

COLLECTING



Numismatic Marvels

A
Numismatist's

Publication

Focusing on Outreach
And Education



Official Publication



Of Numismastery

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Numismatic Marvels

Hello, numismatic family! This is the first issue of Numismatic Marvels, a bi-monthly publication focused on the wonderful world of special numismatic items.

Numismatic Marvels, along with the Loupe, is an official publication of Numismastery.

Numismastery is an organization focused on numismatic education and outreach. You can visit our website at www.Numismastery.weebly.com for our numismatic course, and live news from the numismatic world. Also on this website is “An Overview of Numismatics”, a book by Numismastery’s founder, Preston Thomas.





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THE FOUNDER'S MESSAGE

As the current president and founder of Numismastery, I want to give you a massive “thank you” for signing up for this newsletter, and for spreading the word about my organization. I am sure you are surprised that Numismastery has two newsletters. The Loupe, edited by Tim Schellenberger, has a slightly different intention than this publication. The Loupe focuses on designs and engravers, as well as numismatic updates. Numismatic Marvels, edited by yours truly, focuses on more specific numismatic items such as this issue's focus, the “Hobo Nickel”. Just like the Loupe, please email me if you would like to include an article in this publication, and I will happily review it!

-Preston Thomas, President



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The “Hobo” Nickel

(Excerpts taken from “An Overview of Numismatics by Preston Thomas)

A separate genre of carved coins stretches to include the famous Hobo Nickel. Most new collectors have never heard of these interesting, somewhat bizarre pieces. Hobo nickels are miniature bas relief structures and hold memories of the past ways of life. In fact, these coins are Americana – artifacts related to the history, geography, folklore, and cultural heritage of the United States.



Despite popular opinion, Hobo nickels were in fact, not started by hoboes. Bertram “Bert” Weingand was a legendary original hobo nickel carver. He was born in 1890, and later imprisoned. In 1913, he started to fill his time by carving different things into nickels and

gifting them to the guards. He signed his new pieces of art by removing LI and Y from LIBERTY. He was last seen in the 1940’s, then was never heard from again. Luckily for the numismatic and Exonomic world, Bert passed on his knowledge to a young lad named George, who passed it along to many, keeping the hobby alive and well.

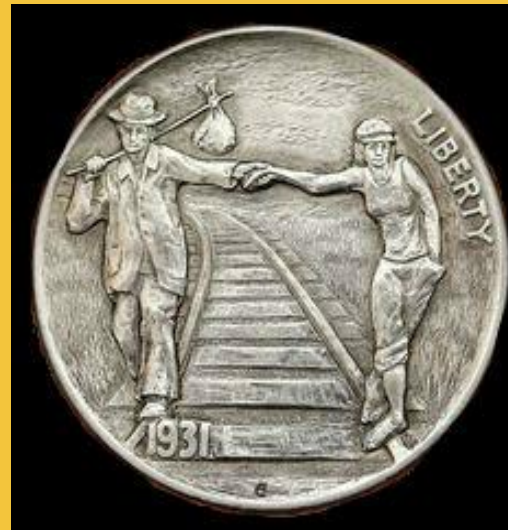


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During the Great Depression, more than 2 million out of work men along with up to 8,000 women became hobos, illegally traveling the rails in search of work. They would drift from place to place and sneak their way onto trains to hitch a free ride to wherever it took them.

An unlocked box car was the preferred accommodation for the hobos, but they would even go as far as to ride on top of the cars if it was locked. Other times, they would have no choice but to walk the tracks and wait for a train to stop along their path. Along the rails, they would

leave each other signs in trees to inform them if the neighboring farmers were friendly, or likely to shoo them out of town. For the most part, farmers were a Hobo's best friend, and given them food and temporary shelter as they passed through.



If a farmer was not readily available, a Hobo's best option was to fish for food. Many Hobos had pets, and many nickels feature the design of a dog accompanying the Hobo. Although many people call Hobos lazy, they might have lived the hardest life of anyone of the period.



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We would know next to nothing about this if it was not for the hobo nickels to tell us of their history.

The topics of the engravings vary as well, but it is most common to find one depicting the day-to-day life of a Hobo. Some have carvings of aliens, and others talk about life at sea. Others are designs of beautiful women, or the designers struggling with an alcohol addiction. Other common themes include death, famous people (especially actors), American Indians, animals, and cartoon characters.



Originally carved on Buffalo Nickels, the host coin soon migrated to include other pieces. During and after the 1980's, the hobby of carving coins became a modernized practice among coin collectors and craftsmen. They commonly engraved all sorts of coins but tended to favor coins with a nice thinness. Morgan and peace

dollars are commonly engraved, but all coins are used.

In modern times, the so-called Hobo nickel is still alive and well, practiced by passionate hobbyists worldwide.

Original pieces can be obtained from \$40-200 depending on the carver and topic of the engravings. These little capsules of history are just one of many things which makes numismatics great!



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SPOTLIGHT: The 1892 Chicago/Columbian Exposition 50c Piece

Commemorative coinage was not an idea that was created along with the US mint in 1792. In fact, it was by total coincidence that the mint issued its first commemorative coin exactly 100 years after its creation, 1892. In 1893, the Chicago Exposition was being held, and millions of people attended. It has even been said that nearly $\frac{1}{4}$ of the nation's population was at the Chicago Exposition (27 million people). The mint released this coin not only as a 400-year commemorative to Christopher Columbus, but to raise money for the exposition. It was minted in both 1892 and 1893.

The Chicago World Fair was a very important event in American history. It was there that the first Ferris Wheel was ever used, and they had bands play music (all members inside one car... *Plus* the instruments!) while the wheel was in motion. They hired Tesla to light the fair with over 200,000 of his new lightbulbs using his AC current, rather than Edison's DC current. In fact, this sole event gave Tesla and his sponsor complete control of the electricity market, as everyone grew to trust his "dangerous" AC power, leaving Edison and his DC power in the dust.

These coins sold for \$1 at the event, and nearly 2 million sold (out of around 6 million produced). They also sold a quarter at the event.



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In fact, the quarter sold for \$1 as well!! It's a wonder that any sold at that price, with the half dollar being considered legal tender, so you are literally getting more money for your money.

The commemorative was designed by Chief Engraver Charles E. Barber (who designed the "Barber Dimes" (1892-1916). Because there were no known accurate portraits of Columbus, Barber was forced to use his imagination for the design. However, while it may not be historically accurate, it represents a landmark in US coinage where we looked past the commonly accepted culture and tried something new. This set the stage for more and more commemoratives to be struck in later years, and they are still being struck to date.

Although attempts to sell them after the event were made, no one seemed to be interested, so some were melted down. Eventually the mint stopped melting them as it seemed wasteful, and they dumped the leftover coins into circulation



Nowadays, the circulated 1892 half dollar is considered common, and you can find it at nearly every local coin shop. In 1893, the mint struck about 1.6 million more, making them even less challenging to obtain.

Up to that point, no US coin had depicted a historical figure as opposed to an artist's model.