

Cumberland Coins

The Volunteer Coin Club Newsletter

February, 2012

Next Meeting

Our February meeting will be held next Tuesday, the 14th at 6:30 pm. We meet at the 127 Senior Center on Highway 127 (Main Street) South of town. Doors open at 6:00.

Our annual election of officers is scheduled to be held at the March meeting. We will have to select a nominating committee this month. Because we have a number of new members, I'd like to have everyone introduce themselves and tell us a little about what areas of numismatics particularly interests them. This will be our educational segment. We will also have our normal business meeting, show and tell, the raffle, and the auction.

Your membership dues are also due in March. I'm sure Mike Swanson will be glad to start taking your 2012 dues early.

Coin Lore

One of the World's Largest Silver Coins

by Bill Snyder



In the early 1600's, the King of Spain ordered his Segovia Mint see how large a coin their new Water-powered coin presses could strike. The answer turned out to be the big 72 mm, 168 gram 50 Reales. (Larger than that, the planchets tended to crack). He, and later his son, had a few of these pieces struck

Legend has it that the King impressed some high-ranking visitors from England by handing some of these massive pieces to them and asking to throw them from the balcony to the cheering crowd. (The legend also said that the thrifty King had his own courtiers at the front, waiting to catch the coins and later return them).

Very few of these coins have survived. One in just a VF sold in 2008 for \$57,500.

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A better one (shown here) has been owned by the British Museum since 1847 -



Notes - This is what the British Museum site says -

“Silver 50 reales of Philip III of Spain

Segovia, Spain, AD 1618

A large silver showpiece

The 8 reales coin, or 'piece of eight', was the normal high denomination silver coin of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spain. It also had an international role, as a currency used across the world in trade. However, on a few occasions in the early seventeenth century, the Spanish kings had made an enormous silver coin, with a face value of 50 reales. The design is exactly that used on the smaller silver denominations, with the crowned Habsburg coat of arms on the front and the castle and lion symbols of the Spanish kingdoms of Castile and Leon between the arms of a cross on the back.

The 50 reales coins were struck at the Segovia mint, which employed mechanized coin-presses driven by water-wheels on the River Eresma: the traditional hand held hammer method of coin-making would have been hard put to impress such huge pieces. The 50 reales coins were made in only a few years, and not in vast quantities. They were clearly not practical as daily currency; they fitted poorly into a silver currency based around the 8 reales piece, and even as a way of storing wealth, it would be have been much easier to use gold coin. It is likely that they were created primarily to show off the Segovia presses, and perhaps to be used a presentation coins, given out by the king and other senior figures to mark a prestigious occasion.

*J.C. Cayon and C. Castan, *Las monedas Españolas: reyes C* (Madrid, 1974), B.J. Cook; 'Showpieces: medallic coins in early modern Europe', *The Medal*-4, 26 (1995)”*

Also, please also note that the coin beside the Peace Dollar, shown at the beginning of this article, is a 20th century pure silver restrike.

COINfucious Says: *"When studying coins on rainy day, be sure to open umbrella!"*

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Area Coin Shows

- March 2-4, 2012 **Chattanooga, [Tennessee State Numismatic Society \(TSNS\)](#) Spring Coin Show.**
Camp Jordan Arena, I-75, Exit 1
- March 10, 2011 **Knoxville Coin Show**, Rothchild Conference Center, 8807 Kingston Pike
(I-40 exit #378)
- April 7, 2011 **Knoxville Coin Show**, Rothchild Conference Center, 8807 Kingston Pike
(I-40 exit #378)
- May 5, 2011 **Knoxville Coin Show**, Rothchild Conference Center, 8807 Kingston Pike
(I-40 exit #378)
- May ??, 2011 **Gallatin Coin & Currency Show**, Civic Center, 210 Albert Gallatin Ave.

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

This Month's Raffle Prizes

| | | Est. Grade |
|----------|------------------|------------|
| 1909 VDB | Lincoln Cent | VF-EF |
| 1909 | Indian Cent | VG |
| 1938-D | Jefferson Nickel | BU |
| 1938-D | Buffalo Nickel | AU |
| 1896 | Barber Half | G |

The Door Prize will be a Proof 1962 Washington Quarter.