

# 330-page book examines single Canadian coin

## Numismatic READING

BRET EVANS

The two latest entries into the world of numismatic literature take very different approaches: one is a collector's look at a single issue, the other a dealer's look at the numismatic market.

Rob Turner has turned a lifetime of collecting into a 300-plus page book: *The 1858 Cents of Provincial Canada*, a key date in Canadian numismatics.

In his introduction, Turner professes to his love of the coin, and claims that his is probably the first book to study the 1858 cent in detail. He is probably right. If any other efforts have been made, it is doubtful they match Turner's depth of information.

While most collectors focus on die varieties and marriages, and Turner is no exception here, few take such pains to put coins into their historical context.

The 1858 cent was the first in the new decimal currency that the provinces of Canada had decided to adopt. Confederation

was, at this time, still nearly a decade away.

Turner gives us the historical perspective on this issue. Canada had gone from a growing economy to the first worldwide depression in 1857. Economic woes were compounded by a bad harvest, and high government debt for new railway lines, canals and roads. What's more, the coinage of British North America was a confusing mixture of various denominations and exchange rates.

He goes on to detail how the coins were made, transported and put into circulation. It even includes a review of coining operations in use at the time, and a primer on 19th century die production and use.

However, once the history is set out, Turner gets down to hard-core numismatics.

Subsequent chapters identify obverse and reverse dies by characteristics, catalogue the dies and compare the marriages of different dies as actually used.

The catalogue takes lots of space, but only because of the lavish use of large, clear, illustrations. Anyone interested in studying Victorian coins of any denomination would gain from reviewing the material presented here, both in content and in style.

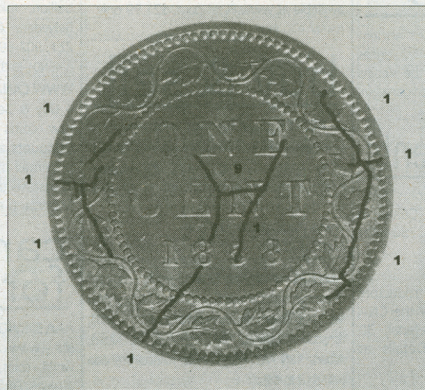
The book includes a very definitive study of die breaks and repunches, as well as an analysis of the relative rarity of die combinations.

Turner is an engineer, and takes a scientific approach to such matters as the relative rarity of the 1858 and 1859 cents.

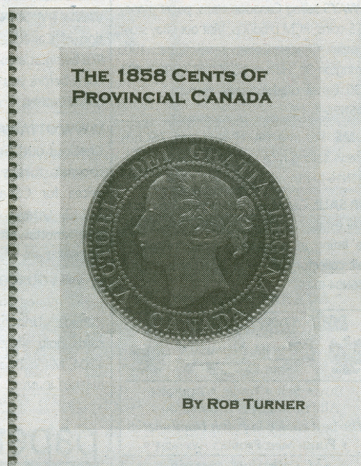
Here he adopts a very sensible approach. He discusses and evaluates theories in turn, with only as much math as needed. Later, he deals with the problem using mathematical models that he correctly assumes are more than most readers want to endure. However, their presence does allow critical readers to test the interpretation for themselves.

The book contains several appendices. While some, such as a mathematical assessment of the accuracy of coin samples relative to mintage, are quite beyond this reviewer, others offer an analysis of coin weight that shows you just how much weight a large cent loses in wear as it moves from Mint State to Good.

This is a book written by a collector for other collectors. The only drawback is that the narrow focus of the subject will limit its appeal.



Turner has gone so far as to include many detailed diagrams, such as this one analyzing a reverse die, pointing out some of the doubled leaves on the coin.



Rob Turner has turned a lifetime of collecting into a 330-page book on a single Canadian coin – the 1858 cent.