

Cumberland Coins

The Volunteer Coin Club Newsletter

September, 2011

Next Meeting

We will return to our regular meetings next Tuesday, the 13th at 6:30 pm. We meet at the 127 Senior Center on Highway 127 (Main Street) South of town. Doors open at 6:00.

After the business meeting, Mack Phillips will be giving a presentation on Early Coin Holders. We will also have show and tell where you can let everybody see you new or unusual items, the raffle, and the auction.

I think it is an important part of our meetings when our members share their knowledge and experience with short educational presentations such as the one in July and the one this month. If you have something like this that you would be willing to present, please see Franc Connor or me at the meeting.

Coin Lore

Rare Doesn't Necessarily Mean Expensive by Bill Groom

At the Blue Ridge Numismatic Association this weekend in Dalton, Georgia, I saw dozens of those highly coveted 1909-S VDB's and 1877 Indian cents. Why are these coins so desirable? There are literally many thousands of these "rare" dates in the marketplace. Just one of over a hundred dealers at the show had a dozen 1877's in his showcase. These key coins are "needed" to fill those gaping holes in almost complete coin albums. And, most every collector knows that nagging feeling ... like eating meatless spaghetti, it is.

Long ago tiring of filling those album holes, this writer became more intrigued with collecting tokens, otherwise known as exonumia. Below is pictured one of the tokens that I managed to acquire at the Dalton show. I'd never before seen this one. Initially, I was drawn to the detailed design elements, but then my intellectual curiosity took over. I wanted to learn more about the token and the man behind it.



There are many unusual aspects to this token. My eyes were initially drawn to the animals, being two lions rampant (on hind legs), flanking an eagle atop a BAR sign on a shield. A busy design, this! What an unusual name this bar owner had ... Hugo F. Bilz! In my wildest imagination, I could never visualize a baby being so baptized! Notice the town, Omaha, given within a banner above the prominent street address, corner of 14th & Douglas. Then too, it's made of brass.

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This so-called “good for” token reveals that it was worth “2 ½ CTS.” in trade. It likely cost Hugo less than a cent to have made in quantity. Perhaps, a short beer could be had for 2 ½ cents. If a patron handed Hugo a nickel, the thirsty customer would receive his brew along with this fancy token that was much larger than his nickel - actually, slightly larger than a quarter. What a bargain! Every time a customer would keep or perhaps forget to redeem a token, Hugo would be another penny or more richer.

Turning to my reference library, I found that this token is listed in Rulau’s *Standard Catalog of United States Tokens, 1700-1900, 4th ed.* Rulau numbers it **Oma 2** and valued it at \$25 in 2004. The catalog notes as follows: “Bilz was in business at 119 So. 14th St. only in the year 1911, according to research by Peter M. Fuhrman. Bilz was in business from 1890-1918 in Omaha, moving to Los Angeles, Calif. In 1920.” Thus, it appears to this writer that the prohibition movement ended Hugo’s illustrious career as a bar owner.

An online Google search reveals that Hugo advertised his “liquors and cigars” business, located at 1324 Douglas St., in *The Railroad Trainman*, a union publication of 1904. Hugo must have catered to a substantial railroad clientele. Now, if the 1324 address happened to be situated on the corner of 14th St., this token may date earlier than 1911, as cited by Rulau. Indeed, the token’s fancy design is more akin to the fabric of many of the gay 1890’s issues. Most early 1900’s cigar and drink tokens seen by this writer have been smaller, mostly dime-sized, made of aluminum as opposed to brass and of plain, lettered design. Hugo must have been quite a character and entrepreneur. What follows is his recipe for a sensible, summer drink as cited in *The Mixer and Server, Volume 12*, dated January 15, 2003. This publication, produced for hotel, restaurant and bar owners, was connected to the American Federation of Labor. Per Hugo:

A SENSIBLE SUMMER DRINK

BILZ’S ROYAL RICKEY

Take Rickey glass, two or three pieces of ice
one-half lime or one-fourth lemon, four or five
dashes raspberry syrup, one-half drink of good,
plain gin, one-half drink of imported vermuth, fill
balance with ginger ale, stir and serve. Add pine-
apple or fruit to taste. We all like them out here.

HUGO F. BILZ, Omaha, Neb.

It sounds as if this “sensible summer drink” could readily render one senseless; especially so, a tea-totter like this writer. This fanciful recipe suggests that Hugo really enjoyed his work and was a jovial host.

Okay. If you’ve gotten this far, you now likely know far more about this particular token than do most exonomists - token collectors, remember? When you come to this month’s club meeting, be prepared for a pop-quiz! Seriously now, getting back to the subject, how does this token stack up against the 1909-S VDB and/or the 1877 Indian cent when it comes to history? For this writer’s money, there’s no comparison. For many collectors, the market value is the all-important measure of a rare coin or token. Try and find another Bilz token ... no easy task, that! What did mine cost? Come to this month’s meeting and find out ...

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COINfucious Says: *"Purchase of counterfeit coin like eating spoiled food ... can cause indigestion."*

Area Coin Shows

October 1, 2011 **Knoxville Coin Show**, Rothchild Conference Center, 8807 Kingston Pike
(I-40 exit #378)

October 29, 2011 **Crossville**, La Quinta Inn, Highway 127 North at I-40 exit 317.

November 4-6, 2011 **Chattanooga**, [Tennessee State Numismatic Society \(TSNS\)](#). Fall Coin Show.
Camp Jordan Arena, I-75, Exit 1

November 12, 2011 **Knoxville Coin Show**, Rothchild Conference Center, 8807 Kingston Pike
(I-40 exit #378)

This Month's Raffle Prizes

		Est. Grade
1957	Franklin Half	Proof-65
1847	Large Cent	Good +
1863	Civil War token	VF
1902	Barber Dime	VF
1957	Canada Dime (silver)	MS++

The Door Prize will be an Indian Head 1/10 ounce Silver Round.