

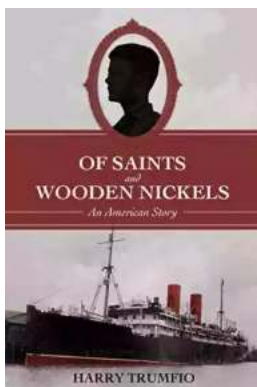
# Of Saints And Wooden Nickels An American Story: The Fascinating History Behind America's Beloved Collectible Coins

In the realm of American collectibles, few items hold as much historical significance as wooden nickels. Used as promotional items, souvenirs, and even religious tokens, these intriguing pieces of "currency" have become cherished mementos of bygone eras. Delving into the depths of their origins, we uncover a fascinating story that blends legends, saints, and an undeniable American spirit.

## A Unique Currency Unveiled

The history of wooden nickels can be traced back to the mid-19th century when American businesses started searching for creative ways to advertise their services. Forged out of economic exasperation caused by the scarcity of actual coins, wooden nickels quickly gained popularity as viable substitutes.

These tokens were often given away for free during community events, bearing the name and logo of the business. Consequently, they served as clever ways to keep a company's brand in the minds of local residents, even after the event ended. As wooden nickels became more prevalent, collectors emerged, recognizing their historical value and unique charm.



## Of Saints and Wooden Nickels: An American Story

by Harry Trumfio(Kindle Edition)

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 956 KB

Text-to-Speech : Enabled

Screen Reader : Supported

Enhanced typesetting : Enabled

Word Wise : Enabled  
Print length : 330 pages  
Lending : Enabled



## **A Saintly Connection: The Role of Wooden Nickels in Religious Culture**

Wooden nickels took on an additional layer of significance within religious communities. In the early 20th century, churches across America began producing wooden nickels that featured images of saints or biblical verses. These tokens were handed out to churchgoers as a symbol of faith and served as reminders of the surrounding religious community.

Collecting these religious wooden nickels became a way for devout individuals to express their piety and show their dedication to their faith. Many churches held special events where rare or commemorative wooden nickels were distributed, further fueling the demand for these unique collectibles.

## **Legends and Folklore: Tales of Unforgettable Wooden Nickels**

As with any beloved item, wooden nickels have their fair share of legends and folklore. One such tale involves the famous carver Red Dog, known for creating intricate wooden nickels that were sought after by enthusiasts all around the country.

According to the story, Red Dog was said to have possessed a magical touch, imbuing his wooden nickels with a charm that brought good fortune to anyone who possessed them. These red-hot collectibles became highly sought after, with

people traveling far and wide to acquire one of Red Dog's legendary wooden nickels.

While the existence of Red Dog remains a subject of debate, his legend continues to add to the allure of wooden nickels, ensuring their enduring popularity in collector circles.

## **The Allure of American Nostalgia**

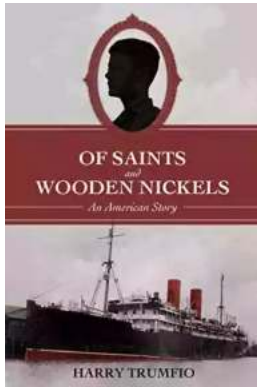
Perhaps the greatest appeal of wooden nickels lies in the sense of nostalgia they evoke. These small wooden tokens serve as reminders of a time long past, a simpler era when community events and small businesses flourished. Holding a wooden nickel in one's hand can transport someone back in time, allowing them to experience a piece of Americana that has all but faded away.

Today, collectors and enthusiasts continue to search for these intricately carved gems, eager to preserve a piece of history that intertwines with the fabric of American culture. Their pursuit is a testament to the enduring allure of wooden nickels and the stories they hold.

The story of wooden nickels is a rich tapestry woven by the threads of American ingenuity, religious devotion, and the nostalgia-inducing power of collectibles. As we delve into the depths of their history, we discover that these small, seemingly insignificant tokens hold an incredible amount of cultural significance.

From their humble beginnings as advertising tools to their role in religious rites, wooden nickels have etched themselves into the hearts of collectors everywhere. Legends and folklore only add to their mystique, further fueling the desire to possess a piece of this uniquely American story.

So the next time you come across a wooden nickel, take a moment to appreciate the history it represents. Behind its weathered appearance lies a tale that encapsulates the spirit of America, connecting generations through the shared love for these fascinating collectibles.



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When my father was just sixteen years old, he stole several hundred dollars from a family member and took a train with a friend from Chicago to New York, where they procured fake baptismal certificates and subsequently a fake passports. From there, they sailed to Italy aboard a steamer. My dad was in search of a family secret. Along the way, all of his money and his passport were stolen, and there he was: an American teenager alone, adrift in Mussolini's Italy without papers. After a year of wild adventures abroad, many prayers to the saints, a Grand Jury hearing, and a strong dose of Buona Fortuna, my father somehow found his way back home to Chicago.

Of Saints and Wooden Nickels is an odyssey of epic proportions, a true coming-of-age-tale that will appeal to readers of all ages, a story of one young Italian-

American on a quest to learn about his family, himself, and the world outside Chicago. While I have fictionalized parts of the story for continuity, it is based almost entirely on actual events told to me by my father over many breakfast meetings.



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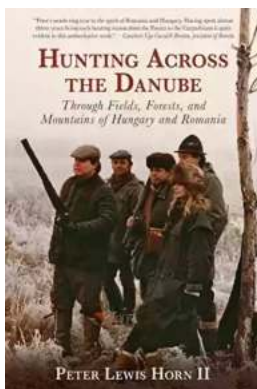
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