

= Washington quarter =

The Washington quarter is the present quarter dollar or 25 ¢ cent piece issued by the United States Mint . The coin was first struck in 1932 ; the original version was designed by sculptor John Flanagan .

As the United States prepared to celebrate the 1932 bicentennial of the birth of its first president , George Washington , members of the bicentennial committee established by Congress sought a Washington half dollar . They wanted to displace for that year only the regular issue Walking Liberty half dollar ; instead Congress permanently replaced the Standing Liberty quarter , requiring that a depiction of Washington appear on the obverse of the new coin . The committee had engaged sculptor Laura Gardin Fraser to design a commemorative medal , and wanted her to adapt her design for the quarter . Although Fraser 's work was supported by the Commission of Fine Arts and its chairman , Charles W. Moore , Treasury Secretary Andrew W. Mellon chose a design by Flanagan , and Mellon 's successor , Ogden L. Mills , refused to disturb the decision .

The new silver quarters entered circulation on August 1 , 1932 ; and continued to be struck in silver until the Mint transitioned to copper ¢ nickel clad coinage in 1965 . A special reverse commemorating the United States Bicentennial was used in 1975 and 1976 , with all pieces bearing the double date 1776 ? 1976 ; there are no 1975 ¢ dated quarters . Since 1999 , the original eagle reverse has not been used ; instead that side of the quarter has commemorated the 50 states , the nation 's other jurisdictions , and National Park Service sites ? the last as part of the America the Beautiful Quarters series , which will continue until 2021 . The bust of Washington was made smaller beginning in 1999 ; in 2010 it was restored to bring out greater detail .

= = Inception = =

On December 2 , 1924 , Congress created the United States George Washington Bicentennial Commission . The 200th anniversary of the birth of Washington , the first President of the United States , would occur in 1932 , and Congress wished to plan for the event well in advance . President Calvin Coolidge was ex officio chairman of the commission , which included government officials as well as prominent private citizens such as automobile manufacturer Henry Ford . In 1929 , the Secretary of Commerce , Herbert Hoover , succeeded Coolidge both as president and in his commission role . By that time , however , the commission had become inactive , doing little after sending out an initial flurry of press releases . A new group , the George Washington Bicentennial Committee was established by Act of Congress in February 1930 .

Hoover was concerned about the large numbers of designs used for commemorative coins in the 1920s ; he feared that confusion would aid counterfeiters . When a commemorative coin bill was sent to him by Congress , Hoover vetoed it on April 21 , 1930 . In a lengthy veto message delivered to Congress with the returned bill , Hoover noted his counterfeiting concerns , and stated that the coins were selling badly anyway ? large quantities of Oregon Trail Memorial half dollars remained unsold .

The Bicentennial Committee wanted a commemorative Washington half dollar , and sought to assuage Hoover 's concerns by proposing that all 1932 half dollars depict Washington instead of bearing the usual Walking Liberty design . The Depression had decreased demand for coin in commerce ; no half dollars had been struck in 1930 , and none would be until 1933 . Most commemorative coins at the time were struck in a quantity of a few thousand . The half dollar was seen as the largest and most prominent design ? the Peace dollar was not then being struck and did not circulate in much of the country . Other commemoratives had been sold at a premium , the Washington half dollar would , for one year , be the normal Mint issue . Although it had not yet received congressional approval , the committee went ahead and began a competition . The committee anticipated that the same artist would first design the committee 's medal and then the coin . The obverse of both medal and coin were to be based on the well ¢ known bust of Washington by French sculptor Jean ¢ Antoine Houdon ; the artist was not restricted as to the reverse design . By law , coinage designs were approved by the Secretary of the Treasury , at that

time Andrew W. Mellon , a noted art collector and connoisseur ; it was anticipated he would interpose no objection to the plan .

After reviewing the entries , both the Bicentennial Committee and Fine Arts Commission agreed on designs by Laura Gardin Fraser . The wife of James Earle Fraser , designer of the Buffalo nickel , Laura Fraser was a notable coin designer in her own right , having designed several commemorative coins , including the Oregon Trail Memorial pieces . With a right @-@ facing Washington , Fraser 's designs were to be used for the medal , and , as those involved expected , the half dollar as well .

On February 9 , 1931 , New Jersey Representative Randolph Perkins introduced legislation for a Washington quarter , to the dismay of the Bicentennial Committee and Fine Arts Commission . The House of Representatives Committee on Coinage , Weights and Measures issued a memorandum stating that the design of the existing Standing Liberty quarter had been found to be unsatisfactory , and that the new piece would not only be struck for 1932 , it would permanently replace the older design . Thus , a new quarter would both be a tribute to Washington on his bicentennial , and relieve the Mint of the burden of having to coin a difficult @-@ to @-@ strike piece . On February 12 , Fine Arts Commission Chairman Charles W. Moore wrote to the House Committee , objecting to the change of denomination , and proposing that they mandate that Laura Fraser 's design for the medal also appear on the coin . Moore was ignored , and Congress passed authorizing legislation for a Washington quarter on March 4 , 1931 . The act provided that Washington 's image , to appear on the obverse , was to be based on the " celebrated bust " of the former president by Jean @-@ Antoine Houdon ; Fraser had based her design on Houdon 's work .

= = Competitions = =

On July 14 , 1931 , Assistant Mint Director Mary Margaret O 'Reilly wrote to Moore , asking the Commission 's advice on a design competition for the new quarter . Moore replied , stating that as Fraser had won the competition for the medal , she should adapt her design for the quarter . Secretary Mellon responded to Moore , stating that as the Treasury had been no party to the earlier design agreement , it was not bound by it , and would not follow it . The Treasury proceeded to hold a design competition , and when the Fine Arts Commission met to consider the submitted designs in an advisory role , it selected those submitted by Fraser . The designs were submitted to Mellon in November 1931 ; he selected Flanagan 's design and notified Moore of the decision . Moore and commission member Adolph Weinman (who had designed the Mercury dime and Walking Liberty half dollar) attempted to get Mellon to change his mind , but only got him to agree to allow the various sculptors more time to improve their entries ? they had asked for more time just for Fraser . On January 20 , 1932 , following resubmissions , the commission affirmed its support of the Fraser designs .

Mellon left office on February 12 , 1932 ; he was succeeded by Ogden L. Mills . With a new Secretary of the Treasury in office , Moore renewed his protest , sending Mills a letter on March 31 deprecating Flanagan 's design and urging the new secretary to accede to the commission 's recommendation . Mills had already been briefed by O 'Reilly on the quarter matter , and responded to Moore on April 11 . Secretary Mills informed Moore that the chairman 's letter had caused him to request changes from the sculptor , but that he would not override Mellon 's decision . On April 16 , the selection of Flanagan 's designs was publicly announced .

Mellon was aware of which artists had submitted which designs , and has been accused of discriminating against Fraser as a woman . Numismatic historian Walter Breen stated , " it has been learned that Mellon knew all along who had submitted the winning models , and his male chauvinism partly or wholly motivated his unwillingness to let a woman win . " Bowers , however , noted that Mellon had approved Fraser 's designs for commemorative coins several times , as well as those by other women , and that no contemporary source speaks to any bias on Mellon 's part . Bowers called the belief " modern numismatic fiction " . Fraser 's design was used in 1999 as a commemorative half eagle issued 200 years after Washington 's death .

= = Flanagan 's design = =

As originally struck , the quarter depicts a head of Washington facing left , with " Liberty " above the head , the date below , and " In God We Trust " in the left field . On the reverse , an eagle with wings outspread perches on a bundle of arrows framed below by two olive branches .

= = = Houdon bust = = =

In 1785 , the French sculptor Jean @-@ Antoine Houdon was commissioned by the Virginia General Assembly to sculpt a bust of Washington , who had led the nascent United States to victory in the American Revolutionary War . Houdon had been recommended by the recently returned United States Minister to France , Benjamin Franklin . The retired general sat for Houdon at Mount Vernon , the Washington family home in Fairfax County , Virginia between October 6 and 12 , 1785 . The sculptor took a life mask of the general 's face ? Washington 's adopted granddaughter Nelly Custis , aged six at the time , later recalled her shock in seeing Washington lying on a table , as she thought dead , covered by a sheet and by the plaster for the mask . She was told that two quills extended into his nostrils , providing him with air . A bust at Mount Vernon today testifies to that visit . On his return to Paris , Houdon used his visage of General Washington in a number of sculptural settings , including the commissioned statue for the General Assembly , which still stands in marble in the Virginia State Capitol .

Portraits of Washington on medals and in other media subsequent to the sculptor 's visit were most often based on Houdon 's work , beginning with the 1786 " Washington Before Boston " medal engraved by Pierre Simon DuViviers . Although only one American , Abraham Lincoln , had appeared on a circulating US coin by the 1920s , the Houdon bust had been used as the basis of the portrait of Washington on the commemorative Lafayette dollar dated 1900 and on the Sesquicentennial half dollar of 1926 . According to coin dealer and numismatic historian Q. David Bowers , the Houdon bust , even then , was the most common representation of Washington on coins and medals . Little is known of Flanagan 's creative process , although models of Flanagan 's quarter with a different portrayal of Washington , facing right , and with a different eagle , have come on the market . Flanagan 's adaptation differs from the Houdon bust in some particulars : for example , the shape of the head is different , and there is a roll of hair on the quarter not found on the bust .

Art historian Cornelius Vermeule said of Flanagan 's quarter , " a die designer could do little wrong in having Houdon 's Neoclassic image as his prototype ... Still , it might be asked whether or not it was fair to force an ideal [ized] portrait of Washington made in 1785 on an artist working in 1932 . There is something cold and lifeless about the results . " Vermeule suggests that the quarter started a trend of similar portrait coins issued by the United States , notably the Jefferson nickel and Franklin half dollar . The historian preferred Laura Fraser 's version , and termed Flanagan 's reverse " a stiff bit of heraldry amid too large a wreath and too much or too large lettering " .

= = Production = =

= = = Silver strikings (1932 ? 1964) = = =

In early July 1932 , newspapers announced that the Washington quarter was being struck and would be issued at the end of the month , once there were sufficient pieces for a nationwide distribution . They stressed that the new quarter was not a commemorative .

The quarter was released into circulation on August 1 , 1932 . There was no great need for the coins in commerce ; despite that , it was announced that six million pieces would be struck in honor of the Washington bicentennial . The coins were generally well received , though the reverse prompted discussion as to whether a bald eagle was depicted , or some other sort of eagle . An eagle expert consulted by The New York Times concluded it was a bald eagle .

About 6 @. @ 2 million quarters were struck in 1932 , of which 5 @. @ 4 million were coined at the Philadelphia mint . Production runs of just over 400 @, @ 000 each occurred at the Denver and San Francisco mints ; these are still the low mintages of the series . The small mintage of the 1932 Denver piece meant that few were available to be hoarded by coin dealers , leading to present @- @ day scarcity in mint state or uncirculated condition ; the mint marks on the 1932 @- @ D and 1932 @- @ S have been counterfeited . No quarters were struck at any mint in 1933 , as there was an oversupply caused by the 1932 issue .

Unlike many earlier coins , the Washington quarter struck exceptionally well , bringing out its full details . This sharpness is possible because the designs of both sides were spread out , with no points of high relief . Nevertheless , the Mint repeatedly adjusted the design . In the first three years of striking (1932 , 1934 and 1935) , three different varieties of the obverse are known . They are generally called after the appearance of " IN GOD WE TRUST " , to the left of Washington 's head : the Light Motto , Medium Motto , and Heavy Motto . The Heavy Motto apparently proved most satisfactory to the Mint , as beginning in 1936 , only pieces bearing the Heavy Motto were struck . For unknown reasons , the original reverse hub was used only in 1932 ; a new hub was used when coining resumed in 1934 . The original style had a high rim around the reverse design , protecting it from wear so well that 1932 quarters in lower grade generally are about equally worn on either side . In later years , with a lowered rim , circulated silver pieces tend to be more worn on the reverse .

The fine @- @ tuning of the design continued through the end of silver production with pieces dated 1964 . During that time , the obverse was modified six times . One revision , in 1944 , left Flanagan 's initials , on the cutoff of the bust , distorted ; this was adjusted the following year . Beginning in 1937 , and continuing until the end of silver circulation production with pieces dated 1964 , a very slightly different reverse was used for proof coins , as opposed to circulation pieces . This is most evident in examining the letters " es " in " States " which almost touch on circulation strikes , and display a separation on proofs .

The piece was struck in numbers exceeding 100 million in some years through 1964 . The San Francisco Mint ceased striking coins after 1955 ; it struck no quarters that year or in 1949 .

= = = Clad composition with Flanagan reverse (1965 ? 1998) = = =

In 1964 , there was a severe shortage of coins . Silver prices were rising , and the public responded by hoarding not only the wildly @- @ popular new coin , the Kennedy half dollar , but the other denominations , including the non @- @ silver cent and nickel . Hopeful that issuing more 1964 @- @ dated coins would counter the speculation in them , the Treasury obtained Congressional authorization to continue striking 1964 @- @ dated coins into 1965 .

The Mint 's production of coins rapidly depleted the Treasury 's stock of silver . Prices for the metal were rising to such an extent that , by early June 1965 , a dollar in silver coin contained 93 @. @ 3 cents ' worth of it at market prices . On June 3 , 1965 , President Lyndon Johnson announced plans to eliminate silver from the dime and quarter in favor of a clad composition , with layers of copper @- @ nickel on each side of a layer of pure copper . The half dollar was changed from 90 % silver to 40 % . Congress passed the Coinage Act of 1965 in July , under which the Mint transitioned from striking 1964 @- @ dated silver quarters to striking 1965 @- @ dated clad quarters . Beginning on August 1 , 1966 , the Mint began to strike 1966 @- @ dated pieces , and thereafter it resumed the normal practice of striking the current year 's date on each piece .

The new clad quarters were struck without mint mark in 1965 ? 1967 , regardless of the mint of origin . Beginning in 1968 , mint marks were restored . The San Francisco Mint had reopened , but from 1968 , it struck quarters only for collectors , for the most part proof coins . The Mint adjusted both sides of the coin for the initiation of clad coinage , lowering the relief (the modified reverse design exists on some 1964 @- @ dated silver quarters) . The obverse was slightly changed in 1974 , with some details sharpened . Mint marks on post @- @ 1965 pieces are found on the lower right of the obverse , to the right of Washington 's neck .

In January 1973 , Representative Richard C. White introduced legislation for commemorative dollars and half dollars for the 1976 United States Bicentennial . On June 6 , Mint Director Mary

Brooks testified before a congressional committee , and responding to concerns that only the two least @-@ popular denominations would be changed , agreed to support the temporary redesign of the quarter as well . On October 18 , 1973 , President Richard Nixon signed legislation mandating a temporary redesign of the three denominations for all coins issued after July 4 , 1975 and struck before January 1 , 1977 . These pieces would bear the double date 1776 ? 1976 . In addition to circulation pieces , Congress mandated that 45 million Bicentennial coins be struck in 40 % silver . Fearful of creating low @-@ mintage pieces which might be hoarded as the cent recently had been , thus creating a shortage of quarters , in December 1974 the Mint obtained congressional approval to continue striking 1974 @-@ dated quarters , half dollars and dollars until Bicentennial coinage began . Accordingly , there are no 1975 @-@ dated quarters . Almost two billion Bicentennial quarters were struck , as the Mint sought to assure that there would be plenty of souvenirs of the anniversary . The Mint sold the silver sets , in both uncirculated and proof , for more than a decade before ending sales at the end of 1986 . Jack L. Ahr 's colonial drummer , which had appeared on the Bicentennial quarter , was replaced after 1976 by Flanagan 's original reverse .

Beginning in 1976 , and continuing over the following twenty years , Mint engravers modified the design a number of times . The Philadelphia Mint 's mint mark " P " was used beginning in 1980 . Coins dated 1982 and 1983 , both from Philadelphia and Denver , command a large premium over face value when found in near @-@ pristine condition . Beginning in 1992 , the Mint began selling silver proof sets , including a quarter struck in .900 silver ; this has continued to the present day . Although President George H.W. Bush signed authorizing legislation for these pieces in 1990 , coinage did not begin until 1992 due to difficulty in obtaining sufficient coinage blanks in .900 silver .

= = = Commemorative (1999 ? present) = = =

The Mint traces the origins of the 50 State Quarters program to a congressional hearing in June 1995 , at which Mint Director Philip N. Diehl , as well as prominent numismatists , urged Congress to pass legislation allowing a series of circulating commemorative coins similar to the quarters Canada had recently struck for its provinces . In response , Congress passed the United States Commemorative Coins Act of 1996 , which was signed by President Bill Clinton on October 20 , 1996 . The act directed the Mint to study whether a series of commemorative quarters would be successful . The Mint duly studied the matter , and reported favorably . Although the act had given Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin the authority to carry out the report by selecting new coin designs , Secretary Rubin preferred to await congressional action . The resulting 50 States Commemorative Coin Program Act was signed by President Clinton on December 1 , 1997 . Under the act , each of the fifty states would be honored with a new quarter , to be issued five a year beginning in 1999 , with the sequence of issuance determined by the order the states had entered the Union . The act allowed the Secretary to determine the position of the required legends , such as " IN GOD WE TRUST " on the coin : To accommodate a large design on the reverse , " UNITED STATES OF AMERICA " and " QUARTER DOLLAR " were moved to the obverse , and the bust of Washington shrunk slightly . A state 's design would be selected by the Treasury Secretary on the recommendation of the state 's governor .

As part of the series , the Mint sold collector 's versions in proof , including pieces struck in .900 silver . The Mint also sold a large number of numismatic items , including rolls and bags of coins , collector 's maps , and other items designed to encourage coin collecting among the general public . The Mint estimated that the government profited by \$ 3 billion through seignorage on coins saved by the public and through other revenues , over what it would otherwise have earned .

Legislation to extend the program to the District of Columbia and the territories had been four times passed by the House of Representatives , but the Senate had failed to consider it each time . Provisions authorizing such a program were inserted into an urgent appropriations bill , and passed in December 2007 . The resultant 2009 District of Columbia and U.S. Territories Quarters Program maintained the Washington obverse but on the reverse displayed designs in honor of the District of Columbia , Puerto Rico , Guam , American Samoa , Virgin Islands , and the Northern Mariana Islands , all minted in 2009 .

In 2008 , Congress passed the America 's Beautiful National Parks Quarter Dollar Coin Act . This legislation called for 56 coins , one for each state or other jurisdiction , to be issued five per year beginning in 2010 and concluding in 2021 . Each coin features a National Park Service site , one to a jurisdiction . Flanagan 's head of Washington was restored to bring out detail . In addition to the circulating pieces and collector 's versions , bullion pieces with 5 troy ounces (155 g) of silver are being struck with the quarter 's design .

In February 2012 , President Barack Obama included in his 2013 budget a provision , inserted at the behest of Mint officials , which if enacted would mandate that the silver dimes , quarters , and half dollars produced for collectors be a minimum of .900 silver , rather than requiring that exact fineness . If the provision becomes law , the Mint intends to strike the collector 's coins from .999 silver . Alloy which is .900 fine is now being used by the Mint only for these pieces ; .999 silver , which is also used for bullion pieces , would be cheaper for the Mint to produce . Customers would pay an additional charge to reflect the extra silver content . In May of that year , the Mint announced plans to strike the first circulation @-@ quality quarters at the San Francisco Mint since 1954 , to be sold only at a premium in bags and rolls . All five 2012 designs were struck , the first circulation @-@ quality coins struck at San Francisco since 1983 (when Lincoln cents were struck without mint mark) , and the first with the S mint mark since the Anthony dollar in 1981 (struck for mint sets only) .

== = Number minted == =