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Jan–Mar 2020



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TSNS President's Message for March 2020

Our November show was very near a sellout. The bourse floor was full of dealers eager to work with a record number of publics who attended. Our new bourse chair, Katie Williams did a remarkable job with no complaints from dealers. Her big smile and easy-going demeanor are keys to her success. Bruce Paulhamus is now working to update our website to make it more user friendly. The Chattanooga and Chief John Ross coin clubs are very much appreciated as they help with the setup of the show and responsible for signing in the public. They all work hard to make the shows successful.

The YN program had a good number of young collector and they came away with some nice goodies from their program. After their program many of them walked the floor to find that special piece from their collection. We as dealers should encourage our YN's and help them when they ask questions. We should also bring coins to the shows that are priced for them. We must help them the best we can - our hobby depends on it.

Mark your calendar to attend the spring how. The dates are March 6-8, 2020.

I hope to see you there.

Bob Hurst

President, TSNS

Upcoming shows in our area:

- *February 9, 2020* Greater Atlanta Coin Shows in Marietta, Ga
- *February 15, 2020* Cookeville Coin Show in Cookeville, TN
- *February 21-23, 2020* Memphis Coin Club Coin Show in Southaven, MS
- *March 6-8, 2020* TSNS Show Coin Show in East Ridge, TN
- *March 13-14, 2020* Nashville BFC&CC Coin Show in Franklin, TN

Don Rhodes



Don Rhodes was recently honored by the Fort Loudon Coin Club and the Smokey Mountain Coin Club. Don has served as the Bourse Chairman for the annual Knoxville Coin Show for over twenty years. Under Don's guidance the show has grown considerably and has been described as "the best small show in the Southeast" by several dealers that attend the show every year. The presentation of a plaque recognizing Don's contribution to the annual Knoxville Coin Show and the numismatic community was made June 13th at the Fort Loudon Coin Club meeting by club presidents Glenn Peterson and Bob Hamby. Don Rhodes is pictured on the first row seated, second from the left, along with other club members in attendance.

Submitted by
Bob Hamby, President
Fort Loudon Coin Club

Dr. David Close



Dr David Close became interested in Peace dollar varieties after a Coin World article on a new doubled die. He quickly realized that little study had been done in this area, so he began to research and catalog these coins. Since then, he has discovered a few hundred new varieties and written two books on Peace dollar varieties. At the FUN show in Orlando January 2020, the Society of Silver Dollar Collectors awarded him the VAM Master award in recognition of his contributions to silver dollar variety collecting. Dr. Close says "There are still good coins out there!"

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Copperhead Tokens of the Civil War

By Bill Grooms

During the Civil War era, northern Democrats who sought to make peace with the Confederacy, take the “live and let live” position were deemed *Copperheads* by the Republicans. These more extremist Democrats were likened to the venomous copperhead snakes. The below, patriotic Civil War token (Fuld 136/397a) was an anti-Copperhead piece ...



Many of the so-called *Copperhead* Democrats openly flaunted their political position by adopting and wearing a Copperhead badge. The badge was nothing more than a cut-down, miniaturized large cent. The obverse stars and reverse legend, United States of America, were removed. The obverse Liberty head was displayed, and a pin was typically soldered to the reverse. The Copperheads were a distinct minority and largely reviled. Rather than invite assault, many of them took to carrying this symbolic token as a pocket piece to share with fellow Copperheads. Below are shown a few examples ...



Here's a contemporary newspaper article about the "Copperhead" badge

The Ontario Repository and Messenger

Wednesday, March 18, 1863

The young Democrats of Syracuse have adopted a "Copperhead" badge. It is made by procuring one of the large United States copper cents, and neatly removing the head of the "Goddess of Liberty." To this is affixed a pin, which fastens to the lapel of the coat, or any other conspicuous place on the wearer where he chooses to display it.

Judging from the below newspaper article, it appears that the Copperhead badges took root in Connecticut. The article ends, saying they "are worn without shame" ...

TRI-STATES UNION. - Port Jervis, NY

April 17, 1863

GENERAL WOOL AND THE COPPERHEADS.

A NEW EMBLEM OF TREASON.

While General Wool and staff, on their recent trip to Connecticut, were awaiting in Bridgeport the arrival of a train, a copperhead; adherent of Seymour showed the symbol of his tribe (a badge) in the presence, of the General.

The copperhead badge is the head of an old copper cent cut out from the body of the coin, and attached to a pin, so that it can be fastened as an emblem on the coat or vest of the wearer. The General regarded the man for a moment, with an expression of scorn upon his face, and said "such men ought not to be at large in our midst — you are a traitor." The veteran soldier then turned away from the man he had so signally rebuked; but we do not learn that the copperhead exhibited the slightest sensitiveness in regard to his position.

The manufacture of the copperhead emblems we have described is regularly carried on in Connecticut, and they have been adopted by the Seymour party as the token of their principles. Large numbers of them are sold, and they are worn without shame.

An "I told you so" appeared in a Republican newspaper some months later ...

THE REPUBLICAN (St. Lawrence County, NY) — *November 3, 1863*

COPPERHEAD.

The editor of the *Advance* don't like to be called a copperhead. It is less than a year since that concern advised its friends to put on the copperhead badge and wear it. Our opinion at that time was that it would be ashamed of itself before the year was ended. On Tuesday the people will bury the whole copperhead fraternity past resurrection.

The wearing of the Copperhead badges seems to have peaked during 1863. General Grant's victory at Vicksburg during the summer of that year turned the tide of the war. The Union cause was bolstered, and the argument of the Copperheads was much diminished. These little copper badges increasingly caused public turmoil, as evidenced by the below newspaper account, following the Vicksburg victory.

Chicago Tribune – July 7, 1863

COPPERHEADS CLEANED OUT AT MT. VERNON, IOWA

The Muscatine (Iowa) *Journal* says there was an exciting time at the anniversary exercises of Cornell College, at Mt. Vernon, on the 28th. It seems that about a dozen persons from Marion appeared in the crowd with Copperhead pins. About two thousand persons were present, the exercises being held in a grove. On the appearance of the secesh emblems, business was suspended by the tumult, and every Copperhead badge was hastily taken from its owner and he forced to hurrah for the Union. A gray-headed traitor, who has long been blatant for the Southern Confederacy, declared that he would not hurrah for the Union, but a little choking brought him to terms. One young woman had on the southern badge, which was torn from her breast, clothes and all, by another young woman. The latter had her bonnet destroyed in capturing the pin, and some young men raised eight or ten dollars in order to replace the bonnet. The Copperhead pins being all "cleaned out," the exercises were resumed, and passed off very satisfactorily.

Soldiers, returning home from battle, found the Copperhead badges to be most offensive. The following newspaper story describes one rather unsettling event, precipitated by a badge-wearing Copperhead ...

Commercial Times – Oswego, NY – May 21, 1864

RETURNED SOLDIERS PUNISH A COPPERHEAD

An exciting affair took place last evening at Shunpike, a small station on the Central road, a short distance west of Auburn. When the train containing the 26th regiment reached there, the station keeper made his appearance wearing a copperhead badge on his coat, in plain sight. This disloyal exhibition incensed the soldiers, and in less time than we are relating the occurrence, the odious emblem was torn off.

The station keeper, allowing his zeal in a bad cause to out-do his discretion, got very mad, and starting for his house, declared that he would get his pistol and shoot his assailants. Upon this some two hundred of the soldiers surrounded the house, smashed in the windows and doors and nearly destroyed the structure. They would have severely handled the misguided copperhead himself, if he had not made haste to escape by a back door. The conductor of the train, upon hearing of the occurrence, hurried up the departure of the train.

The copperheads will learn speedily that the soldiers look upon them as no better than rebels in arms, and woe be to them if they do not keep their unpatriotic feelings within due bounds. — *Syracuse Journal*

Might the below cents have been whimsically fashioned by Copperheads? No way of telling, but they may well have been. The one on the left is crude, whereas the one on the right was skillfully machined in the shape of a nut ... a contrarian political statement, perhaps?



These Copperhead tokens don't command much attention from die-hard collectors of Civil War tokens, yet it's clear that these pieces have no less of a story to tell about that era. Indeed, one of these would fit comfortably within a display of pacifist Civil War tokens, would it not?



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A Soldier's Coin

by *Bill Groom*

Civil War “Identification Discs” or “dog tags” (a much later, WWI appellation) were typically stamped upon brass or copper planchets, the size of large cents. One side was purposely blank to accommodate a soldier's personal and military information. The stock side bore some patriotic motif; this, with which a soldier might self-identify. Lincoln and McClellan were among the more popular images used by diesinker-engravers who made these discs. Patriotic emblems like eagles and shields were also used.

Here's a typical ID for **RUSSELL C. JACKSON / LEON / CATT'S CO** (Cattaraugus County) / **N.Y.** / **CO. K / 64** (th) / **REG-T** (regiment) / **I-B** (1st brigade) / **NY – SV** (state volunteers)



The excessive wear on the raised profile of McClellan suggests that Jackson wore this ID with his personal info facing outwards. Had he carried it as a pocket piece, the wear would be more evenly distributed. He likely purchased this disc when passing through NY City, enroute to Washington, D.C. in 1862. It was made by diesinker, F.B. Smith.

As per the report of the Adjutant General, Pvt. Jackson was 33 years old when he was mustered into service on October 14, 1861. Although he enlisted for three years, he was discharged for disability on March 4, 1863, at Fortress Monroe, Va. Jackson's regiment was reportedly present at more engagements than any other, during the Civil War.

Pvt. Jackson did return home to his family. He obtained work in a machine shop. While Jackson's personal history is that of a common soldier, the history of the Cattaraugus Regiment is stellar. They saw action at Seven Pines, Antietam, Gettysburg, Petersburg, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville and the Wilderness campaign. According to Colonel Fox's report, the Sixty fourth New York Regiment "was present at a greater number of engagements than any other regiment in the service during the war of the Rebellion."

History matters, when it comes down to the appreciation and value of these ID discs. Of course, there are other factors. There's a great book on this topic, *Identification Discs of Union Soldiers in the Civil War - A Complete Classification Guide and Illustrated History* by Larry B. Maier and Joseph W. Stahl (2008). Six hundred of these discs are recorded therein, some of which are discussed in detail. While this book makes mention of other forms of personal ID being used by soldiers, such as coins, not one example, comparable to the one pictured below is illustrated or even cited.



The above host coin, an 1847 large cent, was strategically planed-down to accommodate this soldier's personal identification. The legend reads: **W. RUSSELL WILLSON / 30' Mich. In. (infantry) / ENLISTED. NOV. 28th / 1864 / BORN Apr. 15th.** W. Russell Willson's first name was William, and his surname is sometimes listed as Wilson; this, being the more traditional spelling.

The wear on this piece is consistent with age. The dark spots on the reverse constitute corrosion. Note that whoever planed-down the surfaces was careful to keep the dentils, date and wreath intact. Possibly, 1847 was "Russell's" real birth year, but records differ.

William Russell "Wilson" is listed in Company K of the Michigan 30th Infantry. The regimental roster shows that he enlisted in Flint, Michigan at age 18. The 30th Michigan "IN" (infantry) was formed to patrol the Canadian border. Secretary of War Stanton had learned of threats of raids by southern refugees then in Canada. Concerned about the safety of cities along the border, Stanton recommended, on November 3, 1864, that the Governor of Michigan raise a volunteer regiment for twelve months, unless sooner discharged. This additional force was viewed as: "absolutely necessary, and should be organized before the Detroit River is frozen over." Subsequently, the 30th Regiment was mustered into service on January 9, 1865, having 1,001 officers and men on its rolls. Many of the officers had previously seen service on the southern front. Company K, that of Private Willson, was assigned to patrol Jackson, Michigan. During its tenure, the regiment suffered the loss of eighteen men due to disease. They participated in no battle engagements and were mustered out on June 30, 1865.

According to a booklet, *Civil War Gravesites: a compilation of Genesee, Lapeer and Shiawassee Counties*, William Russell Willson, born in 1846, served as the bugler for Company K in the Michigan 30th Infantry. His later life remains something of a mystery. There's a gravesite in a Minnesota G.A.R. Cemetery, but the birth year for that William Russell Willson is 1858! This Willson died in 1911, and his wife died in 1919. Perhaps, our Willson lied to his wife about his age? As usual, questions abound with exnumia.

Researching counterstamps like this one can be frustrating at times, but it's rarely a dull exercise for this enthusiast. Not one identification disc like Willson's, produced on a repurposed coin, appears in Maier & Syahl's book. The rare substrate helps offset what the disc lacks in active, regimental history. But, then again, who knew that troops were mustered as late as 1865 in order to guard the Canadian border? I sure didn't!