

THE NUMISMATICS OF EMPEROR AGUSTIN DE ITURBIDE OF MEXICO

By: Don Bailey, C-1

Since Mexico secured its independence from Spain in 1821, there have been two proclaimed emperors of Mexico who resided in Mexico: Agustin de Iturbide, and Ferdinand Maximilian, and one who resided in the United States, Emperor Norton of California, who proclaimed himself to be the protector of Mexico following the death of Emperor Maximilian in 1867. we will cover the reign and numismatic history of the first emperor in this article, the other emperors Is each a tale of their own,

Agustin de Iturbide was born in Valladolid in the state Of Morelia. He was a clerical and a royalist, and he Sympathized with the idea of independence. He had Fought under Trujillo at Monte de Las Cruces and Shown his leadership abilities in the war with the Guerrillas in Guanajuato. In 1810 Hidalgo had offered Iturbide, an officer of the provincial garrison at Valladolid, a position in his army, which Iturbide Refused and instead joined the royalists.

Iturbide was a very cruel leader. Within a two-month Period in the state of Michoacan, he captured and Shot 19 guerrilla chieftains and 900 of their followers.

In 1820 he was sent on a military expedition in the South against Guerrero. The clergy who had helped Iturbide obtain this command thought that with the Crushing of the Guerrero forces Iturbide would be made Viceroy and give them a free hand.

Iturbide had his own plans – to be the Liberator of Mexico. After suffering a defeat, he decided to join the rebels. He appropriated for his personal use a train loaded with half a million pesos worth of silver.

In February 1821 in the town of Iguala, he published a plan of independence whereby Mexico was to be an independent monarchy. This monarchy was to be governed by King Ferdinand, or some other prince. The church was to retain its privileges, and the Creoles and Gachupines were henceforth to be equal. These three guarantees made up the "Plan of Iguala".

Guerrero, the general whom Iturbide was sent to defeat, but whom he lost to, would meet with Iturbide at Teloapan and join him by supporting Iturbide's Plan of Iguala. Through the summer, all the forces of the liberals and royalists joined in supporting Iturbide and his plan. When the new viceroy, Juan O'Donoju, arrived in Veracruz, he was besieged, and the only way out for his family was to accept the plan. He did this in August at Cordoba.

Iturbide, now insured of success, changed the original plan; Mexico was now to be a monarchy, but not restricted to the European royal families. O'Donoju went to Mexico City and assumed the head of government position as the plan called for. Iturbide arrived there on September 27, 1821, and in October, Veracruz, Perote and Acapulco surrendered, and the Spanish army retired to the island of San Juan de Uloa. The whole country of Mexico was now independent.



On May 19, 1822, Iturbide was proclaimed Iturbide Augustin I of Mexico. The next year was filled with political and social conflicts and infighting that weakened Iturbide's control. He sent a message to the congress saying that he had accepted the crown only under compulsion and he now wished to abdicate. He also put in a claim for 150,000 pesos. On March 19, 1823, the congress accepted his abdication, and sentenced him to perpetual banishment.

In the spring of 1824, he informed the Mexican government that Spain was planning a reconquest and asked that he be allowed to return to Mexico to fight again for independence. The government in return decreed that if he returned he would be executed. Iturbide was unaware of this decree; he had already departed on his trip back to Mexico with a supply of proclamations and paper money.

Iturbide arrived on the coast of Tamaulipas in the summer of 1824. Not knowing of the death sentence, he proceeded peacefully to the town of Padilla, where he was arrested and immediately executed. Iturbide became a hero among the Mexican reactionaries, while the landowners and clergy preferred to give Iturbide the credit for winning independence rather than Morelos and Hidalgo. In 1838 the remains of Iturbide were moved from Padilla to their final resting place in the Cathedral of Mexico.

The Iturbide coinage was authorized by decree of June 11, 1822, but there were two measures taken in the period between independence and the coronation of Iturbide. On Nov 22, 1821, the provisional government authorized the continued striking of Ferdinand VII coinage until new dies for the coinage of the new government could be prepared. They also authorized the continued circulation of the provisional money of Zacatecas at face value. Consequently we have coinage with the Ferdinand VII effigy struck after independence.

The last date to appear on the half, one, two, four and eight Reales of the royalist Mexico City Mint is 1821. The eight Escudos gold also has the 1821 date. The November 22, 1821 decree of the provisional government decreed the dies for the colonial style coinage would be used until June 1822, but it is believed that the colonial style coinage was struck until 1832, usually with dies dated 1821. Eight Reales of this type are known to be dated 1821 and 1822 from the Durango, Guadalajara and Zacatecas mints.

During the reign of Iturbide, copper coinage of 1/32, 1/16, eighth, and quarter Reales were twice authorized, but never struck. There are eighth and quarter Reales of a regional copper issue from Durango for the providence of Nueva Vizcaya. The obverse of the eighth real has a form of the coat of arms of Durango, with the mintmark "D" at the left, and the denomination at the right. The reverse has the inscription "De La Provinci de Nueva Vizcaya", and the date below. The eighth real was struck in 1821, 1822 and 1823.

The obverse of the quarter real has a different style of the coat of arms with the mintmark "D", and the denomination at the left and right. The reverse again has the inscription "De La Provinci de Nueva Vizcaya" and the date 1822, which is the only year it was produced.

There were also a few provisional silver coins struck in Honduras during this reign of Iturbide. Until this time the territorial limits of Mexico reached from the northern limits of California South to the border of present -day Panama by the annexation on January 5, 1822, of the former "Capitania General de Guatemala".

There were some proclamation medals issued for Chiapas, Quezaltenango, Guatemala, and Leon. At this time the only known coinage is from Comayagua and Tegucigalpa. All are dated 1823, and are known only in two Reales denomination. This annexation was terminated July 1, 1823.

All the coinage of Iturbide has basically the same design, but there are several varieties of eagles, legends and placement of assayers' initials and mintmark. There are four major bust styles of Iturbide and two major eagle styles.

The half real struck in silver has on the obverse medium portrait with the legend "Augustinus Dei Providentia" with the mint mark and the date below. The reverse has the crowned imperial eagle facing to the right in a sitting position on a cactus. The legend around reads "Mex. I. Imperator. Constitut." The Assayer initials, "J.M.", appear below. There is no denomination shown on the half reales that were issued in 1822 and 1823.

The one real was issued in only 1822, and the obverse is the same as the half real, but has a wavy truncation of the bust. The reverse is the same as the half real, but the denomination was placed below the eagle.

The two Reales, which were issued in 1822 and 1823, were similar in design as the one Real, but of different treatment, again of the truncation of the bust.

The eight Reales have five different obverses, and three different reverses:

Obverse 1: A small head of a youthful appearing Iturbide. The "Agustin" is abbreviated to "August".

Obverse 2: A large head of a mature Iturbide.

Obverse 3: Large head of Iturbide with Augustin legend spelled out as "Augustinus".

Obverse 4: Has a medium head and again the full "Augustinus".

Obverse 5: This has an extremely long trunk on the neck, and is rarely encountered.

Reverse "A": a small upright eagle with outspread wings, facing left. The legend, "Mex. I. Imperator. Constiut", beginning at upper right. The denomination "8R", and the assayer's initials, "J.M." follow.

Reverse "B": A large eagle, the same as on the minor coinage with the legend staying the same as Reverse "A".

Reverse "C": Has the large eagle as in reverse "B", but the legend begins at the lower left.

The eight Reales were issued in 1822 in a variety of combinations of obverses and reverses. There are 1A, 2B, 2C, 3B, and 3C. There was one with the "A" reverse but the bust of 1823 eight Escudos. The only type eight Reales issued for 1823 is the 4C variety, with the 1823 date.

Gold was issued under Iturbide in four and eight Escudos denominations. The four Escudos were struck in 1823. The obverse is the same as the silver coinage in that year. The reverse has a cartouche with arms containing an eagle similar to the second eagle design.

The eight Escudos were struck in 1822 and 1823. The 1822 eight Escudos have the obverse bust style, as the half Reales, and the legend on the obverse misspelled as "Augustinus". The 1823 eight Escudos has the obverse the same as on all of the 1823 coinage, and a reverse the same as the four Escudos.

The assayer's initials that appear on all the coinage of Iturbide are "J.M." for Joaquin Davis Madrid. There was also an assayer "J.A." for Jose Garcia Ansaldo, who served from 1812 to 1833, but his initials do not appear on the coinage of Iturbide. The edges of all Iturbide coins have a circle and rectangle pattern.

By decree of Dec. 20, 1822, Iturbide authorized the issuance of a million pesos of both two and ten peso notes, and two million pesos in one-peso notes. These promissory notes, redeemable in one year, were the first paper currency of Mexico.

This decree specified the method of discharge of all public and governmental transactions. The basis of settlement was two-thirds coin and one-third paper currency. The public did not like the use of paper in place of the common silver usage, and this distrust became one factor in Iturbide's collapse. The republican government on April 11, 1823 demonetized the Iturbide notes. But these were allowed to be accepted for payment of taxes. The republican government, on May 12, 1823 issued a series of one-peso notes to be used for redemption of the Iturbide notes, and also for general circulation.

These notes were known to be printed on the back of Papel Bulls of 1818 and 1819.

These notes issued by Iturbide under decree of Dec. 20, 1822 all have the basic design of an imperially crowned Mexican eagle, in an oval with the denomination "Un Peso", "Dos Pesos", or "Diez Pesos". With the serial number at the top, and the inscription, "El Imperio Mexicano promete pagar esta cantidad de [with denomination] con arreglo al Decreto de 29 de Diciembre de 1822, sobre este asunto". Mexico 1 de Enero de 1823," and bear the signatures of the Ministro de Hacda, Tesorero Gral., and the Contader Gral. These notes in the first series are uniface, crude, and, measure about four inches by six inches. These Iturbide notes of the first series have been heavily counterfeited in the past, so care should be taken when purchasing them.

The second series issued on the 1818 and 1819 Papel Bulls, while not an issue of Iturbide, does pertain to the period. It has the Mexican eagle in an oval within a wreath for the Un Peso note, while the Dos and Diez Pesos have the eagle surrounded by a wreath without an oval. The inscription "Las Tesorerias de la Nacion pagaran [the denomination] substituyendose este nuevo papel precisa y unicamente para el cambio de los que se presentaren del sello anterior, cuya fabricacion y emision ha cesado por decreto del soberano Congreso de 11 de Abril ultimo. Mexico 5 de Mayo de 1823." Two of the three signers are the same as on the first issue. The difference is the signature of the Ministro de Hacda.

The only decoration established by Agustin Iturbide is the Imperial Order of Guadalupe, which was authorized by decree dated February 20, 1822.

Four classes of this order were decreed. Iturbide was decreed to be the "Gran Maestre". The next class was "Caballeros Grandes Cruces", which was limited to a total of 50. Next was the "Caballeros de Numero", which was limited to 100. The lowest order was "Caballeros Supernumerarios", with the number being limited by the Grant Master Iturbide. At this time there is nothing available to indicate how many of these awards were presented.

The Grand Master wore the collar order, the breast star pinned on the left chest, with the badge suspended from a wide green, white and red sash crossed over from the right shoulder. The Caballeros Grand Cruces wore the same pieces in the same fashion as the Gran Mastre. The Caballeros de Numero wore the badge suspended from around the neck from a narrow green, white and red ribbon. The Caballero Supernumerarios wore the insignia pinned to their jacket suspended from a narrow green, white and red ribbon.

The Collar Order of the Imperial Order of Guadalupe is made of enameled gold, with the oval medallion with a figure of the Virgin of Guadalupe suspended from the collar, which is made of alternating ornate links and oval disks.

The breast star of the order is also made of enameled gold, with the obverse having a four-armed cross with each arm of the cross being made up of three enameled single pointed leaves with ball tips. The leaves of each arm are enameled in the national colors of Mexico - green, white and red. In the center of the cross is an elliptical medallion with the figure of the Virgin of Guadalupe on a white enameled background. Around the medallion is a green enameled band.

Surrounding the center medallion is a ribbon inscribed "Religion, Yndendencia, Union." Behind the four armed crosses is a wreath of olive and palm.

The badge of the order has the obverse similar to the breast star in that it has the four-armed cross enameled the same with the olive and palm wreath behind the cross. The difference is in the treatment of the center medallion. The badge has a white enameled background with the Virgin of Guadalupe figure surrounded by a green enameled band inscribed "Religion, Yndependencia, and Union."

On the reverse of this enameled gold badge is a red enameled medallion with the inscription in white letters, "al Patriotismo Heroico." The suspension device is a Mexican eagle on a crown.

The insignia of this order also in enameled gold is similar to the badge except that the suspension device is a crown. This order ceased to exist with the abdication of Augustin de Iturbide, to be later reinstated in 1853 by General Santa Anna, and again in 1863 by Emperor Maximiliano. All three series are different from the others. The Guadalupe Orders are all hard to come by, but the Iturbide are the rarest of the issues, and seldom seen.

The medals of the Iturbide period are numerous, and come in gold, silver, bronze, gilded, and silver plate, and in all sizes from 20mm to 58mm. The numerous medals are too many to list for this article, but in Frank Grove's *Medals of Mexico*, Volume II, he lists 35 different medals. If counted in the various metals they total 68 different medals.

These proclamation medals were issued for various reasons and from various towns and states, such as the 1821 "Proclamation de la Independencia" from Mexico City, the 1822 "Inauguracion de Agustin" from Mexico City, as well as issues from Aguascalientes, Chiapas, Durango, Guadalajara, Guanajuato, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Oaxaca, Pitic, Queretaro, Silao, Taxco, Toluca, Veracruz, Zacatecas, and Villa Gutierrez de Aguila.

This aspect of the numismatic history of Iturbide is a field all its own and the history of this interesting period of Mexico can be told through these proclamation medals.

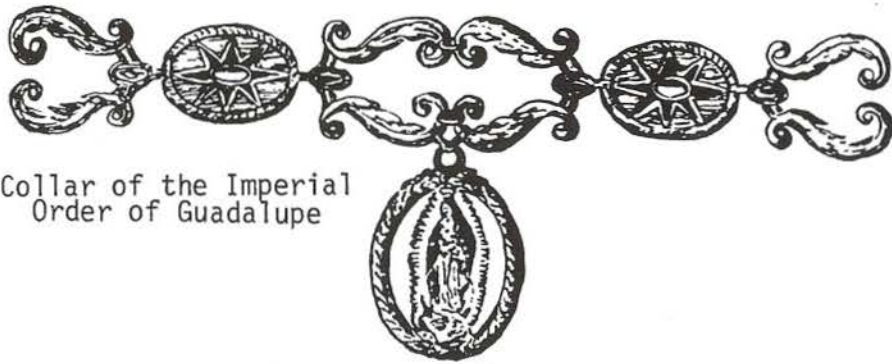
As we have seen in the preceding, this brief period – less than one year – of Mexico's long and vastly interesting history has brought the numismatic field a beautiful set of coinage, some interesting paper currency, numerous medals, a few rare decorations, as well as having a profound effect on the history of Mexico.



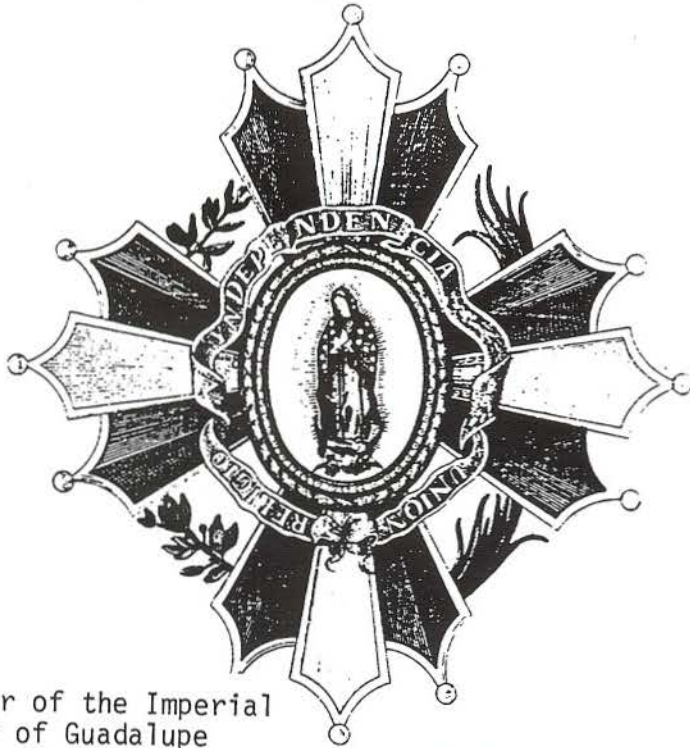
ITURBIDE 1822 MEDAL FOR
OAXACA, G-40a



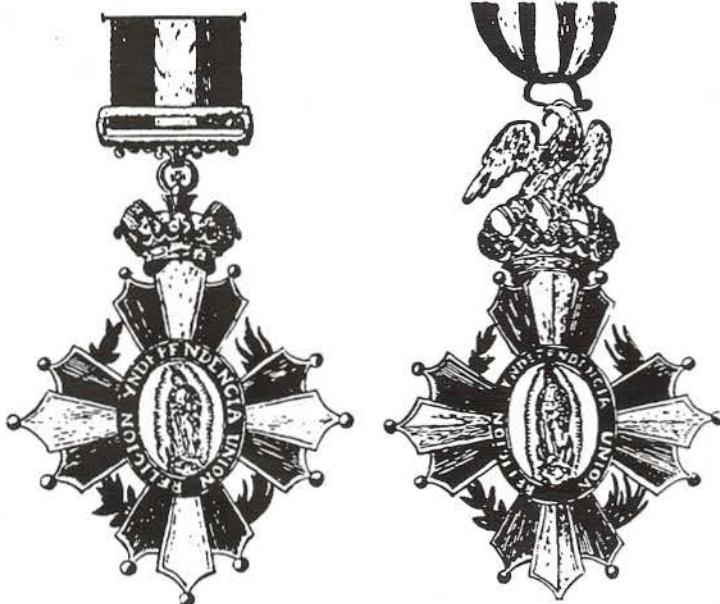
RARE 1822 Mo 8 SCUDOS GOLD
KM 313.1



Collar of the Imperial
Order of Guadalupe

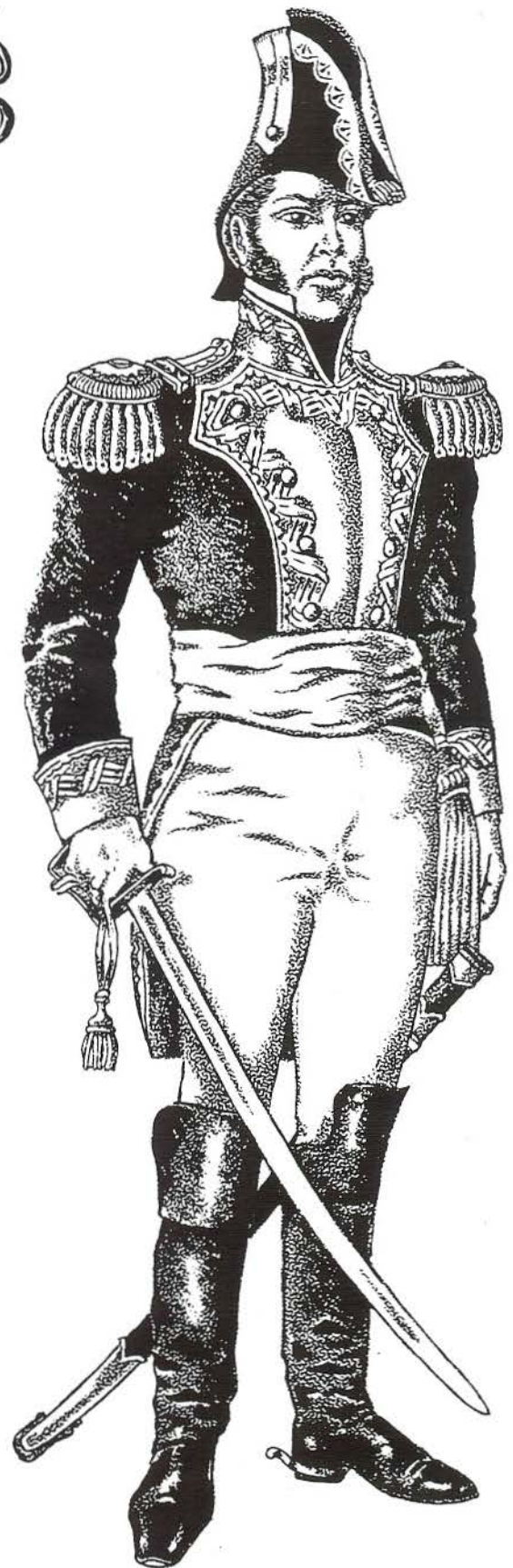


Breast Star of the Imperial
Order of Guadalupe



Insignia of the Imperial
Order of Guadalupe

Badge of the Imperial
Order of Guadalupe



Iturbide in a uniform of a
Mexican General in 1821