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TRIAL OF THE PYX AN OLD CUSTOM

United States Conforms to
it in Regulating Its
Coinage.

The trial of the Pyx is an old custom handed down from ancient times. It is the work carried on annually by a commission appointed by the president to ascertain if the coinage of the money of the country has been conducted according to law, especially as to the variation in standard of alloy and weights of the various pieces of money.

The United States coinage standard is 900 for either gold or silver. That is to say, the gold and silver coins in the United States are composed of an alloy containing 900 parts of gold or silver per thousand parts of alloy. Of course, it is impossible practically to make an alloy exactly 900 fine in the quantity such as is needed to make the coins annually turned out by the mints. Hence the law allows a slight variation from the exact standard. This legal variation is known as the "tolerance." For gold coins the limit of tolerance is one. That is to say a gold coin which has a fineness of 899 or 901 is within the limits of the law. For silver the tolerance is three. That is to say, the silver pieces may be from 897 to 903 fine. It is the function of the Pyx trial to see if these limits are observed, although it is a fact that our mints would be very much blamed if these limits of variation were ever reached, not to speak of them being exceeded.

The name is derived from the word Pyx, which is the name of the box in which the sample coins are kept. Samples are taken thus: Every delivery of coins made to the superintendent of the mint is made in the presence of the assayer. One gold piece is withdrawn indiscriminately from each 1,000 pieces or fraction of 1,000. For silver coins one piece is withdrawn from 2,000 pieces or fraction thereof. These pieces are placed in an envelope, sealed, dated and deposited in the Pyx.

Access to the interior of the Pyx is only possible in the presence of the assayer and superintendent of the mint. The Pyx is sent quarterly to Philadelphia. Annually a commission is appointed to convene at Philadelphia, and there the function with the utmost care is carried out by a commission appointed by the president. The commission comprises in its ranks some of the most eminent scientific men in the United States, and with the utmost exactitude is determined the actual weight and fineness of the respective coins.

We believe that in the history of the United States the Pyx commissioners have never yet had to report that the coinage laws of the United

States have not been complied with. On the other hand, the exactitude with which the work has been carried on is a matter of pride to the government officials entrusted with this important work. The United States coins deservedly rank among the best minted coins of the world.—Exchange.

POWDER RIVER IS SUBSIDING

The lowering of the temperature last night and today has caused a subsidence of the water in Powder river. The only damage reported so far was that done to the railroad bridge at the smelter and the washing out of the approach to the bridge near the Half Way house on the Bourne road.

The latter went out some time yesterday afternoon, and heavy traffic had to be suspended. The stages and other light vehicles, however, managed to get through today, but with some difficulty. A crew of men is at work replacing the approach, and it will probably be in shape for all sorts of travel late this afternoon.

The railroad bridge is still a little shaky. The train returning from Whitney did not get over until nearly 7 o'clock last evening. A crew worked on it all night to get the disarranged bent back in place, and still the train this morning had to wait about an hour before attempting to cross. The train from Baker was nearly an hour late here, but from other causes, however. The reason assigned was that the freight train was in the way.

Shaniko to Bend by "Auto."

The quickest trip ever made between Shaniko and Bend was made last week by an automobile, in fourteen hours, covering the distance of ninety miles. This trip of the auto demonstrates that it may be made an important factor in the transportation business of Central Oregon. It shows that neither grades nor rocks nor sagebrush will prevent the operation of automobiles as passenger and freight carriers. A short time ago this machine was given a trial trip out to Dufur from The Dalles. Later it was sent across the Deschutes canyon to Shaniko, descending and ascending the steep road to Shearer's bridge.—Wheeler County News.

Big Placer Cleanup.

That the placer mines in Granite district still pay was clearly shown Thursday when O. F. Barton came to town with between seven and eight ounces of gold dust. This was taken out by him and Ed Benson and Tom Johnson in a few days' work on the Tabor Diggins, and the cleanup was made to give them some idea of how the ground will pay. They still have about a month's panning before them and should reap a rich reward for their labors.—Granite Gem

Wood, Wood, Wood!

Finest in the market. Sixteen inch, \$4.25 per cord, \$1.50 per rick. Cash on delivery.

SUMPTER FUEL COMPANY.

HARNESSING LIGHTNING ON PIKE'S PEAK FOR POWER

To harness the electricity on Pike's Peak and by means of a metallic circuit conduct it to the base, there to be stored for use as motive power for the cog road—that is the scheme of the Manitou and Pike's Peak railway.

The proposition, according to the general manager, Mr. Sells, is feasible, and affords the only practical means of employing electricity on the cog road.

The one obstacle in the way of carrying out such a plan is the static electricity with which the air is charged above the 12,000 foot point. The fact that Pike's Peak overtops all the surrounding mountains makes it the natural grounding spot dissipated over a large area.

In the ordinary trolley line, power comes along the trolley wire from the power station, thence into the motors under the cars and returns to the earth, completing the circuit.

The heavy currents upon the peak coming so quickly and so violently would, if applied direct, tear the machines to pieces within a week after the operations were begun. The thing to do then is to harness this power and make it useful.

They propose, therefore, to make a complete circuit of trolley wire and a double circuit which shall contain all the power needed to operate the cars and at the same time keep it from ripping up the motors in its desire to get to the earth.

This double trolley circuit will be complete in itself, starting from the power-house in Manitou and returning without going through the earth.

The pole of the car will take the power in the ordinary way and transmit to the motor, but it will return on the other wire to the power-house and not through the earth, thereby preventing the burning out of the motor.

The poles which carry these wires will each have at the top a lightning rod designed to attract electricity which plays around the peak so fiercely. The theory is that the poles will catch the "juice" and transmit it through the rails of the cog road to the powerhouse in Manitou, where it will be transformed and stored for use. They will take the electricity off the peak and transmit it to Manitou, where it can be used for driving trains up and down.

The Cog management have already begun upon plans and specifications.—New York Herald.

O. R. & N. SUMMER BOOK.

The handsome 1904 summer book, "Restful Recreation Resorts," issued by the passenger department of the Oregon Railroad and Navigation company, is just out. It tells all about the summering places of the Columbia river valley—a brief description of the trips up and down the Columbia river, to the mountains, beaches, inland resorts and fountains of healing, where they are and how to reach them. The book has a special designed front cover, printed in two colors, and the inside pages are splendidly illustrated by costly and beautiful half-tones. A copy of this publication may be obtained by

sending two cents in stamps to A. L. Craig, general Passenger agent of the Oregon Railroad and Navigation company, Portland.

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