

WILBUR WRIGHT COLLECTION COMES TO ANA MONEY MUSEUM

The coin collection started by Wilbur Wright, co-inventor of the first successful airplane, has been donated to the American Numismatic Association (ANA) Money Museum.

"This is an intriguing collection established by one of the first men of aviation," says ANA Curator Robert W. Hoge. "It provides a glimpse into the private world of one of America's and the world's great inventors."

Wright's collection encompasses more than 100 specimens from the 18th to the early 20th century issued by the United States, Canada, Mexico and Europe.

"The collection includes a number of pieces from Europe, where Wilbur toured in 1908, demonstrating his flying machine," Hoge says. "Some of the coins he may have picked up as he traveled from France to Germany, Spain, Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands and Great Britain. They provide a glimpse of the world before the advent of his airplane.

"When and how Wilbur Wright went about his coin collecting is unknown," Hoge adds. "Most of his correspondence deals with aviation and family matters, so we must assume that numismatics was a very personal avocation for him."

Wright and his younger brother Orville, flew the first powered airplane for 12 seconds at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina in 1903. Wilbur would later set the flight record at one hour and 31 minutes. Their efforts changed the world and will be commemorated on North Carolina's state quarter - "First in Flight" - to be issued in early in 2001.

Wilbur Wright died of typhoid fever in 1912, and his coin collection was held by his brother Orville. Neither brother ever married, but their other two brothers and sister did. One of the brothers, Lorin, had a son who married and named his son for his famous Uncle Wilbur.

"The coins were entrusted to my husband by Orville Wright's long-time secretary," says Priscilla Wright, widow of Dr. Wilbur H. Wright the grand-nephew and namesake of the renowned aviator. "Will spent a lot of his time growing up around Uncle Orville, and set his life's course according to his standards and those of his other famous uncle."

After receiving a doctorate in physics from Rutgers University, Dr. Wright came to teach in 1956 at Colorado College in Colorado Springs, Colorado, where the ANA is headquartered. During his long tenure, Wright received a number of awards, as well as several grants and fellowships from the National Science Foundation.

The ANA will mount an exhibit of select pieces from the Wilbur Wright Collection for display at the Association's National Money Show, in Salt Lake City, Utah, March 8-10, 2001. The collection also will be displayed at the Money Museum after building renovations are completed in the summer of 2001.

The American Numismatic Association is a congressionally chartered nonprofit educational organization dedicated to encouraging people to study and collect money and related items. The ANA helps its 28,000 members and the public discover and explore the world of money through its vast array of education and outreach programs, as well as its museum, library, publications, conventions and seminars. For more information, call 719-632-2646 or go to www.money.org.