



# COLORADO SPRINGS COIN CLUB COLLECTOR



Meetings: 6:30pm on the fourth Tuesday every month except December  
at the Colorado Springs Police Department Community Room  
955 W. Moreno Avenue  
Colorado Springs, CO 80905  
Guests are always welcome at our regular meetings

PO Box 10055 COLORADO SPRINGS, CO 80932      COLORADOSPRINGSCOINCLUB@GMAIL.COM

## MEETING WILL BE VIA ZOOM

Instructions for joining the meeting have been sent out by email to every member.

THE MEETING STARTS AT 6:30, NOT 7:00.

## OCTOBER 2020 MEETING AGENDA

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 27, AT 6:30PM

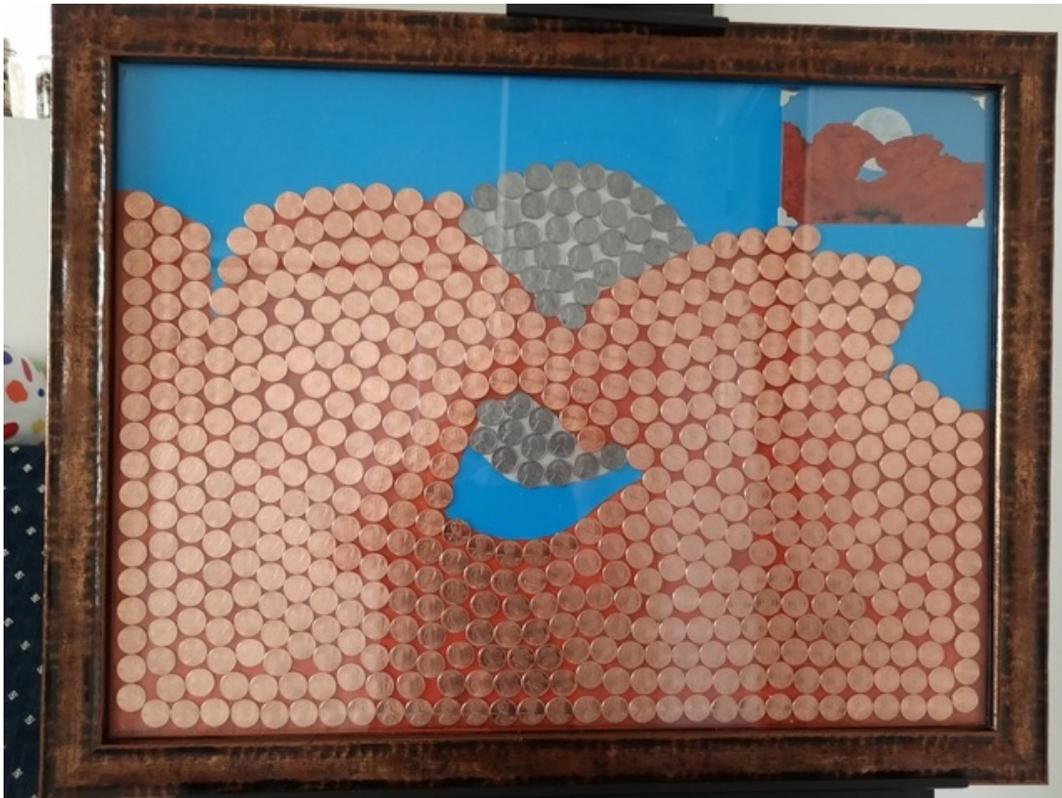
1. Introduction of guests and new members
  2. Secretary's Report.
  3. Treasurer's Report.
  4. Collector's Corner.
  5. Old Business
    - Progress report on potential for a new meeting location.
    - Progress report on the Joint Christmas Party.
    - Progress report on the possibility of having two small Coin Shows in Colorado Springs.
    - Are there any items that the membership would like to discuss?
  6. New Business
    - Ken B. and Steve D. will report on the Denver Coin Expo held October 1-3.
    - Ken B. will report on other shows that he has attended, including the Albuquerque and Northern Utah shows.
    - Is there anything the membership would like to discuss?
  - ~~7. Intermission/Break~~
  8. Program:  
Kevin L. will give a talk on,  
"The Colorado Centennial and The American Bicentennial Through Numismatics."
  - ~~9. Auction~~
  - ~~10. Door and Membership Prize Drawings~~
  11. Adjournment.
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## SEPTEMBER 2020 MEETING MINUTES

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, AT 6:30PM

This meeting was held at the Cordera Community Center.

1. Introduction of guests and new members
  - 24 members and 1 guest in attendance
2. Secretary's Report.
  - Larry F. was voted in as a new club member
  - We are starting to collect dues for 2021.
  - Holly sent out a dues payment reminder to those who have not paid yet in 2020. Dues must be received prior to the Christmas party in order to participate.
3. Treasurer's Report. (The full tabulation is given below.)
  - We received \$50 in membership dues since 7/29/20 and paid \$20 to Terry Carver for website maintenance. UPDATE.
  - \$12,414.56 balance as of 8/25/20 – Approved unanimously
4. Collector's Corner..This was interesting to see since we have not had a face-to-face meeting since February
  - Chris L. – Presented a mural that he has been working on for the past 5 years. The image is of the kissing camel made out of copper cents and the moon in the background is made out of 1943 steel cents.



- Steve D. – From 2009 to 3/26/20 he has been working on a copper, nickel and silver type set and it is finally complete. He presented a slide show with all of the images from the typeset. He also displayed a 1806 Draped Bust Quarter that he had his eye on at a dealer's website in the past but could not buy it at the time. It came up at auction and he bought it for a price lower than the original listing when he first saw it.



Steve also displayed the 1805 dime and educational notes he talked about at the prior Zoom meeting.

- Dave S. – Made a donation to the ANA and received a 2020 Silver Eagle Signed by Jeff Garrett. Also has one from 2016. Showed us some Canadian Currency. One of the bills has a “One” on the side
  - Holly S. – Also made a donation to the ANA and received a 2020 Silver Eagle signed by a past ANA President. Also displayed the 2020 colorized coins.
5. Old Business
- Ken meets 2x a year with the tax office in Denver. We are still on track to become a state-registered nonprofit in 2021. We continue to do everything the state has requested of us, and our monthly newsletter, including the Treasurer’s Report, is helping us with our six month tracking audit with the state.
  - Dan U. has recommended we start the paperwork now and at least get that moving. Received a motion to enlist Dan U. to start moving forward with processing the paperwork – approved by all.
  - We have been submitting our newsletters to the ANA
  - We have a Newsletter Name: Colorado Springs Coin Club Collector
  - Steve is doing a wonderful job on our Newsletter – always looking for articles, pictures, or suggestions to make it better.
  - New Meeting Location - We have looked into several alternative locations to hold a safe meeting however several locations will currently not host and the high costs associated with cleaning have made it prohibitive. Additional location ideas were discussed and will be investigated. John G. and Dave S. are following up on a couple of locations. Please email Ken with any additional ideas. [ken@kenbyrdcoinsandcurrency](mailto:ken@kenbyrdcoinsandcurrency). We are still planning on having the holiday party at the Golden Coral Tuesday, December 8<sup>th</sup> at this time.
  - As of right now we will not be able to meet at our current location past next month due to clubhouse regulations. Also, we cannot hold the auction or white elephant sale due to these restrictions as well.
  - Barbara T. will go to the mailbox once a week. NS & GP- Please leave CSCC mail in the box.
  - Members in attendance voted unanimously to give Life-time Honorary membership to Ken Bressett.
  - Ideas were discussed on how to help the ANA during these hard times. Some have reached out to volunteer and will keep us posted. A fundraiser is currently in progress for American Eagle Dollars. The club discussed making a donation to use these for prizes. This motion passed.
6. New Business
- Ken B. attend the Front Range Coin Club Coin Show this past weekend. The show was good with steady traffic both days with serious buyers. It seems smaller coin shows are easier to put on in comparison to the Big Coin Shows.
  - Ken B. will be attending the Sandy, UT Show this weekend and Denver Coin Expo next weekend
  - If anyone wants a list of upcoming shows please contact Ken B. Surrounding shows will be posted in our newsletter too.
7. Intermission/Break.

8. Program. "A Century of Empresses" explaining the history of the Russian Monarchy during the 18th Century, during which no less than four empresses ruled Russia.
9. [Auction not held.]
10. One door prize and eight membership prizes were given out.
11. Adjournment at 8:45 pm

## SEPTEMBER TREASURER'S REPORT

Here is the full treasurer's report for the period from August 25 through September 22, as given by Treasurer Barbara T at our September meeting:

BALANCE IN ACCOUNT 8/25/20		\$12,414.56
Monies Received		
Dues:	155.00	
Total Deposit:	155.00	+155.00
SUB-TOTAL		\$12,569.56
Expenses		
Refreshments, September Meeting	-16.32	
CSCC Webpage Expense (July)	-85.00	
Total Expenses	-101.32	-101.32
TOTAL		\$12,468.24
BALANCE IN ACCOUNT 8/25/20		\$12,468.24

## 2020 DUES REMINDER

IF YOU HAVE NOT PAID YOUR DUES YET, PLEASE DO SO AS SOON AS POSSIBLE!

Dues are \$10 for individuals, \$5 for Young Numismatists (under 18), and \$20 for Families (all adults and children in the immediate family).

We will accept cash or a check payable to "Colorado Springs Coin Club." Dues can be mailed to: PO Box 10055, Colorado Springs CO, 80932.

## CONTEST ENTRIES: GUESS THE PRICE OF SILVER

With a month to go before the November meeting, we are still seeing fairly stable silver prices.. The prize is still to be determined.

Right now, silver is above all but three of the guesses. Kitco quoted it at \$27.22 at 7:30 PM Tuesday, September 15. This is less than a dollar different from last month. Has the market stabilized? Will it stay stable through November? Only time will tell!

Here are the entries, in increasing order of price.

Mike S.	16.85	Mike F.	19.62	Frank T.	22.17
Dale G.	18.58	Jim B.	20.05	James N.	24.10
Ken B.	19.43	Holly S.	20.32	Barbara T.	27.37
Hector R.	19.50	Dave S.	20.73	Cary R.	29.39
Steve I.	19.83	Eve B.	21.00	Cliff S.	48.20

The guesses seem to be “clumped” with almost half in the \$19-20 range and about 40 percent of the membership going even higher than that with widely-spread high guesses, one at nearly 50 dollars!

## FUTURE EVENTS

### COLORADO SPRINGS COIN CLUB MEETINGS [TENTATIVE]

Oct 27 A talk on the Colorado Centennial and American Bicentennial by Kevin L.

Nov 24(Tentative) A guest speaker to talk about their Bank Collection.

Also the conclusion of our silver price contest

Dec 8 Joint CSCC and & CSNS Christmas Dinner and Party at Golden Corral, 6 PM. (Golden Corral is open serving cafeteria style, so this should be solid.)

Jan 26 My Other Hobby. Bring something you collect (or another hobby) besides numismatics.

### COLORADO SPRINGS NUMISMATIC SOCIETY MEETINGS

These are normally on the second Sunday of every month, except December, at 2 PM. Location is the same as our meetings, at the CSPD Community Room, 955 W. Moreno Avenue. Unfortunately these meetings were also canceled for a few months, but they are now happening by Zoom.

If you’ve never been to a Numismatic Society meeting, they’re a bit different. Every month, instead of a program they have exhibit talks—extended presentations by the membership on whatever they want to show.

### UPCOMING LOCAL COIN SHOWS

Cheyenne Coin, Currency, Collectibles, and Philatelic Fall Expo: 10/30-11/1 at the Red Lion Hotel, 204 West Fox Farm Road, Cheyenne WY 82007. For more information contact Bill Arnold 307-630-2350

Ken B. attends coin shows all over the U.S. – what is the distance out from Colorado Springs that you want to know about Shows – one state away?

### AMERICAN NUMISMATIC ASSOCIATION (ANA) EVENTS

The ANA Headquarters, including the Money Museum, is now open for extremely limited hours, 11-3 Wednesday through Friday.

**2021 National Money Show, Phoenix AZ**—Phoenix Convention Center, March 11-13, 2021

**2021 World’s Fair of Money, Rosemont IL**—Donald E. Stephens Convention Center, August 10-14 2021

## WE WANT WRITERS!

You may have noticed we’ve been including articles towards the end of the newsletter. Steve D. has done a couple, and Kevin L. has contributed one as well: We also brought in a guest writer from the Elgin Coin Club. But it would be very nice to publish things written by other club members as well. Please let us know if you have anything to share. (Text documents greatly preferred over PowerPoint.)

## WORLD’S MOST VALUABLE COIN UP FOR AUCTION

### UPDATE

The world’s most valuable coin, the Neil Carter/Contursi specimen of the 1794 Silver Dollar, did not sell at the auction.

## ADVERTISE IN THIS NEWSLETTER!

Want our membership to know about your business? You can now advertise in this newsletter. Here are the rates:

Size	Dimensions (width x height)	Rate	
		6 months	Full Year
Business Card	3½ x 2	Not Available	\$12
Quarter Page	3⅝ x 5 or 7⅜ x 2½	\$30	\$55
Half Page	3⅝ x 10 or 7⅜ x 5	\$60	\$110
Full Page	7⅜ x 10 (text area) or 8½ x 11 (no margins)	\$150	\$275

Ads will cover that fraction of the text area, for example a quarter page ad will be half of one column on a two column page, or the bottom quarter of the text area, excluding header, footer and margins. The exception is a full page ad, which (if provided as a PDF) can “bleed” to cover the entire page.

Ads must be print-ready. They can be changed from issue to issue, by providing an updated print-ready ad at least ten days before the next club meeting.

## ANA MEMBERSHIP OFFER

Are YOU a member of the American Numismatic Association? If not, here's your chance.

To encourage individual membership within our member clubs the ANA is offering an unprecedented \$5 Gold membership (regularly \$30) for club members who are not current members of the Association.

Benefits Include:

- Online access to every issue of *The Numismatist* from 1888 to the present — a one-stop hobby reference!
- Money Museum virtual exhibits, videos, blogs, Money Talks radio archives, coin collecting tips, and the ability to join the ANA's members-only Facebook group.
- Educational programs galore — seminars, lectures, correspondence courses, plus free lending library privileges and free admission to all ANA shows.
- Discounts on seminars, hobby publications, collection insurance, and direct submission privileges for grading and conservation services through NGC.

Club members who would rather receive *The Numismatist* by mail can upgrade to an ANA Platinum membership for only \$20 (a \$26 savings!).

Club members can call 800-514-2646 or join online at [money.org/join](http://money.org/join) — Use code CLUB2020.

## ANA LIMITED EDITION SILVER EAGLE OFFER

The American Numismatic Association (ANA) has created a special run of NGC-encapsulated 2020 U.S. Silver Eagles. Each “slab” will have original signatures from one of 16 living ANA presidents. These will be used as an ANA membership promotion.

The program is made possible by the participating ANA Presidents, and campaign partners Numismatic Guaranty Corporation (NGC) and APMEC.

To get your ANA Presidential Eagle you can do one of the following (limit one eagle per person)

- Make a minimum donation of \$100 to the ANA
- Sign up three new ANA members
- Renew your membership for three years (those renewing should call 800-514-2646)
- Become a new member with a three year term.

Only 50 coins per president are available and will be issued randomly, limit one per person. The ANA presidents featured on the NGC labels include:

Q. David Bowers (1983-85)

Kenneth L. Hallenbeck, Jr. (1989-91)

David L. Ganz (1993-95)

Kenneth Bressett (1995-97)

Anthony Swiatek (1997-99)

H. Robert Campbell (1999-01)

John Wilson (2001-03)

Gary E. Lewis (2003-05)

William Horton, Jr. (2005-07)

Barry Stuppler (2007-09)

Clifford Mishler (2009-11)

Tom Hallenbeck (2011-13)

Walter Ostromecki (2013-15)

Jeff C. Garrett (2015-17)

Gary Adkins (2017-19)

Steve Ellsworth (2019-date)

ANA Website: [www.money.org](http://www.money.org)



1807 Half Dollar

# FIRST YEAR COINS OF THE DENVER MINT

## GUEST ARTICLE

*By James Davis, Elgin Coin Club*

From the days of the Civil War to the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the United States ran an assay office in Denver after taking over the facilities of Clark, Gruber, and Company. There miners and prospectors could bring in their raw materials to be refined, weighed, and poured into bars. As the need for coins increased, the assay office was upgraded to full mint status. After nearly a decade of funding issues and construction delays, the new mint began striking coins on February 1, 1906.

In the first year of production, six denominations were struck, those being dimes, quarters, halves, and gold \$5, \$10, and \$20. As with other branch mint openings, proof like versions of some coins were struck. The third-party grading services refer to these coins as special strikes. The following is an examination of each denomination struck.

**Barber dime.** This coin has a mintage of 4,060,000. The mintmark appears on the reverse below the bow of the wreath. Variety collectors look for the three known re-punched mintmarks and Breen lists a very scarce doubled 6 in the date. Mint state specimens grading MS60 to 65 are valued between \$185 and \$1,500. The finest known coins are a MS67 that sold for \$14,688 in 2014 and a Special strike 64 that sold for \$28,750 in 2009.

**Barber quarter.** The mintage here is 3,280,000. The mintmark on this coin and the next coin is located on the reverse near the Eagle's tail feathers. MS 60-65 values are \$230 to \$1,650. The finest graded example is a MS67 that sold in 2000 for \$9,775.

**Barber half.** Here the mintage is 4,028,000. Here the MS 60-65 values are \$525 to \$2,500. Again, the finest known is a MS 67 and this coin sold in 2019 for \$49,938.

**Liberty half Eagle.** Moving up to gold, this piece has a mintage of 320,000. The mintmark location on all three gold coins is between the Eagle and denomination on the reverse. Book values for coins in the MS 60-65 range are \$670 to \$1,700. These values can change depending on the spot price of gold. One coin unaffected by the spot price of gold is the finest known MS 67 that sold in 2002 for \$13,800.

**Liberty Eagle.** The second gold coin has a mintage of 981,000. Values for this coin in MS 60-65 are \$1,210 to \$8,500. The finest known specimen was once part of the Eliasberg collection. This MS67 example sold for \$40,800 in 2020.

**Liberty double Eagle.** I have saved the most interesting coin for last. 620,250 were minted and there are known re-punched mintmarks. Normal mint state examples in the MS 60-65 range are valued at \$2,435 to \$13,500. The finest known grade is a MS 66 and that coin is listed by PCGS for A\$125,000. The most interesting coins are the 12 reported special strikes. Today, there are only 2 or 3 are known. The first reported auction of this coin was in 1957. The Kreisberg-Schulman auction company sold the Adolphe Menjou collection. Listed as lot 2608, the coin sold for 240.00. In 2013, a Special strike 66 specimen which may or not be the same coin sold for \$440,625.

From this modest beginning, the Denver Mint has grown to become the largest producer of coins in the world.



## A CENTURY OF EMPRESSES

By Steve D

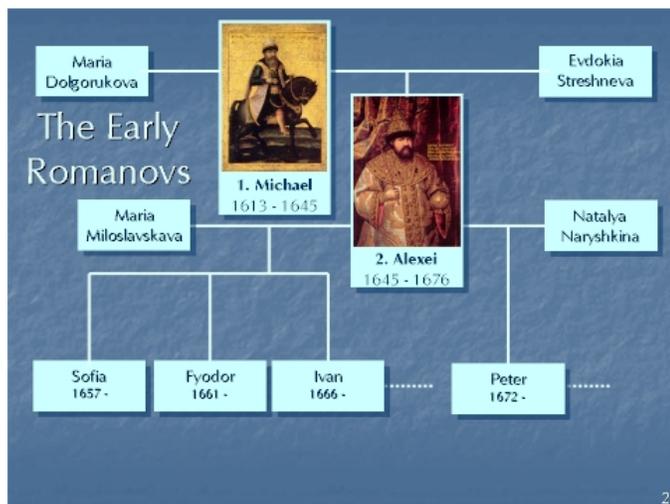
Author's note: I gave a program with this title at the September meeting. I had written a script for it, but when I rehearsed the script before the meeting the fastest I could get through it was thirty five minutes. We didn't have that much time so I mostly abandoned it and just went from memory. If I could remember it without the script in front of me, it got said. (And now you have some notion of what sorts of things take up neurons in my mental junkyard.) What you are going to see here is based on the script, not what I actually said, so even if you went to the meeting *and* have photographic memory, you'll probably learn something new. Be warned: This is going to be a very *loooong* article!

### Introduction

Russia in the 18th Century had one feature that, as far as I know, is unique in European history. It was, for a bit over two thirds of that century--67 years and 127 days--ruled by women, four Empresses in fact.

It was, truly the Century of Empresses.

But before I can begin to talk about the Empresses, I have to set some context. And the context here is Tsar Alexei and his son Peter I, "the Great." And *their* context is the start of the Romanov Dynasty, so it's time for a whirlwind tour of 17th century Russian history.



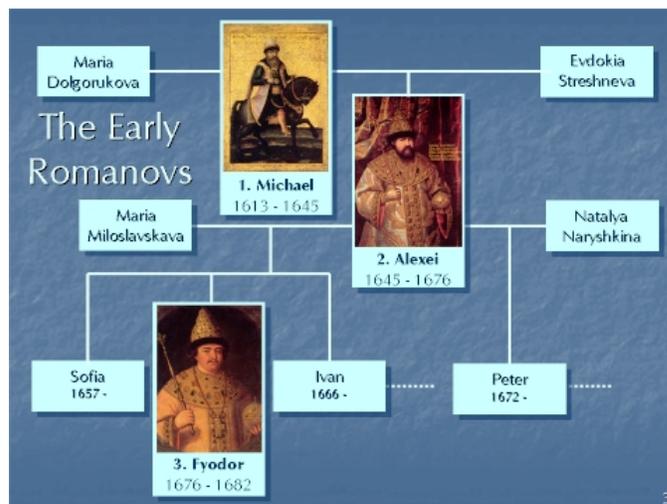
Alexei Mikhailovich Romanov was born in 1629 to Mikhail Romanov, the founder of the Romanov dynasty. He acceded to the throne in 1645. He married twice, first to Maria Miloslavskaya in 1648, and then, after Maria passed on in 1669, to Natalya Naryshkina in 1671.

This matters a lot because that led to there being two "branches" of the Romanov family, the

Miloslovskiys and the Naryshkins, and that would drive much of what happened clear through the first half of the next, 18th century.

Maria, Alexei's first wife, bore three children of some importance, Sophia, 1657, Fyodor, 1661, and Ivan, 1666.

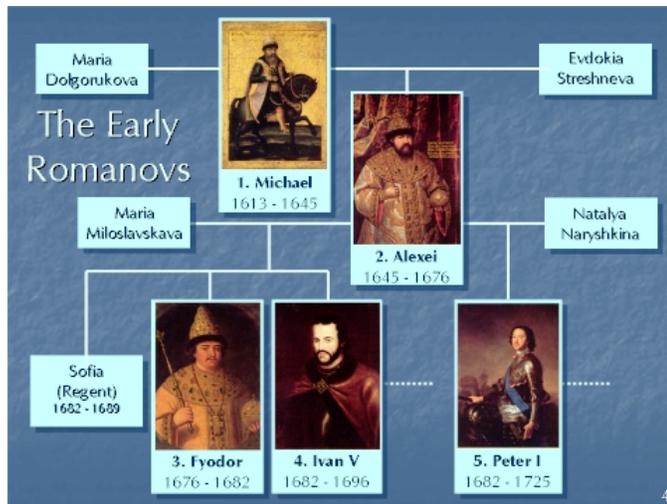
Natalya bore two children. One of them was Peter, born in 1672.



Alexei died in 1676, leaving the throne to Fyodor. But Fyodor was not in the best of health, and he only lasted six years. Now Russia was presented with a problem. The natural claimant to the throne was Ivan, but he was, literally, an idiot, suffering from mental retardation. Peter wasn't retarded--far from it! But he really wasn't in line for the throne. So one had the legitimacy and the other had the ability.

The solution, arrived at after some bloodshed, was to crown them both as Tsars, under the regency of Ivan's sister Sophia. But they were each from different branches of the family, and thus blood

relatives of two different prominent noble families. All sorts of palace intrigues began.



Peter was able to push Sophia out in 1689—it looked very much as though she did not want to relinquish power. After that he at least nominally co-ruled with Ivan. But there were constant intrigues by the Miloslavskiy faction who wanted to rule through Ivan. As near as we can tell, Peter genuinely loved his half-brother, but it must have been a relief on some level when Ivan died in 1696, leaving three daughters, and most importantly, no sons who could render Peter’s status questionable.

*But don't forget those daughters.* They'll show up again presently.

Peter had married Evdokia Lopukhina in 1689. She presented him with one son, Alexei, in 1690. Alexei and Peter didn't get along, not in the least. Nor did Peter and Evdokia get along very well. But at least it looked like the line of succession was secure.

### **Peter I (The Great) 1682-1725**

Peter was making a lot of changes in Russia, in an attempt to modernize and Westernize it. The old nobility resented this greatly, and now, with Ivan gone, they had a new claimant they could get behind: Alexei.

Eventually Peter divorced Evdokia in 1698, sending her off to a nunnery, and had Alexei (and a number of co-conspirators) executed in 1718. But this was not before Alexei presented him with a grandson, Peter, in 1715. Meanwhile Peter had secretly remarried in 1707, to Martha Skavronska, a commoner--later on, with his position absolutely secure, he married her publicly.

Peter’s great legacy was getting Russia a warm water port. Before him, Russia only had ports on the Arctic coast, like Arkhangelsk. Peter fought wars with the Ottoman Empire, which controlled the Black Sea coast, and Sweden, which owned the Baltic coast. He failed against the Ottomans, and succeeded against Sweden after a war that lasted 20 years. He founded St. Petersburg on the Baltic coast and made it his capital.

Peter had been Tsar of Russia since 1689, but in 1721, flush with success, he added the title “Emperor” (not the same thing!) which up to then only the Hapsburgs had used.

Shortly after this time, he married Martha publicly, she took the name Catherine, and in 1724 Peter even had her crowned Empress, making her technically a co-ruler.

Peter did a number of other things, of course, making Russia into a European power and beginning the process of westernizing the country. I could write ten pages on him and do him no justice.

(I can point you to Robert K. Massie’s very readable *Peter the Great, His Life and World*, and I can even point you to the network TV miniseries from the mid 1980s that was based on this book. It’s reasonably accurate as far as it goes, surprising for a Hollywood adaptation.)

But this is a numismatic audience so one thing simply must be mentioned. Peter gave Russia modern coinage, and that event marks the beginning of what today we call “Russian Imperial Coinage.”

Russian coinage up to this time consisted of “wire money.” A small length of silver wire would be snipped off, rolled somewhat flat, then a pair of dies, much larger than the so-called planchet would be used to hammer in the design, St. George on one side, an inscription identifying the ruler on the other.

Wire money existed in three denominations, the polushka of one half denga, the denga, and the kopek, 2 dengas, so named because on that coin St. George was pictured with a kopye, a spear. Occasionally a six denga piece named an altyn from the Tatar word for ‘six’ would be struck as well.

It should be noted that wire money was *tiny*.

There was a unit of account, with no physical existence, the ruble, that had once been substantial

silver ingots, but hadn't been made in centuries by Peter's time. It was equal to 33 altyns, two dengas. Note that people then did *not* think in terms of kopeks, they thought in terms of dengas.

### The Old System

1/2 Denga = 1 Polushka

2 Dengas = 1 Kopek

6 Dengas = 1 Altyn

33 Altyns, 2 Dengas = 1 Ruble

Peter had seen much more modern money on his famous trips to the West, round coins struck on presses. He decided that Russia should have such coins, starting in 1700.

Peter also made one more simplification. If you work some arithmetic on the old system, it turns out that there are 198 dengas in 33 altyns, a total of 200 dengas in a ruble. And that means there are 100 kopeks in a ruble.

So it just took a change in emphasis, from dengas and altyns to kopeks, to put Russia on a decimal system, so far as I know the first Western power to do so. They beat *us* to it by over ninety years.

And indeed, modern looking milled poltinas—half rubles—were minted in 1700, with rubles following in 1704. It was a gradual changeover from wire money to the new system—they existed side-by-side and wire money continued to be produced for a while—but the transition was essentially complete by 1718.

I can't resist showing this one off; it's a 1705 ruble (the 1704s are much rarer, just like our 1794 dollars are much rarer than our 1795 dollars). Notice the almost medieval styling of the lettering, and (on the reverse) a date in Cyrillic rather than Arabic numerals. Going to Arabic numbers was another transition Peter was dragging Russia through.



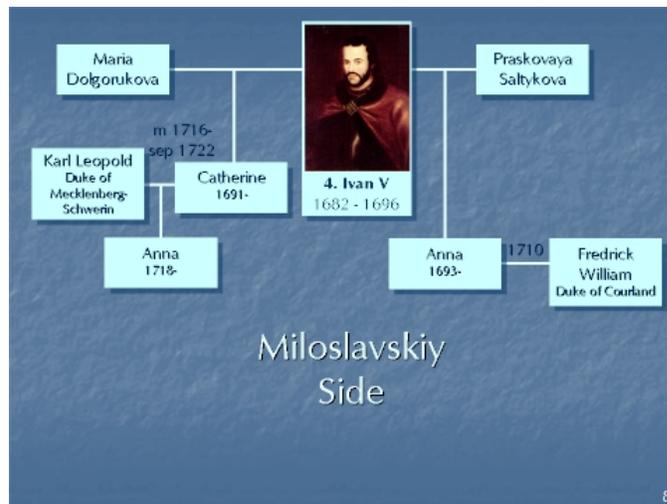
Note the title "Tsar" (ЦРЬ) not used after 1721, obverse 12-1 o'clock, and Cyrillic date (1705) on reverse 10-11 o'clock.

Regrettably I no longer own this coin. But it's somewhat of a consolation that I sold it for thirty times what I paid for it.

Peter the Great died in 1725, having previously crowned his second wife Martha as Empress. When she was crowned she took the name Yekaterina, Katherine.

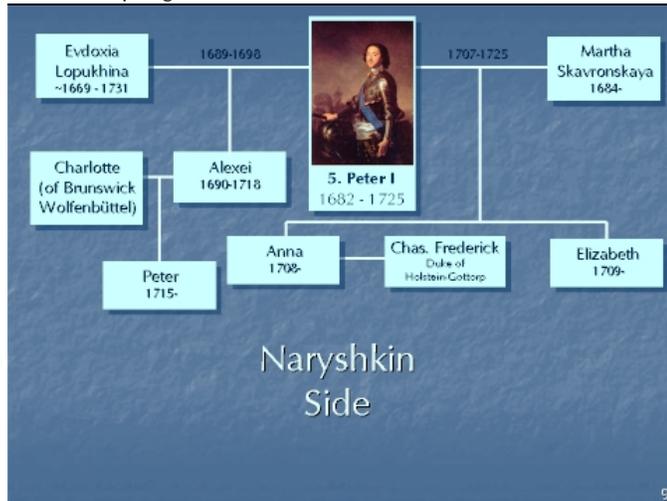
### 1725: The Situation at Peter I's Death

Peter's reign was quite a long one, and it's a good idea to update and review the family situation at the time he died.



Here's the Miloslavsky side, Peter's half brother Ivan's descendants as of 1725. There is a daughter Catherine who had been married off, by Peter, to Karl Leopold of Mecklenberg Schwerin. Catherine had given birth to Anna in 1718, then in 1722 had left Karl Leopold, who apparently was a wife beater. (No information exists as to whether he wore the wifebeater shirts.) Catherine then returned to Russia.

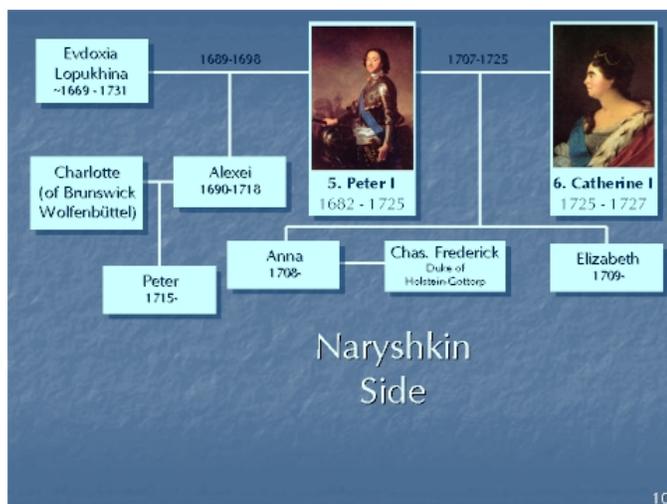
Ivan's daughter by *his* second wife was also named Anna—let's call her Anna-2—and she had been married off to Fredrick William, duke of Courland, by Peter. This was a very valuable alliance, giving Peter access to more ports in the Baltic. However, Frederick William died on his way home from the wedding, leaving Anna-2 destitute.



Over on the Naryshkin side, Peter's side, there is his first wife, Evdokia, in a nunnery. She'd get revenge, though, by outliving him *and* his second wife. There was one son, Alexei, who had been executed in 1718, and grandson Peter, ten years old.

Peter's second wife, Martha, had borne no less than twelve children, however ten of them never made it past childhood, and the two that were left were daughters, Anna (yet another Anna, Anna-3), and Elizabeth, thus no immediate help for continuing the dynasty. Anna-3 had married Charles Frederick of Holstein-Gottorp. Holstein, today, is that part of Germany immediately south of Denmark. (This is going to matter a great deal later on.)

Logically the heir to the throne should have been Peter the grandson, even if he was only ten years old. He was the *only* male descendant of either Peter or Ivan. But instead, Peter's wife Martha, who had taken the name Catherine, got the job. Remember, she had been crowned Empress. That plus some maneuvering by Prince Menshikov, Peter's most trusted man, got her the job.



## Empress Catherine I 1725-1727

*Екатерина Алексеевна I*



So finally we come to our first Empress.

Martha Skavronska was born near Dorpat in Livonia, in 1684. She was married to Johann Raabe, and on that same day he was called away to defend the town, and never returned. Martha, presumably a widow, ended up in the Russian baggage train after Marienburg fell to Peter's forces in 1702. She eventually caught the eye of Prince Menshikov, Peter's favorite. Her job at Menshikov's table was to fill the guests' wine goblets. Peter first saw her there, and within a few months the two had formed a solid relationship; it was a love match. Martha's steady temperament proved to be a good counterweight to Peter's restless nature.

As previously mentioned, Peter eventually married Martha and ultimately crowned her Empress, and she took the name Ekaterina (Catherine).

Once she was on the throne, things worked out well for Prince Menshikov, because Catherine I did virtually nothing, and Menshikov was in effective control. But his free ride ended rather quickly when

Catherine died on 6 May 1727, having ruled for only two years and 98 days.

Her greatest numismatic legacy hangs on the fact that the town of Ekaterinburg (also spelled Yekaterinburg, since that is how it is pronounced), just barely inside Siberia, was founded by Peter and named after her. And it turned out there were huge copper deposits there. The lion’s share of Russian coppers, from the 1720s through 1876, was minted there and those coins bear the Yekaterinburg mint mark (it looks like the letters EM to us). That E is Catherine’s initial in Russian.

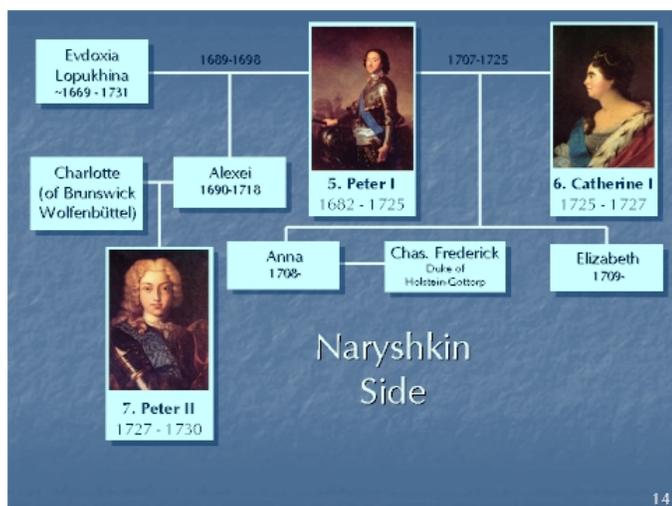
(Yekaterinburg, by the way, is where Nicholas II and his family were slaughtered by the communists in 1918, and where Boris Yeltsin was born.) You may remember it better as Sverdlovsk, which was the communists’ name for it.

I only owned one of Catherine’s coins, this ruble from 1725. Note its much more modern styling compared to the 1705 ruble, and Catherine’s title is “imperatritsa” not “tsarina”



1725 Ruble of Catherine I

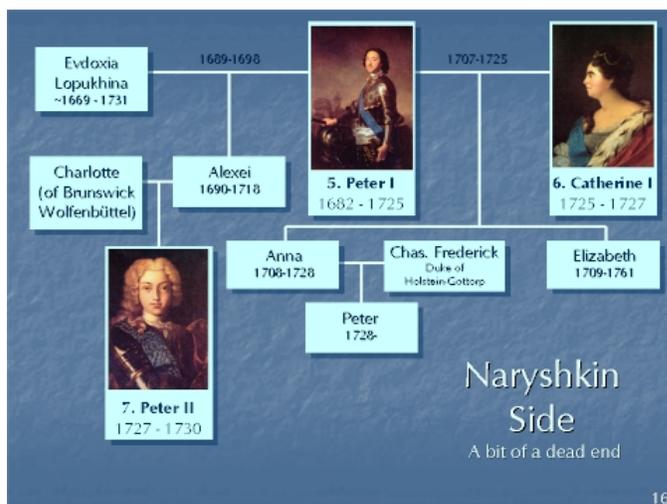
### Peter II 1727-1730



On Catherine’s death in 1727, Peter the grandson became the inevitable choice, even though he was barely a teenager.

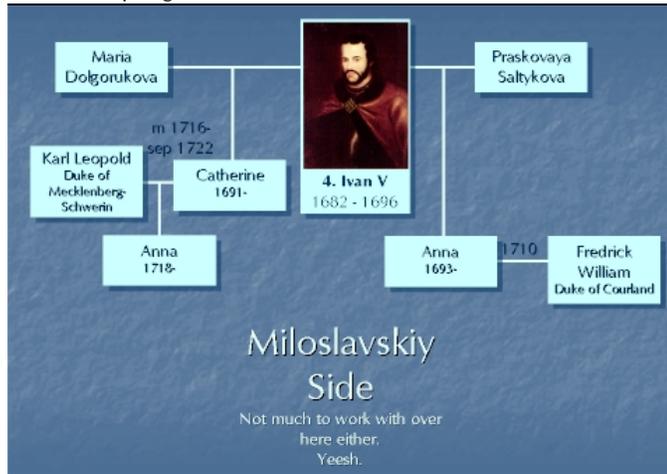
Menshikov probably thought he could rule through Peter II the same as he had through Catherine. He even arranged for Peter to marry his daughter. But he was sorely mistaken. Peter II turned out to be strong willed, and Menshikov ended up counting trees in Siberia. (Exile to Siberia under the tsars simply meant having to move there and stay there. It was rather boring there, so “counting trees” became slang for being sent to Siberia. This was changed by the communists, who made sure people sent to Siberia had plenty to do.)

With Menshikov’s ouster the old nobility was ascendant, because Peter II, as it turned out, sympathized with the traditionalists and began trying to undo his grandfather’s westernization policies. However, Peter caught smallpox days before he was to be married to someone who was *not* Menshikov’s daughter, and died in 1730.



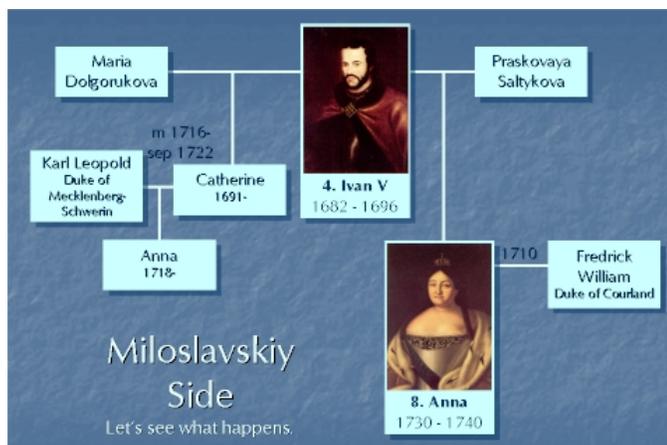
So now Russia was again in an interregnum, and they were in a bit of a jam. There was now another Peter the Great grandson named Peter, born in 1728 to Anna-3. (She had died, incidentally, a few days after giving birth; presumably of “childbed fever.”) But this Peter was still a toddler, so there was no way to put him on the throne without bringing the Duke of Holstein along too, probably as regent. The Russian nobility wouldn’t stand for that.

But there was also the Miloslavsky side of the family. Alas there wasn’t much to work with over there either.



Nevertheless there were a couple of *adults* on that side. Consider Anna-2, on the right. She was destitute, having been widowed almost instantly after being married, so perhaps she'd be willing to accept the throne as a constitutional monarch. Her claim was as good as anyone else's, given that she's the daughter of the *senior* of the co-Tsars, and she does *not* come with some foreign prince as baggage. She'd likely be desperate to accept any terms.

And if that were done, the nobility could finally begin to restore traditional Russia, behind Anna as their figurehead. So that's the choice they made.



## Empress Anna 1730-1740

*Анна Ивановна*

Our second Empress is Anna Ivanovna. (And now we can stop calling her Anna-2.) As planned, she was offered the throne as a constitutional monarch. She accepted on 25 February 1730 and set off for Moscow.



Anna was smarter than the nobles thought. She figured out the situation quickly, allied herself with the Preobrazhensky Guards, tore up the agreement, and made herself absolute monarch. She was coronated on the 19th of March.

She then brought in a team of Germans to administer Russia. Some were good, and some were awful. Her favorite, Bühren (Biron, to the Russians), was not in the first category. Under Anna, Russia did win wars against Poland and Turkey, and improved education for those who were destined for government service. But there were many famines, and most people suffered during her reign.

So the nobility, eager to avoid importing a German as regent over a toddler, got German advisers anyway.

Between her own coarse personality and people's resentment of the Germans she had imported, she was mourned by few when she passed away on 17 October of 1740, having ruled for ten years, 234 days.

She had, days before dying, chosen her older half sister's newly born grandson, Ivan, as her heir.

## Anna's Coins

Under Anna the series of cruciform coppers that ran from 1724 through 1730 ended. For the most part these were 5 kopek pieces though Peter II issued some 1 kopek pieces. These have to be among the most boring coin designs ever.



1730 Cruciform 5 Kopeks

Not much better was this rather boring series of coppers that started in 1730 and ran to the mid 1750s. I've never heard of anyone really trying to collect these. Ironically, no kopek was issued, only dengas and polushkas, even though the kopek was supposedly the "main" smaller denomination at the time. (On the other hand, I suppose if the US could fail to issue dollars and eagles for over three decades in the 1800s, Russia was entitled to blow the kopek off.)



Polushkas (1/4 kopeks) and Dengas (1/2 kopeks) of Anna. This basic type continued into the 1750s.

Here is a grivvenik, or ten kopek piece, similar in form to the ones Peter the Great issued. Note the ten pellets for use by the illiterate.



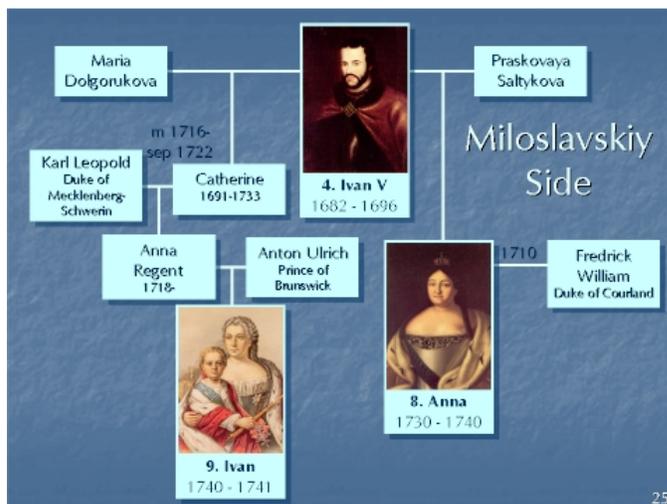
Grivvenik (10 Kopeks)



The two Anna rubles I owned, 1733 and 1738

## Ivan VI 1740-1741

As I mentioned before, Ivan VI, the grand-nephew of Anna, succeeded her.



Ivan was **nine weeks old** when he came to the throne. (So now the old nobility also got the toddler they had tried to avoid by bringing in Anna.) After a brief regency by Empress Anna's favorite adviser Biron—whom everyone else detested—Ivan's mother Anna Leopoldovna (Anna-1) deposed him and herself became regent, exploiting the hopes among the Russians that she'd get rid of the Germans. Although she did get rid of Biron she continued using other German advisors, though a few Russians came into play as well. She handled their appointments ineptly, pleasing no one. Then it became apparent she wanted to seize the throne for herself. That was the last straw, and there was a

palace coup. Except for Ivan, Anna Leopoldovna's entire family got sent home to Germany. Ivan spent the rest of his life in prison, before being killed in 1764. (Imagine growing up having no memory of anything other than your prison.)

(So between Sophia and Anna-1, we have two women who almost became empresses, on top of the four who actually *were*.)

The portrait here of Ivan and his mother is not contemporary at all; it's a much later fantasy, showing Ivan as a toddler rather than an infant.

I can't resist mentioning his coinage. The silver coinage did show his portrait; they made a valiant effort to make the portrait look serious. But because the coins were recalled, they are *quite* scarce today.

As such, I can't resist showing off the one I used to own.

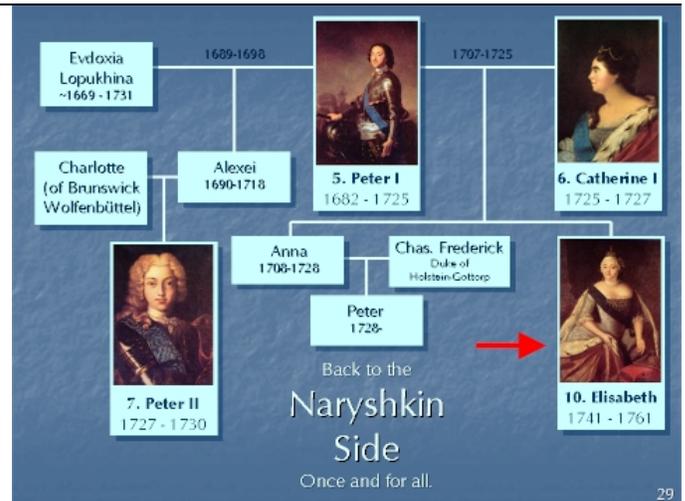


1741 Ivan III Ruble, rare

This coin ended up selling for more any other coin in my collection, with the sole exception of the 12 ruble platinum piece. So you are looking at the second most valuable coin I ever owned.

With the overthrow of Ivan VI in 1741, the Miloslavskiy side of the Romanov family disappears into obscurity.

But if it wasn't a Miloslavskiy who overthrew Ivan, who did it? Well, the last remaining daughter of Peter the Great had finally decided that it was her turn, and so the Germans finally got kicked out.



## Empress Elizabeth 1741-1761

Елизавета Петровна



Elisabeth had learned from Anna's mistakes, and gave Russians a prominent role in her government. In fact, she gave them a more prominent role than anyone had since Peter the Great.

She was extravagant at court, and possessed no moral scruples—Mrs. Grundy was kept well occupied—but even her lovers were Russians.

Finding capable Russians to do jobs that had, since Peter the Great, been given to imported advisors did

much to help Russia feel as if it were a worthy European power.

Things were going well, Russia was fairly prosperous and there were no famines.

But then in 1756 the organic fertilizer collided with the rotating ventilating device.

Our story takes us slightly outside the confines of Imperial Russia to, of all places, *Pittsburgh*. Now Russia is big, and they were working their way into Alaska, but Pittsburgh is just a tiny bit further east into North America than that. But an event that happened here would set the world on fire.

A young colonel of the British colonial militia—who, to be honest, was quite incompetent—got into a skirmish with French forces. The two countries were at peace at the time. The colonel's attack was actually successful, but it was a pyrrhic victory, his position was untenable and he had to retreat, and he retreated to a poorly chosen site and built a poorly-designed and executed fort. The French ultimately counterattacked, and the colonel found himself surrounded. He surrendered, and signed a confession in French—a language he couldn't read—to the effect that his troops had murdered a French officer.

What a fiasco.

This plus a few other incidents ended up plunging Europe into a conflict known as the Seven Years War. Fighting took place in North America--what today we call the French and Indian war--and Asia as well as Europe, and so Winston Churchill (no dummy) would call the Seven Years War the real First World War.

As for that colonel: I said he was incompetent. I didn't say he was stupid. Stupid can't be fixed. But if you're not stupid, you can work on your own incompetence, and he did.

Since his name was George Washington, this was a very good thing for us.

But back to Russia, and Empress Elizabeth.

On entering the Seven Years war in 1757, Russia repeatedly attacked and humiliated Frederick the Great of Prussia; he lost East Prussia quickly in the battle of Kunersdorf.

This, by the way, led to two of Russia's provincial coinages, and you'll see those coins soon.

Frederick the Great was on his last legs towards the end of the war. France, Austria, Sweden and Russia were all on the attack. He was on the verge of simply ceding East Prussia to the Russians in 1761—anticipating the events of 1945—but then he caught a very lucky break, because at this moment, Elizabeth died.

So let's sum up Elizabeth: She understood that Russia at the time needed a firm hand, and was clearly the most capable ruler Russia had had since Peter I. Russia did fairly well under her reign, even if she accomplished what she did by finding good people and delegating.

Only the fact that she was overshadowed by someone who came later causes historians to judge her rather harshly today. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

I have a lot of coins to show you. Let's begin with the smaller regular coinage.

In 1755 and 6, a brief copper and 5 kopek silver series called the Baroque series was introduced. These are the only coins in the Imperial series to be struck with coin, rather than medal, turn, because the designs were nearly identical on both sides.



The "Baroque Series" kopek and silver 5 kopek pieces

Beginning in 1757, we start seeing those large 5 kopek coppers that about 20 years ago were ubiquitous on bourse floors. Of course, the ones that had come out of whatever hoard it was, were from a later reign, but Elizabeth started the series. These coins also came in 1/4 kopek or polushka, 1/2 kopek or denega, kopek, and two kopek denominations, but the five kopek coins are by far the easiest to find. Furthermore, ones from the Ekaterinburg mint are by far the commonest. This coin is very much like those scourges of the bourse floor, except that the obverse has Elizabeth's monogram rather than the later one.



1760 Piatak (5 Kopeks)

Below is a silver quarter ruble, and although almost every ruler made quarter rubles, I very rarely saw one for sale. I jumped on this one fairly early in my serious collecting days, unaware of just how little company it would have before I sold it.



1752 Polupoltinnik (¼ Ruble)

Here is a full ruble, one of two that I owned:



1748 Ruble

And now we come to some coins that were a bit of a mystery to me for a while. Elisabeth issued gold poltinas, rubles and two ruble pieces. I have yet to get my hands on a ruble.



Gold poltina and 2 ruble piece “for use at court”

My references don’t include these with the “mainline” gold coinage, rather they go into another section entirely titled “Coins For Use At Court” which begs one to ask why the royal court had to use special money.

I found out many years later that there was a lot of gambling at court. You might almost think of these as legal-tender poker chips, very *small*, deluxe poker chips. As you can see even the two ruble piece is a bit small for a cent/dime 2x2.

Elizabeth also issued two different “provincial” series, as a result of the Seven Years’ War.

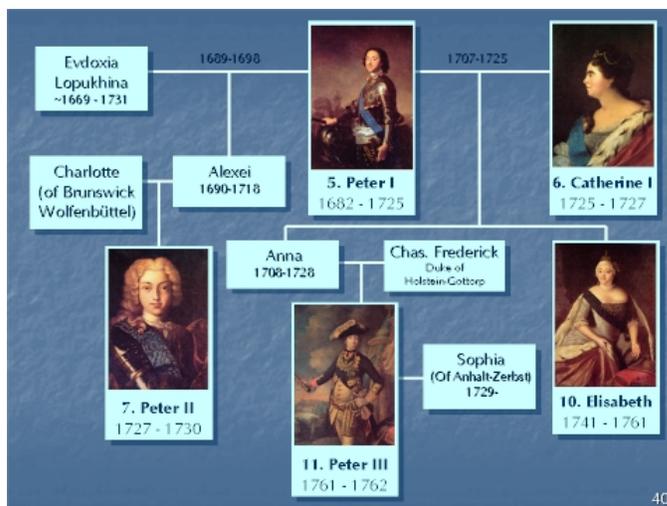
Livonia (present day Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania) was under Russian control, though not too happy about it. It hadn’t yet been converted over to Russian money. (Russia was often slow to fully assimilate new territories.) In the early days of the war, Russian forces gathered there as a springboard into Prussia. Coins of 2, 4, 24, 48, and 96 kopeks were minted in silver for use there; those corresponded to indigenous denominations, 96 kopeks made up one livonaise.

In Prussia itself, soliduses (solidi?) were issued as well as 1, 2, 3, 6, 18 grosh and 1/6 and 1/3 talers. I have a solidus and a six grosh, this is the six grosh.



Russian Provincial piece for Prussia, six Grosh  
(At last, a coin everyone here can read!)

We’ve come, now, to the end of Elizabeth’s two decade reign.



I said that Frederick the Great was bailed out of his tough spot when Elizabeth died. How is that?

Look who took over. Elizabeth had selected the last remaining grandson of Peter the Great—remember the one who was just a toddler when Anna took

over? This was the son of Anna-3 who had died shortly after giving birth to him.

## Peter III 1761-1762

Elizabeth had brought Peter (the grandson) to Russia, and tried to groom him for the job. She had even arranged for his marriage to Sophie of Anhalt-Zerbst.

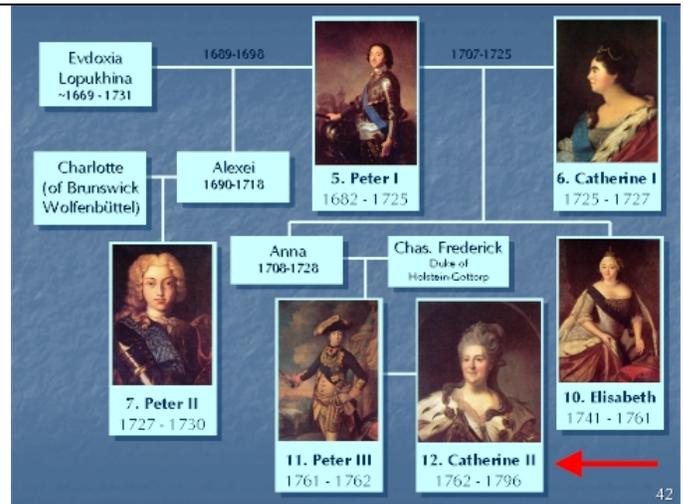
But look where Peter was raised. Remember when I told you that Holstein would become important? This Peter may have been Peter the Great's grandson and an impeccable choice on paper, but since his mother, his sole connection to Russia, had died within days of his birth, Peter grew up as a German and never cared for Russia.

Peter III was a devoted fan of Frederick the Great. But when he came to the throne, Russia was at war with Frederick. So, he immediately withdrew from all Prussian lands and signed a peace treaty under the most humiliating terms. On the verge of triumph, Russia had virtually surrendered. Suddenly, Prussia and its ally England had won the war, and this is probably in large part *why* Frederick is now known as "Frederick the Great."

Peter then began to plan a war on Denmark. This made no sense from a Russian perspective but it would benefit Holstein. Peter simply thought of Russia as a tool to help Holstein. Talk about the tail wagging the dog!

Add that to his horrific personality: Immature, obsessed with military parades, prone to humiliating his officers, and it was *enough*. He got pushed out barely six and a half months after acceding, the shortest reign of any of the Romanovs.

But in an absolute monarchy you can't push someone out without some leadership, someone to replace the guy you're pushing out. Who was he?



Wrong question! Who was *she*? *She* was Peter's not-so-beloved wife, Sophie of Anhalt Zerbst, who had long since taken the name Catherine on converting to Orthodoxy.

## Catherine II (The Great) 1762-1796

Екатерина Алексеевна II (Великая)



Catherine the Great, who absolutely deserved that name, ruled over thirty four years, longer than the other three empresses put together.

She was born 21 April 1729 in Anhalt-Zerbst, and was married to the future Peter III in 1745. Unlike Peter she enthusiastically embraced Russian culture, converting to Orthodoxy and taking the name Ekaterina: Catherine. That adopted Russian-ness plus maturity of character and self-discipline made her quite a contrast with him.

It took *nine years* to get a child, Paul, out of this union, and it's likely Peter wasn't the father. (Can you blame Catherine?) But it was enough for Elizabeth, who took Paul under her wing.

When the time came to make her move, Catherine had very little difficulty pushing Peter out of power; he was taken prisoner and a few days later, probably *not* on Catherine's orders, killed by his guards.

It was expected, once Paul turned 18, that Catherine would step down, basically behaving as though she were a regent, but she never did so. Paul came to bitterly resent his mother.

Catherine was able to conquer the Crimea, finally giving Russia a port on the Black Sea, and pushed deep into Ottoman territory in the Balkans in the early 1770s, something Peter the Great had not managed to do, and these southern conquests led to two interesting provincial coinage issues.

She liberalized quite a bit, beginning to bring the French Enlightenment to Russia (she was a patron of Voltaire), creating the intelligentsia that would later become a headache to the imperial family.

However, she had to deal with a peasant/cossack rebellion in 1771, and then the French revolution came about, altering her attitudes considerably.

Again, this is someone one could talk about for a long time without doing any justice.

She died on the Sixth of November, 1796.

To sum her up: One would have to be a consummate idiot not to regard Catherine as one of the greatest female rulers of all time. Indeed, she is one of the greatest monarchs of all time, period. That "Great" on her name is not a joke, it is not affirmative action or PC, it was well earned.

When Catherine died, Paul became Tsar, and acted out his frustrations and even hatred of his mother. One thing he did was issue a new decree defining the order of succession in detail, and made sure that no woman would ever sit on the throne again. And he got his wish, thanks in large part to better

medical knowledge leading to better health and more surviving children.

So now let us take up Catherine the Great's coinage, which is endlessly fascinating. I owned a **lot** of it.

Remember the large five kopek coppers? They were just part of a series that came out in polushka, denга, kopek, and 2 kopeks as well. All but the five kopek pieces depicted St. George killing the dragon. This is a 2 kopek specimen, and if you look closely, this particular example is overstruck on one of Peter III's pieces, a *four* kopek coin.



Regular Copper 2 Kopeks

(Peter III had come up with the horrific idea of overstriking all the copper coinage at twice the prior face value; this was well in progress when he got the boot. Catherine reversed the decision, re-overstriking, for instance, the 4 kopek pieces as 2 kopek pieces again.)

But by *far* the most common denomination in the standard Catherine copper series is the 5 kopeks. As I mentioned these were the scourge of the bourse floor many years ago. The ones in that hoard were all from the Yekaterinburg Mint. Finding examples from any of the other mints, or one of the easily detected fakes Sweden made during a war with Russia, could be a bit of a challenge. I did manage to get most of them.



Bourse Floor Pollution  
Catherine II Piatak from Ekaterinburg Mint (EM)

I still own one example from the mint in Crimea, the Tauridia Mint, TM. It is considerably rarer than those Yekaterinburg pieces, it cost \$700 even back when the others cost \$20.



1787 Taridia (TM) Piatak, *much* harder to find than the Ekaterinburg pieces.

The planchet is obviously not of the highest quality, but that was typical of the times.

And now for silver. Catherine had four distinct portrait varieties on rubles, fewer on smaller coins. Shown here one of the rubles that I sold, which had the third portrait variety. I still own a couple of very ratty 25 kopek pieces.



1780 Ruble, third portrait (of four)

Silver coins below 25 kopeks were regarded as mere “change” and had a different format. Notice we *still* see pellets for the benefit of the illiterate, and on the 15 and 20 kopeks, a numeral. The ten was still called a “grivennik” and bore no eagle.



10, 15 and 20 kopeks, “small change”

There were regular gold issues in five and ten ruble denominations, but even though these are far more common than previous rulers’ gold, I never managed to get one.

I do have court gold “gambling chips.” This time I’m missing the two ruble piece.



Catherine II Court Gold, Poltina and Ruble

I also own this Eliasberg specimen. (I hasten to point out this is not to the same scale as the others!)



I’ll bet you didn’t expect to see the name “Eliasberg” in this article.

Catherine had a great number of provincial issues.

These coins were issued as Russia pushed into Moldova and Wallachia in and near modern-day Romania during the war against the Turks. These are 1 Para/3 Denga pieces, thus the coins had dual denominations, Wallachian and Russian.



Moldavia/Wallachia Issue, 1 Para/3 Dengas

When Catherine conquered the Crimea, she left the old Khan in charge for a few years as a protectorate. He issued copper coins to the same standards as Russia, like this kopek.



Crimean Kopek

Note this entire kopek coin is in the Arabic script, even the date, which marks the beginning of the Khan’s reign, not the date of issue.

This is a Kyrmis, equivalent to five kopeks (and the same large size). This photograph is a bit larger than it should be, but it deserves to be. This is one of the finest examples of this type known to exist.



Crimean Kyrmis (5 kopeks). One of the finest known to exist

After the khan died, there was another series of “Tauridian” coinage, more Russian in appearance, including some small-denomination silver. I never owned any. Later on, of course, the Tauride mint produced regular issue coppers as I previously showed.

And finally, my favorite, the Siberian series. These came about because a silver mine at Kolyvan, in the Altai region near the western tip of Mongolia, produced a lot of waste copper, copper which still had a notable quantity of silver in it. It was decided to make copper coins out of this waste, but they’d be somewhat lightweight compared to the regular series on account of that silver. So a mint was set up in Suzun, 275 kilometers away (just down the road by Siberian standards) and a new design was created.

The result was a series, polushka, denga, kopek, 2, 5 and even 10 kopeks. The coins were smaller than their corresponding mates in the regular series, but the 10 was still larger than the already-quite-large regular five kopek pieces.

They were initially marked “Kolyvanskiy Med” on the edge, but that later became the letters KM near the monogram, which therefore *looked* like a mint

mark and confused collectors for a long time. (Med, the word for copper, starts with the same letter as “moneta.”)

[A linguistic interjection: The letters A, K, M, O, and T mean pretty much the same thing in Cyrillic as in the Latin alphabet, just be careful to consistently pronounce your vowels like the Spanish do. Other letters, like E and C, come close, and there are a few that only *look* like their Latin counterparts, like B, В, P, X, H, and Y. Those will bite the unaware in the hindquarters.]

Eventually, as the miners got better at not leaving any silver in the waste copper, the Suzun mint started producing standard issue coins in the 1780s. But they continued using KM, now really as a mint mark. In 1831 Suzun switched to the CM mint mark (Cyrillic C is *always* pronounced like S and never like K) mint mark.

Here is a 5 kopek piece with no KM on either side of the monogram; it’s a coin with the lettered edge. The early edge lettered pieces are *considerably* rarer than the later pieces, only a handful exist of the smaller denominations.



Siberian 5 Kopeks, Lettered Edge (no KM)

Here are a polushka, and denga, with KM markings. I had a 1 and 2 kopek as well but those didn’t look as nice.



Siberian KM polushka and denga.

This is a five kopek piece. Now it becomes obvious that the motif is a modification of the Siberian coat of arms, depicting two sables holding up a cartouche with the denomination and year.



Siberian 5 kopeks with KM mark

And here is my favorite, a ten kopek piece. Almost too big to fit on the slide! This one I kept, and therefore was able to photograph it recently, it is, in fact, the coin I talked about in my article in the June newsletter.



Siberian 10 Kopeks, 1777 -- Killer!!

So that's the end.

I don't collect Russian Imperial any more, but it's still of vicarious interest...and one aspect of it is its ties to Russian history and that remarkable run of empresses...especially Catherine the Great.

### Ivan VI's Eventual Fate

When Elizabeth overthrew Ivan in 1741, he was placed in prison. He remained there through her

entire reign, and was nearly forgotten. His guards had standing orders to kill him if anyone tried to break him out. This finally happened in 1764, as people looking to depose Catherine II decided Ivan could lend their cause some legitimacy. The old standing orders were still in effect and Ivan was killed at the age of 24, having never known the world that was outside of prison.

### A Note About the Coin Illustrations.

Many of the pictures here are actually scans of coins I no longer own. Others are old scans of coins I still have, yet others are actual photographs I took a week or so before the meeting (obviously also of coins I still have). Those have gray backgrounds and tend to look better. Someday I will remove the other coins from holders and photograph them.

My scans had one advantage over photos; they're to scale. A coin one inch in diameter gave me a 1200 pixel image; if it was only half an inch, it's 600 pixels across. I cropped the scans down to fit the coins, and saved them at those sizes. By scaling consistently to go onto the slides and these pictures, I preserved relative sizes; if the picture looks twice as big as another, that's the correct relative sizes of the coins. For photographs, however, I position the camera to make the coin almost fill the sensor, so they will all tend to look alike in size (and nearly 4000 pixels across) unless I deliberately do something different. When modifying the power point slides for the talk, I sometimes replaced a scan with a photo, but I tried to maintain at least the approximate scale of the coin. In one case I did deliberately oversize the coin image.

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A postscript: Someone asked after the meeting where I had got the portraits from. Thereby hangs a tale. When I first decided to try to do a "Portrait Ruble" exhibit in 2003, I had two problems: Writing *briefly* enough for an exhibit, and locating good portraits of the emperors and empresses. It looked like I was going to have to scan in black-and-white pictures out of books in many cases, if I could even find pictures of the more obscure monarchs. I took a break from writing and went to a flea market, and—miracle!—someone had a deck of *color* pictures of Russian rulers all the way back to the 800s in trading card (baseball card) size. "How much do you want for those?" "A dollar." I didn't haggle! I would have happily paid a hundred bucks. (I eventually won my first best of show award, Kansas City, Spring 2005, with those pictures!)

As for the brevity issue, I obviously still struggle with it.