



The E-Gobrecht

Liberty Seated Collectors Club

2017 Volume 13, Issue 1
January 2017 (Whole #144)

Please Renew Now!

Time to renewal your membership in the Liberty Seated Collectors Club!

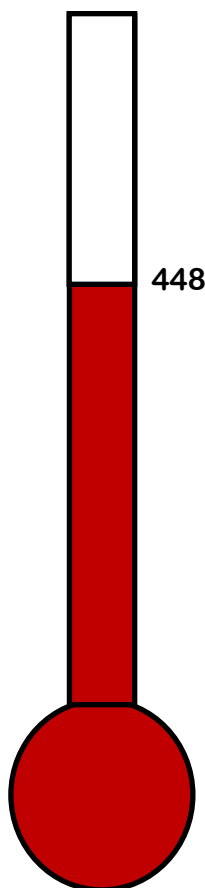
In November, all current members received via the postal mail the current issue of the *Gobrecht Journal* (Issue #127). Included with the mailing was a separate single page enclosure with a dues payment notice, Ahwash Award ballot, and 2017-2019 LSCC Officer election ballot.

The dues notice had affixed a mailing label with your name and address of record, membership number, and expiration of your paid membership. If that expiration date in the upper right hand corner is 2016, that means your membership dues are paid thru the end of December 2016 and we are requesting that you remit payment for the next year. You also have an option to renew for additional years to preclude any dues increases.

The officers of the LSCC request that you renew immediately so that we may have an accurate accounting of the paid membership (68% renewal rate to date) and **so that we do not have additional mailing reminders (at additional volunteer time and expense to the club).**

Please consider renewing for multiple years to streamline the renewal efforts. Thank you.

LSCC
membership
renewals to
date
660



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The *E-Gobrecht* is an award winning informal electronic publication of the Liberty Seated Collectors Club (LSCC). The LSCC is a non-profit organization dedicated to the attributions of the Liberty Seated Coin series. The LSCC provides the information contained in this email newsletter from various sources free of charge as a general service to the membership and others with this numismatic interest. You do not have to be a LSCC member to benefit from this newsletter; subscription to the *E-Gobrecht* is available to anyone. All disclaimers are in effect as the completeness and/or accuracy of the information contained herein cannot be completely verified. Contact information is included on the last page.



Auction News

by Craig Eberhart, LSCC #1348

Legend Regency Auction XIX - December 15, 2016

A nice selection of better date Liberty Seated dimes were in this sale. An 1840-O dime graded PCGS MS62 CAC sold for \$7,931. This was a scarcer die marriage: a medium O F-106. An 1850-O small O dime graded PCGS AU58 sold for \$1,880. Two PCGS graded 1858-S dimes were in the auction. The AU-50 did not sell, but the MS63 CAC coin sold for \$10,281.

Three better date Philadelphia Civil War issues were also sold: an 1863 PCGS MS65 CAC sold for \$3,290; an 1864 PCGS MS66 sold for \$8,812, and an 1865 PCGS MS66+ CAC sold for \$6,756. One of the more interesting sales was a gold CAC stickered 1877-S dime. This 1877-S graded PCGS MS65 and sold for the strong price of \$4,348.

Call for Nominations for the LSCC HALL OF FAME



The Hall of Fame Committee composed of club members Len Augsburg, Bill Bugert, Tom DeLorey, Gerry Fortin, and Mark Sheldon wishes to inform the membership that we are accepting nominations for the Liberty Seated Collectors Club's 2016 Hall of Fame (HoF). Please consider honoring a noteworthy individual to this prestigious distinction for his/her contributions to the club and/or to the advancement of collecting Liberty Seated coinage.

Basic qualifications for club member nominees are significant advances in or contributions to at least one of the following four criteria:

- Numismatic Research on Liberty Seated coinage
- Numismatic Literature related to Liberty Seated coinage
- Collection(s) of Liberty Seated coinage
- LSCC Club officer (for at least five years).

Previous inductees to the HoF include Kamal M. Ahwash (deceased), John W. McCloskey, Alfred E. Blythe (deceased), Randall E. Wiley, Brian Greer, Jim O'Donnell (deceased), Gerry Fortin, and Eugene Gardner (deceased). This year's inductee will be announced at the LSCC 2017 Annual meeting at the August ANA Convention.

The nominations must be received no later than April 15, 2017 and are due to the HoF Chairman, Bill Bugert, via email at wb8cpy@earthlink.net or via postal mail at Bill Bugert, 1230 Red Rock Road, Gettysburg, PA 17325-6927 or to Bill via telephone at (717) 337-0229.



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**Gerry Fortin - Professional Numismatist
Wuximems@hotmail.com 207-329-9957**

LSCC Calendar

January 5-8, 2017. **LSCC table, regional meeting, and educational programs. Fort Lauderdale, FL.**
2017 FUN, Fort Lauderdale Convention Center, 1950 Eisenhower Blvd, Fort Lauderdale, FL
33316. Meeting is on Friday, 9 AM, in Room 113.

February 1, 2017. Deadline for articles and advertisements for *Gobrecht Journal* Issue #128.

February 3-4, 2017. **LSCC table and educational programs. Knoxville, TN.** 53rd Annual Knoxville
Coin Show, Rothchild Catering and Convention Center, Kingston Pike, Knoxville, TN.

Mid-March, 2017. *Gobrecht Journal* Issue #128 published and mailed to all current members.



Regional News

by Dennis Fortier, LSCC #2016

With the holidays over, it is now time for the "coinbirds" to fly off to a warmer climate for some coin fun, social fun, and educational fun. Are you getting the hint? It is FUN time once again!

The FUN show is January 5-8 in Ft Lauderdale, FL. LSCC president Gerry Fortin will host the club meeting on Friday January 6, 9 AM, room 113. Steve Petty will have a presentation on Liberty Seated dollars and John Frost will have a special presentation on a counterfeit 1872-S Liberty Seated half dollar. John will host the club table as well with a display of Liberty Seated dollars.

John Frost designed and had printed some new club business cards. These cards cost just three cents apiece so they can be handed out at club tables while the more expensive brochure we have used in the past is not necessary. The cards list the club website and official email address. Regional Directors, club table volunteers, and Liberty Seated specialty dealers will have them in hand soon.

Houston coin show narrative by John Frost

December 1-3 found us at the Houston Money Show. This year, we tried something different. Instead of a Friday afternoon meeting, we tried a time slot of 9-10 AM before the show opened to the public. This was a little risky, because there were no public hours Thursday, so no ability to tell the public about the meeting in advance. But it all worked out well, as the meeting and educational program were well publicized on the show website more than a month in advance.

We had 10 people on hand as John Frost and Dick Osburn presented the program on Carson City coinage. A highly-illustrated presentation gave comprehensive information on CC coins from dimes to Trade dollars. The program supple-

mented the exhibit on the bourse floor, where all attendees stopped by to see. We saw several club members from Texas and it was good to see them again!

The most interesting thing that happened, however, was the confirmation of a new and very deceptive counterfeit 1872-S Liberty Seated half dollar. The investigation included myself, Dick Osburn, and John Dannreuther. As bad (or good) as the counterfeit was, all three of us said that this was the most fun we have had at a coin show in a long time!

The full story and investigation will be presented in the March issue of the Gobrecht Journal.

Thanks John.

The Smoky Mountain / Ft. Loudon Show in Knoxville TN, February 3-4 will see Dennis Fortier and John Frost manning the club table. More on that show next month.

The club is fortunate to have dedicated volunteers to bring a club presence to so many areas of the country. Best wishes in the new year.



Houston coin show LSCC table display

LSCC website: www.lscweb.org



The Curious Collector

by Len Augsburger, LSCC #1271

Coins We Don't Buy

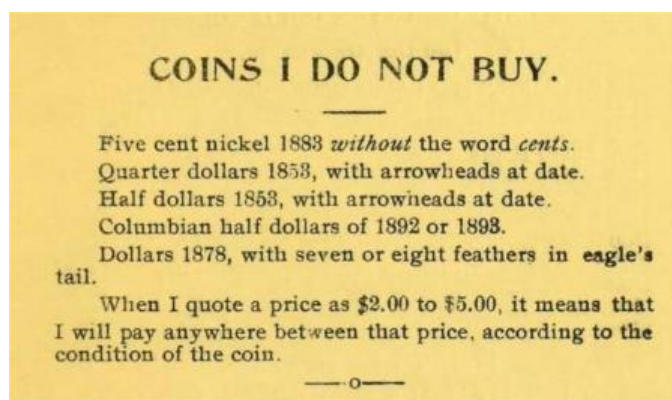
Dealers need to find coins to sell, and, in the pre-Internet era, a typical way to do this was to issue a “prices paid for” list. These pamphlets provided basic information for the public to sort good coins from bad, and included instructions for shipping the better pieces to the acquisitive dealer. Prices paid for lists might be distributed gratis to more promising leads, but were also sold through a variety of publications. Some speculate that dealers made more from selling lists than from buying coins and there is likely some truth to this. I recall an overly excited childhood friend who paid \$2 for such a list (about \$10 in present terms) and was sure that instant riches could be picked out of pocket change after the secrets of the coin dealer were revealed. Such are the \$2 lessons we learned in our youth.

One occasional feature of these lists was the “Coins We Don't Buy” section. Yes, there is swill that even coin dealers refuse. I recall the first time I visited Stack's in New York City. I was sure that only the sexiest, most glamorous coin business would be transacted in such a longstanding, esteemed establishment of rare coindom. Alas, while browsing the stock, I was treated to the Stack's side of a barrage of phone calls from general public. “No, it's not copper – put a magnet on it” (response to a caller who was certain their corroded 1943 Lincoln cent was copper and not steel). “It's only worth face value – we do not buy them.” “No, a 1913 Buffalo nickel is not worth a million dollars, I'm sorry.” And on and on. Later I learned that when working at Stack's you **start** at the coin counter and eventually graduate to the back rooms, where many of the best coins go to private clients before anyone else hears about them. In any case, coin dealers spend a good amount of time explaining why they have no interest in various items.

The “Coins We Don't Buy” list played this role

in former times. Thomas Elder, a New York dealer, mentioned two such coins in his c. 1920 prices paid for list – the 1853 Arrows & Rays quarter and half dollar. Both of these were struck in massive quantities, and must have been readily available in circulation well into the 20th century. These two coins regained popularity only much later, with the promotion of “type” collecting as a way to approach the U.S. series. William P. Brown, also of New York, issued a list in 1899 that similarly refused the Arrows & Rays coinage, and added the 1861 half dollar to the “don't buy” list. This is another common date, and, while interest in Civil War-dated coinage has created some demand, it remains easy to locate. The Connecticut Coin Company, in a circa 1930 list, also eschewed the 1853 Arrows & Rays quarters and half dollars, as did Charles Windau of Red Wing, Minnesota in a 1911 list.

Illustrated below is Thomas Elder's “don't buy” list from his circa 1920 prices paid for list.





Quarter of the Month

by Greg Johnson, LSCC #1460

1891-S Quarter Dollar with MPD?

An email from LSCC member Mario Pizzamiglio back in November contained the photo below (Figure 1) of a new and interesting 1891-S quarter. It appeared at first to be an unlisted MPD with the top of an eight or nine in the denticles to the right of the date. Once he had the coin in hand, Mario was skeptical of that conclusion and sought my opinion regarding what it might be. After a brief back and forth email exchange, which included some photos taken through a microscope, neither of us was able to confidently categorize the feature on the coin and he was kind enough to ship the coin to me for an in-hand inspection.

After careful study under a glass and a 40X microscope it seems most likely that the apparent

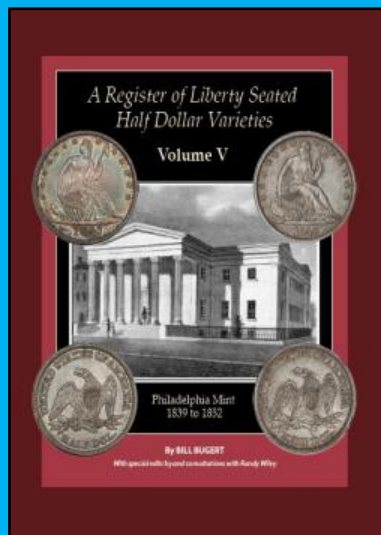
MPD is actually a flaw in the planchet that just happens to be the approximate size and shape of the top of an “8” or a “9”. Figure 2 shows a close up of the area. Note that the design is complete. The defect is incuse (i.e. concave) but the denticles are quite completely struck within the resulting depression. There is also no evidence of post mint damage; e.g. displaced metal.

Planchet defects are quite common on quarters from the 1840’s, especially those minted in New Orleans, but it is very unusual to find something like this on coins produced in the 1880’s and 1890’s. There is never a dull moment for students of seated coinage; you just never know what you will find next.



Above left - Figure 1. 1891-S quarter dollar obverse with possible MPD

Above right - Figure 2. Close up of 1891-S quarter dollar obverse with planchet defect



Now Available!

A Register of Liberty Seated Half Dollar Varieties Volume V, Philadelphia Mint, 1839-1852 by Bill Bugert

With 440 pages and 1,304 photographs in a spiral-bound 8-½ x 11 inch high quality glossy paper format, Volume V describes all known die marriages (172) for Philadelphia Mint Liberty Seated half dollars from 1839 to 1852, inclusive. Included are oversized key diagnostic images, oversized full obverse and reverse images of a late die state example of that die marriage, enhanced die crack diagrams, rarity ratings, important discussion facts, and other related information that will allow you to quickly and easily attribute your half dollars.

This Volume is in the same format as the previous volumes but with some key improvements such as improved images and summary reverse die crack diagrams for key dates. As with previous volumes, Randy Wiley's special edits and consultations are included and many of his reference collection half dollars are plated.

Copies (autographed upon request) may be obtained for \$65 each postpaid to U.S. addresses (via media mail) directly from the author.

Coming soon: Free downloadable pdf copies of Volumes I thru IV for your tablet or laptop/desktop.

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Cracked, Shattered, and Terminal by Benny Haimovitz, LSCC #2494

1838 Dime, F-103b, R4



1838 was a wonderful year for Liberty Seated dime die marriages and die states. The Fortin F-103b provides a simply beautiful example of a completely bisected reverse.



The primary vertical die crack enters the last S of STATES from the rim, forming a small cud between the lower foot of the E and S before proceeding down through the leading leg of the N in ONE.



(Continued on page 9)



(Continued from page 8)

The crack continues through the I of DIME, the left bow, stem, and ribbon before exhibiting through the lower rim. In this die state, there is an additional thin horizontal die crack forming from the top of the D going through the olive leaves toward the rim at K9.

Reverse Diagnostic close-ups:



Upper cud



Horizontal forming die crack

Obverse Diagnostics are few, primarily minor rim cuds and doubling of stars 1, 8 & 9.

Die state diagnostics courtesy of Gerry Fortin and images courtesy of BluCC Photos (Todd Pollock) with this example graded by PCGS as MS64 with CAC approval. If you will be at the 2017 FUN Show in Ft. Lauderdale, stop by Gerry's "Developing a Passion for Liberty Seated Dimes" presentation on Friday, January 6th at 11:00 AM. You are sure to get your ten cents worth.

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Seated Shorts

On January 18, Dr. Nathan Sonnheim will be auctioning his complete (except for the 1878-S) Liberty Seated half dollar collection that has never been auctioned before! As he is now 78 years old, Dr. Sonnheim feels it is time for others to enjoy these rarities. Every coin is slabbed by one of the three grading services (NGC, PCGS, ANACS) and they grade between VG-MS63. Some of these coins were acquired over the years from the late Kam Awash, who Dr. Sonnheim befriended in 1976 when they met at a Stack's auction. They spoke weekly about coins for many years and attended auctions together.

All coins will be auctioned for 10 days under our Powerseller eBay account:

<http://stores.ebay.com/bargainbabe55>. Please go to eBay and favorite our store so you don't miss this great auction!

If you have any questions, Dr. Sonnheim can be reached at 856.981.3397. *[Editor's note: Nate called me on his sale and mentioned that he has many rare die marriages of the Liberty Seated half dollar series in collector grades ranging from G4 to MS64, all attributed.]*

-...-

The LSCC got a great promotion in the *Greysheet*. Check it out...

<http://blog.greysheet.com/2016/12/01/monthly-supplement-they-only-look-dead-why-coin-collecting-has-a-bright-future/>

-...-

From Ken Scholm: Not sure of the appropriate channel in which to relay this but Liberty Seated half dime collectors might be interested in knowing that the American Numismatic Society's "Numismatic Notes and Monographs #48" is available online as a downloadable (is that a word?) PDF document through the Newman Numismatic Portal as part of the ANS publication "Numismatic Notes and Monographs Nos 42 through 49" at this address: <https://ia800209.us.archive.org/34/items/ANSNumNotesVols42to49/ANSNumNotesVols42to49.pdf>. This electronic version offers a much enhanced (that is, bigger) look at Valentine's plates. *[Editor's note: Valentine's book starts on page 548 of this download.]*

-...-





GFRC Open Registry Community Project Launch

by Gerry Fortin, LSCC #1054

To further expand interest in Liberty Seated and Capped Bust coinage variety collecting, Gerry Fortin Rare Coins is pleased to announce the launch of the Open Registry Community Project.

Many of our fellow numismatic collectors are building noteworthy collections in grades ranging from Fine through Mint State and may be excluded from displaying these collections on third party set registries due to exclusive certification requirements. While certification by either PCGS or NGC does provide for consistency in grading and allows for effective set competition, I believe the registry concept should be made more inclusive to support collectors of all levels.

The Open Registry was first started in the 2006 timeframe at www.seateddimevarieties.com and targeted for Liberty Seated dime collectors. The registry was entirely manual and continued to expand until 2014 where it became unsustainable due to size and the resource requirements to operate GFRC. Many LSCC members and other collectors were disappointed. After considerable feedback, GFRC decided to fund the development of an automated Open Registry Project during 2016. The ultimate project goal was to continue the completely open model to best support collectors of all financial means and experience with user initiated set creation and updating. During the design and development phase, several upgrades were included. These are;

- Coin entry reuse across multiple sets to simplify the set loading process
- Ability to add image links and commentaries for each listed coin
- CAC Green and Gold scoring premiums with a proprietary algorithm.

The GFRC Open Registry Community Project is now live and available at <http://seateddimevarieties.com/openregistry/index.php>. A GFRC account setup is necessary with Login and Password at <http://seateddimevarieties.com/login/index.php> and operates best when using Google Chrome as a browser. On occasion, the Microsoft Explorer/Edge browsers will

The GFRC Open Registry Community Project

Liberty Seated Quarters - Basic Set, Business Strikes

A set of Liberty Seated Quarters complete by date and mintmark, if not the most challenging such set in US numismatics, is most certainly on the short list of contenders. Those who have completed, or nearly completed, a Liberty Seated Quarter set in any grade merit the title "dedicated numismatist". The basic set of 108 coins, which excludes most major varieties, has 79 issues with an estimated rarity of R4 or higher (less than 250 pieces known) in grades of XF/AU. No less than 15 different dates / mintmarks are estimated to have fewer than 30 pieces known in this grade range. Certainly, the pursuit of a seated quarter collection requires uncommon patience and persistence, but also provides uncommon opportunities for those who love the thrill of the hunt. Most important for those patient, persistent, and dedicated aficionados of the Liberty Seated Quarter is the understanding that whether you own five of these wonderful coins, or multiple sets, it is all about the collecting journey, not merely a destination. Enjoy the hunt!

- Greg Johnson

Click [Collection Name](#) to view its composition. The *Blank Collection* is an empty version.

		Active		All-Time	
Collection	Rating	Complete	Weighted Grade		Last Updated
The GJ Collection	29.0	62%	49.0	54%	December 25, 2016
The MIKE VERHULST Collection	28.6	96%	29.9	6%	December 26, 2016
The Blank Collection	0.0	0%	0.0	0%	December 25, 2016

block the Login step and a new browser session or PC reboot is necessary.

Matthew Yamatin is the developer and has created a system that is intuitive while providing considerable functionality and ease of use for average through advanced collectors.

The Open Registry Community Project goals include:

- An inclusive registry for collectors to showcase both their certified and uncertified coins
- Increase collector awareness, particularly for Capped Bust and Liberty Seated coinage
- Create friendly competition among GFRC community in a fun manner without annual awards or expensive luncheons
- Free collectors working on registry collections to pursue the best possible coin rather than being limited to a single third-party holder or forced to cross between holders to access competing registries. This can be an expensive proposition and a poor financial decisions with CAC'ed coins.
- Adding a scoring premium for CAC approved coins which recognizes the market pricing premium.

Please visit the Gerry Fortin Rare Coin website and have a look then consider participating. The old Open Registry current has 195 sets and I am sure that number can be easily exceeded moving forward.



A Tour of the San Francisco Mint, 1856

Part 3

by Jim Laughlin, LSCC #876

Continuing from last month's edition of *E-Gobrecht*, Hutching's *California Magazine* Vol 1 No IV, October, 1856, Coining Money at the San Francisco Branch Mint. Readers wishing to see the original article with numerous illustrations, may wish to go to the Newman Numismatic Portal at

<https://nnp.wustl.edu/library/book/517301?page=158>.

My apologies to last month's readers, there are a couple of my errors needing correcting in Part 2: The location of the sodium nitrate mines at Iquique were in Southern Peru then and are today located in Northern Chile near the border with Peru. Additionally, the newspaper source that followed that discussion referenced the Sacramento Daily Union, November 28, 1858; and this should have been 1857.

HUTCHING'S CALIFORNIA MAGAZINE VOL 1, No. IV, OCTOBER 1856, Coining Money at the San Francisco Branch Mint, .part 3

From the adjusting room the planchets are taken to the *Milling Room*, where they are dropped into a tube, belonging to the "milling machine", and by means of a revolving circular steel plate, with a groove in the edge, and a corresponding groove in a segment of a circle, the planchets are borne rapidly round, horizontally, by which process the edges are thickened, and the diameter of the planchet accurately adjusted to fit the collar of the "coining press".

After "milling" they are returned to the Coiner's office and again weighed, to ascertain if the weight is correct.

They are then sent to the *Annealing Room*, where they are put into square cast-iron boxes, with double covers, carefully cemented with fire-clay, and placed in the annealing furnace, where they are subjected to a red heat for about an hour, when they are taken out and poured into a "pickle" containing diluted sulphuric acid. By this process they are softened and cleansed; and after they are rinsed with hot water they are well dried in saw-dust heated by steam, taken

out and returned to the Coiner's office, where they are again weighed, and afterwards carried to the *Coining Room*, to be "stamped". This process is performed by dropping the planchets into the tube in front of the machine, from whence they are carried by "feeders" to the "collar", into which they are dropped upon the lower die; the head die then descends, and by its immense power displaces every particle of gold in the planchet, and gives the impression upon both sides of the coin and the fluting on the edge, at the same moment. At every motion, the "feeders" not only take a planchet to the collar, but at the same time push the coin, previously struck, and now perfect, from the lower die, which rises and falls for the purpose at each revolution of the wheel, from whence the coin slides into a box underneath.

Unfortunately, this article does not say how many coinage presses there were at the Branch Mint in 1856. The artist drawing that accompanied this article shows a man seated in front of a large coinage press, with a similarly sized coinage press unoccupied to his immediate right. There is a third coinage press partially hidden behind our man operating the central press; so, if the artist's drawing are accurate renditions of the coining room at the SF Branch Mint, there were at least three coinage presses lined up side by side. We don't see the rest of the room, so there may have been more. The later San Francisco Mint building (1874) apparently had four coinage presses in 1878.

Sacramento Daily Union, April 19, 1878

San Francisco April 18th.—Superintendent Dodge, of the Mint, announces that of the four presses in the Mint, one will be kept at work on gold coinage and the other three on the new dollars, which will be turned out at the rate of 100,000 per day.

While this pertains to the new Morgan Dollar coinage that began in April, 1878; it does contain the wording "of the four presses in the Mint", which seems to indicate that this was the total number of

(Continued on page 13)



(Continued from page 12)

coinage presses at the San Francisco Mint at that later time. As a comparison, Philadelphia had 10 coinage presses in 1869 but Philadelphia was coining all the copper and nickel coinage for the nation, in addition to gold and silver (Evening Telegraph, Philadelphia, PA. December 24, 1869). For us Liberty Seated coin collectors, the above announcement meant no more “press time” in San Francisco until 1884 when dimes were struck once again (SF did strike 1883 Hawaiian coins under contract in 1883 and also 1884 (using 1883 dated dies)).

Back to the 1856 Hutchings article...

From the Coining Room they are again taken to the Coiner's office where they are weighed, counted and delivered to the Treasurer for payment to depositors.

There is one piece always taken out of about every sixty thousand dollars, coined into double-eagles, and a similar amount from smaller coins, which are sent to Philadelphia, and carefully preserved for examination at the “judgement day”, as it is curiously and expressively called, which takes place annually at Philadelphia, under the superintendence of commissioners appointed by the U. S. Government.

We are surprised at the aggregate amount of coin produced in so short of time, in such a small and very inconvenient building; for, it seemed to us that every man was more or less in the others' way; and wherever the fault may lie, we think it of very questionable economy, that requires a remedy without delay.

This ends the Hutching's Article.

The article ends with a tabulation of the dollar value of gold coin, gold bars, and silver coin produced at the Branch Mint April, 1854 thru September 15th, 1856; which came to slightly over 55 million dollars. Of this figure, only 341,075 dollars' worth were Liberty Seated silver coins, or less than 1 percent of the total dollar value produced at the Branch Mint during this period of time. Gold bars represented slightly less than 22 percent (slightly over 12 million) and Gold coin slightly less than 78 percent (nearly 43 million).

The ending sentence of the Hutching's article,

“with such a small and very inconvenient building”, and “every man was more or less in the other's way” is not what you would expect for a Mint building that had only been in operation for less than 3 years. As was stated in the introduction to Part 1, Congress had appropriated \$300,000 for a “new” Mint building and the original building contractor (Butler) had sold his rights and transferred the contract to the firm of Curtis, Perry and Ward (CPW were successors to Moffat and Co). CPW had a functioning private mint including building and equipment in San Francisco. CPW was somehow was able to re-negotiate with Treasury Officials. Instead of building a whole new Mint facility, they sold to the Government their existing private mint building and machinery and agreed to enlarge and re-construct the existing building.

The Branch Mint building is repeatedly mentioned in the press as being unsuited and unfit.

Sacramento Daily Union, February 19, 1858

Mint Committee—Messrs. Whalen and Anderson paid a visit to the U.S. Branch Mint yesterday. Superintendent Hempstead pointed out to them the utter unfitness of the premises for minting purposes. They left fully impressed with the importance of an early construction of a new Mint building.

The status of the Mint became political fodder. Here in 1859, the Legislature was considering an appointment to fill the seat of the late Senator Broderick (who died following a duel in California with the ex-Chief Justice of the California Supreme Court, Terry). A letter to the Editor writer calls the Branch Mint building a “chicken coop” and places the blame on Senator Gwin and Weller who were the two Senators from California in 1852 when the Senate approved the new Branch Mint.

Daily Alta California (San Francisco), September 28, 1859

...Now, Sirs, I assert, and contend we would have been better off as a State if we had not had a Senator at all. What have they affected that could not have been better affected without them? Will you pretend to say that had it not been for Gwin and Weller the chicken coop that was purchased for the Branch Mint

(Continued on page 14)



(Continued from page 13)

would have been bought? Not at all. That purchase alone should condemn both of them to eternal oblivion. Hence I say, we could have done better, without a Senator on the floor, on that subject. Had there been none there, that place called a Mint, in this city, would not have been purchased; but a suitable lot would have been purchased, and a building put up, that would have answered the purpose. What have they done?...

Testimony taken ten years later in 1869 by a Joint Senate and House Committee on Retrenchment gives, by chance, a brief glimpse of how the Coiner had to physically transfer bullion from his office to his vault.

This is from the testimony of ex-San Francisco Mint Superintendent Robert Swain, Page 267, Report of the Joint Select Committee on Retrenchment, GPO, 1870

...The operative officers had orders ever since I became connected with the mint to remove nothing from one room to another unless it was in locked boxes, and they had regarded those orders; but during the settlement there was more business to be done than usual; there were not sufficient locked boxes for all operations, and they did transport matter from one room to another that was not in locked boxes. The coiner did transport from his office down into the vault of the mint some bullion without it being in the locked boxes. The mint is exceedingly inconvenient and not large enough for the operations. In order to transport bullion from his office it has to go down a trap; it has to go into the annealing room, into the engine room, into the cutting room, out into the yard, and then into his vault. It is almost impossible sometimes to follow it all the way down unless a man goes on the trap, and he would not care to go on the trap when it was full of boxes. It may have been abstracted in that way.

A “trap” had to have been an early elevator of its day, likely controlled by a rope spooled on a windlass. The reference to “abstracted”, was a reference to the some of the bullion could have been stolen by unknown workmen along the route, especially if the boxes were not locked.

Congress finally determined to build a new Mint building in San Francisco in late 1866. It took as we know, till 1874 to finally move into the new Mint Building.

Sacramento Daily Union, December 7, 1866

Land Purchased in San Francisco for a United States Mint—Washington, December 56th. Secretary McCulloch has purchased of Eugene Kelly, for \$100,000 in gold, the one hundred vara lot at the northwest corner of Mission and Fifth Streets, San Francisco, for a Mint building, which is to be completed as soon as the California Legislature cedes jurisdiction.

I believe the issue of jurisdiction at that time was the Federal Government acquiring private property in California, and removing it from the States’ Property Tax base. A “Vara” was a Spanish land surveying measurement.

A period announcement that silver coin (halves and quarters) were available for the exchange of U.S. Gold coin.

Sacramento Daily Union, July 29, 1856

Silver coin—We observe by advertisement in the San Francisco papers, that bankers and others can be accommodated with silver coins of the denominations of half and quarter dollars, at the U. S. Branch Mint in exchange for U. S. gold coins. This will be found to be a great accommodation to the public generally, and it is to be hoped that some arrangement will be, if it has not already been made, to absorb, by re-coining, the various foreign issues of coin now floating through our community, uncertain as to value, and, as a general thing, intrinsically worth less than they pass for. This can only be effected however, by stopping their circulation at other than their real value.

Agoston Haraszthy became Melter and Refiner at the San Francisco Branch Mint in August, 1855, and subsequently was suspended when settlements showed a loss of some \$152,000 during the close of annual settlements. The Mint sent out a Commission to determine the facts and determine if Haraszthy should stand trial. Haraszthy primarily blamed the poor design of the chimneys at the Mint and the failure of the

(Continued on page 15)



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Superintendent to fix it when told of the problem (Haraszthy suggested installing Zig-Zag flues in the chimneys to cool the gases and cause the gold to settle out in the lower reaches of the inside of the chimney, so it could be captured later (Apparently people new about “Zig-Zagging” back in the 1850s)). In a most amazing story, Mint employees were sent out across the street and on top of the roofs of neighboring buildings to gather sweeps and when these sweeps were melted, showed the presence of considerable gold.

Southern Sentinel (Plaquemine, La.) July 18, 1857

A Costly Chimney—In speaking of the charge against Colonel Haraszthy, melter and refiner of the U. S. Mint in California, of being accountable for a deficiency to a large amount, the Alta California says:

The wastage at the Mint is immense, owing to the badly constructed chimneys and flues—A large amount of the fine gold dust escapes and is lodged in the chimney and upon the roof of the Mint and adjoining houses. The sweepings from the roof of Davidson’s building amounted to three hundred ounces. Eleven hundred and eighty ounces were collected from the chimney after two and a half months’ of work.

300 ounces on a neighboring roof top, and 1180 ounces in the Mints’ own chimney after only two and a half months run!

Bret Harte, wrote in, *Bohemian Days in San Francisco* (1901)

...The United States Branch Mint stood very near it <his cousin’s house>, and its tall, factory-like chimneys overshadowed my cousin’s roof. Some scandal had arisen from an alleged leakage of gold in the manipulation of that metal during various processes of smelting and refining. One of the excuses offered was the volatilization of the precious metal and its escape through the draft of the tall chimneys. All San Francisco laughed at this explanation until it learned that corroboration of the theory had been established by an assay of the dust and grime on the roofs in the vicinity of the Mint. These had yielded distinct traces of gold. San Francisco stopped laughing, and that portion of it which had roofs in the neighborhood at once began prospecting. Claims were staked out on these airy placers, and my cousin’s roof, being the very next one to the chimney, the presumably “in the lead”, was disposed of to a speculative company for a considerable sum....

Harte was a famous California Novelist. His short stories *The Luck of the Roaring Camp*, *Outcasts of Poker*

Flat, and *Tennessee’s Partner* are some of the early California Gold rush stories. Unfortunately, like all writers, he also wrote some stories that are best left unread.

Haraszthy was eventually cleared, but it took till 1861.

The Mint in August 1857 again had another bout of getting bad press. Here the Assayer thought it strange that a deposit of crude gold bars turned out to be 90% gold and 10% copper, the same composition of the Mint used for coinage. No refiner on the Coast had a reason to make bars of that composition. In *Conversations with the Superintendent and Coiner*; the Police were called into investigate and trailed the mysterious depositor who appeared in person at an Express office to collect the returned new coin. Turns out it was the Mints own “cutter” in the Coining department who cut planchets from the strips (William Bein). He had been taking small amounts of scrap cuttings daily, small enough they weren’t noticed in the accounting, as the amounts were far less than the Coiner was allowed as wastage under the law. Eventually, these cuttings accumulated into a reasonable sum. Bein pled guilty when confronted, although the exact amount was never known.

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