

The Twelve Caesars

In the reign of the emperor Hadrian 117-138 AD, the Roman historian Suetonius penned his **Lives of the Caesars**. The work began with the life of Julius Caesar, uncle of the first emperor Augustus, and concluded with Domitian, last of the Flavians. In all 12 caesars were included in Suetonius' papyrus scrolls. In contrast to the works of other historians such as Tacitus, Suetonius concentrated on the personal lives of the Caesars rather than on affairs of state. Suetonius' **Lives of the Caesars** has remained popular through the ages. Such modern works as **I, Claudius** by Robert Graves, and its subsequent 13 part TV Roman drama (available to rent at the video store) were created directly from the ancient tome. More recently the X-rated HBO made for TV series **"Rome"** deals with the Julius Caesar and Octavian's (later titled Augustus) early history. Based on the raw and lurid nature of Suetonius' histories, these movie scripts, even though seen through the lens of Hollywood, actually represent the reality of this ancient world.



100%

Glass seal with all 12 Caesars, Julius and Augustus in the center. English, c. 1800. Best displayed with light source behind it. \$477.

For centuries Suetonius' writings have inspired collectors to assemble sets of the Twelve Caesars whose lives are detailed in his work. The Twelve Caesars are: Julius Caesar, the dictator whose monarchical direction prompted his assassination in 44 BC; Octavian, later titled and named Augustus in 27 BC, who consolidated his power by 31 BC and organized the foundation of the Roman empire so well that it survived hundreds of years; Tiberius 14-37 AD, the stepson and last choice of Augustus for successor; Caligula 37-41 AD, who soon proved himself a sadistic maniac and had to be eliminated by his own Praetorian guard; Claudius 41-54 AD, Caligula's aged uncle, who had a fine mind with a grotesque and clumsy physical appearance; Nero 54-68 AD possibly a son of Claudius, but definitely an infamous tyrant and persecutor of early Christians; Galba 68-69 AD a stern ruler whose military budget cuts led to his assassination; Otho Jan-Apr 69 AD was elevated to the throne by the Praetorians in Rome, but was defeated by the legions of

the Rhine and committed suicide; Vitellius Apr-Dec 69 AD was a notorious glutton of the Roman banquet scene and was killed when his troops were overwhelmed by Vespasian's return from the Holy Land; Vespasian 69-79 AD restored peace to the empire and ruled wisely; Titus 79-81 AD his first son completed the conquest of Judaea when his father returned to Rome. His popular reign witnessed the eruption of Vesuvius and the burial of Pompeii. Domitian 81-96 AD was the unpopular second son whose reign went from mediocre to paranoid bloodbaths and his assassination ended the era of the Twelve Caesars.



110%

100-50 BC gold stater of the Celtic Ambiani tribe, who put up fierce resistance to the invasion of Romans led by Julius Caesar. As a general 60-50 BC Julius Caesar built his wealth and power by conquering Gaul for the Roman Empire. Obv: Picassoesque horse Rev: blank NGC Ch XF \$1477.



110%

47-46 BC silver denarius of Julius Caesar, military mint moving with Caesar in North Africa. Obv: diademed head of Venus, from whom he claimed descent. Rev: Aeneas (another alleged ancestor) carrying his father and the Palladium from the burning city of Troy. NGC Ch XF \$1677.



110%

Another Julius Caesar of the same issue, raw EF \$1177.



110%

44 BC early, silver denarius of Julius Caesar Obv: his laureate bust, comet behind. By striking this coin Julius violated the ancient Roman prohibition of putting a living person's portrait on a coin. It is commonly believed that this provoked the bloody response on the Ides of March. Rev: Venus holding long scepter and victory ICG VF 35 \$4700.



110%

44 BC early, silver denarius of Julius Caesar Obv: his laureate bust, wearing veil of high priest, and with the title of "dictator for life". Rev: Venus standing, holding long scepter and Victory. The claiming of this title, conflicting with the principles of the Roman Republic was another nail in his coffin. NGC Ch VF (great centering, Abt Unc, with softly struck areas) \$5977.



110%

43 BC late summer-early fall gold aureus struck by Octavian at his military mint in Italy Obv: laureate bust of the deified Julius Caesar, only posthumous issues have the face of Julius in gold. Rev: very young bare head of Octavian, lightly bearded. Ex: Mazzini, Moretti, Ley. Raw EF slightly misstruck, perhaps sharpest Julius Caesar face in gold in existence. \$187,000.



100%

Glass seal of Octavian, known as Augustus from 26 BC on. English, c. 1800 \$677.



110%

41 BC time of the Second Triumvirate with Marc Anthony and Lepidus, silver denarius Obv: bare head of Marc Anthony, jug behind Rev: bare head of Octavian, but in a political slap in the face to Octavian, his portrait is rendered as a slightly smaller Marc Anthony. Nine years later Octavian destroyed the fleet and legions of Marc Anthony at Actium, leaving him the master of the known world. NGC XF* rare \$5700.

36 BC silver denarius of Octavian Obv: his bare head Rev: temple in Forum where Julius Caesar's body was cremated Abt Good \$97.



110%

32-29 BC gold aureus of Octavian (he did not assume name and title of Augustus until 27 BC) Obv: his elegant bare head Rev: triumphal chariot Raw EF, faint scrape, huge planchet \$27,000.



110%

15-13 BC silver denarius of Augustus, Lugdunum mint in Gaul Obv: his bare head Rev: bull butting right NGC XF* \$2700.



110%

12 BC silver denarius of Augustus commemorating the death of his admiral and good friend Agrippa, and to make hasty payments to Agrippa's leaderless legions in Pannonia. Obv: very unusual face of Augustus (previously assigned to Gaius Caesar) Rev: ram's head candelabra, surrounded by wreath with 2 bucraniums and 2 pateras ANACS EF 45 rare \$3775.



110%

2 BC-14 AD gold aureus of Augustus (born Octavian) Obv: his laureate head Rev: his grandsons, and heirs (Caesar was the title given to an heir to the throne, "Augustus" became the supreme title of emperor) Gaius and Lucius. Both predeceased him, leaving Tiberius next in line. ANACS VF30, I believe to be Boscoreale Hoard based on grade and heavy purplish toning. \$7700.



110%

Same designs as previous, but silver denarius NGC XF \$1277.



110%

Another silver denarius ICG AU 50 \$1477.

22-30 AD bronze as struck by Tiberius Obv: head of Augustus Rev: altar Abt Good/Fair \$67.