

Bob Evans: Geologist, Historian, Curator

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Bob Evans is best known for his work with the S.S. *Central America*, a California Gold Rush era steamship that sank in 1857 carrying tons of gold coins, bars, nuggets and dust. In 1983 Bob was recruited to take charge of the historical and scientific research involved in the search for the fabled treasure ship. The shipwreck site was located in 1986 using side-scanning sonar, and its identity was confirmed in 1988 when the first coins and bars were brought to the surface. The gold was recovered from a depth of a mile and a half, from the Atlantic seabed 170 miles off the Carolina coast.

As the project's chief scientist, Bob became the Curator of the Treasure, and developed techniques to safely remove the decades of mineral and rust deposits obscuring the surfaces of the coins and bars. The results were spectacular. An important numismatic time-capsule was revealed, and the thousands of high-grade mint-state double eagles from the treasure promoted the wider acceptance of responsible coin conservation in the numismatic community. As thousands of pristine specimens of Type I double eagles passed through his laboratory, Bob took the opportunity to document and published the many die varieties. His article "A Wealth of Double Eagle Die Varieties" appeared in *Numismatist* magazine in 2000, and won the Wayte and Olga Raymond Literary Award for that year.

The treasure also contained 532 gold ingots (bars) manufactured by gold-rush California assayers. As a geologist, Bob was fascinated by these bars, which are really only one step removed from the original material. Assayers took the raw gold dust and nuggets from depositors, melted and poured the gold into ingot form, determined the purity, and stamped the ingots with the appropriate information, producing the initial monetary form for almost all gold mined in California during the gold rush era.

Using the S.S. *Central America* ingots as a standard, Bob and fellow geologists Fred Holabird and David Fitch researched and wrote the 2003 *Numismatist* article, "Western Precious Metal Ingots: the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly," an article for which they also received the Raymond Literary Award.

Bob has traveled widely as the curator of the treasure, and he has appeared on many television programs, including The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson, Regis and Kathie Lee, and The Today Show, as well as multiple programs on the History Channel and The Discovery Channel. He has taught twice about shipwreck treasures at the American Numismatic Association's Summer Seminars, and his educational programs at numerous numismatic and non-numismatic conventions have been warmly received and widely praised.

Bob currently resides with his wife Jane on a small farm in the hills of eastern Ohio. He operates a coin conservation and curatorial business, GeoCultural Services LLC, and he continues to enjoy traveling and teaching about the S.S. *Central America* and other shipwreck treasures.