



Bulletin of the
PACIFIC COAST NUMISMATIC SOCIETY
AUGUST, 2023

1288th Monthly Meeting
Half Unions, Half Measures, and Hidden Treasures
Douglas Ward

Wednesday, August 23, 2023, 7:30 PM PDT
Online



Gold coins were an integral part of United States coinage from 1792 until private ownership for non-numismatic purposes was made illegal in 1933. While actual gold coins weren't minted until 1795 (due to stringent bonding requirements for mint employees), denominations based on the \$10 Eagle (\$2.50, \$5, and \$10) were produced periodically for nearly 140 years. Following the discovery of gold in California, the U.S. Mint introduced the \$20 Double Eagle in 1850.

At the same time, proposals were made for new, high denomination gold coins based on the \$100 Union. The proposed denominations were the Quarter Union (\$25), Half Union (\$50) and Union (\$100). But the idea never

went past the pattern stage—only for the Half Union—and that took over twenty years.



Join us online on **Wednesday, August 23** when **Douglas Ward** will tell us all about the long and winding road of the Half Union. Plan to exhibit your gold Unions, your AFL-CIO membership card, or your recent acquisitions. So that everyone may participate, please take pictures of your exhibits to facilitate viewing on Zoom.

JULY MEETING RECAP

John Duff began his talk on Toy Coins with a short discussion of the best reference book on the subject, published in 1990 by David Rogers. David had collected them since 1955 and collaborated with other authors on a very detailed book. Although John himself focuses mostly on collecting toy coins of the Victorian era, he reviewed all sections of the book: Precursor and English Issues (86 sections); Foreign (non-English) Issues (83 sections); and Toy Coin Boxes (21 sections).

There is a distinction in the development of toy coins. Prior to 1870, precursor coins were not made for children, but children did play with them. After 1870, they were made specifically for children.

John also discussed the rarity scale and values listed in the book. Even the rarest of the coins (often unique) were listed at £30 (33 years ago). Few were available, but there were also few collectors. Several items listed in the book had a rarity of RRR*, with the star meaning there was a reliable report of someone seeing the coin but no further proof at the time of one existing. John showed his examples of some starred rarities now in his collection.

John got started collecting these with the purchase of a Lauer toy coin box from 1880. It featured a reproduction bank note on the box and had 13 coins in it (the original would have had 14- he was able to identify all of them). The box and coins were purchased from the late Bill McKivor in Seattle, a well-known and well-liked expert in Conder Tokens.

John discussed the compositions of the known examples throughout his talk. He discussed jetons and precursors. Counters were used, along with counting boards and cloths (which are very rare) to help with the mathematics of Roman numerals, which became obsolete due to the gradual acceptance of Arabic numerals. They were made for adults, but children also used them for learning.

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PCNS MEETINGS

PCNS meetings take place at 7:30 pm on the fourth Wednesday of most months. Currently, meetings are held online using the Zoom platform, thereby allowing members, presenters, and guests to attend no matter where they are located. Everyone with an interest in numismatics is welcome to attend. A meeting code/invitation link will be emailed to all members separately the day before the meeting; non-members can request a link by emailing webmaster@pcns.org.

Special occasions, such as the annual BBQ, will continue to occur in person.

PCNS CALENDAR FOR 2023

August 23, 2023.....**Douglas Ward**, *Half Unions, Half Measures, and Hidden Treasures*
September 27, 2023.....**Michael Wehner**, *Topic TBA**
October 25, 2023.....*Speaker and Topic TBA**
November 29, 2023.....*Speaker and Topic TBA**
December 27, 2023.....**Annual Meeting and Election of Officers** for 2024, *Speaker and Topic TBA**

SPEAK UP!

There are always opportunities for **you** to make a presentation. Thanks to Zoom, you don't even need to be in San Francisco. Your topic can even be something about which you have submitted or plan to submit a *Paper*. Please email webmaster@pcns.org to sign up.

JULY MEETING RECAP (CONT'D)

John went through items in his collection based on the sections of the reference book. Subjects included:

- Hanover Jacks (with 134 known varieties), which were political tokens used in gaming.
- Spiele Marke and Rechen Pfennig coins, the first toy coins starting 1750.
- Joseph Moore's bimetallic models of 1845-1851, an alternative to heavier circulating coins, as well as his tiny fractions
- British true toy coins, advertising pieces
- Foreign toy coins— his latest is a 1925 Weimar Republic type; the book lists them through 1980.
- Coin boxes, often made for special events and coronations.

We invite you to watch John's full presentation on the [PCNS YouTube channel](#).

JULY MEMBER EXHIBITS

Bill shared his 1850 California Gold Mines gaming counter made by Lauer.

Stephen showed us: spiele marks, counters, and jetons— mostly acquired "by accident" as a dealer from the 'things' customers would bring into his coin shop. The pieces featured a unicorn, an owl, a lion/eagle, among other figures.

Federico also showed likely Lauer tokens, mostly game counters made by wealthy coffee growers in Costa Rica, Venezuela, among other places.

Michael showed some of his counters/toy coins. He also showed an intriguing art medal from the British Art Medal Society that had been cast and had a special finish applied.

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