

More Special Delivery Markings of the 1914 Vera Cruz Post Office

Robert L. Markovits

The marvelous initial article to boost the research into the United States Postal Agency at Vera Cruz Mexico, in *Mex-Mix* July 2000 by Mark E. Banchik, M.D., M.B.A., stimulated me to reproduce two items from my United States and Possessions special delivery exhibit for the membership to enjoy and search for new and additional markings.

According to Dr. Banchik, the Railway Mail Service assumed responsibility for the postal service on May 3, 1914, through the end of occupation on November 23, 1914. The article *Forty Years of U. S. Special Delivery Stamps in the Stamp Specialist*, Vol. 14, by C.W. Bates notes:

In 1914, American forces occupied Vera Cruz, Mexico. Under date of April 24, 1914, Postmaster General advised the Navy Department that an order had been given establishing a United States Mail Agency in Vera Cruz, and that H. M. Robinson, Superintendent of Railway Mail Service, had been instructed by telegraph to New Orleans to proceed to the Mexican port to take charge, taking with him assistants and supplies...

So advised, the Commander in Chief of our fleet in Mexican waters, April 25, 1914, sent Commander J.M. Luby ashore to handle the mails pending the arrival of Mr. Robinson. Commander Luby found that all postage supplies had been removed from the Vera Cruz Post Office, but met the situation by canceling "No Stamps" on letters mailed, and inscribing them with the amount of postage (double the ordinary rate) to be collected at point of destination. When letters were posted bearing the United States or Mexican stamps, there was marked across the face of the stamps "Cancelled". It is said that Mr. Robinson arrived with his assistants and stamp supplies and took charge of the work during the first ten days in May, possibly as early as May 3. The occupation was concluded May 23, 1914. (Cited in *Gobie*, pp. 144-145).

The first illustrated cover (Figure 1) contained the US Special delivery issue of 1911, Scott E8, used with the US Consulate handstamp on the reverse (Figure 2), being the only recorded example known to date, and cancelled with the Mexican post mark. Since the set of perf 12 USA Pan Pacific commemoratives was used, I certainly would have to agree that this cover was philatelically inspired, maybe by a friend of the editor of *Mekeels*. This cover is ex-Goble and is illustrated on page 145 of *The Speedy, A history of the United States Special Delivery Service*. Goble believes it was prepared in St. Louis and sent under cover to Vera Cruz for mailing there. The 2c Pan Pacific is pre-cancelled "St. Louis". C. H. Mekeel operated his business and publishing house out of St. Louis at this time and was philatelically very active. This cover was sent May 21, 1914, probably hand delivered from the Consulate to the Post Office. Banchik notes that the Mexican killer cancel was used between May 14 and May 22nd. The illustration on page 142 of *MEXICANA* shows a combination registry special delivery use locally on May 21, 1914, before the US/Mexico Mail Exchange agreement took effect.

I have in my possession a second cover, also from Vera Cruz, addressed to the Scott Stamp and Coin Company, also using the Pan Pacific commemoratives. This cover, cancelled with a "U.S.M.AG." postmark, is dated June 23, 1914. This cancel stood for: U.S. Mail Agency. This cover was illustrated in the *Gobie* book, now long out of print and being updated by the author who owns the copyright, p. 146. *Gobie* speculates that since this cover did not have special delivery receipt markings, it was probably delivered by the regular mail carrier, as was the NYC practice at the time, bypassing the special delivery messenger. Dr. Banchik notes that stamp material at Vera Cruz included the 1911 issue from May 3 until "late June" which ties in with this cover, but not the following cover.

The author's third reported cover (Figure 3) is with the same U.S.M.AG. postmark and is dated 8/22/1914. These covers represent very early uses of US Special delivery issues from a U. S. Post Office abroad. The last cover bears the neat "FEE CLAIMED AT Washington, D.C." post office receipt marking, in a circle without a date, on the front of the cover.