

Cumberland Coins

The Volunteer Coin Club Newsletter

December, 2011

Next Meeting

Our December meeting will be held next Tuesday, the 13th at 6:30 pm. We meet at the 127 Senior Center on Highway 127 (Main Street) South of town. Doors open at 6:00.

I'm not sure what our program will be this month, but there are rumors that Santa may be in the area. We will also have our normal business meeting, show and tell, the raffle, and the auction.

Coins For Sale

I have heard from two people about coins they would like to sell. The first is Joe Stammen (931-484-4106). He has mint sets from 1976 to 1987, proof sets from 1973 to 1988, books by year of nickels, dimes and Standing Liberty halves, and a few miscellaneous other items.

Hearl Hollars (931)-459-2370) has rolls and sets of States quarters and miscellaneous other items to sell.

Call either gentleman for more details on what they have.

Coin Lore

A Survivor of the San Francisco Earthquake ?

By Bill Groom

At 5:12 a.m. on Wednesday, April 18, 1906, a major earthquake struck San Francisco. The magnitude of the earthquake was estimated to have had a magnitude from 7.7 to as high as 8.25. The earth ruptured in a south-north direction for almost 300 miles along an area known as the San Andreas Fault. Tremors were experienced from Los Angeles to Oregon and inland to Nevada. This earthquake is remembered as one of the worst natural disasters in the history of the United States. The death toll from the earthquake and resulting fire, estimated to be above 3,000, being the greatest loss of life from a natural disaster in California's history. The economic impact has been compared with the more recent consequences of Hurricane Katrina.



At the time, 375 deaths were reported. This figure was fabricated by government officials who felt that reporting the true death toll would hurt real estate prices and efforts to rebuild the city. Hundreds of casualties in Chinatown were ignored and unrecorded. This figure is still uncertain today, estimated to be roughly 3,000 at minimum.

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Due to widespread practice by insurers to indemnify San Francisco properties from fire, excluding the earthquake damage, most of the destruction in the city was simply blamed on the fires. Some property owners deliberately set fire to damaged properties, in order to claim them on their insurance. Many water mains had been damaged by the quake, and this complication added to the inability of firemen to contain the growing blaze.

As damaging as the earthquake and its aftershocks were, the fires that burned out of control afterward were even more destructive. It has been estimated that up to 90% of the total destruction was the result of the subsequent fires. Over 30 fires, caused by ruptured gas mains, destroyed approximately 25,000 buildings on 490 city blocks. Worst of all, many were started when firefighters, untrained in the use of dynamite, attempted to demolish buildings in order to create firebreaks, which resulted in the destruction of more than half of the buildings that would have otherwise survived. The city's Fire Chief, Dennis T. Sullivan, who would have been responsible, had died in the initial quake. The dynamited buildings themselves often caught fire. In all, the fires burned for four days and nights.

The San Francisco Mint is a branch of the U.S. Mint. Upon the recommendation of President Millard Fillmore in 1850 and receiving congressional approval in 1852, it was opened in 1854 to serve the gold mines of the California gold rush. By December of that first year, it had produced over four million dollars in gold pieces! It quickly outgrew its first building and moved into a new one, resembling an ancient Greek temple, in 1874. This building became affectionately known *The Granite Lady*. As the earthquake had destroyed the local gas works, production that year was temporarily halted. It was one of the few that survived the great 1906 earthquake. It served until 1937, when the present facility was opened.

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Built in 1874, the San Francisco Mint Building survived the 1906 earthquake. Its artesian well water system intact, homeless, quake survivors took refuge in a makeshift village, surrounding the building. Superintendent Frank Leach had pipes installed to supply the refugees with fresh water.

Like the Granite Lady, another survivor, perhaps ...

Certain dated coins give collectors pause to ponder prior events. Coins dated 1861 are reminiscent of the outbreak of the Civil War, the firing upon Fort Sumter. Issues of 1892 may cause us to reflect upon the Columbian Exposition, celebrating the 500th anniversary of Columbus's voyage to the then New World. Coins dated 1909 will easily remind us collectors of the introduction of the Lincoln Cent. Then too, what collector doesn't appreciate owning a year set of coins, celebrating his/her birth, graduation or some other, personal event?



The San Francisco Mint produced 1,740,154 halves in 1906 in addition to other denominations. Note the S mintmark, S for San Francisco, below the eagle's tail feathers on the above half dollar.

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Might the above, 1906-S half dollar, that year newly minted, have been in someone's pocket during the quake? Had it perhaps escaped the city beforehand? Or, was it minted after the quake, when the mint resumed production? Regardless, it's surely telling us a story about a significant event. It has many other stories to tell if we ask the questions and seek the answers. What of its metal content? What about its design? What might a half dollar have bought in 1906? What are the symbols of this design telling us?

Much of the information in this article was found online at Wikipedia and a few other websites. There's a wealth of historical information about coins, awaiting our discovery. Don't have a computer with online access? Check out an area library. Learn about doing *Google* searches. It's easier than you think, and knowledgeable folks, mostly under age eighteen, are always eager to help a newbie! This will make your coins come alive ...

COINfucious Says: *"Coins are nothing to be sneezed at ... or, sneezed on!"*

Area Coin Shows

December 9-10, 2011 **Gallatin Coin & Currency Show**, Civic Center, 210 Albert Gallatin Ave.

February 3-4, 2012 **Knoxville 48th Annual Coin Show**, Rothchild Conference Center, 8807 Kingston Pike (I-40 exit #378)

March 2-4, 2012 **Chattanooga, [Tennessee State Numismatic Society \(TSNS\)](http://www.tsns.org) Spring Coin Show**.
Camp Jordan Arena, I-75, Exit 1

For more information on any of these shows see <http://www.tsns.org/Tennessee Club Shows.html>

This Month's Raffle Prizes

		Est. Grade
1841	Liberty Seated Dime	VF
1944-D	Mercury Dime	MS-63+
2-2004-S + 1990-S	3 Jefferson Nickels	Proof
1976-S	Washington Silver Quarter	MS-63+
4 Proof Coins from 40 years ago.		Proof

The Door Prize will be the 1906-S Barber Half pictured in the article above.