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ANA Governor Discovers Significant New Canadian Variety

American Numismatic Association Governor Michael Fey, Ph.D., has discovered that a die sinker may have used inverted V's in place of A's in the word, "Canada," on an 1874 H Canadian quarter, thus creating re-engraved A's over inverted V's.

The discovery, which will be listed as a variety in the 62nd edition of "Charlton Standard Catalog of Canadian Coins" to be published in 2007, probably indicates that an engraver inadvertently used an inverted V punch for all the A letters in Canada and, realizing his mistake, crudely scratched the die by hand to make a crossbar to create an A.

"The A's in 'Canada' look very different than the A's in the words 'Victoria,' 'Gratia' and 'Regina,'" Fey said. "Based on my experience with U.S. coin die varieties, I feel pretty confident of what I'm seeing on this coin."

His discovery has been corroborated by other coin experts, including former ANA Governor Bill Fivaz, variety expert Ken Potter and Washington quarter specialist Jose Cortez.

"To me the fact that all three A's show clear hand engraving of a crude crossbar that varies from each other is evidence enough that they (the crossbars) were placed intentionally and individually to correct the mistake of using an inverted V as A's," Potter wrote.

"The work that went into making a die was at that time very time consuming and costly to produce," wrote Cortez. "So, when an error during the making of a die occurred it was usually given to the die maker for corrections to be made."

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Fey said he was inspired to inspect his 1871 and 1874 Canadian quarters because an 1872-H A/V 50-cent piece is listed in the Charlton catalog, and there was talk of a new 1872 H quarter with an inverted A/V. However, the latter does not appear to be a new variety as a die break within the serif of the A may have caused what appears to be a crossbar.

"When I picked up my 1874-H, I exclaimed, 'Oh my God,'" Fey said. "This is a very cool discovery." Later, he added, "This will add to the knowledge base of numismatics and, more importantly, will allow people to revisit their coins and enjoy them in a whole new light."

Fey also said the discovery helps people understand how die sinkers and engravers made coins in the late 19th century. "In this situation, they didn't want to throw out a valuable die."

Fey said there is no way to know how many of the coins were made, and no way to price the coins without first knowing how many are out there or whether there's any demand. "The most important thing we can do is to share the discovery with collectors and see what kind of feedback we get," he said.

Fey submitted the discovery piece to Canadian grading service ICCS, where it graded VF-20. Once there, Scott Cornwell took extensive photographs and made overlays. Brian Cornwell, founder of ICCS, referred Fey to William (Bill) K. Cross, editor of the Charlton Standard Catalog.

To view the images of the 1874 H Canadian Quarter variety, please go to www.money.org and click on "Know More" from the featured coin area (center of home page).

The American Numismatic Association is a nonprofit organization dedicated to educating and encouraging people to study and collect money and related items. With nearly 33,000 members, the Association serves the collecting and academic communities and the general public with an interest in numismatics. The ANA helps people discover and explore the world of money through its vast array of programs including its education and outreach, museum, library, publications, conventions and seminars.

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