

## Oak Ridge's Anniversary Coins

(As published in The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking column the week of January 3, 2022)

At each of Oak Ridge's 25<sup>th</sup>, 50<sup>th</sup>, and 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversaries, coins have been produced. The 25<sup>th</sup> is the most readily available and can be found sometimes on eBay. The 50<sup>th</sup> is harder to find. And I believe the 75<sup>th</sup> was not as widely distributed as either of the others.

A few weeks ago, Mike Stallo brought us the story of Nat Johnson, local graphic artist, in a Historically Speaking column. Nat designed the Oak Ridge 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary coin.

In an article published in The Oak Ridger on Monday, April 17, 1967, the following is found: "Nat Johnson, an artist for the Atomic Energy Commission, has designed the coin. The face of the coin shows a figure representing Hermes or Mercury, the legendary messenger of Zeus. Johnson omitted the winged feet and head because they are not always present in drawings of Hermes and would detract from the symbol of atomic energy.

"The scene depicted on the coin shows the sky over the three hills of Oak Ridge (I cannot imagine why 'three hills' were used! I would have said 'the sky over the Cumberland Mountains'). The messenger has just arisen from the huge government facilities with the newly – born source of power – atomic energy – and has paused in flight for second before beginning his mission of sharing this great achievement with the world.

"The opposite side of the coin shows the now familiar symbol of the Oak Ridge 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary This symbol is used to spotlight all Oak Ridge 25 events." This concludes the description of the coin.

The article went on to say, "The silver anniversary coins will be shipped from the Franklin Mint in Philadelphia on April 21 and will be available at the Oak Ridge '25 Committee Headquarters for one dollar." I just checked ebay and found one for \$20.

The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary coin seems to me to be harder to find. I also do not have a good description of the design. Anyone who can help with that would be most welcome. The front has a large "OR" with what appears to me to be a dove flying from the "R" and an atomic symbol. Also, the words Oak Ridge at the top with 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary at the bottom. The dates 1942 and 1992 are in the middle on each side of the "OR."

What is most amazing about the coin I have is the back side. It has "Tennessee 2000," the three stars on the state flag, "The Volunteer State," a copyright symbol with "TRW 1999," and "1oz .999 Fine Silver." Not at all sure what all this means....do you have any idea??? Any input would be appreciated.

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The Oak Ridge 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary coin is also a bit unusual in that there are at least two designs. One has a huge "75" on the front with the atomic symbol and years 1942 – 2017 with "Oak Ridge, Tennessee" at the top and "75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary" at the bottom. The reverse side is white with a large "A" with "Manhattan Project" at the top, "Bomb" at the bottom of the "A," and the Corps of Engineers castle at the bottom.

The other Oak Ridge 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary coin has the city's official seal on the front with "City of Oak Ridge" at the top and "1942 – 2017" at the bottom. On the reverse side is the large "A" with "Manhattan Project" (twice) at the top and "Bomb" under the "A," the Corps of Engineers castle below that with "75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary" at the bottom.

I have also collected the "Big Ed's Pizza" coin and the "Atomic Bomb Ends World War II with Japan" coin as well as many others. I started collecting "challenge coins" when I would be given one at the end of tours I provided at Y-12 while Historian there. Often the leader of the military or DOE group would shake my hand at the end of the tour and with the handshake place a challenge coin in my palm. That is the traditional method for presenting them.

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I was also sure to get one of each of the Y-12 coins produced at such things as the grand opening of the Highly Enriched Uranium Materials Facility. I am hoping to get one when the Uranium Processing Facility is finished.

Many of you may be collectors of these type coins as well. And some of you may well know more about the Oak Ridge Anniversary coins. Please share with me if you do. [draysmith@comcast.net](mailto:draysmith@comcast.net).

I would like to write a follow up Historically Speaking column where more details of the 50<sup>th</sup> and the two versions of the 75<sup>th</sup> coins are included.



Oak Ridge 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Coin Front

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Oak Ridge 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Coin Back



Oak Ridge 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Coin Front

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Oak Ridge 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Coin Front



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