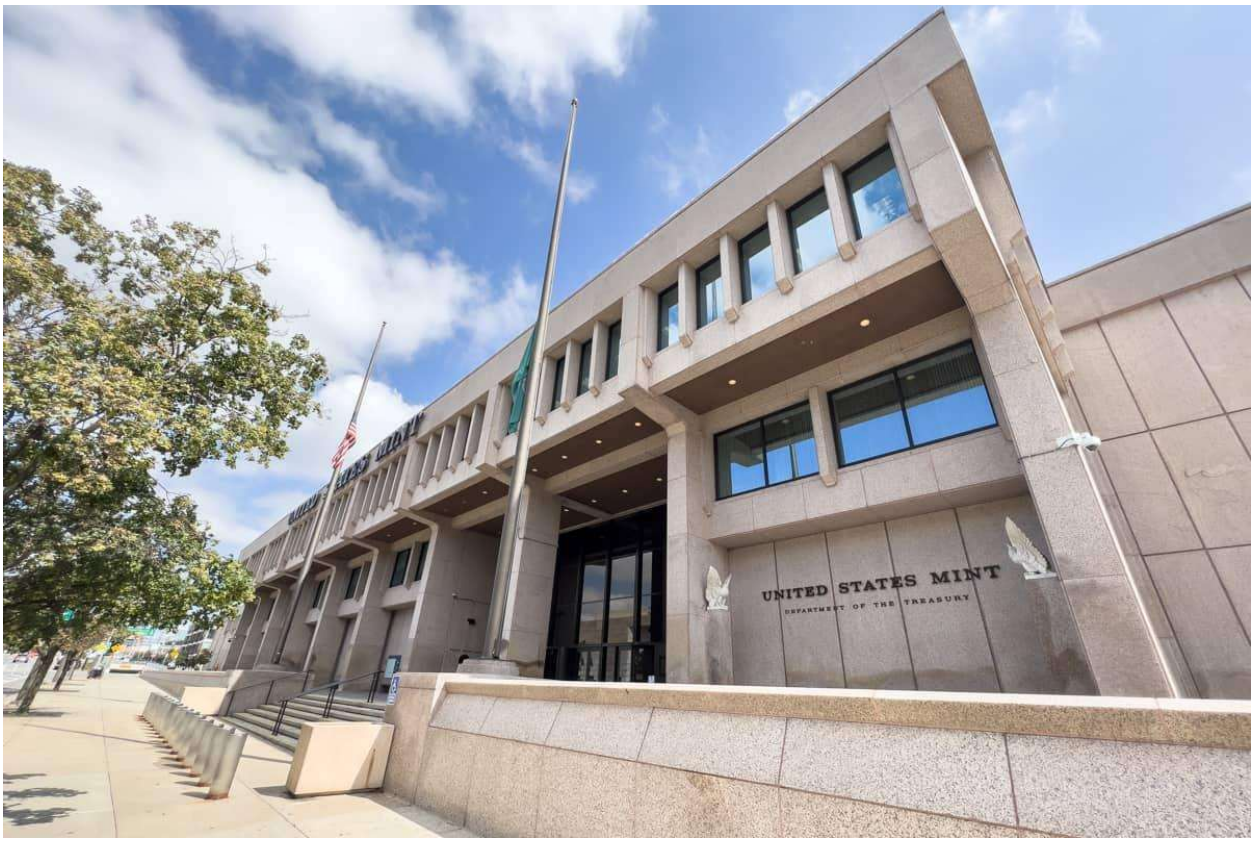
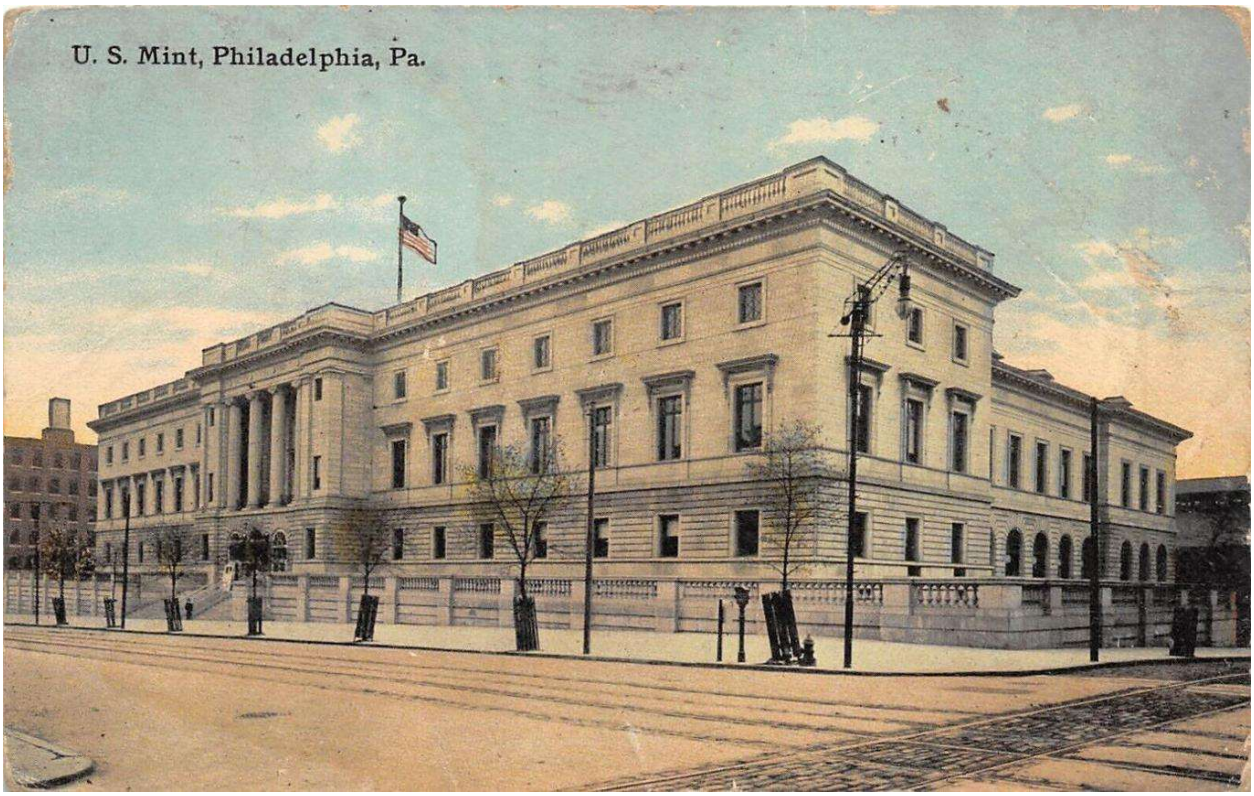
The Philadelphia Mint and the Proof Coins It Produced







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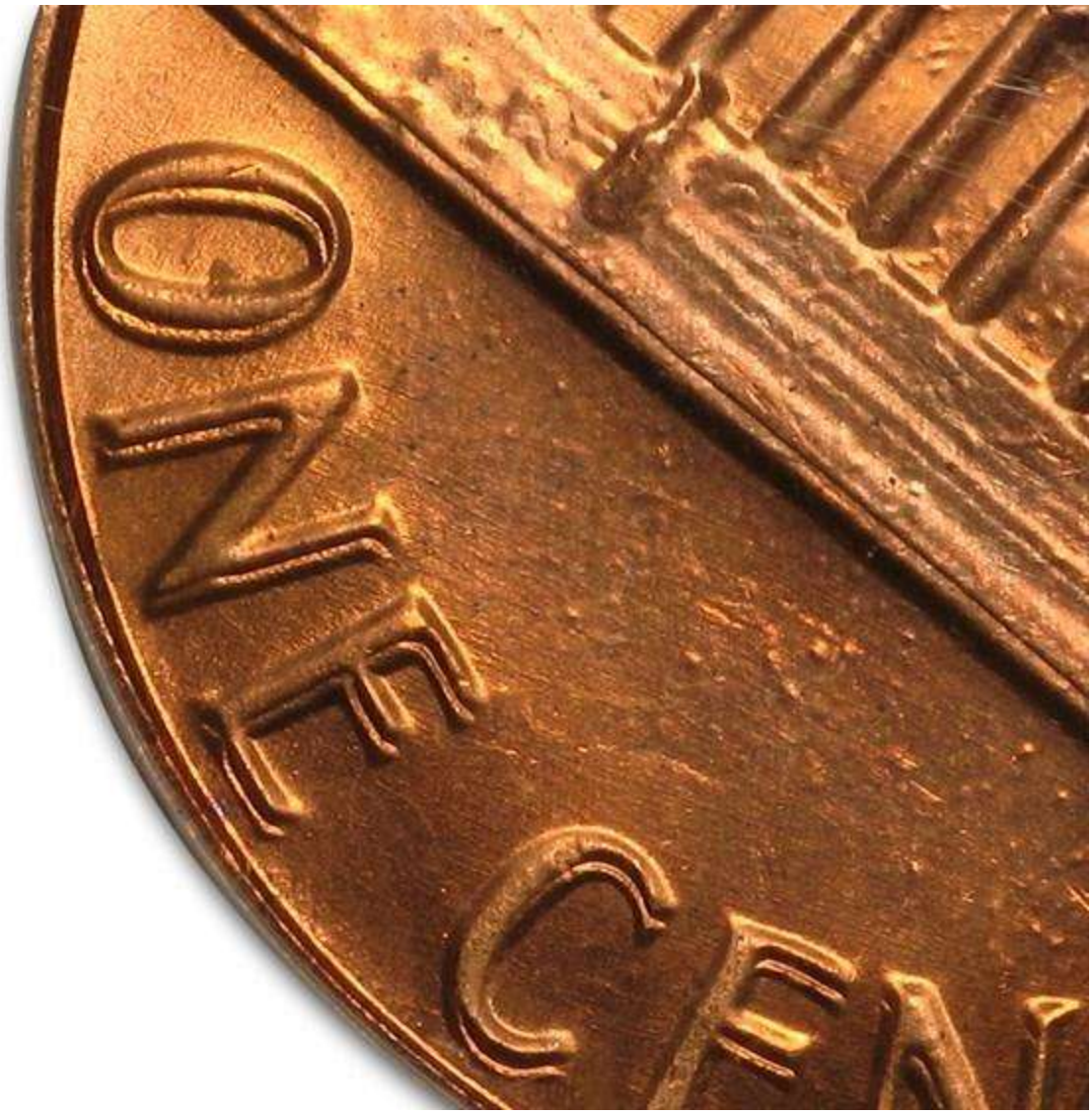
The Philadelphia Mint is the oldest and most historically significant minting facility in the United States. Established in 1792 following the passage of the Coinage Act of 1792, it was the nation's first federal building constructed under the U.S. Constitution. For more than 170 years, Philadelphia was the primary producer of America's proof coins, creating some of the most beautiful and collectible coins ever struck.

The Birth of the Philadelphia Mint

The first Philadelphia Mint opened in 1792 while Philadelphia served as the nation's capital. Under the direction of David Rittenhouse, the Mint began producing copper cents and half cents in 1793. Soon afterward it expanded into silver and gold coinage.

As the United States grew, larger Mint buildings were constructed in Philadelphia in 1833, 1901, and finally the current facility, which opened in 1969 near Independence Hall. Even today, the Philadelphia Mint remains one of the world's largest coin production facilities, capable of striking millions of coins each day.

What Is a Proof Coin?


ONE CENT


LIBERTY
IN GOD WE TRUST
1988



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Many beginning collectors believe a proof coin simply means a coin in perfect condition. That isn't true.

A proof coin is a specially manufactured coin struck primarily for collectors. Unlike ordinary circulation coins, proof coins are made using:

- Highly polished dies
- Carefully prepared planchets

- Multiple strikes from the dies
- Special handling to prevent marks

The result is razor-sharp detail, mirrored fields, and often frosted designs that create the famous "cameo" appearance. Early proof coins often lack heavy frosting, but still display brilliant mirrored surfaces.

Philadelphia's Proof Coin Heritage

The Philadelphia Mint produced nearly all official U.S. proof coinage from the mid-19th century through 1964.

Although small numbers of presentation proofs were struck before then, regular proof production for collectors became established in the 1850s.

The modern era of proof sets began in 1936 when the Philadelphia Mint offered annual proof sets containing:

- Lincoln Cent
- Jefferson Nickel
- Mercury Dime
- Washington Quarter
- Walking Liberty Half Dollar

Collectors could also purchase the coins individually.

Only 3,837 proof sets were sold in 1936, making it one of the key rarities among modern proof sets. Production increased each year until World War II interrupted sales after 1942.

The Return of Proof Sets

After World War II, proof coin production resumed in 1950.

Philadelphia continued producing annual proof sets through 1964.

Popular proof issues include:

- 1950 Proof Set
- 1955 Proof Set
- 1956 Franklin Half Dollar
- 1963 Proof Set

- 1964 Proof Set

Because Philadelphia coins generally carried no mint mark during this period, collectors identify these proof coins by their mirrored surfaces rather than by a "P."

Why 1964 Was the End

The 1964 Proof Set marked the end of an era.

Due to a nationwide coin shortage, the U.S. Mint suspended proof set production in 1965, 1966, and 1967. Instead, it issued Special Mint Sets with a distinctive finish that was neither a traditional proof nor a standard business strike.

Beginning in 1968, proof coin production moved permanently to the San Francisco Mint. From that point forward, proof coins carried the familiar "S" mint mark.

Famous Philadelphia Proof Coins

Some of the most sought-after Philadelphia proof coins include:

- 1936 Proof Set
- 1938 Jefferson Nickel Proof
- 1950 Franklin Half Dollar Proof
- 1955 Cameo Proofs
- 1964 Kennedy Half Dollar Proof (90% silver)
- 1964 Proof Set

Collectors especially prize examples certified as Cameo or Deep Cameo because strong frosting was uncommon before the late 1960s.

How to Identify a Philadelphia Proof

Characteristics include:

- Mirror-like fields
- Extremely sharp details
- Squared rims
- Minimal contact marks
- No mint mark on most issues through 1964

A common misconception is that all proof coins have an "S" mint mark. That is only true for most proof coins struck from 1968 onward. Earlier proof coins were generally produced in Philadelphia and usually have no mint mark.

Collecting Philadelphia Proof Coins

Many collectors enjoy building complete runs of Philadelphia proof sets from 1936 through 1964. These sets represent the final proof issues before production moved west and include classic silver coinage, making them both historically important and visually appealing.

The 1964 Proof Set is especially popular because it contains the first-year Kennedy half dollar struck in 90% silver, commemorating the late President John F. Kennedy.

Legacy

The Philadelphia Mint laid the foundation for proof coin collecting in America. Nearly every classic U.S. proof coin—from the elegant Liberty Head issues of the 1800s to the beloved silver proof sets of the early 1960s—was struck within its walls.

Although the San Francisco Mint now produces most proof coins, Philadelphia's proof coinage remains a cornerstone of American numismatics. Its proof coins showcase the highest standards of craftsmanship and continue to be treasured by collectors around the world.