
Mexico Patent Database [México patentes de invención] 1840-1910**Edward Beatty****Publication Date**

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Mexico Patent Database 1840-1910

Edward Beatty

Sources and Methods

The Mexico Patent Database collects data on patents issued in Mexico from roughly 1840 to the onset of the Mexican Revolution in 1911, totaling approximately thirteen thousand three hundred (13,300) discrete patent records. At present, this is the most comprehensive record available of patents issued by Mexican governments before 1911. There is no single archival or published source that contains a comprehensive list of, or data on, Mexican patents issued during this time period. The section (*ramo*) “Patentes y Marcas” in the Archivo General de la Nación (AGN) contains official files on about one thousand four hundred (1,400) patents, or about one-tenth of the total issued by the national government during this period. Many of the files held in the AGN represent rich sources of detailed evidence on inventions and patent claims by applicants, including application letters, technical drawings, administrative notes, and sometimes additional materials. Jorge A. Soberanis (1989) presents a useful catalog of these materials in his “Catálogo de patentes de invención en México durante el siglo XIX (1840–1900): Ensayo de interpretación sobre el proceso de industrialización del México decimonónico,” and the AGN materials have been used productively by several scholars. However, the documents in the AGN represent only a fraction of the patents issued by Mexican governments over the course of the century and thus do not offer a useful guide to broader patterns or trends. The Mexico Patent Database includes all patents in the AGN as well as roughly 9,000 additional patents solicited and/or issued during the period.

The Mexico Patent Database contains records of roughly 13,300 patents issued by the Mexican government in response to patent applications under the laws of 1832, 1890, and 1903. Compiling this database required consulting the daily, monthly, or annual volumes of four different official publications of the Mexican government in the nineteenth century as well as the archival files in the AGN. These include the annual *Memorias* of the Development Ministry (Ministerio (or Secretaría) de Fomento), the annual volumes of Manuel Dublán and José María Lozano’s *Legislación Mexicana* for the period before 1890; daily issues of the *Diario Oficial de la Nación* from 1890 until October 1903, and the monthly issues of the *Gaceta Oficial de*

Patentes y Marcas from October 1903 (with the creation of Mexico's first Patent Office) to the onset of the Mexican Revolution in 1911. Locating every monthly volume of this last publication required visiting libraries in Mexico City, Washington DC, New York, and Boston.

Each of these publications typically published notices or lists of patent applications and concessions. None of these publications cover the full time period of this dataset, and therefore none can be relied on to provide a comprehensive list of conceded patents. Together, however, they provide notices of roughly 13,300 patents over the seventy year period, capturing a nearly comprehensive list of all those issued by successive Mexican governments. All evidence suggests that relatively few patent applications were not eventually conceded by the government during this period for reasons of noncompliance with patenting requisites (the patenting process did not include an examination for novelty or utility). Less than five percent of applications were formally denied through the century, and there was no significant or persistent temporal backlog in processing patent applications. There is no evidence to suggest that for the pre-1910 period, the trends and tendencies in solicited patents differ substantially from those of conceded patents. Nevertheless, the current Mexico Patent Database is likely not perfectly comprehensive. First, it probably includes records of some modest number of patent applications that were not eventually conceded. Roughly three hundred and fifty in the database are listed as "in process" (*"en tramitación"*), although most of these fall in the last two years of the period, and most of those were likely conceded subsequently. Second, there may be some solicited and conceded patents that were missed in the data collection process and are not found in this database. Third, a few patents may be listed twice, first as an application, and second as a conceded patent, although every effort was made to locate and remove such duplications. All evidence suggests that the numbers in each of these three categories are very small relative to the total number of conceded patents for the period. We ask scholars who use this database and who discover errors or omissions to contact the author so that the appropriate corrections can be made to subsequent versions (Edward (Ted) Beatty, at ebeatty@nd.edu).

Each of the records in the database contains, when available in the published notice: (1) the name of the applicant(s), (2) the applicant's legal status (individual or corporate), (3) nationality, (4) the brief published description of the patent, (5) the legal date of concession, and (6) the assigned patent number. The assigned patent numbers do not always follow a consistent sequential pattern in the years before 1890, when there was no federal office consistently

designated to administer the patent system. Patents issued under the new law of that year, beginning August 1st, are numbered sequentially starting at “1,” and were administered beginning in 1903 by the newly created Patent and Trademarks Office (*Oficina de Patentes y Marcas*). Roughly one thousand patents in the database do not have an assigned patent number, either because the number was not included in the published listing or because it was missed in the data entry process. Users’ assistance in addressing this issue and other kinds of missing information is appreciated. The date of application (7) is included for some records, when that was available in the published notices. A few records also contain information on (8) the stated residence of the applicant, (9) the name of the patent agent employed by the applicant, if any, and notations on (10) patent terms, (11) renewals, (12) fees, and (13) official classification by economic sector. Classification codes follow those assigned by Mexico’s Patent Office in 1903, and listed in the “Classification System” document that accompanies the database. The coding book that accompanies the database details each of these categories and the specifications for each field in the database. The data were initially entered in a Microsoft Access database, and is available here for download as a .csv file. Further information on the database can be obtained by contacting the author at ebeatty@nd.edu. Researchers interested in Mexican patenting activity after 1920 can begin their search by using the digitized *Gacetas* available on the website of the Instituto Mexicano de Propiedad Industrial (IMPI), at <http://siga.impi.gob.mx>.

Scholars and students interested in using patent data and patent records for historical research face a large scholarly literature on the subject and can gain an introduction to published works in this field by consulting recent work on Mexican and Latin American patent history. The bibliographies of these provide a useful window onto the broader theoretical and comparative literature on patenting histories. The scholarly literature on the history of patent institutions and patenting activity is especially large for Western European countries and the United States.¹ A partial bibliography of relevant publications on Mexico is provided at the end of this document; readers are invited to send any references we have overlooked.

¹ This field of literature is too large to detail here. For several useful and recent publications that provide a window onto the broader field, see: Zorina Khan, *The Democratization of Invention: Patents, Copyrights, and American Economic Development, 1790-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Christine MacLeod, *Inventing the Industrial Revolution: The English Patent System, 1660-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); volume 24 and volume 31 of the journal *History of Technology*; and Graeme Gooday and Steven Wilf, *Patent Cultures: Global Diversity and Harmonization in Historical Perspective*, Cambridge University Press, 2018.

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- Any use of the data in published reports or papers should appropriately acknowledge the source, and cite the source in any table (Edward Beatty, “Mexico Patent Database 1840-1910,” University of Notre Dame.)
- Please inform the author of any errors or omissions. This will enable us to update and improve the database, and to share improvements with users.
- We appreciate receiving copies of all published papers and working papers that use or refer to this data. This will allow us, for instance, to inform you of any errors or changes made in the data, and will facilitate a community of researchers on related topics.
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