

IT'S COMMON

by Colonel Bill Murray, NLG

As I peruse exonumia dealers' auction catalogs and fixed price lists, from which I occasionally buy, and talk to collector friends, I'm generally impressed with the knowledge I see evidenced. Descriptions of tokens and medals usually can be depended upon to be accurate in terms of attribution.

Occasionally I, or you, may quibble about condition description or price. However, when one of our well known exonumia dealers describes an item as, for example, a Patriotic

Civil War token, Fuld number 56/436, WM, R-7, you can pretty well depend on seeing an Indian head obverse looking a bit like the Indian head found on the one dollar gold piece of 1856-1889; the reverse will have an oval centered with UNITED / COUNTRY inside, and stars around the outside. You can also expect that the token will be composed of white metal and that only about twenty or so of them are known to exist.

In other words, he knows what the piece is, and he tells you. When you consider the myriad of tokens and medals a busy dealer must handle in a year, you should marvel at his knowledge. Of course, mistakes can be made, and not every piece lends itself so neatly to description as the above example. Many tokens and medals are not documented well, and some not at all. Still they deserve to reach the market, where you or one of your confreres may purchase it and chase down its attribution, perhaps easily, perhaps with considerable digging into references, perhaps after years of searching, perhaps with a bit of luck, or often, not ever.

And, of course, you'll find a few dealers out there, especially those who specialize in coins and don't know exonomia, who make errors from lack of knowledge.

What about your knowledge? It's important. As I read the lists published in different places, and see high prices quoted for certain common tokens usually listed by collectors selling to other collectors, but also occasionally by some of those less qualified dealers, I wonder. Who may be buying these tokens? Often the amount of money involved is small enough that no calamity will occur from the purchase of the piece. But why would anyone buy it at the inflated price?

Here's just one example to make my point. You still see Glade's 3 cent aluminum token from Eureka Springs, Arkansas on lists, or in dealers' books at shows, priced for \$1.75 to \$5.00. Tom Robinson's catalog, *Arkansas Merchant Tokens*, lists this token as a rarity 1 which, according to his rarity listing, means over 71 are available on the market place. We see auction catalogs which sometimes use a description as "Very Rare." Believe me, the Glade's token is not very, but extremely, common.

Several years ago I visited Mr. Glade, an elderly, retired gentleman still living in Eureka Springs. I had a few of his



tokens already, and while I was there he gave me a small handful more, eight or ten, as I remember, from the small supply he had left. Hey! That brings it down the rarity scale several notches right there. He told me he didn't have many left, and that some time before my visit he gave most all of them, "a big box full to some lady."

As a matter of interest, Glade did not remember from whom he purchased the tokens, but he did recall that he got the idea "from some fellow in Bentonville."

The illustration presents an obverse and reverse of the Glade piece, and also the obverse of a Sample Stores token from Bentonville and Rogers, Arkansas, the reverse of which exactly duplicates Glade's token. (These were the original stores of Sam Walton, founder of the WalMart chain.) Very possibly this may be the token from which Glade got his idea.

Robinson's Arkansas catalog lists the Sample Stores token as a rarity 9 (3 to 5 known), but as of this writing some more have turned up. Probably it deserves about a rarity listing of 5 (31 to 40 known). This estimate is based on a recent telephone conversation with cataloger Tom Robinson.

(concluded on page 36)

(It's Common — from page 33)

The Glade's piece is common. The Sample Stores token may not deserve to be designated rare, but how about scarce?

The whole point of this little dissertation is, of course, that you should know what you are doing before you buy, especially if the amount of money involved will result in a serious drain on your pocketbook. Always ask before you spend, "Is it common?"



This photograph of Mr. Glade, issuer of the Glade's token, was taken at his Eureka Springs, Arkansas home, probably in 1974 or 1975.