

EMPIRE NUMISMATICS



US BENJAMIN FRANKLIN HALF DOLLAR 1948-1963

Diameter: 30.6 mm

Weight: 192.9 grains (12.5 grams)

Composition: 90% silver - 10% copper

Designer: John R. Sinnock

Engraver: Charles E. Barber

Mint Marks: Philadelphia (nonce)
Denver (D) San Francisco (S) - found
above Liberty Bell on reverse

Obverse: Head and shoulders portrait
of Franklin facing right with LIBERTY
above and IN GOD WE TRUST below.
The date is to the right.

Reverse: Liberty Bell (similar to that
used by Sinnock on the 1926
Sesquicentennial Half Dollar modeled
from a sketch by John Frederick Lewis)
with UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
above and HALF DOLLAR below. The
motto E PLURIBUS UNUM is to the left
with a small eagle to the right.

Edge: Reeded

This design was the final work of John R. Sinnock, mint engraver, who also designed the long running Roosevelt Dime as well as the Sesquicentennial Half Dollar and \$2.50 Gold Commemoratives. The obverse and reverse models of the Benjamin Franklin Half were completed only a few weeks before his death in May of 1947.

The new design was rejected by the Federal Fine Arts Commission. They based their disapproval on the small cage used on the reverse (included only because it was required by law since 1792) and the obvious crack in The Liberty Bell (for they feared it would draw “cracks” about United States coinage).

The Treasury, however, approved the design over the Commission’s objections and production of business strikes began on April 30, 1948. Proof specimens were struck at the Philadelphia Mint from 1950 through 1963.

While still an affordable series for most collectors, finding boldly struck specimens can be surprisingly difficult with certain issues being truly scarce.

