



**PAN**

**PENNSYLVANIA ASSOCIATION of NUMISMATISTS**

Non-profit 501(c)(4) promoting numismatics through education  
1985 Lincoln Way, Suite 23 #225, White Oak PA 15131

- WHAT:** 112 Years Later, Local Carnegie Hero Medal Recipient Honored with Memorial Plaque, Exhibit by PAN in Collaboration with Others
- WHEN/WHERE:** Plaque ceremony, 11am, Bunker Hill Cemetery (115 N. Washington St, Bunker Hill, Ill. 62014)
- Reception/exhibit unveiling, 1pm, Ruyle Building (920 W. Breckenridge St, Carlinville, Ill. 62626)
- WHO:** Pennsylvania Association of Numismatists, Carnegie Hero Fund Commission, Macoupin County Historical Society,

### **112 Years Later, Recipient of Carnegie Hero Medal Honored with Memorial Plaque, Exhibit**

**CARLINVILLE, Illinois**—It was a typical June evening when Ivah Coles, age 21, and Richard Cromwell, age 20, went for a swim in the reservoir near Benld. While attempting to climb up the steep, high bank, Cromwell fell back into the water and began to sink. From the bank, Coles waded into the water toward Cromwell but sank within eight feet of him. The men's bodies were found in water 10 to 12 feet deep; the reports indicated that they were victims of cramps, caused by the chilliness of the water due to springs nearby. That was June 8, 1904.

Though newspaper accounts of the incident gave no stirring account of bravery or heroism on Coles' part, Coles would later be recognized. In 1908, Coles' mother was presented with a silver Carnegie Hero Medal, Coles' act being among the first few dozen recognized by the Carnegie Hero Fund Commission (CHFC), which since 1904 has recognized nearly 10,000 acts of heroism throughout the United States and Canada.

The Coles medal was recently put up for sale on eBay by a jeweler in O'Fallon, Mo., who had acquired it from someone selling it for scrap silver. The medal was purchased by Matthew Campbell, a member of the Pennsylvania Association of Numismatists (PAN), of Washington, Pa., who contacted the Commission, based nearby in Pittsburgh. These medals are usually held by the recipients and families as heirlooms and are rarely seen for sale. Additionally, of the nearly 10,000 Carnegie medals, only 617 are silver; most were bronze.

When Campbell contacted the Macoupin County Historical Society (MCHS) for research assistance, the society seized on the story, gathering information and locating Coles' grave at Bunker Hill Cemetery. Finding Coles' grave site to be unmarked, Campbell, PAN, MCHS, and various individuals contributed funds to install a memorial plaque and a Carnegie Hero grave marker supplied by CHFC. The plaque will be installed at Bunker Hill Cemetery during a ceremony at 11am on Wednesday, August 24.

"Knowing what this medal represented and that it was given to Coles' mother was very special," said Campbell, who will travel the 550 to Illinois for the ceremony. "That motivated me and all of us at PAN to support the plaque at Coles' grave and create an exhibit. It's a tribute to numismatics that a medal bought on eBay brought all of us together for this project 112 years later."

The Coles medal, which traveled from O'Fallon to Pennsylvania, will return to Illinois to be exhibited at MCHS's Ruyle Building at a reception. A photographic display will remain at MCHS, while the medal will be displayed at PAN's semiannual conventions in Pittsburgh and potentially travel nationally for other events.

“We were impressed with the work done by Campbell and the Pennsylvania Association of Numismatists,” said Eric P. Zahren, Executive Director of CHFC, who will also attend the events in Illinois. “We were happy to support their project to honor Coles and make his inspiring story known to the community.”

High-quality images for print and web of the Coles medal and the grave marker are available for download at [www.mchsociety.org/medal](http://www.mchsociety.org/medal). Images of the installed memorial plaque will be available after August 24.

Contacts:

**Eric P. Zahren**, Executive Director  
CARNEGIE HERO FUND COMMISSION  
436 Seventh Avenue, Suite 1101  
Pittsburgh, PA 15219-1841  
(412) 201-7449 direct  
[eric@carnegiehero.org](mailto:eric@carnegiehero.org)

**Matthew Campbell**, numismatist  
Pennsylvania Association of Numismatists  
1985 Lincoln Way, Suite 23, #225  
White Oak, PA 15131  
(724) 747-3703 cell  
[matthew.campbell1987@gmail.com](mailto:matthew.campbell1987@gmail.com)

**The Pennsylvania Association of Numismatists (PAN)** is a non-profit educational organization founded in 1978 consisting of individuals and coin clubs throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the United States. A life member of the American Numismatic Association, PAN is dedicated to promoting the hobby of coin collecting through coin shows, lectures, seminars, a published journal, and an electronic newsletter. Our primary focus is learning about art, history, and world cultures through coinage, medals, and paper money. Go to [www.pancoins.org](http://www.pancoins.org) for more information, or visit us at [facebook.com/pancoins](https://facebook.com/pancoins).

**The Carnegie Hero Fund Commission**, established by Andrew Carnegie in 1904, has awarded the CARNEGIE MEDAL to 9,868 individuals in recognition of their outstanding heroism, defined by the Commission as acts of lifesaving done at extraordinary risk to the rescuer. Grants totaling \$38.2 million have been given to the awardees or their survivors and include scholarship aid, continuing assistance, and death benefits. Fuller information on the CARNEGIE MEDAL and the history of the CARNEGIE HERO FUND COMMISSION can be found at [www.carnegiehero.org](http://www.carnegiehero.org) and on Facebook: [facebook.com/carnegiehero](https://facebook.com/carnegiehero).

**The Macoupin County Historical Society** is dedicated to the study of Macoupin County history and its people and the preservation of related sites, artifacts, and memorabilia. In 1973, members purchased the historic house known locally as Anderson Mansion, located in northwest Carlinville. Visit [www.mchsociety.org](http://www.mchsociety.org) for more information.

###