

The 1870-CC Silver Dollar Distribution

By Richard Kelly & Nancy Oliver

#RM-0327

On February 10, 1870, the first Nevada silver dollars came off the coin press at the recently completed Carson City Mint (although contemporary newspaper reports gave Friday, February 4th as the first day of silver dollar coinage). Carsonite Abraham Curry was the man in charge and he proudly showed off the new coin to those who had gathered for the occasion. He gave several out to friends and distinguished businessmen/politicians in the area and also sent out a number of them to men of high standing in other parts of the nation. A total of 3,747 new dollars (a larger number than the total population of Carson City at that time) were minted that day, most of which went out into circulation: in fact, a few of the new coins were seen on February 11 in Austin, Nevada, some 140 miles east of Carson. Mintage of the new dollars continued as 2,000 more were minted on February 22, and 2,000 more were struck on March 5.

The demand for these new dollars was high, for the silver content made each of them worth eight cents more than two silver half dollars. As a result, many of these coins were selling for \$1.25 each in the western states.

There was also a demand from the eastern states, for 500 pieces were struck on March 8 to send to that coast. So popular were these coins that over 1,000 were purchased for pocket pieces alone (*Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, March 1, 1870).

Just a few weeks after this first striking, there were a few members of Congress who pushed to close the Carson City Mint. Nevada Republican Congressman Thomas Fitch opposed the closing of the mint and spoke up on its behalf in front of the House of Representatives in mid-March. At that time, there were 134

Republican members of the House and 104 Democrats. In order to prove the quality of the product from said mint, Mr. Fitch brought with him over a hundred examples of some of the first silver dollars made at the facility. In the *New York Times* newspaper of March 17, 1870, the following was written concerning Mr. Fitch's presentation:

The jingle of bright new silver dollars was quite a feature in the House today. The coinage was of 1870 from the mint of Carson City, Nevada, and a hundred or more of the strange visitors were distributed by Representative Fitch, of that State, as specimens of its products.

Nothing was mentioned as to who received the silver dollars, whether it was all members or just the Republican side.

We currently own an 1870-CC silver dollar graded Fine (ANACS slabbed) and it is now worth about \$900 (we paid \$265 for it in 1991). Could our coin be one of the pieces given to House members in 1870, or perhaps one of the former "pocket pieces" of an early sentimental collector of the first Carson City coinage?

Carson City Regional Meeting

Please sign up for the August C4OA regional meeting in Carson City, NV. If you plan to stay for dinner, reservations are required. See page 17 for details.