

# Cumberland Coins

## The Volunteer Coin Club Newsletter

March, 2010

### Next Meeting

Our next meeting will be Tuesday March 9 at 6:30 pm. Due to scheduling issues at TTC, we will be meeting at the 127 Senior Center on Highway 127 South of town. Go south on Main Street past the hospital and through the stoplight. The Senior Center is the third building on the right after the stoplight. The address is 1460 S. Main Street. There is a map at the end of the newsletter.

The main order of business will be the election of officers for the coming year. The nominating committee reported on a candidates for each office at the February meeting and there was one nomination from the membership. The offices and candidates are:

President ----- Mike Puhl  
Vice President ----- Bill Sheffer  
Secretary ----- Pete Fournier and Brandon Fehr  
Treasurer ----- Mike Swanson

We have also invited the members of the 127 Senior Center to attend the meeting and bring any coins or other numismatic items that they have questions about or if they want an informal appraisal of their coins.

### Coin Lore

#### Fantasy Pieces      by *Bill Groom*

To coin and token collectors, a fantasy piece is one that never existed. They often have the look of being old, historic, but they are not. Sadly, would-be collectors and bargain hunters are often deceived by their seemingly realistic appearance.

Many years prior to the Civil War, the city of Charleston, South Carolina required that slaves who were contracted-out by their owners wear a tag. Typically, "CHARLESTON" appeared at the top of the tag, below which was stamped a "No." or number, the year and the occupation of the slave (porter, servant, fruiterer, cooper, etc.)

In recent years, original "slave tags" have sold at auction for sometimes many thousands of dollars. Copies and deceptively similar fantasy pieces can often be found at flea markets and antique shops. Such items are often priced at a seemingly bargain price in the hundreds of dollars. Thus, a buyer of such an item may think he's getting a bargain; when indeed, it's his pocket that's getting picked! To see pictures of original slave tokens and read further about their origin, Rulau's "U.S. Tokens, 1700-1900, 4<sup>th</sup> ed." is an excellent reference.

Other fantasy items that this writer often encounters at flea markets and antique co-ops are the so-called "Cathouse and Saloon" tokens which seemingly circulated in the Old West. These are typically made of brass, half dollar-sized and have incused or sunken lettering. While they may resurrect feelings of what the Old West was like and be interesting conversation pieces, they are fantasy pieces of which original tokens like them never truly existed. As novelty items, they often sell for \$2 or so apiece but are often priced much higher.

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Recently, I was shown what appeared to be a Liberty Seated Dollar, holed for suspension, bearing the engraved letters "CSA" along with the name of a soldier. Below is a photo of a similar, fantasy piece that resides in my collection of odd and unusual coin-related items.



This apparent "coin" is not a genuine half dollar although it is nearly the same size. Note that the denomination has been strategically worn off so that it arguably does not lay claim to being a half dollar! It weighs 9.6 grams in comparison to the weight of a genuine half dollar at 12.44 grams. The small hole and apparent wear would not account for its being over 20% underweight. Also, this fantasy piece lacks a reeded edge that a genuine coin would have.

It appears to be an identification disk (a.k.a. dog tag - really a WWI term) for a "Lt. James B. Washington." While many Union soldiers wore identification disks, this writer is aware of no such Confederate items having surfaced in references as yet in nearly 150 years. Whereas the Union tags have the names stamped in block letters upon uniface medals, these fantasy pieces show what appears to be engraved lettering in script form. In addition to Lt. Washington, other commonly seen names on these fantasy pieces are: Vairin, Bunting, Pender, Boone, Taylor and Forrest; this, according to Rich Hartzog of World Exonomia. Some of the fantasy pieces may cite a particular regiment like the 2<sup>nd</sup> Mississippi, but the use of "C.S.A." appears to be a common denominator. Interestingly, the Confederate States simply used "C.S." as opposed to "C.S.A." on material goods.

As we approach the sesquicentennial of the Civil War, doubtless there will be collectors and history buffs who are enticed to purchase these fantasy items; and, for outlandish prices, too. As with most such unknowns and being wary of impulse buying, collectors are wise to do their homework, before making major purchases. "Buy the book before the coin" and *caveat emptor* (buyer beware) are handy slogans to recite when shopping.

**COINfucious says:** *"Rising metal prices may leave collectors cents-less."*

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### Area Coin Shows

March 5-7, 2010

**Chattanooga** Tennessee State Numismatics Association Coin and Currency Show.  
See [http://www.tsns.org/tsns\\_show/events.htm](http://www.tsns.org/tsns_show/events.htm) for more information.

March 13, 2010

**Knoxville Coin Show**, Rothchild Center, 8807 Kingston Pike (I-40 exit #378)  
**NOTE NEW LOCATION!**

### This Month's Raffle Prizes

		<b>Est. Grade</b>
1866	Shield Nickel	Good
1935-S	Walker Half	F-VF
1921 & 1925	Buffalo Nickels	F-VF
1928-D	St. Lib. Quarter	Fine
1905	Indian Cent	Fine

The door prize this month is an 1979-S Lincoln Cent Cameo Proof

### Look for These in this Month's Auction

		<b>Est. Grade</b>	<b>Min. Bid</b>
1908-S	Indian Cent		
1931-S	Lincoln Cent		
1926-S	Buffalo Nickel		
1931-S	Buffalo Nickel		
1941- 1947	Nice Set of Walking Liberty Halves in a deluxe Capital plastic holder (20 Coins)		
1963 & 1976-S	Jefferson Nickels	Proof	\$2.00
1891-O	Seated Liberty Dime	VG	\$12.00
2005-S	Sacagawea Dollar	Proof	\$8.00

**Note:** If you have coins for the auction that you want to have listed in the Newsletter, email the information to [mike.vcc@frontier.com](mailto:mike.vcc@frontier.com) no later than ten days before the meeting.

