

Cumberland Coins

The Volunteer Coin Club Newsletter

December, 2014

Next Meeting

Our next meeting will on Tuesday December 9th starting at 6:30. The meeting is will be held at the 127 Senior Center on Highway 127 (Main Street) South of town. Doors open at 6:00.

This month we will have a small Christmas party at the Senior Center. Please bring a snack to share. We will still have the usual business meeting, show and tell, raffle, member prize drawing and the auction at the meeting.

Coin Lore

Primitive Civil War Tokens

by Bill Groom

During the U.S. Civil War years, 1861-65, tokens were considered "necessity money" and were used to accommodate everyday trade at a time when coins were being hoarded by those who could afford to do so. Union merchants could order tokens from "die sinkers" who would engrave dies to advertise the business and/or express political sentiments. A small percentage of the Civil War tokens did express Confederate sentiments, but these were struck by northern die sinkers. The overwhelming majority of Civil War tokens traded as substitutes for a cent. A merchant could order tokens by the hundred or by the thousand for a fraction of their face value. Thus, every token given out in change constituted a profit for the merchant. It was generally accepted that these tokens had a cent's worth of copper. While the vast majority of these tokens were copper, other metals were used.

There are many ways to collect Civil War tokens, given that there are over 11,000 varieties of them! Some collectors focus on what are referred to as Primitives. Perhaps, the most appropriate description of these so-called primitives is: *characterized by simplicity or crudity; unsophisticated*. There's an old adage that says, "a picture is worth a thousand words." Compare the following photos and see if you can distinguish the Primitive:



Compare the elements of these two tokens. Note the pointed stars on the right one. See how the numerals in the date are misaligned on the left token; also, that the Indian is not quite centered as he is on the right one. Many primitives display misspellings. Collecting these rather awkward tokens is akin to assembling a carnival sideshow.



The Civil War token pictured below has long been among my favorite Primitives. It's a storecard that lists a business in Buffalo, NY. The diesinker who made this merchant's tokens in 1863, as well as those for some other Buffalo merchants, remains unknown. Frank J. Bieler is listed in Buffalo City directories as operating a saloon at 157 Main Street, during the Civil War. At the time, there was a strong, prohibition movement in New York State, and that may be the reason that Bieler's tokens didn't reveal the nature of his business.

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Many a prohibitionist would have been antagonized by the mere thought of having a saloon token in their pocket during those volatile years.

The letters and spacing on the obverse die show uniformity. The die breaks evidence that this token was struck toward the end of the run, as the die was crumbling. Die breaks as such occur on non-primitives as well. While the address, 157 MAIN St., is not well-centered and the lettering is somewhat crude, it's more so the reverse die that classes this token as a primitive. Note the awkward formation, size and spacing of the words, "BUSINESS CARD." There are two, more glaring errors that were made by this unknown die cutter/engraver. Can you spot them? (see below for answers)

The great diversity among Civil War token issues is what makes collecting these so increasingly popular nowadays.

ANSWER: *The date is upside-down, and the D in CARD is backwards!*

COINfucious Says: *"A coin collector left speechless could be called a dumb-ismatist."*

Area Coin Shows

December 6 **Knoxville Coin Show**, Rothchild Conference Center, 8807 Kingston Pike (I-40 exit #378).

December 12-13 **Gallatin Coin & Currency Show**, Gallatin Civic Center, 210 Albert Gallatin Ave.

February 6-7 **51st Annual Coin Show**, Rothchild Conference Center, 8807 Kingston Pike (I-40 exit #378).

March 6-8, 2015 **Chattanooga;** Tennessee State Numismatic Society (TSNS). Fall Coin Show.
Camp Jordan Arena, I-75, Exit 1.

For more information on some of these shows see <http://www.tsns.org/Tennessee Club Shows.html>

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This Month's Raffle Prizes

		Est. Grade
1914	Buffalo Nickel	VF
1865	CN Three Cent Piece (1st year type)	VG
1937	Buffalo Nickel	XF
1941-S	Lincoln Cent (Beautiful Full Red)	BU
1934	Washington Quarter	AU+

The Door Prize will be a 1909 Barber Dime (Full Sharp Liberty) F-VF.