

Collector's Journal

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2010 James Buchanan Presidential Dollar

Fifteenth in the Presidential Dollars Collection

The James Buchanan Dollar is the third of four Presidential Dollars issued by the U.S. Mint in 2010. It was released in August 2010 and was struck for only about three months before production began on the next coin in the series.

Presidential Dollars are released in the order in which the Presidents served. As a result, the Buchanan coin was the 15th in the series because Buchanan was the 15th President. It was preceded in 2010 by the coins for Millard Fillmore (13th President) and Franklin Pierce (14th President), and will be followed by the coin for Abraham Lincoln (16th President) in late 2010. Each coin is a limited edition that is made for only a short time and can never be struck again.

The obverse of each Presidential Dollar depicts a portrait of the featured President. Coin designers at the U.S. Mint consult a variety of images before deciding on the most appropriate portrait. For most of the early Presidents, the portraits were based on paintings that were completed about the time the President was in office. The first portrait on a coin that was based on a photograph was for James Knox Polk (11th President) in 2009.

The reverse of all Presidential Dollars features a standard design of the Statue of Liberty. Edge lettering includes the motto "E Pluribus Unum," the date of issue, and the mint mark ("P" for Philadelphia or "D" for Denver).

The portrait on the James Buchanan Presidential Dollar is based on a photograph of Buchanan taken by Mathew Brady, who later became famous for his series of photographs documenting the Civil War. Buchanan sat for the photograph at the approximate time of his Presidency between 1857 and 1861. The original photograph resides in the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.



James Buchanan

James Buchanan was born on April 23, 1791, in Cove Gap, Pennsylvania. He was the last President born in the 18th century and the only President who never married. Born into a prominent family, he became a lawyer in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and served in the War of 1812 before entering politics.

Following a term in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, Buchanan was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives five times, served as U.S. Minister to Russia, and spent 10 years in the U.S. Senate. He was also Secretary of State under James K. Polk and Minister to Great Britain under Franklin Pierce.

In 1856 – after more than 40 years in public service – Buchanan won the Democratic nomination for President. He defeated Charles Fremont to become 15th President. The nation was bitterly divided over slavery at this time, and Buchanan was unable to ease the tensions or break the stalemate in Congress. He did not seek reelection in 1860, in part due to his age (69) and in part because he was increasingly ineffective. By the time his term ended on March 4, 1861, several Southern states had already seceded from the Union and formed the Confederate States of America.

Buchanan retired to Wheatland – his home near Lancaster, Pennsylvania – where he died on June 1, 1868. He is buried at the Woodward Hill Cemetery in Lancaster.

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