



Founded March 26, 1949

1211W. College Ave.
Santa Rosa, Ca. 95401

Redwood Empire Coin Club

Volume 63, Issue 5, Meeting #726. May 11, 2011

Next Meeting: June 8, 2011

MINT MEMORIES

The May meeting of the RECC featured an excellent talk by Bill Van V about his days working in security at the U.S. Mint. As a preface, Merle told an anecdote about some unopened silver proof sets he purchased as a collection. He recently opened one from 1962, and read the enclosed note from the Director of the Mint. It told about the special proof coins and proper care. And if something 'appeared' like a scratch, it was 'surely the packaging' and not a Mint problem. The note was meant to discourage people from returning defective items to the Mint.



Bill was a Sergeant in security at the U.S. Mint in San Francisco (not head of security as erroneously reported by me last month). It was actually called the U. S. Assay office at one point. And he actually spent his first 14 years working at the 'Old Mint'. He mentioned a 2' crack on the wall which remains there from the 1906 earthquake.

When the 'New Mint' was first built, it had a front entrance (pictured above). That was sealed off long ago, and now some of that land is occupied by MUNI tracks and a Safeway parking lot. Deliveries go in the rear of the building, where the employee entrance is.

Bill also was able to give a guided tour to four club members— Merle, Lee, Claude, and Joe.

Security there is much tighter than an airport or anything you would usually experience. And as you walk in the entrance, the ceiling is covered in 24 karat gold leaf, and there is a beautiful design on the floor.

There are 3 main floors at the mint, a 4th and 5th half floor, and two floors underground. Vault doors there weigh 7 and 14 tons, but they are so well balanced a single person can open it (after the two combinations are unlocked). But first the floor needs to be lowered in order for the door to swing open, and is raised when it is shut. If someone accidentally gets locked in a vault, there is an 'escape hatch' which leads to an enclosed space enclosed in bulletproof glass.

Bill talked about how the SF Mint would receive coils of metal and punch out the planchets there on site. They then went through a chemical bath to remove impurities, then a polishing process where they were tumbled with oblong steel beads (which Lee had a small bottle of to display). Now planchets are shipped in boxes to the mint.

Next Bill talked about how dies used to be prepared by hand polishing. Now everything is done automatically.

The Mint used a balance beam built in the 1800s to weigh the stored gold annually. It was still extremely sensitive, being able to weigh a pencil mark on paper! There was also a process to weigh bunches of proof sets, to see if there was a variance. If so, the sets would be x-rayed to see if there was a missing coin. Since the coins were placed in the cases by machine, occasionally one would be missing. If a big stack of sets was off, it would be destroyed. 155,000 proof sets were destroyed last year due to 'potential error'. The coins would be removed, cancelled mechanically, and sent out to be remelted into more new planchets. There were also very large bins of 'condemned' coins in each denomination(ones with errors), also to be cancelled and remelted. Lee was probably drooling at the sight of them.

Bill told a few stories of people trying to sneak out coins, and how a couple of kids once shimmied up to a second story window and crawled in once. Employees caught trying to sneak out coins were offered a chance to be prosecuted or resign on the spot (and they were likely prosecuted anyway!).

There were no S-mint coins produced in 1955-1964, when the mint was shut down. Early on there were tours, but the hand rails were deemed unsafe, taken down when the mint was idle, and there are no longer tours.

There was one weekend when all 3 US Mints were open to the public (after requesting invites ahead of time), and one club member was there, getting the autograph of the Secretary of the Treasury. Someone asked why there are no sales directly at the mint, and Bill did not know. They did have sales in 1965-1966, when the special mint sets were made (I was there and bought mine right at the back door; but they still would not even let me peek inside). The club gave Bill a well deserved round of applause for his talk.

CLUB GOLD MEDAL FOUND

Lee gave a talk about club medals. In 1987 we had a club medal made for the 50th Anniversary of the Golden Gate Bridge and initiation of trans Pacific air mail to and from Hong Kong. The medal featured the bridge and the airplane Yankee Clipper. It was designed by long time club member Horace Moore.

Horace was collecting coins well into his 80s, and very nice ones at that. I remember him showing me a (probably XF) 1793 Chain Cent he had recently "just happened to buy" at auction, and he had a number of very rare early gold coins, among others. When the club medals were made, one was struck over an Austrian 100 Kroner coin for Horace. And when he died a number of years ago, nobody knew what happened to that (the only one struck in gold that year).

Lee looked for 7-8 years for that medal without success. About 3 months ago while at Jack Beymer's coin shop, Jack mentioned he had bought something from Horace's estate(he lived in Clear Lake, and apparently some family member inherited the coins). Lee asked Jack (several times) to call this man and see if the gold medal was still around— and it was! Of course the man offered to sell it to Lee for \$2000 (and this coin is considerably lighter than a US \$20 gold piece). Lee said it should be melted for scrap at that price, but was finally offered it for \$1400.

He brought it to the meeting, along with an example of the other two club medals which were overstruck on 100 Kroner pieces. But that first medal from 1987 is unique, and now belongs to Lee.

JUNE MEETING

The topic of the June Meeting is: What Coin or Numismatic Item Represents Father's Day to You? Bring in an item or talk about it, and you will get 4 free raffle tickets!

COINS I WOULD TO OWN

(but cannot afford)

#10— Alexander the Great

Well, this is one which actually most of us *can* afford. It is a classical Greek coin of Alexander III, "The Great", with an impressive design. Alexander III was the greatest conqueror of all time. He never lost a battle, and at his premature death at about the age of 33 in 323 BC, he ruled over lands from Egypt to India.



On the obverse is Heracles (Hercules) wearing a lion skin, with the paws tied around his neck. The first labor for Hercules was to rid the Nemean plain of the wild, enormous and extremely ferocious beast known as the Nemean Lion. But its hide was impervious to all weapons. So Hercules ended up strangling it with his bare hands. He then used the lion's own claws to skin it (still being impervious to weapons), and threw the skin over his shoulders and used the head as a helmet for armor, making Hercules even more powerful.



The reverse features Zeus on a throne, holding an eagle on his right hand and a scepter in his left hand. The inscription translates into "of Alexander" (in Greek, of course).

Imagine what would have happened if Alexander had lived much longer! This coin would be a nice piece of history to own.

CLASSIFIED ADS

Classified ads may be placed by any club member, up to 2 per month. They run for two months. Buy—Sell—Trade—Want Lists OK. Notify Charlie at each meeting (or mail to club P.O. Box, or even call) to get your ad in

KIDS KORNER

By Rich W.

The May meeting was light in attendance. Those in attendance heard discussions of president Lincoln and the events leading up to the civil war.

I will be out of town for the June and July meetings, however I will continue discussion of the civil war and fractional currency when I return.

Some things that we learned about the civil war include the following:

- The civil war lasted almost five years.
- More than 600,000 young men were killed.
- The northern states were about manufacturing while the southern states were largely agricultural.
- The main issue of the war was the abolition of slavery.
- Abraham Lincoln was the president throughout the war from 1860-1865. The union army included 200,000 combatants under the age of 17 and more than 100,000 under the age of 15. Fractional currency was critical to the North during the war with \$368,724,079.45 raised for northern interests.

A quote from the war: "So you're the little woman that wrote the book that made this great war" Abraham Lincoln upon first meeting Harriet Beecher Stowe (Uncle Tom's Cabin) in 1862.

DRAWING WINNERS:

Membership: Philip A, Bill B, Willie Q, Jack H, Larry M, and Joel M

50:50 pot of \$ 84 was split with Jonathan S

Raffle: Bob K, Claude F (Twice), Edwin H (thrice), Jack H (Thrice), Gary C, Jonathan S, and Joel M

May Members: 56+

New Members: none

Guests: Yes, several

Auction: 40 exciting items

Adjournment was at 9:00 p.m. sharp!

Junior Leader

Lee G will be leading the Junior Meeting for the months of June and July, then Rich W will return in August. Meetings begin at 6PM.

Volunteers for **refreshments** for June are: Kurt G, Charlie C, Glenn C, and Berry P. Many thanks !

The Redwood Empire Coin Club meets on the second Wednesday of every month. The Club's meeting location is the **Veterans Memorial Building, 1351 Maple Avenue, Santa Rosa** (opposite the County Fairgrounds across from highway 12), in the "**Dinner Room**" on the east side of the building, at 7:00 PM sharp.

R.E.C.C.

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UPCOMING SHOWS & EVENTS

June 26, 2011. Alameda Coin Club Show. Alameda High School Gym, Oak Street at Central, Alameda

July 9-10, 2010. Modesto Coin and Collectible show. Stanislaus County Coin Club, Modesto Centre Plaza, 1000 L Street, (10th and K), Modesto

July 23-24, 2010. Fremont Coin Club's 39th Annual Show. Elk's Lodge, 38991 Farwell Drive, Fremont

July 30-31, 2011. Nor-Cal Coin Show X. Veterans Memorial Building, 420 Admiral Callaghan Lane, Vallejo

August 14, 2011. Fairfield Coin Club 22nd Annual Coin Show. Willow Room, Fairfield Community Center (downtown), 1000 East Kentucky off Pennsylvania

September 10, 2011. Merced Coin Show. Senior Community center, 755 West 15th Street, Merced

September 30-Oct1, 2011. Sacramento Valley Coin Club Fall Show. Dante Club, 2330 Fair Oaks Blvd, Sacramento

October 8-9, 2011. 15th Annual Contra Costa Coin Show. Diablo Numismatic Society, Holiday Inn, 1050 Burnett Ave, Concord

October 9, 2011. Delta coin Club's 48th Fall Coin Show. Eagle's Hall, 1492 Bourbon Street, Stockton

November 6, 2011. Peninsula Coin Club 32nd Annual Coins and Collectibles Show. Napredak Hall, 770 Montague Expressway, San Jose

November 18-20, 2011. Santa Clara Coin, Stamp, and Collectibles Expo. Santa Clara Convention Center, 5001 Great American Parkway

Check out the newsletter at:
Redwoodempirecoinclub.com

Thanks for reading. Corrections? Additions? Questions? E-mail us at:
info@Redwoodempirecoinclub.com

Or call me— 707-573-1252
See you June 8— Charlie

