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# The MCA Advisor

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*The Newsletter of Medal Collectors of America*

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**Dues:** \$20.00/year

## **Our Calendar**

1. 8/18-8/22/2004 – ANA Convention in Pittsburgh. Our meeting date is Thursday, August 19, 2004 at 3:00 p.m.

## **From the Editor**

Roughly a third of our membership has yet to pay their dues. Those of you who get a “pink slip” in the current issue are in that third. If you just haven’t gotten around to writing a check, kindly gird your loins. Contrariwise, if you do not have \$20 worth of interest in medal collecting, we will spare you the burden of future issues.

Dues paying aside, the interest in medals is in a strong up trend. We have received a constant flow of new subscribers, as non-medal collectors discover the beauty (and value) of these objects. The future flow of Ford material is destined to create an even broader sense of awareness.

Looking back on the first five issues of 2004, we have provided a solid menu of articles along with timely reports on current events. There is more such in the current issue with, looking ahead, no dearth in prospect. Where we have thus far failed is in attracting letters to the editor, a la Penny Wise or E-Sylum. We need travelogues and, indeed, all manner of audience participation. No matter how hesitating your command of the English language, we will turn your commentary into vibrant prose. Trust us. (John W. Adams)

## The Ford Library Sale

George Kolbe's auction of the John J. Ford, Jr. Library was a seminal event. The quality of the material surpassed all prior offerings by a wide measure. George's cataloguing was world class and the bidding was frenetic. Auction lots of special interest to medal collectors:

<u>Lot #</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Hammer Price</u>
162	Baker's Medallion Portraits of Washington	\$ 650
174	Belden on Indian Peace Medals	750
180	Annotated C.W. Betts	325
243	Bushnell Bid Book	12,000
343	W.H. Hunter Bid Book	7,000
393	Courteau's manuscript on jetons	1,900
523	Grueber's Medallion Illustrations (the plates)	1,400
635	Set of Van Loon's (French edition)	5,250
637	J.F. Loubat on American medals	700
663	Medina's Medallas Relativas Europeas	700
677	Superb set of Milford Haven	4,400
766	W.W.C. Wilson with 56 plates	3,750
767	W.W.C. Wilson Bid Book	5,750
840	Fernand Davis Bid Book	1,700
948	Max Mehl's set of Fonrobert	950

and much much more.

Club members "scored" on a vast quantity of proprietary material that has not been available for generations. John Ford collected knowledge, which he succeeded in accumulating beyond any numismatic bibliophile before him. Hopefully, the distribution of that knowledge to new collectors will lead to its broader dissemination. If so, we have much to anticipate.

Granted that John Ford collects knowledge, how does one go about this? It will richly repay any numismatist to make a careful reading of the entire catalogue. The non-numismatic material will prove especially instructive: never a rash spender, John spent large sums to acquire city directories, complete runs of the papers of our founding fathers,

books on mechanical science, books on Indian treaties, a set of American State Papers regarding Finance and the like. Knowledge that relates to medals can be found just about anywhere. A good way to begin is to get your name on the mailing lists of publishers and rare book dealers alike. It takes time to cast the net for knowledge but, as John Ford demonstrates so ably, the effort pays off.

Ford Library I featured big ticket lots. Sales II and III will contain many items of lesser value but yet of considerable worth. Knowledge comes in little packages as well as big. (John W. Adams)

## ANS Library Move -- Sixth Floor & Rare Book Room

By D. Wayne Johnson.

Librarian Frank Campbell escorted me onto the elevator and we rose to the sixth floor. This is the second level of the American Numismatic Society's new home for the World's Largest Numismatic Library (on floors five and six). Imagine! Two floors of numismatic books, journals, documents, data! I had died and gone to numismatic book heaven!

Layout of the sixth floor is similar to the fifth. A small receptionist room to the right as you enter, and a large room at the far left rear for the rare books. This level will be the domain of assistant librarian Barbara Bonous-Smit. Her office is at the rear directly above Frank's on the floor below. I perceive this level will be the entrance for visitors of the future. Sign in please.

Shelving -- similar to the movable shelves on the floor below -- is at the sides like on five. Here are all the library's numismatic journals and all the non-numismatic books. These are already shelved and ready for action.

Study tables are intended to be in the center of the room. I noted the wires to be connected to outlets at the tables. Thank you, thank you. My laptop is so old my batteries cost more than a new Dell computer (and twice as heavy). I need to plug in. At the old library there was only one table (on the lower level) that had a plug hidden next to the set of Benzeits behind the only chair to access that

plug. (Only once, though, did I have to ask someone to move so I could do so.)

It is the Rare Book Room on this floor that is the epicenter of the numismatic book world. Here will be found the one-of-a-kind numismatic literature, the irreplaceable documents, the nearly 150-year old library has acquired. [November 3, 2008 will be the library's 150th anniversary]

It is inconceivable you could write so much as a 2-page article on any numismatic subject without research at this resource.

At first glance, most of what you see in the RB Room is archival boxes. Oh, what numismatic knowledge they contain! Frank pointed to a row of seven or eight gray boxes. "Here is the New Netherlands archives," he said.

"Auction catalogs and bid books?" I asked of the NN archive. "That plus some correspondence as well," Frank replied, with mention of Walter Breen, John Ford, and others (sometime employees of the NYC numismatic firm, prominent in the 1950s and 60s). The story is that these surfaced in Charles Wormser's estate, were acquired by Anthony Terranova, who donated them to the library.

Overall the appearance of what is on the shelves is Clean and Well Organized. Not only for the Rare Book Room but for the library total. So well organized – despite the fact the shelf labels are not on the shelving yet – that Frank and Barbara may have less to do. You won't need to ask them the location of what you are looking for.

That, plus all the holdings are on computer, even down to articles in journals. (Not every article is cited, of course, but citations to Coin World articles have long since passed the 5,000 mark years ago, more than any other journal.)

Seeing those well housed, labeled, organized, and indexed items ready for use – particularly in the Rare Book Room – made me think. What in my own library should end up here? I do have some rare books, one or two unique, the bid books from my own auction firm, perhaps some of my own files. A ten-drawer photo file,

cabinet drawer of numismatic subjects, another of my writings.

I made inquiry to Frank about receiving donations. I don't remember his exact words, but somehow it meant, "later, not now." His routine work has been set aside for the move. He did state it has been weeks since he viewed his email. He expected it contained thousands of messages, mostly public inquiries requiring answers. So for the present, don't email Frank don't call, don't write. He's very busy. But think of what books in your library should be added to the World's Largest Numismatic Library. Meanwhile there is a donation book auction to support the Francis D. Campbell Library Chair (details elsewhere). I couldn't think of a better service to numismatic literature.

The library is slated to be available for the summer graduate seminar (for graduate students and junior faculty) June 1 and open to the public June 18.

### **The Literary Premium Medals Awarded by the Literary Society of King's College in New York, 1767-1771**

By Vicken Yegparian (a synopsis of a talk delivered at the ANS COAC, May 2004)

In late 2001, Stack's handled a hand-engraved silver medal of King's College, the colonial precursor of Columbia University in the City of New York. Although the medal was little known or understood by numismatists at the time, primary source documents at the New-York Historical Society and a study of the three surviving King's College medals have expanded our understanding of the item that clearly deserves a place in the ranks of Betts medals.

The Literary Society of King's College issued these medals, which was an organization of men connected to the College who had agreed to subscribe the sum of £3 yearly for a five-year period beginning November 1766. Among these men were Sir Henry Moore, colonial governor of New York, General Thomas Gage, commander of British troops in North America, and men of prominent New York families like Leonard

Lispenard, Samuel Verplanck, and James Delancey. The purpose of the Society was "...the encouragement of Learning, and the Excitement of Emulation and Attendance among the Students of this College," as announced in the *New-York Gazette* of June 12, 1766. Premiums were to be issued to deserving students using the funds collected, and the premiums were to be in the form of medals or books.

Aside from a couple mentions of the King's College Literary Society in the contemporary press, the Society kept a fairly detailed record of its accounts and actions, including the awarding of medals. These manuscript "Minutes", in addition to various broadsides published by the Literary Society, are in the collections of the New-York Historical Society and greatly enhance our understanding of the Literary Society and its award medals.

The three surviving medals, although hand-engraved, are very similar. Their obverses depict *Alma Mater*, the personification of the college, with children, representing students, at her feet. These motifs originated as the King's College seal in the 1750s and continue to this day as the seal of Columbia University. On the obverse is the legend *PRAEMIUM LITERARIUM COLLEGI REGALIS NOVI EBORACI IN AMERICA* [A Literary Prize of the Royal College of New York in America]. The reverse depicts the goddess Minerva bestowing a medal to a student in academic regalia and the legend *EXIMIO JUVENI PROPTER INSIGNES IN ARTIBUS PROGRESSUS* [To an Outstanding Youth on Account of Noteworthy Progress in the Arts].

A close reading of the Literary Society's "Minutes" reveals that 28 of these medals were commissioned. Eight were ordered from famed New York City engraver Elisha Gallaudet in 1767, with two payments of £8 each made to him in May and November for these medals. Up to now, published research mentioned only Gallaudet as a maker of these medals. Hitherto unrecognized was an order of 20 additional medals by the Society from London that were received in May, 1769. Thus there are two distinct classes of medals and the extant medals fit readily into these two groups.

The first class consists of the two surviving medals of Gouverneur Morris and Benjamin Moore, both awarded at the King's College Commencement of 1768. We know these to be the work of Elisha Gallaudet because they were awarded in 1768, fully one year before medals were received from England. In addition, the engraving work exhibits stylistic similarities to a 1758 bookplate achieved by Gallaudet for the New-York Society Library. Although the Morris medal itself is not named, it was discovered in England in association with documents and a silver spoon tracing their origins to Gouverneur Morris and his descendents. This was the specimen handled by Stack's and it is now the only piece in private hands. The Moore specimen is held by the Museum of the City of New York and was a gift of a Mrs. Robert LeRoy in 1946. It is the only Literary Society medal with the recipient's name actually engraved on the medal.

The Gallaudet engraved medals, executed in 1767, are the third earliest medals produced in the thirteen colonies, after only the 1756 Kittanning Destroyed medal (Betts 400) and the 1757 Quaker Indian Peace Medal (Betts 401), both of which are domestically produced medals of the French and Indian War. Since these two medals are both of a military or strategy nature, the silver Literary Premium of the Literary Society of King's college is *the first American-produced medal of a purely civilian nature*. In addition, the Gallaudet medals are the *first collegiate academic award medals produced and issued in the thirteen colonies*, as the earlier but no longer extant 1762 Sargent medal (awarded in 1766) of the College and Academy of Philadelphia (University of Pennsylvania) was produced in England.

The second class of King's College medals consists of a single medal held by the Columbiana Library at Columbia University. It has probably been in Columbia's collections since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as this specimen was used as the source for an engraving published in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* in 1884. Its pedigree has unfortunately been lost. Although the motifs and legends are the same as the Gallaudet medals, the engraving work is perceptibly different, and the medal is slightly larger and much heavier than the Gallaudet medals. The Columbiana specimen has two hallmarks at the

lower obverse periphery. One is the English lion mark indicating a silver fineness of .925, or sterling, and the other is the rectangular R·R hallmark of silversmith Richard Rugg, who was active in London from the 1750s to the 1770s. These English hallmarks indicate that the Columbian specimen is the only survivor from the group of 20 medals ordered from London. The weight of this medal, 750.0 grains, is also decidedly close to the 751.0 grain weight recorded for the London medals in the “Minutes,” further indicating that it is from the London group.

Of the 28 medals produced by the Literary Society, only 11, or perhaps as many as 13 medals (depending on how the sources are read) were issued or given away by the Society between May 1767 and December 1771. Despite an intention to have an annual subscription drive, only two were conducted, in 1767 and 1769, and a cumulative £96 were collected. Most of these funds were depleted by 1772, when the Society seems to have gone dormant. The author of the Society’s “Minutes” recorded on March 1, 1774 that “the Medals, &c. are in the right hand Box in my cloaths chest,” referring to the Society’s remaining medals and its other effects. The whereabouts of these remainder medals are today unknown and although the New-York Historical Society has acquired most original materials relating to the King’s College Literary Society, these remaining medals are not in the Historical Society’s numismatic collection today. These unawarded medals were probably melted down long ago for their silver, so the appearance of more of the awarded medals would be a more likely and exciting occurrence.

## Questions and Answers

Marc McDonald starts us off with two excellent questions:

1) The French mint has struck many medals of historical interest to collectors in the United States. Although the edge markings indicating the period of striking seem to be well documented, the cornucopia symbol has been in use since 1880. Is there any way to reliably tell when, during the last 124 years, medals with the cornucopia edge marking were struck,

assuming the same dies have been used? Has there been a definitive change in the fabric or finish of pieces during this time that would help to date them? I recall seeing some cornucopia-marked pieces with a date on the edge also, perhaps from the 1960’s or 1970’s if memory serves me. Is this being routinely done now and, if so, when did it start?

Answer: At some point in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Paris mint converted from its copper-bronze to yellow bronze. By the 1960’s, they had begun to add the date to the edge (as Marc points out), such that modern product is readily identifiable. What else happened between 1880 and 1960 would make a good question for the Paris Mint, because none of our experts has the answer. In our next issue, we will add a list of the various edge markings used between 1832 and 1880.

Here’s another question

2) I frequently see descriptions of the die states of medals from the Comitia Americana series being compared with similar medals from the George Washington set of medals in the MHS in terms of the advancement of areas of die rust, etc. Is there somewhere published a set of close up photographs of the MHS set of medals that is enlarged adequately to allow their use in comparisons with other medals?

Answer: Some years ago, John Ford took pictures of George Washington’s set of medals and made up a dozen sets of 8” x 11” black and white glossies. As the owner of one of these sets, I can vouch that they make an outstanding research tool. The bad news: the negatives were lost. The good news: the medals have been re-photographed recently and ten sets of 8” x 11” photos were made. These are available from the Massachusetts Historical society at \$500 per set (I believe). The MHS has kindly donated two sets to be included in the ANS’ benefit auction to be held in

Pittsburgh on Thursday, August 19, 2004. (John  
W. Adams)