

= Lincoln cent =

The Lincoln cent (or sometimes called Lincoln penny) is a one @-@ cent coin that has been struck by the United States Mint since 1909 . The obverse or heads side was designed by Victor David Brenner , as was the original reverse . The coin has seen several reverse , or tails , designs and now bears one by Lyndall Bass depicting a Union shield . All coins struck by the United States government with a value of 1 / 100 of a dollar are called cents because the United States has always minted coins using decimals . The penny nickname is a carryover from the coins struck in England which went to decimals for coins in 1971 .

In 1905 , sculptor Augustus Saint @-@ Gaudens was hired by the Mint to redesign the cent and the four gold coins , which did not require congressional approval . Two of Saint @-@ Gaudens 's proposed designs for the cent were eventually adapted for the gold pieces , but Saint @-@ Gaudens died in August 1907 before submitting additional designs for the cent . In January 1909 , the Mint engaged Brenner to design a cent depicting the late president , Abraham Lincoln , 1909 being the centennial year of his birth . Brenner 's design was eventually approved , and the new coins were issued to great public interest on August 2 , 1909 .

Brenner 's initials (VDB) , on the reverse at its base , were deemed too prominent once the coins were issued , and were removed within days of the release . The initials were restored , this time smaller , on Lincoln 's shoulder , in 1918 . Brenner 's reverse was replaced in 1959 by a depiction of the Lincoln Memorial designed by Frank Gasparro , for the sesquicentennial of his birth year . The Lincoln Memorial reverse was itself replaced in 2009 by commemorative designs marking the bicentennial of Lincoln 's birth . Beginning in 2010 , Bass 's shield design was coined . Originally struck in 95 % copper , the cent coin was changed for one year to steel in 1943 as copper was needed to aid in the war effort . The mint then reverted to 95 % copper until 1982 , when inflation made copper too expensive and the composition was changed to zinc with an outer copper layer .

= = Inception = =

In 1904 , President Theodore Roosevelt wrote to his Secretary of the Treasury , Leslie Mortier Shaw , complaining that U.S. coinage lacked artistic merit , and enquiring if it would be possible to engage a private artist , such as sculptor Augustus Saint @-@ Gaudens , to prepare new coin designs . At Roosevelt 's instructions , the Mint hired Saint @-@ Gaudens to redesign the cent and the four gold pieces : the double eagle (\$ 20) , eagle (\$ 10) , half eagle (\$ 5) , and quarter eagle (\$ 2 @.@ 50) . As the designs of those pieces had remained the same for 25 years , they could be changed without an act of Congress . The Indian Head cent , which the Lincoln cent replaced , had been introduced in 1859 .

Saint @-@ Gaudens originally conceived a flying eagle design for the cent , but at Roosevelt 's request , developed it for the double eagle after learning that by law , an eagle could not appear on the cent . Writer and friend Witter Bynner recalled that in January 1907 , Saint @-@ Gaudens was seriously ill with cancer , and was carried to his studio for ten minutes a day to critique the work of his assistants on current projects , including the cent . Saint @-@ Gaudens sent Roosevelt a design in February for the obverse of the cent showing a figure of Liberty . Roosevelt suggested the addition of a Native American war bonnet , stating , " I don 't see why we should not have a conventional head @-@ dress of purely American type for the Liberty figure . " In May 1907 , Roosevelt instructed that the Indian design be developed for the eagle instead . Saint @-@ Gaudens was by then in declining health ; he died on August 3 , 1907 , without having submitted another design for the cent .

With the redesign of the four gold denominations completed by 1908 , Roosevelt turned his attention to the cent . The centennial of the birth of assassinated president Abraham Lincoln would occur in February 1909 , and large numbers of privately manufactured souvenirs were already being issued . Many citizens had written to the Treasury Department , proposing a Lincoln coin , and Roosevelt was interested in honoring his fellow Republican . This was a break with previous American numismatic tradition ; before the Lincoln cent , no regularly circulating U.S. coin had

featured an actual person (as opposed to idealized personifications , as of " liberty ") . Many writers had suggested a Lincoln half dollar , but that coin 's design had been changed in 1892 and could not yet be altered without congressional approval . By then a lame duck in office , Roosevelt was reluctant to involve Congress .

In late 1908 , Roosevelt sat for sculptor Victor David Brenner , who was designing a medal for the Panama Canal Commission . While the contents of their conversations were never recorded , it appears they discussed Roosevelt 's plans for coinage redesign . Roosevelt had admired a 1907 plaque of Lincoln which the artist had produced . It is uncertain how Brenner was selected to design the cent , but in January 1909 , Mint Director Frank A. Leach contacted Brenner to ask his fee for designing the coin . Brenner mentioned in his correspondence with Leach that the President had liked his Lincoln design ; there is no evidence Brenner considered any other concept for the piece .

= = Design = =

Brenner 's obverse design closely follows a profile of Lincoln he had used in other work , such as the desk plaque he made for the Gorham Manufacturing Company in 1907 . Numismatic historian Roger Burdette suggests that Brenner based his work on an 1864 photograph of Lincoln taken at Mathew Brady 's studio by one of his assistants . However , Burdette adds that in an April 1 , 1909 letter , Brenner mentioned that in producing the design , he envisioned Lincoln reading to a child , when the sculptor felt Lincoln would be at his brightest . This suggests that Brenner may have drawn inspiration from the well @-@ known Brady photograph of Lincoln with his son , Tad . In a 2012 study published in Coin World , numismatic historian Fred Reed suggests that Brenner 's Lincoln work was based on a Brady portrait of Lincoln in right profile which was taken on the same day as the picture with his son (there were several photos taken at this sitting) . As the photograph in question only showed Lincoln 's head and shoulders , Reed indicates that Brenner obtained additional detail from an 1860 campaign photograph of a beardless Lincoln .

On January 18 , 1909 , Brenner submitted models to the Mint with a Lincoln profile on the obverse , and a reverse design very similar to that on the then @-@ current French silver coins , showing a tree branch . He also proposed designs for a Lincoln half dollar , with the late president to appear on one side , and a standing Liberty design ? almost identical to the obverse of the same French coins . Leach replied on February 2 that no change to the half dollar could be made without congressional approval . By February 9 , Leach had discovered the origin of the branch design ? although numismatic historian Don Taxay notes that it is odd Leach had not discovered the source of the standing Liberty design , given that they were on opposite sides of the same French coins . Leach did not confront the sculptor with the artistic borrowing , but instead simply ruled out the submitted designs as unsuitable for the reverse of the cent . He urged the sculptor to prepare a simple design , bearing the denomination , the country 's name , and the motto " E pluribus unum " . Brenner worked quickly , and on February 17 , delivered models for both obverse and reverse similar to the eventual coin , though with a somewhat larger bust of Lincoln , and the motto " In God We Trust " omitted . As a design element on the reverse , Brenner used two ears of durum wheat . The designs were shown to President Roosevelt , who approved them although Roosevelt required " UNITED " , which Brenner had spelled " VNITED " , to be spelled in the conventional way . After Leach examined the models , he objected to the fact that Brenner had put his full surname on the obverse . Brenner wrote in return , " I shall take it out and put it in small letters on the reverse . "

On March 4 , 1909 , the day on which Roosevelt left office , replaced by William Howard Taft , Brenner met with Mint Engraver Charles E. Barber in Philadelphia . Barber had written to Leach , suggesting that Brenner 's designs would have to be modified to be suitable for coinage . On March 15 , Brenner wrote to Leach stating that Barber seemed in no hurry to have the new coins produced . Brenner also complained that the Mint was losing detail as it reduced the large models to coin @-@ sized hubs . Barber had been stung by criticism that he had lost detail in this way with the new gold coins , and he raised no objection to having the reductions done by an outside silversmith . After several hubs were prepared by the Medallic Art Company of New York , Barber sank a master die and sent it to Brenner for retouching .

Patterns were prepared from the dies , but Barber and Leach were unhappy with the pieces . On May 22 , Leach wrote to Brenner ,

I have to inform you that I was not satisfied with the first proof of the Lincoln cent . I found that you had not dropped the Lincoln portrait down so that the head would come nearer the center of the coin ... Therefore I had Mr. Barber make me a proof of this change , and as this left so much blank space over the top we concluded that it would be better to put on the motto , " In God We Trust " . This change has made a marked improvement in the appearance of the coin .

On May 26 , samples of the new coin with and without the motto were shown to President Taft , who selected the mottoed version . The coin was formally approved by Secretary of the Treasury Franklin MacVeagh on July 14 and a release date of August 2 , 1909 , was set .

= = Release = =

The Philadelphia Mint struck 20 @,@ 000 @,@ 000 of the new coin even before its design was made official by Secretary MacVeagh . Dies for the San Francisco Mint , prepared at Philadelphia , were ready for shipment to San Francisco on June 22 .

There was intense public interest in the new cents , especially since the Mint had not permitted images of the new coin to be printed in the newspapers . The Lincoln craze sparked by the centennial had not yet subsided , and there was widespread speculation about the coin 's design . The Mint decided to plan for a simultaneous release of the coin across the United States on August 2 , and Treasury Department branches were sent what were thought to be adequate supplies .

On the morning of August 2 , 1909 , long lines formed outside Treasury facilities across the United States . Some early applicants were able to obtain all the coins they wanted , but soon the pieces were rationed : applicants at the New York Sub @-@ Treasury were allowed 100 pieces per person ; those who sought the coins at the Philadelphia Mint were allowed only two each . Coins passed on the secondary market outside the Philadelphia Mint for a quarter each until prices settled down to five cents per new penny . Many newsboys were among those who profited from the new coins ; crowds gathered around the windows where the coins were for sale in Washington until order was restored .

Brenner 's initials , which he had placed at the base of the reverse , immediately became a source of controversy ? on the afternoon of August 2 , The Washington Star queried the Treasury as to the initials . Quotes appeared in the papers from (possibly invented) unnamed Treasury officials , opining that the coins were illegal because of the initials , which were seen as advertising . On August 5 , Secretary MacVeagh ordered coinage of the cent suspended until the coins could be struck with an inconspicuous " B " for Brenner on the coin . However , removing the initials and striking new pieces with no initials would lead to a three @-@ day delay in coinage ; effacing the initials and inserting an initial " B " would cause a 14 @-@ day delay . Assistant Treasury Secretary Eliot Norton , after meeting with Barber , ordered that the coins be struck with no initial . Treasury Department Solicitor Maurice O 'Connell held that the exclusion of the initials did not constitute a design change which could only have been implemented by waiting 25 years or obtaining congressional approval . Barber also opposed retaining a single initial " B " , fearing that as he had used an identical initial on his Barber coinage , the new coin would be deemed to be his work , and , according to Norton , " He is not willing to be held personally responsible for the Lincoln penny which he has always opposed and does not regard as a successful coin . "

Brenner objected to the removal of his initials , but his protests were to no avail . The cents without Brenner 's initials were in production by August 12 , 1909 . During the halt , owners of vending and slot machines complained that the new pennies were too thick to fit in their machines . Barber was recalled from his vacation in Cape May , New Jersey , to deal with the complaints . Leach ordered changes in the new cent , but Barber resisted Leach 's orders , and was in the end successful ? vending and slot machine manufacturers modified their machines to suit the new cent , rather than the other way around . By the end of 1909 , supply of the new cents was finally up to demand .

Burdette suggests that had MacVeagh been more experienced in his job , he would have been less concerned about the initials . Saint @-@ Gaudens had prominently signed his double eagle on the

obverse , and George T. Morgan 's design for the silver dollar contained an " M " marked on both sides of the piece .

= = Production = =

= = = Wheat cent (1909 ? 1958) = = =

Cents with and without Brenner 's initials were struck at both Philadelphia and San Francisco in 1909 . Coins struck at Philadelphia bear no mintmark ; those struck at San Francisco were marked with an S. The 1909 @-@ S with Brenner 's initials (commonly called the 1909 @-@ S VDB) is the rarest Lincoln cent by date and mintmark , with only 484 @,@ 000 released for circulation . In 1911 , the Denver Mint began striking cents with the mintmark D , and in most years in the following decades , all three mints struck cents . In 1916 , Barber modified the design , causing Lincoln 's cheek and coat to appear less wrinkled . This modification was done to extend die life .

In 1917 , a year which saw Barber 's death in office at age 77 , the wartime economy caused a shortage of cents . At this time , the Lincoln cent had not yet become dominant in circulation ; four @-@ fifths of the cents in circulation were of the older Indian Head design . Demand for the cent continued to increase when a luxury tax was instituted , and cents were needed to make change . In 1918 , Brenner 's initials were restored to the coin , appearing where Lincoln 's shoulder is cut off by the rim of the coin .

The recession year of 1922 saw a lower @-@ than @-@ usual demand for coins in commerce , and few cents were coined . At the time , dies were only made at Philadelphia ; the Denver Mint had outstanding orders for cents that year . When Denver applied to the Philadelphia Mint for more dies (cents were not struck at either Philadelphia or San Francisco that year) , it was told that the Philadelphia Mint could supply no more cent dies , as it was fully engaged in preparing dies for the Peace dollar . Denver filled its orders by striking with a worn @-@ out obverse die , which impressed the design fainter than usual . On many strikes , the mintmark on the die filled with oil and dirt , producing coins on which the mintmark does not appear , or appears only faintly . The 1922 plain piece is another relatively rare one in the Lincoln cent series .

When the 25 @-@ year period during which the Lincoln cent could not be changed without congressional approval expired , there was no interest in replacing the design as the coin had remained popular . Beginning in 1936 , proof coins were struck for collectors for the first time since 1916 . Made only at Philadelphia , these pieces were coined from dies polished to mirror smoothness .

With the US entry into World War II in 1941 , copper and tin , which were both used in the cent , were in short supply . Experiments were carried out by several corporations under contract from the Mint ; they tested various metallic and non @-@ metallic substances , including fiber , tempered glass , and several types of plastic . These experiments used various designs , since actual Lincoln cent dies could not leave government custody . As the experiments proceeded , production of bronze cents was cut back drastically in July 1942 , and ceased in December . On December 18 , 1942 , Congress gave the mint authorization to change the composition of the cent for a three @-@ year period , and five days later , Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau announced that the coin would be made out of zinc @-@ coated steel . Zinc and iron form an electromagnetic " couple " ; the two metals soon corrode when in contact with each other in a damp atmosphere . The public soon complained that the new coins were becoming spotted and stained . Another common complaint was confusion with the dime , and some letters suggested that a hole be punched in the center of the new coins . Morgenthau responded that the new pieces would soon become darker , and that the Mint would be willing to darken them if it could figure out a suitable process .

In December 1943 , the Treasury Department announced that the steel cent would be discontinued after 1943 , to be replaced with coins containing 95 % copper and 5 % zinc (pre @-@ 1943 cents contained the same percentage of copper but might also contain tin in place of some of the zinc) . The Treasury also stated that some of the metal for the new coins would be obtained by melting

down small arms ammunition shells . However , numismatic writer Shane Anderson , in his study of the Lincoln cent , doubts that any shells were melted down , except perhaps ceremonially . After the war , the Treasury quietly retired as many steel cents as it could from circulation , while denying it was doing so ? no public admission of the program was made until 1959 , as the Treasury feared that were it publicly known , the coins would be hoarded . A few 1943 bronze cents and 1944 steel cents are known to exist , and are valuable . Only one 1943 @-@ D cent in bronze is known ; it sold in September 2010 for \$ 1 @. @ 7 million . One of the four known 1943 @-@ S cents in bronze was sold to Texas Rangers baseball team co @-@ chairman Bob R. Simpson for \$ 1 million . There are also many cents dated 1943 that were coated with copper to imitate the genuine rarity . These pieces may be distinguished from genuine off @-@ metal strikes by the use of a magnet . The planchets from which the 1943 and 1944 off @-@ metal strikes were coined were most likely concealed in the coining equipment and were struck when coinage resumed after year end . The cent returned to its prewar composition in 1946 .

In 1952 , the Mint considered replacing the Lincoln cent with a new design by Mint Chief Engraver Gilroy Roberts , but Mint officials feared that the incoming Eisenhower administration would be hostile to replacing a Republican on the cent . Several thousand 1955 pieces were struck with a doubled die , and display doubling of the date . The Mint was aware of the pieces , and knew they were somewhere within a large production lot , but opted to release them , rather than destroy the entire lot . The variety did not become widely known until several years later .

= = = Lincoln Memorial design (1959 ? 2008) = = =

On Sunday morning , December 21 , 1958 , President Eisenhower 's press secretary , James Hagerty , issued a press release announcing that a new reverse design for the cent would begin production on January 2 , 1959 . The new design , by Frank Gasparro , had been developed by the Treasury in consultation with the Lincoln Sesquicentennial Commission . Approved by the President and by Secretary of the Treasury Robert B. Anderson , the new design featured the Lincoln Memorial in Washington , D.C. The redesign came as a complete surprise , as word of the proposal had not been leaked . The coin was officially released on February 12 , 1959 , the 150th anniversary of Lincoln 's birth , although some pieces entered circulation early .

The selected design was the result of an internal competition among the Mint 's engravers . Gasparro did not go in person to see the Lincoln Memorial , a place he had never visited . According to Anderson , Gasparro created an " impressive " image of the Memorial , however , Taxay states that the design " looks at first glance like a trolley car " . Numismatic historian Walter Breen describes Gasparro 's design as " an artistic disaster " .

There was considerable public excitement over the " small date " and " large date " 1960 and 1960 @-@ D cents , with the small dates being the rarer . The Mint feared the interior of the zero as punched into the die would break away during the coining process , giving the zero a filled @-@ in appearance . To reduce the chance of this happening , the Mint enlarged the date . Sealed bags of 1960 cents , with a face value of \$ 50 , sold for as much as \$ 12 @, @ 000 . Prices for the small date coins , of which approximately two million had been struck at Philadelphia , continued to increase until 1964 , when the bubble burst . Approximately 500 million of the Denver small date (out of a total mintage of 1 @. @ 5 billion) were struck , and are not particularly rare . Bowers points out that there are enough of the 1960 Philadelphia small date known to supply every member of the American Numismatic Association , and every subscriber to the major coin periodicals .

In 1964 , a rise in the price of silver led to silver coins being hoarded by the public . With change short , hoarding extended to the cent , which also became scarce in circulation . Mint Director Eva Adams felt that part of the reason for the shortage was coin collectors taking pieces from circulation , and Adams ordered that mintmarks no longer appear on coins . Coins continued to be dated 1964 until the end of 1965 , using authority given by the Coinage Act of 1965 , and almost all 1965 cents were actually struck in 1966 . The Mint began striking clad dimes and quarters , replacing the silver pieces which the public would not spend . Although coinage had been stopped at San Francisco after 1955 , the California facility began to issue cents again , though without mintmarks . In 1968 ,

mintmarks were restored to the cent . San Francisco began minting a limited number of circulation strikes (which it would cease to do after 1974) and began striking proof coins .

Copper prices began to rise in 1973 , to such an extent that the intrinsic value of the coin approached a cent , and citizens began to hoard cents , hoping to realize a profit . The Mint decided to switch to an aluminum cent . Over a million and a half such pieces were struck in the second half of 1973 , though they were dated 1974 . At congressional hearings , representatives of the vending machine industry testified that aluminum cents would jam their equipment , and the Mint backed away from its proposal . Mint director Mary Brooks sought the return of samples which had been distributed to members of Congress , but 14 remained missing , with the recipients affecting not to know what had become of them . One aluminum cent was donated to the Smithsonian Institution for the National Numismatic Collection ; another was reportedly found by a US Capitol Police Officer .

In 1981 , faced with another rise in the price of copper , the Mint decided to change the composition of the cent to copper @-@ covered zinc . After contract difficulties and production delays , the first such cents were struck at the West Point Mint (without mintmark) on January 7 , 1982 . Denver did not convert to the new composition until October 21 . A few pennies were struck by error in brass dated 1983 and are extremely rare . A number of small changes were made to the obverse design in the 1990s and early 2000s .

= = = Lincoln Bicentennial cents (2009) = = =

The Presidential \$ 1 Coin Act of 2005 required that the cent 's reverse be redesigned for 2009 , and that four different designs for the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial be issued . The coins were to be emblematic of Lincoln 's early life in Kentucky and in Indiana , of his professional life in Illinois , and of his presidency . Unveiled September 22 , 2008 , at a ceremony held at the Lincoln Memorial , these designs were :

Birth and early childhood in Kentucky : this design features a log cabin . It was designed by Richard Masters and sculpted by Jim Licaretz . This penny was released into circulation on Lincoln 's 200th birthday , February 12 , 2009 , at a special ceremony at LaRue County High School in Hodgenville , Kentucky , Lincoln 's birthplace .

Formative years in Indiana : this design features a young Lincoln reading while taking a break from rail splitting . It was designed and sculpted by Charles Vickers , and released on May 14 , 2009 .

Professional life in Illinois : this design features Lincoln as a young lawyer , standing before the Springfield Illinois State Capitol . It was designed by Joel Iskowitz and sculpted by Don Everhart . It was made available on August 13 , 2009 .

Presidency in Washington , D.C. : this design features the half completed Capitol dome . It was designed by Susan Gamble and sculpted by Joseph Menna . This fourth cent was released to the public on November 12 , 2009 .

The law also required that collector 's sets , in the same alloy used in 1909 , be sold to the public .

= = = Union shield reverse ' Shield cent ' (introduced 2010) = = =

The Presidential \$ 1 Coin Act required that the cent , beginning in 2010 , " shall bear an image emblematic of President Lincoln 's preservation of the United States of America as a single and united country " . On April 16 , 2009 , the Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) met and recommended a design that showed 13 wheat sheaves bound together with a ring symbolizing American unity as one nation . Subsequently , this design was withdrawn because it was similar to coins issued in Germany in the 1920s . The Citizens Coinage Advisory Committee (CCAC) also met and recommended a design showing a Union shield with ONE CENT superimposed in a scroll ; E pluribus unum was also depicted in the upper portion of the shield .

In June 2009 the CFA met again and this time selected a design featuring a modern rendition of the American flag . As a part of the release ceremony for the last of the 2009 cents on November 12 , 2009 , the design for the 2010 cent was announced . The design chosen was the Union shield , that was selected by the CCAC . According to the Mint , the 13 stripes on the shield " represent the

states joined in one compact union to support the Federal government , represented by the horizontal bar above . " The new reverse was designed by artist Lyndall Bass and sculpted by US Mint sculptor @-@ engraver Joseph Menna . In January 2010 , the coins were released early in Puerto Rico ; this was prompted by a shortage of cents on the island . The Mint re @-@ engraved the obverse , returning to the original 1909 galvano in preparing new dies . However , the Mint did not return to striking the pieces in the higher relief of 1909 ? the piece has long been struck in a much lower relief than the original pieces . Coins of the new design were officially released at a ceremony at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield , Illinois , on February 11 , 2010 .