



PAPERS
OF THE
PACIFIC COAST
NUMISMATIC SOCIETY
2012





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An Introduction to PCNS Papers

Stephen Huston, *Editor*

Welcome to our first publication of PCNS Papers in several years.

For over half a century, PCNS has held an annual papers contest for members and others to submit their numismatic research. The project has served many purposes, some of which have been forgotten over the years:

- to encourage members to complete research projects which otherwise might languish and never become public,
- to provide topics from which to draw programs for our meetings,
- to win engraved medals for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place,
- for peer recognition, and
- to have one's work published.

Originally, the papers were submitted in the Spring of each year, and judged by a group of members who had not made submissions that year. Prizes were awarded at the annual "Awards Banquet" in June, and each author was asked to present their paper as a meeting program in the following months, often accounting for most of the topics presented each year.

Until the 1980s, once PCNS had gotten its use out of the papers as meeting topics, they were forwarded to the California State Numismatic Association (CSNA), for publication in their *Calcoin News* quarterly. Many PCNS papers were published by CSNA, but many

were not. Some authors became discouraged because they were never allotted space amidst the club activity and convention reports filling *Calcoin News*.

By 1983, PCNS had folders full of yet-unpublished original numismatic papers. So we decided to launch our own quarterly, *The Journal of the Pacific Coast Numismatic Society* (aka *The Journal*).

From 1984 through 1995, we produced *The Journal* on a quarterly schedule for 50 issues.

During the first few years, we published the entire backlog of PCNS Papers, and, in the process, created our own venue for new writings. The papers contest was changed to support the ongoing publication; items were accepted continuously, and the annual judging covered all articles published in *The Journal* during the latest year. Writers were published first, and the awards came later.

We acquired regular columnists, some of whom often won awards. As *The Journal* became a polished publication, it even won the ANA's award as Best Regional Numismatic Publication, beating the long-term favorite — CSNA's own *Calcoin News*.

Our membership increased because people wanted our publication. Many of our new members joining in the 1990s lived

far from San Francisco, even outside the US.

However, *The Journal* was mothballed after 50 issues because our volunteer editors and publishers needed a breather from the quarterly pace, and our Society lacked backup staff to take over those duties without a break. With the usual suspects exhausted, we decided to publish *as needed*, anticipating annual publications in 1996 and later years.

As things worked out, our schedule varied from annual to biennial, depending on the number of papers on hand, but the number of submissions never reached the

heyday of *The Journal* years. Our latest publications were biennials for 2005/6 and 2007/8. Then there was a three year hiatus before the publication you are now holding.

I hope that this marks the beginning of a revival of our long tradition of PCNS members regularly submitting their own research for publication.

A sincere *Thank You* to the writers, our three judges, and Dan Hipple, our 2012 Papers Chairman, who oversaw everything.

The next deadline for papers submissions is our monthly meeting in April 2013 — *so get cracking!*

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Thanks to the Sponsors of PCNS, those members who recently have made a significant financial contribution to the ongoing work of the Society:

Jerry F. Schimmel, Fellow of the Society

Frank J. Strazzarino, Gold Member 1959

California Trail Riders Pictorial Tokens

William D. Hyder

If you believe the cowboy and his horse are the quintessential symbol of the West, then you likely know the first horsemen were the Mexican *vaqueros* who accompanied the padres as they established their missions along the California coast.

The *vaqueros'* native California cousins quickly joined them and became master horsemen in their own right.

As the mission system began to dissolve in the wake of secularization, Spanish soldiers and their descendants became new landowners settling the mission land holdings. The new *Californios* took their place alongside the *vaquero* and created a unique style of working- and show-horsemen. Spectacular saddles, riding dress, and dazzling spurs became the norm. Plain old cowboys seem rather drab alongside the *Californio*.

Commercial entrepreneurs, large-scale ranchers and farmers, and the railroad displaced the *Californios* following the discovery of gold and the rapid expansion of California's market economy.

Ironically, San Francisco's Bohemian Club, a paragon of urban wealth and power, gave rise to the oldest trail rider association in California, the *Rancheros Visitadores*.

Neill Wilson recounts the founding days of the *Rancheros* in *Rancheros Visitadores: Twenty Fifth*

Anniversary 1930–1955.

J.J. Mitchell (Chicago banker and a founder of United Airlines) imagined a Bohemian-style club based on the horse about the same time that cowboy artist, Ed Borein, and several friends began annual rides in the Santa Ynez Mountains behind Santa Barbara. Along with sixty or seventy of their well-heeled friends and fellow ranchers, the gentlemen made their first ride as *Rancheros* on May 9, 1930. At least three stagecoaches, a covered wagon, and chuck wagons hauled their gear for what was billed as a strictly stag event. Food, drink, and tobacco were paid for as it was consumed. Cards, dice, and poker chips were provided.

In time, annual dues paid for most of the food consumed, but drinks still had to be purchased at the bar. One undated photograph shows a well stocked, crowded bar at Mitchell's Rancho Juan y Lolita. The sign over the bar reads:

The bar accepts Rancho coin only.

The cashier will exchange your money.

"Rancho coin" comes in three denominations, 5¢, 25¢, and 50¢. The 50-cent token is a pictorial token based on the official *Rancho Visitadores* emblem design by Ed Borein — a *Californio* on his horse reared back on its hind legs in greeting.

The Los Angeles Rubber Stamp



Figure 1

Co. struck all the tokens used by the Rancheros and they proved popular as each denomination is known in several varieties of the same designs, suggesting they were struck on several occasions over the years.

The 50-cent pictorial token is known in aluminum and white metal struck in both 30mm and 31mm. Kappen lists four varieties, of which one is pictured here along with a second, unlisted piece (fig.1). It is possible that K-127 and K2-241 are actually the same piece. The few that I have encountered that appeared to be different were in fact the same dies when carefully measured and overlaid in photographs. My unlisted piece and K-125 may actually be the same piece. I have not yet encountered an aluminum example with the LARS CO signature, although that does not rule out that they exist. Kappen also notes that *Anillo restrikes* exist with and without the LA Rubber Stamp signature.

In 1938, a group of Los Angeles and Palm Springs California business and professional men organized *Los Vaqueros del Desierto*. Their first official four-day ride began on November 2, 1938, with the riders traveling across the desert to the mountains north of

Palm Springs and back by way of One Thousand Palms. Sam J. Buckingham, a winter resident of Palm Springs was named as first *El Presidente*.

Their 1939 trek involved a five-day ride through Palm Canyon to the desert where they followed the old Butterfield stagecoach trails to Indian Wells. It was a somewhat different trip than the Rancheros tradition of visiting ranches; a stagecoach, a covered wagon, and Mexican and cowboy orchestras accompanied the hundred-member *Vaqueros*.

Thirty-five women calling themselves the *Vaqueros y Rancharitas* made their own four-day ride a few days later armed with lipstick and powder puffs, perhaps an early protest at the all male organizations or merely an attempt to poke some fun at the normally desk-bound businessmen who formed the trail riding clubs.

Rides were suspended in 1941, following the death of Buckingham and the impact of World War II, but they resumed in 1946. The uncertainties of weather led the *Vaqueros del Desierto* to move its route to the Angeles National Forest with fewer riders.

Since 1971, each year's ride has followed a different route. As with



Figure 2

the other trail rider associations covered here, membership is by invitation and is largely composed of well-heeled businessmen who enjoy horses and the cowboy tradition.

Perhaps modeled after the *Rancheros Visitadores*, the *Vaqueros* issued 5¢, 25¢, and 50¢ tokens. The 5¢ and 25¢ tokens feature a VD monogram and the 50¢ tokens are pictorial (fig.2).

Kappen notes the American-Pacific Stamp Co. produced the five-cent token, but he does not note who may have manufactured the other two tokens. Kappen reports that American-Pacific Stamp did not sign their tokens, so it is possible that American-Pacific struck all three tokens.

The *Rancheros Visitadores* and the Oakland-based Frontier Boys inspired the formation of the Sonoma County Trail Blazers. According to their anniversary publication, *Sonoma County Trail Blazers—1941–1966*, Warren Richardson, Dr. Ed Beach, and Dr. Leo Stanley discussed forming their own trail riders group closer to their Northern California homes during the 1940 *Rancheros* ride in Santa Barbara County. Richardson assumed the task of organizing the first ride by showing

his home movies of the *Rancheros* event and retelling his stories from the trail whenever and wherever he could find an audience. One hundred six charter members and guests made the first trail ride in 1941, accompanied by wagons and stagecoaches. As with the *Rancheros*, it was strictly stag with beer and whiskey quenching the riders' thirst and ensuring lively evenings around camp.

Also in keeping with *Rancheros* tradition, a cash bar helped keep consumption in line, and, in 1942, the group introduced their own drink token in place of actual cash.



Figure 3

Participants purchased their "Trail Blazer money" from the cashier prior to the start of the ride. The tokens cost fifty cents each and were good for one drink. Two tokens would purchase a chance for a fancy saddle raffle with the drawing held at the end of each ride.



Figure 4

The first tokens were struck in bronze according to Blazer history, although Kappen calls them copper. At some point, they switched to aluminum (fig.3).

The 1947 ride historian wrote that “good old U.S. greenbacks could be exchanged for a sack full of trailblazer money, the only currency usable on the trek and especially coined in the counterfeit molds of Bill Johansen and Howard Robinson.”

Members of the Coins Committee changed from year to year, so the two men may have only been responsible for managing the token inventory and ordering more as needed.

L.A. Drake suggested the name for the organization, but the records do not identify who designed the brand-like logo or who designed the coins. Bill Johansen, however, was involved with each of the relevant committees along with Bob Mitchell and Linn Applegate.

An open bar was introduced for the 1959 trail ride, and use of the tokens was discontinued.

The *Caballeros de San Luis Obispo* also issued pictorial tokens (fig.4). Their traditions began in 1943, inspired by the Paso Robles Trail Riders. The *Caballeros* share the same characteristics of the other

groups — all males, sharing several days on the trail. Attendees were fined for breaking the rules — anywhere from \$5 for shaving up to \$100 for arriving in the company of a woman or child.

I learned the least about the *Caballeros* while researching their tokens, suggesting perhaps a more low profile organization oriented more towards riding and camaraderie and less focus on maintaining business and political relationships. Their tokens are also the least sophisticated of the four organizations.

The pictorial tokens of the four groups recall California’s rich tradition of fancy men displaying their skills and wealth atop their fancy horses. Borein’s popular Western art style adorns the 50¢ token of the *Rancheros Visitadores* and likely inspired the pictorials issued by the other three groups as well.

None are particularly difficult to find, suggesting that many were needed to insure that the riders were able to adequately quench their thirst at the end of each day in the saddle. Their horses had to settle for fresh water and feed after doing all the hard work.

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FIGURE DESCRIPTIONS & CATALOG

FIGURE I:

RANCHEROS VISITADORES

Kappen records four varieties of the 50¢ token under Santa Barbara in his *California Tokens* (K–) and *California Tokens Supplement* (K2–).

K-124. RANCHEROS VISITADORES / Borein’s horse and rider emblem / L A RUB STMP CO // GOOD FOR / 50¢ / * IN TRADE * WM30 [not pictured]

K-125. similar but aluminum; L A R S CO signature. [not pictured]

K-127. similar 50¢, no stars rev. L A R S CO signature. WM30 [pictured]

K2-241. RANCHEROS VISITADORES / Borein’s horse and rider emblem / L A R S CO // GOOD FOR / 50¢ / IN TRADE WM30 (As 127, var. — check distance 50¢ to IN) [not pictured]

K— Unlisted. RANCHEROS VISITADORES / Borein’s horse and rider emblem / L A RUB STMP CO // GOOD FOR / 50¢ / * IN TRADE * AL30 [pictured]

FIGURE 2:

VAQUEROS DEL DESIERTO

These tokens were likely struck by American-Pacific Stamp Co. according to Kappen. Kappen records one 50¢ token struck in three metals under Palm Springs. My collection suggests there were two varieties, one of which is represented by a “sample” token in my collection.

K-40. VAQUEROS DEL DESIERTO / (desert scene, horse and rider, l.) // GOOD FOR / 50¢ WM30.5 tb [not pictured,

but Kappen's plate shows a propeller device above 50¢ and four diamonds separated by a star below 50¢: + + * + +]

K-41. Same but copper. [pictured, same dies as K-40 with the word SAMPLE stamped below 50¢]

K-42. Same but bronze. [not pictured]

K— Unlisted. Obverse same as above // GOOD FOR / 50¢ / IN TRADE. [pictured]

K-9. CABALLEROS de SAN LUIS OBISPO // (3 riders and horses, l.)
Bz28 [not pictured]

K-10. Same but brass [pictured]

K— Unlisted. CABALLEROS de / (3 riders and horses, l.) / SAN LUIS OBISPO // 40TH / (ornament) / COMMEMORATIVE
B32 [pictured]



FIGURE 3:

SONOMA COUNTY TRAIL BLAZERS

Trailblazer money was struck in bronze (or copper) and aluminum between 1942 and 1958. Kappen records two varieties — as mentioned in the organization's history — under Sonoma.

K-19. SONOMA COUNTY TRAIL BLAZERS / (STCB monogram, ctr.) // GOOD FOR ONE DRINK / (horse and rider)
C31 [not pictured]

K-20. Same but aluminum [pictured]

FIGURE 4:

CABALLEROS DE SAN LUIS OBISPO

These tokens do not indicate a denomination. A second, similar token with a single rider and Caballeros Club legend maybe related to the trail riders, but it is the logo of a San Luis Obispo country club and is not included here.

The Maria Theresa Thaler — The Ultimate One-Year Type Set

Mark A. Benvenuto

In a world currently awash in silver and gold bullion coins — usually minted with weights in exact ounces of a precious metal or fractions thereof, and often used as a way to own, store, and trade those precious metals throughout the world — the Maria Theresa Thaler still holds what is arguably a first place as the first international trade coin.

It was not made to be pegged to an exact mass of precious metal as today's bullion coins are, but this one coin has attained an almost legendary status as a way to transfer or exchange silver throughout various parts of the world. With the continued use of the date 1780, no matter what year a particular Thaler is made, the coin has earned a place that is truly unique in world commerce. That 1780 date also makes it an interesting coin to collect — but more on that in a moment.

EARLY MARIA THERESA THALERS

The coin now universally known as “the Maria Theresa Thaler,” often simply called the *MTT* by aficionados, is a large, hefty, silver piece dated 1780, weighing in at just under an ounce. The woman whose face graces it, Maria Theresa, Empress of Austria, reigned for decades before that, and there were

many thalers made over the years with her royal portrait on them prior to this now-famous date.

THE DESIGN

The obverse and reverse of the Maria Theresa Thaler is rather straightforward and standard. In line with the other coins of the great powers of its day, it sports the portrait of a monarch on the obverse, a coat of arms on the reverse, with surrounding inscriptions on both sides. Its obverse is dominated by the portrait of Empress Maria Theresa. The legend that encircles her might need a bit of explanation now, as fewer and fewer of us read or speak any Latin (which almost all educated persons did in her time), and as the imperial titles are rather heavily abbreviated. That legend starts on the obverse, continues on the reverse, and reads:

M · THERESIA · D · G ·
R · IMP · HU · BO · REG ·

This mouthful of abbreviations and acronyms can be expanded to: *Maria Theresia, Dei Gratia Romanorum Imperatrix, Hungariae Bohemiaeque Regina*, which is the beginning of her titles, and which is continued on the reverse:

ARCHID · AVST · DUX ·
BURG · CO · TYR · 1780 · X ·



These are the abbreviations for the Latin: *Archidux Austriae, Dux Burgundiae, Comes Tyrolis*.

If we turn this entire mouthful into English, we get, more or less: *Maria Theresa, by the grace of God, Empress of the Romans, Queen of Hungary and Bohemia, Archduchess of Austria, Duchess of Burgundy, Countess of Tyrol*.

The date 1780, and what appears to be an X, completes it. That X incidentally is sometimes called a *saltire*, a mark indicating the fineness of the silver of the coin.

As if all these titles were not enough, Maria Theresa's entire and complete listing of titles, at least at the time of her husbands' death, is much longer:

Maria Theresa, by the Grace of God, Dowager Empress of the Romans, Queen of Hungary, of Bohemia, of Dalmatia, of Croatia, of Slavonia, of Galicia, of Lodomeria, etc.; Archduchess of Austria; Duchess of Burgundy, of Styria, of Carinthia and of Carniola; Grand Princess of Transylvania; Margravine of

Moravia; Duchess of Brabant, of Limburg, of Luxemburg, of Guelders, of Württemberg, of Upper and Lower Silesia, of Milan, of Mantua, of Parma, of Piacenza, of Guastalla, of Auschwitz and of Zator; Princess of Swabia; Princely Countess of Habsburg, of Flanders, of Tyrol, of Hennegau, of Kyburg, of Gorizia and of Gradisca; Margravine of Burgau, of Upper and Lower Lusatia; Countess of Namur; Lady of the Wendish Mark and of Mechlin; Dowager Duchess of Lorraine and Bar, Dowager Grand Duchess of Tuscany.¹

It's no wonder that the Maria Theresa Thaler uses abbreviated acronyms – and only a few, at that. One can only wonder who actually addressed the dear empress in conversation using all those titles, and if either of them had anything else to do that day— as saying them all must have taken a while!

When it comes to such titles, we can also have some sympathy for the mint engraver who had to

determine just what ended up being important enough for inclusion on this now famous legend around Maria Theresa and the coat of arms, and what got skipped. For collectors of world coins today, it's not hard to pick from that list of titles and locate Austria or Hungary on a map. Even Transylvania won't be too hard, and Auschwitz is a spot that now invokes an ugly and brutal, inhuman time in history. But where on Earth, or in Europe, are Carinthia, Limburg, Guastalla, or Hennegau? It takes a bit of searching on a detailed map.

Similarly, in Maria Theresa's titles, we can see she is an empress, a queen, an archduchess, a duchess, a princess, and a countess. But one has to be pretty well versed on the more subtle matters of European aristocracy to know what a margravine is (the male title for the position is a margrave, by the way). Again, the artists of the mint had to do some serious work to determine just what abbreviations of which particular titles made it onto the obverse or reverse of this coin.

One side of the coin on which there are no abbreviations is the third side — the edge. The words "Justitia et Clementia," or "justice and clemency" encircle the coin, and have functioned as safeguard against unscrupulous traders shaving a bit off the edge of the coin. That third side has actually been part of the MTT's international appeal — it is very easy to see if it is a coin of full value.

As interesting as the mostly abbreviated wording of the

Maria Theresa Thaler is, and as astonishing as all her titles are, understanding the image and coat of arms that dominates the reverse is arguably more so. The bird on the reverse is a two-headed eagle, in this case either symbolic of the union of Austria and Hungary, or a carry-over from the emblem of the Holy Roman Empire, depending on your source, but it's noteworthy, as there are also double headed eagles in the heraldry of Russia, Albania, and the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Istanbul, to name a few others.

The coat of arms on and above the double headed eagle's breast is a fascinating collection of symbols of different aristocratic houses, including those of Hungary, Burgundy, Bohemia, Burgau, and Austria. By the time this complex symbol was used and associated with Maria Theresa, coats of arms had been in use for centuries, and had developed from devices on shields to symbols of noble houses. In an era in which few could read and write, the coat of arms readily identified a mounted warrior in the field. As a member of one aristocratic house married that of another, the symbols and images were often combined, resulting in more and more complex coats of arms. The arms displayed on the MTT are actually not as intricate as those of the Habsburg family eventually became, but they are usually an eyeful for any collector today.

INTERNATIONAL USE

What really separates the Maria Theresa Thaler from many other large, silver coins of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and even the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is how readily it became accepted internationally as a trade coin.

For centuries prior to Columbus' famous voyage, European silver had been going east in exchange for the goods that were so coveted by the European nobility and rising merchant, middle class. Trade routes had been established, and the goods of the Orient flowed west, while the silver of Europe fueled the commercial centers of the east. By the 1700s, the flow of silver into Europe from Spanish colonies in the New World had become large enough that Europe had regained a significant portion of its economic might.

Recent studies have indicated that New World silver was one of the commodities that had kick started business and trade throughout Europe by about 1600, re-fueling the economic engines of nations.² But the trade routes east were still well known and established, which meant that the Hapsburg Empire, with its Illyrian coastline leading to the eastern Mediterranean, was well situated to continue trade with the peoples of Africa and the Middle East. And that meant a constant supply of Maria Theresa Thalers would always be in demand.

The 1780 date on the MTT is the year in which Empress Maria

Theresa passed away, after a long and quite successful reign. She could not possibly have known how much this single coin, with this single date, would end up being used throughout the entire world, from Africa and Asia, even to the western side of the Atlantic.

THE IMITATORS

As with any "bright idea," success means competition will arise, and it usually will do so very quickly. In the case of the Maria Theresa Thalers, it was the large, silver coins of countries such as Britain, France, and Italy that became its international competition, at least during the nineteenth century. But, in eastern Africa and the Arabian peninsula, the newer coins were never accepted as well and at the same value as those with the Empress' face on them. This became the main reason that Maria Theresa Thalers were copied — or counterfeited, if you will — and minted by several different governments throughout the world.

PROOF ISSUES & MODERN MTTs

Long after the daily use of Maria Thalers as a means of exchange came to an end in most parts of the world, these beautiful coins have still been produced, often in a proof or proof-like condition. Because they are so common, there is no real premium associated with these proof issues, and they pop up at shows throughout the U.S. Often the cost is not much more than that of the silver metal within them.

BUILDING A COLLECTION TODAY

Knowing all this, how does a person collect MTTs, especially since they will all be dated 1780? One convenient technique that won't break a person's budget is to assemble just five pieces, making something of a type set. Here's the five:

First, a circulated example.

There are literally tens of millions of MTTs that have been minted (maybe hundreds of millions), and while quite a few of them have been melted down to make jewelry or other such items, there are still enough circulated pieces that any collector should be able to grab one (or more!) at any decent sized coin show or convention. Shop around a bit, find one with a good look to it, even wear, and attractive surfaces, then see if the dealer is offering it at a price you like.

Second, an MTT bearing a countermark that is some Arabic letter or character. As mentioned, the MTTs were made to trade, and throughout much of the southwest of Asia, silver was and is still used for transactions, for jewelry, and for a wedding dowry. Thus, over the course of the last two centuries, many of these big coins have been counter-stamped with one or more Arabic letters. A dealer might charge more for such a piece, simply because the character is proof of the coin's use in Asia or Africa, but that little bit of extra may very well be worth it. Additionally, such script can make an attractive coin even more so.

Third, an MTT with oriental

chop marks. Since these big, silver disks ended up in coffers throughout the world, it would make a good addition to any collection of them to include one with a chop mark – a counter punch from one of the many banking houses in the big cities of China.

Silver kept the Chinese Empire going through much of the nineteenth century. Large silver coins of all types were chopped. While some collectors consider this damage to a coin, there are some fans who specifically collect coins that bear them. A quick online search will even find an active Chop Mark Collectors Club.³ So, one attractive Maria Theresa Thaler with a well-placed chop on it can become a valuable piece in any collection.

Fourth, an MTT with a single piercing in it. Okay, now it just seems like we are collecting mutilated coins – but don't fret! There's a point to the two countermarks we have just mentioned, and to the holed piece that we are suggesting now. We've already commented that Maria Theresa Thalers were used extensively in southwest Asia, and in eastern Africa, and that they were involved in bride price and dowries. In that part of the world, the bride often wears a great deal of her wealth, which can be in the form of coins turned into necklaces, facial coverings, or other adornments. That in turn often means a small hole right above the empress' royal head. So adding one of these to the basic set of MTTs is not too bad an idea either.

And fifth, a proof-like MTT. Now we're talkin'! Since these coins have been minted by several governments, in several countries, as recently as a decade or so ago, some of them are bound to be out there in mint state condition. Find one! Yes, this may cost a bit more than the other examples we have just listed, but it will be worth it. When every bead on Maria Theresa's brooch is still visible, when every feather of the eagle is still sharp, the Maria Theresa Thaler simply looks gorgeous. Don't miss a chance to acquire one of these, if you can.

EXPANDING A COLLECTION

Beyond this, there are plenty of ways by which you can expand your collection. For example, not all countermarks are created equal. Not all that the untrained eye would call Arabic letters really are either. See what you can learn about each piece with an Arabic-appearing script as soon as you purchase it.

Likewise, there are numerous oriental chop marks. Purchasing an MTT with one clear, bold chop on it might make for an attractive addition to a collection. But there are examples out there that look like they must have been target practice for someone who liked to administer chops. Add a heavily, multiply-chopped example to your collection for a coin that has some serious history to it.

In a similar manner, not all proofs are created equal. Look for the best proofs you can find, those with some true eye appeal. Find

examples that are free of spots, blemishes, or small problems. These are wonderful coins to add to any MTT collection.

A FINAL THOUGHT

The Maria Theresa Thaler may be a one-date coin, but it is certainly not a one-hit wonder. It combines beauty, history, and a store of value in a manner that not many other coins can do. The idea of a collection of MTTs — yes, a collection of the same type of coin with the same date — is perhaps not as farfetched as it first might seem.

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San Francisco Through It's Exonumia: THE U.S. BEER HALL

Jerry F. Schimmel

A simple street sign for an obscure thoroughfare in the Mission District inspires this article. The metal rectangle which is attached to a lamp post carries the same name as the one on several brass tokens I've had for decades.



1.

The obverse of the oldest token (fig.1) reads simply U.S. BEER HALL / (ornament) / JOHN WIESE / N.W. COR. / MISSION & 16 STS. On the reverse is GOOD FOR ONE / ★ 5¢ ★ / DRINK. The diesinker's name is in tiny letters at the bottom under "drink": c.a.klinkner & co. s.f.

The piece is 29 millimeters in diameter and the overall design is quite attractive.

The U.S. Beer Hall series is fairly common, there being more than a half dozen varieties with different designs, some likely produced by other diesinkers. The Klinkner firm began operations in the late 1880s, and sold out to the L.H. Moise Company in 1898. The token shown here was certainly



made before that year, probably 1893-95. In those days a 5¢ drink was equal to a glass of beer or shot of house whisky.

In 1899, the U.S. Beer Hall was formally listed in the city directory:

United States Beer Hall, John Wiese, prop., NE cor. 16th & Mission, billiards, fine wines, liquors & cigars, res. 1944 Mission Street.

The actual street address before 1906 was 3000-16th Street, although a few directory entries erroneously list other numbers.

A second series (fig.2, over) was issued without the U.S. Beer Hall designation with the obverse stating simply: JOHN WIESE / (star &



2.

rays) / N.W. / COR. / MISSION & 16 STS. with a small signature: MOISE & CO. The reverse is identical to the earlier token.

Note that there are different signatures on each side. The token was manufactured by the L.H. Moise Co. which used a reverse die left over from their Klinkner Co. purchase. The approximate date of issue is 1900–1906.

Directories have Wiese at 16th & Mission as early as 1880, with a partner named John Riekels. Riekels, like many saloonkeepers, rose from a checkered career as a beer bottler and earlier as a butcher. Riekels lasted until 1883, and Wiese ran the place by himself from then on. His son, John Jr., took over later in the teens. The census material is rather confusing though. It clearly shows John Jr. born in 1881, here in California. There was a Charles Wiese shown as the German-born parent of John Jr. who must have been the actual John Sr. born in the 1840s and listed on the token.

During the 1906 Earthquake and Fire the bar was totally destroyed. The city's first major holocaust extended west to Dolores Street, north to 13th Street, east to Howard Street and south to 20th, where it burned out. The main part

of town was turned into ashes from Van Ness Avenue to the bay.

The beer hall re-opened by early 1907, a few doors west of Mission at 3016-16th on the northeast corner of Lida Place.

From the evidence in directories it looks as though the "U.S. Beer Hall" title was dropped at this time. However, by 1909, the city was engaged in a wholesale change of street names and addresses. 3016 (used in late 1906) became the present day 3036. The saloon continued until Prohibition in 1920, when Wiese (probably the son) tried converting the bar into a restaurant. This seems to have lasted for about a year before the family gave up the ghost.



3.

A third variety (3) issued after the 1906 Earthquake and Fire shows simply JOHN WIESE / 3032-16TH ST. with a reverse stating GOOD FOR ONE / 5¢ / DRINK. There are several varieties of this token issued about 1908–12.

The telephone directories list the address as 3032-16th Street from 1907 to 1921. However both 3032 and 3036 apparently served the same building.

A remarkable thing happened five years before the restaurant closed. On February 9, 1916, by order of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors (Resolution 12556)

Lida Place was re-named Wiese Street. The following year John Jr. was listed as manager.



4.

Another variety of token was issued only 21mm in diameter (fig.4). The obverse states JOHN WIESE and the reverse 3036-16TH ST. There is no denomination which meant that the piece was used for outgoing public telephone calls. It was probably issued about 1912, when most telephone tokens were issued.

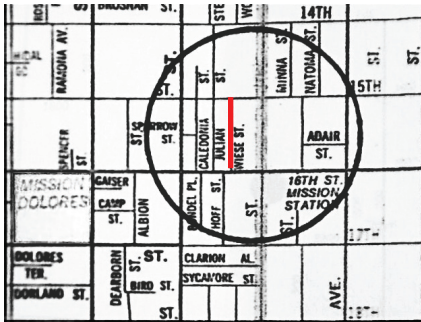


Looking north along Wiese St.

Bay Area Rapid Transit System station. Valencia Street lies west of that with a raft of gentrified coffee houses and shops.

Intervening between Mission and Valencia are four different alleys: Caledonia, Hoff, Rondel and Wiese, and a fifth, Julian, which is officially a residential street, though a small one.

The two sides of 16th between Valencia and Mission offer a serendipity of Mexican grocery stores, at least three Single Resident Occupancy hotels, two banks, a taqueria, two cafeterias, a used book store, a Pakistani restaurant and a Chinese restaurant. Add three drinkeries, all on the south side of 16th. One of them never opens until Happy Hour, and the other two are rather seedy-looking taverns including a Latino drag bar.



Wiese Street in San Francisco is just one block long extending from 15th to 16th streets, north to south. It's not particularly interesting as alleys go, though someone obviously keeps it clean, cleaner than the city keeps 15th or 16th streets, or Mission Street for that matter. A few doors east of Wiese Street lies the major local intersection of 16th and Mission, best known for its large

On the north side of 16th, between Julian and Caledonia, about a half block west of Wiese's post-earthquake site, is an important-looking structure in a rather overwhelming Greco-Roman design. The Mission Bank first opened in 1903, and must have been only lightly damaged in the fire as it re-opened well before December 1906, and operates still through more than a century of management changes. Its first President, later to be Mayor of San Francisco, was James J. "Sunny Jim" Rolph.



5.

A silver-plated brass safety deposit box key tag (5) from said institution is about 26mm in diameter. The obverse shows the bank facade with the legend: THE MISSION BANK 16TH ST. & JULIAN AVE. / - SAN FRANCISCO CAL.—

The reverse reads: KINDLY RETURN TO ADDRESS ON OTHER SIDE (with serial number, and "Whitehead-Hoag" signature).

The rather imposing Greco-Roman facade shown on the disc is replicated by the original which dominates a visual and audible cacophony of vegetable stands, congested traffic, subway plazas, bars, and lunch rooms which occupy the series of semi-blocks between Mission and Valencia streets.



Wiese's post-1906 saloon is now *Taqueria Los Coyotes*. Its colors are a bit garish but in keeping with the colorful Latino atmosphere of the district. For a time during the 1930s and forties the taqueria was called Henry's Dairy Lunch.

While the looks of the taqueria and its adjoining alley are not much, the bank building is worth a stop and a cup of coffee at any of a dozen nearby establishments.

Attempts to learn why Wiese's name was honored with a street sign have proved fruitless. I suspect he was something of a leader and old-timer in the neighborhood so that proposing his name came naturally. Very likely he helped a lot of fire and earthquake victims with food and drink. By 1916, he would have been nearly 80, a good time to retire.

PHOTO CREDITS & SOURCES

Token photos by Dan Hipple
Street photos by Donna Dion
Bank tag photos by Stephen Huston

San Francisco City Directories,
various years
U.S. Census, 1900



