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Our Calendar

1. 6/1/2004 – Kolbe/Stacks' auction of the John J. Ford, Jr. Library, Part I. Venue will be California.
2. 6/18 – Grand opening of the new ANS building, 140 William Street, New York.
3. 8/18-8/22/2004 – ANA Convention in Pittsburgh. Our meeting date is Thursday, August 19, 2004 at 3:00 p.m.

From the Editor

In a narrow sense, Betts is our bible. His book describes a corpus of historical medals that we honor today. Unrevised since 1894, his book has "stood the test of time."

In a broader sense, Betts is a failure. The number of people who collect the entire Betts series can be counted on one hand. His universe, which covers medals issued in nine countries, 10 languages and over 221 years, is too broad to be relevant. He loved historical medals even as we love historical medals. However, if our specialty is to become more than a numismatic backwater, we need to break it down into collectable chunks. We need to talk history to be sure but we also need to talk rarity, die progressions, methods of manufacture and the whole panoply of details that will attract the curious and/or advanced numismatist.

The nine (count 'em—nine) COAC presentations were an exciting demonstration of the research potential that exists in this field. Vicken

Yegparian focused on just one medal (the Kings College prize award) that should be added to the universe. In contrast, David Menchell described hundreds of medals that Betts omitted. Bob Hoge described the rich collection of medals in the A.N.S. cabinet. The night before, John Adams announced that the John J. Ford, Jr. research papers—many of which relate to medals—will be donated to the A.N.S. Library, so 140 Williams Street may become our Mecca.

Bottom line, we medal collectors are on to a good thing. There will be mounting interest in our field for years to come. It is our challenge to shape this interest and more particularly, to enrich it by sharing the knowledge that we have. Special kudos (and a bottle of maple syrup) to the COAC presenters: Anne Bentley, Bob Hoge, Dick Johnson, Vicken Yegparian, David Alexander, Erik Goldstein, Dick Margolis, John Kraljevich and David Menchell. (John W. Adams)

Stack's/ANS COAC

Just got home after a stressful drive back from NYC. Next time I think I'll try mass transit... What a fun day! Robert Hoge started the COAC with his presentation on the Betts Medals in the ANS Collection. Someday I'll need to set some time aside to view some colonials in the ANS.

Wayne Johnson then gave a presentation about categorizing the Betts Medal Series. He's put a lot of thought into this and had a nice handout showing a breakdown of the series.

Then came the surprise of the day. I knew that Vicken Yegparian was to talk about the King's College Medal of 1760, but I couldn't imagine how there would be enough information about one medal, to hold the interest of the audience. What can you say about a medal for more than 5 minutes???? Well, Vic did an awesome research job. He described the history of the medal, how subscribers were obtained to fund its production (each being hand engraved), who engraved which medals, who received which medals, and much more. A fascinating talk!

Then David Alexander talked about a rare John Stewart medal and the history of what it

commemorated. David's knowledge of medals is extensive - ask him a question and he quotes stats. I think he has a photographic memory!

Lunch followed with good socializing. After Lunch, Eric Goldstein talked about the exonomia of the British Armed Forces 1740-1780. There was some really cool information here. I was never aware that British Sailors were called Tars. Now I know that the "British Tars" on Evasion Coppers is referring to sailors. Or was I the only one not aware of this?!?!?

Richard Margolis talked about the Ben Franklin Terra Cotta portraits by Nini and Renaud. Again, you'd wonder how much can be said about these but this is much information. David showed the progression of designs and had pictures of the molds to make many of these.

John Kraljevich talked about Thomas Jefferson as a Medal Collector. I never knew that Jefferson was a numismatist. But he was instrumental in the production of many medals, and had formed an impressive collection himself.

The day ended with David Menchell talking about medals that were not included in Betts. Betts died before his book was ready to print, so others finished the book for him. There were medals included which shouldn't have been, and there were medals overlooked. I always enjoy any of Dave's presentations!

My only regret is that I was not able to attend John Adam's talk last night (with Anne Bentley) about Comitia Americana Medals. I asked Robert Hoge if there was any possibility of including this presentation in the printed proceedings for this COAC, but it appears that John will be publishing at some point. I await the book. I met John and his wife today - what a friendly guy! Colonial collectors in general are a friendly group.

Well, I just wanted to get a few words in about today's events. I'd like to thank the speakers, Stack's and the ANS for making this event a reality. It was very well done!
(Ray Williams)

ANS Library Move Status Report

On the occasion of the COAC Conference Saturday, May 15, 2004, at the American Numismatic Society's new building I asked for, and received, permission to view the Library. I found librarian Francis Campbell -- "Frank" to everyone! -- surrounded by hundreds of boxes of books, perhaps five or six hundred still to be opened and contents placed on shelves.

Yet there were thousands of books already on shelves. "How many boxes did it take to move all these books?" I asked. "Approximately four thousand" Frank said. Any part of the library still at the old building? No.

The library occupies two floors, five and six, of the Society's building at 140 William Street in deep lower Manhattan. The library is named for its most consistent supporter, it is now known as the Harry Bass Jr. Library, and the bronze plaque with relief portrait is already installed, visible immediately as you step off the elevator.

Harry Bass was honored for his more than \$4,000,000 generosity to the library, while he was on the Society's council, as president, and until his death in April 1998. His influence will be felt well into future years, particularly for funding the library database (like he funded the periodical NIP database). Access to this began in 1997, where the online catalog contains the library's full holdings. See: <http://data.numismatics.org/cgi-bin/libsearch>. As I stepped into library on the fifth floor I have entered the John J. Ford Jr. Reading Room. This thanks to the generosity of the Ford family. The dedication ceremony of this Ford Reading Room was held two days earlier, May 13th. After weeks of work the first books brought into this room had filled many of the shelves in time for the ceremony.

The shelving is the first thing you notice as you enter this room. The lighting is the second. Both are brand new, and both more than adequate. Good choices by the planners. The library retains the use of movable shelving, like in the old building up at Audubon Terrace. Movable shelving can accommodate about one-third more shelf space than fixed shelving, according to Frank.

Rows of shelves occupy both sides as you enter the room. One fixed shelf is on the left of a row of seven movable shelves. With an easy twist of the black-armed controls one entire shelf unit -- or the entire row of seven! -- can move easily and noiselessly along the tracks in the floor. In two seconds thousands of pounds of books are shifted for easy entrance to the desired shelf. With adequate overhead lighting the titles of books, even on the bottom shelf, are easily seen.

Unlike the old library, Frank pointed out, all pamphlets and auction catalogs are on open shelves. These used to be in rows of black filing cabinets if you remember those. Now these unbound gems are still in the well-marked file folders but now reside in six-inch wide plastic trays on open shelves. This section of the library is in the far left corner.

Frank's office is adjacent to this. He pointed with peevish pride to the window in his office that he can keep an eye on these pamphlet shelves. What used to be called by the library term "vertical files" now occupy six shelf units each 40" wide (the end one is 36") with six shelves high. Perhaps 140 shelf feet of these pamphlet files with an equal number on the opposite side of that shelving row.

The end results, after more than four years of planning, exhibit this effort was well worthwhile. The floor layout of offices and shelving location are ideal. But the planning included even the box labeling. Each box was identified with codes as to the floor, the "origination" -- where it came from -- and the destination, where to put it. "F5" was the code for the fifth floor.

On this floor are all the numismatic books. The journals and non-numismatic books are destined for the sixth floor. New technology is influencing some of shelf locations as well. A cabinet just outside Frank's office will contain audio-visual items, cassettes, CDs, videos and microfilm. Readers for each of these are planned to be nearby. Overhead will be cameras for security, Frank noted.

Perspiration was pouring off his brow as we talked. He had been working six days a week to effect this move and restocking the shelves. The move had commenced in March. "How many books does the library have?" I asked. "We are still using the figure 100,000," Frank said. And then with a big smile, "Maybe in the future someday we will count every one!" (To be continued). (Dick Johnson)

Ford II

The most recent sale of the John J. Ford, Jr. Collection by Stack's was far more celebrated for its coins than for the superb collection of Washington medals included therein. Consider this: the cover of the catalogue describes the contents as "Numismatic American History / Early American Coins and Tokens / Higley Coppers, Maryland, and New York Coinages/ Immune, Immunis, and Confederatio issues/ Carolina and Rhode Island Tokens / U.S. Territorial Gold Coins and Assay Ingots." The Washington medals inside must have been muttering a Dangerfieldesque line about respect; the two Rhode Island Ship tokens (Betts 561-3) got a special cover mention but the nearly 200 lots of Washington medals had to wait for the inside to get their due.

But get their due they did. The cataloguing and presentation was the kind of masterwork a cabinet of this caliber deserved, catalogued by MCA member Mike Hodder as if he knew that this catalogue would be on people's shelves for a long, long time. Washingtoniana (a syllable longer than the old Washingtonia term but apparently now in greater favor) began the sale, which started promptly at 6:30 with Harvey Stack calling the action. The back row was a dealer enclave: Rhue, Terranova, Hanson, Levine, Streiner, and Paul. Many of the leading collectors were also in attendance. The Washington coin and token issues began the festivities, with a new record being set for a Getz half dollar (at \$340,000 plus 15%) and the unique Perkins Washington dollar selling to the book at the open for a bid of only \$35,000. The gallery was full, though many of those there were just spectators – of course, they could have been spectators who really intended to spend money until they got a load of some of the prices things were bringing.

The medals began with lot 49, a beautiful original Washington Before Boston medal in silver. LaRiviere's piece was admittedly superior and sold for \$64,400 including the buyer's fee. A well known New York dealer snapped up the Ford specimen, one of only five that John knew of, for a final price of only \$43,125. At least one collector was kicking himself after the lot hammered. The other Washington Before Boston's were likewise comparatively inexpensive, like the bronze original graded Choice Uncirculated and described as "finest seen" that hammered at \$5,000 – less than the present *Greysheet* bid for an EF 1907 High Relief \$20. Another bronze original hammered at only \$3,000, and a third specimen brought only \$100 more. It is quite possible that none of us will live long enough to see three bronze originals in the same sale again.

The Very Rare C.C. Wright Declaration of Independence medal did well, hammering to a dealer on a commission bid at \$7,000; a noted collector who was the underbidder had to be satisfied with the electrotype offered in the next lot at a bid of \$575. The same collector ended up with many of the best buys of the sale, carefully choosing rare varieties or pieces in spectacular condition that seemed to be good values for the price. The silver C.C.A.U.S. medal was better than LaRiviere's but sold for about the same price, with a dealer bidding \$31,000 to own it; those who like making notes in their catalogues can add the specimen in the Monticello collection (Jefferson's own!) to the list of known specimens. The gem Washington and Franklin Sansom medal brought a bid of \$18,000, about what the lesser LaRiviere specimen brought in 1999, which may be in response to the fact that Ford owns two more specimens, one of which is called "gem."

The Manley medals generally did very well, with the beautiful silver one selling for a book bid of \$18,000, making the price paid for the Jack Collins silver specimen in the January 2004 ANR sale look like a bargain. The Jack Collins gem bronze piece in the same sale brought more than Ford's piece, though, with the Ford example called "Finest Seen" bringing a high bid of only \$3,000 to the book. The tin specimen, despite being gorgeous and extremely rare, sold for a bid of only \$2,750.

The rarity of the Baker-67b, one of two known, led to a strong final bid of \$11,000 to a well known New York dealer after opening at only \$1,000. The unique Halliday medal in silver (with an enviable Fewsmith-Crosby-Fuld-Picker-Ford provenance) was chased from \$12,500 to \$20,000 to a book bidder. The Halliday medal in white metal with engine turned rims simply has to be the best one – it was gorgeous – and sold for a final bid of \$3,250. It is frustrating to note that the silver Washington Sansom Presidency Relinquished medal in lot 99 of the Ford sale – one of less than 10 known original silver strikes of an historic medal – did not get any floor action in excess of its \$5,000 opening bid. Granted, this was about twice what LaRiviere's brought, but something so rare and so historically important would be worth more than a MS-64 1877 Indian cent if all was right in the world. Oh well. At least the cased piece in the next lot hammered at \$11,000. The gold U.S. mint restrike from the Sansom dies, said to be unique, did not see floor action in excess of its \$12,000 open.

The silver Voltaire medal was a treat to look at and well worth the \$15,000 bid made by a book bidder, and both copper ones were snapped up by the same well-known New York dealer at under \$1,000. The same back-row stalwart bid \$13,000 to win the first silver Hero of Freedom medal *and* the Wilson specimen at \$8,500. To my mind, that provenance is as good as it gets for an early American medal, but the bidders thought that the better condition of the first one was worth nearly \$5000 more once the buyer's fees are included. The gilt Hero of Freedom medal was in extraordinary condition, and was worth the final bid of \$1,800 despite the fact that the last one I saw went for under \$500. The Westwood and Fames medals were available in greater number than ever sold in a single auction before, but the prices remained afloat and none went especially cheap – even the last Fame medal described as “About Very Fine ... rims dented in places” saw a final bid of \$850. Of course, the very best copper piece brought only \$1,400, a testament to the bargains available in the medal field for those who want to be as picky about quality as coin collectors. The extremely rare Emancipator of America medal, one of two known and a lot of heavier to hold than it looks, hammered

at \$10,000; Ford paid \$8,360 for it in 1996. The Ecclestons were strong, with none selling for less than \$650, and the finest one I had ever seen (and the only one plated *twice* in full color) sold to a well known San Francisco dealer for \$2,500. How many full screaming red Eccleston medals have you seen?

The Ugly Head medal was pretty (go figure!) and was strong at \$5,500 after opening at only \$1,600. The Washington Death medal was not pretty but it was rare, and it was bid up to \$6,250. The 1832 Philadelphia Procession medals were all relatively cheap, perhaps a by-product of calling the originality of all pieces from unbroken dies into question. Three Victor Sine Clade medals were offered and none of them were as heinously ugly as this type sometimes comes; one was even unholed and brought a final bid of \$3,750 while the others brought \$2,400 and \$2,600 to collectors.

The Perkins Washington Funeral medals were uniformly strong and saw bold competition. The first one sold was a super-looking Skull and Crossbones in silver that looks like a bargain in retrospect at a final bid of \$6,750. Indeed, the following two lots brought \$6,750 and \$4,750 and neither was nearly as pretty as that first one. A San Francisco collect bid \$30,000 for the spectacularly toned Skull and Crossbones in silver that was called “Finest Seen,” an assessment Ford himself (and most of those who saw it) agreed with. A pair of tin Skull and Crossbones medals both exceeded \$10,000, while the gold Funeral Urn pieces only did a bit better, with one hammering at \$30K and the other three bringing high bids of \$22,000, \$16,000, and \$28,000. Who knew a tin funeral medal would sell for nearly what a gold one would go for? A silver Funeral Urn piece was bought by the book at a \$15,000 bid, while the rest generally sold for bids between \$2000 and \$3000, a price structure a bit higher than the old market price for a typical silver Funeral Urn medal. The uniface oval badge was bid to \$19,000.

For many, the highlight of the Washingtonian section was the peace medals, and all of the real ones brought strong prices. A choice bronze Seasons medal (the Shepherd) sold to the book at a \$15,000 bid, and a clearly awarded silver Farmer sold for \$1,000 more. A choice Farmer in the next lot brought nearly as much, with a bid of

\$13,000, and a scuffy Spinner was the bargain of the bunch with a book winner getting to own it for a \$5,000 bid. The engraved ovals were what everyone waited for though, to see if a price record would fall and to see if either of the pieces being sold as copies or as-is would be purchased at advanced levels. The first piece, described as a modern copy, still brought a high bid of \$2,300. The second piece, a 1792 small oval piece that was unquestionably authentic, opened at \$60,000 and saw a dramatic fight to a high bid of \$240,000. The piece was hammered down originally at \$95,000 – the bargain of the century – but it was concluded that a bid was missed and the lot reopened. The final bid set a new record for a peace medal sold at auction; we shall wait and see what Ford's other oval Washington medals (yes, plural) will bring! The final piece, which Ford purchased as genuine for \$30,000 in 1979, sold to the book at the \$7,500 open; it was offered as-is but its engraving did not hold up to the excellence of the other originals seen.

The Getz Masonic medal is one of the all-time classic pieces of 18th century Washingtoniana; a specimen in silver did bring \$45,000 in Garrett IV, after all, when that kind of money could buy you a gold Chowder Club medal *and* an original 1790 Diplomatic medal (with attendant tin cliché) with enough money left over for a Paris vacation. The Getz Masonic in brass is not quite as rare as it is in silver, of course, but the high bid of \$15,000 was not crazy money for such a piece. The uniface Getz obverse in the next lot sold for multiples of a similar piece in Garrett at \$3,750 – it begs the question of what the silver Getz Masonic piece is worth now?!?! A superlative Washington Benevolent Society medal was bid to \$3,500, but the piece with the original blue rosette still attached was a bit more eye-catching and brought a high hammer of \$4,250. Speaking of Chowder Club medals, Ford's silver specimen was bid from \$1,500 to \$11,000.

For those that believe that the Rhode Island Ship medals are Betts pieces that should have never made it into the *Redbook* or (eek!) slabs, I'll note that the two specimens brought strong prices of \$7,000 and \$3,400, respectively. For those who think they are just colonial coins, go back to sleep and forget that you ever saw such a thing in a journal devoted to medals.

The Ford sale was spectacular, and well worth the cost of spending a day in New York just to watch such important pieces transact. For those who are considering a trip to one of the future installments, make sure to plan a stop at the New York Historical Society to see Horatio Gates' original Saratoga medal in gold and Andrew Jackson's gold Erie Canal medal (with original case!). They're both on the 4th floor. You might also consider a trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art to see Gilbert Stuart's painting of Gates *wearing* his Comitia Americana medal and his Society of Cincinnati badge. What a treat! (John Kraljevich)

COAC Presentations

Bob Hoge led off the 2004 COAC with a description of the "Betts medal" holdings at the ANS. Note that the ANS dedicates its new building at 140 William Street on June 18th, so it will not be long before Bob's holdings are more readily accessible.

Where to begin? The lowest Betts numbers include the sundry Philip II medals from the late 16th century. There are roughly a dozen of these, i.e. enough to give someone a start on researching die varieties and, given an example which depicts Philip II and Emperor Charles on opposite sides, an opportunity to explore the Italian/Nederlandsch connection.

The cabinet contains Betts 22, 23, 24, and 26, which should give those interested in treasure medals a solid start. There are no less than 24 John Law medals, the second or third largest assembly of these fascinating items. [Ye editor hopes to publish on a new book on John Law later this year].

Alan Stahl catalogued the ANS rich holdings of colonial Indian peace medals. However he missed a few and it is worth repeating that here exists such rarities as the 1693 (Louis XIV) family medal in silver and a 1766 Happy While United. If memory serves, there is also a Kittanning medal complimented by no less than three of the Quaker medals of 1757.

For those who might wish to become more immersed in proclamations, Franco-American jetons and/or Admiral Vernon medals there are copious holdings of all. So too with pieces that spring out of the French and Indian Wars, highlighted by a 1758 Louisbourg in gold—none other than Admiral Boscawen's own example.

The Revolutionary War period is similarly blessed—a Germantown in copper, multiple Comitia Americana's, unlisted Rodney's etc. Note that most of these medals (and the others) are catalogued in the Society's online database. Bob Hoge may regret that he ever delivered his paper but we medal collectors will not (To be continued).
(John W. Adams)