

Museum-Piece Donations: Dipping Into

By Maxine Cheshire

Of the millions of dollars worth of foreign gifts received by former President Richard M. Nixon and his family while he was in office, apparently only one numismatic curiosity worth \$2 has been turned over to the federal government under the Foreign Gifts and Decoration Act of 1966.

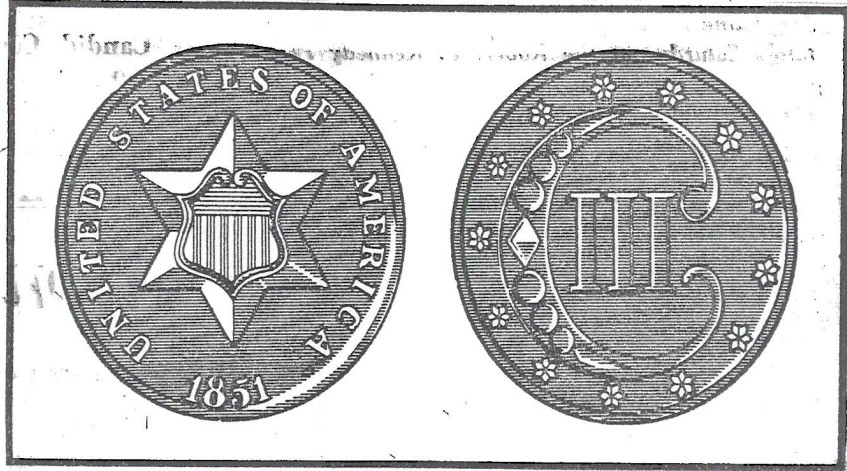
That coin—a U.S. three-cent piece already claimed by the Smithsonian—is on a 40-page list which the General Services Administration has mailed out to the 6,000 members of the American Association of Museums this week.

The museums are being invited to take their pick of a stockpile of gifts which have been turned over to the GSA to date by the State Department for disposition under the law.

The offer is being made in hopes of relieving Uncle Sam of the diplomatic embarrassment of being required by law to auction off such gifts as surplus government property.

To qualify, museums must be non-profit. They must agree to put the

a Stockpile of Foreign Gifts



One of 36,230,090 three-cent (single-line star) coins minted between 1851 and 1853.

VIP

gifts selected on display and not to sell or swap them.

The Smithsonian has already claimed a lot of the best stuff. So have the White House and the Vice President's residence, which took silver serving pieces and rugs, along with a number of military museums, which wanted jeweled daggers and other ceremonial weapons.

But there are Ali Baba storerooms full of other valuable items, including more than \$25,000 worth of jewelry and objects d'art turned in by former Secretary of State William P. Rogers and his wife.

The museums are not being told the appraised value of the items available unless they ask. Not everything has been appraised yet. Included among those still to be viewed by appraisers are five pages of gifts to Rogers' successor, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger.

There is only the one Nixon gift on the 40-page list. Although there are 1,100 packing crates of private and official foreign gifts to the Nixon family in "courtesy" storage with the GSA, none have been formally turned over to the government as required by the law and must still be treated by the GSA as the Nixon's private property.

The coin, minted in 1852, ended up with the GSA by "bureaucratic accident. A German citizen wrote to former President Nixon personally, stating that the three-cent piece had been worn by one of his ancestors as a medallion. The man wanted the coin returned to "the country of its origin."

The coin never got routed through the White House Gifts Unit, but went directly to the U.S. Chief of Protocol, who is supposed to be Congress' watch-dog over such gifts.

The office of Protocol, as directed under the 1966 law, dispatched the coin to GSA for disposition.

All the rest of the Nixon family's gifts are caught up in the legal battles over ownership of tapes and documents and other "presidential mate-

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rials." Whether any of them will ever become available to museums in the future is uncertain.

But in the meantime, museums can take their pick of gifts that include:

- Two \$1,500 coptic processional crosses given to former Vice President Spiro T. Agnew by Ethiopia.

- A \$7,000 set of emeralds and diamonds given to Sen. J. William Fulbright's wife by the Shiek of Abu Dhabi -

- A \$1,950 set of diamonds and rubies given to former Secretary of State William P. Rogers' wife by the Emir of Kuwait.

- A \$1,400 set of jewelry given to Mrs. Rogers by the Ethiopians.

- A \$1,200 set of jewelry given to Mrs. Rogers by the Iranians.

- A \$1,000 gold and silver chalice given to Rogers by Saudi Arabia.

- A \$1,500 watch given to Mrs. Rogers by an unknown foreign official.

- A \$1,000 man's watch given to Rogers by an unknown foreign official.

- A \$3,500 silver urn given to former Secretary of Commerce Peter G. Peterson.

- Five items of amber jewelry given to the wife and daughter of Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) by officials of the Soviet Union and valued from \$35 to \$200.

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From story on deposition by Nixon, given 25 Jul 75, made public 20 Aug 75:

"In the course of the questioning, Mr. Nixon also made the following remarks and comments: None of the gifts received by Mr. Nixon or his wife have been sold or appropriated.' He added, 'All stories to the effect of that are to the contrary and totally inaccurate.'

Filed W/gate

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Charlton