



In this issue of our newsletter, we have another great article from Jeff Garrett on the subject "A Christmas Miracle." Our next meeting will be held on Monday, February 17, 2020 at 6:30 PM at our new location at the Embassy Suites at Lexington Green, 245 Lexington Green Circle. As a reminder, they have asked that we not bring in outside food or drink when attending the meetings. Instead, there is a location within the facility to purchase soft drinks, coffee, or food items.

**DOOR PRIZE TO BE GIVEN AWAY!**

You won't want to miss this meeting! Jeff Garrett at Mid-American Rare Coin will be donating another door-prize item to be given away. Also, Jeff has a really nice deal for any club members who would like to become members of the American Numismatic Association. Jeff will pay 100% of the first year's basic membership dues (the online version of *The Numismatist*, a \$28.00 value) for any club member who wants to become an ANA member for the first time. The ANA offers members many outstanding benefits including discounted coin insurance, life insurance, library use, on-line delivery of *The Numismatist Magazine*, and a great numismatic convention each summer.

### **A Christmas Miracle By Jeff Garrett**

Last December, I experienced one of the most amazing events of my 45-year numismatic career. While I have often said that every day in my profession is like the *Antiques Roadshow*, seldom does something come out of left field that is totally unexpected. But what happened on December 6, 2019, blew me away.

It started with a brief email a couple weeks ago from Doug Davis, the director of the [Numismatic Crime Information Center](#). Doug asked if the 1795 Half Eagle graded NGC MS 62 that was lost in a Federal Express shipment over five years ago

had been recovered. I assumed he was updating his files and the lists of stolen coins that he maintains. “The coin has not been recovered,” I replied.

We had purchased the coin for about \$90,000 in 2014 and shipped the coin by Federal Express to a client in Florida. A few days later, the buyer called asking if the coin had been sent. I was overcome with panic after checking online and finding no clear information about the whereabouts of the package. After multiple calls to Federal Express, we realized the coin had made it to Memphis, Tennessee but had never left the sorting facility. The coin had been lost or stolen! Federal Express investigators found the package’s outside box in the sorting facility, but not the inside box, or its contents. After a few days, the matter was considered closed by Federal Express, and I was refunded my \$25 shipping fee.

Over the years, I have told many friends and colleagues about my experiences dealing with the “Murphy’s Law” of shipping. In other words, what can go wrong will! However, I have had only one package totally lost by Federal Express — this one. My secretary who usually does the shipping was on vacation. I handled the package instead. I hastily shipped the package, ignoring the fact that the coin exceeded my insurance coverage by nearly \$40,000.

To say it was a stressful few weeks is a gross understatement. I could have purchased extra coverage for a couple of hundred dollars, but failed to make the call. I would have probably fired someone else in my company for being so reckless!

### **Gone but not forgotten**

Since then, I have been checking every auction sale for 1795 Half Eagles, hoping the coin would turn up. My biggest fear was that the coin had been lost at the Federal Express sorting facility and was now permanently entombed at the local landfill. I actually sincerely hoped the coin had been stolen, so that recovery would someday be possible.

The story picks up on the aforementioned date of December 6, 2019. Around 4 p.m. Friday afternoon, longtime coin dealer Tom Phillips in Memphis called me to

confirm that my 1795 Half Eagle was still missing, for he had some news to tell me — it had been found and someone was attempting to sell it.

Earlier in the day, a young man was in his shop and showed him a picture of the coin on his cell phone. Incredibly, the coin was still in the same NGC holder it was in when it went missing. The NGC certification number and photos matched exactly. Tom had discovered the coin was stolen by finding the press release issued by the Numismatic Crime Information Center in 2014.

Tom told the young man he would indeed be interested in purchasing the coin, and a meeting was arranged for later that day. After confirming with me that the coin was still missing, Tom contacted the Memphis Police Department. He explained the situation, and the police promised to send officers to his shop. Around 5:30 p.m. Memphis time, the young man walked back into Tom's shop with my long-lost 1795 Half Eagle. Unfortunately, however, the Memphis Police weren't there yet. Tom bravely stalled the potential seller for about 30 minutes, hoping desperately for backup to arrive. Finally, six uniformed officers entered the shop, arrested the suspect and confiscated my coin.

Tom called me a few minutes later to tell me what had transpired. I was overcome with joy and excitement. Seldom does such a valuable coin surface after so long. I am deeply and eternally grateful to Tom Phillips and Doug Davis for their efforts in recovering my property.

### **The moral(s) of the story**

For now, the coin remains in the evidence room of the Memphis Police Department. We have no idea how long the legal process will take to play out. One thing is for sure, it's much safer where it is now than wherever it has been for the past five years.

Reflecting on what transpired during this agonizing experience, there were many lessons learned that I would love to share with readers. Certainly this is a great example of the old adage the best lessons are learned the hard way!

1. When shipping any numismatic material be extremely careful, and do not skip safety precautions. Boxes should always be carefully wrapped with no indication there are valuables on the inside. Never mention coins or bullion in the “Ship to” line, even if the company name is Mid-American Rare Coin Galleries, Inc. or Numismatic Guaranty Corporation. Send the package to an individual only. Shipping coins can be tricky, and I would recommend you check with a professional for advice. Remember, unless instructed otherwise, FedEx will leave a package on a doorstep, and the insurance you purchased will be void.
2. The above mentioned episode clearly illustrates the advantage of having NGC-certified coins. The recovered coin was in an NGC holder with an NGC certification number, and this will make proving the coin is mine immeasurably easier.
3. Whenever shipping coins, you should be certain that you have a high-quality photograph of the coin. Luckily for me, NGC had a photo of the coin on file, and this would have been invaluable evidence if the coin had been broken out of the holder. I cannot overly state the importance of this advice. The [NGC Photo Vision](#) and [PHOTO PROOF](#) options are highly recommended for anyone with valuable coins.
4. Keep good records of any purchase. If a coin goes missing and later shows up, you will need to prove you are the rightful owner. Detailed invoices and proof of payment will be critical.
5. Only buy expensive coins from established dealers who will guarantee title of any coin you buy. This is not as simple as it sounds. If Tom Phillips had purchased the coin at a bargain price from the suspect who presented the coin to him, he could have been out the purchase price. I’m thankful the coin was recovered with no further victims being created. In the past, claims have been made against coins that had been stolen decades ago.
6. If you do suffer a loss of numismatic material for any reason, be sure to circulate that information with as many organizations and companies as possible. The power of a Google search could lead to recovery of your material years later.

7. Never keep valuable coins at home. Not a week goes by that I do not hear about someone losing coins in a home robbery. When thinking about having coins at home for any reason, remember “Murphy’s Law” mentioned above.
8. Make sure you purchase insurance for your numismatic material. Also, study the policy and closely follow the terms and conditions. In the case of a loss, you will need to have documentation mentioned above to prove your losses.

Finally, please financially support the nonprofit Numismatic Crime Information Center ([numismaticcrimes.org](http://numismaticcrimes.org)) run by Doug Davis. He does an amazing job circulating information about coin crimes. Doug also recently took a lead role in the battle against counterfeit coinage. It’s great that we have someone committed to watching the backs of everyone interested in numismatics.