



The CLAPP COLLECTION

at

The Carnegie Museum
of Natural History

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Early Cents Auctions and EarlyCents.com

2025 EAC Convention – Pittsburgh, PA
May 13-18, 2025

George H. Clapp

and The Carnegie Museum

-Charles Heck-

There can be no doubt that George H. Clapp is one of the most highly regarded numismatists in the field of United States Large Cents. During his lifetime he pursued his hobby with a passion that can be matched by very few. He wrote books, corresponded with peers, and kept copious and meticulous notes while assembling the most complete set of U. S. large cent die varieties from 1793 to 1857 in his time.

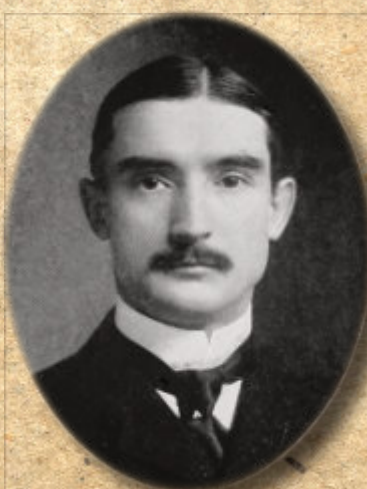
While completing his collection he focused on three criteria: die variety, condition, and die state. Though not an advocate of collecting by die state, certain specimens in his collection clearly indicate that he was willing to sacrifice condition if it served his purpose of completeness as to die variety or if it meant obtaining an interesting die state. George's good fortune allowed him to assemble two significant U. S. large cent collections. He donated one set to The American Numismatic Society (ANS) in New York City, and his other set to The Carnegie Museum of Natural History (Carnegie) in Pittsburgh, PA. It is the Carnegie collection which is the focus of the current endeavor.

Though his accomplishments were significant, he was not alone in achieving his goals. His younger brother Charles and his friend Robert Book were major influences and played significant roles in George's numismatic life. Just as we collectors all need to thank our older family members, coin dealers, auction houses, and certain coin club friends for helping us reach our collecting goals, the inquisitive numismatist needs to know just a little history of the abovementioned three men to truly appreciate the legacy that George Clapp has passed on to every one of us.

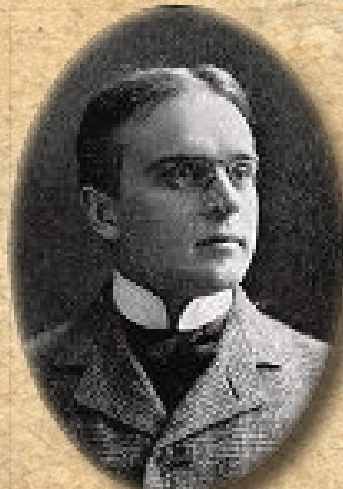
SOME BACKGROUND INFORMATION



George H. Clapp



Charles E. Clapp



Robert D. Book

George Hubbard Clapp was born on December 14, 1858. Not quite two years later, younger brother Charles Edwin Clapp was born on November 29, 1860. And less than 19 months after, Robert Donnell Book was born on June 2, 1862. By 1878 all three men lived or worked in Allegheny, Pennsylvania. Allegheny City was a separate Pennsylvania city from 1840 until annexed by the City of Pittsburgh in 1907.

As fortune would have it, all three men enjoyed very prosperous lives albeit in different fields of endeavor. George is most well-known for becoming a founder of what is today known as Alcoa Corporation - the Aluminum Company of America. Charles began his career as a clerk and rose to Executive Vice President of Crucible Steel Corporation. Book started as a bank clerk at the First National Bank of Pittsburgh. By 1900 he was the Director of the Bank Clerks Mutual Benefit Association of the City of Pittsburgh. In 1902 his career took a major leap when he was admitted as a partner in the prestigious firm of Robinson Brothers - a private bank in the general banking and investment business since 1863. All three were married, had children, and with their wives made major contributions of both time and money to various philanthropic organizations.



Their numismatic lives were equally as rewarding as their careers. In June of 1878, George and seven other men launched the Western Pennsylvania Numismatic Society (WPNS). In May of 1879, Robert Book joined the group and became the club's 17th member. The two men enjoyed the many fruits that the club had to offer. The Clapp brothers and Book all became members of the American Numismatic Society (ANS) and all three were quite interested in early United States copper coinage. In 1931 George thanked younger brother Charles by inscribing on the title page of his book THE UNITED STATES CENTS OF THE YEARS 1798 · 1799 for "...really starting me on my study of cents in 1921..." It is commonly believed that George pur-

chased his brother's entire collection in 1921. In fact, in George's handwritten collection notes that are archived at the ANS, he lists a March 1921 gift from Charles of 47 early date US Large Cents. At various dates in 1924 he purchased the remaining coins in his brother's collection.

As for Book, George writes in a letter to Homer K. Downing dated January 20, 1945: "...in 1930 I purchased the collection of the late Robert D. Book..." from Book's widow. In that collection, I "...got quite a nice lot of 1796."

NUMISMATIC SIGNIFICANCE

George Clapp made numerous contributions to the numismatic community. He attempted to aid Samuel Hudson Chapman in correcting the many errors in Chapman's 1923 book, The United States Cents of the Year 1794. Unfortunately, Chapman did not take constructive criticism well as is evidenced by his inadequately updated version of the book in 1926. In 1925 Howard R. Newcomb especially thanks Clapp in the Preface of his book: The United States Cents of the Years 1801 - 1802 - 1803, for loaning coins and for contributing suggestions. In 1931 Clapp issued the aforementioned book on 1798 and 1799 cents. Ten years later a soft cover octavo was issued as Number Eight of Wayte Raymond's Coin Collector Series entitled: The United States Cents 1804 - 1814. Two years prior to his death, he issued in 1947: THE UNITED STATES CENTS OF THE YEARS 1795 · 1796 · 1797 · 1800 in collaboration with Howard R. Newcomb.

Clapp's books provided the final stones to the foundation that allowed Dr. William H. Sheldon to write his acclaimed EARLY AMERICAN CENTS in 1949 and a revision in 1958 entitled PENNY WHIMSY. But as important as his books were, even more important was his beneficence.

THE COIN COLLECTION

From 1921 to 1947 George Clapp amassed a massive collection of some 2,000 U. S. large cents. Sometime in the mid-1930s he made the decision to divide the collection into two collections. The first would contain an example of every die variety in his collection along with duplicates that had a significant die state (die cracks, cuds, clash marks, etc.). The second would contain a duplicate of each die variety and any duplicate die state that remained after sorting out the first.

In the ANS archives is a letter dated December 7, 1936 from Clapp to ANS president Edward Newell stating his wish to deliver "...a deed of gift which you can accept with the stipulation that the collection is to remain in my custody for further study ...". That gift was for the first collection. The Carnegie Museum was to receive the second collection.

Contained on these pages are photographs of that second collection. Through the efforts of EAC members Thomas Nist and Christopher Pretsch and the whole-hearted collaboration and assistance of Deborah Harding, the Collection Manager of the Section of Anthropology at the Carnegie Museum of Natural History, this project came to fruition. The photography was made possible by grants from Early American Coppers Inc. (EAC) and the Eric P. and Evelyn E. Newman Charitable Foundation, both 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organizations. The photographs were taken by well-known numismatic photographer Lyle Engleson with attribution assistance from Lucas Baldridge and Chris McCawley.

This entire project represents a milestone in numismatics as some of the coins represented here have likely not been publicly viewed in more than 75 years. Records indicate that the last time Clapp exhibited any of his large cents was at the Webster Hall Hotel on August 1, 1944 at a meeting of the WPNS. At that very same meeting well-known numismatist and WPNS member William W. Woodside also exhibited 45 tokens from what was then known as Ceylon and Malaya. Though Woodside was 44 years younger than Clapp, he knew both brothers quite well. In fact, Carnegie Museum records show an accession date for the collection of July 1, 1949. Woodside was curator of coins for the Carnegie Museum from 1948 to the mid-1970s.

It is hoped by those involved in this project that this unique booklet will increase the reader's knowledge and understanding of George Clapp the collector and the role that the Carnegie Museum plays in our numismatic heritage.



Webster Hall Hotel

February 25, 2020

1793



1793 S1



1793 S2



1793 S2



1793 S4



1793 S5



1793 S6



1793 S6



1793 S8



1793 S10



1793 S11B



1793 S11C



1793 S12



1793 S13



1793 S14



1793 S15



1793 S16



1793 COPY



1794



1794 S18B



1794 S19B



1794 S20B



1794 S21



1794 S22



1794 S23



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1794 S24





1794 S25



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1797 S120B



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1798 S185



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1803 S265

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1804 S266A



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1805 S267

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1814 S295

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1857 N1



1857 N2



1857 N13





1793 S8



1794 S24



1807 S272



1814 S294

NOTES

SEWICKLEY

Scale 400 ft. per inch

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EARLY CENTS AUCTIONS