

U.S. MINT'S FIRST STEAM PRESS TO STRIKE MEDALS FOR ANA

The first steam press used by the United States Mint will strike medals for the American Numismatic Association (ANA). It also will be on display at the ANA World's Fair of Money next summer in Philadelphia and at the Association's Money Museum in Colorado Springs, Colorado, after the show.

Gold, silver and copper medals, featuring designs similar to those used on the first pieces minted on the steam press in 1836, will be struck on the 164th anniversary of its initial operation in Philadelphia. The March 23, 2000, public striking ceremony will be held at The Franklin Institute Science Museum in Philadelphia, which has displayed the press since 1927 and operated it for many years.

"This is a wonderful piece of numismatic history coming to life," says ANA Education Director Gail Baker, who arranged for the striking and transfer of the press to the ANA. "Not only did this press strike coins for the Mint from 1836 to 1874, but it also struck medals and tokens at world's fairs and expositions for another 30 years."

Prior to the introduction of this steam-powered machine, the Mint produced coins on manually operated screw presses. The semi-automated lever steam press, utilized a toggle or knee joint to speed up the minting process. In one seamless motion, the press mechanically placed a coin blank in the collar atop the lower die, the toggle then turned to allow the hammer die to come down on the blank and strike it with great force before being pushed back up and allowing the coin to be ejected.

Technology improved, however, and by 1874, the Mint discontinued using its first steam-powered press. The following year, George B. Soley, a Philadelphia die sinker, bought the machine to strike commemorative medals and tokens at a variety of events, including the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia in 1876; Brooklyn Bridge opening in 1883; Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893; Pan American Exposition in Buffalo in 1901; and St. Louis World's Fair in 1904.

After his death, Soley's widow gave the press to The Franklin Institute Science Museum, which electrified and operated it for many years, striking medals for visitors to its museum in Philadelphia. The Franklin Institute was founded in 1824 to teach the mechanical arts and celebrate Benjamin Franklin's scientific legacy, from meteorology and music to electricity, optics and aquatics. It also has served as a clearinghouse for inventors and as a repository of patent material, drawings and models. Today the institute is a world-renowned leader in hands-on science education.

Dr. Denis M. Wint, president and chief executive officer of The Franklin Institute, says, "We are pleased to join the ANA in this exciting project, especially since this machine holds a special place in America's numismatic history."

The press will be displayed at the World's Fair of Money in Philadelphia and then shipped to Colorado Springs, Colorado, where it will be exhibited at the ANA Money Museum.

On behalf of the ANA, Joe Rust, of the Gallery Mint Museum, has refurbished and refitted the press, saying, "It was a wonderful experience to work on this press that carries so much history with it. It's a fine machine and in wonderful working order."

Ron Landis, also of the Gallery Mint Museum and who is hand-engraving new dies for the March 23, 2000, striking ceremony, says, "I am using (19th-Century Mint Chief Engraver) Christian Gobrecht's designs for the original medal struck on this press. The Liberty Cap' will be unchanged on the obverse and only the wording will be changed on the reverse."

The outer ring of the reverse will read: "U.S. Mint First Steam Coinage Press," while the inner circle of the medal will read "ANA Philadelphia Mar. 23," with the date 2000 at the bottom of the piece.

The medals will be the same size as the pieces struck in 1836 - 27 mm. The ANA will produce no more than 20 medals in 22kt gold (approximately 25 grams) and 200 medals in .999 fine silver on a pre-order basis at a cost of \$595 and \$50 each, respectively. No more than 2,000 medals in 99.5 pure copper will be struck and sold for \$18 each. Those attending the ceremony next March who have ordered a medal can activate the striking of their own piece. Proceeds from the sale of the pieces will be used to offset costs associated with refurbishing and moving the press.

For more information about the March 23 striking ceremony or to order a medal, contact the ANA Education Department at 818 North Cascade Avenue, Colorado Springs, CO 80903; telephone 719/632-2646; fax 719/634-4085; E-mail education@money.org; or visit the ANA Web site at www.money.org.

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.