

RNA News



May - June 2017



Denarius coin of Vespasian "Judae"



Sestertius coin of Domitian



As coin of Titus



Sestertius coin of Titus

Coins from the RNA Collection: Article beginning on page four; photos: G. Muhl

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

RNA presidents can have different styles and views of their roles. In my first column I wrote that, as president, I intended to continue the time-honored traditions of the club and moreover - because this is your club – ensure that every decision your board made would provide obvious value to members. My goal was to improve members' experiences when it was consistent with the RNA mission.

To measure progress against my goal I reviewed RNA newsletters and regular & board meeting minutes from my term. Summarized below are some highlights of my review.

Time-honored traditions: there are too many to list here but they include events like the annual coin show and picnic as well as information sharing and the exchange of ideas at meetings.

Youth Outreach: *RJNA* – Despite the journeyman efforts of Joe Lanzafame, RJNA membership has declined dramatically in recent years. RNA is at a crossroads: the incoming board of directors must determine the path forward.

External – We were invited to lead two Boy Scout coin-collecting merit badge events at a local troop but were unable to provide a leader. We are currently working with the Seneca Waterways Council to encourage area Boy Scouts to participate in the Meinhardt Speaking Contest. At this writing it is unclear whether they will this year; however, Scout leaders we contacted have shown interest.

Partnerships – Numismatists and philatelists have a lot in common. Roughly a half-dozen RNA members are also members of the *Rochester Philatelic Association*. The Board approved a proposal to hold a joint RNA-RPA meeting this year. It is scheduled for *Thursday, July 13, 2017* at 7:00 PM at the Jewish Community Center of Greater Rochester.

Social Media - An important channel for the exchange of information today is social media. A Facebook page for RNA was created about eight years ago. It is administrated by three RNA members and access

to the website must be approved by an administrator. The RNA Board formally sanctioned it this year.

Marketing - The Board approved Craig Charles' proposal to produce meeting announcements; they are posted on the RNA website and Facebook page. Also, Craig will record presentations made at RNA meetings and post them if desired.

Technology Committee: *New technology* often provides useful tools. To streamline the acquisition and implementation of these tools the RNA Board approved creation of a technology committee. Craig Charles was asked to lead the effort.

A major concern of members – particularly those with hearing impairments - was the inability to clearly hear other members during RNA meetings and, at the request of the RMSC, we were asked to stop using our existing PA system because it interfered with others meeting in the building. Consequently, we purchased a suitable PA system.

Detailed Guides - New equipment is easy to use for technically savvy folks but not for everyone. Detailed step-by-step guides were created for the operation of our Digital Projector and PA System to aid members unfamiliar with either.

RNA Website - Another major concern of members was the inadequacy of the RNA website. To address this issue we formed a project team to develop a new website that would retain the useful features of prior RNA websites as well as provide new content and functionality. John Lighthouse was appointed project manager. The new website will be implemented in four phases. Phase 1 is scheduled for the end of June 2017; Phases 2–4 are scheduled for quarterly releases, ending March 31, 2018.

A few of the new online features planned for the website are an RNA library catalogue, RNA medal photos and descriptions, archives of the *RNA News*, optional online payments (e.g. dues, medals, events) and a Members' Area.

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

Did RNA Coins Help Pay for the Roman Colosseum?

By Gerard Muhl, RNA President - 1979

When Vespasian became emperor of Rome in 69 AD, he faced an enormous task. The city and empire needed rebuilding after a year-long civil war and a fire that devastated large sections of the capitol. The treasury was nearly empty. The unemployed roamed the crowded streets.

Ancient documents stated that he needed 40 billion sesterces just to rebuild Rome and to stabilize the economy of the empire. Troops had to be paid or their loyalty would waver. This is the largest amount of money ever mentioned in antiquity.

Being himself the son of a tax collector, Vespasian instituted new taxes, sold public offices, and cornered vital supplies which he sold when prices rose. He lived frugally, however, which earned him the moniker, by Nero's old friends, as "a vulgar money-grubbing boor."

Beside infrastructure, Vespasian knew that good schools were necessary if society and the economy were to thrive. He endowed school salaries, paying as much as 100,000 sesterces per year for Latin, Greek and Rhetoric teachers.

One of the emperor's new coins carried the motto, "*Roms Resurgens*" (prosperity is coming). It was more than propaganda, as conditions really did begin to change for the better.

In the fourth year of his reign, Vespasian began the enormous public works project of building the largest amphitheater ever attempted. Known as the *Colosseum* after the huge statue of Nero nearby, it would eventually seat over 50,000 citizens and visitors. As many as ten thousand individuals worked on the project for over eight years.

Vespasian's son, the Emperor Titus, completed the building in 80 AD, one year after his father's death. The Colosseum had 80 entrances. It was one-third of a mile around, and it stood 165 feet tall.

The people of ancient Rome, rich or poor, were now kept peaceful and satisfied at the Colosseum with nearly an endless succession of entertainments. Gladiatorial games, wild beast hunts, and mock sea battles were a few of the events held at the expense of the emperor or various officials up for election. Thirty years after its dedication, the arena began being witness to harrowing scenes of Christian martyrdom beginning with Saint Ignatius of Antioch in 110 AD.

The question now to be asked is, where did the money come from to build such a magnificent and infamous

structure?

From a recently reconstructed inscription carved above one entrance to the Colosseum, archaeologists get a solid clue: referring to the building, it says, "It was made from the sale of the booty."

The most logical booty or treasure was that sent to Rome by Vespasian and Titus after the crushing defeat of the Jews. Between 66 and 73 AD, Israel revolted against Roman occupation. At the end of this revolt, the *First Jewish-Roman War*, over one million Jews were dead and nearly 100,000 were cast into slavery.

A majority of the gold "booty" came from the Temple of Jerusalem. Josephus, the ancient historian who was there when Jerusalem fell, wrote: "(the temple) lacked nothing that could astound either one's soul or eye. It was covered with plates of gold. In the sum its brightness caused people to avert their eyes." Temple gold also came in the form of candlesticks, lampstands, tables, bowls and plates.

The Temple served as a bank for widows and orphans and other common people. The Jewish treasury was kept there. In fact, every male Jew over twenty contributed a half shekel temple tax each year. With over eight million Jews in Israel, that would amount to a huge sum.

In the cave where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found was also discovered a strange piece of ancient writing inscribed on a sheet of copper. Many people believe it lists the Temple treasure at the time the Romans put down the revolt. In various forms it lists nearly 100,000 kilograms of gold.

So much gold went into commerce after the *Great Revolt* that inflation hit the eastern Mediterranean area. Just as if a nation prints too much paper if too much gold is made available, inflation also becomes a problem. Some of the booty brought back to Rome is shown on the Arch of Titus still standing in Rome. One particular artifact shown on the arch is a five-foot high golden menorah being carried by eight soldiers. There can be little doubt that the gold of Israel's defeat paid for Rome's triumph.

In the RNA Collection are coins that remind us of that fateful time of 66 to 80 AD. Perhaps these coins were used to pay the builders of the Colosseum.

1. The club's Year Two shekel of Israel (page 5) stands out as actually having been made during the Revolt. It is one of very few ancient coins to show a date. It also shows the golden omer cup used in the Temple during the harvest festival on the second day of Passover.

(Continued on page 5.)

(Continued from page 4.)

2. A small denarius of Emperor Vespasian (page one, top left) in the RNA Collection shows a Jewish woman captive sitting on the ground next to a display of Roman armor. The word “*Judae*” is clearly read beneath her.

3. Vespasian’s son Titus is portrayed (page one, bottom right) on a large sestertius showing him as a tough general though somewhat overweight. On the reverse is a Roman goddess and the large letters “SC” meaning “by the consent of the Roman Senate.” Actually, by this time the Senate’s power was nearly meaningless. The emperor held supreme control.

4. Titus is also shown on a copper *as* (page one, bottom left). The coin’s reverse depicts a temple on the Field of Mars; a temple dedicated to war. The doors on the temple are closed, indicating that on this 75 AD coin that Rome was ready for war. The word “PROVIDENT” boldly printed below the temple perhaps praises the Roman Emperor-worshipping cult along with Mars as a reason for his success.

5. Finally, the club has a coin of the Emperor Domitian (page one, top right), second son of Vespasian, who is credited for between 81 AD and 96 AD putting the final touches on the Colosseum. He was assassinated in 96 AD, bringing an end to the Flavian line of emperors.

The poet Alexander Pope once wrote of Rome:

“Their ruins ruin’d, and their place no more!

Convinc’d, she now contracts her vast design,

* * * * *

Our **Library** has recently added the following materials:

Coinage and History of the Roman Empire, 2 volumes; David L Vagi; Routledge, 2001.

Numismatic Art in America, 2nd Ed.; Cornelius Vermeule; Whitman, 2007.

Medals of the Renaissance, 2nd revised Ed.; Sir George Francis Hill; British Museum Press, 1978.

Roman Coins and Their Values V; David R. Sear; Spink & Son Ltd.; 2014.

Morgan Dollar: America’s Love Affair with a Legendary Coin; Michael Standish; Whitman; 2014.

And all her Triumphs shrink into a Coin.”

The brutal reign of Rome is long over, but its history remains in its coins and in the magnificent structure of the Colosseum.

(Population and casualty figures in the article are from the ancient historian Josephus who was at Jerusalem at the time of the revolt. Modern scholars would greatly reduce his estimates).



Sestertius coin of Vespasian

(another from the RNA Collection)



Year Two *shekel* of Israel

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Standard Catalog of World Coins 1601-1700, 5th Ed.; George S. Cuhaj and Thomas Michael; Krause; 2011.

Standard Catalog of World Coins 1701-1800, 6th Ed.; George S. Cuhaj and Thomas Michael; Krause; 2013.

Standard Catalog of World Coins 1801-1900, 7th Ed.; George S. Cuhaj; Krause; 2012.

Standard Catalog of World Coins 1901-2000, 42nd Ed.; George S. Cuhaj and Thomas Michael; Krause; 2014.

The Krause *Standard Catalogs* are available for your use at all regular RNA meetings held at the Eisenhart Auditorium prior to and during each meeting. They are kept in the special library cabinet reserved for popular books and cannot be removed from the building.

* * * * *

Collecting Canadian Dollars – Two Decades of Nickel

By Mark Benvenuto, RNA member

One of the neat aspects of the coins of our friends on the north side of the big lake is that the Royal Canadian Mint, the RCM, has a fascinating history of producing dollar coins, one that starts right as our own went into a long sleep. The first silver dollars of Canada, issued in 1935, can be a fun place to start a collection, but a less expensive option begins in 1968. Here's what we mean:

The silver: In 1968, the image of Queen Elizabeth that was on the obverse of all Canadian coinage was that of Arnold Machin, and had been there since 1965. But by 1968 several of the world's governments – that of the U.S. included – had undergone changes in their coinage. The value of silver metal had risen, making the value of the metal in many coins greater than the denomination. Thus, changes were always away from silver metal, and to something less expensive that still looked like silver, even if it didn't quite feel like it. The U.S. made the switch in 1965 in all silver coins except the half dollar, which had its silver content lowered that year. The British system had gotten rid of its silver in circulating coinage back in 1947. The Swiss franc also lost all its silver in 1967, likewise several other governments.

For Canada, the year 1968 saw the unveiling of a dollar coin that looked pretty much like those of previous years, but that was a few millimeters smaller in diameter, and that was made entirely of nickel. Canada has been one of the largest nickel producers in the world for decades. The United States Geological Survey's, "Mineral Commodity Summaries," an annually-produced, downloadable document, pegs Canadian output of the metal at 245,000 metric tons, roughly 1/10th of the entire world's output. Only the Philippines, Russia, and Australia beat that, and the latter two not by much. In short, even in 1968, Canada had plenty of Element 28 to work with. Silver in coinage was to be relegated to special offerings for the collector community.

For those of us who have always passed these nickel "silver" dollars by, one of the noteworthy aspects of them is that they are amazingly inexpensive. Virtually all of the years of this series – from 1968 to 1986 – were minted in large enough quantities that any collector can have one.

The commemoratives: In 1968, United States coinage was not only in a lull when it came to silver dollars, it was in a long dry spell when it came to commemorative coins. In 1970, in 1971, in 1973, and again in 1974, the RCM issued Canadian nickel

"silver" dollars with some very interesting commemorative reverses, making this series rather colorful. The 1970 piece is a commemorative honoring the centennial of Manitoba. The flower that dominates the reverse is the prairie crocus (the *pulsatilla ludoviciana* for the botanists among us), which has been the official flower of the province for decades. In 1971 it was British Columbia's turn, again using an official flower in the design. Prince Edward Island celebrated its centennial in 1973, and in 1974 it was the city of Winnipeg that was commemorated, again for a centennial. That makes for an attractive quartet of commems that are plunked in the midst of several dollars sporting what might be called the normal reverse, meaning the Voyageur reverse that has become a classic symbol of Canada.

As mentioned, the nickel "silver" dollars were produced up to 1986, with two further commemoratives mixed into the run of them. In 1982 the centennial of the Constitution was honored, and in 1984 the 350th anniversary of Jacques Cartier landing at Gaspé and claiming the area for France was honored. The proof version of the Cartier commemorative might cost something of a premium today, but all the others are quite inexpensive.

The price tags: Collectors routinely claim that price shouldn't be the driving factor when forming any collection, yet just about all of us will also admit that we like a bargain. The nickel one-dollar coins of Canada represent almost two decades of bargains, at least for collectors today. They were indeed made to circulate – at least most of them were – and yet because of their relatively large size, they didn't really circulate all that much. That means there are numerous ones out there even now, sometimes in dealers' bargain bins, which are very inexpensive. A person with patience and \$100 might have fun seeing just how many of these dollars he or she could land.

By 1986, both the Canadian "silver" dollar and the Canadian one-dollar note had been examined and found to be in need of an upgrade, at least by the folks in charge. That meant that in 1987 the now familiar Loon dollar debut, new in size, new in color, and new in weight. There was some grumbling among the population in general, as well as the collector crowd, about this new dollar. But the "loonies," as they were quickly dubbed, were produced in such massive amounts (205 million the first year versus 3 million of the nickel "silver" dollars in 1986) that they quickly took their place in everyday commerce throughout Canada. And that meant the nickel one-dollar coins had become a finished chapter in Canadian numismatics, but a chapter that is still readable and collectible today.

Club News and Notes

Since the March - April issue of *RNA News*, two new members joined RNA: we welcome Gregory Baum of Webster, New York, and Mike Wilson of Rochester, New York.

Report of the Nominating Committee for 2017-18 officers and board members:

President:	Eric Miller	Curator:	John Zabel
Vice President:	Kerri Annechino	Librarian:	Michael Luck
Secretary:	Scott Annechino	Board of Directors, 2017-2020:	
Treasurer:	Edward M. Cain	Susie Scoppa, Sheryl Zabel	

The **Royal Canadian Numismatic Association** holds a convention every summer, with the locations changing each year: Ottawa in 2016, Boucherville near Montreal in 2017, and Mississauga in 2018. The RCNA convention bourse (50+ dealers) opens to the public from Friday to Sunday.

The **Bank of Canada Museum** (originally the Currency Museum) and the Royal Canadian Mint, both in Ottawa, may be of interest to RNA members. The museum re-opens in summer 2017 after a three-year renovation and will be the “face” of everything related to Canadian money. Details are available at the RCNA website: www.rcna.ca.

We encourage RNA members to write about your interests in Canadian numismatic materials for publication in *RNA News*.

Annual RNA Banquet Honoring Gerald Vaccarella, 104th RNA President

Please join us for an evening of food, recognition, awards, camaraderie and presentation of the newest RNA presidential medal.

Date: Friday, May 19, 2017

Location: Red Fedele's Brook House, 920 Elmridge Center Dr., Rochester, NY 14626

6:00 pm Hors d'oeuvres and Cash Bar

7:00 pm Dinner

Ticket Price: \$30 per person, payment in advance is appreciated

Contact RNA VP Eric Miller for tickets prior to or at the Wednesday May 10th RNA meeting. Mail reservations won't be accepted if received later than May 12th.

A prize drawing will occur after dinner. In the interest of time it was decided to keep the drawing limited to 3 prizes provided by the RNA.



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For the LOVE of Coins

The RNA Meeting and Events Calendar May - June 2017

Wednesday, May 10: 7:30 PM - RNA Meeting: **Eric Miller** - Austrian Coin Program Designs by Children, Part 1

Friday, May 19: 6:00 PM - **Annual Banquet** honoring past President **Gerald Vaccarella**; Red Fedele's Brook House Restaurant on West Ridge Road. See *Club News and Notes* for details.

Wednesday, May 24: 7:30 PM - RNA Meeting: **Meinhart Speaking Contest; Board meeting** at 6:30 PM.

Wednesday, May 24: 7:30 PM - RJNA Meeting

Wednesday, June 14: 7:30 PM - RNA Meeting: **Chip Scoppa** - WWII Rationing: Ration Books & Ration Tokens

Wednesday, June 28: 7:30 PM - RNA Meeting: Year-End Auction (no speaker); **Board meeting** at 6:30 PM.

Wednesday, June 28: 7:30 PM - RJNA Meeting

Thursday, July 13: 7:00 PM - **Joint RNA - RPA Meeting** at the JCC of Greater Rochester.

Save the Date: Sunday, August 20th at 1:00 PM - **Annual Picnic**

Save the Date: Saturday, November 4th, **45th Annual Coin Show and Sale. Note: one day only.**

Schedule of future 2017 Board meetings: Sunday, August 20 at 12:00 noon (at the annual picnic).

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: June 30, 2017 for July-August 2017, and August 30 for September-October 2017.

Rochester Numismatic Association

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