

A Summary of the Latest Deceptive Struck Counterfeits

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This is intended as a summary of the documented deceptive struck counterfeit US coins known to us to date. The list that follows consist of all the varieties and denominations confirmed to include at least one fake in the population of “suspect” examples, with many varieties known with multiple ones, such as the 1798 “S-158” large cent (with 9 documented examples including the source). Images used in this document illustrate the attribution marks (called “sister marks”) such as dents, scratches and others associated with circulation that are common to each example (within a variety), which just can’t be. These are all apparently in the dies, impressing these common identifiers in all examples struck.



Probable Source 2013



Image Courtesy ANACS



1798 “S-158” counterfeit examples with the probable source on top

Members of Early American Coppers (EAC) became aware of the subject issue mid-2015 with the appearance of several 1798 “S-158” examples in the marketplace with identical circulation marks and tooling. Since then the Team has documented the following denominations and varieties; the 1st probable “source coin” example dates to 2011, the 1st struck fakes 2013 to current.

Note: Every "Variety" listed here has had one or multiple examples TPG certified.

Half cents:

1787 Massachusetts “4C”
1803 “C-3” Draped Bust
1805 “C-4” Draped Bust
1806 “C-1” Draped Bust

Large Cents:

1793 “S-5” Wreath
1794 “S-44” Liberty Cap
1795 “S-76b” Liberty Cap
1796 “S-85” Liberty Cap
1796 “S-93” Draped Bust
1797 “S-136” Draped Bust
1797 “S-139” Draped Bust
1798 "S-152" Draped Bust
1798 “S-158” Draped Bust
1798 "S-161" Draped Bust

Large Cents (cont):

1799 “S-189” Draped Bust
1823/2 "N-1" Coronet Head
1839/6 “N-1” Coronet Head
1847 Hawaiian "cent"

10 C:

1807 "JR-1" Draped Bust

25 C:

1854 Huge O Liberty Seated
1927-S Standing Liberty

50 C:

1872-S Liberty Seated

Dollars:

1836 Gobrecht Pattern
1846 Liberty Seated
1849 Liberty Seated

A little regression before reviewing 3 of the listed struck counterfeits- counterfeits have been a challenge to the hobby and marketplace for a very long time! In the copper world of EAC there are types that have challenged collectors prior to “discovering” this latest type such as

- 1) electrotypes,
- 2) ones I have nicknamed Chinese “cartoon” examples,
- 3) and a group of less deceptive struck fakes than the main focus of this discussion.

The Cartoon style appear to be made from dies created “free-hand” and do not match any known genuine variety; these are the least deceptive and a basic knowledge of numismatics and a copy of the “Red Book” can smoke them out.



"Chinese" 1793 Large Cent (image author's)

The struck fakes using an actual source coin to make the dies are a much higher level counterfeit than the cartoon type; these are documented in both half and large cents and are fairly accurate as compared to the sources, but the counterfeiters use the same layout and change the date to create a series of fakes, resulting in impossible die combinations/ states. These take a higher level of knowledge to discern, with being savvy with the series and variety attributions part of the best defense.



Back to the subject of this discussion, struck counterfeits produced from dies made from genuine source coins to clone that specific date, variety and denomination- these are deceptive enough to have fooled experienced collectors, dealers and third part graders (TPG’s) alike, and the process apparently doesn’t harm the original coin as they have been documented for sale along with the struck clones!

So, the discussion will start with one that is “obvious” to experienced collectors, the 1872-S liberty seated half dollar.

1872-S “Half Dollar” (image courtesy NGC)



This "variety" has been documented in several coin publications, from the LSCC's Gobrecht Journal (mine and other author's works), the ANA Numismatist (image included) and Coin Week. From my Coin Week article ([1872-S-half-dollar](#)):

The issues with this one became quickly apparent when I tried to match the reverse to the known '72-S reverses- the mintmark of this example did NOT match in either size or location to known ones, and my suspicions widened. Calling upon a couple of EAC members for advice I was directed to another prominent club in early Numismatics, the Liberty Seated Collectors Club (LSCC). I quickly learned that a group of club members there had discovered examples of this "mystery" coin prior to my research efforts and had already unraveled the truth about it, which they willingly shared.

Similar to several of the early copper fakes we have documented, this "variety" could also be described as an *improbable die state/ die marriage*, as the obverse "die" was from an 1872-P example, the reverse from an 1875-S, and I'm told the edge from 1876 (due to the number of reeds in total)- a kind of Frankenstein's monster if you will!

Unlike many of the prior varieties of discovered struck fakes the surfaces and strike of these are very good, with few telling differences (of course the die marriage is major!) to cause concern in hobbyists like me who are well out of their comfort level and focus with this series, and many would be hard pressed to suspect this as a counterfeit. And these are convincing enough "on the surface" to be encapsulated by Third Party Graders (TPG's), with mine actually making it into 2 different TPG slabs.

In order to better help hobbyists identify the possible struck fakes going forward I have developed a single page "Attribution Guide" to summarize images of the source example (if known), a struck clone and a known genuine one, and the visual "attribution/ circulation" marks (the terminology established by a fellow EAC member is "sister marks" for the common marks going forward) documented on all examples known.



August 2016 internet example

COUNTERFEITS

Not What It Appears

An 1872-S half dollar sports some questionable marks.

I have encountered many spurious coins by searching through Internet sales venues, and I've closely watched sellers who were associated with fakes in the past. This has led to discoveries of a variety of counterfeits. Many of these individuals buy from and sell to each other, and the list of participants continues to grow. The fake 1872-S half dollar shown in this article came from reviewing the offerings of one of these sellers.

In my opinion, the coin was suspicious and warranted additional investigation. As a collector of Early American coppers, however, tackling this project was beyond my area of focus and expertise.

The problems with this specimen became readily apparent when I tried to match its reverse to genuine '72-S reverses. The mintmark did not match in either size or location, and my suspicions widened. Calling upon a couple members of Early American Coppers (eacs.org) for advice, I was directed to another prominent organi-

zation, the Liberty Seated Collectors Club (lscoweb.org). I quickly learned that a group of members there had discovered examples of this mystery coin prior to my research efforts and had already unraveled the truth about it, which they willingly shared.

Similar to several other early copper fakes I have documented, this "variety" also could be described as an improbable die state/die marriage. The obverse came from an 1872-P example, the reverse from an 1875-S and the edge from an 1876—a kind of Frankenstein's monster, if you will! As a side note, unlike other examples I've discovered during my research effort, the host coins used to make dies for this example are currently unknown. Considering that three pieces were involved in its creation, I can only speculate as to whether they will be discovered.

The surfaces and strike of this fake are very good, and hobbyists like me, who are well out of their comfort zone, usually would not suspect that it is a counterfeit. In addition, this coin is convincing enough on the surface to have been encap-

sulated by a third-party grading company. At least one of the two other fakes I reviewed online also made it into a slab. To help hobbyists identify possible counterfeits of this coin, I have developed an "Attribution Guide" below that breaks down some key areas to look for.

—Jack D. Young

The author originally wrote on this topic for the June 6, 2017, edition of COINWEEK (coinweek.com).



Counterfeit



Genuine

ATTRIBUTION GUIDE

Dings/Gouges



◀ The dings under Liberty's left arm (far left) and on the O in OF, as well as the die gouge on the T in TRUST, appear on all counterfeits of this type.

▼ When compared to genuine issues, it is clear the fake's mintmark is too small and improperly placed.

Mintmarks



Counterfeit

Genuine

PHOTO: JACK YOUNG

1798 "S-158 Large Cent" (image courtesy PCGS)



This "variety" has been documented in several Internet Posts as well as EAC's Penny-Wise, Coin World and Coin Week. From my Coin Week article ([1798-S-158-large-cent](#)):

In the fall of 2015 a fellow EAC'er (member of the Early American Coppers Club) alerted the EAC Face Book group to an apparent deceptive fake 1798 large cent, changing how many of us view the hobby going forward! From the discussions this prompted in that forum and the following *Penny-Wise* articles written on the subject we suddenly became aware of a new level of "struck counterfeits" (actually I've been told the correct term is fake, replica, etc. since early copper isn't "current currency"), so genuine appearing that this one, and ultimately many others were in top tier TPG holders. This example, a supposed "S-158" appeared to be a new variety, an "*improbable die state*" as another respected long-time EAC member noted, or in fact fake.

The "Y" in LIBERTY was too long for any known 1798 large cent, the reverse die break was partially tooled away as not seen for this variety before, and there were a series of blemishes including "dimples" on the bust as struck. The notice of this one opened the floodgate, as I found another example on eBay, then another member reported a 3rd, and then a 4th appeared again on eBay, eventually adding up to eight total documented examples currently, all with common "dimples", scratches and other circulation marks, which just can't be. These are all apparently in the dies, impressing these common identifiers in all examples struck; individual pieces have other marks, damage and inflicted "weathering", possibly to try to hide the truth, but a diligent eye can still help flush them out.

Comparison images below, followed by the developed "1-page attribution guide":

Discrepancies:

Photo comparisons show the counterfeit on the left and a genuine S-158 on the right.

*Note: Size and shape of RTY.
Junction of hair and forehead.*



"Sister marks":

1. Circular depression on bust.
2. Minor marks in reverse fields.

Images and Narrative courtesy Kevin Vinton/ Penny-Wise Jan 2016



Possible "Tooled Source" internet 2013

Known 1798 S-158- Reverse (courtesy PCGS)

1798 "S-158" Large Cent



Struck Counterfeit- 2015 Internet example



Possible Repaired Source (ex-eBay) Genuine Example (courtesy PCGS)

Key Attribution Points:



Length/ shape of "Y"

"Dimples" on bust

Tooled/ removed Rev die break (scratch over tip)

1806 "C-1 Half Cent" (image courtesy NGC)



This "variety" has been documented in several Internet Posts as well as EAC's Penny-Wise and Coin Week. From my Coin Week article ([1806-c-1-half-cent](#)):

These were first known from a group of suspect early coppers submitted to one of the top TPG's back in the fall of 2015, and was the second group shared with Early American Coppers (EAC); these now well documented submissions and the "coins" included are both posted on the EAC Blog tab of the web site.

As previously noted, one of the on-line selling venues appears to have been ground zero for many of the fakes we have been discussing in this series, as we have traced many to listings there and particular sellers. When asked, they have plead no knowledge of the "coin" being fake and often take the stand that they are certified by a TPG. Two of the TPG's have been actively participative in working to flush out these fakes along with EAC, making photos available both during research and at times during the submission process; certs have been updated as a result (past slabbed examples) or stopped at the initial certification process- common submitters have purportedly been identified. I personally have a list of "suspicious coins" by seller, gaining as much info on each through the public domain as my limited skills have allowed, and posted on our focused EAC Face Book group site.

Following up routinely on the list of interwoven sellers resulted in discovering a "suspicious" 1806 C-1 half cent. What's even more interesting about this example is that it matched the previously reported "bad" TPG submitted example.



Image Courtesy PCGS

"Suspect" example 2015



October 2016 Internet example

Until October 2016 we had not found a solid match, although we had a set of grainy images of an example owned by an internet seller in China.



Seller in China example

In comparing the images of the October example to both the TPG submitted and China ones we see a developing set of clear attribution marks, especially the “ding” on the top of “A” of HALF.



October 2016 Internet example

TPG Submission example

Chinese seller example



Major Attribution “Sister Marks”

Continued research resulted in finding another example; this one sold in a 2011 ANA auction, reportedly in a TPG details holder. My initial thought was this was a possible “source” coin.



2011 example (images courtesy of Stack's Bowers)

Several members participated in discussions regarding this, with Ed making a huge contribution to the research as he found the “probable” source coin:



Probable Source Example/ 2013 Auction (images courtesy Stack's Bowers)

Comparison of these two yielded additional common sister marks on the obverse, with the major reverse common marks still prominent:



Damage on the "A" appears different on the probable source example on the left

The sequence of events is interesting and speculative, but what is certain is the example sold in 2011 is earlier in time than we had originally documented for these struck fakes; the earliest 1798 "S-158" went back to 2013 and the same auction as the probable source 1806 C-1. Continued research has not resulted in finding this source example prior to 2013 yet, but it obviously must predate the 2011 "clone", which makes one wonder *when did all this actually start?*

The developed "1-page attribution guide" follows, as well as my friend and fellow EAC member Mark's "Wanted Poster":

1806 "C-1" Half Cent



Struck Counterfeit- 2016 internet example



Probable "Source" Example

Genuine Example (courtesy PCGS)

Key Attribution Points:



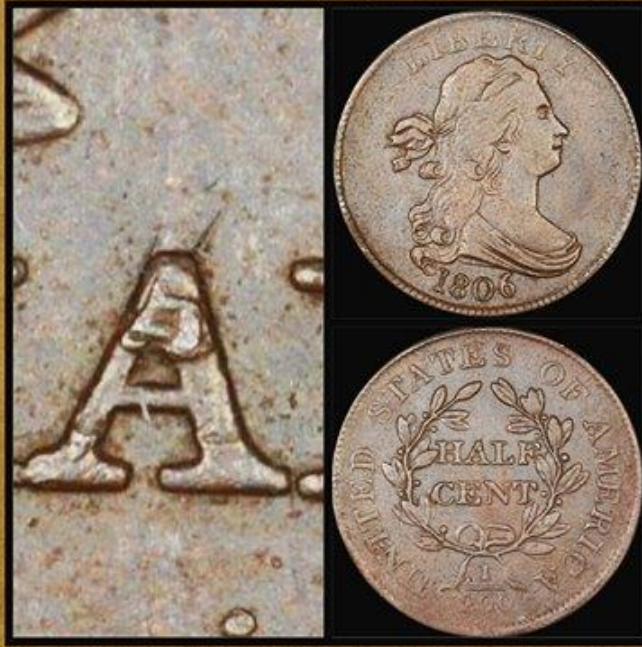
Damage at "A"/ scratch over "L" "Dent" in stem

"Dent" near "A"

"Scratch" on "E"

WANTED

DEAD OR ALIVE



OLD PLUGGED A



1806 1/2 ¢

BORN IN CHINA

WANTED FOR FRAUD



REWARD



10000