

1792 Morris So-Called Silver Center Cent Research Presentation: Responses and Call to Action

On June 20, 2019, the research team of Robert Rodriguez, Tony Lopez, Stuart Levine, and Maureen Levine published a fifty page presentation, "1792 Silver and Non-Silver Cents: Further Studies of the Silver Plug Contained in the Morris So-Called Silver Center Cent," on the Newman Numismatic Portal (available at <https://nnp.wustl.edu/library/book/538104>). Since then, our presentation has received wide support of its conclusion that the 1792 Morris Silver Center Cent, PCGS item 11001.61/13428095, encapsulated as an authentic Judd-1, MS-61, is not a genuine Judd-1, in that its silver plug was fabricated and inserted after the coin left the 1792 United States Mint. It is commonly believed that this fabrication was done to deceive a future collector and not as some obscure pattern variant of the nascent United States mint. Nineteen numismatic luminaries carefully reviewed the study and agreed to go on the record with their opinions. Their responses can be found in their entirety in the accompanying PDF and on NNP (<https://nnp.wustl.edu/library/book/567273>).

Below are excerpts from some of the 19 quotes:

Christopher R. McDowell, Early American Coin Expert and Author:

"The photographic evidence is overwhelming ... It is my opinion that the Morris 1792 silver center cent is not authentic ... In my opinion, the views expressed in the paper are accurate."

Andy Lustig, Professional Numismatic Dealer and Collector:

"The report leaves no doubt in my mind that the silver plug in the Morris J-1 is not original and has been imperfectly engraved in an attempt to pass it off as 'the real deal.'"

Louis Jordan, Associate University Librarian, Academic Services and Collections, University of Notre Dame:

"... clearly demonstrates ... that the silver plug was added to an original 1792 cent at a later date."

Jim Halperin, Co-Chairman of Heritage Auctions:

"I agree with the presentation's conclusions that the plug is substantially unlike all the others known and therefore, most likely a non-Mint fabrication."

Joel J. Orosz, Distinguished Professor of Philanthropic Studies Emeritus, Grand Valley State University:

"The authors are to be commended for establishing the true nature of the Morris specimen, and for refining our understanding of the 1792 coinage."

Anthony Terranova, Professional Numismatic Dealer and Collector:

"Your study: very compelling and most likely correct."

Anne E. Bentley, Curator of Art & Artifacts, Massachusetts Historical Society:

"I accept their conclusions with confidence in their integrity and impartiality."

We are grateful that so many have registered their support of our research and that of the authors of *1792: Birth of a Nation's Coinage*.

PCGS Claims the Morris Specimen is Genuine

PCGS (Professional Coin Grading Service), a division of the publically traded corporation Collectors Universe, is an independent, third-party grading company whose website states: "All U.S. and World coins graded and encapsulated by PCGS are guaranteed genuine."

The research team has reached out to PCGS on several occasions to discuss our findings. We attempted to meet with Joe Orlando, President and CEO of Collectors Universe, and Brett Charville, President, PCGS, twice this year to convey and explain new information but management refused to accept either meeting. Thus, we had no opportunity to present our updated study or discuss its wide support from numismatic experts.

In an email dated March 21, 2019, to Robert Rodriguez, Brett Charville made the following statement: "As you are well aware 1792 was a transformative year for our nation's fledgling mint. Variance among pattern coinage, especially early patterns is not unusual and we do not believe the findings you've presented go beyond circumstantial and speculative." This statement ignores the incontrovertible photographic evidence showing that the plug on the Morris example was engraved rather than struck.

Additionally, Charville wrote, "My own personal interpretation is that at a certain point some involved in this have become so intent on making what they consider a significant numismatic discovery that they've let theory and conjecture stand in for facts." But the false nature of the Morris coin was actually discovered by the Chapman brothers in 1905, when they wrote that "the plug in this specimen has been inserted after the piece was struck and engraved with part impression": a hard fact that cannot be attributed to "theory and conjecture."

We urge the readers to examine the study and review the numismatic community's public comments to determine whether the study is "circumstantial and speculative" and relies on "theory and conjecture."

Call to Action

To have such an altered coin included in the genuine census of the historically important Judd-1 pattern coins raises serious questions about whether PCGS can admit to a significant error in judgment. Do financial conflicts weigh in their refusal to revisit their decision? Please note that the last time the Morris so-called Silver Center Cent sold at public auction (Heritage Auctions, April 2012, Auction 1169, lot 5403) it realized \$1,150,000.

The team respectfully urges all interested parties who agree with our research conclusions, and the opinions expressed by our list of distinguished supporters, to contact Joe Orlando and Brett Charville and insist that PCGS decertify and attempt to remove from the marketplace the 1792 so-called Morris Silver Center Cent, PCGS item 11001.61/13428095, Judd-1, MS-61.

It is the team's firm conclusion that decertifying this deceptive item would be in the best interest of the numismatic community.