

# RNA



# News

The official journal of the Rochester Numismatic Association



## **The Only *Truly* Truly American Coin?**

**Dave Gottfried has some fun with the “Lanzafame Rules,” and comes up with an all-all-all-American coin that satisfies all of them – and then some**

**PLUS: Ira handles an 1804 dollar • The RNA embraces new technology • The 2006-07 board slate**

**March 2006**

Dear Mr. Nachbar,

Thank you for buying my Saint-Gaudens and smaller denomination gold coin collections. I am a recently retired high school counselor and I was very hesitant about the process of disposing of some of my collection. Your quick personal telephone call after receiving my letter surprised me that a business transaction could be a personal event. Your warm manner, clear directions and answering of all my questions was very reassuring.

After I shipped my coins to you for review, I was very surprised at your offer. I wrote to other "large" dealers and received much lower bids or no response at all. I was very pleased with the first check I received from you and even more so with the second profit-sharing check you sent after selling the coins at a major coin show. I knew right then that I had selected the right dealer to do all of my future transactions with also.

I look forward to doing business with you again and will not hesitate to relate my experiences to other collectors that I know in Michigan. Thank you again for treating me as a person and not just another account to further your bottom line.

Yours truly,  
S.H., Michigan

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# RNA News

The official journal of the  
Rochester Numismatic Association  
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One of America's oldest local coin  
clubs

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Visit the RNA Web site:  
[www.the-rna.com](http://www.the-rna.com)

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT

# Get ready for Coin Week

National Coin Week – April 16 to the 22 – will be here very quickly. It is a time to welcome visitors to our meetings and to share our joy and pride in numismatics, something both the RNA and RJNA practice throughout the year. We welcome guests at nearly every meeting.

The ANA's theme for National Coin Week revolves around the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Benjamin Franklin's birth in 1706. One of Franklin's famous wise sayings, "A penny saved is a penny earned," is being adapted by the ANA, as "A penny saved is history learned." Indeed, numismatists know that a benefit of collecting is learning about history, sociology, and economics.

Even the smallest denominations or worn and discarded pieces can lead to historical, political, economic or societal insights, if not substantial profit. Nominal coinage – half cents, cents, three-cent silvers, as well as love tokens, hard times tokens and civil war tokens – all have stories to tell, and a wide collector following.

Who hasn't chuckled at the wit found on hard times and civil war tokens? "The Flag of Our Union, If anyone attempt to tear it down, Shoot him on the Spot" or on the error version "...Shoot him on the *Spoot*." Who doesn't still feel the pride in the saying, "First in War, First in Peace." I consider these pieces little history lessons.

Who hasn't wondered about or romanticized the feelings of a love token exchanged?

Sometimes initials, carefully carved, sometimes a simple little

word like *Mother* or *Father* evokes powerful feelings even today, more than a hundred years and many generations later. I find love tokens, hard times and Civil War tokens extremely interesting and instructive.

And according to legend, the man behind the theme for National Coin Week, Benjamin Franklin, had his hand in the very beginnings of our coinage, near the end of his life in 1787, with devices and phrases on the *Fugio* cent, such as the interlocked chain and the words "WE ARE ONE," and the straightforward "MIND YOUR BUSINESS."

I would like to suggest consideration of exhibits and displays related to the man of our past and present, Benjamin Franklin.

One quote of note:

*"If you would not be forgotten,  
as soon as you are dead and rotten,  
either write things worth reading,  
or do things worth the writing."*

*Benj. Franklin*

### Other Matters

We also need help planning our annual banquet in May and our summer picnic. *Many hands make light work*, and these activities build teamwork and lasting friendships, which is really what our club is all about. My home phone is 241-3807. My email address is [tkraus1@rochester.rr.com](mailto:tkraus1@rochester.rr.com). Please let me know your thoughts about participation in National Coin Week in April. I'm hoping that our participation is something worth reading or writing about.

*Sincerely,*  
*Tom*

# The only truly, *truly* American coin

By David Gottfried

On a lazy Sunday morning, I got to working on the RNA’s Web site, as well as some of the various videos I had taken of past RNA meetings, and began watching Joe Lanzafame’s talk on the Truly American Coin. In this talk, Joe basically came to the conclusion that the only regularly circulated coin that is truly American is the Buffalo Nickel. The imagery on the coin is not “neo-classical,” which is one of the determining factors in Joe’s talk in trying to define such a thing. In fact, there were several factors he used – none of which are on the Buffalo Nickel:

- No neo-classical imagery
- No commemorating dead people
- No eagles
- No wreaths

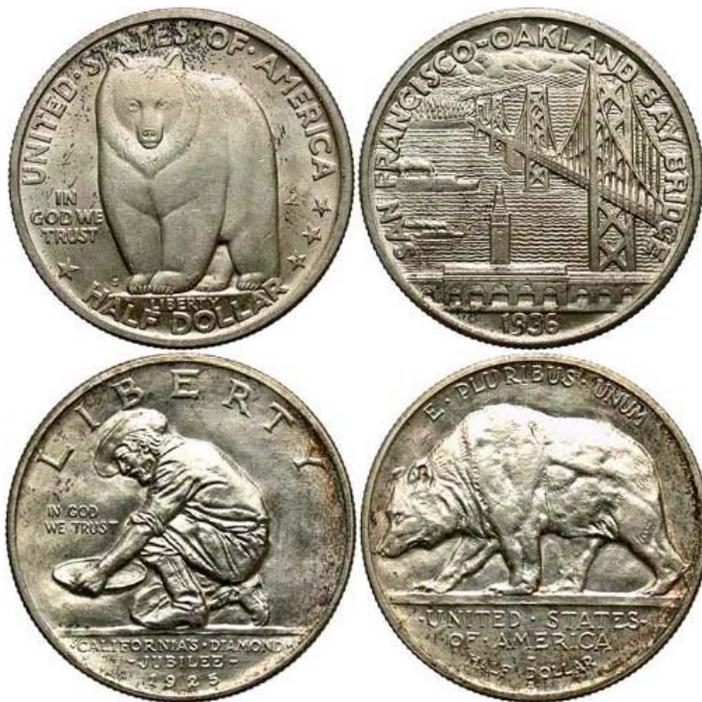
A host of other things, including throwing out imagery for a particular state, such as the state quarters.

So as I was sitting here watching the video, reminiscing about what a wonderful talk it was, I picked up my copy of the Red Book and started looking through it, specifically at early American tokens and the original series of mint commemoratives. And to my shock and horror, basically all of them had eagles, wreaths, classical imagery or dead people on them. Granted, some of the early Washington pieces were made while he was still alive, but they must have known he’d be dead at some point. Plus, most of them have eagles on them, so they fail right there. There were really only a couple of coins that didn’t have this kind of imagery on them, and even

then, if I used technicalities, I could throw those out as well. Some examples:

## San Francisco Bay Bridge Commemorative Half

This coin, on first impression, was very American indeed. A grizzly bear on the obverse, the Bay Bridge on the reverse. However, when it comes down to technicalities, the grizzly bear, albeit defined as a “California grizzly,” isn’t confined to being American. There are grizzlies in Canada, and that should throw it out. And according to Joe, the imagery of the Bay Bridge, while in America, also is only representative of one state – thus, it doesn’t truly capture the “American-ness” necessary for a “Truly American coin.”



Top to bottom: San Francisco Bay Bridge, California Diamond Jubilee half dollars

## California Diamond Jubilee Half

Read the above take on the San Francisco Bay

Bridge half. There’s another darn grizzly bear; and the kneeling Forty-Niner on the obverse, while American, is both representative of only one state and commemorates a group of people long dead. Once again, this coin gets tossed.

## Oregon Trail Memorial Half

Finally, something truly American, right? WRONG! Now, even I have a hard time throwing this out – I mean, the obverse shows American pioneers traveling by wagon across the country, and the reverse depicts an American Indian chief and has a freakin’ outline of the United States on it! Ah, but it also uses the word “Oregon” on one side, thus forever associating it with



a particular state. It's also a "memorial coin," which just screams neo-classical. Now I would argue that these reasons really shouldn't toss this beautiful coin from being "truly American," but by the strictest interpretation of Joe Lanzafame's Rules for Truly American Coins, it probably does.



### Bar Copper

OK – this has to do it! I mean, it says, "USA" on one side and has thirteen bars representing the 13 original colonies on the other. It's so simple in design, how could there be anything on it to argue that it's not truly American? In fact, the Red Book even states, "The significance of the design is clearly defined by its extreme simplicity. The separate thirteen states (bars) unite into a single entity as symbolized by the interlocking letters (USA)."

This is, at last, "truly American," right? It doesn't represent any particular state, clearly represents an American ideal of unity, and specifically says "USA" on it. Might it still fail the test? The only thing that I can see as possible trouble is the font style on the coin – it looks pretty darn close to Times New Roman to me. And anything with the word "Roman" in it must be neo-classical or classical in its style.

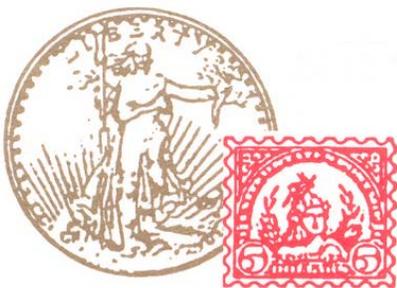


### Turkey – List of States coin

At last! All I had to do was Photoshop this coin together to get something truly American. I was just going to put the US flag on one side, but flags seem kind of classical in design to me (Romans had flags! I recall those SPQR flags all over the place). So here we go – a turkey on one side and a list of the states on the other. No wreaths, no dead people, nothing neo-classical, including the font type (which is "Futura" by the way—something the Classical Europeans never had). This is the truly American coin at last, right? Joe – you got a take on this?

*(Futura's actually a European font. Sorry, Dave. – Ed.)*

**The Edie Coe Presidential Banquet – Friday, May 26, 2006**  
**Green Lantern Inn, Fairport, NY – Cocktails 6 PM – Dinner 7 PM**  
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MICHAEL OMELUCH, Professional Numismatist

# Coins of India

By Eshan Mitra

Hello. My name is Eshan Mitra and I am the secretary of the Rochester Junior Numismatic Association. I am in ninth grade and have been collecting coins for more than six years.

Recently, I have become interested in collecting coins from India. This is mainly because my father is from India, and we go there almost every year. The Indian currency is the rupee, which is equal to 100 paise. The exchange rate is around 40 rupees to the dollar, and paise are worth little enough that they're hardly used anymore.

On my most recent trip to India, last December, I noticed for the first time that Indian coins have mintmarks; not letters like those used by U.S. mints, but symbols below the date. While in India, I collected as many different mintmarks as I could find. After returning home, I tried to look up some information about them on the Internet. Apparently, not many people collect Indian coins, or at least they don't have Web sites. However, I did finally manage to find information on the mintmarks.

The four Indian mints are Kolkata (formerly called Calcutta), which has no mintmark; Mumbai (formerly Bombay), which has a diamond mintmark; Hyderabad, which has a star mintmark; and Noida, which has a dot mintmark.

So many Indian coins have to be produced that foreign mints have recently been hired to produce them as well. This practice began in 1985, when one-rupee coins mintmarked "H" were made in Birmingham, England. Since 1998, this has been done more frequently.

The Kremnica mint in Slovakia has produced one-rupee coins with a circled MK mintmark. Two-rupee coins have been made in South Africa, England, South Korea and Russia. Russia has also produced five-rupee coins.

I have discovered that another effect of India's need for so many coins is that they are not very careful in

making them, so many errors and varieties leave the mint unnoticed. Without much effort, I have obtained two coins with a partial mirror image of the obverse on the reverse. This is caused by the dies striking each other with no coin between them. Also, my favorite Indian coin is a 2002 double die from the Noida mint. Extremely strong doubling is visible on the entire reverse of the coin. I believe that this is a double die, which is caused when the die is made, rather than strike doubling, which is caused when the coin is struck, because the second image does not appear to be flatter than the first.

• • •

*The Meinhart Speaking Contest, named for past RNA president and Rochester Junior Numismatic Association founder Edward F. Meinhart, brings RJNA members before the RNA each May to present talks on topics of numismatic interest.*

*The 2005 Meinhart contest, held at the May 19, 2005, RNA meeting, featured talks from ten RJNA members.*

*Throughout 2005-2006, RNA News will feature talks presented during the 2005 Meinhart competition.*

*Eshan Mitra's talk on the coins of India was chosen as the winning talk at the 2005 Meinhart contest.*

*It was the third time Eshan has won the Meinhart Speaking Contest.*



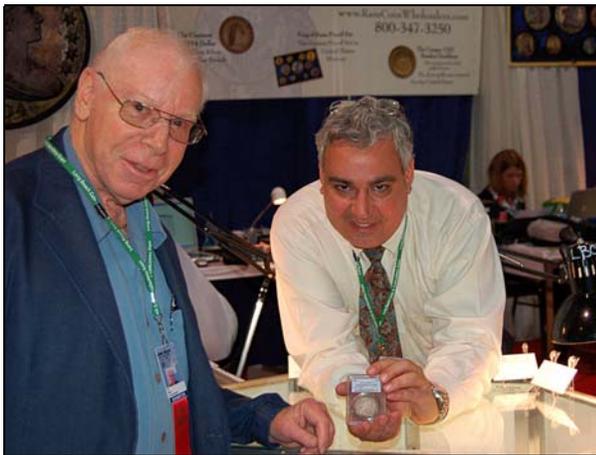
# The Odd Page

## News and Notes from All Over

### It's hard to impress Ira Stein...

...but it can, in fact, be done. Here we see Ira at the Long Beach show last month, posing with the 1804 silver dollar from the King of Siam proof set, being held by Peter Cabral of Rare Coin Wholesalers.

The coin was graded Proof-67 by PCGS, which makes it the finest known – not that we'd complain if someone offered us the worst-known example, either!



### Dan White makes his move

Our best wishes go out to **Dan White**, past president and longtime RNA member.

At the February 16 meeting, Dan announced that he's fulfilling his dream of working full time in the coin business. He'll soon be moving to the Albany area to take a job with a wholesaler there. But never fear – Dan says he'll be a regular Thruway commuter, returning often to Rochester for coin shows as well as the picnic and banquet. And, of course, he'll remain an RNA member from afar. Best of luck, Dan!

### The RNA embraces technology

In a big way, too – **Dave Gottfried** has been busy updating the club's Web site, which we urge you to check out ([www.the-rna.com](http://www.the-rna.com)).

And here's what **Tim Corio** has been working on:

*The RNA now has a page at Wikipedia, the free online encyclopedia created by the efforts of people like you and me. See our page at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rochester\\_Numismatic\\_Association](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rochester_Numismatic_Association).*

*As with all pages at Wikipedia, feel free to add your own information. This is an opportunity for the RNA to tell the world about our organization.*

*A miki (pronounced wee-kee) is a web site where anyone can add a new page or update an existing one. By collaborating, we can put together better information than any one of us working independently.*

*People looking for numismatic issues at Wikipedia or even using Google will find our page, which tells our story. We can capture the history of the RNA, its prominent members, the many contributions these people have made to numismatics and how we can continue to pursue these goals. This will raise visibility of the RNA, increase our standing in the numismatic community and help us fulfill our educational goals.*

And while you're checking out the RNA's Wikipedia page, why not sign up for the RNA's new mailing list? Tim has been working on that as well, creating a new opportunity for RNA members to correspond and share news online.

Join the RNA Public mailing list by sending an email to [RNA-Public-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:RNA-Public-subscribe@yahoogroups.com).

One more exciting bit of technology: you can get your RNA News faster and in color – and help save the club some money – by signing up to receive it online instead of, or in addition to, in the mail. Check in with Tim ([tcorio@rochester.rr.com](mailto:tcorio@rochester.rr.com)) for more information, or ask him at a meeting!

### The nominating committee reports in

Chair **Edie Coe** reports that the following names will be presented as the Nominating Committee's slate of 2006-07 officers/board members at the annual meeting in June:

President – **Steve Lanzafame**; VP – **Ted Vaccarella**; Secretary – **James Kemp**; Treasurer – **Richard Imburgia**; Directors – **Richard Jozefiak** (term expiring 2007), **Alec Ollies**, **Carmin "Chip" Scoppa** (terms expiring 2009).

### And finally, warm regards from Hawaii...

While we were all freezing, **Tim and Darlene Corio** were in Hawaii for much of February. Here they are watching the lava meet the sea. ("I had hoped to poke the lava with a stick," writes Tim, "but they keep you a mile away.")



# The Calendar **March - April**

- **Thursday March 2 - 8 PM - RNA Meeting: Richard Jozefiak** speaks on “Alaska Numismatics”
- **Thursday March 16 - 8 PM - RNA Meeting: Doug Musinger** speaks on “A Topic to be Announced”
- **Friday March 17 - 7:30 PM - Rochester Junior Numismatic Association** Know someone 17 or younger who is interested in numismatics? Why not bring them to an RJNA meeting? Or just show up and join in the “Stump the Advisor” fun.
- **Thursday April 6 - 8 PM - RNA Meeting: Jason Childers** speaks on “Non-Presidential Medals of the RNA”
- **Thursday April 20 - 8 PM - RNA Meeting: Dan White** speaks on “Yet Another Topic to be Announced”
- **Additional Spring 2006 meetings: April 6, 20; May 4, 18; June 1, 15**
- **Friday May 26 - Edie Coe Presidential Banquet** at the Green Lantern Inn, Fairport. See details, page 5

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 Ave nue. 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](mailto:rnanews@fybush.com) or PO Box 10056, Rochester NY 14610.

*National Coin Week is coming -  
April 16-22!*

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