

## Stepping Back a Bit in “Double Dime” Time

by Paul Kluth

Sometimes it is interesting to see what others have written on a numismatic topic in the past. In this case, a brief article was written 55 years ago in 1970 by Mary Jane Cook and published in the Hanover Numismatic Society's (PA) “1970 Hanover Numismatic Scrapbook in conjunction with 7th Annual Hanover Coin Show” on November 7-8.

The history of the Liberty Seated Twenty-Cent Piece at the U.S. Mint is indeed an interesting story that our colleague and LSCC fellow member John Frost can certainly attest to.

### Popular Quarter Outlives 20-Cent Coin

by Mary Jane Hook

The shortest issue of coinage in the history of the United States is the 20 cent piece. Authorized by the Act of Congress dated March 3, 1875, a total of 1,355,000 20 cent pieces were struck before they were discontinued by the Act of May 2, 1878.

The issue of the 20 cent piece may have been the result of demands by people from the Western states and their desire for as much silver as possible. It should also be realized that since the law of 1873 and the abolishment of the issue of minor coinage except at the Philadelphia Mint, many people were without small change, and it was felt a 20 cent piece would fill in for the deficiency.

The weight of the .900 fine silver 20 cent coin was set at five grams or 77.16 grains, as compared with the present standard weight of a quarter dollar - 96.45 (grains)

The similarity in design and size of the 20 cent piece with the 25 cent coins caused confusion and the 20 cent piece became unpopular and was withdrawn.

The number of 20 cent coins struck during this short-lived history follows:

- 1875 — 39,700
- 1875-CC — 133,290
- 1875-S — 1,155,000
- 1876 — 15,900
- 1876-CC — 10,000
- 1877 — 510
- 1878 — 600

According to Mint records, the 1876-CC 20 cent coin was never released and not more than five or six specimens are known to exist at this time.

Several letters in the National Archives regarding the 20 cent piece and its birth are printed below

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and have never been published in numismatic references before.

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Treasury Department  
Office of the Director of the Mint  
April 20, 1874  
Honorable James Pollock, Superintendent  
Philadelphia, Pa.

Sir:

The issue of a 20 cent silver piece being under consideration I have to request that you will cause a pair of experimental dies be prepared for the same.

As the difference in weight between the proposed piece of 20 cents, and the 25 cent piece will be quite small, it will be necessary to give to the former such devices, etc. as will render it easily distinguished from the latter. I should therefore prefer the Bailey figure of "Liberty" as shown on one of the specimen Trade dollars and the Barber eagle as it appears on the Trade dollar. If reduced to the proper size I think they will be very appropriate.

This will afford a good opportunity for testing in a practical way some modifications which appear to possess considerable merit. In the first place let the dies be so made as to give the coin as much concavity on both sides as appears in the new 20 mark piece of Germany.

Secondly let us try the placing of one of the mottoes in lightly sunken letters around the periphery of the coin.

If the coin is properly concave on both sides and the border made sufficiently prominent, the chief devices will be so protected as to avoid abrasion in ordinary circulation.

It is better that any alteration of this character should be undertaken with the silver coin and not gold until thoroughly tested by actual coinage.

H. R. Linderman,  
Director

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August 7, 1874  
To: H. R. Linderman

Sir:

Enclosed find four specimen 20 cent pieces prepared as directed in one of your last letters. The design and execution are good but the coin too much like the quarter dollar in size and appearance.

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I have directed one or two other patterns to be prepared which will, I think remove some of the objections to the coins - be equally artistic and more easily distinguishable from the present quarter. The coins are to be distributed as follows, one to yourself, two for your cabinet, one for the secretary of the Treasury.

The price will be paid out of the fund still here for the purpose of coins as they having been ordered prior to June 30, 1874.

James Pollock

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August 8, 1874

To: James Pollock

Sir:

I have your favor of yesterday enclosing four specimen 20 cent pieces.

The design and execution are both excellent and it would appear that the devices and plain edge are sufficient to readily distinguish the pieces from the 25 cent coin. I would be glad to have the two pattern pieces which I understand are to be made so as to make a distinction between the 25 cent piece and 20 cent piece as clear as possible.

I suppose that the size of the 20 cent piece bears a true proportion to the 25 cent piece according to the weight of the two pieces respectively, although have no means of comparing same.

H. R. Linderman,  
Director

*Source document from the collections of the Hanover Area Historical Society / Yellen Research Library & Archives, Hormel Research & Historical Center, Guthrie Memorial Library, Hanover, PA.*

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