

RNA News

March - April 2017



Above Left: Matteo P. Latona RNA presidential medal 72, 1984, article on page 4
 Above Right: Walking Liberty Half Dollar, article on page 6

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RNA News

Established January 1912

One of America's oldest local coin clubs

American Numismatic Association,
Branch #2, Life Club #8

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Rochester Museum &
Science Center

Member:

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Royal Canadian Numismatic
Association
Token and Medal Society

Contributing Editor: Gerard Muhl
Editor; Production: Ted Vaccarella
tedvacc@yahoo.com

2016-2017 Officers:

President: George T. Fekete

gtf@georgefekete.com

Vice Pres.: Eric Miller

yankeetrouthead@gmail.com

Treasurer: Edward Cain

edmcairn@rochester.rr.com

Secretary: Kerri Klajbor

kerrilh@rochester.rr.com

Librarian: Michael Luck

Curator: John Zabel

Assistant Curator:

Michael Luck

Gerard Muhl

Historian: Dennis DeYoung

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Dennis DeYoung, John Tokoli

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Rochester Numismatic Association

P.O. Box 10056

Rochester NY 14610-0056

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Regular **Rochester Numismatic Association** meetings are held from September to June at 7:30 pm on the second and fourth Wednesdays at **Eisenhart Auditorium** of the **Rochester Museum & Science Center**, 657 East Avenue. The auditorium is the glass front building behind the Museum. **Enter and exit through the right-side door** and go down the stairs to the lower level meeting room. For elevator service to the lower level call 271-4552 X 601 to speak with the Eisenhart security desk attendant. Entry for the elevator is through the **Genesee Community Charter School** door.

Rochester Junior Numismatic Association (RJNA) meetings are held at 7:30 pm on the 4th Wednesday of each month at Eisenhart Auditorium on the lower level; for more information, contact RJNA advisor Joe Lanzafame at 585-314-1240.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Technology is my friend.

When I consider how fortunate I am to live in a time when vast amounts of information are only a few clicks away I think of folks like V. A. Shiva Ayyadurai (email), Sergey Brin (Google), Jack Dorsey (Twitter), Bill Gates (Microsoft), Steve Jobs (Apple) and Mark Zuckerberg (Facebook). And then there's Vinton Cerf, considered the "father of the internet."

In the early 1970s Cerf helped co-found the Advanced Research Projects Agency Network (ARPANET) that, by today's standards, was primitive but, nonetheless, is the genesis of the Internet. He also co-designed many of the protocols that enable the Internet to function. The Internet is the framework that enables Apple, email, Facebook, Google, Microsoft, Twitter and a host of other components to play nice together. The complexity of the system makes me wonder how *any* of it works at all.

The computer, its peripherals and the Internet can significantly enhance your numismatic pleasure. Internet benefits come in many forms and they provide a wide range of options to the numismatist.

Hardware

Your Mac, PC, tablet, smart phone, copier, printer and scanner provide both an interface to utilize a myriad of features and to accomplish specific tasks. Scanners can capture images for use in presentations and publications.

Software

Productivity (e.g. Microsoft Office) and graphics (e.g. Photoshop) software can be used for a variety of purposes like creating simple or complex collection databases, identifying items and determining the authenticity of coins and currency. Some excellent applications are "open source" and, therefore, free.

Buying & Selling

Many sites – for both the generalist and specialist - provide an opportunity to buy and/or sell numismatic items and supplies. Some sites use fixed pricing while others offer auctions. Perhaps the best-known auction site is eBay where items can be bought and sold within the limits

of just about any budget.

Valuation

Coin World offers online values for domestic and foreign coins as well as paper money, and some sites, like eBay, provide sold listings values.

Research

Using a few keywords in the Firefox, Google Chrome, Internet Explorer and Safari browsers usually returns an abundance of information related to the query.

Publications

The American Numismatic Association offers members online access to its Dwight N. Manley Numismatic Library holdings and electronic versions of *The Numismatist*. And, of course, the RNA provides electronic copies of the *RNA News* on its website.

Communication

Email gives users the ability to communicate with each other and organization websites provide information to its members and, in some cases, facilitate two-way communication.

Coin Shows

Information about all major and most smaller coin shows around the country are aggregated on some sites and most shows have dedicated websites where you can find show dates, show schedules, and information about (often discounted) lodging and transportation.

Not Connected?

If you don't have access to a computer or have an email account and would like to use some of the services I mentioned, you're in luck. All you need is a library card and a few minutes to get started. Today, most libraries provide computer stations for their members. Several organizations provide free email accounts, Google (Gmail) being one of the most popular. If you're not connected and would like to be I would be happy to help you get started. If you're interested please feel free to contact me.

If you're reading this column online you are in the majority of RNA members who prefer to receive it electronically only. And by doing so, you collectively save the club roughly \$250 each year!

George T. Fekete

RNA Committees

RNA Bylaws identify several committees appointed by the President and Board of Directors. Here are our currently active committees:

Membership:

Bill Coe (Chair), Dennis DeYoung, John Stephens, Ted Vaccarella and John Bailey

Auditing

Susan E. Bashaw; John Vicaretti; Ted Vaccarella

Endowment Committee

John Zabel (RNA Curator and Chair); 2015-17 Gerard Muhl, Gerald Vaccarella; 2015-2018 John Lighthouse, Earl Gurell; 2016-19 Steve Eisinger, Maria Paris; Ex-officio: Ed Cain, Treasurer

RNA Who Done It: The Case of the Unidentified Sculptor

By Eric Miller, RNA Member

As the saying goes from the Mission Impossible TV show, “Your mission, if you choose to accept it is to...” and in this case, was to find out who sculpted the Matteo “Pat” Latona’s RNA Presidential medal. It took some detective work to uncover all the facts.

This all started around the summer of 2014. Little did I know an innocent conversation with Bill Coe would turn into many RNA conversations, emails and phone calls. Bill and I had what turned into one of our numerous conversations about RNA Presidential medals. These conversations are enjoyable, at least for me, and are what really peaked my interest in collecting RNA Medals and exonomia. The gist of these conversations usually starts with me asking one question which garners a response from Bill of at least one page, if not more, and more questions from me. This may then turn into a full-fledged email or even prompt a call to Bill.

On this particular occasion I asked Bill about the Andrew Harkness medal. Instead of just answering my question with a quick paragraph or short answer, Bill took the opportunity to explain what happened during the years of 1983-1984. Medal Arts had a superintendent who worked there by the name of Bill LaMere, Sr. He struck the medals from 1978-1982. Medal Arts fell on hard times and no longer was able to produce the RNA medals. RNA Member Harry Spencer recommended that the Tower Mint in England be used to make the Harkness and Latona medals. (Keep in mind the Tower Mint isn’t associated with the English government and isn’t located in the Tower of London). The Harkness medal was sculpted by Raphael Maklouf. Unbeknownst to the RNA, in 1983 there was a contest in England for the next likeness of Queen Elizabeth II to be used on their coins. Maklouf entered that contest and won! By this time Pat Latona had become the next RNA President. Because Mr. Maklouf had won that contest his prices for sculpting no longer made it feasible for the RNA to use his services as the sculptor for the Latona medal. Latona’s medal was produced at the Tower Mint, but who sculpted his medal is the burning question.

I wanted to answer this question so I looked at it as a challenge. More importantly, I wanted to answer this question for Bill Coe, to give back a tiny piece of knowledge after receiving so much from him. I thought it shouldn’t be a hard answer since we know where Latona’s medal was produced. Using my high tech computer knowledge called the internet and Google, I looked up the Tower Mint in England on the

web. I contacted the mint through its website. I waited and waited. A couple of weeks passed with no response. I learned long ago how to be politely persistent but I really wanted this answer. I emailed them again and, again, nothing. Now I was getting impatient. I thought to myself, “why aren’t they answering me? I thought this would be easy.” I looked at their webpage again and found a phone number. After realizing the time difference from EST to BST (London time) is 5 hours ahead, I called to the Tower Mint one morning. After numerous attempts to get the phone number right, I heard a female’s voice on the other end, “Tower Mint, how can I help you?” I thought, “Wow. Finally a response and maybe an answer!” I told the lady who I was and that I belonged to the RNA. I also told her all about the Harkness and Latona medals and that Mr. Maklouf was used in 1983 but my question was who sculpted the Latona medal. Her polite response was, “Well sir, 1984 is a long time ago. I am not sure if we have any records going back that far. Mr. Maklouf is gone for the day. Would you mind calling back tomorrow and I will let him know you called?” An interesting note is she said to me that the only employee who still works there from the early 1980’s is Mr. Maklouf, himself.

So being politely persistent, I called back the next day. I had some errands to run and nearly lost my calling window so in a panic I sped home and called again. I got the same polite lady. She told me to hang on and then a male answered, “Hello, Tower Mint.” I just thought, “Oh, this is another person to give me some disappointing news. Sorry Mr. Miller but we don’t know the answer to your question.” His voice sounded rushed, impatient, hurried and definitely French. I told him everything I had already told the other lady. Then I got to the part about Mr. Maklouf being the sculptor of the Harkness medal and he finally said, “this is Raphael Maklouf”. I nearly dropped the phone, I was stunned, almost a little star struck actually. I said to myself, “Wow! Finally, maybe an answer! Eric, hold your composure.”

I ended up having a really wonderful conversation with him. Mr. Maklouf then told me he is driving his Porsche but could I write him an email stating everything in our conversation. He gave me his email address and we hung up. Finally, real progress! Maybe even an answer!

I wrote Mr. Maklouf asking him if he sculpted or engraved Latona’s medal. He answered, “I did not sculpt Latona’s medal.” So I asked, “who did?” He replied, “I will try to find out,” Keeping up my persistence and after a couple days of not hearing from him I wrote to him, “...have you had any success finding this information out?”

(Continued on page 5.)

(Continued from page 4.)

With eager anticipation and in what seemed like forever I heard the all familiar ring from my email alarm on my iPad. Sure enough, a response from Mr. Maklouf!

Here are his exact words, “I cannot be sure but think the sculptor may have been Robert Elderton late of Royal Mint. I hope the above is helpful. Raphael”.

After finally having a sense of accomplishment, I can

Notes on Glenna Goodacre

Of numismatic interest, it is reported that Glenna Goodacre, creator of the Sacagawea dollar, is retiring. Having reached her 77th birthday, she has decided to retire by destroying all the molds for existing editions of her numerous bronzes - both large and small.

For her golden dollar work she was paid with 5,000 special-mint-finished coins. She gave some to her grandchildren, kept one for herself, and sold the rest. They now sell for around \$500 each - for a tidy profit of two and a half million dollars. If you want to see more of her work, go to :

www.scottsdaleartauction.com. Over one hundred of her works go up for auction on Thursday, April 6, 2017.

A color auction catalog is available for \$40 from Scottsdale Art Auction through the website noted above.

Gerry Muhl

honestly say this Mission is Accomplished! I hope this fills and finally answers a tiny but important gap in RNA medal history.

*Author’s Note: After Medal Arts closed, Bill LaMere, Sr. opened the North American Mint. RNA medals have been made by the NAM since the 1986 Keith Fader RNA Presidential Medal. After Bill LaMere Sr.’s death in 2009, Billy LaMere Jr. took over ownership of the mint.



Questions and Answers (Answers on page 7)

1. Where was a “Devils Head” issued?
2. Chinese imitation paper money sometimes burned at funerals bear what nickname?
3. What was the name of the 1870 silver strike in Virginia City, Nevada?
4. What two US coins were struck in non-alloyed copper?
5. What is the modern name for the Sommer Islands?
6. Where was the “Deseret” Mint?

New York Connections for the Walking Liberty Half

By **Mark Benvenuto**, RNA Member

Every now and then it is fun to look at one of the coins that qualifies as a collector favorite – one that has been a favorite for quite some time – and see if there might be something related to it that folks have missed. What sort of collecting possibilities are out there for instance, for the Walking Liberty half dollars? Is there some back story we might not be aware of surrounding a coin we all have probably seen over and over again?

Okay, the basics first: this coin probably has facts and figures we have all seen at least a few times. The designer is Mr. Adolph A. Weinman, who won a contest that landed him both this design and that of the Mercury dime. The Walking Liberty half dollar was issued from 1916 to 1947, there are some scarce dates up near the front, and plenty of common dates right near the end of the series. There are also some proofs issued from 1936 to 1942, in what we might call ascending numbers.

This author will argue that the surprises which get overlooked are both about the man, and about the proofs.

First, the man. Born in Germany, Mr. Weinman emigrated to the U.S. (ca 1884), as did many folks in the 1800's. But it may not be well known that he spent some time in New York City, and that before diving into coin design, had become quite successful at much larger, sculptural works. Indeed, he appears to have considered himself an architectural sculptor much more than a coin designer or a medalist. That's a bit ironic, since most folks remember him for his two coin designs, and we might argue that some in the military may remember him for the campaign medals he designed. On a large scale, though, his work includes a statue of Alexander Johnston Cassatt, which was at Penn Station in NYC. Mr. Cassatt was one of the presidents of the Pennsylvania Railroad, and a moving force behind Penn Station, even though he passed away before it went into use. Mr. Weinman's statue of Samuel Rea is another that stood at Penn Station – and yes, Mr. Rea was another president of what often gets called the PRR. On a more allegorical note, his work *Civic Fame* graces the top of the Manhattan Municipal Building. This sculpture is loaded with

visual, allegorical information – such as the crown she holds having five turrets, symbolic of the five boroughs of New York City – and supposedly had none other than Audrey Munson as the model. Miss Munson has been called the first supermodel, although since she was born in 1891, her heyday was well before times most of us can remember. Mr. Weinman did plenty of sculptural work beyond this, but these three examples serve as good connections to our state.

Next, the proofs. Proof coinage in the United States stretches back into the nineteenth century, but that earliest manifestation was usually as a special offering to the wealthiest of collectors, or those connected with Mint personnel. The year 1936 saw the advent of what we now call modern proofs, in which many of the proof coins were sold in sets (although at the beginning, it seems that individual coins could still be purchased). Officially, 3,901 proof Walking Liberty halves were made in 1936, and the number rises each year until it reaches 21,120 in 1942. Both of those numbers seem minuscule compared to the multi-million proof mintages of the past forty years, but precisely because they are so small, they are worth examining.

As this is written (summer 2016), the 1940 proof Walking Liberty Half dollar, with a mintage of 11,279, the 1941 with a mintage of 15,412, and the just-mentioned 1942 all have prices in the major listings of \$550. No, that's certainly not chump change, and if you are the type of frugal collector who never spends more than \$50 per coin, this price may seem outrageous. But think of what that \$550 will get you. The proofs are the best of the best, and the rarity of these proofs is reason enough to try to add one to a collection. The biggest challenge might be finding one at a decent-sized show, or in a well-stocked dealer's holdings.

All things considered, the Walking Liberty half dollar may not have a direct connection to our dear city, but the sculptor does have a connection to our state. And with the possibility of six early proof halves in existence, three of which are rather reasonably priced, with luck Mr. Weinman's design might just end up being connected with some of our collections. Good luck if you choose to hunt down one of these scarce, beautiful proofs.

Club News and Notes

Since the January-February issue of *RNA News*, two new members joined RNA: we welcome Brad Hughes of Rochester, New York, and Robert King of Henrietta, New York.

Want to visit another coin club? The Fulton (Oswego County) Coin Club meets the first Tuesday of every month at 5:30 p.m. They meet in the Fulton Municipal Building, 141 S. 1st Street. All are welcome.

* * * * *

More About the Farouk/ Pittman Coin Collection

Do Your coins look like they were run over by a truck? Maybe they were. Here is the story.

February 12, 1954 saw long-time RNA member John J. Pittman in Egypt at the opening auction of the King Farouk coin collection. The collection consisted of almost every rarity of US coin including the 1933 gold double eagle. To find more about the sale go to Alison Frankel's book, *Double Eagle*, published in 2006.

For now, let's focus on an event that happened to one of five boxes of coins that Pittman had shipped from Egypt to the Monroe County Airport. The following is from a letter Pittman wrote April 22, 1954 to Napoleon Bartolo and sold in the Kolbe & Fanning book auction at the NY International Coin Show January 9, 2016:

"Apparently, the package arrived at the Rochester Airport during the night hours. It was unloaded from the plane to a truck. Apparently it fell off or was knocked off the truck and was run over by the truck. The small wooden box was demolished and all the coins are bad-

ly damaged. I was told that it took over two hours for several people to gather all the coins that were scattered on the pavement at the airport. Apparently, many of the coins were walked on in the dark while the search was made for the pieces. Also, after the coins had been found, they were placed indiscriminately in large paper envelopes so that the coins had a chance to rub against the other and cause more damage...."

Many of the coins were 1830's gold hand-picked by Pittman. Fortunately the shipment was insured by Lloyd's of London, which paid Pittman a settlement of \$4,000, a regal price in 1954. Pittman also retained possession of the damaged material.

If you see an early US gold coin that looks like it was run over by a truck - it may be one repatriated from Egypt. Another clue that the coin may be from the Farouk auction is the presence of nitrocellulose lacquer coating the piece. Many Farouk coins were lacquered to preserve them from the humid Nile atmosphere. That coating may help in determining provenance.

Looking from a coin from the Farouk/ Pittman Collection? Happy hunting....

Gerry Muhl

Answers to questions on page 5.

1. Canada, 1954
2. Well money
3. Comstock
4. Half cent; large cent
5. Bermuda
6. Salt Lake City



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For the LOVE of Coins

The RNA Meeting and Events Calendar March - April 2017

Wednesday, March 8: 7:30 PM - RNA Meeting: **Scott Fybush** - You Say It's Your Birthday

Wednesday, March 22: 7:30 PM - RNA Meeting: **Craig Charles** - A Nickel for your thoughts: The History of Hobo Nickels in the United States; **Board meeting** at 6:30 PM

Wednesday, March 22: 7:30 PM - RJNA Meeting

Wednesday, April 12: 7:30 PM - RNA Meeting: Secret Service Agent **Brad Jacobs** - Counterfeit Money

Wednesday, April 26: 7:30 PM - RNA Meeting: **Jan Pawlyk, Sue Bashaw** - Wheels of Money

Wednesday, April 26: 7:30 PM - RJNA Meeting

Save the Date: Friday, May 19: **Annual Banquet**; and Sunday, August 20: **Annual Picnic**

Schedule of 2017 Board meetings: May 24 and June 28.

The *Ontario County Coin Club* meets at 2 pm on the first Sunday of every month at the Canandaigua Elks Club, 19 Niagara Street. Doors open at 1 pm.

Future RNA News publication deadlines: April 30, 2017 for May-June 2017, and June 30, 2017 for July-August 2017.

Rochester Numismatic Association

PO Box 10056, Rochester NY 14610-0056