

BEHIND THE VIGNETTE....: Guillermo Prieto

By: Magdalena García Ramírez

During the presidency of General Ignacio Comonfort (December 11, 1855 - November 30, 1857), a decree was issued on February 21, 1856, establishing the postage stamps and the issuance of postage stamps. On July 15 of that same year, a regulation was issued stating that each batch of stamps should be overmarked with the name of the receiving administration (postal district) upon receipt at the destination and then put up for sale or re-shipped to its subordinate offices. This measure sought to minimize thefts in transit and the misuse of stolen stamps. On **August 1, 1856, the first series of Mexican stamps** was issued, and the Postmaster was Don Guillermo Prieto. On the centenary of his death, the Mexican Post Office issued a stamp in his honor. (SC#2048) Fig.1.

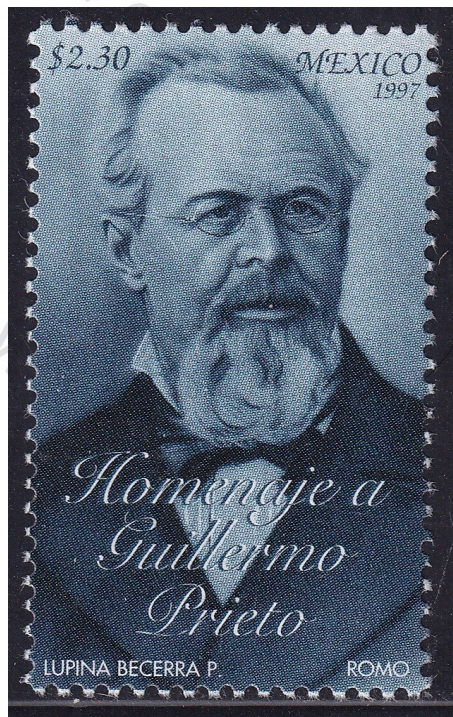


Fig.1 SC# 2048, year 1997

Prieto was **born** in Mexico City in **1818**. At the age of 13, his father died, his mother suffered from mental problems and she lost his mind. His life situation forced him to seek support in different ways until he met Andrés Quintana Roo (a), who protected him and his siblings and guided his education. He was a **witness and/or protagonist** in the eventful 19th century, from the **North American invasion** (1846-1848), through the **Ayutla Revolution** that removed Antonio López de Santa Anna from the political scene once and for all, a constituent deputy in the promulgation of the **Constitution of 1857**, he participated in the **Reform War**, also during the **French invasion**, in the **restoration of the Republic**, and also in the **Porfiriato**. A versatile man, who was intervening at the first level of several presidential administrations as **Secretary of State in various portfolios**, also played a prominent role in critical political journalism, in prose and poetry literature, he was also theatre writer and theatre critic and an excellent orator.

He represented the state of Puebla in the Constituent Congress to draft the Constitution of 1857. For this reason Guillermo Prieto appears in the permanent series of the *Constituents*, contemporary with the permanent series *Architecture and Archaeology* (1950-1975), Fig.2.



Fig.2 Guillermo Prieto constituent of 1857

The event that took place in Guadalajara on **March 14, 1858**, is well known when he **saved the life of President Benito Juárez** thanks to his eloquence and persuasion. When Juárez was about to be assassinated by a group of rebel soldiers in the Government Palace of that city, Guillermo Prieto stood between the soldiers and Juárez and began his speech by saying: *"Stop! Brave people don't kill"*. He accompanied Juárez to Paso del Norte (today Ciudad Juárez) in Chihuahua, as postmaster. He always supported the liberal cause but broke with President Juárez when he extended his term and Prieto gave his support to General Jesús González Ortega, who was due to assume the presidency by mandate of law. For this reason, he left the country in 1866 and returned the following year. He was a **deputy** in 1869, 1871, 1876, 1875, 1880, and 1882.

During the *Porfiriato*, he served as a deputy from 1884 to 1896, a year before his death. In 1890, he won a newspaper contest to determine who was the most popular poet, beating out his closest and best-known rivals, Salvador Díaz Mirón and Juan de Dios Peza. Ignacio Manuel Altamirano called him the Poet of the Nation for his poetry dedicated to heroic events and also for his stories of everyday life that portray the era.

Conclusions.-

Prieto died at the age of 79 (March 2, 1897) in Tacubaya. He was born when Mexico was New Spain, participated throughout his life in the country's long journey to achieve its independence, and died during the Porfiriato. He experienced many significant events that shaped the country. He served as a public servant for most of his life, and was therefore at the forefront of events. As a writer, he used several pseudonyms, such as Don Benedeno and Fidel. His work, ***Memories of My Times***, is considered one of his most important works, and one of those of 19th-century Mexican literature in general. He began writing it on August 2, 1886, and it chronicles the period from 1828 to 1853. It was published until after his death, when his widow handed the manuscripts to Nicolás León Calderón (b), who organized, edited, and published them. Prieto was also a professor of Political Economy and National History at the Military College, writing several books on these topics. He published numerous works and various topics. He certainly had a full life.

Notes.-

(a) Andrés Quintana Roo (1787-1851) es reconocido como "un prócer de la Independencia Mexicana, ideólogo e impulsor de la organización política e institucional del país, periodista defensor de la igualdad y de la libertad" (op.cit. en <https://www.cndh.org.mx/noticia/andres-quintana-roo-procer-de-la-independencia-ideologo-e-impulsor-de-la-organizacion>). Diputado en el Congreso de Chilpancingo que promovió José María Morelos y Presidente de la Asamblea Nacional Constituyente que en 1813 redactó la declaratoria de Independencia; redactó el manifiesto al país con motivo de la Declaración de Independencia el 28 de septiembre de 1821. Fue esposo de la también heroína de la Independencia Leona Vicario. En el año de

1902 se escinde de Yucatán un territorio que se buscaba protegiera a la población maya y se le da el nombre de Territorio de Quintana Roo, en 1974 este territorio se convierte en entidad federativa cuyo nombre actualmente es Quintana Roo y su capital Chetumal. Andrés Quintana Roo nació en Mérida, Yucatán.

(b) Nicolás León Calderón (1859-1929) fue un destacado médico, historiador, etnólogo, lingüista, antropólogo, polígrafo y naturalista mexicano.

Bibliografía.-

Sánchez, Enrique y Magdalena García. Cronología Filatélica de México. Tomo I. 2006.

<https://www.mexicodesconocido.com.mx/guillermo-prieto-pradillo.html>

<https://www.mexicodesconocido.com.mx/guillermo-prieto1.html>

https://www.biografiasyvidas.com/biografia/p/prieto_guillermo.htm

<https://vanguardia.com.mx/opinion/dichosos-labios-guillermo-prieto-un-gran-conversador-LC7105827>

<https://www.eleconomista.com.mx/arteseideas/Memoria-y-cronica-para-Guillermo-Prieto-20210301-0005.html>

<https://www.memoriapoliticademexico.org/Biografias/PPG18.html>