

The History of Central States

Part 2 - 1940

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The successful first-ever “conference” of the Central States Numismatic Society held in Chicago, April 22 & 23, 1939 spawned a second “convention” in Burlington, Iowa, April 27 & 28, 1940. It is not entirely clear why the 1939 CSNS affair was dubbed a “conference” while all succeeding events were “conventions.” At any rate, the nine-story Hotel Burlington overlooking the Mississippi River was head-quarters to the second CSNS convention.

An attendance of 300 numismatists was the goal of the convention committee. The largest display of coins ever exhibited west of Chicago was expected with 24-hour police protection being provided. Professor R.E. Davis, noted Chicago chemistry book author, was slated to be one of the principal speakers. The Iowa Numismatic Association was to meet in conjunction with Central States and conduct its own election and other business. The CSNS convention chairman was Ted Hammer of Burlington, Iowa, later to be associated with the Numismatic Scrapbook.

The March, 1940 issue of Numismatic Scrapbook devoted almost two pages to a preview of the Burlington, Iowa CSNS convention. Editor, Lee Hewitt, called the convention: “Prominent Collectors in Person.” He listed the following well-known numismatists as early registrants: William Brimelow (“Bill the Coin Man:”) from Elkhart, IN, Frank Ross of Kansas City, MO, numismatic editor of Hobbies Magazine, B. Max Mehl, the famous Texas dealer would be a banquet speaker, M. Vernon Sheldon, the ANA Secretary, J. Henri Ripstra, ANA Board member, Harry X Boosel, noted proof coin collector, David Bullowa, assistant editor of The Numismatist, Abe Kosoff, well-respected New York dealer, Albert Grinnell, leading U.S. currency expert, and Dr. J. Hewitt Judd of Omaha.

Central States officers in 1940 were: President - Arthur B. Kelley of St. Louis, First VP - Professor R. E. Davis of Chicago, Second VP - Hubert Polzer of Milwaukee, and the appointed Secretary-Treasurer, Eric Newman of St. Louis. (Side - note: Mr. Newman attended the 64th Central States Convention held in St. Louis, May 2-5, 2003).

A copy of the 1940 CSNS Convention program reveals additional details such as banquet tickets costing \$1.00, a two-session auction with 425 lots, a tour of the Iowa State Prison, a

Mississippi River boat trip, and a visit to historic Nauvoo, Illinois, former Mormon headquarters. The ladies of Central States were certainly not forgotten as an auto tour and card games were planned. The exhibit area boasted 65 cases with coins and currency displayed mainly by dealers.

The April, 1940 Numismatic Scrapbook ran a half-page ad for the Hotel Burlington thanking Central States and the Iowa Numismatic Association for choosing Burlington. It was “proud to be headquarters for the convention and advertised its rates: \$1.50 up - singles and \$2.50 up for doubles.

Post-convention reviews were very complimentary and filled with details of activities. Central States officers elected at the convention were: Professor R. Edward Davis of Chicago - President, Hubert Polzer of Milwaukee - 1st Vice-President, Dr. J. Hewitt Judd of Nebraska - 2nd Vice-President. President Davis appointed M.H. Jackson of Chicago as Secretary - Treasurer.

The convention was well attended with between 175 to 200 present. It was claimed that this was largest number of numismatists ever assembled at a convention or meeting held west of the Mississippi.

The first order of business was the selection of the 1941 convention city - Milwaukee at the invitation of the Milwaukee Numismatic Society. The Articles of Association were adopted and dues set for the ensuing year at 50 cents! The CSNS Board of Governors discussed plans to issue a bulletin (newsletter) from time to time as funds permitted with the aim to eventually publish it quarterly.

The highlight of the 1940 CSNS Convention was the Saturday evening banquet featuring the Novelaires, a male quartet and the featured speaker, B. Max Mehl, Fort Worth, Texas dealer. Mr. Mehl spoke on the the topic: “The Whys of Numismatics” and illustrated his talk with large drawings of coin through the ages.

One sad note footnote to the second ever CSNS convention was the untimely death of newly elected President, R. Edward Davis, on May 4. He had become ill quite suddenly during the convention and died at home in Chicago one week after the convention's close. A tribute to Dr. Davis noted: “To know him was to love him and respect his knowledge of numismatics and ability as a student in coins....”

The next installment of this History of CSNS will focus on the 1941 convention in Milwaukee. Special recognition is paid to The Numismatist and Numismatic Scrapbook for materials cited in this history.