

Building a U.S. Style Collection

Looking for a reasonably priced and attainable challenge?

Try assembling a representative, historical set.

JUST THE OTHER DAY, I bought a newspaper with a \$50 bill and got one of those 1933 double eagles in change. On top of that, it was in nearly mint-state condition.

If you don't believe me, then believe this: Coin collecting has become expensive. Building a complete set of U.S. coins by denomination, date and mint is, in all practicality, impossible.

Louis Eliasberg Sr. achieved this feat over a lifetime (1896-1976). But even his collection has not stood the test of time, having been sold at auction over the past two decades. Assembling a type set is a challenge, as early coins are increasingly hard to find.

So what's a collector to do? Why not create a "U.S. Style Collection"? The goal is not to obtain every variety of each denomination, but rather to exhibit the broad patterns of U.S. coinage. For example, one Seated Liberty piece represents all silver coins bearing that design (half dime, dime, quarter, 20 cents, half dollar and dollar). The set would have an example of each major U.S. denomination, stylistic design, alloy and condition (or grade).

By assembling such a collection, you'll have a beautiful representation of U.S. numismatic history. Best of all, it can be built for less than \$1,000. (The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.) House the collection in a custom album, and you have a desirable investment.

Here is the short list to follow as you begin a hobby adventure. To learn more, I suggest you read R.S. Yeoman's *Guide Book of United States Coins* (the "Red Book") and any of the fine titles by Q. David Bowers.



Three of these coins, marked by an asterisk, are hard to come by for less than \$20 each, but you should be able to get the trio for under \$100. Find the common ones in pocket change and save your money for better condition, older coins. Young collectors on

a budget may want to begin with the 20th century and work backward.

If you assemble coins according to this list, you'll likely hit all the major circulating grades (Good, Very Good, Fine, Very Fine, Extremely Fine and About Uncirculated). A modern proof set will take care of Uncirculated and Proof examples and provide some strong type examples to highlight your holdings.

Completing this collection for under \$1,000 is a surmountable challenge. Once you've done that, you can develop your own style list for U.S. paper currency and start anew. ©

U.S. Style Collection

1. "Bust Right," copper or silver, early 1800s. (Draped Bust half cents can be purchased for in About Good condition for less than \$20.)
2. Early "Head Left" (Classic, Coronet, Matron or Young), copper, first half of 19th century.
3. Flying Eagle cent, 1856-58.
4. Indian Head cent, copper-nickel, 1860-64.
5. Lincoln cent, steel, 1943.
6. Lincoln cent, clad, post-1982.
7. Two cents, copper, 1864-73.
8. Three cents, nickel, 1851-73.
9. Three cents, silver, 1865-89.
10. Shield nickel, 1866-83.
11. Liberty nickel, 1883-1912.
12. Buffalo nickel, 1913-38.
13. Jefferson nickel, wartime silver, 1942-45.
14. Seated half dime, 1837-73.
15. Barber, silver, early 1900s.
16. Mercury dime, 1916-45.
17. Roosevelt dime, modern.
18. Twenty cents,* 1875-78.
19. Standing Liberty quarter, 1916-30.
20. Washington quarter, recent.
21. State quarter, recent.
22. Walking Liberty half dollar, 1916-47.
23. Franklin half dollar, 1948-63.
24. Kennedy half dollar, clad, modern.
25. Trade dollar,* 1873-85.
26. Morgan dollar, 1878-1921.
27. Peace dollar, 1921-35.
28. Eisenhower dollar, 1971-78.
29. Anthony dollar, 1979-99.
30. Sacagawea dollar, modern.
31. Commemorative half dollar, early 20th century. (The Columbian Exposition issue is easy to come by.)
32. Bicentennial quarter, half dollar or dollar, 1976.
33. American Eagle bullion coin,* gold, 1/10 ounce, modern.
34. American Eagle bullion coin, silver, 1 ounce, modern.
35. American Eagle bullion coin,* platinum, 1/10 ounce, modern.