

Trade Dollar Varieties 2017 by Skip Fazzari, LSCC #195

I believe several members of our club are at the forefront of research into the Trade dollar series. One member is working on a much-needed reference on these coins. Up until it is published, collectors interested in these coins have relied on information found in the Breen Encyclopedia, the *Gobrecht Journal*, and a section of Dave Bower's *Encyclopedia of Silver Dollars*. Apparently, some updated information in this Journal is unknown to the average dealer/collector. In an effort to promote the correct identification of the design types before any more reference books are published, I will illustrate a previously overlooked Trade dollar reverse type and a "unique" reverse hub type that I reported last year. Other numismatists have noted mintmark styles and several minor anomalies on the reverses of these coins such as the size/appearance of the period/comma after "Grains." These sub-types are not dealt with here as they too have been largely ignored.

Up until 1994, Trade dollars were divided into two design types (1 and 2) by researchers and authors.

- Type 1 coins are identified by three fingers, sideways pointing ribbon ends, and a berry on the reverse.

- Type 2 coins have four fingers, a turned down ribbon end, and they are missing the berry under the eagle.

My research decades ago revealed the early dates in the series matched the obverse and reverse diagnostics previously used to identify Type 1 coins and the later dates matched the Type 2 diagnostics. Some coins in the mid-dates matched the accepted Type 1 and 2 designations while many did not!

I discovered this was due to some significant (naked-eye) modifications to the hubs that occurred in the middle dates of the Trade dollar series. Thus, in my *Gobrecht Journal*¹ article, I revised the Type designations to include "newly discovered" 2M Obverse and 2M Reverse hubs. This resulted in changes to hub combinations occurring principally in the middle range of dates (1875, 1876, and 1877). The former

Type 2 Reverse nomenclature was changed to 2L at the suggestion of the *Gobrecht Journal* editor² to keep things simple and to highlight the "new" 2M division of the no berry reverse. The different designs were illustrated and described along with a chart of the revised known hub combinations in *Gobrecht Journal* Issue #61. I updated additional findings in *Gobrecht Journal* Issue #63³ published eight months later in 1995.

Several members of the LSCC have made further contributions illustrating many of these varieties and one "new" die combination that confirmed several of my findings. Their efforts and a Type Chart showing the relative percentages of Trade dollar hub combinations for each date and mint can be found in the *Gobrecht Journal Collective Volumes* and individual issues. For the most part, the collecting fraternity and auction companies have ignored or are ignorant of these design changes and continue to use the outdated, incorrect nomenclature to identify many obverse and reverse types of these coins.

Presently, there are no changes to the "historical" Type 1 or Type 2L hubs. After missing the deadline for our Journal last year, I published the characteristics of a "rogue" reverse hub I had identified decades ago in both *Numismatic News*⁴ and *Coin World*. So far, it is only found on 1877-S Large S coins. The "why" and "how" this could happen (dies are produced in Philadelphia) remains a mystery. Initially, I thought it may be a leftover pattern reverse but I cannot find anything to support this. I have also concluded it did not result from a doubled die. I named this hub (see Figure 1 on the facing page) the "Split-Tail" variety even though the characteristic that identifies it is on the eagle's back and not the tail. The rest of the reverse design appears to match the normal hub. I suggested that it be called "hub 3." In the past year I have seen four of these coins so I believe they must be scarce.

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¹ F. Michael Fazzari. "New Die Hubs Identified for Trade Dollar Series." *Gobrecht Journal* Issue #61, November 1994.

² I.e., John McCloskey.

³ F. Michael Fazzari. "Update on Trade Dollar Hub Varieties." *Gobrecht Journal* Issue #63, July 1995.

⁴ F. Michael Fazzari. "New Trade dollar hub variety found." *Numismatic News* August 24, 1993.

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As for the additional changes, in the past the 2M hub was identified by:

Type 2M Obverse: Four fingers, turned-down ribbon ends, no finger spur, doubled top banner.

Type 2M Reverse: No berry, protruding double back feathers.

When I identified that hub in the 1990s, I focused on the similar protruding back feathers and overlooked several major differences! Since then, I have identified a further distinct division of my "old" 2M reverse hub mentioned above calling for a further division into 2M and 2M' hub Types. While the feather detail on the eagle is completely different, perhaps the easiest difference to see is the number and shape of the segments in the eagle's right leg as you look at the coin. At this time, I am calling the 5-segment reverse hub 2M and the previously overlooked hub with 6 leg segments the 2M'. I have illustrated the two different hub types side-by-side using two 1876 Trade dollars



Figure 1. Type 3
"Split-Tail" hub reverse.

(see Figure 2 below). Hopefully, by the next issue of the *Gobrecht Journal*, another member or I will be able to provide a chart showing all the revised hub combinations.

When numismatic researchers and Trade Dollar specialists have identified and verified all the known hubs, a new numbering scheme will be needed. For now, I should like to make a suggestion for the club members and for Joe Kirchgessner's new book. Let's drop the 2L designation I used in the 1990s to separate the old Type 2 hubs into 2M (middle dates) and 2L (late dates) and go back to the Type 2 nomenclature for the later hub Type. Then we can add the new hub as 2M'. This will change the reverse types to: 1, 2M, 2M', 3 (split-tail), and 2.

I am fairly certain that this article will result in additional minor changes made to the hubs and dies (especially the obverses) that remain to be discovered or that are not illustrated here. Hopefully, this article will also encourage auction houses/dealers to accurately attribute these pieces as serious collectors scramble to actually complete their Trade Dollar Registry Sets!

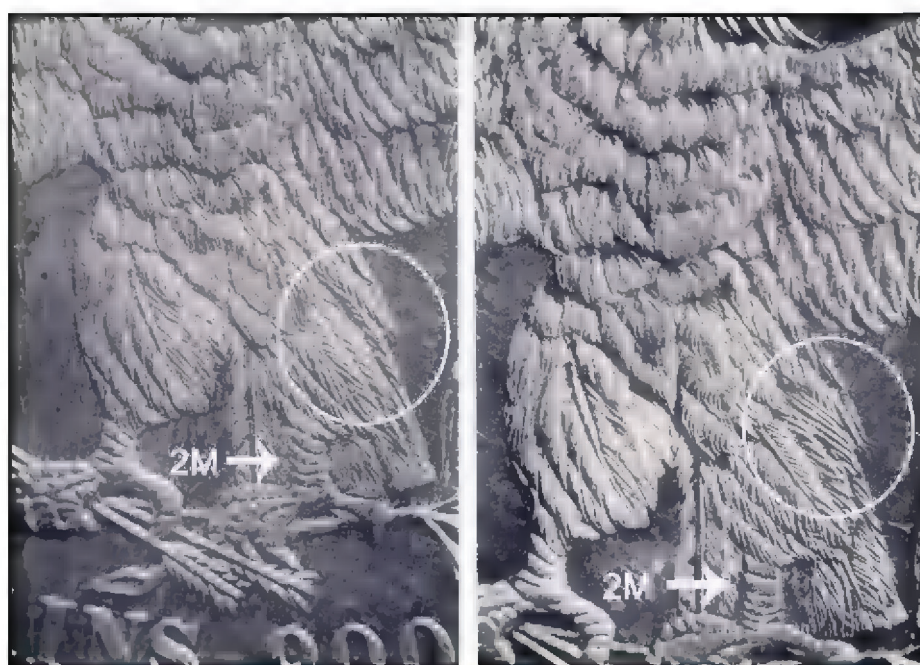


Figure 2. Type 2M hub reverse (left) and Type 2M' hub reverse (right).