

# 1876 US Centennial Exposition So-Called Dollars

—A variety of famous engravers created medals to celebrate the centennial of the United States

by Jeff Shevlin and William D. Hyder

America came of age and wanted to let the world know. The Centennial Exposition, the first official world's fair in the United States, was held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, from May 10th to November 10th, 1876, to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Ten million visitors attended the international exposition and thirty-seven foreign countries participated. President Ulysses S. Grant attending the opening ceremonies. The Main Exhibition Building, constructed for the fair, was the largest building in the world. Alexander Graham Bell personally demonstrated his new invention, the telephone. On display was the actual Statue of Liberty's



*Centennial Exposition Official So-Called Dollar - Silver*

right arm with torch, which visitors could climb. The largest steam engine ever built, some seven stories tall, powered the exhibits. Food innovations included popcorn, ketchup and root beer.

William Barber, Chief Engraver of the United States Mint created the official medal for the Centennial Exposition, as well as the Centennial Nevada medal. The official medal depicts a female (Liberty) as a symbol of the United States, with a halo of stars and rays of light above her head, she is rising up and reaching for the stars, representing greatness,

symbolizing that the United States was rising up to be recognized as a world power. Usually with heraldry, an olive branch held in the right-hand means

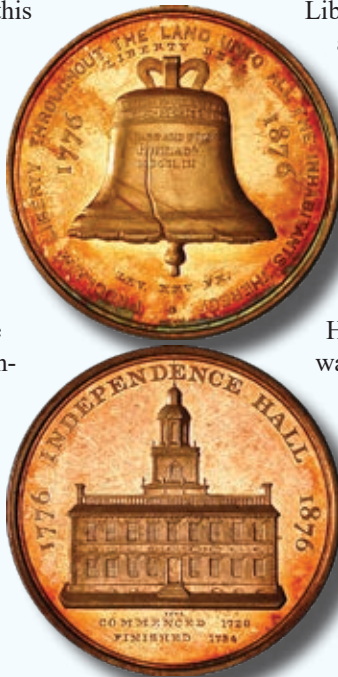
Visitors to the Exposition could climb up the stairway inside the arm of Bartholdi's Statue of Liberty to get a bird's-eye view of the surroundings from the balcony of the torch.



“I prefer peace”, but in this case Liberty holds a sword, indicating that the US was ready to enforce her rights.

In addition to William Barber, other famous engravers such as George Hampden Lovett, William H. Key, George B. Soley, Charles Stubenrauch and Abraham Demarest Sr. produced numerous so-called dollars to celebrate the occasion. So-called dollars are a category of historical US medals that were struck to celebrate events in the United States history.

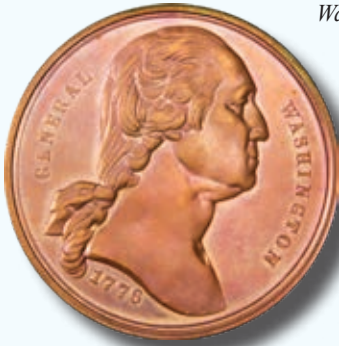
William H. Key was a diesinker and an assistant to William Barber at the US Mint in Philadelphia from 1864 until 1885. Key engraved the “Liberty Bell / Independence Hall So-Called Dollar.” The



*Liberty Bell / Independence Hall So-Called Dollar - Silver*

Liberty Bell was on display at the Centennial Exposition held in Philadelphia. The obverse is a high relief image of the Liberty Bell with Independence Hall depicted on the reverse. Key's signature is below Independence Hall. The Liberty Bell was cast with lettering stating, “Proclaim Liberty throughout the Land and unto all the Inhabitants thereof.” A biblical reference to the Book of Leviticus (25:10), the third book in the Bible states “Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee

for you.” That religious quote was placed on the Liberty Bell and incorporated into the legend for the Liberty Bell exposition medals engraved by



*Washington Large Bust /  
American Colonies  
So-Called Dollar  
- Copper*



Key. It is a testimony to the religious beliefs of the founding fathers of the US Constitution.

George B. Soley was also a diesinker at the US Mint in Philadelphia from 1859 until his death in 1908. Soley created eight different so-called dollar sized dies for the centennial celebration. His dies are found paired in various combinations to create over twenty different medals. Soley's "Centennial Washington Large Bust / American Colonies So-Called Dollar" is a wonderful example of his engraving skills.

Auction catalogs from 1878 & 1879 name the reverse die the "American Colonies," representing the fact that General Washington's troops were farmers during peace and soldiers when at war; this is truly an emotional design considering the fact that they

were victorious over the well-trained British army.

The Declaration of Independence medal is found with three different die varieties. The die engraved by Abraham Demarest Sr. of New York City most accurately depicts the famous portrait by John Trumbull, The Declaration of Independence. Demarest's engraving features four people seated and two people standing to the right of the Committee of Five. All of these medals have extensive die cracks on the obverse near the signature. The reverse die, engraved by George Hampden Lovett, features a naked bust of George Washington with an ornamental border of Calvary and Infantry.

George Hampden Lovett produced over twenty medals for the exposition, including the Battle Dollars, a series



*Declaration of Independence / Washington  
Ornamental Bust  
So-Called  
Dollar -  
Silver*





*Battle of Moores Creek  
So-Called Dollar –  
White Metal*



of eight medals commemorating eight different battles fought by Commander-In-Chief George Washington in 1776, some in which he was victorious, and others where he was not. The Battle of Moores Creek is the first in that series. At the Battle of Moores Creek Bridge on February 27, 1776, the Americans' defeat of the British ended British authority in North Carolina and greatly boosted patriotic morale. In less than two months following the victory, North Carolina became the first colony to vote in favor of independence from Britain

The Eternal Vigilance So-Called Dollar engraved by Charles Stuberrauch depicts a scene of Liberty holding a wreath in her right hand over the head of a kneeling female representing the United States. Liberty's left-hand rests on a bust of George Washington.

The message is that the United States has won their freedom, thanks to the leadership of Washington.

The so-called dollars from the Centennial Exposition were produced at a time when the art of medal production was at its apex in America. The designs are diverse and well executed; they depict significant events and icons in the United States history, as well as being struck in a wide range of metal compositions.

*Jeff Shevlin and Bill Hyder are working on their next book related to so-called dollars, So-Called Dollars – U.S. Expositions – Volume 1. A draft version of the chapter for the "1876 Centennial Exposition" is posted at <http://www.socalleddollar.com>. The authors request your feedback at [SoCalledGuy@hotmail.com](mailto:SoCalledGuy@hotmail.com).*



*Eternal Vigilance So-Called  
Dollar – Copper*

