

American author Henry David Thoreau once said, “None are so old as those who have outlived enthusiasm.” Staying active and engaged is one of the keys to healthy senior living. We have a wisdom that can only be attained through life experience. Like a cherished photograph or a patchwork family quilt, our stories are a national treasure, one we must share with our children and our grandchildren to build a stronger future.

The oldest among us have lived through remarkable times. The 20th Century was a time of great change, and incredible social and technological advancement. We have not only witnessed history – we have made history, and as such we have an obligation to its accurate preservation.

Sharing our personal experiences of days gone by is far more interesting than simply reading a book. The sights and sounds we associate with a given moment in time are often unique. They let us breathe life into history and are seldom captured as effectively as when they are recalled first-hand. Storytelling is a vital part of our cultural heritage.

In keeping with this heritage, one of the most popular features of the United States Mint’s H.I.P. Pocket Change™ educational website is being updated and expanded. The Time Machine, an animated, interactive journey through twelve major eras in American history from the colonial period to the present, has been retooled with new activities and eye-catching graphics.

One reason for making the changes was to add more coin-related material, connecting each era with the work of the United States Mint. Coins now play a more prominent role in each era, and provide users with an historical perspective to link the history of the nation to the coins in use at the time. Graphics and formatting also were reworked to make the entire experience more user-friendly and easier to integrate into classroom activities.

The Time Machine is a fun device used to help a group of animated animals who populate the H.I.P. Pocket Change website learn more about a specific coin-related challenge or question, which is posed at the beginning of each era. The core of The Time Machine is a collection of quizzes, activities and games drawn from true historical events. We may not have been camped with General Washington at Valley Forge, but many of us have vivid memories of events our grandchildren only know from history books.

Designed in the form of an animated storybook, the Time Machine encourages literacy and allows children to read at their own pace. Each section includes related historical materials and links for visitors who want to learn more about a specific era or event in our Nation’s history. A Teacher’s Guide is also included on the website, with classroom lessons and other suggested activities relative to each of the specific eras.

You can visit the Time Machine at the United States Mint’s website, www.usmint.gov/kids/timemachine. It’s a great way for seniors, parents and children to stay connected – with our Nation’s history, and with each other. Children are given the gift of our experience and we, as seniors, are given a spark of vitality and a window into the clear-eyed optimism of youth. All in all, a pretty good trade.