

MEDAL PRODUCERS IN BELGIUM (19TH - 21ST C.)

INTRODUCTION

THE KINGDOM OF BELGIUM acquired its independence from the Netherlands in 1830. At that moment, there was only one single place where coins and medals were produced, *viz.* the Mint of Brussels. It produced for instance 56 medals in 1830, made by Joseph-Pierre BRAEMT (1796-1864), Maurice BORREL (1804-1882), Constant JEHOTTE (1809-1882) and Adrien-Hippolyte VEYRAT (1803-1883)^[1].

The following years the production dropped to 51 medals for the 1832-33 period, involving more medallists such as Adolphe-Christian JOUVENEL (1798-1867), Laurent HART (1810-1860) and Julien LECLERCQ (1805-1882)^[2].

In the second half of the 19th century a few new medal producers made their appearance in major cities such as Ghent (Lemaire), Antwerp (Baetes, Grielens, Vermeiren and Mauquoy) and, of course, Brussels (De Greef, de Saint, Fisch, Fonson, Geerts, Hart, Hoosemans, Lassen & C^o, Wolfers and Würden).

Before we detail further the striking of medals, we should also mention the different other means of producing a medal, *viz.* engraving, casting and even baking...

Engraved medals are typical for the period immediately after the Independence; they materialize in the form of silver discs with engraved ornaments and text, usually awarded by schools as prize medals. Engravers who had a good fame for their engraved medals were Liévin DE BAST (1787-1832) and Charles ONGHENA (1806-1886), both of Ghent. [fig. 1]



fig. 1

^[1] J. LIPPENS, *Catalogus van de patrijzen en matrijzen van het Museum van het Munt-hof, II. Niet-monetair slaggereedschap (tot 1880)*, Brussel, s.d., nos 1188-1243.

^[2] *IBID.*, nos 1244-1321.

Cast medals are not very popular in Belgium; as opposed to its neighbouring countries, in Belgium, very few medallists have applied this technique. Among the medallists with a sizeable production of this type we should mention: Georges AGLANE (1912-1994) – Armand BONNETAIN (1883-1973) – Georges-André BRUNET (1902-1986) – Bernard CALLIE (1880-1954) – Christian CHARLIER (°1930) – Alfred COURTENS (1889-1967) – Marc DE BRUYN (1924-2009) – Jeanne DE DIJN (1919-2013) – Louis DUPUIS (1842-1923) – Harry ELSTRØM (1906-1993) – Domien INGELS (1881-1946) – Oscar JESPER (1887-1970) – Griet JONKER (°1959) – Karel LATEUR (1873-1949) – Paul LATEUR (1909-1993) – Dolf LEDEL (1893-1976) – Jenny LORRAIN (1867-1943) – Marcel MAZY (1931-?) – Audibert PAUWELS (°1965) – René PIRART (1887-?) – Henri PUVREZ (1893-1971) – Marcel RAU (1886-1966) – Charles SAMUEL (1862-1938) – Josine SOUWEINE (1899-1983) – Boudewijn TUERLINCKX (1873-1945) – Raf VERJANS (°1935) – Luc VERLEE (°1939) – Georges VINDEVOGEL (1923-1977) – Leon VOGELAAR (1875-1946) – Georges WASTERLAIN (1889-1963).

A very small group of medallists choose only to produce via casting: Herman DOTTERMANS (1940-2013) – Marit HERTZDAHL-HARTMAN (°1938) – Rik POOT (1924-2006) – Joseph RULOT (1853-1919).

The medals are mostly cast in bronze, but also iron, pewter and silver cast medals are known to exist. The silver ones are the trademark of Armand BONNETAIN [fig. 2], made in his own workshop, the iron ones were made by Marc DE BRUYN at *Vulcain* in Aalst.



fig. 2

The identified bronze foundries are: *Batardy – Minne – Art & Technique – Berghman – Lothaire – Schellinck – Smulders – Vindevogel – Art & Crafts – Compagnie des Bronzes – De Blicck.*

Stoneware medals are even more exceptional, but one artist, *viz.* Frans VAN RANST (1906-1987), used this technique to leave us a beautiful series of portrait medals of the 1955-1985 period. [fig. 3]



fig. 3

BELGIAN MEDAL PRODUCERS

Let us return to the most popular form of producing medals in Belgium, *viz.* medal striking, and look at the number of companies we have identified over time.

For the city of Antwerp and its surroundings, we identified 6 production units; for Ghent: 3; in some minor cities: 3; but for Brussels, as can be expected for a capital, not less than 25 producers were active in the 185 years since the independence. It is important to note that never more than 20 were active in any given year during that period.

The following table [fig. 4] summarizes which companies were active when, whereas the plot [fig. 5] shows how many companies were active during every 10 year-period between 1830 and now.

At first, the medal production grew in popularity over the years, with an absolute peak in the 1910-1920 period, which included of course all the patriotic issues during and immediately after the First World War (WWI).

Production was still very sizeable till the beginning of the Second World War, but the steady flow of medals that we witnessed around WWI did not get its counterpart during WWII. Since then, the number of companies has been steadily reducing, leaving us in 2017 only three which produce medals (*Mauquoy* and *Van Ranst* from the Antwerp region, and *Fisch* in Brussels).

Let us have a look on what we know about some of these companies.

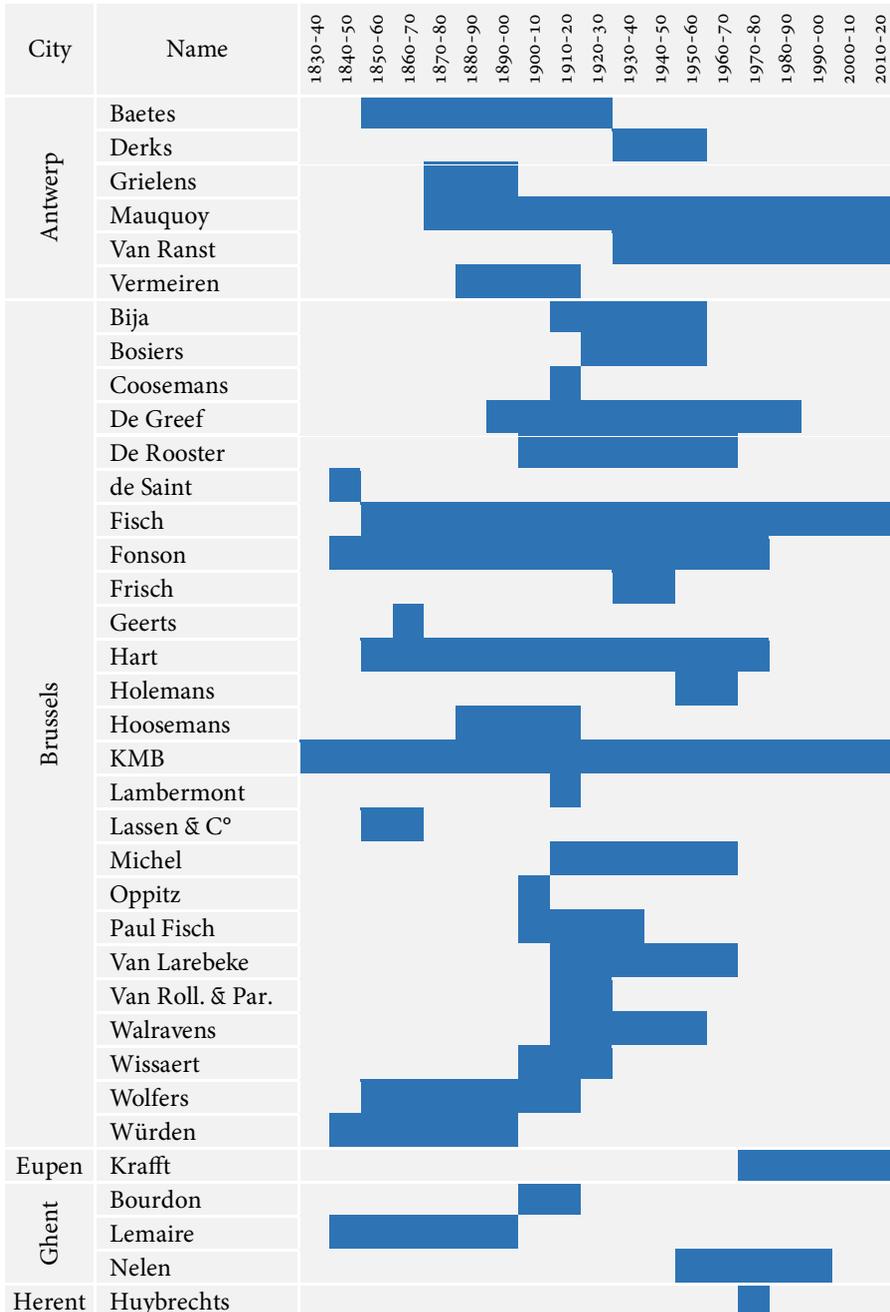


fig. 4 - Medal producing companies active from 1830 on, per 10 year-period

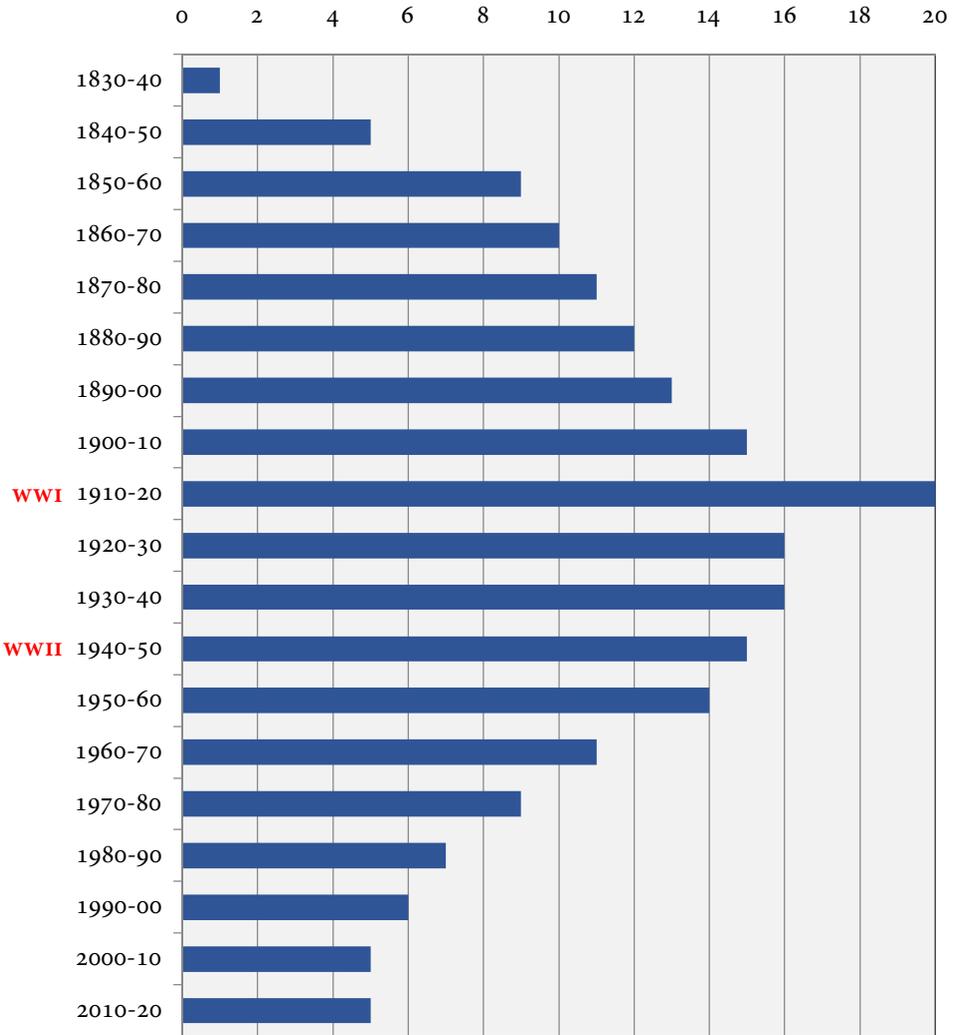


fig. 5 – Number of active medal producing companies from 1830 on, per 10 year period

1. Antwerp^[3]

In Antwerp, we begin chronologically with *Baetes*, active from 1852 till 1930. The company was started by François Ignace BAETES (1826-1890) [fig. 6] and continued by his son Jules (1861-1937).

^[3] In the following descriptions, company names will be written in *italics*, in order to avoid confusion with names of their owners, which are put in SMALL CAPITALS.



fig. 6



fig. 7

Both father and son were talented medallists. Their workshop could be traced at Sint-Kathelijnevest, 47 [fig. 7] from 1852 till 1930.

Besides medals of their own design, they produced for several other Antwerp-based medallists such as Jules ANTHONE (1858-1923) – Edouard GEEFS (1854-1925) – Frans JORIS (1851-1914) – Henry VAN PERCK (1869-1951).

The next company to start producing medals, *viz.* in 1875, was *Mauquoy* [fig. 8A + B] (<http://www.mauquoy.com>), founded by Maarten MAUQUOY (1848-1924), succeeded by his sons Hubert, who specialized in photo-engraving, and Alphonse (1924-1954). Especially Alphonse produced since 1905 beautiful romantic medals. After his death, the company was directed by Edmond TRAMAUX (1881-1958) and his daughter Raymonde (1927-1994); the name of the company was accordingly changed to *Mauquoy-Tramaux*.

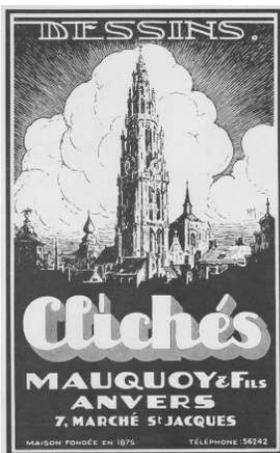


fig. 8A+B

Then, by the end of the fifties, the JANSEN family took over and the expansion started. The company obviously produced medals created by the MAUQUOY and TRAMAUX families. Their medallist portfolio contains mostly Dutch speaking artists, opposed to the Brussels companies which attracted Brussels and Walloon artists. Examples are: Jan ANTEUNIS (1896-1973) – Beni DEBACKER (°1970) – Marc DE BRUYN (1924-2009) – Laurence DE CRAENE (°1965) – Jos DE DAPPER (1915-1981) – Jos DE DECKER (1912-2000) – Jeanne DE DIJN (1919-2013) – Patzy DE PEUTER (°1960) – Josuë DUPON (1864-1935) – Paul HUYBRECHTS (°1951) – Wim IBENS (1934-1997) – Jan KEUSTERMANS (°1940) – Willy KREITZ (1903-1982) – Francien MAAS (°1955) – Mark MACKEN (1913-1977) – Marcel MAZY (1931-?) – May NEAMA (1917-2007) – Jan PEIRELINCK (°1956) – Albert POELS (1903-1984) – Gustaaf VAN DEN MEERSCHE (1891-1970) – Fernand VANDERPLANCKE (°1938) – Luc VERLEE (°1939) – Kriztof WIDELSKI (°1952) – André TAECKENS (1909-1965).

The company had a lot of different addresses. We retraced *e.g.*:

- Hopland, 6 Antwerpen (1875-1904)
- Sint-Jacobsmarkt, 75 Antwerpen (1904-1914)
- Sint-Jacobsmarkt, 7 Antwerpen (1918)
- Kroonstraat, 175 Borgerhout (1955)
- Nachtegaalstraat Antwerpen (?-?)
- Uitbreidingsstraat, 5 Grobbendonk (workshop: 1972-1987) [fig. 9]
- Industrieweg, 12 Grobbendonk (workshop: 1987 – now)

With shops at:

- Oude Koornmarkt, 51 Antwerpen (1969-1987)
- Vlemickveld, 5 Antwerpen (? – now)



fig. 9

Monumunt is a name well known to medal collectors: it was a *Mauquoy* subsidiary, active in the 1991-2007 period, commercializing items produced by the *Mauquoy* workshop.

In 2007 *Mauquoy* took a 50% share in *De Greef* from Brussels (*see there*).

During most of its existence, the *Mauquoy* company did not put any mark on its products, as opposed to Brussels-based companies such as *Fonson & Fisch* which usually put their company name on the edge of their medals.

Somewhere in the 1970's – and before 1981 – one could find examples of an MS mark on the obverse (standing for *Mauquoy-Stockaer*). Since then, a stylized pair of dies is used to identify *Mauquoy's* silver medals. [fig. 10]



fig. 10

In 2016 Peter JANSEN – the then CEO – left *Mauquoy* and took with him some assets. He has now also taken over 100% of the shares of *De Greef* and operates on the market with both an Antwerp and a Brussels-based shop.

Around the same time as MAUQUOY, two other entrepreneurs started their medal producing business:

- Edouard GRIELENS (1845-1901), active from 1875 till 1904 (continued by his widow?) and
- Michel VERMEIREN (1842-1926), active from 1877 till 1920.

Edouard GRIELENS was an engraver, silversmith and medallist with a workshop in the Jules Carnotstraat, 138. He advertised his business on a 28 mm bilingual (Dutch-French) brass token stating:

ED. GRIELENS | 138 | RUE CARNOT | ANVERS | INKOOP VAN
 GOUD EN ZILVER | GRAVEUR-ESTAMPEUR | FABRICANT |
 DE MÉDAILLES | ET DÉCORATIONS | POUR SOCIÉTÉS,
 JETONS, | ÉTIQUETTES | POUR CAFÉS CONTRÔLÉS &^A

We then have to wait the 1930's to see emerge the last two companies: the small *Derks* one and the still operational *Van Ranst* one.

The *Derks* company was renowned as engravers, but especially the founder Floris DERKS (1891-1970) and to a lesser extent Jan DERKS (1922-2009) also produced some medals of their hand in their workshop at the Lombaardenvest, 66 in Antwerp. The period of activity must have been 1930-1960.

BVBA E. Van Ranst, Zonen (<http://www.vanranst.be>) was founded in 1936 by Eugene VAN RANST (1900-1972) and is still run by the family as a producer of jewels, awards and occasionally medals; they produce e.g. medals for Fernand BROSE (°1941) and Paul HUYBRECHTS (°1951). The company is now located at Industriepark Brechtsebaan, 3 in Schoten; till 1996, they were at Borkelstraat, 101 in Schoten. Their founder is remembered by a token [fig. 11], and their trademark is a VR monogram [fig. 12].



fig. 11



fig. 12

2. Brussels

We will only mention general information on most, except of the larger, companies, by lack of sufficient details. In alphabetical order, we have identified the following minor producers:

- Gaspar-Auguste BIJA (1872-1957), born in Schlockschen (now Russia), emigrated to Belgium in 1897, naturalized in 1931. He was a sculptor and medallist, with quite a large production (250) of, mostly cast, portrait medals, coming out of his workshop at the Timmerhoutkaai. Activity spans 1911-1948.
- Joseph BOSIERS (18..-19..) has produced a few medals in the 1924-1949 timeframe.
- Joseph (?) COOSEMANS (18..-19..), active as medal and distinctions producer in the 1914-1920 period. Address not known yet. His war production is catalogued in Lefébure.^[4]
- DE ROOSTER, a producer of military buttons. The company was founded by Richard Joseph DE ROOSTER (1845 – after 1905). The workshops produced sporadically medals from as early as 1897 till for sure 1961 in its workshop at Hallepoortlaan, 35 Sint-Gillis. The earliest identified production is a medal for the jury of the 1897 World Fair in Brussels [fig. 13], the ultimate seems to be a medal for the *Foire Internationale d'Elisabeth-*

^[4] C. LEFÉBURE, *La frappe en Belgique occupée*, Bruxelles, 1923, no. 910.

ville of 1961. Produced medals for Godefroid DEVREESE in 1908-1909, for Guillaume GEEFS (1805-1883) in 1905, for Carl DE COCK (1879-1965) in 1919.



fig. 13

- DE SAINT is only known from an advertisement token where he says he is a mechanic building presses and striking medals and tokens. The 27.5 mm brass token [fig. 14] reads on the obverse

DE SAINT | MÉCANICIEN | RUE DU CHEVAL
NOIR N° 9 | A MOLENBECK (*sic* !) |
ENTREPREND | TOUS GENRES DE |
MÉCANIQUES, | FRAPPE | JETONS ET |
MÉDAILLES



fig. 14

We were unable to determine at what time De Saint was active at this *Rue du Cheval Noir* address. We did however find him in Sint-Jans-Molenbeek in the Biljartstraat / rue du billard, 9 in 1840 (since 1969: Fernand Brunfautstraat).

**De Saint, mécanicien, entreprend et fabrique
tous genre de mécaniques; frappe jetons et
médailles, rue du billard, 9, à Molenbeek-
Saint Jean.**

- Leopold FRISCH (1860 – ?) continued the *Wissaert* workshop (*see there*) after the death of François WISSAERT (1855-1929). At that time, it was situated in the Hospitaalstraat, 9. [fig. 15] A few medals signed by him are known; also a certain E. BRACKENIER signed medals with *Frisch* in the 1950's.



fig. 15

- J. GEERTS from Elsene is mentioned as a producer for Edouard GEERTS (1848-1886) and Charles WIENER (1832-1887) in 1867-1869.
- The *Holemans* company (<http://www.holemans.com>) was certainly a medal editor, and maybe produced medals themselves ... The company was established in 1922 by Henri HOLEMANS (1894-1973), a sculptor of religious art. The company's shop is at Waterloolaan, 11 and nowadays concentrates on jewellery, since 1960 under the management of Jean HOLEMANS. They edited/produced? a medal of Armand BONNETAIN for the *Amis de la médaille d'art* in 1950. Also, some religious medals, signed by "Semen" can be attributed to them, e.g. a P. Valentinus medal from 1968 by Albert POELS (1903-1984).
- François HOOSEMANS (1847-after 1927) was a silversmith and a producer of art and military medals. His production starts around 1875 and his name disappears after WWI.

Identified addresses: Koningsstraat, 78, later 40, and Bergstraat, 86.

Some engravers who had their medals produced by Hoosemans were: Josuë DUPON (1864-1935): *1920 Olympic Games Antwerp* [fig. 16] – Charles VAN DER STAPPEN (1843-1910) – Godefroid DEVRESE (1861-1941) – Egide ROMBAUX (1864-1942) – Auguste DE WEVER (1856-1910): *1897 World Expo Brussels*.



fig. 16

From 1911 onwards we sometimes find the name of Jean HOOSEMANS coupled with *Fisch* or *MB* (*Médailleur belge*); he seems to have been an intermediary who wanted his name mentioned on the medals.

- A *Lambermont* company, maybe a son of the silversmith Joseph Adolphe LAMBERMONT (1839-?), is known to have produced tokens and medals in the 1914-1916 period.

An advertisement [fig. 17] was found linking them to the address Pierre Biddaerstraat, 8 Anderlecht. Artists collaborating with this facility were Louis POUSSET (1865-?) and E. VAN DER BORGH (?-?).



fig. 17

- *Lassen & Cie* was already active around 1840 as producer of buttons for military uniforms [fig. 18A]. In the *Revue belge de Numismatique* of 1905 (p. 247-248) and 1906 (p. 398-399) they are mentioned as having won a contract to produce, in 1846, copper coins for Haiti, but they lost it going forward because of quality issues. The firm had been established by Louis LASSEN (1798-1873) from Copenhagen [fig. 18B], and was situated at the Sint-Goedeleplein, 21.



fig. 18A



fig. 18B

Par pétition adressée à la Chambre des Représentants en date du 18 mars 1842, le Sieur Louis Lassen demande la naturalisation ordinaire.

Le pétitionnaire est né à Copenhague, le 7 octobre 1798; il habite Bruxelles depuis 1833, y est fabricant de boutons, a obtenu la médaille d'argent à l'exposition de 1844, et est breveté du Roi.

A tin advertisement token of 29 mm reads:

LASSEN | ET | CIE | PLAINE (*sic!*) STE GUDULE N° 21.
 A BRUXELLES | FRAPPEMENT | DE MÉDAILLES. |
 FABRICATION | DE BOUTONS. / CONFECTION |
 DE MATRICES. | MANUFACTURE | D'ARMES.

Later – as witnessed by this letterhead [fig. 19] – the company was taken over by *Hartog & Aronstein*, but the medal striking capability is no longer mentioned.



fig. 19

- The Michel company, also known as *Le médaillier belge* (MB), had a 65-year existence. Originally started by Emile MICHEL (1870-1945) in 1908, it was continued by his sons Victor (1902-1984) and René (1915-1988). The first address was Vorstlaan, 91 in Oudergem, then the company had its workplace at Constantinopelstraat, 90 (renamed Emile Féronstraat after WWI). From the medals on the markets, one can estimate that the company was specialised in sport medals, but the sons produced also decent portrait medals. Artists such as Jean DELPORTE (1860-?), Leon GOBERT (1869-1935) and Oscar DE BEUL (1881-1929) also had their signatures on products from this workplace [fig. 20]. Production stopped around 1970 [fig. 21].



fig. 20

A copper 27.5 mm token dated 1931 [fig. 22] mentions the activities as follows:

INSIGNES | JETONS |
VAN LAREBEKE | 25 |
R. DU DRAPEAU |
BRUXELLES |
BOUTONS
D'UNIFORMES



fig. 22

The reverse has a publicity for an automat **LE PASSE-PARTOUT**. It is also known with publicity for *Source de Spontin*, *Nugget Polish*, *Eau de Harre*, *Marouf & Vigor*.

This company produced a lot for the *Belgian Red Cross* (decorations and blood donor medals).

- The producer *Van Rolleghem & Parent* (signing with VR&P [fig. 23]) was active in the period 1905-1930. Edmond VAN ROLLEGHEM and A. PARENT's workshop has not yet been traced. They produced patriotic medals during the First World War and made a lot of small medals to be sold as souvenirs of (World) Expositions. Occasionally their signature is combined with that of René PIRART (1887-?).



fig. 23

- *Walravens*. The company was probably founded by X. (Xavier?) WALRAVENS, but the main person was probably his son Henri WALRAVENS (1899-1960) who led the company in the 1920-1950 period [fig. 24A]. The last family member to head the company was J. WALRAVENS (19..-19..) [fig. 24B]. The company seems to have been residing for the entirety of its existence in the Joseph Claesstraat in Sint-Gillis (Brussel), first at no. 41, later at no. 9.

fig. 24A (l.) & 24B (r.)

The company produced a medal at the World Exposition of 1935 in Brussels, and worked with the following artists: Eugène DE BREMAECKER (1879-1963) – Gustave FISCHWEILER (1911-1990) – Julien STEPPÉ (188?-?) – Paul STOFFYN (1884-1945) – Joseph WITTERWULGHE (1883-1967).

- The beginnings of the medal striking company *Wissaert* are traced back to 1895. With the death of François WISSAERT in 1929 the company was continued by *Frisch* (*see there*).

The first of the *Wissaert* ‘dynasty’ was the Ghent-born Joseph WISSAERT (1825-187?), he established himself as an engraver in Brussels [fig. 25]. His son François WISSAERT (1905-1929), in association with the medallist Fernand DUBOIS from 1893 to 1901, started the medal production.

fig. 25

Recorded addresses are:

- | | | |
|-----------------------|-------------|--------|
| ▪ Gasthuisstraat,9-11 | Brussels | (1893) |
| ▪ Aquaductstraat, 4 | Sint-Gillis | (1902) |
| ▪ Albertlaan, 216 | Ukkel | (1913) |

Some of the artists who used this company were: François WISSAERT (1855-1929) – Paul WISSAERT (1885-1972) – Fernand DUBOIS (1861-1939) – Jean LECROART (1883-1967) – Hippolyte LE ROY (1857-1943) – Arsène MATTON (1873-1953) – Pierre THEUNIS (1883-1950) – Godefroid DEVREESE (1861-1941).

- The name *Wolfers* can point to two distinct, but related companies:
 - Guillaume WOLFERS (1813-1892), active from 1845 till 1960 and then merged with
 - *Wolfers frères*, active from 1850 till 1920 in medal striking, later primarily as silversmiths. The link is that this company was established by Guillaume's brother Louis (1820-1892).

Guillaume WOLFERS had its workplace at Madeleinestraat, 35. It is proven that he produced military medals, but art medals remain doubtful [fig. 26].

fig. 26

Wolfers Frères (<http://bijoutierwolfers.be/nl> <http://wolfers.be/>) was the name taken by *Atelier Louis Wolfers*, after the death of Louis [fig. 27]. Workshops were at Arenbergstraat, 11-31. Their world-wide renown is acquired by Philippe WOLFERS [fig. 28] and his son Marcel, both excellent medallists. Quite a few medallists chose to entrust their medal striking to this house: Philippe WOLFERS (1858-1929) – Marcel WOLFERS (1886-1976) – Pieter BRAECKE (1858-1938) – Isidore DE RUDDER (1855-1943) –

Jules DILLENS (1849-1904) – Jules LAGAE (1862-1931) – Egide ROMBAUX (1865-1942) – Charles SAMUEL (1862-1938) – Godefroid DEVREESE (1861-1941).

fig. 27

fig. 28

- The last of the small producers is *Würden*. The WÜRDENS – of German origin – were silversmiths and medallists. Jean Baptiste WÜRDEN (1807-1874) started the business around 1845, at his death his three sons took over. Around the turn of the 19th century they stopped producing medals.

The three sons were:

- Henri Charles (1849-19..)
- Alexis Louis (1851-1926)
- Gustave Frédéric (1853-1923)

And the addresses:

- Ruisbroekstraat, 56 (1844-1856)
- Keizersstraat, 26 (1856-1875)

The artists linked to this workshop are: Jean Baptiste WÜRDEN (1807-1874) – Henri Charles WÜRDEN (1849-19..) – Godefroid DEVREESE (1861-1941).

A brass 32 mm token [fig. 29] mentions the activities as follows:

ATELIER D'ESTAMPAGE |
 WURDEN | GRAVEUR | SUR |
 MÉTAUX | POINÇONS
 CACHETS | TIMBRES
 MATRICES | FRAPPEMENT
 DE MÉDAILLES
 RUE | DE | RUYSBROEK | 56 |
 BRUXELLES

fig. 29

Another token – 20.5 mm brass – mentions the second address, which is also mentioned in an advertisement from 1857 [fig. 30].

WURDEN GRAVEUR RUE DE L'EMPEREUR 26 BRUXELLES JETONS DE JEU ET D'ADRESSE

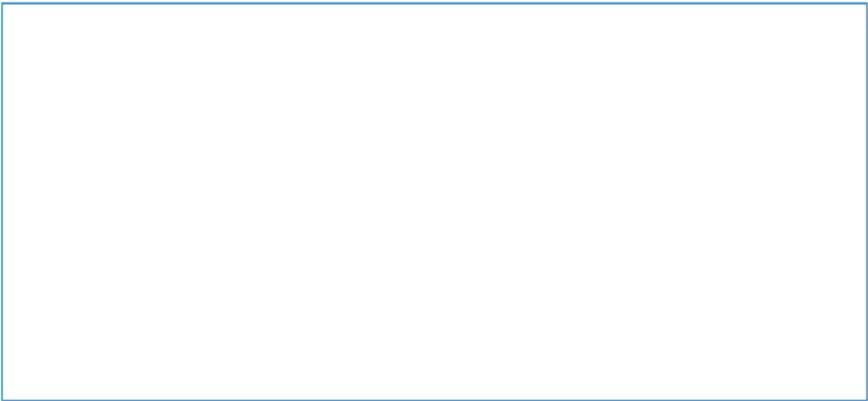


fig. 30

The six major Brussels' striking workshops were:

- *BVBA P. De Greef Médailles* (<http://www.p-degreef.com>) [fig. 31]
 The *P. De Greef* company was founded in 1890 by Paul DE GREEF (grandfather), and for a long time it was in the Zuidstraat, 112-114. The workshop was, since 1942, at a separate address: Kolenmarkt, 67 [fig. 32A+B].

fig. 31

fig. 32A

The grandfather was succeeded by his son Marcel and later by his grandson Paul [fig. 33A+B].

At his death, the last DE GREEF disappeared from the company, which was not long after taken over by the jeweller Marc LEYSEN.

Fifteen years later, and after a short stay at the Prosper Matthysstraat, 16-18 in Vorst, the company got a second investor: *Mauquoy* (50% of the shares). Later, LEYSEN was bought out and ultimately Peter JANSEN (ex-*Mauquoy*) took over and is now running *P. De Greef* from the Émile Jacquemainlaan, 131, where there is still a small decorations production unit.

fig. 32B

Medallists who made medals at *De Greef* include: Paul DE GREEF Senior (1869-1942) – Paul DE GREEF Junior (1926-1988) – Marcel DE GREEF (1901-1964) – Eugène DE BREMAECKER (1879-1963) – Egide DE COSTER (1873-?) – Auguste DUERINCK (1919-1993) – Jean-Pierre EMONDS-ALT (1928-2014) – Gustave FISCHWEILER (1911-1990) – Jean MAYER (1904-1972) – Carlos VAN DIONANT (1899-1969) – Joseph WITTERWULGHE (1883-1967).

Paul DE GREEF Junior studied in Paris, where he must have established contacts with some French medallists. That explains why we see, in the period 1950-1975, quite a lot of medals produced by Raymond BETANNIER (1920-?) – George CONTAUX (1891-1984) and Louis MULLER (1902-1957).

fig. 33A*fig. 33B*

When the workshop stopped producing (2000?), part of the *tupothèque* was moved to the *Mauquoy* company, while another part ended up in the Royal Coin Cabinet.

P. De Greef did not put a mark to indicate its production, but the original boxes in which the medals were kept, some typical reverses used throughout, and an illustrated catalogue [fig. 34A+B] helped to identify a major part.

fig. 34A

fig. 34B

- *BVBA Fibru Europ* (<http://www.fibru.com>)

The company established by German-born Antoine FISCH (1827-1892) is one of the best known in our country. Antoine studied with J. WÜRDEN (*see there*) before coming to Brussels and starting modestly in 1853 in the Greepstraat.

At the death of Antoine FISCH, Joseph FISCH, together with his mother Jeanne WICOT, his sister Antoinette and his older brother Paul, is involved in managing the family business. In 1898, when Paul FISCH decides to set up his own company (*see Paul Fisch Aîné*), Joseph takes charge of the workshop in the Antoine Dansaertstraat.

The FISCH dynasty will thus be continued by Joseph (1870-1916), his wife Marie CLOETENS (+ 1938), and their son Fernand FISCH (+ 1962).

Fernand FISCH [fig. 35] was a great lover of the Art Medal. He had many contacts both in Belgium and abroad, and in 1937 he was co-founder of the *Fédération Internationale des Editeurs de Médailles* (FIDEM), today the *Fédération Internationale de la Médaille*.

fig. 35

- *Établissements Fisch & C^{ie}* first settled in the heart of Brussels, on different addresses :
 - Greepstraat, 9 (1856-1865)
 - Greepstraat, 15 (1865-1873)
 - Zwarte Maagdstraat, 8 (1873-1888)
 - Moutstraat, 8 + H. Mausstraat, 45 (1888-1890)
 - Moutstraat, 16 (1890-1892)
 - Antoine Dansaertstraat, 40-42 (1892-1936)

This continual moving is witnessed on a large collection of advertisement tokens that have already been studied elsewhere^[5] [fig. 36A+B].

fig. 36A

fig. 36B

In 1937, the Fisch workshops moved to a beautiful art deco building, at the Edmond Rostandstraat, 59-63 in Scheut (Anderlecht), where it is still in its original state [fig. 37, 38]. It carries the signature of the architect Antoine POMPE and is consistent with the street's residential character.

Around that same year Fernand FISCH founded, after a trade mission to Colombia, involving also Alphonse MAUQUOY, a *Fisch Bogota* (FIBO) company.

fig. 37

^[5] S. DE LOMBAERT, *La maison Fisch et ses jetons publicitaires*, in *Association des collectionneurs de jetons-monnaie. Bulletin* 23, juin 2001, p. 16-23.

fig. 38

In 1953, on the hundredth anniversary of *Établissements Fisch & C^{ie}*, he converts it into a limited company (NV). The name is then *Établissements Fisch-Fibru*, with the intention to change the name over the years into *Établissements Fibru Fisch* (done in 1958) and in 1988 to *FIBRU NV* (= *FIsch-BRUssels*).

Fernand Fisch also asked his great friend Marcel RAU to make a medal commemorating the same occasion. The subject of this medal remained the favourite emblem of the company with the slogan *BONIS ARTIBUS DEVOTI* [fig. 39].

fig. 39

In 1963, the firm was acquired by Pierre FISCH (+ 1975).

In 1966, his brother Christian and his sister Chantal resigned and sold most of their shares to Marie-Louise DUPONT, working in the company since 1956, and to Paul BERTRAND, both then appointed as directors.

In 1973, Fisch acquired the renowned *Anc. Éts. Fonson*, which had been founded in 1848, and thus was older. The acquisition resulted in the preservation of *Fonson's tupothèque* (collection of dies).

In 1974 Pierre emigrated to Canada and passed the torch to Paul BERTRAND (+ 1997) and Marie-Louise DUPONT (+ 2008), who continued the 'Fisch tradition' dutifully and enthusiastically.

In 1988, the company was split into two separate entities. The purpose of this split was to spread the risks related to, on the one hand, the property management, taken over by *NV Fisch*, and on the other hand, the industrial and commercial management, taken over by *NV Fibru*.

The final change came in 1998; a bankruptcy resulted in a restart as *BVBA Fibru Europ*.

The medals of this firm are mostly marked with A. Fisch, J. Fisch or Fisch & C^{ie} on obverse or reverse or on the edge with Fisch & C^{ie} for the older productions, with Fisch Fonson in the 1974-1988 period, and continuing with Fibru.

The firm put a lot of efforts into publicity, with stands at the World Expositions in Belgium, and the edition of postcards and neat catalogues, even a booklet about Art Medals in French, Dutch and Spanish [fig. 40A-C].

fig. 40B

fig. 40C

The *Fisch* company produced thousands of different medals. Obviously, many medals made before WWI are from the hand of Antoine FISCH (1827-1892) and Jules FISCH (1870-1916). The later FISCH generations were no longer medallists, but business people.

Altogether we identified 210 different artists who used the expertise of this traditional firm for their striking, including some foreign artists from Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, etc.

- *Fonson*

Medal production was not the main activity for this old company, established in 1848. The production of military equipment, swords, uniforms and buttons were the initial reason for establishing the company in the Fabrieksstraat at different house numbers.

At the start, two brothers, Jean-Barthélemy (1808-1882) and Jean-François FONSON (18..-18..), led the company together until 1862. Jean-Barthélemy was a medallist. His brother continued to lead the company until the turn of the century, then it was led further on by François Auguste FONSON (1845-1920), usually signing A. Fonson [fig. 41, 42].

fig. 41

Most of Fonson's medals date from after 1900.

fig. 42

After François Auguste FONSON, Jules (1871-1937) was the last direct family member to direct the company. Jules was president of the *Chambre de commerce de Bruxelles* and member of the *Bourse aux cuirs de Bruxelles*. The signature J. FONSON was further used till 1947 [fig. 43A+B].

fig. 43A

fig. 43B

In 1956 the company's name changed to *Établissements Jules Fonson*, now under Eugène C. WALTON-FONSON (1892-1960), an industrial manager, also very active in the early days of FIDEM [fig. 44].

fig. 44

In 1968 the company was bankrupted a first time, continuing now as *Anciens Établissements Fonson et C^{ie} NV*; six years later, a second bankruptcy led to the take-over of the medal producing activities, a part of the personnel and the *tupothèque* by *Fisch*, its major competitor.

Fonson had some 140 medallists in its portfolio. Its production is well illustrated through several catalogues [fig. 45A-C] and a consistent marking of its medals on the edge.

fig. 45A-C

- *(De Vigne-)Hart*^[6]

The medallist Laurent HART (1810-1860) started his business in the Theresianenstraat, 4 [fig. 46].

fig. 46

^[6] See C. ARNOULD, *De l'esquisse au burin*.

As early as 1847, he moved to the Koningsgalerij, 6 where his successors remained until 1974 [fig. 47].

The company made medals using a screw press, which remained there after the medal production was abandoned. It is now an interesting piece of the decoration of the successive businesses that have used the former workplace [fig. 48].

After HART's death, the business was continued by his widow Octavie VAN DOREN (+ 1889); during this time one sometimes sees the signature P. Hart.

From 1890 onwards miss Alice DE VIGNE (+ 1939) took ownership and the company got a new name *De Vigne-Hart*, which it kept until the closure in 1974. The last decennia both mother and daughter LONDÈS led the company.

fig. 47

fig. 48

An address card / advertisement token from 1847 in (silvered) brass of 27 mm gives us a good overview of the activities of the Hart company [fig. 49].

GALERIES ST HUBERT | BRUXELLES | HART F. |
ATELIER POUR LE FRAPPEMENT DE JETONS ET
MÉDAILLES | HART | GRAVEUR. | GALERIE DU ROI
6. | ET RUE DES BOUCHERS 36 | MÉDAILLES;
| CACHETS D'ARMOIRIES, | D'AUTORITÉS ET DE
COMMERCE | GRIFFES; TIMBRES SECS | ET
HUMIDES; BOUTONS | DE LIVRÉE; VAISSELLE; |
PLAQUES DE PORTES; | MATRICES; POINCONS |
ETC. ETC

fig. 49

Apart from medals from the hand of the master himself, other artists such as Elisa BEETZ-CHARPENTIER (1875-1949) – Jacques MARIN (1877-1950) – Franz VAN LEEMPUTTEN (1850-1914) used his workshop.

It is not unusual to find medals signed L. Hart but struck a long time after his death in 1860. This has of course to do with the fact that the company did not have a medallist working with them for more than 100 years, leading to a continuous re-use of old dies!

A considerable part of Hart's *tupothèque* has joined the collections of the Royal Coin Cabinet.

- *Koninklijke Munt / Monnaie Royale (KMB)*

Our national Mint was until 1878 operating from the Muntplein, 2 in the centre of our capital [fig. 50].

fig. 50

It then moved to new and larger premises in Sint-Gillis at the Munthofstraat, 95 [fig. 51].

fig. 51

In 1976, the KMB moved its activities to the Pachecolaan, 32 in Brussels [fig. 52].

fig. 52

Before 1860 and after 1939 the striking of medals was organised by the Mint Administration. In between, from 1860 till 1939, the Administration was leasing the right to strike medals at their premises to three private entrepreneurs:

- Leopold WIENER (1823-1891) (1860-1891)
- Alphonse MICHAUX (1860-1928) (1894-1926)
- Alexandre EVERAERTS (1877-1943) (1926-1939)

Wiener was holding the function of Chief Engraver, the two others were also *de facto* Chief Engravers, but their function was called Chief Manufacturing.

The artists active with the KMB in the 1830-1900 period

Joseph-Pierre BRAEMT (1796-1864) – Alexandre GEEFS (1829-1866) – Laurent HART (1810-1860) – Constant JEHOTTE (1809-1882) – Louis JEHOTTE (1803-1884) – Adolphe-Christian JOUVENEL (1798-1867) – Julien LECLERCQ (1805-1882) – Adrien-Hippolyte VEYRAT (1803-1883) – Jacques WIENER (1815-1899) – Leopold WIENER (1823-1891).

In the 1900-1939 period

Alphonse MICHAUX (1860-1928) – Armand BONNETAIN (1883-1973) – Alphonse DE TOMBAY (1843-1918) – Godefroid DEVREESE (1861-1941) – Fernand DUBOIS (1861-1939) – Jules JOURDAIN (1873-1957) – Jenny LORRAIN (1867-1943) – Jacques MARIN (1877-1950) – Georges PETIT (1879-1958) – Hippolyte LE ROY (1857-1943) – Charles SAMUEL (1862-1938) – Pierre THEUNIS (1883-1950) – Franz VERMEYLEN (1857-1922) – Thomas VIN OTTE (1850-1925).

After 1939

Albert AEBLY (1897-1971) – George AGLANE (1912-1994) – G.-A. BRUNET (1902-1986) – Alfred COURTENS (1889-1967) – Albin COURTOIS (°1928) – Serge CREUZ (1924-1996) – Jean DEBAST (1883-1975) – Fernand DEBONNAIRES (1907-1997) – Marc DE BRUYN (1924-2009) – Oscar DE CLERCK (1892-1968) – Georges DOBBELS (1910-1988) – Auguste DUERINCK (1919-1993) – Harry ELSTRØM (1906-1993) – Marcel GILSON (°1948) – Paul HUYBRECHTS (°1951) – Idel IANCHELEVIVI (1909-1994) – Andre LANGE (1923-1999) – Dolf LEDEL (1893-1976) – Charles LEPLAE (1903-1961) – Luc LUYCX (°1958) – Mark MACKEN (1912-1977) – Raf MAILLEUX (1916-1996) – Marcel MAZY (1931-?) – Ricky Plaghki (°1950) – Albert POELS (1903-1984) – Marcel RAU (1886-1966) – Michel STIEVENART (1910-1991) – Carlos VAN DIONANT (1899-1969) – Jean VIERSET (°1924).

Not only Belgian medallists worked with the KMB, also foreigners like Raymond JOLY (1911-2006) – Julien LEFÈVRE (1907-1984) – Leon NOSBUSCH (1897-1979) – Bert CORNET (1937-2014) – Geoffrey COLLEY (°1934) – Pietro GIAMPAOLI (1898-1998) – Alasia BORGHESE (°1926) choose the KMB for a few or even a lot of their medals.

- *Maison Paul Fisch Aîné*

As a publisher of medals, Paul FISCH [fig. 53] took over the engraving company (founded in 1853) of his father, Antoine FISCH, in line with the entrepreneurial tradition.

fig. 53

For five years (1893-1898) he lead the company *Fisch & Cie* together with his mother Jeanne WICOT, his brother Joseph, and his sister Antoinette.

In 1898 he created his own company where he released his own creations. Paul FISCH (1865-1919) studied at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of Brussels. Since 1909 he was Chairman of the *Kunstkring van Anderlecht*.

The company did not disappear with his death, shortly after WWI. It was continued by his widow until 1924 and then taken over by Désiré ROBETTE; the activity stopped in 1930.

The company was operating in Cureghem (Anderlecht) at the Duitslandstraat, 32 (1898-1918) [fig. 54], renamed Clemenceaulaan, 32 in 1918. Under Désiré ROBETTE the move was made to the Lambert Crickxstraat, 11 in Anderlecht.

The artists who worked together with Paul FISCH (1865-1919) were: Bernard CALLIE (1880-1954) – Maurice DE MATHELIN (1854-1905) – Godefroid DEVREESE (1861-1941) – Louis DUPUIS (1842-1921) – Hippolyte LE ROY (1857-1943).

Fernand Fisch Aîné also printed nicely illustrated catalogues to promote its business. [fig. 55]

fig. 54

fig. 55

3. Ghent

The eldest medal producing workshop in Ghent belonged to the medallist Victor LEMAIRE (1826-1905) and was situated on the Botermarkt, 1. Literature shows that the start of the medal striking might have gone back to c.1845, with a peak in the 1880-1900 period [fig. 56].

The only other artist whose production we could trace back to this workshop was Hippolyte LE ROY (1857-1943).

fig. 56

We also found evidence that a well-known silversmith, BOURDON, produced medals and tokens. Although the company has long gone, their screw press (*balancier*) and some of their dies have been preserved and witness their past as medal producing equipment. We can conservatively observe that their period of activity in medal striking spans the 1874^[7]-1914 period. At that period the company was led by Edouard BOURDON (1858-1944). It is unclear however if they produced only their own designs or worked with other artists to make designs for medals [fig. 57-59].

fig. 57

^[7] See *Revue belge de Numismatique* 1878, p. 91.

fig. 58

fig. 59

From 1878 onwards their addresses are:

- Cataloniëstraat, 5
- Cataloniëstraat, 11 (1910)
- E. Braunplaats (1918)

The last Ghent minting capacity was situated at the company *Sporttrofeeën Louis Nelen*.

Activities in medal production are situated in the 1955-1997 period. The head-office of Ghent was on two different places at the Voskenslaan (nos 129 and 171). But they also had shops in Brussels (Zuidlaan, 13) and Liège (Quai Orban, 17). [fig. 60]

As their name suggests they specialized in sport-related items, but also produced some art medals, e.g. for Berten COOLENS (1926-1996).

The company disappeared after a bankruptcy at the turn of the century.

fig. 60

4. Other minor producers outside the large cities

A quite unique producer was Willy KRAFFT in Eupen, the German-speaking part of East Belgium. His company specialized in medals for hiking clubs / events. [fig. 61]

fig. 61

The company was established in 1980 and stopped its activities in 2014, because of a bankruptcy (like a few others mentioned earlier in the text...). It was established at the following addresses:

- Edelstraße, 2A Eupen (< 2002)
- Steinroth, 52 Eupen (> 2002)

The only medallist I could link to his company was Joseph FLÉRON (1920-1995).

Our well-known medallist Paul HUYBRECHTS (<http://www.medailles-paulhuybrechts.be>) acquired minting capacity in the 70's, with the intention to produce small medals (X 30 mm). But it did not last long before he found out that the business case was not rewarding and diverted his attention from his artistic creations. [fig. 62]

fig. 62

5. *Importers*

Any medal collector in Belgium might tell you that we find surprisingly many medals attributable to the Swiss company *Huguenin*. I could not find a reasonable explanation for this, until I discovered that *Huguenin* worked here through a dedicated intermediary, *viz.* the *Pirsch Company*.

The illustrated price-lists of *Pirsch* [fig. 63, 64] show that they worked in a professional way in the period 1908-1925. Emile PIRSCH (1863-1925) was a medal editor, whose editions can be found at the Brussels' *Wolfers*, *Walravens* and *Fonson* companies. On top of that he was the exclusive agent of *Huguenin* from Le Locle in Switzerland for Belgium and Luxembourg.

fig. 63

fig. 64

After his death, the company was continued by Paul VILLERS, under the same name.

The company can be traced to at least three addresses:

- Adolphe Demeurlaan, 47 (1924)
- Bibliotheekstraat, 7 (1929)
- Jourdanstraat, 113

CONCLUSION

So far we have not been able to trace medal striking workshops in Liège, but we think there must have been at least one, for a city that had a mint until 1794 and established engravers as the Jehotte's and the Jouvenel's.

There is still much to be researched, but one must realize that the primary sources (archives of the companies) have for a large part been lost and that we must count on secondary sources and iconography to try to get a crystal-clear picture on what workshops were producing and which artists they worked with.

What is already a certainty, is that almost all our medallists have used multiple minting facilities to produce their creations. The ones whose name is linked to a single workshop are either members of the family owning the facility, or they can reasonably be considered employees of that workshop, such as e.g. Herman HEUSERS and Basile LAMON for *Fisch*.

The discovery of the following plaquette (of 1937?) [fig. 65] suggesting minting capacities of Joseph WITTERWULGHE remains one of the subjects needing further research.

fig. 65

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