



The Newsletter of Medal Collectors of America

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Coming Events

January 11-14, 2007--New York International Numismatic Convention

MCA Meeting **January 13, 2007**

What's New On Our Website!

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE EVERY MONTH

www.medalcollectors.org

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.

From the Editor

Barbarians at the Gate

For a long time, medal collectors lived in a dream world. On the one hand, there was a plethora of useful reference works—Betts, Medallion Illustrations, Milford Haven and Pax in Nummis, to name just four. On the other hand, nobody cared. It seems like an outrageous combination but that's the way it was.

Nowadays, well-written catalogues of the LaRiviere and Ford Collections have changed all that. New players have been drawn into the game, with a consequent surge in prices. We old-time collectors yearned to share our hobby and now our wish has been granted.

In V9, #39 of the Esylum, Alan Weinberg provides excellent coverage of the first token and exonumia sale run by Heritage. He relates that the catalogue written by Harv Ganer was exceedingly well done, matching the high quality of the collection. Heavens to Murgatroyd, the material was slabbed and graded (outrageously per Weinberg) by a third party grading service.

Whether it was the prestige of Heritage or the inflated grades, the prices realized broke new ground. To quote Weinberg: "It looks like this is just the beginning of a major new jump in exonumia activity and prices if Heritage and Harv Ganer keep up their push to excel."

The Baldwin's auction on September 25th was more of the same. Many of the early British medals went for multiples of estimate. The silver Resolution and Adventure medal hammered at 4800 pounds (\$9100) compared to two somewhat better specimens in Ford XIV that fetched \$8500.

Even though a Ford price was not only confirmed but exceeded, there is no need to despair. In the sale there were two Betts medals of supreme rarity that were not in Ford (Betts 408 and 414). These fetched less than \$1000 each, confirming in our mind that there will be plenty of reasonably priced niches

going forward. We as collectors are fortunate that our specialty is so broad that no spotlight can capture everything in its glare.

Ford XVI (by John Adams)

Arguably the auction of the finest collection of peace medals ever assembled, Ford XVI was a solid success. Many of the most expensive lots went to the book, but there were approximately twenty active bidders in the room, many of them new to this branch of the hobby.

Perhaps the best way to benchmark values is to look at the large undated peace medals of George III. These appear quite regularly at auction and, thus, the Ford Collection, with no less than ten specimens, provided a meaningful test. The medals passed the test with flying colors, fetching \$11,000 to \$15,000, as against prices of \$5000 to \$6000 one to two years ago. In contrast, the small undated George III, which was described by the cataloguer as being unique in collectors' hands, made only \$16,000. The piece is not unique (we know of two others in collectors' hands), but given that it remains R-7, it seems fair to infer that few people are collecting these medals by size and die variety.

Top prices were fetched by the three Jefferson peace medals--\$165,000, \$160,000 and \$150,000—as well as by the lovely silver Aster medal at \$175,000. The Montreal medal, a piece more important than any of the foregoing, brought "just" \$135,000; its attractiveness was diminished by a vigorous attempt to efface the name of the recipient on the reverse.

The two French peace medals, which started the sale, sold for a mere \$1200 and \$1300. This design was issued both to Indians in North America and courtiers in Europe, with no way of telling which is which. Even so, we regard these sums as a pittance for something dated 1693 that was never copied in later times.

Higher priced but also bargains, in our opinion, were the two Lion and Wolf medals. The piece graded extremely fine brought \$25,000 whereas the very fine example fetched \$16,000.

The George I and George II trade tokens (aka “peace medals”) sold for unenthusiastic prices. This series deserves more attention than it has received. The real George II peace medals, sponsored by the Quakers in 1757, did much better. The gem fetched \$80,000 and the second best \$25,000; the condition of peace medals counts more than we would like to believe.

There was a treasure trove (67 lots) of federal peace medals. We would welcome a volunteer to describe this feast, because it is beyond our competence. Suffice to say that we will never see the likes of such a cornucopia again.

Ridgeway Medal (by John Sallay)

The Ridgeway Medal pictured nearby was given by the New York Society for the Promotion of Education Among Colored Children in 1855 to John W. Jacobs “for General Scholarship and Punctual attendance at School”. It is 59.5 mm in diameter (80.0 mm vertically, including the loop), weighs 59.9 grams and is completely hand-engraved on both sides, with a bright-cut cylindrical rim and matching integral loop. As you can see from the photo, the medal is a superb piece of mid-nineteenth century craftsmanship. For me, however, it is the history and symbolism that make this particular medal one of the most special of the over 2,500 school award medals in my collection.

By 1855, although blacks were still enslaved in the South, they were free in New York because the state had gradually abolished slavery between 1817 and 1841. Nevertheless, New York was still highly segregated for several decades, and black children were

educated primarily in Sunday schools and private charity schools. In 1847, a group of prominent blacks in New York City, led by Charles L. Reason, John Peterson and Charles B. Ray founded the New York Society for the Promotion of Education among Colored Children as a charity society to run black charity schools.

According to Carleton Mabee—whose excellent book Black Education in New York State (Syracuse University Press, 1979) provides much of the following history—the Society was chartered by the state legislature and it established a black high school in New York City in 1847. That school closed the next year, however, due to lack of funding. The Society also ran two elementary schools which received public funding and operated under the supervision of the New York City Board of Education. They charged tuition, though children who could not pay were educated for free. These two elementary schools had an enrollment of just under 1,000 students and were run by the society for five years, from 1848 to 1853. In the end, the Board of Education absorbed them into the citywide system, continuing to run them as segregated black schools until the 1880’s.

As was the custom in American schools of that time, the teachers and principals in the Society’s schools invited visitors to opening exercises, graduations and holiday celebrations, to examine the children orally and award prizes. It appears that they also held general examinations, for which prizes were given, similar to the best white schools in America and Europe. In 1857, the Society made a special appeal for better treatment of the black schools to a state commission that was investigating the city’s schools. In that appeal, they noted that “...Mr. Superintendent Kiddle, at a general examination of colored schools held in July last, (for silver medals awarded by the society now addressing your honorable body) declared the reading and spelling equal to that of any schools in the city.”

The obverse of this medal shows an elaborate school scene with a female teacher seated in front of a table, holding a book and appearing to either teach or give an examination to a boy who is standing in front of her, holding a book or paper at his side. The group of students looking on includes both boys and girls, although many urban schools of this period (including at least one of the Society's schools) had separate male and female departments.

On the wall is a map labeled "Africa" and "Smith's Geography". Rowell C. Smith's Smith's Geography On the Productive System: For Schools, Academies, and Families, one of the most popular school textbooks of the period, went through several editions by several publishers during the nineteenth century. A large number of wall maps were designed and published to accompany Smith's text. "Smith's Geography" may have a double meaning since the Treasurer of the Society and one of its most prominent members was James McCume Smith, MD. A leading black intellectual and activist, Dr. Smith was widely known for his advocacy of black self-help and the importance of integrating into mainstream society. This map, together with the globe on the table beside the teacher, seems to suggest to the student that it is important not only to understand your own heritage, but also to understand the broader world.

The inscription "Knowledge is Power" above is not unusual on school award medals, which often have allegorical scenes and/or instructive mottos. Given the likely social status of the recipient, however, it may also be doubly meaningful, suggesting that education (and implicitly, self-help) is the path to one's rightful, equal place in American society. This motto is attributed to Francis Bacon, but is often shown on medals in Latin as "Scientia Est Potentia" which suggests there may be a more ancient source. The partially draped curtain behind the teacher provides some aesthetic balance, but also represents the knowledge not

yet revealed, which can be attained through the teacher.

I will be the first to admit that his medal does not have the classical artistry of many of the struck medals by the Pingos or Wyons or certainly our own St. Gaudens, all of whose work is represented in my school medal collection. But this medal displays a wonderful American folk-art quality. Moreover, the fact that it is completely hand-engraved means it was unique and special not only to the recipient, but also to the individual engraver who must have spent hours engraving it.

I also appreciate the irony—perhaps even the political statement—that at a time when many blacks in America were not even free let alone provided an education, and when even in New York the conditions of the segregated black schools were inferior to those in the white schools, someone of wealth sponsored the creation of a medal for a black student that is more intricate and beautiful than virtually all such medals awarded to any student at that time.





The Flight of the Southern Cross
(by Tom Warner)

In 1928 The First Trans-Pacific Flight was made by Charles Kingsford Smith, Charles Ulm (Australians) and 2 Americans Harry Lyon, and James Warner (my Father). Upon their return to the USA, Lyon and Warner were each presented with a Gold Medal Commemorating this Historic Accomplishment.

This medal was commissioned by a citizens Committee, and the city of Oakland California, and made by Davidson & Licht Jewelers. The Medal is 4 Oz's of 24 Ct Gold and is 3" in diameter.

In 1958, Warner and Lyon returned to Australia, Where they dedicated the restored aircraft "The Southern Cross" and were each presented with a silver medal.

At that time Lyon had no knowledge of the whereabouts' or even existence of his original 1928 Gold medal.

Since that time, both men have passed on.

I have seen the Silver 1958 medal of Lyon's for sale on e-bay, but was unable to purchase it.

I do have both the 1928 & the 1958 medals of my Fathers. I would be glad to share the enclosed.

I am attaching some photos and a column from the Oakland Tribune July 11, 1928.

Information on this flight is readily available from many sources. The fact that the pilot was Australian has kind of pushed this to the back burner in US Aviation History.

This historic flight paved the way for the commercial flights that we enjoy today, both in navigation and the use of radio for the first time on long distance flight.

Jim Warner served in the US Navy as a "China Sailor" on the Yangtze River on gunboats from 1911, and on the flagship USS St Louis, and Destroyers in WW1, taught Radio in the Navy in the early 1920's, retired in 1927, and then was called back into the Navy and taught Radio in WW2.

I have much more information on the flight, and will gladly answer any questions, or supply you with whatever you need.

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Letters to the Editor

I have a 1974 bicentennial commemorative medal, obverse John Adams (1735-1826), reverse the first continental congress. What are they made of? The one I have is either bronze or gold. I read your article in *Coin World: The Medal Collectors of America Advisory* examines the 1976 says that the John Adams medals were put out in 1974. It was a very good article. Is this medal put out by the US mint? What is it made of and can you give me a price. Thanks and may God bless

L. Waldie

Greene's medal on US House Doors

<<1976_2_103.htm>> Go several paragraphs down to see about the medal. I'll bet they have Washington giving it personally to the deceased Greene!

Anne Bentley

Note: Anne has very sharp eyes. The article states: "The presentation of this medal to Greene is one of the eight scenes from history (sic) on the bronze doors of the United States House of Representatives."

Have any of our readers ever seen this apparent travesty?

Dear John,

The latest MCA Advisory was yet another great issue. I particularly appreciated Tony Lopez' piece on fakes, fantasies & fabrications. As you know, I have been studying fakery for a while, too. In its own way, it is nearly as fascinating as studying the real medals!

Every June here in Cody, WY, there are two major gun shows and a large western memorabilia show within a 2 week period. Amongst all of the high grade Winchesters, fancy Colt revolvers and wooly chaps, I often find peace medals that run the gamut of fakery variations noted by Mr. Lopez. Five years ago, one dealer had 10-12 of the peace medals of various presidents suspended from fancy collars. They look great behind glass! The collars were real (meaning they date to the late 19th or early 20th centuries), but every medal was a silvered restrike!

I'd like to propose that the MCA take on a major project. With the combined wisdom, experience and writing ability of the membership, perhaps MCA should create an encyclopedia of peace medals that would include:

1. Descriptions of all U.S. peace medals (albeit, this part already has been done

well by previous authors) & history section on the distribution of these medals.

2. Descriptions of all other peace or similarly described medals from other countries & history section on the distribution of these medals.
3. Descriptions of fur trade and non-governmental medals given to Indians & history section on the distribution of these medals.
4. Population information & current locations for those medals existing in limited numbers
5. For each medal, significant examples of how that medal has been faked in the manner presented by Mr. Lopez
6. Other sections to be determined by the membership.

This work could be a book that would serve as a valuable resource for many years to come. It could also be a CD ROM which could be produced relatively cheaply and more easily updated. As is true of any field of research, "we stand on the shoulders of giants". What will be our contribution to the future?

Best wishes,

Bob Pickering

[As a collector of Indian peace medals myself, I would be particularly interested in readers' reactions to Bob's idea. Ed.]

Dear Mr. Adams;

I just received the September issue in the mail this afternoon and immediately read through the whole of it, as is my wont. Always enjoyable and interesting. Although I am primarily a collector of "wearable" medals, I do also collect "table" medals, but primarily foreign and mainly those that are somehow related to India.

Although I am sure that you will receive numerous responses to the query from Kristal Bennett (Barnett ?) about the two medals with ribbons, just in case I will respond. These are the two medals given to virtually everyone who fought in the British (in the widest possible sense - including the Canadians, South Africans, Indians, etc., etc.) forces in World War I. The silver medal (George V obverse) is known as the British War Medal, and the bronze medal (the "angel" is a figure emblematic of "Victory") is known as the Allied Victory Medal. The ribbons, while correct, have been switched.

The rainbow ribbon belongs on the Allied Victory Medal and the other ribbon belongs on the British War Medal. Quite a few of the Allied Countries issued their own versions of the Victory Medal after WWI. The US version also features Victory on the obverse and has an almost identical ribbon.

From the point of view of both interest and value, the naming on the edge of the medal is critical. This typically consists of the individual's service number, his rank (abbreviated), his name, and his unit. For the most part, the higher the rank, especially if the medal is to an officer, the higher the value, and odd units (either because they were small in numbers of men or because they are for some other reason not often seen) are usually more sought-after. The medals having been acquired in Scotland, I would speculate that the word GLASGLOW is more likely GLASGOW, but that is not necessarily the case. I would also speculate that this is a pair - that is, they were both issued to the same man, but, once again, that is not necessarily the case. A pair like this with nothing special about it (not to an officer or to an unusual unit) might bring in the \$40 to \$50 range.

If not a pair (the medals to two different recipients) then a touch less.

If Ms. Bennett (Barnett) would like further information please feel free to pass on my e-mail and snail mail address.

Thanks for all your work for MCA. I was the Editor of the OMSA Journal for eight years, so I know what a chore it can be. (No, I am not volunteering to take on the Editorship of the MCA Advisory, thank you!).

Regards,

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John,

Ms. Bennett has the following WWI medals:

British War Medal 1918 designed by W. McMillan 6,500,000 silver struck at London Mint. George V on obverse; St. George and the dragon on reverse.

Gt. Britain Victory Medal 1919 designed by W. McMillan 5,725,000 issued in yellow bronze. Athena Nike on obverse; victory declared on reverse

Tell her that the ribbons have been switched: the rainbow ribbon belongs with the silver medal and the orange/blue ribbon belongs with the bronze medal.

Anne Bentley

Dear Editor,

Not until after re-reading David Alexander's notes on the Art Medal Auction in your September issue could I have come to fully appreciate the courageous decision made by the Presidential Coin and Antique Company to become a pioneer market maker for those oddly shaped, larger than average exnumia items, that are individually cast, hand finished, signed by the artist, and independently produced. Not every collector can even recognize these as a commemorative.

In these pages where we seldom get to discuss the future of the numismatic art medal, please allow me to express my profound gratitude to Mr. Joseph Levine for taking the risk and offering something so new and different that it might one day turn out to become an art form for the new millennium.

As I watch some of our medalists actually being rewarded for not exercising their own imagination and often motivated to recycle the vintage designs of the by gone era only because those rarities continue to set new records in the auctions I start to understand also why some of our newly designed numismatic "masterpieces" are so "successful" in mass-culture "popularity charts" trying to join the ranks with the plastic veneer, elevator music and the summer movies. As we all well know, medallic art was created by the fine artists of the Renaissance much inspired by the humanistic ideas of the classical antiquity in an attempt to produce an enduring legacy of the universally recognized cultural values to be shared with the posterity. Let's face it. Without the "art," medals are just a record-keeping device and as such not even a very accurate or reliable one compared to all the innovations of modern age high-tech. Every effort to apply the same principles to the medal design as to the commercial products of corporate thinking (always with one eye on profitability) will certainly contribute to the acceleration of the ongoing crisis in the traditional arts and crafts.

Analyzing the medals created in the last several decades one can not help but notice the proliferation of timid, sophomoric, insignificant artworks lacking the style, the skill and knowledge on both ends, the creative artists as well as the commissioning parties. Bad education helps to sell bad art and as long as the innocent, the ignorant and the indifferent will continue to accept, it the society as a whole (as well as the future generations) will continue to pay dearly for the mistakes we make today.

Need we remind ourselves that the enormous success of the artistic “enterprise” of the Renaissance and its influence on the development of human civilization had been made possible mainly thanks to the generosity of the enlightened patrons who cared about the positive and powerful image they wanted to project way beyond their own times.

Just think about it when you compare our national endowment for the arts budget figures with, let’s say the \$300 million(!) fund for the NY Metropolitan Opera or the J.P. Getty quarter billion(!) dollars annual(!) acquisition budget.

Sincerely,

Alexander Shagin