

A Call for Research Information for an In-Depth Study of United States Dollars

by

Q. David Bowers

I am currently involved in a numismatic writing project and wish to issue a call to LSCC readers for contributions to this effort. My new book "Silver Dollars and Trade Dollars of the United States: A Complete Encyclopedia" is in its finishing stages and will be published this summer. If you have any research information, observations, comments or data on Liberty Seated dollars or Trade Dollars I would like to hear from you by mail. I will give credit in print for any information used in the text. Please write to me as follows: Q. David Bowers, Box 1224, Wolfeboro, NH 03894.

For Gobrecht silver dollars 1836-1839, I would like to receive information from anyone possessing even a single specimen, with such being identified as to die alignment as published by Julian and Breen and the weight of the specimen in grains. For instances in which Gobrecht silver dollars are in a state of preservation permitting the study of die states, information would be appreciated relative to die rust marks, tiny cracks around the reverse periphery and other die marks, described in as much detail as possible.

For Liberty Seated dollars I would like to correspond with anyone owning proof examples, particularly those dated 1840 through 1865 inclusive, with a view toward obtaining specific information about minute die characteristics. I am aware of the information already published by Walter Breen and Robert W. Julian, both of whom are in fact major contributors and consultants to my new book. I especially seek data not already published by these two authors, or information not finalized in Walter Breen's encyclopedias on Proof coins and on general United States coins.

I am also seeking information concerning the hoards of Liberty Seated dollars released circa 1962-1964. The literature indicates that from one thousand to three thousand 1859-O dollars in Mint State were released at the time, and up to 6,000 dated 1860-O, but I have no information as to when they were released, who found them or how they were distributed. A bit more enigmatic is the notation that a bag of one thousand 1871 Liberty Seated dollars was released. I have no information concerning this at all, except to say that today examples of this date in Mint State seem to be more available than those of certain other contemporary dates. As far as I know, Treasury distributions of Mint State Liberty Seated dollars in 1962-1964 were limited to these three dates, the 1859-O, the 1860-O and the 1871. If anyone knows of any other dates and can furnish information to document this, it would be appreciated.

I recall buying bags of circulated Liberty Seated dollars about 1964, pieces which had been distributed through one of the Federal Reserve banks. An examination revealed a wide variety of dates, including Carson City issues, with the 1847 date being the most prevalent of the early issues. This differs from the experiences related by other contributors to the journal, which suggests that such dates as 1841, 1842 and 1843 may be the most common. If anyone was part of such distributions in the early 1960s, as I was, I would be pleased to hear from you as to the quantity of dollars that you handled and the contents of the bags distributed. In my instance, no Mint State coins were in any of the bags that I examined.

Liberty Seated dollars were withheld from circulation after about 1850, when the price of silver on the international market rose to the point at which the Treasury was no longer paying them out at face value. In 1861, for example, the Mint charged \$1.08 for uncirculated coins, based on a formula derived from the value of half dollars at the time as stated in the 1861 Mint Report. From 1853 through the rest of the decade, Liberty Seated dollars were made almost exclusively for export purposes, sort of like an early day "trade dollar." These coins were shipped to China, particularly the Northern ports. If any reader has data concerning these shipments, apart from what already has been written by John Willem and Neil Carothers, and apart from the information appearing in Mint records, I would be pleased to learn of it. Of special interest would be contemporary financial and newspaper accounts concerning the use of Liberty Seated dollars in foreign exchange.

The subject of trade dollars is also part of the study and I have already acquired much information. Needed at this point is the clarification of technicalities, specifically new information concerning the relative rarity of Type I and Type II obverse and reverse variety combinations of the mid-1870s. I would also like to know of the existence of 1884 trade dollars struck in copper, the whereabouts of a complete 1884 copper Proof set which was in existence in the 1930s, and information from anyone who has bought or sold or who has possessed silver trade dollars dated 1884 and 1885 during the past ten years.

If you can help with any of these issues I would really appreciate hearing from you.

