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*The Newsletter of Medal Collectors of America*

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**Coming Events**

**January 14<sup>th</sup>**, MCA Meeting at noon at International Coin Show at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York City.

**January 16-19, 2006**, French Colonials and Betts Medals I of John J. Ford, Jr.

**May 23-25, 2006** Betts Medals II of John J. Ford, Jr.

**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](http://www.stacks.com) since last minute changes to the Ford schedule have been known to occur unexpectedly.



## From the Editor

There will be two sales of John Ford's Indian Peace Medals in 2006. These will be by far the most extensive offerings of these items ever held. Granted that Hunter (1923), Senter (1933), Bushnell (1882) and Garrett (1980-82) all had fabulous holdings of peace medals, the only collection comparable to Ford's was that of W.W.C. Wilson auction in four sales, 1925 to 1928.

Ford's Federal Series of Indian peace medals is, we are told, virtually complete, including several examples of the Washington oval. If memory serves, JJF owned roughly 15 of the large undated George III's. With this kind of supply, prices are not going to run away, so that collectors should have an opportunity to purchase one or more varieties on a rational valuation. These are truly magnificent and meaningful medals.

Not included in the Ford Collection is the HONOS ET VIRTU medal issued to Indians by Louis XV. We know of only one in collectors' hands (The Garrett piece). The ANS owns two, the Glenbow Museum one and the Chateau Rameszay one. We would be grateful to readers if they can locate other examples of HONOS ET VIRTU. If we get enough input, we will find a volunteer to write on that important chapter in history of which these medals are a part.

## The Bi-Centenary Celebrations for Lord Nelson and the Battle of Trafalgar

(by Christopher Eimer)

The last three months have seen much celebration in England for the Battle of Trafalgar and Lord Horatio Nelson, who met his end on 21 October 1805 at the battle of

Trafalgar, the most acclaimed of all British naval victories. In addition to various lectures, re-enactments and an exhibition at the National Maritime Museum, the three principal London auction houses of Bonham's, Christie's and Sotheby's each held a sale. On offer has been a veritable embarrassment of naval and military riches, concerning not only Nelson, but also Napoleon and Wellington, as well as events relating to the period.

The three auction catalogues collectively weighed in at close to 5 kilos, and numbered 1025 lots, amongst which were military and commemorative medals, presentation swords, manuscripts and autographed letters, ceramics, scrimshaw, paintings, prints and all manner of commemorative ware. Indeed all three sales contained material as astonishing for range as for quality and provenance, and it is clear that vendors were sufficiently persuaded - or astute - to recognize this as the moment to strike, and so it proved.

In marketing terms at least, it represented an apotheosis of opportunity, for the last of which one needs to go back to 1905 and the exhibitions and commemoratives produced for that first centenary. Indeed, some of the medals struck at that time were produced, as their inscriptions bear witness, from the very copper of Nelson's flagship HMS *Victory*. His death amidst his greatest naval campaign was to ensure him a unique place in British naval history, and with it a romance and following, the strength of which has rarely receded since that time, and the material on offer at these auctions is witness to this.

First out of the trap was Bonham's, whose sale on 5 July entitled 'Nelson & The Royal Navy 1750-1815', featured on its front cover a shell cameo of Nelson superimposed upon autographed manuscripts. Amongst them was a letter (Lot 16) that the twenty-eight year-old Captain Nelson had written to the Surveyor-General of Barbados in 1786. In it, he confronts the newly independent United States

of America in allowing their merchant ships to ply their trade in the West Indies, in contravention of the Navigation Act, for which the hammer came down at £12,600.

Twelve lots on could be found a carved wooden figurehead to HMS *Queen Charlotte* (Lot 28) produced in c.1784, which fetched £60,000, built by His Majesty's Naval Dockyard, and now, 221 years later, returning there. A pair of gold betrothal rings reputed to have been exchanged between Horatio Nelson and his love Emma Hamilton (Lot 145) were amongst the more personal items in this sale. The one mounted with the initial 'H' in pearled beads, the other mounted with a miniature painting on ivory of a female eye. Provenanced to Henry Morton Lee, 'a noted collector of Nelson', they hammered at £24,000 and a tad under their lower estimate. Each saleroom managed to bring to the auction block small naval gold medals awarded to captains. Bonham's managed to offer two such medals, the first of which (Lot 186) was awarded to Eliab Harvey, Captain of HMS *Temeraire* (Lot 186), which made £95,000, against an estimate of £50,000-70,000.

Sotheby's and Christie's both had an edge over Bonham's when it came to provenance, that essential ingredient when offering items with claims to the most direct and personal of possessions and mementoes. Nothing could illustrate this better than the first 58 Lots of the Sotheby auction, held on 5 October, which comprised the Matcham family property. As the lengthy introduction to the catalogue explained, these items were the personal possessions of Lord Nelson, from whom they had passed to his sister Catherine Matcham, and thence by descent to the present vendor.

Although short on medals, this group provided some of the more spectacular prices in that sale. A relatively humble combined knife and fork in silver, the very first lot of the sale, says it all. Seven-inches in length and simply engraved with a viscount and ducal coronet,

and with an ivory handle, it brought £53,000 against an estimate of £25,000-35,000. A gold- and diamond-mounted malacca cane (Lot 7) from the Matcham property had been presented to Nelson by the grateful inhabitants of the Greek island of Zante, following his victory over the French at the battle of the Nile. This was estimated at £80,000-120,000 but it took no less than £220,000 to bring this particular baby home. Scattered amongst the rest of the material at Sotheby's were various military and commemorative medals, perhaps most notably a small gold naval medal awarded to Captain Philip Broke of HMS *Shannon* (Lot 256) for his part in the capture of U.S.S. *Chesapeake* on 1 June 1813. As one of the most glamorous campaigns of the 1812 wars, this medal made £232,000 against a £150,000-200,000 expectation.

Closing proceedings was the sale held by Christie's on 19 October, and no less lavish was this catalogue. An inked sketch drawn in preparation for Auguste-Francois Michaut's medal with a personification of the River Volga (Bramsen 1166) comprised Lot 124, and sold just above its top bottom estimate of £1500. A finely made tea caddy, ten inches in width and produced from the timbers of the Victory was a most appealing item (Lot 69). Set in its centre with a silver portrait medal of Nelson, the estimate was pitched at £3000-5000, but it proved to be of sufficient interest to make £31,000. Amongst the Napoleonic material was a Consulate-period or early bicorn hat (Lot 98), said to have been worn by Le Petit General, and de-accessioned from the Smithsonian Institute in 1980. This had been pitched at a £3000-5000, but ended up making £66,000, suggesting the difficulty in projecting estimates on material of this nature.

Perhaps the most interesting provenance at Christie's was to be found on a small group of items coming direct from the Hardy family, the most significant of which was the small naval gold medal awarded to Captain Hardy (Lot 58). As he was later to become, Vice-

Admiral Sir Thomas Masterman Hardy (1769-1839) served alongside Nelson at Trafalgar, and the events which unfolded on the afternoon of battle were to ensure Hardy's place in the annals of British naval history and beyond. Walking the deck of *Victory* at the height of the battle and fully-uniformed, Nelson proved to be easy prey at the hands of a French sniper, elevated upon the rigging of the French ship *Redoutable*. Hardy was with Nelson at this fateful moment and attended him as he laying dying over the following few hours, and where he received Nelson's famous dying utterance 'Kiss me Hardy'. Bequeathed to Hardy's youngest daughter and thence by descent to the present owner and vendor, this most poignant of all associative medals carried an estimate of £80,000-120,000, and ended up selling for £248,000.

\* All prices include the buyer's premium, rounded to the nearest full amount.

## One Planet

(by Alex Shagin, Sculptor)

Newborn medal is like a child,  
 And children are our hopes.  
 Every artist and every family is looking  
 Into the future for their children...  
 Where there is a harmony and  
 Peace in the world.

Now, more than ever, we understand How  
 small our world is,  
 And how fragile is the peace.

When the astronauts on their way to the moon  
 Were looking out their round windows  
 Te tiny disc of their Mother Earth  
 Was as small as a medallion.

Put the medal on the palm of your hand And try  
 to get a feeling  
 Of holding your newborn.

For this medal I chose children

Freely and fearlessly dancing  
 Around the globe,  
 Holding their little hands  
 And carrying our hopes  
 That our civilization will not be lost,  
 That one-day,  
 There will be one people,  
 Living together on one planet.

## The Trafalgar Campaign and Boulton's Trafalgar Medal

(by Thomas F. Gates)

By mid-1804 Prime Minister William Pitt had proclaimed his policy of preparing for total war against the invasion threat posed by Napoleon Bonaparte across the English Channel. While Admiral Sir William Cornwallis blockaded brest, the small dynamic, charismatic Vice Admiral Horatio Lord Viscount Nelson K.B. had assumed command of the British Mediterranean fleet. The loss of his right eye and right arm in battle ashore only spurred on his determination to defeat the French foe.

After many months keeping watch on Admiral Villeneuve's fleet in Toulon, Nelson discovered on 30 March 1805 that the French fleet had vanished into the sea mists en route the West Indies. Nelson followed, never caught up, and so pursued Villeneuve back into European waters. After an inconclusive battle with Admiral Sir Robert Calder's channel fleet, the now combined French-Spanish fleet put into Cadiz. There Nelson on board flagship HMS Victory found his advisory. On 19 October 1805 his inshore squadron spotted Villeneuve's fleet under way. To prevent the enemy from sailing south toward Gibraltar, Nelson ordered "General Chase south east."

At dawn on 21 October he had caught up with Villeneuve off Cape Trafalgar on the Spanish coast. The latter formed his thirty-three line of battle ships into a roughly formed extended crescent with his flagship Bucentaure

ninth in line. The British commander ordered his flag captain, Thomas Hardy, to Steer Victory directly into the line to engage the French flagship. Following were Temeraire and other ships of Nelson's division of his twenty-seven ships of the line. His second in command, Admiral Cuthbert Collingwood, led the other British division to break into the rear of the enemy formation.

Victory, pounded by the French Redoubtable close aboard and Bucentaure at some distance, soon replied with a great blast into Bucentaure's stern from a huge 68 pounder gun on her forecastle. A terrific battle ensued lasting hours. Early on, Nelson in an old blue coat clearly marked with his various orders, became a target for a marksman on board Redoubtable. Wounded, he was carried below. But before he died Hardy advised him of his triumph over the combined fleet.

His maneuver to break the enemy line in two places with the ships fighting in the order in which they sailed and in a thrust which kept the enemy guessing until the last moment had succeeded. While a number of British ships took considerable punishment, dismasted and with heavy casualties, none struck their colors or sank. In all, the combined fleet lost twenty-one ships, sunk or surrendered. The great battle ended any threat of French invasion. The war on the continent would continue until Wellington's "close run" victory at

Waterloo 18 June 1815. But British sovereignty at sea was never in doubt after Trafalgar.

To celebrate the victory and the heroic death of Lord Nelson Mr. Matthew Boulton had struck the so-named Boulton Trafalgar medal.

According to the entry in the magnificent, double quarto volume British Naval Medals by Admiral of the fleet Prince Louis of







Battenberg (Marquess of Milford Haven) Boulton had worked with James Watt (inventor of the steam engine) to set up the first steam coining press in London's soho in 1788. Boulton's presses produced England's copper coinage and other coins until 1882.

The Trafalgar medal illustrated here is a silver copy issued possibly in the 1960s by John Pinches of London. The original striking was awarded in silver to officers of the Trafalgar fleet and in pewter only to ships' companies (which caused some resentment). A gold copy, purpose unknown, turned up in the British Museum. The copy medal is silver, about 60MM in diameter, plain edge with its issue number "No. 37" embossed, of 2500 struck. Obverse has a cameo of Horatio Nelson in left profile circumscribed "Horatio Viscount Nelson K.B. Duke of Bronte." Reverse shows

Nelson's ships breaking the enemy line above, those of Collingwood engaging the rear of the combined fleet. Circumscription reads the signal hoist Nelson ordered as Victory entered the fray: "England expects every man will do his duty." Base of reverse reads "Trafalgar Oct. 21, 1805."

## MEDALS OF THE HALL OF FAME FOR GREAT AMERICANS AT NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

### An Under-utilized Resource of American Medallic Art

(by David T. Alexander)

#### The Hall of Fame – An Overview

Our recent in-depth study of the Society of Medallists (SOM) in the *MCA Advisory* suggested medal collecting as a means of owning and studying work of great artists that the average collector could not afford in any other form. In addition, SOM medals were shown to have numerous varieties of edge marks and patination, inviting further exploration by the dedicated collector.

Echoes of this approach pervade the medal series of Hall of Fame for Great Americans at New York University (HOF). Here is a virtually forgotten source of the highest quality medallic art. Appearing in 1962 and continuing to around 1977, HOF medals never achieved the limited collector awareness won by SOM.

If HOF medals are recalled at all in 2005, it will be by collectors and dealers who are most likely to recoil with a disgusted "OH, THOSE THINGS!!!" This is a shame, since a serious re-examination of "those things" shows this series to be a marvelous resource of medallic sculpture, offering the work of many of the great artists represented in the Society of Medallists, and several others who never created an SOM medal.

Simply stated, HOF represents a trove of medallion art of the highest possible quality, consigned to undeserved oblivion as a monumental **COMMERCIAL FAILURE**, yet an unbridled **ARTISTIC SUCCESS!** HOF medals can be described as **DOUBLE SCULPTURE**. Each portrait was modeled on the three-dimensional bust in the colonnade, so that a proper “after Charles Grafly,” or in the case of the occasional medal and bust by the same artist, “Edmondo Quotrocchi after himself.”

The Hall of Fame was originally the concept of a great American educator, New York University Chancellor Henry Mitchell MacCracken (1840-1918), who created the university’s Bronx campus in 1885-1910. The Hall was endowed by Mrs. Finley J. Shepard (née Helen Gould) around 1900. Located at 181st Street and University Avenue in the Bronx, this “Westminster Abbey of America” includes a quarter mile-long colonnade around the heroically domed Gould Memorial Library, both designed by the great architect of the Gilded Age, Stanford White.

The Hall of Fame centered on a monumental gallery of bronze busts created by famous American artists, portraying some of the country’s greatest artists, writers, poets, musicians, scientists, soldiers, industrialists, statesmen, social reformers and inventors. The medal series presents *bas-relief* re-creations of these *sculptures in the round* crafted by a later generation of American sculptors!

The May 30, 1901 dedication was marked by a George Washington portrait medal by Austrian medallist Anton Scharff, struck by J.C. Christelbauer of Vienna that presents a view of the library and short sections of the colonnade. Apparently 105 Americans were ultimately inducted into the Hall of Fame, but only 98 busts were placed and only 94 of these were represented on medals commissioned by the Fine Arts Committee of the Hall of Fame.

The series included the medallion art of 42 sculptors, produced under the directorship of

Dr. Ralph W. Sockman and the chairmanship of Donald De Lue. Advising the Art Committee at various times were Past Presidents of the National Sculpture Society Lee Lawrie, Chester Beach, James Earle Fraser, Cecil Howard and Sidney Waugh. Serving on the working committee with De Lue were Stanley Martineau, Michael Lantz and Carl Paul Jennewein.

In his *The Sculpture of Donald De Lue: Gods, Prophets and Heroes* (David R. Godine, Boston, 1990, 234pp, heavily illustrated) D. Roger Howlett observed, “Most [medals] were commissioned during De Lue’s tenure as chairman. De Lue felt strongly about the project and its active continuation. New York University turned the Hall and their Bronx campus over to Bronx Community College in 1973. At that time the ongoing program of election and additional busts of inductees and medals was suspended and the Fine Arts Committee was disbanded soon after.”

Inspiring the medal program were endless requests for miniature busts of those enshrined. Providing such miniatures was economically impossible, but medals could answer this need at a reasonable cost, and the series was launched accordingly in 1962.

The Hall of Fame itself was governed by a complex election process involving some 125 Electors, “men and women of national affairs... eminently qualified to judge our nation’s immortals.” Initially, all nominees had to be male and Americans by birth, though naturalized citizens and women were admitted after 1914. The Electors chose seven persons from 16 categories for admission from lists submitted by the University Senate every five years.

These categories carried a waft of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and included authors, statesmen, scientists, naturalists, musicians and actors, educators, military, theologians, lawyers and judges, physicians and surgeons, business men and philanthropists, reformers, engineers and



architects, missionaries and explorers and ``men and women outside the foregoing classes.’’

In 1922 it was decided that all nominees had to be dead at least 25 years before being considered. Interestingly, only 12 of those enshrined had been Presidents of the United States. Selection rules were designed to assure against transience, creating a pantheon where, as New York infrastructure giant Robert Moses said, ``Youth may find a dramatic presentation of the history of our country, the progress of democracy, the glories of free enterprise, the record of ideals in action and the promise of the future.’’ Seen in this light, discontinuation may have been a triumph for political correctness, but a loss to the worlds of history and art!

Despite its artistic importance, landmark status and majestic view of the Hudson River, the Hall of Fame was sorely neglected after 1973, exposed to the ravages of acid rain, New York City’s pigeon population and the occasional vandal. It was still fondly remembered by such NYU alumni as Bronx Borough President and 2005 Democratic mayoral nominee Fernando Ferrer, ``When I was a student in the 1960’s, it was a great place for a cheap date.’’

Indeed, the derelict complex soon became known as the ``hall of shame,’’ and seemed doomed to unchecked decay. Then came the unexpected turn-around in the city’s fortunes under Mayor Rudy Giuliani and the Hall of Fame was the target of an unexpected \$1,3 million face-lift, spearheaded by its dynamic Director, Ralph Roarke.

Not only was the existing colonnade, language and philosophy halls and library thoroughly renovated but parts of the complex that had never been utilized were now slated for completion. Most notable was a state of the art auditorium equipped with the latest audio and video facilities, located beneath the great hall.

On April 5, 1999, the effort was recognized by the Lucy G. Moses Award for

landmark restoration, presented by the New York Landmarks Conservancy. A triumphal celebration of the Centennial of the Hall of Fame’s dedication was held in 2001. Unfortunately, this remarkable turnaround came long after the demise of the medal effort of some 30 years before.

### **THE HALL OF FAME MEDAL SAGA**

All HOF medals were struck by Medallion Art Co., headquartered in New York City until 1973 and unquestionably America’s premier maker of fine art medals. This ambitious series was aggressively advertised during the fast-spiking medal boom of the 1960’s, which had been triggered by the phenomenal success of the official *John F. Kennedy Presidential Inaugural Medal* and *Presidential Art Medals’ (PAM) JFK Presidential Medal*.

For all of its manifest attractions, the HOF series would prove even less of a commercial success than other short-lived medal series of the early 1960’s despite the impressive scope of the program. A basic problem was the cast of characters itself. It might have been foreseen that George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt, Robert E. Lee or Edgar Allen Poe would be best sellers, but such relatively obscure figures as Charlotte Cushman, William Thomas Morton or James Kent would not be.

Some Hall of Fame laureates were simply less exciting to late 20<sup>th</sup> century collectors. Undoubtedly major achievers in their day, Emma Willard, Simon Newcomb and Albert Michelson were simply not ``box office’’ in the 1960’s, although greater collector response to the series as a whole should have pulled the lesser lights along in the collectors’ pursuit of completeness.

Another design feature that often irritated viewers was the obligatory identification **THE HALL OF FAME FOR GREAT AMERICANS AT NEW YORK UNIVERSITY** placed somewhere on each

medal. Whether placed in boldface as legend, sans-serif as inscription or in script woven into a design, this wordy issuer's name inevitably interrupted study and appreciation of any medal design. It might have been better to have borrowed the SOM method of identifying the issuer through an edge inscription.

A fatal note of complexity was introduced at the start by the decision to offer the medals in two metals and three sizes: Bronze 76 and 44.5 millimeters and .999 Silver in 44.5mm. The conflicting visual qualities of Silver and Bronze are startlingly clear in medals of this series, especially on those of highest relief. The frosty antiqued Silver presents a dramatically different treatment of any design compared to the satiny, nuanced patina of the large Bronze medals.

The medals were accompanied by rather large folding black-and-white brochures providing biographies of the HOF honoree and of the sculptors of busts and medals, a history of the Hall of Fame, and recognition of Medallion Art Company and Coin & Currency Institute.

Albums measuring 10-5/8 x 8-7/8 inches were created for the Silver issues with glossy black hard covers silver-stamped with the series name and logo of a stylized bust and pedestal. Each album contained a black-flocked page with 12 die-cut openings that were singularly ill-fitting, some so large so that the medals quickly fell out, others too small so that the medals had to be jammed in with unseemly force. Rare was the HOF album that did not jingle from loose medals when taken from a shelf.

Distribution of the series was handled by Coin & Currency Institute, then at 393 Seventh Avenue, New York City. This firm was directed by the Friedberg family, well-regarded coin dealers and numismatic publishers who had successfully handled the *John F. Kennedy Inaugural Medals, the U.S.S. Enterprise, Civil War Centennial, Alaska and Hawaii Statehood Medals* a few years earlier.

Veterans of an era when sales outlets such as the lamented Gimbel's department store recall that sales of the large Bronze medals were relatively brisk at first, with demand for the Silver medals lagging behind. The small-diameter Bronze medals proved virtually unsalable, and thousands remained on the hands of the distributor for several years after.

Confronted with the bulky store of remainders of the Silver issues, managers were heard to promise, "When Silver gets to \$6 an ounce, we'll be rid of these damn things!" Undoubtedly a large number of the Silver medals did end up at busy refineries during the great Silver boom of the late 1970's.

That fate lay unsuspected in the future when the Hall of Fame series was launched with great fanfare in hobby publications already packed with ads for such competing programs as the several wildly successful PAM series and several flashes in the pan that included Heroes of Peace, House of Shields Presidential-Statehood medals and the Executive Series (U.S. Presidents and Vice Presidents).

And who could forget the late Toivo Johnson's grotesque series purporting to honor great American coin designers and engravers by appropriating their existing medallion art for commercial purposes. These several fizzles burst the 1960's medal bubble and delayed any solid growth of medal collecting for years to come.

The first HOF medals released and publicized failed to generate the degree of intense, collector enthusiasm needed for lift-off. For example, the Alexander Graham Bell and George Westinghouse medals were among the first advertised but their subjects and designs lacked the visual and artistic punch of the George Washington, Edgar Allen Poe or Theodore Roosevelt Medals.

Despite extensive advertising and fanfare, the series faltered and died by 1977. In 1978 about 7,000 unsold remainders of 90 of the large Bronze Hall of Fame issues were sold

to Johnson & Jensen (J & J) of Danbury, Connecticut, pioneers in the field of medal auctions. J & J publicity releases and photos were soon released, featuring an armored truck supposedly hauling this tonnage to Danbury. In fact, the truck was rented only for a couple of hours until photos could be taken in this early example of ``creative medallic advertising.’’

Special interests salvaged large numbers of at least three ``worst-sellers,’’ Charlotte Cushman, William Thomas Green Morton, and Sylvanus Thayer. A museum dedicated to Cushman in Philadelphia acquired her medals in quantity, the United States Military Academy at West Point gathered in the Thayer Medal, and an organization of dental anesthesiologists siphoned off the Morton Medals.

Even after the dramatic sale of the remainders, the HOF sales chart continued to show a flat line. Only a fraction of this immense hoard was sold by the Danbury firm and the unsold thousands were sucked into the long drawn-out J & J bankruptcy process in 1984, emerging in the possession of Collectors Auctions Ltd., which tried to extend the former firm’s auction methods with indifferent results.

Today, some 43 years after the first medal was released, a newer generation of medal collectors is wholly ignorant of this remarkable series. Unlike the increasingly appreciated SOM medals, most Hall of Fame medals can be found at very affordable prices at the present time. Perhaps a detailed examination of the HOF medals from the artistic and collector will awaken intelligent interest in these altogether remarkable though long-neglected examples of high quality medallic art.

**To be continued.**



**OFFPRINTS AVAILABLE**

(Spiral bound, signed and numbered)

- 1) Medals of the French & Indian War by David Menchell \$35.
- 2) SOM Medals by David Alexander \$40.