



The Newsletter of Medal Collectors of America

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Coming Events

August 17, 2006 MCA meeting at Denver ANA
@ 3:00 p.m. Room 706.

October 17-19, 2006 Indian Peace
Medals I of John J. Ford, Jr.

Stack's auction schedule is published on
their website www.stacks.com since last minute
changes to the Ford schedule have been known to
occur unexpectedly.

What's New On Our Website!

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE EVERY MONTH

www.medalcollectors.org

From the Editor

Our May and June issues were compressed into a single issue in order to accommodate articles on Ford XIV. The essence of this landmark sale is well captured in our lead article by Chris Eimer; he presents us not only with the facts but a great deal of wisdom as well. As if this were not feast enough, you are feted with contributions on the same subject by Alan Weinberg and John Kraljevitch.

Ted Withington has rescued us from being dominated by the Betts medal crowd. His pioneering piece on Astronaut Medals is a superb piece of work that all will enjoy.

The ANA Convention in Denver is fast approaching. If anyone would like to run for office, the incumbents will not be offended. A club with only a narrow leadership is doomed to failure over time. The same may be said of a periodical—WE NEED YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS to the MCA newsletter; they may be one paragraph or many—we will polish them into publishable form if your prose is not eloquent at the outset.

John J. Ford, Jr.

(by John W. Adams)

Many members of MCA were fortunate to know John. Many more were not so blessed. Now, with Ford XIII and XIV in your library, you all know John intimately. Read and re-read the pages of these catalogues because they will tell you much about John and, indirectly, much about yourselves.

There are many duplicates in the Ford Betts Medal Collection. Some represent die varieties or die states. However, most represent John's opinion that the series was undervalued. John was more comfortable owning duplicate Betts medals than he was owning stocks or bonds. Warren Buffet had nothing on him!

John was not particularly keen on proclamation medals (he didn't read Spanish), nor was he interested in Admiral Vernon varieties. We can't account for this latter gap (relatively speaking) in his collection, unless he thought the differences between varieties to be trivial or simply too many to be remembered while touring a bourse floor.

Aside from Vernon's and "procs," JFF wanted every Betts variety he could find—and he found just about all of them. If there is a non-Vernon/non-proc variety that John did not own, you may assume that it is exceedingly rare. His collection is by far the most complete collection of Betts medals ever to be offered.

At first blush, we are all impressed with the vastness of John's collection, its quality and its breadth. Less obvious is his interest in the history of making these medals, as evidenced by his holdings of clichés and trials. In our mind, this is the single most important feature of the collection because these pieces tell a story found nowhere else. Viewers of these items must inevitably become enmeshed in the evolution of the dies at the very time of their creation. Only a fanatic can tell when a Greene or Gates medal was made but a Greene or Gates Cliché was made in 1787. Of that you can be sure. The battle of Saratoga Springs is far more important than Nicolas Marie Gatteaux but, without Gatteaux, we do not have the important memorial of the event. The clichés remind us in a very intimate way of the importance of the artist in preserving history.

We owe a debt to John Ford which may not be obvious now but which will loom ever larger with the passage of time. He nurtured Betts medals when no one else cared. He gathered them in, all of them: gorgeous gold medals, gorgeous silver medals, extreme rarities, unobserved varieties of medals and esoteric reminders of the engraving process. Laden with history, Betts medals can be collected by the rich as well as by the not so rich. With Ford XIII and XIV, a dimly lit byway of numismatics has become a new world

bright with opportunity. There are many who will now follow John's footsteps into this new world, learning what he learned while reveling in a special relationship with our nation's past.

The John J. Ford Collection, Part XIV

(by Christopher Eimer)

It was late in the evening on Tuesday 23 May at Le Parker Meridien Hotel, New York, when the hammer fell on the final lot of Betts-related material from the John Ford collection. The last of 509 lots sold by Stack's on that evening, which together with the 414 lots dispersed by them at Ford XIII in January*, brings the sum total of Betts pieces from this remarkable collection to nigh on one thousand lots. Proceedings on the 23rd began at 6.30 p.m. and the number of people filing into the auction room, which exceeded those attending the January auction, left no one in any doubt as to where prices would be heading.

The catalogue was written by Michael Hodder, and as we have come to expect, meticulous record-keeping by John Ford allowed the pedigree and provenance to be provided on a large number of his items: familiar names include those of Messrs Baldwin's, Boyd, Forman, Margolis, New Netherlands and Wayte Raymond. Many medals were represented by several examples in different metals, prompting many to wonder whether the market would be able to absorb quantities of this material, and to speculate on the opportunities that this might provide.

Proceedings opened with a group of two silver and three bronze Spanish fleet captured medals of 1745. These are scarce, not that you would think so from the number on offer, and the two in silver both climbed to \$1800 (Lots 1-2). The second of these, engraved IOS. Gambel, can be traced back to the celebrated but anonymous collection of largely German silver medals sold in Berlin by Laugwitz in 1976 (Lot 547). In 1984, it re-emerged at a

different German auction house, from where John Ford made the acquisition. The three examples of this medal in bronze that followed were all largely in choice condition and fetched prices ranging between \$1500 and \$1700 (Lots 3-5). In one of the few reversals of fortune, as it were, a rather worn example of this medal in bronze was sold in the collection of Lucien LaRiviere** for the inexplicably high sum of \$5000 (Lot 1034).

The first of the many landmark pieces in the Ford collection to be offered during the evening was a silver Kittaning medal. In very nice condition, bidding opened at \$45,000 and closed at \$90,000 (Lot 13). Given its relatively recent dispersal and fairly comprehensive material, the prices achieved at the sale of the La Riviere collection provide a useful point of comparison. In this instance, for example, a slightly inferior Kittaning medal sold for \$58,000 (Lot 2075). Other Kittanings from the Ford collection followed, being strikings in various metals and from various periods, an example in white metal going for \$6500 (Lot 14).

Opening the section dealing with the military and naval action at Louisburg were the all-too familiar brass or pinchbeck medals. Unsigned and with a standard view of Admiral Boscawen on the obverse, coupled with a scene of the harbour and fortress beyond, these sold for between \$250 and \$2000 (Lots 22-31). The celebrated medal by Thomas Pingo for this action was represented by a superb example in gold, which was neither looped nor mounted in any other way. This opened at \$35,000 and, amidst much interest, closed at \$75,000 (Lot 33). Given that this is a presentation medal, there are some who prefer such items, as with those given for the North American treaties, to be worn or to at least to exhibit some semblance of genuine handling. There followed three examples of the medal in silver, two with loops, the other with traces of mounting where a loop was once positioned. The first of these and by far the nicest, within a fitted case, sold

for \$5000 (Lot 34), while the other two each sold for \$3250 (Lots 35-36). There followed three examples of the medal in bronze, all of which sold surprisingly well, making between \$2400 and \$3500 (Lots 37-39). Completing this group were examples of the Kirk medal, with the distinctive head of Britannia, coupled with the advancing figure of Victory. A single silver example sold for \$3250 – surely expensive, when compared with its similar and equally rare Belle Isle equivalents at \$600 and \$500 (Lots 135-136) – while the two bronze medals made \$1400 and \$1100 (Lots 40-42). Buyers had three silver examples of the Louis XV Oswego medal to choose from and these sold for between \$2500 and \$6000 (Lots 44-46).

The King George II medal for British victories began with an unpublished example in gold, which was in superb condition and remarkably free of surface nicks or scratches. Purchased by John Ford in London from Spink & Son, in 1969, one could well believe that this had hitherto been in the hands of just one single owner, such is its flawlessness: a hop, skip and a jump, from 1758 to 2006. Opening at \$31,000, this sold for \$65,000 (Lot 47). John Pingo's gold medal, struck by the Society of Arts, for the taking of Quebec was a relatively recent purchase by JF, having come from the LaRiviere auction, where it had sold for \$20,000 (Lot 2093). This time round, \$32,500 was needed to secure it (Lot 70). Surprisingly strong were the silver and bronze examples of the medal, the four in silver fetching between \$2200 and \$3000 (Lots 71-74) and the six in bronze between \$450 and \$1900 (Lots 75-80).

A brass or pinchbeck medal with a profile portrait of General Wolfe, and a naïve view of Quebec on its reverse, is a great rarity, as well two of the assembled gathering knew. Starting at \$500, it finished up at \$5500 (Lot 84). Ex. A.H. Baldwin & Sons, from whom John Ford managed to acquire a disproportionately large amount of material, this was in fine to very fine condition. Condition mattered little when something was

wanted, as the result of the following lot can also testify: a King George II 'End Crowns the Work' medal for military successes in 1758, struck in tin, dark in colour, poorly struck in places and with some signs of pest, it none the less managed to make \$3000 (Lot 85). Of other Pingo-related material, mention must be made of the conquest of Canada / Montreal taken medal in silver, which was fought all the way from \$2500 to an astonishing \$9000 (Lot 97): its wonderful design by James 'Athenian' Stuart - of whose work there is to be an exhibition, opening in New York later in the year – coupled with its condition and subject, as well as the highly-charged atmosphere of the moment, all contributed to this record-breaker.

Coming from the Wayte Raymond estate was the first of two silver Defence of Morro Castle medals. This wonderfully dramatic medal by the Spanish medallist Tomas Prieto, illustrating on the reverse the castle's powder magazine exploding, it was keenly fought over, selling for \$12,000 and more than double its starting price (Lot 121). An inferior example in the same metal made \$5000 (Lot 122), while two examples in bronze went for \$1100 and \$975 (Lot 123-124). A more personal souvenir of this campaign was a 1761 pillar 8 reales, with engraved inscriptions, which made \$3750, the bidding having started at a lowly \$700 (Lot 125). One indicator of the strength of the sale may be seen in not only the rarities or the simply scarcer items, but even with those which can be deemed common. Nothing better illustrates this than results for the silver medals by Oexlein for the Peace of Hubertsburg in 1763, of which the five examples in the sale were selling for between \$550 and \$1400 (Lots 151-155); and for multiples of what one might hitherto have expected to pay in a German saleroom.

The pivotal section dealing with the American Revolution opened with the first of two silver German Town medals, amid a very real sense of anticipation. The tension was palpable until Larry Stack, seated to the

auctioneer's right, announced the opening bid of \$45,000, at which the item settled (Lot 162). The La Riviere collection had an even nicer example (Lot 1059), which had sold for \$32,000. However, John Ford had not one but two examples in silver, and the second, inferior, medal opened and closed at \$25,000 (lot 163). After this, it was little surprise to see no less than four examples of the medal in bronze, which fetched prices between \$5500 and \$11,000 (Lots 164-167).

A group of 'France Prepares to Aid America' *extraordinaire des guerres* silver jetons largely selling in the hundreds rather than thousands (lots 168-190) provided some respite before the appearance of Comitia Americana material. A particular feature of this mainstay of the Betts series, and complementing the medals themselves, were a few uniface tin or lead strikings which John Ford had acquired over the years. At the time of their acquisition, and to his advantage, few will have recognized the importance of this peripheral material, long regarded by many as irrelevant curiosities. The section opened with the Horatio Gates Saratoga medal, with two examples in bronze selling for \$5000 and \$5500 (Lots 193-194). A uniface striking in white metal, featuring an unadopted reverse design, made \$16,000 (lot 197), while similar uniface strikings for the de Fleury (Lot 201) and John Stewart (lot 202) medals made \$7500 and \$15,000, respectively. Surprisingly strong was a bronze medal of John Paul Jones which made \$8000 (Lot 203). A lead trial of the Henry Lee medal, struck out of its collar, its documentary importance recognized by at least two people, started at just \$600 before resting at \$8000 (Lot 206), while a silver Henry Lee medal did very well indeed at \$19,000 (Lot 207). The bronze Daniel Morgan medal made \$12,000 (Lot 210), of which an original in silver had made \$70,000 at the LaRiviere auction (Lot 1093). A superb Nathaniel Green in bronze went for \$20,000, while a lesser example in the same metal made \$7500 (Lots

222-223), both of these being ex. Wayte Raymond.

Amongst a choice group of silver Treaty of Armed Neutrality, Cadiz and Doggersbank material was the rare King George III 'British Resentment' medal dated 1781, the armoured bust of the king coupled to a reverse with a rearing lion ensnared in rope. This enigmatic and memorable design is a direct crib from the reverse of Johann Hedlinger's portrait medal of Karl XII of Sweden, struck on his death in 1718 (Felder 18). The medal is unsigned and may well be of German, Dutch or even Swedish origin. It had been in the LaRiviere collection and acquired by him from an Almanazar auction in 1973, in what will have been his relatively early days of collecting the Betts series. However, such is the medal's rarity that John Ford - who likely as not will have been in contention for it at the Almanazar sale - had been unable to acquire an example in the interim, and was thus obliged to wait until the self-same medal came back onto the auction block at the La Riviere sale. When it did, \$9500 from the Ford purse was required to secure it (Lot 1087). This time round, and barely five years later, things had clearly moved up a gear and the medal made \$32,500 (Lot 245).

The Treaty of Paris medal, which has all the hallmarks of being by John Reich, was represented by an attractively toned silver example, which made \$4000 (Lot 274); following on were five examples of the medal in its most common form of white metal and these made between \$500 and \$900 (Lots 277-281). A gilt white metal example was the first seen by this reviewer and this sold for a deserved \$1400 (Lot 276).

Now mid-way through the sale, and with tension not letting up, the section dealing with that most poignant of medallic portraits, the Libertas Americana, opened with three trial or experimental pieces - all of them of the reverse side, and again, prescient and judicious purchases by John Ford. The first of these was

a uniface striking in lead, complete in its design and lettering except for the dated inscription in the exergual space and Augustin Dupre's signature, both of which were missing in their entirety. How to value such an item was no easy task, and in the event bidding on this pivotal piece opened at \$2500 and climbed in very quick order to reach \$27,500 (Lot 286). The following item was another interesting piece, and an important tool in the progression of manufacture, being a brass hub, signed, but with the inscription and small elements of the design yet to be added. Again, establishing value will have been tricky and it opened at \$5000 before yielding to an \$11,000 bid (Lot 287). Both this and the previous lot were ex. Wayte Raymond. The final uniface lead striking from this group was ex. Ted Craige estate, signed and with its design and lettering complete. The right-hand frame of the medal was broken but it still managed to climb from an opening of \$5000 to \$16,000 (Lot 288).

The Libertas Americana medals themselves did not disappoint, and the first of two silver examples, described as being uncirculated and with gentle hairlines hidden by the toning, but certainly not an absolute gem, opened at \$35,000, after which an astonishing bidding battle pushed it to the dizzying heights of \$110,000 (Lot 289). With audience applause for this six-digit bidder still ringing in our ears, the second of Dupré's beauties in silver, described as being choice about uncirculated with light hairlines, opened at \$25,000 and went for \$35,000 (Lot 290). For comparison, LaRiviere's example in silver fell somewhere between the two in condition and made \$14,000 (Lot 1113). These being far from great rarities, one is almost surprised that the acquisitive and voracious collector that was John Ford had but just two silver examples. In bronze, however, he was not to disappoint and buyers had the choice of no less than eight medals, six of them choice or nearly so. These made prices ranging from \$11,000 to an eye-watering \$18,000 (Lots 291-296), while the

two laggards were acquired for \$5500 and \$4000 (Lots 297-298).

A St Vincent's Black Corps medal, ex. Leonard Finn, in choice condition, and without any signs of a suspension loop, climbed from an opening \$2300 to sell for \$11,000 (Lot 306). At LaRiviere, a nice example with a suspension loop was bought for \$3800 (Lot 1047). Next on the block was a superb bronze medal for the Tuesday Club in Annapolis dated 1746. Acquired from Fred Baldwin in 1967, it is believed the only example known in this metal and opened at \$15,000, going on to sell for \$40,000 (Lot 307). Unique though it may well be in bronze, it would appear from surviving club records that examples of the medal were actually presented to its members in silver or gilt silver, and this striking may well represent a proof or specimen, not that this matters for a medal of such significance, so few are the opportunities of ownership. The La Riviere collection contained an example in gilt silver with its suspension loop, which sold for \$50,000 (Lot 2067).

A large group of 'Compagnie des Indes Occidentales' silver and bronze jetons (Lots 308-321) provided some breathing space before the enigmatic Charleston Social Club medal of 1763 appeared, a superb example from the F.C.C. Boyd estate. The cataloguer cites a total of three examples, and the only other to come onto the market in recent years, also once owned by John Ford, was sold at LaRiviere for the sum of \$17,000 (Lot 2107). This may or may not have influenced the opening price for this medal of \$15,000, but that was soon left behind as battle ensued and the price climbed to \$50,000 (lot 322). Immediately following were two superb condition William & Mary College medals and these made \$15,000 and \$11,000 (Lots 323 and 324), while a silver 'Voltaire' portrait medal of Washington hardly seems expensive at \$6500 (Lot 325).

Next to appear was Ford's impressive holding of Benjamin Franklin material, highlights of which include the so-called

Franklin Sansom medal, represented by two examples in silver; one was superb and sold for \$35,000, while the lesser went for \$18,000 (Lots 333-334). A nice example, and perhaps deemed a later striking, sold at LaRiviere for \$13,000 (Lot 1049). Next on the block, and amongst the most eagerly awaited of material in the entire catalogue was the three-quarter facing 'Franklin of Philadelphia' portrait medal in silver. Acquired from the Colony Coin Company (Mass.) in 1967, very few examples of the medal were struck in this metal. A beautifully toned and seemingly mint state example is on display in the eighteenth-century galleries of the British Museum in London, and there may well be just one or two other examples nestling in collections, or in the hands of those unaware of what they have, but a rarity it certainly is. The story as to where this fascinating medal was struck and who engraved the dies remains to be told, but the Paris Mint, conjectured in the catalogue description, can almost certainly be discounted as a place of manufacture on various grounds, not least on those of stylistic criteria. After the six-figure sum achieved for the Libertas Americana silver medal, anything was possible, and with the medal opening at 35,000, bidding climbed to a not unexpected \$80,000 (Lot 336).

Soon followed two examples in silver of the Franklin and Washington peace of 1783 medal. Both were nice but the best of them sold for \$42,500, the other going for \$28,000 (Lots 340-341). The Neuf Soeurs or Nine Sisters Masonic medals, or, more rightly, jetons were represented by two in silver, each making \$6500 (Lots 342-343), the type being even rarer in bronze, a beauty of which sold for \$9000 (Lot 344). The Franklin Boston / Genius medal is scarce in bronze, but rare in silver, an example of which opened at \$4000 and went on to make \$16,000. The penultimate lots in this section were the excessively rare Lageman memorial portrait medal of Franklin, in both silver and in bronze. In superb condition, and the silver an absolute stunner, they had been

acquired from the Wayte Raymond estate, and sold for \$24,000 and \$20,000 (Lots 362-363), respectively, both going to the same buyer. The final lot was Franklin's named Royal Society of Edinburgh oval silver medal dated 1783, which opened and closed at \$26,000 Lot 366).

A very extensive group of William Pitt medals (Lots 374-404) included a fascinating piece 'struck for Edward Groh on an English Crown'. Half a page of catalogue commentary was devoted to this medal, which had been struck from copy dies in 1863 on a screw press in New York, the undertype of the English crown clearly visible on the reverse. There was much interest in this item, which opened at \$2500 before closing at \$5500 (Lot 376). Lewis Pingo's medallion portrait of King George III still requires satisfactory explanation for its striking and it was represented by two silver examples, which fetched \$1100 and \$625, and two in bronze, which came in at \$500 and \$400 (Lots 405-408). The medals of Lord North and Admirals Keppel and Rodney were wide ranging and inclusive of variety and type. These preceded a section of Thomas Pingo's Admiral Anson medal, of which John Ford had mustered four examples in silver, five in bronze, one in berlin iron and two in gold. Hardly a rare medal then, the examples in silver sold for between \$1300-\$2000 (Lots 442-445) and those in bronze and berlin iron between \$650 and \$950 (Lots 446-451), so in the bidding there was considerable strength as their was consistency. The first of the gold Ansons was in superb condition and made \$27,500, which was more than double the opening call (Lot 440). The second, and inferior example, opened at \$9000 and sold for \$15,000 (Lot 441). The LaRiviere collection also contained a superb example of the gold medal, which fetched \$17,000 (Lot 1035).

Continuing with matters naval find us with Captain Cook and the Resolution and Adventure. Opening this impressive group was a pair of almost wafer-thin strikings of the Resolution and Adventure medal, the obverse

carrying a portrait of King George III, the truncation of which was signed Westwood rather than the usual B.F. The catalogue description made no mention of metal, but from the illustration, these appeared to be finely toned silver strikings. However, close examination suggests that they might well be bronze with a thin silver wash. No matter, these are interesting and documentary items, though the shame of it being the fragile nature of the flans, one of which had split in places. Pedigreed down to Lewis Pingo, the pair sold for \$7000 (lot 454). To the Resolution and Adventure medals proper, of which there were four in platina (yellow bronze) and four in silver - an embarrassment of riches, if ever there was one. The first of the platina medals, retaining its wonderfully decorative suspension loop and in superb condition, opened at \$4000 to sell for \$12,000 (Lot 455). The three remaining platina examples went for between \$5000 and \$7500 (Lots 456-458). The four silver medals were all in pretty much superb condition, and prices for these ranged between \$5500 and \$8500 (Lots 459-462). The George III Resolution and Adventure medals in silver almost always seem to turn up in nice condition.

Following on from this was Lewis Pingo's Royal Society medal with James Cook's portrait, and here potential buyers could avail themselves of five silver examples, most of them beauties, which sold for between \$1600 and \$2600 (Lots 464-468), and seven bronze examples, which went ranged from \$750 to \$1200 (Lots 469-475). At \$2600, the most expensive of the silver Cook portrait medals makes the least expensive of the silver Resolution and Adventure medals, at \$5500, rather inexpensive. Finishing with Lewis Pingo's medal were three uniface strikings in lead of the reverse side, with its figure of Fortune standing with rudder and globe. These carried finished designs and sold for between \$500 and \$750 (Lots 476-478).

There was a superb example of the emotive 'Kill'd by Indians at O'Why'hee' three-quarter facing portrait medal of Cook. In white metal and with much original brilliance, this rarity made a healthy \$16,000 (Lot 479). In poor man's metal this may be, but with its direct and sensitive image of Cook and poignant inscription, including the date on which he met his demise, this unsigned medal, in all its naked and unprepossessing truth, is a significant piece of Cook iconography - nor to mention its early numismatic reference to Hawaii. Almost certainly of English manufacture, its stylistic features would seem to point to the medallic work of Thomas Holloway, a seal and gem engraver working in London in the 1770 and 1780s, whose use of the three-quarter facing portrait is not without precedent. The LaRiviere example of this medal was nice, but not quite in the same league, and this sold for \$8000 (Lot 2137). The following lot was a bronze portrait using the same image of Cook, the reverse carrying the inscription 'Courage and Perseverance'. In relative terms, only, this is a more common type than the preceding medal, and made a robust \$11,000 (Lot 480). On this occasion, LaRiviere's example had the definite edge in quality and sold for \$4000 (Lot 2138).

An extensive selection of George Whitefield medals followed, providing a range of various types and opening with Thomas Holloway's signed three-quarter-facing portrait of the cleric, with examples in silver and in bronze making \$750 and \$550 (Lots 482-483). Exceptional prices for the rest of this material included Thomas Pingo Jr's silver medal of Whitefield selling for \$900 (Lot 490); and that of the medallist I.W.F. - probably John Westwood, fecit - whose signature was to be found on an attractive silver medal, which went for \$1200 (Lot 495). Following the Whitefield medals was a rag-tag of seven miscellaneous items, the last of which was a hand-made engraved silver disc, movable in the manner of early calendar medals, and probably late

eighteenth century, which provided dates of various central European monarchies and dynasties. Well made though this may have been, the price of \$10,000 was something of a surprise.

Bringing this extraordinary odyssey to a fitting conclusion was the offering of John Ford's carefully annotated copy of C. Wyllis Betts's *American Colonial History*, specially bound, its spine bearing on a gilt-lettered red label 'John J. Ford Jr / Collection Inventory'. Representing an abiding mainstay and summation of JF's numismatic interests, so far as North American and related medals are concerned, it contains a record of pedigrees and provenance's, unrecorded material, corrections to Betts's text, as well as records of transactions and exchanges. After all which had gone before, to have seen this sell for anything other than a spiky figure would have somehow been inappropriate. In the event, spirited bidding between at least two adversaries brought closure to the matter with a winning bid of \$13,000 (Lot 509).

The ability for the market to absorb such a range of material, much of it in duplicate or triplicate, has been remarkable, and is no doubt a tribute to its overall quality and collective pedigree, the state of the market at this time and the way in which the collection has been promoted. The inclusion of multiple examples of the same medal, and in their different metals, tells us much about the period when John Ford started collecting in the 1940s and indeed over the following twenty years, when the availability of material was quite different than it is today. In those early days, many of his purchases will have consisted not just of single items but of whole groups, some no doubt containing more than one example of the same medal. In fact, the Betts and related medals that are represented in this catalogue by more than one example in each metal are more than two hundred and twenty in number, exceeding 43% of catalogue content. It mattered little, as collectors old and new, as

well as dealers, clamored for trophies at this once-in-a-generation opportunity. Relative to coins, the market in medals has always been more sensitive, especially given the extraordinary rarity of many, and it was evident that new buyers - some of them no doubt already collectors of early U.S. and Colonial coins and tokens - were having an exponential effect on prices, both on the common and on the rare material.

With regard to the marketing of the collection, a London auctioneer remarked many years ago that you can bring the horses to water but you cannot necessarily make them drink. Well on this occasion drink they certainly did, and long and hard. Michael Hodder is to be congratulated for the manner and consistency with which the material has been catalogued, while its distribution between the two catalogues and indeed the timing of the auctions, in January and in May, have been well judged by Stack's.

Augustin Dupré's beautiful and iconic *Libertas Americana* stands as one of the benchmarks of the Betts-related series, and the best of the two in this auction registered a near eight-fold increase over five years. No doubt, prices for the some of the more commonly available material, swept up as they were in the maelstrom of the evening, may have some difficulty in being sustained, if only temporarily, but many records have been set and who can say where prices are going to be in a further five, ten or twenty years.

In his entertaining vignette on John Ford written for the introduction to the catalogue, Warren Baker recalls the Robert Reford collection of North American medals held by Sotheby's Toronto in 1968, which at that time established many new records. A sale at which, he reports, John Ford and 'other prominents', convinced that they would have things their own way, ended up largely shut out by new collectors or those unknown to the numismatic community, 'leaving most to skulk away empty handed'. It heralded, as Warren

points out, a new era, and high though the prices were at the time, by today's standards they represent an incredible bargain. Exactly how long will it before the same may be said of the material in the Ford collection?

All prices quoted are without the additional 15% buyer's premium.

* Reported in *MCA Advisory* January (volume 9, number 1), page 4 and February (volume 9, number 2), page 4.

** Dispersed in three parts by Bowers and Merena Galleries on 12 November 1999 (Part 1); 16 March 2001 (Part 2), Lots # 2001-2141; and 21 May 2001 (Part 3), Lots # 1001-1128.

Ford XIV: The Final Betts

(by John Kraljevich)

As I rode the Amtrak towards New York on May 22, I didn't have much of an idea what to expect at the 14th(!) installment of the majestic Ford Collection. The earlier sales saw specialists compete and non-specialists jump in with both feet, no matter what sort of numismatic material was being sold. Betts medals are, admittedly, a bit tougher to slab and market than colonials and some other material, but then again their amazing history and fascinating designs meant that merely introducing the field to some new, savvy folks could have huge market repercussions. The last time such a new introduction happened, a major sale of Betts medals being sold to folks who liked large cents and Proof type, Jim King accused me of "ruining the Betts medal market." At the LaRiviere sales of 2001, a whole boat load of people who had never had a chance to buy a Betts medal before decided they were neat – and competed for them to previously unheard of levels. Jim's jest was

basically a nice way of saying that Admiral Vernon medals weren't ever going to be \$25 again.

Now, at Ford, new money seemed to be flooding in through a broken levee somewhere, but could there be the same kind of geometric growth? Could the medals that were once \$20, those that became \$200 at LaRiviere, become \$1000 pieces in 2006?

The answer, as it turned out, was yes and no. There were fewer of the head-turning "what did that sell for?" reactions than at other Ford sales, but there were still surprises. In truth, considering the vast amount of the material, the size of the market in general, and the knowledge that more sexy JJF material – like Peace medals – was still on the way, it's perhaps most surprising that the market grew at all.

The last Ford Betts medal sale was tailored to the European medals in large part, so here came the really nuts-and-bolts American stuff: the Revolution. The French and Indian War. Franklin. Libertas. (Or, really, Libertas Libertas Libertas Libertas Libertas Libertas Libertas Libertas Libertas, if you're keeping score at home).

The first page of the Ford catalogue showcased 5 specimens of the same medal, Betts-381, a neat historical connection to the 1745 Lima coinage. LaRiviere owned one, a decent VF bronze piece. Ford owned two silver ones and three copper pieces, all pretty well close to Unc. None of them sold for half as much as LaRiviere's. Gulp! Maybe the market can't handle this much quantity, think I. The Kittanning in silver was the first big test, and it sold about where folks expected it to, right around \$100K. This Betts number has sold a few times in the last five years, though, so maybe that was predictable. Louisbourg medals, something LaRiviere had a lot of, brought LaRiviere-sort of numbers, maybe a bit less. While the gold specimen of the Betts-410 was strong at \$75K+15%, the others were about what was to be expected. I managed to

snag a silver one with a mount for a friend at a reasonable \$3250 bid.

So far so good. Three Oswegos, Betts-415, with all three seeming reasonable – a gemmy one at \$6000 hammer, and even a nice looking EF with some nicks at \$2750. Again, reasonable. The gold British Victories medal, Betts-416, was a surprise though. First, who knew one existed? Second, who knew it could look this nice? Third, what's it worth? It opened at \$31,000 to a few gasps. Gasps became dropped jaws at \$65,000 – a lot for a medal that's a few hundred bucks in bronze – but then again, go find another!

The gold Quebec Token brought more than the same piece brought in 2001. The silvers brought similar levels, \$2000-3000 or so, reasonable for a medal that is way scarcer than Ford's four in silver would suggest. One nifty hidden lot: the Betts-unlisted Death of Wolfe than smelled a lot like a Louisbourg medal from the same era. Conversations around that medal mostly turned on the question "ever seen that before?" Everyone I know said no, except one savvy MCA collector who knew it from a 1920s book on Wolfe where it was said to be unique. No argument here! \$5500 was a bargain on that one, Lot 84.

Speaking of bargains, I'm not sure a gorgeous silver Morro Castle medal was one at a \$12,000 hammer, but it sure seems like one compared to the sort of messed-up early U.S. gold coin that would buy you. It certainly ranks Number 1 on my list of "Pretty Medals Showing Body Parts Suspended By An Explosion." The coppers seemed cheap at around \$1000 a piece, and I think the silver medal will prove to be a buy in the future.

A lesson learned: sell six Germantown medals at once and they start getting cheap. A copper Germantown medal at \$6000? Yes, it's late 19th century. But it's Germantown! The cased later striking in Gem condition for \$7000 seemed a buy too. This one ranks first on my list of "Best Metallic Representation of Fallen Lawn Ornaments,"

Have you ever seen that many France Prepares to Aid America medalets? Me either.

Comitia Americana medals were next. The second Gates was bought for a customer of mine, a lot of money for a beautiful specimen. The white metal Gates and the obverse cliché (which clearly lived with the following lot for centuries, only to be torn asunder in this sale) seemed cheap. The unadopted reverse brought \$12,000, proof someone is paying attention to how important a cliché can be. DeFleury times two at \$6000ish seemed reasonable considering their rarity. The John Stewart cliché – about the only chance to get one unless you're going to rob the Mass Historical Society or a NJ collector who is a friend to us all – brought solid money, but could have brought a lot more with another serious collector. Ditto the very ugly but very fascinating Henry Lee piece in lead. If you want the original reverse, it's this medal or a time machine to make sure Joseph Wright gets out of Philly before the fever hits. Then again, someone else might see it as \$8000 for a lump of lead with a bunch of nicks. They'd be right, but they also wouldn't be a medal specialist.

Daniel Morgan at Cowpens might be one of the prettiest medals in the series, and Ford obviously liked it, owning five different specimens. LaRiviere had a silver one that brought \$80,000. Ford's bronze brought \$12,000. I don't know if LaRiviere's would have brought more in this sale, but it very well could have. LaRiviere's Nathaniel Green brought \$14,000 or so. Ford's brought \$20,000, \$7500, and \$7000 hammer. All things considered not bad for what's thought to be 10% of the entire original mintage. But what will they be worth when 10 or 20 people are trying to complete a set of Comitia Americana medals?

\$32,500 for the British Resentment medal, which brought far less in LaRiviere and whose origin and meaning I still don't totally understand, seems like a lot of money. This is a medal I wish I could recatalogue for LaRiviere.

Soon enough the Libertas hoard came. If you've been following the market, in one fell swoop about two years ago every Libertas on earth doubled in value. All it took was a \$3000 specimen to sell for \$11,500 as part of a slabbed silver dollar collection, and every U.S. type coin collector had to own one it seemed. Ford's beautiful silver hammered at \$110,000 – quite enough, I should say – to the owner of the best early U.S. coin collection on earth. It will fit in their collection. The second silver, a rather typical one, brought \$35,000 hammer, which today was actually a little cheap. The copper ones mostly sold for well over \$10,000, and even a badly cleaned one brought \$5500. The market held despite the plenitude, and already I suspect the want lists have all been filled and the market awaits more specimens from ... somewhere.

The Tuesday Club medal brought \$40,000, not much less than LaRiviere's original gilt silver one despite the fact that this one was in copper. It's basically one of two impressions from the dies in private hands, so who is to say \$40,000 is too much? Ditto the Charleston Social Club at \$55,000. A lot more than LaRiviere's, but then again this one was a bit nicer. People paid for rarity at the Ford sale.

People also paid for common. A Nini at \$5000?

The beautiful Franklin/Beaver Betts-546 in silver went to live with the \$110,000 Libertas. \$35,000 for it seems about right. The same cabinet also consumed the better of the Franklin/Washington Betts-617 medals at \$42,500. Nice medals, all.

How about \$80,000 for a silver facing Franklin, Betts-547? The medal was flat-out gorgeous, and it may well turn out to be unique too. This is one we'd all like to know more about, and when we do that price could turn out to be a steal. The Neuf Soeurs medals would have brought more if they were more common – no one seemed to know what they were, but they seem awfully rare. The Franklin Royal

Society medal saw lots of pre-sale talk about it, not as much bidding. Sold to the book.

The Captain Cook Resolution and Adventure medals sold for what they should have, but still strike me as bargains. They're Indian Peace medals, in a way, but for natives of the Pacific from Australia to Tahiti to Alaska. Why are they cheaper than almost every other Peace medal on the planet?

The last two lots seemed like last minute additions: an odd German cipher wheel and some old copy of Betts some guy named Ford wrote all over. At \$10,000 and \$13,000 hammer, the sale fairly ended on an unpredicable bang.

Final verdict? History was made, the major players were there, and the Betts market held despite the grandest injection of new material since Dupré was wandering the gardens of Paris with Franklin. I don't think anyone was disappointed with the purchases made, only the ones they didn't make. Great sales are like that.

WEINBERG'S NOTES ON THE JOHN FORD BETTS SALE

(Reprinted courtesy of the E-Sylum from Vol. 9, #22)

Alan V. Weinberg offers the following commentary on the Betts II Stack's Ford Sale: "The XIVth John J. Ford Jr auction by Stack's occurred in NYC May 23. I have attended every Stack's Ford sale since their inception, save the Chicago Hard Times sale and the Atlanta paper money sales. The sales' contents literally offer a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. The sale attendance and prices realized have reflected that from the start.

John Ford's tastes were often esoteric, areas that investors, speculators and Redbook collectors ignored. Those areas are now becoming fashionable, perhaps because most other series are outrageously priced, beyond the comprehension or capability of most collectors.

But the prices realized Tuesday night can only be described as outrageous, jaw-dropping. When the hotel's auction room opened, intelligent speculation was attendance would be sparse and many seats would be empty. After all, Betts medals? A heretofore very thin market. Who could predict that almost every seat would be taken, with bidders standing in the rear? A number of Ford Family members attended, knowing this series was one of John's favorites.

The serious oldtime collectors turned out, along with a number of very wealthy coin collectors and coin dealers who had not previously exhibited any interest in historical medals. The result was unbelievable with the 676 lot auction lasting from 6:30 PM to 11:30 PM - 5 hours!

A choice silver Libertas Americana medal hammered for \$110,000, a silver Washington/Franklin/Eagle Betts 617 medal (Ford had several) at \$42,500 hammer, a silver Franklin/Beaver B546 at \$35,000 (Ford had two) and many others to Brent Pogue of Dallas, the owner of the Childs 1804 "original" dollar at \$4.1 million and the Bullowa Unc 1795 flowing hair dollar at \$1.3 million.

Dick Margolis captured the two extremely rare Lagemann German- struck Franklin death medals which he'd sought worldwide for so many decades and paid a combined \$44K hammer. I do not think either has appeared at auction since 1930 in Europe. The incredible and unique silver Franklin 1777 Privy Council medal B547 hammered for \$80K to John Adams...I'm certain this medal was the most eagerly sought after of John Adams' pursuits. JJF paid around \$100 for it in 1967. Other active bidders included Chris Eimer all the way from England, Tony Terranova, Dave McCarthy for Kagin's, Stu Levine, Bill Anton Jr, Isaac Rudman of the Dominican Republic, Roger Siboni, Syd Martin, John Kraljevich of ANR for multiple clients and, it is rumored, the Anderson Bros of Whitman Publishing through a very skilled floor agent.

The only book in the sale was Ford's personally annotated and repaired/rebound Betts medal book at \$13K hammer to John Adams who is forming the finest Betts medal collection now that Ford is deceased.

The biggest surprise of the sale, for many, were the outrageously high prices realized for early Massachusetts silver copies and mid 1800's Bolen copies. The circa 1858 Good Samaritan shilling at \$40K hammer to Anton, a large number of Mass silver 1800's forgeries from \$2500 - \$5,000 hammer, a silver Bolen Carolina elephant token setup-struck over an 1807 bust half at a relatively reasonable \$11K to Terranova etc.

Much of the sale interest and the high prices are absolutely attributable to a mouth-watering and fascinating auction catalogue of the highest quality authored by Mike Hodder and overseen and published by Larry Stack. These two guys are aware, as was John Ford in the 1950-70 era, that a well-researched, authoritative, interesting-to-read auction catalogue with top notch photography will generate strong buyer enthusiasm even where there was no previous interest. Invest the time and money into creating a lifetime reference and the effort will return untold rewards.

I can't wait 'til the October sale. There are, I believe, seven scheduled Ford auctions left, all with untold numismatic treasures."

The Astronaut Medals

(by Frederic G. Withington)

For forty years, all through the Gemini, Apollo and Space Shuttle programs, American astronauts have designed commemorative medals and carried them on their flights. The medals are all relatively small (quarter to dollar size) and made of silver (a few are gold plated, and a very few are solid gold). After the flights, the medals were distributed only among fellow astronauts and their families (NASA has strict rules about astronauts profiting from their flights.) Now, however, with all the early

astronauts retired and some deceased, their collections and information about the medals are becoming available. Since the medals are generally being sold for the first time, certificates of authenticity are usually provided by the astronauts or family members who first owned them.

It all started with Gus Grissom's accident. In July 1961, he piloted America's second space flight, a one-man Mercury "capsule." The flight went well, but after splashdown in the Atlantic the emergency escape hatch blew off, the capsule sank, and Grissom was lucky to be saved. He said it was an accident, but there was the suspicion that he had panicked—and if you are an astronaut, you don't panic.

In 1962 the Gemini program of two-man spacecraft started, and Grissom was picked to pilot the first manned Gemini mission, GT-3 (Gemini spacecraft, Titan rocket, third flight--the first two were unmanned). Grissom named his spacecraft the "Molly Brown" (referring to the "unsinkable Molly Brown" of S.S. Titanic fame). He then decided to have medals struck to carry with him and present to his fellow astronauts, presumably to advertise his determination not to panic (he didn't—the flight went well in March, 1965). Figure 1 is the obverse of the medal, showing the floating spacecraft, the legend "The Molly Brown" and the crew names (Grissom and John Young). The medal is 25mm. in diameter, and this specimen is gold plated. Figure 2 is the reverse, with "GT-3" and the flight date engraved. Since the crew names were known well ahead of time they could be incorporated in the die, but the date of the flight was uncertain until the actual launch, so the flight date had to be engraved after the flight.

Although he didn't know it, Grissom was establishing a custom that has been followed ever since. The crew names and mission logo have always been struck on the medals, usually on the obverses, and the flight

dates have always been engraved on the reverses after the flights.

The style of Grissom's medal is informal and amateurish, reflecting the casual and semi-humorous attitude it reflects. The simple reverse, present on all the Gemini and early Apollo medals, shows a desire to keep costs down. After the success of the Apollo 11 moon landing, however, the medals became fancier and more self-conscious (more on this later). NASA did adopt the informal "Molly Brown" logo as the official symbol for the GT-3 mission, however, using a version of it on the souvenir pins and patches sold to the public.

We don't know who sunk the die for the Gemini 3 medal, who struck it, how many were struck, or how much was paid for them (we do know that the recipients paid \$10 apiece for their copies). There must have been some written records such as sketches and invoices, but these have long since been discarded. The recollections of the surviving astronauts and families are too uncertain to provide these details—they had other things on their minds. We don't even know for sure that it was Grissom who had the original idea, though it seems likely.

This absence of records persists throughout the Gemini program, though there are indications that no more than 100 or so medals were struck for any of the flights (there wasn't room to carry many more than that), and that all the medals struck were carried on their respective flights.

Figure 3 is the obverse of the medal carried on the next Gemini flight, GT-4, crewed by James McDivitt and Edward White. The logo is fairly primitive, showing an undersized eagle carrying a Gemini spacecraft. facing the wrong way. This medal is also 25mm. in diameter, a standard followed for the next several flights, and has a reverse similar to Fig.2.

NASA decided not to adopt the eagle-spacecraft logo as the official one for GT-4; I'm told they decided at that point to save the

eagle symbol for the eventual moon landing. The most dramatic event of GT-4 was the first U.S. space walk; Ed White left the spacecraft for a few minutes in a space suit. NASA had a new logo designed showing a space-suited man outside a spacecraft and used it for the public pins and patches.

Figure 4 is the obverse of the medal for the next flight, GT-5. This flight was to attempt to set an endurance record of eight days in space. The crew decided to use a Conestoga wagon as the symbol of a long-endurance trip, so the medal shows a wagon and the legend “eight days or bust” (they made it) and “Gemini 5” and the crew names (Gordon Cooper and Charles Conrad). The reverse was blank except for the engraved flight dates. NASA accepted this logo as the official one for the flight, as in fact they did the logos for all of the remaining Gemini flights, with only minor changes. Apparently a procedure had been put into effect for advance approval of the astronauts’ designs, the beginning of more bureaucratic formality (and less spontaneity) in the astronauts’ medal designs.

Gemini 6 and 7 flew at the same time, performing the first rendezvous in space (a maneuver that would be essential for the moon missions). The medal for Gemini 6 attempts to show the spacecraft movements involved, but only succeeds in looking pretty cluttered. The Gemini 7 crew opted for simplicity, just depicting a torch and the Roman numeral “VII” on the obverse. They put the crew names as well as the dates on the reverse, however; thereafter most of the medals carried something more than just the date on the reverse.

The medals for the remaining five Gemini missions (8 through 12) all incorporated one form or another of the Roman numerals corresponding to their flight numbers. The Gemini 8 medal, like that for Gemini 6, also tried to show a diagram of its mission, which was to dock with a robot spacecraft. Again, however, the resulting sketch looks pretty confusing. To eliminate any uncertainty,

on the reverse of the Gemini 8 medal is spelled out “First to Dock in Space”. It was Neil Armstrong’s success in piloting this spacecraft that led to his selection as pilot of the Apollo 11 moon lander, and thus to be the first man to step on the moon.

The Gemini 9 and 11 medals deviate for the first time from the standard 25mm circular format. Each of them is in the shape of a (slightly different) shield. The majority of the astronauts’ medals since Gemini 11 have been in shapes other than round.

The Gemini program was followed immediately by the Apollo program, designed to culminate in a series of moon landing missions. The three-man Apollo spacecraft entered testing, and the Apollo 1 mission was planned to test the spacecraft in Earth orbit. A medal was duly created for this flight. It was circular, like most of the Gemini medals, but a little larger at 32mm. Its obverse was an epigraphic for the first time, showing the spacecraft in orbit over the earth—the most ambitious and professional image to date. The reverse carried the names of the three crewmen, and was to carry the engraved flight dates after the flight.

Unfortunately, the Apollo 1 flight never took place. On January 27, 1967, the spacecraft caught fire and burned during a test on the launch pad, killing the crew. The medal made to be carried on Apollo 1 became a memorial to the crew instead of a commemoration of their success.

Many things changed as a result of this disaster. The spacecraft was entirely redesigned, and tested very carefully. The next five Apollo missions were all unmanned tests to exhaustively prove the safety of the new spacecraft. Finally, in October 1968, NASA was ready for the first manned flight of the new spacecraft, Apollo 7.

During the long delay Walter Cunningham, a member of the Apollo 7 crew, designed the medal to be carried on the flight. He wanted a larger number of medals than had

been made for the Gemini missions and better quality, so the local jeweler who had handled the work until then put him in contact with the Robbins Company of Attleboro, Mass. The Robbins Company struck the medal, and has struck the medals for all subsequent U.S. manned space flights—more than 100 flights over forty years. (Has there ever been such a long emission of medals on a single theme?) Robbins has kept detailed records of all the astronaut medals they have made, unlike whoever made the Gemini medals. As a result it has been possible to document the series. Howard C. Weinberger did so for the Apollo 7 through 17 flights (the end of the moon landing missions), and published a book entitled “The Robbins Medallions—Flown Treasure from the Apollo Space Program” (The Toy Ring Journal, Inc., PO Box 544, Birmingham, MI 48012). Based on interviews with astronauts as well as the Robbins records, the book is definitive. I understand that Weinberger is working on a second edition, which will extend the coverage further.

Figure 5 is the Apollo 7 medal. It is ovoid, and at 32 mm. at its widest point no larger than the Gemini medals. Its details are sharper, however, and it is struck in higher relief. It shows the spacecraft in orbit around the Earth, the Roman numeral VII, and the crew names. Its reverse is blank, except for the flight date engraved after the flight (as always). It is serially numbered (my specimen is number 13 of 255 silver specimens struck.)

The next flight-tested the ability of the Apollo system to send a spacecraft to the moon, put it into lunar orbit, then return successfully. Apollo 8 was in lunar orbit on Christmas eve of 1968; the crew read from the Book of Genesis in real time to the world’s radios. The crew also took a still-famous photograph of the Earth with the lunar surface in the foreground.

The Apollo 8 medal, designed by pilot James Lovell, Jr., is a sort of pun on the Arabic digit “8”: the Earth and moon are shown within the two loops of a figure eight with crew names

around, the whole within a truncated triangle. 300 silver medals were made. The reverse is again blank except for the flight date.

Apollo 9 and 10 were rehearsals of the maneuvers involving the lunar landing spacecraft, first in Earth orbit and then in lunar orbit. The medals were both designed by the crews and are quite different. The Apollo 9 medal is a simple disk just 25 mm in diameter. It shows on the obverse the rocket being circled by the lander, with the crew names and flight dates on the reverse. The Apollo 10 medal is a complex shield design, 30 mm. at its longest, with a complex scene on the obverse combining the Roman numeral “X”, the two spacecraft, and views of the Earth and moon. The reverse is blank except for the flight dates. 350 and 300 medals were struck in silver, respectively.

Since Apollo 11 (Arabic rather than Roman numerals now) was to be the first Lunar landing mission, all preparations for it were in a glare of publicity. Michael Collins, the Command Module pilot, is given credit for the medal’s design, but obviously various bureaucrats were looking over his shoulder. Figure 6 shows the very-familiar obverse (used as the reverse of both the Eisenhower and Anthony dollar coins), an anepigraphic design showing an eagle landing on the moon. It is slightly different from the public version, however. In Figure 6 the eagle on the medal is holding an olive branch in its beak with its claws outstretched. In the public version the eagle is holding the olive branch in both clenched claws. The authorities felt that the open claws seemed to imply an intention to grab territory.

Figure 7 shows the reverse of the Apollo 11 medal, quite crowded with the crew names and (now) three labeled dates. The medal was only 28 mm. in diameter, partly because so many were to be carried on the flight. Demand from the astronaut community was high for copies of this most-historic medal, so 450 silver and three gold medals were made.

The Apollo 12 medal shows a sailing ship orbiting the moon, because all three of the crew were Navy pilots. Continuing the theme, the first 82 of the 262 numbered silver medals were struck from an ingot of silver recovered from a Spanish treasure ship.

The Apollo 13 medal was the first to be designed by a commercial artist, with a team of three horses on the obverse. The medal had a complex history because of the mission's problems. First, uniquely among all the early space missions there was a change in the crew at the last minute because of illness, so the names on the medal were wrong. Second, the mission was aborted because of an explosion of a fuel tank in flight. (The survival of the crew is an epic story). This meant the spaces on the reverse labeled "launched", "landed" and "returned" were inappropriate. The result was that the entire batch was returned to the Robbins Company after the flight, melted, and 404 medals were re-struck from modified dies.

The next four Apollo flights, 14 through 17, were all successful moon landing missions. About 300 medals were struck for each flight. Professional artists were responsible for all the designs (in consultation with the crews, of course). The designs are interesting and attractive (those interested will find them fully documented in Weinberger's book), but they are no longer the sole product of the astronauts' own creativity. Since the theme of this article is "the astronaut medallists", they are not discussed here.

This is not to denigrate the professional-crew partnerships that have continued ever since. They have resulted in many interesting and attractive medals. For example, Figures 8 and 9 show a particularly original example, the medal made for Skylab 3. (Skylab was the first U.S. space station; one flight set it up and two more performed experiments in it. This was the next-to-last Apollo flight, the last being the Apollo-Soyuz joint flight with the Soviets in 1975). The medal is a sort of rounded triangle

35 mm. at its longest. The obverse (Figure 8) shows a large digit "3" and a symbol suggesting multiple orbital flights, mirroring the shape of the medal. Three of the experiments performed by the crew are represented by symbols in the three openings. The reverse (Figure 9) is also used to reflect the experimental program: the astronauts observed comet Kouhoutek which was passing the sun during the mission, so this event is depicted with the usual engraved flight dates shown in the sun disk.

And so the series has continued through the 113 flights of the Space Shuttle. At this writing the Shuttle flights are set to resume, and a new program of manned flights is to follow. It remains to be seen whether future astronauts will continue the tradition of creating medals for their flights. It also remains to be seen whether these medals will retain interest for future collectors. At worst, they will be forgotten along with the idea of manned space flight. At best, they may become the Betts medals of the 22nd century!

(Footnote: thanks to David Alexander and Stacks for performing the scans of the medals.)



Figure 1: Obverse of The First Astronaut Medal (Gemini 3)



Figure 2: Reverse of Gemini 3 Medal.



Figure 3: Obverse of Gemini 4 Medal.



Figure 4: Obverse of Gemini 5 Medal.



Figure 5: Obverse of Apollo 7 medal.



Figure 6: Obverse of Apollo 11 Medal.



Figure 7: Reverse of Apollo 11 Medal.



Figure 8: Obverse of Skylab 3 Medal.



Figure 9: Reverse of Skylab 3 Medal.

Letters to the Editor

John,

While you had a good position for audience observation, I have always—from the first Ford Sale—taken a position of advantage so I can see all the bidders and annotate my catalogue as completely as possible as to buyers, under bidders, opening & closing bids. You should see my Garrett catalogues. Dave Bowers once told me I was one of some 30 odd bidders who, according to his firm's auction records, attended all 4 Garrett/JHU sales.

Ford like to do this too but I developed my own practice very early on...back to the 60's. I like to occasionally relive the auction or track a pedigree from an annotated catalogue.

I like to reconnoiter a sales room early on and take a position where I can best view the floor action and ID those bidding. When I bid, it is always after everyone else has blown

off steam. That way I can be sure of my competition and make sure the auctioneer is not taking bids from the chandelier or I'm not being bid up arbitrarily by someone who I dislike or is ignorant of what they are bidding upon. There are some very prominent and regular Ford bidders with too much money and no sense at all as to rarity or desirability. One prominent dealer stands out. Today at Long Beach I was shown an 1860 slavery silver token that hammered for \$1350 at a Pre-Long Beach auction. This same prominent dealer bought it on a whim and submitted a \$2000 bid, getting it at \$1350. Trouble was it was not silver but silver-wash brass, dirt common and a \$75 retail token. I just shook my head and silently re-confirmed my opinion of this dealer. He is a big time Ford sale bidder.

I acquired 4 splendid medals at this Long Beach show...most unusual.

An 1835 Connecticut Hart family hand worked and hand-engraved sharpshooter's medal to a 1st Sergeant with spread winged eagle, etc. on it.

A gem proof US mint .900 fine gold Gobrecht medal from Mass Charitable Mech Assn. Awarded for best photographs of Labrador and its Icebergs 1869, flawless in case of issue and two-aisle stopping silver suspension medals with incredible enameled portraits of Adm. Dewey and Adm. Schley and their respective War of 1898 Spanish American War ships...likely unique and literally show-stopping. I don't usually collect this late but these are Smithsonian quality and belonged to an 89 years old Philadelphia woman until a few weeks ago.

Alan Weinberg

To Barry Tayman

I just read the article in a recent Coin World about the Fraser/Pony Express medal. It made me curious about your organization. Several questions: How much is the

membership? Are the newsletters available for purchase if I don't join? Did the issue previous to this one have an article that was the first part of the Alexander article which would discuss the earlier works of the SOM, earlier than the 1952-61 period, and would that be available? I'm just starting to get an interest in medals and would like to learn more.

Gib Shell