

Medal commemorative

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Collections



Honorary commemorative medal.

**Accession
Number**

Period

Materials

Measurements



Historical context

Queen Victoria (1819-1901) ascended the throne at the age of 18, in 1837, and reigned from then on over the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. She was also the head of an empire at its height, over which, as the saying goes, the sun never set. In the 1860s, she supported the union of four of North America's British colonies to form the Dominion of Canada, earning her the title of "Mother of Confederation". In the wake of this, several monuments were dedicated to her in the new Dominion, notably in Montreal, where a statue of Victoria was unveiled in 1872, in the square that had already borne her name since 1860.

She is shown here on a copy of the Canadian General Service Medal (1866 and 1870), awarded to those who fought off raids by the Fenians, a secret organization of Irish who wanted Irish independence from Great Britain. Between 1866 and 1871, Fenians from the United States raided the Canadian border to take Canada hostage in exchange for Irish independence. British soldiers and Canadian militiamen confronted them in various battles, and the raids helped convince large sections of the population of the need for union of the British North American colonies. The Fenian raids helped popularize the idea of Confederation in 1867.