

Barber Coinage

In the late 1880s, Mint Director Edward O. Leech wanted to replace the current designs for the dime, quarter, and half-dollar so he organized a competition for a design to replace the Seated Liberty design. Many artists refused to participate as only the winner would receive the cash prize of \$500 and reimbursement for supplies. Leech ordered Chief Engraver, Charles E. Barber to make a design. In November 1891, President Benjamin Harrison approved the design and the reimbursement/pay raise for Charles Barber. From January 1892 to mid-1916, these coins were minted. In December 1916, they replaced these coins with the Winged Liberty (also known as the Mercury Dime), the Standing Liberty Quarter, and the Liberty Walking Half Dollar. The Barber dime weighed 2.5 grams, was 17.91 mm in diameter, and contained 0.07234 troy ounces of silver. The Barber Quarter weighed 6.25 grams, had a diameter of 24.3 mm, and contained .18084 troy ounces of silver. The Barber Half Dollar weighed 12.5 grams, had a diameter of 30.6 mm, and contained 0.36169 troy ounces of silver. There are two varieties of the 1892 quarter since people complained that they didn't stack properly--there are type I and type II reverse designs for that year. The 1894-S dime is a great rarity with a published mintage of 24 coins. This is because the Mint had \$2.40 extra of silver needing to be struck. At an auction in 2007, one specimen sold for \$1,552,500. A story about one of these is that Superintendent Daggett gave three of these coins to his daughter Hallie. He told her to keep the dime until "she was as old as he was" but, she spent one of the three on a dish of ice-cream on the way home. That specimen is known as the "Ice Cream Specimen". She kept the other two and sold them in the 1950s, following her father's instructions for two of the three. The 1894-S dime is one of the most counterfeited coins. Many counterfeiters would alter a 1894 dime and add or change the mintmark. The Barber quarter series has some key dates as well. For the half dollar, the maximum production per year per mint was less than six million coins struck. The rarest Barber Half is the 1892-O with a micro O mintmark, caused by using a smaller, quarter-dollar puncheon, with only a few dozen known examples. Most years, proofs were created of all Barber coins. The half dollar proofs never went below one thousand in mintage per year and were minted every year. In all 24 years, the total produced for the half dollars was around 136 million coins which was less than half the mintage of 1964 Kennedy Halves at the Philadelphia Mint.

Sources:

<https://www.ngccoin.com/coin-explorer/>

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