

## **Carson City's Coinage Output:**

### **A Comparative Tale**

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### **Introduction**

At the back of each issue of *Curry's Chronicle* is a spreadsheet of the mintage at Carson City. I've always liked that feature since I am a numbers kind of guy. One can learn/determine interesting things from the chart. For example, the average face value of a coin from Carson City was \$0.87. Also, the mint produced coins over a 23-year period, actually minting coins in 21 of the possible 24 inclusive years. It occurred to me that it might be interesting to compare the output of Carson City with that of several other mints.

An examination of our nation's mints indicates that Philadelphia, PA, San Francisco, CA, and Denver, CO are in a league of their own in terms of output whereas Carson City, NV, Charlotte, NC, Dahlonega, GA, and to some extent New Orleans, LA form a somewhat similar group. Curiously, Charlotte and Dahlonega each were open over an identical number of years as Carson City: 23 years! New Orleans had two lives, the first from 1838 to 1861 (again 23 years!) and the second from 1879 to 1909.

Thus, in this article I compare the outputs of the branch mints at Carson City, Charlotte, Dahlonega, and New Orleans. The outputs of San Francisco, Philadelphia, and New Orleans *during* the Carson City active period will be touched on as well.

I have chosen to use *Red Book* (63<sup>rd</sup> edition, 2010) data for convenience. This produced a slightly different version for Carson City than that presented in *Curry's Chronicle* or in *The Mint on Carson Street*. Rusty Goe obviously worries about the details of the

Carson City mintage totals more than the *Red Book* does! The first two tables show the resulting statistics from the Carson City Mint. Note that Carson City was primarily a silver mint with over a quarter of the mintage in Morgan dollars. As mentioned, this is reflected in the average face value per coin from the mint of just under a dollar.

**Mintage Totals from the Carson City Mint – Silver Coins<sup>1</sup>**

Dimes	Twenty Cents	Quarters	Halves	Silver Dollars	Trade Dollars
20,912,588	143,290	10,330,542	5,307,627	13,880,625	4,211,400
\$2,091,259	\$28,658	\$2,582,636	\$2,653,814	\$13,880,625	\$4,211,400

**Mintage Totals from the Carson City Mint – Gold Coins<sup>1</sup>**

Half Eagles	Eagles	Double Eagles	Total Coins Both Metals	Total Face Value Both Metals
709,257	299,778	864,128	56,659,235	
\$3,546,285	\$2,997,780	\$17,282,560		\$49,275,016

**Mintages Totals from Selective United States Mints**

The next tables present the mintage totals from Charlotte and Dahlonega. These mints issued similar amounts of coins to each other and were the two lowest production United States mints. Both mints issued only gold coins and most of these were \$5 gold pieces (73% and 80% for Charlotte and Dahlonega), whereas average face values were \$4.19 and \$4.43, respectively. The mintages from these two mints were much smaller than those from Carson City. This is, of course reflected, in the marketplace. The Civil War was the end point for both mints as the Confederate States took over each one.

## Mintage Totals from the Charlotte Mint<sup>1</sup>

Gold Dollars	Quarter Eagles	Half Eagles	Total Coins	Total Face Value
109,134	217,823	878,819	1,205,776	
\$109,134	\$544,557.50	\$4,394,095		\$5,047,787.50

## Mintage Totals from the Dahlonega Mint<sup>1</sup>

Gold Dollars	Quarter Eagles	Three Dollar Gold	Half Eagles	Total Coins	Total Face Value
73,779	197,850	1,120	1,106,274	1,379,023	
\$73,779	\$494,625	\$3,360	\$5,531,370		\$6,103,134

The next two sets of tables summarize the mintage of coins from the New Orleans Mint. This is a more complex mint than the others in many respects. In its antebellum incarnation (first period), it was primarily a silver mint as can be seen below. Over 90% of its volume was struck in silver. Curiously, it produced mostly similar amounts of coins as the other Southern mints did in the three common denominations of gold coins they produced—\$1, \$2.5, and \$5. Clearly, New Orleans was the most important of the Southern mints, and the most productive of any terminated mint. Reopened in 1879, it remained active until 1909. During this second period, it produced seven times more in face value than it did before the Civil War. Its average face value per coin was silver-like in both stages of the mint, for an overall average of \$0.71.

## Mintage Totals from the New Orleans Mint

### First Period – 1838-1861 – Silver Coins<sup>1</sup>

Trimes	Half Dimes	Dimes	Quarters	Halves	Silver Dollars
720,000	16,200,000	15,320,134	10,583,200	49,555,756	974,000
\$21,600	\$810,000	\$1,532,013	\$2,645,800	\$24,777,878	\$974,000

**Mintage Totals from the New Orleans Mint  
First Period – 1838-1861 – Gold Coins<sup>1</sup>**

Gold Dollars	Quarter Eagles	Three Dollar Gold	Half Eagles	Eagles	Double Eagles
1,004,000	1,070,851	24,000	754,345	1,597,692	829,191
\$1,004,000	\$2,677,128	\$72,000	\$3,771,725	\$15,976,920	\$16,583,820
Total Coins – Both Metals: 98,633,169			Total Face Value – Both Metals: \$70,846,884		

**Mintage Totals from the New Orleans Mint  
Second Period – 1879-1909 – Silver Coins<sup>1</sup>**

Dimes	Quarters	Halves	Silver Dollars
52,811,700	49,536,800	32,631,600	185,507,529
\$5,281,170	\$12,384,200	\$16,315,800	\$185,507,529

**Mintage Totals from the New Orleans Mint  
Second Period – 1879-1909 – Gold Coins<sup>1</sup>**

Half Eagles	Eagles	Double Eagles	Total Coins Both Metals	Total Face Value Both Metals
170,800	763,367	2,325	321,424,121	
\$854,000	\$7,633,670	\$46,500		\$228,022,869

The next table presents comparative data from San Francisco during the Carson City years of 1870 to 1893. San Francisco has had enormous outputs throughout its history, and even in the time slice shown in the tables—the period chosen to match that of Carson City—it out-produced Carson City by factors of more than four in quantity and more than fourteen in face value! San Francisco can be

classified as a silver mint in quantity and a gold mint in face value. It was clearly the most important mint of the Old West.

**Mintage Totals from the San Francisco Mint  
During the Carson City Years – 1870-1893 – Silver Coins<sup>1</sup>**

Half Dimes	Dimes	Twenty Cents	Quarters	Halves	Silver Dollars	Trade Dollars
1,322,001	39,148,613	1,155,000	24,924,514	19,253,028	79,455,073	26,647,000
\$66,100.05	\$3,914,861.30	\$231,000	\$6,231,128.50	\$9,626,514	\$79,455,073	\$26,647,000

**Mintage Totals from the San Francisco Mint  
During the Carson City Years – 1870-1893 – Gold Coins<sup>1</sup>**

Gold Dollars	Quarter Eagles	Half Eagles	Eagles	Double Eagles
3,000	356,500	11,490,900	5,308,350	23,880,400
\$3,000	\$891,250	\$57,454,500	\$53,083,500	\$477,608,000

Total Coins – Both Metals: 232,944,379	Total Face Value – Both Metals \$715,211,926.85
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The Philadelphia Mint had the highest volume of coins of any mint during the period of Carson City’s operation. During this period, it produced over 22 times more coins than Carson City, with a face value about 12 times greater. However, San Francisco during this time, outperformed all mints in terms of face value. For example, it outperformed Philadelphia by a factor of 1.21 to one.

**Aggregate Comparisons**

The next table compares the outputs of the four mints operating during the Carson City years. Carson City was the least productive mint, accumulating just over 3% of the coinage and face value totals of the combined-mint outputs. This was in spite of the fact that the Comstock Lode yield was enormous. Between 1859 and 1878, \$400,000,000 was taken in gold and silver, with 1877 being the peak year as mines produced over \$14,000,000 of gold and \$21,000,000

of silver. However, much of the metal taken from there ended up being minted in San Francisco. On the order of just 10% was minted in Carson City.

**Mintage Totals from Carson City, New Orleans,  
San Francisco, and Philadelphia During the  
Carson City Mint’s Years of Operation – 1870-1893**

Mint	Mintage (Millions)	Face Value (Millions of Dollars)	Avg. Face Value Per Coin
Carson City	56.659	49.275	\$0.87
New Orleans	133.049	119.993	0.90
San Francisco	232.944	715.212	3.07
Philadelphia	1277.856	587.879	0.46
Total All Mints	1700.508	1472.359	0.87
Carson City Output	3.33%	3.35%	

The last table compares mintage outputs for the four closed United States mints. Carson City is much more like pre-Civil War New Orleans than like the other two Southern mints or the New Orleans Mint during its second period of operation.

**Mintage Totals from Closed Branch Mints in  
Ascending Order of Quantity and Face Value<sup>1</sup>**

Mint	Coins Minted (Millions)	Face Value (Millions of dollars)	Avg. Face Value Per Coin
Charlotte (1838-1861)	1.206	\$ 5.048	\$4.19
Dahlonega (1838-1861)	1.379	6.103	4.43
Carson City (1870-1893)	56.659	49.275	0.87
New Orleans (1838-1861)	98.633	70.847	0.72
New Orleans Total (1838-1861 and 1879-1909)	420.057	\$298.870	0.71

The images in this article are reverses of \$5 gold coins, one from each mint discussed here. This is the only denomination and design to have seen production at all the mints.

<sup>1</sup> *Red Book*, 63<sup>rd</sup> edition, 2010. Whitman Publishing, LLC, Atlanta, GA



*Reverses of half eagles from the Philadelphia, New Orleans, Charlotte, Dahlonega, San Francisco and Carson City Mints.*

*(Images courtesy of Stack's)*