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COVER IMAGE

The cover image is an 1824 8 Reales from Durango (KM376.4) with the assayer's initials R. L. whom José Antonio Juárez Muñoz identifies as Ramón Luelmo in his article in this issue.

This particular coin, graded MS65, is described as "a jaw-dropping gem example ... bathed in an allover gray tone with intermingled blue, purple and golden iridescence jumping from the surface when rotated under good light. Upon close inspection, the liveliness of this mesmerizing color can largely be attributed to the underlying luster, which, while not quite fully Prooflike in quality, retains a freshness that is seldom seen ... Presently the single-finest graded example of the "hookneck" type from any mint at both NGC and PCGS."

This coin was sold by Heritage Auctions for a "jaw dropping" \$96,000 (including Buyer's Premium) on 19 August 2021.



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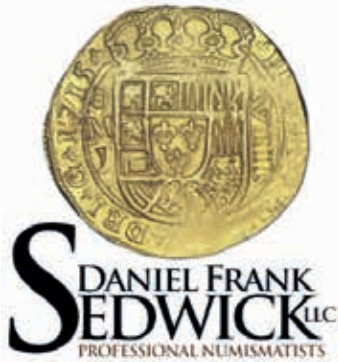
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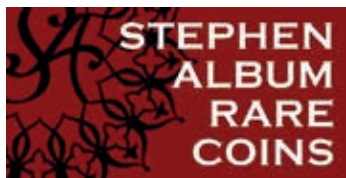
The 11th annual convention is scheduled to be even larger than previous conventions with an expanded bourse floor with much more inventory. In addition, several auction companies have agreed to sponsor the convention by making significant donations to help offset costs and will be exhibiting an incredible number of lots that will be sold in upcoming auctions.

HERITAGE AUCTIONS will be bringing three exciting showcases: the Mexico, the Latin America and the Brazil Showcase. The Mexico has rarities from the colonial types, Iturbide and revolutionary issues but also pristine examples of the popular modern onzas. The Latin America sale offers from 1,500 pieces such key types as post-independence 4 Escudos from Chile and the Central American Republic, and also several 19th- 20th century Patterns. The Brazil showcase has a good selection of early gold pieces and high-grade examples of the beloved 960 Reis and 6400 Reis series.

Stack's Bowers is holding one of their highly anticipated World and Ancient Collectors Choice Online (CCO) auctions the week following the convention, from 1 to 3 November, with significant items from Latin America. From Mexico, an offering of more than 80 War of Independence issues, mostly silver 8 Reales, as well as several hundred 20th Century silver and copper medals are a few highlights.



Sedwick's Auction 34 will feature a choice selection of Mexican and Peruvian 8 escudos gold cobs from the 1715 Fleet, Panama's finest silver cob denomination set, and the final part of John Adams' landmark collection of Admiral Vernon medals, in addition to the unique Congressional Gold Medal awarded to military hero and later President William Henry Harrison in 1825. Additionally, you will find a superb collection of Colombian silver crowns and a world-class offering of early Canadian tokens, along with a selection from Clyde Hubbard's Mexican cob collection, plus an exciting array of shipwreck ingots and high-end artifacts.



Stephen Album's next auction, to be held on 14-17 September, features 3,400 lots from all categories and time periods. Items of particular interest to USMexNA members include a collectible grade 1824 hookneck 8 reales, a 1790 Puebla de Los Angeles silver proclamation medal, an 1863-SLP 5 centavos (ex Lissner), a 1914 Caballito peso and high grade 20th century gold.

This year the number of seminars has been increased. and the speakers will be:

Hilton Lucio – Mints of the 17th Century Brazil Gold Coins

Jay Turner – Counterfeit Detection

Max Keech – Coinage of Morelos

Peter Dunham – Native Identity on the Chihuahua Coppers of the First Republic

Jorge Proctor – The Hidden Mint Scandal of Mexico

Kyle Ponterio – Four Part Cobb Series. Part 1 – Silver Issues

Juan Felipe Ramirez – War of Independence 4 Real Provisional Mints and Zacatecas 8 Reales

Bruno Pellizzari – Brazilian 960 Réis: The link between Portuguese and Spanish America.

For more details about the convention, including how to book at special rates at the Hilton Scottsdale Resort, please visit our website.

CORRECTIONS AND CONFIRMATIONS OF THE NAMES OF THE ASSAYERS OF THE DURANGO MINT 1811 – 1985

by José Antonio Juárez Muñoz

Director of the Museo de Numismática de Durango SEED

In the investigations that I have been able to carry out within the Historical Archive of the Government of the State of Durango (AHGED) we have located files (some already classified and others in the process of being so), as well as some *Periódicos Oficiales*, that give us the name of the Durango assayers. Up to now the mention of the assayers' initials in various books and catalogs, based on the research of Dr. Alberto Pradeau Avilés and published in his work *Numismatic History of Mexico* has in the main been wrong. Dr. Pradeau relates some events that gave rise to the different administrations of the mint of Durango, as well as others related to the assayers, although he confesses to not knowing the name corresponding to several of the initials that appear on the coins. Likewise, others he deduces from some characters in the political history of the state as if they were the assayers, but without checking the sources of the files or newspapers from which he took that observation.

Therefore, I will here list the names and correct data of the characters, in chronological order, with the intention that the pertinent corrections will be made in the specialized books and catalogs.



1.-Initials **R.M.** In 2022, a file was located in the Historical Archive of the State of Durango, in the Finance section, so today we know that they belong to **Ramón Mascareñas**, an assayer at the time of the War of Independence coins, and not to **Ramón Mendoza**, as mentioned in the book by Dr. Alberto Pradeau. The data was found in a still unclassified box of files in the section of "Hacienda" from 1811 in the time of the Nueva Vizcaya.

2.- Initials **M.Z.** Like the first ones these were located in still unclassified files in the Colonial section where the name appears as **Mariano Zaldívar** with his appointment as the main assayer of the Durango mint.

3.- Initials **C.G.** This assayer's name, **Cosme Garcés**, was very hidden within the Archive's documents. In the vast majority of documents from 1818 to 1823 his name was not mentioned and on one occasion did we locate a document of the year 1810 giving some reports of assays in the San Luis Potosí office, where his name is mentioned. It was not known if this was the same character but now we can be certain that when he finished his function as an assayer in San Luis Potosí he was hired in Durango for the years from 1818. The reference is made in unclassified files for February 1823.

4.- Initials **R.L.** Nowadays we can be certain that these belong to **Ramón Luelmo**, as located in 2011, in the files of the Acts of Congress (*Actas de Acuerdos y Decretos del Congreso del Estado de Durango*) of 13 July 1826, which reported the payment to the assayer. This was outlined in my first book, *Reseñas Históricas de Casa de Moneda de Durango 1811-1877*, which was published in 2014.



5.- Initials **C.M.** These belong to **Cayetano Mascareñas** and not to **Clemente Morón**, as was thought. This information was located in 2022, in file number 327 in the section "Correspondencias de la Secretaría General de Gobierno".

6.- Initials **J.M.R.** **José María Ramírez** only appears in a few months in the monthly assay reports in the *Periódicos Oficiales*, but Cayetano Mascareñas continued to exercise the role of *jefe de ensayes* until 1852, so, due to the lack of documentation, we are still unsure about this period in the life of the Durango mint.

7.- Initials **C.P.** These are of **Carlos León de la Peña Muñoz**, a declared liberal and patriotic supporter of President Benito Juárez against Maximilian, who was forced to leave the position of director of the Durango mint. He held several public offices, as well as that of professor at the Juárez Institute in 1875.

8.- Initials **L.T.** These belong to **Luis de la Torre**, as several documents refer to his appointment as director of the Durango mint in the years from 1859 to 1866. However, some receipts for payments for assays bear the name of a totally different person called Francisco Izurieta, though we do not know why.



9.- Initials **J.H.** These belong to **José O. Huitrado Aguilar**, who was sent from Mexico City to perform the job of assayer. This information was found in the *Periódico Oficial* of December 1874 (data shared by my companion and numismatic colleague Javier Ruiz Celis).

10.- Initials **J.M.P.** These were said to belong to someone named **José Miguel Palma** but this name never appears in the records. However, Ingeniero **José María Peimber** was an assayer and then director of the mint at this time. Hence his three initials on the 1877 8 reales, the rarest pieces of the Durango mint.

11.- Initials **P.E.** These belong to **Pedro Espejo** and appeared in the *Periódico Oficial* of 19 September 1877 where it was announced that the assayer Carlos León de la Peña had been appointed Director General de Rentas in the state and that the new assayer would soon arrive to take up his position.

12.- Initials **T.B.** These belong to the assayer named **Trinidad Barrera** and appear in a file dated 14 November 1878 where there is talk of a trial of the previous assayer for mismanagement of the production of silver coins. This would have been Pedro Espejo who was replaced by Trinidad Barrera.

13.- Initials **J.B.** These belong to **Jacobo Blanco**. This name was confirmed in an original report of April 1885, provided to us from a private collection of an acquaintance in the United States, which includes the original signature of the assayer and a red seal of the Intervention of the mint of the government of Durango. Blanco replaced Manuel del Cerro, according to a letter dated 23 February 1885, in which the latter asked for permission to be absent from the office of assayer, to act as Interventor in the month of July. He returned as assayer according to a letter of 9 July of the same year. So the 8 reales with the initials J. B. are extremely scarce, as he performed his functions for just four months.



14.- Initials **M.C.** There is no doubt that these belong to **Manuel del Cerro**, although Pradeau asserted that these initials could correspond to one of two people: **Manuel Canseco** or **Melchor Calderón**. The correct name was found in documents in the section "Correspondencias de la Secretaría General de Gobierno" 1885. In these, addressed to the secretary general of the government, Manuel del Cerro asks for permission to retire for four months from his duties as assayer and Interventor (very special, since he had a double function within the mint).

15.- Initials **J.P.** These are of Ingeniero **José Gómez Palacios** but were confused with those of another assayer, José María Peimbert (J.M.P.) because of the very similar initials. The original names were found in the *Periódico Oficial* of September 1890, where it is alluded that this person works as assayer and Interventor of the Durango mint. At the beginning of 1892 he went to Monterrey to establish the federal assay office and in 1895 he was summoned by Leandro Fernández to Mexico City to help him draw up the "Regulation of Mints" which at that time were being organised on a federal basis. In 1896 Gómez Palacios went to Culiacán as director of the city's mint but only lasted two years until, sick through the climate, he returned to Monterrey. In addition, he held a position on the city council of Durango in the years from 1911 to 1912.

16.- Initials **N.D.** These are of Ingeniero **Norberto Domínguez** that appear in the files of "Correspondencias del Gobernador" of 1896. It is mentioned that he was highly recommended as being well prepared in the matter of the assay of metals and for having occupied the position as Interventor and assayer from 1892 to 1895. In addition to being a professor of meteorology at the Juárez Institute since 1892, he also held positions within the city council from 1892 to 1893 and from 1895 to 1897.

As an appendix I include a table giving the amount of silver coinage for each of the assayers of the Durango mint from 1824 to 1895. These figures are approximations based on data collected from archive files (from the Durango

Mint section, 1824 to 1888, in the Center for Historical Studies of Mexico, Carlos Slim Foundation) and taking into consideration information from the Krause catalog section on Durango 8 reales (1889 to 1895).

These figures are the total of the silver pieces for ½, 1, 2 and 8 reales in addition to the pieces denominated in the decimal system such as those of 5, 10, 25 and 50 centavos and the balance scales pesos.

The table also includes information on the dates that each assayer held office. However, It should be noted that in some cases two or three assayers worked in the same year, sometimes for periods of a few weeks or months so it is very difficult to know exactly how many pieces are to be assigned to each of them due to the short time in which they were made and for the lack of documentary information.

1824 to 1829	Ramón Luelmo	R.L.	3,590,813
1830 to 1849	Ramón Mascareñas	R.M.	15,483,663
1848 to 1849 and 1873 to 1877	Cayetano Mascareñas	C.M.	5,119,603
1849 to 1852	José María Ramírez	J.M.R.	1,941,994
1852 to 1864 and 1867 to 1873	Carlos León de la Peña	C.P.	11,659,379
1864 and 1865	Luis de la Torre	L.T.	1,414,992
1872 and 1877	José María Peimbert	J.M.P.	1,166,976
1878	Pedro Espejo	P.E.	900,919
1878 to 1880	Trinidad Barrera	T.B.	2,668,035
1880 to 1882	José Gómez Palacio	J.P.	4,272,788
1882 to 1890	Manuel del Cerro	M.C.	9,206,211
1885	Jacobo Blanco	J.B.	1,131,644
1892 to 1895	Norberto Domínguez	N.D.	5,512,000

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THE FICHAS OF AUTLAN, JALISCO

by Simon Prendergast

Autlán de Navarro is a town in the southwest of Jalisco, that had relative peace during the revolution but still suffered from the usual disasters of shortages and hoarding. In response the military and civil authorities, local businesses and individuals issued a series of low value notes in the period from 1914 to 1916. Details can still be found in the records of the local archive, and these allow us to confirm their sequence .

La Brigada Moreno

Roberto Adán Moreno was a hacendado in Unión de Tula. At his San Clemente hacienda the constant demands from military chiefs led him to take up arms and form a self defence militia, the Brigada Moreno, with himself as general. He joined forces with Pedro Zamora to gain control over the whole region around Autlán and imposed on the city its first Convencionista Presidente Municipal, José Maqueo Castellanos, on 12 March 1915.

Moreno issued *fichas* to address the shortage of hard cash that circulated throughout the region dominated by the Convencionistas, and were used to pay the troops, workers on the haciendas and public employees. These were designated as from the head-quarters of the Convencionist Army and are known in a variety of colours and fonts.



A 5c note



A 50c note with EJERCITO CONVENCIONISTA in capitals



A 50c note with Ejército Convencionista in Gothic script



These were supposedly printed four to a sheet with one 5c, one 20c and two 50c. There are several references to consignments of notes from Salvador Araiza, the printer in Unión de Tula, who owned the region's sole printshop, but no details of the total amount.

Thus, on 19 June 1915 Epigmenio Ramos left Autlán with 3,000 sheets: on 24 June Capitán Medina took 1,000 sheets. However, the printers were also occupied in producing *fichas* for José V. Gómez in Villa Purificación and someone in El Grullo. On 18 August Teniente Santiago García took a packet containing 1,000 *hojas*, making a total of \$2,000 in 50c notes, and by 20 August Araiza was running out of paper. A consignment of \$19,951 taken by Capitan Io. Domingo Araiza on 30 August included \$14,000 in 7,000 *hojas impresas de fichas de la primera y segunda emisión* (the first reference to more than one issue).

Moreno's issue was withdrawn when the Carrancistas arrived. On 27 November 1915 the Tesorero General reported that he had \$460 in Brigada Moreno that were no longer in circulation, a sum that had risen to \$584.50 by the end of the year.

Moreno himself refused offers of amnesty and continued fighting until his death in 1917.

Rafael B. Gómez

Rafael B. Gomez was owner of the Hacienda “El Totole”, in La Huerta, some miles from Autlán.

He issued a series of *vales* for 5c, 10c, 20c and 50c, which circulated widely in the district. Again, they are known in a variety of designs, fonts, text, colours (due to the use of any available paper) and with different validating seals. Some carry a seal of the General Headquarters of the Brigada Moreno and so these are listed, mistakenly, as a military issue in *Mexican Paper Money*.

These were still being used in November 1915.

Individual commercial issues

The first reference to a private issue is on 25 May 1915 when the Presidente Municipal wrote to Riveros Hermanos, in Ayuquila, that he had learnt that they were demanding payment for maize in *fichas* that some local businesses has issued.



A 20c note with the stamp of a merchant, Juan Jiménez



A 50c note entitled 'PROVISIONAL' with the seal of the Brigada Moreno

The Carrancistas, under General Pablo Quiroga, took possession of Autlán on 25 November 1915 and on the same day appointed Higinio García Meza as Presidente Municipal. At a meeting that day of businessmen, they resolved to address the problem of the lack of small change caused by the withdrawal of the Brigada Moreno notes by authorising certain businesses to issued *bonos ó vales*, validated by the seal of the Presidente Municipal. These *vales* would circulate until Carranza's own fractional currency arrived, at which time each business would collect and reimburse all the *vales* it had issued. Finally, the agreement noted that *vales* that had already been issued by businesses would be withdrawn and changed for *vales* of the new issue. So this was not the first time that private notes appeared.



A 1c and 10c from El Vesubio



A 10c from Clemente González é hijo

Twenty-nine people signed this agreement, though we know of only a couple of issues. These are a 1c and 10c note for the cigarette factory, “El Vesubio”, that was owned by Higinio García Meza and located on the corner of calle Guillermo Prieto and calle de Reforma, and (if rightly placed here) a 10c from Clemente González é hijo. However, on 6 December Leónides E. Sánchez, owner of the appropriately named “Las Termopilas” on the corner of calle Ramón Corona and calle Mariano Escobedo, sent \$364 in 50c and \$1 *fichas* to be stamped by the Presidencia Municipal and stated that he had already issued \$152 in *fichas*.

Vales de Comercio

Next, at a meeting called by the Comandante de la Plaza, Teniente coronel Antonio L. Cano, on 9 December 1915, he addressed the continuing problem by authorising a commission composed of Silvestre Arias, Florencio Topete, Irineo Barragán and Maximo González to print \$5,000 in “Vales de Comercio” in four values (5c, 10c, 20c and 50c). These would again be stamped by the Presidencia Municipal and then distributed among 22 businesses, who would guarantee their notes for the initial period of two months (to be extended, if necessary). On 16 December a further meeting decided it would now issue \$8,000 in notes. After two months, from 16 February 1916, the notes would be redeemed in three *casas de comercio*: José María Topete's “La Palestina”, Clemente González é hijo's “La Reforma” and Adela Blake viuda de

Barragán's "La Esmeralda", and destroyed on 1 March. Notice of this accord was published in neighbouring Unión de Tula.



three of the four values of the Vales de Comercio

These notes were printed on the presses of Francisco L. Araiza.

By 30 December the Tesorero de la Junta Monetaria reported that he had received \$8,151.60 in "Vales del Comercio", from the Presidencia Municipal to be distributed to businesses.

On 1 May 1916 the Presidencia Municipal agreed with the Comisión to extend the validity of the *vales* until a new decision of the Presidencia, which would in turn give people 15 days' notice in which to exchange their notes.

The *fichas* of the Tesorería Municipal

Finally at an extraordinary session of the local council (now a Carrancista *Junta de Administración Civil*) held on 8 June 1916 the members were told that General Melitón Albañez, Jefe de Operaciones in Autlán, had, on 5 June, ordered the printing of \$20,000 in 20c, 50c and \$1 *fichas* to be guaranteed by a deposit of *infalsificables* in the Tesorería Municipal, again to address the continuing shortage of small change. To prevent hoarding these notes would be issued each month (so the first stated that they were valid until 30 June) and then exchanged for *infalsificables*. On 9 June the Tesorero Municipal, Miguel Adame, issued \$10,000 of these *fichas* to the Jefatura de Armas, and the same day, José María Cuellar, Albañez' Jefe del Estado Mayor, received \$5,000 for expenses against the day when the paymasters from Guadalajara could redeem them in *infalsificables*. Cuellar received further consignments and by 15 June had received the total of \$20,000.

We know of examples of the 50c and \$1 values.



Withdrawal and incineration of the *fichas*.

When the Carrancista currency arrived these various issues were withdrawn and we have records of various incinerations. On 29 August 1916 Capitán Zo Fernando González Madrid produced \$3,500 in *fichas* of the first issue in the offices of the Presidencia Municipal, where they were incinerated. On 20 September José María Cuellar produced another \$11,400 of the first issue, which was also destroyed in a similar fashion. On 30 September \$3,592 in "Vales de Comercio" were destroyed and on 20 October Capitán Zo Gómez Flores produced \$15,100 of the second issue which were then incinerated. Finally, on 12 September the Secretario General de Gobierno wrote to the Presidente Municipal informing him that Capitán Cuellar had left Guadalajara four days earlier with sufficient funds to withdraw the \$20,000 of Tesorería Municipal *fichas*.

Most of this information comes from documents in the Archivo Histórico Municipal in Autlán, to whose staff, particularly Martha Corona, I am greatly indebted. These files had previously been consulted by Carlos Martín Boyzo Nolasco, for his work, *La Emisión de Papel Moneda durante la Revolución Mexicana en la Región de Autlán, Jalisco* (Guadalajara, 2013), which I have also used in writing this article.



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THE NEW REVOLUTIONARY CORNER

by David Hughes

Iconic—The 1914 Zapata Presentation Coin

I ran across the term “Iconic” relating to coins recently, iconic being “relating to or characteristic of somebody or something admired as an icon”. The context was an article on Ten Iconic American Gold Coins (a rather pricy collection). My own definition of Iconic, as relating to coins, is a coin that makes me tingle when I hold it. I held an original Oaxaca 1916 60-peso gold coin at the USMexNA Convention once (I did not drop it, thanks for asking), and yes, there was a tingle. I have a coin that my grandfather Hughes picked up out of the ruins of San Francisco after the 1906 earthquake and fire, on his way, in 1906, starting from Michigan, by sea to Argentina, walking over the Andes to the Pacific coast, and by sea again, from Chile to the Fairbanks, Alaska gold rush. A US 1900 V¢, burned and warped, with little bits of gold welded to it, from being near a gold coin during the fire. Iconic.

Another iconic coin passed to me from Verne Walrafen, handled by Richard Long. It is a Guerrero 1914 2-peso, a GB-213 early strike, scarce but not especially rare despite eBay seller claims, an early strike as the eagle side (GB die 3) does not have a radial die break through the E of PESOS, as all the later GB-213 strikes have. The sun side, though, has been faced off in a jeweler’s lathe and nicely engraved:

PRESENTED TO/G. C. CAROTHERS/BY/GENERAL EMILIANO ZAPATA/CUERNAVACA/

DECEMBER 3RD, 1914.



One of many appearing in the Mexican Revolution was the American George C. Carothers, raised in Mexico and a grocer in Tampico, Tamaulipas, on the Gulf Coast. He was appointed, by the State Department prior to the Revolution, to represent the American community in Torreón, Coahuila, a city without a formal State office. The Consular Agents were not professional diplomats but businessmen acting as honorary consuls, and were by no means disinterested observers. After General Francisco “Pancho” Villa conquered Torreón on 1 October 1913, in the second phase of the Mexican Revolution (the revolt against the dictator Victoriano Huerta), Carothers was attached to Villa as a Special Representative. The State Department believed Villa was a potential victor in the Revolution, and felt they should have a representative-informant in the Villa camp. Villa, in his pre-1916 romance with the Americans, accepted Carothers, maybe even felt it a diplomatic coup having an American attaché around. Carothers encouraged Villa in this, perhaps overstating his connections to the American government. Hard to imagine an American grocer in the thick of the Mexican Revolution, but yes, he was.

Originally under the banner of the Constitutionalist Army, Villa eventually split with the First Chief of the Constitutionals, Venustiano Carranza, in 1914, when Carranza stopped Villa from advancing on Mexico City after Villa’s important victory

over the Federal Army at Zacatecas on 23 June 1914, by denying him coal for the railroad engines that transported his army. After Huerta fled the country on 15 July 1914, Carrancista general Álvaro Obregón marched into Mexico City unopposed on 14 August.

Carranza was uneasy, his political control shaky, feeling the breath of both Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata down his neck, and was subsequently displaced from Mexico City by the forces of Zapata on 24 November 1914. Villa commanded a national army (Army of the North) with a local agenda, Zapata commanded a local army (Liberating Army of the South) with a national agenda (the Plan de Ayala) (Katz, 1998). Villa felt he could make common ground with Zapata, and sent Carothers to Zapata's headquarters in Cuernavaca, Morelos, to arrange a meeting.

Carothers, ever the opportunist, appears in photographs taken at this time, with Zapata and his generals. And, on 3 December 1914, Emiliano Zapata gave George Carothers a Zapatista Dos Pesos coin. Carothers obviously had a sense of history, and kept this coin, subsequently having it engraved. A coin, actually handled by General Emiliano Zapata, on 3 December 1914, in Cuernavaca, Morelos. A historic piece. Iconic. I get a tingle holding it.

Zapata agreed to meet Villa in Xochimilco, a small town just outside of Mexico City on 4 December 1914, where they agreed on their common hatred of Carranza. They both entered Mexico City on horseback in triumph on 6 December, Villa paid his respects to the nominal (Conventionalist) President of Mexico in the National Palace, sat in the President's Chair with Zapata beside him, sending a powerful image of the real power behind the throne. Villa was at the height of his power, commanding the largest army in Mexico, in the national capital. But Villa was a local from Chihuahua, having the chance of claiming the Presidency of Mexico he declined, claiming he was uneducated and unfit for the position, he frittered it all away when he quit listening to his advisors, started making command decisions on his own, ignored advise and allowed Carranza and his general Álvaro Obregón to regroup. Zapata returned to Morelos and applied the Plan de Ayala, Villa attacked an entrenched Obregón and lost, and attacked again and lost, and attacked and lost again, and limped back to Chihuahua, the Army of the North dissipated. Villa never was completely vanquished but also never did win again on a national scale, remaining a local terror in Chihuahua, denying Carranza actual state control. Zapata was assassinated in 1919 on the order of Carranza, Carranza was shot in 1920 attempting to remain in power behind a puppet president, Villa was assassinated in 1923, the action likely abetted by President Álvaro Obregón (Katz, 1998), who was also shot in 1928 while attempting to return to the Presidency.

This was one of Verne Walrafen's prized pieces. An Iconic coin. And, after all, we do not own, we are but caretakers of these pieces. I held it on 3 December 2014, 100 years after Emiliano Zapata gave it to George Carothers. And it will pass on, somewhere, for the 200 year mark, one hopes.

References

Friedrich Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA, 1998. It takes a commitment to read all 818 pages of this biography which gives a detailed view of the complex life of General Francisco Villa, who left few actual records.

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20th CENTURY MEXICO – STUDY OF THE NICKEL 5 CENTAVOS (1905-1914)

by Scott Doll

Introduction

To start, let me say that I just love to collect Mexican coin varieties. One area that I feel has gone unnoticed, as well as underappreciated to a degree, involves the 5 centavos pure nickel coinage which was struck from 1905 to 1914. In the short nine-year series, only the year 1908 was not minted. This article will provide a short history of these coins as well as a focus on the known varieties from within the series. Some varieties are well known and well documented within the numismatic community, while others are lesser known, or possibly not known at all until now. It is my expectation that this article will give this underappreciated series some focus, as well as a little love with the hope that more collectors will consider pursuing the many varieties available.

Background

The Monetary Reform of 25 March 1905 redefined the design on all the Mexican coinage except for the silver one peso which would continue with the Republic design until 1909. All other denominations would have new designs to include a redesigned obverse forward-facing eagle holding a snake, as well as a new legend which changed from “REPUBLICA MEXICANA” used during the Mexican Republic period to “ESTADOS UNIDOS MEXICANOS” starting with 1905 struck coins in support of the Monetary Reform.



Example of Mexico 2nd Republic

5 Centavos - 1905 MoM

Silver (.9027), 14 mm

Struck from 1863-1905

*Various mint marks &
varying eagle designs can be seen.*

The new 5 centavos would have a story all their own as they would have a different design with an Aztec style geometric border of quincunxes and points, as well as having a different metallic composition (nickel) compared to other denominations struck at the time. In fact, many of the nickel 5 centavos would not even be struck in Mexico, but more on that in a moment. The Mexican Mint made the decision to move away from silver-based 5 centavos used during the Republic period and shifted towards a pure nickel metallic content for the new coins. Although the decision was a good one from a fiscal perspective as nickel was a much cheaper alternative, it did have other issues since pure nickel was not durable as it corroded badly which caused the coins to degrade quickly over time. I am sure the mint also thought they were helping the masses since it was believed that the old silver 5 centavos were too small and inconvenient, therefore a new larger coin was needed. I am certain that, although the silver 5 centavos may have been inconvenient, the people were less thrilled using the nickel replacement as the intrinsic value was not comparable to silver. I must believe that most people probably felt like they were being cheated by the government.

Production

After the closing of the last of the private mint contracts or chartered mints from the Republic period, all coinage operations moved to the mint located in Mexico City which assumed full responsibility for the striking of all coins needed within the country. With that said, they also knew that they would need help from other mints since the demand was greater than their ability to strike all the newly designed coins starting with the 1905 dated coins. The mint that was chosen to help strike the new 5 centavos coins was The Mint, Birmingham Ltd. or Heaton Mint located in Birmingham, England. This was a good choice as this company produced coins for many foreign nations including France, Italy, China, and much of the British Empire during the 19th century and now Mexico would be added to that list.

The Mexican Mint did not contract all 5 centavos to be struck at the Birmingham Mint but did allow them to strike a vast majority of the coins which would be identical in design and composition to the ones struck at the Mexican Mint. *A Guide Book of Mexican Coins, 1822 to Date* by T. V. Buttrey and Clyde Hubbard state the Birmingham Mint struck a large portion of the 1906 and 1911 coins, as well as all the 1907-1910 coins. Other numismatic scholars also believe that some of the

1914 coins were struck in England, however some reports have stated that the bulk of those coins were never delivered. Whatever the case, it is easy to see that many of the 33 million coins were not struck at the Mexican Mint which might help explain why so many different varieties exist with the date and mint mark designs.



Example of Mexico 20th Century

5 Centavos - 1905 M

Pure Nickel, 20 mm

Struck from 1905-1914

All coins have a "M" mint mark.

The companies who were contracted for the new pure nickel planchets include several from within the United States, as well as one from within Europe. The Scovill Manufacturing Company of Waterbury, Connecticut and the Coe Brass Manufacturing Company of Torrington, Connecticut provided the bulk of the planchets throughout the striking of this issue, while the Arthur Krupp Company of Berndorf, Austria helped with the supply for the 1913 and 1914 coinage.

Variety Overview

The varieties which have been documented or examined for this series include differences with the mint mark, as well as the date. Date varieties include regular, narrow, and wide dates, as well as overdates. The last area of discussion involves repunched date digits.

Upon closer examination, the mint marks are a bit more intriguing as there are different letter "M" designs used throughout the series. Since most prior analysis has described the mint marks as either a large mint mark or small mint mark, I feel it is worth a closer look at these as there is much more to be seen by doing an in-depth analysis of the letter style itself. Now let us begin.

Mint Mark (MM) Varieties

Even though we previously stated that some of the coins were struck in England, all coins bear the Mexico mint mark "M", and nothing is currently known as a way to distinguish, with a high level of certainty, any of the differences between the various strikes in Mexico and those from England. While doing my analysis, I have identified and documented at least five different, distinct mint mark designs or styles. I will admit that some of the differences between them are very subtle, but after looking at these in enough detail, it is relatively easy to distinguish each.

MM Style #1 (Regular "M")

This is the easiest of the various mint marks to identify since it has the most normal looking "M" within this series. Straight even lines with slightly rounded points on most examples. The top indentation is also well pronounced and has the shape of a large "V". Even with subtle differences, most mint marks between the two years struck are not that different. This mint mark is arguably one of the most common seen throughout the series due to the high mintage of 1905 and 1906 which had a total mintage of 12,034,560, or approximately one-third of the total series. This mint mark can be found on selected 5 centavos from 1905 and 1906.



Key identifiers for this variety.

- The top notch is relatively deep and shaped like a large "V".
- The bottom arches are tall, balanced and they are about the same height on both right and left sides.

*Mint Mark Style #1
Regular "M"*



1905

NGC #2824910-004 (MS 62)



1906

NGC #4702735-006 (MS 64)

MM Style #2 (Notched "M")

The notched "M" is also a relatively easy variety to identify as it has a clearly visible notch at the base of the upper recessed area of the letter. Where MM Style #1 (Regular "M") looks like a letter "V" within that area, this variety looks like a narrow rectangle or "U" shape where the lines are almost vertical on either side of the recessed area in question. The top two parts of the letter are also very large and bulky looking compared to MM Style #1. It almost looks like the design is incomplete and may have been hastily prepared by the mint worker. Although obviously different in appearance within the area of the notch, I believe this is most likely an early die design or possibly a reworking of MM Style #1 since all the rest of the letter is almost identical. This mint mark can only be found on the selected 5 centavos from 1905.



Mint Mark Style #2
Notched "M"

Key identifiers for this variety.

- The top notch is relatively deep and shaped like a large "U" and displays vertical walls on both sides.
- The bottom arches are tall, however the left side is slightly higher than the one on the right.



1905

NGC #6205420-004 (MS 64)



Mint Mark Close Up
Pointers to the notch and
bulky top.

MM Style #3 (Prominent "M")

MM Style #3 (Prominent "M") is yet another mint mark style which is relatively easy to identify. It has bold, symmetrical, straight lines throughout. It also has an ever so slightly higher point on the upper left part of the letter. This mint mark style is also slightly larger than all the other mint marks from this series. Many, but not all, examples also show what appears to be a slight doubling on small portions of the letter, however this is most likely a repunched or retooled letter which occurred during die creation. This mint mark style can only be found on selected 5 centavos from 1912 and 1913.



*Mint Mark Style #3
Prominent "M"*

Key identifiers for this variety.

- Thick lettering.
- The top portion of the letter has flat tops, and the left side is slightly taller than the right side. The center indentation is shaped like a large "V".
- The bottom arches are tall, however the left side is slightly higher than the right side.



1912

NGC #2724960-003 (MS 63)



1913

NGC #2724957-010 (MS 63+)

MM Style #4 (Rounded "M")

MM Style #4 (Rounded "M") is quite different than the previously reviewed mint marks. This mint mark design has a somewhat erratic, rounded, and clumpy looking appearance. It is also slightly smaller or flatter compared to the previously discussed styles. Note the overall flattened shape and the rounded top of the letter are the easiest identifiers for this style. This mint mark style can be found on selected 5 centavos from 1906, 1910, 1911 and 1914.



*Mint Mark Style #4
Rounded "M"*

Key identifiers for this variety.

- The top and sides of the letter are rounded. The top indentation is very small and not easily seen on some coins.
- The bottom arches are shorter than the other mint marks and the overall appearance of the mint mark is relatively flat looking.



1906
NGC #6435414-014 (MS 65)



1910
NGC #2843308-002 (MS 65)



1911
NGC #2736257-009 (MS 64+)



1914
NGC #2858944-001 (MS 63)

M Style #5 (Bold "M")

Like with MM Style #1 (Regular "M"), the mint mark style on MM Style #5 (Bold "M") can be slightly difficult to distinguish since it has somewhat similar characteristics to what is seen on MM Style #1. However, upon closer examination, this mint mark is quite different since the upper indentation in the center is very shallow and shaped like a small "v" which makes that feature the easiest identifier to distinguish from MM Style #1 which looks like a large "V". MM Style #4 (Rounded "M") also has a very small indentation, however it is much more rounded and slightly flatter in overall appearance than what is seen on MM Style #5 which has straighter, more even lines and a much bolder looking appearance. MM Style #5 is one of the most common of all the mint marks observed within this series and can be found on six of the nine years this coin was struck. This style can be found on selected 5 centavos from the years 1907, 1909, 1911, 1912, 1913 and 1914.



Mint Mark Style #5
Bold "M"

Key identifiers for this variety.

- The top notch is relatively shallow and shaped like a small "V".
- The bottom arches are tall, balanced and the left side is slightly higher than the one on the right side.
- Thick and bold letter.



1907
NGC #4432193-004 (MS 64)



1909
NGC #2829189-003 (MS 63)



1911
NGC #5939683-020 (MS 65)



1912
NGC #2820532-005 (AU 55)



1913
NGC #6435219-001 (MS 66)



1914
NGC #2724957-011 (MS 64)



1913 (M/M)
NGC #2822574-005 (MS 64)

There is one additional entry that I would like to add to the MM Style #5 section. Although it is not a different mint mark variety, this mint mark can best be described as a sub variety of MM Style #5 as it has an M/M over mint mark that is seen as doubled. Since it appears to be a part of the actual die, it is most likely a repunched letter "M" and not something that was caused as part of the striking process.

Date Varieties

If the review of mint marks was not exciting enough, let us now take a more in-depth look into some of the various date varieties. This will include a review of what I describe as date placement varieties, overdates and finally a review of selected repunched date digits.

Date Placement

Like the mint mark section, there are several different varieties associated with the date. The first group to be reviewed involves date placement. These will be classified as regular, narrow, or wide date. Since the date digits were manually punched by hand by the mint workers responsible for die creation, then it is easy to see how these different date placements occurred.

1905, 1907, 1909, 1910 & 1912 Regular Date Placement

The following are what I reference as coins which have a regular date placement. There will be subtle differences between each year, however these generally fall somewhere in between what are described as a narrow or a wide date. More on those in a moment as each of those can be attributed by counting the small denticles on the surrounding border design above the date.



1906 Narrow (Upright) & Wide (Inclined) Date



1906 Narrow Date or Upright "6"
MM Style #4 (Rounded "M")
NGC #6435414-014 (MS 65)

The narrow date variety is spaced with a total of 9 denticles which starts from the top tip of first "1" to the top portion of the "6" which aligns just before the ninth denticle. This date can also be described as the upright "6" variety.



1906 Wide Date or Inclined "6"
M Style #1 (Regular "M")
Ex. NGC #4702735-006 (MS 64)

The wide date variety is spaced with a total of 9 ½ denticles which starts from the top tip of first "1" to the top portion of the "6" which aligns just past the ninth denticle. The date can also be described as the inclined "6" variety.

Before I begin the next section, which will outline additional narrow and wide date varieties within this series, I would like to say that counting the small denticles, although very tedious, is the best, most precise way to distinguish between a narrow and a wide date. However, it is not the only way to identify the date placement variety for this series. The previously discussed mint marks are the other way to help distinguish the date placement variety since each one of the narrow and wide dates have different style mint marks. Although previously discussed, the 1906 narrow and wide date can best be described as upright or inclined “6” since the denticle count is so close in total number (9 vs 9 ½), plus it is much easier to identify the placement of the “6”.

1911 Narrow & Wide Date



1911 Narrow Date

MM Style #4 (Rounded “M”)

NGC #2736257-009 (MS 64+)

The date is spaced within 9 denticles from the top tip of first “1” to the top tip of the last “1”.



1911 Wide Date

MM Style #5 (Bold “M”)

NGC #5939683-020 (MS 65)

The date is spaced within 10 ½ denticles from the top tip of the first “1” to the top tip of the final “1” which extends just slightly past the tenth denticle.

1913 Narrow & Wide Date



1913 Narrow Date

MM Style #3 (Prominent “M”)

NGC #2724957-010 (MS 63+)

The date is spaced within 9 denticles from the top tip of the first “1” to the top portion of the “3”.



1913 Wide Date

MM Style #5 (Bold “M”)

NGC #2850033-004 (MS 63)

The date is spaced within a total of 10 ½ denticles which starts with ½ way point of the denticle just before the top tip of the “1” and to the top portion of the “3”

Although not photographed within this article, Carlos Amaya in his book, *Illustrated Price Guide of the Modern Mexican Coins 1905 to Date* describes a very wide date or “Far Away 3” variety which occupies 11 total denticles. This date placement variety is viewed to be very scarce.

1914 Narrow & Wide Date



1914 Narrow Date

MM Style #4 (Rounded "M")

NGC #2858944-001 (MS 63)

The date is spaced within a total of 9 denticles which starts from the tip of first "1" to the top tip portion of the "4".



1914 Wide Date

MM Style #5 (Bold "M")

NGC #2850033-005 (MS 64)

The date is spaced within a total of 11 denticles which starts just slightly to the left side before the first denticle at the top tip of the first "1" and just past the tenth denticle which is just beyond the top tip of the "4".

1906/5 Overdate

The most important variety within the 5 centavos series is arguably the 1906/5 overdate which until recently was the only known overdate from within the series. Note the little protrusion on the upper left side of the "6" digit. There is also a faint vertical line down the left center portion of the digit. This vertical line attribute is not easily seen without a loupe. The 1906/5 overdate has a MM Style #1 (Regular "M"). This coin is quite scarce and one of the key coins within the series.



1906/5

NGC #2820532-003 (MS 61)

1913/2 Overdate

The 1913/2 overdate is the most recent variety discovery from within this series. The NGC Census shows a total population of only one which has a grade of MS 62. The coin has a MM Style #3 (Prominent "M") which seems reasonable since this mint mark can also be seen on selected 1912 dated 5 centavos. This variety is believed to be very scarce.



Photo courtesy from an anonymous collector.

Repunched Date Digits

The next section is going to highlight a small sampling of some of the known repunched date digits which have been documented during my analysis of this series. This is by no means a complete list and I am certain there are many more to be discovered and documented.



1913 (1/1) first digit



1911 (1/1) last digit



1913 (1/1) & (1/1)



1913 (3/3)



1913 (3/3)



1914 (4/4)

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1912 Small & Large Mint Mark

Although I believe that I adequately covered the different mint mark styles to include those for 1912 dated coins, I feel that further review of that date is warranted since that particular year has been well documented in various publications, as well as through variety attribution with the third-party grading agencies as having two different mint mark varieties, one being the "large mint mark" and the other described and labeled as the "small mint mark". Upon closer examination, the 1912 small mint mark is simply MM Style #5 (Bold "M") which is the same as what is seen on other selected coins from other years like 1907, 1909, 1911, 1913 and 1914, while the large mint mark variety is MM Style #3 (Prominent "M") which can also be seen on some 1913 dated coins.



1912
MM Style #5
(Bold "M")
or
Small Mint Mark



1912
MM Style #3 (Prominent "M")
or
Large Mint Mark

Rarity

This series is one that is not highly collected or sought out by today's collectors, however those that do collect these coins fully understand how difficult it can be to find specimens in uncirculated condition. Most available for sale in the market are very worn or found in corroded and pitted condition due to their pure nickel content. This is generally true for all dates, but there are several which are more difficult to locate in any condition which includes 1912 as the scarcest followed closely by 1909 dated coins. I would also include the 1906/5 overdate, as well as the previously undocumented 1913/2 overdate within that group since those varieties appear to be extremely rare in any grade. The next tier of scarce dates includes 1905 which is also the first date of the series, followed closely by 1906, 1910 and 1911. Last but not least includes 1907, 1913 and 1914 as the most common dates. Regarding 1913 and 1914, one would think these to be very scarce dates due to their overall low mintages, however that has not been the case as they do often show up in high grade.

Although I have not performed a detailed study of the rarity of the various mint mark styles, I personally feel that MM Style #2 (Notched "M") and MM Style #4 (Rounded "M") are the scarcest, followed closely by MM Style #3 (Prominent "M") and finally MM Style #1 (Regular "M") and MM Style #5 (Bold "M") as the most common. Further study will be needed to confirm my opinion.

Series Chart of Dates, Mintages, Mint Marks & Date Placement

The following chart is a summary of all the dates within the series to include the associated mint mark style, as well as the appropriate date placement variety. The repunched date varieties are excluded from this chart due to the large number of possible varieties available.

DATE	MINTAGE	MINT MARK					DATE PLACEMENT		
		Style #1 Regular	Style #2 Notched	Style #3 Prominent	Style #4 Rounded	Style #5 Bold	Narrow	Regular	Wide
1905	1,420,000								
	incl. above	X						X	
	incl. above		X					X	
1906	10,614,560								
	incl. above				X		X		
	incl. above	X							X
1906/5	incl. above	X							X
1907	4,000,000					X		X	
1909	2,051,600					X		X	
1910	6,181,200				X			X	
1911	4,486,925								
	incl. above				X		X		
	incl. above					X			X
1912	420,000								
	incl. above					X		X	
	incl. above			X				X	
1913	2,035,000								
	incl. above			X			X		
	incl. above					X			X
1913/2	incl. above			X				X	
1914	2,000,000								
	incl. above				X		X		
	incl. above					X			X

NOTE: Birmingham Mint reportedly struck five million pieces with a date of 1914, however the Mexican Mint has no record of receiving them. If fully or partially delivered, 1914 total mintages would most likely be higher than what is currently stated in the mintage report.

Summary

Although the pure nickel 5 centavos is not an overly beautiful coin and does not have a fancy design element, it does have a certain appeal and fascination to some collectors. After all, it was the first, as well as the only, coin minted in modern Mexico with a pure nickel planchet. Future 5 centavos issues would be struck on copper-nickel, bronze, brass, and stainless steel planchets. Also, it is the first 5 centavos to be struck after the 1905 monetary reform. Lastly, these little pieces look quite flashy and lustrous if found in very high grade or brilliant uncirculated condition. Unfortunately, most of the coins are not easily found in that condition today, therefore they can be quite scarce and expensive when found. It is my hope that all the information and details outlined in this article, as well as the cross-reference chart will be helpful to not only die-hard collectors of this series, but also any new or occasional collector who has yet to get deeply engaged with this series. Happy Hunting!

To finish, I would like to acknowledge and recognize Doug Plasencia and Scott Schechter at Numismatic Guaranty Company (NGC) for all their help and support in working to get me the set of NGC PhotoVision high resolution coin images used in this article. Without their help, I would not have been able to provide the coin image details needed to present this article. Thanks guys!

Please send your comments, questions, or suggestions regarding this article, to me at rscottdoll@sbcglobal.net or Instagram @sd_mexcoins.

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UNC Details (Obverse Graffiti) NGC
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Mexico: Republic
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XF Details (Harshly Cleaned) NGC
Realized \$13,200



Mexico: Estados Unidos silver Proof
Onza 1999-Mo
PR70 Ultra Cameo NGC
Realized \$6,300



Mexico: Estados Unidos silver Pattern
5 Pesos 1950-Mo
MS61 NGC
Realized \$7,200



Mexico: Charles & Johanna "Late Series"
4 Reales ND (1542-1548) G-M
MS62 NGC
Realized \$17,400



Mexico: Republic copper Pattern
8 Reales 1829 Pi-JS
MS64 Brown NGC
Realized \$15,600



Mexico: Philip V gold
8 Escudos 1743 Mo-MF
AU53 NGC
Realized \$12,600



Mexico: Republic "Hookneck"
8 Reales 1823 Mo-JM
AU58 NGC
Realized \$10,800



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50 Pesos 1943-Mo
MS67 NGC
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"I MADE THE MUERA HUERTA MEXICAN PESOS"

by Ricardo de León Tallavas



No one had ever been able to find an account made directly from those involved in the making of the most significant Mexican coin since Mexico gained its independence, until now. This unique series was struck in 1914, and it is undoubtedly the most significant ounce of silver (peso) ever made, as part of its design had never been used in the world's history for a coin until then. It reads: "Muera Huerta" (Death to Huerta). No one before had attacked the official leader of a country in a coin until that moment. These coins have become exponentially expensive due to their design, fame and very deep mystery surrounding their origin. This is the tale of a letter written by the main executor of these well sought after Mexican coins, which was forgotten for decades. twice.

The coins are no stranger to us collectors. They have been listed since Howland Wood's booklet, *The Mexican Revolutionary Coinage, 1913–1916*, was published in New York in 1921. Edith O'Shaughnessy, the wife of the American Agent in Charge of Mexican Affairs in Mexico City, Nelson O'Shaughnessy, had already written about the circulation of these pesos in her memoirs dated in Mexico City on 14 March 1914:¹

"I saw a silver rebel peso the other day. It had Ejercito Constitucionalista for part of its device, and the rest was "Muera Huerta!" ("Death to Huerta!") instead of some more gentle thought, such as "In God we trust."

Huerta had become President of Mexico after imprisoning and assassinating the elected official President Madero and the Vice-president Pino Suárez in February 1913, with the aid caused by the abuse of diplomatic duties of the American Ambassador Henry Lane Wilson. These unjust events triggered a bloodshed in Mexico and was the origin of the now very popular series of Death to Huerta pesos. Wood cited this interesting series in 1921 describing it as follows:²

"This (peso) was coined at Cuencamé, an old Indian village between Torreon and Durango, in Durango State, under orders of Generals Calixto Contreras and Severino Cenicerros. This coin is most remarkable on account of its inscription — MUERA HUERTA (Death to Huerta). So dire a threat on a coin is almost unique in numismatic annals."

Then, no additional information for about 50 years. One of the most diligent researchers, Francisco Pradeau, a dentist residing in Los Angeles, California, who was the first Mexican-American to introduce the history of Mexican coinage to the English speaking public, was very close to unveiling some of this mystery in 1933. However, his effort of acquiring the copy of a letter sent to the person he asked to help him with enquiring in Mexico City about these series, Francisco Pérez Salazar, a well known individual connected in politics and all aspects of culture, got temporarily lost by a random situation as we soon will see.

1. Edith O'Shaughnessy, *A Diplomat's Wife in Mexico*, Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York, 1914, p. 227

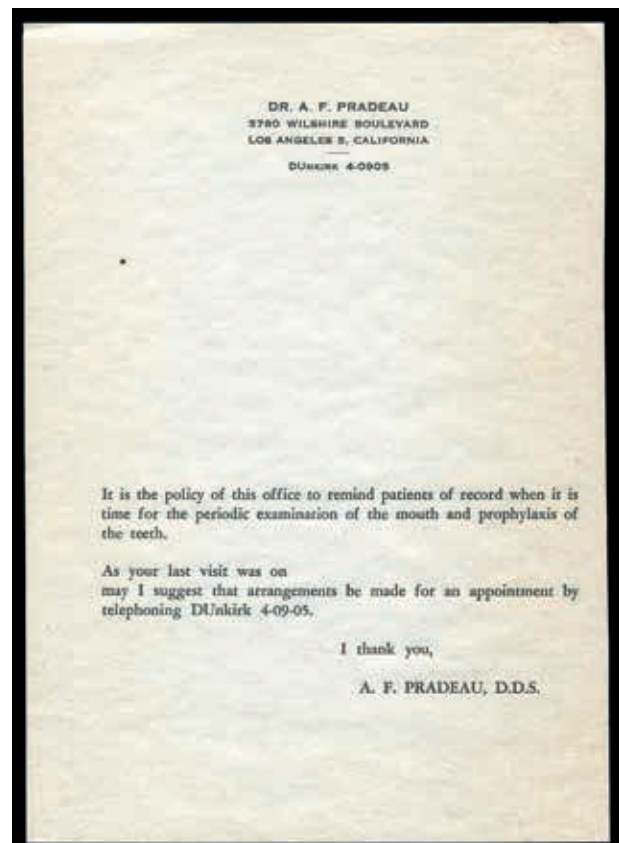
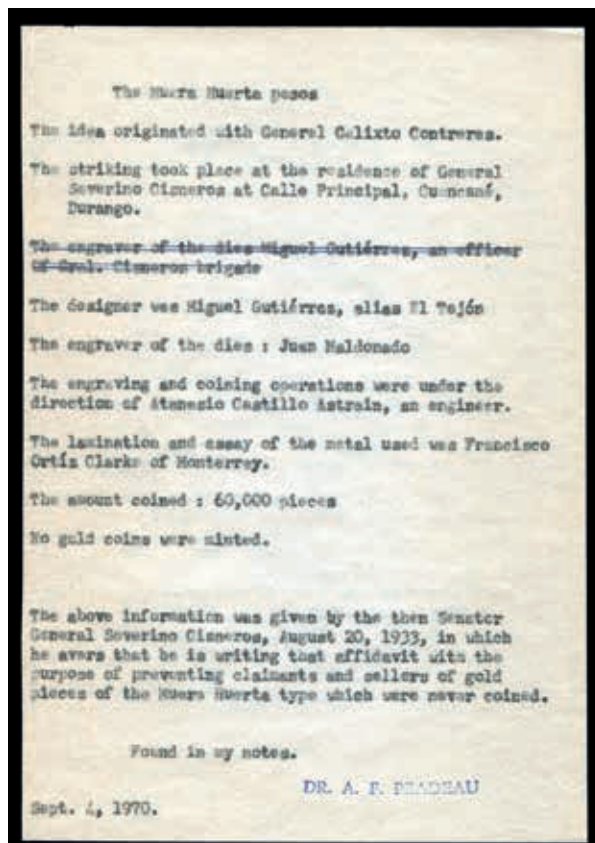
2. Howland Wood, *The Mexican Revolutionary Coinage, 1913-1916*, American Numismatic Society, 1921, p. 14

But first, let us address the reason for this new information to be produced. In the late 1920s or early 1930 forgeries of the silver Muera Huerta coins started appearing in jewelries and coin shows, but in gold. Their denomination was of twenty pesos and they were of 22k in purity (.900 fineness). By 1933 there was an open and equally byzantine argument between those that assured they were original gold coins from the Mexican Revolution and those who called them forgeries. Sánchez Garza stated in his book³ that several sources told him that Villa himself gave these gold coins to his generals. Pradeau saw this as an opportunity to get in contact with the only survivor that commanded the striking of these silver pesos. So, Pradeau asked Pérez Salazar to ask Severino Cenicerros about the authenticity of the gold issues flowing in coin stores and auctions.

By then, Severino Cenicerros was a Mexican Senator of the 37th Legislature. He responded immediately to Pérez Salazar who then turned in a copy of Cenicerros' two-page typed letter to Pradeau, giving him several important facts which have remained unknown until the present article. Pradeau folded that letter inside of his copy of the recently published book authored by Sanchez Garza, dealing specifically with the Mexican Revolutionary issues. This seemed to be a very appropriate place to leave this information. However, the small book and the two-page letter got misplaced in Pradeau's library for almost 40 years. When this letter was found by Pradeau at random in 1970, he and Erma C. Stevens had organized in Los Angeles, California, The Aztec Numismatic Society (TANS), which met at the basement of the California Federal Savings Building.

The TANS monthly publication was called *Plus Ultra*. In its number 85, dated October 1970, Pradeau used half a page to make a very succinct account of the Muera Huerta peso. For his article, Pradeau quoted the information stated in Cenicerros' letter dated 20 August 1933. No one had read, much less seen, this letter other than Pradeau himself. This *Plus Ultra* article is the only mention that had been made since 1921 that substantially added important information about this Death to Huerta pesos issue.⁴

Pradeau states in his 1970 article a bare list of names, positions and sets a concrete amount of 60,000 pesos for the silver issues, which Cenicerros in his letter quotes as a mere approximation. The draft for this half a page list was dated a month before the article's publication. This draft and the 1933 letter were placed back in the same book in 1970 and never seen again for over half a century.



3. José Sánchez Garza, *Historical Notes on Coins of the Mexican Revolution*, Imprenta Formal, Mexico City, 1932, p. 11.

4. *Plus Ultra*, The Aztec Numismatic Society, Vol. VIII, No. 85, p. 6.

The book and the inadvertent documents inside were sold to a book dealer in Houston, who then sold the book and documents to me in January 2023. This is the forgotten Cenicerros letter, the one dated 90 years ago:

Severino Cenicerros, Senator of the Republic
Mexico, Federal District, 20 August 1933.
Señor Francisco Pérez Salazar
Eliseo St. #35
Mexico City.

My Dear and Appreciated Friend:

Serving your wishes to clarify any doubts regarding the coins commonly called the “MUERA HUERTA” pesos, on which I had direct participation, I would like to state the following facts. In 1914, having earned the military rank of General, I was part of the many that joined the Revolutionary lines. There was also a guy named Calixto Contreras, of the same rank, both of us under the direct command of Francisco Villa. I am originally from the village of Cuencamé, in the State of Durango, so I established my headquarters in my house, still located on the main street of this small town. It was in my house that all of these coins were minted, all of the “MUERA HUERTA” pesos.

Having the utmost need of money to pay the troops, we decided to put to good use the silver produced in the mines located in the mountains of San Lorenzo and also the only mine located at the Santa María hills. It was Contreras who came up with the idea of having the legend of “MUERA HUERTA”, which probably may sound inadequate to some, but it synthesized the ideals of the Revolution that wanted to take down the usurper of the Presidency.

Once we agreed on the designs, and having enough metal to coin, we used a steel rack for minting them. The designs and the dies were made by an officer under my direct command. This officer was MIGUEL GUTIERREZ, who came from Lerdo City, Durango, we called him endearingly “EL TEJON” (the Badger). He was a very good artist in the works of drawing. The dies were cut by a Mechanic named Juan Maldonado under the direct supervision of engineer Atanacio Castillo Astrain. The lamination and assay was done by Francisco Ortiz Clarke (*misspelling for Clark*), who was from Monterrey. He was in charge of verifying the metal alloy and its purity, as well as being in charge of the coining process. Clarke was well versed in mining skills. The minting press was improvised, as I stated, in my own house.

More than likely the bad quality of the iron used for the dies was the culprit for them to shatter slowly. We coined for two or three months an approximate amount of sixty thousand pesos. When General Villa was made aware of our minted pesos, he immediately requested some of them to be shipped to him, which we did. I do not remember how many talegas (slim tight bags of cloth or skin) we sent, but there were several.

After this time, and during the rest of the Revolution, we never coined “MUERA HUERTA” pesos again. We never knew or allowed anyone else to do so. We did not coin any other metal but silver; we could not have coined gold in any denomination because we did not have any metal of that kind. Also, gold coins would have not solved any of the regular needs of the troops.

The officer Miguel Gutiérrez is still alive. I am sure he could elaborate more on this subject. I offer to locate his current address so the two of you can communicate, and maybe you could obtain some other additional information.

I do hope that this letter-serves the purpose of your enquiries, and that these clarifications are useful to you in the numismatic study of our country. I do hope these “MUERA HUERTA” gold forgeries will stop as well as the speculations over their origin of being genuine.

I remain your most humble servant,

SEVERINO CENICEROS
(*Erroneously stated as Cisneros*)

This letter proves once and for all that the often repeated version that these coins and the idea of “killing Huerta” in a coin was conceived by Villa, who had commanded Calixto Contreras and Severino Cenicerros to coin such pesos, had been wrong all along. The Cenicerros’ letter states tha Villa was not aware of this Muera Huerta peso until after they had been coined. Authors such as Sánchez Garza, Utberg⁵, Guthrie, Muñoz⁶ and Bailey wrongly repeat and promote this idea, that it was the profound hate that Villa felt for Huerta that originated this coin.

The Cenicerros’ letter confirms that the idea that Calixto Contreras was the one in charge of the bureaucratic permits to coin these pesos is right, particularly by the fact of a telegram sent by Governor Rouaix to Calixto Contreras dated 2 January 1914, that supports this fact. This communication reads in part :

“Believing that all coinage should lack any elements that could limit its circulation, this in regards to the pesos you are going to coin, such as the reading of Muera Huerta! and Juárez Brigade, could be interpreted as just an issue enforced by the brigade you command. I suggest, if you agree with its convenience, that instead it could bear the Constitutionalist Army legend...”⁷

Also, the fact that Cenicerros states that Francisco Ortiz Clark, the assayer and laminator of these coins, was known for his knowledge in mining skills is supported by another reference. In 1918 Ortiz Clark requested a permit to establish a mine called “Santa Librada” in Monterrey, with the premise of exploiting lead and zinc, which validates Cenicerros’ statement.⁸

As for the documents, yes, they are folded back again in the very same book for now, but I will make sure that they are not forgotten again, particularly now that you have read their contents here.

5. Neil S. Utberg, *The Coins of the Mexican Revolution, 1910 - 1917*. n/d, 1965, p, 17.

6. Miguel Muñoz, *Numismática Mexicana*, Libros de México, Mexico City, 1977, p, 213.

7. Archivo Histórico del Gobierno del Estado de Durango, Fondo de Copiadores, 1914.

8. *Boletín minero: órgano del Departamento de Minas de la Dirección de Minas y Petróleo*, Secretaría de Fomento, Colonización e Industria, Mexico City, 1918, pp. 322 and 368.


THE 8 ESCUDOS OF 1754/3 Mo MF AND THE TRANSITION OF 1754

by Emiliano Puga Gómez



Close-up of the “Imperial” and “Royal” crown of an 8 Reales 1754 Mo MM.

484) and those later from 1754-1760 with Imperial and Royal crowns or “different crowns” (KM# 104.2, A&C# 485-497).



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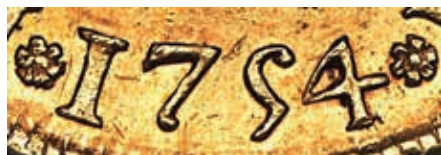
Brad Yonaka in his work "A Variety Guide of the Silver and Copper Coinage of the Mexico City Mint 1732-1771" pp. 41-42, proposes some theories of the reasons for the changes.

One can expect that all the denominations of Escudos also presented some kind of variance, at least in the denominations of greater value. Thus, in inspecting examples from 1754 two main variants were identified on obverses:

8 Escudos 1754/3 Mo MF. Not previously catalogued nor reported.
Early coinage, style of 1752-1754



1. Overdate 4/3 well concealed, more noticeable in some examples than in others.
2. Rosettes with six petals enclosing the date.

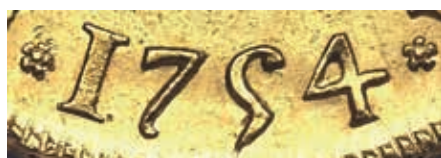


1754/3

8 Escudos 1754 Mo MF
Late coinage, style of 1754-1756.



1. Clean date.
2. Cinquefoils with five petals enclosing the date.



1754

No variations in design were identified on the reverse dies.

It is concluded that the overdate (which is quite tenuous and in some examples difficult to detect due to some wear) bears some relationship with the subtype of 1752-1754, a subject that it has been suggested many times but never been specified or cataloged. This opens the doors for researchers and specialists in colonial coins to delve deeper into this transition in the Mexico Mint. Finally, this is a chronological comparison of the transition in the coins of 8 Escudos.



1753 Mo MF



1753 Mo MF



1753 Mo MF



1755 Mo MM

Early coinage

Later coinage



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