

Mint condition: Yellowstone to be featured in new series of quarters



The Yellowstone River spills over the 308-foot Lower Falls in Yellowstone National Park late last month. Yellowstone National Park will be featured second in a 56-coin series of quarters that begin circulating early next year. (Mark Gocke/Star-Tribune correspondent)

By CHUCK BARTELS
AP business writer
Thursday, September 10, 2009 8:05 AM MDT

HOT SPRINGS, Ark. -- Quarters dropped into fountains at Hot Springs National Park in Arkansas next year could feature the park itself.

The U.S. Mint announced Wednesday that the first in its "America the Beautiful" series of quarters will feature Hot Springs, which was set aside for preservation by the federal government in 1832. Yellowstone National Park will be featured second.

Other sites to be honored in the 56-coin series include Washington's Olympic Mountains, the tallgrass prairie of Kansas and the White Mountains of New Hampshire. Each state and territory will be featured in the series, which will end with Alabama's Tuskegee Airmen memorial in early 2021.

Oklahoma Gov. Brad Henry in April had recommended the Oklahoma City National Memorial for his state but Mint officials instead selected the Chickasaw National Recreation Area. The Mint said the site of the 1995 federal building bombing is owned by a private foundation and not a federal agency.

South Dakota's coin will feature Mount Rushmore, which also is depicted on the back of quarters created as part of the 50-state series from 1999-2008 that made, well, a mint.

New coins will be issued in the order Congress approved the national sites. While Yellowstone is considered the first national park, the federal government set aside Hot Springs four decades earlier so it will be featured first.

New coins will be released about every 10 weeks beginning in early 2010. A specific release date hasn't been determined, nor have designs been unveiled, U.S. Mint spokeswoman Carolyn Fields said Wednesday.

Hot Springs promoter Steve Arrison, the head of the city's Convention and Visitors Bureau, sees the coins as another marketing tool for the city of 40,000.

"The only thing that would make it better would be if we could put our Web site on the quarter," Arrison said.

Congress designated what is now Hot Springs National Park as a federal reservation in 1832 to preserve its thermal waters for public benefit.

The National Park Service was established in 1916, and Hot Springs Reservation became Hot Springs National Park in 1921. In places, the city and park are one. Nature trails snake through mountains rising next to the city, and bathhouses line one side of Central Avenue.

Recently, park officials have been trying to put a distance between the park and the city, which uses "Hot Springs National Park" as its official name. Interior Secretary Ken Salazar has said he hopes for a compromise as the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office looks at the matter.

Following the Yellowstone quarter in 2010 are California's Yosemite National Park, Arizona's Grand Canyon National Park and Oregon's Mount Hood National Forest.

The 50-state quarter program made collectors of people who previously had never given numismatics a

thought. U.S. Mint Director Ed Moy has said 147 million people collected state quarters ranging from Delaware in 1999 to Hawaii in 2008.