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MEXICO. 8 Escudos, 1834-DoRM.
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Convention time is here! Our fourth annual convention will be held Thursday thru Saturday, 15-17 October at the Hilton Scottsdale Resort, 6333 N Scottsdale Road, Scottsdale, Arizona.

The welcome party, silent auction and awards ceremony will be held from 5pm on the Thursday on the patio area outside the convention rooms. Appetizers will be served courtesy of Heritage Auctions and the bar will be open for you to purchase beverages of your choice. Most of the members attending the convention show up in time for the party and it has become a highlight of the event.

The American Numismatic Society will be attending and bringing an excellent display from their collection. Stacks-Bowers, Sedwick and Heritage Auctions will all be showing lots from their fall sales that promise to be extensive and interesting.

We are still looking for donations for the silent auction. If you have extra coins, medals, currency or other collectibles that you can part with for a good cause, please send them to me at my office address below. If you have books and auction catalogs lying around wasting space, please send them as well. Remember, all proceeds directly benefit the Association.

We would like to have around six displays on the convention floor. So far we have several excellent proposals. If you are interested in setting up a display, give me a call. Once again, we will be judging and giving out awards for the best displays.

We still have a few rooms in our allotment, which is larger than in prior years but closing out fast. If you are thinking of attending, now is the time to make your reservation and the easiest way to do it is online at usmex.org.

We have arranged for three presentations a day, on Friday and Saturday. The speakers will be:

Mike Dunigan, Dan Sedwick and Kent Ponterio
Jay Turner (of NGC)
Kent Ponterio
Carlos Jara
Phil Flemming
Allan Schein

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Mexican Proclamation Medals
Provisional Zacatecas
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COVER IMAGE

The cover image shows a detail from Fray Bartolomé de las Casas by Félix Parra, which was used as the source for the vignette on the Banco de Londres y México's \$20 note. Simon Prendergast's article on page 25 recounts an attempt to counterfeit this note.



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LETTER

Dear Editor,

During the first week of June 2015, the Long Beach Coin Expo took place at the California Convention Center of the same name. This is always a fun show for me and one I look forward to attending. Having recently published my book *Mexican Beauty - Belleza Mexicana* on Mexico's Caballito Peso, I had several opportunities to expand my distribution with a coin supply company that exhibited there and a major wholesale only distributor. Both companies are good at what they do and successful within their respective areas.

The on-site seller was kind enough to offer my book for sale, and there were a number of people that spent considerable time perusing through the pages. Unfortunately, a few waited in vain while the sellers unsuccessfully tried to locate me on the bourse floor, to whom I wholeheartedly offer my apologies.

One individual however was a fellow from Mexico who told the supply company that since I was not of Mexican descent, I had no right to produce a book on a Mexican issue. It wouldn't surprise me if this was the same fellow that scolded me at the September 2014 Mexico City show. In an attempt to have a conversation, I asked if he spoke English, and was verbally reprimanded. He told me that if I want to do business in Mexico I should learn the language. Ironically, he told me this in English, then snubbed me. Nice fellow. I'm sure he works in the Public Relations department of a local corporation as some sort of friendship emissary.

Unfortunately, I was not able to connect up with this critic, because I would have explained that knowledge should not be confined within national borders, and ask what he's done lately. Other than complain that someone produced a work about a Mexican coin issue nobody, not even one of his countrymen, has managed to produce to date. Hmmmmm.

The book is bi-lingual also, translated by the Mexican born numismatist, my good friend Roberto del Bosque. Even the graphic artist I worked with here in Salt Lake City, Eduardo Cuellar, is from Mexico City, and was educated there in the famed Art Institute. Now that's an international collaboration, in my assessment.

The coin's creator, French sculptor and medalist Charles Pillet, designed this coin, engraved the dies and struck the proofs in Paris. In 1911 the relief was modified slightly by Pillet, and the changes engraved by Charles Barber, chief engraver of the U.S. Mint at Philadelphia. So in actuality the things that are Mexican about the coin is the name ESTADOS UNIDOS MEXICANOS on the obverse, the silver it contains and the fact that it circulated in Mexico. Its entire creation was conceived outside Mexico and thereafter presented for production to the Casa de Moneda. Again, in reality, it's as much an international coin as it is a sovereign issue.

If books about Mexican numismatics were to be confined to those written by citizens of Mexico, or those with a connected heritage, the volumes that exist would be about half the current roster, maybe less. What if Clyde Hubbard, Dick Long, Theodore Buttrey, Don Bailey, Neil Utberg, Hugh Guthrie, Elmer Powell, J.B. Parker, Mike Dunigan, Max Keech, Cory Frampton, Greg Meyer, Brian Stickney, Carlos Jara, Kent Ponterio and Simon Prendergast, to mention a few, never wrote on Mexican numismatics? The overall body of knowledge would be vastly diminished. Mexican authors and numismatists have produced some excellent work, but without the collaboration and contributions of the authors/numismatists named above and others, the libraries of collectors on Mexican numismatics would have many an empty bookshelf.

We're living in the 21st century. Americans are living in Mexico, and Mexicans in North America. The world has become an international community, with knowledge garnered from all corners of the planet by people from every walk of life and every nation. There are few barriers to information that is accessible to any and all interested parties, unless you live in North Korea. So numismatic treatises of every sort, on every topic, by people from the planet over, have and will continue to appear as they are created. To the individual that feels this should be restricted I can only surmise that he is either unable to produce or jealous of those who have. As a martial arts master, I find it practical, in the philosophy of Bruce Lee, to "use what is useful". Any technique that works has value, no matter the origin. The same goes for all knowledge, in my opinion. If there is a body of knowledge that can enlighten me on a subject, or increase my understanding of a coin series, I embrace it. As a student of numismatics I have learned that most everyone has something to teach, and conversely, we all have something to learn. Does it really matter where that knowledge comes from so long as it is accurate and useful? I don't think it does, but then, I try to keep an open mind because I don't know what it is I don't yet know.

Every new article, new book, new insight into a coin or piece of currency adds to the overall body of numismatic knowledge. The more that's contributed, no matter the source, so long as it is viable accurate information, is of value. I encourage everyone that has learned something that they believe was previously not known or not written about to put it down on paper and submit it to this Journal for publication. The more contributors, the better. The US Mexican Numismatic Association has grown into a positive, influential, educational organization that networks hundreds of like-minded collectors, all with divergent but largely similar interests. The phrase "each one teach one" has been demonstrated over and over, and continues to expand along with the organization.

Allan Schein
Salt Lake City, Utah

NEWS

New 20 Pesos coins proposed

Since December 2014 the Mexican Chamber of Deputies has approved three new projects for the striking of coins.

The first coin will commemorate the 80th anniversary of the Bellas Artes palace, considered one of the most beautiful buildings in the world and a symbol of Mexico City. Its construction was commissioned by president Porfirio Diaz but the revolution intervened and construction stopped for more than 20 years. President Lazaro Cardenas finally inaugurated the palace in 1934. The second will celebrate the centenary of the Mexican Air Force, founded by president Venustiano Carranza in Veracruz in 1915. Finally, a coin will honor the bicentenary of the death of José María Morelos y Pavón. Morelos was one of the major leaders of Mexican Independence, and, in the numismatic area, struck a lot of copper and silver coins. He was executed by the Spanish on 22 December 1815.

All these coins will have a 20 pesos value and the same characteristics as other coins that have appeared over the last years. They will have a diameter of 32 mm, a weight of 7.35 grams and be bimetallic with an aluminum bronze ring and copper and nickel center.


(information from Pablo Luna Herrera)

1715 Fleet Society

The Society's 300th Anniversary Conference, held in Florida, was by all accounts a great success. The item that made the news headline was the announcement of the "Tricentennial Royal", a superior fully-dated 1715 eight escudo gold Royal, which was found on the Douglass Beach site near Ft. Pierce, Florida on 17 June. The "Tricentennial Royal" is particularly special because of its date, the year in which the fleet was lost.

Ben Costello, the Society's Director, is currently working on a Newsletter item that will summarize the week's events together with pictures. For more information, visit <http://www.1715fleetsociety.com>.

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COUNTERFEIT PORTRAIT EIGHT REALES

by Robert "swamperbob" Gurney

The portrait style Spanish-American eight reales was one of the most well-known, and extensively circulated silver trade coins that the world has ever seen. Produced in Spain's New World colonies from 1772 to 1825, the coin made Spain a major player on the world financial stage in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This was due in large measure to the fact this coin accounted for about sixty percent of the annual silver production worldwide. The portrait eight reales of Mexico City were the primary trade coin desired by the Chinese after 1785 and generated premiums in the range of 16-26% over the period from 1830 to 1930.

The popularity and general acceptance of this particular coin made it the object of forgers who operated in all areas of the globe. It was a coin not merely counterfeited in the countries of origin, but in all of the places where it was accepted as currency in day-to-day transactions. It was produced in small back-room operations and in large factories. It was produced at times in utter secrecy, yet at other times it was more or less an "open secret." It was produced as both worthless base metal copies and as "perfect" imitations containing the correct amount of silver. It has been made to circulate as currency, as well as to specifically deceive collectors.

This article identifies different types of counterfeits, including a class of full weight silver replicas of the portrait eight reales series, and attempts to answer when and why these were made.

My interest in these counterfeits began as a teen when I met and spoke to one of the forgers who actually made these coins for a living in Massachusetts in the 1920s. Over the years I have acquired documentary proof that these coins were in fact made but until the advent of accurate XRF (X-ray Fluorescence) testing I did not have a scientific way of identifying any of them. The image is of the first portrait that I got from the self-confessed counterfeiter. The coin has been proven to have too little gold as a contaminant (to have been made in 1805) by two different XRF laboratories and this coin is the basis for my belief that full weight silver counterfeits were produced for the China trade as late as 1930.



Milestones in the History of Silver Refining

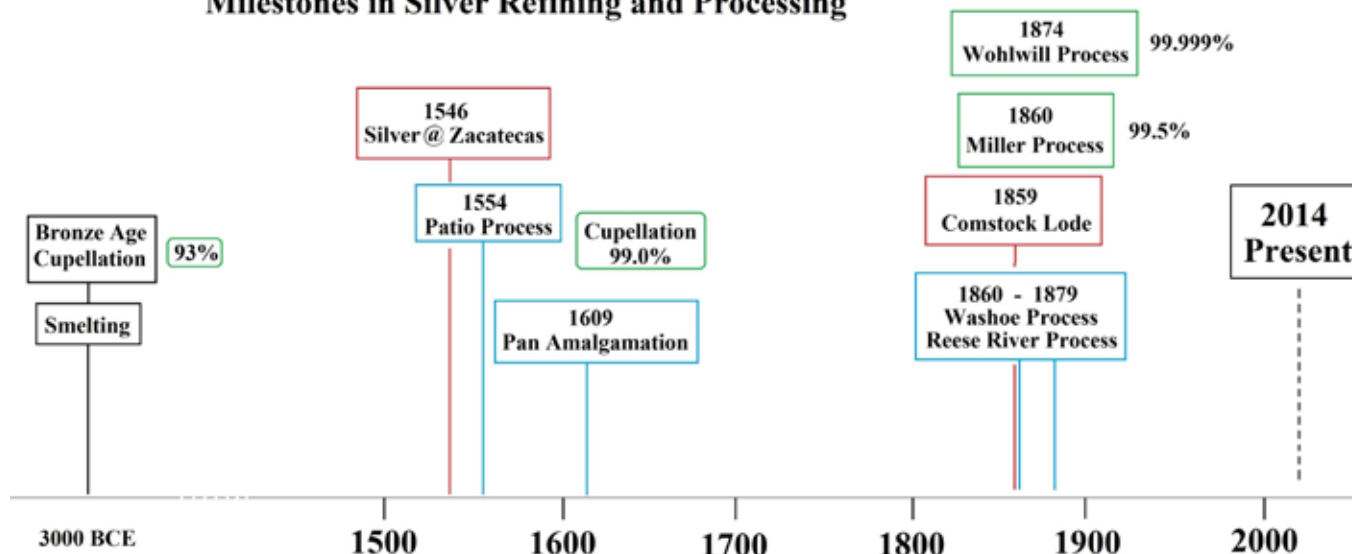
All of the silver ore mined in central Mexico and used in the period around 1800 contains gold as a contaminant. This is a well-known fact. Virtually all Mexican silver has gold as a contaminant. Another less well known fact is that the Valenciana mine which produced 60% of the silver coined at Mexico City was highly contaminated with gold. Recent test borings tested with XRF indicate 2-3%.

Refining ore to extract metal was an industrial practice that began with the patio process. This process relied on the fact that gold, silver and copper (copper is also a contaminant) will amalgamate with mercury. The resulting amalgam is heated to drive off the mercury leaving the metal behind. This is a mix of gold, silver and copper. Metals like iron and platinum also found as contaminants do not amalgamate with mercury. The mixture is refined by cupellation which extracts the copper. This leaves a silver gold solution. Silver and gold are mutually soluble so in liquid form they form an actual solution that cannot be mechanically separated. In other words in a liquid state gold even though it is denser will not drop to the bottom. The final step referred to as parting separated the gold from the silver with acid. Silver reacts with nitric acid while gold will not. This method of parting gold is ancient but does not remove all of the gold from the silver.

When gold and silver traded at a ratio of just 16 to 1, the removal of as much silver from the gold was critical and results with nitric acid parting could produce 99.0% fine gold. Silver also could not be refined past 99.0% but because parting of gold was costly there was a point beyond which it was viewed as uneconomical to bother extracting the gold at all. This was particularly the case when the contamination was on the order of 0.2% or less.

The history of gold and silver parting is the key factor to be considered when reviewing silver coins.

Milestones in Silver Refining and Processing



The above chart gives a timeline for the methods of refining silver used from antiquity onwards with the dates of key discoveries (refinements of the process), along with the levels of purity achieved. It shows that the Spanish-American refining methods were different than the methods developed after the Comstock Lode was discovered in the United States. In rapid succession a series of technological innovations like the injection of chlorine gas into the liquid solution of silver and gold led to better and better parting rates. Gold purity rose from 99.5% at best to 99.99% fine within the space of about ten years, 1870-1880.

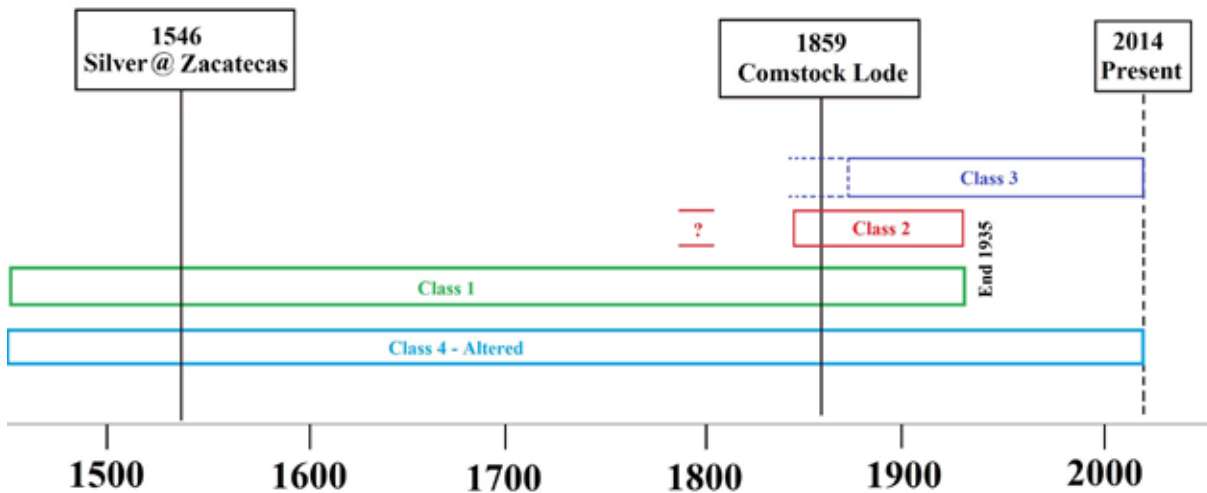
Counterfeit Coin Varieties and their Period of Manufacture

Some people, including the American Numismatic Society, believe all types of counterfeits can be classified into just 'Contemporary' and 'Modern (or Numismatic)'. However, for the eight reales I prefer four classes for clarity based on the reasons that the coins were made, as well as the alloys used. For each class I have indicated a period of time when they were made. Note that many overlap.

Class 1	Contemporary Circulating Counterfeits (base metal below 800 fine)	made from the inception of eight reales until 1935
Class 2	Contemporary Circulating Silver Counterfeits (assay over 800)	made from 1830 until 1935 (with a possible early episode ca.1800)
Class 3	Numismatic Forgeries - made to deceive collectors	made from the start of collecting ca. 1850 until the present
Class 4	Other - includes altered coins used in circulation and those altered for collectors among other types like buttons, replicas, souvenirs etc	made from the inception of the eight reales until today

This is summarized in the diagram overleaf.

Counterfeit Coin Varieties and their Period of Manufacture Spanish Colonial Eight-Reales



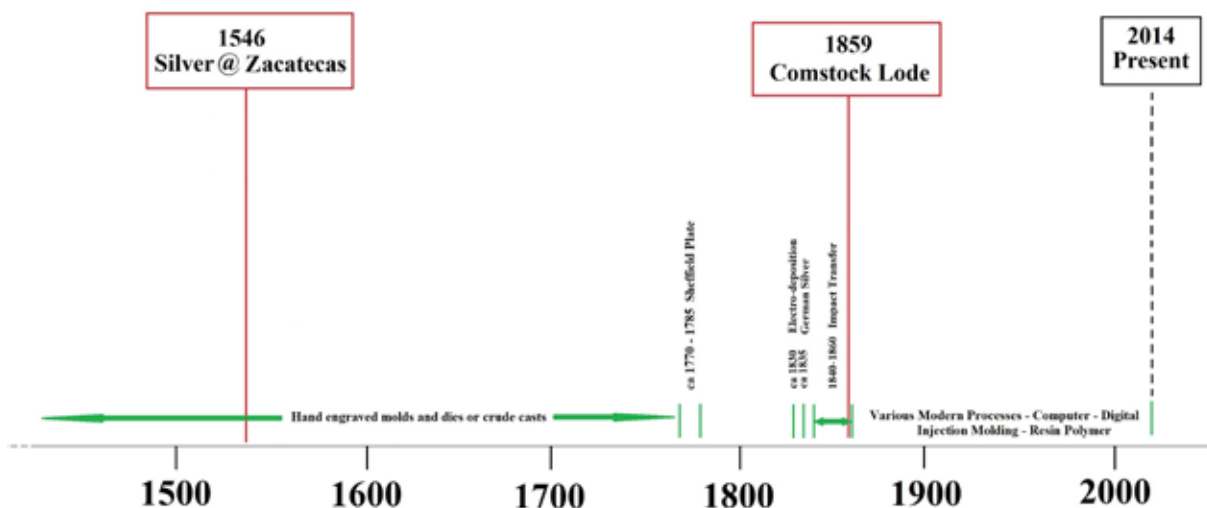
In my book (*Counterfeit Portrait Eight-Reales: The Un-real Reales* by Robert Gurney, Gordon Nichols and John Lorenzo, 2014) we expand on the thirty-nine varieties of Class 1 counterfeits noted by Dr. John L. Riddell as existing in circulation in New Orleans in 1845 (*A Monograph of the Silver Dollar, Good and Bad*, Cincinnati, 1845) and swell that number to some 589 varieties. We also cover the numismatic fakes that plague the industry.

However, the focus of this article is the existence of Class 2 counterfeits - full weight silver replicas made in the UK and US to support the financial needs of the China trade between 1830 and 1930.

I believe that millions of these counterfeits were made after the originals made in Mexico between 1772 and 1811 were worn to a point where they no longer commanded a premium from the Chinese merchants.

This trade began with UK merchants and lasted until the Opium Wars made it possible for the British to sell opium in China and thereby reduce the balance of trade between the UK and China. The same remedy was not available to US merchants. The US government failed to get permission to officially make replicas but US companies (acting, I believe, with the tacit support of the government) did start making US versions at least by 1873. The large silver discoveries in Nevada and the silver surplus made the Chinese the world's largest consumer of silver and the US obliged in part with these counterfeit portrait eight reales.

Milestones in the History of Counterfeiting



The above chart covers the major historic points in counterfeiting and illustrates why 1830 is a great date, actually a watershed, to divide older technologies from the more modern methods. Until 1770 counterfeiters had only two viable methods of creating a coin - engraving their own dies or making a cast copy. In 1770 Sheffield plate technology was developed in the UK which resulted in massive numbers of counterfeits being produced from 1796 to 1820. These were all silver coated base metal -all early Class 1.

In about 1830 electro-deposition and electro-typing were developed allowing accurate molds to be created. This was followed in 1835 by German Silver production which allowed planchets to be created at a minimal cost with no silver being used (This fact alone – little or no actual value – contributes to the survival of counterfeits made from German Silver or electroplated copper).

In the period 1840-1860 impact transfer and other methods developed in rapid succession – a process that appears to be ongoing and accelerating as I write this. These are all “modern” industrialized techniques, none of which were available to “colonial era” forgers. So 1830 is a great dividing point between true Spanish Colonial forgeries and later forgeries which should all be considered republican efforts.

The key to identifying some of the later date Class 2 coins is the assay. In 1772-1811 Mexico City refined silver with the patio process. The refined ingots were purified at the mint by cupellation and parting with nitric acid which produced silver about 99% fine. About 1860 the US developed processes that produced a better parting of gold and silver reaching 99.5% purity. This rose to 99.999% in 1874. This is when pure silver as we know it today was first available.

Therefore an accurate XRF test (a non-destructive form of forensic scientific analysis of the metallic elements contained in an object using “secondary” fluorescent emissions produced with bombardment with gamma or x-rays) will determine if a coin was made with silver refined before 1811 or after 1874. This will identify and eliminate most US-produced counterfeits but unfortunately not the earlier UK versions made between 1835 and 1874.

Fortunately the early silver counterfeits may not be very plentiful at all if the statements of early Chinese economists are correct. I have read that before 1840 roughly 85% or more of the silver coin that entered China was melted into saycee ingots. This makes sense since silver was illegal to export from China until after the first Opium War and in any event China had a balance of trade surplus with the west. Based on this and the reduced need for the British to make silver counterfeits after 1840 (the first Opium War), the majority of silver counterfeits that survived in China to return in the past few decades were likely those made at the latest point in time - the US counterfeits.

I appreciate that it may be difficult to imagine that full weight silver coins existed that were not made in the date and place indicated. These coins were sometimes struck as were the originals on screw presses with open sides. Blanks were edged before striking. Great pains were taken to duplicate the dies and in some cases dies were hubbed. For the entire time period that eight reales have been collected these Class 2 silver counterfeits have laid unidentified in collections and banks worldwide. I am not advocating the removal of these coins from collections nor am I in any position to state that these coins are worth less than originals because relative scarcity at this point is unknown.

I simply believe that we need to identify these coins for what they really are - historic relics of an age where silver content was more important than actual origin and where merchants took advantage of a unique situation to make an added profit at the expense of the Chinese.

COUNTERFEIT PORTRAIT EIGHT-REALES



The Un-real Reales

Robert Gurney

The coin on the cover is a Sheffield plate counterfeit confirmed by both XRF tests and specific gravity. It has under 60% of the appropriate silver content and has a clear ribbon seam in the dentils

GUILLERMO PURCELL Y CIA

by Elmer Powell

Guillermo (William) L. Purcell was born in Limerick, Ireland in 1844 and arrived in Matamoros, Tamaulipas in 1862, moving to Saltillo, Coahuila in 1872. In addition to general merchandise he invested in mining (forming the "La Constantia" mining company in 1879), smelting, cotton, railroads and banking. He owned two extensive and successful cattle-ranches, known as "Esmeralda" and "Santa Anita y Terrenos de la Frontera", comprising about 800,000 acres and located between the San Rodrigo and San Antonio rivers. He was a shareholder in the Banco de Coahuila and founder (in 1870) of the Casa Bancaria Purcell, with head offices in Saltillo and a branch in San Pedro at the center of the cotton industry.

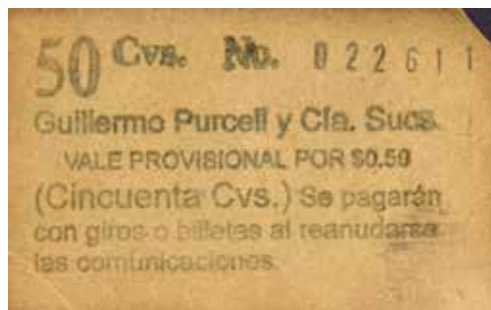
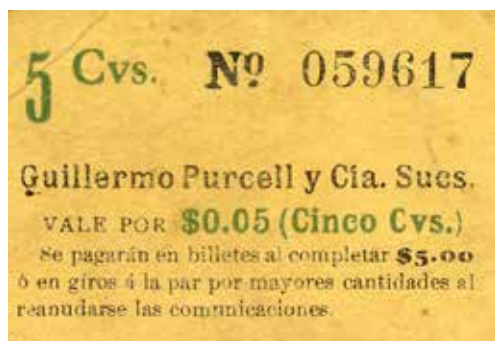
In January 1906 he established a private company "Guillermo Purcell y Cía" to control his properties. He died in San Antonio, Texas in February 1909, and his company continued as "Guillermo Purcell y Cía. Sucs." under his son, Santiago.

A wide range of notes issued by the company in response to the shortage of small change are known from the period of the Revolution, testament to Purcell's vast interests and their history in banking, but also demonstrating how one cache, when found, can radically alter our knowledge of this area of numismatics. A study of the notes, their face value, their currency, and the manner in which they were to be redeemed, gives an insight on local economic conditions. If the date in the PAGADO (PAID) handstamp refers to the date when they were actually withdrawn from circulation (rather than some later book-keeping exercise), then we also have an indication of the length of time they were in circulation.



San Pedro 1913 issue

San Pedro (de las Colonias) lies in the southwestern part of Coahuila, to the east-northeast of Torreón. Purcell's first known issue includes a series of low-value (5, 20 and 50 centavos) *vales*, dated July to September 1913, that would be payable in bank-notes (for amounts of \$5) or drafts (for large amounts) once communications, which had been interrupted by the rebels, had been renewed.



Higher-value *vales* for \$1 and \$5, dated 1 August and 1 September 1913, stated that they would be paid by drafts or checks drawn on Mexico City, Torreón, Monterrey or Saltillo or in bank-notes, which the company would import once the railroad communications had been reestablished.



There was also at least a \$2 note, for which we have documentary evidence.

On 12 November the *Mexican Herald* reported that the stores in Torreón were open and doing business as well as could be expected under the trying circumstances that prevailed there, and that in the cotton plantations in the Laguna district picking was going on though, as the planters would not be able to market their cotton, they would be obliged to store it until the railroads re-opened. The greatest difficulty that the merchants and planters had to contend with was the scarcity of money. The rebels had not issued any fiat money, as they had done in Durango, but a number of the large planters were paying their employees in *vales*, which were accepted by the merchants of Torreón and surrounding towns. When a merchant had accumulated a number of these *vales*, amounting to about \$100, he turned them over to the planter who had issued them and received a draft for the amount. The plan, so far, was worked well with the *vales* passing as currency and not being discounted. Besides the Purcell issues *Mexican Paper Money* lists such *vales* from the Hacienda de Bolivar, Hacienda "La Candelaria" and Casa Francisco Madero in San Pedro and Manuel de la Fuente y Cía. in Torreón, and there are surely others waiting to be discovered.

A 50c note dated November 1913 does not have the condition about communications being renewed. Perhaps we should not read too much into this (as a companion 50c *vale*, dated October 1913, from the Hacienda de Bolivar in San Pedro, carries the same wording), but it may be that by then circumstances in the Federal or Constitutionalist controlled areas were returning to what could pass as normal.



La Constanica, Esmeralda 1913 issues

The La Constanica mine, Esmeralda, is situated in the municipality of Sierra Mojada in the extreme west of Coahuila. We know of one issue of one and five pesos. Both these notes were issued



by the Compañía Minera "La Constanica" in Esmeralda on 21 August 1913 and canceled by Guillermo Purcell y Cía., Suc. in Saltillo four years later on 27 July 1917.

San Pedro 1914 issue

The earlier 1913 San Pedro notes were all backed by a deposit in the Banco de Coahuila in Saltillo as on 19 March 1914 the bank's manager, Tomás Olivares, wrote to the company confirming that it would honor the \$40,000 that the San Pedro company had put into circulation, and for a period of a year would increase the guarantee to \$100,000 for a ½ per cent fee. The next day, Arnulfo M. Garcia, the company's attorney, sent a copy of the bank's resolution to the state governor and asked for authorization for a total of \$100,000 (\$25,000 in 5, 10 and 20 centavos, \$25,000 in 50 centavos, and \$50,000 in one peso), some of which would replace the \$40,000 in earlier notes, which were in a poor state. On 21 March the company was given permission to continue using its *vales*, and set a date of 30 April to redeem the notes of \$2 or more and 31 May for the smaller values, after which date their circulation would be prohibited. A proposed draft for the new notes was

GUILLERMO PURCELL Y CIA. SUCS.

Banqueros.

VALE al portador por-----\$1
--UN PESO que se pagarán en giros o cheques
sobre México, a la par, o en Monterrey y Saltillo
si se pudiere, o en billetes de Banco si las se-
guridades y vías de comunicación lo permiten.
San Pedro, Coahuila, a 31 de marzo de 1914.
pp. Guillermo Purcell y Cia., Sucs.

A. Ramirez

Para que estos vales ser buenos, deben llevar
necesariamente, además de nuestra firma y la del
Cajero, nuestros sellos fechadores, uno por el
anverso y otro, por el reverso; sin cuyos requi-
sitos no tendrán ningún valor. –

At the same time, on 19 March, the company issued a public notice that in order to comply with the Jefe Político's ruling of 8 March regarding the circulation of *vales* in the town up to 30 April it would receive all the notes of \$2 and above for exchange and withdrawal, whilst the notes of 5c to \$1 would continue to circulate. All the notes would be paid with drafts on Mexico City, Monterrey or Saltillo or, if possible, in banknotes.

As we do not know of any San Pedro *vales* dated 1914, we do not know whether any notes in the proposed format were in fact issued.

La Constancia, Esmeralda 1914 issues

We know of a 50c note dated 5 February 1914 and a \$1 note.



San Pedro 1915 issue

These higher-value notes (50c, \$1 and \$5) were payable in the paper money that was in circulation at the time of exchange, i.e. the current Constitutionalist issue.



La Constanzia, Esmeralda 1916 issues

Further issues are known from 1916. One group is for specific amounts in Constitutionalist money, to be used in the marketplace in Sierra Mojada. These were typed on reused sheets of paper, including chits issued by the company store (tienda de raya).



We also have examples of *vales* from "La Esmeralda" for specified amounts (\$5, \$10 and \$20), with a space for filling in the name of the payee, payable in merchandise in the company's store.

Another group are of provisional *vales* for specific amounts in Carranza's *infalsificable* money. Note that the denominations go up to \$100, so these were not just for paying wages but for every manner of commercial transactions.



San Pedro 1917 issue

These checks for 25c, 50c and \$1, with date stamps from February 1917, were in use in the Purcell haciendas, run from San Pedro, and were payable a la par in checks drawn on New York, San Antonio, Eagle Pass or Laredo, possibly reflecting the failure of the Carranzista government to win local support for its *infalsificable* currency in the northern areas bordering the United States.



On 8 April 1917 State Secretary (Oficial Mayor Encargado del Despacho) Rafael Flores wrote to the Presidente Municipal of San Pedro that in view of the abnormal circumstances that prevailed in San Pedro Guillermo Purcell y Cía., Suc. could continue paying their workers in the Laguna with checks, until the situation returned to normal.

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1876-GW MS63 NGC



Costa Rica. Central American
Republic gold 4 Escudos 1837 CR-E
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Costa Rica. Republic gold
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SOME VARIETIES FOR THE 1/8 REAL FROM NUEVA VIZCAYA DURING THE EMPIRE OF AUGUSTÍN DE ITURBIDE: 1821-1823

by Mariana Grace Meade and Dr. Javier Bolaños Meade

Introduction

On 27 September 1821, General Agustín de Iturbide y Arámburu entered Mexico City leading the “Trigarante” Army (Army of the Three Guarantees). That day ended the Spanish domination in the Nueva España, and Mexico became an independent nation. Iturbide was proclaimed Emperor on 18 May 1822 and soon enough he had to deal with the issuing of coinage for the newly created Empire.

During the War for Independence, coins were struck in several mints throughout the country. In the newly independent country, however, Betts (1) believed that except for the proclamation medals the silver and gold coinage of the Empire was coined in Mexico City. Pradeau (2) on the other hand stated that silver coinage was minted in Mexico City, Durango (Nueva Vizcaya), Guadalajara, Guanajuato, and Zacatecas, whereas gold coinage was minted in Mexico City and Guadalajara. Nonetheless, all coins had the Mexico City mintmark (Mo) and neither Betts nor Pradeau mentioned the Nueva Vizcaya copper coinage. These coins from Durango are the subject of this paper. The mint in Durango was located in the Province of Nueva Vizcaya, territory of the modern states of Durango and Chihuahua. The mint produced several coins during the War for Independence, particularly a famous 8 reales KM#181 (with different varieties known), but it was no stranger to copper coins such as the 1/8 real KM#60 and KM#61. After the war, between 1821 and 1823, 1/8 real coins were minted, constituting the very first copper coins from the independent Mexico (3,4). It looks like this mint was no stranger to striking different varieties for the same coin such as the mentioned 8 reales KM#181, and of course the famous Hookneck in 1824 with its more than forty varieties (3,5).

By Imperial decree on 11 June 1822 the coinage of copper coins was authorised. These coins were supposed to have the liberty cap supported by a wand. However, even when approved these coins were never struck (2). But the coins from Nueva Vizcaya were produced in two denominations. On 1822 a 1/4 real coin (KM#300 very rare) was minted, and from 1821 to 1823, coins of 1/8 real (KM#299) were produced.

These 1/8 real coins were minted using several dies and, as such, many varieties exist. The 1821 is the most difficult to procure, and the 1822 is the easiest. On the obverse of the coin, the arms of Nueva Vizcaya are pictured, with an oak tree charged with two wolves passant with their prey, crowned, with a palm leaves wreath. There is a letter D for Durango, and the value is listed as ●/8 instead of 1/8 (if in any variety is a 1/8 we found none). On the reverse, the inscription reads all in capitals “DE LA PROVINCIA DE NUEVA VIZCAYA” and then the year. The coins are made of copper, small, with a diameter of about 17 millimetres and a weight close to 3 grams.

Now we will discuss the differences between the varieties. Forty-seven coins were reviewed to come up with this list. The ones featured show the different styles identified on these coins. It is very likely that many other unknown to us exist and therefore this list could be much larger. Many coins discussed in this paper were certified by the Numismatic Guarantee Corporation (NGC) and as such their certificate number is included.

The Obverse

The only variety that we were able to single out from the year of 1821 is pictured here (Fig.1 NGC 3972490-020). While the coin is worn and therefore the details of the arms are difficult to distinguish, it is important to pay attention to the wreath as this is the detail that is most likely to change between the coins in this series (thin versus thick, straight versus curved, etc).



Figure 1

For 1822 we found five different varieties. Figures 2-6 (NGC 2786915-003, 3972490-021, 3972490-022, 3972490-024, and 3972490-026)



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6

and for 1823, three varieties are found (Figures 7-9 NGC 3715965-013, 3972490-023, and 3972490-025).



Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9

It is important to mention that 3972490-025 has an attribution by NGC as 1822 as the last number on the date is not seen complete, but it is clear that the upper part of the number has a horizontal line more compatible with a 3 than a 2 (Figure 18b).



Figure 18b

The Reverse

The reverse includes the legend "DE LA PROVINCIA DE NUEVA VIZCAYA" (FROM THE PROVINCE OF NUEVA VIZCAYA) and the date. The figures are pictured in the same order as in the obverse that is Figure 10 is the reverse of Figure 1, Figure 11 is the reverse of Figure 2, etc. Coins 3 and 5 (Figures 12 and 14) have an inverted number 1.



Figure 10



Figure 11



Figure 12



Figure 13



Figure 14



Figure 15



Figure 16



Figure 17



Figure 18

As it can be seen on Figure 15b, the arrows point to very unique features in these coins: the “O” in “PROVINCIA” appears to be open on top; “PROVINCIA” appears to have a tilde and appears as “PROVÍNCIA” instead of “PROVINCIA”; and lastly, the “U” on “NUEVA” is double struck.



Figure 15b

Figure 16 is missing “DE LA” and we consider that given the quality of the rest of the legend, it is unlikely that the missing letters are due to wear, soft strike, but possibly were not included in the die. Between Figures 13 and 14, “PROVINCIA” is clearly different. Due to wearing on the coins is difficult to make clear comments about the other coins. However, the sizes of the letters in all other coins suggest that they were struck from different dies.

We tried matching these coins with the ones in the collection at the Banco de México (<http://www.banxico.org.mx/ColeccionNumismatica>). The task was difficult given that, as always, these coins are heavily circulated and the details are elusive. However some coins were identifiable and are listed as follows:

1. Specimen 2818, from 1822. The obverse of this coin is the same as in Figure 1. Interestingly Figure 1 corresponds to an 1821 specimen. The reverse is not identifiable.
2. Specimen 2829, from 1822. Matches Figures 3 and 12 meaning these two coins were minted using the same dies.
3. Specimen 2821, from 1822. Matches Figures 5 and 14 meaning these two coins were minted using the same dies.
4. Specimen 2826, from 1823. Matches Figures 7 and 16 meaning these two coins were minted using the same dies.

So it can be seen:

Type 1 (Figures 1 and 10): Thin, straight wreath. Only variety found from 1821. The die used for the obverse of this coin was used on both 1821 and 1822 coins.

Type 2 (Figures 2 and 11): Thin, straight wreath. Legend worn.

Type 3 (Figures 3 and 12): Thick, curved wreath. Deformed “N” in “NUEVA”. Inverted number 1.

Type 4 (Figures 4 and 13): Thin, curved wreath. Tall number 2.

Type 5 (Figures 5 and 14): Thick, curved wreath. The letters “N” and “U” in “NUEVA” are united. Inverted number 1.

Type 6 (Figures 6 and 15): Thin, straight wreath, broken crown. Open “O”, tilde in “PROVÍNCIA”, double “U”.

Type 7 (Figures 7 and 16): Thick, straight wreath. Missing “DE LA”.

Type 8 (Figures 8 and 17): Thick, curved wreath. Legend worn.

Type 9 (Figures 9 and 18): Thick, straight wreath. Very crude legend.

Conclusion

These 1/8 real coins saw heavy circulation and therefore are extremely difficult to find in high grade to appreciate their details. However, it is clear that different varieties were struck. Given the large number of types shown, it is plausible the hypothesis that contemporary counterfeits exist, yet the authors were unable to find documentation about this issue or any other authors supporting this theory. However the reader has to remember that some of the 1/8 real coins minted in Durango starting in 1824 (KM#320) are believed to be contemporary counterfeits (3). Given the propensity of this mint to have multiple varieties of the same year for a given denomination (i.e. Hooknecks, KM#181, etc), it is also possible that all the issues are legitimate and many dies were used to strike these coins. While the authors are only presenting the few varieties that we were able to identify, it is likely that others not described in this paper in fact do exist and collectors are encouraged to look for them.

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THE SHORT-LIVED MINT OF TLALPAM

by Carlos Jara

In 1825 the legislature of the State of Mexico decided to establish a mint in their state, based on the higher population than other Mexican states where mints existed and on the Ley de Clasificación de Rentas (Revenue Classification Law) of 16 November 1824. To this end, after much discussion, the following decree was issued on 19 July 1825:

The Constituent Congress of the State of Mexico, in order to provide benefits to individuals in the minting of their metals, has decreed as follows:

Article 1. The State will establish on its account a mint with its corresponding refining office.

Article 2. This establishment will function as a concession to an individual or a company.

Article 3. Buying funds will be established by the State and for now in Pachuca, Temascaltepec Zimapán and Taxco.

Article 4. The governor will propose to the Congress the amount for the buying fund in each of these mines.

Article 5. Silver and gold metals acquired through these funds shall be coined in the mint of the state.

Article 6. The employer shall specify a fixed term, within which the coined metals shall be delivered to their owners.

Article 7. The employer shall be accountable for all the faults noticed in the weight and fineness of the coinage and for the compliance to the obligations indicated in the bases of the present contract.

Article 8. The governor of the state shall ask for bids from entrepreneurs under the aforementioned terms and after hearing the opinion of the Board will proceed to formalize the corresponding contract considering the most advantageous offers and requiring the necessary warranties.

Article 9. The formalized contract will be forwarded to the Congress for its approval.

Which is hereby communicated to the governor of the state who will ensure its compliance, printing, publication and circulation.

The reasons expressed by the Congress of the State of Mexico to install a mint in Tlalpam were threefold: that the surrounding mines - among the richest of the Republic - justified it, that this would save the miners mining transportation costs, and lastly that establishing the mint would open a new industry of some benefit to the Treasury. Public officials were so sure that interested bidders would be plentiful for the projected mint, that a sum of \$95,000 was authorized in advance – on 12 September - for the purchase of metals to comply with Articles 3 and 4 of the aforementioned decree: \$40,000 were to be employed in the region of Taxco, \$20,000 in Temascaltepec, \$20,000 in Pachuca, and \$15,000 in Zimapán.

A beautiful essay for pieces of eight, believed, based on its style, to be from engraver José Guerrero, who had also prepared the dies for the famous medal in honor of General Guadalupe Victoria, was also prepared: it bears the Mexico Mo mintmark and the JM initials corresponding to the assayers José García Anzaldo and Manuel Ruíz de Tejada.

The miners of the region did not share the political enthusiasm to establish a mint in Tlalpam and refused to support the project. Moreover, the Mexico City mint, only 16 km away, inspired them with greater confidence than a new company apparently managed by venal and ambitious politicians. As a result, the government did not receive a single bid to lease the mint. This failure did not discourage the members of the government who managed to bring about modifications in the decree of 19 July 1825, enabling the Government of the State of Mexico to install and operate its own mint and assay office. Not deterred by the obstacles arising - including the inexperience of the staff that were appointed and the costs involved - Acts deemed necessary for the mint were approved in quick succession.

Melchor Múzquiz - governor of the state and later President of the Republic - proposed an old house in ruins for the mint's location which he valued at \$17,500. He then appointed a board to buy on credit all the necessary coining equipment from the Mexico City mint. Juan Nepomuceno Sanabria drew up plans for the building of the mint but the reconstruction of the old house sold by Melchor Múzquiz was commissioned instead to Manuel Rionda. The budget

presented by Rionda to the legislature for the repairs and remodeling of the building amounted to \$11,625. It was approved by the Chamber and works began on 9 July 1827. By mid-October, \$18,183.17 had already been spent but the advances were slow and more funds were required to complete the works. Another budget was hastily proposed for a total of \$52,675 and immediately passed by the legislators. This requested increase in the budget raised suspicions against the contractor and an expert, Teodoro Latropinier, was appointed by the Governor to inspect the works. His report not only approved the works done but also made a warm eulogy of all the works that had been completed. Nevertheless, the costs continued to rise and had reached \$106,776 before the building was even able to accommodate the mint.

At first, when Múzquiz's offer was made public, high praise was given for his magnanimity and munificence, but as the cost of the work kept augmenting, the general feeling turned against him and in the end he was vilified by most who believed the operation had left him a handsome profit.

Shortly after starting the reconstruction works, the Governor appointed the employees of the projected mint and each began to receive his salary even though the facility was not yet functioning. The legislature became aware of this anomaly and on 8 January 1828 requested the suspension of these payments, and a detailed and updated daily report of expenses with a final budget of the funds that were needed for the completion of the work.

On 28 February 1828 the Chamber approved the expenses related to the projected mint, but revoked the appointments that had been given to the employees. It is doubtful whether the Governor took this censorship into account since on the 20th of that same month, he informed the legislature that orders had been delivered to the employees appointed to the mint to ensure their observation of the federal regulations for establishments of that nature.

When dies were requested to start the minting operations, it was agreed that they could not bear the "Mo" mintmark since that belonged by right to the mint of Mexico City. The abbreviations "Eo Mo" which corresponded to the name Estado de México would thus be used for the coins that would be minted at Tlalpam.

The Provisional Government Junta had, on 11 June 1822, established a tax of 2% on minted silver and gold which was systematically used on payment of a contracted debt of a forced loan. This tax was still collected in 1828 under the designation of "Extraction rights" and the state legislature on 24 May 1828 decreed that the coinage circulating within the state without the paperwork proving the payment of the aforementioned right was not only subject to the immediate payment of said right but also to a 3% penalty. The resulting profits would then be split equally between the denouncers, the apprehenders and the municipality.

Numerous documents related to the establishment of a mint in Tlalpam can be found when studying the decrees of the Constituent Congress of the state of México. Between 1827 and 1831 many resolutions were passed on this matter by the legislature, some related to the designation of the employees, others to the accounting of the mint, etc. There is also evidence that by 5 September 1828 the legislators were agreed that installing the mint had been a huge mistake and that prudence seemed to suggest its immediate closure. On 29 May 1829 a serious dissension occurred between the mint's employees and the state governor threatened to sack the ones responsible. At this point, the legislature intervened and instructed the mint not to make changes in the personnel without its authorization.

The staff of the mint included:

Director	Manuel Rionda (until February 1829)
	Colonel José María Abarca (from February 1829 until 13 June 1830)
	José Vicente Luna (in 1830)
Treasurer	Colonel José Vicente Villada (from 10 March to 15 October 1829)
	Colonel José María Chavero (until 1830)
	José Vicente Luna (appointed interim manager in 1830)
	Manuel Navarrete (a provisional appointment in 1830)
Assayers	Luis Velázquez de la Cadena, main assayer
	Francisco Parodi, second main assayer
	Luis Parodi, first alternate assayer
	Manuel Onofre Parodi, second alternate assayer
Engravers	Manuel Arao
	Miguel Ramirez

The “LF” initials that appear on the coins of this mint correspond to the first names of Luis Velázquez de la Cadena and Francisco Parodi Pagani.

In a communication addressed to the state governor on 29 January 1829, Rionda lamented that his duties as director of the mint had become a heavy burden for him. It is not known whether this gentleman was removed from office or resigned voluntarily but considering the later events, it is very likely that he resigned and that, fearful of the fate that awaited him as a result of the failure of the mint, he sought safety before the storm broke out. In any case, the fact is that he left Tlalpam and soon afterwards was appointed as director of the mint of Mexico City.

On 22 May 1829 the legislature was asked to authorize the expenditure of \$5,711.15 to be invested in making some repairs needed at the mint, including \$711.15 that would be spent on works requiring immediate attention with the remaining \$5,000 to finish what had not yet been completed. A series of events ensued, culminating on 2 June with an indictment filed against former director Rionda. On 16 June the Secretary of State publicly guaranteed Rionda’s integrity but could not stop the wave of indignation that had arisen. On 14 July four prominent jurists asked for Rionda to be prosecuted for embezzlement and fraud against the public finances. The defendant was officially notified and testified in one of the courts in Mexico City. The process continued later in Tlalpam in absentia of the defendant and on 25 August 1830 he was finally convicted and sentenced to banishment from the territory of the state and the confiscation of his urban properties. It is likely that the charges against Rionda led to his eviction from the direction of the Mexico City mint at the end of 1829 when Ildefonso Maniau took over. Rionda later sought to vindicate himself and published a 47-page booklet entitled *Rara aplicacion de la ley en la sentencia de D. Manuel Rionda*.

The second treasurer of the mint of Tlalpam was Colonel José Vicente Villada whose provisional appointment was extended on 10 March 1829. He resigned on 15 October 1829 and Governor Joaquín Lebrija granted him a bonus of \$1,000 in recognition of his services. Nevertheless, it was soon established that Villada’s accounts were not in proper order: when requested to reimburse the missing funds, he responded that he was not able to do so and the government immediately confiscated his properties in the state of México and sold them to cover the embezzled amount.

Based on some official documentation, including the minutes of the legislature from its session of 18 September 1830, it appears that the mint had a good number of assayers, who were left unemployed and almost helpless after the mint had closed. Pressed by need and encouraged by the paternalistic attitude of the authorities, they asked to continue receiving their salaries until employed again. The legislature was sympathetic towards the request and would have approved it had there been funds available in the State Treasury. In consequence, the Congress agreed to give preference to these assayers whenever a position of similar category opened at any of the government’s dependencies. Sadly, the names of these assayers have been lost to history.

The minting operations in Tlalpam started on 23 February 1828 but that mint was short lived. On 29 May 1830 a decree of the state legislature ordered the closure of the mint: the last coins would be struck on 9 June of that year and operations stopped four days later. The employees of the mint sent a formal protest to Governor Melchor Muzquiz through Director Joaquín Lebrija expressing their consternation at the ruin that awaited their families. A special mention was made of the fact that many of them had quit better positions at the Federation to serve the State. On 3 June Lebrija requested Muzquiz to suspend the closure and stated that the employees of the mint had agreed to accept only a partial proportional payment of their salaries if the mint’s funds had become insufficient. This rather magnanimous attitude out of imperious need was not considered and on 8 June a new, more threatening, letter was sent to the governor. An excerpt of this letter follows:



8 Escudos 1829
(lot 31253, Heritage Long Beach auction, September 2014)

We consider the Constituent Congress to have no authority to issue providences other than those absolutely necessary for the celebration of elections and the reunion of the new Constitutional Congress; any other legislative act that it exerts can only be considered as an attack against the sovereignty of the State. The citizen, on another hand, is obliged to obey only the law and it must be understood that obeying the dispositions that the Constituent Congress has issued outside its faculties would only mean yielding to brute force. Your Honor has the obligation to protect our political rights and particular interests guaranteed by law, and thus we exhort him to pay us the corresponding owed warranties...

Muzquiz evidently refused to acquiesce to this petition since on that same date the following note was sent:

All the petitions guided by moderation and the respect to the authority from the employees of this mint have been ignored... (and now they) must speak as free citizens... In consequence ...they protest ... and comply by force and not the law ... which had conceded them the warranties of their employments.

The following were the amounts minted at the Tlalpam mint:

Period	Gold	Silver	Totals
February to June 1828	-	227,955.00	227,955.00
July 1828 to June 1829	95,976.00	514,990.88	610,966.88
July 1829 to June 1830	107,568.00	216,171.00	323,739.00
Total	203,544.00	959,116.88	1,162,660.88



8 Reales 1829

(lot 6276, Ponterio Baltimore auction, November 2010)



1/2 Real 1829

(lot 8132, Ponterio Baltimore auction, March 2011)

Only the following partial mintage figures detailed by denomination have been found, but they are of the utmost importance since they detail some of the denominations that were struck. From 23 February 1828 to 15 October 1828: \$346,874.75, divided as follows:

606	pieces of 2 Escudos	2,424.00
340,660	pieces of 8 Reales	340,660.00
4,922	pieces of 2 Reales	1,230.50
20,482	pieces of 1 Real	2,560.25

From 16 October 1829 to June 1830: 156,301.00, divided as follows:

206	pieces of 8 Escudos	3,296.00
153,005	pieces of 8 Reales	153,005.00

The government of the State of México tried to lease the mint and its rights but to no avail: finally, the legislature decreed on 3 October 1831 to return the equipment to the Mexico City mint and to sell the building. According to historian Father Mariano Cuevas (*Historia de la Nación Mexicana*, México, 1953, Vol. II), Lorenzo de Zavala confiscated the equipment and never returned it.

The mint was never able to produce sufficient profits to cover its operational costs: net losses amounted to \$9,491.63 on its first year of operations, then \$14,966.42 on its second year, and \$18,539.95 in its third and last year. After the building was sold and the equipment returned to the Mexico City mint, the total net loss was of \$149,774.93.

After the state of México was dismembered, its capital was transferred to Toluca. On 7 December 1847 Governor Francisco M. de Olaguibel signed a decree authorizing the reopening of the mint. However, since Toluca was only 73 km away from Mexico City and thus within the limits exclusively reserved to the mint of that city, the project was dismissed after the director of the Mexico City mint, Alejandro Bellange, protested. No further attempts to reopen the mint were made although it is somewhat ironical that one was made at all, considering the blatant failure of the mint of Tlalpam.

COUNTERFEIT \$20 BANCO DE LONDRES Y MEXICO NOTES

by Simon Prendergast

The Banco de Londres y México produced a new series of notes, in seven values, printed by the American Bank Note Company ("ABNC"), in 1889 following its change of name from the Banco de Londres, México y Sud America. The \$20 note is particularly striking, having as its main vignette a portrait of the early humanitarian, Fray Bartolomé de las Casas. The image is taken from an equally impressive painting by the Mexican Félix Parra, which now hangs in the National Art Museum in Mexico City (though nowadays it would probably be considered too kitsch).

Bartolomé de las Casas (c. 1484 – 1566) was a 16th-century Spanish historian, social reformer and Dominican friar. His extensive writings, the most famous being *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias* (A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies) and *Historia de Las Indias*, chronicled the first decades of colonization of the West Indies and focused particularly on the atrocities committed by the colonizers against the indigenous peoples.

In 1542 de las Casas was appointed Bishop of Chiapas, but served only for a short time before he was forced to return to Spain because of resistance by the operators of the feudal encomiendas to the reforming 'New Laws' that de las Casas had persuaded Charles V to enact, and because of conflicts with Spanish settlers over his pro-Indian policies and activist religious stances. The remainder of his life was spent at the Spanish court where he held great influence over Indies-related issues. Although he failed to save the indigenous peoples of the West Indies, de las Casas' efforts resulted in several improvements in the legal status of the natives, and in an increased colonial focus on the ethics of colonialism.

It has long been noticed that there are two varieties of this \$20 note. Apparently Carlos Gaytán believed that both were genuine, even though he thought that one was printed in Mexico by lithography on hard paper and not by the ABNC. Gaytán reasoned that at that stage of the revolution the bank could no longer afford the expense of having its notes printed in New York.

However, Gaytán was wrong.

Certainly, during the revolution, because of urgency, economy and speed of delivery, Mexican banks, including the Banco de Londres y México, did resort to locally produced issues from Bouligny & Schmidt and the American Book & Printing Company but these were new designs and a reputable bank would not have risked reproducing the American Bank Note Company's imprint. The ABNC also managed, despite occasional difficulties and delays, to continue deliveries to Mexico throughout the revolution and the Banco de Londres y México would have been in a better position to pay for any new notes than, say, the Banco Minero de Chihuahua.

These notes were, in fact, good quality counterfeit produced in the United States.

In August 1916 large quantities were reported to be circulating in San Antonio, Texas. The U. S. Secret Service began to investigate after banks in Laredo, Eagle Pass and El Rio bought up quantities of the false notes in all good faith. A large packet of notes was taken to Mexico City, and the bank issued a notice to other bank, listing the differences between the genuine and counterfeit notes. Their list was:

- 1) the paper used was approximately 60% linen whilst the genuine used 90% linen
- 2) the colour or tint in the genuine was an orange yellow (*amarillo anaranjado*) but darker in the counterfeit
- 3) the colour or tint behind the shading in the vignette was light in the genuine, but darker in the counterfeit so the figures were less embossed
- 4) the 20 in the bottom left hand side was more blurred in the counterfeit
- 5) the lettering in the promise to pay were entirely separate one from the other.





A genuine Series H \$20 Banco de Londres y México note

Charles Blackmore, the ABNC resident agent in Mexico City, sent an example to New York where experts examined it and marked up the most easily detected differences, with these listed in an accompanying table, as follows:

FACE

- | | |
|---|--|
| I. Centre division line omitted. | VII. Lines in sleeve omitted. |
| II. Curve in letter different. | VIII. Six lines of ruling here. Should be seven. |
| III. Centre of letter different. | IX. Treatment of eye radically different. |
| IV. Top of letter not straight. | X. No period after Co in original. |
| V. Treatment of arm entirely different. | XI. Body lines and hair lines joined; should not be. |
| VI. Treatment of neck entirely different. | XII. Different shaped "2". |

BACK

- | | |
|---|--|
| I. Line is light in original. | IV. Very different from original. |
| II. Variation in lathe work. | V. Treatment radically different. Color is lost. |
| III. This part of pantograph not in original. | |

I shall leave it to others, who possess actual notes rather than scans, to try to identify all the features that the ABNC recorded. Suffice it to say, that the two versions are easily distinguishable at first sight.



*A counterfeit Series H \$20 Banco de Londres y México note
sold by Gaytán in 1955*

In late September 1916 Sr. Felix Martino, a director of the bank, reported to the ABNC and the Secret Service that the factory or workshop producing the notes was established in San Antonio and the principal directors were said to be Messrs. Kelly and Levi and two individuals by the name of Cicero from the frontier states of Mexico. Mr. Kelly was said to have gone to New Orleans on 12 September with a large quantity of notes to place on the market.

These counterfeit notes resurfaced in 1922 in Torreón, Durango. On 30 March Ciro Melendez, from that city, sent the ABNC a sample note (H 293618, dated 1 October 1913) which the bank had said was counterfeit. Poor Melendez had almost \$500 in such notes. Then on 27 April Isauro Martínez, who owned the local cinema, sent H 258851, which the ABNC acknowledged was false. He also had a quantity of these notes.

Almost a decade later, on 20 January 1931, the Mexican newspaper *Excelsior* reported that the police had recovered \$3,460 in counterfeit \$20 notes after a José Palemón García had tried to exchange some in Toluca and been arrested *in flagrante delicto*. Palemón García confessed that he had received them from a Manuel Garza Méndez in Monterrey and Garza Méndez, in turn, claimed he had received them from a José González more than ten years before but knowing they were false had given them away to Palemón García. Blackmore, still the ABNC agent, reported that the bank did not believe many counterfeits were in existence and that the Comité Liquidador de los Antiguos Bancos de Emisión, which was handling the liquidation of old banknotes, was aware of the secret marks that genuine notes carried and so would detect any forgeries. The bank's manager stated that the original counterfeiting took place in New Orleans some years ago and that the false plates were destroyed by the police with the intervention of the Mexican consul at New Orleans, but he thought that the police probably failed to locate all the false plates and that some of them were sent to some place in the north of Mexico. This is probably a misunderstanding of Kelly's connection with New Orleans.

Finally, it should be noted that a group of counterfeits appeared on the market in Mexico City in 1955. Known counterfeits seem to have serial numbers ranging from 159xxx to 161xxx, whilst the genuine notes were numbered 250xxx to 304xxx, though the two counterfeits recorded in 1922 (258851 and 293618) are a problem. Could the ABNC not have the skill to recognise its own notes?

THE OAXACA 1915 DOS PESOS SERIES, A NEW ADDITION

by Angel Smith Herrera

While it may appear to most collectors that this series have been “over catalogued”, since we even have a specialized book dealing with it (La Ventana by Woodworth and Flores) as well as a very recent approach to list all the known dies and their combinations (Carlos Amaya’s Tricolor Compendium of the Coinage of the Mexican Revolution), it is always exciting to learn about new varieties that have remained undetected or at least unreported. Such is the case of the Oaxaca “Dos Pesos” 1915 coin reported herein.

The coin in question was part of a very old collection that I recently acquired and, while checking new purchases against my own collection for upgrades, I noticed that the reverse (balance scale side) is unlisted in all major references dealing with the series. This triggered an inquiry with a group of friends and numismatists and I was pleased to learn of three more examples of this new variety; thus, there is a good chance that this coin is to be found with some effort since it may not be particularly rare.



Walrafen Obverse H; Amaya Obverse 45



new Reverse

On this new specimen, the obverse die is well known in major catalogs; it was assigned die number “H” by Verne R. Walrafen and is listed as Obverse 45 in Amaya’s compendium. The key difference is a totally new reverse die that is easily identifiable by looking at the right balance scale plate which is situated very close to, but higher than the “L” on the legend. Also the “PE” of Pesos is dramatically tilted to the left in contrast to the rest of the legend.



Several other minor differences will be found such as the location of the “D” in reference to the balance scale plate as well as what appears to be double hubbing on “PROVISIONAL”.



This specimen weighs 14.4 grams, has a diameter of 33 mm, and a corded edge.

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