

The Washington Quarter: A Coin with a Rich History



The Washington quarter, the familiar 25-cent coin in American pockets today, was first introduced in 1932 to commemorate the 200th anniversary of George Washington's birth. Originally intended as a one-year tribute, the coin permanently replaced the Standing Liberty quarter and featured a portrait of Washington designed by sculptor John Flanagan.

The selection of Flanagan's design was not without controversy. Many members of the bicentennial committee favored a design by sculptor Laura Gardin Fraser, whose work had received support from the Commission of Fine Arts. However, Treasury Secretary Andrew W. Mellon chose Flanagan's design, and the decision remained unchanged.

The quarter was struck in silver from 1932 until 1965, when the U.S. Mint adopted copper-nickel clad coinage. Over the decades, the coin has undergone several notable changes, including the special Bicentennial reverse used in 1975 and 1976 and the popular State Quarters and America the Beautiful programs that showcased states, territories, and national landmarks.

In 2021, Flanagan's original portrait of Washington returned to the obverse, paired with a reverse depicting Washington crossing the Delaware River. The following year, the Mint launched a new series honoring influential American women, continuing the quarter's tradition of reflecting the nation's history and values.