

Collecting Two Cent Pieces

by Thomas Coulson



1864 Two Cent

The curious Two Cent piece made its appearance into circulation in the war-torn United States of 1864. Any circulating Federal coinage was scarce during the Civil War as citizens worried by great uncertainty hoarded anything of tangible value in sight. Privately issued 'Patriotic' and merchant tokens helped fill the void left by the missing coinage. Government officials recognized this 'encroachment' on the Mint's proprietary function. In response, the Mint quickly churned out the cheaper to produce bronze cents and Two Cent pieces while Congress outlawed the private issues. Because of their low intrinsic value and sheer numbers, they generally escaped the fate of hoarding. Millions of the bronze cents and Two Cent coins entered circulation to welcoming consumers and merchants alike.

When the Civil War ended in 1865, the hoarding problem was somewhat alleviated; though very little silver or gold circulated yet. Nickel interests lobbied successfully for the introduction of nickel based three and five cent coins. As these coins debuted, demand for the two cent pieces fell dramatically. Mintages steadily declined over the years. By 1872, Two Cent production was just an afterthought. In 1873, only 600 proof coins were struck for collectors. Many Two Cent pieces were returned to the mint to be melted and re-coined into new cents.



1865 Two Cent Reverse

The Two Cent obverse design is a simple shield with leaves surrounding its upper part. Its claim to fame is being the first generally circulating United States Coin to bear the motto "In God We Trust". The reverse design is a rather plain wreath with the denomination "Two Cents" inside. The Two Cent coin, along with the other 'odd' denominations, has never been especially popular to collect. There is opportunity in instances like these, because often the value in the scarcer issues is overlooked.

Liberty Coin Service offers a nice selection of quality, hand selected Two Cent pieces for sale.

View Our Inventory of Two Cent Pieces for Sale [Here](#).





1867 Two Cent Piece

How to Collect Two Cent Pieces – Four Different Ways

1. The Basic Collection

A run of Two Cent pieces consists of ten or eleven coins. There are the 1864 Small Motto Two Cent, the 1864 Large Motto Two Cent, one for each year from 1865 to 1872, and the 1873 proof-only Two Cent issue for collectors so inclined to add it. The 1864 Small Motto is more of a circulating pattern; much like the 1856 Flying Eagle Cent. Perhaps only a few thousand were made and they are elusive in all grades. Given their scarcity, they represent good value; though its prudent to collect a grade in which all of the motto is readable. The other 'bookend' to the business strike series is the 1872 issue. Only 65,000 of these were minted. The Two Cent Piece was near the end of its run and many of these were melted due to lack of demand. The 1872's are available in lower grades but very scarce in mint state. The 1865 to 1871 issues are all relatively common and affordable; though the later dates are a little tougher.



Two Cent - In God We Trust Motto

These are very collectible in Very Fine to About Uncirculated grades. Very Fine coins will have a completely readable motto; perhaps the most distinctive feature of the Two Cent piece. Coins with a uniform brown surface are most desirable. Many Two Cent pieces exhibit a blotchy brown and tan surface. The Mint was having difficulty with mixing the alloy of French Bronze; an issue that would not be fully resolved until the 1940's. Mint State coins are readily available for most dates, though as noted, the 1872 Two Cent is rare in this grade. Most uncirculated coins are brown or red-brown and they are frequently a little lackluster. Fully red coins are elusive for all dates.

Click [here](#) for a printable checklist of Odd Type Coins to help you start!

2. The Odd Series Set

Two cent pieces are frequently collected along with the other 'odd type' coin the Three Cent Piece. Because these types were short-lived series, album makers thought at some time that it was smart to combine both series rather than make separate albums. Both the Two and Three Cent coins are interesting and challenging to collect, so it might be fun and convenient to do so since there are albums already made for this purpose.



1829 Half Cent



1865 Two Cent



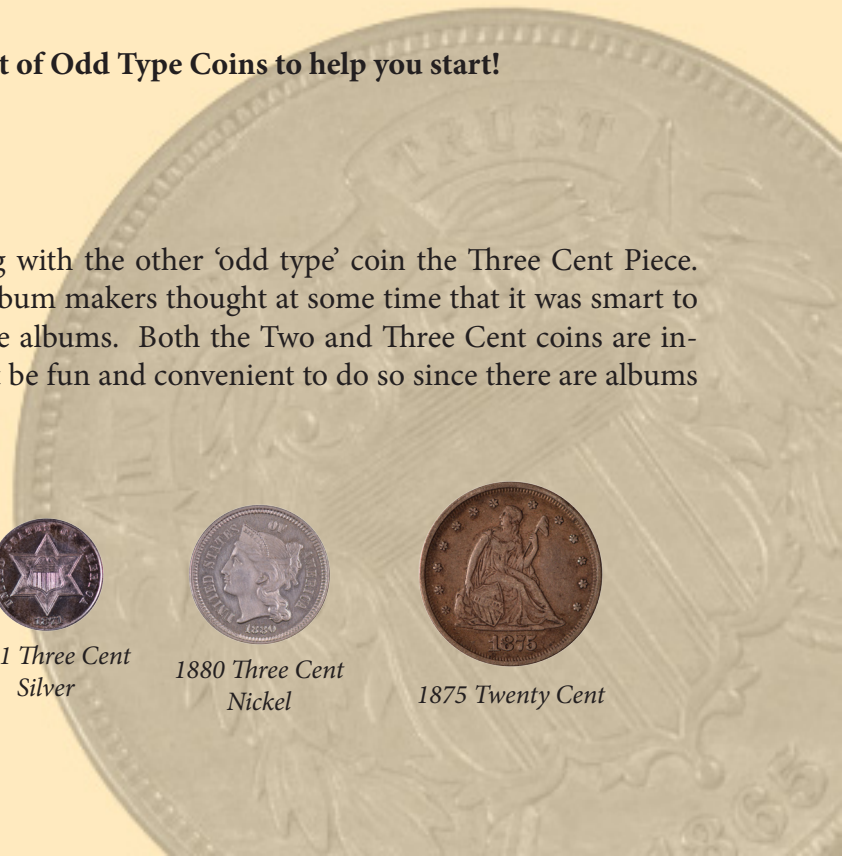
1871 Three Cent
Silver



1880 Three Cent
Nickel



1875 Twenty Cent



3. The Proofs

There are twelve coins to collect in a proof Two Cent series. There is the 1864 Small Motto, one of each date from 1865 to 1872 and the 1873 Open and Closed 3 varieties. The Proof 1864 Small Motto Two Cent Piece is the star of this series. Only about 30 of these are known to exist. It will be the trophy for anyone adventurous enough to collect proof Two Cent pieces as only a handful of these have appeared in auctions over the past decade. As a one year type, it ranks as one of the rarest of all proof United States type coins. The 1864 Large Motto Two Cent is very scarce in proof. The other dates are more common, with mintages of 500 to 1000 pieces. These are available and reasonably priced in brown or red-brown states. Red coins are available, but usually at strong premiums. The 1873 Proof Two Cent is popular and commands a higher price as it is the only issue available for that date.

4. Varieties

There are several interesting varieties in the Two Cent series. There are several coins with repunched features and doubling. Some of the most interesting varieties are the 1864 Large Motto with clashed dies from an Indian Cent and the 1867 Doubled Die Obverse (which is very prominent). As with other Two Cent coins, these are most collectible in grades of very fine or better. The Two Cent series has not been so extensively studied as other series, so there may be more varieties yet to discover.



Octagonal Two Cent

Read more about United States Two Pieces

Fivaz, Bill and Stanton, J.T. [Cherry-picker's Guide To Rare Die Varieties of United States Coins.](#) Whitman Publishing, Atlanta, 2009.

Flynn, Kevin. [The Authoritative Reference on Two Cent Coins.](#) Stanton Publishing, 2011.

Kliman, Myron. [The Two Cent Piece and Varieties.](#) Durst Publications, 1977.