



Media only: Valeska Hilbig (202) 633-3129
Neal Hobson (202) 633-3129

Smithsonian to Display Rare Proof Coins at Numismatic Convention in Baltimore

Washington, D.C., July 7—The Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History will showcase 21 numismatic rarities from its National Numismatic Collection at the World’s Fair of Money convention hosted by the American Numismatic Association from July 30 to Aug. 3 at the Baltimore Convention Center. “Historic Rarities: Early United States Proof Coins,” will include the 1860 double eagle proof pattern with the Paquet reverse, a special design made by its engraver, Anthony Paquet, and a previously unknown variety of an 1818 proof half dollar as part of the traveling display.

Initially, the Philadelphia Mint made proof coins as showpieces to demonstrate American talent and innovation. These early proofs are recognized by their mirror finish and feature sharper relief than found on coins made for circulation. The coins in the “Historic Rarities” display are part of a larger collection transferred to the Smithsonian by the U.S. Mint in the 1920s.

“This traveling display provides an opportunity to showcase extraordinary and rare proof coins, including an 1818 silver half-dollar proof which our curator recently reclassified as unique as it is the only one made at the time,” said Brent D. Glass, director of the National Museum of American History. This display represents the museum’s second appearance at the Baltimore convention.

“NGC and NCS are immensely proud to be presenting sponsors of this exhibition; proof coinage and Paquet’s pattern demonstrate first hand the beauty of coinage and the active human role of designers and engravers. Showcasing these rarities is a wonderful opportunity for the numismatic community,” said Mark Salzberg, chairman of the Numismatic Guaranty Corporation.

The display is divided into four sections: Early Proofs, 1843 Proofs, the Anthony Paquet double eagle pattern and Baltimore national currency proofs.

The objects in the group of early proofs include coins of several denominations dating from 1818 to 1821. The coins were minted in several different metals, including copper, silver and gold.

The group dated 1821 is likely the only such grouping in existence.

The set of coins dated 1843 includes rare examples of the artistry and evolving techniques of the period, including coins of which fewer than 10 examples survive today. Here, visitors will see an 1838-O half dollar from New Orleans , a legendary coin among collectors as only about a dozen of them survive.

The 1860 double eagle pattern is unique because of its special Paquet reverse and the fact that it was struck in gold. All other examples of this coin were struck in copper.

The fourth set of items will be of special interest to Baltimore residents because it includes paper proofs of currency circulated by Baltimore's national banks. The two paper proofs provide a window into the city's prominent role in American banking during the immediate post-Civil War period.

The "Historic Rarities" display draws from the museum's National Numismatic Collection, which consists of more than 1.5 million objects, including coins, medals and paper currency and preserves the role of money in economic history. Previously, the museum has sent displays to Denver and Orlando. Each exhibition in the traveling coin program is designed specifically for its particular venue.

Background

The "Historic Rarities: Early United States Proof Coins," traveling display will appear at the World's Fair of Money in Baltimore from July 30 to Aug. 3, located at the Baltimore Convention Center, One W. Pratt Street in Baltimore.

Numismatic Guaranty Corporation of America and Numismatic Conservation Services LLC are the presenting sponsors of the exhibition. Numismatic Guaranty Corporation of America certifies and authenticates rare coins, tokens and medals. Numismatic Conservation Services is the sole professional service dedicated only to the conservation of numismatic objects. Both NGC and NCS are independent members of the Certified Collectibles Group, headquartered in Sarasota, Fla.

The National Museum of American History is currently closed for major renovations and will re-open in fall 2008. For information about the museum, please visit <http://americanhistory.si.edu> or call Smithsonian Information at (202) 633-1000, (202) 633-5285 (TTY).

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