



**NOTICE OF CHANGE IN MEETING DATE: OUR NEW MEETING DATE GOING FORWARD WILL BE THE THIRD MONDAY OF EACH MONTH.**

In this issue of our newsletter, we have another great article from Jeff Garrett on the subject of "An American in London." Our next meeting will be held on **Monday, October 20, 2014 at 6:30 PM in the Bronte Bistro at Joseph-Beth Booksellers in Lexington Green.** As a reminder, they have asked that we not bring in outside food or drink when attending the meetings. Instead, we are welcome to stop by the bar on the way into the meeting room to purchase soft drinks, coffee, or food items.

**DOOR PRIZE TO BE GIVEN AWAY!**

You won't want to miss this meeting! Jeff Garrett at Mid-American Rare Coin will be donating another door-prize item to be given away. Also, Jeff has a really nice deal for any club members who would like to become members of the American Numismatic Association. Jeff will pay half of the first year's basic membership dues for any club member who wants to become a new ANA member. Several of our club members have already taken Jeff up on this deal. The ANA offers members many outstanding benefits including discounted coin insurance, life insurance, library use, on-line delivery of The Numismatist Magazine, and a great convention each summer.

**AN AMERICAN IN LONDON**

**By Jeff Garrett**



Following our week in Paris, the next stop on our European vacation was the fabulous city of London. It is perhaps my favorite city in the world. I love the centuries of history, the historic landmarks, and that everyone speaks English. We had made plans to visit all of the typical tourist attractions that London has to offer. Summer is a very busy time in London. Seeing the sights can be quite difficult given the long lines at many of the popular attractions. The Garrett family operates on a tight schedule when on vacation as we want to see as much as possible. The rest of the family wanted to see the Tower of London, Buckingham Palace, Big Ben and the London Eye. I wanted to see the U.S coins at the British museum. A coin nerd till the end!

To see the U.S. coins at the British Museum requires an appointment and a reason for the visit. Luckily I had recently made an acquaintance that would make the visit possible. Last year the Smithsonian Numismatic Department had an opening for a new curator for the NNC. A large number of individuals applied for the job, and the final selection was a remarkable young lady named Ellen Feingold. You have to love that last name for a numismatic curator! Her credentials are quite impressive and include a PHD from Oxford and several years working in the numismatic department of the British Museum. She started her new position last month and I am very excited about the future of numismatics at the Smithsonian. Ellen set up an appointment at the British Museum for me to examine their holdings of United States coinage.

The subject of United States coinage in museum collections has fascinated me for years. There are lots of great coins or entire collections in museums around the world that very few collectors or even numismatic researchers know about. Many great early U.S. coins that exist today are the results of early travelers from around the world who had returned home with souvenirs of their visit to the United States. A spectacular array of superb coins was purchased in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century by Lord Saint Oswald. Most of these coins found their way back to the U.S. and are considered among the finest known for the issue. The Oswald collection contained multiple Gem 1794 Silver Dollars. Many of the best U.S. coins in the British Museum are from Sarah Sofia Banks, who had acquired the coins while visiting the United States. The coins were donated to the museum in 1818.



The British Museum has a wonderful numismatic facility with a large staff of full time employees and volunteers. Its collection of Ancient coins is considered among the finest in the world and I'm quite sure the British collection has no equal. I have worked closely with the staff of the NNC at the Smithsonian for many years. I thought it would be quite useful to see how other museums operate a numismatic department. Ellen Feingold will probably utilize much of her numismatic experience at the British Museum to make improvements at the NNC. Hopefully, one of those improvements would be to set up a research room like the one at the British Museum. The room has a long table with computers, lights, numismatic library and many other amenities to assist researchers. Coins are brought into the room in old fashioned coin cabinets. An assistant brings two

trays at a time for examination. The whole experience is quite civilized and secure.

As mentioned before, my primary interest was seeing the United States coinage in the British Museum collection. The coins are arranged by denomination on the trays. We started with Double Eagles and worked our way back. Most of the Double Eagles in the collection are unremarkable, except for an 1849 Mormon Twenty Dollar piece. There were a few other random Territorial issues and a dozen or so common date Saint Gaudens Double Eagles. The next tray provided a bit more excitement by starting with Choice Mint State 1795 Ten Dollar. The 1799 Ten Dollar was equally choice. The remainder of the Ten Dollar tray had very few highlights except for a beautiful EF 1851 Baldwin Ten Dollar. The Half Eagles in the collection are quite interesting. There are several choice early issues, highlighted by Proof 1836 example. Other amazing coins include what is probably the finest known 1869-S and 1871-S Half Eagles. The Quarter Eagle tray has one of the highlights of the U.S. coins in the collection. The 1796 With Stars Quarter Eagle is a true gem and one of the finest I have ever seen. The collection also has Proof 1836 Quarter Eagle, suggesting a complete 1836 Proof set at one time in the collection. The collection now misses several of the copper and silver coins to make a complete 1836 Proof Set. The most memorable gold dollar is a gem 1850.

The silver trays started with Silver Dollars and began with a bang. The 1794 is extremely well struck and is Mint State. The coin would probably grade MS or MS63, but would be debatable due to its toning. There are several other mint state Bust Dollars and just a few Seated Dollars. There are scattered highlights in the trays of Quarters, Dimes and Half Dimes, none that I would describe as earth shattering. The copper trays have a few amazing coins. The 1794 Half Cent and 1793 Wreath Cent are full Gems, with partial mint red. These were obviously picked up by Sarah Sofia Banks on her visit to the United States, and eventually donated to the museum.

This wrapped up our quick visit behind the scenes at the British Museum. We next spent some time in the regular numismatic exhibit. The exhibit is quite large and tells the story of money from ancient times until the present. It is very well done with many interesting displays. I thought there would be more great ancient coins on exhibit but later found them mixed in with Greek and Roman art in other parts of the museum. The exhibit obviously cost substantial sums and was interestingly funded by CITI Bank, an American corporation.

Our schedule in London only permitted one day of numismatic activity. The rest of the trip was spent seeing the sights and enjoying this great city. Next visit I will make time to see the coin shops in London. Wherever you travel in the world, adding a numismatic side trip can be a fascinating experience. One time in Canada I purchased a deal that paid for the vacation- but that story will have to wait for another article!