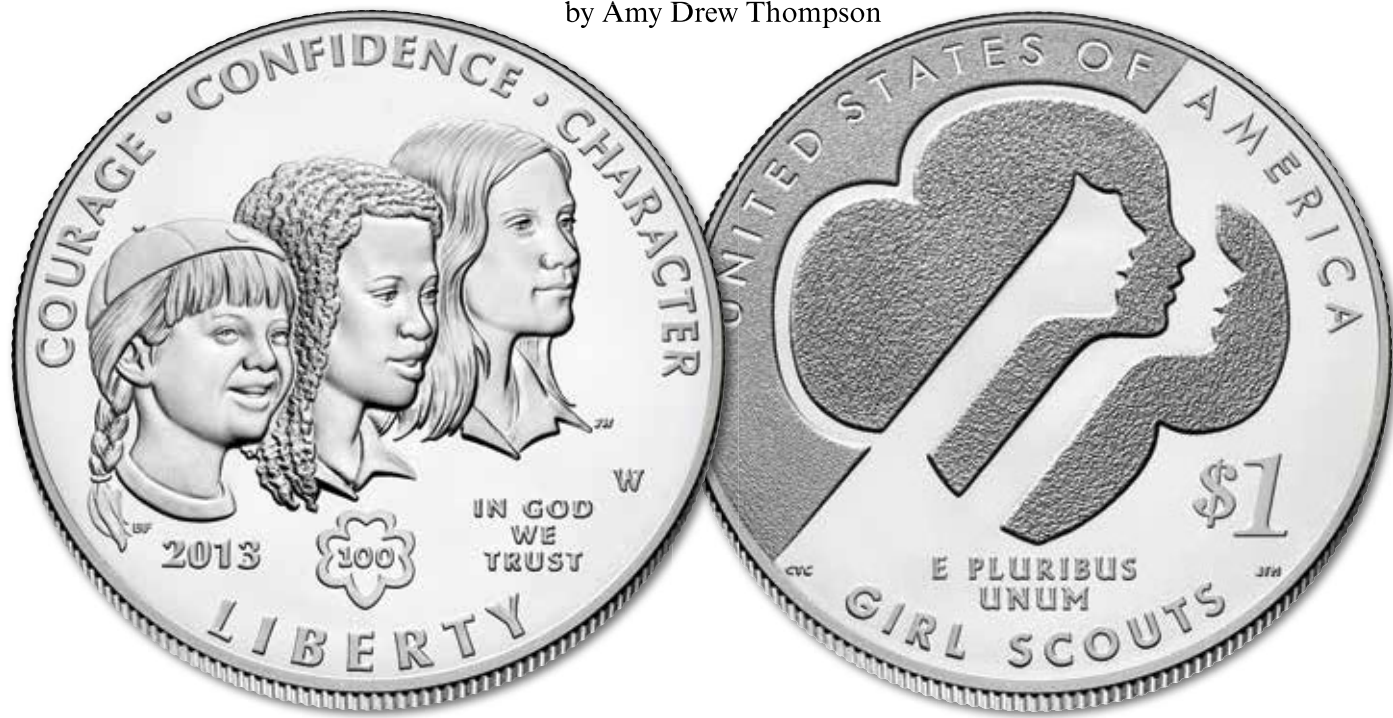


# Opportunity Knocks

## The Girl Scouts Coin Could Make a Difference for the Organization

by Amy Drew Thompson



Earlier this year, the U.S. Mint issued a silver dollar in commemoration of the Girl Scouts of the USA. Everyone involved came together to give the coin historical perspective and make sure it was emblematic of Girl Scouting.

### Thin Mint-age

In March, the **Girl Scouts of the USA Centennial Silver Dollar** became the first-ever commemorative to acknowledge a girls' organization. Will it become a classic? Only time will tell, but to scouts, to girls and women across the nation, the message is, "You make a difference."

This story came to me just as the adorable hordes were gearing up their cookie sales at our local shopping centers, sweet, sash-draped moppets were ringing my bell in pairs and trios, and troop-supportive mom friends were beginning to ping me via social media in bold attempts to sabotage my New Year's resolution while easing their wee Brownies and Juniors on down the road toward financial literacy badges.

UNITED STATES MINT



The Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace is owned and operated by Girl Scouts of the USA as a National Girl Scout Program Center and an historic house museum for the general public.

"Well, my husband *does* love Thin Mints. I suppose I could get some for *him*..." As if I have a mint allergy.

To state the obvious, ours isn't the only family lulled by the Samoa's siren song. Typical Girl Scout Cookie sales average around \$790 million annually according to an organization spokesperson, roughly 70 percent of which stays in the local Girl Scout council and with troops, providing resources to support Girl Scouting in that area. That's a lot of coin.

And now, they have one of their own. As it marked the close of its centennial—the very first troop of 18 girls was registered by founder Juliette Gordon Low in March of 1912—the 2013 Girl Scouts of the USA Centennial Silver Dollar, a commemorative coin honoring a century of Girl Scouting, was released, marking not only the millions of lives enriched by the organization since its inception, but the first-ever United States coin depicting girls.

### Path to the Mint

"The story of how the 2013 Girl Scouts of the USA Silver Dollar came to be is really about the people and the partnerships that supported it," says Chief Executive Officer Anna Maria Chávez. "The idea of a commemorative coin came out of discussions between Girl Scouts, the Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace in Savannah and Congressman Jack Kingston (R-GA), who introduced the Girl Scouts USA Centennial Commemorative Coin Act into the U.S. House of Representatives in 2009."

JULIETTEDONLOWBIRTHPLACE.ORG



A Girl Scout hangs a banner on the Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace in 1955. The house reopened as the organization's program center one year later.

From there, the torch was passed to members of Troop Capitol Hill, a bipartisan delegation of women members of Congress working together to create public policies benefitting girls, and to bring Girl Scouting to underserved communities. Two Senate co-chairs, Susan Collins (R-ME) and Barbara Mikulski (D-MD),

introduced the bill, which passed with more than 300 co-sponsors in the House. "Girl Scouts supporters also played a big part in making all this happen," says Chávez. "Girls, alumnae, volunteers, parents, staff, board members and other friends who wrote, emailed and called their members of Congress. More than



The 2010 Boy Scouts commemorative silver dollar went over very well with collectors of Boy Scouting memorabilia. Neither of the Scouting coins are predicted to be hugely sought after.

40,000 messages were sent from Girl Scouts all over the nation.”

And it worked. In October of 2009, President Obama (who, incidentally, revealed that he, too, is a Thin Mint guy during his 2012 campaign) signed the Girl Scouts USA Centennial Commemorative Coin Act in the Oval Office along with the Girl Scouts’ Honorary President, First Lady Michelle Obama. “It’s such an honor!” says Chávez. “The law recognizes the achievements of the Girl Scouts of the USA and of the 59 million women across the nation whose lives have been influenced through Girl Scouting.”

#### Scouting the Perfect Design

It’s contemporary. It’s multicultural. It is available in both uncirculated and proof qualities. And everyone involved with it appears pleased with the design, a process which began with the Girl Scouts organization coming together with artists—a mix of U.S. Mint sculptor-engravers and those from the Artistic Infusion program—to give historical perspective and input on themes and imagery emblematic of Girl Scouting. A total of 10 designs were pitched.

“It’s all kept anonymous,” says Mint spokesperson Michael White. “It’s not until the designs have been reviewed and selected that the artists of each are revealed.” On the finished product, the obverse was designed by Barbara Fox, and the reverse by Chris Costello, both Artistic Infusion designers.

“We love it!” says Chávez, for whom the obverse in particular hits home. “I love the three girls on it of different ages and backgrounds, and those important key words, ‘Courage. Confidence. Character.’ They are from our mission, ‘Girl Scouting builds girls of courage, confidence and character who make the world a better place.’”

Sue Hrychuk, proud leader of Troop #60428 from Moorpark, Calif., thinks the images are quite representative of Girl Scouting, of the individuals who make up the troops. “It’s what we strive for,” she says, “to get all different girls—the quiet ones, the noisy ones, all of them,” she laughs. “We’re always trying to find ways to get girls involved who might not necessarily have that much support in the community or parents around who can do that for them. We celebrate Juliette Gordon Low each year [on her birthday, which is Founder’s Day], but I think it’s neat that they didn’t make the coin about her, that they put modern girls on it. It’s more apropos for our scouts today.”

As much as the scouts are individuals, so, too, are the troops. Erin Riches is a co-leader of the five-scout Troop #1759 in Sacramento, Calif., which formed only just last summer. They may be adding a sixth soon. “All our Brownies’ parents are full-time working moms,” she says. “Our girls have other things going on, as well, but we make it a priority to get together a few times a month. Some troops are run by stay-at-home moms and they meet every week and do these incredible activi-

UNITED STATES MINT



Treasurer of the United States Rosie Rios (left) and Girl Scouts of the USA Chief Executive Officer Anna Maria Chávez attended the Capitol Hill event to launch the 2013 Girl Scouts of the USA Centennial Silver Dollar.

ties, and it’s kind of nice that like the scouts themselves, each troop can be different. We have different experiences, but our overall goals are the same.” It’s one of the things she likes best about the Girl Scouts, and an idea she sees reflected in the coin’s design.

#### Could-Be Collectible?

While Chuck Daughtrey doesn’t quite share the same enthusiasm for the coin’s design, he reports that sales thus far are going as expected, considering its timely release. Daughtrey, art/marketing director for the Sarasota, Fla.-based Modern Coin Mart, says coins that have potential buyers out there who are directly involved with the subject tend to do better than those with patriotic or historical themes. Even so, he’s doubtful they’ll pick up much investor interest.

“They sell at a hefty premium, about \$20 over the silver melt value,” he explains. “Anyone investing in precious metals will lean toward bullion or a bullion-related product, like Silver Eagles, which [at press time were] available for \$36, less than \$10 over silver melt.” The days of investing in metal via commemoratives, he says, are over, relegated to a time when the metal was worth so little that the coins often sold for under \$20 apiece. “These days, with the metal carrying the issue price of the coins to over \$50, speculators are much more frugal in their choices, opting for the same weight for less money.”

That said, it could set more than a few Girl Scouts on the path to numis-

GIRL SCOUTS USA

matics. “Girl Scout-involved people will buy them.” A Boy Scout leader himself, Daughtrey picked up a 2010 commemorative silver dollar when they were issued. “It went over very well with Scouts and collectors of Boy Scouting memorabilia.”

He predicts modest success for the Girl Scouts coin, but doubts it will exhaust the maximum mintage allotment, a fate that can harbor a silver lining. Coins with less popular subjects tend to sell in smaller numbers, creating an avenue toward classic collectability. He cites the Jackie Robinson \$5 gold coin, issued in 1997, as an example.

“It was not widely received for one reason or another,” he explains. Thusly, mintage suffered. “Even though 100,000 were authorized, only about 52,000 uncirculated and 24,000 proof coins were minted. Today, the Jackie Robinson uncirculated \$5 gold commemorative is considered the key—that’s the highest-value coin—in the series. It is worth up to 40 times its original issue price.” The record auction price stands at more than \$9,500; at issue, it cost \$205.

Could this happen for the Girl Scouts’ coin? Unlikely, says Daughtrey, but not impossible. He believes its initial popularity will be enough to carry mintage over the scarcity level, but will not reach its maximum potential. “There’s always a possibility, however, that its popularity could seep through the cut-off date to order them. If that happens, we could be looking at an opportunity issue.” He gives it a 25 percent chance of being a



*Vintage Girl Scout badges, clockwise from top: My Community, Animal Raiser and Bug Finder. The badges may look different, and the categories might have changed, but the Girl Scouts still have to work hard to earn them.*

sought-after issue with a hefty premium into the future.

#### **What It Means, Really**

In addition to commemorating all the accomplishments of its first hundred years, says Chávez, the coin also marks the beginning of the next century. “We are celebrating the opportunities for girls that our founder established. We are celebrating the Girl Scouts movement.”

“It’s a wonderful memento,” says Hrychuk, whose daughter (and troop) recently graduated from Juniors to Cadettes and celebrated by participating in an annual tradition in California: a Girl Scout walk across the Golden Gate Bridge. “Girl Scouts from all over come to participate and ours happened to coincide with the hundredth year.” They turned it into a three-day event: 13 girls, a multitude of moms and a wonderful adventure and bonding experience.

“It led the way into the idea of them being bigger girls now, to think about doing bigger things.... It was a huge milestone for them.”

For creative-minded troop leaders (or perhaps the numismatically inclined), the coin may represent even more, including further opportunities to teach young girls the lessons of financial literacy they begin learning as Daisies on their

maiden cookie-sales voyages: the value of money, its proper management, the setting of monetary goals and more. The Girl Scouts sell more than 200 million boxes of cookies each year; quite staggering when you consider that their short selling season—and in the case of those aforementioned Daisies and Brownies, pint-sized stature to boot—puts them on the charts with heavy-hitters like Oreo even minimally.

For the historic-minded, the coin could be seen as a snapshot of how far girls and women have come and how far they might go. It is a conversation starter, a place where questions might be asked and subjects tackled. *How many women have appeared on United States coinage? Only a very small number. One of them is Susan B. Anthony. Do you know what she did that was so important?* Teaching opportunities abound.

As one of only two commemorative coins selected for production this year, the Girl Scouts stand to earn roughly \$3.5 million from its sale via surcharges, money that, says organization spokesperson Valerie Geiss, will go a long way, supporting program development and delivery. “We’d like to ask coin collectors to support girls—their sisters, their daughters, their granddaughters—through the purchase of the coin.”

#### **FUN WITH MONEY**

Numismatics has long been viewed as a male-dominated hobby. It’s a fact that ANA Numismatic Educator Rod Gillis does not dispute, though he his colleagues would certainly welcome a demographic shift.

“One of the ways in which the Girl Scouts and the American Numismatic Association has tried to bring more young ladies into the hobby is through the Fun With Money patch program,” says Gillis. “To earn their patch, Girl Scouts must immerse themselves in the basics of numismatics. The key to the course is to show that collecting coins, or money in any of its forms, can be an enjoyable pastime that lasts a lifetime.”

Fun With Money Workshops are offered at both the World’s Fair of Money and National Money Show, but no worries if you can’t make the shows. Troop leaders interested in running the workshop themselves will find support materials and a list of necessary activities on the ANA’s website at <http://www.money.org/explore-the-world-of-money/scouts.naspx>. ☺



JULIETTEGORDONLOWBIRTHPLACE.ORG

*Savannah Mayor James Moore Wayne originally owned the Wayne Gordon House. The Girl Scouts saved the house from demolition, and it became a national landmark.*