

The Austrian Railway Series

Coin collecting like stamps can be done topically and being a railfan, train spotter, or just railway nut I do have a soft spot for metallic objects having connections with the railway industry. The hobby does offer several different possibilities including railway transit tokens, medals, and of course coins. This latter group is typically comprised of non-circulating pieces made to satisfy those collectors like myself who has been bitten by more than one interest. In that regard I would like to point out the most recent series by the Austrian Mint and more specifically the aspects of the third coin in the series.

The Austrian Mint began the railway series coins in 2007 starting with Northern Railways featuring the 1837 locomotive named the Austrian on the obverse and a more scenic view of the same locomotive with cars in tow crossing the Danube River. The denomination of the coin is twenty euros is minted in silver and only available in



proof condition. The series will have a total of six coins issued two per year with a limited mintage of 50,000 pieces each. To be honest I did not become aware of the series until 2008 when they appeared in a Downies newsletter I received. At that time I purchased both third and fourth of the series issued in 2008. The third coin features a splendid three quarters (roster shot) image of a more modern Austrian steam engine or DAMPFLOKOMOTIVE on the obverse. The reverse shows the same locomotive waiting in a typical European train shed of the period with a woman in a flocked hat in the foreground.

The locomotive featured on this coin is considered one of the most successful designs of Dr. Karl GolsDorf with its unique wheel arrangement being 2-6-4. For those not familiar with railway terminology this means two pony wheels, six driving wheels, and four trailing wheels as described using what is commonly know as Whyte notation. Many an O27 Lionel Lines engine featured this wheel arrangement, but very few real steam locomotives in America did. In the United States the 4-6-2 Pacific type was wheel arrangement typically found pulling passenger trains with a nice example being currently exhibited at the California State Railway Museum.



Southern Pacific 2467 at Railfair 99, James Haney

There were a couple of reasons for Karl's design being the exact opposite in wheel arrangement of the Pacific type. The first being the use of low pressure steam cylinders which are considerably larger than those found on a conventional passenger locomotive so with only two pony wheels there was ample space for his design. Another contributing factor was the low grade coal available, requiring a large firebox, which needed more support requiring four trailing wheels. Similar to the Pacific type this design pulled passenger trains typically being assigned between Vienna and Prague.



Digital photo by István Halász (hihihihi@freemail.hu)

Of the original forty-three "310" class locomotives featured on the coin two still exist. One is in storage at the Vienna Technical Museum and the other 310.23 appears to be operational. The latter locomotive residing supposedly in the collection of the Technical Museum of Prague has been in steam as recently as 2005 judging from photos found on the web. This museum though is currently under renovation and I could not find it listed on their

website though many others reference the locomotive being in their collection. A fitting end to have one locomotive at each of the terminal cities once served.

The series concluded last year with the sixth and final coin featuring modern locomotives of the Austrian Railways. Like most countries in Europe modern means electric and that is what you will find on both the obverse and reverse of the sixth coin. Even though the series is over the entire collection is still available from the Austrian Mint. You can even purchase a case to house all six coins. After my initial purchase from Downies I discovered that I could save roughly ten dollars per coin by ordering directly from the mint. The site requires that you create a login in account for ordering. Once completed the transaction goes rather smoothly and on average I received the coins within four weeks of the order. One item of note when ordering abroad is that most credit card companies do charge a conversion fee, but compared to wiring money through your bank it is a nominal charge. Lastly one bonus in ordering the coins directly from the mint is that you receive a color brochure showing the locomotives and giving a brief history. Granted I assume it is the history since the tri-fold brochure is not in English, but still something worth the additional wait.

Now with this series completed I have begun casting an eye toward the Switzerland Mint's Cog Railway series. Hopefully I will be able to share something regarding that experience soon along with a little history of the lines being depicted.

James Haney

Resources:

Austrian Mint: [https://www2.austrian-mint.at/mueshop/catalog/updateItems/\(layout=6_1_60_49_5_2&uiarea=2&ctype=area_Details&next=products&care=000000017&cit=\)/.do?areaid=workarea](https://www2.austrian-mint.at/mueshop/catalog/updateItems/(layout=6_1_60_49_5_2&uiarea=2&ctype=area_Details&next=products&care=000000017&cit=)/.do?areaid=workarea)

Downies: <http://www.downies.com/northamerica/home.asp>

The European Railway Server: <http://www.railfaneurope.net/>

Encyclopedia of Railroads, General Editor: O.S. Nock, Published 1977

The Great Book of Trains, Brian Hollingsworth, Published 1987