

The Cincinnati Numismatist

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January 2021



The next meeting of the Cincinnati Numismatic Association will be held at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, January 8th. You will be able to attend this meeting from the comfort of your home through the Zoom application. Members will receive an email invitation and meeting password.

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It's All Been Done Before Euros Versus the German Silver 5-Mark Pieces

By Mark Benvenuto

Cincinnati is proud of its Oktoberfest, or at least the folks who participate in it are. We'll not be foolish enough to wade into any arguments about whether folks are more fanatical in Cincy or someplace like Milwaukee or Frankenmuth. That's just a recipe for trouble, pure and simple. But we can make a connection between the Oktoberfests here, and those in Germany, the ones where folks now spend Euros for a good beer. Yes, it's about the coins.



The formation of the Eurozone, or more specifically the idea of the money of the member countries being of equal value anywhere one goes within it, certainly seemed like an amazing development

back when the whole shebang was unveiled twenty years ago. No more converting Deutsche marks to Belgian francs, or Italian lire to Austrian schillings. Nope, one set of Euros would do for all of them. But believe it or not, this had all been done before.

After the death of no less a historic figure than Charlemagne, in 814 – Karl der Grosse to the Germans – there was no Germany at all for over a thousand years. Oh, there were still German-speaking lands,

and plenty of noblemen, and a few noble women, ruling them. But their money systems never really meshed, at least not between countries, principalities, duchies, or other lands that were not nestled right next to each other.

2020-2021 Meetings

Date				Presenter	Date				Presenter
October	9th	Friday	Extended Show & Tell		February	12th	Friday		Open
November	13th	Friday		Open	March	12th	Friday		Open
December	11th	Friday	Annual Christmas meeting and Charity Event		April	17th	??day		Annual Dinner?
January	8th	Friday		Open	May	14th	Friday		Open
					June	??th	Friday		Open

Enter a man who wanted to see a united Germany, a German Empire, and who had the talents to make it happen, Otto von Bismarck. We don't have to be serious students of history to know that he made it all happen in 1871. But what many folks don't realize is that he did it with some masterful compromises, and coinage was one of them. Here's what we mean.

Bismarck and those working with him came up with a standard weight for the coins of this newly forged empire, with the smaller pieces all sporting the same design. All the copper coins, and the silver coins up to the 1-mark pieces, would all have common designs. Collectors of these pieces today know that the eagle on one side did change once, but other than that this is mostly an exercise in collecting dates, and possibly mint marks.

But the silver and the gold is where this grand, political compromise really shines. What king, prince, duke, or other nobleman wants to give away power? Probably none. So, as a nod to their continued authority, the larger silver and gold coins of this new empire would all be of the same weights – same for all 2-mark pieces, for 3-mark pieces, and for the big 5-mark coins – but the obverses would still be that of the ruler of a particular land. The same rule would hold for the gold pieces, the 10-mark and 20-mark gold, which meant a person could now hop on a train up north somewhere, get off down south in Munich, and use the coins from their home locale. Since the 5-mark coins were the silver dollars of their day, these are the coins which provide the biggest canvas upon which a ruler would display his royal noggin. And that makes for a fantastic collecting challenge for us right now.

Even though the pandemic has shut down virtually all of the coin shows of any size, they will come back – and that means we will again be able to visit with and shop among the world coin dealers who do stock the classic, German 5-mark pieces. It can be fun to get a view of several of these “silver dollars” all at once. For those of us wondering where to start, one good spot might be the biggest of the big, Prussia and Bavaria. Both of these lands were big players when the Unification took place, and the kings were recognized figures. Enough of each of them were produced that we might actually consider assembling a date run, one that starts in the 1870's and goes right up

“What king, prince, duke, or other nobleman wants to give away power?”

to the outset of “the war to end all wars.” Checking the eternal swap fest of eBay, some of the Prussian pieces are available in AU grades for as little as \$50. That's not bad.

Much like Prussia, the 5-mark pieces of Bavaria are fairly common. And much like any big, silver coin today, high grade, mint state specimens tend to be rather costly. But the just-mentioned \$50 price tag is not impossible for one of these, if we can tolerate a bit of wear.

While the 5-mark pieces of the bigger kingdoms are fairly easy to come by, the bigger challenge and the more intense hunt might be to find 5-mark silver pieces from the lesser-known royal houses. We can all be forgiven for having to use a map to find such places as Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, or Saxe-Meiningen, but they did issue 5-mark coins, among others. Agreed, these will tend to cost more; but that is simply because less of them were ever made. On top of this, or perhaps along side it, two interesting additions might be 5-mark silver from the free cities of Hamburg and Bremen. Both of these municipalities got the title “Free City” from a Holy Roman Emperor, and thus were not gobbled up by some neighboring land. Their coins are not exactly rare, but do tend to carry price tags in the hundreds of dollars. Still, adding these pieces to a collection, the only ones without some royal face on the obverse, would be quite the feat.



**German States Bavaria
5 Mark 1876D KM# 896**



**German States Prussia
5 Mark 1875B KM# 503**

The entire idea of a unified coinage system for a large, German Empire located smack dab in the middle of Europe came crashing down in 1918, with the surrender of the Central Powers. And it would be almost a century until the current coinage of a unified chunk of Europe would come into existence. We'll admit that it is indeed a lot of fun to collect 5-Euro circulating coins from all the nations currently issuing them. But it is also interesting to know and see that, yes, this has all been done before.

Modern Hobo Nickel Engraver is Russian

By Richard Giedroyc

Coins have been altered for satirical or political reasons since at least the mid-18th century. Seated Liberty silver dollars are occasionally encountered on which Lady Liberty appears to be sitting on a chamber pot. Other coins from the same period may have become the host for love tokens.

By the early 20th century, Hobo nickels made using an Indian Head nickel as the host coin were in vogue. The value collectors place on these nickels depends on the quality of the artwork and in some instances if the artist can be identified. The most famous of

with changeable faces, his work often features clever, integrated mechanism that allow parts of the metal designs to move.”

The online posting continues, “Booteen’s latest piece is no exception—it features a central golden heart that actually beats. With anatomically correct proportions and intricately carved veins, Booteen’s heart-themed coin is already impressive as an unmoving sculpture. However, once the user starts turning the small cog at the bottom of the one dollar coin, the metal components come to life, mimicking a real heart beat.”



Russian artist Roman Butin carves coins in the “Hobo Nickel” style

these artists were Bertram “Bert” Wiegand and his student George “Bo” Washington Hughes.

Hobo nickels and other altered coins are still produced today, most of the more modern examples being made by machine rather than being engraved by hand.

Bert and Bo may be gone, but the name Roman Butin (Booteen in English) is increasingly appearing on coins more recently redesigned in the same spirit. According to an October 21, 2019 MyModernMet.com posting: “Hobo nickel is a term used to describe the 18th century sculptural art form of hand-engraving coins, resulting in miniature bas-relief sculptures that you can hold in the palm of your hand. While the ancient art is rarely practiced today, Russian artist Roman Booteen keeps the craft alive with his extraordinary coin carving designs. From a Gold Bug coin with mechanical wings to a coin

“Booteen’s latest piece is no exception—it features a central golden heart that actually beats”

Another web site adds, “His carvings include pop culture figures, and he often plays with exaggerating and softening the facial features of his characters giving them a real sense of personality.”

Booteen’s own web site, BooteenCoins.com posts, “Based in Russia, rising star Roman Booteen (spelled Butin) maintains a mysterious level of abnormality, while producing hobo nickel creations that regularly shock the coin collecting community with both their subject matter and complexity. His carvings include pop star figures, and he often plays with exaggerating and softening the facial features of his characters.”

Booteen added a post on February 3, 2020 reading, “Do I sell? Of course I sell my work. All my work is sold, including the lighters and all coins. Everything you see has been sold and is long gone. There is no secrecy about this.”

Booteen’s work can be seen by surfing the Internet. He has used Mexican coins, US nickels, half dollars, and particularly Morgan silver dollars as hosts for his work. I purchased a Booteen enhanced silver dollar for

\$19.90 from the online business Great Potatoes in California. I was surprised when the host turned out to be an 1878-CC Morgan dollar in what I would consider to be cleaned About Uncirculated.

One Carson City silver dollar could be an accident, assuming Booteen's supplier isn't familiar with US coins. Two makes it questionable if Booteen's host coins are genuine.

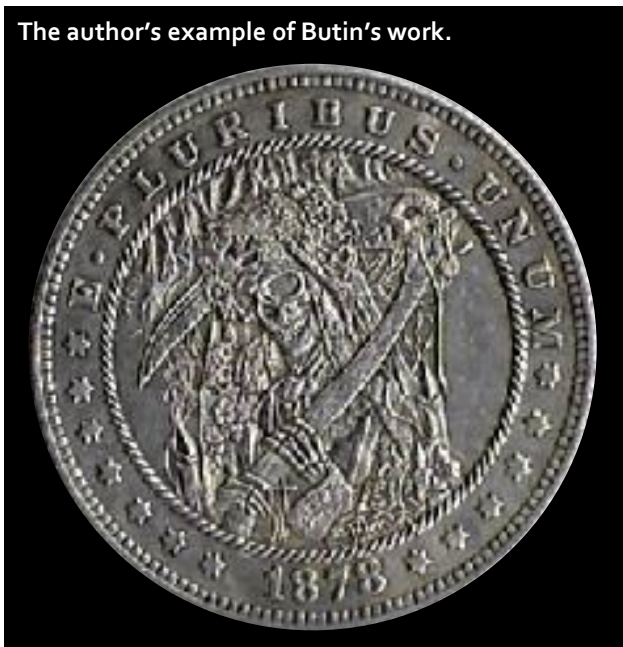


Obverse and reverse of a Morgan Dollar carved with a grim reaper design by Roman Butin.



Further research found that most of Booteen's work illustrated online use 1921 Morgan silver dollars, however I did find another 1878-CC with the obverse engraved into a skull being offered for \$29.75 by TheCoinPeso.com.

The author's example of Butin's work.



TheCoinPeso.com for example has acknowledged it is an 1878-CC silver dollar, however the web site describes what it calls the material (the coin's composition) as being "metal" rather than as silver. My coin weighs 24.6 grams. An unaltered Morgan silver dollar is supposed to weigh 26.73 grams. My example is therefore underweight, but could this be because the coin has been altered?

There is no question Booteen's work shows great craftsmanship. One of his unique Hobo silver dollars sold in 2017 for more than \$10,000, according to Dangerous-Minds.net. My question is if all of the coins he is using to engrave his work are genuine. If the host coin is bogus, someone did a great job of counterfeiting it. The authenticity of the host coin had yet to be determined at the time this article is being written.

Calumet Farm Bottle Engraved for Auction

For the benefit of the Cincinnati Ronald McDonald House

The bottle of Bourbon in the photos below was donated by a member of the club. "90th Anniversary" has been engraved and colored in gold on the bottom front of the bottle. The back of the bottle is engraved with the club logo that was first used on polo shirts worn by volunteer club members who worked the Central

States Numismatic Society Convention when it was held in Cincinnati in 2009. Bids are being accepted by email to cincycoins@gmail.com and the bidding will continue and close during the January 8th zoom meeting. A bottle like this sells for \$80 to \$100 but this one is priceless.



Club News

Many local and national coin shows have been cancelled. Check the show schedule on page eight.

The next meeting is on Friday January 8th. During the meeting the auction of the engraved bottle of Bourbon will close. See page five for more details.



Dues notices for 2021 were sent with the newsletter a couple of months ago. Memberships that were

not renewed by January 1st are now lapsed.

You can save time and postage by paying for multiple years of dues in advance or you can convert to a life membership for \$175 and never have to pay dues again!

Members can purchase copper examples of the 90th-Anniversary medal for \$10 each including postage. Send a check for \$10 for each medal to:

Dave Heinrich/CNA
P. O. Box 446
Miamitown, OH 45041

Checks and money orders should be made out to the Cincinnati Numismatic Association.

We don't know when we will be able to have in-person meetings again but the current schedule assumes that by December we will have our Christmas dinner and

charity auction back in our downtown location.

Our hope is that we will be able to resume in-person meetings sometime before December. If we can, we should make that first meeting a celebration. Do you have an idea of how we should mark the occasion? Bring it up in a zoom meeting or send an email to cincycoins@gmail.com.

If you accepted the challenge of writing an article for the newsletter by taking a challenge envelope and are having difficulty identifying the item or researching it, don't hesitate to ask for some help. Send an email to the editor, David Heinrich, and he will assist you.

Free Coins, Medals, Tokens, Banknotes...

You can add a free numismatic item to your collection. Sealed envelopes containing a coin, medal, token or banknote will be available for the taking. All you have to do is agree to write an article for the newsletter about the item you receive. All of the pieces have been photographed so you can include photos in your article.

Included with your mystery item will be an information sheet that includes the item's weight and diameter or in the case of a banknote the width and height and the item's photo identification numbers.

As an added incentive, one or two of the items will have some intrinsic value. That's right, there will be a little bit of treasure "buried" in among the plain brown envelopes.

Will you be brave enough to take the challenge? What will you learn? What will you add to your collection, a foreign coin, a medal commemorating a historical event, a banknote from a far away land or time?

There is no specific length required for your article, it just needs to be long enough to tell the story.

If you would like to participate send an email to cincycoins@gmail.com and one will be mailed to you. All envelopes are unmarked and sealed ahead of time as a group so no one knows what's inside.

The program has resulted in multiple articles for our readers to enjoy,



Watch for articles to appear in future issues of the newsletter. Why not give it a try?

Membership Application

Pass this Membership Application on to a friend!

Since 1930, the Cincinnati Numismatic Association has been the gathering organization for coin collectors and other numismatic related specialists in the Cincinnati area. Its purpose has remained the same, to foster knowledge of numismatics and a fraternal spirit among those who pursue the study of coins, currency, tokens, medals, and exonomia.

The organization meets once a month, on the second Friday at 7:30 pm. The meeting location is at Coins +, 225 East 6th Street, in downtown Cincinnati on an upper floor of the building.

Our meetings consist of numismatic presentations given by numismatists from among our membership and from other experts in their fields from around the country. Show and tell and light refreshments are also part of our meetings.

We have a group dinner held at a local restaurant every April. December marks our annual Christmas dinner meeting and charity auction benefiting local children's charities.

Club dues for adults are \$10 annually. Dues for Juniors are just \$3 a year. This is certainly one of

the best values in numismatics.

Membership in the Cincinnati Numismatic Association includes a subscription to its monthly publication, The Cincinnati Numismatist. In 2006, 2007, 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 the publication received first place in the ANA's competition for Outstanding Local Numismatic Publication.

The Cincinnati Numismatic Association has its roots in its long history, but strives to serve the needs of the collectors of the future. Give us a try!

I hereby make application for membership in the CNA and agree to abide by the constitution and bylaws of the said association.

☐ 3 year membership (\$29)

☐ Life membership (\$175)

☐ 1 year membership (\$10)

☐ 1 year Junior member (\$3)

Print Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____ (home)

_____ (work/cell)

Email: _____

Signature: _____

Sponsor (optional): _____

Signature: _____

(DO NOT FILL OUT THE FOLLOWING LINES)

Member Number: _____ Date Paid: _____

BOG Approval: _____ BOG Approval: _____

Make checks payable to the Cincinnati Numismatic Association.

Mail application and payment to: CNA, PO Box 446, Miamitown, OH 45041

CINCINNATI NUMISMATIC ASSOCIATION

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The Cincinnati Numismatic Association was founded in August of 1930 and consisted of thirty-five members including numismatic notables such as B. Max Mehl and Farran Zerbe. The first CNA President was Herbert A. Brand. The CNA was founded for the purpose of hosting the 1931 American Numismatic Association convention. Since then, the CNA has hosted the ANA convention three times, in 1942, 1980, and 1988. The CNA also hosted the 1998 ANA Spring show.



The Cincinnati Numismatist
is an ANA award-winning publication

Numystery

By: Colonel Green

This month's Numystery:

The American Numismatic Association was founded in what year?

Numystery answer:

The American Numismatic Association was founded in 1891 by Dr. George Francis Heath

Coin Show Schedule

Monthly

Cincinnati Greenhills Classic Coin, Currency, Stamp, Jewelry & Watch Show, American Legion Hall, 11100 Winton Rd, Cinti, OH
Last Sunday, 10:00 am - 3:30 pm
numismaniaofohio@gmail.com

Monthly

Columbus Coin, Stamp & Card Show, Makoy Center, 5462 Center St., Hilliard, OH 10 am - 4 pm
Third Sunday, over 18 \$2 admission
drich@columbus.rr.com

Editor's Note

This schedule was accurate at the time of printing but as you know things are changing on a daily basis.

January 7th-10th

The 66th annual FUN Convention will be at the Orange County Convention Center, 9800 International Dr., Orlando FL 32819, North/South Bldg Hall SB, Orlando, Florida. The show in January is renowned for being the bellwether event on the numismatic calendar. With over 1500 dealers, Heritage Auctions, exhibitors and over 10,000+ of the most avid collectors, the FUN show kicks off the year on a high note. Make your plans early to attend this monumental numismatic event! More information at www.funtopics.

January 8th-17th

The 49th Annual NYINC will be held at the Grand Hyatt Hotel, located at 109 East 42nd Street, New York, NY 10022, between Park and Lexington Avenues. The Grand Hyatt also enjoys a direct indoor connection to Grand Central Station, the terminal point for commuter lines of the Metro North System. Our dates will be Friday, Jan-

uary 8, 2021 through Sunday, January 17, 2021, with bourse activities taking place Friday-Sunday, January 8-17, 2021. 115 Dealers all world and ancient numismatic bourse area, Public admission is \$20 for a three day pass valid throughout the event. Children 16 and under with an adult are admitted free of charge.

Want To Be Published?

If you have an article that you would like to have published in the newsletter, **PLEASE** mail it to; C.N.A., PO Box 446, Miamitown OH, 45041 or email to cincycoins@gmail.com