

## EXONUMIA

# THE GOLDEN AGE OF CALIFORNIA STATE CELEBRATIONS

Medals struck by L.H. Moise Company in the late 19th century commemorated local festivals, fairs and expositions that enticed tens of thousands of people to explore the beauty of America's 31st state.

by William D. Hyder [R1059458](#) & Jeff Shevlin [LM5659](#)



PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO/DUNCAN WALKER

▲ Pioneers flocking to California in search of gold in 1849 discovered an area rich in natural beauty.

**E**UREKA! California pioneers found more than gold in 1849: they discovered a widely varied geographic wonderland, from the redwood forests in the north to the deserts in the south, from the majestic Sierra Nevada Mountains in the east to the beaches on the West Coast. The temperate climate was perfect for year-round celebration, and one could always find a festival, fair or fiesta.

The Southern Pacific railway cooperated with local communities to promote topical destinations, offering special fares to encourage travel as towns and the rail industry sought to work their way out of the economic depression that troubled the nation in 1893-98. During this period, the L.H. Moise Company of San Francisco struck a series of souvenir medals that featured the California State Seal as a common element.

Ewing produced the souvenirs on the same style of press used by the Mint at his concession booth adjacent to the Mechanics Building.

PHOTOS: LIBRARY OF CONGRESS (EXPOSITION), WILLIAM D. HYDER & WWW.NETSTATE.COM (SEALS)



▲ Gold-plated medals (H&K 245) were struck on the opening day of the 1894 California Midwinter International Exposition in San Francisco (left) by J.W. Ewing at his booth near the entrance of the Mechanics Building. Later medals were struck in brass.

### The California State Seal Prototype

The 1894 California Midwinter International Exposition appears to have inspired the Moise state seal series, although the seal was already a popular medallic theme. U.S. Department of the Interior contractor J.W. Ewing struck official brass and gold-plated bronze medals at the Exposition under the authority of the U.S. Mint director. At his concession booth adjacent to the entrance of the Mechanics Building, Ewing produced the souvenirs on the same style of press used by the Mint.

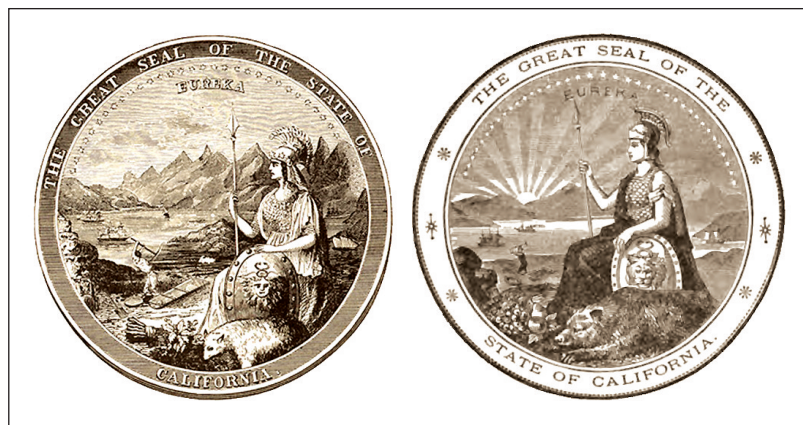
In his book *National Commemorative Medals of the United States Mint since 1873*, William Swoger reports that Mint Chief Engraver Charles E. Barber designed the medal. Harold E. Hibler and Charles V. Kappen, coauthors of *So-Called Dollars*, record Barber's creation as one of many known U.S. dollar-sized commemorative medals (H&K 245). His design closely followed the original California State Seal adopted in 1850.

The state seal has its origins in the California Constitutional Convention in Monterey in 1849.

U.S. Army Major Robert S. Garnett proffered a sketch meant to embody the economic potential of the prospective state. Thirty-one stars represented the fact that California would become the thirty-first state in the union. The goddess Minerva sprang fully grown from the mind of Jupiter, just as California sought to become a state without first becoming a territory.

A miner worked diligently along the banks of the Sacramento River, where ships symbolized ☉

▼ The medals' design was based on the California State Seal (left) and the modified version from the 1880s and '90s.



We presume that Moise copied Barber's design for his own use when he produced a second version of the Midwinter Exposition medal.

the state's commercial readiness. The peaks of the Sierra Nevada Mountains provided a backdrop for the major elements, capped by the Greek motto EUREKA, which translates "I have found it." (The ambiguous "it" could be interpreted as gold or Eden.) The grizzly bear at Minerva's feet fed on grapes that, along with a sheaf of wheat in the background, represented California's agricultural riches.

The seal closely follows Garnett's design, but it was attributed to Caleb Lyon, assistant secretary of the state constitutional convention. The bear was added to represent strength and recognize the participants in the Bear Flag Revolt, the short-lived 1846 rebellion led by California settlers against Mexican authorities.

We presume that L.H. Moise copied Barber's design for his own use when he produced a second version of the California Midwinter International Exposition medal (H&K 245A) that more closely followed the seal as modified in the 1880s and '90s. Firms often shamelessly copied the designs of others, although

Moise made a few notable alterations.

The sun rising over the mountains (with its rays spread across the sky) and a reclining bear, consistent with state use, were the major differences between Barber's and Moise's versions of the obverse. The Moise reverse was a direct copy of the Ewing medal.

Moise formed his rubber stamp production firm as the Midwinter Exposition took shape in August 1893. He had worked in the business for 17 years as a minority partner

and daily manager of the C.A. Klinkner rubber stamp firm and branched out on his own, taking some co-workers and customers with him. Following Klinkner's death, Moise proposed that his 25-percent share plus monthly salary be converted to a 50-percent owner's share plus salary to continue managing the business under the Klinkner name, but Klinkner's widow declined and sued to stop him. Not to be denied, Moise engaged her in a four-year battle for the business, finally prevailing to form Moise-Klinkner in 1897. Producing his own version of a popular contemporary medal was a business move typical of the times.

Despite their rarity rating in Hibler and Kappen (5 on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being common and 10 being unique), exposition souvenirs 245 and 245A are relatively easy to find compared to many so-called dollars from the period. For some unknown reason, Moise later produced a less-refined 245A obverse die first identified by Jeff Shevlin while cataloging the Bill Weber Collection for auction in 2008. Since then, several pieces have been recorded, but most are heavily worn, which may be why they escaped notice until now.

Many examples of the first 245A obverse show evidence of die failure along the rim between 3 and 6 o'clock. The reverses of both medal versions appear to have been struck from the same die, as the style and uneven alignment of the letters are identical.

Several markers make it easy to distinguish the two dies, even on heavily worn medals. What we presume to be the second obverse die is not as well defined and apparently was engraved by an entry-level or less-skilled craftsman. On the first die (Type 1), the EUREKA motto is small and tightly spaced, ending at the tip of the crest of Minerva's helmet. Minerva's spear points to the left side of the base of the U. On the second die



▲ Moise's version of the Midwinter Exposition souvenir (H&K 245A) employed one reverse die and two different obverse dies: Type 1 (top) and Type 2.



▲ The primary characteristics of Type 1 (top, in brass) and Type 2 (bottom, in aluminum) dies: the spacing and size of the word EUREKA and location of the diagnostic repunched stars.

PHOTOS: WILLIAM D. HYDER (TYPE 1) & JEFF SHEVLIN



(Type 2), the motto is larger and widely spaced, ending near the mid-point of Minerva's helmet. The spear points to the right of the U.

The sun's rays are prominent across the field of the Type 1 die, while on Type 2 they are faint to the right of the spear and Minerva, almost disappearing. The spear shaft is straight on Type 1, but broken and offset to the right below Minerva's hand on the second die. The two obverses also differ with regard to the ships on the river and the depiction of the agricultural products at Minerva's feet.

Type 1 and 2 dies feature diagnostic points that seem to indicate only two dies were used to strike all the medals reported here. Counting from the left, the 22nd star on the Type 1 die was re-punched, with the first punch placed low and to the right. Other diagnostic points can be noted in the uneven placement of the stars, but the re-punched star is easy to see. On the Type 2 die, spikes are visible on either side of the lower point in star 21. They appear to be the remnants of an earlier star punch, but that is not certain. The two spikes can be difficult to detect on heavily worn or softly struck medals, although the left spike is most distinct. Again, the alignment of other stars can be used as a diagnostic.



◀ In 1895 the L.H. Moise Company produced brass souvenirs for the Venetian Water Carnival in Santa Cruz (top).

### Event Souvenirs

By the early 1890s, the lure of gold had run its course, and economic development seemed stalled despite the expansion of rail service throughout much of California. San Francisco businessmen sought to promote growth by showcasing the richness of the state and San Francisco through an international exposition modeled after the successful World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1892-93.

The economic success of the San Francisco venture inspired other California communities to sponsor events to stimulate their local economies, albeit on a more limited scale. In time, these many fairs and expositions were coordinated by the California Celebration Committee, which was charged with weaving them into a ©

Then the snow stopped, and the sun came out. Cancellations poured in as the ice yielded to an unexpected heat wave.

continuous chain of festivals.

The coastal city of Santa Cruz, for example, suffered a serious fire in 1894 that destroyed much of its downtown business district. Rebuilt in a Renaissance style, the city promoted its incarnation as the “Florence of the West.” Latitudinally situated some 400 miles south of popular European tourist destinations such as the French Riviera, Sicily and southern Greece, Santa Cruz played up its ideal climatic conditions to further its reputation as a health and pleasure resort.

Local businessman J.P. Smith introduced a “Santa Cruz Venetian Water Carnival” in 1895 as a singular variation of the floral fairs already sponsored by the city. The San Lorenzo River, with its relatively calm and protected mouth, was the perfect setting for the weeklong festivities, which included a floral parade; a “Rose Regatta” of flower-bedecked boats; and numerous aquatic events, including swimming, diving, canoeing and yacht races. However, local disputes with a competing fairgrounds association over property and rights of way scuttled plans for the creation of permanent facilities.

In 1903 another businessman,

Fred Swanton, created Neptune Park, plus a boardwalk and campground, at the river’s mouth. His vision endures to this day as the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk, complete with an original Charles Loeffler carousel that debuted in 1911 and a National Historic Landmark, the original 1924 Giant Dipper roller coaster built by Loeffler’s son Arthur. The Water Carnival itself moved up to a city park and continues today as the River Arts Festival.

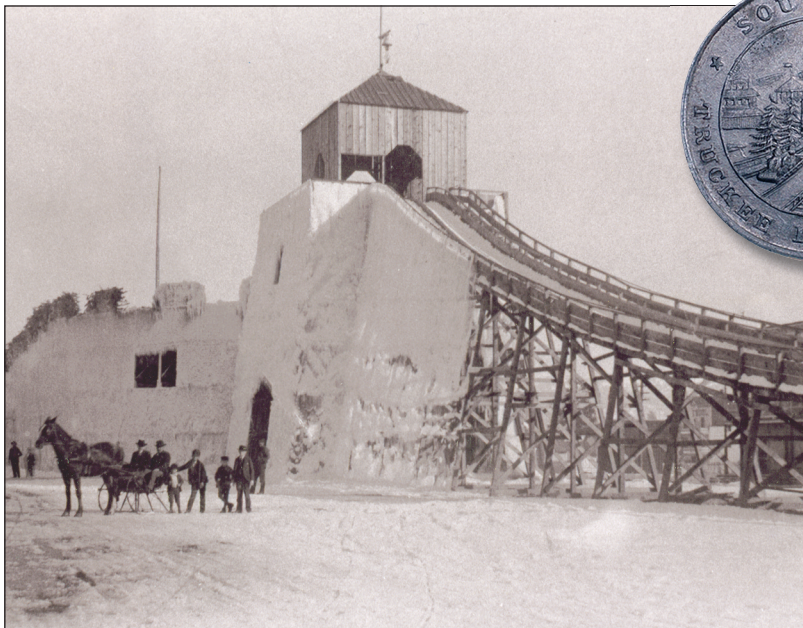
The Santa Cruz souvenir medal was struck using the Type 1 obverse die. The die had deteriorated from its extensive use in striking the Midwinter Exposition medals, but heavy polishing along the area of failure appears to have stabilized it and extended its useful life.

In Truckee, at the top of the Sierras, businessman and promoter Charles F. McGlashan constructed an artificial icicle lit with an arc lamp on a hill overlooking his mountain town in early 1895. With that successful experiment, he convinced the town council to allow him to build an Ice Palace in the heart of the business district at the end of the year. The palace enclosed a skating rink, and a towering toboggan slide stood outside.

Thus was born the first ice carnival in the West. The event was promoted, train and hotel reservations were booked, restaurants were stocked to feed the expected crowds, and snow began falling a week before the carnival was slated to open in early January 1896. Then the snow stopped, and the sun came out. Cancellations poured in as the ice yielded to an unexpected heat wave. However, the snow did return, and McGlashan’s Winter Ice Carnival became a popular attraction for years.

The Moise Truckee souvenir medal (H&K 729) is the only undated piece in the series and one of three struck using both obverse dies. While silver or silver-plated examples are known for three Moise medals, the Truckee specimen is one of only two event souvenirs struck in aluminum as well as brass. One can imagine they were made in multiple years, and

► The undated 1895/96 Truckee Ice Carnival medals (H&K 729) were struck in brass (Types 1 and 2) and aluminum (Type 2). The ice palace constructed by event promoter Charles McGlashan enclosed a skating rink and included a towering toboggan run.



Moise's medals seemed natural souvenirs for Admission Day celebrations, and the company struck pieces in 1896 and 1897.



▲ Brass 1896 La Fiesta de Los Angeles souvenir.

the separate production runs would explain the use of different dies and possibly metals from year to year. The brass Type 1 medal available for study shows the aforementioned rim degradation and a die gouge or cud along the rim at 5 o'clock that may suggest the die was beginning to have additional problems. The aluminum and brass medals struck from Type 2 dies show no loss of detail when compared to the Type 2 Mid-winter Exposition examples.

Later in 1896, Californians celebrated La Fiesta de Los Angeles. The Los Angeles Merchants Association hoped the event would bring people to this vast, sparsely populated southern region of the state. (As hard it might be to imagine today, Los Angeles played only a minor role in the state's economy prior to the devastating 1906 San Francisco earthquake.) Inspired by the carnivals of Nice and Monte Carlo, as were so many of the California festivals, the fiesta had a style of its own, capitalizing on its Spanish history and Native American cultures.

The business district was decorated in red, green and yellow for the five days of parades, revelry and feasting. California's railways cooperated by delivering tourists in red electric cars to the center of the festivities, where representatives of the Southern California Indian tribes performed dances, songs and rituals for the curious visitors.

L.H. Moise Company produced medals for this event as well. Collector (and later ANA President) Virginia Culver, writing in the 1965 volume of the Token and Medal Society's *TAMS Journal*, noted the obvious differences between the two Moise obverses in her comparison of the 1896 La Fiesta de Los Angeles souvenir medal and an 1897 Santa Rosa Admission Day medal described by John Reynolds in an earlier issue.

Based on die characteristics, we now know the 1896 medal is an example of the Type 2 obverse. Weak details to the right of Minerva and faint sun rays to the right of her spear suggest polishing early in the die's life.

Also in 1896, the Native Sons of the Golden West (NSGW) commissioned Moise to produce a medal commemorating California Admission Day. The Native Sons, an organization of young men established in San Francisco in 1869, extended its reach across the state over the next decade, sponsoring its first annual celebration of California's admission to the Union in 1850.

Though the weather was cool in Stockton on September 9, 1896, the reception that greeted the Native Sons (and Daughters) walking the parade route in their summer finest provided more than sufficient warmth. Participants arrived by rail and steamer to celebrate Admission Day and the "Forty Niners" who built the great state. Stockton brightened the events with an elaborate display of red, white, blue and yellow electric illumination along the streets of the business district. The city's courthouse was similarly aglow.

Moise's state seal-themed medals seemed natural souvenirs for Admission Day celebrations, and the company struck pieces in 1896 (using the Type 2 die) and 1897 (using Type 1). Like the previously mentioned Los Angeles issue, the 1896 obverse showed the effects of die polishing.

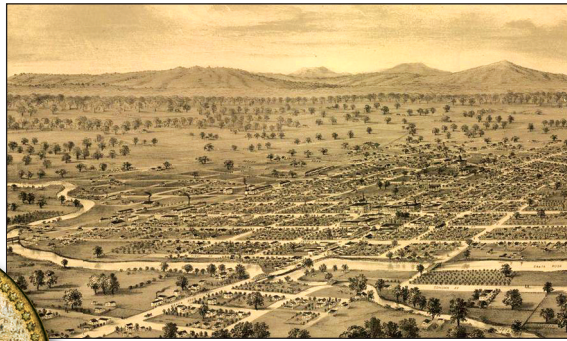
Santa Rosa hosted the 47th Admission Day celebration by the Native Sons of the Golden West in 1897. About 15,000 guests arrived by rail between September 8 and 9. Each NSGW chapter (or "parlor") marched to the official headquarters to receive its lodging assignments. The local parade marshal, accompanied by San Francisco's finest police officers, led the



◀ Brass and silver-plated souvenirs were issued for the 1896 California Admission Day celebration in Stockton (H&K 635).

PHOTOS: JEFF SHEVLIN

Laminations in the field behind Minerva suggest the die surface was beginning to disintegrate beyond repair.



◀ A brass medal issued for the 47th celebration of the Native Sons of the Golden West, held in 1897 in Santa Rosa (shown above in an 1876 lithograph), pictured two bears dressed for the ball.



procession on September 9. The grand marshal and his aides followed on horseback, then came Park's Band, followed by a contingent of buggies carrying the Native Daughters of the Golden West decked out in white, carrying white silk parasols.

Each parlor and contingent marching in the parade had a unique color scheme, and one group had its own black bear mascot. Reproductions of California's flag flew throughout the city in commemoration of the historic Bear Flag Revolt. Bike races, dances, grand dinners and fireworks punctuated the three-day celebration.

The Moise commemorative medal featured a festive pair of bears ready for the celebratory ball. The Type 1 obverse die was resurrected and heavily polished for use in striking the pieces. Laminations in the field behind Minerva suggest the die surface was beginning to disintegrate beyond repair. To our knowledge, this striking represented the last use of the Type 1 die.

Moise also struck a souvenir medal (H&K

► The brass 1897 Cloverdale Citrus Fair souvenir (H&K 639).



639) for the 5th annual Cloverdale Citrus Fair in 1897, using the Type 2 obverse die. Cloverdale was the center of state agricultural production in the 1890s. On the fair's opening day, February 17, 1897, the deep hue of Malta oranges stood out in colorful contrast to the white walls of the main pavilion. Henry J. Crocker's miniature orange grove dominated the center of the pavilion display area. Albert's Vineyards, the Cloverdale Wine Company, the Parker Vineyard Company and Italian-Swiss Colony displayed the finest in Northern California's wine-making tradition. Speakers noted that California's pioneers came seeking gold, never dreaming they would find their fortunes in fruit, wheat, olives and wine, thanks to the state's superior climate and soil.

### Storecards

Whether interest in the Moise medals diminished or they really never became popular, the company's souvenir series ended in 1897. Moise used the Type 1 die for a token (or "storecard") advertising his firm in 1894 or 1895. Following the demise of the souvenir series, the firm's storecards were struck with the Type 2 obverse die.

The Moise token struck from the Type 2 die likely was produced about the same time as the Cloverdale medal, as both exhibit the same loss of fine detail from die polishing. It does not bear the Klinkner name, although Moise began using the Moise-Klinkner label in 1898.

The next documented uses of the Type 2 die for advertising purposes were Christmas 1902/ New Year's Day 1903 storecards for Oakland, California, liquor dealers Beckert and Kieso, and a later, undated token for the John Douglas plumbing company. The Beckert and Kieso storecard presumably was the last dated use of the state seal dies. (Moise had produced an encased Indian Head cent Christmas token for Beckert and Kieso the year before.)



▲ The undated Moise storecard struck with the Type 2 die about 1897.

PHOTOS: WILLIAM D. HYDER (SANTA ROSA MEDAL, MOISE STORECARD) & JEFF SHEVLIN (CLOVERDALE MEDAL)



▲ The brass 1902/03 Beckert and Kieso storecard (left) and aluminum 1903 John Douglas storecard.

The Moise production facility in San Francisco burned in the fires that followed the 1906 earthquake, and we assume the state seal dies were destroyed at that time. The Douglas storecard, therefore, must have been produced prior to the earthquake.

**Die-State Analysis**

We began our study of die states to satisfy our curiosity about why the L.H. Moise Company would use two dies of different qualities to strike Midwinter Exposition medals. We also hoped to explain why the few known examples struck from Type 2 dies are so worn. We believe the

story told by a careful examination of the physical changes in the dies answers our questions.

Whether the Moise Midwinter Exposition medal was an official or pirated issue, it appears to have sold well, given its relatively common status today, and likely inspired Moise to market the souvenir for other California events. Although we have not personally examined a Moise storecard struck from a Type 1 die, the image cataloged in Kappen's *California Tokens* does not appear to show the 5 o'clock die gouge present on the Truckee and Santa Rosa medals. That would place the production of the first storecard in 1894, contemporary with the Mid-

winter medal, or 1895, about the same time as the Santa Cruz medal.

The Type 1 die began to show renewed signs of failure during production of the Truckee souvenirs, necessitating the creation of a new die, albeit by a less-experienced die-sinker. Moise's agents sold his products along the West Coast and throughout Central America. In 1897, shortly before abandoning the souvenir series, Moise restruck a limited number of Midwinter medals as sales samples for his agents, pairing the Type 2 die with the original reverse die. Perhaps these became pocket pieces, thereby explaining their heavy wear and scarcity.

We sequenced the use of the Type 2 die according to the progression of die polish and the gradual loss of fine details. ©

PHOTOS: WILLIAM D. HYDER



1  
1894  
Midwinter



2  
1895  
Santa Cruz



3  
1895/96  
Truckee



4  
1897  
Santa Rosa

◀ This sequence shows the progressive deterioration of the Type 1 die. Note the obvious die lamination in the Santa Rosa specimen (4).





▲ Shown here is the progression of die polish on Type 2 specimens, beginning with the 1895/96 Truckee obverse. Allowing for some loss of detail due to wear, the restruck 1894 Midwinter medal appears to have been produced just before or just after the 1897 Cloverdale medal.



Shallow devices in the field on either side of Minerva gradually disappeared as the die was polished between uses. Repeated polishing also resulted in the gradual loss of the top edge of Minerva's shield and the bear head on its face. The amount of die polish evident on the Midwinter Exposition medals leaves little question that those struck from the Type 2 die must have been made about the same time as the Cloverdale medal.

The use of the deteriorating Type 1 die in 1897 can be explained by the fact that dies were routinely stored for later use. It would be relatively easy to select either die when producing a new medal. The laminations apparent in the lower right quadrant of the Santa Rosa medals indi-

cate the die was irreparably damaged, leading to its retirement after its use in 1897.

Regardless of how one explains the use of two obverse dies, the relative scarcity of all examples suggests that not many pieces were struck over the 12 years the dies were in use. The Moise medals, with the exception of the Midwinter piece, are encountered infrequently and are collected primarily by specialists in early California medals. Of the two pictorial medals (Santa Rosa and Truckee), the Truckee version (H&K 729) is more expensive, probably because of its inclusion in Hibler and Kappen. All are intriguing souvenirs of California's tradition of celebrating its rich cultural history and bountiful natural resources. ©

PHOTOS: WILLIAM D. HYDER & JEFF SHEVLIN (LOS ANGELES, CLOVERDALE & MIDWINTER MEDALS)

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### L.H. Moise Company "California State Seal" Medals and Tokens by Type and Rarity

MEDAL/TOKEN	CATALOG REFERENCE	TYPE 1	TYPE 2	RARITY*
1894 Midwinter Exposition	Hibler/Kappen 245A	Brass Copper Aluminum —	— — — Brass	Common Scarce Rare Rare
1895 Santa Cruz	—	Brass	—	Scarce
1895/96 Truckee	Hibler/Kappen 729	Brass — —	— Brass Aluminum	Rare Scarce Scarce
1896 Los Angeles	—	—	Brass	Scarce
1896 Stockton	Hibler/Kappen 635	— —	Brass Silver-Plated	Scarce Rare
1897 Cloverdale	Hibler/Kappen 639	—	Brass	Scarce
1897 Santa Rosa	Rulau Santa Rosa 7	Brass Silver-Plated	— —	Scarce Rare
1895/97 Moise	Kappen San Francisco 1716	Aluminum —	— Aluminum	Scarce Scarce
1902 Beckert & Kieso	Kappen Oakland 25	— —	Brass Silver	Scarce Rare
1903 Douglas	Kappen San Francisco 707	—	Aluminum	Scarce

\* Common = more than 75 known    Scarce = 11 to 75 known    Rare = less than 11 known