# Collecting United States Type Coins 

by Thomas Coulson

Liberty Coin Service stocks a wide variety of United States Type Coins for sale, including PCGS and NGC certified United States Type Coins and nice, hand selected uncertified specimens. For some great ideas on how to collect United States Type Coins, read the passage below.


Coinage of the United States Mint represents a rich and interesting survey of our country's history. The first coinage of the United States commencing in 1793 tells the story of a fledgling Republic with a fresh concept of liberty. The coins are unlike most any others of the time. Monarchs, Coats of Arms and Latin inscriptions are absent. The allegory of Liberty and the language of the populace, English, grace these new coins.

The U.S. Mint, like the new Republic, struggled for survival in those early days. Limited resources and rampant illness among mint employees frequently curtailed production. To be sure, the Mint's tiny emissions are rather crude by European standards of the era. Coins were often struck unevenly and on inferior or recycled planchets. While citizens were critical of these issues at the time, collectors of the coins today appreciate them for the character borne from the hardships the mint and the Nation faced.

As the United States grew, its coinage changed to reflect a new prosperity. Steam presses, added in 1829 , made coins of a quality on par with European states. The Republic was


1875 Twenty Cent expanding Westward and one mint in Philadelphia was no longer sufficient. To facilitate commerce in other regions, new mints were added. The Nation was still experiencing growing pains in the form


1833 Bust Half Dime of wars and discord over the issue of slavery. Discovery of gold in California, and later silver in Nevada presented its own challenges to the coinage. During this time, the mint grew unsteadily. Though production was mechanized, some design elements were still inconsistent. Branch mint coins were often poorly made. New, experimental denominations were tried and failed. The mint's great triumph of the era was finally producing enough coins to eliminate foreign coinage from circulation. This success was short lived, however, due to hoarding and exporting of coinage caused by war and imbalances in gold and silver supplies. These coins (Liberty Seated and odd types) are prized by collectors for their variety and the great amount of History they represent.


The next interval in United States History brought unprecedented growth. With earlier conflicts resolved, the Nation was free to focus on expansion and modernization for decades. People from all over the world recognized opportunity and flocked to our shores in droves. The Mint matured at this time, too. Abundant silver and favorable legislation led to deluge of dollars. By 1880, the Mint produced more than enough coins for the population. Excess capacity existed to strike coins for other nations. (The Mint first struck coins for Venezuela in 1875.) U.S. Coinage (Barber, Morgan and Liberty types) became uniform in this period. The designs were plain
and variety diminished greatly. Uniformity was a testament to the mechanization process that started some sixty years earlier. Though unremarkable, these types have a charm about them that is reminiscent for the era.

By the turn of the century, the United States had transformed the growth of the past few decades into a launching pad to the center of the World


Walking Liberty Half Dollar stage. A new progressive time full of innovation was born. The minting of coins was no exception. Mints around the World were producing bright, modern looking coins. Presi-
 dent Theodore Roosevelt recognized that the United States Mints should be doing the same. To this end, he commissioned the renowned sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens to design gold coinage that would be the finest in the World. His numismatic masterpiece, the High Relief Double Eagle is considered one of the most beautiful coins ever made. More importantly, the new coin inspired a complete redesign of U.S. Coinage over the next fifteen years. These new issues, such as the Walking Liberty Half dollar are modern and beautiful. The images are classic yet with fresh new lines and bold features. Each of these series is very popular to collect; and it is easy to see why. They are common enough to appeal to any budget and their beauty is unparalleled.

The emergence of the United States as a World Superpower has affected the theme of our coinage. This Nation came of age amidst adversity and conflict. On a foundation of innovation and hard work, we built the greatest State of the Modern Era. Current coins reflect a proud heritage of our greatest leaders. The Mint has become a prolific issuer of Commemorative coinage celebrating the people and events that made our


Kennedy Half Dollar Nation great. Collectors of modern coinage can appreciate both the consistency of regular issues and the variety of commemorative issues. The minting process has been refined to produce coins of perfection; yet it is a challenge for collectors to assemble sets with that goal of perfection in mind.


1795 Flowing Hair Silver Dollar

# How to Collect United States Type Coins - Nine Different Ways 

## 1. The Basic U.S. Type Coin Collection

The basic collection can be formed in many ways. To begin collecting type coins, one must define the boundaries and contents of the collection. Establishing an approximate budget for the collection will aid in determining a grade range and quantity of types to acquire. The complete collection (1793 to Date) contains a few types that are prohibitively expensive for all but the most wealthy collectors. For this reason, type sets are often broken up into more manageable sections. Since a type collection can be defined in many ways, it is eminently possible for anyone to define a set that will be affordable and satisfying to complete.


1857 Large Cent

There are several albums in which to collect type coins and they are all a little different. Typically these albums are organized by denomination and century. There are also holders available for type sets of single denominations or for the principal U.S. Gold types. Many U.S. Coin series have subtypes that some collectors would consider important and others would not. Some collectors may forgo the album format for one of their own design that includes the types and subtypes one considers relevant. This could be especially true of collectors of certified type coins. The following suggestions show different ways to assemble the basic type coin collection.

By Century- The most common albums for collecting type coins are designed to collect either 19th and 20th century coins or 20th century coins alone. These are usually made to house base metal and silver coinage. Gold coins are collected separately. The easiest way to form a collection is to purchase one of these albums and start filling it. Of course, it is not necessary to purchase an album to collect the coins. You can define the collection in any manner, and set up your own display.


By denomination - Cents, Nickels, Odd Type, Dimes... A collector can choose to focus on a particular denomination. Sometimes these are holders available to house this type of collection. Otherwise, it can be assembled freestyle.


Example of Odd Type Set


Click here for a printable checklist of Odd Type Coins to help you start!
Click here for a printable checklist of Half Cents - Nickels to help you start!
Click here for a printable checklist of Half Dimes - Dollars to help you start!

By Era - Do you like Bust coinage? Liberty Seated coinage? Indian gold? Perhaps you like a certain type of coin like one of these, but you cannot afford or do not want to collect the entire series. Collecting type coins does not necessarily mean you must collect all types of coins. If you appreciate a particular type of coin but cannot complete the set, there is nothing wrong with collecting several appealing specimens of that type in lieu of a more structured format.


By Mint- Some people enjoy focusing on the history and work of a specific mint. Collecting type coins by mint can be a challenge. Some type coins that are common in general but may be rare for a particular mint. The New Orleans mint, for example has four one year type rarities (1839-O \$2 1/2, 1854-O \$3, 1879-O \$20, 1909-O \$5).


Click here for a printable checklist of Denver Mint Type Coins to help you start!
Click here for a printable checklist of Carson City Mint Type Coins to help you start!
Click here for a printable checklist of New Orleans Mint Type Coins to help you start!
Click here for a printable checklist of San Francisco Mint Type Coins to help you start!

By Strike- Most people will collect a business strike type set. The alternative would be a proof type set collection. The Proof Type set can be broken into groups based on one's budget. The set could be assembled as follows:
$>\underline{\text { Modern Proof Coins (1936-Present) - This is a fun and easy }}$


1952 Proof Jefferson Nickel collection of proof type coins. A few of the earlier issues (Buffalo Nickel, Mercury Dime, Walking Liberty Half) are a little more expensive, but even these should be within the budget of most dedicated collectors.


1936 Proof Walking Liberty Half Dollar

Classic Proof Coins (1858-1916) - The U.S. Mint started issuing proof coins in quantity around 1858. These type coins can be expen-


1891 Proof Seated Half Dollar sive. Even the most common specimens are a few hundred dollars each if they are decent looking. All types in this era are regularly obtainable for collectors with a robust budget. For those with
 Barber Dime limited resources, an abbreviated collection might be attainable. This might include one representative of all Liberty Seated denominations, one Barber coin, an Indian Cent, Two Cent, Three Cent, and Shield Nickel, and perhaps a matte proof Lincoln Cent or Buffalo Nickel.
$>$ Early Proof and Specimen Coins (1793-1857) - Before 1858, the U.S. Mint only issued Proof coins in limited numbers. Before 1817 the Mint issued no proof coins; just occasional specimens such as special presentation coins in 1793 and 1794. These early proof coins are very rare; so the collector wishing to assemble a set of them will need time, patience, and vast reserves.

U.S. Gold Proof Coins (1858-1915) - Proof U.S. Gold coinage is rare and expen-


1901 Proof Quarter Eagle sive. Most dates had fewer than 100 coins of any given type minted. Though rare, most types are obtainable at a hefty price since they were made in so many different years. Proof U.S. Gold comes in three finishes: Brilliant, Sandblast, and Matte.

Irregular Proof Issues - These are the rarest amd most coveted of all proof coins. They include branch mint proof coins such as the 1838-O Half Dollar and the 1894S Dime; non-conventional types such as the 1922 Peace Dollars and several Commemorative Half Dollar issues; special issues for dignataries and wealthy collectors such as the 1804 Dollars; and clandestine issues such as the 1885 Trade Dollar or the 1913 Liberty Nickel. These prizes are seldom offered at auction and attract major publicity when sold.

## 2. The Time Line- Telling a Story with U.S. Coinage

Use coins to tell your family history. I have a collection of coins that represent important events in the life of my grandfather. He was born in 1876 in England, so I have a English Sovereign of that date. He moved to the United States in 1884, so I have a Morgan Dollar of that date. He was married in 1903, so I also have a Morgan Dollar of that date. His children were born in 1905, 1907, 1911, 1915, and 1917. I have a coin to represent the birth of each of them. He died in 1963, so I have a half dollar from that date. I have researched our family history, and I can write about these significant events in our family and display my work with the coins
 for other family members to see. For me, there is a true connection I feel with the past by having these tangible mementos. I can imagine with clarity, the surroundings and travails of my ancestors when I look at these coins.


1884 O Morgan Dollar

Additionally, many people have stories about particular coins they might have received at certain times in their lives. Perhaps you kept the first dollar you earned. Maybe someone famous gave you a coin. Did you keep a pocket piece for good luck? Possibly a coin could have even saved your life! (Refer to the story of Lieutenant George E. Dixon of the Confederate submarine Hunley and his lucky Double Eagle!) If you have a special coin, it is a great thing to include with your family history and pass down through the generations along with the story that made it so important to you.


1895-O
Barber Dime

My story involves the 1895 -O Barber Dime pictured to the left. I found the coin in my front yard when I was 8 years old. It had worked its way up through the soil after it was undoubtedly lost decades before; probably around the time our house was built. I was excited to learn I had found the key date of the Barber Dime series and I have been hooked on coin collecting ever since!

## 3. Type Coins by Date



1838 Bust Half Dollar

Many collectors will assemble a year set of type coins for a particular date. The easiest way to do this is to buy a proof and/or mint set which is the basic a type coin collection for a given year. Collections could be formed for a special year such as one's birth year or a parent's birth year. I know of a collector that is working on a date set for the year Michigan became a state (1837). Another idea might be collecting U.S. Anniversary date sets and related exonumia. (i.e.1826, 1876, $1892,1926,1976)$ As with any type coin collection, there is flexibility in the contents. The set could be one of each denomination for the year or it could include all mintmarked coins as well. For earlier years, one may collect multiple varieties of a single denomination. (Perhaps cents by


1816 Cent Sheldon number or halves by Overton variety.) For later dates, one might consider adding commemorative coins to the type set. An additional challenge would be to add any foreign type coins struck by a U.S. Mint for the year in question, if applicable. The year with the greatest variety of type coins (20) is 1873 . The year with the least Variety of Type


1873 Dollar coins (1) is 1816 .

## 4. One a Year Collection

The United States Mint struck coins for every year from 1793 to present. It would be an interesting exercise to assemble a collection of type coins representing each date of U.S. Coinage. Most dates are


 obtainable at a reasonable price. Only a couple dates are expensive (1793 and 1815). This form of collecting allows for flexibility and opportunity to buy a greater number of subtypes that would not be collected in a coin album
type set.




1998 Silver American Eagle

## 5. Go for the Gold

The United States Mints struck vast numbers of different gold coins. There are so many different issues (many of which are rare) that few collectors can afford to collect a series of U.S. Gold coins by date and mintmark. A popular way to collect U.S. Gold coins is in a type set. The type set allows collectors to survey the rich variety of these coins without the expense of a series. The most common type sets are the Liberty and Indian Gold Sets. These typically contain one of each type of the $\$ 2.50, \$ 5.00, \$ 10.00$ and $\$ 20.00$ Gold coins. The Liberty type set is sometimes expanded to include one each of the three types of dollar gold coins and the $\$ 3.00$ gold. Another variant on the type U.S. Gold set is the modern 4 coin American Eagle series; one each 1 ounce, $1 / 2$ ounce, $1 / 4$ ounce and $1 / 10$ ounce gold coins. Though usually not included in a gold type set, the classic $\$ 2.50$ and $\$ 5.00$ Classic Gold coins minted from 1834 to 1839 are affordable and would make nice add-ons to the collection. Pre 1834 U.S. Gold is very inter-
esting and beautiful to see; but if you wish to collect it, be patient and unafraid of spending huge amounts of money.



1901 \$10 Liberty Eagle


Gold Liberty 4-Coin Type Set

Click here for a printable checklist of U.S. Gold Type Coins to help you start!
Click here for a printable checklist of U.S. Gold Type Coins (Abridged Version) to help you start!

## 6. The Whole World in Your Hands

Did you know that from 1875 to 2000, the United States Mints issued 377 different type coins for over 40 different countries representing every continent except Antarctica? The coins were made in many


1904 Panama "Pill"


1973 Liberia $\$ 5.00$ different shapes, sizes and metals. Six different mints issued foreign coins. (Philadelphia, Denver, San Francisco, West Point, New Orleans, and Manila. The group offers a wonderful array of types for the collector that appreciates diversity. I think this is an overlooked area of numismatics. Many coins in the series are quite scarce and sell for a fraction of the price of comparably rare U.S.


1944-D Curacao 2 1/2 Gulden


2000-P Iceland 1000 Kronur
 Coins. (Further, I think the coins made for Cuba by the U.S. are some of the best values. The designs are attractive and often difficult to find relative to their price.) A type set of these Foreign coins would be a nice addition to the standard U.S. Type coin collection or a great stand alone group. Take pride in a time when the United States was the manufacturer for the whole World by collecting these coins!

## 7. Types of U.S. Territories and Possessions

This is a similar concept to the World coinage collection above. Some of the coins are in both sets. The set can and probably will also contain coins that were issued before or after the land was possessed by the United States. Such a collection could also include lands administered by the U.S. Military during the time of occupation. The Philippines' coinage would definitely belong in this collection. The coin-


1947 S Philipines One Peso issued before these areas were possessed by the United States. Coinage was issued on behalf of the Marshall Islands after the country was administered by the United States. Many other areas were administered by the U.S. at one time and may have coinage associated with that era. This is a very open-ended topic and can be defined in almost any way.


1896 Puerto Rico 10 Cents

## 8. Do it for Love and Money

Love tokens are a fascinating form of coin art. The tradition of giving a specially marked coin to a loved one dates at least to Elizabethan England. In the nineteenth century, a popular expression of one's affection was an ornately engraved coin with the name or initials of a special or intended person; usually a woman. The engravings range from crude to ornate and are usually hosted on silver coins and to a lesser extent, gold. Rarely, they are found on minor coinage as the object was to give your girl something precious. The practice of engraving coins in this manner largely died out by 1910, so it is unlikely to find many love token types


Engraved Quarter Eagle


Engraved Silver Dollar after that date. It would be interesting to see how many different coin types of love tokens could be collected. An added bonus of the collection is the beautiful artwork and the special meaning behind each unique message.

There are other types of coin art that can be used to supplement the gaps in U.S. Coinage where love tokens are difficult to find. These could include enameled coins (usually found on later U.S. Gold), pop outs, and hobo nickels (which are not exclusively made on Buffalo nickels).


Engraved Seated Liberty Dime

## 9. Confederate States Type Set

The United States Mints at New Orleans, Louisiana; Charlotte, North Carolina, and Dalonega, Georgia were taken by Confederate States forces after the secession of those States in 1861. The mints continued to produce coins on the behalf of the Confederacy with U.S. Designs. All the coins are quite rare with the exception of the half dollars. While the coins are very expensive and often elusive, this would be a fascinating collection to complete for one with the means to do so. The United States Issues included in this collection would be:

1861-O Half Dollar. Most of the half dollars issued at the New Orleans Mint in 1861 were struck either for the State of Louisiana after secession or the Confederacy. Many of the dies that struck those coins have been attributed to either one or the other governments above. The most notable is the 'cracked Confederate obverse'. This was the same die that was used earlier to strike the Confederate Half Dollar Pattern coins. (Breen,P. 665)

1861-D Gold Dollar. This is the only 1861 issue of the C, D, or O mints for which no Federal issue was struck. Extremely rare.

1861-C Five Dollar Gold.


1861-O Half Dollar Confederate States Issue

## 1861-D Five Dollar Gold.

$>$
1861-O Twenty Dollar Gold. As with the half dollar issue of this mint, some of the coins were issued on behalf of the State of Louisiana and the Confederacy after the outbreak of the war.

In addition to the U.S. Design coins, there were cents and half dollars struck with a Confederate design. Both original designs are prohibitively rare. However, restrikes of the Confederate designs were made after the war (in the 1870's; and another series in the 1960's). These restrikes, although uncommon, can be collected.

If the 1861 issues prove too difficult, there are several 'near-Confederate' issues that are interesting, too. The 1860-D Gold Dollar, 1860-C Quarter Eagle, the 1860 - C and D Half Eagles, and the 1860-O Eagle and Double Eagles have the similar crude character as the 1861 issues.

## 10. Counterfeit Type Coins

One unique type collection would consist of many different counterfeit type coins. Counterfeit coins are captivating and popular because of their illicit origins. These 'coins' have rich and interesting stories to tell. Collections could include coins made to circulate- struck from hand cut dies or machine made dies and cast specimens; coins made for collectors- unofficial restrikes or electrotypes; coins made for tourists such as the modern crude Chinese imitations; and coins made to sell for a premium to their


Electrotype 1793 Half Cent metal value such as the more modern U.S. Gold die struck counterfeits.


3 Cent Silver from hand-cut dies

The most interesting counterfeits are the contemporary ones made from hand cut dies that were intended to pass in circulation. Many of these are beautifully made and are often deceptive enough to escape detection at a quick glance. Bust Half Dollars are the most frequently seen of this type; though three cent silvers and nickels and Shield Nickels are also seen. U.S. Gold coins are occasionally seen die struck in base metal with a gold plating and rarely, in platinum! (For much of the 19th century platinum was less valuable than gold.)


Shield Nickel from hand-cut dies

Most type coins can be found in the cruder, gray cast versions. Many earlier types (particularly copper) are often encountered as electrotypes.


Twenty Cent Cast Counterfeit

Circulating counterfeits are mostly found in the denominations from three cents to half dollars. Cents are a little scarcer, two cent pieces are rare. Twenty cent coins are scarce as they were part of a short lived series. Early dollars are unusual. Morgan dollars are available, but somewhat scarcer than other denominations. In the modern era (after 1950) all circulating counterfeits are much scarcer among U.S. Coins. These are more likely to be found as the modern Chinese fakes.

The collector of a set of counterfeit type coins could focus on finding as many of the circulating types as possible. There will be types that just do not exist as circulating counterfeits. To build a more complete collection, one will need to collect different types of counterfeits.

One caveat....Owning Counterfeit United States Coins is technically illegal. The risk of seizure exists but is probably remote so long as the collection is discreet and used for study purposes. Another consideration is that these items will tend to be more illiquid. Still, many people find satisfaction in collecting them. I consider the early circulating counterfeits fascinating pieces of History. I believe there should be a place to study them in numismatics so long as there is complete disclosure about non-genuine status.


Bust Half from handcut dies

The following is a list containing some of the more notorious non U.S. Mint issues:
1804 Unofficial Restrike cent - This is a non-U.S. Mint issue made from genuine U.S. Dies by a private party (or parties) around 1860 to satisfy collector demand for the scarce date coin. Though is is a counterfeit coin, it is listed as a coin in A Guide Book of United States Coins. ("the Red Book") Collectors of this coin might also want to collect the 1803 Large cent with the arcing die crack that was made from the same obverse die.

1823 Unofficial Restrike cent - Also a non- U.S. Mint issue made from genuine U.S. Dies by a private party between 1860 and 1870 to satisfy collector demand for this scarce date. Like the 1804 restrike, it is "Red Book" listed and regularly trades as a coin.

1848 Small Date Cent - An interesting circulating contemporary counterfeit. Possibly originated out of a New York City Counterfeiting ring. Note: Counterfeiting Large cents may have become economically viable at this time due to the finds of large copper deposits in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. (Green, Numismatic News, June 28, 2012)


1883 Racketeer Nickel

1883 Racketeer nickel - This is actually a genuine U.S. Liberty Nickel altered by gold plating. The original scam was perpetrated by one Josh Tatum (origin of the expression "you're Joshing me!") He tried to pass these nickels without the word 'Cents' on the reverse as Five dollar gold pieces. This lead to the redesign of the coin to include the word cents. Countless 1883 no cents nickels have been plated to emulate the appearance of this coin. Good quality examples even have reeded edges.

1944 Henning Nickel - Well made counterfeits executed by Francis Hemming of Erial, NJ (Breen, 260). Henning was caught for his oversight to not include a large mint mark above the Monticello's dome; as would be normal for 1944 coins. Henning also made nickels dated 1939, 1946, 1947, and 1953. All are identifiable by a looped 'R' in the word PLURIBUS. These coins were good enough to pass regularly in circulation and many may not yet be discovered.


Henning Nickel


1896-o Micro o Dollar

1896, 1900, 1902-o Micro 0 Dollars - These are some of the best counterfeit U.S. Coins ever made. In fact, they were considered genuine until about 2005. This is another counterfeit that was viable to create due to the depressed value of its metal (silver). The price of silver plummeted starting in 1926 due to an oversupply of the metal coming to market. The price of silver bottomed at just under 25 cents an ounce in 1932. The party responsible for these counterfeit dollars could have made huge quantities for a cost of less than 50 cents per unit and pass them for a dollar; making vast profits. As the forger(s) were never caught; this must be one of the greatest crimes of the 20th century! Read more about the diagnostics of this coin at the PCGS website (www.PCGS.com).

Omega Three Dollar Gold - Exceptionally high quality counterfeit three dollar golds dated 1874, 1878, and 1882 appeared in the numismatic marketplace in the 1970's. The coins were distinguishable by the Greek character "omega" in the Liberty of the headdress. These are well known and popular counterfeit coins because of the workmanship and the omega signature. Like the maker of the micro o dollars above, the artist that created these coins was never caught; which adds to the cache of the reproductions.

1915 D Half Eagle - This is a reasonably well made counterfeit gold coin except for one thing. The Denver mint did not strike any half eagles in 1915! It is just a fun representation of a fake made by someone that didn't do enough research on their product.

1907 High Relief Double Eagle - This is the most notable of the 'omega' counterfeits. A beautiful copy of a beautiful coin. The omega hides within the claw of the eagle on the reverse of the specimen.

## Read more about United States Type Coins

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