

Double Punched 1859 Cents - Know What You Are Buying

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Provincial cents dated 1859 provide collectors with a multitude of varieties and errors. The very large mintage of nearly 10 million coins, combined with the new, harder bronze alloy (previous Royal Mint minors were made of copper) severely taxed the minting tools used by the Royal Mint. Many of the dies had their features improved through re-punching, creating varieties, and many of the dies suffered wear and damage through overuse, creating errors and die state differences.

The most interesting 1859 pieces exhibit re-punching or die chips involving the “9” in the date. Arguably, the most popular of these varieties are the double punched narrow nine, type 1 (DP#1) and type 2 (DP#2). Both have long been included in the Charlton catalog, and have enjoyed mainstream collector support as an integral part of the Victorian Cent collection for several decades.



Figure 1 This very interesting 1859 cent, with a triple punched knob, resides in a PCGS holder as a Narrow 9.



Figure 2 The DP#1 nine.

Although probably not the scarcest of the re-punched nine varieties, DP#1 and DP#2 coins are far from common. Their long-term collector support has ensured that both types trade at a heavy premium over both regular 1859 narrow 9 pieces, as well as other re-punched nine varieties. Typically (there are exceptions), most other significantly re-punched nine pieces trade for 40-60% of the price of a similarly graded DP#2. Because of these large price differences, it behooves the collector to be able to positively identify both types from the many other re-punched nines in existence.

There seems to be very little confusion over what constitutes an 1859 double punched 9, type 1 (DP#1). The remnants of an underlying nine connect the upper and lower loops of the uppermost nine. More evidence of the underlying nine shows along the right edge. A die chip left a weakly defined “tail” on the left side, below the lower loop of the nine.



Figure 3 The DP#1 Obverse.
Note the die cracks at 2:30, 6:00, 9:00, and 11:00.

The DP#1 coins also have some other obverse and reverse features which help identify them. The obverse of a DP#1 exhibits four die cracks, one through the right side of the “T” in VICTORIA, one through the “D” in DEI, one through the “R” in REGINA, and one through the “N” in CANADA. The reverses also have two die cracks, from the rim to the leaves, at 3:00 and at 6:30 on a clock scale. Other, more faint, reverse die cracks appeared near the end of the die life.

Perhaps the chip preceded the die cracks, so it remains possible that a DP#1 will have the die chip, but not show some of the die cracks. The DP#1 reverse may also have been married with more than one obverse die. I can only report that every DP#1 that I have examined has all four obverse and both reverse die cracks. It seems likely the die chip happened near the end of the life of the reverse die, accounting for the scarcity of the DP#1.

Third party grading services generally have exhibited a very strict interpretation of what constitutes a DP#1. If a coin doesn't possess the features shown in both Figures 2 and 4, the major grading services will very likely not call it a DP#1.



Figure 4 The DP#1 Reverse.
Note the die cracks at 3:00 and 6:30.



Figure 5 The DP#2 nine.

The DP#2 has a heavily doubled nine, with remnants of the original nine showing prominently to the left of the upper loop and the knob of the upper nine. The remnant to the left of the knob is quite distinctive from other 1859 re-punched nine varieties. A faint trace of the lower loop of the original nine will sometimes show below the lower loop of the upper nine.

The reverse of the DP#2 usually shows two faint die cracks from the rim to the leaves, one at 3:00 and one at 4:30 on a clock scale. Obviously, since this coin results solely from die variety, DP#2 coins minted from an early die state will not have some, or all, of the die cracks.

The obverse of the DP#2 does not have any die cracks. It does, however, have a heavily and

distinctively re-punched first "A" in CANADA. Figure 7 shows this letter. Also, the obverse of the DP#2 often (but not always) shows some evidence of clashed dies above the portrait.

Somewhat surprisingly, third party grading services often seem to have a very liberal standard for which coins they attribute as DP#2 cents. Other re-punched nine varieties, some quite dissimilar from the DP#2, end up in DP#2 holders. Figures 9 and 10 show coins labeled as DP#2 by PCGS. All are different than the version shown in Figure 5, and all likely will only fetch a fraction of the DP#2 price upon resale.



Figure 6 The DP#2 Reverse
Note the die cracks at 3:00 and 4:30.

This price difference results in a minor problem for the collector in the lower circulated grades, but can represent a huge difference in value for mint state coins. For example, PCGS has graded four coins as 1859 DP#2 in MS-64 Red. DP#2 coins in that grade could be expected to trade for about \$10,000. Your author has examined two of these four coins (one in person, and one by detailed photographs). Both have a distinctly different type of re-engraved nine than the one shown in Figure 5, and do not have the other markers described above for this variety. An unsuspecting buyer (it can happen even at that lofty level) could unwittingly pay \$10,000 for a coin arguably worth only \$4,000 to \$6,000 to a more knowledgeable buyer.

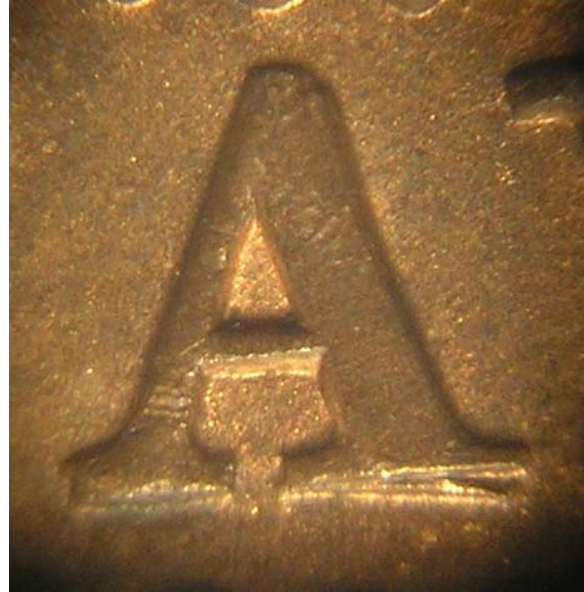


Figure 7 The first “A” in CANADA on a DP#2



Figure 8 The DP#2 Obverse
Note the die clash marks above the portrait.

ICCS seems to have a tighter standard in this regard. Often, when grading a coin with a re-engraved nine similar to, but not exactly like, that shown in Figure 5, they will attribute the coin as “DP#2, Variation”. Even ICCS, however, is not entirely consistent. Figure 11 shows a coin that ICCS certified as a DP#2 with no “Variation” comment.

All of the above proves that collectors should know what they are buying, and as the adage says; “Buy the coin, not the holder.”



Figure 9 A wonderfully re-punched nine, with a quadruple punched knob, certified as a DP#2 by PCGS.



Figure 10 Another interesting re-punched nine, certified by PCGS as a DP#2.



Figure 11 A re-punched nine, very similar to Figure 10 above, certified by ICCS as a DP#2.

None of the three coins pictured on this page have the reverse die breaks, or the obverse re-punched "A" in CANADA described above as markers for a DP#2.