



The E-Gobrecht

**Liberty Seated
Collectors Club**

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LSCC Auction Items Wanted

[Editor - Extracted with gratitude from Gerry Fortin's Daily Blog.] Our club leadership team...is focused on the Anaheim ANA annual LSCC meeting and in planning mode. I am pleased to announce that Heritage's Bob Merrill will once again be the auctioneer for the LSCC annual auction. Bob Merrill is the consummate auctioneer with quick wit and a lifetime of stories; no one is as entertaining as Bob Merrill. Craig Eberhart volunteered to prepare the auction catalog and write lot descriptions. Securing auction lots is now the primary challenge. We discussed the preparation of a color catalog as was done during 2016. The cost for printing a full color catalog and mailing with the August [issue of the] *Gobrecht Journal* approaches \$1,500. Therefore, the club will need a minimum number of quality auction lots and associated proceeds to justify this cost. Auction lot donations can include coins, reference books, artworks, and about anything related to Liberty Seated coinage.



Bob Merrill at the 2015 LSCC auction

Donated auction lots are an important aspect of the LSCC revenue stream. *Gobrecht Journal* printing costs consume all club member dues and advertising revenues, therefore the annual auction becomes the primary vehicle for generating monies and allowing the club to hold a [upcoming] club convention at the [Whitman Baltimore Expo]. If there is potential interest to donate or consign Liberty Seated related material for the annual auction, then please contact me, Len Augsburger or Craig Eberhart for more information. [Contact information is listed on the last page of this issue of the *E-Gobrecht*.] The LSCC is the only non-profit organization that actively promotes Liberty Seated coinage collecting and our club goals are noble. The leadership team is a group of dedicated volunteers with a united goal; ensuring next generation collectors are attracted to the Liberty Seated denominations through education and outreach. We need your support! Thank you.

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The *E-Gobrecht* is an award winning informal electronic publication of the Liberty Seated Collectors Club (LSCC). The LSCC is a non-profit organization dedicated to the attributions of the Liberty Seated Coin series. The LSCC provides the information contained in this email newsletter from various sources free of charge as a general service to the membership and others with this numismatic interest. You do not have to be a LSCC member to benefit from this newsletter; subscription to the *E-Gobrecht* is available to anyone. All disclaimers are in effect as the completeness and/or accuracy of the information contained herein cannot be completely verified. Contact information is included on the last page.



Auction News

by Craig Eberhart, LSCC #1348

The Whitman Baltimore Expo sale was held by **Stack's Bowers Galleries** on March 31 and April 1. The Rarities Night auction included an 1867-S quarter in PCGS MS62 CAC that sold for \$9,987. An 1878-S half dollar with good details did not sell. An 1859-S dollar graded MS62 by PCGS sold for \$9,400.

In the other part of the Stack's Bowers sale an 1846 dime in PCGS EF40 sold for \$2,115. An 1860-O dime graded EF45 by NGC sold for \$2,585, a surprisingly low price. It should be noted that this dime appeared to have pervasive surface roughness, a feature not uncommon for 1860-O dimes.

An 1875-CC twenty-cent piece graded MS62 by NGC sold for \$1,762. This double dime variety, a BF-1, did not sell for a premium even though it was rated the rarest 1875-CC variety (R-5) in the recent book by Lane Brunner and John Frost *Double Dimes The United States Twenty-cent Piece*. Since publication of their book they have discovered a new variety, BF-5, rated R-6 that has supplanted the BF-1 as the rarest variety.

An 1858-S quarter in PCGS VF20 sold for \$822. Two 1860-S quarters, perhaps the rarest "no motto" San Francisco quarter were sold in this auction. An NGC EF40 sold for \$7,637 and a PCGS VF25 sold for \$3,995. An 1872-CC quarter in NGC F12 did not sell. An 1872-S

quarter, the rarest San Francisco mint issue, was graded AU55 by PCGS and sold for \$5,875. This quarter had dark mottled toning perhaps contributing to the low hammer price.

A limited selection of Liberty Seated half dollars was included in this sale, but it did include an 1846-O WB-26 tall date half dollar graded PCGS EF40 that sold for \$1,527 and an 1852-O graded PCGS EF45 that sold for \$1,351.

A nice selection of Liberty Seated dollars were in this sale including many in choice AU grades. An 1840 in PCGS AU58 CAC sold for the very strong price of \$6,462 possibly indicating that this coin was either undergraded or a circulated proof. Two 1841 dollars were grade AU58 with the PCGS coin selling for \$2,350 and the NGC coin selling for \$1,410. An 1842 graded PCGS AU58 also sold for \$1,410. Two dollars, an 1843 and an 1846, were graded PCGS AU58+ and both received the CAC "green bean." They sold for \$2,585 and \$2,115 respectively. An 1859-S dollar graded PCGS EF40 sold for \$1,645. Three 1870-CC dollars were in the sale, two with detail grading and a PCGS AU50 which sold for \$4,935. An 1876-CC trade dollar graded PCGS AU58 sold for \$2,585.

The Central States **Heritage Auction** held in Chicago at the end of April will be covered in the May Auction News.

LSCC Calendar

May 1, 2016. LSCC Table, **Norwich, CT**. Pawcatuck Valley Coin Club Annual Show, Holiday Inn, Chelsea Rose Room.

May 12-14, 2016, LSCC Table and Educational Programs, **Somerset, NJ**. Garden State Numismatic Association Convention, Ukrainian Cultural Center, 135 Davidson Avenue. Educational Programs: Friday, 1 PM (Liberty Seated Dollars) and Saturday, 2 PM (Introduction to Liberty Seated Coinage).

June 1, 2016. Deadline for articles and advertisements for *Gobrecht Journal* Issue #126.



Regional News

by Dennis Fortier, LSCC #2016

The Spring Whitman-Baltimore Coin Expo lived up to its expatiations. The show was well attended as was the club meeting. John Coyle gave a superb presentation on Trade Dollars at the meeting that was keenly received by the members present. His knowledge of the series is remarkable.

John Coyle's display of Trade Dollars at the club table was very impressive as well. Members and non-members alike were struck by the quality and comprehensiveness of his collection.

Two former members who were absent for twenty years rejoined the club at Baltimore. One was former Vice-President Roy Ash. Long standing members were excited to see him again. Welcome back Roy!

John Frost hosted the club table at the Bay State show (photo below). One of the new member brochures he gave out has already showed up in the club mail box. Here are John's impressions of the



show:

"April 22-23 found us at the Bay State Coin Show in Marlboro, MA. We've been to this show for a number of years now, and while this particular show's traffic was a little below normal, numerous LSCC members stopped by the table to discuss the

club's happenings and look at the exhibits. I think we had as many as 8-10 members from New England area drop by to chat. This year, the show organizer left open the possibility of adding educational programs next year, assisted by NENA, the New England Numismatic Association. Hopefully, we'll expand our presence next year to include more education, which we are trying to do around the country."

The 77th Anniversary Convention of the Central States Numismatic Society is happening as this is being written. Steve Petty hosted the meeting and Gerry Fortin gave a presentation titled "Subtle Varieties/Die States for the 1839 Philadelphia Liberty Seated Dime Strikes." A full report will be in next month's column.

May is another busy month starting with The Pawcatuck Valley Coin Club annual coin show May 1st. John Frost will host the club table. A new venue for the regional program will be Garden State Numismatics Association Convention May 12-14 in Somerset NJ. There will be a club table and educational seminars. Garden State Educational seminars are: *Liberty Seated Dollars* on Friday and *Introduction to Liberty Seated Coinage* on Saturday. Carl Feldman will join John at Garden State.

Has anyone seen the movie "Freedom" starring Cuba Gooding Jr.? The movie is set in 1856 and concerns the Underground Railroad. In the movie a character is paid a half dollar. The half dollar takes up the entire screen for about one second. The coin is a Walker Liberty half dollar!



Second LSCC Polo Shirt Order

Procrastinators get a second chance! Several people expressed regret over missing the deadline to order an LSCC polo shirt. Well here is a second chance. We are putting together another order of shirts.

Cost is \$35. Send your check to Dale Miller (see contact information on the last page of this newsletter) or pay by credit card to the club's PayPal account.

Don't forget to include your **name, address, and shirt size.** Order two to be on the safe side. This will most likely be the final order. Don't wait get your order in right away.

Address any questions to Dennis Fortier at ricajun@msn.com. Order closing date is June 15!



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The Curious Collector

by Len Augsburger, LSCC #1271

Flag Hoisting at the New Orleans Mint in 1862

The 1861-O half dollar is perhaps the most popular of all Liberty Seated coins, and rightfully so. The pieces are plentiful, due to a bountiful recovery from the SS Republic shipwreck and, with the marketing of complete die marriage sets, collectors have been exposed to numerous varieties for the issue. Randy Wiley's masterful work, presented in *Gobrecht Journals* #94 and #97, associates each die marriage with its respective coining authority. The *Guide Book* identifies the "CSA die crack" as the diagnostic to identify the examples struck under the Confederacy, but this is not precisely correct. The "CSA die crack," for which a hefty premium is assigned, runs from Liberty's nose to the rim and is easily identifiable on many coins. A closer reading of Wiley's work, however, reveals that the CSA die crack (more properly a later die state of the W-11 marriage) is not the one infallible way to identify "Confederate" half dollars. Wiley identified six marriages in total, W-9 to W-15, which are also associated with the Confederate authority. The reader is referred to Wiley's articles for additional detail, now available online at the Newman Numismatic Portal, with permission of the LSCC.

Wiley's article in *Gobrecht Journal* #97 further states "Dr. Bonzano, who had been appointed special agent of the U.S. Treasury, returned to New Orleans [in June 1862] with orders to take charge of the Mint and recover all government property." A recent chance finding in the National Archives details M. F. Bonzano's purchase of American flags for the New Orleans Mint. Two flags were purchased from Collis & Mitchell of New York City, located at "No. 162 south corner of Dover" – today at the foot of the Brooklyn Bridge on the Manhattan side. The flags were large – 15' x 25' and 10' x 15.5'. Clearly the Union intended to boldly signify its dominion over the New Orleans Mint. The expense for the two flags, purchased on July 31, 1862, was \$60. The purchase in

New York indicates that there was no ready supply American flags in New Orleans – not a surprise! On August 6, a charge of \$1.50 was incurred for "express freight to New Orleans." In New Orleans, expenses were detailed as a flagpole, painting the pole, "blacksmith work" (apparently for mounting the pole), "crossing...the river," and labor, all of which totaled \$73. It seems only one flag was raised, with the duplicate perhaps remaining in storage as a contingency. Bonzano was reimbursed on September 8 and the paperwork was duly filed to rest in an archive for many years before being examined by this writer.

Bibliography:

Randy Wiley, "Die Marriages of 1861-O Half Dollars," *The Gobrecht Journal* #94, <https://nnp.wustl.edu/library/book/514095>

Randy Wiley, "Coining Authority and Rarity for Die Marriages of 1861-O Half Dollars," *The Gobrecht Journal* #97, <https://nnp.wustl.edu/library/book/172>

National Archives, Record Group 217 (accounting records of the Treasury Department), entry 347 (settled miscellaneous Treasury accounts), file #144821. The author acknowledges Bob Julian for identifying resources within Record Group 217.



Quarter of the Month

by Greg Johnson, LSCC #1460

1853-O Quarter Dollars

About 12 years ago I began a collection of Liberty Seated quarter die marriages. It quickly became apparent that, when collecting by die marriage, some issues are far more interesting than others and that the 1853-O is one of the most interesting. The building of an 1853-O die marriage set led to a number of interesting discoveries and two *Gobrecht Journal* articles. The first, in Issue #105 (July 2009), described the early die state of the “Filled O” die marriage (Briggs 3-E, J-107) and the second, in Issue #118 (November 2013), detailed 11 distinct die marriages and their attribution. This more recent article introduced the “J” [Johnson] numbers that are currently used only by a few dedicated variety nuts.

This month I want to offer a brief history and summary of the 1853-O die marriage set, as well as an update regarding two recent additions. I will not repeat the *Gobrecht Journal* article here; it is available courtesy of the Newman Numismatic Portal at <https://archive.org/details/gobrechtjournalfn118libe>. What can currently be defined as a complete set, in my opinion, consists of 14 coins despite there being only 11 die marriages. This is because there are significant die states that, to me, offer a distinct enough appearance to constitute a different variety. Two of the “extra” varieties are die states of the filled O die marriage, which can be found with the mintmark completely filled, completely open and in some intermediate states. These are identified as:

1853-O J-107a (completely open)

1853-O J-107b (partially filled)

1853-O J-107c (completely filled).

There is also a very late die state of the J-106 variety in which a heavy die crack runs from the eagle’s nose on the reverse, through the A in STATES and connects with a number of rim cuds; this is identified as J-106b.

The project began in 2004 with an effort to

locate and acquire examples of all 5 varieties of the 1853-O listed in Briggs’ *The Complete Encyclopedia of United States Liberty Seated Quarters* (Lima, OH 1991). During the ensuing six years I came to own more than 30 examples of the 1853-O in a variety of grades. One of the 5 listed die marriages (Briggs 1-B) has yet to be located 12 years later, while 7 die marriages not listed in the book had been identified by 2010. At the end of 2010, I owned 13 of the 14 examples in the complete set as defined above, missing only the early die state J-106a. Some of the coins in the set were, however, in low grade, unworthy of certification, or both. That is when activity slowed down considerably.

Patience and persistence are keys to building Liberty Seated collections of all types, but perhaps especially Liberty Seated Quarters. Quarter variety sets require both patience and persistence at levels that invite references to mental illness. That said, for the past six years I have continued to seek new die marriages and upgrades to the existing set with the single purchase being the November 2012 acquisition of a completely filled O example (J-107c) in a PCGS XF45 holder. Prior to that purchase two full years had elapsed without any additions or upgrades, and since that time three-and-a-half years have elapsed without so much as a nibble. Then, in the space of one week in April 2016, two significant upgrades appeared.

The first find was in the Stack’s Bowers sale connected with the March Whitman show in Baltimore. I attended the show on Thursday, March 31 and Friday, April 1, but uncharacteristically did not review auction lots. I quite thoroughly enjoyed meeting up with a few dealers and socializing with the friends, colleagues and kindred spirits of the LSCC but never got around to auction lot viewing before I had to head for home. Back at home Saturday morn-

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ing I decided to check out the Stacks Bowers internet only session on the website and was shocked to find an accurately attributed example of the rarest 1853-O die marriage (J-104, Briggs 2-D) in a PCGS XF45 holder (See Figure 1). It was only the third example of the die marriage that I had seen during the prior 12 years. The first one was a raw VG10/F12 in my set and the second was an ANACS AU55 with secondary toning and a firm asking price of over \$3,000. The ANACS piece was offered to me about five years ago but passed upon in the interests of solvency. I placed a bid online and won the auction for well below my maximum, which I am sure was more than the coin is

actually worth to anyone who hasn't been looking for one for more than a decade.

Only a few days after the auction above concluded an online auction website featured a filled O die marriage in its earliest, unfilled die state (J-107a, Briggs 3-E) in a PCGS XF40 holder with CAC approval (See Figure 2). I already owned four examples, including the coin featured in the 2009 *Gobrecht Journal* article, but none of them are worthy of TPG grading and encapsulation, much less the CAC sticker. This coin was also purchased for well below my flagrantly ridiculous maximum bid. So the long, patient wait has been rewarded and the two coins pictured have a new, happy home. I love it when a plan comes together.



Figure 1: 1853-O J-104 25¢ Obverse.



Figure 1: 1853-O J-104 25¢ Reverse.



Figure 2: 1853-O J-107a 25¢ Obverse.



Figure 2: 1853-O J-107a 25¢ Reverse.



The Strike Zone

by Rich Hundertmark, LSCC #2347

My 1875-S Double Dime Die Pairing Adventure

Modified fly fishing proverb of the month:
Many Americans believe that they are born coin collectors.

For a man to admit a distaste for coins would be like denouncing mother-love or hating moonlight.
-- John Steinbeck

One of the easiest Liberty Seated specialty books to read and utilize is Lane Brunner and John Frost's *Double Dimes The United States Twenty-Cent Piece*. I must confess to loving our odd denomination short series coinage, including the 2 cent piece, 3 cent silver, and now the 20 cent piece.

At a recent auction in central Pennsylvania, I noted in the pre-auction listing that a 1875-S 20 cent piece was up for sale and I marked the lot as one to study. Auctions such as this are "rough and tumble," there is only a two-hour window to view, seating is both limited and cramped when previewing, and of course lighting is not optimal. However, I was able to view the lots I had selected including the 1875-S.

The coin was listed as grading VG which appeared correct with no problems evident under close inspection. The key for me was the variety. In small auctions such as this opportunities can quickly present themselves. As I have just recently gained interest in the series, I knew going in that my existing coin was a BF-13, easily diagnosed by the combination of a misplaced 8 high in the denticles on the obverse and a Filled S/S reverse. Would I be able to add another variety?

The answer to my pre-auction preparation did not take long, as the coin was readily identified as an-

other BF-13. As it was nicer than my Good grade existing coin I still decided to bid, but was unsuccessful.

The die marriage for the BF-13 is listed as Obverse 9 coupled with a Reverse H. The obverse on the coin I have is an earlier die state as no rim break under the date is noted. On the reverse the S mint mark is high, positioned such that it is directly below where the branch and arrow feathers intersect. The coin also exhibits the die crack identifier that runs through the top of UNITED.

The BF-13 die marriage is listed as an R-2, so it is a fairly common pairing. After the auction I further read that late die state examples exhibiting advanced die cracks are harder to locate. Having an additional coin showing the die state progression would not have been a bad thing to add, however I did not bring the book with me to note the existence of this feature, and then possibly make a higher bid, lesson learned!

The pics of the misplaced 8 and Filled S/S are courtesy of the Double Dime book and can be found on page 102 describing the BF-13 die marriage variety.

Happy collecting!
Rich



Misplaced 8 high in the denticles





LSCC Member in the Spotlight:

Scott Grieb, LSCC #740

by Tony Barreca, LSCC #2151

Tony. *When did you first become interested in coin collecting and numismatics? Was there a specific experience or set of experiences that triggered it? What series did you start collecting when you did?*

Scott. 1965 was the year. I was eight and had a grandfather who seemed to me to be the embodiment of history, brown wrinkled skin, gray hair, he lived in a tent, had lots of stories--he was a pilot in WWI -- and possessed what I saw as the greatest treasure on earth: an old oxidized pill bottle full of old, old pennies! He would pull out his magnifying glass and gaze at one. I was rapt with attention and hooked! That penny was dated 1919, right after World War II! A permanent love of history, and the artifacts that had "been there," was instilled.

Tony. *How did you initially become interested in Liberty Seated (LS) coins? Which LS denominations do you focus on currently? Previously?*

Scott. The use of the word "Liberty" on coins. My father knew a guy who went into old ghost towns, and I had the opportunity to buy some Indian Head Cents he dug up. My goal was to find at least one with "Liberty" still readable. To me, being able to read "Liberty" on a coin signified quality and a survivor from the past. Skip ahead about 15 years to when I finally had the funds to purchase truly nice coins, and I still targeted "Liberty". Of course, Liberty Seated coins have "Liberty" right up front!

The classical motif of Liberty Seated coins has always interested me, and is so emblematic of the 19th century. The country's ideals of Liberty and Freedom are etched with rich symbolism.

Tony. *Within the series of LS coins you focus on, do you consider yourself a variety collector? If so, what is your approach to variety collecting?*

Scott. I focus on Liberty Seated Dimes and purchased my first, an 1890, on January 20, 1968. It has since disappeared and I only know of it now because I stumbled across a record of it a few years ago. As so many, during my teen years I did not collect actively but maintained an interest. Then, in 1981 I was looking through a Redbook and was amazed that an 1879 Liberty Seated dime with mintage of only 15,100 was valued at only \$40 in Good. I could afford that! I could really own something much rarer than any Lincoln Cent and for less!

So I began collecting Liberty Seated Dimes by date. My first, then, was an 1868-S in VG for only \$15. In 1982, I learned about the "specialist varieties" when I purchased Kamal Ahwash's encyclopedia. Very few dealers cared about varieties then, some joked about them, but those who took them seriously, such as Bob Everett in Seattle, were a great help and inspiration.

Like most Liberty Seated people, I have examples of each denomination, but lately have been also favoring Liberty Seated half dollars. I was blessed to come across a few very nice examples in the 1990's, mostly from Brian Greer, such as an 1851 and an 1857-S. I am kind of riding the wave with them, so to speak.

Tony. *How long have you been an LSCC member? In your opinion, what are the main advantages of belonging to the club?*

Scott. I joined in 1983. Bob Everett made sure of that and even let me borrow his copy of *Gobrecht Journal* #21 which contained the first Liberty Seated dime survey. At that time the information in each journal was invaluable. No other organization had so much information about Liberty Seated coins. It was great!

Tony. *Do you ever participate in Club activities? If so, which ones? Have you ever visited the Clubs message boards?*

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Attended a meeting in person? Which activities could you see yourself participating in at a future time? Have you ever actively recommended that a collector friend join the LSCC? If not, why not?

Scott. I was Secretary-Treasurer of the LSCC from 1994 to 2000 and wrote several articles for the *Gobrecht Journal* in the 1980's and 1990's. I also try to attend meetings if they are anywhere near Chicago. The thought of writing more articles is inviting but with a busy career, family, etc., I have not had the time I truly need to do so. I have recommended LSCC membership to several people. It is one thing that has always made collecting fun!

I should say that working with John McCloskey, who was club president then (for you new members), was a true pleasure. He had everything so organized I knew exactly what I had to do, and how, from the first day. I am convinced to this day that he has never received the recognition from the numismatic community, at large, that he deserves.

Tony. *If you could change one thing about the LSCC, what would it be?*

Scott. I have never really thought along those lines. I have always seen the LSCC as "it is what it is."

That being said, I believe many of the recent changes of the past few years have been positive. For example, the new 8½ by 11 format [*Gobrecht Journal*] with calendared pages and color photos is great and very impressive. Having monthly features is good, too. Bottom line: we need to get people excited about seeing their work being published, myself included.

Tony. *In your collecting career, what was the greatest coup you ever pulled off when purchasing a coin? Your biggest mistake?*

Scott. Bob Everett helped. It was 1985 and I saw an 1875-CC In-Wreath wide CC at a dealer's table that I just could not afford. I told Bob about it, hoping that he would buy it for inventory, and that somehow I could purchase it later, after I had "saved my shekels" as he would say. Well, Bob went over to the dealer

and talked a while. He came back, reported the dealer did sell it to him at a "kick the table twice" price and then offered it to me for only \$88! I was abashed; I also bought it.

That 1875-CC has since been joined by other wide CC's. Gerry kept coming across them last summer and even though I was in the hospital much of the time I somehow managed to scoop them all up! The MS-63 F-112b is a beauty.

My greatest mistake was selling that first 1868-S Seated Dime, that old VG. I still remember exactly what it looked like, and if I ever stumble across it again, it is sold!

Tony. *Do you think of the hobby as being a form of investment as well? If so, how do you approach your use of coins as an investment vehicle?*

Scott. I do not consider myself an investor in coins, though many I have are worth much more now than when purchased them. My goals have always been to have fun, relax a little, learn a lot, and enjoy looking at something that was in use when my great and great-grandfathers were living.

Tony. *While we don't want to make anyone uncomfortable by getting too personal, it would be a real opportunity for your fellow club members to get to know you a bit if you'd also answer one or more of these optional questions.*

Tony. *What is/was your work/career?*

Scott. Fire protection engineering. A career I fell into and that has taken me all over the world. I cannot complain about it at all.

People might ask, what in the world is fire protection engineering? In brief, it is the science of keeping your business in business. How do you prevent a disastrous fire that could burn down the only plant in town and upon which everyone depends? How can a large warehouse fire, with storage to 40 feet high and higher, be controlled to minimize the loss? How do you know if a fire can jump from one

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building to the next and result in a conflagration? That is the job of Fire Protection Engineering.

As for my own career, I started in Seattle doing field work; sawmills and pulp and paper mills became my specialty. In 1989, I moved the family to the Chicago area to become the assistant in my company's fire protection training laboratory. We had 10,000 square feet at corporate headquarters with working fire protection equipment, "all the bells and whistles," and a modern classroom. Our trainees were engineering and applied science graduates. Classes were also held for industrial fire chiefs, risk managers, and anyone involved with the fire protection systems wherever they worked.

Eventually, I became an independent consultant but now work for another company as an account engineer who does not have travel so much. Perhaps when I retire, I will again do a bit of field work. It gets

in your blood. There is constant demand for fire protection engineers, a type of engineering most people have never even heard of. But it has the most interesting and diverse possibilities!

Tony. *What other hobbies/interests do you have besides numismatics?*

Scott. History has always been an interest, especially the Old West, seafaring, both World Wars, Biblical, European, and other ancient history. Friends say I should have been a professor; I certainly am absent minded enough!

Tony. *What is your greatest or most memorable personal achievement?*

Scott. A standing ovation from a group of managers for a project I did back in the 1990's. Plaques and awards are OK but when it is personal, it means something!



A Few Newspaper Articles from Near the Close of the Liberty Seated Period by Jim Laughlin, LSCC #876

The following article appeared in an 1891 newspaper under the heading of "Sunday Pastimes." Liberty Seated quarter dollar collectors can probably appreciate this sage advice that is nearly 125 years ago, especially after attending a coin show in search of expanding one's collection.

San Francisco Call, September 28, 1891.
COIN DATES, Some Interesting Statistics Relative to
the Issue of American Silver Money.

At the club one of the members pulled out a handful of small change to pay his bill.

"Have you any quarters?" said one, who was sitting near.

"Yes, four. Do you want to borrow them?"

"No. But what will you bet that I cannot guess the dates on them?"

"I do not know what your trick is, but for a flier I will bet the coins themselves."

"Done. I will name the dates: 1853, 1854 and two of 1876. Am I right?"

"Let me see. One is 1854; this is 1877; this is 1876, and this is 1853. You guessed three correctly and missed one. So you owe me a quarter and I owe you 75 cents. Now explain your trick."

"It is no trick. The fancy took me a few weeks to examine the dates on coins, and I found that almost every quarter bears one of these dates, with an occasional 1856, 1857, 1858, 1878. I suppose more of them were coined in those years. During the weeks I have been in the subject, I have seen one 1861, but not a single other quarter bearing date in the sixties or in the seventies, except as I have mentioned. If one wanted to bet as we have just done, he would be a sure winner in the long run."

I witnessed this transaction and it interested me so that I looked the matter up. In the report of the Director of the Mint, I found a full explanation. In that is a table giving the coinage in different denominations for each year since the organization of the mints. The coinage of quarters fluctuated in a most remarkable way. Beginning with 1850, for three

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years the coinage averaged about \$40,000 a year. Then in 1853 it jumped up to \$3,813,555. In 1854 it was almost as much \$3,095,000. Then it dropped to \$714,260 in 1855. In 1856 it was \$1,816,000; in 1857, \$2,411,000, and in 1858, \$1,842,000. Then it dropped again, never rising to \$400,000, and in war time averaging only five or six thousands, except in 1861, when it was \$1,213,650. In 1875 it was \$1,075,875; in 1876 \$4,454,287.50; in 1887, \$2,727,917.50. Then began the coinage of silver dollars by the millions, and the production of subsidiary coins dropped way off. For the past ten or fifteen years the coinage of quarters has averaged three or four thousand dollars a year.

Just examine the dates on the quarters that come into your possession and see how they bear out these statistics. For instance, in 1886 there were only \$1471.50 in quarters coined, and there are a thousand chances to one against a coin of this date coming into your hands.—Albany Argus.

Unfortunately this article has a couple of typographical errors in it that avid Liberty Seated quarter dollar fans probably immediately picked up on. In the second to last paragraph, the 1887 should have been of course 1877. I confirmed this by checking the 1891 Director of the Mint's Report and found the dollar value for 1877 to have been \$2,727,927.50 for Philadelphia which very nearly matches the amount published (off by \$10). For 1887, it would have been only \$2,677.50.

The other suspect entry is in the fourth paragraph, where the author states "with an occasional 1856, 1857, 1858, and 1878." Here the 1878 date is questionable, as the dollar value of quarters produced in 1878 at Philadelphia was \$565,000 and the dollar value for 1877 at Philadelphia would have been \$2.7 million. I suspect the 1878 is also a typo and should have been 1877. There, of course, is the possibility depending on time and place, that maybe 1878 was a more common date for the author to find than 1877.

At the very end of the article is "Albany Argus," which meant the San Francisco *Call* was giving credit to that paper for being the original publisher of the article. While it does not say it, I suspect this is

Albany, New York, however Albany is a common City name and so too is *Argus* for newspapers. My quick internet search located that there was an Albany *Argus* newspaper in New York in the early 1800s, but I couldn't find if it still existed in 1891, nor a digital copy of the original article. The author had used the Mint Report table's specific only to the Philadelphia Mint, rather than using the tables that provided the grand totals for all four mints combined. While slim, it supports an East Coast origin for the article.

The statement that "I have seen one 1861, but not a single other quarter bearing date in the sixties or in the seventies, except as I have mentioned..." indicates the 1862-1874 quarters were scarce at least in the local where the author resided. Again, it is too bad to not have a definitive location where the author resided, but I suspect this was up-state New York.

I do sort of wonder whether the San Franciscans who may have read this article in their local paper realized the advice being given was for wagers placed in New York? It is too bad the local press did not have a follow-up article of what was the most common quarters found in pocket change in San Francisco in 1891. While I suspect it would have been 1876 and 1877, I am not so sure as much of this mintage was sent East to retire the fractional currency paper money.

The following article announced a Government program of free shipping to alleviate a severe shortage of dimes and half dollars in late 1891.

Sacramento Daily Union, September 17, 1891
 Washington, Sept. 16—Owing to numerous inquiries coming from different parts of the country for fractional silver coin, the United States Treasurer has prepared a circular stating in substance that new halves and dimes will be furnished in sums \$200 or more by express free of charges, or by registered mail in sums or multiples of \$50, the registration charges paid, to any point, in the United States.

Apparently there were sufficient quantities of quarters in circulation to not have been included in the Government program. Dimes had been in demand throughout the late 1880s and the Mint had acknowl-

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edged that there had been shortages at various times and locations. The inclusion of half dollars indicated that in parts of the country, the mostly pre-1878 stock-piles had finally becoming exhausted.

The following article denotes the final closing of the Liberty Seated period at the San Francisco Mint. The new Barber designs had been announced in the San Francisco *Call* on November 12, 1891.

San Francisco Call, January 4, 1892

COINAGE DIES, Those of Last Year's Date Being Destroyed.

The steel dies for last year's coinage are being destroyed at the Mint. About twenty at a time are thrown into a forge and heated until their color is cherry red. They are then placed upon an anvil and given two cross diagonal blows with a chisel and then struck with a sledge hammer, which completely obliterates all traces of the fine engraving. These precautions are taken to render the dies useless in the hands of anyone who might abstract them from the Mint vault.

The following 1892 article regards the use of Confederate paper money in Los Angeles immediately after the close of the Liberty Seated coinage period. I suspect the article was primarily a reporter's flight of fancy working from a scant rumor or report that maybe someone had been duped. What I do find interesting, although the wording in the particular paragraph is somewhat garbled, our reporter tries to establish that people on the Pacific Slope are not educated in the use of paper money, stating that "silver and gold being almost the only mediums of commercial transactions here." Just one more confirmation of the hard money preference of the West Coast population during the Liberty Seated period.

Los Angeles Herald, July 25, 1892

CONFEDERATE BILLS, NUMEROUS ATTEMPTED SWINDLES WITH THESE REPORTED. The Racket Considered to Work Remuneratively-Bold Attempt to Obtain a Load of Them.

Numerous attempts have been made of late in this city by sharpers to pass upon unsophisticated people bills of the late Confederacy, of the denominations

of five, ten and fifteen dollars. In some cases the attempts were successful, although in the majority of them the operators met with disappointment because their intended victims were not as green as they looked.

On Saturday, a tall, lean, and lank individual, whose general description is summed up in the words "hard looking," made insignificant purchases at candy stores and fruit stands on the east side, tendering in payment Confederate bills. These were declined and coin required instead.

It seems strange that, with the great difference in the general appearance of the defunct currency and that of greenbacks, silver certificates and treasury notes, so many people should be deceived into accepting them and parting with good money instead, but it is nevertheless a fact that numbers of swindlers make it a common practice to work the racket. That it is more than ordinarily remunerative cannot be doubted, because it has been done persistently for years by crooks.

It is probable that it is more successful on the Pacific coast than anywhere else in the United States, because its people are not educated in paper money as those of the Pacific slope are, silver and gold being almost the only mediums of commercial transaction here.

Only a short time ago, an individual one night, threw a rock into the plate glass of a Main street pawnshop, where all he could possibly have gathered in was a large collection of Confederate bills in the show case. That he was willing to stand a charge of malicious mischief or even burglary, in the event of capture, indicates that to him at least, those notes represented their face value in dollars, the additional labor and the possible danger in working them off probably adding zest to the prospective occupation of placing them in circulation.

The plate glass proved stronger than the rock and the latter was the only corpus delicti that Policeman James Hollaran succeeded in capturing, because the legs of the disappointed thief were by him brought into play with commendable energy as soon as he found that his attempted rape of the show case had been foiled.

It will thus be seen that trades people who deal in a small way with the commodities of life, in places somewhat removed from the center of town, cannot

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be too careful in scrutinizing paper money offered them by strangers in payment for purchases of comparatively a little amount when contrasted with the denomination of the note tendered.

Crooks arrested for the crime can only be prosecuted for obtaining money by false pretenses and are not amenable to the United States courts.

Not sure if the Who, What, Where, Why and How was around back then, but it seems we have nothing concrete in this article that indicates Confederate bills actually duped anyone in Los Angeles in 1891. Perhaps it was just to warn us.

Sources:

California newspapers: California Digital Newspaper Collection, University of California, Riverside, <http://cdnc.ucr.edu>

Report of the Director of the Mint, 1891, Government Printing Office. Page 198-199. This volume is available also on line thru Googlebooks.



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Vice President

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leonard_augsburger@hotmail.com

Secretary / Treasurer

Dale Miller
dalecta@gmail.com

Publications Editor

Bill Bugert
wb8cpy@earthlink.net
P.O. Box 242
Fairfield, PA 17320
(717) 337-0229

National Positions

Carl Feldman

carlscoins@gmail.com
Membership Chairman

John Frost

john.frost@doubledimes.com
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Dennis Fortier

ricajun@msn.com
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Jason Feldman

jasonfeldman@gmail.com
Director,
LSCC Southern Region

Steve Petty

stephenpetty@sbcglobal.net
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bpcushing@gmail.com
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