

Trade tokens, "good fors", bingles, scrip, chits, seco, whatever you call them, trade tokens have become a respected collectable, and an expanding branch of numismatics. The collecting of tokens, is called "exonumia", and includes other types of tokens, including transit tokens, encased cents, and many others. In a narrow sense, trade tokens are the "good for" tokens, issued by merchants. Generally they have a merchants name, sometimes a town and state, and also the required "good for 5¢" (or other denomination) legend somewhere on the token. Types of merchants that issued tokens include general stores, grocers, department stores, meat markets, drug stores, saloons, bars, taverns, barbers, coal mines, lumber mills, and many other businesses. Trade tokens are often made from aluminum, or brass. Some are seen in nickel, fiber, celluloid and vulcanite. The most desirable tokens have the town and state on the token. Many factors affect value of tokens, including if the town and state are on the token, the rarity, condition and type of business. Another important factor is the number of tokens known from the town.

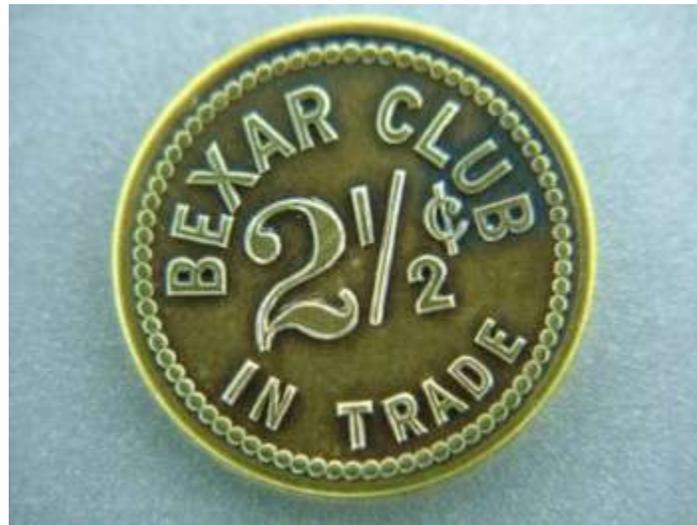
How can I find trade tokens to collect ?

A good place to start, is with your friends and family. Let your friends know you collect trade tokens, and show them one, if they don't know what tokens look like. Carry a token around in you pocket for this purpose. Be sure and ask you family, aunts, uncles, grandparents, for any old tokens they might have. Other productive places to find tokens, are flea markets, garage sales, antique shops and malls, coin shows, coin shops, second hand stores, junk shops in small towns, metal detector hobbyists, and through trades and mail bid sales in token publications.

What do tokens look like ?

Tokens can vary widely in appearance, and there are many fakes, fantasy tokens and other poorly made copies, that are sold to unsuspecting collectors. Experience is the best guard against these fakes, but even the veteran collectors are taken by them now and

then. Genuine trade tokens have a certain look about them, that you will become familiar with the more you handle them. Trade tokens discussed here were used generally between about 1867 and current day. We do not neglect post 1950 trade tokens as many of them are not only genuine trade tokens but quite interesting, affordable and attractive to the eye.



This is merchant trade token from San Antonio, Texas.