

## **Crane's Carson Coin Corner**

### **In Love with Love Tokens**

**By John Crane**

**#CM-0003**

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, otherwise perfectly sensible people found yet another way to deface perfectly good Carson City coins. The reason was affection.

Folks had engraver artisans create love, affection, or mourning tokens for them to wear as necklaces, pins, broaches, bracelets, and fobs. Typically found on Seated Liberty dimes, these ornate engravings were also seen on everything from cents to gold pieces, and many foreign silver coins. Most are found on coins dated after the Civil War, and their popularity died off after World War I.

Of course, “love tokens,” as they are known, have been around for centuries. Earlier tokens from Germany and England celebrated births, marriages, or deaths. Sometimes praises to God were engraved.

By the time love tokens really boomed in America, dimes were most often used—a lot of money in those times. Women wore them on charm bracelets or necklaces, with names or initials of their family members, or loved ones, typically seen.

Many love tokens you find today have several holes in them, through which they were looped together with several others.

The common love token will have two or three initials of a person's name, woven together in a fancy monogram, and an engraved border on the reverse of a Seated dime or quarter. Sometimes a complete name is spelled out or the word “papa” or “mama.” Whimsical scenes of gardens, flowers, sailboats, or buildings occasionally accompany a name or initials. These are very special. Dated love tokens also increase the lure of the unknown.

A “CE” dime.



An “M” quarter.

There is an interesting part of the love token legacy that has to do with the Carson City Mint, or any mint for that matter. Ninety-five percent of love tokens have the reverse planed flat for engraving, obliterating any mintmark that may or may not exist. I’m not sure why that is the case, but it sure makes finding a Carson City mintmark a challenge.

In years of searching, I have found but a small handful of love tokens with the “CC” mintmark, even though there are many thousands of 1870s’ era Seated Liberty love tokens out there. One that has eluded me thus far is a “CC” mintmarked “mourning” token. Usually found on a larger coin, such as a half dollar, the engraving consists of a single large letter, enameled in black. This will be surrounded by a profusion of intricate floral design and a nice border.

To find out more about love tokens, you could check out the Love Token Society. They put out a quarterly publication called *Love Letter*, which like *Curry’s Chronicle*, relies on members to provide articles. You can contact them through Sid Gale, their secretary-treasurer, at Sid Gale, P.O. Box 2351, Denham Springs, LA 70727, or at [sidgale@cox.net](mailto:sidgale@cox.net) (email).

Happy hunting.....your trusted servant John.

*(Images courtesy of John Crane)*