

Elyse: We left Galveston and traveled four hours west, to the scene of our next investigation. But our story starts in 1910 during the blood and chaos of the Mexican Revolution. For 30 years, Mexicans had been living under the dictatorship of President Porfirio Diaz. His unjust economic policies had built great resentment among the masses. On the 20th of November, 1910, this frustration boiled over and Francisco Madero, one of the leaders of the opposition movement, issued a call to arms. The revolution had begun. The country plunged into anarchy and the presidency changed hands frequently, as revolutionaries like Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata brought the country to its knees. Across the border, United States policy on the revolution fluctuated. Officially neutral, in 1914 President Wilson ordered armed interventions as the situation deteriorated and the lives of Americans in Southern Texas were threatened. By 1917, after 7 years of fighting and nearly 2 million dead, revolutionary Venustiano Carranza came into power. Within a few years, the fighting would come to an end. Carranza drafted a constitution, based on the principles of the revolution that is the foundation of Mexico's government today. But success didn't come cheap, and the revolutionaries needed one thing: money, and lots of it. What better way to get this than to make your own? Legend has it that during the course of the revolution, millions of pesos were being printed in Texas in a covert operation run by a shady group of rebels. The money was smuggled by moonlight across the Rio Grande into bandit country and straight into the hands of the revolutionaries. But where did these notes come from? Money, money, money, money well, a man in Texas suspects that his family printing firm was at the heart of this clandestine operation. Russell Hill is a third-generation owner of the Clarke Printing Company in San Antonio.

Russell: I've owned it since 1985 and I've worked there every day. We've had a very long history.

Elyse: But was Russell's printing company really doing business with revolutionaries?

Russell: If we find out that it's true, I think all the employees will get a kick out of it. It'll really add that much more to our History.

Elyse: I'm Elyse Luray, and I've come to meet Russell to see if I can help.

What's this rumor that you heard?

Russell: It's a rumor that was passed down from generation to generation of employees, from my grandfather to my father and to me, and it's a rumor that we might have printed some Mexican notes that funded the Mexican revolution.

Elyse: Are there any examples of these notes here?

Russell: No, there's not. There's some examples of Mexican notes in a museum downtown.

Elyse: Really? That's great. That's a great starting point.

Russell: The pesos at the Witte Museum could provide some clues. Here's some examples of Mexican currency that we have in our collection.

Elyse: Do you know anything about them?

Russell: Not really, other than the years they were made. Which was... ..1914 and 1915, most of them. 50 centavos, 1914.

Elyse: Oh, they're beautiful. There's so much detail. I can't believe it. There are three notes. The first is this green 50 centavos. 10 peso, the state of Chihuahua. Look at that lithography. 1915. The second is a 10 peso note. Wow, that's nice, too. From an artistic point of view, they're just wonderful. Let's see another one. And the third is a brown 20 peso note. So what would you like to know?

Russell: I would like to know whether my company, Maverick Clarke Lithographing, at the time produced these beautiful notes. That would be such a part of history to us, and even though it might be a little on the questionable side of history, the support of the revolutionaries, it'd still be fun.

Elyse: Much is known about the chaos and bloodshed of the rebellion, but there's one story that hasn't been told. A lot of the fighting on the revolutionary side was financed by people printing their own pesos. The first thing I need to do is find out more about these notes. They certainly look like genuine pesos, but they don't look like Federal Government Issue. If they were, then they would say, "Republic of Mexico," somewhere on them. Instead, these notes say, "The State of Chihuahua." They also contain images of Francisco Madero and Abraham Gonzales. Who are these guys? Francisco Madero began the revolution, but was assassinated in January, 1914. He's still known today as a hero of the revolution. Abraham Gonzales was governor of Chihuahua, the most pro-revolutionary state in Mexico. It was also the home to legendary radical, Pancho Villa. So it looks like Madero and Gonzales are on these notes as a form of tribute to their Revolutionary War effort. Rather than counterfeiting official Mexican notes, the revolutionaries created their own currency. Not only did this provide the rebels with a constant stream of cash, having your own currency was a status symbol. But could any of these notes have been printed in San Antonio, Texas? Dr. Hilberto Henagoza is a local historian here in San Antonio. If anyone can tell me what was going on here during the revolution, he can. What was San Antonio like in 1910?

Hilberto: Well, there were revolutionaries all over the place from various factions in Mexico here in San Antonio.

Elyse: There were?

Hilberto: Yes. They were printing their propaganda. They were looking for contributions. They needed more money in order to start the revolution. The most important one, of course, was Francisco Madero. He had the money already. He had links. To people who had money. He could begin the revolution. He planned it from here. He got the equipment here, that is, the guns and supplies. He took them to the border, and as planned, on the 20th of November, he launched the Mexican revolution.

Elyse: That's fantastic. This place was crawling with revolutionaries, and top of the list was Madero, the guy on our notes. But why did they come here?

Hilberto: His initial launch is actually unsuccessful, but it opens a can of worms. Okay. And revolutionaries pop up everywhere in a short period of time.

Elyse: Besides Madero, who else was here in San Antonio?

Hilberto: They all had agents here in San Antonio. Carranza had agents. Pancho Villa had agents. Obregon had agents. They all had agents here in San Antonio.

Elyse: You know, it sounds kind of chaotic to me. It also sounds kind of shady to me. It has been described by some historians as "A city of shadows," because there was intrigue. There were agents here buying weapons. They had to look out for the interests of the U.S. government representatives or agents. They had

to look out for other revolutionaries and so on. So it may look like that. So could any of the revolutionaries have been printing money here in San Antonio?

Hilberto: It may have been. I've never heard of it, but it's not completely unlikely. Since San Antonio was supplying so many other things, they may well have been supplying currency as well. Who knows?

Elyse: It's only circumstantial, but it does suggest that Russell's story could be true. But I need proof. Russell's company, Clarke Printing, started business as Maverick Clarke Litho Company in 1874, so they were certainly around during the Mexican revolution, between 1910 and 1920. But in the early 1940s, they relocated and lost all their early records. So I'm going to have to hunt for evidence elsewhere. First stop is the county sheriff's office. But there's nothing here about Maverick Clarke or the printing of revolutionary currency. San Antonio police department doesn't have any records pre-1950s. And despite a wealth of data, the local courthouse has turned up blank. There's nothing, nothing at all. Maybe Maverick Clarke kept their printing job for the revolutionaries a secret. It's a long shot, but my last hope is the local newspaper. There's some great ads here in the archives, but there's nothing about currency. But here's something. It's a may, 1914, article in the 'San Antonio Express.'

"New money made here on its way to huerta's foes. Currency aggregating 5 million added to Carranza's circulating medium done with all secrecy."

Venustiano Carranza was one of the leaders of the revolution. This article is saying 5 million pesos worth of his currency was being made here in San Antonio. This is great! It's the first evidence that any revolutionary money was being printed in San Antonio. What else is there?

"Adding 5 million to the volume of circulating medium, the Maverick Clarke Litho Company" -- I found it! -- "yesterday completed the huge task of lithographing 1,652,500 pieces of currency ranging in the value of 50 cents to 50 pesos."

So if this newspaper is to be believed, Russell's story is true. Maverick Clarke really were printing money for the revolutionaries. "Contract for this work was signed by Delagarza." So they were printing notes, but were they our notes?

I need to find out more. Maybe the answer lies with this middleman, Delagarza. The University of Texas in Austin has a special Latin-American collection.

Staff: Can I help you with something?

Elyse: Yeah, I'm looking for information on Lazaro Delagarza. I've discovered that they have an archive of correspondence belonging to Lazaro Delagarza. Okay, this says, "Miscellaneous general correspondence, 1914 to 1915." Okay, so this is from a bank in Texas saying that "We enclose our draft of \$1,620 U.S. Dollars to cover your shipment of constitutionalist currency." So this is great. So I know at least that he is involved in shipping some type of currency from Texas. Listen to this. It's a western union telegram from October 31, 1914, to Lagarza.

"We are writing you today regarding stock we have from your order for your notes. Maverick Clarke Litho Company, 1 p.m."

So here's the evidence in Delagarza's own words. The paper trail leads straight to Maverick Clarke. It was conducting legitimate business with the revolutionaries. But what about the three pesos from the museum?

I still don't know if they were the kind of notes Maverick were printing. There is only one kind of expert that can help me, and that's someone who has the ability to know everything about a note just by looking at it. I've managed to track down one of the country's top numismatists, or currency experts, in Massachusetts. Gene Reed should be able to tell me exactly where these notes came from. Well, I have some money and I just want you to take a look at it. Now, have you seen any of these before?

Gene: Oh, all of them. They look real. These letters here were a way of keeping track of how many notes they had printed.

Elyse: So tell me about this note.

Gene: Well, it's a 50 centavos, definitely a first run, and the first run was for 5 million pesos. Carranza asked Villa for 1 million pesos and Villa had Carranza's seal put on them so Carranza would think that they were for him. So these notes were printed by Pancho Villa, who gave some of them to Carranza.

Elyse: I'm amazed that the notes were made for two of the most well-known revolutionaries.

Gene: But there's more. This is a genuine note printed in Texas by Maverick Clarke. Maverick Clarke printed the first run.

Elyse: Oh, Russell's gonna be so excited. Thank you so much. This is fantastic. By pure coincidence, one of the museum's notes, the 50 centavos, was actually printed by Maverick Clarke in 1914. Russell is in for a big surprise. Not only was his company printing Mexican revolutionary pesos, they were printing pesos for two of the revolution's key players, Carranza and Pancho Villa. And we've got one of those notes right here.

Russell, you asked me to find out if Maverick Clarke indeed did make currency for the Mexican revolution.

Russell: Yes, we did.

Elyse: The answer is, they did.

Russell: Oh, that is wonderful.

Elyse: Maverick Clarke printed Mexican pesos, first issue, for -- ready for this? -- Pancho Villa and Carranza.

Russell: Ha, you're kidding! I never dreamed that. That's really something. It's kind of a shock almost. I had no idea that we were involved at that level, at all. And for the two big names in the Mexican revolution. That's incredible. Well, I mean, I think it's really wild that it was the first issue of currency that Pancho Villa ever ordered came from your company. Blew me away. Oh, yeah. We probably didn't get paid for it, now that I think about it. [Laughter] All the employees are going to be surprised, too. They're going to love it, that we were maybe out there a little bit on the edge instead of just the old true-blue boring printing company.

Elyse: Now, you know the peso that you took me to see at the museum?

Russell: M-hm. That group of pesos?

Elyse: Well, one of those pesos was actually printed by your company.

Russell: That's great.



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Elyse: It was the 50-cent peso.

Russell: Oh, really? Oh, my golly! That is just incredible. And you didn't even know that it was Maverick Clarke. Basically, we've lost all the old examples of printing, so for me to touch that one is just amazing.

Elyse: Well, I think I might be able to help you with that. I have a surprise for you. You do the honors.

Russell: Oh! They're original Mexican pesos, revolutionary. Oh, what a wonderful surprise! And they're printed by Maverick Clarke. This is fantastic. This is the oldest piece of printing that we have in our possession from the company and the only piece that we have from way back then. And for it to be this, that's as special as it can be.

Elyse: These notes and the rest of the revolutionary pesos Maverick Clarke printed helped overthrow an oppressive regime and led to the creation in 1917 of a constitution that remains the basis of Mexican democracy today.