

Collecting Indian Cent Varieties By Ron Robertson

Coin collecting is often called a passion but, at least in my opinion, collecting varieties should be considered more like an obsession or even lust. Once I discovered Indian Cent varieties, which I think of as “Snow” varieties, the problem became more one of not indulging myself with every one I found. Where some might have indulging moments thinking of blondes, brunettes, and redheads, I think of repunched dates, misplaced dates, and doubled dies. The ironic thing is that, when I started back into coin collecting in my doddering years, I didn’t know a thing about varieties, much less being able to identify one.

Learning about the whole world of variety collecting has made me much more aware of every aspect of a coin: die state, surface condition, and strike quality, which equates, of course, to the overall grade. Looking for sometimes minute variations in a date, or doubling of Longacre’s initial, will certainly educate your eyes to seeing what’s on the coin and not just what’s written on a 2x2 or slab. What happened was that in looking for varieties specifically, I learned more than I ever dreamed possible about coins in general. I discovered that, by not always viewing a coin from a single direction and instead looking at it from all angles of the compass N, S, E, & W, varieties could be more easily seen (with a 16-20x loupe), because of the shadows produced.

Rick Snow’s first book on Indian Cent varieties (1992) along with Kevin Flynn’s extensive look at misplaced dates was a good starting point for me. But it was Snow’s most recent three volume series (excluding the Flying Eagle volume) which to me as I look back, has brought Indian Cent varieties more on a level with Large Cent’s Sheldon varieties or Morgan Dollars and their associated VAM’s. Of course, experienced Indian Cent collectors knew about CONECA and The Fly-In Club and therefore had variety information through those groups. To the beginning and intermediate collector back in the early 90’s, the only Indian Cent variety they knew of was the 1869/69 (Snow-3) and that was only because there was a hole for it in their folder. Be that as it may, by taking a few examples of different years from the most recent volume of “The Indian Cent Attribution Guide, 1890-1909” (Dec. 2009) and comparing the number of varieties to the 1992 book, demonstrates the increase in information now available to the Indian Cent collector:

Year	1992	2009
1895	7 Snow varieties	32 Snow varieties
1898	3 “ “	37 “ “
1906	3 “ “	50 “ “

Admittedly, the majority of these coins are not new discoveries - many, if not most, have appeared in print before (especially in *Longacre’s Ledger*). What has changed is that information on all of the different types of Indian Cent varieties are now available in a comprehensive manner with their rarity and demand more or less established. Of course, now for the hobbyist trying to collect by Snow variety, the problem is one of overload. With about 1000 Snow varieties now established, the collector must, at least if you are like me, consider budget along with personal preferences and, possibly most important, how understanding your spouse is. As with any type of lust, you must control



your impulses or they’ll control you (just ask a well-known golfer!). We should probably be glad that we don’t approach the hobby like our Large Cent brethren and collect by die pairs. In fact, an Early American Copper specialist once mentioned to me that he and a friend had tried counting die pairs for a single year of Indian Cents and gave up the process at 100. Their feeling was that they had not even scratched the surface and that collecting each year by die pair was, while not an impossible task, one more laborious than they were willing to undertake. Of course, if that was your preference, you could always collect die pairs of the 1877 of which only 2 are known.

So what do you do once you have completed the traditional date set? Collect a second set? Many people do, some even have several sets, often in different grades just to make it interesting. If you want to collect by Snow varieties, there are only about three times as many as there are Sheldon varieties so that’s not too bad. Myself, I incorporated as many of my favorite variety type - repunched dates - into my regular year set as I possibly could. That my coins are all in PCGS holders and are mostly Photo Sealed was by design, as I felt that was the best way of both establishing and keeping their value. PCGS also has (as NGC does) a registry set website in which you can list your coins to compete against other collectors and at the same time, at least with PCGS, the coin’s value is posted. Having an approximate market value of the coin can be important for insurance purposes, but having a printout of the total value of your PCGS coins can be invaluable for your family in case you happen to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

One unfortunate thing about having a coin attributed by PCGS is that its value most often will now register as zero, instead of the price of the basic coin. Why? My guess is that there is little if any auction information (yet) on which to base an estimated price for that specific variety. It seems to me that it should be at least the basic price plus x amount, but I’m not getting the big bucks to make those decisions.

PCGS Set Registry Collecting


All this leads me to the newest registry set that PCGS has for the Indian Head Cent collector: The *Indian Head Cent Complete Variety Set*. Almost exclusively using the coins listed in the latest printing of the *Cherrypicker's Guide to Rare Die Varieties of United States Coins (5th ed. Vol. 1)*, the variety enthusiast now can list many more coins in a registry set than ever before. The basic set has 55 coins in it. The "With Major Varieties Set" adds nine coins which, along with both type 1873's and 1886's, includes the biggies, such as the 1873 Closed 3 S1, 1888/7 S1, and 1894/1894 S1 for a total of 64. The new "With Complete Varieties Set", adds to the basic set a whopping 118 coins for a total of 173, something for everyone, regardless of their favorite. My own favorite, repunched dates, are generously represented throughout the set but especially so with the 1864-L variety which, along with the basic year type, includes 6 different repunched dates. Putting together this set has also somewhat forced me to look for misplaced dates (I think it should more correctly be called a misplaced digit, as it's often a single numeral) and doubled dies which had been far down my list of preferred acquisitions. I have a new appreciation for those types of varieties now, maybe unfortunate for my wallet but satisfyingly feeding my love of Indian Cent variety coins.

With PCGS, I first listed my basic set, mostly to have a record of my coins but also to compare them to what others had listed. Wow! The top sets, both current and the all time best were a real revelation to me and I quickly gave up any thought of ever making even the top 5. After I included my set in the *Major Varieties* Registry, I moved up the list quite a bit, but most of my favorite coins were still excluded. However, going from No. 18 in the basic set to No. 8 was kind of fun and then I discovered what is basically *The Cherrypicker's* set and went to No 1. Of course I'm only 53 % finished with the set which will get up to about 59% once my latest batch of coins gets certified. Still being No. 1 in anything at my age makes my creaky legs get a spring in their step. As I mentioned to Rick a while back after we attended the PCGS Registry Set awards luncheon: "Gee, only about \$50,000 more and I'll be able to win one of those \$10 plaques too!"

There are things I like about the *Complete Variety* set, such as the six 1864-L repunched dates - in fact, all of the repunched dates, but I don't like that some of my other, favorite coins, were not included. That just means that my basic set is still composed of mostly variety coins. In fact, having to add an entire basic set to the 118 varieties is a real push for most people. I mean, why not have the Complete Variety set consist of only the varieties? Of course, the non-variety set is almost always available at auction or from dealers in almost any grade desired. However, except for some of the major varieties, for example the 1873 Close 3 S1, most of the others will really require searching, lots and lots of searching. I'm sure there are long-time Indian Cent variety collectors out there who would blow me out of the water if they had their coins attributed and slabbed by PCGS, but the point, at least for me, is the pursuit of specific varieties and not my Registry set position.

Some ironies (either funny or maddening) regarding the set as chosen by PCGS was that in the *Cherrypicker's Guide* an 1870 is listed, in which the authors mention comes with both the separately targeted DDO and the DDR, so it's possible to get a double-find! PCGS, in their wisdom, requires that you not only have both coins the DDO, FS-101 and the DDR, FS-801, but the third coin with both. So instead of one coin representing both varieties, you must have the two separate ones plus the one with the combination DDO & DDR. Of course, no one is forcing anyone to collect these according to PCGS who, by the way, gave that particular coin the made-up designation 101/801. At least the coin does have a Snow number (S2), although it's not listed in the *CP Guide*, but it would have been nice to get a two-for, but what was it that was said about "fools and their money?" Still, they are really neat doubled dies, which the year 1870 is well known for, but with a total of 7 varieties, it could have been reduced by one! Also, for the years with both the Bold and Shallow reverse (1870, 1871 and 1872), both types of reverse are required for the set. As all three years have separate listings in the *Red Book*, usually indicative of both demand and price, one is probably wise to acquire the coins sooner than later.

Bill Fivaz's and J.T. Stanton's new edition of the *Cherrypicker's Guide* also has adopted a new system for numbering varieties which makes more sense than what they had previously used (especially if you've had enough of decimal numbers in the 4th grade). Just as an example, now all repunched dates will be numbered as: 300, 301, etc, instead of the 006.71 and variations they had used before. Also obverse doubled dies will all be in the 100's, reverse doubled dies in the 800's, and those Shallow N's



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of 1870-1872 would be in the 900's which is the miscellaneous reverse variety. All of the new designations make more sense to me, but then I never had a chance to grow accustomed to the old system. In case you have PCGS coins with the old numbering system, don't worry, they are just as valid. I won't go into any more detail about the new numbering as it's simple and seems to make sense. Even if you don't know a thing about a coin series you at least know that if it has a number in the 300's that it's a repunched date, period. So the important stuff for us is: .01 for Cent, then the next four-digit number is the year, and the last set of numbers is the specific variety.

Below is a list of all the coins one needs in addition to the basic set to have what PCGS, via both the *Cherrypicker's Guide*, and our own Rick Snow have chosen as part of this set. Whether they are the most important, or popular, or maybe just the varieties that are most representative, I'm not sure. But whatever the answer is, they are a good cross section of the different varieties available in Indian Cent collecting and, if nothing else, you will have fun looking for them.

One last note or two: there are at least two errors in the *Cherrypicker's Guide*. The first one is with the 1864-L's in which the photo for the S2 variety is incorrect. What is described is the S2 but the photo is for the S5, which appears on the same page (p37) just above the listing for the S2. I've already corrected this with PCGS and anybody having an S2 should be O.K. as mine came back correctly attributed. The second error is the 1895 FS-301, which has a photo and description for an S20, but has the S1 designated. I can only assume that the description is correct and the error was in the Snow number, but I would contact either PCGS or the authors of the *Cherrypicker's Guide* before I sent a coin in to be attributed. Oops, I just found a third error. The 1898 FS-401 has a Snow designation of S12, yet Rick's new book

states that S12 has been de-listed and was found to actually be S5. If you're like me, you want to know the correct, up-to-the-minute data, and likewise have your coins correctly attributed, especially if you're paying PCGS for this service.

Having 118 variety coins graded and attributed by PCGS at a minimum of \$42 per coin (\$30 for grading, \$12 for variety designation) costs just shy of \$5000. That's some serious money to me, and definitely would pay for some pretty nice coins I could be buying for my Registry set. Actually, I've just about given up on ever completing the *Complete Variety* set but will continue to pursue the coins in it if just for the parameters it gives me. I would like to collect just about every variety of Indian Cent ever made but short of winning the lottery, I just can't figure out how to do it.

A big problem I have is that I've tried to have a more or less matching set, nearly all of my basic set coins are MS64RB and the ones that aren't are either MS65RB or Red. Adding varieties, especially ones like the 1865 S2 (DDR) and '73 S1 I've had to lower my target grade considerably, both because of price and most of all availability. Some of these coins are impossible to find, or nearly so as to make little difference. Most of the other varieties are no different in price than the regular date, only harder to find, often because no one looks for them as there is no demand. I refuse (well, maybe not completely) to pay more for the coin than its basic date price plus whatever the variety rarity is worth. So most of these coins, minus the *Redbook* varieties, are date price plus maybe 10% or 20% at the most, but that is likely to increase as more people look for them. So to acquire as many of them as possible and beat the jump in prices maybe I can raise money by selling copies of *Longacre's Ledger* on the street corner? Nah!

PCGS Complete Variety Set Registry

	DATE	SNOW #	F/S #	PCGS#	TYPE	SHORTHAND DESCRIPTION
<input type="checkbox"/>	1859	S1	301	37391	RPD	1859/1859 (sw)
<input type="checkbox"/>	1859	S2	302	37390	RPD	1859, 185/185 (s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	1859	S3	303	37392	RPD	1859, 18/18 (s) 59/59 (n)
<input type="checkbox"/>	1860 T1		401	37393	Pointed Bust	Type of 1859
<input type="checkbox"/>	1861	S1	301	37394	RPD	1861, 61/61 (s) [mostly base of 1]
<input type="checkbox"/>	1862	S2	301	412746	MPD	Remains of 8&6 protruding from denticles
<input type="checkbox"/>	1862	S5	801	412744	DDR	Arrow shafts
<input type="checkbox"/>	1863	S2	301	412748	RPD	1863/863 (sw)
<input type="checkbox"/>	1863		302	412750	MPD	Portion of 1 in neck at the necklace
<input type="checkbox"/>	1863	S10	801	37395	DDR	Right leaves (center) of the wreath
<input type="checkbox"/>	1864 CN	S5	401	408760	Die Polish Lines	Above and through the ear
<input type="checkbox"/>	1864 No L	S4	1101	37396	DDO + RPD	Strong doubling on Liberty, 1864/4 (w)
<input type="checkbox"/>	1864 No L	S2	1301	37399	RPD	1864/864 (sw)
<input type="checkbox"/>	1864-L	S1	2301	37408	RPD	1864/1864 (se)
<input type="checkbox"/>	1864-L	S3	2302	37411	RPD	1864/1864 (n), 1/1 (s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	1864-L	S4	2303	37414	RPD	1864/1864 (n), 18/18 (s)



<input type="checkbox"/>	1864-L	S5	2304	37402	RPD	1864/1864 (n), 18/18 (s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	1864-L	S2	2305	37405	RPD	1864/1864 (s), closer to bustpoint than S1
<input type="checkbox"/>	1864-L	S10	2306	37417	RPD	1864, 86/86 (n)
<input type="checkbox"/>	1865 Plain 5	S1	301	37432	RPD	1865, 18/18 (s), 65/65 (n)
<input type="checkbox"/>	1865 Plain 5	S4	302	37435	RPD	1865, 18/18 (n)
<input type="checkbox"/>	1865 Plain 5	S3	303	37438	RPD + MPD	1865/1865 (s), MPD >8 & 6
<input type="checkbox"/>	1865 Plain 5	S2	304	37441	RPD + MPD	1865, 1/1 (e), 5/5 (s), MPD in denticles
<input type="checkbox"/>	1865 Fancy 5	S1	1301	37426	RPD	1865, 1/1 (s), 5/4 digit punch
<input type="checkbox"/>	1865 Fancy 5	S4	1302	37429	RPD	1865/186 (s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	1865 Fancy 5	S14	1401	37423	Die Gouge	Circular die line in headress
<input type="checkbox"/>	1865 Fancy 5	S2	1801	37420	DDR	One Cent strongly doubled
<input type="checkbox"/>	1866	S1	101	37444	DDO + MPD	Doubled ERTY, MPD in necklace & denticles
<input type="checkbox"/>	1866	S2	301	37447	RPD	1866/66 (n)
<input type="checkbox"/>	1866	S3	302	37453	RPD	1866/1 (w)
<input type="checkbox"/>	1866	S9	303	37450	RPD	1866/66 (n) [bottom loops of 6's]
<input type="checkbox"/>	1867	S1	301	37459	RPD	1867/67 (n)
<input type="checkbox"/>	1867	S4	302	37456	RPD	1867/18 (s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	1868	S1	101	37462	DDO	Doubled RTY in LIBERTY (minor) & Initial,
<input type="checkbox"/>	1868	S4	102	37471	DDO + RPD	Tops of LIBERTY doubled, 1868/868 (sw)
<input type="checkbox"/>	1868	S5	103	37468	DDO + RPD	Tops of BERTY doubled, 1868/8 (n)
<input type="checkbox"/>	1868	S8	301	37465	MPD	Extra 8's in denticles >6&8<
<input type="checkbox"/>	1869	S3	301	37474	RPD	1869, 69/69 (n)
<input type="checkbox"/>	1869	S1	302	37477	RPD	1896, 18/18 (nw), 6/6 (s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	1869	S4	None	148716	RPD (Not in F/S)	1869, 9/9 (n)
<input type="checkbox"/>	1870	S1,2,13, etc.	101	37480	DDO	TY in Liberty (n)
<input type="checkbox"/>	1870	S5	102	37492	DDO+RPD+MPD	IBERTY, 1870, 18/18 (n), 0/0 (e), 0 in denticles.
<input type="checkbox"/>	1870	S4	301	37489	RPD	1870/1870 (n)
<input type="checkbox"/>	1870	S8	302	37486	MPD+DDR	Multiple digits in denticles, Doubled die rev.
<input type="checkbox"/>	1870	S2,3,14	801	37483	DDR	Strong doubling on One Cent, mostly CE of Cent
<input type="checkbox"/>	1870	S2	101/801	408503	DDO + DDR	See 101, see above.
<input type="checkbox"/>	1870	Many	901	408017		Shallow N
<input type="checkbox"/>	1871	S4 & 5	901	404549		Shallow N
<input type="checkbox"/>	1872	S1	301	37495	RPD	1872/1--2
<input type="checkbox"/>	1872	S10,13,14	901	404546		Shallow N
<input type="checkbox"/>	1873 Close 3	S1	101	37504	DDO	Doubled LIBERTY
<input type="checkbox"/>	1873 Close 3	S2	102	37501	DDO	Doubled IBERTY
<input type="checkbox"/>	1873 Open 3	S1	1301	37498	RPD	1873/73 N
<input type="checkbox"/>	1874	S1	101	37507	DDO	Slightly doubled LIBERTY
<input type="checkbox"/>	1875	S1	301	408617	RPD	1875/18 (s) Small over Large 18
<input type="checkbox"/>	1875	S2	302	408620	RPD	1875 18/18 (w) 5/5 (w)
<input type="checkbox"/>	1875	S3	303	408623	RPD	1875, 18/18 (s)

□	1878	S2	301	37510	MPD	Tops of 3 digits in denticles below the 87 in date
□	1880	S1	101	37513	DDO+ Die Clash	Reverse die clash, reeding visible through E in One
□	1882	S6	401	37516	MPD	Base of several 1's in necklace
□	1883	S1	403	404543	MPD	Base of a 1 sticking out of the neck below the pearls
□	1883	S6	801	37522	DDR	Ribbon ends and arrowhead tips
□	1883	S7	402	412753	MPD	Base of a 1 is in the necklace
□	1883	S8	401	37519	MPD	Two digits, sticking out of the denticles, left of 8 & 3
□	1884	S1	401	37525	MPD	8 & 4 in denticles below same
□	1887	S1	101	37528	DDO	America widely doubled
□	1888	S1	301	2169	Overdate!!!	1888/7, 7 digit protruding under last 8
□	1888	S2	302	37531	RPD	1888/888
□	1888	S27	303	37534	MPD	Base of 1 below ribbon
□	1888	S32	305	37540	MPD	Digit between hair curls, another>< ribbon & curl
□	1888		304	37537	MPD	Not in CPG, but in PCGS registry
□	1889	S3	301	37546	RPD	1889/1889 (sw)
□	1889	S1	801	37549	DDR	Shield doubled (4 lines) & left inner leaves of wreath
□	1889	S11	802	412756	DDR	Shield doubled (4 lines) & left outer leaves of wreath
□	1890	S1	101	37558	TDO	Tripled legend, possibly quadrupled
□	1890	S3	401	37552	MPD	Small part of 1 sticking out of neck just above pearls
□	1890	S6	402	37555	MPD	9 (or 0) in denticles below 9 in date
□	1891	S1	101	37564	DDO	Doubling on LIBERTY & STATES OF AMERICA
□	1891	S3	301	37561	RPD	1891/1891 (n)
□	1892	S1	302	37570	RPD+DDR	1892, 89/89 (n), doubling on right wreath veins
□	1892	S8	301	37567	RPD	1892, 892/892 (e), very widely repunched
□	1892	S14	401	37573	Die scratches	Scarface, heavy scratches on cheek
□	1893	S2	301	37576	RPD	1893, 893/893 (e)
□	1894	S1	301	37582	RPD	1894/1894 (ne) massively repunched
□	1894	S2	402	37579	MPD	9 & 4 in denticles and well into field
□	1895	S1	301	37585	RPD	1895/895 (e)
□	1895	S9	302	37588	RPD	1/1 (e), 1895/1895 (e), 1 with multiple repunchings
□	1896	S1	301	37591	RPD	1896/6 (e), wide & bold 6
□	1897	S1	401	37597	MPD	Base of 1 boldly sticking out of neck
□	1897	S8	402	37594	RPD	1897, 9/9 (s)
□	1898 ¹	S13	402	37603	MPD	Top of digit, either 8 or 9 protruding from denticles
□	1898 ²	S5	401	37600	MPD	Digit in denticles below 2nd 8
□	1899	S1	301	37606	RPD	1899/899 (e)
□	1899	S13	302	37609	RPD	1899, 9/9 (e), 1st 9 widely repunched, (Breen's O/D)
□	1899	S9	303	412764	RPD	1899, 1/1 (s), 9/9 (n)
□	1900	S1	301	37612	RPD	1900, last 0/0 (ne)

1 Not S5

2 Was S-12 (delisted)



<input type="checkbox"/>	1900	S3	302	412767	RPD	1900, 19/19 (s), last 0/0 (n)
<input type="checkbox"/>	1901	S19	301	412770	RPD	1901, 1st 1/1 (s), last 1/1 (n)
<input type="checkbox"/>	1902	S4	401	412773	Die gouge	Die gouge by eye (ne x sw)
<input type="checkbox"/>	1903	S10	301	37615	MPD	Small portions of digits 190 in denticles below date
<input type="checkbox"/>	1903	S6	302	37618	MPD	Top of 0 digit, 9&0, top of 3 just to right of 0 in date
<input type="checkbox"/>	1903	S7	303	412776	RPD	1903, 1/1 (nw), 1/1 (e)
<input type="checkbox"/>	1903	S3	304	412779	RPD	1903/1903 (se), 03/03 (w)
<input type="checkbox"/>	1904	S10	301	412783	RPD	1904, 1/1 (s), 04/04 (n), top of 4 is most bold
<input type="checkbox"/>	1905	S1	301	412786	RPD	1905/5, (s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	1906	S7	301	412789	RPD	1906/906 (s), 6 lightly repunched far to the south
<input type="checkbox"/>	1906	S14	302	412792	RPD+MPD	1906, 0/0 (s), 06 in denticles
<input type="checkbox"/>	1906	S20	303	412795	RPD	1906, 19/19 (s), 6/6 (e)
<input type="checkbox"/>	1907	S1	301	412798	RPD	1907/1907 (s), 90/90 (n), 0 in denticles slightly left of 0
<input type="checkbox"/>	1907	S2	302	412801	RPD	1907, 90/90 (n)
<input type="checkbox"/>	1907	S27	303	412806	RPD	1907, 90/90 (s), 90/90 (s), multiple repunchings
<input type="checkbox"/>	1908	S4	301	37621	MPD	Upper portion of complete date in denticles
<input type="checkbox"/>	1908	S9	302	37624	MPD	08 in upper portion of denticles below & left of same
<input type="checkbox"/>	1908-S	S1	201	412809	RPM	1908-S/S (s).
<input type="checkbox"/>	1909	S1	101	144404	DDO	Longacre's initial, master die doubling

BN listed PCGS number

RB Add 1 to listed PCGS number

RD Add 2 to listed PCGS number

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