

# SVCC

— NEWSLETTER —

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SACRAMENTO

SCENE

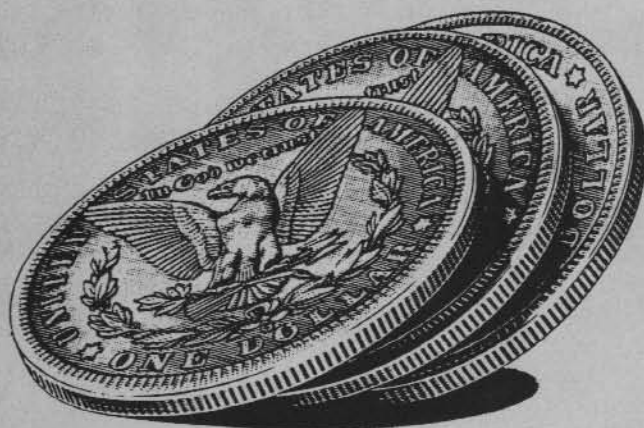
## FALL SHOW EXHIBITS CLASS

If you attended the last SVCC coin show in March, you might have seen the three exhibits provided by Bob Travis, Dave Showers, and your Editor. That initial effort was well received and has resulted in a decision to invite exhibits on a competitive basis, beginning with our next show. The 31st Annual SVCC Coin-o-rama will be held on Saturday and Sunday, October 22-23, 1988 at Expo Center, Cal-Expo, I-80 and Exposition Blvd., Sacramento.

We invite the participation of our members, as well as members of other Northern California coin clubs who may be interested in submitting an exhibit. So dig out that collection and get creative! Bourse Chairman for the show is Dennis Pacheco, P.O. Box 160122, Sacramento, CA 95816. For information on the exhibit competition, contact John Gomer, 3445 American River Drive, Suite D, Sacramento, CA 95864.

## ATTENDANCE STILL AT RECORD LEVELS

Attendance at SVCC meetings has been very strong all year. The first 10 meetings of 1988 saw total attendance of 572. . . an average of more than 57 per meeting! Those of you who



stayed home to watch "St. Elsewhere" don't have an excuse any longer! You are missing stimulating educational programs, lots of prizes, and Ben Gay's semi-monthly comedy monologue!

#### PETE CLEANS UP

Pete Prince gave his acclaimed program on "Coin Cleaning and Preservation" at the May 25 educational meeting. He reviewed different types of coin holders and cleaners, and chemical products for storage which inhibit corrosion and prevent moisture damage.

Pete also displayed his most recent failure, a Byzantine bronze coin which he submerged in lemon juice for a short period. The encrustation was indeed removed, but the coin now has an unattractive, brassy appearance. It's back to the laboratory for Doctor Pete!

#### PREVIEWS OF COMING ATTRACTIONS

##### SVCC EDUCATIONAL MEETINGS:

- July 27: The GSA Sale of Carson City Silver Dollars
- August 24: English Coinage: Elizabeth I to Elizabeth II

##### NUMISMATIC STUDY GROUP TOPICS:

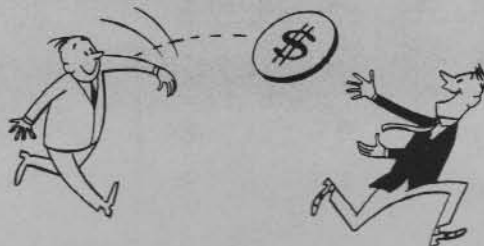
- July 19: Themes on U.S. Commemorative Coins, Part I
- August 16: Introduction to Ancient Coins, Part II
- September 20: Foreign Coins Struck at U.S. Mints

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#### DON'T BITE THAT COIN!

The first printed book describing coinage techniques was Pirotechnia, written by Vannuccio Biringuccio and published in 1540. In the following translated passage, he describes the final stages of producing gold coins:

" . . . the workers . . . finish smoothing them and rounding them by hammering on the edges. Thus made, they are heated and thrown into a common blanching liquor made with powdered tartar, salt and water, or urine. In this way the gold is cleaned and brightened. . ."





UNITED STATES



HALF CENTS



by Dave Showers

Roger Cohen, in his recent book on half cent collecting, calls these smallest of U.S. coins (in terms of face value) the "little half sisters." The name is appropriate because, while collecting U.S. large cents has been one of the most popular areas of the hobby, half cents are barely recognized by many collectors and remain a neglected series. Half cents as a series are rare, yet prices do not reflect this rarity. Collector demand remains small for half cents, perhaps because the series has several large gaps, particularly from 1812 to 1824 and from 1836-1848, when regular issues were not made. Completing a set, if proof-only dates are included, can be expensive and out of reach for the average collector, but a collection of business strikes can be achieved on a modest budget (except for the rarities).

Type sets and date sets are the most common methods of collecting half cents. Specialists include Cohen varieties in their collections, but many collectors include only Red Book varieties.

The series began in 1793 with a rare one year design of Liberty facing left with flowing hair. It was designed by Joseph Wright before he died during the yellow fever epidemic in Philadelphia in September, 1793. Most coins of this year are found in lower grades and are expensive in any state of preservation.

In 1794 another one year type with Liberty facing right was produced in larger quantities and is much more available to collectors today. The designer was Robert Scot, who was to have a long association with the U.S. mint. All the early types have a similar reverse design--an open wreath with several pairs of berries--which continued in use until 1809.

The next design, featuring a smaller head of Liberty facing right, was produced from 1795 to 1797. Both 1796 varieties, with and without pole on the obverse, are rarities and most collectors include a common variety from 1795 or 1797 for their type sets. This design is attributed to John Gardner, Assistant Engraver to Robert Scot.

From 1800 to 1808 the familiar draped bust design of Gilbert Stuart, first seen on the silver dollar of 1795 and modified by Robert Scot, was seen on half cents. Many collectors strive to complete a half cent set starting with 1800, since the cost is much less than 1793-1797 coins and can be

collected in high grades. The Draped Bust series offers date collectors, variety collectors, and die state collectors the richest number of coins in the series. In 1804 over one million coins were struck for the first time, a level of production which was reached again only in 1809. The lowest mintage was in 1802, when only 20,000 were struck, and many of these were on defective or spoiled large cent planchets which had been cut down to half cent size. Although available in lower grades, it is a great rarity above VF condition.

A major change occurred in 1809 when John Reich re-designed the half cent, as well as several other U.S. coins (1807-1809). The so-called "Classic" or "Turban" Head design was used until 1836, with minor changes in the master hub in later years. After three years of declining production (1809-1811) due to an oversupply of half cents, production ceased in 1812, not to be resumed until 1825. The matronly "down-to-earth" woman depicted by Reich was again revived and used for the next ten years--until 1836.

During the 1830's collector coins became popular and the first proofs were made available for sale by the mint. Proofs only were struck in 1836 using the Turban Head design. Although no circulation strikes were made, the "Mature" or "Braided Hair" design of Christian Gobrecht was introduced in 1840, three years before it appeared in its final form on the large cent. During the 1840's only proofs were made, except for 1849 when regular production began for the first time since 1835. The Gobrecht design remained in use until half cents were discontinued in 1857. The total mintage of the last nine years of production (1849-1857) amounts to less than one million, yet the cost of an MS-60 coin is less than large cents of the period during which several million coins were minted each year.

Over the 65 years of production from 1793 to 1857, only 9,000,000 coins were minted for the entire series. Only two years (1804 and 1809) had over one million coins each and many of the later years had mintages of less than 100,000. Yet these coins are surprisingly inexpensive and affordable to the average collector. How long this buying opportunity will be available to collectors is difficult to predict.

There are two major works on the subject available to interested collectors: Roger Cohen's book American Half Cents: The Little Half Sisters and Walter Breen's Encyclopedia of U.S. Half Cents. They provide a wealth of information for the collector of half cents and early U.S. copper coins.

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HOP TO IT!!

OUR NEXT MEETINGS WILL BE HELD:

\* \* \* \* \* JULY 13 \* \* \* \* \*

\* \* \* \* \* JULY 27 \* \* \* \* \*

# COINAGE OF THE ROMAN PROVINCE OF JUDEA

## PART 2

by Eric Kondratieff

(Continued from the May issue)

After Pilate's departure, Judea was left without a procurator. However, one was soon appointed by the Syrian governor, Vitellius (father of the future emperor by the same name). Unfortunately, the procurators under Caligula did not issue any coins, although there were other interesting issues from the neighboring provinces and kingdoms.

Early in 41 A.D., Herod Agrippa aided the emperor Claudius in his accession to the imperial throne. In gratitude, Claudius ceded to Agrippa's small tetrarchy all of the territories that had belonged to his grandfather, Herod the Great. This included Judea, and thus the lepta issued at that time proclaimed the kingship of Herod Agrippa, rather than the suzerainty of Rome. After Agrippa's death, there were several procurators in succession who did not issue coins. In fact, it was not until the end of Claudius' reign that Antonius Felix (52-59 A.D.) issued a vast quantity of leptons, the first in eleven years. Since he was only a freedman, Felix's appointment may have seemed a downgrading of the post. However, it was really an upgrading, as he had extremely significant political and familial connections. His brother Pallas was in the emperor's secretariat and allied to Claudius' fourth wife, the empress Agrippina, making Pallas one of the most powerful and important men in Rome. Felix himself was connected to the emperor by marriage: his first wife, Drusilla (I), was the granddaughter of Marc Antony, whose daughter Antonia was Claudius' mother. Felix emphasized these connections on his coinage. On one issue, dated Year 14 (54 A.D.), we find the empress' name, IOYΑΙΑ ΑΓΡΡΜΝΙΝΑ (Julia Agrippina), taking pride of place on the obverse, surrounded by a laurel wreath. The emperor's name, ΤΙ(ΒΕΡ)ΙΟC ΚΛΑΥΔΙΟC ΚΑΙCΑΡΟC ΓΕΡΜ(ΑΝΙΚΟC), is found on the reverse with the regnal year (ΛΙΑ = 14) and two crossed palms (Figure 1). The emphasis given to Agrippina is no doubt due to her influence in helping Felix to obtain his post.



Figure 1

The other issue by Felix is a study in tact. Faced with two possible heirs to the throne (Britannicus, Claudius' son by his third wife, Valeria Messalina; and Nero, Agrippina's son by an earlier marriage to L. Domitius Ahenobarbus), Felix discreetly named them both on the same coin. On the obverse are two crossed shields with spears, a type with

slightly offensive overtones, copied from an imperial denarius honoring the emperor's father, Drusus the Elder (Sear 492 / Figure 2). Nero's name appears on the obverse, and Britannicus' on the reverse with the more traditional palmtree (Figure 3).



Figure 2

Why Nero's name should have taken precedence over Britannicus' may be due to Agrippina's influence. Also, when Nero had come of age, Claudius issued denarii honoring his adopted son as "Principi Iuventuti" (Prince of the Youth), a designation for the heir-apparent (Sear 567). The precedent for this occurred in Augustus' reign, when his grandsons and designated heirs, Caius and Lucius Caesars, were named "Principes Iuventutis" by the equestrian

order when they had assumed their togas of manhood. Augustus issued denarii showing their togate figures on the reverse, with bucklers and spears between them (Sear 368). Thus, the shields and spears on the coins of Felix may also be in reference to this title, as the buckler and spears (hasta et clypeum) were the insignia of the "Prince(s) of the Youth." No



Figure 3

such coins appeared for Britannicus, as he was still underage when Claudius died.

It was well that Felix did not neglect to honor Nero, who soon after became emperor and disposed of the unfortunate Britannicus. As for Felix's governorship, not only the Jews but also the Romans felt that many of the problems in Judea were due to him personally, for as the historian Tacitus later wrote of him, "He exercised the prerogative of a king in the spirit of a slave, with superlative cruelty and licentiousness." After seven years as procurator, Felix was finally recalled to Rome and replaced by Porcius Festus (59-61), another governor incapable of bringing true peace and prosperity to the province. Festus died after less than two years in office, but not without first issuing another vast quantity of leptons.

The coins issued by Festus show a return to a more traditional type. The obverse carries Nero's name in Greek (NEPONWC) surrounded by a wreath. The reverse has a palm leaf with the inscription LE KAICAPOC (Year 5 of Caesar / Figure 4). The only significance



Figure 4

that can be attached to this typology is that perhaps the wreath and palm leaf refer to some undetermined military victory. It seems that Festus was simply keeping the coin type as inoffensive as possible, and succeeded. The procurators who followed did not issue any coins, so this coin by Festus is the last of the procuratorial lepta of Judea.

SOURCES: Hendin, David/Guide to Biblical Coins/Amphora Books, 1987.  
Grant, Michael/The Jews in the Roman World/Dorset Press, 1973.  
Tacitus/The Annals of Imperial Rome/Penguin Books, 1956.

B O O K

R E V I E W



Walter Breen would probably be the first to admit that he is a procrastinator. His published works are usually long overdue by the time they finally arrive. But there is a good reason: Mr Breen is a perfectionist. When you read one of his books, you feel that he has taken the time to make certain that each sentence is accurately structured; that he has personally selected each photograph; that he has carefully combed the text for errors, distrusting all proofreaders.

Now sit back and imagine that someone has taken the Red Book, our trusted companion, and eliminated all estimated values. Then each section has been expanded to include the important elements of all research relevant to that specialized area. Quite an imposing task, right?

What you have is Walter Breen's Complete Encyclopedia of U.S. and Colonial Coins (Doubleday, 1988). It is a mammoth book, lavishly illustrated with over 4,000 photographs. It is the most comprehensive study of U.S. numismatics ever packed into a single volume.

Not only are all series, dates, and mint marks covered, but all major varieties are included. As an example, the Red Book gives us eight pages on Bust half dollars of 1794-1836, mostly values; Breen's Encyclopedia, noting only occasional auction prices realized, devotes 19 pages to the subject. In large, easy to read format, the book includes 158 pages on Early American (Pre-Federal) issues, 420 pages on regular issues, and 176 pages on other issues, glossary, indices, etc.

For at least a year I had been hearing rumors that this book was "nearing publication." It was worth the wait. I used to consider the most valuable single reference work on American numismatics to be The History of United States Coinage as Illustrated by the Garrett Collection, by Q. David Bowers.

It now has serious competition.

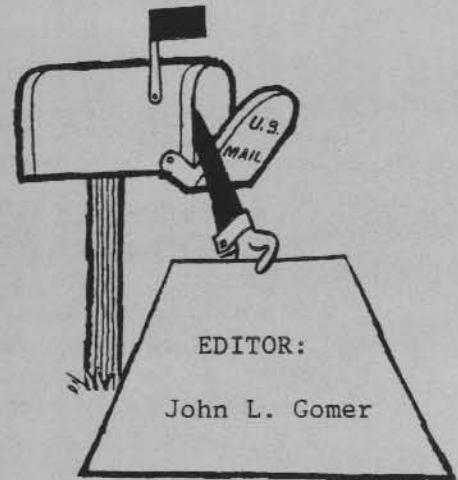
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Sacramento Valley Coin Club  
P.O. Box 160122  
Sacramento, CA 95816

OFFICERS:

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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