

AN
ILLUSTRATED
ENCYCLOPAEDIA
OF
POST-REVOLUTION
HAVANA CIGARS

Trial Printing

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**ILLUSTRATED
ENCYCLOPAEDIA**
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**POST-REVOLUTION
HAVANA CIGARS**

Min Ron Nee

Second Edition Number 0000/2000

Special Acknowledgement

I would like to thank Cubatabaco and Habanos S.A. for the kind permission to reprint images in old official illustrated catalogues. These images appear in many pages and are marked by © Cubatabaco or © Habanos S.A.

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Numerical

510 Humidor

A commemorative humidor produced by Habanos S.A. to commemorate the 510th Anniversary of the discovery of the New World by Christopher Columbus.

Date of launching

Produced in 2002. Officially launched during the 5th Habanos Festival held in February 2003 where Humidor Number 510 was auctioned. Available for public sale in Hong Kong in April 2003.

Number produced

510. Numbers 001 to 510.

Packaging

100 cigars per humidor. 20 each of 5 different vitolas of 5 Global Brands packed in a handmade humidor with beautiful wood inlays. "...it is made from 6 woods, namely ukola, pommele, cedar, eucalyptus, bubinga and sycamore, giving it a multi colored look."*

*Source: From the auction brochure circulated during the Festival.



510 Humidor.



The beautiful wood inlays of the top of the 510 Humidor. Actual size, vertical view.

Cigars

Brand	Commercial Vitola Name	Factory Vitola Name	Number of Cigars	Ring Gauge	Length (Metric)	Length (Imperial)
Cohiba	Espléndidos	Julieta 2	20	47/47	178 mm 176 mm	7 inches
Hoyo de Monterrey	Épique No. 1	Coronas Gordas	20	46/46	143 mm 142 mm	5 5/8 inches
Montecristo	Montecristo No. 2	Pirámides	20	52/51	156 mm 155 mm	6 1/8 inches
Partagás	Royales de Partagás	Felipe 24	20	45/45	115 mm 113 mm	4 1/2 inches
Romeo y Julieta	Hermosos No. 3	Hermosos No. 3	20	48/48	140 mm 139 mm	5 1/2 inches

Figures in black colour are official dimensions.
 Figures in green colour are by direct measurement.

Cohiba Espléndidos

Construction	Favour Intensity	Overall Strength	Balance	Elegance	Complexity	Aftertaste
3	3	2	3	3	3	3

Tasting notes

(From cigars of 3 different humidors tasted between 2011 and 2012.)

Appears to be just regular production Cohiba Espléndidos made in 2002.

The draw is a trifle on the loose side. Mildly herbaceous, with faint hints of cocoa, vanilla, coffee, blended within the typical Cohiba grassy background taste. Very subtly sugary sweet.

The main impression is the classic Cohiba grassy taste. All other flavours appear faint.

The blend tastes like a hybrid of old Criollo and newer strains.

Compared with the performance of pre-1995 cigars when at 10 years old, it is obvious this cigar lacks the necessary *substances* to age into a great cigar. Aging potential will not be remotely close to the “original ones”.

Just an average 2002 Cohiba Espléndidos you would expect from an ordinary box.

Overall score: 3/5 by early 1997 to mid-2003 era standards.

Hoyo de Monterrey Épique No. 1

Construction	Favour Intensity	Overall Strength	Balance	Elegance	Complexity	Aftertaste
2	2	2	3	3	3	2

Tasting notes

(From cigars of 3 different humidors tasted between 2011 and 2012.)

The ones which I have tried were quite under-filled, might need some adjustment in smoking pace to compensate.

Appears to be just regular production Hoyo de Monterrey Épique No. 1 made in 2002.

Overall taste is faint in everything. There is an impressive sugary sweetness which is quite pleasant though.

The blend tastes mainly of new tobacco strains. There are no old Criollo fillers detectable. Aging potential unknown, but not looking good.

Overall score: 2/5 by early 1997 to mid-2003 era standards.



Cohiba Espléndidos



Hoyo de Monterrey Épique No. 1

Montecristo No. 2



Montecristo No. 2

Construction	Favour Intensity	Overall Strength	Balance	Elegance	Complexity	Aftertaste
4	3	3	3	3	3	3

Tasting notes

(From cigars of 3 different humidors tasted between 2011 and 2012.)

The only thing I could manage to remember is everything is just about average, save construction being a trifle above par for the early 1997 to mid-2003 era.

Appears to be just regular production Montecristo No. 2 made in 2002.

The vast proportion of the filler tastes of new strain tobaccos, with a hint of old Criollo mixed within.

Faint in old school Montecristo taste, but nonetheless the experience is quite pleasant.

Ultimate aging potential unknown. It seems still not to be on the downhill trend yet.

Nothing really bad can be said about this cigar, but nothing really good either.

Overall score: 3/5 by 1997 to mid-2003 standards.

Partagás Royales de Partagás



Partagás Royales de Partagás

Construction	Favour Intensity	Overall Strength	Balance	Elegance	Complexity	Aftertaste
4	4	4	5	5	5	4

Tasting notes

(From cigars of 3 different humidors tasted between 2011 and 2012.)

The only gem of the 510 Humidor.

Above average construction, but cannot be described as flawless.

It is obvious this cigar is specially made from choice first class old Criollo fillers and the blend is designed to reproduce the “old style Partagás” taste profile. The fillers taste of pure old time Criollo.

Full of typical Partagás’ hallmark flavours, strong pleasant tobacco taste, with very full peppery and earthy tastes. There is a very pleasant unforgettable complex subtle sweet taste not present in “old style Partagás” cigars.

Great balance with long lingering aftertaste.

All in all a great cigar, no doubt on the improving path.

Aging potential at least on par with every classic pre-1995 Partagás commercial production vitola.

Overall score: 5/5 by 1997 to mid-2003 standards. 4/5 by pre-1995 era standards.

The new strain tobacco wrapper is less fragrant than the old Corojo, hence the less than 5/5 score.



510 Humidor cigars, vertical view.

(Approximate 3D actual size, perspective projection. The humidor is depicted in actual size.)

Romeo y Julieta Hermosos No. 3

Construction	Favour Intensity	Overall Strength	Balance	Elegance	Complexity	Aftertaste
3	2	3	1	1	2	1

Tasting notes

(From cigars of 3 different humidors tasted between 2011 and 2012.)

The single good thing which I can say is its consistent construction and good draw, otherwise this might very well be the worst cigar of the 510 Humidor.

The blend appears to be specially designed, but very unfortunately flawed. Muted flavours, lacks balance and complexity. Fillers seem to be all new strain tobaccos.

Overall comment about the 510 Humidor

The cigars are disappointing as a Limited Edition Humidor, with the single exception of Partagás Royale de Partagás.

2000 to 2012 were chaotic years in Cuban cigar production. This might have been a rushed project. In some humidors it was discovered that the cigar bands of Partagás and Romeo y Julieta were mixed up.

The 510 Humidor looks quite beautiful. The “Cuban Art” in it is instantly recognisable, and is built with first class craftsmanship.

Romeo y Julieta Hermosos No. 3



510 Humidor.



2 First Day Covers commemorating the 5th Habanos Festival. (Actual size. Private collection of the author.)

EMS

Means “English Market Selection”.

The British market traditionally favours darker wrappers more than the rest of the world. The term was actually an American creation. Originating from “Faber, Coe and Gregg, Inc.”, a firm which imported Havana Cigars into the USA before the Embargo. “EMS” was used to distinguish between “AMS” and “AMS”, “American Market Selection”. The American market preferred specially treated light green wrappers* at the time.

*See Part II **Romeo y Julieta - Commercial Production - Churchills** for the light green wrapper colour.

In June 1992, British cigar merchants “Joseph Samuel and Sons” and “Hunters & Frankau” started to put an “EMS” stamp on all boxes of cigars cleared from bond for the domestic market. Nowadays the term is commonly interpreted as referring to cigars imported by UK cigar merchants.

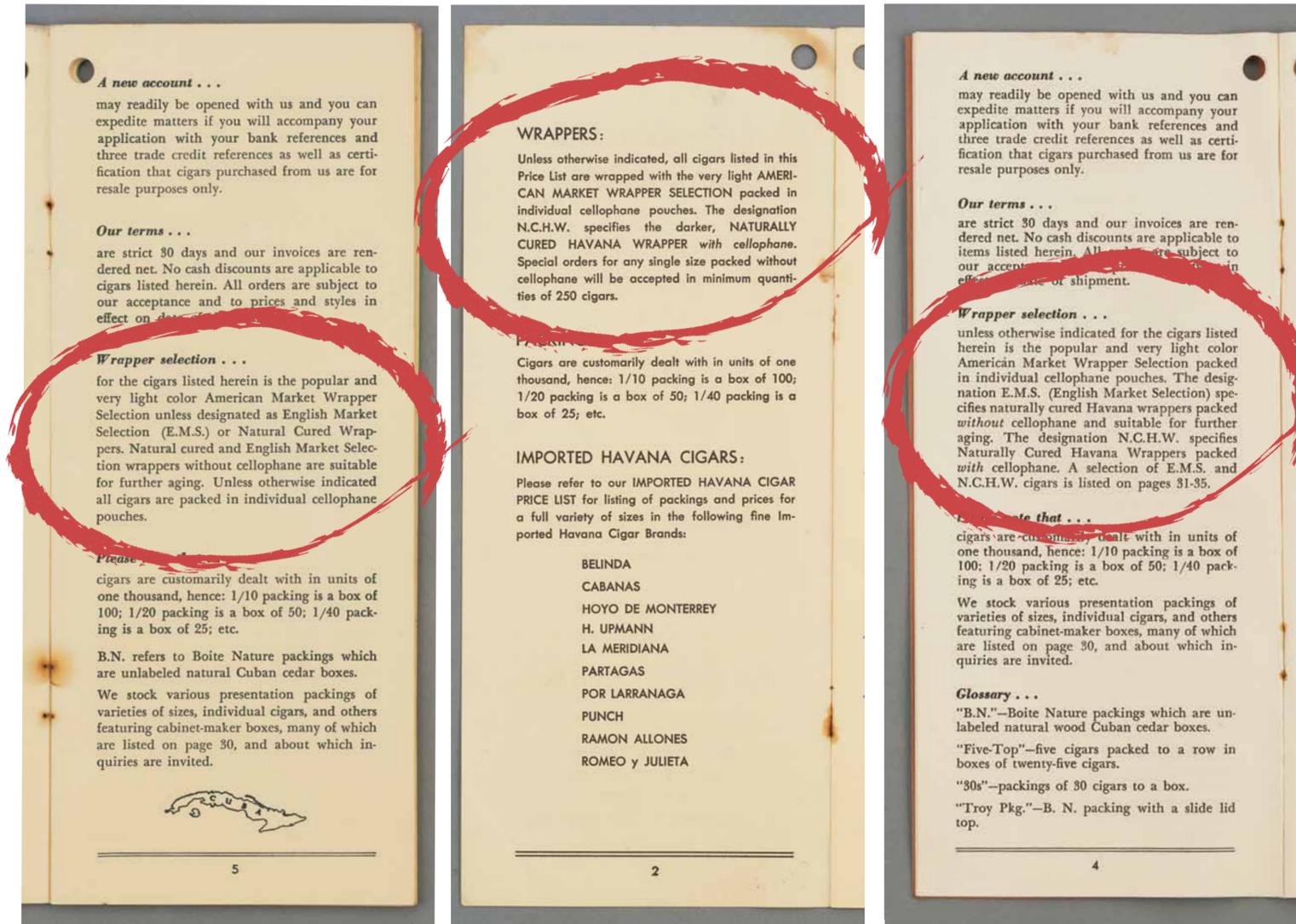
Source: Veteran British cigar merchants.



A salesman’s cigar samples of “Faber, Coe & Gregg, Inc.” believed to be from the mid to late 1950’s.

The purpose of these samples was to demonstrate to potential customers the difference in colour between “AMS” and “EMS” cigars.

(Actual size. Actual colour. The colour of the cigars might be darker than they originally were 6 decades ago. Cigars become darker with age, no exceptions. Private collection of the author.)



Top left: A page from “Imported Havana Cigars, Wholesale Price List, Effective September 1, 1954.”

Top middle: A page from “International Cigar Brands and Domestic Cigars, Wholesale Price List, Effective June 1, 1957.”

Top right: A page from “Imported Havana Cigars, Wholesale Price List, Effective January 1, 1958.”

These are wholesale price lists issued by “Faber, Coe & Gregg, Inc.” before the Revolution.

The difference between “AMS” and “EMS” [also called “NCHW”, “Naturally Cured Havana Wrapper”] is explained by “Faber, Coe & Gregg, Inc.”. (Contents encircled by the author in red.)

(All price lists depicted in actual sizes. All price lists private collection of the author.)

Bottom right:

The first “EMS” stamp amongst all my boxes of Cuban cigars.

This stamp is from a box of Bolivar Regentes purchased first hand in London. According to the date code underneath the box, the cigars were boxed in June 1991, 12 months before the “EMS” stamps were first introduced in the UK. There is a time difference because these stamps are put onto cigar boxes after they have been cleared from bond in the UK, and not before they leave Cuba.

The first “EMS” stamp was light green in colour. This colour remained unchanged until October 1997, when it was changed to other colours.

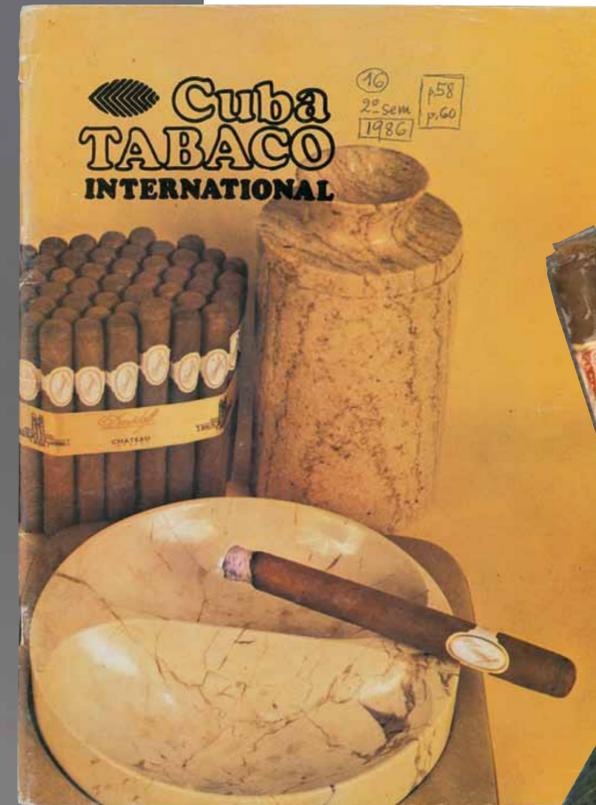
The subsequent colours and dates of change can be found in Hunters & Frankau’s website.



(Actual size. Cigar box private collection of the author.)



Two marble jars which hold 25 corona size cigars believed to be from the late 1960's. This type of packaging is not mentioned in any official catalogues. The only reference I can find suggesting that it is an official packaging comes from a photograph on the cover of a "Cubatabaco International" magazine from the mid-1980's. (Approximate 3D actual size, perspective projection. The 2 jars are of the same height, the white one is slightly larger in girth. Private collection of the author.)



Below: "Cubatabaco International" magazine, No. 16, Second semester, 1986. (Magazine private collection of the author. Cover photograph © Cubatabaco.)



Left: The jar and the cigars.

Only specimens containing corona size cigars with "Cubatabaco" cigar bands exist to my knowledge.

This together with their extreme rarity, suggests that this type of packaging has not been used in any cigar brands in commercial production.

Very likely the reason is because these marble jars were expensive to produce, and cigar merchants at that time refused to pay extra money for ultra fancy packaging.

All the items listed in the "Cubatabaco Luxurious Cabinets" booklet released in 1971 proved to be commercial failures.

(Approximate 3D actual size, perspective projection.)

Using the official Cuban guaranty seals

Towards the end of the 19th Century, the problem of fake cigars became a big problem amongst legitimate Cuban cigar producers.

These cigars include products within the Island of Cuba, imitating or blatantly faking famous brands, and products outside of the Island of Cuba advertised as Cuban products.

In 1886 the “Unión de Fabricantes de Tabacos” (UFT) was founded to try to rectify the problem. The Spanish Government issued a Royal Order on 13 February 1889 to authorise the UFT to issue its own guaranty seal for its members.

This is the first ever official guaranty seal of Cuban cigars.

This guaranty seal remained continuously in use until the next new seal appeared in 1905. During the US occupation of Cuba from 1898 to 1902, the US temporary Government issued an official guaranty seal. It has never been recognised by the Cuban cigar industry.

Source: Cigar experts in Cuba.

1889 to 1905



The First Generation Official Cuba Guaranty Seal, legally effective on 27 March 1889, actual launching date unclear. (Actual size. Private collection of the author.)

In 1902 the Island of Cuba became independent of Spanish Colonial rule and the República de Cuba (Republic of Cuba) was founded.

By necessity this guaranty seal was re-designed by UFT. The words “República de Cuba”, with the official Coat of Arms of the Republic, were incorporated into the new guaranty seal. It had an additional “Presidencia - República de Cuba” ink stamp, with additional ink stamps of the manufacturers.

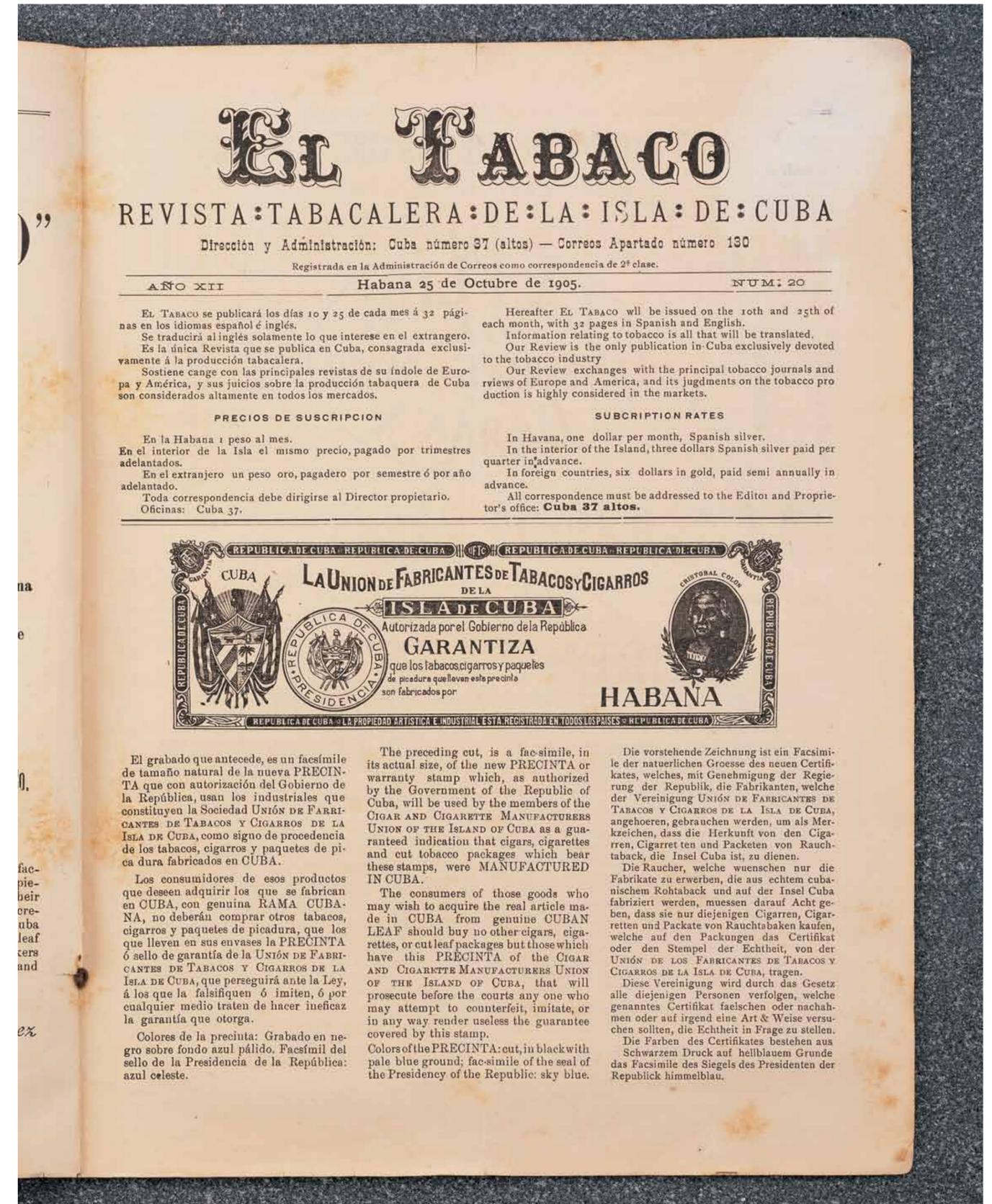
Although most books conveniently quote the first appearance of this guaranty seal as 1902, while searching through “El Tabaco” magazines of the period, I by luck discovered that the official debut of this new guaranty seal was in October 1905, as reported in “El Tabaco” magazine, 25 October 1905 Issue. (See photograph of the 1905 “El Tabaco” magazine on opposite page.)

This guaranty seal remained in continuous use until the Valdés Carrero Act was passed on 16 July 1912, and was replaced by the now famous Cuban Green Warranty Seal we all know nowadays. The new green seal first appeared in March 1913, as announced by “El Tabaco” magazine, 25 March 1913 Issue. (See photograph of the 1913 “El Tabaco” magazine on overleaf page.)

1905 to 1913



The Second Generation Official Cuba Guaranty Seal, 1905 to 1913. (Actual size. Private collection of the author.)



The inner front page of “El Tabaco” magazine, 25 October 1905 Issue, announcing the introduction of the new Guaranty Seal of the new Republic of Cuba.

(Actual size. Private collection of the author.)



Diplomatic Lonsdale size (Cervantes vitola) cigars packaged in a "Cinco Bocas" cabinet.

These were Diplomatic Cigars for the "XXXIII FERIA INTERNACIONAL DE BARCELONA" ("33rd International Fair of Barcelona") held in Spain in 1965.

(Approximate 3D actual size, perspective projection. The front height of the cabinet is depicted in actual size. Private collection of the author.)



The Cinco Bocas cabinet with the lid closed.

Front view.



Back view.



“Bohio” humidor.



“Bohio” humidor fully opened.



Cohiba, y no tabaco, era como llamaban los aborígenes de Cuba a la planta de hojas sedosas que ponían sobre ascuas. Tabaco era la horquilla hueca que usaban para aspirar por la nariz el humo cuyo delicado aroma dió fama universal al nombre.

Diplomatic Cohiba Lanceros. First generation cigar band design in Boite Nature Box of 50's.

(Cigars depicted are in actual size. Property of a Canadian gentleman.)

Cohiba

Coronas Especiales - First generation cigar band

This is the only confirmed legitimate box of “First generation cigar band” Cohiba Coronas Especiales I personally know to exist.

It has an interesting, but in my opinion, trustworthy provenance story. It belongs to the estate of a Hungarian General.

The story from the General’s widow is that Fidel Castro gave this box of Cohiba to the General when he visited Hungary sometime in the early 1970’s. The two men sat down and smoked 2 cigars right away. The box was never touched again and was put into safe storage.

The widow sold some of the General’s belongings after the General passed away 2 years ago [at the time of writing: early 2014], including this box of cigar, to a Hungarian gentleman who is not in the cigar trade.

In order to find a buyer he contacted cigar merchants in Hungary. He searched the internet and found Nino Muñoz “Flying Cigar”, who writes a world famous cigar blog and is a dear friend of mine.

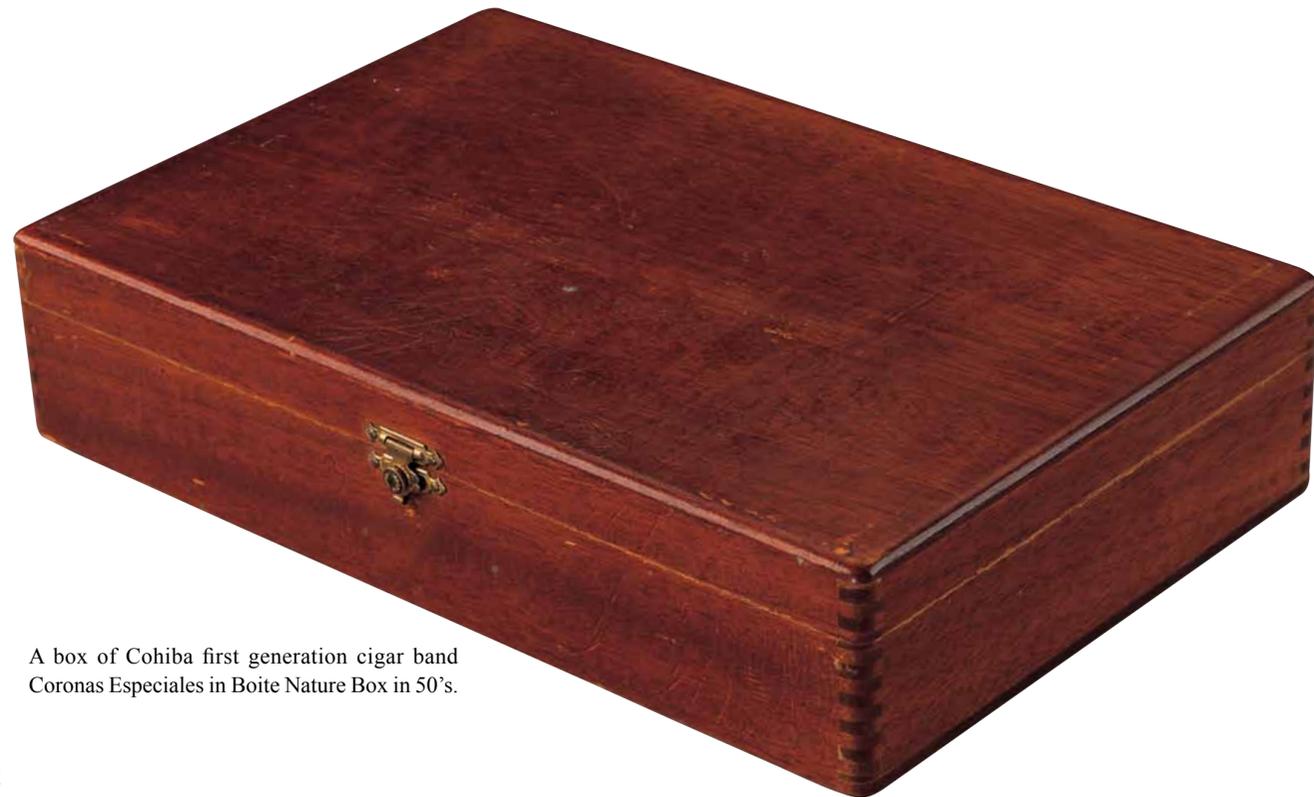
Nino invited the Hungarian gentleman to Germany. Nino kindly authenticated the cigars and I bought the box. I would like to take this occasion to thank Nino for his courtesy.

Some cigars are so outrageously rare that I cannot find them. But somehow they manage to find me.

Interesting note:

This cigar measures 152 mm including the cellophane.
Its actual length excluding cellophane is estimated to be 150 mm versus the official 152 mm listed. Shrinkage in length of 2 mm has occurred during 4 decades.

Diplomatic Cohiba Coronas Especiales with first generation cigar band.



A box of Cohiba first generation cigar band Coronas Especiales in Boite Nature Box in 50's.



A box of Diplomatic Cohiba Coronas Especiales with first generation cigar band in Boite Nature Box in 50's, believed to be from 1969. This is believed to be a personal gift from Fidel Castro to a Hungarian General when he visited Hungary sometime in the early 1970's.

The 2 missing cigars are believed to have been smoked by Fidel Castro and the Hungarian General during their meeting.

(Cigars depicted are in actual size. Private collection of the author.)

Bolívar

A cigar brand.

Pre-Revolution History

The “traditional” pre-Revolution history of Bolívar brand is now deemed completely invalid following the discovery of irrefutable documental and material evidence accumulated by the author since the first edition.

Internet trademark search of “Bolívar” cigars from the United States Patent and Trademark Office states that the “Bolívar” cigar brand was filed for trademark registration on April 15, 1913 by “WALTERS & CO. COMPOSED OF ROBERT MIDDLEMAS AND PERCY J. WOODS, SUBJECTS OF THE KING OF ENGLAND FIRM ENGLAND ST. BOTOLPH HOUSE ALDGATE, LONDON, E.C. GREAT BRITAIN.” This British Firm was the distributor of the Bolívar brand in the UK at the time.

The trademark was approved on April 15, 1913, with the applicant listed as owner.

The “FIRST USE IN COMMERCE” was listed as “18950000”, meaning year 1895, precise date unclear.

This claim is supported by the discovery of a Bolívar papeleta with the words “COPYRIGHT 1894, GEO, S. HARRIS & SONS, PHILA.”.

Internet search of this company from the website of “Library Company of Philadelphia” confirms that there was indeed such a lithographer in Philadelphia at the time.

The “almost accepted as truth” legend that the brand was created by José Fernández Rocha is also disputed by the discovery of 2 old Cuban cigar boxes, one with the first generation official guaranty seal (1888 - 1905), the other with second generation official guaranty seal (1905 - 1913).

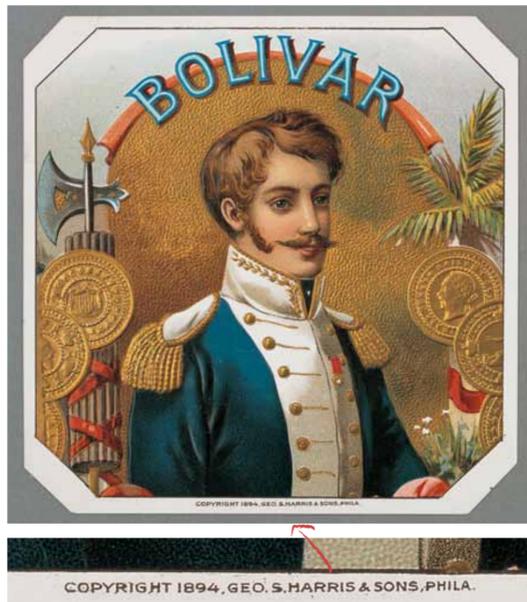
On the guaranty seal of the first box, despite half gone, the partial word “Rodríguez” is clearly legible.

On the guaranty seal of the second box, the words “José Rodríguez” is clearly ink stamped.

Nothing can be found on further research of “José Rodríguez” as an individual, company, factory or owner of brands.

He is not listed in the “Prices Current of the Independent Havana Cigar Factories”, July 1905, by “Federico Baureiedel & Co.”. This was a near-exhaustive price list of “*Marca Independiente*” cigar brands at that time. In this price list, “Rocha y Ca” at “San Miguel No. 100” was listed as a “*Fabricantes*”, meaning “owner of tobacco brands”. (See Glossary of Terms for explanation.) This firm only makes 2 brands, El Crepúsculo and Nené, both quite obscure brands.

It may be concluded that whoever “José Rodríguez” was, he must not have been a very prominent cigar personality in Cuba at his time.



A Bolívar papeleta believed to be from the year 1894. (Actual size. Private collection of the author.)



An old Bolívar box with the first generation (1888 - 1905) guaranty seal.

(Approximate 3D actual size, perspective projection. Private collection of the owner.)



Front of the box depicting the guaranty seal. (Actual size.)



An old Bolívar box with the second generation (1905 - 1913) guaranty seal.

(Approximate 3D actual size, perspective projection. Private collection of the owner.)



Back of the box depicting the guaranty seal. (Actual size.)

Romeo y Julieta

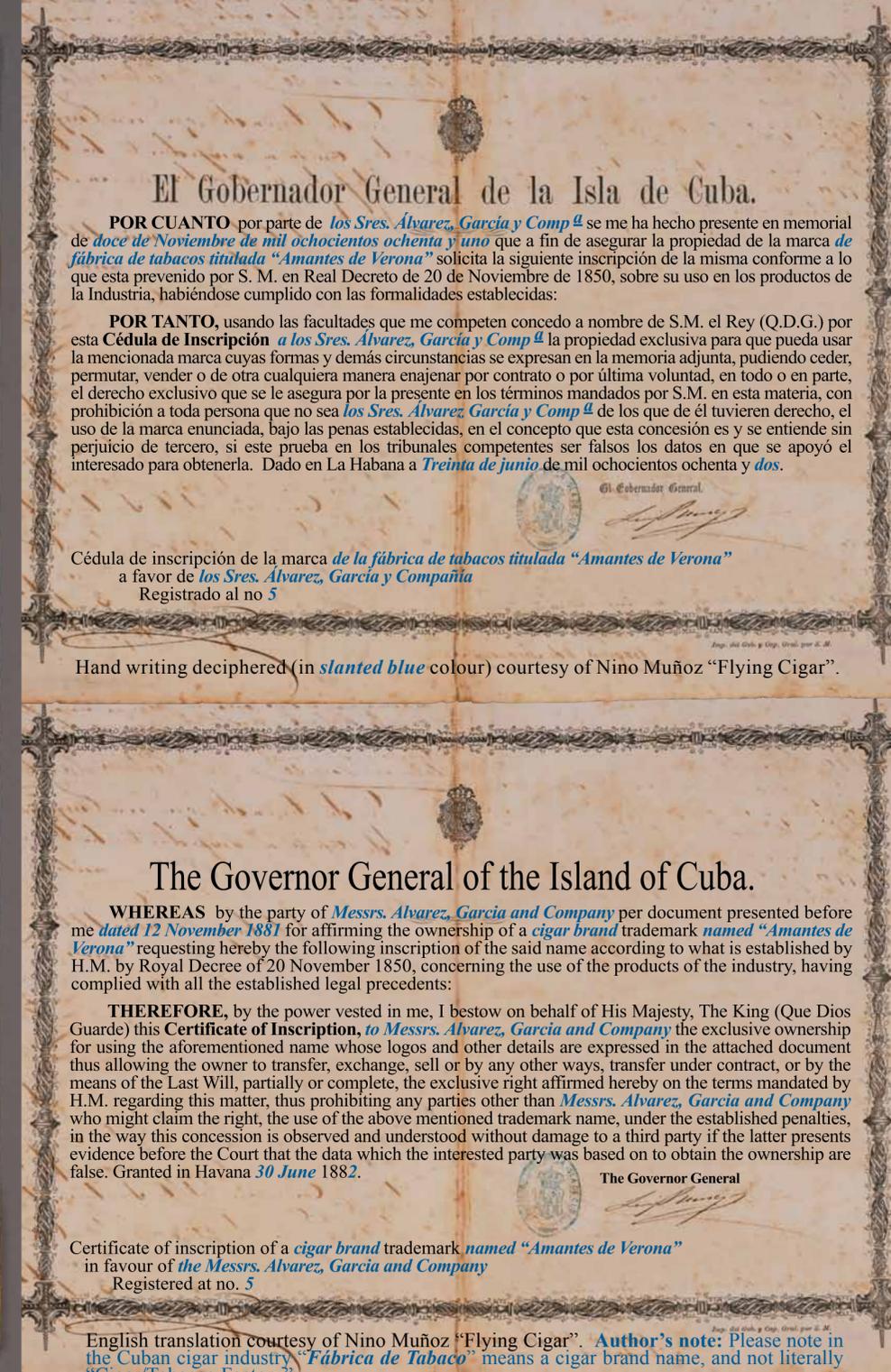
A cigar brand.

Pre-Revolution History

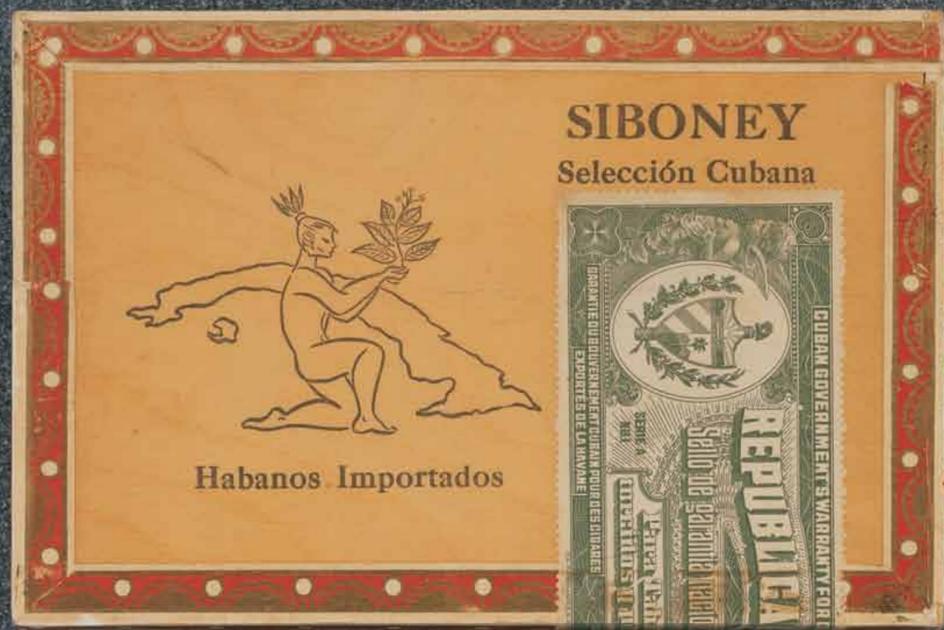
The complete 19th Century history of this brand can now be documented with almost surgical precision, as the complete set of official Cuban Government documents has been acquired by the author since the publication of the first edition.



An official Cuban document. Certificate of Inscription of cigar brand trademark "Amantes de Verona" ("Lovers of Verona") dated 30 June 1882. (Actual size. Document private collection of the author. Purchased from an auction in Europe.)



English translation courtesy of Nino Muñoz "Flying Cigar". **Author's note:** Please note in the Cuban cigar industry, "Fábrica de Tabaco" means a cigar brand name, and not literally "Cigar/Tobacco Factory".



Front of the box of Siboney Coronas Tip No. 3, dated "31 OCT 1962" on the back. Actual size.



Back of the box of Siboney Coronas Tip No. 3, with date stamp dated "31 OCT 1962". Actual size.



Front of the box of Siboney Coronas Tip No. 3, dated circa 1976. Actual size.



Back of the Siboney Coronas Tip No. 3, dated circa 1976. Actual size.

Careful examination and comparison between the "Siboney Man on the Cuba map" logo stamp, the "Habanos Importados" stamp and the "SIBONEY Selección Cubana" stamp of both boxes confirms beyond any doubt that both boxes were stamped by an identical stamp with 3 components.

The fact that the stamp mark on the circa 1976 box is heavily worn out suggests that many, many boxes of similar Siboney cigars were produced in between the 2 periods.

This begs the burning question: where have all these boxes gone? An educated guess is that the Siboney brand failed to sell in the international market and ended up as a domestic brand. The Siboney brand might have never been sold in Cuba tourist shops. This explains why these boxes, which were once mass produced, are practically unheard of outside of Cuba. I have met many senior Cuban citizens who remember the Siboney brand.

The 1962 box: The absolute uniformity of the gap between the "MADE IN HAVANA - CUBA" stamp and the "HECHO EN CUBA" stamp suggests that this is a single stamp, and that the "HECHO EN CUBA" stamp is not a later re-stamp.

Amongst all the cigar boxes I have ever seen, this stamp is absolutely unique. This, together with the odd position of the green seal, suggests that there must be something very, very special about this 1962 Siboney box.

The late 1970's box: The dating of the box to about 1976 is based on the third generation green warranty seal (1972 to 2000) plus the worn out degree of the "HECHO EN CUBA" stamp.

Note that "REVISADO" and "FUMIGADO" ink stamps appear on both boxes. These appear to be different ink stamps. The significance of this is not clear at the moment and will be the subject of further research.



A Fonseca cigar commissioned by "Paris" (very probably by the City of Paris) for André Tardieu (1876 -1945), 3 times Prime Minister of France (3 November 1929 to 17 February 1930, 2 March 1930 to 4 December 1930, 20 February 1932 to 10 May 1932).

The front of the cigar reads: "Fait Spécialement pour le 'Grand Français' André Tardieu, Président du Conseil des Ministres, Paris.", meaning "Specially made for the 'Great Frenchman' André Tardieu, Prime Minister [of France], Paris."

The back reads: "Habana - F. E. Fonseca & Co., New York. Guaranteed pure Havana tobaccos, long filler and especially prepared. Patent No. 6*X*5.540 (* Guessing, **Illegible)."

(Approximate 3D actual size, perspective projection. The 2 Time magazines are actual size. Fonseca cigar, Time magazines, early 20th Century Art Nouveau sterling silver ashtray all private collection of the author. Items placed on an actual granite tile, texture specially commissioned by the author for photographic effect. Background is not done by computer effect.)



Front and back of the cigar in actual size.

The cigar measures 141 mm or ~ 5 1/2 inches including the tissue wrapping. It is probably a Petit Corona size cigar (5 inches) if the tissue wrapping is removed.

Commercial Production

Altezas Reales

Date of introduction: Pre-Revolution. An educated guess would be during the Roaring Twenties.

Date of discontinuation: Official date: Sometime pre -1980.* Production ceased in 1975.**

* Source: This vitola is not listed in the complete cigar list in a 1980 internal Cubatabaco document.

**Source: Author's interview with veteran workers in the Partagás Factory in 2002.

Construction: Totally hand-made. Long filler.

A cigar of historical importance. This is the only post-Revolution cigar in commercial production known to be produced of the Salomones Española vitola prior to 2003. (See entry **Part I Vitolas - Salomones**).

Old boxes of Cifuentes Altezas Reales happen to be extremely rare. I have only seen 4 boxes for sale to date, all originally imported into Spain. I was not able to buy one single box when doing the first edition.

These cigars are too precious to smoke, and I intend to keep the box intact as a legacy for posterity, unless I can find another box.

Dimension

Ring Gauge	Length (Metric)	Length (Imperial)	Factory name	Vitola number	Shape
57	184 mm	7 1/4 inches	Salomones Española		Perfecto

Packaging

Semi Plain Box	Slide Lid Box	Cardboard Pack	Semi Boite Nature with Brooch	Special Packaging
(Without cellophane) 10's				

Cifuentes Altezas Reales from a 1975 official Cubatabaco catalogue. It measures 181 mm in length. ©Cubatabaco



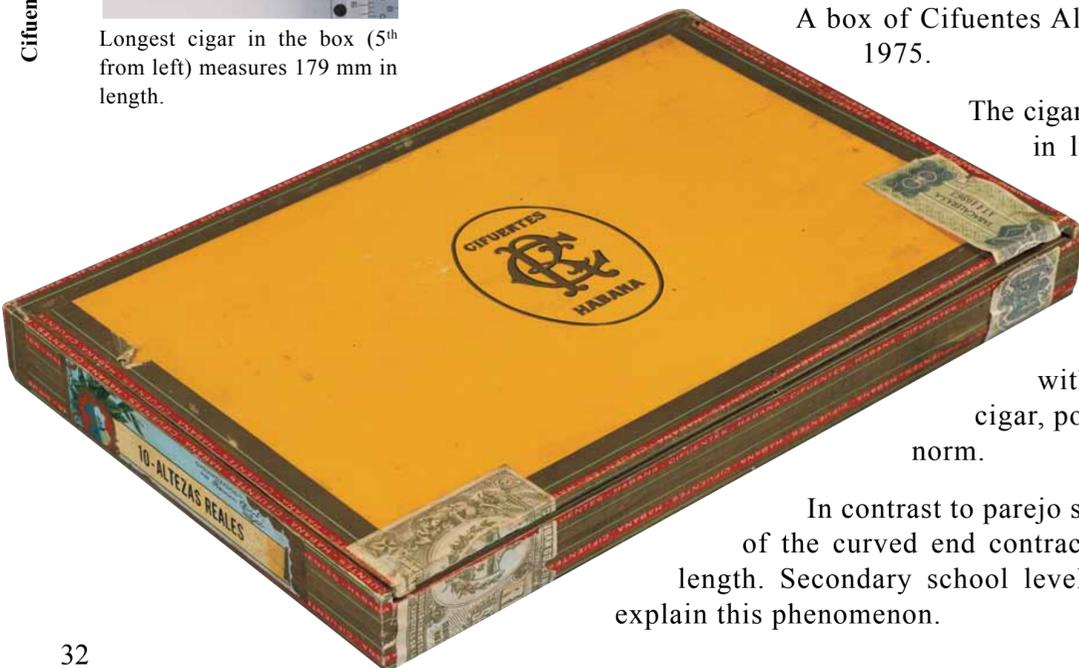
Longest cigar in the box (5th from left) measures 179 mm in length.

A box of Cifuentes Altezas Reales, dated circa 1975.

The cigars measure 174 to 179 mm in length, though the official length of the Salomones Española vitola is listed as 184 mm.

Substantial shrinkage in length of cigars rolled with a pointed end (or in this cigar, pointed in both ends) is the norm.

In contrast to parejo shaped cigars, as the girth of the curved end contracts with age, so goes the length. Secondary school level geometry would easily explain this phenomenon.



The Cifuentes Altezas Reales box depicted on the opposite page opened. (Cigars depicted are in actual size.)

San Luis Rey Double Coronas ©Cubatabaco



Double Coronas

Date of introduction: Probably only produced in one batch in 1989.
Date of discontinuation: Official date: 2000. Unofficial: The first batch in 1989 was probably the last.
Construction: Totally hand-made. Long filler.

I have never seen this cigar.

Dimension

Ring Gauge	Length (Metric)	Length (Imperial)	Factory name	Vitola number	Shape
49	194 mm	7 5/8 inches	Prominentes	612	Parejo

Packaging

Semi Plain Box	Slide Lid Box	Cardboard Pack	Semi Boite Nature with Brooch	Special Packaging
(Without cellophane) 25's	50's			Cajón 25's, 50's

Lonsdales

Date of introduction: Probably only produced in one batch in 1989.
Date of discontinuation: Official date: 2000. Unofficial: The first batch in 1989 was probably the last.
Construction: Totally hand-made. Long filler.

I have one full box. A very, very generous gift from a Swiss friend of Mr. Nino Muñoz "Flying Cigar".

Tasting notes

None. I have decided to keep this box intact as a legacy for posterity.

Dimension

Ring Gauge	Length (Metric)	Length (Imperial)	Factory name	Vitola number	Shape
42	165 mm	6 1/2 inches	Cervantes	503	Parejo

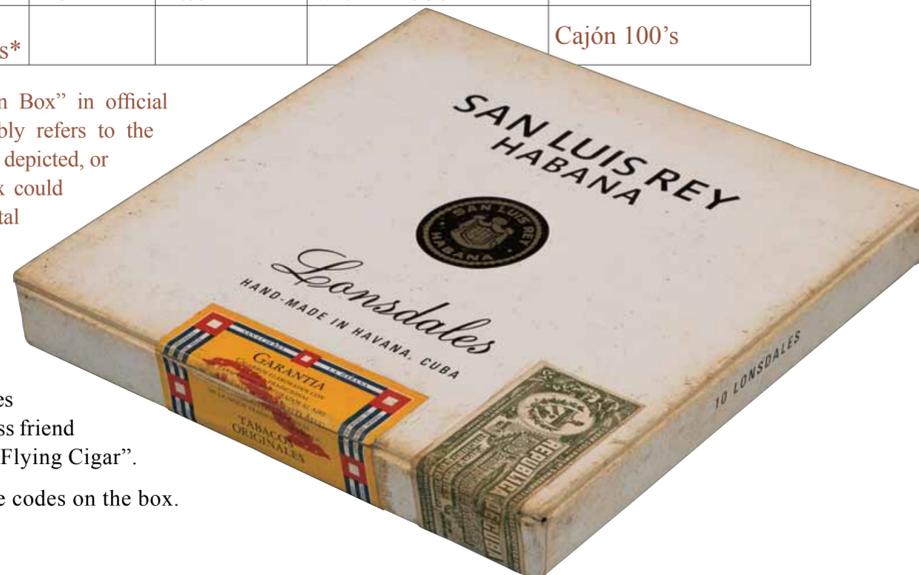
Packaging

Semi Plain Box	Slide Lid Box	Cardboard Pack	Semi Boite Nature with Brooch	Special Packaging
(Without cellophane) 10's*				Cajón 100's

*The "Semi Plain Box" in official documents probably refers to the Cardboard Box as depicted, or the cardboard box could be an experimental packaging.

A box of San Luis Rey Lonsdales courtesy of a Swiss friend of Nino Muñoz "Flying Cigar".

There are no date codes on the box.



San Luis Rey Lonsdales ©Cubatabaco



The box of San Luis Rey Lonsdales opened. (Approximate 3D actual size, perspective projection. The width of the bottom of the box is the actual width.)

Cristales

Date of introduction: Pre-Revolution. Exact date unknown. The earliest date would have been during the 1940's when glass tubes became first used in Cuba.

Date of discontinuation: Official date: Sometime pre-1980.* An educated guess of the date of cease of production would be 1978 when there was a massive trim of non-selling vitolas. This cigar is still listed in a 1975 official Cubatabaco illustrated catalogue.

* Source: This vitola is not listed in the complete cigar list in a 1980 internal Cubatabaco document.

Construction: Not listed in any catalogues. According to the only specimens I have from 1972, it is made of short filler, appears to me as machine-bunched with hand-rolled wrappers.

This model can be found listed in the 1969, 1971, and 1975 official Cubatabaco illustrated catalogues. Size is not listed in the catalogues. Packaging is listed as only in Semi Plain Boxes in 10's.

This is a very, very elusive cigar, probably because it was only exported to Spain, and vintage cigars are not as commonly found there as in the UK.

After searching for many years I finally managed to locate 2 boxes dated circa 1972, both boxes originally imported into Spain.

As both boxes are from the same batch and origin, I would need to find a third different box before I would like to try the cigars. My personal habit.

Trying boxes of decade old cigars from the same batch and same source yields no truly meaningful information, but meanwhile spoils the mystique.

Dimension (This is very likely the Cristales/Cristales-mano vitola. The vitola name gives it away.)

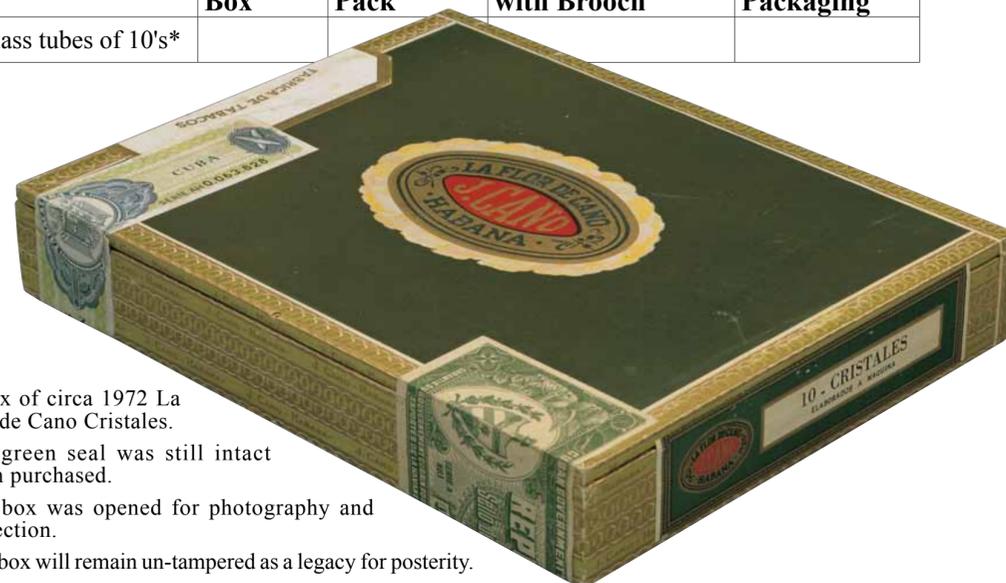
Ring Gauge	Length (Metric)	Length (Imperial)	Factory name	Vitola number	Shape
41/40	150/147 mm	5 7/8 / 5 3/4 inches	Cristales Cristales-mano	271 771	Parejo

Figures in black colour are official dimensions.

Figures in green colour are by direct measurement.

Packaging

Semi Plain Box	Slide Lid Box	Cardboard Pack	Semi Boite Nature with Brooch	Special Packaging
In glass tubes of 10's*				



A box of circa 1972 La Flor de Cano Cristales.

The green seal was still intact when purchased.

One box was opened for photography and inspection.

This box will remain un-tampered as a legacy for posterity.



La Flor de Cano Cristales ©Cubatabaco

Above:

The actual length of the glass tube by direct measurement is 168 mm, the cigar is 147 mm.

Below:

The unique white La Flor de Cano cigar band of the Cristales. Other models all use red colour.

(Actual size. Private collection of the author.)



Pre-Revolution cigar band.



Cubatabaco era's cigar band.



A box of circa 1972 La Flor de Cano Cristales opened.

Note that the bronze powder of the cigar band of the 5th cigar from left is oxidised. This is very likely because the plastic stopper of the glass tube is flawed and not air-tight.

There can be no other reason, as the green seal was cut on the day photographed. These tubes have never been touched since boxed.

(Approximate 3D actual size, perspective projection. The width of the bottom of the box is the actual width.)



A Diplomatic cigar band for Mr. José Manuel Pérez Seoane, dating from 1965 to 1969.

(Actual size. Private collection of the author.)

Interesting note:

The “Exquisitos size” was created by Mr. Daniel Solana, Director of Cubatabaco, from 1st January 1966 to October 1972, for his friend Mr. José Manuel Pérez Seoane, owner of the prestigious Spanish publishing house Alfaguara.

According to Mr. Solana, Mr. Seoane had had a stroke and could not hold a large format cigar between his lips, so the Exquisitos size was specially created for him. First, as a private custom rolled cigar exclusively for Mr. Seoane. Then, as demand grew from his friends and customers, as a commercial production vitola of Cohiba.

The vitola was known at El Laguito Factory as Seoanes.

Source: Mr. Nino Muñoz “Flying Cigar”. Abstracts from Mr. Nino Muñoz’s interview of Mr. Daniel Solana in Havana in February 2009.

Exquisitos

Date of introduction: As a private custom cigar, should be between late 1960’s to early 1970’s, according to Mr. Solana. As an official commercial production cigar, it is absent from the 1983 official Cubatabaco illustrated catalogue. This is not quite compatible with Mr. Solana’s story and will be further researched.

Current production status: Regular current Commercial Production.

Construction: Totally hand-made with long filler. **Current classification:** Tripa Larga.

This Cohiba model was introduced sometime before the Línea Classica Series in 1989. All agree this is one of Cohiba’s best before the blend change in late 1995. It has to be drawn slowly and leisurely to appreciate. Not recommended for smoking when inadequately aged. This applies to all cigars produced from all different eras.

Tasting notes

Before 1996: Strong “Cohiba grassy flavours”. Medium *bean flavours*. Strong tobacco taste. Great balance and aftertaste. Ages outrageously well. Recent tastings of these cigars confirm that they are still in the path of improving. Strength 4/5.

1996: Noted to become more diluted in taste. Same blend. No construction issues.

1997 to 2003: Inconsistent both in taste and construction. There is no reason to pay the extra premium of Cohiba except for those who buy cigars for the bands. Avoid.

2003 onwards: Drastic blend change in mid-2003. Different strain tobacco fillers changing every year. Impossible to give a general overall comment. There is a clear attempt to bring the cigars back to their former glory. 2012 cigars have returned to more than 60% of the pre-1995 taste. Rich in *congeners*. Construction issues seem to have greatly improved. Unfortunately a few lemons in each box is still the norm.

Dimension

Ring Gauge	Length (Metric)	Length (Imperial)	Factory name	Vitola number	Shape
36	125 mm	4 7/8 inches	Seoane	517	Parejo

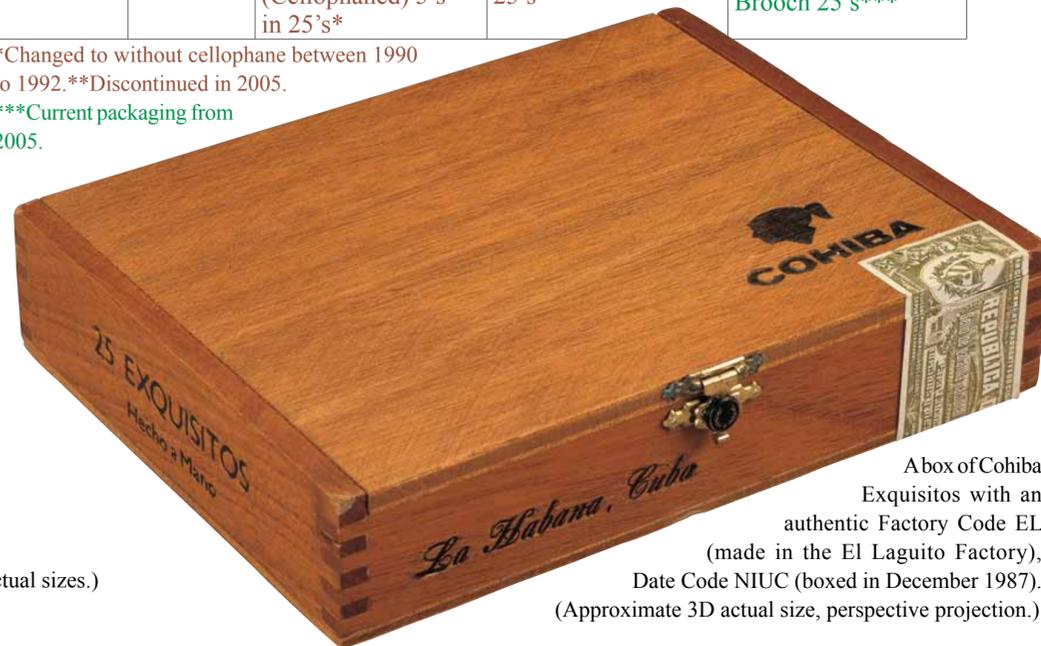
Packaging

Semi Plain Box	Slide Lid Box	Cardboard Pack	Semi Boite Nature with Brooch	Special Packaging
		(Without cellophane) 5’s in 25’s (Cellophane) 5’s in 25’s*	(Cellophane) 25’s* (Without cellophane) 25’s**	(Without cellophane) Boite Nature with Brooch 25’s***

*Changed to without cellophane between 1990 to 1992. **Discontinued in 2005.

***Current packaging from 2005.

***Current packaging from 2005.



A box of Cohiba Exquisitos with an authentic Factory Code EL (made in the El Laguito Factory), Date Code NIUC (boxed in December 1987). (Approximate 3D actual size, perspective projection.)



Cohiba Exquisitos from 4 different eras. (Cigars are depicted in official sizes, not actual sizes.)

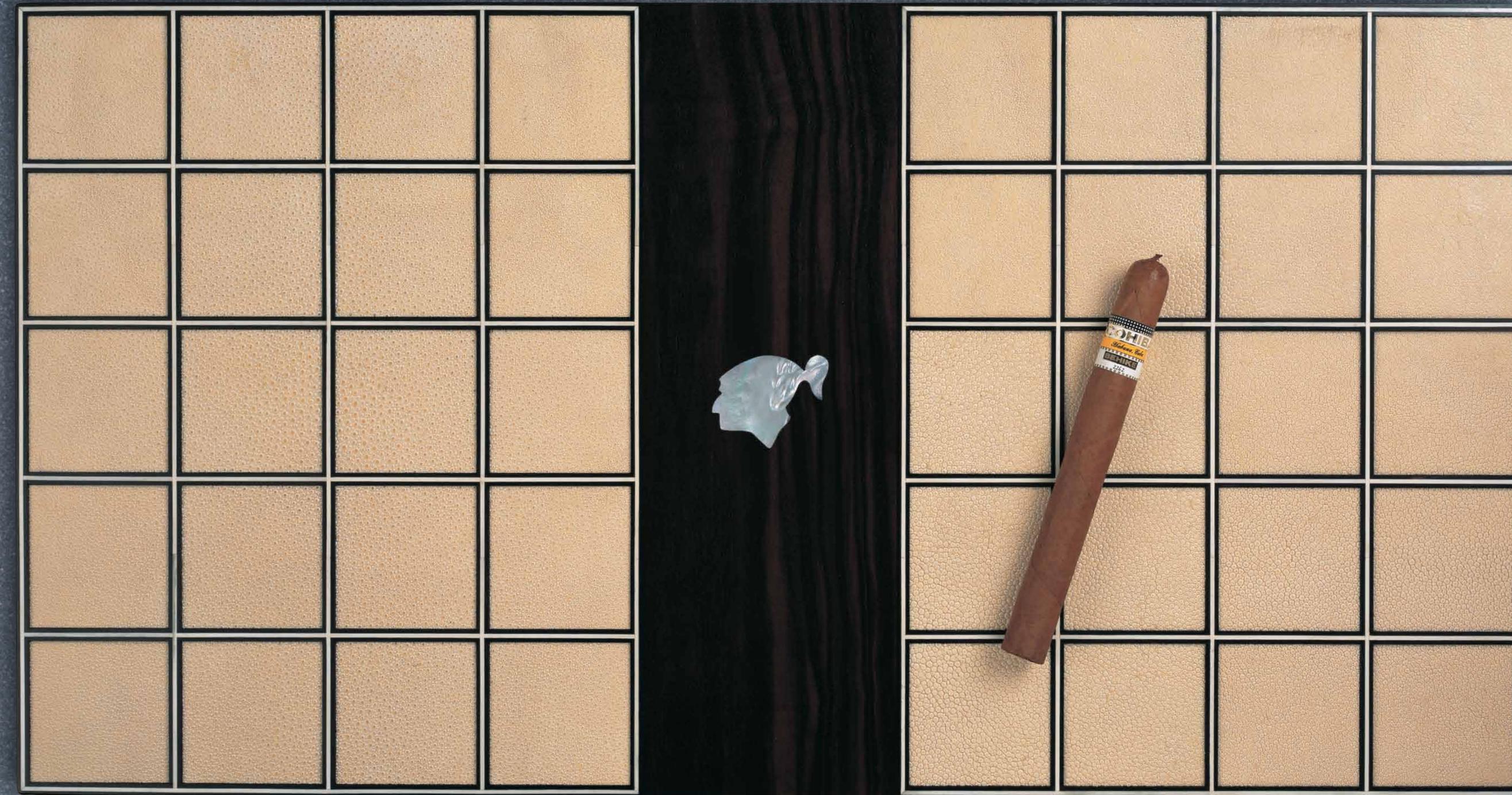


Box code EL NIUC, El Laguito Factory, boxed December 1987. Box code EL NNSO, El Laguito Factory, boxed November 1990.



Box code EL OLSU, El Laguito Factory, boxed May 1998. Box code BRS AGO 12, Unkown Factory, boxed August 2012.

4 boxes of Cohiba Exquisitos from different eras. See captions of the 4 cigars on bottom of opposite page. (Approximate 3D actual size, perspective projection. Cigar boxes are depicted in actual sizes.)



Cohiba 40 Aniversario Humidor. Vertical view.

(Actual size, perspective projection. The length and width of the box are in actual size.)

The cigar on the top appears slightly larger as it is closer to the camera lens. This particular cigar measures 187 mm or $7\frac{3}{8}$ inches excluding the pig tail in actual size.)



Cohiba 40 Aniversario Humidor opened. Vertical view.

(Actual size, perspective projection. The length and width of the box are in actual size.

The cigars are slanted in view and are further from the camera lens. They might appear shorter than their individual actual sizes.)



Partagás 150 Aniversario Humidor.

Glossary of Terms

Below:

Cross section of a 109 vitola cigar produced in the late 2000's. There is a quite significant soft spot.

Lump of super dense tobacco in the foot. Smoke can still pass through the remaining normal tobacco with ease. But of course this is sub-par craftsmanship.

A quite hollow soft spot. Definitely not acceptable.



Softer area at the foot. I would consider this as normal.

Soft spots

Different tobacco leaves are bunched to form a cigar. The density of tobacco is quite uniform inside. This is the magical craftsmanship of a skilled cigar roller.

If the rolling skill is less than optimal, some areas might be under-filled. There is a feeling of “emptiness” when squeezed. These are called soft spots.

The quicker burning of the less dense tobacco in a soft spot, versus the opposite side, results in a slanted ash. Burning too quickly also creates an undesirable taste.

Drawing extra, extra slowly might help a little. There is no cure for a really bad slanted burning end when the soft spot is almost hollow, except cutting off the soft spot completely and relighting the remaining cigar. Repeatedly torching the slanted burnt tip never works. This only ruins the remaining taste.

Solid foot

The foot is typically the softest spot of a cigar. This is the result of the orientation of tobacco leaves within a cigar. The part of the tobacco leaf nearest the stem is located at the head end, and the tip of the leaf at the foot end.

The tip part of a tobacco leaf is by nature thinner as it is more recently grown, and therefore naturally less rich in taste.

If the roller cuts the foot deeper and rids the tip part of the leaves, the cigar will become much richer in taste right from the beginning. Of course lots of tobacco leaves are “wasted”, but this was how super-premium cigars were made in the old days.

The foot feels “solid” on squeezing. Experienced people can tell a “solid foot” by looking towards the foot, the tobacco appears more densely packed, but squeezing remains the definitive test.

Before early to mid 1997, when a cigar has both Cabinet and Semi Plain Box versions, Cabinet version cigars had “solid foot” and Semi Plain Box cigars had “soft foot”. This difference is no longer seen in post-1997 productions.

(See entry **Part I Cabinet Selection.**)

Suave

The word can be either French or Spanish, and if you insist, an English word as well.

The meaning in all 3 languages is similar.

This term has been used since the 19th Century by the Spanish people to describe cigars.

For the Spanish specific meaning on cigars, I defer to the words of Mr. Leopoldo Carbajal, I cannot say it better than he.

THE WORLD'S WORK ADVERTISER

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H
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CARBAJAL
H. de Cabañas y Carbajal

“CABAÑAS”

cigars are known to almost all who have any knowledge of *fine* cigars, as the one Havana brand that unvaryingly holds its exceedingly high standard of excellence and mildness. The highest percentage of fine and mild tobacco from San Juan and San Luis sections of the Vuelta Abajo district that is grown in Cuba, goes to the world's most discriminating smokers in the CABAÑAS brand. The characteristic traits of the CABAÑAS brand are its aroma and mildness, what the Spaniard calls “suave.” It has made its reputation on these qualities more than on any others, so difficult is it to find a *mild* Havana cigar that has character; that is not neutral, yet not so pronounced that it is unacceptable;—that is really mild and yet has individuality. It has taken more than one hundred years to bring the CABAÑAS brand to its present perfection, and the fact that it is to-day the most aggressively imitated brand in Havana is the strongest evidence of its *established, continued and present excellence.*

Dealers who are not interested in substituting brands made to imitate the CABAÑAS brand will confirm these statements and recommend the CABAÑAS brand to you for these qualities.

All known sizes are made in the CABAÑAS brand.

H. de CABAÑAS Y CARBAJAL,
Manufacturers,
LEOPOLDO CARBAJAL, Marquis of Pinar Del Rio,
President,
Zulueta 10, Havana, Cuba.

In writing to advertisers please mention THE WORLD'S WORK

A clip of advertisement from “The World's Work Advertiser”, date unknown.

The statement about Mr. Leopoldo Carbajal being the President of H. de Cabañas y Carbajal dates it to before 1902, the year this brand was acquired by the “Trust”.

(Actual size. Private collection of the author.)