

American Sales & Auctioneers, Pt. 2

Many numismatic auctioneers of the 19th century

were characterized by professionalism and longevity.

WITH THIS month's installment, I continue my exploration of 19th-century numismatic auctioneers and their sales. For each company listed here, I have included the dates of its first and last coin auctions (if known), and the name or names of the numismatic experts it employed (if any). Catalogers and numismatists often worked for a variety of employers, so their names might be associated with more than one company.

• **Edward Cogan (1858-79).** Some consider Cogan to be the father of the rare coin business in the United States. A professional book dealer born in Essex County, England, he became a numismatist and full-time coin dealer in 1856, first in Philadelphia and later, in 1865, in Brooklyn. He wrote one of the first books about coins in 1860, and his catalogs were among the earliest to feature coin photographs. Cogan held at least 70 coin auctions, starting with his first on November 1, 1858, when a silent "coin auction" in his store brought \$128.63.

• **William Woodward (1860-90).** A native of Maine, this book auctioneer was among the first full-time professional numismatists and coin auctioneers in the country. Among his employees was numismatist Edouard Frossard. Woodward held 108 numismatic sales.

• **William Strobridge (1862-78).** Originally a salesman from Baltimore, Strobridge entered the coin business in New York and prospered until illness put an end to his career in 1878.



▲ **Henry Chapman (pictured) and his brother, Samuel, were highly successful auctioneers who entered the numismatic profession as teenagers. Henry was so influential that he convinced the U.S. Mint to strike 12 proofs of the 1921 Morgan dollar just for him.**



He cataloged 111 coin auctions, including the famous Lorin G. Parmelee sale in 1876.

• **Ebenezer Mason (1867-72).** By the early 1860s, Mason was a writer and coin dealer, becoming a coin auctioneer later in the decade. He employed numismatist John Haseltine until 1869. Mason held 34 coin auctions in Philadelphia, Boston and New York City.

• **John Haseltine (1870-83).** A former Union Army captain, Haseltine worked for Mason and was employed briefly by the Chapman brothers,

Henry and Samuel. He cataloged 87 numismatic sales.

• **David Proskoy (1876-87).** Proskoy was a well-respected coin dealer for 55 years, although he conducted only five coin auctions under his own name. He often cataloged sales for John Scott, and he later partnered with Harlan Smith (see "New York Coin and Stamp Company").

• **S.K. Harzeld (1877-81).** German-born Harzeld was an auctioneer and expert in foreign coins. He held 16 coin auctions, some having catalogs illustrated with line drawings instead of photographs.

• **John Scott (1877-1910).** An English stamp dealer who came to New York in 1863, Scott was not a numismatist, but rather a first-class businessman and promoter. He employed Proskoy and Frossard in the 1880s, and later numismatist Lyman Low until 1896. He conducted numerous stamp auctions and 50 successful numismatic sales.

• **Edouard (Edward) Frossard (1878-1901).** This Swiss-born numismatist was a cataloger for Woodward, Scott and Henry Sampson. In 1879 Frossard authored *Monograph of United States Cents and Half Cents Issued between the Years 1793 and 1857* and in 1893 wrote *Varieties of United States Cents of the Year 1794*. He cataloged 175 coin auctions under his name. He also is famous for his very public clash with Woodward. See Carl W.A. Carlson's article in the June 1983 issue of *The Numismatist*, "The Frossard-Woodward Feud of 1880-1881" (p. 1138).

• **Chapman Brothers (1879-1932).** Henry and Samuel H. Chapman ©

started out as aggressive, teenage coin dealers, and their catalogs featured photographic plates made by Samuel himself. The two mostly are remembered for their unusually skillful cataloging and their great longevity in the coin business. Their 51 coin auctions included famous collections assembled by Charles I. Bushnell, Henry W. Beckwith, George H. Earle, John S. Jenks, Matthew Adams Stickney and Andrew C. Zabriskie.

- **Harlan P. Smith & Henry Sampson (1880-81).** This short, ill-fated partnership produced only four coin auctions. Both went on to become well-known numismatists.

- **George Massamore (1880-97).** A former Confederate soldier from Baltimore, Massamore became a dentist just after the Civil War. Later, as a numismatist, he produced 46 coin auctions of what we today would call “commercial material.”

- **George Cogan (1881-85).** Al-



▲ **John Haseltine (left),** a prominent auctioneer in his own right, worked briefly for the Chapman brothers. **Lyman Low (right)** conducted more than 200 sales.

though he was the son of pioneering American numismatist and coin auctioneer Edward Cogan, he did not possess his father’s skill in this field. His catalogs were not well executed, hence his short career with only 10 coin auctions.

- **Harlan P. Smith (1881-87).** A

professional coin dealer from 1870, Smith conducted 21 sales after his partnership with Sampson dissolved.

- **Charles Steigerwalt (1881-1910).** A successful professional numismatist from 1878 until his death in 1912, Steigerwalt produced no less than 63 fixed-price lists and 68 coin auctions.

- **Lyman Low (1882-1924).** Low was a Union Army veteran and a prolific writer. He cataloged coin auctions for John Scott until 1896. Under his own name, he cataloged and conducted 212 sales.

- **New York Coin and Stamp Company (1888-1908).** David Proskey and Harlan P. Smith partnered to conduct 23 sales and produce an equal number of fairly good catalogs with photographic plates.

Next month, I’ll tackle 20th-century auctioneers, beginning with numismatic heavyweights Ben Green, Thomas Elder and B. Max Mehl.

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