The Saga of Bernard von NotHaus by Loretta Schultz

Bernard von NotHaus is one of the more unconventional characters known in numismatic circles. What started out as a desire to illustrate Hawaiian culture blossomed into a lucrative business that highlighted his opinion of the monetary policies of the U.S. government. He did his homework: studying economics related to gold and the devaluation of the dollar; learning all he could about the minting process and consulting lawyers who assured him that what he wanted to produce was not illegal. Von NotHaus co-founded the Royal Hawaiian Mint Company with his partner, Talena Jay “Telle” Presley in 1974. One of his first issues was a copper commemorative of the first ruler of Hawaii, King Kamehameha I. He also made a silver (.925) commemorative depicting a local shelter system (a reoccurring theme). It depicted EARTH in the exergue and symbols from nature, the top one being an N for NotHaus within a star within a circle. Von NotHaus used them as barter with his friends on the big island of Hawaii.

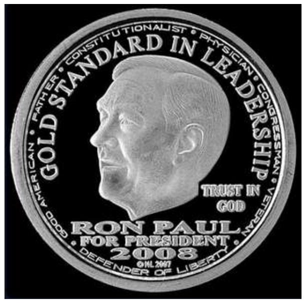
Back in 1913, Congress passed the Federal Reserve Act which Woodrow Wilson signed into law. It was formed “to furnish an elastic currency, to afford means of rediscounting commercial paper, to establish a more effective supervision of banking in the United States and for other purposes.” This act in turn produced the Federal Reserve System where twelve regional Federal Reserve Banks oversaw managing the money supply for the country. Later, the Act was amended to attain stable prices, moderate long-term interest rates and achieve maximum employment. Some criticism of the system consisted of feelings that the federal government was given too much power along with the disapproval of enabling the President of the United States to appoint its Board of Governors. Back in 1913, U.S. money was based on gold and silver, but by 1974, America had fiat currency of paper money and debased coinage. Von NotHaus disliked the U. S. government’s fiat money and believed that any legal tender should be backed by precious metals.

He saw how the U.S. Post Office changed when they had to contend with the competing forces of express delivery companies like Federal Express. Having an alternate, inflation-resistant monetary system based on trustworthy gold and silver seemed like a sensible thing to establish. Thus, NORFED was born. Finding a partner, Jim Thomas, who agreed with his ideas, von NotHaus centered his headquarters in Evansville, Indiana, and created NORFED which stood for the National Organization for the Repeal of the Federal Reserve Act and the Internal Revenue Code. Von NotHaus stated its mission “was to provide an alternative currency to that which is issued by the U.S. government: a currency that is backed by gold and silver and therefore inflation-proof.”

Calling himself a “monetary architect”, von NotHaus designed and engraved his American Liberty Dollars. His original design was minted in 1998 by the Royal Hawaiian Mint and portrayed the Shelter System that was on his King Kamehameha 1st “coin”. Only 150 were struck. Another one of his first creations was the $10 Liberty Dollar minted in 1999 by the Sunshine Minting Company originally based in Coeur d’Alene, Idaho. It contained one ounce of .999 silver. You can find his personal hallmark after the word “silver”, which is the letter B within a circle within a triangle.

He had a multitude of diverse editions produced with various themes, such as U.S. states, other countries and a few licensed specialty ones. You can view these types and varieties at norfed.info/liberty-dollar-encyclopedia/.

One of his more unusual subject matters was the 2008 presidential candidate, Ron Paul. Von NotHaus must have felt that they were kindred spirits, since Ron Paul also called for the abolition of the Federal Reserve and that he wanted to return to the gold standard. However, Ron Paul was not involved with the “coin’s” inception and did not endorse it. Several issues were made in gold, platinum,



silver and copper, but only the copper ones were shipped to buyers on November 13, 2007. Things changed for von NotHaus on November 14, 2007. On that date, the U.S. government sent agents from the FBI and the U.S. Secret Service to raid several establishments and partners of von NotHaus. Although von NotHaus never claimed the American Liberty Dollar to be legal tender and was only to be used as barter, the government decided otherwise and issued a public warning. It claimed that the von NotHaus medallions looked like real money because they bore the inscriptions “Liberty”, “Dollars” (making them look like they had a cash value), “Trust in God” (being like “In God We Trust”), and “USA”. They also had a date on them that could seem like a date of production. The Liberty Dollars employed images that were used on legal tender, such as the torch used on dimes, the Statue of Liberty, the Liberty Head design and a depiction of the Bill of Rights. The government cited 18 U.S.C. § 486, where it was a federal crime “to pass, or attempt to pass, any coins of gold or silver intended for use as current money except as authorized by law.”

At the headquarters of NORFED in Evansville, Indiana, the following was seized: a little over 3,000 pounds of copper rounds with 5,930.32 Troy Ounces of silver and 63.24 Troy Ounces of gold in the form of Liberty Dollars. Also taken were three platinum Liberty Dollars and $254,424.09 in U.S. currency. They took the computers and files and froze NORFED’s bank accounts. Even though Sunshine Minting Company was not criminally charged, their facility which stored purchasers’ Liberty Dollars in their vault (aka Shelter System warehouse) was raided. Along with dies, molds and casts, the following was confiscated: 11 Silver Bars and Silver Scrap (totaling 10,720.60 troy ounces), 168,599 Troy Ounces of silver, 147 Troy Ounces of gold, 17 Gold 0.05 Troy Ounces of gold, and 710 0.5 Troy Ounces silver in the form of Liberty Dollars. 16,000.05 Troy Ounces of Raw Silver and two recalled shipments, each containing 1,000 half-ounce silver Liberty Dollars were seized, too. Even his mother, Mary von NotHaus, was not immune to the raid. They took approximately 16,000 troy ounces of raw silver from her home. It was later determined that the silver was purchased legitimately with her personal retirement funds and eventually returned to her.

In May of 2009, von NotHaus was charged with counterfeiting, fraud and conspiracy against the United States and him being referred to as a "domestic terrorist". He was out on bond until the trial took place in 2011 where he was found guilty. The prosecutor asked for 23 years in federal prison, but U. S. District Court Judge Richard L. Voorhees gave von NotHaus six months of house arrest and three years of probation (eventually being released after only one year). His appeal in 2014 was denied. In this very complex case, it was later ruled in 2017 that any Liberty Dollars not considered contraband be returned to their lawful owners. Concerning these particular Liberty Dollars, if the owners so desired, von NotHaus offered to place a counterstamp on them, MA, standing for monetary architect. In 2019, Bernard von NotHaus partnered with Wayne Hicks and his wife, Kathy, to resurrect the Liberty Dollar. The Hicks couple formed the Liberty Dollar Network in Live Oak, Florida and von NotHaus designed the Live Oak Liberty Dollar for them. They are considered legal if not used for commerce.

Liberty Dollars have led a beleaguered life, but they are still popular among collectors, Libertarians and anti-establishment groups. They have appreciated greatly and with the price of silver hovering around $75.00 per ounce, they sell for a premium on eBay and elsewhere. Bernard von NotHaus is still living as of this writing and attending coin conventions. Below are some items that he wrote:

To Know Value – *An Economic Research Paper* (a 21 page report that started it all)

The Liberty Dollar - American Inflation Proof Currency - From Concept to Crypto 25th Anniversary *(1998-2023)*

The Liberty Dollar: From Concept to Crypto (2026 Edition)

Y2K Money: Your Survival Currency

The Liberty Dollar Solution to the Federal Reserve

If you would like to learn more about him, here are some videos:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IvHhqr8OeFc (Interview with Glenn Beck)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=argq_cxalZ8&t=220s (Interview - Bitcoin: The End of Money as we Know It, 2014)

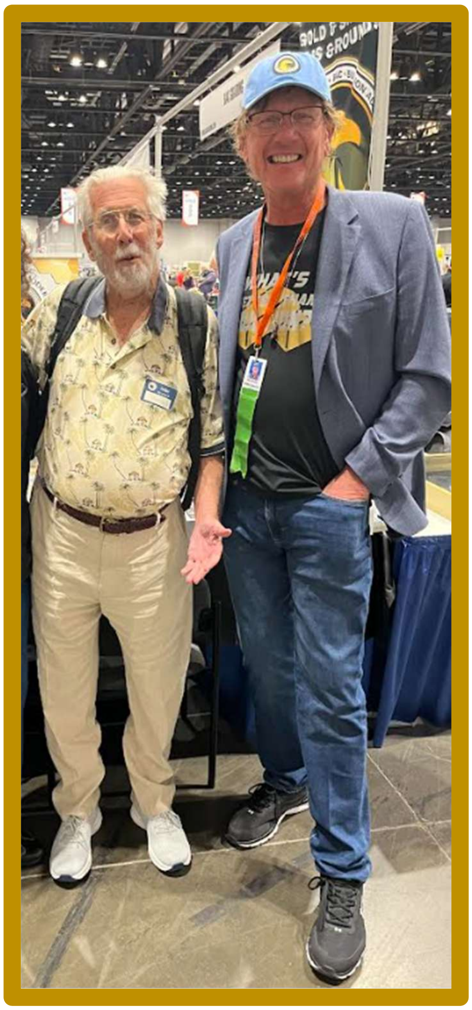
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F4wIlH1RKg4 (Coinweek's interview with Bernard von NotHaus at FUN in 2011: Status of the Liberty Dollar)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZpQ9XR1hUWY Liberty Dollar Reborn! FUN 2021

https://www.orcamedia.net/show/liberty-dollars-wayne-hicks-part1

You can also read about his extraordinary life from this in-depth interview:

https://www.indianapolismonthly.com/news-and-opinion/business/mad-money/



Bernard von NotHaus (left) and Michael Greenwood (Founder of BAC Grading) at the F.U.N. Show in Orlando, Florida, January 9, 2025