

Collecting Barber Quarters

by Thomas Coulson



1892 Barber Quarter

War. Amidst this change, the Barber Quarter was a steadfast witness working tirelessly in the channels of commerce.

The Barber Quarter (which shared a design with the dime and half dollar) was introduced in 1892 as a replacement to the long running Liberty Seated Quarter series. The coin is named after its designer, Charles E. Barber, the chief engraver at the U.S. Mint. His simple design portrayed the head of Miss Liberty facing right. Though not so embellished, the obverse design resembles both the Morgan Dollar Liberty Portrait and the French 'Ceres' design used on that country's silver coinage from 1849 to 1851. Barber utilized a derivative of the Eagle found on the Great Seal of the United States similar to the Heraldic Eagle design used on early Draped Bust coinage (1798-1807) for the coin's reverse.



France 'Ceres' Design Series



1895 Barber Quarter MS62
reverse

The newly designed coins were greeted by the public with mixed results. Many appreciated the fact that there was a new design for minor silver coinage after half a century of the Liberty Seated Design. The design could hardly be considered revolutionary as it closely resembled both the portraits on the Morgan Dollar and the Liberty Nickel. Some citizens found the design attractive while others considered it unimaginative. A few derided Miss Liberty's less than delicate features!

Barber coins entered circulation and stayed there. The majority of surviving Barber Quarters are well worn; many to the point of slickness. Many Barber Quarters remained in commerce for more than a generation after the last were made. They were commonly used in the 1940's and some even circulated into the 1950's. Few Barber Quarters were saved early on either because they were too expensive for most people to hold or they were thought too unremarkable to be worthy of collecting. As a result, uncirculated or nearly uncirculated Barber Quarters are scarce. A high grade Barber Quarter is a special coin to encounter; particularly after one sees so many of the type worn nearly flat.

The Barber Quarter series is an advanced collection. In low grades, all coins are readily attainable; though the key dates, 1896-S, 1901-S and 1913-S Barber Quarters are expensive. A nice, evenly matched set in very good to fine condition would be a worthy project for a patient collector. Higher grade collections are more challenging. A collection of coins ranging from very fine to almost uncirculated might be just as or more difficult to complete than a complete collection of uncirculated Barber Quarters. There are many

Barber issues in this grade range that are much harder to locate than their price would indicate. There are no major rarities in the Barber Quarter series like the 1894-S in the Dime series or the 1892-O Micro o in the Half Dollar series. The above mentioned three “S’s”(1896-S 1901-S, and 1913-S) scarce, but can usually be found at a price.

Liberty Coin Service stocks a diverse selection of uncertified and PCGS and NGC certified Barber Quarters for sale.

View Our Inventory of Barber Quarters for Sale [Here](#).



*1895 Barber Quarter
MS62 PCGS CAC*

How to Collect Barber Quarters – Three Different Ways

1. The Basic Collection

For the most part, assembling a Barber Quarter collection will place focus on buying what is available at any given time. Later dates are more available than pre-1900 coins; though most dates are readily available in lower grades. Most collectors are likely to fill the set from the most common to scarcer coins; waiting to finish with the 1896-S, 1913-S, and 1901-S Barber Quarters in that order. It is best to assemble a collection with a consistent grade range. A set grading good to fine, or very good to very fine will look much more appealing than one with excessively worn coins placed next to high grade pieces.

The best combination of collectability and value is probably a very good to fine set. Most of these coins can be found with a little work; though the majority of available coins still grade good or less. Many of the dates in the late 1890's and early 1900's will be a bit tricky to find nice. Most of the coins in the late 1900's and 1910's will be easier to locate. A complete, nicely matched set of Barber Quarters assembled with the discipline to avoid cleaned and damaged coins will be very impressive, even in a relatively low grade like very good or fine.

Completing a high grade circulated set in the range of extremely fine to almost uncirculated will be considerably more challenging than a low grade set. Many issues (particularly the earlier branch mint ones) are very scarce in high circulated grades as the coins either circulated extensively (for 40 to 50

years) or not at all. Few were plucked out of change early on. In fact, several Barber Quarter issues are scarcer in almost uncirculated grade than they are in Mint State. Both time and money can be an issue for a set in this grade as many of these coins will be tough to locate regardless of price and of course, the keys will be very expensive if found at all.



1893 Barber Quarter MS63

A mint state collection will also be a very advanced and expensive project. Mint state Barber Quarters other than the Philadelphia Mint issues are quite scarce. However, almost all dates are available in auctions regularly enough to make a complete set attainable for collectors with the requisite resources. Even the rarest three dates (96-S, 01-S, 13-S) have become available at least once a year or so in major auctions recently. If money is no object, the mint state Barber Quarter set may be the one for you.

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2. Proof Set

A run of Proof Barber Quarters could be an interesting and more affordable collection than most people would think. Virtually all of them have mintages under 1,000 pieces. Most Proof 64 and 65 specimens are very attractive and priced in the \$1,500.00 to \$2,000.00 range. While this seems expensive for a single coin to most people, it is within reach for most dedicated collectors willing to save up for a coin. The collection is finite, with only 24 pieces to collect. Buying one or two pieces a year would put this impressive and beautiful collection within reach of even modest collectors.



1903 Barber Quarter
PF67 NGC

Proof 63 and lower grade Barber Quarters are readily available too. The coins usually have moderate to heavy hairlining. Though these are cheaper, the higher quality coins (64 and 65 grades) are likely better value for the difference in price.



1893 Proof Barber Quarter

In collecting a run of proof Barber Quarters, one should be conscious of consistent appearance. Many proof coins of the era have wonderful toning and many are white. It would be best to stick with either all toned coins or all white coins in the collection. Many specimens are also dark and unattractive. It is best to avoid these altogether.

Cameo and Deep Cameo Proof Barber Quarters are much more difficult to collect. The Philadelphia Mint changed its production procedures in 1900 resulting in the production of very few cameo proof coins. While dates in the 1890's can be collected with cameo finishes, many later issues are virtually nonexistent with cameo or deep cameo finishes.

Want a challenge? Try collecting Cameo and Deep Cameo Proof Barber Quarters. The certified populations for Deep Cameo coins are miniscule! Many dates do not have a single specimen graded by PCGS or NGC. There are a concentration of dates in the 1890's having Deep Cameo Proof specimens, but after 1900, virtually no coins exist. The process of producing proof coins changes at the turn of the century resulting in fewer cameo coins. Deep Cameo coins are not frequently offered for sale.

3. The Mint Set

With 74 different date and mintmark combinations, a complete date and mintmark set of Barber Quarters is too expensive for many collectors to consider. A more reasonable collection would be one uncirculated coin from each mint. This set contains only four coins. That is one each from Philadelphia, Denver, New Orleans, and San Francisco. There are three dates (1907, 1908, and 1909) for which all four mints issued coins. Other interesting coins include the 1906-D Quarter (the first Denver Mint coin) and the 1909-O Quarter (the last issue made in New Orleans). One of my other favorites is the 'earthquake special' – the 1906 San Francisco Mint issue. With the devastation wrought by the massive earthquake and fire of that year, it is a miracle that the Mint there not only survived, but managed to produce a healthy number of coins.



*Barber Quarter from
Philadelphia*



*Barber Quarter from
Denver*



*Barber Quarter from
New Orleans*



*Barber Quarter from
San Francisco*

Read more about Barber Quarters

Breen, Walter. Walter Breen's Complete Encyclopedia of U.S. And Colonial Coins, Doubleday Publishing, New York, 1988

