



North York Coin Club

Founded 1960

MONTHLY MEETINGS 4TH Tuesday 7:30 P.M. AT
Edithvale Community Centre, 7 Edithvale Drive, North York
MAIL ADDRESS: NORTH YORK COIN CLUB, P.O.BOX 10005
R.P.O. Yonge & Finch, 5576 Yonge Street, Toronto, Ontario, M2N 0B6

Web site: www.northyorkcoinclub.ca

Contact the Club :

E-mail: northyorkcoinclub@rogers.com
Phone: 647-222-9995

Member :

Canadian Numismatic Association
Ontario Numismatic Association

PresidentNick Cowan
1st Vice PresidentBill O'Brien
2nd Vice PresidentShawn Hamilton
SecretaryTony Hine
Treasurer
Past PresidentRobert Wilson

Executive Committee

DirectorTony Hine
DirectorRoger Fox
DirectorVince Chiappino
Junior Director
AuctioneerBob Porter
Auction ManagerMark Argentino
EditorsPaul Petch

Receptionist
Draw PrizesBill O'Brien
Social ConvenorBill O'Brien
LibrarianRobert Wilson
Program Planning

THE BULLETIN FOR JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2009

COMING EVENTS FOR WINTER / SPRING 2009

FEB. 21 & 22, 2009, Toronto, Torex - Canada's National Coin Show, Hilton Toronto Airport Hotel, 5875 Airport Road, Mississauga Ballroom. Featuring Canada's finest dealers. Hours: Sat. 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Sun. 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Admission \$6. Official Auctioneer: Moore Numismatic Auctions, Charles Moore. The Hilton hotel is located directly across from Toronto's Pearson International Airport. For more information, please call (416) 705-5348.. Website: <http://www.torex.net>.

FEB. 21, Mississauga, Canadian Tire Coupon Collectors Club, TOREX meeting, Hilton Toronto Airport Hotel, 5875 Airport Rd. Hours: 10 a.m. to noon. Canadian Tire Coupons and Memorabilia, trading, displays, auction, education session, fun and fellowship. Sponsor/Affiliate: TOREX Show. For more information, contact Roger Fox 905-898-7677, or at phoxyx@look.ca. Website: <http://www.ctccc.ca>.

ONTARIO NUMISMATIC ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONVENTION

APRIL 24 - 26, Kitchener, Holiday Inn Hotel and Conference Centre, 30 Fairway Rd. S. Hours: Fri., 2 p.m. set-up, bourse opens at 10 a.m. on Sat. and Sun., 52 bourse tables, admission \$3. Coin auction Fri. 6 p.m.; Militaria Auction Sat. 11 a.m. For more information, contact Tom Rogers (519) 451-2316, or Don Antoniak (519) 886-3547. Convention Hotel offers a \$109 rate on Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Phone: (519) 893-1211

Website: <http://www.ichotelsgroup.com/h/d/hi/1/en/hotel/ykwc?requestid=112447>

Download registration form:

<http://www.ontario-numismatic.org/Registration2009.pdf>

Download Exhibit Form:

<http://www.ontario-numismatic.org/ExhibitApplication2009.pdf>

Download Exhibit Rules:

<http://www.waterloocoinssociety.com/images/exhibitrr.pdf>

NEXT MEETING - TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 24

We start gathering at 7:00 p.m. with meeting start scheduled for 7:30 p.m.

Our special topic for this meeting is Coin Banks. We have organized with a few members to bring and exhibit their banks.

If you own a bank (or two) bring them along and participate!

Our supply of draw prize material is very low and we appreciate all donations.

Remember to bring some items for the auction!

MARCH 1, Mississauga, VI Polish - Canadian Coin, Stamp & Collectibles Show 2009, John Paul II Polish Cultural Centre, 4300 Cawthra Rd. (south of 403). Hours: 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Many tables of stamps, coins, medals, paper money, militaria & antique papers. Exhibits of stamps, coins, paper money, sports pins, medals, collectibles and Orders and Decorations of Poland. Polish stamps and Polish Mint info table. Free admission and parking. Refreshments available. For more information, contact Ignacy Kania, 905-273-7313 or Wieslaw Grzesicki, 416-258-1651, e-mail: info@troyakclub.com. Website: <http://www.troyakclub.com>.

MARCH 8, Windsor, Second LA Show, Moose Lodge, 777 Tecumseh Rd. W. Hours: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Buy, sell, and trade, coins, tokens currency. For more information, contact Glen Gibbons, telephone: (519) 256-2013, e-mail: ggibbons1@cogeco.ca.

MARCH 20 - 22, Montreal, QC, Nuphilex, Holiday Inn Midtown, 420 Sherbrooke St. W. Hours: Fri. 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Sat. 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Sun. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission \$3 per day, Sunday free. Early bird admission \$25 (\$10 donated to Quebec Autism Society). Coin auction by Lower Canada Auction. For more information, contact Gabriel Sebag, (514) 842-4411, e-mail: nuhilex@bellnet.ca. website: <http://www.nuphilex.com>.

MARCH 21, Cambridge, 18th Annual Cambridge Coin Show, Cambridge Newfoundland Club, 1500 Dunbar Rd. Hours: 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Free admission, buy, sell, trade, and evaluate at 51 tables of tokens, trade dollars, coins, paper money, militaria, sports cards, CTC coupons. For more information, contact Wolfe, wolfe1937@hotmail.com, Vince Nevidon, (519) 622-6625, or Gus Lawrence, (519) 653-5549.

MEETING NEWS OF THE NOVEMBER 2008 MEETING

The 541st meeting of the North York Coin Club was held on November 25 at Edithvale Community Centre, 7 Edithvale Drive, room 123 with President Nick Cowan calling the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m. 25 members were in attendance with one late arrival.

Treasurer Len Kuenzig drew the name of Jim Heifetz for the on-time attendance draw. Because he had not yet arrived, the prize for the next regular meetings on-time attendance draw will rise to \$4.

The secretary moved that the minutes of the October minutes be accepted as printed in the November bulletin. Seconded by John Regitko and carried. The Treasurer provided a financial report.

The president noted that honorary life member Lucille Colson had donated a box of coins to the club and that several of her donations would appear as auction items.

Member Shawn Hamilton reported on his attendance last weekend in Baltimore at the coin show featuring over one thousand dealer tables. Silver was trading at \$15 per ounce with dealers asking for a premium on 100 ounce bars. A large number of tables offered only precious metals by weight.

President Nick Cowan reported that the planned Xmas dinner at the Legion on December 9th was cancelled because of a lack

of members committing with a deposit by the booking deadline. Accordingly, the club will host a December 9th meeting at our usual monthly location. Nick suggested that dinner could be paid for by the club, but member John Regito suggested a nominal \$5.00 charge, humourously proposing that if it were free he would bring 12 guests, including his wife Monina and girlfriend Nancy. Nick suggested asking for a food bank donation rather than five dollar charge, relating how the fire hall graciously and thankfully received our 2007 donation to the food bank. A compromise motion called for a five dollar charge per person plus a suggested food bank donation of ten dollars each. The motion was carried.

The president said that elections for club officers would be held in January, inviting members willing to serve to approach the nominating committee of David Quinlan. He said he had not decided whether to continue, but that our treasurer had indicated that he would not stand again.

Member Tony Hine moved that auction commissions of 10% be capped at one dollar.

He stated he was not disinterested as he had an item in the auction with a \$250.00 reserve. Member John Regitko stated he believed that that was the long standing practice, and following acquiescence by the auc-

tion administrator Mark Argentino, the motion was allowed to die without a seconder.

Avner Bar-Moshe raised the issue of monthly bulletins to be sent by regular mail. The President, he said, had said in March that he would ensure that members who did not wish to receive e-mailed bulletins would receive them by regular mail. In reply, the president stated that he had delegated the job with a commitment that it would be attended to, but that the commitment was not fulfilled.

After much spirited discussion, member Ben Boelens agreed to undertake mailing and the President offered 10,000 envelopes for use in mailing.

Member Roger Fox delivered a presentation on Canadian Tire gift certificates.

Door prizes were awarded to Jim Heifetz, Dick Dunn, Ben Boelens, Franco Farronato, Henry Nienhuis, Richard and David Quinlan.

Sales of door prize draw tickets raised \$22.00 for the club. Auction commissions raised \$8.50 and donations were sold for proceeds of \$42.75, bringing total club proceeds of \$51.25 from the auction.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

COMING EVENTS FOR WINTER / SPRING 2009 ... CONTINUED

MARCH 27 - 29, Kingston, EONS, Days Inn and Conference Centre, 33 Benson St. Hours: Fri.: 2 p.m. to 5:30 p.m., Sat.: 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Sun.: 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Admission \$4, (which includes a ticket on the gold coin draw). *Fifty tables of coins, paper money, postcards, stamps, jewellery, military and more. Local coin club in attendance.* For more information, contact Ted Bailey, 1-866-747-2646, e-mail: tedscollectables@bellnet.ca. Website: <http://tedscollectables.com>.

APRIL 4, Guelph, South Wellington Coin Show, Royal Canadian Legion, 919 York Road. Hours: 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. *One of Southwestern Ontario's biggest shows, 50 dealer tables, free parking, fully accessible. Large display area, hot meals. Admission \$2 for ages 16 and up. Free gold coin draw.* Lowell Wierstra, 8 Smart St., Guelph, ON, N1G 4K9. Phone (519) 824-6534, e-mail: ljwierstra@sympatico.ca. Website: <http://www.w3design.com/swcs/>.

APRIL 5, Chatham, Kent Coin Club annual spring coin show, Wheels Inn, 615 Richmond St. Hours: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. *Free admission and parking, 25 dealer tables (coins and paper money for all interests), hourly draws, displays with prizes in 10 categories.* For more information, contact Lou Wagenaer (President), 27 Peters St., Chatham, ON, N7M 5B2, telephone: (519) 352-5477.

MAY 3, Windsor, Spring Coin Show, Caboto Club. The Windsor Coin Club will be holding its 59th Annual Spring Show at the Caboto Club, 2175 Parent Ave., Windsor. Hours are from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. *Admission of \$1 includes draws for hourly door prizes and a grand prize. Juniors admitted free. Lots of free parking.* For more information, contact Margaret Clarke at mclarke@wincom.net, (519)735-0727.

JUNE 14, Brantford, Brantford Numismatic Society 48th Annual Coin Show, Woodman Community Centre, 491 Grey St. Hours: 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. *Free admission, free parking,*

34 dealers at 65 tables. Local police protection, member assistance for dealer unloading and parking. For more information, contact Brantford Numismatic Society, PO Box 28071, North Park Plaza, Brantford, ON, N3R 7K5 or Ed Anstett, 519-759-3688, edanstett@rogers.com.

JUNE 27 & 28, Toronto, Torex - Canada's National Coin Show, Hilton Toronto Airport Hotel, 5875 Airport Road, Mississauga Ballroom. Featuring Canada's finest dealers. Hours: Sat. 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Sun. 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Admission \$6. Official Auctioneer: The Canadian Numismatic Company. The Hilton hotel is located directly across from Toronto's Pearson International Airport. Sponsor/Affiliate: . For more information, please call (416) 705-5348.. Website: <http://www.torex.net>.

*Listings are courtesy of
Canadian Coin News Coming Events*

MEETING NEWS OF THE DECEMBER 2008 MEETING

The 542nd meeting of the North York Coin Club was held on December 9 at the

Edithvale Community Centre, 7 Edithvale Drive. This was the annual Christmast party

meeting and no minutes were taken since there was no business discussed.

MEETING NEWS OF THE JANUARY 2009 MEETING

The 543rd meeting of the North York Coin Club was held on January 27 at 7 Edithvale Drive in room 123. President Nick Cowan called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m. with 25 members and three guests in attendance.

An on-time attendance draw for \$4 was won by Franco Farronato. President Nick Cowan passed apologies from the editor who was unable to produce a January bulletin while recovering from computer problems. He also passed on the regrets of Bob Velensky from Fredericton, N.B. The President invited greater member participation and said membership was dropping to a critical level. Outgoing treasurer Len Kuenzig delivered his final treasurer's report for the year ended December 31, 2008, with typed copies photocopied and available for the membership. The key balance sheet event was the transfer of \$750 from the GIC holdings to the chequing account in December, 2008.

The president quoted the words of Waterloo Coin Society President Peter Becker in saying the members should ask themselves what they can do to help the club grow and prosper? The President urged members to bring a guest to the club.

Member Paul Petch commented that when he was President, he would casually discuss recent news with collectors before the meeting and then would call on those with the most interesting news so it could be shared with all in attendance. He said North York used to have a strong reputation as the friendliest coin club and that there is no reason why that feeling cannot be maintained. As an example, he recalled a presentation by Al Bliman on casino chips after the late member visited Las Vegas, which resulted in several members picking up on this branch of the hobby. Paul proposed an executive meeting for February 10th to move organizational activity away from the meeting and thus provide for more hobby and social time.

The president invited three guests and one recent member to tell the club what each collects.

Harry Y., a guest, collects Netherlands and Germany. He used to have a large Canadian collection, but has since divested. Now he collects anything that tickles his fancy.

Raj collected coins and stamps in school. When a new younger sister destroyed his col-

lection, he vowed never to collect anything valuable again. A rebuilt collection was looted by movers, and now he tries to collect coins with metal value. His collection includes European precious metal coins, Canadian non-precious metal coins and even a coin from Turkey. New member Richard has collected Canadian coins and paper money for two years. He has quite a bit missing, and what is missing he cannot afford. Guest Vassily has collected Russian, Israeli & Canadian coins and paper money for three to five years. English is his second language

Long time member John Regitko described his life in collecting and the hobby. He says with digital images of his collection, he no longer needs the actual coins. He says he recently went to his second stamp collectors meeting and is now collecting stamps designed by coin designers. He cited Brent Townsend's polar bear stamps, known from the townie coin and the works by Dora de Pédery-Hunt.

A coffee break was called at 8:35 p.m.

Following the coffee break Roger Fox presented a display of CTC coupons with roman numerals, a short-lived 1964 issue offering a 15% discount with an "XV" marking.

The program was voluntary with only three stores (Yonge & Church, Barrie & Ste. Catherines participating.

Paul Petch showed a Last Supper art medal belonging to his wife that was sculpted by Dora de Pédery-Hunt under a commission from Cardinal Carter in 1979 for the Archdiocese of Toronto. Paul acquired the medal as a Christmas present for his wife from the estate of Ms. Hunt.

A discussion followed regarding the elimination or demonetization of the one cent coin.

John Regitko pointed out the Royal Canadian Mint has never demonetized anything, although it refused to accept returns of unsold Montreal Olympic coin inventory from dealers.

Following a lucky draw, the meeting adjourned about 9:30 p.m.



Last Supper art medal by Dora de Pédery-Hunt

THAT WAS THE YEAR THAT WAS -- THE MINT AT 100

BY PAUL PETCH

I am sure that all collectors are aware that 2008 was a very special year for the Royal Canadian Mint. It was a full year of celebration marking the centennial of Canada's own mint. Strictly speaking, it was in 1931 that the Government of Canada took over the operation of our national mint, it actually being the Ottawa Branch of the Royal Mint when it opened in 1908.

This short article does nothing more than present what this writer considers to be the top items produced by the Mint in 2008. This is all a matter of personal taste, so if you have been attracted to something that does not appear here, please don't be offended, because I'm sure you have already cast your vote for your favourites by adding them to your collection.



Thirty million breast cancer coins entered circulation beginning on April 1, 2006. These were the second coloured circulation coins to be produced by the RCM's Winnipeg facility, following the popular 25-cent poppy coin in the fall of 2004. This is a 2008 story because the RCM received recognition from its peers at the Mint Directors Conference in Busan, Korea, with the Most Technologically Advanced Circulation Coin Award. This is the second honour earned by innovative circulation coin, which was previously recognized in May 2007 as the "Best New Coin" by the International Association of Currency Affairs. The 25-cent breast cancer circulation coin features the iconic pink ribbon, the symbol of hope and awareness in the effort to create a future without breast cancer.



Released on June 23, just as the Beijing Olympics were getting underway, this welcome circulation coin commemorated the participation of Canada's athletes at the games. "The Mint has provided each member of the Canadian Olympic and Paralympic Teams competing in Beijing with a Lucky Loonie as their own personal good luck charm and through the launch of the coin, Canadians also have an opportunity to own a piece of the Olympic dream," said Ian E. Bennett, President and CEO of the Royal Canadian Mint.



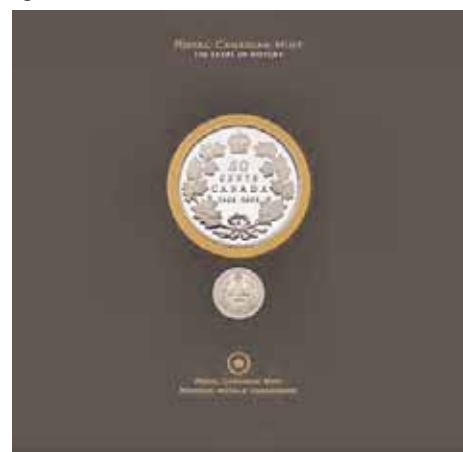
Lucy Maud Montgomery's heroine Anne Shirley first appeared in print 100 years ago as *Anne of Green Gables*. This oversized, nickel-plated steel 25-cent painted coin, bears a portrait by accomplished illustrator Ben Stahl.



To celebrate and commemorate its centennial anniversary, the Royal Canadian Mint released a truly stunning book entitled, *Royal Canadian Mint: 100 Years of History*. The book is a delight, not only for numismatists but for bibliophiles as well. It is not unlike the best of what the Folio Society produces, being, to use the usual language of that hobby, sumptuously-bound, lavishly illustrated, and enclosed in a protective slip case. The book is both very large (at over 11 inches [28cm] in length and width, and very heavy (at 1 inch, or about 2.25cm thick). There are 198 pages.

In an unusual twist, the doubled-dated, proof fifty-cent coin bearing the bust of King Edward VII on its obverse and the 1908 wreath design on its reverse is physically embedded in the cover of the book. (This is the same sterling silver coin as that in the commemorative coin and stamp set.)

A commemorative stamp and its selva from the same set are also "tipped in" on an inside page. Beautiful black and white, as well as colour photographs adorn every single page of the book, and collectors will see almost all their beloved favourites represented (the Canadian centennial \$20 gold coin from 1967 is a notable exception). The two covers of the book feature in large size the two sides of the 1908 fifty-cent piece, part of the first coinage run come out of the new production facilities in Ottawa, one hundred years ago.





These coins celebrate the founding of Quebec city in 1608 by French explorer and map maker Samuel de Champlain. The design featured on the sterling silver dollar is the exceptional work of Longueuil, QC artist Suzanne Duranceau. The coin features a portrait of Samuel de Champlain with the “habitation” he built at the foot of Cap-aux-Diamants, now Quebec City, in the background. He had landed on the shore of the St. Lawrence River in 1608 at a place the local Algonquin people called “Kébec” or “where the river narrows”.

The RCM also released six million circulating \$2 coins on May 8. “I invite all Canadians to look for this commemorative coin in their change,” said Ian E. Bennett, the Mint’s President and CEO. This coin was officially unveiled to the public at the IIHF World Hockey Championship’s “Fanfest” on May 7th, before the start of the game headlining France and Belarus. “There are few North American cities that can celebrate a past such as that of Québec City. It is from the year 1608 that we truly started to become what we are today. Because the founding of Québec City also marks the founding of Canada,” said the Honourable Josée Verner, Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages. The coin, designed by emerging jeweller and Quebec City native Geneviève Bertrand, depicts the founding of the city. It features a fleur-de-lis, a ship, and lines representing the waters of the St. Lawrence River. This design was engraved on a two-dollar coin by Mint Engraver William Woodruff of Ottawa.



On the occasion of the 90th anniversary of the Armistice, the Royal Canadian Mint, in association with the Royal Canadian Legion, issued its latest coloured circulation coin which features the iconic red poppy, Canada’s flower of remembrance. The Mint announced it would produce up to 11 million 25-cent coloured poppy coins, which entered into circulation October 27 and were distributed exclusively at Shoppers Drug Mart/Pharmaprix locations from coast to coast. Between 1914 and 1918 over 650,000 Canadian men and women fought to protect the peace and freedom our country enjoys today. Of those, more than 66,000 gave their lives and another 170,000 would be wounded. Lieutenant-Colonel John McCrae, a Canadian medical officer during the First World War, was responsible more than any other for the adoption of the poppy as a symbol of remembrance in Canada and the Commonwealth through his poem *In Flanders Fields*.

The famous 17th century playing card money of New France got a nod from the RCM when these two colourful sterling silver representation were released this year. Two more are to follow in 2009.



THE LOST VOYAGEUR by Ian MacLeod, The Ottawa Citizen

More than 20 years ago, the dies for Canada's new dollar coin went missing, and, according to a retired Mountie who worked on the case, clues to the mystery could lie in our own backyard.

The unsolved and forgotten crime story that gave birth to the loonie coin two decades ago has been revived by a retired Mountie who suggests the key to the great Canadian coin caper could lie hidden somewhere in Ottawa.

On the morning of Nov. 3, 1986, two freshly engraved master dies for Canada's new \$1 coin were picked up by a courier service from the Royal Canadian Mint on Sussex Drive for delivery to the mint's Winnipeg production plant. The mint planned to save \$43.50 by sending the dies through a local letter-courier firm instead of a high-security armoured service.

One die carried the image of the Queen and the other noted sculptor and artist Emanuel Hahn's iconic "voyageur canoe" scene that had graced Canada's first silver dollar and other coins since 1935.

The plan was to introduce a new bronze-coloured voyageur canoe dollar coin in early 1987 and begin a two-year phase-out of the old green-and-white \$1 bill.

But 11 days later, on Nov. 14, distressed mint officials in Winnipeg called in the Mounties—the two steel dies had never arrived from Ottawa.

"I remember it well," Denys Stewart, the former Winnipeg RCMP staff sergeant who supervised the case, said in interview this week. "It was fairly important because of the fact that this was the new coin that they were going to start issuing and obviously . . . counterfeiters could make a heyday on it."

The Winnipeg investigators eventually concluded the dies never arrived there and may have been swiped before they ever left Ottawa, said Mr. Stewart, who retired in 1995 after 35 years of service.

If correct, that means the lost voyageur and its mate may still be floating around the capital. Their resurfacing would be no small change to coin collectors and the Royal Canadian Mint, which is celebrating its 100th anniversary.

"Everybody has a dollar in their pocket, so they can kind of understand this story," said Christine Aquino, an Ottawa spokeswoman for the mint. "It's one of those urban legends or folklore stories of the mint that everybody likes to talk about. What really happened to those dies?"

As Mounties in Winnipeg and Ottawa tried to answer that question in late 1986, mint officials combed their design bank and selected an image of a loon by artist Robert-Ralph Carmichael. It had been submitted and rejected in 1978 as the image for a \$100 gold coin. The substitute design was quickly approved by the federal government.

But for two months, officials said nothing publicly, hoping the lost voyageur and the other die would surface. Before they left the mint in Ottawa, the two dies—each about eight centimetres square by a few centimetres thick—were to be packaged separately for shipping, a standard security practice to prevent counterfeiters from getting their hands on a complete set of dies. But they somehow ended up being packaged together in a box clearly marked as mint property.

After they were picked up on Nov. 3, they were taken to the courier service's offices on Comstock Road, and were to be taken with other parcels and letters by van that night to Montreal's Dorval airport for an Air Canada air-freight flight to Winnipeg. They should have travelled in a cargo bag with five other small boxes going to Winnipeg that night.

At 6:55 the next morning, Nov. 4., the bag was picked up by another courier service in Winnipeg. The five other boxes were there, but police could never determine if the two dies also arrived. All of the shipping documents for the dies were missing, too.

John Regitko, past president of the Canadian Numismatic Association, believes someone along the line spotted the mint's package "and said 'Oh, there must be some

valuable coins in here,' and managed to sneak it out. I suspect when he saw what it was, that he or she knew they couldn't go into a coin store and try to sell them.

"I think they're buried in somebody's backyard and years from now . . . somebody's going to come across (them)."

A week after the dies went missing, mint officials finally informed Monique Vézina, the minister responsible for the mint. For several weeks, Ms. Vézina and mint officials even considered making a minor change to the voyageur design that would enable a police investigation to track down where any counterfeits might be coming from.

That was scrapped when someone decided the public could get burned with the counterfeits in the meantime. People who unknowingly wind up with counterfeit money are required to turn it over to police without any compensation.

On June 30, 1987, six months behind schedule, the first of the bronze-plated nickel dollars went into circulation and 850 million loonies later, the image stands as a ubiquitous Canadian symbol in its own right.

"When you think about it, the loonie is by accident, it was never supposed to be," said Ms. Aquino.

As for the voyageur canoe, "we came to the conclusion that it either went missing somewhere in transit or before it left Ottawa," said Mr. Stewart.

An interesting and different slant on this story comes from coin dealer Willard Burton, who was employed by Loomis who had subcontracted with a dependable local Ottawa courier for the transport of letters and small packages. He had a hand in the investigation at the time the dies went missing and confirms they were in transit when they disappeared without a trace. It is also a fact that our first dollar coins would have featured the familiar voyageur design, and perhaps that Canadian icon, the Loonie, would never have come into being.

THE NEBULOUS NATURE OF NUMISMATICS

by Richard Morrison, Financial Post

Coins are among the most liquid of collectibles traded on online auctioneer site eBay, with many items attracting 20, 30 or more bids — far more interest than stamps, watches, dolls, china, silverware, toy soldiers and the like, which means selling them is not a problem. And unlike, say, refrigerators, coins are relatively easy to wrap and ship.

Do coins outperform stocks? Dealers can trot out statistics showing how an investment in coins has consistently outperformed stock markets, but stamp shop owners can tweak the numbers to show the same thing, as can those who sell art. The fact is, an investment in pocket lint would have outperformed stocks over the past year, so determining the relative advantage of anything over equities is tricky.

But those contemplating a shift from stocks to collectibles of any sort should be aware that each market carries its own perils. If you don't know what you're doing, coins you've paid a fortune for can easily turn out to be counterfeit.

For coins, value is linked to rarity and condition. Old coins are not necessarily worth more than new ones, since it depends on how many of the coins are still around and what condition they're in.

Coins are graded on a 70-point scale, with 1 being so worn, tarnished and scratched that the words are illegible. At the far end of the spectrum are mint-state, or MS-70 coins, as shiny as when they were made, with all details clearly visible, untouched by human fingers and unscratched by other coins. The older the coin, the less pristine condition it is expected to be in, and a relatively rare one can trade for \$10,000 or more in near-mint state.

If you own what you think might be a valuable coin, you can send it to an independent grading service, where for a fee an expert will examine the coin under a magnifying glass, assign a grade to it, issue a serial number, then enclose everything in a tamper-proof plastic holder. If the expert says your coin has been cleaned (a no-no in collecting circles) or finds that it has been doctored or is counterfeit, it will likely be

After a horrible year
in the stock market,
I decided to diversify what
was left of my investments by
selling some of my stocks and
exchange-traded funds and
putting the proceeds into cold,
hard cash
— coins, specifically.



“body-bagged” and sent back to you without a grade.

Novice coin collector/investors should start by reading veteran collector Susan Headley's pages at About.com (coins.about.com), followed by the book *Coin Collecting for Dummies*, by Neil Berman and Ron Guth. Among their most important points: Don't tell anyone you have a coin collection at home, or sooner or later word will reach a criminal who will break into your house to steal them. (I keep my coins in a safety deposit box).

You can buy “raw” or ungraded coins and take your chances on what you can sell them for, but as all the books say, until you have experience in evaluating coins yourself, collectors should buy only coins graded by International Coin Certification Service (ICCS) in Canada, and either Professional Coin Grading Service (PCGS) or Numismatic Guarantee Corp. (NGC) for U. S. coins.

How do you know what a coin is worth? For those collecting Canadian coins, the annual *Charlton Catalogue of Canadian Coins*, edited by W. K. Cross, is indispensa-

ble. For U. S. coins, check out the Numismedia Web site (www.numismedia.com) and get a subscription to the weekly *Coin Dealer Newsletter*, which lists current wholesale coin prices.

Buying coins on eBay carries the risk of falling prey to numismatic fraudsters, particularly with ancient coins, where as many as two-thirds may be fake, as Reid Goldsborough explains on the Numis Web site (rg.ancients.info/guide).

“Cheating has always been a part of the world of money, including the world of collecting money. The Internet just makes it easier to cheat, and be cheated,” he warns. He recommends buying only from reputable dealers.

Along with fraudsters, Canadians who trade anything on eBay are vulnerable to currency fluctuations, since most transactions get converted to U.S. dollars if you pay with PayPal. If you buy something on eBay for US\$1,000 while the loonie trades at US80¢, its real cost is \$1,250. Should the loonie rise to par with the U. S. dollar and you sell the same item for US\$1,000, you will be out \$250. You can improve your odds if you buy heavily when the loonie is relatively strong and sell when it's relatively weak, but that's not as easy as it sounds.

Canadians face another hazard when buying anything from outside the country: The Canada Border Service Agency (CBSA) is supposed to levy GST and PST on any packages foreigners send to you.

I paid a Texas coin dealer US\$728.88 for a 1908 Liberty Vnickel, only to have the CBSA demand a further \$43.33 in GST and \$69.33 in Ontario provincial sales tax — \$117.66 in total — before the chap at Canada Post would give me the package. My appeal to a CBSA official, based on the grounds that I have never had to pay the taxes on about 50 foreign-sourced items I've bought on eBay before, fell flat.

“You were lucky,” he said.

The coin market is as complex as the stock market. I am moving into baseball cards.

DARWIN ART STRIKES WRONG NOTE



It is the ultimate, infallible tribute to a Briton: placing their portrait on a banknote alongside images of their life and work. But now a leading UK biologist has announced that pictures on the £10 note, which commemorates the achievements of Charles Darwin, are 'little better than fiction'.

Professor Steve Jones, of University College London, said putting a hummingbird on the current £10 note was a blunder. 'The note is supposed to encapsulate Darwin's trip to the Galapagos, with him looking at a hummingbird as a source of inspiration. But there are no hummingbirds on the islands,' said Jones at last week's opening of the Natural History Museum's exhibition, Darwin.

'Mockingbirds and finches were important in getting Darwin thinking about evolution, but hummingbirds played no role at all. Presumably the artist just happened to like them.' Jones said he had written to the Bank of England but had received no answer. A spokesman for the Bank referred The Observer to its website which insists the hummingbird was of 'the type characteristically found in the region of the Galapagos Islands'.

But hummingbirds are not even mentioned in *On the Origin of Species*, said Jones. 'So why depict them? This is not a trivial issue. We are surprised by the numbers of people who believe in creationism and rubbish like that only to find the currency in which we place our trust is telling us lies about evolution.'

WHAT IS GOING WRONG AT EBAY?

by Joe Weingarten, Executive Director, Macintosh Reseller Association

As the economy slows you would have to assume that people would want to sell Grandma's antique green glass collection and on the other side of the coin people would want to buy bargain products. Could it be that eBay is hurting themselves?

eBay, in its quest to drive profits, is doing everything wrong from the perspective of the sellers. Without good sellers, the buyers will leave. Fees have gone up so much that sellers have been moving to other auction sites that charge much less. Then they started to push Free Shipping to try and increase eBay revenue. You see, shipping is not included in the auction fee eBay collects, so some dealers overcharged on shipping. With free shipping the amount is included in the sale price, so eBay gets paid. Instead of fixing the problem of excessive shipping, they drove off sellers and the overcharging shippers continue. They also put pressure in a very quiet way to move towards online stores, thus removing the small seller who has unique listings and many one of a kind items, this limiting choices in the long run... something that made eBay a place to find anything.

Then they took actions that did in fact drive off buyers. For example, a lot of buyers of antiques are older and less trusting of electronic payment systems, so eBay started to

demand using their PayPal system only for payment. Buyers who use money orders or cheques left. Of course this tied PayPal and another revenue stream to eBay, but at what costs? And to top it off, fees to list products keep increasing. You used to be able to look all over the world at other eBay sites with ease, now you have to sign in at each country, thus reducing both products and sales.

Here come the other sites to compete with eBay. Offering free stores with a commission on sales only or listings at about 50% off eBay fees and some allow listings for free, just making money on commission on sales, and no collection of payment restrictions. www.ibid.net, www.ioffer.com, www.specialistauctions.com, <http://listityourselfauctions.com> just to list a few.

eBay continues to change its format to make it easier to sell and buy, the only problem it makes it harder and slows down the system. It is almost as if we were going to switch driving from the right side to the left side of the road. It appears this is being done to increase revenue from advertisers on the eBay site. Maybe eBay needs to move backwards towards what worked in years past and stop being greedy... I think it is starting to hurt them.