

Porte de Mar Stamps of Mexico and their Forgeries

The purposes of the Porte de Mar system were: 1) to compensate packet ships for carrying mail to foreign ports, 2) to allow postal patrons to prepay maritime postage fees, and 3) to provide visible evidence that these fees had been paid.

At the time of mailing, Porte de Mar stamps were placed (by the postal clerks) on the backs of envelopes in an amount equal to the required overseas postage and the mail was forwarded to Veracruz or Tampico. Mail packets were then placed on foreign ships to be transported to their ultimate destinations. The total value of the Porte de Mar stamps in each packet was calculated and that amount was paid to the ship's captain (or agent) for carrying the mail. Arrangements were made with both English and French ships, and the postal patron had to specify which service was to be used. The stamps primarily functioned as internal accounting devices (contraseñas).

Because these stamps were not sold to the public and early stamp album makers provided spaces for these stamps the resultant philatelic demand resulted in many forgeries which are an integral part of this exhibit. These were contemporaneous and are often scarcer than the stamps themselves.

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Highlights include a unique full sheet of the 1875 emergency overprint on the two centavos stamp (JX9a), full sheets of many other stamps, a complete set of essays for the third issue (1879), seven Porte de Mar covers (fewer than 100 exist), and the largest known used block of any Porte de Mar stamp.

Rare material is indicated by red borders as well as in the text. Transfer types are presented according to the scheme in Karl Schimmer's book, Porte de Mar.