

Collector's Journal

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2012 Chester A. Arthur Presidential Dollar

Twenty-First in the Presidential Dollars Collection

The Chester A. Arthur Dollar was the first of four 2012 Presidential Dollars and the start of the sixth year of the ongoing series. The coin was released by the United States Mint in the Spring of 2012. It will be followed by coins for Grover Cleveland, Benjamin Harrison, and Grover Cleveland again.

Presidential Dollars are issued in the order in which the Presidents served, starting with George Washington. The Arthur coin is the 21st coin in the series because Arthur was the 21st President. The reason there will be two coins for Grover Cleveland is that he was the only President to serve two non-consecutive terms and is therefore considered both the 22nd and 24th President.

Four Presidential Dollars are issued each year, but they are issued one-at-a-time so each coin is made in a limited edition of only about 13 weeks. All coins are struck for circulation at the U.S. Mints in Philadelphia and Denver: Philadelphia coins bear a small "P" mint mark in the edge lettering, while Denver coins have a small "D."

Chester A. Arthur was a large man with distinctive side-whiskers and an eye for the fashions of the day, elements of which are captured in his portrait on the coin. The image was inspired by photographs taken during Arthur's Presidency, including an 1882 photograph taken in Washington, D.C.

The inscriptions under Arthur's portrait include the notation "21st President" and "1881-1885" to indicate the dates of his Presidency. "In God We Trust" was moved from the edge lettering to the obverse starting in 2009 in order to avoid what became known as "Godless" error coins. Some 2007 and 2008 coins were struck in error without the edge lettering, so moving "In God We Trust" to the obverse assured that no other coins could be made without the motto. The reverse of the coin shows the Statue of Liberty.



Chester A. Arthur

Chester A. Arthur was born on October 5, 1829, in Fairfield, Vermont – making him the first President born in Vermont. The son of a Baptist minister, he taught school before being admitted to the bar in New York in 1854 and moving to New York City to practice law.

In 1871, President Ulysses S. Grant appointed Arthur as collector of the Port of New York. Arthur held the position until 1878, and he became known for his honesty as well as his loyalty to the Republican party. As a reward, he was named as James A. Garfield's Vice Presidential running mate in the 1880 election.

Garfield won the Presidency, but he was assassinated a little more than six months after his inauguration. Arthur became President upon Garfield's death, taking the oath of office on September 20, 1881. One of his campaigns as President was to reform the Civil Service to make hiring and promotion merit-based instead of according to party loyalty. On February 21, 1885, he made a major public appearance to dedicate the Washington Monument in Washington, D.C. By the time he sought re-nomination in 1884, Arthur was no longer popular with his Republican party, and he did not secure the nomination for the 1884 election. Suffering from a fatal kidney disease, he died in New York City on November 18, 1886.

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