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Today's Collector
New Opportunities

Questioning Theory by Study



This scan is the same as the one I showed you last week about the plate flaws.

This happens to be the Largest plate crack on Dos Reales. Position 189.3

We are also subject to misinformation. For years, collectors were told that the plates became worn out. I, too, was no different from others who believed this until I started studying the issues in Mexican Gothic. I discovered that the black-printed issues that were left over or reprinted before the Blue-Green print on Blue Gray watermark paper still showed low-quality printing, as in the 1861 issues. Only one thing would have changed with the later thin paper issue: the print quality improved. Before the second printing on the new paper, the plate must have been cleaned. When the printer returned to printing on the prior standard light paper, the image was printed in black on the light-colored paper. There was a brief period in 1868 when the stamps looked fairly nice, but once the printing expanded with the black ink, there was a noticeable drop in quality.

Position 189 is a key to what happened with the big plate crack. The story was that the center where the crack divided was the point at which that piece of the plate fell out. The reasoning was that some of the black prints began to show a blank area at this crack position. After seeing the cleaned plate stamps on the Watermarked issue, I found that the area thought to have been replaced because of a blank spot on the stamps was exactly as the missing plate piece had been before. So, I realized that the blank area had one of the following problems: the ink filled the area. When this happened, the printer was wiping the plate before laying the paper down on the press. The hard, dry ink would have been wiped clean, leaving the finished stamp blank. When the plate was cleaned for the Watermark issues, the original details would once again appear in the printed image. This explains a false idea of worn plates that has circulated about the hobby for years. The black ink used on those Dos Reales was enough to dry up into the pores of the engraved plates, eventually leaving poorly printed stamps.



This scan is from Ismael's recently purchased cover with a mystery Dos Reales.

What most collectors do not realize about the plate issues of Mexico's Dos Reales is that for many years, the experts in this area had no conception of the Second Plate of the Dos Reales. When studying these plate stamps, the Dos Reales of the first plate only showed a few of the earmarks that defined the plate, because all known full sheets of the First Plate were gone. Only a couple of the noticeable things on that plate set it apart: the plate outside sheet plateline, and the three main colors of the first plate issues. There was one other type of Green stamp that did not match either the first or the third plate. The missing plate was, as we now know, Plate Two, a more standard Green, and a stamp that just does not match with either the first or third plates used in Mexico for the Dos Reales. I am not sure when the Second Plate finally came out of the closet to take its place among the largest printed plates in early Mexico. The philatelist who studied the high-quality printed stamps noticed features such as more likely vertical side-burring lines on these stamps. Another thing was the Green color, which didn't look like a Plate One issue, and a stamp that seemed uncommon as a Green stamp found on any of the Plate Three issues.

I recently had a stamp buddy, Ismael Sanchez Moreno, who sent me scans of a Un Real and a Dos Real, both on a full cover, both sent shortly after the beginning of 1857. The Un Real normal, but the Dos Reales was not one of the new Third plate Dos Reales. Was it a Plate Two? A short history lesson from me, Plate Two Dos Reales are very rarely used on stamps from the Mexico District. Mexico. At the time the cover was sent on March 20, 1857, there was a good possibility that the stamp was one of the 120 examples (60 position sheets) of the Plate Two issues. The Postal Authorities had been busy using the new Plate Three issues for Mexico City and had sent most of the early 60-position stamps to other districts, rather than using any of them for Mexico City. But on March 13, 1857, they passed along 120, two sheets of the likely plate 2 stamps for the Mexico District office. At first, I didn't want to tell Ismael I was totally sure it was a Plate Two Dos Reales because the first pictures he sent were too dark and unclear to determine the plate. The next scanned image was great for color and markings; I know the markings that are only on the second plate of the dos reales. Yes, my friend has a scarce use of the second plate issue.

These few examples show why studying the plates and their differences in the finished products can give the collector a new approach to many of the things we study.

Enjoy!

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