

SVCC

— NEWSLETTER —

MARCH, 1988

VOLUME III, NO. 3

SACRAMENTO

SCENE



ATTENDANCE TREND

A recent review of the SVCC sign-in book revealed that our average total attendance per regular meeting has nearly doubled in the last two years! Here are the numbers:

<u>YEAR (NO. OF MEETINGS)</u>	<u>AVERAGE PER REGULAR MEETING</u>
1985 (22 regular meetings)	28
1986 (22 regular meetings)	32
1987 (22 regular meetings)	52
1988 (First 3 regular meetings)	58

If you aren't coming to our meetings, this should make you wonder why! Great educational programs, fun and fellowship with other collectors, auctions, raffles. . . Join us!

SPREAD THE WORD!

The Sacramento Valley Coin Club Sixth Annual Spring Show is upon us! 60 dealers, great raffle prizes, and several nice exhibits highlight the March 12-13 show at Cal-Expo. Tell all your friends and neighbors to give it a try!



MEXICO, METAL DETECTORS, MISCELLANEOUS

Earl Fraser presented an educational program at the February 24 meeting on "Agustin Iturbide, Mexico's First Emperor." Earl gave a history of early Mexico and showed slides of some of the coins struck during the short reign of Iturbide.

You won't want to miss these upcoming educational programs:

- MARCH 23: Mitch Blachet / Buried Treasure: Metal Detectors and Their Use
APRIL 27: Ron Lerch / Tokens and Other Exonumia
MAY 25: Pete Prince / Coin Cleaning and Preservation
JUNE 22: John Gomer / Roman General: The Family of Septimius Severus

NSG REGROUPS

The Numismatic Study Group, an affiliate of the Sacramento Valley Coin Club, held its 16th meeting at the home of John Gomer on February 16. Four regulars attended the meeting, which featured the topic "U.S. Silver Dollars: 1794-1935." Bob Travis spoke on Flowing Hair dollars, John Gomer discussed Draped Bust dollars, Bob Decesaris covered Liberty Seated dollars, and Dave Showers paid homage to the Morgan dollar. Boston cream pie and coffee was enjoyed by all as other subjects were discussed and coins were passed around.

The next meeting of NSG will be held March 15 at the home of Bob Travis. Each member will make a presentation on one of the U.S. branch mints.

* * * * *

"NUMISMATIST"

"Numismatist! Now what is that?"
A friend asked me one day.
For he had heard the word pronounced
In some peculiar way.
Collecting medals, coins and bills,
I answered him, and though
It seemed to me I'd missed something,
I wanted him to know.
I couldn't seem to find the words.
Then I began to think,
I know that it must be much more,
As in my mind I link.
The fun I had, the friends I made,
The times I spent with each,

The auction sales, and times I hit,
The lesson that they teach.
The coins I sought, the few I got,
The clubs I joined and such,
Of how an idle curious thought
Had made me care so much.
Of friends that passed along the way
That I had chose to tread,
Of how they smiled and welcomed me,
The talks and what we said.
And then I fully realized,
No matter how I try,
I couldn't make him understand
"Numismatist" as I.

K. L. McIntosh

Numismatic Scrapbook Magazine, May, 1941

THE CASE OF THE DISAPPEARING DOLLARS

The years from 1794 to 1803 saw the production of nearly 1½ million silver dollars by the Philadelphia Mint. Yet very few of them were actually seen in circulation. Why the disappearing act?

The Flowing Hair design of 1794-5 was criticized for the wild, unkempt hair of Liberty. In 1795 the famous portrait artist Gilbert Stuart was enlisted in the search for a "world class" coinage. Referring to Liberty's hair, Stuart said: "We will bind it up and thus render her a steady matron."

The new design, engraved by Robert Scot, proved popular. It was first paired up with a Small (Perched) Eagle reverse; then, in 1798, with the Large (Heraldic) Eagle reverse.

Early dollars were coined from silver deposited with the mint by banks or individuals. These bullion deposits were small for the first several years. However, beginning in 1798, they increased dramatically, leading to much higher mintages. Yet they still did not appear in the channels of commerce.

Elias Boudinot, Director of the Mint, tried to remedy the situation by removing foreign silver coins from circulation; melting, refining, and recoinning them into dollars; then placing the dollars back into circulation. Unfortunately, his plan merely aggravated the disappearance of silver dollars from circulation.

The reason was simple: The U.S. silver dollar contained about 8% more silver than the Spanish milled dollar, which was still being accepted at a value of one dollar. Entrepreneurs were transporting U.S. dollars to the West Indies and exchanging them at an advantage for Spanish milled dollars (for example, 1,000 U.S. dollars could be traded for 1,080 Spanish milled dollars). Then the Spanish dollars were brought back to the U.S. and exchanged for United States dollars at par.

Some U.S. dollars also drifted to Central and South America, where they were counterstamped for local use. Others went to the Orient in international trade.

These factors all contributed to a continuing flow of U.S. dollars out of the country. In 1804 the minting of silver dollars was discontinued.

The experience made the U.S. government cautious, because it was 32 years before the U.S. Mint once again struck silver dollars for circulation.



Spanish milled dollars, please!

REIGN OF THE SUN-GOD

* * The Eccentric Elagabalus * *

"The reign of this prince. . . was characterized throughout by. . . impurity so bestial that the particulars almost transcend the limits of credibility."

"One of the most cruel, debauched, and shameless wretches that ever disgraced humanity or polluted a throne."

"Even when allowances have been made for his youth, (his) conduct seems ridiculously stupid."

"His reign was notorious for religious fanaticism, for cruelty, bloodshed and excesses of every description."

What kind of ruler could possibly inspire such savage remarks? . . .

Varius Avitus Bassianus was born at Emesa, Syria in 205 A.D. He was first cousin of the emperor Caracalla. This imperial connection and the influence of his wealthy grandmother, Julia Maesa, led to his appointment as high priest of Elagabalus, a religious cult of Emesa which worshipped a small, shiny black stone. Legend said that the stone fell from heaven, so it was probably a meteorite.

Macrinus, who had become emperor in 218 A.D., was unpopular. The grandmother of young Varius changed his name to Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, the same name Caracalla had taken later in life. She convinced the legions at Emesa that the young man now known as Marcus was the legitimate heir to the throne, claiming that he was an illegitimate son of Caracalla. The troops revolted. Macrinus fled and was hunted down and killed. At the age of 13, Elagabalus became master of the Roman world.

He began the journey to Rome at a leisurely pace, wintering at Nicomedia. It was nearly a year before he finally arrived at the capital. And what an arrival! His procession advanced into the city over roads sprinkled with gold dust. The sacred stone of Emesa was in a chariot pulled by six white horses. The new emperor, wearing his priestly robes, jewels and make-up, walked backwards in front of the chariot, holding the reins. His mother, Julia Soaemias, was dressed like Venus in a very scanty outfit. Accompanied by exotic ceremonies, the stone was placed in an elaborate temple and surrounded by treasures taken from all the major temples.

The Romans were shocked and disgusted by their emperor's behavior. His effeminate looks and transvestitism led to rumors



The inscription on this coin of Elagabalus was wishful thinking. It translates as "The Triumph of the Emperor's Religion."

of homosexuality. Yet he had four wives in a period of three years. He rejected his first wife, Julia Paula, in favor of Julia Aquilia Severa, a Vestal Virgin. This was especially outrageous to the citizens of Rome. The Vestal Virgins were highly respected guardians of the sacred fire, ancient documents, and other artifacts associated with the state religion. By marrying a Vestal Virgin, Elagabalus displayed his lack of respect for the traditional Roman gods. He only worshipped his Sun-God.

It was said that the emperor kept concubines in the palace to entertain his lusts. He invited Roman citizens to the palace for feasts and played practical jokes on them. He would distribute tickets for absurd lotteries in which the prizes might be a dead dog, ten flies, ten camels, and a bag of gold.

By 221 A.D. Julia Maesa began to realize that the people were not going to tolerate her grandson much longer. Her other daughter, Julia Mamaea, and Mamaea's son Severus Alexander were discreet, moral and honorable. Elagabalus was persuaded to adopt his cousin and elevate him to the rank of Caesar. This appointment was very popular with both the army and the citizens of Rome.

But Elagabalus soon became jealous of his cousin. He made several unsuccessful attempts on the life of Severus Alexander. On March 11, 222 A.D. the Praetorian guards hacked to death Elagabalus and his mother. The soldiers tried to stuff the bodies down a sewer manhole, but the corpses would not fit through the opening. So they were dragged through the streets of Rome and thrown into the Tiber River. At his death, Elagabalus was 17 years of age. The reign of the Sun-God had come to an end.

The brass and silver coins of Elagabalus are relatively common; his gold coins are rare. The obverse portraits of some coins show Elagabalus with a horn over his forehead, symbolically representing the sun's rays emanating from the head of the Sun-God.

Introductory quotes and information for this article taken from:

- Anthony, John: The Imperial Ladies of the Severan Dynasty, Coin Monthly, February, 1983.
- Brown, Augustus: The Coinage of Elagabalus (AD 218-222), New York, n.d.
- Mattingly, Howard, et al: The Roman Imperial Coinage, Vol. IV, Part II, London, 1938.
- Seaby, H.A.: Roman Silver Coins, Vol. III, Pertinax to Balbinus and Pupienus, London, 1982.
- Smith, William: Classical Dictionary of Biography, Mythology and Geography, London, 1858.
- Stevenson, Seth W., et. al.: A Dictionary of Roman Coins, London, 1889.
- Sydenham, E.A.: Historical References to Coins of the Roman Empire, London, 1917.

N O R T H E R N C A L I F O R N I A
S H O W C A L E N D A R



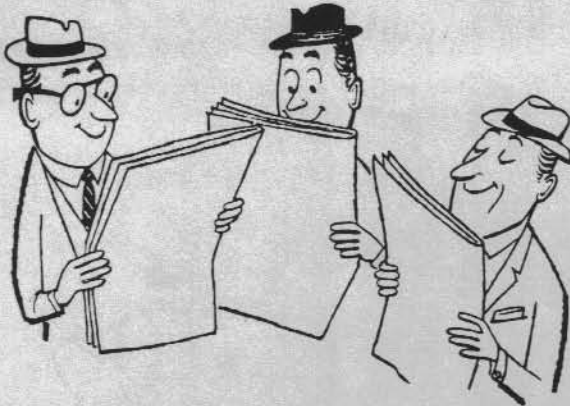
- 12-13: Sacramento Valley Coin Club Sixth Annual Spring Show - Building 3, Expo Center, Cal-Expo, Exposition Blvd. at Interstate 80, SACRAMENTO
- 20: Napa Valley Coin Club Coin Show - Town & Country Fairgrounds, NAPA
BOURSE: Gene Feierstein, P.O. Box 2154, Napa, CA 94558
- 26-27: Eureka Coin Club 22nd Annual Coin Show - Redwood Acres Fairgrounds, 3750 Harris Street, EUREKA
BOURSE: Harry Dixon, P.O. Box 505, Eureka, CA 95501
- 27: Redwood Empire Coin Club 20th Annual Coin-a-Rama - Veterans Memorial Building, 1351 Maple Avenue, SANTA ROSA
BOURSE: William Feist, P.O. Box 2811, Santa Rosa, CA 95405



- 24: Vallejo Numismatic Society 16th Annual Coin Show - Dan Foley Cultural Center, Dan Foley Park, Tuolumne Street, VALLEJO
BOURSE: Stan Turrini, VNS, P.O. Box 4281, Vallejo, CA 94590
- 24: Reno Coin Club Fourth Annual Coin Show - Peppermill Inn, 2707 South Virginia Street, RENO
BOURSE: Jim Melick, RCC, P.O. Box 10791, Reno, Nevada 89510



- 20-22: California State Numismatic Association Convention - San Jose Convention Center, Park Avenue and Market Street, SAN JOSE



CLASSIFIED

AD

SECTION

WANTED: Israeli and Thai coins and currency. Call Madera: (916) 483-5683.

WANTED: We buy coin collections and accumulations, U.S. and foreign, gold and silver. Especially need coins of Japan. Strictly confidential. FINDER FEES PAID. Call "Ben" Gay, (916) 726-5334.

WANTED: MS-63 or better Lincoln cents, pre 1940. Call 421-7630 after 5 P.M.

MILITARY PAYMENT CERTIFICATES: U.S. military currency used overseas from 1946 (Series 461) to 1973 (Series 692). Denominations are 5¢ to \$20. Write/call/bring to SVCC meeting. Nick, P.O. Box 60104, Sacramento, CA 95860, (916) 486-8720.

WANTED: California fractional gold coins and 19th century gold tokens. I will pay at least 45%-70% of current Red Book value (page 238) for problem-free coins. Also buying Colonial coins and U.S. half cents and large cents. David Showers, P.O. Box 2420, Woodland, CA 95695.

FOR SALE: California trade tokens. Send large, self-addressed envelope with 39¢ postage on it for list. Dan Jacobson, P.O. Box 7101, Sacramento, CA 95826-0801.

WANTED: Year sets of The Numismatist: 1888-1908, certain issues of 1909 and 1910, 1911-1913, 1915-1931, 1934, 1935 and 1940. Also, year sets of Numismatic Scrapbook Magazine: 1935-1940, 1944-1946, 1948-1950, 1962, 1964, 1965, certain issues of 1966 and 1967, 1968-1975. John L. Gomer, 3445 American River Drive, Suite D, Sacramento, CA 95864 / (916) 486-8755.

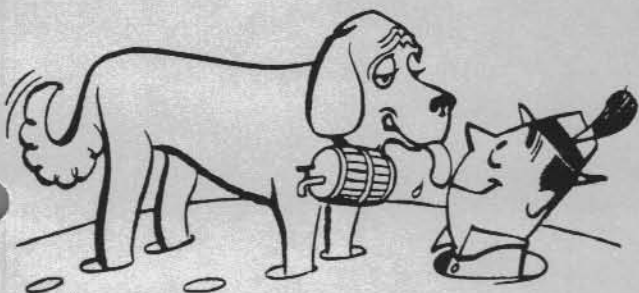
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COME IN OUT OF THE COLD!

OUR NEXT MEETINGS WILL BE HELD:

* * * * * MARCH 23 * * * * *

* * * * * APRIL 13 * * * * *

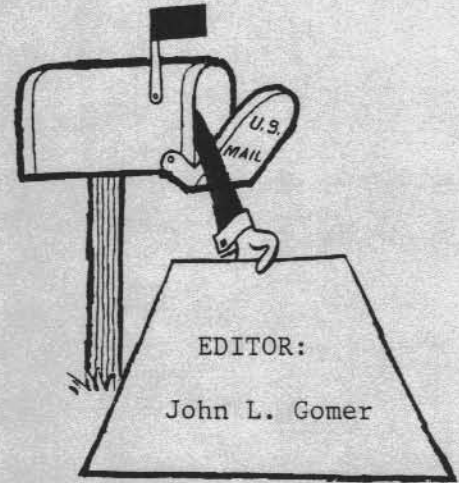


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Ray Tisser - Assistant Treasurer



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