

Presidents on Parade

The new Presidential dollar coins honor America's past leaders, some of whom have never before appeared on U.S. money.

THIS MONTH, as Americans observe Presidents' Day, the United States Mint will inaugurate an exciting tribute to America's Chief Executives: the Presidential \$1 Coin Program. Four circulating dollar coins honoring America's Presidents in the order of their service will be issued every year.

The 2007 coins portray a particularly distinguished quartet, whose nicknames reveal their importance: George Washington was revered as the "Father of His Country"; John Adams was considered the "Atlas of Independence"; Thomas Jefferson was known as the "Man of the People"; and James Madison was credited as the "Father of the Constitution." Together, they helped achieve American independence, establish an enduring government for the United States, and guide the new nation through its first decades.

So far, the first four Presidents have experienced varying degrees of monetary memorialization. Washington's quarters and Jefferson's nickels are ubiquitous, and both have appeared on non-circulating commemoratives. But Madison has never been seen on a circulating coin, and Adams has been totally absent.

This year's Presidential dollars bring Americans face-to-face with each of these historic leaders. Until recently,

profiles were standard on American coins; however, the 2007 Presidential dollars offer a change of perspective, with three-quarter facing portraits. The obverses are miniature metallic history lessons that list the President's full name, order of service and dates in office.

The reverse features another American icon: the Statue of Liberty. Allegorical images of Liberty appeared regularly on coins throughout the mid 20th century, but the statue itself—perhaps the ultimate expression of liberty—has been shown only occasionally. The new coins present a striking, upward-looking view, showing about half the statue, with the torch blazing prominently at the top.

Some familiar design elements—the inscriptions IN GOD WE TRUST and E PLURIBUS UNUM, and even the date and mintmark—won't be found on the obverse or the reverse. They've been relocated to the "third side"—the edge.

Edges often were lettered or decorated on early American coins, and occasionally on issues in the beginning of the 20th century. Lettering on the 21st-century version is impressed into the edge in a separate process after the coins are struck. By distributing inscriptions literally all around the coin, there's more room for bold designs on the obverse and reverse.

The Presidential dollars are notable not only for their subject matter and designs, but also for their composition. The clad or "sandwich" format has an inner layer of pure copper surrounded by outer layers of copper blended with zinc, manganese and nickel. This mixture debuted with the Sacagawea dollar in 2000, matching the electromagnetic signature of copper-nickel (ensuring acceptability in coin-operated machines), while imparting a distinctive, golden color.

All of these innovations—standout ☺

► Appearing in the order of their terms are Presidents George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison.

Not Actual Size



COIN PHOTOS: U.S. MINT



▲ Incuse edge inscriptions on the new dollar coins leave more room for bold designs.

appearance, impressive designs and historic appeal—are meant to boost a denomination that historically has faced challenges in circulation. Tiny, gold dollars lasted only a few decades in the 19th century, and hundreds of millions of Morgan and Peace silver dollars were made to benefit the silver industry, but not to circulate. The Anthony dollar's small size was intended to be convenient, but its similarity to a

quarter was its undoing. The Sacagawea dollar (still produced for circulation) has made only limited inroads.

New initiatives for the Presidential dollars will ensure their availability and promote their circulation. It's hoped the public will view the coin as an alternative to four quarters or a dollar bill.

There is precedent for successful circulating coins with varying designs. For nearly a decade, state quarters have showcased the history, culture, nature and wildlife of America's states. Now, in yet another connection between coinage and society, Presidential dollars will display the history of the United States through images of its past leaders.

Presidents' Day comes only once a year. But every day, numismatists and the general public can enjoy using and collecting America's latest coins—the Presidential dollars.

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▲ Liberty's profile adorns the common reverse of the U.S. Presidential dollar coins.