



THE FINAL FRONTIER

Space exploration offers hobbyists a collecting theme that is out of this world.

NEIL ARMSTRONG, whose footprints on the moon represent one of humanity's greatest achievements, died this August at age 82. Obituaries justifiably lauded him for his accomplishments in space and widely praised him for his quiet humility back on earth.

Armstrong's life story reminds us of the glory of space exploration—which is very well represented in our hobby. If you're looking for an interesting area to explore, a topical collection with a space-related theme will take you on a fascinating orbit around the world of numismatics.

One sign of the momentousness of the 1969 moon landing is that it was commemorated on a U.S. coin almost immediately after it happened. The Eisenhower dollar, introduced in 1971, featured on its reverse a depiction of the Apollo 11 mission patch—an olive-branch-

bearing eagle landing on the moon, as in Armstrong's memorable report, "The *Eagle* has landed." The insignia was actually designed by Apollo 11 astronaut Michael Collins, who remained in the lunar orbiter while Armstrong and Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin visited the lunar surface. The same design, in smaller form, was later used on the Susan B. Anthony dollar.



◀ **FRANK GASPARRO** designed the Eisenhower dollar reverse, which was based on the Apollo 11 mission insignia.

Two state quarters, Ohio's and Florida's, also have space-related themes. Armstrong was born in Ohio, as was John Glenn, the first American to orbit the earth. Their home state's quarter celebrates the "Birthplace of Aviation Pioneers" with a design that includes an anonymous astronaut. On Florida's coin, inscribed "Gateway to Discovery," the space shuttle—which was based at the state's Kennedy Space Center—flies over a Spanish galleon and a strip of land with Sabal palm trees.

The space shuttle also appears on a 1992 silver dollar commemorating the 500th anniversary of Christopher Columbus' voyage to the New World. Actually, it's more appropriate to say that half of the space shuttle appears on the coin. The other half

◀ **NEIL ARMSTRONG** was the first person to walk on the moon. Space-age themes have been depicted on two of the state quarters.

is mashed up with a Columbus-era sailing ship. In the not-quite-coins category, the U.S. Mint issued bronze, silver and gold "America in Space" medals in 1988, as well as a "New Frontier" medal in 2011 celebrating John Glenn and the Apollo 11 astronauts.

There are no space-age themes amid the leaders and buildings on American paper money, but there is a related item of interest. Military Payment Certificates (MPCs) were issued during the Cold War to soldiers on American military bases abroad, with designs changed frequently to deter black-market activities. Series 681, released during the Vietnam War, features a spacewalking astronaut on its 5-, 10-, 25- and 50-cent issues.

Orbital imagery also is found on money from around the world. The U.S.S.R. commemorated its achievements in the space race with a 1981 rouble and other issues portraying cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin. Satellite launches by India, Iran and Taiwan were celebrated on those nations' bank notes, and a Canadian \$100 note features a satellite-derived map of the country.

As usual, coins make great souvenirs, and some are out of this world—literally. A few have been carried to space and back by astronauts. There's even a coin on Mars: a 1909 V.D.B. cent, placed on the rover *Curiosity* as an informal way of calibrating the images beamed back to Earth. The coin also will show the public the Martian surface—which an extraterrestrial grading service might one day call "environmental damage."

And you may not realize that





▲ **THE 1992 CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS** quincentenary dollar morphs an image of the *Santa Maria* with the U.S. space shuttle *Discovery*.

space already has its own currency—sort of. In 2007 the foreign exchange firm Travelex launched the Quasi Universal Intergalactic Denomination, or QUID. (“Quid” also is a nickname for the British pound.) It was really just a marketing stunt, but, who knows, Travelex may be on to something! Depending on which perennial predic-

tion comes true first—space tourism or the cashless society—we may one day take space trips with space coins in the pockets of our space suits.

Until that day comes—and even if it doesn’t—there are plenty of other space-themed collectibles to enhance

your earthbound hobby. Each acquisition will be one small step in the building of your collection, and one giant leap for numismatic enjoyment.

sanders@money.org



▲ **MILITARY PAYMENT CERTIFICATES** were issued to U.S. personnel stationed overseas. The reverse of this Series 681 25-cent issue depicts space-walker Major Edward H. White.

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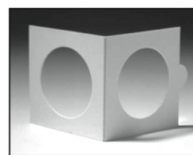


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