

RNA News



The official journal of the Rochester Numismatic Association



Collecting the issues of the Waterbury Mint

by Gerard Muhl



**PLUS: Andy Harkness searches for Barney Bluestone's missing medals • Get ready for the holiday auction
Meet the model behind Sacagawea • And more!**

December 2003

RNA News

The official journal of the
Rochester Numismatic Association
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America's oldest continuously operating
local coin club

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Newsletter Editor: Scott Fybush
rnanews@fybush.com

2003-2004 Officers:

President: David Gottfried
585-738-0908
dag@rochester.rr.com

Vice President: Edith Coe
585-865-7992
billcoe@juno.com

Secretary: Steve Lanzafame
585-288-1932
unpub@aol.com

Treasurer: Tom Kraus
585-241-3807
tkraus1@rochester.rr.com

Curator: John Zabel
Librarian: John Tokoli
Historian: Robert Doty

Board of Directors:
Darlene Corio, Douglas Musinger
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P.O. Box 10056
Rochester NY 14610-0056

FROM THE PRESIDENT

An ESNA Show in Rochester?

As per the direction of our illustrious newsletter editor, Scott Fybush, this week's edition of the Letter From the President will be very long and rambling. Why, you might ask? Is it because I'm such an excellent writer that Scott gets inundated with requests from readers insisting that I write more?

Or perhaps it's because I provide such a breadth of numismatic knowledge that readers have some sort of mind altering experience that only my pieces can provide? No, simply put, once again Scott is in need of material. So, here I am doing my part!

On a side note, I would like to thank a few people for some particularly hard work done over the past month. First off, I think we all need to send our great appreciation to Bill Coe who once again has served remarkably as coin show committee chairman. This is an incredibly difficult task to undertake each year, and I think we can agree this year's show was again a success. Also, a thanks goes out to all our member volunteers who participated this year. Finally, I want to send a thank you out to all the junior members who helped out this year. I hope that RJNA members will continue to help out, since it's got to raise their enthusiasm for coin collecting!

Next, in this issue, you'll read a very interesting article written by Andy Harkness about the "tailings" of Barney Bluestone – a noted Syracuse dealer. As many of you might be aware, Andy is one of the few serious collectors of agricultural and mechanical award medals. If you remember, he did an extremely interesting and informing talk last year about this aspect of exonumia.

Finally, I hope everyone enjoys Gerry Muhl's piece on the Waterbury Mint. In the next issue, Gerry will examine Rochester's history in terms of counterfeit paper currency and coins. I think it will amaze most to read how much counterfeiting was going on in the 19th and early 20th centuries, and what role Rochester's counterfeiters had.

Now, onto a couple club business issues – first, there will be a board meeting held prior to the second meeting on December 18th, at 7:00PM at the Eisenhart. All members are encouraged to attend board meetings.

Secondly, the Empire State Numismatic Association (ESNA) is interested in the possibility of hosting its annual convention in Rochester in the not-too-distant future. This would be a rotating show, and Rochester would be one city on the rotation for this statewide association. I have been in contact with members of ESNA and we will further discuss the possibility of hosting a show in Rochester.

Third, as I mentioned in last month's issue, members of the RNA have expressed an interest in having a group visit to the Memorial Art Gallery to view the upcoming Augustus Saint Gauden's exhibition, "Master of American Sculpture," which will run February 15th through April 11th. I have contacted the MAG and hope to have a date and cost to attend by the next issue of the *RNA News*.

Fourth, while several members did attend our last lunch at Beale Street Café, I think perhaps it's time to schedule one for the weekend – so that more members might be able to participate. Originally, we had scheduled these lunches for a group of us who worked downtown during the week. However, we recognize that that's simply not an option for many members. Therefore, as we only have one meeting scheduled for the month of January (on the 15th) let us set a lunch date for Saturday, January 24th, at NOON, at Nathaniel's Pub – 251 Exchange Boulevard. Please RSVP to me at dag@rochester.rr.com or 738-0908. I hope you can make it!

I hope everyone can make it to the December meetings. There should be a great auction – in fact, see the listings on page 6. No pressure to bid on auction lots submitted by me!

David A. Gottfried

In Search of Barney Bluestone's Tailings

by Andrew Harkness

When a person specializes in collecting the award medals of American agricultural and mechanical societies, he is, in effect, traveling on numismatic backroads. There are only a handful of serious collectors of these; the waters are uncharted as there is, presently, no definitive work about the subject. But backroad adventures can be fun.

Nineteenth century fairs were not all held in rural America. Great fairs were also held in cities. The fairs were sponsored by agricultural societies in the country and by mechanical institutes in the cities and towns.

These societies were founded by foresighted people to encourage excellence. Awards were offered, in competition, to farmers for improving their livestock and produce, and to our early inventors and "mechanics" for creating labor-saving devices or machinery.

These awards came in several forms. For 100 years the most popular award form was not the blue ribbon; it was the award medal. This type of medal was sometimes crudely fashioned, but it was often produced by the best sculptors of the 19th century. Most importantly, however, the medal was almost always personally engraved to the recipient in recognition of his or her achievement.

I have spent thousands of hours searching for these medals since 1971, because I recognize them as art treasures and symbols of our American greatness.

My favorite adventure began in 1974 when a friend (collector's collector Steven Tanenbaum) located a small group of these medals. All of them were awarded to the same person, "F.S. Peace," a Buffalo, N.Y., manufacturer. I purchased and cataloged the medals and put them away with the rest of my collection. I did not forget them.

Three years later, I purchased a group of auction catalogs produced by the great Barney Bluestone. This was a thrilling event in itself, for Bluestone was a famous numismatic figure during the 1930s and 1940s. In central New York state he was a legend, recognized as a colorful, honest and good man. I have heard first-hand reports about the rolls of uncirculated 1916 Standing Liberty quarters in his inventory; of the keg of uncirculated 1773 Virginia half pennies that Bluestone dispersed through the years; of the fabled Albert A. Grinnell paper money collection that he auctioned in the 1940s.

If you were a customer of Barney Bluestone's, he would give you a Proof coin of your birth year (uncirculated if no prods were struck). I remember meeting in the late 1970s an old-time collector who was born in 1895. He still owned the gem proof 1895 Morgan dollar that Bluestone had given him. Barney Bluestone was still his mentor, although this gentleman was well past his 80th year.

Barney Bluestone was long gone in 1977. He had sold his coin shop in Syracuse, N.Y. in 1950. Two additional owners had owned the shop since that time and the Bluestone inventory was long since gone too. Or was it?

In going through my Bluestone catalogs, I discovered that the medals awarded to F.S. Peace had been part of a Bluestone auction in 1934. These medals had remained together for 43 years.

I revealed this new discovery to friends at a Rochester Numismatic Association meeting. The club's great idea man, Gerry Muhl, startled me by revealing that the Bluestone shop still existed, although the ownership was twice removed from him. Furthermore, he was certain that part of Bluestone's medal inventory remained in the shop. Could there still be some "tailings" to be mined at Barney Bluestone's?

Is there a reader of this story willing to hazard a guess at how long it took me to find my way to that shop in Syracuse?

I entered "The Olde Curiosity Shoppe" at 9 the following morning. The shop had been renamed and was now primarily a second-hand store. There were no coins. They had been "cleaned out" years before, the diminutive owner said.

"Medals? No one ever buys those." He pointed toward two cases in a dusty, poorly lighted section of the store. I worked my way toward them, picking my way through the clutter. And there

before me were dozens of medals! Many were unknown, even in the listings studied during my considerable research into the subject. Here were the tailings at Barney Bluestone's! A price was soon agreed upon and all of the medals were purchased and removed. Many were dusty. It was apparent that they had laid untouched for years, completely forgotten and unappreciated, but that is all changed now.

During the exciting winter evenings that followed, the cataloging took place. There were Mint medals, private medals and some foreign medals. Most importantly, there were many of the wonderful award medals, spelling out the achievements of early American pioneers.

Midway through the cataloging, three medals surfaced that had been awarded to F.S. Pease. The name rang a bell. A check of my personal catalog file and the Bluestone auction of 1934 revealed that these were the missing medals from that auction of so long ago! I had reassembled the Bluestone medal auction lots from the 1934 sale.

The medals had not sold, so Bluestone had returned them to his cases. There they had laid unwanted and unappreciated for 43 years. They now have a new home and a place of honor in an obscure exnumismatist's collection.

Those of us who travel the backroads of numismatics are having a lot of fun. I wish that I had known you, Barney Bluestone!

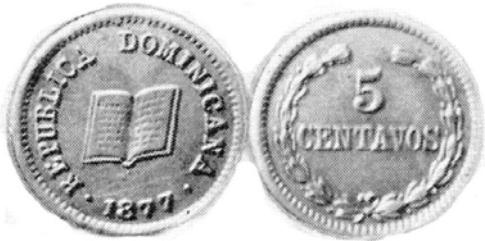


Collecting the Waterbury Mint

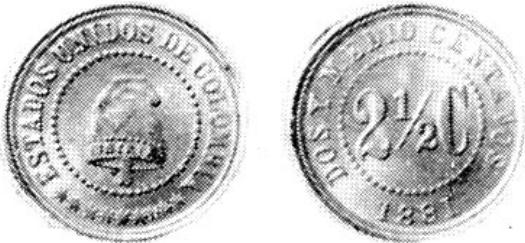
by Gerard Muhl

Here is a collection of foreign coins privately minted in the United States that's within the reach of most collectors. A complete type set is thirteen coins, while a date set is only four more coins. But let's start at the beginning...

The Waterbury Works began in Connecticut in 1802 as a metal button maker, and passed to the Scovill family in 1811. In the 1830s and 1840s, they entered the numismatic field by striking a wide variety of Hard Times tokens. During the Civil War they specialized in small cent sized tokens that passed usually for one cent each. Again, hundreds of varieties were struck. But it wasn't until the 1870s and 1880s that they began striking legal tender coins for Central and South American countries.



In 1876 and again the following year, the Waterbury Mint supplied planchets for the Venezuelan 1 centavo and 2½ centavos coins which were to be struck at the Philadelphia Mint. In 1877 they eliminated the U.S. Mint as middleman and struck 1, 2½ and 5 centavos coins directly for the Dominican Republic. One million 1 centavo, 21,000 2½ centavos and 130,000 5 centavos coins were struck.



Colombia was next to place an order with the Waterbury Mint. In 1881 and 1902, 2½ centavos pieces were struck. In 1886, 1888 and 1902, 5 centavos pieces followed. Total production for Colombia was 25,830,000 pieces!



Nicaragua ordered two million 5 centavos pieces in 1898 and again in 1899. In 1895, Peru placed a small order for 10,000 zinc 2 centavos coins from Waterbury.

Four coins from Haiti finish the collection of the Waterbury Mint and the Scovill Manufacturing Company. Haitian coins

have been struck in Paris, Birmingham (England), the Philadelphia Mint and in Waterbury. In 1904 and 1905 a total of 32,000,000 5 centimes were struck. In 1906, 10,000,000 10 centimes, and in 1907, 5,000,000 20 centimes were made in Waterbury.



The Waterbury Mint was priced out of coin production by the Philadelphia Mint but continued supplying one-cent and five-cent blanks to the U.S. Mint between 1888 and 1906. Scovill continued striking commemorative medals well into the 20th century. One notable commemorative produced was that for the 1893 Columbian Exposition at Chicago. Designed by Augustus St. Gaudens, 24,000 of these three-inch award medals were struck at Waterbury.

Who will be the first to bring a complete type or date set of these interesting coins to an RNA meeting?

Coinage of the Waterbury Mint	
* - needed for type set	
Columbia	
*1881 2 ½ centavos	
*1886 5 centavos	
*1888 5 centavos (new design)	
1902 2 ½ centavos	
1902 5 centavos	
Dominican Republic	
*1877 1 centavo	
*1877 2 ½ centavos	
*1877 5 centavos	
Haiti	
*1904 5 centimes	
1905 5 centimes	
*1906 10 centimes	
*1907 20 centimes	
*1907 50 centimes	
1908 50 centimes	
Nicaragua	
*1898 5 centavos (Estado in legend)	
*1899 5 centavos (Repub. in legend)	
Peru	
*1895 2 centavos	

The RNA's Holiday Auction – Thursday, December 18

It's that time of year – unload those closets and "junk" boxes and bring your hidden treasures to the RNA's annual holiday auction at our December 18 meeting. And if you're still looking for that special something for that special someone, you just might find it out there on the green felt auction boards. Here's just a small preview of what's in store (but there's plenty of room for more lots – limit 10 lots per consignor, please!)

- 1904 AU Phillipines Peso (starts at \$150)
- 1878 CC Morgan US Silver Dollar (\$45)
- 1792 (copy) Unc. US "Birch Cent" (by the Gallery Mint) (\$20)

- 1862 Half Dime F-15 (\$10)
- 1842 Seated Liberty Dime You grade! (\$3)
- 1883 Seated Liberty Dime VG-10 (\$8)
- 1909 VDB Lincoln Cent AU (\$5)
- 1936 Long Island Tercentenary Half Dollar XF (\$20)
- 1853 Seated Liberty Quarter - Arrows and Rays F (\$15)
 - 1905 Barber Quarter VF (\$12)
 - 3 Barber Halfs G, G, G (\$6)
 - 4 Barber Dimes AG and G (\$4)
- 1892 Barber love token VF obverse (\$2)

- Flying Eagle Cent Set (3 coins) G+ Trends at \$75.00 (\$35)
- Indian Head Cents (26 misc. dates in folder) G + Trends at \$82.00 (\$45)
- Buffalo Nickels (38 misc. dates in folder) G + Trends at \$365.00 (\$150)
 - Jefferson Nickels (60 misc. dates in folder) XF+ (\$10)
- Mercury Dimes (34 misc. dates in folder) G + Trends at \$36.00 (\$17)
 - Roosevelt Dimes (39 misc. dates in folder – all silver) (\$15)
 - Roosevelt Dimes (30 misc. dates in folder – all silver) (\$12)
- 1865 Seated Liberty half dollar G (\$15)
- 1 roll Kennedy Half Dollars (\$5 face is 90% silver; \$5 face is 40% silver) (\$25)
- 1927 \$20 St. Gaudens Gold MS 63/63 ANACS certified (NOT SLABBED) (\$475)

There'll be much more on the table December 18 – so don't miss it!

Can you help the club's collection?

Gerry Muhl checks in with a request to help out the RNA's collection:

We need 1973 to present Canadian nickels to complete the RNA's Canadian 5 cent collection. Your curator would appreciate your donation or coins for possible purchase by the club.

Can you help the club? Contact Gerry at (585)336-9459.



RNA's 2003 Coin Show a Success

The R.N.A. held its Thirty-first Annual Coin and Stamp Show and Sale on November 1 and 2 at the Rochester Museum & Science Center — Eisenhart Auditorium.

The show was a sell-out as 33 dealers manned the 41 tables. Not a space was left for an additional table. Only words of satisfaction were received from the dealers.

With advertising in *Coin World*, *Numismatic News*, the *Numismatist*, and the *Democrat and Chronicle*, approximately 500 people came to see what they could find for their collections.



Several club members helped with the various activities needed to put on the show. A specific list will be available at a later date. But, probably, the project most praised by the dealers was the delicious, affordable lunches prepared by **Jim and Karen Kemp** and **Richard Imburgia**.

There were several good exhibits. The Alphonse Kolb Best of Show award went to **John Stephens** for his multi-cased **Apothecary Weights** exhibit. It was so good that he has been encouraged to take it to the next A.N.A. exhibition. Congratulations, John. John was interviewed, live, on Sunday morning by **Michael Warren Thomas** on his "Antique Talk" radio show on WYSL (AM 1040). This was quite an experience for John and gave the R.N.A. some additional exposure. We thank Mr. Thomas for his interest in our activities.

Even though several members participated in the show presentation, every member should consider the show an opportunity to visit 33 dealers all at one time at one place as a convenience and as a benefit of club membership. The maximum efficiency is obtained when you can see the coins before purchase and you can get more than one opinion on the value of coins you might have for sale. More information about the show will be reported as it develops.

Be sure to mark your calendars now for the R.N.A. 32nd Annual Coin Show for November 6 and 7, 2004. It is not too early to begin to plan your exhibit for that show.

Meet the model for the Sacagawea Dollar! Ganondagan Festival – Saturday, December 6, 2003



You can't visit with James Longacre's daughter, or with Teresa deFrancisci, who modeled for the Peace Dollar. And sure, you can see the models for a dozen different RNA medals just by attending a meeting - but you already know what those guys look like.

But how often can you meet a living model for a current U.S. coin? Mark down Saturday, December 6 on your calendar, then - because that's when Randy'L He-Dow Teton visits Rochester!

The model for the Sacagawea "golden" dollar will be the guest of honor at the Ganondagan Native American Winter Festival, taking place from 10 AM until 6 AM upstairs in the Eisenhart Auditorium of the Rochester Museum and Science Center, 657 East Avenue.

At 3 PM, Randy will give a short talk about her experience modeling for the coin, and afterwards she'll be signing autographs - so bring that MS70 slabbed Sacagawea along! (And your editor, who won't be able to attend, hopes *someone* takes some pictures, too...)

You can find more information about the festival at Ganondagan's Web site, www.ganondagan.org.

The Calendar December-January

- **Thursday December 4 - 8 PM - Scott** Fybush speaks on “Rochester’s WHEC Radio Medallion,” a deservedly obscure topic that manages to combine radio towers, exonumia *and* a bit of Rochester history. Really.
- **Saturday December 6 - 3 PM - Randy'L He-Dow Teton**, the model for the Sacagawea dollar coin, appears at the RMSC (see page 7 for details)
- **Thursday December 18 - 7 PM - BOARD MEETING** in our meeting room prior to our regular meeting
- **Thursday December 18 - 8 PM - Holiday Auction** Look for lists of exciting auction items on page x of your *RNA News* – and get in the bidding mood! (And see page 6 for auction lot listings!)
- **Friday December 19 - 7:30 PM - Rochester Junior Numismatic Association** Come see what the juniors are up to – and brace yourself for a lightning round of “Stump the Advisor.”
- **Thursday January 1 - NO MEETING!** Happy new year! No meeting tonight, so don’t show up!
- **Thursday January 15 - 8 PM** - Ira Stein speaks on “Lucite Coin-Embedded Toilet Lids” (or something...)
- **Saturday January 24 - NOON** - Social Lunch Nathaniel’s Pub, 251 Exchange Boulevard. Call David Gottfried at 738-0908 to RSVP

Regular RNA meetings are held on the first and third Thursdays of every month except July and August at the Eisenhart Auditorium of the Rochester Museum & Science Center, 657 East Avenue. Enter through the Eisenhart or Gannett School doors and follow the signs downstairs to our lower-level meeting room. All are welcome! Call Dave Gottfried at 738-0908 if you need a ride or directions.

RJNA meetings are held in either the ballroom of the Eisenhart Auditorium building or an upstairs classroom at the Gannett School; follow the signs posted on the building's doors or call Steve Lanzafame at 288-1932 for more information.

The Calendar welcomes meeting notices from other area clubs. Send them to rnanews@fybush.com or PO Box 10056, Rochester NY 14610.

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PO Box 10056

Rochester NY 14610-0056