

The Third Side of the Coin: Book Review: *Twisted Tales* by Robert R. Van Ryzin

(Iola, Wisconsin: Krause Publications, 1995)

by [Michael E. Marotta](#)
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"Perhaps, above all, there is the story of the coin and the need to re-examine what we know and what we don't know about its creation -- if no other reason than to offer the numismatic community additional food for thought and to bring home the point that history is not chiseled in stone. There's often room for legitimate speculation when it comes to matters regarded as fact."

The above quote comes from page 147 of this delightful 239 page book. The story in question is the design of the Roosevelt Dime. While John Sinnock has been given credit, it was Van Ryzin who most recently broke the story of Dr. Selma H. Burke. Burke is a multi-talented woman who, among other things, designed a plaque for the Register of Deeds Building in Washington DC. Her modeling of the head of President Roosevelt was unconventional for the time and it was very much like the one that appeared on Sinnock's work.

Most numismatics reject the claim -- however attractive the story was in times past -- that James Longacre modelled his daughter in a native war-bonnet for the one-cent piece. Van Ryzin stays in the mainstream here. But he does provide a startling drawing of Sarah. She has a Greek nose, straight from the forehead with no bridge.

Who were the three native chiefs whose composite portrait appeared on Fraser's five-cent piece? Who were the women whose composite became the Liberty on the Saint Gaudens \$20 gold? How many movies did the 1894-S Dime known as "Hallie's Comet" appear in? You will also find the oft-told tales of the 1913 Nickel and the 1804 Dollar. These, however, are the correct versions.

The best value in this book is the extensive bibliography. If you want to check Van Ryzin's sources, he gives you that opportunity. Each chapter is footnoted and there is a concluding bibliography of newspaper articles, government documents, etc.