

# The life and times of Jack

## Numismatic TALES

By George Manz

We have much to learn from those coin collectors who pioneered coin collecting in Canada. While many of these pioneers have already died, I hope this series will stimulate interest in the history of Canadian coin collecting.

This is the second in a series of interviews with coin collectors and coin dealers who have interesting stories to pass on to all collectors, both young and old alike.

I hope to interview collectors from other parts of Canada after I complete this series on collectors from Saskatchewan.

Jack S. has been collecting coins since the 1940s. Like many coin collectors, he doesn't want people to know his last name or where he lives in Regina.

Jack has been collecting coins since the 1940s. But he began this interview by telling me about an incident in 1955, when he went to the corner store to buy rolls of small cents for a family card game later that evening. He bought five rolls and opened them up to distribute them to members of his family.

To his surprise he found two rolls of 1923 cents in fine or better condition, about 20 dated 1924 and a similar number from 1925. Knowing the coins were worth more than face value, he later went back to the store to see if he could purchase more rolls.

But the storekeeper, knowing that an older man had sold him the rolls of cents at face value, got suspicious and refused to sell Jack any more. But Jack made a tidy profit on the deal and even won playing cards later that night.

By the late 1950s, Jack had quite an extensive collection of coins. Among his favourites at the time were his silver 5-cent collection which only lacked the 1921. But he thought the



rare coin was overpriced so it wasn't a priority for him to own it.

But his pride and joy at the time was a complete silver dollar collection. It took him two years to find a high grade mint state 1948 silver dollar that was graded at minimum MS-63 and possibly as high as MS-65.

Jack began what he called "heavy-duty collecting" in the early 1970s and joined the Regina Coin Club during this time. But he found collecting and researching Canadian coins too easy and wanted to collect coins that were much more difficult to find and research.

He recalls his introduction to ancient coins in the 1970s. Four workers had uncovered a hoard of Roman coins in Bath, England. While the British government took all the silver coins, the four workers who had discovered the hoard split the copper coins between them.

Jack remembers seeing 12 ancient Roman coins from the hoard and fell in love with them. The set of 12 coins included Constantine I (also known as Constantine the Great), Helena, his mother, as well as Crispus, his son. All three coins are from the third century AD.

Finally, after over a year of dickering with the son-in-law of one of the four hoard discoverers, Jack was finally able to purchase all 12 coins. Most are in almost mint state condition and are a joy to behold.

The oldest Roman coin in Jack's collection is a silver denarius from 90 BC. His collection also includes a type set of Byzantine coins, including a silver coin from Leo IV from 1775-1780, as well as a dirhem of Genghis Khan from 1206-1227. He also purchased a set of more than 200 pieces of Indian coinage beginning in 160 BC up until about 1500 AD.

Another coin that interested Jack was the famous Greek

coin that features the goddess Athena.

When Jack saw a photo of the tetradrachm on the cover of a coin dealer's catalogue, he knew it was a coin he had to add to his collection. But he didn't just want any tetradrachm that was minted between 449 and 413 BC. So he searched for 20 years before he purchased a high grade example from a dealer in Buffalo, New York.

This silver coin shows Athena wearing a helmet on the obverse, while her attribute, "wisdom" is shown on the reverse by the owl.

This coin is now world-famous for being the largest silver coin minted at the time, as well as the first to have designs on both sides of the coin. I am pleased that Jack sold me this outstanding Greek goddess several years ago. I cherish it and enjoy showing it to collectors at coin shows.

Jack got interested in traditional money almost by acci-

dent in the mid 1970s. He started writing to the few dealers and collectors in the world who specialized in traditional money in places like South Africa, Australia, Hong Kong and Singapore. In the U.S. Jack dealt with well known collectors and dealers such as Paul Dillingham, John Neil Becker, and Scott Semans.

Among his prized possessions are a Assegai Zulu stabbing spear from South Africa, and the largest liganda spear I have ever seen (it's over five feet long and a foot longer than mine).

Jack also has an assortment of axe money, including a ceremonial axe with a 40-inch blade from the Mount Hagen region of New Guinea, as well as a stone axe bound with bark strips that once was in the Stephen Kellnen collection.

Other interesting pieces in this odd and curious money collection include a rare whale tooth from Fiji that once was in both the Tyrell and Gibb collections as well as black and white speckled shell money from Borneo that was from the Dantoni and Becker collections.

But Jack says that his pride and joy is a rare 38-inch woven mat that was used as money on Santa Clara Island in the South Pacific. The mat is very rare and almost never seen in public sales.

Jack urges all coin collectors to build an extensive library of books and periodicals before they start to purchase coins. And by looking at his library, it's obvious he has done his homework, with books on most aspects of numismatics.

Jack isn't collecting coins like he used to. He still has an extensive foreign paper money collection, but now mostly collects coins and paper money for his grandchildren.

Jack S. warns present day collectors not to "spread yourselves too thin like I did, but if you've had as much fun as I had, it's not bad."

George Manz is a numismatist and coin dealer based in Saskatchewan. □