

## The 1939 Royal Train Canadian Visit Silver Medallion (submitted by Judy Blackman)

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Members of the royal family have been frequent visitors to Canada, beginning as early as 1786 when Prince William (the future King William IV) came to the country as part of a naval contingent serving in North America and the West Indies. Queen Victoria's father, Edward, Duke of Kent, had long stays in Canada between 1791 and 1800, on military duties or as commander of British North American troops. Albert Edward, Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII), conducted the first official royal visit to what is now Canada in 1860. During a 2-month tour of Newfoundland, the Maritimes and the then province of Canada (later Ontario and Québec), highlighted by the opening of the Victoria Bridge between the Island of Montréal and the south shore of the St Lawrence River, and the laying of the cornerstone for the Parliament Building in Ottawa, the prince was honoured as a visible symbol of monarchy and empire. The next major royal tour was that of the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York (later King George V and Queen Mary) in 1901. This was the first transcontinental tour, and demonstrated the "steel of empire" significance of the CPR. The popular Edward, Prince of Wales (later King Edward VIII), made official tours of Canada in 1919 and 1927 in addition to private visits to his Alberta ranch.

The Canadian Prime Minister, W.L. Mackenzie King, had visited Hitler in mid-decade and for a time felt that Germany would cause no trouble. Spain, Munich, Czechoslovakia, brought home to him and the Cabinet the belief that there would be a war in Europe and that Canada was in danger of being involved. Would Canada react to the challenge? There was a need to feel the pulse of the nation. Perhaps a suggested royal visit would give an answer.

In 1939, King George VI were invited to tour had abdicated in 1936 marry Wallis Simpson, a woman. Would the VI, be able to stir the Canadian people? It early that Canada be host to the King and The royal visit was a happening to most couple travelled by "The Royal Scot"



and Queen Elizabeth Canada. Edward VIII in order to be free to divorced American next in line, George enthusiasm of the was apparent very would be delighted to Queen. wonderful story book people. The royal train, their own train: shipped to Canada

fitted to run on Canadian lines. They stopped for brief visits at divisional points and did a walk about to speak to veterans, seniors and school children. This was to set new and interesting guidelines for later royal tours. The royal visit in 1951 was planned that the royal Princess might see and be met by as many people as possible.

The title "King of Canada" reflected Canada's sovereign status within the British Empire which derived from the Imperial Conference of 1926 and the 1931 Statute of Westminster. Therefore, the King would not act for Canada as King of the "mother country", Great Britain, but as King of Canada. Tweedsmuir's desire was to put the Statute of Westminster into practice, and that meant Canadians should "see their King performing royal functions, supported by his Canadian ministers". It meant having the King, and Queen, in Canada to perform those functions; the images on the coins and postage stamps resolving themselves into a real King and Queen.

In May and June 1939 King George VI and Queen Elizabeth made the first visit of a reigning monarch to Canada. The extensive tour was planned to solidify Canadian support for Britain on the eve of WWII. The Princess Elizabeth, accompanied by the Duke of Edinburgh, made her first royal visit to Canada in 1951.





I was fortunate enough recently to purchase through Colonial Acres Coins a .925 silver 1939 Regina, Saskatchewan, Medallion commemorating the Royal Visit. The obverse has the bust of King and Queen and the reverse is the map of Canada. The Map of Canada has a line on it, showing the railway route that the Royal Family took on their visit. "A MARI VSQVE AD MARE" is Canada's motto, Latin for "from sea to sea". "REGEM ET REGINAM CANADA SALVTAT" is also Latin, and translates as "Canada salutes her King and Queen"

The medallions were issued in gold, silver, and bronze. Of the bronze pieces, there is both a large size version (was sold at post offices for 10c), and also a small version (1 inch diameter), which were given to all schoolchildren. As a result of this, the small bronze version is very common, and often found in coin collections, or just among keepsakes of the elderly. Here are pictures in bronze, as I could not find any pictures of the silver one I bought. The current dealer store / show price for the silver is \$25.00 and I negotiated my price down to \$18. It's actually quite beautiful and in amazing condition.







Christmas is a time of light and celebration. But darkness is all around on Dec. 25, 1939, as citizens of the British Empire face another world war. Amid the gloom, King George VI resurrects a tradition his father launched: an annual Christmas message to all inhabitants of the Empire. In this excerpt from his speech, broadcast in Canada by the CBC, the King says the Empire shall remain undaunted in the face of war.

The speech would go on to be famous. King George VI, not usually a compelling speaker, inspires and reassures his people by quoting a poem: "I said to the man who stood at the Gate of the Year, 'Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown.' And he replied, 'Go out into the darkness, and put your hand into the Hand of God. That shall be better than light, and safer than a known way.'"

There was also the 1939 Canadian .800 silver and .200 copper Commemorative Dollar 23.33 gms, 36.00 mm with reeded edge. >>>>> The obverse (designer and engraver: TH Paget) is uncrowned George VI. Canada's second commemorative coin was created when the reverse of the 1939 silver dollar was used to mark the Royal Visit. The reverse (designer and engraver: Emanuel Hahn) design consists of the Centre Block of the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa and the Latin phrase "FIDE SVORVM REGNAT" meaning "He reigns by the faith of his people". This was available through the Bank of Canada (issue 994,316) and the Post Office (issue 369,500) for a total mintage of 1,363,816. MS 64 would go for around \$125-\$145, and AU-50 for about \$25, UNC+ about \$200, and fine or better about \$12.25. There was also a Commemorative set as Charlton catalogue no. 11 in a case #11. The case has inscription covered by oval blue patch impressed in gold lettering: "Royal Visit / King George VI & Queen Elizabeth / Commemorative / Medals & Dollar / 1939". The price for the empty case is \$1,500+!!!

