
The MCA Advisory

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WHAT'S NEW ON OUR WEBSITE?

CHECK IT OUT EVERY MONTH

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From the Editor

We thank Ted Withington who was the first person to send in an election ballot. They say that confession is good for the soul and, on that premise, we confess to a mistake: the ballots you returned showed Barry Tayman continuing as Secretary-Treasurer; in fact, Barry is continuing as Treasurer and we propose to introduce Vicken Yegparian as Secretary. To those of you who have not met Vicken, he is a brilliant young numismatist who works at Stacks'. His 2003 COACS presentation on the then recently-discovered Columbia medal was a gem. We look forward to contributions from Vicken on many fronts. At our members meeting in Milwaukee, our ballot was corrected and Vicken was voted into office unanimously.

Speaking of that meeting, the Secretary-Treasurer and our Webmaster submitted their reports which are appended below. Both Barry and Ben have done a phenomenal job. We all should make a point of converting our unspoken gratitude into a verbal or written word of praise.

The meeting featured an excellent panel on Admiral Vernon medals. John Kraljevich, who is arguably the best cataloguer extant in this field, gave a fine presentation in which he made the point that the expedition to Cartagena was the first involvement of American troops (including George Washington's older brother) in a foreign war. Spencer Peck, who is a true zealot on the Vernon series, was eloquent in explaining his passion, which has resulted in a collection of roughly 150 varieties. He ended by telling the story of his favorite acquisition, a Vernon medal believed to have been the pocket piece of George Washington.

The focal point of our club is, of course, the MCA Advisory. The present pipeline of articles is excellent, a tribute to the vibrancy of our membership. Spencer Peck has promised to stimulate regular contributions from Admiral Vernon collectors; Don Scarinci will do the same for art medals and we will rely on John Sallay to see that topical medals get their fair share of the space.

Dave Bowers' *The 100 Greatest Medals and Tokens* is due out in the Fall. He has generously contributed an advertising page to the club which we will fill with a warm invitation to join our club. We plan to offer the same flyer as an insert to all authors of new books on medals and related subjects.

The Carl Carlson Award is given to numismatists who have made outstanding contributions to medal collecting over a sustained period. There has been none more worthy than this year's recipient, David Alexander. A medal collector since 1953, David has written articles for over a dozen periodicals, including a regular column for *Coin World* since 1991. He has catalogued medals with virtuosity; he has received countless awards and served as an officer in just about every organization in the field, including a recent tour as president of the New York Numismatic Club. The founder of Medal Collectors of America in 1998, David is truly our eminence grise. Thankfully, he is going strong with his best yet to come.

The Gloria Stamm Chamberlain Award is given to new contributors in the field of medals. Readers of the Advisory will recall Len Augsburger's many translations of pithy material written in French. It is a true luxury to gain access to such material. We look forward to more of the same as well as articles that combine Len's interest in medals with his expertise in numismatic literature across the board.

Secretary Treasurer's Report (Barry Tayman)

Last year, we gave \$1000 to the Library of the ANS and a similar amount to the Library of the ANA. Even so we have a cash balance of \$8016 and a budget that is pretty much in balance.

We have one Charter Member, one Honorary Lifetime Member, seven Complimentary Members and 135 paid members, for a grand total of 144 in all categories. A diligent pursuit of our dues

delinquents could bring us over the 150 level for the first time.

Webmaster Report (Ben Weiss)

With the help of Sam Pennington and Heath MacAlpine, we have posted a variety of new material. Our biggest project is to post the SOM and HOF series authored by David Alexander. These postings await images from him.

In short order, we will be adding annotated medal bibliographies as well as new LINKS to other collections. We are now caught up on past issues of the MCA Advisory, which we publish six months in arrears. Medal Collectors.org. is alive and well.

Book Review (by Richard Margolis)

Comitia Americana and Related Medals By John W. Adams And Anne E. Bentley: An Appreciation And Appraisal

Exhaustively researched, intelligently organized, thoroughly illustrated, and handsomely produced, this impressive work by the team of John W. Adams and Anne E. Bentley is certainly the last word, at least for the foreseeable future, on the historically significant, and for the most part artistically attractive series of Comitia Americana medals and a few closely related pieces -the *Benjamin Franklin* medals of 1784 and 1786, the *Libertas Americana* medal, and the various versions of the famous and elusive *Diplomatic* medal, all struck in France during the years 1780 through 1792. Also described is the *Henry Lee* medal, a sort of "odd man out" which, although engraved by an American medallist, and struck later than the others of the series, in Philadelphia, is as integral a part of the Comitia Americana series as those medals which were cut by French engravers in Paris. The

Franklin of Philadelphia 1777 Medal, concerning which more later in this review, has also been included in this study.

The extent of the authors' research is barely hinted at by the 377 footnotes, and the multi-page bibliography. Despite the authors' protestation that they are not writers, the text is well written and replete with felicitous turns of phrase. The illustrations are well selected, depicting various medals in gold, silver, bronze, and white metal, in a number of die states, as well as a few hubs, dies, and drawings, most of which have not been published before.

Particularly impressive are the introductions to sections 3 to 16, which provide in a succinct and highly interesting manner the historical background for each of the medals. In the heat of acquisition which so often consumes collectors, this history can be frequently ignored or at best known only imperfectly. Certainly this reviewer learned a great deal about the history behind each medal and the specific deeds of heroism which caused the Continental Congress to single out the recipients of these unique honors; consequently his appreciation of the Comitia Americana medals has been considerably enhanced.

One of the more interesting nuggets of information unearthed by Adams and Bentley, certainly unknown to this reviewer, and no doubt previously unpublished, concerns the medals awarded for Stony Point. In August 1780, in the interests of economy, Benjamin Franklin had the dedicatory inscriptions of two *Fleury* medals, one in gold and one in silver, effaced, and replaced with inscriptions appropriate to *Wayne* and *Stewart* respectively, the other heroes of Stony Point. How characteristic of the "a penny saved is a penny earned" author, but how unsuitable for honoring these two men (and ultimately rectified by medals made specifically for them).

A good deal of the substance of this

work derives from the extensive survey which the authors conducted among hundreds of public collections and private collectors in an effort to determine, as far as possible, the numbers of medals which exist in gold, silver, bronze, and white metal. Their summation of the results in a series of tables provides for the first time a reliable snapshot of currently known examples. This is information which should prove invaluable to collectors who hope to acquire these medals, as they have now been alerted as to which types in various metals they might have a reasonable hope of acquiring, and which are so rare that they are likely to permanently remain on their wish list. To substitute for the latter, the Adams/Bentley team offers the practical advice, which will be accepted by some and spurned by others, that restrikes, struck copies, and even cast copies or electrotypes, can satisfactorily take the place of original examples.

In the belief that a book review should serve constructive purposes, in addition to paying deserved homage to the work being appraised, I offer a few additional comments:

The section on collections of the past and present which have contained notable series of Comitia Americana medals is particularly interesting. This compilation of information pays justified homage to those collectors who have had both the appreciation and stamina to undertake collecting this mostly elusive series of medals. Particularly startling, and no doubt completely unpublished, is the discovery that Vienna's Kunsthistorisches Museum contains a nearly complete set of the French Comitia Americana medals, no fewer than eight (six, plus the *Libertas Americana* and 1786 *Franklin*), being in silver; seven of these handsome silver examples are illustrated in the current volume. Even more unusual, each of these silver examples, the weights and diameters of which have regrettably been omitted by the Adams/Bentley team, is the finest known of its type, having been struck with special care from polished dies.

It is a pity that the background of this

spectacular group, meaning for whom these medals were struck, and how they wound up in Vienna, is unknown. The authors' admittedly reluctant suggestion that Marie Antoinette may possibly have been the individual responsible, seems to me not much more than a stab in the dark. Additional research in the archives of the Paris Medal Mint and/or the Vienna Kunsthistorisches Museum perhaps could suggest a more plausible suspect. Possibly such research might begin with an inquiry as to whether there are other French silver medals of this same period, not of American interest, but struck from similarly special dies, in the Vienna collection.

This lengthy and interesting section on collections which have included Comitia Americana medals omits one extremely important listing of these medals. In Emile Bourgey's Paris auction catalogue of June 8-9, 1953, lot 149 consisted of a remarkable group of Comitia Americana and related medals, described as follows:

"Suite très intéressante de médailles se rapportant à la *libération de l'Amérique*:
Washington. 1776. 68m/m. (Loubat 1). –
Horatio Gates. 1777. 56m/m (L.2). – *Anthony Wayne*. 1779. 53 m/m. (L. 3). – *Lt-Colonel de Fleury*. 1779. 46 m/m. (L. 4). – *Daniel Morgan*. 1781. 56 m/m. (L. 8), – *Guillaume Washington*. 1781. 46 m/m. (L. 9). – *John Edgar* [sic] *Howard*. 1781. 46 m/m/. (L. 10). – *Nathaniel Greene*. 1781.56 m/m. (L. 11). – *B. Franklin*. 1784.46 m/m. (L. 15). *B. Franklin*. 1786. 46 m/m. (L. 16). – *J. P. Jones*. 1779. 56 m/m. (L. 17). – *Liberte Americaine*. 1777-1781. 48 m/m. (L. 14). – *Autre en Arg.* – *Medaille diplomatique*. 1776. (L. 19) Clichés uniface. 68, 69, 72 m/m. Br.12p. .Arg.lp. Stain. 6p. Ens. 19p. TB. La plupart rares."

The rather bare bones description in the Bourgey auction catalogue indicates that this group consisted of a bronze example of each of the first twelve medals listed, plus a silver example of the *Libertas Americana*, and three uniface clichés of the *Diplomatic*

medal, accounting for sixteen of the nineteen pieces listed, but leaving three other etain examples to be puzzled over. Of the various American medals struck in France, this lot only lacks an example of the *John Stewart* medal, which has eluded so many collectors past and present. One can speculate, probably correctly, that the eight uniface clichés of the *Diplomatic* medal in the John Ford collection may have included, besides the five examples which are known to have come from the W.W.C. Wilson collection via Wayte Raymond, the three examples in this lot. Unfortunately, there is no hint as to who owned this exceptional group of 19 pieces.

Also of considerable interest is the corpus (or "census") of known examples of each of the medals, which should prove helpful for collectors seeking to find their way in this difficult series. Here I note an occasional lack of consistency, as the white metal clichés or splashes of some of the medals are included in the census listings, while others (the *Washington*, the *Gates*, and the *Fleury*) are omitted, even though examples of them are illustrated elsewhere by the Adams/Bentley team. Other *Comitia Americana* trial pieces are omitted entirely; for example, there are uniface tin trial pieces of the obverses of the *John Eggar Howard* and the *William Washington* medals in the collection of the Smithsonian Institution. The *William Washington* is particularly interesting, as it differs from the finished medal in having a blank field above the fleeing British troops; the hills on the finished medals do not appear on this trial impression.

A few additional comments on some of the individual medal listing are in order:

-*George Washington*, p. 53: a concordance for the V obverse is given with the works by Mooney, Fuld, and Baker; shouldn't this concordance have also included Stahl, who provides such an extensive listing of the *Washington* medals ?

-*John Paul Jones*, p. 112: at least one medallion (in colored wax) commissioned by Jones from Jean Martin Renaud exists; it is a portrait of the American naval hero, made in Paris in 1786,

and was in the Scottish National Museum of Antiquities (now part of the Museum of Scotland). It is illustrated in the second volume of Milford Haven's *Foreign Naval Medals*, p.364, #583. -*Libertas Americana*, p. 189: the statement is made, "All *Libertas Americana* medals have the distinctive die break on the inner rim at K7 of the obverse." However, the one uniface white metal obverse impression that I have seen shows no trace of this die break. Evidently, it developed immediately after the tempering of the dies; consequently, none of the soft metal impressions of the obverse (assuming that others exist), because they antedate the hardening of the dies, will exhibit this die break.

-*Diplomatic Medal*, p. 241: the illustration of a uniface trial reverse is the identical illustration that has already appeared on page 211; the second illustration is incorrectly described as lot 197 of the Ford V sale.

An excellent case can be made for the inclusion of the *Libertas Americana* medal, the two *Benjamin Franklin* types of 1784 and 1786, and the various varieties of the *Diplomatic* medal in what is primarily a study of the *Comitia Americana* series of medals. Either Franklin or Jefferson, two of the American representatives in Paris, were closely connected with these other medals in varying ways, and they were all engraved by Augustin Dupré, one of the three medallists (perhaps the most talented) who had engraved the French *Comitia Americana* medals. The connections of these medals to the *Comitia Americana* series are obvious, and as a consequence they are often collected along with them.

However, I fail to find comparable reasons for the inclusion of the *Benjamin Franklin of Philadelphia, 1777 Medal* in this study. There is no question of the classic nature and attractiveness of this great rarity, particularly in silver, in which metal only two

examples seem to be known. However, this medal was struck three years before the earliest of the Comitia Americana series, certainly in England, by a currently unknown medallist who seemed to cherish his anonymity. He was probably also the engraver of three other unsigned medals: *David Hume* (1776), the notorious *Chevalier d'Eon* (1777), and the so-called *Voltaire Washington* medal (1777). If there is a common denominator linking these four medals, which also could account for the bashfulness of their creator, it would seem to be the political incorrectness of issuing them at this time (1776-1777), in this place (England).

Grueber, Sellers, and Hodder are singled out as the only authors who have written about this medal, and all three are quoted by Adams and Bentley. With the exception of the suggestions by Sellers that the medal may be connected with events of 1777, more specifically with the pro-American pamphlet, *The Remembrancer*, published that year, and the medal's design based on the John Lodge engraving of Franklin which serves as the pamphlet's frontispiece, his other comments, and those of Grueber and Hodder, are of no great value in shedding light on its origin or purpose; Grueber's and Hodder's statements are particularly inaccurate, as has been noted by Adams and Bentley.

¹I had purchased these two *etain uniface* trial pieces at Henry Christensen's memorable sale of September 20, 1967, in which they were lots 221 and 226. Having not yet been bitten by the collecting bug for the Comitia Americana series, I listed and illustrated them shortly thereafter in my Fixed Price list 33 of May-June 1968, from which they were purchased by the Smithsonian.

Actually, a fourth author, who has also speculated about this enigmatic medal, has been overlooked. This is the late Sara Elizabeth Freeman, who, in her authoritative volume on the extensive collection of medical medals at Johns Hopkins (*Medals Relating to Medicine and Allied Sciences in the Numismatic Collection of the Johns Hopkins University*, Baltimore, 1964), pp. 89-90, disputes some of Sellers' comments, but does agree with him that the medal is related to the events of 1777. Noting that the the date (J777)

employs a letter J in place of a numeral I, and that the date is followed by a cross pomme, she states, "Identification of the medallist is too involved to consider at this time, but I would suggest that the crosslet alone, or in conjunction with the letter, may be the signature of one whose understandable preference for anonymity will be respected for the moment". Nothing written since Freeman has added to our current state of knowledge about this piece.

Adams and Bentley, in an effort to flesh out the background of the *Benjamin Franklin of Philadelphia 1777 Medal* quote Sellers, who refers to correspondence between Josiah Wedgwood and his partner, Thomas Bentley, in which the latter sends a medal he refers to as "the brazen head" to Wedgwood for possible ceramic reproduction. Sellers assumes this to be a medal of Franklin, and Adams and Bentley (Anne, not Thomas) echo this opinion, going one step further by assuming, without precisely saying so, that it is the *Benjamin Franklin of Philadelphia 1777 Medal*. However, it is quite certain that the so-called "brazen head" medal sent to Wedgwood was actually a portrait of Washington, not Franklin. David Hartley's letter to Franklin of May 15, 1778 is also quoted, but is not really relevant, because Hartley is asking Franklin's permission to forward the example of the Nini "fur cap" medallion of Franklin that he had previously received from Franklin, to Wedgwood and Bentley for reproduction; Wedgwood subsequently issued a version in basalt and in jasper. To sum up, I am unable to find any compelling or even valid reason for including this lovely medal within the present study.

If, in my opinion, there is no real justification for including the *Benjamin Franklin of Philadelphia* with the series of medals covered so thoroughly by this volume, there is a piece which has a solid claim for

inclusion, but does not appear. This is a rather obscure trial piece in white metal, unsigned, but reliably credited to Augustin Dupre, commemorating the *Fleet of Count d'Estaing*, which took part in the unsuccessful siege of Savannah. The example in the Musée Carnavalet is described and illustrated on p. 132 of *Augustin Dupre (1748-1833) Graveur General des Monnaies de France; Collections du Musée Carnavalet*, by Rosalie Trogan and Philippe Sorel. It also appears on the descriptive list of Dupre's works, now in the Paris Mint, which was prepared by his son, Narcisse Dupre (referred to by Trogan and Sorel on their p. 90). It is inscribed FLOTE DU CONTE DESTAIN, and depicts two naval vessels under sail. Trogan and Sorel state, "Ce projet de médaille relative à la brillante campagne américaine de l'amiral d'Estaing de 1778-1779 fait partie de l'ensemble d'œuvres que Dupre exécuta au moment de l'indépendance des États-Unis, la plupart faisant suite à des commandes américaines. Cet essai semble le seul connu."

Of the brilliance of this particular naval campaign there may be considerable question, and whether this piece originated with an idea by Dupre himself, or was suggested to him is not known, but by commemorating an important French fleet action in the War of Independence and its prominent commander, I think that Augustin Dupre's little trial piece qualifies for inclusion in a study of the Comitia Americana medals.

Despite the few areas of disagreement which I have discussed, probably at too great length, I have found the new Adams and Bentley tome a work of serious and original scholarship, and can recommend it without reservation. It presents the historical background and details behind the production of this unique series of commemorative medals in a thorough and expert manner, and in so doing clearly demonstrates the authors' love and appreciation of them. Collectors and scholars alike should welcome this study unreservedly and add it to their libraries.

[Mr. Margolis has given the book a close reading and makes many constructive points. His distress about the inclusion of the 1777 Franklin

medal is perhaps overdone. The authors debated the point themselves—it is a close call. However, just as there are points to be made against inclusion, there are points in favor, the strongest being that it fit nicely with the 1784 and 1786 Franklin medals (which were unofficial as well). Between the three, we see Franklin being lionized by friend and foe alike; we see him honored by English admirers even as he is negotiating the alliance with France (the 1777 medal) and we see him honored after the conclusion of the War (the 1784 and 1786 medals). Quite a guy! A less substantive point is that Ford XIV, a work that will stand as authoritative on Betts medals for years to come, mis-described the 1777 Franklin medal, a fact which motivated us to set the record straight.—ed.]

Harzfeld

(by David Fanning)

[In answer to a correspondent's inquiry regarding medals issued by S.K. Harzfeld.—ed]

A memorial medal of Joseph J. Mickley was designed by Lea Ahlborn and struck in bronze (at least) in 1879. The specimen in the Bass collection weighed 936.4 grains and was 50.8 mm in diameter. It was described as a proof (Bowers and Merena Galleries, The Harry W. Bass, Jr. Collection — Part I, lot 2122). According to the Bass catalogue, "these medals were produced under the supervision of Henry J. Mickley and sold through dealer S.K. Harzfeld. It was expected that just about every numismatist would desire an example (see below), but sales proved slow, and today the medals are elusive."

The Bass collection also had an 1881 Washington medal struck in commemoration of the Yorktown centennial (Bowers and Merena Galleries, The Harry W. Bass, Jr. Collection — Part I, lot 2158).. This is listed as "Baker-451A. Rarity-4. 261.7 grains; 32.9

mm. Bronze. Plain edge. MS-63."

The catalogue description notes that the piece was "struck by William H. Key for Sigmund K. Harzfeld."

A Washington medal in white metal with a Harzfeld connection was sold as part of a group in 2006. Unlike the Mickley medal, this one is marked "Harzfeld's Series," and also seems to have a Masonic reverse. From the description, "George Washington Medal, Harzfeld's series, the reverse depicts surveyor tools, white metal" (Heritage, 2006 September Long Beach auction, sale 416, lot 6438).

A **similar** medal appeared on eBay (item 230078693645) in January 2007, where it sold for \$7.10. This appears to have the same Washington obverse as above, but has a different reverse and is struck as a proof. From the description:

"Listed by Fuld/Rulau in the 'Family Arms, Genealogy' section as a Bookplate medal, this is the second obverse with GEORGE WASHINGTON 1732-1799 added on the obverse. A silver proof, it is listed as Rarity 8, 5-9 known. A German collector named Harzfeld commissioned William H. Key, then assistant engraver at the U.S. mint, to prepare the bookplate series. Virtually as-made and about as rare as they come. It must be noted that this example is unholed - unlike the Fuld/Rulau plate medal." Will have to consult Fuld/Rulau.

The Coin Galleries auction of July 20, 2005 (lot 1042) had a bronze uniface cast of the Harzfeld Washington bust, unlisted in Baker, "Sigmund K. Harzfeld's distinctive Washington bust 3/4 left, an epigraphic." Ex Glendining's July 1970 Sale, lot 581. Brought \$50.

Medallic Art Of Onorio Ruotolo

(by David T. Alexander)

New York has long enjoyed its reputation as the greatest melting pot of an expanding America. Here arrived the first of the cresting waves of immigrants that in the late 19th and early

20th centuries brought millions of families from Southern and Eastern Europe to these shores, which had earlier received the Irish, German and Scandinavian arrivals.

Each group was received with varying degrees of hostility from those who had already settled. As far back as the Colonial era, the significant numbers of Germans arriving in Pennsylvania and their refusal to immediately abandon their German language and customs aroused the ire of a popular writer and philosopher more generally remembered for his warm humanity, Dr. Benjamin Franklin.

This writer recalls with wry amusement the saga of the arrival of most of the best people of Cuba in Miami, Florida after 1959. Anguished complaints were soon heard from Anglos about "these noisy foreigners taking over our neighborhoods, talking loudly in Spanish, with all that weird food..." Fast-forward to the 1980s when the Nicaraguans flooded into Miami, leading the now-established Cubans to complain about "these noisy foreigners taking over our neighborhoods, eating all that weird food..." The more things change...

Masses of Southern Italians arrived after the unification of their country in 1861. The new nation's ruling classes from Piedmont and Lombardy were unabashedly happy to see them go, and the large numbers from the former Kingdom of the Two Sicilies now congregated in the slums of major eastern cities of New York, Boston and Philadelphia, spreading out to the Midwest and beyond.

New York's Italian population faced especially significant obstacles to advancement. Most came from rural backgrounds of poverty and ignorance but settled in urban environments that offered low-paying unskilled jobs that paid barely enough to keep a family alive. Tens of thousands were jammed into the warrens of Manhattan's Lower East Side, a constricted area which at one time had the greatest population density in

the Western Hemisphere and was tailor-made for epidemic disease and crime.

Politically New York was very unevenly divided between the Republicans of wealth and social prominence, typified by one Manhattan area known as the “Silk Stocking District,” and the more plebian Democrats, tightly ruled by the well-oiled machine of Tammany Hall. In the late 1800’s, Tammany’s bosses and district leaders were solidly Irish-American, filled with the contempt of the well-established for newer arrivals, to whom they referred by a variety of ethnic labels that need not be repeated here.

Jews from Eastern Europe faced the same discrimination and exploitation in such low-paying industries as the garment trade, but had the advantage of considerably more advanced communal organization. Both Italian and Jewish Americans of the time were pioneers in labor union organization, which then involved considerable violence both in actual organizing and in mounting successful strikes. Their lives were punctuated by catastrophes such as the Triangle Shirtwaist fire with hundreds of female garment worker its victims.

Advancement of the Italian-American community was complicated by vestiges of old-world radicalism, echoes of anarchism, syndicalism and socialism that endured and accentuated separation from the wider American society. One of the first to realize this and to fight it while maintaining unswerving pride in his Italian heritage was a young attorney named Fiorello H. La Guardia, who was a key member of an intellectual uplift group known as “The Green Geniuses.”

The group included sculptor Attilio Piccirilli, whose monument to the men of the *U.S.S. Maine* still stands in Columbus Circle; poet and former Catholic Priest Antonio Calitri, translator of Walt Whitman; Arturo Giovanitti, syndicalist, journalist and poet; Giovanni Fabrizio, flautist of the New York Philharmonic and the brothers August and Giuseppe Bellanca, aviation design pioneers and pilots.

Another key member was Onorio Ruotolo, a Renaissance man active in the arts, politics, labor and progressive causes. (The proper Italian pronunciation would be “Ru-OH-to-lo,” anglicized to “Ru-o-TO-lo). He was an active sculptor, poet, journalist, social critic with especially deep involvement in the cause of organized labor at its most difficult time. He was born on March 3, 1888 in the village of Cervinara, province of Avellino, Campania, Italy, son of an engineer.

His art education began at age 12 in Naples’ Royal Academy of Fine Arts under the gifted though eccentric sculptor Vincenzo Gemito (1852-1929). His mentor’s eccentricities became more marked in later life, when he found himself facing a judgment of insanity and possible confinement. Ruotolo exonerated the aged artist with an article forthrightly entitled *Vincenzo Gemito e la sublime folli suo genio*, Vincenzo Gemito and the Sublime Insanity of his Genius.

Ruotolo came to America in 1908, in part to escape military conscription and to leave behind a frustrated love for a young woman whose parents denied his wish to marry her. He settled in the teeming Lower East Side and began creating poignant sculptures of anonymous figures of the streets, including *The Drunkard*, *The Indigent*, *The Paralytic*, *Rose the Organ Grinder*. His epic protest against capital punishment, *The Condemned*, was a sculptural study of a death row prisoner at Sing Sing prison. Author John May wrote of him in 1931, “While he worships the heroic, his sympathies are with those whom life has maimed and oppressed.”

In common with many left-wingers (with the conspicuous exception of a young Socialist editor named Benito Mussolini), Ruotolo opposed Italy’s entry into World War I and fell out with co-editor Arturo Giovanitti of their struggling *Il Fuoco*, “a bi-monthly magazine of art and struggle.” His wartime sculpture captured his response to the horrors of war, notably *The Other Heroism* in 1916;

The Tragedy of the Mines, 1916; Red Cross, 1917; and Buried Alive-Les Emurées, 1918. American art historian Ilene Susan Ford wrote that his “rejection of ugliness in favor of the traditional notion of beauty suggests pervasiveness of a 19th century romantic sensibility even in the treatment of the horrors of modern warfare.”

After the war, Ruotolo began portraying political and cultural leaders, including Theodore Dreiser, Arturo Toscanini, Enrico Caruso, La Guardia, Senator Thomas Hart Benton, American Socialist leader and anti-war martyr Eugene V. Debs and Vladimir Ilyich Lenin. Mirroring the ambivalence of many Italian-Americans including publisher Generoso Pope, toward dictator Benito Mussolini, the generally anti-Fascist Ruotolo created a Mussolini bust in 1932. In 1941 he sculpted a bust of Socialist leader Giacomo Matteotti, who had been kidnapped and assassinated by Fascists in 1924.

As a recognized sculptor, Ruotolo received a number of commissions for mausoleums and memorials, including the Wilson Memorial at the University of Virginia in 1929; the Paino Mausoleum at Brooklyn’s Saint John’s Cemetery; the Fusco Memorial, “From Darkness to Light” and “The Idyll of Death” at Woodlawn Cemetery, The Bronx.

Ruotolo founded the Leonardo da Vinci Art School in 1923 (commonly dubbed the Leonardo), an idealistic, initially tuition-free effort for the working poor partly financed by labor unions that struggled on for two decades. None of the staff were paid. Among its students was Japanese artist Isamu Noguchi, who later ruefully confessed that the academic standards upheld at the School confined him and added “everything I learned I had to unlearn.” Classes were offered not only in painting and sculpture, but in wrought iron, ceramics, as well as in English and Italian literature.

The Leonardo was the only New York art facility to teach fresco painting, a popular form during the Depression and the famed murals of the Works Progress Administration. Ruotolo’s friend La Guardia was now the nationally famous

reforming mayor of New York and rededicated the Leonardo in 1934 with a fresco symbolizing Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his New Deal. The School folded in 1942 for lack of financial support in wartime and in 1946 the sculptor was incapacitated by a stroke.

From 1930 on, he moderated his once intense political beliefs, professing to his son Lucio that “all politics was manipulative and self-serving.” He still served as education director for the Shirtmakers Joint Board of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, a union long headed by his friend and fellow New Dealer Sidney Hillman. He died on December 18, 1966 at the age of 78. Today he is largely forgotten in his fast-changing city although the Italian American Museum mounted a retrospective exhibit of his works in March 2004.

Ruotolo, like so many other busy sculptors, took occasional forays into the art of the medal, in which he was generally successful. There is no definitive listing of all his medallic work but the catalogue which follows represents the Ruotolo medallic works known to this writer. Others doubtless exist and the cataloguer would appreciate receiving notice of them.

Probably the best known of all his medals is that prepared for the Inauguration of Fiorello H. LaGuardia in 1933. Others treat with labor unions and their leaders, at least one dealing with aviation that showed a strong Fascist design component, several involving the history of a Sephardic Jewish family active in commerce in Curaçao and Cuba, the Maduros.

New York-Related Medals

Fiorello LaGuardia Inaugural Medal, 1933. Bronze, 76 and 30mm. Obv Large high relief head r. with legend curving below, FIORELLO LA GUARDIA MAYOR OF N.Y.C. NOV. 7 1933, tiny signature © RVO/TOLO at r. Rev Torch-wielding nude battles

multi-headed hydra, Latin *HYDRAE COLLA EXURIT He Destroys the Necks of the Hydra*, symbol of ignorance, poverty, disease, bigotry. © RUOTOLO at lower rim. The small diameter medals have an integral loop. Struck by Medallic Art Co., edge A, MEDALLIC ART CO NY.

The large diameter medal possesses something of the majesty of a Presidential Inaugural, which was perhaps fitting for the hyper-energetic mayor of the world's largest city. LaGuardia's explosive methods led to far-reaching reforms in all areas of city government. Intensely controversial during his lifetime, LaGuardia excelled in attracting publicity. Many remember him today for his headline-making action in going on radio to read the Sunday comics to the city's children during a newspaper strike.

Officially a Republican, he opposed Prohibition while representing the Lower East Side in the U.S. House of Representatives, going so far as defying the law by making beer in the House chamber. As mayor, he was supported enthusiastically by a highly diverse constituency including Italian and Jewish-Americans, reformers, former Socialists and at least some of regular Republicans. As Mayor he was served by a formidable group of high-caliber leaders including Adolph A. Berle, Newbold Morris and Paul Windels who were certainly not "ethnic" as was the mayor himself.

He unified the city's subway system in 1940, and was credited with implementation of far-reaching welfare state programs for New York, but more than 50 years later it was evident to objective students of city history that his success led directly to the city's financial debacle of the 1970's.

Italian-American Medal to Italo Balbo, 1933, IX E.F. .925 Silver, 33.2mm. Obv Towering head of Royal Italian Air Force Air Marshal Balbo in flying gear emerging from sea, Fasces with Roman numerals *Era Fascista* dates recede to horizon. Incuse-relief *GLI ITALIANI DI NEW YORK/ NEW JERSEY/ E CONNECTICUT/ A/ ITALO BALBO*. The Italians of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut to Italo Balbo. Rev Sky Giant over sea, holding Star of Italian Destiny, oak

and laurel, *CROCIERA AEREA DE DECENNALE. ROMA - CHICAGO - NEW YORK - ROMA*. 1933 XI. Air Crossing of the Decade, Rome-New York-Chicago and back. Struck by Medallic Art Co. *STERLING*.

Italo Balbo (1896-1940) was a leader in the Fascist March on Rome in October 1922, later serving as general of the Fascist Militia (1923) and Minister of Aviation (1929-1933). He was named Air Marshal in 1933 when he led a mass transatlantic flight of flying boats from Italy to Brazil and a second from Rome to New York and Chicago. Along with many leaders who really knew the state of the Italian military, he opposed Italian entry into the Second World War and was shot down by "friendly fire" off Tobruk while serving as Governor of Libya.

The destination for his flight of his Savoia-Marchetti flying boats was Chicago's great Century of Progress Exposition. The flight touched down at Sea Gate near Coney Island, Brooklyn, greeted by the mayor and a vast crowd including the writer's late grandfather, Thomas J. Knight.

The straightforward use of Fascist iconography on this medal, notably the monumental fasces bearing Roman numeral dates in the *Era Fascista* is a curiosity for a left-wing artist who was a purported enemy of Mussolini's Fascist government.

Medals Relating to the Maduro Family

S.E.L. Maduro & Sons Centenary Medal, 1937. Bronze, 76.2mm. Obv Facing bearded bust in frock coat, sea behind with anchor, dolphin, legend S.E.L. MADURO FOUNDER. 24TH JANUARY 1837. Rev Dutch-style 2-story building under five flags, sailing cog and nude Mercury seated r. over cornucopia, smiling four-member family l., legend FIRST CENTENARY S.E.L. MADURO & SONS -  1837 - CURACAO. N.W.I. - 1937 -  Tan-gold patina. Struck by Medallic Art Co., edge B, small BRONZE. N.W.I. = Netherlands West Indies.

S.E.L. Maduro & Sons Centenary Medal
Obverse, 1937. Bronze uniface, 76mm. Facing
bearded bust in frock coat, sea behind with anchor,
dolphin, legend S.E.L. MADURO FOUNDER.
24TH JANUARY 1837. Tan-gold patina. Struck by
Medallic Art Co., edge B, small BRONZE. N.W.I.
= Netherlands West Indies.

S.E.L. Maduro & Sons Centenary Medal
Reverse, 1937. Bronze uniface, 76.2mm. Dutch-
style 2-story building under five flags, sailing cog
and nude Mercury seated r. over cornucopia,
smiling four-member family l., legend FIRST
CENTENARY S.E.L. MADURO & SONS -  1837 – CURACAO. N.W.I. – 1937 - . Tan-gold
patina. Struck by Medallic Art Co., edge B, small
BRONZE. N.W.I. = Netherlands West Indies.

S.E.L. Maduro & Sons 125th Anniversary
Medal, 1962. Bronze silverplate, 76.5mm. Obv
facing bearded bust in frock coat, sea behind with
anchor, dolphin, legend S.E.L. MADURO
FOUNDER. 24TH JANUARY 1837. Rev $\frac{3}{4}$
perspective of Dutch-style 2-story building under
seven flags, modern freighter at wharf r., nude
Mercury of preceding medal now seated l. over
cornucopia, legend 125TH ANNIVERSARY S.E.L.
MADURO & SONS -  1837 – CURACAO.
N.A. – 1962 - . Silver patina. Struck by Medallic
Art Co., edge B, small BRONZE. N.A. =
Netherlands Antilles.

Compañía Cubana de Fianzas S.A. 50th
Anniversary Medal, 1953. Bronze silverplate,
76.5mm. Obv Outer raised border is inscribed
Compañía Cubana de Fianzas S.A. ☆ 1903 •
CINCUENTENARIO • 1953 ☆ Recessed field
bears *SEGUROS/ DE TODAS CLASES* over shield
with Morro Castle, lighthouse, *SERVICIO
GARANTIA* at top, *FUNDADA EN 1903* at base.
Rev National Capitol at Habana, baseball stadium,
Sugar Central, cane on ox cart around
*PRESIDENTES/ GUILLERMO DE ZALDO/
FUNDADOR/ 1903-1928/ CLAUDO GONZALES
DE MENDOZA/ 1928-1942/ SALOMON L.
MADURO/ 1942. CINCUENTA AÑOS DE
SERVICIO PUBLICO. O. RUOTOLO N.Y.* at r.
Antiqued patina. Struck by Medallic Art Co., edge
B, small BRONZE.

Compañía Cubana de Fianzas S.A. 50th
Anniversary Medal, 1953. Bronze, 76.5mm.
Types as above. Tan-gold, the edge shows no
maker's name or alloy. This medal is
obviously connected to the prior Maduro
issues by the President of the firm at the time
of the anniversary.

Medals of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America

Sidney Hillman – Amalgamated
Clothing Workers of America Medal, 1946.
Bronze silverplate, 37.5mm. By Onorio
Ruotolo, sc. Obv Head l. as President ACWA,
incuse RVOTOLO on truncation. Rev Three
bald, heavily muscled workers grasp a massive
pole suggesting the raising of a roof tree, IN
UNION THERE IS STRENGTH/
CONVENTION A.C.W. of A. 1946 at l., ©
RVOTOLO at 6:00. Notably double-struck
reverse. General style of Medallic Art Co., but
the edge is without maker's mark. Antique
patina.

Sidney Hillman – Amalgamated
Clothing Workers of America Medal, 1946.
Bronze, 37.5mm. Types as above, less
obviously double-struck, edge without maker's
mark. Light brown-gold patina.

Ruotolo was especially close to Sidney
Hillman (born Zagare, Lithuania, 1887, died
New York City 1946), whose Amalgamated
Clothing Workers of America (ACWA) was
organized in conflict with the existing,
conservative United Garment Workers
affiliated with the American Federation of
Labor. Hillman led his workers from
doctrinaire Socialism to a cooperative stance
toward employers prepared to work with
ACWA. Hillman's ACWA flourished during
World War I and its embattled aftermath of
strikes, lock-outs and labor violence,
organizing its own bank and building
cooperative housing.

ACWA created a joint business project
with the Soviet Union during Lenin's New
Economic Policy era and for a season had

close relations with the Communist Party of America. Such flirtation was common among Left-progressive movements of the time. Organized crime infiltrated ACWA on the local level with little protest from Hillman. Such figures as Jacob “Little Augie” Orgen and Louis “Lepke” Buchalter eventually had to be ousted from exploitive roles involving the union and employers especially in sub-contracting and trucking.

Initially active in establishing the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), Hillman became a principal labor representative in President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s New Deal of the 1930’s and went on to become a major force in government-labor relations including leadership in securing passage of the Wagner Act. During the Second World War he was a key figure on the National Defense Committee and the War Production Board. Hillman died in 1946, a New Deal loyalist to the end, his lifelong efforts are summed up neatly in biographer Matthew Josephson’s title, *Sidney Hillman, Statesman of American Labor*.

Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America Convention Medal, 1950. Bronze uniface, 76.5mm. By Onorio Ruotolo, sc. Narrow cartwheel rim shows incuse legend, ☆AMALGAMATED CLOTHING WORKERS OF AMERICA☆ 17TH BIENNIAL CONVENTION . MAY 1950. CLEVELAND, O. Union logo at top r. over worker with flaming torch spanning the field, flag-bearer and crowd of smaller figures process l. toward rising sun. This medal exhibits a somewhat crude, robust style. No maker’s name, signed © 50 RVOTOLO. Tan-gold patina.

Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America Convention Medal, 1950. Bronze silverplate uniface with integral loop. By Onorio Ruotolo, sc. Types as above. Back bears two reversed Union Bugs, UWJI, MBS/RSM. Both of these 1930’s-style medals were struck after the death of union chief Sidney Hillman.

#

Ruotolo’s medals serve today’s collectors as a window into a world in some ways more remote than ancient Rome, a now-vanished world of ethnic struggle, labor unrest, reformist politics, the Great Depression and war. As such, Ruotolo’s medals are a graphic example of one of the greatest values of historical numismatics, the illumination of the past.

Photographing Medals

(by Samuel Pennington)

An essential element of any medals collection is a catalog and an essential element of that catalog is clear photography.* This article gives some hints on successful photography of medals.

First off, forget film! Digital photography has made photographing your collection far easier than in the old film and darkroom days. Exposure and focus are automatic with most digital cameras. A tiny disc or card replaces expensive film and developing costs, and the results are immediate—no more trips to the one-hour developer.

A computer, some photo editing software, a \$300 camera, a copy stand, and, optionally, a \$200 color inkjet printer is all you need. You can even get by without a camera and software if you have access to a scanner and a fast internet connection.

The main requirement for a camera is some sort of close-up capability. I’m using an Olympus 500 SP UZ which has 6 megapixels (all you need) and a 10X optical zoom. The optical zoom means you can get a ten-times bigger image. Don’t confuse optical zoom with digital zoom. The digital zoom just makes a bigger screen image but does not add to the information captured. Olympus has just come out with an 18 X optical zoom for about \$400. It should be worth the extra \$100.

Some cameras with limited zoom come with several close-up settings which can be dialed in.

A copy stand will allow you to get a precise and shake-free picture of your medal. Some newer cameras come with image stabilization but pictures taken with image stabilization alone are nowhere near as clear as those taken with a stand. Copy stands run from \$25 for ones without lights to \$200 and more. I bought mine complete with lights and blue bulbs on eBay for \$41 plus \$19 shipping.

I use a piece of red velvet for a background, but just about any color will do. The cloth makes sure there are no background reflections. Lights are less necessary with a digital camera—I do much of my photography on a table in front of a window. Direct sunlight can be tricky so I draw translucent curtains to avoid direct glare.

Shoot your pictures at as high a resolution as the camera will deliver. When editing, remember that for computer screen display, 72 dots per inch (DPI) is standard, but for book or article printing, you will want 200 or 300 dpi.

Most cameras come with some minimal photo editing software. In case yours didn't, a new web-based editing program is at www.picnik.com. It's free for now. You upload your picture to the site, edit it, and then download the edited picture. You need a fast connection. Sounds complicated but it works,

If you don't have a camera, medals can be scanned on a flatbed scanner. The results are a little flatter than with a camera.

* D. Wayne Johnson published a thorough article on how to assemble the text of such catalogs in the May, 2005, *Advisory*. You can find his article on cataloging at www.medalcollectors.org, click on Archives and Back Issues, then download *The MCA Advisory May 2005 PDF*.



My copy stand came from eBay for \$41 plus \$19 shipping, which is about what it sold for back in the dark old days of film photography.



The same medal scanned on a flatbed office scanner (left), photographed with a digital camera on a copy stand with single light source (center) and on a copy stand with two lights (right). The scanned version is much flatter. The two-light version is slightly flatter. The photos illustrate the reverse of the Donald

H. De Lue (1897-1988) Brookgreen Gardens members' medal for 1979.

The 1796 Castorland Jetons

By Ron Guth

[The following is a piece written many years ago but never published. Ron Guth is a distinguished American numismatist and it was his hope to popularize the Castorland jeton by giving their background and then listing the many variants. The background is presented here in the August issue. The listing of the variants will appear in our September issue.--ed.]

Introduction

The Castorland jeton belongs to a rather small group of coins and tokens which are collected as part of the American colonial series, but which, in fact, may have never circulated here in America. However, because of its reference to the American colonies and the existence of a real Castorland settlement in America, this jeton became popular as part of the broader American colonial series and continues to be collected by virtue of tradition. Although a good case may be made against the Castorland jeton ever having circulated in America, it is difficult to argue with traditional listings, nor is it the author's intention to do so. For in so doing, one opens a Pandora's box, forcing a rethinking on pieces such as P.P. Myddleton's token, the New York Theatre token, the Voce Populi issues, and others. Taken a step further, one might question the coins and tokens which actually circulated in America but which were struck overseas. This larger group would include the London Elephant tokens, William Wood's series of Rosa Americana and Hibernia issues, the Maryland coinages, the Saint Patrick (or Mark Newby) coinages, the French Colonies copper and billon coinages, many of the Washington issues, and several others.

Because of the impossibility of reaching a consensus definition of the "true" American colonial coin, traditional listings have remained relatively

unchanged for decades, and rightly so.

Therefore, collecting discriminations should be left to the individual collector. Rather than argue the validity of including the Castorland jetons in the American Colonial series, it is the author's wish to make the Castorland jeton more desirable and collectible in the eyes of anyone who has an interest in collecting it, regardless of how it might be classified.

The Castorland jeton has been extensively restruck in various metals, resulting in confusion over whether a given coin is an original or a restrike. Understandably, collectors have ignored the true potential of this series. An additional purpose of this work is to clear up some of the misconceptions concerning the Castorland jeton, to identify various dies, and to offer a systematic means of collecting the various die and metal combinations.

From Whence Cometh The Castorland Jeton?

The purpose and intended use of the Castorland Jetons has been a source of interest and speculation for many years. As early as 1826, Hennin proposed that they were issued for "some usage relative to one of the French Colonies in America, or perhaps for some new colonization project." Hennin felt that they probably referred to some territory in Canada, where there was "a large commerce in beaver pelts" and one of the islands in Lake Ontario was named Castor Island." This speculation was repeated by Lathoumetie in "The Mystery of the Castorland Piece."

Lathoumetie offered as one possibility the French Society (founded by Astor to compete with the famous Hudson Bay Company). In English, the name of the firm was abbreviated "C° Astor Land" (which was further contracted to Castorland). Unfortunately, that company disappeared rapidly because of bankruptcy.

A third possibility proposed by Lathoumetie was a village by the name of

Castorland in northern New York, near the Canadian border and Lake Ontario. This town still exists and is located on Highway 410 near the Black River in New York State.

A fourth and final possibility is a settlement attempted in 1792 of land in northern New York State by Pierre Chassanis. This settlement comprises the area around the modern town of Castorland. As we shall see from the following section, this is the most correct of the four possibilities.

The History of The Castorland Settlement

The following account of the Castorland Settlement is reprinted with the kind permission of the American Numismatic Association. The original article, authored by Victor Morin, appeared in the October, 1942 issue of THE NUMISMATIST.

"At the beginning of the bloody days of the French Revolution, a group of citizens wished to find a shelter by founding a colony in an alien land. The new republic of the United States seemed to offer an ideal refuge, and, to that end, Pierre Chassanis, citizen of France, on August 31, 1792, purchased from William Constable, American citizen, a domain of six hundred and thirty thousand acres of land in the northwestern part of the State of New York, between the Black River, and the forty-fourth degree of latitude, in the region where the towns of Greig, Brantingham, Lowville, Castorland, Carthage, Great Bend, Black River and Watertown, in the counties of Lewis and Jefferson are situated today. The purchase was made for fifty-two thousand louis sterling, by an agreement signed before Master Rene Lambot, notary at Paris, the money to pass to the seller on presentation of a certificate of valid title to the French Consul at Philadelphia.

"In the following month of October a prospectus was issued to those who would be interested, dividing the six hundred thousand acres in six thousand lots of one hundred acres each, at a price of \$152.28 a lot, fifty acres to be paid for immediately and fifty at the end of seven years.

"The subscription having reached nearly a

third of the capital offered, a meeting of forty-one leading subscribers to eighteen hundred and eight portions took place at the home of Chassanis, No 20 rue de Jussienne, in Paris, June 28, 1793, and the constitution of the society was adopted under the name of the 'Company of New York,' with a seal representing a maple tree nibbled by a beaver and the word 'Castorland' in exergue.

"It was stated in the constitution that two hundred thousand acres of the land acquired by Pierre Chassanis in New York State on the borders of Lake Ontario and the Black River were retained by him for the account of the company thus formed, of which the duration was fixed at twenty-one years from the first of July 1793. The management was given to Chassanis for the whole term and to four trustees living in Paris and eligible for election every three years, meanwhile the administration of the property was delegated to two other trustees in America who were obligated to give a bond of forty thousand livres for fidelity in the exercise of their duties.

"The four trustees associated with the director at Paris, were the citizens Guyot, Maillot, Guinot and La Chaume and the two assigned to the colony were Pierre Pharoux and Simon Desjardins; the first were not entitled to any salary but were to receive two 'tokens of presence,' of the weight of four to five gros in silver (about fifty cents) for each meeting they served, while those in America had the right to an annual indemnity of six hundred dollars to compensate for the expenses of a change of residence and installation there, besides a commission on the profits if their work gave satisfaction.

"Pharoux and Desjardins embarked at Havre on the following eighth of July, on board the American ship 'Liberty', of one hundred and eighty tons capable of accommodating a dozen passengers, but there were forty really, most of whom were returning to Cuba by way of New York. Many of them formed family groups which were quite

picturesque. After many visits of the national guard at the moment of departure, the encounter with pirates near the heights of Bordeaux, near the Bermudas, and even in the Bay of New York, the attempt at suicide by a lady of Palais-Royal who was numbered among the passengers, and many other incidents related by Desjardins in his diary, they landed on the seventh of September 1793.

"The trustees departed immediately for their destination by way of the Hudson and Mohawk rivers without knowing exactly where they would find the territory which was the object of their journey part of which was between the Black River and the forty-fourth degree of latitude. But they had the good fortune to meet at Albany one of their compatriots, Marc Isambart Brunel, a famous engineer (and, at the time, a political exile) who greeted them most cordially and was of much assistance.

"Having engaged four woodland guides, procured by a Canadian named Baptiste, they left Albany on the twenty-seventh of September in a boat under the guidance of a German called Simon, with baggage that consisted of tents, provisions, arms and surveying instruments, rowed up the Mohawk river to Fort Stanwix, descended, through Wood Creek and Fish Creek, to the Oswego River, then to Stoney River, then to Hungry Bay, and reached the mouth of the Black River on the 20th of October.

"As the season was advanced, they did not wish to run the risk of having to spend the winter under a tent in that place, and so they decided to return to Albany after having taken note of the geographical situation, the topography and geology of their territory. They crossed Oneida Lake and arrived at New-Rotterdam where Mr. Van der Kemp regaled them with a banquet of bear meat which they found 'delicious even though somewhat unsavory,' and Colonel Wisner had them dine with him at Schoharie, excusing himself for wearing his hat at the table 'because he had been scalped by the Indians.

"It was necessary, meanwhile, to look after the title to the property. Pharoux and Brunel went as soon as possible to Philadelphia on this account. They were not received very cordially by

the Secretary of the Treasury and with even less courtesy by the Secretary of State. Mr. Jefferson,' so says the diary, 'did not even ask us to be seated, and when we told him that very large numbers of our countrymen intended to seek refuge in America, he made a very significant grimace.

"On their return to Albany, Desjardins and Pharoux asked the Legislature of New York State to recognize the title of Pierre Chassanis, director of their society and chief owner of two hundred thousand acres, in view of the fact that the political situation in France prevented his coming to this country, and they demanded the same privilege for those who intended to remain there permanently. That authorization was accorded the petitioners by the law of March 27, 1794, but refused to their representative because he was an alien.

"They returned to Castorland on the thirteenth of May, passing the home of Baron Steuben who received them very cordially, and on the fifteenth of June they commenced to build a log house and various other works incident to residence. But the question of title ownership was not regulated, and Desjardins was compelled to return hastily to New York on this account. During his absence, the little colony was decimated by a malignant sickness which forced those remaining to return to Albany, which they reached after having endured a hard journey.

"The courage of the colonists was, nevertheless, superior to suffering. They started back to Castorland on the first of June 1795, and, reaching it on the twentieth of the same month, they built a mill, a forge, a canal and other works during the course of the summer, but still greater misfortune to test their strength fell on them soon. Pharoux crossing the river, with seven companions, for the purpose of surveying land, on the twenty-first of September was whirled on the raft into Long Falls. He was drowned, with two other men, and all their geodetical instruments, clothes and provisions vanished in the water.

Sickness broke out anew in the colony, and snow commenced to fall on the seventeenth of October and at the same time provisions were exhausted. Desjardins decided to return to Albany with his fellow workers and leave the colony to the care of Mr. Robinson and a Canadian family for the winter.

"In the following spring (1796) Desjardins retraced his way to Castorland with other colonists, but found that a large number of domestic animals had died of hunger during the winter while others were lost in the woods. These reverses, meanwhile, did not daunt his courage. 'Accustomed to disappointment in all we undertake,' he said, 'I am concerned solely with the remedy.' For to increase the bad luck, a stranger whom he had hired for temporary work, stole the money of the company on the night of June twenty-eighth, escaping in a canoe with six hundred dollars in silver and bank notes, besides important papers contained in a small trunk. The thief was pursued, caught and arrested, but Desjardins was the most surprised man in the world to see, at the finish of the examination, the accused enter the tavern with the constable who guarded him, and chat familiarly with the magistrate who was to render sentence.

"The summer was devoted to the preparation of a map of the territory of the colony which was forwarded to the society's headquarters in France. Without taking into account some irregularities in the land, the trustees at Paris laid out the lots, also, the streets which passed at times through marshes and under impassible precipices, but, as the instructions were peremptory, the colonists had to conform to them.

"But this was not all. At the end of September a new leader, by the name of Rudolph Tillier, 'member of the supreme council of Berne,' arrived on the property to carry on the duties in place of Desjardins. His salary, which was six hundred dollars yearly, began the first of July, 1796, and he was given a commission on the lots he sold, and, also, the right to pass four months of the winter in New York for personal affairs.

"He was an intriguer who had succeeded in

imposing himself on the company through the influence of Swiss financiers who had loaned money on the real estate, and Chassanis, the director, discouraged by the bad results of the enterprise, clung to him as a savior who would retrieve the losses. Tillier brought with him, probably, the coins of Castorland of which we have spoken at the beginning of this article, and intended to distribute them when he took charge of the property. Chagrined beyond measure, Desjardins turned over to his successor the papers and other goods of the colony to which he had given the best part of his life, and on the second of November he left Castorland 'with a presentiment,' he said, 'that he would never return.-

"Tillier, who had expected to accomplish wonderful things, real marvels, was no more fortunate than his predecessors. He sought, but without any more success, to obtain from the Legislature of New York, the ratification of the titles of Chassanis. With very heavy expense for agricultural tools and implements, animals and provisions, he established twenty Parisian families on the banks of the river Castor where they knew all the privations and sufferings of pioneers in the virgin forest. It was an enterprise destined for inevitable failure.

"The integrity, too, of Tillier's administration seems to have been questioned for, about two years after his arrival in America, Chassanis asked Gouverneur Morris, former Ambassador of the United States to France, whom he had known in Paris, to take control of the affairs of the company, examine Tillier's accounts and forbid all new expenses.

"In order to circumvent the impossibility of obtaining title to the property in his own name, Chassanis was authorized, by a meeting of the stockholders held on May 14, 1798, to have it transferred to his brother-in-law, Jacques Donatien Le Roy de Chaumont, who was an American citizen and whose father had entertained Benjamin Franklin during his sojourn in Paris. Le Roy

got in touch very soon with Morris to whom he sent Father Piere Joulin, cure of Chaumont, who had refused to take the constitutional oath of the French Republic and who seized with alacrity the chance to escape the guillotine.

"But Tillier retaliated with audacity. By a notification published in Albany newspapers, on the eighth of January 1800, he requested the public 'not to put any trust in the envious reports of Gouverneur Morris, Pierre Joulin, or their agents; to wit, Richard Cone (named to succeed Tillier), Jacob Brown (land agent), Patrick Blade (constable of notary Lambot) or any other persons acting against himself in the name of the New York Company or of Pierre Chassanis or Jacques Le Roy.' In the following month of October, he published a virulent pamphlet attacking Chassanis, to which the latter deemed it necessary to respond by a written justification that he addressed to the stockholders of the Company. Morris instituted an action at law for an accounting and reclaiming of titles to land from Tiller, and Tillier countered with a demand for \$22,493.92, which he offered subsequently to reduce to \$2,000.00 payable in real estate. He was last heard of in Louisiana.

"Chassanis died in Paris, on the 28th of November, 1803, and the lands of the New York Company were sold, little by little, to American colonists, who, more inured to the kind of life and the climate of the country, made the territory prosper. The memory of the pioneers lived meanwhile in names given to localities in the region, such as Castorland, Le Roy, French River (today the Oswegatchee) and Beaver Creek. A native poet, Caleb Lyon of Lyonsdale, has dedicated a poem to that courageous adventure. He has alluded to the commemorative coin, of which we have spoken, in these lines:

'There was struck a classic medal by this visionary band: Cybele was on the silver, and beneath was Castorland; The reverse a tree of maple yielding forth its precious store, SALVE MAGNA PARENS FRUGOM was legend that it bore.'

"The company was dissolved at the

expiration of the term of twenty-one years, fixed for the duration of its operation, on July 1, 1814. It owed 561,766 livres to its Swiss creditors who acquired its assets at public sale on liquidation. Le Roy took charge of a considerable interest, and directed affairs on the property, but he became bankrupt ten years later, and his son, Vincent took his place, with success.

"Thus ended a bold enterprise, which was repeated, nevertheless, with the same results, in the colonization of Champ d'Asile, provoked by analogous events, the following year."

A more recent book has been devoted entirely to the history of the Castorland settlement. Edith Pilcher's "Castorland: French Refugees in the Western Adirondacks (1793-1814) is based mainly upon the original journals of the settlement, rediscovered by William Appleton. Appleton found the journals in a Paris bookstall where they were being sold for their rag content! Later, the journals were translated by Dr. Franklin B. Hough, one of the true Renaissance men of the late 1800's. Pilcher's book is well-researched, well-written, and it succeeds in bringing to life the struggles of this pioneer settlement.

A Description of the Castorland Jeton

The most eloquent description of the Castorland jeton was presented by W. Elliott Woodward in 1867:

"The head on the obverse is that of Cybele, personifying the earth as inhabited and cultivated; the wreath of laurel, the emblem of victory, signifies that the goddess conquers the wildness and ruggedness of nature, and brings earth under the dominion, and subservient to the uses of man. The reverse represents Ceres, who holds in one hand a 'bit', with which she has tapped a sugar-maple -- in which a faucet, technically a spile, is inserted to draw off the sap; in her right arm she supports a cornucopia of flowers, and at her feet lies a sheaf of wheat; thus combining, in a single group, emblems of three

seasons. In the exergue appears a beaver. The obverse inscription is FRANCOAMERICANA COLONIA (French-American Colony) with the name Castorland and date 1796; the reverse, SALVE MAGNA PARENS FRUGUM, a quotation from Virgil, may be rendered 'Hail! Great parent of fruits'."

Jeton Or Half Dollar?

Considerable debate has centered around the classification of the Castorland pieces. Lathoumetie presented three hypotheses in his article. One was that the Castorland pieces were a type of 'necessity money,' presumably used by the colonists. He bases this opinion on the close similarity to a Half Dollar, and the implied value that such a piece would have. His second hypothesis is that the Castorland piece was a commemorative medal. According to Lathoumetie, the style, weight and diameter were in the tradition of royal and administrative jetons which were issued in the period between Henry IV and the French Revolution. The pieces may have been distributed as commemorative medallions to the subscribers, to the public, or to the inhabitants of the territory (possibly as a souvenir of the foundation of the Colony). Finally, Lathoumetie believes they may have been a propaganda piece. Could it have been issued by Bonaparte himself, as a means of affirming that a French Colony existed in America, despite a treaty with the English in 1763?

As more modern research has pointed out, the Castorland pieces are properly called "jetons de presence." This is the term used at the meeting of the New York Company (La Compagnie de New York) on June 28, 1793 ordering their design and manufacture. A "jeton de presence" is a piece "given in certain societies or companies to each of the members at a session or meeting." In Morin's history of the Castorland settlement, it has been shown that the pieces were to be the sole compensation for the four trustees associated with Chassanis in Paris. Each of the trustees was to receive two of the jetons for each meeting they served. According to Hough, "this custom has its analogy in the existing practice of certain stock companies in

New York, in which a half eagle or a quarter eagle is given to each director present at each meeting held on the business of the company. The (Castorland jeton) was doubtless designed to be given to emigrants and others as a keepsake, and was not a coin, as it wanted the sanction of law, nor a token, as it was not to be redeemed."

It should be noted that the equivalent value of the silver contained in two of the jetons was approximately one dollar. While this might sound like a piddling amount as compensation, one should realize that the wages for unskilled laborers in the United States during this period was roughly one dollar per day!

Some modern scholars continue to maintain, however, that the Castorland pieces were actually intended to be Half Dollars. Several strong points are made in this direction. First, most of the originals are struck in silver, representing an intended value. Second, their size and weight closely approximates that of the United States Half Dollars of the same period (208 grains). Third, the piece is dated. Fourth, the edge is reeded. Most medals show plain edges, while precious metal coins struck for circulation have reeding on the edges to prevent clipping. Fifth, virtually all of the originals are struck on a coin axis, unlike the later restrikes and most medals (which are struck with a medallion alignment). Sixth, virtually all of the originals are found in worn condition, indicating that they did, indeed, circulate.

The question then becomes, should the Castorland pieces be named for their intended use or their actual use? If that be the question, we are more correct in calling them jetons, as that is exactly what they were called by the issuing body. We are not so correct in calling them Half Dollars, as such a claim is based on circumstantial evidence and is unsupported by the written instruments of the issuing body. Furthermore, there is no

evidence that any of the pieces circulated here in America. If a choice must be made, then, it is more appropriate to label them "jetons."

Original Or Restrike?

Traditionally, Castorland Jetons have been classified as either originals or restrikes. Some dispute has arisen, however, as to what differentiates an original from a restrike. This confusion has come about because of the several restrikes struck from the same dies used to strike the original jetons. For example, the 1988 Redbook (GUIDEBOOK OF UNITED STATES COINS) lists the silver and copper originals and mentions in a footnote that copy dies have been used (and are still being used) to restrike the issue. Their claim that "restrikes are thinner and usually have more modern letters" is inaccurate and quite misleading, since some of the copper and silver restrikes weigh as much or more than the originals. In general, the differences in the lettering styles is more evident on the reverses, but there are some modern reverse dies which could easily fool the unknowledgeable collector.

If you have a silver or copper Castorland Jeton in your hand, the first job is to determine if it is from the appropriate, original dies. Turn to the section on Die Descriptions. The obverse should match exactly the description for Die 1 and the reverse should match exactly the description for Die A. If they do not match these dies, then your jeton is a restrike and you can go on to the other die descriptions to determine the correct die combination. If they do match, there is still the possibility that your coin is a restrike. Look at the reverse. If there is a die break (however small) coming in from the rim at the S in PARENS, then your coin is a restrike. If there is no trace of the die break at the S in PARENS and there is no die rust at the right handle of the pot, then you have what John J. Ford, Jr. calls a "simon-pure" original. If die rust IS visible at the pot handle, but there is no die break at the S in PARENS, then you still have an original (in the author's opinion), but there has been some controversy among collectors as to whether or not an original can have the die rust.

Traditional listings have allowed die rust on the originals, but have disallowed any trace of the die break (in fact, if one were to disallow die rust on the coins, there would only be five or so originals and many of the coins purchased for three and four thousand dollars would be classified as less valuable "restrikes")!

To be continued in the September issue:

Letters to the Editor

Hi John,

Thank you for forwarding the email from Sam Pennington about the Erie Canal medal. If there is also a reply from John Sallay, I would be pleased to get it. I no longer see a need to put my email address in the MCA Advisory.

It's great to have this information about my medal. I really appreciate your help.

Best regards,

Jeff Hawk
tokenmaven@optonline.net

To the Editor:

In answer to Mr. Hawk's letter, what he has is the *Completion Of The Erie Canal, 1826*. It is 81 mm. and made of white metal. Joe Levine's Presidential Coin auction catalogs say it was sculpted by Charles Cushing Wright. The obverse shows Pan seated on a cornucopia filled with the fruits of the land, his arm around Neptune, who is seated by the ocean. The reverse shows the New York coat of arms surrounded by an eagle on a half globe, flanked by a view of Castle William. This medal was prepared for the great celebration in New York City in early 1826 to commemorate the completion, after eight years of labor, of the Erie Canal which linked the Hudson River and Lake Erie.

Curiously, Ledlie Laughlin's 1940 *Pewter in America Volume I*, figure 280, lists this medal as in his collection and as made of pewter and the pewterer as unknown. In reality it was most probably designed by Sir Edward Thomason (1769-1849), a Birmingham, England diesinker, manufacturer, and inventor.

I'm not qualified to say whether or how to clean his medal.

[We referred Allan to Dick Johnson's marvelous article on this very subject, published in an earlier issue of *The Advisory*—ed.]



Sam Pennington, Publisher *Maine Antique Digest*. (207) 832-6276

Dear John,

I'm sorry to trouble you, but I am a new member of MCA and would appreciate some advice on archival storage media for medals. I have been collecting English historical medals for only a few years, so I'm still quite a novice.

I have been using "safe-flips" for most of my specimens, but they are not available larger than 2.5 x 2.5 inches. Many of my medals are much larger than that. Various hard, round containers are sold, but they are really intended for coins and are also too small. Some people have suggested using polyethylene sandwich bags. I have also considered the cloth lined plastic trays sold by Lighthouse. Is either of these safe? Do you have any other suggestions?

Many thanks for your help.

Cordially,
Allan Smith