

"¡Viva la Revolución!" New Money Museum Exhibit Tells Story of Mexico's Revolution

"¡Viva la Revolución!" Words that echoed throughout Mexico's chaotic, decade-long revolution in the early part of the 20th century will resound in a new exhibit opening November 20 at the American Numismatic Association Money Museum, 818 N. Cascade Ave., in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

"The Mexican Revolution is a fascinating, yet complicated story," says Money Museum Curator Lawrence Lee. "The money produced during this time is one of the most complex of the modern age. It is through these bits of metal and paper that we reinterpret the story of this great struggle."

"¡Viva la Revolución!": The Money of the Mexican Revolution will track the revolutionaries as they fought against a constantly changing central government--and among themselves.

"Always in need of money to pay their troops, buy supplies and set up provisional governments, those orchestrating the battle for change quickly discovered a simple solution--make their own," Lee says. "Using whatever materials they had on hand, and often with very limited facilities, the numerous revolutionary leaders, including the famed Francisco "Pancho" Villa and Emiliano Zapata, struck their own coins and printed their own paper and cardboard currency."

In addition to the hundreds of monetary specimens, including some of the rarest coins from the Mexican Revolution, the exhibit will feature documents, photographs and other artifacts. Of special interest will be a series of stark, black-and-white photographs by Agustin Victor Casasola, on loan from El Museo Latino, that capture the grim reality of a nation at war with itself.

The exhibit begins with 37-year-old Francisco Madero's 1910 attempt to unseat President Porfirio DÃ-az, who ruled Mexico for more than a quarter century. Madero soon joined Villa and revolutionary leader Pascual Orozco in northern Mexico, and, with Zapata in the south, they succeeded in driving DÃ-az into exile in early 1911.

Madero assumed the presidency but soon was fighting with his former allies. In 1913 revolutionary Victoriano Huerta successfully overthrew Madero, who subsequently was assassinated with the tacit approval of the United States ambassador to Mexico. Huerta's presidency, like his predecessor's, was marked by violence. Aggressive and victorious campaigns by Villa led Huerta to resign and flee the country in 1914. Villa's ally, Venustiano Carranza, took control of the presidency but excluded Villa and Zapata from the country's leadership. Angered, the two revolutionaries moved against Carranza.

Alvaro Obregón, with the help of Villa, ousted the new president. Almost immediately, Obregón then went to war against Villa and Zapata. In 1915 control of Mexico City changed so often that the Zapatistas won and lost the capital three times in one week.

Carranza rejoined the power struggle with a new army in 1916. Three years later, Zapata was assassinated. In 1920 Carranza was killed in his attempt to remove Obregón from his power base in Sonora. That same year Obregón was elected to a four-year term as president and pardoned Villa, who then retired from politics. Villa was assassinated in 1923, and Obregón, who was elected to a second term as president in 1928, was assassinated before his inauguration.

1-peso issued by Zapata

Opening on November 20, 2003--Mexican Revolution Day--the story of that tumultuous time will be told through the coins and paper money issued during the rebellion. (Opening ceremonies are set to begin at 5:30 p.m., Thursday, November 20. A special lecture entitled "The Democratic Legacy of the Mexican Revolution" by Dr. Francisco Valdez-Ugalde, Ph.D., from the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México is set for 7 p.m., Wednesday, November 19, at the Penrose Library, Carnegie Reading Room, 20 N. Cascade Ave., in Colorado Springs.)

"¡Viva la Revolución!" is produced in conjunction with the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Consulate General of Mexico in Denver; Mexican Cultural Center; El Museo Latino in Omaha, Nebraska; and Mexican numismatic experts Don Bailey of Hemet, California, and Joe Flores of Stockton, California.

Bailey, a writer and researcher of Mexican numismatics for more than 40 years, was awarded the Mexican Order of the Aztec Eagle in 2001--the highest honor the Mexican government can bestow on a non-citizen--in acknowledgment of his contributions to Mexican numismatics. Flores, the leading expert on numismatics of the Mexican Revolution, shares a part of his extensive collection of rare and unique coins of the era for this exhibit.

In addition to Flores and Bailey, other members of the United States Mexican Numismatic Association also contributed to this exhibit: Sal Falcone, John Hardman, Daniel Neill and Stephen G. Searle.

"¡Viva la Revolución!": The Money of the Mexican Revolution will remain on exhibit until October 1, 2004. For more information about the American Numismatic Association Money Museum and its exhibits, contact the ANA at 818 N. Cascade Ave., Colorado Springs, CO 80903; phone 719-632-2646; e-mail museum@money.org; or visit the ANA at www.money.org.

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