
The MCA Advisory

The Newsletter of Medal Collectors of America

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May

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John W. Adams, President
John Kraljevic, 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

June 11th - Kolbe's Sale of Ford Library II
July 28th, 3:00 p.m.. Membership Meeting at
ANA Convention

What's New On Our Website!

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE EVERY MONTH

www.medalcollectors.org

From the Editor

We hope to see many of you at the ANA Convention in San Francisco. Our Club's meeting will be held on Thursday, July 28th, at 3:00 p.m. John Kraljevich is working on a program; perhaps we can arrange an informal dinner that evening where we can plot our future under the most conducive conditions.

This issue contains two—count 'em two—articles on medals by O. Wouter Muller. The creations of this talented Dutch silversmith are interesting for his technique as well as for the historic content. Also in this issue is installment #2 of David Alexander's opus on SOM medals; we will complete with installment #3 in the June issue and, if there is demand will produce an off-print of the whole thing. If you like the idea of an offprint, either on Alexander's SOM medals or David Menchell's French and Indian War medals, drop us a line.

My Favorite Medal

by John W. Adams (jadams@adamsharkness.com)

Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, the various European nations waged wars and then concluded peace treaties. These treaties typically included the swapping of territories on the continent and, as often as not, the exchanging of possessions in the New World. In 1667, Britain, Holland and Spain gathered at Breda, where they included a treaty that, amongst many other provisions, called for the Dutch to cede their colony in New York to the English.

A dozen different medals were struck commemorating this occasion. My favorite is the piece executed by Wouter

Muller, a Dutch silversmith. The devices are straightforward: the obverse features a rendering of the castle at Breda; the reverse depicts a ship with billowing sails on which are the arms of the participants to the treaty.

Typically, as in the present case, Muller's designs are commonplace. What distinguishes his work is the craftsmanship. *Medallic Illustrations* lists eleven medals by him, nine that are "signed" and two that are probable. All eleven consist of two plates joined by a band that protects the high relief. The plates are large—3 to 3 ¾ inches in diameter—and the band is broad—4 to 5 millimeters in width.

Medallic Illustrations describes Muller's technique as "two embossed plates, chased." Pax in *Numis* uses the phrase "travaillée au repoussé." Pax declares the Breda medal to be "superbe," no doubt referring to the craftsmanship that is indeed impressive. Whether the plates were cast, then chased or whether the features were brought up entirely by repoussé, the relief is high. The details are many and well executed, including a motto around the periphery on both sides that is evenly incused. Given the immense amount of labor required to produce examples by these techniques, all of Muller's medals are rare. Indeed most are rated "very rare" or "extremely rare" by the understated prose in *Medallic Illustrations*.

Occasionally, Muller put his hallmark (two castles) on the band of the medal. However, his typical signature was to place his name in the motto—e.g. "Old Breda's castle, by the ingenuity and art of Muller" or "by his art Muller crowns the best of heroes" (M1 515/160).

This form of trademark lacks modesty, perhaps, but, with Wouter Muller, the lack of modesty is justified by the quality of his creations.

My Favorite Medal

by Ben Weiss

(Weiss, B.: www.historicalartmedals.com)

OLIVER CROMWELL AND MASANIELLO

by

Ben Weiss

I chose this particular piece, Oliver Cromwell and Masaniello, as one of my favorite medals because it combines wonderful art with important and interesting historical events. The medal is beautifully executed by the Dutch silversmith and medallist O. (Wouter) Müller, who worked between 1653 and 1688. Bolzental calls him Ader Meister Müller@ and praises the excellence of the execution of his medals (Forrer).

This rare medal was made in 1658 of two embossed silver plates, 70 mm in diameter, in high relief, chased and united by a broad rim. The inscriptions are incuse. It depicts on the obverse a bust of Oliver Cromwell between two soldiers supporting a laurel wreath over his head. On a cartouche below is inscribed: **OLIVER CROMWEL PROTECTOR V. ENGL: SCHOTL: YRLAN 1658** (Oliver Cromwell, Protector of England, Scotland and Ireland 1658). On the reverse is a bust of Tommaso Aniello (Masaniello) between two sailors supporting a crown over his head. A cartouche below is inscribed: **MASANIELLO VISSCHER EN CONINCK V. NAPELS 1647** (Masaniello Fisherman and King of Naples 1647).

The medal offers further interest in that the two personages depicted, Oliver Cromwell and Tommaso Aniello, not only shared a common

political destiny, both being commoners who rose to the highest positions in their respective countries at approximately the same time period in history, but who also apparently shared a somewhat similar physiognomy, as the medal clearly shows.



Obverse:

OLIVER CROMWELL



Reverse:

TOMMASO MASANIELLO

Tommaso Aniello, called Masaniello (1620?-1647), was a fisherman, turned Neapolitan revolutionist, who in 1647 led a revolt of the lower classes against the Spanish

rulers of Naples and the Neapolitan nobility whom the Spanish administration had relied on to maintain order. The causes of the popular revolt were the imposition of burdensome high taxes, dissatisfaction with the rule of landowning barons, and the failure of the government to maintain justice. The rebels took up arms, turned upon tax collectors and nobles, and besieged the Spanish garrison. This caused the Spanish viceroy to come to terms with Masaniello, promising the reforms demanded and recognizing him as captain general. However, Masaniello was killed shortly afterward, allegedly poisoned by the Governor d'Arcos when at his palace. Nevertheless, the rebellion continued to the countryside and the rebels proclaimed a republic. This commoner-inspired republic was short lived, lasting only a few months, as hopes on the French coming to the aid of the Neapolitans did not materialize. The nobles in the countryside raised a force and blockaded the city, leading to a restoration of the Spanish garrison and the reestablishment of Spanish rule with the nobles restoring control over the Neapolitan populace.

The reverse of this medal compares Masaniello's revolt with that of Oliver Cromwell's in England. Like that in Naples, the English commoners and their representatives in parliament grew tired of the excesses of the nobility, in this case the rule of Charles I.

Charles I (1600-1649) was King of England, Scotland, and Ireland from 1625 to 1649. During his tenure, Charles had serious disagreements with parliament over religious, political and financial matters, ultimately leading to their imposing several conditions and grievances against the king. Charles refused to relinquish control of the army, and his attempt to arrest leading opponents in the Commons precipitated the English Civil War. After suffering a succession of defeats by the

army led by Sir Thomas Fairfax and Oliver Cromwell, Charles surrendered and was taken prisoner. In 1649 Charles was tried for treason and was beheaded as a tyrant and public enemy to his people.

Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658) was born into a landed, though by no means very wealthy, family. In 1628 he entered parliament, and although he initially supported a settlement with Charles I in parliament's disputes with the king, this settlement required the crown to accept Cromwell's political allies as the king's ministers and to guarantee religious liberty to Protestants. This brought Cromwell into conflict with those who wanted a more democratic form of government and with those who advocated replacing the old Church of England with a new Presbyterian church based on the teachings of John Calvin. Because of the duplicity of the king, however, Cromwell began to support actions against Charles. As an outstanding military leader, he led the Civil War between the Commoners in parliament against the Royalists, a war culminating in a parliamentary victory for Oliver Cromwell and to the beheading of Charles I in 1649. Charles I was succeeded on the throne by his eldest surviving son Charles II, but like his father, Charles II was roundly defeated militarily and was forced into exile.

In 1653 a Protectorate was established, with Oliver Cromwell given the title of Lord Protector of England, Scotland and Ireland in the newly formed Commonwealth, thereby becoming the first commoner to rule England. Like many rulers who achieve great power, Cromwell became a virtual military dictator, although he resisted the temptation to take the title of King. He was rather inept politically, and with the Dutch Wars and the war against Spain financially weakening the government, parliament became increasingly disillusioned with the Commonwealth.

Cromwell's most notable achievement was his championing for unprecedented religious freedom. This religious freedom should be viewed as relative, however, because while Quakers, Catholics and Jews were now allowed to worship as they wished, they were still subject to regulation, and worship had to be done privately. Further, there was still a recognized State Church under Cromwell. Despite these religious restrictions, Cromwell's edicts were enlightened for the period. It was only during this brief from 1649 to 1660 that membership in the State Church of England was not a qualification for entry into universities, the professions and public office. (Although since 1660, anti-discriminatory laws were enacted from time to time, Jews still weren't permitted to enter the British Parliament until the late nineteenth century).

Oliver Cromwell died in 1658. His son Richard Cromwell succeeded him briefly as Lord Protector of England, but in 1660 parliament invited the exiled Charles II back to the throne, ushering in the Restoration and, thereby, ending the period in which a commoner ruled England.

Cromwell's efforts may not have been totally in vain, however, as Charles II, perhaps in response to the expansion of religious tolerance initiated by Oliver Cromwell, issued the Declaration of Indulgence in 1672, expanding religious freedoms for Catholics.

The rise to power of commoners over the nobility and the advancement of religious freedoms initiated during the historical period represented by this medal make this one of my favorites. Sadly, even though centuries have passed since these times, it is obvious that much has yet to be done in both regards: one, to reduce the influence of the powerful over the weak, and the other, to spread more tolerance among peoples of different beliefs.

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Weiss, B.: www.historicalartmedals.com
e-mail: ben@benweiss.org

Hints For Cataloging Medals and Medallic Items Copyright © 2005 By D. Wayne Johnson (dick.Johnson@snet.net)

Use a **checklist** for cataloging medals or medallic items. Devise your own to make certain you include every datum about every item you catalog. Here is a 19-point checklist I use in cataloging Tiffany medals:

MEDAL CATALOGING

C H E C K L I S T

- 1) Working catalog number (subject to change).
- 2) Name and date in boldface.

- 3) Size (and shape if not round).
- 4) Composition (and weight if precious metal).
- 5) Artists: designer, engraver, sculptor (specify which).
- 6) Obverse description.
- 7) Reverse description.
- 8) Signed (how, where).
- 9) Edge.
- 10) Issuer.
- 11) Comments.
- 12) Portrait(s), biographies.
- 13) Patina.
- 14) Mounting.
- 15) Public collections.
- 16) Exhibited.
- 17) References.
- 18) Auction records.
- 19) Author's collection.

2. Set your computer for 12-point type. Write in standard paragraphs -- this gives you great flexibility and unlimited text capacity. Start a new paragraph for each of the checklist items (except I put 3 and 4 on the same line). Put that first word in boldface type at the beginning of the paragraph.

3. Medals have names. Use names rather than titles. Catalogers of the past had a tendency to use a *title* perhaps as a shortcut for a medal rather than its *name*. Resist this temptation. You are more known by your name than your title (occupation title or mister or military rank is a title). Your name is far more specific. It pinpoints you. The same is true for medals. It is not difficult to give every one of the items in your catalog its proper name.

For example: Use "Lexington Battle Centennial Medal" as the name for the HK medal (not its title "Lexington Centennial"). I know, this is what Hibler & Kappen did, and so did Julian in his

monumental catalog of U.S. Mint medals but they were cataloging only in one topic. However I am taking the big picture approach with identifying every medal in the world and trying to make sense with one rule -- name the item -- that would work for all. This is necessary where you have to include medals from many sources or many catalogs (like for my directory of American artists' works). There may be some duplication of names for similar items (but there are ways of getting around this).

4. After the name of the medallic item, add comma and **the date of the medal.** Be careful, "founding dates" appear on some medals and these may not be the year in which the item was created or issued (or for which it was intended). If you cannot pin down an exact year use "circa"--pick a year or decade in which you surmise it might have been issued. Put circa and this year(s) within parentheses. If all else fails use one of the 20-quarter centuries in the last 500 years in which medallic items have been created.

5. Like the last name of a person, put the last word in the name the **type of medallic item it is.**

Most of your items will be "Medals." But there are a couple dozen kinds of medallic items--medals, medallions, medalets, plaques, plaquettes, badges, emblems, pins, reliefs, ingots, paperweights, watchfobs and more.) One of these is the medallic item's last name.

6. Medals versus medallions. The cutoff is 80mm (3 1/8-inch). Medallions have a diameter greater than 80mm. Medals are from 80 to 25mm. Medalets are smaller than one inch (24.4mm). The cutoff between plaques

and plaquettes is 8 inches -- 23.0cm.
[Any relief item larger than 24-inch is a tablet. Tablets are not easily collected, obviously!]

7. Shape and size. If it ain't round say so. Describe the shape in words as best you can. In measuring medals of odd shape, put these in an imaginary rectangular box, tight fit. Then measure the inside of that box (in other words, top to bottom, side to side). Omit the loop if present. Medallic items are measured height by width. Height always comes first. (If you are a philatelist -- they give the width of stamps first -- you must break that habit!)

8. Omit all punctuation in the medal's name. No commas, no quotation marks, no semicolons. No italic words. Parenthesis and brackets are permitted. See next item. (Only one exception, in a company name made up of three or more personal names you must use a comma.)

9. Personal names. Your option: "Washington (George)" or "George Washington" -- personally I prefer the first style of putting all but the last name within parentheses after the last name for quick recognition and ease of alphabetizing a long list of portrait medals by the name of the medal. Related family names come together in such an alphabetic list --

Washington (George)
Washington (Martha)
Washington (William)

10. Capitalize initial letter in every word in the medal name. Okay, you don't have to capitalize articles -- a, the, of, and -- and such.

11. Your option. Put the medal **name over or under** the illustration. I like under. But be consistent throughout

your catalog. Never put the illustration after the description (like in Walter Breen's Encyclopedia of Colonial and United States Coins) -- that was a horrible mistake.

12. Number the medal. Put this in boldface. Above the name or on the same line. It can be in a larger type size or same size as the name. Future numismatists will cite this as "[cataloger's last name] numbers" for all the items you list in your catalog. Don't use any other name or word ahead of your catalog numbers. (In the catalog of Goetz medals, the author suggest calling these "Opus numbers" since this was his "magnus opus." This was a mistake. "Opus" could apply to any extensive catalog of collector items. Seasoned numismatists call Goetz medals by their "Kienast numbers" named after cataloger Gunter W. Kienast)

Citing numismatic items by cataloger's last name and catalog number is an extremely well-established custom for all numismatic literature. Hey, it's little recognition for all the work you put into compiling and writing the catalog! You can't get rich writing a numismatic catalog, but you deserve a little fame! (Best of all, your name will be associated with your catalog numbers long after you're dead -- that's lasting fame!)

13. Obverse and reverse descriptions. Use the boldface word at the beginning of separate paragraphs. This is one of the most important aspects of numismatics. You learn by doing. Describe every device and element you see on every surface of that numismatic specimen. You will have to learn -- and use -- a lot of new words, like *truncation*, *exergue*, *uniface*, *listel*, *fillet*, *provenance*,

radiate, there are hundreds more. Get a numismatic dictionary and ask a lot of questions. Many people in the field will be glad to answer your question "What's this called?" I'm writing such a dictionary. Ask me.

Describe position by the viewer's *right* and *left* (this is different from Heraldic *blazoning* -- describing -- as in coats of arms. Positions around the circumference can be positions of a clock face. Careful using "over" which means to the top of the design in contrast with "superimposed" which means one design element on top of another "shield superimposed on breast plate."

14. The numismatic custom in **describing items** is to start in the center -- with the center device -- the most important or perhaps strongest pictorial element and work outwards, ending in the lettering around the edge. Examine every aspect of that medallic item and put it in words in the description.

15. Describing the lettering. Copy all lettering exact. Old numismatic catalogs used to copy the center dots and tiny punch symbols with the same symbol in printers' type. We don't have these anymore -- so use words. Capitalize all the medal's lettering in your description like it appears on the medallic item. (I only know one medal that used caps and lower case lettering on the medal -- Paul Manship did this for effect just to be different! He put caps and small caps on the other side. Smarty pants!)

If your computer can use small caps for all the lettering on a medallic item -- that's great -- use small caps. [If your piece has a *chronogram* in the lettering you will HAVE to use both large

and small caps to record the chronogram. Copy exact.] Also use a "line break" -- the diagonal or slash mark (/) at the end of each line if the legend or inscription goes to two or more lines. Or, if the lettering continues from the obverse over to the reverse. Put a space before and after the diagonal mark.

16. Take **measurements** in tenths of a millimeter -- that's excellent! I include both mm and inches. Millimeters are very exact. Metric dimensions make Europeans happy; use inches and that makes Americans & Brits happy. (I use a special conversion chart I made -- I measure in millimeters and look up size in inches in my chart and list both.). I call this my "M&M Chart" for Measurements of Medals (in MilliMeters) for advancing nuMisMatics by a Modern numismatist writing a Medal catalog (while eating candy ... well, I think I have carried this M&M alteration far enough!).

17. Put **Edge** on a separate line and describe. "Plain" means smooth, like struck in a collar with no serrations, no marks or lettering (you can also have plain edges that are *trimmed* but that takes some expertise to identify). Describe everything else -- reeding, lettering, hallmark, mintmark, fineness mark, other edge lettering or such. One space medal even included the time on the edge the space capsule landed on the moon. Interesting facts like this should not be overlooked and definitely be included in the edge description.

18. Artist. If you can identify the artist, designer, engraver, diesinker, sculptor, medallist, list this. Include the artist's full name. If the artist signed the item state how he signed it and where.

Did the artist use name, initials or monogram?

19. Notes, comments, other data should be in one or more paragraphs. This can include such a wide diversity of information. Most important is the "collector lore" of interest to collectors. What is special about this medal? Relic status? (Made of some special metal.) How made? (Like wooden medals.) Something about the designer or engraver. Die varieties? Or die state (like a broken letter). Was there an unusual purpose to this medal? Was it an award medal? This can be most anything that adds interest to that medal.

Here's a good example of "collector lore"-- sculptor Marcel Jovine designed an Apollo-Soyuz medal obverse inscription in English, reverse in Russian – with his initials in English on one side, Russian on the other. Research the specimens you are cataloging. Dig deep.

Here you can also include a history of the piece, or the event depicted. Or biographies of the people portrayed on the medallic item. For historical or commemorative pieces, you can also include some of the details of these events. Add as much detail as you wish – it makes owning the piece that much more interesting and meaningful.

20. List catalog number citations to other numismatic catalogs. These numbers will differ from yours, of course, so you will have to include these prior references.

21. List your sources. List the reference works, periodicals, manuscripts, personal correspondence, films, whatever, you found which mentions or catalogs this item.

22. Auction sales. List sales by auction – auction house, date, lot number, price realized.

23. Now comes the **tabular matter**. What you have described above is the TYPE. What you list below are the VARIETIES. Number each variety based on your catalog number of the type. (Choosing a numbering system is a separate subject. We can discuss this further if you wish.)

24. For each line -- put the **variety number in boldface type** at the beginning of the line. Include as many lined-up columns as you wish. For the dollar value, I would recommend two figures – a range. Fine and Extra Fine, or whatever. Let these price columns be on the far right. Collectors are accustomed to viewing values at the end of the line. And, of course, a separate line for each variety. Put the header line in boldface over the columns and you will use this line over and over.

25. Now I am going to recommend something you will not like. **Spell out the metal alloys** and compositions. I dislike abbreviations, they are difficult to comprehend (and remember from the last time anyone uses your catalog). Does "Br" mean bronze or brass? Or bright or brilliant? You eliminate all misunderstandings and speed up comprehension by spelling out in full every composition. Even in the tabular columns.

26. Speaking of **abbreviations**, I like to eliminate these in descriptions as well. Unless, of course, they actually appear as lettering on the medallic item. Then you have to mention what they mean. Like translating foreign language legends. If you have a minister on a medal, spell out "reverend" to eliminate

confusion with "reverse" – both abbreviated "rev."

27. And speaking of foreign language lettering, you must translate every inscription and legend into English. And let's point out the difference between inscription and legend. "Legend" is the lettering following the perimeter of the item. "Inscription" is everything else, horizontal, vertical or wavy.

28. And speaking of translating learn to recognize symbols and symbolism on medallic items, and explain what they mean. (Isn't cataloging fun?)

29. Portraits. Identify all people portrayed on medallic items. Give their full name and dates (you can even add ascension dates for monarchs). If it is not a person who lived at some time in the history of the world, it is a generic person. Describe that image as best you can – bearded man, man in a cloak, equestrian man, seated lady, female nude, whatever.

30. Look for whatever makes a medallic item different from all others, other than its design. This could be a different perspective in the design, a different artistic style or art movement, a different border or edge treatment, even a different patina. Mention all this for a full description. It's all of interest to the collector.

Good Luck Cataloging!

The Society of Medalists

The Art Medal Defined

(by David T. Alexander)

Second of three installments of a truly important opus

Most Americans entering the medal-collecting field today began as coin collectors. An understanding the similarities and differences between coins and medals is vital if new collectors are to be fully comfortable in the medal field.

The coin collector mindset was formed by the realities of coins themselves. In modern times, coins face strict limitations. Size, weight, alloy, relief are rigidly defined by statute, the needs of banks and coin-operated machines. Artistic triumph in coin design is still possible, but faces daunting challenges to even the most skillful and determined artists.

Mintage figures have had critical importance, though informed collectors realize that war, coin melts and shoddy record keeping always affect the reliability of such figures. The inter-connection of grade and price became ever more critical in the coin field since the 1960's.

Nonetheless, coin collectors are comforted by these boundaries, and are drawn to series with beginnings and endings, buttressed by mintage figures and finite limits in time. They are uncomfortable with areas lacking clearly demarcated limits. Such closely defined medal categories as U.S. Presidential Inaugural Medals, Indian Peace Medals, and issues of the Society of Medalists naturally appeal to such collectors.

Basic medal characteristics such as relief, patina, varied shapes and sizes must be understood before recruits from the world of coins can be at ease in the realm of the medal. Definition of these basics will be instructive to the newcomer, while veteran medal collectors may look upon it as a review.

RELIEF. Relief, the height of devices raised above the field, is one of the immediate visual distinctions between modern medals and coins. Ancient Greek coins boasted the kind of high relief known today as medallic, but such coins did not need to stack or operate machines. In theory, the only limitations on relief of modern medals are those imposed by budget and the capacity of multi-ton presses. Fields on which the reliefs rest are also important, whether smooth, stippled, lined or roughly textured.

PATINA. Gold, silver and bronze medals when freshly struck have brilliantly reflective surfaces like those of a newly minted coin. Gold medals are often left in this state, but antique or artificially oxidized surfaces are now generally preferred for silver and bronze medals. An antiqued surface brings out subtleties of design while protecting the surfaces against tarnish and careless handling.

Few of the Circle of Friends Medals featured particularly colorful patinas. Many of the Society of Medalists issues would include bold and innovative coloration as an important part of the artist's intent. Bronze, an alloy of copper, tin and zinc, is the metal that lends itself most successfully to patination.

An ancient bronze sestertius of Nero, a heroic Roman statue of Hadrian or the copper roof of a medieval cathedral exhibit natural patination. A metal is beautified and protected by age, oxidation and the creation of a stable surface by combining the metal with a variety of interactive, color-imparting elements.

Modern medal manufacturers have perfected scores of different formulae and methods for applying patinas, including chemical treatment and torch finishes that are proprietary secrets of the industry. As we shall see, the same medal may exist with two, three or more distinctive patinas, creating significant visual varieties. Colorful patinas are intrinsic parts of the artist's intent and are one of the most attractive features of the modern medal, a feature coins cannot claim.

EDGE MARKINGS. Most medals in modern times have had plain edges. Whether struck in a closed restraining collar as 19th century U.S. Mint medals were, or struck without a collar and lathe-trimmed as most 20th century issues, the edges do not bear reading or ornamentation. Since the mid-19th century, however, edge markings have been a feature of many world medals.

The Paris Mint combined Privy marks such as an Antique Prow, Bee or Cornucopia with tiny incuse words *CUIVRE* (copper), *BRONZE*, *ARGENT* (silver) and *OR* (gold). Metals could be identified by such edge marks as *STERLING* (.925 fine), *FINE SILVER* (.999 fine) or *BRONZE*. Edge marking discourages the unscrupulous from gold plating or silver-plating base metal medals for sale to the unwary. Gold medals are also marked in accordance with the "Tiffany Law" of 1900, passed to regulate the abuses resulting from confusing terms such as gold-filled, rolled gold, gold electroplate or gold plate.

Society of Medalists medals generally bore two or more incuse edge markings. *THE SOCIETY OF MEDALISTS*, sculptor's name, and *MEDALLIC ART CO.* are generally

found. The maker's name is frequently accompanied by a geographical designation such as N.Y., CONN. or CT.

SOCIETY OF MEDALISTS EDGE MARKS

Most, but not all, SOM issues bore the full name of the Society and number of the issue: THE SOCIETY OF MEDALISTS ----- ISSUE.

Frequently the date is provided along with the full name of the artist, for example, 1967 – HERRING COE. At a later date, the word SCULPTOR or SC. joins the name and Copyright symbol, ©.

MEDALLIC ART CO. EDGE MARKS OBSERVED

A. MEDALLIC ART CO. N.Y. The **Y** is substantially thicker than other letters, particularly on its upright. This is possibly the oldest MACO edge marking, first seen on some COF pieces but remaining in use for decades after.

B. MEDALLIC ART CO. N.Y. BRONZE. Variable distance between **N.Y.** and **BRONZE**, occasionally measurably higher or lower.

C. Two lines: MEDALLIC ART CO. N.Y. BRONZE

D. MACO BRONZE

E. MEDALLIC ART CO. – DANBURY, CONN

F. © MEDALLIC ART CO – DANBURY CT. BRONZE

G. MACO-NY-BRONZE.

H. MACO. N.Y. BRONZE.

I. © 1993 FINE SILVER – MEDALLIC ART COMPANY SPECIAL ISSUE SOCIETY OF MEDALISTS

J. © MEDALLIC ART CO – .999 FINE SILVER

The last two edge marks (J and K), appear only on the few medals struck to accompany a Minneapolis, Minn. Telemarketer's offering of a coin and medal promotion involving the work of A.A. Weinman, Anthony DeFrancisci, and John Flanagan. This promotion, with certificates bearing the name and signature of "famous numismatic authority" Karl D. Hirtzinger, included Victor D. Brenner's *Motherhood Medal*, promoted as a SOM issue though in fact it was issued by the Circle of Friends. Here are true "Silver Restrikes," not accounted for in the mintage figures of the SOM silver issues noted earlier.

MEDALS OF THE NINETEEN THIRTIES

Order of information:

Date. Number of Issue. Name of Sculptor. Title of Medal. Obv and Rev. Each medal will be accompanied by a concise description and artist's comments on its design. The author's observations follow, along with contemporary notices of each issue when available. Brief biographies and notice of other works of each artist are provided.

Mintage figures were published during the 1970's for many of the early SOM issues that MACO declared closed. SOM silver re-issues had maximum mintage limits of 500 each. Not all were actually struck, and as noted above, not all pieces actually struck survived the silver speculative boom.

It should be kept in mind that MACO was a private company, not a government agency. Therefore just how "final" the published figures were remains problematical. The "Special Issue" silver medals sold through the Minneapolis telemarketer provide one example of additional striking at a later date.

SOCIETY OF MEDALISTS: THE CATALOGUE

1930. #1. LAURA GARDIN FRASER. Hunter, Ruffed Grouse.

Obv Hunter with rifle at ready, dog at point, **STEADY** at r. Signature ligate *LGF 1930* at l.

Rev Ruffed Grouse in display on fallen log, anepigraphic.

Fraser's extensive comments on her medal define the basic philosophy of the art medal for art's sake. "There are many persons who desire to collect medals but are unable to do so because the medal is used in most instances as a specific award. The scope of subject matter which bears no relation to a particular person or occasion embraces many forms of expression and the sculptor has a large field of choice.

In this case, I felt that a sporting subject would be a departure from what

one has been accustomed to seeing in medallic art. Therefore, I chose the hunter with his dog because it presented the opportunity of telling a story embodying a human and animal element.

It has been studied as to correctness of detail so that it should have an appeal to those who are interested in out-of-door life. The ruffed grouse forms the reverse. It may be considered as a national game bird and is distinct in character and very decorative. It is to be hoped that there is sufficient merit in the rendering of this work to appease the collector whose interest is in the art of the medal."

The Numismatist, journal of the American Numismatic Association (ANA) carried a brief, illustrated notice in its August 1930 issue (p.523). It printed Fraser's remarks in full and noted that Medallic Art Co. of New York struck the medal. The piece illustrated was credited to a noted Philadelphia collector and ANA member, F.D. Langenheim.

The story concluded, "The Society of Medalists has recently been formed in New York City largely through the efforts of George D. Pratt, a nationally known collector and arts patron. The society is an affiliation of the Art Center in New York and the headquarters is with that organization at 65 East Fifty-sixth street, New York City. The second medal will be issued in the fall, which is now being designed by Paul Manship, at present in Paris. This society has a membership of 1200 and takes rank with much older European societies of a similar nature."

The infant society might have been surprised at the size of membership

attributed to it. Today, this rather bland design might seem an odd combination of hunting and endangered species. In the early 1970's, the obverse was adapted without authorization by an unrelated firm for use as a belt buckle. After the author drew Medallic Art Company's attention to this copyright infringement, company lawyers promptly addressed the matter and sale of the buckles ceased.

This issue is the first to feature the light tan-gold patina that is sometimes called "MACO vanilla," an uncomplicated patina that would be applied to many SOM medals. No really notable color variations have been observed to date.

Other works of Laura Gardin Fraser included the 1921 Alabama Centennial half dollar, Oregon Trail half dollar (with husband James Earle Fraser), and many medals including the 1958 American Numismatic Society Centennial Medallion.

EDGE AND PATINA VARIETIES OBSERVED:

1. THE SOCIETY OF MEDALISTS FIRST ISSUE. Tan-gold. A.
2. Ditto. Tan-gold. B.

1930. #2. PAUL MANSHIP. Hail to Dionysus.

Obv Grape-crowned bearded god of wine over shallow 2-handled kylix, rosettes divide words of two-line concentric legend, **HAIL * TO * DIONYSUS * WHO * FIRST * DISCOVERED/ * THE * MAGIC * OF * THE * GRAPE**
*Bold circles, ornate borders and stops were Manship specialties.

Rev Youthful satyrs trampling grapes, anepigraphic, signature ©/ .P.MANSHIP. 1930.

Manship's work was one of the only SOM medals embroiled in public controversy. The February 1931 issue of *The Numismatist* reported strident complaints over his glorification of wine in an America still nominally observing Prohibition. The sculptor had deliberately mocked the Noble Experiment, his critics cried. The *New York Times* reported several protests and one resignation.

The *Art Digest* announced that the design aroused the ire of "some of the 1,500 members of the organization," a charge denied by the society. SOM would have been delighted to possess a membership of 1,500 at any time in its long career!

According to *The Numismatist*, "more letters of praise than censure had been received, and that as many such letters had been provoked by another medal which the society issued and which did not deal with a controversial subject." This could only have been Fraser's hunter and dog.

The critics' distemper would have intensified, if they read Manship's observations in the brochure accompanying his medal. "Inspired by recent echoes of public sentiment, the new medal departs from the traditional serious expressions of medallic art, giving a lighter and gayer touch to the commemorative idea."
"The sculptor's design is to express the apotheosis of

The Grape that can with Logic
absolute

The Two-and-Seventy jarring
Sects confute:
The sovereign Alchemist that in a
trice
Life's leaden metal into Gold
transmute.

As Omar sings in FitzGerald's words.

The face of the medal bears the classic head of Dionysus, the divinity of Greek mythology whose counterpart was Bacchus of the Romans. The son of Zeus and the mortal Semele, whose mortality was too actual to survive the flaming ardor of the god-head, Dionysus fulfilled a spectacular career in keeping with his sensational origin. It was he, to quote Milton's lines, 'that first from out the purple grapes, crushed the sweet poison of misused wine.'

The decorations shown upon the head of the deity are in keeping with his attribute as the god of revelry. Below is seen the kylix, the broad, shallow cup used at the banquets of the ancients... So on the reverse... two satyrs are treading the winepress. Their stupid faces, pointed ears, goat legs and tails betray the dominance of animal instincts which their master Dionysus exemplifies.

The medal is not conventional. It is subtly humorous, and is symbolic of a present-day attitude toward certain restraints of the times. Thus it is commemorative of an era."

This tempest in a teapot (or more properly in a Grecian kylix!) is described by Harry Rand in his 1989 biography, *Paulanship* (National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, D.C.). "For the first time since his 1913 *Centaur and Dryad*, and particularly the frieze on its pedestal, Manship celebrated

abandonment to the pleasures of wine and the flesh. He paid homage to what must have been one of his favorite deities."

"The coin's (sic) obverse bears a head of Dionysus rising from a kylix (a classical Greek drinking cup). In the midst of Prohibition, Manship boldly inscribed the medal 'Hail to Dionysus Who First Discovered the Magic of the Grape.' ... The work's more dour recipients collided with Manship's whimsy. Reactionaries failed to see in the Dionysus medal that Manship was not an advocate of 'wets,' and they believed that he had skirted the issue of Prohibition.

The Dionysus medal exalted the complexity of normal human appetites rather than rendering them invisible or seemingly unnatural. The Dionysus medal accepted the full reality of human desires and neither scorned them --- or worse --- made them the object of charade. By the time Manship issued this medal, his classicism, its spirit and variety, was rejected in some quarters."

This spirited exchange of views undoubtedly brought SOM more publicity than any other early issue. From this point, notices of its medals would be increasingly perfunctory, providing only an illustration and a line or two of bland description.

Other Paul Manship medals sought by collectors include his 1914 COF New York Tercentenary Medal, his mordant 1918 satirical medal against Kaiser Wilhelm II, 1933 Franklin D. Roosevelt and near the end of his long career, the 1961 John F. Kennedy Inaugural Medal for which he was chosen by Jacqueline Kennedy.

Dionysus is the first SOM issue that lent itself to a bold range of patinas and several edge varieties have been observed.

EDGE AND PATINA VARIETIES OBSERVED:

1. THE SOCIETY OF MEDALISTS SECOND ISSUE. Clear saddle brown. A. 5.3 millimeters thick at rounded, beveled rim.
2. Ditto. Deep, slightly matte hematite red. B.
3. Ditto. Glossy graphite brown. F. 6mm thick at boldly flat, sharply squared rim. Die rust can be seen where design elements are close to the rim. This medal was purchased from SOM in 1975.

1931 #3. HERMON MacNEILL. Hopi Indian Prayer for Rain.

Obv Five Hopi rain dancers, two with snakes in their mouths, one crouching to gather up snakes for return to the cottonwood enclosure set up for the ceremony. Two other dancers distract mouth-held snakes with eagle feathers. MacNeil's sky is adapted from Hopi sand painting showing stylized rain clouds and serpentine arrows of falling rain. Incuse HOPI in exergue. Signature *H A MACNEIL* incuse lower r.

Rev Dancers race from mesa onto the desert, hands full of snakes to be returned to their dens. Lightning flashes above, incuse **PRAYER** (vertical) **FOR RAIN** in exergue.

MacNeil, best known to coin collectors for his Standing Liberty

Quarter of 1916-1930, wrote, "The two incidents of the Hopi Prayer for Rain on the mesas of northeastern Arizona depicted on this medal are chosen by your sculptor because of the extraordinary vital enthusiasm and power that the Indians throw into this ceremony.

Having witnessed it and been thrilled by the intensity of their emotion and on further study by the complicated and perfectly natural development of this drama, I cannot help feel that in it we find a basic note underlying all religions. All these Southwest Indians, living as they do in an arid region, have developed their religion along the lines of their greatest need – water."

MacNeil described the setting as the *Kiva*, An underground chamber. Members of the Snake and Antelope clans gathered snakes for six days from the compass points, above and below, "therefore from all the directions of the universe." Poisonous snakes are included in the dance, distracted from the dancers holding them in their mouths by another dancer wielding an eagle feather. The artist witnessed several snakebites, which had no apparent effect on the exalted, fasting dancers.

MacNeil theorized that the wriggling serpent forms suggested the shape of lightning "snaking" earthward from the clouds, as seen in the sand art above. At the end of the prayer dance, the Indian raced out onto the desert, hands filled with snakes to be released into their dens as a rain cloud forms overhead.

This is SOM's first non-circular medal, showing a boldly ovoid shape. At least four distinctive patinas have been

observed on examples of the Hopi medal, described below.

EDGE AND PATINA VARIETIES OBSERVED:

1. THE SOCIETY OF MEDALISTS THIRD ISSUE. Rounded rims. Light tan, sea green highlights. A.
2. Ditto. Light tan with hints of gold. A.
3. Ditto. Intense glossy hematite red. A.
4. Ditto. Bold sea-green, sharply squared rims. A.

1931 #4. FREDERICK MacMONNIES. Lindbergh, Lone Eagle.

Obv Youthful Charles Augustus Lindbergh in flying gear gazing upward, *Spirit of Saint Louis* above. Rough-hewn field, bold legend **CHARLES. A. LINDBERGH.** Signature *FM/ 1933/©.*

Rev **LONE EAGLE**, eagle in flight through Storm hurling lightning, blasting Wind, crowned and beckoning Death.

MacMonnies shared his vision for his medal in *A Message from the Artist*. “To attempt to commemorate Lindbergh’s mighty achievement within the tiny compass of a three inch medal is preposterous, and if one does not succeed in representing even a faint suggestion of the sublime courage that faced appalling odds – the fascinating problem is compensation enough.

In the head of Lindbergh I have tried to catch something of the inner belief and nobility of vision of the boy, together with the experience of the master airman.

On the reverse is an allegory of the Lone Eagle battling through the perverse elements of storm, wind and fog. The figure of Death as King, Life’s ever present tyrant, sure of his final triumph, retreats foiled and defeated. The Wind tries in vain to raise a barrier against the spent and trembling wings, while the insane fury of the Storm hurls lightnings and veils the moon and stars in mist and rain, but the Lone Eagle goes on.”

This medal is the only SOM issue re-released some forty years later as a 32-millimeter tan-gold bronze miniature for inclusion in a private firm’s Philatelic-Numismatic Combination (PNC). This miniature is perversely scarcer than the original medal. MacMonnies’ medal was the first SOM issue to feature a portrait. It would be 24 years until portraiture reappeared again in the series with Georg Lober’s Hans Christian Andersen.

EDGE AND PATINA VARIETIES OBSERVED:

1. MEDALISTS FOURTH ISSUE. No maker’s name, Goldplate.
2. THE SOCIETY OF MEDALISTS FOURTH ISSUE A. Goldplate.
3. Edge mark A. only, no SOM identification. Ebony-brown.

1932 #5. LEE LAWRIE. Whatsoever a Man Soweth.

Obv Ancient sower scattering seed under brilliant sun, **WHATSOEVER A MAN SOWETH.** Raised *LAWRIE/ ©*

Rev Sickle enclosing wheat ear, nettle, central inscription, **THAT SHALL HE ALSO REAP.**

Lawrie's short *Message from the Artist* noted "I chose the Sower for the subject of this medal because it is a character that I have long admired. There was a farmer in Illinois that I as a boy liked to watch sow. I can see him now – his stride and the swing of his arm, regular as though timed, as he distributed the grain evenly over the soil.

My reason for using the verse from Galatians is that it seems applicable to our age. All of us are sowers, and we should not expect life to yield much in return for little, or little for nothing, or anything at all for the mere wishing – either in a material or in a higher, abstract way."

Lawrie was active in the National Sculpture Society and the SOM board. He was an influential sculptor-member of the Federal Commission of Fine Arts, striving manfully under virtually impossibly difficult conditions to improve the artistic quality of that most difficult area, U.S. commemorative coinage.

EDGE AND PATINA VARIETIES OBSERVED:

1. THE SOCIETY OF MEDALISTS FIFTH ISSUE. A. Tan-gold, deeper patina around the devices.
2. Ditto. B. Lighter, more uniform tan-gold.
3. Ditto B. Somewhat more to the gold overall.

1932 #6. JOHN FLANAGAN. Aphrodite, Swift Runners.

Obv Elegant beauty in "Gibson Girl" coiffure, artfully fondling a string of pearls, **APHRODITE** above, *MCM JF XXXII* right.

Rev Marathon runners passing the torch, **SWIFT RUNNERS**, *JF. © .Sc.* In exergue.

In his *Message from the Artist*, Flanagan noted two dissimilar faces of the goddess of love. "Venus, the Roman counterpart of Aphrodite, has many identical attributes that have been forgotten in the prevalent association with sensual love. Venus was the goddess of family life, of fruitfulness also in gardens and groves, in plants and flowers.

The myrtle, the rose and the apple were sacred to her, and as the goddess of Spring the month of April was the month of Venus. Her mythical origin from the sea-foam exalted her as the goddess of the sea and her blessing and aid were sought by mariners and fishermen.

The face portrayed on the medal bears a refinement of expression, revealing the finer and more spiritual attributes of the goddess of Love."

Flanagan sought to depict the Greek *Lampadedromia*, or torch foot-race on his reverse. The artist recalled its allegorical significance to Herodotus and Plato as a symbol of the torch of life passed from one generation to the next.

Flanagan designed the Washington quarter in the 1931 U.S. Mint competition. His design was rammed through by Treasury Secretary Mellon, though Laura Gardin Fraser's

model was actually chosen twice by the contest judges and the Commission of Fine Arts. His career was well along in 1932, well past his 1900-1920 peak.

At the height of his artistic powers, Flanagan created the COF Hudson-Fulton Medal the City of Verdun Medallion recalling the epic battles around that city in World War I. It is believed that his life ended in a Times Square hostel for alcoholic derelicts in New York City in 1952.

EDGE AND PATINA VARIETIES OBSERVED:

1. THE SOCIETY OF MEDALISTS SIXTH ISSUE, A. Deep reddish-brown with green highlights.
2. Ditto. D. Bright malachite green.
3. Ditto. A. Light brown-gold.
4. Ditto. F. Even blue-green.
5. J, K. SPECIAL EDITION – SOCIETY OF MEDALISTS, © 1993 FINE SILVER MEDALLIC ART COMPANY (first Minneapolis telemarketer re-issue of an SOM in silver).

1933 #7. CARL PAUL JENNEWEIN. Glory and Fame.

Obv Winged cherub holding two laurel victor's crowns, **GLORIA** at lower right. Both sides are distinguished by boldly beaded borders.

Rev A virtually life-size cicada flanked by **FA – MA**. At right in the artist's highly distinctive signature, a stylized facial profile with ligate *CPJ* © behind.

In his *Message*, Jennewein wrote, "Fame and glory are symbolized in this medal as the elements in the life of men

which the awarding of medals is designed to promote and recognize. But the artist has made a subtle distinction between that Glory which, unsought, belongs to those who aspire, strive and sacrifice for a great ideal, and that Fame which is won by self-seeking in the attainment of public eminence for the gratification of personal power and vanity.

The representation of the cicada... might seem at first, strangely out of keeping with the Latin word *Fama* which it divides. The figure, however, relates to the original meaning of the term which is not necessarily high repute, but rather public notice, so often confused with fame in its better sense. Thus the cicada, by its noisy and shrill self-assertion gains wide hearing, but is only the discordant demonstration of an obstreperous but insignificant creature."

But the symbol of Glory, the consummation of high achievement, is the winged child, expressing ingenuousness, faith and aspiration, which, in bestowing the laurels is conscious only of the purity of motive in the supreme attainment which glorifies life and labor."

Jennewein enjoyed a long and distinguished career. He designed the widely acclaimed Harry S Truman Inaugural Medal in 1949.

EDGE AND PATINA VARIETIES OBSERVED:

1. THE SOCIETY OF MEDALISTS SEVENTH ISSUE. A. Light brown-gold.
2. Ditto. B. More pale brown-gold.
3. Ditto. No MACO edge mark.

**1933 #8. GAETANO CECERE. No
Easy Way from Earth to Stars.**

Obv Male and female nudes stretch toward the sky, winged Pegasus rearing at left, signature *C. CECERE/ © 1933*.

Rev Twin peaks with a small but sturdy tree growing at their base beneath a starry sky. Concentric two-line legend, **THERE IS NO EASY WAY FROM THE/ EARTH TO THE STARS.**

New York-born artist Cecere was evidently thinking of a world sunk in the Great Depression when he created this medal. His straining figures symbolized “the age-old inner urge of a large portion of humanity, its never-ceasing struggle to free from the bondage of the sordid and material, its aspiration toward a higher plane of existence.”

His mountain peaks symbolized “the difficulties of life, rising high above a sturdy little tree, which stands firm and undaunted with uplifted branches seeking to grow closer to the stars. At this time in the world’s history, when the burdens of humanity are heavier than ever before, it seems fitting to dedicate this medal to those who are fighting adversities while retaining their vision of a higher goal.”

Cecere was a Prix de Rome winner at 24 and enjoyed success both as medalist and monumental sculptor. His other medals included the U.S. Army Soldier’s Medal, the Princeton University Commemorative Medal and the Columbia Broadcasting Company Medal for distinguished service to broadcasting.

**EDGE AND PATINA VARIETIES
OBSERVED:**

1. THE SOCIETY OF MEDALISTS EIGHTH ISSUE. B. Clear, chatoyant light brown-gold.
2. Ditto. Deep graphite brown.

**1934. #9. HERBERT ADAMS. First
Little Shiner.**

Obv Young boy with fishing rod, minnow. **OH WHAT ARE THE PRIZES WE PERISH TO WIN.** Signature raised *A 1934 ©*

Rev Fish leaping, water weed shapes below, **TO THE FIRST LITTLE SHINER WE CAUGHT WITH A PIN.**

This medal was struck on an 8-sided, flower-like planchet used only on this issue. Adams’ *Message* announced “This medal is dedicated to all true fishermen... our previous medals have been circular in outline. For the sake of variety, I have used a modified octagonal form. The theme of my ‘piece of eight’ is told in its inscription, quoted from a poem by Oliver Wendell Holmes for the Berkshire Jubilee, Pittsfield, Massachusetts, August 1844.”

A master sculptor of the Architectural League of New York, National Academy of Design and National Sculpture Society, Adams subtly contrasted the legendary silver piece of eight with this eight-sided medal and its reference to the joys and rewards of fishing, especially for the young and innocent.

EDGE AND PATINA VARIETIES OBSERVED:

1. THE SOCIETY – OF MEDALISTS – NINTH ISSUE (divided by indentations of the polygonal planchet). A. Pale matte coppery red.
2. Ditto. Glossy deep red-brown.
3. Ditto. Copyright symbol, B. Bright brass-gold.

1934. #10 ALBERT LAESSLE.

America – Abundance.

Obv Strutting turkey cock, **AMERICA** left, full name *ALBERT-/ LAESSLE* right, © at ground.

Rev Ear of corn framed by separated husks, **ABUNDANCE**.

Describing his composition, Laessle stated, “Wishing to symbolize the abundance of America, I have chosen for my medal two truly American subjects, the turkey and the corn... Roaming wild through the forest, the turkey by its strength and love of liberty foreshadowed the strength and liberty of the new country. I have depicted the turkey with ruffled feathers, its pride and the vigor of its youth symbolizing the growth of the young America.

The Corn is also indigenous to America, having been presented by the Indians to the first settlers. There is something especially beautiful about the growing corn, with its long leaves rustling in the wind. The flower appears, and finally the ear, -- the apotheosis of the corn... It symbolizes true wealth. It is the culmination of the harvest, when man, flushed by his labors in the

summer sun, gathers to his granaries the fruits of the earth.”

Here is another example of the generally upbeat direction of the Society’s artists, offering a strong dose of good cheer and tasteful patriotic spirit in a nation mired in the depths of the Depression. Lines before soup kitchens, closed factories, rampant unemployment, the dust bowl; none of these are reflected in SOM issues.

EDGE AND PATINA VARIETIES OBSERVED:

1. THE SOCIETY OF MEDALISTS TENTH ISSUE. A. Tan-gold.
2. Ditto. B. Light gold with hints of deeper tones.

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**Striking similarities
Reverse of first Bush inaugural medal
closely resembles 1964 LBJ design**
By David T. Alexander

Special to COIN WORLD

Normally, January 2005 would be an exciting month for medal collectors, as they eagerly awaited release of the official George Walker Bush and Richard B. Cheney inaugural medals. Designs had been approved and medals actually struck by Medalcraft Mint of Green Bay, Wis., before the approval was abruptly countermanded and new designs decreed in what appears to be a turf war within the Bush Presidential Inaugural Committee.

Each decision to select new designs for the medal has been partially overturned. The original version of artist Gladys Gunzer's conjoined Bush-Cheney busts will be used after all, after being abandoned briefly by the committee for a similar design by the same artist. However, a new reverse design by an unnamed artist based on the presidential seal will replace the banal eagle and flag design that had already been publicized. Such changes are, of course, the source of wonder for inaugural medal collectors and vastly increase collecting interest.

After a hard-fought campaign and re-election, the president and vice president took their oaths of office Jan. 20 and formally began their second terms of office. A gala inaugural celebration has been a national event since 1789, and the traditional medal has been a vital component since at least 1889.

Presidential inaugural medals have a unique status, and many who pursue them take no interest in any other branch of numismatics.

The series is chronicled by three major references, beginning with Richard B. Dusterberg's *The Official Inaugural Medals of the Presidents of the United States* (second edition, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1976).

A highly readable comprehensive anecdotal history is Neil MacNeil's *The President's Medal, 1789-1977* (Smithsonian Institution and National Portrait Gallery, Washington, D.C., 1977), while an extraordinarily handy, smaller format work is H. Joseph Levine's *Collectors Guide to Presidential Inaugural Medals* (Johnson and Jensen, Danbury, Conn., 1981).

Only medals commissioned and sold by the inaugural committee are official inaugural medals. They should not be confused with the United States Mint's Presidential Series medals, which sometimes include inaugural dates in their inscriptions. The Mint strikes open-ended editions, which are sold for decades at minimal cost, possessing minimal market value as a result. Nor should they be confused with private medallic issues that commemorate a presidential inauguration and that have not been sanctioned by the inaugural committee.

Fascinating to collectors are intimate stories of political, artistic and industrial intrigue involving some of the most recent inaugural medals. For instance, it is known that Paul Manship was chosen to create the 1961 John F. Kennedy medal because incoming first lady Jackie Kennedy knew of him after writing a college term paper on his art.

Former U.S. Mint Chief Engraver Gilroy Roberts hacked out the dual portraits for the uninspiring Richard M. Nixon-Spiro Agnew inaugural medal from photographs because his boss, Joe Segel, was so frantic to land the medal contract that sittings by the subjects were out of the question.

In-fighting between the manufacturer of the first William Jefferson Clinton inaugural medal and two contending artists led to a published yet enigmatic "revised attribution" of the art work specifying that the Clinton portrait "was adapted by Charles Hoffman and Jesse Corsaut from an original sculpture and design by Norman Nemeth."

When the first Bush inaugural medal, struck by the private Medalcraft

Mint, was released in 2001, all eyes were drawn to a remarkable likeness of the new chief executive, shown virtually full-face with features tilted ever so slightly upward under serif-style letters spelling out GEORGE W. BUSH. In the lower left field are the artist's initials, CV.

The CV initials belong to designer Charles Vickers, a former designer at the Franklin Mint who, when he designed the obverse of the 2001 Bush inaugural medal, worked from a private studio and was in private practice.

Neither the medal, certificate of authenticity (bearing the names of Bill and Kathy DeWitt, Mercer and Gabrielle Reynolds, co-chairs, inaugural committee); nor the historical brochure by presidential inaugural medal authority H. Joseph Levine identify Vickers by name, and the reverse of the 2001 medal bears no artist's signature (it is a composite work from the minter's engraving staff, according to the private mint that struck the medals).

When I received my set of the Bush inaugural medals in the snow of upstate New York in late January 2001, I was immediately struck by the strange familiarity of its reverse. The major element is a highly distinctive, stylized presidential seal. At center is the American eagle with boldly raised wings, its hatchet beak holding a short swirling scroll inscribed E PLURIBUS UNUM, the U.S. shield on the breast.

The eagle's talons hold an olive branch to the viewer's left and bundle of arrows to the viewer's right. This specific description is necessary because in heraldry, the left and right sides of any coat of arms are those of a knight bearing a shield. A sword held in the warrior's right hand would appear to the

left of a facing opponent. In other words, heralds regard a coat of arms as a person possessing its own left and right, opposite those of the viewer.



Ralph J. Menconi designed the inaugural medal for President Lyndon B. Johnson, sworn into office in the wake of President John F. Kennedy's assassination in Dallas Nov. 22, 1963. Menconi based his reverse design on the presidential seal.



THE REVERSE Of the first George W. Bush official inaugural medal closely resembles the Menconi design; both are based on the presidential seal. The reverse of the 2001 Bush medal is credited as a composite design by Medalcraft Mint's engraving staff.

Another oddity of the presidential seal is that it went unnoticed until the administration of Harry S. Truman that the presidential eagle was shown looking toward the arrows emblematic of war on its own left (or viewer's right), which was heraldically incorrect. Manship had his eagle facing that way until a Kennedy aide exclaimed, "What are you trying to make of Kennedy, a war president?" The head was promptly made to face the opposite direction toward the olive branch.

On the reverse of the 2001 Bush inaugural medal, a circle of stars surrounds the eagle, along with an outer solid circle and the legend FORTY-THIRD

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, INAUGURATED JANUARY 20, 2001. It was immediately obvious that both eagle and the entire layout were identical with the 1964 Lyndon B. Johnson and 1969 Richard M. Nixon medals produced by Presidential Art Medals Inc. (PAM) of Vandalia, Ohio, as part of its widely marketed series begun with its wildly successful 1961 John F. Kennedy medal.

The sculptor for nearly all PAM medals was the late Ralph J. Menconi (born 1915, died 1972). He was a remarkably prolific sculptor who created seemingly endless medals for PAM's presidential, statehood, signers of the Declaration of Independence and other series. He was chosen for the official Richard M. Nixon 1969 inaugural medal and the first American Revolution Bicentennial Administration medal of 1972.

I was privileged to work with Menconi in 1965 on the Florida statehood medal, for which he developed a splendid portrait of Seminole war leader Osceola and possibly the only truly accurate rendering of the state seal in existence. His death effectively derailed PAM's ongoing programs, as no other artist could be found to successfully continue Menconi's inimitable style and volume of high quality production.

A side-by-side view of PAM's 1964 Johnson and Medalcraft's 2001 Bush inaugural reverses confirms the uncanny resemblance. Why this was done we can only guess. Admittedly, a 1964 copyright would have expired and Menconi was almost 30 years gone. Medallic Art Co. had lost the contract to strike PAM products when Ray Reute and others organized the ill-fated Art Medals Inc. in

the mid-1970s, and that firm had foundered not long after its launch.



the **presidential seal** also appears as the motif for the final rendition of the reverse of the 2005 Bush-Cheney inaugural medal. Vice President Richard B. Cheney appears on the second Bush inaugural medal, as is traditional.

Presumably, this design was in the public domain and reuse of eagle and layout certainly saved a significant amount of time in the hurried months before the inauguration. It is remarkable that no public notice was then taken of this startling design similarity, but my own thought at that time was that the world had enough on its mind from hanging and dimpled chads and Supreme Court motions.

The difficulties confronting the 2005 Bush-Cheney medal will doubtless prove more fascinating after those medals are finally released a week or more after the ceremonies of Jan. 20. As has been reported in *Coin World*, a subcommittee of the Bush Presidential Inaugural Committee had selected designs for the 2005 Bush-Cheney medal (by traditional, the vice president is depicted on a president's second inaugural medal, if the president wins re-election), and production of the medals had begun.

However, another inaugural committee ordered an end to production of those medals after selecting new obverse and reverse designs for the medal, and announcing its decision.



ADAPTING EARLIER DESIGNS is nothing new. The 1923-S Monroe Doctrine half dollar reverse, above, is based on a design for a medal for the 1901 Pan-American Exposition by artist Charles Keck.



THE ORIGINAL REVERSE for the 2005 Bush-Cheney inaugural medal depicted an eagle and the American flag. It was replaced after an unknown number of medals were struck.

Within days of the order countermanding the original selection of designs, the committee committed another about-face by deciding to keep the original obverse design and match it to a new reverse design. It is unknown what, if anything, will be done to the medals struck with the original reverse.

Interestingly, the final reverse design for the 2005 Bush-Cheney medal also uses a presidential seal design.

In any event, casual use of existing art is nothing new in American medallic history.

U.S. Mint Chief Engraver Charles E. Barber was an incorrigible practitioner of the art of appropriating other artists' art. He lifted Olin Warner's Columbus bust from the World's Columbian Exposition Directors' medal for his 1892 Columbian half dollar and

Peter Krider's Lafayette-Washington bust on the Yorktown Surrender Centennial medal of 1881 for the 1900 Lafayette dollar.

Artist Charles Keck denounced adaptation of his 1901 Pan-American Exposition medal design of North America and South America as maidens clasping hands for the reverse of the 1923-S Monroe Doctrine half dollar.

The more things change ...

RALPH J. MENCONI designed the inaugural medal for President Lyndon B. Johnson, sworn into office in the wake of President John F. Kennedy's assassination in Dallas Nov. 22, 1963. Menconi based his reverse design on the presidential seal.

THE REVERSE OF the first George W. Bush official inaugural medal closely resembles the Menconi design; both are based on the presidential seal. The reverse of the 2001 Bush medal is credited as a composite design by Medalcraft Mint's engraving staff.

THE PRESIDENTIAL SEAL also appears as the motif for the final rendition of the reverse of the 2005 Bush-Cheney inaugural medal. Vice President Richard B. Cheney appears on the second Bush inaugural medal, as is traditional.

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