

THE FIRST MINT OF THE MEXICAN INSURGENTS

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TRANSLATION OF THE MONOGRAPH

" LA PRIMERA CASA DE MONEDA INSURGENTE "

BY MIGUEL L. MUÑOZ

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The First Mint Of The Mexican Insurgents

Where, when and who established the first mint of the "Insurgentes"?

Dr. A. F. Pradeau in his Numismatic History of Mexico, published by the Banco de México, S. A. translated into Spanish (*Historia Numismática de México*) by Román Beltrán Martínez states on page 98 of the English version and on page 163 of the Spanish translation:

THE FIRST INSURGENT MINT

On October 4, 1810, six days after the victorious Hidalgo forces had taken Guanajuato, the head of the emancipation movement was informed by Don José Mariano Robles, Paymaster-General of the Army, that while the treasury had over half a million pesos in silver bullion, coined money was extremely scarce. (Zamacois, Historia de México, Vol. VI, pp. 426-427).

As the shortage of money was acute, Hidalgo sought the advice of the leading men of the town, and after lengthy deliberation, it was decided that the best way out was to establish a mint, wherein the bar silver on hand could be coined. Hidalgo approved the plan, and the directorship of this first Mexican mint was entrusted to Don José Mariano Robles.

The building chosen for the mint was an ore-reducing plant located at the San Pedro Hacienda, the property of Don Joaquín Peláez. Hidalgo himself furnished the drawings and specifications for the construction of the minting machinery.

The adaptation of the old building and the construction of the mint machinery began October 9, 1810, and proceeded with such rapidity and skill that by the end of October, limited minting operations were started.



D. MIGUEL HIDALGO Y COSTILLA, Priest of Dolores, FATHER OF OUR COUNTRY "...Hidalgo was good looking, medium built swarthy, bright-eyed, soft-voiced, a pleasant talker, courteous; he did not show at first his wisdom, but soon could be seen that he was a man of knowledge; he was fiery, enterpriser as well as violent..."

Carlos María de Bustamante



D. JOSE MARIA MORELOS, priest of Carácuaro, SERVANT OF OUR COUNTRY "... Morelos was a man of action, good horseman, strong arm — people's hero, gentleman of an ideal and pursuer of hope — man of husky appearance and strong heart — a hero sculptured in bronze..."

Salvador Pineda.

When the royalists re-entered Guanajuato, November 25, 1810, the installation of the newly constructed minting machinery was nearly complete and it was so perfect that the Spanish authorities ordered it sent to Mexico City, where it could be used as a model in the construction of similar machinery for future mints. (México a Través de los Siglos, Vol. III, pp. 122-123.)

Several counterfeiters among the prisoners in the jail of Guanajuato when the insurgents entered the town, were employed in the mint and a young ironsmith of notable ability made the dies.

The first coins issued were similar in every respect to those of the Mexico City mint, even to the assayer's initials. The reproduction was so perfect that Bustamante (Cuadro Histórico, Vol. 1, pp. 7 and 47) asserts detection was impossible.

This accounts for the total absence of known pieces of this first insurgent mint in any contemporary collection. The reasons for imitating the coinage of New Spain were, primarily, the psychological effect upon the timid populace, and secondly, the retention of the comparatively stable economic status.

The Spanish edition contains various footnotes which show that Dr. Pradeau based his remarks on the "Historia de México desde sus tiempos más remotos hasta nuestros días" (History of Mexico from the oldest times until the present date) by Niceto de Zamacois and other contemporary works. The translator adds "Zamacois, following Alamán (loc. cit) stated that the machines built according to the designs in a "Dictionary of Arts," were more perfect and better constructed than those in the Mint of Mexico City". Further, "Among the prisoners, according to Alamán, there were several who were being prosecuted as forgers. These were enlisted to plan the establishment, and a young blacksmith who had shown signs of being capable of steel engraving made the dies." Alamán adds that he himself forgot the name of this engraver but that when he was young, together with the sons of Riaño and Bernabé Bustamante, were taught to engrave dies.

After carefully reading the above, it will readily be understood that it is not possible to construct a mint in barely three weeks "... from October 9th to the end of the same month..." And more particularly if, according to Zamacois and Alamán, the project was started by building the machines from the designs of a "Dictionary of Arts."

We cannot either accept what Bustamante states "...the reproduction was so perfect in all senses..." When one of the principal characteristics of the coins from the Provisional Mints was that of being badly made and inferior in appearance to those of the México City Mint, and that too, after various years of experience.

Wishing to follow up this matter because we could not be happy about this imaginary mint we consulted "México a Través de los Siglos" Vol. III (Mexico through the Centuries), and there were found the following:
page 127

"...Hidalgo raised two new infantry regiments, one in Valenciana to which he appointed the young Don Casimiro Chovell as Colonel, he was the administrator of the mine there. He also appointed Don José Mariano Jiménez, a student of the School of Mines in Mexico City, and another student of the same school, Don Rafael Dávalos, who was doing his practical work in Valenciana mine and who was a graduate in mathematics of the college in Guanajuato. These two he appointed as Captain of Artillery, and Director of the cannon foundry which was immediately established. The copper came from the "capellinas" of the Spanish haciendas which were the copper cylinders used for collecting mercury vapor after it was used in the extraction process. (Alamán Historia de México. Vol. 1. p. 448) The artillery produced by this foundry was, rather naturally, very imperfect and the same could be said of the rest the arms which were soon produced in the same place with patriotic enthusiasm under the control of Chovell and Dávalos..."

Page 128:

"...Hidalgo continued to busy himself with the question of supplies to satisfy the urgent needs of his powerful army grew larger and larger after the assault on the Alhóndiga de Granaditas. The great quantity of silver bars captured in this building on the one hand and the extreme scarcity of coinage which was becoming serious at the time, naturally led to realize the need for a mint, which within a few days was completely finished in the Hacienda of San Pedro in charge of Don José Mariano Robles. It was so perfectly set up that the machines in it, made by workmen of Guanajuato were later taken to Mexico to improve those of Apartado or the mints of the King. Nothing was changed

in the type of fineness of the coins and they were so perfect that they were mistaken for the pesos and other coins struck in the capital (I) Cuadro Histórico de Bustamante, page 7). The machines, as well as those used in the casting of cannon were built according to the designs and instructions of a Dictionary of Arts. Which it is believed had been diligently studied years before by Hidalgo and which formed part of the library of Don José María Bustamante..."

As we were not satisfied with this information we then consulted Bustamante's work, which indeed has a name longer than lent. "An Historical Picture of the Mexican Revolution started on September 15th, 1810 by Citizen Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, priest of the village of Dolores in the bishopric of Michoacán. Dedicated to his Excellency Don Ignacio Trigueros Secretary of the Treasury Office." This edition of 1961 follows the text of the work printed by order of Chamber of Deputies of the Union in 1926.

On page 42 we find the following:

"General Hidalgo did not neglect the organization of the civil government ... in this respect he ordered the construction of a Mint in Guanajuato, a step which shows his practical acumen in believing that if the war were prolonged commerce would be paralised and currency would become scarce. The work was started in the Hacienda of San Pedro and pushed ahead so fast that in less than two months the machinery and necessary offices were almost finished. The coinage was so beautiful that it was confused with that of Mexico and the weights, testing machines, and implements of the mint were as well finished as those of the capital."

Nevertheless we continued to be obstinate and could not accept the word of Bustamante and other contemporary writers until we could really prove the facts. More especially, after reading in "Mexico a Través de los Siglos" that, "... the artillery and armaments which came from the foundry were, rather naturally, very imperfect..." It is only natural to think that the machinery was also imperfect. Further, one author says that it was established in a few days; another in three weeks, and Bustamante in less than two months.

It's just not possible!!!

Continuing our search to find out where, indeed the first mint of the "Insurgentes" which really did strike coins was founded, we followed the "Insurgentes" to Valladolid, Pradeau in the work mentioned, on page 164 Spanish and 99 of the English edition says:

VALLADOLID

THE FIRST INSURGENT PROVISIONAL COINS

On October, 10, 1810, Hidalgo left Guanajuato and on October 15th entered Valladolid. There, he confiscated the vessels and objects of the church, from which several thousand dollars' worth of silver was obtained. This was melted and cast into irregularly square planchets, which, with the value stamped on one side, circulated as money, Orozco y Berra, in his *Diccionario de Historia y Geografía, México, 1854, Vol. V, p. 926*, describes these pieces and adds that they were stamped with letters P. V. for Provisional Valladolid. Apparently, no one has actually seen a single specimen of this coinage. The author, during his investigations, interviewed a Mexican family whose ancestors had resided in Guanajuato at the time of the War of Independence, and among a few trinkets which they had inherited, a piece of silver was found which to some extent conforms to the above description. It is cast, weighs twenty-five grammes, measures 31 x 35 x 2 millimeters. On one side appear the letters P. V. and just below, 8R. These characters, however, have not been stamped, but seem to have been in the original pattern from which the cast was made. The other side is plain. It shows no signs of wear and, according to the owner, had remained carefully wrapped from the day it was acquired. While there is a possibility that this planchet may be spurious, the author is inclined to accept its authenticity, (*Pradeau's Numismatic History of Mexico Pl. XIII, 9.*)

In this chapter Pradeau speaks of another crime; a very serious one ecclesiastically committed by the "Insurgentes" and endorsed by Hidalgo, "...There, he confiscated the vessels and objects of the church..." "*México a Través de los Siglos*" does not mention this confiscation and Bustamante (page 63) only says the following about Valladolid:

"The priest Hidalgo conferred the civic command on Don José María de Anzorena and he was not mistaken in his choice... when the military preparations were finished and it was possible to continue the expedition, he took the money which was in the safe of the Cathedral, not only that of the tithe but also some sums which had been deposited there by various private persons for greater safety. He finally extracted \$412,000 pesos, but a smaller part he left for the expenses of the Church: he also took other sums from various other persons for only in this way could he provide for this enormous host which daily needed a great deal of money..."

Hidalgo would have had to strike a very large quantity of coins to pay "the enormous host" mentioned by Bustamante. Further, as will be noticed, Bustamante mentions nothing about the confiscation of the vases and another objects of the churches.

The idea came to us as result of this supposed incident, to verify it in the records of the Double Trial, civil and ecclesiastical to which Hidalgo was subjected, for we felt sure we would find something, about it and, perhaps, something about the mint in Guanajuato.

The book which we looked up has also very long name, "Causas Formadas al Benemérito de la Patria, Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla por la Inquisición de México y la Comandancia General de las Provincias Internas de Chihuahua". (Trial of the Well-deserving of the country, Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, by the Inquisition of Mexico and the High Court of the Interior Provinces). Supplemented with important documents. Published in Mexico, D. F. in 1884. It has an introduction by Manuel A. Romo under the title, "To whom this may read" which we copy:

"The charges against the illustrious father of our Independence, the immortal Priest of Dolores, Don Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, in this volume, have been taken from the invaluable collection of documents on the History of War of Independence in Mexico, formed through the keen and indefatigable work of our friend J. E. Hernández y Dávalos, who has dedicated his life to raise this monument to National Glory and if there should be any person who might have any doubt about the documents which are included in this volume, he should go and see the mentioned Señor Hernández y Dávalos who has the originals."

At the foot of the last page of this book, there is the following note which we consider to be very important: "The documents published in this book have been produced to the letter, without any correction or alteration. Mexico, September, 1884. J. E. Hernández y Dávalos".

We too have copied to the letter.

It is worth mentioning that the original process of the Civil Authorities has 89 pages, whilst, that of the Holy Inquisition is also very voluminous, containing the first process against Hidalgo in 1800 and the second of 53 charges. Romo says that after the death of Sr. Hidalgo the Inquisition closed the file without following the barbarous custom of burning him in effigy as was done in many cases.

DOCUMENT No. 2

THE STATEMENT OF THE PRIEST HIDALGO, IN 89 PAGES.—Book No. 13 Page 10, Item 6a.

ASKED:

*If he knows or is aware as appears from what he and others have stated, if in order to further the rebellion he has raised armies; has attacked or faced up to those of the King: **has coined moneys** made guns, arms, and ammunition: has appointed Generals, officers and all sorts of placemen: has seized the sources of income of the King, of the church, of the Europeans and also of the "criollos", because they would not support his party; because they would not adhere to him, deposed, prosecuted and killed established and legitimate authorities; substituting others according to his fancy; given and taken away positions of all kinds, sending everywhere emissaries to seduce the public, and others to seek help from foreign powers. Say how much you know and pay attention to the order in which you are questioned.*

ANSWERED:

*That the witness had raised forces with which he had attacked and faced, up to these of the King: **that he had coined money in Zacatecas and would have done it in Guanajuato if the establishment had been finished** which factory also produced cannons, arms and ammunition; that he had appointed generals and other officers, but this was not an exclusive prerogative of his since the Captain*

General and the other Generals who were a long way away from the centre of government and the official body did the same as it pleased them; that he had also taken what he found in the Royal coffers, and various amounts from the Cathedrals in Valladolid and Guadalajara as well as from the Europeans as has been said, and from the "criollos" he took horses but with a promise of reimbursement to these who took his part; that he had deposed the established authorities if they were Europeans or "criollos" who would not support his party; that he had prosecuted many of them; but only killed the intendent of Guanajuato Don Antonio Reaño; that in the same sense he had given and taken away positions of all kinds; that as far as concerns emissaries he has already declared; and that as respect the sending of people to foreign powers he stated that together with Allende they sent a Don N. Letona of Guatemala to the United States to seek their alliance and arms, with full and express power to offer them free trade since there was nothing else to offer them and this took place in the last month of December, but he did not know whether this agent arrived at his destination although he had heard he had been killed on the way; that he had also been heard say that afterwards, Allende himself had sent Don Ignacio Aldama with the same idea without knowing what he has declared and how he will speak about the facts on which he is questioned and how he will answer."

On Page 16, Item 23:

ASKED:

If among the valuables which he had been taken from the churches there were jewels and hoy vessels.

ANSWERED:

That neither he nor any other of the leading men of the "Insurgents", as far as he knew, had taken any jewels or sacred vessels from the churches.

Item. 24

ASKED:

With what right and by what authority did the witness take valuables from the churches; under what conditions was it done and what was the way in which it was done.

ANSWERED:

That he did not consider with any more right and authority that by which he took the rest from individuals and that it has been answered to question twenty one. As far as the method was concerned he did no more than pass an order to the councils and he did not remember if the order was verbal in Valladolid to declare the valuables they had and that they would be repaid from the National Funds. In this way they took, with no more formalities, an amount he did not remember from the church in Valladolid but Don Juan Aldama should know as he was commissioned to take it. From Guadalajara some fifty six thousand pesos were taken by the commissioner, a certain Avendaño from Sonora, who was named "oidor" (Special judge) for the matter, and in the same way seventy thousand pesos from the Office of Wills.

The research begins to yield results! We read with great interest the reply of the priest Hidalgo to Item 6a, "... that he had struck money in Zacatecas..." which we knew nothing about, and that, "...they would have done so in Guanajuato if the projected installation had been completed..." Therefore, we were right in thinking that in the short space of three weeks it was not possible to erect a mint and carry out the striking of coinage. This makes us think again of what Dr. Pradeau says when he talks about "the first mint of the insurgentes in Guanajuato". "...When the Royalists re-entered Guanajuato in November 25th, 1810, the installation of the newly constructed minting machinery was **nearly complete**...". That is to say, by the end of October they had struck perfect coins, and twenty five days later, the installation was about to be completed!!

We must not forget that the priest Hidalgo said categorically; "...that money had been produced in Zacatecas..."

We still have to find out, in good time, if indeed Hidalgo struck money in Zacatecas, after we have investigated the striking of coinage in Valladolid made from silver of the church wessels for several thousand pesos.

With this reservation we will now give the evidence of Don Juan Aldama who, according to Hidalgo, was the person sent to take over the valuables of the Cathedral in Valladolid.

DOCUMENT NUMBER 37

THE EVIDENCE OF DON JUAN ALDAMA

Page 71 Item 24.

ASKED:

If he did not, in the town of Valladolid, take away considerable amounts of money belonging to the Holy Church, to Charitable Funds and to His Majesty.

ANSWERED:

He was summoned by the Priest Hidalgo and was sent by him to receive in the treasury of the said Holy Church, four hundred and seven thousand pesos which he was to hand over the Treasurer of the Army. These he received in the said Cathedral from a clerical gentleman and another, without any violence whatsoever. This is one of those things which he could not avoid but he was unaware from which accounts the amounts came.

There is, therefore, not the least doubt that a great mistake has been made in stating that coins were cast from the Holy Vessels.

The Holy Inquisition among the 53 charges made, makes no charge about and does not even mention this supposed sacrilege. It is only too obvious that the inquisition would have done so in case such a crime had been committed.

In order to investigate what the priest Hidalgo said in evidence that he had struck money in Zacatecas, we returned to Dr. Pradeau's Numismatic History of Mexico and on page 155 of the Spanish version and 92 of the English edition, we find:

ZACATECAS PROVISIONAL MINT

"...It was not until the month of October, 1810, that Count de La Laguna, then in charge of the Zacatecas government, proceeded to equip a mint, which on November 14, 1810, began coining only silver. This mint was the most prolific of all the provisional mints, and the denominations struck ran from eight-reales to one-half real.

Don Ignacio López Rayón, who with the capture of General-

issimo Hidalgo had become the titular head of the Insurrection, entered the City of Zacatecas April 15, 1811. Rayón ordered the rich mine of Quebradilla, thrown open to all who chose to work it, and one third of the metal mined was given to the laborers who extracted it. With this incentive thousands toiled day and night, and a large amount of silver was thus secured, which Rayón caused to be coined in the Zacatecas mint, using the L.V.O. dies found there. General Rayón was forced to evacuate the city May 21, 1811, (Pl. XII, 1-7.)

Señor Beltrán Martínez adds a note to the foregoing which says, "(351) Rayón did not leave Zacatecas on this date but on May 1st (Alamán, op. cit. II p. 267).

Bustamante on page 163 tells us: "*Rayón stayed less than a month in Zacatecas but in this short space of time he managed to increase his forces, clothe his soldiers, repair his arms, cast artillery, construct five ammunition wagons and discipline his troops. At the same time he organized the government as well as he could. He coined money in order facilitate commercial activity which had been paralysed for lack of it. He supported the working of the rich mine of Quebradilla that was in bonanza and he reconditioned the haciendas Bernardez and la Saucedá.*

Later, on page 168, Bustamante describes the situation when the Royalist forces had reoccupied the city: "...Calleja agreed to the continuation to the striking of the Provisional money in Zacatecas. The dies were imperfect. On them was a group of mountains similar to those which surround Zacatecas and with the letters L.V.O. standing for "Labor Vincit Omnia." These coins were accepted readily as their ugly appearance was compensated by their heavier weight and the good fineness. Indeed among the many types of coins which appeared then, those of Zacatecas were preferred in Veracruz where a peso was worth nine reales."

As can be seen from the foregoing the name of Hidalgo does not appear anywhere as a striker of money. Maybe it was a mistake of the Priest Hidalgo, although the coinage of Rayón might have been struck by his order or indeed with or without his agreement.

The greatest prize of our research was that of having found in the same book, the following, copied word by word.

DOCUMENT No. 36

A LETTER CORRECTING CERTAIN MISTAKES IN
THE HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF BUSTAMANTE.

Page 61.

Señor Lic. D. Carlos María Bustamante, Casa de V. México.
(from my house) September 12, 1823.

Dear Sir,

On the 16th of July I sent you the following communication.
M.s.m. In the footnotes to the eleventh letter of the Historical Picture in favor of Diego García Conde you use almost at the end, this expression, "We wish to convey a memorial of true history to posterity" Basing myself on this, as protection, I take the liberty of making two remarks to you. First, in the letter 11a. (p. 5) you talk of a place near Zacatecas called "La Capilla de los Herreros." (The Chapel of the Blacksmiths) No such place is known in the immediate surroundings of that city. There is the Sanctuary or Chapel of Señor Guerreros situated, to the south east of the suburbs of the city, about a league before the college of "Propaganda Fide" of our lady of Guadalupe (which it is wrong you call "cruciferos"). There a magnificent image of Christ Crucified is venerated which in the opinion of father Bezanilla (Muralla Zacatecana, lecture on April 8th note 1a.) was brought by Don Alonso de Villa-seca along with Señor de Santa Theresa and other Holy Christs and images from the parish of the silver smiths in Zacatecas. They have a celebrated temple a short distance away from the town of Purificacin, the Real and the Fresnillo mines. The second point is that when in the same letter (p. 8) you deal with the stay of General Rayón in Zacatecas and his return to Saltillo, you say that there, "He coined money to ease the commercial situation which was paralysed by lack of it." It is a complete mystery to me what General Rayón was doing in Zacatecas at this time since I had been put in prison together with the first leaders of the fight for the American Liberty. Indeed, to tell the truth, if these remarks mean that General Rayón decided on or promoted the establishment of the Mint in Zacatecas (the first, I understand, of the Provisional ones) then they are completely mistaken.

The establishment of the mint was asked for by the general mining interests through their Regional Deputy from Count Santiago de la Laguna the Provisional Intendant (later Lieutenant General of the Armies of America) before the entry of the first American Chief, Don Raphael Iriarte (which took place on November 2, 1810).

The petition was shown by the Minister of the Treasury to the Fiscal Procurator, Don Domingo Velázquez (now the President of that Provincial Delegation and Provincial ad-interim Political Chief,) and to me, in virtue of my position as Interim Assessor of the Municipality during the period of the government of the afore said Count. There were several meetings of the Treasury and others in order to come to the best arrangements, but as there were no experimented die sinkers available for engraving, Don Manuel Ramos cut the first die. On the obverse were the City Arms, rather badly done; on the reverse those of the King of Spain, but since the engraver could not manage Lions he substituted Pomegranats.



Don Manuel Ramos cut the first die, but since he could not manage Lions he substituted Pomegranats.

The first coinage from Zacatecas came out with a fineness of 12 dineros (1,000) as no more suitable alloy was available. The truth of this account is the statement of proofs which I enclose, which was confirmed by the Secretariat of the now extinct State Council. You may make whatever use you care of this letter either including it in your admirable account or giving an extract if it is worthy of your attention.

Although this letter (including the proof which I mention in it) was delivered by myself to your house (and not to a mere servant but to somebody of the upstairs apartments) I fear it did not reach you, by the silence about it which I have noticed in the additions to the Historical Picture. It is true that as my information was sent at a later date than that of the twelfth as it was written on the 14th of the same month it could not have appeared in it because the design of the Zacatecas money was dealt with on page 6, but I do think it might not have been inopportune at least, to have a note in the fourteenth letter which carries the date of the 28th of July). There, as a break in the narrative is an extract from the evidence of Señor Hidalgo, and you could have put in a remark calling attention to the words "That money had been struck in Zacatecas" unless that statement weighs more in your mind than the data on which I base my complaint. I venerate as I should the glorious memory of the First Hero of Anahuac but I cannot do less, frankly, than be surprised, and I must wonder at this mistaken statement, when I read in the Picture the statement already mentioned (which I had not seen before).

"And where are we finally? Did the generalissimo Hidalgo or General Rayón manufacture or strike money in Zacatecas?"

Another could say that one of the two; but I reply definitely, that neither did, if by manufacturing or coining we include the making of the first die or establishing the coinage. When either of them first trod that soil for the first time the mint was already established, and I don't want you just to take my word for it. I would refer to the file (which should be either in the Secretariat of the Viceroy if after my departure from Zacatecas it was decided to approve it, or in the Mayoralty where information can be gathered, certificates obtained, or compel witnesses if one wishes.

It can be said is not a work of such importance, really, when the point does not affect the main line of History (or rather the main lines of it). I would, however, reply to this that it would have been all the same to mention the complaint which had been presented, and to which I swear there was reason. I pray you, therefore, to give consideration to this letter, (the justification for which I gave in my previous one). Because it would be very extraordinary that the claim of Señor Don Diego García Conde not to have sworn not to have taken arms against us, unless it is documented, should be worthy of some mention. My letters,

accompanied with certain proofs are neglected. Whether one, or the other deal with a really important historical matter. But in that one the honor of one man is at stake; in these, the glory of the State of Zacatecas, in whose glories I am interested because I first saw the light of day there. If you do not care to listen to me I will trouble you no further. I will see the newspapermen so that incorrect accounts will not be bequeathed to posterity, which at the turn of the century will become accepted as truths thanks to the rather negative proof of there having not been contradicted by any contemporary.

Before lying down my pen, as I realize your numerous preoccupations must, at times naturally (distract your attention, I would make the observation that in the twelfth letter (11) one comes across a palpable anachronism. There, writing of the action which Don Benedito López fought in the neighborhood of Xaripeo (which I understand was in May 1811) you make the following comment. "If my pen were governed by poetical enthusiasm I would say that the ghost or shadow of Hidalgo, coming out frighteningly from his tomb had surrounded his Hacienda of Xaripeo" But what shadow? when even his body couldn't do it at that time, surrounded as it was by the gloom of his prison. From which tomb? Unless you mean cell number 4 of the gaol of the Military Hospital of Chihuahua. That he was there I know so certainly because at the same time my cousin Lic. D. Ramón was in cell number 3 and I was in number 5. Señor Hidalgo was not defrocked until the 29th July, put into the death cell on the 30th and executed on the 31st. (sic.) We ourselves were firmly convinced we should suffer the same fate, and I began to believe that the unforgettable Salcedo intended, as a grand finale, to provide the new city of Chihuahua with the spectacle of seeing the sacrifice of Christ between two thieves, the epitaph would have been that this common ill doer knew how to honour those of our calling. Luckily it did not turn out that way. My cousin was shot on the 6th of June 1812 and I outwitted Dimas in having, at any rate saved my life As. I was in the cell to the right).

I would earnestly have you believe that my pen is not guided by any spirit of rivalry or competition. Imagination would have

to be very petty if, not being capable of producing an original work, it contents itself with biting those of others. I attempt what is most difficult, that is, to write with certainty. The facility of criticising the works of somebody else is not to my taste. I said at the beginning, and in conclusion I would repeat, that, in view of the object you say you pursue which is that of transmitting to posterity your recollections of History in a complete and true manner, I have taken the liberty to point out to you (where you appear to wonder from the truth) that which I know to be true.

*With this I repeat myself to be your faithful servant
who kisses your hands.*

Lic. Mariano Joseph de Garcés

Nearly a century and a half has passed by since the late Lic. Garcés wrote this extremely interesting letter of which Bustamante did not care to take notice. We feel certain, from the sincerity with which he wrote that his only wishes and interests, when he wrote this letter, were the same as those which have guided us, at this time. These are to try and bring the facts to light in order to provide a true version for those who follow us.

Our most grateful thanks, and those of other numismatists to Lic. Manuel Mariano Joseph the Garcés, for the very valuable data he has provided, R.I.P.

But we must return to our research. Lic. Garcés is not the only person who corrects Bustamante. In the same book we have discovered another letter dated two years later which we must give:

DOCUMENT No. 70

Page 198

"A letter to Don Carlos Maria Bustamante, in which the confession of Sr. Hidalgo which took place in Chihuahua is explained.

5r. Lic. D. Carlos Maria Bustamante.

Durango Oct. 28, 1825

My dear friend,

I realize from your very welcome letter of the 12th why you did not reply immediately to my former letters

I saw as you asked me, Sr. Magistral Iturribarria, and bearing in mind your request about the confession of Sr. Hidalgo, the only thing I can say to you on the matter from what he answered is; that when he arrived in Chihuahua he had been, for several days, placed under arrest by the commanding General by orders of the mentioned Sr. Hidalgo

He also ordered me to tell you in his name that the History of the State of Zacatecas to which you refer in your Historical Picture is not as accurate as it should be.

It suffers from misunderstandings and, to correct these, write to Franciscan Friar Gálvez who will inform you about everything, as he was an eye witness of all that happened. I do not doubt that he will put you right with his customary punctuality and this is to advise you to do so.

Your friend and humble servant, who kisses your hands.

Juan Manuel Asúnsolo.

P.S. Gálvez is called Friar Antonio. I send you a paper for him so you will realize how we are here concerning our first Constitutional Congress.

We can easily realize from the documents given above that, with very few exceptions, numismatics had little or no interest for the historians. At first sight they accepted, without verification, the information which came into their hands. Some, unfortunately, allowed themselves to be governed by egoism, pride, and by pure unwillingness or indifference.

They failed to verify their ideas on numismatic events, probably because, according to their criteria they were not of historical importance. Nevertheless we have managed to be able to clear up many things.

Guanajuato was not the first mint of the Insurgentes because, as we have seen it never succeeded in producing coins.

Neither was there any insurgent coinage in Valladolid. The pieces described by Orozco y Berra and later by Doctor Pradeau, illustrated in his Numismatic History of Mexico Plate XIII No. 9 must be those of a later striking if indeed they are from Valladolid.

Zacatecas should not be considered as a mint of the Insurgentes. It was established provisionally under the Viceroy. The Royalist just as much as the Insurgents used the L.V.O. dies when they were in possession of the city.

Hidalgo, therefore, coined no money of any kind even if he might have given orders and authority to strike coins in Zacatecas, and even though he confessed having done so in this testimony.

So where, when and who established the first mint of the Insurgentes?

Having now abandoned the cities of Guanajuato, Valladolid and Zacatecas, as well as the forces under the command of Hidalgo, Allende and others, who fought in what are now the States of Jalisco, Michoacán, Guanajuato and the other territories in the North of the country we must turn our eyes to the South. There we find two possible candidates — The Generalissimo José María Morelos y Pavón, priest of Carácuaro and the lawyer Ignacio Rayón, the head of the Supreme Congress of the Government of América.

General Morelos was a man of action very disposed to fight if needed. He had the gift of leadership and of inspiring confidence in his followers. Since he had received instructions directly from the Priest Hidalgo, he felt he had sufficient authority to decide for himself what should be done. This is revealed by a letter he wrote to the lawyer Rayón, dated in Tixtla (State of Guerrero) on the 12th August 1811 which we copy from a book published in Cuernavaca, State of Morelos, in 1897, entitled **"The coinage of the Insurgent General José María Morelos,"** This was a numismatic essay of Dr. Nicolás León who translated, and includes, in it, the pamphlet of Lyman Hayes Low published in New York in 1886.

From page four we have, word for word:

"24 Finding myself helpless, he says, as the Treasury owed several thousands as a result of the consumption of such a large force, I have decided to strike copper as a promise to pay, as in this way the poor and the rich will lend to us. This I did by issuing a proclamation to the army suppliers of the province of Tecpan that nobody should refuse it and that it should be accepted at its face value in the markets. This proclamation I also send to your Excellency, asking you to be so good as to publish it in convenient places as it would be sound policy to have this coinage accepted by the commerce of other provinces."

Dr. León adds, "This did happen".

"25 I wanted to take this step in agreement with Señor Hidalgo, but he only replied on the 16th of December last, from Guadalajara, that I should borrow from or draw on the National Treasury for any amount. But since, up to now, I have not been able to find any solvent persons who would make loans big enough to satisfy the wants of the troops. I have struck copper pieces from half a real up to one peso, excluding "tostones" (4 reales) of no intrinsic value, to the benefit of poor and rich alike and it seems as though we have been greatly helped".

Next we give, word for word, the text of the proclamation of Morelos mentioned above.

"Don José María Morelos, General for the conquest of the South, by Agreement of the gentlemen of the Congreso Nacional Americano (National American Congress) Don Miguel Hidalgo, and Don Ignacio Allende, etc., etc.

"As I feel it is my duty to provide that as far as possible nothing should be lacking for the development of our forces and since there is no normal currency in silver or gold for payment of the troops, I have decided by a decree of this very day, in the city of Nuestra Sra. de Guadalupe, in the province of Tecpan to strike copper money for general commercial use as orders to pay, which will be honored by the National Treasury once the conquest is completed. It might even be before if there are sufficient "reales" of silver or gold which should not be difficult as minerals are now being worked, and as the money we have surcharged or to be surcharged we shall not allow to leave this realm for any other.

"In order that this copper coinage should have the same value as those of silver or gold, it will be guaranteed by the National Treasury. In this part of the South the coinage should have the following characteristics in size a little bigger than the current Mexican silver with a corresponding thickness. The inscription on one side shall be a bow and arrow with an inscription below indicating the corresponding wind which is the South. The other side will carry an inscription a continuous design of M. O. and S., as abbreviation of the word of Morelos; M, and above this, the value of the coin were it Peso, Tostón, Peseta, Real or Medio."

And in order that the National Treasury, shall not be liable for amounts which have not been struck, a special book will be opened which will record individually the lots which are struck in the Treasuries who will provide details. Therefore nobody can, without my permission or that of the National Congress strike similar or different money under penalty of a fine of double the amount coined payable in gold or silver. In case the offender has not the money to pay the fine he shall be condemned to imprisonment until all the mentioned copper coin shall be recovered.

And since this coinage is a charge, in the same way as a sight draft payable by our National Treasury at the time anyone present it, it should be considered as of the same value as if it were of gold or silver, and be used for all dealings and contracts of purchases, sales, promises to pay, drafts, collections and payments throughout this Kingdom, just as the Mexican coinage has, and is accepted.

And in order that this shall come into force, striking of the said coinage will start in the Treasury of the aforesaid Capital and will continue in others, should it be necessary, of which due notice will be given to the public, And that there should be no mistaking them for the "cuartos" or "clacos" of the shops I order that the owners of them should recover all these of copper which their true value would be given in silver reales to all who bring them in. For the present only those "clacos" of wood will continue to circulate in the shops as has been the custom in many places of this Kingdom for the convenience of the poor and in order to prevent frauds, the shopkeeper must obtain a license from this authority for the amount of "clacos" they wish to issue, which will be granted for a low fee for the benefit of the troops, in proportion to the amount they wish to issue.

And in order that everybody should be advised and that nobody can allege ignorance I order that this step should be published by proclamation in this canton and in the remaining places of the Province of Teipan and the others in the South. Given in the Headquarters in Tixtla on the nineteenth day of the month of July of one thousand eight hundred and eleven.—José Ma. Morelos, General of the South, By order of His Excellency, Félix Ortiz".

This proclamation is included in Supplement No. 2 of the Scientific Society "Antonio Alzate" published in this capital city in 1901. Fortunately for us Dr. León was interested in the coinage of money carried out by Morelos and bequeathed us the two works from which we have taken the previous documents.

There cannot be any doubt but that **Morelos was the first Insurgent who actually coined money**. There must have been many difficulties to start with, as coins of 1811 are scarce, particularly the 8 Reales.

Don Manuel Orozco y Berra in his work, "The coinage of Mexico" says: "The coinage of Morelos of 1811 (quite rare)...", Señor Low only reports one example in silver, and Dr. León mentions that he has only seen one example in copper.

Nevertheless the moneyers of Morelos must have learned their jobs fairly quickly since this copper coinage is the most plentiful, especially those dated 1812 and 1813, of all the "Insurgent" issue.

Dealing with the place where the first "Insurgent Mint" was established; Dr. Pradeau on page 166 of the Spanish translation and Page 100 of the English version, says:

"...It was at Tixtla, where, according to the diary of Captain Don Felipe Benecio Montero, "thought was given to money, and as there was a scarcity of funds, the General decided to coin copper as sort of promissory currency which was to circulate until the nation could redeem it..."

We should mention that captain Montero says, "It was in Tixtla where thought was given to money"; but he doesn't say that it was minted. On the other hand, the "Proclamation" of Morelos says clearly: "...I have decided, today, by decree, that copper coins shall be struck in the city of Our Lady of Guadalupe in the province of Teipan..." and later, "...and to carry this out, the striking of the copper coinage will be started in the Treasury of the mentioned Capital and will be continued in other places if necessary..." which, as we know, was done in innumerable places.

Referring to the locality of the first coining, Dr. León on page 30 of his essay tells us:

"It is rather a guess, without precise document to localize the first place or the principal place of the Morelos coinage. The mere facts of having found coins in the state of Guerrero (Chilpancingo) to which Señor Bastow refers and the place where this happened does not permit one to assume what he does, which is that Chilpancingo or Tixtla were the places where striking the Morelos coinage was started. We believe, basing ourselves on the letter of Morelos to Rayón that it would be more logical to consider Tecpan as the cradle of this work."



Very likely one of the first coins minted by Priest José Ma. Morelos.

The foregoing was published by Dr. Leon in 1897. Possibly he had not then seen the Proclamation of Morelos which he himself published in 1901 or surely he would have mentioned it. We ourselves, however, are of the same opinion as Dr. León. Why? We prefer to answer this question with the decree of General Morelos, taken from Edmundo O'Gorman's book, **"Historia de las Divisiones Territoriales de México"** (History of the Mexican Territorial Divisions) page 33.

O'Gorman writes, "As an historical curiosity I give below the Decree which created the Province of Tecpan."

"By virtue of my powers for the reform of the Province of Zacatula I have decided by decree on this date to issue the following decision:

First: Recognising the worth of the village of Tecpan which has born the burden of the conquest of this province, its larger population and its geometrical size, as it can handle many sea

going ships; I have decided to make it a City, giving it on this date the name of Ntra. Sra. de Guadalupe (Our Lady of Guadalupe) which will be done with the first council, but meantime we only announce for the knowledge of the villages and places of this providence that they should consider the said City as head of it, particularly and specially because of the guarding of the ports.

3a. Although all the Kingdom is interested in its defense, the boundary line should be the river Zacatula which is called the Balsas on the West, and on the North the upper reaches of the same river for a distance of four leagues among which there is Cusamála and from there to the East the villages of Totozintla, Tlacoztotlán; the south east should be in the straight line of the Palizada, the gateway to the sea, which has caused a lot of work in the actual conquest, lying inside of it, Tixtla, Chilapa and other places which we have conquered up to the present moment. All of which places will acknowledge as the center of the province and as the capital the aforesaid City of Ntra. Sra. de Guadalupe in both, its political and economic government as well as in the democratic and aristocratic, etc. . . ."



Coins like these were minted at Tecpan; the first Mint of the Insurgents.

It should be mentioned that the insurgents province of Tecpan comprised a large part of what is now the State of Guerrero as well as a part of the State of Morelos. The City of Ntra. Sra. de Guadalupe, capital of the "Insurgente" province is now known as Tecpan de Galeana, capital of the district of Galeana. It is situated, more or less, half way between Acapulco and Zihuatanejo.

It will be seen, from the aforementioned decree, that Morelos was very interested in making Tecpan a great capital city and the end of the same

decree says that Tixtla as well as Chilapa and all the other settlements in general "will recognize it as the centre of the province and its capital... as well as the political and economic capital."

In the General Archives of the Nation, Operaciones de Guerra (Operations of War) vol. 561 pp. 170/171 there is a communication in which general Morelos gives the seven reasons he had for founding the province of Tecpan, and converting the town of that name to the capital city. We give the seventh and last, word by word:

"...because she made the foundations which held the province, providing reales and men to win the first victories of the various battles just as the whole province did to gain that of Oaxaca and large parts of Veracruz, Puebla and Mexico..."

The list of reasons ends with following:

"NOTICE. Every american, in good standing, who wishes to inhabit the new city of Chilpancingo or the beautiful villages of Tixtla and Chilapa, will be provided a house and farm land and the same will be true for the city of the Kings of this port of Acapulco."

From the foregoing it will be seen that Morelos chose Tecpan, not only as a thank offering and a preference, but also because of "its larger population, and geometrical layout..." and that he could not have chosen Tixtla or the **new city of Chilpancingo** precisely because these places had a lower population and commercial importance, etc.

As far as our other candidate, Bustamante says the following on page 233 of his book,

Cuadro Histórico (Historical Picture) "After the actions at Torre and Emparan the lawyer Don Ignacio Rayón considered seriously the future of the Nation which up to then had no head. For this purpose, therefore, he summoned a council of the principal men in the neighborhood of Zitácuaro which assembly he made as widely representative as possible. The Junta then freely named three individuals who were invested with the command in the name of the Mexican Nation. These were mentioned Rayón, Don José María Liceaga and the priest of Tusanla Dn. J. José Sixto Verduzco. Afterwards the same Junta (council) named D. José María Morelos, priest of Nacupétaro and Carácuaro in the bishopric of Michoacán."

After the Junta was expelled from Zitácuaro as a result of the attack of Calleja on it on January 2, 1812 it began to wander and Tlalchapa succeeded Sultepec as its Seat. It was in this town that the following decree was issued:

The Supreme American Governing Congress, in the name of Don Fernando VII, etc. As it is in the National interest in order to achieve independence, to prevent Europeans from extracting their wealth during the war, and since we must provide from the Americans (Mexicans) a large monetary turnover, be put into circulation, which shall be struck bearing an eagle, cactus, bow and arrow and sling in the hope that this measure, a child of the burning zeal which we have for the public benefit will help at the same time to distinguish by its circulation, the real patriots among the rebels.

Therefore, whilst permitting for the time begin the circulation of Mexican money, we shall issue the national coinage we have described, and we order all Americans (Mexicans) to accept it with the warning that those who do not, will incur a fine of two hundred pesos which will be strictly enforced, whilst in a case of insolvency any punishment deemed appropriate by law. And that in order this matter should come to everybody's notice, we order its publication by proclamation in all the capitals, cities, towns and villages of our dominions by posting it on the usual walls.



Vignette of the arms adopted by the "Junta" of Zitácuaro" in August, 1811. Precise copy made by Sr. Rubén López R. copied from documents in the National Archives of Mexico.

*Given in the National Palace of Tlalchapa, January 23rd 1812.
Lic. Ignacio Rayón, Dr. José Sixto Verduzco, José María Liceaga.
By order of S. M. Remigio de Yarza, Secretary
(National Archives - Operations of War v. 933 p. 116)*

We should mention that in each place where Rayón was stationed he never omitted to mention the National Palace in the revolutionary edicts he issued, even though the President and his collaborators often did business in mud huts. With this the idea that there was an autonomous Government, with no fixed seat but still in existence, was published.

In this important proclamation the national local symbols of Eagle and Cactus stand out in the "Insurgentes" coinage as a declaration of war against that of the traditional Royalist with the "Plus Ultra".

By the end of the same year 1812, Rayón had established a mint in Tlalpujahuá, Michoacán, a town on the borders of what is now the State of Mexico, as we realize from the letter which Morelos sent to Don Ignacio Rayón which we copy below:

Most Excellent Sir — With the dispatch of Y. E. of the 30th of this November I received "tres pesos" of various coins of



Vignette of the central part of the seal used by Don José Sixto Berdusco, member of the "Junta de Zitácuaro". The same design was used for the coins minted by said "Junta" (council).



Eight Real coin of the "Junta de Zitácuaro" with the legends, on the obverse: "Ferdin. VII — Dei Gratia — 1811 BR —" on the reverse: "Provincial por la Suprema Junta de América" (Numismatic History of Mexico, Plate XVII, by Dr. A. F. Pradeau).

the National Mint which Y. E. has set up in Tlalpujahua. The finish is quite good but they are light in weight and since there has been such a lot of forgeries I understand they will lose their value if you do not give the full weight of an ounce to the peso which is a guarantee that the bad ones do not come to be valued

as half pesos. I send to Y. E. three pesos of the Provisional issue of the South, which for easy were cast for the "Jura" as we did not have more than six days to produce them. I have based myself on this method of production in order that I am not swamped by other coinage. Among the three pesos is a Provisional one of Oaxaca which I found when we took over, since for more than a year coins have not come from the Mexico mint. I have tried to do all possible that one and all should be of an ounce, insisting that the Provisional (issue) of the South should continue because of its greater quantity.

*God preserve Y. E. for many years. General Headquarters
Dic. 29. 1812.*

José María Morelos

to H. E. President Don Ignacio Rayón.

This most interesting letter was discovered by Dr. Pradeau, who in addition, on page 169 of his Numismatic History says the following about it "Unpublished, but with the autograph of Morelos it was preserved with other letters from him by Don Carlos Ma. Bustamante. They are bound in vol 4 of the Section of MSS. Lafragua in the Library of the State of Puebla."

As will be realised from this document, the coinage of Rayón or of the Council, afterwards, the Supreme National Council was later than the coinage of General Morelos (Q. E. D.).

It also shows what the Priest Morelos was an experienced coiner. He talks about the finish, weight and size of the coins as well as of forgers as a man who has had a lot of experience in these matters, meanwhile Rayón was just beginning his first coinage.

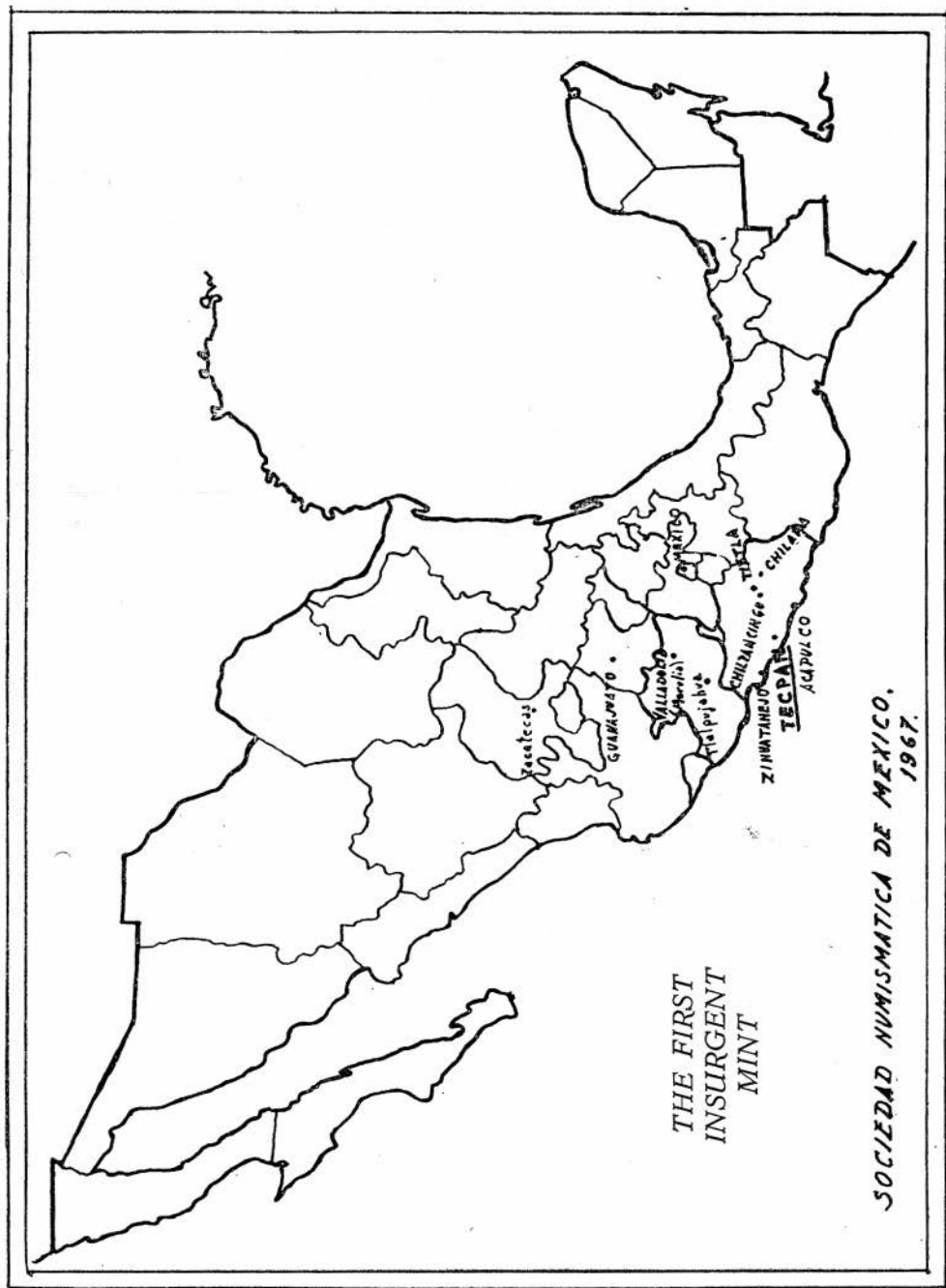
It is very true that there are coins of the Council dated in 1811. We must however say that many are absolutely false; indeed, in the opinion of expert numismatists few can be considered genuine.

How then were they dated 1811 when the previous letter is of the end of 1812? No document is known which proves that that these coins were actually struck in 1811. It is therefore, our opinion, until the contrary is proved, that the Council may very well have had the dies and other preparations ready to strike coins in Zitácuaro, but, due to the unexpected attack of Calleja on January 2nd 1812 the Insurgents had no time to use them: Their sudden flight soon turned into a pilgrimage. Months later, when the Insurgents managed to get a little rest in Tlalpujahua they could have used the dies dated 1811.

There is other point which speaks in favor of the Priest Morelos and we do not know whether it has been appreciated, for although it is of very small importance numismatically it is of great importance economically, Before Morelos struck his coins absolutely all the money in Mexico was valued and accepted at the value of the metallic content, that is by the intrinsic value, which lead to its being accepted all over the world. It was Morelos who struck the first coinage with a face value much higher than that of the metal content. In other words, **the coinage of Morelos was the first fiduciary issue of Mexico.**

In conclusion we would like to say that we have preferred to copy, word for word, the historical documents and letters of the various authors, giving references by which they can be read and studied by any body who cares to verify the facts mentioned. The only purpose of the author has been that of correcting numismatic errors which have persisted for over a century and a half which up to now had been accepted as facts, even though they were not, by all writers. In view of what has been exposed we can definitely state that:

The First Mint of the Insurgents: was in Tecpan, Gro., and that it was established in July 1811 by the Generalissimo Jos María Morelos. Priest of Cuarácuaro who earned for himself the title of Servant of the Country.



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