



July's Double Dime - Off-Center Error by John Frost, LSCC #2005

Last month's partial solar eclipse was seen at sunrise in the eastern U.S., and was actually part of the annular eclipse (widely known as the "ring of fire") that crossed remote parts of Canada on June 10th.

Here in Massachusetts, the sun was 73% eclipsed, with a fiery crescent rising above the northeast horizon. We were lucky enough to have a mostly clear sky with some haze and very thin clouds which allowed periods of visibility without the need for a solar filter.

Very few of my neighbors were up at the time of greatest eclipse, 05:33 EDT, so the street was quiet and no distractions in eclipse viewing.

Partial Solar Eclipse, 2021 June 10



Stretching the imagination a bit (okay, a lot!), this eclipse reminded me of an off-center coin, the crescent sun representing the unstruck portion of the planchet. With my imagination going full steam ahead, I decided to make off-center coins the topic of this summer's column.

While modern off-center errors are fairly common, they are rare on Liberty Seated coinage, and excessively rare in the double dime series. I only know of three off-center twenty-cent pieces, and I am lucky enough to own one of these.

When a coin is struck completely outside the retaining collar, it is classified as being "broadstruck." Broadstruck coins, by their very nature, will be larger in size than a coin of a formal strike. If the planchet was a little uncentered in the press, there will be a portion of the planchet that will be left unstruck. If the planchet was uncentered enough that any part of the design from the dies (including devices, dates, lettering, and denticles) is completely off the planchet, it is classified as being "off-center".

The off-center strike can be minor (3-5%), but can also be much more. Low-grade off-center Liberty Seated coins are very rare, as many of the few examples were pulled from circulation while still in higher grade and saved as curiosities. Others were likely kept as pocket pieces, resulting in the heavy wear.

I have an interesting story regarding an off-center twenty-cent piece. This particular coin was in the FUN 2012 Heritage auction. NGC 10% off-center, VG10. Although I had a bid already submitted in that auction, I knew it wouldn't hold up, and was at the hotel increasing my bid that evening at least 10 minutes before that lot was sold. I entered the new bid, hit the "submit" button. Then the information page popped up. When I hit the button to confirm the new bid, my computer seemed to freeze up and I did not get an acknowledgement back from Heritage.

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My hotel's internet had crashed! Did Heritage get my confirmation before it crashed? When the hotel's internet came back online 15 long minutes later, I discovered it had not, and the lot had just sold. My original bid was used and I was the under-bidder. I lost it.

I was devastated! And it would grate on me for a number of years – that lost opportunity. When would I get another chance on an off-center double dime?

A few years ago, a dealer friend told me a client was selling off some of his impressive error collection. I bought a double-struck Barber quarter from that collection. Taking a shot, I asked him to check to see if the collector had any double dime errors by chance. A few days later, I heard back. "Just one. A coin 10% off-center, NGC VG10." I said "That's the coin!" The one I lost. I was able to negotiate with the collector via my dealer friend to acquire the coin. Even though it cost a lot more than it originally sold for in the auction, I did get it for what I was trying to bid when the internet crashed. So that painful memory on losing one of three off-center double dimes known to me was finally erased!



**1875-S Liberty Seated Double Dime
NGC VG10 - 10% Off-Center**

Despite being low grade and a little deceptive due to the upset rim of the planchet before striking, clearly the denticles on both sides are off the planchet on both sides and the tops of the letters on the reverse barely stay on the coin. I wonder how long this coin was in someone's pocket? If the sun had been 90% eclipsed on the morning of June 10th, it would have been a dead ringer for this coin!

For more information on the double dime, and particularly errors for this series, see our online book:

<http://www.doubledimes.com>

<http://doubledimes.com/Errors.html>

Enjoy!

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