

ANS

AMERICAN
NUMISMATIC
SOCIETY

2018
ISSUE 1



DEPARTMENTS



on the cover:
Detail of a Pan American Airlines lithograph
poster advertising travel to Guatemala by
Paul George Lawler, ca. 1938 (Library of
Congress, LC-USZC4-11783) 104 x 69 cm.

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ANS MAGAZINE
2018

Volume 17, Issue 1

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The *American Numismatic Society Magazine* is published four times a year by the American Numismatic Society. Annual subscription rate is \$72. Copies are mailed to all members of the ANS. Single copy is \$18. Overseas airmail is an additional cost. A membership in the ANS includes a subscription to the magazine. To inquire about a subscription please contact: ANS Magazine Subscription Dept. (212) 571-4470 ext 117, orders@numismatics.org. All rights reserved. No part of this magazine or its cover may be reproduced without written consent of the copyright proprietor. Opinions expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the ANS. Printed in Canada.

The American Numismatic Society, organized in 1858 and incorporated in 1865 in New York State, operates as a research museum under Section 501(c)(3) of the Code and is recognized as a publicly supported organization under section 170(b)(1)(A)(vi) as confirmed on November 1, 1970. The objectives of the ANS have evolved into the mission ratified by the Society’s board in 2003 and amended in 2007 and 2016: “The mission of The American Numismatic Society shall be to promote and advance the study, research, and appreciation of numismatics”.

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From the Executive Director

Ute Wartenberg Kagan

Dear Members and Friends,

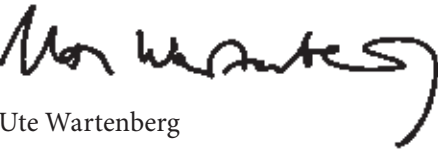
February is usually a very quiet month at the American Numismatic Society. After the busy weeks in January, when the New York International Numismatic Convention brings many visitors to our vault and the library and we hold our annual gala, we usually have time to clean up our offices and relax a little bit. As you will read in this issue of the *ANS Magazine*, at the gala, which was held in the beautiful surroundings of Harvard Hall at the Harvard Club, we honored the Rosen Family, who have been among our most steadfast and generous supporters for many decades. It was a very special event, attended by over 180 people, many of whom had come to New York to attend auctions and to visit with old friends.

By early February, I was ready to turn to some long overdue correspondence and administration, when my colleagues and I received an email that greatly alarmed us. We heard something new concerning the North West Territorial Mint (NWTM) chapter 11 bankruptcy proceeding. After an unsuccessful attempt to reorganize the business, the Trustee in charge announced that he would liquidate all assets. Why this matters so much to the Society is that NWTM also owns the Medalllic Art Company (MACO), the longest-lasting and arguably most important private mint in the US. Like many other institutions, the ANS has long been using MACO to strike its medals, including the Huntington Award and Saltus Award medals. Since its foundation in New York City in 1903, MACO has served generations of America’s finest sculptors and other artists in the production of their work, as well as countless non-profit and for-profit institutions in their desires to produce various commemorative, award, and other medals. Because medals have long been recognized as a standalone art medium, and one that is that is far more affordable to acquire than larger sculptures or paintings, MACO has also served to put fine art into the hands of many Americans who might not otherwise have had the chance to own the original work of a great artist.

What was now proposed, and without much warning to the institutions or artists concerned, was a sale of the dies, galvanos, sample medals as well as, of course, all machinery and other assets. When I approached the Trustee in charge of the proceedings, we learned that the dies were considered to be simply tools and thus the property of MACO, not of the institutions or artists. It was then proposed that the ANS bid for the holdings of dies, galvanos and samples (although only those prior to 1997). At this point, ANS Trustee Mary Lannin and I decided to visit the company’s facilities in Nevada in order to get a better idea of their holdings. What we saw there was an extraordinary archive of medalllic art, covering the entire twentieth century, in which works of many of the most famous sculptors were represented. Further, the archives provide an extraordinary overview of a slice of American history from the perspective of companies, clubs, schools and so on, many of which are extinct today.

As often in bankruptcy auctions, the assets of a company might be dispersed, or, as a real threat in this case, leave the United States altogether. Losing the dies and archives as well as the extraordinary cataloguing work that has been put into preserving everything for the last 115 years would be a huge loss to future generations. Should these dies fall into the wrong hands, particularly those beyond the reach of US law enforcement, unauthorized medals could be produced confounding awardees, collectors, and the institutions themselves.

The Trustees of the American Numismatic Society therefore decided to place a bid for this material. At the time of writing, we are all waiting to see what the judge in this case decides. If successful, the ANS will be able to continue its role as one of the stewards of medalllic art in this country. We will keep our membership informed as this story develops!


Ute Wartenberg

Facing page: The author with a denarius of Augustus in the Swenson Collection (Swenson 2400–375; RIC Augustus 87A) (Photo by Lesser Gonzalez Alvarez).

TEXAS TREASURE: The Renaissance of the Swenson Collection

Giuseppe Castellano

Rome, AD 238. “Where are your Germans now?” jeers the soldier, stabbing his victim. The emperor Pupienus bellows and claws at his assailant, pulling at his purse-strings in desperate struggle. A shower of bright silver denarii falls from the soldier’s belt and scatters in the pool of blood spreading across the paving-stones. The soldier scrabbles at the ground, taking up wet handfuls of bloody coins, freshly minted in the image of the dying man. With a final round of curses, the assassins retreat. Hours later a rag-and-bone man finds a bloody denarius between two stones.

Gotland, the Baltic Sea, AD 450. The dreamer’s coin shines through the passing clouds, a crisp silver disk. A wet snick as the spade cuts through rocky mud, a squelch as the spade-load slumps onto the spoil heap. The digger pauses to wipe his brow, takes a draught of ale from the flagon at his side, and returns to digging. When the hole is deep enough, he sets his spade against the rock where his sword leans and heaves the chest down into the earth. He opens it and plucks up a small silver coin. This he flips back and forth across his thumb and forefinger. Old kings and strange southern runes glint in the moonlight. He lets it fall again, clinking brightly among its fellows. He locks the box, buries it, and shoves the stone into place. The digger then girds his sword, takes up his spade, and walks back to the beach. He throws his tools aboard his boat and shoulders it down the shingle with a grunt as the hull grates against gravel. With a prayer and a dip of his oars, he sets out once more on the wide whale-road.

Offenbach am Main, Germany, AD 1815. The forger works by candlelight. Flames dance as he examines the coin between his thumb and forefinger. The forger sets

the coin down and pulls out his loupe, bowing deeply across the table to catch the light. He stays there for a long moment studying the coin intently. The forger observes the subtleties of the inscription, the tight curls of the beard, the minute rendering of the emperor’s pupil. With a sigh of admiration, the forger sets down his loupe and walks to the window, observing the moonlight over the river Main, scattered like pearls across black velvet. A cat purrs and rubs against his leg. The forger returns to his workbench, takes up his burin, and begins cutting his die.

Austin, Texas, AD 2017. The scholar peers at a silver coin in the lab, a small windowless office in the University of Texas football stadium that serves as project headquarters for the Swenson Digitization Project. He sets the denarius of Pupienus (fig. 1, Swenson 2400–1292, RIC IV Pupienus 1) down on the table and removes his glasses, closing his eyes and pinching the bridge of his nose. Pupienus reigned April to July 238, less than a semester, before he was killed in the streets of Rome. Despite his short tenure, the coins he minted are fairly numerous, perhaps an indication of the significant military expenditure required for survival during the crisis of the third century. Clearly the copious denarii were not enough to buy more time from the legions. Replacing his glasses, he turns back to the glowing screen and begins to type.

Every coin has a story, and a collection as rich as the Swenson has many such stories to tell. What might these coins tell us of the thousands of people that have handled them over the last two-and-a-half millennia? Where have they travelled? What events, mundane and spectacular, have they witnessed? A collection is not



Fig. 1: Pupienus, Rome, AR denarius, c. AD 238 (Swenson 2400–1292; photo by the author). 20 mm.



Fig. 2: Svante Magnus Swenson (by Brasier & Co., Prints and Photographs Collection, di_11073, The Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin).



Fig. 3: Prof. Alex Walthall with an aureus of Augustus (Swenson 2400–364; RIC Augustus 206) (photo by Lesser Gonzalez Alvarez).



Fig. 4: Prof. Alex Walthall and students in his graduate seminar on ancient numismatics study coins in the Swenson collection first-hand (photo by Lesser Gonzalez Alvarez).

only the sum of its parts, the many stories of thousands of individual coins, but also the biography of the collection as an assemblage in itself. The collection takes on a second life as an historical entity in its own right. Such a collection, and the archival materials associated with it, can provide a unique perspective on numismatics, antiquarianism, and the more general historical context in which it came to be.

Svante Magnus Swenson, the first documented Swedish immigrant to Texas, was a prominent figure in the state's history (fig. 2). He donated his collection of coins and medals to the University of Texas at Austin in 1891. This gift, described as “princely” by the grateful administration, was the first major donation to the university, which had only been founded ten years earlier in 1881. The Swenson is among the largest such collections in the South. It comprises some 3,500 Greek, Roman, and Byzantine coins. Swenson also donated 1,800 European medals, many in silver, dating from the 17th to the 19th centuries. In the 125 years since it has been at the University of Texas it has been overlooked and under-used and has never even been catalogued in its entirety. Security concerns and lack of funding have precluded the realization of the Swenson collection's full potential for over a century.

The Swenson Digitization Project's goal is to catalogue, record, and publish online the Swenson collection of ancient coins at the University of Texas at Austin. Now, the internet has provided us with a secure and cost-effective digital platform to share these coins with the world. Classics Professors D. Alex Walthall and Rabun Taylor, along with a team of graduate and undergraduate students, have taken up this long-overdue project. The final product, entitled *Online Database of the Swenson Coin Collection*, will be available on the web in the style of the University of Virginia's *Fralin Numismatic Collection* (<http://coins.lib.virginia.edu/>). Once digitized, the Roman Imperial coins in the Swenson collection will be data-linked to OCRE, the American Numismatic Society's Online Coins of the Roman Empire (OCRE, <http://numismatics.org/ocre/>). This diverse collection will finally be accessible to students and scholars everywhere.

The size of the Swenson collection, as well as its broad temporal and geographical range, render it an excellent teaching collection. The digitization project itself is giving UT students the rare opportunity of working hands-on with a world-class coin collection (fig. 3). Professor Walthall has already used the collection as a teaching aid in graduate seminars (fig. 4). Besides their use in his ancient numismatics seminar, the coins of the Swenson collection have proven equally valuable in

other courses, for example on the archaeology of Hellenistic kingship, where they served to illustrate firsthand the development of ruler portraits and royal propaganda. Outside of the classroom, student volunteers are identifying and cataloguing the coins of the Swenson collection, developing their research skills and enjoying the satisfaction of working on a “real-world” academic project with a tangible public impact.

The History of the Collection

The story of the Swenson collection begins in Napoleonic Sweden. August Wilhelm, Baron Stiernstedt, was born on December 14, 1812, in Stockholm, on the very day that the frostbitten remnants of Bonaparte's once-*Grande Armée* limped homewards across the Russian border. Sweden, Russia's ancestral enemy, was allied with France. In 1810, the Swedes had elected Napoleon's (French) Marshal Bernadotte to rule as heir presumptive to the decrepit and childless King Charles XIII, thereby ending three centuries of native Vasa rule. A string of defeats against Russia in the 18th and early 19th centuries had left Sweden, once a European power, greatly weakened. December 14, 1812, was surely a grim day in Stockholm.

August Wilhelm was scion of the Stiernstedts, a noble Swedish family that had served the Crown since at least the turn of the 17th century as jurists, soldiers, and politicians. His ancestor Carl Johan Stiernstedt had dedicated his life to the fight against Russia, spending 13 years in captivity in Siberia after Sweden's resounding defeat at the Battle of Poltava in 1709. Perhaps the birth of baby August sweetened the undoubtedly bitter mood at Fullersta Gård, the family seat, a manor house that old Carl Johan had acquired in 1748.

A jurist by profession, young August Wilhelm's true passion was history, heraldry, and numismatics. He was a member of Parliament and held the prestigious positions of Royal Chamberlain and State Herald. The Baron wrote several important works on Swedish nobility, heraldry, and numismatics. His monograph on the famous copper money of Sweden won grand prize of the Royal Academy of Swedish Archaeology in 1857. August Wilhelm was a founding member of the Swedish Numismatic Society and president from 1873 until his death in 1880.

Despite the honors and laurels that he received, Stiernstedt was considered by some to be a ruthless man who used his rank, title, and connections to further his own interests. He was obsessed with enlarging his collection, and seems to have used his social capital in an ethically questionable manner. The great Swedish poet Carl Snoilsky, for example, criticized the Baron's methods. Stiernstedt had—perhaps unfairly—purchased

Snoilsky's large collection when the poet was forced to leave Sweden following a divorce in 1878.

August Wilhelm succumbed to typhus in 1880 at Bröd-torp Manor in Pojo, Finland, then part of the Russian Empire. On Stiernstedt's death, a large part of his personal collection of coins and medals was purchased by Svante Magnus Swenson. The 1882 auction catalogue, hastily written in French by Otto Heilborn and riddled with errors, is the first and only thorough publication of the collection.

Svante (or Sven, or Swen) was born in 1816 in Lättarp, Barkeryds Parish, Jönköping, in the southern Swedish province of Småland, and emigrated to the United States in 1836. A family story claims that his ship burned in New York harbor before his baggage had come ashore, leaving Swenson with just the shirt on his back. Nonetheless, he found work as a clerk in New York, as a bookkeeper in Maryland, and in 1838 Swenson became the first of many Swedish immigrants to Texas. He survived a shipwreck off Galveston on the way. Ever the opportunist, Swenson allegedly went down to the beach the next day, salvaged what he could of the wreck, and sold it in a remarkable display of business acumen. Through a series of savvy maneuvers and lucky breaks, Swenson became one of the largest landowners in the young Republic. By the 1850s he managed a booming mercantile business and owned several cotton plantations across Texas and Louisiana. Swenson's investments in the Buffalo Bayou, Brazos, and Colorado Railway allowed him to acquire 100,000 acres in West Texas. His extensive landholdings and runaway success in business made Swenson fantastically wealthy.

Swenson exploited slave labor, despite his own avowed ideological opposition to the practice. It has been suggested that this opposition to slavery drove him to encourage Swedish immigration to Texas, in order to bolster the free work force. Swenson offered to defray the cost of passage to America in return for a year's labor on his land in a form of indentured servitude. The scheme worked and many Swedes from Swenson's home parish in Småland emigrated to Texas on the so-called "Swedish pipeline." By the outbreak of the Civil War, Swenson had sold all of his slaves. Clearly Swenson was a businessman first and an abolitionist second.

In 1861, the shadow of secession was spreading across the country as slave-states withdrew from the Union. Texas Governor Sam Houston, who opposed secession despite being a slave-owner and an anti-abolitionist, charged Swenson with supplying his hoped-for Army of Texas and even offered him a position on the general

staff as Quartermaster-General along with a Colonel's commission. Houston's bid to avoid Texas' withdrawal from the United States failed in the face of the successful secessionists, however, and Swenson's promised colonelcy fell through. Swenson continued to oppose secession from the Union and refused to take up arms for the Confederacy, but remained in Texas nonetheless, exporting cotton as an agent of the Swedish Crown. The trade in cotton was crucial to the Confederate war effort, so Governor Francis R. Lubbock allowed Swenson to travel for business. Swenson's special dispensation to travel, along with his opposition to secession, enraged many staunch Texan confederates. In 1863, amid threats of death, Swenson transferred ownership of his Texas assets to his relatives and fled to Mexico and thence to Sweden. Swenson would never again live in Texas.

In 1865 Swenson took his family to New York City and there established a bank, S. M. Swenson and Sons. This was eventually incorporated into the First National City Bank of New York, a precursor to Citibank. Despite his new residence in New York, Swenson maintained a strong connection with Texas, visiting often until his death in Brooklyn in 1896. His descendants still live in Texas and continue to run SMS Ranches.

The Swenson family has left a lasting mark on Texas. One example is the venerable Palm School, one of the first elementary schools in Austin. Established in 1892 as the Tenth Ward School, it was renamed in 1902 after Swenson's uncle, Swante Palm (born Swante Jaensson), a great benefactor of education in early Austin (fig. 5). Swante, like his nephew, was an important and influential man in his day, serving as Justice of the Peace for Travis County, postmaster, and alderman for Austin. He was instrumental in Swenson's initiatives to bring Swedes to Texas, and in 1866, as vice consul to Sweden and Norway, he received the Order of Vasa from King Carl XV of Sweden and Norway for his role in encouraging immigration to the United States. Between the 1840s and the 1920s, half of the inhabitants of Barkeryds, the home parish of Swenson and Palm, emigrated to Texas.

Swante Palm was known as an intellectual who loved his books and even ran an unofficial lending library out of his home. Not only did he seek knowledge, but he sought to share it: he was known to run an unofficial lending library out of his home. He had been turned on to reading as a young boy by his parish clerk in Småland who recognized his passion and ability and bought him his first book. On his death in 1899, Swante donated his immense library of 12,000 volumes, primarily in Swedish, to the University. This gift formed the basis of the early library collection.

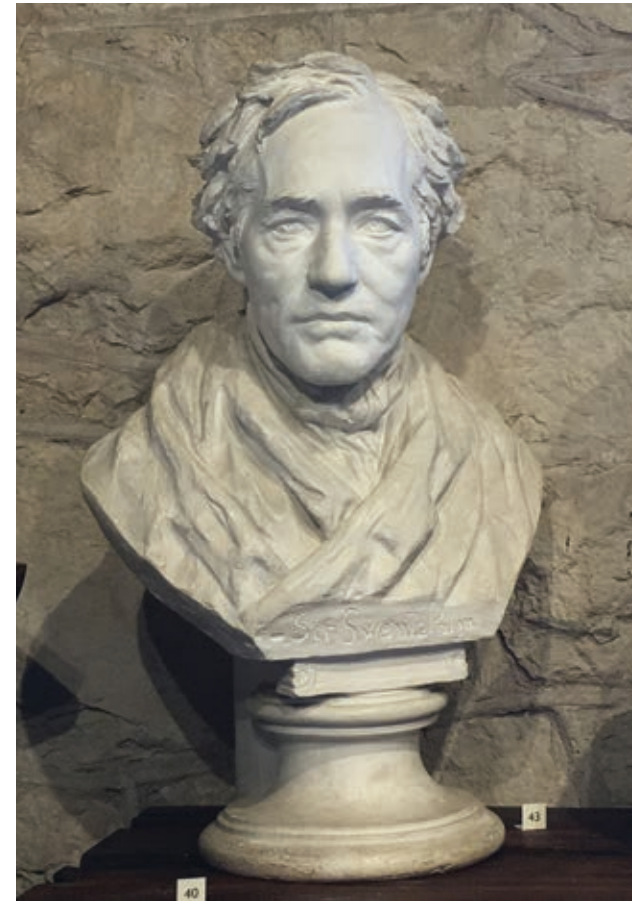


Fig. 5: Bust of Sir Swante Palm, uncle of Svante Magnus Swenson, by Elisabet Ney, held at the Elisabet Ney Museum in Austin, Texas (photo by the author).

In 1891, five years before his death, Swenson donated his coin collection, then valued at the sum of \$75,000 (\$1.9M in 2017 dollars), to the University of Texas. In the words of Vivian Richardson, *Dallas Morning News*, the collection was transported from New York to Galveston by "gallant little steamers" bearing "pieces of eight, pieces of gold and silver, bronze monies from the pockets of the twin Kings of Sparta, fat black coins from the cupboards of the Cesars [sic], pirate gold from islands of the blue Aegean, medals of old Ruric of Russia and Constantine, [and] tiny tarnished bronze pieces which were given in payment for wine and olive oil by small dark men to small darker men of the trading boats."

Despite Richardson's palpable enthusiasm, these coins have not always enjoyed such a rapturous reception, nor the treatment they deserve. The early tenure of the collection at UT reads like a comedy of errors. Within ten years of the coins arriving at the university, their keepers lost the combination to the enormous safe that



Fig. 6: A young woman holds a tray of coins from the Swenson collection (Swenson Coin Collection, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin).

housed the collection (fig. 6). It took 27 years to finally reopen it. Since then, only a small number of the coins have ever been exhibited and only for brief periods.

The Swenson collection has evoked mixed reactions throughout its history. In 1978, a well-respected numismatist at the University of Texas called the collection "sizeable and distinguished," but in 1985, another expert disagreed, noting that it "is not a collection that I would call distinguished." Such divergent opinions, informed by differing systems of value among the audience, are not unusual when it comes to collections. It is important to appreciate the Swenson for what it is: an excellent teaching collection of significant numismatic breadth with some noteworthy coins. It is not, however, a first-tier collection of rarities in excellent condition, nor is it comparable to the great national and university collections. Whatever one's opinion, Prof. Walthall and the Swenson Digitization Project are ensuring that this collection is finally receiving the attention that it deserves, over a century after its presentation to the University.



Fig. 8: Lucania, Metapontum. AR stater, c. 540–510 BC (Swenson 2400–2733; photo by the author) 30 mm (images enlarged).



Fig. 7: Aegean Islands, Aegina. AR stater, c. 600–550 BC (Swenson 2400–3036; photo by the author) 21 mm (images enlarged).



Fig. 9: Sicily, Himera, AR drachm, c. 550–484 BC (Swenson 2400–2807; photo by the author) 22 mm (images enlarged).



Fig. 10: Sicily, Naxos, AR litra, c. 530–490 BC (Swenson 2400–2824; photo by the author) 11 mm (images enlarged).



Fig. 11: Rome, AE as, c. 280–276 BC (Swenson 2400–001; photo by the author) 72 mm.

Highlights of the Collection

The 3,500 coins of the Swenson span two-and-a-half-millennia, from Aeginetan silver staters to Italic bronze asses, from Ostrogothic kings to Syracusan tyrants, from Lusitania to Persia. Its primary strength is in Roman Imperial coinage, but the Greeks and the Byzantines are also well-represented. The strong showing of imperial denarii and solidi suggest a Swedish provenance for some of the coins, from Late Antique hoards, as we shall see below. Many pieces come from the Western Mediterranean, which led Prof. John Kroll, Professor Emeritus in Classics at the University of Texas, to believe that some of the coins were collected there. Per-Goran Carlsson of the Swedish Numismatic Society has suggested that there may be some connection with Gustav Daniel de Lorichs (1785–1855), a Swedish nobleman and collector who served as a royal envoy to Spain from 1815 until his death in 1855. While abroad on diplomatic service he acquired a large collection of ancient coins, many Spanish, which eventually came into the possession of the Swedish Royal Coin Cabinet. It is likely that Stiernstedt was involved in these transactions and acquired some of these coins for himself, which may partly explain the many Spanish and Western Mediterranean coins in the Swenson collection.

The Swenson collection includes several of the famous Aeginetan silver “turtles,” some the first coinage minted in Greece proper (fig. 7). The earliest piece that we have probably dates to the early 6th century BC, and is quite possibly the oldest coin in the collection (Swenson 2400–3036). It bears the turtle, symbol of Aegina, on the obverse and like most early coinage it has a square incuse punch on the reverse. The thick, dumpy flan is typical of the early coinage of the Aegean. This particular example bears a countermark, which may suggest that it travelled somewhere other than Aegina and was accepted as valid currency there. These silver staters circulated widely in the Archaic period and represented the first Greek “international currency,” in which role they were superseded by the even more famous Athenian “owls” in the late 6th and early 5th centuries.

In southern Italy, the earliest coinage was also incuse, but rather than bearing square punches on the reverse these coins had detailed incuse reverses in alignment with the obverse type that mirrored the relief in negative counter-relief. This style was known as “double-incuse.” Such coins were time-consuming and technically challenging to produce, which may explain their brief duration and rapid replacement with double-relief coinage. Various explanations have been given for this remarkable double-incuse technique, from the practical (ease of stacking) to the philosophical, specifically the influence of Pythagoras, whose father was a

gem-engraver and who spent much of his life in Croton and Metapontum. More recently, however, it has been suggested that the thinness of the flan in combination with the incuse reverse would have made it more difficult for forgers to produce silver-plated imitations with base-metal cores. Famous cities in Magna Graecia which minted in this style include Croton, Metapontum, and Sybaris, and the Swenson includes examples of all of these. Pictured is a stater of Metapontum from the second half of the sixth century BC (fig. 8, Swenson 2400–2733). It bears an image of a barley-ear, the symbol of the city, representative of the great agricultural wealth of the Metapontine hinterland.

Alongside these earliest Italian issues are also some of the first coins from Sicily. One of the most ancient pieces in the Swenson is a rare drachm of the Chalcidian colony of Himera, bearing a cock on its obverse and an incuse mill sail pattern on the reverse, and dating to the second half of the 6th century BC (fig. 9, Swenson 2400–2807).

The Swenson collection also contains examples of rare early Sicilian small silver, including two litrai of Naxos, another Chalcidian colony that began minting coinage around the same time as Himera (Swenson 2400–2823 and 2400–2824). These tiny coins bear the head of Dionysus on the obverse and a bunch of grapes on the reverse (fig. 10). Unlike the drachm of Himera, which was minted on an imported Greek silver standard, the litrai of Naxos appear to conform to a native Sicilian libral standard, representing the equivalent of the indigenous bronze pound in silver. Before the introduction of Greek-style coins to Italy and Sicily, the native peoples used bronze lumps, objects, and ingots by weight against the native Italic libral standard as a means of exchange, a store of wealth, and a measure of value. These coins represent an attempt to convert between the two traditions, imported Greek and indigenous Italian.

The Swenson collection is not limited to coins and does contain some examples of non-monetary currency. One of the most impressive pieces in the collection is a rare example of Rome’s first aes grave, the large, cast, coin-like bronze ingots that served as currency in 3rd-century BC Italy. Our aes grave was produced around 280 BC, bearing on its obverse the janiform head of the Dioscuri and on its reverse the head of Mercury wearing his winged traveller’s hat (*petasus*) (fig. 11). At 297 g, it weighs a full contemporary Roman pound of bronze (Swenson 2400–001; RRC 14/1). Like the litrai above, these ingots were influenced both by indigenous Italic and imported Greek elements. The aes grave are thus bound to the Italic tradition by weight standard, metal,



Fig. 12: Campania, Neapolis(?), AR didrachm, c. 310–300 BC (Swenson 2400–035; photo by the author) 17 mm.



Fig. 13: Rome, AR denarius, c. 115–116 BC (Swenson 2400–279; photo by the author) 18 mm.



Fig. 14: Gelimer, Carthage, AR 50 denarii, c. AD 530–534 (Swenson 2400–2463; photo by the author) 16 mm.



Fig. 15: Uncertain mint (barbaric imitation), AR denarius (Swenson 2400–381 photo by the author) 19 mm.



Fig. 16: Augustus, Gallia, Lugdunum, AR denarius, c. 2 BC–AD 4 (Swenson 2400–380; photo by the author) 20 mm.



Fig. 17: Tetricus I, AR denarius (Becker imitation) (Swenson 2400–1556; photo by the author) 20 mm.



Fig. 18: Leo I, Thessalonica, AV solidus, c. AD 462–466 (Swenson 2400–2262; photo by the author) 21 mm.

and production technique, but are round like coins and are cast with Greek-influenced iconographical elements on the obverse and reverse.

One of the most remarkable coins in the Swenson collection is the famous Mars/Horse's head ROMANO didrachm, Rome's first silver coin (fig. 12, Swenson 2400–035; RRC 13/1). Probably minted in Campania between 310 and 300 BC, this extremely scarce coin represents a Holy Grail of ancient numismatics. The Mars/Horse's head ROMANO issue is the first of a series of coinages generally referred to as Romano-Campanian, reflecting its dual cultural identity as a “Roman” coin minted entirely in accordance with Campanian tradition, in a region of Italy with strong ties to the Greek world. These early Romano-Campanian issues were most likely minted as a response to specific regional needs in an area long monetized on the Greek model. It has been suggested that the Mars/Horse's head ROMANO issue was produced in order to pay for construction of the Via Appia from Rome to Capua. The Via Appia was one of Rome's first great roads and was built by the censor Appius Claudius Caecus between 312 and 308 BC in order to facilitate Roman military access to the south during the Samnite Wars. The southern Italian workers, whether Campanians, Greeks, or mixed, would have expected payment in coin, and this Romano-Campanian coinage answered their demand. Coins would not be used at Rome itself for another century.

Though they were relatively slow to take up the practice of minting coins, the Roman aristocracy (besides recognizing the obvious economic benefits) quickly understood the potential of coinage as propaganda in the fiercely competitive social and political milieu of the Mid- to Late Republic. By the end of the second century BC, Roman moneyers had begun to adorn their coins with iconographic references to their *gentes*, or clans, and to their illustrious ancestors. In a society with such a reverence for the dead and a fanatic dedication the *mos maiorum*, or ancestral custom, a reference to one's distinguished pedigree was a strong endorsement of one's own greatness.

An excellent example can be found in the denarius of Marcus Sergius Silus (fig. 13, Swenson 2400–279; RRC 286/1). This coin was minted by Silus when he served as quaestor in 116 or 115 BC, in honor of his eponymous late 3rd century ancestor, M. Sergius Silus *Ferrus*, the famed commander of the Second Punic, Illyrian, and Gallic Wars (and, according to Pliny, the great-grandfather of the popularist conspirator Catiline, of Ciceronian infamy). The elder Sergius was wounded 23 times in two campaigns, losing his right hand in the second campaign. This he replaced with an iron

prosthetic that allowed him to hold his shield, from which he got the *agnomen* (honorary name) *Ferrus*, or “Iron.” He was particularly known for his one-handed exploits against the Gauls in what is now northern Italy, and it is probably one such episode that is depicted on the reverse of our coin. M. Sergius Silus gallops left on a rampant horse, a shield in his iron right hand, wielding his sword with his left. The severed head of a Gaul, instantly recognizable by its wild spiked hair, hangs from his sword-hand. The denarius of M. Sergius Silus illustrates well the colorful nature and vivid iconography of Late Republican coinage, as well as the Roman predilection for violence and gore.

Among the rarest coins in the Swenson collection are the issues of the Vandal kings of North Africa, for example the 50-denarius piece of Gelimer, considered one of the very first medieval coins (fig. 14, Swenson 2400–2463; MEC 1, 26). Gelimer (r. AD 530–534) was the last king of the Vandals, defeated by the great Byzantine general Belisarius in AD 534 as part of Emperor Justinian's lifelong bid to restore the Western Roman Empire. For his victory over the Vandals in Africa, Belisarius was granted the last-ever Roman triumph, which contributed to his reputation as *ultimus Romanorum*, or “Last of the Romans.” The deposed Gelimer lived out his life in Galatia on an imperial land-grant.

The Swenson collection has its share of fakes, both ancient and modern, which have fortunately not been weeded out. Though not “genuine,” they are interesting in their own right and are worthy objects of numismatic study. Among the ancient ones are several silver-plated bronze coins, known as *fourrées* or *subaerati*, primarily denarii. Some of these plated coins may be “official” issues, produced in order to increase the mint's revenue, and some may be simple forgeries. There are also contemporary barbaric imitations. An excellent example is our ancient copy of an Augustan denarius (fig. 15, Swenson 2400–381). It has the simplified, stylized iconography typical of Celtic or Germanic imitations and the nonsensical inscription consisting of shapes made to look vaguely like Latin letters (and which may have succeeded in fooling an illiterate). These are fairly common, especially in “Barbaricum,” the regions of central, northern, and eastern Europe outside of the empire proper. Such barbaric imitations are often found in the same Swedish migration period hoards that may represent the provenance for some of our denarii and solidi. We luckily possess a genuine example of the same type that allows for helpful comparison (fig. 16, Swenson 2400–380; RIC Augustus 207).

Among the modern fakes in the Swenson collection are several pieces that have been identified as works of the

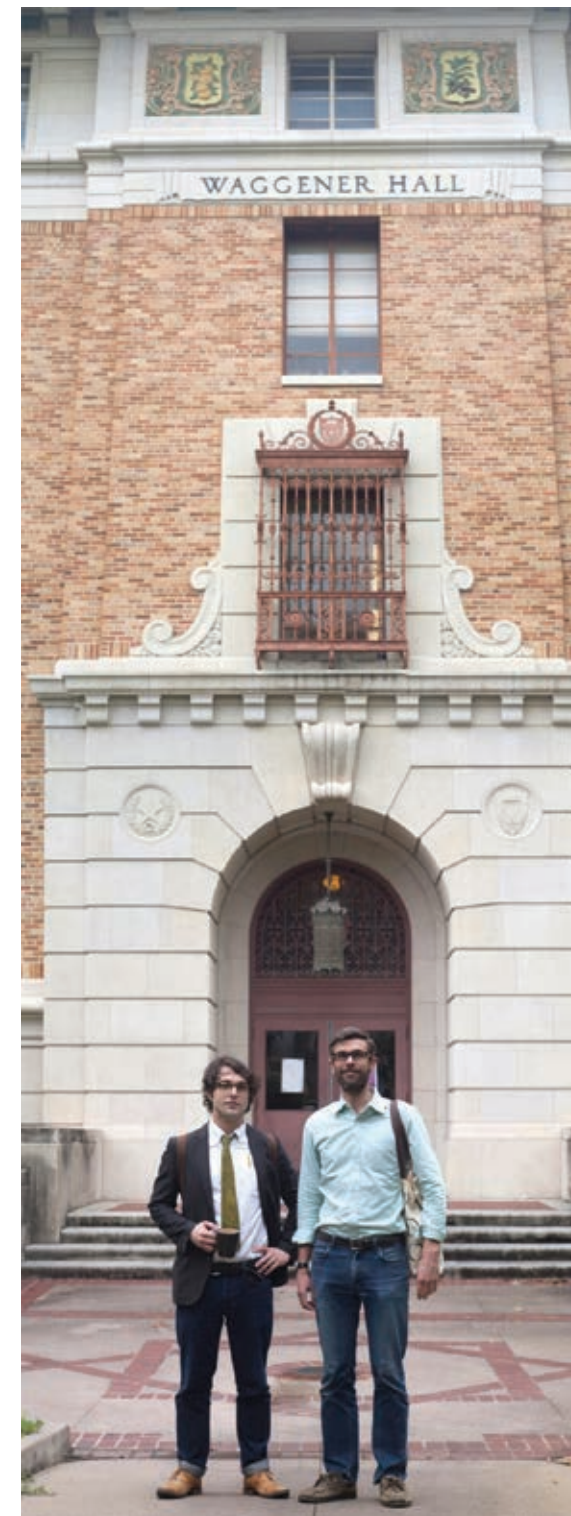


Fig. 19: Dr. Alex Walthall (r.) and the author outside Waggener Hall, home to the Classics Department at the University of Texas (photo by Lesser Gonzalez Alvarez).

most famous coin-forgers in history, the German Carl Wilhelm Becker (1772–1830). Among these is an imitation of a rare denarius of Tetricus (r. AD 271–274), ruler of the Gallic Empire (fig. 17, Swenson 2400–1556). The Gallic Empire was a breakaway state of the Roman Empire that functioned as a sovereign power between AD 260 and 274, during the great crisis of the 3rd century. Becker’s imitations are noted for their quality, in particular his attention to the inscriptions, which is often a weak point of modern forgeries. He was known to work meticulously from originals and not from drawings as so many others. Becker would even “age” his pieces by putting them in a box full of iron filings attached to the springs of his carriage and driving back and forth between Offenbach and Frankfurt, a practice which he called “taking his old gentlemen on a ride.” Not only was Becker a prolific forger, but he was a respected numismatist, antiquarian, and art dealer. Goethe visited him in 1815 and was full of praise for “Antiquary Becker,” as he was known in his lifetime. On occasion, he would sell his own work as legitimate. Around 1825 an Italian called Sestini exposed Becker as a falsifier of ancient coins, but Becker took this in stride and was forthright about his imitations, which he henceforth sold openly as copies until his death in 1830. Though imitations, Becker forgeries have become highly collectible in their own right, and continue to fool numismatists. In addition to enriching the historical significance of the Swenson collection, the presence of these copies render it an even more effective pedagogical tool, allowing fakes to be spotted “in the wild.”

Further Directions

Though not forgotten by the numismatic community, the Swenson collection has for the last century been fairly inaccessible for study. The collection has mainly sat in storage, aside from relatively brief periods in which small portions of the coins were publicly exhibited. Despite some attention paid it by Drs. Carmen Arnold-Biucchi, T. V. Buttrey, and John Kroll, among others, the Swenson collection has been largely ignored, primarily because of the lack of a modern publication. The renewed attention inspired by the Swenson Digitization Project has already caused something of a stir, particularly in the Swedish numismatic community.

Until recently, the portion of Stiernstedt’s coins that Swenson purchased and donated to the University was thought to have represented the entirety of the Baron’s collection. This is not the case. Research undertaken for this article has proven that Swenson only purchased part of the collection, while the medieval and Viking-age coins were acquired by Finnish industrialist Herman Frithiof Antell. Antell was a wealthy collector of art, coins, and weapons, and his collections—including his portion of Stiernstedt’s coins—were donated

upon his death and now form the core of the Ateneum in Helsinki, one of the constituent museums of the Finnish National Gallery. Our own Swenson collection seems, therefore, to have a long-lost Finnish sister in the Antell collection. A parallel error seems to have been made in Sweden regarding the fate of the Stiernstedt collection. According to the Royal Archive’s online biography of Stiernstedt, the *entirety* of the collection was sold to Antell and eventually donated to the Finnish Museum. This is obviously untrue. Thanks to the Swenson Digitization Project, the two known portions of Stiernstedt’s collection have finally found each other, 137 years after they were separated.

Thanks to the Swenson Digitization Project, the collection is already contributing to numismatic study on an international scale. Professor Ingrid Edlund-Berry of the University of Texas has kindly facilitated contact with interested Swedish scholars in order to further study the history of the collection. These include Prof. Svante Fischer of Uppsala University, who tracks the Late Roman solidi in Scandinavian hoards back to payments made in the empire; Prof. Ragnar Hedlund, a Roman archaeologist and numismatist also at Uppsala; and Prof. Lennart Lind of Stockholm University, who studies the circulation, use, and deposition of Roman denarii in Northern Europe. These contacts have already increased our knowledge of the Swenson collection, and continued cooperation promises even more fruitful collaboration. Until recently, for example, we had no idea of the provenance of any of the coins in the Swenson collection, besides that they originally came from Stiernstedt’s collection. Now, thanks to our Swedish colleagues, we know that the many of the denarii and the solidi that make up a significant portion of our collection probably came from Migration period Scandinavian hoards, particularly those on the rich Baltic island of Gotland.

The Migration period refers to a time roughly corresponding to the Late Empire and very Early Middle Ages, between 400 and 800 BC, preceding the Viking Age in northern Europe. Silver denarii circulated in Barbaricum from the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD into Late Antiquity. Roman denarii, primarily from the 1st to the 3rd centuries AD, represent the first coins used in Sweden. Denarii have been found in vast numbers in Sweden, in particularly on the thriving trading-center of Gotland, where 7,000 of the 8,000 total from Sweden have been found both in hoards and as scattered finds. These coins are often found alongside later gold solidi of the 5th and even the 6th centuries AD.

Though the denarii and solidi appear together in hoards, the silver coins are earlier and probably arrived

in Scandinavia before the gold coins. The gold solidi appear to have made their way north not by way of commerce but as payments to military units and as tribute to barbarian tribes in what has been described as the Late Roman “cash hemorrhage.” One of the solidi in the Swenson collection has a hole in it, suggesting that it was suspended as an ornament (fig. 18). This may provide further indication that at some point it came into the possession of a barbarian, as it was common among barbarians to wear Roman coins as personal adornments and indicators of status. The holed solidus is of Leo I (r. AD 457–474), whose coins are quite common among Scandinavian hoards (Swenson 2400–2262; RIC X 616). While we must await the results of the interested Swedish scholars, it therefore seems likely that many of our solidi and denarii came from Scandinavian hoards of the Migration period. Further cooperation may allow scholars to actually reconstruct historical hoards and even Late Roman payments from the coins in Swenson’s collection.

In the past, it was even suggested that both the ancient and the modern fakes in the collection be simply gotten rid of as not only valueless but dangerous, as they might be misidentified as genuine by the untrained eye, and therefore mistakenly thought worthy of study. Though perhaps distressing to a more traditional collector, that the Swenson collection is “unweeded” is music to the ears of more historically-inclined numismatists, and renders it far more likely that scholars like Drs. Fischer and Lind would be able to reconstruct old hoards and ancient payments from the material at hand. The hoard evidence is not the only important historical element of the collection as it stands. In its untouched state, the Swenson collection provides excellent evidence for numismatic practice as a snapshot of the highest tier of collecting in 19th-century Sweden as part of the considered collection of an important statesman and life-long numismatist. In this sense, the Swenson collection itself is similar to a hoard, a numismatic assemblage frozen in time. There is much work to be done on this aspect of the collection, as an historical entity in its own right.

If little has yet been done with the 3,500 coins of the Swenson collection, it must be said that next to nothing has been done with the 1,800 medals. Many of them are European royal or imperial issues from the 17th to the 19th centuries. The medals come primarily from France, England, Russia, Sweden, and the United States. There are undoubtedly some gems among these remarkable pieces, which have never been catalogued or studied. This must await a later iteration of this project, as our current focus is upon the ancient coins of the Swenson collection.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Swenson collection offers many things to many people. First and foremost, this excellent teaching collection will be accessible to anyone with an internet connection, and will hopefully help to instruct and inspire a new generation of humanistic students and scholars. Though there seem to be no unique or unpublished types among the coins, the digital publication of so many unpublished specimens will nonetheless prove a great benefit to the numismatic community, particularly to those interested in hoards and die-studies. Even a single understudied coin can contribute to (or even subvert) our knowledge of a coinage, an historical figure, or even a country. Besides the individual coins, there is the remarkable story of the Swenson collection itself, which should pique the attention of those interested in the more contemporary history of Sweden, the United States, and Texas. Svante Magnus Swenson came to this country with only the shirt on his back and rose to wealth and prominence within a decade. In the current political climate surrounding immigration, it is inspiring to note that the Swenson collection, the first great gift bestowed on the University of Texas, was donated by a deeply patriotic and enormously successful first-generation immigrant. He used his wealth not only to provide for himself and his family, but also to enrich the state of Texas, the land to which he owed his great success. Now, thanks to the Swenson Digitization Project, the many tales of our collection might be heard by all.

Author’s note: *I would like to thank (in alphabetical order) the American Numismatic Society, my Swedish grandfather, Harry Verne Bergstrom, my wife Chantel Castellano, Dr. Ingrid Edlund-Berry of the University of Texas, Mr. Per-Goran Carlsson and the Swedish Numismatic Society, Dr. Svante Fischer of Uppsala University, the artist and photographer Mr. Lesser Gonzalez Alvarez, Dr. Ragnar Hedlund of the University of Uppsala, Ms. Sarah Herzer, Prof. Jack Kroll of the University of Texas, Prof. Lennart Lind of Stockholm University, Mr. Caolán Mac An Aircinn, Dr. Stephanie Malmros and the staff of the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History at the University of Texas, Professor Thomas Palaima of the University of Texas, research assistant Mr. Daniel Pederson, Professor Adam Rabinowitz of the University of Texas, Mr. Andrew Reinhard and Mr. Alan Roche of the ANS, the Swenson Digitization Project team, Professor Rabun Taylor of the University of Texas, Dr. Peter Van Alfen of the ANS, Dr. Klaus Vondrovec of the Münzkabinett of the Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, and Professor Alex Walthall of the University of Texas.”*