

ROYAL CANADIAN MINT HISTORICAL TIMELINE



ROYAL
CANADIAN
MINT
MONNAIE
ROYALE
CANADIENNE

On January 2nd, 1908, the Royal Canadian Mint celebrated its centennial! The Mint has been producing both domestic and foreign coins and collector items of the highest quality for the last 100 years. We are a dynamic, market-driven industrial company that competes for the production and sale of circulation coinage, precious metals, refinery services, collector products and medals in both Canadian and international markets. The Mint is a progressive commercial Crown Corporation with over 800 employees between its facilities in Ottawa and Winnipeg.

TAKE A TRIP BACK IN TIME

Scroll through the years and discover some of the most interesting coins and milestones in the Mint's history. Click the arrows on the right and left to move forward or backward through each decade. Enjoy!

1908

THE FIRST COIN

At the opening ceremonies for the Ottawa branch of the Royal Mint on January 2, Governor General Earl Grey struck the Dominion's first domestically produced coin: a silver fifty-cent piece bearing the effigy of His Majesty King Edward VII.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Composition: .925 silver, .075 copper

Diameter: 29.72mm

Weight: 11.62g

Edge: Reeded

1911

A REFINERY

The Ottawa Mint's Refinery is completed in January. By year's end, a record number of gold sovereigns – more than 256,000 – were coined at the new facility.

A NEW ROYAL EFFIGY

The effigy of His Majesty King George V, who acceded to the throne in 1910, first appears on all coins minted in Canada.

1920

A SMALLER CENT

The large one-cent piece was the second coin struck by the Ottawa branch of the Royal Mint at the opening ceremonies in 1908. This large cent was replaced in 1920 by a smaller bronze coin, closer in size to its American counterpart.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Composition: .955 copper, .030 tin, .015 zinc

Diameter: 19.05mm

Weight: 3.24g

Edge: Plain

Photo credit 1920 and 1922: National Currency Collection, Currency Museum, Bank of Canada

1922

A NICKEL OF... NICKEL

Canada converts to a nickel five-cent piece to replace the more costly silver coin. Nickel is an excellent metal for coinage, and Canada is the world's leading source of nickel ore.

1931

A TRULY CANADIAN MINT

The Discontinuance Proclamation of December 1, 1931 transforms the Ottawa branch of the Royal Mint into the Royal Canadian Mint – a wholly Canadian institution.

Photo credit: Library and Archives Canada

1935

THE FIRST SILVER DOLLAR

The first silver dollar issued by the Royal Canadian Mint commemorates the silver jubilee of His Majesty King George V.

The coin's reverse design, by Toronto sculptor Emanuel Hahn, portrays a Voyageur and an aboriginal paddling a birch-bark canoe. Faint lines in the sky represent the Northern Lights. This admirable design served for decades, an enduring reminder of Canada's early history.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Composition: .800 silver, .200 copper

Diameter: 36.00mm

Weight: 23.33g

Edge: Reeded

1937

NEW COINS FOR CANADA

New Canadian coinage is introduced, with the effigy of the newly enthroned King George VI on the obverse. Original reverse designs for the fifty-cent, twenty-five-cent, ten-cent, five-cent and one-cent coins feature Canadian emblems: the Coat of Arms, the caribou, the Bluenose fishing schooner, the beaver and the maple leaf.

1939

THE ROYAL VISIT

A silver dollar is issued to commemorate the Royal Visit of His Majesty King George VI and Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth. The reverse design by Emanuel Hahn depicts the Centre Block and the Peace Tower of the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa. The legend, Fide Suorum Regnat, means "He reigns by the faith of his people."

1943

TOMBAC FIVE CENT

During the war years nickel was scarce, owing its use for munitions. To conserve valuable supplies, the Royal Canadian Mint adopted tombac, a type of brass, for the five-cent piece. The coin had a twelve-sided shape to help the public distinguish it from the bronze cent. Instead of the familiar beaver, the new five-cent coin displayed the patriotic V for Victory made famous by Churchill (notice the V is also the Roman numeral for 5) and a burning torch. Designed by Thomas Shingles, Chief

Engraver of the Royal Canadian Mint, the coin's rim holds a message in Morse code: "We win when we work willingly."

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Composition: .88 copper, .12 zinc

Diameter: 21.3mm (corners) 20.9mm (sides)

Weight: 4.54g

Edge: Plain

Photo credit: Library and Archives Canada

Copyright: Malak Ottawa

1948

INDIA'S INDEPENDENCE

When India became independent in August of 1947, the legend of IND: IMP had to be removed from the obverse of Canadian coinage, where it had appeared since 1902. An abbreviation of India Imperator, Latin for "Emperor of India", the legend was no longer appropriate. However, owing to the time required to produce new dies, the revised inscription did not appear until late 1948.

1949

WAR MEDALS

In honour of Canadians' gallant war service, the Defence Department commissioned the Royal Canadian Mint to strike the Defence of Britain Medal and The War Medal 1939-1945. Both medals were struck in 800 fine silver.

NEWFOUNDLAND JOINS THE CONFEDERATION

Still considered one of Canada's most beautiful coins, the silver dollar struck to commemorate Newfoundland's entry into the Confederation depicts the "Matthew", the ship in which John Cabot made his historic discovery of Newfoundland in 1497.

1951

200TH ANNIVERSARY OF NICKEL DISCOVERY

The bicentennial of the isolation and naming of nickel by Swedish chemist A.F. Cronstedt is commemorated, aptly enough, with a nickel coin: the Canadian five-cent piece. At the time of issue, Canada produced 90% of the world's nickel supply.

1953

EFFIGY OF A QUEEN

The first effigy of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II to appear on Canada's coins portrays the young sovereign uncrowned, her hair wreathed with laurel.

1958

CENTENNIAL OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

This commemorative silver dollar recalls the centenary of the Caribou Gold Rush and the establishment of British Columbia as a Crown Colony. The bold reverse design by Stephen Trenka features a totem pole typical of those found among Pacific Coast Native Canadians, poised against a background of mountains.

1959

CANADA'S NEW COAT OF ARMS

In 1957, the design of Canada's Coat of Arms was simplified. In addition, at the suggestion of the Queen, the crown of Edward the Confessor was substituted for that of the Tudors. The changes are reflected in the fifty-cent coin minted in 1959, which presents a new reverse modelled and engraved by Thomas Shingles.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Composition: .800 silver, .200 copper

Diameter: 29.72 mm

Weight: 11.66g

Edge: Reeded

1964

CONFEDERATION CONFERENCE

Fifth in the series of commemorative silver dollars, this issue recalls the centennial of Confederation conferences held in Charlottetown and Quebec City. The design is by Dinko Vodanovic of Montreal, winner of a nationwide competition. His drawing features emblems of four European nations who took part in the founding of Canada: France, Ireland, Scotland and England. More than 7 million of these popular coins were struck.

1965

A MATURING MONARCH

A new obverse sculpted by Arnold Machin portrays a more mature Elizabeth II, wearing a jewelled tiara. The legend, too, was revised: the formal Dei Gratia was reduced to D.G.

1967

SIX NEW REVERSES

A set of six designs submitted by Canadian artist and sculptor Alex Colville were selected for a new circulation coinage, minted to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Confederation of 1867. The coins depict common varieties of Canadian wildlife:

ONE-CENT COIN: A rock dove, symbol of spiritual values and peace

FIVE-CENT COIN: A rabbit, emblematic of fertility and new life

TEN-CENT COIN: A mackerel, to represent continuity

TWENTY-FIVE-CENT COIN: A bobcat, embodiment of intelligence and decisive action

FIFTY-CENT COIN: A howling wolf, to evoke the vastness of Canada

SILVER DOLLAR: A Canada goose, for its dynamic serenity.

Canadian coins reverted to their pre-1967 designs in 1968.

1968

NICKEL COINAGE

As the price of silver rose, the cost of minting silver circulation coins became prohibitive. In August 1968, the Royal Canadian Mint issues the first nickel-based fifty-cent and one-dollar pieces. Smaller and darker than their silver predecessors, they are accepted with little resistance by the general public.

1969

A CROWN CORPORATION

Upon the recommendation of the official advisory board, and with the approval of the Government, the Royal Canadian Mint becomes a Crown Corporation on April 1, 1969. The mandate for the Crown Corporation specifically encouraged the new Board of Directors to operate the Mint as a profitable business – not simply as the supplier of a needed commodity.

1973

A TRIBUTE TO THE MOUNTIES

The 100th anniversary of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in 1973 is commemorated with a twenty-five-cent circulation coin and a 500 fine silver dollar collector coin that portray an RCMP officer astride his horse. The design is the work of artist Paul Cedarberg.

1976

COINS AND MEDALS FOR THE 21ST OLYMPIAD

To celebrate the XXI Olympic Games in Montreal 1976, the Royal Canadian Mint launches a series of silver coins in five- and ten- dollar denominations. Seven thematic sets are produced, for a total of 28 commemorative coins, minted in both satin and proof finishes. A 100-dollar gold coin – the first-ever modern Olympic gold coin – is also struck, as well as the medals awarded to the Olympic champions.

A HIGH-SPEED, HIGH TECH PLANT

Although coin production actually started in 1975, the Winnipeg plant of the Royal Canadian Mint celebrates its official opening in 1976. All of Canada's circulation coins and coins for foreign governments are struck on the high-speed presses of this ultra-modern facility.

1979

THE GOLD MAPLE LEAF

In February, 1979 the Government launches the Gold Maple Leaf programme on a three-year trial basis. Distinguished by the stunning likeness of a maple leaf on its reverse, Canada's first bullion coins contained one troy ounce of twenty-four-karat gold. The Maple Leaf's success was such that Parliament authorized the coin's production on a continuing basis in 1981.

Today, the Gold Maple Leaf is struck in 9999 fine gold – it's the purest gold bullion in the world.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Composition: 1979: .999 fine gold 1982-present: .9999 fine gold

Weight: 31.150g

Diameter: 30.0mm

Edge: Reeded

1981

O CANADA!

This proof-issue of 100-dollar gold coin celebrates the adoption of “O Canada” as the country’s national anthem on July 1, 1980. The reverse design is by Roger Savage.

1987

INTRODUCING THE “LOONIE”

The one-dollar circulation coin is introduced as a cost-saving measure, to replace one-dollar bank notes. Minted of aureate bronze plated on pure nickel, the coin has a distinctive eleven-sided shape. The reverse presents a graceful Canadian Loon at rest on a lake, a design by one of Canada’s most well-known wildlife artists, Robert-Ralph Carmichael. Since its launch, the coin has become familiarly known to Canadians as “the Loonie”.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Composition: .915 nickel, .085 bronze

Diameter: 26.72mm

Weight: 7.00g

Edge: Plain

1988

CALGARY OLYMPICS

To help finance the XV Winter Olympic Games held in Calgary, Alberta, the Royal Canadian Mint issues a series of ten commemorative sterling silver coins in proof quality only. The obverse of each coin is dated with the year of its minting, while the reverse on every coin has “Calgary 1988”. The reverse designs, by various artists, feature dynamic images of athletes competing in Olympic winter sports.

SILVER MAPLE LEAF

Encouraged by the success of the Gold Maple Leaf programme, the Royal Canadian Mint launches the Silver Maple Leaf bullion coin in 1988. Each hand-crafted coin contains one troy ounce of 9999 fine silver.

1990

PORTRAIT OF A QUEEN

The crowned effigy of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II which appears on Canada’s coinage in 1990 shows the monarch in her 64th year. The portrait is the work of Dora de Pedery-Hunt, the first Canadian to design a royal effigy for Canadian coinage. It remained in use until 2003.

1996

THE PATENDED BI-METALLIC COIN

The two-dollar coin is introduced on February 19, 1996 to replace the two-dollar bank note – as coins last some 20 times longer than notes. Familiarly known as the “Toonie”, the two-dollar coins features a distinctive bi-metallic locking mechanism engineered and patented by the Royal Canadian Mint. The coin’s outer ring is nickel; the inner core is aluminum bronze (92% copper, 6% aluminum, 2% nickel). In 1996 alone, 375 million “Toonies” are struck at the Royal Canadian Mint’s Winnipeg plant – an amazing feat. The reverse depicts an adult polar bear in early summer on an ice floe. It was designed by Ontario artist Brent Townsend, who specializes in studies of North American wildlife and landscapes.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Composition: Ring: .99 nickel Core: .92 copper, .06 aluminum, .02 nickel
Diameter: Ring 28.0mm Core: 16.8mm
Weight: 7.3g
Edge: Interrupted Serration

1997

A NEW ROUND CENT

The familiar one-cent coin contained 98% copper until 1997, when its composition is modified. The Canadian penny – the workhorse of our circulation coinage – is now made of copper-plated zinc. The twelve-sided form proves difficult to plate, resulting in the reintroduction of the round design.

1999

COINS FOR THE MILLENIUM

To mark the end of the second millennium, the Royal Canadian Mint strikes a different twenty-five-cent coin design for each month of 1999 and 2000. The artwork is chosen from more than 66,000 entries submitted by Canadians from all walks of life, as part of the Mint-sponsored “Create a Centsation!” coin design contest. The 1999 series looks back on the preceding thousand years; the 2000 coins look forward to the future.

The Millennium programme is hugely successful, making coin collectors of millions of Canadians. The Mint products over 500 million twenty-five-cent coins during 1999 and 2000 to keep up with demand.

A NEW DIMENSION IN DESIGN

The Royal Canadian Mint celebrates the 20th anniversary of its signature Gold Maple Leaf with a high-tech version of the bullion coin, featuring a beautiful maple leaf hologram. It is a first for the Mint, and a clear demonstration of the technical prowess. The innovation consists in striking the hologram directly onto the coin's surface, instead of producing a applying it in separate steps

2000

FIRST COLOURED COLLECTOR COIN

"Celebration", a twenty-five-cent piece designed for the Millennium programme, is the first Canadian coin ever to be re-issued in a colourized version. Released in July 2000, this special collector version features a Canadian flag with a red maple leaf and side panels.

2001

MULTI-PLY PLATING

With the development of a patented multi-ply plating technique, the Royal Canadian Mint steps once again to the forefront of minting technologies. In 2001, Canadian circulation coinage converts to this money-saving production method. The five-, ten-, twenty-five- and fifty-cent coins are struck on nickel-plated steel blanks; a copper-plated steel blank is used for the one-cent piece. Multi-ply technology is one of several major innovations from the Mint. Others include selective plating and laser enhancement, technologies used for collector coins.

2003

UPDATED ROYAL EFFIGY

Introduced a year after the Golden Jubilee of Her Royal Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, the latest obverse effigy depicts the Queen without a crown. The portrait was designed by Suzanna Blunt.

2004

LEST WE FORGET

The Royal Canadian Mint releases the world's first coloured circulation coin commemorating the Poppy, Canada's flower of remembrance. The twenty-five-cent piece presents a stylized red poppy on the reverse. The coin is dedicated to all of the 117,000 gallant Canadians who gave their lives while in the nation's service. To meet the engineering and design challenges involved in producing this innovative coin, the Mint

perfected a high-speed colouring process that can generate 30 million coins. The process ensures that the colour adheres to the metal and resists day-to-day wear.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Composition: .940 steel, .038 copper, .022 nickel

Diameter: 23.88mm

Weight: 4.4g

Edge: Reeded

2005

HONOURING TERRY FOX

For the first time in history, a circulation coin features a Canadian-born figure: Terry Fox. This one-dollar coin marks the 25th anniversary of Fox's *Marathon of Hope*, in which he ran the equivalent of a marathon every day for 143 days to raise money for cancer research.

2005

SASKATCHEWAN AND ALBERTA CENTENNIAL COINS

The Royal Canadian Mint unveils a pair of twenty-five-cent coins celebrating the centennials of Saskatchewan and Alberta. Each coin's design was chosen by the public—a first in Mint history. The Saskatchewan coin features the Western Meadowlark. The Alberta coin features an oil derrick with cattle grazing at its feet under Alberta's "Big Sky." It also features the provincial flower, the Wild Rose.

2006

SQUARE BEAVER COIN

Inspired by the tokens used by fur traders, the Royal Canadian Mint struck a three-dollar sterling silver square coin as part of a collector series. The reverse of the coin presents the beaver, the prize of the fur trade.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Composition: 92.5% silver, 7.5% copper

Weight: 11.72g

Diameter: 27.00mm

Edge: Plain

2006

BREAST CANCER COIN

On March 31, the Royal Canadian Mint and the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation release a twenty-five-cent coin featuring the pink ribbon, a

symbol of hope and awareness in the fight against breast cancer. This is only the second coloured circulation coin in the world.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Composition: three-ply nickel finish plated steel

Weight: 25.175g

Diameter: 23.88mm

Edge: Serrated

2006

NEW SILVER REFINERY

The Royal Canadian Mint officially opens a new, state-of-the-art silver refinery—restoring in-house silver refining services after a 23-year hiatus. Using a unique, cost-effective process that produces zero waste, this compact facility has a high potential capacity of 10 million troy ounces per year.

2006

NAME THE POLAR BEAR

The Royal Canadian Mint released a commemorative version of the two-dollar coin celebrating the Toonie's 10th anniversary. The coin features the polar bear in a new pose designed by Tony Bianco. Canadians voted on a name for the polar bear: 'Churchill' was the winner.

2007

VANCOUVER 2010 WINTER GAMES COIN PROGRAM

The Royal Canadian Mint unveils its program of circulation and collector coins in anticipation of the Vancouver 2010 Winter Games, representing the most extensive circulation program in relation to the Olympic and Paralympic Games ever conceived by any mint worldwide. An official supporter of the 2010 Winter Games, the Mint will also produce the world's first bullion coins bearing the emblems of an Olympic Games and the athlete medals.

2007

BREAKING THE RECORD

The Royal Canadian Mint makes a big impression by celebrating the launch of its new line of 99.999% pure one-ounce Gold Maple Leaf bullion coins with the unveiling of a 100-kg, 99.999% pure gold bullion coin with a \$1 million face value. The new coins introduce the

international bullion market to the highest standard of gold bullion purity.

Guinness World Records certifies the \$1 million coin as the largest gold coin in the world. The reverse features an elegant maple leaf designed by Stan Witten and the obverse bears the effigy of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II designed by Susanna Blunt.

2008

100 YEARS OF MINTING

The Royal Canadian Mint celebrates its centennial! On January 2, 1908 the Dominion's first domestically produced coin was struck by Governor General Earl Grey: a silver fifty-cent piece bearing the effigy of His Majesty King Edward VII. The Mint has been producing both domestic and foreign coins and collector items of the highest quality for the last 100 years.