



Lady Liberty

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Who is Lady Liberty?



Lady Liberty is a mythical figure based on a combination of the Greek goddess Athena (Minerva), the Roman goddess Libertas, and an imaginary Indian Queen.

Athena was the goddess of wisdom and justice. She was the guardian of Athens, a democratic city-state in ancient Greece.

Libertas was the goddess of freedom.

The Indian Queen is Columbia, the female counterpart to Columbus.

In the years following the discovery of America, the image of an Indian Queen was used to entice Europeans to the New World. The Indian Queen represented the exotic, dangerous adventure that was America!



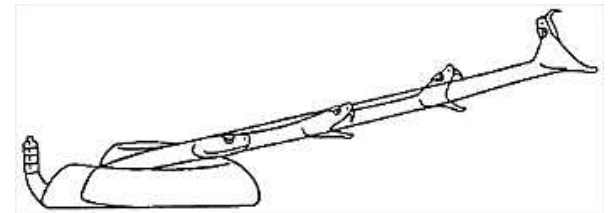
Lady Liberty and her Attendants



Lady Liberty is attended by the bald eagle and often the rattlesnake.

The bald eagle is indigenous to North America and a symbol of power. With keen eyes, swift wings, and sharp talons, the bald eagle represents a young nation that is vigilant and able to defend itself.

The rattlesnake is a similar symbol of vigilance and ability to defend against attack. The rattlesnake can strike up to half its body length.



Lady Liberty and Other Symbols of Freedom



Bald Eagle

Oak
Laurel
Wheat
Pine



Flag

Stars



Shield



Rattlesnake



Phrygian Slave Cap
or Liberty Cap



“No one will attack me with impunity.”



Lady Liberty has Changed Over Time



In the years surrounding the American Revolution, the exotic image of the Indian Queen or Princess gave way to the softer images of classical Greek and Roman art.

It has been said that it was not clear whether a feathered Indian Princess had changed into a Greek goddess, or a Greek goddess had placed plumes in her hair.



For over 200 years, Liberty was represented on United States coins as a mythical goddess.

But for the first time in 1979, she was represented by a woman who had actually lived, Susan B. Anthony, the leader of the women's suffrage movement.

The Coinage Act of 1792

On April 2, 1792, Congress created the first national coinage system for the United States of America. The basic unit of money was a dollar coin containing $371\frac{1}{4}$ grains of fine silver (exactly equal to the silver content of a Spanish milled dollar).



The first Coinage Act required that the obverse of all gold and silver coins bear an impression “emblematic of Liberty and the year of the coinage.” On the reverse side, “there shall be the figure or representation of an eagle with this inscription: United States of America.”

The Act went on to define gold coins as Eagles (\$10 gold coin), Half Eagle (\$5), and Quarter Eagle (\$2½). Silver coins smaller than the dollar were defined as Half Dollar, Quarter Dollar, Disme (the original spelling of “dime” or tenth of a dollar), and Half Dime (not a “nickel”, but a silver coin worth 5 cents). Copper coins were defined as Cent and Half Cent.

Flowing Hair Dollar 1794 – 1795



Designer: Robert Scot

Obverse: Liberty is depicted as a proud woman with her head uplifted. The 15 stars represent the 15 states of the Union in 1794.

Reverse: The fledgling eagle has upraised wings to show the youth and majesty of the new nation. Laurel branches symbolic of victory and honor encircle the young eagle.



Notes: 1,758 silver dollars were minted in 1794, but fewer than 100 exist today.

Comparison of the First and Current Dollar Coin



Over the years, Liberty has transitioned from an abstract image to people who lived. The people chosen are symbolic of freedom.



From the Flowing Hair Liberty, the proud woman with head uplifted, to the young Shoshone woman who assisted the Lewis & Clark Expedition.

Liberty is Now Symbolized by People Who Lived



In fact, the first person who actually lived to symbolize Liberty was a man, Abraham Lincoln!



The second Coinage Act of 1837 dropped the requirement for an eagle on the reverse of the dime, half dime, cent, and half cent.

Liberty is Now Symbolized by People Who Lived



Theodore Roosevelt had originally commissioned Augustus Saint-Gaudens to design a one cent coin, but it was never minted.

Instead, to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the birth of Abraham Lincoln, Victor Brenner was commissioned to redesign the cent using a “specific symbol of Liberty.”



Victor Brenner modeled the Lincoln cent after a bronze plaque that he had previously made and showed to Theodore Roosevelt.

Liberty Image Categories



Liberty as a Goddess: Flowing Hair, Draped Bust, Classic Head, Phrygian (Liberty) Cap, Coronet (also Rays), Seated, Standing, Walking, and Striding

Liberty as an Indian Queen: Feather Bonnet and Headdress

Liberty as a Device: Star, Eagle, and Shield

Liberty as a Man: Indian Chief, Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Franklin Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy, and Dwight Eisenhower

Liberty as a Lady: Susan B. Anthony and Sacagawea

Liberty as a Goddess



In addition to the Flowing Hair image of Liberty, other more “sophisticated” images were used such as the Draped Bust and Classic Head.

Variations of the Draped Bust image were used on the Half Cent, Cent, Half Dime, Dime, Quarter, Half Dollar, and Dollar.

Variations of the Classic Head image were used on the Half Cent, Cent, Quarter Eagle, and Half Eagle.



Liberty as a Goddess wearing a Cap



Liberty is often depicted wearing a Phrygian Slave Cap or Liberty Cap.

Such caps were made of felt or soft leather and given to freed slaves as a symbol of their freedom.

Examples of Liberty wearing a cap include the Quarter Eagle, Morgan Dollar, Winged Liberty "Mercury" Dime, and Walking Liberty Half Dollar.



Winged Liberty “Mercury Dime” 1916 – 1945



Obverse: Lady Liberty is wearing a Phrygian Slave Cap with wings that symbolize “freedom of thought”. But people mistook her for the Greek god Mercury who was male and had wings on his feet!



Reverse: The faces, Roman symbol of authority, is a bundle of rods with an axe. An olive branch is behind the faces which represents a desire for peace.

At the time, America was being pressed by Europe to join World War I.

Liberty as a Goddess wearing a Crown



Liberty is often seen wearing a crown, also called a coronet or tiara.

Variations of Coronet are many and include the Half Cent, Cent, Three Cent, Five Cent, Dollar (gold), Quarter Eagle, Half Eagle, and Eagle.

On the Peace Dollar, Liberty's crown has been transformed into rays of light – a treatment inspired by the Statue of Liberty.



Peace Dollar 1921 – 1935



Obverse: Liberty is depicted as a beautiful woman wearing a crown similar to the one worn by the Statue of Liberty.

Reverse: The eagle is at rest clutching an olive branch while looking into a rising sun suggesting the dawn of peace.



Notes: The Peace dollar was issued to mark the termination of hostilities between the United States and Germany.



Liberty as a Goddess – Seated



Liberty is depicted as a woman seated with head uplifted. She holds a federal shield and staff topped with a Liberty Cap.

Notice the use of the 6-point star, which is symbolic of French heraldry. The 5-point star is symbolic of English heraldry.

The cap on a pole references the raising of a Liberty Cap during a 263 B.C. battle against Rome to show that slaves who joined the fight would be freed.



Notice the use of the 6-point star, which is symbolic of French heraldry. The French helped America gain independence from Britain. The 5-point star is symbolic of English heraldry.



Seated Liberty Trade Dollar



Liberty is depicted as a woman seated on a bale of cotton backed with a sheaf of wheat. Her eyes are level with the open sea, not uplifted as on “domestic” coins. Her right arm is outstretched with an olive branch in her hand as a symbol of peace. In her left hand is a scroll bearing the word Liberty

Trade Dollars weighed 420 grains versus 412¼ grains of standard U.S. dollars. They were intended to circulate in the Orient and compete with Mexican dollars.



Trade Dollars are the only coin to have “legal tender” status revoked by Congress. In 1876, their use to overseas trade only.

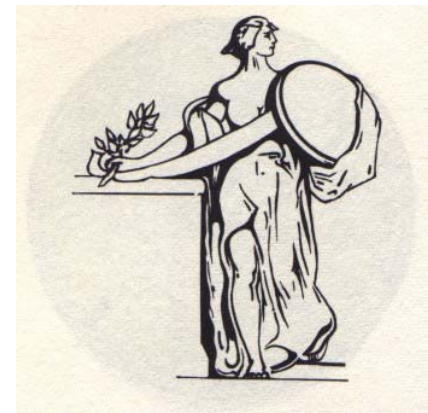
Liberty as a Goddess – Standing



Liberty is depicted as a partially nude woman in a passageway of Greek or Roman architecture.

Minting of the type 1 version began in 1916. Public outcry against this “obscene coin” forced the redesign which resulted in the type 2, released in late 1917.

The type 2 added chain mail to Lady Liberty to cover her right breast.



Liberty as a Goddess – Walking



Obverse: Lady Liberty walking toward a rising sun draped in an American flag wearing a Liberty Cap. She is carrying a branches of laurel and oak, symbols of victory and strength.

Reverse: The American Bald Eagle perched on a mountain ledge with a pine sapling (an early symbol of “Young America”) in its right talon.



The Walking Liberty design is used for silver bullion coins which began production in 1986.



Liberty as a Goddess – Striding



Early designs of the Double Eagle by Augustus St. Gaudens showed Lady Liberty with angel wings and a torch.

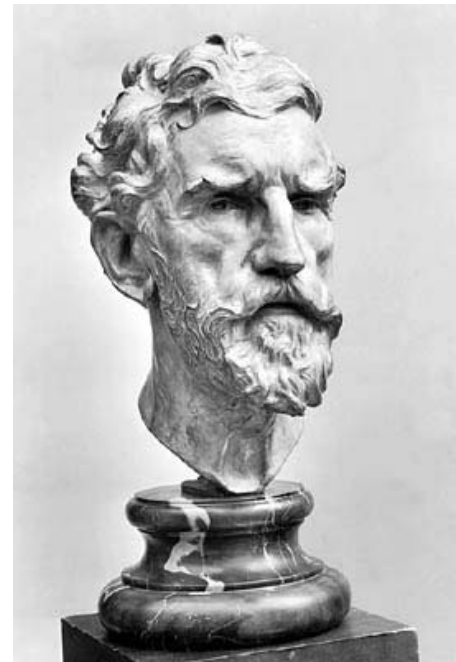
Commissioned by Theodore Roosevelt, they were minted beginning in 1907 until they were outlawed by Franklin Roosevelt in 1933.



The Majesty of the Double Eagle



The extremely high relief pattern of 1907 is considered by many to be the most beautiful American coin ever minted.



Designer: Augustus Saint-Gaudens

Liberty as an Indian Queen



The gold dollar was designed by James Longacre and minted from 1854 through 1889. It is the smallest diameter coin ever made by the United States, only $\frac{9}{16}$ inch (a dime is $\frac{11}{16}$ inch)!

Liberty is depicted as an elegant Indian Princess wearing a crown of feathers with the word Liberty on the band.

In a later design by Augustus Saint-Gaudens, Liberty wears a full Indian headdress of feathers with the word Liberty on the band.

Liberty as an Indian Queen appears on the Cent, Dollar, Three Dollar, and Eagle.

Liberty as a Device



From 1851 to 1873, Liberty was depicted as a 6-point star on the obverse of the silver Three Cent coin designed by James Longacre.



Only minted from 1856 to 1858, the “Flying Eagle” Cent was the first small cent coin. It marked the end of the large cent which had been minted since 1793.



The “Shield Nickel” as it is known was minted from 1866 to 1883. Following the Civil War, the use of the Union Shield (also called Federal Shield) was used as an image of Liberty.

Liberty as a Man



Liberty has been depicted as a man beginning with the Indian Head Quarter Eagle in 1908. Bella Lyons Pratt was commissioned by Teddy Roosevelt for this first ever intaglio coin.

The Indian Head Five Cent “Buffalo Nickel” was actually a composite of three Indian chiefs.

All of the other men were presidents, except Benjamin Franklin who was a statesman, ambassador, inventor, and signer of the Declaration of Independence.



Indian Head “Buffalo Nickel” 1913 – 1938



James Earle Fraser, the designer of the Indian Head Five Cent or “Buffalo Nickel” used three different Indian chiefs to form the composite image on the obverse:



Chief John Big Tree, a Seneca
Chief Two Moons, a Cheyenne
Chief Iron Tail, a Sioux

The Seneca was the model for the nose and forehead, the Sioux was the model for the cheek and chin, and the Cheyenne for the hair and headdress.



The buffalo on the reverse was a bison in the New York Zoo called “Black Diamond” which was sold for \$700 in 1915 at the age of 20.

He weighed 1,550 pounds and dressed to 750 pounds of meat. His hide measured 15’ x 15’ and was made into a robe and his head was mounted.

Liberty as a Woman



SBA Dollar: Liberty is depicted as Susan Barton Anthony who participated in the suffrage movement which gave women the right to vote. On the reverse is an eagle landing on the moon with an olive branch in its talons.



Sacagawea Dollar: Liberty is depicted as Sacagawea with her infant son, Jean Baptiste. On the reverse, an eagle is encircled by 17 stars for the 17 states in 1804 when the Lewis & Clark expedition began.

Both the SBA and Sacagawea dollar coins have the same diameter of 26.5 mm, as opposed to 38.1 mm of previous dollar coins. Quarters are 24.3 mm, resulting in confusion and public dissatisfaction.



Lady Liberty

The End

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