

Overlooked Issues Part 5 – Thin and Thick Figures

In my last message I covered the Provisional Issues of 1867-67. During the gap after the end of the Maximilian stamp issues and before the next National issue would be released, it gave the postal authorities time to design print and distribute the new 'Full Face' issue of 1868. This new issue would be used for not quite 4 years and in that time it would face one the most interesting controversy to effect the postal service in Mexico. Before I get deeper into this controversy in my next coverage of the interesting issue series, I will cover some of the many point that make the more commonly known as the '1868' issues one of the very most interesting and overlooked issues of Mexico.

Thin Figures of Value, without Period after Numerals		Thick Figures of Value, with Period after Numerals	
6 CENT.	12 CENT.	6.CENT.	12.CENT
25 CENT.	50 CENT.	25.CENT.	50.CENT.
	100 CENT.		100.CENT

Interestingly, starting in September of 1868 this series would have two basic style of stamps that divide the issues into the early Stones 'Thin Figure' and later stones 'Thick Figure' issues. These stamps were produced on Lithography stones and the actual distinguishing difference between these stamp designs was in the value figures, plus whether they periods that followed these different style figures. For some reason this is one of the most difficult things to understand for the novice collector to this issue. Even in many general collections the difference in these two types are often found incorrectly placed in albums. Scott Catalogue gives a fairly good example of these figures and what to look for., but they stress the 'Period' placement. Occasionally the numeral figures that should not have a period follow the numeral do and visa-versa with the ones that are normally with periods may lack this characteristic.



Ten types of thick figure 25cts.

Another interesting thing about these stamps is that there were ten (10) different types of reliefs used on all the later thick figure stamps. So, the collector can look for these types in each of the districts. Since the plates used were lithography stones are delicate and easily damaged, there are numerous constant plate varieties in these issues. Many of the numbers were touched up and in some instance incorrect numbers would wind up on the printed stamps. Replacements of particular positions in the plates would make plating of these issues close to impossible. The good point for the specialist is the ability to have material to study for varieties, and some collectors in the past have done amazing lifetime collections of the varieties in these issues.



Perforation types of thin and thick figure issues.

The first two years of this series had many stamps perforated on a large scale for the first time by Mexican produced printings. Actually the first Period with the thin figure values had more stamps perforated than not. The type of perforation used were so crude that by the time the Thick Figure types came along, the use of perforations almost died out in these stamps. The perforations would cut into the stamp design and rarely would they work well in separation of the stamps for use. For the most part the postal clerks would just use their scissors or straight edges to divide the stamps apart. Beautiful margins are commonly known on the imperforated stamps, but it is rare to find a well centered perforated stamp what actually used the perforations correctly.



Thick figure 50ctv without period.

Like the other issues, there are roughly 50+ districts that used their overprinting devices to distinguish the stamps that they sold in either their main or in their sub offices. Interestingly, a change from the district consignment and date would happen with this issue. The actual consignment number wound up being dropped and a district's number would be put in its place. The year date would now only have the last two digit of the number from 1868 to 1872. For the collector this makes sorting, the districts and the years used, a much easier task. So, for the specialist only collecting districts and consignment years, each issue could have roughly 50 districts x 4 years = approximately 200 different stamps per denomination. For those that collect all 5 denominations this increases the factor to around a thousand different stamps. You also have to take into account the numerous stamps that were done in both the thin and thick figures overlapping during the first two issues years. So, you see that well over a thousand stamps can be a huge task, but one that is cherished by the specialist. Interestingly there are also many sub offices for each of these districts that adds thousands of possible stamp to collect and a life time of collecting interest.



Plate variety on thin figure 25ctv.

Although I have not finished this interesting study of the 1868 issues, you should be able to see that these sometimes called ugly classics have a beauty all their own. I have had many friends and clients that have fallen in love with these issues and to them they are one of the beauties of Mexican Philately. Certainly, these stamps should be considered by any collector looking for an interesting specialty with stamps that are generally easy on one's budget and gives anyone the opportunity to find some true rarities.

Enjoy!