

The Tokens of Lee Chong and Ah Ling Pahala, Hawaii

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The tokens from Pahala have fascinated me since I started collecting tokens from Hawaii. Pahala is a small town on the Big Island of Hawaii. Most of these tokens have serial numbers and several distinct series of tokens were issued.

Both Lee Chong and Ah Ling's general stores were associated with the Hawaiian Agricultural Company sugar plantation. This plantation was located on the southern side of the Big Island and was a two day trip by horse to the town of Hilo. Because of this isolation, there was a need for a general store for use of the plantation workers.

In 1903, Lee Chong was running a general store and restaurant.

In 1908, L. Chong is now running a hotel and his store has expanded from general merchandise to dealer in groceries, rice, crockery, boots and shoes, hats, general merchandise, cigars and tobacco, and Japanese fancy goods. A manager, Ah Tai, is listed and this is also where Ah Ling comes into the picture. Ah Ling is listed as a clerk for L. Chong. L. Chong has also opened a second store in Woods Valley with Ah Fon as the manager. Ah Ling also appears as a laundryman working at Volcano House, a hotel on the rim of Kilauea Crater, half way between Hilo and Pahala.

In 1910, Ah Ling is listed as having his own dry goods store in Pahala. It is very curious that a

second store would be needed. I did find Sing Chong, listed as a tailor, working for Ah Ling, so perhaps the Ah Ling business was more clothing oriented than L. Chong's store. L. Chong is listed with a branch store in Moaula.

In 1920, Ah Ling is listed as groceries, dry goods, hats, boots, shoes and hardware. This is also the first appearance of L. Chong, Ltd. W. Weiken is listed as the manager. Their business now includes general merchandise, restaurant, hotel, radio service and service station. Branch stores in Moaula and Woods Valley are noted.

In the 1939-40 directory, the L. Chong, Ltd. listing remains basically unchanged, but Ah Ling has now disappeared.

My access to the Territory of Hawaii directories was limited to what was available at the Hilo Public Library. There are some holes in my research, and I couldn't continue past 1940 without going to the Honolulu Public Library.

Kappen's *Lee Chong's Pahala Tokens* provides some additional information based on the personal recollections of Pahala residents who remember the store. Lee Chong died around 1950.

The Tokens

The Pahala tokens were initially cataloged by Medcalf & Russell in their *Hawaiian Money* catalog in 1978 (and again with their second edition of 1991). At that time they stated, the "significance of various numbers and letters on these tokens of the same denomination is not known". The catalog numbers were assigned based on token material and the denomination.



The initial use of tokens occurred around 1920, when both Lee Chong and Ah Ling had stores in Pahala. These first tokens were very similar to each other, and somewhat different than the latter issues of Lee Chong. The early tokens were made by the Moise-Klinkner Co. in San Francisco.



All the later tokens have a three digit number above the location where the serial number would be punched, or where the letter appears on the die. As I was working on this article, trying to organize the listings, it dawned on me what these numbers might actually mean. I had been trying to figure out why they started at 928, weren't consecutive, and stopped at 939. I believe these are the years these tokens were ordered. Series 928 was ordered in 1928 and the last series of 939 was ordered in 1939. Series 930 bears the P. & M.K. mark of Patrick & Moise-Klinkner Co., which was formed in 1930.

On most of the later tokens, there is also a number below the location where the serial number or letter belongs. I have long thought this was the number of tokens ordered, so the serial numbers would run from 1 up to this number. The serial numbers always were

below this limit. I have now seen one example where this wasn't true.

I have no idea what the letters which appear in place of a serial number on the 928 and 930 series tokens are all about. They don't seem to relate to the stores at Moaula Camp or Kapapala Camp in Woods Valley. They remain a mystery.

Many of the tokens which were intended for serial numbers exist without their serial number. I assume this is because when the tokens were ordered, extras were made. These extras weren't part of the original plan, so were never serial numbered.



The one token (a \$1.00 token) I have seen with a serial number larger than the bottom number was on the 939 series, the last series with a bottom number. I think there were two orders in 1939, both using the 939 series number. The first have the bottom 'ordered' quantity for each denomination and the second had three stars instead. I think after the initial order was placed, they needed more tokens, so ordered the 939 with stars series, deciding to abandon the use of this bottom number. I do not know whether the serial numbers were punched by the manufacturer or done after delivery. These high serial numbers were either a mistake by the manufacturer or a decision by L. Chong, Ltd. to make more tokens available while waiting for their second 939 order.

Ah Ling – First and only series

The tokens of Ah Ling are similar to the first series issued by L. Chong. These tokens have the proprietor name, an incuse serial number, and the town name. I believe these tokens were all issued about the same time, and were the earliest of the known tokens.



AH LING / (incuse serial number) / PAHALA.
Good For / 5¢ / In Merchandise
Brass round 19mm – 2TC-83



AH LING / (incuse serial number) / PAHALA.
Good For / 10¢ / In Merchandise
Brass round 24mm – 2TC-84



AH LING / (incuse serial number) / PAHALA.
Good For / 25¢ / In Merchandise
Brass round 29mm – 2TC-85

L. Chong – First Series

L. CHONG / (incuse serial number) / PAHALA.
Good For / 5¢ / In Merchandise
Brass round 19mm – 2TC-unlisted



L. CHONG / (incuse serial number) / PAHALA.
Good For / 10¢ / In Merchandise
Brass round 23mm – 2TC-unlisted

L. CHONG / (incuse serial number) / PAHALA.
Good For / 25¢ / In Merchandise
Brass round 26mm – 2TC-unlisted

L. Chong – Series 928

These tokens all have the series 928 number, the letter H, and a second number on the obverse. There is no serial number. I have only seen one of this series, but believe they all exist.

L. Chong / 928 / H / ? / PAHALA.
Good For / 5¢ / In Merchandise
Brass octagonal 19mm – 2TC-17

L. CHONG / 928 / H / ? / PAHALA.
Good For / 10¢ / In Merchandise
Brass octagonal 22mm – 2TC-18

L. CHONG / 928 / H / ? / PAHALA.
Good For / 25¢ / In Merchandise
Brass octagonal 26mm – 2TC-20



L. CHONG / 928 / H / 400 / PAHALA.
 Good For / 50¢ / In Merchandise
 Brass octagonal 30mm – 2TC-21

L. CHONG / 928 / H / ? / PAHALA.
 Good For / 1.00 / In Merchandise
 Brass octagonal 39mm – 2TC-22



L. CHONG / 930 / O / 500 / PAHALA. / P. & M.K.
 Good For / 25¢ / In Merchandise
 Brass octagonal 26mm – 2TC-20

L. CHONG / 930 / O / ? / PAHALA. / P. & M.K.
 Good For / 50¢ / In Merchandise
 Brass octagonal 30mm – 2TC-21

L. Chong – Series 930

These tokens all have the 930 series number and the letter O. These tokens bear the makers mark P. & M.K, from the Patrick & Moise Klinikner Company. These companies merged in 1930.



L. CHONG / 930 / O / 500 / PAHALA. / P. & M.K.
 Good For / 1.00 / In Merchandise
 Brass octagonal 39mm – 2TC-22



L. CHONG / 930 / O / 1000 / PAHALA. / P. & M.K.
 Good For / 5¢ / In Merchandise
 Brass octagonal 19mm – 2TC-17

L. Chong – 936 with serial number

These tokens all have the 936 series number. They were designed to have an incuse serial number, but some examples are known without the serial number.



L. CHONG / 930 / O / 1000 / PAHALA. / P. & M.K.
 Good For / 10¢ / In Merchandise
 Brass octagonal 22mm – 2TC-18



L. CHONG / 936 / (incuse serial number) / 3000 / PAHALA.
 Good For / 5¢ / In Merchandise
 Brass octagonal 19mm – 2TC-17

L. CHONG / 936 / (incuse serial number) / 2000 / PAHALA.

Good For / 10¢ / In Merchandise
Brass octagonal 23mm – 2TC-18



L. CHONG / 936 / 3000 / PAHALA.
Good For / 5¢ / In Merchandise
Brass octagonal 19mm – 2TC-17

L. CHONG / 936 / (incuse serial number) / ? / PAHALA.

Good For / 25¢ / In Merchandise
Brass octagonal 26mm – 2TC-20

L. CHONG / 936 / (incuse serial number) / ? / PAHALA.

Good For / 50¢ / In Merchandise
Brass octagonal 30mm – 2TC-21



L. CHONG / 936 / 2000 / PAHALA.
Good For / 10¢ / In Merchandise
Brass octagonal 23mm – 2TC-18

L. CHONG / 936 / (incuse serial number) / 500 / PAHALA.

Good For / 1.00 / In Merchandise
Variety with low underline in 1.00
Brass octagonal 39mm – 2TC-22



L. CHONG / 936 / ? / PAHALA.
Good For / 25¢ / In Merchandise
Brass octagonal 26mm – 2TC-20

L. CHONG / 936 / (incuse serial number) / 500 / PAHALA.

Good For / 1.00 / In Merchandise
Variety with high underline in 1.00
Brass octagonal 39mm – 2TC-22

L. CHONG / 936 / ? / PAHALA.
Good For / 50¢ / In Merchandise
Brass octagonal 30mm – 2TC-21

L. Chong – 936 without serial number

The following are the know Series 936 tokens without a serial number. My guess is that more than the ordered number of tokens were produced and in general, the serial numbers stopped at the number of ordered tokens.



L. CHONG / 936 / 500 / PAHALA.
Good For / 1.00 / In Merchandise
Variety with low underline in 1.00
Brass octagonal 39mm – 2TC-22

L. CHONG / 936 / 500 / PAHALA.
Good For / 1.00 / In Merchandise
Variety with high underline in 1.00
Brass octagonal 39mm – 2TC-22

L. Chong – 939 with serial number

These tokens all have the 939 series number. All the earlier tokens were made of brass, these are all aluminum. They were designed to have an incuse serial number, but some examples are known without the serial number.



L. CHONG / 939 / (incuse serial number) / 4000 / PAHALA
Good For / 5c / In Merchandise
Aluminum octagonal 19mm – 2TC-12



L. CHONG / 939 / (incuse serial number) / 3000 / PAHALA
Good For / 10c / In Merchandise
Aluminum octagonal 23mm – 2TC-13



L. CHONG / 939 / (incuse serial number) / 1200 / PAHALA
Good For / 25c / In Merchandise
Aluminum octagonal 26mm – 2TC-14



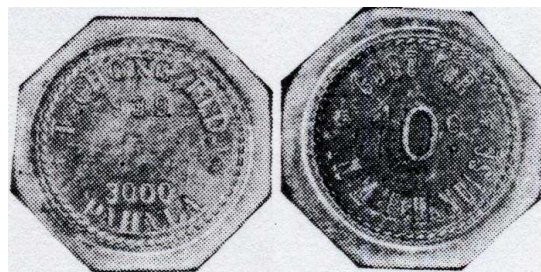
L. CHONG / 939 / (incuse serial number) / 1000 / PAHALA
Good For / 50c / In Merchandise
Aluminum octagonal 30mm – 2TC-15



L. CHONG / 939 / (incuse serial number) / 1500 / PAHALA
Good For / \$1.00 / In Merchandise
Aluminum octagonal 39mm – 2TC-16

L. Chong – 939 without serial number

L. CHONG / 939 / 4000 / PAHALA
Good For / 5c / In Merchandise
Aluminum octagonal 19mm – 2TC-12



L. CHONG / 939 / 3000 / PAHALA
Good For / 10c / In Merchandise
Aluminum octagonal 23mm – 2TC-13

L. CHONG / 939 / 1200 / PAHALA
Good For / 25c / In Merchandise
Aluminum octagonal 26mm – 2TC-14

L. CHONG / 939 / 1000 / PAHALA
Good For / 50¢ / In Merchandise
Aluminum octagonal 30mm – 2TC-15

L. CHONG / 939 / 1500 / PAHALA
Good For / \$1.00 / In Merchandise
Aluminum octagonal 39mm – 2TC-16

L. Chong – 939/Stars with serial number

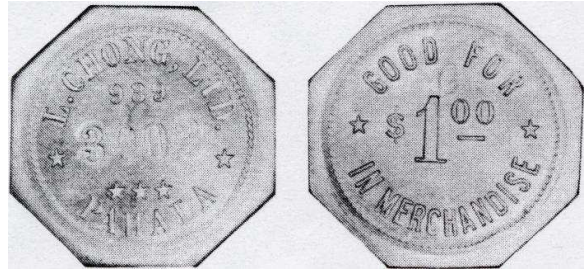
These tokens all have the 939 series number, but in place of the bottom (quantity) number, there are three stars. Some have serial numbers, others do not.

L. CHONG / 939 / (incuse serial number) / PAHALA
Good For / 5c / In Merchandise
Aluminum octagonal 19mm – 2TC-12

L. CHONG / 939 / (incuse serial number) / PAHALA
Good For / 10c / In Merchandise
Aluminum octagonal 23mm – 2TC-13

L. CHONG / 939 / (incuse serial number) / PAHALA
Good For / 25c / In Merchandise
Aluminum octagonal 26mm – 2TC-14

L. CHONG / 939 / (incuse serial number) / PAHALA
Good For / 50¢ / In Merchandise
Aluminum octagonal 30mm – 2TC-15



L. CHONG / 939 / (incuse serial number) / PAHALA
Good For / \$1.00 / In Merchandise
Aluminum octagonal 39mm – 2TC-16

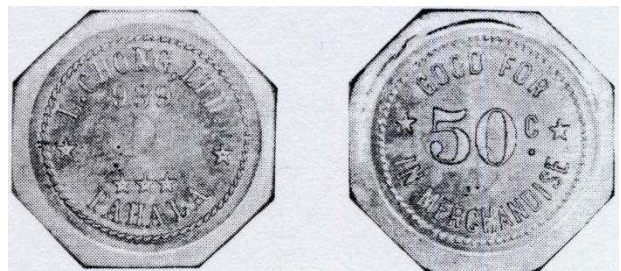
L. Chong – 939/Stars without serial number

L. CHONG / 939 / PAHALA
Good For / 5c / In Merchandise
Aluminum octagonal 19mm – 2TC-12

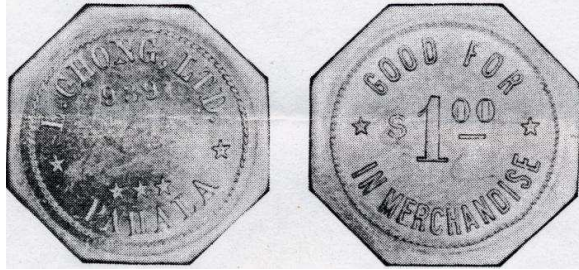
L. CHONG / 939 / PAHALA
Good For / 10c / In Merchandise
Aluminum octagonal 23mm – 2TC-13



L. CHONG / 939 / PAHALA
Good For / 25c / In Merchandise
Aluminum octagonal 26mm – 2TC-14



L. CHONG / 939 / PAHALA
Good For / 50¢ / In Merchandise
Aluminum octagonal 30mm – 2TC-15



L. CHONG / 939 / PAHALA
Good For / \$1.00 / In Merchandise
Aluminum octagonal 39mm – 2TC-16

In Conclusion

My hope here is to share the information I have found and hopefully inspire others to share the information they have about these tokens. There may be additional series' which have not been documented here. *Hawaiian Money* lists a 929 series and a round bass 10¢ token (2TC-19), which I have never seen an image.

There may be other theories as to the meanings of the various numbers and letters. I have yet to come up with an explanation of the letters on the 928 and 930 series tokens. I hope that putting my ideas forward stimulates discussion and the exchange of information.

I would appreciate images of any of the tokens listed don't have images and descriptions of any tokens missing from this listing.

New and corrected listings and images will be posted on **tokencatalog.com** as they become available.

References: *Lee Chong's Pahala Tokens*, by Charles V. Kappen, TAMS Journal, Volume 20 Number 5, 1980; *Hawaiian Money*, Donald Medcalf and Ronald Russell, Second Edition, 1991; *The Ka'u Sugar Company, Inc.*, published about 1972; *Husted's Directory of Honolulu and the Territory of Hawaii*, various years. 1903, 1907, 1908, 1909, 1910, 1920, 1939-40.