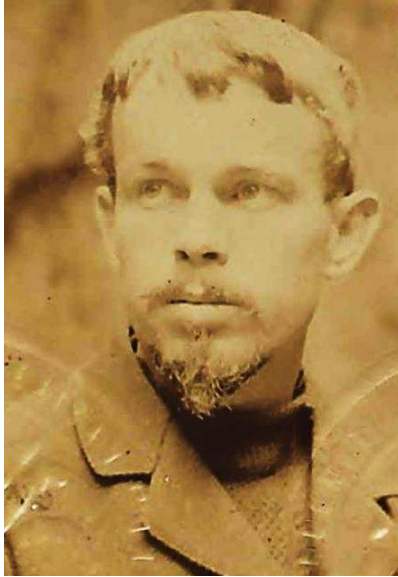


In 1931, just a year before his death, the American Numismatic Society awarded the prestigious J. Sanford Saltus medal to Edward Warren Sawyer for his work with Native Americans. Nearly two decades earlier in 1914, the Society published information regarding his work:<sup>1</sup>

*Mr. Edward W. Sawyer.*—The most important event in the field of medallic art in our country for 1913 was the advent of Mr. Sawyer's portrait pieces of typical North American Indians. For although the medals are dated 1912 that is understood to be the date of the study, the medals were completed in 1913. Elsewhere in this volume Mr. Sawyer has himself made a statement regarding his work, so that no extensive discussion of the subject will be required here. As an important contribution to the efforts put forth for many years past to preserve a complete anthropological record of this slowly passing race, Mr. Sawyer's works rank second to few, and is comparable to the three great volumes of lithographic portraits of typical Indians published in 1836 at Philadelphia by Edward C. Biddle. In fact this group, in all now nearly two score, of portraits of Indians forms an excellent complement to that earlier work, and the more valuable because separated by two generations from it. In his portraiture of the Indian it is not surprising that Mr. Sawyer has developed great skill and produced splendid results; for evident ability and superior training have been supplemented by an extent of practice seldom enjoyed by an artist. Mr. Sawyer modelled nearly forty portraits of Indians within a period of less than a half dozen years! And the Indian is not an easy subject for the artist, if something more than a mere faithful likeness is desired. The inscrutability of his countenance, exceeded by few races of the world, cannot but prove baffling to any attempts to express either dominant characteristics or fleeting emotions of his soul. And yet there is not a lifeless portrait in the entire large group of these medals, while many of them are all that one could require of an artist in the intelligible expression of character. Mr. Sawyer's fine achievement, while a credit to his artistic abilities, possesses national and historical value that will in future be more highly valued.

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<sup>1</sup> "Coins and Medals in the United States in 1913," American Journal of Numismatics, vol. XLVII, 1914, pp. 148-9. Illustrated are Chief - Sota - Oglala Sioux; Noco-To-Mah—South Cheyenne; Curley - Custer Scout - Crow (Plate 11).



Edward Warren Sawyer was born on March 17, 1876 to a Chicago gynecologist of the same name. As sons of a prominent citizen, Edward and his brother, Philip Ayer Sawyer (1877-1949), likely had comfortable childhoods.<sup>2</sup> As a teenager, Sawyer witnessed the World's Columbian Exposition, and he was likely stimulated by the sculptural decorations throughout the fair.

Sawyer was trained at the Art Institute of Chicago under the tutelage of Herman MacNeil, the famed designer of the Standing Liberty quarter who was an exhibitor at the 1893 World's Fair. Near the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Sawyer traveled to France where he studied at the Académie des Beaux Arts.

The artist returned to the states and received a bronze medal at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis for his statue of a charging buffalo. That same year he traveled to Fort Yuma on his initial western excursion, meeting his second cousin, the painter, Elbridge Ayer Burbank. The two artists had difficulties on this trip as members of the Yuma tribe were reluctant to pose for their portraits. In their culture, nothing should remain following their death. "If you make my picture, [when] I die, my friend will see my picture and make him sad." Sawyer reviewed all of his work in an article for the *American Journal of Numismatics*.<sup>3</sup> He described the Yuma as "large, tall men, with heavy features and long hair twisted around in strands." With great difficulty, Sawyer was able to convince a member of the tribe to pose for him. Ne-I-So-Meh was the only portrait that survives from his initial foray. He wrote that a young Yuma school girl also posed for the artists.



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<sup>2</sup> Dr. Edward W. Sawyer was born in New Hampshire or Massachusetts about 1850 and died in 1897. Mary "Mollie" Manney was born in Wisconsin about 1850 and died in 1898.

<sup>3</sup> "My Work Among the Indians," *American Journal of Numismatics*, vol. XLVII, 1914, pp. 159-63.



Following a three month stay at Fort Yuma, Sawyer and Burbank traveled to Gallup, New Mexico, and to Ganado, Arizona, home of the world-famous Hubbell Trading Post that remains in operation today, now part of the Hubbell Trading Post National Historic Site. Sawyer had much better success among members of the Navajo nation. Several Navajo portraits were modeled at Ganado. Those portraits included At-Zi-Di and Ish-ki-La-Cai, likely the first two as the style of incuse lettering resembles the earlier portrait prepared at Fort Yuma.





Other portraits included Chief Tja-Yo-Ni, Nol-To-I, and Est-Zan-Lopa whom Sawyer described as “a little girl blanket weaver.” Additional Navajo portraits were modeled on Sawyer’s second trip west in 1908. Those portraits completed in 1904 or 1908, the dates uncertain, included Capitan who may be the individual recorded in the 1920 Federal Census as a doctor in St. Michaels, Arizona, Chief Many Horses, and Quinlichini-Nez who is probably the Navajo appearing in a 1915 Indian Census as Kinlacheney Nez.

The second western excursion also included a visit to the Apache Nation at Agua Caliente, Arizona where Sawyer completed models of an Indian called Apache, a scout called Captain Coffey, and another called Old Jim, an art critic who said: “That man was no good ... that man is making me with only one eye and I have two eyes.” Lighting a match that he held at arm’s length, Old Jim closed one eye and said “heap good.” He then closed the other eye and said “both eyes heap good, that man is no good.”

Returning to Paris, Sawyer exhibited his work, eventually returning for his final trip west in 1912. Beginning in Oklahoma, Sawyer traveled to South Dakota and Montana, and modeled many portraits from several different nations: “I have always wanted to model a series of heads from all the different tribes.”



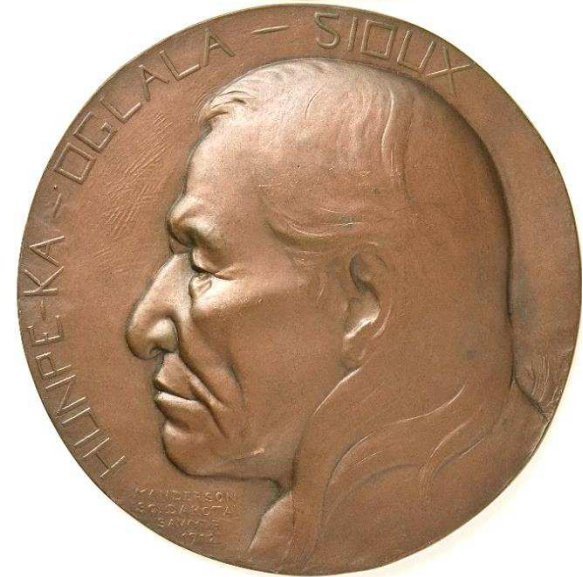
He began his third trip at Pawhuska, Oklahoma where he worked with on the Osage reservation. Sawyer noted that the Osage Indians were the Aristocrats whose land was rich with oil reserves. He described the Osage as big, dignified men. He modeled Kah-Wah-Se who was known as Yellow Horse, and See-Hah who was known as Buffalo Hoof. After leaving Pawhuska, Sawyer traveled 50 miles to Pawnee where he spent time with an Indian family, where he modeled Sah-CooH-Ru-Tu-Ree-Hoo who was known as Seeing Eagle, and his wife, Pee-Ru-Ths. He also prepared the portrait of “a pretty little girl” named Stah-Pe-U. The Kickapoo people lived at McCloud, Oklahoma,<sup>4</sup> just east of Oklahoma City, where Sawyer modeled On-Ah-Shin-Nin-Nah and a squaw named Be-Me-Tha.

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<sup>4</sup> Often incorrectly spelled McCloud.



Leaving McLoud, Sawyer made his way to Geary, Oklahoma, 80 miles to the west, where he spent time with the South Cheyennes and the Arapahoes who he described as large, gentle men with wide noses. At Geary, Sawyer modeled Ba-Haw (Thunder), Ne-Aie-Ta-Ha-Wa (Cut Finger), Han-Ni-Ait (Coyote Robe), all of the Arapahoe nation, and Noco-To-Mah (Bear Robe), a South Cheyenne. In Clinton, Oklahoma, Sawyer prepared models of two more South Cheyennes, Ma-Si-Ni (Woman's Heart) and Che-Ho-Ni (Chief Little Wolf). In Anadarko, Oklahoma, 60 miles southwest of Oklahoma City, Sawyer modeled a Wichita Indian known as Chief To-Wak-Oni-Jim, who he described as a fine type of old man and a great orator. The chief was 65 years old at the time of Sawyer's visit.



After the artist finished his work in Oklahoma, he spent some time with the Navajos in Arizona, and then traveled to the Crow Agency in Southeastern Montana, close to the Little Big Horn battlefield. A Crow scout named Curley was the sole survivor of Custer's battalion. Sawyer also modeled a medicine man named Ech-Spa-Di-E-Ash, and Be-Sha-E-Chi-E-Di-Esha who was known as Big Ox. During his time at the Crow Agency, Sawyer met J.R. Eddy, the Indian agent from Lame Deer, Montana who told him of a Cheyenne named Esh-Sha-A-Nish-Is, also known as Chief Two Moons. A Cheyenne medicine man named Ho-Tua-Hwo-Ko-Mas, or White Bull, was also sculpted at Lame Deer. Old Bear, or Ma-Ki-Na-Ko, was his third subject at the Lame Deer agency. After an unsuccessful visit to the Pine Ridge agency in South Dakota, Sawyer made his final stop of his 1912 excursion at Manderson, South Dakota where he modeled Chief Sota (Smoke), Sunka-Hanska (Long Dog), and Hunpe-Ka (Picket Pin), all members of the Oglala Sioux tribe.

Working with Sawyer's models, the Medallic Art Company produced bronze galvanos of his portraits. A galvano is a uniface rendering with the back typically filled with lead or another material to provide support. The galvanos were created in two sizes, 2-3/4-inch diameter and 5-

inch diameter. There are 38 different subjects and 41 varieties known today. The majority of these galvanos are found in museums including the American Numismatic Society, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Massachusetts Historical Society, the Musee d'Orsay in Paris, the Smithsonian Institution, the University of Reno, and the Whitney Western Art Museum. Examples in private hands are extremely rare, including 18 different examples that Heritage Auctions will offer in our June 2018 Long Beach sale.