

Medals Struck by Private Individuals

Introduction

It would be easy to combine this category of Centennial medals with the Organizational medals; but, though they are few, these individual medals exemplify the spirit of rugged individualism that we Americans have proudly claimed as part of our unique heritage. Daniel and Betsy Warner, Dr. Montroville Wilson Dickeson, and the Sheldon family demonstrated with their medals that the spirit of American patriotism during our Centennial was not limited to commercial companies or patriotic and historical organizations.

There is another medal that could be considered a personal medal. The restrike of the Diplomatic medal, which is housed in the Declaration of Independence drawer, was the result of a personal campaign waged by Jules Marcou. Only three examples of the original 1776 Diplomatic medal were struck and awarded to foreign diplomats upon completion of their service in this newly formed country. In 1867, Marcou managed to purchase two lead proofs, one of the obverse and one of the reverse of the Diplomatic medal from a French dealer. In 1874, after Marcou learned of the Centennial Commission's intent to strike medals, he sent a letter to the Director of the Mint, suggesting that the Mint use his specimens as patterns to re-engrave a set of dies and restrike the Diplomatic medal for sale during the Centennial celebration. That is exactly what transpired. If Marcou had commissioned and sold the medal himself, as did Dr. Dickeson, the Diplomatic medal would indeed reside in the Personal Medals drawer of the Centennial cabinet.

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4200. Warner/Wilder Marriage



(2.4x)



(2.4x)

Obverse: In the center, two clasped hand in a glory of 36 rays; above, clockwise around from 10:00 in four curved lines: "DANIEL L. WARNER / AND / BETSEY WILDER / MARRIED"; below, counterclockwise around from 8:00 in two lines: "FEBRUARY 12TH / 1826"; below, an oak branch left and olive branch right, crossed and tied.

Reverse: Three interlinked rings inscribed with the names and birthdates of the Warners' three children: "ELIZABETH BORN MAR. 5TH 1828", "THOMAS BORN JANU 28TH 1831", "HENRY BORN MAY 21ST 1836"; clockwise around from 6:30: "TO COMMEMORATE THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY, FEBRUARY 12TH 1876"; below the rings in four lines, the last two curved: "IN THE / 100TH YEAR / OF OUR / NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE".

In his #138, Holland notes that pieces were struck in silver, copper and white metal. "None were sold and the dies are destroyed."

Cross-refs: Not listed.

Diameter: 33.3 mm. **Edge:** Plain

Alloy	No.
Silver	4200si
Bronze	4200bz
White Metal	4200wm

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4210. Continental Dollar Restrike



(2.1x)



(2.1x)

Photos courtesy of
Heritage Auctions

Obverse: The obverse is laid out as a center circle surrounded by two rings. The center circle, circumscribed by a thin raised line, has a sundial on a table; in exergue, in two straight lines: "MIND YOUR / BUSINESS"; in the next ring outward, also circumscribed by a thin raised line, at 11:00, the sun with a face on it, with 17 rays extending into the center circle pointing at the sundial; also within the ring, clockwise from 8:00: "FUGIO"; in the outer ring, circumscribed by a circle of denticles adjacent to the rim, clockwise from 7:00: "CONTINENTAL CURRENCY"; at 6:00: "1776".

Reverse: In the center, two concentric circles forming a center circle with a ring around it; in the center circle in three straight lines: "WE / ARE / ONE"; in the ring: "AMERICAN CONGRESS", the two words separated by a raised dot; around the whole, thirteen interlocking rings, each with the name of one of the original colonies; starting from 12:30: "N.HAMP'S, GEORGIA, S.CAROL'A, N. CAROL'A, VIRGINIA, MARYLAND, DELAWARE, PENNSYLV'A, N.JERSEY, N.YORK, R.ISLAND, CONNECTT, MASSACH'S"; with a border of fine denticles adjacent to the rim.

Cross-ref: HK-852, 853, 854, 855, and 856.

Diameter: 38.1 mm. **Edge:** Plain

Alloy	No.	Note
Silver	4210si	Only 50 struck, according to John W. Haseltine (19 th -century coin dealer).
Bronze	4210bz	Slightly less than 4mm thick.
White Metal	4210wm	3 mm thick
Pewter	4210pe	About 4 mm thick.
Lead	4210ld	Slightly more than 2 mm thick.

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I doubt if any coin in American history has been replicated any more than the legendary Continental Dollar of 1776. Just about every modern set of early American coin replicas includes the Continental Dollar. Thousands of replicas were handed out as mementos of our Bicentennial celebration in 1976, and the Continental Dollar is a perennial favorite as a marketing piece for financial institutions everywhere. However, few, if any, of these reproductions can match the longevity and interesting history of the Continental Dollar reproduced for the 1876 Centennial by Dr. Montroville Wilson Dickeson. Though a medical doctor by profession, Dickeson's passions were archaeology and collecting, particularly numismatics, with a flair for showmanship and exhibition.

Dickeson's best known link to the Centennial was his Continental Dollar replica that he commissioned and sold as souvenirs at the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia. Less well known is his second contribution to the Exhibition. Based on the pioneering archaeological work that he had done from 1837 to 1844 studying the Indian burial mounds of the Mississippi River Valley, Dickeson commissioned a huge panorama of that expedition which was executed by John J. Egan, an itinerant Irish artist. Egan used the drawings and renderings of Dickeson as his source material.



*"Huge Mound and the manner of opening them" image courtesy of the St. Louis Art Museum;
Panorama of the Monumental Grandeur of the Mississippi Valley, painting by John J. Egan.*

Panoramas were a popular attraction in the mid-nineteenth century. They were a precursor to the moving picture in which the painted canvas was unrolled a bit at a time to give the impression of traveling along the landscape. Dickeson's panorama was about eight feet high by 350 feet long and consisted of 27 scenes. It was unveiled at Memorial Hall (also known as the Art Gallery) at the Centennial Exhibition in 1876. It remained on display there until 1885. The Dickeson panorama is the only one that survives from that period, and it is now displayed at the City Art Museum in St. Louis, Missouri.

Now, back to Centennial numismatics. Less is actually known for certain about Dickeson's Continental Dollar (diesinker, quantities, etc.) than his panorama, but the dies that he commissioned have a fascinating history. In February 2006, Jeff Shevlin, in the first issue of the So-Called Dollar Collectors' Club Journal, published a very thorough article on Dickeson's and subsequent restrikes of the Continental Dollar. I am indebted to him for much of the information here. After the Centennial, Dickeson's dies disappeared from view until about 1917 when Thomas Elder acquired them and used the obverse die to strike four of his medals. Then they disappear again until 1962 when Q. David Bowers, then of the Empire Coin Company, used both dies for 7,200 pieces in pewter (sometimes cataloged as white metal or tin). Then, later that same year, Robert Bashlow used the dies to strike

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copies in silver (2,000 pieces), goldine (3,000), and bronze (5,000). There are rumors of examples in aluminum and other off-metals, but I have not (yet) seen them myself. Here's where the story gets interesting. Bashlow announced publicly that after his use of the dies he would donate them to the Smithsonian, thus preventing any further copies ever being made. However, not as publicly, he first had working hubs made from the dies, which could be used to make additional dies. From them he made at least two sets of dies. For his silver copies he modified one of the reverse dies with the letter "S" at about 6:30 between the Delaware and Pennsylvania rings. One or both of the obverse dies and the "S" dies were used to strike the silver copies. The other reverse die was used for the goldine and bronze versions. In 1964, yet another version of the dies was made with "6TH Boy Scout Jamboree '64" cut into the "FUGIO" ring of the obverse and the word "COPY" added directly above the Delaware ring on the reverse. I do not know if these were two new dies from the transfer hubs, or if the plain (no "S") reverse and/or one of the obverse dies from the goldine and bronze restrikes were used.



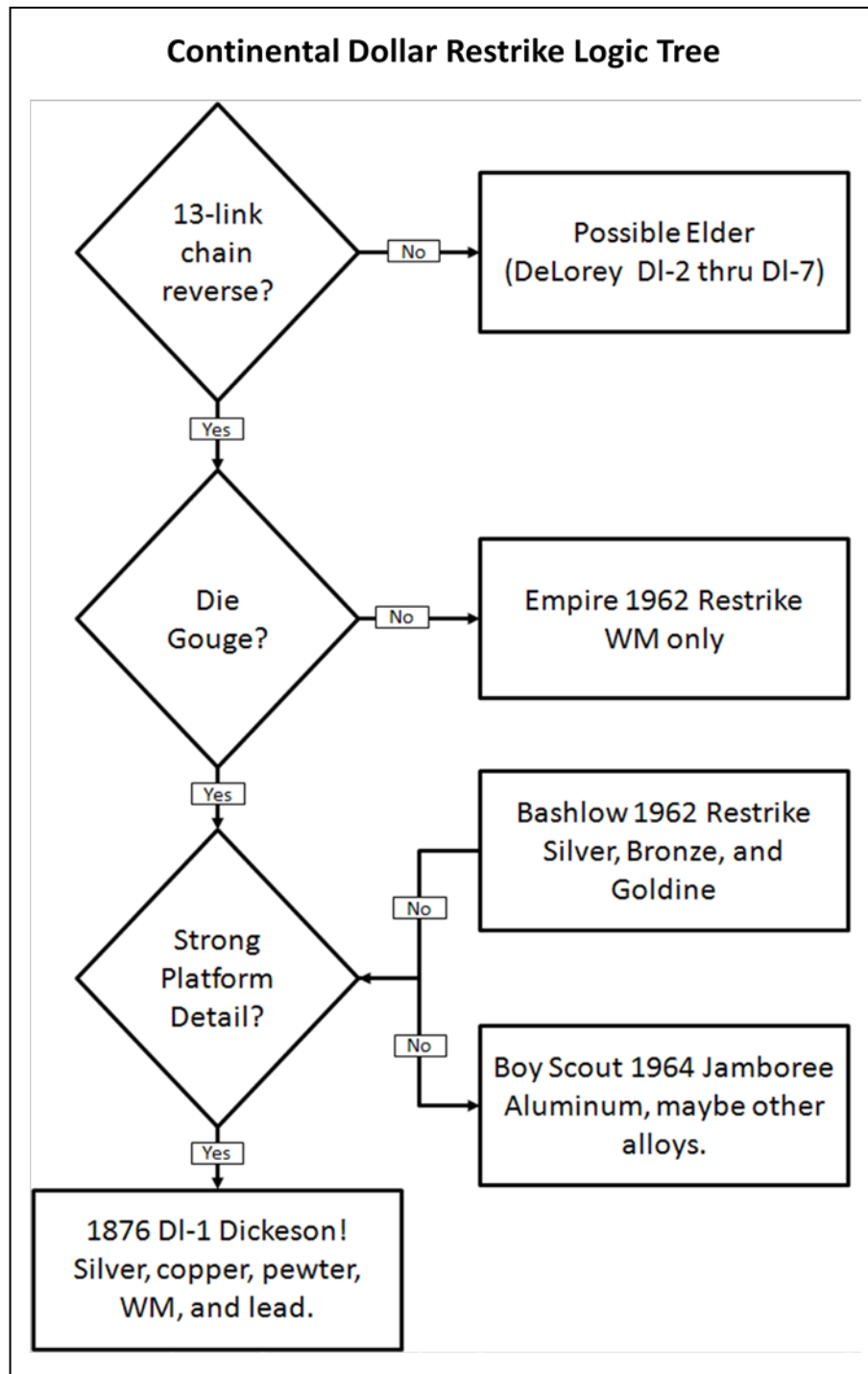
Above is pictured a die pair owned by Dr. David Litrenta, which I photographed in 2004. They do not appear to exhibit any of the die characteristics that are used to differentiate the Dickeson, Elder, Bowers, or Bashlow striking, so they might be yet a third pair from the transfer hubs. Meanwhile, the original dies are in the Smithsonian, but the location of the transfer hubs and extant dies is unknown.

One might think that so many medals from one original set of dies would make for a bewildering and confusing array of look-alikes, and it is true that they are often misattributed.

This need not be the case, however, for there are distinctive characteristics that make it relatively simple to differentiate all the varieties. It is important to do so, because an original 1876 Dickeson example is a treasure among Centennial medals and valued accordingly.



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Though the 1876 example is known in silver, bronze, white metal, pewter, and lead, they are all distinguishable from any of the modern restrike counterparts. All the 1876 originals exhibit significant detail in the table on which the sundial rests, particularly the back edge of the table. If you have a silver medal, the 1962 Bashlow version has the "S" at about 6:30 on the reverse; the 1876 does not. The 1876 bronze, also called copper in some references, is 4 mm thick, while the Bashlow bronze is thinner at about 2.5 mm. The 1876 pewter medal is 4 mm thick, and the 1876 white metal medal is 3 mm thick, while the Bowers Empire restrike is about 2.5 mm thick, but more importantly exhibits a die gouge at about 7:00 on the obverse crossing the outside ring just above the "C" of "CONTINENTAL" (see photo). A lead example can only be 1876, and, of course, a gold 41 mm specimen has to be HK-852b from 1962, while the goldine 38 mm version would be from Bashlow.

The flow chart above illustrates the identification decision process:

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4220. Washington Bust R./Sheldon Coat of Arms



(2.0x)



(2.0x)

Obverse: In the center, undraped pig-tailed bust of George Washington to right; above and around from 9:00 to 3:00: thirteen six-pointed stars; above and around from 8:00 to 4:00: "TO COMMEMORATE THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE" (there is a dot beneath the "T" and "H" of 100TH); beneath in two curved lines counterclockwise from 8:00 to 5:00, separated left and right from the previous inscription by a diamond: "DECLARATION / OF INDEPENDENCE"; the whole inside a denticled rim.

Reverse: Inside a double-ring rim, a center disk with the Sheldon family coat of arms consisting of a shield with three horizontal bands, the top and bottom cross-hatched, and the center blank. The top band contains two sheldrakes (a European fishing duck similar to a merganser); the bottom band holds a single sheldrake; above the shield a fourth sheldrake walking on a length of rope; below the shield, a banner displaying the Sheldon motto: "HOPE SHELDON"; outside, around from 8:00: "H.L.S 1821" and from 12:30: "H.A.S. 1870"; below: "AUG.15."; the three inscriptions are each separated by a St. Andrew's cross. The meaning of the initials and the dates is not known. It is possible that two of the Sheldon clan celebrated personal milestones, perhaps birthdays, on August 15th.

Cross-ref: B-641.

Diameter: 39.8 mm. **Edge:** Plain

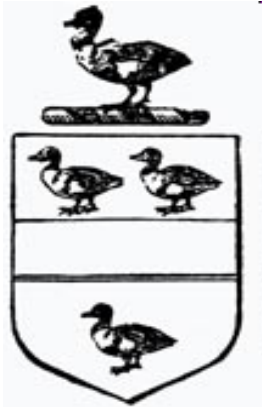
Alloy	No.
Bronze	4220bz
White Metal	4220wm

In their 2nd edition, Rulau and Fuld list this medal by the date of 1870 on the reverse, while Baker listed it as 1876 for his number 425. The inscription on the obverse clearly states that this medal is intended as an 1876 Centennial.

According to the official American Sheldon Family Genealogy System, no American Sheldon can prove direct descent from the English Sheldons. Therefore, the arms portrayed on the reverse of this medal either belonged to a different branch of the Sheldon family in 1876, or are actually "arms of assumption" claimed by someone not entitled. The official description of the arms is: "Upon the upper part of the

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bearing is the form of a shell-drake -- statant; upon a bar crossing the design beneath, and resting upon a broad band, are two more in the same position but with smaller contour; -- and still beneath another like the two last. Encircling the whole underneath, is the motto -"Hope, Sheldon to the last." The Sheldon arms have assumed many variations on the official description, and the one most closely matching the design on the medal is illustrated here.



Family tradition, as told on the Sheldon Family website, gives the origin of the arms, as follows: "In the olden time a ship was wrecked upon an island, and all on board perished excepting one survivor named Hope Sheldon. He survived on the island by catching and eating mergansers until rescued years later, *"the loneliest in a lonely sea,"* and returned to his friends.

It is not known who H. L. or H. A. Sheldon were, nor is there any evidence as to the meaning of the dates on the medal's reverse. It is my personal theory (invented by me solely to put a happy ending to the story), that a Grandpa H.L. Sheldon shared his 55th birthday with his six-year-old grandchild H.A. on August 15, 1876, by shooting off some fireworks left over from the recent 4th of July celebration. Anyone else got a theory?