

# Searching For Uncirculated Coins In The 1890s

By Hal V. Dunn

#CM-0005



T.R. Hofer, Cashier of the Bullion and Exchange Bank, and Superintendent of the Carson City Mint

In the late nineteenth century widely disseminated current numismatic information was exceedingly scarce. To determine with any accuracy what denominations had been struck at any federal mint required one to consult the annual Mint Report, issued by the Treasury Department. For most collectors this was not practical.

Coinage operations at the Carson City Mint ceased on June 1, 1893, never to resume. Six months later on December 19, 1893, E. B. Stevens, cashier of the First National Bank of Parsons, Kansas penned a letter to T. R. Hofer, his counterpart at the Bullion and Exchange Bank of Carson City. Mr. Stevens makes no reference in his letter to Mr. Hofer's office as Superintendent of the Carson City Mint, a position he was holding simultaneously with his banking



*E.B. Stevens, Cashier of First National Bank of Parsons, Kansas*

1961.

LEE CLARK, President.  
H. D. MIRICK, Vice-Pres't.  
E. B. STEVENS, Cashier.

THE FIRST NATIONAL BANK  
OF PARSONS.

PARSONS, KAN., December 19 1893.

Sir,

I desire to receive in uncirculated condition the following coins of Comm. City Mint of this years coinage:

Dollar Half dollar Quarter dollar and Dime.

I desire them for my private collection of coins.

Enclosed please find my draft on St. Louis for \$2.00 to your order in payment of above.

I also enclose stamped envelope so you can send them to me by registered mail.

Can you give me the address of any one in your city that is interested in collecting coins? I desire to correspond with such a person.

Thanking you in advance.

Yours truly

E. B. Stevens Cash.

T. R. Hofer Cas.

Bullion & Exchange Bank.

Comm City Minter

*[Handwritten initials and scribbles]*

Letter from E.B. Stevens to T.R. Hofer requesting envelopes of "CC" coins.

employment. Whether Mr. Stevens knew of this curious situation is not revealed in surviving correspondence available to this author. The request made by Mr. Stevens was very simple; he wished to purchase four Uncirculated 1893 Carson City coins for his personal collection. But there was a problem, three of the coins had not been struck at Carson City since 1878. Those coins were one dime, one quarter dollar and one half dollar. How could Mr. Stevens have made such a mistake? The answer to that question is probably contained in the first paragraph of this article; a lack of readily available current news.

The Stevens letter is unremarkable. No doubt other early collectors requested coins from the superintendents of the Philadelphia, New Orleans, San Francisco and Carson City Mints, or from the bankers of those cities. The letter is also interesting as it serves to illustrate how some collectors of over a century ago sought to complete their collections. He was also seeking the names and addresses of other collectors Hofer might be able to refer him to.

In the early years of collecting little notice was taken of mintmarks. Then in 1893 August G. Heaton published *A Treatise On The Coinage Of The United States Branch Mints* and mintmarked coins began to assume their proper place in numismatics. Was Mr. Stevens' request motivated by the Heaton treatise, or did he already have an interest in branch mint coins? Another unanswered question.

E. B. Stevens became member 233 of the American Numismatic Association in December 1894. His number was later converted to 82 in 1899. In 1894 A. G. Heaton assumed the presidency of that association.

*(Steven's portrait and letter courtesy of Hal V. Dunn. Hofer picture courtesy of Southgate Coins.)*