
The MCA Advisory

The Newsletter of Medal Collectors of America

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Coming Events

August 8-12, 2007--ANA Convention in
Milwaukee

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

On Saturday the 13th, the Club held a meeting in conjunction with the New York International Coin Convention. The meeting was an unalloyed success, with lively participation from most of the 25 members who were present.

Topics covered ranged from our own forthcoming elections to sponsoring a candidate for the ANA Board (see below) to propose improvements for our website. There will be more details on these issues in our February number, as well as specifics regarding our next meeting at the ANA Convention in Milwaukee. Suffice to summarize by noting that our members are awash with good ideas. For its part, the club boasts healthy finances (\$8600 in the bank) and a growing membership (146 paid plus honorees).

Chris Eimer, David Menchell and ye editor led a panel discussion on: The Long Term Impact of the John J. Ford, Jr. Sales on Medal Collecting. By any measure, the popularity of the sales has led to an increase in prices. Eimer cited the British Resentment medal (Betts 584) which soared from \$8000 in LaRiviere to \$32,000 in Ford, a fourfold increase. The Libertas Americana in silver escalated even more dramatically, rising from less than \$10,000 in LaRiviere to more than, \$100,000 in Ford. Heavens to murgatroyd! Ye editor argued that such examples were more the exception and merely part of a natural reaction to the huge increase in high quality material for sale. Offsetting price inflation was the solid informational value of the catalogues: a corpus of detailed descriptions on such neglected areas as the victory medals of Louis XIV and French jetons in general now permits budget-conscious collectors to acquire these items with the confidence that comes through knowledge. In a similarly positive vein, Ford's voluminous holdings of George III peace medals has permitted a bevy of new collectors to enter the halls of history in an especially meaningful way.

David provided a balance to the Ford mania by illustrating the tremendous upsurge of activity of eBay. If John J. Ford, Jr. had never collected any medals, the technology of the internet is introducing waves of a huge variety of material--typical lower priced—to a broad audience. In a graphic illustration of the point, Dave brought a dozen of his eBay prizes to the meeting. Thank you Dave and thank you Chris (all the way from England).

Joseph Boling

Attached is a clearly stated request by Joseph Boling for nomination to the ANA Board. Medal Collectors of America has not ventured "into politics" heretofore but we have every right to sponsor candidates for office in the ANA if we so choose. Indeed, we could nominate up to seven candidates for the Board (there are seven vacancies). Please give your president your feedback on this issue and I will act accordingly.

John W. Adams

Joseph E. Boling requests nominations from ANA clubs and members

Joe Boling has announced his candidacy for the office of ANA governor. Joe and I are soliciting nominations from ANA members and ANA member clubs. Enclosed are a nomination form for your club and two individual nomination forms along with a postpaid return envelope. Your next club or board meeting would be a good time to discuss the issues and complete the forms.

In Joe's press release he wrote: 'How am I qualified to be a governor of the ANA? I am a retired Army colonel (28 years service in the Infantry, Ordnance Corps, and Adjutant General's Corps), with a dual- concentration

MBA (administrative theory/organizational behavior, and computer management). I was president of the International Bank Note Society 1986-1990 and have been their treasurer since 1993. I was secretary of the Pacific Northwest Numismatic Association from 1994-2006 and also their treasurer 1996-2006 (I now reside in Indiana, so I gave up those posts this year).

“I have been an ANA member since 1974 (converted to life member in 1981), and have been an ANA exhibit judge since 1978. I have been a member of the ANA’s exhibiting and judging committee for eighteen years. I have been ANA’s chief judge for fourteen years. I have taught at the ANA Summer Seminar (both weeks) for the past eight years (principal or co-instructor in four courses, assistant or guest instructor in eight courses). I have been recognized by the ANA with the Glenn Smedley Medal, the Medal of Merit, the lowland Wood Medal, and the Farran Zerbe Memorial award.”

Boling’s platform is founded on the ANA’s role as a service organization for hobbyists. He says--

“I believe that the ANA has strayed from serving its individual members (including clubs). The emphasis has moved toward becoming a ‘heavy hitter’ with government agencies, inserting ourselves into movements to establish museums and other ‘outreach’ programs that do little to serve individual collectors. Yes, it is desirable to raise public awareness of numismatics, but not when that means draining the organization’s fiscal resources and diverting staff hours to programs in which most members cannot participate. If such efforts can be funded with donor money, then we can provide the specialist knowledge to ensure that the programs are accurate and, if possible, benefit the collecting community. But those millions of dollars cannot be generated from member dues. If ANA wants to play in those parks, we need someone on staff who can

bring in donations of several million dollars annually. Nobody is doing that today.

“Speaking of the ANA staff, having been to HQ every year for quite a while, and to every convention for quite a bit longer, I can see the deterioration of morale that has occurred among ANA’s employees. The ferocious turnover rate is a symptom of a leadership climate that must be changed. I will do what I can as a member of ANA’s governing body to effect such changes.

“ANA should be a collector-oriented organization. Selling our name and reputation to the highest ‘industry’ bidders when we cannot (or will not) regulate the efficacy of the product provided by those bidders is a disservice to the membership and to those in the general public who believe that the ANA represents collectors. We are doing nothing to rebut the statement that ‘ANA cares more for dealers than for collectors.’ Yes, dealers are also members but a dealer with an annual revenue stream approaching a billion dollars should have no more voice than a member who collects nickels from circulation.”

I am requesting nominations for Joe (and later, votes) from individual and club members of ANA. Please use the enclosed post paid envelope to return the nomination form to me. I can also be reached via email to ThomasSheehan@msn.com, Phone (206) 949 2646. Joe Boling can be reached at P0 Box 29344, Indianapolis, IN 46229-0344. Phone 317-894-2506, email joeboling@aol.com.

Greco Plant Announcement

America’s Newest Plant For Producing Art Medals Built in Connecticut

(by D. Wayne Johnson) Copyright © 2007

Without fanfare but with a giant leap of faith for the fine art medal industry, the

Greco family of Connecticut has quietly built America's newest plant for the creation of medallion art and highly detailed metal casting. Investing more than \$3 million, the family built a specialized plant in New England for design and production of medals and sculptural reliefs.

While the plant is spanking new, Greco family members are longtime crafts- men in the rarified field of bas-relief reproduction and art metal patination. In fact, family patriarch Hugo Greco, celebrated his fiftieth year in the field October 15, 2005. In 1955 he had joined Medallion Art Co., then of New York City, and rose rapidly through three production departments to be foreman of the finishing department before the firm moved to Danbury Connecticut in 1972.

Hugo Greco, 75, a native-born Italian, brought to the position a finely honed heritage of craftsmanship and appreciation of glyptic art objects. The heritage will continue as he has brought his two sons into the family business and trained them in the multitude of metalworking and finishing skills. Enrico "Ricky," 41, and Michael, 36, will certainly carry forth the family tradition of fine craftsmanship into the next generation.

The new plant is located in the Francis J. Clarke Industrial Park on a curving road among gentle rolling hills in west central Connecticut in the quiet hamlet of Bethel. (This town is long known as the last home and studio of famed sculptor Anna Hyatt Huntington who, with her philanthropist husband, Archer Milton Huntington, donated their estate – which spanned parts of Bethel and Redding – to Connecticut as a state park).

This is the third move for the Greco firm since its founding in 1986, with larger quarters each time. Future growth is planned in advance this time with the present building. Greco Industries occupies the front half of the one-floor, high-ceiling building. The back half of the building is rented out

to a local foundation for their direct mail operation with the proviso that the firm can reclaim the area when needed.

High quality medals and trophies are most prominent among the products the firm manufactures. No pot metal and quickly machined items made here; all products are made from sculptors' models. The firm's clients are just as high class. The firm is, in effect, the official medallist to the National Collegiate Athletic Association, creating all the NCAA's trophies and medals. The trophy held over the heads of the winning team shown in news photos at the end of any sports season is a Greco product.

To honor the centennial of Andrew Carnegie's establishment of a fund to award individuals a medal for lifesaving, the foundation issued this silver-plated 2 1/2-inch medal in proof surface. Collectors can still **obtain the medal for \$80 at the official distributor, CyberCoins at www.cybercoins.net while supplies last.**

A recent production is the Carnegie Hero Fund Centennial Medal, creating a new portrait of their benefactor, Andrew Carnegie, for the Carnegie Hero Fund Foundation for its second century. The firm now produces the Hero Fund Medals, as the organization bestows a medal usually to about a dozen civilians a year for lifesaving in America and Canada.

The medal was quite a challenge to produce because, at founder Carnegie's insistence, the recipient's name and inscription must be in raised lettering. This requires a special **insert die** to be inserted within the reverse die for every medal. That's tricky medal production.

Even more tricky are reliefs made by electrode position, a technology in which the firm excels. End products are called "galvanos" in honor of Luigi Galvani, an Italian scientist, the first person to observe, in 1791, electric current. Electricity is required to deposit tiny particles of metal to build up on a pattern to form a sculptural relief.

The process, which appears mysterious to some, requires knowledge

of metallurgy, chemistry, physics, and art. It all takes place in large tanks filled with an electrolyte solution in which the pattern is wired to conduct a mild electric current and immersed.

Gold, silver, copper – any metal that conducts electricity – can be electroformed. But the number of variables, composition of the solution, its pH factor, its temperature, amperage of the current, preparation of the pattern, all must be carefully controlled by Greco craftsmen.

Those NCAA trophies are relief casts mounted on two-foot tall walnut plinths. But they are given a patina, a permanent coloring of the surface metal, before being mounted on the wood trophies. In a year's time Greco makes hundreds of these high-grade trophies for over two dozen different sports for the national collegiate sports organization.

Bronze metal patination is one of the firm's specialized talents. The process is similar to coloring bronze statues. An acid solution is applied to the bronze object – medal, galvano or statue – that chemically alters the surface metal. Colors are typically green or brown, but virtually a rainbow of metallic colors can clothe the naked copper or bronze skin. It is not a coating, but a permanent, protective, attractive surface. No wonder it is applied to statues and other art works.

Hugo Greco is regarded as a master of bronze patina work. He had to apply, or create, more than forty patina formulae for the prestigious Society of Medallists, a series of art medals created by Medallic Art Co., when he headed up their finishing department.

Two art medals were issued every year, each medal was intended to have a different patina finish, to be harmonious with its artistic design. The medals were designed by top American sculptors—Paulanship, Malvina Hoffman, Herbert Adams, James Earle and Laura Gardin Fraser, and, of course, Anna Hyatt Huntington—among 130 American artists.

An underwater scene, on an art medal created by sculptor Frank Eliscu for his Society of Medallist #70, for example, was given a sea-water green patina created by Greco. Even more dramatic was the Great Religions medal series. Every one of these medals bore a patina created by Greco in consultation with the artist and authorities for that religion. The patina had to be significant. One matched the color of a church roof.

Another process occurring in the Greco plant is plating. Here objects, usually medals, can be plated with silver, gold or other precious metals. An award medal, for example, can be struck in bronze but treated for three classes of award, bronze, silver, gold. There is more to finishing a complete art medal than merely treating the object that comes from the pressroom.

Art medals are usually given a “French finish” – oxidized and highlighted – to display contrast for the human eye to behold. After this, or any of two dozen different finishing steps, the medal is then dried and lacquered. Producing a fine art medal is not a simple process, but it includes technologies the Greco family understands well from beginning to end, derived from over a half-century's experiences.

Frequently medals need to be inscribed. To accomplish this, master engraver Robert Banyai heads up a three-man department surrounded with modern equipment, most of which are computers. Recipients' names, dates, events are inscribed, or engraved on a die, like in the case of the Carnegie Hero Fund Medals.

Having dealt with hundreds of American artists, reproducing their bas-relief sculptures – often for museum collections – is an every day occurrence for the Grecos.

The firm does not sell medals directly to medal collectors (at least not yet). You must acquire these from others, as is the case of the Carnegie Hero Fund Centennial Medal (see illustration above). There is one area, however, in which the firm provides an active service to the medal fraternity. That is in *refinishing*

medals. This may seem alien to medal collectors who moved on from collecting coins (where any such act would be forbidden).

Medals -- particularly art medals with a patina finish -- enjoy the privilege that they can be refurbished. A badly toned item, or one with carbon (sulfur) spots, can be given a new surface treatment, to return to the original finish or sport an entirely new one.

It stems from Original Intent. It was every medal maker's original intent to provide a beautiful object. It can be made new and beautiful again by refinishing.

The process is not cheap. It doesn't pay to refinish a dollar medal. But it can greatly enhance a favorite item in your fondest collection. Medal collectors can inquire about refinishing medals; get in touch with one of the Grecos. Phone (203) 798-7804, fax (203) 778-6529, or by email: greco86@sbcglobal.net They do not employ salesmen. You must talk with the owners.

Some Notes on the Congressional Gold Medal Awarded To Charles Lindbergh (by Scott Miller)

Although the first successful flight of an airplane by the Wright brothers at Kitty Hawk in 1903 went virtually unnoticed at first, subsequent milestones in aviation were better publicized throughout the 20th century. Prior to the inauguration of the space program, the single achievement that most caught the public's attention and admiration was Charles Lindbergh's solo transatlantic flight from New York to Paris in May 1927.

In recognition of his achievement, Lindbergh was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor and the Distinguished Flying Cross, as well as a promotion to colonel. Following these honors, in the act of December 14, 1927, the President was authorized to present in the name of Congress, "a medal of honor to Colonel Charles A. Lindbergh, United

States Army Air Reserve, for displaying heroic courage and skill as a navigator, at the risk of his life, by his non-stop flight in his plane, the Spirit of St. Louis, from New York City to Paris, France, on May 20, 1927, by which he not only achieved the greatest individual triumph of any American citizen, but demonstrated that travel across the ocean by aircraft was possible". (quoted in Medals of the United States Mint Issued for Public Sale, Revised 1972, by Captain Kenneth M. Failor, USNR and Eleonora Hayden, pp. 263 – 264)

Bronze copies of the gold medal designed by Laura Gardin Fraser have long been one of the most popular of the mint list medals. The obverse depicts a bust of the youthful Lindbergh, while the reverse shows the lone eagle soaring among the clouds; the sun and stars symbolic of Lindbergh's flight through night and day.

According to the Report of the National Commission of Fine Arts (Eleventh Report, January 1, 1926 – June 30, 1930, pp. 90-92) Ms. Fraser submitted the winning design from a competition arranged by the Director of the Mint. Among the artist's papers is a sketch for a different reverse, similar in many respects but portraying a nude male figure flying through the clouds, rather than the eagle seen in the final version. There are also differences in the clouds, stars and other features. (photo courtesy of the Archives of American Art).

Although the earlier design is well executed, the final version is certainly the more satisfying of the two; the nude male in the earlier sketch is less inspired than the eagle, and the overall design a bit awkward. Fraser's final, simple design with its graceful yet powerful imagery proved a worthy memorial to Lindbergh's heroic achievement.

Letters to the Editor

John,

Bravo to you for reminding us in your "Copies" editorial that medal collecting is not just a hobby of a fetishist, but can be--and often is--a deeply rational pursuit, rooted in appreciation of history and aesthetics.

It may not be a nice thing to say, but your comparison of 19-century collections, with all their copies, aftercasts and electrotypes, to what is expected of a fine medal collection of today--"originals" only - suggests that our ancestors were a whole lot more rational, commonsense, and prone to sensible compromise, than we are today.

Your editorials (I recall another, illustrated one, from a few months ago) help us stay focused on the bigger picture, and remind us what is important here and what is subordinate; if the rules of strict purism get in the way of deeper understanding of history and of wider aesthetic experience, it is perfectly ok to bend the rules.

Thanks for keeping us on the right track!!!

Best,

Lev Tsitrin

Some time ago, a member requested that we post information on new medals being produced. There are too many being made to keep up across the board, but here are two nice ones; The Libertas Americana and the 1784 Franklin Natus Boston.





They can be ordered from www.talismancoins.com in silver or bronze at the prices indicated on this web-site--Ed.

Dear Mr. Adams,

Thank you very much for your time on the phone this morning and your interest in featuring the restrike medals of Monnaie de Paris.

Images of the 1784 Benjamin Franklin Natus / Genius bronze medal (regular and high resolution) are attached. The Libertas Americana images will follow.

This medal can be found on our web site at:

<http://www.talismancoins.com/servlet/Detail?no=44>

It takes a little while to load (as a PDF), but an illustrated story on the Monnaie de Paris Franklin program from last year can be read at: <http://www.money.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Home&CONTENTID=5655&TEMPLATE=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm>

Please let me if you have any questions, have problems viewing/using the images, or need additional information.

Thank you again and best regards,

John

John Winkelmann
ANA Life Member

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