

The Augusta Coin Club Meets on the 3rd Thursday of the Month at America's Best Value Inn on Washington Road

The Augusta Coin Club since 1959

Pres. David Chism
1st V.P. Arno Safran
2nd V.P. Glenn Sanders
Sec. John T. Attaway
Treas. Xavier Pique
Sgt. in Arms: Bryan Hoyt
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Volume 9, Number 6

THE AUGUSTA COIN CLUB MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

June, 2009

Our Next Meeting is Thursday, June 18, 2009 from 6:30 to 9:30 PM

50th Anniversary Club Medallions Now Available

Club Meeting Calendar for 2009

Jan. 15	May 21	Sep. 17
Feb. 19	June 18	Oct. 15
Mar. 19	July 16	Nov. 19
Apr. 16	Aug. 20	Dec. 17

Club Medallions and 2010 Red Books Available

At the May 21 meeting President Chism announced that the 2009 50th Anniversary Medallions were now available. Treasurer Xavier Pique, who had worked extensively on the project, explained that the silver issue price from the Monterey Company came in well beyond expectations and so the club decided to order the three base metal alloys; Antique Bronze, Antique Copper and Silver wash. The 2009 medal design again features our club logo, a replica of the Saint-Gaudens Double Eagle with the state of Georgia above on the obverse. Unlike the past four years, the number 50 has been incused into the state map, representing the club's 50th anniversary since its founding in 1959. The reverse displays the Canal House at the headwaters of the Augusta Canal built in 1845 along the Savannah River Rapids below where the Savannah Rapids Pavilion stands today. The medallions were being sold to club members at \$7.00 each or \$20 for a set of three.



The 2009 Augusta Coin Club Medallion struck in Antique Copper
The obverse shows the Club Logo numeral 50 on the GA map
The coin is shown actual size, 1½ inches in diameter.
[Magnify page to 200% to see details or use 3x glass.]

(More Club News on page 4, column 2)

Collecting the Coins of 1899: 110 Years Ago

By Arno Safran



The obverses of an 1899 Year set [Magnify to 200%]

During the 1980's and 1990's many obsolete US type coins were relatively inexpensive. Even then, many collectors tended to concentrate on saving up for the "popular key dates" such as the 1909-S VDB cent or 1916-D Mercury dime; some spending large sums on extremely low grade specimens just to have that "key". To my way of thinking that modus operandi towards collecting prevented one from acquiring a considerable variety of beautiful coins that while not rare as such, were still uncommon in the higher grades. Collecting years sets with eye appeal - if moderately priced - has always been one of my collecting goals, so back in the late 1990's I started to assemble a set of the US coins dated 1899 (excluding gold) in the highest grades I could afford; preferably AU-55 thru MS-63. The V nickel and Barber half in the 1899 set shown are both AU's but still attractive.

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Collecting the Coins of 1899

(Continued from page 1, column 2)



The reverses of an 1899 Year set. [Magnify to 200% to see details.]
The Morgan dollar was struck at the New Orleans Mint.

I was delighted to discover that at the turn of the 19th into the 20th century the coins struck at the Philadelphia Mint for the most part were coined in prodigious numbers with enough AU to BU survivors still available at affordable prices within my budget over time. This was true not only for 1900 but for the immediate years following and preceding. Thus we come to 1899, a group of six coins (excluding gold) that was produced eleven decades ago.



An 1899 Indian Head cent grading MS-65 Red
53,598,000 were struck [Magnify up to 200%]

With a few exceptions most Indian Head cents dated from 1880 on are considered common and moderately priced up through MS-63 and the 1899 cent with a mintage of over 53,500,000 is one of them. Back in 1987, you could still find a nice MS-65 Red specimen for around \$30.00. Indian cents have increased in value quite a lot since then. Today it is advisable to look for a certified specimen graded Red-Brown to full Red. That said, even a well struck Brown MS-64 may be considered a “best buy” in today’s market.



An 1899 Liberty nickel graded AU-58.
The mintage was 26,027,000. [Magnify to 200%]

Like the Indian Head cent, the 5¢ Liberty “V” nickel is generally considered to be a common coin type with most dates as the 1885, 1886, 1912 D and 1912 S issues. The 1899 with a mintage of over 26 million is easily affordable in AU up through MS-63. The AU example shown cost \$40 when it was acquired in 1990. Today, the Coin Dealer Newsletter’s *Monthly Supplement* lists an AU-50 at only \$47.00, a MS-60 at \$70.00 and just \$110 for a MS-63. While these are wholesale figures, one could hardly call my original purchase a good investment. My purpose then was to form a year set having eye appeal at very little cost which represented a portal to my grandparents’ era as newlyweds. Rarity was not a priority.

In 1997, I realized I had not yet found a suitable 1899-P dime to match some of the other denominations for the date. At a major show scheduled for the huge Baltimore Convention Center that year, I was pretty sure that I would be able to find a choice MS-63 or 64 which was in my price range. I wasn’t on the bourse floor ten minutes when I came across a blazing uncirculated gem. It was certified MS-67 by PCGS. Out of curiosity I inquired what the dealer wanted and he calmly replied, \$2,500. I couldn’t believe it as the 1899 Barber dime, with a mintage of 19,580,000, was considered an extremely common date. At that time the rare 1802 Draped Bust dime with a reported mintage of just 10,975 was valued at the same figure, \$2,500 in the still appealing grade of VF-20. I had never been a fan of grade rarity and so, continued looking. A couple of hours later I came across a proof-like 1899 Barber dime graded MS-63 for \$125. The coin was no blazer but it had reflectivity and looked attractive and blended in with the others in the set.



A Proof Like 1899-P Barber dime

With the 1899 25¢ coin we come to the first of the three “big” denominations of this year set. Ridiculed and berated by later numismatists and politicians as lacking artistic imagination in his designs, Charles E. Barber in 1899, was in the midst of his tenure as Chief Engraver of the US Mint in Philadelphia and had four of his design types then in circulation; the Liberty nickel (since 1883), the Liberty Head dime, the quarter and half dollar (all since 1892). He was also the designer of the commemorative Columbian Exposition half dollar (1892 & 1893) and Isabella quarter (1893).



Charles E. Barber

In 1899 the Philadelphia Mint alone struck over 12.6 million quarters. Today, the 25¢ coin is considered the workhorse of our pocket change but at the turn of the 19th into the 20th Century, the quarter had the purchasing power of \$6.69.

(Continued on page 3, column 1)

Collecting the Coins of 1899

(Continued from page 2, column 2)



**An 1899-P Barber Liberty Head quarter graded MS-62
The mintage was 12,624,000 [Magnify to 200%]**

Despite the large mintage, the economic times were disproportionate between the rich and laboring classes; many of them, immigrants who had recently arrived were now competing for the same jobs with Americans whose ancestors had been living here for generations. A good salary in 1899 was around \$8.25 a week. Many wage earners had to work between 9 and 10½ hours six days a week to get it and some received their pay in little manila envelope. Tenement rents were \$15.00 a month for a coldwater flat; (*The bathrooms were in the hall*) Butter was 26¢ a pound. A dozen eggs costing 23¢. A brand new 1899 Barber quarter was not about to be saved. As a result, an 1899-P quarter is scarcer in Fine-15 thru XF-45 than in AU to MS-65 where it is available for a price. According to the 2010 *Red Book* an AU-50 will sell for around \$125 and a MS-63 for \$325.



**An 1899-P Barber Half dollar grading AU-58
The mintage was 5,538,000 for the Philadelphia Mint issue
representing the high water mark of the entire 73 coin series.
[Magnify to 200% to see details.]**

Despite what former critics have said about Barber's designs, the Barber half for type looks good even in VG-8 but is absolutely resplendent in high grade. It has enjoyed an ardent collector base during the past sixty years because unlike the Barber dime and quarter series, the Barber half (*struck from 1892 through 1915*) has no "stoppers". If the quarter had a fairly large purchasing power in 1899, the half dollar's was tremendous; around what \$13.50 would acquire in goods today.

In 1899 my maternal grandfather was 24 years of age. He had married my grandmother the previous year and they were expecting the birth of their first child. Grandfather as a young laborer was earning around \$5.00 a week and needed that fifty-cent piece for the basics. He was not about to save a brand new Barber half specimen should one come his way in that little brown pay envelope. This may explain that despite a record 5.5 million P Mint halves struck in 1899, an MS-63 is priced at \$900 today with an AU, listed at \$300. XF's are hard to find but a VF-25 specimen should go for \$100 and still looks attractive.

The final denomination; the Morgan dollar is the most popular yet the least expensive in mint state of all the others in the set. That's if the collector opts for the 1899-O (*the New Orleans Mint issue*) with 12,290,000 struck as opposed to only 330,000 for the much scarcer 1899-P. The 1899-S has a mintage of over 2.5 million but is even rarer in mint state than the 1899-P. Back in 1899, a dollar had the purchasing power of \$26.50.



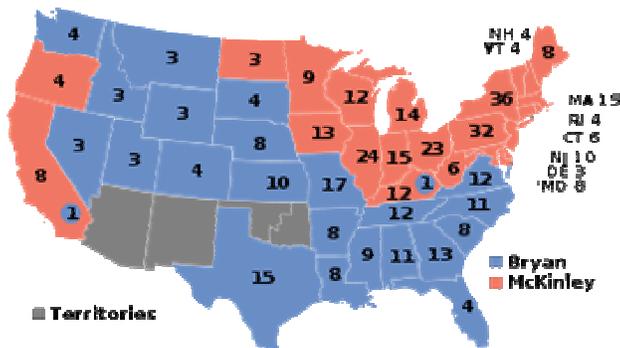
**This 1899-O Morgan dollar was certified MS-63 PQ by PCGS
but only cost \$23.00 back in the late 1990's.**

In 1999, one hundred years after it was minted a certified 1899-O Morgan dollar could be acquired for as little as \$23 in MS-63 condition. Today it would be closer to \$40.00; still a good value.

The four 1899 gold denominations (the \$2.50, \$5.00, \$10.00 & \$20.00) are also represented by common dates with only the \$2.50 quarter eagle showing a low mintage, although still priced as a common date. The problem for a collector of modest means is not just dealing with the increased bullion value of gold during the past three years but with the frenzied activity of gold buyers in this current market that has raised the prices of generic gold type coins to unprecedented heights.



In 1899 William McKinley, fresh from the successful campaign against Spain in the Spanish-American War of the previous year, was in the third year of his first term as 25th president of the United States. The former Governor of Ohio had defeated William Jennings Bryan 23 states to 22 in the Electoral College three years earlier.





2009 A Year for Rarities? By Eric Knapp



If you are like me, you have probably been to a number of banks these past couple of months looking for the new Lincoln Cents and U.S. Territories Quarters. You have probably also gotten the same response I have to your inquiries: "We won't be ordering any of these new coins." or "We don't know when or if we will be getting them." Explanations typically turn to the fact that there are too many older coins in circulation so the banks see no need to order anything new. These banks are seeing a steady supply coming in their doors from local businesses and customers. Local banks also usually get all of their coin orders through a regional branch, so they have even less control over the type of coins they can order. If their regional branch isn't specifically ordering the new 2009 coins, there is no guarantee that they will receive them.

Recent reports have shown that the first 2 coins in the Territories Quarter series have had the lowest mintages out of all of the State Quarter issues - by far. In fact the 172,400,000 for D.C. and 139,200,000 for Puerto Rico COMBINED are less than the lowest issue of the Statehood series (Oklahoma at 416,600,000).

The Mint also just announced last week that they will halt production of the nickel and dime for 2009. Through the end of March, the Mint reports a total coinage of 69.36 million nickels and 120 million dimes. These figures are just a little over 10% of the mintages of these coins in 2008. Even more staggering is the comparison to 2007 mintages, when 1,197,840,000 nickels and 2,089,500,000 dimes were coined.

As with 2008, the 2009 Kennedy Half Dollar saw a mintage of only 3.4 million coins. Half Dollar coins are not minted for circulation, but this is still an incredibly low number. Dollar coins for 2009 seem to be holding steady - current mintage figures for 2009 appear to be on target to match or exceed mintage figures for previous years. This should hold true, considering that the Mint has been heavily promoting the use of the dollar coin and there has been no indication of a halt in production yet.

So what does this all mean? Will 2009 coins become key dates for collectors years from now? Of course not, but for the short-term, there may be some profits if you are lucky enough to get a hold of some of these "rarities". The Mint was selling sets of P and D mint rolls of the log-cabin cents for \$8.95 and these have sold out as of this writing. A quick glance at EBay shows sellers getting \$2 to \$3 PER COIN for the cents and rolls selling for over \$6 apiece! Territories Quarter rolls are showing a more modest profit as well. In the long run, these coins will eventually make their way into circulation, but even then they are certain to be hoarded because of their perceived rarity. With mintages in the millions they will never approach the levels of a key date, but this may be as close as we will get to see a "key date" circulating coin in this modern era.

Eric Knapp is editor of the *Hills Numismatist*, monthly newsletter of the Watchung Hills Coin Club in Watchung, NJ, (Ed.)

More Club News

(Continued from page 1, column 1)

At the May 21 meeting President Chism announced that the **2010 Red Books** were available for a bargain price of \$9.00. The volume is listed at \$14.95 retail. At this price no serious collector should be without one as it is packed with important numismatic information regarding United States coinage.

The treasury balance reported by club Treasurer Xavier Pique was \$10,288.99 with all expenses paid. For **Show and tell**, Jim Barry displayed a silvered bronze *tetradrachm* struck by A Roman provincial of Commodus - son of Marcus Aurelius. The obverse depicted a portrait of Commodus, the reverse showed the lighthouse on left with a galley sailing by. **The program** was a PowerPoint presentation on "US Transitional Date coins from the 18th & 19th Centuries" by Arno Safran. Our **prize winners** for the evening were Rick Heise and Charles Eastman; each winning a 2009 silver eagle. Jason Marshall won the 50/50. Congratulations winners all!

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