



I'LL TAKE THE RADIO, PLEASE!

A mid-20th-century coin dealer and entrepreneur offered merchandise in exchange for coins.

I grew up in the 1960s, a time when the coin hobby had a very high profile and insinuated itself into popular culture in a big way. Coin-themed scripts were frequently featured on television, particularly in the many situation comedies so fondly remembered today. Much of that enthusiasm was based on the get-rich-quick principle, which resulted in the

publication of countless pulp guides to finding a fortune in one's pocket change. One man, however, took this concept further than anyone else, and it makes for a very interesting tale.

David A. Christianson, a dealer in New York City, published coin folders priced at 50 cents in which each coin entry was assigned a Treasure Point (TP) value. Embedded within the folder was a booklet that provided brief histories of various coin types and also featured a broad assortment of popular merchandise. These likewise were given TP values. As explained within this booklet, the coins could be exchanged for the non-numismatic items by matching up point values. For example, the key-date 1909-S VDB cent (TP 3600) was worth enough to trade for pearl earrings (TP 3015), but not quite enough to secure an Airguide Biscayne barometer (TP 3630). Of course, most coins carried much lower point values. A photographic guide was provided that showed which sort of coin was acceptable for redemption and which was not.

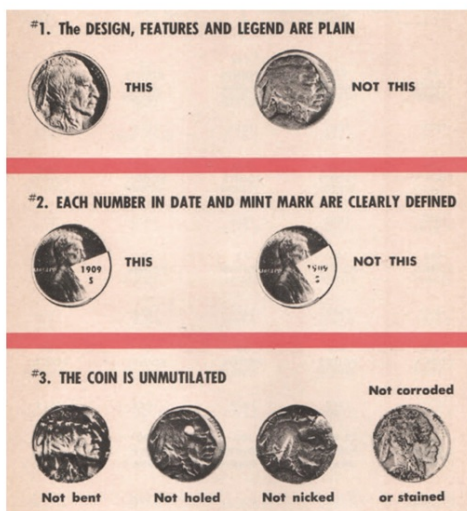
The concept of exchanging points for merchandise was a familiar one in the 1960s. My parents always received either



PHOTOS: DAVID W. LANGE

▲ REDEEMING COINS for merchandise was a new development in the 1960s. Pocket change could be exchanged for radios and other items.

Blue Chip or S&H Green Stamps with most purchases of gasoline and other products. These stamps were issued in sheets and had gummed backs. All one had to do was give them a lick and paste



LINCOLN HEAD CENTS		
TP 3600 1909 S V.D.B 484,000	TP 24 1910 S 6,045,000	TP 18 1911 D 12,672,000
TP 24 1912 S 4,431,000	TP 6 1913 D 15,804,000	TP 24 1913 S 6,101,000



◀ TREASURE HUNT BOOKLETS combined numismatics with pop culture by offering merchandise for coins. They presented a brief overview of coins (top) and provided slots to help users organize their finds (bottom).

PHOTOS: DAVID W. LANGE

them into books furnished for that purpose. When filled, these books were exchanged for the same sort of items that Christianson was offering. I recall that my mother acquired her home haircutting kit this way, and memories of the horrifying results are still fresh after 50 years.

To date, I've found just two of these Treasure Hunt coin folders, one for cents and the other for nickels. Whether folders for other denominations actually were produced is unknown. The November 11, 1960, issue of *Coin World* relates that Christianson's Treasure Hunt Redemption Corporation planned to produce a total of four books annually, the other two being for dimes and quarters. The proposal was to update these each year as values and merchandise selections changed, but it's doubtful that the scheme lasted that long. The coin folders/books I have are labeled "1961 EDI-



▲ CHRISTIANSON'S TREASURE HUNT BOOKS were published for U.S. "pennies," nickels and possibly other denominations.

TION" and copyrighted in 1960. They state that the point values were good from September 1960 until September of the following year, when the 1962 editions would be issued, but I suspect these inaugural publications might be all that came of Christianson's enterprise.

One intriguing feature of these books is the address given for the company's office: 509 Fifth Avenue, New York City. When I read that, it immediately triggered a recollection. My 2007 book about antique coin boards, *Coin Collecting Boards of the 1930s & 1940s: A Complete History, Catalog and Value Guide* (ANA Library Catalog No. DD50. Lan.DW), features the products of Colonial Coin & Stamp Company, which was located right next door at number 507. It seems that there must have been a "coin dealer's row" on that block, though both buildings were wiped away some years ago to be replaced by a modern high-rise.

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