

# *Commemoration of Death*

The medals of the *Lusitania* murders



by Greg Burns

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## Introduction

Greetings! I'm glad you've chosen to pick up this book. The process of writing it was enjoyable, but more important was the fun I had doing all of the research into the little details that went into the final product you now hold in your hands. The history



of these past events and people is fascinating and full of the pathos and drama of all great and terrible human experiences, and I hope you get as much satisfaction out of reading this as I have had in putting it together. But before we start, perhaps it's appropriate for me to tell you a little bit about how I came to write this book.

Near the end of November, 2002, I was in a local coin shop and noticed an odd-looking medal with the image of a skeleton on it. I remembered having seen one like it perhaps twenty years before in the book, *The Beauty and Lore of Coins, Currency and Medals*, by Elvira and Vladimir Clain-Steffanelli. It's a large beautiful book, illustrated with wonderful color photos on glossy pages, and filled with myriad stories dotting the landscape of all of numismatics: primitive money, ancients, medieval and modern coins, paper money and medals. You should peek at it if you ever get the chance. While the Clain-Steffanelli book hadn't passed along any of the details of the story behind the gruesome medal, it did devote an entire page to showing the obverse and reverse of the medal, and had attracted my eye at the time because of its macabre image. It was distinctive and I had remembered it.

Now here before me was what appeared to be the same medal, and the bid board listing for the piece was only \$20.

Gavrilo Princip had been rejected from various terrorist and rebel groups because of his small size, but was finally accepted into a group named Young Bosnia, which was equipped and trained by the Black Hand, another Serbian group. He used a Browning 1910 semi-automatic pistol chambered for the .380 ACP light round to kill the duke and his wife<sup>1</sup>. Princip was a month shy of 20 years old at the time.

Austria-Hungary, which had been looking for an excuse to declare war on Serbia, issued what it knew to be an unacceptable ultimatum on July 23. Their demands, taking as a given that the Serbian government was implicated in the assassination, included:

- Renouncing opposition to annexation to Austria-Hungary,
- Publication in their official journals their condemnation of separatist propaganda against Austria-Hungary,
- Active suppression of any opposition to annexation, including in the schools,
- Remove from military and administrative service any who Austria-Hungary pronounced as guilty of opposition propaganda,
- Acceptance of Austria-Hungarian direction in such suppression, and in the investigation and prosecution of the assassination,
- The arrest of specific named individuals,

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*1 The assassination was a comedy of errors. One of the conspirators failed to throw his bomb, a second also failed to throw his bomb or use his pistol, a third threw his bomb, but it bounced off of the folded convertible cover and exploded under the car following; even Gavrilo Princip failed to act when presented with his first opportunity. Francis Ferdinand didn't take appropriate advantage of the mishaps and undertake more secure measures, and later that day when his car stalled while reversing from a mistaken trip down the wrong street, was shot by Princip and later died. Medalist Karl Goetz didn't overlook the opportunity to make a medallic commentary on the topic. Opus K-132 is titled "The Russian Ambassador Receives the Serbian Assassins," and Kienast translates the obverse legend as "The spark of the world fire."*

At right a British enlistment poster referring to the “scrap of paper” which brought them into the war. The paper was the 1839 Treaty of London guaranteeing Belgian neutrality, and was broken by Germany when they invaded Belgium on their way to attack France. Below are medals by Henri Dropsy (top), and Alphonse Mauquoy (bottom) making reference to the famous “scrap of paper”.



You can likely guess the German response to these turn of events. They quickly chose to suspend their observance of the Cruiser Rules, and the seascape of the naval war took a new turn. On this was built the eventual German use of unrestricted submarine warfare: the sinking of any Allied ship, unarmed merchant or otherwise, without warning.

Meanwhile, a sleepy America wanted simply to keep out of the war. This was a conflict many miles from her home grounds and involved a quarrelling brew of European nobility that was foreign in more ways than one. America saw little difference in the justifications of any of the combative powers, and in fact enjoyed a prosperous brisk trade in supplying the belligerents with all of the necessary war goods.

## The American Flag—a Ruse de Guerre

A *Ruse de Guerre* is, literally, a “trick of war.” Such is the category of act as a ship flying the flag of another country. The *Lusitania* was known to have employed exactly this deception on a journey just prior to her sinking. During his voyage departing January 30, 1915, from New York to Liverpool, the US president’s adviser and representative, Colonel Edward Mandell House, noted that Captain Dow (then in charge of the *Lusitania*) reportedly hoisted the American flag as the vessel drew near to the danger of the Irish coast, an area established by the Germans as a war zone. House recorded in his diary that this, “created much excitement, and comment and speculation ranged in every direction.” House was questioned about the incident by the press after landing, but evaded a diplomatic snare by evasively replying, “I was not an eye witness to it and have been able to say that I only knew it from hearsay.” Germany decried the ethics of fraudulently flying the colors of a neutral nation, understanding the complications it meant for a submarine looking for legitimate military targets. The United States protested to London



# Part Two: Lusitania Medals Commentary

## Karl Xaver Goetz, the Man

The infamy and controversy of submarine warfare reached an early pinnacle with the sinking of the *Lusitania* along with 1,198 passengers and crew. The allies howled about the murderous callousness of the act, and the Germans responded with a growl of defensive righteous anger of their own. And one of those growling German citizens was Karl Goetz.



This German medalist and sculptor is best known for his satirical medals created during and shortly after the conclusion of World War I. Born in Augsburg, Germany, he studied art in that city under master Johannes Dominal and continued his education and training in Dresden, Leipzig, Berlin, and Düsseldorf until 1897. After spending the subsequent two years in the Netherlands, and after that Paris for five years, he finally settled in Munich where he spent the rest of his

in his attributed 800 being furnished to a single Amsterdam dealer (no doubt Goetz' associate J. Schulman). The 100 reported by the November German telegram having been produced was likely a fair estimate for the time, and this seems in line with Goetz' own account contained in his letter of 1920 to the German embassy in London, who had written via the State Department in Bavaria wanting to know how many *Lusitania* medals had been sold by Goetz up to that time. Goetz replied that the number was 430 pieces up to September, 1920. Unfortunately, because of the loss of Goetz' production records during the WWII bombings of Munich, there will probably never be an accurate count.

## **The Medal of Sandstrom & Mahood**

The British weren't the only ones with strong feelings regarding the German ethics involved with the tragedy of the *Lusitania*. Among a pressing crowd of others were two men in the United States: Gustav Sandstrom and Clarence Mahood of Warren County, Pennsylvania.

Sandstrom and Mahood created their own copy of Goetz' *Lusitania* medal and sold it along with their own version of the box and propaganda leaflet similar to the British.

Today these pieces are a bit scarce and command a nice premium among knowledgeable collectors over the more common British copies. The Sandstrom and Mahood pieces are easily distinguished by the style of lettering and die engraving, and most obviously by the rather goofy grinning pumpkin-head of a skeleton.

### ***Gustav G. Sandstrom (June 4, 1897 – April 4, 1984)***

One of five children of Jonas and Karin Sandstrom, this Swedish immigrant was born in Hybo, Sweden, and later came to the United States. Gustav was first employed as a

# Part Three: Medals Diagnostics, Rarity and Values

## Numbering System Explanation

I've created a numbering system for the different varieties that is extensible in case of the future discovery of additional varieties. I've included a tabular version at the front of the variety listing for quick reference, while the listings for each of the varieties themselves contains specific attribution information and visual examples of the pieces, including any specific visual diagnostics. The numbering system separates the varieties by issuer (I reserved two spots for Goetz' first and second issues), date shown on the medal, alloy and various die differences, and is composed of at least one numeral (for the issuer). This first numeral is followed by a alphabetic character with a final numeral for some (e.g. 1a1, 2b3, etc.)

There are likely other varieties unlisted, either because I haven't come across them yet, or because the differences between the ones I've seen have simply escaped my attention (hey, it happens). I suspect there are an enormous number of varieties of the British propaganda pieces, and I've restricted the ones in this edition that are either significantly distinctive or for which I have multiple specimens to assure that the variety isn't simply some type of die fluke. Any readers finding new varieties are invited to notify me and I'll be happy to include them in any future editions along with an acknowledgement of the lucky person discovering them and first notifying me.

# Photographic Listing with Attribution Data

The following pages show a two-page spread dedicated to each variety containing enlarged photographs of each of the varieties along with a description of the expected physical properties required to identify each and differentiate it from similar pieces.

Though I've listed 27 different varieties, I do not own one of each, nor have I personally confirmed that they all exist. For those I list which I haven't personally confirmed, I note that fact along with the rationale for including them, which is usually because of a trusted source of high credibility and reputation. By the way, for those varieties I do not own I am an active and interested buyer. Please feel free to contact me at [gregsburns@gmail.com](mailto:gregsburns@gmail.com) for an offer.

For those items with the K•Goetz edge stamp, I've shown in the below photograph an enlarged version of the impression. I've not noticed any significant differences from one to the next, other than it is common for one side or edge of the stamp being more or less deeply impressed than other areas, usually due to a lack of uniformity in the alignment of the punch (held by hand) and the usually irregular surface receiving the impression.



Variety: 1a1



General Description: Goetz first issue  
5 MAI dating  
Bronze (non-magnetic)  
With edge stamped “K•Goetz”

Mass: 40 - 65 grams

Specific Gravity: 7.7 - 9.1  
Values below 8.7 are uncommon

Diameter: 2.200” - 2.250”

**Important Visual Diagnostics:**

- *Generally sharp clean castings with few (if any) flaws.*
- *Usually a fair amount of distance from the lettering at the tops of the reverse and obverse and the edge of the piece (perhaps .04”).*
- *Typically light circumferential grinding/finishing marks on edge and sometimes accompanied by a light beveling (chamfer) of perhaps .020” or so.*
- *Usual patina and color is as shown in photos.*

Notes: n/a.

# Part Four: Aftermath and Miscellany

## **Other *Lusitania* Medals**

Because of the notoriety of the sinking, the *Lusitania* was a popular subject for medallists of the day, as well as since. I have no doubt that we'll see some additional (new) medals during the coming centennial of the tragedy in 2015. In fact, as of this writing I'm working on a collaboration with a gentleman of great talent and experience on just such a project.

I've included here some brief information about other medals featuring the ship, or mentioning her name, that I've found during my past few years of research. If any readers are aware of others not listed here I'd appreciate a word or two and an image if possible to include in any possible future editions of this book. Note that, for the most part, none of the photos are to any particular scale.

This part concludes with an overview of other related materials, primarily having to do with the various medals, packing boxes, pamphlets, etc., as well as a smattering of other things I found interesting, but that didn't fit so well in other sections. Hope you enjoy them. If you come across some other bit of Lusitaniana, then please do let me know so that I can expand the info in any future editions.

## Related Ephemera and Oddities

The British and Pennsylvania copies both come with their respective boxes, and there are several varieties of the propaganda pamphlets for each.

The British pamphlet is very scarce in the Dutch, German, French and Portuguese language versions, and at least the English language version comes both with and without the legend at the top that states, “*Do not destroy this...When you have read it carefully through kindly pass it on to a friend.*” There are a few other variations as well. Anyone having pamphlets in languages other than those shown are strongly encouraged to contact me so that future editions can be updated to include them. There’s also a good sales opportunity <grin>.

The Sandstrom and Mahood envelopes, pamphlets and boxes are just plain scarce, regardless of variety. There are several varieties of their pamphlet in various colors, layout and wording. And interestingly, considering the rather obvious knock-off of the British medal and ephemera, the Warren County producers had the brass to claim a copyright on their material. Talk about American ingenuity!

In the following pages I’ll show some of the varieties of the pamphlets along with a short description of the features that make them different from the others. I’ve not really tried to make it a focus of my collecting to acquire all the different varieties, and I can’t tell you much about relative rarities, but I think that would make an interesting specialty all on its own. I’ll also include some of the other oddball items related to the *Lusitania* I’ve picked up along the way.



A  
German Naval Victory

"With joyful pride we contemplate this latest deed of our navy. . . ."  
*Kölnische Volkszeitung*, 10th May, 1915.



This medal has been struck in Germany with the object of keeping alive in German hearts the recollection of the glorious achievement of the German Navy in deliberately destroying an unarmed passenger ship, together with 1,198 non-combatants, men, women and children.

On the obverse, under the legend "No contraband" (*Keine Bannware*), there is a representation of the *Lusitania* sinking. The designer has put in guns and aeroplanes, which (as was certified by United States Government officials after inspection) the *Lusitania* did *not* carry, but has conveniently omitted to put in the women and children, which the world knows she *did* carry.

On the reverse, under the legend "Business above all" (*Geschäft über alles*), the figure of Death sits at the booking office of the Cunard Line and gives out tickets to passengers, who refuse to attend to the warning against submarines given by a German. This picture seeks apparently to propound the theory that if a murderer warns his victim of his intention, the guilt of the crime will rest with the victim, not with the murderer.

**British - Pamphlet.**

Same as before, but this time with addition of ellipses and closing quote marks immediately after "...deed of our navy". I assume this one came second.

medal came out on date the act was delayed as stated, by the second search.

¶ On the reverse, under the legend "Geschäft über alles" (Business above all) appears death at the ticket window selling tickets to those refusing to heed the warnings published by German agents. This scene is intended to create the idea that those who court danger are guilty, rather than those committing the deed.

¶ The submarine and crew that fired the shots was sunk with all hands by being accidentally rammed by another U-boat in the harbor at Hegeloland. Whether this was justice meted out by a revengeful God or was another act of "Kultur" based on the assumption that "dead men tell no tales," may never be known, but it is significant that Germany immediately began to deny the "intentional" sinking of the ship.

¶ As soon as the Peace terms were signed they immediately began denying the circulation of the medal, claiming that it was made and sold for profit by private individuals. They have so far failed to explain just how it was possible for any private person to procure the information as to the exact date this ship would encounter the waiting U-boat, had it not been delayed, nor have they explained how such an individual would know the ship would be sunk on any date.

¶ Every school book, history and encyclopedia and hundreds of other works will have pictures and stories of this medal. Every American, man, woman and child should have one of these duplicates, made

from one of the originals, obtained right in Germany at the time of its circulation, by a secret agent of one of the Allied powers.

¶ There is no such thing as a genuine war souvenir in existence, because of the fact that the Allied governments salvaged every atom of war material, down to the very nails from discarded shoes, from the battlefields, and while a few uncompleted runtings remaining in this country have been offered for sale, such has no historical value whatever, while this medal relates to the incident that caused the downfall of the German Empire and will be of historical worth as long as the world stands.

¶ The medals are exact copies of the originals are die-cast from solid metal and finished in oxidized copper to bring out detail. They may be had at dealers, from agents, or will be sent postpaid upon receipt of price by the manufacturer, C. M. MAHOOD, Box 171, Warren, Pa.



THESE are the words printed in a German newspaper, the "Kölnische Volkszeitung," on May 10, 1915, at the top of the front page, heading an article proclaiming the "glorious achievement" of the sinking of the steamship "Lusitania" and the destruction of 1,198 non-combatants, men, women and little children.

¶ The Belgian atrocities, poisoning of wells and bombing of cities all dwindle to insignificance when compared to this atrocious murder, committed without warning.

¶ This "victory" was hailed by shouts of

delight in every quarter of the former German Empire and the school children were granted a holiday. Therefore it was only to be expected that the enemy would attempt to justify this heinous crime, which they did by asserting that the vessel was armed and carried contraband.

¶ This was proven absolutely false, because the vessel had been thoroughly examined by United States Government officials and was later proven false in the U. S. District Court of New York, when Judge Julius M. Mayer said: "the proof is absolute that she (the "Lusitania") was not and never had been armed, nor did she carry any explosives."\*\*The court finds that the fault must be laid to those responsible for the sinking of the vessel, in the legal as well as the moral sense."

¶ Not satisfied with the rejoicings over this act of treachery the German Government caused the medal pictured on these pages to be struck in order to keep the event alive in German hearts. It was designed by Herr K. Goertz, of Munich, is 2 1/2 inches in diameter and weighs nearly three ounces. It is in high relief and would be treated as a caricature if it were not for the tragedy of it all.

¶ On the obverse, under the legend "Keine Bannware" (No contraband) is shown the sinking ship with deck loaded with guns, airplanes and armoured cars, which she did not carry, and the women and little children she did carry are omitted. Below reads: "Der Gross Dampfer Lusitania Durch ein Deutsches Tauchboot Versenkt 5 Mai



1915" (The Great Steamship Lusitania sunk by a German Submarine May 8, 1915) and it is of startling significance that the medal bears the date of May 8, 1915, while the ship was sunk on May 7, 1915 because the ship had been delayed two days from sailing while our government made a second thorough search for contraband. But the date proves that the deed was long premeditated for medals cannot be designed, executed and circulated quickly.

¶ From the rough, haphazard manner in which this date is placed on the medal it is concluded that it was all completed but the date and when the word was flashed by spies that the ship had sailed, the time it would encounter the waiting submarine was computed and the date added, but while the

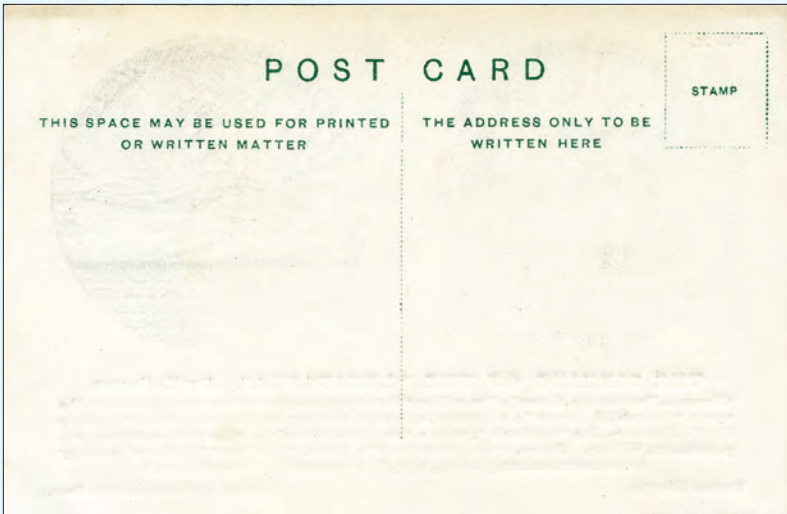
## American - Pamphlet.

This appears to be the third version. There is no mention of our friend Sandstrom, though there is again the mention of the "peace terms" in the past tense, indicating at least post November 1918. Coupled with the December, 1919, advertisement Mahood took out in *The Numismatist* previously mentioned in this book, this would seem to confirm a falling-out between the two partners. This version is by far the most common.



### Lusitania Salvage Display.

Limited edition produced in 1991 by J. N. Jeffries with Elgin watch cases (inner and outer), a dial, and movement recovered by Oceanering Salvage Company, and includes within the display frame a certificate of authenticity and a small model of the *Lusitania*. Though the certificate states there are “only 250 available” I’ve only seen ever this one.



### Medal Postcard - Britain.

Oxford University used to present various numismatic-related lectures circa 1919 that were open to the public, at least one session of which related to the various German medals. They sold these postcards as an accompanying money-maker, reportedly 260,000 sold at a profit of 45 percent. There were

## Other Propaganda and Ephemera

There are many other related collectables. *Lusitania* post-cards are very popular, and there are also stamps (memorial stamps with no postal value, also known simply as “Cinderellas”) with images of the ship and other propaganda. There were many propaganda posters and cartoons as well, including one poster that I’ve seen that included an image of the medal.

Some of the other ephemera relating to the *Lusitania* includes materials of the Lake-Railey Expedition to salvage the ship (a topic brought up several times by various folks). There are letters, envelopes, newspaper articles, et cetera, all describing or promoting the concept of building a “tunnel” of steel tubing down to the ship so that salvage operations could be performed on the cargo.

## For More Investigation

I would love to find the German language newspapers announcing the sinking of the *Lusitania* for the purpose of verifying Goetz’ claim that the initial botched date was the result of an erroneous Munich newspaper report. See the section in previous pages relating to the British propaganda brochures; their are two different sources quoted attributing the wrong date to either *Kolnische Volkszeitung* (Cologne People’s Daily) or *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* (Berlin Local Gazette).

I’d also love to get an original newspaper showing both the Cunard final ad for the *Lusitania* alongside the German warning ad (publication date of May 1, 1915). Reportedly a number of eastern newspapers carried them in the same issue. Good luck finding one.



*Here's money for your Americans.  
I may drown some more.*

The arrogant Kaiser Wilhelm II, militaristic emperor of Germany, provoked Austria-Hungary to declare war on her neighbor Serbia. This ignition point brought the flaming ravages of World War I to all of Europe and much of the rest of the world, resulting in the deaths of 20 million people. This book focuses on 1,198 of them and the medal that commemorates their frightful end.