

# From The Beginning

by Charlie Catlett

“Dear Mr.....

It occurs to me it is about time that Sonoma County and the Redwood Empire region have its own Numismatic Club, so I am writing you to find out whether you would be interested in joining such a club.”

With that simple letter Henry T. Wrede helped found the Redwood Empire Coin Club. The first meeting was on Saturday March 16, 1949, and there were eighteen charter members to begin with. A one paragraph announcement placed in *The Numismatic Scrapbook* in May 1949 stated that meetings “would be held the last Friday of each month at the shop of Wm. Lambert, Secy., 1435 Town & Country Drive”.



**Henry T. Wrede**

It didn't take long for the club to get busy. Membership in the California State Numismatic Association (itself only three years old at the time) was accepted on March 25, 1950, and membership in the American Numismatic Association was accepted on December 30, 1950. By April 1951 the club was involved locally with National Coin Week, enlisting the aid of two local newspapers for publicity. And on April 4-6, 1952, the club hosted the 10th semi-annual California State Numismatic Convention, with over 2000 attendees! Newspaper and radio spots helped make it one of the most successful events to date— not bad for a three year old club.

Over the years the club seems to have wandered about the Redwood Empire. The first few meetings were actually held on Mondays at the homes of members. By June 1950 the club began using the Tap Room of the Grace Brothers Brewery at Second and Wilson Streets in Santa Rosa. It was a favorite Santa Rosa gathering place for civic meetings and men-only socializing. The club apparently enjoyed it as well, since free beer was served and the Tap Room was used for over three years.

Attendance at early meetings averaged ten to twenty members. By the late 1950s and 1960s attendance was up to sixty or seventy members at a meeting, with a club total of about 150 members. Full-time coin dealers like Earl Parker would often come to meetings, and gold coins were often purchased *by the roll*. The only shop in Santa Rosa to purchase coins at the time was on 4th Street below the Occidental Hotel. It was actually a Religious Store, but it also had some stamps and coins for sale. (Reverend John S. Bain of the Book & Bible Store was RECC Member #42).



**Earl Parker**

Over the years the club has had a variety of interesting and exciting events. Although there are gaps in our records, some of these are highlighted here.

- ◆ April 20-26, 1951: The American Numismatic Association and the R.E.C.C. had a National Coin Week display at the Santa Rosa Chamber of Commerce. Four tables were set up with displays of U.S. coins (complete sets of Indian cents through Standing Liberty Quarters), silver/gold certificates, foreign coins, Pioneer gold, pieces of eight, etc. Nine club members contributed, and there were also displays at American Trust Bank, Exchange Bank, and Gensler & Lee Jewelers. Club Member Bill Lambert gave a 15 minute talk on radio station KSRO.
- ◆ February 1952: Earl Parker displayed a complete set of proof Liberty (Barber) halves, which he offered for sale to the club for a 'mere' \$345 (\$18,000 in 1999 value)
- ◆ May 1952: First attempt by the club to organize a Junior Club
- ◆ August 1953: Club raises \$75 over several months of benefit auctions, proceeds going to the Crippled Children's Fund to send a crippled child to summer camp.
- ◆ July 1965: Member Paul Snedaker gave a talk "on the whys and wherefores of the new Teletype system of buying and selling coins".

- ◆ June 1965: Club President Ben Hall resigns due to business conflicts; Bill Feist is elected President. September 1965: Bill Feist is drafted into the Army; Marjorie Rogers is elected president!
- ◆ October 1966: “For the first time in its 17 years of membership in the ANA, we took advantage of their Audio-Visual Education Program”. Slide set #8 on Ancient Greek Coin Type Sets was presented. Several others were presented over the ensuing year.
- ◆ January 1990: First coin photo to appear in RECC Newsletter: ancient Athens Owl
- ◆ June 1990: A vault in Des Moines, Iowa was opened to inspect a hoard of 1000 Iowa Commemorative Half Dollars. RECC members Mike Turrini and Jan Henke were on a panel inspecting the coins! An article was in Numismatic News.
- ◆ May 1992: RECC 500th Meeting. A special auction was held to benefit the club. There was a big birthday cake, and eight special displays of coins, medals, and wooden nickels.
- ◆ June 1992: First reported Youth Meeting
- ◆ July 1997: Secretary Charlie Catlett ushers in the computer age . The newsletter is produced using computer-generated images, and photo scanning soon follows.
- ◆ March 1999: The Santa Rosa City Council unanimously votes to issue a proclamation in recognition of the Redwood Empire Coin Club’s 50th Anniversary. At the March 16 City Council Meeting, Club President Merle Avila proudly accept the Proclamation on the Club’s behalf.

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