

ALEXANDRIA COIN CLUB NEWS

Volume 21, Number 11

December, 2013



New to our club? Welcome!

We meet on the **3rd Wednesday each month**, at the Lee Center, 1108 Jefferson St. in Alexandria, VA. It's just off US 1 inside the Beltway, and there's plenty of free parking. Meetings are held in the Gold Room. Check the lobby bulletin board just to be sure! The bourse opens at 7:00 p.m. and members may display, trade, and sell coins during this time. Our auction starts about 8:10 p.m. Members and visitors can bid during the bourse and auction. Members are encouraged to submit coins to be included in future auctions – contact **Auction Chair Robin Borum** at Robin.Borum@verizon.net or 703-395-3269.

Next Meeting: December 20!

President:	Boots Barnes
Vice Pres/ANA Rep:	Frank Falgiano
Secretary:	Doug DeBarr
Treasurer:	Tom DeYoung
Auction Chair:	Robin Borum
Auctioneers:	Frank Falgiano Joel Cherry
ESNA Rep:	OPEN
MWNA Rep:	Jeff Saah
Microscope Coord:	Robert Mitchell
Refreshments Coordinators:	Doug DeBarr
YN Director:	Pete Locke
Webmaster:	Mike Atkins
Newsletter Editor:	Roger Moran

Tentative Meeting Agenda:

- 7:00pm Bourse opens – please help yourself to refreshments!
- 8:00pm Meeting begins: welcome, announcements, discussions, speakers.
- 8:10pm Auction begins. Door prize drawing and raffle held at intermission.
- 9:30pm Settlement of auction accounts, submission of coins for next auction, adjournment.

In this issue:

Annual Holiday Party	2
Coins in “A Christmas Carol”	2
ACC Dealers	7
2014 Alexandria Coin Show	8
December Auction List	9

Alexandria Coin Club

PO Box 1233 Alexandria, VA 22314

www.alexandriacoinclub.com

Member: ANA, ESNA, VNA

Annual Holiday Party

All members are reminded of our annual Holiday Party to be held December 20, and are reminded to bring their store-bought pre-packaged treats to share with the membership. Rules of the Rec Center do not permit us to bring home-made items, however delectable.

From the pages of *The Numismatist*

A Christmas Carol

John M. Kleeberg

The timeless author conveyed his disregard for wealth and money through his characters and carefully crafted dialogue.

Charles Dickens' novella *A Christmas Carol*, first published in December 1843, enjoys undiminished popularity. Although Dickens reveled in the details of Christmas shopping, he skimmed on the details of monetary transactions. The reader is told about the scales, the twine and roller, the smell of tea and coffee, and the wicker shopping baskets, but never how much the items cost.

This omission was deliberate. Dickens disapproved of monetary transactions, relegating them to the world of the "old" Scrooge, that is, before the stingy character was transformed. The very items used to process monetary transactions, such as cash boxes, keys, padlocks, ledgers, deeds and heavy purses, become the chain that weighs down Marley's ghost. The most detailed monetary transaction in the book occurs when Joe, the old clothes and junk dealer, purchases the buttons, clothing, bed sheets and curtains that were plundered from Scrooge's corpse: "Joe, producing a flannel bag with money in it, told out [counted] their several gains upon the ground."

Money as a Metaphor

Coins in *A Christmas Carol* often serve as metaphors for something of little monetary value, like the American expressions "red cent" or "thin dime." Dickens refers to the farthing, penny, twopence and sixpence in this way. After Scrooge's transformation, he pledges to provide food and fuel for the poor and declares he will donate "not a farthing less." When Joe says that his offer is final, he explains, "If you asked me for another penny, and made it an open question, I'd repent of being so liberal and knock off half-a-crown." When the Cratchits drink to Scrooge's health, Tiny Tim "didn't care twopence for it."

Twopence were not coined for general circulation in 1843; the only ones struck were for special "Maundy" sets. This last expression does not refer to a specific coin, but is similar to the American phrase "Let me put in my two cents' worth," even though the last time the 2-cent

piece was coined for general circulation was in 1872.

In *A Christmas Carol*, the sixpence appears twice. Joe, again presenting a final offer, says “I wouldn’t give another sixpence, if I was to be boiled for not doing it.” And Mrs. Cratchit appears “brave in ribbons, which are cheap and make a goodly show for sixpence.”

Bob Cratchit’s Salary

Two coins in this story have significant value: the shilling and the half crown. In the book’s opening scene, Scrooge refers to “my clerk, with fifteen shillings a week.” Bob Cratchit receives this pay on Saturday, all in shilling coins: “Bob had but fifteen ‘Bob’ [slang for shilling] a week himself; he pocketed on Saturdays but fifteen copies of Christian name.” Since Cratchit was working six days a week, his salary comes out to a half crown per day. Scrooge refers to this daily rate when he suggests that if Cratchit wants to take Christmas off, it should be as an unpaid holiday. “If I was to stop half-a-crown for it, you’d think yourself ill used.”



Shilling of 1844

This 15-shilling wage was not, however, an accurate picture of the salaries paid to Victorian clerks, who were better compensated than that. At the North and South Wales Bank of Liverpool, a clerk starting out in 1854 received £60 a year (Cratchit made only £39 a year), and one’s salary rose with age. Cratchit, whose eldest daughter (Martha) was in her late teens, must have been about 40 years old. At the Sea Insurance Company of Liverpool in 1890 and 1895, the only employees making salaries of £40 or less were teenage apprentices. Everyone age 21 or older made at least £75 a year. In 1843 two private banks in the city, Prescott, Grote, Ames, Cave & Grote and Glyn, Hallifax, Mills & Company, paid their clerks an average annual salary of £119.

Another salary mentioned is that of Peter Cratchit, for whom his father, Bob, found a position as an apprentice, at 5 shillings, 6 pence a week. This was not unusually low for an apprentice; those in the weaving trades earned as little as 2 shillings, 9 pence.

A Generous Tip

When Scrooge sends a boy off to buy a gigantic turkey, he offers a generous tip: “Come back with the man, and I’ll give you a shilling. Come back with him in less than five minutes, and I’ll give you half-a-crown!” A half crown (2 shillings, 6 pence), the largest silver coin in general circulation, was a magnanimous gratuity in the Victorian period.

Another example in which a half crown is considered the appropriate amount for a tip appears in *The Young Visitors* [sic], written in 1890 by 9-year-old Daisy Ashford. This book raised the question of whether a footman should be compensated when he first handles a guest’s luggage:

I was right not to tip him[,] whispered Mr. Salteena. [The] thing to do is to leave 2/6 [2 shillings, 6 pence] on your dressing table when the stay is over. Does he find it[?] asked Ethel[,] who did not really know at all how to go on a visit. I believe [sic] so[,] replied Mr. Salteena. [A]nyway we can't help it if he does not.

Later in the story, Mr. Salteena "slipped 2/6 into the butlers open palm." This literary evidence indicates that, in 1890, as well as in 1843, a half crown was considered a respectable gratuity.

The Workhorse Shilling

Hoard evidence confirms Dickens' view of the circulating coinage of the time. The shilling was the workhorse of Victorian silver coinage, supplemented by the half crown and sixpences and, after 1849, by the florin (2 shillings). A hoard of 45 silver coins deposited in 1851 and found at Poringland in Norfolk, England, in 1969, comprised 16 sixpence, 28 shillings and a half crown. Another Victorian silver hoard discovered at Dunkerton in Somerset in 1958 contained a threepence, 88 sixpence, 38 shillings, 26 florins and 11 half crowns.

Fezziwig's Holiday Party

One of the scenes that the Ghost of Christmas Past recalls for Scrooge is the holiday party held by Scrooge's old boss, Fezziwig, when Scrooge was still an apprentice. Fezziwig's party cost £3 to £4; with 20 couples attending, this works out to between 1 shilling, 6 pence to 2 shillings per person, or 10 to 13 percent of a 15-shilling-a-week salary.

British office holiday parties in 2010 were estimated at £90 a head, which is 18 percent of the average weekly salary of £500. (Employers in the United States are more Scrooge-like as they spend about \$75 a head.) British employers are known to spend as much as £10,000 on a holiday party, and paying £4,000 for the bar bill is not unknown. One reason for the high costs is that modern offices have more employees. Also, the insistence on premium liquor brands makes them more expensive. Fezziwig, by contrast, controlled his costs by offering only "negus" (a mixed punch) and beer. Even the transformed Scrooge supplied only "a bowl of smoking bishop" (a hot, spiced-wine punch).

Dickens' Critique of the United States

The year before Dickens published *A Christmas Carol*, he toured the United States and disseminated his highly critical *American Notes for General Circulation*. His interpretation emphasized the comic through his description of foot traffic on New York City's Broadway: "Take care of the pigs. Two portly sows are trotting up behind this carriage, and a select party of half-a-dozen gentlemen hogs have just now turned the corner."

Dickens also highlighted the horrific by portraying New York City's watch-house in *The Tombs*, where people who had been arrested overnight were confined from 7 p.m. to 5 a.m., when the courts reopened. Occasionally, a person would die in this overnight lockup, where "he is half-eaten by the rats in an hour's time," wrote Dickens.

The poor economic conditions in the United States further darkened Dickens' picture of the country. The Hard Times period that began with the Panic of 1837 worsened during the 1840s. In 1841 both the Second Bank of the United States and the Morris Canal and Banking Company of New Jersey failed, and no fewer than eight states defaulted on their bonds during this time.

Dickens believed the headquarters of the Second Bank of the United States was a "tomb," a "catacomb" of lost money. In an April 24, 1842, letter from Sandusky, Ohio, he described the United States as a country experiencing a total monetary collapse:

Consider at your leisure the strange state of things in this country. It has no money; really no money. The bank paper won't pass; the newspapers are full of advertisements from tradesmen who sell by barter; and American gold is not to be had, or purchased. I bought sovereigns, English sovereigns, at first; but as I could get none of them at Cincinnati, I have had to purchase French gold; 20-franc pieces; with which I am traveling as if I were in Paris!

Dickens introduced his negative view of the United States in *A Christmas Carol*. When Scrooge is confused about whether it is midnight or noon, he checks and decides it is indeed night: "This was a great relief because 'three days after sight after this first of exchange pay to Mr. Ebenezer Scrooge or his order,' and so forth, would have become a mere United States' security if there were no days to count by." Two references to monetary instruments are found here. One is the bill of exchange payable to Scrooge that can be endorsed over to another payee. The second is the worthless paper of United States securities, such as the Planters' Bank bonds of the State of Mississippi, the bank notes of the Morris Canal and Banking Company, or the post notes of the Second Bank of the United States.

Dickens' jaundiced view of U.S. securities would have been echoed by many in London. The lead partner in the City of London investment bank Baring Brothers was Joshua Bates, a native Bostonian, who wrote in June 1842, "There never was a Country so disgraced in point of Credit as the United States of America, by the repudiation of some of the States & the inability of others to meet their engagements." The difficult economic times that the United States experienced (which Dickens had seen through his own eyes) and the dismal view that many English financiers held of the prospects for the U.S. economy, explain the contempt that Dickens expresses for "a mere United States' security."

Coins in the 1951 Movie Version

The best film treatment of *A Christmas Carol* is generally agreed to be the 1951 version starring Alastair Sim. The film adds two notable numismatic references to those of the novel. The halfpenny appears as another denomination when Scrooge asks the waiter for "More bread!" The waiter responds that it would be a "halfpenny extra," whereupon the miserly Scrooge decides to go without. The other numismatic instance transpires when Scrooge gives a coin to his charwoman, Mrs. Dilber, as a Christmas present, and she looks down in astonishment to see "A guinea!"

Guinea coins were no longer in circulation in 1843. From 1817 onward, the Royal Mint struck

sovereigns instead, and the new coinage rapidly replaced the old guineas. A hoard of gold coins deposited in 1822 or 1823 at Twyford near Winchester, England, and discovered in 1977, comprised 83 sovereigns and only 13 guineas and half guineas. Thus, six years after the Royal Mint began striking sovereigns, the sovereign coinage comprised more than 86 percent of the circulating gold coins.

Is this reference by Mrs. Dilber an anachronism? Surprisingly, no. In careless slang, the term “guinea” referred to sovereigns. Victorian writers often used the word to contrast an educated speaker, who used the proper term “sovereigns,” with a less-advantaged speaker, who used the word “guineas.”

Additional instances of this usage occur in the works of humorist Thomas Hood; in *The Mysteries of London* by George W.M. Reynolds; and in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, when a cabdriver informs Sherlock Holmes that his fare “offered me two guineas if I would do exactly what he wanted all day and ask no questions.” When the cab reaches Waterloo Station, “he paid up his two guineas, like a good one, and away he went into the station.” Thus, the term “guinea” could be used in careless slang to mean “sovereign,” as Mrs. Dilber does in the 1951 film.

Today, *A Christmas Carol* is a vivid depiction of life in Victorian England. Dickens used monetary references to contrast the tight-fisted Scrooge— a “squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner”—to the transformed Scrooge, who tips half crowns and donates so much to the poor that it would take a fundraiser’s breath away. Dickens’ monetary references are intermittent because he wants to de-emphasize commerce and emphasize the benevolence and joy of the season. Because of the vividness with which Dickens wrote, even the occasional references to Victorian fiscal customs remain especially valuable.



1844 Half Crown Reverse



Have a Question? Need Some Help?
Contact an ACC Dealer!

Robin Borum	Robin Borum Rare Coins	703-395-3269	rborum@verizon.net
Joel P. Cherry	MERCURY Numismatics	703-876-9450	joel.cherry@cox.net
Frank Falgiano	CEFCO Enterprises	703-491-1017	
Mike W. Hess	Classic Coins & Collectibles	703-330-3747	
J.W. Kennedy	Kennedy's Stamps and Coins	703-569-7300	
John Koeber	Butternut	703-802-0252	
John Manley	German Coins	202-546-5256	
Bob Mitchell	RKT Coins	703-268-5234	RKTcoins@cox.net
Mike Olson	MCO Consultants – Numismatics	703-644-5375	
Bob Patterson	Bob's Coins	703-490-1222	
Andy & Alynne Skrabalak	Angel Dee's Coins and Collectibles	703- 580-6969	www.angeldees.com
T.J. Shea	Penny Pincher Coins	703-383-1414	
John Sullivan	Cameo Coins and Collectibles	703-281-7053	camcoins@aol.com
George Watson	George A. Watson	703-843-7072	
Wayne Wilcox	Wayne's Coin & Currency	703-920-2385	
Jason Zeibel	Z&Z Coins	703-598-1340	



Drum Roll Please...

**Announcing:
The 2014 Alexandria Coin Show!**

**When? Saturday, February 8, 2014
9:00 am – 5:00 pm**

**Where? Springfield American Legion Post 176
6520 Amherst Avenue
Springfield, VA 22150**

**Who? Your contact is Boots Barnes
703-975-7029 (cell)
steven.barnes8@verizon.net**

Anything else?

It's free and open to the public! Door prizes will be awarded and there will be a special instruction period at 1:00 pm that's not to be missed!

Bring family! Bring Friends! Get your sweetie a love token!

December Auction Lots

#	Item	Description	Min Bid	Estimated Value
1	1c	1931-S VF30		110
2	25c	6pc,1877 Fr,1888-S AG,1895-O VG,1934-D,40-D,42-S all VF		108
3	50c	4pc, 1954-D VF,1956 VF,1958 EF,1962-D EF		34
4	\$1	1900 EF		36
5	\$1	1881-S in PCGS MS63 holder		65
6	Gold	2002 \$10 Proof Eagle in Mint box	450	525
7	Comm	1920 Pilgrim Half EF	25	70
8	Comm	1925 Lexington-Concord Half VF	25	65
9	25c	26pc, 1950-D to 1964-D in 2x2's, avg F to BU		160
10	50c	20pc roll, 1963-D UNC		360
11	1c	44pc in Whitman folder, 1909 to 1940-D, avg circ	10	15
12	1c	129pc in 2x2's, 1934 to 1963, avg circ		15
13	5c	42pc,17-Buffalo's 25-Jefferson's, 1917 to 1985-D avg circ		15
14	1c	22pc, 1887-1909, avg G or better	20	45
15	5c	9pc,1899-1912, avg G to VG		15
16	50c	1854-O G6	30	35
17	1c	1961 in NGC Proof 67RD holder	30	40
18	\$1	1994 Proof Silver Eagle in Mint box	70	125
19	Sets	1977,78,79,80 Uncirculated Mint Sets	15	37
20	1/2c	1851 VF	51	80
21	5c	1868 VF	26	40
22	5c	1848-O VG, 1849-O AG	36	50
23	5c	1850 AG, 1856 AG, 1861 G6	29	50
24	10c	1823/2 G	30	45
25	10c	1828 Curl Base 2, G	52	75
26	50c	1828 Sq Base 2, Sm 8's, Lg let rev, VF	120	150
27	50c	1831 EF	115	175
28	Comm	2pc, 1892 & 1893 Columbian Expo Halves, both EF	20	34
29	50c	1899 G6	13	20
30	50c	1916-D F15	100	130
31	50c	1917-S obv, F	70	200
32	50c	1921-S VG	45	75
33	50c	1921-D VG	275	400
34	50c	1936-D MS62	40	100
35	50c	6pc,1916,17,18,18-D,18-S,19-S; avg AG to VG	60	110
36	mixed	1943-P 5c BU,1945-S 5c BU.1966 & 2-1969 50c EF-AU		24
37	\$1	1971-S Eisenhower Proof Dollar 68 DCAM		22
38	50c	4pc, 1935, 1936, 1937, & 1938; avg F to VF		54
39	mixed	27pc,1964-1972 quarter,dime,nickel.cent, Proofs & SMS		40
40	50c	16pc, 1964,1970,2-1971,12-1972; all Proofs in 2x2's		90
41	\$1	1884-O MS63 DMPL	130	180
42	25c	1915-D in PCGS EF40 holder	55	70