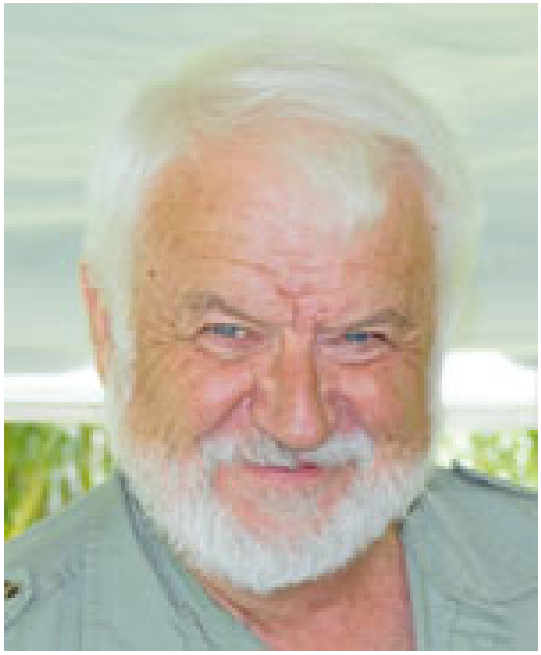
Hearts at Work

—A Column by Jim TiptonJim Tipton

“Servicio Postal Mexicano celebrates Mexico”



This afternoon—on the very day of the *Bicentenario*, the Bicentenary celebrating Mexican independence—I have been leisurely looking over the collection of stamps of Mexico that I have accumulated over the past couple of decades. One hundred years ago, in 1910, Mexico issued a set of eleven colorful stamps celebrating the
Centenario
of independence, a set that included two women important to the rebellion—Josefa Ortiz and Leona Vicario—as well as men like López Rayón, Juan Aldama, Epigmenio González, Mariano Abasolo, Ignacio Allende, and of course the most important of all, Miguel Hidalgo.

With this series, Josefa Ortiz and Leona Vicario became the first women depicted on stamps of Mexico. Josefa Ortiz de Dominguez not only provided much needed financial support to the movement for independence. It was Josefa herself who alerted Miguel Hidalgo that their conspiracy to overthrow Spain had been discovered, which prompted Hildago to declare independence—“El Grito de Independencia”—on September 16 instead of in October as he had

planned. Leona Vicario de Quintana Roo, wife of insurgent Andrés Quintana Roo, contributed financially, but she also ferreted out much needed intelligence information for the insurgents, helped fugitives escape, and was twice sent to prison with all her goods confiscated. A few decades later President Santa Ana officially named Leona “Sweet Mother of the Fatherland”.

So important was Miguel Hidalgo, the “Father of Mexico,” that from 1856, the year Mexico first began to issue stamps, which bore his image, until more than thirty years later, no other man appeared on a Mexican stamp…except for 1866 when four stamps appeared bearing the imperial profile of short-lived Emperor Maximillian.

In 1950, on the 150th anniversary of Mexican independence, three stamps were issued featuring the Mexican liberty bell, the cherished Bell of Dolores, as well as the monument to Mexican independence, and Miguel Hidalgo. The Bell of Dolores is, of course, the bell that a fifty-seven-year-old village priest, Father Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, rang in the parish of Dolores, in the state of Guanajuato, on the morning of September 16, 1810, sounding the cry for independence. The bell is now in the National Palace in Mexico City, and every year, on September 16, the President of Mexico repeats the patriotic cry, which ends with:
Viva Mexico! Viva Mexico! Viva Mexico!

Why from tiny Dolores, one might ask. Miguel Hidalgo had been banished to Dolores for fathering children and reading prohibited books. In 1953, incidentally, on the bicentenary of his birth, three stamps were issued to honor Miguel Hidalgo. Since 1856 so many stamps have been issued bearing the likeness of Hidalgo that a nice collection might be assembled of those alone.

In 1985, the 175th anniversary of independence from Spanish rule, *Servicio Postal Mexicano*, the Mexican Postal Service, released five stamps honoring the heroes of independence along with five stamps honoring the heroes of the Mexican revolution since 1985 was the 75th anniversary of that. Those Mexican revolution stamps feature Francisco Villa, Emiliano Zapata, Venustiano Carranza, Francisco Madero, and the Soldadera, the woman who served (even in battle) at the side of her man.

For the 200th anniversary of independence from Spain, which we just finished officially celebrating (although the party continues), Servicio Postal Mexicano issued in September of 2009 a very colorful and attractive set of eight stamps and two souvenir sheets, followed in

2010 by another set of eight stamps and two souvenir sheets. The 2009 set includes portraits of heroes as well as paintings of the capture of Miguel Hidalgo and insurgents and the execution of Hidalgo; the 2010 set includes portraits of heroes, battle scenes, and a very beautiful souvenir sheet of the impassioned Hildago crying out for freedom while at that very moment being kissed on his bald head by a very sensuous angel.

This bicentenary and centenary year is a wonderful time to begin a collection of the stamps of Mexico. In some ways stamp collecting is the perfect retirement activity. As you might expect Mexican stamps generally are carefully designed, colorful, often beautiful, depicting the history of Mexico as well as its industry, its flora and fauna, its arts and crafts, its wonderful people. I intended when I moved here years ago to become a dealer in Mexican stamps to the expatriate community—one more project I never got around to—but I do have available a few thousand duplicates of Mexican stamps. Albums are easily obtainable…there is even a downloadable album you can print on your own quality paper for less than $10. You can contact me at spiritof mexico@yahoo.com