

Random notes on Esperanto, postcards and Guadalajara

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1. History of Esperanto in Mexico

Esperanto is a relatively easy-to-learn international second language, created by L. L. Zamenhof in 1887. Zamenhof used the pen name Doktoro Esperanto to publish his ideas, and the made-up surname quickly became the name of the language.

By the end of the nineteenth century many educated Mexicans were aware of Esperanto, and of its growth in popularity, especially in Europe. The regime of Porfirio Díaz held a high regard for European ideas, technology, education, industry and fashions.¹

In 1902, *The Mexican Herald*, the leading English-language daily in Mexico City, was telling readers that "the new universal language" was spreading rapidly in France, Italy, Russia, Canada and South America.² Columns and articles about Esperanto appeared several times a year in the paper during the next few years.

At the same time, *El Minero Mexicano*, a weekly Spanish-language Mexico City newspaper, was publishing columns by Ramón Limones, a journalist who was enthusiastic about the potential benefits that Esperanto offered for anyone interested in science or travel.³

The newspaper's front page in August 1903 explained its intention to dedicate a special section each issue to 'teach' the language, via a series of ten lessons authorized by Zamenhof himself.⁴ The paper repeated the entire course after it ended in November. By the end of 1903, an Esperanto group had formed in Orizaba, Veracruz.

The following year, Limones published *El Esperanto en Diez Lecciones*, a book of the course, which was heavily promoted in *The Mexican Herald*.⁵ The paper informed its readers that a "group of intellectual Mexican people" was engaged in propagating the new universal language, and provided contact information for Limones in Mexico City and Dr. A. Vargas in Santa Rosa Necoxtla (now Camerino Z. Mendoza) in the state of Veracruz.

¹ Geovani Ruiz Monroy. 2015. "[El Esperanto en México. Breve semblanza del Esperanto desde su nacimiento hasta su llegada a México.](#)" Vuelo libre. Revista de historia (Guadalajara: U.de G.), Año 1, núm. 2, pp 74-83.

² The Mexican Herald: 12 Oct 1902, 10.

³ Ramón Limones. 1903. "El esperanto" and "Nuevo idioma en diez lecciones", *El Minero Mexicano*, 19 Sep 1903.

⁴ *El Minero Mexicano*: 13 August 1903, 1.

⁵ The Mexican Herald: 12 Dec 1904, 4.

In 1905, Guadalajara-based *Jalisco Libre* published a major article about Esperanto.⁶

La Gaceta de Guadalajara jumped on the bandwagon in 1907, drawing attention to a newly formed Esperanto group in Mexico City, headed by Lic. Ramón Manterola and Prof. Luis G. León, which met the first Sunday of each month at Manterola's home. The group's membership fee was two pesos a year, and they planned to publish an Esperanto paper.⁷ A year later, one Mexico City *preparatorio* was reported to be adding Esperanto to its curriculum.⁸

2. Atequiza postcard, ca 1909?

In the U.K., one of the hotbeds for the early adoption of Esperanto was the leafy London suburb of Wimbledon, site of the eponymous annual tennis championship. A local resident in her fifties, Miss Eliza Ann Lawrence, had learned Esperanto in 1901 and was a member of a local Esperanto group which was the nucleus of a wider London grouping, the London Esperanto Club, formed in 1903.

Two years later, "In 1905 someone called W W Hide of 150 Effra Road, Wimbledon learned Esperanto." The author of those words, Bill Chapman, was unable to trace why these individuals wanted to learn Esperanto, but thought it might be either "through idealism or a desire for contacts overseas, perhaps."⁹



Fig 1. Canal, Hacienda de Atequiza, ca 1909. Photo: Pedro Magallanes.
Published by Alba y Fernández, Guadalajara.

⁶ *Jalisco Libre*, 9 Sep 1905, 1-2.

⁷ *La Gaceta de Guadalajara*: 27 Jan 1907, 11.

⁸ *La Gaceta de Guadalajara*: 12 April 1908, 11.

⁹ Bill Chapman. 2017. "[The History of Esperanto and its Links To Wimbledon.](#)"

This postcard of Atequiza, Jalisco, (Fig. 1) was addressed to Hide (Fig. 2). It is unclear how Octaviano Zamora Fregoso obtained Hide's address, but sending him a postcard in Esperanto suggests that Hide did indeed have "a desire for contacts overseas." According to the handstamp, Zamora Fregoso was a teacher in Tuxpan, Tepic, Mexico, when he wrote the card. The lack of any stamp or postal markings on the card suggests it was originally mailed in an envelope, which was not an uncommon practice at the time.

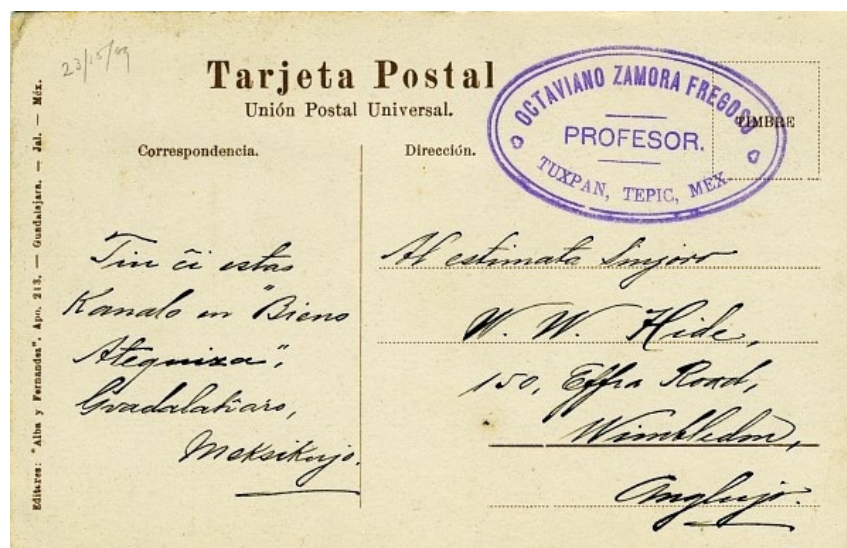


Fig 2. Reverse of Atequiza postcard, with handstamp of Octaviano Zamora Fregoso and brief message in Esperanto.

While I have been unable to find out very much about the sender, it may be the Octaviano Zamora Fregoso (1867-1939) who married (Maria) Inés Nuñez Zuñiga (1895-1959) in November 1912 in Santiago Ixcuintla (now in the state of Nayarit). Their marriage certificate unites Octaviano Zamora Fregoso and Maria Inés Nuñez Zuñiga, but gives his parents' names as Rafael Fregoso and Paula Zamora, which would mean Octaviano's surnames should really be Fregoso Zamora, not Zamora Fregoso! Their three daughters appear to have sorted out this confusion; all used the surnames Fregoso Nuñez.¹⁰

The simple message on the card –written in Esperanto– is "Jin ĉi estas kanalo en "Bieno Atequiza", Gvadalaharo, Meksikiyo."¹¹ ("This is a canal in "Hacienda Atequiza," Guadalajara, Mexico.")

3. Esperanto meeting in Guadalajara, 1913

Sadly, there are no obvious clues to help identify the participants shown, or the photographer (and/or publisher), of this real photograph postcard (Fig. 3) of an Esperanto gathering. A handwritten notation in ink on the back –"Guadalajara, XII-25-913"– appears to be contemporaneous, and suggests this meeting took place in Guadalajara on 25 December 1913.

¹⁰ Flora Inés Fregoso Nuñez (1915-1978), who became a doctor; Ninfa Paulina Fregoso Nuñez (1916-?); and María Lia Irene Fregoso Nuñez (1918-1981).

¹¹ In Esperanto, 'Mexico' is usually Meksiko, rather than Meksikiyo.



Fig 3. Real photo postcard (1913?) of an Esperanto meeting.

4. Arauz postcards with Esperanto captions

Esperanto was sufficiently popular in Mexico in the 1920s that Juan Aráuz Lomeli, one of the more prolific publishers of postcards in Guadalajara, republished a series of views of the city, where the original Spanish-language captions were replaced by captions in Esperanto.¹²



Fig 4. (lt) Aráuz postcard of San Francisco plaza. Fig 5. (rt): Esperanto version (image courtesy of Arq. Toño Aceves).

The caption reads: Esperanta Kolekto / Stacidomo kaj Preĝejo San "Francisco" / Guadalajara, Mex. (Esperanto Collection / San "Francisco" Station and Church) / Guadalajara, Mexico)

¹² Profile of Juan Aráuz Lomeli: <https://lakechapalaartists.com/?p=7457>

5. 2nd Mexican Congress of Esperanto, Guadalajara 1963

This postcard publicized the 2nd Mexican Congress of Esperanto, held in Guadalajara from 26-28 December 1963. The wording in white along the bottom reads 'APRENDA UD ESPERANTO EL IDIOMA DE LA FRATERNIDAD' (Learn Esperanto, the language of fraternity).



Fig 5. Publicity postcard for 2nd Mexican Congress of Esperanto, Guadalajara, 1963.

This seems like a particularly fitting way to conclude these random notes about the links between Esperanto, postcards and Guadalajara!

~ Havu mirindan konferencon!