



SO-CALLED DOLLARS FROM THE PACIFIC COAST EXPOSITIONS 1894-1962

by Eric Schena

Within the vast collecting possibilities within so-called dollars lies the medals of the various expositions and fairs that occurred in the later end of the nineteenth and throughout the twentieth centuries. Of special note are the eight major expositions that took place along the West Coast from California all the way up to Alaska. It is these western expositions that are the subject of an in-depth examination in the beautiful new book by Jeff Shevlin and Bill Hyder, *So-Called Dollars from the Pacific Coast Expositions 1894-1962*. Like their counterparts in the East and Mid-West, the Pacific Coast fairs primarily showcased modern scientific and technological advances, new inventions, and economic progress, all the while celebrating the richness and bounty of the West. The most prominent off these spectacles were as follows:

- 1894 California Midwinter Exposition
- 1905 Lewis and Clark Exposition
- 1909 Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition

- 1915 Panama Pacific International Exposition
- 1915-1916 Panama-California Exposition
- 1935-1936 California Pacific International Exposition
- 1939-1940 Golden Gate International Exposition
- 1962 Seattle World's Fair

Like many other fairs, these events were fêted with numerous medals, not only officially sanctioned by the governing bodies but also privately produced unofficial souvenirs. The so-called dollars of these fairs and expositions have long been popular among collectors especially since publication of the Hibler & Kappen catalog. However, Shevlin and Hyder take this investigation to the next level with this truly exhaustive and encyclopedic study.

As a relative newcomer to so-called dollars, the attention paid to the history of the events behind the medals is always appreciated, especially with

the not nearly as well-known expositions, such as the 1894 California Midwinter Exposition.

Each exposition has its own chapter with a thorough historical overview as well as the numismatic background. Details on some of the die varieties of several medals are also provided, along with key identification markers. A personal interest of mine are the officially produced souvenir slugs from the 1915 PPIE. These medals resemble the \$50 gold coins produced by the U.S. Assay Office of Gold, though this is often quite superficial. Seeing a detailed history and examination of these pieces is a welcome sight and helps to add context to the examples in my personal collection.

The entries for each medal provide an overall history of each medal, obverse and reverse descriptions, the composition, diameters, weights, as well as a rarity scale running from R1 to R-8.

Large and clear photographs of each medal are also provided, along with detailed enlargements for specific varieties where appropriate. The authors helpfully put not only their catalog numbers in the upper header but also the Hibler-Kappen concordance in the lower margin, an especially useful feature when trying to look up a specific so-called dollar. This also serves to highlight medals and varieties that are unlisted in the Hibler-Kappen book.

The book is printed in full color throughout on thick paper stock and is profusely illustrated with not only images of the medals themselves but also historical photographs, postcards, and related ephemera. I have long believed that these additional illustrations, details, and artifacts help to provide a more rounded and complete picture and am always appreciative when authors include

Chapter 3

1905

Lewis and Clark Centennial Exposition



There was a time in the history of the world when grand expositions were held, astonishing buildings were constructed, the greatest accomplishments of mankind were displayed and all the foreign countries and peoples of the world were invited to participate and attend. The 1905 Lewis & Clark Exposition was held in the middle of that grand time.

Captain's Meriwether Lewis and William Clark were the first Americans to reach the Pacific overland. They headed an expedition, the Corps of Discovery, under the authority of President Thomas Jefferson that departed from St. Louis, Missouri in May of 1803 and reached the Pacific Ocean in November, 1805. The expedition carried silver Indian Peace Medals in three sizes and smaller Washington Season Medals as gifts to the tribes that they would encounter in order to help ease their passage. Numismatists are familiar with medals portraying Jefferson on the obverse and a message of peace and friendship on the reverse. Washington had ordered the Season Medals struck in England for his use, but they arrived after his term of office. President John Adams distributed some of them, but the remainder were given to Lewis and Clark to dispatch along their way. They completed the expedition and made it back to St. Louis September 23, 1806.

The city of Portland, 100 years later in 1905, celebrated the 100th anniversary of that national event with the "Lewis and Clark Centennial and American Pacific Exposition and Oriental Fair" also known as the "Lewis & Clark Centennial Exposition". During the exposition's four and one half month run

63

SH 7-1 1894 California Midwinter International Exposition



SH 7-1 Exposition official medal struck in the Mechanics Building by an U.S. Interior Department contractor. The dies were designed and engraved by Charles E. Barber and produced by the Philadelphia Mint. Gold-plated medals were struck on opening day.

Obv: Depiction of California's state seal based on the original design.
 Rev: An exposition slogan, the Land of Sunshine Fruit and Flowers, around the rim. The central text declares the medal a souvenir of San Francisco's California Midwinter Exposition in 1894.

- 33.5 to 34.2mm
 - SH 7-1 CU** Copper, 16.46gm, R-8
 - SH 7-1 BS** Brass, 17.06 to 17.20gm, R-5
 - SH 7-1 GP** Gold-Plated Brass, 17.22gm, R-6
 - SH 7-1 SP** Silver-Plated Brass, R-8
- Note: Two copper die trials are known. They were sold as Lots 1011 and 1012 in the December 2008 Holabird-Kagin sale of the Bill Weber Collection, So-Called Dollars and \$50 Slug Facsimiles.
- SH 7-1.1 CU** Copper Die Trial Incomplete, 19.52gm, R-10
 - SH 7-1.2 CU** Copper Die Trial Blunder, 19.39gm, R-10

HK-245

28

1894 California Midwinter International Exposition SH 7-2



SH 7-2 Moise version of the official medal. We do not know if these were sanctioned copies sold on the exposition grounds or if they were unofficial medals to sell off-site.

Obv: Depiction of a modified version of the California state seal.
 Rev: The same text and layout as the reverse of SH 7-1. Different letter punches were used to copy the design.

- 33.6 to 34.3mm
 - SH 7-2 BS** Brass, 16.88 to 17.62gm, R-5
 - SH 7-2 AL** Aluminum, 4.39gm, R-9
 - SH 7-2 GP** Gold-Plated Brass, 17.05gm, R-8
 - SH 7-2 SP** Silver-Plated Brass, 17.18gm, R-8
- Die Variety SH 7-2.1
 Wide EUREKA 1897 restrrike.
 Obv: New die, "wide EUREKA."
 Rev: Same die as 7-2.
- SH 7-2.1 BS** Brass, 17.9gm, R-8
- Note: SH 7-2.1 was struck in 1896/97, perhaps as salesman's samples. Some brass alloys used in 1894 have a copper color.

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29

HK-245

them. Here, Shevlin and Hyder put in just the right amount and serve to accentuate an already excellent presentation.

All in all, Shevlin and Hyder have produced an invaluable work for devotees of so-called dollars, as well as those with even a tangential interest in exposition medals. Eminently readable and useful, this is a book that will stand the test of time.

The regular edition with a glossy sturdy binding is \$59.95. For the bibliophile, a deluxe leather bound edition is also available for \$149.95. Limited to 100 copies, this special version has a brass commemorative medal encased in the cover struck by Daniel Carr using an original die

engraved by George Morgan for the 1909 Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition. In addition to the main volume, there is also a pocket-sized price guide and checklist companion book available for \$19.95 that will be produced annually and be expanded each year until all so-called dollars are included.

Shipping is \$4.50 per book. Both the regular and deluxe versions of So-Called Dollars from the Pacific Coast Expositions 1894-1962 and the pocket price guide may be ordered from Jeff Shevlin, 1894 E. William St., Suite 4-240, Carson City, NV 89701, phone: (916) 955-2569 or email: SoCalledGuy@Hotmail.com. For additional information, visit <http://So-CalledDollar.com>.