

Porte de Mar Stamps of Mexico and Their Forgeries: Synopsis – Notes for Judges

Title and Treatment

This exhibit is a study of the Porte de Mar stamps of Mexico, which were in use between 1875 and 1879, and their forgeries. It shows how the postal authorities used these stamps to indicate payment for 'sea postage' between Mexico and many overseas destinations. These stamps are unique - no other country has produced stamps with a similar purpose. All the stamps are shown as well as many varieties, such as plate flaws, transfer types, stamps with district overprints (not required), cancels (also not required), and forgeries. Porte de Mar stamps became unnecessary when Mexico joined the UPU and issued regular stamps for overseas postage in 1879.

Knowledge, Study and Research

The exhibitor has made a thorough study of these stamps and the literature, including articles written over a hundred years ago, and has accumulated a wide variety of stamps and other material for analysis. Many **previously undocumented** varieties such as plate flaws and retouches are in this exhibit. Original research on the Third Issue stamps (page 62) is also shown.

A note on forgeries: Porte de Mar stamps were applied by postal clerks and not sold to the public, but early stamp albums included spaces for them. This 'philatelic need' led to the production of many **contemporary** forgeries which were sold to collectors – they were not intended to defraud the postal system, although they were (and still are) often sold with forged cancels and forged district overprints. This exhibit includes examples of all known forgeries as well as previously unknown forgeries, forged district overprints and cancels, and full sheets of some forgeries.

Rarity and Condition

Most of the Porte de Mar stamps are inexpensive, although genuine used stamps are scarce and covers are rare. It has been estimated that there are fewer than 100 covers in existence (Herbert Strauss, 1973), while Karl Schimmer (1987), could find only 49 he considered genuine. **There are seven Porte de Mar covers in this exhibit (one with stamp removed).** One of the rarest is an 1875 cover which was sent on the French packet to Madrid. This cover received special handling from the French Postal Agency in Veracruz with the addition of a strip of five 40c French stamps (Scott #59). Porte de Mar covers with French postage added are extremely rare, with this number of stamps and total amount of franking, this cover is unique.

Another unique item in this exhibit is the largest known used multiple of any Porte de Mar stamp, a block of ten 5 centavo stamps with Veracruz cancels as well as a N. York Steamship marking.

Other highlights include a **complete set of essays for the third series stamps** (the only known Porte de Mar pre-production material - only a few sets exist), full sheets of many genuine stamps, and **a full sheet of the two centavo stamp which was overprinted with the numeral five to make up for a shortage of the twenty-five centavo stamps (JX9a).** This sheet is pictured in the Schimmer text (page 57). It has been expertized by Schimmer and is believed to be unique.

Informational Sources

The best source for further information about these stamps is the book by Karl Schimmer entitled Porte de Mar which was published in 1987 by MEPSI. A more comprehensive reference is the book Mexican Maritime Mail (Chapter 13) by Schimmer and Heath. There have also been many articles in *Mexicana* and other philatelic journals.

This exhibit has recently been expanded. Significant additions include several additional Porte de Mar covers, additional material on forgeries, examples of Mexican maritime mail before and after the Porte de Mar period, and covers demonstrating exempt mail.

Thank you for evaluating this exhibit.