

Flying Eagle cent

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia



 1857 Flying Eagle Cent

The **Flying Eagle cent** is a [United States coin](#) that was minted from 1856 to 1858. The coin was designed by [James B. Longacre](#). The Flying Eagle was the first small-sized cent coin minted in the US, replacing the earlier [large cent](#). The obverse of the coin depicts an [eagle](#) in flight, a unique subject for the obverse of American coins. The reverse of the coin has the words ONE CENT surrounded by a wreath, similar to the reverse on the later [Indian Head cent](#) and [Wheat cent](#) minted until 1958. The [United States Mint](#) in Philadelphia struck about 700 Flying Eagle cents in 1856 as [pattern](#) pieces, a way to show influential congressmen and senators what these coins would look like. The coins became popular and were soon selling for \$2.00 (equal to \$48.73 today) in auctions. The Mint began restriking them in 1858 and selling them to the public. Probably another 1,500 pieces were struck in Proof format and sold to new collectors. Auction prices dropped to 25¢, equal to \$6.33 today. Today, proofs sell for \$6,000 or more.

In 1858, there was a "large letter" and "small letter" variety produced. An easy way to tell the difference between large-letter and small-letter varieties is to look at the word 'America'. In the large letter variety, the letters A and M are joined, whereas in the small letter they are not. The small letter variety is a low relief design. The eagle is shallower in the die and the letters are smaller than those used in 1857 and on the 1858 large letter variety.

Both the Flying Eagle Cent and [Indian Head cents](#) minted from 1859 to 1864 were struck in an [alloy](#) of 88% [copper](#) and 12% [nickel](#), giving the coins a much whiter sheen than contemporary one-cent pieces. The [nickel five-cent coin](#) would not begin production [until 1866](#), and so these nickel-alloy one-cent pieces were slangily known as "nickels".

The design didn't last long due to the obverse design opposing the reverse design. The eagle's head and tail were opposite the wreath. The presses had to strike the coins harder to get the design up fully. This caused dies to fail more often. The design was replaced by the Indian Cent in 1859.

Flying Eagle Cent Mintages

1856	2,000
1857	17,450,000
1858	24,600,000