

The Shield Nickel

by
Michael Wescott
with Kendall Keck

From the book
*The United States Nickel Five-Cent Piece:
History and Date-by-Date Analysis*

Bowers & Merena
Wolfeboro, New Hampshire
1991

ISBN: 0-943161-37-1

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the following people for their assistance, information, and encouragement for this work.

Bonnie Keck Adams
Thomas M. Barosko
JoAnne Barrineau
Jack Beymer
Lawrence Block
Q. David Bowers
Walter Breen
Lynn Chen, ANA Library
Andrea Christy
Bela G. Danko
Amy Davies
James T. Donohue, Ph.D
E.W. "Bob" Everett
Bill Fivaz
Karen Flowers
Ann Gibbons
Sandra Gray
Jon Grove
Joyce Ham
Kenneth R. Hill
Michael J. Hodder
Peggy Holden
August Jackson
Ethel McLeod Johnson
Robert W. Julian

Robert & Larry Keck
Ginger Kern
Thomas S. LaMarre
Mary N. Landis & Family
Julie Manning
Mandy Mason
Beth Moore
Bernard A. Nagengast
Mary Perry
Delma K. Romines
LoRan Ross
Robert R. Van Ryzin
Michael Schmidt
Stephen K. Schmidt
Les LeRoy Smith
J.T. Stanton
Jerry Stover
Dwight H. Stuckey
Garry Talbert
Stephen R. Taylor
Thomas S. Valente
Margaret Wescott & Family
Clint Wilkins
Lee Wilson

Special Thanks to Manuscript Consultants: Michael Schmidt, Walter Breen, Bernard Nagengast, James Donohue and Dwight H. Stuckey.

THE SHIELD NICKEL

1866 - 1883

Nickel had been used in Switzerland for coinage in 1850 – for the first time ever, according to the April 1901 *American Journal of Numismatics*. In China and India the white copper called *pack fong* was used to counterfeit silver. In about the year 1700 a strange ore was found in the copper mines of Saxony. The miners called it kuper nickel, or false copper, after "Olk Nick" and the mischievous gnomes because although it looked like copper ore, it yielded a brittle, unfamiliar metal when smelted. In 1751 nickel was isolated by Swedish chemist and mineralogist Baron Axel Fredrik Cronstedt, who prepared an impure sample from an ore containing niccolite (NiAs). The sample, he reported, was white, brittle, and nonmalleable with a melting point nearly as high as iron. In 1823 pure nickel was obtained by analysis of German silver. Nickel is twice as abundant as copper and makes up .016% of the earth's crust. Its atomic number is 28.

Early in 1853 the price of copper planchets for cents was higher than the face-value of the coins, and the U.S. Mint considered the use of nickel in coinage. The price of copper went down after March of 1853, but in 1856 more efforts were made to replace the large cent. A well-known pattern for the new small cent, Judd-180, was struck in a nickel alloy in 1856. Its Flying Eagle design, by James Longacre, was adopted and used for circulating coinage in 1857 and 1858. Then the design was changed to the Indian cent design, again by Longacre. The composition of the cent was changed to bronze by an April 22, 1864 bill.

One of the largest producers of nickel was Joseph Wharton (1826-1909), whose Bethlehem Iron Company purchased a nickel mine in Lancaster Gap, Pennsylvania. This purchase was encouraged by the Philadelphia Mint, as they would rather obtain their coinage nickel from a "local," than any foreign company. Wharton had stalled the Mint's change to bronze for the cent until 1864, and helped push the nickel/copper three-cent piece. By supporting a nickel five-cent piece, he was anticipating a profitable post-Civil War period.

Also in 1864 a new denomination was introduced, the two-cent piece. During the Civil War just about all the coins in circulation had been hoarded. The introduction of these two-cent pieces was quite popular, and would soon bring about the nickel five-cent piece.

Though the silver half dime (1794-1873) was still being produced by the Mint in 1866, its production was too limited to serve as a general circulating coin; total mintage in that year for silver half dimes was less than 131,000. As soon as these coins left the Mint, according to Walter Breen, they "vanished," often into melting pots. As Neil Carothers wrote in his *Fraction-*

al Money, "After June, 1862, the United States mints were, so far as silver was concerned, merely establishments conducted for the benefit of New York and San Francisco bullion dealers."

Having no idea what the future might hold, the government had no wish to terminate the silver half-dime but it wanted, at the same time, to introduce a coin of proportionate value of base metal and attempt to popularize it. Also, the new five-cent pieces were to be a replacement for the five-cent fractional notes, which sported a portrait of Spencer M. Clark of the Currency Bureau. Many were furious that Clark had put his own living portrait on the 5c notes; a portrait of William Clark, of the Lewis and Clark "Corps of Discovery" Expedition, was expected instead. As a direct result, a bill was passed April 7, 1866 forbidding the portrayal of a living person on federal coins and currency. Spencer Clark only kept his job because Treasury Secretary Salmon P. Chase supported him.

Those people in support of nickel coins began to push for a nickel five-cent coin. However, they had to get through Mint Director James Pollock, former governor of Pennsylvania, of the Whig party from 1855-58. He favored the silver half-dime. Pollock was eventually persuaded to throw his grudging support behind the proposed nickel five-cent piece on the understanding that once the economic problems had been solved the production of silver half dimes would resume in quantity.

In his annual report for the fiscal year of 1865, Pollock wrote that he would accept a nickel five-cent coin. He also said that the new coin would have to be no heavier than 3.89 grams, but there was a movement at the end of the war for the country to go to the metric system, and nickel supporters hoped that the new nickel five-cent piece could become a part of this standard. They wanted the nickel to be exactly five grams in weight and 20 millimeters in diameter.

The act to authorize the coinage of the nickel five-cent piece (14 Stat. L. 47) was passed by the House of Representatives April 10, 1866. It was introduced in the Senate on April 11, read twice, and referred to the Committee on Finance. It read in part:

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, that, as soon as practicable after the passage of this act, there shall be coined at the mint of the United States a five-cent piece, composed of copper and nickel, in such proportions, not exceeding twenty-five per centum of nickel, as shall be determined by the director of the mint ...

And be it further enacted, that the said coin shall be legal tender in any payment to the amount of one dollar.

On May 16, 1866, President Andrew Johnson signed the bill. Mint Director Pollock was determined to have patterns ready at the time the bill was signed, and he called upon James Longacre (1795-1869) for designs. Under pressure,

it seems, Longacre wasn't at his best. The Shield design that was adopted is very similar to his two-cent piece design, with only a few subtle differences: the motto "IN GOD WE TRUST" was not on a scroll, and some features were added, such as the cross with flat ends that appears on the top of the shield device on the obverse. This cross is usually referred to as Maltese or a cross patté. Neither is strictly correct. A Maltese cross is dovetailed at each finial surface, while a cross patté has three lobes at the end of each arm, with the overall effect resembling a lion's paw (patté means "paw" in French: "furnished with paws.") Walter Breen believes that the cross is that of the Order of Calatrava.

It is somewhat surprising that IN GOD WE TRUST from the two-cent piece was used on the nickel five-cent piece as well because some people at the Mint had been afraid that the motto would be read "In Gold We Trust," as noted in the August 1866 *American Journal of Numismatics*, "...much nearer the fact."

The Union shield, on the obverse of the Shield nickel, was adapted from the Great Seal of the United States. The heraldic description is: "Paleways of thirteen pieces, argent and gules; a chief occupying one third of the whole, azure." The horizontal lines at the top represent blue in heraldic terms and the vertical stripes represent red, with white suggested by the absence of any lines. The blue field represents the Congress of the United States supported by the red and white stripes representing the 13 original states. The shield is so arranged that Congress holds the states together while depending solely on their support to maintain the union.

The reverse design that was finally adopted inspired some controversy, the "stars and bars" surrounding the Arabic numeral 5 on the reverse seeming to some to be proof of the rumor that Longacre favored the Confederates. This rumor has no fact or credibility, as far as we know. On the reverse there was a large 5 surrounded by 13 stars and 13 rays (1866-1867). From the remainder of 1867 until 1883 the reverse lacked the rays. The number 13, again, represents the original states. UNITED STATES OF AMERICA surrounds the upper two-thirds of the 5 and the bars and stars, while the word CENTS is at the bottom.

Some patterns seemed more artistic than the one adopted. Several different designs carried a bust of Washington, perhaps inspired by an article in the June 1865 *New York Journal of Commerce* advocating a bust of our first president on a coin. Another carried one of Lincoln from a photograph by Mathew B. Brady, who is best known for his pictorial history of the Civil War and his *National Photographic Collection of War Views and Portraits of Representative Men* (1870).

A Washington design had already been used on patterns for the two-cent piece in 1863, and Lincoln portraits had appeared on Paquet medals, and we can assume that Longacre had a model in front of him as he "designed"

these patterns. Q. David Bowers once remarked that he thought that one of these designs would have been more interesting.

The Shield nickel was, at the time, called "the ugliest of all known coins."² Joseph Wharton, the nickel mine owner who had pushed the nickel/copper three- and five-cent pieces, said: "[The Shield nickel] has an awkward and lumpy appearance and is entirely devoid of resonance. The design of its [obverse] strongly suggests the old fashioned pictures of a tombstone surmounted by a cross overhung by weeping willows, which suggestion is corroborated by the religious motto [IN GOD WE TRUST]. It is a curiously ugly device."³

On May 28, 1866, Pollock sent to the Treasury Secretary Longacre's patterns with an explanation of each. He commented in his letter that he favored the shield design. He didn't send the Lincoln pattern, possibly because he believed that the portrait wouldn't have been acceptable in the South so soon after the war. Obviously, Pollock shared the opinion that people should not appear on coins, which was quite a widespread belief. Also, the shield design had the lowest relief, and would have caused the least amount of wear to the dies during striking. This last argument was decisive, and the shield design was accepted.

James Barton Longacre was born August 11, 1794, in Delaware Co., Pennsylvania, son of Peter Longacre, a descendant of early Swedish settlers. In his youth his talents were discovered by John F. Watson, a Philadelphia analyst, who made him an apprentice in his bookstore. It was Watson who sent Longacre to George Murray to learn the art of engraving. During his stay with Murray, Draper, Fairman & Company, he was asked to engrave the portraits of Washington, Jefferson and Hancock on the facsimile of the Declaration of Independence published by John Binns in 1820. John Vallance executed the other engraving. Being the first correct facsimile of the Declaration ever made, it cost the publisher \$9,000. It was the largest engraving made in the United States up to that time.

By 1819 Longacre had his own business and was commissioned to engrave many of the portraits in John Sanderson's *Biography of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence*, which began publication in 1820. In 1826 he engraved many of the actors in Lopez & Wemyess' *Acting American Theater*. He also worked on the *The National Portrait Gallery of Distinguished Americans* with New York publisher James Herring, published in 1834 and 1839.

When Mint Engraver Christian Gobrecht died on July 23, 1844, President John Tyler (on recommendations by Secretary of State John C. Calhoun) ap-

pointed James Longacre to the post. He assumed the position on September 16. Longacre was an excellent portrait engraver but had no experience at die sinking. Between the years 1844-1849 this lack of skill was not apparent as his only responsibility appears to have been adding dates on dies. His lack of skill nearly cost him his job in 1850, however.

While he was a mint engraver, he designed the types of the Flying Eagle cent, 1856-1858; Indian Head cent, 1859-1909; two-cent piece, 1864-1873; silver and nickel three-cent pieces, 1851-1873 and 1865-1889; Shield type nickel five-cent piece, 1866-1883; Liberty Head gold dollars, 1849-1854; Indian Head gold dollars, 1854-1889; three-dollar gold pieces, 1854-1889; and double eagle \$20 gold Liberty type, 1849-1907. He also worked on remodeling the coinage of Chile.

Longacre died in Philadelphia on January 1, 1869. Four days later a memorial was attended by all the employees of the Mint.

THE 1865 NICKEL PATTERNS

Longacre's first patterns for the nickel are dated 1865. They looked much like the designs that were accepted, with a few minor differences, the biggest being the date. There is also a dot in the center of the reverse of Judd-416 and 417, the same reverse as used on the regular 1866 Proofs. Judd-419 is the Without Rays type, dated 1865 but probably made in 1866 or, more likely, 1867, when this type first appeared. Since Judd-418 has the reverse hub of 1869-70, this 1865-dated pattern was probably made in 1869 or even later. Most of these patterns in nickel and copper are rare, with fewer than 12 pieces known.

THE 1866 NICKEL PATTERNS

In 1866 many nickel patterns were made with a bust of George Washington and a variety of reverses, most with the numeral 5 in a wreath, some with the regular Shield nickel reverse die (Judd-461 through 485). Above Washington a number of different mottos can be seen, such as UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, IN GOD WE TRUST, or GOD AND OUR COUNTRY. Some of these are rare, with just two to three pieces known; Judd-480 is unique. Judd-486 through 488 have a bust of Lincoln. Judd-489 through 496 have an obverse similar to the design of the regular issue, except that the ball at the bottom of the shield divides the date in two. Most of the patterns after this are similar to those already discussed. Many patterns dated 1866 in Judd's book are "mules," that is, the obverse of one design combined with the obverse of another design, or a reverse combined with the reverse of another design. This sometimes produced a coin with two obverses or two reverses! Judd-531a is a mule of the regular Shield nickel obverse die and the obverse of a \$3 gold piece. Walter Breen wrote to Michael Wescott in an October 30, 1988 letter concerning these sorts of "patterns:"

²—The *American Journal of Numismatics*, August 1866.

³Wharton, Joseph. *Memorandum Concerning Small Money, with Illustrations of Existing Nickel Alloy Coins.* (1877)

Allegedly such pieces were struck outside the Mint from genuine dies. How the (regular shield obverse and the \$3 gold obverse) dies left the mint is unknown: another scrap metal sale? Reportedly some dies of the period were once in the Boston Numismatic Society, later retrieved; this may explain Judd-513 through 533, 545, 547, 574-585, 601 and 691. None of these [(mules)] is a pattern [(proposed coinage design)]...

THE 1867-1871 NICKEL PATTERNS

On December 15, 1863, a suggestion was made to Director of the Mint James Pollock by Mint assayers Jacob R. Eckfeldt and William E. DuBois. They thought that an aluminum coin should be substituted for the half dime. Longacre designed the patterns, as his interest in aluminum coinage dated back to 1859. Since many of these half dime designs appear also on nickel patterns at the time, they are of interest here. Aluminum was then a precious metal; some of the patterns, accordingly, had reeded edges. All of the five-cent patterns of 1867-1868 (Judd-561 through 585, 623 through 636) bore a bust of Liberty on the front — some may be tempted to say a more attractive one than Barber's design — and many have a Roman numeral "V" on the reverse. The same sort of design was to appear on all the "minor" coinage. Perhaps these influenced Barber somewhat when he designed the Liberty nickel.

The design on the patterns seems to be another variation of Longacre's standard Liberty, on which he simply changed the hair and/or headdress but kept the same facial features. Longacre's ultimate source is said to be a Philadelphia museum's plaster cast of a Roman marble in the Vatican. Some of the designs have a 5 on the reverse and some have the Shield nickel reverse. A few of these patterns are unique, while as many as 50 are thought to have been struck of others.

Most of the 1869 patterns (Judd-683 through 690) are like the preceding patterns, but one interesting mule has the obverse of the Shield nickel and on the other side the obverse of the Indian cent — the unique Judd-691. A group of five went successively from the collection of S.S. Crosby, T. Harrison Garrett, John Work Garrett, Johns Hopkins University, to Bowers & Ruddy's Garrett Sale (3/80:988,991, 992, 999, 1001), to Auction '84:1225-29.

1866. J-479. Obv. Washington, 1 GWT. Rev. Regular type of 1870, no rays. 92.9 grains. *White metal*. Dies from this reverse hub. Went into use in late 1869. Ex S.S. Crosby, Garrett:988. Auction '84:1225. \$2,750.

1866. J-521. Obv. bust of Washington, USA. Rev. Bust of Washington, 1 GWT. *Silver*. 72.1 grs. Two-headed. Ex S.S. Crosby, Garrett:991, Auction '84:1226. \$4,180.

1866 J-523. Same. *Brass*. 88.1 grs. Two-headed. Ex S.S. Crosby, Garrett:992, Auction '84:1227. \$3,520.

1867 J-unlisted. Obv. 1866 Bust of Washington, USA. Rev. Head of L, star on coronet, 1867. "Nickel alloy." Like J-584 except alloy. 85.1 grs. Two-

headed, two different dates. Ex S.S. Crosby, Garrett:999, Auction '84:1228. The 1867 die was also muled with a pre-1865 \$5 rev, no motto. Nickel alloy. 86.1 grs.

1869? J-unlisted. Obv. 1866 Bust of Washington, 1 GWT. Rev. Head of L, 1869. "Nickel alloy." 96.3 grs. Two-headed, two different dates. Ex S.S. Crosby, Garrett:1001, Auction '84:1229. The 1869 die also comes muled with a \$5 reverse, no motto (before 1865):J-778. Brass. 62 grs. USA on both sides. Ex S.S. Crosby, Garrett:1086.

No patterns were struck in 1870; in 1871 the patterns (Judd-1050 through 1058) again show Longacre's Liberty with the V or 5 reverse. A surprising number are known of most of these patterns, although one was done in steel and is believed to be unique (Judd-1058).

THE SHIELD NICKEL REGULAR ISSUES
TYPE I SHIELD NICKEL, WITH RAYS
(1866-1867)

1866



Mintage Proofs

14,742,500	200+
-------------------	-------------

Regular mintage of 1866 Shield nickels began in June 1866. They were first sold in Uncirculated sets of four with a gold dollar for \$35. Although 14,742,500 were minted, this issue is often more difficult to obtain in the higher grades than one might expect from the mintage figures. This date is sought after not only by the Shield specialist and collector, but also the investor. As a first year issue, it is often wanted by the type collector. In this date especially there were many striking problems and very low die life. Almost any higher grade nickel will exhibit many die cracks, which is true of most dates but especially the early ones, and many of the nickels were of low quality. According to Walter Breen, in fact, nickel planchets caused more die breakage than all other denominations put together! Low grade specimens of the early dates are usually not attractive coins, for several reasons. Many were not struck well, and the dies wore down quickly. Also, Shield nickels simply don't wear attractively.

Major varieties for this date include some heavy "doubled" dates (repunched dates), the most famous being the so-called "18666" (Breen-2462) where most of a third, fainter "ghost" 6 is seen after the normal date.



(Courtesy of Bill Fivaz)

The 18666 Shield nickel was first reported by Barney Bloom of Rochester, New York, in the September 1949 issue of *The Numismatist*. The three or more varieties in existence are very rare. See illustration in *Coin World*, September 23, 1987, p. 88. There is a heavily doubled 1866/1866 (Breen-2461) which shows doubling on *all* of the digits just as pronounced as that on the 18666. It is not as rare.



1866/1866 Nickel

(Courtesy of Bill Fivaz)

There are at least four varieties, including a tripled date. Michael Schmidt has reported the existence of a variety with the last 6 larger than the other three digits. Since dates were entered with four-digit punches, Walter Breen suggests that this may be due to a four-digit logotype being entered obliquely, numerals heavier to the right. On February 17, 1988, Joseph D. Ambrulevich

discovered a doubled obverse die, obviously an annulet, cross, shield and leaves. Shield nickels with rays (no date visible) are known on cent and three-cent planchets.

Data is fragmentary on Proofs, but there were at least 125 silver Proof sets of 1866 produced after June 1 of that year and all of these contained the new nickel five-cent piece. In addition to this, there were perhaps 75 or 100 pieces struck for the "minor" sets (total value under 10 cents). Note: The silver sets always carried the minor coinage, so the known mintages of silver Proof sets after 1858 always show the minimum number of minor Proof coins struck as well. Another problem is that, beginning in 1864, the Mint also made up sets of minor Proof coins for sale priced a few cents over face value. No useful records have been found for the sales or striking of minor Proof sets in 1866 or 1867 and the overall data for Proof coinage prior to 1878 is fragmentary. On the 1866 Proof Shield nickel the figure is set at 200+; however, it may be as high as 500.

The Proofs are all from a single pair of dies. On the reverse there is a plain dot in the center and slight recutting on the upright left of the 5. The reverse die is the same as was used on the pattern Judd-416. 1866 Proofs are often seen on granular planchets and with carbon spots. Original 1866 Proof nickels Without Rays (Judd-507, Breen-2467) have a reverse unseen elsewhere, with two center dots. Restrikes have a reverse from the hub of 1868; these were probably made for Dr. Linderman (see below).

1867 With Rays



Mintage	Proofs
2,019,000	15+

The 1867 Shield five-cent piece comes in two varieties: With Rays and Without Rays. Anyone having seen the With Rays variety, comparing it to the Without Rays, can see why the change was made in 1867. Combining the mintage of the With Rays (2,019,000) and the Without Rays 1867 (28,890,500), gives this year a total of 30,909,500 – a hefty mintage for

those days in nickel coinage, the largest mintage in the series and the only year with a mintage of over 30 million. Only 1868, with a little over 28 million, comes close.

One of the main reasons for changing the design by eliminating the rays from between the stars on the reverse was excessive die wear resulting in low quality of many of the pieces struck. In late 1866 the chief coiner (and later director) of the U.S. Mint, A. Loudon Snowden, approached James Longacre, the designer, to see if some solution could be worked out. Snowden felt that there was simply too much metal that needed to flow into the reverse design elements, which affected the obverse strikes as well. For the design to come up properly, the pressure of the dies had to be increased, and increased die breakage resulted. The greater striking force not only cracked and shattered dies, but also wreaked havoc with the coining presses, creating fresh problems for the chief coiner. The Treasury secretary, Hugh McCulloch, ordered that the rays be removed from the design on January 21, 1867. After several patterns had been made for the new reverse, Snowden informed Director Millward that the change was to be made February 1, 1867. Because of this early date, there are not nearly as many With Rays 1867 nickels as there are Without Rays, and the same is true with Proofs. The 1867 With Rays Proof is among the great Proof rarities, with 15-30 existing.

A.L. Snowden refused to strike the With Rays 1867 in Proof, so these Proof coins were probably not struck under Mint authority. Perhaps Dr. Linderman, who became director in April of that year, had them struck, as his collection of patterns and Proofs was, reportedly, a very good one, and perhaps he couldn't pass up the opportunity. Obviously in this situation all the owners would keep quiet about it, and the exact number minted is unknown, but fewer than 20 are thought to exist by some, although estimates of up to 30 have been reported. Some suggest that the total number struck is even higher. In *Walter Breen's Complete Encyclopedia of U.S. and Colonial Coins*, Breen writes:

(1867) Proofs with rays, evidently clandestine, have become major rarities (12-15 known); they come from a single pair of dies, before and after repolishing. As prooflike early business strikes from other dies are far less rare, diagnostic criteria for the real Proofs are necessary. State I: Roughness at base of all white stripes except that farthest (left); outer leaf below RU detached but not hollow; (reverse) ray below T(ES) hollow, dentils 3:00-5:00 attenuated. State II: Same dies repolished; leaf below RU hollow; ray below T(ES) incomplete; dentils at 2:30-5:00 still thinner, weaker. This supersedes account in Breen {1977}, p. 132. ... State I (at least 5 known) discovered subsequently.

Several interesting varieties occur on some of the Shield nickels of the 1867 With Rays type. One is the 1867/1867 that appears somewhat as 186677; this variety has doubling on all of the digits, but most noticeably on the 6 and 7, where doubling is seen far to the left.



1867 Doubled Date

(Courtesy of Jack Beymer)

The 1867 doubled date varieties are listed as Breen-2464. Breen-2465 is a "very rare" tripled date, described as: "One of the extra dates is below final position, the other a little (to the right); other varieties possible."⁴ Another variety shows parts of an extra 1 & 7 at the left and right of the date, and yet another has a date so far to the right that the 8 is under the ball!



1867 Doubled Die Obverse

(Courtesy of Bob Everett)

There is a doubled obverse die, plainest at the bottom of shield. Jack Beymer's discovery coin has a heavy crack from 1 to rims nearly as thick as the 1.

1867 With Rays nickels are known on three-cent stock, very underweight; reported in *Error Variety News*, October 1984.

⁴ Breen, Walter. *Walter Breen's Complete Encyclopedia of U.S. and Colonial Coins*. Garden City: Doubleday, 1988; page 296.

TYPE II SHIELD NICKEL, WITHOUT RAYS (1867-1883)

OBVERSE AND REVERSE HUB TYPES

Starting with this variety, in the Shield series there are three different obverse and reverse hub types. The first obverse hub type also applies to the With Rays Shield nickels, but the three reverse types listed here are only for the Without Rays variety (the With Rays reverse hub is obviously an entirely different hub simply because it has the rays). Les LeRoy Smith has supplied the following tips for hub type identification:

OBVERSE HUB TYPES

Type 1 Outer leaf of the second cluster on the right indistinct, upper left arrowhead notched, edge of left cross arm slants down to left. This obverse hub type is seen on all Shield nickels 1866-1868, and on half of the 1869 dated Shield nickels.

Type 2 Main leaf of first cluster on the right missing stem, edge of left cross arm slants down to right (as opposed to left as on Type 1), upper left arrowhead blunt, feathers at left are wavy along the upper edge, scroll lacks details. This hub type occurs on half of 1869, all of 1870 and 1871, and half of 1872.

Type 3 Upper left arrowhead pointed (not blunt as in Type 2), second leaf of third cluster at the right is misshapen, feathers at left are jagged (as opposed to wavy on Type 2), scroll details intact. Occurs on half of 1872 and later dates.

REVERSE HUB TYPES

Type 1 The star below the O in OF has one blunt point (it appears to be chipped at the point). This is always there and can be spotted with the naked eye. Occurs on all 1867 Without Rays and some of 1868, 1869, and 1870.

Type 2 The star below ES in STATES points to the serif of the S. This can be seen with the naked eye. Type 2 is the only hub with the star so positioned. Occurs only in 1868. About one-third of 1868 is Type 2 (according to Les LeRoy Smith's estimate).

Type 3 Everything that isn't Type 1 or 2. Star #8 (below O) is normal and star #7 (below ES) points to E as it does on Type 1. Type 3 occurs on most 1869s, all but one (known thus far) variety of 1870, and all varieties from 1871 on.

Thus the following chart can be used to determine what varieties exist of particular dates:

OBVERSE

1866 to 1868 – Type 1 only
 1869 – Types 1 and 2
 1870 and 1871 – Type 2 only
 1872 – Types 2 and 3
 1873 on – Type 3 only

REVERSE

1867 Without Rays – Type 1 only
 1868 – Types 1 or 2
 1869 – Type 3 mostly, sometimes Type 1
 1870 – Type 3 mostly, Type 1 on one variety
 1871 on – Type 3 only

1867 Without Rays



Mintage	Proofs
28,890,500	600+

This issue is very modestly priced and readily obtainable. With its mintage at 28,890,500, it is usually available on the market in every grade and condition. The rays between the stars on the reverse were removed in order for the metal to flow into the die properly to create the wanted design. Although the removal of the rays on the reverse helped the coining of the design, specimens are still found with poor strikes. This issue is scarce in gem Uncirculated; the stars are not usually all struck up fully.

The mintage estimate for the Proof 1867 Without Rays is set at 600+. There are several Proof obverse die varieties, including a normal date and one with a faintly recut date.

There are several major varieties, doubled dates (Breen-2470) and a tripled date (Breen-2471). One doubled date variety shows part of an additional 7

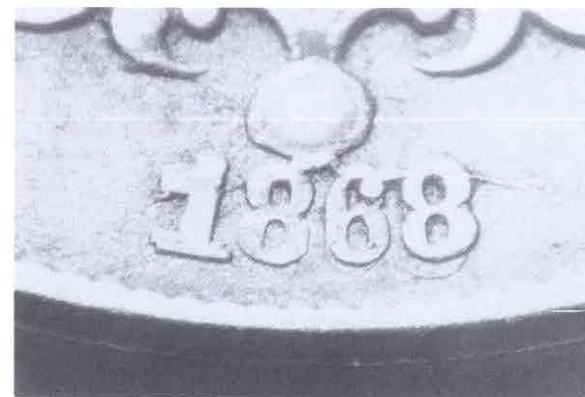
emerging from the right side of the ball. Several major 1867/67 varieties exist. There is also a doubled obverse die. Without Rays Shield nickels (no dates visible) are known on cent and three-cent planchets, and are reported on half dime and quarter eagle planchets.

1868



Mintage	Proofs
28,817,000	600+

This is the easiest of the early dates to find in gem Uncirculated condition. Most 1868 Shield nickels show the date crowded into ball, with the first 8, the 6, or both touching and even overlapping the ball.



1868/1868 Nickel

(Courtesy of Bill Fivaz)

At least six doubled die obverse varieties exist, with both Type 1 and Type 2 reverse hubs. A tripled date variety also exists (Type 1 reverse). The Type 2 hub chipped at C(ENT)S and was replaced in 1869.

The Proof issue of 1868 had the advantages of improved dies. This in turn led to a far better surface than in earlier Proofs. Mintage for this issue is like

the 1867 Without Rays, being set at 600+. All Proofs are from the Type 1 reverse hub. Two obverse dies were used:

Die I: Normal date. Rarer of the two.

Die II: Base of 1 recut in date, lower circle of a repunched 8 overlaps the middle section of the second 8. Date is away from ball (on many business strikes the date touches or even overlaps the ball).

Some Proofs may exist with rotated reverses, as these occur on other denominations of this year.

1869/8 Overdate

The 1869/8 overdate with the narrow numerals type date of 1869 was discovered by Walter Breen (2480) in 1960. However, some specialists doubt the coin's authenticity, perhaps because most of the overdates are in low grades. Q. David Bowers, in his *United States Three-Cent and Five-Cent Pieces*, notes: "Don Taxay lists an '1869/8' overdate in his *Comprehensive Catalogue and Encyclopedia of United States Coins*, but all such 'overdates' seen by me have been recut dates and have not clearly shown an 8 under the 9." While under the circumstances it is very difficult to prove one way or the other, it is the belief of the present writer that the overdate does exist. Even Proofs are rumored.



1869 5c 9/8?

(Courtesy of Bill Fivaz)

1869



Mintage	Proofs
16,395,000	600+

There are two different date types of this year, the narrow numerals or "tall date" type (2481, type of 1868) and the wide numerals (2482 & 3) or "fat date" type. The narrow numerals type was first noticed by Walter Breen in 1959 and is the rarer of the two date varieties.

This issue, with a mintage of 16,395,000, catalogues in the same price range as the two dates preceding it, although the mintage is over 10 million less in both cases. This date is becoming harder to find but is still somewhat easily obtainable. However, it is very scarce in gem Uncirculated.

There are several major repunched "double dates" that are sometimes mistaken for overdates. A doubled die obverse variety was discovered by Richard G. Mulfinger in 1970.



1869 Repunched Date

(Courtesy of Les Leroy Smith)

All Proofs of this date are of the regular "fat" date type, and all are from reverse hub Type 1.

1870



Mintage Proofs

4,806,000

100+

The mintage of this year is about one-quarter of 1869 but catalogues for the same prices in most conditions. It would seem there just isn't much demand for this date. Although not as often offered as one might think, the date sells for low prices when found and is perhaps one of the better buys in the series. If and when the series gains popularity the prices of this date will most likely shoot up. Scarce in gem Uncirculated.

There is a doubled die obverse listed by Walter Breen as "Very Rare" (Breen 2487). Also, at least two doubled date varieties known. A doubled die reverse variety exists, as reported in the January 1981 *Error Variety News*, page 10. Plainest at TED, (T)S and several stars. Gules overlap azure in shield. The second is that of Jack Beymer.

The Proof issue of 1870, with mintage figures somewhat higher than the previous three years at 1000+, commands a higher price than the 1869, which, in Proof, is considerably rarer than the 1870. This is due to the fact that the total mintage, including business strikes and Proofs for 1870, is about one-fourth that of 1869. The planchets used for the 1870 Proofs were often granular. There were two obverse dies used:

I: Die filemark slants down to the right near the cross; curved lines in lower horizontal stripes.

II: Left arrow butt is attenuated; the right line in the first two vertical stripes is incomplete at the top. Some of the shield's outlines are incomplete.

As for the reverse Proof die, it is the same one that was used later for one of the three 1871 Proof varieties. However, according to specialist Michael Schmidt, the 1870 reverse is in a *later die state* than when it was matched with the 1871 obverse! This reverse die can be clearly identified by a die spike from the rim between TA in STATES pointing roughly to the center of the first T. The reverse was also made from a hub that was crumbling at the bottom of S in CENTS.

1871



Mintage Proofs

561,000

960+

The 1871 Shield nickel is the rarest easily affordable date in the series. The only dates with lower mintages are those from 1877-1881, which can cost hundreds of dollars more. The coin is, however, seldom offered on the market – but when it is, it is very inexpensive considering and is probably very underrated. It has been said that Uncirculated 1871 Shield nickels are rarer than Uncirculated 1879-1881! Almost all of those offered for sale are in the low grades, and even these can be difficult to come by.

For Proofs, at least three die pairs were used. One of the reverse dies was also used in 1870 (see entry for 1870).

I: The 7 and the 1 in the date nearly touch each other; the ball is over the 8 and the left half of the 7; the left base of the first 1 is just right of the left edge; the date is high to the right and the right base of the final 1 is slightly off-center. Unpolished areas are found at the bases of the horizontal stripes and the tops of the vertical stripes are incomplete at the right, especially the first two. On the reverse there are extra outlines on all of the stars and many of the letters.

II: The 7 and the 1 touch; the date is high to the left; the ball extends from above the center of the top of the 8 to over the right corner of the 7; tops of the vertical stripes are incomplete. It is unknown which dies are rarer of I or II.

III: The 7 and 1 do not quite touch; repunched date placed well to the right – first cut low then corrected. Very rare.

There is one doubled date variety listed as Breen-2489, "Very Rare." Date was first entered too high, then corrected. Fivaz & Stanton, *Cherrypicker's Guide*, 5c-006 (Rarity-5), shows a doubled obverse die. Counterfeits made for circulation in the 1870's are known.

1872

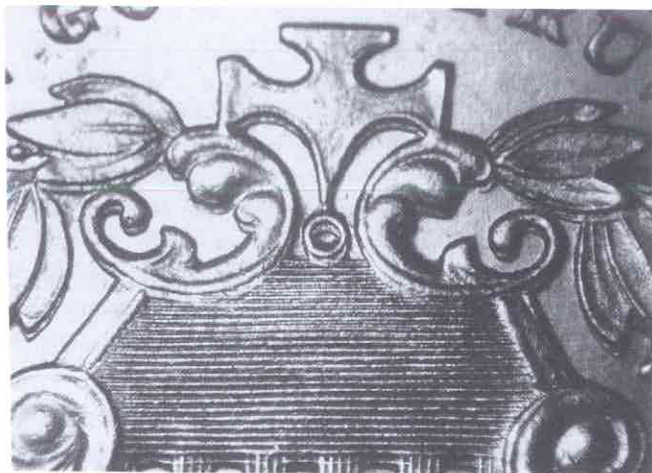


Mintage	Proofs
6,036,000	950+

This date is more elusive than one may think. Despite its regular mintage figure of 6,036,000, this date hasn't been offered to a very large extent by dealers. Very scarce in gem Uncirculated.

There are several minor Proof varieties, one with a "heavy" date and a partly filled 2 and another, rarer, with a thin date and doubling on the shield.

There are two 1872 doubled die obverses (2492), found on both business strikes and Proofs.



1872 Doubled Die Obverse

(Courtesy of Bill Fivaz)

Heavy doubling is seen on certain parts of the obverse, mostly the circle, cross, leaves, scrollwork and horizontal lines.



1872/72 Doubled Die Obverse

(Courtesy of Bill Fivaz)



1872 Large over Small Date

(Courtesy of Kenneth R. Hill)

One of the doubled reverse varieties is found with the bottom of the S in CENTS missing on the reverse due to a hub defect (see 1870). A *tripled* obverse variety was described by Mark Etheridge in the March 1989 *Errorscope*, Vol. 5, No. 8, page 21, (3/89).

Another major variety was discovered by Kenneth R. Hill, September 8, 1979. The 1872 date appears to have been punched over a larger date that, when first reported in the Summer 1988 *Nickel News*, was thought to be meant for a half dime. Later, Mr. Hill concluded that the original (larger) date was intended for a quarter eagle gold piece. The second example of this variety is owned by Jack Beymer and has been authenticated by Walter Breen. Naked eye variety: look for part of extra 8 running into ball. Two known to date.

1873/2 Overdate

There are two 1873/2 varieties listed by Walter Breen in his *Complete Encyclopedia of U.S. and Colonial Coins*. On the first variety he reports: "1873/1872 Open 3. Ex. rare. Discovered by [Walter Breen] about 1957. All digits show double punching at bases; the 1872 logotype was first entered low and slanting up [to the right], then the 1873 Open 3 logotype was repeatedly and heavily entered, to obscure traces of overdate. 1) Breen, Kagin (1957). 2) Kagin, Eliasberg Estate. 3) John Petrasich (repunched date) 1990. 4) reported.

According to Breen, the second variety is also a doubled die obverse and it was discovered by Bill Fivaz, although it is not certain what the original date was (1872 or 1873). There are other varieties with what may be a 2 under the 3.

Although the second 1873/2's discovery is attributed to Bill Fivaz by Breen, Fivaz writes in a letter to Michael Wescott (November 2, 1987): "I have never seen an 1873 that convinced me it was a 3/2...." The illustration at Breen-2497 speaks for itself. Another specialist, Les LeRoy Smith writes (October 14, 1987): "I have recently come to the conclusion that the [so-called 1873/2] that [Bill Fivaz] and Jack Beymer have examples of is not an overdate ... in that instance, I believe it is a 3/3 with the under-digit tilted sharply to the right (50 degrees or so)." But as dates were impressed by 4-digit logotypes the 187 must have been entered crossing the ball.

All supposed overdates are from the Open 3 variety of the 1873 date.

1873



Mintage Proofs

4,550,000	1,100+
-----------	--------

Not only is the 1873 issue one of the more popular dates of the Shield nickel series with collectors, but the "Open 3" and "Closed 3" varieties of the figure 3 are among the more famous.

Publicized by Harry X Boosel, the Closed 3 variety's mintage was 436,050, while the Open 3 has a mintage of 4,113,950. Although the Closed 3 variety is much rarer, they are listed in catalogues at the same value as the Open 3, if they are listed separately at all.

The Closed 3 type was the original type; however, on January 18, 1873 the chief coiner complained to the director that the Closed 3 looked too much like an 8 because the knobs on the 3 touched or almost touched. For the record, the 1878 date is larger than the 1873.

It seems that all of the Proofs, and a rather large number of them for the time, are of the Closed 3 variety. The Proof mintage has been estimated at 1,100+; it has been listed as 1,650.

In 1873 there is another doubled die obverse, less drastic than the 1872. It is seen especially on the circle and bottoms of the leaves. It is listed by Walter Breen as "Extremely Rare." (2494)

Closed 3: Another doubled obverse, the two impressions far enough apart that the annulets *do not overlap*, and there is severe overlap of extra azure at vertical stripes. Discovered by Bob Everett.

1873 Large Date over Small Date

Discovered and reported by Bill Fivaz in 1987, this is definitely a major discovery. The 1 and the 8 are doubled to the right, but the 7 and the 3 are doubled to the left. Also, looking at the doubled 3, the second date is clearly made up of smaller numerals. The first 1873 date punch clearly had smaller numbers, possibly meant for the silver three-cent piece. However, in 1873 on silver three-cent pieces (and half-dimes, for that matter), the only date type known is with the "Closed 3" type, and this one is open. Three, perhaps four, of this variety are known to us at present. Bill Fivaz's coin, seen



1873 Large Date over Small Date

at ANA, August 26, 1987, which is a very early die state; a coin owned by Kenneth R. Hill of Seattle; a low grade (VG-F) specimen owned by Michael Schmidt of Kentucky; and perhaps one of a much later die state, a low grade coin discovered several years before Fivaz by Delma K. Romines of, again, Kentucky.

Illustrated in *Coin World*, July 22, 1987, p. 54; Fivaz & Stanton *Cherrypicker's Guide*, 5c-009. "Rarity 6."

1874



Mintage	Proofs
3,538,000	700+

Even though this date has a lower mintage than several previously discussed dates it seems to be offered in larger numbers by dealers. Major doubled dates in both business strikes and Proof exist. There is a doubled obverse die, similar to those of earlier years. Fivaz & Stanton *Cherrypicker's Guide*, 5c-010, "R-5." Scarce in gem Uncirculated. One doubled die obverse is known; discovered by Jack Beymer. Counterfeits made in the 1870's exist.

Proof mintage figures at 700+; it seems production of Proofs was going down at this time. The Proof coins of this date are often found struck on granular planchets and/or with partly rounded edges. Two major die varieties listed by Breen in his Proof book:

- I: Strong date, usually with recutting at the top of the 4. .LP
- II: Rarer weak date.

1875/4

Listed as Breen-2503. Quoting from *Walter Breen's Complete Encyclopedia of U.S. and Colonial Coins*: "1875/874 (?) Very rare. The 875 are punched over other digits; only the 4 is uncertain (it is not another 5)." 1977 FUN:205.

1875



Mintage	Proofs
2,097,000	700+

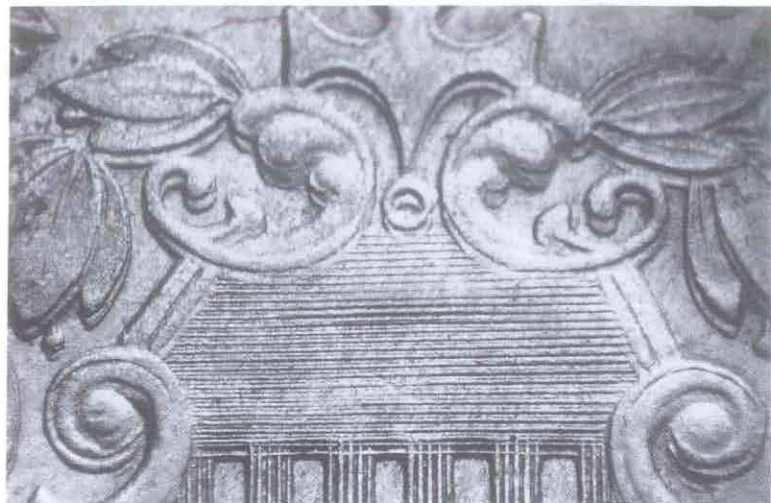
This issue has, in recent short periods, increased in value dramatically, in some cases as much as 25%. The mintage of this date is somewhat low at 2,097,000. There are at least two doubled obverse dies, more drastic than 1873 but less so than 1872. *Cherrypicker's Guide* 5c-011 R-4.



1875 Doubled Die Obverse

(Courtesy of Les Leroy Smith)

The doubling is seen especially on the circle, cross, leaves, scrollwork and horizontal lines. In one of these, date is well to right, ball above 8 and space to right. 1875 nickels are often weakly struck, and are scarce in gem Uncirculated.



1875 Doubled Die Obverse, Variety 1 (Courtesy of Bill Fivaz)

Quantities of counterfeits exist of this issue, again produced in the 1870's. Shield differs in style from the genuine.

On the Proof issues the date was often shallow; the planchets were granular and narrower than usual – thus sometimes the rims are missing.

1876



Mintage	Proofs
2,530,000	1,150+

This issue has risen considerably in value over a short period of time as did the 1875. Scarce in gem Uncirculated. This is the last date known to occur on the counterfeits made for circulation in the 1870's.

The 1876 Proof issue has character traits similar to that of 1875. There are two listed varieties: A normal date and a somewhat rarer recut date to the

right with a die crack at the left of the base of the 1 moving left towards the border.



1876 Tripled Die Obverse (Courtesy of Bill Fivaz)

One of the most famous of all Shield nickel varieties is the 1876 *tripled* die obverse, truly a fascinating variety.



1876 Tripled Die Obverse (Courtesy of Bill Fivaz)

An MS-65 example is in the collection of its discoverer, Bill Fivaz, which made the cover of the March 1986 issue of *Split Image*, newsletter of the Doubled Die and RPM Clubs, part of CONECA. The tripling is particularly evident on the circle.



1876 Triple Die Obverse

(Courtesy of Bill Fivaz)

At least two doubled obverse dies also exist, one also with repunched date.

A Treasury order suspended coinage of nickels for circulation. It remained in effect for five years, ending December 12, 1881.

1877



Mintage Proofs

0	875+
---	------

In the end of 1876 the Treasury Department suspended the coinage of nickel five-cent pieces because there was no general demand for them — they were flooding back into the Subtreasuries and the Mint.

However, the Mint still struck the Proof 1877 nickels for collectors. It is difficult, because of the loss of the records in 1925, to determine the mintage of that Proof-only year (indeed, the rarest single date of nickels since 1866

excluding the 1913 Liberty Head). It is known that 510 silver Proof sets were produced and sold in this year, and these included the 1877 Proof nickels. Many coin catalogues leave it at that, listing 510 as the total mintage of 1877 nickel five-cent pieces for the year. This is wrong.

The medal department letters, however, were not destroyed in 1925, and Mr. Robert W. Julian, who has studied the records of the Mint at the National Archives for years, examined each letter and the number of *minor* Proof sets (copper and nickel coins) ordered by mail, to arrive at an estimate. He published his findings in *Coin World*, April 8, 1987, p. 38. The problem, however, is that these documents do not show how many over-the-counter sales there were at the Philadelphia Mint, and here educated guesswork has to come in.

There were 260 minor Proof sets sent out by the Mint, and adding this to the 510 nickel Proofs in the silver sets, one comes up with 770, which is the "absolute minimum." One can with confidence estimate that another 100 were sold locally or within the Mint. Thus the total number of 1877 nickels can be estimated at about 875-900, and, as Mr. Julian says, "perhaps as high as 925." 875+ is as close as possible.

The 1877 Proof-only nickel issue is one of the most romanticized, debated, and desired coins in the Shield — indeed the whole nickel — series. It is the ultimate key date of the nickel, excluding the 1913 Liberty nickel, which wasn't even an official coin. However, 1877 nickels can be obtained, with a little patience, for a reasonable price. In 1987, Bowers and Merena offered one in Proof-65 for \$3,750, and they can be obtained for less in lower quality Proof condition or impaired Proof (such as VF or EF).

The issue is characterized by a shallow date which is a little above center; reverse shows extra outlines on UNITED STATES with both E's closed on many examples. It is often found dull with rounded rims.

1878/7

According to Walter Breen, the 1878/7 is simply an early die state of one die of the 1878 nickels, with a clear shaft of the 7 in the upper reaches of the 8. This would mean that 1878 nickels are really 1878/7 nickels with the last traces of the 7 worn or polished off, thus all 1878 nickels are overdates. Possibly the most convincing photo of the overdate is in Bowers & Ruddy *Rare Coin Review* No. 38, p. 18 (July 1981).

1878



Mintage	Proofs
0	2,350

Again, this year was Proof-only, but because of the publicity the 1877 issue caused, more Proofs were produced this year. It has been referred to as the "sister" of the 1877. These cost considerably less than the 1877, and, it seems, are more often found impaired (perhaps just because there are more of them). Proofs of this year are often seen with a frosty appearance, and dealers have erroneously offered such pieces as "Uncirculated."

1879/8 Overdate

Very little is known about this coin and many collectors, dealers, and investors don't know of its existence. Very few catalogues and references list it.

This coin is listed by Walter Breen (2514) as "Very scarce." Q. David Bowers, in his book *U.S. Three-Cent and Five-Cent Pieces*, reports that the coin is found only in Proof, and is only about three times as rare as the regular 1879 Proof, leaving the mintage estimated at about 800. It has been suggested by many numismatists, however, including Bill Fivaz, that the overdate is perhaps more common than the regular Proof. Mr. Bowers has also reported that this variety is identified by a "fuzzy" section in the junction between the ball and its suspension. The reverse die is the same as the 1878 Proofs and is identified by a die chip inside the 5 at the bottom. Walter Breen reports two business strikes: 1) 1983 ANA Midwinter, 2) Ted Clark.

The overdate's 9 is narrower than the 8 and faint traces of the 8 can sometimes be seen on either side, but usually only within the top and the bottom.

1879



Mintage	Proofs
29,100	3,200

With its low mintage, this is an elusive date.

Proof mintage was a high 3,200. The Proofs of this and the next two years have almost the highest mintages in the Shield series, but are substantially more expensive because of the fact that the low total mintage of the year drives the price up. There are several die varieties in Proof listed by Breen:

- I: Overdate (separate listing)
- II: Normal except for slight recutting on the 9. The 7 almost touches the ball.
- III: Plainly doubled date.
- IV: Another doubled date, seen on the left upright section of the 1 and triple outlines are seen on the 8.
- V: Completely normal date.

The 25,900 business strikes were made for Christmas stocking stuffers and collectors of Uncirculated coins, according to Bob Julian. *Coin World*, April 8, 1987, p. 38.

Of some interest, it was in 1879 that the first "five-cent store" was opened. In Utica, NY on February 22, Frank Winfield Woolworth (1852-1919) opened his five-cent store after the idea originated at his "five-cent table" at a Moore and Smith county fair. The store was very unsuccessful until moved to Lancaster, PA in June, where it became a success. By his death in 1919, Woolworth was operating 1,000 stores in the United States and Canada.

1880



Mintage	Proofs
19,955	3,955

Bob Julian says that the 16,000 business strikes were made in January 1880 for similar purposes to the 1879's.

Although the total mintage if this year is lower than that of last year, the Proof mintage is higher: 3,955. The Proof issue is seen with two major varieties, a normal date where the first 8 touches the ball and a second variety with the second 8 recut far to the south. This variety is known sometimes as the "dropped 8" variety. The second 8 was first entered very low and then corrected. On the reverse of this variety there is evidence of re-engraving from a broken hub, the only instance among Shield nickel Proofs. The hub was broken at the top of the second S in STATES and at the bottom of the S in CENTS. These have been patched by hand – a rough channel was cut straight across from the body of the S to the serif. A large portion of the Proof mintage is of this variety.

As in the previous year, the price of Proofs is only high because of the low total mintage. Dull Proofs are often offered as business strikes.

1881



Mintage	Proofs
72,375	3,575

Although the mintage is somewhat higher than the previous two dates the 1881 doesn't seem to be any easier to obtain.

The Proof issue is like the previous two dates concerning the pricing of the Proof issues. The outline of the ball is broken near the first 8. The top inner-right berry is reattached to the east, the left base of the first 1 is slightly right of the center and the right base of the last 1 is barely right of the left edge. Most have rounded rims. Two pairs of dies made for Proofs, the first in January, the second in March, ready March 17.

On December 12, 1881, the 1876 Treasury order was no longer in effect. Much larger mintages followed.

1882/1 Overdate

This "overdate," thus far, has not been proved to be anything but a Re-punched Date or a Filled-2 variety. Even though this overdate has been listed in many reputable references as definitely existing, including some editions of the *Guide Book*, a genuine overdate has not been uncovered.

The closest a collector is likely to come to this variety is an 1882 nickel with the base and part of the shaft of a 1 visible far to the right of the date. Discovered by Jack Beymer.

1882



Mintage Proofs

11,476,000	3,100
------------	-------

With a total mintage of 11,476,000, this date is the most commonly found issue in the Shield series today and is readily available in all grades.

There are two major varieties, the Filled-2, often mistaken for an overdate, and a Clear-2, the latter being the rarer of the two. Both occur with recut dates. Both varieties are found with both Proofs and business strikes. Sometimes 1882 Filled-2 nickels are sold as either 1883/2 or 1882/1 overdates.



Once thought to be 1882/1
(Courtesy of Les Leroy Smith)

In the first case, these can be avoided in remembering that in genuine overdates, the 1883 is much more widely spaced than 1882. As for 1882/1, this has yet to be authenticated. See separate entry.

This date is also known on a cent planchet, discovered by Jerry Bobbe. One Filled 2 variety shows 2 first entered too high, as does one Clear 2.

The Proof issue has three major varieties:

- I: Clear 2, most common.
- II: Filled 2, the date is low and seated well to the right.
- III: Filled 2 and lower half of the second 8.

Look at the edges of your Clear 2 Proofs: you may be lucky and find one with 5 evenly spaced raised bars (Judd-1697, Breen-2520), from the handful struck for Congressman (ex. Major General) William S. Rosecrans. Then there is Judd-1693, Breen-2521, a Clear 2 Proof without ball above date.

1883/2 OVERDATE

Several major varieties (usually said to be 5 or 6) of this overdate exist. The 1883 3 over 2 is somewhat scarce and worth considerably more than the normal issue. This overdate is the only one popularly collected for the Shield nickel series. Along with circulated pieces, this overdate may occur in Proof. This variety can be confused with another variety where the final 3 appears filled, and is nicknamed "blob 3"; and even sometimes 1882 Filled-2 varieties have been mistaken 1883/2.

For years the definitive reference for identifying the different 1883/2 varieties has been the diagrams in the "Collectors' Clearinghouse" section of *Coin World*, which recognized six varieties.⁵ More recently, in his *Complete En-*



1883/2, Breen-2524

(Courtesy of Bob Everett)

⁵"Shield Nickel Examination Resumes with Emphasis On 1883 Overdates," Collectors Clearinghouse, *Coin World*, November 14, 1973.

cyclopedia of U.S. and Colonial Coins, Walter Breen combined these varieties by position of the 2. He writes:

2524 – 1883/1882 2 partly left of 3. Rare. At least three varieties; over 90% show only part of middle curve of the two between the knobs of the 3...



1883/2, Breen-2525

(Courtesy of Bill Fivaz)



1883/2, Breen-2525

2525 – 1883/2 2 within 3. Scarce. At least two varieties, one found on Proofs; upper curve and part of knob of 2 within half of the 3...

2526 – 1883/2 "18823." Extremely rare. Fewer than five reported of the earliest die state with almost the entire 2 in space between (the



1883/2, Breen-2526

(Courtesy of Bill Fivaz)

second 8 and the 3) (discovered about 1954). Later reground die states (rare) show top and base outlines of 2 between (the second 8 and the 3) with traces of middle curve left of the space between the knobs. Last state no longer shows top of 2. (This variety exhibits a very noticeable die break from rim through bases of 18 to rim), at first very faint, later heavy; earlier states lack it.

2527 – 1883/2 2 partly right of 3. Extremely rare. Date 1882 first entered far to the right; parts of 2 peep out from the right edge of the 3. Discovered by (Walter Breen) about 1954; 3 or 4 known.

This data is not easily combined with the data in the Collector's Clearinghouse article. According to Breen, 2524 has at least three subvarieties. The photograph in the *Encyclopedia* matches the diagram for CC 2, and the general "2 partly left of 3" description used by Breen can also apply to CC 5. Breen-2526 ("18823") corresponds to CC 6, a fairly easy match because of the distinctive die break. However, Collector's Clearinghouse also lists a variety 4 that has a complete 2 before the 3, as well as a variety 5 with the knob and bottom curve of the 2 fully in front of the 3, neither of which match any Breen variety. Breen-2527 matches CC 3 (the only 1883/2 variety with the 2 to the right), and Breen-2525 roughly matches CC 1 ("2 within 3").

1883



Mintage **Proofs**

1,456,919

5,419

Most, if not all, Shield nickels dated 1883 show at least some doubling in the motto, IN GOD WE TRUST. One full doubled die obverse variety exists. Of course, this cannot always be seen on worn pieces. Although the mintage is somewhat low at 1,456,919, this issue is readily available in all grades for a minimal price. One 1883 Shield nickel is known struck on a cent planchet.

Proof mintage figures at an astronomical 5,419, the highest in the Shield series. There are several die varieties:

- I: Overdate (mentioned separately).
- II: Doubled date, misplaced to the right and then corrected.
- III: Different doubled date, first placed too low. Scarcer than the others.
- IV: Partly recut date, outline at base of second 8 and top of the 3.
- V: Normal date. Lower curve of both 8's and many letters are filled.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- Altman, Charles I. "History of the United States Nickel Five Cent Piece." *The Numismatist*, January 1949
- Baker, Anthony. "Buffalo Nickels — Not All Were Created Equal." *FUN-Topics*, Spring 1988
- "Beebe Nickel Finds New Home at ANA." *The ANA Communique*, Spring 1989.
- Bowers, Q. David. Private communication.
- Bowers, Q. David. *United States Three-Cent and Five-Cent Pieces*. Wolfeboro, NH: Bowers and Merena Galleries, 1985.
- Breen, Walter. *Walter Breen's Encyclopedia of United States and Colonial Proof Coins 1722 - 1977*. New York: FCI Press, Inc., 1977
- Breen, Walter. *Walter Breen's Complete Encyclopedia of U.S. and Colonial Coins*. Garden City: Doubleday, 1988
- Breen, Walter. Private communication.
- Brown, Dee. *Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1970.
- Chell-Frost, Malcolm. "The Re-Engraved 1939 Jefferson Nickel." *The Numismatist*, November 1942.
- Chell-Frost, Malcolm O. E. "More About the Re-Engraved Jefferson Nickel." *The Numismatist*, February 1943.
- Cohen, Annette R. and Druley, Ray M. *The Buffalo Nickel*. Arlington, VA: Potomac Enterprises, 1979.
- Cregan, William. "Liberty Nickel: Barber's Best." *Coins*, October 1987.
- "*The Curiosity World: Exploring Eggs and Rare Coins.*" *Rare Coin Review*, Summer 1988.
- Davis, Norman M. *Complete Book of U.S. Coin Collecting*. New York: MacMillan Co., 1971.
- Day, Thomas C. "Joseph Wharton and Nickel Coinage." *The Numismatist*, October 1987.
- De Shon, W. H. "The New Five-Cent Piece." *The Numismatist*, May 1913.
- DuBois, Patterson. "Our Mint Engravers." *American Journal of Numismatics*, July 1883.
- Duffield, A.T. "The Nickel." *The Numismatist*, November 1943.
- Dunshie, Kenneth. "Buffalo Nickel Only One of James E. Fraser's Great Works." *News From Home*, Spring 1957. (reprinted in *Coin World*, December 23, 1964)

“Fact or Fiction: Were There Jefferson Nickel Proofs Made in the Year 1966 by the United States Mint?” *PAK Newsletter*, June 1980. Reprinted: *Nickel News*, Fall/Winter 1989.

Fivaz, Bill and Stanton, J.T. *The Cherrypicker's Guide*. Savannah, GA: Fivaz and Stanton, 1990.

Fivaz, Bill and Stanton, J.T. *Joja Jemz Error Catalogue*, December 1987, March 1988, August 1988 and December 1988 issues.

Fivaz, Bill. “Reverse Carvings on Buffalo Nickels.” *Nickel News*, Winter 1987-88.

Fivaz, Bill. “Weak Strike Information.” ANA Summer Seminar handout, 1982.

Fivaz, Bill. Private communication..

Flower, Harry. “Numismatic Tributes to Albert Einstein.” *The Numismatist*, January - February 1987.

Henrik, Istvan. “New RPM Discoveries.” *Errorscope*, November 1987.

Herbet, Alan. “Coin Clinic.” *Numismatic News*, May 3 & 17, June 12 & 28, August 2 & 23, 1988.

Herbert, Alan. “Nickel Found on Nicaraguan Planchet.” *Numismatic News*, October 6, 1987.

Herbert, Alan. “1943/1942-P War Nickel.” *PAK Newsletter*, March 1978. (Reprinted: *Nickel News*, Fall/Winter 1989).

Hill, Kenneth R. “The 1872 Small Date Over Large Date: First Published Report.” *Nickel News*, Summer 1988..

Hornaday, William T. *Popular Official Guide to the New York Zoological Park*. New York: New York Zoological Society, Tenth Edition – October 1, 1909.

“Increase in Use of Nickel for Coinage.” *American Journal of Numismatics*, April 1901.

Jackson, Joseph. “James Barton Longacre.” *Dictionary of American Biography, Volume VI*, ed. Dumas Malone. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935.

Judd, J. Hewitt. *United States Patterns, Experimental and Trial Pieces*. Seventh Edition by Abe Kosoff. Racine, Wis: Western Publishing Co., Inc., 1982.

Julian, Robert W. “The Lowly Nickel.” *Coin World*, March - April 1987.

Kane, Joseph Nathan. *Famous First Facts*. New York, H. W. Wilson Co., 1981 (4th Ed.).

Krakel, Dean. *End of the Trail: The Odyssey of a Statue*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1973.

LaMarre, Tom. “B. Max Mehl: The 1913 Nickel Man.” *Rare Coin Review*, Spring 1987.

LaMarre, Tom. “The King of Small Cents.” *Rare Coin Review*, Summer 1987.

Lange, David. “Sunny Jim and the '12-S Nickel.” *PCNS Journal*, April 1986.

“Liberty 1913 Nickel Offers Mystic Aura.” *Numismatic Scrapbook Magazine*, December 1971.

Lincoln Library of the Arts. Columbus: Frontier Press Co., 3rd edition 1980.

Mulfinger, Richard G. “A Shield Nickel is Doubled.” *The Numismatist*, January 1970.

Nagengast, Bernard A. *The Jefferson Nickel Analyst*. Sidney, OH: Bernard Nagengast, 1979.

Nagengast, Bernard. “Jefferson Nickel Design Undergoes Change.” *Coin World*, February 28, 1979.

Nagengast, Bernard. “Rarity of Full Step Jefferson Nickels.” *Nickel News*, Summer and Fall 1988.

Nagengast, Bernard. “Reverse Varieties Not Well Publicized.” *Coin World*, July 16, 1980.

Nagengast, Bernard. “SURPRISE! There are Two Jefferson Nickel Varieties in 1967.” *Nickel News*, Spring 1988.

Nagengast, Bernard. Private communication..

“The New Five Cent Piece.” *American Journal of Numismatics*, July and August 1866.

Pennington, William A. *Definitions Relating to Metals and Metalworking*.

Ratzman, Leonard. “The Buffalo Nickel, a 50-Year-Old Mystery.” *Whitman Numismatic Journal*, May - June 1964.

Reed, Mort. *Encyclopedia of U. S. Coins*. Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1972.

Reiter, Ed. “Put Another Nickel In.” *PAK Newsletter*, February 1978.

Rochette, Edward C. “John Otto: His Buffalo and his Nickels.” *The Numismatist*, January 1990.

Romines, Delma K. *Hobo Nickels*. Newbury Park, CA: Lonesome John Publishing Co., 1982.

Rothe, Anna. *Current Biography: Who's News and Why, 1951*. New York: H.W. Wilson Co., 1952.

Rush, N. Orwin. “James Earle Fraser.” Entry in *Dictionary of American Biography, Supplement Five*. Ed. John A. Garraty. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1977.

Schlag, Felix Oscar. “The Story Behind the Jefferson Nickel.” *United States Three-Cent and Five-Cent Pieces* by Q. David Bowers. Wolfeboro, NH: Bowers and Merena, 1985.

Schmidt, Michael. Private communication..

Schwarz, Ted. “Ups and Downs of the U.S. Nickel.” *Coins*, July 1983.

“Shield Nickel Examination Resumes With Emphasis On 1883 Overdates.” Collectors' Clearinghouse, *Coin World*, November 14, 1973.

- Stanton, J.T. "Doubling Your Fun with Jefferson." *Nickel News*, Fall 1987.
- Stanton, J.T. Private communication..
- Stanton, J.T. See: Fivaz/Stanton entries..
- Stuckey, Dwight H. "Concerning the Jefferson." *Nickel News*, Fall 1987.
- Stuckey, Dwight H. *The Counterfeit 1944 Jefferson Nickel*. Charleston, SC: Dwight Stuckey, 1982.
- Stuckey, Dwight H. "A 'Non-winner.'" *Numismatic News*, October 2, 1982..
- Stuckey, Dwight H. Private communication..
- Taxay, Don. *Counterfeit, Mis-Struck, and Unofficial U.S. Coins*. New York: Arco Publishing Co., Inc., 1963.
- Tiernan, Marilyn. "Shield Nickel Varieties Deserve Scrutiny." *Coin World*, October 1, 1980.
- Van Ryzin, Robert R. Letter to Michael Wescott May 4, 1990, published in Spring 1990 *Nickel News*.
- Van Ryzin, Robert R. "Which Indian Really Modeled?" *Numismatic News*, February 6, 1990. Reprinted: *Nickel News*, Spring 1990.
- Wagener, Dick and Coffing, Courtney L. "Invectives Greet the Indian-Buffalo Nickel." *Numismatic Scrapbook Magazine*, April 1972.
- Wexler, John A. and Miller, Tom. *The RPM Book*. Newbury Park: Lonesome John Publishing Co., 1983.
- Wharton, Joseph. *Memorandum Concerning Small Money, with Illustrations of Existing Nickel Alloy Coins*. Joseph Wharton, 1877.
- "What is a Nickel?" *American Journal of Numismatics*, October 1881.
- Whitlock, Arnold. *Symbols, Signs, and Their Meaning and Usage in Design*. Newton, Mass: Charles T. Branford Co., 2nd edition 1971.
- Wrzesinski, Jim. "Errors on the U.S. War Nickel." *Errorscope*, September 1987.
- Yates, W. Ross. "Joseph Wharton's Nickel Business." *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, July, 1977.
- Yeoman, R.S. *A Guide Book of United States Coins*. Racine, Wis: Western Publishing Co., 41st Edition edited by Kenneth Bressett, 1987.

Michael Wescott was the founder of the American Nickel Collectors' Association (1987-1992) and editor of its journal, *Nickel News*. His articles have appeared in numerous publications, including *The Numismatist*, *Rare Coin Review*, *Coins*, and *Errorscope*; a book, *The U.S. Nickel Five Cent Piece*, was published by Bowers & Merena in 1991. He is currently at work on an annotated bibliography of the Beatles. A musician and songwriter for the band Amphibian Skin, he lives in New York City.

Kendall Keck was born in 1941 and raised in Memphis, Tennessee. He began collecting coins for a Boy Scouts merit badge, and soon found himself specializing in the Shield nickel. He ran a successful Confederate currency dealership in Louisville, Kentucky, and helped write the Shield Nickel section of *The U.S. Nickel Five-Cent Piece* before he died in 1988.