



The Newsletter of Medal Collectors of America

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Coming Events

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

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

May 2006 Betts Medals II of John J. Ford, Jr.

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

May 2006 Indian Peace Medals II 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

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From the Editor

As noted on the front page of this issue, we will hold our regular January meeting at the New York International. The date is Saturday the 14th, the time is noon and the place is that very nice room hidden at the end of a maze. Our enterprising members will find us, we doubt not.

The business portion of our meeting will include a discussion of the Club Medal to be led by Don Scarinci. We have not yet made any commitments on this front but, rather, are evaluating the many responses of interest and dis-interest submitted by our members.

As noted in the September issue, the educational segment of the meeting will be a roundtable (Eimer, Alexander and Adams thusfar) on the subject of collecting Betts medals. This series of 623 numbers spanning 232 years with inscriptions in seven languages is daunting for any but the most ambitious collector. However, it resolves itself into an almost infinite number of sub-segments and themes that, in turn, will fit almost any budget. The mission of the Roundtable is to be your guide in general, with more specific reference to the Ford Betts material coming up later in January and in May.

A Mystery Medal

George Washington Peace Medal 1789

(by Kahlil Gibran)

In November 1993, I was successful bidder at the West Coast San Rafael Auction Gallery of a George Washington peace medal. Upon receipt, I carefully tested and examined it under magnification, performed a scratch test in its original hole, and determined it was struck in silver measuring 62.5mm and weighing 108 grams with its silver suspension link.

It depicted a full faced Washington bust facing right, inscribed "GEORGE WASHINGTON, THE FATHER OF OUR

COUNTRY 1789" with the reverse inscribed FRIENDSHIP THE PIPE OF PEACE and showing clasped hands with crossed, reversed pipe and tomahawk and a surrounding decorative wreath. Above the clasped hands is scratched J.W.G. When later examined by a respected New York dealer/expert, the initials were identified as possibly standing for the early collector John W. Green. The edge is smoothly finished. Images from the several photos mentioned in the following references do not reveal this medal's crisp details.

Questions abounded as I studied the perfectly struck silver surface. Who sculpted the images? When were they struck? Who could afford to pay for the obviously expensive dies? With the limited access to the sophisticated machinery involved, where were the medals struck? Searching for answers, throughout the years, I've tried to make sense of a medal that has enjoyed a broad and checkered history in the study of American Peace medals. My research revealed this medal in various materials, of mostly soft porous metal castings.

In a 1933 catalogue published by American Art Association of the Anderson Galleries Inc. at 30 East 57th Street, a collection of Rare Medals and orders of Chivalry from the collection of the late Charles P. Senter was offered. On page 12, item #90, the medal was not sized but described as "Pewter. Fine but not contemporary with date. Used in Oklahoma during latter part of nineteenth century."

Obviously, this "unofficial" medal was well distributed in the nineteenth century. The question was by whom? A fascinating exchange, appearing in Bauman L. Belden's *Indian Peace Medal Issued in the United States 1789-1889*, sheds some light on its distribution. In a letter to Mr. W.C. Wyman, Union League Club, Chicago, Illinois, Joseph A. Lamere, identified as an Indian, writes from Pender, Nebraska on October 17, 1901. In the first two paragraphs Lamere states the popularity of

“The George Washington Peace & Friendship medal.”

But the legend is that the present government has always used such a medal and decorated the Indian representatives who negotiated a treaty after signing of the treaty, with this medal. This custom was continuous until about the conclusion of the Civil War, since when it is wholly discontinued. The Indians were always made to understand that decoration with this medal was the highest distinction the Great Father could bestow on His red children; and each one so decorated felt that the Great Father regarded him as a Chief or head-man in his tribe. So it is that the medal is more sought after than any other known to me among the Indians...

Going on to tell “the history of the dies of this medal,” Lamere stated that he had bought them from a part blood Indian whose relatives were employed by the Interior Department in Washington. Recounting that he has sold as “many as \$800 worth of these medals for use among the Poncas of Oklahoma Territory,” he proposed to supply Wyman as long as he does not sell them for retail among any tribes in Nebraska or the Dakotas.

Lamere’s offer included selling quantities in 50 or more aluminum copies for \$2.00 apiece and silver copies of \$15.00. Although Wyman did not respond to this offer, Lamere’s continued role in selling the George Washington medal is corroborated in another reference. Page 69 in Francis Paul Prucha’s *Indian Peace Medals in American History* published in 1971 shows a photo of Yellow Hair, a Brulé Sioux Indian wearing the George Washington Peace & Friendship medal described as “an unofficial medal bearing a crude likeness of Washington. Such medals, cast in base metal, were widely distributed among Indians during the late nineteenth century.” Prucha includes a description of “a

collector of Indian relics” who visited the Omaha tribal reservations in 1901. Locating an Indian who showed him the 1789 Washington medal, the collector finally ascertained that the Indian had received it from a man in Pender, Nebraska 100 miles north of the Reservation. Obviously, Lamere was circulating his wares.

In searching the Photographs Catalog of the Smithsonian Institution National Anthropological Archives, Prucha’s photograph is identified as a silver nitrate negative by Charles H. Carpenter and depicts Chief Yellow Hair as a Dakota Rosebud man from the Dakota Brulé culture, at the U.S. Indian School, St. Louis, Missouri, 1904. Carpenter’s notes indicate that the photo was “probably taken at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis.” In summarizing Yellow Hair’s appearance, the catalog cites Bauman Belden’s article and describes the medal as “a George Washington Medal made first in the mid 1800’s. Not of government issue; were sold extensively in the late 1800s.” With this information, it is apparent that the great tradition of bestowing peace medals as mark of respect and government authority had descended into a paltry exchange cheapened by brazen entrepreneurs. In Figure 64, Prucha describes the medal as the “strangest and most intriguing of the unofficial peace medals.”

On April 12, 1986 at the Bowers and Merena, Inc. presidential Coin and Antique Company, Inc. auction of The Collection of David W. Dreyfuss, a white metal 64mm “privately-manufactured Indian peace medal” is pictured in Figure 5651 and described as coming from the Kessler-Spangenberg Collection April 1981. Again a crude cast appears in Kurt Krueger’s 1986 Spring Americana/ Exonumia Auction. Then, in November 1, 1997, a Washington Indian Peace medal in copper came up in the Early American History Mail Bid Auction with the following description:

Believed to have been struck around 1845, although the dies for this piece existed as

late as 1901... Although not officially sanctioned, this piece was widely accepted by the Indians and was, in fact, one of the most popular of all medals used by them. A rare, seldom-seen item that is perhaps the only really collectible and affordable Washington Peace Medal.



Certainly, as a collector and sculptor, I am fascinated by the true origin of this medal. Although some authors describe the visage as “ugly,” I find that criticism extreme. In fact, the portrait shows a Washington as he probably appeared in later years. Certainly it is not in the style of the noble “Cincinnatus” tradition,

but there is an authenticity in appearance that proves true to a nineteenth century admirer.

I have also noted the discrepancies of the various sizes of this medal. Rich Hartzog’s extensive online article *Genuine, Fake and Fantasy Indian Peace Medals* (Rich Hartzog World Exonumia 1997-2003 <http://www.exonumia.com/fakes/Indian.htm>, modified March 29, 2005) mentions several sizes of this medal but fails to include one measuring 62.5mm and struck in silver.

Again, with my lifelong foundry experience, I have observed that cast metals expand and contract at varying rates depending on the metal and the temperature of the melt. They also exhibit porosity when carefully examined. Struck medals are constant in size and surface texture except for those few that were struck from cast planchets and exhibit minor voids.

The question remains: Could my George Washington medal have been struck from a cast planchet? In the tremendous pressure of striking a medal, the metal is squeezed into the details of the die, exhibiting a density of surface, thus eliminating most porosity.

My quest to solve the mystery of this Peace & Friendship medal continues. Hopefully the secret of its origins, especially information on the original designer and sculptor, remains in an undiscovered repository of letters or of invoices that will answer the several questions about its origins and manufacture.

Florida Statehood Medal

(by David Alexander)

I was amazed to see an old friend on the last page of the September issue of MCA Advisory, the Florida Statehood Medal. This was a project of mine back around 1965, when I was serving as Museum Director for the Historical Museum of Southern Florida in Miami. The 32.5-millimeter medal was part of

Presidential Art Medal Company's (PAM) second successful series, the Statehood Art Medals (SAM). Presidential had begun its offerings with the spectacularly successful John F. Kennedy Medal of 1961, which launched a mushroom growth of medal interest across the nation.

PAM was founded by coin dealer Frank L. Darner of Dayton, Ohio, who loathed the cheap, coin-relief presidential medals that the kids bought at his shop. He wanted something of bold quality with high sculptural relief that was still affordable. PAM leadership came to include former Ohio Governor Frank V. DiSalle and Max Humbert. In due course James L. Harper took the helm at PAM while the others essentially hived off to form Paramount International Coin Corp. Nearly all of the first three PAM series were sculpted by Ralph J. Menconi of Pleasantville, New York, a gentleman of incredible virtuosity who had and equally incredible ability to produce first-class medallic sculpture quickly and frequently.

It was announced at the beginning of the program that SAM would work with state and local historical societies to choose historical personages representing each state that would be recognizable to most collectors. Each reverse would present the State Seal, an invitation to medallic distress wisely side-stepped with today's Statehood Quarter series. Some were highly successful, including King Kamehameha representing Hawaii; Fra Junipero Serra, California; Henry Ford, Michigan; Kit Carson, Colorado; Jefferson Davis, Mississippi; Brigham Young, Utah. Somewhat incongruous were the choices of Ty Cobb for Georgia; John L. Lewis, Iowa; George M. Cohan, Rhode Island.

Among the first issued was Vermont, with a facing bust of poet Robert Frost. The reverse presented the Green Mountain State's distinctive seal featuring two wheat sheaves above a stylized pine tree towering over a forest, cow, sword and date 1778. Below was the State motto, FREEDOM & UNITY. The

medals were struck and ready for release until someone unhelpfully pointed out that State law forbade any private use of the Seal without specific permission of the Legislature! PAM quickly pled for and received a special session of the lawmakers, who fortunately approved the project and its use of the Seal in record time.

When Florida's turn rolled around I was in my second year as Director of the Historical Museum of Southern Florida, an agency of the non-profit Historical Association of Southern Florida (HASF), founded in 1940. I was surprised to learn that neither the venerable Gainesville-based Florida Historical Society nor any other group within the State had shown any interest in the SAM program. I wrote to PAM and HASF involvement was warmly received. I corresponded at length with medallist Menconi.

Florida was a tough subject. Although Ponce de Leon was a popular figure, the myth of his interest in the Fountain of Youth polluted his history. Confederate General Kirby Smith stands in the Hall of Statuary in the nation's capitol but was largely forgotten in the 1960's and modern industrialists such as Henry M. Flagler were similarly obscure even in Florida itself.

A stellar choice was the Second Seminole war leader Osceola (ca. 1800-1838), a young war leader though not a chief, who opposed the Treaty of Payne's Landing that would have carried out the Federal and State governments' compulsion to "relocate" the Seminoles to Oklahoma. This spurious treaty unilaterally replaced the earlier Treaty of Fort Moultrie that permitted the Seminoles to remain in their Florida refuge along with Black slaves who had taken refuge among them.

Legend has it that as the various chiefs came forward to sign the Payne's Landing document, Osceola joined them to the horror of many. Reaching the table, he drew a dagger and stabbed the treaty, crying, "This is how I sign!" He proved a redoubtable and chivalrous foe and is still widely admired a century after

he died in captivity in Fort Moultrie. He had been captured by treachery by the dishonoring of the flag of truce that brought him to supposed negotiations. Some 23 towns, counties and geographical features bear the name Osceola today from Iowa to Massachusetts, New York to Florida.

A young man whose features had none of the heaviness of many American Indians, Osceola was called "Powell" by the whites but boasted, "I am a pure-blooded Muscogee! No white blood flows in my veins!" Nonetheless his grandfather was named Steve McQueen... Excellent paintings of Osceola survive and my museum library held a trove of biographical information including a new full-length biography I sent on to Menconi for the illustrations and facts for the SAM brochure that accompanied each medal sold.

We had our hands full with the State Seal. The Florida Statehood Art Medal would present the only artistically and legally correct rendering of the Seal in existence. As adopted during Reconstruction, the law stated that the Seal would present an Indian maiden strewing blossoms on a shore with a steamboat behind her. A palm tree stood across the water and on the horizon was the sun rising over highlands! Yes, that's right, HIGHLANDS as seen on the Florida-Georgia border where Iron Mountain with its few hundred feet is the highest point in the State.

As seen in actual use throughout Florida in Government offices, private businesses, on flags, in bronze and etched in glass, the Seal is almost never correctly detailed. Most often a male warrior is shown, generally with a breath-takingly inappropriate Plains Indian feather headdress. The highlands are often lowlands, the ship generally not a steam-and-sail craft required by the law.

SAM offered the Florida Medal in .999 Silver and Bronze. In recognition for my rather energetic help with the project, I received a multi-medal Process Set showing the steps from blank to finished, Bronze along with 200

Bronze medals that we sold in the Museum gift shop along with 3-minute Lucite embedment egg-timers including a medal ("just like the ones President Kennedy has on his desk with HIS Presidential Medal!").

The death of Ralph J. Menconi in late 1972 severely impacted PAM's programs, as no adequate replacement could be found. The Gerald R. Ford Presidential Medal was the first post-Menconi attempt and was as frightful failure. The PAM series generated enough success to generate their own blue-cover Whitman albums. I acquired two Whitman albums of SAM's not long ago with many unfilled openings and have wondered whether the series was ever completed. The Florida medal was, by any standard an exciting project.

Looking at the Florida Medal in MCA Journal, I am wondering whether this is a Bronze suffering the effects of burial or whether, just possibly, this is one of the pot-metal counterfeits produced around 1975. This was after my ouster from the museum after my 11 years of effort had built a million-dollar new building and opened up as dazzling future for the institution. The fakes were cast by a souvenir manufacturer whose specialty was fake treasure coins, located in New Rochelle, N.Y. The low-cost counterfeits were instigated by one of my former staff and their appearance in the gift shop brought a lawyer's letter from PAM and Medallion Art Co., copyright holders, of the "cease and desist... govern yourself accordingly" variety. These crude casts are now a rather perverse rarity! The genuine medals, like most modern medals, have limited market value today.

Just a few recollections of a fondly remembered project.

MCA Considers "Medal of the Year" (by Donald Scarinci)

The Board of Trustees of the Medal Collectors of America is considering a proposal

to publish an annual medal of the year. The membership is being asked whether they would support such a medal and to what extent.

The idea is to appeal to both the art medal collector and the collector of historical medals by producing a medal on a topic of contemporary interest. For example, a medal could honor the entrepreneurs who flew the first privately financed spacecraft. The medal would be presented to them and sold to our members on a subscription basis. The medal would be the subject of a design competition to obtain the best possible work of art. Thus, the medal would memorialize a historical event instead of commemorating a past event, and at the same time the medal would be a hand held sculpture.

Some other ideas for medals that come to mind could include the adoption of the Iraq constitution, the death of Rosa Parks, the season of Hurricanes or any other historically important event. If we award the medal to a person or place, present the medal in some formal way, or have the medal used at some event, it would fall well within the definition of a historical or even an award medal. A committee appointed for this purpose could work out the details to be sure the membership receives a meaningful product with a quality design.

The issue of size and cost needs to be addressed. A struck medal in a three-inch size would probably need to be sold for between \$75 and \$150 depending on the number of subscribers. A smaller medal could be produced and there seems to be some interest in this less expensive alternative. The downside to a struck medal with a round shape is the obvious limitation to the canvas. The contemporary art medal has broken the boundary of size and shape and not all medals are round. Medals can be struck in alternative sizes and shapes, but it would be a matter of cost.

The cost of a cast medal would average about \$250 to \$350. These could be produced

in an issue of 50 or fewer. The British Art Medal Society (BAMS) is an example of an organization that produces cast medals. They commission about five or six medals a year and require the membership to purchase at least one. The purchase requirement is sometimes controversial and MCA is not considering imposing a similar requirement.

The benefit to the art of the medal in England as a result of the encouragement that medallic artist have received from BAMS is obvious. Prior to 1982 when BAMS was started, the art of the medal in England was at least as banal and uninteresting as the art of the medal in the United States is at present for the most part. After over 20 years of BAMS medals and a magnificent journal encouraging and promoting the art medal, England has become one of the countries that lead the world in this art form. Even a casual perusal of last year's FIDEM catalog is evidence of that.

There is a vacuum in the United States medal market that private enterprise has not filled. There is no Society of Medallists, there is no Franklin Mint for better or worse, and the U.S. Mint is producing medals that have questionable artistic merit. Only Brookgreen Gardens and the Jewish American Hall of Fame are producing annual art medals. Some numismatic clubs produce a medal from time to time, but graphic artists are not medallic sculptors and the art and history component is most often lacking from their products.

Instead of complaining about the quality of our coinage or the lack of any new collectible medals, the proposal that the MCA Board is considering is at least an attempt to try to do something about the situation. Perhaps we will demonstrate that a market for medals exists and our effort will spur private businesses or other organizations to follow our lead.

If the membership agrees that the MCA should attempt to produce or to sponsor a medal, there would need to be advance subscriptions. Please be sure to communicate

your interest in such a subscription and at what price level you would be interested.

Letters to the Editor

Dear Mr. Adams,

As much as I wished to answer your question there are so many other important aspects of this issue to be clarified so I believe the attached letter (see immediately below—Ed.) will help us to find the best solution and soon.

With much respect,

Alex Shagin, Scultor

* * * *

Dear Mr. Adams,

Contrary to the commonly shared perception, not all medallic artists are gone. A few are still practicing. A few of those alive today were once commissioned by the S.O.M. or Brookgreen Gardens. And a few are recipients of such awards as the Saltus medal from the ANS or Medal of Excellence from the ANA. But how many of them can make a living by making medals, that's another story. It just happened to be also my story which (being a veteran supporter of MCA) I'd be much honored to share.

After 14 years of formal education in the visual arts and five years of services at the Leningrad Mint, I left Russia and since 1979 have been continuously practicing medallic sculpture in California. With over a thousand projects for numerous official and private clients in several continents and nationwide, I can now with a certain degree of confidence offer some of my ideas, opinions and concerns in sincere hope of more progress and recognition for one of the noblest and unique endeavors of humankind.

These days when more often than we want to admit most new medals are displaying derivative concepts, amateurish designs, sophomoric sculpting, shallow messages,

almost complete detachment from the reality and disconnection with other cultural developments in our society to such degree that we are in danger to overlook the ongoing crisis and remain oblivious about the true function, goals and purposes of the numismatic arts and the greater untapped potentials in influencing the historic events so we can leave a valuable legacy for the future generations.

Thanks to the tireless efforts of highly professional researchers in the numismatics, we can enjoy an easy access to the facts of S.O.M. history which pretty accurately reflect the last century's developments in public art and art education. Unlike any other collectibles, art medals are hard to be grouped and characterized by their physical properties unless we bring up the stylistic differences and similarities which arrive in a package together with uniquely personal expression of the artist's views, feeling and skills.

It is obvious that "strictly numismatic" observations of the finishing on a medal (which is not performed by the artist) will not sufficiently cover the area of the aesthetic values of the piece and make it more desirable for the potential collector.

As for the other descriptive characteristics, where there is a chance we need to establish more uniformity to avoid omissions, misstatements and occasional subjectivity such as:

- ❑ A hundred blows were needed to strike a medal;
- ❑ A 2,500 limited edition was promised for a piece;
- ❑ Some medals are missing the size figures;
- ❑ The S.O.M. 114 is missing ONE PLANET title, etc.

It wouldn't hurt to allow not a few but each and every author to have his or her say by printing their statements that made SOM so much more artist-friendly.

In which regard on a highly personal note I wanted to finish by expressing my

sincere gratitude to the genius of Joseph V. Noble under whose guiding, gentle and generous hand many of my colleagues were enabled to deliver the best of their ideas at the top of their artistic performance.

A truly unprecedented and wonderful accomplishment and a standard hard to match. Thanks.

Sincerely,

Alex Shagin

Dear Mr. Moore:

Your inquiry to John Adams was referred to me to answer.

1. With few exceptions, there are no mintage figures available for Medallion Art Company (MACO) medals, nor is there an easy way to determine any particular medal's relative rarity. About the most the average person can do is to consult an experienced collector or dealer and get his "feel" about the rarity of any particular item.
2. The Sessler medal in the box that you own is scarce, but not rare. In addition to that medal there is another related piece described below:

DICKEN'S CHRISTMAS CAROL MEDAL, (1932). 89mm. Bronze. Unsigned, but ascribed to John R. Sinnock, Sc. Uniface. (MCO). Uncirculated. The obverse legend: GOD BLESS US EVERY ONE CHRISTMAS CAROL – 1843 surrounds a scene depicting the dance at Fezziwig's shop. The reverse has a ring affixed for hanging.

With modifications, this obverse served as the reverse for a medal containing a portrait of Charles Dickens issued in 1932 that celebrated the 50th anniversary of the book selling business of Charles Sessler, Philadelphia. Sessler decided to have uniface

examples such as this made to serve as a medallic Christmas card. It is a good deal scarcer than the 50th anniversary medal.

Sincerely,

Joe Levine

Dear John,

Thank you for producing such a great publication. It is much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Seymour Finkelstein

* * * *

Dear Mr. Adams,

Hello! Greetings and Peace! God Bless America!

In formal response to your inquiry with the September 2005 MCA ADVISORY of our Medal Collectors of America (MCA), please note that I, for myself, would be interested and would most likely purchase **one (1) each, silver and bronze, large diameter annual medal.**

Further, I commend the MCA and its governing authority for actively considering this and soliciting commentary from the membership.

Changing the subject, please accept my compliments for your editorship of our MCA ADVISORY. My copy is always enjoyed, adding to my knowledge, and readily bound into my numismatic library. **Excellent Job!**

Remember, Have Fun With Your Hobby! I thank you and remain

Cordially and fraternally yours,

Michael S. Turrini

* * * *

John,

I have recently acquired a medallion of which I know nothing. The front is the left profile of a bearded man with 1830 THOMPSON HOADLEY LANDON 1915 around the head and the back is Bordentown Military Institute New Jersey 1889-1915. I would love to know more. crsult@gwi.net, or abbykara@yahoo.com

Chuck and Betty Sult

" Can anybody provide the Sult's with some information? --Ed.