

## **The Eagle Street Mint – Where Carson City**

### **\$10 Gold Pieces Began Their Ascent**

**By Tony Arnold**

**#LM-20-0032**

The title of my current offering pays homage to Rusty Goe's *The Mint on Carson Street*, and to the name given to our favorite capital city's first permanent settlement circa 1851 after Frank Hall shot, stuffed and mounted an eagle over the Eagle Station trading-post door. Quickly sprinting through the years, we traverse through Utah Territory, encounter Mormons, and come to Abe Curry wheeling and dealing with partners and establishing what is now Carson City, Nevada in 1858. After the Paiute people were subdued by federal troops and local militia near Pyramid Lake in 1860, the Nevada Territory was ready for creation and President James Buchanan signed the legislation on March 2, 1861, just prior to honest Abe Lincoln taking office. Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor, South Carolina was fired upon by Confederate forces on April 12, 1861, and the most devastating homeland conflict in United States history began. Father against son, brother against brother to the tune of at least 623,026 military dead and 471,427 wounded. The total casualty figures are the best approximation available using multiple historical sources. It was during the horror of the War Between the States, that the "Battle Born" state of Nevada came into existence on October 31, 1864, when President Abraham Lincoln signed the Act of Congress.

I now re-introduce my hero Abraham van Santvoord Curry, who from the beginning envisioned Carson City as the state capital complete with a branch mint. The dirt was finally turned on the mint building grounds on July 18, 1866, and after interminable delays the first silver dollars were minted during the first week of February in 1870, and probably officially issued to the public on February 11 of

that year. Carson City gold eagles were next in line and made their debut on February 14, 1870, followed by half eagles and double eagles in March 1870, with half dollars and quarters batting in the middle of the lineup in April 1870. I have a deep attachment for all issues from our beloved Carson City coin factory, but the gold eagles have secured a special place in my heart. Please note the minting date of February 14, 1870 (Valentine's Day). With apologies to the Marshall Tucker Band, I sing ♪♪ Can't you see, can't you see, what those "CC" Eagles been doing to me. ♪♪

Gold, my dear C4OA brothers and sisters, has fascinated mankind for ages. The mere rumor of new sources of "the color," as prospectors called it, was enough to cause significant population disruptions and an almost mindless stampede by adventurers seeking instant wealth. California, Colorado, Nevada, Oregon, Alaska, and the Yukon were names in the nineteenth century that had an almost mystical quality about them. Of course, we as sensible, grounded individuals are obviously immune to any "Siren call" evoked by such stardust thinking as that. Dare I mention the romanticism elicited by designations such as Carson City, Comstock, Gold Hill, and Virginia City?

Keeping in mind that in this article I am focusing on my favorite denomination in the Carson City gold coin series, my beloved Carson City eagles, it is my strongly held belief that these 19 coins are significantly more difficult to obtain in any acceptable, collectable condition than either the Carson City half eagles or double eagles. Whether your focus runs from GENUINE with Net Details to Mint State (good luck with that), "ugly" will likely be a factor. I confess that technical grading of coins has outweighed eye appeal in some of my purchases, especially when I just wanted to fill that empty space in my collection. But I never forgot that my Carson City coin adventure is partly art (very subjective in nature) and partly

science. I say be a collector first and don't worry so much about what everyone else is doing or saying.

Now let's take a peek at those 19 Carson City eagles. The survival rate for the entire series is a paltry 3.33%. The dates 1881-CC, 1891-CC, and 1892-CC constitute 55.96% of the total mintage. The other 16 years' aggregate mintage is 44.04%, with the extremely low output ten-year, 1870 – 1879 run's mintage accounting for 20.23%. If all that makes your head hurt (and it should), just let me state that out of 299,778 Carson City eagles minted only about 10,000 exist today (according to Rusty Goe's most recent estimate). A review of Rusty's Top 25 Carson City coins includes the 1870-CC eagle as the only representative of that denomination. This placement along with Douglas Winter's assessment, should lock it into the #1 slot for "CC" eagles, unless you want to consider the NGC MS-62 1879-CC beauty.

Any discussion about Carson City coinage should take into consideration condition, availability, and date pressure. All that aside, locating Carson City eagles minted during the 1870s is indeed challenging. If you find an example of an 1874-CC that meets your requirements, I would suggest you snap it up, because the other nine dates from that decade are definitely a lot pricier. Locating (or affording) a Mint State Carson City eagle from the 1870s is a stopper for most collectors. I have held the only Mint State 1879-CC specimen in my hands, and it made me weak at the knees. Mint State coins also exist for the 1871-CC, 1874-CC, and 1875-CC. A firm *maybe* is the best I can say for the other six years: 1870-CC, 1872-CC, 1873-CC, 1876-CC, 1877-CC, and 1878-CC.

Collecting a Carson City eagle from the 1880s is a bit easier for plebeians like me. Uncirculated coins exist for all five dates, and if you are really in the market for a high grade example, an 1881-CC eagle is probably your best bet. Keeping the ugly factor in mind, you

should be able to score an acceptable looking circulated example of any of the five dates for your type set. The 1884-CC had die problems, but most 1880-CC, 1881-CC, 1882-CC, and 1883-CC eagles had much better strikes than those minted in the 1870s.

The four dates from the 1890s are next in the queue. Your best opportunity for a great looking Uncirculated Carson City eagle is an 1891-CC. There are some very nice looking examples of the 1890-CC and 1892-CC issues, as well. The 1893-CC eagle was torpedoed by the U.S. Treasury Department in their haste to close the Carson Mint. Production was held to a relatively low mintage of 14,000. I don't know of any really spectacular 1893-CCs in the marketplace. I purchased the only Mint State "CC" eagle in my collection back in 2001. I bought a raw (uncertified) 1891-CC, which currently resides in an NGC MS-62 holder. With a little patience on your part, you will be able to snare a nice Mint State example, too.

The following table shows the composition of my own modest efforts in building a set of "CC" gold eagles.

***Navy Mustang Collection "CC" Gold Eagle Set***

<b>Decade</b>	<b>Totals</b>	<b>Grade Range</b>
1870s	8 of 10 dates	F-12 to XF-45
1880s	5 of 5 dates	XF-45 to AU-58
1890s	4 of 4 dates	VF-20 to MS-62

My recent acquisition of coin #102 in my quest for a complete set of Carson City coins, an 1872-CC eagle graded PCGS XF-45, moves me up another notch toward the magic number of 111. My friend and mentor Rusty Goe, my bride Mary Ann, and I are trying to figure out how to keep moving onward and upward. Two of the remaining nine Carson City coins I need are the 1870-CC and 1873-CC eagles; plus seven other "Oh my God" pieces. It's definitely not getting any easier, but this old boy is still in the game.



1872-CC

\$10

PCGS XF45

8664.45/19594732



*Coin No. 102 in the Navy Mustang Collection, a well preserved 1872-CC gold eagle graded XF-45.*

#### References:

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*(Image courtesy of Southgate Coins)*