

Proof “No Motto” Seated Liberty

Until the Mint made proof dollars available to the public, mintage of the series without the motto IN GOD WE TRUST was limited.

DESIGNED BY U.S. Mint Engraver Christian Gobrecht, the “No Motto” Seated Liberty dollar was struck between 1840 and 1866.

Following a decades-long hiatus, dollar coinage resumed in 1836. U.S. Mint Director Robert Maskell Patterson requested new dies, for which Gobrecht rendered a seated image of Liberty for the obverse and a flying eagle for the reverse. The Mint adapted his Liberty motif for the dollars of 1840, though his flying eagle was cast aside in favor of the shield-bearing eagle with arrows and olive branch featured on lesser denominations of silver coins. The motto IN GOD WE TRUST did not appear on the reverse until 1866.

This month, I'd like to take a look at the proofs in the No Motto series. Please remember that reports of certified populations are not infallible. I agree with David Hall and John Dannreuther of Professional Coin Grading Service (PCGS), Mark Salzberg and Jeff Isaac of Numismatic Guaranty Corporation (NGC) and professional numismatist Silvano DiGenova, all of whom maintain that figures can vary as much as 20 percent because some proofs have been submitted more than once.

1840. Mintage is estimated between 15 and 50, depending on the source of the data. Twenty-three have been certified in all grades. I would be surprised if individual specimens totaled more than 10. The reverse subsequently was used for 1841 and 1842 proof dollars.

1841. Of the 15 documented proofs, 4 have been certified. In his *Encyclopedia of U.S. and Colonial Proof Coins* (ANA Library Catalog No. GA80.B7c), Walter Breen reported 5 coins; I believe there are 6.

1842. Eight of the 15 proofs minted have been certified. Incidentally, Breen supposed that the late John Jay Pittman's 1842 proof set was assembled piece-by-piece. However, Pittman told me his set was original, and dealer David Akers, who auctioned Pittman's collection, concurs.

1843. Mintage has been established at 15, with 7 certified. Breen identified 7, not including the one in the Smithsonian Institution's National Numismatic Collection, which brings the number of known specimens to 8.

1844. Eight proofs have been certified out of a mintage of 15. Breen listed 8 different coins; I count only 6.

1845. Mintage is estimated at 15 to 20, depending on the source, with 14 coins certified. Breen reported 7 coins, including the Smithsonian's specimen. (“B1” has a blundered date, while “B2” has a normal date.) But, by my count, 8 proofs are extant.

1846. Again, mintage ranges from 15 to 20, with both blundered and normal dates. Breen tallied 15 coins.

1847. Mintage is 15, although population reports indicate 16 proofs have been certified. Breen listed 12 coins and 3 die combinations.

1848. Fifteen proofs were minted, with 10 certified. Breen noted 8 coins; I believe there are 9.

1849. Eight of 15 coins have been certified. Breen stated that the dollars of 1840-49 and 1852 that exhibit a die chip between the T and E in UNITED have a “possibility of being restrikes.”

1850. Mintage estimates vary from 20 to 35 coins, with 17 certified. I agree with Breen that only 7 proofs exist.

1851. Sources indicate a mintage of 35 to 50, which I strongly dispute. I have never seen an original. Numismatist James Halperin, who has an amazing memory, recalls a specimen he loaned to PCGS for photographic purposes. DiGenova distinctly remembers handling only one; perhaps it is the same coin Halperin had. In any case, Breen listed a single piece—and anyone who doubts Halperin or DiGenova is a fool!

1851 Restrike. Mintage is 35, of which 17 have been certified. ☉



▲ The Willis H. duPont specimen of the 1866 “No Motto” Seated Liberty dollar was graded Proof-65 by NGC.

1851-O. One is known to Halperin, and only one has been certified.

1852. Of 35 proofs, only 1 has been certified. Breen noted 2, leaving the mintage open to question.

1852 Restrike. Two of 35 have been certified. Breen reported only 1.

1853. Mintage is 15, and 6 have been certified, none of which Breen ever saw.

1853 Restrike. Twelve of the 35 struck have been certified; one resides in the Smithsonian.

1854. Mintage is 30, with 16 certified.

1855. Fifty to 60 were struck from two dies, of which 15 have been certified. This is the first of the “common date” proofs.

1856. Of the 50 proofs struck, 37 have been certified.

1857. Mintage is 50, of which 32 have been certified.

1858. This proof-only date has a mintage of 80 to 300, struck from 2 to 3 pairs of dies; 68 have been cer-

tified. For the first time, the Mint offered them publicly, at \$1.08 each.

1859. Mintage is 800; 134 have been certified.

1860. Of the 1,330 struck, 514 were sold. Only 139 have been certified.

1861. Of the 1,000 minted, 400 were sold. Ninety have been certified.

1862. Mintage is 500 to 550, with 157 certified. The coin shares a reverse with the 1853 restrike.

1863. Mintage ranges from 460 to 470, struck from 3 sets of dies; 139 have been certified.

1864. Most of the 470 struck were not sold and later were melted at the Mint. Only 14 have been certified.

1865. Of the 500 struck, 163 have been certified.

1866. With a mintage of 2, this coin generally is considered a pattern. Both proofs have been certified.

Next month, I’ll consider the proof “with Motto” Seated Liberty series.

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