

## The Underrated 1877-CC Half Eagle

By John W. McCloskey

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The 1877-CC half eagle is not generally recognized as a key date, but in the higher grades this issue is nearly as difficult to obtain as the early Carson City rarities from this series. With a mintage of only 8,680 pieces it is a little more available than the early rarities in Circulated grades, but it is as rare as these issues in Mint State. The finest known example is a piece sold by Bowers and Merena from the *Bass Collection* in October, 1999. This coin has sharp lustrous surfaces and has been graded PCGS MS-62. The 1877-CC date is also very rare in AU grades, but examples at this level do occasionally appear at auction. Most recently a coin graded NGC AU-55 was sold by *Stack's* in the *Americana Sale* in January 2007. All of the coins of this date that I have seen are examples of the same variety as illustrated in this article. On the obverse the date is level in the field below the bust, with the digits closer to the denticles below than to the bust above. On the reverse the "CC" mintmark is level and closer to the feather tip above than to the letter "V" in the denomination FIVE D. below. In mintmark placement, note that the feather tip is over the right edge of the left "C."

There are twenty-seven pictures of 1877-CC half eagles in the Heritage Auction archives and all of them are examples of the variety that I have just described. Over the years I have examined the pictures of many other coins in auction catalogues and they have all been examples of this variety.

The standard reference book for Carson City gold coinage is *Gold Coins of the Old West* by Douglas Winter and Lawrence Cutler, published in 1994. This reference lists two varieties for this date. The variety illustrated with this article is their 1-B variety. They



***Lovely Circulated example of the elusive 1877 gold half eagle. This is the 1-B variety as mentioned in this article.***

also list and illustrate a 1-A variety with another reverse. I have not illustrated this variety because I have not been able to find one and am not even sure that it exists. Their picture of the mintmark shows a reverse with the feather tip over the center of the left "C," further to the right than on the variety illustrated in this article. The only reference that I have seen for this variety is a picture in the book *United States Gold Coins, an Analysis of Auction Records, Volume IV, Half Eagles* by David W. Akers, published in 1979. I would not want to claim that this second variety exists solely on the appearance of a picture in a book that is now almost thirty years old.

All of the 1877-CC half eagles that I have seen are examples of the 1-B variety. If a second variety actually exists, it would be very rare. If any reader can produce an example of a second variety for the 1877-CC half eagle, I would encourage him to report it to the editor of this publication for documentation and verification. These coins are very rare and numismatic research on them can be conducted only through the collective efforts of the numismatic community. Many coins are locked up in private hands for many years and only through new research studies will many questions about them be resolved.

*(Images Courtesy of Stack's)*