



LIGHT RAIL

Aluminum was used for trains and tokens in the early 1930s.



One of the first things I do every Monday morning when I turn on my computer is read the *E-Sylum*. Produced by

Wayne Homren for the Numismatic Bibliomania Society, this newsletter is e-mailed at no charge to everyone signed up to receive it. Included each week is an amazing amount of numismatically related information, and I highly recommend it to anyone who has more than just a passing interest in the hobby. (For a free subscription, contact Homren at whomren@gmail.com. ANA members whose e-mail addresses are on file receive copies as an Association benefit.)

Among the numerous items illustrated in a recent edition was an aluminum token issued in 1934 by the Aluminum Company of America (ALCOA). Homren commented, "It's of interest to me personally because I'm a native of Pittsburgh, home of the ALCOA company. But

I find it most interesting because of the great Art-Deco style of the piece, which I'd never seen before."

Reading Homren's remarks made me realize that all too often I tend to ignore items like this because they are, at least to me, extremely common and, thus, uninteresting. But others might have the opposite reaction when seeing one for the first time. I immediately e-mailed Homren and asked if he'd like to have one; I knew that somewhere I had stashed away an envelope containing quite a few of them.

The reverse of the 32mm token reads A SAMPLE/OF THE ALUMINUM/IN THE NEW/UNION PACIFIC TRAIN/BUILT BY/PULLMAN CAR & MFG. CORP./ALUMINUM CO./OF AMERICA. The ALCOA logo

appears above "Aluminum Co." and in small letters at the bottom are the words GREENDUCK CHI. On the



I knew the token was common, but I didn't realize just how common.



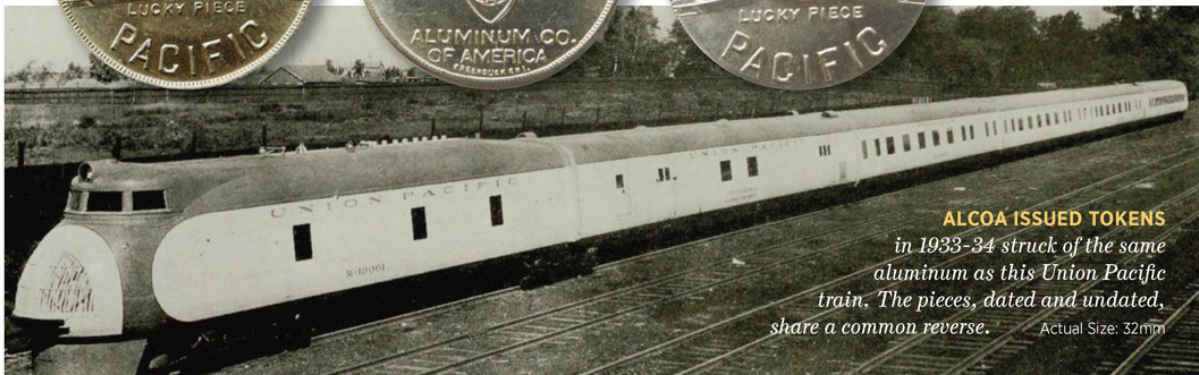
obverse a train is depicted in the center, with UNION above and PACIFIC below. The date, 1934, is at the upper left, and in smaller letters below the train is LUCKY PIECE.

I knew the token was common, but I didn't realize just how common until I searched the ANA's digital archive of *The Numismatist*. The February-April 1934 issue revealed that "a total of 1,000,000

of the pieces have been struck. They will be given to school children and to visitors to the train on its exhibition tour. Five tons of aluminum alloy—10,000 pounds—were used to make the million tokens." The writer also noted that "to commemorate the completion of the new high-speed, lightweight, streamlined Union Pacific passenger train, a Union Pacific 'lucky piece' has been issued. The first of those struck were sent to American editors. They



PHOTOS: DAVID SCHENKMAN (TOKENS) & WIKIMEDIA COMMONS



ALCOA ISSUED TOKENS in 1933-34 struck of the same aluminum as this Union Pacific train. The pieces, dated and undated, share a common reverse. Actual Size: 32mm



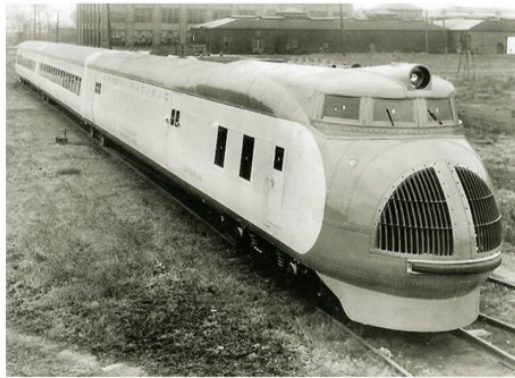
are made of aluminum alloy, the same material of which the new Union Pacific train is built—as strong as steel of the same dimensions, but of only one-third the weight. The train was completed in January.”

Continuing my search for information in the 1934 *Numismatist*, I learned that the tokens were popular giveaways at coin club gatherings. At the February meeting of the Northampton Numismatic Society, each member received one, and a couple months later, an example was given to every member of the Dallas Coin Club. ANA President Nelson T. Thorson brought about 200 of them to the 1934 convention, where they were passed out to people in attendance.

Eventually I located my tokens—more than 30 of them. As I looked through the group, I noticed that a few didn't have the 1934 date but were otherwise identical. I decided to revive the

tradition started in 1934 and bring one for every attendee at the next dinner of my Nummis Nova social group.

I wondered why tokens were struck with and without a date, so I decided to



see if they were included in Nathan N. Eglit's *Century of Progress* catalog of numismatic items from the 1933-34 Chicago World's Fair (published by the Token and Medal Society in the August-October 1965 issue of its

TAMS Journal). Eglit listed both types—as CP.70 with a date and CP.71 without—and commented that the one without a date was issued in 1933.

The tokens were manufactured by the Greenduck Company of Chicago, Illinois. The business was formed in 1906 as a partnership between George G. Greenburg, a former employee of another Chicago die-sinker, S.D. Childs & Company, and Harvey Dugcheisel. “Greenduck” is derived from the two partners' names. The firm eventually began operating as Green Duck Metal Stamping Company, and it remained in business until 2004.

I welcome readers' comments. Write to me at P.O. Box 2866, La Plata, MD 20646. If a mailed reply is desired, please enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

schenkman@money.org

PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

SOCIETY OF PAPER MONEY COLLECTORS, INC.

THE SOCIETY OF PAPER MONEY COLLECTORS, INC.

Learn, Share and Develop Friendships Through Collecting Paper Money

- Online access to over half century of our Award Winning Journal: *Paper Money*
- Access to the most comprehensive online census of Obsolete Paper Money
- Blogs, events calendar, and other resources online at www.spmc.org
- Visit us at major shows throughout the year including International Paper Money Show

For membership information, please visit www.spmc.org/signup and mention this ad