
JOURNAL OF THE
BARBER COIN COLLECTORS' SOCIETY

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2004

Barber Halves at the Smithsonian

See page 13



**The Museum of American History (above)
houses the National Numismatic Collection**

Photo reprinted courtesy of Smithsonian Institute Office of Imaging and Photographic Services Website

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JOURNAL OF THE
BARBER COIN COLLECTORS' SOCIETY

Founded in 1989 by Steve Epstein

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BCCS PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I am writing rather fresh from Pittsburgh and the ANA Convention. All of you will have read the convention happenings in the numismatic press prior to seeing this issue of the Journal. I'd only state here there were great crowds each day (even greater on Saturday) and the Heritage ANA auction sold over \$20 million of material.

The ANA BCCS meeting was lively and productive. We had about a dozen attendees including Paul Gilkes, assigned from *Coin World*. Among the information pieces shared, the February 2005 Long Beach Show will display the top three or four Barber Half Dollar sets based on PCGS Registry ranking. This should be rather exciting and will likely include the collection of a BCCS member.

An additional news item is the existence of an 1898 half dollar minted in New Orleans with a micro 'O.' (There is no typo here; the coin is dated six years after the appearance of the Barber silver types.) The owner is unknown to me and reportedly resides in Georgia. This variety was first listed by Biestle in his 1929 Half Dollar book and is referenced by Dave Lawrence in his Complete Guide. I'm sure more will be forthcoming.

Two key discussion topics involved electronic communications among Barber collectors. The first discussion concerned the advantages of an Email forum with news, comments, items for sale/trade and more. I indicated this has been suggested previously but not implemented due to the lack of a person to coordinate (i.e., electronic editor) the content, subscribers and management of this communication. I wish to note here the keen interest expressed by individuals present while I recall earlier hard feelings on several members' part when no Email forum was launched. This objective requires a committed person to step forward and make this happen (please Email me to volunteer, or with comments, etc.).

The second topic (possibly derived from the above discussion) came from member John Frost with a proposal to create a BCCS website. John offered to initiate the steps which could lead to this being a realization, including obtaining a domain name. This approach may require more initial start-up effort but less subsequent ongoing effort.

Please offer your comments and opinions on these ideas by either Email or as a letter to the editor. Thanks for your interest in Barbers and in our Society.

Numismatic regards,
Phil Carrigan



BCCS EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Beginning with the next issue, we would like to reinstate “**Barber Barter**” which made its first appearance in the Vol. 1, No. 2 Journal back in the summer of 1989. As initially stated in that issue, this section is a free service available to all BCCS members for the sole purpose of trading Barber coins only in an effort to upgrade or complete their personal collections.

SAMPLE ADS

Need 92, 93-O, 94 and 94-O Dimes. Strict XF-AU. Have approx. 200 duplicates AG-XF. Will trade lists. Your name and contact info

Wanted - Quarters in XF. Full band must be visible. Name and contact info

Need 1910-S Barber Dime in AU. Strict ANA grading please. Will buy or trade. Enclose phone number and I will call. Name and contact info

Ads are limited to 50 words and should be surface mailed or emailed to me. See page 3 for complete mailing address information. Ads must be received by Dec. 1st to appear in the next issue.

_____ Many thanks to those who gave feedback to last issue’s “Editor’s Message” and Arno Safran’s letter. Remember, it is mainly this Journal that provides communication between us Barber enthusiasts. Your fellow members appreciate your opinions, experiences and findings regarding collecting Barbbers.

THE JOURNAL NEEDS YOUR ARTICLES!

Remember your article submission(s) automatically enters you in the BCCS Literary Contest. The article receiving the most member votes will win a 1st place prize of \$50. Second place prize will be \$25 and third place will be a free one year BCCS membership. So, make sure your membership is up to date and get your article to Eileen at the post office or e-mail address on page 3.

DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE IS December 1st

Hunting Down Mid-Grade Barber Halves

By **Robert M. Petty**

I want to share an experience I had a couple of years ago hunting for Barber halves at a local coin show. In March of 2002, I headed out on a Saturday morning to a local coin show about 30 miles from my home. On this particular day, I had about five hundred dollars set aside to hunt for Barber halves. I left the house excited about the prospect of finding a nice original VF Barber half to add to or upgrade a coin in my nearly complete F/VF set. I figured I would be lucky to find any nice original VF coins, but you never know what will turn up on a hunting trip. I guess that is half the fun of collecting.

I arrived at the show around ten in the morning and began hunting the bourse floor for that hidden Barber half treasure. The bourse floor consisted of about forty tables of coin dealers and, after about an hour of searching, I spotted a couple of nice VF Barber halves: an 1899-S in nice original VF-30 for which I gladly paid \$95.00 and, to my surprise, a nice 1910 in VF-25 for which I shelled out \$135.00. These two coins were original, problem-free coins with that nice deep rich pearl grey toning that I really like. I was feeling pretty darn lucky to have found these two coins. I was now down to \$270.00 to spend at the show, and figured I would just take the money home as I had looked over most everything at the show. Almost.

I went to one of the last tables at the show, a small table with just a few coins on display in a wooden box with a glass top. When I looked in the upper right corner of the box, I kinda froze in disbelief as my eyes spotted a Barber half in a cardboard 2x2 with "1904-S VF-30" written on the holder. I calmly asked the dealer if I could examine this coin while, on the inside, my heart raced like an excited kid in a candy store. I figured the coin was probably a problem coin as it is a very tough date in VF and I had never seen one in VF at any coin show before. The coin in my set was a Fine-15 I had purchased around seven years before.

Upon examining the coin with my 5x magnifier, I came to realize I was holding an original pearl grey problem-free VF+ 1904-S! The holder was marked \$340.00. My mind began to race. *Uh-oh, I only have \$270.00 left.* The dealer at this point let me know that if I was interested in the coin, he would let it go for \$325.00, but not a penny less. I thought this was more than fair but I was short of cash, and I always buy cash and stay within my budget. I calmly gave the coin back to the dealer and said I would think about it.

As I walked out of the show in a dazed stupor, I decided that I was going to go out to my car, drive to the nearest cash machine (which was about two miles away) and get the extra cash needed for this special occasion. I am usually a very calm person, but I was darned excited about this coin! I piled into my old reliable '86 Toyota Camry and started driving for the cash machine. I was almost there when I saw blue lights behind me. I pulled over with the police officer pulling in behind me.

When he came to my door, he asked, "Is there any reason you're going 15 miles per hour over the speed limit this afternoon?"

I thought *I can't tell him that in my excited frenzy over hunting down a rare Barber half, I had totally forgotten about speed limits, police, the earth, etc. on my way to a cash machine to get money to purchase it before someone else does.* Ouch!

Well, I finally got to that cash machine after humbly signing my speeding ticket for \$163.00. I proceeded back to the coin show, going the speed limit of course and, luckily for me, the coin had not sold. I purchased it for \$325.00 plus the \$163.00 for the speeding ticket or a grand total of \$488.00! It was a kinda bit-sweet day, but every time I look at my prized 1904-S in my collection, I have to smile as it was all worth it to get my darling VF 1904-S Barber half.



These coins are currently listed, pictured, and for sale at:

MoneyBucks Coin Auctions

- *1899-O/O Barber Dime; ANACS VF-35; Very Rare
- *1901-S Barber Dime; VG-10; 4 1/2 Letters; Key Date!
- *1913 Barber Dime; SEGS AU; White
- *1896 Barber Quarter; ANACS AU-58; Repunched Date
- *1914-D Barber Quarter ANACS MS-61; Doubled Die Obverse; Extremely Rare in Mint State
- *1897-S Barber Half; Good/AG; Key Date
- *New copy of Walter Breen's Encyclopedia of US Coins, 754 pp.

www.MoneyBucks.net

Hub Types, Logotypes & Mintmarks - Part 3

By **Steve Hustad**

It's getting warm out here now and my second refilling of the bird feeder within the week tells me that spring is here! – or the squirrels have found yet another way to fulfill their roles as nature's thieves! (I prefer to believe the first.) This time of year also reminds me that it's time to write up the next installment of "Barber Logotypes and Mintmarks."

I hope many of you are finding this little (but basic) series useful as a sort of refresher, though many will find it redundant. But I think we have to consider that the BCCS is always taking on new members (hopefully!), and it's those members who also need to be served, as they are the future of coin collecting and of our organization specifically.

So here we go with part 3 on the various mintmark punches used during the run of the Barber Dime series. This part uses six plates to illustrate the six mintmark punches used: 3 for San Francisco, two by New Orleans, and just one at the Denver Mint.

When the Barber Dime, Quarter and Half series were introduced in 1892, they utilized (for the most part) the same date mintmark punches that had been in use with the Liberty Seated silver coinage series for quite some time.

The first 'S' mintmark plate: 1892 - 1899 - illustrates what I'm calling "Style A" and shows the size and style of the mintmark punch used from its inception in 1892 through, and including, the 1899 minted pieces. By comparison, we can determine that it is the very same size and style as used on the seated dimes previously. Why change, right?

This style's characteristics include a fat 'S' with mostly closed loops and tall serifs. The center/diagonal portion is the 'fat' part. This mintmark often will cause chips resulting in one or both loops becoming filled. Sometimes the serifs appear to close the loops on more well-worn pieces, though this is a function of wear and not a different style punch (determined by comparison of same die pieces in different states of wear).

There is an overlap of 1899 pieces with the next style (B), but I haven't seen or heard of any of style A on 1900 dated coins – yet.

The second 'S' mintmark plate: 1899 – 1911, illustrates what I'm calling "Style B" and shows the size and style used in the series middle years. The 'S' mintmark

punch is now noticeably a bit wider, thinner and more open with slightly smaller serifs (with more rounded tips to the serifs). This is a significant change. Why? Perhaps the old ones merely wore out and this was the Mint worker's idea of current style? We'll never know. I like style A best (call me nostalgic!), but with the change comes more collecting excitement, so...

No overlap is known with following style 'S' (C) but, as noted above, overlap is known with style A in 1899.

The third 'S' mintmark plate: 1912 - 1916, illustrates what I'm calling "Style C" and involves only the last five years of the Barber Dime run. This last style is thinner, taller and even more open than the preceding. The serifs are made even smaller again. A comparison of style 'A' with 'C' becomes very stark. It's almost as if a morphing has occurred with 'B' in between as 'the missing link!' Natural selection? Natural progression?

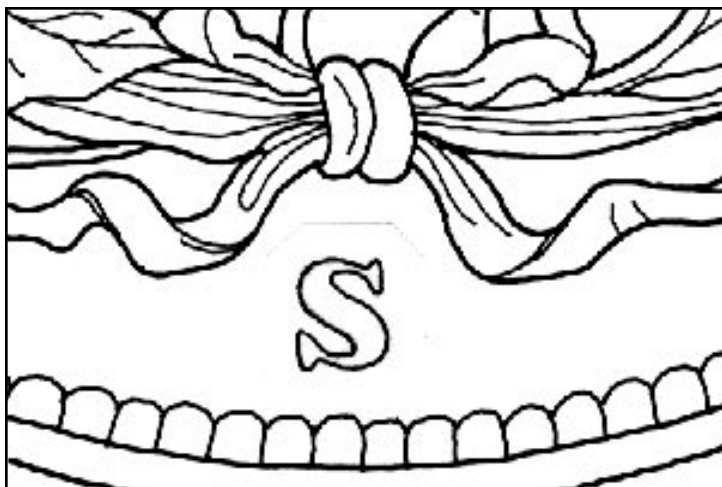
The first (and only) 'D' mintmark plate: 1906 - 1914, illustrates what I'm calling "Style A." This type of a similar style to the final 'S' style (Times New Roman? – probably not!) was the only one used throughout the Barber Dime's run at the Denver Mint. Large 'D.'

The first 'O' mintmark plate: 1892 - 1909, illustrates what I'm calling "Style A." Again, style 'A' as in the previous Liberty Seated years continues into the Barber Dime series. Characterized by an overall style as per 'S' mint pieces, style A. Fat sides, thin at the top and bottom and used throughout the Dime run at the New Orleans Mint until its closing after 1909. The only variation in its run occurred in 1905.

The second 'O' mintmark plate: 1905 only, illustrates what I'm calling "Style B." The famous "micro O" variety. A very collectable, and elusive piece! Quite scarce relative to its larger brother (which was also minted here in 1905), this piece was created (I think) when a Philadelphia Mint worker (and all dies were first prepared at the parent mint before shipping to the branches for production) used a mintmark punch intended for use on the quarter series, thus creating a very neat piece for us to collect, cherrypick and write about. Scarce in all grades.

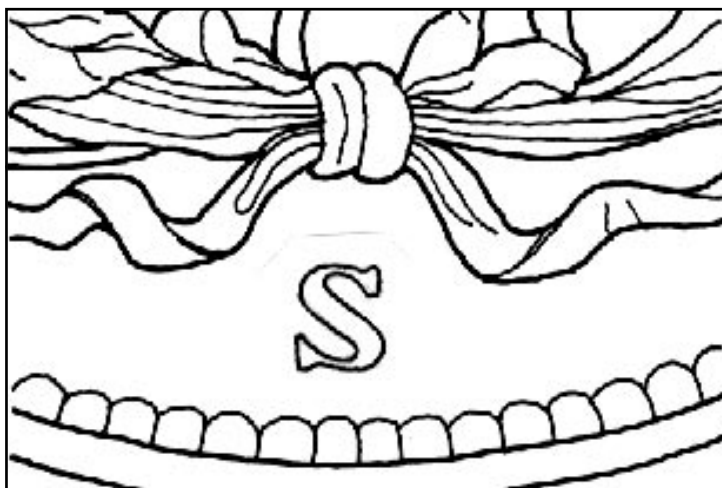
I think that noticing the small differences in the mintmark punches used in these series really adds to the enjoyment and understanding of what we collect. Also, sometimes it is very useful to step back and review some basics so we're more readily able to identify abnormalities, or differences that might otherwise go unnoticed via the "can't see the forest for the trees" syndrome.

Next issue – the Barber Quarter series, its hub types, and how to identify them.



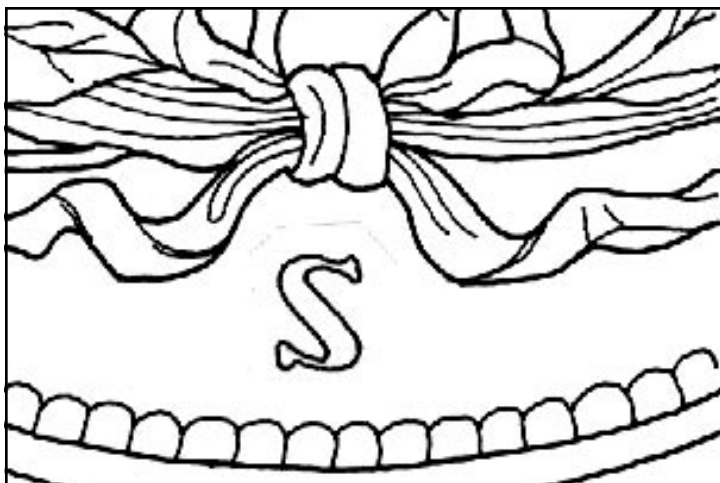
'S' Style A: 1892 - 1899

Type as in previous years; fat 'S' with mostly closed loops and tall serifs.



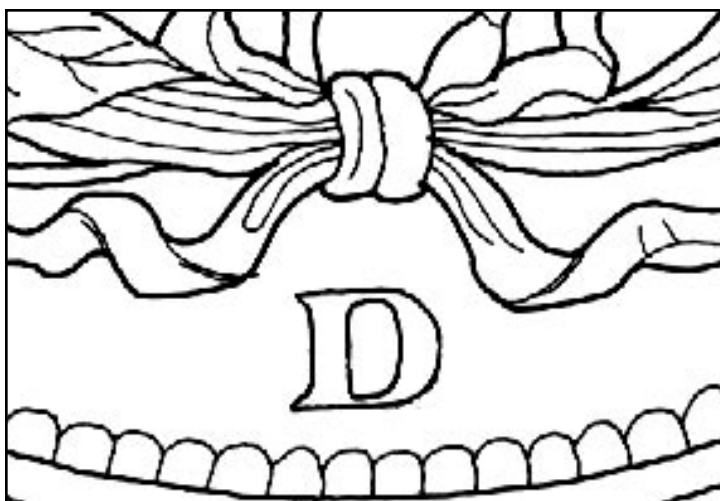
'S' Style B: 1899 - 1911

New punch: a bit wider, thinner and more open with slightly smaller serifs.



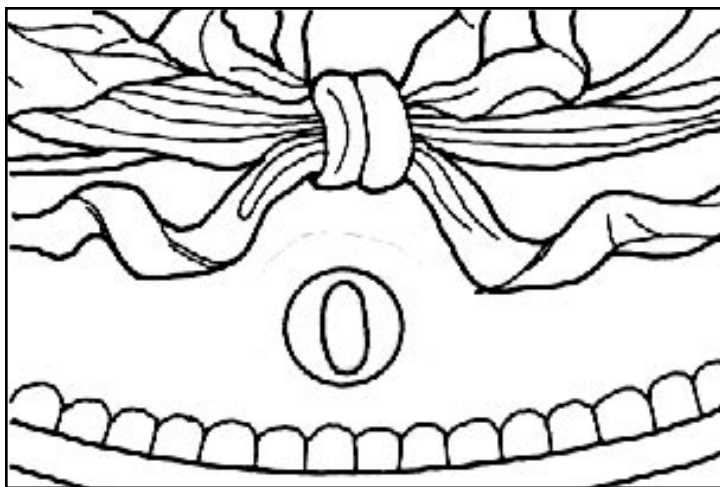
'S' Style C: 1912 - 1916

Final type: even taller, more open, small knobs for serifs.



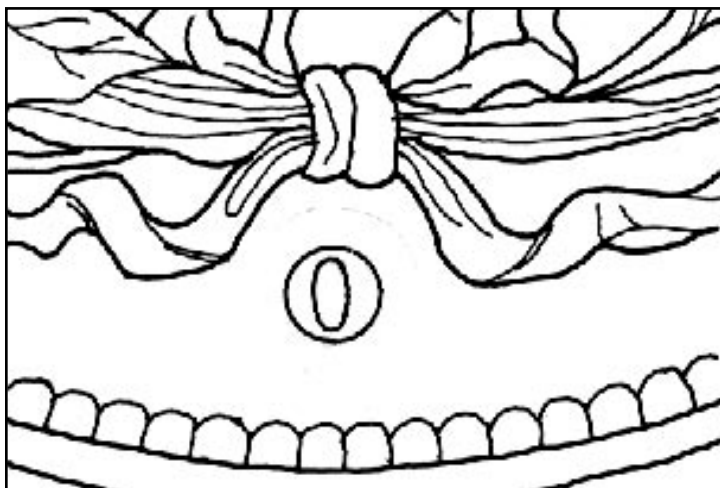
'D' Style A: 1906 - 1914

Type used throughout series; large 'D.'



'O' Style A: 1892 - 1909

Type as in previous years; used throughout the series.



'O' Style B: 1905 Only

'Micro O' from punch intended for use on quarters; this year only; scarce.

Barber Halves at the Smithsonian

By **Peter K. Shireman, MD**

It was a great and unexpected surprise gift from my wife for Father's Day. She had arranged for me to spend three days in Washington, DC to look at coins in the National Numismatic Collection. She made all the travel reservations and plans for me and had even contacted the Curator of the museum, Dr. Richard (Dick) Doty to meet with me personally on Monday May 24, 2004. Any coins in the entire Collection were available for study and I merely needed to contact Dr. Doty ahead of time to have the desired coins pulled for study. He even made it known in our email correspondences that almost any coins not on exhibit could be pulled out prospectively as needed. What an amazing gift to a numismatist! My wife had seen an article in our local newspaper indicating the main coin display at the Smithsonian would be closing and wanted me to have a chance to see it before it closed. The original plan of seeing the public display was expanded to include research of my choice.

I arrived in Washington on Saturday the 22nd in the afternoon and got settled in. Sunday was spent mostly at the Museum of American History, the building that houses the National Numismatic Collection among many other artifacts of our Nation's history. The main display is the Josiah Lilley collection of gold that is quite comprehensive for United States gold, but has many world gold coins, too. Other numismatic items are on display. A small display case houses the three types of 1804 dollars and these are displayed each with clever and unobtrusive stands with mirrors behind to allow obverses and reverses of all three coins to be seen. In a nearby case are several wonderful \$20 gold pieces including the pattern 1849 and an ultra high relief proof 1907 Roman Numerals St. Gaudens. These few treasures alone are worth millions of dollars.

Monday arrived and found me waiting outside anxiously for the 10:00 A.M. hour to arrive. I was to meet Dr. Doty by contacting security inside the building. A few minutes later Dr. Doty and I obtained a special badge that allowed me to be with him and within the building outside the usual public areas. Dick is a very amicable fellow and very knowledgeable about numismatics; his current special interest is in the minting process and he is traveling in Europe in 2004 to study the historical coining process in many countries. We entered a special elevator with a full-time guard manning it, and we went up several floors, perhaps the fourth floor.

We went down several long and bland hallways and then to his office. Security also was present in the form of locked doors, but we were soon inside.

My main interest in the trip was to look at the collection of Barber Half Dollars to see what was housed in our National Collection. The staffing was very low the day of my visit meaning that Dr. Doty himself would spend his time with me as I examined the coins. Usually other staff members perform this function, but I was pleased to have such a knowledgeable and friendly individual to assist me. I came armed with two magnifiers, 5X and 10X, my digital camera, a legal pad, and my hard-bound copy of David Lawrence's 1991 textbook on Barber Halves. Dick had pulled out all of the Barber Halves and had them in order of issue starting with 1892. Each coin is housed in a small cardboard box made of thin hard cardboard and having an open face. The boxes are about 2" x 3" with a small closed end with room to write on the front the date, mintmark and other information. The backs of the boxes have written information on the origin of the coin, when known. Coins were examined by picking them out carefully with my bare fingers, handling them on the edges, of course.

I quickly settled in the small library at a long table and began examining the coins, all the while conversing with Dr. Doty about the coins at hand and other facts about our National Collection. Currently there is no comprehensive catalog system for all of the 600,000 coins and 1 million paper money notes in the collection. The coins are stored in a large locked vault room on trays in large cabinets that span from the floor to about 5 feet high. The coins are sorted and stored sequentially by year. This means the Barber Halves were pulled from many different drawers. Most pattern coins are mixed right in at the appropriate years.

In all there were 118 Barber Halves set out for me to view. Since the total number of regular issues of Barber Halves is 73, there were multiples of some dates. I had noted an additional three Barber Halves on display to the public, two 1892 proofs and a 1903 circulated example next to another Barber Half which had been embossed into three dimensions in high relief, a curiosity piece. I wasn't quite sure what to expect of the collection, and what I found was quite an interesting mixture of coins. Rather than give extensive detail of the whole run, I will give some examples and then summarize. The grades provided are my estimates.

The 1892 issues are represented by a proof example which is mostly brilliant but has moderate hairlines; my estimated grade is PR 63. It is from the Mint Collection. The 1892-O has a regular sized mintmark (not a microscopic O) and is uncirculated with peripheral tone, perhaps MS 64 and is from "Cox." This designation likely represents a donation from someone with that name, although some of the coins come from public auction as will be noted below. The Lawrence text does indicate a Cox Sale in 1962 in his notes on 1892 micro-O halves. Two 1892-S

coins are present and include a nice AU55-58 specimen designated “Wilson” and an example with G+ obverse and G reverse with mild wear into “United.” The latter is from the Mint Collection. You can see that examples from the branch mint in the original Mint Collection are not all high-grade. The proof examples throughout range from brilliant to toned and have from few or no hairlines to moderate hairlines. A few have cameo contrast.

Each year has similar examples with a proof example for each, and Philadelphia business strike coins for some years. The branch mint coins vary from well-worn G condition to choice uncirculated with no real pattern of how these are obtained or stored. The overwhelming majority of the coins derive from the original Mint Collection which was stored in Philadelphia until the 1920’s. In the late 20’s the collection was physically transferred to the Smithsonian. A moderate number of coins were purchased at auction, particularly a Stack sale of 12/8/86 from which came examples of 1896-O MS 63-64, 1897-S MS 65-66, 1899-S AU55, 1902-S BU whizzed, 1903-O MS 64 peripheral tone, 1905-S MS 63, 1906-S MS64, 1907-S MS 64 with roller marks, 1911-D MS 64, 1913-S MS 64, and 1915-D MS 64. A few other coins are designated “purchased” and some of these may also derive from the Stack’s sale.

Of special interest to me are the “key” issues of Barber Halves. The 1896-O is quite nice as described above with nice proof-like reverse fields, the 1901-S has light toning and a small mark by the eye, MS 63-64, and the 1904-S is AU 50 with evidence of a moderate cleaning with the coin from “Cox.” Throughout the run of coins, most of the later dates have at least one high-grade coin. The lowest grade coins as the only example include the 95-O (VG), 95-S (G), 96-S (G+), and the 00-S (G+). The 1904-O has XF detail and is bent at 1-2 o’clock, and the 1907-D has XF detail, is bent, and has some PVC damage.

An interesting subset of coins are in deplorable condition and are from Chase Manhattan Bank. Dr. Doty indicated that at one time this bank had public display boards of many coins, including Barber Halves. The coins were glued or otherwise secured to material and were on display to be viewed by customers. Later the sets were donated to the Smithsonian. The coins mostly are cleaned, badly pitted, and some have remaining adhesive on the back with occasional tufts of fibers from material. Lastly, a small number of coins were designated as “FIC” which was interpreted for me as “found in cabinet.” Dick thinks these are mostly from the original Mint Collection.

All in all, each normal variety of Barber Half Dollar was present with the exception of the 1906-O. Dr. Doty is at a loss as to why this specific coin is missing in the collection, but to his knowledge, no one had previously done what I did in examining the whole series. The 1892-O and 1898-O coins both had normal sized

mintmarks. I even asked about the Beistle book on half dollars. A copy was present and we made photocopies of several of the pages I was interested in. I had been looking for the book for some time and it was referenced in the David Lawrence text. There is no illustration of the described 1898-O micro O half, an example of which has surfaced in private hands in March, 2004. The 1898-O micro O half appears to be exceedingly rare and no published images are present in any text or article of which I am aware.

I took my time examining the Barber Halves and took a brief break for lunch, dining with Dick Doty. Over lunch we discussed other museums in the United States that might harbor Barber Half Dollars that I might be able to study. The ANS Museum in New York, the ANA Museum in Colorado Springs, and the Byron Reed Collection in Omaha were raised as possibilities. Dr. Doty indicated he wasn't sure the Reed Collection was open for research study, but that the other two are. I am not sure if or when I will have a chance to visit any of these other museums, but they are on my wish list.

After lunch I spent another two hours finishing my evaluation of the Barber Halves and looking at some of the extreme rarities kept in special locked areas. I was allowed to handle the coins and photograph any coins I wished. Dr. Doty has a camera stand to which I attached my digital camera. Coins photographed included selected Barber Halves, all the Barber Quarter and Barber Half patterns of 1891, the 1913 Liberty Nickel (this one is in a Kointain holder), 1906 Barber pattern \$20 gold in low relief with a sandblasted appearance, 1822 \$5 gold piece, 1907 pattern double thick \$20 gold pieces, Birch Cent (recently handled by President Clinton), half dime, 1794 copper pattern \$1, and proof \$50 gold pattern.

Dr. Doty and I parted company at about 3 P.M. as newly-minted friends. He indicated that very few collectors or researchers do what I did and actually make arrangements to come in and examine coins in person. The coins belong to all of us, the citizens of the United States and he firmly believes that they should be available to all of us for viewing. Dick spent five hours with me and I was thrilled and honored to have his attention and store of knowledge available and tried to take full advantage of it. Would I go again? You bet I would. One additional parting thought: I have since purchased a nice 1906-O Half in circulated XF 45 that I am donating to the National Numismatic Collection so that the run of Barber Halves will be complete. Many thanks to my wife, Janice for the great gift, and special thanks to Dr. Doty and the Smithsonian Institution for the ability to study the coins.



BARBER BITS

Members respond to Arno Safran's letter and the editor's message which appeared in the Vol. 15, No. 2 Journal:

The letter by Arno in the latest Journal struck a cord with me. I was at a show on Sunday and was seeking a nice 1902-S dime. After some amount of searching, I found a dealer who had one and it was marked VF! I asked to see the coin, but was disappointed by the grading, which, in my opinion, was a F12. He would not come down appropriately for me to purchase the coin (my minimum for Barbers is F).

I then looked at some other coins he had in his case and observed many over-graded (in my opinion) Barber Halves. In fact, I saw very few Barber Halves in F or better that day!

I have found, after many years of collecting, that over-grading becomes much more dominant as the market gets hotter. I have imparted this (wisdom?) to a few folks who are new to collecting--I want them to learn how to grade and avoid being taken by an optimistic (or should I say dishonest?) dealer.

On another note, I found the Survey results quite interesting. Barber collectors have been collecting coins for quite a bit of years and my thought here is that somewhere in that time they found out about Barbers and discovered the difficulty and fun of attempting to put a set or partial set together. I would have to say that the most fun I ever had in coin collecting was putting together (or trying to!) some sets of Barber Dimes.

Thanks for a wonderful Journal and keep up the good work!

Lonergan

Kevin



In response to Arno Safran's article in the Journal.

He is very right!

I have found that many dealers over-grade Barber coins. I have seen coins over-graded at the F.U.N. [show] in Florida and also some dealers on the east and west coast of Florida. I am in New York several months a year and I have found the same problems in grading at most coin shows. Some dealers also over-grade coins and then give you a discount on the coins which reduces them to the regular Trends price.

Sincerely yours,
Ralph Vignola



I am in total agreement with you on how to collect Barber coins. I collect Barber dimes, quarters, and halves and, due to their scarcity, when I see a date that I do not have, regardless of grade, I buy it. I will even buy an AG coin so long as the date and mintmark are clear. My goal is this: to assemble a complete set of Barber dimes, quarters, and halves, irrespective of grade. I would rather have all the date/mintmark combinations in any grade included in my set than have only a few high-grade coins in my collection. My goal is COMPLETION.

In my quarter collection, for example, the 2004 Red Book lists 74 different date/mintmark combinations. My set to date includes 49 coins in grades AG to Fine. My strategy is this: as I continue to fill holes in my collection, buying the dates I need in any grade I can find them, at the same time I am always looking to UPGRADE the coins already in the set. I always carry with me my "Coin World Ledger of U.S. Coins" to all shows and meetings, therefore I always know what I am in need of, and what I can upgrade.

My main focus is on completing the set; upgrading comes in a close second. But I can do both simultaneously and have FUN doing it! Will I ever complete my Barber sets? Will it be a very valuable set when and if it is completed? God only knows. My philosophy is this: collect WHATEVER you want, HOWEVER you want, in WHATEVER GRADE you want. It's your collection. Collect and BE HAPPY - that's all that matters!

John Dembinski
President, Wayne Coin Club
Wayne, MI



In the latest Journal you wondered if folks buy what they can get or if they wait for the right coin. I am in the latter group. I find that I want to purchase the coin once and be done with it - I do set a grade minimum for my sets and I stick to it. Of course, as you aptly point out, other people have different ideas. That is okay with me as collecting should be the way the individual likes it!

Thanks!

Kevin

Lonergan



Phil Carrigan submitted the following text taken from the article “Build Your Own Hoard of Barbers” by Joel T. Edler which appeared in the July 2004 supplement, Numismatic News Coin Market:

Another series..., Barber halves, seem to be quite active. Here again, like Morgan dollars, it is not just the key coins in the set. Even the more common coins in the series are stronger than they have been since you could sell them for bullion in January of 1980 for \$12 to \$12.50 each.

One of our contributors, Bob Weikle, reports that he is aware of several collectors who have large hoards of 1913, 1914 and 1915 Philadelphia Mint halves. In my travels to shows I, too, have talked to many who are accumulating these dates of Barber halves. Other Barber coins seeing an upsurge of hoarding are the 1897-S quarters along with 1900-O and 1905-O quarters. Another favorite that Bob reports is the 1900-O dimes. He says that one of his customers spends in the range of \$30,000--\$50,000 per year salting away these semi-key Barber issues.



BARBER BITS *continued*

I have only been a member of BCCS for a short period of time. I am excited to be able to communicate with other Barber collectors who have similar interest as do I. When I went to my first meeting as a non-member, it was at the Milwaukee ANA show several months ago. Upon leaving the meeting I was like “WOW! I hardly know anything about the Barber coins except in general.” I learned about triple die reverses, hub types and different logo types. There was all the excitement about a hoard of the 1901-S Barber quarters on the bourse floor. I got to meet other members; everyone was nice and friendly. I encourage anyone that I meet who has an interest in Barber dimes, quarters, or my favorite, the Barber halves, to join the club. For such a low annual charge, the publication is great.

After reading the last issue, #2, I had to agree with a couple of articles that were written. First, about purchasing only the coins that I need for a set versus just buying coins that I like. I choose to buy the coin if I like it and can afford it at the time. The reason I buy Barbers is because I like the coin, the design, and the history. To me, buying coins that I like and I'm drawn to is not a bad idea. If I have been looking for a semi-key or key date in VF for months and come across a nice Fine in the date I need, I will buy the coin because of its scarcity. I think that the Barber coins are way undervalued and have just recently starting seeing the plus signs that are long overdue. Basically, if you can afford it, buy what you like. If money or your budget is an issue, buy the ones that you need upon encountering them. Either way, if you buy a coin you like, then you can't go wrong.

Second, I strongly agree with the article that was written by Arno Safran, about dealers and the practice of over-grading Barber coins. At coin stores, local shows or a big show floor bourse, the majority of Barber halves that are raw are over-graded. Sure, I am new to the BCCS and the hobby in general, but I feel confident about my ability to grade Barber coins. I try to go along with the official ANA grading standards. I am currently completing my second set of Barber half dollars. The first set I completed was in G-VG condition. I completed the set in about 11 months. When I went to purchase a VF Barber half for my U.S. type set, I came to a realization: there are not a lot of readily available Barber halves in the VF/XF grade that are raw or uncertified. Most of the ones I see have been cleaned, damaged, or are way over-graded. I then took the challenge of completing a set of Barber halves in VF-20/30 condition. I am two years into the set and have 62 of the 73 coins in original VF condition. Most are raw; about seven are certified by one of the three major grading services. In that two years, I have not just sat idly back and waited for the coins to come to me. I have been hunting them steadily. I scan every inventory that contains Barber halves in every coin magazine I can get my hands

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Over-Grading Just a Bit?

By **John Dembinski**

In reference to Mr. Safran's letter in the Journal, Vol. 15, No. 2 ("Barber Bits," page 13), I too have come across all too often the occurrence of dealers over-grading coins in the Barber series. I will relate from memory just two instances of buying from dealers Barber coins that were grossly over-graded.

The first was about two years ago. It was a 1900-O dime graded as VF-20. And I remember paying a VF price for it. It looked decent, a nice original coin, but alas, I had not done my homework. According to the *Official A.N.A. Grading Standards for United States Coins, Fifth Edition*, part of the description for this grade reads: "EVERY letter in LIBERTY is visible." To make even a Very Good grade, LIBERTY must show three letters. Besides the coin having some nice details, I couldn't find even TWO letters showing in LIBERTY. This coin couldn't even make VG by these standards!

The other instance was back in March at our club's [Wayne Coin Club, Wayne, MI] local show. The coin in question was a 1913 Barber Quarter graded as Fine on the holder. Wow! Got to have that one - that's one of the keys! It was priced at \$60 and I thought it would make a nice Father's Day gift for myself. The dealer knocked \$10 off the price so my wife bought it and put it away.

On Father's Day morning, I received my gift - a 1913 Barber Quarter in Fine condition - or so I thought. Now, according to the A.N.A. Grading Standards book, in Fine condition part of the description reads: "ALL letters in LIBERTY are weak but visible." On my particular coin, the "L" and the "Y" are the only complete letters to be seen. Also showing is the upper half of "I" and the right crossbar of "T." I graded the obverse VG. It's certainly not Fine!

For the reverse, outside of having a strong border and denticles, the shield on the eagle's breast is worn so smooth it merges with the wings, and one could barely tell there was a shield there at all! The eagle's eye is worn flat, and only four complete letters of the motto show on the ribbon. The reverse of this coin wouldn't even make a VG in my opinion, so I graded it as Good. To me, it is still a decent coin, but certainly doesn't command a grade of Fine.

My wife and I have decided that we are going to have a little fun at next

year's show. I am going to place the coin in a different holder, and I will go back to that same dealer and ask him what grade he would assign to that coin. I've heard over the years from other collectors that some coin dealers will downgrade coins when buying, and likewise upgrade coins when selling. Has the above-mentioned practice reached epidemic proportions? We all certainly hope not. One thing I have learned the hard way - brush up on your grading skills so that YOU will know what makes a coin a VF as opposed to a VG. Armed with this kind of knowledge, coin dealers then cannot take advantage of us collectors. But stay tuned. I'm sure there's more to come on this topic.



BARBER BITS

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on. I search endlessly on the Internet. I contact dealers and coin stores. I have individuals looking for me at the shows I miss. The coins are not out there. If they are, I can't find them.

It is frustrating to me to find a date that I need, seeing the coin graded an EF-40/45 and priced accordingly. Upon closer inspection of the coin, I barely see the word LIBERTY, let alone bold even letters, with the slightest weakness in BER. The upper band is usually barely visible let alone complete. Some, if any, detail in the hair is apparent. The reverse shows about one quarter to, at most, half of the eagle's feather, along with a weak shield. Sure, some New Orleans Mint issues have and do display a weaker strike, but not a Philadelphia or San Francisco issue. When I see a F-VF coin graded as an XF and priced as an XF, I become discouraged. Sometimes the difference can be \$40-\$50 for a common date (1912-P), but a scarce date (1897-O) can be hundreds of dollars difference. I try to come to agree on an appropriate price, but many times I walk away without the coin. Look, in the short time that I have been assembling my VF set, I have come to realize that several dates that have an R-3 rating and above are nearly impossible to find. I don't mind paying a slight premium for a scarce date coin that is accurately graded. I will even go as far as to pay twice dealer ask price for nice accurately graded key dates that I need for my set, but paying double, or even triple, for an over-graded coin is just something that I don't like to practice.

If you or anyone you know is attempting to complete or start to assemble a VF-XF Barber Half set; I wish you good luck and happy hunting.

Scott Mathison

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