20.00	250.00		550.00	
Córdoba	350.00	15.00	15.00	400.00	1,200.00	2,250.00	
Cuautitlán (5)	*	250.00	500.00	1,500.00	§	*	*
Cuernavaca	100.00	10.00	20.00	350.00	500.00	500.00	1,500.00
Durango	250.00	20.00	15.00	100.00		350.00	
Guadalajara	35.00	10.00	12.00	80.00	700.00	225.00	1,000.00
G. Hidalgo (6)	*	?	?				
Guanajuato	40.00	3.50	2.50	70.00	300.00	225.00	350.00
Hermosillo (7)	300.00	250.00	150.00	800.00		*	
Huatusco (x, 8)		1,250.00	1,250.00				
Huejutla	1,200.00	1,200.00	400.00				

Detail from Mark Banchik's Handbook

The last thing I will cover is if you join the Society, the first 60 years of our publication "*Mexicana*" are available on DVD. This information covers around a thousand articles that pertain to collecting Mexican issues, history, technical knowledge, new findings and more. Mexicana has won Gold and Vermeil Medals in Philatelic literature competitions. It is the best part of joining. The Society also has helped writers turn their research efforts into good books, handbooks and articles that are reaching the needs of our members. For more information, use this link mepsi.org and from there you can join, purchase digital information and reach links that are helpful in areas of Mexican philately. Dues are \$35 per year and some of the best money you will ever spent if you are really interested in collecting Mexico or just love the topics.

October 16, 2015

Why study my Mexican stamps?

Last week I talked about the reference material that can be found on Mexican stamps and the list I gave you is way too short for someone that is interested in forming a very specialized collection of Mexico. I really only touched the surface of the abundant material that has been written on Mexican philately. What I did try to do, was to give you a brief coverage of information that will get you started. This week's title about why we study Mexican stamps is one that I feel you might enjoy. With many countries, such as the United States, United Kingdom, France, Italy and Germany many collectors can collect these countries and put together wonderful collections without getting much deeper than just using a catalogue for this purpose. Specialized stamps are certainly there part of any country, but for most of these collectors getting a full collection of these stamps is a real achievement but likely at a huge financial cost.



Mexico, on the other hand, is a country that has some things that make it very different from these much larger countries with many expensive stamps. What has become the greatest appeal of Mexico's philately can be found in the district overprints, cancels and revolutionary material that exceeds many of the other countries we might collect. Collecting general issues of Mexico becomes far more exciting when the collector comes across a better district in the classics, an obscure sub office cancel or a local overprint on a revolutionary issue. These are things that require a little more expertise than your trusty Scott catalogue. This is why I had offered a short list of reference material that will help you collect Mexico and, even if you are only filling one blank at a time.



When I started out in Mexico I was just like everyone else. The subject of Mexican Philately seemed like it would take me forever to learn just the basics, I had no idea of where I could find out about these odd number and names on my early stamps, how to sort out the odd overprints on later issues and what all these odd perforations were in those big stamps of the 1880-90s. Sure Scott was helpful with the issues, but not the details. Pricing was a huge question mark for me. What condition meant to my stamps value and how would I advance past my Scott Specialized when I had all the odd stamps to include? In the process of learning about these stamps, I fell in love with collecting Mexico. It had all the appeal for a collector just buying a stamp or a set at a time for their album as well as the appeal for a specialized collector to spend a lifetime putting together a collection that never became a burden or tiresome. All of these things about collecting Mexico was the appeal and the fact that many of the stamps could be purchased at very reasonable prices. The fun part was the hunt.

Speaking of hunt, the fact is, that a collector with knowledge is better prepared to spot those great stamps others miss. It is like the difference of a hunter using a high powered rifle compared to a kid using a BB gun. I have said this many time and other will also say this, but just remember that "Knowledge is King". Enjoy your stamps more by study,

and you will never tire of them.

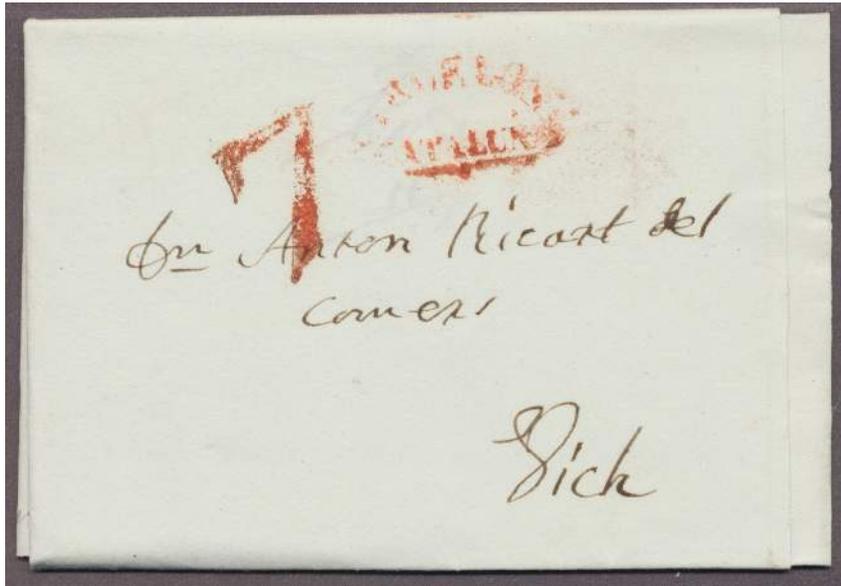
Note: Last week I mentioned the catalogue 'Sellos Postales de Mexico' that was put out in the past in Spanish from Mexico. I heard from Mike Roberts regarding this catalogue and my error on the name of the author. Yes, I do not know everything about Mexico yet. This is what he told me.

"By the way, a more proper reference for (the author's name) "Celis" would be "Celis Cano". An attempt was made to update the catalog series by the nephew, another Celis Cano, I think. He sent me a copy and asked that I take a look at it to sell. The information had been updated and was current to about 2008 or so. The content was very good and extended to all issues and had updated prices. The only problem was the book had been pasted-up and photocopied so illustrations really sucked. Text was fuzzy and nearly illegible. I offered to rework it for him but never heard another word. At Pacifica 97, I purchased a copy of Celis Cano 1979, from the editor, Guillermo Celis Cano. It was much better than the new version I was given".

October 29, 2015

Philatelic Periods of Mexico

I have talked a lot about getting to know your stamps, but little about how Mexican stamps and postal history can be divided into six basic periods of study. So, today I would like to cover the historic periods of Mexico's philately. They are Pre-stamp, Classics, Post Classic, Revolutionary, Early Modern and Modern. If you have been reading my messages from past years, you may remember some of the things I have said regarding these periods of study, but today I would like you to exam each of these areas as a possible future study of Mexico that may enrich your collecting efforts.



The first period of Mexico's philatelic History I will call the Stampless Mail era, and it has two sub periods of great importance. The first is the Colonial Mail, and this in the most difficult and valuable to collect. The Colonial Mail that ends with the 1821 Independence of Mexico, precedes what we will be called simply the Pre-Stamp period. The Pre-stamp period obviously lasted until arrival of stamps issued on August 1, 1856. The idea that mail could serve the population to boost an educated people had either not occurred or was ignored by those in power, both in most of Europe and in the colonial areas of the New World. Mail was mainly Government or Church Mail. The Royal mail in Mexico was generally correspondence between either the rich merchants or members of the Vice-Royalty. Little personal correspondence was found during the 18th century and internal mail in Mexico was slow in expansion outside of the major cities and Royal military post. Catholic Church mail was just that, and little of it was used by any others outside of the church. By the time of independence in 1821 the routes and mail had become more established connecting many of the areas of Mexico. The previous government division of Mexico began to have mail postal departments in what would later become the states of Mexico. These postal departments became the district offices that would play such an important role in the coming Classic period of Mexico's stamp history.



In early 1856, the postal administrators of Mexico devised a plan that would set apart Mexico's stamps as almost unique in the world. No other country in the world would have what is called the district system of overprints for every area of the country. The idea was to prevent what had become a national problem in Mexico, the robbery

of the Stage Coach lines which were the main link between the larger cities. To send valuable stamps that could be stolen and resold would cost the Post a huge sum and dilute their revenue to a point of continued rate increases. So, someone, unknown today, came up with the idea of overprinting the stamps upon arrival at their designated district office that would validate the stamps for postal use. For the collector, this means that each stamp issue would turn into a possible average of 50 stamps for each denomination. The district overprinting of stamps would last until around 1883 and this will mark the end of the Classic period, with an enormous amount of collectable issues for the country. Adding to the numerous district overprints are consignment numbers and the cancels used on many of these stamps. Instead of just a number of series from 1856 to 1883, Mexico now has enough collectable stamps for stamp enthusiast to spend a life time collecting.

The classic period was a time of many conflicts including the Imperial period during the 1860s when France installed a puppet government with Maximilian as emperor . There were also times when stamps were an option or not available, were mail was sent without stamps, which we call these covers 'Sello Negro' (Black Stamp), for the black postmarks and 'Franco' (paid) notations. Some were sent collect as the pre-stamp covers were normally sent, but for many they elected to pre-pay for these stampless covers as they did for the stamps. Postal history in either these Sello Negro covers or stamped covers has become an important part of many advanced collections, where rates and links to historical events become part of their story.

The Classic period is followed by the Post Classic Issues, of 1884-1910. These stamps mark the period that coincides with the expansion of the railroads in Mexico, that eliminated the need for the district overprint system to protect the sending of mint stamps between the cities. This period is also marked by the improvements in stamp production. The last of the classic stamps issued are the 1874 issues and the Foreign Mail issues, of which the designs were products by foreign stamp designers. They marked the beginning of better designs and stamp production. The first of the post classic issues is actually the Medallions of 1884 did indeed have some stamps with district overprints, but those were done by postmasters not following the postal administrations guidelines. The importance of the Post-Classic period is that we can find many issues that have changes in paper and perforations. The introduction of watermarks came with the Large Numerals of 1891 which was done to make the stamp more secure from fakes. Beginning with the Definitives of 1899, stamps would again be designed and even printed in England, until the last issue of the post-classic stamps in 1910, the Independence Issue.



Starting in 1910 and lasting until the early 1920s civil strife would overtake the country again. By 1913 when the Northern states of Mexico would break away from the Government controlling Mexico. Stamps would now be produced or overprinted to satisfy the need for postage because of politics or the lack of stamp arrivals. Some of the most interesting stamps and covers were produced in Mexico during 1913 to 1916. Many of these stamps are collected for their rarity, the local and political overprints and also for wide variety of covers, setting this period apart from all other in Mexican philately.

The next two periods of Mexican philately are the Early Modern and the Modern issues of Mexico. The lines between these two periods are more blurry than the divisions between the earlier issues. The printing styles and the improvements that were made can loosely be defined as the 1917-20 issues that still had the qualities of the post classic issues and the increasingly modernizing designs of the stamps we see in the 1940s defines the Early Modern Issues. The Modern era with high quality stamp production can then be defined as starting with the stamp designs of the definitive issues of 1950-75. The rise in commemorative issues during the early modern and

the modern time periods is evident in both these periods. Today the stamps of the Twenty-first century are by anyones standard as beautifully done as any in the world.

We are now able to see how the progression of Mexico's philately through these different periods has so much to offer both the general collector wanting just one each of the stamps of Mexico and the advanced collector looking for meaningful study material. There are other parts to these different periods of study that can be added to each of these groups, from postal history, postal stationery, proof and essays, specimens, airmail issues, back of the book issues, revenues and other subjects that play an integrated part in the philately of Mexico.

