

April 2003

A wise old owl sat in an oak,  
The more he saw, the less he spoke,  
The less he spoke, the more he heard,  
Why can't we be like that wise old bird?

# The Owl

## Mascot of Athens and Goddess of Wisdom

by John Hibbs<sup>1</sup>

The idea of incorporating the owl into the discussion of the symbol of CandlePower<sup>2</sup> came to me from the Reverend Bob Edgar<sup>3</sup> during his recent talk at San Diego's Peace and Justice Institute.

*"I like owls because they can see in the dark. They remind us that we live in dark times and our constant fight against the forces of evil. Our job as leaders is to provide a vision for paths leading to a brighter future."*

### Owls? Owls? What's so great about an owl?

Curious, I asked Google to search "owls". The results opened new vistas about an extraordinary creature that millions associate with superb intelligence, wisdom and grace. Let me share some of my findings with you.

From the Mensa web site: "For thousands of years owls have been respected and looked upon with awe. Whether it is their inscrutable faces, commanding posture or quiet stealth, they are inevitably depicted as having power over human lives."

Did you know that owl drawings have been found in the earliest cave dwellings? Or that an owl was credited with helping the Greeks defeat the Persians during the golden days of Greece? In Japan pictures of owls are used to ward off evil spirits. Some Native Americans believe eating the eyes of an owl will improve vision. In Yorkshire, owl soup is said to cure the whooping cough.

### A mascot, a goddess — and coins called owls

Since my viewpoint comes from the angle of an educator, of most interest was the role of the owl in ancient Greece. In Athens, that citadel of scholarly inquiry and the cradle of democracy, this intriguing bird earned the scientific name *Athene Noctua* – the Goddess Athena, Goddess of Wisdom. For Athenians, the owl became the city's mascot; and part of their monetary system.

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<sup>1</sup>email: [hibbs@bfranklin.edu](mailto:hibbs@bfranklin.edu); homepage: [www.bfranklin.edu/johnhibbs](http://www.bfranklin.edu/johnhibbs).

<sup>2</sup>[www.bfranklin.edu/candlepower/CandlePower.pdf](http://www.bfranklin.edu/candlepower/CandlePower.pdf).

<sup>3</sup>Dr. Bob Edgar, General Secretary of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA  
<http://users.voice-alert.com/gld7/7028.html>

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**The Benjamin Franklin Institute of Global Education**

2529 Front Street • San Diego CA 92103

+1 (619) 230 0212

[hibbs@bfranklin.edu](mailto:hibbs@bfranklin.edu) • [www.bfranklin.edu](http://www.bfranklin.edu)

How? Athenian coins had on one side the image of an owl; on the other the face of the Goddess Athena. The coins were called “owls” — a perfect juxtaposition between knowledge acquisition and wealth creation!

With help from Google I also came upon a sculptor who artfully fashioned the linkage between vision, keys, locks and an owl. You will have to visit his web site to view all his fine work<sup>4</sup> but if you can imagine a heavy pair of 18th century keys with the circles at (the thumb-end) serving as spectacle rims, the shafts running ‘down’ to the key’s business-end (serving as “feet”), the “nose” as the lock’s entry point, you will have a good mental picture just how neat is the symmetry.



#### **The best part — the makings of CandleScholar**

Then I came upon a candle maker in Wisconsin with quite a lineup of different owl species formed with wick and wax. I encourage a visit to his store.<sup>5</sup>

What's best is this maker is warm to the idea of CandlePower and our “Light Up” campaign. From him we will source CandleScholar, about whom you will just have await the month of May. That's when we start to light up CandlePower, driven by the symbol of an owl, some keys and a coin.

As always, suggestions, comments and observations are encouraged.

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<sup>4</sup> [www.owlman.com](http://www.owlman.com)

<sup>5</sup> [www.veltd.net](http://www.veltd.net)