

RNA



News

The official journal of the Rochester Numismatic Association



Closing time at McLeod

PLUS: Dennis DeYoung on Franklin's Conder tokens

March-April 2008

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Bright future for RNA

I've always enjoyed reading; in recent years my focus has been on history and biography. *His Excellency* (Ellis) on George Washington; *1776* (McCullough); and *Team of Rivals* (Goodwin) are each extraordinary studies well worth your time. Goodwin relates how Abraham Lincoln brought into his cabinet his three main 1860 presidential election rivals – Salmon Chase, Edward Bates and William Seward. The book is a mini-biography of all four men. In the 1954 preface to his one-volume edition of *Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years & The War Years*, Carl Sandburg noted that since he published his six-volume biography of Lincoln in the 1920s and 1930s, a huge volume of new studies, biographies and original documentation had been collected and published. Sandburg made use of all of this new material as he edited, corrected and polished this new biography.

In the 50 years since Sandburg wrote, the amount of material available through books and original materials has been supplemented by new resources, not the least of which is the Internet. The authors mentioned above made good use of all of these resources in order to provide new insights about their subject.

This brings me to the RNA library, named after the late John Jay Pittman. The library has books and periodicals that may not otherwise be available in Rochester, to assist in preparing a talk or writing an article for *RNA News*. We are currently reviewing our inventory and plan to make an updated catalog readily available in the near future.

The proposed change in our bylaws, per the notice in the January-February *RNA News*, was approved by the membership at our business meeting on February 7. The bylaws have been updated and will be made available soon on the RNA Web site at the Membership tab. At our board of directors' meeting on February 13, the board approved the appointment of Mike Luck as assistant curator and Gerry Muhl as assistant librarian for the remainder of the fiscal year. The board continued its discussion about strengthening our relationship with the Rochester Museum & Science Center, and about how RNA might be able to help the mission of the museum concurrent with fulfilling the RNA

educational mission. A committee including John Stephens, John Zabel, Gerry Muhl and me will follow up on this over the next few weeks. The board also reviewed the status of the collection inventory, which is nearly complete.

McLeod Stamp & Coin is in the process of being sold, according to Ursula Loose. As you may know, many of us first heard about RNA and/or were encouraged to join RNA by Ursula. Ursula and John Kellas may continue to have a role at McLeod, and we look forward to many more years of fellowship with them as RNA members. Thank you, Ursula!

Keshequa Coins, sponsor of the Rochester Area Coin Expo at the Doubletree Inn, Henrietta, provides a table for RNA at each show. Members of both RNA and RJNA have helped staff our table. At the February 10 show, George Irwin created a display of Lincoln cents and medals and handed out 1958D wheat cents to the young numismatists who stopped by the table. He also did this with Queen Elizabeth coins at the December show. We handed out information that George provided about membership in RNA and RJNA. Please consider taking an hour to staff our table at the next show in April.

At our meeting on February 21, Sue Scoppa noted that she is preparing displays of numismatic material at Irondequoit High School as part of National Coin Week in April. We also noted RNA education and outreach; if you would like to help with this committee, please contact me or Gerry Muhl. We sincerely appreciate the efforts of our members – George, Sue, Gerry and others – who contribute to our educational mission. You are welcome to join with them, time and distance permitting.

Preparations are well under way for the Annual Banquet on Friday, May 23. Mark your calendar; additional information will be provided in *RNA News*.

I look forward to seeing each of you at upcoming meetings as our association continues to make its own history in our little corner of the universe.

Ted Vaccarella

Benjamin Franklin, printer and – minter?

By Dennis C. DeYoung

Conder Tokens

The Red Book contains mainly US coins – there are few tokens and still fewer foreign tokens. Although the Franklin Press Tokens probably never circulated in America, collectors often include them as a U.S. “Colonial” coin due to the reference to the American patriot and statesman, Benjamin Franklin.

These copper tokens, all dated 1794, have plain edges and a diameter of 1.1”. The obverse has an image of an unorthodox common press and the Latin inscription “SIC ORITUR DOCTRINA SURGETQUE LIBERTAS” (“Thus learning begins and liberty arises”). The reverse says “Payable at the Franklin Press London.”

The 1794 Franklin Press Token belongs to a series of British-made pieces known as “Conder” Tokens, after the surname of the first author to catalog them: James Conder, of Ipswich, Suffolk. His catalog was first published in 1795 and revised in 1798. It served as the standard reference on these pieces until 1890.

These Halfpenny- and Penny-sized tokens were usually issued by tradesmen of the 18th century as units of trade. In the years from 1787 to 1797, the British coin of the realm was in a poor state, and an enormous number of tokens was struck, particularly by booksellers. Some were also made available to collectors or used as advertising tokens by certain merchants.

Breen (1977) writes, “these tokens’ device was apparently intended for the press at Watts’ Printing Works, Wyld St., Lincoln’s Inn Fields, London, where Benjamin Franklin worked between January and July 1726. Franklin revisited the press in 1768, while living about 20 minutes’ walk away.”

Franklin was probably not compensated for this smart use of his prominent name!

Benjamin Franklin

Ben Franklin is well known as a statesman – the only man to have signed all four of the colonies’ most important documents: the Declaration of Independence, the alliance treaty with France, the peace treaty with England and the United States Constitution. He is also known for his many inventions, which included bifocals, the lightning rod, the Franklin stove, and a rocking chair that automatically kept the flies off your head! He also worked for the early post office and started the first fire department.

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Lesser known are his origins as a printer. Ben was the youngest son, and 15th of 17 children, of Josiah Franklin. His father had a hard time setting Ben up in a profession. Ben tried studying to be a minister, then a scholar (he did well at writing but failed at arithmetic). At age 10 he began making soap and candles in his father’s store. At 12, Ben was nearly sent to work at his brother’s candle store in Rhode Island, but instead he asked to go to sea. His father didn’t approve and instead attempted to set him up in Boston with one of many different Leather Apron men, as craftsmen were called in colonial times. He would have been a cutler (a person who makes and fixes knives) had free training been available. Ben loved to read, so instead Josiah made him a printer.

Ben began as an apprentice to his 21-year-old brother James, who was just setting up a print shop with a new press he had brought from England. In this position, Ben developed an interest in politics and also started writing. His first works were poems sold as “broadsides” (large sheets of paper printed with a poem, song, ads or a political message) published by James and sold in the streets by Ben.

Starting in 1721, James Franklin published a weekly newspaper, the *New England Courant*, which sometimes published letters from readers or letters to the editor made up by James and his friends. Ben had been practicing, and by the time he was 16, it seemed to him that he could write as well as the older writers. So he wrote letters to the editor posing as a middle-aged widow named Silence Dogood, who had opinions on many subjects.

Despite the success of his poems, Ben knew James would never print this type of work from him. So he secretly slipped the letters under the door of the shop at night. James and his friends loved them, and over time printed 14 Silence Dogood letters received in this way. When James found out that his clever little brother was the Widow Dogood, he became angry and promised not to print anything of Ben’s ever again.

Soon after this, the *Courant* printed some articles insulting the government, which landed James in prison. Ben, the apprentice, got off with a warning and quietly took over as editor. Under Ben, the newspaper was more successful than ever.

When James got out, they fought constantly, and eventually Ben left. Ben’s brother had asked all the printers in Boston not to hire him, so he journeyed to New York and then Philadelphia. A series of printing jobs followed, including one in London, England.



An example of the 1794 Franklin Press Token from the collection of the author (NGC AU-53 Breen-1165)



From left to right: The author's example shows the early die state; an intermediate die state showing die breaks; an example, from the RNA's collection, showing the late die state

Franklin's Press

The printing press illustrated on the front of the token appears to be a Blaew press (the first patent press made, beginning in 1620), now often known as a "Franklin Press." It is the same type of press used by Franklin while he worked in London as a journeyman printer for the firm of Mr. Watts.

The press, used by Franklin in London, was purchased by Edward Cox in 1770 from Watts' Printing Works, where Franklin had worked as a compositor. Mr. John B. Murray of New York discovered it in the possession of Messrs. Harrild & Sons. Murray felt that an upper room in a by-lane of London, at some distance from a frequented street, was not the place for any relic, however trifling, of Benjamin Franklin. After some time, the Harrilds presented the press to Murray on November 16, 1841. In gratitude, Mr. Murray sent 163 pounds (at this time, a hardworking clerk might hope to earn one pound a week) to the Printers' Pension Society of London, remarking, "as a glorious consequence of the appropriate and liberal arrangement proposed by Messrs. Harrild, each country will be put in possession of a new memorial of Franklin: America, of HER CITIZEN'S PRESS, and England, of an endowment bearing his name and benefiting those who have worked as he once worked."

The press was shown at the Patent Office, the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition and the Smithsonian's U.S. National Museum before being sold to the Smithsonian in 1901 by Murray's widow. The press is now on display as part of a recreated post office and print shop of the early 19th century in the Printing and Graphic Arts section of the National Museum of American History at the Smithsonian Institution.

A plate, affixed to the front of the press sometime long before 1840, has the following inscription: "Dr. Franklin's Remarks relative to this Press, made when he came to England as agent of the Massachusetts, in the year 1768. The Doctor at this time visited the printing office of Mr. Watts, of Wild Street, Lincoln's Inn Fields, and going up to this particular press thus addressed the men who were working at it, 'Come my friends, we will drink together. It is now forty years since I worked like you, at this press, as a journeyman printer.' The Doctor then sent out for a gallon of porter, and he drank with them, saying – 'Success to Printing.'"

It may very well be this exact press that served as the model for the image on the token.

Die States

It is thought these tokens were made in Birmingham from a single pair of dies, as most examples show a diebreak within the press and a defect at the 'ERT' in LIBERTAS. As the dies aged, this lettering defect festered, while new breaks occurred and became more pronounced as the striking went on.

Early die states feature near-perfect dies with just the lettering defect mentioned above. These early die state examples are rarer and generally have greater design eye appeal.

Intermediate die states can be attractive to those who find interest in the fairly large breaks on the obverse, showing mainly as cud right of center on the press and as a squiggly line coming off of the side of the press beneath the long handle.

Later die states show another break in the lower left area of the press, with the previous die defects becoming prominent. Most letters are beginning to show unsteadiness as well. This is easily observed by comparing the bottom of the 'E' found at 3 o'clock to intermediate or early die state examples.

Most Franklin Press Tokens are found in the lower Uncirculated grades, indicating that they were never intended to circulate or that they circulated little. Very few examples appear below About Uncirculated.

The finest Brown Uncirculated 1794 Franklin Press Token graded by PCGS is a single MS-65. The finest Red & Brown Uncirculated 1794 Franklin Press Tokens graded by PCGS are 3 MS-64s. No Red Uncirculated 1794 Franklin Press Tokens have been graded by PCGS.

References

Ben Franklin – Extraordinary Inventor, Brave Leader, by Macken, Santrey, & Sabin; Scholastic, 2007; *Coin Facts* (<http://www.coinfacts.com>); PCGS - Collectors Universe, Inc., *Population Report* (www.pcgsc.com); *The Conder Token Collector's Club*, website (<http://www.conderclub.homestead.com>); Numismatic Guaranty Corp., *Population Report* (<http://www.ngccoin.com/poplookup>); Smithsonian Institution collection and website (<http://americanhistory.si.edu>); *Walter Breen's Encyclopedia of U.S. and colonial proof coins, 1722-1977*, by Walter H Breen, F.C.I. Press, 1977

Loose, Kellas sell McLeod Stamp & Coin

For almost 40 years, collectors of coins and stamps in the Rochester area have perched on the stools at McLeod Stamp & Coin, socializing with fellow collectors, buying and selling coins, stamps and precious metals, and, in the case of literally hundreds of new collectors, learning about the RNA and its sister club, the RJNA.

On March 1, that era came to an end as the store's co-owners, Ursula Loose and John Kellas, closed the store and awaited bids for the sale of the business, which they took over from longtime owner Andy Hale upon his death several years ago.

While the future of the space at 2423 Monroe Ave. remained uncertain at *RNA News* press time, the last days of the store under its present ownership were filled with a parade of customers coming in for one last pass through the

bins of Indian cents (including one lucky find, below), bearing gifts of flowers for Ursula and her assistant, Randy Jones.



Ursula Loose and Randy Jones in the store's final days

Uncounted numbers of RNA and RJNA members owe their participation in the club to Ursula's constant support and promotion of the club from her perch behind the counter.

Bill Coe long ago dubbed Ursula the "spark plug" of the RNA's annual coin show for her work selling table space and ads in the program.

For members of the RJNA, Ursula's presence at meetings (and

occasional hosting of meetings at the shop) has been a tradition – one Ursula says she'll continue in retirement.

Ursula has already received the RNA's highest honor, having been named "Numismatist of the Year," but in truth the club can't possibly honor her enough for all she's done over the years. We wish her the happiest of retirements.

RJNA member finds '55 double-die in final days at coin shop

By Jennifer Rutledge

When Eshan Mitra, RJNA Secretary and Brighton High School senior, entered McLeod Stamp & Coin Co. last week, the last thing he expected was a windfall. It was winter break and he had some time on his hands, so he wanted to look at coins and say goodbye to Ursula and McLeod one last time before the business closed its doors forever.

Eshan's favorite coins to collect are error coins, so he started looking through the metal pan of old wheat cents as he had many times before over the last nine years, hoping to spot one with an error. He had found some with errors in the bin before, but nothing worth more than a couple of dollars. Within minutes, Eshan said that he had found a 1955, double-die cent.

Ursula's eyebrows went up as she asked to see the coin, and as soon as she took a look, a huge smile appeared on her face. She confirmed that it was indeed a double-die, and said that it was worth a lot of money. The coin was passed around for others in the store to see as Ursula looked up the current value of the coin. Everyone who looked at the coin decided that it was probably of "very fine" quality. Ursula then announced that the reference guide showed the current value of a very fine 1955 double-die cent to be \$1,350!

Ursula beamed as she announced that Eshan had beaten the previous store record, the discovery of a 1916 D Mercury dime worth \$900, years ago. Eshan was stunned he had found this special coin, and it was clear that Ursula could not have been happier for him. Ursula charged Eshan only five cents for that double-die because she said it was the right thing to do, since Eshan had found it in the bin where all coins cost five cents. Meanwhile, after congratulating Eshan, one of the other customers in the store feverishly started sorting through that bin of old cents alongside Eshan, but he knew as well as everyone else there that the chance of finding another coin like that was extremely unlikely.

As I sat there on one of the stools at McLeod for probably the last time, I felt that it must have been fate, that this was a perfect ending for Ursula and McLeod. I am the parent of two RJNA members, and I have seen first-hand how much "Ursula's kids" mean to her. Yes, that's what we call the RJNA kids that Ursula has recruited and supported so generously for the last 35 years. That one of Ursula's kids, the one who specialized in error coins and had spent years looking for them in her shop, had made such a great discovery during her last days in business, clearly meant the world to her and could not have been scripted any better. The story about Eshan's big find has already been recounted over and over again, and has brought smiles to all who have heard it. Even better, it is a wonderful story and treasured memory of Ursula and McLeod that will be told by coin collectors for years to come.

Although Ursula's kids are sad that they will not be able to visit Ursula at McLeod any longer, they are thrilled that she plans to continue attending RJNA as long as she is able.

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:

Richard Kase, Rochester, NY

Gregory O'Brien, Batavia, NY

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

Patricia Jagger-Finner and Roland Finner (Family Membership), Iola, WI
Timothy Looney, Pittsford, NY

Justin Tracy, Farmington, NY
Howard Greenwald, Rochester, NY
Zane Dick, Webster, NY

Bob Doty needs a new kidney – can you help?

From Sharon Doty, wife of RNA historian and past president Bob Doty:

Bob has a lot of friends in the RNA and I know that, through contacts with people such as you, he feels like he is still a part of the group. It's a great love of his. Can you help us by spreading the word, and asking that every RNA person spread the word to all their friends and relatives that Bob needs a kidney? We never know. Strangers do donate to strangers and that is an awesome thing. We don't know until we ask and there is no such word as "impossible" any more.

We try to live with all the "possibles" and miracles that life has given Bob and me. I know that there are still more to come. WE'RE NOT DONE YET!!

We are getting involved in Alliance For Paired Donation. Go to www.allianceforpaireddonation.com for more information. Bob's daughter Donna has been willing to donate a kidney all along, but she is an A blood type and Bob is an O. Among all the criteria for a match, blood matching is Number One. Here's how the program works: Donna would give her type A kidney to someone who needs an A. Maybe that person has an O friend or relative who wants to donate. Bingo!

If it's a match, Bob could get that person's kidney. It's a switching situation, done about or at the same time, possibly in the same hospital. (About six months ago, 10 people received kidneys at relatively the same time at a hospital in Virginia. Awesome.)

We hear that the operation for the donor is relatively simple, done laproscopically, and usually the donor is back to work within two weeks. (A friend of a friend in Illinois received a kidney from his daughter last week. She was out of the

hospital the next day, and he was out of the hospital in two days. That time frame is NOT how it has been described to us, however.)



The paired donation idea puts a person higher on the kidney transplant list. Live donor kidneys live in a new body twice as long as cadaver kidneys, and live donor kidneys are healthier.

Our goal is to spread the word. You never know. All it takes is one person somewhere out there in the world. Thank you so much. Something important:

Everyone should be listed as an organ donor on his or her driver's license. We were a bit slow on the draw, but finally got our North Carolina driver's licenses. I automatically declined to be a donor because of a rare disease that I have, and I don't think they want my blood. Bob and I went in separately and he told me later that he had them put him as a donor on his license "because they can use anything they are able to use from me." I will see if I can get mine reversed. You never know.

Famous last words: "YOU NEVER KNOW." And this has an impact on anyone who needs an organ, even eyes.

Spread the word, for our sake, and for the sake of many, many others who might now have the number of support group people that we have...please. Thanks.



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The Calendar **March-April**

- **Thursday March 6 – 8 PM – RNA Meeting** Peter Blaisdell will present part 1 of his talk on “Hagia Sophia”
- **Thursday March 20 – 8 PM – RNA Meeting** Peter Blaisdell will present part 2 of his talk on “Hagia Sophia”
- **Friday March 21 – 7:30 PM – Rochester Junior Numismatic Association Meeting**
- **Thursday April 3 – 8 PM – RNA Meeting** will be in the Cunningham House Studio, next door to the Eisenhart Auditorium on the RMSC campus. ANA vice-president Patricia Jagger-Finner is tentatively scheduled to speak.
- **Friday April 4-Sunday April 6 – Buffalo Numismatic Association** “Gold and Silver Over Niagara” Coin Show, Conference Center of Niagara Falls. ANA vice-president Patricia Jagger-Finner will conduct a Boy Scout merit badge workshop. More information at www.the-bna.com.
- **Sunday April 13 – 10 AM-4 PM – Rochester Area Coin Expo** At the DoubleTree Inn, Jefferson Road & I-390, Henrietta
- **Thursday April 17 – 8 PM – RNA Meeting** Douglas Musinger will discuss “Coin Doctoring”
- **Friday April 18 – 7:30 PM – Rochester Junior Numismatic Association Meeting**
- **Thursday May 1 – 7 PM – RNA Board Meeting; 8 PM – RNA Meeting** Grant Hobikan speaks on a topic to be announced
- **Thursday May 15 – 7:30 PM RNA Meeting** Meinhart Speaking Contest
- **Friday May 23 – 6 PM RNA Banquet** at the Green Lantern Inn, Fairport. Details in the May-June *RNA News*
- **Sunday August 3 – RNA Picnic**

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

March 5, 1940 Mr. Perry of Hobby Council films an RNA meeting (Does the film still exist?).

March 18, 1941 *Kodak* magazine has photos of RNA coin room display at museum.

March 2 1943 J. Pittman voted in to RNA.

March 4, 1944 RNA broadcasts on WSAY radio.

March 24, 1945 Banquet door prize is \$1 gold piece.

March 18, 1947 J. Pittman notes more speculation in coins than collecting. He exhibits complete set of 50-cent proofs from 1858 to 1915.

March 19, 1947 Fathers are invited to RJNA “Fathers Night.”

March 2, 1948 RNA Coin Week “appraisal committee” invites Rochester citizens to get free appraisals at Seneca Hotel. Club buys coins for its collection.

March 21, 1950 RNA plans to host a panel to answer questions t RJNA meeting.

March 6, 1951 RJNA announces it will allow parents at its next meeting.

March 4, 1955 RNA hosts Ladies Night. Everyone is asked to bring coins with portraits of women to show and discuss.

March 6, 1956 RNA decrees a person must now attend three meetings before being eligible to be voted in to membership.

March 20, 1956 Museum Director Thomas provides space in museum for RNA library.

April 7, 1931 Motion passed that all coins not suitable for exhibits be turned over to the museum for use in circulating educational exhibits.

April 8, 1933 Joint meeting with Buffalo Coin Club in Batavia. This was an annual event.

April 2, 1935 RNA draws up a resolution against newspaper ads deceptively offering to buy or sell coins.

April 16, 1935 Resolution passed that money from any club coins sold should be used to buy coins or books.

April 7, 1936 RNA meets on the second floor of the museum, next to the coin room. Members express disgust at not being able to order Rhode Island half dollars, as big dealers bought them all for speculation.

April 2, 1937 Color movies of the previous year’s RNA picnic shown at club meeting. (Could they still exist?)

April 6, 1937 Rochester Historical Society proposed that Congress issue a Denonville-LaSalle 250th anniversary commemorative 50-cent piece.

April 18, 1939 Joint meeting with Caledonia and Perry Coin Clubs held in Rochester.