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Today's Collector
New Opportunities

The Nasty Truth About Philately



Fake 2 Real reprint with pre-stamp postmark

Split Genuine Un Real from Provisional with forged Deligence Postmark.

Both stamps have forged postmarks.

Today's message is about selling stamps and buying stamps. The title "The Nasty Truth About Philately" is my way to catch your eye. I am actually going to talk more about what we collectors face when we open our computers to view stamps listed in online sellers' lots on sites like eBay and other auction-like platforms. Originally, there were a few lots about different country stamps and covers. Many of the lots didn't even have scans, and it was like bidding on those mail auctions with only a short description, no picture, and very little information. The lack of a picture made scanned images a necessity for sellers, and an easy way to improve the lots.



Genuine Dos Real from Orizava, Fake Puebla Reprint, Fake Tabasco Reprint, Counterfeited packet 2R

The crude packet stamp was used to fill novice collectors' albums and rarely ever fooled any advanced collectors.

Now comes the nasty truth: it turned out that a number of dealers, knowingly or unknowingly, were selling fakes as genuine. Yes, these fakes have been a source of shame in the industry. eBay stepped in and tried to stop this by shutting down dealers that became known as sellers of fakes and counterfeit items. They listened to dealers and collectors who informed them of the fake material. They gave buyers or interested parties the opportunity to notify the seller that the material they are selling is fake.



Toluca fake overprint and cancel on the Genuine stamp,
 Acapulco 8R reprint with fake district overprint and cancel,
 Well done, fake 8R packet issue with fake overprint and postmark.

As a seller and a member of Mepsi, I would write to the party selling fakes. I would tell them that the items were fake. So, what did they do? They relisted these as stamps, possible fakes, or genuine reprints. Reprints are rarely genuine stamps. Counterfeits are typically ugly copies of genuine stamps. So, these dealers would tiptoe around the fakes or use a slogan like "Sold As Is" or something similar. For many years, I would let the sellers know about the fakes, or if they were really blatant, I would contact eBay. In the early days of eBay, this wasn't so bad, and in my lots, they didn't advertise other sellers' stamps. By the time there were about 30,000 lots of Mexican stamps, policing fakes on eBay was impossible. What really bugs me is that I know my lots are always genuine, but to have 5 or 6 fakes or counterfeit Mexican lots advertised by other sellers mixed in with my lots. I speak of eBay, but I assure you it is more than eBay. Dealers and sellers should know whether the stamp is genuine or fake on any website. Even as you scroll through the dealers at a stamp show, if you know the difference, you may find any number of fakes mixed in. In auction-house lots that show something removed from bidding, you can bet someone told the auction owners the lot is a fake.



All four of these 1861 issues are fake reprints with three having vertical grain,
 and the Ocho Reales black on red-brown has horizontal grain.
 All of these have fake overprints and postmarks.

So, how do you deal with this problem? If you suspect something in a seller's lots is fake, let someone you trust know that and ask them to tell you if it is real or not. Over the years, I have helped other collectors with this problem. If I don't know for sure, I will direct them to other collectors who would know. In auctions, you can put items on extension to see if they would be deemed genuine by a credible expert. If you are buying from a dealer online or at a stamp show, find out whether they will guarantee the stamp or cover. Most reputable dealers will do so; if not, please return the material and walk away. This email was not written to scare you, but to coach you to learn what is real and what is not. There is a lot of literature on fakes. Use these books and learn. Never forget to ask someone you trust.

Enjoy!

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