



Worcester County Numismatic Society

Founded 1946

Meets 2nd Friday of the month except July and August

May
2020
WCNS
Monthly
Newsletter

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Next Meeting: Friday June 12?

We will have to see. There will be an update in the May newsletter, and on the WCNS website.

WCNS Leadership

Officers

Co-Presidents: Mike Simpson & John Frost

Vice President: Jim Turner

Secretary: Maria Matys

Treasurer: Stanley Sobiech

Director at Large: Bob Moffatt

Programs

Speaker Bureau: Bob Moffatt

YN Coordinator: Mark Matys

Newsletter Editor: John Frost

Hi everyone,

With Governor Charlie Baker's extension of the state-wide shutdown, our May meeting is also cancelled, not to anyone's surprise. While I am personally going through coin show withdrawal, it is absolutely the right approach. At the moment, we are keeping our options open for our June meeting, which is scheduled for June 12. Like lots of unknowns with the coronavirus, we'll just play things by ear.

Right now, all coin show remain cancelled, but hopefully things will be safe to resume on a limited based before too long. Coin dealers with good websites and a solid web presence seem to be doing well with strong sales of great collector coins, and the auctions are as busy as ever.

Hopefully when we are able to resume, some of our members will have some new treasures for show and tell. I'm glad to say that I have some. Stay safe everyone! Stay tuned.

- John and Mike

Coin in the Spotlight: 1909/8 Double Eagle

With the financial volatility associated with the current coronavirus pandemic, gold has made a strong recovery and now features a spot price just over \$1,700 per troy ounce. Many predict it will make a run at \$2,000 in the not-too-distant future. With all of bullish sentiment over the precious metal, classic gold coins such as the double eagle are in hot demand.

Many "20 Libs" and "Saints" are flying out of inventories of both coin and bullion dealers, with a healthy premium over their actual gold value.

One of the more popular issues is the 1909/8 overdate Saint. With a mintage of over 161,000 (respectable for a gold coin), the 1909 is plentiful in all grades, including mint state. With upwards of 15,000 survivors, about half of them feature the overdate. As such, it is not a tough coin to find, especially after hoards of double eagles were repatriated from vaults in Europe, where many U.S. gold coins were exported.

Although it is not a scarce coin, the overdate is very prominent and the variety carries a definite premium over the normal 1909 date. They are rarely cherrypicked because the lower left loop of the 8 is so easily seen and will not be missed by most dealers or collectors. It is a very popular variety and a favorite of many.





Women on Coins, by Fred A. Liberatore

This is an easy subject to write about because there are so many of them shown on coins. In the ancient world, Athena was widely known on the tetradrachms of Athens. These coins were struck in huge numbers and were the standard trade coin for centuries. Of course, it helped to be a goddess if you wanted your portrait on coined money. Amazons also were portrayed as well as nymphs and many other female personifications.

To be a woman portrayed on coins it helped to have a powerful husband which can be said of Arsinoe, Bernice (both wives of a Pharaoh), and The Cleopatra who ruled Egypt (after eliminating her brother-husband) in her own name.

Rome of course intervened in the person of Julius Caesar and then Mark Anthony. She had children with both of them. In the end it did not turn out well for her or her son by Caesar.

Livia, the wife of Augustus, was the first of the imperial women to appear on Roman coinage. In fact, wives and daughters in the imperial routinely appeared on Roman coinage for centuries.

In the Byzantine Empire (better named Eastern Roman Empire) it was clear that the wife of Justin II really was a co-ruler with him. I have a 40 nummi copper coin from his first year of rule (565-566 A.D.) minted in his capital, Constantinople. They both sit on the same size throne facing the viewer. Curiously, the most famous empress of this empire, Theodora, the wife of Justinian the Great, who became emperor after Justin II, never appeared on the coinage. However, she clearly also had great influence on her husband. One Byzantine empress ruled alone, Irene from Athens, 797-804 A.D. She had both gold and bronze coins struck in her own name and with her portrait. She was ruthless enough to order the blinding of her own son for whom she had been regent.

I know of few women appearing on medieval coinage but one stands out, Matilda, a daughter of Henry I. She was a claimant to the English throne, did appear on some crude and extremely rare silver pennies during the Anarchy (1135-1153 A.D.)



Athena on Tetradrachm coin



I am sure other women began to appear on coins during and after the Renaissance but the one who is most famous and widely known is Maria Theresa on the ubiquitous 1780 Austrian taler which in Africa and the middle east became a kind of universal currency. It has been restruck innumerable times as a widely desired and acceptable trade coin similar to the Athenian tetradrachm.

◀ 1780 Maria Theresa thaler

The preeminent women on coins are queens of Great Britain and their numerous colonies and now Commonwealth Nations. Queen Victoria appeared on coinages everywhere around the world. I would hazard a guess that her portrait on coins is the most common of the 19th century. Her long reign, 60+ years, and an empire covering 1/4 of the world's surface surely added to the total coinage.

Not to be outdone is queen Elizabeth II whose portrait appears on coins in Canada, New Zealand, Australia, many island nations, and of course Great Britain and such enclaves as Jersey, Guernsey, the Isle of Man, and Gibraltar. She has outlived her distant ancestor Queen Victoria, so her coins are even more numerous.

Any decent bargain box will have Elizabeth's coins and often a well-worn Victorian specimen. Common they are, inexpensive they are, and historic they are, all leading to Happy Collecting.

Deadline for next issue: May 28th