

“Fake News and Fact Checking.. Comes to ‘Coins?’”

By Sarah Robinson Trout

I work and part-own a coin shop in Jacksonville, FL - Edgewood Coin. In my years here, I've seen so many counterfeits, of many types of coins. And yes, emulating valuable coins, and the kinds of coins that you do have to question, “Why did they even bother counterfeiting this?”. There's contemporary counterfeits, modern counterfeits, made of the right metal, or not. But especially in recent years, I've seen a huge rash of modern counterfeits passed off as 1 oz silver. Bars, U.S. eagles, you name it. There are counterfeit coins. But perhaps there are even more faked bars and bullion type items, because there's less design consistency to verify the fake “against.”

When you work professionally in the field, when you see a thousand of the real things, and when the tools you need to verify an item are readily available as a “business-necessity,” it's a lot easier to recognize them right away, or at least after a short test or two. To the average person though, who just wants to diversify their investment portfolio, it's tough to order an item from what looks like a real place, the thought of it not being that real item, maybe not even crossing your mind yet. I have customers come into the store to sell items that they may have had set aside for a rainy day, for many years. No valid return policy, the source they got the coins from may be long gone. They think, I have a security, I have silver set up in the safe, I'll be okay, and then in their moment of need, they're hit with the news that their security itself has failed them, that they were the victims of a fraud, that they have no silver. How loathsome. Counterfeits can hurt an economy. But that economy is filled with “us”. It's filled with “you.”

This excerpt is in reference to some 2023 Silver Eagles, though as stated above, there are many counterfeits, for many types of things. Perhaps these details and pictures will assist you or someone you know, in knowing you have the real thing, or don't, maybe before it's too late to do something about it. Don't be part of the problem.

In December of 2023, Edgewood Coin was presented and asked to verify the authenticity, by a customer, a quantity of 2023 U.S. Silver Eagle \$1 coins, that he had previously purchased online from a different source.

United States Silver Eagles are issued as 1 troy ounce (31.103g) in weight, of .999 fine silver composition, legal tender currency with a denomination of \$1.00 USD, with a diameter of 40.6mm. They are struck by the United States Mint, starting in 1986 to 2021, for the type 1 design, and from 2021 to present, for the type 2 design.

Upon testing the silver content for the coins presented by the customer, the coins in question did not test as .999 fine silver, or of any silver content at all, on the Sigma Metalitics Pro, which verifies the specific density of a metal, as within its settings. When weighed, the coin by itself, in no protective holder, weighed .82 troy ounce, or 25.3 grams rounded to one decimal place, therefore was under original issue weight.

Diagnostically speaking, in the process of minting coins, the U.S. Mint has specific die pairs, like “molds” all used to strike all the coins of that issue. Because of this, all authentic coins come from a specific set of dies and bear the same, identical details as the dies they are struck with - the width of the rays of the sun in the coin’s obverse design, the letter font of the date, the roundness or sharpness of the strike, in design or letters, all matter. Traditionally, pimpling, weak strikes, or blurry details are all red flags to take as warnings for counterfeits. All the coins presented to us bear sure-fire signs of being not authentic examples. As aforementioned, these examples have details that are not matching or original to certified, known authentic examples.





Pertaining to the non-authentic coins: the stars and background of the flag wrapped around Lady Liberty are too well defined, showing a netting-like “fabric” texture behind the stars, not of the same relief or height as the original, while the feet for example, are the opposite, being under-defined and too low in height or relief.

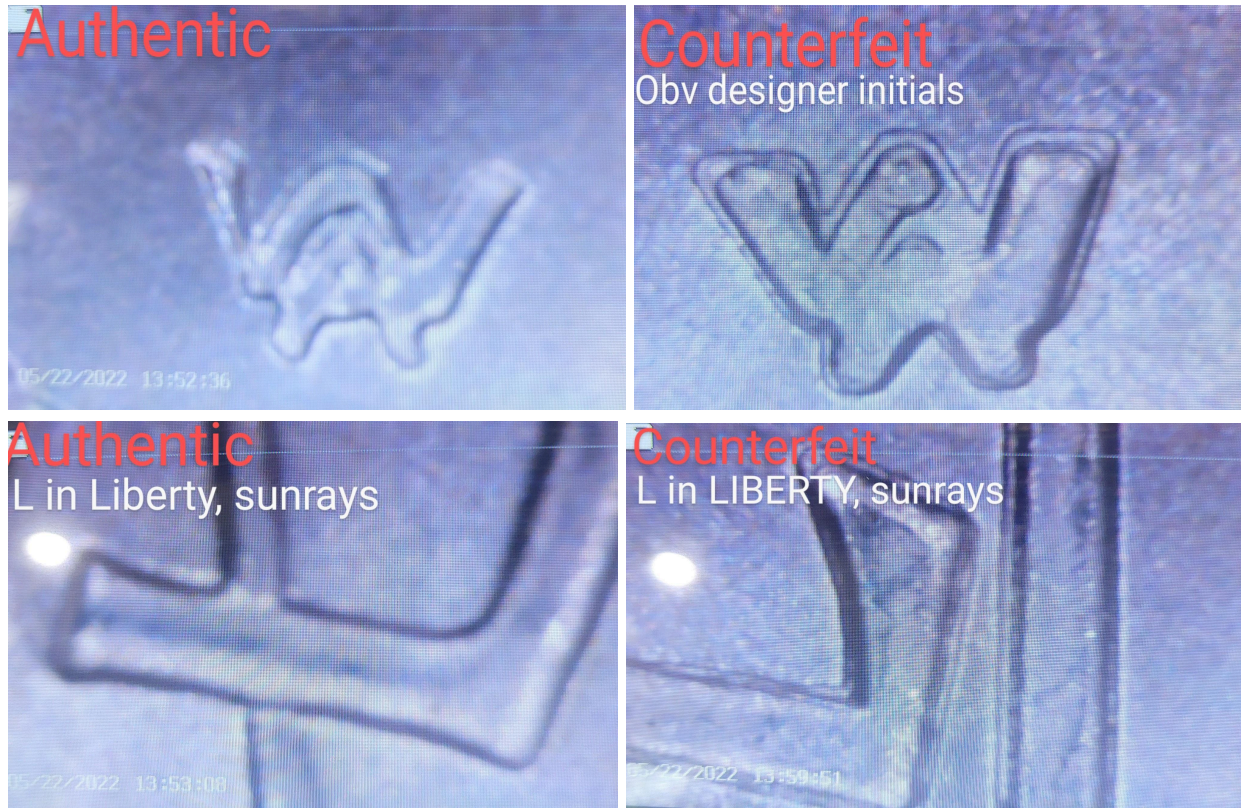


The font of the letters on the reverse of the coin have a pimpled appearance, another usual, hallmark sign of a counterfeit coin. The edge reeding appears to be wider and overly rounded compared to original examples. In addition, being the Type 2 reverse designs, after the U.S. Mint switched to this coin design in 2021, the coins presented to us December 2023 lack the anti-counterfeiting measure put in place by the U.S. Mint of a wider flattened line, a small smoothed section, among the outside edge reeding that should be there.

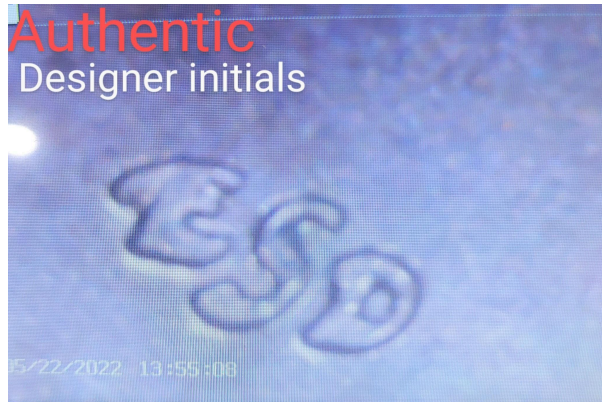


These coins are also too small in diameter, at approximately 39.94mm, measured with a digital caliper, compared to the U.S. Mint originals at 40.6mm. The counterfeit example also measures approximately 2.61mm thick, while the authentic U.S. example measures approximately 2.87mm thick, measured at the same time instore with the same digital caliper.

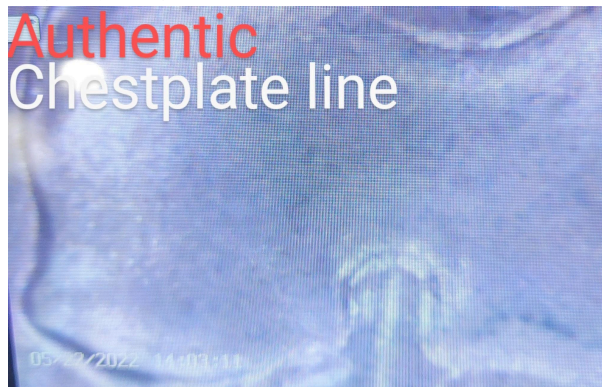
The letters, font, and shape are wrong, on the items presented to us. I've taken microscope pictures that depict this. The "AW" obv designer initials are thinner and less blocky on the authentic example, while the counterfeit has block font, and what looks similar to the Longacre effect seen on many authentic U.S. pre-33 \$1 gold examples. This effect is seen on the "L" in Liberty of the counterfeit silver eagle as well.



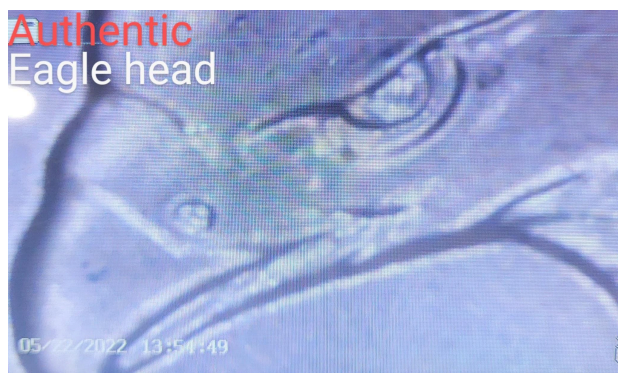
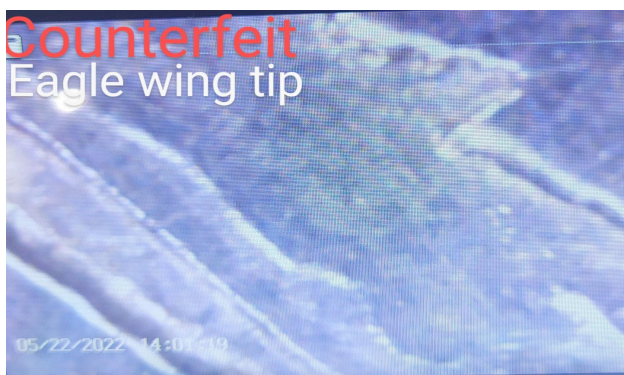
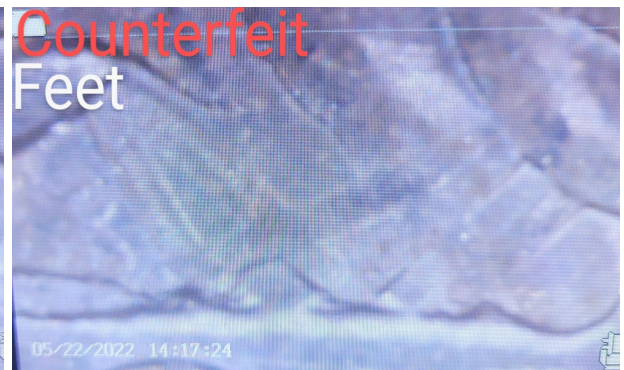
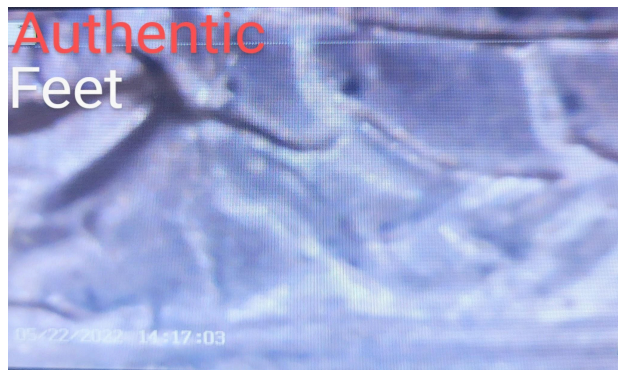
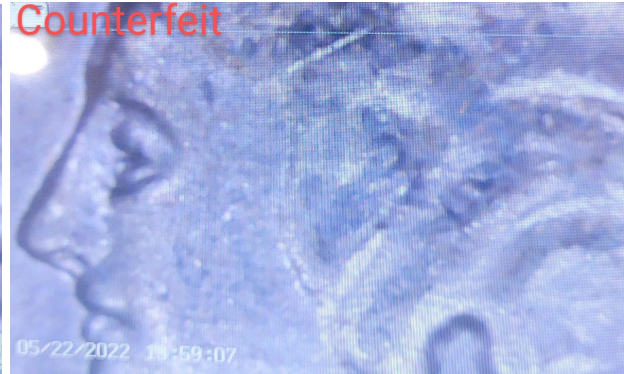
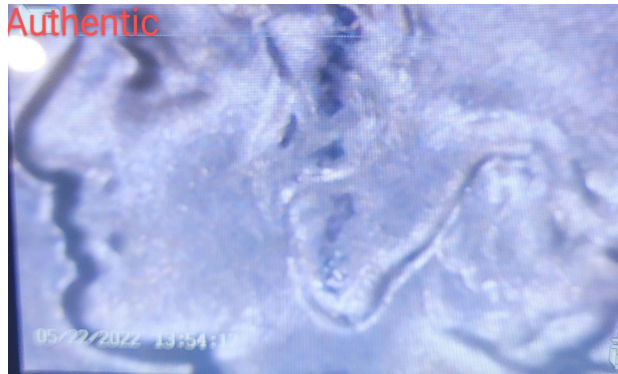
The "ESD" reverse designer initials are clear on the authentic example, but the letters are so blurred on the counterfeit that they do not even make out real English letters. On the authentic example, the "MG" rev sculptor initials, the "M" and the "G" touch at the right hand side of the "M," while on the counterfeit, this was blurred or dramatized to the point where it looks more like a "VS."



The counterfeit obv chestplate of liberty has a bottom line, where the authentic obv chestplate of liberty is smooth and more rounded, being a slightly higher relief strike but smoother design missing the outline.



Both the feet and the face/head of Lady Liberty, and the wing and head of the eagle on the reverse, are more weakly struck on the counterfeit than the authentic example, and the counterfeit appears to have a slightly more hooded eye, in the face of Liberty. The counterfeit's eagle's head on the reverse lacks detail, and has a separation/gap at the beak that should not be present. The authentic version especially of the eagle's head looks more artistically complete, the eye is full instead of more beady, there are more details and more well defined, like the presence of the breathing/nostril hole.



The authentic date example uses a different font than the counterfeit date as well, the authentic having a noticeable tapered bottom tail of the 3, while the counterfeit is rounded. The pictures make the difference clear.



U.S. Mint Silver Eagles are United States legal tender. The coins presented do not bear the word “copy,” “facsimile,” or any synonym or word of the like meaning, and are beyond replicas, being truly counterfeit. They are not silver, the wrong diameter, the wrong thickness, bear incorrect details on the coin and edge reeding, and wrong texture on the letters and details, and are underweight.

In our professional opinion, all of the 2023 coins presented by the customer were not authentic U.S. Mint 1 ozt Silver Eagles, and to advertise them as such would be incorrect and misleading. I’ve included pictures of the actual counterfeit 2023 silver eagle, as well as of an authentic 2023 U.S. Silver Eagle, for specific comparisons. This is a start - people need to realize there are so many fakes, that are so close to the real thing. I couldn’t tell you how many times I’ve heard “There’s no way they could fake something like that” from the public. But oh, do they - Counterfeits have existed about as long as coins have, they just get better and better at emulating the real thing.

This article is pertaining to a specific counterfeit, a specific counterfeit “die pair” if you will, but we’ve had other fake silver eagles already come across our desk. Of different years, different details, business strike *and* proof. There are fake coins, and fake third party grading holders (“Slabs”).

It’d be near impossible to familiarize yourself with every detail of every counterfeit, so it’s best really, to become familiar with what the real thing really looks like. And for third party certified coins, become familiar with the anti-counterfeiting measures that these companies have equipped their holders with. And above all, buy from a reputable source. And I don’t mean a website that “looks” legit. Look for reviews, over an extended period of time. Ask questions. Ask if the seller can verify the item for you - And if they can’t answer your questions, maybe you should start asking more questions.