

Collecting Native American Themed US Coins

by Thomas Coulson



1855 Gold \$1

The American Indian has been a subject represented on US coinage since the 1850's. The first "Indian" designs created at the US Mint were not actual Indians at all; but rather personifications of Liberty dressed in Indian regalia. These early designs were not intended to pay homage to the American Indian. The intent at the time seems to have been to represent the uniqueness of the American experiment in governance.

Throughout the nineteenth century the United States and Immigrant settlers were still very much at odds with Native American Groups as Manifest Destiny brought a steady inflow of mostly European settlers further westward. These settlers along with US military presence skirmished and warred with the Indian tribes they encountered during the expansion of the United States. The numbers of settlers and their desire for land eventually lead to the forced removal of most Native American groups from their traditional homelands. In light of this relationship, it is apt that the contemporary renditions of Indians on US coins would be somewhat exploitative in nature; taking versions of Indian headdresses and using them in a way no Indian would approve.

As the nineteenth century closed, the Western United States had been largely settled and most American Indians had been displaced. As the Native American, the Bison and all other aspects of the 'untamed frontier' disappeared, a curious nostalgia developed for the bygone times and things. As part of this movement, Native Americans once again appeared on new US coin designs. This time, some of the designs were more true to Native American features; rather than just representations of a European face of Liberty in a headdress.

Though these Indian depictions were more accurate in representation of Indian features, they can still be considered by many in Indian communities to be offensive or disrespectful. The popularity of the "Orientalism" movement of the early 20th century characterized American Indians and Eastern peoples as "Noble Savages". While a perfect representation of freedom and liberty, this line of thought also regarded such people as inherently inferior to Europeans. The coins designed during this period romanticized Indians in a way that was potentially patronizing.

Within a few decades, there began to be some recognition that Native Americans contributed greatly to the richness of the American experience at a great cost to their Tribal cultures. While wholesale exploitation of American Indians continued during these times, more efforts were also made to make life more equitable for them within the framework of the United States. The first major sign of this was the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924, which made all US Indians official citizens of the United States. During this time, there were several new US commemorative coins issued with Native Americans depicted on them. Some of these presented specific Native Americans that had important roles in historic events. Some were more generic Indian designs. These did not necessarily seem to have the same meaning as earlier designs; as they were also showing the American Indian's importance to historic events in some instances.

The abuses of the US commemorative coin program in the mid-1930's led to a major reduction of commemorative coin types. There were few opportunities for new coin designs after this and American Indian seemed to fall out of favor as a coin subject. The next new US coin design with a Native American was issued in the year 2000; after a six decade hiatus.

The new era of Native American coin designs has focused much more on historic Native Americans and their contributions to the United States. Many recent designs have been created with partnerships between the US Mint and Native American organizations. These designs focus much more on inclusion and cultural sensitivity than any of the earlier issues.

How to Collect Native Americans and Subjects on Coins – Three Different Ways

1. The Basic Collection

The collection of Native American US coin designs can be split into three groupings.

The first group is the earliest coins which depict personifications of Liberty with European features wearing Indian headdresses. These were struck from 1854 to 1939.

The second grouping presented Native Americans with correct physical features and clothing. These were issued between 1907 and 1938. The \$10.00 gold Indian is part of this group though its design is more like the first grouping.

The third grouping is the modern issue coins commencing in the year 2000. These designs promote cultural awareness and many were designed in partnership with Native American groups. These designs show people and Native American symbols that highlight important contributions by these people and groups and step beyond by educating all citizens about the richness of Native American heritage.

What follows is a list of US Coins in chronological order (and a few other items) that depict Native Americans or have Indian themed representations. While not an exhaustive list, this will be a good launching point for anyone wishing to form a collection of Indian related US Coinage. I have written a brief synopsis of each coin and rated its artistic merit and cultural sensitivity.

First Group:

- **\$3.00 “Indian Princess” Gold (1854-1889)** - The \$3.00 Indian Princess was created as part of Mint Director Snowden’s coinage redesign commencing in 1853. The design depicts Lady Liberty (as modelled from the Venus Accroupie profile (Breen P.504)) wearing a stylized Indian headdress. It is difficult to understand the rationale for using an Indian motif at a time when the United States and its white citizens were frequently at war with many groups of Native Americans. Indians, as a group of peoples that were distinctive to the Americas, perhaps presented a way to distinguish the United States from other emerging republics. An example of this might be the short lived coinage of the Second French Republic issued from the Revolution of 1848 until Napoleon III regained control of France in 1852.



1854 Gold \$3

The Indian Princess design is decent, but a bit plain. The face is no departure from the previous Longacre designs. The headdress actually does add an attractive feature that is not present on the earlier “Coronet” design on earlier US Gold coins.

From a cultural viewpoint, it is a nightmare. The headdress is not an authentic Native one; rather a “European” rendition of what a headdress should look like. As noted before, the facial features are female and clearly not Indian. As a final indignity, the Headdress is emblazoned with the word “Liberty” at the headband. This is a curious juxtaposition given the US Government’s considerable restraints on the “Liberty” of American Indian groups.

- **\$1.00 Type II “Indian Princess” Gold (1854-1856)** - The Type II One Dollar Gold is the identical design to the \$3.00 Indian Princess on a smaller flan. There proved to be several striking issues in the smaller format. As a result, the coin design was improved in 1856. The comments regarding the \$3.00 Indian Princess apply to this coin as well.

- **\$1.00 Type III “Indian Princess” Gold Dollar (1856-1889)** - It was clear early on that there was a problem with weakness of strike on the Type II Gold Dollar such that the denomination and date were often faint when freshly minted and readability was exacerbated due to wear. James Longacre was tasked with modifying the design such that the date and Princess would be better struck. This was achieved by lowering the relief and thickening the bust slightly. This largely achieved the desired effect; though the low relief made the design a bit less aesthetically pleasing. From a cultural standpoint, nothing changed from the previous designs. Miss Liberty did not appear to be any more “Indian -like”, nor did the headdress look any more like an authentic Indian one. Longacre had no foresight of cultural relevance and a truly Native American design would not likely been accepted by the public at this time.



1856 Gold \$1

- **Indian Cent (1859-1909)** - The Indian Cent, also designed by James Longacre, seems to be a continuation of the concept of using Indian related design initiated by his earlier gold designs. While the features of Miss Liberty are clearly European again, the headdress more closely resembles a version of a Plains Indian War Bonnet. It looks to have eagle feathers at top with a diamond embroidered band extending over miss Liberty’s hair.



1859 Indian Cent

The design of the Indian Cent is attractive, though not outstanding. It was likely chosen to replace the Flying Eagle Cent (which is more attractive in my opinion) by Mint Director Snowden just as much for technical aspects such as low relief and ease of striking than it was for any artistic merits. Even so, striking issues continued to plague Indian Cents throughout their production run. Most notable weakness in the reverse center around the denomination “One Cent” and also at the tips and high points of the headdress. Despite this, the Indian Cent is one of the most popularly collected US coin series. This is undoubtedly due to the fact that the coins are relatively common and affordable. They were also popular among earlier collectors as a familiar reminder of the coins that circulated during their youth.

Culturally speaking, the Indian Cent was probably more dubious and confusing than its gold predecessors. The headdress is more “Indian-Like” and might be more along the lines of what is considered “Cultural Appropriation” today; though this concept was unrecognized in the 19th Century. The casual use of an Indian Headdress outside its normal context could certainly be considered offensive by some Native Americans. Once again, the headband shows the legend “Liberty” across it; which is a cruel contradiction of the way white settlers and the US Government treated American Indians at the time. The Indian Cent

would also be far more visible to the US populace than the preceding gold coins that most public citizens only rarely (or never) handled. It is strange that the Indian Cent gained such widespread acceptance at a time when the West was actively being settled and skirmishes between the US, settlers and Indian Tribes were commonplace.

Second Group:

- **\$10.00 Indian Eagle Gold (1907-1933)** - Nearly half a century would pass before a new Indian design appeared on a US coin. The next would be Augustus St. Gaudens Eagle design. This depicted miss Liberty again in a stylized war bonnet. St. Gaudens' original design showed miss Liberty with a laureate wreath. It was at the suggestion of president Roosevelt that the concept be re-worked to depict Liberty with the headdress in keeping with the theme of something uniquely "American".



1926 Gold \$10 Indian

This design is attractive; certainly an improvement over the Coronet design that endured for 70 years. It has the modern look indicative of the great coinage re-design commencing from 1907. I do not believe it to be St. Gaudens greatest numismatic work, however. This is due, in part, to the fact that Charles Barber had to redesign the coin to make it practical for circulation. On the final product, Miss Liberty looks a bit lifeless.

The Indian design is once again a coin that no Native American would recognize as being authentic to their lifestyle. It is another example of a white artist taking license with an item not meant to be portrayed in such a disrespectful manner.

- **\$2.50 Indian Quarter Eagle Gold (1908-1929)** - The \$2.50 Gold Indian was a result of President Theodore Roosevelt's great desire for more artistic coin designs. The Double Eagle and Eagle of Saint Gaudens both debuted in 1907 very successfully. These designs were deemed to impractical for a smaller module coin such as the quarter eagle. It was the idea of Dr. William Sturgis Bigelow – a personal friend of president Roosevelt to have an entirely different (and unique) incused design for the quarter eagle. To this end he commissioned artist (and understudy of Augustus St. Gaudens) Bela Lyon Pratt to create designs. Pratt chose to design an authentic looking male Indian bust not identifiable as an individual or belonging to a specific tribe. The Indian appears to be wearing a Plains style war bonnet.

This design is an artistic triumph. Though Pratt was somewhat disappointed with the final version of his work; I believe most would agree that it is a beautiful design. President Roosevelt was said to be very pleased with the result as well. It is, along with the identically designed half eagle, the only US coin with an incused design. It is also the first regular issue US coin depicting a person that is not traditional female representation of Liberty. A free American Indian is a suitable if not preferable substitute for the idea of Liberty.



1908 Gold \$2.5 Indian

From a cultural viewpoint, this is the first US coin design that represents a true American Indian. In creating this design, Pratt improved markedly upon previous designs which bore no true relationship to actual Indians. His design may have been influenced by the Orientalism movement of the time which romanticized Eastern and Native American culture and art. Pratt may have also been influenced by the nostalgia of bygone days. By the time of this design in 1908, the Western United States had largely been settled and the major Indian-Army skirmishes were well past.

It is important to consider that while Pratt's design is one of an authentic American Indian; it could still be considered stereotypical or appropriative or both. It does not depict a particular person or a specific tribal costume but rather a composite of Indian -like attributes. While a vast improvement on previous designs, it still could be considered offensive to some Native Americans.

- **\$5.00 Indian Half Eagle Gold (1908-1929)** - The \$5.00 Indian Gold coin was of identical design to the quarter eagle mentioned above. The same comments mentioned above apply to this coin.
- **Buffalo Nickel (1913-1938)** - The Buffalo Nickel was part of the great US coin redesign that began in 1907. It replaced the Liberty Nickel, which may boast the unofficial distinction of the United States' least popular coin design. The new nickel has an Indian that is supposed to be a composite of three different people. They are Chiefs Iron Tail, Two Moons, and John Big Tree. This gives a real look to the subject without violating the law that no living person should be portrayed on a US coin. Like the quarter and half eagle of 1908, the Indian portrait is a departure from the traditional allegorical figures of Liberty. Many would agree though that the American Indian is a true symbol of Liberty.



1913 Buffalo Nickel

The Buffalo Nickel is consistently considered one of the most popular US coin designs. Both the obverse and reverse are beautiful, especially on the type I coins of 1913. Unfortunately, the design did not work very well in circulation or production. The dates wore off the coins rather quickly and many coins were poorly struck – especially in the 1920's. Part of this problem was poor quality control at the Denver and San Francisco mints; but it was also partly owing to the design of the coin. The coins popularity led to two reprints of the issue in a silver dollar form (2001) and the gold coin series commencing in 2006. The design has been copied by many private companies producing silver rounds recently to great success.

The cultural relevance of the Buffalo Nickel is much the same as the preceding Quarter and Half Eagles. The coin can paradoxically viewed as both an homage to the American Indian and also an affront to his existence. The tribute comes in portraying persons that represents the rich heritage that Native American culture has contributed to our nation. It could also be viewed as a rebuff to groups of people that were consistently exploited for centuries, pushed from their homelands, and weren't even considered US citizens until the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924 – 11 years after the debut of the Buffalo nickel!

- **Missouri and Missouri 2x2 Commemorative Half Dollars (1921)** - These non-circulating coins were issued to commemorate the centennial of Missouri Statehood and provide funding for the State Centennial Exposition. The design depicts a frontiersman (supposedly Daniel Boone) on the obverse and a settler guiding an American Indian away.

The high relief design is quite attractive and the standing Indian on the reverse is artistically competent, though the features are smaller and it is difficult to tell much about it. It is one of the more attractive classic commemorative designs.



1921 Missouri Half Dollar

From a cultural sensitivity perspective this has to be one of the worst examples among US coinage. The coin literally depicts a settler showing an Indian that “you’re not welcome here anymore in what was once your home but Is now our home.”

- **Oregon Trail Commemorative Half Dollar (1926-1939)** - This commemorative coin was the Idea of Ezra Meeker who was one of the last surviving settlers to traverse the trail from Iowa to Oregon Territory in 1852. He wanted to sell the coins to raise funds that would be earmarked to erect markers along the trail lest it be forgotten. The obverse design by



1926-D Oregon Trail
Half Dollar Reverse

James Earl Fraser portrays a Conestoga wagon travelling westward. The reverse designed by Laura Gardin Fraser depicts an American Indian standing upright in a bold manner; his left arm outstretched and palm raised in what appears to be a “Halt” motion.

The Oregon Trail is without a doubt one of the most beautiful coin designs ever produced by the US Mint. It is arguably one of the most beautiful coin designs worldwide, ever.

What, exactly, is the meaning of the American Indian’s gesture on the reverse? Some think it is a gesture of peace. Others say that the Indian is telling the settlers to stop advancing west. Still others say the Indian is warning settlers of the dangers that lie ahead. Whatever the meaning, it can also represent that the Indian was a major part of United States History. Before the settlers arrived, the American Indian was the central part of US History and pre-history in that region.

- **Hawaii Commemorative Half Dollar (1928)** - This commemorative was issued to observe the 150th anniversary of Captain Cook’s landing in Hawaii. It portrays the bust of Captain Cook on the obverse and a native Hawaiian Warrior modeled after a statue of King Kamehameha I. The background view is of Waikiki beach with the mountain Diamond Head behind.



1928 Hawaii Half
Dollar Obverse



1928 Hawaii Half
Dollar Reverse

The reverse of this coin is particularly beautiful! The obverse is okay; and overall, the coin has a pleasing balance. Specimens are difficult to find nice as many were stored in sub-optimal conditions.

This is not a traditional American Indian depicted here but once the US annexed Hawaii the Warrior would definitely be considered a Native American. The warrior seems to have a friendlier gesture than the Indian on the Oregon Trail commemorative. He seems to be welcoming, or at least alluding to the beautiful scenery behind him.

- **Daniel Boone Commemorative Half Dollar (1934-1938)** - This commemorative half dollar was issued in observance of the 200th anniversary of Daniel Boone’s birth. The obverse of the coin features Boone while the reverse shows Boone and Chief Blackfish of the Chillicothe band of the Shawnee Tribe.



1938 Boone Half
Dollar Reverse

The coin is average in artistic merit. The Boone looks nice, though there are no features that really make the coin distinctive.

This is the first US coin that depicts an identifiable Native American historic figure. The scene on the reverse shows a meeting between Daniel Boone and Chief Blackfish. This may be a reference to a plea Boone made appealing to Chief Blackfish to spare Boone's men captured during a winter raid in 1778. Boone was eventually adopted by Blackfish's tribe as was customary and given the Indian name Sheltowee (Big Turtle). While this coin was designed around Daniel Boone, it is significant that a design element chosen represented this episode in his life. Chief Blackfish was important enough to merit this honor among all the other life events that could have been chosen from Boone's existence.

- **Arkansas Commemorative Half Dollar 1935-1939** - The Arkansas Half dollar officially commemorates the centenary of Arkansas statehood. The coin's obverse has both miss Liberty as a youth and a Quapaw Indian chief in jugate form. The reverse shows an eagle with the Arkansas flag diamond as a backdrop.

The aesthetic quality of this coin's design is average to slightly better. The reverse is busy, though attractive. It also contains several veiled references to Arkansas' role in the Confederacy. The obverse rendition of miss Liberty is quite plain. The Indian has Indian-like features, too. The Quapaw Tribe were referred to as Arkansa by Algonquin speakers; which is the origin of Arkansas' name.



1936 Arkansas Half Dollar Obverse

The Indian depiction on the Arkansas Half Dollar is true to life; which is a positive. The coin's designers chose to recognize the state's Native American name origin as an affirmation of the importance of the Quapaw tribe's to the history of the region.

- **Rhode Island Commemorative Half Dollar (1936)** - This coin was issued to commemorate the tercentenary of Rhode Island's settling. The coin's obverse displays an adaptation of the city's flag showing a Narragansett Indian greeting founder Roger Williams arriving in a canoe. The reverse is an anchor surrounded by legend.

It is hard to imagine a more bland and uninteresting design. The figures of the Indian and Roger Williams are not detailed and are scarcely better than stick figures. The Indian kind of looks like a guy wearing a bunny suit. There are several poor commemorative designs, but this must be amongst the worst.



1936 Rhode Island Half Dollar Obverse

Like the Arkansas commemorative, the Rhode Island coin portrays a member of the tribe native to the region before the founding of the colony. It demonstrates that these Native Americans were an important part of the area's history.

- **Long Island Commemorative Half Dollar (1936)** - This coin was issued to mark the 300th anniversary of the Dutch settlement of Long Island. The coin's obverse depicts the jugate heads of a Dutch settler and an Algonquin Indian native to the area. The reverse shows a ship.

The design is fine overall. It has an Art Deco vibe about it and looks reasonably attractive; though certainly not a masterpiece. Much commentary has been made of the rough appearance of the two gentlemen on the obverse.



1936 Long Island Half Dollar Obverse

From a Native American cultural viewpoint, it is hard to be excited about this design. The Algonquin is nearly eclipsed by the Dutchman and seems to be little more than an after-thought. Though the features are clearly Native American, there is not much to see here.

Third Group:

- **Sacagawea Golden Dollar (2000-2008)** - This golden dollar coin was intended to replace the Susan B. Anthony Dollar as the circulating coin. The coin's obverse shows two Native Americans. The first is Sacagawea, the Shoshone guide that assisted Lewis and Clark on their expedition of the Louisiana Purchase. The second is her infant child Jean Baptiste Charbonneau who was born during the expedition.



*2000-P Sacagawea
Dollar Obverse*
this happens.

The design is decent overall. Not particularly aesthetic overall, but not a terrible design, either. Since there are no known historic images of Sacagawea, a Shoshone Indian named Randy L He-Dow Teton served as model for her likeness. Having a member of Sacagawea's same tribe certainly gives a feel of authenticity to the design. The aureate color does not lend itself well to the rigors of handling and circulation. The coins, though seldom circulated, do not appear very attractive when

This is the first US coin design that was a collaborative effort with the Native American community. The House Committee charged with choosing a design recommended Sacagawea for the coin in spite of public opinion that showed the Statue of Liberty was a more popular choice. In this writer's opinion, it was the appropriate choice since the Statue of Liberty had already been depicted on US coins; the bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark Expedition was approaching; and no Native American had graced a US coin in over sixty years.

Once the design was selected, artists were invited to create designs with emphasis on representing Sacagawea with correct features. The proposed designs were reviewed by members of the Native American community before the eventual design was selected. In all regards, this looks to be the first real attempt at cultural inclusivity.

Unfortunately, the small dollar sized coin has never been heartily accepted by consumers. Outside of toll booths, vending machines, and the post office, the aureate dollar coins saw little usage in the United States. The coins were issued for circulation in 2000 and 2001 and only for collectors thereafter. Ironically, the coins are used in commerce regularly in El Salvador and Ecuador; two countries that use the US dollar as a de facto currency.

- **Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian American Buffalo Commemorative Dollar (2001)** - This is the first reprisal of the Buffalo Nickel. It is a recreation of the original coin in silver dollar format. It is a testament to its great popularity that this issue despite its unusually large production of 500,000 pieces for a commemorative coin, sold out rapidly. Prices soared well above the US mint issue price early on and are one of the few modern commemorative issues that still command a premium over its initial issue price today.



*2001 American Buffalo
Dollar*

This modern issue has an overall positive view. The issuance of this commemorative was the idea of Ben Nighthorse Campbell of the Northern Cheyenne Tribe. Some proceeds from the sale of the commemoratives also went for the support of the National Museum of the American Indian.

- **Lewis and Clark Commemorative Dollar (2004)** - The Lewis and Clark commemorative silver dollar marks the bicentennial of the Louisiana Purchase Expedition.

The design does not directly depict a Native American at all. It features Lewis and Clark on the obverse. The coin's connection with Native Americans comes in the packaging options offered by the US Mint. The Coin and Currency set sold with the coin references the many important and helpful interactions that Lewis and Clark had with Native American tribes during their journey. The set also contains a Sacagawea dollar that acknowledges her role in the expedition.



2004 Lewis & Clark Dollar

Even more interesting are the Pouch sets sold with hand crafted Native American pouches from each of the Tribes that Lewis and Clark encountered along their travels. Each pouch comes with a certificate of Authenticity stating the person's name and tribe that made it.



Lewis & Clark Coin & Currency Set

These additional options – and particularly the coin and pouch sets are significant in the developing awareness of the US mint (and partnership with Native Americans) in honoring the contributions of Native Americans to the development of the United States as we know it; often at their own expense. It il-

lustrates the distance the US mint has come since the first Indians appeared on coins. In 1904, for the centennial of the Expedition; no consideration was given to these contributions of Native Americans. Those designs issued from 1903 to 1905 featured presidents Jefferson, McKinley and Lewis and Clark.



2004 Lewis & Clark Dollar Pouch Set

- **\$50.00 American Buffalo Gold Bullion Coin** - In 2006, the US Mint rolled out a new gold bullion series featuring a reprise of the 1913 Type I Buffalo Nickel design. This was owing to increased interest in gold bullion at the time and the fact that the US Mint did not previously issue a gold coin that was 24 Karat pure gold.

The design is virtually the same as the original coin with the exception of the wording about its gold content and the denomination. The design is timeless and has proven to be very popular amongst collectors.

The selection of this design being used for a gold bullion coin was due to its overwhelming popularity among collectors.



One Ounce Gold American Buffalo

This is the third time the design had been used on US coinage. The original was in 1913, the commemorative dollar in 2001 was the second. Such usage is reserved for only a few coin designs that are considered to be among the nation's most beautiful. It puts the Gold Buffalo in company with the Saint Gaudens Twenty Dollar Gold design and the Walking Liberty Half Dollar.

➤ **Native American Golden Dollar Series (2009-Present)** - This dollar proceeded a step beyond the preceding Sacagawea Dollar. Sacagawea remained on the obverse of the coin and the reverse was intended to change for each year of issue to portray a design culturally relevant to Native Americans. The different designs to date have been:

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|-------------------------------------|---|
| • 2009 Three Sisters of Agriculture | • 2017 Sequoyah |
| • 2010 Hiawatha Belt | • 2018 Jim Thorpe |
| • 2011 Wampanoag Treaty | • 2019 Indians in Space |
| • 2012 17th Century Trade Routes | • 2020 Alaska Anti Discrimination Act of 1945 |
| • 2013 Treaty with the Lenape | • 2021 American Indians in Military Service |
| • 2014 Ceremonial Pipe | • 2022 Ely Samuel Parker |
| • 2015 Mohawk Ironworkers | • 2023 Elizabeth Tallchief |
| • 2016 Code Talkers | • 2024 Indian Citizenship Act of 1924 |

The designs listed here have been attractive in general. The design elements are chosen by American Indians and are created to look correct to the American Indian perspective. The only real design problem is the missing date and mint mark on the obverse of the coin. It is difficult for collectors to read these features on the edge of the coin.

It is clear that considerable thought and care have been given in the selection and design of the topics appearing on the reverse of these coins. The people and events depicted are significant and meaningful to the Native American community and the US population as a whole. The process of choosing the design subjects is a partnership between the US Senate's Committee on Indian Affairs, the Native American Caucus, and the National Congress of American Indians.



*2009-2022 Native American Dollar
Reverses*

➤ **Chaco Culture National Parks Quarter (2012)** - This was issued as part of the National Parks commemorative quarter series. The design comes in both the normal quarter size version and the five ounce silver bullion piece. The coin shows ruins of structures built by the Chacoan Indians around the year AD 1000.



*2012 Chaco Culture Five
Ounce Silver Quarter*

The design is detailed and it is a bit difficult to discern the finer points on the quarter size version. They are easier to see on the 5 ounce size. Overall, it is middling in terms of design quality amongst the National Parks Quarters.

This is the first time in US coinage history that a coin design made reference to the great past cultures that inhabited North America in the Pre-Columbian Era. The Chacoans were an advanced society that created architecture larger than anything built in the region until the 19th century. That these ruins still remain after a thousand years is testament to the indelible mark the Chacoans and other early cultures left in North America. This coin has important cultural relevance in its ability to pay homage to the great Native American cultures that populated the continent before European settlement.

- **Wilma Mankiller Women's Quarter (2022)** - This quarter was the third in the new series of commemorative quarters honoring prominent American women. She was the first Native American to receive this honor. Mankiller was the first woman elected Chief of the Cherokee tribe. She was involved in the Cherokee community from her youth and her efforts to raise the living standards for the tribe were transformative.

The design shows Mankiller looking outward with the seven pointed star of the Cherokee Nation in the background. The design is fine, though its details are not so prominent or crisp as one would like due to the small size format.



2022 Wilma
Mankiller Quarter

The subject here is fitting and culturally relevant. Wilma Mankiller was an excellent advocate for Indian and Women's rights and warrants depiction on a US coin.

- **Maria Tallchief Women's Quarter (2023)** - Maria Tallchief was an Osage Indian who was noted for her remarkable talent as a ballerina. She was the 10th prominent American woman to be featured in the new quarter series.

The design is simple, but appealing. It has Tallchief's name in both English and Osage characters.



2023 Maria Tallchief
Quarter

Like the Mankiller Quarter, this design is culturally relevant in a way that would have been impossible a century ago.

There are a few interesting designs that do not fit in the category above, yet still have interesting Native American Imagery. These are mostly coins of "the Americas" – not just the United States. This is a good but not necessarily complete list of the types that are available to collect.

2. Other Interesting Designs

Series 1899 \$5.00 Silver Certificate "Chief Onepapa" This beautiful Silver Certificate boasts a wonderful portrait of Chief Running Antelope (1821-1896). Chief Running Antelope signed the Treaty of 1868 with the United States. The portrait on the Silver Certificate shows a depiction of Running

- Antelope from a famous photograph. One of the interesting aspects of the photo is that Chief Running Antelope is wearing the Peace Medal around his neck that was presumably presented to him upon the signing of the 1868 treaty. This feature made it into the portrait

on the \$5.00 Certificate. The other interesting thing about the Silver Certificate is that the headdress Chief Running Antelope is wearing is not the same as the one in the photo and is also not the correct type to be worn by a chief of his Sioux tribe. The headdress on the note is a Pawnee war bonnet.



1899 \$5 Silver Certificate

This was the first portrayal of an actual American Indian on a piece of US money; first debuting in 1899. The note had a great run; circulating until the mid-1920's.

The portrayal of Chief Running Antelope was somewhat problematic, despite its beauty. Having the incorrect headdress is a great disrespect. Aside from that, the design is wonderful and faithful to the photograph. How does this fit within the perspective of the times? Is it nostalgic for the old West that was recently departed? Is it part of the Oriental movement? Is it both?

- **The Canadian “Death Dollar” of 1958** - This coin was issued for the centenary of the founding of the British Columbia Province. It features a Native American Totem pole. It is a very attractive design with just one problem. One of the design elements (the raven head at the top) of the totem pole symbolizes death to the local indigenous tribes. This caused quite an uproar at the time. Natives of the area were upset and uncomfortable with the coin's usage. It is a good example of what not to do when creating an Indian -Themed design. Make sure to consult Native Americans before making a design.



1958 Canada Dollar

- **Dominican Republic 5 Centavo** - Issued from 1939 to 1959 and again from 1978 to 1981, these coins were actually struck by the US Mint; so they could technically belong on the list above. The design looks a bit like the Indian cent; though the features of Liberty more closely resemble Native American looks.



5 Centavo
Obverse

- **Dominican Republic Peso** - These were struck in 1939 and 1952. The design is the same as the 5 centavo above.
- **Haiti 10 Gourdes and 100 Gourdes of 1971** - This is a set of prominent Indian Chiefs issued for the country of Haiti as a non-circulating commemorative issue. They were struck by the Italcambio company. The designs are very attractive and it is an interesting set. Each Issue was also produced in a gold 100 Gourdes denomination.
- **Hawaii Coinage of 1883** - These coins feature a Native American by extension of the inclusion of the Hawaiian Islands as part of the Americas. King Kalakaua I graces the coin's obverse. These were also struck at the US Mint in Philadelphia. There were four sizes: Dime, Quarter, Half Dollar and Dollar.



1883 Hawaii Quarter

- **Honduras Lempira** - Issued from 1931 to 1937, these were also struck at the US mint in Philadelphia. They feature a stylized Indian on the obverse (looks sort of Art Deco).

- **Venezuela Cacique medallions** - These gold medallions were issued from about 1955 to 1960 by the Italcambio company for Venezuela. They come in varying sizes by gram and feature a variety of Indians of Venezuela. Some of the designs are very attractive and some are not so attractive. These are not coins so they can often be bought on the basis of their bullion content.



3. Indian Peace Medals

These were medals issued by governmental bodies and distributed to prominent Indian leaders and as a gesture of peace and goodwill. They were first given by the British under the authority of the King of England as early as the reign of George II. Under the United States government, engraved medals were given under George Washington. The US mint began striking these medals during the Jefferson presidency and continued throughout the term of Benjamin Harrison. The first designs showed the president on the obverse and peace pipes on the reverse. Starting with the presidency of Millard Fillmore, the reverse featured a US Soldier and an Indian chief standing and facing.

These medals are quite rare and expensive. If one does decide to collect them, it will take extensive resources. Consider that medals will generally cost \$5,000 to \$15,000 each or more. Additionally, authentication is important. This makes an amazing collection if one has the resources to afford them.



Franklin Pierce Medal Reverse

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