

THE BECHTLER HOUSE AND COLLECTION EXHIBITS

THE NORM JENKINS BECHTLER GOLD COLLECTION.

Norm's wife, Betty Jenkins will be at this special display of certified gold Bechtler coins. Certified by NGC in special certified label holders.

See updated information for the Bechtler House and Historic Park: Home to America's first one-dollar gold coin. The mint site is located in Rutherfordton, NC

THE BECHTLER HOUSE

Home to America's first one-dollar gold coin! Rutherford County in the 1830's had dirt roads, horse-drawn carriages, and a community on the brink of an economic boom. The Bechtler Family moved to North Carolina right when gold fever was hitting the state. Local miners and businessmen appealed to the U.S. Government to establish a mint to meet the needs of the burgeoning gold industry. Congress ignored the request. Christopher Bechtler did not. During the 1830s the Bechtlers minted more than \$2.24 million dollars in gold coins, stimulating commerce in the Southeast and leaving a permanent legacy to both Rutherford County and American history. In 2015, the original 1837 Bechtler House was purchased and today is a heritage center. Open to the public and showcases period artifacts and exhibits that transport visitors back to the 1830s and tell the Bechtler Story. The house also serves as the headquarters of the NC Gold Trail, which connects over 27 counties with historical significance from the NC gold rush. The mint site is Located at 362 Gilboa Church Rd., off U.S. Hwy 221, three miles north of the Bechtler House. For more info: 828-286-9977. Web site: www.visitNCGold.com

BECHTLER HOUSE EXHIBITS:

Bechtler's original coin press; the only known Bechtler Rifle in existence; Bechtler coin set; Bechtlers's Legacy and the man who minted America's first one-dollar gold coin. North Carolina's gold history in the early 1800s; UNC-TV's Emmy-nominated documentary on "GOLD FEVER & the BECHTLER MINT"; Bechtler's 1840s square grand piano; Bechtler as a gunsmith.

***SEE A SPECIAL DISPLAY TABLE: BRNA 59TH ANNUAL
CONVENTION AUGUST 24TH- 26th***

HE STARTED HIS CAREER WITH THE FLIP OF A COIN

And he's been in the money since

It was a hot day and Norman Jenkins and his school buddies decided to flip a coin to see who was going to shell out for the drinks.

Norman lost, or so it seemed. The machine kicked out change that included a V-nickel worth \$3.

That was the beginning of a hobby that was about to get serious.

"I started reading a little about coins, doing a little trading here and there. Just fooling around," Norman said. "I developed a pretty good eye for valuable coins."

One day Norman and his father stopped at a service station in Ellenboro on their way to Spartanburg. A man at the station said he had a V-nickel and an Indian Head penny he wanted to sell. Norman gave him \$30 for the nickel and \$1 for the penny. Norman's Dad wasn't impressed.

"You have less sense than I thought you had," the elder Jenkins told Norman.

Later that day on the way back, Norman stopped at the home of another coin collector, presented his new purchases and asked for a price.

"I can't give you the top price for 'em but I'll give you \$100," the dealer said.

Norman's dad had to change his opinion.



NORMAN AND BETTY with their collection of rare gold coins from the Bechtler Mint. The Mint struck the first gold dollar ever produced in America at a site two miles north of Rutherfordton on U.S. Hwy 221. The year was 1831 and North Carolina was leading the nation in gold mining. Things changed dramatically in 1849 when a miner stumbled on gold in the American River in California. The Great Gold Rush of '49 was on and history was in the making.

HE STARTED HIS CAREER WITH THE FLIP OF A COIN (continued)

“You have more sense than I thought you had,” he said, laughing about the discovery.

Norman’s hobby was to present many more exciting finds. There was the fellow who wanted to sell a coin he had accepted to cover a \$50 bet in a poker game. Norman gave him \$50. A call to a collector in Dayton, Ohio brought an offer of \$1700!

“He told me to just mail it to him,” Norman recalled. “I told him I’d go him one better and personally deliver it. I didn’t waste any time getting to Dayton.”

Coins from the old Rutherford County Bechtler’s Mint have played a big part in Norman’s most recent activities. Over the years, he has collected a small fortune in the coins. His collection was among those featured at a recent American Money Show in Charlotte.

Bechtler coins show up in the strangest places. Less than six

months ago, a man from Cherryville brought in a coin he thought was just a piece of old metal. He found it while tearing out a ceiling in an old home.

“It was a \$5 gold Bechtler coin,” Norman said. “I offered him \$5,000 on the spot. Scared him to death. He said he’d get back with me if he decided to sell. I haven’t heard a word from him.”

Norman and his wife, Betty, rent space for their coin business in Butler’s Jewelry Store in Forest City. They’re open Wednesday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. and on Saturday from 9 to 2.

It’s a good life for two retirees, she from Tanners and he from A & P. Company and the Rutherford Hospital. Norman says he still gets excited when he comes across a coin he’s been looking for. And Betty looks forward to the short week at the store every Wednesday.

The above article appeared in the Rutherford County Chamber of Commerce (VISION) Spring 2007.