



Feature Article

Two New Liberty Seated Half Dollar Die Varieties

By Edward Van Orden

"Every day in the PCGS grading room is another day of potential opportunities to discover a new variety. Recently, a near-complete set of circulated Liberty Seated half dollars came in for attribution. Seeing a set of any series is always fun, but considering the number of die varieties that already exist in the Liberty Seated half dollar series gives one a tad more hope that maybe, just maybe, there's at least another one out there that hasn't been spotted yet. Equipped with Bill Bugert's books (all of which he generously posted at <http://www.lscweb.org/BillBugertBooks.php>, we eagerly plunged into the set and were able to match virtually all of them to a known die combination. There were two, however, that prompted a second look: the 1843-O and the 1867-S.

For the 1843-O, we matched the mint mark placement to that of "Reverse E" (WB-10, WB-11, and WB-12). We also matched the die cracks at "DO" and "D ST" present on a later die state (LDS) used for WB-11. In our correspondence with Mike Perkins, he wrote, "For a die sequence, I would say that the reverse die is after WB-11, but before WB-12 due to the state of the die cracks." The date, however, did not quite line up with any of the obverses associated with these varieties ("Obverse 6" [WB-10], "Obverse 7" [WB-11], and "Obverse 5" [WB-12]), so we curiously looked through our database to see if perhaps we had an unattributed example of this die pairing. To our delight, we found one - and with matching obverse die crumbling from 7:00 to 2:00, to boot!

Next up was to check the '43-O obverses in Bill's book to see if there was a match. When we got to WB-16, the date on the submitted coin appeared to line up with that of "Obverse 9." The upper die crack on the rock support connected to the drapery (under the lower left half of the shield) as well as a die polish line directly below the sandal also matched. The crumbled obverse rim and two die polish lines in the 7:00 to 2:00 area, however, were not pictured, suggesting that perhaps the unattributed and submitted coins may have been a later die state than that photographed in Bill's book. Fortunately, in our correspondence with Bill, he confirmed, "The date placement is the same and a few die lines

(Continued on next page)

**Half Crazy - The Newsletter of the Seated Half Society - Issue #3**

(Article continued from previous page)

confirm it. The die cracks are not all there, but that is to be expected with different die states. I listed the latest die state I knew in my book." So, with Bill's and Mike's approval, we had a new die marriage: WB-19 (9-E)!

Now for the 1867-S. The degree to which the "S" was rotated clockwise and the horizontal die line through the eagle's left wing made it easy to identify the "A" reverse. It also appeared to be a late die state (LDS) with the die crack from the eagle's right wing tip through the arrow shafts. Since "Reverse A" is only used with die variety WB-1, one would expect to see "Obverse 1" (also only used with WB-1). The date, however, did not line up. With "Obverse 3," however, the date seemed to line up perfectly and the die crack through the foot and base was there. There was also a notch/inner die cud in the drapery above the top-left center of the shield. We went through the PCGS database and found two other coins with not only the same notch but also with the identical date placement as well as the die crack through the foot and base. Could we have stumbled upon another new die combination? As with the 1843-O, we reached out to Bill and Mike to see what they thought. Mike emailed back, "I would say that this marriage falls in between WB-1 and WB-3, as the obverse is an earlier die state than WB-3 but the reverse is a later die state of WB-1." Bill responded with, "I think it is a 3-A also. Nice-looking coin, and it will be assigned 1867-S WB-11 as a new die marriage."

How about that! Not one but TWO new Liberty Seated half dollar varieties! Perhaps something like this won't happen again for quite some time here at PCGS, but then again... it could happen today.

Special thanks to Steve Feltner, Phil Arnold, Bill Bugert, and Mike Perkins for their expertise, and enthusiasm!

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Detailed Images with Key Attribution Diagnostics on next page.

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(Continued on next page)



Half Crazy - The Newsletter of the Seated Half Society - Issue #2

1843-O WB-19



1867-S WB-11



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