



Liberty Seated Basics 101

by Dennis Fortier, LSCC #2016

Issue XVIII - Counting Reeds

Introduction: One of the requests we often hear is for articles in club publications that reach back to more basic skill building. Members are at all different levels, and newer members are in some instances unfamiliar with commonly used terms in our little corner of the hobby. Mint production has changed over the last two-hundred +plus years. The Liberty Seated years (1836-1891) saw its share of production change during that time. Those changes came with a learning curve. A good deal of that learning curve had to do with the first few Branch Mints coming on line and Mint employee's at those Branch Mints needing to learn their craft.

Some of the topics already discussed include the following:

- Issue I - Weak Strikes (June 2020 E-G)
- II - Die Wear in (July 2020 E-G)
- III - Security/Home Safes (August 2020)
- IV - Security/Safe Deposit Boxes (Sept. 2020)

- V - Buying White Coins (October 2020)
- VI - Raw vs. Certified (November 2020)
- VII - Mintage vs. Survival Rate (Dec. 2020)
- VIII - Mintmark Sizes & Placement (Jan.'21)
- IX - Liberty Seated Oddities (February 2021)
- X - Die Lines & Lint Marks (March 2021)
- XI - Learning to Say 'No' (April 2021)
- XII - Covid, CAC and Market Change (May)
- XIII - Doubled Dies vs. Machine Doubling (Jun)
- XIV - The Cadillac Effect (July 2021)
- XV - Networking (September 2021)
- XVI - Chopmarks (October 2021)
- XVII - Changes in Collector Preferences (Dec.)

Additional topics will be discussed in future months.

"An Introduction to Liberty Seated Basics 101" also appeared in the *The Gobrecht Journal* Summer 2020, Volume 46.2.

Counting Reeds

Counting the reeds on the edge of a coin is becoming a lost art. Early Gobrecht Journal articles and many reference books published the reed counts for different issues from the various Mints. The Mints of the Liberty Seated time period were responsible for making their own collar dies; therefore, the reed counts at each Mint differed.

Many coins today are in Third Party Graded

holders which leaves the edge of the coin completely or partially obscured. This makes counting reeds impossible on such coins. We accept these coins as being genuine because the leading grading services guarantee that they are genuine. Have you ever wondered how the grading services ascertain whether or not a coin is genuine?

Reed counts are one of the ways they can do it. Added mintmarks have long been a criminal activity for the fleecing of unsuspecting collectors. Reed

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L.S. Basics 101 cont.

counts however, cannot easily be faked. Modern day counterfeiters making counterfeits from scratch, almost never take the time or trouble to use the correct reed count of the issue in question. Many coin collectors do not make the effort to learn about the coins they collect and are easily fooled.

Several years ago, I purchased (with the right to return) an 1864 half dime with a hole in it. The hole was located where the mintmark would have been if there was one. I sent the coin to Mr. Half Dime (Steve Crain) for authentication. At the time Steve's notes were not available, and I did not have Blyth's Half Dime book, so I had no reference to help me. Along with diagnostics Steve also counted the reeds and was able to determine that the coin in question was indeed the more valuable 1864-P half dime.

Many collectors, especially circulated dime and half dime collectors buy raw coins due to the fact that the cost of slabbing is prohibitive on most of these coins. Reed counting for these numismatists is an essential tool to avoid being taken by unscrupulous sellers. So how do you count the reeds on a coin and what tools do you need.

The tools needed are simple; a good 30 power microscope, proper lighting, the bell housing from an ordinary flashlight, a ledger, and of course the necessary reference material.

You first put the coin in the bell housing of the flash light and then place the bell housing under the microscope. Adjust the microscope to your eye. You will see the reeds of the coin reflected on the bell housing around the coin. Next locate a starting point on the edge of the coin. Something that sticks out such as a minor ding or smudge of dirt. Then you start rotating the coin slowly (very slowly) as you count the reeds.

This will take some practice as it is easy to lose count or miscount. It will be necessary to count the reeds more than once to be sure you have the

correct count. Once you have the correct count, and have checked it against your reference material, it is recommended that you enter the information in a log so it won't become necessary to redo the work later.

Another way to count reeds is to take a photo of the coin in the bell housing so you can see the reeding reflected in the housing. There is an article in the E-Sylum from 9/7/2008 (available on the Newman Portal) that gives excellent advice as how to do this.

<https://nnpdev.wustl.edu/library/periodical/9728>

Reed counting is a skill that every numismatist should take the time to learn.

See images on next page...

Late Breaking Announcement:

Heritage Auctions FUN 2022 live auction sessions originally scheduled to take place at the FUN Show, January 5 - 9, 2022, have been postponed one week to January 12-16, 2022, to now be held at the Heritage Auctions Dallas Headquarters. The auctions will take place on the same day of the week and at the same time just one week later.

While the auctions have moved to Dallas the following week, Lot Viewing for the auctions will still take place at the FUN Show.

**Orange County Convention Center
North Concourse | Rooms 220BCD
9899 International Drive | Orlando, FL**

Monday, January 3 | 10:00 AM - 7:00 PM ET

Tuesday, January 4 - Thursday, January 6 |
8:00 AM - 7:00 PM ET

Friday, January 7 | 8:00 AM - 6:00 PM ET

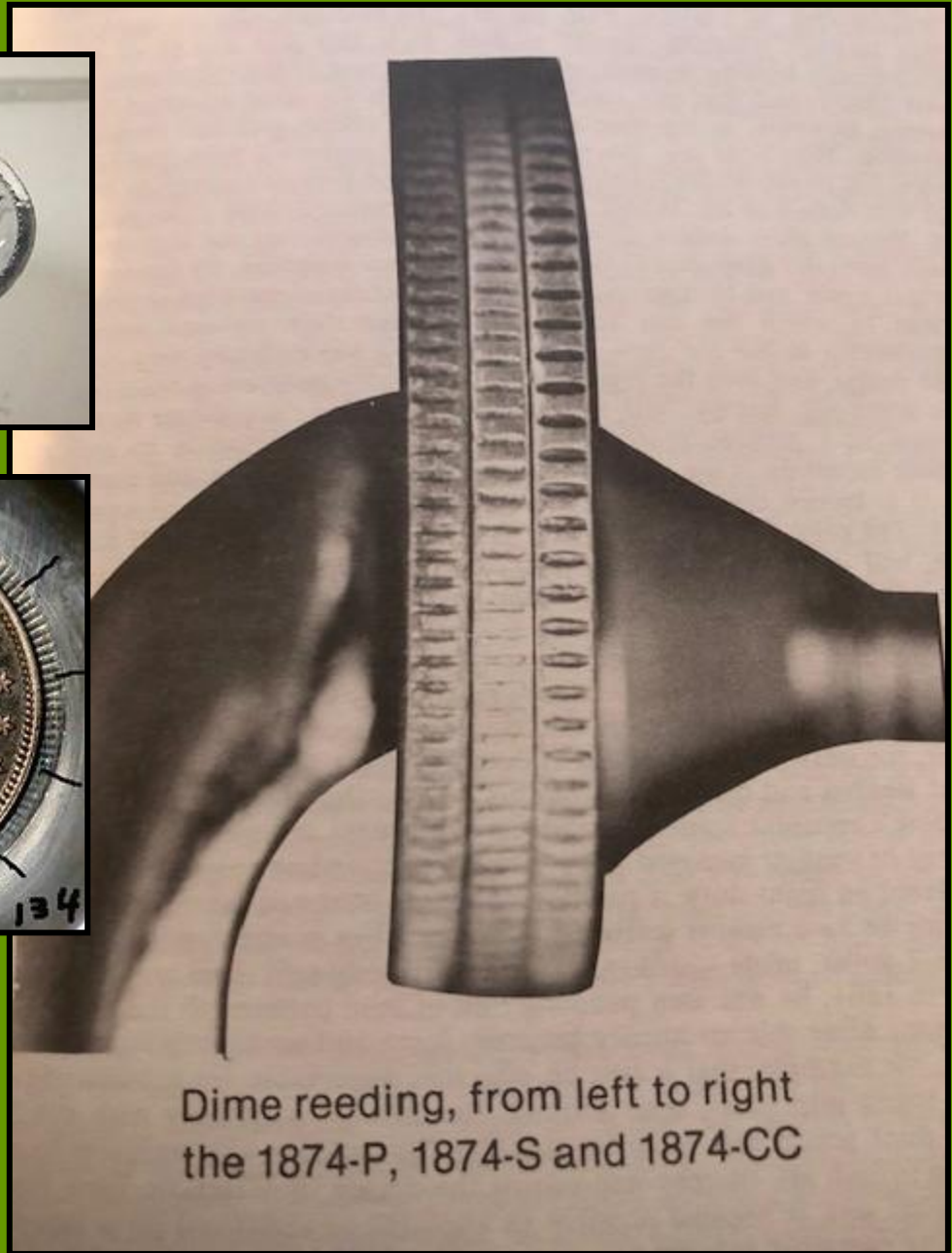
Saturday, January 8 | 8:00 AM - 12:00 PM ET



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Left two images from E-Sylum (via Newman Numismatic Portal),
September 2008, Vol. 11, No. 36, Article 13
(Flashlight bell housing with coin placed in it, and
reeds reflected on the wall of the bell housing)

Large right image from Gobrecht Journal Collective Volume I
Article by John McCloskey, August 3, 1975
(Some pioneering work by John McCloskey showing
the different reeding from the various Branch mints)



Dime reeding, from left to right
the 1874-P, 1874-S and 1874-CC

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