

**THE GOLD COBS
OF MEXICO
1679-1732**



**Part 3: The Box-End Cross
Issues of 1700-1710**

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3.1 The Box-End Coinage of 1700-1710

The classic Box-End Cross design appears abruptly in 1700 on all gold denominations. No Jeweled or Plain Cross issues are known to have been struck after 1699. The Box-End Cross design lasts until 1710 with one significant stylistic variation. In 1702 the style of the fleurs in the angles of the cross changes noticeably. At the end of 1710 the Box-End Cross is discontinued in favor of the short-lived Ornate Cross design. Nothing has yet come from the archives explaining why the Box-End Cross design was discontinued.

On the shield side of the first Box-End Cross issues (1700-1701), we have the Hapsburg shield of Carlos II, essentially unchanged throughout the 1690's. A simpler crown, resembling the style of the 1680's, is favored in 1700 and thereafter on most issues. The new Bourbon shield of Philip V is first seen on dated issues of 1702. In 1705 assayer Jose Eustaquio replaces Lopez, but this occasions no design changes.

Presentation pieces were no doubt struck on several occasions in the Box-End era, but only a small group (5) of 1702 Royal onzas survived. All were salvaged in 1964 from a same 1715 Fleet wreck (very improbably said to be the patache of Soto Sanchez). Three now reside in the Florida State Collection.



Mexico 1702 Eight Escudos Royal



3.2 Why we should distinguish the Plain Cross (1695-1699) and the Box-End Cross (1700-1710) series

Plain Cross issues, struck in the five year interval 1695-99, not before or after, carry on the design of the Jeweled Cross series with the sole significant difference of using a thinner “jewelless” crosses. In 1700 the cross side designs were more extensive reworked. An even thinner cross now appears, arms and crossbars no thicker than the tressure lines. The crossbars of the cross are now attached to the tressure, forming the fourth side of a rectangular box at the end of arms. The boxes are connected to another with a thin rope-like line. Soon, possibly in 1701 but certainly by the 1702, the fleurs in the angles of the cross are also redesigned. These redesigns create the classic “Box-End” Cross series that continues until 1710 without serious modification. The striking differences between the Plain Cross and Box-End Cross are best illustrated in comparing the Royals of 1695 and 1702 (as we did section 1.12). Rather than repeat those images, we illustrate to the right the last Plain Cross and the first Box-End Cross issues known. Notice how much the cross and tressure have changed.



Mexico 1699/8/7 eight escudos



Mexico 1700 eight escudos

Photo credit : R. Tauler

3.3 Box-End Cross 1 Escudos (1700-1710)

The first Carlos II Box-End issue comes in 1700. One of two known dated example is pictured below. Its cross is 9 mm wide, the same as on jeweled issues of the period. The “boxes” are large, nearly 5 x 1.5 mm. The crown is simplified. Gone is the doubled upper ban at the base of the crown. A second but undated Carlos II appeared as lot 208 in the Ubilla-Echerez sale of 1964. The Florida State Collection has the other dated 1700 and a 1701/0 (FL ## 11.01694, 11.01684, pictured in Craig).



Mexico 1700 one escudo



Dated Box-End one escudos from the reign of Felipe V are known in commerce for the years 1702, 1703, 1704(two), and 1707(two), 1708/X, 1709, 1710 (three). All but one 1710 appear to be from the 1715 Fleet. The Florida State Collection has dated issues of 1702 (two), 1703 (four), 1704, 1709 and 1710. A 1702 sold by UBS in 1997 is pictured below. No accurate census yet exists for undated Philip Box-End one escudos, but they are not rare.



Mexico 1702 one escudo



Photo credit: R Tauler

3.4 Box-End Cross Two Escudos (1700-1710)

In 1700 first two escudos with classic Box-End designs come from the Mexico City mint. The single known dated example from that year is pictured below. The only other dated Carlos II Box-End two escudos known is a 1701 sold in the Ubilla-Echevez sale (lot 203) of 1964. The Florida Collection has no dated Box-End Cross two escudos of Carlos or Felipe.



Mexico two escudos 1700



Possibly In late 1701, certainly in early 1702, Box-End Cross escudos began to be issued with the Bourbon shield of Philip V. No dated specimens are known until a single 1704* specimen. Another Box-End Cross is believed to occur with a 1708* date (pictured below). Neither the 1704 nor the 1708 dates are certain. Real 8 in the 1964 Ubilla sale auctioned a 1710 dated Box-End Cross two escudos. A second 1710 two escudos is now known. Undated Philip V two escudos with Box-End crosses exist in some numbers.



Mexico two escudos (17)08?



Photo credits: R Tauler

3.5 Box-End Cross Four Escudos

No dated (1700-01) Box-End Cross media onza is known for Carlos II. Undated specimens are rare. Lot 205 in the 1964 Ubilla-Echevez sale offered one from Real 8. The Florida Collection has only one dated Box-End Cross media onza, a later 1705/X issue of Felipe V.

Several years ago, on the internet no less, a 1707 J Box-End Cross 4 escudos with Mel Fisher papers surfaced. It auctioned at Heritage soon after for \$26,000. It is pictured below. Another Philip Box-End Cross (Tauler 106, originally lot 54 in the Schulman 1972 sale) is thought to be dated 1706, but that dating is uncertain. That one, or those two media onzas, represent the entire population of dated Box-End Cross media onzas.



Notice on the 1707 how the cross and tressure seems hand engraved rather than punched in. Wavy lines of irregular thickness say hand engraving. The fleurs by contrast look regular and engraved with punches, but the rest of the central devices looks hand cut. This kind of irregularity is often seen on Mexican escudos 1706-1713, suggesting that in the final phase of the War of Succession Mexico City had difficulty obtaining or producing quality iron punches and dies.



3.6 Box-End Cross Eight Escudos

Three dated Box-End Cross onzas of Carlos II are known, the 1700 pictured below, another in the Mexico Mint collection, and a 1701. No undated Box-End Cross onzas are securely attributed to Carlos II, but with further study one or two may be. The Florida Collection has no Box-End Cross onzas except for the 1702 Royals.

Dated Box-End Cross onzas of Philip V are known for 1703, 1706, 1708, 1709 (two), and 1710 (three). A spectacular 1709/X that sold several years ago for \$46,000 is pictured below. Several features of the die and the striking suggest that this was some sort of special issue. It is not of Royal quality, but not a normal business strike either.



Photo credit: R Tauler

