

## The Nickel's Westward Trek

It's what some consider the most American coin. Both the Jefferson nickel and Buffalo nickel designs are entirely indigenous, with only the barest nod to another culture in the motto *E Pluribus Unum* (from many—one). The buffalo design resonates with history. One of the three Native Americans used as models for the Indian image on its obverse was Two Moons, a Cheyenne chief who fought Custer at Little Big Horn. The bison on the reverse ironically was an Easterner. His name was Black Diamond, and he resided in a New York City zoo. The Jefferson five-cent piece is entirely devoted to the third President—his portrait on the obverse and his home on the reverse.

To commemorate the bicentennial of two major events in Jefferson's presidency, the U.S. Mint has created four new nickels in its Westward Journey Nickel Series™. In 1803, Jefferson doubled the size of the country with his purchase of the Louisiana Territory



from Napoleon and the French people. In 1804, he dispatched the Corps of Discovery, led by Lewis and Clark, to search out a water route across the Northwest. Both events are represented on the reverse of the four coins.

In the spring of 2004, the Louisiana Purchase/Indian Peace Medal design was struck. In the fall, the Keelboat nickel bore the image of the keelboat specially designed for Captain Lewis for the expedition. Both coins have the traditional Jefferson image on the obverse.

In 2005, a new likeness of the President will appear on the face of the nickel, along with the word *Liberty* in a replication of Jefferson's handwriting. The design on the reverse of the spring issue will feature the return of a grazing cousin of New York's Black Diamond. The fall issue depicts a view of the Pacific Ocean and the words from Captain Clark's journal: "Ocean in view. O! The joy!" Actually, Clark spelled ocean with an *i* (ocian) in the journal, but the Mint chose discretion over accuracy in their engraving.

The designs are impressive and will probably please collectors. Now, if we could only find something that actually still costs a nickel, we could restore some of the luster to the most American coin. ■

