



A.N.A. 28457

January, 1994 — Newsletter

P.O. Box 561

South Elgin, Illinois 60177

I.N.A. 1299

January Meeting

Meeting: 7:30pm
Trading: 7:00-7:30pm
Location: VFW Post 1307
1601 Weld Road
Elgin, IL 888-9809

Prizes

Regular Member: 10¢ 1936 NGC MS-65
Junior Member: 10¢ 1958 NGC MS-67
Raffle Prizes: 1783 Nova Constellatio
copper
1¢ 1802
1¢ 1813
25¢ 1876
and more...

Door Prizes: Come and see...

Bring a new member or guest!

January Agenda

The January meeting will include a video on collecting colonial currency along with real examples.

If you bring items to be sold at auction, we'll have an auction.

We will also be collecting club dues (They're due by the end of February—they tell me you do not get March's newsletter if you are not paid up).

Collectors Corner

In connection with January's meeting we are going to have a "Collectors Corner," a sharing of the little things of collecting we all like. Bring in something interesting to you—it'll surely interest several of the rest of us too. When you come in put the item on the "Collector's Corner" table in the front for everyone to look at (unless you feel ill at ease with that). Then during the meeting each one who has brought something in can get up and talk about the item(s) for a few minutes—share your interests. I've been to other clubs where this is done every month by several members. I've learned a lot about things I'd never thought of looking at (Some call it "show and tell."). It's always fun. Let's try it.

December Minutes

The 432nd meeting of the Elgin Coin Club was called to order at 8:05pm at VFW Post 1308. Twenty five regular members and no guests were present.

The secretary and treasurer gave their reports. Both were accepted without amendments. The balance in the treasury was about \$1,800.

Under new business:

- The members elected the following officers:

President — Doug Nelson
Vice President — Harold Hunt
Treasurer — Joe Cerny
Secretary — Mike Metras

- The members approved two changes in the by-laws:

Nominations for officers will begin in October from now forward.

The officers terms will now be staggered and for two years: the president and secretary one year and the vice-president and treasurer the next. This will begin next year with the change of the president and secretary.

After new business, the door prizes were awarded and followed by a special Christmas drawing. Many members benefited.

We took a break to eat Christmas cake sell raffle tickets that netted \$116. This was followed by the raffle and membership drawings.

Outgoing secretary David Jones presented Outgoing president Doug Nelson with the traditional Past President's medal.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15.

Presented by Mike Metras, Secretary, as recorded by outgoing secretary Dave Jones.

The new officers thank you for putting your trust in us. We'll try to serve you well. Help us have fun together. Thanks also to all former officers for their efforts at making the Elgin Coin Club successful.

Winter Buffet

Before the December meeting, several members and guests enjoyed a fine ham and roast beef buffet. Thanks to Hank and the VFW crew who prepared and served it and to Charles Lindman for setting it up and making it happen.

Dues and Fees

This is a reminder for those of us who can never remember membership dues and auction fees.

Dues

Membership dues in the Elgin Coin Club, payable before the end of February each year, are:

- \$15 for the first adult and \$7.50 for each adult after the first
- \$5 for junior members (YNs) under 18.

Auction Fees

The Club gets 5% of the sale ("hammer") price of all items sold at club auctions unless other rules are explicitly stated before the auction.

Newsletter Changes

As I begin my tenure as secretary of the Elgin Coin Club, I agreed to expand the monthly newsletter into something more than an announcement of the past and coming meetings. You are looking at the beginnings of this changes. The things that used to be in the newsletter are still here. If something is missing, tell me so I do not do it again.

These changes include:

- The previous month's minutes.
- If it is feasible and acceptable to the members, some of us would like to include a small "Items Wanted" classified ad feature (free?).
- The former could be expanded to "For sale" items (free?)(how many per member?).
- At least one feature article a month—a page or two long. I've included one of my own this month. I need help from you all for this one. Please give me anything you'd like included. You can keep all rights. There is no reason for the club to hold the copyright. We'd just like to print it once in the newsletter. I'll mark it with your copyright if you'd like that.

- The “Dealer of the Month” feature along with the dealer cards will continue.
- If you have any special announcement for the membership (or a significant part of the membership) you want to include in this letter, get it to me at the regular meeting or to the club post office box before the board meeting two weeks later and I'll get it into the next month's newsletter.

If you have any other ideas on how to make this a better tool to help all of us enjoy any and all aspects of numismatics better, bring it up at the meeting. I'm willing to put in the effort to make it happen and I have the tools to product an expanded format.

New Name

With these changes to the newsletter, what do you think about a change in name from “newsletter” to something declaring its expanded function? Subject to your OK at the club meeting, I'd like to open a contest for a new name for the newsletter.

Feature

With all the above now presented to you, here is the first in what I hope will be a series of articles contributed by all of us.

A Visit to the Denver Mint

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On Tuesday afternoon at the ANA summer seminar in July, 1993, classes were off a tour the Denver mint. Supervisory personnel took groups of 5 to 7 around the floor among the machines where we saw every operation in detail.

The tour opened my eyes to how errors occur. Speed is the biggest culprit. Speed is of essence when making a totally incomprehensible 5 to 7 billion coins a year, millions a day. Our guide, a press room supervisor, said he tells his friends he makes “a million and a half dollars a day, but I have to leave it at work.” He's been there for 30 years.

The coins are punched from sheets, heated in an annealing furnace, have their edges rolled up, and then

are struck on the press into whatever they are supposed to be.

The raw blanks, freshly punched out of the rolled metal sheets, are crude with uneven surfaces and a lot of scratches. They looked like punchouts from electrical boxes without the bulging clip that is always on the electrical variety.

Once punched, the blanks go into a big furnace where they are heated and softened and then cooled and cleaned. The process presents little to look at, other than a 25-foot drum slowly turning and giving off heat. At the far end of the drum, a pool of water receives the blanks. This is annealing.

The blanks move down a conveyor to machines that roll up their edges to give them their familiar rim. The blanks are fed down a tube into an area between a thick plate (a big flat cylinder) and an exterior wall. The plate is rotating and the wall stationary. The blank rolls along between the wall and the plate through an increasingly smaller area that squeezes up the rim.

Conveyors of little buckets carried the blanks off to be struck into coins. The most impressive coining press is a new German type with a single die that stamps out 700 to 750 coins a minute. It works so quickly that it looks like it is just vibrating. It's hard to realize that these machines can again and again so quickly develop the 150 to 200 thousand pounds of pressure required to strike a coin, drop it, and strike another. Another press has two or four dies allowing it to make up to 800 coins a minute, four at a time. 200 punches a minute is still impressive.

Operators check the coins with a magnifier at the beginning of the shift and every ten minutes or so during general operations. At 700 coins a minute a one would think a lot of errors could happen in that ten minutes between checks. Most of the new coins looked beautifully uncirculated. But some had shiny flat scratch marks that I had often thought probably were from the mint. Our guide said they were from fingers that eject the coins after they are struck. Other marks clearly are from the original blanks when the striking does not use enough pressure to flow the metal into all crevices of the die.

Was there noise? No more than you'd expect in a building of punch presses and stamping machines. You bet it was noisy! We wore ear plugs and all workers had big ear muffs. We came in during the break between shifts when it was fairly quiet and didn't need the plugs. Once the machines started, we did.

A special machine separates out error coins. It has a couple shaking grids, medal plates with coin-sized holes. Good coins poured on the top grid sift through holes the size of the coin being sorted while oversized and large odd-sized ones stay on the top to be checked and shunted back to be remelted. The lower grid is just a bit smaller than the standard coin so the standard coins stay put while the undersized pieces fall through where they, too, are sent back to the melting pot. Only coins in the middle continue on to be counted.

We got to stick our hands into several pots of coins just coming off the press.

In a corner of the basement they were making the WWII commemorative silver dollar. Big presses were slowly *double striking uncirculated coins*. They inspected each coin individually and counted rejects closely (two guards helped!). I was surprised to see them double striking uncirculated coins, something supposedly reserved only for proof coins. Well, that is why we took the this tour, to learn about the *real* processes.

The last stop was the counting room where machines count and weigh the coins before they are bagged. Most are sewed into bags though some are put into bins. I saw pennies being counted into a 3x3x2-foot steel box.

Finally it was us getting the lookover. Security took us through a metal detector so sensitive that we had to remove our belts, keys, and shoes. Some went through again, and again, and again. ...and a couple told me they were missed all together. Good old government efficiency.

In the sales room after the tour, I met Barbara McTurk, the outgoing mint director, a Bush appointee. I overheard her tell another person, "This is my parting gift to the people of the ANA." What a gift, to walk the mint floor. The group that afternoon and a group from the minting seminar the day before were the first visitors allowed to walk the floor in 17 years. Everyone else stays inside glassed-in catwalks high above the machines. That Friday, July 23, was Barbara's last day as mint director. Thanks, Barbara. What a day! What a visit!

Final impressions: It's a big factory producing millions of the little metal disks we choose to accept as a medium of exchange. It was noisy, busy, dirty, efficient, and matter-of-fact. People were doing their everyday job, just like the rest of us. It's just the nature of their product that gives the place a bit of a mystique.

A Parting Thought on the ANA Summer Seminar

The last hours of the last day of my class on Ancients brought coins of the ages through my fingers. I remember holding a fat lion and bull electrum (a natural gold-silver alloy) piece of Lydia thinking about who had made it, who had used it, who had buried it for safe keeping (2600 years ago!) only never to have retrieved it again, who had found it, and how had it got to the ANA museum. Quite an experience, an experience repeated again and again for the few hundred very old coins that passed through my hands that afternoon. I can still see and feel the pulse of that smooth, gold bullet with a bull and a lion squashed into it so long ago by the swing of some strong man's hammer.

What a week of discovery!

Respectfully,

Mike Metras, Secretary