
The MCA Advisory

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Calendar for 2010

August 12th Club meeting 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. at
Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.
Anne Bentley and John Adams to speak.

What's New on Our Website!

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE EVERY MONTH

From the Editor

The April issue is particularly rich in content. The article on Betts-76 by David Fanning tackles a formidable challenge: proving what a medal is not. Think about this. Proving what a medal is can often be accomplished by scouring contemporary files. Proving what a medal is not requires this same scouring but it must also find ways to rule out all the likely possibilities. David meets this challenge with gusto.

We welcome to our pages Stephen Scher. His topic is "On Quality and Connoisseurship" and he is extraordinarily well qualified to deal with the topic. Members who have read any of his prolific writings on Renaissance medals will attest to the thorough scholarship which under girds his works.

Admiral Vernon Medals On Attribution and Grading

(by John W. Adams)

Since the collecting of Vernon medals began, numismatists have struggled with attribution. No less than ten attribution systems have been proposed and the best of these, McCormick-Goodhart, is challenging to use. Proof of this point can be seen as recently as the April 28, 2010, auction sale catalogued by coin Galleries. Here four Admiral Vernon medals are plated as well as "attributed;" of these four, three are attributed incorrectly.

<u>Lot #</u>	<u>Coin Galleries Attribution</u>	<u>Correct Attribution</u>
3243	M-G 47-50	M-G 44
3244	M-G 66	M-G 75
3245	M-G 96	M-G 96
3047	M-G 182	M-G 183

We sympathize with the cataloguer of the above lots. Except for intense users,

McCormick-Goodhart is entirely inadequate. We hope that our new book on the subject will make attributions easy for professionals and amateurs alike.

A more serious issue concerns grading. All four of the plated Vernon medals were graded and encapsulated by NGC. We compare NGC's grading with our own.

<u>Lot #</u>	<u>NGC Grade</u>	<u>Editor's Grade</u>
3243	AU-53	VF-30
3244	EF-40	VF-20
3245	VF-30	F-15
3247	EF-45	F-15

Having been tutored on grading by John J. Ford, Jr., we tend to be conservative. Even so, we have looked at a lot more Admiral Vernon medals than has NGC and we find the magnitude of the discrepancy alarming. If the buyer of lot 3243 pays an AU price or if the buyer of lot 3247 pays an XF price, they are being cheated by NGC's inexperience and/or incompetence. One redeeming aspect is that Coin Galleries illustrations are excellent so that, where lots are plated, bidders should be able to figure things out for themselves. Where the lots are graded by NGC and are not plated (lots 3246 and 3248), caveat emptor.

Volunteer Needed

Our various discussions on storage have defined the need for a box that will hold 4" x 4" envelopes and flips. Frame A Coin has agreed to make a 4" x 4" x 9" box for us, with cover, but they will not stock it. If the Club buys 500 to 1000 boxes, we will need some member to store them and send them out as orders are received. We will pay \$5 per box for the trouble. May we have a volunteer please?

The Betts-76 French Family Medal (by David F. Fanning)

The medals listed as numbers 75 and 76 in C. Wyllys Betts's *American Colonial History Illustrated by Contemporary Medals*¹ have proven confusing to numismatists, not least because these medals come in several different sizes and alloys, were restruck, and are signed by more than one individual. Any comprehensive reference on the series would have to list considerably more than two varieties to be found.²

The medals share the same basic design and are clearly closely related. The listing in Betts assumes that both were distributed as Indian Peace Medals. While this has been shown to be the case with Betts-75, the status of Betts-76 is considerably less certain. The question of whether Betts-76 was distributed as an Indian Peace Medal (and, by extension, whether it should be considered a Betts medal) will be the focus of this article.

These similar medals are listed by Betts under the heading "French-Indian Medal." Betts-75 (Figure 1) is a 1693-dated medal, while Betts-76 (Figure 2) is dated 1686. The obverses of both types bear the bust of Louis XIV, while both reverses depict the Grand Dauphin Louis at the top, with his three children below. The reverse legend reads FELICITAS DOMUS AUGUSTAE, underscoring the presence on this medal of the male members of three generations of the French royal household. The main difference between Betts-75 and 76 (besides the dates) are that the Dauphin and each of his children are identified by (abbreviated) name on Betts-75, while Betts-76 mentions only the birth of the youngest of the children, Charles, Duc de Berry.

These are beautiful and charming medals, well worth inclusion in any cabinet. Betts-75 has the distinction of having been distributed as an Indian Peace Medal (in gold, no less), which makes it of considerable

importance to collectors of early medals relating to the Americas. The status of the large-size (75.5 mm) issues of Betts-75 as Indian Peace Medals has been conclusively shown by John W. Adams, 3 and will not be further discussed here.

Betts-76 is another matter, however. No one appears to suggest that the medal was originally issued for purposes of presentation to American Indians, though there are a number of known cases of medals struck for different purposes that were eventually utilized as Indian Peace Medals. In the case of Betts-76, however, there seems to be little firm evidence that the medal was in fact ever distributed as such. In the absence of such evidence, its status as a medal relating to colonial America becomes questionable.

Charles, the Duc de Berry, was the third, and youngest, son of Louis, the Grand Dauphin. The medal commemorating his birth is described as such in the masterful compendium on Louis XIV medals published during the king's lifetime in 1702 by l'Académie Royale des Médailles et des Inscriptions (generally known as La Petite Académie).⁴ This enormous and sumptuous volume was published for the royal court, with the initial copies of the first folio edition being reserved for distribution within the king's inner circle.⁵ This is an important contemporary work that provides descriptions of the events for which the medals depicted within were struck. It was, however, politically influenced in ways which affect the use of the work as a definitive reference.⁶ Medals which did in fact exist were occasionally excluded if the Académie felt they did not reflect the historiography they were constructing for the king. That said, the 1702 *Médailles* is an essential work that must be taken into account.⁷

On plate 215 of the 1702 *Médailles*, we find Betts-76 depicted (Figure 3). Its description is as follows:

NAISSANCE DE MONSEIGNEUR
LE DUC DE BERRY.

L'HEUREUSES naissance de Monseigneur le Duc de Bourgogne, & de Monseigneur le Duc d'Anjou, promettoit déjà une longue posterité au Roy, & à Monseigneur le Dauphin. Madame la Dauphine eût un troisième Fils, que l'on nomma Duc de Berry. Ce fut un renouvellement de joye dans toute la France, qui sensible aux bénédictions que le Ciel continuoit de respandre sur la Famille Royale, ne se lassoit point de le remercier.

C'est le sujet de cette Médaille. On y voit la teste de Monseigneur, & celles des trois Princes ses Enfants. Les mots de la Légend, FELICITAS DOMUS AUGUSTÆ, signifient, *la Félicité de la Maison Royale*. L'Exergue, CAROLUS DUX BITURICENSIS NATUS XXXI. AUGUSTI. M. DC. LXXXVI. veut dire, *Charles Duc de Berry né le 31. d'Aoust 1686.*

This roughly translates as:

BIRTH OF HIS LORDSHIP
THE DUKE OF BERRY

THE happy births of His Lordship the Duke of Burgundy, & of His Lordship the Duke of Anjou, had already promised a long posterity to the King, & to His Lordship the Dauphin. Madam the Dauphine had a third son, who was named the Duke of Berry. There was a renewal of joy in all France, which, mindful of the blessings that Heaven continued to bestow on the Royal family, did not neglect to give thanks.

It is the subject of this Medal. One sees the heads of His Lordship, & those of the three Princes, his Children. The words of the legend, FELICITAS DOMUS AUGUSTÆ, mean, *the Felicity of the Royal House*. The exergue, CAROLUS DUX BITURICENSIS NATUS XXXI. AUGUSTI. M. DC. LXXXVI. says, *Charles Duke of Berry born the 31st of August 1686.*

Louis XIV died in 1715, upon which Louis XV, his great-grandson, assumed the throne. In 1723, an expanded edition of *Médailles* was published.⁸ It covers the entirety of Louis XIV's reign, though there are some differences between the 1702 and 1723 editions besides simple updates. The entry for the Betts-

76 Duc de Berry medal is the same in both editions (minor variances in spelling and punctuation aside), though the engraving of the medal is somewhat different.

A birth within the royal household was, of course, an event worth celebrating, and Louis XIV authorized the production of medals to recognize all sorts of events (over 300 are listed in the 1723 edition of *Médailles*). As *Médailles* is a contemporary source, and in the absence of any evidence to the contrary, it seems quite definite that Betts-76 is a French medal struck to commemorate the birth of a child. It's a beautiful medal, and one can appreciate a medallic depiction of such an event as a welcome respite in a series of medals largely depicting wars and treaties. It seems reasonable, however, to wonder whether the only reason it was included in the Betts reference is that its basic design was copied in creating the later Betts-75 medal.

If the Betts-76 medal was not issued for the purpose of being distributed to North American Indians, we must ask whether it was in fact so distributed, regardless of the reasons for its origin. Here the waters become much murkier.

On September 12, 1885, Rev. Horace Edwin Hayden read a paper before the Wyoming Historical and Geological Society (Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania). The paper was published as *An Account of Various Silver and Copper Medals Presented to the North American Indians*.⁹ It addresses the Betts-75 and -76 medals. Given the rarity of the work, the readers' indulgence is begged for including the following excerpts of Hayden's discussion:

Pursuing this subject chronologically I find a medal of Louis XIV. of France, mentioned as having been presented to the Canadian Indians during the early years of the eighteenth century. It is very doubtful, however, if it was struck with any reference whatever to the Indians. It presents on the *Obverse* the head of Louis XIV., with the usual Legend, "*Ludovicus XIV., D. G. Fr. et Nav. Rex.*"

Reverse, the bust of the Dauphin, and under that the busts of the Dukes of Burgundy, of Anjou, and of Berry, the three children of the Dauphin. Under each bust is the respective name and title. Surrounding them is the legend, “*Felicitas Domus Augustae;*” and in exergue is the date “1693.”

This medal was supposed to be one of the regular series of Louis XIV., and again it is said to have been struck to commemorate the birth of the Duke of Berry. However, it was used by the French as a reward to the Indians, who cared very little what occasion called it into existence. It is of silver, with a ring attached, and was found in the possession of an old Indian family of the Huron tribe near Quebec. Mons. Rhaume, Curator of the Numismatic Museum, Quebec, asserts that it was “a medal of reward granted to the Indian chiefs by the king, for bravery, just as these large silver medals were given by George II. and George III. The historical medal bears only the name and birth of the Duke of Berry, 1686, while this contains the name of each son and the date 1693. I do not know of another copy existing.”

Mons. Rhaume’s statement is supported by a letter from Mother Mary, of St. Helena, dated Quebec, October 17, 1725, who, after mentioning the Indians, says: “Louis XIV., had sent silver medals of considerable size, on one side of which was his portrait, and on the other that of the Dauphin, his son, and that of the three princes, children of the latter, to be given to those who should distinguish themselves in war. To them has since been attached a flame colored ribbon, four fingers in breadth, and the whole decoration is highly prized among them.

When a chief dies he is honorably buried, a detachment of troops parade, several volumes of musketry are fired over his grave, and on his coffin are laid a sword crossed with its scabbard, and the medal under consideration fastened upon them.” (*Am. Jour. Num. XI. 93.*) These medals are so extremely rare that I judge very few were presented to the Indians, or else,

as Mr. Rhaume suggests, the English destroyed them after the conquest of Canada.¹⁰

Hayden does not answer the question of whether Betts-76 was distributed to North American Indians. He quotes Rhaume, who mentions both medals but makes it clear that the example he is specifically discussing is a Betts-75. The 1725 letter from Mother Mary, which is quoted elsewhere as well, is quite clear that medals of this basic type were distributed, but does not distinguish between the two designs.

In Betts’s 1894 work, the subject of the origins of Betts-75 and Betts-76 is given some cursory attention. Of Betts-75, it is noted, “This medal was used for presentation to the Indian Chiefs, although not originally struck for that purpose.” A footnote clarifies this further: “Aside from the fact that this is said to have been presented to Indian chiefs by the French officials in Canada, it has no reference to America.” For Betts-76, not even these justifications for inclusion are given (indeed, almost no description is given of Betts-76 except to say that its date is 1686).¹¹

However, the entries for Betts-75 and Betts-76 are not the only parts of Betts in which these medals are discussed. An important footnote is appended to the description of Betts-90, reading:

This [Philip V of Spain] is the Prince commemorated on 75. Since that page was printed we find in a letter from Rev. A. Rhaume, of Laval University, in A. J. N., XII: 93, corroboration of the fact that 75 was struck for presentation to Indian Chiefs for bravery, while 76, although used for the same purpose, was originally struck on the birth of the Duke of Berri. On this the name and title are wanting below every bust but his, while to his name and title is added the date of his birth.

The Medal is extremely rare. Sandham and McLachlan do not give it, and Mr. Betts and the Editors have never seen it. Leroux describes it as our 76, but does not mention the variations. We therefore note the differences. —Eds.¹²

Once again the Rhaume (Rheaume) letter is cited as the only evidence for claiming that Betts-76 was awarded to Native Americans in Canada by the French authorities.

In 1915, Victor Morin published *Les médailles décernées aux Indiens d'Amérique*.¹³ In this work, he discusses both Betts-75 and Betts-76 and clearly states that both were distributed to Indians. His description of Betts-76 is as follows:

En 1686, Louis XIV fit frapper, à l'occasion de la naissance de son petit-fils le duc de Berry, une médaille qui portait d'un côté son buste avec la légende "LUDOVICUS MAGNUS REX CHRISTIANISSIMUS", et au revers les bustes de son fils le Dauphin et des trois enfants de ce dernier, Louis, duc de Bourgogne, Philippe, duc d'Anjou, et Charles, duc de Berry, avec la légende "FELICITAS DOMUS AUGUSTAE", et en exergue l'inscription "CAROLUS DUX BITUR. NAT. XXXI. AUG. MDCLXXXVI."

Des exemplaires de cette médaille apportés au Canada firent fureur parmi les Indiens qui y voyaient non seulement le portrait du roi, mais encore ceux de son fils et de ses petits-fils, et un mot toute la lignee royale; et comme cette piece etait d'assez belle dimension (41 millimetres), elle devint l'objet des plus grandes convoitises.¹⁴

This has been translated by Anne Bentley as: To mark the birth of his grandson, the Duke of Berry, in 1686, Louis XIV had a medal struck with his bust and the legend "LUDOVICUS MAGNUS REX CHRISTIANISSIMUS" on one side, and on the reverse, the busts of his son the Dauphin with his three children (Louis, Duke of Burgundy, Philippe, Duke of Anjou, and Charles, Duke of Berry), with the legend "FELICITAS DOMUS AUGUSTAE", and the inscription "CAROLUS DUX BITUR. NAT. XXXI. AUG. MDCLXXXVI" in the exergue.

The examples of this medal that were brought to Canada caused a commotion among the Indians, who saw on it not only the portrait of the King, but also those of his son and

grandsons; in a word, the entire royal line; since this piece was also of fairly good size (41 millimeters), it became a highly desired medal.¹⁵

Morin is very explicit here in distinguishing between the two medals and clearly states that Betts-76 was distributed as an Indian Peace Medal. He even gives the size, which corresponds correctly with the usual diameter of this and the other medals in the *histoire médallique* of Louis XIV (discussed below). He does not, however, cite a contemporary source that demonstrates that Betts-76 was distributed as an Indian Peace Medal.

Proving that a medal was not distributed as an Indian Peace Medal is more difficult than proving that one was, as there is an inherent lack of evidence.¹⁶ No evidence of which I am aware proves that Betts-76 was distributed as an Indian Peace Medal, despite Morin's claim that it was. The dating of the medals raises some interesting points. Betts-76, being dated 1686, would seemingly obviously predate Betts-75, which is dated 1693. The design of Betts-75 was, then, simply a revision of Betts-76. Jones, in *Medals of the Sun King* (vide note 6) discusses the complex processes used by La Petite Académie:

The sequence of events started with the Académie's decision that a subject merited inclusion in the history. Once this had been agreed a particular Academician would be detailed to sketch his idea of the event. This, if approved by the Académie, would be forwarded to their official artist who would produce a fair copy ... which included those details — the attributes of the various characters etc. — which the originator specified. This was then engraved on a copper plate, and a proof was taken which would once again be discussed by the Académie. An Academician, not necessarily the one who had done the sketch, would compose one legend, which was expected to be a model of brevity and elegance, for the field of the medal, and another, which recorded the event and the date

on which it took place, for the exergue. Then, while what might be yet another Academician worked on the official description of the event, the Académie's artist would supervise the medallist who was strictly instructed to execute the design without modification.

Even then the Academicians were shown a lead impression from the die ... before it was hardened, so that they should make further alterations.¹⁷

The process could be very slow, at least for new designs. Although dated 1686, it is almost certain that the Duc de Berry's nativity medal was not actually produced that year. Indeed, it is probably not artistic license on the part of the engravers that he is depicted on the medal not as an infant but as a young boy. On the other hand, the processes involved in simply taking an existing design, modifying it and striking medals was nowhere near as involved, and could be accomplished fairly quickly. The 1693-dated Betts-75 medals that Adams has demonstrated were definitely awarded to Indians were awarded that same year. I strongly suspect that while the 1693-dated Betts-75 was struck in 1693, the 1686-dated Betts-76 was likely struck a few years after 1686.

This thesis is borne out by an examination of another contemporary reference on Louis XIV medals. As Peter Burke has pointed out, many of the medals of Louis's reign were produced later than the dates given on the medals (being later interpretations of the events commemorated by the medals): "The king's image was under constant revision. For example, new medals were struck to celebrate, or to reinterpret, events that had taken place earlier in the reign. Thus we have to keep two time-scales in mind, what might be called 'medallic time' as well as the time of events."¹⁸

This is most relevant to the medals commemorating events from earlier in the monarch's reign; the Petite Académie was established in 1663, but it was only in the mid-1680s that they began to focus much of their

attention on medals. As for Betts-75 and -76, we know for certain that the 1693-dated Betts-75 was produced during 1693 as it was distributed during that year. The 1686-dated Betts-76, however, seems to have been produced at least five years after the medal's date. It is notably absent from Claude François Menestrier's 1691 listing of Louis XIV medals, *Histoire du Roi Louis le Grand*.¹⁹ While this is not in itself proof that the medal did not exist at the time Menestrier compiled his volume, it is highly suggestive that it had yet to be struck. The depiction of Charles, duc de Berry (whose birth is commemorated by the medal) is notably not that of an infant, but as a young boy of five years age or so.²⁰

In addition, it seems clear that the design of Betts-76 was based on an earlier Louis XIV medal commemorating the birth of Philippe, duc d'Anjou, the second son of the Dauphin, who would later become Philip V of Spain. This medal²¹ is virtually identical to Betts-76, but the reverse includes only the Dauphin and his first two sons.

To commemorate the birth of the Dauphin's third son, the design was simply adapted and updated. The updated medal provided a medallic portrayal of three generations of the French royal house, a suitable design, with minor modifications, for use as an Indian Peace Medal. So it would appear that Betts-76 was produced between 1691 and 1693, while we know for certain that Betts-75 was produced in 1693. The above agrees with what we know of the working habits and machinations of the Petite Académie. The fact that the 1693-dated Betts-75 medal is neither depicted nor described in the Petite Académie's 1702 *Médailles* affirms the design's derivative status: it simply does not differ enough in design from the 1686-dated medal to be accorded status as a distinct issue.

There is another reason that Betts-75 is not listed in the 1702 *Médailles* volume (or the current Divo work based upon it). As is well known, Louis XIV was something of a

connoisseur of medals, particularly of those medals celebrating himself. The king was fond of distributing medals commemorating the various highlights (real and exaggerated) of his reign to foreign dignitaries and others found deserving of royal gifts. In 1907, Henri Nocq published an important article in the *Gazette numismatique française* in which he published the contents of a manuscript found in the Bibliothèque de l' Arsenal listing medals distributed as gifts by Louis XIV and Louis XV.²² Far from being the dry listing it admittedly at first appears to be, Nocq's article provides some highly illuminating evidence of how the French monarchs felt about the medals struck in their name and the uses for which they were intended.

To cite an example from Nocq's listing of medals given to representatives of Cologne in 1710, he gives the following entry: Le 16 may, donné au comte de St Maurice, envoyé Extraordinaire, un medailler de l'histoire du Roy, de Deux cens quatre vingt six medailles, dont sept d'or et 279 d'argent ...²³ which translates roughly as On May 16, a set of medals of the history of the King, [consisting] of two hundred eighty-six medals, of which seven were gold and 279 silver, was given to the Count of St. Maurice, Envoy Extraordinary ...Nocq records a number of other instances in which entire sets of medals were presented to various dignitaries. These sets varied slightly in number, but appear to correspond roughly to the number of medals included in Louis's ongoing official *histoire medaillique* (which by the end of his reign included around 320 medals if one counts those commemorating his death). Those medals constituting this official medallic history of the king were those included in the two editions of the *Petite Académie's Médailles sur les principaux événements du règne [entier] de Louis le Grand*. It is worth repeating that Betts-76 is included in this series of medals while Betts-75 is not. Betts-75 was not struck for the same reasons most of Louis's medals were: to commemorate an event.²⁴ It served a different

purpose, as an Indian Peace Medal. Betts-76 had no such special purpose. While its design would make it rather suitable for distribution as an Indian Peace Medal, and while medals depicting the royal family were at times singled out for distribution to favored parties,²⁵ I believe its suitability of design was recognized though modifications were required to make it fully suitable for a new function as an Indian Peace Medal.

Betts-76 had to be struck in a larger size, the irrelevant information giving the birth date of the Duc de Berry had to be removed and the royal family members had to be named: in other words, Betts-76 had to become Betts-75 in order to fill this new function.

In conclusion, while more than one rightfully respected numismatic scholar has stated that the Betts-76 French Family Medal was distributed as an Indian Peace Medal, there is no real evidence that it was. There is evidence that they were distributed widely, almost certainly more so than Louis XIV's other medals,²⁶ but not for this specific purpose.

While my arguments above cannot, by necessity, prove that Betts-76 was not distributed as an Indian Peace Medal (and, by extension, does not belong in Betts), I believe the evidence strongly suggests that this is the case.

Notes

1. Betts, C. Wyllys. *American Colonial History Illustrated by Contemporary Medals*. Edited, with notes, by William T.R. Marvin and Lyman Haines Low. New York: Scott Stamp & Coin, 1894.
2. There are multiple die varieties of Betts-75, discussed to some extent in the Stack's catalogue of the John J. Ford, Jr. collection (Parts XIII [Jan. 16, 2006] and XVI [Oct. 17, 2006]). For examples of Betts-75 in bronze, silver, gilt silver and gold, see Stack's catalogue of the John W. Adams collection (Jan. 12, 2009). For an example of Betts-76 in silver, see Bowers and Merena's catalogue of

the Lucien LaRiviere collection (Part II, Mar. 15–17, 2001), lot 2001. Multiple die varieties and sizes were recognized by P.N. Breton in 1912, when he classified Betts-76 as Breton-6 in his *Popular Illustrated Guide to Canadian Coins and Medals*.

3. Adams, John W. “The 1693 Indian Peace Medal.” *The Colonial Newsletter*. Vol. 35, No. 2 (July 1995; Serial 100), pp. 1507–1510. For an interesting overview of Franco-Indian relations, see Mason Wade’s “The French and the Indians,” in *Attitudes of Colonial Powers toward the American Indian* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1969), pages 61–80.

4. *Médailles sur les principaux événements du règne de Louis le Grand, avec des explications historiques. Par l’Académie Royale des Médailles & des Inscriptions*. Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1702.

5. The initial copies printed bear the royal arms on both covers and include a Préface suppressed from later printings. Baron W.H.J. van Westreenen van Tiellandt (1783–1848), in cataloguing the magnificent library of Pierre Van Damme in 1808 (lot 987), wrote that those copies with the royal arms were “exécutée par les ordres du monarque même, qui s’en est réservé tous les exemplaires pour en faire des présens.”

6. For a brief overview of the history of this remarkable book, see Mark Jones, *Medals of the Sun King* (London: British Museum, 1979). For a more detailed examination of the suppressed *Préface*, see Mark Jones, “Correct and Incorrect: The Composition of Medalllic Reverses in Late Seventeenth-Century France,” *Perspectives on the Renaissance Medal*, Stephen K. Scher, ed., New York, ANS/Garland, 2000, pp. 221–235.

7. While all of the medals listed in the 1702 *Médailles* volume are known to exist (*vide* Jean-Paul Divo, *Médailles de Louis XIV*, Zürich, Spink, 1982), the Betts reference occasionally suggests otherwise, noting in some cases medals known only by their description and depiction in the 1702 work and not by any known specimens. Based on various

errors encountered in the Betts reference while comparing it to a copy of the 1702 *Médailles*, this author is inclined to believe that the editors of Betts did not have access to a copy of the Petite Académie’s work and introduced errors into the text concerning French medals relating to the Americas.

8. *Médailles sur les principaux événements du règne entier de Louis le Grand, avec des explications historiques*. Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1723.

9. Hayden, Horace Edwin. *An Account of Various Silver and Copper Medals Presented to the North American Indians by the Sovereigns of England, France, and Spain, from 1600 to 1800, and Especially of Five Such Medals of George I. of Great Britain, Now in the Possession of the Wyoming Historical and Geological Society, and Its Members. Read before the Wyoming Historical and Geological Society, September 12, 1885*. Wilkes-Barré, Pennsylvania: Reprinted from Part 2, Vol. II. of the Proceedings of the Society, 1886.

10. Hayden, pp. 17–18.

11. Betts, pp. 37–38.

12. Betts, p. 43.

13. Morin, Victor. *Les médailles décernées aux Indiens d’Amérique. Étude historique et numismatique. Mémoires de la Société Royale du Canada, Série III, Tome IX, 1915*.

14. Morin, pp. 282–283.

15. Unpublished translation by Anne Bentley, of the Massachusetts Historical Society, whom the author thanks for providing permission to reproduce her work here.

16. Alan M. Stahl put it well in “American Indian Peace Medals of the Colonial Period,” in *Money of Pre-Federal America* (John M. Kleeberg, editor; New York: ANS, 1992), page 160: “Though hundreds of medals are documented as having been distributed to Indians in the eighteenth century by the French, the English and the Americans, almost no specimens are known from controlled archaeological context, and the identification of a specific object as a colonial Indian Peace Medal can only be made on the basis of vague

and often suspect provenances, descriptions culled from documentary sources and the physical appearance of pieces in modern collections. It is evident that the record of surviving types is incomplete, and some pieces often adduced as Indian Peace Medals have no clear claim to such designation.”

17. Jones, *Sun King*, pp. 5–6.

18. Burke, Peter. *The Fabrication of Louis XIV*. New Haven: Yale, 1992, p. 3.

19. Menestrier, Claude François. *Histoire du Roi Louis le Grand : par les Medailles, Emblemes, Deuises, Jettons, Incriptions, Armoiries, et autres Monumen Publics*. Paris, 1691.

20. The birth of a child would not be a subject one would rush to commemorate at the time, given the high infant mortality rate among even the most nobly born. Waiting a few years would make sense.

21. Divo 200.

22. Nocq, Henri. “Médailles offertes présents par Louis XIV et Louis XV de 1662 à 1721.” *Gazette numismatique française*, Vol. 11 (1907), pp. 131–163. John W. Adams cites Nocq as his primary source proving the distribution “à deux des principaux sauvages de Benaques, deux medailles d’or” on March 21, 1693 (page 163). The 1706 presentation of a gold medal and chain to “au chef des sauvages a Benaques pour lors à Paris” on June 22, 1706 is also recorded (page 163), as is the requisition of 40 silver medals “pour faire des presens à des sauvages” in Canada on June 1, 1710 as well (pages 158 and 163).

23. Nocq, page 135.

24. Louis XIV medals that are unlisted in the 1702 and 1723 *Médailles* generally fall into two categories. The first are medals that, while contributing to the king’s *gloire* and designed to ensure his fame, do not commemorate an event. Jean Warin’s 1671 *Ludovicus Magnus* and 1674 *Nec Pluribus Impar* medals would be examples of this category. The second were historical medals that do in fact commemorate an event but whose issue was subsequently “revised.” An example would be the 1654-

dated *Perrupto Hispanorum Vallo Castris Direptis / Atrebatum Liberatum* medal with Victory holding crowns aloft, which (for whatever reason) was found unsuitable and replaced by the *Atrebatum Liberatum* design given on Plate 38 of the *Médailles*.

25. Nocq cites the presentation of “deux medailles d’or representans la famille royalle” to an envoy from Munster on November 23, 1701 (page 137). Other instances of the distribution of these French Family Medals are also recorded by Nocq.

26. Medals depicting the royal family are specifically mentioned on numerous occasions in the records provided by Nocq, while the design of the medals presented are usually otherwise not noted.

Captions

Figure 1 — A large-size copper Betts-75 medal, the size and type which saw distribution to Native Americans. This is the 75.5 mm specimen recently sold as part of the John W. Adams collection (photo courtesy of Stack’s Rare Coins, New York City).

Figure 2 — The 1686 dated Betts-76 French Family Medal. This is a 41.4 mm specimen recently sold as part of the John W. Adams collection, now in the collection of the author (photo courtesy of Stack’s Rare Coins, New York City).

Figure 3 — Betts-76 as depicted in the 1702 edition of *Médailles sur les principaux événements du règne de Louis le Grand, avec des explications historiques*.

On Quality and Connoisseurship

(by Stephen K. Scher)

In a recent article in this publication, Lev Tsitrin, as a collector, addressed the complicated problem of the determination of quality vis-à-vis the collecting of medals. As a professor of art history, museum curator, and collector for some forty years I can understand Mr. Tsitrin's concern for the various ways that one can approach this knotty subject. As he mentions, I attempted to present some of the elements of connoisseurship in an article written in conjunction with the exhibition, *The Currency of Fame*. He also, without mentioning my name, refers to me as "a very prominent expert in the field of the Renaissance medal," in relation to a conversation we had about the judgment of quality in medals. After reading his very entertaining piece, however, I feel it necessary to clarify a number of the points he makes, points based on a rather serious misunderstanding of my remarks and a good deal of confusion regarding the entire process of artistic production, especially relating to medals, the procedures and foundations of art history, and the established values of connoisseurship.

The processes of production and reproduction for such works of art as medals, old master prints, small bronzes, porcelain, etc. usually follow a familiar and specific set of procedures: There is frequently, but not always, a patron or someone who commissions a work of art, consulting with the artist as to form and content. The artist then sometimes, but again not always, makes preparatory drawings followed by a model – in wax, wood, or stone for cast medals. There then follows the entire procedure of casting: producing an initial cast, which, in the case of indirect casting, preserves the model and acts as an intermodel for further casting.

The only original is the model, the use of the term "original" generally being mis-used, since everything that follows is, strictly speaking, an "aftercast." I am speaking in this

article only about cast medals; struck medals require a somewhat different set of standards, but still present the collectors with the same basic principles.

Here, then, is where the process of connoisseurship begins, that is, the determination of the quality and authenticity of a given example of a medal. When we speak of an artist's intentions, we are referring to what the artist has in mind as a final product, i.e., what he considers to be an acceptable result following his original design and one that will also satisfy his audience. For cast medals, there may be some cold work necessary and perhaps some artificial patination. The difficulty for us as collectors is to attempt to determine whether what we are holding in our hands closely approximates a satisfactory result in relation to all other examples that exist based on long-established criteria, which will be described in due course.

Mr. Tsitrin refers to Rembrandt and therefore to old master prints. In this process, the artist often creates an initial version of his composition, pulls a few copies, which are usually called "proofs," and, if he feels it is necessary, continues to make changes and adjustments to the original etched or engraved plate. Each of these changes becomes a new state, in some cases resulting in an entire series of different states. These represent the developing processes of the artist's mind, can include mistakes, and obviously must, in the first instance, satisfy him. The earlier states are printed in very small quantities and are therefore given high value by the collector. These, including the final state, have little to do with the quality of the impressions, which also vary and are graded from poor to excellent or brilliant and carry sharply differing values on the art market. In copper plate etching and engraving, for example, as one continues to print, the plate deteriorates, losing detail, the image becoming progressively weaker. This sets up entirely different bases of judgment. Obviously, because of such losses later impressions do not represent the original work,

or intentions, of the artist, nor would they have satisfied his own audience, and they continue to lose value for the later viewer and collector.

The same is true for medals, although the processes and terminology are different. In fact, the terminology has never been entirely accurate and is often confused with numismatic grading. To my mind, as stated earlier, there is only one original, and that is the model. From that point on all examples of the medal are judged by a generally accepted set of criteria, and these are not always easy to determine. They generally include: the clarity or sharpness of the images and lettering, the diameter or size, the patina, the amount of cold work, and the condition. In specific cases there are some other tests that can be applied. All of these have nothing to do with the quality of the design, which is an entirely different matter, since it is an aesthetic judgment and not immediately relevant to this discussion.

Taking these points into consideration, it is nonsense for Mr. Tsitrin to state that “respect for the artist as a final arbiter of what is artistically valid and what is not is anachronistic.” Does this mean that the opinion of the artist regarding his own work is of no consequence and never was? I am afraid the poor artist would be extremely affronted by such an opinion. The artist, of course, would certainly need to satisfy his patron, if there is one, but he would certainly also need to satisfy himself. Here, once again, Mr. Tsitrin is confusing the perception of physical elements with aesthetic considerations.

What I meant by my comment to Mr. Tsitrin about the artist’s intentions in relation to what a collector should look for is that the collector should attempt to acquire an object, in this case a medal, that is as fine in its various physical criteria as possible; this is what determines the quality of the object, once again putting aside aesthetic judgment. If one is attempting to justify the purchase of poor quality medals by asserting that the essential characteristics of a good medal are irrelevant, that collector is deluding himself. The phrase,

“Beauty is in the eye of the beholder” refers only to aesthetic considerations, not to the quality of physical characteristics. To maintain that a poor cast with weak lettering and images, with an indifferent patina, with obvious cold work, and with major changes to what has been established as an excellent specimen in public and private collections, is to reject any and all bases for connoisseurship, patently an untenable position.

There are many statements in Mr. Tsitrin’s article that need to be questioned. He says: “It is the mentality of those times that should apply in our judgment, not the present-day one.” I envy him his understanding of the mentality of a past epoch and his ability to put aside that of his own, a difficult task indeed, if not impossible! And how is that compatible with his assertions that the opinion of the artist is not relevant?

Again: “No one cares about old artists’ intentions.” I am happy to hear this, since it relieves the entire field of art history from one of its prime concerns. He applies this curious theory to his discussion of a print by Rembrandt in which he confuses a proper understanding of an artist’s intentions with the entire process of printmaking and the subsequent, and, in this case, irrelevant vagaries of the modern art market.

Throughout his paper Mr. Tsitrin continues to ignore all of the most basic criteria for judging the physical characteristics of a medal, those qualities that have always determined whether any given cast is acceptable. According to him there are no inferior examples, only variations, any one of which is satisfactory. This seems to suggest that a medal that sells for \$50,000. is really no different from the same type that goes for only \$500., or, in other words, the purchaser of the more expensive medal would have been equally satisfied with the cheaper example.

For example, in his description of an example of the medal of Nonina Strozzi attributed to Niccolò Fiorentino that is in his possession, he admits to all of the factors that

make it not only an inferior cast, but one that has been changed in significant details from the original model. From the illustration it appears to be an attractive object, but it is NOT Niccolò Fiorentino's original conception. I certainly do not wish to deny Mr. Tsitrin the pleasure he obtains from this medal, but he cannot use it as the basis for suggesting that it makes no difference that it does not correspond to the acceptable examples of the medal in major collections. (There is some confusion as well in the identification of the illustration, which is his own example, but which he states is the Berlin specimen.)

He also discusses the reverse of this medal offering a judgment about its aesthetic shortcomings, a rather frequent problem with Fiorentino's reverses, yet his example is uniface. Once again, he is delivering an aesthetic opinion that is an entirely different matter from his arguments regarding the quality of a specific cast.

In his further discussions of other casts of medals in his possession, Mr. Tsitrin offers reasons for these acquisitions that bring into question the entire field of medallic connoisseurship. There are other statements that are questionable, such as: 'In collecting Renaissance medals, bending the rules should be the main rule; adhering to "standards" should not be. Sacrificing quality of that which has no real quality anyway, is no lowering of standards at all. A "bad" piece may after all be quite all right.' If Mr. Tsitrin is proposing himself as the arbiter of medallic quality, both aesthetic and physical, then we are left with no standards at all.

[Lev Tsitrin confesses to being out of the mainstream and enjoys such a position. In contrast, Stephen Scher does an eloquent job of educating us as to what the mainstream is all about. We have learned more from his article than from any we can recall.—editor]

Book Review Notice

Kolbe & Fanning Numismatic Booksellers are pleased to announce the upcoming publication of a standard reference work on a long-neglected byway of American numismatics, namely Admiral Vernon medals:

MEDALLIC PORTRAITS OF ADMIRAL VERNON

Medals Sometimes Lie by John W. Adams and Dr. Fernando Chao (h) with the collaboration of Anne E. Bentley

Kolbe & Fanning, Gahanna, Ohio, 2010. 240 pages, finely illustrated throughout in color, 9 by 12 inch format. Well bound in cloth with a pictorial dust wrapper

\$95.00 plus \$5.00 shipping in the United States and \$25.00 elsewhere

Interest in this fascinating historical series has captured the attention of famous numismatists and collectors on three continents. Since the issuance of these medals in 1739-1741, no less than fourteen works on the topic have been published, the first in 1835 and the last in 1966. None of these earlier efforts succeeded in creating a practicable attribution system. Thus, despite their almost irresistible allure, Vernon medals have tended to overwhelm collectors with their apparent complexity at the same time that they were the bane of professional cataloguers. No longer will this be so. The authors have succeeded in gathering high quality images of all 275 varieties and modern technology makes possible the publication of these images in book form. The images combined with a new, user-friendly attribution system makes the identification of Vernon varieties both easy and accurate.

Earlier authors, a group which includes a marquess, an earl, a general and the president

of a country, have not gotten the history right. English speaking writers tended to view Admiral Vernon as the conquering hero, while Spanish speaking writers regarded him as a low grade buccaneer. Adams and Chao have dug deeply into original source material in both languages which, in turn, has permitted them to publish some startling conclusions

The authors' "History of the Events" sets the historical record straight and is accompanied by a bibliography, a guide to collecting the series, a chapter on the metals utilized, and a vital series of appendices comprising concordances, a census, biographical notes on prominent collectors, a guide to grading, and other germane topics. These sections are the soul of the book; its heart is the extensive, detailed catalogue of "The Medals Themselves," comprising two thirds of the volume. Here, over 275 medals are depicted in full color enlargements, accompanied by painstakingly detailed descriptions printed in two colors for ease of use. Dr. Joel J. Orosz has termed the book "one of the signal triumphs of modern numismatic scholarship" and concludes that "In fact, *Medallic Portraits of Admiral Vernon* does such a superb job of defining the previously indefinable, the only numismatic book to which it can be appropriately compared is Sylvester Sage Crosby's *Early Coins of America*." Orders for the book are now being accepted and delivery of the book is expected in early June.

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Letters to Editor

Dear John,

I've just had the distinct pleasure of reading the February MCA Advisory, and I would like to respond to several articles.

First, your editorial comment on medal collecting rang a bell—I searched my memory to identify why Kahlil was so attracted to medals. It didn't take long to figure out that his choices were not based on either history or theme, but on pure aesthetics. As a practitioner of the bas-relief with a keen eye, he was constantly searching for instructive examples. Collecting medals became an inexpensive means to enjoy that art form. And, yes, I think he was proudest of his Pisanello examples.

Jean Gibran

Greetings,

I am doing research on a bust of Lincoln I received from my late grandfather. The only piece of information I have is that it is inscribed "Copyright by V. D. Brenner" on the back of the piece. This is not one of his plaques representing the image on the penny, but rather a bronze bust showing a younger Lincoln. If I had to estimate the piece is about 6-8 inches tall excluding the base. If you are curious, I can send you a picture. I just can't seem to find any reference to a Brenner bust anywhere.

If you could point me in the right direction to find out more information regarding this piece that would be great.

Thanks!

Pat McGrory



Dear Pat,

John Adams could not have recommended a more interested person in reference to your Brenner bust of Lincoln. I have studied the works of Victor David Brenner for more than thirty years and have compiled an extensive list of his more than 320 medallic works and his 38 sculptural works. I had planned to publish this in book form but more information keeps popping up every year. Like most authors, we strive for perfection, listing every know work, but the older I get the more I realize this is next to impossible.

Also my partner and I have just issued a medal in honor of Brenner on the centennial of his creation of the Lincoln cent (and the 200th anniversary of Lincoln's birth). Thus my interest in Brenner is both personal and professional.

The Lincoln bust you have sounds familiar; I have it listed in my database.

However, there may be several vanities. I would be delighted to see a photograph and compare it with one I have listed. Please furnish any further description you can, including any maker's marks, dates, and such.

In return would you be interested in further background information on Brenner? Or perhaps a complete list of his works I have available? Please contact me. I will be most delighted to assist you with any information I can furnish you.

Most respectfully,

Dick Johnson

Medal Definition

Dear John,

The other organization that has Medal in their title (give or take a plural) is the Orders and Medals Society of America. The most generic definition of a medal in that organization is "wearable art". I have often thought the distinction between OMSA and MCA medals is that one you wear the other you hold.

My Medal

Be it hammered or whittled or cast in green
sand,
Be it die cut, engraved, double struck in a band,
Square, oblong or round-
Humble or profound-
The true medal is art come alive in my hand.

This limerick found its inspiration in these words of the Hungarian sculptor Dora de Pedery-Hunt who immigrated to Canada in 1948 and who just recently passed away.

"The medal always intrigues me. I find it equally exciting to make one or to own one.

To create a medal I have to accept the challenges of working inside the limits of a

small disc and obeying the strict rules of the striking, casting and finishing processes.

But the clay is soft and it yields pleasantly, almost too easily to the touch of my fingers. Maybe, after all, these limitations are necessary. I welcome these odds—my medals are the result of a good fight against them—and at the end at least I can look back on a bravely fought battle.

But just wait until you own one; you will discover for yourself that there is really magic in a medal.

Clasp it in your fist, let your warmth enter the cold metal and then take it to the window. Watch it: the light hits some edges, hidden crevices appear, there are some mounds you had not seen before. Feel the tension of the surface. There is life underneath. It is not a cold piece of metal anymore: trees grow here, bodies leap high, faces emerge.

All this is brought about by you, and only you can arrest this magic moment or change it at any time with a slight flick of your fingers.

Let it happen, for your medal just came to life.”

Medals by Dora de Pedery-Hunt, Canadian Stage & Arts Publications Ltd., Toronto, Canada, ca 1973 Introduction

Harry Waterson

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

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