

Crown and Minor Commemorative Coins of the 19th and 20th Centuries

American Numismatic Association

Lecture Set #26

Part 1 – Western Hemisphere

Canada, Mexico, Dominican Republic, Cuba, Bermuda

Crown & Minor Commemoratives of the 19th & 20th Centuries

What is a commemorative coin?

One Answer:

A commemorative coin must be legal tender of a duly constituted government and struck in denominations usually found in that country.

Its devices, legends and mottoes must clearly indicate that it does memorialize some event or person in that country's history.

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THE AMERICAN NUMISMATIC ASSOCIATION
VISUAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
PRESENTS

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Canada struck a silver dollar in 1935 to commemorate the 25th year of the reign of George V of England. George Frederick Ernest Albert, son of Edward VII, was 70 years old when this coin was struck. This was the first dollar coin issued by the Dominion of Canada. Legend surrounding his crowned head reads, "Georgius Rex Imperator Anno Regni XXV" or George V, King and Emperor 25th year of Reign.

Reverse features a canoe with fur trader and Indian honoring Canada's historic heritage. Canada at top, Dollar at bottom with the date below the canoe.

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This silver dollar from Canada commemorates the royal visit of George VI and the Queen to the Dominion of Canada, part of a world wide visit which included the United States and the Union of South Africa.

Generally kings and queens of England alternate in facing left or right and King George V faced left also, but if Edward VIII had reigned he would have faced right, so continuing the tradition, George faces left. Notice that Indian also appears in his title.

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A Canadian Newfoundland commemorative, with John Cabot's ship Mathew portrayed on the reverse. Cabot, a Venetian in the service of England discovered the 10th largest island in the world and this was the basis of Britain's claim to North America.

In the inscription surrounding George VI's head, reference to India is missing.

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A Canadian 5 cent commemorative; calling attention to the 200th anniversary of the isolation of the metal nickel.

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Canada also issued a beautiful commemorative of British Columbia, a colony which had been known since 1792, but had not been populated until gold was discovered in 1858. The main device on the reverse is a native totem pole, the Canadian Rockies in the background. Canada is in the upper left, British Columbia on the right.

The Indians of British Columbia protested the totem as portraying a "Tsimshian" or mortuary totem, so some considered it a "death coin." Designer's initials "ST" appear at the bottom of the totem.

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Issued to commemorate the Charlottetown Convention of the Maritime Provinces; the Quebec convention came about which then drafted the North American Act passed by the British Parliament in 1867.

The reverse was a prize-winning design of Dinko Vodanovic, a Yugoslavian born architect employed by the Canadian National Railways in Montreal, who won \$1,000 for his efforts. The center represents the four ethnic groups making up Canada's people; the shamrock represents the Irish, the thistle, the Scots, the rose, the English, and the fleur-de-lis, the French.

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This two gram two peso issued by Mexico in 1921 commemorates the 100th anniversary of the agreement between Vicente Guerrero, leader of the revolutionary movement against Spain and Augustin de Iturbide, a soldier of the viceroy of Spain. The agreement was known as the Plan of Iguala.

An old Aztec saying was “Where you will find an eagle sitting on a cactus on a stone in the water, tearing with his beak and talons a snake asunder, there you shall settle.” This led to the settlement of Mexico City.

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A Mexican 5 Pesos commemorative of the inauguration of the Southeastern Mexican Railway service which connected Mexico City with Veracruz with standard gauge tracks and equipment. The traditional eagle of Mexico adorns the obverse and the reverse features a locomotive set against a tropical scene of palms and native plants.

Lettered edge reads in translation, "Industry, Commerce, Agriculture."

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This is another 5 pesos silver issued by Mexico in 1953 to commemorate the bicentennial of the birth of Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla. Hidalgo - 1753-1811 - was a Mexican priest and leader of the first serious attempt to secure independence from Spain. The revolt failed and Hidalgo was executed on July 30, 1811.

The obverse is the same as for the Railway Commemorative. The reverse portrays a full bust portrait of Hidalgo in clerical garb facing full. To his right in the background is the double-spired cathedral which he served in his home town of Delores; above the spires are the dates: 1753 and 1953 – one above the other. At top right in circular arrangement.

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This is the obverse of the 5 and 10 Pesos struck in 1957 by Mexico to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the Mexican Constitution. There is a 1 Peso in this series, the obverse of which is slightly different see in a moment. Notice the traditional eagle and snake with UNITED MEXICAN STATES in smaller letters. The denomination is in larger letters at top; weight and fineness of the denomination is in circular arrangement at the bottom separated by the date, 1957.

For the 1 Peso, the eagle is enclosed in a laurel wreath. At the top in circular arrangement, the legend - translation of which reads: UNITED MEXICAN STATES. At the bottom is the value and date, 1957.

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This is the reverse common to all three denominations of the Constitutional Commemorative. The main device is the head of Zapotec Indian, Benito Juárez facing to the left. Juárez - teacher, lawyer, jurist, great leader of freedom and nemesis of ill-fated Emperor Maximilian - more than any other person was responsible for liberal government in Mexico and the constitution of 1857. This document was in effect until 1917. In circular arrangement around Juárez's head is the legend, translation of which reads: CENTENARY OF THE CONSTITUTION ••• and the dates, 1857-1957. To the right of the head, the mint mark, Mo. The edge is lettered, translation of which reads: INDEPENDENCE AND LIBERTY.

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In 1959 Mexico issued a 5-pesos silver to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the birth of Venustiano Carranza. President of Mexico from 1917 to 1920, He nationalized the petroleum lands of Mexico.

This is the reverse of the coin. The obverse is the same as for the 5 and 10 pesos Constitutional Commemoratives. The head of Carranza faces left. The mint mark, MO, is right of head. In circular arrangement at the top is the legend, translation of which reads, YEAR OF CARRANZA; at the bottom in circular arrangement the dates, 1859-1959. Edge is plain.

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1960 saw the striking by Mexico of a 10 pesos silver coin commemorating the 150th anniversary of Hidalgo's call to revolt and the 50th anniversary of the revolt against dictator, Diaz, led by Francisco Madero . Reverse of the Hidalgo-Madero Commemorative pictured. The obverse is the same as that for the 5 and 10 pesos Constitutional Commemoratives. Shown here are the full conjoined busts of Hidalgo and Madero. Each is identified by his name in small letters underneath the bust. Three significant dates -- 1810-1960-1910--are arranged to the left, top and right of the two busts. 1810 was Hidalgo's call to arms; 1910 was Madero's ill-fated attempt to overthrow the dictator, Diaz . At top in large letters: INDEPENDENCE AND LIBERTY. At the bottom is the motto, translation of which reads: RIGHT TO VOTE BROUGHT ABOUT - NO REELECTION" (refers to dictator's ruse of being reelected by a so-called popular vote). Edge is reeded.

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To commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Republic, Cuba in 1952 struck a series of minor coins in silver; 10, 20 and 40 centavos. Civil government began in Cuba on May 20, 1902 after 2 years of military government under the U.S.A. The design is the same for all three coins with reeded edge –weight and stated value differing.

This is the 40 centavos piece. The obverse portrays the ruins of a sugar estate, La Demajague in Oriente Province. The estate was the Property of the Cuban patriot - Carlos Yanuel de Cespedes - first revolutionary president and leader of the revolt of 1868 against Spain. The main device is a large tree growing between the spokes of a flywheel from the sugar mill.

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Another Cuban commemorative series was issued in 1953 to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the birth of Jose Marti. Marti was a Cuban patriot, liberator and poet. He was killed fighting for Cuba's independence. Cubans consider him as one of the greatest heroes of their independence struggle. Marti in 1895 issued a Declaration of Independence from Spain.

Obverse is the same for the 1, 25, 50 centavos and 1 peso. A star of Cuba with rays is near his forehead, around his bust is the inscription, "1953, Centenary of Marti, 1953."

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The brass centavo has for its reverse design: an inverted isosceles triangle with five-pointed star from Cuba's flag. The triangle divides the value; 1 C (centavo). Weight and fineness above inverted base. In circular arrangement at top~ REPUBLIC OF CUBA; at bottom translated: FATHERLAND AND LIBERTY.

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For the 25 centavos reverse design there is a Phrygian Cap - symbol of freedom and reminiscent of the French Revolution. The cap with a 5-pointed star on the side is mounted on the axe of the fasces bundle, symbolizing justice. To the left in two straight lines: 25 •• CTS (centavos); REPUBLICA DE CUBA at top; PATRIA Y LIBERTAD (FATHERLAND AND LIBERTY) at bottom.

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For the 50 centavos reverse, the main device is a scroll (turned at bottom and top) on which is inscribed an excerpt from a speech of Marti (translated): WITH ALL AND FOR THE GOOD OF ALL.

This was part of a speech he made in Florida just before returning to fight for Cuban independence. To the left of the scroll is the coin's weight and underneath, the coin's fineness. To the right of the scroll, 50 C. Same arrangement at the top and bottom as for the other coins.

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The reverse of the Marti 1 Peso Commemorative has an unusual design. The large key portrayed slightly below center of the coin was a part of the original coat of arms granted to the City of Havana in 1555 and signified Cuba as the "key" to the New World. In the background is a smooth expanse of water , with two headlands representing North and South America - the key being located between the two. The rising sun with stylized rays signifies the new world itself. In the extreme foreground is the figure "1" on which is superimposed the word, PESO. Underneath are the weight and fineness of the coin. At the top is the legend: REPUBLICA DE CUBA; at the bottom is the motto, FATHERLAND AND LIBERTY. All of the coins with the exception of the Centavo have reeded edges.

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To commemorate the 350th Anniversary of the first English on the Island of Bermuda, Great Britain struck a crown in 1959. In 1609, the Seaventure – one of the ships bound for Virginia to relieve Jamestown - was wrecked on what is now Bermuda. The first permanent settlement was in 1612.

In the center of the reverse is a relief map of Bermuda and associated islands. Immediately above the map is a replica of a Bermuda sloop and beneath a replica of a fitted dinghy - symbolic of Bermuda's heritage. The Bermuda sloop is a speedy craft built of cedar that served as a lifeline of the colony in the early days. The dinghy of native cedar was developed over a century ago and is still raced locally. BERMUDA at the top with dates: 1609- 1959 at either side. At the bottom is the denomination: ONE CROWN which not only signifies the value but the fact that Bermuda has been only under British sovereignty. Metal is silver; edge reeded.

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Also in the west Indies is the Dominican Republic. In 1955, a 1 Peso was struck to commemorate the 25th Anniversary of the Fourth Period of Independence. This period began in 1930 with the overthrow of President Horacio Vasquez. Rafael Leonidas Trujillo Molina came to power. Trujillo's dictatorship was interrupted in 1938, but was resumed in 1942. He continued in absolute power until his assassination in 1962.

The obverse carries the bust of Trujillo in full military uniform facing right. The date, 1955, is split with two numerals on either side of the head. At top left, UN PESO; five stars are immediately shown above Trujillo's head. At the top to the right, the weight of the coin. At the bottom in two circular lines, the legend which translated reads: 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ERA OF TRUJILLO

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In 1963, the Dominican Republic struck four coins - 1, 5, 10 and 25 Centavos - to commemorate the centenary of the restoration of the Republic. The first Dominican Republic was established in 1844 with Santana as President. After 17 years of turbulent existence, Santana asked Spain to take over control of the country. Spanish rule soon became intolerable; by February 1863, a revolt was in full swing. In the midst of this bloody uprising, the Dominican Republic was once more constituted. On the 14th of September, 1863, a group of citizens proclaimed the Republic had been restored. It was not until 1865, that the Spanish left Santo Domingo.

The same reverse is used for all four coins: the arms of the Republic center with laurel spray at the left and palm branch at the right. Underneath the arms are the significant dates: 1863 ••• 1963.

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