

# COINS FOR YOU

A starting guide for  
new collectors



UNITED STATES MINT

*Connecting America  
Through Coins*



# WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF COIN COLLECTING!

Coins reflect our culture. The symbols, inscriptions, and images depicted on our coins express our shared values and history.

Collecting coins is like collecting stories. And, as a new numismatist (**new-mis-ma-tist**), you can be part of those stories.

As you read through this booklet, you'll learn about the fun hobby of coin collecting. In no time, you'll be striking up all kinds of "coin-versations" as your collection grows.

**Happy Collecting!**



# ABOUT THE U.S. MINT



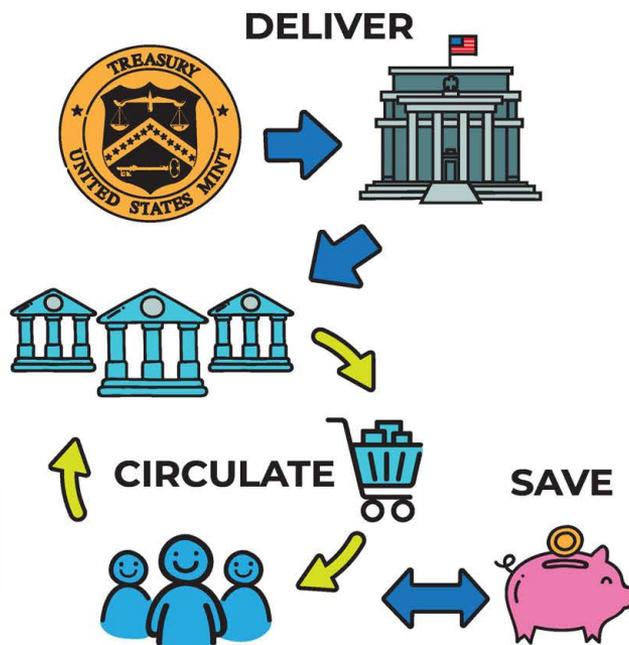
The U.S. Mint is the government agency that makes coins. The Mint is responsible for producing circulating coins for Americans to conduct business every day. The Mint also makes numismatic coins for collecting, bullion coins for investing, and medals to honor important people.

The Mint sends new coins to Federal Reserve Banks (DELIVER). From there, they go to local banks across the country to enter circulation. Coins are distributed from banks, stores, and people as they are spent (CIRCULATE). For example, you use your coins to buy something from a store; the store takes your coins to the bank; the bank then gives the coins to another store, and so on. If you save your coins, they are then out of circulation (SAVE).



## DID YOU KNOW?

Coins and paper bills aren't made by the same agency. The Bureau of Engraving and Printing (BEP) makes paper money.



# MINT HISTORY



## DID YOU KNOW?

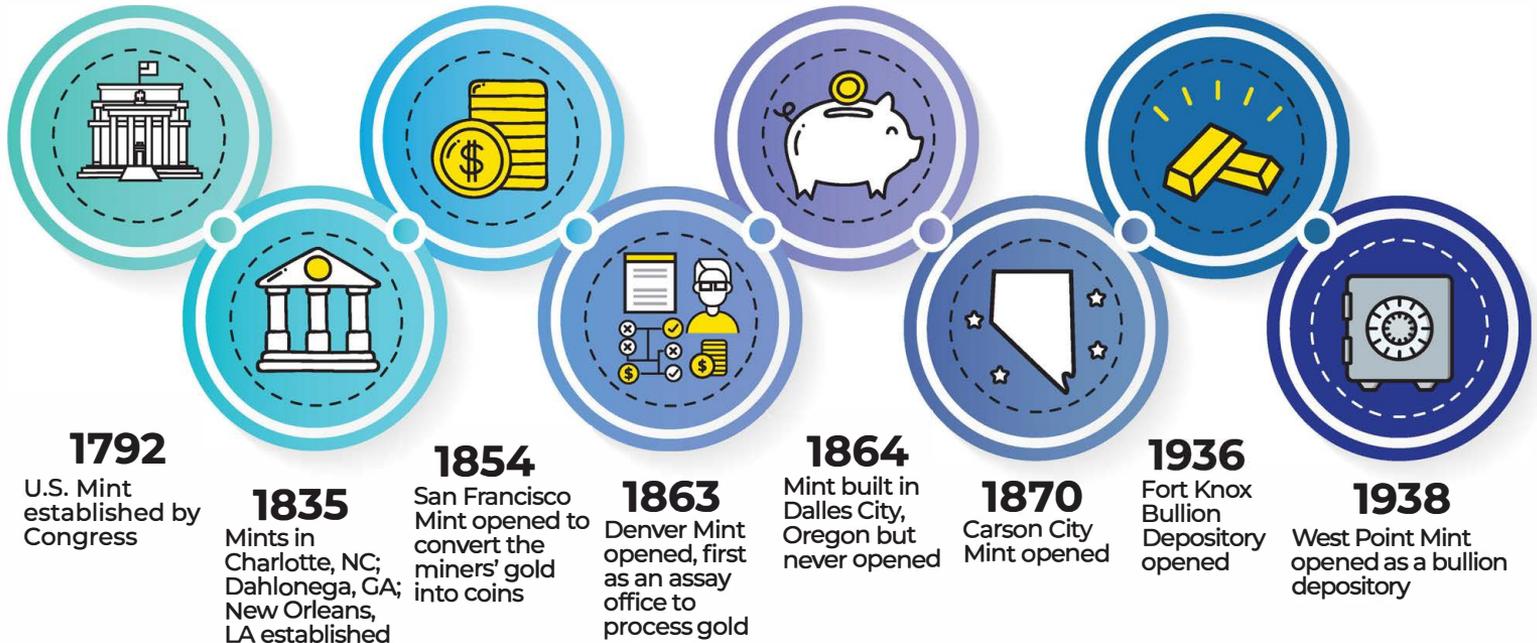
You can still find old and rare coins that have mint marks from old Mint facilities. In fact, the “D” mint mark that now stands for Denver used to mean Dahlonega, Georgia.



PHILADELPHIA

On April 2, 1792, Congress passed the Coinage Act establishing the first national mint in the United States. Congress chose Philadelphia, which was then the nation’s capital, as the site of our first Mint.

As the United States grew, America’s need for coins grew with it. Also, discoveries of precious metals like silver and gold in the 19th century put more pressure on the Mint to turn the metal into coins. This prompted the government to open more Mint locations around the country. The Mint currently operates four Mints in Denver, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and West Point and a bullion depository at Fort Knox.



# MINT LOCATIONS

**SCAN ME!**

Learn more about how we make coins at the Denver and Philadelphia Mints in our U.S. Mint Virtual Tour app



Today, the Mint has six locations across the United States. Each location has a different purpose.



## DENVER

The U.S. Mint at Denver makes circulating and collectible coins. It also makes coin dies and stores gold and silver. The Denver Mint offers public tours.



## SAN FRANCISCO

The U.S. Mint at San Francisco makes collectible coins. It has special robots that package the coins.



## FORT KNOX

The U.S. Bullion Depository at Fort Knox doesn't make coins. It stores the country's gold.



## WASHINGTON

The headquarters of the U.S. Mint is in Washington, DC. Although this location doesn't make coins, it is responsible for research, marketing, and other important business related to the Mint's operations.



## PHILADELPHIA

The U.S. Mint at Philadelphia makes circulating and collectible coins, medals, and dies for both coins and medals. It is the largest mint in the world and also offers public tours.



## WEST POINT

The U.S. Mint at West Point makes investment (bullion) and collectible coins. It also stores gold, silver, and other precious metals.

# HISTORY OF COINS

In ancient times, people used metal for money before people used coins. During this time, the weight of a piece of metal determined its value. If you wanted to buy something, the seller would weigh the metal. The heavier your piece, the more you could buy.



Then, a clever person thought of stamping the piece's weight right onto the metal! In the mid-7th century B.C., people in Lydia (now part of Turkey) made coins from electrum, a natural metal that's made up of gold and silver. These coins also had symbols stamped onto them.



In the 6th century B.C. during the rule of King Croesus, Lydians learned to make gold coins. They discovered how to remove silver from the electrum, leaving just the gold. King Croesus' coins were an amazing 98 percent pure gold!



In the late 4th century B.C., Ptolemy I of Egypt became the first king to have his own image put on coins. Many countries still put leaders on their coins today.

# MODERN U.S. COINS



America's history is rich and deep, which should be reflected in our nation's coin designs. Until recently, however, coin designs did not mirror the diversity of America's culture or our varied past. Through its recent programs, the Mint has begun to honor the diverse contributions of many Americans. With programs like the Native American \$1 Coin Program and the American Women Quarters™ Program, the Mint strives to fulfill its mission of "Connecting America Through Coins."

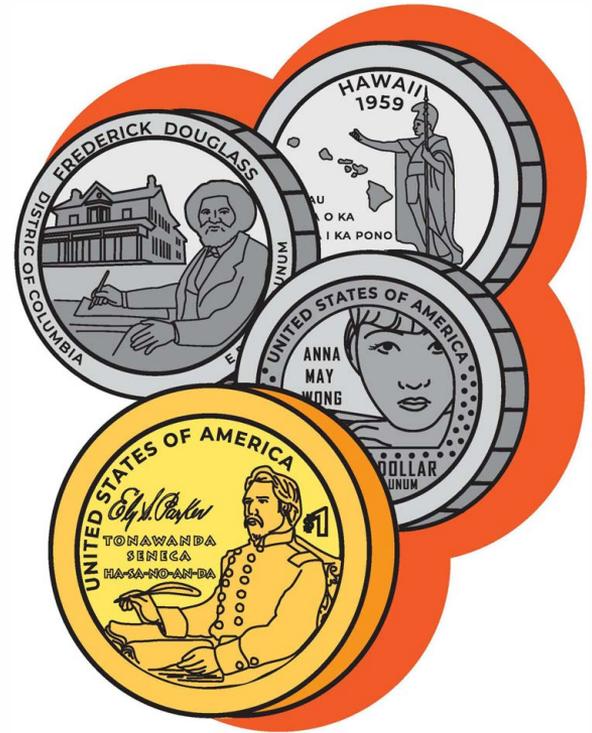


## DID YOU KNOW?

The first African American to appear on a U.S. circulating coin was Duke Ellington in 2009. The coin was part of the 50 State Quarters Program representing the District of Columbia.



Although our nation's first coins did feature a mythical female representation of liberty, it wasn't until the Susan B. Anthony Dollar was released in 1979 that a woman appeared on a U.S. circulating coin. The coin replaced the Eisenhower Dollar and was minted from 1979-1981 and again in 1999.



# CIRCULATING COIN PROGRAMS



Congress can create a coin program based on a design theme that inspires coin collecting. These coins can be found in your change, so be on the lookout to start collecting!

## 50 State Quarters (1999 to 2009)

The 50 State Quarters Program honored each of the 50 states with special reverse (tails) quarter designs. In 2009, the Mint made six more designs for Washington, DC and the five U.S. territories as part of the District of Columbia and U.S. Territories Quarters Program.



**America the Beautiful Quarters® (2010 to 2021)** The Mint made a total of 56 different quarters celebrating a national site from each state, territory, and the District of Columbia. Each reverse design showed a scene from a national park or forest.



**American Women Quarters™ (2022 to 2025)** The quarters celebrate American women from a variety of backgrounds. Each reverse honors a different woman and her impact on our country. The obverse (heads) shows a new portrait of George Washington created by famous sculptor Laura Gardin Fraser.

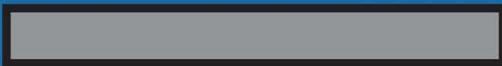
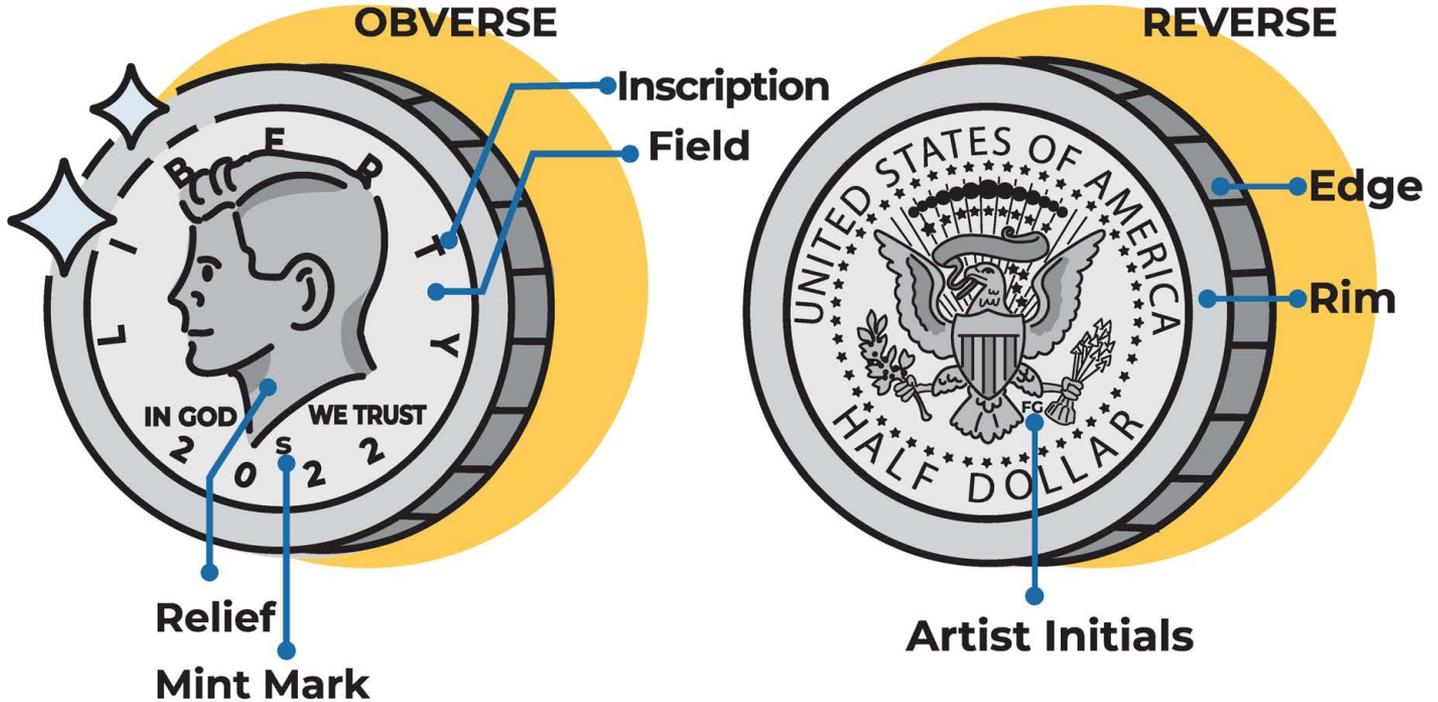


**SCAN ME!**



Learn more about the Mint's coin programs on our website.

# PARTS OF A COIN



**Plain Edge**



**Lettered Edge**

A coin's edge can be plain, reeded, lettered, or decorated.



**Reeded Edge**



**Decorated Edge**

# COIN COLLECTING



People have collected coins for centuries. At first, only royalty like kings collected coins. This gave coin collecting the nickname of “the hobby of kings.” In fact, the first known collector was a king: Augustus Caesar, the first emperor of Rome. He lived from 63 B.C. to 14 A.D.

Augustus collected many coins and gave coins as gifts. Many of the Roman emperors who ruled after Augustus also had large collections. Rich and royal families continued this tradition throughout the Middle Ages.

Coin collecting became a popular hobby in America in the 1800s. Since then, more and more people have enjoyed collecting coins, no matter their age or income. After all, coins are all around us!



## DID YOU KNOW?

The Umayyad dinar, an ancient Islamic coin, is one of the most expensive coins ever sold at auction. It sold for over \$6 million dollars in 2011!



# GET STARTED COLLECTING COINS



## What do cows, space, and national parks all have in common?

They have all been featured as part of a coin design! When a coin catches your eye, save it and start a collection.

You can collect all kinds of coins for a variety of reasons.

Coins can:

Help you remember a place you traveled

Have interesting designs

Be old or brand new

Evoke different emotions



## DID YOU KNOW?

A person who collects coins is called a numismatist. Numismatics is the study and collecting of things that are used as money, including coins, tokens, and paper bills.

# BUILD A COLLECTION



**SCAN  
ME!**

Learn more about caring for your collection by scanning the QR code.

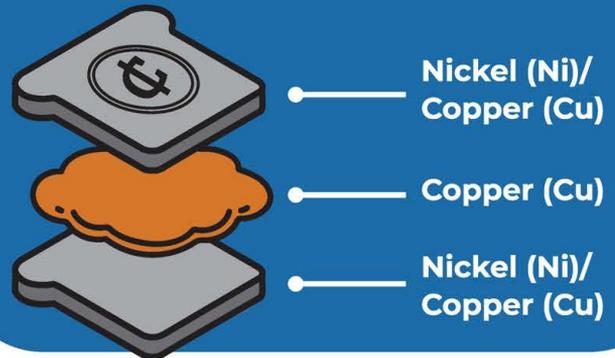
**It's easy to start a coin collection; you can begin with coins that you already have.**

- Gather your coins and store them safely in protective holders or albums.
- Keep a list of your coins. Include the coin type, year, and other information you find useful.
- Add to your collection by searching for coins at coin shows, auctions, or flea markets. And always check your change for coins that fit your collecting theme.



## DID YOU KNOW?

Not all coins are made of the same metals! Before 1964, the U.S. made coins containing silver. After 1965, all circulating coins became clad, meaning they have a core and outer layer made of different metals. You can actually see the layers when you look at the edge of a coin – the copper core peeks out through the nickel.



# GROW YOUR COLLECTION

All coins have a story to tell. Some markings or parts of your coin might make for a more exciting and unique story. When you are thinking about adding a new coin to your collection, here are a few things to look for:



**Unique or rare mint marks.** For example, the West Point Mint, which doesn't usually make circulating coins, produced special "W" quarters in 2019 and 2020.

**Precious metal coins, like bullion coins.** The U.S. Mint produces precious metal coins in gold, silver, platinum, and palladium for collectors and investors. Proof and uncirculated coins are collected for their limited mintage numbers, while bullion coins offer a way to invest in precious metals.



**Limited edition release coins.** Sometimes the Mint makes coins for a limited time, making them more rare than other coins. During 1943, the Mint made steel pennies as a way to save copper during World War II.



**Age.** Ancient or older coins can be more expensive because they have had to survive over a long period of time. For example, a 1652 silver shilling made in the Massachusetts Bay Colony sold for over \$350,000 in 2021.

**Condition.** Coins in pristine condition are worth more, so make sure you handle and store your coins properly.

**Complete sets of a particular coin type or coin program.** Creating a complete set of one coin or program will make your collection more valuable, and it also gives you a collecting goal.



**Error coins.** Errors were more common in the past before modern machinery. If you find a coin with a mistake, it can be worth quite a lot! In 2018, a \$1 coin stamped with a quarter design sold at auction for nearly \$200,000.

# Learn More



Visit the U.S. Mint website to discover more about coins and Mint history, watch videos, and stay up to date with the latest Mint news.



Find resources for teaching with coins, at-home activities, games, and videos at the U.S. Mint Coin Classroom!



If you have questions or want more information, email us at [education.outreach@usmint.treas.gov](mailto:education.outreach@usmint.treas.gov).



The U.S. Mint Virtual Tours app allows you to visit the Philadelphia and Denver Mints from anywhere! Step onto the production floors and learn about how we make coins. Available in the Apple App Store and Google Play Store.



Download on the  
App Store

GET IT ON  
Google Play

