

Overlooked Issues Part 9 – The Banknote Issue

One of the things I have grown to love about Mexican philately is that there are so many different issues and for the classics, each has their own special uniqueness. When I was first introduced to Mexico, the larger format stamps of the 1874 issues with their various different designs, a first for Mexico, had these interesting numbers and town overprints on them. They were the most common and least expensive of the classic issues, so they were also the easiest for me to find. I quickly, lost interest in them when I discovered all the earlier issues with their older classic look and multitude of overprints. After all, I thought, if you have one each, why would you need more. Little did I know that these stamps of 1874-83 are the most diverse series in the classic issues of Mexico.



First type consignment. Thin Crisp wove 10ctv, Med. wove 5ctv, Vertical laid 5ctv & Horiz laid 10ctv.

For the 1874 issues, the Mexican Postal Administration contracted with the American Banknote Company to design and print these beautiful stamps. The paper used was a thin crisp variety and these first printings were beautifully done. Collectors often refer to these issues as the ‘Banknote’ issue, regardless of the fact that after the first printings were done and the stamps and plates were transferred to Mexico, the postal administration took over the later printings of these beautiful stamps. Although the quality may not have been up to par with the earlier printing, the addition of different papers and a couple of changes in the consignment numbers during the series has added literally thousands of varieties.



1ctv w/ low numbers, 50ctv with Mexico 1878-83 configuration, 5ctv with high numbers and part of Banknote Inscription and 10ctv Medium wove high numbers.

The first thing that most collectors realize is there are more than just thick and thin types, as Scott’s catalogue seems to indicate. In the numbering system there are three different consignment configurations. The first is the split number or commonly called wide apart consignment. The district consignment number is on the left spaced apart from the last two digits of the year date on the right. The one for the Mexico district would read “1 74” for the first year and be found in the bottom area of the stamp. The second type consignment numbers were also on the bottom but the consignments and year date were joined, such as Mexico again as “5478”. But, the Mexico district was different from the rest after a short period in 1878 where these numbers are were found on the bottom of the stamp. The next change, also done in 1878, was that the numbers went from the bottom area of the stamp to the top of the stamp, which gives us another type. This “numbers together” change for both the bottom and top, for the 1878 to 1883 numbers was also accompanied by new district numbers differing from the earlier 1874-1877 stamps. The reason Mexico District’s consignment didn’t change from bottom to top in 1878 was that the district’s name, unlike all the other districts, was printed at the same time as the consignment numbers. There actually is one more consignment variety, and that is those stamps used in the later days of 1883, when the postal administration ended the need for consignment numbers altogether.



Very thin wove high numbers 25ctv and 100ctv.

The difference in the consignment from the “numbers wide apart” to the “numbers together at the bottom and at the top”, is only one of the things that differ with the catalogue version of these issues. One of the most important thing that is not shown in most catalogues is, of course, the district numbering systems. General catalogues such as Scott are not geared to showing all the different districts used, so values for only the common ones are mentioned.

But, district names and consignment numbers pales to the differences in papers, giving us the opportunity to find hundreds if not thousands of different possible stamps in this interesting series. I mentioned the thin crisp paper first used by the American Banknote Company, but this was short term except for some of the higher denominations. Nick Follansbee mentions 8 different varieties in his catalogue from thin crisp to the very thin wove paper of 1882-83. The majority of the stamps, however, are found on various medium to thick wove papers, that were mostly without watermarks. Those with watermarks are scarce and unlike most watermark stamps, do not show well using back light. Then there were stamps that have paper with horizontal and vertical laid lined paper. So, the varieties are numerous when the collector realizes that with each district, consignment number type, the various papers and also not mentioned yet colors, there are a lot of stamps to collect.



Very thin wove paper on 5 and 10 centavos without consignment numbers. With and without district name overprints.

Like most of my messages, I would like to stress the need to purchase, if you have not done so already, Nick’s catalogue. It has more information than I can write in this short message, and just this 1874 series would take weeks to cover in full. Collecting Mexico, as I learned is far exceeded with each issue we cover fuller by the diversity and uniqueness of these stamps. Truly, such a collection of something such as these Banknote issues, could be a lifetime endeavor. There is a great deal of fun to collect this issue and others from Mexico, oftentimes at little expense for the keen eyed collector looking for varieties and hidden treasures these stamps hold.

Enjoy!