

FUNNY MONEY

We're used to coins and bills that are the same all over the country. That hasn't always been the case.



FUR CASH

During the fur trade, the Hudson's Bay Company sometimes used something called trade silver — items like this silver cross — to pay for pelts. The company later created metal tokens to represent different numbers of pelts.



WHICH COINS?

It was expensive and dangerous to ship coins to North America in the 1600s, so the first Europeans used whatever kind of money was around — French deniers, Spanish *piastres*, English pennies and shillings.



DECK OF MONEY

In 1685, the government of New France had to pay its soldiers, but it had no paper money left and no way to print any. Some creative person turned to the most common kind of paper around: playing cards. The amount it was now worth was printed on the back of a card and signed by the governor.



DECIMAL POINT

Between about 1851 and 1870, Canada gradually moved to a system using dollars and cents instead of British pounds and pennies. Known as the decimal system, it meant there were officially 100 cents to a dollar. Now everyone knew what money they were using and how to calculate it.



PAPER COINS

In 1870, the Canadian government felt there were too many American coins being used here. Since it couldn't make its own coins, it printed 25-cent banknotes known as shinplasters. The term probably comes from the United States, where soldiers used similar low-value bills to line their boots so they wouldn't rub their ankles sore.



SEVEN-DOLLAR BILL?

With all kinds of banks printing notes, we ended up with some pretty strange ones at times. Before the government took over the money business, Canada had four-dollar, seven-dollar, eight-dollar, 25-dollar and even 500-dollar bills.

