

VAMs: Morgan and Peace Dollars

The term VAM comes from the attributer's names: Leroy C. Allen & A. George Mallis. Both men joined forces in the late 1960s to produce their original volume on U.S. silver dollar varieties, entitled *the Guide to Morgan and Peace Dollars*. This influential work was first privately published in 1971, and Leroy Van Allen still catalogs silver dollars and publishes periodic supplements to the book.

The VAM attribution system is a series of identifying numbers assigned to individual die varieties for each date and mintmark. This way of organizing it makes it possible to refer to any particular silver dollar variety in the series simply by using its "VAM number." Each date in the Morgan and Peace dollar series has its own set of reference numbers, beginning with VAM 1 and proceeding as high as necessary to accommodate all of the known die varieties for that date and mintmark.

For example, in 1888 a specific die pair from the New Orleans Mint struck what is affectionately known as the "Hot Lips" variety. To distinguish this obverse and reverse die combination from all others dated 1888-O, Van Allen and Mallis assigned the "Hot Lips" variety its own VAM number, in this case, VAM 4. Hence, only a coin struck by this pair of dies is a VAM 4 for this date.



1888-O "Hot Lips" Variety VAM 4



1888-O "Scarface" Variety VAM 1B