

RNA



News

The official journal of the Rochester Numismatic Association



EISENHART AUDITORIUM
ROCHESTER MUSEUM & SCIENCE CENTER



Countdown to RNA Coin Show

PLUS: Chip Scoppa on identifying Roman coins

November-December 2008

STILL GOING STRONG & BUYING STRONG!



As many of you are aware, it has been my intention to wind down my commitments and to retire from the business. I conducted my Farewell Sale at the ANA convention in Baltimore in early August (pictured above) and was looking forward to cutting back my work week in the autumn from 60 hours to 25-30 or so. And then the whirlwind struck. What I have been warning about in these pages for 7 years is now underway!

PRE-EMPTIVE STRIKE

Knowing that the Fannie Mae & Freddie Mac real estate insolvencies could no longer be shielded from the public view, a handful of New York banks and investment houses¹ orchestrated a brutal take down of the precious metals markets in August and early September to groom the public for the chaos that was to follow. From \$909 at the close of the ANA, gold was heavily shorted for six weeks until reaching a low on 11 September 2008 of \$735 per ounce. Like deer frozen in headlights from an oncoming truck, traditional safe haven buyers stood motionless in fear as a veritable caravan of crises roared past at blinding speed: Fannie & Freddie, Lehman Brothers, AIG, Merrill Lynch, Wachovia, Washington Mutual, the \$700++ billion "bank bailout," and with no end in sight!

¹ See Ted Butler's "Smoking Gun" article at www.butlerresearch.com

During this frightful period, many lifetime collectors have asked for my assistance in skillfully, but quickly, liquidating their coin collections. The volume of my business has been higher since the ANA than at any other time in recent memory. After discussing the situation and its implications, all of my employees have agreed to stay on and continue assisting me to best handle the accelerated purchasing. That is, for a time.

REDUCE RISK & PROTECT YOURSELF

If you would like to simplify your financial situation, to get liquid and take some risk off the table by selling your appreciated coins, then please consider my sincerity and readiness to best represent your interests. Through a combination of retail customers, specialists in the trade and auction houses, I know how to quickly get you the top dollar for your coins. And I work close - often for just 10% on larger collections. You can choose my company check or elect to convert some or all of the proceeds to gold and silver bullion coins.

Take advantage of my availability to help you in the turbulent weeks ahead. Beat the crowd and get liquid now. You know of my long standing reputation to treat you fairly. Please contact me today. I am still going strong, and buying strong!



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FROM THE PRESIDENT

The more things change...

As I sit here watching the news of the 2008 stock market crash where 40 percent of my hard-earned 401K assets evaporated into nothing, I am reminded of an ancient Chinese curse: "May you live in interesting times."

With the stock market on a roller coaster ride due to the collapse of the financial and banking markets, the upcoming United States presidential election and the onset of winter, it seems the only certainty these days is change itself.

With the increased riskiness of the stock market, the question becomes what to do with any money you may have for investment.

Some so-called experts say you should sell all your stocks, buy gold and bury it in your back yard. If your luck is like mine, the stock market will surge back up after selling and the thieves will find the gold. Other experts say buy stock now, using the logic of buying low and selling high. But will the market return to the high levels it previously enjoyed? Most experts say not any time soon.

What about investing in coins? Will the coin prices drop in value because of the fiscal turmoil? Or will the market be a safe haven for your invested value? The "Coin Values" column in *Coin World* suspects the market will be split, with the lower-valued common coins dropping in price and the rarer, more valuable coins increasing in worth. Except maybe in China, the population of rare coins is not going to increase and will always hold its value relative to other investments. This is especially true if the federal government continues to print more money.

Another thing the column mentioned is that due to the market

crash, some people may be forced to sell their collections due to their personal circumstances. This may be an opportune time to buy that rare coin you have been coveting.

However, I take comfort in some things that do not change. I look forward to the scampering trick-or-treaters on Halloween. I look forward to the Thanksgiving dinner with family, even though I probably will be like the turkey and get stuffed. I look forward maybe less so to the hoard of shoppers at the malls during the holiday season. Hmm, maybe I will change this year and do my shopping early so I can better enjoy the company of family and friends during the holidays.

But mostly I look forward to the annual RNA Coin Show on November 1st and 2nd. I am not sure why it is, but there is something special about the RNA show. Under the guidance and hard work of Bill Coe, the show draws a good mix of dealers who can offer you anything you may be looking for, even those elusive apothecary weights I hunt for. Perhaps it is the combined efforts of the RNA membership pulling together from setting up to breaking down, making sure everyone who attends the show, be they dealers or just the curious, will have an enjoyable time.

Perhaps the most valuable thing one can have is not something owned, but the company of friends and family you have. Once you realize this nugget of wisdom, you are already a rich person, no matter how much money you have.

John Stephens

Imperial Roman Attribution 101 – The Short Course

by Carmen J. Scoppa

You can identify or “attribute” your coin with knowledge of the following characteristics of it. These six points will help you to pinpoint the ruler it was issued under, the type of coin, the denomination and possibly the time and place of its minting:

- Physical Characteristics
- Obverse Legend
- Obverse Device
- Reverse Legend
- Reverse Device
- Mint Mark and/or other markings

Physical Characteristics

Weight – Usually given in grams with an accuracy of at least 1/10th of a gram, but it is better to have figures to 1/100th of a gram. This weight data will help with your determination of the denomination of the coin in question.

Diameter – Usually given in millimeters with an accuracy of at least 1mm, but it is better to have figures to 1/10th of a mm. This dimensional data will help with your determination of the denomination of the coin in question.

Die alignment – Die alignment is expressed in degrees and describes how the obverse and reverse dies were aligned to each other when the coin was struck. The best way to look at it is to put a straight edge on the face of the coin, with the edge at the top (0 degrees) and the bottom (180 degrees) through the center. While holding the straight edge to the coin, turn it over and note where the “top” of the reverse device is. If it is in the same place as the top of the front device it is called 0-degree alignment. If the top of the reverse is at the bottom it is called 180-degree alignment. Another way to examine die alignment is to hold the coin on the edge with the obverse facing you, your index finger at the top of the obverse design (0 degrees) and the thumb at the bottom of the design (180 degrees); then rotate the coin horizontally maintaining your index finger and thumb fixed on the same spot on the rim. The 0-degree alignment is called Metal Rotation, while the 180-degree alignment is called Coin Rotation. Roman coinage was made using dies that were movable, so true 0 or 180-degree rotations were not always made. You must guess at the rotation, to the nearest 15 degrees, if it is not at the 0 or 180-degree mark. If you turn the coin over with the straight edge on it and the top of the obverse at the top of the rotated coin, you must observe where the “top” of the reverse device is. If you observe that the top of the reverse device is pointing towards where the 3 would be on a clock face, this is said to be 90-degree rotation. If it is pointing to the spot where the 9 would be on the face, it is said to be 270-degree rotation.

Color – Color could help to determine the material the coin is made from. This material data will help with your determination of the denomination of the coin in question. Also, by knowing the material, you will know in what section of a reference book to look for your attribution references. The most likely materials are gold (AU), silver (AR) or bronze and/or copper (AE). There are several alloys of bronze ranging from a high content of silver (alloy called billon) to very little different metals except copper. Most are intermediate types with various metals alloyed with the copper to make the bronze. All are called AE in the nomenclature.

Obverse Legend (the wording on the front)

Spelling counts! Note length of the legend, note breaks in the legend. The whole legend is a big key in the attribution.

Name of the issuer – This name is the single BIGGEST KEY to the whole attribution process. Without this name, the whole process is much more complicated, if not made almost impossible in some cases.

Titles or descriptors – These words or abbreviations attached to the issuer’s name will help to finalize the attribution. There are a lot of abbreviations that could be attached within the legend, such as IMP, AVG, COS, P, F, DN, GAL, VAL, A, M etc. Just one title could change the whole coin’s attribution.

Known legends – There are several places to find legends:

- Moneta or other software
- RIC, Sear, Van Meter or other books
- Web sites like the FORVM (www.forumancientcoins.com), WildWinds (www.wildwinds.com), Dirty Old Coins (www.dirtyooldcoins.com), etc.

These known legends are most of the time able to be attached to the various mints. One legend may be only used at a single mint. This is important information when you are looking for the various available places where a certain coin was made.

Partial legends – There are several places to find search engines of legend’s characters if you can only see a few of the letters. Some of the places these are found:

- Moneta or other software
- FORVM (www.forumancientcoins.com)
- WildWinds (www.wildwinds.com)

Note: Some letters are very common and will produce a long listing of possibilities. Examples of those letters are AVG, IMP, DN CAE, and NOB. Other combinations of letters, such as POTXXXVII, are unique and return a short list if not a single hit when they are used.

Obverse Device (the picture on the front)

For an Imperial issue it will most likely be a head (this is where we get the slang term “heads” from) or a bust. There are various types of these figures.

Each could have different types of headgear, be holding different types of other gear, be wearing different types of clothing and facing various directions.

Type – Types are head only, bust, two heads or busts (facing each other), conjunctive heads (one right next to the other with only the profile of the one behind showing). After a while the issuers will be recognizable by their profile or other features.

Headgear – The various types of headgear are bare head, laureate, diadem, pearl diadem, diadem with rosettes, radiate, helmet and radiated helmet.

Clothing – There could be none, draperies, cuirass (breastplate), imperial robes, armor and various combinations of these. Some issuers have standard types of clothing or equipment that they use more frequently than others.

Other Gear – The other gear could be spear(s), arrow(s), shield, mappa, globe, plus various other handheld objects. These items may appear alone or in combinations.

Direction – The direction that the head/bust is facing (right, left, forward etc) is a main point. Some of the descriptions get very complicated, with wording such as “as seen from the rear” or “from the front.”

An important note: the radiate will not only help with the description, but will help with the denomination (most likely it will be double).

Reverse Legend (the wording on the back)

Again, spelling counts! One letter can throw off the whole attribution. Note length of the legend and note breaks in the legend. The whole legend is a big key in the attribution. The wording of this legend will most likely tie into the Reverse Device.

If you are using a book such as *Roman Imperial Coinage (RIC)*, knowing the issuer and cross-referencing the reverse legend from its index to the pages where the issuer is listed can cut down the amount of different pages that need to be looked at.

If you are using a book such as Van Meter or Sear, knowing the issuer and then looking for the reverse legend in alphabetical order under the proper denomination works.

Knowing your reference book and how it is set up helps you find what you are looking for more quickly.

Titles or descriptors – These words or abbreviations used will help to finalize the attribution. There are a lot of abbreviations that could be attached within the legend, such as IMP, AVG, COS, P, F, DN, GAL, VAL, A, M, etc. Just one title could change the whole coin’s attribution.

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Note: Some letters are very common and will produce a long listing of possibilities. Examples of those letters are AVG, IMP, DN CAE, and NOB. Other combinations of letters, such as COSXXIX, are unique and return a short list if not a single hit when they are used.

Reverse Device (the picture on the back)

For an Imperial issue it will most likely tie to the reverse legend. Expect certain devices with certain legends. For example; the “FEL TEMP”s will be a “fallen horseman,” a “Phoenix” type (either on a mound or on a globe), a hut (with spear point up or down) type or a Galley (with either Phoenix or Victory) type.

Type – There are many different types of reverse devices on these coins. These run from the common “two soldiers that are flanking one or two standards” to special one-of-a-kind architectural depictions of buildings that could even be shown in 3D. The device most likely will be a noun – a person(s), place or thing:

- Person(s) – Emperor(s), Deity(s), family member(s), soldier(s), combinations, etc.
- Place – Harbor, on a boat, in the clouds or another type of scene
- Thing – Altar, wreath, building, animal, etc.

Description – What is going on? Is someone walking, standing, holding?

Items – There could be many different items held or just in the scene:

- Scale
- Cornucopia
- Scepter
- Rudder
- Globe
- Whip

The list goes on and on and on.

Number in the scene – How many figures make up the complete scene, and where are they in relationship to each other:

- Four Princes in front of ...
- Emperor and a Deity facing ...
- Two Soldiers flanking ...

Extra” items – Are there “extra” parts to the scene? If so, what are they?

- Eagle at the feet
- Holding Victory on a globe
- Captives being speared

(continued on page 6)

Attribution of Imperial Roman coins

(continued from page 5)

Mint Marking(s) and other control marks

Placement on the coin – Where on the coin are the various markings?

Exergue – The space below a line on the reverse of the coin, most of the time at the bottom of the reverse device.

Fields – Center, right or left

Other places –

- Above, as in star **above** the She Wolf or Campgates
- Behind, as in delta **behind** bust
- After, as in pellet **after** legend
- Under, as in pellets **under** Bust

Type of markings – Letters, symbols, characters and other types of marks.

From these marks and the placement, along with the right references, you can even know the timing of the striking of the coin at a certain city.

reference numbers. Sometimes you can even put a picture with it to help in the visualization of the attributed coin and/or a quick visual description.

Aurelian (A.D. 270–275) AE-Antoninianus, 22 mm, 3.26gm, die alignment 180 degrees, struck at Siscia in 274 or 275; obverse – **IMPCAVRELIANVSAVG** Radiate bust, cuirassed, right; reverse – **CONCORDIAMILITVM** Aurelian standing right facing Concord standing left, clasping right hands, with XXIVI in exergue. RIC 244 (vol. V, part II, page 292), VM 7, page 257, Sear 3258 (1988 4th ed.) & C. 60. This coin exhibits an even toning on both of the silvered (nearly complete) surfaces. There is some damage from the lower part of the Emperor through the exergue, which obscures some of the mint mark.

A much shorter version would be **Aurelian (270-275) ANT. CONCORDIAMILITVM**



A coin from the Aurelian era, A.D. 270-275. This is the coin used in the attribution example above.

Putting it all together

Now all six of these points need to be brought together to form the complete attribution. The reference book, if any, that is used must be cited, and an “attribution” must be written. Most common descriptions of imperial coinage start off with the ruler or issuer of the coin in question, then list the descriptors to pull all of it together. For clarity and brevity, some of the exactness may, and should, be left out of the written attribution.

Here is a “typical” attribution written for a coin: Common name of the ruler and the time frame of rule; denomination; physical characteristics; mint with coin-striking timing, if known. Next, the obverse legend (in capital lettering and bold characters); obverse device description; reverse legend (in capital lettering and bold characters); reverse device description, with the placement of mint and control marks; and finally, the citing of

This gets you close, but very little help is given to the reader, who could be a buyer for a coin you are looking to sell. Don’t get me wrong; each of these attributions has its place, as well as the spectrum of all of those in between them.

If you can’t find all of the information, give as much of it as you can. If you are asking for help in completing an attribution, make sure you give as much information as you can. Asking someone to help ID a coin that is described by saying, “it has a head on one side and two figures on the other with some lettering around both” will be a waste of your time, and no one will be able to help. On the other hand, if you post a picture of both sides of the coin and tell all the letters that can be seen, together with any book or Internet references that you feel may apply, your chances are much better for someone to be able to help you. Happy attributing.

Club News and Notes

The RNA is producing a souvenir cachet envelope and cancel, as seen below, for the 36th Annual Coin & Stamp Show, held November 1st and 2nd.



“The RNA has done covers and cancels like this in the past, and it was thought it would be nice to do it again,” says Rochester Philatelic Association Recording Secretary Rick Kase. “It is a nice way to blend both hobbies together, as are many members of the RNA and the RPA that belong to both clubs.”

The covers will be on sale at the show for two dollars each, or after the show by mail.

If you are unable to attend the show, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope with two dollars (cash or check) for each

cover to RNA Coin Show Cover, PO Box 10206, Rochester, NY 14610-0206.

Kase says, “There will be 42 cents postage affixed to the covers using the 29-cent numismatic stamp and the 13-cent Indian head penny stamp. The 3-cent George Eastman stamp is for display only. Don’t we wish postage was only 3 cents!”

• • •

Check those calendars! Please note that the second meeting in November will be held on November 13th instead of November 20th, because of scheduling issues at the RMSC. And our January meetings will be held January 8th and 22nd, rather than the usual first and third Thursdays of the month. Don’t miss out!

• • •

Our condolences to RNA member **Earl Gurell** on the passing of his brother, **Melvyn Gurell**, who succumbed to lung cancer October 18. Funeral services were held Oct. 20. Donations in his memory can be made to Temple Beth El, the American Cancer Society or Lifetime Care Hospice.

Applications Corner

The following people have applied for membership in the RNA since the last issue of the RNA News. RNA members with pertinent information about applicants are requested to contact the Membership Committee, in care of Bill Coe. If no objections are received within 45 days after publication, these applicants will become members of the RNA:

Elizabeth T. Mantione, Rochester, NY (as a family membership with Joseph Mantione)
James F. Schmitt, Macedon, NY

Michael J. Yurgosky, Pittsford, NY
Willis A. Heise Sr., Albion, NY
Alfred Bergeron, Leesburg, FL

The following people have been accepted as members in the RNA since the last issue of the RNA News:

John Kellas III
Richard Kase
Gregory O’Brien
Vincent P. Cavanaugh
Alex Hrabko

Gary Wycker
Gregory Hunt
Robert A. DeLena
David T. Robinson



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The Calendar **November-December**

- **Saturday & Sunday, November 1-2 – 36th Annual RNA Coin Show and Sale** 9 AM – 5 PM Saturday, 9 AM – 4 PM Sunday at the Eisenhart Auditorium, Rochester Museum & Science Center, 657 East Avenue. Free admission!
- **Thursday, November 6 – 8 PM – RNA Meeting** Peter Blaisdell will give a talk.
- **Thursday, November 13 – 8 PM – RNA Meeting** Jason Childers will discuss numismatics “After The State Quarters.”
Note the date change for the second meeting in November!
- **Friday, November 21 – 7:30 PM – Rochester Junior Numismatic Association** Bring a junior and play “Stump the Advisor”
- **Thursday, December 4 – 7 PM – RNA Board Meeting**
- **Thursday, December 4 – 8 PM – RNA Meeting** Steve Eisinger will administer a “Foreign Coin Quiz.”
- **Sunday, December 14 – 10 AM-4 PM – RACE Coin Show** DoubleTree Hotel, Jefferson Road at I-390 in Henrietta
- **Thursday, December 18 – 8 PM – RNA Meeting** Get in the holiday spirit with the annual auction!
- **2009 meetings: January 8, January 22 (note 2nd and 4th Thursdays!), February 5, February 19**

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.

Dates in RNA History

Compiled by Gerard Muhl

November 3, 1942: RNA passes resolution urging US that electrotypes be banned.

November 2, 1943: J. Pittman and G. Lindboe work on a series of lessons on numismatics. They want to make numismatists rather than just collectors.

November 21, 1944: Pittman gives members a list of all the books in the RNA library.

November 15, 1949: Henry Dutcher applies for membership. The club holds a donation auction to buy a slide projector, and raises \$66.

November 4 and November 5, 1950: Numismatic Advancement Council holds its first convention in Syracuse. George Bauer of the RNA is vice president of the group, later called ESNA.

November 7, 1950: RNA hears a proposal to have only one business meeting a month. That does not happen until 1979.

November 20, 1951: J. Pittman and Val Judson are named “cohorts” in RNA banquet punch committee. The position is renewed each year.

November 18, 1952: William Hutchinson becomes an RNA life member.

November 1, 1955: RNA invites area coin club presidents to its annual banquet. They come from Albany, Albion, Buffalo, Caledonia, Syracuse and Toronto.

November 6, 1955: The RNA holds a get-together with the Albion Coin Club.

December 17, 1940: Dr. Edith Voget donates a set of silver Czech coins to the RNA. Interest was high on European coins with World War II raging in Europe.

December 1, 1942: RNA members discuss a government proposal to strike a new 3-cent piece, a half dime and a copperless penny.

December 15, 1942: The club buys a Series F \$100 war bond.

December 21, 1948: Ed Meinhart, assistant secretary of Union Trust, is appointed chairman of the Junior Numismatic Association of America. He will help organize junior clubs in New England, New Jersey and New York. In 1948, the RJNA has 78 boys, ages 12 to 17.

December 2, 1952: J. Pittman speaks about coin grading, pointing out that today's coins are generally graded higher than in early days.

December 16, 1952: A. Kolb reveals a new reverse design for the RNA presidential medal.

December 21, 1954: A. Kolb arranges for a variety show at the club's annual banquet. J. Pittman notes local banks are flooded with “CC” silver dollars.

December 20, 1955: At RNA meeting, J. Pittman shows a complete collection of Canadian bronze, silver and gold coins from 1870 to 1955.