

# Counterfeit *dos caritas*

There are few references to forged *dos caritas* and they imply, unsurprisingly, that the counterfeiting was of a much higher quality than was the case with the *sábanas*

. No circulars or official pronouncements on how to identify counterfeits are known, so the information derives from some correspondence, some newspaper reports and study of the notes themselves.

## Correspondence

On 9 November 1914 de la Garza wrote to Navarro that he had been informed that counterfeit *dos caritas*

were in existence and that that he would send an example when he received it so that Navarro could note the differences<sup>{footnote}</sup>LG papers, letter de la Garza, Torreón, to Navarro, Washington, 9 November 1914<sup>{/footnote}</sup>. On 27 January 1915 de la Garza sent a counterfeit \$10 note (number 249481) to Navarro, asking him to find out how it was made and what they could do to identify the perpetrator. On 3 February 1915 Navarro replied that the note had been lithographed (

*hecho en piedra*

) and was at first sight an obvious forgery, with more differences noticeable under a magnifying glass<sup>{footnote}</sup>LG papers, 6-D-37, letter from de la Garza, El Paso, to Navarro, Washington, 27 January 1915: 6-E-7, letter from Navarro, Washington, to de la Garza, El Paso. 1915, 3 February 1915<sup>{/footnote}</sup>.

On 3 February 1915 Tesorero General Vargas wrote to de la Garza that having studied the counterfeit *dos caritas*, he suspected that they were also being printed at Norris Peters, and asked de la Garza to investigate and, if necessary, punish the malefactors<sup>{footnote}</sup>LG papers, 3-H-2, letter from Vargas, Chihuahua, to de la Garza, Ciudad Juárez, 3 February 1915<sup>{/footnote}</sup>. On 6 February

[de la Garza replied](#) that the counterfeits were very good, but did not have the secret marks and intentional errors ( *señales secretas y fallos*

).

He [listed over twenty differences](#)

that he had found in the \$5 and \$10 notes<sup>{footnote}</sup>LG papers, 3-H-5, letter from de la Garza, El Paso to Vargas, Chihuahua, 6 February 1915. There are other references to secret marks.

When on 13 February 1914 Lazaro de la Garza asked for a quote from the American Bank Note Company he stated that the notes were to have two secret marks (ABNC). On 6 January 1915

Navarro sent Vargas details of the *contraseñas*

on the notes (LG papers, 6-D-13, telegram Navarro, Washington, to Vargas, Chihuahua, 6

January 1915) and this cannot have referred to the code letters as they were applied in Ciudad Juárez or Chihuahua. On 2 February 1915, de la Garza suggested that they could inform the public of one of the secret marks every few days to foil counterfeiters, but that the effect would be limited as the counterfeiters would merely redesign their notes (LG papers, 1-J-6, letter L. de la Garza, El Paso, to Villa, Aguascalientes, 2 February 1915). Obviously these secret marks have yet to be identified. De la Garza suggested using the secret police and in the same month the chief of Villa's secret police, Héctor Ramos, sent a detective to San Antonio to arrest three 'gringos' and recover nine plates and some counterfeit notes the plates were for every denomination from 50c to \$50 (LG papers, 6-E-15, letter Navarro, San Antonio, to de la Garza, El Paso, 16 February 1915). Those arrested were Fred Meyer and Charles. H. Hudson, two employees of

[Maverick-Clarke](#)

, and J. N. Nidel. The plates demonstrated certain differences from the genuine notes.



Ramos also knew of a certain Dr. Ochoa of the International Engraving Co., who had established himself across the road from the Hotel Paso del Norte LG papers, 3-H-14, letter from de la Garza, El Paso, to Vargas, Chihuahua. 22 February 1915.

On 4 February 1915 Sebastian Vargas wrote to E. G. Saravia, governor of Durango, warning that counterfeit *dos caritas* had appeared, and that he was sending details ADUR, gaveta 6, nombre 83. He sent instructions on 6 February ADUR, gaveta 6, nombre 88. The governor received the instructions on 15 February and copied them on to the Jefatura de Hacienda and Dirección General de Rentas ADUR, gaveta 6, nombre 88. Acknowledged by Jefe de Hacienda Ignacio Montemayor on 17 February and by Director General de Rentas J M Plagaray on 19 February.

It was said that Jack Noonan who had been in Douglas and by 12 March 1915 was staying in the Hotel McCoy, El Paso, was known to be smuggling in counterfeit notes and should be closely watched{footnote} JMM papers, box 5, folder 3, coded telegram from Maytorena to Luís Gaxiola, 12 March 1915{/footnote}.

On 9 May 1915 Ramos reported to Maytorena from El Paso that amongst the latter's forces was a paymaster (*pagador*) called Francisco Huerta, who was in correspondence with the Ponce brothers, known counterfeiters (see [Counterfeiting in the United States](#)), and it was likely that Huerta was dealing in counterfeit money{footnote}JMM papers, box 5, folder 9{/footnote}. However, Huerta had already been removed from office on suspicion of disloyalty to the cause{footnote}JMM papers, box 5, folder 10{/footnote}.

On 17 May 1915 Coronel Juárez de Instrucción Militar, Ramón Gavala, reported from Hermosillo on an enquiry started by the Presidente Municipal of La Colorada into a payment of \$740 in counterfeit *dos caritas* made by the *casa comercial* of C. E. Roundtree y Cía. The company's manager, E. C. Buichhams, had bought large sums of money from the First National Bank of Nogales, and the Internacional Exchange Company, the Juarez Commission Company and Tomás Rascon, all of El Paso, so the coronel was planning to raid the company, check its holdings and marking any counterfeit notes "Falso"{footnote}JMM papers, box 5, folder 11, item 4{/footnote}.

## Newspaper and other reports

The earliest reference seems to have been on 23 July 1914 when a newspaper reported an instance of \$1,800 in very good counterfeit *dos caritas* passed in El Paso{footnote}*El Paso Herald*, 23 July 1914{/footnote}.

In November 1914 Villista secret agent #5 contrived the arrest of three employees of Maverick-Clarke who had stolen the original plates and so produced perfect counterfeits. They had been arrested with the "goods" and jailed{footnote}CONDUMEX, Fondo Federico González Garcia, carpeta 37, legajo 3669 report of 18-26 November 1914{/footnote}. It is unknown what relationship this had with the arrest of three employees in February 1915 above.

In November 1914 the *San Antonio Express* reported that an American, representing several people whose property had been confiscated by Villa, had tried to interest a Kansas City bank

note company in producing \$1,500,000 in currency similar to Villa. They planned to recoup their losses by having the money printed, buying livestock or bullion, then taking their purchases across the border and converting them into American money. The bank note company submitted the proposition to the Secret Service Department in Washington, which reported that there would be no violation of any law, but the company decided to decline the contract{footnote} *San Antonio Express*, 2 November 1914{/footnote}.

**Daniel Reyes Retana, Luis Sanchez Noriega, E Rivero, E Gallegos, Manuel del Moral:** In the days when the northern troops were approaching Mexico City it was discovered that a large amount of Chihuahua notes were circulating there. At first it was believed that the notes were brought by people preceding the northern troops, but investigation showed that the notes were counterfeit and led to the arrest of E. Gallegos, the proprietor of a printing establishment and Manuel del Moral, a printer. They implicated Reyes Retana, Rivero and Sanchez Noriega as the principal and real directors of the plan to counterfeit and circulate the notes.

A court martial sentenced the men to death. The wife of one of the men confessed that she strongly opposed the illegal work that her husband was doing and she destroyed some \$30,000 of the counterfeited notes which were in his possession. The majority of the notes (about \$135,000) were seized by the police{footnote} *The Mexican Herald*, 8 December 1914{/footnote}.

On 13 December they were executed at the Spanish cemetery, north of Tacuba. Reyes Retana, Sanchez Noriega and Rivero all belonged to prominent families in the capital{footnote} *El Paso Morning Times*, 14 December 1914; *La Voz de la Revolución*, Durango, 16 December 1914{/footnote}.

On 17 February 1915 the newspaper *Vida Nueva* reported that twenty thousand pesos in false notes ('Banco del Estado de Chihuahua' in headline, 'Estado de Chihuahua' in body of text) had been seized in Nogales, Arizona. These were to be burnt{footnote} *Vida Nueva*, 17 February 1915{/footnote}. On 18 February Treasurer Vargas [warned](#) that, in view of the large number of forged *sábanas* and *dos caritas* circulating, anyone in possession of counterfeit notes would be shot{footnote} *Periódico Oficial*, 21 February 1915{/footnote}.

**Archie G. McMath:** A few days later, on 22 February, an American, Archie G. McMath, a local real estate dealer, was arrested at the Hotel McCoy, El Paso, by detective O. W. Smith, with a handbag filled with \$50,000 in false \$5 *dos caritas*. A complaint was filed in justice J. M. Deaver's court.

[McMath had earlier been indicted in Fort Worth on a similar charge](#)

but the case was later dismissed{footnote}

*El Paso Herald*

, 23 February 1915:

*Vida Nueva*

, 23 February 1915{/footnote}.

**Ernesto Sánchez:** By March forged notes had been circulating in the markets of León for several weeks and on 9 March Ernesto Sánchez was arrested *in flagrante delicto* with 2,000 pesos in false \$10 notes as he paid for some goods. The notes were very similar to the genuine article except for the quality of the paper used{footnote}

*Vida Nueva*

, 10 March 1915. However, Sánchez turned out to have been a reputable businessman from San Luis Potosí (

*Vida Nueva*

, 17 March 1915){/footnote}.

There was, however, a lot of confusion over the different seals and the type and size of signatures that led to accusations of forgery and reluctance to accept certain notes. On 18 March 1915 R. A. Sepúlveda, the head of the Office for Exchange (*Oficina Canjeadora*) in Monterrey, Nuevo León wrote to the editor of

*La Epoca*

to correct an article that had referred to Vargas' and Munoz' signatures and the colour of the seals on the reverse{footnote}

*Periódico Oficial*

, 19 March 1915{/footnote}. Sepúlveda pointed out that a feature of the forged \$1 and \$5 notes was that Vargas' signature extended beyond the edge of the design whereas this occurred with either one or both of the signatures on the genuine \$50 notes. On the forged \$1 and \$5 notes the facsimile signatures of Vargas and Munoz were thick, larger than on the authentic notes, and scrawled{footnote}'subsiste como detalle para distinguir los billetes falsificados, el hecho de que las firmas de los Sres. Vargas y Muñoz, hechas en facsímil, que calzan los billetes falsos de UNO Y CINCO PESOS, son gruesas, más grandes que las que se ven en los billetes auténticos, y GARRAPATEADAS.'{/footnote}. Again, the seals on the reverse of the \$50 could be black, blue or red. On 10 May the Inspector Oficial in Monterrey, Alfredo H. Hernández, in his

### [first circular](#)

, declared that the first issue of the *dos caritas* could be identified by the fact that the signature on the \$1 and \$5 extended beyond the design, the \$10 had its seal on the front, and the \$10 and \$20 were handsigned. People, he said, were mistakenly refusing *dos caritas* because they did not have a date next to the series letter or letters on the reverse<sup>{footnote}</sup> *Periódico Oficial*, 14 May 1915<sup>{footnote}</sup>.

On 20 March 1915 Guilebaldo Romero, Presidente Municipal of Guadalajara, denied that there were any counterfeit *dos caritas*<sup>{footnote}</sup> *La Republica*, 20 March 1915<sup>{footnote}</sup> and on 4 April 1915 Sub-secretary Padilla repeated the claim. Padilla told the *Mexican Herald* that the fact that some notes lacked seals or serial letters in a particular place did not make them counterfeit<sup>{footnote}</sup> *Mexican Herald*, 4 April 1915<sup>{footnote}</sup>.

In April 1915 Detective Joseph Hausinger seized some \$6,000 worth of counterfeit Villa money from a rooming house on Mills Street, El Paso<sup>{footnote}</sup> *El Paso Herald*, 30 April 1915<sup>{footnote}</sup>.

In San Francisco Carranza's agents uncovered a group of Americans who were counterfeiting both Carrancista and Villista currency, and calculated that not less than \$12m had been produced in that part of the United States alone<sup>{footnote}</sup> *Periódico Oficial*, Sinaloa, 23 September 1915<sup>{footnote}</sup>. On 10 August 1915 the consul there, Ramón P. de Negri, reported that he had examples of high quality bogus Ejército Constitucionalista notes, Chihuahua notes and *revalidados*, and that there were five million that were being shipped to El Paso, Nogales, Agua Prieta and Brownsville<sup>{footnote}</sup> *Periódico Oficial*, Nuevo Leon, 14 August 1915<sup>{footnote}</sup>. On 21 August de Negri arranged the arrest of one of the principal counterfeiters and confiscation of a million pesos<sup>{footnote}</sup> *Periódico Oficial*, Sinaloa, 23 September 1915<sup>{footnote}</sup>.



