

# GARAGE SALES

## What Makes a Coin Collectible?

A quarter is worth 25 cents – until it's not. Some coins can be worth thousands of dollars more than their face value.

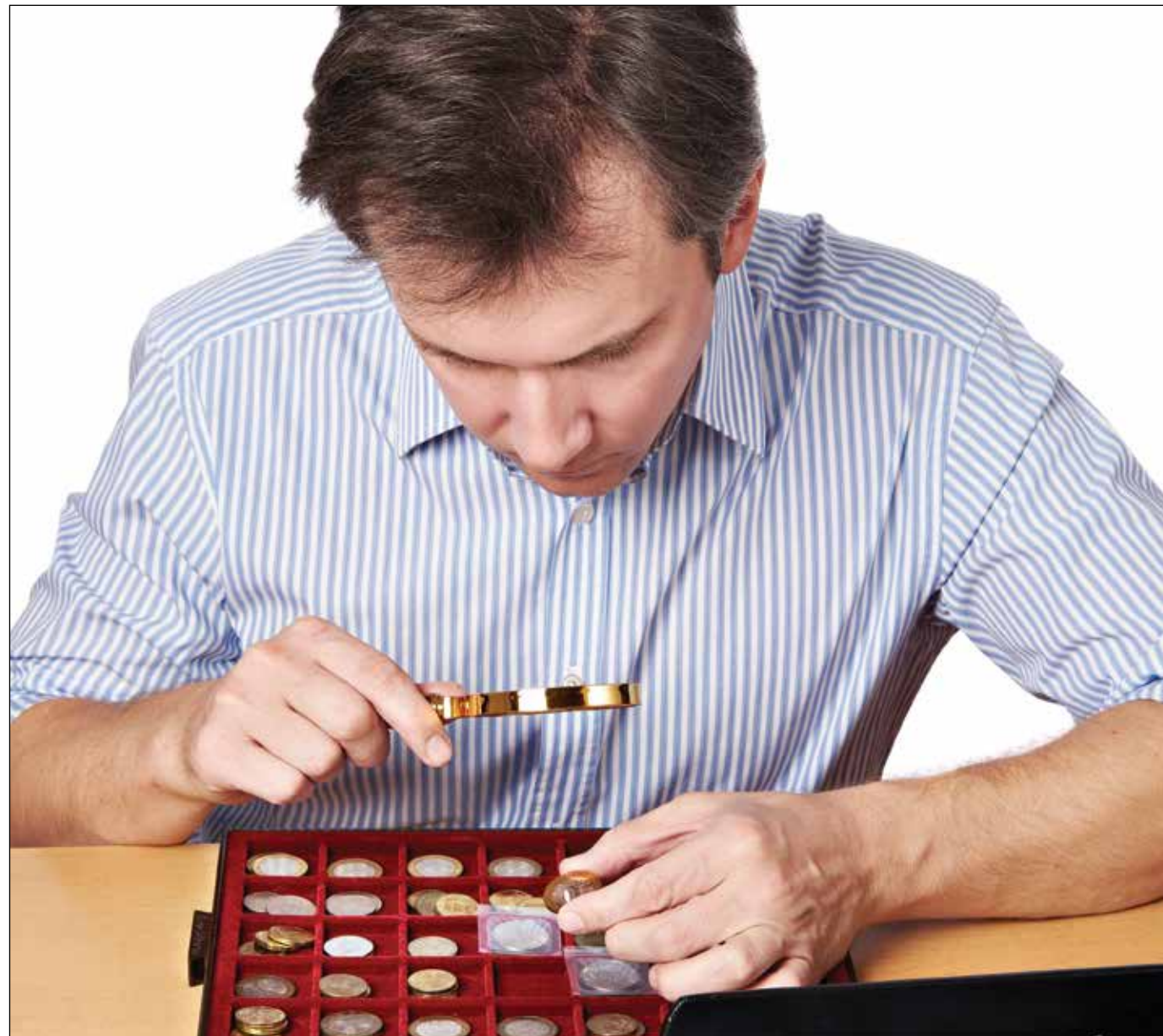
They can be easy to spot if you know what you're looking for. Here are four things that can influence a coin's value from the American Numismatic Association.

### VARIETY

Most coins are minted, purposely, to look exactly alike. However, there may be differences in the run of a coin that makes some more valuable than others. The ANA points to the 1909 penny. Each mint began producing them with the initials VDB on the bottom of the reverse (the one without President Lincoln's head) side. Not long after production began, the decision was made to remove the initials. So 1909 cents with the VDB initials are less common than those without and, therefore, are worth more money.

### CONDITION

One of the most important factors in determining a



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coin's value is its condition. The more circulation and handling a coin has seen, the more degraded it can be. Greater wear usually means lower value, the ANA says. Collectors and investors often use third-party grading ser-

vices when dealing in coins to get a professional opinion on the state of their valuable coin. Coins can be graded on a scale of 1-70, with a Poor 1 being the worst – barely identifiable – and an MS 70 being the best – perfectly struck

and uncirculated. Most pieces, the ANA says, are somewhere in the middle, but a higher grade generally has a higher price tag.

### DEMAND

Coins with more demand

always are worth more money.

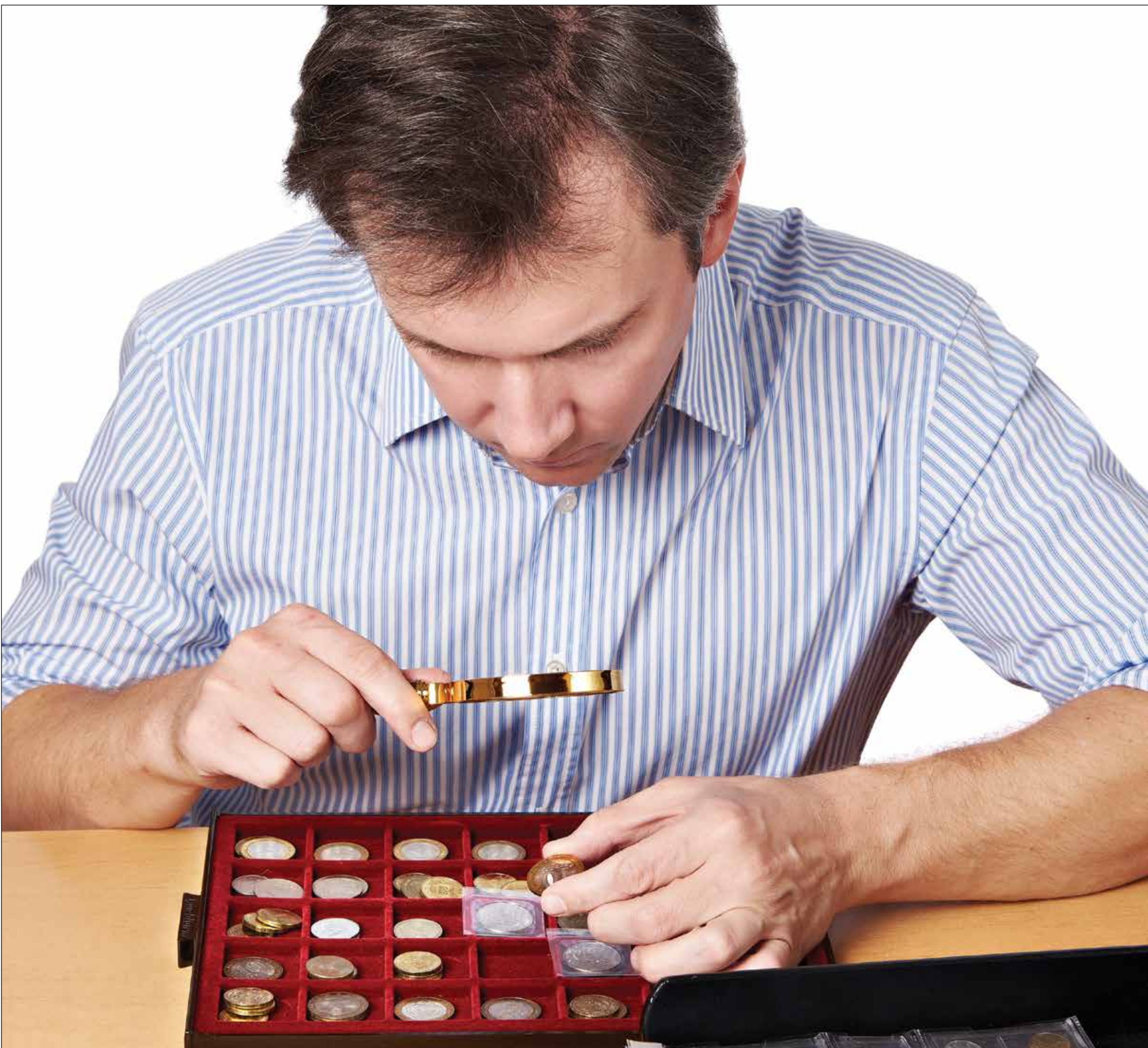
The ANA says Morgan and Peace dollars are some of the most popular coins in American history and are consistently more expensive than other series of equal rarity. Other coins enjoy cyclical popularity, such as the buffalo nickel and Mercury dimes. No one knows what makes these more popular at certain times; even the professionals are at a loss as to why some coins are popular. There are also less-popular coins, and those fetch a lower price. The ANA says half-cent coins are a great example.

### MINTAGE NUMBER

Each mint produces a different number of coins each year, and some mint marks and years are more rare. Again, the ANA turns to the 1909 penny. That year, the Philadelphia mint made more than 100 million Wheat pennies, while the San Francisco mint only made 2.3 million. Those S-marked Wheat pennies are, therefore, worth more than those from Philadelphia. Morgan dollars from New Orleans (O) and Carson City (CC) are also more sought after by collectors than those from other mints.



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### BUYER'S TIP

#### Get an Appraisal

If you think you've found a particularly rare or valuable coin, have it appraised by a third party before you plunk down payment. The American Numismatic Association maintains a list of reputable dealers and other professionals you can visit in your area. Each ANA member must agree to and abide by a code of ethics, meaning you have a better chance of getting fair service with one of their members. Once the coin is yours, also talk to your insurance agent about having your newfound treasure appropriately insured against damage, loss or theft.

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