



L. W. HOFFECKER  
President of the A. N. A. 1939-1941.

# Go tell it on the Franklin Mountains ...

## L.W. HOFFECKER IS REBORN!

PART 3 OF 4

### INTRODUCTION

In 1949, the San Francisco Mint was ground zero for one of the most peculiar eyewitness accounts in contemporary numismatic history. During the 58th American Numismatic Convention, an event sponsored by the American Numismatic Association (ANA), a select group of coin enthusiasts, including Lyman William Hoffeecker (1868-1955), were invited to tour the San Francisco Mint. At some point during the U.S. Mint tour, Hoffeecker was shown a backdated Mexican silver coin that (according to official U.S. Mint records) should not have existed. Astonished by this news, Hoffeecker would document his personal experience and submit it for numismatic publication.

Unfortunately, someone with significant influence over the press prevented that article from ever being published. After many failed attempts to report the striking of Mexican silver coins inside the San Francisco Mint and vindicate his experience, L.W. Hoffeecker would eventually drop the matter altogether. Sadly, six years after the San Francisco incident, Hoffeecker would die having believed that his good name had been tarnished for telling the truth. To this very day, L.W. Hoffeecker's personal account has never been published, nor has he ever received any credit for his discovery. In 1968, thirteen years after his death, a curious article would surface describing the minting of Mexican silver coins at the San Francisco Mint. The author in question? Someone whom L.W. Hoffeecker had thought responsible for the censorship of his original report.

By publishing never-before-seen documents, Part 3 of the "Go Tell it on the Franklin Mountains..." series will give credit to L.W. Hoffeecker's personal account inside the San Francisco Mint and expose the unfairness he experienced

### BY JASON ELWELL

in his last years (an indignity that still endures). To support Hoffeecker's own statements, additional evidence found in U.S. Mint reports, numismatic books, and related articles will be presented. Recognized and respected by the numismatic community, these peer-reviewed sources will serve well in vindicating his experience inside the San Francisco Mint.

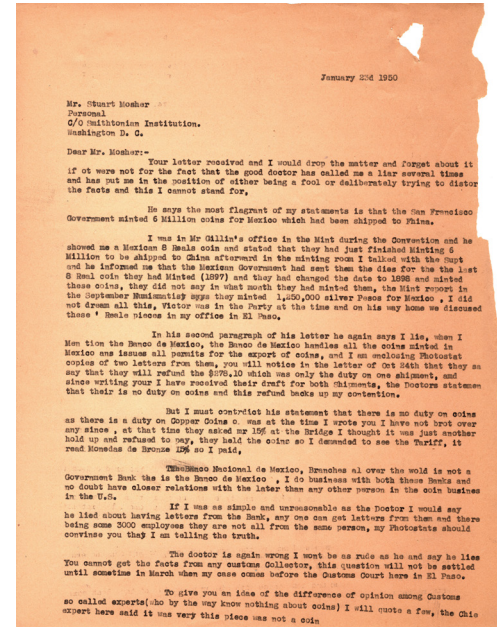
While initial reports documenting this incident have remained hidden from the public for the better part of 77 years, it's this author's hope that L.W. Hoffeecker's truth will finally be known.

"A MAN MAY DIE, NATIONS MAY RISE AND FALL, BUT AN IDEA LIVES ON." - JOHN F. KENNEDY

### THE SAN FRANCISCO MINT OR BUST

To coincide with the centennial of the famous 1849 California Gold Rush, the American Numismatic Association would host its 58th consecutive convention in the city of San Francisco. Patrons of the four day event, held Aug. 21-24, 1949, could buy and sell coins, listen to numismatic lectures, enter and view competitive exhibits, enjoy a ladies' fashion show (which included Chinese gowns modeled by ladies of the ANA), purchase commemorative event medals, or even take a tour of the San Francisco Mint. As this convention was one of the largest recorded events in ANA history, notable numismatists such as Dr. Alberto Francisco Pradeau of La Crescenta, CA, and L.W. Hoffeecker of El Paso, TX, were among those in attendance.

For those unfamiliar with these names, Dr. Alberto Francisco Pradeau (1894-1980) is regarded as one of the most influential authors in Latin American numismatics. In 1949, he served as part



Letter from L.W. Hoffeecker to ANA "Numismatist" Editor Stuart Mosher describing what he saw in the San Francisco Mint

of the ANA's Resolutions Committee and as part of *The Numismatist* magazine's Literary Awards Committee. At the 58th convention, Dr. Pradeau was one of five scheduled guest speakers, and his lecture was titled: "The Coinage of Mexico." In 1969, Pradeau was recognized for his many contributions to Mexican numismatic authorship, and he was awarded the American Numismatic Association's Medal of Merit. Today, Dr. Alberto Francisco Pradeau's books remain highly covered and are still utilized by researchers and collectors alike.

Lyman William Hoffeecker (1868-1955) was a highly successful numismatist who resided in the El Paso/Juarez borderland region. As a coin dealer who conducted business on both sides of the United States/Mexico border, L.W. Hoffeecker was very familiar with the coinage of both nations. Hoffeecker was also the designer/creator of the 1935 Old Spanish Trail (El Paso) commemorative half dollar, which was created to establish the first public museum in El Paso, TX (an effort that took decades to complete). From 1936 to 1939, Hoffeecker served on the ANA's Board of Governors, and from 1939 to 1941, Hoffeecker served as the 21st President of the American Numismatic Association. Today, people can still visit the museum that Lyman William Hoffeecker helped create, and his Old Spanish Trail half dollar is coveted by collectors as a "Key Date."

While attending the San Francisco convention, L.W. Hoffeecker would compete in a numismatic exhibition

with his exhibit titled *'Cartoon' Paper Money*, which showcased various designs made from the clippings of paper money. After judges tallied all scores, Hoffecker would receive an Honorable Mention for his efforts; however, he would bring home the silver in a different way. As part of the formal ceremonies of the 58th convention, Hoffecker would be recognized for 25 years of continuous ANA support and was given a silver medal for this accomplishment.



The San Francisco Mint

L.W. Hoffecker would also partake in the convention's sponsored tour of the San Francisco Mint. Little did he know that this event would greatly impact his life. Inside the San Francisco Mint, L.W. Hoffecker learned about the minting of silver coins destined for China. At some point, according to Hoffecker's letters, he and other members of the tour had been invited to the superintendent's office, where Mr. Gillin (Superintendent of the San Francisco Mint) placed a Mexican silver coin dated 1898 in his hands. Those privy to the operation at the San Francisco Mint had explained to Hoffecker that Mexico sent the San Francisco Mint dies for the last 8 Reales coin and alluded to the notion that the San Francisco Mint had modified those dies in-house to reflect a date change from 1897 to 1898. Hoffecker also understood that 6 million coins were to be shipped from San Francisco, CA, to China.

In a letter dated January 23, 1950, L.W. Hoffecker is quoted stating: "The Mexican government sent them the dies for the last 8 Real coin they had minted (1897) and they had changed the date to 1898 and minted these coins..." In a letter dated February 3, 1950, Hoffecker again referred to the Mexican 8 Real coin, stating: "I had the coin in my hands."

After the unimaginable ordeal at the San Francisco Mint, L.W. Hoffecker submitted an article describing his account for inclusion in the ANA's magazine, *The Numismatist*. Unfortunately, Hoffecker's discovery was never published, and it seems that L.W.

Hoffecker believed a man named Dr. Pradeau was responsible for suppressing his article from the public.

*Disclaimer: Let's be clear! I am not accusing any government, organization, or person of anything. Everyone has the right to share creative works in the writing process. I am only reporting the contents of these letters as I have understood them. Also, Governments absolutely have the right to conduct business within the scope of the law. Organizations and publishers absolutely have the right to publish or not publish information within the guidelines of their Constitution/By-Laws, and all people absolutely have the legal right to First Amendment protections under Freedom of the Press (as long as facts are not fabricated and opinions are noted). You, the reader, should read the letters presented, conduct your own research, and form your own conclusions.*

## THE LETTERS

In keeping the integrity of these presented works, only minor spelling and punctuation errors were corrected for readability. Scans of the original letters are available on [TexasNumismatics.org](http://TexasNumismatics.org).

**Document (A): Letter from Stuart Mosher (Numismatist Editor / Smithsonian Institution) to L.W. Hoffecker dated January 20, 1950**

Dear Friend Hoffecker:

Please accept my thanks for your letter of Dec. 5, and January 10. I would have answered long before this tardy date but your first letter required study and investigation.

I would have published it but for the fact that Dr. Pradeau is a very sincere person and I did not wish to cause any misunderstanding. I have written to him and am enclosing his reply. Please re-read your own letter, then read his and judge for yourself if I have done the right thing by withholding your letter up to this point.

If you should care to change your letter so that it does not appear to criticize the Doctor I should be glad to publish it.

While I am quite aware of what goes on within the A.N.A. I take no part in such politics and there seems very little I

can do to improve our present situation. Katen may have just reasons for his complaints but my hope is that our present officers will be able to promote harmony without involving *The Numismatist*. Space is tight and we cannot afford to risk losing members and advertisers by using it all up with political arguments. For five years now I have kept the magazine free from personal attacks and I hope that I will be able to finish out my editorship without involving the magazine in a bitter controversy.

I hope this finds you in health and the Year 1950 will be one of the best you have had to date.

Cordially yours, Stuart Mosher

**Document (B): Letter from L.W. Hoffecker to Stuart Mosher dated January 23, 1950**

Dear Mr. Mosher:-

Your letter received and I would drop the matter and forget about it if it were not for the fact that the good doctor has called me a liar several times and has put me in the position of either being a fool or deliberately trying to distort the facts and this I cannot stand for,

He says the most flagrant of my statements is that the San Francisco Government minted 6 Million coins for Mexico which had been shipped to China.

I was in Mr. Gillin's office in the Mint during the Convention and he showed me a Mexican 8 Reals coin and stated that they had just finished Minting 6 Million to be shipped to China afterward in the minting room I talked with the Supt and he informed me that the Mexican Government had sent them the dies for the last 8 real coin they minted (1897) and they changed the date to 1898 and minted these coins, they did not say in what month they had minted them, the Mint report in the September *Numismatist* says they minted 1,250,000 silver Pesos for Mexico, I did not

dream all this. Victor was in the Party at the time and on his way home we discussed these \* Reale pieces in my office in El Paso.

Hoffecker's letter to Stuart Mosher then changes topics, discussing how "the Doctor" is again calling Hoffecker a liar for comments regarding tariff duties, Mexican coinage, and Bancos (topics that will be addressed later in this article).

**Document (C): Letter from L.W. Hoffecker to Nellie Tayloe Ross / Director of the Mint, Washington D.C. dated February 3, 1950**

Dear Mrs. Ross:

I wrote an article for our Magazine in which I made the statement that I had been in the Mint in San Francisco, and that Mr Gillin had showed me a Mexican 8 Real coin which I am quite positive he said they had just minted 6 Million to be sent to China, I had the coin in my hands, but some one told our Editor Mr. Stuart Mosher who is also Curator of the Smithsonian Institution that there was not a word of truth in my statement.

I wrote to Mr Gillin and received a letter from his Secretary Miss Patricia V. Orr that Mr Gillin was out of the City and that it was not permitted to give out any information in regard to the operations of the mint and referred me to your department.

This matter worries me as I am not in the habit of giving out false information.

The Mint report in The Numismatist for October on page 607 says that 750,000 Pesos were coined for Mexico and again in the September Issue 1,259,000 On page 558, all at the San Francisco mint.

Can you give me any details as to the design of the coin and the date, the Coin Mr Gillin handed me was an 8 Real and I think dated 1898, I later talked with a gentleman who took to be a foreman in the workroom and he told me that the Mexican

Government had sent them the dies for the 1897 8 Real coin this was the last year they minted Reales in Mexico and he said that had altered the date making it 1898 instead of 1897.

It's not my desire to get you in any argument, but would very much appreciate it if you will just state the facts that is all I need to clear my name which is the best asset I have,

With kind personal regards to yourself and Mr Howard, I am  
Yours truly, L. W. Hoffecker,  
Past President of the A.N.A.

**DOCUMENT (D): Letter from Stuart Mosher - Numismatist Editor / Smithsonian Institution to L.W. Hoffecker dated March 13, 1950**

Dear Friend Hoffecker:

Please accept my thanks for yours of February 14 and March 8th. I would have answered the first sooner but have a bad case of "bursitis" and only during the last week have I been able to get any relief.

I'm sure that Dr. Pradeau did not mean to have his remarks understood as personal. You know that our Spanish brothers are impetuous and that they rarely mean to be unjust.

I have studied your correspondence with care and I am convinced that you know what you are talking about. I have never heard your integrity questioned, and on the other hand I have heard many nice remarks about you. I only wish that people would talk about me as they do about you, but I fear that that will never be the case.

You will notice that the Connecticut vs Wichita affair has finally made The Numismatist. I regret this very much but there was nothing I could do to keep it out. I wonder what will happen next.'

I'm returning your correspondence and thanks again for giving me the straight facts.

Kindest regards, Stuart Mosher

**DOCUMENT (E): Letter from L.W. Hoffecker to Stuart Mosher dated March 16, 1950**

Dear Mr. Mosher:

I received your letter along with my papers yesterday, thanks for returning them, I was sorry to hear that you had been laid up. One of the girls living next door was laid up some time ago with the same thing and from what she said it was not very pleasant.

I was pleased that I had been able to square myself with you, but I still do not think that I know more about Mexican coins than the doctor, but I will tell the truth or keep my mouth shut, nobody will ever make me believe that he did not know he was not telling the truth when he took the hide off of me, I guess his wife had reason for quitting him,

He had a grouch on at the convention because they did not pay his expenses up from Los Angeles and waive the expenses for the entertainment and the dinner, on account of his making a talk.

You do not need to worry about what people say about you, I have heard lots of nice things, and nothing otherwise, Max was through some weeks ago and he spoke very hugely of you.

I hope to attend the convention this fall and see you there.

I note what you say about the row being aired in the Numismatist, I was one of the crowd that stopped that some years ago, nobody cared to pay \$5.00 dollars to read about such things.

Doctor Wilde told me in Frisco that he was told by one of the new board that he did not have a chance, that you had to play along with the gang if you got anywheres.

I think most of the board is all right, but have no use for Shaldon or Rengan.

Yours truly, L.W. Hoffecker

## UNDER A DR'S CARE

In 1968, approximately 13 years after L.W. Hoffecker's death, a rather curious article was published in *Vol. 5, #60* of The Azteca Numismatic Society's (TANS) *Plus Ultra* magazine. Written by A.F. Pradeau, "The San Francisco, California, Mexican Pesos of 1898" discusses how both Mexico and the United States minted Mexican pesos with a back date of 1898 and how a tour group, sponsored by the 58th ANA Convention, witnessed their manufacture at the San Francisco Mint.

While many contemporary numismatic authors have documented the mintage of 1898 (1949) peso restrikes (T.V. Buttery - 1963 & 1971, C.G. Altz - 1965, Dr. W. Ingram - 1967, T. DeLorey - 1976), only Pradeau's article discusses their production from the viewpoint of eyewitnesses. Regarded as the earliest article to document backdated pesos from this perspective, "The San Francisco, California, Mexican Pesos of 1898" is often cited for its many contributions to numismatic scholarship; however, it leaves many basic, open-ended questions unanswered.

In the last paragraph of "The San Francisco, California, Mexican Pesos of 1898", A.F. Pradeau states that: "During the National Convention of the American Numismatic Association held in San Francisco, California, from 21 to the 24th, August, 1949, those touring the mint witnessed the striking of the Mexican pesos and, of course, were unable to obtain specimens." I find it interesting that Pradeau referred to participants of the 1949 San Francisco Mint tour as "those who toured." By referencing "those" participants in the third person, it appears as if Pradeau was never part of the San Francisco Mint tour group (or at least wasn't invited to Mr. Gillin's office), which leads to another question: Who were these people that "witnessed the striking of the Mexican pesos" and "were unable to obtain specimens"? Returning to "The San Francisco, California, Mexican Pesos of 1898", Pradeau doesn't list names, cite sources, or share a bibliography. As Pradeau was a very famous numismatic author/expert (and still should be regarded as such), he, above all other numismatists, should have understood the importance of citing sources in any literary work.

I also find it interesting that Pradeau chose to emphasize a very specific set of words while discussing back dated Mexican coins at the San Francisco Mint. In "The San Francisco, California, Mexican Pesos of 1898" Pradeau states that: "Arrangements were made with the San Francisco, California mint to strike two million pieces- ONE PESO type, dated 1898-". Pradeau also states that: "These coins we'll be rated as curiosities of desirable numismatic value because of the date which legally should have been 1897, the value PESO instead of Rs., for reales and lastly because their scarcity as the bulk of the issue was melted."

Now, whenever a writer wants to stress the importance of a word or phrase with an audience, he (or she) will typically place additional emphasis on selected wording. After reviewing A.F. Pradeau's "The San Francisco, California, Mexican Pesos of 1898", it's apparent that emphasis was placed on both the words "PESO" and "reales" intentionally, but for what purpose? After searching the digital archives of the Texas Numismatic Association (TNA), the American Numismatic Association (ANA), the Newman Numismatic Portal (NNP), and the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), which yielded zero results, I felt that all possible leads had been exhausted to the extent of information currently accessible.

Returning to the never-before-seen documents that lay across my desk, L.W. Hoffecker's firsthand account at the San Francisco Mint spoke in a way that Pradeau's article never could.

## REPORTS FROM THE U.S. AND ABROAD

According to official reports of the United States Mint, the production of Chinese 1934 Sun Yat-sen dollars and Mexican 1898 (1949) Mo AM pesos occurred during a fiscal-year split of calendar year 1949, which resulted in the full mintage of these coins being documented in two separate segments: *Fiscal Year ended June 30, 1949*, and *Fiscal Year ended June 30, 1950*. As reported by the Director of the U.S. Mint, the United States struck a combined total of 30,000 dollars for China and 2,000,000 pesos for Mexico. Additional information pertaining to the mintage of these coins was also reported in both the September and October 1949 issues of *The Numismatist*. As this magazine

reported on the "execution" of Chinese dollars and Mexican pesos by the United States for the months of June and July only, it appears that the entire production of Chinese 1934 Sun Yat-sen dollars and Mexican 1898 (1949) Mo AM pesos had been minted in calendar year 1949. For those who would like to review this data, mintage numbers are provided in both fiscal-year and calendar-year formats.

In *Guidebook of Mexican Decimal Coins* (1963), Theodore V. Buttrey documented that both the United States and Mexico struck peso coins for China. Buttrey was also certain that one could tell the difference between original 1898 pesos and 1949 restrikes; however, he never mentioned how all San Francisco mint issues were allegedly melted. In his book, Buttrey stated: "These pieces can properly be called restrikes and trade coins. Restrikes can be distinguished from originals in that the beaded edge of the reverse contains 134 beads, while the edge of the original contains 140 beads." By not mentioning the destruction of San Francisco restrikes, it alludes to the possibility of surviving examples.

In *The Coins of Mexico* (1964), Niel S. Utberg tried to document the San Francisco pesos of 1898; however, Utberg mistakenly reported that Liberty Cap pesos minted by the United States had been struck at the Denver mint. As actual mint reports confirm that all U.S.-struck pesos were struck in San Francisco, this would be an unfortunate error that slipped into publication.

In *Foreign Coins Struck at United States Mints* (1965), C.G. Altz & E.H. Barton had their own go at documenting Chinese silver dollars and Mexican pesos. Now, according to Altz & Barton, all Republic of China (ROC) dollar coins minted by the United States in the year 1949 were identical to Chinese dollar coins originally minted in 1934 (Year 23 of the ROC), however they disagreed with Buttrey on how to distinguish San Francisco strikes from Mexico City strikes. Altz & Barton stated: "On the Pesos actually struck in 1898, there are 139 denticles in the border on the reverse while the 1949 restrikes have only 131 denticles." As Altz & Barton were convinced that they were correct, they added: "This is the only U.S.-struck coin of Mexico which can be identified without a doubt as originating in the United States."

In 1971, Theodore V. Buttrey again attempted to document the San Francisco Pesos of 1898. In *Guidebook of Mexican Coins* (1969), Buttrey documented the mintage of San Francisco pesos as a: “balance of 1,942,000 pieces.” This contradicts original mint reports of 2,000,000 coins documented in U.S. mint reports; however, it could explain why people believe that they have surviving examples. Buttrey also redacted his earlier published works by stating: “These pieces can properly be called restrikes and trade coins. Restrikes can be distinguished from originals in that the beaded edge of the reverse contains 134 beads, while the edge of the original contain 139 beads.” Buttrey also mentioned a slight difference in the shape of the “1” in the date of the restruck pesos.

In *The Numismatic Scrapbook, Vol. 33, #379* (1967), Dr. William Ingram discusses the issues with conflicting denticle-bead counts between the original

1898 Pesos and the 1898 (1949) restrikes; however, reporting errors were also made in an internal editorial note within the article, causing published information to be skewed once again. Dr. Ingram had also stated: “. . . those ‘restruck’ by the San Francisco mint have almost a sharp ‘distinct’ raised rim on both the obverse and reverse at the margin of the serrated edge,” further complicating the identification process.

Tom DeLorey tries to address this identification issue in *The Numismatic Scrapbook Vol. 42 #480* (1976) as he addresses all conflicting numerical inconsistencies of original and restruck 1898 Mexican pesos. DeLorey references Buttrey’s updated *Guidebook of Mexican Coins* (1969) as holding the correct number of denticles for referencing original and peso restrikes by the San Francisco mint. At the beginning of his article, DeLorey states: “The 1898 struck coins have 139 denticles on the reverse

(Liberty Cap) side, while the 1949-struck coins have 131 denticles on the obverse (Eagle) side and 134 on the reverse.” DeLorey also stated: “Although there is no official way of distinguishing between these strikes of these last two Mints, it is generally accepted that all of the well struck coins came from the San Francisco Mint and that all of the poorly struck coins come from the Mexican Mint.” Without considering the possibility that the Mexican Mint was capable of making vast improvements between the years 1898 and 1949, DeLorey’s statement about the “general acceptance” of San Francisco mint’s superiority seems to dance dangerously close towards the concept of ethnocentrism, “the attitude that one’s own group, ethnicity, or nationality is superior to others” (Merriam-Webster).

Lastly, as documented in *Historia Numismática de México de 1823 a 1950, Tomo Primero* (1957), Alberto Francisco Pradeau briefly documents the creation of both the 1934 Chinese Sun Yat-sen dollars and the backdated 1898 (1949) Mo. AM. Mexican pesos; however, I found no such information in his book documenting any such 58th ANA convention tour groups or testimonies relating to the striking of backdated Mexican pesos at the San Francisco mint.

Now, according to Pradeau, all the dies for 1898 (1949) peso restrikes were engraved at the Mexico City Mint and were identical. In *Historia Numismática de México de 1823 a 1950, Tomo Primero* (1957), Pradeau states that: “The dies for this coinage-produced in Mexico and in San Francisco, California-were engraved at the Mexico City mint; as distinguishing marks, they feature 150 reeds and 131 serrations, whereas those minted in 1898 bore 150 reeds and 139 serrations, with no other differences existing between the two.”

Personally, I don’t think anyone can distinguish backdated peso restrikes of Mexico from those struck in San Francisco, CA, as even the “experts” can’t even agree on the simplest of identification marks. However, if there was any possibility that at least one backdated peso of the San Francisco mint had in fact escaped the melting pot or that surviving examples still exist today (as alluded to by other numismatic authors), then could it be possible that at least one die sent from Mexico had somehow been modified to reflect

According to U.S. Mint records, the entire production of Chinese 1934 Sun Yat-sen dollars and Mexican 1898 (1949) Mo AM pesos were minted in calendar year 1949. Mintage numbers are provided in both calendar-year (left) and fiscal-year (below) formats.

**Coinage Executed for Foreign Governments by United States Mints during the Month of June, 1949**  
\* As Reported in *The Numismatist Magazine* - September 1949, Page 558. **China and Mexico Only**

| Country | Denomination    | Coinage By Mint At - |               |               | Total For June 1949 |
|---------|-----------------|----------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------------|
|         |                 | San Francisco        | Denver        | Philidelphia  |                     |
| China   | 1 Dollar (Yuan) | None Reported        | 2,410,000     | 9,950,000     | 12,360,000          |
| Mexico  | 1 Peso          | 1,250,000            | None Reported | None Reported | 1,250,000           |

**Coinage Executed for Foreign Governments by United States Mints during the Month of July, 1949**  
\* As Reported in *The Numismatist Magazine* - October 1949, Page 607. **China and Mexico Only**

| Country | Denomination    | Coinage By Mint At - |               |               | Total For June 1949 |
|---------|-----------------|----------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------------|
|         |                 | San Francisco        | Denver        | Philidelphia  |                     |
| China   | 1 Dollar (Yuan) | 3,200,000            | 4,140,000     | 10,300,000    | 17,640,000          |
| Mexico  | 1 Peso          | 750,000              | None Reported | None Reported | 750,000             |

**Coinage Executed for Foreign Governments by United States Mints during the Month of August, 1949**  
\* As Reported in *The Numismatist Magazine* - November 1949, Page 692. **China and Mexico Only**

| Country | Denomination    | Coinage By Mint At - |               |               | Total For June 1949 |
|---------|-----------------|----------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------------|
|         |                 | San Francisco        | Denver        | Philidelphia  |                     |
| China   | 1 Dollar (Yuan) | None Reported        | None Reported | None Reported | None Reported       |
| Mexico  | 1 Peso          | None Reported        | None Reported | None Reported | None Reported       |

**Coinage Executed For Foreign Governments By United States Mints Combined Months June, July, & August, 1949**  
\* As Reported in *The Numismatist Magazine* - September, October, & November 1949, Pages 558, 607, 692. **China and Mexico Only**

| Country | Denomination | June 1949 | July 1949       | August 1949   | Grand Total |
|---------|--------------|-----------|-----------------|---------------|-------------|
|         |              | China     | 1 Dollar (Yuan) | 12,360,000    | 17,640,000  |
| Mexico  | 1 Peso       | 1,250,000 | 750,000         | None Reported | 2,000,000   |

**Coinage by the United States Mints for Other Countries during Fiscal Year 1949**

\* As Reported in Annual Report of the Director of the Mint for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1949

| Country | Denomination    | Gross Weight Per Coin      | Per Coin (Grains) | Coinage By Mint At - |               |               | Total Per Fiscal Year |
|---------|-----------------|----------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------------|
|         |                 |                            |                   | San Francisco        | Denver        | Philidelphia  |                       |
| China   | 1 Dollar (Yuan) | 880 silver - 120 copper    | 412               | None Reported        | 2,410,000     | 9,950,000     | 12,360,000            |
| Mexico  | 1 Peso          | 902.7 silver - 97.3 copper | 417.81            | 1,250,000            | None Reported | None Reported | 1,250,000             |

**Coinage by the United States Mints For Other Countries during the Fiscal Year 1950**

\* As Reported in Annual Report of the Director of the Mint for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1950

| Country | Denomination    | Gross Weight Per Coin      | Per Coin (Grains) | Coinage By Mint At - |               |               | Total Per Fiscal Year |
|---------|-----------------|----------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------------|
|         |                 |                            |                   | San Francisco        | Denver        | Philidelphia  |                       |
| China   | 1 Dollar (Yuan) | 880 silver - 120 copper    | 412               | 3,200,000            | 4,140,000     | 10,300,000    | 17,640,000            |
| Mexico  | 1 Peso          | 902.7 silver - 97.3 copper | 417.81            | 750,000              | None Reported | None Reported | 750,000               |

**Coinage by the United States Mints for Other Countries Combined Fiscal Years 1949 & 1950**

\* As Reported in Annual Report's of the Director of the Mint for the Fiscal Year's Ended June 30, 1949 & June 30, 1950

| Country | Denomination | Gross Weight Per Coin      | Per Coin (Grains) | Fiscal Year 1949 | Fiscal Year 1950 | Grand Total             |
|---------|--------------|----------------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------------|
|         |              |                            |                   | China            | 1 Dollar (Yuan)  | 880 silver - 120 copper |
| Mexico  | 1 Peso       | 902.7 silver - 97.3 copper | 417.81            | 1,250,000        | 750,000          | 2,000,000               |



“reales” (as reported by Hofferker) and that Superintendent Gillin really did place a single 1898 reales of Mexico in L. W. Hofferker’s hand while standing in the Superintendent office at the San Francisco mint?

For those who are now screaming “Blasphemy,” may I remind you that stranger things have happened at U.S. Mint facilities. Consider the existence of the 1804/1857 Bust Dollar or the 1913 Liberty V Nickel. Now, consider the infamous Robbery of the San Francisco Mint, which occurred at the turn of the 20th century. In 1901, the San Francisco mint was robbed of an exorbitant amount of money, and the culprit turned out to be a high ranking U.S. Mint employee. Chief Clerk Walter Dimmick, who was second in command at the facility, had, in fact, stolen 1,500 Gold Double Eagles (worth \$30,000 in 1901) by simply loading them into his bag and walking out the mint doors over the course of several weeks. As Chief Clerk Dimmick had become familiar with security personnel at the San Francisco mint, posted officers had stopped checking both him and his bags, thus creating an opportunity. If blatant disregard for security protocol was not bad enough, one evening while patrolling the San Francisco mint, an on-duty security guard had noticed Dimmick struggling with his heavy luggage. Instead of questioning Dimmick about his unusually heavy bag, the guard offered to “lend a hand” and helped carry the stolen coins off site. With that being said, is it possible for such a coin to have existed only in that office and only in that moment?

### CHILLIN WITH GILLIN

George B. Gillin (1895-1981) served as Superintendent of the San Francisco

Mint from July 1, 1948, to November 30, 1951. George B. Gillin, a San Francisco local, was a graduate of both Mission High School and Sacred Heart College. In the 1930’s, Gillin started a successful insurance business that continued to grow well past his professional tenure at the San Francisco mint. Recommended to President Truman by Senator Sheridan Downey, Gillin was sworn into office as Superintendent of the San Francisco Mint on July 1, 1948, with an interim salary of \$8,500/yr (\$113,822 today). In 1951, after an alleged “monopoly” bust involving the bonding of IRS tax office employees, it was discovered that George B. Gillin had been operating his insurance business throughout his entire employment at the San Francisco Mint. As it was forbidden for senior-level federal officials to run private businesses, Gillin was given an ultimatum. Gillin had to choose between giving up his then \$10,800/yr (\$146,349 today) government position or step away from his personal private insurance company. Gillin promptly sent Treasury Secretary John W. Snyder his letter of resignation and stated that he would “devote the next few years to more gainful pursuits.” While his resignation was dated November 20, 1953, he was not officially removed from the office until November 30, 1953. Shortly after his departure from government service, Gillin again let his thoughts be known by publicly stating: “I wouldn’t take another political job for all the money in the Mint” (The San Francisco News, January 3, 1953).

Gillin’s involvement with the American Numismatic Association has also been documented in some detail. While the ANA hosted its 58th Convention, San Francisco Mint Superintendent George B. Gillin provided access to his minting facility and gave a tour to ANA convention participants. This fact was published in *The Numismatist* (Nov. 1949), *Numismatic Gallery Monthly* (Oct. 1949), and in *NENA News* (Sep. 1949). *NENA News* went one step further by describing a brief interaction that occurred inside the San Francisco Mint building.

In Vol. 62, No. 11 of *The Numismatist* (Nov. 1949), V. L. Arrington discusses his trip through the San Francisco Mint as part of an “open house at that establishment.” Arrington describes the minting process, beginning with the intake of metal through the receiving room and ending with finished coins

in the weighing room. While V. L. Arrington’s article did not mention the coining of backdated pesos or Yuan dollars, he does thank Chief Coiner Joe Steele and Mint Superintendent George B. Gillin for “passing through their offices.” Arrington also mentioned how the San Francisco mint has struck “103 million pieces so far . . . which of course includes those struck for 34 foreign countries.” Too bad Arrington’s article didn’t elaborate on his encounter with Steele or Gillin, as conversations with these men might have proved insightful. However, if there had been forces suppressing information within *The Numismatist* magazine, as alleged by Hofferker, it could explain why V. L. Arrington’s article, suddenly tapered off after mentioning their names. After all, as reported by Doctor Wilde in Document (E), “you had to play along with the gang to get anywhere.”

After reading “A trip through the San Francisco Mint,” I couldn’t help but wonder if the “V” in V.L. Arrington stood for “Victor” – the man whom Hofferker had mentioned in Document (B). By conducting an expanded search, I found that in April of 1937, a V. L. Arrington had been accepted into the ANA under member # 6066. Unfortunately, no first name was listed under the new members section of the Report of the General Secretary. I also found the name “V.L. Arrington” as listed in the Members section of the 58th ANA Convention Register. While I still question whether these men were one and the same, I can’t help but notice how “V.L. Arrington” and “Victor” both share an uncanny connection to the 58th ANA Convention and the San Francisco Mint.

Moving forward, in *Vol. 1, No. 5* of *NENA News*, Earl Tuttle discusses the highlights of the 58th ANA Convention and describes his educational experience at the San Francisco Mint. He also comments about being invited to Superintendent Gillin’s office for a brief conversation. Earl Tuttle states: “Mr. George B. Gillin, the Superintendent of the Mint, gave a short talk in his office.” Now, by no means is Earl Tuttle’s official statement a “smoking gun,” but his personal account does prove that ANA tour participants were inside the San Francisco Mint and that a private conversation, involving ANA tour participants, had occurred in Superintendent Gillin’s office.

## ONZAS, BANCOS, AND A LETTER REVISITED

In 1949, the Banco de México would release yet another numismatic curiosity onto the world markets. Known as the 1949 Onza of Mexico, this medallion silver bullion coin was created to provide an easier means of owning precious metals, sell off excess bullion reserves, and honor the rich history of the Mexico City Mint.

As the Onza was a new kind of coin, classification issues quickly arose between customs officials at the border between the United States and Mexico and numismatists alike. To complicate business at the border, along with the release of the new Onza, agents at the International Bridge between El Paso, TX, and Juarez, Mexico, had begun collecting a 15% tariff on "Monetas de Bronze." This would further strain internal ANA politics, as Hoffecker was again trying to defend himself against accusations that the "Doctor" was calling him a liar.

Starting with paragraph four of a letter addressed to Mr. Stuart Mosher - *Numismatist* Editor / Smithsonian Institution, (January 23, 1950) / Document (B), Hoffecker addresses false accusations for reporting tariff duties being collected on coins at the International Ports of Entry. In his letter, Hoffecker defends himself by sharing "Photostat" copies of letters from the Banco de México (the Mexican Mint), which acknowledged that tariff charges had indeed occurred. Hoffecker then discussed how the Banco de México was reimbursing both of those tariff charges. Hoffecker also discussed the differences between the "Banco de Mexico" and the "Banco Nacional". Hoffecker's response almost becomes comical once you realize that in the November 1949 issue of *The Numismatist* magazine, Dr. A. F. Pradeau made a huge mistake in identifying the difference between these two entities. As reported in the article "Mexican Mint issues Silver Token, Dated 1949," Pradeau references the "Banco de Mexico, SA. of Mexico City with a branch in New York City" instead of the "Banco Nacional de Mexico, SA., New York City Agency." Shortly thereafter, in the January 1950 issue of *The Numismatist*, the Banco Nacional de Mexico, SA., New York City Agency made a formal announcement requesting Pradeau to "please rectify this...."

Referring back to Document (B), Hoffecker continued to describe his experience with the new onza coins at the El Paso/ Juarez Port's of Entry. In reading his letter to Mosher, Hoffecker had quite the conversation with all the "experts," as Customs Agents had declared that the 1949 Onza was not a coin and expected tariff dues. The agents' reasoning was that the Onza did not have a monetary value displayed, thus it was not a coin. Hoffecker then responded with an impromptu course in numismatics. Hoffecker provided examples of a 1943 'Tejo' of Mexico, some very early gold American Eagles/ Half Eagles, and other foreign coins that had no monetary value displayed. He then asked the agents to account for their existence as coins. As expected, the agents could not and then another "expert" spoke up telling Hoffecker that the onza in question did not show where it was made. Hoffecker provided the customs agents with another lesson in numismatics and referred to the Mexico "Mo" mintmark. The agents' response was that the "Mo" meant nothing and that it had no Mexican emblem on it. Hoffecker then provided examples of other Mexican coins and at least 10 other U.S. commemorative half dollars, which included his own Old Spanish Trail (El Paso) half dollar.

Hoffecker's letter addressed to Mr. Stuart Mosher - *Numismatist* Editor / Smithsonian Institution, (January 23, 1950) / Document (B), then switches topics, discussing the true "cost" of doing business at the border amongst other things

**DOCUMENT (B) - Continued.**  
**From L.W. Hoffecker to Stuart Mosher - *Numismatist* Editor / Smithsonian Institution dated January 23, 1950**

In his second paragraph of his letter he again says I lie, when I mention the Banco de Mexico, the Banco de Mexico handles all the coins minted in Mexico and issues all permits for the export of coins, and I am enclosing Photostat copies of the two letters from them, you will notice in the letter of Oct 24th that they say that they will refund the \$278.10 which was only the duty on one shipment, and since writing your letter I have received

their draft for both Shipments, the Doctor's statement that there is no duty on coins and this refund backs up my contention.

But I must contradict his statement that there is no duty on coins as there is a duty on copper coins or was at the time I wrote you. I have not brought over any since. At that time they asked me 15% at the Bridge. I thought it was just another hold up and refused to pay, they held the coins so I demanded to see the Tariff, it read Monetas de bronze 15% so I paid,

The Banco Nacional de Mexico, Branches all over the world is not a government bank as is the Banco de Mexico, I do business with both these Banks and no doubt have closer relations with the later than any other person in the coin business in the U.S.

If I was as simple and unreasonable as the Doctor I would say he lied about having letters from the Bank, anyone can get letters from them and there being some 3000 employees they are not all from the same person, my Photostats should convince you that I am telling the truth.

The doctor is again wrong I won't be as rude as he and say he lies. You cannot get the facts from any customs Collector, this question will not be settled until sometime in March when my case comes before the Customs Court here in El Paso.

To give you an idea of the difference of opinion among Customs so-called experts (who by the way know nothing about coins) I will quote a few, the Chief expert here said it was very this piece was not a coin From the mere fact that it had no value on it, I contend that the words 1 Troy oz gave it a value he said no. I then showed him the Mexican "tejo" of 1943 which it had the weight on it, he could not account

for that, I then showed him an early American Eagle and Half Eagle, and English Gols back to 1709 with no value on it,

Then the Real expert on money == for \$4.92 a day for years learning to be an expert on everything that passes through a customs house, said it could have been made in Denver, I showed him the Mo he said that meant nothing that it had no Mexican emblem on it, I showed him coins issued in Mexico from 1870 to 1905 both in Gold and Silver, but he said it had to have an eagle on it that all coins had, I showed him 10 U.S. Commemorative Half Dollars and to rub in my old Spanish Trail among the rest,

He said it did not Circulate in Mexico, which is true. One of our newspapers reporters was in Mexico at the time they first came out and could not obtain one; she came home and called me and I gave her one to publish with her article.

You will notice that the bank states in their letter of September the 5th that they had sent a few to this Country for numismatic purposes, they and everyone else denies that it is a medal, so where in come in Numismatics if it is not a Coin, I do not know of any Numismatists collecting manufactured articles of silver.

In the Doctor's Summary of the cost he has overlooked a few items I expect through ignorance, I still do not believe in calling anyone a crook without some good evidence, I was not brought up to think I knew it all.

#1 U.S. Consular Invoice without which nothing can come out of Mex

#2 Mexican Broker Charges for fixing up the Mexican export papers and getting this Invoice.

#3 The Express and Insurance

#4 Broker Charges on each side

of the border.

There is no Limit to the amount of what the Mexican charges will be the Inspectors are not getting any wages and are starving, one Official comes out and tells you his wife is sickened and wants \$10.00 U.S. Cur for medicine you finally (after 6 Hours the last ==) get to the Cashier to pay your duty he is busy and won't look at you until \* o'clock and informs you the office is closed, you say you understand the buy am willing to pay extra for over time, you give him 10 Peso and go out and find your car is locked in the Customs Corral, you give a fellow a peso and he finds the man with the key it costs another Peso, then you think thank God it is all over but it cost \$10.00 Peso more to send a man to the bridge with you to tell them to pass you,

The Doctor says I was there all the time at the Convention when he was talking Yes I was, I never heard him mention the Troy oz, he probably refers to his pack before the Convention which I could not have heard if I had been in the , he did mention to me that they did not pay him for his talk or his expenses up there. \*\*\*

Suddenly, Document (B) abruptly ends in a jumble. Given the way that the last few sentences are typed over each other, it appears that the typewriter must have either jammed up while Hoffecker was typing or that Hoffecker had been so focused on getting his last comments out that he did not notice that he was typing over his previous work. After a very laborious effort to unscramble his last few sentences, Hoffecker reveals one final message to Mr. Mosher.

I have only tried to convince you that I am not a liar, I am not interested in anything I send in being published, in fact I do not want it published.

I am not mixed up with Katen and never joined his Dealer

posse, I asked Saxon if he did not think we should go a little slow on giving him publicity until he showed what he was going to do.

some one must agree with him or we would not have lost some 2,000 members,

Apparently, these last sentences express the emotions of a man who had reached a breaking point but still cared about his hobby and the ANA. Hoffecker also urged Mr. Mosher to pay attention to current events and be aware of certain parties, or posse's. Future history would prove Hoffecker correct as in 1950, "Katen" (Frank J. Katen), a man Hoffecker had mentioned in those last lines, had been expelled from the American Numismatic Association for his involvement with irregularities in the 1948 and 1949 elections.

## CONCLUSION

While it is ultimately every reader's choice in deciding what these letters actually mean, it's this author's belief that, until the history books are rewritten, somewhere within the final documents of Lyman William Hoffecker, an injustice will remain.

For those who wish to further study the L.W. Hoffecker letters in this article, it is requested by this author that the Texas Numismatic Association please provide digital access to the original letters presented in this article, so long as their use is for educational and research purposes only and that their use is properly credited as: Courtesy of the Jason Elwell Numismatic Collection-Digital Access Provided by the Texas Numismatic Association.

***Go Tell it on the Franklin Mountains ... L.W. Hoffecker is Reborn! Part 4 of 4, will acknowledge the many good works of L.W. Hoffecker and why us numismatists should be thanking him for doing so much for our hobby. Be on the lookout for the final installment of this series in the Fall issue of TNA News!***

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Overlapping text at the end of a letter from L.W. Hoffecker to ANA "Numismatist" Editor Stuart Mosher