

1795 Half Dime

Fakes produced in the 1960s and '70s continue to fool experienced numismatists.



ANY OF THE
counterfeits

highlighted in this column and found in the marketplace are not new creations. Most likely they were first encountered in the 1960s or '70s and have lingered undetected in collections for decades. This could be the case with this month's fake, a 1795 half dime.

The earliest records I can find for this counterfeit date back to October 1978, but it probably bounced around the bourse floor a few years before that. In the last decade, I have seen only a handful of examples. Each was sent to me by a disappointed, but not entirely surprised, collector or dealer.

In comparison to genuine specimens, this counterfeit 1795 half dime is somewhat crude and will not deceive most hobbyists. However, anxious to own a prized coin like this, many collectors allow enthusiasm to



▲ Counterfeit 1795 half dime.



▲ Depression at top of 7 in date.

For example, the date area provides most of the diagnostics needed to authenticate this coin. Note the weakness and loss of relief at the base of the 5 and the depression at the top right of the 7. Numerous raised lines can be seen in the field below the 9 and 5 near the rim, and a line extends from the top right of the 9. Many



▲ Line extends from top right of 9; many lines in field below 9 and 5.



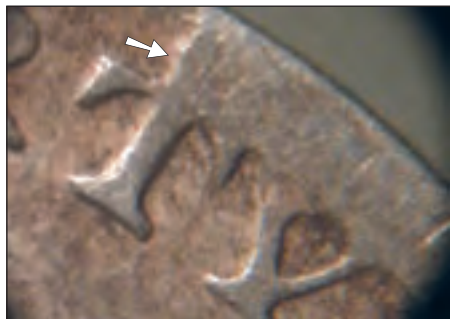
▲ Weakness and loss of relief at base of 5 in date.

overrule skepticism as they toss away hard-earned cash on an otherwise easily detected fake.

The weight of this counterfeit and others produced from the same dies is a dead giveaway. Genuine 1795 half dimes weigh in at around 1.34 grams. This counterfeit typically is 0.14 to 0.18 grams overweight. But weight is not the only discrepancy that exposes this piece as counterfeit. Many anomalies and diagnostics also prove the coin is fake.

■ Specifications ■

	WEIGHT (grams)	DIAMETER (millimeters)
Genuine	1.34	16.5
Counterfeit	1.48-1.52	—



▲ Raised metal, or “cud,” above TY of LIBERTY is typical of genuine specimens struck from dies in later stages of deterioration. In this case, it is not considered diagnostic.

heavy toolmarks, which are evident as raised lines on the coin’s surface, surround the date.

A few depressions are apparent on letters in the word LIBERTY, and a linear depression is prominent between the E and R in AMERICA. Fur-

ther study reveals toolmarks similar to those found near the date; misshapen and incomplete stars; a lump of raised metal at the rim above IT in UNITED; and a small depression on the I in AMERICA.

One obvious feature that *should not* be used as a diagnostic is the raised metal above the TY in LIBERTY, which resulted when part of the die broke away and left a void. This “cud” is seen on some late die states, designated as Variety LM-10 in Russell J. Logan and John W. McCloskey’s 1998 reference, *Federal Half Dimes 1792-1837* (ANA Library Catalog No. GB27.L6). The “cud” visible on the counterfeit was present on the genuine specimen from which the fake was made.

Despite the many flaws described here and the significant difference in weight, 1795 half dime fakes have appeared off and on in the marketplace for almost 40 years; this specimen was submitted for grading only a few



▲ Linear depression between E and R of AMERICA.

months ago. Since a counterfeiter can produce a few thousand fakes from one set of forged dies, I suspect this won’t be the last time we see one of these pieces.

If you have an interesting forgery you would like to see highlighted in this column, please don’t hesitate to contact me.

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