

THE PLANCHET

EDMONTON NUMISMATIC SOCIETY

May 2014

Volume 60 Issue 7

The Griffins of Pantikapaion Page 18





2012 - 1st Place
ANA Outstanding Local
Club Publication Award



2011 - 2nd Place
ANA Outstanding Local
Club Publication Award



2010 - 1st Place
RCNA Best Local
Newsletter



THE PLANCHET

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<http://en.wikipedia.org>

Griff Statue in the forecourt of the
Farkesreti Cemetery Budapest

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Message from the President

Marc Bink 2014



I somehow had it in mind that for my first message I'd try something poignant or witty; unfortunately it's not going to work that way. Instead, I'll start by saying thank you.

First off, I'd like to thank the previous Executive. Your contributions are appreciated. The fact that the current Executive is pretty much the same as the previous one is a vote of confidence in the Executive as a whole as well as the course it is following. I intend to stay that course and look forward to working together with the new Executive. I'd also like to thank David Peter, who took on the job of President on after the RCNA Convention of '09 as an emergency measure and did a super job with it for almost 5 years. David has agreed to stay on as the Vice President, so we're not about to lose his guidance and advice; in fact, I'll be leaning heavily on him as I learn the ropes. He's also agreed to stay on as Bourse Chairman, so here again, continuity is preserved and therefore everyone knows what to expect.

The club is in good shape; we have money in the bank, we're one of the most vibrant and progressive clubs in all of Canada. We have the biggest and arguably the best run coin shows in all of Canada. I fully intend to keep it this way. But we do need your help; not only do we always need volunteers but we are also looking for ideas and places to take this club. Our mandate according to our constitution is to further the study of numismatics and to educate the public, so we're looking for ideas and volunteers to spearhead projects to get us in the schools or more into the community educating people about history and Canada through coins...this is where you the reader can help us; - it's your club, you do have a say and we'd like to hear from you. And we are accessible... for the most part, although some of us work during the day. That said, if you've got an idea, I'd love to go for a coffee and hear about it.

And lastly, I'd like to thank Roger Grove for his contributions in turning the Planchet into what it is today. Roger has elected to step down as Editor in Chief after close to 5 years. He took the Planchet to new heights; winning the ANA Outstanding Local Club Publication Award as well as the RCNA Best Local Newsletter Award. We wouldn't be here without his artistic touch and his formatting wizardry.

We're also happy to report that Paul Purdie has taken over as Editor in Chief of the Planchet; we wish him success and ask that you support him in his new role. Paul has some very good ideas for where he'd like to take the Planchet, and together with Paul, we columnists are looking forward to providing you with more original material that we hope you will find interesting. Here again, we need a feedback loop and would appreciate hearing from our readers. What can we do to improve? What would you like to see more of?

The bottom line is this - it is as much your club as it is any of the Executive that you supported to represent you. So we seek your input, and we look forward to hearing from you!

And in closing, thank you for your continued support of the ENS, Canada's best and most vibrant coin club!

Marc

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About Your Society

February 12, 2014 - ENS Annual General Meeting

President David Peter opened the meeting at 7:19pm.

- He welcomed members.
- The upcoming show was discussed :

- dealers were finalized, and a couple new ones will be attending. It's looking like it will be a good show.

- Memberships are due. Pay at the meeting or on-line. Marc will give you your updated membership card tonight to those who pay tonight.

Marc Bink - called for volunteers for the upcoming show. Spots include:

- auction, walkers and appraisal table.
- sign-up form is at the front.

Howard Gilbey discussed the silent auction for the show:

- still room for more lots, about 3/4 full so far.
- Submit them to Ray or Matt at their respective shops no later than Saturday.

Pierre - Presented (presented) the club's financials:

- The main expenditures were the spring and fall shows.
- The club remains in a healthy financial state.
- The financial books are open tonight to any member attending to review.
- The financial books were audited by the audit committee struck at the last meeting.
- Marc Bink moved to accept the Treasurer's report. Jeremy Martin 2nd (seconded) the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Elections:

- David asked Howard to come and do nominations.

President:

- David nominated Marc Bink, Dan seconded; Jules moved nominations cease, Mike Schneider seconded.
- Marc Bink elected President by acclamation.

Vice President:

- Marc nominated David Peter, Arif seconded; Jeremy moved nominations cease, seconded by Marc.
- David Peter elected Vice-President by acclamation.

Treasurer:

- Marc nominated Pierre Driessen, David seconded; Seymour moved nominations cease, Ray seconded.
- Pierre Driessen elected Treasurer by acclamation (acclamation.)

Secretary:

- Pierre nominated Mitch Goudreau, John seconded; motion to cease nominations by Marv, Ray seconded.
- Mitch Goudreau elected Secretary by acclamation.

Editor-In-Chief:)

- Roger nominated Paul Purdie, David seconded; add motion to cease nominations Pierre, Marc seconded.
- Paul Purdie elected Editor-In-Chief by acclamation (acclamation.)

Past President: - Since David Peter has a voting position as Vice-President, Jamie Horkulak remains as Past President.)

Directors:

- David nominated Ermin Chow, Jules seconded.
- Seymour nominated Andy Vanderleest, Pierre seconded.
- Pierre nominated Howard Gilbey, Marc seconded.

continued on next page

2014-15 Executive

Marc Bink - President

David Peter - Vice President

Pierre Driessen - Treasurer

Mitch Goudreau - Secretary-

Paul Purdie - Editor-In-Chief

Jamie Horkulak-Past President

Directors

Marv Berger

John Callaghan

Terry Cheesman

Ermin Chow

Howard Gilbey

Roger Grove

Chris Hale

Wayne Hansen

Jeremy Martin

Andy Vanderleest

Greg Wichman

Webmaster: Markus Molenda

Librarian: Mitch Goudreau

Show Chair: David Peter

Social Activities:

Pierre Driessen

Youth Director and

Facebook: Ermin Chow

Twitter: Roger Grove

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About Your Society

February 12, 2014 - ENS Annual General Meeting -continued

Election of Directors - continued

- Jules nominated Greg Wichman, David seconded.
- Pierre nominated Marv Berger, Elmer seconded.
- Pierre nominated John Callahan, Bill seconded.
- Wayne nominated Terry Cheesman, Pierre seconded.
- Pierre nominated Wayne Hansen, Marv seconded.
- Roger nominated Chris Hale, ??? seconded.
- Marc nominated Roger Grove, Pierre seconded.
- Pierre nominated Jeremy Martin, Roger seconded.
- Pierre moved to cease nominations, Seymour seconded, Marc Bink moved to create a position of Youth Director, David seconded.

All nominees were elected with Ermin Chow receiving the new position of Youth Director.

Marc Bink thanked everyone and gave a speech about its being an honour and privilege to be the next President of the ENS.

David Peter thanked members for his time as President.

Break:

Marc Bink gave a presentation: "Currency of the Confederate States of America."

Door Prize Draw (prize draw) was held.

Meeting Adjourned (adjourned) - 8:50pm

Minutes from ENS Monthly Meeting on March 12, 2014

Marc Bink, the ENS President, opened the meeting at 1920 hrs and welcomed the audience for the first time as the ENS President.

Marc reiterated how wonderful our ENS volunteers are. The success of our March 1-2, 2014 show, and the others before it, wouldn't be possible without their dedication and efforts.

March 2014 Coin Show Report

Greg Wichman reported that 988 persons attended our show. The bitter cold and the absence of the bullion dealers probably played a role in the slightly lower attendance.

Howard Gilbey briefed us that 76 of 102 lots in the Silent Auction were sold at the show. The remaining lots are available at tonight's club silent auction.

Kudos were given to Wayne Hansen and Terence Cheesman for their fantastic ancient coin display.

Looking forward to the November 8-9, 2014 show, Marc mentioned that it would be great to have a display on World War I, since this year marks the 100th anniversary of its commencement. Wayne, Terence and Howard would all be willing to assist and provide advice to anybody interested in making a display but are hesitant to do so.

Other Business

1) Dan Gosling brought to the attention of the room that Stan Wright, a dealer, is setting up a foundation to assist youth

development as part of the Calgary Foundation in the name of Don & Roxanne Carlson, who were recently killed. Don was a well known numismatist from Alberni Coins in Calgary.

Howard Gilbey made a motion that the ENS make a donation to this cause. This was seconded by Bob Eriksson. A vote was held, and the motion carried.

Jeremy Martin motioned that we donate \$500. Howard Gilbey seconded it. Pierre Driessen then made a motion that the ENS donate \$250 instead to the cause. A vote was held between the two amounts with a \$250 donation being selected.

2) Terence Chessman gave the room a briefing on his recent 2 day numismatic seminar using ancient coins at the University of Saskatchewan. This was for students of History and Classics.

3) David Peter told us that last week end's Calgary Show was not as busy as ours. The displays were all well done, with a special mention that Albert Kaiser's on Greenland was top notch.

The Calgary club is looking into adding a fall show to their schedule starting in 2015.

Show & Tell

The following items were passed around for show and tell

- 1921 Peace Dollar
- 2 x Swiss shooting medals
- Princess Charlotte death medal
- Prince of Wales Merchant Token (merchant token)
- A set of 1 oz copper rounds

@ The Next Meeting

Wednesday, May 14, 2014



Royal Alberta Museum, 12845 - 102 Avenue
Meeting Start Time 7:15pm

- Society matters
- ENS Annual Member BBQ location and date announcement
- Show and tell
- Silent auction
- Door prizes draws

Presentation "The Canberra Mint - Australia"
by Wayne Hansen

(our very own globetrotting numismatic ambassador)

For more information regarding these events, or to add an item to the agenda
please send an email to editor_ens@yahoo.ca



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<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Edmonton-Numismatic-Society>, be our friend and 'like' us.

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Information wanted "at any cost"....

By Marc Bink



"When you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth..."

Sherlock Holmes



The Sign of Four by Arthur Conan Doyle (1890)

Recently the island of Anticosti is in the news again. The interesting thing is, except for a few deer, the odd hunter and coin collectors, no one else in Canada even knows where Anticosti Island is. This time, the Quebec government believes that there is oil on the island and would like to develop it at any cost, but, of course, the environmentalists have other opinions of what should be going on. This is not the first time this place has been embroiled in a controversy. So wait a minute. Just how do coin collectors fit into this?

I love a little mystery, and it's not often that I'm able to combine my love for a good detective story with some strange coins, so when this project came up, I just had to go for it. It's a story that's got a bit of everything - a little drama, an air of mystery, some plot twists and turns, a few dead ends and most important of all a strong human element. Who knows? This could be the start of an adventure that would make a half-decent pulp novel if spun right, sent to the correct franchise and properly ghost-written. I can already see myself speeding through the Laurentian landscape in some sort of high-powered vintage automobile with some "baddies" chasing close behind. Wait a minute; that's been done already. Oh well, anyway, this is the story of the so called Anticosti Island

token.

The "given" in this equation...

This token is a pretty little bronze, 1/8 of something. On it is the fraction 1/8 surrounded by a wreath with a very prominent "A" on the obverse and an almost Byzantine-looking representation of a Roman Centurion on the reverse. It was supposedly made by the Paris mint in 1870...But wait. Or was it made in New York by a famous die-sinker? Whom was it made for? Was it a chocolatier with delusions of grandeur or some Honduran or Cuban Hacienda owner looking to pay his staff with some much needed small change? It's pretty much anyone's guess. There's no



documentation anywhere to prove who commissioned it or why. We just know that a token supposedly attributed to Anticosti Island first surfaced in about 1890.

What we do know is this; the coin first appeared and was listed as an "Anticosti Token" by the Scott Stamp and Coin Company's 1890 catalog. It turns up again as an early Canadian token in 1892 in an auction sale catalog of the collection of one Joseph Hooper. Ed Frossard in New York repeated the attribution on one piece that turned up in his auction, which was followed by the Chapman Brothers, B Max Mehl, U.S. Coin and many others since then. Since that very first sale, the coin was attributed to Anticosti Island and nowhere else. Mr. Hooper, an ex-president of the ANA and a very prominent numismatist at the turn of the last century, attributed the coin to Anticosti Island, and the thinking is he must have had a solid reason to do so. But he never stated why he believed this or where he acquired the coin. But we do have an idea how the coin could have possibly come up on his radar. More on that later.

The 1913 Scott catalog had the coin listed in the Canadian section as a pattern. By the 1940s, things started to come into question, as it was realized that Canadian authorities had no record of the coin ever being a pattern, and that no such denomination would have ever been needed in Canada. This is when the Menier legend came into larger acceptance. The coin was attributed to the Paris mint and supposedly made for French Chocolatier Henri Menier¹. The coin was also listed in Charlton's until 1978 as being from Anticosti Island, but in the 1978 issue, it is referred to as attributed to the island but with "no proof of its use there."

The Impossible...

¹ *Henri Menier (1853-1913) was a wealthy French chocolatier. He and his brother Gaston ran their father's successful chocolate factory in France. While Henri was nominally the heir, he was also a passionate hunter, utopian, and a playboy who spent more time chasing game than molding chocolates. He left the mundane day-to-day stuff to his brother Gaston and business partner Martin-Zede. His biography is not all that detailed, he didn't leave much or do much; but we do know he was not a numismatist. He was into Naturism, and bought Anticosti Island more as a private hunting preserve than for its economic potential. He imported deer to the island, and due to the fact that there are no natural predators there, the population of them has taken off and they are in turn damaging the natural fauna and the environment. So while Menier was of a Naturist bent, he never really thought it through or was very serious about it, and that seems to be the story of his life. If he had commissioned a piece for Anticosti Island, it probably would have been patterned off of any one of the "shooting thalers" that were very popular in his normal hunting grounds of Switzerland and France, and not some obscure central American token of an uncertain pedigree.*

It wasn't until a 1969 article by Fred Bowman appeared in the CNJ that the attribution of the coin was formally questioned and a possible explanation as to its origins was offered. A few things he suggested didn't make sense though. A follow up article by Michael Curry in 1972 more or less confirmed this and just added to the confusion of the coin's attribution. Mr. Bowman was convinced that the coins were made for Henri Menier, the chocolatier from Paris who leased Anticosti Island in 1895. The problem with this explanation is that the token is referred to as the "Anticosti Token" a full 5 years before Menier rented the island and was supposed to have brought them in. Why would he buy old coins? One has to remember that Menier would have been 17 in 1870. Mr. Curry contends that because the date of the coin is 1870, not 1895, and that it looks pretty similar to a Honduran issue, it should be considered as an unsuccessful pattern coin, not a Menier chocolate token. Both gentlemen make a pretty convincing case for their beliefs, so in order to understand where both were coming from, a little background information on Anticosti Island and Mr. Henri Menier is necessary.

Anticosti Island is a huge island in the Gulf of Saint Lawrence. It's about the size of Corsica, but it is for the most part uninhabited (pop. 261 in 2006) and currently is a nature preserve. It is and always has been part of Quebec. The funny thing about this place is that while it does appear on all maps of Canada, until it had been brought to my attention, I never really saw it, even though it is the biggest feature in the Gulf. The place is pretty inhospitable, and the winters are long and fierce. It's very stormy there.

In 1895, on the advice of his friend and partner George Martin-Zede, Menier leased Anticosti Island for \$125,000.00. From 1895 until his premature death, he created a lumber mill, a paper mill, a fish cannery, and he tried to create a workable port on the western tip of the island. So Anticosti Island became the Meniers' private hunting preserve. The idea was that he would entertain influential friends and people from Europe here, but there is no word of just how successful he was at that.

In 1913, Henri died. This was unfortunate for the island, because he was the driving force behind development there. Martin-Zede continued to manage the place, but Gaston Menier was having trouble justifying the expenses, especially once the value of the Franc crashed after the First World

War. At this point in time, the only alternative

currency used on the island (and properly attributed to it) was proposed by Gaston. It was in the form of banknotes payable in Canadian dollars. Gaston requested permission from Canadian authorities to use these notes as sort of a stop-gap in the winter when travel to the mainland was impossible. He received permission, but there is no way of knowing whether they were actually issued or honored. In 1926, the island was sold to the Wayagamack Pulp and Paper Company which then pared back development on the island and just ran a paper manufacturing plant there. In 1953, the Menier Chateau, now dilapidated, was burned to the ground by employees of the paper mill. With it went any lasting evidence of the Menier days. In 1974, Consolidated Bathhurst (successor to Wayagamuck) decided to sell out and the Quebec government took over. Now there is still a small settlement at Port Menier, but for the most part the island is uninhabited, save for a lot of white-tailed deer. There is still some logging and fishing going on, but the primary source of income for the island is tourism. And no, there is no resort there; the "tourists" are primarily hunters.

Sometime in the 1830s through to the 1870s, a number of lighthouses were established and manned on the island. There obviously was a good reason for this. As a result of its location, it seems that a good many ships had this nasty habit of bumping into the place whenever it got foggy or stormy. In 1922, the Quebec government published a chart of all the shipwrecks that were known to have occurred there between 1822 until 1914. The number is incredible; there were something like 400 ships wrecked there. Even more odd is the fact that it would seem there are a large number of ships that were wrecked there in the early 1870s. After the establishment of the lighthouse on the southwestern end, this number dropped to next to nothing by the onset of the 20th century.

The Improbable...

Michael Curry used Fred Bowman's initial article on the Anticosti token as a starting point for his

research, and he ran down all the leads he could find. I am not about to re-run those same leads, because, as the Assistant Curator of the Bank of Canada's numismatic collection, Mr. Curry was far more qualified as a researcher than I'll ever be. So I'll be basing a couple of conclusions that I've come to on his research.

Mr. Curry made a convincing argument that these coins were never used as currency on the island. The next inference that Mr. Bowman has made that Mr. Curry repudiated was the fact that Menier bought these things and possibly gave them out as tokens. Why would Menier do this? The next thing that is "funny" is the discrepancy in the dates. What would Menier want with coins dated 1870 in 1895 or later? Looking at Menier's biography, one can conclude that he wasn't a numismatist. He too was a hunter, playboy and a "Utopian" type of guy that was more interested in playing god on a remote island than collecting small bronze or alloyed coins.



Mr. Curry did a bit more looking and discovered that these coins have some similarities to some Honduran trial pieces struck by the Paris mint starting in 1869 and progressing into the mid 1870s. This would account for the large letter "A" on the coin. However, there's no real way to prove this either, as most of the records for the mint in 1870 were destroyed after the Siege of Paris and the Commune of 1871. But some of the samples on hand are of the right consistency, so it is entirely possible and

plausible.

The coins themselves don't leave many clues to their origin. But there are a few things that are known about the period. One is that some patterns were possibly struck by the Paris mint in 1869-70 for Honduras. We know that the approved design had some of the same design elements as the token, although it's a stretch. The final design² that was introduced into circulation looked nothing like the Anticosti token and was struck in cupronickel and not bronze. It appears that a

² Honduras, Republic, p.588, KM #30, 1/8 Real, "Standard Catalog of World Coins", Cuhaj et al, Krause Publications, 2009

pattern coin of the 1/8 Real was also made, but it was struck in cupronickel and carries a date on it of 1869E, not A like the production version. There's nothing to say that this coin was struck in Paris either; for all we know it could have been made in Poughkeepsie or where ever. The "E" on the pattern coin could mean "Essai" or "Edmonton", for all we know. A lot of mints were engaged in striking low mintage private "hacienda tokens" for plantation owners in Honduras. I would imagine that these would have been deliberately similar in appearance to the legal tender in order to encourage acceptance. Mr. Curry also writes that there was a New York link to this story. It would appear that some of the dies for the Honduran coinage were made in New York.

Not so improbable...plausible?

George H. Lovett³ and Company of New York presumably cut dies for the Honduran issue that was accepted as well as some "hacienda tokens". Could these be some of them? Unfortunately, Mr. Lovett didn't keep records of his designs, so we'll never really know. According to a 1904 biography of the man, George H. Lovett was part of a large family of die-sinkers. His father had set up shop in New York, and George had apprenticed there starting at age 16. He more or less took over his father's business along with his 4 brothers. One of the brothers, Robert Jr., was the person responsible for the Confederate cent. It appears he had a bit of a drinking problem and also didn't record things. But one thing that is unique is that all of the brothers were engaged in making Civil War tokens and shop tokens during the early 1860s. It would appear that they shared design components amongst each other, because the Liberty design used on the Confederate cent appears on more than one type of Civil War token attributed to one or more of the brothers.

The problem is no one can prove it; here again, the Lovett disdain for record keeping. But what is interesting is this same biography, which is based on an April 1894 obituary of George Lovett, stating

quite clearly that he made Hacienda tokens for both Honduran and Cuban sources. And if you look really closely, the Anticosti token has a wreath that was borrowed from the Confederate cent and the Roman centurion looks like a modified Liberty off of a Civil War token. The Honduran piece does too... Almost. It's close, but upon closer examination

³ George Hampden Lovett, Feb.14, 1824-Jan.28, 1894, die sinker and coin maker in New York, made numerous medallions, coins and tokens for a number of clients, most of whom will remain unknown, because Mr. Lovett didn't like to keep records of what he did. The eldest of 4 brothers, all engaged in die-sinking and medallion production, Lovett outlived all of his siblings and was probably the most prolific of the lot.

the Honduran piece clearly starts to differ from the Anticosti token. So there is a strong likelihood that George was possibly responsible. Not only could he have made the dies, he might have struck the tokens too. According to ads he placed in the American Numismatic Association's publication in 1866-68, he had minting capabilities. There are a few other twists here too; George Lovett was the last of the brothers to die in 1894, just as the token was gaining notoriety. As such, he was obviously in no position to either claim or deny responsibility for the coin. On the other hand, according to the obituary, most of his medals and materials wound up being donated to the ANA... and its president was one of the people who first attributed the coin to Anticosti Island. This would be the same Mr. Hooper referred to earlier.

After the US Federal Government declared Civil War tokens illegal and non-redeemable in 1863, a lot of small mints like the one George Lovett ran were looking for work. They'd take on anything, and their products show up everywhere in North and Central America. The products they would turn out weren't bad; a little crude, but for the most part pretty good. Looking at my example, I can see each individual cut in the die. There are some areas of corrosion, and there are some crude cuts. The dies look like they were turned out by hand and were fairly low production. Here again, looking at my example and the pictures of one that sold at a Heritage Auction earlier this year, I see the same flaws repeated in both coins, indicating that they would have come from the same die. There's no chance that the coin sold at the Heritage Auction and mine are the same; similar condition and all the right flaws, but I bought my coin close to 2 years ago at an ENS show.

More Impossibilities...

And what of the Paris Mint? In 1870, it was in some trouble. The year started out normally, but then by summer, the German army had showed up for its first of many uninvited visits to Paris over the next 75 years or so. Napoleon III had made the mistake of swallowing some Prussian bait and getting goaded into a war that he was not militarily ready for. Napoleon attacked Germany and was quickly repelled and driven back to Sedan where he eventually surrendered. Paris held out but was under siege from about June 1870 until January 1871. After this, Paris was in turmoil, and the "Commune" was established. The Paris mint was still active during this period and managed to make a 5 Franc piece, and that was about it. A lot of records went missing for a variety of reasons though. Among these were the records of the Honduras contracts. However, we do know that the

Paris Mint was responsible for the trial pieces of the Honduras 1/8 real in 1869. But the differences between the Anticosti Island token and the Paris-made Honduran pieces are too great. Paris has no records of doing anything else at that time. So all Mr. Curry got when he talked to the Paris mint years later was an indifferent Gallic shrug and silence.

Ok...Really? Somewhat Improbable...

So I'm going to go out on a limb and say that I believe the answer to this question might lie in the form of a shipwreck, and that these coins were salvaged on or just off the coast of Anticosti Island. It's possible that they were in transit, and the ship they were on crashed. Some of the coins show corrosion damage which could either be blamed on bad dies or a small degree of water damage. We have no idea how many of these coins exist, but a fair number of them have been offered for sale over the years, and they still turn up regularly at auction. Just when they were salvaged and by whom is still a bit of a mystery too.

Corpus Delecti?

Locals have been illegally salvaging shipwrecks on both Magdalena and Anticosti Islands for years. These activities would be done in secret, since technically, the property on those ships still belonged to some company. Thus it was a form of theft. But it was a large source of income for inhabitants on both sides of the Gulf for years.

The Truth?

The only hole in this argument is the fact that no one has ever claimed responsibility or ownership of the coins, and no one made noise when they started to turn up. There is actually a simple explanation for this. There is a very good chance that all parties involved in the shipwreck would have been paid out by insurance and didn't really care about them anymore. There's also the possibility that the hacienda that they were destined for had gone broke before the delivery was made, and therefore, these coins became just so much extraneous junk. Could they have been headed for a Canadian smelter? Did George Lovett

know that the coins were shipwrecked there, because he had been paid out by insurance as a result? Did he leave a note or an attribution on a die or a sample that said something like this? We'll never know, but so far, this explanation is about the most plausible. The other thing that is plausible is that the coins could have been part of a scrap copper shipment bound for Montreal. This would explain why each and every coin is either MS or close to MS; they were never issued or claimed as coinage, and they were sold and sent for scrap. The cheapest way to get them up to Canada from New York would be to send them by ship, and that ship, whichever one it was, could have been one of the many that was wrecked on Anticosti Island between 1870 and 1874.

Okay Sherlock...

Insurance companies like Lloyds of London were operating and taking extensive hits in the 1870s, as the volume of shipping on the lakes increased. Shortly after the Civil War, both the US and Canadian economies were growing, as the industrial revolution firmly took hold in the US. Cheap shipping became available, as a lot of older ships that were rendered obsolete by technological innovations such as the steam engine were placed into service on the lakes.



The insurance angle would need to be run down, before anything conclusive can be determined though. It appears that no one has looked into the possibility of a shipwreck as an explanation of how the tokens came to be on the island of Anticosti. The fact that these tokens still turn up implies that there were quite a few of them salvaged and sold. The only way to conclusively prove this theory is for someone with a lot of time and patience to go through and check all the manifests of all the ships that cracked up on or near Anticosti Island between 1870 and 1874. But unlike a certain fictional underwater explorer (who shares my passion for unique antique cars), who has huge government databases and libraries available to him with a simple phone call, I have neither the time nor the resources to further investigate this lead. So it looks like I won't get the fancy car or the girl in this instance, and the coin will have to remain attributed to Anticosti Island. I'm still

waiting to hear back on the movie rights though...

And finally, the plausible...

Or, lastly, it could be, as a certain Mr. McLaughlin told a group of collectors at an ANA meeting sometime early in the 20th century, that most of the tokens listed in the Breton catalog were fantasies, were never intended for any circulation but were made to deceive collectors. This certainly could be one of those instances, since no one seems to know where this coin originated or who was responsible for it, and any leads quickly and conveniently dry up or are quickly exhausted.

The only problem with this argument is that the coin is too well made to have been struck in a backroom somewhere, and surely by now, someone would have let us in on the joke.

So there you have it. Right now it's all conjecture and just my "humble opinion". As the Conan-Doyle quote at the top of this article implies, after the impossible has been eliminated the remainder, however implausible, might well be the truth; so we are left with this story, unless someone can anyone offer a better or more plausible explanation.



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COIN WORKSHOP IN SASKATOON

March 7th and 8th, 2014

By Terence Cheesman

Some years ago I had made contact with Tracine Harvey who at that time was a student at the University of Alberta and was focusing her studies on ancient coins. She accepted a position which included being the curator of the Museum of Antiquities at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon. Over the years, I have lent some of my coins to her, to be used in numismatic displays. The subject of a coin workshop involving a larger group of my coins was raised a couple of years ago. After one false start the workshop came to be in March of this year.

One would think that setting up such a thing would be easy, but that would be the furthest thing from the truth. The first problem was scheduling the weekend. The workshop had to contend with both exams and holidays, not to mention the elephant in the room, the weather. This year was a perfect example of a really lousy winter and a really long one. Even the week before the workshop, I had no idea if we would be able to make it. Another problem is the current state of academia. Budgets are tight and the University of Saskatchewan is not alone in cutting funds to programs deemed to be of marginal value. I believe it was not until January that we even knew that we had a going concern. However, the biggest hurdle was communication. Being that we were some 530 kilometres apart, some of the planned activities were not resolved until the previous weekend.

So about 5.50 A.M., I got into my car with my bags and about 300 coins and set off to Saskatoon. The first seminar did not start till 1.30 P.M., so I thought I had plenty of time. The weather was good and sunny, though cold, and I had few problems except for some patches of blowing snow that obscured the highway for a bit. It was not until I had got into Saskatchewan that I thought "Are they in a different time zone?" Oops. Saskatchewan is one of the few places that does not use daylight saving time, and normally when I travel into Saskatchewan the people there are in the same time zone as those in Alberta. So this became a concern, as I pressed down a little more on the gas pedal. Well, I made it with some time to spare.

Saskatoon is a pretty city. It has a population of about 250,000. The history of the province of Saskatchewan over the last 40 years has been the NDP and the only province to suffer a decline in population. In fact, despite the better economy over the last few years the province is barely at the same level as it was in 1986. Thus Saskatoon hasn't had have much of the building boom that affected the skyline of cities like Edmonton. The University has many buildings in the Collegiate

Gothic style, favoured at the turn of the last century and faced in a local limestone. The coin workshop was held in the Peter McKinnon Building which houses the Museum of Antiquities. The museum is unusual in that it contains a large number of plaster casts of famous Egyptian, Greek and Roman sculpture. The objects include copies of the Rosetta Stone, the Charioteer of Delphi and many busts of roman Emperors. When I got there the museum was closed. Earlier a child decided to climb up the Charioteer which is a statue that is around six feet tall, breaking off the arm.



a nice day in Saskatoon

My first day consisted of an introduction followed by three sessions on Greek coins. The first session, which discussed Greek coin denominations, weight standards and minting techniques consisted of a power point presentation and one tray with ten coins in it. The following Greek session, which covered the earliest coins to those of Philip II of Macedon, roughly from 650 B.C. to 336 B.C., used three trays, each of ten coins to help illustrate something of the scope and development of Greek coins. The earliest coins exhibited were from about 650 B.C. This particular session was followed by

two seminars featuring Hellenistic coins which covered the period from 336 B.C. to 30 B.C. Each seminar consisted of 30 coins. The room was less than ideal for what we were doing. It was a small standard classroom with the usual desks and as the trays of coins were being passed around, I kept waiting for one to be tipped with my coins rolling off in all directions. Fortunately this didn't happen, and all the coins came back intact. Whew!! I should mention that the students were really engaged, asking lots of good questions. At the close of the seminar I packed all my stuff away and found my car and then drove to my hotel.

The hotel is called the Park Town. It is a very nice hotel with a good restaurant. Unfortunately it was a bit expensive but the food was good. I had a chicken and rice dish which was very nice. That night, I set up shop in my room did my emails and went to bed. The next morning (Saturday), I had breakfast and headed out to the next sessions. This time, the room was more of a conference room with a number of large round tables. There were actually more students on this day than the previous, which could be ascribed to more interest in Roman coins than Greek, or that word travels slowly on this campus, and no one had a chance to flee. This time, there were four seminars on Roman coins two covering the coinage of the Republic to Augustus roughly from 300 A.D to 14 A.D. and the next two covering the Imperial coinage from 14 A.D. to about 490A.D. Again, each seminar featured 30 coins being passed around in trays. Despite being our first effort the seminars were a success.

The next session involved an actual workshop where the students tried to identify coins. Each group got ten coins, which were stripped of my packaging and two reference books. The groups

consisted of ten coins each which were minted by the same individual. Thus they had to identify who was on the coin, the obverse and reverse inscription, as well as what was on the reverse. I had to bring along a few of my magnifying lenses, as few had any of their own. Trying to be clever, I placed a trick coin in each group, but I really did not have too. The students most of whom had never handled any ancient coins before, had enough trouble working on any of the coins without any further hindrance that I could offer. Tracine and I went around and gave the various groups some assistance. They did make progress and worked out most of the coins offered. This marked the end of the seminars.

I was offered supper, and naturally I chose Fuddruckers, a burger place which used to be in Edmonton, but the only place in Canada where they still have a franchise is in Saskatoon. They make an excellent burger, and I was really happy to get one. I went back to the hotel and later in the evening, enjoyed some live music at an Irish pub which was also in the hotel. I ran into another person who was attending a seminar on the residential school system in Saskatchewan. His seminar was shut down by First Nations activists. I had a good night's sleep, and the next morning gassed up in Saskatoon (where it was 6 cents a litre more than in Edmonton) and headed home. The weather was much warmer coming back, and the roads were nice and dry.

In retrospect, I hope that further seminars can be held in Saskatoon. They can only get better. Some areas where the communication between Tracine and myself was poor can be easily fixed, and future seminars will be that much more seamless. The biggest hurdle will be financing.



Peter McKinnon Building



Museum of Antiquities U of S

Further word has spread to the University of Alberta, and a similar somewhat more ambitious program involving other areas of material culture,

such as pottery, glass and other ancient artifacts may be set up in Edmonton next fall.



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The Griffins of Pantikapaion

By Wayne Hansen



"A new hoard contains exceptional examples of scarce griffin coins"



Griffins Attacking a Deer. Table base from Magna Graecia, 325-300 BC.
(Sculpture returned to Italy by the Getty Museum in 2007).

I suspect that we all dream of traveling to exotic places. For many people, exotic might be anywhere over the nearest horizon or anywhere that he or she hasn't visited. In the short lives of the ancients, except perhaps for the few mariners or overland traders, the exotic would include just about everywhere. Many would likely only have traveled as far as they could see from their own settlement. In those early historic times, Pantikapaion was one of those fabled places that would have been beyond the comprehension of the mainstream Greeks, for it was the most remote of the Greek colonies, reachable only by leaving the familiar shores of the Aegean Sea and the wide Mediterranean. Indeed, if the ancients heard anything about Pantikapaion, they may have heard that griffins dwelled there.

A. Pantikapaion and Its Coinage

Pantikapaion Background

Pantikapaion was the most distant of the northern Greek settlements, perched near the top end of the Black Sea on a triangular promontory now called the Crimean Peninsula, part of modern Ukraine (see map in Figure 1). The city was in a strategic location, guarding the entrance to the Sea of Asov and forming the western end of the fertile Eurasian steppe (similar to the North American prairie grassland – see map in Figure 2). Pantikapaion settlers had come from the Greek colony of Miletos in southwestern Asia Minor, moving far up the western Black Sea coast to be nearer the supply of grain, fish and slaves that were routinely exported to Greek centers in the south.

Figure 1: Greek Colonies on the Black Sea

Greek colonists established several new settlements around the perimeter of the Black Sea including the most distant, Pantikapaion.

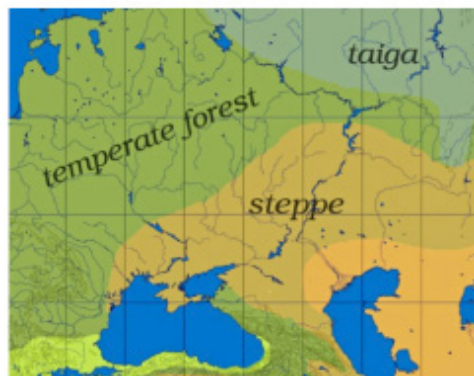


The settlers encountered tribes of local inhabitants including the Tauri, who lived primarily in the mountainous south of the peninsula, plus Scythians and possibly

Cimmerians. The presence of the Tauri gave the peninsula the ancient name of 'Taurica' or 'Tauric Chersonesos' ('chersonesos' meant peninsula to the Greeks). The Tauri were a rough bunch, bent on conflict and piracy, living off the proceeds of war and pillage (perhaps modern media conglomerates are their direct descendents). They were renowned for the worship of the virgin goddess Artemis Tauropolis and for their habit of sacrificing wayward or shipwrecked travellers. According to Herodotus, the heads of prisoners or other victims would first be removed and impaled on posts, then their bodies would be buried or thrown into the sea. The Scythians were a nomadic, Iranian group of peoples who came from the east and occupied the whole of the central and western Eurasian steppes starting in the 7th century BC. They also moved past Crimea farther into Thrace, displacing some earlier inhabitants along the way. In the 5th to 4th centuries BC, they prospered by controlling much of the Greek slave trade through the Black Sea. The Scythians also excelled in the production of fine and extravagant gold artworks that embodied a kind of pre-Celtic exuberance. Scythian dominance diminished in the late 3rd century when confronted by Philip II of Macedon in the south and by another Iranian tribe, the Sarmatians, who moved into the western steppes.

Pantikapaion grew throughout this time, relying on the adjacent fertile steppe soils and the sea. The city cooperated with many of the various local peoples (who helped populate their city), but it also conquered others where necessary. Its main exports were grain, salted fish and some wine, while it imported pottery, oil and finished metal goods from centers in the Mediterranean.

Figure 2: Steppe Region and View from Ancient Pantikapaion



Location of Eurasian Steppe

View from the ruins of Pantikapaion to the Sea of Asov

The name 'Pantikapaion' is reportedly derived from a local tribal name meaning 'fish route' - implying that fish had to navigate the adjacent narrow channel connecting the Black Sea to the to the Sea of Asov.

Around 480 BC, a ruling founder family emerged in Pantikapaion to establish the Kingdom of Bosporos and to begin a major period of expansion into surrounding territories. The city grew more prosperous as its trade and territory increased. The first coinage was minted in Pantikapaion at the same time, though it did not bear the name of the king or the city (similar to other early Greek coinages). By 438 BC, a new ruling dynasty was established under King Spartokos I, followed in 433 by his successor, King Satyros I. The number and variety of coins produced in Pantikapaion burgeoned by the early 4th century, the start of a classic period that encompassed several dynastic successors through to the end of that century. This article primarily addresses this classic, early coinage period, from 380 to 300 BC.

Early, Classic Pantikapaion Coins

As with other northern Black Sea cities, Pantikapaion is best known for substantial issues of bronze coins, in both large and small denominations, which commenced production in the mid-4th century BC. However, its earliest coins were tiny silver obols, diobols and triobols, plus eventually hemidrachms and drachms, minted for 150 years between 500 BC and the mid 4th century. The earliest silver coins generally featured a facing lion scalp on the obverse and a punch reverse, while the later hemidrachms incorporated the head of a satyr on the obverse and a lion type on the reverse. After 380 BC, Pantikapaion briefly minted limited numbers of rather large silver denominations, including tridrachms and tetradrachms, as well as a series of gold staters that were slightly heavier than the later Macedonian equivalents (9.1 grams versus 8.6 grams). The gold staters were elegant and visually startling with a magnificent head of a satyr on the obverse (either facing or in profile) and an equally magnificent standing griffin with wheat stalk on the reverse. These staters seem to embody a Scythian design aesthetic - they were a technical and artistic triumph, especially when they and a companion silver drachm issue incorporated the facing three-

quarter head version of the satyr design. Stater production ceased after Philip II of Macedon initiated his own major gold stater issue, replacing the Pantikapaion stater as an international trade coin. The special, and now rare, silver tridrachm featured a profile portrait of a beardless satyr on the obverse and a profile head of a bull on the reverse. For the remainder of the 4th century, and beyond, the satyr obverse/bull reverse coin types became the basis for the city's later issues; however, most of the later coins were struck in bronze instead of precious metal. Examples of a few of the early coin types of Pantikapaion are shown in Figure 3 (photos from commerce). The earliest coins were struck in silver and gold, befitting the wealth of the city. Bronze issues began in 340-325 BC, so first bronzes are contemporary with the latest of the gold and silver coinages shown below.

Once Pantikapaion switched to minting bronze coins around 340 BC, it devised a range of denominations from large bronze obols 25-26 mm in diameter to the small bronzes of 12-14 mm. My collection focus has been on the early bronze coin issues dated between 340 and 304 BC, since later coins tend to become cruder in design and execution, and styles become less attached to the earlier Greek city state roots. I have not acquired any of the Pantikapaion silver issues thus far, in part, because the better coins are fairly rare and expensive, and in part, because most of the others are small and usually heavily corroded. As for the gold staters, which are also rare, I will simply mention that the two examples shown in Figure 3 sold for \$325,000 and \$120,000 respectively (plus auction percentages).

On the other hand, I have included images of several Pantikapaion bronze coins from my collection in Figure 4. Most are from the late 4th century when the quality of die production was relatively high (following soon after the artistic pinnacle of the gold and silver issues circa 370-340 BC). For various reasons mentioned later in the article, preservation of these northern Black Sea coins is generally poor. Most are corroded or covered in a thick patina. It is difficult to find good specimens of these types, and the bronze griffin tetrachalkion is particularly difficult. My griffin coin in Figure 4 below is an old, less than perfect acquisition from 2002. The availability of

better specimens from a recent hoard of griffins inspired me to write this article with a focus on the type. I will offer other hoard examples of the griffin bronzes later in the article.

Figure 3: Early Precious Metal Coins of Pantikapaion (480–325 BC)

480 - 420 BC



3-1 Tetrobol (13m/3.1g)

3-2 Triobol (13m/2.8g)

3-3 Diobol (12m/1.1g)

390 - 355 BC



3-4 Diobol (1.5g)

3-5 Hemidrachm (2.0)

3-3 Hemidrachm (15mm/2.4g)



3-7 Hemidrachm (12m/2.0g)



3-8 Gold stater – Group 2 (9.1g)

355 - 325 BC



3-9 Tetradrachm (15.8g)

3-10 Drachm (16m/3.5g)



3-11 Tridrachm (25m/11.7g)

3-12 Gold stater – Group 4 (9.1g)

All Figure 3 coin photos are taken from commercial sources. The majority are from the CNG (Classical Numismatic Group) website, but 3-4 and 3-5 are from Gorney & Mosch, while 3-8 and 3-12 are from the New York Sale, Prospero Collection.

Figure 4: My Pre-Hoard Pan Collection (340-280 BC)

The higher quality coin examples described here are taken from the author's Pantikapaion collection prior to the appearance of the new griffin hoard (described later in the article). They are dated to the city's three earliest bronze periods, between 340 and 304 BC, except for the last two coins that fall after 300 BC (4-10 was countermarked by a later ruler). Note the varying use of the bearded versus beardless satyr obverse type. The two 'Large Bull' obols (4-3 and 4-4) are the largest of the Pantikapaion bronze issues, and they are quite scarce. Relatively few Greek centres issued large bronzes – Olbia and Pantikapaion are the two in the Black Sea area, while others are found in Sicily, Egypt and Baktria. All coins show the city name as either 'ΠΑΝΤΙ' (PANTI) or 'ΠΑΝ' (PAN) in Greek letters. (Photos by the author.)

340 - 325 BC

325 - 310 BC



4-1 Large Bow (25.6 x 24.2m; 11.59g)

4-2 Small Bull (17.4m; 4.62g)

325 - 310 BC



4-3 Large Bull (27.5 x 27.3m; 19.1g)



4-4 Large Bull (27.0 x 26.0; 19.09g)

310-304 BC



4-5 Griffin (20.1 x 19.0m; 7.5g)



4-6 Lion (20.8 x 20.3m; 7.73g)



4-7 Pegasos (15.8 x 15.2m; 2.91g)



4-8 Bowcase (14.4 x 13.5m; 1.90g)

300 - 280 BC



4-9 Small Bow (20.4 x 19.8m; 6.1g)



4-10 Lion Countermark (21 x 20.2m; 6.20)

Pantikapaion Coin Types

As you can see from the commercial photos and my collection examples, Pantikapaion employed several iconic images on its coinage. The variety of denominations and types is unusual for a Greek city. Following is a list of the main types plus a few comments about the possible significance of each. Much of this is my own conjecture, since little is known on the topic.

Lion Head – Many cities and dynasts chose a lion motif in the archaic and classical period. This was likely a general symbol intended to convey power and significance or possibly an avatar for a specific early ruler.

Satyr Head - Pantikapaion switched from the facing lion head on its earliest silver coinage to the head of a satyr as the obverse badge on its late silver and bronze issues. The satyr initially took the form of an older, bearded creature, but a young, beardless version was also introduced in the late 4th century (possibly influenced by the 'Attic School' of art). Many numismatists had thought that the head might represent the god Pan, since it would have been a pun on the name of the city, but the head's anatomic features and the Kingdom's regal association indicate otherwise. Besides, as noted above, the city name was likely derived from local tribal

sources, and Pan would usually appear to be more goat-like with small horns at the top of the head.

The satyr image is otherwise uncommon in Greek coinage (the staters of Thasos are the most obvious exception, showing a full satyr carrying a nymph). The satyr is a mythical being with some goat-like features (pointed ears and phallus, horse's tail, pug-nose, long hair and beard, wearing an ivy wreath. Satyrs were companions to the god Dionysios, so they loved wine and women, and they communed with nature. They led a carefree life dancing with nymphs and eager for any physical pleasure. But the satyrs were also fearless and they could have brutal instincts.

Before the Hellenistic era, starting in 323 BC, portraits of rulers were not placed on coins – heads of heroes or deities were used instead. In 389 BC, The second dynastic ruler of the Bosporan Kingdom, Satyros I, died after he had reigned for over 40 years and achieved considerable power and stability for the trading nation. His son and successor, Leucon I, took over and continued with the same expansionist policies, at the same time as he created new, high denomination coinages to compliment the status of the Kingdom. The highest denomination was the first issue of a series of gold staters displaying a superlative satyr head (see Figure 3-8 for the second gold issue). Although the mythical satyr may or may not have been revered by the local tribes, it is thought that the satyr iconography

was chosen as a pun to honor the name of the king's able father, Satyros I. This gold satyr obverse design persisted on silver and bronze coinages through the 4th century and defined Pantikapaion's classical period.

Bull Head - Often the obverse satyr image was paired with a reverse head of a bull or ox, a universal symbol for strength, but it also possibly represented the cult of goddess Tauropolis - the Tauric Artemis. Native Tauri, who populated the mountainous coast of the Tauric peninsula (Crimea), worshipped Tauropolis - variously described as a huntress associated with forests and wild things, and/or a more war-like entity. She was the Tauric version of goddess Artemis and was associated with the bull, the Taurian symbol for war. Greek legend noted that the Taurian kings sacrificed any foreigners who came ashore on the altar of Tauropolis. The Tauri were otherwise known as pirates and pillagers. As the Bosporan Kingdom expanded, the Greek Artemis may have merged to some extent with the native, bloodthirsty Tauropolis, such that the bull became a symbol of the city and Kingdom.

The Tauric Artemis and Ares were the chief gods of war and reportedly worshipped by the legendary Amazons, as well as the Tauri. The warlike Spartans also worshipped Tauropolis as an integral element of their austere society - a society where war, sacrifices, punishment and deprivation fit the broader agenda.

Griffin Forepart - The griffin was an unusual design on coinage. Other cities (Teos and Abdera) did use a lovely seated griffin image as an obverse motif, but this was very uncommon elsewhere. It was a fantastical creature with the body, tail and legs of a lion and the head and wings of an eagle. It was thought to be especially powerful because its features combined the king of the beasts with the king of the birds. Its role was to guard treasure and priceless possessions, although it was also considered to be a symbol of divine power and a guardian of the divine.

The griffin pre-dated Greek culture, since it was known in Egyptian, Mycenaean and Persian mythology. The Persians saw it as protection from evil and witchcraft. Many people favored the griffin in their decorative

arts for obvious reasons. Its bird and beast legend may have arisen from sightings in

Asia of exposed petrified bones in the desert.

The griffin device was initially used on the first issue of gold staters in Pantikapaion after 380 BC. This could infer that the city was summoning divine protection for the city and its new precious coinage and perhaps protection for King Satyros and his successors who would likely have been associated with, and honored by, the satyr image on the obverse. It was appropriate that the griffin, a protector of northern gold treasures, should be depicted on a monumental gold coin that was minted by a city which only recently had secured a supply of this precious metal (from a northern source in the Caucasus or the Altai mountains of Kazakhstan).

Sturgeon - This curved fish design is found on two of the middle-sized bronzes, one with lion profile reverse and one with the griffin reverse. The sturgeon was a massive, primeval creature of the Black Sea that must have figured prominently in the fishing industry of Pantikapaion. The city sent large quantities of salted fish to Greece, and the sturgeon probably represented its reliance on this industry.

Pegasos - This winged divine stallion was a popular mythological creature, most notably found on the coinage of ancient Corinth. Pantikapaion traded with Corinth, so it may have adopted a version of the same image on one of its smaller coins for its artistic value. Another reason might be that the Greek sea god Poseidon sired Pegasos, and Poseidon was likely an important deity in the remote, seafaring colony.

Bow, Arrow and Bowcase - These items are often associated with goddess Artemis, the huntress, who carried a bowcase over her shoulder. But the huntress type derives from Greek mythology, which assumes Pantikapaion was mostly Greek in character. Alternatively, the bow could relate to Artemis Tauropolos (above) who was a local tribal goddess, and continuing warfare around the city-state may have been the main consideration. Regardless, the bow looks identical to the type celebrated in Scythian art.

Figure 5: Comparison of Gold and Bronze Satyr Head Coins

The contemporary gold stater and bronze AE25 issues of 340-325 BC featured similarly styled, profile satyr head design, including the wreath of ivy leaves and pointed goat ear. The stater diameter is 21 mm, while the bronze diameter is 25-26 mm. The later griffin bronze issues of 310-304 BC reversed the satyr portrait direction and provided a simple headband, or tainia, instead of the wreath of ivy leaves. (Stater photo courtesy CNG; bronze photo by the author.)



B. Griffins and A New Hoard Find

Griffin Bronze Production

The griffin was an admirable symbol for the remote city of Pantikapaion and the Bosphoran Kingdom. It was generally associated with northern territories in Greek mythology, and it served as a protector for golden treasures. It was therefore appropriate that the Pantikapaion griffin was first used in the kingdom's gold stater series, which in turn promoted the new wealth of the city. The griffin was ultimately a fantastical creature, well suited to the extraordinary capabilities of the local, Scythian-inspired die carvers. Towards the end of gold stater production at the Pantikapaion mint, an extensive issue of bronze griffin coins commenced – coins that usually appear in the coin market today in a severely degraded condition.

The rest of this article focuses on the AE 20 griffin bronze issue of Pantikapaion, the issue with a satyr head on the obverse and a griffin forepart/sturgeon on its reverse. Minted only briefly in 310-304 BC, it was similar in some respects to the satyr head and lion/sturgeon coins, except that the griffin bronze had a traditional bearded satyr facing right, while the lion bronze had a beardless satyr facing left. I discovered a few months ago that a new hoard of the bronze griffin coins was being dispersed in the market. I decided to find out what I could about the hoard and also try to obtain a few examples of the available coins.

New Griffin Coin Encounter

I was simply minding my own business one day early this past Fall when I stumbled onto a Pan griffin coin being auctioned on eBay by Michael Laidlaw, a seller from South Africa. It was a fairly spectacular coin with clean,

matte, light tan surfaces and sharp detail. I noticed from the archive that a similar coin had been sold by this seller a week or two before for a hefty \$330. I was glad to have missed that one, since the new coin had a nicely centered reverse – arguably the prime side because of the griffin type. I won the new coin and corresponded further with Michael over the next few weeks (I had purchased two other Pan-related coins from him in previous years and knew he was very reliable, although his interest in ancient coins is limited – he says, ‘they all look terrible’). Meanwhile, I discovered that he had posted two more similarly detailed griffin coins on eBay, though they were a bit darker in tone with some small, greenish splotches. When I enquired further, he mentioned he had two other new ones ready to post, and he sent me those photos too.

It was becoming a bit surreal to find so many lovely griffin coins in one place, since they are rarely seen otherwise. I still had my one corroded griffin bronze coin of an earlier style that I had bought 10 years before (see Figure 4-5), but it seemed like a good idea to try to obtain more of the nicer griffins. So I continued to bid as they came up, winning the first of the next four coins, but I missed the coin it was paired with – the one I really wanted – since they were closing at almost the same time, and my screen unexpectedly stalled (a lesson learned). The coin I missed had a wonderful, pristine, high relief obverse portrait of the satyr, and it sold for just under \$100 – half of what I paid for the one that I wasn’t as keen about!! The next two coins came up separately two or three weeks later. I was just outbid on the first one in the last moments (it went for \$285), and I didn’t place any bids on the last one, because it had more wear, and the patina was much brighter. The net haul from eBay then stood at two coins, however even after winning the two new griffins, I found that the story was not yet over (see Griffin Hoard section below).

The Hoard

Michael mentioned soon after our initial

correspondence that he was acting as the eBay sales agent for the owner of the griffin coins, who lives in Eastern Europe. The dealer/owner is some distance from the site of ancient Pantikapaion, but he is interested in all Bosphoran coinages. I had mentioned to Michael that I was likely to write an article about these griffin coins (my usual *modus operandi* for interesting collection additions), so he suggested that I contact the owner if I wanted to ask any questions. All Michael knew was that his supplier had been offered a small group of coins earlier in the year. So I contacted the owner/dealer, all the while thinking that the matter was becoming quite intriguing.

Over the course of several emails with the owner, I managed to determine a few background details about this new group of Pan griffin coins. I also found out that this dealer had originally sold three of my other Pan collection coins to other people in the United States before I acquired them – including my large, green bull obol and my lion reverse coin (Figures 4-4 and 4-6). Regarding the new griffins, he said that three friends had found a large hoard of coins, perhaps near the town of Simferopol, numbering around one thousand items in varying states of preservation. No more than three hundred coins were in reasonable condition, in that they were not corroded or fused together. The three friends split the coins evenly. He said that he managed to look at about fifty of the coins offered by one of the finders in June, and that he selected around fifteen to purchase (he had told Michael: “In June I bought one and a half ten coins of ‘Griffins’, part of a small treasure. Condition of coins good and rather rare!”). He had sent eight of these fifteen coins to Michael for eBay sale (shown in Figure 6), while the rest were otherwise dispersed.

When I look closely at all of the new hoard coins and many other griffins over the years, I was reminded that I have never seen two dies the same on either obverse or reverse. This suggests that massive numbers of coins

Figure 6: Griffin Coins Posted on eBay



Figure 6 shows the eight Pan griffin coins recently listed by seller, Michael Laidlaw, on eBay (photos by Michael Laidlaw). They are numbered in the order they were posted together with the rough diameter and weight information that the seller provided. Coins 6-1 and 6-2 were listed and sold before I knew they were being offered, and they both sold for over \$300. I bid on five of the other six coins, winning only 6-3 and 6-4. I lost 6-5 because of an unfortunate computer/timing glitch, and I was unsuccessful on the others - either I was fairly outbid, or I didn't fully commit. But I did OK.

These are some other factoids I obtained about the new coin find and the local collector interest around the Black Sea.

- Hoard coins the dealer offered were largely sold in the condition they were found, with reasonably fresh metal and with only light patina or encrustations. They were not cleaned. Any apparent greenish spots do not affect the metal quality – they are surface copper oxide deposits ‘formed in the earth’, that may be cleaned with strong vinegar. The dealer mentioned he only had four coins like my first eBay purchase (Figure 6-3) with a light, dusty patina and absolutely no green spots.
- Similar hoards around the Crimea sometimes contain silver and bronze coins, but all of the coins in this new hoard were Pan griffins.
- The ‘overwhelming quantity’ of finds for Black Sea Coast coins are from the Bosporan Kingdom, which includes Pantikapaion as the major mint.
- It is rare to find even the most common types of Black Sea/Bosporan coins in good condition (see my Planchet article from June/July 2012, “My What Big Claws You Have, Eagle-Grasping-Dolphin Coins of the Black Sea” for a survey of some of the early Black Sea coin types, including Olbia which is near the Crimea and Pantikapaion).
- Many coins found in the north Black Sea area are corroded and encrusted, although coins found in sandy, non-agricultural soil fare best. The finish and color of specimens can be affected by the find location, and those found in agricultural areas will have more corrosion and encrusted ‘oxides’ depending on the types of agricultural chemicals used (Pan bronzes can have a heavy greenish or reddish patina which is often smoothed before sale).
- In the Ukraine, there are many collectors of Black Sea Coast/Bosporan coins, and prices are very high, especially for rare coins and coins in good condition.
- While I stick to the classic 340-300 BC Pantikapaion issues, collectors in the Ukraine collect the whole of Anokhin’s Black Sea catalogue ‘from the first to the last number’.

Several things were obvious from our internet discussion. First, the hoard griffins presented to me recently were good quality for the type. Also, there is a very active ancient coin collector sector within the north Black Sea area that creates a high demand for new coins, which in turn dictates high prices for good ones. On this basis, we can probably assume firstly, that most of the best griffin coins from the new hoard had been dispersed quickly in the local market to satisfy demand, and secondly, that relatively few of the better quality north Black Sea coins will, in future, ever reach the western market.

All was not lost however. My dealer contact said he would see if any other of the new griffins were still available. He first confirmed that the original finder had none left, but he found a few griffins with a second person, so he sent photos of the coins – a few as singles and some in groups. He told me a price, based on the second finder’s strange notion that all of the coins are worth the same amount. To conserve space I will not show the second batch of photos. Suffice it to say that many of the coins were sharp, although they were possibly not quite as well struck as the eBay coins. They also exhibited significantly more green oxide spots.

I had to wait for a week or two while the coins from Michael’s eBay listings were finishing, then I ordered two of the second finder’s coins from my dealer contact. They arrived within 8 or 9 days by regular registered mail, the same time as for the coins from South Africa. Both of the second finder’s coins that I ordered (Figure 7-3 and 7-4) were a bit different from the eBay coins – not only were the patinas darker with more of a green cast, but the weight of each was noticeably higher (over 8 grams). Surprisingly, the diameter of one was also a

millimeter wider than the eBay batch, which was a good thing. I must admit that I found the dark tone and heavier weights to be attractive.

Figure 7 contains my own photos of all four of the griffin hoard coins that I purchased in this elaborate buying episode. The first two of course came from the eBay sales through South Africa, and the second two came

Figure 7: My Griffin Hoard Purchases



7-1. (20.5 X 20.1m; 5.92g)



7-2. (20.7 x 20.4m; 6.24g)



7-3. (20.9 x 20.3m; 8.14g)



7-4. (21.5 x 21.1m; 8.18g)

I purchased the four Figure 7 griffin coins in the order shown. You will note that, coincidentally, the size and weight of the coins increases in accord with the purchase sequence, and the degree of patinization also increases in the same order (actual coin weights and dimensions provided). As seems to be the rule with Pantikapaion, none of the dies matches any other. There is little wear evident. The coin surfaces appear to be entirely natural with no corrosion and minimal, if any, encrustation. Moreover, the original detail and luster of the smooth metal is largely preserved in these examples

– a truly exceptional situation, since most western offerings are corroded and/or encrusted and smoothed.

I understand that the greenish areas seen on the latter three coins were formed while the coins were entombed and are not evidence of an active metal disease. The green spots are composed of a secondary, oxidized copper mineral, similar to malachite, which formed on the coin surface over a long period of time (malachite is native to that area of Europe). The green cast is enhanced by the digital photography; the color is much less

visible on the coins. In natural light, the coins otherwise appear to be light brown to dark brown.

The four coins are obviously well preserved. They clearly illustrate the consistency of the Pantikapaion style and the high regard the celators placed on maintaining the quality of the coins in this period. Some variation in the specific design of both the satyr and the griffin is normal – on these coins you can see variations in the satyr's beard, hair, horn and ribbon, and you can also see fascinating differences in the shapes of the griffin's head, neck, paws, and especially the wing. It is remarkable that this amount of quality was instilled into each die of this mass-produced bronze issue. The excellent quality and consistency of the coins could even suggest that a single, talented celator was able to produce the quantity of dies required for the griffin tetrachalkion issue over its six year run. In any event, the carver(s) must have been allowed enough latitude to adjust the fine details of each die's obverse and reverse design, and to act on creative impulses. Each griffin coin appears to be a

fraternal, rather than identical, twin of the same stylistic template.

C. Modern Griffin Images

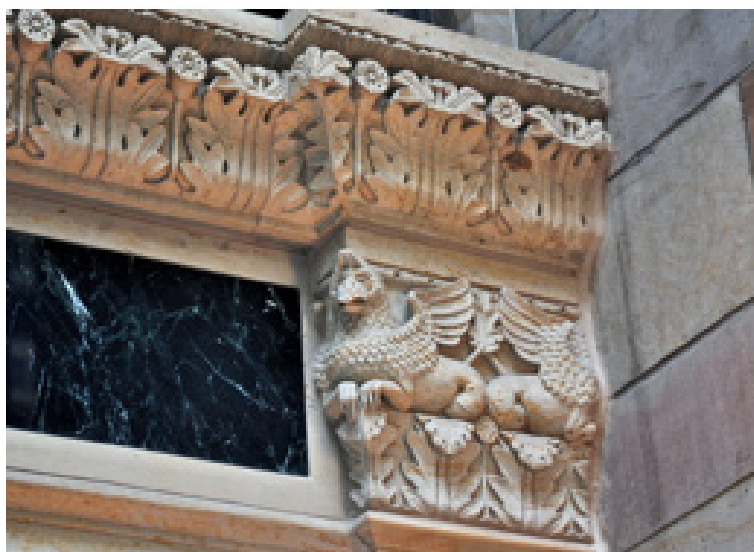
The ancient griffin design so boldly modeled on the gold and bronze coins of Pantikapaion (and on the silver coins of Teos in Asia Minor) sometimes became the inspiration for creation of other ancient artifacts, such as the large bronze caldrons of Delphi. The design also became popular in more recent centuries for its classical allusions and its dramatic style. The griffin image is visually interesting and conveys a kind of powerful mysticism. I have frequently seen examples of the griffin design in our travels, not only on ancient museum artifacts, but also as emblems or as decoration on the inside and outside of modern buildings. Buildings of a certain age all over the world have used griffin figures to instill a primitive awe in the viewer and establish the cultural refinement of the builder. Figure 8 provides a few examples of griffin figures seen on recent trips. (Photos by the author.)

Figure 8: Griffins in Architecture



8-1 Exterior of building in Siena, Italy

Figure 8: Griffins in Architecture



8-2 Exterior of building in New York



8-3 Ceiling of house in south England



8-4 Fireplace of house in south England



8-5 Floor decoration in city hall Oslo



8-6 Airline sign in Aarhus, Denmark

Another Modern Homage

I couldn't resist bidding on this massive bronze medallion that was struck in a limited edition in Paris over 40 years ago. It captures the true artistry of the ancient gold original.



Bronze Art Medallion Replicating Pantikapaion Gold Stater Design

Struck in Paris 1971; 51mm/162.2g. Ex CNG - Photo by CNG (Collection of the Author)

In Closing...

I hope that this little griffin hoard account was as interesting for you as it was for me. Though details of the hoard find are scarce, it is still fascinating for a low-brow collector to discover a conduit to ancient coin source material. It is clear in this instance that the few available griffin examples were no doubt the remainder of a small pile of exceptional coins. Nonetheless, even these remainders were much better than most of the usual offerings encountered in western countries in the last decade or more. I never cease to be amazed at the sheer variety of styles and number of dies used for both obverses and reverses at the Pantikapaion mint. The quality of die carving remained high even while the output of bronze coins must have

been staggering.

It is also interesting to report that there is a very active collector market in the north Black Sea area for the same coinage produced there in ancient times. This will ensure a continuation of scarce pickings and high prices for good Pantikapaion coins in the foreseeable future.

With time, many of the facts I learned were forgotten but I never lost the excitement of discovery'.

Paul Berg





Numismatic Treasures from the Fabled “CC” Mint

By Ermin Chow



Numerous fellow numismatists share my excitement for the coins minted by the over-hyped, but short-lived, Carson City Mint. Despite the level of interest, some avoid the series due to economic reasons. However, their high premiums are not solely due to low supply (mintage figures) but also to high demand on the collector markets. “Why the intense level of excitement around the Carson City (CC) mintmark?” some individuals may ponder. For many including myself, the appeal of the CC mintmark can partially be credited to its distinction as the sole two-lettered mintmark. Its status as the most famous of the now-defunct United States branch mints, in addition to its popularity inflated by many numismatic media outlets, elevate its demand. Some reminiscent collectors may even view it as a loving memory of the bygone era of the Old West. Additionally, this mint has produced very few coins in only eight denominations, so it is a challenging but fun task to obtain a denomination date set. There is a reason for everyone to collect CC coins, including history buffs, treasure hunters, numismatic speculators, the average collector and everyone in between.

Introducing the Carson City Mint’s History

Nevada was admitted into the Union in 1864 to garner “vast mineral wealth” through the loyalty of the former territory during the Civil War (Lange 106). Due to the large mineral deposits in the area, this now-famous branch mint was established in the Nevada state capital of Carson City in 1870, several years after its Congressional approval in 1863. The lengthy delay was due to political and financial obstacles with the federal government. The small branch mint was created, because mine owners in Nevada did not want to ship their bullion “over the Sierra Nevada Mountains to the United States Mint at San Francisco,” since it was a difficult and dangerous journey (Lange 107).

The first superintendent of this branch mint was Abraham Curry, a strong proponent of its establishment and a wealthy land owner in the region. However, his tenure was shortened by his unsuccessful campaign for the lieutenant governor’s office in September 1870. Six subsequent superintendents were appointed for a total of seven in its short history, with the most influential one being James Crawford (Figure 1), who served for over 10 years. The last superintendent was T.R. Hofer, who saw the unfortunate demise of the mint in 1893 (A Brief History of the Carson City Mint).



Figure 1 James Crawford

The first coin minted at the mint was a seated Liberty dollar bearing the “soon to be famous CC mintmark” (McDonald). All the denominations except the dime would subsequently be minted in the same year, and the dime was minted the following year. None of the denominations smaller than the dime were ever minted, nor were the small gold denominations. The first coin press in use was made by Morgan & Orr of Philadelphia since the mint’s opening, but it required repair in 1878, and the repairman’s company initials, V&T, were stamped on its plate. It is notable that most coins minted at the CC mint were in the later dates for the smaller denominations, thereby explaining the low mintage figures of Carson City dimes minted in the early 1870’s.



Figure 2. An example of the reverse of a Carson City Liberty seated dollar including the “1870 CC SEATED LIBERTY SILVER DOLLAR” NGC AU

In 1876 during the centennial of independence, the Carson City mint struck the highest number of coins in its history, a figure that has never been surpassed. Political clashes arose, and the mint was temporarily shut down for several years in 1885 by an unsupportive President Grover Cleveland. However, it was reopened in 1889, although it was short-lived, and minting operations were permanently ceased in 1893 due to high costs and a lack of funding. The total number of coins minted at the facility did not surpass 60 million over its short lifetime, as most bullion processed through the facility was formed into ingots (“Carson City US Coin Mint”).

After its shutdown as a mint, the location served as a government assay office until 1933, which continued to “refine raw gold and silver ore” from Nevada mines (Lange 113). In 1941, the building was purchased by the state and renovated to become part of the Nevada State Museum (Figure 3). The number of visitors has steadily increased similarly to the appreciating value of Carson City coins. Up to the present day, the museum is open to the public, and its first operational press

is on display, remaining functional as a press to mint souvenir CC coins for visitors. There is only a nominal admission charge, and guided tours are offered for the general public to inquire about the mint’s definitive history and unique coinage.

Overview of Collecting the Denominations

Collecting any particular series has many nuances, causing numismatists to take differing approaches for every series. For myself, the later issues of dimes were my starting point, because most examples command only slight premiums over their Philadelphia Mint counterparts of the same year. For example, the price difference between purchasing an 1877 and an 1877CC dime in MS 63 is a mere 60%, as opposed to price differences totaling over 500% for some of the earlier issues of dimes and other denominations. As well, there are only 10 dates in a complete series, including major varieties, and only eight coins are realistically required to complete a date set (Bressett 153-154).

The twenty-cent pieces are beautiful works of art, although the Carson City set is very expensive to complete, albeit being a set of only two coins. The easiest of the pair is the 1875CC, despite a cost upwards of \$2000 for a nice uncirculated example (Bressett 163). The 1876CC is an auction record-shattering coin, which everyone desires, but most cannot afford. However, this series would make up a memorable and uncommon collection that will create jealousy amongst numismatists. If a collector wants to begin a twenty-cent denomination set, jumping right into Carson City issues is not the route most choose to take, due to the large investment required. However, its slightly larger counterpart, the quarter set, is a far more common approach to commencing a collection of the Liberty seated design, especially for CC examples. The later dates are much cheaper like the dimes and commonly available with few hassles.

The half dollars are generally not associated with the CC mintmark as much as the other denominations, therefore they only command very modest premiums for most dates including the key dates. For Liberty seated collectors and collectors of larger sized coinage, the half dollars would be an excellent



Figure 3. A recent photograph of the Carson City Mint at night (“Carson City US Coin Mint”)

choice, especially for high grade coins and key dates. There is also the Liberty seated and trade dollar series which are relatively uncommon and not the denominations most collectors choose to begin their CC collection. Despite relative prices compared to examples from other mints being fairly modest, these series are fairly pricey for every mintmark, because of limited accessibility, thus correlating the lower interest levels in these denominations.

Contrarily, one of the most popular CC coin series (also one of the most popular US coin series) is the Morgan dollar. Therefore, the series is sold at slightly inflated prices, due to their popular demand and instant recognition. The Morgan dollars are readily available and much easier to attain. Additionally, due to the strong market for the Morgan dollars, selling and upgrading should be a fairly straightforward task that can easily be used to create a profit for those who have a keen eye for beauty in coins. The General Services Administration (GSA) of the United States sold a large hoard of then-recently discovered Carson City Morgan dollars to the public from 1973 to 1980. These coins were released in black inserts inside large plastic shells and sold via mail bids. Currently, there are collectors that specifically search for “GSA dollars,” and the releases provide an interesting twist to collecting CC dollars. Nevertheless, there were large quantities of these coins in mint state in existence, so there is a ready supply at the higher grades. Additionally, collectors should be careful of the authenticity of the coins, because even GSA holders are being counterfeited.

Gold denominations minted include the half eagle (\$5), the eagle (\$10) and the double eagle (\$20), all of which were struck in fairly limited quantities. The eagle was the first gold denomination coined at the mint (Figure 4). Grading gold pieces can be quite tricky and is not recommended for beginners, although they are visually appealing examples of Carson City coins. They can be easily counterfeited, so one must be careful when purchasing such coins. Nonetheless, gold CC issues are quite rare and expensive, hence the lower demand from collectors. Therefore, it is a specialization that usually only seasoned collectors looking for a challenge will begin.



Figure 4. An example of the 1891CC eagle (“Eagle (United States) coin”)

Acquisition and Research of “CC” Coins

Learning about any given coin series (add .) such as those minted in Carson City, is best accomplished by starting a collection, when a numismatist realizes his interest in said series. The more coins a collector purchases within any given series, the more hands-on experience he will have. Every rookie mistake committed in the process will result in an increase in knowledge, which can often lead to self-directed research and conversation with more experienced collectors on the topic. Analysis of mintage figures, population reports or numismatic literature written on anything related to the Carson City Mint or coins will definitely increase insight into market trends and strategies for collecting. Coin shows are one of the simplest and most enjoyable ways to view many CC coins together and to compare prices and quality between pieces. Also, many experts are on site to provide specialized knowledge, and some may even be willing to provide a second opinion on potential purchases.

Joining a local coin club or a specialty club will enable a collector to share and learn from others with similar numismatic specializations. Spending time with professional numismatists will further enhance the knowledge in any area of numismatics including CC coins. Networking is the key to success in becoming a knowledgeable collector and for purchasing or selling coins for reasonable prices. Auctions are also great sources of CC coins, especially the high priced examples, because people tend to consign them to large auction houses for a widespread exposure.

When purchasing high-end Carson City coins, it is much better to have the assurance of certified examples, unless one is confident of their authenticity and grade. Additionally, they are much easier to sell and are generally a requirement for consignment to major auction houses. Third party grading services, although quite expensive, serve as independent opinions to authenticate and assess coins and even have large funds to guarantee their attributions of the coins. Although the coins will be slabbed in bulky holders, they protect them from any damage and are very sturdy. Unfortunately counterfeit third party holders are starting to be produced, so individuals should be careful when purchasing slabbed coins. Also to note, Morgan dollars from the GSA hoard can even be graded by third parties intact in their black holders when submitted to the major grading companies (Figure 5).

An Analysis of the Mintage Figures and Price

Like all coins, market pricing is a multi-faceted combination of factors in which people place an over emphasis on mintage figures (Figure 6). Arguably, equally influential variables include: quantity survived, market activity, technical grade, eye appeal, collector demand, bullion prices amongst many other factors. Despite no direct correlation between mintage figures and price levels, there is often a strong association between the two. For example, due the low mintage of the 1874CC dime, the coin sells for over 260 times an 1876CC dime in mint state and about 400 times as the 1874 dime minted in Philadelphia. In contrast, the extreme rarity of the 1876CC Twenty-Cent

piece is largely attributed to the fact that the majority of the 10,000 issued were not released. In addition to Twenty-Cent pieces generally retailing for higher prices, the popularity of the denomination contributes to the inflated prices.



Figure 5. An image of a PCGS-encapsulated GSA Morgan dollar (“PCGS Encapsulates GSA Hoard Silver Dollar Coins in Special Holder”)

Denomination	Total Mintage	Earliest Mintage Date	Lowest Mintage Figure
Dime	20,912,588	1874CC	10,817
Twenty-Cent	143,290	1876CC	10,000
Quarter	10,330,542	1870CC	8,340
Half Dollar	5,322,627	1870CC	54,617
Dollar	18,092,729	1871CC Liberty seated	1,376
Half Eagle (\$5)	709,617	1876CC	6,887
Eagle (\$10)	299,778	1879CC	1,762
Double Eagle (\$20)	864,128	1870CC	3,789

Figure 6. Comparison of mintage figures between denominations and earliest mintage date (Bressett 153-277 and “Carson City US Coin Mint” 1)

As the 1870CC quarter is examined, another observation associating prices and low mintages can be made. Even though the variety 4 1873CC has an even lower mintage, the date is not designated as the lowest mintage of the denomination, because when combined with variety 5, the total mintage for the year/mintmark combination is higher. As far as half dollars go, the trend continues, as mintage figures roughly determine the rankings of the price levels between the different Carson City mint issues. However, this phenomenon of mintage figures solely affecting price is not seen in the Liberty seated dollars, because the majority were melted most years, and an estimated 750 to 1000 were actually released as opposed to the release of the entire 1871CC issue (“SEATED LIBERTY DOLLARS 1873 CC S\$1 MS”).

In 1878, the Treasury Secretary decided to eliminate the trade dollar, but 97,000 had already been made at the Carson City mint before the decision. In this year was thus the lowest

mintage of trade dollars, albeit significantly higher than that of Liberty seated dollars or half dollars, so they can be obtained at very reasonable premiums, as logic dictates. The rarest Morgan dollars are actually not minted at the CC mint, despite many of the key dates struck there, and command significant premiums over the common dates.

For gold denominations, their mintage figures have always been low due to their lack of circulation in everyday commerce and the US dollar’s high purchasing power in at the time. Additionally, due to the intrinsic value, the numismatic value of gold denominations is much higher than for silver denominations to begin with. Despite the lower mintages, the lower circulation resulted in many more mint state examples. For double eagles, the rarest examples are indeed the lowest mintage ones, with prices in the six-figure range. Despite the rarest dates not being Carson City issues, the CC issues follow a general trend of scarcity, and low mintages quite often command stronger prices in both the eagle and half eagle denominations, similar to the phenomenon seen in the Morgan dollars.

Conclusion

Due to the unique history of the mint, its coins and its political relationship with the US government, it is a fascinating mint specialization to collect. The Carson City Mint has produced many rarities but also many relatively common, yet interesting, coins for the average collector. Therefore, any interested numismatist should consider beginning a collection. This series is also more of a challenge, as there are many key dates that are difficult to obtain. If one is not obsessed over about completing a date set, then collecting a CC mint type set is the recommended route. Numismatics can be considered a lifelong journey, and one of the highlights for me is my current interest in the coins of the Carson City mint.

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AN ANALYSIS OF MERLEN'S 1804 NAPOLEON CORONATION MEDAL

By Pierre Driessen



We critique, grade and catalogue their work. As we delve deeper, we come to admire their knowledge and imagination; we begin to marvel at their artistic and technical skill. Yet how much do we actually know about the people who created our numismatic treasures? Sadly often very little! This is especially true of those who laboured in the coin and medal mints during one of the most prolific periods in numismatic history, namely the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

Coins and medals were created for the glorification of nations, persons of influence and important events. The institutions and their workers charged with creating them, especially those of the era's super powers Britain, France and the Hapsburg Empire, were an important part of the propaganda machine, serving to project power through the sophistication and beauty of their coin and medal designs, for both domestic and international consumption.

French monarchs were amongst the first to truly recognize and exploit this potential. Under the Bourbon kings, the Paris Coin and Medal Mints were developed into well-organized institutions with international reputations for excellence and innovation. Napoléon Bonaparte, upon achieving supreme power in France, infused them with new life, giving special prominence to the Medal Mint. He installed Vivant Denon, a capable administrator and man of learning and culture, as its director.

Building upon the legacy of the Ancien Regime, with many of its craftsmen, engravers and designers, such as Benjamin Duvivier (1730 - 1806) continuing to serve, the Medal Mint reached its pinnacle as an instrument of official state propaganda during the Consulate and First Empire. It became a great honor for foreign dignitaries to make a pilgrimage to the Medal Mint, as evidenced

by the numerous medals struck to commemorate their visits.

Despite the depth and breath of its talent, all



Image 1: Paris Galvanic and Physical Research Society jeton

Obverse: shows a classically dressed woman, possibly Eidya, the Greek goddess of knowledge, experimenting with a variety of electricity generating apparatus.

Legend reads: EXPERIENTIA DUCE. ('Experience under' referring to the scientific method of discovery through experience, i.e. experimentation).

Exergue: signature: Merlen. F(ecit) - 'made it'.

Reverse: shows a wreath composed of a branch of oak branch on the left and laurel on the right, inside are four lines of text, below dividing devise is the date.

Legend reads: SOCIÉTÉ / GALVANIQUE / ET DE / RECH. PHYSIQ. (Galvanic and Physical Research Society).

This is one of the earliest know jeton's engraved by Merlen. Done in 1802 while working for the Paris Medal Mint.

note: Merlen signed his work variously as Merlen F., J.B. Merlen F., J.B.M. or M.

jeton details: silver (AR), 7.82 g, 28 mm, edge: cannelée.
jeton reference: Bramsen 219.

employees were servants of the state, there to enhance the prestige of France, its ruler and his regime. As such there was little room for individualism. Only a few of the most outstanding engravers, artists and designers have become known to us. These are talents such as Bertrand Andrieu (1761 - 1822), Jean Pierre Droz (1746 - 1823), Nicolas Guy Antoine (1773 - 1846), André Galle (1761 - 1844) and Romain Vincent Jeuffroy (1749 - 1826). This has often come about only through the efforts of dedicated numismatic researchers. It is their slugging through mundane sources, such as mint wage and expense accounts, that has brought some information to light. Legal records have proven to be another source of potential information, as in the case of Andrieu through his disputes with Matthew Boulton of Soho fame.

This large pool of talent made it difficult others to make their mark, despite their skill. One such talented, yet relatively unknown engraver and die-sinker, was Johann Baptiste Merlen. Born in 1769 in Flanders, nothing is known of his early life. No print or painting of him exists. It is not known where he learned die sinking or engraving, nor if he practised his craft in Brussels or elsewhere before coming to Paris. According to Leonard Forrer's "Biographical Dictionary of Medallists," Merlen practiced in Brussels, because some of his earliest works were jetons for the Academy of Medicine of Brussels dated AN XII or 1803 - 4.¹

This conclusion is contradicted by a jeton, made for the Paris Galvanic and Physical Research Society, dated AN X or 1802 (**Image 1**). So it is more plausible that Merlen moved to Paris during the early Revolutionary period and found employment with the Paris Medal Mint. Here, he furthered his education under the tutelage of such French engraving masters as Duvivier, Andrieu, Tiolier, Droz and Brenet, gradually advancing until he was skilled enough to be given his own commissions. Initially, he would have been given minor ones, such as jetons for private societies, governmental commissions being reserved for the more skilled senior engravers.

Thus it is most likely that Merlen executed the Brussels jetons in Paris. It makes sense for the Brussels Academy of Medicine to go to Paris for their jetons, since the Paris Medal Mint was the most technologically advanced and employed the most skilled designers and engravers of the era.

Under the direction of Vivant Denon, the Paris Medal Mint had become an institution of such talent and innovation that it proved difficult for Merlen to advance and gain important commissions. He remained in the shadow of its

greats: Droz, Andrieu, Tiolier, Jeuffroy, Brenet and Barre.

For collectors of Napoléonic numismatics, the medal created in 1804 by Merlen for the coronation of Napoléon as Emperor of the French is the most interesting part of his medallic legacy. Not only is an original striking difficult to find, appearing seldom at auction, but it departs significantly from the standardized look of the official Napoléonic medal series. This medal was undoubtedly Merlen's submission to the competition for designs for the official medal to be struck by the Paris Medal Mint to commemorate the momentous event. The mint director Vivant Denon planned to make it an integrate part of the official Napoléonic medal series he supervised. This medal was to be extra special, as it was to be struck in large numbers in various sizes and distributed widely to those attending the ceremony in Notre Dame on 2 December 1804, the Imperial guard and especially to the Parisians in general during the official public celebrations on 3 December. Denon set out the parameters of the design, and the mint's designers and engravers would have submitted their versions and interpretations for his and Napoléon's consideration.

The design which Merlen submitted was not selected, and it is not known if Napoléon ever saw it. When compared to the design of the official coronation medal that was adopted and executed, in my opinion it is self-evident why Merlen's was not chosen, namely: style, message and suitability of the design to be translated to the different sizes without losing its overall design and clarity of message. Three different sizes of 40, 32 and 14 millimeter,s in bronzed copper, silver and gold, were planned.

THE MEDAL:

Merlen's medal did not fit with the overall design and premise of the Napoléonic medal series developed by Denon, which was part of what we know today as the Empire Style. This was based on a fusion of ancient Egyptian, Greek and Roman motifs, creating a style that was characterized by a powerful, yet simple classical elegance. This style was part of the propaganda of the new regime, in its attempt to gain legitimacy by linking itself to the past through the adoption of ancient symbolism.

Denon envisioned a medal that would make a strong statement, linking the Napoléonic regime with the legacies of the Greek, Macedonian, Roman, Gallic, Byzantine and Carolingian Empires. Since a

medal has a limited surface, it must be clean, powerful and yet communicate its message clearly for all to understand, regardless of social station or level of education. A medal functioned like a picture book telling a story through visual imagery. This was achieved to great effect by the official coronation medal that was adopted and executed. Its obverse was designed and engraved by Andrieu, while the reverse was designed by the sculptor and painter Antoine Chaudet (1763 - 1810) and engraved with slight modifications by Jeuffroy (**Image 2**).

Merlen's medal (**Image 3**) on the other hand was

cluttered. Its style was not clean, nor elegant nor classic. It tried to do too many things within the limited space of a medal, losing clarity of message.

Merlen medal obverse (*Image 4*):

Merlen depicted Napoléon elevated on a shield by four knights in Renaissance style armour with plumed helmets. The French imperial eagle is emblazoned on their shields. The newly crowned Emperor of the French has a baton in his right hand, wears coronation robes, a crown and the chain of the Legion d'honneur. His leg



Image 2: The official medal adopted for the Napoleon Medal series celebrating Napoleon Bonaparte's coronation as Emperor of the French on 2 December, 1804.

The medal was executed in various metals (gold, silver and bronzed copper) and diameters (41mm, 32mm and 16 mm). The main design elements were retained across all sizes - maintaining a uniform style and consistent message.

Obverse: shows the laureated bust of Napoleon Bonaparte as Augustus.

Legend: reads: Napoleon Bonaparte

below truncated signatures: ANDRIEU F(ecit), DENON DIR(exit).

Reverse: shows Napoleon elevated on a shield by two figures symbolizing the two pillars of French society - the senate and the people.

Legend: reads LE SENAT ET LE PEUPLE (the senate and the people)

exergue: AN XIII / DENON DIR(exit), JEUFFROY F(ecit)

Medal details: bronzed copper (AE), 32.82 g., 41 mm, edge smooth (plain)

medal references: Bramsen 326, d'Essling 1021, Millin 83, Laskey XXXIX

Napoléon most certainly would not have wanted his rise to the zenith of French power to be linked with



Image 3: The medal submitted by Merlen as his entry for the competition for designs for the official coronation medal for Napoleon Bonaparte.

The medal differences in design, style and message become very apparant when compared to the Andrieu / Jeuffroy medal shown in image 2.

medal details: bronzed copper (Æ), 41.26 g, 41 mm, edge: smooth (plain).
medal references: Bramsen 333, d'Essling 1027, Julius 1273, Millin 94.

reveals him wearing armour. The knights stand on broken swords. To their right is a hydra, representing Great Britain, while to the left is a cannon.

The inscription around the edge reads: **BONTÉ DE TITUS SAGESSE DE M. AURELE GENIE DE CHARLES M.** translated it means: 'The goodness of Titus the wisdom of Marcus Aurelius the genius of Charlemagne (Charles the Great)'.

The exergue inscription reads: **AU NOM DU PLUS GRAND DES HEROS FREMIT L'HYDRE BRITANNIQUE** which translates as: 'At the name of the greatest of heroes the British hydra shudders'.

The meaning of the edge inscription would be lost on many, as universal public education was in its infancy, and a substantial part of the population was illiterate of both the written language and history in general. The exergue inscription brings an unwelcome reminder of France's ongoing struggle with Britain. This reminder was not something the regime would have wanted, as the vast majority of the French people desired peace after almost 15 years of

constant war since the beginning of the French Revolution in 1789. Napoléon, as head of state represented the promise of this much longed for peace.

Napoléon most certainly would not have wanted his rise to the zenith of French power to be linked with the British, but rather to have people believe it to have been the reward bestowed upon him by the French people for his restoration of order, reformation of almost every facet of French society, safeguarding of the hard won advances of the Revolution, and defence of France's territorial integrity and honour. Napoléon would have wanted to perpetuate this fiction, as was done very well by the official Andrieu / Jeuffroy medal.

The four knights elevating Napoléon further work to undermine the official propaganda of his elevation to the purple by the will and with the consent of the French people. Merlen's representation gives the impression, too close to the truth for comfort, that his elevation to Emperor of the French was really a continuation of his original seizure of power through the coup d'état of 18th Brumaire (9 November 1799)



Image 4: Obverse of Merlen's coronation medal.

supported by the army.

The symbolism invoked by the cannon, knights and British hydra also unfortunately emphasizes the uncomfortable truth that Napoléon, his regime and the imperial dynasty he founded was based upon a precarious foundation of his past and continued success as a military commander. All could come undone in a hurry, if setbacks were suffered on the battlefield.

Napoléon wanted his regime to be based upon the 'fact' that he had become Emperor of the French through the free will of the French senate and people. Initially, the intention was to emulate the fiction of imperial Rome, a republic ruled by a first citizen, a caesar, an augustus, an emperor. Napoléon could not claim the divine right of kings as the anointed of God, as had been done by the Bourbons, as the foundation for his rule and that of his dynasty. Instead, he claimed to have been placed in his exulted

position through the sovereign choice of the French people.

Merlen medal reverse (Image 5):

The reverse was even more cluttered and confusing. Inside a wreath made up of two branches of oak tied with a ribbon, Merlen employed an arcane devise called a chronogrammatic. Making use of the fact that in certain ancient languages, in this case Latin, letters could also represent numbers, certain letters in an inscription double as numbers, which when added together would express a number or date.

The chronogrammatic in the field reads:

NAPOLÉON BONAPARTE /
LE TRÈS GLORIEUX /
ET TRÈS AUGUSTE EMPEREUR /



Image 5: Reverse of Merlen's coronation medal.

SE FAIT SACRER ET OINDRE /
A PARIS PAR PIE VII /
SOVVERAIN PONTIFE .

In normal lettering this would read:

Napoléon BONAPARTE LE TRÈS GLORIEUX ET TRÈS AUGUSTE EMPEREUR SA FAIT SACRER ET OINDRE A PARIS PAR PIE VII SOUVERAIN PONTIFE (*Napoléon Bonaparte the most glorious and august emperor was crowned and anointed in Paris by Pius VII Sovereign Pontiff*).

In Latin the letters I, V, X, L, C, D and M also stood for the numbers 1, 2, 5, 10, 50, 100, 500 and 1000 respectively. Since in Latin the letter 'u' was rendered as 'v', Merlen used 'v' instead of 'u' so it could also represent the number 5. Thus he

created a mixture of French and Latin lettering to make his chronogrammatic work. This is all very contrived, as it looks and reads rather awkwardly. What was his intent?

The sum of LLLIVXVVMVICIDIIVIIIVVII is 1804, the year of Napoléon's coronation. Below the oak branch wreath, the full date of the ceremony in Notre Dame is repeated, again in an awkward fashion as:

II . DECEMB . MDCLLXVVVVVVVIIIIIIIII
(2 December 1804)

The excessive use of Roman numerals makes it difficult to read. You are almost forced to break out your abacus to do the calculus. In addition, the numerals are partially hidden under the wreath, while the wreath itself is not done justice.

Taking into account all these factors, the medal's overall design is not only cluttered but has an amateurish look and feel. In addition, its excessive use of elements causes it to fail another of Denon's requirements - the suitability for clear translation across different size medals.

Merlen's submission was clearly unsuitable for this, since the reduction in size would render many of the design's elements illegible. This would have necessitated rationalization through element removal, but this in turn would have caused a loss of the clarity of its message. What could have been safely removed? The simple truth is - nothing.

It is for these reasons that Merlen's medal, commemorating the coronation of Napoléon Bonaparte as Emperor of the French, was not selected by Vivant Denon to be included in the Paris Medal Mint's official Napoléon medal series.

Merlen would continue his career at the Paris Medal Mint, executing various jetons, in 1805, for the Administration of the Registration of State Lands, in 1806, for the Lodge of St. Victor of the Friends of Victory, in 1808, two jetons, one for the Foundries of Vaucluse, the other for the Lodge of Isis, all minor commissions.

In 1804 and 1815, he was responsible for two medals. He did not attain prominence, nor it appears was he engaged in any truly important commissions at the Paris Mint.

His reputation was such, however, that shortly after the collapse of the First Empire in 1815, Merlen saw his opportunity and immigrated to Britain. Here he was engaged at the urging of the London Mint's chief medallist Benedetto Pistrucci (1784 - 1855) and took up the post of assistant engraver under William Wyon (1795 - 1851), the mint's chief engraver.

That Pistrucci, a very accomplished designer

and engraver of medals and coins, made this recommendation testifies to the talent and skill of Merlen. The curious inner workings and politics of the London Mint also had something to do with it. A dislike and mistrust of foreigners, and mint rules restricting the employ and roles of foreigners strained relations between Pistrucci and Mint officials, especially the Wyons. Pistrucci was also at times a rather temperamental artist. As a result, this required the employ of another engraver who could work with Pistrucci and was willing to conform to the quirks of the British mint. This man was Merlen.

The first officially recorded works in Britain credited to Merlen were the dies for the reverse of the half-crown of George IV in 1820 (**Image 6**). Next in 1823, he was charged to engrave the obverse dies



Image 6: George IV half-crown 1821, obverse by Pistrucci, reverse by Merlen.

Merlen was very skilled in armorial bearings and other technically detailed designs. He was however, as can be seen from his 1804 medal in images 3, 4 and 5 not skilled in executing the human form.

for George IV's double sovereign (two pounds), a commission that Pistrucci had refused, because the design was not his. Rather the sovereign's head was to be engraved after a model by the sculptor Sir Francis Legett Chantrey (1781 - 1842). According to Forrer, the result was less than satisfactory as it was : "this head of the King does not much resemble the model." ²

Merlen would go on to engrave many coins for the British Mint, but most often, he would be responsible for the reverse. It proved that he was excellent at rendering technical details such as armorial bearings, rather than the human form. He continued to work through the reigns of George

IV, William IV and the early part of Victoria, retiring from British service in July 1844. Merlen died around 1850, exact locale unknown, although it is thought that he may have returned to Flanders, by then part of the new Kingdom of Belgium.

NOTES:

1. *Biographical dictionary of medallists: coin, gem and seal engravers, mint masters, etc., ancient and modern with references to their works B.C. 500 - A.D. 1900* Volume 4, p. 38.
2. Ibid p.39.

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Progressive Academy Coin Club Design New Coins

The members created their very own Canadian coin designs at the February meeting. Their task was to draw a coin that represent Canada. The designs show symbols of Canada, its natural beauty, sports and culture.



Design 1



Design 2



Design 3




Design 4

Rachel Kirbyson: Design 1 The \$1 coin depicts the Rocky Mountains, an Inukshuk, the Northern Lights and a First Nations campsite.

Ruben Miranda: Design 2 This \$1 coin depicts sports such as Hockey, Lacrosse and Baseball.

Kale Buchanan: Design 3 This \$25 coin depicts the natural beauty of the Canadian Rockies.

Charles Parsons: This \$1 coin depicts the Canadian Rockies, The Canadian flag and hockey.



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Next Issue

The next issue of The Planchet is planned for late June or early in July. Please have submissions to Christopher Hale for his review by June 15, bearing in mind, it will take time for his review. Please make whatever corrections are required and send them to me with picture files by June 22.

The Planchet after that one will be issued in early September and the operative dates will be to Mr. Hale by August 10 and to me by August 20.

Paul Purdie
Editor
(ppurdie@telus.net)



Classified & Coming Events

PLACE YOUR AD HERE FREE FOR ENS MEMBERS

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Wanted

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New Membership Applications

No new members this month

These individuals have applied for membership into the Edmonton Numismatic Society. Pending any objections from the membership at large, these individuals will be accepted as "Members in Good Standing", effective this publishing date. Any objections to the aforementioned applications must be submitted in writing to the Secretary of the Edmonton Numismatic Society, and will be evaluated by the Executive Committee on a case-by-case basis.

Coming Events

June 11, 2014 - ENS June Meeting - Royal Alberta Museum, 7:15 pm start.

July 6, 2014 - ENS Annual Barbeque starts at 4:00 pm. Details to be sent later.

September 11, 2014 - ENS September Meeting - Royal Alberta Museum, 7:15 pm start.

October 8, 2014 - ENS October Meeting - Royal Alberta Museum, 7:15 pm start.

November 8 & 9, 2014 - *Edmonton's Fall Coin Show and Sale, Edmonton Hotel & Conference Centre, 4520 - 76 Ave, Edmonton, Alberta, T6B 0A5, dealers wishing to attend call 780-270-6312.*

November 12, 2014 - ENS November Meeting - Royal Alberta Museum, 7:15 pm start.

December 10, 2014 - ENS December Meeting - Royal Alberta Museum, 7:15 pm start. Live auction with all proceeds to charity.

January 14, 2015 - ENS January Meeting - Royal Alberta Museum, 7:15 pm start.



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