



New \$5, \$1 coins pay homage to War of 1812, Battle of Baltimore

U.S. Mint to issue gold and silver coins in March; proceeds will fund bicentennial activities statewide

By [Mary Gail Hare](#), The Baltimore Sun
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The U.S. Mint unveiled the designs Wednesday for two limited-issue coins that will be available in March to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the War of 1812. The \$5 gold piece and the silver dollar pay homage to the national anthem, [Fort McHenry](#) and the Battle of Baltimore.

The Mint issues only two commemorative coins annually, and many organizations vie for the recognition and funding from the sales. Rep. [C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger](#), who sponsored the legislation for the bicentennial coins in the U.S. House, said he had to gather more than 250 signatures from colleagues.

"It was a lot of work involving both sides of the aisle," he said.

He added with a laugh: "We were, at one point, up against the Girl Scouts. I had to use Berger's Cookies, another Maryland tradition, to get some of those signatures."

Plans call for minting 100,000 gold War of 1812 coins and 500,000 silver ones, which will be available in the spring and sold, mostly through the Internet, through 2012.

"These are limited edition and will go right away," Ruppersberger said.

[Sen. Benjamin L. Cardin](#), who sponsored the Senate bill, said in a news release Wednesday that the coins will bring attention to Maryland's role in the war and draw many into statewide commemoration activities.

Prices will be set early next year, but the silver dollars, roughly an ounce of 90 percent silver and 10 percent copper, will likely sell for about \$50 each. The cost of the gold coins, a quarter-ounce with 90 percent gold and 10 percent alloy, will be based on the current market price of the metal, mint officials said.

The Maryland War of 1812 Bicentennial Commission estimates proceeds of as much as \$8.5 million from the coin sales, an amount it must match through corporate sponsors, merchandising and individual contributions, said Bill Pencek, commission director.

All money raised will defray costs of celebrations planned across the state, starting with the Maritime Festival at the [Inner Harbor](#) in June. Proceeds will also pay for educational programs, exhibits and preservation of the sites and structures that highlight Maryland's role in the war.

"These coins are the bedrock on which all our efforts are based," Pencek said. "The sales have the potential to contribute much to what will be a 32-month commemoration. With more than 600 war-related sites throughout Maryland, this is a statewide story."

All four designs — the front and back of each coin — won approval of the U.S. Treasury secretary last month, after consultation with the bicentennial commission and the U.S. Commission of Fine Art and a review by the Citizens Coinage Advisory Committee.

In the past 30 years, coin sales have generated more than \$418 million and funded many causes, including renovations of the [Statue of Liberty](#).

"The success of the sales varies among the different coins, but there are no bad causes," said [Michael White](#), spokesman for the U.S. Mint. "The subject matter for these two coins is certainly great to commemorate."

The face of the gold coin features naval warships in sea battle, with the reverse side imprinted with the first words of [Francis Scott Key](#)'s poem, inspired by the defense of Fort McHenry, that became the national anthem. Lady Liberty waving the 15-star flag of the era and Fort McHenry grace the face of the silver coin and "E Pluribus Unum" appears on the reverse side.

"We all know the challenges of these economic times, but we are optimistic about our marketing efforts," Pencek said. "We anticipate many willing purchasers from all over the world."

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