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Contact: Erin Gong

734.995.5439 734.995.1188 (fax)

egong@aahom.org

Local Museum Penny Makes 9,500-mile Journey

On Wednesday, June 10, the Ann Arbor Hands-On Museum, Ann Arbor, MI, will add a new piece to its collection—a coin from the Museum's penny machine that recently completed a 9,658-mile journey from a geocache in Germany back to the Museum.

Geocaching is a worldwide treasure hunting game where people find hidden geocaches, containers with toys and trinkets, using GPS technology. This coin was a Travel Bug, an item that hitchhikes from cache to cache, usually with a goal destination—in this case, to return to the museum where it was made. The coin traveled for 487 days through 27 geocaches in 3 countries and 6 states.

Goetz Ulrich, the coin's owner, dropped the coin in a geocache in Wolfsburg, Germany on January 27, 2008. The coin traveled around Germany geocaches until July, when it jumped the Atlantic and was placed in a geocache in Arizona. From there it traveled through California, Florida, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, New York, and Canada, including stops to the Grand Canyon, Los Angeles, and Niagara Falls.

At the beginning of May, Ulrich emailed the Museum to let them know about the coin's existence and that it was getting close to its destination.

The penny finally reached its goal on May 28, 2009, when geocachers Gina & Janet Cowing, from Ontario, Canada, delivered the coin to the Ann Arbor Hands-On Museum. They had picked up the coin in an Ontario cache and returned it while apartment-hunting for their son, who will be studying at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor this fall.

Coin Travel Facts

- **Traveled 9,658 miles in 487 days**
- **Dropped in 27 caches**
- **Visited Germany, Canada and 6 U.S. states**
- **Started in Germany on January 27, 2008**
- **Returned to U.S. soil on July 13, 2008**
- **Reached destination in Ann Arbor, MI, on May 28, 2009**



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Ari Morris, Store Manager for the Ann Arbor Hands-On Museum, was present as the Cowings returned the coin. Morris says, “I was back in my office and I heard the cashiers saying visitors were here about some sort of geo something. I knew exactly what they were talking about so I went to the front to talk to them.”

Jenna Rupp, Membership Coordinator at the Ann Arbor Hands-On Museum and the primary contact with Ulrich, says, “When it showed up I was just shocked because I thought it would take longer. It came from Germany for goodness’ sake.”

Ulrich lived in Troy, MI, several years ago and visited the Ann Arbor Hands-On Museum with his family many times. They once used the Museum’s penny machine to flatten a coin and imprint the atomic symbol and Museum name on it.

Ulrich says, “Years later [in Germany], my daughter found the pressed penny in her memory book and she thought it would be cool to drop this penny as a unique Geocoin in Germany, along with a mission to get it back to its origin.”

The Ann Arbor Hands-On Museum will display the returned coin and a map of its travels starting next week. Find out more about the coin at the Museum’s blog at <http://blog.aaom.org> or visit the coin’s travelogue at www.geocaching.com.

The Ann Arbor Hands-On Museum provides more than 250 interactive exhibits that spark the imagination. The Museum is a regional destination attracting 200,000 visitors every year. The mission of the Museum is to inspire people to discover the wonder of science, math and technology. Visit www.aaom.org or call 734.995.5439 for more information.

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