

# SVCC

## NEWSLETTER

APRIL, 1988

VOLUME III, NO. 4

SACRAMENTO

SCENE

### SPRING SHOW SYNOPSIS

The Sacramento Valley Coin Club held its Sixth Annual Spring Show at Cal-Expo on Saturday and Sunday, March 12-13, 1988.

Collectors and most dealers seemed pleased, although the market for "investor" coins continues to stagnate.

HONOR ROLL: The following SVCC members, listed in alphabetical order, were responsible for all planning and coordination of the show, advertising, bourse, setup and breakdown, signs, refreshments, and all the other details that go into the making of a successful coin show. A round of applause for:

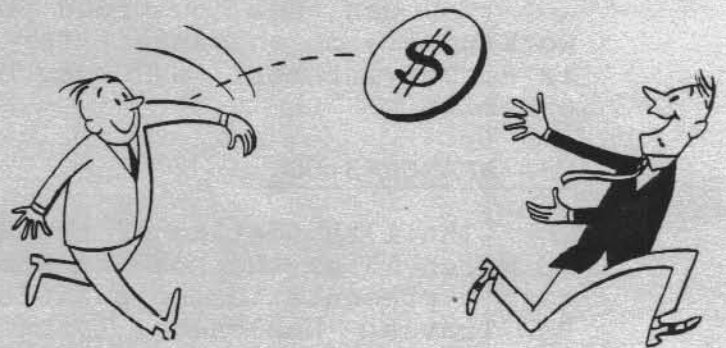
Tony Barajas  
Bob DeCesaris  
Madera de la Secoya

Ben Gay  
Dennis Pacheco  
Hank Wavers

SETUP: Al Albietz, Mike Bruss, Ted and Jean Clement, Fred Knudsen, George Moss, Tim Lewis, and Tony's daughter Millicent and her friend, Janet. Special thanks to our junior members who helped with setup: Chris Bradeen, Mike Lewis, Chris Slavensky, and Neil Tigner.

Lori Harris and her boyfriend, Leroy Sunada, also worked hard during setup. Lori sold quite a few raffle tickets, with the aid of her pretty smile. She also assisted with the raffle by drawing the winning tickets. . . If you didn't win, blame her!

Jim Tyson was hospitality chairman for the first time and did a great job. He wishes to thank all members who served their time at the registration tables: Gee Albietz, Carl and Margaret



Anderson, "Smokey" Burkart, Merle Coover, Vi Curry, Betty Daley, Bill Freeman, Jack Frost, Jim Hagarty, Lori Harris, Jennie Kammins, Lynne Kreps, Tim Lewis, Jack Meyers, Frank Stangl, Ray Tisser, Kitty Trent, Judy Wavers, Loren Weste, and Mike Wilke.

Jim Hagarty was there to handle all finances and also served on breakdown. Jack Frost assisted with the raffle and breakdown. Troy and Wendy Thompson worked very hard on breakdown. Mori Eiri helped with both setup and breakdown.

Perennial raffle winner R. Reyes built a new raffle drum and donated it to the club just prior to the Sunday drawing. We thank the Reyes family for their continued support.

This show boasted the first exhibits seen at an SVCC show in quite awhile: Dave Showers provided a beautiful display of British Conder tokens, each with its own fascinating story; Bob Travis featured a gorgeous set of Draped Bust half cents; and John Gomer's exhibit displayed some of the wide variety of reverse themes to be found on ancient Roman coins.

You can show how proud you are of your coins, too. Start working now on an exhibit for the October 22-23 show! If there is enough interest, SVCC may begin to feature competitive exhibits.

#### NSG BRANCHES OUT

The 17th meeting of the Numismatic Study Group was held on March 15 at the home of Bob and Mary Travis. Each member gave a presentation on a different U.S. branch mint: Bob Travis - Dahlonga, Lynne Kreps - New Orleans, Dave Showers - San Francisco, Bob DeCesaris - Carson City, and John Gomer - Denver.

Members enjoyed homemade boysenberry cobbler and coffee. The customary session of coin "show-and-tell" followed.

The next NSG meeting will be held at the home of John Gomer on April 19. John and Dave Showers will present "An Introduction to Ancient Coins."

#### MEETINGS, MITCH AND METAL DETECTORS

Strong turnouts at SVCC meetings continue. The March 9 meeting saw a packed house of 64! At the March 23 meeting, 59 members and guests enjoyed an educational program by Mitch Blachet on metal detectors. Mitch gave a short history of the instruments, a summary of different types and how they operate, and tips on use. He brought along one of the more popular models for members to examine.

Don't miss the April 27 educational program. Noted token expert Ron Lerch will speak on "Tokens and Other Exonumia."

You new members and beginners should mark May 25 on your calendars. This is the meeting at which Pete Prince will give his now-famous, informative presentation on "Coin Cleaning and Preservation." You will learn a lot!

THE EARLY YEARS OF THE  
SAN FRANCISCO MINT

by David Showers

In the months following the initial gold rush into California, there was a movement to establish a mint on the West Coast. By September 1850, the same month that California achieved statehood, Congress authorized the U.S. Treasury to establish a contract with a private firm to impress a U.S. stamp into bars and ingots of gold. In February 1851, Augustus Humbert was appointed U.S. Assayer and had his name and government stamp placed on gold ingots of the private firm Moffat & Company.

The assay office, in cooperation with Moffat & Company formed a provisional mint and supplied "ingots" in the form of coins in \$50, \$20, and \$10 denominations. The \$50 gold piece was accepted as legal tender on par with standard U.S. gold coins, but was officially called an "ingot." The U.S. Assay Office of Gold (Curtis, Perry and Ward) assumed the contract from Moffat in 1852 and continued to produce "ingots" until the mint was established.

Kellog and Company, now Kellogg and Humbert, continued to produce their own gold coins until well after the U.S. mint opened, in order to fill the need for circulating hard currency during that transition period.



Congress authorized the San Francisco Mint in July, 1852, but no contract was awarded until late 1853, when Curtis, Perry and Ward received the contract to build the mint and supply the needed machinery. The mint finally opened in April, 1854, nearly five years after the first calls for its establishment, when the first double eagles were produced. Numerous issues of private gold in larger denominations are well documented for the period, as well as California fractional gold which functioned as small change.

It is interesting to note that the chief products of the San Francisco mint during its first years were quarters, half dollars, gold dollars, eagles and double eagles. Why these denominations were issued in quantity while others were not minted until later years is open to speculation. I have a theory that the mint deliberately chose those denominations to drive the private gold coins out of circulation, or at the very least to mint the denominations

which appeared to be the most popular with private firms. Quarters, halves, and dollars were the California fractional gold denominations circulating at the time. Perhaps the mint was competing with those private manufacturers whose products were considered underweight when compared to standard mint products in terms of precious metal intrinsic value. Whatever the reason, we know that for a period after 1855, the production of California "fractional" or small denomination gold ceased and was not resumed for several years, at which time (1859-1882) the second generation coins were produced not for circulation, but as souvenirs.



Local shortages of gold and silver coins continued into 1856 as the U.S. mint output was increased. Private gold continued to circulate on par and the entire mint issue was often shipped overseas for payment of trade. Slowly, U.S. issues replaced private gold. By 1860, most private issues were only memories and a colorful chapter in U.S. numismatics came to a close.

Anyone interested in pioneer coinage and history is invited to join the Society of Private and Pioneer Numismatics. For information, write to: SPPN, P.O. Box 2420, Woodland, CA 95695.

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NORTHERN CALIFORNIA SHOW CALENDAR

- APRIL 24: Vallejo Numismatic Society 16th Annual Coin Show - Dan Foley Cultural Center, Dan Foley Park, Tuolumne Street, VALLEJO  
BOURSE: Stan Turrini, VNS, Box 4281, Vallejo, CA 94590
- APRIL 24: Reno Coin Club Fourth Annual Coin Show - Peppermill Inn, 2707 South Virginia Street, RENO  
BOURSE: Jim Melnick, RCC, Box 10791, Reno, Nevada 89510
- MAY 14-15: Stanislaus County Coin Club Second Annual Coin Show - Convention Center, 10th and K Streets, MODESTO  
Free admission / Door prizes drawn every half hour
- MAY 20-22: California State Numismatic Association Convention - San Jose Convention Center, Park Avenue and Market Street, SAN JOSE

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OUR NEXT MEETINGS: \* \* \* APRIL 27 \* \* \*  
\* \* \* MAY 11 \* \* \*

## THE SUN GOD'S SUCCESSOR

". . . The Romans beheld a youth. . . possessed of talents, courage, correct morals---every human virtue and every personal accomplishment. His goodness as an individual, and his wisdom as a ruler, recalled. . . the happier times of the empire. . ."

". . . a welcome contrast to his predecessor, and historians agree in bestowing on him the highest praise on account of his many amiable virtues."

"He ruled the empire wisely and well, and its condition was much improved."

Last month we examined the scandalous reign of Elagabalus and his ignominious death at the age of 17. We now turn to his cousin and successor, Severus Alexander, who also acceded to the throne when very young. Unlike Elagabalus, however, he accepted the responsibilities of power with maturity and dignity.

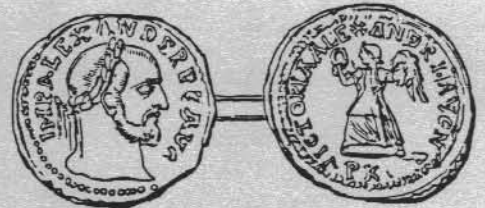
He was born Marcus Julius Gessius Alexianus Bassianus at Arce, Phoenicia in 208 A.D. His father died when Severus was very young, but his mother saw that he received a good education. The son of Julia Mamaea, grandson of the powerful Julia Maesa, and cousin of the emperor, he was a favorite of the upper echelons of Roman society.

When the ludicrous behavior of Elagabalus threatened his reign, he was persuaded to adopt the 13 year old boy and elevate him to the rank of Caesar, at which time Severus changed his name to Marcus Aurelius Alexander. In 222 A.D., when Elagabalus and his mother were murdered, he became emperor of the Roman empire at the age of 14 and assumed the name of Severus. The enraptured senate not only proclaimed him Emperor and Augustus, but gave him the title of Pater Patriae (Father of the Country).

Severus appointed a council of 16 senators as his advisers, and one of his first official acts was to rid the city of the superstitious religious cult of Elagabalus. The traditional Roman gods were returned to prominence and Jupiter, the king of the gods, is featured on the reverses of many coins of Severus Alexander.

Mature for his years, Alexander proved to be a social and political reformer. The silver coinage of Rome, which had become very debased under Septimius Severus and his successors, was restored to something close to its original purity. Workmanship was restored to the coinage as well. The relief of the imperial portrait on the obverse of denarii is noticeably higher than that of other emperors of this period.

Severus did not indulge in orgies or decadence like many of his predecessors. His idea of an enjoyable evening was a quiet



DENARIUS OF SEVERUS ALEXANDER  
REV: "To Jupiter the Defender"

dinner party with good conversationalists and literary men. Sometimes music and the arts would be featured. Severus was a good performer himself, but unlike Nero, he never performed in public, believing it to be unseemly behavior for an emperor.

He was married three times, but his last wife, Sallustia Barbia Orbiana, the daughter of a senator, is the only one for whom coins were struck. It is generally believed that he fathered no children.

Severus Alexander was the first emperor who favored the Christians. He had inscribed over the palace gate the phrase "Quod tibi fieri non vis, alteri non feceris", which may be translated as "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you."

Severus was also popular as a general of the Roman army. At the age of 23, he led a formidable force against the invading Artaxerxes, King of the Persians. After a tremendous battle, Artaxerxes was driven back to the frontiers. In 235, he led the army West against the Germans, who were threatening the Gallic provinces. Severus was victorious once again, but it was to be his last achievement. A band of mutinous soldiers, led by Maximinus, a general said to be seven feet tall, murdered Severus Alexander and his mother, Julia Mamaea.

His death was universally deplored. The senate awarded him the honors of consecration and a festival in his honor was instituted, which continued to be celebrated periodically for nearly 75 years after his death.

Most coins of Severus Alexander are relatively common. They also provide a variety of interesting themes and are thus an inexpensive and enjoyable area of Roman coinage to collect.

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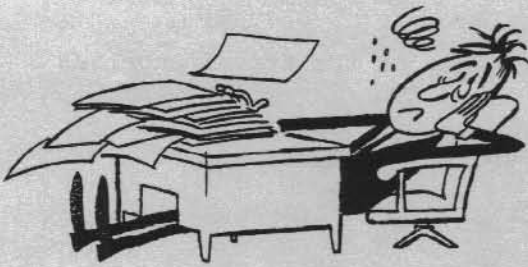
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SVCC meets at 7:30 P.M. on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of the month at:

SMUD Service Center  
5026 Don Julio Blvd.  
North Highlands, CA