

Explosive Control Tokens

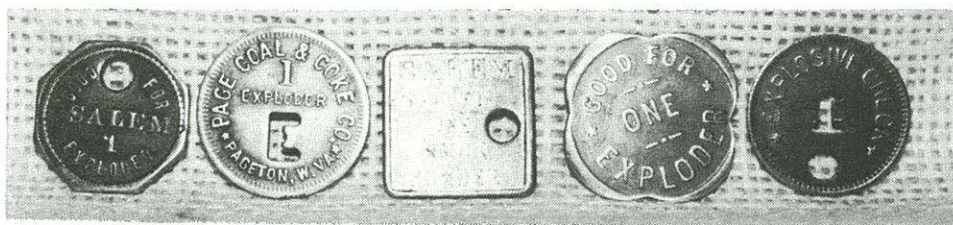
by Dave Johnson



By the early 1800's the commercial mining of coal was underway in the Eastern United States. Throughout its history in the U.S., the coal mining industry has been a major consumer of explosives. The use of explosives was such that by 1860 almost 25 million pounds of blasting powder were being produced annually.

location for redemption and another location for detonating devices.

In addition to tokens, paper receipts and coupon books were used in the same manner as the metallic tokens as a means of controlling the disbursement of explosives. Unlike tokens, the paper explosive control items were not reusable.



The tokens were primarily made of one of six materials: aluminum, brass, copper, nickel, zinc alloy and fiber. Tokens were produced in round, square, oblong, octagonal, hexagonal, and scalloped

Coal mining, with its explosive gases and dust, low and soft ceiling, and wet workings, has always been among the most dangerous of occupations. The use of explosives under these conditions only added to the danger for the miner. Rules were needed to control the use and handling of explosives in mining operations. Explosives were never allowed to be stored underground in the mine and detonating devices were never allowed to be stored in the same area as explosives.

shapes. The lettering is either raised or inset stamping.

Those interested in collecting exploder tokens will find much more detailed information in David E. Schenkman's book *Explosive Control Tokens*, published in 1989 by:

**National Scrip Collector's Association, P.O. Box 29
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A means of controlling explosive devices peculiar to the coal mining industry was the use of explosive control tokens, better known as exploder tokens. Beginning in the 1880's, tokens were issued by coal mining companies for black powder, fuse, squibs, dynamite and blasting caps. These tokens were all of the "GOOD FOR" variety, indicating exactly what they could be exchanged for and in what quantity. In some instances the mining companies supplied explosives to the miners at no cost and at other mines the miners had to purchase their own explosives from the company store. The miner took his own tokens for explosives to one



(top) Vesta Coal Co. controlled by Jones & Laughlin Steel Co. The No. 4 Mine was located at California, Pennsylvania.

(center) Five assorted explosive control tokens.

(below) Three assorted explosive control tokens.