

The New Orleans Mint

by [Michael E. Marotta](#)

When the New Orleans mint was opened on May 8, 1838, the South was the dominant section of the nation. Cotton and tobacco were exported all over the world, while the industrial and commercial enterprises of the North were still in their infancy. Illinois and Indiana were called the West.

In 1838, the US operated four mints. The main mint was in Philadelphia. The branch mints were in Charlotte, North Carolina; Dahlonega, Georgia; and New Orleans, Louisiana.

When the southern states formed their Confederacy, the New Orleans mint was the center of a storm. Not all southerners were against the Union, certainly not all of the federal employees at the New Orleans mint! There were those who acted quickly to keep precious metal from the hands of the rebels. There were also those with other motives, and several thousand ounces of silver disappeared from the New Orleans mint in the chaotic days of early 1861. When the war ended, the other Southern branch mints were left closed, but New Orleans was re-opened by the federal government.

By 1910, with the shift in the national economy to the north and west, the New Orleans mint was no longer needed. But its legacy continues in the work it did. During the 1880s and 1890s, New Orleans turned out hundreds of millions of coins, mostly in silver, but also in gold. Some New Orleans issues, such as the 1909 Five Dollar piece are considered rare. However, there were many years in which the output of this branch mint was greater than the work from the main mint in Philadelphia.

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