

The Cabinet

Just as a book is made up of chapters that hold words, a cabinet contains drawers that hold collectibles. This is a cabinet of Centennial medals, and each drawer holds a different category of medal.

Medal vs. Token

The distinction between medals and tokens is so blurred that they often appear to be synonymous. A dealer once told me in response to my question that he couldn't define the difference, but he knew which was which when he saw one. Since this volume includes medals but excludes tokens, it becomes important to know the difference, if only within this cabinet.

Let's start with the definitions that the American Numismatic Association uses in their exhibit competition rules. Class 3, the Medals category, includes "Medallic items not used as a medium of exchange, or not having trade value" Class 4, the Tokens category includes "Items, including encased postage, issued unofficially as a medium of exchange for goods and services or for advertising purposes, but excluding American colonial items included in class 1 (United States Coins). Includes substances used in lieu of metal, other than paper." "Wearable" medals are included in Class 5, the military medals, decorations, orders and badges category, thus seeming to be excluded from the Medals category. Nevertheless, such medals are included in this volume, since I consider the distinction of wearability to be meaningless; because many of the Centennial souvenir medals were issued holed and unholed, looped and unlooped, offering the obvious option of being worn by the proud new owner.

What's good enough for the ANA is good enough for me. This cabinet concentrates on medals, for the simple reason that Centennial medals have as their primary purpose the commemoration of the United States Centennial. Tokens, on the other hand, have as their primary purpose the conduct of business during which the Centennial presented itself first as an advertising opportunity and secondarily as an historic occasion.

For example, this cabinet includes what I call the Lingg medals (mules of the nine Centennial designs produced by Lingg Brothers Jewelers), but excludes the myriad of Lingg tokens with their Centennial obverses and businesses advertising on the reverses.

The previous statement points up another distinguishing characteristic between medals and tokens. Medal collectors refer to the image side of a medal as the obverse; the inscription side, the reverse. Token collectors on the other hand consider the merchant's (i.e., business-card) inscription side as the obverse, because tokens are typically collected by merchant. Thus, a token collector would refer to the inscription of a Lingg token as the obverse and the Centennial design side as the reverse. It is a moot point, however, with Lingg medals because both sides display a Centennial design, so either side could be listed as the obverse.

When I open up a cabinet of Centennial tokens, I will honor the token collectors' conventions.

Categories

Categorizing Centennial medals has turned out to be a much more difficult and complex task than I had first expected. My first clue should have been how many times I had sorted and re-sorted my own collection. As with any collection, allowing the individual specimens to suggest their own categories works, but only for a while. Soon, new additions to the collection nominate new categories, which tempt the collector to reorganize. Usually the only thing gained by reorganization is not new clarity but simply greater familiarity with one's own collection.

The biggest challenge with categorization is that many medals logically fit into two or more categories equally well. For example, the George Washington/Brooklyn Sunday School medal, could easily fit into multiple categories, such as Washington Portraits, Religious Organizations, or, simply, Organizations. I followed Goldilocks' logic and put it into the Organizations category because a Washington category was "too large," and Religious Organizations was "too small," but the Organizations category was "just right."

The medals from the Centennial Exhibition posed a significant classification challenge, which I resolved by creating no less than five categories of Exhibition medals.

Introduction

Altogether, there are 14 categories of U.S. Centennial medals. They are:

National Commemoratives	The Centennial medals authorized by the February 12, 1873, Act of Congress authorizing national commemorative medals.
Declaration of Independence	Medals that commemorate the 100 th birthday of the Declaration of Independence.
Exhibition Award Medals	Medals awarded to exhibitors at the Exhibition.
Exhibition Medals	Medals commemorating the Centennial Exhibition itself.
Exhibition Visitors	Medals honoring visitors to the Centennial Exhibition.
Exhibition Buildings	Medals depicting the buildings of the Centennial Exhibition.
Struck at the Exhibition	Medals struck on-site at the Centennial Exhibition.
Centennial Woods	Centennial medals struck in black walnut or cherry wood.
Organizations	Centennial medals commissioned by organizations.
Foreign Medals	Centennial medals struck by foreign governments.
Historical Figures	Medals depicting historical persons.
Historical Events	Medals commemorating Centennial events.
Patriotic Symbols	Centennial medals depicting patriotic symbols.
Personal Medals	Centennial medals commissioned by individuals.
Centennial?	This is the fifteenth drawer in the Centennial cabinet. It is a proto-category referred to as “Maybe Centennial, maybe not.” This drawer is a placeholder for medals that have yet to be certified as actual Centennials. I invite reader collaboration on these medals. Confirmed Centennials will be added to the catalog, while non-Centennials will be removed.

The sixteenth drawer in the cabinet is currently empty, reserved for?

Images and Sizes

After much deliberation, I have decided that visual detail is more important than scale illustrations. Thus, this volume is illustrated with the best photographs available to me, and medals are depicted as large as page format permits (i.e., two 3.2-inch diameter images side by side). In most cases, this means that medals are shown larger than life-size. The exact size of each medal is listed in the data section under Diameter and the ratio of the photograph’s size to that of the actual medal appears below the photo within parentheses, such as (2.2 x). This means that the 3.2-inch image is 2.2 times the size of the actual medal. Thus, medals smaller than 3.2 inches will have an x value greater than one; those more than 3.2 inches in diameter will have an x value less than one. Medal sizes are shown in millimeters. A conversion table, which lists equivalent values such as inches, medal sizes as in Holland and Frossard, and watch sizes can be found in the Appendices.

Thickness and Weight

With the exception of the medals struck by the U.S. Mint, Centennial medals tend to vary, sometimes quite widely, in thickness and weight. The Mint was and is required by Congress to maintain accurate records and follow strict standards in all their activities. Private minters, on the other hand, were and are in business primarily to make money. As a result and in contrast with the excellent standards of most modern private mints, nineteenth-century private manufacturers of medals often did not hesitate to use planchet material that varied in composition and thickness, depending on cost and availability. The result is that many Centennial medals can be found in a wide range of thicknesses and weights. At opposite ends of some of

these ranges, one might be tempted to list thick and thin or light and heavy varieties, as earlier catalogers have sometimes done. Thicknesses and weights vary so much in privately-struck medals that I have decided not to list either measurement as part of this cabinet. Individual collectors are invited to use their own judgment in this matter with their own collections.

Catalog Numbering

Holland and Frossard numbered their medals using Roman numerals, blithely ignorant that one day their Roman numbering schema would drive computers (and this author) crazy. Ergo, I have taken the liberty of translating their Roman numerals into Arabic numerals when citing from their catalogs. My conscience pricks me for the intellectual infidelity, but convenience outweighs the guilt.

The numbering system in this catalog follows a simple rule. Each die pair used to strike a medal gets a new number. Die varieties are subjective. How much difference between successive dies does it take to call it a new die, a new design? Usually, if it appears that the intent of the diesinker was to duplicate the previous die, but noticeable differences exist, that will be considered a die variety, and the catalog number will not change. Examples of this are the three ray varieties and two date varieties on A-20, the small Commemorative Medals. On the other hand, the two varieties of the large Commemorative Medal differ so widely that separate numbers have been assigned.

When the difference between dies appears to have been intentional in order to create a different medal or to serve a different purpose, then a separate number is given to the resultant medal. Mules are an obvious example of this. So are the cases where the sculptor has placed his name or initials on one die and not the other. Another example would be the Soley “Struck in the Centennial Buildings” series which can be found with three distinct reverse dies: with and without “No.” and with “Soley” in exergue under the date.

In the beginning, the numbers in this catalog all started out ending in zero; i.e. each medal’s number skips ten to the next medal’s number. This numbering scheme is driven by the expectation (and the hope) that medals unknown to me at the time of publication will be brought to my attention after publication. When that happens, the “new” medals can be inserted wherever they best fit into the cabinet without changing any already assigned numbers. By skipping ten numbers, there should be plenty of room for new insertions.

The alloy from which a medal has been struck is designated in the catalog by a two-letter abbreviation subscripted next to the catalog number. The alloys used in this book are listed below: Synonymous alloy names are shaded, and the abbreviations used in their stead are listed.

Alloy	Abbrev.
Albata (cf. White Metal)	wm
Black Walnut Wood	bw
Brass	bs
Bronze	bz
Cherry Wood	ch
Composition	cm
Copper (cf. Bronze)	bz
Copper-nickel	cn
Clay (cf. Terracotta)	tc
Earthenwary (cf. Terracotta)	tc
Enamel	en
Celluloid	ge
Gilt	gi
Gold	go
Graphite	gr
Gutta Percha	gp

Alloy	Abbrev.
Hard Rubber	hr
Lead	ld
Leather	lr
Milk Glass	mg
Nickel	ni
Nickel-plate	np
Oreide	or
Pewter (cf. White Metal)	wm
Porcelain	pn
Silver	si
Silver Plate	sp
Tin (cf. White Metal)	wm
Type Metal (cf. Lead)	ld
Vermeil	vm
White Metal	wm
Wood (unspecified variety)	wd

Style

Anyone who has attempted to describe a medal or to identify a medal from someone else’s description knows that sculptors and engravers of medals (not to mention authors) are held to no grammatical standard. There is no consistency of spelling, punctuation, or abbreviation. I have attempted to describe the medals in

Introduction

this cabinet using a consistent standard which is simple to state but more difficult to follow. The standard will, as much as possible, obey the following rules:

- The obverse will be described before the reverse. In most cases, the obverse is easily distinguished, but in some cases the decision is not so simple. In fact, even published authors sometimes differ as to which side is the obverse and which is the reverse. In such cases, I get to make the decision, and while I may be arbitrary, I will do my best to be consistent. For example, among the many medals that have the Liberty Bell on one side and Independence Hall or some other edifice on the other, I will consistently assume that the Liberty Bell is the obverse.
- Legends, if any, will be described literally, as follows:
 - Upper and lower case in the description will mirror the case as used on the medal.
 - The text of a legend, including its punctuation, if any, will be enclosed in double quotation marks. If the legend includes quotation marks actually on the medal, the entire legend, including its double or single quotation marks, as appropriate, will be enclosed in the opposite quotation marks (single if double on the medal, double if single on the medal).
 - Thus, ‘ “WHAT A GLORIOUS MORNING!” ‘ indicates that the legend on the medal contains double quotations and that the exclamation mark also appears on the medal. “WHAT A GLORIOUS MORNING!” would indicate that there are no quotation marks on the medal (but the exclamation point does appear).
 - Superscripts and subscripts, if any, will be depicted in the description as on the medal. For example, “100TH” indicates that the “TH” is depicted on the medal as a superscript; “100TH” indicates that the “TH” is not a superscript on the medal but is the same size and on the same level as the rest of the text.
 - A forward slash (/) indicates the end of a line in a multi-line inscription.
 - Figures, edifices, and designs will be described from major to minor, larger to smaller, inner to outer, etc.
 - Dates will be described depending on where they appear on the medal: if in the legend, then as part of the legend; if in the design, then as part of the design.

Rarity (to be added to catalog after collaboration online)

One of the wonderful things about medals is that they are almost always issued in relatively small quantities that would make numismatists salivate over the prospect of owning such relative rarities. For example, there are 15 known examples of the 1804 Silver Dollar, and we all know that it would require a bid in seven figures to purchase the next one that comes up for auction. However, equally scarce medals can commonly be purchased in high grade for under \$100. (I have done it many times!). The reason for this is simple: the demand for 1804 dollars far exceeds their supply. Apparently, the demand for some equally rare medals is lower even than the limited supply, which presents a happy opportunity to those who know their medals.

Repetitive Descriptions

One of the things I find very difficult to follow is the use of “Same as the obverse (or reverse) of xxx” in the description of the obverse or reverse of a medal. This was taken to an extreme in many catalogs of the 19TH Century. For example, Holland number LXXVII says “Same as No. LXXIII,” which says “MACHINERY HALL and view, otherwise, same as last” (LXXI), which says “AGRICULTURAL HALL and view, otherwise, same as last” (LXX), which says “HORTICULTURAL HALL and view, otherwise, same as last” (LXIX), which says “Memorial Hall with foreground and beneath MEMORIAL HALL, otherwise, same as last” (LXVIII), which finally gives the full description. Humbug, I say!

I realize that the purpose of such frustrating circumlocution is to save space, and paper, and therefore money in the world of books. In the world of electronic media, I think the extra effort of sometimes-repetitive descriptions is outweighed by the convenience of being able to read a complete description with each medal. Therefore, in most cases, I have provided complete descriptions wherever possible.

Proxy Pix

Many sets of Centennial medals share common dies. Take, for example, the depiction of the presentation of the Declaration of Independence by the Committee of Five, copied from Trumbull's famous oil painting. There are four known die varieties of the Trumbull die, muled with five other dies to create at least twelve known die pairings in the set. Three of them are merchant tokens, and nine of them are Centennials. Of these nine that are known to exist, I have so far been able to obtain photos of only four. However, I do have images of all the dies in the set, so rather than leaving readers with only the text descriptions of the obverse and reverse, I have assembled "Proxy Pix" from these available images to serve as graphic examples of such a medal until I have the opportunity to obtain matching images. Mules # 2, 6, 7, and 8 of this set in the Declaration of Independence drawer are Proxy Pix.

By the way, one of the goals of this iBook is to solicit the donation of missing images from my fellow collectors. Those who provide such images with permission for me to use them will receive grateful acknowledgement and the honor of owning the plate medal in this catalog.

Pagination

Some compromises are inevitable and necessary in a web-book, such as this, that straddles the worlds of both electronic and paper books. In order to make browsing as convenient and quick as possible on-screen, each medal is listed on a new page. This facilitates using the "page down" arrow in Acrobat Reader to scroll down through the document medal by medal. I admit this makes for a lot of white space in the printed version. However, this will be rectified at a later date. If there is enough demand for a high-quality printed book at some time in the future, I have a fine-press publisher who has expressed interest in printing and binding a fine edition. If/when this possibility comes to fruition, it will be announced on the website and every other venue I can utilize.