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ANOTHER VIEW ON COIN PRESERVATION

By Carl Querbach

Mr. Paul Johnson, in a recent article entitled "Coin Preservation" (Ontario Numismatist, September 1971, p. 72), raised a question of considerable importance to all serious numismatists. Experiments I have made with various types of coin holders would suggest, however, that the matter is a bit more complex and difficult than he indicated. My comments are based in part on my own tests and in part on a very helpful book by Mr. Charles Frank entitled Coin Preservation Handbook (Coingard Industries: 1964).

For ideal protection a coin should not come into contact with normal atmosphere, moisture, fingerprints, rubber bands, dust or dirt. It should also be protected from any kind of physical damage such as nicks, scratches, or rubbing. In my judgment there is currently on the market no thoroughly satisfactory coin holder. An ideal holder would combine the following features: absolute airtightness, visibility on both sides, complete physical protection, reasonable cost, and a receptacle for an air-drying agent such as silica gel. I will evaluate the presently available types of holders against these standards, going from the poorest to the best.

Perhaps the worst place for coins (except for keeping them loose in a cigar box) is a Whitman coin folder. It offers at best physical protection on one side only, though even this is uncertain because coins can become loose and fall out. It offers no protection from the atmosphere; in fact, it offers less than none, since the paper it is made of tends to attract moisture and to tarnish the edges and backs of the coins in it. Since there is visibility on only one side, there is a temptation to remove coins from time to time causing possible fingerprints, scratches or nicks.

The traditional paper coin envelope offers slightly better physical protection by covering both sides of the coin, but only if great

care is always exercised when removing it. The coin must not be touched with the fingers, breathed upon, nor allowed to fall onto a hard surface. These envelopes, being paper, also tend to cause tarnish themselves. The convenience they offer and their extremely reasonable price have made them very popular, but they are quite unsuitable for brilliant uncirculated material. There is also some possibility of rubbing as the envelopes slide against each other in a storage box.

The Whitman Bookshelf Albums are quite expensive, but have nevertheless been quite popular--unjustly so in my opinion. They do have the advantage of both side visibility and good physical protection (not perfect, since coins often slide loosely in the holes and can be rubbed thereby). But they are anything but air-tight, and the portion of the paper pages which is in contact with the edges of the coins tends to tarnish them in a peculiarly unattractive way. Anyone who has stored a brilliant uncirculated collection in one of these albums for any length of time will know what I mean.

The widely used 2x2 fold-and-staple mylar coin holder offers several distinct advantages. It is convenient and inexpensive, it offers visibility on both sides, and the coin is completely in contact with an inert plastic film which will not harm its surface. But this holder is far from airtight, and, worst of all, if it is punctured (a fairly common occurrence, since the plastic film is very thin) the coin will tend to tarnish rapidly and deeply in the particular spot where the hole or tear is. For the same reason the physical protection provided is less than desired. The staples in one holder can scratch the coin in the holder next to it in a storage box. These holders are very popular with dealers because they offer low cost, good visibility, some protection, and a convenient place to write information. For long-term storage of a fine collection, however, they are quite unsatisfactory.

It would seem that most of the difficulties mentioned would be avoided by slipping these holders into the 20-pocket plastic pages which are in wide use. But all that is really gained is better physical protection, and this is offset by the danger of the holders falling out and by the unfortunate fact that the flexible vinyl plastic commonly used for these pages is not chemically inert and will tend eventually to tarnish the coins. The same objection must be made about the popular 2x2 plastic coin envelopes made from this same type of flexible plastic.

There is also on the market a rather expensive snap-lock holder of hard plastic which is sometimes advertised as airtight. My tests with blue silica gel (which can detect the invasion of moisture) have demonstrated that these holders are not in fact airtight. It may take longer, but coins in them will tarnish just as surely as coins kept in

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any of the holders previously mentioned. The physical protection they provide is not quite adequate either. Coins have an annoying way of fitting just loosely enough to slide around whenever handled. If the high spots of the particular coin are higher than its rim, a rub is quite possible. These holders are quite hard to open, and it is rather easy (I speak from sad experience with a favourite gem coin) to drop or scratch a coin when removing it from one of them.

The expensive three-layer plastic holders which are assembled with plastic screws are somewhat better, but again neither airtight nor damage-proof. I have seen many an older proof set in one of these holders with ugly tarnish working its way across the coins from an obviously less airtight edge. They can also harm rims or cause handling damage if the fit is too tight--an all too common occurrence.

A word on storing rolls. Plastic coin tubes, though sometimes represented as airtight, are in fact not. Some collectors try to overcome this fault by sealing them with tape. This should never be done, since chemicals in the adhesives used in common types of tape tend to cause discolouration. (The same is true of the adhesive used in self-stick coin holders, which are for that reason completely unsatisfactory). Sealing with wax is more satisfactory, though the process is messy and the airtightness of the seal is not verifiable. The plastic tubes also allow the coins to touch, move around, and rub each other--not so serious, perhaps, for common current rolls, but very bad for top premium material.

Can coins, then, be kept brilliant and free from damage? Not easily, I'm afraid. Mr. Frank, in the book previously mentioned, has some ingenious ideas on the subject, but none of them meets all my criteria for the ideal coin holder. He does, however, make one very valuable point. He demonstrates that most corrosive agents in the air or in papers, plastics, or adhesives are much less likely to cause tarnish or damage if the storage environment is very low in humidity. He recommends, therefore, putting the coins themselves into one or another type of inert, though not airtight, holder and sealing the holders in an airtight case, can, or jar (such as a paint can or a canning jar). Into this container one places a quantity of silica gel, a drying agent in crystal form which can be obtained at larger drug stores, taking care that it does not touch the coins themselves. The silica gel greatly reduces the humidity in the sealed container, and the coins do indeed stay bright. The trouble, of course, is that you cannot take them out and work with them without breaking the seal and removing them temporarily from this low-humidity environment. Paint cans and fruit jars do not fit smaller safe-deposit boxes either. But the idea is still the best I know, and it does reduce the period of susceptibility to atmosphere to a minimum. Some collectors try to get around the inconvenience involved by simply placing bags of silica gel in their safe-deposit boxes or safes. This helps somewhat, but in the absence of airtight sealing the gel must be replaced frequently to be effective.

Another approach is simply to buy heavily toned coins in the first place. Though these are subject to further tarnishing, the surface is somewhat more stable and less subject to drastic change from its present appearance. And some people find such pieces more attractive than brilliant ones. But this is not much help if you collect more recent issues, since most of these are either brilliant or have been repeatedly cleaned when you get them.

Faced with this somewhat dismal picture, I think the collector simply has to make up his mind what is more important to him, the best possible protection regardless of cost and trouble, or lower cost and greater accessibility despite preservation risks.

Editor's note -

The following letter was received by Area Director, Mel Fiske, and we felt its contents should be shared by our members. Here goes:

September 6, 1971

Dear Mel:

On my visit to your home, you asked me about what I call "My Wonderful World of Watch Fobs". I have found that the words "watch fobs" will bring one of two reactions, i.e., "Oh, yes, my grandfather had a fob which hung on his watch chain", or "What's a watch fob". The latter comment I get most frequently; the first comment is correct. Grandfather did have a pocket watch with a chain which passed through the button hole in his vest and on one end was his gold pocket watch and on the other end, usually a knife. Along the chain, so that it was visible, was a small gold ornament known as a fob.

This type of fob is still in demand today as a charm for a woman's charm bracelet. However, when grandfather went to work in the field or at the shop come Monday morning, he did not wear this chain as it was too costly to take a chance on losing it, so he tied a string to the watch and placed it in the pocket on the bib of his overalls. It did not take him long to find out that the string did not last long, so he soon made up a leather strap only to find it stuck straight out. The next step was to hang a weight on the leather strap so it would lay along side the body.

Somewhere around 1880, some enterprising advertising sales man decided this weight would be an ideal place to put a message about a product, and so the advertising watch fob was born.

Used at first by farm machinery manufacturers to advertise their products, and later by almost every business which had an advertising budget, the fob was the first known advertising novelty and has been replaced in today's modern society by pens, cigarette lighters, ash trays, calendars, etc. There are still fobs being used by manufacturers of construction machinery which show present day bulldozers and earthmoving equipment. These are worn with pride by operators of this equipment.

The main interest in fobs today, however, centres around the collector, and there are three clubs, with well over 700 registered members active today. Two of these clubs are in the United States and one is in Canada. The one International Club holds a two-day show in the spring of each year and the Canadian Club holds a two-day show the last week-end of September each year in Hamilton, Ont.

At this point, I am sure a lot of people will be asking "What does a fob look like and what is so interesting about them?" Well, a fob can be recognized by the bail on the medal. Most all military medals and sporting medals have a small hole and a ring through the hole so it can be attached to a ribbon. The fob has what is called a bail or slot usually wide enough to pass a $\frac{1}{4}$ " or $\frac{5}{8}$ " wide leather strap through it and the bail was stamped as part of the medal. On the front of the fob is usually a picture of the manufacturer's product or emblem, and the reverse had the company name and a message about

their product. Many of the now dead car manufacturers advertised their cars via the watch fob.

If you have ever had the opportunity to examine a fob, you would soon recognize the craftsmanship which went into making of the die, as on many of the old machinery fobs, almost every detail of the machine could be recognized, even to the nuts and bolts which held it together. Although the finished fob did not come up to the standard of today's proof and mint-like coins and medals, the workmanship and detail in the designs was in my opinion superior to any coin today.

So that just partly explains my "Wonderful World of Watch Fobs". There are so many things to learn in fob collection, i.e., what varieties there are, where to find them, how to recognize and identify fobs when you do find them, and on and on.

Some interesting facts: The largest known collection in North America - 2600 - owned by Allan Hoover in Illinois. The largest Canadian collection - 1100 - owned by myself. If this sounds like an interesting hobby and you are within driving distance of Hamilton on September 25 or 26, drop in at the East Hamilton Kiwanis Boys Club on Ellis Avenue, opposite the Greater Hamilton Shopping Centre, and see the collectors and their collections. If you do stop and say hello, be prepared to spend a few minutes while I try to sell you on "My Wonderful World of Watch Fobs". If you can't make it there, do drop a line - I just love to talk about fobs.

Sincerely,

Bill Mitchell,
4 Elm Dr., Stoney Creek

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NEWS AROUND THE COIN CLUBS

BRANTFORD NUMISMATIC SOCIETY -

The first meeting of the fall season had as its theme "Coinage of Newfoundland", an O.N.A. Audio-Visual Program. Editor John Barchino urged everyone to get behind the Club and make the winter months a real success.

HURONIA NUMISMATIC ASSOCIATION -

The President, Bill Gage, introduced the film "Waterdevil" which was enjoyed by all. One of the features of the evening was a prize given for the person standing on a pre-arranged spot which was won by Lloyd Russell. A lively auction was also greatly enjoyed.

INGERSOLL COIN CLUB -

The highlight of the last meeting was a talk by Bill Clarke of London on "Private Banking in Southwestern Ontario". As Bill has specialized in this subject the talk was most interesting. Also a worthwhile auction took place.

KITCHENER COIN CLUB-

The fall started off with a film "Breath of Spring". It was felt that the program chairman, Jim Dum, got his seasons mixed but anyway the film proved very interesting. This was followed by a lively auction.

LONDON NUMISMATIC SOCIETY -

The first fall meeting featured as guest speaker, Jim Finch who spoke on "Russian Coinage" and his talk was both interesting and informative. A fine auction followed under

the leadership of Lloyd T. Smith assisted by Ted Leitch and Norm Link.

NIAGARA FALLS COIN CLUB -

The first fall meeting featured the O.N.A. Audio-Visual film on "the Coinage of Israel" from ancient to modern. This is an excellent film and was thoroughly enjoyed.

ORILLIA CHAMPLAIN COIN CLUB-

The editor, Gordon Horne, reports everyone ready to start the fall season off with a bang. The September meeting was mostly taken up with plans for the forthcoming show.

PEMBROKE CENTENNIAL COIN CLUB - Meets the 2nd and 4th Mondays.

Hold their meetings at Victoria Hall over the police station, the editor, Les Milberry, tells us. It is nice to have a new club represented here. So keep it up, Pembroke, and keep us informed of your meetings. The club held a successful Junior Show in the spring and are planning a Senior one a little later.

ST. THOMAS NUMISMATIC ASSOCIATION -

The ONE HUNDREDTH meeting featured the film "Coins of Israel" by Art Leff and anniversary cake and coffee. Congratulations on being One Hundred. Keep it up.

THISTLETOWN COIN CLUB -

Are sending out a frantic call for Executives - Editor, Vice-President, etc. The Juniors are growing in number and the club had a trader's night at the first fall meeting.

WATERLOO COIN SOCIETY -

The September meeting was called "Pre Oktoberfest Night" and featured some slides on Oktoberfests previously. There was also a report from Albert Fuller on the C.N.E. Show.

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PROPOSED COIN SHOWS

Listed below are the proposed coin club annual show dates and banquets. Check, please, to see if they conflict with your club's date.

- Oct. 9-10 - Kitchener Coin Club annual Show and Banquet in the Walper Hotel, Kitchener.
- Oct. 17 - Stratford Coin Club Annual Show at the Legion Hall, 207 St. Patrick St., Stratford. Details re bourse, etc., to Stratford Coin Club, P.O. Box 262, Stratford, Ont.
- Oct. 23 - St. Catharines Coin Club Annual Show and Banquet in Westminster United Church Parish Hall, Queenston St., Details re bourse, etc. to Howard Hill, 1 Hayes Ave., St. Catharines.
- Oct. 24 - Tillsonburg 9th Annual Coin Show and Hobby Show at the Orange Hall, Brock St. East. Details re bourse, etc., Charlie Laister, No. 3 Highway, Tillsonburg, Ont.
- Oct. 30 - Hamilton Coin Club 125th Anniversary Show at the Hindoo Koosh Grotto, 121 Hughson St.N., Hamilton. Contact Show Chairman, P.O. Box 325, Station "B", Hamilton, Ony.
- Nov. 13-14 - Windsor Coin Club Annual Show at Norton Palmer Hotel, Park St. at Pelissier, Contact Windsor Coin Club, Box 173, Sandwich P.O., Windsor 10, Ont.

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- Mar. 25-26- Waterloo Coin Society Annual Show at the Holiday Inn, No. 8 Highway, Kitchener, Ont. Details to Box 41, Waterloo.

THE BREAD TOKENS OF ONTARIO - continued from Sept. issueHAMILTON

A.M. Ewing/Hamilton (Diamond)	
Good for/1/loaf/of bread)2 Dots)	A-R-21
Good for/1/loaf of bread (2 Dots)	C-R-21
A.M. Ewing/Hamilton. (Bar)	
Good for/1/loaf/of bread (2 Stars)	A-R-20
J.W. Geiger,/302/King St./West./Hamilton.	
Good for/one/half/loaf bread	A-R-21
J.W. Geiger,/302/King St./West/Hamilton	
Good for/one/loaf bread	A-R-25
Wm. Hazel/Jr/Hamilton/Ont.	
Good for/1/loaf/of bread	B-R-22
R.B. Hill/Hamilton.	
Good for/one/loaf	A-R-29
H. Howes/Baker/232-234 King W./Hamilton, Ont.	
Good for/½/loaf of bread	A-0v-30X22
Jackson's/Bakeries/Ltd.	
One/unsliced/loaf	PL-R-28-Green (C.H.)
One/sliced/loaf	PL-R-28-Red (C.H.)
Jarvis/Home Made/Bread/241 Hunter E./Phone 2458	
Good for/1/loaf of bread	A-R-25
Wm. Ees & Son,/Hamilton. (3 Plumes in centre)	
Good for/one/loaf	B-R-29
J.H. Rodgers,/Baker/232 York St./Hamilton, Ont.	
Good for/one/loaf bread	31½X21½
J.F. Sheehan,/Baker/Hamilton.	
Good for/one/loaf bread	A-R-25
R. Skerrett/223/York/St./Hamilton.	
Good for/6/cents.	B-R-25
Mark Smith & Co./173/York St./Hamilton	
Good for/one/loaf bread	A-R-25
Sunshine/Bread Co. Ltd./Hamilton. Ont.	
Good for/1/loaf of bread	A-RE-32X19
The Swan/Bakery and/Confectionery	
Good for/1/loaf	A-RE-32X19

HANOVER

At/G.A. Rozel's/Bakery/Hanover, Ont.	
Good for/one half/loaf bread	A-R-25

HARRISTON

J. Hucks/Baker/Harriston.	
Good for/1/loaf of bread	A-Sc8-28
At/Weber's/Bakery/Harriston, Ont.	
Good for/one half/loaf bread	A-R-25

HARROW

N.G. Hope/Bakery/&/Confectionery/Harrow, Ont.	
Good for a/5¢/loaf of bread	A-R-25

HAVELOCK

J.V.A. Coon/Grocer/and/Baker/Havelock, Ont. A-R-25½
 Good for/small/loaf/or value/in merchandise

HAWKESBURY

Jos. Hurtubise/Baker/Hawkesbury, Ont. A-S-31
 Good for/one/large/loaf A-O-29
 Good for/one/small/loaf
 Good for/one/small loaf/W. Wilson A-O-27
 Hawkesbury/Ont.

HEPWORTH

A.F. Cunninghams/Baker/Hepworth B-R-25
 Good for/half/loaf bread A-R-25
 Good for/one loaf/of bread

INGERSOLL

Geo. A. Bone/Bakery/Ingersoll A-S-26
 Good for/one/loaf of bread (notched corners)
 Chas. Allin/Baker/Ingersoll. A-R-25
 Good for/1/loaf of bread

INWOOD

N. W. Smith/Baker/West End./Inwood, Ont. A-Sc4-28
 Good for/1/loaf of bread

KEMPTVILLE

A. Robinson,/Baker A-Ov-32x22
 Good for/1/loaf of bread
 A. Robinson,/Baker A-RE-33x20
 Good for/1/loaf of bread

KENORA

City/Bakery/Kenora. A-R-28
 Good for/one/loaf

KINCARDINE

C. Sturgeon/Baker/&/Confectionery,/Kincardine.
 Good for/one loaf/of/bread

KINGSTON

W.J. Crothers/King St./Kingston. A-R-20
 Good for/½/loaf of bread A-R-25
 Good for/1/loaf of bread
 Jas. J. Lackie's/Bakery/Kingston, Ont. A-R-25
 Good for/1/loaf of bread A-R-25
 Good for/2/loaves of bread
 R.H. Toye/Baker/Kingston A-R-25
 Good for/½/loaf of bread
 R.H. Toye/Baker/Kingston A-R-28
 Good for/1/loaf of bread
 R.H. Toye/Baker/Kingston A-RE-32x18
 Good for/1/loaf of bread

KINGSVILLE

John Cooper & Son/Bakers/Kingsville/Ont. A-Sc4-29
 Good for/1/loaf/of bread.

KITCHENER

Naciuk's/Bakery
Good for/1/loaf/of bread A-0-23

LANCASTER

John Caron/Baker/Lancaster, Ont.
Good for/1/loaf of bread A-RE-33x20

LEAMONGTON

F. Harrison
Good for/1/loaf/of/bread B-Sc8-29

LINDSAY

T.J. Allen,/City Bakery/Lindsay, Ont.
Good for/1/loaf of bread A-RE-33x20

A.B. Terry/Confectioner/Lindsay.
Good for/½/loaf of bread. A-R-20

LONDON

O.J. Fridle/451/Dundas St./Phone 1065/London.
Good for/1/loaf/of/bread A-R-25

One Loaf/1/B.F. Brighton (Incuse)
(Blank) W-R-24½

Fitzgibbons Bakery/326/Ridout St./London, Ont.
Good for/1/loaf of bread A-Sc4-28½
Good for/1/loaf of bread (8 struck) B-Sc4-28½
Good for/1/loaf of bread (8 struck) C-Sc4-28½
Good for/1/loaf of bread (8 struck) W-Sc4-28½

D. Gilmore/London
Good for/1/loaf A-Sc8-28

J. Gwalchmai/Baker/London, Ont.
Good for/1/loaf of bread A-Sc8-29

H & J. MacFie/Bakers/Corner of/King & Ridout/
St's./London, Ont.
Good for/1/loaf/of bread A-0-27

W.D. Miller/London/Ont.
Good for/one/loaf/bread A-Sc8-28
Good for/1/loaf of bread A-Sc8-28

R. Willis/No. 639/Dundas St./London, Ont.
Good for/1/loaf of bread A-Sc8-29

LUCAN

T.A. Webb/Baker/and/Confectioner/Lucan.
Good for/1/loaf of bread A-Sc8-28

LUCKNOW

Dominion Bakery/Good for/½/loaf/T.Reid/Lucknow
(2 of ½ protrudes beyond "F" in loaf)
(Beaver) A-R-18
(Beaver) (2 of ½ does not extend to)
(end of "F" in loaf) A-R-18

Dominion Bakery/Good for/1/loaf. T. Reid/Lucknow
(Coat of arms) A-R-28

MacKenzie's/Bakery/Lucknow/Ont.
Good for/1/loaf. A-Sc8-28

CANADIAN NATIONAL EXHIBITION

A very attractive O.N.A. Exhibit was set up at the 1971 C.N.E. Forty-eight exhibit cases were on display for the public to view. This is the largest type of non-competitive exhibits by individual adult and junior exhibitors to be available to the non-collecting public. The C.N.E. attracts over 3,000,000 visitors and if 5 to 10% of these view the exhibits then we are really promoting the hobby to the uninitiated general public.

Chairman Albert Fuller is to be commended on his dedicated participation both in time and energy. Many collectors may not be aware of the fact that the only place on the grounds that the official C.N.E. medals were available was at the O.N.A. Exhibit. Mr. Fuller with the help of a non collector friend, Mr. Vernon Forrest, were the star salesmen at the show, out-selling all other members who manned the exhibit. Clubs represented came from Toronto, Tillsonburg, Kitchener, St. Catharines, London, Waterloo and the Ontario Numismatic Association. Those who helped man the table were, A. Fuller, V. Forrest, M. Fiske, J. Baxter, W. English, S. English, I. Smith, F. Lieshout, R. Trimble, C. Laister, P. Lambert. The Central Coin Club manned a table to promote their club and were well satisfied with the results.

Next year we would like to have as many clubs as possible participate even if it is only for one day, Let the O.N.A. know how we may assist. Many clubs supplied information on their annual shows which were prominently displayed. A special vote of thanks is due to John Baxter who, in order to assist medal sales, donated six free draw prizes and a number of Apollo 11 First Day Covers.

The co-ordinator of the Arts, Crafts and Hobbies building, Fred Brown must be thanked for his handling of all the problems in an efficient manner. For the members interested in C.N.E. medals the O.N.A. has these medals available from 1963 to date. A price list is available.

IN MEMORIAM

It was with deep regret that your executive learned of the passing away of Willy Mahrt, well known in numismatic circles, especially around Tillsonburg, London, Stratford area. Our sympathy goes out to the family in their sad loss.

THIS 'N THAT - must be brief this month because we have tried to catch up on as much as possible backlog of news--The C.N.E. show as far as the O.N.A. is concerned has been well covered elsewhere, just wanted to say I hope what was started this year will grow and grow, start to plan now for next year, January not June or July or there isn't time for a good show--I see our old friends, the MacNabs, are back--sounds like they had a ball over home--Fall's here again and clubs are out of mothballs and perking again--let's have your news by 22-24 th month-

NEW MEMBERS - Applications in the September issue have now been accepted. The following new applications have been received and will be accepted in the November issue if no written objections are received.

- #822 - Paul C. Rochon, P.O. Box 244, Station (A), Toronto 116, Ont.
- #823 - Leslie Brown, 11 Minto Street, Toronto 255, Ont.
- #824 - Corie Nelson Gowlett, Sr. 34 Boulton Ave. Toronto 275, Ont.
- #825 - Bob Gregg, 3827 Lawrence Ave. E. Scarborough 721, Ont.