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on the cover: Lithograph bird’s eye view of the Port of New York looking south from the Battery towards Staten Island, 1872 by Parsons and Atwater (artists), Carrier and Ives (publisher), Library of Congress.
From the Executive Director

Ute Wartenberg Kagan

Dear Members and Friends,

As I am writing this letter, I am sitting in my office on the 11th floor of 75 Varick Street looking at three major building sites where skyscrapers are being erected. It is an amazing spectacle to witness the speed at which this is happening. In an ultra-luxury condo building to my right, all glass, with swimming pool, laborers are still working on the higher floors while on the lower floors I can see an unmade bed that someone left this morning before going out. Further down the road, one of the restaurants where we go occasionally for lunch is closing since the entire two-story brick building is being pulled down to make space for the new tower of the Disney Corporation. This will be located right next to the newly built Google complex, which was just announced.

When the ANS Trustees decided to relocate the institution to this neighborhood straddling the line between SoHo and TriBeCa just west of Chinatown, which our landlord has named “Hudson Square”, I had to explain its location even to New Yorkers, since it was totally unknown. Apart from many unrenovated buildings, there was nothing here. But over the last few years, Hudson Square, located on the Westside of Lower Manhattan, has become one of the cool places to be, with all the benefits and side effects of such gentrification. Food trucks have made our lunch choices better, and during the warm season, we have several small parks, all set up with umbrellas, sun lounges, and tables; often there is live music. If so inclined, one can even play outdoor ball games, and a brand-new coffee shop in our own lobby serves fancy brews, which makes Starbucks look cheap.

The Society, which occupies some 18,000 square feet at 75 Varick Street, has been able to make ample use of its beautifully built-out space. Our Money Talks and other lectures are well attended. Over the last few years, tourists have also discovered that we have a small three-case display on view, and a surprising number make it through security to our floor. In short, we are very happy where we are, but space is tight. To start with, there is no proper museum since our collaboration with the Federal Reserve Bank ended. The curatorial areas are now also a little cramped, and our Rare Book Room could also do with more shelving as we are acquiring more archives from our members. Housing the archives, dies, and galvanos of the Medallic Art Company, which are currently in Green Bay, Wisconsin, and in Nevada, is not even remotely feasible in our space, and we are exploring a more permanent solution.

Why am I giving you all this detail? During its last meetings, the Board of Trustees has been discussing our space needs and what we can afford in the future. What was a rather inexpensive lease for Manhattan some 10 years ago has become much less affordable, and it is unlikely that this trend will reverse any time soon. The financial issues are intrinsically tied to the question of what the ANS would like to be in the future. Here a number of different concepts for our organization could be imagined, which might involve more digitization, a proper museum display, a location outside Manhattan, and much else. Gilles Bransbourg, our Deputy Director, is working on a new plan for the Society; and we would very much like to include the members in this discussion. A consultant, who has known the Society for almost as long as I have, will also be involved, and you might well receive a call over the summer from someone who will want to discuss all this with you.

With great potential for positive change ahead of us, I do hope you will let us know (anonymously if you wish) your opinions on the future strategic plan for the ANS.

Yours truly,

Ute Wartenberg
IS THERE A SANTA CLAUS?
The Story of Seleucid Coins Online

Oliver D. Hoover

On September 21, 1897, The Sun newspaper of New York published an editorial by Francis Church in which he responded to a question posed by eight-year-old Virginia O’Hanlon (fig. 1). It was not just any question, but rather THE question: “Is there a Santa Claus?” Church took the opportunity to provide a famously uplifting and philosophizing answer arguing for faith in the unseen and unseeable as the means of reaching true beauty and glory. As Seleucid Coins Online (SCO for short) begins to pick up steam with the addition to the database of 4,450 coins from the collection of the Bibliothèque nationale de France in April, it seemed worthwhile to reflect a little on what it is, what it can do, where it has come from, and where it will go—all of which is also bound up to a great extent in the faith of people and institutions in what began as an intangible idea.

Although Seleucid Coins Online (numismatics.org/sco/) was only realized in 2018 through an important Christmas-like grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities obtained by Peter van Alfen and Ethan Gruber, the dream of something like it goes back almost two decades. In 1999, Ute Wartenberg, the new Executive Director of the American Numismatic Society, hired me as a curatorial assistant, a job that often gave the opportunity to spend time with the 52 trays of coins that make up the ANS Seleucid collection. Since at the time I was also working with Arthur Houghton and Catharine Lorber on the *Seleucid Coins* volumes, I also had opportunity to become their regular eyes on the ANS Seleucids, checking and rechecking the coins as questions arose regarding weights, diameters, and especially the form of monograms. In those days, digital photography was still fairly new, but the Society had seen the obvious potential and purchased a digital camera. Aware of my Seleucid interests, Ute generously gave me permission to photograph the Society’s entire Seleucid collection for personal study and for publication. This was a real privilege because there was really no other way to see the ANS Seleucid collection in its glorious totality without being physically present at Audubon Terrace. Back then, an online database of the Society’s entire collection existed, but it was just beginning to include images. One could only imagine what could be done if everyone had access to images and descriptions of the ANS Seleucids.

The critical importance of being able to visit the American Numismatic Society in person or knowing someone else who could visit and check things on your behalf was further underlined for me when I was given the task of photographing Roman provincial coins of Berytus and Heliopolis to illustrate a Lebanese PhD dissertation that was eventually published in 2009. If you live in New York City (and especially if you work or volunteer for the ANS) it is not much of an issue to come in and take a look at the coins in the collection whenever needed, but it takes rather more effort and (sometimes substantial) funding to come in from Lebanon, Europe, Canada, or even the central and western United States to view the collection. The same situation

was of course true for the other great numismatic collections of the world.

Much wider accessibility to Seleucid coinage began in 2002 and 2008 when the American Numismatic Society and Classical Numismatic Group jointly published the two parts of Seleucid Coins: A Comprehensive Catalogue (fig. 2). These volumes did a great deal to update the types and control monograms known to the great Seleucid numismatic scholar and ANS President Edward T. Newell in The Seleucid Mint of Antioch (1918), Eastern Seleucid Mints (1938), and Western Seleucid Mints (1941), and to synthesize the numerous new discoveries and studies published in the intervening decades (fig. 3). They collected in one place descriptions, commentary, and perhaps most importantly, illustrations of every major type known at the time from public and private collections. The plates of the printed volumes made it much easier to see rare and unique Seleucid types that might exist in only one of the world’s great collections. The utility of the type catalogue in Seleucid Coins: A Comprehensive Catalogue combined with historical and numismatic introductions to each reign made the material easily available not only to the numismatic community, but also to archaeologists and ancient historians, some of whom may be very much at home with textual and epigraphic sources but less comfortable with coins.

Most would probably agree that Seleucid Coins: A Comprehensive Catalogue really did something to advance the plot, as it were, in the story of Seleucid numismatics. However, it did not and could not do everything. While the book format necessarily had a defined ending, the truth is that Seleucid coinage is more like an ongoing news story with an ending that could be just around the corner or, rather more likely, lie far beyond the horizon. We have not yet seen the full spectrum of Seleucid coins that have survived from antiquity. New coin types, denominations, and control monogram varieties have continued to appear in archaeological excavations, on the market, in private collections, and even in public collections. At present over 200 new types and monogram varieties have been reported since the second part of Seleucid Coins: A Comprehensive Catalogue was published in 2008. Sometimes these new discoveries make it necessary to correct and modify descriptions and interpretations presented in the printed volumes. A good example of this is a new variety of SC 1001, an Antiochus III tetradrachm attributed to Uncertain Mint 49 in Phrygia (perhaps Apamea) in the private Medicus Collection that was reported earlier this year (fig. 5). The reverse die of this piece is shared with SC 860, a tetradrachm featuring what is vaguely described in the catalogue as the “head of a mature king” and attributed to Antiochus Hierax at Uncertain Mint 46 in the Hellenispon (fig. 6). Since it seems somewhat implausible that a reverse die of Hierax from a Hellenispon mint would have been reused by Antiochus III in Phrygia, SC 860 should probably be reclassified as an issue of Antiochus III from Uncertain Mint 49. Likewise, a dated Sidonian tetradrachm of Antiochus VII Sidetes in the ANS collection (ANS 1944.100.77660) that was somehow omitted from Seleucid Coins: A Comprehensive Catalogue, makes it clear that the mint’s silver production was not actually limited to the three years SE 175–177 (138/7–136/5 BC) under Antiochus VII but actually continued at least into SE 178 (135/4 BC) (fig. 7). This might seem to raise the possibility of even later silver issues since the Sidonian bronze coinage for Antiochus VII extends as late as SE 182 (131/0 BC) (fig. 8). These are not minor developments. In light of such discoveries, as well as more mundane ones like, for example, new monogram combinations in the ubiquitous Sardian bronze coinage of Antiochus II Thros (SC 521–522) made it clear that some vehicle would eventually become necessary to update, expand, and correct the catalogue of Seleucid Coins: A Comprehensive Catalogue.

In a similar vein, just as the new material has expanded, so too has the number of scholars (and collectors) interested in the Seleucid dynasty and its coinage. Gone are the old days of the 1990s when much Seleucid numismatics and history in Canada and the United States had to be practiced by a handful of misfits and rebels in the dark corners of classics departments or in the back alleys behind university libraries for fear of being caught and turned towards less arcane areas of enquiry. It was virtually unthinkable scant decades ago that any university might hold a conference described as a “Seleucid Study Day” but now the University of Waterloo holds...
them at regular intervals. We truly live in an enlightened age with a new generation of Seleucid scholars that appears to be much larger and engaged than any in the past. With this heightened interest in the Seleucids comes a new landscape of scholarship that is already having an impact on the study of the coins directly as well as indirectly, through the development of a more nuanced political, social, and economic history of the Seleucid Empire.

As it was obvious that the printed volumes of Seleucid Coins could not address either the new developments in relation to material or to scholarship that appeared after 2008, the specter was raised of a potential catalogue of addenda and corrigenda to be published at some point in the future. This was not especially desirable since both new discoveries and new interpretations would almost certainly require an addenda to the addenda in time. An online solution was the obvious best response to the challenges posed to the printed volumes of Seleucid Coins: A Comprehensive Catalogue, but little headway could be made until 2017. A private initiative known as the Seleucid Coins Addenda System (SCADS) for short, was briefly attempted in order to put the new coins online (fig. 9), but it could not have developed into what Seleucid Coins Online is and will be in the future. It was stopped as soon as the opportunity for SCADS appeared.

An initial version of Seleucid Coins Online was launched in January, 2018, with the second and most current version appearing in November of the same year. It consists of a fully searchable database of types as listed in the printed volumes of Seleucid Coins: A Comprehensive Catalogue linked to entries and images that appear in the online databases of the ANS collection as well as the collections of other institutions. At present, SCO contains records with images for some 9,665 individual coins. At 4,807 pieces, more than half of the contents come from the cabinet of the American Numismatic Society, but the remainder has been made up by gracious partners at the Bibliothèque nationale de France (4,450 pieces), the Münzkabinett der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin (209 pieces), Harvard Art Museums (94 pieces), the British Museum (35 pieces), the Archäologisches Museum der Westfälischen Wilhelms Universität (31 pieces), the Martin von Wagner Museum der Universität Würzburg (16 pieces), the Staatliche Münzsammlung München (8 pieces), the Münzsammlung der Philippi-Universität Marburg (7 pieces), the Fralin Museum of Art at the University of Virginia (6 pieces), the Ashmolean Museum (1 piece), and the Münzkabinett Wien (1 piece). The number of specimens and the number of contributing collections are expected to only increase over time. A great deal of thanks is due to the present contributors because they believed in the potential value of the SCO project as much as did our members Philip Atkinson, Peter Christian, and myself, and dedicated their time and resources to photography and cataloguing in order to link their data into the Seleucid Coins Online framework. They put their faith in the unseen, just as Church projections were limited by matters of size and cost to illustrate only a single specimen for each type for the most part. Seleucid Coins Online now makes it possible to pull up multiple examples and control subtypes at a single keystroke. One notable case is that of SC 21, an Antiochene bronze issue of Seleucus I Nicator (fig. 10).

Seleucid Coins: A Comprehensive Catalogue illustrates at this issue, which includes five control varieties and seven countermarks, by a single coin from a 1986 NFA sale. A search for this same type in Seleucid Coins Online (numismatics.org/SCO/id/sc.1.21) will pull up some 42 specimens representing two control subtypes and six countermarks. Likewise, SC 94, an Alexandrin tetradrachm emission of Seleucus I at Babylon (fig. 11) is currently represented by 54 specimens from four control subtypes. Seleucid Coins: A Comprehensive Catalogue, on the other hand, was able to represent only two subtypes of SC 94 (subtypes 2 and 3) with two plate illustrations (CSF 1, 683 and Meydancık 2022). It would be possible to provide numerous other cases where the representation in Seleucid Coins Online far outstrips that of the printed volumes of Seleucid Coins: A Comprehensive Catalogue, but this would belabor the point unnecessarily.
At present, each type and subtype in the Seleucid Coins Online database includes a standardized text description closely following those of Seleucid Coins: A Comprehensive Catalogue, but sometimes modified slightly for the Alexandria issues in order to follow the model used for PELLA (numismatics.org/pella/), which immediately preceded Seleucid Coins Online as an online resource. The international utility of the text descriptions are enhanced by standardized French and German translations provided by Frédérique Duyrat of the Bibliothèque nationale de France and Karsten Dahmen of the Münzkabinett der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin, respectively. In addition, the type descriptions also contain links to Nomisma.org, an online thesaurus and repository of terms and concepts related to numismatics.

Notes point to new interpretations or necessary corrections. For example, while Seleucid Coins: A Comprehensive Catalogue identifies the helmet worn by Athena on SC 129 as Attic, it is clearly Corinthian in form as noted in Seleucid Coins Online (numismatics.org/scoc/id/sc.1.38). Perhaps more importantly, it is pointed out in a note that the Seleucid character of SC 38, an obol attributed to Seleucus I at Hierapolis-Bambyle has been challenged recently, probably rightly, by Nathanael Andrade (numismatics.org/scoc/id/sc.1.38). Notes also serve to draw attention to important new die links that between SC 860 and SC 1001, which has already been mentioned.

Although Greek, Phoenician, and Aramaic legends are given in their proper Unicode font scripts, monograms do not currently appear in the type descriptions. However, work is under way at this very moment to create a system to display monograms within Seleucid Coins Online and indeed the entire family of Hellenistic Royal Coinage tools.

Seleucid Coins Online also offers supplementary tools for each type. A map plots the location of the mint city in the new database, which is currently under development. In time, there can be little doubt that Seleucid Coins Online will become the most formidable tool in the arsenal of the Seleucid numismatist.

 Seleucid Coins Online stands as symbol of the very exciting times that we live in for both Seleucid numismatics and Seleucid studies as a whole. But perhaps even more importantly it stands as a symbol of the great things that are accomplished when the international numismatic community pulls together for a purpose. Without the many institutions and individuals who have contributed their time and resources to the Seleucid Coins Online project both at the American Numismatic Society and in Europe the final product would surely be diminished from what it is. As an Israeli numismatic colleague recently lamented in response to the addition of the BnF coins to the SCO database, "the only drawback of the utterly decadent possibilities nowadays to do (almost) all numismatic work from your desk, is that you don't get to see real coins." Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus.

Notes


8. Danny Syon, April 17, 2019, on the Seleucid email group (seleukids@yahoo.com).
I should like to present […] some observations on the usefulness of having in the classroom a few simple genuine objects of antiquity to serve in stimulating the student’s interest, and bringing him to a better realization of the fact that the authors he is studying and the people of whom they wrote once really lived, and lived, moreover, in a workaday world that differs from ours only in degree. Among the numerous antique specimens […] none will serve this purpose better than ancient coins, for the double reason that they bring us literally in touch with the ancient people through whose hands they circulated for daily expenditures and that they bear the names of persons familiar in history […].


With these words George N. Olcott, Professor of Latin at Columbia University from 1904 to the year of his untimely death in 1912, highlights the importance of ancient coins as a didactic tool in university and even high school classrooms (fig. 1). A pioneer in the use of ancient coins as a didactic tool, Olcott points out that coins are easy to acquire and that they represent ideal teaching instruments. They are portable, inexpensive and widely sold, and they engage students’ interests especially when they bear the names of famous individuals. On a more basic level coins may be passed around a classroom so that students can literally reenact ancient money changing hands. To take his point even further, representations of buildings and monuments on coins would be of particular value to American teachers and students precisely because visiting them would simply be out of the question; detailed plans and photographs of the structures still standing could be expensive or hard to come by in his day (figs. 2–3). In another article of 1910, Olcott argues that “there is no reason why every institution where Classics are taught should not have a small and well-selected collection [of Greek and Roman coins] as part of its equipment.” This brings us to the collection of Roman coins Olcott assembled in the course of his life, which was clearly curated by somebody who had primarily in mind the ultimate goal of teaching students about the development of Roman coinage, its rich variety and its ultimate relationship to the history of the society they were produced in. Olcott viewed his as a working collection with a clear pedagogical set of objectives (fig. 4).

From the outset, George N. Olcott clearly articulated a vision and purpose with his collection:

We at Columbia have gradually within the past ten years or more been getting together a similar working collection, which—withstanding lack of adequate funds—already numbers many hundred specimens and the graduate students will unite, I am sure, in declaring that they receive an impetus and inspiration in their work by being enabled to handle and study original objects happily preserved from the wreck of the past.

In Olcott’s mind, the applied nature of the collection was

The Olcott Coin Collection at Columbia University

Lucia Carbone with Andrea Kmetz-Sheehy and Joe Sheppard

1. Olcott 1905a.

2. Indeed, as a senior at Columbia University, Olcott wrote his BA thesis on the representations of buildings on Roman Coins, entitled Roman Monuments and Buildings as Types of Roman Coins (Olcott 1893). He later reviewed the scholarship of, and even met, the most important figure in Roman topographic studies of the times, Rodolfo Lanciani: Olcott 1910c.


4. Harry Langford Wilson, Professor of Classics, Johns Hopkins University, as cited by Olcott 1908b, p. 206.

5. Olcott 1905a.
that at that time, only Yale University possessed a larger card catalogue. By comparison, it is here worth noting facts, including ca. 3,500 Roman coins complete with lamps, inscriptions and terra sigillata—was donated to the Academy by Zita Ledderucci, Olcott’s widow.

Following Professor Wilson’s auspices, G. N. Olcott acquired for himself and Columbia University a sizable collection of Roman, Etruscan and Villanovan arti-

In 1926, part of the Olcott Collection of Antiquities—including oil lamps, inscriptions and terra sigillata—was donated to the Academy by Zita Ledderucci, Olcott’s widow.

Upon his death on March 2, 1912, this collection was bequeathed to Columbia University. In the same letter where the bequest is made official, the coin collection is defined as being composed of “Greek and Roman coins” (fig. 6). As will become evident, the Greek coins to which the letter referred are Roman Provincial ones, defined as Greek Imperial until the publication in 1992 of the first volume of the series Roman Provincial Coinage. In Olcott’s view, his coin collection had

Time in and space. As made clear by his obituary, Olcott considered his collection of antiquities and coins as a “working” one, whose didactic function was not thought to compete with the more aesthetically pleasing and better-funded one at the Metropolitan Museum. The primary teaching purpose of the collection was made clear by the will itself, which stated that the collection would have gone to the University of Michigan or Harvard in case Columbia did not accept Olcott’s terms, which mostly centered on its didactic use. Consistent with Olcott’s desiderata, in 1916—four years after his death—his coin collection has thus been reinstated to its original didactic function (figs. 7–8).

A Life Devoted to Roman Antiquities

In spite of his wide-ranging interests—particularly Latin epigraphy, but even including modern language in time and space. As made clear by his obituary, Olcott considered his collection of antiquities and coins as a “working” one, whose didactic function was not thought to compete with the more aesthetically pleasing and better-funded one at the Metropolitan Museum.11 The primary teaching purpose of the collection was made clear by the will itself, which stated that the collection would have gone to the University of Michigan or Harvard in case Columbia did not accept Olcott’s terms, which mostly centered on its didactic use. Consistent with Olcott’s desiderata, in 1916—four years after his death—his coin collection has thus been reinstated to its original didactic function (figs. 7–8).

A Life Devoted to Roman Antiquities

In spite of his wide-ranging interests—particularly Latin epigraphy, but even including modern language
The Olcott Coin Collection

The Olcott Coin Collection was part of the Olcott family's legacy, which included significant contributions to the field of numismatics and archaeology. The collection was acquired by George N. Olcott, who was a member of the American Numismatic Society, as well as a scholar and professor at Columbia University.

Several figures are notable for their contributions to the Olcott Collection. John Sarlitto, Joe Sheppard, Andrew Ward, and Caroline Wazer served as students, as well as Heather Russo and Alexandra Ginieres, during a seminar and contributed to the exhibition design.

The Olcott family, led by George M. and Jennie Olcott, lived and researched in both Rome and New York throughout George N. Olcott's lifetime and afterward. Olcott's family was divided between Italy and the United States, and he continued to interact with the Olcott Collection during his travels and research.

The Olcott Collection was curated by Caitlin Allday, Molly Allen, Lucia Carbone, Emily Cook, Justin Dombrowski, Michael Fowler, Zachary Maiuro, and other scholars. Olcott acquired thousands of ancient coins, hundreds of Roman bricks, and marble samples, which were displayed in the Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

The Olcott Collection was part of the American Academy in Rome. Olcott and his family were involved in the transformation and excavation of ancient Roman sites, such as the Forum to the Baths of Trajan, which yield vast numbers of artifacts from the Olcott Collection.

The Olcott Collection included objects ranging from lamps to funerary urns and tombstones, as well as stamps and money of terracotta decoration that provided clues to buildings' ancient standing. Olcott's collection also included fragments of ceramic vessels and stone inscriptions and groups of ancient objects.

The Olcott Collection was displayed as the centerpiece of Columbia's new campus, and the Olcott family was critical to the existence and success of the collection. Many people and organizations were critical to the exhibition, and the Olcott family's contributions were acknowledged.

With gratitude, the exhibition organizers acknowledged those to whom they were most indebted: instructors, students, museum staff, curators, researchers, collectors, donors, and volunteers who contributed to the Olcott Collection and the exhibition.

The Olcott Collection housed at the university for over a century, and it remains an invaluable resource for teaching and scholarly research.

Figure 9: G. N. Olcott nominated as a member of the American Numismatic Society on November 11, 1907.

Figure 10: Letter of G. N. Olcott to Bauman L. Belden regarding his membership, dated November 27, 1907.

Figure 11: George M. Olcott (1835–1917), father of George N. Olcott.

Figure 12: Casina, the residence of the Olcott family in Ridgefield, CT. The house, built in 1893, was demolished in 1968.

Figure 13: George N. Olcott on 1887.

Figure 14: The American School of Classical Studies in Rome (now American Academy in Rome), its original abode in Via Garra in 1897. Columbia University Archives.

Figure 15: The Temple of Neptune in Paestum, photographed by George N. Olcott in 1897. The photograph is included in the picture of Olcott's mother and her sister May, who were visiting him in Italy. Olcott family Archives.

Figure 16: George N. Olcott wandering in the countryside surrounding Rome. Radicofani, 1897. Columbia University Archives.

Figure 17: The dedicatory inscription from the Amphitheater of Pompeii photographed by G. N. Olcott in 1897. CIL X 8441 (first century BCE). Claudius Quinctius Cneius (filius Valgus) / Marcus Porcius M(arci) (filius) / (ascus) / dec(urium) / dec(uris) / theatrum tectum / fac(undum) / loc(atus) / (eius) / indig(ens) / pro(hib)ic(atus). Translation: The duoviri Claudius Quinctius son of Valgus and Marcus Porcius son of Marcus by decision of the city council put out to tender the construction of a covered theater and the same men approved the work. The duoviri were important civic magistrates in the cities of the Roman Empire.

Figure 18: Rodolfo Lanciani (1845–1910). The great archaeologist, author of the monumental Forma Urbis Romae (1883–1901), was one of G. N. Olcott’s teachers in Rome.

Figure 19: A part of the Forma Urbis Romae relative to the Vatican Gardens.

Figure 20: Zita Ledderucci and Bianca Olcott in 1904. Olcott family Archives.

Figure 21: George N., Zita, and Bianca Olcott in 1902. Olcott family Archives.

Figure 22: Zita Ledderucci and George N. Olcott in 1892. Olcott family Archives.

Figure 23: George N. Olcott on 1887.
George N. Olcott was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1869. His father, George Mann Olcott, was essentially a self-made man, having left Columbia College Grammar School at age 16, the story goes, rather than receiving the cane for drawing caricatures of the headmaster, Charles Anthon, a historian who would go on to become president of the ANS (1868–69, 1873–83). 24 He quickly became a wealthy business partner in the pharmaceutical industry and moved into banking (figs. 11–12). The wealth of the Olcott family allowed for a privileged education, which explains George’s precocious knowledge of foreign languages and the purchase of coin specimens at a very young age.25

In 1889, Olcott enrolled at Columbia College (fig. 13). There he became familiar with Roman literature, history, and epigraphy. Moreover, he also deepened his knowledge of linguistics and Etruscan antiquities that were to become leading themes of his academic career. He graduated with full honors in 1893 with a BA thesis on Roman Monuments & Buildings as Types of Roman Coins, showing his knowledge of numismatics, topography, architecture, and archaeology.26 In 1894 he was appointed University Fellow in Latin, also confirmed for the following year. From 1896 to 1898 he stayed at the American School of Classical Studies in Rome as a Drisler Fellow, only two years after Seth Low had secured for the Department a number of noteworthy specimens for the university, alongside his own private collecting.27 As soon as he arrived at the American School in Rome (that would become the American Academy in Rome in 1913), Olcott exploited every opportunity for excursions all over the Italian peninsula, documenting them with letters and photographs (figs. 15–16).28 In the years 1896–99 he travelled intensively to sites of archaeological interest with the most important antiquities of his time—including R. Lanciani and A. Mau—but also hiked in the surroundings of Rome (figs. 17–19).29 His archaeological interests were never separated from his anthropological ones. Travel was his key to accessing not only the past, but also the present of Italy, rubbing shoulders with humble peasants and Romans as well as local aristocrats. At the same time, he began to collect ancient artifacts, inscriptions, and coins, which would later become the Olcott Collection of Antiquities. During this time the young Olcott met Zita Ledderucci, the daughter of his landlord in Rome (fig. 20). The couple were married in Rome on July 19, 1902. Zita soon became a tireless helper of her husband’s collecting work and kept her own collection of ancient glass. Their daughter Bianca Aurelia Maria Louisa Joanne Olcott was born in Rome, on July 7, 1903 (fig. 21). She married Count Giuseppe Domenico Bartocci Fontana of the Papal Guard in 1940, and their heirs still live in Assisi, where their garden is decorated with the sculptures and inscriptions Olcott never exported.25 While in Rome for a year-long leave of absence from Columbia University in order to pursue research for his Epigraphic Dictionary, George N. Olcott died suddenly of pneumonia on March 2, 1912, in Rome, aged 45 (fig. 22).

Between 1902 and 1912 Olcott evidently spent every summer at his “Villetta Olcott” in Rome, where it appears that he was acquiring objects for his own collection of artifacts, if not also for Columbia University and as diverse as Hungarian and Roman—numismatics represented the core of Olcott’s scholarly pursuits. He began collecting coins “even as a boy,” and continued buying coins for the rest of his life.24 Coins represent the largest part of the collection he left to Columbia University, and we know he was a member of the American Numismatic Society (ANS) from 1907 until he died—even serving as assistant curator in 1908—as well as editorial contributor on numismatics to the American Journal of Archaeology (AJA) from 1898 to 1905, and as a member of the American Journal of Numismatics (AJNum) (figs. 9–10).20

The relationship between George N. Olcott and the American Academy in Rome (AAR) was never interrupted. In 1926, part of the Olcott Collection of Antiquities—including oil lamps, inscriptions, and terra sigillata—was donated to the Academy by Zita Ledderucci, Olcott’s widow. Geflick 2015, pp. 57–8. Letter to May Olcott, November 20, 1896. “But more than the city I enjoy taking a fine day off leaving the students […] and wandering without destination […] and fix the sites of buried cities and battlefields of older days, turn over the potsherds.”

Letter to May Olcott, May 1, 1897. “Tomorrow we go to Pompeii for a week. If you write me within that time, address me at the Albergo del Sole (Sun Hotel), Pompei, by the amphitheatre.”

22. Columbia University 1912, p. 3. “In every visit to Italy [Olcott] secured for the Department a number of noteworthy specimens for this purpose, [i.e., for Columbia affiliates to work on] and the arrangement last May of this material in the beautiful room assigned to it in the Hall of Philosophy gave him the keenest satisfaction.”

23. The relationship between George N. Olcott and the American Academy in Rome (AAR) was never interrupted. In 1926, part of the Olcott Collection of Antiquities—including oil lamps, inscriptions, and terra sigillata—was donated to the Academy by Zita Ledderucci, Olcott’s widow. Geflick 2015, pp. 57–8.

24. Letter to May Olcott, November 20, 1896. “But more than the city I enjoy taking a fine day off leaving the students […] and wandering without destination […] and fix the sites of buried cities and battlefields of older days, turn over the potsherds.”

25. These inscriptions are now published in Sensi 2001.
for third parties back in the United States. On the one hand, university records suggest he was paid a very mi-
serably amount by the university, but his side-jobs, such as consulting for auction houses, and of course dealing in antiques himself are all well documented.24 For example, the records at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign show that his widow, Zita Ledderucci Olcott, sold some 54 coins for $19.07 to the World Her-
tage Museum on December 24, 1915, with correspon-
dence suggesting that Olcott himself was involved in
brokering the deal only a few months before his death.27
But the flipside of this scholar was another Olcott who
ends, a new control symbol, or a variant portrait facing
at least up to the tetrarchy, as far as Parthia in the East
and Spain in the West.28
But the most revealing information about Olcott’s col-
lecting habits and business activities comes from the
introductory remarks with which he prefaced a series
of articles in the American Journal of Numismatics
between 1902 and 1910. His main scholarly concern in
these editorials was to publish new specimens that were
missing from the standard reference works of the day,
chieﬂy Cohen and Bahrfeldt, and his contributions are
minor but detailed, such as alternative spellings for leg-
ends, a new control symbol, or a variant portrait facing
the opposite direction.29
This focus on precise and laborious indexing is perhaps
to be expected in someone who was also working on
Latin epigraphy at the end of the nineteenth century,
a ﬁeld which the German academy had then recently
revolutionized by organizing and publishing every
Latin inscription then known in 15 ponderous volumes
of the Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum (fig. 23).30
For what concerns numismatics, T. Mommsen had argued
for its importance as Hilfswissenschaft, an auxiliary yet
fundamental aid to the study of ancient history, in his
seminal work of 1850, Über das Römische Münzwesen.31
But the ﬂipside of this scholar was another Olcott who
could not resist guiding the Layman reader with tales of
his travels throughout Italy at the same time as he was
urging amateur numismatists to engage in coin
collecting so that as many specimens as possible could
do one day be recorded more systematically (fig. 24).32
The following passage is not uncharacteristic of his style of
teaching and the City of Ancient Rms in New York

26. The ANS and Columbia Libraries, for example, both have a
copy of a document compiled by Olcott with coins appraised
for auction: George N. Olcott. 1902. Catalogue of antique
and medieval gems: to be sold at the marked prices by Mears,
Tiffany & Co. March 10 to 16, 1902, for the beneﬁt of the Charity
Organization Society of the City of New York and
the Provident Relief Fund.
27. Letter dated April 5, 1977, from Ashley Goldhor, Research
Assistant at the World Heritage Museum to the Archivist at
Columbia University Library. Edlund 1980. More recently,
Jane Siegel, Columbia University RBML, Head Librarian. Missing
from the picture are Andrea Knetsch-Sheehy and Dr. Joe Sheppard.
Babylonian, Egyptian, Greek and Roman Antiquities, Modern
Jewelry, Etc. Prof. G. N. Olcott, N. Homsey, A. Knowles and Other
Properties On Friday, June 2nd, 1916. Catalogued by Thomas L.
Roberts. 32 East Twenty-Third Street, New York.
29. Cohen 1880–92; Bahrfeldt 1897.
30. Olcott wrote his doctoral dissertation at Columbia University
on Studies in the Word Formation of the Latin inscriptions:
Substantives and Adjectives with Special Reference to the Sermo
Vulgaris, and devoted considerable energies during his later
years to a highly ambitious project, the Thesaurus Linguae
Latinae Epigraphicus.
31. Mommsen 1850.
32. He explicitly quotes this dream of a single comprehensive
reference work for numismatists in Olcott 1903, p. 104, where he
emphasizes the “utility of publishing all such variants
in some one of the recognized numismatic periodicals. In
no other way can we lay the foundations for that complete
and scholarly corpus of Roman coins that must some day be
produced as the basis for all future study of the science of
Roman numismatics.” Cf. Olcott 1905, p. 38, where he writes:
“each year the inadequacy of Cohen’s work, magnificent as it was
in conception, and epoch-making in execution, becomes more
apparent.... Yet while we wait for the Corpus of Roman coins,
which would take years, if not decades, in the preparing,
would that some benevolent Carnegie Institute might provide the means
for a thorough revision!”

22 The Olcott Coin Collection
23 The Olcott Coin Collection
remark: “Well, here’s a curious old piece, but it doesn’t seem to be a coin; throw it in and we’ll make it four lire.” The sale was made, and I came into possession, for four cents, of one of the greatest rarities of my collection.33

While some of his observations could be considered inappropriate and almost enraging, Olcott’s purpose in such personal anecdotes is to act as a model for American numismatists who might not have realized the vast opportunities for collection—and clearly amusement—on the other side of the Atlantic. Olcott is keenly aware of the lack of large teaching collections of Roman coins in the New World, but is optimistic that great headway can be made if enough people are speculating in what is after all a market economy. This mixture of mercantile pragmatism and rigorous scholarly detail, and the blend of colonial egalitarianism with this most aristocratic of leisurely European pursuits, sum up Olcott’s activities at a time when the boundary between the academic and numismatic world was not as often crossed as today perhaps.34 In some ways Olcott valued his practical skills more than academic knowledge, defining the ideal numismatist as a man who “must indeed be experienced, versed in the language of the country, wary and incredulous, for the falsifier and the ‘sharper’ are lying in wait for the ready purchaser, especially if a foreigner.”35

Olcott presented himself as taking down the barrier between scholars and laymen, or even between classes. He would interview southern Italian farmers about the hoards they dug up as carefully as he would the auction dealers of Munich and Geneva.36 In the more gentlemanly Classical Journal Olcott defended his commercial interests to an audience interested in the traditional more noble pursuit of philology:

[At the risk of being dubbed “antiquity dealer” by the profane and unsympathetic, I have for some years past offered for sale, especially to colleges, schools and teachers, such things as I have acquired. I am delighted with the success of this my “missionary enterprise,” which has led to the formation of small collections in numberless schools and colleges, especially in the Middle West and New England states.37

At the end of this article, Olcott publishes his address and urges amateurs to contact him if they do not share his ready access to the libraries of New York and dealers of Europe. Should his readers be interested in medals, he publishes elsewhere Francesco Gneccchi’s address with a similar plea for amateurs to get in touch with the Italian specialist.38

In spite of his at times questionable acquisition methods, Olcott was a forerunner of the use of ancient coin collections as didactic tools and his numismatic enthusiasm remains pivotal in fostering the use of coins as a central element in the study of Roman antiquities in American universities.

The Odyssey of the Olcott Coin Collection after his Death

In the already quoted letter dated November 22, 1912, Olcott’s collection of antiquities and coins was bequeathed to Columbia University by his widow, Zita Ledderucci Olcott per the terms of his will. The bequest was accepted by the Columbia Board of Trustees on December 10, 1912 (fig. 25).39 The Olcott collection resided in multiple locations on the Columbia University campus including at one time a display in Philosophy Hall. In 1938, items in the collection were moved to Schermerhorn Hall under the direction of Professor William B. Dinsmoor, Professor of Art and Archaeology, and Dr. C. C. Williamson, Director of Libraries (figs. 26–27).40 In 1944 discussion began of moving the coin collection to the Plimpton Room of Low Library or the vault in Butler Library with the objective of “...having it available for a cataloger or a scholar who will be assigned to work over the collection and appraise.”41 It would appear the discussed transition took place given that, in 1949, the coins travelled from the Plimpton Room in Low Library to the Butler Library-Special Collections.42

34. Olcott 1910b, p. 109. Philologists are beginning to learn about archaology, but not numismatics— with the exception of Theodor Mommsen, “the only thoroughly rounded classical scholar.... But for the rest—should we gather the names of great classicists and those of famous numismatists, they would stand in two almost mutually exclusive columns. The study of ancient, especially Roman, coins, has been mainly limited to private collectors— often men with a master’s classical training—and to the custodians of public collections; and scientific articles by competent writers appear almost inevitably in the exclusively numismatic periodicals that seldom reach the greater public, even of the studious.”
35. Olcott 1904a, p. 65.
The Olcott Coin Collection

Figure 35: Monetales in the Olcott Collection of Roman Republican coins (89–45 BCE). Data compiled and provided by Elizabeth Heintges.

Figure 36: Denominations in the Olcott Collection of Roman Republican coins. Total number of coins: 1,030. Number of coins catalogued to date: 722. Data compiled and provided by Elizabeth Heintges, Tal Ish-Shalom, and Katy Kootz.

Figure 37: Denominations in the Olcott Collection of Roman Imperial coins. Total number of coins: 1,977. Number of coins catalogued to date: 533. Data compiled and provided by Alice Sharpless.

Figure 38: Olcott Collection of Roman Provincial Coins - Greater Region/Province Representation (per card catalogue). Total number of catalogue entries: 521. Number of provincial regions represented: 25. Data compiled and provided by Andrea Kmetz-Sheehy.

At this point, fixed in its location in Butler Library, the coins receded from view to emerge from the shadows only intermittently and certainly not in any consistent fashion. Brief clues present themselves regarding the nature and scope of the scholarship conducted. In 1950, it was noted in a letter from Professor Kurt von Fritz, Chair of the Greek and Latin Departments, to Provost Grayson L. Kirk regarding funding for the coins:

…during the last few years the Olcott Collection of Greek and Roman Coins, which belongs to the Department of Greek and Latin, has been in the process of being rearranged and recatalogued. During the years 1948 and 1949, a Miss Ruth M. Keller has been doing this work for us. About the middle of September 1949 Miss Keller had to interrupt her work because of a leave of absence from the school where she is working had expired. She promised, however, to come back and to finish the work in the summer of 1950 if the Department should so desire.43

In 1959, Coleman H. Benedict, Assistant Professor of Greek and Latin at Columbia, published an article in Columbia Library Columns, “The Olcott Collection of Ancient Coins.” Benedict was of the opinion that, “the Columbia University Library offers an excellent opportunity for the direct study of coins from various periods of history, particularly from ancient Greece and Rome. The coins from these latter countries are in the Olcott Collection, located in the Special Collections Department of the Library.”44 However, the pedagogical auspices of Prof. Benedict did not seem to have found any practical substantiation. In the course of the 1960s, the coins appear to have retreated once again into the confines of the Butler Library vault. No subsequent mention or record of scholarship occurred in that decade.

A few, brief touchpoints took place through the 1970s. A door to examination was re-opened in 1974, when the ANS Curator of Roman Coins William E. Metcalf took the opportunity to briefly examine the coins and produced a summary account of the “Roman coins in the Collection of Columbia University” (figs. 28–29).45

A 1977 Columbia Spectator article by Josh Moroz was one instance in which a spotlight was returned to the coins. The headline for the article by Moroz lamented that the “antiquity collection in Butler suffers long-term neglect.” According to Moroz, Professor Richard Brilliant of the Art History and Archaeology Department had attempted to study the coins, which remained in their spot in Butler Library. According to Brilliant, “the conditions make study virtually impossible. The trays that contain the coins are shrouded with dust and the desk in the room does not allow for more than one or two trays at a time. In addition, lighting is inadequate.”46 Once again, the coin collection returned to its home in the RBML Library, and the pattern of intermittent and episodic investigation continued.

Ingrid Edlund in 1980 undertook the project to create and publish a catalogue of the Iron Age and Etruscan vase included in the Olcott Collection. Her scholarship, by way of providing the context for the bronze and...
It was not until the 2010s that the collection of both the artifacts and the coins rose again to the surface. In 2011, a graduate seminar organized by Columbia Professors Francesco de Angelis and Marco Maiuro brought the collection back into the light and to its original teaching purposes. In 2012, a conference celebrating the 100th anniversary of George Olcott’s death and entitled, “Archaeology and the City: George Olcott and His Collection,” was held at Columbia University in March 2012 (fig. 30). The conference also provided the platform for the inauguration of the exhibition “Archaeology and the City: George Olcott and His Collection, between Rome and Columbia.” Both the conference and the exhibition served to expressly recognize Olcott’s contribution to Roman Archaeology throughout his career and especially as Columbia’s first professor in that discipline. Since then, the collection has been an important didactic tool in high school and university courses on Roman Civilization.

Despite this well-earned existence over the course of its life in Rome and at Columbia, the interest for the Olcott Coin Collection endures. Having enjoyed but a brief appearance in the limelight, it has always remained a well-known and documented collection. Moreover, following Olcott’s original desiderata, a group of Columbia graduate students is now preparing the collection for scientific publication. Happily, the 2012 reappearance of the wider Olcott collection sparked renewed interest in his coins. A dedicated, collective effort by Columbia University Graduate students under the supervision of ANS Assistant Curator for Roman Coins Lucia Muscariola is underway to establish a database of this collection (fig. 31).

The Composition of the Olcott Coin Collection

As designed by its creator and existing today, the Olcott coin collection is comprised of three subsets: Roman Republican, Imperial, and Provincial coin issues. The 109 trays of the Olcott coin collection are divided into Roman (79 in total) and provincial (35) (fig. 32). The card catalogue is divided along these lines as well, with the Republican coins preceding the Principate and Empire. The cards identify the catalogue number in the top left-hand corner (figs. 33–34). The reference to the coin type is listed next, generally according to Cohen for imperial coins, and to Babelon or Grueber’s BMCRR for the republican coins, as the standard reference works of Olcott’s day.30 The trays of imperial coins are organized according to emperor or empress featured on the obverse, and then in the order that they appear in Cohen, rather than by denomination or metal. The Republican coins are arranged chronologically according to Grueber. The provincial coins, divided into cities by region, beginning with Spain and ending in Alexandria, and then chronologically, are classified according to Head’s Historia Numorum.31

On every card, descriptions of the obverse and reverse die, with diagrams for comprehension if necessary, the weight is listed, as is the provenance when known. The diameter in millimeters, the metal and denomination, and the date of production are listed on some cards, but not regularly. There is no reference to die axis. Occasionally too the price paid appears in pencil, and a short note if the coin has been plated, retooled or pierced. There are other marks whose precise significance has so far eluded me; for example, coins bought from the same lot appear to have the same Greek letter noted in the bottom left-hand corner.

Most of the information about the provenance of the coins has come from these cards so far. The date of sale is indicated on the lower left corner, generally accompanied by a source or vendor, which includes the leading dealers of the day, such as Merzbacher, Cahn, Ratto, and Egger. At the back of the catalogue are a few cards with condition notes and references to other publications of Rome by these dealers. It is clear that Olcott was also buying coins from more obscure sources, such as one John Harrison, a watchmaker of Chester, England, where I met him in 1847—’that is to say, when Olcott was 14 or 15 years old. Similarly, one solidus of Valentinian III is simply catalogued as being “from a peasant, Rome (1907), v. fine.” It is no surprise that the earliest known purchase is in New York, from the Scott auction house in 1882 when Olcott was either 12 or 13. Scott appears regularly in the cards (1882–85, 1896–97), and dealers living in New York such as Edwards or Heres also list their coins from sources that dated from the 1880s and early 1900s, before the European auctioneers largely take over. This is consistent with Olcott’s biography, as we know that he was a Drisler Fellow at the American School of Classical Studies in Rome (1896–98), and continued to spend his summers in Italy, where he ultimately succumbed to pneumonia.

It is clear from Olcott’s cards and articles that he was in contact with antiquities dealers residing as far as Palermo, Vienna, Munich, Berlin, Geneva, and Paris. Olcott also noted on the back of the card when coins had been published elsewhere, and in three instances when the coins came from a particular hoard. For example, 14 denarii of Trajan, Antoninus Pius, and Marcus Aurelius from a hoard found at Larnaka, Cyprus, were sold to Olcott by Khayat in 1911. I have taken this to be Azeez Khayat, the Lebanese dealer on Sixth Avenue in New York, which might explain the origin of the bronze scales from Berytus still in the Olcott collection and the “Phoenician” glass that Mary Olcott mentioned in her biography of her brother.32 The provenance of 13 coins from the so-called La Rouillas hoard, found in 1891 in Sousse, France, were also meticulously recorded in the card catalogue when Olcott purchased them in 1905. Similarly, Olcott published a hoard of coins from Tarquinii in 1902, asserting the reader that a lump of fused coins found by farmers in 1898 “was brought to me almost as found, with but a few coins loosened from the others,” although it is only from the card catalogue that we learn the middleman was Barsanti, who had sold them to Olcott in 1898.33 Olcott clearly appreciated the information that hoards could supply about circulation and dating. As demonstrated by one of his editorials on the subject,34 further support is the fact that there occasionally appear details about the find-spot, often admittedly vague, for example: “Caesarea in Cappadoce,” “Armenia,” “Laodicea ad Mare,” “Syria,” “from the Tiber,” “near Vienna.”

The I.030 Roman Republican coins included in the collection are mostly denarii, ranging in time from ca. fourth century through the latter part of the first century BCE. The role of this collection as a pedagogical tool for numismatic training is especially apparent as it contains a multiplicity of monetales, multiple subtypes of the same coin type and a consistent presence of plated denarii (7% of the total). Important historical moments (Civil War of 49–45 BCE, the travels of Augustus, the Roman and Caesarian factions and architectural features (e.g., the rostra, the temple of Vesta, etc.) are also documented. Therefore, Olcott’s work is a pedagogical tool that can be used to learn about the social, political, and economic history of the Roman Republic.
well-represented in the collection (figs. 35–36).57

The 1,977 Roman Imperial coins, with issues dating from the first century BCE through the fifth century CE, seem to be more varied from a denominational point of view, with a wide presence of sestertii. Once again, architectural representations on coinage loom point of view, with a wide presence of sestertii. Once

57 The Republican Coins in the Olcott Collection were divided in 29 trays. Of these trays, 11 were catalogued by PhD students Mahmoud Samori and Caroline Wazer in 2014, while 7 of them have catalogued in the course of the past academic year by PhD students Tal Ish-Shalom (trays XII–XIV, ca. 140–100 BC), Elizabeth Heisint (trays XIX, XXIII, XXV, 89–45 BC) and Katy Knorr (trays XV, XXIV, XXVII, ca. 95–89 BC, 46–40 BC).

58 Head 1911.
Dr. Samuel Mackenzie Elliott and the Abolitionists of Staten Island

Peter van Alfen

Introduction
For generations the borough of Staten Island has had a rather contentious relationship with the rest of New York City due in no small part to the fact that for over half a century the rest of the City dumped its garbage on the Island. By the time the rather ironically named Fresh Kills landfill was finally closed in 2001 it had become the largest dump in the world covering 2,200 acres. Capped nearly two decades ago and slowly being turned into parkland, its tainted vestige is far from abated. 1 Years earlier Staten Islanders had become so fed up with their standing as the maligned “forgotten borough” that a majority of them voted in 1993 to secede from the City in a non-binding referendum that caught the attention of the mayor’s office and the powers in the state capitol in Albany, which led to a number of important concessions. Besides closing the landfill, they also removed the fee to ride the Staten Island Ferry operated by the Department of Transportation to and from Manhattan; twenty-five years on the ferry remains free and one of the City’s most popular tourist attractions (fig. 1).

Despite these attempts to mollify the Islanders, the resentment remains. The successful Brexit referendum in the United Kingdom in 2016 briefly revived hopes that Staten Island’s secession might still be possible. 2 Long before this unfortunate modern legacy, however, and long before it was incorporated into the City by the consolidation of Greater New York in 1898, Staten Island had enjoyed a reputation as one of the most idyllic and easily accessible refuges from the cares of Manhattan for those wealthy enough to buy acreage and build a country estate. Home to the highest hills on the eastern seaboard, some rising to over 400 ft above sea-level, many of the hilltop estates that dotted the island commanded unparalleled views not just of Manhattan to the northeast, but of the Atlantic Ocean to the south-east, and of the mainland to the west (fig. 2). Writer and naturalist Henry David Thoreau spent part of 1843 living on the Island at the home of William Emerson, a local judge and the older brother of Ralph Waldo Emerson, praising its scenery and flora in letters home. 3

Hoping to capitalize on the growing demand for Staten Island property, one of the wealthiest and most successful early nineteenth century Manhattan developers, Thomas E. Davis, purchased hundreds of acres of the north-east corner of the Island in 1836 from the estate of US Vice President and former New York governor Daniel D. Tompkins with the intent to subdivide and sell it. He named his tract New Brighton after the resort in England and for decades thereafter Staten Island’s New Brighton could boast of some of the fanciest hotels, restaurants, bathhouses, and homes found anywhere on the east coast (fig. 3).

New Brighton’s historic district preserves some of this former grandeur. 4 Around the same time that Davis acquired his tract, 3. In a letter to his sister Sophia dated May 22, 1843, for example, he notes that “[t]he whole island is like a garden and affords very fine scenery” (The Walden Woods Project, https://www.walden.org/log-entry/22-may-staten-island-n-y/, accessed April 24, 2019).
4. New Brighton is today generally considered part of the St. George district, named after the financier and shipping magnate George Law, who owned a large portion of the north shore Staten Island waterfront in the 1860s. For the history of New Brighton/St. George see Pearson et al. 1994 and Zalma 2014.
another gentleman with a keen sense of the opportuni-
ties offered by Staten Island real estate, bought a large
waterfront tract to the south of New Brighton along Kill
van Kull, the narrow waterway that divides the Island
from the mainland. Just 24 years old at the time of his
purchase, Samuel Mackenzie Elliott would spend the
next 40 years buying, trading, and selling real estate in
Staten Island, including many properties featuring rus-
tic stone houses that he designed and had built on them
(fig. 4). Of the two-dozen such houses he built, several
remain today.5 By the mid-nineteenth century, when
the first comprehensive surveys of Staten Island had
been completed and corresponding maps produced,
Elliott’s tract, now extensively built-up, was labeled
Elliottville, which extended from the waterfront on Kill
van Kull eastwards climbing towards the summit of
one of the ridges running north-south along the Is-
land (fig. 5). Atop this ridge Elliott built an astronomi-
cal observatory, while some distance below he also built
a small Episcopal church, St. Mary’s, which continues
to hold services (figs. 6–7). Much of Elliottville by this
time, like New Brighton, had been subdivided into
individual lots. Many of these and the houses on them,
Elliott continued to own and rent out for decades, but
he also from time to time sold lots to those he desired
to have as permanent neighbors. Farther afield on the
Island, Elliott bought and sold additional tracts and lots
as the opportunities arose making him one of the most
prominent landowners on Staten Island in the mid-
nineteenth century. Although he achieved success in
these real estate ventures, this was mostly a sideshow to
his primary professional activity, that of being a physi-
cian and one of the first practicing ophthalmologists in
New York City.

Samuel Mackenzie Elliott
Born in Inverness, Scotland, in 1811 to a British Army
officer, Elliott (fig. 8) graduated in 1828 from the
Royal London Ophthalmic Hospital, which later
was to become Moorfields Eye Hospital, was founded
by John C. Saunders in 1804; it is unclear if Elliott
frequented this hospital while in London, but given his
developing specialization in ophthalmology it is pos-
sible. Despite his later wealth, the young doctor does
not appear to have had much money while in London.
An accomplished draughtsman, he managed to support
himself by producing anatomical drawings and paint-
ings for the medical profession at large. After nearly five
years of study in the British capital, Elliott was hired
as a ship’s surgeon and so crossed the Atlantic never
to return home again. Arriving in the United States in
1833, he seems to have gone immediately to Cincinnati,
Ohio, perhaps for the express purpose of studying with
the genitourinary surgeon, Alban Gilpin Smith (later
Goldsmith), who developed a technique for lithotripsy.
Goldsmith later relocated to New York City taking a
position at the College of Physicians and Surgeons at
the University of the State of New York.8 In the mean-
time, Elliott was in Philadelphia once again attending
medical lectures before he, too, finally settled in New
York City, establishing a practice in lower Manhat-
tan, which was later expanded to include a second-
ary practice in Elliottville. On the sign he hung above
his office on Williams Street and in his newspaper

5. See, for example, 69 Delafield Place, Staten Island. The house,
which was built ca. 1850, was landmarked in 1967, see Landmarks
Preservation Commission Report, LP-0338.
6. Much of the bibliographical information in this paragraph is
derived from Elliott’s obituaries published in the New York Times
on May 1, 1875, and the New York Tribune on May 7, 1875. See
also Leng and Davis 1939, pp. 253–55.
7. For a medal commemorating Saunders and his hospital see Galst

Figure 1: Bronze medal commemorating the launch
of the ferryboat Richmond on Staten Island on May
20, 1905, one of five new boats built for the new city-
run ferry service between Staten Island and Man-
hattan. Previous service had been privately owned
and often inadequate. (ANS 0000.999.8240) 51 mm.

Figure 2 (above): Lithograph by Augustus Kollner, ca. 1850, depict-
ing a hilltop estate on Staten Island, likely the “Marble House”, the
former home of Daniel D. Tompkins (d. 1825). In the distance are
The Narrows and the Atlantic Ocean. (The Miriam and Ira D.
Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs: Print Collection,
The New York Public Library).

Figure 3: Sheet music cover for the New Brighton Quadrilles,
ca. 1836, featuring an idealized view of New Brighton, lithograph
by J. H. Bufford. (The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints

Figure 4. (above): Engraving by Benjamin T. Bensley, ca. 1828,
showing the city of New Manchester, its earthen fortifica-
tions, and the land owned by John C. Saunders. To the east
is New York City, while to the west is the Dutch settle-
manship along the Kills. This drawing was made
just after the New York isle was ceded to New York by
New Jersey in 1790. (ANS 0000.999.8201) 29 cm.

Figure 5. (above): Lithograph by George Harvey, ca. 1835,
drawn from the watercolor by Robert Havell, showing
the general survey of Staten Island completed in 1833
by John C. Saunders and his surveyors. Of the 24
houses drawn in the survey, only the house at the
lower right, 194 New Brighton Avenue, was built by
Elliottville. (ANS 0000.999.8196) 24 cm.
advertisements from 1836 onwards he describes himself as an "oculist", a term that had then the same connotation as ophthalmologist does today, a trained and credentialed physician of the eye. Elliott’s practice grew rapidly as did his reputation for obtaining cures that seemed “due more to luck than to science,” which in turn, it seems, attracted professional jealousy as well as accusations of quackery, something not entirely uncommon in the US in the nineteenth century. In fact, by the end of the nineteenth century, ophthalmic quackery in the US was sadly widespread.

It is not entirely clear who made the accusations against Elliott, but I suspect they may have come from physicians associated with the New York Eye and Ear Infirmary (fig. 9), which was incorporated in 1822. Elliott does not appear to have had any professional connection with the Infirmary, which is odd considering his specialty, growing prominence, and continued desire to develop new techniques and medications to treat ocular ailments. Apparently, because of the unwanted negative attention and desire to obtain credentials fully recognized in the US, he pursued an MD from New York Medical College, which was bestowed in 1851, when he was 40 years old, some 15 years after he had established his practice. At the same time, in response to accusations that he kept his professional skills secret, Elliott also gave a series of lectures in which he described the procedures used in a number of his more remarkable cases. One such case was described in his New York Times obituary:

…a man applied to him for treatment after part of the vitreous humor had escaped, and the doctor cured that eye by injecting with an infinitesimal syringe distilled water that he had warmed in a phial immersed in a cup of water that he had heated to ninety-eight degrees. After the injection the patient lay on his back twelve hours, and on walking forth from the doctor’s house he was conscious of improved vision. The cure, in time, was complete.

Like many other nineteenth century physicians, Elliott also sought to develop new or improved medications and ointments. Perhaps as part of this pursuit, he

assembled an important collection of botanical samples mostly drawn from the flora of Staten Island. After his death this herbarium, which included species already extinct on the Island by the beginning of the twentieth century, made its way into the collection of Natural History Association of Staten Island, now the Staten Island Museum.11

Regardless of the accusations he suffered from other physicians in the City, Elliott attracted a sizeable number of patients, many of whom travelled great distances to avail themselves of his expertise, including some of the most noted celebrities of the day. His roster of patients included, among many others, Commanding General of the US Army Winifred Scott, the naturalist John J. Audubon, the poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (fig. 10), the historian William Hicklin Prescott, the scientist Dr. Elliott and the Abolitionists

the abolition of slavery.17 While in Massachusetts, Sarah began to suffer from an ocular ailment and through the family’s connections with the Transcendentalists of Brook Farm, the utopian community adjacent to their own farm in West Roxbury just outside of Boston, they were put in contact with Elliott. Sarah began an initial extended treatment in 1847 in Staten Island, where she, her husband and their four children rented a home from Elliott. Following an extended sojourn in Europe with their children, the Shaws decided to settle permanently in Elliottville in 1855, where they purchased a lot from the doctor, with whom they had become quite close. Within a short period of time, the Shaws’ home-stead and Elliottville became a center for abolitionists in the New York City area.18

Several years before the Shaws decided to settle in Staten Island, Elliott had already sold an adjacent lot and house to Sidney Howard Gay, the long-time editor of the National Anti-Slavery Standard, a prominent abolitionist newspaper (fig. 13). From the time that he moved with his wife Elizabeth to New York City in 1844, Gay was actively involved in a number of anti-slavery initiatives including the Underground Railroad, a broad network extending from the southern states to Canada organized to convey fugitive slaves to their freedom. Gay’s Manhattan office at 142 Nassau Street became an important stop on the Railroad, as were reportedly the homes of the abolitionists on Staten Island, including Dr. Elliott’s.19 For two years, 1855 and 1856, Gay kept detailed notes on the more than 200 fugitives he helped pass through the City, including some who were brought to him at his office by Harriet Tubman and Harriet Tubman’s underground railroad network.20

11. Proceedings of the Natural Science Association of Staten Island, June 13, 1885, p.1; Davis 1907.
15. Executive Committee of Staten Island, 1858.
16. Francis Shaw, William Emerson, and five others formed the "Executive Committee" that wrote a report defending the actions of those involved in Quarantine’s destruction. See Executive Committee of Staten Island, 1858, p. 17.
19. Foner 2015: ch. 4. The 1967 Landmarks Preservation Report (LP-0338) on Elliott’s home at 69 Delafield Place on Staten Island notes: “Active in the Abolitionist movement, he reputedly harbored many slaves in his cellar…”. Unfortunately, I have not found corroborating evidence to indicate that Elliott or any of his neighbors harbored fugitives in their homes.
In 1865, Salathiel Ellis produced a bas-relief plaster portrait of Gay (fig. 15), one of several such plaster portraits Ellis produced of prominent individuals, mostly New Yorkers, in the 1850s and 1860s.22 Ellis had moved to New York City in 1842 and resided there until 1858, advertising his services first as a cameo maker and later as an artist and engraver.23 He became increasingly well known for his medallic art, including a series of four Indian Peace Medals, the last one featuring President Abraham Lincoln in 1862 (fig. 16).24 In 1852, more than a decade before he sculpted his portrait of Sydney Gay, Ellis had produced a portrait of another well-known New York City abolitionist, Isaac Tatem Hopper (fig. 17). For several years the two worked together at the National Anti-Slavery Standard, where Hopper was manager and Gay was editor.25 The same year he produced Hopper’s medal, Ellis also exhibited portraits at the National Academy of Design annual exhibition of Drs. Edward Delafield and John Kerney Rodgers, the founders of the New York Eye and Ear Infirmary, and Elliott’s possible detractors.25 Gay, however, was not the only Staten Island abolitionist to be portrayed by Ellis. In 1865 he also produced a medal for the US Congress thanking Cornelius Vanderbilt for his gift to the US Navy of the paddlewheel steamer USS Vanderbilt in 1862 (fig. 18). Vanderbilt’s fortune had its origins in a Staten Island Manhattan ferry service, and it was in Staten Island’s Moravian Cemetery that he was laid to rest in 1877.26

Within a year after the Shaws settled in Elliottville, their oldest daughter, Anna, was wed to George William Curtis, a prolific contributor to Putnam’s and Harper’s, and a popular public speaker, who like his in-laws was a fervent abolitionist and supporter of equal rights. Years before his marriage, in the 1840s, Curtis and his brother had spent summers at Brook Farm pursuing their interests in the Transcendentalist movement and becoming good friends with Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry David Thoreau, and the Shaws.27 In 1859, the Shaws built their daughter and her new husband a house on another lot purchased from Elliott a short distance from their own home; George and Anna’s house still stands.28 Following his death in 1892, Columbia University established an award for oratorical skill in Curtis’s honor and commissioned Victor David Brenner, the designer of the 1909 Lincoln cent, to sculpt his portrait (fig. 19).

By the time the Civil War began, Elliottville had become a tight-knit community of like-minded families actively seeking reforms for the ill of nineteenth century US society: slavery, poverty, and the rights of women. Collectively they spilled a great deal of ink for their causes, during the War they spilled their blood as well.

The Civil War

The attack on Fort Sumter in April 1861 (fig. 20) and President Lincoln’s call for volunteers to help quash the rebellion saw a great deal of activity in Elliottville. Almost immediately the Shaws’ only son, Robert, volunteered for his gift to the US Navy of the paddlewheel steamer USS Vanderbilt in 1862 (fig. 18). Vanderbilt’s fortune had its origins in a Staten Island Manhattan ferry service, and it was in Staten Island’s Moravian Cemetery that he was laid to rest in 1877.26

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after all, spent over a dozen years (1884–1897) creating a monument to her brother Robert and the regiment he led, unquestionably one of his masterpieces (fig. 23). In the decades since Robert had been killed, their father, Francis, had done much to keep his memory alive and to alter and shape public perception of the Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts, which had otherwise suffered ignominiously.31 A former fugitive slave and later successful Boston caterer, Joshua B. Smith, who had worked for the Shaw family, pushed a number of leading Massachusetts politicians to commission a monument to Robert and the Fifty-Fourth to install on the Boston Common, which ultimately fell to Saint-Gaudens to complete.32 By his own admission, Saint-Gaudens struggled mightily with the execution of his concept, while those who had commissioned the monument hoped to live to see it unveiled.33 By all accounts the wait was worth it, even for the notoriously self-critical sculptor. By contrast, another portrait statue by Saint-Gaudens of the founder of Sailor’s Snug Harbor, Robert Richard Randall, that stands in Staten Island remained unloved by the artist to the end: “the less said about the ‘Randall,’” he quipped, “the better.”34

While the Shaw family accepted the call of duty and suffered tragically as a result, Samuel Mackenzie Elliott and his sons risked their lives as well. A few years before the war started, in 1858, Elliott had helped organize and lead the Seventy-Ninth Regiment Highlanders (fig. 24), originally a social club militia comprised primarily of Scotsmen, like Elliott, and named after the famed Queen’s Own Cameron Highlanders, who distinguished themselves during the Crimean War. When Lincoln’s call to arms came, Lt. Col. Elliott and his Highlanders were mustered into service for three years on May 29, 1861. Following their march to Washington (fig. 25), they were attached to the Army of Northeastern Virginia and saw action in the First Battle of Bull Run on July 21, 1861 (fig. 26). The Highlanders sustained some of the greatest number of casualties during the

34. Quoted in Greenhal 1985: 125.
battle, including Elliott, whose horse was killed during the charge and collapsed on the doctor, seriously injuring his back. Elliott never fully recovered, and walked with a limp for the rest of his life. Because of these injuries, Elliott did not see combat again, but spent the rest of the war, and a considerable sum of his own fortune, over $30,000, the equivalent of nearly a million dollars today, helping to raise and outfit additional soldiers for the Seventy-Ninth. At the end of the war only 130 original members of the Seventy-Ninth were left alive out of the 872 that had marched down Broadway on their way to Washington in 1861. The Seventy-Ninth was disbanded in 1876, a short time after Elliott died.

The Post-War Years

Elliott returned to his ophthalmic practice after the war, and to his real estate ventures. But post-war Staten Island was rapidly changing as continued development encroached on the old estates and the Island's idyllic shoreline gave way to railroads, wharves, and industry. While many of the antebellum abolitionists remained and directed their energies to other reforms, welcoming new members to their community and churches, the war had scarred them all emotionally, if not physically. Samuel Mackenzie Elliott’s death in 1875 at age 64 came too soon; the doctor was eulogized by his neighbor Samuel Mackenzie.

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Executive Committee of Staten Island. 1858. Facts and documents bearing upon the legal and moral questions connected with the recent destruction of the quarantine buildings on Staten Island. New York: Wm. C. Bryant & Co.

Figure 24: Decoration of the Veteran Association of the Seventy-Ninth Regiment Highlanders, New York Volunteers (1909-999:143, gift of Joseph Stewart) 90 × 40 mm (image reduced).


Figure 26: Lithograph of the First Battle of Bull Run by Kurz & Allison, 1869 (Library of Congress).

...marks Preservation Committee.
Thomas Elder’s Letters Confirm His Crotchety Reputation

David Hill

Feisty, irreverent, opinionated, outspoken, short-tempered, sharp-tongued, self-righteous, caustic—these and other coarse adjectives have long been associated with the coin dealer Thomas Elder (facing page). Some of these traits were on display for all to see in the magazines (figs. 1–2) and catalogs he published in the first half of the 20th century. He could be frank with his opinions and wouldn’t hesitate to wield the power of print if you crossed him. Say you had the winning bid at one of his auctions and refused to accept the lots—Elder might publicly call you out as a deadbeat. Even the esteemed London dealer A. H. Baldwin got the Elder treatment. Convinced he was getting the runaround on a Mormon gold quarter eagle, Elder wrote to Baldwin, apparently issuing his standard threat to take the matter public. “Take whatever action you like,” Baldwin wrote back, though he warned him against accusations of “trickery or lying.” Elder went ahead and published the dispute, printing parts of Baldwin’s letter in his Elder Monthly.²

Print wasn’t Elder’s only weapon. He had another medium at his disposal, and he deployed it during his most famous battle, which had to do with the American Numismatic Association’s presidential election of 1909. He and budding numismatic impresario Farran Zerbe had discussed the presidency a couple of years earlier when Zerbe had wanted the position for himself. Over dinner, Elder let Zerbe know that he wouldn’t support him because Zerbe was a coin dealer and it therefore went against his own business interests.³ Nevertheless, Zerbe won, and he served from 1908 to 1910. With his time in office coming to an end, Zerbe and Elder ended up backing separate candidates in the next race. This time the two men fought bitterly, viciously attacking each other in print. But Elder took it a step further, issuing scathing satirical tokens, one of which depicted Zerbe as a jackass (fig. 3).⁴

While you can get a taste of Elder’s personality from his publications, for the full meal you must turn to his correspondence. There are pockets of Elder’s letters here and there in the ANS Archives, and some of it certainly confirms the negative aspects of his reputation. But it should be noted that Elder earned a great deal of respect over the course of his career, for conducting his business with sincerity and honesty, and for his impressive numismatic accomplishments—the nearly 300 auctions he conducted over his lifetime (as many as 17 in a single year) and his prodigious output of tokens and medals, examples of which fill 13 trays in the ANS vault (figs. 4–5).

Elder joined the ANS in 1904, the year he moved from Pittsburgh to New York City to jumpstart his infant coin business.⁵ He wasn’t what you would call an active

1. John Lupia notes the published use of several of these in his biographical sketch on Elder at numismaticmall.com. Others come from sources referenced below.
3. Elder to A. R. Frey, July 16, 1907, Howland Wood Personal Correspondence.
8. Ibid., 1330.
member. Beginning in 1906, he did serve, along with Lincoln cent designer Victor David Brenner, on a committee that hoped to influence President Theodore Roosevelt as he turned his attention to redesigning the nation’s coinage, though their work appears to have had little to no demonstrable effect. (He served on a similar committee at the American Numismatic Association.) Years later he was part of another committee on US coins. This one had him proposing the creation of some “numismatic propaganda” that could be sent to the presidents of all of America’s colleges, part of an effort to stimulate what he perceived as the nation’s dying interest in coins. This also seems to have come to nothing. When the ANS tried to put him on its membership committee—“without my knowledge,” he said—he declined.

Elder and the ANS did maintain a pleasant, mutually beneficial relationship for a while, though. He had gotten US Mint curator Louis T. Comparette interested in becoming an ANS member, and the Society saw this as quite a potential acquisition. And from time to time, the ANS turned to him to sell duplicate books from the library. He also handled the coin collections of deceased employees Nelson Pehrson and Bauman Belden, both of whose families were said to really need the money. (Of course, this wasn’t charity work. Elder made sure he got his 25–30% commissions.) Sometimes the ANS sent other business his way, referring individuals with coins to sell to him, though Elder complained that the Society had been unrealistically inflating expectations by showing these people the latest US Coin Values and Lists published by C. H. Shinkle.

By the 1920s, Elder’s letters were growing more accusatory and threatening. He complained that nobody at the ANS was answering his letters. He said he had suffered “more than one affront” by its staff. The Society was neglecting American numismatics, he said, and he told curator Howland Wood that he was “sorry to see the established policy of doing things to offend well known collectors is still in effect at the ANS building.” In fact, he told Wood, if he wasn’t a dealer (and materially benefited, presumably, from his association with the Society), he would certainly resign. Wood brushed him off. He had no control over these matters, he said, and besides, he had “enough troubles.”

Wood and Elder had known each other since Wood’s pre-ANS days, when he was active in the American Numismatic Association. In 1909, Wood’s satirical take on the seal Brenner had designed for the New York Numismatic Club had appeared in Elder’s Numismatic Philistine (figs. 6–7). Their early correspondence contains a good deal of joshing, with Wood teasing Elder, who owned land in upstate New York, about “hoeing potatoes on [his] country estate” and for bragging about fishing—going on about “trout, sunfish, catfish, bass, chubs and minnows”—while failing to mention his own wife. For a while, despite the occasional outburst, Wood remained friendly with “Tom.” This began to change in 1924, as Elder’s letters grew ever more strident. He had somehow become convinced the ANS was playing favorites, referring consigners to other dealers and cutting him out of the action. “Few people ever say your society sent them to me with collections of any

9. ANS Minutes, November 19, 1906.
11. Elder to Edward Newell, June 27, 1921, General Correspondence.
14. Elder to and from Sydney Noe, November 2, 1917, and November 5, 1917; Elder to and from Sydney Noe, May 7, 1932, and May 6, 1932, General Correspondence.
15. Elder to Bauman Belden, May 24, 1913, General Correspondence.
16. Elder to and from Howland Wood, April 4 and 5, 1922, Howland Wood Curator Correspondence.
17. For more on Howland Wood as an illustrator, see David Hill, “The Talented Mr. Wood,” November 9, 2015, on the ANS blog PocketChange.
18. Howland Wood to Elder, September 1, 1922, Howland Wood Curator Correspondence.
importance,” he told Wood.24 “If I am being discriminated against I mean to discover it.”25

Things boiled over in 1925 when the coin collection of W. W. C. Wilson of Canada went not to Elder but to rival Wayte Raymond (fig. 8). In his fury, Elder went straight at Wood, accusing him of meeting with Wilson’s widow, keeping secrets about it,26 and spreading lies. “Your miserable little underhand efforts won’t profit you anything,” he said. “Don’t be such a hypocrite to come in here posing as a friend of mine.”27 This episode would mark a break with Wood, and letters from Elder to the ANS no longer came addressed to him. But Wood took the high road when it came to this particular correspondence he gives freer rein to his non-numismatic opinions.

He had many thoughts about the state of the world in the 1940s. One thing he didn’t like was mineworkers striking during the war. He wasn’t unsympathetic to the “dirty job of a coal miner,” he said.28 On the contrary, he had first-hand experience, having “picked slag from slag heaps along the Ohio River to buy me and my small brother clothes.”29 But with a war on and everyone making sacrifices, there was simply no excuse. “Strikers should be put on the spot and into the firing line,” he said.30 He was opposed to any correspondent a year later, but he unhesitantly recommended him as a dealer, praising his honesty and business practices.31 Nearly a decade after this dustup, Elder was once again accusing the ANS of favoritism, issuing his old familiar threat to take the matter public: “We will show you up if you don’t write us and promise to do this again.”32 Howland Wood’s response was the equivalent of a weary sigh: “I am really at a loss to know what you are driving at. . . . We have no idea what you mean.”33

In 1940, Elder issued his final catalog, a mail bid sale, but he continued to sell coins. The ANS has some correspondence from the 1940s between Elder and large cent collector Leonard Holland, who was buying coins from him. In the letters from this period, Elder constantly refers to his age—“I’m in my 70th year, towards the end”—along with his ailments, and those of his wife Ruth, who was 12 years younger than him. (“She is nice looking and gets around OK,” he told Holland, “and looks better than she really is.”34 She would have been about 58 at the time.) Nevertheless, in the letters he appears sharp as ever, sounding little different from previous decades, though in this particular correspondence he gives freer rein to his non-numismatic opinions.

Elder was the quintessential curmudgeon—unfortunately, given some of his uglier rants, just not the loveable kind. He had spent thirty-four years running his shops in New York City and had grown to despise it. It was a “rotten place,” he said, “filled with Jews and foreigners.”35 In fact these were often the same people, the “refugee Jew dealers in coins” ruining the business there.36 Individual dealers were also slandered. B. Max Mehl, for example, was accused of pulling a “jewtrick.”37 As is often the case with this kind of bigotry, Elder allowed for exceptions. “You can’t trust any of them,” he told Holland, but “I found [Barney] Blue-stone the best of the lot. I do biz with him.”38 John Kleeberg addresses anti-Semitism in the book An Island of Civility (2009), a history of the New York Numismatic Club, co-written with David Alexander. According to Kleeberg, by mid-century the club had developed a reputation for anti-Semitism. But in its earliest years it was ecumenical, welcoming people of diverse backgrounds—accepting Irish-Catholic, Chinese, and African-American members. Elder was a principle founder of the club, having called for the first organizational meeting in late 1908, so there is some irony in the fact that Victor David Brenner, a Jew (and championed by Elder as a good choice to design coins39), was also a founding member. Kleeberg attributes the club’s openness in the early years to the influence of Frank Higgins, its first president, who espoused a particular racial worldview that had him respecting all peoples.40 (Of course, Elder didn’t have much good to say about B. Max Mehl.35)

20. Elder to Howland Wood, November 17, 1906, General Curator Correspondence.
25. Elder to and from Howland Wood, November 15, 1934.
26. Elder to Leonard Holland, letter beginning, “You have bought generously…”
27. Elder to Leonard Holland, letter beginning, “I got you off my best 1793 cent…”
28. Elder to Leonard Holland, letter beginning, “I got the ok for the other two cents…”
29. Elder to Leonard Holland, letter beginning, “I can’t tell much…”
30. Elder to Leonard Holland, February 16 [no year].
31. Elder to Leonard Holland, letter beginning, “I can’t tell much…”
32. Elder to Leonard Holland, letter beginning, “I got you off my best 1793 cent…”
33. Elder to Leonard Holland, letter beginning, “Thanks for your letter…”
34. Elder to Leonard Holland, July 9, 1945.
35. Elder to Leonard Holland, letter beginning, “I got you off my best 1793 cent…”
36. Elder to Bauman Belden, November 17, 1906, General Curator Correspondence.
Higgins in his letters, calling him “grouchy and complaining as ever” and noting his tendency to cause “more trouble than a bag of monkeys.”

I’m sorry to say that the American Numismatic Society wasn’t always entirely Higgins-like in its practices. A while back I stumbled onto a letter that Howland Wood wrote to Numismatist editor Frank Duffield in 1937. The ANS was looking to replace the recently deceased assistant curator Robert Robertson. They wanted someone young and enthusiastic about coins. There was another important stipulation, Wood said: “We do not want anyone Jewish.”

In the 1940s, Elder was extremely pessimistic when he contemplated the future, envisioning a post-war America in near total economic collapse, with people basically scrounging for food. One big problem was going to be all of the women in the workforce. “Women aren’t going back into private life,” he warned. “They are going to be all of the women in the workforce. “Women aren’t going back into private life,” he warned. “They are going to be all of the women in the workforce.”

Eventually, the inevitable happened, and Holland and Elder’s relationship hit a rough patch. When Holland kept records of the Saint-Gaudens coins, the famed eagle and double eagle. "The farm is the answer," Elder told him. "Get your living, raise healthy children there and never live in a city." He repeated recommendations Elder’s ANA coin design committee had elicited from a Roosevelt aide following the production of the Saint-Gaudens coins, the famed eagle and double eagle.

Elder’s role in all of this had become so inflated that Wood referred to him as “more trouble than a bag of monkeys.”

Ruth Elder died in 1954. Elder couldn’t have been more wrong in his prognosticating about the postwar economy—which experienced, in fact, unprecedented growth. But he may have been right to worry about Holland, who ran into financial difficulties in the 1950s. Holland had used his large cent collection as collateral for a construction project, and when the deal fell apart, the bank foreclosed, and his coins were sold through an obscure auctioneer. Because the sale was not widely advertised, they brought low prices, some selling for only about a third of what they should have.

47. Ruth Elder to Leonard Holland, November 1, 1952.
48. Ruth Elder to the Hollands, letter beginning, “I just rec’d special del…”
50. Ruth Elder to the Hollands, letter beginning, “I just rec’d special del…”
52. Kolbe & Fanning, Important Numismatic Literature 125 (June 7, 2012), lot 866. The catalog of the Holland coins was Pennypacker Auction Centre, May 8–9, 1999.
New Acquisitions

In December 2018 the American Numismatic Society received a gift of great importance: 5,843 Spanish Islamic and related coins from the collection of past ANS president and benefactor Archer M. Huntington. In 1950, George C. Miles, a curator at the ANS and specialist in Islamic coinage, authored a book on a portion of this collection entitled The Coinage of the Umayyads of Spain. Stephen Album, a world authority on Islamic coinage, recently examined the entire collection, as he is in the process of completing the 4th edition of his standing reference, the Checklist of Islamic Coins. He provides the following observations after his five-day review: “I was astonished to encounter hundreds of coins that have never appeared in the market for at least half a century, comprising a magnificently preserved collection that could not be reproduced in modern times. In addition to dozens of types unknown to me, there are hundreds of coins in this collection which I knew existed, according to older publications, but had never physically seen.”

Nearly all of this collection was originally assembled by highly knowledgeable scholar/collectors in Spain during the nineteenth century, such as Pascual de Gayangos (fig.1) and Francisco Codera. Archer Huntington built his collection by acquiring the collections of these earlier collectors, before and around the time of his foundation of the Hispanic Society of America in 1904. The collection contains a wide variety of Spanish Islamic coins, above all the Spanish Umayyads (fig. 2) and the Mulkī al-Tawā‘if (figs. 3–4), the “party kings” who struck a bewildering variety of coins in more than twenty local kingdoms. These coins provide a unique source of historical information for much that did not fully survive in contemporary chronicles (figs. 5–6). The acquisition of this collection by the ANS and its eventual inclusion in MANTIS and other forms of publication will surely encourage further academic study of the coinage of Islamic Spain and related series.

An important addition to our Greek Department came from long-time collector and ANS member Alan Leventen. He generously donated this group of coins of the Holy Land in appreciation of the assistance given to him by the Society and former ANS Chief Curator William Metcalf in his research for his graduate thesis. Mr. Leventen’s gift includes well preserved and scarce Roman provincial coins from Philipopolis, Bostra, Rabbathmoba, Dium, Petra, Hippos, Esbus, Philadelphia, Capitoliis, and Gadara. Highlights among these coins are a bronze coin of Gadara depicting the Three Graces (fig. 7), symbolic to Gadara; two rare coins of Capitoliis, one with a reverse bust of Alexander the Great (fig. 8) (involved in the foundation myths of the city) and another with the local city goddess standing in a temple (fig. 9); a rare issue of Bostra of Otacilia Severa (fig. 10); and several early quasi-autonomous coins from Hippos (fig. 11), Philadelphia (figs. 12–13), and Gadara (fig. 14). Two coins of Damascus feature scarce reverses involving a sacrificial scene to a local deity (fig. 15) and a symbolic “meeting” between emperor Philip I and the local goddess of Damascus (fig. 16). Finally we also received a nice quality 4-prutah coin of Matthias Antigonus (fig. 17).

A fine addition to the Medals Department is an interesting group of three medals donated by Nigel Greig. The most recent of these is a cast bronze portrait medal honoring François Cardinal de La Rochefoucauld (1558–1645), an important leader of the French Counter-Reformation (fig. 18). The son of Charles de La Rochefoucauld, Count of Randan, who was killed at the Siege of Rouen in 1562, his career progressed rapidly due to royal favor. At the age of 10 he became Vicar-General to Cardinal Louis de Lorraine de Guise in the abbey of Tournus, and by the age of 17 he was the abbot, while studying at the Jesuit Collège de Clermont in Paris. He was appointed Bishop of Clermont in 1585 and was raised to the rank of Cardinal in 1607. In 1622 he became president of the Conseil du Roi (King’s Council), in which position he was succeeded by the famous Cardinal Richelieu.

Another interesting medal from Mr. Greig’s donation is a cast bronze medal of 1620 portraying the French royal couple, with a youthful bust of King Louis XIII (b. 1601–1663) in armor, ruff, and sash on the obverse and a bust of Queen Anne of Austria (1601–1666)

Figure 12: Roman Provincial. Syria. Philadelphia. Bronze coin, quasi-autonomous period. (ANS 2019.7.19, gift of Alan C. Leventen) 16 mm.


Figure 14: Roman Provincial. Syria. Gadara. Bronze coin, quasi-autonomous period. (ANS 2019.7.25, gift of Alan C. Leventen) 20 mm.

Figure 15: Roman Provincial. Syria. Damascus. Bronze coin, Philip I. (ANS 2019.7.17, gift of Alan C. Leventen) 29 mm.

Figure 16: Roman Provincial. Syria. Damascus. Bronze coin, Philip I. (ANS 2019.7.18, gift of Alan C. Leventen) 29 mm.

Figure 17: Roman Provincial. Judaea. Bronze coin, Mattathias Antigonus, Jerusalem mint, 40–37 BCE. (ANS 2019.7.31, gift of Alan C. Leventen) 19 mm.

Figure 18: France. Cast bronze medal commemorating Cardinal François de La Rochefoucauld (1558–1645). (ANS 2019.6.1, gift of Nigel Greig) 70 mm.

Figure 19: France. Cast bronze medal portraying King Louis XIII (b. 1601–1643) and Queen Anne of Austria (1601–1666), by Guillaume Dupré (1579–1640), 1620. (ANS 2019.6.2, gift of Nigel Greig) 58 mm.

Figure 20: Belgium. Cast silver medal portraying Jean II, seigneur of Argenteau-Hermalle (1535–1590), by Jacob Jonghelinck (1530–1606), 1586. (ANS 2019.6.3, gift of Nigel Greig) 47 mm.

Figure 21: France. Bronze medal commemorating Georges Clemenceau (1841–1929), by Ferdinand Gilbault (1837–1926). (ANS 2019.1.1, gift of W. Stephen Jeffrey) 95 mm.
Mr. Greg’s donation also enhanced our collection of Low Countries medals with a cast silver piece from 1586 portraying a lord from Limbourg, Jean II d’Argenteau, seigneur of Argenteau-Hermalle (1535–1590) (fig. 20). The obverse of the medal depicts Argenteau wearing a ruff; the reverse bears the image of Hope standing with an anchor and a crane to her side, a symbol of vigilance. The artist of this portrait medal was Jacob Jonghelinck (1530–1606), a Brabantine sculptor, medalist, and seal engraver from Antwerp. Jonghelinck worked in Italy under Leone Leoni; he then moved to Brussels in 1562, where he came to the attention of Cardinal Granvelle, who appointed him sculptor to the Burgundian court in 1563. As a sculptor and medalist, Jonghelinck was strongly influenced by contemporary Italian Mannerist style.

We were pleased to receive from W. Stephen Jeffrey an interesting medal issued in France following World War I (fig. 21). It is a medal dedicated to Georges Clemenceau (1841–1929), by Ferdinand Gilbault (1837–1926), a sculptor known for his medals of eminent figures of World War I. Clemenceau was a leader of the Radical Party who served as the Prime Minister of France from 1906 to 1909 and again from 1917 to 1920. For most of the final year of war, he led France and was acknowledged by the French people as Père la Victoire (Father of Victory). In 1919 Clemenceau presided over the Ver- sailles Peace Conference and became one of the major voices behind the Treaty.

Our holdings of British Art Medal Society medals have been expanded with an interesting new group of purchases. One of these is a cast bronze medal entitled Way Out (fig. 22) by Maya Graber (b. 1974), a sculptor and medalist working in Switzerland. She studied at the University of Fine Art Burg Giebichenstein in Germany. She is a member of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Medaillenkunst and FIDEM. Her work typically engages with political and poetical themes. In her BAMS medal, Way Out, Maya Graber shows her vision of Brexit as an endless staircase, where the British lion is walking up and the European bull is waiting to see what happens. The reverse quotes the French philosopher Blaise Pascal: “The universe is a circle whose center is everywhere, whose circumference is nowhere.”

Another piece in this BAMS acquisition is a cast bronze medal from 2018, Trophy Fish (fig. 23) by Duncan Walters (b. 1966). An experienced monumental stonemason, in 2013 he was awarded a place at Falmouth School of Art where he studied fine art. In his BAMS medal, Trophy Fish, Walters honors the humble sar- dine, celebrating its importance as a sustainable protein source for many generations in many countries, making it a real trophy fish.

An additional piece in our new BAMS purchase is another cast bronze medal from 2018, Grazing (fig. 24) by Zoe Pearce (b. 1994), a painter and medal maker from London. She graduated from Falmouth School of Art with a first class honors degree in 2016, and in the same year one of her medals was exhibited at FIDEM in Belgium. Pearce was chosen as BAMS New Medallist for 2016–17 and studied with Professor Bogomil Nikolov in Bulgaria and at the Royal Mint’s Engraving Department. In Grazing, Pearce portrays the limpet as a microcosmic representation of the sense of life in the landscape. On the obverse the medal shows a limpet on a rock face; the reverse has the pattern of marks that a limpet leaves as it feeds upon algae.

From BAMS the ANS also obtained the 2018 cast bronze medal Lost in the Odyssey (fig. 25). This interesting artwork was designed by Mashiko, a well-known medallic artist and long-time ANS Fellow. Born in Manchuria, she grew up in Kyoto, Japan, and moved to the United States in 1962. She has received numerous awards for her medallic artwork and small-scale sculptures and was the US delegate to FIDEM from 2008 to 2014. Based in New York, she is the founder and director of the Medialia...Rack and Hamper Gallery, which is focused on promoting contemporary medallary art. Her new BAMS medal, Lost in the Odyssey, depicts a tree with its branches and roots curling around the edge of the medal; a removable steel ball nestles in the hollow reverse. According to the artist’s statement about the design, “Life is from an unknown place appearing a little before dawn, wandering back to an unknown pathway just a little before dusk.”

We are also pleased to enhance our collection of the medals issued by the ANS with a previously unknown variant of the 1909 Hudson-Fulton medal, donated by ANS Fellow Vicken Yegparian (fig. 26). Designed by the famous sculptor and medalist Emil Fuchs, this medal was issued for the celebrations in New York and New Jersey in September–October 1909 that commemorated the 300th anniversary of Henry Hudson’s discovery of the river that bears his name as well as the 100th an- niversary of Robert Fulton’s commercial application of the steamboat. This medal was produced in large
quantities in several sizes and compositions, but the 2-inch size was hitherto unknown in bronze. Another gift of medals came from our long-time friend and Life Fellow Anthony J. Terranova. His latest donation is a group of three Heath Literary Awards, presented by the American Numismatic Association to Eric P. Newman (1911–2017). Established in 1949, the Heath Literary Award recognizes outstanding articles published during the previous twelve months in the ANA’s magazine The Numismatist. Eric Newman won this honorable award a remarkable 16 times. Terranova’s gift includes a bronze third-place award from 1966 with the obverse depicting a male figure raising a torch in his right hand and holding a scroll reading NUMISMATIC RESEARCH with his left arm (fig. 27). Two other examples, a silver first-place award from 1959 and a bronze fourth-place award from 1967, use a later design that has a female figure on the obverse, looking at a medal in her left hand and holding a stylus in her right hand (fig. 28). This gift is a meaningful remembrance of Eric P. Newman’s many contributions over the years as a numismatic researcher and educator.

Through a donation from our Trustee Mary N. Lannin the US Department received a proof gold 5 dollars, a proof silver 1 dollar, and a half-dollar set issued by the United States Mint in 2019, in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the first manned Moon landing by the United States space program leading up to the Moon landing. The obverse was designed by Sculptor-Engraver Phebe Hemphill, represents a male figure raising a torch in his right hand and holding a rope, and the United States are included in this reverse design (fig. 29). In addition to this gift Ms. Lannin also donated a 2019-W proof Lincoln cent. This is the first Lincoln cents struck at the West Point facility in more than 40 years and the first to bear the facility’s W mint mark.

Our long-time curatorial volunteer and ANS Fellow Frederic G. Withington generously donated a bronze example of a medal issued by the New York Numismatic Club commemorating the end of World War I (fig. 30). The obverse depicts soldiers preparing to board a ship bound for the front; this side was designed by medallist and artist Luigi Badia, portrays the post-war victory parade of New York City’s 77th Division. This image is based on an actual photograph from that day, which includes Color Sergeant Sing Lau Kee, the only Chinese-American to have been awarded the Distinguished Service Cross during World War I.

Current Exhibitions
At the end of January, the Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art at Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, opened an exhibition entitled Caravans of Gold, Fragments in Time: Art, Cargoes, and Exchange across Medieval Saharan Africa. This major exhibition explores the material legacy of the far-reaching artistic, cultural, economic, and intellectual exchanges that were stimulated by trade across the Sahara Desert in the medieval period and makes visible the formative role of West Africa in shaping our modern, global world. This exchange process was stimulated by West African gold, prized for its purity and used for minting currencies and adorning lavish works. Camel caravans making the journey southward across the Sahara transported glass vessels, glass beads, glazed ceramics, and luxury objects such as jewelry and textiles. ANS coins are an essential part of the exhibition, reflecting the way that West African gold was integrated into the global economy through centers of trade in Italy (figs. 31–32) and England (fig. 33). The ANS objects are seen alongside more than 250 other objects from numerous museums including finds from Mali, Morocco, and Nigeria, providing a new and sweeping view of the impact of trans-Saharan trade across regions. The Block Museum exhibition will travel to the Aga Khan Museum in Toronto (September 21, 2019–February 23, 2020) and then to the National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution (April 8–November 29, 2020).

The Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois, requested a long-term loan of a Roman coin of Constantius I as Caesar (293–305 CE) (fig. 34) for a newly renovated permanent exhibition at the Mary and Michael Jaharis Galleries of Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Art. Among the different sections in the new gallery is a display devoted to coin portraits from Roman Republican through Byzantine times. One part of the exhibit features the Roman Tetrarchy. At the end of the third century AD, the emperor Diocletian (284–305 CE) instituted many reforms to stabilize the Empire. He restructured the Roman government by establishing the Tetrarchy, a system in which rule over the massive Roman Empire was shared between four men. This vast territory was effectively divided in two parts, having a senior emperor with the title of Augustus and a subordinate with the title of Caesar in each half. The Art Institute has its own wonderful coins of the two Augusti, Diocletian and Maximian, as well as one of the Caesars, Galerius. The loan of the ANS coin of the other Caesar, Constantius Chlorus, completes the set of portraits of the four Roman tetrarchs on display (fig. 35).

In March the Metropolitan Museum of Art opened an exhibition entitled The World between Empires: Art and Identity in the Ancient Middle East. Over 190 works from museums in the Middle East, Europe, and the United States are included in this significant show, including thirteen coins from the ANS collection. (fig. 36). The exhibition presents a
new perspective on the art and culture of the Near East during the period of the Parthian and Roman struggle for regional control (ca. 100 BCE–250 CE) (figs. 37–38). The exhibition explores the cities and trading networks of southwestern Arabia, Nabataea, Judaea, Syria, and Mesopotamia, looking at how people expressed their diverse political and religious identities in architecture, stone and bronze sculptures, wall paintings, jewelry, coins, and terra cotta tesserae (figs. 39–40). The featured items represent great centers of trade, such as Dura-Europos, Petra, Baalbek, Palmyra, and Hatra, as well as specific regional traditions such as Jewish identity during a period of struggle with Roman rule (figs. 41–42). The exhibition also addresses the effects of recent military conflicts in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen on archaeological sites, monuments, and museums, including deliberate destruction and robbing.

Figure 30: United States. New York Numismatic Club. Bronze medal commemorating the centennial of the end of World War I, by Eugene Daub, Joel Iskowitz, and Luigi Badia, 2018. (ANS 2019.4.1, gift of Frederic G. Wight) 62 mm.

Figure 31: Italy. Republic of Genoa. Gold genovino, 1253–1339. (ANS 1985.27.1, purchase) 20 mm.

Figure 32: Italy. Republic of Florence. Gold florin, 1348–1367. (ANS 1954.237.233, bequest of Herbert E. Ives) 21 mm.

Figure 33: Great Britain. Gold 5 guineas, James II, 1685–1688. (ANS 1957.172.19, bequest of Hoyt Miller) 38 mm.

Figure 34: Roman Empire. Silver coin, Constantius I as Caesar (AD 293–305), Siscia mint. (ANS 1956.102.54, purchase) 18 mm.
A Significant Milestone

One of the most meaningful forms of support for the ANS comes from members who consistently maintain their membership in the Society year in and year out. We are honored by this show of unwavering dedication and gratefully acknowledge those who have reached the significant milestones of 25 years, 30 years, 40 years, and—most remarkably—half a decade of continuous membership in the ANS.

With deep appreciation, we thank our 50-year anniversary members:

Mr. Stephen Album
Mr. James R. Briggs
Mr. Arthur Ray Doumaux Jr.
Mr. Dennis Gill
Mr. Lawrence S. Goldberg
Dr. R. Craig Kammerer
Mr. George F. Kolbe
Mr. Donald J. Orth
Mr. Harvey Stack
Mr. Michael R. Zagorin

We would also like to acknowledge those devoted members who have reached the following milestones:

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CONCORDIA DISCIPLINARUM: ESSAYS ON ANCIENT COINAGE, HISTORY, AND ARCHAEOLOGY IN HONOR OF WILLIAM E. METCALF

EDITED BY NATHAN T. ELKINS AND JANE DEROSE EVANS

William E. Metcalf was a prominent name in Roman and Byzantine numismatics. This volume of essays by former students and colleagues working in North America, Britain, and Europe, is an overdue tribute to a generous scholar. Metcalf’s interest in Roman coins—especially Roman Provincial coinage—has helped shape a generation of scholars, some of whom are represented in this volume.

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Concordia Disciplinarum: Essays on Ancient Coinage, History, and Archaeology in Honor of William E. Metcalf

Numismatic Studies No. 38

Published on Behalf of the American Numismatic Society

ISSN: 0517-404-x
ISBN: 978-0-89722-357-7

Printed in the United States of America

Published by Classical Numismatic Group

Printed by W. H. Allen & Sons Ltd., Lancashire, England

Published in association with the American Numismatic Society

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Numismatic Studies No. 38

Published on Behalf of the American Numismatic Society

ISSN: 0517-404-x
ISBN: 978-0-89722-357-7

Printed in the United States of America

Published in association with the American Numismatic Society

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**1609. TWELVE YEARS TRUCE CONCLUDED AT ANTWERP BETWEEN THE UNITED PROVINCES AND SPAIN AND THE TRIPLE ALLIANCE BETWEEN ENGLAND, FRANCE, AND THE UNITED PROVINCES.**

Oblv. Three conjoined hearts below Celestial clouds with the name of Jehovah in Hebrew.

Legend: 

\[ \text{SYNCTA CORDA FIDELVM} \] (The hearts of the faithful united)

Rev. Crowned fleur-de-lis and rose above Belgic Lion.

Legend: 

\[ \text{CONTRA VIM TRANNORVM} \] 1609 (Against the violence of Tyrants)

vLII 50.A.M.I.I., 16525; JMP 1953.92; TMP 1901 page 130; silver, 50.06 grams, 51.5 mm.

Medals like this were struck in gold by order of the separate States, City governments or the States General and attached to a chain they served mostly as rewards or gifts to military commanders or foreign dignitaries respectively.

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