

## COUNTERSTAMPS; A NUMISMATIC WINDOW INTO OUR HISTORICAL PAST

One of the many reasons that we as a group and the collecting fraternity as a whole, pursue, acquire and collect coins, is the link these coins can provide to our past. While any coin from the early United States Federal period provides fascination and daydreaming about the era of it's manufacture and the possible historical figures who might have hurried it along on it's journey as payment in commerce, a counterstamped coin can actually be a historical, numismatic "footprint" of a specific person or event, without the conjecture as to where and who it might have come into contact with.

There are many different ways to collect counterstamped coins. Some are collected by location such as a particular city or state. Some people collect by a certain era such as the "Hard Times" era circa 1833-1844, the Civil war period from 1861-1865 or the "Gay Nineties" during 1890-1900. I myself collect by type of host coin, ones stamped on U.S. Bust coinage; on halves and quarters in particular.

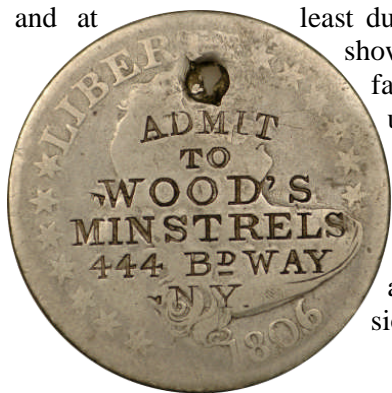
Recent articles by W. David Perkins on known counterstamps on U.S. bust dollars, (see JRJ 16/2 2/2005 Pg. 26 & JRJ 14/1 12/2001 Pg. 15), show a small part of how counterstamped coins can tie us to a place and time in history. While the previous articles dealt only with U.S. Bust Dollars, this article will deal only with selected U.S. Bust Quarters.

The information included in this article was derived from listings in *MERCHANT and PRIVATELY COUNTERMARKED COINS* by Gregory G. Brunk © 2003; (World Exonumia Press) & the *STANDARD CATALOG OF UNITED STATES TOKENS 1700-1900* by Russell Rulau © 1999; (Krause Publications). Both of these works are a tremendous wealth of historical information as it pertains to coins and tokens and are wholeheartedly recommended to all coin collectors, not just those who collect counterstamps. Additional information was found in the *STANDARD CATALOG OF WORLD COINS—19TH CENTURY 1801-1900* © 2004; (Krause Publications).

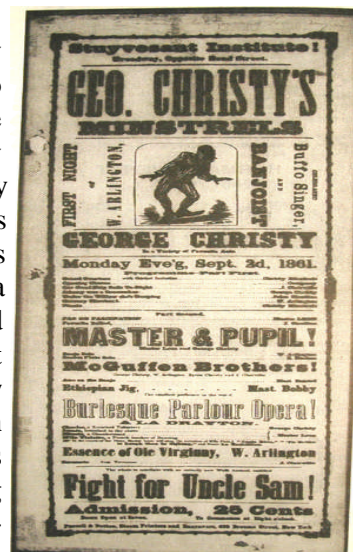
Ahead are 15 different examples which demonstrate the way counterstamped coins can provide a link to our past and open a window to another time...

1. "ADMIT/TO/WOOD'S/MINSTRELS/444 BD WAY/N.Y." on an 1806/5 B-1 (also found on a low grade 1796 variety unknown)

Wood's Minstrels was a traveling minstrel troupe originally formed by Edwin P. Christy in or about 1842. The group first performed in Buffalo NY until they moved to New York City in 1846. They performed at the American Opera House (472 Broadway) at least until 1854 when Christy retired. In 1853 An offshoot of the group became known as George Christy & Wood's Minstrels. Later, this group became simply Woods Minstrels and at



least during 1855-1857 performed at the address shown in this counterstamp. We know for a fact that this coin was countermarked and used as an admission ticket during that time. The Wood's Minstrels built a new building, which opened on Oct. 15th 1857 at 561-563 Broadway. A token was then produced showing this new building and was used from then on as an admission ticket in lieu of counterstamped coins.



REPRODUCTION COURTESY OF BRUNK CATALOG



**2. "H. SCHOONMAKER" on a 1805 B-3 (also known on a 1806 B-9)**

It is thought that this stamp is from William H. Schoonmaker who had a military cutlery and fancy hardware store located at 181 Broadway in New York City in 1829. He also dealt in guns, pistols, rifles and other military goods as well as silver-plated Britannia. There is however no listing for him after 1830 so it appears that this coin was stamped prior to that date.

**3. "DR. Wm. YOUNG / No 152 SPRUCE ST / PHILA." on a 1805 variety unknown (also known on a 1806 B-9)**

Dr. Young operated an "infirmary for diseases of the skin" at 33 South Fourth St. in Philadelphia PA in 1838, then was located at 152 North Spruce from 1841-1857 and moved to 416 North Spruce after that. He advertised at various times as a physician, chemist and oculist. This particular coin was stamped during the time he was located at the 152 North Spruce address. Listings in both the Brunk & Rulau tomes say this stamp is also known on a 1802 quarter! Obviously this is a mistake and the 1806 listed above was the one meant.

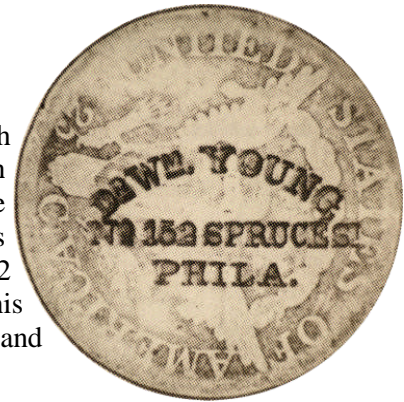


PHOTO COURTESY OF BRUNK CATALOG



PHOTO COURTESY OF BRUNK CATALOG

**4. "C.C. CLARK / NASHUA, N.H. / (2 Pomegranates) / 1859" on a 1806 B-2 or B-3 (only one known on a bust quarter)**

This is the advertising stamp of Carlos C. Clark, a gunsmith from Windsor VT., who made flintlock and percussion rifles. He moved from Windsor Vermont to Nashua New Hampshire in 1859 and as this coin is the only example stamped with 1859, I believe it was stamped in 1859 to commemorate the opening of his new gunsmith shop. He moved again to Manchester New Hampshire in 1863 to open a new office but continued to operate both locations until 1868.



REPRODUCTION COURTESY OF BRUNK CATALOG

**5. "J.M. TAYLOR / BROKER / CHATHAM ST / COR. JAMES N.Y." on a 1806 B-3 (also known on 1805, 1815, 1818 and 1837 quarters)**

Taylor was located at 169 Chatham St. in New York City in 1855 and was a prolific counterstamper of silver coins. It is not known what kind of broker he was, but there is a possibility that he was a broker of currency, which would add another numismatic slant to his legacy. There are other countermarks listing Brooklyn L.I. as his location (known on 1818, 1819 and 1834 quarters). He is not listed in city directories after 1857 so this coin was certainly stamped within the 1855-1857 time frame.





**6. “VOTE THE LAND / FREE” on a 1815 B-1 (unknown on any other Bust Quarter)**

While it had been believed this stamp was somehow tied to the FREE SOIL PARTY in the presidential election of 1848, it is now thought to possibly be connected with the NATIONAL REFORM ASSOCIATION which was formed in 1844. This was a minor party in the election of 1844 whose platform advocated the giving of free land to homesteaders, prohibiting the seizure of land for failure to pay debts and “land limitation” to reduce the proportion of land controlled by the wealthy.

**7. “HOUCKS / PANACEA / BALTIMORE” on a 1818 B-1 (also known on 1805(2), 1807, 1819 quarters)**

These are one of the most popular counterstamps collected as part of the “Hard Times” token series, which are generally found on bust half dollars. Dr. Jacob Houck came to Baltimore Maryland in 1828 and opened a dry goods business at 121 West Baltimore St. It wasn’t until 1834 that he began selling “Botanic Panacea” for \$1.50 a bottle and advertised in the 1835 to 1842 business directories. This Panacea was sold at various business address locations including 16 Hanover St., which was listed in this full page ad in Matchett’s *Baltimore Director* in 1842, up until the 1850’s. Henry T. Houck became proprietor of the firm in 1851 and in later years probably licensed it for others to sell as there is an 1855 advertisement in a Nashville Tennessee directory by a A.G. Goodlet for “Houck’s Improved Panacea & Goodlet’s Vegetable Lineament” listed at No. 29 1/2 Cherry St. Nashville Tennessee.

Prepared Solely from Vegetable Matter, by  
**JACOB HOUCK,**  
BALTIMORE.

Which may be taken with perfect safety by all ages and in all diseases; its uses are for the following diseases—Dyspepsia, Loss of Appetite, Indigestion, Inflammation of the Stomach, Heart Burn, Diarrhea, Dysentery or Flux, Piles, Fistula, Obstructed Menstruation, Ague and Fever, Bilious or Remittent Fever, Typhus Fever, Scarlet Fever, Small Pox, Erysipelas or St. Anthony's Fire, Ankle, Pleurisy, Measles, Yellow Fever, Costiveness, Wind on the Stomach or Bowels, Cholera Morbus, Consumption, Influenza, Colds, Coughs, Inflammation of the Chest, Hay, Gout, Rheumatism, Inflammatory Sore Throat or Quinsy, Whooping Cough, Thrush or Sore Mouth, Putrid Sore Throat, Dropsy, Inflammation of the Heart, Dropsy, Rickets, Diseases of the Liver, Jaundice, Difficulty of making Urine, Gleet, Hysteria, Nervous and Scrophulous Affections of the Members and Ligaments, Mercerial and Venereal Diseases, Ulcers, Sores, Affections of the Skin, and all diseases arising from Impure Blood, &c.

Price per Bottle, \$1.50.

The above medicine can be obtained at  
No. 16, corner of German and Hanover streets,  
With proper directions for using.

A liberal discount made to persons who buy to sell.



ACTUAL BOTTLE THAT CONTAINED HOUCK'S PANACEA (FROM THE AUTHOR'S COLLECTION)

REPRODUCTION COURTESY OF BRUNK CATALOG



**8. “H. REES” on a 1819 B-4 (unknown on any other Bust Quarter)**

Henry Rees appears in the Philadelphia, PA 1810-1850 censuses. There is an advertisement for a blacksmith named H. Rees at Arch St. near Broad in the 1837 directory. Other countermarked coins are sometimes found with “PHILa” in a straight line below the curved “H. REES” punch. As of this time there are no countermarked coins known with a later date than 1838.

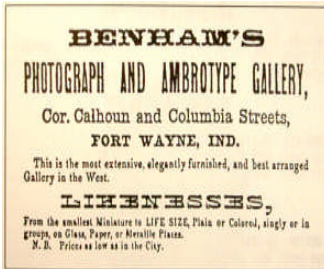


**9. “DR. KIMBALL / DENTIST / BOSTON” on a 1824 B-1 (unknown on any other Bust Quarter)**

Although at this time nothing has been found to pinpoint an exact location for Dr. Kimball’s practice or a specific time period that he operated, with the amount of information contained in this counterstamp it is only a matter of time until the answers are found. This type of stamp with a name, occupation and town are the easiest to research and once a match is found will generally go up in value.

**10. “B. H. BENHAM / ARTIST / FT. WAYNE / IND” on a 1825 B-2 or B-3 (unknown on any other Bust Quarter)**

“Artists” were also photographers utilizing Ambrotype and Daguerreotype methods before and during the Civil war. B.H. Benham’s studio was located at 106 Columbia St. from 1858-1862.



REPRODUCTION COURTESY OF BRUNK CATALOG

As there were no radio or television advertising venues yet available, stamping a coin with your name, location and type of business and passing it out in change, would allow many people to see it and remember to think of your business when the time came for needing your particular service.

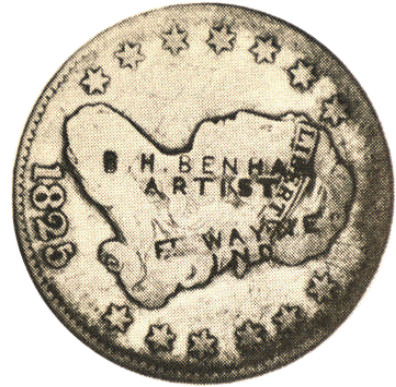


PHOTO COURTESY OF B&M, Van Ormer sale 9/1985 lot 2535



**11. “W. LEVIS” on a 1834 B-1 (also known on an 1818 and 1825 quarter)**

William Levis who was born in 1785, was an early silversmith in Philadelphia PA. Before he died in 1842, he was listed in the 1832-1833 city directories as a carrier located at 292 Filbert St. and in 1836-1837 as an oil & leather merchant at No. 228 3rd Street. There is also a curved box punch with “W. Levis” known on bust halves but so far this type has not been found on any bust quarters.

**12. “GRAFFORT HOUSE / DUBUQUE IO on a 1835 variety unknown (unknown on any other coin)**

The Graffort House, an elegant hotel, opened in the spring of 1858 in Dubuque Iowa. By 1863, *The Daily Herald* reported that: “Mr. Graffort runs an omnibus to and from the trains and boats, free of charge, and will deal fairly by his customers in every way.” By 1880 however, the area did not seem suitable for a hotel and it was eventually turned into a shoe factory.



PHOTO COURTESY OF B&M, Van Ormer sale 9/1985 lot 2673

**13. “R. FLANAGAN’S / PUNCH (punchbowl & ladle) / 112 N. 6TH ST.”  
on a 1807 B-1 (unknown on any other Bust Quarter)**

Robert Flanagan operated the Lyons Hotel at 112 N. 6th St. in Philadelphia PA in 1837. The hotel had a drinking establishment located inside that was named the “Vulcan Hall” and it is thought that this is where the “punch” was sold. Directories for 1835-1857 list the 112 address but the address was renumbered in 1858 to #156. While most of the marked coins are on early Spanish colonial 2 reales, a few stamped tokens with dates of 1848 are known so these were probably produced between 1848 to 1857.



*PHOTO COURTESY OF B&M,  
Van Ormer sale 9/1985 lot 2647*



*PHOTO COURTESY OF  
Standard Catalog of World Coins  
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**14. FLEUR-DE-LYS symbol on a 1828 B-1 ( also known on an 1820 B-4 Bust Quarter)**

These counterstamps are thought to originate from Puerto Rico in 1884, as many foreign coins were marked with this symbol to legitimize them for circulation in that country. The coins were redeemed in 1894 prior to the Spanish-American war, when the island was ceded to the United States after the Spanish loss.



*PHOTO COURTESY OF  
Standard Catalog of World Coins  
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**15. (KEY) symbol on a 1835, variety unknown (unknown on any other Bust Quarter)**

During the Cuban revolution of 1872-1877, it is thought that these marks were applied and used as a fund raising device by the revolutionary troops. Usually these stamps are encountered only on Mexican coins.

While Large Cents are the most commonly encountered counterstamped coins, many other countermarked coins too numerous to list in this short article can be found on all denominations of Bust silver as well as Bust Quarters. I have been compiling, tracking and collecting the following countermarked bust coin series for several years:

- 1796—1838 U.S. Bust Quarters—————Currently I have over 135 different stamps listed.
- 1807—1836 U.S. Capped Bust Halves—————Currently I have over 350 different stamps listed.
- 1794—1804 U.S. Bust Dollars—————Currently I have over 100 different stamps listed.

If anyone owns or has an interest in counterstamped coins I would like to hear from them and I would be happy to share my information. If you have a coin and just want to see if it is a known counterstamp feel free to contact me anytime.

Unlike the much debated reasons for the E & L counterstamped quarters, the stamps listed in this article have a very identifiable purpose. Still others provide a mystery yet to be solved and a link to the past to be completed.