CCCBHCC.COM COLLECTORS CORNER ARTICLES

2009 to 2019

ABSTRACT

Since 2009 collectors and researchers have been contributing to our understanding of contemporary counterfeit Bust half dollars. This is their research as originally posted on the cccbhcc.com website.

Compiled by: Winston Zack

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2009 Articles

1831 D 7/G - Error Coin

Rick Irons

September 2009 (01)

Here's a neat error coin. It appears to be an 1831/3 overdate - you can see traces of a 3 at the top of the second 1. Also, it is double struck with doubling noted on both sides of the coin.

Capped Bust halves that are not Davignons - Part 1

Larry Schmidt

September 2009 (2) (with June 2010 update)

Many fellow collectors study Overton varieties and known mint errors of genuine Capped Bust halves (CBh) to better identify contemporary counterfeit CBh when encountered. A collector's studies delve into; off center strikes, multiple strikes, multiple profiles, clashed dies, rotated dies, refinished dies, shattered dies, sinking dies, reworked dies, die defect lines, die cracks, die patches, worn dies, die breaks, lapped dies, cuds, recuts, damaged planchets, struck through coins, stair step dates, higher / lower numbers or letters, small / medium / large numbers or letters, punctuated dates, over struck numbers or letters, filled numbers or letters, drawn to the edge stars or numbers or letters, double serifs, incused or raised segments, twin segments, triple segments, edge errors, and more. A star can look thin and wire like when compared to other stars on the same CBh due to reworking. Individual legend letters can have what appears to be added upper serifs due to die wear. Even with this specialized knowledge challenges still remain when determining if a specimen is a contemporary counterfeit CBh or a genuine CBh.

Such a challenge to consider is the pictured 1827 specimen. This specimen has obverse and reverse rims with no segments (i.e. dentils). The coin is a strong VG+ grade that would surely show under magnification if there had been any segments at one time, which it does not! Other than the absence of segments the specimen has the characteristics of a genuine CBh! The specimen weighs 13.2 grams as compared to a genuine CBh minted weight of 13.48 grams, a difference that could easily be accounted for from the amount of general circulation wear. Stars, numbers and letters are randomly drawn to the edge on the obverse and the reverse, all of which can be found in genuine CBh. (Note that in the drawn numbers is a smaller knob of the 5 in 50 C. felt to be a result of the drawing.) The edge of the specimen has the expected FIFTY CENTS OR HALF DOLLAR * lettering.

Is this specimen an unidentified Overton, the result of more extensive damage caused by the edge lettering machine as suspected in the similar Overton 1810 106a variety? Does it belong to a family like the Davignon 1838 11/L? After this specimen was looked at by fellow collectors it was felt to be a genuine coin. It is important to note that some Overton varieties are very rare with dentils, and die state specialists look for early strikes in hope of finding the variety with some dentils showing.


LIBERTY
1827
E PLURIBUS UNUM
50 C

1838-O Fake or Unlisted variety?

Larry Schmidt

September 2009 (3) (with June 2010 update)

This specimen is either a numismatic fake or a contemporary counterfeit. But which one? As explained in Yeoman's Red Book, "The 1838-O was the first branch mint half dollar. Though not mentioned in the Director's report, the New Orleans chief coiner stated that only 20 were struck." After a little detective work this specimen was determined to have an oversized O mintmark. Comparisons to genuine later half dollar and dollar coins with O mintmarks were made and it was found that the genuine O mintmarks in these comparisons had a thinner oval both in shape and line thickness than the O mintmark on this specimen. (Because of these differences this also eliminates an O mintmark being transferred from a later genuine coin in an attempt to create a numismatic rarity, a known forger's trick.) Evidence could point to the specimen being a contemporary counterfeit by looking elsewhere on the obverse where no rim segments are found, but rather a high and square rim.

After this specimen was viewed by fellow collectors it was felt to be a rather bad attempt at a numismatic fake and not a contemporary counterfeit. A really poor O mint mark was made and soldered to a genuine coin, an effort that could not fool numismatists today. It is also important to note that genuine Capped Bust halves (CBh) can have missing dentils when struck. Reflecting this specimen's struck die state collectors of genuine CBh look for early strikes in hope of finding a variety with strong dentils showing. To add to the list of detective clues some genuine CBh are even found 'shaved', a practice of evenly removing silver from the edges and / or rim.

This is the detective story for this specimen. Do you have your own detective story to share with fellow collectors?

Variation or New Variety?

Larry Schmidt

September 2009 (4)

As collectors we've all faced the issue of studying poorly struck contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust halves. Sometimes a specimen being studied doesn't quite match all the attributes of a known variety. Is this because it was weakly struck, a trick counterfeiters used to fool the public into thinking that the coin had already been in general circulation for a long time already? Is it a result of low-quality production when the die struck the blank? Maybe changes due to die wear? Could it perhaps even be a trial piece? These and many other questions whirl through the mind of a collector when confronted by a poorly struck specimen.

Here for example is a comparison case for you to consider, two 1827 1/A specimens. The first specimen to study has the expected large, raised triangular eye and shows a rather flat off-center strike. The second specimen has a sharper strike, with a slightly raised rim, but with not even a trace of the large, raised triangular eye. The second specimen also appears to have die breakage on the right side of the reverse. Is the the second is pecimen simply an example of poor production with the die being filled with grease where the eye was when it was struck? Is it yet a new variety? What are your thoughts?


1827
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
50 C.

2010 Articles

Displaying Your Collection

Larry Schmidt

January 2010 (1)

Here's a solution to displaying your contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust halves (ccCBh) that after very surprised reactions of local coin dealers and members of a coin club to the solution was thought worth sharing.

The saga for the solution began with what I thought was going to be a simple enough task, study a ccCBh collection in a side-by-side album format just like collectors of genuine coins can do. I dearly wanted to move away from putting any more of a growing collection of ccCBh into individual coin holders. While neat for storage the individual holders didn't offer an easy comparison of Davignons let alone the display of an entire ccCBh collection. You probably know the drill. If you want to look at one of your ccCBh it has to be pulled out of a storage box to be viewed and then be put back again (i.e. especially when pulling out multiple coin holders at a time I know I'm not always the most accurate and made mistakes in putting specimens back in their proper order). I thought it was going to be a simple solution of just buying an album for a ccCBh collection. WRONG!!!

The task of finding an album did not prove easy was an understatement. Out-of-print Whitman Albums (Bust Type Halves 1807 - 1839), even when it could be found, had a definite Red Book bias to defining Capped Bust halves. So did the Dansco two volume version currently in print have a similar bias. (I could have bought Dansco blank pages for Bust half dollars to add to their albums, but was not pleased with their construction of the too easy way the plastic covers slid in and out away from the spine.) I was told by more than one dealer in my album search of a great type of album once made in the 1930s through the 1960s, Wayte Raymond boards. Their construction has the plastic protective covers slid into the spine of the albums. The Wayte Raymond boards have to be removed from their binders to slid out the plastic protective covers by row offering great security. Well to shorten this story I came across the M. Meghrig & Sons who states "Most Wayte Raymond boards were made in the 30s thru early 60s. After Wayte Raymond our company Meghrig continued to manufacture these boards until early 60s." Upon investigation this company has plain boards for Capped Bust halves and binders in stock!!! Just what I was looking for to allow for neatly displaying the multiple Davignon varieties. I ordered my plain boards and binders and they arrived in a few days with no shipping charges nor sale tax required (i.e. Meghrig is in CA where state taxes would be charged if you live in CA). The binders and boards are great .... just what I was looking for!!!

I've chosen to not write coin identifications on the boards. Instead I've drafted printed index pages that identify by date and Davignon code each specimen on the following boards by page and row and column location (i.e. each printed index page is put in a cut down legal-size plastic sheet protector). This arrangement allows flexibility for a collection to grow. To also allow for the growth of the collection I took the option to order enough binders and boards allowing for one row per board to be left open, that is, unused initially. This has made it easier to add ccCBh with minimal coin movements to maintain a sequence by date and Davignon variety coding.

In addition, a simple solution was found for securing the smaller 30 mm diameter Variety 2, Variety 3 Davignon varieties from rattling in the boards that are die cut for Remodeled Portrait and Eagle (1809-1834) Variety 32.5 mm diameters. By trimming down the outside diameter of the foam ring of an Air -Tite 30 mm holder to that of Remodeled Portrait and Eagle (1809-1834) Variety 32.5 mm diameter each ccCBH that has a smaller diameter is held securely. This simple solution also gives a great appearance as well.

If interested, see Meghrig's offerings for yourself at the bottom of the page for "LARGE SIZE NO PRINTING PAGES - PLAIN" at
http://www.meghrigsupplies.com/WAYTERAYMONDSTYLEBOARDS.html.
By scrolling down where product codes are entered at the bottom of the screen, you'll see the new binders listed with pricing as well.

Capped Bust Half Dollar Era Contemporary Counterfeit Type Set Invitation

Rick Irons

January 2010 (2)

A fellow contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust half (ccCBh) collector sent images of an 1826 dime pictured below. Unusual I thought, not being a collector of this coinage, until it was pointed out there was never an 1826 dime minted by the US!

This dime certainly is a solid reminder that there were undoubtedly contemporary counterfeits circulating for all the U.S. minted denominations during the Capped Bust half era. Many fellow ccCBh collectors may have come across other contemporary counterfeit denominations in their collecting pursuits. Here is your invitation, to jointly create a virtual type set of Capped Bust half dollar era U.S. contemporary counterfeits. Send in your images from half cents to eagles of U.S. contemporary counterfeits (e.g. see those already sent in below) and we'll form a unique visual image of a type set from the Capped Bust era for fellow collectors to enjoy.


LIBERTY
1819

True and False

Larry Schmidt

March 2010 (with January 2012 update)

Imagine you're in Philadelphia in the late 1830s and you're carefully counting coins you're about to receive from a land sale. When counting the coins, you see different Capped Bust halves, differences now known as First style Variety 1 1807-1808, Remodeled Portrait and Eagle 1809-1834, Portrait Modified Slightly 1834-1836, Variety 2 1836-1837, Variety 3 1838-1839, and yes maybe a few contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust halves (ccCBh). This would reflect the day-to-day world of general coinage circulation which included Capped Bust Half 'true' genuine varieties and 'false' ccCBh co-existing side-by-side.

The general circulation side-by-side co-existence of genuine and contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust halves is neatly hinted at in the 1820/19 Overton 102 shown below. This particular specimen stood out even when encountered in general circulation with its unusual 1820 over 19 date and was "checked" more than once with test cuts (i.e. a practice of the era used to expose suspected counterfeits).

Fast forward to today to your ccCBh collection while still holding onto the thought of how 'true' genuine varieties and 'false' ccCBh co-existed in general coinage circulation. Consider how your ccCBh collection could reflect this same general coinage circulation by putting 'true' and 'false' coins side-by-side. I've made this choice and have subjectively added 'true' Overtons that I feel could have been confused as being counterfeit into my ccCBh collection (i.e. my growing list of Overtons is at the end of this article). By opting to add primarily Overtons in circulated grades that have R1 (i.e. common), or R2 (i.e. slightly uncommon), or R3 (i.e. scarce) rarities, a number of interesting side-by-side comparisons of 'true' Capped Bust halves have been added with modest effort. You too may want to consider doing the same and create another aspect of our hobby to enjoy.

1808 O-103 Date is well centered, slanting to the left with left base of 1 missing - R1 (common)

1810 O-102a Liberty's chin weakness - R2 (slightly uncommon)

1812/1 O-102 Date 12 over 11, small 8 - R2 (slightly uncommon)

1813 O-110 Letters sharply clash marked below bust - R1 (common)

1817 O-106a Date is rather low and 81 is much closer than 18 or 17 - R3 (scarce)

1817 O-112 7 wider and higher than 181 - R2 (slightly uncommon)

1818/7 O-102a Break partly fills upper loop in 8 - R2 (slightly uncommon)

1820/19 O-102 1820 over 19, small curl based 2 - R1 (common)

1821 O-104 5 canted sharply to right in 50 C - R1 (common)

1822/1 O-101 1822 over 1, last 2 heavier - R1 (common)

1823 O-101 Broken 3 - R3 (scarce)

1823 O-101a Patched 3 - R1 (common)

1823 O-110a Ugly 3 - R3 (scarce)

1824 O-103 Date jumble of recuttings - R1 (common)

1825 O-108 Low, smaller 5 - R3 (scarce)

1826 O-102 Sharply higher 6 - R1 (common)

1828 O-102 Curled base, large 2 - R2 (slightly uncommon)

1831 O-107 First 1 in date very high and out of line - R3 (scarce)

1831 O-109 18 higher than 3 - R1 (common)

1832 O-115 3 clearly lower than 182 - R3 (scarce)

1832 O-117 1 over 1, unusual serif - R4 (very scarce)

Another Mystery Solved

Larry Schmidt

September 2010

Sometime it can be just plain tough to identify a contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust half. You know the coin is a definitely an old counterfeit, but normally due to a lot of wear and / or a weak strike which die variety? Is it an extremely common rarity, or a previously unknown discovery specimen? But this is a tale of a different kind. It is the challenge of identifying an unevenly, off-center, double-struck specimen with only the 183 of the date clear enough to make out. This problem child is pictured below. Before reading any further try your own hand at identifying this one, and yes, it is pictured in the Contemporary Counterfeit Capped Bust Half Dollars, First Edition as well as the 2nd Edition.

Well, if you think you know and are reading this far it's time to share the failures and final success made in identification. First the date's last digit just could not be made out regardless of the lighting conditions. So assuming that a known variety would match up from 1830 forward a match to Liberty's profile was attempted ..... big mistake! Liberty's true neck profile is not the one on the far left, but turned out to be the fainter second vertical line a little to the right considerably narrowing the profile which shows the degree of the double-strike. Next the faint Les and Res were matched to a short list of varieties. The following step was to carefully read all of the variety descriptions in the *Contemporary Counterfeit Capped Bust Half Dollars, First Edition* for the tentative short list of varieties looking for a potential match, but this didn't help. It was only after a few tries using various attributes that were felt unique enough to match to the pictured plate coins for a match to be found. The tilted L and lower S in PLURIBUS provided the necessary clues to match the specimen uniquely to the 1831 9/I variety. A rewarding end!

2011 Articles

Contemporary Counterfeit Capped Bust Half Dollars .... A Fast Moving Numismatic Field

Larry Schmidt

April 2011 (1)

You'd think collecting coins over 150 years old would be static. In the field of collecting contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust halves nothing could be further from this expectation! Just in the few months since publication of the Contemporary Counterfeit Capped Bust Half Dollars, 2nd Edition:

** Eight previously unknown varieties have been found for which details are given under the New Discoveries segment of this website.

** Rarities continue to be updated as noted for six varieties in the Census segment of this website.

Not bad for our field of numismatics, but more and more can continue to be expected! What else can we expect with dynamics of 347 known varieties in which five to ten "extremely common" varieties likely account for more than half of the total of surviving bogus halves, yet slightly over 71% of all the varieties consist of only one or two known specimens and another slightly over 19% of all the varieties consist of only three to five known specimens? Continue to enjoy the excitement in our fast-moving field of numismatics!

True and False Follow-up

Larry Schmidt

April 2011 (2)

The is a follow-up to the previous Collectors Corner article True and False that discussed genuine Capped Bust half Overton varieties that can be confused with contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust halves. This follow-up presents the story of a genuine Capped Bust half Overton variety that could be confused with a contemporary counterfeit but also has added history of a hard life began at the mint that got only worse.

The coin that had this hard life is an 1827 Overton 136 variety pictured below noted for its Stars 6-7 and 12-13 being close together along with a low 50 C. and UN that nearly touch. In this specimen's minting though a worn die was likely filled with too much grease that prevented letters, numbers, etc. from fully forming. The visible results are mushy, bloated or filled letters, numbers, etc. But the story does not end there.

What would appear as a slight off-strike (i.e. noted by the 50 C. that is too low with the C. riding the rim), this specimen's tough life continued with characteristics of either having been shaved* or spooned**. This specimen with statistics of 13.1 g weight, 32.20 mm diameter and 1.91 mm thickness have its edge lettering missing, a smooth rounded edge and a raised rim.

* Circulating coins commonly suffered from "shaving" or "clipping", by which persons would cut off small amounts of precious metal from their edges. Historically unmilled British silver coins were sometimes shaved to the point of being reduced to almost half their minted weight. The monarch would have to periodically recall circulating coins, paying only bullion value of the silver, and reminting (i.e. recoining) them. While master of the Royal Mint, Isaac Newton came up with the idea of milling lines on the edges of coins to make it easier to detect coin clipping and to help reduce recoining, an idea still found on many of our coins today.

** A spooned coin has been repeated tapped around its rim reducing its diameter and raising its rim. Spooning was often done by sailors and inmates who had nothing better to do. Spooned coins were sometimes used as gaming pieces or made into rings when a hole in the center of the coin was drilled. During WWII spooning was not permitted after it was discovered that the noise caused from the tapping allowed an enemy to locate ships via sonar.

Variation or New Variety? Part 2

Larry Schmidt

June 2011 (with Nov. 2018 update)

Since the original Variation or Variety? article was written for the Collectors Corner further comparisons have been made of other contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust halves (ccCBh) varieties. These additional comparisons have formed key understandings between variations of the same Davignon variety verses similar but distinct Davignon varieties which are described below:

Even if a ccCBh when struck had not transferred all design elements from the die it is regardless the same Davignon variety. This is a pretty bold statement to make when more often than not so few specimens of many varieties are known and are available for comparison. One example of not all the design elements transferring from the die are the 1827 1/A specimens compared in the original Variation or Variety? article in which one specimen has the variety's signature raised triangular eye while the other specimen's triangular eye portion of the design is totally omitted. A second example of omitted design detail is a fine / very fine specimen of an 1833 2/B that has no period following the 50 C on the reverse. These examples of omitted design detail of known Davignon varieties are the result of either; 1) too much grease left in a die and / or dirt having filled a die cavity and thus not permitting all detail to have transferred from the die to the planchet when struck, or 2) die wear created areas that no longer transferred all design detail to the planchet when struck. Additionally, different types of planchet metals can show significant variation in the strength of design detail, while off-struck or multi-struck specimens can obliterate design detail. It is important to remember that counterfeiters, though skilled, did not necessarily maintain the same high-quality controls of the US Mint and thus variations of design detail omissions as represented by these examples can be expected to continue to be discovered.

A ccCBh's that has different design detail placement to other known Davignon varieties for the same date point to the discovery of a new Davignon variety. If there are any location differences of a ccCBh obverse's stars, date numerals, Liberty, etc., or the reverse's LES, RES, alignment of legend lettering to scroll lettering, arrows, 50 C., etc. to known Davignon varieties for the same date then a new Davignon variety has been discovered that may be very similar but is none the less distinct. Many similar but distinct Davignon varieties are already known including multiple obverse / reverse marriages (these different die marriages perhaps hinting at an active die exchange between counterfeiters). A list of similar yet distinct Davignons noted in the Contemporary Counterfeit Capped Bust Half Dollars, 2nd Edition that can be expected to expand includes; 1815 4/D vs 4/E, 1821 2/B vs 2/C vs 2/E, 1822 2/B vs 2/I, 1828 1/A vs 1/P, 1829 2/B vs 8/H vs 8/I vs 8/O vs 11/B, 1830 2/B vs 2/N, 1830 16/R vs 24/R, 1832 2/B vs 3/B vs 3/C, 1833 33/X vs 24/X vs 41/X, 1833 19/S vs 19/BB, 1835 9/I vs 9/R, 1838 3/C vs 3/E vs 1833 1/A vs 1835 5/E.

Regardless of recuts and/or repairs made to a ccCBh die, the same die was used to strike variations of the same Davignon variety. Recuts made for design adjustments, die breaks, cuds (i.e. extra metal other than the counterfeiter’s intended design from the dies normally from

chipped edges of a die), or incomplete broken/welded die repairs should be considered variations (i.e. die states) of the same Davignon variety. One example of this variation is the 1825 2/B plate coin in the 2nd Edition showing a specimen without any four-pointed stars yet this Davignon variety is known to have some stars recut with only four points (e.g. S4, S6, S11, S12, S13). A second example of this type of variation is a discovered 1835 12/L with a base of the E in STATES that is not crooked though the middle horizontal t-bar in the E has added material which appears to be all part of a poor recut. The quality of recuts and / or repairs were sometimes of low workmanship, perhaps just good enough to get the die back into the press to strike more counterfeits. As collectors we need to keep in mind that counterfeiters probably kept striking their dies to produce as many counterfeits as possible until their dies literally fell apart and were beyond repair. Thus, recuts and repairs will likely continue to be discovered as our collecting hobby matures.

Low grade ccCBh's can make identification of Davignon variety variations verses similar yet distinct Davignon varieties a never-ending challenge. Further compounding this challenge the coin grade of specimens can vary significantly between the obverse and reverse, or are weakly struck overall as some counterfeiters attempted to fool the public into thinking that their freshly struck counterfeits had been in general circulation for some time as shown by their imitated worn state. Keeping all this in mind the following guidelines are presented as summary rules of thumb for the fine line of identifying a ccCBh to be a variety variation or a distinct new variety:

1. Omitted design elements of a known Davignon variety are a variation and not a new variety.

2. Differences in design detail placement to known Davignon variety detail placement for the same date point to a discovery variety even if very similar.

3. Recuts or telltale repairs are variations of the same Davignon variety.

Rarity and Collecting

Larry Schmidt

December 2011

In Keith Davignon's 2nd Edition our world of collecting contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust halves is described as one where "more than half of the surviving population of bogus halves consists of only five to ten 'extremely common' die varieties", and yet "the great majority of the different varieties known are quite scarce relative to genuine coins" (i.e. today over half of the die varieties are unique with only one specimen known). Add to these two descriptive dynamics an understanding that our collecting world is far from static! 14 new varieties have already been discovered since the publication of the 2nd Edition (i.e. see New Discovery section on website). Additional specimen finds continue to be made for known die varieties, in many instances redesignating prior rarity levels (i.e. see Census section in website for rarity redesignations, plus keep in mind unreported collection inventories not included in the census). It can be expected that rarity redesignations are to continue, especially for struck varieties which account for four out of five of all known varieties, assuming contemporary counterfeiters would have struck as many counterfeits as possible from their laboriously crafted dies.

Where then does rarity fit in our world of collecting contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust halves? Look beyond what seems like a never-ending supply of 'extremely common' rarity die variety finds, where your next find might be the discovery coin of a new die variety. Where your next find might be the second specimen of a previous 'only one known specimen rare' die variety. Where your next find might be an additional specimen for a Davignon designated 'scare rarity' variety (i.e. of 6 to 9 known) that combined with your recent find is now redesignated as a 'common rarity' die variety (i.e. 10 to 19 known). Begin to think of rarity designations as fleeting, constantly changing from the ongoing finds made by yourself and fellow collectors.

Consider not looking at rarity designations in collecting. Focus rather on collecting that which is of your greatest personal interest in contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust halves. Are the Mexican Head varieties your keenest interest? Is your greatest desire the impossible varieties of 10 or 12 or 14 stars or 1840s? What about multiple strike contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust halves? While there are many other specialized directions that one may take, a single specialized direction might seem far reaching for many collectors today. As your collection grows though it is likely a question that you may ask yourself in the future.

2012 Articles

NC

Larry Schmidt

July 2012 (with June 2015 update)

Making the numismatic headlines of 2012's late spring was ANACS attribution of the seventh NC-3 1795 large cent. What does this have to do with collecting contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust halves? NC, the coin collecting acronym for "Not Collectable" denoting a unique or nearly unique coin, certainly can apply to many of our Davignon varieties, but in 2012's late spring too there was a much quieter NC related breaking headline for our hobby. The NC barrier was broken for the 1836-O 4/D, a cornerstone of our hobby that is pictured on the cover of the 2nd Edition. The known population of Davignon 1836-O 4/Ds increased to make the variety a collectable Scarce rarity rating!

The 1836-O 4/D's change in rarity is representative of the continuing dynamics of our hobby. Reported populations continue to rise of known specimens for varieties adjusting their rarity ratings (e.g. see the updated rarities within the Census section of our website for continued adjusted variety designations noting that by the June 1, 2015 ccCBHcc.com Census the cumulative count reporting from collectors participating in the census further updated the 1836-O 4/D variety to a Common rarity rating). Within these increases in known specimen populations are included higher grade specimen finds giving a much, much greater understanding for a variety (i.e. see the latest high grade specimens found in the 2nd Edition Errors / Changes section of this website). And yes, counterbalancing all this new variety discoveries continue to be made .... our own latest NCs (i.e. see New Discoveries section of this website).

When Were Davignons Really Minted?

Larry Schmidt

November 2012
(with January 2013, October 2015, January 2017 and September 2017 updates)

"The dates on counterfeits of course give us no real clue as to when they were struck."

This quote from John P. Lorenzo in Circulating Counterfeits of the Americas raises the question of just when were our beloved contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust half dollars minted anyway? As suggested by Mr. Lorenzo an exact year can't be determined when a specific variety was minted, however approximate date ranges can be estimated when specific groups of contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust half dollars (a.k.a. Davignon varieties) were minted which are described below.

An overall approximate date range can be estimated when the earliest to the last of the Davignon varieties were minted. To understand the date when Davignons were most likely first minted it would seem significant to understand that both Flowing Hair Type half dollars 1794 - 1795 and Draped Bust Type half dollars 1796 - 1807 were counterfeited (i.e. see Before Davignons section in this website). But there is controversy as to when these pre-Capped Bust halves were minted.

John Riddell in his A Monograph of the Silver Dollar: Good and Bad of 1845 published a list with illustrated facsimiles of the then known half dollar counterfeits. Riddell's earliest listed half dollar counterfeits began with an 1814 Capped Bust Half (a.k.a Davignon 1814 1/A variety). No Flowing Hair Type half dollars nor Draped Bust Type half dollars were listed as counterfeits by Riddell. Another source, Don Taxey in his 1963 landmark Counterfeit Mis-Struck and Unofficial U.S. Coins notes an 1813 origin:

"The Schilke 'discovery coin' was owned by an elderly man who claimed that it had been with his family for many years. The coin was wrapped in a piece of stained and yellowed paper which was beginning to crumble at the crease marks. An almost inscription on the paper read:

'Limpsten (?) Wednesday, May 19, 1813 - This day rec'd of John Cram of Unity, one half dollar dated 1787 – and inclosed (sic) The same within this paper – Francis Chase & Chs (Charles) Way present at the time – Attes – Abneil Chase.'

The above note, if genuine, would indicate that the manufacturer of these coins took place sometime between 1794 and 1813. And yet the omission of any 1787 dies following Riddell's extremely inclusive list of counterfeit half dollars would seem to preclude this possibility. The alternative is that they were made around the third quarter of the last century, along with the 1650 Pine Tree shillings, the Washington half cent, and other such fancy productions."

To understand when the last of the Davignons were minted it is important to understand the nature of the counterfeiter. A belief held today is that counterfeiters meant to pass their minted counterfeits as inconspicuously as possible into general circulation to avoid detection and the

harsh prosecution that would follow. For Davignon varieties this likely meant they were minted up to a period before drawing undesired attention for closer inspection amongst a more and more Liberty Seated coinage dominated general circulation (i.e. the Liberty Seated Half Dollar 1839 – 1891 replaced the Capped Bust Half last struck in 1839). With a recognized degree of conjecture this likely sets an approximate ending period when Davignons were last minted from at least one generation but less than two generations beyond 1839 to an 1850s / 1870s date range estimate. While this 1850s to 1870s date range is certainly not absolute it is a conservative estimate (i.e. if fellow collectors feel a need to adjust this date range keep in mind that as a guideline research consensus states that during the first half of the 19th century 20 to 25 years equaled one biological generation).

Within an approximate date range when Davignons were minted from as early as 1813 / 1814 to the 1850s / 1870s it is important to understand terminus post quem, that is, it is easy to mint and circulate a counterfeit coin dated in the past, but it is difficult to mint and circulate a counterfeit coin dated in the future. By example an 1827 1/A Davignon variety could have been minted from as early as 1827, but not before 1827, to any year up to the 1850s / 1870s date range estimate. This method to estimate the approximate date range from the earliest year to the last year range when a Davignon variety was minted though is just the beginning in that some groups of Davignon varieties that share common attributes may be refined further.

For a group of Davignon varieties as late as around 1845 can be used to narrow the ending period of their approximate date range when they were minted. In the already mentioned A Monograph of the Silver Dollar: Good and Bad by J. L. Riddell, published in 1845, 38 Capped Bust half dollar struck and cast counterfeits dated 1814 to 1839 obverses and reverses are pictured with brief descriptions "alerting banks, commerce, and all other readers". This work by John Leonard Riddell, an employee of the New Orleans US Mint, alerted the public, likely stopping counterfeiters in short order from continuing to mint these specific Capped Bust half dollar counterfeit varieties (i.e. if they were yet being struck). A breakdown of Riddell's 38 listed Capped Bust half dollar counterfeits is as follows:

30 of Riddell's identified Capped Bust half dollar counterfeits are cross referenced within the descriptions of Davignon varieties to Riddell's 1845 Monograph listed numbers in both the Contemporary Counterfeit Capped Bust Half Dollars First Edition and 2nd Edition by Keith Davignon (i.e. see footnote 1 at the end of this article for these Davignon variety cross references). Six of Riddell's identified Capped Bust half dollar counterfeits can additionally be cross referenced to specific Davignon varieties that were not included in either the Contemporary Counterfeit Capped Bust Half Dollars First Edition nor 2nd Edition (i.e. see footnote 2 at the end of this article for these additional Davignon variety cross references). Two remaining Capped Bust half dollar counterfeits referenced by Riddell are not identified yet to any specific Davignon variety due to the monograph's poor picture quality (i.e. see footnote 3 at the end of this article for these Riddell listed numbers).

The group of 36 Davignon varieties that can be cross referenced to Riddell's Monograph listed numbers have an ending period as late as around 1845 for their approximate upper date range when minted. By example the 1824 2/B Davignon variety listed by Riddell as Number 446

likely has an approximate date range when minted from as early as 1824 to as late as around 1845.

For a group of extremely common rarity Davignon varieties Riddell's 1845 Monograph can also be used to conservatively narrow the earliest period to after 1845 for their approximate date range when they were minted. It stands to reason if certain Davignon varieties are found to have extremely common rarity today these same varieties were just as likely to have been quite common if already known in 1845. To show just how numerous the populations of these extremely common rarity varieties still remain it has been speculated by Keith Davignon that collectively they account for considerably more than half of the total surviving population of bogus halves! It would seem impossible that extremely common rarity Davignon varieties such as the 1831 1/A, 1833 1/A, 1838 3/C and 1838 3/E would certainly have been listed by Riddell if known, yet none of these varieties are found in his 1845 monograph! There is little speculation that the earliest period of an approximate date range is after 1845 when this group of extremely common rarity Davignon varieties not listed by Riddell were minted. By example the 1838 3/E Davignon variety (i.e. today stated as probably the most common of all bogus bust halves) was not listed by Riddell and would have an approximate date range after 1845 to the 1850s / 1870s when minted (i.e. reference earlier analysis in this article for estimating an upper date range).

For the group of Davignon varieties that each have a known German silver specimen for their variety the earliest period can be narrowed to around the 1830s for an approximate earliest date range when they were minted. Keith Davignon and Bradley Karoleff in Circulating Counterfeits of the Americas discuss Dr. Lewis Feuchwanger's metal (a.k.a. Feuchwanger's composition, or German silver). German silver was stated to be a new metal alloy of the 1830s comprised of copper, zinc and nickel. This alloy was even suggested by Dr. Feuchwanger to the US Congress that the metal be used as a substitute for copper to mint small denomination coinage. In fact, in 1837 Dr. Feuchwanger produced one-cent and three-cent trial pieces to promote the United States adopting German silver as an official metal for coins, to which he would profitably supply the planchets. Davignon varieties struck in German silver are identified within their descriptions in the Contemporary Counterfeit Capped Bust Half Dollars First Edition and 2nd Edition. It is significant to note that additional Davignon varieties continue to be found minted in German silver including the 1825 2/B, 1825 6/F, 1828 5/E, 1828 6/F, 1828 7/G, 1828 11/K and 1828 16/Q Davignon varieties (e.g. known from my own collection). All Davignon varieties with specimens found minted in German silver have an approximate date range narrowed from the 1830s to the 1850s / 1870s (i.e. reference earlier analysis in this article for estimating an upper date range). The approximate date range for struck Davignon varieties found in German silver also applies to other alloys found struck for the same Davignon varieties. It stands to reason that the dies struck different alloy planchets that were available roughly during the same approximate period (i.e. also different alloys were thought to test the new dies of a Davignon variety). Going even further, some Davignon varieties minted in German silver can use a combination of clues already discussed to narrow even further their approximate date ranges when minted. For example, the Davignon 1826 3/C is found in German silver, placing from the 1830s when minted, but additionally the variety is listed by Riddell in his 1845 monograph too. So, the approximate date range for the 1826 3/C is from the 1830s to as late as around 1845

when minted. (Note - The dating from the 1830s is not absolute but extremely likely. German silver in the 1830s became a readily available imitation alloy of a lesser known Chinese alloy paktong also comprised of copper, zinc and nickel. Paktong resembles silver and was used occasionally as early as the eighteenth century and had been imported to England from China.)

For groups of Davignon varieties that have either the same obverse or reverse die there is a common narrowed approximate date range when they were struck. A Davignon variety not listed in Riddell that has the same obverse or reverse die as a Davignon variety listed by Riddell in 1845 can be assumed to have been actively using the same die during the same approximate date range period. Such an example is the 1821 2/B Davignon variety that is listed by Riddell, yet both the 1821 2/C and 1821 2/E Davignon varieties that used the same obverse die are not listed by Riddell. Thus, using the Riddell's Monograph clue applicable to one of the related varieties, all three of these 1821 varieties would have been likely struck to as late as around 1845. Further narrowing their same approximate date range when struck the 1821 2/B variety is also known in German silver (i.e. no specimens of either the 1821 2/C or 1821 2/E varieties are yet known in German silver). It can be reasoned that with the added 1821 2/B German silver clue all three of these 1821 varieties have a common narrower approximate date range when struck from the 1830s to as late as around 1845 (i.e. again because of the active use of a common die during the same approximate date range period). Although there are relatively few Davignon varieties which used same obverse or reverse dies known today, other varieties will likely be discovered with same dies and this technique can increasing be used to determine an approximate date range when Davignon varieties using the same die were struck.

There are exceptions though making it not possible to estimate approximate date ranges when certain counterfeit specimen exceptions were struck. Muddying the efforts to estimate approximate date ranges are frustrating counterfeit specimens that intermingle characteristics of Davignon design trends and mid-20th century fakes. Take for example the 1807 pictured below which has been tested to be an alloy of 64% copper, 31% zinc, 3% silver, 2% other metals, but has no nickel and thus is not Feuchwanger's German silver metal by definition (i.e. the alloy could have begun in part with a low grade of silver called billon, sometimes silver in color, ususally made of part silver and part copper). This specimen's obverse has Davignon characteristics of an after 1809 proportionally shorter and broader figure of a rounded cheek Liberty, plus oversized wirey stars that are more like those found in many 1820s Davignon varieties. Confounding this specimen though is a Flowing Hair Type half dollar reverse of 1794 -1795! The specimen has a non-lettered edge without reeding with instead an edge filled with non-uniformly spaced lines likely caused from extruding the oversized 33.81 mm planchet through the dies while in the press. Could this mule specimen pictured below possibly be a trial strike of a Capped Bust obverse handmade die with an outdated Flowing Hair Type reverse handmade die (i.e. this reverse is not found in any known Flowing Hair Half Dollar contemporary counterfeit - see Before Davignons section in website)? More likely though this specimen is a broadstruck mid-20th century fake manufactured at a time when such mintings were created out of early US coinage ignorance (i.e. raising the possibility, however remote, of similar resembling Davignons that may need to be revetted). Unresolved absolute answers to questions like these will continue to add difficulty in estimating approximate date ranges when particular counterfeit specimens were minted.

Similar rule of thumb answers for estimating approximate date ranges when other varieties of contemporary counterfeits were struck are also needed. Take for example the multiple specimens known of an 1833 dated half dollar that is a Liberty Seated Variety 3 - Arrows at Date No Rays 1854 – 1855, one of which is pictured below!

January 2017 Update - Cited references to the 1850s / 1870s estimated upper date range for when contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust halves continued to minted should be reconsidered instead to be up to the 1850s / 1860s. Findings shared by a fellow collector shows strong evidence that between the Civil War until the end of Reconstruction, approximately 1861-1875/7, silver coins were not being counterfeited again until after the Reconstruction. Newspaper reports of the era stated that those silver coins that were counterfeited after Reconstruction were of the Liberty Seated Mint Type, most likely because this was the Mint Type design most numerous in general circulation.

1. Davignon varieties referenced (i.e. with added latest rarity updates found in the Census section in this website) to listed numbers made by Riddell in 1845:

Davignon 1814 1/A cross referenced (i.e. no pieces yet reported) to Riddell's 1845 Monograph No. 440,

Davignon 1817 1/A cross referenced (i.e. no pieces yet reported) to Riddell's 1845 Monograph No. 441,

Davignon 1818 1/A cross (i.e. rare rarity) referenced to Riddell's 1845 Monograph No. 442,

Davignon 1821 1/A cross referenced (i.e. rare rarity) to Riddell's 1845 Monograph No. 443,

Davignon 1824 2/B cross referenced (i.e. very scarce rarity) to Riddell's 1845 Monograph No. 446,

Davignon 1826 2/B cross referenced (i.e. rare rarity) to Riddell's 1845 Monograph No. 448,

Davignon 1826 3/C cross referenced (i.e. rare rarity) to Riddell's 1845 Monograph No. 449,

Davignon 1827 2/B cross referenced (i.e. no pieces yet reported) to Riddell's 1845 Monograph No. 450,

Davignon 1828 2/B cross referenced (i.e. rare rarity) to Riddell's 1845 Monograph No. 451,

Davignon 1828 3/C cross referenced (i.e. rare rarity) to Riddell's 1845 Monograph No. 452,

Davignon 1828 4/D cross referenced (i.e. scarce rarity) to Riddell's 1845 Monograph No. 453,

Davignon 1829 3/C cross referenced (i.e. rare rarity) to Riddell's 1845 Monograph No. 455,

Davignon 1830 5/E cross referenced (i.e. rare rarity) to Riddell's 1845 Monograph No. 456,

Davignon 1831 4/D cross referenced (i.e. rare rarity) to Riddell's 1845 Monograph No. 457,

Davignon 1832 4/D cross referenced (i.e. no pieces yet reported) to Riddell's 1845 Monograph No. 459,

Davignon 1832 5/E cross referenced (i.e. very common rarity) to Riddell's 1845 Monograph No. 460,

Davignon 1833 9/I cross referenced (i.e. rare rarity) to Riddell's 1845 Monograph No. 461,

Davignon 1833 10/J cross referenced (i.e. very scarce rarity) to Riddell's 1845 Monograph No. 462,

Davignon 1833 11/K cross referenced (i.e. very scarce rarity) to Riddell's 1845 Monograph No. 463,

Davignon 1833 4/D cross referenced (i.e. very scarce rarity) to Riddell's 1845 Monograph No. 464,

Davignon 1833 12/L cross referenced (i.e. rare rarity) to Riddell's 1845 Monograph No. 465,

Davignon 1834 3/C cross referenced (i.e. no pieces yet reported) to Riddell's 1845 Monograph No. 467,

Davignon 1834 4/D cross referenced (i.e. no pieces yet reported) to Riddell's 1845 Monograph No. 468,

Davignon 1836 2/B cross referenced (i.e. rare rarity) to Riddell's 1845 Monograph No. 469,

Davignon 1836 3/C cross referenced (i.e. rare rarity) to Riddell's 1845 Monograph No. 470,

Davignon 1837 3/C cross referenced (i.e. common rarity) to Riddell's 1845 Monograph No. 472,

Davignon 1838 2/B cross referenced (i.e. rare rarity) to Riddell's 1845 Monograph No. 473,

Davignon 1838 16/Q cross referenced (i.e. no pieces yet reported) to Riddell's 1845 Monograph No. 474,

Davignon 1839-O 1/A cross referenced (i.e. rare rarity) to Riddell's 1845 Monograph No. 475,

Davignon 1839-O 2/B cross referenced (i.e. rare rarity) to Riddell's 1845 Monograph No. 476,

Davignon 1839-O 3/C cross referenced (i.e. very scarce rarity) to Riddell's 1845 Monograph No. 477.

2. Davignon varieties previously not referenced in their descriptions (i.e. with added latest rarity updates found in the Census section in this website) to listed numbers made by Riddell in 1845:

Davignon 1822 1/A description (i.e. common rarity) not cross referenced to Riddell's 1845 Monograph No. 444,

Davignon 1823 1/A description (i.e. extremely common rarity) not cross referenced to Riddell's 1845 Monograph No. 445,

Davignon 1825 1/A description (i.e. extremely common rarity) not cross referenced to Riddell's 1845 Monograph No. 447,

Davignon 1832 12/L description (i.e. rare rarity) not cross referenced to Riddell's 1845 Monograph No. 458,

Davignon 1833 2/B description (i.e. very common rarity) not cross referenced to Riddell's 1845 Monograph No. 466,

Davignon 1836-O 4/D description (i.e. scarce rarity) not cross referenced to Riddell's 1845 Monograph as No. 471.

3. Listed number made by Riddell in 1845 monograph that is not cross referenced to a Davignon variety:

1829 listed in Riddell's 1845 Monograph as No. 454.

2013 Articles

Contemporary Counterfeits Verses Modern Fakes

Harvey Bactacky, Louis Scuderi and Larry Schmidt

January 2013

There are two types of minted counterfeit coins. The first, historic counterfeits, were made to be accepted and passed in general circulation for everyday purchases at their implied face value. Known as “contemporary counterfeits” this type was produced (struck or cast) at approximately the date on the coin in order to blend in as inconspicuously as possible with genuine coins in general circulation. These contemporary counterfeits were made during times when a day’s pay could be measured with just a few low denomination coins, and are the focus of this educational website, specific to the contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust half dollars known as Davignon varieties.

The other category of counterfeits are imitations of numismatic items that are in violation of the Hobby Protection Act of 1973 and do not, as required by law, have the word “COPY” marked legibly, conspicuously, and non-deceptively on the obverse or reverse. While there are a flood of modern imitations on the market correctly marked with "COPY" there are also many of these exact coins without the "COPY" markings making them illegal fakes. These are fakes manufactured to fool the modern-day coin collector. Most of these illegal fakes are lustrous and in high grade, but that said, many of them still have some problems with date punches and some of the lettering that clearly indicate recent manufacturing. One such example is an 1824 currently seen on the market which can be found with and without the required "COPY" marking (the coin pictured below has the legally required "COPY" marking). This coin has attributes of a large wide date with a horizontally elongated 4 on the obverse, and small legend letters plus an eagle with no tongue on the reverse. Additionally, the ES letter bottoms are open in STATES and the shield has partial crossbars and stripes on the reverse, all likely due to poor strike and/or die preparation by the counterfeiter. On this example the combined obverse and reverse attributes have no matching counterpart of a genuine Capped Bust half dollar Overton variety. We do note that in some cases actual coins have been used to mass produce these counterfeits and that these specific fakes are difficult to detect.

This flood of modern fakes of early coins is likely coming out of China where examples of counterfeit United States coins can be found for sale in most large cities and tourist attractions. A small percentage have the word COPY on them but most do not. Today's coin collectors have to be very careful when buying these early coins. If you are not very familiar with a particular series of US coins that you are thinking of collecting, stay away from raw examples until you gain some knowledge about the characteristics of genuine examples from the series. We would recommend that novice collectors buy only slabbed coins from reputable third party certification services and that they purchase copies of the excellent reference books available for all of the early US series before they purchase these coins.

Epilogue (June 2014) - Another modern fake pictured below has surfaced to challenge fellow collectors. Look closely and you'll see blunt stars with uneven sized points on the obverse, plus a reverse loaded with "errors" including; 1) overly long claws on the eagle's feet with the rightmost claw on the eagle's left (viewing) foot touching, but not overlapping the center claw, 2) uneven scroll lettering (e.g. note BUS and UNU), 3) legend STATES has a smaller A, AMERICA has a tilted E which is much higher than M at the base plus a base of A much higher than M, and 4) missing continuous arrow shafts under the grasp of the eagle's right foot claws. The specimen has a square rim, lettered edge lettered as normal but with a thin style font that does not quite match the Mint's style font, and does not ring at all.

Epilogue (December 2014) - Another modern fake pictured below has surfaced to challenge fellow collectors. Note the bloated stars and the wrong 5 in 50 C. It even has a reeded edge!

Epilogue (December 2014) - Another modern fake pictured below has surfaced to challenge fellow collectors. Note the bloated stars and the wrong 5 in 50 C. It even has a reeded edge!

Epilogue (June 2018) - Another modern fake pictured below has surfaced to challenge fellow collectors. High, larger 1 in the date. (Note - Variations have been found with a different reverse LES and RES.)


LIBERTY
1826
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
E PLURIBUS UNUM
50 C.

An Attempt To Solve Another Mystery

Larry Schmidt

March 2013

As previously explained in the Collectors Corner September 2010 article titled Another Mystery Solved:

"You know the coin is a definitely an old counterfeit, but normally due to a lot of wear and / or a weak strike which one? Is it an extremely common variety, or a rare discovery specimen?"

This is another article about a contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust half that has proved difficult to identify. The contemporary counterfeit in question is pictured below which has a weak, uneven strike visible on both the obverse and reverse. Before reading any further try your own hand at attempting to identify this specimen. In your efforts you will likely find that attempting to identify this specimen will definitely have some surprises!

Well, if you think you know the answer and are reading this far it's time to share the techniques used in attempting to identify this specimen:

1st Step - Given that all attempts to read the date on the unidentified specimen were not successful regardless of the lighting conditions, the first step narrowed the search to known Davignon varieties that had similarly positioned tight chin Liberty profiles. This matching effort was not an exacting process, but rather a process that was approximate in which it was best to include rather than exclude potential variety candidate matches. An approximate approach was used to compensate for atypical differences in surviving variety specimens due to minting variations (i.e. multi strikes, off-strikes, weak strikes, etc.) and / or various metal alloys that were used that can have quite different wear patterns. The combined factors of minting variations and

wear pattern differences can really have a tremendous effect on the appearances of specimens even for the same Davignon variety!

Liberty's similarly positioned tight chin profile was used for an approximate search criteria as the position and design of the profile's outline are normally strong surviving attributes that can be seen even in very worn specimens (i.e. very worn contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust Halves are quite common even amongst the plate coins illustrated in the Contemporary Counterfeit Capped Bust Half Dollars, 2nd Edition.) The match for similarly positioned tight chin Liberty profiles like the unidentified specimen's resulted in 69 Davignon candidate matches conservatively identified out of the 361 currently known Davignons listed in the Contemporary Counterfeit Capped Bust Half Dollars, 2nd Edition plus additional varieties listed in the New Discoveries section in this website (e.g. 1813 1/C, 1814 1/A, 1815 3/C, 1818 6/F, 1819 4/D, 1822 7/G, 1822 11/K, 1829 4/D, 1829 5/E, 1829 6/F, 1829 9/J, 1830 4/D, 1830 5/E, 1830 10/J, 1830 10/O, 1830 12/L, 1830 13/M, 1830 28/CC, 1831 9/I, 1831 10/J, 1831 11/K, 1831 13/M, 1831 19/S, 1831 20/T, 1832 10/J, 1832 13/M, 1832 14/O, 1832 20/U, 1833 8/H, 1833 9/I, 1833 12/L, 1833 13/M, 1833 23/W, 1833 27/AA, 1833 31/FF, 1833 41/X, 1834 2/B, 1834 3/C, 1834 4/D, 1834 5/E, 1834 7/G, 1834 8/H, 1834 9/I, 1834 10/J, 1834 11/K, 1834 14/N, 1834 15/O, 1834 16/P, 1834 18/R, 1835 3/C, 1835 4/D, 1835 7/G, 1835 8/H, 1835 13/M, 1835 14/N, 1835 15/O, 1836 1/A, 1836 3/C, 1836 6/F, 1836 7/G, 1836 8/H, 1836 9/I, 1836 10/J, 1836 14/N, 1836 15/O, 1837 1/A, 1838 7/H, 1842 1/A, 1842 1/A with Recut Date.)

2nd Step - The list of the 69 potential Davignon candidates compiled in the first step was further narrowed by matching or eliminating each of the candidates against additional distinguishing attributes of the unidentified specimen's:

- Star 8 size / location to Liberty's cap,
- Visible block-like (i.e. non tapered) lower serifs in the letters in AMERICA,
- Distinctive "50" numerals in 50 C.,
- RES at the outer edge of the M's left bottom serif,
- Long eagle claws grasping arrow shafts that do not extend continuously as would be expected.

When matching or eliminating each of the 69 Davignons it was important to anticipate that not all of the unidentified specimen's distinguishing attributes would be visible for all of the illustrated plate coins (i.e. due to atypical differences within a Davignon variety as mentioned in the previous step). After matching / eliminating the 69 Davignons respectively with / without visible distinguishing attributes to the unidentified specimen's there were four matched Davignons remaining (e.g. 1837 1/A, 1838 7/H, 1842 1/A, 1842 1/A with Recut Date.)

3rd Step – It was anticipated that a single match of one of the four remaining Davignons to the unidentified specimen could now be made using a fingerprint technique. The basics of the fingerprint technique used picked two imaginary points on either the obverse or reverse of the unidentified specimen which were then used to draw an imaginary line noting what detail design features on the counterfeit were crossed by the line. Three imaginary lines were drawn on the unidentified specimen's obverse in this manner. The first line drawn was from the center of star 5 to the center of star 11 noting where Liberty's eye was passed through by the line. The second

line drawn was between the center of star 1 and the center of star 8 noting where just to the left of the Y in Liberty's headband the line passed. The third line drawn was from the center of star 13 through the intersection of the first two lines drawn noting where the extended line passed on the left edge of star 7. The combined results of the three lines passing by or through details of the design created a fingerprint for the unidentified specimen (i.e. additional lines could have been added creating more details to a fingerprint if it was felt necessary.) The same imaginary pairs of points and lines were drawn on each of the four remaining Davignons creating individual fingerprints. An attempt was then made to match the fingerprint of the unidentified specimen to one of the four fingerprints of the remaining Davignons. Normally only a single Davignon would have matched the unidentified specimen using this fingerprint technique, however with this unidentified specimen the unexpected happened! The fingerprint of the unidentified specimen matched each of the fingerprints of the four remaining Davignons! This commonality had not been previously seen across these Davignons before! The matching fingerprints unexpectedly proved that the same master dies had been used over and over again to make working dies with date numeral changes!

Getting back to the unidentified specimen, progress had not continued using the usually reliable fingerprint technique, so an additional matching attempt was made to compare "micro fingerprints" of the small area on the obverse between the widest left and right lower Liberty profile edges down through the area of the date for the unidentified specimen and all four remaining Davignon varieties. Digital images of these micro fingerprints were scaled equally in size, aligned to star 1 and then compared with imaginary vertical lines seeking to find any common alignment between potential fragment(s) of date numerals possibly visible on the unidentified specimen to identical positioned portions of date numerals on any of the four Davignon varieties. Yet even with these attempted micro fingerprint comparisons no further matches could confidently be made due to the lack of credible fragments on the unidentified specimen's date.

4th Step – The results from the previously steps exhausted what could be done to analyze the obverse and the reverse. The identification efforts for the specimen continued onto what is sometimes called the third side of the coin, its edge. It is realized that for the reader this step would not have been possible to conduct given the lack of edge descriptions for most Davignon varieties in the Contemporary Counterfeit Capped Bust Half Dollars, 2nd Edition, but this effort did further narrow the possible matches for the unidentified specimen, an effort thought worthwhile to share. In collaborating with fellow collectors, it was found:

- The unidentified specimen's edge is fully milled (a.k.a reeded) without any lettering,
- The only known Davignon 1837 1/A's edge has identified small areas of milling here and there on the edge (i.e. it is quite common for milling to be worn off in some areas of an edge or the quality of the milling to be poor and inconsistent when minted),
- The very scarce rarity Davignon 1838 7/H's edge has identified milling imprinted with "FIFTY CENTS * OR HALF OF A DOLLAR".
- The very scarce rarity 1842 1/A's edge has identified milling with an occasional gap / weakness here and there (i.e. it is quite common for milling to be worn off in some areas of an edge or the quality of the milling to be poor and inconsistent when minted),

- The only known 1842 1/A with Recut Date's edge has identified milling imprinted with "HALF DOLLAR".

By matching the attributes of these edges, it could now be said that the previously unidentified specimen was either a Davignon 1837 1/A or a Davignon 1842 1/A. This was the limit of the final analysis that could be made*.

* Physical attributes of contemporary counterfeits' planchet thicknesses and weights can not be used for identifying a specimen. Very intentionally Davignon varieties resembled the diameters of genuine Capped Bust half dollars they were imitating to be passed in | general circulation as inconspicuously as possible (i.e. 32.5 mm diameter for Variety 1 1807-1836 or 30 mm diameter for Variety 2 1836 – 1837 and Variety 3 1838 – 1839). Unlike relatively uniform diameters contemporary counterfeit planchet thicknesses and weights though varied greatly. This is evidenced in the example of two surviving Davignon 1823 1/A specimens in extremely fine coin grades. The first 1823 1/A specimen was minted in copper with a 1.73 mm thickness and weight of 10.9 g. The second 1823 1/A specimen was minted in German silver with a 1.85 mm thickness and weight of 12.9 g. Keeping this example in mind it is believed some counterfeiters (a.k.a. of a Davignon variety) appeared to have used whatever planchets were available, while more sophisticated counterfeits (a.k.a of another Davignon variety) appeared to have increased the mass of their counterfeits by increasing the planchet thickness to lessen the specific gravity disparity of their alloy used to that of the silver and copper alloy used for genuine Capped Bust halves. Because planchet thicknesses and weights can be so inconsistent they are unfortunately unusable for identification purposes. Given these caveats, planchet thickness / weight for the unknown specimen are 2.33 mm /15.5 g, for the only known Davignon 1837 1/A are .96 mm / 6.54 g, for two very scarce rarity Davignon 1838 7/H specimens are respectively .95 mm / 7.18 and 2.13 mm / 14.2 g, for the very scarce rarity Davignon 1842 1/A are 1.42 mm / 7.18 g, and for the only known Davignon 1842 1/A with Recut Date are 1.06 mm / 6.86 g. Note - Rarities have been additionally noted to give the reader an understanding that there are few specimens known for all four Davignon varieties forming too small of a sample size to be statically relevant (i.e. see ccCBH Census section on this website for Davignon variety counts).

Could the unidentified specimen be only the second known 1837 1/A Davignon variety? More likely could the unidentified specimen be another very scarce rarity 1842 1/A Davignon variety (i.e. very scarce rarity equals six to nine known specimens)? Who can tell?

In the end the effort to identify this specimen had both good news and not so good news. The good news was that the 1837 1/A, 1838 7/H, 1842 1/A and 1842 1/A with Recut Date Davignon varieties were discovered to share the same master dies from which working dies with date changes were made. The not so good news was that while the specimen cannot be absolutely matched to a single Davignon variety, this contemporary counterfeit could be identified as either a Davignon 1837 1/A variety or a Davignon 1842 1/A variety demonstrating that unfortunately not all contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust halves can be always absolutely identified.

Note – If all this detective work had not identified any match(es) the potential of a discovery Davignon variety was possible. Keep in mind that previously unknown Davignon varieties

continue to be found! In the New Discoveries section in this website 22 discovery Davignon varieties can be viewed that have been brought forth since the October, 2010 publication of the Contemporary Counterfeit Capped Bust Half Dollars, 2nd Edition (i.e. as of February, 2013). Please don't hesitate to contact this website if you think you've found the next discovery Davignon!

Multi-Struck - Part 1

Larry Schmidt

May 2013 (with January 2017 updates)

The terrific article Fascinating 1836 Double Struck Half by Jeff Heisenberg with expert analysis by Edgar Sounders in the John Reich Journal pointed out that a quick count in AMBPR revealed only 46 double or triple struck genuine Capped Bust halves. The article further added Edgar Sounders' remarks regarding multi-struck genuine Capped Bust halves..."I would think that they are, as a rule, all very rare. Perhaps only 100 to 120 in all grades - and that would be at the very high end." (i.e. see Links section of this website to the John Reich Collector Society). These multi-struck beasts are indeed extremely rare considering over 88 million Capped Bust halves were minted for multi-strikes to have survived in such low numbers!!! How does this apply to contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust halves? The estimates of surviving multi-struck contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust halves encountered seemed much, much higher than multi-struck genuine Capped Bust halves. But was this right?

Six collections of contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust halves that make up 78.1% of the 306 known struck Davignon varieties identified in the December, 2016 census (i.e. see Census section on this website) were analyzed for the frequency of multi-struck contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust halves, updating the May, 2013 analyses. This update found 40 single sided or double sided multi-struck specimens across 34 different Davignon varieties. Statistically this is a surprising 5.17% of the 774 struck Davignon specimens in the six collections, and 11.1% when comparing the 34 multi-strikes in different Davignon varieties to the total 306 known struck Davignon varieties!!! (Note - The analyses of the collections carefully netted out what looked like multi-strikes but were instead recuts, double detailing from poorly cast counterfeits, and potential multi-struck specimens too worn to absolutely confirm.)

The higher occurrence of contemporary counterfeit multi-strikes likely point to lower production skills / standards practiced, plus perhaps reflecting lighter weight presses used by counterfeiters compared to our early U.S. Mint's. The use of a lighter weight press needed either more striking pressure or multiple strikes to bring up detail for silver counterfeits, or an alloy that looked silver, with the certainly harder metal taking a toll on die life.

The higher occurrence of multi-strikes found in this survey are the remnants of the many counterfeiters who raced to profit by their crime.

History Keith Davignons Editions of Contemporary Counterfeit Capped Bust Half Dollars

Larry Schmidt

November 2013 (with February 2014 update)

There are a number of different published 1st Editions and 2nd Editions plus one Unpublished Die Varieties by Keith Davignon's of his milestone Contemporary Counterfeit Capped Bust Half Dollars. As these different publications potentially make their way onto the secondary market an overview understanding of them can be significant to the collector. The history of the publications of 1st Editions, Unpublished Die Varieties and 2nd Editions are provided below in their chronological sequence:

1st Editions

- 500 bound black cloth copies with silver printed Title/First Edition/1842 Obverse Counterfeit Image/Authorship by-lines cover. Spine silver printed Authorship/Title/ First Edition/ Publisher plus publisher's image by-lines. Silver on black patterned endpapers. Copyright 1996. 188 die variety descriptions with images appendix.

The above 500 copies were printed first followed by three limited copy versions which were published all at the same time (see the following).

- 5 bound full dark brown leather copies with gold printed Title/First Edition/1842 Obverse Counterfeit Image/Authorship by-lines cover. Spine gold printed Authorship/Title/First Edition/ Publisher plus publisher's image by-lines. Copies have an added numbered "Presentation Copy" bookplate signed by the author (printed in silver ink - not as a script signature). Brown toned marbled endpapers. Copyright 1996. 188 die variety descriptions with images appendix.

- 25 half black leather bound with gray and black gloss marbled card stock copies with gold printed Title/First Edition/1842 Obverse Counterfeit Image/Authorship by-lines cover. Spine gold printed Authorship/Title/First Edition/ Publisher plus publisher's image by-lines. Copies have an added numbered "Deluxe Edition" bookplate signed by the author (printed in silver ink - not as a script signature). Silver on black patterned endpapers. Copyright 1996. 188 die variety descriptions with images appendix.

- 40 bound black cloth copies with silver printed Title/First Edition/1842 Obverse Counterfeit Image/Authorship by-lines cover. Spine silver printed Authorship/ Title/First Edition/ Publisher plus publisher's image by-lines. Copies have an added numbered "Special Numbered Edition" bookplate signed by the author (printed in silver ink - not as a script signature). Silver on black patterned endpapers. Copyright 1996. 188 die variety descriptions with images appendix.

Unpublished Appendix of Die Varieties

- Unbound Supplement Aug 06 - Appendix Catalog of Die Varieties. Microsoft Office Word file of 310 die variety descriptions without images appendix that was shared with Keith's permission.

2nd Editions

- 6 galley bound proofs on gloss black flexible card stock printed with white Title/2nd Edition/ Authorship cover. Spine black spiral used to hold printing together. White endpapers. Copyright 2010. 339 die variety descriptions with images appendix.

- 6 bound gloss black card stock binding copies with white printed Title/2nd Edition/1836-O Obverse Counterfeit Image/ Authorship by-lines and image cover. Spine white printed Title/ 2nd Edition/Authorship by-lines. White endpapers. Copyright 2010. 339 die variety descriptions with images appendix.

- 134 bound gloss black card stock binding copies with silver/gray printed Title/2nd Edition/1936-O Obverse Counterfeit Image/ Authorship/Edited By by-lines cover. Spine silver/gray printed Title/2nd Edition/Authorship by-lines. White endpapers. Copyright 2010. Paper is white and light weight. 339 die variety descriptions with images appendix.

- 150 bound gloss black card stock binding copies with silver/gray printed Title/2nd Edition–2nd Printing/1836-O Obverse Counterfeit Image/Authorship/ Edited By by-lines cover. Spine silver/gray printed Title/2nd Edition/ Authorship by-lines. White endpapers. Copyright in 2010. Paper is off white and heavy weight. 339 die variety descriptions with images appendix.

2014 Articles

We're Writing Our Red Book Yet.

Larry Schmidt.

February 2014

A Guide Book of United States Coins, commonly called the Red Book, has been the primer for US coin collectors since 1947. It is often joked amongst fellow contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust half dollar collectors that we're still writing our own specialized Red Book. Never has this been truer given the activities that began in the last weeks of 2013!

At the end of 2013 the sharply struck new discovery German silver 1840 4/E variety was vetted. Just recently the latest new discovery variety 1829 20/U has been vetted. Including the 1840 4/E and the 1829 20/U the total is now 28 new varieties discovered since the publication of the 2nd Edition in 2010. All 28 new discovery varieties can be viewed in the New Discoveries section of this website.

Besides looking forward with new discovery varieties we're looking back too! Previously identified varieties are being updated further as more becomes known about a variety though additional specimens for the variety that are being found. By example there was recently a discovery of the second known 1826 3/C, one of the counterfeits originally identified by John Riddell in his A Monograph of the Silver Dollar: Good and Bad published in 1845. This second discovered 1826 3/C is a single struck specimen updating significantly the variety's original description that had been based on the weakened multistruck plate coin illustrated in both the 1st Edition and 2nd Edition. Comparison studies between varieties are providing further updates too. For instance the previous '1842 1/A with Recut Date' specimen is now considered a variety unto itself and has been revetted as the 1842 2/A variety. It was found that this newly revetted 1842 2/A variety belongs to a family of at least four contemporary counterfeit varieties that share a common obverse master die to which dates were added in their respective working dies. Both the 1826 3/C and the 1842 2/A variety updates can be viewed in the 2nd Edition Errors/Changes section of this website.

Are we getting close to finishing our own specialized Red Book? If the activities just since the end of 2013 are any indication, I think not. With little doubt there will still be plenty of collecting discovery trills and continued education advancements yet ahead for fellow collectors!

Stories Behind Discoveries - Part 1.

Larry Schmidt.

April 2014 (with September 2016 update)

Many contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust halves have been simply put aside as interesting but unidentified novelties many years before Keith Davignon's 1996 1st Edition initially identified varieties in our field of numismatic study. Individual specimens can sometimes be traced through the last few owners such as the 1838 19/T variety (e.g. 'Wicked Witch of the West' Liberty, missing period after HALF DOL pictured in the 2nd Edition as well as below) that was found in a Texas estate, passed through two Illinois coin dealers and finally to a fellow collector.

Other specimens have more in-depth provenance stories such as the ones below:

- The 1813 1/C was truly a buried treasure (i.e. pictured in New Discovery section on website). This specimen is so far the only metal detector find of a new variety. From its time since being lost and buried in a Civil War battlefield, this specimen has a large resulting crack and surface characteristic of a casting although the variety is a struck contemporary counterfeit.

- The 1826 17/Q (i.e. pictured in New Discovery section on website) was a multi generation unknown coin that had been in one family for three generations. Years ago the grandfather, who was described as a serious coin collector, use to interest his then young grandson with a few low grade coins to play with to make believe he too was a coin collector alongside his grandfather. Years later the now adult grandson had inherited belongings of his grandfather's and at the bottom of one of the boxes these same low-grade coins he had played with as a youth were found, amongst them the 1826 17/Q!

Please use the Contact Us section of this website if you too have a discovery story that you believe fellow collectors would enjoy hearing about and share authorship for any addition(s) to this article!

Capped Bust halves that are not Davignons - Part 2.

Larry Schmidt.

September 2014

Many collectors of contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust halves (a.k.a. Davignons) are first and foremost advanced collectors of genuine Capped Bust halves who have an in-depth working knowledge of the nuances of hundreds of genuine Capped Bust half die varieties further defined by die states (i.e. die varieties identify by date different observe and reverse die combinations and die states identify a die variety's wear and degradation of the dies from usage that are not to be confused with coin grade). Other collectors, including myself, are focused contemporary counterfeit collectors who have a less keen knowledge of genuine Capped Bust half die varieties and die states which can lead to first-glance confusion, that is, deciding if a particular specimen is a contemporary counterfeit or not? Such a questionable specimen is pictured below which is a learning opportunity of genuine verses contemporary counterfeit determination.

For me this 1830 small 0 specimen raised first-glance questions if the specimen was a contemporary counterfeit or was a genuine coin because of certain attributes as seen in the close-up images below:

When the working die begins to deteriorate over time from usage the letters and stars like the 50 C. near the edge elongate. The die spreads out and devices near the edges connect to the rims as can be seen at the bottom
of the 5 and C.

Some banner letters are missing that are not due to coin wear as can be seen from the overall higher coin grade of the specimen. The missing letters in the scroll are a function of too little pressure and not enough metal with the high point.

There is a raised line on the planchet most noticeable in the field on the right side of the Eagle's neck with a slight overlap.

With the helpful expertise of a couple of genuine Capped Bust half collector friends this specimen is properly identified as a well-known genuine 1830 Capped Bust half Overton 118 die variety very late die state with significant die clashing, more common on early dates (i.e. a die clash error happens when obverse and reverse coin dies come together in the coining press without a planchet between which can cause an imprint of each die to be left on the opposing die face).

This specimen and others like it provide great learning opportunities and are part of the fun of our hobby!

Stories Behind Discoveries - Part 2.

Roy Lee Hampton.

October 2014 (1) (with December 2016 ccCBHcc.com notation)

This dubious counterfeit coin has been in my family for at least three generations. It's really more a family curse than an heirloom. My mother inherited it from my grandfather's modest coin collection after his death in 1971. I have no idea how long he may have possessed it before then. Having been a beat cop during the 1930s and 1940s he may well have taken it off of someone knowing it was a fake. With only 10 stars it isn't very hard to spot! I also believe that my uncle, who kept the best coins from the collection for himself, probably also knew it and that's why he threw it in with the sack of junk coins that he gave to my mother; just to get her riled up.

Did it ever, when she looked the coin up in The Red Book and saw what it was worth (in 1972) she flipped out. It was promptly taken to a local coin dealer who pronounced it a "worthless forgery." It seemed incomprehensible at the time that anyone would take the time and effort to carve their own coin die and make counterfeit 50¢ pieces. Obviously 50¢ was worth a whole lot more in the 19th century than in the 20th. Needless to say my mother was very disappointed and threw it back in the coin sack, only for me to discover decades later and fall for the same cruel prank.

I had all but forgotten about the unfortunate incident years later when I was sorting through the family collection of unremarkable coins when I looked up this half dollar. Needless to say, it gave me quite a start when I saw "An extreme rarity!" and read what the genuine article was worth. Still, it all sounded too good to be true. I remained cautious and did a little research. Even as a complete numismatic neophyte I could tell there was something not right about this coin. So I downloaded an image of a perfect 1838 O proof and over laid it with my bogus half dollar in Photoshop, and Voila! About the only things alike about these two coins is they are both round and made of metal! Then I realized that this was the same coin that had caused such a ruckus after my grandfather's death and almost brought my mother to tears.

Obviously, this coin was not contrived to deceive a numismatist or anyone else really, who had time to give it a second glance. Given its level of wear (if even that's genuine) it no doubt got passed off quite a few times while in circulation. No doubt causing a lot of trouble and strife along the way, not just within my family alone. Thanks to ccCBHcc.com the mischievous thing has finally been identified and cataloged (e.g. Davignon 1830O 12/M variety) and won't ever fall again into unsuspecting inexperienced hands.

ccCBHcc.com Notation - On the reverse to the right of HALF DOL is what is likely the mark of a test drill made in the coin's history by a merchant to verify that the coin was solid silver. Note that the there was not an attempt to pierce through the coin and that there are remnants of metal on the edges of the pierced area, both characteristics of test drill usage.

Capped Bust halves that are not Davignons - Part 3.

Larry Schmidt.

October 2014 (2)

Deciding if a particular specimen is a contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust half dollar variety (a.k.a. Davignon) or not can many times be based on knowledge of the hundreds of genuine die varieties that are further defined by die states (i.e. see Capped Bust halves that are not Davignons - Part 1 article in this Collectors Corner section). Adding to these complexities genuine Capped Bust halves can be found that have been modified in various ways that can lead to first-glance questioning if a specimen could be a contemporary counterfeit or not.

Modified genuine Capped Bust halves can be as simple as having had their edges trimmed leaving a smooth non-lettered surface. Trimming was a practice of dishonest people who sought to make an illegal profit from filing off the edges and selling the precious metal removed. The smaller diameter of the trimmed coin often went unnoticed, but his dishonest practice decreased the value of the original silver or gold coin. To curb the practice of trimming the Mint began milling reeded edges so a coin could be easily identified if it was trimmed. Reeded edging became standard for the half dollar with the Capped Bust half dollar Variety 2 in 1836.

Other examples of modified genuine Capped Bust halves can be rather unique and bring a smile to a collector. Take for example the altered date specimen displayed below, an erroneously dated 1802 Capped Bust Type Lettered Edge half dollar. This "impossible" 1802 dated specimen reaches back to the Draped Bust Type with Heraldic Eagle Reverse Half Dollar (i.e. minted with regular issues from 1801 to 1807 struck with entirely different die designs than the Capped Bust Type Lettered Edge half dollar). Detailed study of this "impossible" 1802 altered date Capped Bust Type Lettered Edge half dollar specimen shows that it can be identified to have originally been an 1812 Overton 106 variety by its unique heavy die crack position on the coin's reverse. Understanding how the 1 was changed to a 0 is to appreciate the significant difference in the metal mass between the smaller 1 numeral and the much larger 0 numeral making chasing an impractical counterfeiting technique. There can be little doubt that a technique totally replacing the 1 was used. Using this total replacement technique the second 1 in the specimen's date would have been removed to the field level of the coin (i.e. the coin's level with neither raised nor incuse design) and either a handcrafted 0 numeral or a 0 numeral removed and transferred from a genuine coin was soldered onto this specimen replacing the original second 1 numeral.

Another example of an altered coin is a genuine 1837 Capped Bust half with a modified eye in Liberty displayed in images below. This “modification” could have resulted from damage (i.e. many bust coin collectors have come across a damaged coin now and again that just doesn’t fit), or this specimen was carved intentionally creating this graffiti (i.e. carved coins were not made to deceive but are interpreted instead as an individual's folk art created for their own satisfaction). However this 1837 specimen’s change to its Liberty’s eye occurred, for the contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust half dollar collector similar specimens like these can raise first-glance questions.

Other modified specimens like these provide great learning opportunities and are part of the fun of our hobby!

A Bigger Family - Part 1.

Louis Scuderi and Larry Schmidt.

November 2014

Contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust half families are those struck varieties which appear to share the same punches that created design elements in working dies used to strike the counterfeits. Never has this been clearer than in the recent ccCBHcc.com vetting of the 1833 42/OO discovery variety pictured below:

During the vetting process of the 1833 42/OO variety it was discovered that the same punches were used as those of other known varieties in the previously identified “Buck-Tooth Eagle" family that includes the 1830 6/F, 1832 6/F, 1832 7/G and 1833 11/K as noted in Keith Davignon’s writings. The difference between these varieties are the placements of the same design elements made from punches on both the obverse and reverse. These similarities (e.g. Liberty's profile, an elongated eagle with raised feathers on right of neck, legend lettering and slogan lettering) can be seen in the 1833 42/OO.

But during the vetting of the 1833 42/OO the “Buck-Tooth Eagle" family has also been discovered to include the 1830 14/P, 1831 14/N, 1833 19/S and 1833 29/DD varieties too! This expanded family could point to a very industrious single counterfeiter or quite likely counterfeiters that sold equipment/punches/edge lettering devices to each other (i.e. similar sharing of punches of design devices are also seen in some colonial contemporary counterfeits).

It is interesting to note that along with the discovery of the larger "Buck-Tooth Eagle" family another very closely "Buck-Tooth Eagle" related family was also discovered that used a six vertical bar shield (i.e. instead of the seven vertical bar shield of pales noting red gales) that minimally include the 1831 7/G, 1832 6/F, 1832 12/L, 1833 19/BB, 1833 36/JJ and 1835 10/J varieties.

2015 Articles

More on Rarity and Collecting.

Larry Schmidt.

February 2015

The question "Where then does rarity fit in our world of collecting contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust halves?" had been previously raised in this website's Collectors Corner article Rarity and Collecting – December, 2011. In the previous article it was noted that it was suspected that many contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust half variety rarity designations would continue to change with the ongoing cumulative finds made by fellow collectors. This conjecture seems to never be truer when looking at the statistics for our historic and educational hobby.

Between the 14 year period from Keith Davignon's Contemporary Counterfeit Capped Bust Half Dollars – First Edition published in 1996 and his follow-up publication 2nd Edition published in 2010 there were: a) 150+ vetted variety discoveries bringing up to 339 the number of then known varieties, b) 35 variety rarity level updates were made due to additional specimen finds, c) 41 second specimen finds for varieties that each had only a single previously known specimen, and d) 8 first specimen finds were made for known varieties that had been documented in 1845 by John Riddell, a New Orleans US Mint Branch official.

What has occurred since the publication of the 2nd Edition, now going on four and a half years? There have already been; a) 32 vetted variety discoveries bringing up to 370 the number of currently known varieties, b) 32 variety rarity level updates have been made due to additional specimen finds, c) 24 second specimens finds for varieties that each had previously only a single known specimen, plus d) 1 more first specimen find has been made for a known variety that was documented in 1845 by John Riddell, a New Orleans US Mint Branch official.

From these statistics what projections can be made comparing the periods between; 1) the publications of the 1st Edition and the 2nd Edition, and 2) since the publication of the 2nd Edition to the present? Great discovery varieties continue to be found, although at what appears to be a slowing pace (i.e. see the New Discoveries section of this website for vetted variety discoveries made after the 2nd Edition's publication), while additional specimens of known varieties are being found at an ever quickening pace resulting in higher cumulative counts / further variety rarity level updates (i.e. see the Census section of this website for the periodic reporting of rarity updates after the 2nd Edition's publication)!!!

A Bigger Family - Part 2

Louis Scuderi and Larry Schmidt

March 2015

Contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust halves made to be passed in general circulation at their implied face value were either cast or struck.

Cast contemporary counterfeits were dubious copies made from impressions taken from genuine coins forming molds into which molten metal was poured. If a cast counterfeit Capped Bust half dollar was done well enough and has survived in a high enough coin grade it can actually be identified by specific design elements and die wear / fatigue to an exact genuine half dollar variety, either an Overton variety (1794-1836) or a Graham variety (1836-1839).

Struck contemporary counterfeits were minted from obverse and reverse dies that under the pressure in a press which transferred the images from dies onto properly sized blank metal discs called planchets. Obverse and reverse dies were either; 1) completely hand-made as one whole, 2) assembled like components from punches of all the obverse and reverse design elements, 3) or worn/damaged/out-of-date US Mint dies deemed unworthy for further official that were illegally used. While it is speculated that some genuine Mint dies may have been illegible acquired, it is known that the Mint sold as a practice policy worn/damaged/out-of-date dies as scrap metal not recognizing that counterfeiters would purchase these discarded dies for further use.

This article is about a specific group of struck varieties from dies assembled from common punches of obverse and reverse design elements. There are multiple variety groups identified like this, but this particular group uniquely is comprised of 15 contemporary counterfeit varieties (a.k.a. Davignons) dated from 1830 to 1835. Each of the 15 varieties share atypical design elements on both the obverse and reverse, most notable an atypical eagle design and is known as the "Buck-Tooth Eagle" family that can be seen in the 1830 6/F specimen below:

Collectively the 15 contemporary counterfeit varieties of the "Buck-Tooth Eagle" family represent an opportunity to more fully understand how counterfeiters plied their illegal skills. By comparing the varieties within this family to each other an understanding can be gained of which obverse and reverse design elements used separate design element punches verses gang punches (i.e. gang punches combine multiple design elements together) for creating the dies used to strike the counterfeits. This opportunity might seem unremarkable until it is realized that the 15 varieties in this family are comprised of four Rare rarities (i.e. only one or two specimens known), eight Very Scarce rarities (i.e. only three to five specimens known), and three Scarce rarities (i.e. only six to nine specimens known). Add to this that surviving specimens can be quite worn and may no longer exhibit all of the design elements clearly.

Through detail analyses of the "Buck-Tooth Eagle" family's 15 varieties it can be determined that the following techniques were used to create the dies that struck the contemporary counterfeits:

Obverse:

- The Liberty bust was a gang punch including Liberty's headband with lettering showing distinctive spacing and alignment of the TY lettering. Some of the family's varieties exhibit a well centered placement of the bust while other varieties Liberty busts are off-center or have high placement.
- Each star was a common punch with various placement variations and rotations in relationship to accompanying stars between varieties. It should be noted that all varieties show a very high degree of skill in placement as groups Stars 1 -7 and Stars 8 -13.
- The date numerals were individual punches with significant variation between the 15 varieties (e.g. the numeral 1 is found in a shortened version, a backwards version, and an equal length to other date numerals version).

Reverse:

- The buck-tooth eagle complete with arrow shafts and arrowheads was a gang punch. However differently positioned shields were found with either six or seven strips indicating the use of a separate additional punch with quite unique spacing between the stripes by variety.
- Each of the individual legend words UNITED, STATES and OF were gang punches aligning and spacing the letters of the three separate words. These three words are found to vary in spacing between each other within the varieties. The legend word AMERICA was comprised of common individual letter punches with significant variations in spacing and alignment for this word between varieties.
- The scroll with E PLURIBUS UNUM lettering was a gang punch (e.g. note the consistent high N in UNUM) differently positioned resulting in variety specific left end of scroll (a.k.a. LES) and right end of scroll (a.k.a. RES) alignment to legend lettering.
- The numbers and letter and period for 50 C. are individual punches with variations in spacing and alignment between varieties.

As previously stated there are other multiple variety groups that have also been identified in addition to the "Buck-Tooth Eagle" family. In Keith Davignon's 2nd Edition identified are four additional but smaller contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust half dollar families nicknamed "Top Gun", "Mexican Head" or "Hair-Do", "Ski-Nose", and "Too Legit to Quit". Newly discovered families continue to be found too (e.g. noted in the ccCBHcc.com Collectors Corner March, 2013 article An Attempt To Solve Another Mystery. Do these families point to an industrious individual contemporary counterfeiter per family? Or did contemporary counterfeiters of Capped Bust halves likely sell equipment/punches/edge lettering devices to each other similar to the sharing of punches of design devices as seen in some colonial contemporary counterfeits?

Epilog - A fellow collector has already noted a 16th member to the "Buck-Tooth Eagle" family! This family is now identified as six Rare rarity Davignon varieties (e.g. 1832 42/OO, 1833 19/BB, 1833 29/DD,1833 36/JJ, 1835 10/J and 1840 3/D - reverse die only), eight Very Scarce rarity Davignon varieties (e.g. 1830 14/P, 1831 7/G, 1831 14/N, 1832 6/F, 1832 7/G, 1832 12/L, 1833 11/K, 1933 19/S), and three Scarce rarity Davignon varieties (e.g. 1830 6/F, 1833 20/T). Note - All variety rarities are based on the most current updates that can be found in the Census section of this website.

Between Historic Contemporary Counterfeits and Today's Fakes

Larry Schmidt

June 2015

This is an article about known groups of counterfeit Capped Bust half dollars. There is one group of 372 now known varieties of cast and struck contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust half dollars that historically were minted to be dubiously passed at their implied face value in general circulation. There is the recent group of silver-plated base metal (i.e. or even 90% silver!) Capped Bust half dollar fakes that have no U.S. legally required Hobby Protection Act markings which are so expertly struck as to fool today's numismatist. While these two well-known groups of counterfeit Capped Bust half dollars have a history of some 175 to 200 years separating them from each other there is a third group between the historic contemporary counterfeit and todays expertly struck fake Capped Bust half dollars!

Before there were today's counterfeiters who clearly understand the nuances of early US coinage, there were counterfeiters thought to be active earlier in the 20th century who did not have a solid knowledge of early US coinage. Some of their minted counterfeits are simply wild with different mint types muled obverses and reverses (e.g. a known 1797 dated Draped Bust Type half dollar obverse muled with a Capped Bust Type half dollar reverse). Other specimens from this earlier 20th century counterfeiter group while very obvious to collectors of genuine Capped Bust half dollars can confound collectors of contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust half dollars! A sample specimen felt by a consensus of fellow collectors to belong to this 'between group' of fakes from earlier 20th century counterfeiters of early US coinage is displayed below. This 1838 dated specimen has as an obverse of an atypical Liberty with raised lettering on the headband, bloated date numerals and smaller than expected stars, plus a reverse with an invalid use of "50 CENTS" instead of "HALF DOLLAR", bloated legend lettering followed by a bold period, and simplified vertical stripping on the shield.

So what makes this specimen an earlier 20th century fake? The appearance of wear patterns that are impossible is one of the key factors, most visible when comparing the Liberty bust to the rest of the elements on the obverse. Also notice the strength and regularity of the rim's segments (i.e. the edge's reeding that can't be seen in the images also have strength and regularity) that identify this specimen as an earlier 20th century fake rather than a historic contemporary counterfeit.

Contemporary Counterfeit Bust Halves and their Composition

Harvey Bastacky

August 2015 (1) (with February 2016 and December 2016 updates)

Collecting Contemporary Counterfeit Bust Half Dollars has become more popular since the publication of Keith Davignon's book identifying and attributing most of the known counterfeit pieces. Pieces that are not in the books are still being discovered so collecting them is still in a stage of infancy. With the new technology out there today, there is a "gun" that when directed at any metal will nondestructively determine the composition of any metal or combination of metals, or alloys through XRF technology. It is used extensively today by jewelers to determine gold content and authenticity.

I had most of my collection of contemporary counterfeit Bust Half Dollars (i.e. I have accumulated about 94 pieces) tested and generated the attached chart below which shows the percentages of the metals used to produce each coin. The metals consisted of copper (CU), nickel (NI), zinc (ZN), lead (PB), iridium (IR), gold (AU), silver (AG) and tin (SN).

The counterfeiters used every imaginable metal composition to produce these coins. I have identical varieties of some pieces and each has a different composition! I noticed from the data that most of the early pieces before 1835 contained at least some silver, perhaps to help the alloy look more like silver. After 1837 when German silver was developed, the counterfeiters stopped using silver and used the German silver alloy (i.e. in 1837 Dr. Feuchwanger produced one-cent and three-cent trial pieces to promote the United States adopting German silver as an official metal for coins which was followed by many bogus halves dated 1837 and 1838 appearing to be made of the same composition).

(TABLE NOT INCLUDED HERE)

A Bigger Family - Part 3

Winston Zack

August 2015 (2)

Keith Davignon, in the 2nd edition of his book "Contemporary Counterfeit Capped Bust Half Dollars" made many connections between shared obverse and reverse dies as well as stylistic "Families" where the same artist and/or punch styles were used to create the multiple hand-cut die-struck counterfeits. Currently there are more than 300 known hand-cut die-struck contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust style half dollar die marriages known, and that list grows every year with new discoveries. As such, it is difficult to match up all the known counterfeit Bust half dollar die marriages to their respective Families. But, progress is being made by dedicated researchers. Here I present on a known, but growing Family of contemporary counterfeit Bust half dollars.

Davignon noted that 1829 2/B and 1829 11/B share the same reverse, and that 1829 8/H, 8/I and 8/O share the same obverse. He also noted that 1829 13/N, 15/P, and 18/S were stylistically similar - "very likely coined by the same counterfeiter". But there's more to the story than just these counterfeits dated 1829. More dates are involved in this Family of counterfeits.

The most striking attribute for this family, in my opinion, is the unique style of '8' in the date with its tilted 'D'-shaped inner loops. On the reverse, the eagle's shield lines, and reverse lettering are also fairly unique to this Family. Given these similar stylistic characteristics, the following dates and die marriages are added to this Family: 1811 2/B, 1815 5/F, 1826 1/A, 1828 17/R (newly discovered).

Further, and unless I am mistaken, 1829 15/P shares the same reverse as 1829 8/H. It is also possible that 1828 17/R shares a reverse with one of these known die marriages in this family, but since it was double-struck it is presently difficult to distinguish.

Below is the list of all known family members at the moment:

1811 2/B
1815 5/F
1826 1/A
1828 17/R
1829 2/B (Shared reverse with 1829 11/B)
1829 11/B
1829 8/H-P (Reverse H and P are identical, in my opinion)
1829 15/H-P
1829 8/I
1829 8/O (Three shared obverse dies)
1829 13/N
1829 18/S
(1833 38/LL may tentatively match)

Our Hobby's Iceberg

Larry Schmidt

November 2015 (1)

Within our hobby there is what may be considered our hobby's iceberg, the 1845 publication A Monograph of the Silver Dollar: Good and Bad by J. L. Riddell, an employee of the New Orleans US Mint. This publication pictured obverses and reverses with brief descriptions "alerting banks, commerce, and all other readers" of 38 Capped Bust half dollar struck and cast counterfeits dated 1814 to 1839. Why can John Leonard Riddell's publication today be considered our hobby's iceberg? J. L. Riddell's identification of 38 counterfeit Capped Bust half dollars was just the tip of the iceberg! The 1845 reporting of 38 counterfeit Capped Bust halves is very much like an iceberg's 10% visibility above the waterline of the real size of the iceberg, that is Riddell's identification of the 38 counterfeits had just about 10% visibility of the now identified 372 contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust half dollar varieties known today (i.e. see Census Section of this website to review the 372 current known varieties as of the June 1, 2015 census)!

J. L. Riddell's 1845 publication has other interests for fellow collectors too. Perhaps simply pointing to the difference of contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust half variety survival rates, relatively few specimens of the 38 counterfeit varieties identified by Riddell have been rediscovered! Identified clearly enough from Riddell's pictured obverses and reverses all but one of the 38 counterfeits can be vetted to distinct Davignon varieties for collectors today. Of the 37 Riddell / Davignon identifiable contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust half dollar varieties; a) six vetted varieties have yet to have any known specimens found, b) 18 vetted varieties have rare rarity (i.e. 1 to 2 known specimens), c) five vetted varieties have very scarce rarity (i.e. 3 to 5 known specimens), d) one vetted variety has a scarce rarity (i.e. 6 to 9 known specimens), e) two vetted varieties have common rarity (i.e. 10 to 19 known specimens), f) two vetted varieties have very common rarity (i.e. 20 to 49 known specimens), and g) two vetted varieties have extremely common rarity (i.e. 50+ known specimens). These rarity breakdowns are even more interesting considering that today when it is felt just ten "most common" contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust half dollar varieties comprise approximately half of all surviving contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust half specimens only four of the ten "most common" varieties are identified in the 1845 Riddell publication! (See the Most Common Davignon Varieties section and the Collectors Corner November, 2012 article When Were Davignons Really Minted? on this website.)

Note - Fellow collectors can find A Monograph of the Silver Dollar: Good and Bad by J. L. Riddell available as a hardcover reprint. An original copy can be viewed on-line via the Newman Numismatic Portal, Washington University in St. Louis at https://nnp.wustl.edu/library/book/528985 and page forward to entries beginning at number 426).

* The stimulus for this article was the recent rediscovery of the second specimen of Riddell's 1845 Monograph No. 456, also known as the Davignon 1830 5/E variety.

Look What Was Unearthed in New Hampshire!

Kathy P

November 2015 (2)

I was out at a sports field here in New Hampshire and was slowly working my way back to my car when I got a signal that my detector told me was a 50-cent piece. I pinpointed and dug a hole, and found... a nail. Then I used my handheld pin-pointer and found that there was another metal item on the side of the hole I'd dug, about 6 inches down. I loosened the dirt a bit with my fingers, and I saw the edge of the coin, but figured it was an old buckle, as I've found several of those in this area. I pulled out the item, and to my surprise, it was a large coin, covered in dirt, that looked to be made of copper. After wiping the dirt off a bit, I could make out 50c and United States on the reverse. I was thrilled! Happy with my digging that day, I left the site and headed home. I ran the coin under water and let it dry on a soft cloth, and did some research. Immediately when I found that this coin should have been made of silver, I was suspicious of its authenticity. I dug around on the Internet for a while, and came across ccCBHcc.com, and emailed the website. A response was received with a wealth of knowledge including identification of the coin as a variety 1821 2/E that at one time would have likely had a deceptive silver wash. My suspicions were confirmed that indeed this was a contemporary counterfeit coin. So cool!

Meet the Families

Winston Zack, Louis Scuderi, Larry Schmidt

December 2015 (with February 2016 and September 2017 update)

Overview:

In 1996 Keith Davignon, in his book *Contemporary Counterfeit Capped Bust Half Dollars - First Edition,* brought to the fellow collectors' attention the idea of stylistic similarities in contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust half dollars now known as 'families':

"One cannot help wondering as one looks upon a group of bogus coins who made them, and whether the same person may have been responsible for several different 'coins'. When examining a large quantity of dates and varieties, spread out side by side on a table, stylistic similarities tend to 'jump' out at you. (Davignon, 1996)."

This excerpt from the *First Edition* formally introduced the concept of 'families' to contemporary counterfeit CBH collectors. Counterfeit families are varieties that share and appear to share stylistic similarities, such as die-punch linkages (e.g. letters, numbers, and design elements including stars, Liberty bust, eagle with olive branch and arrows, banner), used to create die elements in working dies, or which share an entire common obverse or reverse die and thus have a die linkage. Families are most easily identified from hand-cut dies which were die struck as opposed to cast and transfer die counterfeits. This article builds upon Keith Davignon's *First* and *Second Edition's* initial identification of six nicknamed families (1) *Top Gun*, (2) *Mexican Head*, (3) *Ski-Nose*, (4) *Too Legit to Quit*, (5) *Buck-Toothed Eagle,* and (6) *Clinton Head* (Davignon 1996 Chapter 6; Davignon 2010 Chapter 7), other non-nicknamed families, and previous articles in the *Collectors Corner* section of the website ccCBHcc.com (i.e. *An Attempt to Solve Another Mystery* (Schmidt 2013), *A Bigger Family - Part 1* (Scuderi and Schmidt 2014), *Bigger Family - Part 2* (Scuderi and Schmidt – Part 2)). Ongoing research currently suggests at least 30 known families that are identified in tables at the end of this article.

Introduction:

In our fledgling country a mix of coins circulated and the populace, outside of the large eastern cities, was generally unaware of what current US Mint products looked like. With transportation focused on rivers, and law enforcement outside of cities essentially nonexistent, counterfeiters could pass their counterfeit, fake, bogus, imitated, spurious, non-regal coins (and paper money) with relative ease and with little fear of being caught.

"To Counterfeit Is Death" was a term added to 18th century American colonial paper money by the likes of Benjamin Franklin and others. The term was likely used because counterfeiters were a threat to the State, and reliability, confidence and trust in the currency was critical for a stable economy. The primary motive for counterfeiters should first and foremost be seen as a method of greed and building wealth. But it also likely had a secondary, almost beneficial effect of adding coins into circulation during times of relative absence such as during economically unstable periods (e.g. panics and depressions).

Counterfeiting operations as documented by historical sources, and noted by Davignon (2010) ranged from simple individual operations to more complex networks involving highly organized gangs made up of several people sometimes spread out over hundreds of miles. The work was often done in secret. In some instances equipment, punches, and edge lettering devices were sold, traded or exchanged over long distances.

The New World (North/Central America) counterfeiting culture began shortly after the arrival of settlers, but truly boomed in the mid/late-18th century (Gurney 2014). The coins typically counterfeited during this period were denominations commonly seen in circulation. Specifically this included English and Irish guineas, halfpence, halfpennies, and farthings, Mexican and Peruvian eight and two reales, French ecú and five franc pieces, Spanish pistareens, and Brazillian joes and half joes (Kleeberg 2000). Shortly after the United States began minting Federal coins those Mint types/denominations were counterfeited as well. Of particular focus here is the extent of counterfeiting U.S. Capped Bust-type half dollars (CBH), arguably the most counterfeited U.S. coin in the 19th century. One reason CBHs were targeted is that they were the bullion coin of the era used for banking/larger commercial transactions as compared to other US Mint denominations, and thus saw more widespread circulation.

The 30 Families (and counting) / Current Analyses:

Research currently suggests at least 30 known families, comprising 155 Davignon varieties, of contemporary counterfeit hand-cut die CBHs exist (see Table 1 for a summary of the 30 families and Tables 2 through 31 for details of each individual family). It is likely that other known Davignon varieties, not currently connected to one of these listed families, may also be linked to the families listed here as higher grade specimens become available for research. It is also possible that additional families may be identified in the future as new discovery varieties are reported and vetted; some varieties are currently being studied to see if they have the die characteristics to form a new family.

The sizes of each of the families currently range from two to 25 Davignon varieties. Significantly, family memberships makes up approximately 62% of the approximately 247 reported hand-cut die struck varieties.

As this enlarged family tree continues to grow, and, as we attempt to understand the contemporary counterfeiting process, even more questions have arisen, including:

Do these families point to an industrious individual contemporary counterfeiter per family? Or did contemporary counterfeiters of Capped Bust halves likely sell equipment/punches/edge lettering devices to each other similar to the sharing of punches of design devices as seen in some colonial contemporary counterfeits?

These questions are difficult, if not impossible to answer now that nearly 200 years have passed since these illicit pieces were produced. Although hundreds of pieces still exist relatively few likely survive from what can only be presumed were much larger productions. In addition, historical documentation, which can aid in piecing together the background to this counterfeiting story, is relatively scarce or non-specific, and as such provides little direct provenance information.

It is important to keep in mind that counterfeit dies would have been expensive to buy and time consuming to make. It takes *at least* three dies to make a family of two members, which generally

consists of one common side (or common hub type), and two different opposing sides. For example the *Clinton Head* family with 23 members, used at least 39 dies! This is a truly staggering quantity of dies for any family. This begs the questions whether these dies all belong to a single counterfeiting operation, whether worn-out dies were re-hubbed, repunched, or reused, and/or whether these dies and hubs were sold/traded across multiple locations. Davignon (1996, 2010) notes that there were multiple localities where gangs of counterfeiters worked, and he speculates that hundreds of CBH counterfeiting operations were in business. If each of these 30 families, including 155 die struck varieties, represent a single counterfeiting operation, do the remaining 94 die struck varieties not linked to a family each represent a single and unique counterfeiting operation? Is the size of each counterfeiting family commensurate to the scale, and potentially success, of the counterfeiting taking place? Can we estimate when certain counterfeits were made based upon the date of the piece, or the dates for the entire family? At the moment these questions remain unanswered, but attempts will be made to answer them with the information available.

It is difficult to ascertain whether any one operation had possession of and was using all these dies, or if multiple locations were being supplied with dies from a single source. It is almost certain that one prolific counterfeiter was re-using master hubs to make their dies, and that most likely not all dies from each family were in use concurrently, but were made to order, especially after dies wore out. To better figure this out an emission order needs to be established. The major issue stopping us answering this is survival bias of the certain contemporary counterfeit varieties plus lack of knowledge about die life.

Since we do not know how many counterfeits were produced for each variety, it is impossible to know precise survival rates, however estimating survival rates is still possible. The economics of counterfeiting would suggest that counterfeiters produced larger number of pieces to make up for the cost of metal, dies, machinery involved, time and labor, and rarely, if ever, produced just a handful of counterfeits by choice; factors such as premature die breakage and counterfeiters being arrested would have limited the production of certain varieties. Further, fifty cents was a lot of money for many people in the first half of the 19th century, and the counterfeit would keep being passed along until forcibly removed from circulation. Therefore, in theory, these counterfeits likely had a relatively long survival rate alongside authentic coins. By comparison, it was estimated that just 0.4% of the Philadelphia mintage for CBHs survives today for all dates; in his article Evans (1993) incorrectly stated that 0.004% of the original CBH mintage survives today – this has since been corrected here to 0.4% surviving. Although different factors exist for the survival rate of counterfeits, especially CBHs, and if we assume a similar survival rate for counterfeit CBHs, then an estimated 600,000-6,000,000 (give or take) were originally produced (from a surviving population of approximately 2,500 to 25,000 pieces).

Alternatively, one noted collector hypothesizes that only about 75,000 – 100,000 counterfeit CBHs were originally produced and that there is a higher survival rate for counterfeits than authentic CBHs. This is due to the fact that there would be no incentive to melt or destroy a counterfeit by choice and eat the financial loss, and therefore counterfeits were just set aside as curiosities at the end of their use-life.

Multiple factors were involved in the identification and destruction versus the survival of counterfeit CBHs after they were introduced into commerce. Identification as a counterfeit depended primarily on the quality of characteristics that the specimen possessed and were assessed through 1) the details of the engraving, 2) planchet metal/alloy, 3) method of production (cast or die struck), and 4)

Commented [WZ1]: ID and Destroy counterfeits section of Intro

dimensions of the piece (i.e. width and thickness). In theory, the better the qualities the piece possessed the longer it should remain undetected. It is interesting to note that many counterfeit CBHs are still misidentified today as authentic coins, potentially suggesting higher quality, more deceptive workmanship, or inexperienced sellers. Other factors of survivability, such as the discovery of counterfeit coin hoards (i.e. 1831 1/A as noted in Davignon 2010), can bias this assessment although in general this has not been a major factor.

Overall, approximately half of the reported counterfeit hand-cut die struck CBH varieties are known by just one example (or less) in the current ccCBHcc.com Census (as of May 2016); some varieties reported in Riddell (1845) are not known to survive to the present day census. Over time the number of unique varieties will continue to fall as more examples of that variety are reported, although at the same time additional, previously unreported new discovery varieties will likely surface. Almost all varieties are known by ten or fewer pieces. Only about ten varieties are estimated to have about 50 or more examples existing (Davignon 2010); some of these are estimated to survive in the hundreds if not close to a thousand pieces. But in general, the rarity of these pieces cannot easily be explained.

It is likely that the majority of pieces from each variety were casually destroyed over time (possibly in the big melts of the 1850s). It is also possible that most varieties were fairly low quality to begin with, and were subsequently removed from circulation early on. It could also be the case that counterfeit varieties that are relatively common today may have been just as common as other varieties that are now rare, unique or perhaps so far unknown. In other cases some varieties, especially those from larger families, may have intermixed dies quite frequently and as a result some varieties may have had very low production runs. Knowing how varieties relate to each other in a family, and creating die-link emission orders, will help us better understand the sequence of counterfeiting.

Counterfeit families are made up of both shared-side and single-paired varieties. Most families are known with at least one die reused creating multiple varieties. Varieties with shared-sides are somewhat common among families. Currently 85 of the 155 varieties share a side with another variety, with the majority of shared sides being reverse dies. It is currently unknown why so many more reverse dies were shared than obverses. It could be due to the universal nature of reverse dies being more-or-less the same, whereas obverse dies are uniquely dated. This may also be related to which die was the hammer or anvil die, as was the case at the U.S. mint from die break and cud analysis, such that the hammer die (usually the reverse) generally fails more often than the anvil die (usually the obverse). It may also be the result of poorer quality die steel. Although it is also worth mentioning that most counterfeit CBHs are not known with die breaks or cuds (similar to Mint made CBHs) which may indicate smaller production runs that did not result in die failure, or that larger planchet coins were not generally prone to die failure.

In contrast, 68 of the 155 varieties within these 30 families are single-paired varieties without either side known to be shared with another reported variety. It is almost certain that at least one side of some of these single-paired varieties will eventually become part of a shared-side emission order as new varieties are reported. Although still speculative, some single-paired varieties may have been distributed to other counterfeiting operations, and as such sold in obverse-reverse sets or another made-to-order combination of dies. This could explain why there are so many varieties from these families which are not part of a shared-side emission order. But we must also look at specimen survival bias and production to help dissect these families.

Production was a key part of counterfeiting. There was the production of the die and the production striking of the counterfeit. A skilled engraver could produce a counterfeit die or set of dies in a single day. Those dies likely would have needed to be tested to make sure they did not break shortly after being made, especially if they were being sold. Fortunately the results of some of these tested dies survive today as uniface strikes or die trials on real coins (likely simulating a planchet).

Production of counterfeits was also related to the type and amount of metal/alloy available. A large quantity of metal meant that you could theoretically produce a large number of planchets which could be struck all at once, possibly from a single pair of dies. After those planchets were used another batch of metal would need to be made. As time passed, different sided dies could have been married to start a shared-side emission order. In some cases those die pairings were used again to strike more counterfeits using different alloys. We know that some varieties were struck using multiple alloys there were strikingly different such as copper, German silver and brass (i.e. 1824 1/A, 1828 1/A, 1830 8/H); preliminary metallurgical analysis using X-Ray Fluorescence (XRF) also indicates multiple alloys (some being relatively minor differences) were used to strike the same counterfeit variety (Bastacky 2015).

Larger, more successful, and possibly more complex, counterfeiting operations could have produced counterfeits for years before stopping or being caught. This could explain several questions including, 1) why some families are much larger than others, 2) why families used multiple dates and 3) why there are more shared-side emission orders for larger counterfeiting operations than smaller operations.

The dies themselves also needed to last for a considerable number of strikes to create a profit for the counterfeiter. Dies were expensive, and manufacturing counterfeits was a costly, labor-intensive operation. But, dies eventually failed. Due to a lack of surviving dies it is almost impossible to know how strong and reliable counterfeit dies were, and how long they would last until failure. As such, this adds a new factor to whether some varieties were single-paired because the dies broke early in production, or whether other factors were at work.

It is of interest to note that in general most contemporary counterfeit CBHs (like the US Mint made ones) do not exhibit large die breaks (one notable exception is 1833 24/X). This might indicate that little die breakage was occurring in the dies, and thus the dies were comparably strong. Then again, if a die broke a counterfeiter would not likely want to make a counterfeit with an obvious broken die feature because it would make that piece stand out in general circulation more clearly.

Conclusions and Suggested Further Analysis:

This article's main focus is to show that there are many more counterfeit families than previously recognized, and that some individual counterfeit families are larger than previously believed. We can categorically state that our understanding of these families is incomplete and more varieties likely exist(ed). Davignon identified five of the six largest known families, and identified similar characteristics among other varieties which were never formally matched to a family. This article formally names 23 additional families (Table 1), and adds to the discussion of counterfeit families and counterfeiting in general. Even more questions have been generated as a result of this research, and ongoing and future research will attempt to answer those questions.

The results of this research (Tables 2-30) have allowed us to be fairly confident that two of the families pre-date the use of German silver around 1837. At least four families show transitional periods of billon (copper-silver alloys) and German silver alloys in their counterfeits dating to a period of manufacture around 1835-1840. Another 19 families are fairly confidently dated after 1837 since their preliminary metallurgical analysis suggests the use of German silver and not billon. And there are at least four families where there is not yet enough information to estimate the relative age of manufacture. Several families have members with copper or bronze type alloys that were silver plated, and research is underway to see if these planchets can provide temporal evidence for manufacture.

Silver plating copper planchets was one of the earliest forms of counterfeiting silver coins dating back to around 600-650 B.C. in Asia Minor. These early counterfeits were called 'fourrée's' (several types of spellings), and were most commonly produced by taking a flan of copper, wrapping it with silver foil, heating it, and striking it with the dies. More recent forms of plating involved the 'Sheffield plate' method, and later the use of electrochemistry and electroplating. Sheffield plate, invented in 1743 by Thomas Boulsover in Sheffield, involved a thin sheet of silver placed over copper, heated to fuse the two layers, and rolled to the desired thickness. Counterfeiters quickly employed this technique, especially the Birmingham forgeries from 1796 to ~1820. Later, silver and gold electroplating was invented by John Wright of Birmingham, England and patented in 1840. This method involved using potassium cyanide as an electrolyte. Further research will need to clarify how silver plated counterfeit CBHs were produced.

Pre-1837 counterfeit CBH families, albeit rare, appear to be smaller operations using just a few dies and creating few die marriages. The 'transitional' families (~1835-1840), which are generally fairly large, may be related to the financial Panic of 1837. These families may have been making counterfeits throughout the Panic, and gradually grew in the number of dies made and used over time. The post-1837 families may also be related to the Panic of 1837, but possibly the tail-end of the Panic since these families tend to be smaller than the transitional families. The remaining varieties not listed with these families may or may not also be related to the Panic of 1837 or the 29 known families. Additional study of the edge designs and XRF analysis may help explain the extent of counterfeiting before and after 1837.

The use of German silver instead of billon was a more cost effective alloy for producing counterfeit silver coins. The transition from billon to German silver by counterfeiters is presumed to have taken place fairly quickly, although it may have taken several years before all counterfeiting operations stopped using billon. The Panic of 1837 may have been perfect timing for counterfeiters transitioning to this cheaper alloy since silver coinage was becoming quite scarce in circulation. Thus, the coincidental introduction of German silver coupled with the consequential Panic of 1837 may have been the perfect storm for counterfeiters, and could be the catalyst helping to explain the sudden surge in counterfeiting CBHs at this time.

There are nine families with members listed in Riddell – *Clinton Head, Buck-Toothed Eagle, Mexican Head, Pointed Wing, Top Gun, (New Family 1), French Connection* and *Dotted Feathers*. The first four come from the four largest families, and were generally made during the transition period from billon to German silver; *Pointed Wing* likely post-dates 1837. The *Top Gun* family with only three known variety members is one of the two known pre-1837 families. The other pre-1837 family is *Backward S's,* which was not listed in Riddell. What makes the *Top Gun* family so interesting and likely to be listed in Riddell is that all the members are common or extremely common; the *Backward S's* family

also has one variety member which is common. Most of the remaining families not listed in Riddell post-date 1837 and most of their members are rare or scarce. What this could indicate is that Riddell primarily identified pre-1837 and transitional varieties commonly found in circulation, but rarely post-1837 varieties, and most of those were likely non-family varieties. The only pre-1837 family not listed in Riddell is *Backward S's,* and the only transitional families not listed in Riddell are *Ski Nose* and *Mexican Head (Class 2).* We should be cautious however to assume that the transition from billon to German silver was instantaneous around 1837, as some counterfeiters were still using billon alloys after 1837.

Another important aspect to analyzing counterfeit families is assessing how economical the counterfeiters were in using digits to make their dated dies. For Mint made CBHs the first and second numbers for the dates, 1 and 8, are constant for all dates, and therefore should always be used on counterfeits. The third digit should be one of four numbers – 0, 1, 2, 3 – and the numbers 2 and 3 were used twice as often as 0; in a few instances the number 4 was used by counterfeiters. The fourth digit in the date could be any one of ten numbers, but the numbers 7, 8 and 9 were used one time more than the others, and therefore has a slightly higher probability of being used by counterfeiters. Therefore, when analyzing how many times certain numbers were used to make Mint struck CBHs, 1 and 8 are the most common followed by 2 and 3; the least common numbers are 4, 5, 6, 7, and 9.

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For counterfeiter die sinkers the most commonly used numbers, not surprisingly, are 1, 2, 3, and 8. These numbers can be used in the first three digits of most CBH dates, and when interchanged can make up to 12 different CBH dates; only the *Mint Mimicked* family used just these four numbers. The least used numbers are 6, 7, 9. These numbers are terminal in the sequence of a CBHs date, and therefore would be a more specialized number for a counterfeiter die sinker to make/acquire and use. Therefore, given when most counterfeit CBHs were made, and that 1820s and 1830s dated CBHs were most common in circulation, it was most economical for counterfeiters to primarily stick with the numbers 1, 2, 3 and 8 when making their counterfeit CBHs.

Commented [WZ3]: remove

It also appears that the die sinker for each of the four largest counterfeit families preferred to make obverse dies with a specific date, and other dated dies were produced for diversity. The most common date for each of these families composes 33 to 60% of the known obverse dies for that family, whereas the other dates in these families composed at most of just 10 to 24%. It is also interesting to note that for the smaller families, those with fewer than 10 varieties in a family, six of these 18 smaller families appear to have used just one date to produce all their counterfeits.

One of the key remaining data collection methods which will aid in the study of counterfeit CBHs is the utilization of XRF analysis. XRF studies of counterfeit CBHs are currently underway and show some intriguing results. The goal of XRF analysis is to better understand provenance, especially in terms of when and where the counterfeits were made, but also to potentially identify who made them. The eventual goal will be to run XRF analysis on all known varieties and as many surviving pieces as possible.

XRF analysis of the alloys could let us know whether shared-side and single-paired varieties were used by the same counterfeiting operation or whether multiple operations were using dies from a single engraver. A generally uniform alloy used on most/all counterfeit varieties within the same family, would strengthen the assumption that the same counterfeiting operation was using all the dies. But if there are distinct, marked differences in alloys between shared-side and single-paired

varieties for the same family then there is a potentially stronger indication that dies were sold to different counterfeiting operations.

[1] Dates with an '*' to the left of them are identified in Riddell (1845).

[2] Alloys listed come from the Harvey Bastacky collection, the Mark Glazer collection, the Winston Zack collection, and several Anonymous collections, and should be considered preliminary results until more examples are analyzed. Alloys listed in parentheses are from Davignon (2010), cccbhcc.com, or Riddell (1845), and are considered best-guess estimates until metallurgical analysis is conducted.

Acknowledgements:
A special thanks goes to Keith Davignon (1996, 2010), Mark Glazer, the authors updating ccCBHcc.com, and other collectors for keeping an updated record of counterfeit CBH varieties. Without their tireless efforts this article and future research would not be possible.

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Commented [W4]: Now, I've only just started doing cross-Family comparison of edge dies, and I have a long way to go, but these initial results are intriguing and potentially quite exciting, not to mention potentially ground-breaking! My initial thinking here is that some of these larger counterfeiting operations were purchasing their planchet stock from specific manufacturers, rather than, say, the Clinton Head family being directly related to and/or linked with the Never Too Late and Buck-Toothed Eagle families. If it turns out that these edge dies were used to create varieties in multiple counterfeit families, this will certainly help to narrow-down and confine the period of production among the counterfeit families with shared edge dies. I'm excited to study this more!

Table 1. Counterfeit Families

#	Family Nickname	Vars	Obv	Rev	Dates	Est. Made
1	Clinton Head	25	23	16	1813, 1814, 1831, 1833 to 1835, 1838	1841-1842
2	Mexican Head	21	19	15	1822, 1825, 1828, 1830 to 1833, 1835	1835-1840
3	Buck-Toothed Eagle	18	17	14	1830 to 1833, 1835, 1840	1841-1842
4	BBB	15	14	11		
5	Pointed Wing	13	11	12	1811, 1815, 1826, 1828, 1829	Post-1837
6	Smushed 8's	9	9	6		
7	Ski Nose	8	8	3	1817, 1829, 1830, 1831	1835-1840
8	Square Tip	9	7	6		
9	French Connection	7	7	7		
10	Y 1's	5	5	5		
11	Top Gun	5	5	2		
12	Too Legit to Quit	5	4	2		
13	Never Too Late	5	5	1		
14	Fancy 5s	4	3	3		
15	Puckered Lips	4	4	4		
16	Sans Serif S	4	4	2		
17	(New Family 8)	3	3	2		
18	Stumpy Lower Arrow	3	3	1		
19	Mint Mimicked	4	4	3		
20	1833 Counterfeiter	3	3	2		
21	Long Neck	3	3	2		
22	(New Family 9)	3	3	3		
23	Medalist	2	2	1		
24	Backward S's	2	2	1		
25	1830 Counterfeiter	2	1	1		
26	(New Family 3)	2	2	2		
27	Dotted Feather	2	2	2		
28	Late Comer	2	2	1		
29	Fantasy	2	1	1		
30	(New Family 10)	2	2	2		
	TOTAL: 30 Families	192	178	133		

Commented [W5]: Changed dies due to soft, worn-out dies? Dies probably did not break because of the lack of surviving examples with broken dies.

Commented [W6]: Significant alloy changes should be recorded so that I can tie up alloy identities – shared alloys and changes in alloys over time. This evidence would support that pieces were made at the same time or adjacent to each other.

Commented [W7]: Not satisfied as a family at this point in time

Table 2. Rarity colors

Rarity Term	Rarity Color	Known
(Nearly) Unique	Red	1-2
Ex. Rare	Orange	3-5
Very Rare	Yellow	6-9
Scarce	Green	10-19
Common	Blue	20-49
Very. Common	Purple	>50

Table 3. Metal/Alloy abbreviations

Metal/Alloy	Abbreviation
German silver	GS
Billon	Bi
Copper	Cu
Silver	Ag
Brass	Br
White Metal	WM

Colors highlighting the Date, Obverse, and Reverse represent relative rarity (Davignon scale) based upon the cccbhcc.com census information.

Table 3. *Clinton Head*

Clinton Head							
	Date	**Dav.**	**Obv.**	**Rev.**	**Edge**	**Alloy**	**Notes**
1	*1833	9/I	1	A	3-C	Bi	Shared obverses and reverses
	1831	13/M	1			Bi	
	1813	1/A	1		???	Bi?	
	1813	1/C		B	???	Bi?	
	*1814	1/A	1		???	Bi?	
	1838	23/X	1		3-C	Bi	
2	1833	5/E	2	C	5-E	Bi	Stars unique to this variety, possibly experimenting with a transfer die reverse.
3	1835	11/K	1	D	2-B	Bi	
	1833	32/GG	3	E		Bi?	Unknown if edge die is same as others
	1836	19/S	1			GS	
	1834	12/L	1			Bi	
	1834	21/U	2	F		Bi	
	1831	19/S	2	G		Bi	
	1835	5/E	2	H		Bi, GS	Shared reverses
	1833	30/EE	4		???	GS?	
4	1834	15/O	3	I	1-A	GS	
	1834	17/Q	4	J		Bi	
	1835	12/?	3		???	Bi	Shared obverses and reverses
	1835	12/L		K	???	GS?	
5	1835	17/Q	4	L	4-D	GS	
	1838	4/D	2	M		GS	
	1833	28/CC	5	N	???	Bi?	Shared reverses
	1835	8/H	5		???	GS?	
	1833	23/W	6	O	???	Bi?	
	1834	13/M	5	P	???	GS?	Probably has edge 2-B

Dates: 1813 through 1838; primarily dated in the 1830s; 1833 is the most common.
Varieties: 25 reported; 23 obverse dies, 16 reverse dies.
Riddell's: 1814 1/A (# 440), 1833 9/I (# 461).
Edge Dies: At least five groups of edge dies; some varieties not available for study.
1-A) 1834 15/O, 1834 17/Q.
2-B) 1831 19/S, 1835 5/E, 1834 12/L, 1834 21/U, 1836 19/S (1833 32/GG?).
3-C) 1831 13/M, 1833 9/I, 1838 23/X. This edge is also known on BTE 4-D.
4-D) 1838 4/D, 1835 17/Q.
5-E) Reeding between words. This edge is also known on Never Too Late edge 1-A.
Rarity: Most are rare, few are very scarce, or scarce, and 1814 1/A is currently unknown to survive since Riddell (1845).
XRF: Billon and German silver.
Est. Made: Pre-1845. 1838-1840.
Other:

Commented [W8]: New Variety. ST Collection.

Table 4. *Mexican Head*

Mexican Head						
Date	**Dav.**	**Obv.**	**Rev.**	**Edge**	**Alloy**	**Notes**
1838	15/P	1	A	RE	GS?	
1835	16/P	1	B	???	???	Class 2
1835	18/R	2	C	RE	GS	Class 2; hand-reeded edge. Circa >1836
1835	9/I	3	D	3-B	Bi	Shared reverses
1835	6/F	4		Undet.	Bi?	1835 6/F is a Class 1.5; 1835 9/I is a Class 2.
1833	18/R	1	E	1-A	Bi	Class 2
1828	11/K	1	F		GS?	Gang punches used
1830	?/?	1	G	1-A?	GS	
1822	3/C	1		?-A	Bi	Shared reverses and obverses
1832	8/H	1		1-A?	GS?	
1831	2/B	1		1-A	GS	
1831	2/U		H		GS	
*1828	4/D	2			GS	
*1833	2/B	2	I		GS	Plain, half-lettered, & fully lettered edge. ~12g
*1833					Bi	Harvey Bastacky alloy result.
*1828	4/D	2	H	2-A	GS	Larry Smith edge result.
1828	7/G	3	J		GS	
*1833	2/B	2	I		GS	14.75g
*1833				2-B	GS	15.50g
*1833					GS	11.74g
1828	1/A	4	K		GS	Shared obverses and reverses
1828	1/P		L		GS	
1825	4/D	1			GS	
1828	5/E	5	M		GS	
1831	8/H	2	N	???	GS?	
1833	17/Q	3	O	???	GS?	

Dates: 1822 through 1835; primarily dated in the early 1830s; 1828 is the most common.
Varieties: 21 reported; 19 obverse dies, 15 reverse dies.
Riddell's: 1828 4/D (# 453), 1833 2/B (# 466).
Edge Dies: At least four groups of edge dies. 1833 2/B has three different edge combinations.
1-A) No reeding between words; 1822 3/C may belong with this edge die.
2-A) TS in CENTS fairly wide; HA in HALF widely spaced; reeding between words.
2-B) IF in FIFTY fairly close; TS in CENTS fairly distant; reeding between words.
3-B) IF in FIFTY distant; TS in CENTS close; reeding between words.
Rarity: Most are rare, few are very scarce, or scarce, 1833 2/B is extremely common.
XRF: Billon and German silver.
Est. Made: Pre-1845. 1833-1840.
Other: There are two types of Mexican Head varieties – Class 1 and Class 2. Class 1 have large, rounded-top digits in the date and large reverse lettering. Class 2 have small, flat-top digits in the date and small reverse lettering. 1835 6/F is a transition variety with a Class 1 obverse and a Class 2 reverse. Based on obverse, reverse and edge die emission order it appears that this entire counterfeiting operation was in-house.

Commented [W9]: New Variety. ST collection.

Commented [WZ10]: Summarize thick and thin, or light and heavy planchets

Table 5. *Buck-Toothed Eagle*

Buck-Toothed Eagle						
Date	**Dav.**	**Obv.**	**Rev.**	**Edge**	**Alloy**	**Notes**
1830	6/F	1	A	6-F	Bi	
1831	14/N	1	B		Bi	
*1832	12/L	1	C		Bi	
1833	19/S	1	D		Bi	Shared obverses; backward 1 in date
1833	19/BB		E	6-F?	Bi?	
1832	7/G	2	F	6-F?	Bi	
1832	22/W	3	G	6-F?	Bi	
1833	29/DD	2	H	6-F	Bi	
1833	36/JJ	3	I	6-F?	Bi	
1833	42/OO	4	J	6-F	Bi	
1832	6/F	4	K		Bi	Shared reverses
*1833	11/K	5			Bi	
1833	20/T	6	L		Bi	Shared reverses; Mark Glazer has identified that 1840 3/D has perfect edge lettering and not the backwards S in CENTS
1830	14/P	2		6-F?	Bi	
1840	3/D	1		7, 8, or 9	Bi?	
1835	2/B	1	M	7-G, 8-H	Bi	Bi + Bi/GS hybrid alloy (Bastacky)
1831	7/G	2	N	3-C	Cu/Br	Shared reverses
1831					GS	
1835	10/J	2			GS	

Dates: 1830 through 1840; primarily dated in the early 1830s; 1833 is the most common.
Varieties: 18 reported; 17 obverse dies, 14 reverse dies.
Riddell's: 1832 12/L (# 458), 1833 11/K (# 463).
Edge Dies: At least four groups of edge dies. All other varieties were too worn or not available.
3-C) Perfect letters; shared with Clinton Head edge 3-C.
6-F) Backwards 'S' in CENTS, upside-down backwards 'L' and 'F' in HALF; shared with 1827 6/F.
7-G) DOL in DOLLAR widely spaced.
8-H) Normal edge letter spacing, strongest in HALF A DOLLAR.
Rarity: All are rare, few are very scarce, or scarce, 1833 2/B is extremely common.
XRF: Billon, German silver, Brass. Further, and potentially most intriguing, is that Bastacky's (2015) results indicated the presence of Iridium within the alloys of some of these varieties. Iridium is a platinum group element, which, at this time, was really only known from mines in Colombia and lesser so in Ecuador. This element could potentially indicate a location of origin for these counterfeits; varieties from the *Mexican Head (Class 1)* and *Top Gun* families are also reported as having Iridium.
Est. Made: Pre-1845. 1835-1845.
Other: The date 1840 is a strange anomaly for this family of counterfeits given that it is dated five years after the next latest date. This die sinker may have been anticipating bust halves being made in 1840 and prepared such an obverse die while reusing an older-style reverse die. The edge die evidence here suggests that this family was likely purchasing their planchets from a source, as both known edge dies, 1-A and 2-B, are known on varieties not stylistically associated with this family.

Table 6. *BBB*

BBB						
Date	**Dav.**	**Obv.**	**Rev.**	**Edge**	**Alloy**	**Notes**
1820	4/D	1	A	???	Bi?	Broken Arrow subgroup
1828	13/M	1		LE?	Bi	
1825	3/C	1	B	???	Bi?	
1815	1/A	1	C	???	Bi?	Backward Ns subgroup
1815	3/C	2	D	1-A	Bi	
1818	8/H	1	E	???	Bi?	
1811	3/C	1	F	1-A	Ag	
1820	6/F	2	G		Ag	Shared reverses
18??	?/?	???			Bi	
1820	7/G	3	H		Bi	Shared reverses
1822	12/L	1			Bi	12/L previously called '2/I'
1825	2/B	2	I		Bi	Shared reverses
1822	2/B	2			Bi	
1822	8/H		J		Bi?	New reverse eagle design
1828	2/B	2	K	???	Bi?	

Dates: 1811 to 1828.
Varieties: 15 reported; 14 obverse dies, 11 reverse dies.
Riddell's: None.
Edge Dies: Of the varieties able to be analyzed, all share the same edge die; there may be two different FIFTY CENTS OR edge dies, but all the HALF A DOLLAR edge dies appear to be identical.
Rarity: Rare to Scarce.
XRF: Billon and silver.
Est. Made: Pre-1830
Other: There are at least three groups of varieties based on reverse features,
1) The right-most pair of leaves pointing inward towards the denomination '50 C.' and the extra metal sticking out of the Eagle's left wing and below the N in UNITED;
2) The 1815's have backward Ns in UNITED (1818 8/H might also have this feature);
3) at least three varieties have the bottom arrow broken.

Table 7. *Pointed Wing*

Pointed Wing						
Date	**Dav.**	**Obv.**	**Rev.**	**Edge**	**Alloy**	**Notes**
1829	2/B	1	A	1-A	Bi	Shared reverses
*1829	11/B	2		1-A?	Bi, Ag	
1829	8/O	3	B	???	Bi?	Shared obverses
1829	8/I		C	???	Bi	1829 8/H shares a reverse with 1829 15/P which was a test strike.
1829	8/H-P		D	???	GS, Cu	
1815	5/F	1	E	1-A	Bi	
1826	1/A	1	F		GS, Cu	
1828	17/R	1	G	???	GS?	
1828	18/S	2	H	???	Bi	
1829	13/N	4	I	1-A	GS	
1811	2/B	1	J		Bi	
1829	20/U	5	K		Bi	
1833	38/LL	1	L		Bi	Appears to be the same edge die as that used on 1834 1-A 'Puckered Lips'.
1833	38/??		M		???	

Dates: 1811 through 1833; primarily dated in the late 1820s; 1829 is the most common.
Varieties: 14 reported; 11 obverse dies, 13 reverse dies.
Riddell's: 1829 11/B (# 454).
Edge Dies: Nearly all examples studied show little or no edge lettering present. Those pieces with some letters and words showing appeared to have some similar and some different edge lettering. More study is required to know their relationships. The 1833 38/LL variety has a backwards 'S' in CENTS, and the overall lettering is reminiscent or identical to the edge lettering on 1834 1/A 'Puckered Lips' type.
Rarity: All are rare to very scarce.
XRF: German silver, billon, silver, copper.
Est. Made: Pre-1845. 1830-1840.
Other: The '6' for 1826 1/A appears to be the same digit as the '9', except turned upside-down. Their use of earlier, 1820s and 1810s, dated dies could indicate that the detail of the dies was low and/or they were weakly struck thus signifying the appearance of wear. 1829 15/P has been delisted as it is the same variety as 1829 8/H. A test/trial strike piece is known of 1829 8/H.

Commented [W11]: 1828 14/N likely belongs to this family.

Table 8. *Smushed 8s*

Smushed 8's						
Date	**Dav.**	**Obv.**	**Rev.**	**Edge**	**Alloy**	**Notes**
1831	5/E	1	A	???	GS?	
1835	1/A	1	B	RE, PE	Br	
*1836	2/B	1	C	1-A?	???	Shared reverses
1833	21/U	1		1-A?	???	
1834	6/F	1		1-A	GS	
N.D.	?/?	?	D		Cu	
1831	3/C	2	E		GS	Shared reverses
1833	16/P	2		1-A?	GS	
1831	17/Q	3	F	???	GS	

Dates: 1831 to 1836; primarily dated in the early 1830s; 1831 is the most common.
Varieties: 9 reported; 9 obverse dies, 6 reverse dies.
Riddell's: 1836 2/B (# 469).
Edge Dies: 1-A) 1831 3/C, 1834 6/F and the N.D. variety
The remaining edge dies either have different lettering, are reeded, or have not yet been studied.
Rarity: Rare and Very Scarce.
XRF: German silver and brass.
Est. Made: 1835-1845.
Other: The reverse of 1835 1/A resembles the reverse of the *Mexican Head* Family variety 1833 18/R although as of right now there is no immediate connection between these two families; there is also no known edge die connection with the *Mexican Head* Family. 1832 11/K has no known connection with this family at this time.

Table 9. *Ski Nose*

Ski Nose						
Date	**Dav.**	**Obv.**	**Rev.**	**Edge**	**Alloy**	**Notes**
1817	2/B	1	A	1-A?	GS?	Shared reverses Reverse A is same as reverse S and U Similar obv. hub portrait as 1830 17/S Same date gang punch as 1831 20/T (Boston?)
1829	1/A	1		1-A	GS	
1830	1/A	1			GS	
1830	17/S	2			GS	
1830				PE	Cu	
1830	19/U	3		1-A?	Sn/Pb?	
1831	1/A	1		1-A	Sn/Pb	
1831					GS	
1831					Bi	
1830	21/W	4	B	???	???	
1831	20/T	2	C	???	Br?	Wide top arrows

Dates: 1817 through 1831; primarily dated in the early 1830s; 1830 is the most common.
Varieties: 8 reported; 8 obverse dies, 3 reverse dies.
Riddell's: None.
Edge Dies: At least one pair of edge dies is known. All of the other varieties were either too worn or were not available for study.
1-A) 1830 1/A, 1831 1/A.
Rarity: Range from Rare to Common. 1831 1/A, the only common variety, may only be common because a rumored hoard of 15-20 high grade pieces was discovered in Boston (date of discovery unknown).
XRF: German silver and tin + lead. None known in billon, but examples have been described as such in Davignon (2010).
Est. Made: 1830-1845? Most likely early 1830's.
Other: If the origin of manufacture was in/around Boston, this may explain why Riddell, being so far away in New Orleans, did not record any examples in his monograph – these may have been too geographically distant, and/or were produced late enough that their circulation did not reach New Orleans, if at all, until after 1845.

Table 10. *Square Tip*

Square Tip						
Date	**Dav.**	**Obv.**	**Rev.**	**Edge**	**Alloy**	**Notes**
1825	7/G	1	F	4-D	Bi, GS	
1821	2/B	1	A	2-B	GS	Shared obverses and reverses
1821	2/C		B	PE	Bi	
1821	2/E		C	3-C	Bi	
1822	4/D	1		1-A	Bi	
1822	5/E	2	D	1-A?	Bi?	Shared reverses
1830	16/R	1		1-A?	Bi?	
1830	24/R	2		1-A	Bi	
1821	6/H	2	E		Bi	

Dates: 1821, 1822, 1825 and 1830.
Varieties: 9 reported; 9 obverse dies, 6 reverse dies.
Riddell's: None.
Edge Dies: The same edge die was used to make 1822 4/D and 1830 24/R; 1822 5/E and 1830 16/R have not yet been analyzed.
Rarity: Common to Rare.
XRF: Billon and German silver.
Est. Made: 1830 to 1850.
Other: In general these varieties are fairly well made, although seem weakly struck.

Table 11. *French Connection*

French Connection						
Date	**Dav.**	**Obv.**	**Rev.**	**Edge**	**Alloy**	**Notes**
*1836-O	4/D	1	A	RE	GS, Br	
1836-O	16/P	2	B		???	
1836-O	17/Q	3	C		Bi	
1838-O	???	???	???		???	
*1839-O	1/A	1	D		???	
1839-O	4/D	2	E		???	
1839-O	6/F	3	F		Br	Cu/Ag (Probably Ag plated Brass)

Dates: 1836-O, 1838-O, and 1839-O.
Varieties: 7 reported; 7 obverse dies, 7 reverse dies.
Riddell's: 1836-O 4/D (# 471), 1839-O 1/A (# 475).
Edge Dies: Reeded.
Rarity: 1836-O 4/D is common, while all other varieties are Rare**.**
XRF: Brass and billon.
Est. Made: 1839-1845.
Other: The '6' and '9' punches may be the same number and just flipped to make both dates. The origin of these is likely New Orleans. 'Claw'-like 'C' in AMERICA.

Table 12. *Y 1s*

Y1's						
Date	**Dav.**	**Obv.**	**Rev.**	**Edge**	**Alloy**	**Notes**
1813	2/B	1	A	1-A	GS	Third pale gule has three stripes
1815	2/B	1	B		GS	
1817	3/C	1	C		GS, Cu/Br	
1818	6/D	1	D	1-A?	GS?	
1819	4/D	1	E	1-A?	???	

Dates: 1813 through 1819; primarily dated in the late 1810s.
Varieties: 5 reported; 5 obverse dies, 5 reverse dies; Brian Greer made the association to add the 1817 variety based on obverse portrait similarity.
Riddell's: None.
Edge Dies: 1-A) 1813 2/B, 1815 2/B and 1817 3/C.
1818 6/F and 1819 4/D have yet to be analyzed.
Rarity: Rare.
XRF: German silver, brass.
Est. Made: Unknown.
Other: The die sinker made dies in sets.

Table 13. *Top Gun*

Top Gun						
Date	**Dav.**	**Obv.**	**Rev.**	**Edge**	**Alloy**	**Notes**
*1822	1/A	1	A	1-A	Ag	Shared reverses
*1823	1/A	1			Bi, Ag	
*1825	1/A	1			Bi, Ag	
*1824	2/B	1	B		Ag	Shared reverses
1825	6/F	2			Ag	

Dates: 1822 through 1825; primarily dated in the early 1820s; 1825 is the most common.
Varieties: 5 reported; 5 obverse dies, 2 reverse dies.
Riddell's: 1822 1/A (# 444), 1823 1/A (# 445), 1824 2/B (# 446), 1825 1/A (# 447).
Edge Dies: All varieties share the same edge dies.
Rarity: Very Common to Very Scarce.
XRF: Silver and Billon. German silver was not detected despite Davignon (2010) suggesting that 1822 1/A and 1823 1/A could be made of it.
Est. Made: Pre-1830.
Other: The die sinker possibly used Mint made dies or hubs given the extremely high quality workmanship.

Table 14. *Too Legit to Quit*

Too Legit To Quit						
Date	**Dav.**	**Obv.**	**Rev.**	**Edge**	**Alloy**	**Notes**
1833	1/A	1	A	1-A	GS, GS+Ag	Shared obverses and reverses. Possible letter edge connection between 1837 2/B, 1838 3/C, 1838 3/E. 1837 2/B almost certainly made from same alloy as 1833 1/A. Overall alloys used by this counterfeiter were quite uniform!
1836	5/E	1			GS	
1837	2/B	1			GS	
1838	3/C	1			GS	
1838	3/E		B		GS	

Dates: 1833 through 1838; primarily dated in the late 1830s; 1838 is the most common.
Varieties: 5 reported; 4 obverse dies, 2 reverse dies.
Riddell's: None.
Edge Dies: The planchet maker used the same two edge dies to create all of the planchets.
Rarity: Extremely Common or Scarce; 1836 5/E is the only Scarce variety.
XRF: German silver. Their composition is also remarkably uniform possibly suggesting a highly skilled counterfeiting operation.
Est. Made: Post-1845.
Other: Given that these pieces are extremely common (overall), are made of German silver, and are not listed in Riddell's monograph suggest a post-1845 date of manufacture. Their uniform composition and generally well struck examples may suggest a sophisticated counterfeiting operation, and one which may have operated overseas (such as Birmingham, England).

Table 15. *Never Too Late*

Never Too Late						
Date	**Dav.**	**Obv.**	**Rev.**	**Edge**	**Alloy**	**Notes**
1836	18/R	1	A	5-E; PE	Bi, GS	Shared reverses
1837	1/A	1		5-E?	Bi?	
1838	7/H	1		5-E; PE	Bi, GS	
1842	1/A	1		5-E, RE	Bi, GS	
1842	2/A	2		RE???	GS?	

Dates: 1836 through 1842; primarily dated in the late 1830s; 1842 is the most common.
Varieties: 5 reported; 5 obverse dies, 1 reverse die.
Riddell's: None.
Edge Dies: Insert Information
Rarity: Rare or Very Scarce.
XRF: Billon and German silver.
Est. Made: 1835-1845.
Other: The reverse die is the old-style, lettered-edge type with '50 C.' which stopped being made in 1836, and not the later '50 CENTS' and 'HALF DOL.' reverse which had a reeded edge. It is also possible that these were made by a foreigner who may not have known that this half dollar design stopped being made in 1839.

Commented [W12]: Sheridan Downey Auction ~8/1/2017 lot 117 has what appears to be a billon example with a reeded over lettered edge.

Table 16. *Fancy 5s*

Fancy 5s (NF6)						
Date	**Dav.**	**Obv.**	**Rev.**	**Edge**	**Alloy**	**Notes**
1812	1/A	1	A	1-A	Ag, Cu	Shared reverses and edges
1818	11/K	1			Br	
1815	4/D	1	B	???	Bi?	Shared obverses
1815	4/E		C	???	Ag?	

Dates: 1812 to 1818.
Varieties: 4 reported; 3 obverse dies, 3 reverse die.
Riddell's: None.
Edge Dies: All varieties share the same lettered edge die.
Rarity: Rare and Very Rare.
XRF: Silver, copper and brass, billon.
Est. Made: Unknown.
Other:

Table 17. *Puckered Lips*

Puckered Lips						
Date	**Dav.**	**Obv.**	**Rev.**	**Edge**	**Alloy**	**Notes**
1833	14/N	1	A	???	GS?	
1833	22/V	2	B	???	GS?	
1834	1/A	1	C	1-A	GS	Shared reverses; silver plated
				???	Bi	
				???	Cu/Br	
1838	24/Y	1	D	???	GS	

Dates: 1833 and 1834.
Varieties: 4 reported; 4 obverse dies, 4 reverse dies.
Riddell's: None.
Edge Dies: Edge 1-A is also used on the *Pointed Wing* varieties. Apparently a second edge device was used on this family, specifically for the 1834 1/A variety and between the German silver and copper/brass planchets, although this has yet to be studied by the author; the other varieties have yet to be analyzed.
Rarity: Rare and 1834 1/A-T is considered extremely common.
XRF: German silver, German silver with Silver, Billon, and Brass.
Est. Made: Post 1830.
Other:

Table 18. *Sans Serif S*

Sans Serif S						
Date	**Dav.**	**Obv.**	**Rev.**	**Edge**	**Alloy**	**Notes**
1833	8/H	1	A	2-B?	GS?	
1831	10/J	1		1-A	GS?	
1820	1/A	1			GS	
1822	9/I	1	B		Bi	

Dates: 1820 and 1822.
Varieties: 4 reported; 4 obverse dies, 2 reverse dies.
Riddell's: None.
Edge Dies: 1820 and 1822 both share the same edge die; 1831 and 1833 have not been studied.
Rarity: Rare to Scarce.
XRF: German silver and Billon.
Est. Made: Unknown.
Other:

Table 19. (*New Family 8*)

(New Family 8)						
Date	**Dav.**	**Obv.**	**Rev.**	**Edge**	**Alloy**	**Notes**
1816	1/A	1	A	1-A	Bi	
1821	4/F	1	B	???		Shared reverses
1826	2/B	1		1-A	Bi	

Dates: 1816 to 1826.
Varieties: 3 reported; 3 obverse dies, 2 reverse die.
Riddell's: None.
Edge Dies: Two varieties share the same edge; the third probably does as well.
Rarity: Very Rare and Rare**.**
XRF: Billon
Est. Made: Pre-1840.
Other: In general, the quality of workmanship on the dies is very good, although the strike quality is somewhat weak.

Table 20. *Stumpy Lower Arrow*

Stumpy Lower Arrow						
Date	**Dav.**	**Obv.**	**Rev.**	**Edge**	**Alloy**	**Notes**
1818	2/B	1	A	LE	GS, Cu	Shared reverses
1820	2/B	1		???	GS	
1832	23/X	1		???	GS	

Dates: 1818 to 1832.
Varieties: 3 reported; 3 obverse dies, 1 reverse die.
Riddell's: None.
Edge Dies: 1818 2/B has a lettered edge; the other two varieties have yet to be analyzed.
Rarity: Very Rare and Rare**.**
XRF: German silver, Copper
Est. Made: 1830-1850.
Other: In general, the quality of workmanship on the obverse and reverse dies is very good, although the strike quality is generally poor.

Table 21. *Mint Mimicked*

(New Family 5)						
Date	**Dav.**	**Obv.**	**Rev.**	**Edge**	**Alloy**	**Notes**
1830	20/V	1	A	1-A	GS	Shared reverses
1832	25/Z	1			GS	
1832	2/B	2	B		Bi	
183_	???	???	???		???	

Dates: 1830 and 1832.
Varieties: 4 reported; 4 obverse dies, 3 reverse dies.
Riddell's: None.
Edge Dies: All varieties share the same edge die.
Rarity: Rare.
XRF: German silver and Billon.
Est. Made: Post 1830.
Other:

Table 22. *1833 Counterfeiter*

1833 Counterfeiter						
Date	**Dav.**	**Obv.**	**Rev.**	**Edge**	**Alloy**	**Notes**
1833	24/X	1	A	LE	GS	Shared reverses; 1833 41/X is the same variety as 1833 33/X
1833	33/X	2		???	GS	
1833	35/II	3	B	???	GS?	

Dates: 1833.
Varieties: 3 reported; 3 obverse dies, 2 reverse dies.
Riddell's: None.
Edge Dies: 1833 24/X has a lettered edge; the remaining two varieties have yet to be studied.
Rarity: Rare and Very Scarce.
XRF: German silver.
Est. Made: 1830-1850.
Other: 1833 24/X is known by only one piece, and it has a dramatic obverse die crack across the obverse; this may indicate that this die broke shortly after being used.

Table 23. *Long Neck*

Long Neck						
Date	**Dav.**	**Obv.**	**Rev.**	**Edge**	**Alloy**	**Notes**
1838	13/N	1	A	???	GS?	Shared reverses
1840	4/E	1		RE	Bi	
1838-O	12/M	1	B		GS	

Dates: 1838 and 1840; one is 1838-O.
Varieties: 3 reported; 3 obverse dies, 2 reverse dies.
Riddell's: None.
Edge Dies: Reeded.
Rarity: Rare and Very Scarce.
XRF: German silver and Billon.
Est. Made: 1839-1850.
Other: A reverse mint mark was not added until Seated Liberty type coins starting in 1839.

Table 24. *(New Family 9)*

(New Family 9)						
Date	**Dav.**	**Obv.**	**Rev.**	**Edge**	**Alloy**	**Notes**
1812	2/B	1	A	???	???	
1818	9/I	1	B	PE	Bi	
1825	5/E	1	C	PE	Bi	

Dates: 1812, 1818, 1825.
Varieties: 3 reported; 3 obverse dies, 3 reverse die.
Riddell's: None.
Edge Dies: Unknown.
Rarity: Rare.
XRF: Unknown.
Est. Made: Unknown.
Other:

Table 25. *Medalist*

Medalist						
Date	**Dav.**	**Obv.**	**Rev.**	**Edge**	**Alloy**	**Notes**
1823	10/J	1	A	1-A	GS	Shared reverses
1827	1/A	1			GS	

Dates: 1823 and 1827.
Varieties: 2 reported; 2 obverse dies, 1 reverse die.
Riddell's: None.
Edge Dies: All varieties share the same edge die.
Rarity: Rare to Scarce.
XRF: German silver.
Est. Made: Unknown.
Other:

Table 26. *Backward S's*

Backward S's						
Date	**Dav.**	**Obv.**	**Rev.**	**Edge**	**Alloy**	**Notes**
1823	4/D	1	A	1-A	Bi	Shared reverses
1824	1/A	1		2-B	GS	
1824				3-C	GS	
1824				???	Bi	Bi = Bastacky result

Dates: 1823 and 1824.
Varieties: 2 reported; 2 obverse dies, 1 reverse die.
Riddell's: None.
Edge Dies: Three different lettered edge dies; 1824 1/A has two different edge dies.
Rarity: Rare and Common.
XRF: Billon and German silver.
Est. Made: 1823 to 1830?
Other: The Backwards S is located in the word PLURIBUS within the scroll. This family shares no relation to the Stumpy Lower Arrow family.

Table 27. *1830 Counterfeiter*

1830 Counterfeiter						
Date	**Dav.**	**Obv.**	**Rev.**	**Edge**	**Alloy**	**Notes**
1830	2/B	1	Aa	1-A	GS, Bi	Shared obverses
1830	2/Ba		Ab		Bi, Br	
1830	2/N		B		Bi	

Dates: 1830.
Varieties: 2 reported; 1 obverse die, 2 reverse dies.
Riddell's: None.
Edge Dies: All varieties share the same edge die.
Rarity: Very Scarce and Common.
XRF: German silver, Billon, Brass.
Est. Made: 1830 to 1840?
Other: 1830 2/B is known with a normal reverse and a recut reverse.

Table 28. *(New Family 3)*

(New Family 3)						
Date	**Dav.**	**Obv.**	**Rev.**	**Edge**	**Alloy**	**Notes**
1833	7/G	1	A	???	GS	
1833	15/O	2	B	LE	GS?	

Dates: 1833.
Varieties: 2 reported; 2 obverse dies, 2 reverse dies.
Riddell's: None.
Edge Dies: 1833 15/O has an extremely weak lettered edge; 1833 7/G has not yet been studied.
Rarity: Rare.
XRF: German silver.
Est. Made: 1830 to 1850?
Other:

Table 29. *Dotted Feather*

Dotted Feather						
Date	**Dav.**	**Obv.**	**Rev.**	**Edge**	**Alloy**	**Notes**
*1833	4/D	1	A	1-A	GS	
1833	39/MM	2	B		GS	

Dates: 1833.
Varieties: 2 reported; 2 obverse dies, 2 reverse dies.
Riddell's: 1833 4/D (# 464).
Edge Dies: All varieties share the same edge die.
Rarity: Rare and Very Scarce.
XRF: German silver.
Est. Made: 1833 to 1845.
Other:

Table 30. *Late Comer*

Late Comer						
Date	**Dav.**	**Obv.**	**Rev.**	**Edge**	**Alloy**	**Notes**
1837	11/K	1	A	RE	GS	Shared reverses
1838	10/K	1			GS	

Dates: 1837 and 1838.
Varieties: 2 reported; 2 obverse dies, 1 reverse die.
Riddell's: None.
Edge Dies: All varieties share the same reeded edge die.
Rarity: Rare and Very Scarce.
XRF: German silver.
Est. Made: 1837 to 1850.
Other:

Table 31. *Fantasy*

Fantasy						
Date	**Dav.**	**Obv.**	**Rev.**	**Edge**	**Alloy**	**Notes**
1840	1/A	1	A	RE	Bi	Shared obverses
1840	1/B		B		???	

Dates: 1840.
Varieties: 2 reported; 2 obverse dies, 2 reverse dies.
Riddell's: None.
Edge Dies: All varieties share the same reeded edge die.
Rarity: Rare.
XRF: Silver.
Est. Made: 1840 to 1850.
Other: This family may have been made by a foreigner who was unaware that this style of half dollar stopped being made in 1839. This counterfeiter, it is speculated, may have made earlier dated counterfeit half dollars.

Table 31. *(New Family 10)*

(New Family 10)						
Date	**Dav.**	**Obv.**	**Rev.**	**Edge**	**Alloy**	**Notes**
1828	6/F	1	A	???	GS	
1828	19/T	2	B		???	

Dates: 1828.
Varieties: 2 reported; 2 obverse dies, 2 reverse dies.
Riddell's: None.
Edge Dies: Unknown.
Rarity: Rare and scarce.
XRF: German silver.
Est. Made: ???
Other: ???

Table 14. *Mint Mimicked*

Mint Mimicked					
Date	**Obv.**	**Rev.**	**Edge**	**Alloy**	**Notes**
1832	2	B	1-A	GS, GS+Ag	123 dentils
1832	3	C	2-B		129 dentils
1832	10	J			
1832	13	M			

Dates: 1832.
Varieties: 4 reported; 4 obverse dies, 4 reverse dies.
Riddell's: None.
Edge Dies: A comparison of 1832 2/B and 1832 3/C reveals that different edge dies were used to make the planchets; 1832 10/J and 1832 13/M have yet to be analyzed.
Rarity: Rare to Extremely Common.
XRF: 1832 2/B is made of German silver, however the other varieties have yet to be analyzed.
Est. Made: 1830 to 1845.
Other: Their overall high quality in design and manufacturing could suggest that older, non-cancelled Mint dies were used to produce these counterfeits, or a highly sophisticated die engraver (possibly a former Mint engraver) made these dies.

Due to recent updates and analysis 1832 2/B and 1832 3/B are the same variety. 1832 3/C has a different obverse from 1832 3/B. There is little or no Family resemblance (esp. die punches) among the 4 varieties listed here. It is likely these are Transfer Die counterfeits, or that this Family could represent stolen Mint dies. Additional analysis on composition and edge studies will provide additional, pertinent information. There is consideration that this Family should be dissolved.

Commented [W13]: Officially Dissolve Family

1832 2-B has same edge lettering as New Family 5.

The other 3 varieties are in no way related other than similarity of the portrait.

May be related based on hub type, composition and edge lettering. Other punch types do not appear to match. Then again, the hub could have been shopped around quickly and die sunk into pre-made dies by a variety of die makers, and thus each had their own unique hand in making counterfeit CBH dies.
See Pgs. 88-89 in COAC 1998 for more info.

2016 Articles

When You Just Can't Tell

Larry Schmidt

February 2016

Well another one has been discovered! Below are images of yet another contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust half that is unfortunately not fully identifiable but has enough distinct attributes to distinguish it as a previously unknown variety (e.g. an obverse with too close spacing between Stars 1 - 2, plus too close spacing between Stars 4 - 5, and a reverse with UNITEDSTATES and perhaps more of the legend as one word). While these attributes can distinguish this specimen as a new unique variety the specimen has only a partially readable 18?? date and thus can't be vetted as a new discovery variety! It is additionally interesting to note that this specimen has a significant minting error, that is, extra metal on the surface of the coin that can be seen on the left sides of the obverse and reverse images. The specimen was struck at a later state after the dies had broken allowing extra metal to fill the surface of the coin where the obverse and reverse die surfaces were missing. The extra metal on the obverse and reverse, or "cud", should not be considered a distinctive attribute as other specimens for this identified variety could be found that were struck earlier from the dies before they broke and would not have any extra metal other than their counterfeiter's intended design.

Other unique specimens that each have enough distinct attributes to distinguish themselves as a previously unknown variety yet can't be fully identified as a new vetted variety are known to exist! These cast and struck contemporary counterfeits are known to not match any vetted Davignon variety, yet these specimens are either too worn / damaged / or for other reasons not able to be identified / vetted as new discovery varieties. A grouping of these type of unvetted specimens can be found at the very end of the New Discovery section on this website.

Specimens like these continue to fuel our hobby's excitement in that we absolutely know for sure that there are additional new discovery varieties out there yet!!!

When 1 variety + 1 variety = 1 variety

Winston Zack

March 2016

In recent efforts to identify an 1833 dated contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust half (CCCBH) that had seen a great deal of circulation wear two previous vetted Davignon varieties have now been determined to be in fact the same variety! It is now understood that the 1833 33/X and the 1833 41/X Davignon 12-Star varieties are the same variety through the match identification of identical distinctive obverse dentils patterns by Stars 7 and 9 (i.e. the multi-struck 1833 33/X variety is reidentified as the single struck 1833 41/X variety). There are only a few other known identified CCCBH obverse dies with 12 stars; the 1830 20/V, 1840 1/A, and 1840 1/B. Almost all the rest of the Davignon varieties have the expected 13-star obverses with the exception of the 1838 12/M with 10 stars, the 1833 32/GG with 14 stars, the 1835 5/E with 14 stars, plus a few multi-struck specimens that only appear to have more than 13 stars due to their multi-struck stars.

ccCBHcc.com Notation - This discovery has been made by a fellow collector described as having "a very sharp pair of eyes" by the collector / owner of the multiple struck 1833 33/X specimen plate coin. It is just this kind of serious numismatic study that through the synergy of fellow collectors working together depth and richness of knowledge is gained and shared, benefiting all fellow collectors!

Multi-Struck - Part 2

Larry Schmidt

December 2016 (with December 2017 update and July 2018 Epilogue)

In the Collectors Corner May, 2013 Multi-Struck - Part 1 article analyses of multi-struck contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust half dollars were presented. Within the findings there was a distinct difference found between multi-strikes which would have perhaps been initially noticed but after inspection would have likely been passed on in general circulation without its owner giving it much added thought, but there were also other multi-strikes which were quite dramatic. This article provides for the enjoyment of fellow collectors a gallery of enlarged color images for typical representative example of a multi-strike that would have been likely accepted in general circulation and other dramatic multi-strikes which would have not been. Subjectively, specimens have been selected that display their striking errors the best. Other dramatic multi-strike specimens are known to exist, but due to their worn condition and/or dark toning they are VERY, VERY difficult to see [e.g. other known examples for instance include; a) an 1831 9/I identified in the September, 2010 Collectors Corner article Another Mystery Solved, and b) an 1829 7/G with a recognizable second 9 to the right of the four digit date, two overlapping lettered Liberty headbands, a 14th star, and a crosshatched shield on the eagle that resulted from one shield being struck over by another shield at an angle].

1831 7/G representative multi-strike likely accepted in general circulation (e.g. besides Liberty's slight doubled profile note typical multi-strike distortions of stars, date and legend)

1821 3/D dramatic multi-strike

1826 5/E dramatic multi-strike

1828 17/R dramatic multi-strike

1834 ? variety dramatic multi-strike

1838 3/C dramatic multi-strike

1838 7/H dramatic multi-strike and off-strike

July 2018 Epilogue

Although not a multi-struck specimen the silver wash Extremely Common rarity 1825 1/A variety below was clipped which would have certainly stood out in general circulation! The specimen's clipped edge surface exposes the raw planchet which appears to be brass. Weight of the specimen is 12.6 grams.

2017 Articles

Weights

Larry Schmidt and Winston Zack

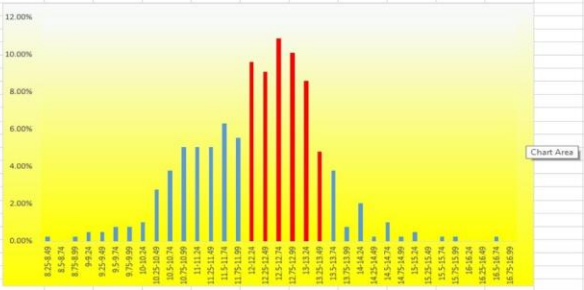
March 2017

Sometimes when you hear or read something it triggers renewed thinking for an area. Such was the case in a recent request sent to a few fellow collectors to identify a specimen for which a comment was made related to getting a copy of a genuine coin with the correct weight. With a more significant larger number of available Davignon varieties to collectively compare weights what could an analysis tell about minting of these historic copies tell?

First, when thinking of the variables of Capped Bust half dollar (CBHD) contemporary counterfeit 'correct' weights was indeed no easy task. Different alloys with different weights struck underweight copies, 'close' to legal weight copies, and heavier copies. Alarmingly for numismatic study even within the same Davignon variety significant ranges are known (e.g. one specimen of 1826 3/C weighs 11.5 grams and another weighs 15.8 grams)! With this in mind the analysis began.

For the analysis only struck specimens with visibly complete planchets were compared; all holed, chipped, plugged, etc. specimens were not analyzed. With the remaining sample size of 396 identified Davignon specimens' weights were collectively compared. The result found was that 53.3% of contemporary counterfeit CBHDs were within the weight tolerance of authentic CBHDs of 12.0 g to 13.34 g accounting for different degrees that circulation wear may affect weight (i.e. complete results of the collective weight analysis are found at the end of this article). This statistic shows that the greater the circulation wear of genuine CBHDs the higher the number of Davignons were included within a matching tolerance weight range. This is important to keep in mind remembering the theory that clever contemporary counterfeiters minted coins that appeared to already have had significant circulation wear and were lighter in weight as part of their deception!

Weight	Count	%	
8.25-8.49	1	0.25%	
8.5-8.74	0	0.00%	
8.75-8.99	1	0.25%	
9-9.24	2	0.51%	
9.25-9.49	2	0.51%	
9.5-9.74	3	0.76%	
9.75-9.99	3	0.76%	
10-10.24	4	1.01%	
10.25-10.49	11	2.78%	
10.5-10.74	15	3.79%	
10.75-10.99	20	5.05%	
11-11.24	20	5.05%	
11.25-11.49	20	5.05%	
11.5-11.74	25	6.31%	
11.75-11.99	22	5.56%	
12-12.24	38	9.60%	
12.25-12.49	36	9.09%	Counterfeit CBHs within the weight tolerance of authentic CBHs in circulation
12.5-12.74	43	10.86%	
12.75-12.99	40	10.10%	
13-13.24	34	8.59%	
13.25-13.49	19	4.80%	
13.5-13.74	15	3.79%	
13.75-13.99	3	0.76%	
14-14.24	8	2.02%	
14.25-14.49	1	0.25%	
14.5-14.74	4	1.01%	
14.75-14.99	1	0.25%	
15-15.24	2	0.51%	
15.25-15.49	0	0.00%	
15.5-15.74	1	0.25%	
15.75-15.99	1	0.25%	
16-16.24	0	0.00%	
16.25-16.49	0	0.00%	
16.5-16.74	1	0.25%	
16.75-16.99	0	0.00%	
TOTAL	396	100.00%	
	210	53.03%	% of ctft CBHs



Rarity and Collecting Update

Larry Schmidt

April 2017

Back in December 2011 the Collectors Corner section of this website posed the question "Where does rarity fit in our world of collecting contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust halves?". The question was presented to fellow collectors to begin to think of rarity designations as constantly changing, the results of ongoing cumulative finds of vetted new discovery specimens and additional specimens for previously known varieties reported by fellow collectors. Well what do we know now a few months past five years later?

Comparing the current March 26, 2017 census (i.e. see the Census Section of this website) to past ccCBHcc.com censuses the following can be said about the reported growing number of vetted Davignon varieties with either; no known specimens *, only a single known specimen, or having two or more known specimens:

** 2011 had 347 vetted varieties; 6 with no known specimen or 2%, 178 with 1 known specimen or 52%, 163 with 2 or more known specimens (46%)

** 2012 had 356 vetted varieties; 6 with no known specimen or 2%, 174 with 1 known specimen or 49%, 176 with 2 or more known specimens (49%)

** 2014 had 368 vetted varieties; 6 with no known specimen or 2%, 183 with 1 known specimen or 51%, 179 with 2 or more known specimens (47%)

** 2016 had 374 vetted varieties; 6 with no known specimen or 2%, 141 with 1 known specimen or 38%, 227 with 2 or more known specimens (60%)

** 2017 so far has 391 vetted varieties; 6 with no known specimen or 2%, 155 with 1 known specimen or 40%, 230 with 2 or more known specimens (58%)

The 2017 year to date census statistics for reported vetted varieties with two or more known specimens when broken down are comprised of; 47 second specimen finds for previous "only a single known specimen" varieties, plus 74 varieties with single rarity level updates and another 13 varieties with multiple rarity level updates all since the September, 2010 publication of Keith Davignon's Contemporary Counterfeit Capped Bust Half Dollars - 2nd Edition. This shows that for these 230 vetted varieties with two or more known specimens conservatively over 37.8% have had their rarity level ** upgraded! These statistics quantify the dynamics of our hobby and tell of the continuing opportunities in our collecting for elusive specimens to be found!!!

* Illustrated in the 1845 publication A Monograph of the Silver Dollar: Good and Bad by J. L. Riddell, an employee of the New Orleans US Mint for which no specimen has yet been found.
** 37.8% = [(13 varieties with multiple upgrades + 74 varieties with single rarity upgrades) / (230 varieties with two of more known specimens)]. The 37.8% calculation does not include the 47 second specimen finds for previous "only a single known specimen" varieties as their rarity designations do not change given that the Davignon rarity occurrence levels are 1-2 = Rare, 3-5 = Very Scarce, 6-9 = Scarce, 10-19 = Common, 20-49 = Very Common, 50+ = Extremely Common.

Treasure Hunt

Kerry Schaller

May 2017

I started hunting road construction sites with my metal detector a few years ago. It's an opportunity to get a glimpse of early history of these small towns we are hunting. It's also a chance to find older coins that we just don't see very often. Most of the paved roads we travel everyday were the same roads traveled over 100 years ago by the early settlers, but in those years the roads weren't paved. Downtown sidewalks were made of wood, and not concrete. Items lost were covered by a layer of dust in the road or fell in the gap between the boards of the sidewalk lost to those of that time.

I get excited every time I'm out exploring one of these sites. I had already found three Large cents and three early Liberty Seated dimes at this site and this trip's success was to be no different. Every day the construction crew moved dirt around, bringing new items to the surface within reach of the metal detector. On this day shortly after arriving, I got a good signal at two inches deep. I dug down and out pops a large dark disc. On closer examination, I see the eagle of an early half dollar and the outline of a Capped Bust Liberty. Excited by the find, I put it in my pocket, but was also thinking this wasn't a silver target on my machine. After several hours of hunting, I headed for home with just the one coin for the day.

After getting home I cleaned the coin up. Yes, I clean these coins as the roadbed is often very rough on these pieces and their value to a collector is limited, but every so often a gem pops out that was tucked away in some unknown spot that preserved and protected it from the harsh conditions.

After sending pictures to several friends, I got a reply mentioning counterfeits. I had never found one, but the signal my machine gave me in the field, came rushing back to me. I pulled out my metal detector and air tested the Capped Bust half. Air testing is done with a metal detector by passing an item across the coil in the air. Certain coins will come in consistently with a certain signature (i.e. silver dime, bronze penny, zinc penny, etc.). Soils can be mineralized, which can alter the response that an item would register on the machine in the field. Air testing eliminates those variables to see how a certain actual target will respond on the machine.

The results from my air testing? Wow, it comes in where an Indian Head small cent would signal. I noted the weight from my Redbook of a genuine Capped Bust half dollar and then weighed my construction site buried treasure find and it which came out to nine grams. A chunk missing from it being holed certainly did not make up four grams needed to make the weight of a real Capped Bust half dollar. I found the ccCBHcc website and scrolling through the New Discovery section and found the 1838 21/V Davignon variety. Upon reading the description and comparing the pictures, it was a spot-on match. The composition of German silver (i.e. copper/nickel/zinc) also made sense for the metal detector signal I got in that nickel and zinc come in much lower and react much different from silver.

The initial let down of this Capped Bust half dollar being counterfeit, has actually been replaced by the excitement of finding my first counterfeit coin! The effort and craftsmanship to make this counterfeit coin is exceptional.

Reidentifications

Larry Schmidt

June 2017

As collectors we know it is often challenging to correctly identify contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust halves where wear and tear of up to two centuries, planchet issues, and/or striking issues (e.g. weak strikes, double strikes, off-center strikes) can cause confusion. Any of these factors can make certain specimens of the same variety look very different!

Similarly, some vetted varieties based on a single known specimen with excessive wear, planchet issues, and/or striking issues can turn out to have misleading appearances. In a few cases these differences in appearance have led to later reidentifications, reassessing the variety anew. Reidentifications are part of ongoing learning, an element of a healthy growth in knowledge, providing the most accurate contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust half dollar information to fellow collectors.

When a new discovery candidate is submitted to be vetted a process begins that involves multiple advanced fellow collectors who participate in synergistic scrutiny made independent of the owner of the submitted specimen. This vetting process has proved quite successful, yet very infrequently previously vetted specimens have been later deemed to be reidentified, sometimes years later after their original vetting. Additional specimen find analyses comparing additional detail(s) not seen before, and/or further study of single known specimen vettings including the use of overlays matching design elements of stars, curls, letters, and even denticles bulges and fillings with different vetted varieties can result in reidentification. (It is interesting to note that it has been found that neither a variety's variations of obverse and reverse rotation, nor different edge designs/lettering configurations can be used as distinguishing attributes.)

Reidentifications address both; 1) a previously vetted variety that is determined to be another known vetted variety, and 2) an identified variety variation that is deemed to be a distinctly unique variety unto itself. These reidentifications have been documented primarily in the website's 2nd Edition Errors/Changes section, but two examples are also noted in the website's New Discovery section of new discovery varieties that have later proved not to be two new varieties but rather two previously known vetted varieties.

Great Finds are Still Being Made!

Larry Schmidt

June 2017

A serious bogus half collector's most recent addition has brought his collection to 99 pieces with what has been deemed by fellow collectors who participated in the specimen's vetting as one of the most interesting new discoveries (e.g. 1832 28/CC http://cccbhcc.com/new-discoveries.html#183228CC). The new discovery is unique having no known Davignon variety family similarities. The 1832 28/CC just goes to prove that wonderful finds are still out there as told in the following events by the fellow collector who wishes to remain anonymous:

"I acquired the piece from a dealer at the Ft. Laud monthly coin show. The dealer drives to this show from Fort Meyers each month. He knows I collect bogus pieces and I have bought some from him in the past. I asked him this time if he had anything for me and he said he had a bogus half, but it was pretty poor. He showed it to me and asked me what I wanted to pay for it. I told him $10 and he said 'SOLD'!!!!"

An Approach to Convert the Counterfeit CBH Census to the Sheldon Scale

Dennis Wierzba

July 2017

The counterfeit Capped Bust Half (CBH) census is a record of how many examples of a variety have been seen, not an estimate of how many may exist. In copper series such as large cents and colonials that have been studied and reported for nearly 150 years, higher level rarity estimates (i.e. R6, R7, and R8) are now essentially stable with an example or two showing up on rare occasions. Counterfeit CBHs and other counterfeit series are currently understudied and underreported. Keith Davignon, presumably knowing this, developed a rarity scale with tight bands (scarce = 6-9 examples, common = 10-19 examples) that quantified, with very descriptive words, the rarity designation using a small sample size based on his collector observations. As more collections are reported, it will be possible to improve projected rarity from a growing sample size.

Dr. William Sheldon developed this classic 'Sheldon rarity scale' for large cent that has been adopted for many other United States numismatic series, but has not yet for counterfeit CBHs. This complicates comparing census records to estimated population rarity. As such, an approach to convert counterfeit CBH census data and project it to the Sheldon scale is needed.

The solution is simple. If you can approximate what percent (Est% as a decimal)) of the population that has been seen and by using the number of reported coins (n), then the projected population (P) is = n / Est%. For example, a census with 20% of the estimated population would have the census figure, n, multiplied by 5 (=1/.20). This projected population (P) can then be converted to the Sheldon rarity scale. As long as the number of seen specimens grows roughly in line with additional survey contributions, this projected estimate should be stable. The Sheldon rarity scale has growing, wider bands as the rarity number falls and is forgiving of estimation error.

The astute reader will observe that we really do not know what the population of counterfeit CBHs that exist and therefore what percent of the population has been surveyed. However, an intelligent, rough estimate can be made. While how many collections have been submitted is known in the census, whether any large collections (and their size?) that have NOT been shared and some feeling about how much is still out there is an unknown. Therefore, the census is the best group to estimate percent surveyed and create a projected Sheldon rarity for each variety. Further, an informal survey of collectors of counterfeit CBHs has estimated that approximately 2,500 to 25,000 still exist. The census is currently comprised of 1,168 specimens, but excludes the 10 most common varieties which are roughly 50% of the projected population. Making this adjustment, the 1,168 coins should be compared to population guesses of 1,250 to 12,250.

To quantify this concept further, I have used the midpoint of the Davignon scale with various choices of estimated percent surveyed to create a projected Sheldon rarity (R#). As you can see, the impact of small estimate errors in the percent surveyed is relatively benign. A much more egregious error is to apply the Sheldon scale directly to the raw data of the number seen

(equivalent to saying 100% of the coins have been surveyed). The approach suggested attempts to correct for this type of error.

SHELDON SCALE PROJECTIONS VS. % SURVEYED USING DAVIGNON MIDPOINTS

Davignon Rarity Midpoints	10%	20%	25%	33%	50%	100%
RARE (1.5)	R6-	R7-	R7-	R7-	R8	R8
VERY SCARCE (4)	R5-	R6-	R6-	R7+	R7-	R7-
SCARCE (7.5)	R5+	R5-	R6+	R6+	R6-	R7-
COMMON (15)	R4-	R5+	R5+	R5-	R6+	R6-
VERY COMMON (35)	R3-	R4+	R4-	R4-	R5+	R5-
EXTREMELY COMMON (50+)	R2-	R3+	R3-	R3-	R4+	R5+

What are the implications of the above table? The estimated % surveyed is the key variable for any hope of completion or near completion. If only 10% of the population has been surveyed, the typical Very Scarce variety is a R5-; at 33%, it is R7+. The test for the relevance of any rarity estimate is your opinion of the demand side, now perhaps R6, i.e., R5s and below are currently obtainable for the collector base.

(1) I would like to thank Winston Zack for his helpful comments and edits.

Outsourcing Operations: Planchet Manufacturers and Counterfeit Bust Halves

Winston Zack

September 2017

Introduction:

Contemporary counterfeit coinage, especially United States coinage, is an often enigmatic subject matter. Little contemporary information was recorded on these pieces, and thus we are primarily left with just the surviving physical evidence to help us reconstruct this history. Like archaeology, reconstructing history does involve making assumptions based on the best information at hand, and this article makes several assumptions backed up by such evidence.

Contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust half (CBH) dollars are especially interesting and complex to study given that there are now about 400 known Davignon varieties made from hand-made and transfer dies, and cast pieces. So far approximately 200 hand-made die counterfeit CBH varieties have been isolated to about 30 families (presumably each family is a separate counterfeit operation), with several dozen more not associated to a larger family group and are called singletons.

At a minimum, each of these families contains between two to 25 varieties each. Most of these families are small, with over 80% of all families containing less than 10 known varieties each. Additional, as yet unreported varieties are regularly being added to these families, and new families might be created from new discoveries.

This article discusses three presumably separate, but intriguingly interrelated families, nicknamed Clinton Head, Buck-Toothed Eagle, and Never Too Late, and a singleton, 1827 6/F. Their association with each other is based on their planchet diagnostics, including primarily their edge dies, but also their alloys, both of which are interconnected attributes. Additional information that can be gleaned from this analysis is assessing approximately when these counterfeits were made.

As a result of reanalyzing Davignon's (2010) attributions, and new discoveries reported on cccbhcc.com, this article has created new, preliminary attributions, labeled in the tables below as 'New Desig.', for each variety in each family. These new attributions make it easier to identify shared obverse and reverse dies within and between varieties from the same family. Highlighted grey cells with question marks contain either estimated (?) or missing (???) information (if anyone reading this article owns any of these varieties and can provide this missing information or is willing to send me those varieties to study I would be most grateful).

Clinton Head

The Clinton Head family contains 25 known varieties using 23 obverse and 16 reverse dies. These varieties are dated from 1813 to 1838, with the majority dated to the 1830s. Two varieties re listed in Riddell (1845), including the 1814 1/A (# 440; still unreported in modern times) and 1833 9/I (# 461). Their composition is either billon (Bi; a debased silver and copper alloy) or German silver (GS; copper, nickel, zinc alloy). At least five different edge dies have been recorded, and each edge die is associated with a different subgroup. See table 1 for more information.

Table 1. Clinton Head family

(not available)

Buck-Toothed Eagle

The Buck-Toothed Eagle family contains 18 known varieties using 17 obverse and 14 reverse dies. These varieties are dated from 1830 to 1840, with most dated before 1835. Two varieties are listed in Riddell (1845), including the 1832 12/L (# 458) and 1833 11/K (# 463). Their composition is either billon or German silver. And at least four, and maybe five, different edge dies were used for this family. See table 2 for more information.

Table 2. Buck-Toothed Eagle family

(not available)

Never Too Late

The Never Too Late family contains five known varieties using five obverse dies and one reverse die shared between all varieties. These varieties are dated from 1836 to 1842, and none were listed in Riddell (1845). Their composition is either billon or German silver. And at least three different edges are known for this family, including one lettered edge, one plain edge (PE), and one reeded edge (RE). See table 3 for more information.

Table 3. Never Too Late family

(not available)

1827 6-F

This variety was made from excellent hand-made dies that at first glance appear to be from transfer dies but does not match any known Overton variety. It is not currently known to be directly associated with any larger counterfeit family. It is made of billon and has a lettered edge.

Analysis:

As mentioned above, it is assumed that these three families and 1827 singleton were made from separate counterfeiting operations, but intriguingly were also interrelated, if only indirectly. These three families and singleton are assumed to be from separate operations due to a lack of shared punch types and die use between each. But they are interrelated in that some of the varieties from each family or singleton share one or more edge dies with one of the other families or singletons! The concluding assumption here is that each of these counterfeiting operations bought their planchets from a common, third party distributor and at approximately the same time. In addition, it is assumed those varieties without edge dies shared between more than one family or singleton also bought their planchets from the same source closely in time to the other varieties made from each family.

Edge dies:

Between these three families and one singleton at least eight different lettered edge dies are known (labeled 1-A through 8-H in tables 1 to 3, and in figure 1), along with a reeded edge (RE), and a plain edge (PE; presumably just not sent through the castaing machine). Three of these lettered edge dies are shared between these families and singleton, but are only ever shared once (Figure 1). This suggests that when there is a shared edge die each counterfeiting group put in a planchet order at or around the same time and for specific types of planchet alloys.

Alloys:

Planchet alloys can also be helpful in elucidating relationships between different counterfeiting groups, and extrapolating roughly when a counterfeit was made. The planchet alloys studied in this article were analyzed via x-ray fluorescence (XRF). The results showed a majority of pieces were made from billon and German silver, and rarely brass (BR).

Billon is strongly assumed to be an alloy used exclusively by earlier counterfeiters (i.e. 18th century and early 19th century) due to its more expensive silver content, and is rarely found on U.S. counterfeits after the Civil War. In contrast, the cheaper German silver alloy is considered a later alloy which started to be used by counterfeiters during the second half of the 1830s. German silver was advantageous to billon in that the color more closely mimicked real silver and was cheaper to produce given the absence of precious metal content requirements. When there is overlap between billon and German silver alloys for a variety or subgroup this is considered to be a transition period from billon to German silver. The history and transition from billon to German silver by counterfeiters will be discussed in a future article.

It is assumed that each of these counterfeiting groups ordered specific planchet alloys over the course of their operations. One good example of this is from edge 3-C, used on the Clinton Head and Buck-Toothed Eagle families, and known discretely in either billon or German silver, respectively. Some varieties (i.e. Clinton Head 1835 5/E), and subgroups within a family (i.e. Clinton Head subgroups 3 and 4), are known with both billon and German silver planchets suggesting a transition from one planchet type to another.

Conclusion:

Based on the above information it is strongly assumed that these three families and the one singleton were made from different counterfeiting groups. They bought their specific planchets from an independent, third party planchet manufacturer. And as such, these counterfeiting groups were probably operating in a similar geographic area at the same time. Furthermore, based on a review of the dates on the counterfeit coins themselves, especially the latest dates, and the pieces reported in Riddell (1845), it is strongly assumed that these counterfeiters were making these pieces sometime between approximately 1840 and 1842, especially since most counterfeiter's imitated dates on or near the current calendar year (Zack 2017).

All told, these counterfeiting operations exhibit an open-system counterfeiting style whereby they outsource their necessary materials (i.e. planchets and dies) and were only involved with the final step, striking the counterfeits. This would have had the effect of streamlining the size of their operation and could have sped up production. This is in contrast to a closed-system counterfeiting operation whereby all the different parts are contained in-house, similar to how the U.S. Mint operated at the time.

Other than the connection to a third party planchet manufacturer more specific details about these counterfeiters remain unknown. Did these counterfeiting groups know about each other? Were they part of a larger counterfeiting network? Where were these operations taking place? Are there contemporary reports of these pieces in circulation? And were these counterfeiters ever apprehended? These questions remain for future research. But this initial research brings us one step closer to answering these questions.

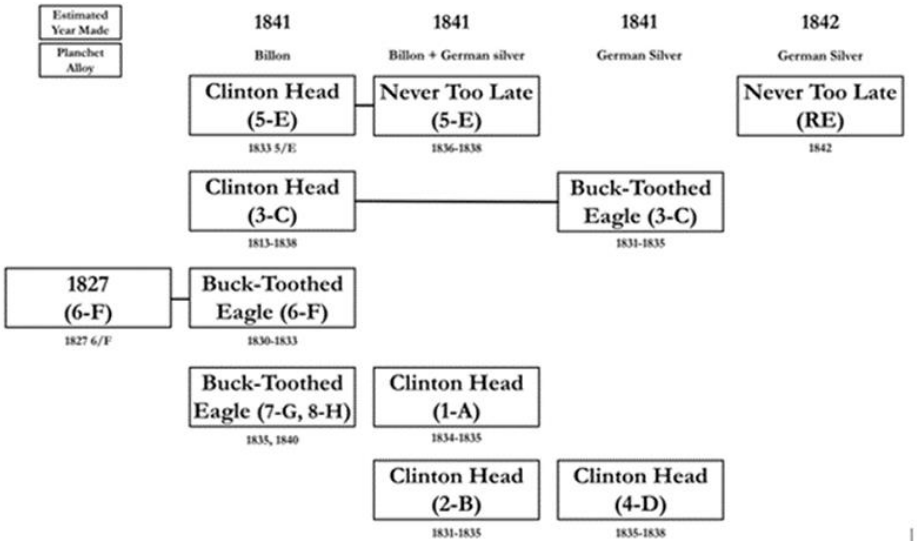


Figure 1. A hypothetical association between the three families and one singleton, their shared edge dies, their composition, and when they may have been made.

Acknowledgements:

At a minimum I would like to thank Larry Schmidt, Mark Glazer, David Kahn, Louis Scuderi, Dennis Wierzba, Brad Karoleff, and Steve Tompkins for their varying roles over the last couple of years assisting my research on this subject. Without their assistance it would have been more difficult to write this article.

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Mint Paths Not Taken

Larry Schmidt

December 2017

While Capped Bust halves were still being minted the Philadelphia Mint explored other various pattern coins in 1838 and 1839 in additional to variations of the Liberty Seated design that would eventually replace the Capped Bust mint type. Why is this significant to the contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust half dollar collector? Modern copy replicas are available today of both 1838 and 1839 dated historic pattern coins displayed in this article that could be confused as contemporary counterfeits!

Modern Copies of 1838 Mint Patterns - "Liberty Head obverse" (i.e. Gobrecht's head of Liberty facing left, luxuriant tresses falling to her shoulder, with the word LIBERTY on the ribbon in her hair, seven stars to the left, six stars to the right, and the date 1838 below). Multiple reverse designs minted with this obverse are known. Two of these reverse varieties that can be purchased as modern copies and are shown above; the "Perched eagle holding four arrows" (i.e. eagle holding olive branch and four arrows, head turned to right, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA above HALF DOLLAR below), and the "Flying eagle in plain field" (i.e. eagle flying to the left, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA above HALF DOLLAR below). An additional genuine 1838 pattern reverse design not known to be available as a modern copy with the 1838 "Liberty Head obverse" is the "Regular reverse of 1838" (i.e. perched upright eagle with a shield holding olive branch and three arrows, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA above, HALF DOL. below). This reverse happens to be the same reverse of the 1839 mint pattern modern copy shown below that is to be discussed later in this article. Another genuine 1838 pattern reverse design not known to be available as a modern copy with the 1838 "Liberty Head obverse" is the "Paquet's perched eagle with broken ribbon" reverse (i.e. perched eagle with a ribbon across the shield, continuing to the eagle's beak, eagle's head facing to left, olive branch and three arrows, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA above, HALF DOLLAR below).

Modern Copy of 1839 Mint Pattern - “Coronet Head facing right” (i.e. Gobrecht’s Coronet or Braided Hair head facing right, word LIBERTY beginning above the ear and ending with the Y above the forehead, 13 stars around, 1839 date below). The modern copy of one of the reverses of the multiple reverse designs known to have been minted with this obverse is shown. This reverse is of the “Regular reverse” (i.e. perched upright eagle with a shield holding olive branch and three arrows, large letters UNITED STATES OF AMERICA above, large letters HALF DOL. below). Three additional genuine 1839 pattern reverse designs were minted but are not known to be available as modern copies with this 1839 obverse. The three reverses are; the “Regular reverse” with small letters, the “Regular reverse” with medium letters, and the “Flying eagle in plain field” (i.e. as shown and described in the 1838 modern copy above).

2018 Articles

Unique

Larry Schmidt

February 2018

Back in April, 2017 a ccCBHcc.com Collectors Corner article Rarity and Collecting Update ending with the sentence "These statistics quantify the dynamics of our hobby and tell of the continuing opportunities in our collecting for elusive specimens to be found!!!" Well the clock has moved forward and some trends might be beginning to show of relative leveling within our continued collecting by percentage. We know statistically the following via census reporting compared to Keith Davignon's 1996 1st Edition publication; 'no known' varieties (documented in A Monograph of the Silver Dollar: Good and Bad by J. L. Riddell, published in 1845, yet with no known specimens), new variety discoveries, and continued finds of known varieties that take into account reidentifications of varieties:

1996	17 no known	57 single known (32.2%)	103 two or more known (58.1)
2009	6 no known	194 single known (64.0%)	103 two or more known (34.0%)
2010	6 no known	211 single known (62.2%)	122 two or more known (36.0%)
2011	6 no known	178 single known (51.3%)	163 two or more known (47.0%)
2012	6 no known	172 single known (48.6%)	176 two or more known (49.7%)
2014	6 no known	185 single known (50.0%)	179 two or more known 48.4%)
2016	6 no known	147 single known (38.7%)	227 two or more known (59.7%)
2017	6 no known	157 single known (39.0%)	230 two or more known (58.5%)
2018	6 no known	143 single known (37.0%)	242 two or more known (61.0%)

Transfer Die Contemporary Counterfeits

Larry Schmidt and Dennis Villanucci

April 2018

Contemporary counterfeits minted from transfer dies were so dangerous! Several Davignon varieties are identified as potential transfer die candiates 1. These dubious coins have neither the telltale characteristics of cast coins 2, nor coins struck from hand cut dies 3. Transfer die contemporary counterfeits used a method in which the counterfeiter created a working die in the crudest form, called an impact die. A genuine coin was sacrificed to make a working die by impressing it into die steel, as if the coin were a working hub (i.e. a hub die is a specialized die used not for striking coins but for imparting designs to working dies). Using a pair of obverse and reverse working dies, the counterfeiter then struck as many fake coins as possible until the dies wore out or broke becoming unusable. The transfer die method was most commonly used to counterfeit gold coins, though a few copper and silver contemporary counterfeits are known to have been made via this method too (e.g. identified transfer die Liberty Seated denomination specimens can be viewed via the Link Section of this website to the Liberty Seated Contemporary Counterfeit Archives).

The process that is usually followed to identify a coin that is suspected having been produced by the transfer die method is generally a labor intensive one. Transfer die counterfeits will always be identifiable from the presence any surface defects that the original coin may have had, which were subsequently impressed it into the working dies by the counterfeiter, plus the presence of other defects that were caused by the counterfeiter when making the transfer dies. All struck die defects were then unavoidably copied into all subsequent coins the counterfeiter struck from the dies, thus repeatedly replicating them identically. Obviously it would be extremely unlikely that any two coins would have identical random marks (defects) in the exact same locations. Detecting transfer die contemporary counterfeits is a time consuming, but straightforward process of comparing the surface characteristics of all specimens that can be found that are suspected to have been struck from the same dies.

1. An initial list of suspected struck transfer die specimens was compiled by reviewing close-up color images of the plate specimens and then eliminating varieties that showed obvious grainy textured surfaces, porosity, or other definite obvious casting attributes. The list included; a) plate specimens with direct or implied reference to transfer dies in the 2nd Edition or New Discovery Section of this website, and b) plate specimens identified Overton cast variety which do not exhibit any of the typical attributes of a casting, rather appearing struck from a die pair. For accuracy the list was further refined via the feedback from fellow collectors / owners of the identified varieties which deleted some and added other varieties not initially identified. The result is the following list of 26 identified struck transfer die varieties that were reexamined to which additional varieties can yet be expected to be added through further reexaminations and new discoveries. The list below includes five Davignon varieties that had been thought to previously be cast but are now understood to be struck from transfer dies (e.g. 1820 5/E, 1824 4/D, 1830 10/O, 1834 2/B, 1834 9/I, 1836 3/C). Not included in the list below are two varieties that are now questioned if they are struck or cast (e.g. 1826 15/O and 1826 16/P).

1808 3/C identified as O-104 after vetting.

1809 1/A identified as O-106 but with a reeded edge after vetting.

1811 1/A identified as O-108 after vetting.

1820 5/E vetted as "Cast copy of O-103."

1823 6/F identified as O-104 after vetting.

1824 3/C identified as O-101 after vetting.

1824 4/D identified as O-117 after vetting.

1826 11/K identified as O-102+3/reverse after vetting.

1828 3/C identified as O-117 after vetting.

1829 12/M identified as O-113 after vetting.

1829 19/T vetted as "Appears to be a die struck copy of O-117, probably using copied dies".

1830 10/O identified as O-117/+8 after vetting.

1832 3/C unidentified Overton after vetting.

1832 21/V identified as O-103 after vetting.

1834 2/B vetted as "Obviously cast, but does not match any genuine dies."

1834 9/I identified as O-111? after vetting.

1834 11/K unidentified Overton after vetting.

1835 14/N vetted as "Copy of O-103".

1836 3/C unidentified Overton obverse/O-113 reverse after vetting.

1836 8/H vetted as "Cast copy of O-112".

1836 14/N unidentified Overton after vetting.

1836 15/O identified as O-106? after vetting.

1836 20/T vetted as "Possible transfer die of an 1836 Overton 116 obverse" (reverse is a handmade die).

1837 4/D identified as probably GR-1 after vetting.

1837 7/G identified as probably GR-1 after vetting.

1838 11/L unidentified Graham after vetting.

1839O 3/C unidentified Graham after vetting.

2. Cast coins can be recognized by looking for recessed and raised area flaws that were not part of a genuine coin's original design. Recessed flaws of cast coins most often found are small holes, casting voids known as porosity, caused by gas formation and solidification shrinkage of non-metallic compound formation, all while the metal was molten (i.e. larger gas-related voids caused by trapped mold or core gases in the molten metal are called blows or blowholes). Unintentional raised areas that are not part of the genuine coin's raised design were transferred to the cast coin with unwanted added metal from the mold where air bubbles were trapped when the mold was formed leaving hole flaw(s), or when carelessness left loose sand in the cavity or coarse particles or cores of metal in molding sand.

3. Hand cut die struck contemporary counterfeits by comparison very rarely accurately captured the original design of the genuine coin attempted to be copied. Atypical lettering including size, shape and placement are the most commonly occurring identifiers of hand cut dies, but also can include folk-art-like efforts, portraying Liberty, eagle and other design elements images.

1816

Winston Zack and Larry Schmidt

May 2018

This is a tale about an 'impossible' 1816 Capped Bust half dollar a year for which the Capped Bust half dollar was never minted. It began at the end of August 2016 when Keith Davignon forwarded an e-mail he had received regarding an impossible counterfeit 1816 Capped Bust half dollar. The 'discovery' of this 1816 began at a coin show in Dalton, Georgia where the impossible 1816 counterfeit Capped Bust half dollar purchase was mentioned and blurry cell phone camera images of the coin were sent. These rough images circulated and a wider awareness of the 1816 entered into the knowledgeable world of the John Reich Collectors Society (i.e. an organization that encourages the study of numismatics, particularly United States gold and silver minted before the introduction of the Liberty Seated Mint type …. see the Links section of this website for JRCS's Internet URL). It is important to note that this 1816 specimen is not to be confused with the limited copy Daniel Carr 1816 over-strike made with genuine US Mint coins.

This counterfeit 1816 was then sold, anonymously, from dealer to dealer. A fellow enthusiast and collector, who is also a dealer, eventually bought the piece, and provided clearer images, as shown below, greatly improving the rough cell phone images that had previously circulated.

This fellow enthusiast/collector/dealer was not absolutely convinced that it is truly contemporary to the Capped Bust era. Some design elements of the piece were believable as a contemporary counterfeit, while other aspects were not as certain. Being both a very experienced fellow collector and dealer, he became firmly convinced that it is not a modern Chinese counterfeit. He thought that because of the unique date the coin would be held to a higher standard, since it was clearly a date that someone would want to fake, if they were going to do so.

The journey of the 1816 continued. The coin was then sold to another collector where it resides today. This latest owner studied the piece extensively, comparing design aspects to other recorded varieties, and providing the vetting information as follows:

Obv. Large date.
Rev. Fine lines below shield, left of arrow feathers, and above left talon.

LES Below center of E1.
RES Below left upright of M.

Obv. Large, tall, evenly spaced date. Large, evenly spaced stars. Star 7 points to the front of Liberty's hair curl.

Rev. Fine lines below shield, left of arrow feathers, and above the left talons. Arrow shafts not connected through right talon.

Note - At least two pieces known; a second, lower grade example has been seen (no photo available).

Studying the 1816 piece revealed that it has design characteristics similar to 1821 4-F and 1826 2-B (Riddell 448) with overall die work of high-quality. The obverse numbers are tall, and on 1826 2-B the '6' looks similar. The stars are also of similar size, design and spacing. On the reverse the Eagle portrait is very good, and the eagle on this 1816 looks very similar to the one used on 1821 4-F (in comparison to all the other recorded Davignon varieties). The 'S' punch type and the wide-looking second 'U' in UNUM are most distinctive as being different from what the Mint used (if we were to assume some sort of Transfer Die counterfeit scenario). No matching reverse die to any other recorded Davignon variety has yet been identified. There is though an additional finding that the die detail identifies a match of the 1821 4-F, 1826 2-B, and the 1816 sharing of the same edge design! As a result, these three varieties all form a unique counterfeit family (so far name-less), dating back to at least 1845 when 1826 2-B was recorded by Riddell. Therefore, through this added significant finding it is believed that the 1816 variety is in fact contemporary to 1845 and the larger suite of contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust half dollars.

Counterstamped Contemporary Counterfeit Capped Bust Halves

Larry Schmidt

June 2018

Counterstamped contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust halves are an anomaly! Reasonably they should not exist but they do as is shown in this article through a few known survivors. Each of these very rare survivors is from a different contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust variety, and these varieties are not related through any currently identified die family groupings of multiple varieties.

Why are counterstamped specimens that are so different from each other being singled out? For the simple reason that each would have drawn additional attention to the contemporary counterfeit!!! This added attention was the very opposite scrutiny that their counterfeiters are believed to have wanted!!! Counterfeiters strived for their contemporary counterfeits to blend without notice into general circulation to be accepted at their implied face value. For this very reason counterstamping is a departure from the normal, or rule that contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust halves adhered to.

If the avoidance of the era's counterfeiters' efforts are understood correctly, that is to not counterstamp their dubious copies, then it is was legitimate businesses who unwittingly added their own counterstamps to contemporary counterfeits fully believing that the coins being counterstamped were absolutely genuine. This gives further proof to the success of the deception of contemporary counterfeits, in that a legitimate business would not knowingly have counterstamped a fraudulent coin to promote their business, an act that could by association overshadow their own business as also being fraudulent. Rare specimens thought to have been genuine when counterstamped for commerce are illustrated below:

Illustrated in the Contemporary Counterfeit Capped Bust Half Dollars 1st Edition and 2nd Edition by Keith Davignon is this 1820 1/A variety counterstamped "PURE COIN" (variety dies

used have no identified family to other varieties). Note – “The term 'pure coin' came into use after 1834 when the purity of American silver coins was changed to 0.900. Often coins were melted to make all sorts of silverware. These "pure coin" counterstamps are used either as test platforms for the silver mark or a result of idle time. Many are found on large and small cents. There was never any implication that the coin itself was 'pure silver' (Pure coin Brunk P-780, p253). "

1833 2/B counterstamped "Doctor A. Perret" (variety dies used identified to be Mexican Head family).

1834 17/Q variety counterstamped “BC” or “ABC” (variety dies used identified to be Clinton family).

1837 3/C variety counterstamped “CAST STEEL” (variety dies used have no identified family to other varieties).

1838 3/E variety counterstamped with "2" (variety dies used identified to be Too Legit To Quite family)

A different type of exception is counterstamped “BAD.” The counterstamp was very likely a clear warning to individuals who were literate to not accept this coin as genuine. 1823 1/A variety counterstamped “BAD” (variety dies used identified to be Top Gun family).

Distant to counterstamps yet other hard evidence when contemporary counterfeits were unknowingly thought to be genuine was their use in engraved love tokens to timelessly capture truisms on a coin that was believed to be as true as those words engraved (i.e. love tokens had one side or sometimes both sides smoothed down and engraved with initials, names, phrases and/or scenes).

1830 3/C love token (variety dies used have no identified family to other varieties).

1838 3 obverse with C or D reverse die.

1842 1/A "SAS" love token engraving on reverse. Rare, the existence of counterstamped as well as engraved love token contemporary counterfeits are yet further proof that they were thought as very real (i.e. plus many contemporary counterfeits that were not counterstamped nor engraved too)! Exactly the intent that these dubious coins were minted for!

1: Other counterstamped specimens exist. Included in these specimens known but images that are not available to add to this article:

Davignon 1825 1/A counterstamped "C.W. Reed" (variety dies used identified to be Top Gun family)
Davignon 1833 1/A counterstamped "A C" (variety dies used identified to be Too Legit To Quit family)

Davignon 1833 6/F counterstamped "X" (variety dies used identified to be Clinton Head family)
Davignon 1838 3/E counterstamped “H.E.P.” (variety dies used identified to be Too Legit to Quit family)

If you have a counterstamped contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust half you’d like to share with fellow collectors please contact this website.

Keith Davignon's Contemporary Counterfeit Capped Bust Half Dollars 2nd Edition Variety Attribution Guide

July, 2018

The Variety Attribution Guide appendix from Keith Davignon's Contemporary Counterfeit Capped Bust Half Dollars 2nd Edition listing 339 die variety descriptions with images is now available on-line on this website (http://cccbhcc.com/variety-attribution-guide.html).

“It almost doesn't look real (which I guess it isn't)”

Larry Schmidt (and fellow collectors)

August 2018

In an exchange of e-mails with a fellow collector regarding a metal detector find of a Very Scarce rarity designated Davignon the words of this article's title were shared. This brought back to mind the 2011 Collectors Corner article Rarity and Collecting that hinted at developing one's collecting focus by Davignon variety type / category, and not rarity. My own preference for collecting of Davignons by variety type / category can be summed up with play on words of this article's title to read ... "if it really doesn't look real". The more unreal a contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust half looks, the more desirable it is for me. The concept of "unreal" could mean an impossible date, or it could refer to an already identified family member from either the Mexican Head (Class 1) or Mexican Head (Class 2) families. But the best unreal ones for me are the primitive looking varieties that don’t really take into account the specimen’s coin grade.

Curiosity got the better of me and fellow collectors with significant collections were asked how their focused collecting had advanced. Their responses are presented below alphabetically by name:

“My collecting focus on bogos is to obtain as many different dates as I can. I do like the die cut pieces more than cast pieces. The cruder, the better.” – Harvey Bastacky

“As what catches my eye -- early (pre-1820), late (post 1838), mintmarked (1836-O, 1838-O) and those coins that have something unique or unusual about them which could include ‘it really doesn't look real’.” – Mark Glazer

“I came to this series in a way that was likely different than most. I imagine that many collectors of counterfeit Bust halves transitioned to the series after (or while) collecting the REAL Bust halves. I never collected the series and, with a few minor exceptions, never really collected the Federal U.S. coinage. My interests started with American colonial coins, especially the state copper series, which have numerous contemporary counterfeits for each. But the more research and publication I did with the counterfeit British and Irish 18th century coppers, the more I was drawn to the Bust halves, and especially so to the cruder and more improbably dated examples.” – Jeff Rock

“My collecting interests began with U.S. coins, especially colonials, but on a budget. It soon became apparent that if I wished to continue collecting I had to diversify. British and U.S. counterfeits provided an endless supply of affordable and interesting coins. From there it was a small step to contemporary counterfeit bust half dollars which were also affordable and interesting. Keith Davignon’s book and the update recently published helped tremendously and while I do not expect to collect every variety, I enjoy any one which is listed and has an informative write up. My preference is for struck pieces but I happily collect them all. My favorites are the impossible dates and the O mint marks.” – Dave Strong

...

“I am attracted to the more ‘unreal looking’ bogo halves. Hand-cut dies are a must for me. Cast pieces don't appeal to me at all, and transfer die strikes are not high on my list either. In general my preferences are: hand-cut dies, silly looking design elements and impossible dates.” – Dennis Villanucci

“Nearly 400 varieties is quite a challenge since the absolute rarity of many pieces keeps one’s collection with many holes. I have decided to do a date set, preferring struck varieties, but will use casts. I also include coins that are somewhat crude or primitive in my set. My test is that the die work screams counterfeit, at least to me. Most modern fakes are Chinese transfer dies and I avoid this style of counterfeit. However, the January 2013 article Contemporary Counterfeits Versus Modern Fakes (ccCBHcc.com Collectors Corner) includes a hand cut die. So as always buyer beware.” – Dennis Wierzba

"Counterfeit coins come in various states of quality. My favorite aspect in collecting these pieces has evolved into trying to identify when and where each variety, but especially a family group of varieties was made. The challenge and enjoyment therefore is not just in the acquisition of outstanding varieties, but in tying pieces to their past and solving these little mysteries." – Winston Zack

It is important to note that these quoted fellow collector responses did not focus directly on rarity which seems to contradict the norm of collecting coins. These fellow collector responses are aligned with advanced collecting by variety type / category. If you were to move away from contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust halves rarity designations, what would your keen Davignon variety type / category collecting interest be?

An Anatomy of a Transfer Die Variety

Larry Schmidt

September 2018

A contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust half recently submitted for identification assistance perchance shows the anatomy of a transfer die Davignon variety. The specimen, later identified as a Davignon 1834 2/B transfer die variety, was a metal detector find that from the effects of being buried partially separated the coin's 'silver' outer layer from its planchet core [i.e. see the April 2018 Transfer Die Contemporary Counterfeits article (http://cccbhcc.com/collectors-corner.html#transfer) for the latest transfer die identification updates]. The three images of the specimen submitted to aid in Davignon variety identification can also be used to better understand the transfer die variety's anatomy which are best viewed in the following sequence:

The specimen's reverse image below shows what the entire coin would have looked like at one time (i.e. bumps on the surface are areas where the 'silver' outer layer is lifting off from the underlying planchet due to the effects of being buried that can also be seen in the specimen's obverse image as well).

The specimen's obverse image below shows how the coin's 'silver' layer was added that is now partially missing exposing the planchet core on the left side.

The specimen's edge image below shows more dramatically the added 'silver' layer which has separated away from the planchet core.

NC Rarities and Culls

Mark Glazer and Larry Schmidt

September 2018

When a particular Davingon find is made it can make the heart beat a bit quicker. That's the good news. The bad news is that most often the newly found specimen is ugly and low-grade relative to the Mint struck coins. This started the thought process about why in our contemporary counterfeit collecting world fellow collectors gets so excited about what would be culls in the rest of the coin collecting world. Even more so for contemporary counterfeits very, very seldom have little if any precious metal value.

While discussions on whether a coin is an MS-64, MS-65 or an MS-66 can be found on many coin forums, this is simply a subject that does not come up when it comes to contemporary counterfeits where the emphasis is on the historical and numismatic significance of the coin itself and not so much on its condition. As stated by Keith Davignon in his Contemporary Counterfeit Capped Bust Half Dollars 1st Edition and 2nd Edition reference to contemporary counterfeits:

"Relative to grading standards for genuine coins, the overwhelming majority would grade form 'poor' to 'fine', with 'good' being the average. Pieces that grade a full 'very fine' are considered exceptional, especially if otherwise problem-free. Things normally considered problems on genuine coins such as marks, edge dings or cuts, attempted punctures or holes, etc., are the rule rather than the exception on bogus coins and should not be considered detrimental to their value or desirability to collectors of these pieces."

In some respect, this is one of the more positive aspects to collecting contemporary counterfeit bust half dollars. For instance, recently, an 1833 44-QQ contemporary counterfeit bust half, one of only three known, was auctioned on eBay (https://www.ebay.com/itm/1833-Contemporary-Bogus-Capped-Bust-Half-Dollar-rare-Davignon-44-QQ-R-8-Fine-/173491056125?nordt=true&orig_cvip=true&rt=nc&_trksid=p2047675.m43663.l44720).

While some may see a coin which is worse for wear, others see an important relic in the history of the coins which circulated in the first half of the 19th century. The auction elicited serious competition from ten different bidders up to the closing seconds of the auction.

A Collector's View…Collecting contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust halves to the similarities with counterfeit British and Irish coppers of the 18th century

Jeff Rock

September 2018

I started collecting counterfeit Bust halves, especially in regards to the similarities with counterfeit British and Irish coppers of the 18th century. My interest started with American colonial coinage, and specifically the state coppers that were struck 1785-1788, each of which has counterfeit examples known. Some are extremely well made, others laughably crude -- but they always charmed and beguiled me more than the real ones did. After learning that counterfeit British and Irish halfpence were, by far, the most commonly found coin in colonial America and the early United States, well into the first few decades of operation of the Philadelphia Mint, I started collecting those issues, along with the British evasion coppers series which was tied to it (evasions have the general look of a regal halfpenny or farthing, but with the legend(s) changed to something different, as a way to evade the counterfeiting laws in England -- they could be nonsense words like HIRARMIA for HIBERNIA or actual words such as GEORGE REIGNS instead of GEORGIVS III REX).

In the 1980s and 1990s there was a fallacy that "Crude = American" which meant that any extremely crude counterfeit British or Irish piece must have been made in America -- simply because it was crude. This theory that has been completely debunked since, and we now recognize that there were bad engravers, poor die steel and rickety presses on both sides of the Atlantic in the late 18th century. But those very crude counterfeits, as well as mules and pieces that had dates that didn't exist for regal coinage, soon became the more interesting pieces to me, far more so than the very well-made and deceptive counterfeits. What fascinated me the most is that these types were OBVIOUS |counterfeits -- and yet most of them exist only in well-worn condition, which meant that they were accepted in commerce for decades, despite no one, illiterate or even legally blind, being fooled. Unfortunately, I was not alone in this fascination, and today it seems that the cruder the counterfeit, the higher the price tag!

The "Family" concept being used with counterfeit Bust Halves (and other US coinage as well) actually got its start in the counterfeit copper community about 20 years ago (though it was first sketched out over 125 years ago by C. Wyllys Betts in a talk given to The American Numismatic Society which was well ahead of its time - and thus promptly ignored and forgotten). The Family concept used die and punch linkage, as well as stylistic similarity, to try and bring some order to a ridiculously large and completely unresearched series -- one that existed for 200+ years without ANY effort to classify or understand. For those of you who bemoan 400+ counterfeit varieties of Bust halves though, we collectors of counterfeit coppers will only laugh -- we have an estimated 10,000 different varieties, and have already delineated some 100 different Families, with more to come!

One important thing to remember is that even though counterfeit 18th century coppers and counterfeit Bust Halves were separated by half a century (and the Atlantic Ocean) that things

were not appreciably different in terms of their manufacture. Both types would have been mostly made by hand operated presses or cast in the same type of sand. Both types would have had the same problems with engraving dies, making mistakes in legends or dates, repairing broken dies. Both would have needed to acquire or make their own blank planchets. Both would need to figure out ways to get their product into circulation. Both would likely need to form at least a tenuous network between counterfeiters - which at the minimum could warn of increased police activity in a given area, allowing those not yet caught to get rid of their dies and planchets. We are really just starting to figure out the history behind these things, and since we have almost no records (other than a few court cases and newspaper accounts when counterfeiters were caught), the evidence will need to come from the coins themselves -- if we can only decipher what they are saying!

Work has progressed on the large 18th century counterfeit British and Irish copper series, and the first in what is hopefully a series of books, Contemporary Counterfeit Halfpenny & Farthing Families has recently been published. It is the effort of 10 authors who describe and plate 34 known Families, and give brief summaries that lay the groundwork for 19 more. This hardcover book is published by The Colonial Coin Collectors Club (C4) and is nearly 300 pages with extensive full color illustrations. It is priced at around $55 in a not-for-profit effort to get the information out to as many collectors as possible. It can be purchased from numismatic literature dealer Charlie Davis (numislit@aol.com).

1832 Davignon 2/B, 3/B and 3/C Enigma

Winston Zack

November 2018

This author has been particularly confused over the last few years with regards to three different circulating contemporary counterfeit (CCC) Capped bust half (CBH) dollar Davignon varieties, specifically 1832 2/B, 1832 3/B, and 1832 3/C. Why? Because this author had been solely relying on Davignon's 2nd edition published in 2010. In this 2nd edition the photos of 1832 2/B and 1832 3/B are unequivocally the same variety. Oops! Further, the obverse photo for 1832 3/B and the obverse photo for 1832 3/C are definitely different obverse dies, and yet they share the same obverse number – the star-point-to-denticle alignments are generally similar but there are noticeable differences, and the denticle below the 1 in the date on 1832 '3/C' is below the upright, while on 1832 '3/B' it is slightly offset to the left. Oy Vey! We have a conundrum on our hands which needs urgent updating. Further, if these three varieties were all related to each other I would have expected that at least some of the edge dies would be the same, but they were all different; this is not unknown for related family varieties to have used planchets with different edge devices, but it is unusual, and it did start making me scratch my head a bit more that these were not likely related to each other.

So, what I quickly realized is Davignon's 2nd edition book is imperfect and has some errors – I know of very few coin books which can be considered perfect and with little or no error – we are all human of course!

Nevertheless, this issue has caused me the most heartburn in sorting out this issue because I figured that Davignon had to have at least seen differences between these three varieties, or at least between 2/B and 3/B, especially because these varieties usually come in high grades, otherwise he would not have listed them as separate varieties.

A few months ago, I had the opportunity to purchase Davignon's 1st edition as published in 1996 – mostly for posterity. Having not really looked through the book I finally decided to look at pages 110-111 where these three varieties were located. I was not necessarily thinking I would be seeing different plate images of these three varieties between these two books since there was no logical reason to switch any out, especially since the plate images showed high-grade examples. But low and behold the plates for 1832 2/B between both books were different, and the other two varieties were the same – albeit the photo quality was improved. Therefore, I was quickly able to establish that 1832 2/B was the outlier to my variety identification issues, and that the plate image in the 1st edition was the different variety causing all my angst. Now it was time to get to work to sort out the differences between 1832 2/B and 1832 3/B, and to see if I actually did own one of each of these three varieties.

Differences between these three varieties

The following descriptions are based on images from the first edition of Davignon (1996), and examples from the author's only collection.

1832 2/B and 3/B

1832 2/B Obverse: denticle centered below 1; star 13 points between denticles

1832 3/B Obverse: denticle off-set left below 1; star 13 points to the top of the denticle

1832 2/B Reverse: die line between arrows, denomination, leaves and UNITED, and denticles, and which may circle the entire area around the coin in front of the denticles. No repunched 50 C. Top of A1 aligns with left half of denticle. Top of A3 aligns between denticles.

1832 3/B Reverse: die line between lower two arrows and denticles. Repunched 50 C. Top of A1 aligns with right half of denticle. Top of A3 aligns with top of denticle.

*Other letter and denticle alignment differences are visible between the two reverse dies.

1832 3/B and 3/C

1832 3/B Obverse: Star 4 points to high side of denticle. Star 9 points to bottom edge of denticle

1832 3/C Obverse: Star 4 points between denticles. Star 9 appears to point to top of denticle.

Rarity
Between both the first and second editions of Davignon each of these three varieties are said to be either 'common' or 'very common'. I contend, based on this authors' own collection, that varieties listed as 1832 3/B and 3/C are at least common or very common, but that 1832 2/B is very rare. Maybe 1832 2/B is actually more common than I believe it is, but that has yet to be determined.

Conclusion
Based on the above analysis, each of these three varieties are unique, with unique obverse and reverse dies. None are knowingly related to one another based on their obverse, reverse and edge die characteristics. Further, each is of high-quality workmanship, such that they may be transfer dies. Finally, because each obverse and reverse die are unique, the Davignon designation codes should be updated to reflect this without confusing shared obverse and reverse number and letter designations, respectively.

2019 Articles

Assessing All Details - How Counterfeit Coin Varieties Are Not Always as They Seem

Winston Zack

February 2019

An avid collector recently sent me a group of nine circulating contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust half (CBH) dollars to study for my research project on the subject, as well as other varieties which were being sold to me. These were nine varieties recorded in Davignon (2010) which I did not own, and which I had not yet had the opportunity to study. Therefore, these varieties were going to fill crucial gaps in my research on the subject. As such, this is a story about that group, but more specifically about Davignon variety 1828 16/Q.

Over the course of the last five years I have had the opportunity to acquire, study, and professionally photograph nearly every recorded Davignon variety, along with more than 25 additional undocumented and unreported contemporary counterfeit CBHs. Over the course of this time, I have meticulously categorized nearly all of these varieties into four groupings based on their manufacturing method. This includes hand-made dies, transfer dies, hybrid dies (those using one hand-made and one transfer die), and cast counterfeits. Further, within the three types of die struck counterfeit categories I have so far recorded more than 30 different counterfeit families, and have since continued the tradition of applying nicknames to nearly all of them. As such, I would like to think I know counterfeit CBHs fairly well.

I was eager to open this package of nine Davignon varieties and start studying them. Several of the varieties were only known by relatively poor photos, including 1826 15/O, 1826 16/P, 1828 3/C, 1828 16/Q, and 1830 28/CC, thus making it previously difficult to study them and discern their production method. Upon inspection of the group I quickly focused in on 1828 16/Q (as plated in Davignon - see below) which was one of the few definite hand-made die varieties here.

As I normally do when looking at contemporary counterfeit U.S. coin's I give the piece a broad, visual inspection before looking closer with my loupe. I immediately noticed that this 1828 16/Q has medal turn. Medal turn is very rare on nearly all counterfeit CBH varieties. Therefore, this feature was very cool to document. Otherwise, considering the roughened condition of this example, leaving much to be desired in terms of quality, I was about to set it aside and study it more closely later. That is, until something about the reverse caught my eye.

Between the two sides, the reverse exhibits a bit more detail than the obverse, although the left half of the eagle was a bit obscured along with most of the letters in UNITED. Otherwise, the overall die quality looked to be finer than most hand-made die CBHs. And that was when I thought the reverse looked familiar, possibly related to a small family group that I immediately had in mind.

This is where I pause and tell you that I have a fairly extensive reference collection of hand-made die contemporary counterfeit CBHs. In fact, I currently own about 203 of the 285 or so hand-made die varieties recorded between Davignon, cccbhcc.com, and additional varieties I own but which I have not gotten around to reporting to the broader collecting public. And all of these varieties are divided between their respective family groups, and singleton varieties. Therefore, it is fairly easy to study and compare two or more varieties side-by-side, especially for instances such as these.

This small family group, which I have recently called the 'Stone' family, has just three recorded varieties. These Stone family varieties include 1816 1/A, 1821 4/F and 1826 2/B (see Table 1, below). These varieties are all characterized by being made from billon planchets and sharing the same edge die; this edge die is currently unique to this family is not known on any other family or singleton variety. The 1821 and 1826 varieties share a reverse, while the 1816 used a separate set of dies. And 1826 2/B was listed in Riddell (1845) as number 448.

Table 1. Stone family varieties

Date	Rarity	Riddell	Davignon	Obv.	Rev.	Edge	Alloy	Notes
1816	R8		1/A	1	A	1-A	Bi	
1821	R8		4/F	1	B		Bi	
1826	R8	448	2/B	1			Bi	

Okay. By now you have probably noticed that the Stone family does not have any 1828-dated varieties. I noticed that too and got cautiously excited. Thus, I started asking myself questions to resolve whether 1828 16/Q was a new, fourth variety related to this family? If so, does it share a reverse with one of these varieties? And does the edge die match the edge used to create the Stone family?

The first step I took was to see if the edge matched those from the Stone family. The edge on 1828 16/Q was fairly well-worn, and the few letters and couple words that could be discerned were quite faint. Nevertheless, enough edge letters were visible to make a basic comparison. Those letters came from both halves of the edge die and read 'OR (HA)LF (A) DOLLAR.' There

was a perfect edge letter match both in terms of letter size, and letter spacing and alignment between LF (A) DOLLAR. This was a great start!

Then I proceeded to the reverse die comparison. The two difference reverses, listed simply as A and B in Table 1 above, are similar but distinct enough, especially around the denomination, to make a fairly quick identification. I was fairly quickly able to eliminate reverse B as not matching 1828 16/Q. But in comparing this variety to reverse A, as known on 1816 1/A, I noticed this was a perfect match.

At this point I started to get excited, but paused to assess the information. First, an edge die match was made which suggested a relationship to the Stone family. But with the matching reverse I knew this piece was related to the Stone family. It was looking increasingly likely that this was going to be a new, fourth variety to this family, and that 1816 1/A was no longer going to be an isolated die pair. Not to leave any stone left unturned, no pun intended, I turned the counterfeit coin over to the obverse for a closer inspection.

As previously stated, the obverse shows much less detail than the reverse. The details on the right-half of the piece are nearly fully obscured from damage. All but star 8 is visible, along with the last two digits in the date being barely visible. Therefore, the stars on the left are almost all I could rely on for any definite attribution. Considering the possibility that the damage around the last digit in the date could be mistaken for an 8 instead of actually being a similarly shaped but distorted 6, and therefore could match a known obverse die, I checked whether this piece could be 1826 2/B. It was not a match – the position of star 7 on 1826 2/B is a bit closer to Liberty's head than 1828 16/Q. Similarly, the spacing between the left stars of 1821 4/F did not match those of 1828 16/Q either. Seeing that the reverse of 1828 16/Q was already found to be a match to 1816 1/A, for fun I compared these two obverses; I was already fairly content that the third digit in the date was a 2 despite some minor damage in the area. After reviewing the position and orientation of the stars between each other, as well as the position of stars 7 and 8 to the cap, I could not find any noticeable difference which suggested that the obverses were different dies. This did not make much sense, and so I went back to take a harder look at the last two digits in the date. The last digit was slowly making more sense to be a 6 rather than an 8, while the third digit was a little more troublesome. Upon close inspection it still looked like a 2, but heck it could be almost any number. Mentally eliminating the scatter of minor metal movement damage from this area and a partial 1 started to emerge.

I could not believe this. Never did I expect that this so-called 1828-dated piece would turn out to be the rare and coveted 1816 1/A variety, now one of two reported examples in existence (I own the other example). While I could have kept this discovery a secret, I immediately informed the owner. Without hesitation I offered to return the piece to the collector instead of just purchasing the misidentified variety without telling the whole story here. Plus, how else would I have told this collector that the 1828 16/Q variety had to be de-listed because this piece matches another known variety!? The collector was delighted with the discovery, and was grateful to have it returned back to their collection.

Usually that would be the end to this story, but it is not. How could a counterfeit coin be so badly misidentified, and the reported date be 12 years different from the real date? First, the last two

digits of the date were partially obscured by damage, thus a certain level of reasonable best-guess was originally applied to come up with 1828. Heck, at first glance this piece looked like an 1828 to me! Further, by the time the 2nd Edition of Davignon was published no 1816-dated varieties were known, and this reverse was unknown on any other variety. Therefore, this was a previously undocumented obverse and reverse, whichever way you look at this. Finally, why would an 1816-dated contemporary counterfeit CBH ever be expected to exist given that the Philadelphia mint did not strike half dollars with this date – therefore a counterfeiter should have no real reason to create a counterfeit with this date.

Ultimately, the take-home message from this incident is that damaged counterfeits can be a problem when trying to properly determine whether they match an existing variety, or whether the obverse and/or reverse match another known variety. In these cases, the utmost caution needs to be taken before concluding an identification. And some examples may never end up being identified to their variety given the condition of the piece in comparison to all other recorded varieties. Furthermore, studying, cataloging, and recording the best possible information, including having excellent photographs of these different varieties, if not owning an extensive reference collection, can greatly assist in elucidating such situations.

EPILOGUE

The emphasis on high-quality photographs was made even more important after studying three other varieties from this group. Specifically, the plate image of 1828 3/C was found to be an authentic coin matching Overton-117. This does not mean that 1828 3/C will become a delisted variety, rather that this variety has not been identified since it was originally published as Riddell No. 452. Similarly, it was found that 1826 15/O and 1826 16/P were badly damaged authentic coins, and therefore will be delisted. 1826 15/O is actually an O-108, while 1826 16/P is an O-112. As such, Table 2 lists all of the delisted Davignon varieties, along with the reason given.

Table 2. Delisted Davignon Varieties.

Date	**Var.**	**Comments**
1822	7-G	Likely 1832 3-C; at the very least this piece is not fully identifiable
1826	2-B	Same as 1826 4-D
1826	8-H	Same as 1826 3-C
1826	10-J	Same as 1826 14-N
1826	15-O	Authentic Coin --> O-108
1826	16-P	Authentic Coin --> O-112
1828	12-L	Same as 1828 1-A
1828	16-Q	Same as 1816 1-A
1829	15-P	Same as 1829 1-A
1831	16-P	Trial test strike
1832	24-Y	Same as 1832 5-E
1832	26-AA	Authentic Coin --> O-102
1833	41-X	Same as 1833 33-X
1834	19-S	Same as 1831 12-L

1834	20-T	Same as 1834 1-A
1835	9a-R	Relisted as 1835 18-R

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Rarity Updates

Larry Schmidt

April 2019

In the current April 3, 2019 ccCBHcc.com census there are significant rarity updates noted by Davignon variety. Of the 392 known varieties there have been a total of 162 rarity updates that comprise an amazing cumulative 41.58% of total varieties since Keith Davignon's 2009 publication of Contemporary Counterfeit Capped Bust Half Dollars 2nd Edition! These cumulative updates include:

60 second specimen finds for varieties that are still graded as Rare (e.g. those specimens noted by Keith Davignon in his Contemporary Counterfeit Capped Bust Half Dollars 1st Edition and 2nd Edition referenced as '1 known specimen', as well as ccCBHcc.com vetted new discoveries with initially only their discovery specimen)

70 single rarity level upgrades from Very Scarce to Very Common

32 multiple level rarity upgrades from Scarce to Very Common

Yet with all of this activity there still remains four known varieties that have no specimens found (i.e. identified in the A Monograph of the Silver Dollar: Good and Bad by J. L. Riddell, published in 1845), and 141 remaining '1 known' specimen varieties netted out from the 64 ccCBHcc.com new discoveries varieties for which already two or more specimens have now been discovered.

Davignon Variation Die States

Larry Schmidt (edited by Winston Zack)

April 2019

Minting coins is, by its very nature, a destructive process, but none more so than to the dies. This occurs from the constant force exerted from the pressure of the coinage press and pressing those dies against the blank planchet to bring up the relief of the coin's images. These pressures progressively chip away at the dies, and eventually the dies will begin to fail and crack. Sometimes these dies can be repaired, while on other occasions they begin to break apart and are beyond repair.

Whereas previous articles in Collectors Corner have been written about distinguishing contemporary counterfeits Capped Bust half dollars by new varieties, or die marriages (i.e. *Variation or New Variety?* http://cccbhcc.com/collectors-corner.html#September,%202009%20(4); and *Variation or New Variety? Part 2* http://cccbhcc.com/collectors-corner.html#June,%202011), this article will focus on identifying which Davignon varieties are known with multiple die states. The list below identifies Davignon varieties which are known with multiple die states, including die cracks and device alterations (e.g. repunched letters). This list is expected to grow as more die states for additional Davignon varieties are identified.

1825 2/B vetted as later die state "Stars 4, 6, 11, 12, 13 are recut with only 4 points," but an earlier die state specimen is known with no 4-point stars. (The same reverse die break is known to have been used in both obverse die states.)

1829 1/A vetted as an early die state without any star variations, but a later die state specimen is known with an eight-point recut star 5.

1831 9/I vetted as "Arrows, 50C, and many letters in legend recut", but an earlier die state specimen is known without any recut arrows, 50C, nor legend letters.

1832 2/B vetted as later die state "Die cracks above letters of legend, particularly D in UNITED," second S in STATES," and above "OF", but an earlier die state specimen is known without any die cracks.

1835 12/L vetted with a late die state of a distorted crooked base of E in STATES, but an earlier die state specimen is known without a crooked base of E in STATES.

BEHIND THE NUMBERS—DIGGING A BIT DEEPER INTO THE UPDATED CENSUS

Dennis Wierzba

(undated)

As the reader may be aware, there are five varieties that are excluded from the census counts, as they are extremely common: 1823 1/A, 1825 1/A, 1833 1/A, 1838 3/C and 1838 3/E. These varieties would be expected to be included in any collection, but would be under-represented in any collection survey (versus a true population survey) as a collector would save only one or two examples. The census count, without these five varieties, is 1,333.

The updated census has an additional 35 varieties each with a count of ten or more rating the variety as at least a Common rarity equaling a total of 520 or 39% of the census total. If one started today, one could build a 40 variety (35+5) collection fairly easily as previously still unreported coins for a variety would be found.

The dynamics shown from the updated census are not only limited to varieties that have at least a Common rarity. The current census detail shows that even within the identified 64 vetted new discoveries made since Keith Davignon's 2009 2nd Edition, 16 of these varieties already have 2 or 3 specimens found! Equally though because of the census's limited number of participants the census variety counts can only tell so much. Such an example is the 1833 21/U variety which previously had a census count of zero (i.e. a variety known from a poor and damaged specimen plate coin published by Keith Davignon's in his 1996 1st Edition that is repeated in the 2nd Edition). Recently though a discovery of a high grade 1833 21/U specimen has been made and can be seen on this website (http://cccbhcc.com/2nd-edition-errors-changes.html#183321U) that is owned by one who does participate in the census. The 1833 21/U variety now has a census count of 1 although 2 are technically known including the plate specimen. Other similar understated variety counts exist as dealers' inventories that are not included, or by fellow collectors who elect to not actively participate in the census.

The census is a simple count of the varieties one owns, not the number of unique varieties in a collection. When the number of unique varieties are counted, 12 collections (versus just reported accumulations) have been revealed with the following variety counts: 271, 210, 91, 72, 67, 60, 55, 47, 45, 44, 39 and 37. These counts should be increased by 5 to account for the excluded most common varieties. It is obvious that reaching 100 varieties is a challenge for the contemporary counterfeit Capped Bust half collectors.

Note: I would like to thank Larry Schmidt for his assistance in this study. No collector names were shared.