

An Interview with Mike Verhulst

Like many collectors, Mike Verhulst (LSCC #2586) was initially attracted to the hobby via the ubiquitous Whitman blue folders. He started with cents, searching through change jars, and soon learned that many of the dates were more easily acquired at coin shops, albeit at a higher price. The search for wheat cents eventually branched out to Indian cents, Buffalo nickels, and Mercury dimes.

Collecting paused during the teenage years, a not untypical pattern, and resumed after graduating from college and entering the work force. Mike noticed how ebay carried multiple listings for just about any coin you coin think of, and so the Indian cent album was resurrected. Once again, Mike cast a wider net over time, pursuing Standing Liberty quarters as well as Bust quarters and halves. These projects concluded quickly and Mike wished to seek a longer-term challenge.

Mike was of course familiar with the Standing Liberty quarters series key, the 1916 issue, with a production of 52,000 pieces. But while the mintage was seemingly low, the availability of the coin was remarkably high. Indeed,

PCGS alone has certified over 2,000 examples, and they are always available at a price (a quick check of just one site - collectorscorner.com - reveals four pieces for sale).

Liberty Seated coinage does not share the same profile – within this context, rare really means rare! Mike looked at the auction archives for issues like the early Carson City pieces and quickly grasped the reality of the situation. Mike settled on the quarter series, thinking the dimes were on the small side, and besides he had had previous experience collecting quarters in other series.

Mike made purchases from major auctions and attended larger shows in his area. He worked with about half a dozen dealers who specialize in Liberty Seated coinage, names familiar to most of us. He also checked online auctions and dealer sites on a daily basis and further traded coins with fellow collectors.

Most of his coins have been upgraded two or three times, with Gerry Fortin Rare Coins acting as an outlet for duplicates. A notable example is the 1871-CC quarter, which he first acquired in AG3 from the Stack's



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1871-CC 25c from the Verhulst collection, PCGS F12. Images courtesy of Heritage Auctions.



1855-O 25c, CACG MS63. Images courtesy of CAC.

57th Street Sale. He later purchased a PCGS VG10 CAC piece and today owns an NGC F15 coin, one of his favorite pieces in the set, in addition to an 1855-O in PCGS MS63 CAC acquired from Paradime Coins.

Most of his coins have been upgraded two or three times, with Gerry Fortin Rare Coins acting as an outlet for duplicates. A notable example is the 1871-CC quarter, which he first acquired in AG3 from the Stack's 57th Street Sale. He later purchased a PCGS G6 CAC piece and today owns a PCGS F12 (crossed from an NGC F15) coin, one of his favorite pieces in the set, in addition to an 1855-O in CACG MS63 CAC acquired from Paradime Coins.

Mike's key criteria for evaluating coins are color and eye appeal. Indeed, he would prefer a colorful MS63 example over an untuned Gem. He is obviously a stickler for originality, with an impressive 80% success rate with CAC submissions. Mike's coins are illustrated on the PCGS set registry, and a careful examination of the

images will further reveal his taste as a collector.

So why sell now? Mike views the current market as strong and has had difficulty upgrading pieces in recent years. As he is active on the PCGS Set Registry (under the collection name "Mike's Seated Quarters"), the lack of upward mobility has also contributed to a desire to sell. He intends to stay active in numismatics, perhaps pursuing the "box of twenty" approach, possibly including non-Liberty Seated material.

Mike's Seated quarter set will be exhibited at the Central States show (April 23-25 in Schaumburg, IL) at the Gerry Fortin Rare Coins (GFRC) table. GFRC was recently acquired by Darrell Low and Matt Mayers, and this represents the first auction sale under the new management. This will be an online sale, closing Saturday, May 9. This sale will include part one of Mike's set, with the second half to appear following the ANA convention. See the GFRC website (<https://212collectibles.com/>) for further information.