

Hey! Wanna Nickel?

Scrip and tokens have often been issued locally in times of severe economic distress such as financial crises and the Civil War. During the Depression, a local bank in Tenino, Washington, issued emergency currency printed on thin shingles of wood. Blaine, Washington, soon did the same with both flat scrip and, in response to requests generated by news and word of mouth, coins that included a 5-cent piece. The Chicago World's Fair in 1933 issued wooden nickels as souvenirs, and the tradition of wooden nickels as tokens and souvenirs continues to the present day.

In more recent times, wooden nickel trading has become more popular. Individuals can have their own personalized token made and then trade with others who also have had their own made. This is especially popular in geocaching. Some businesses have issued wooden nickels as a discount coupon; bring it in and get a discount on certain products.

An American adage, "Don't take any wooden nickels" is considered a lighthearted reminder to be cautious in one's dealings. This adage, too, precedes the use of wooden nickels as a replacement currency, suggesting that its origins lie not in the genuine monetary value of nickels but rather in their purely commemorative nature.

