



**For Immediate Release**

## **The Art of North Carolina Money: The Stories Behind the Symbols**

***Special Exhibit Open Through September 30, 2014***

Nearly three centuries of North Carolina currency are now on view in the North Carolina Collection Gallery of UNC's Wilson Library.

*The Art of North Carolina Money: The Stories Behind the Symbols* features more than 80 examples of money, tokens, and medals. The earliest is a handwritten five-pound note from 1729; the most recent is a colorful 2009 PLENTY (Piedmont Local EcoNomy Tender) from the collection.

Unlike the consistent design of most modern U.S. currency, early monies varied greatly, reflecting the multiple private institutions and central and local governments that produced them.

With so many types of money in circulation, it was often difficult to distinguish the good from the bad. Issuers quickly learned that people were less suspicious of attractive objects than plain ones, so they embellished the money with detailed pictorial elements known as vignettes.

While some of the art was primarily for eye appeal, other decorations had symbolic or local meanings. An example of 1839 scrip printed in Greensboro, for example, featured portraits of Sir Walter Raleigh along with an engraving of a modern steam engine.

Antebellum currency featured imagery related to agriculture and industry, but some bills issued by Southern states leading up to the war, and later by the Confederate States of America, showed scenes of seemingly contented slaves at work.

Notable examples of the engraver's art from other states are also displayed. These include a five-dollar "Santa Claus" note, issued by a Boston bank in 1857, and the 1837 "Elvis note," from Philadelphia, so called by modern collectors because the central figure looks remarkably like Elvis Presley in his white jumpsuit.

*The Art of North Carolina Money* draws on the extensive numismatic collections of the North Carolina Collection Gallery. It will be on view through September 30, 2014.

The Raleigh Coin Club will be holding an open meeting at the Gallery on Tuesday, September 16, 2014. The meeting will include a guided tour of the exhibition hosted by its curators Bob Schreiner and Linda Jacobson. The meeting will begin at 7:00pm and is free and open to the public.

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### **About the North Carolina Collection Gallery**

The Gallery presents a variety of exhibitions that feature literature, photographs and artifacts from the North Carolina Collection's extensive holdings. The Gallery itself is responsible for overseeing more than 22,000 museum objects for the department, including the furnishings in three historic rooms: the Sir Walter Raleigh Rooms, complete with late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English furniture; the nineteenth-century library from Hayes Plantation in Edenton, N.C.; and the Early Carolina Rooms. The latter is decorated with mid-eighteenth century paneling from Pasquotank County, as well as furniture from the late colonial and early federal periods (ca. 1760-1820).

Long-term exhibits in the Gallery's main display area interpret the early exploration and attempted settlement of Roanoke Island by English colonists in the 1580s and depict the Algonquian culture indigenous to that region. Another exhibit on North Carolina's early nineteenth-century gold rush includes a rare 24-coin set of Bechtler coins. Still other exhibits recount the history of the University of North Carolina, the department's collection of rare ornithological prints, the lives of the original Siamese twins Eng and Chang Bunker (1811-1874), and much more. The Gallery is also responsible for displays in two special rooms that memorialize the work and contributions of two distinguished alumni of the university: Asheville native and novelist Thomas Wolfe and philanthropist John Sprunt Hill of Durham.

### **Directions and Parking Information**

The North Carolina Collection Gallery is located in UNC's Wilson Library which is located directly across the street from UNC's Bell Tower, which faces South Road on campus. However, the library's front entrance and access to the NCC Gallery are on the opposite side of the building. Six large Corinthian-style columns define the entrance. A side entrance with an access ramp and elevator is also available on the east side of the library. Weekday visitors to the University of North Carolina should be aware of enforced parking regulations on campus. Up-to-date parking instructions can be obtained through the Parking Services Division of the UNC Department of Public Safety (919-962-3951).