

# The Planchet

September 2017



Issue #581

## **THE NEXT MEETING WILL BE MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2017**

Meetings of the Indianapolis Coin Club are now held  
the **third** Monday of each month at the  
**Northside Knights of Columbus**  
**2100 E. 71st Street in Indianapolis, Indiana.**

The Meetings consist of a business session, an intermission, educational program,  
and a numismatic auction. Doors open at 6:00pm, meeting will begin at 7:00pm.

## **Indianapolis Coin Club Educational Program**

**This month's Educational Program will be:**

**I.C.C. Exhibit Night**

**Next Month's Meeting Date & Program:**

**Monday, October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2017, at 7 pm.**

**"The Barber Series—America's Ugly Duckling Quarter"  
by Jim Roehrdanz**

*For a complete list of 2017 Meeting Dates & Educational Programs see the last page of this newsletter.*

*More information can be found on the Indianapolis Coin Club's website at:*

<http://www.indianapoliscoinclub.org/>

## A Few Words From Your President

Our meeting on Monday, September 18, is our annual Exhibit Night, when many ICC members display a favorite subset of their numismatic collection. Our members have always presented excellent exhibits, and I am sure that we will have more of the same this year. Dig into your collection and see what you may find to show your fellow members. Some of your long-forgotten items may be exactly what will make for an informative and interesting display.

Work on the special edition of **The Planchet** continues. Chris Bower is working hard on this issue and I am sure it will be well received. The format will be a stapled 5-1/2 x 8-1/2 pamphlet that will be passed out free of charge to attendees at the I.S.N.A. show on October 27 and 28. Twelve (12) pages, consisting of pages 1 through 6 and the last 6 pages, will be in color. At least 12 black and white pages will make up the interior. We have already secured a few advertisers, which will hopefully offset most or all of the cost of production. If you would like to contribute an article, or have suggestions for other content, contact Chris with your thoughts, suggestions, ideas, and comments. The special edition will increase the visibility of the Club, and we hope that collectors who are unaware of the Club may want to come to our meetings and possibly join. The same goes for former members that have not renewed their membership for one reason or another.

The I.S.N.A. show will be held on Friday, October 27, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Saturday, October 28, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. At the time of this writing, we are unsure whether the ICC will be able to have a table at the show. If we have an answer in the affirmative, or it is still uncertain by our meeting on Monday, we will have a sign-up sheet for volunteers to man the table. We would like members to volunteer for 2 hours at a time if possible, but any amount of time would be appreciated. Please consider signing up if you are able.

We have a new member of our Membership Committee. Nick Conner, one of our young numismatists, joins Steve Howery (Membership Committee Chairman), Hellmut Richter, and Gary Conner. This is a new committee which was just recently established. As a YN, Nick will be a valuable asset to the committee, reaching out to potential YN's that may be interested in learning more about numismatics and inviting them to join the club. Adding new club members ensures that fresh perspectives and ideas will be available to all club members. If you have any ideas regarding the promotion of ICC membership or would like to serve on this committee, please speak to one of these committee members.

Please consider participating in Exhibition Night on Monday. Whether you plan to participate in Exhibition Night or not, consider bringing a spouse, significant other, friend, neighbor, or a collector that has second thoughts about attending our meetings. As always, I look forward to seeing you at our meeting on September 18.

*Jim Sukup*

## **War Nickels and Steel Cents: The Role of U.S. Coins in World War II**

by Andy Nahrwold

The following is text of the presentation I gave last to the club last month.

I'd like to begin with a brief apology to veterans or any members who lived through the war for any inaccuracies I may inadvertently present. I chose this topic because though I don't collect war nickels or steel cents specifically, I find the concept of them fascinating. The idea of making such a commitment to the war effort that a country would physically change the very metal that makes up its currency is to me astounding, and a story worth being told.

I'll start with a brief history of metal in US coins pre-war. In the US, copper has officially been used in coinage since 1793. Pure copper was used until the passing of the large cent. In 1856, the first flying eagle small cent was issued, consisting of 88% copper and 12% nickel. The composition changed to bronze in 1864, which was an alloy of 95% copper, 4% zinc and 1% tin. This same alloy was used through the beginning of WWII.

The nickel five cent piece was introduced in 1866, and was made of 75% copper and 25% nickel, weighing 5 grams. Other than during WWII, neither weight nor composition has changed to this day, despite at times being worth more in metal value than face value.

Leading up to the war, the US had been struggling to recover from the Depression. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 12/7/1941, the US started mass production of war materials. Factories of all kinds halted production of what they had been making – automobiles, appliances, toys, etc – and converted their shops to aid the war effort. This war effort was on a scale unprecedented. American industry provided almost 2/3 of all Allied military equipment during the war, including 297,000 aircraft, 193,000 artillery pieces, 86,000 tanks, 2,000,000 army trucks, 23 aircraft carriers, and thousands of ships.

There was an incredible demand for copper during the war. Every piece of rolling, floating, or flying equipment needed huge amounts of copper for wiring. Other uses included radios, pipes, and normal non-war uses. One of the biggest needs was for shell casings, from small arms to artillery shells. Copper jackets on bullets were needed to keep from fouling gun barrels. Literally millions of tons of copper was used.

The Chase Brass & Copper Company alone made more than 50,000,000 cartridge cases and mortar shells, and more than a billion small caliber bullets. They eventually produced components used in the atomic bomb. The American Brass Company made more than 2 billion pounds of brass rods, sheets, and tubes during the war. In 1943 alone, the US consumed 2,078,000 short tons of copper. Copper mines in Arizona thrived during this time.

Nickel was also in high demand. Advancements in the combustion engine in the 1930's kept nickel-steel demands high. Nickel alloys had the ability to resist failure at high temperatures, such as those caused by high rotational speeds in aircraft and in engines. The B-29 Superfortress, for example, used thousands of pounds of nickel alloys for such uses as cooling units, fastening devices, engine parts, exhaust systems, and control assemblies for guns.

Nickel alloy parts were also known to withstand the corrosive effects of seawater, so it was used in hulls, propeller shafting, gas & water tanks, and valve & pump parts. Lastly, nickel hardened armor was used for tanks, nickel alloys for anti-aircraft guns, and even lightweight but tough portable bridges.

During the war, the vast majority of Allied nickel came from Canada, from such places as the Sudbury Nickel Mine. There, workers in 1943 worked 56 hours per week with no overtime pay, making 51¢/hour for surface work, 61¢/hour for underground work, 71¢/hour for miners, and 78¢/hour for first class trades. From 1939 to 1945, International Nickel Company of Canada delivered to the allied countries 1.5 billion pounds of nickel and 1.75 billion pounds of copper. Their work was deemed so vital to the war effort that Canadian Radio advertisements, sponsored by the International Nickel Company of Canada, often played. The text of one from 1942 is as follows:

“That cheer of the crew is partially for you, Mr. Miner, Mr. Smelter or Refinery Worker. It’s also for the nickel that makes the steel in the hulls of those ships stronger, for the nickel that gives the boilers the ability to stand the extra pounds of pressure. For the guns aboard that are stronger, more accurate, more reliable, thanks to the nickel that’s in them. It’s for the copper that goes into the electrical apparatus, it’s for the hundreds of tons of metal you are turning out for every branch of the armed forces. Yes sire, yours is a mighty important job these days!”

So with all the need for nickel and copper, the US had to do something. On March 27, 1942 Congress passed a law changing composition of the nickel coin. The thought was to make it 50% copper and 50% silver, but multiple issues were raised. Most notably, the metal nickel gave the coin an electrical resistance that was easily detected by coin operated machines. You have to remember that at this time, subway turnstiles used nickels, as did vending machines in factories and elsewhere. Thus, it was necessary to find an alloy that worked in these machines. Eventually, it was found that an alloy of 56% copper, 35% silver, and 9% manganese worked, and on October 8, 1942 production resumed. To differentiate the new alloy, a large mintmark was placed on the reverse of the coin over Monticello’s dome, similar to the use of arrows on Liberty Seated coins.

Also of note was that the Philadelphia mintmark was used for the first time on nickels. It seems relevant to mention that now, considering that the cent has the first P mintmark this year as well. A short side note of the use of silver in the nickel coin: while silver was deemed a strategic war material, primarily through shortages of aluminum, tin, and copper, the government already had large stockpiles of silver bullion. Thus, it made sense to use it for additional coins, although towards the end of the war 15,000 tons was sent to Oak Ridge, Tennessee to make magnets used to separate uranium.

With respect to copper cents and the military's demand for copper, production of cents was drastically reduced in July of 1942. By December, it had stopped completely. The mint commissioned several manufacturing companies to experiment with materials other than copper and tin, and some things considered for use in the cent were different color plastics, zinc, fiber, and even tempered glass! However, it was decided to use low carbon steel coated with a quarter of a thousandth inch of zinc to inhibit rust.

This new cent would weigh 42.4 grains, as opposed to the bronze cent which weighed 48 grains. Production of the steel cent started February 12, 1943, which was also Lincoln's birthday.

During 1943, over a billion steel cents were minted. However, they went over like a lead balloon. Many people felt they were ugly, they spotted easily, some machines wouldn't accept them, and people confused them with dimes. On January 1, 1944 the mint went back to using 95% copper again.

However, to save face and to further emphasize patriotism, the mint obtained scrap ammunition shells, which were refined and had zinc added, thus becoming brass. This mix was used to produce cents from 1944 through 1947, at which time the composition went back to bronze - 95% copper, 4% zinc, and 1% tin.

It is thought that many of the cents minted in 1942 were also brass. At the time, the rationale was that removing tin would have saved 100,000 pounds of tin annually. The 40,000 pounds of tin that the mint already had on hand at the time was immediately turned over to defense industries.

The bottom line is that, as noted, over 1 billion steel cents were minted during the war. About 900,000,000 war nickels were minted. The contribution to the war effort is estimated to be 2.5 million pounds of nickel metal, a few hundred thousand pounds of tin, and about 5 million pounds of copper. Some might think this was a drop in the bucket, but the symbolism alone of an entire country sacrificing their coinage played a powerful role in encouraging the population.

*One thing I wondered while doing research was why the government didn't have a scrap drive for existing coins, since it seems there were scrap drives for nearly every other kind of strategic war material – even rags! What I learned is that for almost every war, demand for hard currency (coins) skyrockets. This had been the case since our country was founded. I also found it fascinating to research vital strategic raw materials and where they were mainly produced. As stated, Canada had pretty much cornered the market in nickel and manganese, while tungsten came from Burma. Germany fought for the Petsamo Nickel Mine, which was captured from Finland in 1940 and used to further the German war effort.*

**Minutes of the Indianapolis Coin Club Meeting for August 21, 2017 were not available at the time of publishing. They will be published in the October newsletter.**

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Officers and Board Members:**

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The Monthly Planchet is the official publication of the Indianapolis Coin Club. It is published monthly in Indianapolis, Indiana. All inquiries should be sent to ICC, P.O. Box 2897, Indianapolis, Indiana, 46206.

# Treasurer's Report

2017

<b>RECEIPTS:</b>	Aug.
Dues - Regular @ \$20.00 ea.	
Dues - Junior @ \$5.00 ea.	
Advertising - Planchet @ \$35.00 ea.	
Fifty/Fifty Drawing:	\$ 41.00
Donations / Auction Lot Sales:	
ICC Library Book Sold (est):	
Auction Lots Sheets @ \$1.00 per Sheet:	\$ 12.00
Amazon.com	
Newsletter Postage Fee:	
<b>TOTAL RECEIPTS:</b>	<hr/> \$ 53.00

<b>DISBURSEMENTS:</b>	Aug.
Dues - ANA:	
Insurance - Liability:	\$ 300.00
Insurance - Treasurer's Bond:	
Mail Box Rental:	
Secretary/Treasurer Office Supplies:	
- Postage:	
K of C Meeting Room Rent:	\$ 100.00
Exhibitors Nights Prizes:	
Library Purchases:	
Website Maintenance	
Newsletter:	
- Printing/Supplies:	\$ 300.00
- Postage:	
<b>TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS:</b>	<hr/> \$ 700.00

**NET INFLOW / OUTFLOW:** \$ (647.00)

<b>ICC CHECKBOOK:</b>	Aug.
Starting Balance:	\$ 3,386.48
<b>CD's Mature:</b>	
Cash/Checks in:	\$ 53.00
Checks Out:	\$ 700.00
Ending Balance:	<hr/> \$ 2,739.48
Net Gain or Loss for the Month:	\$ (647.00)

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# **Indianapolis Coin Club**

## ***2017 Meeting Dates & Educational Programs***

- January 16, 2017** - 'Indiana's 2016 Bicentennial Celebration' - by Jeff Bercovitz  
*\*Prize sponsor: Jeff Bercovitz*
- February 20, 2017** - 'How Counterfeiters Evade Security Features of Paper Money'  
- by Joseph E. Boling  
*\*Prize sponsor: Joseph E. Boling*
- March 20, 2017** - 'Large Cents' - by Sam Shafer  
*\*Prize sponsor: Sam Shafer*
- April 17, 2017** - 'Easter Numismatics: Maundy Coinage' - by Donn Wray  
*\*Prize sponsor: Donn Wray*
- May 15, 2017** - '1776' - by Chris Bower - by Chris Bower  
*\*Prize sponsor: Chris Bower*
- June 19, 2017** - 'The Ultimate Mercury Dime' - by Vinton Dove  
*\*Prize sponsor: Michael White*
- July 17, 2017** - 'The Crowns of Scotland' - by Paul Vaughn  
*\*Prize sponsor: Paul Vaughn*
- August 21, 2017** - 'War Nickels and Steel Cents: The Role of U.S. Coins in WW II'  
- by Andy Nahrwold  
*\*Prize sponsor: Andy Nahrwold*
- September 18, 2017** - I.C.C. Exhibit Night  
*\*Prize sponsor: Bob Bettcher*
- October 16, 2017** - 'The Barber Series—America's Ugly Duckling Quarter'  
- by Jim Roehrdanz  
*\*Prize sponsor: Jim Roehrdanz*
- November 20, 2017** - 'Annual State of the Hobby Address' -by Mark Eberhardt  
*\*Prize sponsor: Mark Eberhardt*
- Tuesday, December 5, 2017** – NO MEETING - I.C.C. Holiday Banquet

\*For 2017 we are continuing the 'Attendance Prize' drawing at each monthly meeting as an added incentive for all I.C.C. members to attend as many meetings as possible and to encourage new membership. Everyone attending each regular monthly meeting will receive a prize ticket when they arrive at the meeting and sign in at the greeting table. The prize each month will be a 90% silver U.S. Half Dollar (or equivalent or greater 90% silver content coin) The I.C.C. Board members and officers as well as several I.C.C. members chose to act as sponsors and donate the monthly prizes rather than funding them from our budget. You'll find the monthly prize sponsor listed below each monthly meeting date above. You'll just have to show up to see what you may win!

*Please keep this in mind each month; regardless of who is giving the monthly program and/or the topic, we owe it to that person and the membership to **remain quiet and pay attention** during the program. It's important that we respect the knowledge that is being shared with us as well as the time and effort the speaker is donating to our club.  
The same rules should apply to our monthly auctions; **please remain quiet and pay attention.**  
Thank you.*