

# Rochester Numismatic Association

America's Oldest Continuously Operating Coin Club – ANA Branch #2 – Life Club #8  
Member: American Numismatic Society – Empire State Numismatic Association  
Canadian Numismatic Association – Token and Medal Society – Rochester Museum & Science Center

P.O. Box 10056 – Rochester NY 14610-0056 – [www.the-rna.com](http://www.the-rna.com)



## From the President

You never know what sort of e-mail will arrive as a result of the RNA Web site ([www.the-rna.com](http://www.the-rna.com), just in case you haven't visited lately...)

A few weeks ago, this letter arrived in my mailbox:

*This inquiry concerns Silver Buffalo Proofs I just received today from the National Collector's Mint. Was surprised to see no denomination so I got on the net to find that these coins are not at least licensed by the US Mint.*

*Yours is the first non-ad for the National Collector's Mint search on Google so I visited your site first. Nice factual page. I am a 40 something getting back in to collecting after decades of distraction. Saw the ad for the Buffalo Proof and thought to add to my collection. I was quite surprised to be taken in so easily.*

*I genuinely thought I ordered a US Mint product. I can't remember the TV ad stating that the product was recognized currency so shame on me for not being more alert.*

*The coins are a reasonably good proof, not great, and they have serial numbers and a cert. They are dated so I can get stung by the same ad next year and if so shame on me. They are a silver clad base and the cases are covered with those hairline scratches that annoy anyone trying to enjoy a well struck coin.*

*I don't expect to get a \$200.00 coin for much less than that but would like to know if these specimens are really worth \$9.95 and will accrue value as they age.*

*If not I'm afraid I can foresee a lengthy refund process in my future.*

*Is there a market for these 2nd level proofs or can you predict one developing as more private mints churn out reproductions and commemoratives?*

*Continued on next page*

## Upcoming Meetings

**Tuesday 12 March – 8 PM**

Scott Fybush speaks on "Recent Canadian Non-Circulating Legal Tender."

**Tuesday 26 March – 8 PM**

Darlene Corio speaks on the origin of the motto "In God We Trust"

**Tuesday 9 April – 8 PM**

Jason Childers speaks on "St. Helena: Coins in the Middle of Nowhere"  
**Join the RNA for dinner at the Portico before the meeting (more at right)**

**Tuesday 23 April – 8 PM**

Wayne Scheible speaks on "The Bad Boy of Rome"

**Tuesday 14 May – 8 PM**

Speaker TBA

**Friday 24 May**

Presidential Banquet honoring Dan White  
Green Lantern Inn, Fairport

**Tuesday 28 May – 8 PM**

The Meinhart Speaking Contest

**JUST ANNOUNCED!**

**Sunday 21 July – Time TBA**

RNA Annual Summer Picnic  
Wadhams Lodge  
Powder Mills Park  
Perinton

(stay tuned for additional details!)

Unless otherwise noted, all meetings are held in the lower level of the Eisenhart Auditorium, 657 East Avenue. Please enter through the Gannett School and take the elevator to the lower level and through the tunnel to our meeting room.

## Dinner April 9 – be there!

It's become an annual RNA tradition to have a social dinner before at least one of our regular meetings, and this year is no exception.

Gerry Muhl has arranged a private room for us at the Portico restaurant, 740 St. Paul Street, from 6 until 7:30 PM before our April 9 meeting.

Menu choices include:

- Haddock fish fry with cole slaw and fries (\$9.95)
- Veal French (\$14.95)
- Pasta a la Vodka (penne pasta with plum tomato puree, red pepper, vodka, cheese and heavy cream) (\$12.95)
- New York Strip Steak (12 ounce) (\$15.95)

Please RSVP to Gerry Muhl at 336-9459 by April 1 with the number of people attending and your menu choices. A sign-up sheet will also be distributed at the March meetings.

The room is small, so we're limited to the first 25 people who sign up to attend. The room is located up one flight of stairs from street level.

The Portico is on the east side of St. Paul Street, just north of the old Bausch & Lomb plant.

There's plenty of free parking available nearby.

*Buon appetito – hope to see you there!*

## March 2002

**INSIDE: Our treasurer gets scammed (and fights back) . . . Gerry Muhl on America's foreign coinage . . . Picnics and mugs and medals, oh my!**

## From the President

*Continued from page one*

Can I expect to see dozens of tv ads for an endless parade of tinted World Trade center Liberties and laughing clown proofs?

Will they be worth as much as those old ride tokens for seaside heights in twenty years or are the tokens more worthy of investment?

They're really not bad proofs; just not what I thought I was ordering. Just leaving out the word 'currency' in an ad enables vendors to market something less than the real thing.

One must pay more attention to ads than ever, especially when buying coins.

I wonder how many collectors have been similarly deceived. At least when I hear "Recognized currency in the Isle of Wight" I know the coin is not what I'm looking for.

Sound familiar? We all know just what sort of ads this e-mailer has seen, right?

And even if we think we're too sophisticated to fall for the "National Collectors Mint" and its ilk, what happens to the would-be collector who gets burned by one of these ads (and, unlike this e-mailer, isn't honest enough to blame himself for making the error?)

As hobbyists, we can't do the work of law enforcement in cracking down on fraudulent offers like these – but we can fight back with education.

Any chance we have to teach our non-expert friends and acquaintances about the difference between "real" coins and these fraudulent offers is a priceless opportunity. Let's not miss it!

Drop me a line and tell me what advice you'd offer my new correspondent. I'll print some of the responses next month – and forward them to our once-burned, twice-shy would-be Buffalo owner as well.

*Scott Fybush*

## ANA in Rochester: On Track to 2012!

The RNA is one step closer to bringing an American Numismatic Association convention to Rochester in our centennial year of 2012.

In response to our letter to the ANA, Executive Director Ed Rochette wrote back to us with some mixed news.

The ANA's annual (summer) convention requires at least 150,000 square feet of meeting space, a figure the Rochester area doesn't quite meet. That's the bad news.

The good news? We're the right size for the mid-winter convention, and Rochette says our numismatic heritage makes us a strong candidate.

The next step for the club will involve preparing a formal proposal for the 2012 mid-winter convention, which we'll present to the ANA at its New York convention this summer. Stay tuned!



*Noted numismatist Grady Gottfried enjoys the 2001 RNA picnic, with help from Dinosaur BBQ*

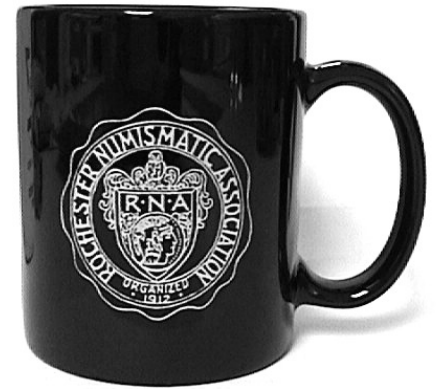
## Picnic time!

*Save July 21 for fun in the (we hope!)  
sun with the RNA*

Vice President Jason Childers has booked the date for this year's club picnic.

Sunday, July 21, will be the magic date, and the location will be the same one we've used for the last couple of years: Powder Mill Park, off Route 96 in Perinton. We'll be in the Wadhams Lodge, the same one that played host to last year's picnic.

We'll have more details on start time and price as the date gets closer.



## Get Mugged!

**At long last, the RNA coffee mugs are here. Now buy one!**

You've been hearing about them for months now; in fact, "the mugs will be here soon" is probably on a par with "the check's in the mail" when it comes to presidential catchphrases.

But after all that waiting, they're finally here. Really. No, seriously. As in, ten big boxes of the things sitting in the presidential basement.

I'm biased, of course, but I think they look pretty darned good. They're dark blue, with gold-colored RNA seals on both sides.

Extensive empirical testing in the RNA kitchen has determined that they're dishwasher-safe, as long as you're careful. The metallic logo imprint is probably not microwave-safe, but what you do in the privacy of your own home is up to you...

Want one? Two? A dozen?

They'll continue to be available for sale at RNA meetings, for \$7 each, two for \$12.

If you'd like them shipped to you, please add \$3 per mug for shipping (they're heavy and need to be packed carefully to avoid breakage), and send your check, payable to the Rochester Numismatic Association, to:

RNA Mugs  
PO Box 10056  
Rochester NY 14610-0056

Need more information? Just contact president Scott Fybush by e-mail ([scott@fybush.com](mailto:scott@fybush.com)) or at 585-442-5411.

## Ebay Buyers Beware – “There Be Weirdos in Them Hills!”

By David Gottfried

Okay, let me start off by saying that I love eBay. I collect hard times tokens, and frankly, unless I go to conventions or coin shows, there really isn't any other way to find the tokens I need (does anyone really need tokens?). I've probably dropped thousands via eBay and to date, have been extremely satisfied. In fact, I'm bidding on a few items right now.

But there is still a risk involved, and I thought RNA members might be interested to learn about an experience I recently had with an Ebay seller.

I was just about to hit the quarter century mark, and for my birthday, my dad had purchased an 1854 Type II gold dollar slabbed by SEGs as MS-61. It was a very nice coin, and the person he bought it from had a very positive feedback rating. My dad was very clear with the seller that this was a birthday present, and could we get the coin delivered by February 1<sup>st</sup>. The seller, who I'll call Mr. X, didn't think there would be a problem and was just waiting for the check to clear.

Well, about two days after the check cleared, we received the following gem of an e-mail (names are changed for reasons you'll see later!):

*I represent the estate and family of Mr. X. I regret to inform you that he was shot and killed in a robbery at his home on Jan. 23 2002. The police investigation has reached the point that I was allowed to contact customers that Mr. X had sold items to on Ebay. The estate is being inventoried and as soon as probate is completed you will receive either the item you purchased or a refund of the purchase price. The police and family are still in the process of determining what was taken in the robbery, as soon as this is complete, I will have a better idea of what can be shipped and what will be refunded. I apologize for the delay in communicating with you regarding this, but I could not notify anyone until the police authorized it. The probate and inventory should be completed in 60 - 90 days. You can help speed this up by replying to this address with the exact item you purchased, please be as descriptive as possible. If the coin was certified, please include the service and the slab # if possible. When everything is settled, I will have to try to determine who gets what and unfortunately the records are very poor. Please try to give me as*

*much identifying info as possible for the item. Please also insure that your shipping information is included and correct. Thank you for your help and cooperation in resolving this matter, there are very many customers and I try to resolve this in the most efficient manner possible.*

*Thank you.  
Mr. X's Attorney  
Attorney at Law.*

Okay, I thought this was a scam from the beginning, in part because of the lack of contact information for the “attorney,” and the numerous spelling mistakes, but we provided the information as requested in good faith. However, we got to thinking, “This should be pretty easy to confirm. We'll just go on Google.com and try and find a story about the murder, or an obituary.” Well, as I did my search, I could find no record of any murder. It wasn't impossible that there wasn't a murder, but read on.

I then did some research on the town that Mr. X came from. It was a small community of around 10,000. I found the telephone number for the local sheriff's office and left a message looking for confirmation of the murder. The sheriff's office was closed on Saturday, so I left a message asking to be contacted when they opened.

While I was doing this, other Ebay members were getting very upset. Thanks to one particular member in California, we made significant headway in learning what happened to Mr. X. By this point, about 20 ebayers had left negative feedback on Mr. X's account, and Ebay suspended active auctions that had yet to close. We, along with a bunch of other eBayers sent messages to the attorney to try and get confirmation – or even contact information. We had also sent an email indicating that we would be filing charges with the US Postal Service for mail fraud. Eventually we received the following email, which I think you'll get a kick out of:

*Coins are shipping. THIS IS NOT AN ATTEMPT TO DEFRAUD ANYONE. If you would like to file charges, go ahead and do so. Posting feedback and making threatening calls will not advance your case at all. This was a valid attempt to inform customers of what had occurred and what was being done. You and the other eBay users should be ashamed of the behavior you are exhibiting. Making calls to the family with threats is very INHUMAN of you and the others. Your coin will be shipped as soon as I can get to it. I am required to keep extensive records so the process is taking some time. Please*

*have patience, if you feel you must file an action, go ahead, but it will not get your coin shipped any faster.*

We explained to him that without confirmation of who he was, and the fact that the local sheriff had no information on a murder, and had received many phone calls from other eBayers around the country, our actions would move forward.

He responded: *I am sorry you are taking that attitude. Go ahead and file your charges and I wish you luck. It has no bearing on me. I am not providing my contact information because that is my preference. I have no desire to deal with the a\*\*holes that are so prevalent on Ebay. This mail box is filled with false claims from you great Ebay users and more than 75% are false claims. Believe or do not believe I could care less. Go ahead and file your charges.*

Well, while all this was going on, our friend in California had a close friend who was close friends with the Postmaster General. This expedited postal action – i.e., they immediately took the case. eBay was also responsive, given that the Postal Service was intimately involved at this time. Additionally, my father's staff was able to track the IP address where the “attorney” had sent his email from. Coincidentally, it was the same place that Mr. X worked! We now knew that Mr. X was indeed alive and well, and we know Mr. X was also Mr. Attorney.

Another factor that helped: the local law enforcement got on the ball and physically went to Mr. X's house and knocked on the door. It was explained to Mr. X that he had better start shipping coins, and both the sheriff and Postal Service would keep an eye on him to make sure he followed through. Well, coins miraculously started shipping! And I got my birthday present.

Unfortunately, the story doesn't end there. The coin we purchased was SLABBED, and this coin was RAW. The postal inspector on the case has asked us to submit the coin to be professionally graded. If the coin comes back under the grade Mr. X was supposed to have sent us, we will continue to pursue a conviction of mail fraud.

So, now we wait. I've sent in the coin to be graded, and it will be interesting to see what happens. This story isn't over yet, and I'll write a follow-up as soon as more information becomes available. If you have a similar story to share, please mail copy to the RNA address or e-mail to me at [davidg@rnychamber.com](mailto:davidg@rnychamber.com).



### **2001-2002 Officers**

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**Secretary: Vacant**  
Nominations welcome

**Treasurer: David Gottfried**  
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## **90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Medals Are Here!**



Our club has a long tradition of special medallic issues, and our ninetieth anniversary this year is no exception.

Club member Gerry Muhl coordinated production of the RNA 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary medal, which features a design with a long history.

The original version of this medal was designed by Alphonse A. Kolb for the RNA's 700<sup>th</sup> meeting, on March 2, 1943.

Because of wartime shortages of materials, it was never issued, and exists only as a unique bronze in the club collection.

At Gerry's suggestion, the RNA chose to use a modification of this design for our 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary medal, thus completing the design process that began nearly sixty years ago.

60 examples will be struck in silver (\$12), 35 in silver-plated bronze (\$6), 35 in gold-plate bronze (\$6.50) and 35 in platinum-plated bronze (\$7.50).

A complete set of four medals is priced at \$30.

If ordering by mail, please make checks payable to the RNA and include \$3 for insured shipping per order. Checks should be sent to PO Box 10056, Rochester NY 14610-0056.

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PO Box 10056  
Rochester NY 14610-0056