

# HUH?

By AGWire™  
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For the past 13 years, we have been religiously logging Engelhard silver bar serial numbers at every opportunity to the point of obsession, be it daily scouring of Ebay listings, Instagram and other online posts, or displays at shows or our LCS counter. Every opportunity to log a serial number furthers our quest to precisely delineate each and every serial run, which dials in production mintage and date relevance of every size, series and variety of Engelhard silver bullion.<sup>1</sup> With our Engelhard Master Serial Registry at now over 25,000 photo-verified serial numbers, there are few, if any holes left to fill, but the process continues, relentlessly. Engelhard never logged their bullion production information, so we're creating their Back Pages. Not to be confused with our favorite Bob Dylan song "[My Back Pages](#)". From our back pages, we have determined that only a few varieties and sizes have their own specific serial number run, whereas most bars and ingots shared a master serial run with many other sizes and varieties. US, Canadian and London Engelhard production each utilized a primary master serial number progression that was used and shared throughout the entire bullion production span. What this meant was that if Albert had a weekly production quota of stamping 150 10oz 5 digit Engelhard ingots on his production line in Iselin, New Jersey in 1973, he simply progressed his rotary dial up one digit for each new bar that he hand stamped until he finished his work for the day. Let's say for simplicity that Albert ended the day stamping 10oz ingot #19206. Al was off for the next few days, and the plant foreman told Jack that he needed to crank out a short run of 100 5oz 5-digit bars for a distributor, and he glanced at a quick hand jotted note from Al that said 19206, so the foreman assumed *that* number was the new starting serial number of Jack's progression, so he told Jack to start the 5oz run with 19206. Based on the above 5oz stamp font, Jack clearly had a different rotary dial stamp than Al, and both bars ended up with the same serial number. The process clearly wasn't rocket science, and none of these guys were likely statistical analysts, but they did

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<sup>1</sup> We actually log serial numbers on most widely known vintage bullion refiner bars, such as Johnson Matthey, US Assay, Perth Mint, Homestake Mining, Bunker Hill, SilverTowne, Simmons, Cascade Refining, Harringtons, to name a few.

their best no doubt, and what they produced is precisely what we love today, God Bless them, mostly for the mistakes they made! If they only knew how much their blunders were cherished by collectors today, and *oh* how much they're worth! They would say, "HUH?"

This 19206 serial number is currently the only known 'duplication' between one ingot size and another. Because of our comprehensive serial logging, we may likely be the ones to identify the next duplicate set, and the ingots will more than likely have different owners. Is there collectible value to owning both examples? *Most Definitely!* The next big discovery should be interesting to say the least. We have record of two 5 T.oz ingots that were both stamped with the same serial number. This was likely due to the same production line confusion where one shift ended and the other started, this time with both workers using the same rotary dial stamp, and the new shift worker failing to advance the last number, so the serial number was the same for the ingot made at the end of the previous day as the one made the following morning. Nobody cared at the time, and they likely didn't even notice that it happened, as yesterday's production was likely already out the door and on the truck. Back then these silver bars were cheap (inexpensive), worth about \$2.00 per ounce at the time, so maybe \$20 for a 10oz bar, and \$10 for a 5oz bar. Their incentive was to get the product out, not to make them perfect. Many blunders slipped through the cracks, totally unnoticed, or just simply ignored, with no record whatsoever... until WE noticed!

The mystique and allure of this great hobby of collectible bullion is that there will continue to be surprises like the above examples, which realistically occurred many many times throughout Engelhard's bullion production, and the same would be said for all other vintage refiners that we track. We may soon discover the next matching pair, and then the next, or something totally different that completely blows our minds. We won't know *until we know*. And if you're the lucky one who comes across it, we'll bet you'll say, "Pretty cool, **HUH!**".

Duplicity,

**AE**