

## BEHIND THE VIGNETTE...: Federal District- CDMX

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According to the most **accepted and finally adopted** data, the founding date of Tenochtitlán is considered to be **August 13, 1325** (1); and **always, from then until now**, that geographical point has been the **nerve center** of our country, in the political, in the economic, in the cultural and as a population center.

### The long journey of Federal District.-

During the viceroyalty period (1521-1821), the capital of New Spain was built upon the archaeological remains of Tenochtitlán. With the signing of the Treaties of Córdoba in August 1821, which finalized Mexico's independence from the Spanish Empire, Article Four established that the seat of the Mexican Empire would be located in Mexico City. In 1823, Emperor Agustín de Iturbide fell from power, and the following year, in October, the Political Constitution of 1824 was promulgated, a month later, on November 18, the Federal Congress decreed the creation of the Federal District (DF), defining its territorial extent as a circle with a radius of two leagues (2) from the center of the city's main square. The aforementioned decree stipulated that the Federal District would be the capital of the country and the seat of the three branches of government: Executive, Legislative, and Judicial, it would have the status of a state, with a local Congress and a governor.

During the unstable period the country experienced from its independence until almost the end of the 19th century, the Federal District transitioned from a federal to a centralized system in 1836, becoming a "Department." The federal system was reinstated with the Constitution of 1857, which stipulated that if the powers of the Union were transferred elsewhere, the Federal District would be renamed the State of the Valley of Mexico. During the French Intervention, the Federal District ceased to exist and was renamed the Department of the Valley of Mexico, but Mexico City remained the capital of Maximilian's empire. With the restoration of the Republic, the Constitution of 1857 was reinstated, and the Federal District was re-established. In 1916, President Venustiano Carranza decreed the autonomy of the municipalities at the federal level, a provision later enshrined in the Constitution of 1917.

From 1917 to 1997, several reforms were made to the political structure of Mexico City. One of these occurred between 1928 and 1929, when the municipalities within the Federal District were abolished and renamed "delegations." The Central Department of the Federal District was formed, headed by a Department Chief appointed by the President of the Republic. This department comprised Mexico City and 13 delegations (3), each headed by a delegate appointed by the Department Chief. In 1970, three more delegations were created, bringing the total to 16 (4). During the period from 1928 to 1970, some delegations' names and boundaries changed.

The Federal District lived and survived for 192 years (1824-2016).

### CDMX, a new identity.-

Through a legal process initiated in 2010, the city sought a name change to give it national and international identity and, most importantly, legal autonomy. On **January 29, 2016**, the Federal District officially became Mexico City (CDMX), with the political status of a federal entity, the 32nd. This political reform granted it constitutional autonomy; it would no longer be administered by the federal government, could create its own local constitution, have a local congress, and the political delegations became municipalities. Its constitution was promulgated in 2017, and CDMX would be headed by a governor elected by direct vote.

To ensure that the change in name and the capital's identity were strengthened, and that the name Federal District was left behind, the acronym CDMX was promoted in all public spaces, and thus the new term was introduced into the daily life of the population; giving the use of the acronym, in my opinion, a fresh and modern identifier.

Regardless of this process, some problems arise, for example, when someone processes an official document, since some were born in the Federal District and their birth certificate indicates this, while others were born in Mexico City. This has been "resolved" by offering both birth options, so that they match personal birth certificates.

The 16 delegations of the Federal District became municipalities, keeping their same name (5). According to **official data from 2020**, the population of Mexico City was 9,210,000 inhabitants.

#### When did the change come to Philately?-

In the permanent series "Creación Popular" (2005-2023), the silver gourd (Guaje de plata) craft was featured throughout its 19-year run. Labeled as originating from Federal District (**Distrito Federal**), from 2005 to 2008 it had a face value of \$13 pesos, and from 2009 to 2019 a face value of \$13.50 pesos. From 2019 until the series ended in 2023, its face value remained at \$13.50 pesos, and Mexico City (**Ciudad de México**) was labeled as the origin of this craft.

In Fig. 1 you can see the two stamps issued of the Silver Gourd in **2019** (see red circles, bottom right of the stamps), same face value for both but one being labeled as Federal District (Distrito Federal) and the other Mexico City (Ciudad de México), (see red circles, to the left of the stamps, in the first half of the image).



Fig.1 To the left SC#2503Dm (ET#209) and to the right SC#2503N (ET#209a)

#### Notes.-

(1) If you are looking for more information about Great Tenochtitlan, you can find the article published on August 22, 2025 on this topic on this portal ([www.etiangui.com](http://www.etiangui.com)).

(2) 1 league = 4.82803 kilometers. The two leagues of radius are then equivalent to a circle with a diameter of 19.31212 kilometers, or an area of 283.5294 km<sup>2</sup>.

(3) The 13 delegations in 1928 were: Guadalupe Hidalgo, Atzacotalco, Iztacalco, General Anaya, Coyoacán, San Ángel, La Magdalena Contreras, Cuajimalpa, Tlalpan, Ixtapalapa, Xochimilco, Milpa Alta y Tláhuac.

(4) The 16 delegations, starting in 1970, were: Gustavo A. Madero (formerly Guadalupe-Hidalgo), Azcapotzalco, Ixtacalco, Benito Juárez (which contains a large part of the territory that belonged to the General Anaya delegation), Coyoacán, Álvaro Obregón (formerly San Ángel), La Magdalena Contreras, Cuajimalpa de Morelos, Tlalpan, Ixtapalapa, Xochimilco, Milpa Alta, Tláhuac, and are added Miguel Hidalgo, Cuauhtémoc and Venustiano Carranza.

(5) The current area of Mexico City is 1,495 km<sup>2</sup>, it is the smallest federal entity in the entire country and occupies 0.1% of the national territory with 7.31% of the total population of the country according to data from the **2020 Census** (9,210,000 / 126,014,024).

#### **Bibliography.-**

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