

The Society of Silver Dollar Collectors

presents

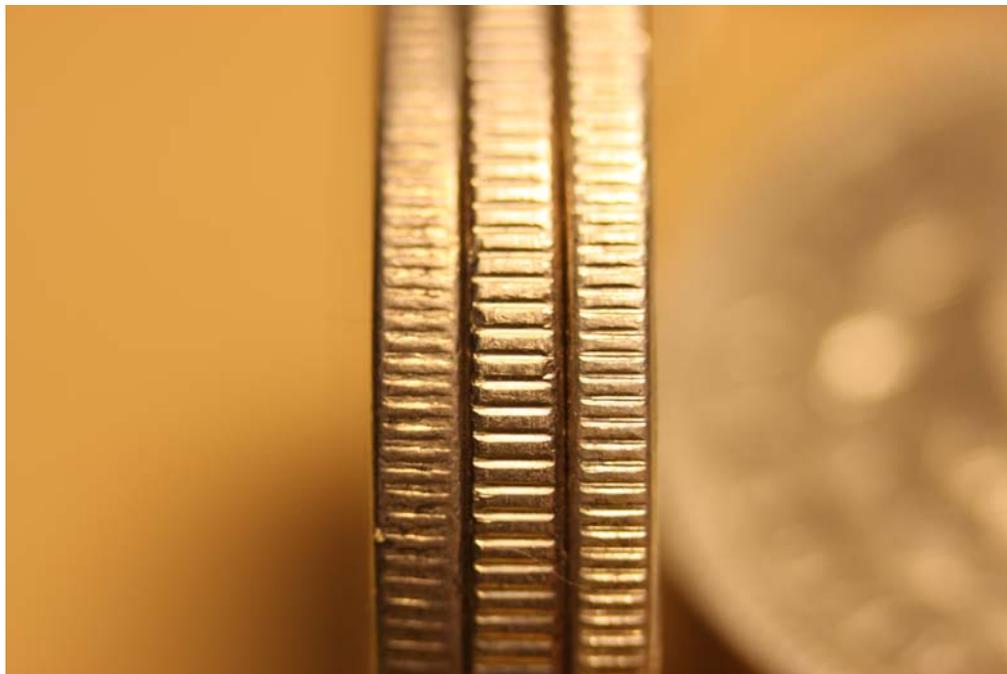
The 1921 Wide Reeding Varieties



VAM 44

By C. Ash Harrison

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Wide Reeding

**First Edition
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Introduction

These varieties are what we refer to as VAMs, standing for Van Allen and Mallis. Leroy C. Van Allen and A. George Mallis have likely devoted more time than any others researching and cataloging different varieties of Morgan and Peace dollars, and while Mr. Mallis has passed away, Mr. Van Allen is still going strong listing new varieties and updating the older ones. Those of us who pursue VAMs are forever indebted to these gentlemen for the work they have done. There are many, many other people whose names I will not list at this time who have devoted themselves to the pursuit of new varieties and it is to those folks that this work is dedicated. Hopefully, you will find this work to be helpful in sorting out the 1921 Wide Reeding varieties.

The coins that I have used to make this work are from my personal collection. I have tried to provide extra examples where die state or stage makes significant differences in what you see on the coin.

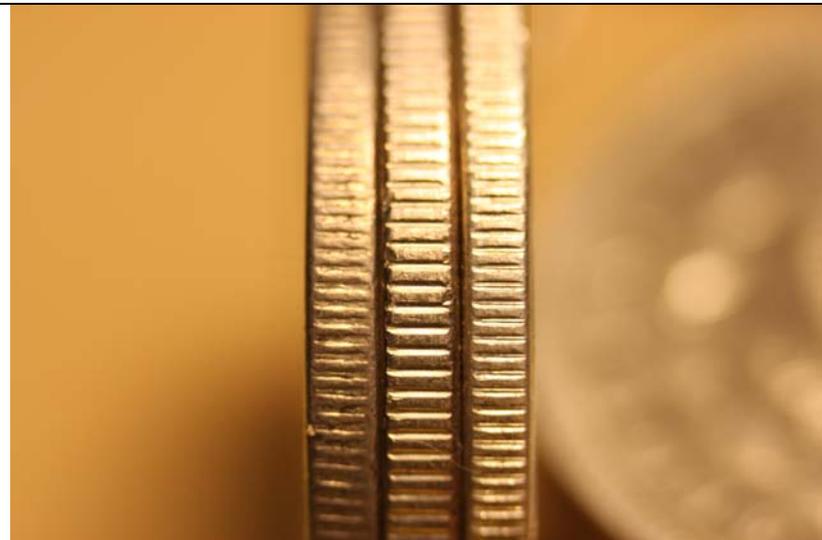
The Wide Reeding varieties are varieties that actually have Infrequent Reeding on the edge of the coin. This presents a couple of problems. First, when you encounter a 1921 in a high grade, it is often already in an encapsulation, which makes it particularly challenging to see the edge of the coin. You will need to know how to attribute the varieties to be able to positively identify the coin. Second, you will need to learn to spot the coins with Infrequent Reeding upon sight. They are actually pretty easy to spot after a while – especially if there are multiple dollars nearby.

The history of this group of coins is substantial. Leroy Van Allen has collected them for over 40 years and has had a representative group of them for most of that time. He and Jeff Oxman hypothesized that this Wide or Infrequent reed pattern of 157 reeds was on a test collar that was used very early in the production of the 1921 coins. For over 40 years this coin was found only with the D1 reverse, which has been shown to be the first style reverse used in making the 1921. So, the fact that all the Wide Reeding varieties were being found with D1 reverses seemed to make sense that the collar was a test design. However, this theory was upended in 2006 when I found a coin with Wide Reeding with a D2 reverse! Needless to say, we are now in search of a new theory on how and why the 157 reed collar was used.

The coin became the VAM 44, a number befitting one of the rarest of VAMs. After less than 6 months, Rob Joyce discovered a second example of the same coin going through some of Larry Briggs' 1921 coins. As of February 2008, these are the only 2 VAM 44 1921 coins to have been found.

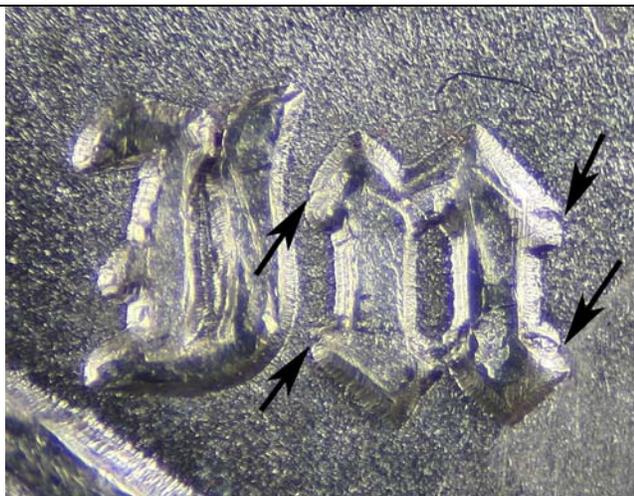
The values of the coins within this publication are published on a bi-annual basis by the SSDC in the *VAMView Price Guide*. I will defer to the pricing in that publication, as it may be obtained by members of the SSDC at any time.

Wide Reeding

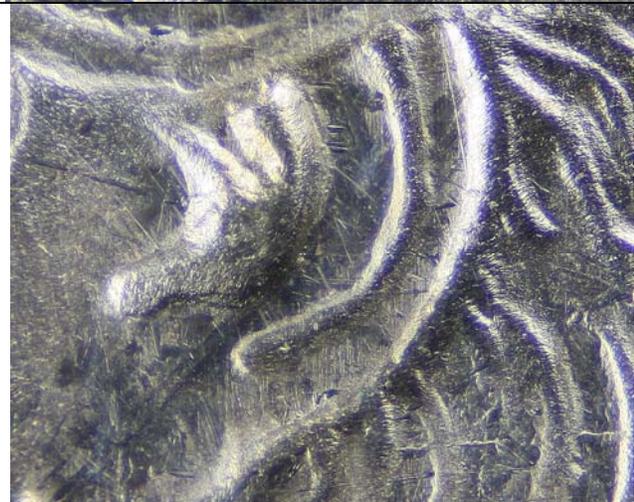


The coin in the middle of this picture is the coin with Wide or Infrequent Reeding. There are 157 reeds on this coin. The other coins have 189 reeds. The particular collar die that made this reeding is rare to the Morgan dollar series. It may have been an experimental die as proposed by some experts. This, without question, is the best way to find the Wide Reeding (WR) coins.

VAM 4



This is basically all you will need to see to attribute this VAM. The dramatic doubling on this N is unique to this coin. If the coin has wide reeding and this N, you have the VAM 4.
****LEARN THIS****



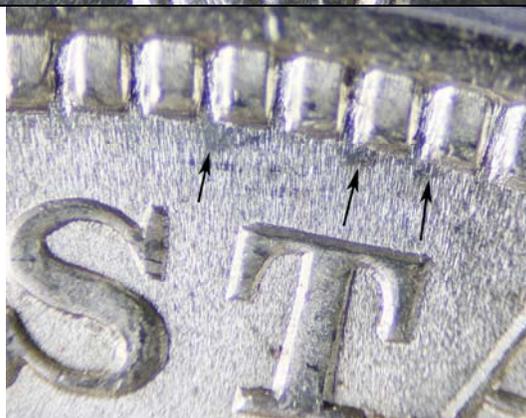
This is the ear of lady Liberty. There are two parallel die scratches that can be seen in the upper third of the ear. This will help to identify the obverse die of the VAM 4.

VAM 13

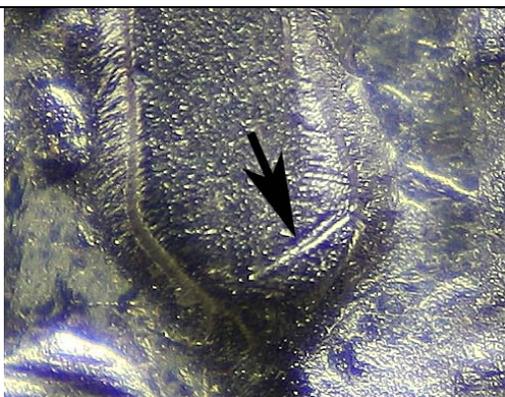


This die scratch is between the top and second group of leaves in the wreath on the right hand side of the reverse. It can be very slightly misleading because there are other WR VAMs that have a scratch here. This one is MUCH more pronounced. Once you have found this marker, you will still need to rule out some of the other markers of the other VAMs.

****LEARN THIS****



This picture is a bit misleading because the marks that you see are 3 dimensional. There are slightly raised "bumps" that emerge from the field and angle up into the denticles. They vary in depth and size depending on strike and die condition. This phenomenon occurs on the VAM 13, the VAM 25, and the VAM 27. On the latter two, Leroy Van Allen has actually assigned another VAM for the late die states. This is at about 10 o'clock on the reverse between STA of STATES.



This large die scratch is a nice marker for the VAM 13. It is between the eagle's neck and its left wing. ****LEARN THIS**** Combined with the die scratch on the wreath listed above, this is the lock for the attribution.



There are numerous die scratches on the obverse of the VAM 13 in the ear area. The best markers are the die scratch between the two outer folds of the ear (the lowest arrow). The next best marker is the scratch behind the ear. Depending on the amount of wear on the coin, this may or may not prove to be a solid marker.

VAM 25



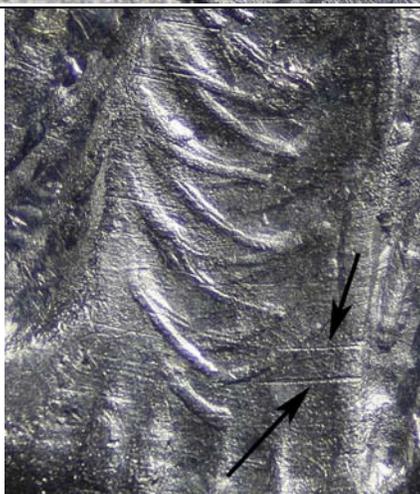
This is one of the most difficult markers to see on low grade coins, which means that learning this group of VAMs as a whole is necessary. However, if you see the die scratch to the right of the hair curl on the obverse. There are **MANY** light scratches in the area about the curl and even some in the hair. This combined with a couple other markers locks in the VAM 25 attribution. ****LEARN THIS****



Here is a **MISLEADING** marker. This can lead you to believe this coin is the VAM 13. The die scratch on the VAM 13 is much thicker. The next marker below makes this even worse. **THIS** is why it is so important to find the die scratches on the obverse as shown above.



This marker is similar to the raised gouge on the VAM 13 but it is further to the left. Generally, there is just one of these on the VAM 25. If this marker is prominent, then Leroy Van Allen has designated the VAM 25A. I have found in practice that there is some evidence of this marker on all the VAM 25 coins I have seen, therefore, I will call them all VAM 25 for now. **SEE section on VAM 27A**

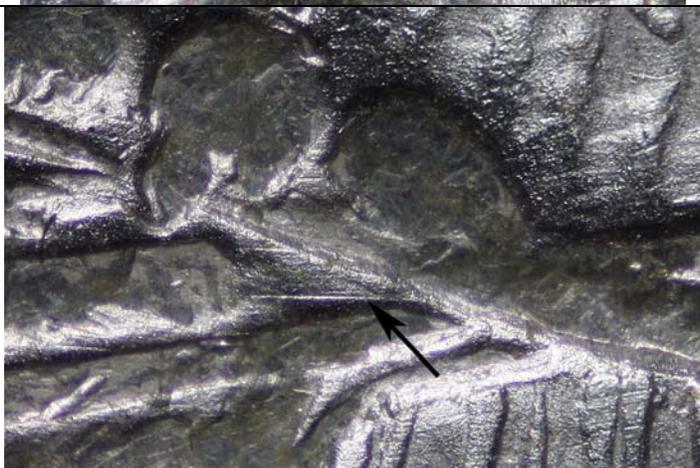


This set of parallel die scratches is an excellent marker for the VAM 25. It is located at the junction of the abdomen and the tail feathers on the right side near the leg feathers. This is the **primary** marker for the reverse of this coin ****LEARN THIS****

VAM 26



This is the primary marker for the VAM 26. There are 2 sets of “railroad tracks” in the lower hair of the lady Liberty. The location is to the right of the designer’s initial and above the 2 in the date. If you draw a line vertically from the 2 and horizontally from the top of the M initial, you will find the correct gap in the hair where this marker resides. ****LEARN THIS****

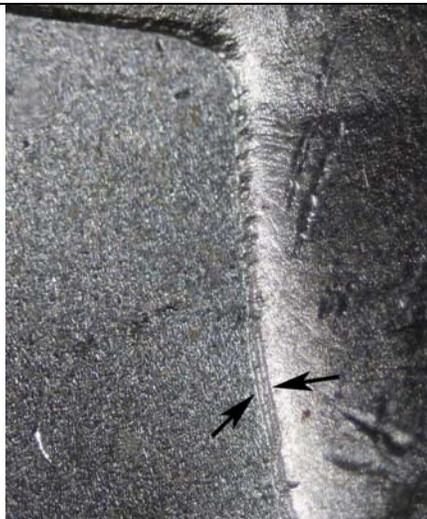


Try to not let this picture play with your eyes. The eagle’s claw and the arrow feathers are the raised area and the more lighted areas are the lower areas. The key to this picture is the die scratch in the recessed area between the olive branch and the arrow. This is a long, thin die scratch that should be visible on all VAM 26 coins. This is the best reverse marker for the coin.

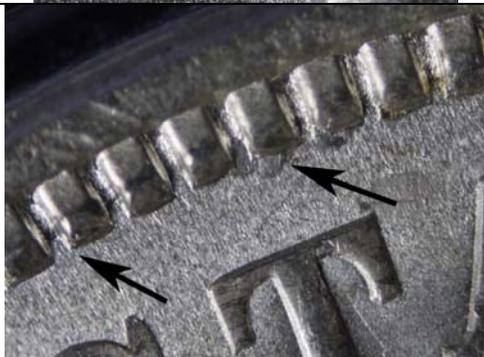


Back to the obverse hair. These markers are in the lady’s hair. The “whirlpool” area on the right is very easy to locate on any Morgan dollar. It is due north of the space between the 1st and 2nd right stars, and it is due west of the 4th and 5th right stars. You will hopefully be able to use these markers if the “railroad tracks” are unavailable.

VAM 27



This is the primary pick up point on the VAM 27, as well as the VAM 27A. The lower neck of Lady Liberty is tripled. This is fairly easy to pick up, once you master the use of a loupe and proper lighting. This marker will not necessarily immediately catch your eye. You may have to tilt and twist the coin to see it. It is critical that you learn this skill to find these minor markers, because so many VAMs are attributed using just this type of thing. ****LEARN THIS****



This is the area between S and T of STATES. This area will determine whether the coin is a VAM 27 or 27A. If there is NO raised gouge at all, SUPERB, it is VAM 27! If there is only the right marker as shown in this picture, then you have VAM 27 still. If there is ANY trace of a gouge on the left where the arrow is, you have VAM 27A. ****LEARN THIS****



You may find it useful to use these markers to lock in the attribution of the VAM 27. Keep in mind that VAMs 27 and 27A share the same dies, so this may not help in separating the two.

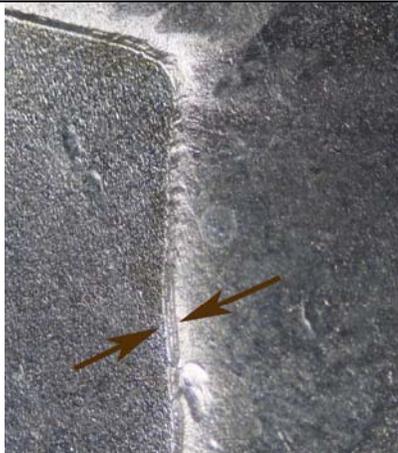


This is the area of the ear on lady Liberty. There are numerous die scratches around it. These may be used in conjunction with the tripling on the neck to verify and lock in this attribution.

VAM 27A



This is the primary marker for the VAM 27A. The die gouges on the reverse between the S and T of STATES show a large gouge above the T, a second gouge above the S, and often another gouge to the right of the main gouge on the right. It is the presence of the gouge on the left that makes the coin a 27A. ****LEARN THIS****



This is the neck of the VAM 27A. It is obviously identical to the VAM 27.



On some of the later die stage VAM 27A coins there is a significant amount of rough die polish below and around the eagle's right wing.

Note on the VAM 27 & 27A, 25 & 25A

The VAM 27 and 27A are separated by a judgment call of the amount of gouging there is at the rim on the reverse. I have arbitrarily made that call at the point where the lower gouge becomes visible. There is no such point on the VAM 25 and 25A. Therefore, I feel that all of the coins I have ever dealt with are actually the 25A. The problem is that these coins have been slabbed as VAM 25 for the duration. Therefore, I am not recognizing the VAM 25A. I feel that if a VAM 25 is found WITHOUT any trace of the die gouge, it should be called the VAM 25 EDS.

VAM 28



The primary marker for the VAM 28 is the doubled chin of the Lady Liberty. It is the only Wide Reeding coin that has this feature.

****LEARN THIS****



This die scratch is basically due north of the 1 in 1921. It is about half way between the bottom of the hair and the ear. Note that this is an unusual place for a marker and it may be a bit difficult to locate, but once you find it, you'll never miss another VAM 28.



This die scratch is a very good marker to identify the reverse of the VAM 28. It is in a recessed area and will likely be present even on lower grade coins. You may have to move a bit of grunge to see it, but it should be there.



This is an excellent marker that is very visible on the eagle's left wing. There are die polish lines all over the wing. Several of the more visible markers are highlighted here, but it is important to note that the lines are radial. Near the bottom of the wing they run nearly vertical. Near the top, they are about 45 degrees to the left.

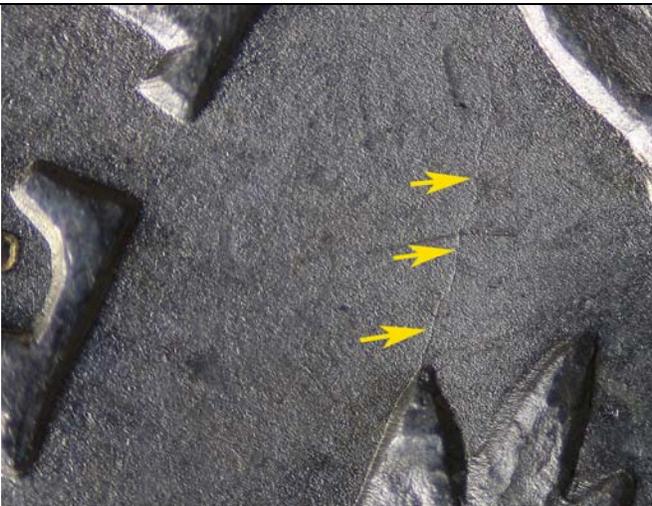
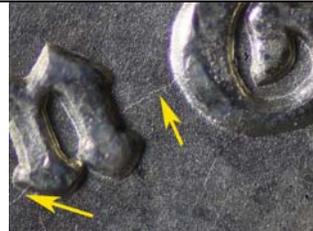
VAM 29



This die scratch is the marker used to identify the VAM 29. There is no doubling on the chin, no tripling on the neck, no die scratches by the hair curl, and no railroad tracks in the hair. In other words, this is really the only major marker available to attribute the coin. ****LEARN THIS****



There is some pitting in the area to the right of the eagle's right leg on the VAM 29. There are very few normal die markers on this reverse die, otherwise. Now, there are quite a few die cracks on the reverse. I will show them below. The first between IN and GOD. The second is above the left wreath. The third is upward and left of the word DOLLAR



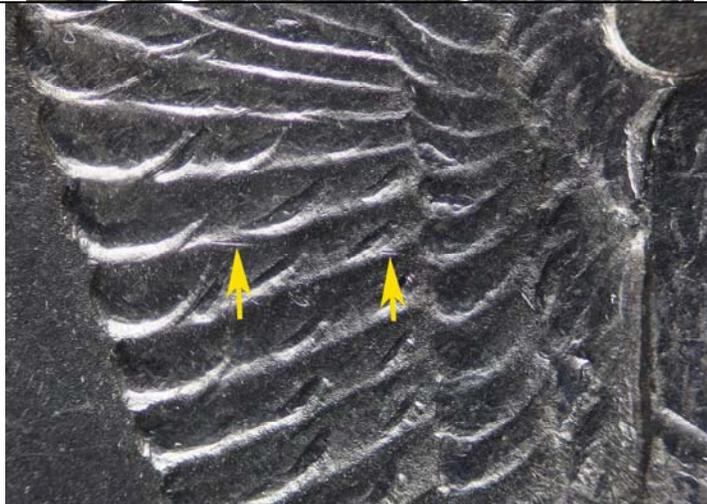
VAM 44



This is the D2 reverse and shown is the easiest way to attribute it. The center talon of the eagle's right claw does NOT extend below the olive branch. Also note where it lines up with the arrow feather. The D2 reverse also has 16 berries in the wreath, versus 17, but by far, the talon is the easiest marker. This is the VAM 44 talon. ****LEARN THIS****



This is a die scratch in the lower part of the eagle's right wing. It is one of the best markers on the reverse of the VAM 44.



Here is a second die scratch in the eagle's right wing. It is also used to attribute the VAM 44.



This die scratch in the upper part of the inner ear cavity is an excellent marker for the obverse of the VAM 44. This should prove to be an easy attribution point. ****LEARN THIS****

Important note: The VAM 44 is reported to have a sister VAM. That VAM has the same die pair **WITHOUT** the Wide Reeding. The author is unaware of the VAM number for this reported coin, but would be very interested in seeing this coin.



The VAM 44 has an interesting set of scribbles in the area between the eagle's right leg and the abdomen feathers. This may be of interest to the collectors of the scribbling scratches varieties, since the VAM 44 is an R8 variety. This coin is **BY FAR** the rarest of the Wide Reeding varieties and is the stopper in the set. It is also a very likely candidate for the Hit List 40.



Pictured here is the D1 Reverse. It is common to all of the Wide Reeding VAMs other than the VAM 44. Note that the center talon goes **BELOW** the olive branch and intersects the feather of the arrow. This is by far the best way to tell the D1 reverse. This reverse also has an extra berry on the right side of the wreath at the junction of the last two bunches of leaves.

About the Author



Ash Harrison has been a coin collector since 1968 and a dealer since 1988. He is always very pleased to work on estates, because he has a real passion for coins and enjoys looking at them.

Credentials:

- Owner/Operator – Ashmore Rare Coins and Diamonds, 1988-present
- President – Greensboro Coin Club, 2004-2005, 2005-2006, 2007-2008 VP 2006-2007,
- Director – North Carolina Numismatic Association
- President – Society of Silver Dollar Collectors 2006-current
- Membership Director, Treasurer – Society of Silver Dollar Collectors 2004-2006 Recipient, 2006 Terry Armstrong Memorial Award
- Bourse Chairman, President – Winston-Salem Coin Club 2008
- Member – Blue Ridge Numismatic Association, South Carolina Numismatic Association, Lexington Coin Club, Reidsville Coin Club
- Life Member – American Numismatic Association, FUN, NCNA
- PCGS, NGC, ICG – Certified Dealer
- Certified in Diamonds and Diamond Grading – Gemological Institute of America

Ash travels continuously to coin shows all over the nation to buy and sell coins, and supplies several of the largest coin dealers on eBay. He is a regular speaker on the topics of Varieties of the Morgan Dollar, Grading US Coins, Online commerce, and many others.

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