

= Barber coinage =

The Barber coinage consisted of a dime , quarter , and half dollar designed by United States Bureau of the Mint Chief Engraver Charles E. Barber . They were minted between 1892 and 1916 , though no half dollars were struck in the final year of the series .

By the late 1880s , there were increasing calls for the replacement of the Seated Liberty design , used since the 1830s on most denominations of silver coins . In 1891 , Mint Director Edward O. Leech , having been authorized by Congress to approve coin redesigns , ordered a competition , seeking a new look for the silver coins . As only the winner would receive a cash prize , invited artists refused to participate and no entry from the public proved suitable . Leech instructed Barber to prepare new designs for the dime , quarter , and half dollar , and after the chief engraver made changes to secure Leech 's endorsement , they were approved by President Benjamin Harrison in November 1891 . Striking of the new coins began the following January .

Public and artistic opinion of the new pieces was , and remains , mixed . In 1915 , Mint officials began plans to replace them , after the design 's minimum term expired in 1916 . The Mint issued Barber dimes and quarters in 1916 to meet commercial demand , but before the end of the year , the Mercury dime , Standing Liberty quarter , and Walking Liberty half dollar had begun production . Most dates in the Barber coin series are not difficult to obtain , but the 1894 dime struck at the San Francisco Mint (1894 @-@ S) , with a mintage of 24 , is a great rarity .

= = Background = =

= = = Charles Barber = = =

Charles E. Barber was born in London in 1840 . His grandfather , John Barber , led the family to America in the early 1850s . Both John and his son William were engravers and Charles followed in their footsteps . The Barber family initially lived in Boston upon their arrival to the United States , though they later moved to Providence to allow William to work for the Gorham Manufacturing Company . William Barber 's skills came to the attention of Mint Chief Engraver James B. Longacre , who hired him as an assistant engraver in 1865 ; when Longacre died in 1869 , William Barber became chief engraver and Charles was hired as an assistant engraver .

William Barber died August 31 , 1879 of an illness contracted after swimming at Atlantic City , New Jersey . His son applied for the position of chief engraver , as did George T. Morgan , another British @-@ born engraver hired by the Mint . In early December 1879 , Treasury Secretary John Sherman , Mint Director Horatio Burchard , and Philadelphia Mint Superintendent A. Loudon Snowden met to determine the issue . They decided to recommend the appointment of Barber , who was subsequently nominated by President Rutherford B. Hayes and in February 1880 , was confirmed by the Senate . Barber would serve nine presidents in the position , remaining until his death in 1917 , when Morgan would succeed him .

Coinage redesign was being considered during Barber 's early years as chief engraver . Superintendent Snowden believed that the base @-@ metal coins then being struck (the one , three , and five cent pieces) should have uniform designs , as did many of the silver pieces , and also some gold coins . He had Barber create experimental pattern coins . In spite of Snowden 's desires , the only design modified was that of the five @-@ cent coin , or nickel ; Barber 's design , known as the Liberty Head nickel , entered production in 1883 . The new coin had its denomination designated by a Roman numeral " V " on the reverse ; the three @-@ cent coin had always had a " III " to designate its denomination . Enterprising fraudsters soon realized that the nickel and half eagle (or five @-@ dollar gold piece) were close in size , and plated the base metal coins to pass to the unwary . Amid public ridicule of the Mint , production came to a halt until Barber hastily added the word " cents " to the reverse of his design .

= = = Movement towards redesign = = =

For much of the second half of the 19th century , most U.S. silver coins bore a design of a seated Liberty . This design had been created by Christian Gobrecht , an engraver at the United States Mint in Philadelphia , after a sketch by artist Thomas Sully , and introduced to U.S. coins in the late 1830s . The design reflected an English influence , and as artistic tastes changed over time , was increasingly disliked in the United States . In 1876 , The Galaxy magazine said of the then current silver coins :

Why is it we have the ugliest money of all civilized nations ? The design is poor , commonplace , tasteless , characterless , and the execution is like thereunto . They have rather the appearance of tokens or mean medals . One reason for this is that the design is so inartistic , and so insignificant . That young woman sitting on nothing in particular , wearing nothing to speak of , looking over her shoulder at nothing imaginable , and bearing in her left hand something that looks like a broomstick with a woolen nightcap on it ? what is she doing there ?

Public dissatisfaction with the newly issued Morgan dollar led the Mint 's engravers to submit designs for the smaller silver coins in 1879 . Among those who called for new coinage was editor Richard Watson Gilder of The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine . Sometime in the early 1880s , he , along with one of his reporters and sculptor Augustus Saint Gaudens visited Mint Director Burchard to argue for the creation of new designs . They brought along classic Greek and Roman coins in an attempt to persuade Burchard that the coinage could easily be made more beautiful . The visitors left disappointed , after learning that Burchard considered the much criticized Morgan dollar as beautiful as any of them .

In 1885 , Burchard was succeeded as Mint director by James Kimball . The new director was more receptive to Gilder 's ideas and in 1887 announced a competition for new designs for the non gold coinage . These plans were scuttled when Vermont Senator Justin Morrill questioned the Mint 's authority to produce new designs . The Mint had claimed authority under the Coinage Act of 1873 in issuing the Morgan dollar in 1878 and the Liberty Head nickel in 1883 . Morrill was a supporter of coin redesign and had in the past introduced bills to accomplish this ; he felt , however , that this could not be done without an act of Congress . Kimball submitted the issue to government lawyers ; they indicated that the Mint lacked the claimed authority . All three men worked to secure a bill to authorize new designs : Morrill by introducing and pressing legislation , Kimball by lobbying for the authority in his annual report , and Gilder by orchestrating favorable coverage . With legislators busy with other matters , it was not until September 26 , 1890 that President Benjamin Harrison signed legislation making all denominations of U.S. coins available for immediate redesign by the Mint upon obtaining the Secretary of the Treasury 's approval . Each coin could thereafter be altered from the 25th year after it was first produced ; for example , a coin first struck in 1892 would be eligible for redesign in 1916 .

= = Inception = =

Three days before the signing of the 1890 act , Barber wrote to the superintendent of the Philadelphia Mint , Oliver Bosbyshell , setting forth proposed terms of a competition to select new coin designs . Barber suggested that entrants be required to submit models , as opposed to drawings , and that the designs be in low relief , which was used for coins . He proposed that the entries include the lettering and denomination , as submissions without them would not adequately show the appearance of the finished coin . He received a reply that due to other work , the Mint would not be able to address the question until the spring of 1891 .

On October 16 , 1890 , a new Mint director , Edward O. Leech , took office . Leech , aged 38 at the time , had spent his career at the Bureau of the Mint , and was an enthusiastic supporter of redesign . He took the precaution of obtaining recommendations from Barber as to suitable outside artists who might participate in a competition . Since most of the proposed artists were New York based , Andrew Mason , superintendent of the New York Assay Office , was given the task of finalizing the list of invitees . Leading Mason 's list of ten names was that of Saint Gaudens . Mason sent Leech the recommendations on April 3 , 1891 ; the following day , the Mint director

announced the competition , open to the public , but he specifically invited the ten artists named by Mason to participate . Besides Saint @-@ Gaudens , artists asked to compete included Daniel Chester French , Herbert Adams , and Kenyon Cox . Although Barber had warned the director that reputable artists would likely not enter a contest in which only the winner received compensation , Leech offered a \$ 500 prize to the winner , and no payments to anyone else . He sought new designs for both sides of the dollar , and for the obverses of the half dollar , quarter , and dime ? Leech was content to let the reverses of the Seated Liberty coins continue . By law , an eagle had to appear on the quarter and half dollar , but could not appear on the dime .

Most of the artists conferred in New York and responded in a joint letter that they would be willing to participate , but not on the terms set . They proposed a competition with set fees for sketches and designs submitted by the invited artists , to be judged by a jury of their peers , and with the Mint committed to replace the Seated Liberty coins with the result . They also insisted that the same artist create both sides of a given coin , and that more time be given to allow the development of designs . Leech was unable to meet these terms , as there was only enough money available for the single prize . In addition to inviting the ten artists , he had sent thousands of solicitations through the country ; a number of designs were submitted in response to the circulars . To judge the submissions , he appointed a jury consisting of Saint @-@ Gaudens , Barber , and Henry Mitchell , a Boston seal engraver and member of the 1890 Assay Commission . The committee met in June 1891 and quickly rejected all entries .

Leech was quoted in the press regarding the result of the contest :

It is not likely that another competition will ever be tried for the production of designs for United States coins . The one just ended was too wretched a failure ... The result is not very flattering to the boasted artistic development of this country , inasmuch as only two of the three hundred suggestions submitted were good enough to receive honorable mention .

Barber wrote years later about the competition , " many [entries] were sent in , but Mr. St. Gaudens , [sic] who was appointed one of the committee to pass upon designs , objected to everything submitted " . Numismatic historian Roger Burdette explained the artistic differences between the two men :

It is likely they were so far apart in their artistic understanding that neither listened to what the other had to say ... Barber was from the English trades @-@ apprentice approach where engraving and die sinking were crafts closely aligned to other metal workers such as machine tool makers . His father and grandfather were both engravers . Saint @-@ Gaudens was a classically trained sculptor who began his career as an apprentice cameo cutter in New York , later moving to Paris and Rome for extensive training while perfecting his artistry . Barber generally worked in small , circular formats ? a three @-@ inch medal was a large size for his sculptures . Saint @-@ Gaudens was uncomfortable with small medals and typically designed life @-@ size or larger figures ... the 1891 competition turned the two against each other for the rest of their lives .

= = Preparation = =

Frustrated at the competition 's outcome , Leech on June 11 , 1891 instructed Barber to prepare designs for the half dollar , quarter , and dime . As the Morgan dollar was then being heavily struck , the Mint director decided to leave that design unaltered for the time being . For the obverse of the new coins , Leech suggested a depiction of Liberty similar to that on the French coins of the period ; he was content that the current reverses be continued . Leech had previously suggested to Barber that he engage outside help if the work was to be done at the Mint ; the chief engraver replied that he was aware of no one who could be of help in the preparation of new designs . Leech had spoken with Saint @-@ Gaudens on the same subject ; the sculptor stated that only four men in the world were capable of executing high @-@ quality coin designs ; three lived in France and he was the fourth .

Leech announced the decision to have Barber do the work in July , stating that he had instructed the engraver to prepare designs for presentation to Secretary of the Treasury Charles Foster . In a letter printed in the New York Tribune , Gilder expressed disappointment that the Mint was planning

to generate the new designs in @-@ house , feeling that the Mint , essentially a factory for coins , was ill @-@ equipped to generate artistic coin designs . Due to Gilder 's prominence in the coinage redesign movement , Leech felt the need to respond personally , which he did in early August . He told Gilder that " artistic designs for coins , that would meet the ideas of an art critic like yourself , and artists generally , are not always adapted for practical coining " . He assured Gilder that the designs which Barber had already prepared had met with the approval of Mitchell , though Leech himself had some improvements to suggest to the chief engraver .

Barber 's first attempt , modeled for the half dollar , disregarded Leech 's instructions . Instead of a design based on French coinage , it depicted a standing figure of Columbia , bearing a pileus atop a liberty pole ; an eagle spreading its wings stands behind her . The reverse utilized the heraldic eagle from the Great Seal of the United States , enclosed inside a thick oak wreath , with the required legends surrounding the rim . Leech rejected the design , and Barber submitted a revised obverse in mid @-@ September with a head of Liberty similar to that on the adopted coin . Leech got feedback from friends and from Secretary Foster ; on September 28 , he wrote Barber that Liberty 's lips were " rather voluptuous " and directed him to prepare a reverse without the wreath . Barber did so , and pattern coins based on the revised design were struck . Barber complained , in a letter on October 2 to Superintendent Bosbyshell , but intended for Leech , that the constant demands for changes were wasting his time . Leech replied , stating that he did not care how much effort was expended in order to improve the design , especially since , once issued , they would have to be used for 25 years . Barber 's reply was transmitted to Leech on October 6 with a cover letter from Acting Superintendent Mark Cobb (Bosbyshell was traveling) stating that Barber " disclaims any intention to be captious and certainly did not intend to question your prerogative as one of the officers designed by law to pass upon new designs for coinage " . The letter from Barber was a lengthy technical explanation for various design elements , and requested further advice from Leech if he had preferences ; the overall tone was argumentative . Leech chose not to write again ; he addressed one concern , about whether the olive branches in the design were rendered accurately , by visiting the National Botanical Garden , obtaining one , and sending it to Barber .

The question of how to render the stars (representing the 13 original states) on the coin was posed in the letters ; in the end , Leech opted for six @-@ pointed stars on the obverse and five @-@ pointed ones on the reverse . Barber had prepared three versions of the design , each with clouds over the eagle ; Leech approved one on October 31 and ordered working dies prepared , but then began to question the presence of the clouds , and had two more versions made . On November 6 , President Harrison and his Cabinet considered which of the designs to approve , and chose one without the clouds ; the following day , Leech ordered working dies prepared . Barber scaled down his design for the quarter and dime . While the Cabinet approved the designs , members requested that the Mint embolden the words " Liberty " on the obverse and " E Pluribus Unum " on the reverse , believing that these legends would wear away in circulation ; despite the resulting changes , this proved to be accurate . For the reverse of the dime , on which , by law , an eagle could not appear , a slight modification of the reverse of the Seated Liberty dime was used , with a wreath of foliage and produce surrounding the words " One Dime " .

It is uncertain when pattern dimes and quarters were struck , but this was most likely in mid @-@ November 1891 . One variety each of pattern dime and quarter are known , whereas five different half dollars are extant ; all known Barber coin patterns are in the National Numismatic Collection and none are in private hands . On December 11 , Bosbyshell requested a delay in production to mid @-@ January 1892 to allow the dies to be more thoroughly tested ; Leech refused . The first Barber coins were struck at the Philadelphia Mint on January 2 , 1892 at 9 : 00 a.m. By the end of the day , all three denominations had been coined .

= = Design = =

All three denominations of the Barber coinage depict a head of Liberty , facing right . She wears a pileus , a crown fashioned from an olive branch , and a small headband inscribed " Liberty " . On the quarter and half dollar , the motto " In God We Trust " appears above her head ; she is otherwise

surrounded with 13 six @-@ pointed stars and the date . On the dime , her head is surrounded with " United States of America " and the year . The reverse of the quarter and half dollar depicts a heraldic eagle , based on the Great Seal . The bird holds in its mouth a scroll inscribed " E Pluribus Unum " and in its right claws an olive branch ; in its left it holds 13 arrows . Above the eagle are 13 five @-@ pointed stars ; it is surrounded by the name of the country and by the coin 's denomination . The reverse of the dime depicts a wreath of corn , wheat , maple and oak leaves surrounding the words " One Dime " . Barber 's monogram " B " is on the cutoff of Liberty 's neck ; the mint mark , on the dime , is placed beneath the wreath on the reverse and beneath the eagle on the larger denominations .

Barber 's head of Liberty is purely classical , and is rendered in the Roman style . The head is modeled after the French " Ceres " silver coinage of the late 19th century , but bears a resemblance to Morgan 's design for the silver dollar . This did not escape numismatist Walter Breen in his comprehensive guide to U.S. coins , " Barber must have been feeling unusually lazy . He left the [dime] rev [erse] design as it had been since 1860 , with minor simplifications . His obv [erse] was a mirror image of the Morgan dollar head , with much of Miss Anna Willess Williams 's back hair cropped off , the rest concealed ... within a disproportionately large cap . " In his text introducing the Barber quarter , Breen states , " the whole composition is Germanically stolid , prosy , crowded (especially on rev [erse]) , and without discernible merit aside from the technical one of low relief " . Burdette terms Barber 's designs , " typically mediocre imitations of the current French @-@ style ? hardly better than the arcane seated Liberty type they replaced " .

Art historian Cornelius Vermeule , in his work on U.S. coins , took a more positive view of Barber 's coinage , " the last word as to their aesthetic merits has yet to be written . Little admired or collected for more than three generations after their appearance [writing in 1971] , these essentially conservative but most dignified coins have suddenly become extremely popular with collectors " . Vermeule argued that " the designs of Barber 's coins were more attuned to the times than he perhaps realized . The plumpish , matronly gravitas of Liberty had come to America seven years earlier in the person of Frédéric Bartholdi 's giant statue [the Statue of Liberty] ... " He suggested that the features of Daniel Chester French 's huge statue Republic , created for the World Columbian Exposition , " were absolutely in harmony with what Charles Barber had created for the coinage in the year of the Fair 's opening " .

= = Reception = =

Leech released the new designs to the press about November 10 , 1891 . According to numismatist David Lange , the new coinage received mixed reviews , " while the general press and public seemed satisfied with the new dime , quarter dollar , and half dollar , numismatists were either mildly disappointed with the new coins or remained silent on the matter . " Moran records a number of unfavorable reviews , without listing any favorable ones . Vermeule stated that " the initial comment on the new coinage concerned the novelty of a contest , its failure , and the inevitable result that the commission would go , as always , to the Chief Engraver [Barber] and his staff . "

George Heath , editor of The Numismatist discussed the new pieces : " the mechanical work is all that could be desired , and it is probable that owing to the conventional rut in which our mint authorities seem obliged to keep , this is the best that could be done " . W.T.R. Martin wrote in the American Journal of Numismatics , " The general effect is pleasing , of the three the Dime is to many the most attractive piece . The head of Liberty is dignified , but although the silly story has been started that the profile is that of a ' reigning belle ' of New York , she can hardly be called a beauty ; there is a suggestion ... of the classic heads on some of the Roman coins , and a much stronger suggestion of the head on the French Francs of 1871 and onward ... these coins are an advance on what has hitherto been accomplished , but there is yet a long distance between them and the ideal National coin . "

Other reactions were unfavorable . Artist Kenyon Cox , one of the invited artists to the 1891 competition , stated , " I think it disgraceful that this great country should have such a coin as this . " Harper 's Weekly proclaimed , " The mountain had labored and brought forth a mouse . " Saint @-@

Gaudens was also interviewed , and as author Moran put it , " injudiciously ranted " : " This is inept ; this looks like it had been designed by a young lady of sixteen , a miss who had taken only a few lessons in modeling . It is beneath criticism ... There are hundreds of artists in this country , any of whom , with the aid of a designer , could have made a very respectable coin , which this is not . "

= = Production and collecting = =

Soon after issuance of the new quarters , the Mint received complaints that they would not stack properly . Barber made adjustments in his design to remedy this problem . Accordingly , there are two versions of the 1892 quarter , dubbed " Type I " and " Type II " , both for the version without mint mark struck at Philadelphia and for those struck at the New Orleans Mint (1892 @-@ O) and the San Francisco Mint (1892 @-@ S) . They may be distinguished by their reverses : Type I quarters have about half of the letter " E " in " UNITED " covered by the eagle 's wing ; with Type II quarters , the letter is almost entirely obscured . Type I quarters are rarer for each mint .

The 1894 @-@ S Barber dime is one of the great numismatic rarities , with a published mintage of 24 proof pieces . Various stories attend the question of how so few came to be coined . According to Nancy Oliver and Richard Kelly in their 2011 article for The Numismatist , the San Francisco Mint in June 1894 needed to coin \$ 2 @. @ 40 in silver left over from the melting of worn @-@ out coins , just enough to coin 24 dimes . More ten @-@ cent pieces were expected to be struck there later in the year , but this did not occur . Breen , on the other hand , related that San Francisco Mint Superintendent John Daggett had the dimes struck for a group of banker friends , giving three to each . He also gave three to his young daughter Hallie , telling her to retain them until she was as old as he was , and she would be able to sell them for a good price . According to the story , she spent one on a dish of ice cream , but kept the other two until 1954 . One of the approximately nine known dimes was retrieved from circulation in 1957 , and Breen speculated this may have been the ice cream specimen . One sold for \$ 1 @, @ 552 @, @ 500 at auction in 2007 .

In 1900 , Barber modified the dies . This change resulted in quarters that were thinner , so that 21 of the new coins would stack in the space occupied by 20 of the old . Barber again set to work on the dies . San Francisco Mint officials wanted permission to use the old dies , which was refused , as it was felt that all mints should be producing coins with the same specifications . There are small differences between quarters produced at the different mints .

Except for the 1894 @-@ S dime , there are no great rarities in the series , as mintages were generally high . Key dates for the dime include the 1895 @-@ O , 1896 @-@ S , 1897 @-@ O , 1901 @-@ S and 1903 @-@ S. For the quarter , key dates are the 1896 @-@ S , 1901 @-@ S , and 1913 @-@ S. The rarest half dollar is the 1892 @-@ O " Micro O " , in which the mint mark " O " for New Orleans was impressed on the half dollar die with a puncheon intended for the quarter ; other key dates are the 1892 @-@ S , 1893 @-@ S , 1897 @-@ O , 1914 , and 1915 . " Condition rarities " , relatively inexpensive in circulated condition but costly in high grades , include the 1901 @-@ S , 1904 @-@ S , and 1907 @-@ S half dollars . Although most dates are obtainable , many are scarce in uncirculated grades as the coins saw heavy wear . Large quantities of Barber coins were melted for bullion when silver prices rose in the late 1970s and early 1980s .

= = Replacement = =

According to Burdette , " agitation to replace Barber 's banal 1892 Liberty head began almost before the first coins were cold from the press . " In 1894 , the American Numismatic and Antiquarian Society , in conjunction with various artistic and educational institutes , began to advocate for better designs for U.S. coins , but no change took place in the remainder of the 19th century .

In 1904 , President Theodore Roosevelt started to push for improvements to U.S. coins , and arranged for the Mint to engage Saint @-@ Gaudens to redesign coins which could be changed under the 1890 act . Before his death in 1907 , the sculptor provided designs for the double eagle and eagle , though the double eagle required adjustment by Barber to lower the relief before it could

be released as a circulating coin . Redesign of the smaller gold pieces , Lincoln cent , and Buffalo nickel followed between 1908 and 1913 . By then , the dime , quarter , and half dollar were the only coins being struck which had not received a redesign in the 20th century . As the 1916 date approached when the Barber coins could be changed without an act of Congress , calls for a new design increased .

In 1915 , a new Mint director , Robert W. Woolley took office . Woolley advocated the replacement of the silver coins when it was legal to do so , and instructed Barber and Morgan to prepare new designs . He consulted with the Commission of Fine Arts , asking them to examine the designs produced by the Mint 's engravers and , if they felt they were not suitable , to recommend artists to design the new coins . The Commission rejected the Barber and Morgan designs and proposed Adolph Weinman , Hermon MacNeil , and Albin Polasek . Although Woolley had hoped that each artists would produce one design , different concepts by Weinman were accepted for the dime and half dollar , and one by MacNeil for the quarter .

Woolley had hoped to begin production of the new coins on July 1 , 1916 . There was heavy demand for small change , and as delays in actual production stretched into the second half of the year , Woolley was forced to have Barber prepare dies for 1916 @-@ dated dimes and quarters bearing the chief engraver 's 1892 design . According to numismatist David Lange , " Barber must have secretly smiled to himself as his familiar Roman bust of Liberty once again dropped from the presses by the thousands , and then by the millions . " There were sufficient half dollars from 1915 available to meet demand ; no Barber halves were struck in 1916 . The production difficulties were eventually ironed out , and at least token quantities of each of the new coins were struck in 1916 , putting an end to the Barber coinage series .