

A Canadian Love Token

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Love tokens in Victorian and Edwardian times offered a person's feelings of affection, devotion and concern for another. They were meant to be accepted as a talisman that echoed "Remember me" with a hope of binding the two people. These were "as understood" messages. Being personal they were usually represented by a monogram of one or the other's initials. That kept their privacy from intruders. Today's collectors of these tokens can enjoy each one's workmanship and condition, but its history and the fullness of its message eludes them.

For the token you see here, its workmanship, and its condition each implies aspects that could tell us part of its story. Let's look at this humble cent to tease these things out. Obviously what first was a love token later became a memorial. To begin, the cent itself was an economical choice and though the engraving on its reverse was minimal, its AEB shows skill. This piece once had a loop at the top for suspension. A cent as a pendant for a lady would be improbable; for a man, it would serve as a watch fob. Could these AEB initials be those of a young woman of modest means saying, "remember me" to her beau or husband?

Both sides of the piece are well worn. That wear could be from its long-time use as a fob. Working men kept their watches in the waist-band watch-pocket in their work pants. The piece's wear suggests it gave the man many years of solace in which both of its sides spent time rubbing on his coarse-cloth clothing. Eventually, on the obverse, it appears that in 1893 he lost his long-time soulmate. Her plea, "Remember me" gains his pledge, "Eternally remembered." Although the quality of the engraved obverse legend is weak, its wording is forceful. Their love endures.

The story is speculation, but in reality a cent used for a love token is infrequent; this one's worn condition is uncommon, and its transition into a memorial is unusual. We're left to wonder. . . .

