



Andreas Hofer

The Tyrolean Insurrectionist and His Numismatic Legacy



by: James T. Martin

Andreas Hofer -Tyrolean Patriot

In the age of the Napoleonic conquests in Europe, Andreas Hofer, a patriot of the Tyrol stood up against this rising tide and left a brief numismatic legacy. Born in November of 1767 at St. Leonhard in the Tyrol, he was the son of a long standing family of innkeepers. When Andreas inherited the *Sandhof Inn* from his father he was already involved in the local horse and wine trade. This background of respect and the contacts he developed in his trade were to serve him well when combined with his natural leadership abilities. Before we take a look at his heroic insurrection against the Bavarian and Napoleonic forces lets examine the historical backdrop that led to rebellion.

The Tyrolean region of Austria is located at the eastern end of the Alps and bridges northern portions of Europe with the northeastern areas of Italy. As such it was a major trade route that required the people of the area to be obstinate and proud of their culture in order to maintain their identity. During the Middle ages the Tyrol was incorporated into the southern part of the Duchy of Bavaria. Later, the area was ceded to Duke Rudolph IV of the House of Hapsburg, and thus it's traditional association with Austria today.

Napoleon first marched on Tyrol in June of 1796, during the 1st Republic of France. Under this threat many Tyroleans gathered in the parish church in Bolzano (in Italy today) and vowed that if God granted them victory they would hold an annual religious procession. Their first strike against Napoleon led to victory at the Battle of Sprignes in 1797, and true to their word, the veneration of the 'sacred heart' that they believed brought them victory is still celebrated today.

Upon abandonment of the plan to invade Britain, after several missteps culminating in his defeat at the Battle of Trafalgar, Napoleon again turned his attention to conquests on the Continent. In response the countries of the United Kingdom, Austria, Russia, Naples, Sweden, and later, Prussia, formed the Third Coalition against his advances (1805). The two previous coalitions had been against the French revolutionary state, this one was the first to oppose the new French Empire. With Napoleons' forces concentrated around Boulogne the allied coalition organized attacks against them in Germany and Italy. An initial success forced the Bavarians, allied to France, to abandon Munich. Napoleon Bonaparte quickly moved across the Rhine River met and surrounded the Austrian forces at Ulm, Germany. This forced the capitulation of the Austrian forces and caused the Russian army to flee east and then northward to meet reinforcements. With this victory Napoleon headed north and found the Third Coalition allies in a defensive position at Austerlitz in the Austrian homeland. There, in a battle described by Bonaparte himself as his finest ever, the Austrians were destroyed when they fell victim to a feigned French retreat. With this defeat the Coalition abandoned their planned efforts in Italy and northern Germany. At the Treaty of Pressburg Austria was eliminated from the Coalition and evicted from Italy. This event, and the clean-up operations in Austria and the Tyrol, set the stage for our look at the heroics of Andreas Hofer.

Part of the Treaty of Pressburg (aka; Peace of Pressburg) in 1805 was that the Tyrol was ceded to the German State of Bavaria. By this time Andreas Hofer had already been involved in government and the military. He had been elected to the Tyrolean *Landtag*, a representative assembly with some legislative authority, and he had served as a sharpshooter and a militia captain during the Third Coalition period. With the ceding of the Tyrol to Bavaria Andreas became a leader of the anti-Bavarian movement.

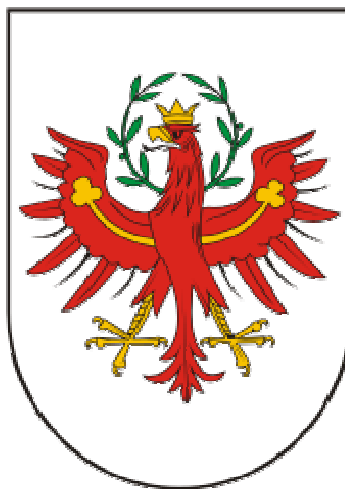
The Emperor of Austria, Franz I, called a delegation together in Vienna in January of 1809; the mission was to organize a possible uprising. Andreas Hofer was part of that delegation, and was there to begin the rebellion on April 9, 1809. His first mission, after mobilizing his Passeier Valley militia, was to march through the Jaufen Pass to Sterzing (Vipiteno) where they seized the town and took the Bavarian occupation forces prisoner. They inflicted further casualties as they pursued General Bisson's troops through the Wipp Valley. This led to the first victorious occupation of Innsbruck. With the fame of these victories Andreas Hofer was seen as a true leader and his stature as a major player in the rebellion was recognized. Sadly, the rebellion's chances of ultimate success waned when Napoleon defeated the Austrian forces of Archduke Charles. With that Bavarian forces reoccupied Innsbruck and Napoleon's troops left the area. Once again rebellion flared

Events now came fast and furious. At the first and second battles at Iselberg (Berg Isel) on May 25th and May 29th, Hofer's troops defeated the Bavarians again and drove them out of the country. Hofer took Innsbruck on May 30th. The day before Andreas Hofer had received a promise from the Emperor that any peace treaty signed by him would not include giving the Tyrol back to the Bavarians. Franz I then sent Austrian Intendant Hormayr to rule Tyrol and Hofer returned home. This agreement did not hold and upon the Austrian defeat at the Battle of Wagram on July 6th the Tyrol was again ceded to the Bavarians. To end this see-saw situation in the region Napoleon sent 40,000 French and Bavarian troops to take over Tyrol and reoccupied Innsbruck. With no hesitation Andreas Hofer sent word throughout the valleys of the Tyrol to join battle yet again. As a deeply religious man Andreas never claimed glory for himself and is known to have declared "Not me; not you either, but Him up there!" Preceding this latest struggle he rallied the troops by uttering another famous motto: "You've been to mass; you've had a schnapps. Now forward in the name of God!"

At the third battle of Berg Isel on the 13th and 14th of August, Commander Haspinger carried the day. During the tough 12 hour fight Andreas Hofer had stood for some time in the heat of battle inspiring his troops to fight on. Ultimately, Marshal Lefebvre and his French troops were defeated but Intendant Hormayr had fled leaving Hofer as supreme commander of Tyrol's armed forces. With this leadership vacuum Hofer declared himself governor of the province. He moved into the governors residence, known as the Hofburg, and ruled the land in the name of the Emperor of Austria for two months (Aug 14 - Oct 14, 1809). One can assume that during this short period Andreas Hofer had the authority and the means to have his two rebellion coins minted (Fig. 1 & 2 below).

The signing of the Treaty of Schönbrunn on October 14, 1809 once again sealed the fate of Tyrol. Unbelievably, the province was again ceded to Bavaria. With the promise of amnesty, Hofer and his troops laid down their weapons. However on November 12, Hofer, having received false reports of Austrian victories, tried to rally his troops once again. This time the prospects appeared dim and the few who answered his call were quickly defeated by the French troops at the fourth battle at Berg Isel. Andreas Hofer and his last faithful follower, Kajetan Sweth, were forced to hide out in a hut high up on the Pfandler Alm, a mountain pasture in his beloved Passeier Valley. The French offered a reward of 1500 guilders for Hofer and, in a betrayal similar to a biblical tale, a neighbor named Franz Raffl revealed his hiding place. Italian troops were sent and Hofer was captured on January 2, 1810. Andreas Hofer was sent to face a court martial in Mantua. Napoleon himself had given the order to “give him a fair trial and then shoot him.” While Napoleon later claimed to Prince Metternich that Hofer was executed against his wishes he did face a firing squad on February 20, 1810. He faced his executioners and refused to wear a blindfold. In a last letter to a friend he wrote “Goodbye cruel world. Death comes so easily to me that there will be no tears in my eyes.”

The prophecy he expressed to his confessor shortly before his execution: “The Tyrol will be Austrian again” was proved true just three years later. In 1823 the remains of Andreas Hofer were moved from Mantua Italy to the court chapel in Innsbruck Austria where his life-size marble statue now stands. Before this, in 1818, Franz I had given a patent of nobility to the Hofer family. In a final tribute a large bronze statue of Andreas Hofer was placed at Berg Isel in 1893. His story of sincere piety, self-sacrificing patriotism and noble sense of honor has been an inspiration to poets and youthful idealists ever since.



Provincial symbol of Tyrol: Crowned, red spread eagle with laurel wreath around the head.

Andreas Hofer - Numismatic Heritage

In the brief two month period between August 14 and October 14, 1809 Andreas Hofer held a self appointed position of power that afforded him the opportunity to mint two denominations. Andreas believed he had the authority under the Emperor to mint coins as part of his duties. In order to reward Hofer, and perhaps to ratify his temporary government, Emperor Franz I presented him with a gold medallion. There is no indication that this medallion still exists.



Fig.1: 1 Kreuzer, copper: OB: GEFURSTETE GRAFTSHAFT TIROL (Princely County Tyrol). Crowned, spread eagle of Tyrol with laurel wreath around the head. RX: EIN (1) KREUZER 1809 within a wreath consisting to two different laurels. The edge has a floral pattern. Varieties exist; any help attributing those by documenting them at www.Moneta-Coins.com would be appreciated! Listed as copper, the piece is ~ 24 mm in diameter and weighs about 4.7 grams. References for this coin include: Austrian Province Tyrol KM 148; Craig 41; Lapa 265, Eklund 118 and Neumann I 1351-3.



Fig.2: 20 Kreuzer, silver: OB: GEFURSTETE GRAFTSHAFT TIROL (Princely County Tyrol). Crowned, spread eagle of Tyrol with laurel wreath around the head. RX: 'NACH DEM CONVENTIONS FUSS' (means 'according to the Convention Standard'). '20. Kreuzer. w/ two different sprigs of laurel below) *1809*'. Andreas Hofer's 20 Kreuzer 'nach dem Conventions Fuss' was worth 24 Kreuzers of the various local 'Landmuenzen' or 'Scheidemuenzen'. Edge has a floral pattern. KM states there are three varieties, it would be wonderful to be able to document these at the Moneta Temple site (www.Moneta-Coins.com). Austrian Province Tyrol KM 149; Craig 42.

When it came time for Austria to initiate its post war 50 Schilling series of commemoratives it began with Andreas Hofer and the 150 Year Anniversary of the 1809 insurrection. As the first in the series it is the only one to show the denomination in written form (Fünfzig) rather than numerically. It is also the only one in the series to show the traditional eagle reverse. However, the eagle is Tyrolean rather than Germanic. This coin has never been a strong collector piece and presents a conservative design which is fitting for the occasion. It was minted at a time when Europe was just beginning to fully recover from the ravages of the Second World War. Outside of Austria and surrounding areas Andreas Hofer is not well known. Krause - Mishler lists it as KM# 2888; the coin is about 35 mm in diameter and weighs 20 grams in .900-fine-silver. KM lists it as 'No Date', and it's true that the dates shown serve to illustrate the 150 years since the rebellion, but 1959 is there and rather boldly at that. KM also sometimes fails to indicate a mintage figure; nearly 3 million business strikes were pressed and another 800 in proof. As the 200th Anniversary is fast approaching I fully expect Austria to grace collectors with another rendition of Andreas Hofer and I suspect we'll get another Tyrolean eagle too.



Fig.3: Austria; 1959 Andreas Hofer Insurrection Commemorative - 50 Schilling

Numismatic Note: The Tyrol issued the first the worlds first crown sized silver coin in 1484 (Craig) or 1486 (KM). Austria continued to strike coins of regular Austrian types at Hall (F) until 1807. Other mintmarks for Hall are FH, G, H, HA. Curiously, Franz I had previously been known as Franz II while enthroned as Holy Roman Emperor (1792 - 1806). He became known as Franz I of Austria (1806 - 1835) when Napoleon dissolved the bogus Holy Roman Empire through conquest.