

Canadian Borderline Tokens

by Fred Bowman, F.R.N.S., F.C.N.R.S.

The so-called Canadian Borderline Tokens are not listed by either Breton or Leroux and it cannot be claimed that they are one hundred per cent Canadian but they had a more or less limited circulation in Canada during the years when currency of small denominations was almost nonexistent. From about 1810 to the time when decimal coinage was established in Upper and Lower Canada in 1858 almost any type of coin was acceptable by the people in general. In some cases even plain discs of copper or brass were used. Banks, merchants and individuals found it very profitable to put into circulation tokens of any kind available. Some were manufactured locally while others were imported from the United States or England. Many of the anonymous tradesmens tokens used in England were imported and put into circulation in Canada. Others were made by manufacturers in England expressly for the Canadian market, a few struck and sent to importers in Canada in the hope of obtaining orders for quantities of them. The profits were large and the practice was quite legal.

The decision as to whether a coin was acceptable rested largely in the hands of the farmer women at Bonsecours Market in Montreal. If they were accepted at the market, well and good; if not, then the distributor could have them accepted in some other locality.

Writers on English Tradesmens Tokens such as Batty, Atkins and Davis included them among other Canadian tokens. All large collections of Canadian tokens included numbers of these pieces largely picked out of circulation. They were certainly used in this country to some extent, along with a large assortment of other anonymous tokens which are Canadian beyond question.

1 — **BON POUR DEUX SOUS PENNY**

Obv. Laureate and draped bust to right. "BON POUR DEUX SOUS/1812"

Rev. Commerce with scales and cornucopia seated to left on a bale of goods. "ONE PENNY TOKEN".

This coin was struck at the establishment of Thomas Halliday in Birmingham, England, as it bears the signature "H" of Mr. Halliday on both faces. Probably only a few were struck as samples in the hope of obtaining orders for a quantity from distributors in Montreal. It was, without doubt, intended for Canada as this was the only possession which, at that period, used tokens with the legend in the French language.

The obverse is from the same die as Breton 958 with the Oak wreath replaced by the legend. The reverse is identical with that of Breton 958.

Three specimens only are known to the writer, one of which shows considerable signs of wear.

2 — **COMMERCE PENNY** No date

Obv. Laureate and draped bust to the right in a closed laurel wreath.

Rev. Commerce with sprig and cornucopia seated to left on a bale of goods. "COMMERCE".

3 — **COMMERCE PENNY 1814**

Obv. Laureate and draped bust to the right in a closed laurel wreath.

Rev. Commerce with sprig and cornucopia seated to left on a bale of goods. "COMMERCE/1814".

4 — **COMMERCE PENNY** Prince of Wales crest.

Obv. Commerce with sprig and cornucopia seated to left on a bale of goods. "COMMERCE"

Rev. Prince of Wales crest of three feathers and motto "ICH DIEN" "TO FACILITATE TRADE/1813"

5 — **COMMERCE ONE PENNY TOKEN**

Obv. Commerce with sprig and cornucopia seated to left on a bale of goods. "COMMERCE".

Rev. "ONE/PENNY/TOKEN" in a closed wreath of oak and laurel.

While the following seven tokens are obviously Irish, they had a considerable circulation in Canada.

- 6 — WELLINGTON — E. STEPHENS PENNY 1813
Obv. Laureate and draped bust of Wellington to left.
“WELLINGTON & ERIN GO BRAGH/1813”
Rev. a crowned harp. “E STEPHENS/DUBLIN”
- 7 — WELLINGTON — E. STEPHENS PENNY 1814
Obv. Laureate and draped bust of Wellington to left.
“WELLINGTON & ERIN GO BRAGH/1814”
Rev. A crowned harp. “E. STEPHENS/DUBLIN”
- 8 — WELLINGTON — EDWD. STEPHENS PENNY 1816 draped bust
Obv. Laureate and draped bust of Wellington to left.
“WELLINGTON & ERIN GO BRAGH”
Rev. A crowned harp. “EDWD. STEPHENS/1816”
- 9 — WELLINGTON — EDWD. STEPHENS 1816 undraped bust
Obv. Laureate bust of Wellington to left.
“WELLINGTON/ERIN GO BRAGH”
Rev. A crowned harp. “EDWD. STEPHENS/1816”
- 10 — WELLINGTON — IRELAND PENNY 1818
Obv. Laureate and draped bust of Wellington to right.
“WELLINGTON ERIN GO BRAGH”
Rev. A crowned harp. “IRELAND/1818”
- 11 — WELLINGTON — IRELAND PENNY 1822
Similar to No. 10 but dated 1822
- 12 — WELLINGTON & VICTORY — EDWD. BEWLEY PENNY
Obv. Laureate and draped bust of Wellington to left.
“WELLINGTON & VICTORY/1814”
Rev. Britannia with sprig and lance seated to left with shield featuring a harp at back. “EDWD. BEWLEY/1826”
13. — ONE STIVER
Obv. Female figure with sprig and caduceus seated to left on a bale of goods. “TRADE & NAVIGATION/1838”
Rev. “ONE/STIVER” in an inner circle. Around outside
“PURE COPPER PREFERABLE TO PAPER”
This token, although obviously for British Guinea, had quite a large circulation in Canada, due probably to the fact that the reverse is very similar to Breton No. 962.
- 14 — PHOENIX PENNY
Obv. A Phoenix rising from flames in a wreath of laurel and oak.
Rev. “ONE/PENNY/TOKEN” in a double inner circle surrounded by a dense wreath of oak.
- 15 — JUSTICE PENNY
Obv. Draped figure of Justice holding sprig in right hand, standing facing, in a wreath of laurel and palm.
Rev. “ONE/PENNY/TOKEN” in a wreath of laurel and oak.
- 16 — SHIP PENNY no date
Obv. A ship sailing to right.
Rev. “ONE/PENNY” in wreath of laurel.
- 17 — SHIP PENNY 1813
Obv. A ship sailing to right. “ONE PENNY TOKEN/1813”
Rev. “ONE/PENNY/TOKEN” in a closed wreath of oak.
- 18 — GOD SAVE THE KING PENNY
Obv. Laureate and draped bust to right. “GOD SAVE THE KING/1830”
Rev. “FOR/PUBLICK/ACCOMMODATION”
This is an Isle of Man token but it had some circulation in Canada.

- 19 — **GOD SAVE THE KING HALFPENNY**
Similar to No. 18 but of halfpenny size.
- 20 — **C'EST DU CUIVRE HALFPENNY**
Obv. Laureate bust to left, probably that of Napoleon.
Rev. Ship with Union Jack on the bow-sprit sailing to left.
"C'EST DU CUIVRE"
Lyman Low said of this coin, "The ship, the flag, the inscription, the engraver and Napoleon make it highly probable, in my mind, that it was made for circulation in Canada, where the warmest welcome was extended to everything having a semblance to a coin up to Victoria's coinage of 1858" It is probably a pattern struck in the hope of obtaining orders for a quantity from Canada. The writer knows of but two specimens.
- 21 — **LION HALFPENNY**
Obv. A lion walking to the left. "HALFPENNY/1813"
Rev. Britannia with sprig and trident seated to left, a shield behind, in a wreath of oak. The initials "B.C.C." for British Copper Company appear on some specimens immediately below the shield.
This coin, along with the following one, No. 22, are the two most commonly circulating in Canada. Batty lists eighteen varieties.
- 22 — **VINCIT AMOR PATRIAE HALFPENNY**
Obv. Laureate and draped bust to right. "VINCIT AMOR PATRIAE/1811"
Rev. Britannia with sprig and trident seated to left, shield behind, in a wreath of oak.
Batty describes twenty-two varieties.
- 23 — **MERCURY HALFPENNY**
Obv. Bust of Mercury with winged helmet and caduceus, to left.
Rev. Britannia with sprig and trident seated to left, shield behind, in a wreath of oak.
Many have the initials "B.C.C." for British Copper Company below the shield. Batty described eleven varieties.
- 24 — **BRUTUS HALFPENNY**
Obv. Bust to left. "BRUTUS"
Rev. Britannia with sprig and trident seated to left, shield behind, in a wreath of oak.
Many have the initials "B.C.C." below the shield. Batty describes fourteen varieties.
- 25 — **COMMERCE HALFPENNY 1811**
Obv. Laureate and draped bust to right. "HALFPENNY TOKEN"
Rev. Commerce with sprig and palm branch seated to left, behind shield.
"COMMERCE"
- 26 — **COMMERCE HALFPENNY — GREAT BRITAIN**
Obv. Laureate and draped bust to right. "GREAT BRITAIN"
Rev. Commerce with sprig and palm branch seated to left, shield behind.
"COMMERCE/1814"
McLachlan says it was circulated in Nova Scotia.
Batty describes six varieties.
- 27 — **WELLINGTON — DELIVERER OF PORTUGAL AND SPAIN —**
Halfpenny size
Obv. Bust of Wellington to left: "FIELD MARSHAL WELLINGTON"
Rev. "THE/DELIVERER/OF PORTUGAL/AND SPAIN/1814" in a wreath of laurel.
This medal was used in Canada as currency to a limited extent. It came in silver, brass and copper and was usually holed.
- 28 — **DUKE OF WELLINGTON — BORN — DIED —** halfpenny size
Obv. Bust of Wellington to left. "ARTHUR DUKE OF WELLINGTON"
Rev. "BORN/MAY 1st 1769/DIED/SEP. 14th./1852" in a wreath of laurel.
This medal too was used in Canada as currency to a limited extent.