

## MERL AND ROSE – SILVER BULLION AT ITS FINEST



When the newly formed Bullion Authentication Company (BAC) first received a 2 oz piece of silver bullion with a gold nugget and “MR” stamped into it, they were intrigued. This beautifully crafted piece had an unmistakable charm, but also mystery - who or what was behind the “MR” hallmark? Initial online searches offered conflicting and sparse information, prompting a deeper dive.

BAC reached out to several Nevada coin dealers and made a visit to the Carson City Mint Museum. One dealer described Merl and Rose as a couple of “desert rats” who would go from coin shop to coin shop in Nevada selling their silver rounds. Were Merl and Rose a young couple trying to make ends meet? Were Merl and Rose business partners? Was it Merl or Merle? Did the “MR” really stand for Merl and Rose or something else? And what was a “desert rat”?

Further research led to a listing on WorthPoint describing a “Nevada Heritage Coin Collection” attributed to Merle and Rose. This limited-edition collection, minted in the late 1980s, consisted of 18 rounds—one for each of Nevada’s 16 counties, one for Carson City, and one for the Nevada Heritage Series (1884–1922).

According to the Worthpoint listing<sup>1</sup>, *"The Nevada Heritage series was a limited edition of 2500 sets. The themes were, Railroad, Counties, Pearl Harbor & States. Merle and Rose (see "MR") under the dates, received permission from the State of Nevada to use their seal. They paid royalties for each one sold and they were minted by many different private mints, some marked .999. By agreement they had to be .999 and have a Nevada gold nugget. The Carson City Mint Museum sold them back then for \$15 apiece. The Heritage sets came in boxed wooden velvet lined cases. When Merle died, Rose had 800 sets unsold. They were sold off at auction, whereabouts and to whom unknown. Very little known example and considered rare. Ones not marked .999 scrapped. No known complete theme sets known of but was told some will have to surface. This info from a Reno coin shop owner. Next call, Ken Hopple of the Carson Mint Museum. I haven't seen another full set anywhere. They are probably out there, but I haven't been able to locate any. This is a rare find and in superb condition as shown in the photos"*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.worthpoint.com/worthopedia/complete-nevada-heritage-collection-429763935>

The round that BAC received to authenticate, grade and encapsulate appeared to be from the Nevada Heritage Coin collection. Next, we went to the Carson City Museum, but staff were unfamiliar with Ken Hopple. We checked reference material in the gift shop, and talked with staff there, but we found nothing on Merl and Rose.

A post to the “Vintage Bars” Facebook group elicited some helpful comments, including a very helpful woman, who stated that while some believe “MR” stood for Merl and Rose, his daughter did not believe this to be true. She stated that Merl Richard was his name. The following was purportedly written by the daughter.

“I remember in the early 1970s, he had a nursery for landscaping and also dabbled in Bonsai trees in Hayward, CA, then later running a large gold mining operation out of Lake Tahoe, then to Nevada for other gold and silver mills, and settling in Mina, NV from the late 70’s throughout the 1980’s. He was Treasurer of the Nevada Miners and Prospectors Assn and very active in the politics of mining, and late in the decade he became the publisher/editor of The Nevada Prospector magazine. That publication often had many advertisements for the silver “medallions”, as he called them.”

Digging into mining records, BAC found references to several claims in Mineral County, Nevada—such as New Boston #3 and Pilot Mtn. Gold #39—registered to a Merl E. Richard<sup>2</sup>. In fact, 212 claims were found under his name, suggesting a substantial presence in Nevada mining history.

While BAC was able to clarify that “desert rat” is a colloquial term in the western U.S. for a person who lives and works in desert regions—often prospecting for minerals—the full story behind “MR” remains elusive.

In the end, no single source offers a definitive explanation. But BAC’s investigation has uncovered a fascinating tale woven from mining, entrepreneurship, artistry, and Nevada history. The mystery remains—but so does the allure.

**Please contact BAC at [info@bacgrading.com](mailto:info@bacgrading.com) if you have additional information to add to the history of Merl and Rose.**

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<sup>2</sup> <https://thediggings.com/mines/nmc442921> and <https://thediggings.com/mines/nmc475137>

# V&T RAILROAD SERIES

2 OZ. Silver Medallions  
Limited Edition 2,000 Each

The V&T Railroad Engines used exclusively in Nevada.  
There will be 29 in the series.



BACK



VT-1



VT-2



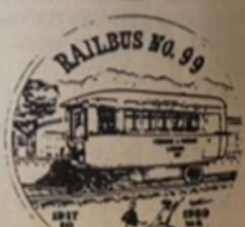
VT-3



VT-4



VT-5



VT-6

Nevada Prospector Silver Company, P.O. Box 283, Mina, Nevada 89422