

**AMERICAN SCHOOL MEDALS**  
**(From a presentation at the 2005 MCA meeting at the ANA)**

**Medal Collectors of America**  
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**Images of Medals**

**1. American School Medals**

- Prizes for exceptional achievement were given in ancient times, the earliest that I know of being those mentioned in Homer's Iliad of around 3000 BC which were given at the funeral games for Patroklos. These early prizes were not medals, but rather bronze caldrons and tripods, mules, oxen, a silver bowl, a silver-handled broadsword and a "girl adept at gentle handicraft"
- Since this is the MCA meeting at the ANA convention, however, and we're here to talk about medals, today I'm going to discuss American School Medals, which I collect.
- I'll begin by briefly reviewing the 16<sup>th</sup> century European origins of school award medals, discuss the few know medals of the American colonial period, the Boston School Medals established by Benjamin Franklin...

**2. Today's Discussion**

- **European Origins**
- Colonial Period
- Boston School Medals
- 19th Century Engraved Medals
- 19th Century Struck Medals
- U.S. Mint Medals
- 20th Century Examples

**3. Protestant Gymnasium; Klagenfurt, Austria c.1555**

- Prizes for academic excellence were given in Europe as early as the 14<sup>th</sup> century, but in those days were useful items such as books, silver pens and monetary awards
- The first school award medals were given at gymnasiums in Austria and Germany in the third quarter of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. These gymnasiums were essentially secondary schools (run by either Jesuit or Protestant clerics), which prepared boys for university and taught the classical languages and liberal arts.
- Dr. Herbert Erlanger, who published a book in 1975 entitled the "Origin and Development of the European Prize Medal to the End of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century", noted that the earliest dated school award medal was given in 1577 at the Nuremberg Gymnasium at Altdorf. There are also dated examples of school medals from other German, Austrian and Swiss cities dated from the few years right after that.

- This gold medal, however, which recent research by Dr. Lanz indicates was awarded around 1555 at the Protestant Gymnasium in Klagenfurt Austria (the oldest high school in Austria), is the oldest school medal that I know of and certainly one of the oldest that exists.
  - All of these early school award medals were struck in silver and gold in monetary sizes (this being a 3 ducat size) and so were probably acceptable in payment, but were produced in very small numbers, and were not struck according to the legally prescribed norms for coins of the period
  - My own theory for why award medals (both shooting and school medals) seem to have originated in the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century is that a silversmith in Augsburg figured out around that time that he could use a screw press to stamp out coins and medallic objects. As a result, the labor required and therefore the economics of making these sorts of things changed dramatically and it became more practical for medals to be used as academic prizes.
  - Anyway, on this particular piece we have...(describe)
  - Obverse legend “Ego Sum Via Vert Et Vita” means “I am the true way and the life”
  - “Agnus Dei Qui Tolit Peccata Mundi” is “Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world”
4. Jesuit Gymnasium; Graz, Austria – 1627
    - This is a triple thaler sized medal from Graz in Austria dated 1627 (with the name Peter Haimer also inscribed) and has a more typical design for the school medals of that period, though is very large
    - “Fautori Patria Graeciv M.” means “from the fatherly patrons of Graz”
    - The reverse legend “Dulce Est Praeteriti Quondam Meminisse Laboris Munus Non Munus Patria Finis Erit” is translated as something like “It is sweet to remember one day things that are past” and “achieving a reward of labor is not an end in itself”
  5. Virtutis Comes Gloria; Basel, Switzerland – 1642
    - This is a more typical sized medal of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, being about the size of a quarter
    - “Virtutis Comes Gloria” essentially means “Fame is a companion of virtue”
    - The reverse legend “Mag Bas Ivventuti Stud Brabeion D D” means “Basel student prize” with the implication that it was a prize in a contest or examination
  6. Patricius Sporer; Wurtzburg, Germany c.1650
    - This is the earliest school medal that I’m aware of that was meant to hang on a ribbon or cord, much the way modern Olympic medals are awarded and worn
    - “S. Patricius C. R. Patronus Scholarum” translates as “St. Patricius (Sporer), Christus Rex, Patron of the Students”
    - “Dumus B. M. Virginis” means “Thorns of the Blessed Virgin Mary”
    - There is also an edge inscription: “Study Vitutis Ac Morum Tesserera Apud C: Regv: S.P. Augustini in Oppido Wertensi” which means “Award for the Study of Virtue and Morals at (name of institution) in Wurtzburg”
  7. King David Psalmenpfennig; Bern, Switzerland c.1680

- From the earliest time, school medals were awarded for several reasons, for example,
    - For the best examination or performance in a particular subject
    - For diligence
    - For graduation or other specific achievement
  - In Berne, medals were given in Sunday schools for memorizing the Heidelberg catechism, and smaller ones given for memorizing the Bern Catechism (which was an abbreviated and simplified version)
  - This particular medal was given to a child in a Sunday school for memorizing all 150 Biblical psalms in the verse translation of Lobwasser which was published in 1655, so you can imagine that these are fairly scarce
  - “Omnis Halitus Laudet Iah” (Jehova) means “Let (or may) every breath praise God”
  - “Monum(entum) Liberal Reip Bernensis” means “a token of recognition from the free republic of Bern”
8. Diligentiae Praemium; Ansbach, Germany – 1737
- “Diligentiae Praemium” means “prize for diligence”; it is a legend that comes up in many places
9. Invitat Pretiis Animos; Basel, Switzerland c.1780
- Note the device of Athena, the goddess of wisdom, placing a wreath on the head of a student, which is a device that shows up over and over again
  - “Invitat Pretiis Animos (et praemia ponit)” is from a line in the 5<sup>th</sup> book of Virgil’s Aenid (line 292) and is translated as “He invites (or summons) the souls (people) with prizes (and offers rewards)”.
10. Blundell’s School, Keats Medal; Tiverton, England c.1778
- The idea of awarding medals for academic achievement seems to have made it’s way from the German-speaking parts of Europe to England during the reign of the Hanoverian King Georges. Although large silver badges were used at Christ’s Hospital (which was a charity school) in London, the first real English school award medals were apparently given in the 1750’s at either St. Paul’s School or Christ’s Hospital in London.
  - This medal was given soon after that and is typical of the finely executed British school award medals of that period. The legend, “Detur Digniori”, which means “let it be given to the more worthy” references the inscription Detur Pulchriori (let it be given to the more beautiful) that was inscribed on the golden apple Paris awarded to Venus. This motto was later used on the earliest of the Boston Latin School medals that I’ll show you in a moment
  - “Detur Digniori”
  - “In Patriam Populumq Fluxit” is roughly translated as “It flowed onto the nation and the people”, apparently referring to wisdom
  - “Petrus Blundellus Fund Don MDCIV” says simply “Peter Blundell Founding Don 1604”
11. Rev. John Burrowes School; Dublin, Ireland – 1780
- The motto above the owl on the obverse “Sume Superbiam Quaesitam Meritis” is the famous closing line of the third book of Horace’s odes (Horace,

Carm. 3, 30, 14) and, poetically translated, is “Crown my head with a garland of Delphic laurel”

- Here, Athena is portrayed as an owl, which was sacred to her, and this medal has multiple devices signifying scholarship
- The spines of books have Virgil, Homer, Xeno, and Euclid on them
- The reverse inscription “Has Laudis Primitias Ortinuit Henricus Otway Examinatione Habita In Schola Revd. Johannis Burrowes Juxta Dublin A.D. 1780” is translated as “These first fruits of praise to Henry Otway by examination held at the school of the Reverend John Burrowes near Dublin in 1780”.
- Note that both of these British medals are very well done, but are fairly typical for British school award medals of that period

## 12. Today’s Discussion -- Colonial Period

- The earliest school medals intended for America were two gold medals that an English merchant and member of Parliament, John Sargent, commissioned in London and asked Benjamin Franklin to offer in 1762 at the College and Academy of Philadelphia (which is now the University of Pennsylvania) to two students for their essays.
  - These were probably hand engraved and may still exist, but are not known.
  - I mention them not only because they are the earliest documented school medals awarded in America, but also because of Franklin’s involvement, which we’ll see in a moment is fairly significant

## 13. Kings College Literary Prize; (Columbia University) – 1768

- The earliest extant American school medal is this elaborately engraved medal given by the Literary Society of King’s College in New York, which is known today as Columbia University
  - It comes in two versions – an American made version engraved in New York by Elisha Gallaudet, who is believed to have engraved the dies for the Continental Dollar, and an English made version executed in London and hallmarked RR for Richard Rugg.
  - They are exactly the same except for the natural stylistic differences you’d expect from two different engravers.
- “Praemium Literarium Collegium Regalis Novi Eboraci in America Benjamine Moore” meaning “A Literary Prize of the Royal College of New York in America, to Benjamin Moore”
- “In Lumine Tuo Videbimus Lumen” meaning “In Your Light We Shall See Light”
- “1<sup>st</sup> Pet. II 1.2.” refers to a verse from the Bible that I won’t get into here
- “Eximio Juveni propter Insignes In Artibus Progressus” means “To an Exceptional Youth on Account of Noteworthy Progress in the Arts”
- This example is one of three known (of the 28 made) and resides in the Museum of the City of New York, having been given to them by a descendent of Benjamin Moore, the recipient

## 14. College of William and Mary; Botetourt Medal – 1772

- This is a copper specimen of the Botetort Medal, which was awarded at the College of William and Mary
  - The medal was established by Lord Botetort, who was the Royal Governor of Virginia and Rector of the William & Mary Board of Visitors
  - The were dies engraved by Thomas Pingo and these medals were struck in London at the Royal Mint
  - Eight gold medals were awarded between 1772 and 1775, 2 each year, one for classical learning and one for natural philosophy (or science)
  - Two of these gold medals are in Virginia institutions and a third was seen privately in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, though I don't know where it is today
  - A handful of copper examples such as this one are also know. They were probably struck at the Royal Mint as specimens during 1771 or 1772, before the gold medals and dies were shipped to Virginia
- “Regnante Georgio Tertio Musis Amico” means “During the reign of King George III, friend of the muses”
- “Quaesitum Meritis” below the bust means “earned by merits”
- “Gul. Et Mar. Tradunt Blaro Chart. Col.” means “William and Mary give the charter of the college to Blair”
- “Anno Regni Quarto” meaning “in the fourth year of their reign” (i.e., 1693), which is when the college was chartered

#### 15. Today's Discussion -- Boston School Medals

- The first medals given after the American Revolution, the first given in any number, and certainly the medals which seem to have spawned all of the other early American school medals are the Boston School Medals established by the will of Benjamin Franklin, who died in 1790.
- I wrote a long article on this series for *The Numismatist* in 1978, but I'll try to give as brief an overview as I can

#### 16. Boston Franklin School Medal; Engraved Crossed Quills – 1792

- Franklin was born in Boston and briefly attended the public grammar school there before he moved to Philadelphia to join his brother
- When Franklin died, he left £100 sterling to the City of Boston for medals to be given to the best boys in the then 7 public schools (3 to each school, for a total of 21 per year initially)
- These medals were first awarded in 1792, this one being from the Bushnell collection

#### 17. Boston Latin School; Stacked Books – 1793

- In 1793, the design for the Latin School medals was changed to this stacked books design, while the other schools continued with the crossed quills over the open book design
- “Detur Digniori” as we noted earlier means “let it be given to the more worthy”

#### 18. Boston Franklin School Medal; Struck Crossed Quills – 1802

- In 1800, the engraved crossed quill design was replaced by this struck version, while the Boston Latin School continued with the completely hand engraved stacked books design through the late 1820's

- In about 1830, a smaller Wright & Bale design with a funny looking bust of Franklin replaced both of these versions and was given through 1846 in three varieties
  - The Boston School Committee reverted to a few simple hand engraved designs which were used until 1850. There is a simple and very rare stuck design that was used in 1851 and then...
- 19. Boston School Medal – 1858; Struck by U.S. Mint (SC-11)**
- In 1852 they commissioned Henry Mitchell to engrave the dies for this design.
  - These were struck at the U.S. Mint until 1952 and given in large numbers. It's the design they still used today, although the execution of the modern medals is inferior to this mid-19<sup>th</sup> century execution.
- 20. Boston Town Medal For Girls – 1821**
- Franklin's will explicitly said that these medals were to be given to the best boys, but by 1821 this was considered unfair to the girls then also attending the public schools.
  - Although only boys went to school at the time Franklin made his will and the Committee might have reasoned that he really meant that the medals were intended for all of the "children" who attended the schools, they decided to create a separate series of award medals for the girls.
  - The first year of these say "Town Medal", but Boston became a city in 1822, so after the first year these medals read "City Medal"
  - This particular medal was once in the Woodward collection
- 21. Boston City Medal For Girls; Struck Hexagonal Variety –1839**
- These City Medals come in eight different varieties – 4 struck and 4 engraved...
- 22. Boston City Medal – 1865; Struck by U.S. Mint (SC-12)**
- The last design of these City Medals was engraved by Mitchell and struck by the U.S. Mint until 1867, at which point both boys and girls were given the same Franklin medals.
- 23. Today's Discussion -- 19th Century Engraved Medals**
- From the very first years these Franklin and City medals were awarded, they were a very big deal in Boston and became known throughout the region as a very high honor
- 24. Good Scholarship Gorget; New England c.1800**
- As a result, other schools (both public and private) started awarding silver medals for scholarly achievement
  - Because these other schools tended not to have the resources to have dies executed, all of the other early American medals, up until about 1830, are completely hand engraved.
  - Not all of them are round; this one is in the shape of a gorget, which was a symbol of esteem and honor based on the item of military paraphernalia that officers wore around their necks
- 25. 1st Drawing Star; New England c.1810**
- This one is in the shape of a star, and as you can see, most of these are very simple designs, having only words and ornamental borders
- 26. Mrs. Rowson's Academy; Boston – 1810**

- Mrs. Rowson was a prominent actress and author who established a private school in Boston for young ladies in 1797.
  - She taught various academic subjects, but she also taught music, dancing, needlework, drawing and painting, and many of her students' works survive
  - She retired in 1822 and died in 1824, but the school continued to be run by her daughter for some time after that.
27. Mrs. Rowson's Academy; Boston – 1817
- Here's another medal from Mrs. Rowson's School that was awarded in 1817 to the "Head of the 1<sup>st</sup> Grammatical Class"
28. Mr. Reid's School; Philadelphia – 1815
- Here's a similar medal given by a Mr. Reid, who I'm told ran a school in Philadelphia
  - I think this one is curious because it's not clear whether the "A" is simply an article (as in "a premium for writing") or represents the a first prize somewhat akin to the grade "A" such as we use grades in school today
29. Grammar Award; New England c.1815
- Here's an early American medal with a very simple device – crossed laurel branches, which are an ancient symbol of glory
30. Thy Brightness Shall Increase; Charlestown, Mass. – 1821
- This medal is dated 1821 and while the location is not identified, I know it is from Charlestown, Mass. based on other medals, both in my collection and the collection of the Massachusetts Historical Society
31. Presented by the Trustees; Louisburg, NC – 1826
- This medal is gold, which is unusual for this period and certainly unusual outside of Boston during that period
32. Phi Beta Kappa - Early Hand Engraved Gold Key c.1830
- A presentation on American school award medals would not be complete without a Phi Beta Kappa key
  - The honorary society Phi Beta Kappa was founded at William & Mary in 1776, extended to Harvard and Yale in 1779, and spread from there.
  - It evolved from being one of several secret societies that were popular on college campuses during the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, to an honorary society in the 1830's.
  - The early medals were hand engraved, square gold medals, but at some early point someone figured that if they had the shank of the winding key from their pocket watch soldered onto the medal, they could make it a useful everyday item that would be less obnoxious to display and use publicly, or perhaps more obnoxious depending on your point of view.
  - This idea caught on and today, the Phi Beta Kappa medals are in the shape of a key, but not actually a watch key.
  - "Phi Beta Kappa" is from the initials of the society's motto in Greek which means "philosophy the guide of life".
33. Chauncy Hall School, Diligent Effort Eventually Succeeds –1838
- The Chauncy Hall School in Boston gave medals from the early 1830's until about 1895

- These are notable not only for their pithy mottos, but also because the medal system there was self-competitive. Any student who reached a certain level of competence could earn a first, second or third gold medal, or a first, second, third, or – in this case fourth – silver medal
34. W. Nixon’s Musical Seminary; Cincinnati, Ohio – 1843
- We might discuss whether this is a “medal” in the numismatic sense, but in the interest of time I’m sure you’d all agree this is an interesting early American silver school award
35. School of the Rev. R.T. Huddart; Drawing and Oil Painting – 1843
- This medal was given by a Reverend Richard Townsend Huddart, who emigrated from England to New York in the early 1830’s and then went on to San Francisco in 1850.
  - In a moment I’ll show you a photo of an earlier struck medal given by him.
36. N.Y. Society for the Promotion of Education Among Colored Children – 1855
- I recently sent John Adams a brief article on this Ridgway Medal for the MCA newsletter, so I won’t go into a lot of detail on this medal now.
  - It was given by the New York Society for the Promotion of Education Among Colored Children in 1855 to John W. Jacobs “for General Scholarship and Punctual Attendance at School”.
  - The Society was formed in 1847 by a group of prominent blacks in New York City as a charity society to run black charity schools.
  - As was the custom in American schools of that time, the teachers and principals in the Society’s schools invited visitors to opening exercises, graduations and holiday celebrations, to examine the children orally and award prizes. It appears that they also held general examinations, for which prizes were given, similar to the best white schools in America and Europe.
  - Again, you can read all about it in the upcoming article.
37. University of Virginia; Jefferson Society - 1856-7
- This medal is gold and is marked on the edge in engraved script, “Made by Canfield, Bros. & Co. Baltimore”. It shows a view of the original academic village of the University of Virginia, the central campus which was designed by Thomas Jefferson, who also founded the university.
  - This Literary Society still exists today and I believe that our own John Kraljevich was a member while he was a student there.
  - “Haec Olim Memenisse Juvabit” literally means “it will be pleasant one day to remember these things”.
  - It refers, however, to Virgil's arguably most famous line: “Forsan et haec olim meminisse iuvabit” which means “perhaps some day it will be pleasant to remember even this”. Virgil quotes Odysseus, who says this in a famous speech to his men when they are shipwrecked on an island, trapped in a cave guarded by the Cyclops, and wondering if they will ever escape.
  - It’s a great joke for those literate in the classics!
38. Yale Literary Magazine, “The Pen is Mightier Than the Sword”
- “Qui Palmam (which should read Palmam) Meruit Ferat” is a motto that shows up on several school award medals, though usually as “Palmam Qui Meruit Ferat”; it means “Let he who merits the palm carry it”.

39. Christ Church Sunday School; Cambridge, Mass. – 1867
- By the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, you begin to see medals for attendance, particularly for Sunday School attendance.
  - At that point, Sunday schools were not so much religious education as free schooling for children who couldn't otherwise attend school, and so regular attendance even once a week was very important
40. Central Presbyterian Sunday School - on an 1875 Half Dollar
- Once in a while you encounter school award medals engraved on one or both sides of a silver coin, such as this one engraved on the back of a half dollar.
41. Woodland St. School; Worcester, Mass. – 1885
- As you've probably noticed, many school award medals are dual purpose – both tangible rewards for excellence, attendance or whatever, but also moralistic teaching vehicles themselves.
  - In this case, the teaching point is a famous quote from Lord Alfred Tennyson's "Idylls of the King, Guinevere" which reads "For manners are not idle but the fruit of loyal nature and of noble mind".
42. Philadelphia Surgical College; Faculty Prize – 1888
- "Collegium Medico Chirurgicale Philadelphense"
  - Greek inscription – Δυναμις Σοφια Και Αγρυλνια – well, it's Greek to me, too
43. Gold Penmanship Prize – 1888
- Here's another example of a medal similar in all ways to many American school award medals of the period, except in its shape
44. St. Peter's Academy; Rome, New York c.1890
- This medal also has a non-round shape, but also has gold and silver devices applied to the gold engraved star
45. Scholarship Prize Awarded By A.D. Wedemeyer – 1893
- Another gold medal that's perhaps a bit better than typical of the late-19<sup>th</sup> century engraved style
  - Medals like this also come as little pins, usually with a pin bar and a drop that, if the pin is missing, look a lot like a typical gold medal
46. **Today's Discussion -- 19<sup>th</sup> Century Struck Medals**
- I'll now turn to struck medals, and so we'll go back a bit to an earlier time
47. Rev. R. Townsend Huddart; Ivy Prize, New York – 1833
- "Doctarum Hederæ Praemia Frontium" is, again, a quote from Horace's Odes (Horace Odes I, 1) the entire line of which is translated "The ivy, the glory of learned brows, joins me to the gods on high"
  - "Kembel P Pauling Musarum In Grammaticus Alumno; Propter Diligentiam, Studiumque Per Sex Menses Insigne, Et Assiduum; D,D,D, Revs R. Townsend Huddart Nov-Ebor. MDCCCXXXIII" means basically "to Kemble Pauling, for diligent and assiduous study for six months, from the Rev. R. Townsend Huddart, New York, 1833."
48. Dummer Academy Alumni Prize Byfield, Mass. – 1839
- "Societas Alumnorum Scholæ Dummerensis" says simply "alumni society of the Dummer School"
  - "Crede Te Posse Et Potes." means "believe that you can and you can"

- 49. Vivit Post Funera Virtus; Reward of Merit c.1840**
- The angel is blowing the trumpet on Judgment Day and this particular design is found in both England and America on medals and documents
  - “Vivit Post Funera Virtus” means “Virtue Lives Beyond the Grave”
- 50. Free Academy of New York; Cromwell Medal c.1840**
- Now CCNY (part of CUNY)
  - Here we have an angel, with the owl (by way of Athena, representing wisdom) at her feet, placing the wreath on the head of the student, who is surrounded by the tools of a liberal arts education – a globe, transit, chemistry flask, artist’s palette, books and so forth
  - This medal was awarded in both gold and silver, with specimen strikes in both white metal and copper
- 51. Benjamin Franklin; Reward of Merit c.1845**
- This is a nice little white metal medal that, except for Franklin, is unidentified
  - I’ve always wondered, however, if this might have been used by the Boston School Committee for the Franklin awards in 1847
    - The dies for the Wright and Bale medal broke in 1846 and, perhaps as a result, there was a considerable amount of debate in Boston that year about the wisdom of awarding medals to school children both boys and especially girls. Indeed, no medals were awarded to girls that year.
    - I don’t know if this is just coincidence, but I own or have seen multiple Boston Franklin school medals for every single year except 1847, but although I know they were awarded that year, have never seen one
- 52. Franklin “Then Plough Deep While Sluggards Sleep” c.1845**
- The next two medals were executed in Birmingham England by Joseph Davis, one for awards to boys and the other for girls
  - This one has a Franklin theme focused on hard work, showing a boy studying, a beehive on the reverse and one of Franklin’s aphorisms, “Then Plough Deep...”
- 53. George Washington; “Scientia Mores Emollit” c.1845**
- The girls’ medal has Washington with a patriotic theme on the reverse, but has the girl in a more refined setting, with a tablecloth on the table, bookshelves behind her and a harp off to the side
  - The motto “Scientia Mores Emollit” means “knowledge makes one’s character more gentle”
- 54. Remember Thy Creator in the Days of Thy Youth c.1845**
- Another medal that comes in both boy and girl designs is this one and the next, executed by F.B. Smith of New York
  - Both are nearly exact copies of English school award medals of the period, indicating perhaps that those English medals, too, may have been meant for export to America, but a New York entrepreneur stole the designs and undercut the importer’s price
- 55. Our Father Who Art in Heaven; Reward of Merit c.1845**
- This is the girl’s version; note again the difference in pose, kneeling in prayer rather than standing
- 56. School Boy Reward of Merit; by Bridgens, New York c.1850**

- This medal is interesting to me because the design is highly reminiscent of some Swiss designs, with the beehive and the temple of fame up on the hill
  - Together, these signify that hard work in school leads to success
57. Joseph Ray Mathematical Prize Cincinnati High Schools – 1858
- This is meant to be Pythagoras, pointing to a drawing of his theorem on his lap, surrounded by scientific and mathematical instruments, which seems appropriate for a math prize
  - “Dignori Detur” again, “let it be given to the more worthy”
58. Scientia Est Potentia; (Knowledge is Power) c.1860
- This medal is one of a large series executed by Frederick C. Key & Sons of Philadelphia
  - Not all of them are signed, but it is possible to match up all of the different die combinations and conclude that a number of similar unsigned medals can be attributed to this shop
  - Here again is Athena, the goddess of wisdom
  - “Scientia Est Potentia” is the Latin version of the motto “knowledge is power” attributed to Francis Bacon
59. George Washington; Reward of Merit c.1860
- Here’s another one of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Key medals, this one with a profile bust of Washington, in brass
60. Norwich Free Academy; Newton Perkins Medal – 1884
- This medal has a very nice profile bust of Athena and was executed by FB Smith and Horst of New York
  - The school is in Connecticut and these Newton Perkins Medals are still awarded today
61. Barnum Medal – 1885; Bridgeport, CT High School
- PT Barnum became very involved in the civic activities of his home town of Bridgeport, Connecticut toward the end of his life, including a stint as mayor during the late 1870’s
  - This medal is very rare, since apparently only a few were given each year for only two or three years
62. University of California – 1890
- This is an enormous gold medal that I think could only have been made in California during its gold producing days
  - “In Diversis Versati, In Unum Versi” means “Involved in diverse things, focused on one thing”; while it is no longer the motto of the University of California, it is Brown University’s motto
  - “Scientia, Conscientia” means knowledge and conscience
63. **Today’s Discussion -- U.S. Mint Medals**
- I don’t usually make a big distinction between US. Mint medals and other struck medals, but since a number of people collect these, I thought I’d show you a few of the 75 or so American school medals struck on contract by the U.S. Mint for private schools, colleges, and some local school systems, before they gave up this practice in the early 1950’s

- It's important to note that not all of the individual medals that the U.S. Mint struck were struck by the Mint, so the mintage figures in Bob Julian's book are not necessarily a good indicator of rarity, at least for some school award medals
- 64. Dorigo's Musical Academy; 1st Class - 1848 (SC-22)**
- This is a cute little medal for a school that no one has seemed to be able to trace and was unknown to Julian except by the dies still in the mint's collection
- 65. Peabody Medal; Danvers, Mass. - 1862 (SC-19)**
- George Peabody was a very wealthy merchant banker who emigrated early in his career from the north shore of Boston to London
  - He had a special interest in education and never forgot his roots, so there are a number of Peabody funds, institutes and, of course, medals
  - I don't believe he ever explicitly funded an award or a medal; rather he would periodically donate a large sum of money for schools, scholarships and so forth, and the recipients would follow up by commissioning an award medal in his honor
  - They almost all have this motto "Education a Debt Due From Present to Future Generations".
- 66. Baltimore Female College; Angel With Crown c.1865 (SC-5)**
- This medal was executed by Robert Lovett of Philadelphia; while it's not his greatest artistic work, the design is very interesting
  - "Collegium Baltimoreense In Usum Feminarum" means simply "Baltimore Female College"
  - And the reverse inscription "Praemium \_\_\_\_\_ Ob Eminentiam In \_\_\_\_\_" is just a very functional "Prize (with a space for a name) for Excellence in (with a space for the subject)"
  - The obverse device, however, is somewhat curious. We have an angel holding out a crown, standing next to a pedestal with a book. On the book (which is a Bible) on the pedestal is written in tiny letters "Prov(erbs) Chap. IV: 8,9" which is you can't really understand without also hearing the verse immediately before it:
    - 7. Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom and with all thy getting get understanding.
    - 8. Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honor, when thou dost embrace her.
    - 9. She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee.
- 67. Baltimore Female College; View of Building c.1865 (SC-7)**
- The college also had the mint strike a few other designs, also by Lovett
  - This one has a view of the college building, with English legends
- 68. Penn. First District Medal with "execrable" (i.e., wretched) Latin - 1866 (SC-35)**
- "Scientia Sine Religio Vanitatem Est" – Knowledge without religion is vanity
  - Was changed to "Scientia Sine Religione Vanitas Est" on a raised ribbon, so that they could reuse the die by reengraving it deeper

- This is the version that was, according to Woodward, “suppressed, as it ought to have been, for its execrable Latin”
- 69. United States Military Academy; Washington - 1866 (SC-56)**
- It was ordered from the Mint by the Superintendent of West Point in 1864 and given in 1865 and 1866 only, with 5 each in gold, silver and bronze during each of those two years (for a total of 30). The Secretary of War, however, issued an order in 1866 forbidding such awards, so that was that.
  - I don’t believe that any of the 30 awarded examples has reached the collectors’ market, but there were 5 bronze specimens struck in 1866, of which this is one (from the Zabriski Collection). Another was auctioned by Joe Levine about 12-14 years ago.
- 70. Worcester High School; Bullock Medal - 1866 (SC-71)**
- These Bullock medals were struck by the Mint for the high school in Worcester, Massachusetts and given for a number of years
  - This medal is quite nice, I think, but fairly easy to find in nice condition
- 71. Berwick Academy; Cogswell Medal c.1870 (UN-9)**
- Here’s a medal that was listed by Julian as Unclassified, though it’s a school award medal produced for the Berwick Academy in Maine
  - The dies were executed by the Wyon firm in London, but then struck in gold at the U.S. Mint
  - The was given for many years – one each year from 1870 through at least the 1940’s
  - The jewelry firm in Boston that had made the arrangements for both the dies and the striking, Bigelow & Kennard, however, had only a couple of them struck at the Mint, and then retrieved the dies and had them made elsewhere
  - “Ex Dono Gulielmi Lambert Cogswell” means “from the donation of William Lambert Cogswell”, the trustee who gave the money for the award
  - “Acad. Barvic In Repub. Main. Cond. 1791” means Berwick Academy in Maine, founded 1791”
  - “Dei Timor Initium Sapientiae”, the motto on the ribbon under the school’s arms on the reverse, is the Latin version of Psalm 111, verse 10 “The Fear of God is the Beginning of Wisdom”.
- 72. Jesse Ketchum Medal; Buffalo, NY - 1873 (SC-15)**
- The Ketchum medals were established by the will of Jesse Ketchum and given in both large and small sizes, in both gold and silver beginning in 1873. They are still given out today.
  - The dies were engraved by William Barber, and there are a couple of different minor die varieties
  - One of the interesting things about this series is the consecutive numbering of the medals, which are now in the 2000’s, I think
  - “Sapiens Erit Sapientior” means “The wise will be wiser”
- 73. Wilmington Public Schools; Attendance Award -1873 (SC-68)**
- The U.S. Mint made about 500 of these for the Wilmington school system in the early 1870’s, probably representing a stock that was given out over a several year period

74. James G. Carney Medal; Lowell, Mass. - 1906 (SC-28)
- The mottos on this medal are both from the Old Testament
    - The obverse inscription “Get Wisdom, Get Understanding” is from Proverbs (recall the Baltimore Female College medal)
    - The reverse inscription “The Fear of God is the Beginning of Wisdom” is from the Psalms (recall the Berwick Academy medal)
75. **Today’s Discussion -- 20th Century Examples**
- By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, we begin to see a fairly consistent degradation of design and increase in quantity of medals awarded
  - I just have a few examples of early 20<sup>th</sup> century examples to show you
76. New York Times Essay Award – 1903
- The New York Times was one of several newspapers that sponsored essay contests and spelling bees for school children, just as Scripps Howard does today.
77. George Peabody Medal; Danvers, Mass. – 1913
- Here’s one of the later versions of the Peabody medals that we discussed earlier
78. The Louisville Times Medal For Effort – 1929
- Here’s another medal sponsored by a newspaper, this one for effort, as opposed to achievement.
79. American Legion School Award (small version) c.1935
- The American Legion has given out large numbers of citizenship awards, in many different varieties
  - This is a relatively early and nice medal that was designed by R. Tait McKenzie in 1922
  - It comes in both a large medal and this smaller version which hangs on a ribbon, like a military medal.
  - There’s also a girl’s version that has a young woman gathering the folds of an American flag
80. **American School Medals – Conclusion**
- So to conclude, school award medals originated in the German-speaking parts of Europe during the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, evolved and spread, reaching Britain by the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century
  - Benjamin Franklin was responsible for introducing the idea of medallic school awards to America, first at the University of Pennsylvania and then more broadly in Boston.
  - The idea has spread and continues to this day, although the designs have evolved and the reasons for the awards have changed.

### [Images of Medals](#)