

The Numismatic Marketplace

Shops, shows, ads and auctions—how to find prized pieces that suit your interests and pocketbook.



COLLECTING COINS typically involves buying coins. While there are some opportunities to collect from circulation, you'll acquire most of your coins in the numismatic marketplace. Fortunately, there are many excellent sources for collectable coins, from dealers at shops or shows to listings in print or online. Each of these alternatives has something to contribute as you pursue your numismatic interests.

A friendly and knowledgeable dealer at a local coin shop can be a great resource. Most coin dealers started out as collectors, so they should be enthusiastic about numismatics and willing to answer your questions. To locate a coin store, look in the yellow pages under a heading like "Coin Dealers and Supplies." At the shop, some items will be displayed and others will be behind the counter; so if you don't see what you're looking for, don't hesitate to ask.

For a greatly expanded selection, you can visit a gathering of dealers at a coin show. These shows come in various sizes, from single-day, local events with 20 to 30 dealers to regional or national shows lasting several days with hundreds of dealers. Show calendars can be found in weekly and monthly numismatic periodicals, though not every publication lists every show. You also can use Internet search engines like *www.google.com* to find websites with information about upcoming shows in a particular area. (Enter, for example, "coin show Indiana.")

The floor of the coin show, known

as the "bourse," is a numismatic shopper's delight. Most dealers will have an assortment of American coins, while some may focus on paper money, world coins or other specialized areas. This diversity means you can find material to satisfy your current interests while keeping an eye open for new and interesting collecting areas. A coin show is a great place to learn, because dealers typically are willing to show their wares even if you're only looking. It's also worthwhile to participate in any educational activities associated with coin shows, such as exhibits, talks and club meetings.

There are a few practical matters to keep in mind. First, transactions at coin shows are almost exclusively handled in cash. The bourse is a busy place, so you may have to wait before getting a particular dealer's attention. Some dealers may leave before the show's formal closing. Finally, it's common for dealers to offer discounts on coins sold at shows. It's best to wait for an offer, though it's not impolite to ask.

While coin shops and especially coin shows expose you to a vast selection of items, they still represent only a fraction of what's available. To begin exploring the rest, you can peruse the advertisements in various numismatic publications. From

full-page displays to small classifieds, advertisers offer a wide variety of coins by mail or phone. In addition, many dealers will send more extensive and elaborate price lists on request, or refer you to their Internet websites. You'll probably want to see a coin in person to evaluate it fully, so be sure to find out the dealer's return policy before making a purchase.

Another element of the coin market is the online auction, which combines a wide selection with the convenience of shopping from home. The most

popular is eBay® (*www.ebay.com*), where a variety of sellers list tens of thousands of numismatic items in numerous categories. You can browse the listings or search for specific items based on criteria you select. Most auctions last one week, after which the winning bidder and the seller arrange details of payment and shipment. Listings on eBay commonly include pictures, so you can get an idea of how something looks before bidding.

Given all the opportunities, with careful shopping and a bit of patience you can find what you're looking for.

The different elements of the numismatic marketplace are all means to the same end: acquiring coins that will be prized pieces of your growing collection.

sanders@money.org



Browse the bourse!