

Arkansas Commemorative Halves

Grand plans were made for marking the state of Arkansas' 100th anniversary in 1936 in the state capitol. Noting the success of other states in funding such events through the sale of commemorative coins, a similar plan was devised by a state-appointed group calling itself the Arkansas Centennial Commission. This plan was necessary because the Arkansas state legislature failed to appropriate anything to fund these elaborate anniversary festivities.

Due to the overweight influence the Arkansas Congressional delegation possessed, several federal funding initiatives were undertaken. First, the US Post Office issued a commemorative stamp recognizing the centennial. The Commission produced 10 first-day cover designs, with over 375,000 cancellations. The Commission pocketed the profits from sales.



Second, authorizing Congressional legislation allowed coinage of up to 500,000 half dollars honoring the centennial of the state. However, the bill's language conveniently omitted any reference to a place or date of coinage, yet it specified that the coins were to be delivered only to the Commission or its designated agent "at such times as they shall be requested." With so generous an authorization, the Commission could and did request that Arkansas halves be coined at all mints and in consecutive years.

The Commission selected Edward Everett Burr to design the coin, and Emily Bates was to put the design into plaster. Unfortunately, the design of this issue was not well received. In fact, after the first models were delivered, the Fine Arts Commission requested that both the artist and sculptor be replaced. However, after some reworking, the design was eventually approved and sent to the Medallion Art Company of New York for reduction to hubs.

The portrait side of the coin (which at the time of issue was considered the reverse) features the conjoined busts of a Quapaw Indian and Lady Liberty. The obverse is emblazoned with a large eagle in front of a rising sun with the name Arkansas above.

A total of 13,000 coins were coined in Philadelphia in 1935. They sold well, and the Commission upon the advice of Fort Worth coin dealer Max Mehl, ordered small mintages from the Denver and San Francisco Mints, to the tune of 5,500 coins each. They were supposedly available for purchase from the Arkansas Centennial Commission for just \$1, but unfortunately



most of them had already been secretly sold to Mehl, who then retailed them for \$2.75 each. Subsequent issues, offered annually through 1939, were subject to the same unfair manipulations at ever-higher mark-ups. Such practices ultimately brought down the wrath of Congress, culminating in 1939 with a law terminating the re-issue of all previously-authorized commemoratives. The Arkansas half dollar is a good example of a worthy project discredited through greed and poor management.

If this weren't enough to aggravate collectors (who naturally sought completeness in their sets), a new reverse (portrait side) was added in 1936 featuring the head of Senator Joseph T. Robinson. He was a well-known figure within Arkansas having served in the House of Representatives, as governor, and finally within the Senate; he was also alive at time of issue. The obverse was not changed. The 1936 Robinson-Arkansas Half Dollar is considered a separate issue by most collectors.



Special Meeting Activity Calendar

- September** – Show and Tell Night
- November** – Veteran's night, Officer/Director elections
- December** – Christmas party
- April** – Quiz Night
- May** – Donation auction
- June** – Youth Night
- July** – Weenie Roast

We need volunteers to give programs in 2018. Contact Kenny Smith if you have an interest.

Upcoming Local Coin Shows

- September 15** – San Antonio Coin, Collectible & Antique Show, 4522 Fredericksburg Hwy. Free.
- September 28-30** – Texas Coin Show, Grapevine Convention Ctr \$3 or free with NETCC membership.
- October-20** – Round Rock Coin Show, 1209 North I-35, Round Rock. \$3.
- October 26-27** – Cowtown Coin Show, White Settlement Convention Center. \$3.
- November 10** – Paris Coin Show, 3535 Lamar Avenue, Paris. Free.

August New Members: None.

August First Time Visitors: Kenneth Miller, Judy Moser, Bill White and Larry Powell.