

Cumberland Coins

The Volunteer Coin Club Newsletter

June, 2015

Next Meeting

Our next meeting will on Tuesday June 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.

We will continue to meet in the kitchen/dining area since this area fits our needs. Drinks and snacks are allowed there if you want to bring one. We will have the usual business meeting, show and tell, raffle, member prize drawing and the auction at the meeting.

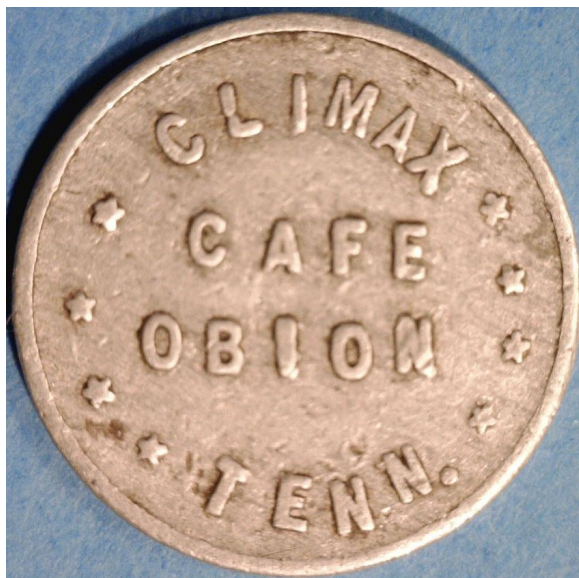
Coin Lore

A Curious Tennessee Token

by Bill Groom

I recently rediscovered a token that I'd tossed in an old cigar box among many other curious pieces, over twenty years ago now. This box has long housed an assortment of *maverick* or unattributed tokens that puzzled me; this, during my pre-internet days. Opening that old box was akin to encountering a group of former acquaintances who looked familiar but about whom I knew so little. Over the years, the box and tokens therein have traveled hundreds of miles with me. The box was tucked into a carton of assorted possessions, only to have found its present resting place upon a bookshelf.

Being a longtime collector of Civil War tokens and other early merchant issues, I have many reference books in which these popular pieces are cataloged and described. The old cigar box housed tokens for which I then had no reference. Now, with the internet at my fingertips, I thought, "Let's see if I can learn something about some of these mavericks." One of the first to challenge me was the Tennessee token, pictured below ...



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This dime-sized, aluminum token is what *exonumists* or token collectors commonly call a *good for*. The style of this one suggests that it was produced in the 1900-1910 era. At that time, a typical cigar or a drink could be had for a nickel. Tokens like this would be given out in change; this, likely at the discretion of a customer. It served as word-of-mouth advertising in addition to being a curiosity and a collectible. Of course, it would be redeemed, so locals would have accepted it as a nickel of sorts.

What probably caused me to buy this token some decades ago was the name, Climax Cafe. Why on earth would a restaurant choose such a provocative or suggestive name? Might it have been chosen from the perspective of the food on the menu, what with its life, that of the cow, the vegetable or the fruit having come to an end on a plate? Was roadkill on the menu? Was this name alluding to some form of epicurean ecstasy? Was the Climax Cafe located on a dead end street? The mind reels ...

Searching the internet has as yet provided no assured insight into the business known as the Climax Cafe. Obion, I learned, is a town situated in the northwest corner of Tennessee. As of 2010, it had some 1,100 residents. In looking at the history of the town, focusing upon the era that this token was issued, a clue as to the possible naming of the Climax Cafe presented itself. The following excerpt, penned by R.C. Forrester was found online, within *The Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*:

In the early 1900s trouble loomed at Reelfoot Lake. Fishermen felt they had a natural right to fish the lake. However, lands beneath the lake's shallow waters had been claimed under the 1783 grants made prior to the earthquakes of 1811-12 that created the lake. In the meantime, settlers profited from the lake's bounty of fish and migrant waterfowl unmindful of previous claims. In the 1870s John Burdick established a dock and wholesale fish business at the lake.

In the 1890s James Harris of Tiptonville became interested in exploiting the timber and agricultural possibilities of the lake. Buying up most of the old land grants, Harris announced in 1899 that he would drain the lake. Opposed by Burdick and the fishermen, Harris's son won the initial legal battle when the lake was declared not navigable and thus subject to private ownership.

In 1907 Harris joined forces with the West Tennessee Land Company, which had acquired the remaining grants. Under pressure from the land company, Burdick chose to lease his property and obtained sole rights to purchase all lake fish, a move that embittered some of the fishermen.

Emotions among some lake residents shifted toward a more violent solution to the dispute as they lost faith in legal remedies. Soon men wearing masks and gowns and calling themselves Night Riders, made vigilante raids around the lake, terrorizing those who opposed them and burning Burdick's dock.

On the night of October 19, 1908, Robert Z. Taylor and Quentin Rankin, attorneys for the land company, were taken from Ward's Hotel at Walnut Log by the Night Riders. When they refused demands to reopen the lake to fishing, Rankin was killed, and Taylor escaped into the water of the lake, surviving to tell the story.

Captured by the state militia, eight men were tried in Union City, and six of them were sentenced to hang, but the Tennessee Supreme Court overturned the verdict on several technicalities. The lake was later ruled navigable and incapable of private ownership. Today it is a part of Tennessee's park system, and its fish, game, and the winter presence of American bald eagles attract many visitors.

Might the Climax Cafe have been a favorite haunt of the aforementioned Night Riders? Perhaps, the owner was a member of the klan-like riders? An answer to that question and others posed by this token may never be found. Thus, the mystery remains ... Anticlimactic, eh what?

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Area Coin Shows

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

August 1 **Knoxville;** Coin Show, Rothchild Conference Center, 8807 Kingston Pike (I-40 exit #378).

November 13 -15 **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>

This Month's Raffle Prizes

Note that this month's raffle prizes are all first year type coins.

		Est. Grade
1858	Flying Eagle Cent (LL)	VG
1851	Large Cent	VG
1863	Civil War Token (saloon - beer mug)	VF
1976-S	Ike Silver Dollar	Proof
1933	\$20 Gold (sorry - replica - looks cool though)	P-L

The Door Prize is a 2005 World Coin Catalog (Used).