

# Austrian Silver Commemorative 2 Schilling Coins

## Overview

Among the most historically rich and politically fascinating numismatic artifacts of interwar Europe, the Austrian silver commemorative 2 schilling coins — popularly known as the *Doppelschilling* ("double schilling") — were issued annually by the Münze Österreich (Austrian Mint) in Vienna from 1928 to 1937. This compact series of ten coins chronicles the turbulent arc of Austria's First Republic, beginning with a celebration of cultural giants and ending in the shadow of authoritarianism, just one year before Germany's annexation of Austria brought the Republic to its close.

Unlike the later Second Republic commemorative programs, these coins were struck for general circulation rather than purely for collectors, making them genuine artifacts of everyday Austrian life during one of the most dramatic decades of the 20th century.

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## Historical Context

The Austrian schilling was established by the Schilling Act of December 20, 1924, replacing the badly inflated Austro-Hungarian krone at a rate of one schilling to 10,000 kronen. The new currency was a deliberate signal of economic stabilization, and the silver content of commemorative coins reinforced this message. The First Republic introduced the commemorative 2 schilling program in 1928, in part to project confidence in the recovering economy — giving rise to the nickname the "Alpine dollar" for Austria's silver schilling coins, a reflection of their perceived stability and quality.

The series spans two distinct political eras of the First Republic. The coins from 1928 to 1932 honor artists, composers, and intellectuals — a cultural celebration befitting a liberal republic still anchored in Enlightenment values. From 1933 onward, the subject matter shifted markedly toward political figures, reflecting the rise of the Austrofascist *Vaterländische Front* (Fatherland Front) and the transformation of Austria into an authoritarian corporate state under Engelbert Dollfuss. The 1934 coin, issued in memory of Dollfuss following his assassination, stands as one of the most politically charged commemorative coins in European numismatic history.

The series ended in 1937, with the Karlskirche coin the last issued before the Anschluss of March 1938, when Germany annexed Austria and the schilling was replaced by the Reichsmark.

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## Physical Specifications

All ten coins in the series share consistent physical specifications, with a minor variation in

diameter between the earlier and later issues:

Attribute	Detail
Denomination	2 Schilling
Composition	64% silver (640 fineness)
Weight	12 grams
Diameter	29.4 mm (1928-1935); 29 mm (1936-1937)
Edge	Reeded
Minting Facility	Austrian Mint (Münze Österreich), Vienna
Production Period	1928-1937
Total Issues	10 commemorative types

The **obverse** of all coins in the series displays the denomination — "2 S" — within a circle of the nine heraldic shields representing the federal states of Austria, with the inscription *REPUBLIK ÖSTERREICH*. This design, used consistently across the series, reinforced the republican identity of the state even as the coins' subject matter reflected the political changes taking place.

The **reverse** features a portrait or image unique to each year's commemorated subject, typically rendered in profile relief with inscriptions identifying the honoree.

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## The Complete Series (1928-1937)

### 1928 — Franz Schubert

**Occasion:** 100th Anniversary of the Death of Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

The inaugural coin in the series honored Franz Schubert, one of Austria's most beloved composers, marking the centenary of his death. Schubert's portrait is shown in left-facing profile, designed by engraver Edwin Griener. The choice of Schubert was emblematic of the early series' focus on cultural prestige. As the first coin issued, it also holds a special place among collectors as the key opener of the *Doppelschilling* series.

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### 1929 — Theodor Billroth

**Occasion:** 100th Anniversary of the Birth of Theodor Billroth (1829-1894)

Theodor Billroth was a pioneering Austro-German surgeon, widely regarded as the father of modern abdominal surgery. He also had a deep personal connection to Brahms and was an accomplished amateur musician. The 1929 coin honored his centennial birth year, celebrating Austria's contributions to medicine and science.

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### 1930 — Walther von der Vogelweide

**Occasion:** 700th Anniversary of the Death of Walther von der Vogelweide (c.1170–c.1230)

Walther von der Vogelweide was the most celebrated of the medieval German-language Minnesingers (troubadour poets), a figure of pan-German cultural importance claimed by both Austria and Germany. The 700th anniversary of his presumed death provided the occasion, and the coin reflects the period's interest in Germanic medieval heritage.

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### 1931 — Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

**Occasion:** 175th Anniversary of the Birth of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1831)

Mozart appeared on Austrian coinage with regularity throughout the 20th century — and this 1931 coin marked the 175th anniversary of the composer's birth in Salzburg. Already featured on the 1956 silver 25 schilling, Mozart's enduring association with Austrian national identity made him a natural choice. The 1931 *Doppelschilling* remains one of the more avidly collected in the series.

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### 1932 — Joseph Haydn

**Occasion:** 200th Anniversary of the Birth of Joseph Haydn (1732–1809)

The bicentennial of Joseph Haydn's birth was the occasion for the 1932 coin. Haydn, composer of *The Creation* and the *Emperor Quartet* (whose melody became the Austrian, and later German, national anthem), was a natural choice for commemoration. The 1932 issue is sometimes noted as among the more challenging to find in high-grade uncirculated condition.

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### 1933 — Ignaz Seipel

**Occasion:** Death of Ignaz Seipel (1876–1932)

The 1933 coin marked a decisive turn in the series. Ignaz Seipel — a Catholic priest, theologian, and two-time Austrian Chancellor (1922–1924 and 1926–1929) — had died in August 1932. A key architect of Austrian Christian Social politics and an opponent of parliamentary socialism, Seipel

was a formative figure of the conservative right. His commemoration signals the series' shift from cultural celebration toward political veneration.

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### **1934 — Engelbert Dollfuss**

**Occasion:** Death of Engelbert Dollfuss (1892–1934)

This is arguably the most historically significant and controversial coin in the series. Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss had dissolved the Austrian parliament in March 1933 and established an Austrofascist authoritarian state modeled partly on Mussolini's Italy. He was assassinated by Austrian Nazis during a failed coup attempt on July 25, 1934. The coin was struck within weeks of his death, bearing his right-facing portrait and the dates 1892–1934. Described by one auction house as "a piece of notable historical and political interest within Austrian numismatics of the interwar period," it remains a striking and somber artifact of the era. The coin's NGC-graded examples in MS63 can command estimates of €150–200 or more.

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### **1935 — Karl Lueger**

**Occasion:** 25th Anniversary of the Death of Karl Lueger (1844–1910)

Karl Lueger served as Mayor of Vienna from 1897 until his death in 1910 and was a transformative figure in Viennese municipal politics, credited with modernizing the city's infrastructure — gasworks, water supply, public transport — through a program of municipal socialism. He was also a virulent antisemite, and his political style has been studied as a precursor to later far-right movements. The Austrofascist government's decision to honor him on this coin was ideologically deliberate. The 1935 issue is widely available and popular among collectors.

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### **1936 — Prince Eugene of Savoy**

**Occasion:** 200th Anniversary of the Death of Prince Eugene of Savoy (1663–1736)

Prince Eugene of Savoy was one of the greatest military commanders in European history, serving the Habsburg Empire across decades of conflict — including decisive victories over the Ottoman Turks at the Battle of Zenta (1697) and the Battle of Petrovaradin (1716). His death in 1736 was the occasion for the 1936 coin. Eugene also appears on the 1963 silver 25 schilling, testament to his enduring symbolic importance in Austria.

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## 1937 — Karlskirche (St. Charles's Church)

**Occasion:** 200th Anniversary of the Completion of the Karlskirche (1737)

The final coin in the series departed from the pattern of honoring individual figures, instead depicting Vienna's Karlskirche — the magnificent Baroque church designed by Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlach and completed in 1737. The coin inscription includes the architect's name (*J.B. FISHER VON ERLACH KARLSKIRCHE VOLLENDET 1737*). It was the last commemorative coin issued before the Anschluss, and its architectural subject perhaps reflected a desire to celebrate Habsburg cultural heritage in the face of an uncertain political future.

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## Thematic Analysis

### Cultural and Artistic Phase (1928-1932)

The first five coins honor composers and cultural figures whose reputations transcended politics: Schubert, Billroth, Vogelweide, Mozart, Haydn. This phase aligns with the democratic-liberal values of the early First Republic and reflects a program of national pride rooted in artistic achievement rather than political ideology.

### Political and Ideological Phase (1933-1937)

The final five coins represent a profound shift. From 1933 onward, the Austrian government was moving steadily toward authoritarianism, and the coin subjects reflect that trajectory: a conservative Catholic chancellor (Seipel), a fascist dictator (Dollfuss), a populist antisemitic mayor (Lueger), a Habsburg military hero (Prince Eugene), and finally a piece of Baroque heritage architecture (Karlskirche). Taken together, this later group served as a vehicle for legitimizing the Austrofascist *Vaterländische Front* state and its preferred historical mythology.

This political dimension makes the series especially interesting to historians and political numismatists, as the coins serve as a year-by-year record of a nation's ideological transformation.

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## Collectibility and Value

The complete ten-coin *Doppelschilling* set is a recognized collecting objective, confirmed by auction appearances of complete sets at houses including Heritage Auctions. Individual coins are accessible, with circulated examples typically available in the \$10-\$35 range depending on grade and subject, while high-grade uncirculated specimens of key dates — particularly Schubert (1928), Haydn (1932), and Dollfuss (1934) — can reach considerably higher premiums.

Because these coins circulated in everyday commerce, truly pristine examples in MS63 or better are genuinely scarce, and collector demand for full sets in matched high grades remains

consistent. The silver content (approximately 0.247 troy oz fine silver per coin) provides a baseline bullion floor, though numismatic value substantially exceeds melt value for most issues in any collectible grade.

Notable premiums apply to:

- **1928 Schubert** — Key date as first in series; strong collector demand
  - **1932 Haydn** — Difficult to find in uncirculated condition
  - **1933 Seipel** — Lower mintage, historically significant political transition coin
  - **1934 Dollfuss** — High historical interest; graded examples well-regarded
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## Conclusion

The Austrian silver 2 schilling *Doppelschilling* series of 1928–1937 is a compact but extraordinarily rich numismatic record of one of the most turbulent decades in modern European history. Beginning with Schubert and ending with the Karlskirche, these ten coins trace a path from cultural confidence to political crisis, from liberal republic to authoritarian state, and from peace to the threshold of annexation. For collectors, they offer an accessible entry point into interwar European silver, while for historians they serve as primary documents of an era whose consequences shaped the world. Few ten-coin series in all of 20th-century European numismatics carry as much narrative weight as the Austrian *Doppelschilling*.