

NEWS & NOTES *continued*

## EXONUMIA

# Another Christmas Story

*Civil War tokens that portray old-time spectacles are reminiscent of this favorite holiday film.*

➤ “YOU’LL SHOOT YOUR EYE OUT” is the refrain from the classic 1983 holiday movie *A Christmas Story*. Based on a collection of childhood stories by author and radio personality Jean Parker (“Shep”) Shepherd, the film enjoys a cult-like status as part of a 24-hour, television marathon shown annually during the holidays. (I make a point to watch this Christmas special every year.)

For those who are unfamiliar with the film’s main story line, it revolves around the trials and tribulations of a young boy named Ralphie Parker, who desperately wants nothing

more than a Red Ryder BB gun for Christmas. What ensues is an entertaining series of subplots woven into the primary theme narrated by Shepherd as the voice of a grown-up Ralphie fondly recalling the most memorable Christmas of his youth.

Set in a fictional, small town in Indiana, *A Christmas Story* offers fans of both the movie and numismatics a unique collecting angle or holiday gift idea for significant others. With eyes and eyeglasses being key topics in the movie, the Indiana Civil War storecards of H.D. Higgins, a jeweler and optician from Mishawaka, Indiana, offer a nice tie-in. The tokens are cataloged as IN-630-A in the third edition of *U.S. Civil War Store Cards: The Definitive Collector’s Resource* (ANA Library Catalog No.

PA75.F8u) by George and Melvin

Fuld and edited by John Ostendorf. These tokens are known in several obverse and reverse varieties, including three different stock reverse dies (Nos. 1327-29) featuring the popular “periscopic spectacles” motif as the main device. The majority of Higgins’ tokens carry a rarity rating of R-6 or greater, and are a challenging pursuit for those wishing to acquire one of every known variety. However, a few examples, such as IN-630-A-5a with the more common rating of R-3, would make for a fun one-off.

While the time frames of the movie (1940s) and the tokens (1860s) differ, the Indiana and eyeglass connection are easily made. Plus, as far as gifts go, tokens are a lot safer than BB guns!

—Todd R. Sciore



▲ Henry D. Higgins fabricated eye wear and issued 19 varieties of Civil War tokens, which had a face value of a cent each. The obverse of the representative token shown here lists Higgins’ profession and location. The stock reverse features his signature “periscopic spectacles.”

Not Actual Size

