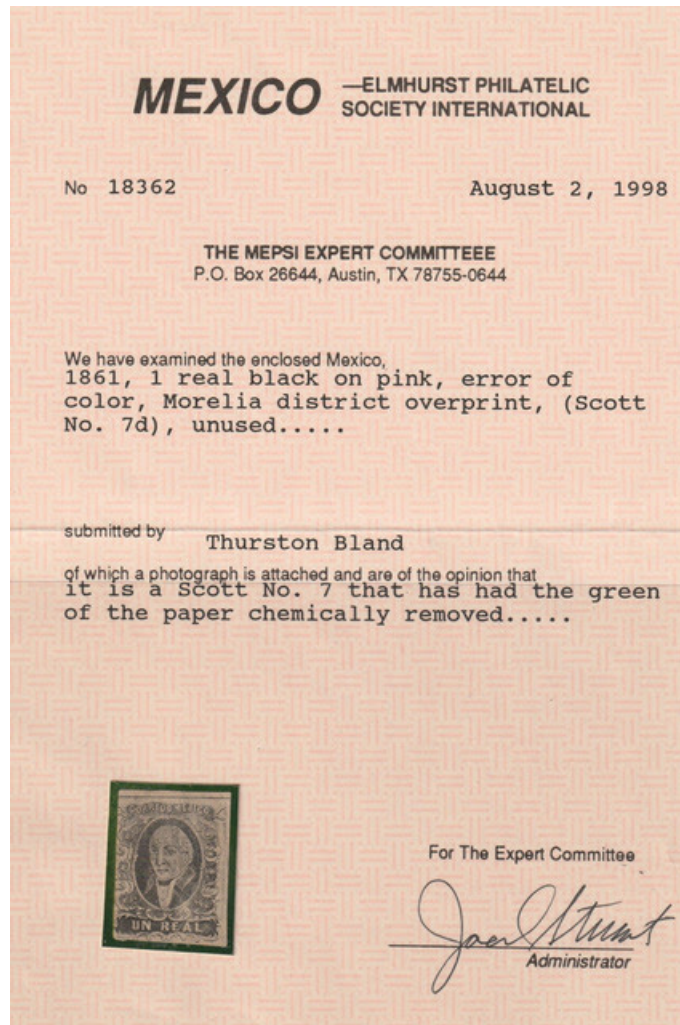


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Today's Collector
New Opportunities

How Experts Find Something Fake or Not



This was my first submission to the MEPSI Expert Committee.

Turns out my stamp, I thought, might be a rare Un Real, printed on the Dos Reales paper.

The head of the Expert Committee at the time popped my bubble.

For years, MEPSI's Expert Committee has been critiquing Mexican philately in an effort to award Genuine issues of Mexico or to provide a negative reason for considering material sent in as fakes or as an altered example. The efforts to find something that, from the outside, often looks like a genuine deal are more about determining whether the watermark is correct and whether other factors, such as an additional overprint or cancel, can affect the validity of the stamp on the cover. Sometimes the question is not if something is genuine or if a genuine example of a stamp has

been altered. For most experts, the truth about whether a stamp or cover is genuine is something they can determine by just looking at a scan. So much research has been done in recent years that things like reprints, fake cancels, and overprints have been clearly distinguished as genuine or fake, making judgment easy. It is said that about 80% of fakes are easy to find, whether they are fakes or not.



Some Counterfeits are just too ugly to be genuine.

Interestingly, the forger added a consignment number to an 1856-type issue dated 1873.

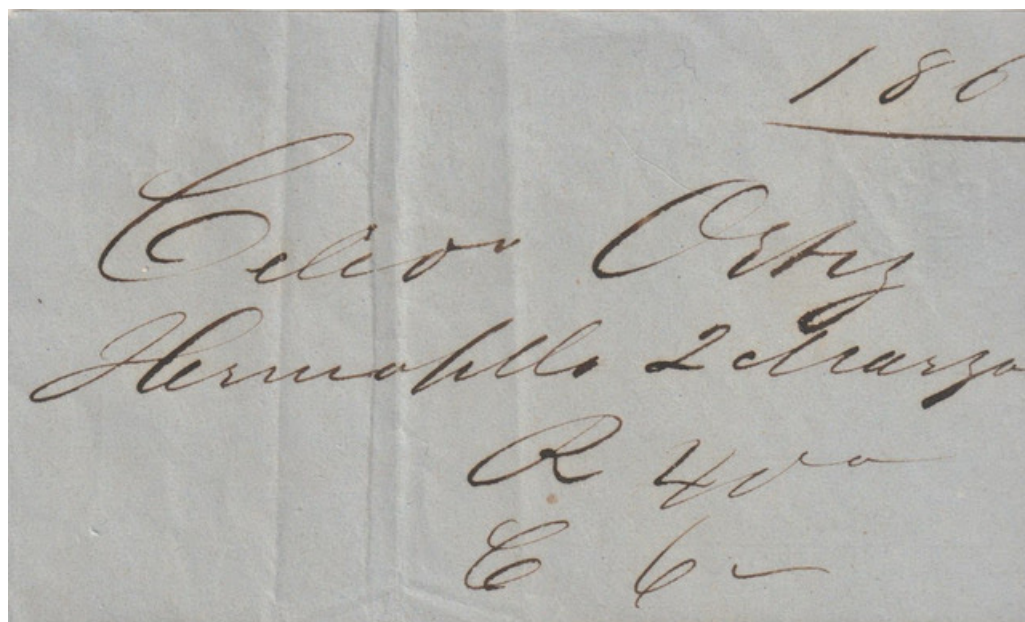
These are what we refer to as 'Easy Call'.

So, how does the expert tell the difference between those 80% or the other 20%? One of the best things is the power of reason. If something looks like the genuine article, do the other things suggest someone changed it to make it look more valuable than it is? Stamps on covers are generally based on what the cover shows the inspector. First, find out why this stamp was used and what would make it genuine or not. The first thing to check is the district overprint on a Mexican stamp. Then comes the cancel, followed by dates from the letter or docking present on the cover. There are research books that dispel many truths. Research books like Chapman's listing of stamps sent, and when this was done. Gaps across different denominations of stamps can indicate whether the sending district lacked stamps, giving reason to split another issue to make the correct rate. On the other hand, the question may be whether the postmark is genuine; other texts provide good examples of fake cancellations, and, of course, cancellations listed in other research books show what the original cancellations may look like. A good inspector will know much of this material, and sometimes just an easy check will give them the answer.



This is the front of a cover that used an uncanceled Ocho Reales Split.

Note: that the quarter piece has part of the overprint showing.



The cover was actually sent and the receiving docket said it was sent March 2nd (1861-64)

I have recorded other covers from Hermosillo without the cancel being used on the splits.

Guess the clerk at the post office figured the split damage made the stamp canceled?

Often, stamps or covers are not fakes or counterfeits, and postmarks and overprints assure the expert that the stamps are genuine. There are things like splits, the separated stamps used to alter the rate for replacement on a cover sent. In the early issues of Mexico, this practice was often used because districts did not receive stamps in a timely manner, and there was a need to alter the higher denomination to make a lower rate. Mexico, interestingly, has more splits used than any other country in the world, making some of these much lower in price. Mark me, they are still better than the common stamps they may have replaced for making the postage. Experts have set down rules they follow on these splits. Although splits may have cut off a district, overprinting other things, like the cancel, can prove authenticity. One thing necessary to prove a split is genuine is the postmark that covers the stamp where the split is made. This is why

an uncanceled stamp is frowned upon for valid use. Only history, other cancellations, and notations would prove a mint example on the cover or piece. When I just typed this last sentence, I thought back to around thirty full covers I won at an auction that featured Dos Reales from the 1856 issues that never received a postmark or cancel. If someone clipped off one side of these stamps, they would never receive a genuine split used. On the other hand, I have a quarter split 1861 Ocho Reales uncanceled as a Dos Reales on a Hermosillo cover. Rarity tells me that the Ocho Reales split, still with part of the overprint, was used. For splits from a very scarce issue, this might be the case. I still question the Hermosillo split Ocho's genuineness for use? Maybe its use is real, but to make it a positive, someone dropped the ball by not striking the stamp with a cancel.

We, collectors, like to have everything mounted pretty, with a good story, but life and collecting stamps do not always come in a pretty package. Some stamps have an obvious genuine quality, while others have been affected by someone trying to improve their value. If you have something of value, you want to make sure it is a genuine example; getting a certificate is very important. Generally speaking, most of the stamps that make it through the certificate process are genuine. The large auction houses will sometimes send numerous items to go through the expert committee. It stands to reason that they are clearing the way for the item to be a clean, genuine example. This is a wise idea for collectors who have high-priced examples that may be questioned later when their collection is broken down and sold at auction or to a dealer.

Enjoy!

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