

## AMERICAN INTERVENTION AT VERA CRUZ 1914

Long at odds with the Huerta government, the Wilson administration responded to the detention of sailors from the *U.S.S. Dolphin* in Tampico on April 9, 1914, demanding actions which the Mexicans considered demeaning to their national honor and refused. As a consequence, the U.S. sent a large naval squadron to Vera Cruz, Mexico's main port, using the excuse that a large shipment of arms for Huerta's forces was due to arrive on *S.S. Ypiranga*, which the Americans wished to prevent from landing. The resulting intervention lasted from April 21 to November 23, 1914.

H. M. Robinson, the head of the Railway Mail Service, was appointed postal agent and sent to Vera Cruz to deal with both military and civilian mail, taking charge of the post office on May 3, 1914. The postage rates at the Mail Agency were the same as if the letters had been mailed in the United States. At first, the Mexicans did not recognize American postage on letters from the port to the interior of that country, but an arrangement was worked out that Mexican stamps would be sold in Vera Cruz for use on such mail.

This purpose of this exhibit is to show the wide variety of postal markings used during the intervention as well as the various stamps that were used to pay the postage on this mail. Some of these markings were widely used and some are very elusive by any standard. Where possible, the earliest and latest dates that have been recorded are designated.



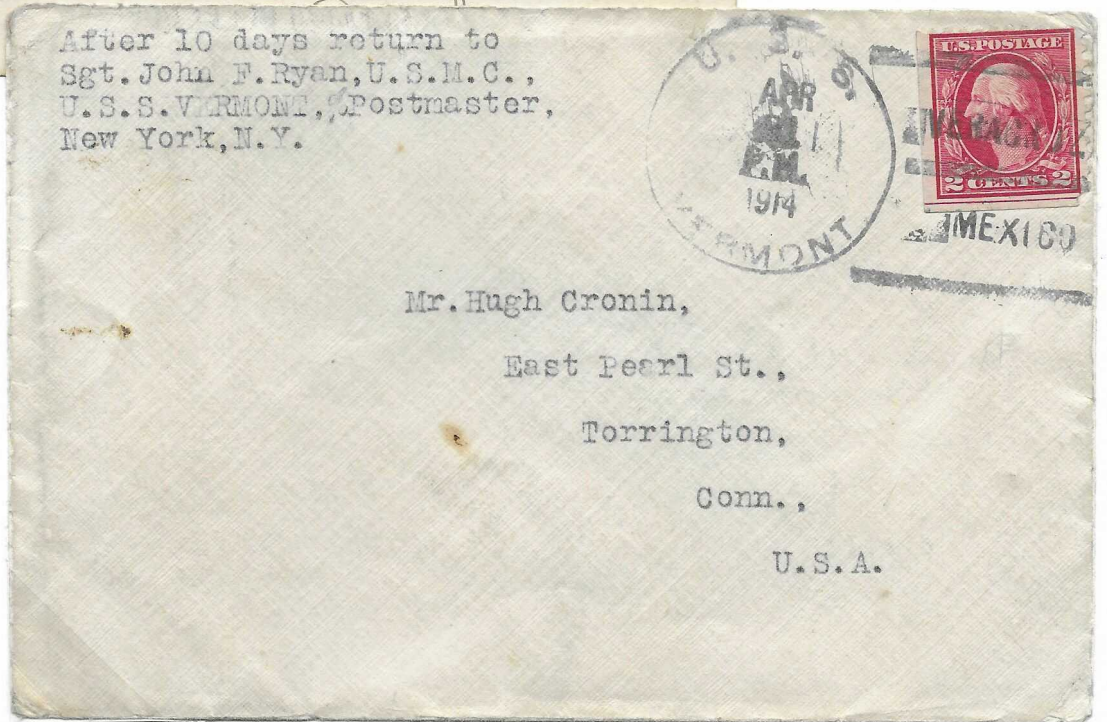
This extraordinary \$1.00 Washington stamp, as well as a 30¢ Franklin adhesive plus six 5¢ Washingtons (on the reverse), was used on a large portion of a heavy registered cover originating from Vera Cruz. Only five examples of covers bearing this high value have been recorded; this is the only one originating from a U.S. post office abroad. The stamps are cancelled with the rectangular "Vera Cruz" killer that replaced the bull's eye marking and is the earliest recorded usage.

**TRIGGER FOR INTERVENTION  
FIRST DAY OF INTERVENTION**

The first Americans to land were 787 sailors and Marines from U.S. warships at Vera Cruz, including the *Vermont*, on April 21, 1914. The subsequent occupation was confined to the city of Vera Cruz and its waterworks some 10 miles distant.

U.S.S. Dolphin  
April 6, 1914

U.S.S. Vermont  
April 21, 1914



Picture postcard mailed from *U.S.S. Dolphin* on the visit to Tampico that provided the trigger for the intervention. Cover below mailed from *U.S.S. Vermont* on the day the forces were deployed ashore. Note the designation of the location "Veracruz/Mexico" between the killer bars.

**FORERUNNER OF AMERICAN  
ADMINISTRATION OF POST OFFICE**

Between the first landing at Vera Cruz on April 21, 1914 and the opening of the American Mail Agency on May 3, letters were normally mailed through the post offices on board the warships in the harbor. However, one cover sent by an American soldier has been discovered that was actually mailed through the Mexican post office prior to that date, thus providing a forerunner usage.

VERACRUZ  
May 1, 1914



This cover from a member of the 19<sup>th</sup> Infantry was apparently written on board his troopship in the port of Vera Cruz based on the "April 29, 1914" in manuscript, which apparently refers to when the letter was dated. The Army forces disembarked the next day, and the soldier no doubt took the letter with him to the post office on May 1 and asked the Mexican employees to put it in the mail. Since U.S postage would not have been in stock at that time, one assumes that the soldier brought the stamp with him from home.

**MEXICAN MARKINGS  
OFFICIAL MAIL**

WAR DEPARTMENT  
VERACRUZ  
-3 MAY 14 1914  
VER.

WAR DEPARTMENT  
VERACRUZ  
-3 MAY 14 9AM  
VER.

WAR DEPARTMENT  
VERACRUZ  
-3 MAY 14 9AM  
VER.

WAR DEPARTMENT  
VERACRUZ  
-3 MAY 14 9AM  
VER.

WAR DEPARTMENT  
VERACRUZ  
-3 MAY 14 9AM  
VER.

OFFICIAL BUSINESS.

**WAR DEPARTMENT.**

Hq. 7th Inf., 5th Brigade,

Veracruz, Mexico.

OFFICIAL BUSINESS

PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE TO AVOID  
PAYMENT OF POSTAGE, \$300



VERACRUZ  
-8 MAY 14 11AM  
VERACRUZ

The Commanding General,  
Second Division,  
Texas City, Texas.

The occupation was so hastily arranged that there were no plans for postal activities. The U.S. mail agent took over the main Veracruz post office on May 3, 1914 and immediately began to process mail with the existing Mexican postal markings.

**Earliest Recorded Use  
By U.S. Postal Agent**

VERACRUZ  
May 3, 1914  
May 8, 1914

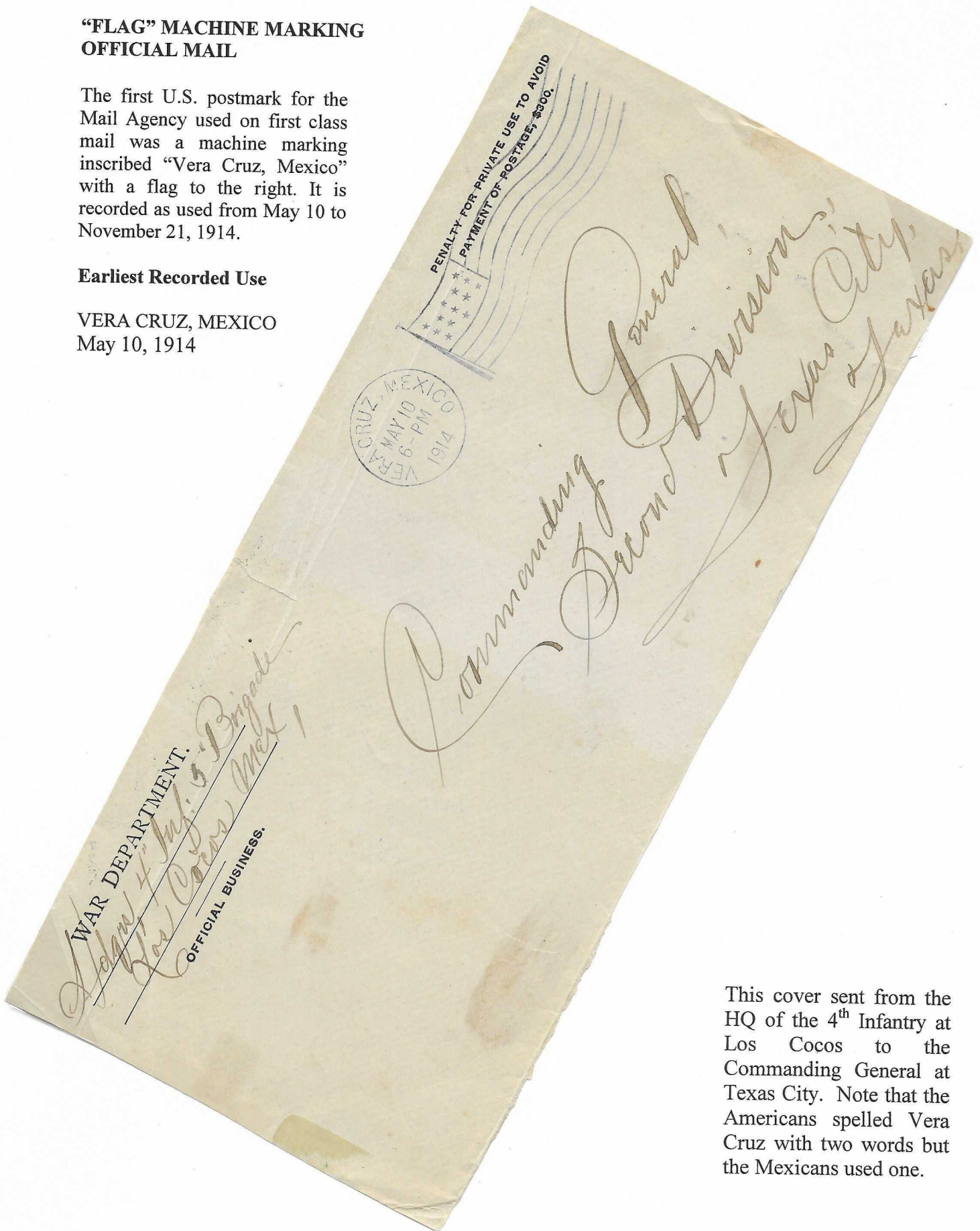
The roller cancel was used by the Americans from May 3 to 23, 1914 and the Mexican duplex handstamp from May 3 to 29.

**“FLAG” MACHINE MARKING  
OFFICIAL MAIL**

The first U.S. postmark for the Mail Agency used on first class mail was a machine marking inscribed “Vera Cruz, Mexico” with a flag to the right. It is recorded as used from May 10 to November 21, 1914.

**Earliest Recorded Use**

VERA CRUZ, MEXICO  
May 10, 1914



This cover sent from the HQ of the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry at Los Cocos to the Commanding General at Texas City. Note that the Americans spelled Vera Cruz with two words but the Mexicans used one.

**STEEL DUPLEX MARKING  
OFFICIAL MAIL**

The second type of Mail Agency postmark for first class mail was a steel duplex. It is the most widely used marking during the intervention, extending from June 2 to November 22, 1914, the day of departure of the U.S. forces.

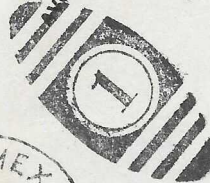
VERA CRUZ, MEX./U.S.M. AG.  
June 14, 1914  
July 15, 1914

WAR DEPARTMENT  
HQ. U.S. EXPEDITIONARY FORCES  
CHIEF OF M. VERA CRUZ, MEXICO  
OFFICIAL BUSINESS



Commanding General, U. S. A.  
Second Division,  
Texas City, Texas.

PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE TO  
VOID PAYMENT OF POSTAGE. \$300.



que Cessner.  
Estado # 2547.

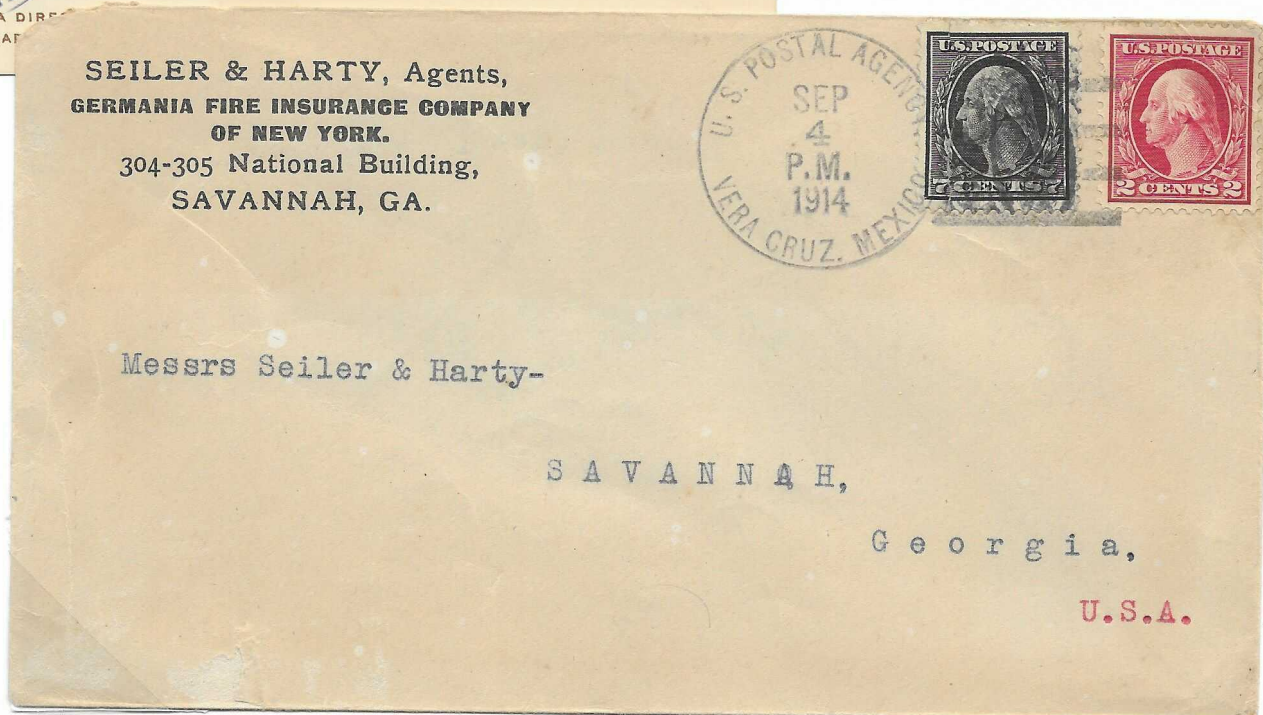
MEXICO, D.F.

There were two versions: that with #1 in the killer was to be used on mail addressed outside Mexico, while #2 was intended for use on mail to the interior.

**RUBBER DUPLEX MARKING  
POSTAGE DUE MAIL**

One final type of postmark used on first class mail was a rubber cds with four bars on the right. It is recorded as used from June 11 to September 21, 1914 and was applied much less frequently as compared to the steel duplex.

U.S. Postal Agency/Vera Cruz, Mexico  
July 15, 1914  
September 4, 1914

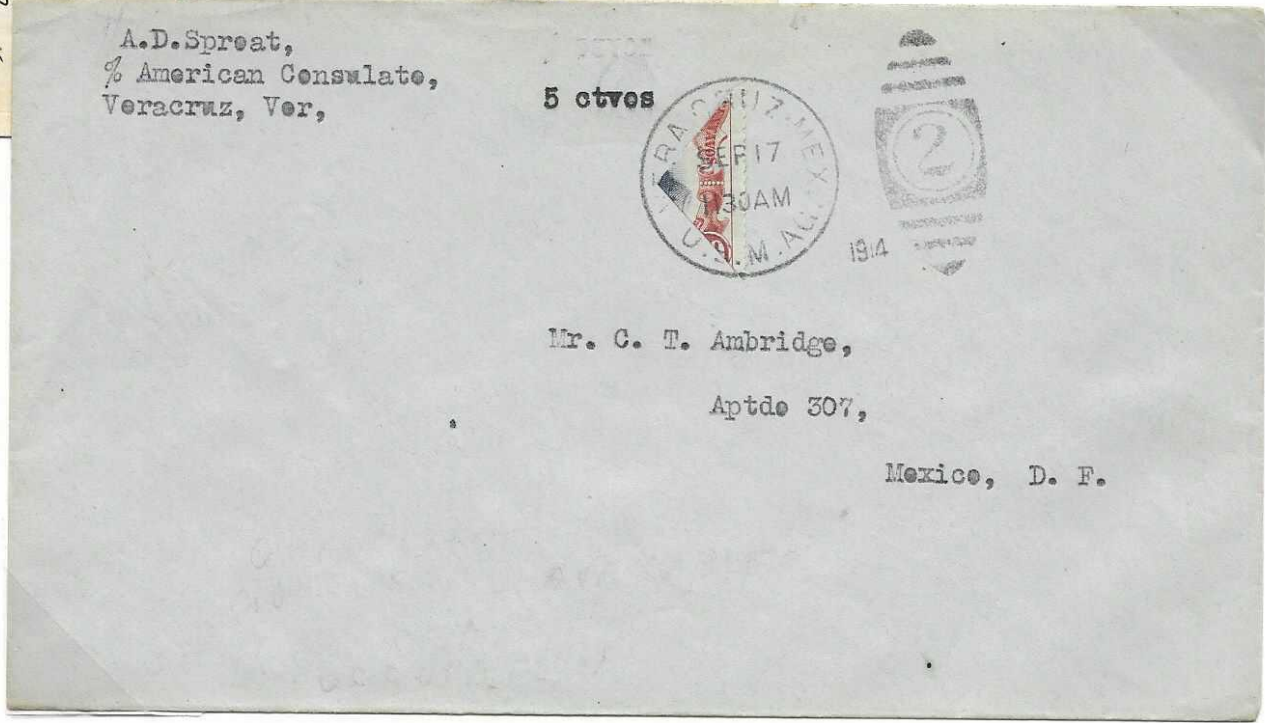


The Mexican postal card used in the American postal system for local delivery was regarded as unpaid and 1¢ postage due was assessed. The payment of 9¢ postage on the lower cover is inexplicable, since it would seem that 2¢ would have been sufficient.

**USE OF FRACTIONAL MEXICAN POSTAGE**

Based on the agreement of May 25 with the Mexican postal authorities, the Mail Agency began to sell Mexican stamps to pay postage on items sent to the interior. However, there were occasional shortages of the most popular denominations, i.e. 2 centavos for postcards and 5 centavos for letters. When this problem occurred, the clerks would cut up stamps to make the proper denominations, affix them to the items tendered and cancel them with the regular postmark.

VERA CRUZ, MEX./U.S.M. AG.  
 August 13, 1914  
 September 17, 1914



Upper example was franked with a bisected Mexican 4 centavo stamp to pay the 2 centavo rate on a postcard. Below is a cover with a quadrisection of the 20 centavos stamp, paying the letter rate of 5 centavos to Mexico City.



**REGISTERED MAIL  
DOUBLE-CIRCLE BACKSTAMPS**

Incoming and outgoing registered mail was backstamped with a double-circle marking. The first version had the name of the office at the top and "REGISTERED" at the bottom. It is recorded as used from May 5 to November 17, 1914. A second version inscribed "U.S. Mail Agency, Reg. Div." at the bottom was used from September 4 to November 12, 1914.

**Earliest Recorded Example**

VERA CRUZ, MEX. U.S.M. AG.  
May 5, 1914  
September 28, 1914

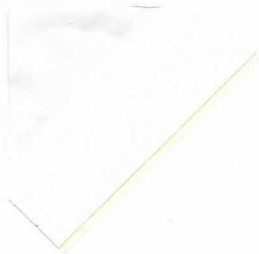


Upper registered letter from Morelia was franked with 20 centavos in Mexican postage (double weight letter at 2 x 5 cent. plus 10 cent. registry fee.) Lower cover sent from San Andres Textla was also franked with 20 centavos Mexican.

**REGISTERED MAIL  
MEXICAN BOXED "R" MARKING  
FRANKED WITH REGISTRY STAMP**

The proper manner of canceling the postage on registered mail was with an undated "killer." The first type of this marking used in Vera Cruz was a small bull's eye, which is recorded as used from the first days of the occupation until June 24. The old Mexican boxed registration marking with a space for the number was used from the beginning until late in the period.

Vera Cruz, Mex. U.S.M. AG.  
June 1, 1914



Although properly franked from the American standpoint with 2¢ postage and the 10¢ registration fee paid by the special stamp, the Mexican authorities did not recognize the payment of postage on the above letter. Thus double-deficiency postage of 30 centavos was collected from the addressee.

**REGISTERED MAIL  
RECTANGULAR KILLER  
AMERICAN BOXED "R" MARKING**

Other registration markings included a rectangular killer inscribed with the name of the agency and a standard rectangular box used stateside for the number of a registered article. For some reason, this latter arrived quite late and was used only in the final five weeks of the occupation from October 21 to November 17, 1914. Only three examples of this marking have been reported.

**Earliest Recorded Example**

Vera Cruz, Mex. U.S.M. AG.  
Oct. 21  
Nov. 13



The upper cover was underpaid since only 10¢ U.S. was affixed, covering the registry fee but not the letter postage. At one point, the Mexicans considered charging postage due but concluded that proper Mexican postage of 15 centavos had been paid so did not do so. Lower cover had no Mexican postage so was charged 30 centavos double postage due.

**REGISTERED MAIL  
AR MARKINGS**

The Postal Agency in Vera Cruz had a provisional marking made up with the letters "AR" to designate that a return receipt was sought from the recipient of a registered letter. (There was no charge for this service at the time.) This device appears to have been carved from cork or rubber. Only two such covers are recorded, with dates in the registration backstamps of August 18 and 19.

**Earliest Recorded Example**

VERA CRUZ, MEX. U.S.M. AG.  
August 18, 1914



This cover is unusual in several respects, including the use of the AR marking. It was sent to England at the 2¢ treaty rate with Great Britain which, with the 10¢ registry fee, accounts for the 12¢ total postage paid and is a very unusual usage. In addition, it is franked in part with a 3¢ parcel post stamp which was at that time valid for postage on first class mail and is the only such reported use from Vera Cruz.

**REGISTERED MAIL  
SPECIAL SERVICE MARKINGS**

The Vera Cruz agency had one-line markings to indicate letters requiring special services. These were not always used so that examples are uncommon, with fewer than five examples of each being recorded.

VERA CRUZ, MEX. U.S.M. AG.  
June 14, 1914  
June 22, 1914  
August 19, 1914



Examples of "Return Receipt Requested," "Special Delivery" and "Registered" one-line handstamps on registered letters. Note datestamps used improperly to cancel postage on lower two covers.

## RECEIVING MARKING

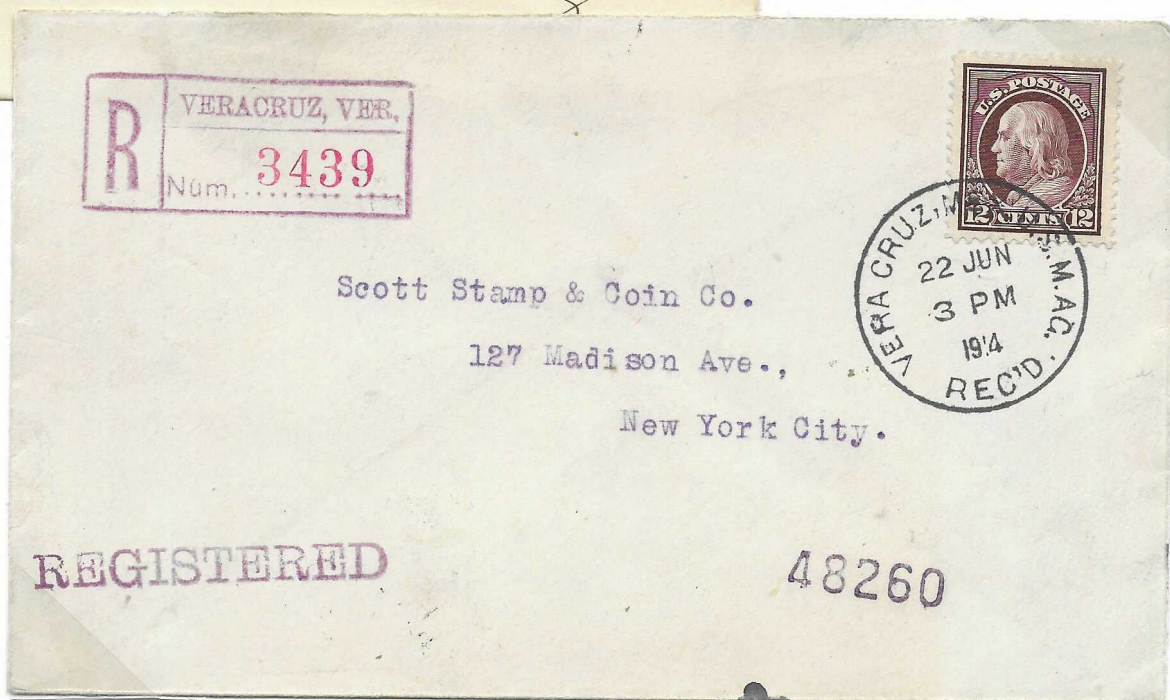
A steel cds was provided for marking incoming mail. However, it is rarely found in such usage, being more commonly seen as a cancellation on outgoing mail. It is inscribed with the usual wording for the Mail Agency but with "REC'D." at the bottom of the dial. Recorded used from June 3 to mid-November 1914.

### Earliest Recorded Example

Vera Cruz, Mex. U.S.M. AG. REC'D.

June 3, 1914

June 22, 1914



Upper cover sent by ordinary mail to a warship based locally although more than sufficiently franked for special delivery or registration. Cover below pays 2¢ postage plus 10¢ registry fee to a recognized philatelic address.

**OTHER MARKINGS**

The Postal Agency used three other markings for special purposes: General Delivery, Money Orders and Parcel Post. These are all relatively scarce, although the former is recorded as used from early June to November. None of the "M.O.B." markings are known on actual money orders but they have been used on covers in May and June. Only three examples of the parcel post marking are known, dated from September to November.



Vera Cruz  
 May 27, 1914  
 September 11, 1914  
 October 12, 1914



Cover canceled with the M.O.B. marking is franked with what is believed to be the full range of stamps actually on sale at the Mail Agency in Vera Cruz, which included the registration and special delivery issues as well as the most needed denominations of regular postage.

## TAMPICO MARKING

At the beginning of the campaign, it was unclear as to whether U.S. forces would be landed at Tampico as well as Vera Cruz. To be prepared, a postmark inscribed "Tampico Sta." was prepared and sent to the postal agent at Vera Cruz. Toward the end of the intervention, when it was certain that it would not be used for the intended purpose, some pieces of Mexican stationery were struck with this cds as souvenirs.

Tampico  
October 31, 1914



These "proof strikes" of the Tampico cds exist only with dates of September 16 and October 31, 1914. Only about half a dozen examples have survived for philatelists.