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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PARIS MINT RELEASES RARE, 100-YEAR-OLD SAN FRANCISCO EARTHQUAKE MEDAL



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To commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Great San Francisco Earthquake and Fire, Monnaie de Paris (the Paris Mint) has re-released a large medal originally struck in 1906 to express the sympathy and admiration of the French people toward their American counterparts. This art nouveau-style medal is rich in beauty and symbolism and features allegorical figures on both sides. It is huge (nearly 4 inches in diameter!) and is also known as the Restoration of San Francisco Medal.

The great earthquake and fire of 1906 struck San Francisco at dawn on April 18th, killing more than 3,000 people. Registering an estimated 7.8 on the Richter scale, the quake destroyed 28,000 buildings, left more than half of the population of San Francisco homeless, and, along with the fire it sparked, caused damage equivalent to nearly \$9 billion in today's dollars. Please see the very end of this release for a Backgrounder about the San Francisco Earthquake and Fire of 1906.

This high relief medal is an official restrike of the original 1906 San Francisco medal, minted at the Paris Mint from original dies. Our research combined with the mint's can find no record of this medal ever having been previously restruck.

Two Different Metals

Talisman Coins has received permission from the Paris Mint to issue an extremely limited edition with a mintage of only 10 vermeil (silver dore) and 99 bronze dore examples of this immense medal. Like the originals, which almost never come on the market, these restrikes are truly rare. This represents a unique opportunity to own a beautiful, hard-to-find and important art nouveau medal of significant size and historical value.

The 1906 San Francisco medal is struck in bronze dore and silver dore (vermeil). This means that the medals are solid bronze and silver, respectively, that are coated with a thick layer of gold, in this case 24-karat (pure) gold. Much more gold is used in this process than in typical electroplating (which is only a few molecules deep), so the layer of gold is thicker and the finish richer than standard gold-plating.

The bronze dore medal weighs 306 g of bronze, while the vermeil version weighs 362 g (nearly a full troy pound) of .950 fine silver. Each is coated with .25 g of .999 fine gold, and each measures 90.3 mm in diameter and 8 mm in thickness.

Stunning Art Nouveau Design

The obverse features the high-relief allegorical figure of San Francisco, clothed in simple classical garb, standing in front of the meticulously-detailed ruins of her city. The crown on her head refers to the city's 19th-century nickname, "Queen of the Pacific". There are several subtle signs that indicate that San Francisco will rebuild and return to glory. She rises from the rubble of the city in the foreground with a calm and unperturbed look on her face as she confidently flourishes her robe. Behind her shines a luminous star, her guide in the future restoration effort. Her left hand gestures toward a newly-sprouted oak tree, a symbol of growth and strength, which indicates that the rebuilding effort has already begun. The artist's signature LOUIS BOTTEE appears near the edge at the 7:00 position.

On the reverse the allegorical figure of France, Marianne, in her traditional dress, offers a laurel branch across the wide Atlantic Ocean to the United States, symbolized by a bald eagle with stars and stripes on its shield. Marianne's left hand rests on a rudder marked "RF", which represents both the ship of state ("Republique Francaise") and France's maritime commerce and might. Just below this is a bundle of birch rods, the fasces, which symbolize power. The laurel branch echos the oak sprig on the obverse and signifies that the rebuilding effort will be a success, but it also represents France's empathy as summed up by the legends. Around the upper rim runs AU PEUPLE AMERICAN ET A LA VILLE DE SAN FRANCISCO ("To the American people and to the city of San Francisco"). In the lower exergue the incuse legend completes the sentiment: SYMPATHIE ADMIRATION from LA REPUBLIQUE FRANCAISE. The artist's signature L. BOTTEE appears near the edge at the 3:30 position.

About the Artist

As indicated by the signatures, both sides of the Restoration of San Francisco medal were designed and engraved by a true master of the art nouveau style, Louis-Alexandre Bottee, born in Paris in 1852. As a youth he was apprenticed in an ornamental button factory to which was attached a studio for medal engraving. Here he etched the button models and decided upon his future career as a medalist. He attended the Ecole des Arts Decoratifs and in 1869 worked in the workshop of Paulin Tasset. He went on to study at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in 1871. There he was pupil to such noted artists as Ponscarme, Dumont and Millet. In 1878 Bottee was awarded the Grand Prize of Rome for medallic engraving. At the Salon des Artistes Francais he won a third-class medal in 1882, a second-class medal in 1887 and finally a first-class medal in 1894. Bottee received a gold medal at the Exposition Universelle in 1900 and was made an Officer of the Legion of Honor in 1903.

Bottee was one of the earliest and foremost practitioners of the Art Nouveau style in medallic art design. He is well-known for some of the most famous international exposition medals ever designed, including medals for the Expositions Universelles of 1889 and 1900 in Paris, the World's Columbian Exposition (Chicago World's Fair) of 1893, and the Louisiana Purchase Exposition (St. Louis World's Fair) in 1904. Of his other medals, perhaps his best known is Aux Poetes Sans Gloire, with its beautiful and haunting imagery. On all of these medals he presents elegant and alluring women in classical garb as allegories for countries and abstract concepts. Bottee-designed medals are instantly recognizable for both their beauty and their high-style art nouveau motifs. Bottee continued to work into his seventies and passed away in 1941.

The 1906 Restoration of San Francisco Medal is available exclusively from Talisman Coins, the official distributor for Monnaie de Paris in North America. The bronze dore medal is priced at only \$99.95, while the silver dore (vermeil) version costs \$399.95. Each medal is presented in the traditional, blue Monnaie de Paris gift box. A clear plastic display stand and individually numbered certificate are included.

For more information or to place an order, call Talisman Coins toll-free at 888-552-2646, visit them on the web at www.talismancoins.com, email the company at talismaninfo@charter.net, fax them at 314-968-3801, or write to 9051 Watson Road, Suite 103, St. Louis, MO 63126.