

A Different Penny

Quick, check your pennies! You may have some special pennies.

Long, long ago before the time your grandparents were born, the United States government had pennies. Officially, almost as soon as the United States became an independent country, the US Mint started making pennies.

But those pennies have changed a lot since then. This short story is about the pennies you find today, not the full history of pennies. Today we call pennies Lincoln Cents.



This penny was first minted in 1909 and its design was not changed until 2009.

2009 was the Bicentennial or 200th birthday of Abraham Lincoln our 16th President.

To celebrate Lincoln's 200th birthday and honor his service the US Congress authorized a year of special pennies.

Four different pennies with a design on the reverse (back or tails) that illustrated different times in Lincoln's life. The design on the obverse (front or heads) would remain the historical portrait of Lincoln.



The designs would change every three months during the year.

A small log cabin on the first 2009 penny represents Lincoln's birth and early childhood in Kentucky. Officially called "Birth and Early Childhood" cent.



The second cent of 2009 shows a young Lincoln sitting on a log reading a book. Officially this was called "The Formative Years" cent.



The third cent show Lincoln standing in front of the Illinois state Capital, where he got his start in politics. Officially called "Professional Life" cent.



The fourth and final 2009 cent shows the US Capital building as it appeared during Lincoln's time in office. Officially called "Presidency" cent.



In 2010 the US Mint changed the cent's design again. The obverse still has Lincoln's portrait as it has since 1909, but the reverse design has been changed.

The 2010 design is intended to be emblematic of President Lincoln's preservation of the United States of America as a united country. A depiction of the Union Shield is used on the reverse. The shield's design dates back to about 1780. The shield consists of 13 vertical stripes bound together by a single horizontal bar. It represents the original 13 states bound together as a compact union in support of the federal government.

This cent design of 2010 is still used today and is expected to be the final design for the cent.

