The McGill University Collection of Greek and Roman Coins:
New Evidence for its History

by Richard Virr, Barbara Lawson, G. Michael Woloch and Franziska E. Shlosser

Although most of McGill's collection of classical coins has been catalogued and published, the origin of the collection itself, has, until now, defied explanation. This article reconstructs the history of the collection by examining the numismatic holdings of the Natural History Society of Montreal (1827-1925), random coin donations over the years to McGill University and to the University Library. This research also sheds light on the rather mysterious connection between a coin collection belonging to Margaret Murray (d. 1927), wife of McGill professor of philosophy John Clark Murray, and the collection of the University's Principal, William Peterson. The article concludes with a survey of the coins now comprising the collection, and of their vital and valued contribution to teaching and research activities at McGill.

Même si l'essentiel de la collection de pièces anciennes de McGill a été catalogué et publiée, son origine a jusqu'à aujourd'hui défie toute explication. Cet article reconstruit l'histoire de la collection en examinant le fonds numismatique de la Natural History Society of Montreal (1827-1925) et les collections de pièces données à l'Université McGill et à ses bibliothèques au fil des ans. Cette recherche éclaire également d'un jour nouveau le lien plutôt mystérieux qui existe entre les collections numismatiques de Margaret Murray (d. 1927), épouse du professeur de philosophie de McGill John Clark Murray, et la collection du principal de l'Université, William Peterson. Cet article donne également un aperçu des pièces qui font désormais partie de la collection et du rôle précieux qu'elles ont joué dans les activités d'enseignement et de recherche à McGill.

McGill University has a collection of about 2100 classical, antique and oriental coins, of which some 1764 have been identified. This collection illustrates most of the important areas of Greco-Roman numismatics. The major part of the collection was found in 1966 in a box when the University's McCord Museum of Canadian History was being moved to new quarters. This box was typical of those used for storing coins in the early part of this century. The collection was turned over to the Classics Department, and a preliminary classification of the coins was made by the late Professor Colin D. Gordon in 1966. The next year, 1967, the collection was moved to the Redpath Museum, and a grant from the Quebec Ministry of Education in 1975/1976 helped provide appropriate storage. Since 1979, the Curator of Ethnology, first Kathleen Zahn, and now Barbara Lawson, has been responsible for the collection. In 1981, G. Michael Woloch and Franziska E. Shlosser were appointed joint honorary curators.

Most of the collection has been described in a three volume catalogue published between 1975 and 1984. The general editor is Professor G. Michael Woloch of the Classics Department. Volume I, dealing with the Roman coins, contains two sections: the main part by D.H.E. Whitehead, and a supplement, by Vivien Law, of coins wrongly sorted in 1971. Volume II, treating the Greek gold and silver coins, is by Professor Franziska E. Shlosser of the Department of History, Concordia University, Montreal. She is also the author of Volume III which describes the Greek
The McGill University Collection of Greek and Roman Coins

bronze coins and the bronze Greek coins of the Roman Empire as well as some silver coins and some Judean and Indian coins. Volume III also contains a second supplement of Roman coins by L. Cass-Conrad. The three volumes are richly illustrated with 25 plates in Volumes I and II, and 28 in Volume III. Volume II follows sylloge format with photographs of all of the coins described. In the preparation of the catalogue, assistance with the format was provided by the curatorial staff of the American Numismatic Society.

When Volume I of the catalogue was published in 1975, the origins of the collection were obscure. Most of what was then known was based on Professor Shlosser's McGill M.A. thesis of 1971. However, new information has been discovered and some old information reassessed, and it is now possible to reconstruct, at least broadly, the origins of the collection. This essay includes a preliminary catalogue of gifts of coins over the years to the Natural History Society of Montreal and to McGill University, a history of what would now appear to be the core of the McGill collection and a description of the collection itself as it now exists.

NUMISMATIC HOLDINGS OF THE N.H.S.M. (1827-1925)

The Natural History Society of Montreal (N.H.S.M.), founded in 1827, was the earliest scientific organization in Canada and among the first established in North America. The Society maintained a museum, which included zoological and botanical specimens, and also minerals. In addition to the natural history holdings, the museum also received donations of ethnological objects and coins. After years of fluctuating fortune, the Society disbanded in 1925 and its collections were divided among the McGill University libraries and museums.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description of Donation</th>
<th>Locality</th>
<th>Donor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1830 Feb. 23</td>
<td>A silver coin</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>Rev. E. Parkin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1831 Nov. 28</td>
<td>A copper coin</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>Mr. R. Wier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1832 Dec. 31</td>
<td>Seven copper coins</td>
<td>Roman</td>
<td>Mr. J. Brown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1832 Dec. 31</td>
<td>A small silver coin</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>Mr. Grant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1833 Oct. 28</td>
<td>A copper coin</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>Rev. J. Bethune</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1833 Nov. 25</td>
<td>Five coins (one of Maximilian)</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>Mr. J. Rattray</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1833 Dec. 28</td>
<td>Three copper coins (one of the Emperor Nero)</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>Mr. A.H. Armour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1835 Aug. 31</td>
<td>Two copper coins</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>Mr. J.V. Browne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1835 Aug. 31</td>
<td>One copper coin of the reign of Vespasian</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>Mr. H. Youle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1836 Apr. 25</td>
<td>One antique copper coin</td>
<td>Herculaneum</td>
<td>Dr. A.H. David</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1837 Apr. 24</td>
<td>Eleven silver &amp; copper coins</td>
<td>Grecian &amp; Roman</td>
<td>Mr. Alex Buchanan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1837 May 18</td>
<td>Fourteen silver coins &amp; forty-eight copper coins. Many rare and valuable being ancient.</td>
<td>Grecian &amp; Roman</td>
<td>Mr. Alex Buchanan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**obverse:** NERO CLAVD CAESAR AVG GER PM TRP IMP PP
Bust laureate with aegis.

**reverse:** [AUG-VSTI]-S-PQR-OST-C
Bird's eye view of harbour of Ostia.
A list describing the distribution of this material mentions a box of coins sent to the Redpath Museum. The register of the Natural History Society of Montreal includes approximately 140 donations of coins, representing donations by approximately 100 different individuals, totalling close to 1000 coins (average entries are for 5 coins or less). Of these, some 660 are described as copper, 3 as brass, 180 as silver, and 3 as gold. Over 300 coins have a European provenance, the greatest representations being from England and France as might be expected.

The table lists the only donations to the N.H.S.M. designated as Greek or Roman (97 coins in all). It should be noted that entries are often ambiguous regarding the age of coins and the term "ancient" is used inconsistently throughout the N.H.S.M. register. This list may, therefore, include some non-classical examples. As close to 500 coins have no provenance indicated, it is quite probable that classical coins were among those described as "ancient" or included in generalized entries such as "four silver coins".

NUMISMATIC HOLDINGS OF MCGILL UNIVERSITY

The earliest records of donations to McGill University are included in the University's annual reports, however, only large or otherwise significant gifts are noted in detail. For example, 18 Roman coins presented by Mr. E.T. Hemmings are mentioned in an early listing of material donated to McGill University. However, it is conceivable that there were several random donations of one or two coins, similar to those made to the N.H.S.M., that received no notice.

The records of the University Library mention at least two gifts of coins. Unfortunately, these, like the N.H.S.M.'s records, usually provide very little information. In 1919, the wife and the daughter of the late Reverend Canon Thomas Musson (1832-1901) presented to the Library some 38 volumes of early printed books, over 110 early engravings and "a cabinet of coins, chiefly Canadian and Roman." Most of this material had been acquired by Musson during travels in Europe in 1858 and 1859. The coins are further described as being "numerous, and including . . . many Roman and Canadian specimens; but containing a goodly number of British and other examples as well." No other information has been found concerning these coins; they are not now in the collection of the University Library. In 1933, the Library received a collection of 15 Greek coins in a case from Mrs. Walter Frewen Lord. As with the Musson coins, no further information has been found and these coins are not in the Library collections.

Gifts of coins also appear in the register of McGill's Redpath Museum. Although the Redpath's holdings were primarily focused on natural history materials, ethnological and archaeological artifacts were included among the earliest donations to the Museum. A large numismatic collection belonging to Rupert E. Kingsford, was presented to the Redpath Museum by his widow in 1922. The Kingsford Collection included 1397 coins of various date and provenance. The classical component of this large donation consisted of 66 Roman republican Denarii. There are two later entries in the Redpath Museum's register that mention coins: one, a donation by Miss Mary V. Dunlop on 14 April 1939 including "coins" with pressed plants, minerals, and insects to be added to the Barnston Collection; the other entry, dated 8 December 1941, consisting of "7 frames, medals, coins, etc." from the Estate of M. Jérôme Côté (a note in the margin reads "for McCord"). There were also donations of coins to McGill's Ethnological Museum, including a collection of 124 Asian coins presented by the widow of Dr. Arthur Willey in 1944. These coins presumably became part of the University's miscellaneous numismatic holdings when the Ethnological Museum was closed in the late 1940s.

THE MURRAY-PETERSON COLLECTION

In the preface to volume one of the catalogue of the McGill coin collection mention was made of the collection of coins belonging to Mrs. Clark Murray. As pointed out there, "the contents of Mrs. Murray's collection are at least partially consistent with those of our collection." However, the subsequent state-
ment that "Mrs. Murray's claim on the collection was of tenuous validity" has no basis in fact. New information now makes it possible to elucidate at least some of the mystery surrounding Mrs. Murray's coin collection and its relationship to the McGill collection.

Margaret Polson Murray (d. 1927) was the wife of John Clark Murray, McGill professor of philosophy. Her greatest claim to fame is that of founder, in 1900, of the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire. Some time in the early 1890s, she acquired a collection of coins and Russian medals. A copy of the ten-page rudimentary catalogue that she had printed bears the rubber-stamped date of Jan 20 1894.14 Where Mrs. Murray acquired this collection has not been traced, but the collection would seem to have been a Montreal, or, at least, an eastern Canadian one, as it was known to Montreal numismatists such as R. W. McLachlan.15 A brief summary of the contents of the collection as listed in this catalogue will be helpful. There were 15 Greek gold, 60 Greek silver and 178 Greek copper coins; 8 gold Byzantine, 9 silver Byzantine and 49 copper Byzantine coins; 34 silver Asiatic, 31 copper Asiatic coins and 1 glass coin; 7 Roman gold, 26 Roman silver, 137 Roman Imperial silver, 362 Roman copper and 112 Roman half-silver coins; and finally, there were 489 Russian gold, platinum, silver and copper coins and 52 silver and bronze Russian medals. That is, a total of 1518 coins and 52 medals.

For reasons that are not at all clear, Mrs. Murray found herself in financial difficulties in the early years of this century and appealed to Principal William Peterson of McGill for help.16 As recorded in the Peterson Letterbooks, the story begins on 29 March 1902 with the following letter to the Chancellor of the University, Lord Strathcona, then Canadian High Commissioner in London:

An excellent opportunity presents itself of doing something for Mrs. Clark Murray, and also acquiring something of permanent value in return. Mrs. Murray has just sent me the catalogue of a very remarkable collection of coins which she possesses, and with the history of which I am fully acquainted. The collection numbers some 2000 in all,
- Greek, Roman, Asiatic, Byzantine, and Russian; gold, silver and copper. It could be very serviceably used in connection with the teaching of History, and as McGill possesses absolutely nothing of the kind, it would be a valuable addition to our equipment. I enclose a note in which Mrs. Murray tells me that she would like to have $2500. I have no doubt that the collection, if examined by an expert, might be considered to be worth that figure, but as I happen to know the peculiar circumstances under which it was acquired some ten years ago for a considerable smaller figure, I am quite disposed to think that if I am empowered to offer, say, $2000, it could be secured, while Mrs. Murray would at the same time be benefited by an immediate and easy sale. I make this suggestion to you with some diffidence, but short of paying out money to Mrs. Murray by way of financial assistance, I do not think that I can make any better suggestion.17

The catalogue mentioned by Peterson is undoubtedly the one described earlier. Unfortunately, in no place does Peterson record the history of the collection. In a letter to Mrs. Murray of the same date, Peterson wrote, "I am much interested in the collection of coins, of which I had heard a great deal previously from Professor Moyse."18

On 15 April 1902, Peterson made a conditional offer to Mrs. Murray of $2000 for the collection, subject to an examination by an expert, if it included the numismatic books that she had acquired from the collection's previous owner. The expert was the well-known Montreal numismatist R. W. McLachlan, and he examined the collection on 17 April.19 The same day, Peterson wrote to Mrs. Murray as follows:

I have been over your collection of coins to-day with an expert from the Chateau de Ramezay and another friend, and regret to say as the [sic]
Galba, Paduan (?) forgery, Sesterce. (McGill, I, 21).

obverse: *IMP*SER*SVLP*GALBA CAES AVG TR POT
Bust laureate.

reverse: SC (l. and r. in field) ADLOCVT (in exergue)
Signiferi being addressed by emperor.
result that, though I may be able to find some other method of assisting you, I am compelled to withdraw the conditional offer which I made of $2000 for the collection. I am afraid you will be surprised to hear that many of the most valuable things seem to have disappeared: for example there are only 7 gold Greek coins, instead of 15; only one Roman gold coin, instead of 7; while half of the Russian gold collection has entirely disappeared. There are, of course, a good many counterfeits in the collection, as is very commonly the case. Both the gentlemen who were with me to-day knew it before you acquired it, and miss some features of it which used to be prominent. For example, there is only one of the Russian silver bars, and the Greek collection strikes them as not being what it was originally. Among other disappearances I may note nearly half the unclassified silver Greek coins; a large number of the Asiatic silver coins; nearly half the Imperial silver coins; and the earliest of all the Russian silver coins.

Peterson concluded by asking Mrs. Murray to call at his office if she should wish to do so. The next day, 18 April, Peterson wrote to Lord Strathcona, "I have come to the conclusion that it [the coin collection] is not worth more than $500." And he offered Mrs. Murray that sum for it. This offer was repeated on 7 May, but the tone of the negotiations was becoming acrimonious. However, on 20 May, Mrs. Murray accepted the offer of $500 for the collection.

This correspondence suggests that Peterson bought Mrs. Murray's collection of coins himself, for $500, but, as part of a financial package worth $2500, largely, if not entirely, paid for by Lord Strathcona. The $2000 was, presumably, to help cover the losses that Mrs. Murray claimed she had sustained on behalf of the University. However, there is a small problem with Peterson's purchase. In 1903, the affair had not yet reached its final settlement. On 13 April, Peterson wrote to Mrs. Murray:

I do not know that I ought to be asked to take this matter up again, but if you are now prepared to sign the enclosed receipts, and will forward them either to Dr. Barclay or to me, I shall arrange to pay the sum of $2500 on behalf of Lord Strathcona, as previously promised. You will note that in the second receipt I use the phrase "the balance of the collection," as it no longer corresponds, as you are aware, to the printed catalogue.

So the question remains, Who paid for the coins? Peterson? or Strathcona? As subsequent events will show, Peterson possessed them, and, as a classicist of some renown, the collection would have had a certain interest for him. But here, the coins disappear from sight for almost thirty years.

In 1930, William Gordon Peterson, the eldest son of the Principal and a classicist like his father, wrote in a postscript to a letter dated 25 January:

I take this opportunity of stating that, pursuant to my Father's wish, my will leaves to McGill his collection of coins (classical and modern). Also some classical gems. As I collect these things myself, this collection will finally come to the University greatly augmented. My father knew that, otherwise he would have left it at once, on his death.

The younger Peterson died later in the same year on 3 October. A general description of this collection—unfortunately, no other exists—was prepared to settle the estate by Albert Woodhouse, Dealer in Antique Gems, etc., 56 Carey St., Lincoln's Inn, London on 27 January 1931. He described a miscellaneous collection of classical and modern coins and medals. Of particular interest are the "53 Russian Medals in silver and bronze mostly in Covers with descriptions, War, Police, Commemoration etc." Mrs. Murray's catalogue...
listed 52 Russian medals. In addition, there is a "collection of Russian silver and copper coins in 11 Trays, Early to recent periods." But of even greater importance are the following entries:

A polished oak Coin Cabinet with 23 Trays, containing a large Collection of Early Roman silver & bronze Coins periods B.C. 520-400 etc., including 1 gold, in No. 8 Tray.

A walnut Box with 12 Trays, containing A collection of Byzantine Coins including 7 gold in 4 Trays. [Mrs. Murray's catalogue lists 8 gold Byzantine coins.]

A small mahogany Box, containing numerous Roman & Greek Coins, some brass & bronze Medals, 1 Oriental gold coin, all in paper covers.

A cedar-wood (Cigar) Box, containing 66 small Grecian Coins in covers with description. A quantity of loose copper coins.

These four groups are all described as "ancient" by Woodhouse. Unfortunately, he gives no count for these various categories of coins.

The bequest of Lieut-Col. Peterson was duly received at the University, and the Curator of Museums, E.L. Judah, reported to A.P.S. Glassco, the Secretary of the University, that the collection, including the antique gems, had been unpacked and examined. Leo Renault, Curator of the Numismatic Collection of the Chateau Ramezay, considered the Greek coins to be the finest collection in Canada at the time. The Russian collection also was considered significant. Judah concluded his report by saying, "This whole collection should be insured for $8000.00, under the 80% co-insurance clause, as it might be difficult to replace it for $10,000.00." 28

This important bequest was reported in The McGill News:

A valuable collection, composed of thousands of platinum, gold, and silver coins, collected by the late Sir William Peterson, and by his son, the late Lieut.-Col. W.G. Peterson, has reached the University, to which it was bequeathed in Col. Peterson's will. The oldest coin was minted approximately 2,700 years ago, and the most valuable are Russian coins made of platinum. In addition to coins, the gift includes a collection of antique carved gems, collected from many lands over a long period of years. It is hoped that, after classification has been completed, the collection will be placed on view this summer. 29

However, it would seem that the collection was not put on display. The report of Cyril Fox on the McGill museums, 1932, does little but note the existence of the Peterson coin collection, and that it had not been assigned to any museum. 30

A list of McGill's numismatic holdings prepared c. 1932, 31 perhaps for Fox's museum report describes coins and medals from the late Colonel Peterson, the late J.H.R. Molson, the Rawlinson Collection, "together with many small donations that are of very little use." 32 In addition to various medals, this list provides a few details regarding the holdings of British, foreign, and ancient coins at the McCord National Museum. The material described includes:

The Roman collection. Not classified. Many forgeries in this collection.

A very fine collection of Greek silver coins [presumably the collection of Tarantine coins now in the Redpath Museum]. Not many type specimens but a large number of die varieties.

A small lot of Greek bronze coins. Never been looked over. 33

And here the University's collection of classical coins disappears from view until its reappearance in 1966 in the old McCord Museum as described in the published catalogue. 34 There can be little doubt that the Murray-Peterson collection forms the core of the pres-

Obverse: Head of Heracles in lion-skin; cut across the top of the head.

Reverse: Zeus seated on throne.
ent McGill collection. It is this collection that is “the private collection of a single individual of substantial income who maintained a fairly serious interest in classical numismatics” as posited in the catalogue. 35

CLASSICAL COINS AT McGILL UNIVERSITY CIRCA 1966

In 1966, when Professor Gordon tallied the coins that had been found in a box in the McCord Museum and passed on to him, he recorded the following: 766 Greek, 921 Roman, 111 Uncertain, 35 Foreign, totalling 1833 coins. 36 Gordon’s observations regarding the coins he examined were noted as follows:

The classical coins displayed a few traces of having once been organized. A number of the coins were accompanied by small paper discs on which was written certain information, though evidencing no particular plan. The discs sometimes bore a description of the individual coin, sometimes the legend, occasionally a Poole number (presumably a reference to the early catalogue of British Museum coinage); on a few a sum of money is written, in pounds sterling, possibly the price paid for the coin. 37

Further analysis of the coins now housed in the Redpath Museum has added several details to Gordon’s comments. A tally of the coins indicates a total of approximately 200 labels; 126 affixed to the cardboard frames enclosing each coin, plus more than 80 detached discs. The vast majority of these (i.e. 150 or 3/4ths of the total) describe Tarentine coins, of which there are a total of 215 in the collection at the present time. The proportionally large number of Tarentine labels suggests a specialized collecting interest, perhaps corresponding with the assessment of the “very fine collection of Greek silver coins” mentioned in the report on McGill’s numismatic holdings. 38

Several factors suggest that Peterson was responsible for the development of this particular component of the collection. Murray’s collection, purchased by Peterson in 1903, was not notably strong in this area. That collection included a total of 60 Greek silver coins, only one of which was Tarentine. 39 It is also unlikely that the Tarentine coins were passed on from the N.H.S.M., as even the vague entries in the Society’s register of donations would have given some indication of a collection of this nature. Finally, a disc label on one Tarentine didrachm (acc.80.02.80), indicates that the coin was purchased at a sale of Greek civic and regal coins held at the London auction house of Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge in January 1914. 40 This suggests the continued development of the collection after it was purchased from Mrs. Murray in 1903. 41

Gordon noted the paper disc labels as being the work of two different hands. 42 They have also been taken as possible indications of the work of two different collectors. 43 A comparison with labels at the Royal Ontario Museum known to be from the London numismatists, A.H. Baldwin & Sons, Ltd., led to further inquiries which confirmed that most of the labels were written by staff members of Spinks and Baldwin & Sons during the first half of this century. 44 This information supports the argument for a single collector with a specialized interest in Tarentine coins, rather than a multitude of collectors coincidently sharing the same specialization. Most probably, this collector was Principal Peterson.

In spite of the tortuous path travelled by many of the coins described, classical coins from all of the sources treated here, now form McGill’s Collection of Greek and Roman coins. 45

THE COLLECTION TODAY

The collection of Roman coins consists of 848 pieces and is a well-varied one, representing nearly all time periods and mints. Both Republican and Imperial coins are present, and most regions of the Empire represented. The earliest coins date from about 320 B.C. and the latest from A.D. 527–538. The greatest number of coins (90) come from the reign of Constantine I (A.D. 306–337). Other large concentrations include those of Probus (A.D. 285–282) 64; Diocletian (A.D. 284–305) 55; Galienus (A.D. 253–260) 48; Maximian I (A.D. 285–305) 38; Antoninus Pius (A.D. 138–161) 34; Augustus (27 B.C. – A.D. 14) 29;
Syracuse, Tetradrachm, about 474-450 B.C. (McGill, II, 46).

obverse: Quadriga driven by male figure; Nike flying overhead, about to crown horses with wreath.

reverse: ΣΥΡΑΚΟΣΙΟΝ
Head of Arethusa surrounded by four dolphins.
The McGill University Collection of Greek and Roman Coins

Constantius II (ruled 337–361, coins 326–361) 28; Constantine II (ruled 337–340, coins 311–341) 23; Hadrian (A.D. 117–138) 22; and Trajan (A.D. 97–117) and Marcus Aurelius (A.D. 161–180) 21 each. The collection includes a number of forgeries, both ancient and modern including at least one Greek and several Roman examples of the work of the notorious, but gifted, nineteenth-century German counterfeiter, Carl Wilhelm Becker (1772–1830). 47

The ancient Greek coins comprise 316 silver, four gold and four electrum ones, plus the bronze ones. The largest number of coins from the same region is 213 silver coins from Tarentum, situated in the instep of the Italian boot. On account of their relatively large number, they can be considered the most significant part of the Greek collection. The rest of the coins are from the Greek mainland, Magna Graecia in general and the Hellenistic kingdoms. A small number is from Persia.

As can be expected in a collection of such variety and diverse provenance, the quality of the coins ranges from very good to poor. This is particularly apparent in the collection of bronze coins. If, however, the collection is sometimes lacking in fine specimens, it makes up for this lack by its greater variety. The Greek bronze and Imperial coins total 592 pieces, including coins from Palestine ranging from the Hasmonaeum Dynasts to the Bar-Cochba War and the provincial cities under the Romans.

There are a number of interesting forgeries among the Greek coins. The most significant of these is a gold stater of Seleucus II made by the counterfeiter Becker. 48 There are, as well, some ancient forgeries, and Celtic imitations of the coins of the Macedonian kings.

In addition to the coins received by Gordon in 1966, McGill's Faculty of Religious Studies supplemented the University's numismatic holdings in 1978 with the donation of 259 Greek, Greek Imperial, Byzantine, Jewish, Islamic and other coins as part of the R.B.Y. Scott Collection of Near Eastern Antiquities. Of these, 102 coins have been identified and catalogued. Recent donations include one Roman Empire coin (acc. 85.02.01), struck in the East. This coin was brought from Egypt by Mrs. Charles Adams and donated to the collection by Professor Stanley Frost. An electype of an Athenian demarchus (acc. 88.03.22), presented by Mrs. Germaine Deichmann, was added to the collection in 1988. In 1990, 19 oriental coins of various provenances were transferred to the Redpath Museum from the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections (acc. 90.04.01-19).

Publication of the catalogues, which were widely and favourably reviewed, has enabled collectors and scholars to access what is in the McGill collection and to study coins appropriate to their work. Both photographs and casts of the coins can be provided: M. Amandry, Conservateur of the Cabinet des Medailles in Paris, used casts in his recent work. 49 However, the collection is primarily a teaching one, and its best use is for instruction in university courses and for thesis research. A course on Greek and Roman numismatics, using the coins as ancient sources, has been taught from 1975 by Professor Woloch. It was last taught in 1989/1990, and is planned for 1992/1993, in conjunction with an exhibit of electrotypes, "Rome and the Germans as Seen in Coinage," at the Redpath Museum. The coins have been used for class exhibits in courses on ancient history and Latin civilization, and they have been used by students writing B.A. and M.A. theses.

Moreover, other research on the coins continues. In 1976 a series of analyses was carried out by M. Attas 50 to measure the silver content of some of the Tarentine coins. This group was chosen because it represented a range of coin types from ca. 500 B.C. to the Hannibalic occupation of 212–209 B.C. X-ray fluorescence (XRF) was used, and the general conclusion was that the coins had not been devalued, even during the uncertain times of 212–209 B.C. In 1985 a second series of analyses was undertaken by H. Marshall using proton activation analysis (PAA). There were several reasons for undertaking a second analysis. First, XRF determines the elemental composition in a thin surface layer, and this could result in certain errors since the composition at the surface of a coin might differ from that of its core. Second, only copper was determined quanti-
The McGill University Collection of Greek and Roman Coins

tatively by XRF, and it would be of interest to
know the percentage of other metals, such as
gold, in the coins. Finally, the values obtained
by PAA could be used as a check. The copper
values obtained by Marshall were somewhat
higher (about 10%) than those obtained by
Attas. T. Saavedra is presently (1990) reviewing
and comparing this previous work for a B.A.
Honours thesis in Classics.51

Since the McGill collection of Greek and
Roman coins was rediscovered and first stud-
ied in 1966, questions inevitably have arisen
regarding its origins. In this essay, we have
used new research and a re-examination of
information already known to outline what we
believe to be the principal sources of this col-
collection. Our reconstruction of the history of
the collection restores to the University a part
of its heritage, too long forgotten, and records
the names of the many donors who have con-
tributed to the formation of this collection as
it exists today. Not only is it important to rec-
ognize the significance of the large donations
of coins such as the Peterson and Scott ones,
but it is of equal importance to recognize that
the many donations of single coins and small
numbers of coins, first to the Natural History
Society and later to the University, have also
enriched the collection. The history of the
McGill coin collection is typical of that of many
collections: periods of obscurity followed by
periods of great interest; of small donations
and of major gifts; and of a history to be
reconstructed.

Notes

The authors would particularly like to thank
Eunice Tees, Phebe Chartrand, Warren Baker
and Peter Mitchell for their assistance with and
interest in this research project and Jeff
Campbell, Janet Kelly, Leilah Nadir, and Susan
Wade for their assistance with the coin tallies.

University Collection of Greek and Roman
University Collection*, by D.H.E. Whitehead;
Vol. II: *Greek Gold and Silver Coins in the
McGill University Collection*, by Franziska
E. Shlosser; Vol. III: *Ancient Bronze Coins in
the McGill University Collection*, by Franziska
E. Shlosser. Amsterdam: B.R. Gruner

University Coin Collection,” in Whitehead, iii.

3. For an historical overview of the
N.H.S.M., see Stanley Frost, “Science educa-
tion in the nineteenth century,” *McGill Journal

4. N.H.S.M., “Natural History Society’s
Inventory, March 7, 1906 [-1925],” p. 16 of
distribution list. On file, Rare Book Collection
of Blacker-Wood Library, McGill University.

5. N.H.S.M., “General Registry Book of
Donations to the Natural History Society
[1827-1854, 1895-99].” Written up to 1852 by
Alexander George Lachlan; continued from
1852 to 1854 by Librarian; continued from
1895 to 1899 by J.B. Williams, Curator. Acc.
297961, Rare Book Collection of Blacker-
Wood Library, McGill University.

The “Minutes of the Natural History Society
[of] Montreal [1858-1888]” were examined for
coin donations of the period not covered by the
registry book. (Acc. 269043, Rare Book
Collection of Blacker-Wood Library, McGill
University, Montreal.) Although there may
have been a few coins donated during the peri-
ods for which there are gaps in the records,
t.e. 1854-8 and 1888-95, these would have
been minor donations. Mention of significant
donations occurring during these undocu-
mented periods were carried over to later
records.
6. A comparison of this count with one noted in 1830, indicates that almost a third of the coins held by the N.H.S.M. at the turn of the century had been donated within the first three years of the Society's existence. *Third Annual Report of the Natural History Society of Montreal* (Montreal, 1830), 7-8.

7. Calendar of the McGill University,(Montreal, 1863), 31. This publication includes donations to the University from 1856 to 1863.

8. Quarterly and Annual Report of the Librarian, 1917-1920, and Minutes of the Library Committee, 10 February 1919, vol. 3, p. 159. McGill University Archives, M.G. 40. A superseded text of the report contained this phrase: "the most important section of them (the coins) are of Roman and Canadian origin."

9. Minutes of the Library Committee, 11 April 1933, vol. 6, p. 8 McGill University Archives, R.G. 40. As with many of the coins mentioned in the N.H.S.M. and other records, there is no indication whether these were ancient or modern examples.


14. Mrs. Clark Murray, "Catalogue of a rare and valuable collection of coins and of Russian medals." Printed catalogue, undated, Montreal, 9 pp. A photocopy of this catalogue, kindly supplied by Warren Baker, is now in the files of the Ethnology Collections of the Redpath Museum, McGill University. No original of the catalogue has been located. Copies of all the letters cited in this article also are in the files of the Ethnology Collections of the Redpath Museum.


16. Mrs. Murray's financial problems may well have been related to the unsuccessful University Club for students that she organized in 1895. Stanley B. Frost writes, "Peterson was reporting at the end of the session [1898-1899] that Mrs. Murray had lost money on the operation of the club, but the board of governors declined to come to her rescue, and in October 1899 the principal announced its closing with a heavy deficit." *McGill University. For the Advancement of Learning*, vol. 2. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1984), 20. Additional difficulties may have been due to the lack of pensions for McGill professors. Her husband, John Clark Murray, was to retire in 1903. See the correspondence cited in the next note.

17. Peterson Letterbooks, McGill University Archives, R.G. 2. The following letters are important: 29 March 1902 to Lord Strathcona, 29 March 1902 to Mrs. Murray, 15 April 1902 to Mrs. Murray, 17 April 1902 to Mrs. Murray, 17 April 1902 to R.W. McLachlan, 18 April 1902 to Lord Strathcona, 25 April 1902 to Mrs. Murray, 5 May 1902 to Mrs. Murray, 7 May 1902 to Mrs. Murray, 12 May 1902 to Mrs. Murray, 12 May 1902 to Mrs. Murray, 20 May 1902 to Lord Strathcona, 3 April 1903 to Dr. Barclay, 13 April 1903 to Mrs. Murray and 26 January 1904 to Judge Archibald. Unfortunately, Mrs. Murray's letters to Peterson do not seem to have survived.

18. Charles E. Moyse (1852-1924) was Molson Professor of English Language and Literature at McGill at this time.


23. Letter of 20 May 1902, post script, to Lord Strathcona from Peterson. Peterson
Letterbooks, McGill University Archives, R.G. 2.

24. Peterson Letterbooks, McGill University Archives, R.G. 2. Among other differences, there were now 7 Greek gold coins, not 15, and 55 silver instead of 60; there was 1 Roman gold coin instead of 7, and 60 Imperials instead of 137; and there were 10 Russian gold coins instead of 20, and about 170 silver instead of 230. Based on these figures, Peterson acquired about 900 (923) Greek, Byzantine, Asiatic and Roman coins. See letter of 17 April 1902 to Mrs. Murray for these figures.

25. Peterson Bequest, Board of Governors' Papers, McGill University Archives, R.G. 4. It is not clear as to whom this letter was addressed, but it must have been to someone at McGill, perhaps the Secretary A.P.S. Glassco.


27. The Russian coins and medals are not now part of the McGill collection.


The McGill News, vol. 12, no. 3 (June 1931), 53.


31. Report [of the] Numismatic Collection, McGill University. Typescript prepared by E.L. Judah, Secretary, University Museum Committee, circa 1932, 4 pp. (From an assessment done over the previous two years by Mr. L.A. Renaud, Honorary Numismatic Consultant to the University.) Photocopy on file, Ethnology Collections, Redpath Museum, McGill University.

32. Ibid., p. 1. This comment regarding small donations of very little use probably refers to coins transferred from the N.H.S.M.

33. Ibid., p. 2.

34. Sullivan, iii.

35. Ibid., vii.

The McGill University Collection of Greek and Roman Coins

36. [Colin Gordon]. Handwritten tally of coins, circa 1966. On file, Ethnology Collections, Redpath Museum, McGill University, Montreal. Gordon's tally shows a significant increase in the number of Roman, and especially Greek coins, compared to the 644 Roman and 253 Greek coins noted in Mrs. Murray's catalogue. Although the composition of the collection passed on to Principal Peterson by Murray and that presented to McGill by his son, W.G. Peterson is not known, comparison of these figures allows some speculation as to the collection's development by both Petertons. On the other hand, a report prepared in 1966 for the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research records only 800 items for the Peterson coin collection. This information was not communicated to Gordon, and does nothing to elucidate the question of the development of the McGill collection by the Peterson and/or others. Report on file, Ethnology Collections, Redpath Museum, McGill University.


38. Sullivan, iii-iv.


40. Mrs. Clark Murray, "Catalogue."

41. Correspondence to Mrs. B. Lawson from Mrs. M. Sinclair (Spink & Son Ltd.) 19 June 1990 and from Mr. Peter Mitchell (A.H. Baldwin & Sons Ltd.) 12 September 1990. On file, Ethnology Collections, Redpath Museum, McGill University.

42. It is most unlikely that this Tarentine didrachm was acquired for the N.H.S.M. Although the N.H.S.M. did not disband until 1925, its collections were packed up and essentially inactive from 1906 onwards, as it awaited funds to erect a new building, which unfortunately never materialized (see Frost, vol. 2, 41).

43. Sullivan, iv.

44. Ibid., iv.

45. Correspondence to Mrs. B. Lawson from Mr. Peter Mitchell (A.H. Baldwin & Sons,
46. One apparent oversight in the transfer of classical coins from the McCord to the Redpath Museum, resulted in the unfortunate loss of 65 Roman (silver) Denarii, sold by the McCord to Spink & Son, Ltd. in 1975.

47. For the coins, see: Whitehead, Pacatian, nos. 1, 2, p. 73; Claudius II, no. 14, p. 88; Maximian I Herculeus, no. 36, p. 136; Olybrius, no. 1, p. 169; and Postumus, nos. S2, S3, S4, p. 210. For Becker, see: George F. Hill, Becker the Counterfeiter. Chicago: Obol, 1977. (originally published in 1924.)


51. T. Saavedra has kindly provided the information in the text on elemental analysis.