

US Mint Medals Presented to MINT DIRECTOR ROBERT M. PATTERSON

Robert Maskell Patterson was named Director of the United States Mint by President Andrew Jackson, and this appointment was confirmed by the Senate on January 5, 1835. He served with distinction for more than 15 years, retiring in July of 1851. Patterson was the son of former Mint Director Robert Patterson, Sr. (1806-24), and his immediate predecessor in this office was his brother-in-law, Samuel Moore (1824-35). This sort of interconnectedness of the Mint's officers was quite common, lasting as late as the early 20th Century, and it represented a shared sense of commitment to public service.

R. M. Patterson's term witnessed the introduction of steam power to the actual coining process, as well as many other mechanical and statutory improvements that made America's coinage equal or superior to that of European nations. He also oversaw the debut of several new coin issues, including the gold dollar and double eagle in 1849-50 and the silver three-cent piece in 1851. He supervised the creation of new designs for all of the existing denominations, as well as the restoration of silver dollar and gold eagle coinage during 1836-38.

These achievements are commemorated in the three medals which accompany this exhibit, all of which are from the estate of Director Patterson. The two smaller pieces herald the debut performance of a steam-powered coin press, this very same press now preserved and on display at the Museum of the American Numismatic Association in Colorado Springs. The larger piece was presented to Director Patterson upon his retirement in 1851. Numismatic Guaranty Corporation is very proud to have been selected to certify and encapsulate these extremely rare medals and to present them for your viewing pleasure.



1836 COPPER MEDAL
FIRST STEAM COINAGE
JULIAN MT-21
NGC MS 65 BN

Chief Coiner Franklin Peale returned to the USA in 1835 following his two years of studying the mints of Europe. Among the improvements he introduced to the US Mint was the French-designed steam powered coining press. The debut of this press was scheduled for February 22, 1836, the anniversary of President Washington's birth, and Second Engraver Christian Gobrecht prepared dies for a medal to commemorate this momentous occasion. A mechanical glitch, however, delayed the first steam striking until March 23 (careful inspection of this medal's inscription reveals the date "MAR. 23." punched over the earlier intended date). Copper strikes were made at that time using cent planchets imported from England. The specimen presented here is the first impression taken of these dies with the new steam press, a fact recorded with the inscription "The very first" at 12 o'clock on its edge. As Director Patterson had overseen these developments, it was only fitting that this first strike be presented to him. It survives accompanied by its original envelope similarly labeled and dated March 23.



Engraved edge of 1836 Copper Medal



1836 COPPER-GILT MEDAL
FIRST STEAM COINAGE
JULIAN MT-21
NGC MS 64 PL

Given the significance of this occasion to the United States Mint and to the nation as a whole, it's not surprising that at least this one copper example was gilded. Unlisted in R. W. Julian's reference book on US Mint medals, this specimen is likewise pedigreed to Director Robert M. Patterson, and it comes with a charming wooden presentation case. In all other respects it is similar to the regular copper impressions from the same dies. Note Christian Gobrecht's use of the same date punches and roundel stops as seen on his landmark silver dollars of 1836. Justifiably proud of the Mint's achievement, Director Patterson wrote to Treasury Secretary Levi Woodbury: "I also send, by this mail, some copper pieces struck at the mint today on our new press by steam. They are the first ever struck by this power in America. We must consider this day, therefore, as marking an epoch in our coinage."



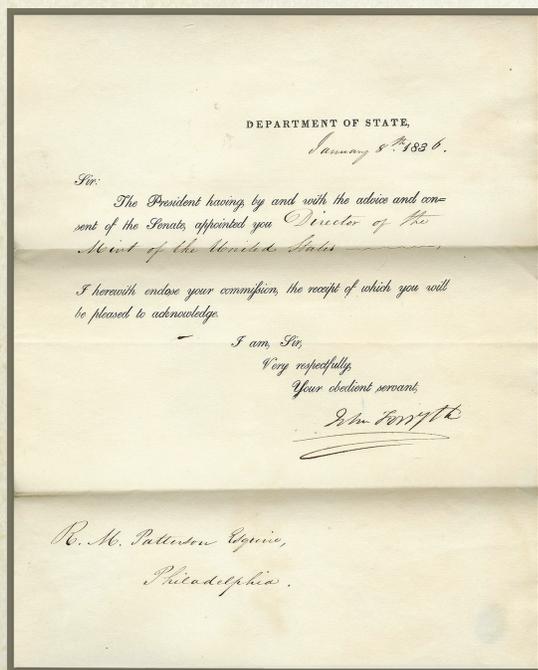


1851 COPPER MEDAL
 ROBERT M. PATTERSON
 DIRECTOR OF THE MINT
 JULIAN MT-2
 NGC MS 62 BN

Also from the estate of Robert M. Patterson is this splendid United States Mint Medal honoring his term of service. The portrait of Patterson was executed by famed engraver Charles Cushing Wright and signed by him below the truncation. Not an official issue of the US Mint as authorized by Congress, instead it was created by Chief Coiner Franklin Peale as a testimonial to Patterson for his outstanding leadership and his support of Peale's activities. Such an honor had been given to just one Mint official previously, when longtime Chief Coiner Adam Eckfeldt had received a similar medal in 1839.

The olive branch and snake device seen on the reverse of this medal was borrowed from an earlier Mint medal (Julian MI-20), and Julian speculates that the accompanying inscription may have been punched by Peale himself. Its words indicate that Peale was not alone among the Mint's officers and personnel in his respect for the retiring Director. The Latin legend *MONEX MONETAE* and the date 1837 both refer to Patterson's signal achievement in office, his drafting of important reforms to the Mint's standards and procedures which became law on January 18 of that year. It is presumed that Patterson was also presented with a gold impression from these dies, but this piece, if it did exist, has never surfaced.

Other items on display:



Letter dated January 8, 1836, transmitting R. M. Patterson's commission signed by John Forsythe, Secretary of State



Paper wrapping the 1836 Copper Medal



Wooden box for the 1836 Copper Gilt Medal