

= 1804 dollar =

The 1804 dollar was a dollar coin struck by the Mint of the United States , of which fifteen specimens are currently known to exist . Though dated 1804 , none were struck in that year ; all were minted in the 1830s or later . They were first created for use in special proof coin sets used as diplomatic gifts during Edmund Roberts ' trips to Siam and Muscat . Some silver dollars were struck in 1804 , though all were dated 1803 . In 1806 , production was suspended by order of James Madison , then Secretary of State , and the denomination was not struck again until the 1804 @-@ dated pieces were minted .

Edmund Roberts distributed the coins in 1834 and 1835 . Two additional sets were ordered for government officials in Japan and Cochinchina , but Roberts died in Macau before they could be delivered . Besides those 1804 dollars produced for inclusion in the diplomatic sets , the Mint struck some examples which were used to trade with collectors for pieces desired for the Mint 's coin cabinet . Numismatists first became aware of the 1804 dollar in 1842 , when an illustration of one example appeared in a publication authored by two Mint employees . A collector subsequently acquired one example from the Mint in 1843 . In response to numismatic demand , several examples were surreptitiously produced by Mint officials . Unlike the original coins , these later restrikes lacked the correct edge lettering , although later examples released from the Mint bore the correct lettering . The coins produced for the diplomatic mission , those struck surreptitiously without edge lettering and those with lettering are known collectively as " Class I " , " Class II " and " Class III " dollars , respectively .

From their discovery by numismatists , 1804 dollars have commanded high prices . Auction prices reached \$ 1 @,@ 000 by 1885 , and in the mid @-@ twentieth century , the coins realized over \$ 30 @,@ 000 . In 1999 , a Class I example sold for \$ 4 @.@ 14 million , then the highest price paid for any coin . Their high value has caused 1804 dollars to be a frequent target of counterfeiting and other methods of deception .

= = Background = =

The Coinage Act of 1792 , the legislation which provided for the establishment of the Mint of the United States (today the United States Mint) , authorized coinage of multiple denominations of gold , silver and copper coins . According to the act , the dollar , or " unit " , was to " be of the value of a Spanish milled dollar as the same is now current , and to contain three hundred and seventy @-@ one grains and four sixteenth parts of a grain of pure , or four hundred and sixteen grains of standard silver " . The act went on to state that the coin would be struck in an alloy consisting of 89 @.@ 2 percent silver and 10 @.@ 8 percent copper . The purity and weight standards outlined in the Act were based on the mean of several assays conducted on Spanish milled dollars . However , the dollars were mandated by Spanish law to contain 90 @.@ 2 percent silver , and most of the unworn examples in circulation in the United States at the time contained approximately 1 @.@ 75 grains (0 @.@ 113 g) more than the silver dollars authorized by the Act . In 1793 , President George Washington signed into law a bill which declared Spanish milled dollars legal tender , provided that they weighed no less than 415 grains (26 @.@ 9 g) , which meant that at the lowest weight allowed by law , the Spanish dollars would contain approximately 0 @.@ 5 percent less silver than the United States dollar coins . As a result , the United States silver dollars and unworn Spanish dollars were largely forced out of circulation in accordance with Gresham 's law ; the lighter Spanish dollars were shipped in quantity for circulation in the United States , while the heavier pieces would be turned in to the Philadelphia Mint to be recoined into United States coinage to take advantage of the discrepancy in weight . At that time , silver bullion was supplied to the Mint exclusively by private depositors , who , according to the Coinage Act of 1792 , had the right to have their bullion coined free of charge . As large silver coins were a preferred method of commerce throughout the world , especially China , a considerable number of the United States dollars requested by silver depositors were exported to satisfy that demand .

The first dollar coins , known as Flowing Hair dollars , were issued by the Mint beginning in 1794 .

By 1800 , a majority of depositors requested their bullion be struck as silver dollars , which were then utilizing the Draped Bust design . This contributed to a shortage of small change in circulation , and as a result , the public became increasingly critical of the Mint . Mint Director Elias Boudinot began encouraging depositors to accept fractional coins , and the production of dollars began to decrease in relation to the smaller coins . Dollar coin production ceased in March 1804 , although those pieces bore the date of 1803 . In his 1805 report , Mint Director Robert Patterson stated that " [t] he striking of small coins is a measure which has been adopted to accommodate the banks and other depositors , and at their particular request , both with a view of furnishing a supply of small change , and to prevent the exportation of the specie of the United States to foreign countries . " Though none had been struck for over two years , Secretary of State James Madison officially suspended silver dollar coinage on May 1 , 1806 , addressing a letter to Patterson :

Sir : In Consequence of a representation from the director of the Bank of the United States that considerable purchases have been made of dollars coined at the mint for the purpose of exporting them , and as it is probable further purchases and exportations will be made the President directs that all the silver to be coined at the mint shall be of small denominations , so that the value of the largest pieces shall not exceed half a dollar .

= = Production = =

= = = Edmund Roberts ' diplomatic mission = = =

In 1832 , commercial shipper Edmund Roberts began acting as an envoy to Asia on behalf of the United States government , with the intent of negotiating trade deals in the region . During his mission , he reached deals both with Said bin Sultan , the Sultan of Muscat and Oman , and the Phra Khlang of Siam (modern Thailand) , an important financial minister of that nation . Roberts was given items which were to be presented as gifts to the officials with whom he was negotiating , but described them as being of " very mean quality , and of inconsiderable value " . After the treaties were ratified in the United States , Roberts had to return to Siam and Muscat to receive approval from the representatives of those nations . In a letter to the Department of State dated October 8 , 1834 , Roberts decried the gifts of his previous journey as inadequate and insulting to his hosts in the Orient . In addition to several other items , he requested a set of coins as an appropriate offering to Said bin Sultan :

I am rather at a loss to know what articles will be most acceptable to the Sultan , but I suppose a complete set of new gold & silver & copper coins of the U.S. neatly arranged in a morocco case & then to have an outward covering would be proper to send not only to the sultan , but to other Asiatics .

In a November 11 , 1834 letter sent to Mint Director Samuel Moore , Secretary of State John Forsyth approved Roberts ' suggestion , writing :

The President [Andrew Jackson] has directed that a complete set of the coins of the United States be sent to the King of Siam , and another to the Sultan of Muscat . You are requested , therefore , to forward to the Department for that purpose , duplicate specimens of each kind now in use , whether of gold , silver , or copper .

He also directed Moore to have two Morocco leather boxes made to house the coins . He stated that one should be yellow in color , and the other crimson , and that funds could be drawn from the Treasury for the value of the boxes and coins . Later , in a letter dated December 2 , 1834 , Forsyth directed Moore to include " national emblems " (including an eagle and stars) on the exterior of the cases .

In their book *The Fantastic 1804 Dollar* , numismatic historians Eric P. Newman and Kenneth E. Bressett assert that a problem arose at the Mint as to how to interpret Forsyth 's order . As his initial correspondence indicated that the sets were to include coins of every type then in use , Mint officials included both the silver dollar and gold eagle . The moratorium on silver dollar coinage had been lifted in 1831 , but none had been coined since those issued in March 1804 . Two sets of coins ,

minted in proof finish , were completed and delivered along with their boxes to Roberts shortly prior to his departure on the USS Peacock on April 27 , 1835 . The dollars included the sets bore the Draped Bust design , depicting an allegorical representation of Liberty on the obverse and a heraldic eagle on the reverse . A list of diplomatic gifts was also proposed for missions to Japan and Cochin @-@ China (today part of Vietnam) , which included two additional sets of coins .

Roberts delivered the first set of coins to Said bin Sultan on October 1 , 1835 . He delivered the next set to King Rama III of Siam the following year , on April 6 . Roberts died in Macau on June 12 , 1836 , before he could initiate contact with any other nations . On June 30 , Edmund P. Kennedy , commodore of the diplomatic fleet , wrote to the State Department that he had " directed that the presents [which remained ungifted due to Robert 's death] be forwarded to the United States " . The proof sets meant for Cochin @-@ China and Japan were likely included in the shipment of returned presents . All dollars struck for inclusion in the diplomatic gift sets were likely dated 1804 . It is unknown why that date was chosen for the dollars , but numismatic historian R.W. Julian suggests that it could have been done to prevent angering collectors who would not have been able to acquire the 1834 @-@ dated coin for their collections ; Chief Coiner Adam Eckfeldt , after consulting with Moore , mistakenly determined that 19 @,@ 570 dollars bearing the date 1804 were struck in that year . The dollars minted for the diplomatic gift sets , as well as other examples struck with the same dies , are collectively known as " Class I " 1804 dollars . In total , eight specimens of this type are known today .

= = = Later restrikes = = =

During the nineteenth century , Mint employees produced unauthorized copies of medals and coins , sometimes backdated . Although coin restrikes were created openly at the Philadelphia Mint from the 1830s , the practice became clandestine by the end of the 1850s . In the decades after the first 1804 dollars were produced , collectors became aware of their existence and desired to obtain them . Several were struck at the Mint in 1858 . Those coins , which became known as " Class II " 1804 dollars , had plain , unlettered edges , as opposed to standard issue Draped Bust dollars and those struck as diplomatic gifts , all of which had edge lettering applied by the Castaing machine . In 1859 , James Ross Snowden unsuccessfully requested permission from the Treasury Secretary to create patterns and restrikes of rare coins for sale to collectors , and in that year , dealers began offering plain edge 1804 dollars to the public . At least three were offered for sale by various dealers in 1859 , and coin dealer Ebenezer Locke Mason claimed that he was offered three by Theodore Eckfeldt , a Mint employee and nephew of Adam Eckfeldt (who had died in 1852) . After the public became aware that Mint officials had permitted restrikes , there was a minor scandal which resulted in a Congressional investigation and the destruction of outdated coinage dies . The controversy prompted William E. DuBois , Mint Assayer , to try , in 1860 , to recall the examples of the 1804 dollar in private hands . According to DuBois , five coins were known to be privately owned , of which four were recovered . He stated that three were destroyed in his presence , and one was added to the Mint 's coin cabinet (of which he was curator , and which is today the National Numismatic Collection) , where it remains today . The coin , which is the sole known Class II specimen in existence , was struck over an 1857 Swiss shooting thaler minted for a shooting festival in the Canton of Bern . The fifth coin , alluded to by DuBois , is not currently accounted for , although its edge may have been lettered after its recovery in an attempt to pass it as an original . Coins with added lettering are known as " Class III " 1804 dollars . The obverse coinage die used to strike the Class II and Class III 1804 dollars was deposited in safekeeping in 1860 , and the reverse die was destroyed in that year . The obverse die was defaced in 1869 .

Class III dollars are identical to the Class II dollar , except lettering similar to that on the Class I dollars was applied to the edge of the coins . Based on the slightly concave appearance of the Class III dollars , it is likely that all were given edge lettering at some point after striking ; as the Castaing machine was meant to be used prior to striking , its improper use resulted in a deformation of the coin surface . Newman and Bressett assert that they were struck at approximately the same time as the Class II dollars , and that the edges were lettered and the coins concealed by Mint employees

until 1869 , when one was offered to a coin collector , who rejected it as a restrike . However , numismatist S. Hudson Chapman believed that some Class III dollars were struck as late as 1876 . In 1875 , several were sold by Philadelphia coin dealer John W. Haseltine . Six specimens of the Class III dollar are known today .

= = Numismatic interest = =

Collectors first became aware of the existence of the 1804 dollar in 1842 , when a pantograph reproduction of one specimen was featured in A Manual of Gold and Silver Coins of All Nations , a work authored by Mint employees Jacob R. Eckfeldt and William DuBois . The first private collector to obtain an example was Matthew A. Stickney , who acquired the coin from the Mint on May 9 , 1843 , by trading certain rare coins from his collection , including a unique early United States Immune Columbia coin struck in gold . Interest in coin collecting and the 1804 dollars began increasing , and by 1860 , the dollars saw extensive coverage by numismatists . In 1885 , auctioneer W.E. Woodward described the 1804 dollar as " the king of coins " , a moniker which it maintains today . Numismatic historian Q. David Bowers asserts that the 1804 dollar has attracted more attention than any other coin . All fifteen extant specimens are acknowledged and studied by numismatists . They are identified by nicknames based on prominent owners , or the first individuals known to have possessed the coins .

At the 1962 American Numismatic Association convention , British numismatist David B. Spink announced that he was in possession of a theretofore unknown 1804 dollar specimen . The coin was housed in a yellow leather case embossed with an eagle and other ornamentation , conforming to the description of that made for the King of Siam . The set consisted of a half cent , cent , dime , quarter , half dollar , dollar , quarter eagle , half eagle and eagle . As all of the coins in the set were dated 1834 with the exception of the dollar and eagle , it provided the first definitive proof that an 1804 dollar was included in the diplomatic presentation sets . According to Spink , the set was offered to him by two women whom he believed were descendants of Anna Leonowens , tutor of the children of Rama IV (half @-@ brother and heir of Rama III) and fictionalized protagonist of the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical The King and I.

= = = Years of production = = =

The fact that no 1804 dollars were struck in 1804 was not widely accepted by numismatists until the early twentieth century . Before such time , the actual year in which they were struck remained contentious among numismatists . Early on , collectors assumed that the 1804 dollars were struck in 1804 , and their rarity was explained by various theories . The bulk of the mintage was variously rumored to have been paid to Barbary pirates as ransom , lost at sea en route to China , and melted before leaving the Philadelphia Mint . In 1867 , numismatist W. Elliot Woodward acknowledged that 1804 dollars were struck as diplomatic gifts in 1834 , but he also believed that others were struck in 1804 . Numismatists Lyman H. Low and William T. R. Marvin , writing for the American Journal of Numismatics in 1899 , stated that " the journal confidently asserts that there is no dollar dated 1804 which was struck in that year by the U.S. Mint . " In 1891 , numismatist John A. Nexsen wrote that the Class I 1804 dollars were " without doubt coined in 1804 " . In 1905 , he recanted his earlier assertions , stating that " no one now believes that they were coined in 1804 . "

According to Newman and Bressett , the manner in which the 1804 dollars were produced is proof that none were struck in 1804 . They note that the Castaing machine 's edging dies utilized an ' H ' that was undersized in relation to the other letters , the same as those used on Draped Bust dollars throughout the regular production of those coins . However , the edge lettering on all Class I 1804 dollars is deformed and partially obliterated , meaning that they were not struck in an open @-@ collared coinage press as was used in 1804 , but one which used a steel collar that was not introduced to the Mint until 1833 . The deformation of the edge lettering was caused by pressure pushing the coinage metal against the steel collar containing the coin blank . Additionally , many 1804 dollars were struck in proof finish , a technique which was first employed at the Mint in 1817 .

== Sale prices ==

From the time numismatists became aware of 1804 dollars , they have commanded high prices , both in relation to their face value and the numismatic value of other silver dollars . Some early examples were maintained in the Mint 's coin cabinet for use in trades , and in 1859 , dealers began offering Class II dollars priced at \$ 75 , while Theodore Eckfeldt reportedly offered a Philadelphia coin dealer three coins for \$ 70 each . In 1883 , a Class III dollar was reportedly purchased in Vienna for \$ 740 , and a Class I specimen was auctioned for \$ 1 @, @ 000 in 1885 by Henry and Samuel H. Chapman . In 1903 , an example sold for \$ 1 @, @ 800 , and the same coin reportedly sold for \$ 4 @, @ 250 in 1941 . In 1960 , a Class III dollar fetched \$ 28 @, @ 000 at an auction conducted by Stack 's , a coin firm , and the same coin reached \$ 36 @, @ 000 at another Stack 's sale in 1963 . A Class I specimen brought \$ 77 @, @ 500 at a 1970 Stack 's , and during a 1980 rise in coin prices , a Class III example sold for \$ 400 @, @ 000 by Bowers and Ruddy Galleries . A Class I example reached \$ 990 @, @ 000 at a Superior Galleries auction in 1990 , and an example once owned by coin collector Louis Eliasberg became the first 1804 dollar to surpass \$ 1 million at auction , selling for \$ 1 @, @ 815 @, @ 000 at a sale conducted by Bowers and Merena , Inc . , in 1997 .

The price reached an all @-@ time high in 1999 , when the finest known specimen , graded Proof @-@ 68 by the Professional Coin Grading Service , which is believed to have been the example presented to Said bin Sultan , was auctioned by Bowers and Merena for \$ 4 @, @ 140 @, @ 000 . At the time of the sale , this was the highest price paid for any coin . In 2008 , a Class I example was sold by Heritage Auctions for \$ 3 @, @ 737 @, @ 500 , and a Class III was sold by the same firm for \$ 2 @, @ 300 @, @ 000 in 2009 .

== Counterfeits and reproductions ==

Counterfeits and spurious reproductions of the 1804 dollar have been created since numismatists became aware of the coins ' high value . James A. Bolen , a medallist and coin collector who created copies of valuable coins between 1862 and 1869 , fabricated an 1804 dollar by altering the last digit in the date of a genuine 1803 example . Although Bolen added his name to the edge of the coin , other forgers created altered date coins with the intent to deceive . Nineteenth @-@ century stage actor John T. Raymond purchased a specimen of the coin , which was later revealed to be a forgery , for \$ 300 . All silver dollars dated between 1800 and 1803 were subject to alteration to 1804 dollars , but 1801 was the date most commonly used for that purpose .

In addition to altered dates , electrotypes of the 1804 dollar were created , both for the purposes of study and fraud . One such coin in the collection of the San Francisco Mint was described by them as genuine from 1887 to 1927 . Electrotypes were also created by Mint employees , and one was used as the basis for the pantograph reproductions which appeared in Eckfeldt and DuBois ' 1842 A Manual of Gold and Silver Coins of All Nations .

More modern replicas , known as " Saigon copies " , were commonly offered as original at low prices to American soldiers during the Vietnam War . In Saigon and other South Vietnamese cities , as well in nearby Thailand , military personnel were offered the copies by vendors who sometimes claimed that they were family heirlooms . In 2012 , Professional Coin Grading Service founder David Hall stated that counterfeit 1804 dollars had been available in Hong Kong for decades .

== Known specimens ==