



# 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](http://www.northyorkcoinclub.ca)

## Contact the Club :

E-mail: [northyorkcoinclub@rogers.com](mailto:northyorkcoinclub@rogers.com)  
Phone: 647-222-9995

## Member :

Canadian Numismatic Association  
Ontario Numismatic Association

President .....Nick Cowan  
1st Vice President .....Bill O'Brien  
2nd Vice President .....Shawn Hamilton  
Secretary .....Henry Nienhuis  
Treasurer .....Ben Boelens  
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## Executive Committee

Director .....David Quinlan  
Director .....Roger Fox  
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## THE BULLETIN FOR AUGUST 2009

### FANATIC NUMISMATISTS IN TOWN

BY ANDREW HANON, EDMONTON SUN, AUGUST 13, 2009

You might want to dig the change out of your couch cushions after reading this. If you find a 2000 Canadian dime with a tiny letter P under the queen's head, it's worth a small fortune. One of the so-called "P" dimes on display at the Royal Canadian Numismatic Association's convention in Edmonton this week is worth — are you ready for this? — \$5,000. That's right, a five-grand dime.

Coin collectors prize it because it's an oddity. Only a small number of the "P" dimes, made of nickel-plated steel, were released by the Royal Canadian Mint to vending machine companies so they could test them on their equipment. A few — nobody can really say how many — slipped into general circulation, and if you're lucky enough to have one in your piggy bank, it could be worth thousands, depending on its condition.



Photo: David Bloom/Sun Media

*Don Olmstead from Olmstead Currency displays a 1935 \$20 Canadian bill featuring a young Princess Elizabeth (bottom) and a 1998 \$1,000 bill featuring the Queen. Olmstead was attending the Royal Canadian Numismatic Association Annual National Convention at the Delta Edmonton South.*

And with people's faith in the stock market shattered, there's growing interest in collectibles like rare coins as an investment. "More people want to put their money into hard assets," says David Peter, vice president of the Edmonton Numismatic Society. "They want to diversify and have something tangible for their money."

How about the notorious Devil's Head series of bills from 1954? They were the first Canadian bills issued after Queen Elizabeth became monarch. People were horrified to see a clear image of a devil's face in young Queen Elizabeth's hair behind her left ear. The Bank of Canada quickly fixed the problem and modified the plates that the bills were printed from, so the Devil's Head notes became rare collectibles.

Don Olmstead of Olmstead Currency, one of the convention's exhibitors, had a \$1,000 Devil's Head bill worth about \$4,000. Had it been in perfect, unused condition, he said, it would be worth a staggering \$12,000.

Peter, an avid collector since his early teens, said that in the past couple of decades the value of collectible currency has slowly, but steadily increased, regardless of what the rest of the economy has been doing. "In recent years, people have moved some of their money into this because they're looking for something stable," he said.

Stan Wright of Diverse Equities, which deals in rare currency and precious metals, agrees. "We've got a lot of people who are very, very nervous about the U.S. economy," he said. "People just want a return of their money, not even return on their money.

## NEXT MEETING

**TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22**

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

We are sorry to inform you that it is once again necessary for us to cancel the North York Coin Club meeting. As has happened in past years, the meeting place will be closed for the last week of August while maintenance staff perform annual cleaning. Our next meeting will be on September 22 when we will be presenting a full report on what happened and what was seen at the annual convention of the Royal Canadian Numismatic Association, this year in Edmonton, Alberta.

They're concerned with protecting what they've got."

Peter advises collectors to buy items they like, not just because they think it will appreciate in value. "That way if something goes wrong, at least you have something to enjoy."

And old does not necessarily mean it'll be valuable, says George Manz, who was exhibiting coins from ancient Macedonia, the Roman Empire and even Celtic currency, most of which ranged in value from \$100 to \$400, considerably less than the nine-year-old "P" dime. "Age means nothing," he said. "You can have a 2,000-year-old coin, but if there are a million of them around, they're not going to be that valuable."

An example of really valuable ancient coins, Manz said, are ones with Julius Caesar's likeness on them. After he was murdered, his successors melted down most of the coins marking his rule. Those that have survived to the present day are highly prized.

## MEETING NEWS OF THE JULY 2009 MEETING

It was necessary to cancel the July meeting of the North York Coin Club. The strike against the City of Toronto caused our meeting place, the Edithvale Community Centre, to continue to be closed.

### COMING EVENTS FOR SUMMER 2009

**AUG. 30, Woodstock,** Woodstock Coin Club Show, Community Complex, 381 Finkle St. Twentieth annual show. Hours: 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. *Admission \$1, kids free, free parking, lunch counter, hourly draws. Wear your dealer badge and you could win \$50.* For more information, contact Tom Rogers, telephone (519) 451-2316.

**SEPT. 13, London,** London Numismatic Society 17th Annual Coin Show, The Ramada Inn, 817 Exeter Rd. off Hwy. 401. Hours: 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. *Displays and dealers in coins, medals, notes and tokens. Admission \$2, includes entry for draws. Children free.* For more information, contact Len Buth (519) 641-4353, email: [lbuth@webmanager.on.ca](mailto:lbuth@webmanager.on.ca)

**SEPT. 25 - 27, St. Catharines,** TNS Fall Show, Quality Hotel, 327 Ontario St. Hours: 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Show pass \$20 (includes early entry), daily admission \$4. For more information, contact Rick and Jo-Anne Simpson, email: [rscoins@cogeco.ca](mailto:rscoins@cogeco.ca), telephone 905-643-4988, fax 905-643-6329.

**OCT. 3 - 4, Cambridge,** TL Coin Show, Cambridge Hotel and Conference Centre (formerly Future Inns), 700 Hespeler Rd., Cambridge. Hours: Sat. 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sun. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. *Free parking, admission \$4, seniors and students \$2, young collectors (12 & under) free.* For more information contact Linda Robinson, telephone: (289) 235-9288; email: [lindarobinson@cogeco.ca](mailto:lindarobinson@cogeco.ca); or Tom Kennedy, telephone (519) 271-8825.

**OCT. 4, Windsor,** Annual Essex County Coin Show, Fogular Furlan Club, 1800 EC Row Ave. E. Hours: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. *Canadian, U.S., and world coins and paper money, watches, and tokens. Admission by donation to Canadian Diabetes. Sponsor/Affiliate: Essex County Coin Club.* For more information, contact Essex County Coin Club, email: [essexcountycoinclub@hotmail.com](mailto:essexcountycoinclub@hotmail.com), or Colin Cutler, email: [ccutler@cogeco.ca](mailto:ccutler@cogeco.ca).

**OCT. 10, Oshawa,** Oshawa and District Coin Club Durham Coin-A-Rama, 5 Points Mall, 285 Tauton Rd E. *Free dealer, public, and membership draws. Free admission. Featuring paper, coins, tokens, medals and many other items.* For more information, contact Sharon (905) 728-1352, email: [papman@idirect.com](mailto:papman@idirect.com).

**OCT. 17 - 18, Toronto,** Torex - Canada's National Coin Show, Hilton Toronto Airport Hotel, 5875 Airport Road, Mississauga Ballroom. Hours: Sat. 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Sun. 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Admission \$6. Admission \$2 for ages 16 and up. *Featuring Canada's finest dealers. 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>.

*Listings are courtesy of Canadian Coin News Coming Events*

## JUDGE: ODYSSEY MARINE SHOULD SEND COINS TO SPAIN

### FROM THE TAMPA BAY BUSINESS JOURNAL

*Here is the latest chapter from this story The Bulletin started following a few months ago...*

A federal magistrate in Tampa has recommended Odyssey Marine Exploration Inc. return to the Kingdom of Spain more than 500,000 gold and silver coins and other artefacts recovered from the ocean near the Straits of Gibraltar.

Odyssey Marine has been seeking recognition from the court that it should have ownership rights to the items, which it recovered in 2007 in a project it code-named "Black Swan."

In a decision handed down in June, U.S. Magistrate Judge Mark Pizzo said the court lacks jurisdiction to hear the case and recommended granting Spain's motion to dismiss. He also recommended Odyssey Marine return the coins and artefacts within 10 days.

Odyssey Marine said in a release that it would file a written objection to the recommendation and would "continue to vigorously defend its rights to what it has legally recovered."

Spain has said the artefacts came from the "Nuestra Senora de las Mercedes," a warship carrying treasure back from Peru when it was sunk by British gunboats off the Spanish coast in 1804, and claimed the treas-

ure as its own. The magistrate ruled there was enough evidence to confirm the recovery site was that of the Mercedes and that the vessel and its cargo are subject to sovereign immunity.

"I'm very surprised," Greg Stemm, Odyssey Marine's chief executive, said in the release. "Odyssey has done everything by the book. For the Court to find that enough evidence exists to conclusively identify the site as the Mercedes and that neither Odyssey nor the claimants who owned the property have any legal interest is just wrong. I'm confident that ultimately the judge or the appellate court will see the legal and evidentiary flaws in Spain's claim, and we'll be back to argue the merits of the case."

Odyssey Marine (NASDAQ: OMEX), headquartered in Tampa, is engaged in the exploration of deep-ocean shipwrecks.



## US DEEP SEA EXPLORERS FILE OBJECTION TO JUDGE'S RECOMMENDATION TO AWARD TREASURE TO SPAIN

Deep-sea explorers based in Florida filed an objection Tuesday to a judge's recommendation that they give 17 tons of shipwreck treasure back to Spain. In June, a federal magistrate judge in Tampa issued a written recommendation, saying the wreck was likely the Mercedes and accepting the Spanish government's argument that it had never expressly surrendered ownership of the ship and its contents.

But Odyssey Marine Exploration contends there isn't enough evidence to confirm that the cargo it recovered came from the Mercedes. The company argues that if it is, the Mercedes was engaged in commercial activity when it exploded, which nullifies Spain's sovereign immunity claim. Odyssey filed its objection Tuesday afternoon in Tampa federal court.

"We were disappointed in the initial recommendation, but we know that admiralty law is complex, and the facts of this case are unique," Melinda MacConnel, vice-president and general counsel for Odyssey said in a statement. "We are confident that the facts and applicable law are in our favour."

In its objection, Odyssey lists a number of arguments disputing the judge's conclusion that the ship is the Mercedes and that Spain is the rightful owner of the treasure.

The company says eyewitness accounts state the Mercedes sank within view of land and that the ship was carrying between 33 to 50 cannons. The site where the treasure was found is not within view of land and only 17 or 18 cannons have been found, according to the objection. Nor is there any trace of burning among the artefacts, even though the ship exploded.

Odyssey also claims the Mercedes was engaged in commercial activity when it sank. The group cites historical documents that show the vessel transported mail, goods and passengers for freight. Twenty-five descendants of people who privately owned and commercially shipped cargo on the Mercedes have also filed claims of interest.

Odyssey says the recovery is believed to be the largest collection of coins ever excavated from a deep-ocean site.

## eBAY SELLERS FACE AUDITS

BY DEREK SPALDING, THE DAILY NEWS (NANAIMO)

### *Taxman will come knocking soon for share of online profit*

Tax audits for eBay merchants are nothing new to Nanaimo's Matt James, who has been selling artwork, collector coins and fishing tackle around the globe for the past 11 years. Canada Revenue Agency auditors went through his financial books in 2005 and 2006.

Come the end of summer thousands of Canadians will go through the same gruelling process when the federal agency begins a wave of audits, targeting people who have sold merchandise through the online eBay marketplace website. Revenue Canada obtained a list of 5,000 high-volume eBay sellers along with their transaction records through a legal fight that has opened the door for the taxman to go after information from other marketplace websites and crack down on up to \$5 billion in undeclared revenues from people who do business online.

This new "tax grab" gives an advantage to sellers in the United States, who don't face such additional expenses, and it hurts small businesses and artisans who until now have had easy access to a global marketplace, according to James. The move could also eventually hurt Canada Post when more sellers drop out of the business, he said.

Revenue Minister Jean-Pierre Blackburn said his government will continue to seek out the unclaimed revenues, despite the criticisms from across the country. "This is certainly only the beginning of the process," Blackburn said. "We believe that a whole new market is opening (for the revenue agency)."

James said he was a bit of a "guinea pig" for the government when they audited him four years ago. In business for 11 years, the popular eBay seller said the government took two years to track his customers and figure out how to tax everyone. "I had been a big eBay seller. They had to figure out how to go about nailing people down," he said. "They had to figure out how I was getting my money into Canada." At the time, CRA agents tried to collect James' records from eBay.com, but so far they can only collect information from eBay.ca.

The government obtained its list of 5,000 individual members or companies and their online transactions on Nov. 7, 2008 following a lengthy legal battle that reviewed privacy issues as well as an appeal from eBay. The

website unsuccessfully argued against disclosing the information on the grounds that it was stored on an electronic database outside of Canada.

Blackburn said the government could not immediately use the information in November since there were still unresolved legal issues and a possibility of an appeal to the Supreme Court. But he said the government has since reached an agreement with eBay — described in court documents as "the world's largest global online marketplace" — that will allow the revenue agency to use the information from the list.

It includes members who sold more than \$1,000 US worth of products per month (or its equivalent in Canadian dollars) for any period of three consecutive months in 2004 and 2005.

He said that anyone with previously undisclosed revenues should voluntarily come forward immediately to avoid audits, penalties and fines. "Within a month we will start the audit process, one by one, to determine whether these people (on the eBay list) declared their revenues on their tax returns in 2004 and 2005," he said. Blackburn also said the court decision would open the door for the revenue agency to obtain transaction records from subsequent years.

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation said it disagreed with the government's approach. "The government has taken it upon itself now to start pro-actively digging on witch hunts with the assumption of guilt, not innocence," said Kevin Gaudet, federal director of the lobby group. "Our argument would be the best way for governments to cause people to legally comply with taxation requirements is to lower the taxes."

James has sold fishing tackle since he started selling on eBay more than a decade ago. He then moved on to sell art work and coin and currency collections. He said taxes would only discourage people from having online businesses in Canada.

"They're going to force people to go across the border and start shipping from there," he said. "We provide a service to people who otherwise wouldn't be able to survive."



**R.C.N.A. CONVENTION  
FEATURES  
RCMP COUNTERFEIT COIN  
PRESENTATION  
BY PAUL PETCH**



Photo: Henry Nienhuis

*R.C.N.A. President Michael Walsh presents certificate of appreciation to Sgt. Tony Farahbakhchian*

Sgt. Tony Farahbakhchian, R.C.M.P. Pacific Region Counterfeit Co-ordinator, presented a most interesting information session on the afternoon of August 14 during the R.C.N.A. Annual Convention in Edmonton. A capacity crowd heard the details behind his efforts to check the spread of replica Canadian coins out of China by way of eBay.CA auction sales.

One of the most calming aspects of his talk was the fact that the Canadian Criminal Code does a very good job of identifying this activity as illegal and does provide good tools to law enforcement officers to build its cases against transgressors.

Not so calming is the fact that the Chinese government, while dealing with the counterfeiting of Chinese with the death penalty, does not see the production of foreign replica coins as being against the law. The coins will continue to come rolling out and will continue to be a threat to unwary buyers.

Several articles have appeared in the popular press over the last few months and are presented here in an effort to provide the full scope of the story to our members.

**R.C.M.P. Press Release:  
REPLICA / COUNTERFEIT CANADIAN COINS  
PULLED OFF EBAY AUCTION SITES**

**Vancouver, B.C. July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2009** – The RCMP Federal Commercial Crime Integrated Counterfeit Enforcement Team in Vancouver would like to remind the general public that the selling and or buying of replica or counterfeit Canadian coins is strictly forbidden and in contravention of Section 450 of the Criminal Code.

Members of the Royal Canadian Numismatic Association (RCNA) recently brought to the attention of the RCMP Federal Commercial Crime Integrated Counterfeit Enforcement Team in Vancouver that during the past few years, sellers from China had been selling Chinese made counterfeit coins on eBay. These coins were replicas of rare Canadian coins from the turn of the century.

Sgt. Farahbakhchian, the RCMP's Pacific Region Counterfeit Coordinator, stated that; *"These coins have fooled many unsuspecting buyers who were led to believe the coins were genuine numismatic rarities, worth thousands of dollars. Unfortunately a substantial number of these counterfeits have already made their way into private collections. The ramifications of these counterfeit coins will most likely be felt for generations as individuals attempt to pass them off as genuine coins, or bequeath them as part of their estate. Some coins had even been stamped by the seller as "replicas."*

The Criminal Code makes it an indictable offence to possess, buy, receive or introduce into Canada Counterfeit Money that resembles or is apparently intended to resemble or pass for a current coin or paper money. Canadian coins (including Newfoundland coins) dating back to 1858 are still current, as there has not been any Act

of Parliament to demonetize them.

Upon receipt of the RCNA complaint, the RCMP immediately notified eBay representatives, at their Headquarters in San Jose, California, and informed them of the situation. Upon consultation with the RCMP, eBay cooperated fully with the RCMP's request to remove all current listings from the Canada and USA sites. They have agreed to amend their Currency Policy, banning the sale of any replica versions of all Canadian and Newfoundland coins dating from 1858 onward on its eBay.ca and eBay.com websites.

Ms. Andrea Stairs, Head of Marketplace Development for eBay Canada, further added that; *"This move will help prevent replica coins from entering the market and potentially being re-sold as originals. E-Bay will continue to collaborate with the RCMP to maintain a marketplace that is safe for both buyers and sellers of numismatic material."*

eBay's decision to institute prompt and effective measures to ensure that the unlawful sale of these coins ceases immediately demonstrates eBay's strong commitment to working in partnership with the RCMP in the fight against counterfeiting. The preservation of the integrity of the Canadian economy and the broader e-commerce marketplace is one of the strategic priorities of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

The RCMP is also in the process of creating a link on their website containing educational material on the identification of counterfeit coins. This will include updated digital images, specifications and identifiers for each of the coins in question.

If anyone has information regarding the production or distribution of counterfeit coins or currency, they are asked to contact Crime Stoppers or their local detachment or police force.

Released by:  
Sgt. Tony Farahbakhchian  
Pacific Region Counterfeit Coordinator  
RCMP, E Division Federal Commercial  
Crime Section  
Telephone: 604-598-5393

## CHECK BOTH SIDES OF THE COIN

BY RICHARD MORRISON, INDEPENDENT INVESTOR, FINANCIAL POST, MAY 22, 2009

Among all the collectible items you might want to diversify your investment portfolio with, rare coins offer the most potential for profit, as there are more wealthy coin collectors than there are say, collectors of stamps, baseball cards, comic books or just about anything else.

Sadly, counterfeiters have figured this out too. A simple search on eBay and a few online auction sites show that it's common for rare coins to attract bids of \$1,000 or more - and that means huge profits for those who can pass off counterfeits bought for a few dollars as the real thing.

Neal Shymko, a coin collector in Edmonton, logged on to eBay in February and spotted a package of 15 Canadian 50¢ pieces being offered by a Quebec-based seller. Twelve of the 15 coins were of so little value their combined worth would be about \$50, Mr. Shymko says, but three coins, from 1888, 1890 and 1894, were noteworthy, and he won the package with a \$4,000 bid, then paid with a money order.

The coins arrived soon enough. After a quick glance showed they were indeed old 50¢ coins, Mr. Shymko logged on to eBay and gave the seller positive feedback - a favourable review of the transaction, a move he later regretted, since eBay does not allow changes.

Mr. Shymko says he grew suspicious about the three high-end coins when he took them out and noticed they felt unusually light. Such coins should weigh 12 grams, but when he put them on his postal scale, each of the three weighed only 8.5 grams.

"Just to make sure my scale wasn't out I checked other coins I have from the same time period and they all weighed in at the 12-gram mark," Mr. Shymko says.

Before putting them in a safety deposit box with the rest of his collection, he examined the three coins and discovered they'd been struck improperly, with the same obverse, or front, for all three, and a historically incorrect obverse for the 1894 coin. As a final clue, Mr. Shymko noticed the seller had reused a box with a label from China, where producing replicas of rare coins is a huge

industry.

Mr. Shymko contacted the seller, who first claimed an inability to understand English, and then fell silent when Mr. Shymko used an online translator to correspond in French. "All correspondence from them has now ceased," Mr. Shymko says.

Mr. Shymko complained to eBay, which sent him a few form-letter replies and said its staff was investigating but could not offer further details because of privacy issues. "Ebay has been totally useless in this matter," he says.



Photo: Chris Schwarz / Canwest News Service

*Edmonton collector Neal Shymko paid \$4,000 for rare coins that turned out to be counterfeit. The 1890 piece in the centre of the three coins would have a book value of \$4,500 if it was real.*

Andrea Stairs, an eBay Canada spokesperson, described the incident as "not typical to eBay," noting that according to the information she has, the seller, who spoke no English, used a translation program and listed the item in good faith.

The incident "was the result of a couple of really unusual events," says Ms. Stairs. "We have a zero tolerance for counterfeits and we're doing our best to make sure that those things don't hit the marketplace," she says, adding that eBay works with the RCMP, the provincial police forces and members of the numismatic community to develop guidelines and policies that help protect buyers from purchasing illegal merchandise.

Ms. Stairs says if Mr. Shymko had paid with PayPal, he would have been protected up to the full amount of the purchase price - something Mr. Shymko says he's heard sev-

eral times since then, but which doesn't make him feel any better.

A recent search on eBay found 352 replicas of rare Canadian coins for sale, all but four from sellers in China. Another 9,950 replica U.S. coins were listed; of these, 9,134 were from China. There is nothing illegal about buying or selling a replica, as long as the coin is stamped as such. A collector who wants the 1936 "dot" Canadian 1¢, for example, might want a replica since only three genuine ones exist, going for prices of \$200,000 and up. A replica of the coin on eBay, however, is just \$4.65, with free shipping. A replica of the extremely rare 1921 Canadian 50¢ piece, which goes for \$35,000 to \$85,000, depending on its condition, was on offer for US\$4.

On eBay, the photographs of the coin copies show the word "replica" stamped into the coin. But if it arrives without a stamp, the buyer has a counterfeit coin.

To avoid being victimized by a counterfeit coin, it's best to stick to coins that have been independently examined, graded and encapsulated in tamper-proof holders. In Canada, that means only buying coins graded by International Coin Certification Service (ICCS) of Toronto or Canadian Coin Certification Service (CCCS) based in Saint-Basile-Le-Grand, Que. ([canadiancoincertification.com](http://canadiancoincertification.com)).

Louis Chevrier, CCCS president and chief grader, has been a coin collector for 35 years, a dealer for 16 years and a coin auctioneer for the past five years. He says he can usually spot a fake coin right away. "It raises a red flag with me. I get a gut feeling there is something wrong," he says, adding that some Chinese replicas are often crudely made but novice collectors could still be fooled.

Mike Marshall, a coin collector in Trenton, Ont., says he has tried without success to make police enforce Section 406 of the Criminal Code, which deals with counterfeit coins, and to persuade politicians to contact eBay and urge them to disallow the sale of "replica" coins. "One phone call from an agency of power in Canada to eBay would end the influx," Mr. Marshall says.

## E-BAY PULLS PHONY CANADIAN COINS

BY IAN ROBERTSON, TORONTO SUN

TORONTO — An Eastern Ontario man is rejoicing in the recent success of his two-year campaign to get counterfeits of classic Canadian coins dropped from eBay.

But it was a long and often frustrating haul for Mike Marshall, a collector and military retiree. Marshall, 48, he first faced a wall of uninterest and dismissal from police, plus officials in Ottawa, he said in an interview from Trenton.

And he said several “unscrupulous secondary sellers” who knowingly bought the made-in-China fakes then offered them for resale as genuine rarities, tried to undermine his attempt to alert officials, the public and collecting world. “I even had someone threaten me on an eBay chat line,” Marshall said.

What he and the RCMP got removed over the past week are not poorly moulded lead quarters, half-dollars and even the occasional dime and nickel that crooks duped the public with in the first half of the last century.

Instead, they are die-struck fakes of older Canadian and Newfoundland coins from large copper cents to gold spheres.

Six Chinese firms still produce them and legitimately sell their product in China, but they’re no longer listed on eBay, said Bret Evans, managing editor of the Canadian Coin News.

Newfoundland joined Confederation in 1949, but its old coins remain valid as pocket change, so fakes — not marked as being copies — fall under federal anti-counterfeiting laws.

The RCMP counterfeiting investigator, who backed Marshall and joined his campaign, said eBay will issue a statement today about banning sales of Chinese-made so-called “replica” and “copy” coins which were advertised with warning marks but were rarely counter-stamped as such.

Toronto-based eBay Canada Ltd. did not return an interview request made last Friday. But earlier this week, RCMP Sgt. Tony Farahbakhchian praised officials at the California-based Internet auction firm’s headquarters.

“It is a big victory,” he told the Sun from his Surrey, B.C. office. “We’ve had the utmost co-operation from eBay.”

They were not aware of the situation,” Farahbakhchian said. “They didn’t think they were doing anything wrong and we have thousands of these coins out there.”

Thanks to Marshall, the RCMP will have one of each — a reference collection of 117 fake coins which, he said, cost \$1,200. He paid \$221 for a complete set of 80 coins still available for direct purchase from one Beijing firm. If genuine, they would list in the trends column of the Canadian Coin News, a St. Catharines-based hobby paper, for \$296,312.

### ‘HUGE PART’

“Mr. Marshall played a huge part of it,” Farahbakhchian said of his efforts. “He spear-headed this.”

Collectors can pay big bucks for rare coins.

Not all replicas were of key coins, Evans said. But even those that appeared shiny and new appealed to collectors who could normally only afford a low-grade worn coin.

The problem is not just the buyer who wanted a good-looking coin, Marshall said.

It is also an unknowing estate seller or, worse, fraudsters who list them on eBay as genuine rarities worth hundreds, even thousands of dollars, Farahbakhchian said.

A knowledgeable collector can spot most copies by their metal content and slightly larger size, Marshall said.

Closer examination reveals mistakes such as incorrect typefaces and other flaws.

But Marshall said “unless you engrave them or mark them as copies, they’re going to find their way on to the market.”

“People would lose faith in the integrity of Canadian coins,” Farahbakhchian said.

Ironically, Marshall said, a U.S.-based eBay executive told him sales of Canadian coin copies would be halted if a police or government agency alerted them that making, selling or possessing fakes is illegal under federal laws. “I begged local police to seize the ones I bought,” to get the story out as a warning, he said. “They just laughed at me.”

A senior official at the Royal Canadian Mint in Ottawa appeared interested during initial discussions, “but I haven’t heard back from him in quite a while.”

Federal officials took notice after Farahbakhchian alerted investigators two months ago at an anti-counterfeiting conference in Niagara Falls, showing them detailed articles Marshall wrote in the paper. “Technically, you cannot possess any counterfeit coin,” the Mountie said. “It’s subject to the RCMP seizing them.”

The RCMP, however, is kept much busier chasing mass counterfeit currency crooks, plus importers of often-shoddy foreign-made fake commercial products.

To prosecute someone even with a small counterfeit collection, “you have to prove the person knew they were fake,” Farahbakhchian said. In the U.S., collectors can legally own a small reference collection of forgeries.

China permits production of coins pre-dating 1949. In addition to having an RCMP computer link for collectors to view the fakes Marshall donated, Farahbakhchian plans to have the force’s liaison officer appeal to its government to have companies cease making Canadian replicas.

As a collector, “I can tell the difference, but these are dangerously close,” he said. “People inheriting such coins may not know they are fakes.”

Examples of fakes that could fool an uninformed buyer include copies of a 1921 50 cents silver coin that fetches up to \$100,000 if real.

Since beginning his appeal, Marshall said, “I get at least two calls a week from people who have been duped.”

In one classic case of money not well spent, Edmonton collector Neal Shymko paid \$4,000 for made-in-China copies of Canadian coins he later learned were fakes.

A senior who lives near Trenton recently contacted Marshall about an 1894 50 cents piece, which the buyer thought, was worth thousands of dollars. He was left broken-hearted that “he spent a great deal of money on a \$3 piece of slag.”

One Hong Kong firm even tarnished some copies of its “key date” 1948 silver dollars — rarest of the large coins circulated from 1935-67 — to appeal to collectors who knew top-grade versions had been faked.



## LARRY STEVENS: NO COIN OR BIRD DETAIL ESCAPED PHOTOGRAPHER

BY LAUREN WISEMAN, WASHINGTON POST STAFF WRITER

Larry Stevens spent his early years as a professional photographer covering celebrities in Hollywood and Washington. He was a member of the White House press corps and took photos for some of the most popular magazines of the era: Time, Life, Parade and the old Saturday Evening Post.

In the 1960s, he left behind the world of bold-faced names. He forged a new career, one that brought him lots of money — literally.

Mr. Stevens, 87, who died Feb. 25 of cardiac arrest, became a leading photographer of coins.

“I had discovered that nobody can remember a Cabinet member’s name when he’s in office, let alone when he gets out, so there wasn’t a very good secondary market for much of my photography,” the Falls Church resident told COINage magazine in 1997. “I sat down to decide what I could photograph that would be of permanent value on film, something that could be sold over and over. And I decided on coins, stamps and birds.”

Mastering the art of 35-millimetre film, the numismatic photographer learned how to capture the fine details of coins, paper money and medallic art and how to produce photographs that required very little retouching. He would spend hours making sure he caught the correct grooves, shadows and dimensions of a coin, including how faces and images were raised ever so slightly from the coin’s surface.

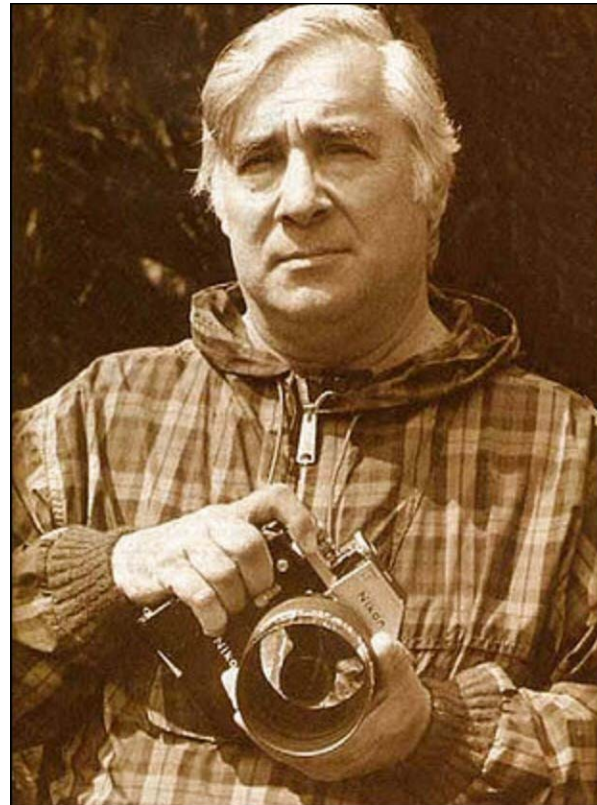
“Larry was able to focus on the nuances of the coin,” said Scott Travers, the author of coin books that include some of Mr. Stevens’ photos. “Coins are very small, and the photographer needs to capture a lot of artistic info in a very small space.”

“Just for a coin to appear circular, it has to be tilted in a certain way,” Travers added, noting that Mr. Stevens “would use props to tilt a coin at just the right angle so as to not appear oval in the photograph.”

Through his work, according to COINage Magazine, where Mr. Stevens

freelanced for many years, he had built up one of the largest private photo collections of rare coins, including photos of U.S. commemorative coins, Colonial-era coins and nearly all the coins created by the U.S. Mint since the late 1970s.

According to his daughter Wendy Stevens, Mr. Stevens had file cabinets filled with thousands of photos of coins, plus the negatives. When COINage or Coin World magazine would call him to request a specific coin, he would either pull from his file or photograph it.



*Larry Stevens taught himself bird photography. “I had found that bird painters were fudging a lot about bird anatomy. So I made it my job to photograph birds swimming and diving and walking,” he said. (Family Photo)*

By the mid-1970s, Mr. Stevens had photographed much of the National Numismatic Collection, rarities from the Philadelphia Mint and coins from the Chase Manhattan Bank Money Museum. He also photographed the coin collection of Eli Lilly, the pharmaceutical entrepreneur.

“It was a real challenge to photograph that collection, but I never had a failure. If I put a coin down, I had a picture,” he told COINage magazine in 1997.

Frank Lawrence Stevens was born in Chicago and headed an Air Force photography combat team during the Korean War. He refined his skills after the war, when he settled in Southern California and attended the old Fred Archer School of Photography. Besides his daughter, of Falls Church, survivors include his wife of 54 years, Mary Taylor Stevens of Falls Church; two other children, Lee Stevens of Falls Church and Lisa Forte of Annandale; a sister; and two grandchildren.

In the 1970s, he started to photograph wild birds to create a reference library, similar to the one he had created for coins, that bird carvers and artists could use. He also began to paint and carve wildfowl.

He also approached the art of bird photography from a technical viewpoint and taught himself how to take the best photos for bird carvers to use. He worked hard to capture exact feather patterns and color detail.

“I had found that bird painters were fudging a lot about bird anatomy. So I made it my job to photograph birds swimming and diving and walking,” he told COINage in 1997.

Each year, he attended the Ward World Championship Wildfowl Carving Competition and Art Festival in Ocean City and sold his prints to world championship carvers and artists.

By the late 1990s, when he was forced to give up photography, carving and painting because of Lewy body disease, a degenerative disorder that causes the loss of mental functions, his bird library included about 40,000 photographs.

“Larry’s 35-millimetre photography far eclipses even the very best computer technology we have today,” Travers said. “He was a master of his trade.”

## U.S. MINT MUST SEEK COURT OK TO KEEP RARE 1933 COINS

by Mary Claire Dale (AP)

**PHILADELPHIA** — The U.S. government improperly seized a set of extremely rare and valuable “double eagle” coins from a Philadelphia jeweller’s descendants and must win a forfeiture case to keep them, a judge ruled this week (July 28).

Ownership of the 10 gold coins — worth millions of dollars apiece — may be determined by a jury in a weeks-long forfeiture hearing.

The family of the late Israel Switt is suing to recover the double eagles, so named because they had a face value of \$20, twice the amount of gold coins known as eagles.

The government argues that none of the coins were removed legally from the Mint when President Franklin D. Roosevelt abandoned the gold standard in 1933. The stock-piled double eagles minted that year and wait-



ing to go into circulation were instead melted down, although a few apparently survived.

The judge’s order released Wednesday calls for the government to initiate a forfeiture hearing by Sept. 28. The hearing would likely amount to a trial in which the government would have to prove Switt’s family never legally possessed them, a family lawyer said.

Lawyer Barry Berke argues that some coins could have left the Mint legally through a gold exchange program in place at the time that attracted jewellers like Switt. “There was a period of time where it was permissible to exchange gold coins for gold bullion,” said Berke, who represents Switt’s daughter, Joan S. Langbord of Philadelphia, and her sons, Roy Langbord of New York City and David Langbord of Virginia Beach, Va.

They say they found the coins in a safe deposit box in 2003, 13 years after Switt died. The following year, they asked the Mint to authenticate them and suggested they were open to a negotiated settlement, perhaps akin to the 50-50 split reached in a previous case involving one double eagle coin. The collection could be worth nearly \$80 million or more. A comparable double eagle sold for \$7.59 million in 2002 — believed to be the highest price ever paid for a coin.

The family has previously asked for the coins’ return or a settlement of up to \$40 million.

U.S. District Judge Legrome Davis ruled that the government improperly seized the coins and denied the family due process when Mint officials decided to keep them after they were authenticated without a hearing. “The government’s ‘good-faith’ belief that the coins were once stolen is not sufficient, under the circumstances, to justify its decision to conduct a warrantless seizure,” Davis wrote.

Federal prosecutors representing the Mint declined through a spokeswoman to comment Friday.

In a statement, the family noted Israel Switt’s combat service in World War II and said they have tried to be open with the government throughout the long case. “Perhaps this was only a minor and personal battle, but nevertheless it is one where a family’s rights to receive fair treatment from the government of the United States was vindicated,” the statement said.

### Flashback:

In August 2005, the U.S. Secret Service announced the recovery of ten 1933 Double Eagle gold coins from the family of Philadelphia jeweller Israel Switt, the illicit coin dealer identified by the Secret Service as a party to the theft who admitted selling the first nine double eagles recovered a half century earlier. In September 2004, the coins’ ostensible owner, Joan S. Langbord, voluntarily surrendered the 10 coins to the United States Secret Service. In July 2005, the coins were authenticated by the United States Mint, working with the Smithsonian Institution, as being genuine 1933 Double Eagles. Currently, the coins are held at Fort Knox under lock and key.

After the announcement that the US Secret Service had recovered the coins and that they had been authenticated, Ms. Langbord publicly claimed that she inherited the coins from her father via legal means, and continues to threaten a federal suit concerning the surrendered coins. To that effect, Langbord has apparently retained the services of the attorney, Barry Berke.

According to various accounts, Israel Switt had many contacts and friends within the Philadelphia Mint, and reportedly had access to many points of the minting process. It is believed that Switt obtained the stolen 1933 Double Eagles through his personal relationship with Mint Cashier George McCann. One possible theory is that McCann swapped previous year Double

Eagles for the 1933 specimens prior to melting, thereby not compromising accounting books and inventory lists.

Some in the numismatic world have advanced an argument that Switt could have legally obtained the 1933 coins when he was exchanging gold bullion for coins. Although the Mint records clearly show that no 1933 Double Eagles were issued, there were allegedly three weeks in March 1933 when new Double Eagles could possibly have been legally obtained. The Mint began striking double eagles on March 15 and Roosevelt’s Executive Order to ban them wasn’t finalized until April 5.

The discovery of these 10 pieces in addition to the two held by the Smithsonian Institution and the one example sold for \$7.59 million has cast a serious light on these fabled coins in many ways. With the 10 coins, the population of known 1933 Double Eagles skyrocketed 333% overnight.

The Mint has stated an intention to preserve the coins for display. Until the early 1970s any recovered 1933 Double Eagle, as gold bullion, was destined to be melted. Therefore, while Double Eagles recovered prior to 1974 were melted down, any Double Eagle recovered now can be spared from this fate. Currently, with the exception of the one sold on July 30, 2002, 1933 Double Eagle coins cannot be the legal possession of any member of the public, as they were never issued and hence they remain the property of the US government.