



# Liberty Seated Dollar News and Information

by Dick Osburn, LSCC #717  
and Brian Cushing, LSCC #2170

## *1859-S*



The 1859-S is a rare date in the Liberty Seated dollar series. The mintage was low and many were exported to the orient. Despite this the date is available with patient searching, in some cases more so than the mintage would indicate. Although, as will be seen below, the date is a condition rarity at both the high and low ends of the scale.

The availability by grade shows a curious feature. Based on statistics from the major third-party grading services the prevalent grades are VF-AU. Over 450 examples have been graded by PCGS and NGC. Of these only 14% grade below VF20, while less than 10% grade mint state. Very few examples circulated heavily, although the percentage for this date is still much higher than for the previous Philadelphia-minted dates in the 1850's. Even fewer were saved from circulation. The mint-state percentage is one of the lowest for any date in the entire series. Collectors seeking to complete a problem-free low to mid-grade set and those seeking coins in choice to gem mint state will both have challenging searches.

The finest known 1859-S is a single MS65 coin graded by NGC. The finest PCGS-graded example is a single MS64+, currently part of the D. L. Hansen Collection. NGC has graded none at the MS64 level. The two services have given a combined 13 coins a grade of MS63. In choice BU, this is one of the rarest dates in the entire series. Surprisingly, the date is very available in AU58, with a total of 36 coins receiving that grade from the two major services. Population statistics are as of October 2021.

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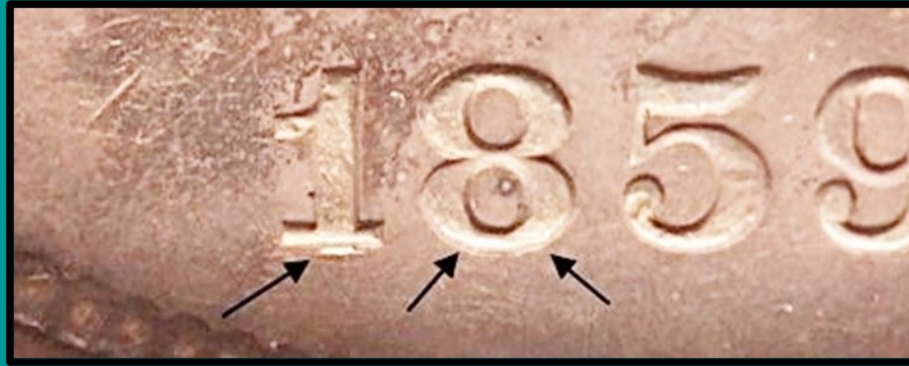
A fully struck 1859-S is a rarity. Almost all examples seen display at least minor weakness on the star centrals, and they're almost never seen without slight weakness on the feathers at the upper edge of the eagle's left wing. We've seen a few with well-struck stars, including the D. L. Hansen example, but can't recall ever seeing an example with a full strike on the left wing. 1859-S surfaces are occasionally frosty, but more often at least slightly proof-like. With two die pairs sharing the 20,000 mintage, the dies didn't wear enough to produce fully frosty examples.

Two obverse dies were paired with two reverses to strike the mintage for the year. The following table summarizes the known die marriages:

<i>Die Marriage</i>	<i>Rarity</i>	<i>Obverse Die</i>	<i>Reverse Die</i>	<i>Estimated Survivors</i>
OC-1	R2	1	A	650
OC-2	R4	2	B	150

We note that Breen (reference 3) listed two 1859-S varieties. Breen 5461 was described as "normal date". Breen 5462 was the "repunched 18". He rated Breen 5462 as "extremely rare". In reality both of the known die marriages are Breen 5462. They exhibit the repunching in early die states. Evidence of the repunching disappears as the dies wear and are polished. Examples with clear repunching are scarce, but not rare. They can be easily found with patient searching. The picture below shows an early die state of the repunching for OC-1. This coin is from our reference collection.

The photos that lead this article are courtesy of Heritage Auctions (HA.com). They picture a MS63 example that is one of the finest graded by PCGS.



Comments or suggestions for future articles are always welcomed. Our contact information:  
 Dick Osburn, 713-875-5860, dickosburn@comcast.net.  
 Brian Cushing, 410-571-4699, osburncushing@gmail.com

References: 1. Dick Osburn and Brian Cushing, Seateddollarvarieties.com.  
 2. Dick Osburn and Brian Cushing, Liberty Seated Dollars, A Register of Die Varieties, self-published in January, 2018.  
 3. Walter Breen, Walter Breen's Complete Encyclopedia of U.S. and Colonial Coins", published in 1988 by Doubleday, E. C. I. Press.

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