

“The Bulletin” March, 1998

President's Message

We have had a good response from the members with many mailing in their meeting survey cards. This survey is intended to determine if we could simplify our annual meeting schedule by standardizing on a particular night of the month for all the months of the year. Well, the results are in and your Executive hears the majority of members when they say, “Don't change anything!” So, we'll continue to meet mainly on the 4th Tuesday with special scheduling for June, July, August and December.

There is a Member's Auction Night in the planning stages for the April meeting. Look over your collection for duplicates and unwanted items and plan to contribute. We're looking for at least 50 lots in this auction.

Remember the ONA Convention coming up April 18/19 and the draw ticket sales. Please bring ticket stubs and money for the books you have sold to the next meeting to be turned over to Harvey Farrow.

Need to reach the President? Phone calls are welcome at **416-745-3067** (leave a voice mail message if you can't get through in person) and e-mail may be sent to petchp@ican.net.

Maintain the Right

The next meeting of the North York Coin Club will be held on **Tuesday, March 24, 1998**, at the Edithvale Community Centre, 7 Edithvale Drive.



We are pleased to have Mr. Chris Boyer scheduled to be with us for the evening. The motto of the RCMP, above, foreshadows his topic which is “Numismatic Connections With the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.” Chris has written on this subject in the numismatic press and brings with him a personal perspective on the service. He is chairman of the Youth Committee for the CNA and President of the Waterloo Coin Society. This promises to be a timely talk, given the RCMP 125th Anniversary Commemorative Dollar being produced this year.

Coming Events

7th Annual Cambridge Coin Club Show March 28, 9am-5pm at the Cambridge Newfoundland Club, 1500 Dunbar Road. Free admission. Contact L.R. (Verne) Shaull, (519) 621-3810 Ext. 253.

ONA Annual Convention April 18, 10am-6pm and 19, 10am-4pm sponsored by the City of Ottawa Coin Club at the Citadel Hotel, 101 Lyon St. N. Admission \$2 per day per adult. Contact Graham Neale, (613) 521-2117

Hamilton Coin Club Spring Show April 18, 9am-4pm at the Royal Canadian Legion, Barton St. E. (across from Centre Mall). Admission \$1. Contact Nancy Kanerva, (905) 608-0568

Peterborough Coin Club Show May 2, 9am-5pm at Portage Place, 1154 Chemong Rd. Free admission. Contact: Evelyn Robinson, (705) 745-5050

Windsor Coin Club Show May 3, 10am-4:30pm at the Caboto Club, 2175 Parent Ave. \$1 admission, free parking, hourly draws, displays. Contact: Ron Binder, (519) 254-6855

North York Coin Club Annual Show October 3, 9am-3pm at the Edithvale Community Centre. 25 bourse tables. Free admission, parking and hourly draws. Contact: Ron Zelk (416) 633-4383 Ext. 222.

***Next Meeting:
March 24***

Meeting News from the February 24 Meeting

The 426th meeting of the NYCC was held on Tuesday, February 24, 1998 at the Edithvale Community Centre, 7 Edithvale Dr. Willowdale.

The President, Paul Petch opened the meeting at 8:00 p.m. and welcomed 23 members and 5 guests

The Secretary thanked Bob Porter for taking last month's minutes in her absence and then read his minutes which were accepted by the Chair. Lucille then advised members that Fred Jewett may be in failing health but he was certainly mentally *with it* and would appreciate any calls or visits to Riverdale Hospital (461-8251).

The On Time Attendance Draw was

won by Albert Kasman who was present to receive the \$8. pot. We're back to \$2. next month.

Al Bliman announced the passing of Larry Becker, long time North York dealer and a past member of this Club on February 20, 1998.

The Mint Box was passed to two juniors.

The Chair reminded the Executive of its next meeting on March 11th. He is also seeking the assistance of all members to promote our next show featuring 25 dealers and had on hand special show fliers for distribution. He also encouraged members to sell ONA raffle tickets from which we make some money.

Torex Show Report — Dick Dunn reported a specimen of Playing Card Money, estimated to sell for what was thought to be a highly over-priced \$6,000., actually sold for \$14,000. Rick Craig said token & medals were moderately priced and decimals are still down. Rick also said the Token Collectors club are arranging to have more regular meetings. Roger Fox reported the Canadian Tire Money Group had a good meeting.

At this, our Anniversary. meeting, the following long standing members were recognized. Fifteen Year Certificates recognizing contributions to the Club were presented to Ron Zelk and Sam Snider. Carl Anderson, Paul Johnson and Basil Latham received gold lifetime membership cards for 25 years of continuous membership. Sam and Carl were absent so theirs will be forwarded by mail.

Rick Craig, as moderator for the evening, explained the format for the Coin Fair and introduced the members and dealers who set up tables in order to show and answer questions on their areas of special interest. The club is

much indebted to the following who so willingly gave of their time and efforts:

- **Basil Latham** who had an amazing collection of error coins and paper money.
- **Dick Dunn** highlighted his table with special Canadian paper money and cheques.
- **Roger Fox**, always enthusiastic, had a display of Canadian Tire Money as well as a huge display of other Canadian Tire memorabilia. It is surprising his wife hasn't pitched out those old motor oil cans!
- **Rick Craig** really enjoyed discussing the beautiful classical Greek coins that he collected for his wife as well as his collection of the Kings of Macedonia including Alexander the Great and his Generals.
- **Del Murchison** had a fun time explaining his interesting collection of Odds & Curious money.
- **Brian See** always has on hand a collection of fascinating World, Ancient, Medieval and Canadian coins which he is willing to talk about at any time.
- **Bob Porter** specializes in paper money and, like Brian, is happy to share his numismatic knowledge.

For our Coffee Break special thanks go to Ted Boxall for ordering and delivering a delicious Anniversary Cake, to Roger Fox for making the coffee and to Harvey Farrow for providing the other necessities. The cake was served by Lucille Colson with the assistance of Al Bliman.

The auction was run by Bob Porter and the Lucky Draw was called by Al Bliman. The draw winners were: Leslie Kuretsky(2), Norman G. Gordon(2), Norm Belsten(2), Harvey Farrow(2), Avram Zak, Dick Dunn and Russ Brown. Many thanks to Brian See and May Bunnett for their auction donations and Basil Latham for serving as runner.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.40 p.m.

Question of the Month

One of the most distinguished areas of North West Mounted Police service was in the Yukon. A N.W.M.P. detachment was in place at Fort Constantine in 1895 and under the firm leadership of Sam Steele they kept order during the gold rush. In the gold boom towns, where inflation went wild and money for circulation was a problem, bags of gold dust served some miners very well, but there were some banks present from those earliest days too.

Our March question of the month asks you to name those banks and to identify the highly collectible issues for which they were responsible.

The February question pointed out that the year 1998 marks 140 years of decimal coins in Canada, but challenged readers to name the North American event which took place one year earlier which helped to consolidate decimal coinage. See the article on page 4, "Foreign Coins In the United States", for the answer.

A NUMISMATIC HORROR STORY by Al Bliman

In this, our fourth and final installment of this series, we take on the most difficult of our subjects:

Fantasy Coins

The subject of fantasy coins is a difficult one to categorize. Fantasy coins are not counterfeit, nor in any way altered. They are not meant to deliberately deceive or mislead people into thinking they are something they are not, except in one key regard—the marketing strategy sometimes used to sell them.

First, let us define our terms. When I use the term *fantasy coin* I refer to the proliferation of “non-circulating legal tender” coins sold all over the world, sometimes with undue emphasis on their investment value. Production of these coins is done not to provide coinage of the realm or even collectors’ specimens of legitimate coinage, but purely to move a product which may make a profit for the issuer. Large advertising campaigns, plush cases, lots of descriptive literature printed on glossy paper and often individual serial numbers are associated with these products. You would be hard-pressed to find another situation in which *coin collecting* is so far removed from *numismatics*.

Now, with all that being said, an alert buyer, being completely aware of what it is they are purchasing, could feel true and genuine satisfaction in becoming the owner of a fantasy coin. That is because the addition of such a piece to their collection could be in keeping with their collecting strategies. Many collectors are interested in particular topics or themes and aggressively seek out collectibles which “tie in” with their strategy. This is a good thing.

It is not a good thing when a buyer believes they are investing in a desirable

rarity which will appreciate in value for later resale or, worse still, buys on impulse with no collecting strategy at all. Fantasy coin manufacturers have included the Franklin Mint, the Pobjoy



McIntosh: Truth or Fantasy?

In November, 1997, the Pobjoy Mint offered, in one brochure for the Christmas season, the following items (I choose this mint merely because the pamphlet is at hand, the others are the same):

- Peter Rabbit Coins
- The Peacock Crown Coin
- Una & The Lion Gold Sovereigns
- Isle of Man Explorer Crowns
- Heroic Campaigns of WW II Series
- The Sterling Silver Christmas Series
- Gandhi 50th Anniversary
- Golden Wedding Anniversary of Queen Elizabeth II
- Flower Fairies series
- Gold Wedding Ring Coin
- The Last Voyage of Britannia Coin
- A Queen's Birthday Coin
- A series of Classical Heads (Cleopatra, etc.)
- Commodore Nelson
- Year of the Ox
- The Lost World series
- Bosnia's Thoroughbred Horse Coin
- Isle of Man Cat Coins
- Royal Dog series
- Gibraltar Wonder Coins
- Cultures of the World series
- History of the Cat
- The Tudor Age
- A Peony-flower coin
- Millennium 2000 Coin
- Gold Angel Watch
- Lion and the Unicorn
- Kon-Tiki 50th Anniversary
- New Euro Coin
- Isle of Man Tourist Trophy Races
- Sierra Leone Wedding Coin
- Gibraltar Mosque Coin
- Princess Diana
- More Cat Coins
- 100th Anniversary of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee
- The Gold Christmas Angel, and others...

I'm sure you get the idea!

Mint and, in more recent years, the U.S. Mint and others including, I am sorry to say, our own Royal Canadian Mint. The theme is fairly constant: a limited issue that sounds small in comparison to mod-

ern coin mintages. When this small mintage is combined with a precious metal content such as silver, gold or platinum the image of an upscale collectible is created. In the first instance, there are far fewer steady buyers of these coins or medals than there are users of circulating coinage. The seemingly small numbers made are, in reality, more than enough to meet demand. So much so that the after-market is all but non-existent. In the case of the second marketing ploy—precious metal content—there may be so little actual silver or gold in the piece relative to its selling price that commodity prices would have to go up many times over to make the bullion value meet the issue price.

The question is: isn't our own Royal Canadian Mint moving dangerously close to this style of opportunistic commercialism when it commemorates such manufactured events as the McIntosh Apple or ventures into the field of custom privy marks for its bullion coins?

If I have dwelt too much on the investment aspect of these items (I have difficulty calling them coins) it is because I am suggesting that you should be aware of marketing campaigns in which this motivation is promoted. Make no mistake, these are quality products with beautiful artwork and proof finishes. If these factors appeal to you over all others as a collector then these are valid and attractive objects for you to collect. However, if resale is of importance to you, then be warned that in too many cases bullion value is all that dealers will offer—and we have already described the low real metal content normally present which will limit your return.

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Odd and Curious Monies of Early Canada by Robert Obojski

A detailed study of odd and curious money of early Canada would fill many pages; thus, in that respect it is the purpose of this article to give readers a brief glimpse into this fascinating area of Canadian numismatics.

The original currency of the Indian tribes of Canada was the wampum, which consists of a string of shell beads made out of the shells of clams. In addition to its monetary use, wampum was also used as an ornament, as means of conveying messages of importance, as a token of friendship, as a record of historical events and as a pledge at the conclusion of treaties.

Any wampum belts which served such purposes had usually a sentimental value that disqualified them from serving as a medium of exchange. It is only loose beads or strings, not belts, that were used for monetary purposes. The strings were measured by the fathom and were used extensively as a medium of exchange not only in trade among the Indians themselves, but also in trade with the whites.

According to Paul Einzig in his monumental study "Primitive Money In Its Ethnological, Historical and Economic Aspects" (London, England, 1948),

wampum strings were also used for payment for special services, for instance to performers at Indian feasts. To some extent they served as a standard of value. White and purple shells had different values. The Iroquois estimated their wealth by the number of beads they possessed.

The quantity and value of wampum was necessarily affected by the contact with whites. As a result of the introduction of iron tools, the output increased a hundredfold. The natives of the eastern coast of Canada who were primarily affected by this inflation flooded the tribes residing further inland with wampum beads. Early in the 19th century, fur traders introduced faked porcelain beads, and, as a result the monetary use of wampum became reduced to absurdity.

Professor Einzig has pointed out that shells of other kinds were also used as currency in Canada. The Nootka, before adopting blankets as their currency, used small shells from the coast bays. In the 1870's, they were still used by some of the more remote tribes.

Shell money was used to a large extent by the maritime tribes of British Columbia for payment of fines and blood money. Among the Haida, mur-

der was settled with the relatives of the victim by the payment of large sums of shell money. Among the Karok outraged husbands were placated with shell money at about the rate that would be paid for murder. Bride money, too was paid in the form of shells. No marriage was legal and binding unless preceded by the payment of shell money.

French Canada

Under French rule, coins in Canada were very scarce, and furs and grain were extensively used as currency. Trade was carried on for a time by means of negotiable notes payable in furs, grain or farm produce.

Already before the advent of European immigrants, skins of various animals, especially beavers, were used as money by natives. Beaver skins owed this use, to some extent, to religious associations. The beaver was regarded as a sacred animal by many Indian tribes. There prevailed a curious and, to the civilized mind, somewhat perplexing tradition according to which the hunter was able to kill the beaver only with the animals' tacit consent, or at any rate, its forgiveness, which could only be earned by the observation of solemn rites. These rites entailed burying those remains for which he had no use as either food or currency.

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Foreign Coins In The United States by Michael Marotta

Until February 21, 1857, if you sold a horse and the buyer paid you in Mexican silver or German gold, you had to accept it as legal tender. And most people were only too glad to be paid in any kind of hard money.

In the United States, until 1857, there just were not enough federal coins to support all the trade and commerce that was going on. Coins from Mexico, Peru, England and other countries circulated as legal tender along side American coins.

Bankers and merchants relied on booklets that showed pictures of foreign coins. These booklets also gave the market values of the coins. In the early 1800s, banks in Virginia, Tennessee, New Jersey, Illinois and Ohio issued paper money that could be redeemed in Spanish reales. These banknotes had pictures of the coins, so you would know what was promised even if you couldn't read.

The legal tender law of 1857 removed the legal status of foreign coins. How-

ever, Mexican silver dollars were still generally accepted throughout the western United States and British gold remained welcome in the industrial northeast. For one thing, the US Civil War created a currency crisis. Lincoln's paper dollars drove precious metals from circulation. But after the Civil War, the nation recovered and no longer needed to rely on foreign coins. Today, the situation has reversed, with the American dollar the currency of choice for international transactions.

*A.N.A. Money Talks,
Transcript No. 1407
February 24, 1998*

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Skins of animals were extensively used as a store of value. Professor Einzig indicates there is also ample evidence in the accounts of the Hudson's Bay Company and elsewhere to show the extent to which they were used as a medium of exchange. Everything was sold for "made beaver" which was the currency of the country towards the middle of the 19th century.

A century and more ago when an Indian wanted a rifle, the rifle was stood on end and the Indians laid furs flat on the ground until they were heaped to the top of the gun barrel; then the Indian took the rifle worth possibly fifty dollars and the Hudson's Bay Company took the furs worth from a hundred to a thousand dollars. Maple sugar was used as currency in Nova Scotia. As late as 1846 the practice of issuing promissory notes payable in timber, country produce and other special articles, prevailed to a great extent in Nova Sco-

tia.

Newfoundland

Dried codfish were widely used along certain parts of the Newfoundland coast during the 19th century. In the *Regulation on Fisheries in the Terra Nova* issued on August 18, 1825, fish played the part of official money which served for the payment of wages and of procuring all that the fishers desired and could obtain.

An article appeared in the "Westminster Review" of March, 1889, which states, to that day, on the northeast coast of Newfoundland, cod alone was currency.

Odd and curious money of early Canada constitutes one of the most exciting facets of the country's monetary history with more and more collectors being attracted to this phase of the hobby.

Examples of early Canadian odd and curious money may be seen at such public numismatic museums as the Chase Manhattan Bank collection in New York City, the Smithsonian at Washington, DC, the National Bank of Detroit collection, and at the Bank of Montreal's newly-opened Money Museum.

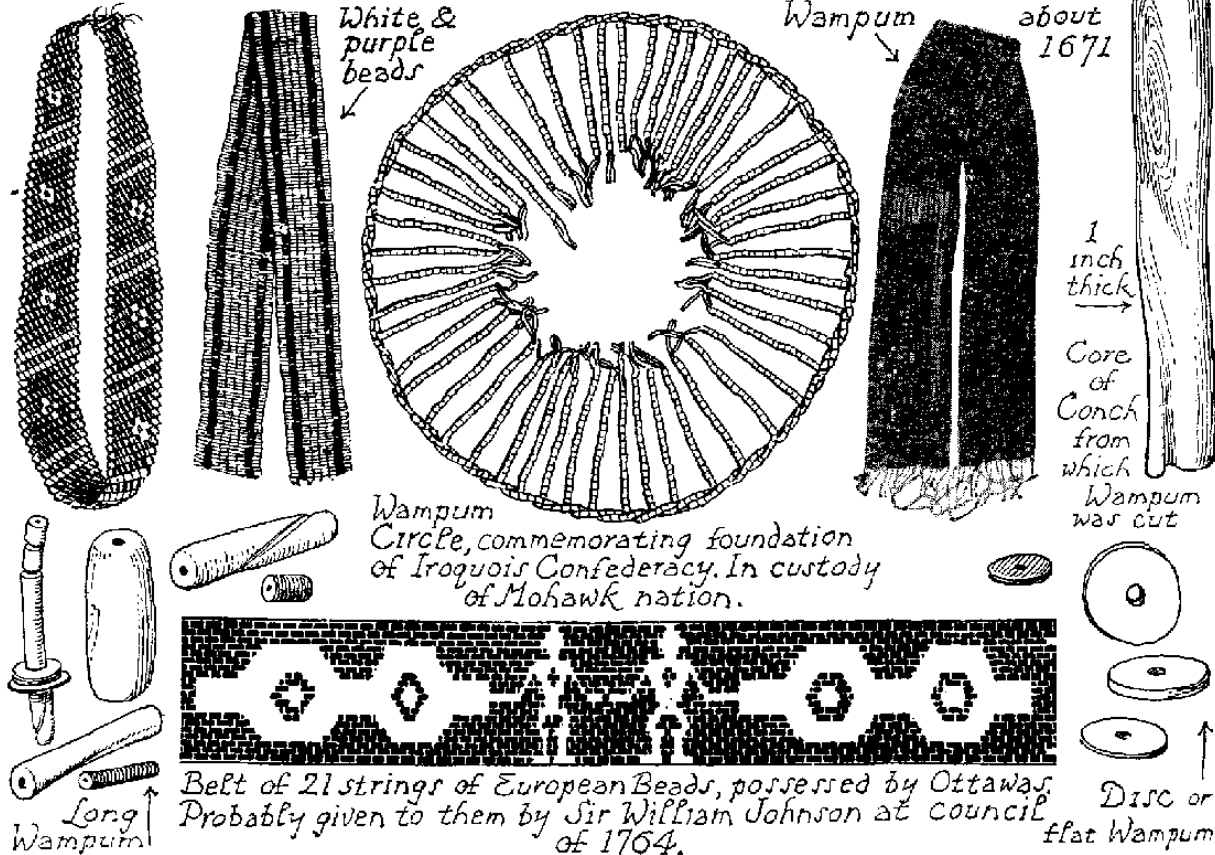
Other Primitive Monies

Rare furs of the sea otter were said to have the standard of value and medium of exchange among the Haida Indians of British Columbia in the 18th and early 19th centuries, until they were superseded by the trade blanket.

During the 19th century a fictitious currency developed in western Canada, the unit being a "skin," but no particular skin. The unit was usually equal to a half dollar. A beaver was worth ten such imaginary skins and a fine silver fox hide 300, a muskrat hide was worth one-

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WAMPUM & BEAD BELTS



White & purple beads

Peace Belt, made of Wampum about 1671

1 inch thick

Core of Conch from which Wampum was cut

Wampum Circle, commemorating foundation of Iroquois Confederacy. In custody of Mohawk nation.

Long Wampum

Belt of 21 strings of European Beads, possessed by Ottawas. Probably given to them by Sir William Johnson at council of 1764.

Disc or flat Wampum

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tenth of a skin, etc.

Spirits came to be widely accepted as a means of payment. At Fort Edmonton, rum was a favorite medium of exchange. Slaves were used as a monetary unit for large transactions on the Pacific Coast and they became a recognized form of wealth. Copper shields, too, were used as a store of value, but not as a medium of exchange.

Paul Einzig maintains that as a result of contact with whites, blankets had gradually taken the place of furs and wampum as the monetary unit of the Indians. The unit with the Kwakiutl Indians of Vancouver Island was a cheap white woolen blanket valued at fifty cents. These blankets formed the means of exchange and everything was paid for in blankets, or in objects the value of which was measured by blankets. Above all, blankets served as a standard or deferred payments. An extensive and elaborate credit system was developed in many Indian communities in Western Canada, all based on debts in blankets.

Einzig stated: "Interest was charged according to the kindness of the lender and the credit of the borrower. As a rule a hundred per cent was charged for a year." This credit system was closely related to the system of competitive gift exchanges best known under its Indian name of "Potlatch." Potlatch is a Chinook word (there are equivalent terms in the vocabulary of other Indian tribes) and means "gift." Its meaning has "elastic string attached to it, so that the gift will come back with interest."

Franz Boas and John R. McLean, two distinguished sociologists, have made detailed studies of the potlatch system. Following is a brief account of their findings.

Potlatch

Until it was prohibited by the Canadian Government, potlatch constituted a most important function, affecting fundamentally the economic, political and social system of the Indians. In substance it amounted to the ceremonial distribution of gifts on the under-

standing that the recipients have to return larger gifts (usually at least double of the value received) on the next occasion.

It was the ambition of Indians to be able to distribute the largest possible number of blankets. Their social standing and political power depended on being able to outshine their rivals within the tribe and in other tribes in this respect. To that end, many Indians spent years of hard toil, living in poverty, denying themselves the necessities of life, in order that they might be able to save a sufficient number of blankets to hold an impressive potlatch. If the amount of blankets thus saved at considerable sacrifice did not suffice then they borrowed more, right to the limit of their credit

One of the Vancouver Island chiefs once gave an immense potlatch to 2,500 guests, lasting over a month, and sent his guests home with gifts that exhausted the wealth he accumulated during the five previous years. He was sure, however, of recovering what he spent, with a hundred per cent profit.

The copper shields mentioned previously also changed hands on the occasion of the festivities. They were bought and sold frequently, and their sentimental value increased with every transaction. The higher the rank of the purchaser, the larger number of blankets he had to pay for the coppers. It has been suggested that these coppers may be regarded as the equivalent of large banknotes, worth thousands of blankets. Their sole function was to play a part at the ceremonial exchanges. Many of them had names of their own and had no fixed value.

Under the system of potlatch, a rich man, who had a large number of accumulated blankets, was in a position to loan out his property to others at ruinous rates of interest; as the recipient of the loan might be called upon at any time to repay the amount with accrued interest, the rate of interest worked out at times as high as two hundred per cent.

In his book "Potlatch and Totem" (London, England, 1935), W. M. Halliday said: "Gradually the privilege began to be abused and distorted until it resembled a huge octopus which held all customs and habits of the Indians in its embrace. It was a particularly wasteful and destructive system and created ill-feeling, jealousy, and in most cases great poverty, and it was only after having considered the matter from every angle and for a long time that the Government of Canada passed a Statute forbidding it."

Professor Einzig, however, pointed out that there was another side to the story. He said: "The Canadian government's action in outlawing Potlatch met with criticism on the part of more than one ethnologist. They held the view that the system was a necessary evil, at least until the Indians had reached a sufficiently advanced stage to discard it. It was these competitive exchanges which had provided practically the only incentive for the Indians to exert themselves beyond covering the bare necessities of life. Without it their economic activities tended to slacken, their standard of living to decline. This was in fact what actually happened in many instances after the prohibition of potlatch."

(This article first appeared, as best as I can tell, over 35 years ago in Numismatic News, sometime between the middle and end of 1963. While it is somewhat dated, it is a useful Canadian overview of the subject. The illustration is by C.W. Jefferys from "The Picture Gallery of Canadian History", first printed in July, 1942, by the Ryerson Press.)