

New Hubs for Carson City Eagles

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From previous numismatic research it is known that new reverse hubs were used to prepare dies for the silver denominations just prior to the United States Centennial year in 1876. Research scholars have documented the introduction of new reverse hubs for Seated dimes in 1876, Seated quarters in 1875, Seated half dollars in 1876, and Trade dollars in 1875. These new hubs were very similar to those used in previous years, but they each had a feature that distinguished them from the earlier hubs.

The mint system produced millions of silver dimes, quarters, half dollars and Trade dollars in the Centennial year of 1876, but the production of gold half eagles and eagles was limited to little more than 10,000 pieces during this important year. However, limited production did not extend to all of the gold denominations, with the striking of more than 2.32 million double eagles in 1876. With this heavy production the U.S. Mint introduced new obverse and reverse hubs to the double eagle series in 1877.

The hub changes in the double eagle series have been well documented and include more significant modifications than those seen on any of the silver denominations. Specifically, the denomination on the reverse hub was changed from TWENTY D. to TWENTY DOLLARS and the lettering in UNITED STATES OF AMERICA was repositioned with respect to the central device. The new obverse hub also has some easily recognizable differences. Specifically, the thirteen stars around the periphery of the design were repositioned relative to the central device, with the tip of the crown half way between the 6th and 7th stars, and the 1st star much closer to the tip of the bust.

While production of half eagles and eagles was very limited during the 1870s, production of these denominations increased sharply late in the decade, with mintages exceeding two million pieces for each denomination by 1880. The mints produced 4.57 million half eagles in 1880, a figure that would require the need for many new dies and perhaps some attention to improving the images on this denomination. After a careful study of the half eagle design, I was able to document the use of new obverse and reverse hubs in the half eagle series at the Carson City branch mint in 1881. These revisions were more subtle than those made in the double eagle series just a few years before. But a change in the denticle count and a repositioning of the thirteen stars on the obverse, and the lettering on the reverse, was sufficient to document the existence of the new hubs. Descriptions of the new obverse and reverse hubs for the half eagle series were provided in my article “New Hubs for Carson City Half Eagles” that appeared in the spring 2006 issue of *Curry’s Chronicle*. Further research has verified that the new half eagle hubs were used to prepare some dies for Philadelphia coins in 1880, but it has been verified that all three of the known varieties for 1880-CC half eagles were struck using dies prepared from the old hubs.

After my success in identifying new hubs for the half eagle denomination, I turned my attention to the gold eagle denomination. The mints struck 2.17 million eagles in 1880, suggesting that this might be a good place to start looking for changes in the coinage hubs. I started my search by counting the denticles around the edge of the obverse and reverse fields on a set of Carson City eagles. I was fortunate enough to find a difference in the denticle counts during the same year that they were found for the half eagle series. The result of the hub study for Carson City eagles is given in Table 1 on the following page:

Table 1
Carson City Eagle Coinage Hubs

Coinage Hub	Dates Used	Denticle Count
Type 1 Obverse	1870 to 1880	152
Type 1 Reverse	1870 to 1880	145
Type 2 Obverse	1881 to 1893	140
Type 2 Reverse	1881 to 1893	141

Denticle counts verify that new hubs were introduced into the Carson City eagle series in 1881. While the Type 2 hubs are very similar to the earlier Type 1 hubs, it is not expected that a collector would need to count the denticles to identify the hub type. Rather, a few key features will be provided so that the hub type can be determined for any specific coin. Descriptions of the distinguishing features for the four hubs are as follows:

Type 1 Obverse Hub: Dies have 152 denticles around their rims. All 13 stars are distant from the edge of the field, about one half of a star radius from the denticles. The 1st star on the lower left points to the lower third of a denticle. The 6th star is closer to the denticles than to the upper tip of the coronet. The 13th star on the lower right points to the gap between two denticles. This hub was used to prepare the obverse dies for Carson City eagles from 1870 to 1880.

Type 2 Obverse Hub: Dies have 140 denticles around their rims. All 13 stars are close to the edge of the field, about one fifth of a star radius from the denticles. The 1st star on the lower left points to the upper third of a denticle. The 6th star is about four times closer to the denticles than to the upper tip of the coronet. The 13th star on the lower right points to the lower third of a denticle. This hub was used to prepare the obverse dies for Carson City eagles from 1881 to 1893.

Type 1 Reverse Hub: Dies have 145 denticles around their rims. The upright of the T in UNITED extends up through the gap between the denticles. The top of the first A in AMERICA is centered below the gap between the denticles. The upright of the first T in TRUST extends up through the center of the second S in STATES. The R in TRUST is rotated to the left with the base of the R closer to the scroll edge on its left, and the top of the R is below the top of the T on its left. This hub was used to prepare the reverse dies for Carson City eagles from 1870 to 1880.

Type 2 Reverse Hub: Dies have 141 denticles around their rims. The upright of the T in UNITED extends up through the center of a denticle. The top of the first A in AMERICA is centered below a denticle. The upright of the first T in TRUST extends up through the right edge of the second S in STATES. The R in TRUST is level with the base of the scroll, and the top of the R is level with the top of the T on its left. This hub was used to prepare the reverse dies for the Carson City eagles from 1881 to 1893.

The features listed above will distinguish the four hubs that were used to prepare the dies for Carson City eagles. There are also many other minor differences in the hubs that were not explicitly listed in the descriptions because they were not needed to document the existence of the two hub types. This research on eagle coins is not as extensive as that done on half eagles, but all of the 1880-CC and earlier eagles that I have seen have been from Type 1 hubs, while all of the 1881-CC and later eagles have been from Type 2 hubs. I would doubt that there was overlapping use of dies from two different hubs for the eagle denomination at the Carson City Mint, because of the limited mintages for this series during the 1880s. I believe that it is more likely that dies from the new Type 2 hubs will be found on 1880 eagles from the Philadelphia Mint, but the large mintages for this issue might make it difficult to locate them.



Type 1 Obverse as seen on 1870-CC to 1880-CC eagles.



Type 1 Reverse as seen on 1870-CC to 1880-CC eagles.

A small “CC” mintmark appears on all of the reverse dies that were used to strike 1870-CC to 1877-CC eagle coins. The openings in the mintmark are oval in shape and only a little taller than they are wide. A large “CC” mintmark appears on all of the reverse dies used to strike 1878-CC to 1893-CC eagles, with the openings in the mintmark very tall and narrow. This means that the large “CC” mintmark was used on dies from both Type 1 and Type 2 reverse hubs. There are no known reverse dies with small “CC” mintmarks



Type 2 Obverse seen on 1881-CC to 1893-CC eagles.



Type 2 Reverse seen on 1881-CC to 1893-CC eagles.

that were prepared from the Type 2 reverse hub.

The images in this article are of an 1878-CC eagle that was struck using dies prepared from Type 1 obverse and reverse hubs, and an 1882-CC eagle that was struck using dies prepared from Type 2 obverse and reverse hubs. Both coins appeared in the sale of the *Old West Collection* by American Numismatic Rarities during August 2006.

(Images courtesy of Stack's)