

The Fifty United States Quarter Dollar Collection

Discovering the Fifty United States Quarter Dollar Collection

Coin collecting has long been a cherished hobby for millions of Americans, but few series have captured the public imagination quite like **the Fifty United States Quarter Dollar Collection**. Launched by the United States Mint in 1999, this monumental program invited citizens to explore the nation's rich heritage through the humble quarter—one coin at a time. Over the course of ten years, the Mint issued a new quarter for each state in the order that the state ratified the Constitution or was admitted to the Union. What began as a simple circulating coin program quickly became a nationwide phenomenon, sparking a renewed interest in numismatics and creating a lasting legacy for generations of collectors. Whether you are a seasoned numismatist or a casual enthusiast just starting out, assembling a complete set of these fifty quarters offers a rewarding journey through American history, art, and culture.

The Birth of a Landmark Coin Program

The idea for a state-themed quarter series emerged in the mid-1990s as a way to celebrate the millennium and engage the public in a positive, educational initiative. Congress passed the 50 State Quarters Program Act in 1997, and the first coin—featuring Delaware—was released on January 4, 1999. The program was an immediate success. The U.S. Mint reported that as many as 147 million Americans collected the coins, either casually or seriously. The quarters were issued at a rate of five per year, and each design was chosen by the respective state through a public selection process, which included input from citizens and state officials.

One of the most remarkable aspects of **the Fifty United States Quarter Dollar Collection** is the sheer volume of coins produced. The Mint manufactured billions of these quarters for circulation, making them easy to find in pocket change during the program's run. Yet, despite their abundance, the series also includes key rarities, mint errors, and proof versions that can be highly valuable. This blend of accessibility and depth is a big reason why the collection remains popular even years after the last coin was issued in 2008.

Understanding the Collection: What Makes It Special

Each coin in **the Fifty United States Quarter Dollar Collection** features a standard obverse—featuring George Washington's profile, designed by John Flanagan—but the reverse side tells a unique story. The designs range from iconic symbols like the Liberty Bell in Pennsylvania to natural wonders such as Hawaii's volcanoes and Alaska's grizzly bear. Many states chose to highlight historical events, state mottos, or famous landmarks, creating a colorful mosaic of American identity.

Collectors often appreciate the artistic diversity of the series. The designs were created by a mix of U.S. Mint engravers and outside artists, and each one reflects careful thought about what best represents a state's character. For example, the Oklahoma quarter features a scissor-tailed flycatcher soaring above a field of Indian blanket wildflowers, while the South Dakota quarter depicts Mount Rushmore and a Chinese ring-necked pheasant. The result is a collection that feels both personal and patriotic.

The Complete List of State Quarters

To assemble a full set, you will need one quarter for each of the fifty states, issued in the following order:

- 1999: Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Georgia, Connecticut
- 2000: Massachusetts, Maryland, South Carolina, New Hampshire, Virginia
- 2001: New York, North Carolina, Rhode Island, Vermont, Kentucky
- 2002: Tennessee, Ohio, Louisiana, Indiana, Mississippi
- 2003: Illinois, Alabama, Maine, Missouri, Arkansas
- 2004: Michigan, Florida, Texas, Iowa, Wisconsin
- 2005: California, Minnesota, Oregon, Kansas, West Virginia
- 2006: Nevada, Nebraska, Colorado, North Dakota, South Dakota
- 2007: Montana, Washington, Idaho, Wyoming, Utah
- 2008: Oklahoma, New Mexico, Arizona, Alaska, Hawaii

Of course, many collectors also aim to include the six additional quarters from the **District of Columbia and U.S. Territories** program that followed, but the core of the collecting world remains the original fifty states series.

How to Start Building Your Collection

Getting started with **the Fifty United States Quarter Dollar Collection** is easier than you might think. Because the coins were minted in such large numbers, many of them can still be found in circulation, or purchased at very low cost from coin dealers, online marketplaces, or even your local bank. Here are some practical steps to begin your collecting journey:

1. **Set a Goal:** Decide whether you want a simple circulated set, a high-grade uncirculated set, or a proof set. Each has its own appeal and level of investment.
2. **Gather What You Can:** Start by checking your spare change. You may be surprised how many state quarters you already have. Sort them by year and state.
3. **Use a Folder or Album:** A dedicated coin folder or album will help you organize your collection and identify which coins you are missing. Many affordable options are available from brands like Whitman or Dansco.
4. **Fill the Gaps:** Once you have identified the missing quarters, you can purchase them individually or in lots from reputable coin dealers. Look for coins that are problem-free, with no major scratches, dents, or environmental damage.
5. **Learn About Grading:** Understanding coin grading—from Poor (P-1) to Mint State (MS-70)—will help you assess value and quality. The Sheldon scale is the standard in the industry.

Choosing Between Circulated and Uncirculated Coins

One of the first decisions you will face as a collector is whether to aim for circulated or uncirculated quarters. Circulated coins are those that have been used in everyday transactions and show signs of wear. They are generally inexpensive and can be found in pocket change. Uncirculated coins, on the other hand, have never been used and retain their original mint luster. They are slightly more expensive but offer greater detail and visual appeal. For most beginners, a circulated set is a fantastic way to start, and you can always upgrade specific coins later.

Key Rarities and Valuable Quarters in the Series

While most state quarters are common, **the Fifty United States Quarter Dollar Collection** includes several notable rarities that serious collectors seek out. Understanding these can help you recognize a potential treasure in your own collection. Some of the most sought-after varieties include:

- **1999 Delaware "Spitting Horse" Error:** A small die crack makes it look like the horse is spitting. This error is highly collectible.
- **2004 Wisconsin "Extra Leaf" Error:** Some Wisconsin quarters show an extra leaf on the corn stalk. This variety comes in two forms—high leaf and low leaf—and can be worth hundreds of dollars in high grade.
- **2005 Kansas "In God We Rust" Error:** A grease-filled die caused the lettering to appear as "In God We Rust" on some quarters. This error is quite popular among collectors.
- **2008 Hawaii Proofs and Silver Proofs:** The final issue in the series, especially in proof or silver proof format, is highly prized.

If you are lucky enough to come across any of these errors, it is wise to have them authenticated and graded by a professional service such as PCGS or NGC. Doing so can significantly increase the coin's marketability and value.

Preserving Your Fifty State Quarter Collection

Proper preservation is essential to maintaining the condition and value of your quarters. Coins are sensitive to environmental factors such as moisture, temperature changes, and handling. Here are some best practices for keeping your collection in top shape:

- **Handle Coins by the Edges:** Oils and dirt from your fingers can cause tarnishing over time. Always hold coins by their edges, or wear cotton gloves when handling high-value pieces.
- **Use Archival-Quality Holders:** Store your quarters in Mylar flips, coin capsules, or acid-free albums. Avoid PVC-based holders, as they can damage the coin's surface.
- **Control the Environment:** Keep your collection in a cool, dry place away from direct sunlight. Bathrooms and basements are usually poor choices due to humidity.
- **Avoid Cleaning:** Never clean your coins with abrasive materials, liquids, or dips. Cleaning reduces the coin's value and can cause irreversible damage. A gentle rinse with distilled water may be acceptable for certain circulated coins, but it is best to consult an expert first.

Displaying Your Collection

For many collectors, half the joy of assembling **the Fifty United States Quarter Dollar Collection** comes from displaying the finished set. Beautifully designed albums and frames allow you to showcase all fifty quarters in a single, attractive layout. Some collectors even create custom maps of the United States with a slot for each state's quarter. Whether you choose a simple binder or a custom shadow box, displaying your collection can spark conversation and inspire others to start their own numismatic journey.

The Lasting Legacy of the Fifty State Quarters Program

The impact of **the Fifty United States Quarter Dollar Collection** goes far beyond the coins themselves. The program is credited with introducing a new generation to coin collecting, and it revitalized the hobby during a time when interest was declining. Schools used the quarters to teach history, geography, and civics. Families collected together, and many children received their first coin album as a gift. The program also set a precedent for future commemorative coin series, such as the America the Beautiful Quarters Program and the American Innovation Dollar series.

Moreover, the state quarters remain a tangible connection to the early 2000s—a time before smartphones and social media dominated everyday life. There is a certain nostalgia attached to pulling a quarter from your pocket and wondering which state you might find. For those who collected the entire series, that feeling of accomplishment is priceless.

Conclusion

Assembling **the Fifty United States Quarter Dollar Collection** is more than a hobby—it is a celebration of American diversity, history, and artistry. Whether you are drawn to the challenge of finding every state, the thrill of discovering a rare error, or simply the beauty of the designs, this collection offers something for everyone. With a little patience and dedication, you can build a complete set that will bring you joy for years to come. And as you hold each quarter in your hand, you will be holding a small piece of America's story. Start your collection today, and discover the pride that comes with owning a complete set of the fifty United States quarter dollars.