

Fellow Collectors,

A Tale of Two Cancels

Making a case identification for a cancel.

Most of the time when we are looking at our stamps for the cancels or a printing varieties, they turn out to be nothing but a common example. Rarely do we ever find something of great value, especially if at one time we thought it to be of little value. I guess the statement “If it is rare, the reason it is rare, is because it really is rare” holds true more often than we might wish. Today I will tell you of a very happy experience I had with what I at one time thought was only a fake.

Collecting the Mexican Dos Reales of the first design, I have accumulated a huge number of common district examples. I buy group lots that sometime contain hundreds of these stamps. I also cull out these stamps for my collection from albums or lots I buy for resale material. So, oftentimes I will lose track of where I may have picked up a stamp. While going through what I thought were common examples one day, I noticed that one of the stamps looked too good to be a normal Mexico district late plate example. The margins were nice and the cancel was very well struck. I tossed it aside after I had marked the holder possible fake.



My mystery stamp

I don't know how long it was before I pick up that holder again, so it might have been years. I guess that during the time had lapsed, I had become more savvy about what I was looking at. First, I found that the stamp was a deep Emerald color from position 49-I and next I realized that the cancel was not a common Mexico cancel. The closing letters for the village name was “TLAN” a very common ending. In Pete Taylor's book of Reversed Spelling I found 102 examples of this ending on Mexican towns and villages. The one thing I had going for me was the large size of the cancel. At first I thought it was round, but discovered with a closer look it was an oval. Oval cancels are fairly common in the early years, but I was not sure which one would have the ending that would fit. I ask my fellow collectors on Meximail what they thought and one of them came up with the name Polotitlan. Looking up in Schatzkes, for the cancels listed under this rare district, I found a fit. Not the one I expected Sz 1145, the 'Franco' type but the rarely used Administration cancel Sz 1146.



How to prove this is the cancel I thought it was became a problem, because the cancel shown in Schatzkes has a stars dividing the 'ADMN.DE CORREOS' and 'DE POLOTITLAN'. I could tell with close inspection that it was not a 'star' on my stamp but a 'diamond' made up of four little diamonds. I remembered that a friend of mine had purchased an example of the Polotitlan stamp with this cancel from an auction. He verified that the stamp had indeed received a good MEPSI Certificate. His stamp does not have the Mexico District name as mine does, but otherwise it is the same cancel with the diamonds like mine and believed to also be a plate I example. Mexico Postal Authorities didn't send Polotitlan any stamps directly until February 1860, so all the Dos Reales sent to Polotitlan as a district office were from plate III. What we also know is that Soyaniquilpan send some stamps periodically to Polotitlan without their district overprint. Polotitlan never had a district overprint, so regardless of whether the stamps came from Soyaniquilpan or from Mexico City, it is difficult to tell which were district or sub district use.



Photo copy of MEPSI Certified example of Sz 1146



personal copy of Sz 1145

Considering that the stamps that my friend and I have are from early plates, they had to originate as sub office stamps or like mine an out of district cancel. Apparently, my stamp was an example that originated in the Mexico District. It may have been brought to this small village from the Capitol and used there by anyone. Administration stamps were normally used by the post masters on post office mail or on certified letters. Personally, I think this was more likely a stamp that was used on a certified letter with other stamps, since most of the cancels from Polotitlan on single use stamps are socked on the nose. So, my mystery stamp does continue on, unless someone finds a cover with a similar example placing the date used and the reason it was used I may never know for sure why it was canceled the way it was and by whom.

Finding scarce stamps is difficult, but there are still a lot of them out there. It may be a scarce cancel or a

watermark that becomes your reward, but whatever it is, finding something you unexpected is one of the joys that collectors of Mexico have. It may take some research and you may run into some dead ends, but just when you think the proof of is not there, someone else will have the answers to the remaining questions. That is the interesting part about studying Mexican Philately.

PS The stamp Schatzkes used to do his cliché may likely have been from my friend's stamp, and Schatzkes added in a star as the divider instead of a diamond thinking it would work.

Enjoy!