

“If This Little Volume Could Speak”

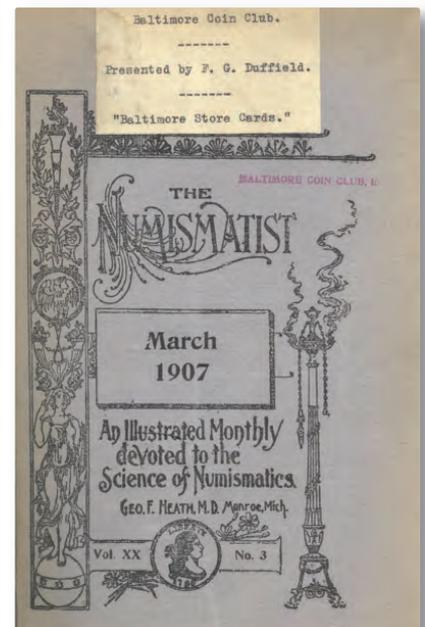
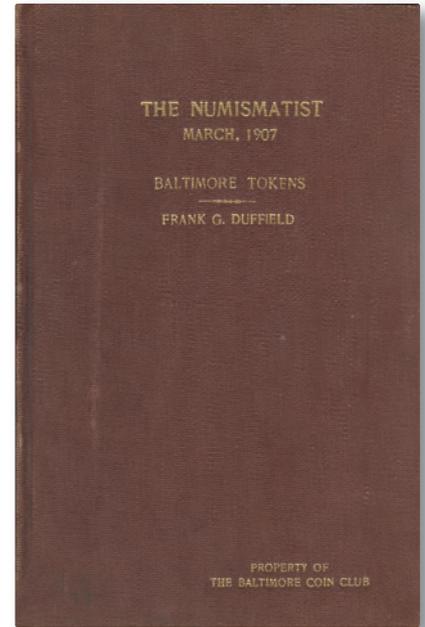
A specially bound book in the Baltimore Coin Club archives tells the story behind the work of a respected author and editor.

➤ Ever wonder what a book would say if it could talk to you? If it could reach out from history and tell you about its life and where it has been? This is what I experienced when I pulled a worn, reddish-brown volume from the Baltimore Coin Club (BCC) archives. (Visit the group’s website at www.baltimorecoinclub.com.) It was a bound edition of Frank G. Duffield’s “Baltimore Tokens” from the March 1907 issue of *The Numismatist*. Inside is the original cover with a label that reads “Baltimore Coin Club./Presented by F.G. Duffield./“Baltimore Store Cards.” However, Duffield also included a typed and hand-signed “Preface” that cleverly described the book’s genesis:

If this little volume could speak, it would probably express itself something like this:

I came into being March 1, 1907. Recollection of my early life is quite vague, except that I spent several years in an attic with companions very much like myself. When I was 30 years old, I remember being taken from the attic into a new world; one which I never before suspected existed. I remember being presented body and soul to a lot of men who called themselves the Baltimore Coin Club. Here I was laid away with companions somewhat similar in taste but much more modern. I learned later that my new home was to be a museum, and that the Baltimore Coin Club frequently held meetings in the room adjoining mine. If I kept real quiet I could hear what they said. Most of it was about money, but a good deal of it seemed to be just talk. It ranged from commemorative coins and Lincoln cents to leaved dimes, and finding out how much any of the men would give for a certain coin. Sometimes a wave of reckless enthusiasm would sweep over the meeting and as much as 15 cents would be offered for a coin. It sounded foolish to me—giving good money for money you can’t spend. Here I remained untouched for a few years and I concluded I was the forgotten child. Finally one night I was taken into the limelight in the presence of a lot of handsome men, and I learned I had been adopted by the Baltimore Coin Club and that they all were anxious to do something for me. They took me out, and after they had padded my figure to make it a little more shapely, they bought me a new bright red outfit from head to foot, making me look like an animated blood transfusion, and they put a sign on me saying I was the property of the Baltimore Coin Club. But it was all right with me, for they are a fine lot of guys. And now I invite all of you, one at a time, to drop in at my apartment on North Holliday street and look me over. Better still, take me out, one at a time and find out what I know about Old Baltimore. It may surprise you. I’m companionsable and interesting.

F. G. Duffield



▲ This bound volume (top) in the Baltimore Coin Club archives presents Frank Duffield’s article about Baltimore merchant tokens, which appeared in the March 1907 issue of *The Numismatist*. The book includes the original cover of the journal (bottom) and a clever preface by Duffield (left).

and after they had padded my figure to make it a little more shapely, they bought me a new bright red outfit from head to foot, making me look like an

PHOTO: baltimore coin club/michael atkins

animated blood transfusion, and they put a sign on me saying I was the property of the Baltimore Coin Club. But it was all right with me, for they are a fine lot of guys. And now I invite all of you, one at a time, to drop into my apartment on North Holliday street and look me over. Better still, take me out and find out what I know about Old Baltimore. It may surprise you. I'm companionable and interesting.

F.G. Duffield

Duffield was born in New Jersey in 1866 and came to Baltimore in 1893. He started collecting coins in 1901, and served on the ANA Board of Governors in 1905-07. He was ANA general secretary in 1909-10, vice president in 1912-13, and president in 1913-15. Duffield probably was the force behind the ANA's 1916 convention in Baltimore, the first of many in the city. He became editor of *The Numismatist* a month before the end of his presidency and served in that role for 27 years, until 1942.

Duffield presided over the Baltimore Coin Club in the 1930s, when he donated the aforementioned book to the club. He died in 1954. When the ANA Hall of Fame was created in 1969, he was among its first inductees.

Following Duffield's eloquent "Preface" were 23 pages devoted to

"Merchant Cards and Tokens of Baltimore." The article began by identifying Baltimore die-cutters and when they were in business. The pieces, numbered 1 to 155, were described, along with their issuers and pertinent information, when available.

Number 61 describes a 1795 dollar counterstamped HOUCK'S/PANACEA. Number 62 bears the same message, but on an 1830 Capped Bust half dollar. Duffield's article explained how Jacob Houck came to Baltimore from Frederick, Maryland, in 1828. Working out of 1121 West Baltimore Street, he started selling his Botanic Panacea for \$1.50 in 1834.

Duffield traced Houck's various locations in Baltimore between 1834 and 1851. He mentioned that although the merchant's counterstamped half dollars were not rare, his own 1795 specimen was the only one of which he was aware.

The BCC's bound March 1907 issue of *The Numismatist* also included several pages of want ads. These are interesting not only because of the items sought, but also for the up-and-coming numismatists who wished to acquire them:

- Wayne Raymond wanted to correspond with collectors of Greek and Roman coins. (In later years, he desired contact with collectors of English and Roman coins because he had many of these for sale.)

- Stephen K. Nagy offered to pay cash for George Washington medals

and for \$1 and \$3 gold pieces.

- ANA Secretary Howland Wood wanted to sell an 11 x 14-inch photograph showing the obverse and reverse of "Ships Colonies and Commerce tokens" for \$1. He also had a large quantity of the tokens for sale.

- H.O. Granberg offered to buy different types of U.S. coins, including dimes from 1855 to 1894; 20-cent pieces; San Francisco quarters dated 1856, 1860, 1866 and 1867; Carson City quarters from 1870 to 1873; New Orleans half dollars dated 1838 and 1839; and dollars from 1870 to 1885, preferably uncirculated.

An assortment of dealer advertisements followed, with B. Max Mehl offering his "Star Coin Book" for 10 cents and items such as an Extremely Fine 1795 dollar for \$5.50, an uncirculated 1856 Flying Eagle cent for \$13.50 and an 1846 dime for 75 cents. S.H. Chapman described his business on a full-page ad, and Thomas Elder promoted his 10th sale. On the back cover, Henry Chapman offered his numismatic services, as well as items ranging from Greek and Roman coins to U.S. coins and paper money.

I was delighted to come across this treasured book in the Baltimore Coin Club archives. It prompted me to learn more about Frank Duffield, a driving force in the early years of the ANA and the BCC, and about the numismatic climate of the times.

—Michael Atkins

Support the hobby you

NUMISMATIST

DONATE TODAY!
Call 719-482-9810
or visit
www.money.org

You can ensure the hobby's bright future and reach a new generation of collectors by sending a tax-deductible donation to the American Numismatic Association.

AMERICAN
NUMISMATIC
ASSOCIATION