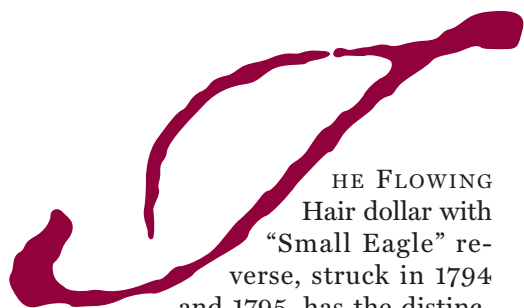


Robert Scot's Liberty

The first of the silver type coins, the 1794-95 "Flowing Hair/Small Eagle" dollars are characterized by two varieties.



THE FLOWING Hair dollar with "Small Eagle" reverse, struck in 1794 and 1795, has the distinction of being the first U.S. silver type coin. Although many issues produced by the early Mint are known to have numerous die varieties (about which entire books have been devoted), the subject of this month's column is characterized by only two, major reverse designs: one with two leaves below each of the eagle's wings, the other with three. (The piece illustrated at the right is an example of the two-leaf reverse.)

The Flowing Hair/Small Eagle issue was the first dollar-size, silver coin struck under the Act of April 2, 1792, which provided for the establishment of a national mint in Philadelphia. The Flowing Hair designs created that year by engraver Robert Birch (known for his 1792 copper cent pattern) were not well received and subsequently were replaced by Chief Engraver Robert Scot's new rendering, although they resemble each other in many ways. Author Walter Breen speculated that Scot loosely copied Joseph Wright's original 1793 half cent and large cent, although this leans more toward speculation when you compare the two designs side by side.

Long a champion of these early coins, professional numismatist Anthony Terranova points out that vari-

ations of Scot's Flowing Hair/Small Eagle motifs were used for the obverse and reverse of the 1794 half dime, the reverse of the 1796 and 1797 dime, the reverse of the 1796 quarter dollar, the obverse and reverse of the 1794 half dollar, and the reverse of the 1796 half dollar. Talk about economy of design! All probably were based on the same original art, although they were not made from the same master hub.

In his *Complete Encyclopedia of U.S. and Colonial Coins* (ANA Library

ness" being a relative term, as numismatic professional Silvano DiGenova points out, perhaps only 100 half dimes, 250 dimes, 150 quarter dollars, 1,100 half dollars and maybe 700 dollars have been certified.

Since coins were in short supply for commerce, all denominations of this type are, for the most part, found used, sometimes well worn and damaged, with the exception of a hoard of quarter dollars that changed hands from Colonel E.H.R. Green to Abe Kosoff to

Andre DeCoppet. Legendary coin-trader Arthur M. Kagin later picked through the lot, bought the best ones and prooflikes for his own stock, and sold the balance just after World War II. (Thirty years later, Kagin still had quantities of these quarters.) In any case, today, collector demand grossly outstrips supply, making all these coins very pricey in any grade, and unavailable and all but unaffordable in the highest grades.

Regardless of whether Scot's Flowing Hair was based on the half cent and large cent of the same year, its design is very interesting. It might have been influenced by renowned American artist Gilbert Stuart, who was pressured by Mint Director Henry William De Saussure to cre-

ate an image of Liberty. He reportedly drew it prior to August 1795, having based it on portraits of Philadelphia socialite and beauty Mrs. William Bingham (the former Anne Willing). The liberty cap, a common component of earlier numismatic depictions of

This 1795 silver dollar, designed by Robert Scot, features the "Small Eagle" reverse, with two wreath leaves below each of the eagle's wings. Scot might have adapted his image of "Flowing Hair" Liberty from artist Gilbert Stuart's painting of a Philadelphia socialite.



Catalog No. GA40.B65), Breen presumed these coins were stockpiled and delivered to the Treasurer late in 1795, accounting for the strong mintages of both dates of the type and the relative "commonness" of survivors in higher grades. "Common-

Miss Liberty, was removed, perhaps because of its association with the French Revolution then raging, or maybe for artistic reasons. I doubt we will ever really know for sure.

The coin did not bear a denomination, which was unnecessary at the time of issue since the bullion value and implied face value technically were equal. This left an attractive, youthful bust of Liberty facing right, with her unbound hair blowing in the “winds of freedom.”

The Flowing Hair/Small Eagle dollar shown here is nearly perfect and, according to the cataloger, is faintly toned in sky-blue and almond-gold. It has a few marks, but they are minimal and not worth mentioning. The coin’s



Robert Birch’s “Flowing Hair” design, illustrated by this 1792 cent pattern, was not well received.

original, smooth surfaces are well struck, with the exception of the eagle’s breast, which is usual for both the coin type and this specific date. I doubt that even a dozen specimens equal the condition or appearance of this spectacular piece.

Respectfully, I would like to thank Steve Ivy and Mark Borckardt of Heritage Auction Galleries for allowing me to quote freely from their catalog.

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