

The 1919 AEF Athletic Table Medals

Each soldier who received a shooting prize in May 1919 at the largest shooting contest ever held by the US Army, or who was on a winning team in the spring 1919 America Expeditionary Forces (AEF) athletic contests that were part of the Doughboy Tournament, received a special medallion or table medal to commemorate their placement. Robert I. Aitken, an American sculpture, designed these awards, which were struck in France.



The bronze table medals are 1-15/16 inches in diameter and on the obverse show a heroic male (3/4 view, looking to the viewer's left) in athletic garb ("tee" shirt, shorts, and shoes), saluting. At the figure's feet are an army pack with an entrenching tool attached, a canteen, and a helmet. To the left are the words AMERICAN / EXPEDITIONARY / FORCES and to the right FRANCE / 1919. At the seven o'clock position near the edge is the small word AITKEN, above the even smaller FECIT, the Latin for "done by." On the left side of the reverse is a front view of the Statue of Liberty from the waist up and on the lower

right are waves below a blank space for engraving the winner's name, event, and unit.

Robert Aitken was born in San Francisco, California, in 1878 and was a student at the Mark Hopkins Institute and later from 1901 to 1904 was a professor at the school. Aitken received several honors including the Phelan Gold Medal for sculpture, the Helen Foster Barnett prize from the National Academy of Design, the Gold Medal of Honor for Sculpture from the New York Architectural League, the Silver Medal for Sculpture at the Panama-Pacific Exposition, and other awards. He produced several monuments including the William McKinley statue in Golden Gate Park, the American Navy Memorial in San Francisco, and the George Rogers Clark Monument at the University of Virginia. He also designed the \$50 gold piece for the Panama-Pacific Exposition and the pediment for the U S Supreme Court Building.

The wooden boxes that contain the original medallions are slightly more than two



inches on a side and are covered on the outside with black paper with a metal push-button fastener in front. A closed container is approximately 95/100 inch thick at the highest point and the top is slightly convex. Around the outside upper edge of a box lid is an embossed ornate floral pattern. The box inside has a recessed green velvet insert to hold a medallion. The inside lid and the hinge is of white silk bearing the gold impression: L. CARIAT / MEDAILLEUR-EDITEUR / Rue Boissonade.20 / PARIS.



The army made hundreds of these awards for the Doughboy Tournament, a series of athletic events held in the spring of 1919. The *Stars and Stripes* newspaper noted, after one swimming event, that the winners received “the usual A.E.F. medals.”

Despite their frequent awarding, few of these table medals survive; especially those that accompany the AEF shooting prizes given at the D’Auvours Rifle Range, LeMans, France.



Reverse of AEF medallion.