

Overlooked Issues Part 12 Classic to Modern Mexican - The 1861 Issue

As I have written in the past, one of the least followed issues for many collectors of the Classic issues of Mexico is the second Issue in the Series of 1856 and 1861. The 1861 issues are not only just a continuation of the previous colorful 1856 stamps, but done in new colors in both printing and papers. This issue was done during a time of great uncertainty in Mexico, and we will see how the politics of the time played an important part in what was happening to both this issue and the mail distribution, not to mention the availability of stamps in many of the districts.



*Split used in Zacatecas when postage stamps were rationed due to shortage.
Ocho Reales used as a quarter sect for Dos Reales rate.*

An easy history lesson for the time all starting during the previous 1856 issues when Mexico borrowed large sums of money from England, France and Spain to fight the on going battles between the Conservatives which at the time controlled Mexico and the Liberals headed by Juarez. Juarez entered Mexico City in January of 1861, and the control of the city was in the liberals hands. In April of 1861 the first stamps with the new colors would be issued. It was not long before there was a dramatic color change to the higher denomination stamps in the Cuatro and Ocho Reales which was made in the summer of that same year. This was done to prevent the opposing political fractions in distant district from using the previously printed stamps without forwarding revenues received to the central Postal Authorities. In general the postal service should be politically neutral, but such things fall away during wars. Districts like Aguascalientes, Guadalajara, Zacatecas and Durango wound up not receiving new deliveries for month at a time. Rarities of splits and scarce issues were happening in this period up until the end of the French take over in 1864.



Two types of overprints and cancels used in Aguascalinetes during 1861 issue.

Looking back to the time Juarez took control of Mexico, he did not want to pay up when the debt came due that the conservatives had accumulated. In the first part of 1862, Expeditionary forces from these countries had landed in Veracruz to demand satisfaction of these debts by diplomatic channels and the English and Spanish withdrew from Mexico. Apparently France had different ideas and with the backing of the conservatives that wanted the Juarez government gone, they used their military forces to embark on an Intervention of Mexico with the goal of turning it into an Imperial country controlled by France. With the United States in Civil war, they worried little about the Monroe doctrine, being used to remove them from Mexico.



French Intervention cancel on unoverprinted Veracruz stamp on front.

Veracruz became the first place that the French took control of the post offices, most likely to have control of the mails going in and out of this important port city. We find stamps with new cancels for the city of Veracruz, but some of these have survived on the previously overprinted stamps from this district. The French apparently did not care for these odd overprints and for sometime stopped the overprint of stamps in Veracruz. Likewise after taking over the offices in Orizava, they did something similar. But by the time they are well underway in their takeover of the Capitol, Mexico City, they had reverted back to using the overprint.

May 5, 1862, the Mexican Regular Army defeated the French to win the first and only battle the Mexicans had ever won over a foreign power. Now celebrated as 'Cinco de Mayo' throughout Mexico and in many areas of the United States. The victory was short lived, because by May of 1863 Juarez had left Mexico City and the Conservatives with the French forces had taken control of the city. The back and forth control of these opposing forces would not end until Maximilian the Crowned Emperor of Mexico would have his life end at the wrong side of a firing squad, in Queretaro on June 19, 1867.



Rare provisional use of 1856 Zacatecas district issue in early 1864.

We have already covered the time period of the 1861 issues though the Maximilian issues, but our interest is in the 1861 issues today. With all the war going on for most of the country and unsettled until close to the end of the this issue in the spring of 1864, many of these districts that were at the scene of battles between these forces were often in turmoil. Cross lines covers during these battles are considered rare. These are considered some of the rarest items in Mexico. Issues from places like Hermosillo and Chihuahua are also so rare that only a couple of examples are even known today of some of these

denominations. Another interesting philatelic thing happened due to the shortage of stamps, in Zacatecas the when some of the old 1856 stamps were again used as provisional stamp to make up postage during the early months of 1864.



*Hermosillo a Rare district during the 1861 issues.
Dos Reales cropped from cover for illustration.*

Collectors often overlook both the 1861 issues and the history behind these stamps that bounced back and forth during this political roller coaster in Mexico during their issuance. These stamps are not as pretty as the earlier 1856 issues, but they are in most instances scarcer, have more interesting history and allow the collector to form a great collection at a fraction of the cost that many other country rarities like these would cost.

Enjoy!