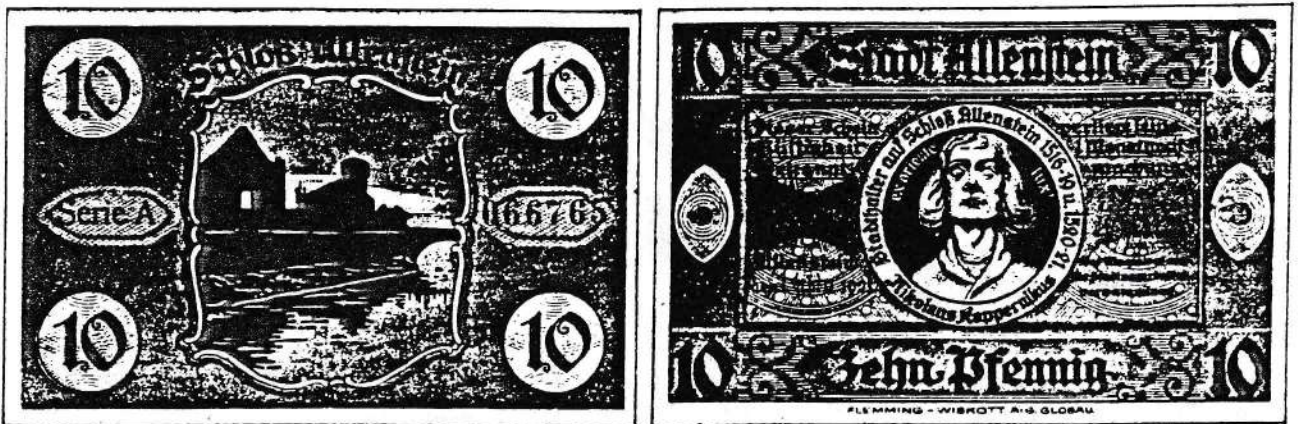


ASTRO NOTGELD

For many of our members who collect astronomy wherever it can be found, German notgeld offers a variety of interesting items. But what, you may ask, is notgeld?



During the First World War a shortage of regular currency made it necessary for many German towns, cities and communities to issue emergency coins and paper money. These monetary curiosities are known collectively as notgeld which means necessity money. Both the metal and paper notgeld are collected extensively by numismatists in Europe and North America.

From the numismatic point of view it is safe to presume that little attention was paid to notgeld when it first made its appearance. The nation was involved in a fateful military struggle, economic conditions were in a perpetual state of crisis and notgeld was being used to buy the necessities of daily life. From 1914 until 1918 most Germans were concerned with more pressing matters than the collecting of paper money.

After the Armistice, however, there was some opportunity for pursuits other than sheer survival. Although the economy was in chaos and much political turmoil existed, some people began to show an interest in acquiring examples of the emergency money issued during the war. When collectors' requests for specimens came to the issuing authorities, some of them seized upon the occasion to raise some much needed fiscal revenue. At first the old plates were put back on the presses and collectors were obliged for a small fee. It was not long though before notgeld was being produced specifically to take advantage of the growing collector demand.

As a rule, there was nothing sinister or underhanded in the manufacture of notgeld for the collector market. Although the notes had the trappings of legitimacy such as "good for" clauses, face values, dates, seals and signatures, their status was only slightly above that of souvenirs. Even the designs of the notes reflected a spirit of lightheartedness which suggests that the notgeld of this period was not intended to be taken as a serious fiduciary instrument.

The custom arose of issuing colorful sets or series of notes which were sold for a few marks. It was not uncommon for notgeld to have expiration dates which terminated their short-lived period of validity. Instances of notes being released after the expiration date have been reported. The possibility of notgeld being presented for redemption was remote since inflation had so eroded the mark by 1921 as to make it virtually worthless.

As more places issued notgeld for collectors the ranks of the collectors swelled. Dealers appeared on the scene, sensing a chance to reap a middleman's profit. Increased demand led to ever more emissions until it appeared as though a majority of the populace was somehow involved in the process of designing, printing, distributing or collecting notgeld. Notgeld clubs, exhibits, periodicals and catalogs sprang up as if by magic. In retrospect it seems to have bordered on madness for so many people to have been caught up in a fad of such proportions. But on the other hand, the fantastic and unprecedented episode can be viewed as having a positive effect from both the standpoints of economics and psychology.



Glashutte Observatory on backs of two different notgeld shown actual size

Collectors and students of notgeld agree that there are two basic categories of notes. Some were issued strictly for use as a circulating medium of exchange while others were produced primarily or exclusively with the collector market in mind. Although this distinction can be made, it is purely academic since it does not necessarily effect the desirability or value of a particular note. Both kinds are sought with equal enthusiasm and are appreciated for reasons other than intentionality.

--By permission from "Notgeld Newsletter" of Dwight Musser, Box 305, Ridge Manor FL 33525

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The standard catalog for German notgeld was compiled in several volumes by Dr Arnold Keller. Most of the astro theme items are to be found in Volume 4 - Series notes (Serienscheine) which are those primarily issued for the collector market. In his preface to this volume, Dr Keller details many of the outstanding artistic series as well as the more blatant abuses that occurred.

"The public became more and more opposed to the Notgeld Idiocy. Finally this resulted in the passing of a law dated 17th July 1922, whereby all further notgeld issues were forbidden, and the issuers threatened with punishment." One may wish that the new-issue practices of certain nations might be so easily dealt with today!



Rathenow note reduced 25%
others shown actual size

Typical of the less serious subjects found on notgeld are Rathenow's stargazer (right) and the series from Gemeinde Kolln-Reisiek depicting zodiac signs. There are six notes in the zodiac set, each with two different signs on back and a single design on front of Sun, Moon and stars.

Below are a pair from Kreuzburg (now Kluczbork, Poland) honoring native son Gustav Freytag (1816-1895), a famous novelist, dramatist and critic on the 25pf value and recalling the city's founding in the 13th century by knights of the Red Star Order (50pf value). A comet or meteor appears on the one in memory of Freytag. Can anyone verify if there was an actual sighting of a comet/meteor near Freytag's birthdate or is it symbolic/traditional only?



Famous and not-so-famous places and personalities appear on many notgeld. For example, this trio issued by the Lilienthal Savings Bank in honor of astronomers Schroeter, Bessel and Harding. The face of each value is different; the backs depict the same view of the astronomers printed in different colors. Friedrich Wilhelm Bessel (1784-1846) was famous for being the first to detect the parallax of a star and for suggesting the existence of a trans-Uranian planet which led to discovery of Neptune. He superintended the construction of Königsberg's Observatory and was its director for many years. Biographies of Schroeter and Harding are needed. Can one of our readers please explain the connection between Lilienthal and Königsberg?



back view same on each



all illustrations actual size

Notgeld are a colorful complement to astro collections. Many persons and places not shown on stamps or philatelic material may thus be introduced into your album. Glashutte Observatory (page 28) is one such installation. Can anyone supply details of its history?

LILIENTHAL ASTRONOMERS

On page 30 of Astrofax #20 are shown German notgeld issued by the Lilienthal Savings Bank depicting astronomers Bessel, Schroeter and Harding. In reply to the request for biographies of Schroeter and Harding, Dr Bruzek kindly supplied the following:

Johann Hieronymus SCHROETER was born at Erfurt in 1745. He took legal studies in Gottingen and while there, Kastner - then director of the Gottingen observatory - aroused his interest in astronomy. Later in Hannover, Schroeter became acquainted with the Herschel family and that revived his astronomical activities. At that time, Wilhelm Herschel was already known as an outstanding astronomer in England.

In 1781 Schroeter moved to Lilienthal, a small town near Bremen, where he became a government official ("Oberamtmann"). There he built a small observatory and obtained in 1785 a seven-foot reflector by W Herschel, then one of the most powerful instruments outside England. In 1792 Schrader's workshops in Lilienthal constructed, under superintendence and at the cost of Schroeter, a thirteen-foot and later a twenty-foot reflector for the observatory.

During 34 years Schroeter studied the topography of the moon and the planets partly assisted by Harding and Bessel, both of whom received their training as practical astronomers in Lilienthal. In 1805 Harding became professor in Gottingen while Bessel, who succeeded him as assistant, was nominated director of the new observatory at Konigsberg in 1810.

Schroeter was the father of descriptive astronomy in Germany as Herschel was in England. He made numerous important discoveries of lasting importance, especially in the topography of the moon. However, many of his results did not remain undisputed. In particular, he had arguments with Herschel about some results or interpretations of observations. The judgement of Schroeter by his contemporaries was rather controversial indeed. But he was in great esteem with Gauss and Lichtenberg and was elected a member of quite a number of German and foreign learned societies.

In April 1813, Lilienthal was destroyed by French troops and Schroeter's observatory with all books and writings burnt down. Schroeter did not recover from that blow and died 29 August 1816.

Karl Ludwig HARDING was born at Lauenburg in 1765. Originally he studied theology and came to Schroeter in Lilienthal for private tutoring. He became more and more interested in Schroeter's astronomical activities and from 1800 was his assistant observer. On 2 September 1804, he detected Juno, the second planetoid. In 1814 he started construction of a celestial atlas designed for the special purpose of facilitating asteroidal research. This most important achievement of Harding was not completed until 1822 in Gottingen where he had become a professor for astronomy in 1805. He collaborated there closely with Gauss who was director of the Gottingen observatory since 1807. Harding died on 31 August 1834.

As for the connection between Lilienthal and Konigsberg, it is of course Bessel. Bessel joined Schroeter in 1805 after Harding had left for Gottingen and remained until 1809 as assistant observer. After he had moved to Konigsberg, little connection to Lilienthal was left, if any at all. For instance, Bessel learned of Schroeter's death only from the newspapers.

notgeld comet

"City and Heidelberg Castle with the Comet of 1618 over the Castle, after a copperplate engraving by Matthaus Herian (in the *Theatrum Europaeum*)" One of the three bright comets that appeared in 1618, touching off a comet debate that eventually included Kepler and Galileo.

The one million mark Heidelberg notgeld illustrated below was sent by Dwight L Musser along with news that he has prepared a 60 page book about the German small notgeld notes of 1916-1922. Notgeld Handbook No. 1 consists of translations into English of Dr Keller's prefaces to his catalogs. It explains how notgeld came to be issued, the early days of notgeld collecting as well as the many different varieties.

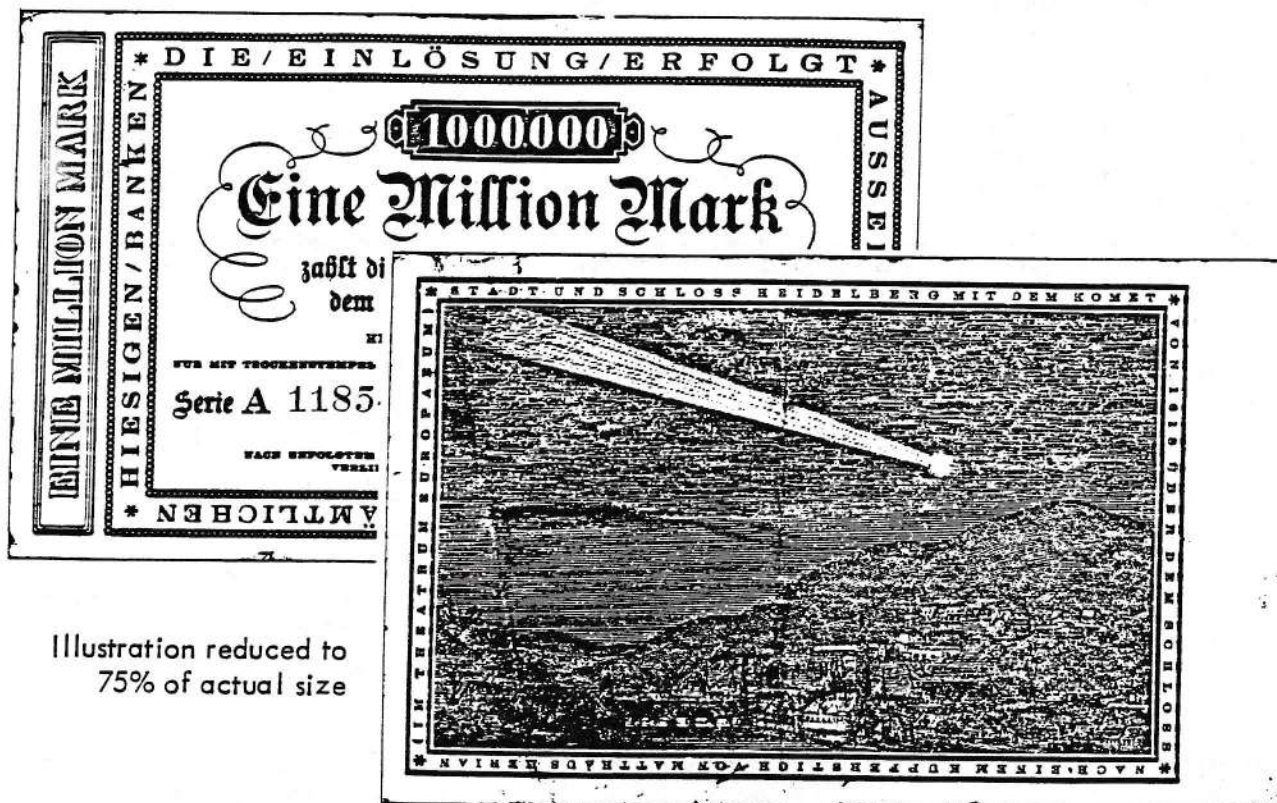


Illustration reduced to
75% of actual size

THE DARK SIDE OF THE AZTEC CALENDAR STONE...

Chris Moser of the Mesoamerican Archeology Study Unit sent this comment regarding symbolism on the Aztec Calendar Stone (see Astrofax #20 for the original version):

In Death and the Afterlife in Pre-Columbian America edited by Elizabeth P Benson, published 1975 by Dumbarton Oaks Research Library & Collections of Washington DC at \$10, there is an article (one of seven) by Cecelia F Klein titled "Post-Classic Mexican Death Imagery as a Sign of Cyclic Completion". In this article she argues that the Calendar Stone deity is not Tonatiuh, the Sun God of the daytime sky but actually his counterpart, Yoaltonatiuh, the Night or Dead Sun in the dark bowels or underworld of the earth where the sun was believed to pass in the West each evening when it was swallowed by the Earth Mother Monster. Klein feels that the extended tongue and other traits indicate that the Dead Night Sun was depicted. Her argument is good and is generally accepted by most iconographers.