

In Pursuit of Freedom

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New commemorative coins celebrate abolitionist Harriet Tubman's life and legacy



New commemorative coins honor Harriet Tubman.

ONE OF THE MOST REMARKABLE PEOPLE in American history is being honored with commemorative coins bearing her image. Harriet Tubman, the trailblazing 19th century abolitionist who escaped slavery and repeatedly risked her life leading others to freedom, will be featured on three coins to be released this year.

In January, the US Mint announced the sale of \$5 gold, \$1 silver, and half-dollar clad coins depicting Tubman at different stages of her life and work. The law authorizing the coins was passed in 2022, the bicentennial of Tubman's birth.

Born into slavery in 1822 in Dorchester County, Maryland, Tubman is known for her daring rescues as a conductor on the Underground Railroad, a network of safe houses for those escaping slavery. Thought to have made over a dozen high-risk missions to the South, she is credited with leading an estimated 70 people to freedom. She later became a nurse and Army scout for the Union Army in the US Civil War and was the first woman to lead an armed expedition in the war; one raid led to freedom for hundreds of enslaved people in South Carolina. In her later years, Tubman gave speeches in support of women's voting rights, civil rights, and health care. She died in 1913 in Auburn, New York.

"Every coin produced by the United States Mint helps to tell

a story that teaches us about America's history or connects us to a special memory," Ventris C. Gibson, director of the Mint, said in a press release. "We hope this program will honor the life and legacy of Harriet Tubman."

One side of the silver dollar depicts Tubman's experiences as an Underground Railroad conductor "offering her hand to the viewer with an expression that challenges the viewer to seize the opportunity for freedom," according to the US Mint website. The reverse depicts silhouetted figures crossing a bridge formed by a pair of clasped hands. In the sky, the Big Dipper points to the North Star, which forms the "o" in the *United States of America*. The \$5 gold coin also draws on the theme of helping hands, a tribute to Tubman's continued commitment to others, even after the Civil War.

While the coins are legal tender, they are intended primarily as collector's items and will not be in general circulation. Surcharges from the sale of the coins will go to the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati, Ohio, and the Harriet Tubman Home, Inc., a nonprofit in Auburn, New York.

Plans to feature Tubman on the US \$20 banknote have been delayed in recent years. **F&D**

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A mural depicting Harriet Tubman offering a hand in Cambridge, Maryland, near Tubman's birthplace.