

**CATALOGUE OF
MEDALS
AND PLAQUES**

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Catalogue of Medals and Plaques by Victor D. Brenner

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VICTOR D. BRENNER



EXHIBITED AT
THE GROLIER CLUB
MARCH 7 TO MARCH 23
1907

FOREWORD

IN the early days of this Republic great attention was paid to the production of medals, indeed, some months before the Declaration of Independence, Congress ordered a gold medal to be struck and presented to George Washington "for his wise and spirited conduct in the siege and acquisition of Boston." Later there was a series designed and struck in Paris, by order of the Continental Congress, under the supervision of Colonel David Humphreys, who, recognizing the importance of following the rules governing numismatics, asked the aid of the French Academy of Inscriptions and Belles-Lettres in the

composition of the designs. Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson and John Jay were interested in the work, Franklin as an admirer and friend of the famous medallist Dupré.

The art of Dupré, Duvivier, Gatteaux, Andrieu, Gayrard, and other notable French medallists strongly influenced our own artists and for several decades after the establishment of the Republic the importance and special value of this art continued to be recognized in this country. As late as 1846 General Winfield Scott, in a letter to Secretary of War Marcy, in relation to the medal ordered by Congress to be presented to General Zachary Taylor for his victories on the Rio Grande, expressed an appreciation of the medallists' art, which is worth quoting here. He wrote: "As medals are

among the surest monuments of history, as well as muniments of individual distinction, there should be given to them, besides intrinsic value and durability of material, the utmost grace of design with the highest finish in mechanical execution. All this is necessary to give the greater or adventitious value; as in the present instance, the medal is to be at once, an historical record and a reward of distinguished merit." Further testimony to the importance of this branch of art, if such be needed, is found in the words of J. F. Loubat, the author of the well known "Medallic History of the United States." He wrote: "Medals, by means of the engraver's art, perpetuate in a durable form, and within a small compass which the eye can embrace at a glance, not only the features of eminent persons, but

the dates, brief accounts and representations (direct or emblematical), of events; they rank, therefore, among the most valuable records of the past when they recall men, deeds, or circumstances which have influenced the life of nations."

About the middle of the last century there appears to have been a decline in the public encouragement of the medallist. Not only in the mind of the public, but in that of the artist as well, this special art has become confused with the art of the sculptor and the canons governing numismatics have long been forgotten or ignored. The result has been that while there has always been a considerable demand for the work of competent medallists, and while this country has produced architects, sculptors and painters of world-wide reputation, no medallist

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has come to the front as a master in his profession. It is, therefore, a matter of great satisfaction to find here an artist whose taste and temperament have inclined him to choose this special branch of plastic art for his life work and who has already achieved eminence in it.

The small size of plaques and medals and the consequent difficulty of showing them to advantage in a general collection of works of art, are the chief reasons why a medallist rarely shows his work publicly, and it is only in an intimate and special exhibition like this that these productions can be studied with satisfaction.

Mr. Victor D. Brenner, whose collected works are enumerated in this catalogue, was born in Shavely, Russia, in 1871, and at the age of thirteen began to work with his

father in engraving seals and in stone cutting. After three years' experience under his father's directions he left home and worked as an engraver of jewelry and a sculptor in various cities of Russia until 1890, when he came to New York and entered as a pupil, first in Cooper Union, then in the School of the National Academy of Design, and in the Art Students' League, practising his profession in the daytime and studying at night. In 1898 he went to Paris, became the pupil of Roty and studied in the Julian Academy under Peuch, Verlet and Dubois for two years. After a year's travel in Italy and Germany he returned to New York and opened a studio and in the course of three years produced a large number of plaques, medals, reliefs and busts.

The past two years he has spent