EDUCATION

Cherrypickers Guide To Rare Die Varieties Of United States Coins An Official Whitman Guidebook

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Unearthing Hidden Treasures: The Cherrypickers Guide to Rare Die Varieties of United States Coins An Official Whitman Guidebook

For generations of coin collectors, the thrill of the hunt is what keeps the hobby alive. While many enthusiasts focus on mint state grades or precious metal content, a dedicated community of numismatists knows that the real prizes are often hiding in plain sight. These are the subtle, often overlooked errors and die varieties that can transform a common pocket coin into a coveted rarity. At the heart of this specialized world lies one indispensable resource: the **Cherrypickers Guide to Rare Die Varieties of United States Coins An Official Whitman Guidebook**. This volume is not merely a catalog; it is a treasure map, a field guide, and a mentor rolled into one, teaching collectors how to "cherrypick"—the art of finding valuable coins at face value or standard retail prices because the dealer or seller did not recognize the variety.

This article will explore why the Cherrypickers Guide has become the bible for variety collectors, how it has evolved over decades, and how both novice and experienced numismatists can use it to elevate their collecting strategy. We will dive into the most famous varieties it documents, explain the methodology behind the listings, and provide practical advice on how to start your own cherrypicking journey armed with this official Whitman guidebook. Whether you are a lifelong collector or just beginning to look at your change with a magnifying glass, understanding this guide opens a door to one of the most rewarding and intellectually engaging facets of American coinage.

The Genesis of the Cherrypickers Guide

Before the internet, before high-resolution digital photography, and before online price guides, identifying rare die varieties was a pursuit reserved for a handful of expert numismatists. The information was scattered across specialized journals, auction catalogs, and private collections. The average collector had little chance of recognizing a 1955 Doubled Die Lincoln cent or a 1982 No P Roosevelt dime. That changed with the first publication of the **Cherrypickers Guide to Rare Die Varieties of United States Coins An Official Whitman Guidebook**. Authors Bill Fivaz and J.T. Stanton compiled decades of research into a single, portable volume designed specifically for the hunter in the field.

Who Are the Authors and What Is Their Legacy?

Bill Fivaz is a legendary figure in numismatics, a life member of the American Numismatic Association, and a recipient of the highest honors in the field. J.T. Stanton is equally respected for his meticulous research into die

varieties. Together, they created a system that demystified complex die diagnostics. Their goal was simple: give the everyday collector the tools to spot a valuable variety without needing a graduate degree in numismatic engineering. The **Cherrypickers Guide to Rare Die Varieties of United States Coins An Official Whitman Guidebook** is their enduring legacy, now in its multiple editions, continuously updated to reflect new discoveries and market trends.

What Exactly Is a Die Variety?

To use the Cherrypickers Guide effectively, one must first understand what constitutes a die variety. A die is one of two metal pieces that strike the coin blank. When a die is manufactured, it is created from a hub. If the hub has a defect—such as a chip, a doubling, or a misplaced element—that defect is transferred to every die made from that hub, and subsequently to every coin struck by that die. These are not random, one-off errors; they are systemic repetitions that create a specific "variety."

The **Cherrypickers Guide to Rare Die Varieties of United States Coins An Official Whitman Guidebook** focuses exclusively on these intentional or accidental design variations that occur during the die-making process. It does not cover general circulation damage or common bag marks. Instead, it catalogs:

- Doubled Dies: The most famous category, where design elements appear doubled due to a misalignment during the hubbing process.
- Repunched Mintmarks (RPM): Mintmarks that were punched into the die more than once, leaving a visible ghost image.
- Over Mintmarks: A mintmark from one mint is punched over a mintmark from another mint (e.g., a "D" over an "S").
- Misplaced Dates: Date digits that are positioned incorrectly within the design.
- Die Breaks and Cuds: Cracks or breaks in the die that leave raised, irregular lines or blobs of metal on the coin.

How to Use the Official Whitman Guidebook for Maximum Effect

Owning the **Cherrypickers Guide to Rare Die Varieties of United States Coins An Official Whitman Guidebook** is the first step. Knowing how to use it efficiently is what separates a casual reader from a successful cherrypicker. The guide is organized by denomination and then by date and mintmark. Each listing includes a clear photograph, a written description of the diagnostic features, and a current market value in multiple grades.

Mastering the Diagnostic Language

The guide uses specific terminology to describe what you should look for. For example, for a doubled die, it might say "strong doubling on the date and LIBERTY" or "notching on the serifs." Learning this language is crucial. You cannot simply flip through the book while looking at a coin; you must read the description and compare it feature by feature. The **Cherrypickers Guide to Rare Die Varieties of United States Coins An Official Whitman Guidebook** teaches you to look at the smallest details—the shape of a letter, the position of a mintmark, the thickness of a numeral.

Using Lighting and Magnification

Most die varieties cannot be seen with the naked eye. A 10x to 16x loupe is essential. Proper lighting is equally critical. A direct, low-angle light source will cast shadows that reveal the subtle raised lines of a doubled die or the depression of a repunched mintmark. The guide often includes notes on the best way to view a particular variety, such as "best seen under incandescent light with the coin tilted east to west." This practical advice is gold for the cherrypicker.

The Most Sought-After Varieties in the Guide

While the Cherrypickers Guide contains thousands of listings, certain varieties have achieved legendary status. Knowing these helps collectors understand the potential value hiding in their collections.

The 1955 Doubled Die Lincoln Cent

Arguably the most famous die variety in American numismatics, the 1955 Doubled Die Lincoln cent is the crown jewel of the Cherrypickers Guide. The doubling is dramatic, with the date and the word "LIBERTY" showing clear, separate images. Even in lower grades, this coin commands a significant premium. The official Whitman guidebook provides detailed diagnostics to distinguish the genuine variety from common, less valuable forms of doubling.

The 1982 No P Roosevelt Dime

For modern coin collectors, the 1982 No P dime is a classic example of a mint error that became a major variety. The Philadelphia Mint produced dimes without its "P" mintmark, creating a scarce and valuable coin. The **Cherrypickers Guide to Rare Die Varieties of United States Coins An Official Whitman Guidebook** was instrumental in bringing this variety to the attention of the masses, leading to many being pulled from circulation.

The 1918/7-D Buffalo Nickel

An overdate variety where the 1918 die was repunched over a 1917 hub. The result is a visible "7" beneath the "8" in the date. This is a key variety for Buffalo nickel collectors and is fully documented in the guide, with clear images showing the telltale ghost of the 7.

Why This Guide Remains the Industry Standard

There are other books on die varieties, but the **Cherrypickers Guide to Rare Die Varieties of United States Coins An Official Whitman Guidebook** holds a unique position. It is published by Whitman Publishing, a name synonymous with coin collecting since the 1930s. This official status adds a layer of credibility that self-published or niche references often lack.

Continuous Updates and Community Input

Numismatics is a living field. New varieties are discovered every year as more collectors look more closely at their coins. The Cherrypickers Guide is updated regularly to include these new finds. The authors also maintain a strong connection with the collecting community. Many of the varieties listed were first reported by amateur cherrypickers who submitted their discoveries for verification. This collaborative spirit makes the guide a living document, constantly evolving to reflect the state of the art.

Realistic Valuations

Unlike some guides that offer wildly optimistic prices, the Cherrypickers Guide provides conservative, realistic market values based on actual auction results and dealer transactions. This helps collectors understand what they can truly expect to pay or receive for a variety. The **Cherrypickers Guide to Rare Die Varieties of United States Coins An Official Whitman Guidebook** is known for its honesty, which builds long-term trust with its users.

Starting Your Own Cherrypicking Adventure

You do not need a massive budget to start cherrypicking. In fact, some of the best opportunities are in modern coins that can be found in bank rolls, pocket change, or at face value from a local coin shop. Here is a step-by-step approach using the official Whitman guidebook.

Step 1: Focus on One Series

Do not try to memorize the entire guide at once. Choose a single series that interests you. Lincoln cents from the 1940s to the 1970s are a great starting point because they are abundant and contain many documented varieties.Study the relevant pages of the Cherrypickers Guide until you know the common diagnostics for that series.

Step 2: Build Your Toolkit

You need a good loupe, a bright LED light source, and a clean workspace. The **Cherrypickers Guide to Rare Die Varieties of United States Coins An Official Whitman Guidebook** should be right next to you, open to the page you are hunting. Some cherrypickers also use a digital microscope connected to a screen for extreme magnification, but this is not necessary for most varieties.

Step 3: Inspect Every Coin

Look at every coin in your target series. Do not skip worn or dirty coins. Some of the most valuable varieties were found on coins that appeared unremarkable at first glance. Train your eyes to look for abnormalities: extra thickness in letters, odd spacing, misshapen numbers, or ghostly outlines. When you see something suspicious, compare it to the photographs and descriptions in the official Whitman guide.

Common Pitfalls to Avoid

Even with the best guide in hand, mistakes are common for new collectors. Understanding these pitfalls will save you time and money.

Confusing Die Deterioration with Die Doubling

As a die ages, it wears down and can create mushy, thick letters that look like doubling. This is called "die deterioration doubling" and it is common, adding little to no value. The Cherrypickers Guide specifically warns against this. True doubled dies have sharp, clear separation of design elements, not just a blurry or swollen appearance.

Overpaying for Common Coins

Just because a coin has an interesting feature does not mean it is in the guide. Many collectors get excited about a mark on a coin and assume it is a rare variety. Always confirm your find against the specific criteria in the **Cherrypickers Guide to Rare Die Varieties of United States Coins An Official Whitman Guidebook**. If it is not listed, it is likely not a recognized variety.

Neglecting Attribution Services

Once you believe you have found a variety from the guide, it is wise to have it professionally attributed by a third-party grading service like PCGS or NGC. They will certify the variety and encapsulate the coin. This adds immense value and liquidity. The official Whitman guidebook often notes which varieties are most commonly certified, giving you a roadmap for what to submit.

The Future of Variety Collecting

As digital imaging and online communities grow, the hobby of cherrypicking is more accessible than ever. High-resolution images allow collectors to share discoveries instantly. However, the **Cherrypickers Guide to Rare Die Varieties of United States Coins An Official Whitman Guidebook** remains the foundational text. It provides the rigorous, peer-reviewed standard that online forums often lack. New collectors are encouraged to use the guide as their primary source and then supplement their knowledge with online communities and auction records.

Modern minting technology has reduced the frequency of major die varieties, but they still occur. The 2000-P Sacagawea Dollar with the "Cheerios" reverse

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