
The MCA Advisory

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Board Members

John W. Adams, President
John Kraljevich, Vice President
Barry D. Tayman, Secretary & Treasurer
David T. Alexander
Robert F. Fritsch
David Menchell
Scott Miller
John Sallay
Donald Scarinci

John W. Adams, Editor

99 High Street, 11th floor
Boston, MA 02110
jadams@adamsharkness.com

Barry Tayman, Secretary & Treasurer

5424 Smooth Meadow Way
Columbia, MD 21044
Btayman@comcast.net

David Boitnott, Webmaster

dboitnott@nc.rr.com

website: medalcollectors.org

Editor of *Collectors' Guide*, Dick
Johnson
(dick.johnson@snet.net)

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Important Dates

May 10th – Ford Collection Part IX
June 11th - Kolbe's Sale of Ford Library II
July 27th-31st - ANA Convention

What's New On Our Website!

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE EVERY MONTH

www.medalcollectors.org

From the Editor

Alan Harlan has suggested (see Letters to the editor) that we emulate the highly successful British Art Medal Society. The Society's magazine, *The Medal*, is much to be admired and it is our ambition to take a step in that direction before long. More immediate (and easier) opportunities to steal pages from their playbook would include 1) more membership meetings and 2) periodic sponsorship of art medals by our leading sculptors.

Dick Johnson has come up with an exciting venue for a meeting in Connecticut in the October timeframe. More about that in the May issue. Meanwhile, ye editor intends to draft Don Scarinci to chart our course on sponsoring medals. Other members interested in meetings or medals are cordially welcome—not one ounce of volunteer energy will be wasted, we promise.

My Favorite Electro

(by John W. Adams)

Robert Ready was not the first artisan to practise electrotyping but he may have been the best. An engraver of seals by trade, he was appointed to the staff of the British Museum in 1859 where he (and later his son) made high quality electrotype copies of some of the great rarities in the Museum's collections.

One such is the 1723 memorial medal of Sir Christopher Wren. Executed by the German medallist G.D. Gaab, the original is a massive (102mm) cast, which has been chased to bring out the

noble visage and massive coiffure of Sir Christopher. The only medal of this renowned scientist and architect, the portrait does full credit to the subject. Fittingly, the reverse is an equally detailed view of Wren's architectural masterpiece, St. Paul's Cathedral. Destroyed by fire in 1666, the rebuilding of St. Paul's began in 1675 and was completed in 1710.

Medallic Illustration's describes the Wren medal as "very rare," listing only the piece in the BM. Thus, Ready's electrotyping skills, which reproduce all of the detail in the original down to the marks of chasing, has permitted me to share Gaab's masterpiece as well as the man he memorializes. Electrotypes can add an enriching dimension to our hobby.

My Favorite Medal

(by Dr. Thomas Fitzgerald)

A New Basilica

By the time Pope Nicholas V was enthroned in 1447, the condition of Constantine's fourth century St. Peter's Basilica was deplorable. During the past century and a half (a period when the papacy had taken up residence in Avignon referred to as the "Great Schism"), the old church had been used as a fortress and sometimes subjected to siege. There had been extensive damage by earthquakes as well as from assault and a deplorable lack of maintenance.

Faced with these attributes of the old church, the pontiff debated the wisdom of rebuilding and repairing the historic ancient basilica that had long served Christianity and the popes or tearing down Constantine's church and building a new one in its place. However

the pope's decision to demolish the old Constantinian basilica and build a completely new facility came too late in his lifetime. His successors, who were preoccupied with the urgent affairs of state and dealing with the constant threats of Saracen invasions, did little more than put off the problem of the run-down church. Each succeeding pope continued the process of patching and renewing the old building in the hope that the decision to demolish it might be deferred to the next reign. For the next fifty years they procrastinated.

Pope Julius II (1503-1513)

The election of Pope Julius II brought about a crisis in the history of St. Peter's. Some decisive action must be taken. Unlike his predecessors, Pope Julius did not hesitate to undertake the monumental task of demolishing the historic basilica and building a completely new structure. He was well aware of the relative short reigns of popes and the lesson of Pope Nicholas V, who died before he could get started the building of a "new" St. Peter's. Pope Julius almost immediately set about the task.

It is important to remember his reign coincided with the "High Renaissance" including an enormous increase of wealth to princes and potentates. The discovery of the New World and the subsequent opening of the mines of gold, silver and diamonds led to an influx of riches from the Americas to Europe. The popes' coffers benefited as much as those of the sovereigns throughout Christendom. Julius II had plenty of revenue to draw upon.

Pope Julius II had reigned for just over a year and a half before he decided

to demolish the old basilica. In spite of strong opposition from many cardinals, Roman officials and the citizens of Rome, the pope moved ahead with his plans. On April 18, 1506, he laid the first stone of the new basilica twenty-five Roman feet below the pavement of the old structure. It was to be the foundation of the St. Veronica pier at the southwest corner of the crossing. On a block of white marble Julius inscribed his intentions. Under it he placed a pottery vase containing newly minted gold ducats and some gold and bronze medals. The pieces display the pope's effigy on the obverses and a view of the new basilica on the reverses. The occasion was marked with a great deal of ceremony.

A Description of the Medal

The medal was the work of the Italian medallist Foppa Cristoforo Caradosso (1452-1526 or 1527). He worked for a number of wealthy families including Ludovico Sforza and King Matthias Corvinus of Hungary. Caradosso visited Rome, Viterbo and Florence in 1496 and was involved with the Mantuan Court as late as 1524.

The medals were struck, it seems, in gold and bronze. These 56mm pieces are very rare. There is a bronze specimen in the holdings of the British Museum and one in this author's collection. The obverse of the medal for the corner stone of the new St. Peter's Basilica depicts a half-figure of the pope, facing right and wearing the regal papal cape. The Latin inscription identifies the pope, "IVLIVS LIGVR PAPA SECVNDVS."

But it is the reverse of this medal that is so important and informative.

This frontal view of St. Peter's depicts Bramante's architectural design. Seen are the larger and smaller semicircular apses whose bases encompass a half-square. At each side are the two tall slender towers. Of course, this does not look familiar to us. The plans were greatly changed by later architects resulting in the "porch" entry we know so well. The inscription reads: "TEMPLI PETRI INSTAVRACIO" (Installation of Peter's Temple) and "VATICANVS."

Note. There have been a number of smaller medals (36mm) struck in bronze in the 19th century. They do not carry the inscription on the reverse as seen on the original pieces.

The Society of Medalists **America's Premier Art Medal Series** (By David T. Alexander, Founding President MCA)

The first public notice of a new organization devoted to fostering the art of the medal in the U.S. appeared on page 8 of *The Numismatist*, journal of the American Numismatic Association in January 1929:

"The Society of Medalists

An organization for the stimulation of an appreciation of medallic art in America has recently been formed, with headquarters at the American Federation of Arts, Barr Building, Washington, D.C. It will be known as the Society of Medalists. The organization committee is composed of George D. Pratt, Robert W. De Forest and Alexander B. Trowbridge. Herbert Adams and James Earle Fraser are the society's professional advisers.

It is to be a non-profit-bearing organization with the sole purpose of stimulating an interest in medallic sculpture by issuing to its members each year two bronze medals created by American sculptors of the highest rank. Two different sculptors will be engaged each year, and the designs will cover an extensive range of interest, such as natural history, sport, conservation, forestry, aviation, architecture and similar subjects.

The invention of new and exceptionally accurate machinery makes it possible to strike medals to the quantity of 1,000 or more for a very low cost. The new Society of Medalists' calculations are hence based upon a minimum of 1,000 members. Annual dues will be \$8, to cover satisfactory fees for the sculptors, costs of producing the medals and furnishing a case or frame for each, and all additional expenses, including organization and distribution.

Four days after the first invitations were sent out, nearly 200 persons had joined the new society, which would seem to indicate that there is a definite place for it in the United States. The Society of Medalists had its inception at the convention of the American Federation of Arts in Washington last May."

Later SOM literature attributed founding of the society entirely to George Dupont Pratt (1869-1935), a Renaissance man vitally interested in the arts and sciences. Pratt was active in the leadership of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, American Museum of Natural History, Brooklyn's Pratt Institute, the New York State Conservation Commission, Boy Scouts of America and the American Forestry Association.

Nothing further was heard of De Forest or Trowbridge, or for that matter of the American Federation of Arts. Although the convention at which SOM had its inception according to *The Numismatist* story took place in May 1928, the official founding date always given for SOM in the years following was 1930. The earliest address for the society in its own literature was the National Arts Club Building, 119 East 19th Street in New York City. We can only speculate on what became of the federation and the other two cited founders.

The format adopted for SOM shows that Pratt was clearly influenced by the Circle of Friends of the Medallion, of which he had been a member. The basic SOM formula of two fine art medals per year continued the Circle's format. Before his death in 1935, Pratt had the satisfaction of savoring his new organization's first nine medals.

I joined the Society of Medalists in 1974, having acquired my first four SOM medals in the Fall of 1974. I found that I could buy (overpriced) back issues directly from the society and promptly bought such issues as Paul Manship's *Bacchus* and my long-sought Jennewein *Fame and Glory*. I corresponded with SOM Director Mary Louise Cram and wrote extensively in *Coin World* about each new SOM medal as it was released. We also splashed the Society's .999 Silver "Restrike" program rather lavishly.

I purchased a large group of SOM's from the estate of Dayton dealer Frank Darner, founder of Presidential Art Medals Co. Hank Spangenberger and H. Joseph Levine provided medals and encouragement. Jake Sureck, late lamented dean of Oklahoma

numismatists, sold me his SOM's, bought at time of issue, and so it went. I was hooked!

I visited Medallion Art Company's Danbury facilities to cover the First Strike ceremony of Edward Fraughton's Ronald Reagan Inaugural Medal for Coin World in early 1981. Leaving the newspaper in March, I signed on as a full-time cataloguer for Johnson & Jensen in Danbury. During 1981-83, I learned a vast amount about cataloguing, U.S. and world medals and how not to run a business. All experience has value.

I was a founding member of the American Medallion Sculpture Association (AMSA) in 1982 and served on its first governing board. I wrote "The Art Medal in Twentieth Century America, the First Eight Decades" as the introductory essay in AMSA's first exhibition catalogue in 1983.

By now I had acquired enough SOM's to discover that dramatic varieties in strike and patination existed and I was recording these varieties in my mind's eye as my wife and I drove our convoy of impressively large U-Haul trucks from Danbury to Des Moines, Iowa, to join the Kagin organization in 1983.

My experience as a collector was now joined by a cataloguer's matchless opportunity to handle hundreds of SOM medals. I was surprised to find that next to nothing had been written about SOM's in general, other than reprints of their brochures in *The Numismatist* over the years. Nothing whatever had been published about varieties. In a numismatic world obsessed with the intricacies of U.S. coins, Mint marks and

die varieties, the medal field was light years behind.

I returned to New York in 1990, cataloguing hundreds of medals of every era for Stack's and Coin Galleries. With the encouragement of Harvey and Larry Stack, I founded Medal Collectors of America (MCA) at the 1998 Portland, Oregon, American Numismatic Association convention.

My hope was to make MCA the first *successful* organization devoted to the *collecting* of art and historical medals, to *research and publication* about medals and to *bringing together* medal collectors throughout the U.S. and Canada with fraternal outreach overseas.

The medal field is now poised for rapid growth after a century of neglect. SOM medals' attractions are legion. Deep philosophical subjects, magnificent designs by America's greatest sculptors, relative availability at reasonable cost should make the series a magnet for new collectors.

More than 13 years have passed since the last regular issue of the Society of Medalists appeared. *A whole generation of collectors is maturing which may never have heard of SOM.* With their many attractions, SOM's should take their place beside such already active areas as U.S. Presidential Inaugural, Betts and U.S. Mint medals.

The enthusiastic reception of Paul Bosco's Valuation Guide to SOM issues in the premier issue of MCA's journal, *The Medal Cabinet*, shows that the time is ripe for this in-depth exploration of Society of Medallists' medals.

Why and How

Issued between 1930 and 1992, the medals of the Society of Medalists (SOM) form an unmatched panorama of American medallic sculpture. For six decades, the Society released two art medals each year to its members. The following pages offer an in-depth review SOM medals of 1930-1940, each with an appreciation of its design and a brief biography of its sculptor.

Accompanying each issue is a catalogue of all varieties known to me of patina, planchet dimension and edge mark. No such in-depth review has ever been attempted. It is hoped that this study will prove of value, both to medal collectors and admirers of fine sculpture in bas-relief form.

Development of the Art Medal

Re-invented by Antonio Pisano, called Pisanello during the Renaissance, the medal's primary role was commemorative and historic. Medals glorified great men of the Italian city-states, recorded their victories, honored their spouses and families. The struck medal became an ideal propaganda vehicle for the wars of religion, or for chronicling the victories of such monarchs as *Roi Soleil* Louis XIV of France, Britain's Queen Anne and later of Napoleon.

Medals played a significant role in American numismatic history, as revealed by a glance into C. Wyllys Betts' *American Colonial History as Illustrated by Contemporary Medals*. 19th century, American medals recorded history and rewarded excellence. Medals popular with collectors celebrated the careers of George Washington, Benjamin Franklin and Abraham Lincoln; U.S. Mint medals

recorded the nation's military, naval and political heroes.

Engravers and die-sinkers such as C.C. Wright, Robert Lovett Sr. and Jr., and George Hampden Lovett provided medals for political campaigns, agricultural and industrial expositions, hobbyists and history buffs. Tokens of the Hard Times, Civil War and Gay 90's headlined medal-makers Frederick B. Smith, Peter Krider, Joseph K. Davison Sons, the Lovetts and Warners. Late 19th century manufacturers such as Tiffany, Gorham and the Newark's Whitehead & Hoag ushered in a new age of the American medal, still directed toward historic and industrial commemoration and award.

A major shift, following the exposure of American sculptors such as Augustus Saint Gaudens and Victor D. Brenner to the European movement, toward medals as a medium of artistic expression (though still tied to commemoration and wealthy sources of commissions). The New York-based American Numismatic Society (ANS) was a significant force in this slow unfolding of the art medal. The transition toward art as a specific desideratum in medals was by no means smooth, as the contretemps between Saint Gaudens and Charles E. Barber over the World's Columbian Exposition Award Medal proves. U.S. Mint Chief Engraver Barber sabotaged Saint Gaudens' artistic reverse featuring a nude youth holding a torch.

Despite Saint Gaudens' world reputation, art lost out decisively as the crabbed Barber callously elbowed artistic concerns aside, substituting his own banal reverse of an inscribed tablet squashing the *Santa Maria* in what his

furious adversary called "an act of rare shamelessness."

European organizations dedicated to creating and collecting fine art medals flourished in the early 1900's. France was home to *Les Amis de la Médaille d'Art*; Belgium and the Netherlands to the *Société Hollandais-Belge de la Médaille d'Art*. After World War I this group split into separate national organizations, the *Société Royale des Amis de la Médaille d'Art* and the *Vereeniging vir Penningkunde*. Pre-1914 Vienna gave birth to the *Österreichische Gesellschaft für Förderung der Medaillenkunst und Kleinplastik*.

These groups commissioned Europe's finest medallistic sculptors to create art medals for their members, an idea which crossed the Atlantic with diplomat, journalist, writer and arts organizer Charles DeKay. Joining forces with medal enthusiast and early ANS member Robert Hewitt Jr., DeKay launched the Circle of Friends of the Medallion (COF) in 1909.

COF issued two fine art medals each year, beginning with John Flanagan's *Hudson-Fulton Medal* of 1909. The series comprised 12 art medals, housed in uniform tan cloth-bound books offering essays, poems and writings relating to the medal topic, edited by DeKay. COF medals presented historic, commemorative and abstract artistic themes. Attracting some 550 members, COF faded away in 1915 after release of Allan G. Newman's *Joan of Arc Medal*.

Its membership brought together sculptors and arts patrons, leaders in education and industry. Among these was a wealthy New York collector and arts patron named George Dupont Pratt.

Medallic Art Company

The Circle played an important role in the creation and early success of Medallic Art Company (MACO), which became the major force in development of the 20th century American medal. This firm began as a department of Deitsch Brothers, makers of the die-struck brass ornaments then *de rigueur* for ladies' handbags.

French-born Deitsch employees Henri and Felix Weil brought the first Janvier Reducing Machine to the U.S. to create metal handbag accessories, but this line evaporated with a sudden change in ladies' fashions. The Janvier was then put to work reducing sculptors' models and Medallic Art Co. was born. Among its first commissions was the COF *Hudson-Fulton Medal*.

As the Weils were scraping up money to buy Medallic Art from the Deitsch brothers, the old owners were selling the COF contract to Joseph K. Davison's Sons in Philadelphia. They then extorted an additional \$1,000 for the MACO name itself. The Weils and MACO struggled on, producing some of the other fine Hudson-Fulton medals and badges, and getting a pleasant revenge by striking the final COF medal in 1915.

Led by Indiana businessman Clyde C. Trees after 1919, MACO assumed a commanding position in the world of the medal in the U.S., maintaining its leadership into the 1980's. MACO overtook Whitehead and Hoag, a giant of the industry during the first four decades of the 20th century.

Whitehead and Hoag cared little for the artistic component of its medals, and Art received no star billing or even special mention in any of its surviving literature. In contrast, Medallic Art

forged the closest possible links with the art community, sculptors and art organizations. This relationship cemented the firm's leading position from the 1920's on. In time, commemorative and award medals struck by MACO formed a roster of excellence.

The firm struck many Presidential Inaugural Medals, a succession of State and local commemoratives. Outstanding later series medals included the Hall of Fame for Great Americans, Presidential Art Medals and its succession of varied commemorative issues and most of the more significant Bicentennial medals.

It produced many of the nation's most prestigious award medals, including Congressional Medal of Honor for Army, Navy and Air Force. Awards for the sciences, commerce, industry and the professions included the National Medal of Science, the Peabody and Pulitzer Prizes, the Caldecott and Newberry Awards.

Born in New York City, Medallic Art Company was located for many years on East 45th Street in Manhattan. In 1973, the firm relocated to an ultra-modern, state-of-the-art facility on Old Ridgebury Road in Danbury, Connecticut. Ultimately, control shifted from William T. Louth, nephew of Clyde C. Trees to new management led by Donald Schwartz.

Beginning in 1966, the medal world gasped at the meteoric rise of the Franklin Mint and its nationwide blitz of coin-relief, Proof surface medals. The spectacular merchandizing success of the Franklin Mint introduced confusion as to the exact role of MACO. Relocation to suburban Connecticut, competition from the Franklin Mint and internal management problems brought MACO

far-reaching changes that impacted heavily on SOM.

A 1992 press release, sent out under the name of *Medallic Art Company, a Division of Tri-State Mint, Sioux Falls, South Dakota*, reported, "Last December, the Connecticut National Bank foreclosed on the company [MACO] and the corporate principals voluntarily surrendered the assets of the company to the bank. In January of this year Tri-State Mint bought the significant assets of the company from the bank, including the Medallic Art name, customer lists, goodwill, all molds, dies, patterns and memorabilia." After nearly a century, MACO, its traditional clientele and SOM faced seismic change.

The Society of Medalists

Founded in 1930 by George Dupont Pratt (1869-1935), a Renaissance man vitally interested in the arts and sciences, the Society of Medalists was virtually unique in the history of American art. He obviously patterned his new society after the Circle of Friends, of which he had been a member. The basic SOM formula of two fine art medals per year continued the Circle's format. Before his death in 1935, Pratt had the satisfaction of savoring his new organization's first nine medals.

Over the next six decades, SOM commissioned two bronze fine art medals each year. Year by year, the Society's program involved most of America's greatest medallic sculptors, creating an unequalled treasury of bas-relief art. SOM medals are often the only examples of many sculptors' work that a collector of average means may hope to acquire.

SOM was launched a few months after the great stock market crash of October 1929. That its program could continue through the depths of the Great Depression is a commentary on the strength of the basic concept. The high ideals and optimistic spirit of so many of the Society's medallic subjects defied anxiety over the state of the nation's economy, unemployment, bank failures, bread lines and pervasive fear.

Two new medals appeared each year into the 1990's, each accompanied by a descriptive brochure, the first 12 of small size and consisting of *A Message from the Artist*, later entitled *A Message from the Sculptor*. Several of these were quite lengthy and offered deep philosophical insights that helped define both art medal and Society.

The 13th medal introduced larger and more elaborate brochures featuring a halftone of the medal; artist's message and an extensive biographical section entitled *About the Artist*. Sharp-eyed collectors may find it interesting to compare the side the artist considered to be the obverse to with that sometimes shown in later Society literature.

Medals were housed in cream-colored cardboard boxes imprinted THE SOCIETY OF MEDALISTS in black, with the number of each medal as in FIRST ISSUE for earlier releases. Boxes and brochures were soon separated from many medals, making a full set of the ephemeral descriptive sheets a rarity in its own right.

All but two SOM medals were initially struck in bronze. The exceptions resulted from the same World War II metal shortages that gave America the 1943 zinc-steel cents and wartime silver-manganese nickels. Struck in .999 silver

were Carl L. Schmitz' small 1943 *Four Freedoms* and Richard Recchia's larger 1944 *Art Enduring Medals*. Both were re-issued in large-size bronze after the war, and the bronze pieces are substantially rarer than the silver.

That was not the last association of silver with the SOM. In 1971, the Society sought its members' opinion on a proposal to re-issue its medals in .999 silver in smaller diameter and lower relief. A poll of the members showed greater support for striking silver medals in their original size and relief, thereby utilizing the original dies while maintaining the artistic integrity of each issue.

Only 500 of each issue were to be struck in this precious metal. Given the size of SOM medals, each would represent a substantial weight of silver. Society literature used the infelicitous term "restriking" to describe the silver program. Elsewhere in numismatics, "restrike" has a distinctly pejorative flavor. "Re-issue" might have been less troublesome, for here were SOM issues appearing for the first time in silver, not silver SOM's re-appearing through restriking!

Silver prices rose relentlessly in the 1970's, just as SOM began its silver re-issues. The explosive increase in silver prices on the 1979-1980 bullion market effectively derailed the silver re-issue program. Silver's replay of the "Dutch tulip madness" was fueled by the Hunt brothers' ill-conceived attempt to corner the silver market. Before the crash and resulting indictments, bullion madness saw silver rise to nearly \$50 per ounce. It is probable that more than a few silver SOM's found their way into the smelter in these hectic months.

Artistic quality became an issue after the 1950's. Many collectors believe that the level of artistic quality of the first three decades did not continue in the 1970's and 1980's. Shifting trends in American sculpture were projected onto the medal, often to the dissatisfaction of collectors more closely attuned to the work of an earlier generation of medalists. Here is a classic case of *de gustibus non est disputandum*, to be sure, but this question impacted the Society's viability in its later years.

The take-over of MACO by Tri-State Mint had immediate effect on the Society. The new ownership stated that it would continue the Society of Medalists series, and Marcel Jovine's Creation Medal was the first SOM completed by it. Issue prices rose, and the traditional two-medal format was soon effectively abandoned. Although Don Everhart's Dinosaur medals and one large religious art plaque would be issued under the banner of the Society of Medalists, the 60 year-old two-medal a year format was gone and the Society they had known ceased to exist for most collectors. As long-time SOM Director Joseph Veach Noble told this writer as he began work on this story several years ago, "The Society of Medalists is moribund."

Paradoxically, the end of the traditional series makes the Society's medals more attractive to many collectors than they were as part of an ongoing, open-ended series. An examination of some basics of numismatic collecting may make the world of the medal more understandable for these newly interested collectors.

Note: This is the first installment of a multi-part series to be continued in the May issue—ed.

Lt. Col. Francois de Fleury Hero of the Defense of Fort Mifflin

(by Alvan Markle)

Louis Fleury, a Captain of Engineers in the French Army, came to America in 1776 with a group of French officers hoping for commissions in the Continental Army such as was given to General Lafayette. When these were not forthcoming, the others were discouraged and returned to France; however de Fleury enlisted as a private soldier. Distinguishing himself at Piscatagua, he was made a Captain of Engineers in the Continental Army. At the Battle of Brandywine, as Major of Brigade, his horse was killed under him, and he was wounded. For his valor, he was awarded a horse as a mark of the high sense Congress entertained of his merits. (Only General Arnold was ever similarly honored.) At the Battle of Germantown he led three cavalry charges. The horse given him by Congress was shot under him and he was again wounded.

Recognizing the need for a competent engineering officer for the defense of Fort Mifflin, General Washington sent Major de Fleury to that vital post on October 14, 1777. He significantly improved its deficient defenses despite lack of materials, and during the prolonged siege continually restored the fortifications that were severely damaged by heavy cannon fire from the British fleet and from land batteries that included eight-inch howitzers. Fleury continually rallied and encouraged troops “half jaded to death” and led them in recovering spent enemy cannon balls to return them to the

British with deadly effect. The Commandant and garrison were relieved three times, but Major Fleury refused to leave the Fort. After enduring devastating fire for a month, on November 15th, he was wounded and without ammunition for the two surviving cannons, the fort was evacuated that same night. Congress promoted Fleury to Lieutenant Colonel in consideration of the gallantry he had manifested in the service of the United States.

De Fleury commanded one of the two attacking columns in the audacious bayonet assault on the British fort at Stony Point on July 15, 1779. He was the first to enter the main works, and struck the British flag with his own hands. For this gallant deed, Congress voted him a silver medal resolving: “THAT CONGRESS ENTERTAINS A HIGH SENSE OF THE ZEAL, ACTIVITY, MILITARY GENIUS, AND GALLANTRY OF LIEUTENANT-COLONEL DE FLEURY, WHICH HE HAS EXHIBITED ON A VARIETY OF OCCASIONS IN THE ARMIES OF THESE STATES, WHEREIN, WHILE HE HAS RENDERED ESSENTIAL BENEFIT TO THE AMERICAN CAUSE, HE HAS DESERVEDLY ACQUIRED THE ESTEEM OF THE ARMY AND GAINED UNFADING REPUTATION FOR HIMSELF.”

At the Battle of Monmouth, de Fleury commanded a select corps of 500 infantry, 50 cavalry, and artillery that included Washington’s personal bodyguard. He then served under General Count de Rochambeaux in the campaigns of 1780, 1781, and 1782 including an expedition to Rhode Island and the Siege of Yorktown. He received

glowing commendations from General Washington for his exceptional services and heroism in both the infantry and cavalry. After our liberty was secured, de Fleury returned to the service of his native country. Although far from rich, he declined any pecuniary recompense for his service in America.

Subsequently, he served in the French army in India, Mauritius, and Europe and became a Marshal of France commanding the French forces at the battles of Montmedy, Givet, and Cambray in 1791 and 1792. During the retreat from Mons his horse was shot and fell on him, and while helpless he was ridden over by a cavalry charge. He survived his wounds and retired from military service. Ironically for one who had fought so well for liberty, Marshall Count de Fleury was guillotined by the Terror during the French Revolution.

Heroism may be expected but once in a lifetime, if ever, yet de Fleury displayed it time and again.

When is a Coin a Medal?

(by George Fuld)

When in 1961 the Getz 1796 was rediscovered after disappearing for 100 years, there was a stir among Washington collectors. This medal resurfaced in the St. Louis area in the summer of 1960 as the property of dealer Louis Karp. This unique "medal" had been listed by W. Ross Snowden in his book of 1861 as part of the U.S. Mint collection. The location of the hole in this specimen confirmed that it was the identical piece pictured by Snowden (See it illustrated as No. 43 on Plate XI). It was listed by Baker as No. 33 noting that

it was actually the property of H. Drumheller of Schuylkill Co. PA and not part of the Mint Collection as had been implied by Snowden's listing.

Eric P. Newman and this author discussed the medal in detail in an article in *The Numismatic Scrapbook Magazine* (Nov. 1961, (2882-85)). Some of the comments from this article, printed in the *Colonial Newsletter of April 1961* are relevant: "A few words as to the origin of the 1792 President Half Dollar from Walter Breen in the "United States Patterns of 1792" (*Coin Collectors Journal*, 21 (2) 1954). In this pamphlet Breen gives a very sound basis for classifying the 1792 President I pieces as 1792 pattern coinage for the U.S., but issued only on a semi-official basis. A few of Breen's points should be emphasized. Although Breen knew of no basis for attributing these pieces to Getz, he followed the tradition established by Dickeson, Crosby, Baker and others in assigning these pieces to Getz. By good fortune one of the authors obtained an excerpt from a Philadelphia newspaper of 1843 which discussed the so-called Washington colonial coinage. The article by Jonas R. McClintock, a former mint official, who was associated with the first U.S. mint, stated that 1792 patterns were cut by a young artisan from Lancaster. This is the earliest source that discusses the Washington coinage, and there can be no doubt that the person referred to is Peter Getz of Lancaster. For once, it appears that a numismatic tradition is borne out by the facts. However, since the article by McClintock erroneously states the 1791 large eagle cent was made in Philadelphia, it may have been the origin of the same erroneous conclusion as to

the 1791-cent reached by Snowden, Prime, Cogan, Mickley and Crosby. It appears quite likely that some of the Getz pieces were struck at different times, perhaps late 1791, while others were struck in early 1792. This may well account for the difference between the large flan and small flan copper pieces.”

Fuld and Newman further stated “However, there is new evidence since the publication of Breen’s pamphlet that the 1792 Getz pieces were struck as late as 1795. For years, a puzzling listing in the Newcomer collection compiled by B. Max Mehl had a piece described as a 1792 President I piece “struck on a one cent planchet. Lettering cut into obverse and reverse. Diameter 30 mm. Extremely rare or unique. Very good.” The piece, then priced at \$46.00 was more recently (circa 1960) acquired by another Midwestern dealer and proved to be a 1792 Getz piece struck on a 1795 U.S. cent planchet. Thus, at least one 1792 was struck after its dating. The fact that this is on a U.S. large cent flan, presumably only available at the mint might strengthen the conclusion that the Getz pieces were of a semi-official nature, such as the Birch cents and that the dies were still in the mint in 1795.”

Fuld and Newman concluded that the 1796 piece was very similar to the Getz half dollar of 1792, but dated 1796 and struck over an 8 reales of Mexico. For comparison, a silver 1792 Getz Half dollar is shown in the Garrett collection Figure 2. Also for comparison, in Figure 3, is the 1797 Getz Masonic medal from Pennsylvania which has the legend W.G.G.M. This abbreviation stands for Worshipful General Grand Master, a honor only bestowed on Washington in Pennsylvania. “Thus it is the hypothesis

of the present authors that the 1796 silver medal was a development piece struck by Getz, for his personal use in the evolution of the 1797 Masonic medal. In addition, the size of the 1792 and 1797 pieces are the same, and the 1796 piece shows that this die was also of similar size...It is probable that Getz used this as a watch fob.”

Further study on this piece was undertaken by Hodder when it was sold in the Bowers & Merena “Kissel and Victoria” Sale in 1989 as Lot 31. He noted: “The exact nature of this piece and whether it had any intended currency value, is also uncertain. Its weight is far too heavy for the standard Half Dollar (208 gns.), while it is too light for the standard dollar (416 gns.) even given the higher fineness of the undertype. A very likely occasion for the dating of this piece, one which accords well with the obverse, would be the period following September 17, 1795, when George Washington delivered his Farewell address to the people of the United States. It is quite likely that this piece was manufactured, probably by Peter Getz, as a celebratory medal recognizing Washington’s selfless devotion to the new American republic.”

Hodder further wrote “The obverse bears a uniformed bust left of Washington, with inscription (G.) WASHINGTON PRESIDENT.1796 This is the same Washington bust that appears on the Getz pieces of Baker 24, but the letters were entered into the die using different punches. An inner circle of scalloped ornaments was added after striking, also using a single punch repeatedly...while it cannot be known with certainty if the maker of this piece was Peter Getz (died 1804), it is certainly

from his obverse Washington bust punch
and his half dollar reverse die. We note



Figure 1: The 1796 Getz "Dollar."
 Figure 2: The 1792 Getz Half Dollar, Baker 23 ex Garrett collection.
 Figure 3: The 1797 Getz Masonic medal, Baker 288 ex Fuld collection.

that one 1792-dated copper Washington Half Dollar is known struck over a 1794/5 U.S. large cent, with edge device showing (Breen 1988, N.1356). This present piece is the same...reverse die state as the overstrike on the large cent, showing heavy rust at A of STATES, around the bird's head, and some stars."

The metrology of the 1796 "dollar" is as follows. The piece is 1½ inches or 38mm in diameter. It weighs 351 grains, and the reverse is 185 degrees from the obverse. The edge is ornamented with circles and squares, from the Mexican 8 reales.

The date on this piece is not an alteration from 1792, which has a different obverse die altogether. It is without the presidential number, and it appears linked with the die state mentioned by Hodder above. It was struck after the 1792 pieces (Baker 23-4, Breen 1348) without PRESIDENT I in the die. Although Fuld, Newman and Hodder think that this is properly a medal, it was included in Breen's Encyclopedia as No. 1359, denoted as 1796 Dollar (?).

The 1796 piece was first offered to the public in the James Kelly ANA Sale of 1972, lot 1076. The piece was resold in a Kagin Sale in 1975. Hodder stated that this piece later was reportedly sold by Arthur Kagin for \$25,000. It appeared again in the Bowers & Merena "Kissel and Victoria Sale" of 1989, lot 31. It was purchased by Jack Collins who later sold it in the Stacks Collins Sale of April 1996, lot 41, for \$9,900.

No further information has surfaced on this intriguing production. It has remained unique for over 140 years. The present owner of this "medal" is unknown to the writer, but he/she

possesses an important relic from the formative days of our republic.

Captain Thomas Truxton Medal

The following letter by Thomas Jefferson explains why originals of the Truxton medal are rare. Today, it seems odd that the Great Democrat did not advocate a new set of dies immediately so that more persons could enjoy the design.

To the Secretary of the Navy (Jacob Crowninshield) Washington, June 15, 1808

Sir,--I have considered the letter of the director of the mint, stating the ease with which the errors of Commodore Truxton's medal may be corrected on the medal itself, and the unpracticability of doing it on the die. In my former letter to you on this subject, I observed that to make a new die would be a serious thing requiring consideration. In fact, the first die having been made by authority of the Legislature, the medal struck, accepted and acquiesced in for so many years, the powers given by that law are executed and at an end, and a second law would be requisite to make a second die or medal. But I presume it will be quite as agreeable to Commodore Truxton to have his medal corrected in one way as another, if done equally well, and it certainly may be as well or better done by the graver, and with more delicate traits. I remember it was the opinion of Doctor Franklin that where only one or a few medals were to be

made, it was better to have them engraved.

The medal being corrected, the die becomes immaterial. That has never been delivered to the party, the medal itself being the only thing voted to him. I say this on certain grounds, because I think this and Preble's are the only medals given by the United States that have not been made under my immediate direction. The dies of all those given by the old Congress, and made at Paris, remain to this day deposited with our bankers at Paris. That of General Lee, made in Philadelphia, was retained in the mint. I mention this not as of consequence whether the die be given or retained. But to show that there can be no claim of the party to it, or consequently to its being corrected by Mr. Reich; that this is as far as we can stretch our authority, and I hope it will be satisfactory to the Commodore. I salute you with constant affection and respect.

[It should be noted that TJ's memory fails him in at least two respects: 1) there were a number of the earlier medals that he did not supervise—e.g. de Fleury, Greene, Gates and Libertas Americana and 2) the dies were not all deposited with the bankers; at least five sets of dies remained at the Paris Mint and at least three sets were shipped to the United States—ed.]

Letters to the Editor

John:

- (1) Question: In his article on medal storage systems, Don Scarinci

makes reference to the availability of 4X4 PVC free flips, but he hasn't identified either the manufacturer or his source for the product. Can you help? I've been using jeweler's tissue per Joe Levine's recommendation.

- (2) Under "Letters to the Editor", Bill Bounds asks you about a silver Libertas Americana restrike which emanates from Monnaie de Paris. You may recall that, at the close of our January meeting at NYINC, I approached you about the same subject. Clearly, the French Mint prepared copy dies in the original 48 mm format and struck a number of silver pieces a few years ago. I'd never heard about this until I purchased one out of a Craig Whitford auction last year--for about \$80. I have the same COA and green case, but no booklet. There are only the tiniest variations between this new set of dies and the original--and the piece does carry a standard French Mint edge mark to establish that it is a restrike and the period of its issuance. There would, however, appear to be nothing about this piece on the Monnaie de Paris website. Are there also copper restrikes? I don't know.

- (3) Lastly, file this under possible "goals" for the future. While MCA, in its present form, definitely serves a real (and important) purpose, I would love to see it evolve into something more akin to the British Art Medal Society. In order for that to happen though, it

would seem to me that we'd need to form a partnership with AMSA and, perhaps, a museum/ institution that could serve as sponsor and benefactor. BAMS has the British Museum and pretty much full use of its facilities and numismatic staff through the good offices of Philip Atwood. I'm not certain just who we might be able to approach in the US at this point (even if the "interest" should turn out to be there among our members and AMSA). The Getty has a fine collection of early European cast medals and engraved gems. BMFA? The Smithsonian? At least it's something to think about.

Alan Harlan

Alan's point #3 deserves sober reflection. I would appreciate reader feedback on what BAMS functions we might undertake—ed.

Dear John,

I enjoyed your February MCA Advisory, particularly David Menchell's article on French and Indian Wars medals. I have long been involved in the Society of Colonial Wars and have Betts 403 and 418.

Am enclosing a copy of a write-up I did on Louis Fleury for Fort Mifflin which I gave them framed handsomely with obverse and reverse of MI-4, Betts 566, (Mint #406) in modern bronze. I have one of the 47 struck in copper in Philadelphia from the original dies after

1880. Fleury's Stony Point silver medal was one of the very first Comitia Americana medals struck at the Paris Mint. Possibly his nationality had something to do with this.

After Brandywine, the Paoli Massacre, and Germantown; Washington's army was in disarray and vulnerable. The British had landed at the head of the Chesapeake and their long supply line did not permit the coup de grace. For over a month, they tried to bring their fleet up the Delaware with supplies to Philadelphia but were barred by Fort Mifflin and Fort Mercer on the Jersey side. When the fort was finally abandoned, it was too late for a campaign. Howe went into winter quarters in Philadelphia, and Washington was able to winter in Valley Forge where he reconstituted his army. Arguably, Louis Fleury's stubborn defense saved the Continental Army and our independence.

Every medal has its story, but I think this one is exceptional.

With best regards,

Alvan Markle

Alvan is the most vigorous 86 year old we know. He used Amtrak from Philadelphia to "day trip" COAC 2004—ed.

Don Scarinci's excellent article on supplies has provoked this question: "Where does he get the stuff?"

Answer: Paul Pfiel, Frame a Coin,
Mfg36 Lincoln Pl., Madison, NJ 07940.
Phone: 973-822-0094, Fax: 973-593-8380.

CORRECTION: The author of that fine article on the Libertas Americana medal in the March issue is Theodore McCann, not Theodore McMann as published. Also, he cites the number of silver medals at 50, not 470.

Auction Update

Ford to come; Eliasberg is history; New world record set by M+E

(by John Kraljevich)

In just 83 lots, Ford IX will manage to excite American medal collectors and squeeze some more money from this growing marketplace. The diverse selection of medals serves as prelude to a catalogue that is certain to be a shelf-bound reference for collectors of American colonial coins, as world-class collections of William Wood's Rosa Americana coins and Connecticut coppers will be offered at the May 10th sale. The medallic appetizer, though, is an interesting smorgasbord that covers the gamut of American history from 1801 through the 20th century and quite possibly includes the proverbial "something for everyone."

The sale begins with two very desirable Assay Commission medals, dated 1922 and 1938, an unusually random leadoff to the grouping of Presidential medals that follow. The series begins with four (!) Jefferson Inaugural medals, an historical issue that also served in its time as a commemorative of the 25th anniversary

of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Three are silver, one is a lovely white metal specimen. An exceptional Madison Presidential in white metal is followed by a duplicate and triplicate in more typical grade. The John Quincy Adams medal is also to be offered in triplicate, including an incredible silver specimen (the first one I've seen, and only a little more rare than the occasionally seen white metal specimens). Tyler, Polk, Taylor, Johnson, and Grant follow, and a short run of the diminutive Andy Jackson inaugural medals complete this subsection.

A rather impressive American Academy of Arts and Science Count Rumford medal in gold will be offered, this one presented in 1873 for improvements in astronomical photography. The famed Garrett-Julian plate Royal Hawaiian Agricultural Society medal in silver resurfaces as lot 27, followed by analogues from Maryland and New England (the latter including Gobrecht's gorgeous Archimedes portrait). The half-dozen 1826 Semicentennial medals (HK-2) to be offered in a row must be some kind of record – and one is even a brockage!

A run of "medals honoring achievement in the fine and performing arts" includes some unusual and rare piece honoring personages such as Edwin Forrest and Tom Thumb; one includes the words "big burlesque" in its legends.

In a lesson in studious duplication, Ford is revealed to have owned three Fulton medals, three Erie Canal completion medals by Thomason, two silver Erie Canal medals by Wright (HK-

1), and six of Wurden's John Brown medals, including both of the silver pieces from Garrett. At last, the wealth will be shared. Those who collect medals relating to the transportation of water will find two items of interest (does anyone collect medals relating to the transportation of water?) For those enamored of gold, both the massive 181.74 gram Home Front Service medal of WWI and the 1855 Norfolk Yellow Fever medal hold promise. Two 1830s-era medals from South Carolina will appeal to the rebels in our midst.

This Ford medal sale is a mixed bag, including medals that will cost tens of thousands and those that will cost but a few hundred dollars. Some are common, some I've never seen before. The sympathetic placement at the front of the catalogue before the onslaught of hundreds of 1780s Connecticut coppers may give us all a chance to call it a night early and go have a drink.

Stack's will sell Part IX of the John J. Ford Collection on May 10th at Le Parker Meridien Hotel on West 57th Street in New York City. Bidding begins at 6:30 PM.

The Eliasberg Collection of World Gold Coins and Medals was sold in New York City on April 18th and 19th. The sale realized over \$10 million, far surpassing all presale estimates. Bidders from 37 nations competed to win lots and drove prices into the stratosphere. Among the medallic highlights:

Austria. 1892 shooting medal in gold, 4th Festival in Brunn. Forrer IV, p.

245. \$3,680 (on a stupidly low estimate of \$200-300, mea culpa)

Germany. 1887 gold prize medal, 9th German Union and Jubilee Shooting Festival at Frankfurt by Lauer. \$4,370 on a \$1,700-\$2,750 estimate.

Germany. Hamburg. (ca. 17th century) 13 ducat medal on the virtues of motherhood. Holed and mounted. \$4,830 on a \$600-1000 estimate.

England. 1688 Landing of Torbay medal in gold, MI (James II) 65. One of 6 or so known. \$9,775 on a \$2,000-3,000 estimate.

England. 1887 Royal Academy of Arts prize medal in architecture in gold. \$5,060 on a \$1,500-2,500 estimate.

Hungary. Portrait medal in gold of Maximilian II. Habich-3428. \$2,990 on a \$1,500-2,500 estimate.

Poland. Portrait medal in gold of Prince Boguslaus Radziwill, 2 ducats weight. HCz-4009 (R-4, one or two known). \$10,925 on a \$1,750-3,250 estimate.

Latvia. 1785 gold medal to commemorate the 10th anniversary of Peter Biron's school at Mitau. HCz-3411 (silver). \$13,800 on a \$4,000-7,000 estimate.

Iran. 1882 gold bravery medal, 5 toman weight. \$3,220 on a \$750-1,250 estimate.

Mexico. 1809 Fernando VII proclamation on Parras in gold. Grove-101, Herrera-46. \$8,050 on a \$1,750-3,250 estimate.

Peru. 1839 Battle of Yungay medal in gold, 39.3 mm. Ex. Newcomer collection. \$20,700 on a \$3,000-5,000 estimate.

Peru. 1864 Second International Congress medal in gold. \$5,290 on a \$1,000-2,000 estimate.

Morton and Eden Sets New World Record with Gold Renaissance Medal

The recent Morton and Eden (in association with Sotheby's) sale of the John R. Gaines Collection of Renaissance Medals realized £670, 750 excluding buyer's premium – not bad for 53 lots. An exceptional array of castings was included, led by a simply beautiful gold medal of Mary Tudor, cast by Jacopo Nizzola da Trezzo. The so-called "State of England" medal led all lots at £210,000 – a new world record for a medal sold at auction. It was estimated at £80,000-120,000. A ca. 1460 medal by Florentine artist Petrecino sold for £112,000 on a £40,000-60,000 estimate. Congratulations to Morton and Eden on their successful sale!