

= Civil War token =

Civil War tokens are token coins that were privately minted and distributed in the United States between 1861 and 1864 . They were used mainly in the Northeast and Midwest . The widespread use of the tokens was a result of the scarcity of government @-@ issued cents during the Civil War .

Civil War tokens became illegal after the United States Congress passed a law on April 22 , 1864 prohibiting the issue of any one or two @-@ cent coins , tokens or devices for use as currency . On June 8 , 1864 an additional law was passed that forbade all private coinage .

Civil War tokens are divided into three types ? store cards , patriotic tokens , and sutler tokens . All three types were utilized as currency , and are differentiated by their designs . The collectible value of the tokens is determined chiefly by their rarity .

= = History = =

By 1862 , the second year of the Civil War , government @-@ issued coinage began vanishing from circulation . American citizens hoarded all coins with gold and silver , and eventually began hoarding copper @-@ nickel cents as well . This made it extremely difficult for businesses to conduct transactions . In response , many merchants turned to private minters to fill the void left by the hoarded coins . The first of these privately minted tokens appeared in the autumn of 1862 , by H. A. Ratterman , in Cincinnati , Ohio . New York issues followed in the spring of 1863 , first with Lindenmueller currency store card tokens issued by New York barkeep Gustavus Lindenmueller and then with Knickerbocker currency patriotic tokens issued by William H. Bridgens . It is estimated that by 1864 , there were 25 @,@ 000 @,@ 000 Civil War tokens ( nearly all redeemable for one cent ) in circulation , consisting of approximately 7 @,@ 000 ? 8 @,@ 000 varieties .

Lindenmueller currency , or " Lindenmueller tokens , " are one of the best @-@ known and commonly struck types were store cards . Lindenmueller had more than one million of his one @-@ cent tokens struck and placed into circulation in 1863 . One of the common uses for the token was for streetcar fare . The Third Avenue Railroad company of New York , which had willingly accepted a large quantity of the Lindenmueller tokens in lieu of actual currency , asked Lindenmueller to redeem them . He refused , and the railroad had no legal recourse . Incidents such as these eventually forced the government to intervene .

On April 22 , 1864 , Congress enacted the Coinage Act of 1864 . While the act is most remembered for the introduction of the phrase " In God We Trust " on the newly created two @-@ cent piece , it also effectively ended the usage of Civil War tokens . In addition to authorizing the minting of the two @-@ cent piece , the act changed the composition of the one @-@ cent piece from a copper @-@ nickel alloy ( weighing 4 @.@ 67 grams ) to a lighter , less thick piece composed of 95 % copper ( weighing 3 @.@ 11 grams ) . The new one @-@ cent piece was much closer in weight to the Civil War tokens , and found greater acceptance among the public .

While the Coinage Act made Civil War tokens impractical , the issue of their legality was decided on June 8 , 1864 , when Congress enacted 18 U.S.C. § 486 , which made the minting and usage of non @-@ government issued coins punishable by a fine of up to \$ 2 @,@ 000 , a prison term of up to five years , or both . ( Chapter 25 of Title 18 deals specifically with counterfeit and forgery ) . It did not make it illegal to own Civil War tokens , however , and evidence exists that the tokens were viewed as collectibles as early as 1863 , when the first known listings of Civil War tokens were published .

= = Types = =

= = = Patriotic tokens = = =

Patriotic Civil War tokens typically displayed a patriotic slogan or image on one or both sides . Since

the majority of these tokens were minted in Union states , the slogans and images were decidedly pro Union . Some common examples of slogans found on patriotic tokens are " The Union Must and Shall Be Preserved , " " Union For Ever , " and " Old Glory " . Some of the images found on patriotic tokens were the flag of the United States , a 19th century cannon , and the USS Monitor .

Among the best known varieties of patriotic tokens are the so called " Dix tokens . " They are named for John Adams Dix , who served as Secretary of the Treasury in 1861 . In a letter from Dix to a revenue cutter captain , Lieutenant Caldwell , he orders Caldwell to relieve another cutter captain of his command for refusing an order to transfer from New Orleans to New York . The letter ends with the following sentence : " If any one attempts to haul down the American flag , shoot him on the spot . " The quote found its way to a number of patriotic tokens , albeit with a slightly modified wording ( " haul down " is usually replaced by " tear it down " ) .

=== Store cards ===

Civil War store cards differ from patriotic tokens in that one or both sides displays the name and / or location of a privately owned business . Businesses that could afford it had two custom dies made , with both advertising the business . Otherwise , only one side displayed the business 's information .

=== Sutler tokens ===

Sutler tokens are similar to store cards . Rather than listing the name of a private business , however , these tokens bore the name of a particular army unit ( usually a regiment ) and the name of the sutler who conducted transactions with the regiment . Of the three types of Civil War tokens , sutler tokens are by far the rarest .

=== Collectible value ===

There are several factors that determine the collectible value of Civil War tokens . The main factor is rarity , which is measured on a scale from 1 to 10 ( 1 being the most common type ) . The scale was developed by noted numismatic dealer and writer George Fuld .

The material used to mint Civil War tokens can also affect collectibility . Civil war tokens were minted using a variety of materials , copper being a common choice ( often actually bronze ) . Other materials used for minting were nickel , tin , German silver , white metal , and silver . Examples of tokens minted using rubber are also known to exist .

=== Fuld rarity scale ===

- R 1 : Greater than 5,000
- R 2 : Between 2,000 and 5,000
- R 3 : Between 500 and 2,000
- R 4 : Between 200 and 500
- R 5 : Between 76 and 200
- R 6 : Between 21 and 75
- R 7 : Between 11 and 20
- R 8 : Between 5 and 10
- R 9 : Between 2 and 4
- R 10 : Unique ( one known example )