



THE ONTARIO NUMISMATIST

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE ONTARIO NUMISMATIC ASSOCIATION

WATERLOO, ONTARIO

ONA OFFICERS

Past President --
R. R. Rekofski
President --
Lloyd T. Smith
First Vice President --
William English
Second Vice President --
Frank G. Uttley
Secretary --
Mrs. Ruth Mueller
239 Lancaster St. W.
Kitchener, Ont.
Treasurer --
Bruce H. Raszmann

REGIONAL DIRECTORS

Walter Griggs --
Western Ontario
Rudy Sauro --
Central Ontario
Peter DeGraaf --
Eastern Ontario
Robert C. Willey --
Lakehead, Northern Ont.

Historian:

Walter Griggs

Publicity Director:

William English
Box 4
Waterloo, Ont.

Speaker's Circuit & Display Case Service:

Frank G. Uttley
35 Chestnut St.
Kitchener, Ont.

Ontario Numismatist Editor & Librarian:

Mrs. Claudia Pelkey
440 Pineland Ave.
Oakville, Ont.

Audio-Visual Services:

David Ashe
1069 Lakeshore Rd. E.
Oakville, Ont.

Vol. 4 -- No. 9

September, 1965

Page 70

THE SOHO MINT

By David Ashe

In the year 1760, Matthew Boulton, an Englishman, operated a small foundry in Birmingham, England, and manufactured steel jewellery, watch-chains, buttons, chatelaines, buckles, clasps, purse-mounts and seals. Boulton's foundry was small; but his wares were in great demand. It was the time of the Industrial Revolution, and small businesses had to expand or terminate.

In the early part of 1761 Boulton found a new location on Handsworth Heath. At one end of the Heath had stood an old coaching inn; and above the main entrance had hung the portrait of a huntsman with his dogs, with the words of the old English hunting cry "SO-HO", "SO-HO". Here would be the new home of Matthew Boulton's foundry, and on a later date, unknown to him at the time, the site of his famous Soho Mint.

About this time there was acute shortage of small coinage. It was not long before tradesmen began to issue tokens, but a vast majority of these were of short weight and earned a dishonest profit both for their makers and issuers. Many tokens bore the name of the issuer as a guarantee of good faith, but quite a few were anonymous and were foisted upon the public by people who had no intention of redeeming them at a later date.

There were tradesmen tokens. One token told how "John Stokes Has Lost His Love For Anne May". A coin dealer, even went as far as to issue a token with the inscription of St. Matthew's Gospel, Ch. 22, v. 21; and changed the context to: "Render Unto The Collector Those Which Are Charles Foyle's".

Matthew Boulton cast a knowing eye on the illegal token trade, and erected three water powered screw-presses, and let it be known that he would accept orders for the issue of any legal token.

The Industrial Revolution was gathering momentum, though many people carried on small trades in their own home. Weaving, dying of cloth, button making; to mention only a few, were worked continuously.

Counterfeiting coins was a recognized art, and because of the acute shortage of small coinage, the art came into full glory. The machinery which was capable of

making metal buttons with a device and letters stamped upon one side of a piece of metal, was capable, with a few modifications, of making a coin, with a device and letters stamped on both sides. It was as easy to counterfeit one kind of coin as another --- gold and silver, as well as copper, the button making forms only required a little skill in manipulation, to which the button-makers were found fully equal. The profits of this illegal trade were of course large; but as long as the counterfeiter could find a market for their handiwork they went on producing.

Although profitable, the prosecution of the counterfeiter was by no means neglected. While some people pursued it on a large scale, and contrived to elevate themselves among the moneyed class, others less fortunate, received an elevation of an entirely different nature: One of the most gruesome sights of those days being the skeletons of the convicted counterfeiters dangling from the gibbets on Handsworth Heath.

The punishment for the crime of counterfeiting was death, and sometimes of a brutal character. In March, 1789, a woman in London, was convicted of counterfeiting. She was first hanged in her own kitchen, and later her body was taken and fixed to a stake and burnt before her door at Newgate.

Meanwhile, Matthew Boulton, was first drawn to legal coinage in 1772. James Watt, the inventor of the piston steam-engine met with Boulton, and as early as 1774 they discussed applying steam power to coining.

In 1786, Boulton and Watt were the first men to erect a steam driven coining press. In fact, it proved so successful they were awarded a contract, and executed an order for copper coinage amounting to 100 tons for the United East India Company.

These coins, the first to be made by the power of steam, were remarkable both for their size and excellent workmanship; and they were so accurately minted with the new machinery that effective forgery was made almost impossible. Boulton was delighted with his innovation and immediately tried to interest the Royal Mint in London. Due to the obstruction of officials at the London Mint Boulton was not immediately successful. It was not until January 5, 1788, that Boulton was granted an audience with the Privy Council Committee. In fact, Boulton was so confident that he would receive a contract to coin English regal coinage he erected a new building along side his foundry, which was known afterward by the name Soho Mint.

By the end of the year 1788, Matthew Boulton had fitted and set to work six steam driven coining presses, with rolling mills, annealing, blank cutting, and a machine for bagging coins.

These presses were fed blanks through a shoot so as to cut down handling to a minimum. This device, with similar devices, which were to follow later, were invented by James Watt, and were the forerunners of certain parts of the equipment used today.

With the new steam powered equipment the Soho Mint executed a token coinage for the North Americas, and a silver coinage for the Sierra Leone Company in Africa.

The ONTARIO NUMISMATIST is published monthly by the Ontario Numismatic Association. The publication may be obtained with memberships of one of the following categories: Adult -- \$2 yearly; Junior -- \$1 yearly (up to 18 years of age); Husband and Wife (One copy) -- \$3 yearly; Club -- \$10 yearly.

Remittances (plus bank exchange if paid by cheque) payable to the Ontario Numismatic Association, P. O. Box 33, Waterloo, Ontario.

Authorized as second class mail by the Post Office Department, Ottawa, and for Payment of postage in cash.

Supplies of the famous John Wilkinson tokens took place between 1787 and 1793. And it is of interest to note by quoting a letter written by Wilkinson, dated December 8, 1790: "... I shall be content if I can have about 5 tons of the half pence ...". This letter, still extant, gives some idea of the tonnage of coinage executed by the Soho Mint.

Matthew Boulton eventually erected eight steam driven coining presses, and they could mint 96 coins or medals per minute. With slight alterations to the machines the presses were capable of cutting blanks. The eight presses were coupled in an octagon pattern and worked in a horizontal position. Immediately below, a similar machine, of shape and position housed the lower dies, and the central post was connected to the steam-engine with guide pillars on the outer connecting rods, and thus created a vertical pump motion. The eight presses could be adjusted to mint between 50 to 120 coins or medals per minute, and could strike 8 different coins or medals at the same time. Each of the presses required the attendance of one boy of about 10 years of age. And you may be intrigued to learn that these boys were clothed in white trousers and jackets, which were washed every week. It seemed that when orders were plentiful, the boys worked on the night shift and their working day was of ten hours or more in length.

Finally, the British Government had to agree that Boulton's new coining method was far superior to that of the London Mint, and on June 9, 1797, a contract was signed at the Treasury in London. Matthew Boulton was in attendance for the occasion. The proclamation authorizing the new English regal copper coinage appeared in the "London Gazette" on July 26, 1797. The contract called for a coinage of 500 tons of copper at 108 pounds sterling per ton, and was to consist of 20 tons of two penny pieces, and 480 tons of one penny pieces. These coins were known later as the English "Cartwheel" series.

According to a document signed and submitted to the Treasury for payment by Matthew Boulton, the total amount of English copper regal coins issued by the Soho Mint, between 1797 and 1808, were in the amount of 3,531 tons of copper.

Meanwhile, the Royal Mint did not look too kindly toward the Soho Mint in Birmingham, but the Royal Mint had to agree that their own water-driven machinery could not execute a large coinage within such a limited time. After a lengthy debate they agreed the Tower Mint could not withstand the new heavy equipment and therefore a new location would have to be found. Matthew Boulton was employed to design the new building and to supply the new machines including the necessary steam-engine.

Work on the new Tower Hill Mint commenced in 1805, and was completed five years later in 1810. The new London Mint was the most complete mint of its kind in the world, and a model to be copied. It is of interest to note that its machinery was not superseded by the new until 1882.

On January 5, 1810, an article appeared in the "Globe" newspaper, to the effect that the Soho Mint had received a contract to execute the recoinage and counterstamping of Mexican silver dollars, into five shilling pieces, for the Bank of England. These pieces were greatly admired; and deliveries to London commenced in the month of December, 1809. It is recorded on January 14, 1810: "... 38 casks of dollars, to be stamped at the Soho Mint, amounting to 50,000 pounds sterling, were delivered to the custody of the persons appointed to receive them, and were sent by Snell's Canal ...". The shipment arrived by the following week, and on January 22: "... a similar amount of dollars were sent ...". Further deliveries took place in the same year. In fact, two million dollars in all to the value of 500,000 pounds sterling were recoinage or counterstamped by the Soho Mint.

Matthew Boulton and James Watt became so famous in coining, that they erected Royal Mints in Russia, Spain and Denmark, (under Parliamentary sanction); and mints for Mexico, Calcutta and Bombay. Out of the Soho Mint had come famous coins and tokens such as the copper coinage of the United East India Company in 1786; and the silver coinage for Sierra Leone. English tokens of all descriptions. Token coinage for the North Americas; and the penny coinage for Bermuda in 1791. The interesting coinage for the Madras Presidency of India in 1794; the "Cartwheel" English regal copper coins between 1797 and 1808; and recoined and counterstamped silver dollars in the early part of the 1800's.

Matthew Boulton and James Watt were two men who were devoted to good coinage, and with their new method of steam-power they revolutionized their ideals. Today their principles are still enjoyed, but with a certain amount of diversity.

- 0 -

CLUB NEWS

The ST. THOMAS NUMISMATIC ASSOCIATION which meets the second Wednesday of each month, accepted an invitation to visit the WOODSTOCK COIN CLUB for a combined August meeting.

INGERSOLL COIN CLUB had 19 members and guests out to the July meeting to view O. N. A. Audio-Visual, by David Ash, of "Australian Type Coinage" and "The Waitangi Crown". Mrs. Winifred Mather, Toronto, donated two books ... one was placed in the club library and the other was won by Mrs. Lorne Moon. Three new members joined the club.

CHAMPLAIN COIN CLUB, July meeting, was presided over by Vice-President, Fred Carter in the absence of President, R. Marshall. Highlight of the evening was the showing of the O. N. A. Audio-Visual set, "Canadian Coinage", part IV of a series by Lloyd T. Smith, covering tokens of the coastal provinces and Quebec.

HURON COUNTY NUMISMATIC CLUB has devised a novel quiz through the medium of their monthly bulletin that should keep their membership interested in numismatics as well as in good attendance. Each month five questions are published; the members must bring their answers to the following meeting. Each month a prize is awarded for the most correct answers and the answers are fully discussed; a grand prize is awarded at the end of the year for the highest yearly total.

TORONTO COIN CLUB had as their guest speaker in June, John Regitko, Programme Director of the Central Coin Club, who spoke of the merits of collecting mint errors and displayed some of his extensive collection. Feature of the July meeting was the showing of the O. N. A. Audio-Visual, "Canadian Silver Dollars" by Wm. English.

LONDON NUMISMATIC SOCIETY had 38 members and guests to their July meeting. Mr. T. Masters spoke to the society on his recent visit to the Canadian Centennial Numismatic Park in Sudbury. On behalf of this, Mr. Masters presented L. N. S. with a Sir Winston Churchill 5 shilling Coin Memorial medallion.

LIBRARY DONATION

Once again the O. N. A. is indebted to Major Sheldon S. Carroll for his donation to our library of the "Royal Canadian Mint Report", 1964.

NEW MEMBERS

Applications published in the July edition of the Ontario Numismatist were accepted. No applications were received for August or September.

CHANGES OF ADDRESS

179. Robert Armstrong, R. R. #4, Owen Sound, Ont.
391. Sidney W. Fitzpatrick, 236 Delatre St., Thamesford, Ont.
454. Edward F. Donald, 6 Sunset Dr., Simcoe, Ont.
612 WINDSOR COIN CLUB, c/o Mrs. G. Pomeroy, 264 Kennedy Pl., Windsor, Ont.

- 0 -

COMING EVENTS

- September 19 TILLSONBURG NUMISMATIC SOCIETY 3rd Fall Convention, Mil-Mar Manor. Competitive displays. Cup for Best-of-Show. Plaques for Best-in-Class. Tickets: \$2.50. General admission: 25 cents. 200-lot auction by Louie Biro. For information: Mr. W. B. Wolfe, R. R. #3, Tillsonburg; Mr. J. W. Southerland, Box 164, Fort Burwell; or Mr. Fred Cole, Otterville.
- September 25 LONDON NUMISMATIC SOCIETY 14th Annual Banquet, Westown Plaza. Banquet Chairman: Wm. N. Clarke, 167 Delaware Ave., London, Ont. Registration and banquet ticket (roast turkey dinner -- \$3.00 Public admission: 25 cents for afternoon, 50 cents for evening. Registration: Alex Sweeton, 172 Regent St., London. Displays: Sam Smith, 92 Elworthy, London, Assistant displays: Percy Elgie, Thamesford. Bourse chairman: Graham Esler, 56 Glass Ave., London. \$10.00 bourse fee includes one banquet ticket; limit 10 dealers. Auction: Lloyd T. Smith.
- October 2 KITCHENER COIN CLUB 2nd Numismatic Show and Dinner. General chairman: Wm. Mansfield. Displays: Victor Montag. Bourse: Ted Turanski.
- October 9 KINGSTON KOIN KLUB Annual Fall Show and Auction, Commodore Motor Hotel, 840 Princess St., Kingston, Ont. Bourse tables available at \$7.50 from Mr. E. Howlett, 61 Westmoreland Rd., Kingston, Ont.
- October 12 INGERSOLL COIN CLUB Open House, Ingersoll Memorial Centre.
- October 16 BAY OF QUINTE NUMISMATIC ASSOCIATION 3rd Annual Coin-A-Rama, Kiwanis Centre, 118 Dundas St. E., Belleville, Ontario. Competitive displays, bourse, auction. General Chairman: Fred Hoffman, P. O. Box 125, Belleville, Ontario.
- November 14 HURON COUNTY NUMISMATIC CLUB 4th Annual Coin Show, Elm Haven Motel, Clinton, Ontario ... 12 noon to 9 p. m.
- April 29, 30, May 1 ONTARIO NUMISMATIC ASSOCIATION 4th Annual Convention, Cleary Auditorium, Windsor, Ontario. General Chairman: Paul Landry, 14200 St. Marys Street, Detroit 27, Michigan, U. S. A. Bourse Chairman: Gordon Pomeroy, 264 Kennedy Pl., Windsor, Ont.

- 0 -

Paid in ladies -- Pay in the royalist army of Yench is 15 'fat ladies' monthly -- that is 15 Maria Theresa dollars.

CONSTITUTION and BY-LAWS

Beginning with the December issue of The Ontario Numismatist, 1963, your executive endeavoured to discuss and propose articles of the O. N. A. Constitution and By-laws. Unfortunately, through uncontrollable circumstances, these proposals ended suddenly in the March, 1964 issue, with Article V. Article VII appeared in November, 1964, in order that there should be some guidance in the election of officers. We are now able to continue with Article VI and invite all members to discuss these proposals.

ARTICLE VI - Elected Officers.

Section 1 - The elected officers of the Association shall be: the President, the First Vice-president, the Second Vice-president, the Secretary, the Treasurer and Regional Directors.

Section 2 - The term of office of an elected President shall be limited to one elected two-year term, in addition to any period that he may have served as President because of the death, resignation or other inability of the regularly elected President.

Section 3 - The duties of the elected officers shall be to conduct the affairs of the Association in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution and of any By-Laws enacted thereunder. The duties shall be more specifically detailed in the By-Laws of the Association.

Section 4 - The governing body of the Association shall be the elected and appointed officers and shall be known as the Executive.

Section 5 - The duties of the Elected officers shall include, but are not limited to the following:

- (a) to appoint officers, biennially or at such other times as the officers may be vacant, to fill the following offices: editor, librarian, advertising manager, historian and such other offices as the Executive may deem advisable. Assistants to these officers may be appointed at the discretion of the Executive.
- (b) to appoint temporary officers to fill any elective office, except President, at any time that the incumbent shall become incapacitated or otherwise unable to discharge the duties of that office.

Section 6 - Duties of the Executive shall include, but are not limited to the following:

- (a) to decide on the time and place for holding the general meeting;
- (b) to prescribe the form of official membership applications and official ballots;
- (c) to rule on the admission of applicants against whom objections have been raised;
- (d) to rule on the disposition of formal charges brought against a member of the Association;
- (e) to fix advertising rates for space in the official publication and to set rules and regulations in connection therewith;
- (f) to fix the compensation paid to any officers to whom such compensation is paid;
- (g) to prescribe which elected and appointed officers shall be bonded and to fix the amounts thereof;
- (h) to remove from office any elected or appointed officer who does not or cannot meet the requirements of the office;
- (i) to carry on and direct the affairs of the Association generally.

To be continued next month.