



A YEAR TO CELEBRATE

In 2021 notable numismatic anniversaries are the norm.

Years ending in “0” are usually occasions for retrospection, but for numismatic significance, 2021 is hard to match. Looking back at rare dates, coin series and monetary systems, there’s a lot to commemorate this year.

100th anniversary of several rare issues. Anyone who collects 20th-century coins eventually runs into the key or semi-key issues of 1921. The 1921-S nickel; 1921 and 1921-D dimes; 1921 quarter; and 1921, 1921-D and 1921-S half dollar all stand out for their low mintages and high prices. This was a period of economic downturn, and demand for new coins was low—but as I’ll soon elaborate, the U.S. Mint was able to stay busy in other ways.

100th anniversary of the Morgan/Peace dollar transition. The Morgan dollar series arguably should have ended in 1904. However, the Pittman Act of 1918 led to the melting of hundreds of mil-

lions of silver dollars, the sale of the resulting precious metal to Great Britain, the purchase of new silver to replace the sold metal, and coinage of the purchased silver into dollars. (This was the strange logic of silver politics.) So, the Morgan dollar returned in 1921—with by far its largest annual mintage. But these coins, like their predecessors, were destined to spend their time in U.S. Department

of the Treasury vaults as backing for Silver Certificates rather than in circulation.

The Peace dollar, commemorating the conclusion of World War I, debuted at the very end of 1921. Initially struck in high relief and small quantities, larger amounts were coined in lower relief from 1922 to 1935.

75th anniversary of the Roosevelt dime. First issued in 1946, the year after Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s death in office, the Roosevelt dime was inspired by the president’s involvement with the anti-polio efforts of the March of Dimes. This denomination has an unusual distinction: it is the only current, actively circulating U.S. coin whose design has never changed.

50th anniversary of the Eisenhower dollar. The copper-nickel Eisenhower dollar, which was no more popular than its silver predecessors, will finally reach its 50th anniversary milestone. The coin is doubly commemorative, with an obverse portrait of Dwight D. Eisenhower (1890-1969), Allied supreme commander in Europe and later the 34th U.S. president, and a reverse that celebrates the Apollo 11 moon landing. “Ikes” saw limited use, largely in casinos, and were made only until 1978.

50th anniversary of decimal coinage in Great Britain. The decimal coinage system is a natural one for ten-fingered creatures such as ourselves, and decimal currency spread around the world in the 19th century. But Britain was a holdout, continuing to use a system of 240 pence equaling 1 pound. By the 1960s, however, modernization beckoned, and a new decimal coin-

age (with 100 pence to the pound) was introduced over a three-year period, culminating on “D-Day” (February 15, 1971).

125th anniversary of the 1896 presidential election. In the late 19th century, the inflationary potential of silver currency was attractive to debtors and unattractive to business interests. The “Free Silver” movement reached its zenith with the 1896 presidential candidacy of William Jennings Bryan, whose “Cross of Gold” speech remains a landmark of campaign rhetoric. Bryan was defeated by William McKinley, and his cause was defeated with the passage of the Gold Standard Act of 1900, the same year that Bryan once again lost to McKinley.

50th anniversary of the closing of the “gold window.” In the United States, gold ceased to be a circulating medium in 1933—and, in fact, it was illegal for U.S. citizens to own gold, except for rare coins, jewelry and industrial uses, until 1975. But a vestige of the gold standard remained in the Bretton Woods monetary system, whereby each nation’s currency was convertible to the precious metal at a fixed rate (\$35 an ounce for the United States). But on August 15, 1971, President Richard Nixon prohibited foreign governments from exchanging dollars for gold, thus closing the gold window and eventually ushering in the era of floating exchange rates.

So, what would a collection of coins related to the anniversaries of 2021 look like? While this list is a good start, I don’t exactly know—but I have a whole year to figure it out!

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▲ **THE TRANSITION** from the Morgan Dollar to the Peace Dollar celebrates its 100th anniversary this year.

Actual Size: 38.1mm

PHOTOS: HERITAGE AUCTIONS