

Knights of the Maccabees



32 mm, copper (or bronze?)

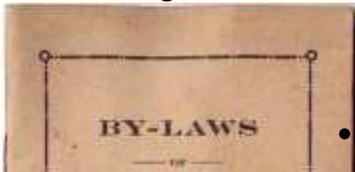
About this token:

- I haven't been able to find out much about them, but I assume they were used in a manner similar to "Masonic Pennies" as both a keepsake and a membership identifier. They show up on eBay from time to time, both as "blank" as shown above, and with name and tent number engraved (I think the ones with names are a little scarcer).
- I similar token (inscribed) appeared on eBay in Sept. 2005, with the following information:



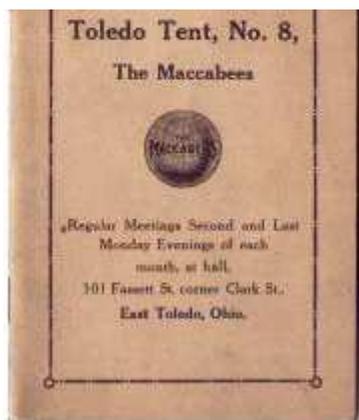
The Knights of the Maccabees was founded in 1878 in London, Ontario, Canada, extensively reorganized in 1881 and 1883, and shortened its name to "The Maccabees" in 1914. The insurance aspect of the fraternity has always been paramount. Its fraternal aspect drew on the exploits of the Jewish military genius Judas Maccabeus. The aspects of Maccabeus's feats that appealed to the founders of the modern Maccabees were steadfastness and persistence; his wisdom in the use of power; and the fact that he seems to have been the first recorded military leader to order his soldiers to reserve a part of their spoils for the widows and orphans of their fallen colleagues. The offices of a Tent were Commander, Lt. Commander, Knight Record Keeper, Master at Arms, Sergeant, Chaplain, Guards, Sentinel, Picket. In 1896, the Knights of the Maccabees had a membership of 209,831. The Maccabees converted to a life insurance company in 1962. It changed its name to The Maccabees Mutual Life Insurance Company.

- The following item and description showed up on ebay in May, 2004:



Published 1917, "By-Laws of Toledo Tent, No. 8, The Maccabees. Regular Meetins second and last Monday Evenings of Each Month at Hall, 301 Fassett St. corner Clark St, East Toledo, OH."

- The Knights of the Maccabees were a fraternal and benevolent "legal



reserve society." Families of deceased members received benefits in the form of legal-reserve insurance. All white persons of sound health and good character, from birth to 70 years of age, were eligible for membership. Their name comes from the Biblical Maccabees. The order was founded in London, Ontario in 1878 and reorganized in 1883. Before 1914, it was known as the Knights of the Maccabees. Subsequent to 1914, it has been simply been called "The Maccabees". At one time, about one third of membership was in Michigan. Thirty years ago, their national headquarters was located at 5057 Woodward Avenue, Detroit, MI. From "History of Genesee County, Michigan Vol. 1, - 1916": Knights of the Maccabees of the World, organized originally in Canada, was incorporated in Michigan in 1884. Originally it operated on an assessment basis;

whenever a member died, each living member was assessed 10 cents to go into a pot to provide the widow \$1000. After reorganization, it became much more sophisticated, collecting monthly assessments based on payouts. By the 1890s it provided not only death benefits but also benefits of \$4 to \$10/week; total and permanent disability benefits of \$50, \$200, or \$300 annually (depending on the size of your assessment); \$175-\$2000 for loss of hands, eyes, feet, etc.; funeral benefits, and so on. "Coal miners" - "aeronauts" and other dangerous professions excluded. Manufacturers, sellers, and drinkers of alcohol also excluded. The Maccabees were one of the more successful of fraternal benefit societies which sprung up after the Civil War. Many insurance companies were not interested in sales to ordinary people and there was little in the way of "safety nets". Groups like the Maccabees, Foresters, Woodmen, and so on provided a safety net along with pleasant social meetings and other gatherings. Each had its own ritual legend -- the Foresters, Robin Hood, for example, and the Maccabees the story of Mattathias Maccabee and his sons, the leaders of the Jewish revolt against Syrian desecration of the Temple.

- Jeremiah writes: You mentioned that you might like more information on the Maccabees good luck coin that you have. I have my grandfather Leo's and at that time in upstate NY you might go to another Lodge and be welcomed, as the coin would provide some identity. All this before drivers licenses and other IDs were prevalent.

As you probably know the Maccabees were a fraternal lodge but also had links with the ladies as well. Several friendly stories were told about lodge life and that belonging to this society was less expensive and included a greater number of the middle class of America, at least in upstate NY. I also have his ribbon, one side with the camp shown, the other black for a funeral. At that time not much insurance was written by all those famous commercial companies so these fraternal organizations had low cost insurance for its members. A large number of my oldest friends when I was a kid, said that the Maccabees insurance held together the family after the father died suddenly including some in my own family. This old clan was held in high regard back then and almost forgotten today.

- Erwin writes: According to the obsolete phrase section of an old 1912 Webster's dictionary, "Astra Castra Numen Lumen" means: "The stars my camp, the Deity my light"
- I did a web search, but only turned up the interesting fact that in 1896, the Knights of the Maccabees had a membership of 209,831.
- Forwarded from Don: The Knights of the Maccabees were a fraternal and benevolent "legal reserve society". Families of deceased members received benefits in the form of legal-reserve insurance. All white persons of sound health and good character, from birth to 70 years of age, were eligible for membership. The name comes from the Biblical Maccabees. The order was founded in London, Ontario in 1878 and reorganized in 1883. Before 1914, it was known as the Knights of the Maccabees. Subsequent to 1914, it has been simply been called "The Maccabees". Thirty years ago, their national headquarters were located at 5057 Woodward Avenue, Detroit, MI
- From "History of Genesee County Michigan Vol. 1, 1916": Knights of the Maccabees of the World, organized originally in Canada was incorporated in Michigan in 1884. The Knights of the Modern Maccabees and The Maccabees of the World have since consolidated and are now known as the

Maccabees.

Know anything about this token? Please [let me know!](#)

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