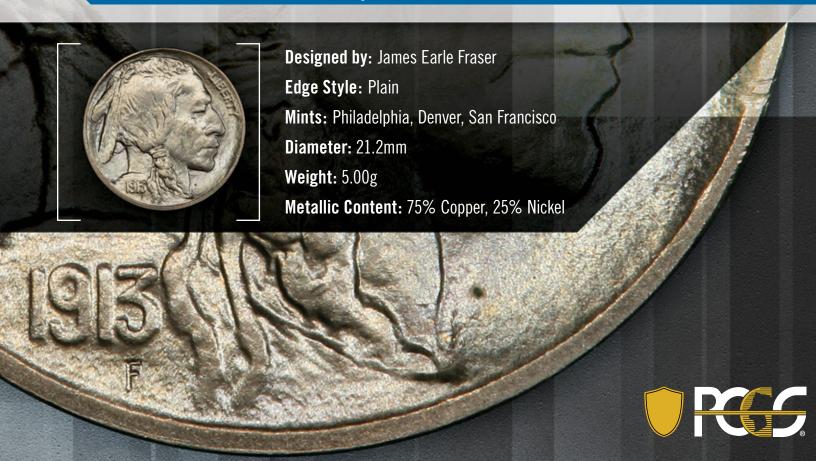
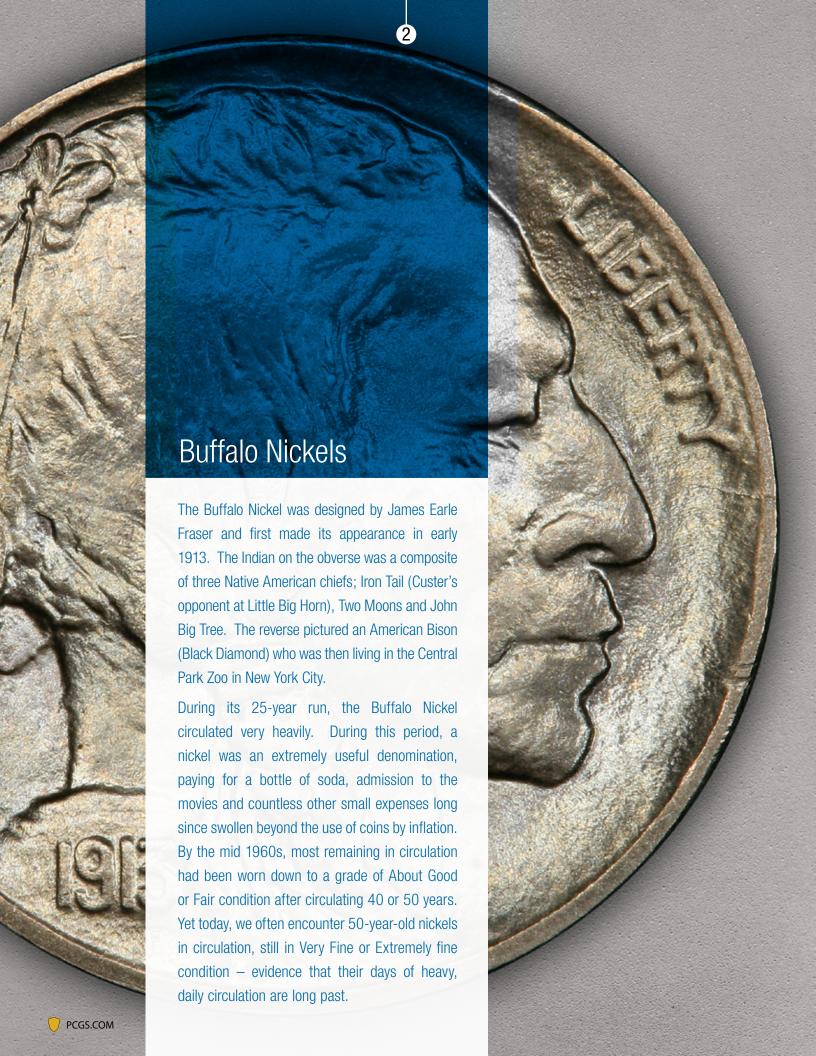


Buffalo Nickels

Buffalo Nickel Facts Every Collector Should Know





Are Buffalo Nickels Rare?

It depends on what dates in the series. Most of the dates after 1927 in lower grade are quite common, as are most of the Philadelphia-minted coins. Many dates in the 'teens and early 1920s from the Denver and San Francisco Mints are scarcer. None of the regular issues though can really be called rare.

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What is the Difference Between Type I & Type II Buffalo Nickels?

When the Buffalo Nickel first appeared in early 1913, the buffalo on the reverse was standing on a raised ground, or mound, with the denomination "Five Cents" appearing in raised letters below. It was very quickly discovered that this lettering was a high point on the coin and would wear off very quickly. As a result, the design was modified late that spring, and the buffalo was placed on a flat plain with a recessed area below, protecting the important words "Five Cents." Oddly, the date on the obverse remained raised, resulting in premature wear and, ultimately, many "dateless" coins by the 1950s and early 1960s. The mintmark (D or S) can be found beneath the words "FIVE CENTS" on the reverse.





What Are the Buffalo Nickel Key Dates?

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Key dates for Buffalos really can be broken into two distinct areas. The first, you might call "regular issue" key dates—meaning those dates and mints with low mintages and high value today. These include: 1913-S Type Two, 1921-S, 1924-S and the 1926-S. (Output from the San Francisco Mint was usually lower than either Philadelphia or Denver.) In addition, because nickel is a very hard metal, many of these branch mint issues are plagued with a weak strike.

The greatest rarities in the Buffalo Nickel series, however, are what we might call errors, or unplanned irregularities in the dies or minting process. Because these were usually either unintentional or a die prepared and used for expediency, their mintage figures are unknown. Some of the more noteworthy keys here include the 1916 Doubled Die, the 1918/17-D overdate, the well-known 1937-D "3-legged" variety and the lesser-known but even more valuable 1936-D with 3 1/2-legged variety.



What Are Buffalo Nickels Worth?

Well worn Buffalo Nickels
without dates, or with partial
dates can be purchased anywhere
between 15¢ and 25¢ each.

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Coins in Good to Fine condition with full dates in the mid 1930s, can run anywhere from 35¢ to 50¢ each.

Earlier dates in the 'teens and 20's with full dates run in the 75¢ to \$1.00 range.

Later dates in the VF range are worth roughly \$1.00 each.

Uncertified Buffalo Nickels in Uncirculated condition can be purchased in the \$15-\$25 range, but be sure the coin you're buying is really uncirculated.

A nice PCGS certified Buffalo Nickel in a high Uncirculated grade is around a \$45-\$50 coin.

At the other end of the spectrum, some of the highest known grades of the rarest Buffalo Nickels have bought in excess of a quarter of a million dollars at auction, and of course everything in between.

Buffalo Nickels are often most easily graded by the wear on the reverse of the coin.



FR - AG

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In very low grades, (**Fair** and **About Good**) the date will often be very weak, with only one or two digits showing. The rim will be worn into the tops of the lettering.

G - VG

In grades of **Good** and **Very Good**, the lettering should be clear, and a full date should be visible, although it will be worn. The base of the buffalo's horn should show.

F - VF

In grades of **Fine** and **Very Fine**, most of the horn should show, although the tip may not be visible.

EF - AU

In Extremely Fine and About Uncirculated, a full horn tip should show.

How Do I Grade Buffalo Nickels? (continued)

As mentioned earlier, due to the hardness of nickel, many Buffalos (particularly the "D" and "S" mints from the 1910s and 1920s) are poorly struck. Often many details are very mushy and not even visible, even on uncirculated specimens. Note the two reverses shown below. Both coins are uncirculated — the one on the left is very poorly struck, while the coin on the right is fully struck.



Poorly struck Buffalo Nickel



Fully struck Buffalo Nickel

A Coin for Those New to the Hobby

Although many Buffalo Nickels do not command the value of other popular coins—such as Morgan Dollars, for instance—the ease of acquiring these 5-cent pieces and their very affordable value makes them great coins to collect for those new to the hobby. Collecting the 25-year set may be a tricky task, however, as many of the coins' dates are worn off from its years of heavy circulation, back before inflation rendered nickels all but obsolete.

