



A BUYER'S GUIDE TO CASINO COLLECTIBLES

SECOND EDITION, AUGUST 2007

EDITED BY:
Sheldon Smith



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EDITORIAL NOTE:

I sincerely hope you enjoy using this SECOND EDITION of the BUYER'S GUIDE TO CASINO COLLECTIBLES.

The GUIDE was born of the belief that an informed collector is good for our hobby and that the more information buyers have before they make a purchase, the better informed they are.

I asked for "TREATISES" to be submitted on the official CCGTCC web site, I also asked for "TREATISES" on CHIP BOARD.COM.

You may not agree with everything you read here, but everything you read here will be worth your reading! To the AUTHORS that stepped up to the "CHIP," my chapeau is doffed to you!

The opinions expressed here are just that: OPINIONS. The Board of the CCGTCC does not endorse any of the opinions stated here nor are they necessarily the official position of the CCGTCC on any subject.

Every "TREATISE" submitted was included in this SECOND EDITION.

There are many fine web sites out there run by collectors and dealers alike. I have chosen not to include any web sites unless incidental to the "TREATISE."

There is a great deal of information on the internet and some might question the need to have information in hard print, in fact, as you read this it is available ONLINE to be downloaded and is not in hard print unless you do o!. I believe that having this BUYER'S GUIDE for reading material and being able to pick it up and refer to it is an invaluable tool for us collectors.

Thank you,



Sheldon Smith
LM-5087-83

OFFICIAL CC>CC GRADE & CONDITION DESCRIPTIONS

I. GRADING DESCRIPTIONS or STANDARDS are a result of natural use of chips and tokens. The following five grades have been adopted and endorsed by the Casino Chip & Gaming Token Collectors Club, Inc.: **NEW, SLIGHTLY USED, AVERAGE, WELL-USED, POOR**

GRADE	CHIPS	TOKENS
New (N)	Appears not to have been used in games; square and round edge chips will be as from the manufacturer with absolutely no wear, no dings or nicks; no scratches on surface of chip or inlay.	Appears not to have been used in games or slot machines; only slight handling marks on higher relief surfaces, commonly referred to as "bag marks" from being jostled upon delivery; original mint luster and sheen present; no signs of wear. [Compare with coin standard "brilliant uncirculated" and "uncirculated."]
Slightly Used (SU)	Only slight signs of use, edge still crisp but ever so slightly dulled with very little wear; cross hatching may show slight wear near edge; few or no edge nicks; still retains luster in mold design; bold hot-stamp; inlays excellent.	Near mint condition with minimum circulation; very minor rubs & scratches; retains most of the luster & sheen. [Compare with coin standard "almost uncirculated."]
Average (A)	Typical chip found in play after months/years of use; slightly rounded edges; will have minor defects such as small nicks on edges; inlays are beginning to show even wear and about half of the cross hatching has worn from the body surface; hot-stamps have dulled, beginning to show even wear and may be missing a small amount of foil.	Typical token found in play after months/years of play; will display many surface scratches and edge dings; may still retain a little luster or sheen. [Compare with coin standard "circulated."]
Well-Used (WU)	Moderate and uniform wear of edge, surface and hot stamp; noticeable edge nicks and/or surface scratches; no luster in mold design; cross hatching is nearly worn off; hot-stamp is still readable but much of the foil is missing.	Scratches, dents, no luster or sheen; well-used token that has seen considerable use. [Compare with coin standard "very circulated."]
Poor (P)	Edges that were formerly sharp and square, are now well worn like bicycle tires; original hot-stamp foil is mostly missing with only the recesses visible (may have to hold towards a light); moderate to large chips (nicks); surface cross hatching barely visible (if at all); severe scratches to inlay or chip surface; severe color fading; partial wear up to half of CHIPCO design from the edge to the center of the chip. (Damage, such as cracks, breaks, missing inlay or other chip structure, do not apply to this category.)	Severe edge dings and/or scratches/gouges; pitted, corroded or blackened. [Compare with coin standard "worn."]
Specimen, Sample, Prototype, Pattern	Produced by the manufacturer as imprimaturs of a type of chip, or for submission to a gaming operator or gaming control authority as representative, for approval. May or may not be completely finished.	Produced by the manufacturer as imprimaturs of a type of token, or for submission to a gaming operator or gaming control authority as representative, for approval. May or may not be completely finished.

<p>II. CONDITION DESCRIPTIONS or STANDARDS are unnatural changes in chips and tokens as a result of other causes. Specimens in this "Condition" category may be graded in any of the five "Grading Descriptions." A cancelled, damaged or defective chip or token can be graded in any category from "NEW" to "POOR." However, a dirty, cracked or faded chip cannot be graded as NEW, even if it has not been played in a casino. It is not in the original grade as when it was made. The "Condition" category consists of the following terms that should be used as qualifiers to further accurately describe the five grades: (Examples: New/Clipped; Average/Warped)</p>		
1. CANCELED or MODIFIED (Either by the manufacturer, the casino, or by a third party)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Drilled B. Notched C. Overstamped D. Clipped 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> E. Bent F. Painted G. Plated
2. DAMAGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Severe nicks or chunks B. Loose or missing inlay C. Cracked D. Broken E. Warped F. Permanent stain G. Severe fading H. Cigarette burn(s), fire damage I. Over-cleaning J. Severe scratching or gouging K. Shaved edge (example: to fit in a bezel) L. Water damage M. Burial damage N. Clouding of sterling silver tokens, a symptom of PVC (Polyvinyl Chloride) exposure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> O. Corrosion P. Anodized for different colors Q. Plated R. Obliteration of details
3. MANUFACTURER DEFECTS OR MODIFICATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Inlay or die strike off-center (slight, moderate, extreme) B. Some of the script or photo is missing from the inlay C. Some of the hot-stamp is missing D. Manufacturer modification (example: one side of chip includes manufacturer's advertising information, even though the other side uses the actual casino chip design) E. Ivory chips only - nerve holes (small, moderate, extreme, as a "see through") F. Foreign material struck into tokens 	
4. MANUFACTURER ERRORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Incorrect inlay or graphic (example: Inlay or graphic is supposed to be different on each side of chip, but it is the same; mismatched dies used for tokens) B. Wrong mold C. Double-strike (token) or of hot-stamp (chip) D. Mistake in color or number of edge inserts E. Strikes on metals other than standard (tokens) F. Railroad edge strikes G. Planchet clips (tokens) H. Strikes on wrong size planchets (tokens) 	
5. PROOF or PROOF-LIKE	<p>For tokens, pieces produced on highly polished planchets and double-struck to produce an exceptional image on a mirror-like surface.</p>	

<p>6. CLEANLINESS (or the lack thereof, resulting in a soiled chip or token)</p>	<p>This may not be a permanent condition. To clean or not to clean is the choice of the owner. While cleaning chips is a commonly accepted practice for aesthetic or hygienic purposes, it does not improve the grade but may damage the chip and diminish its value and grade. On the other side, non-cleaning should have no effect on the grade unless the specimen is so dirty that grading is not possible. In a situation involving a permanent stain that cannot be easily removed, the chip or token will fall into the "Damaged" category. Some collectors take the position that chips and tokens should remain in their "natural state" and should not be cleaned.</p> <p>With respect to tokens, some take the position that, as with coins, cleaning constitutes a change of condition.</p>
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California Indian Chip Collecting - George Dmitrevsky, LM-125-125

Collecting chips from Indian Casinos in the U.S. and especially California is an area of collecting that has enjoyed an upsurge in activity in the past few years. Part of that excitement can be attributed to the ever-increasing tribes that are opening new casinos on their tribal lands. Others issue new racks of chips as they open new and expanded casinos usually with attached hotels that rival some of the best casinos in Las Vegas.

Indian gambling on tribal land became a significant political issue in California in the last decade. California has more gaming tribes than any other state with 54 as of December 2005 currently hosting some form of gambling.

Key dates in the expansion of casino gambling in California:

Early 1980s—Citing their semi-independent status as sovereign nations, tribes begin to offer bingo with prize money.

(Oct. 1980 a card room and bingo was opened in the city of Cabazon, the Coos Pa Um Nut was the second Indian casino to open in the country, the first in California.)

The progression of the casinos was to offer poker first, then bingo and finally slots.

1987—The casino door opens. The US Supreme Court rules that California can't bar gambling on tribal land.

1988—To handle future gambling, Congress passes the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act. It mandates that tribes and state government establish compacts, or joint agreements on the types and sizes of gambling. Between 1988 and 1997, Indian gambling nationwide jumps from \$212 million to \$6.7 billion.

The largest amount of casinos can be found in Riverside and San Diego counties. (both in SoCal area).

The molds used most often are Hat & Cane, Chipco, A Crest, Birdsuit, and Bud Jones.

Some excellent sources of information for California Indian chips can be found in Armin Pfaender's California chip guide 2006, Armin Pfaender. Eastman's Illustrated guide of California Card room chips and checks with California Indian Gaming, Lawrence R. Eastman, 1998. California Native American Casinos, gaming chips and tokens by Dick Staeffler, 2005

Information can also be obtained at www.chipguide.com

I can be contacted at -claychip@mindspring.com

Casino Drink Glasses – Mark Englebretson, R5377

There is not a great deal to be said about this area of Casino Collecting. However, it is gaining in popularity and so many of the glasses are real works of art.

At this time the prices are pretty reasonable. Many can be bought for \$5.00 or less, lot's of good intermediate stuff for \$25.00-75.00. Higher dollar items can go over \$200.00.

A pyroglaze process made older glasses. Heat stable ink was applied and fired on at very high temperatures. These glasses are easily identified by the rich vibrant colors. You can run your finger over the imprint and feel the thickness of the ink. Later, a cheap silkscreen process was used. These glasses have little value but nonetheless should be part of a collection.

As to collecting the glasses, you can pick a specific area such as, Tahoe, Reno, Small Town or Vegas. You can pick short drink glasses, which are only 3 to 3 ½ inches tall. Collect just stemware. The possibilities are endless. One collector I know has a goal to have every Harolds Club glass. Good luck. Harolds had more glasses than any Casino in Nevada. This collector has over 100 and says he isn't even close to having them all.

For the collector with deeper pockets there are many pricey ones because of how scarce they are.

For example; Grand Opening Flamingo from Las Vegas, The Moulin Rouge from Las Vegas, The Tropics from Reno, The Dog House from Reno, etc., and Small Town glasses can go for up \$200.00 plus.

As with any Casino Collectible, they display beautifully. My friend, Steve Lowe, has one impressive collection, and has it all displayed. You can just stand in awe looking at all the sparkling glassware from long ago.

All these items are a direct link to the days of Vintage Gaming. Hold one in your hand, preferably with a drink in the glass, close your eyes and let it take you back to place it came from.

I would be happy to answer any questions: mark@communicomm.com

CASINO MATCHBOOKS - Don Lueders, R-1461

Old matchbooks and covers from casinos have recently become a popular addition to the collections those in our hobby. These little pieces of cardboard can be as colorful as a casino chip, but often have additional information to those interested in the history of the place.

Philumeny, or the collecting of match covers, boxes, and labels is an old hobby. Advertising match covers from casinos and hotels with gambling abound and there has grown up a specialized group of collectors who like to go after these. Some traditional collectors like to remove the matches and flatten the covers to make it easier to store and display them. Others appreciate the complete matchbook as an artifact and like to keep its condition as close as possible to when it was in use at the casino. "Full Book" is the term most used for these matchbooks with all matches intact. Another term frequently used is "unstruck", meaning there are not strike marks on the grey strip on the matchbook. This term is most often used in relation to match covers and clarifies whether there were any matches used before the collector stripped them out.

A major change in the appearance of matchbooks occurred in the early 1970's when the federal government decreed that the striker appear on the back of the book rather than the front. Presumably, this would save the poor consumer who struck a match from igniting the entire pack and setting himself afire. I use the date 1972 as the approximate date that most Nevada casinos converted to front strikers, although the date is not precise since front-strike matches in stock and in production were still often used.

There is currently no comprehensive list of known casino matches. My guess is there are around 5,000 different Nevada front-strike casino matches. If later issues are included, and if the scope of the collection is expanded to other states and countries, there could well be 50,000 different. Avid collectors also look for varieties, such as different manufacturer names or changes in the wording of advertising as later orders or placed.

Matches can be found in the same places that old chips and tokens can be found: antique shops, estate sales, auctions, collectibles shows, etc. For those who search eBay, the on-line auction house, there is a separate category for matchbooks under the collectible paper category. Recently, a separate category of sales has been added under collectibles, casino, although there are usually only a dozen or two listed each day.

Collectors obviously like to find their matchbooks and covers in pristine condition, but this is frequently not possible. The hottest current area is early Nevada small-town covers, and these often come from old collections where the hobbyist not only removed the matches, but also bob-tailed the cover (cut off the striker). Many times this is the only way you will find an old 1930's cover from a small casino in a remote area.

Plastic pages for storing covers or opened-matchbooks are available from hobby shops. These fit standard 3-ring binders.

Retail prices can vary considerably, but no rare covers have yet approached the prices of rare casino chips. Current front-strike matches can usually be found for a few cents each, if not free from the casino. More common front strike covers from Nevada will range from \$1-5, while very scarce covers and matchbooks have sold in the \$50-100 range. There are differences of opinion regarding the premium for a full-book, but my valuation is 2-4 times the value of the same item as a cover only.

Casino Tokens: A quick overview - Ron Clewell, R-5536

Casino tokens are coins created for a casino to use in slot machines, table play, or for promotional use. Tokens should never be mistaken for silver strikes, which are won as a prize out of a slot machine.

In 1964, silver dollars begin to sell at a premium and were taken out of casinos as fast as they were being put into play. The Nevada Gaming Commission passed a regulation permitting casinos to issue metal tokens to replace silver dollars that were played in slot machines and on gaming tables.

In July 1965, the Franklin Mint was the first company to mint tokens for casino use. The first tokens were minted for Harrah's Lake Tahoe (note: the first token was actually pressed on a platinum planchet). Token production continued on until 1970, when Eisenhower Dollars were introduced in 1970.

When the Susan B Anthony Dollar was issued in 1979, casinos were allowed to produce tokens once again.

Today, tokens are rapidly being phased out of casinos and are being replaced with Ticket In Ticket Out (TITO) technology. Because tokens are no longer being used, change attendants, coin cups and wet naps are being phased out as well.

The most common token produced is the \$1.00 token but there are tokens have been minted up to \$1000. There are also No Cash Value (NCV) tokens that are used for promotional purpose.

Some of the more collectible tokens are route tokens, used at bars, grocery stores and other establishments. Route tokens are much harder to find since fewer were produced (compared to casinos) and an establishment could go out of business in a few months after having the tokens created.

The value of a token is based on its condition. Most common tokens are worth 2 – 3 dollars based on being slightly used. A token in "mint" condition can be worth 3 – 5+ dollars based on casino the token was created for. Due to the durability of tokens, few tokens are worth more that a few times "face" value. Error tokens, misstruck tokens, tokens pressed in precious metals (silver, gold, platinum), and rare tokens are a few examples were a token can be valuable.

Collectible casino memorabilia to be found at yard, garage, and estate sales
Raulin Mendonca, R4376

Unlike flea markets and antique stores, people running yard sales, etc., usually don't know much about these collectibles. Most of the time, you will have to ask if they have them. They are not always on display. Of those items on display, ashtrays and matches are usually, most common. There are sometimes bags or racks of plastic or paper poker chips. These should be looked through to see if casino chips or tokens have gotten mixed in.

When you see ashtrays from casinos or other souvenirs from casinos, be sure to ask about chips or tokens. This is a clue that someone has visited a casino or two. Most of the time you will be shown "poker chips" and usually they are generic plastic chips. But every once in a while, a hand full of real casino chips makes an appearance. This will usually make your day.

Always ask the person in charge for a price on this accumulation, don't volunteer a price. Most of the time you can get them for face value or less. They don't have a chip rack or price guide and if they do, they are collectors themselves. Most of the time, you will be asked to offer a price. I try to be fair, but carrying price guides is not practical. So I make an offer based on condition, rarity (if known), and quantity. Sometimes a price can't be reached, so I write down the description of the chips and go home and look them up. I will then go back and offer a price. Sometimes they hold sentimental value and a price isn't reached. Don't make the mistake of demeaning the people's chips. They may change their minds.

Make up a business type card with what you collect, your name, phone number, and email address if have one. Do not put your home address on the cards. (you don't want any midnight visitors looking for your collection.) Leave these cards with every contact you make. You will be surprised that people remember you and find an item you might be interested in.

Over the past several years, I have found matches, calendars, ashtrays, key chains, playing cards, and drinking glasses from casinos. But most important, I have found casino chips and tokens. In fact, almost all the tokens I have come from yard sales, etc.

I will cover antique shops and flea markets in another section. Hope this will help.
Happy collecting.

Collecting match covers from casinos and other places - Raulin Mendonca, R4376

Matchbooks first appeared in the late 1800 in plain covers. Someone came up with the idea of putting printing on the covers. That was the birth of the modern matchbook with advertising.

Matchbooks are difficult to display and store; so most collectors take the matches out. Except when the matchsticks are printed, these are called, "features" and left in the books. To remove the matches, carefully lift up on the metal staple's edges and take it out with the matches. Now you have a match cover, which can be flattened and placed in a plastic page and put in a binder. Supplies can be obtained from C. T. Rogers at ctcoins.com. You can also check other sites by using Google, etc. For match cover supplies.

Matches come in basically 3 sizes: 20, 30, & 40 strike books and the pages to display them also come in these sizes. In the early 70's a law was passed to put the strikers on the back of the book, for safety reasons. So, you have older front strike covers (these are more sought after by collectors) and newer rear strike covers. These are more plentiful and can be found at yard sales, flea markets, etc. Also ask your friends for accumulations of matches.

Because of recent anti-smoking laws and such, casinos are among the last places still giving out matchbooks. There is a club devoted to just casino covers. For more information on this club contact: Richard Hagerman 824 peachy canyon circle #101, Las Vegas, NV 89144. They publish a bi-monthly gazette on casino match covers. No website yet, but dues is only \$5 a year.

Collecting covers from casinos can be helpful to a chip collector. Because, if a casino no longer exists, the match cover can show a drawing or photo of the casino, an address, or other logo. When chips, match covers, ashtrays, and other souvenirs from casinos are put into a collage or shadowbox; this can create an interesting history of the casino.

Unstruck covers are the most desirable. On rare covers, struck covers are ok to fill out a collection until a better one is found. Unlike casino chips, there are no price guides for match covers. The price is whatever the buyer is willing to pay. In most cases there were large numbers made, so most collectors trade among themselves. At recent chip shows and conventions there have been more matchbooks and covers on dealer's tables. Match boxes are also available from casinos and other places. These can be opened carefully and flattened like covers to display.

I have just touched the surface on cover collecting here. For more information you can contact the various clubs other than the casino club mentions earlier. The oldest and largest is the Rathkamp Matchcover Society. Contact terry rowe at trowerms@ctcn.net. There is also the sierra-diablo mc, contact: loren moore at loren@bgspjlanco.com. You can also contact the editor of their newsletters, mike prero for information, rmseditor@evl.net.

I hope you will find this informative and will inspire you to collect covers. Maybe at a future show, we can trade duplicates.

Displays - Michael Downey – R6202

Now that you have collected chips, tokens, silver strikes, dice and other casino memorabilia, the question arises what to do with them? Do you want to just keep them tucked away in binders or cases? OR would you rather show them off? Gone are the days when people collected chips and such and just threw them in a drawer or a box when they got home and forgot about them.

Many casino chips and silver strikes are truly beautiful and could be considered “works of art”. For some, keeping their items in binders and boxes is the choice on how to house their collection. While there’s nothing wrong with that- can you imagine if you will, the Mona Lisa being kept out of sight in a box?? For others, such as myself, displays that show off our collections are the way to go.

There are innumerable ways to display your collection; the only limitations are your imagination and budget. I have seen all kinds of showcases from the elaborate to the elegantly simple. For example, one of the most popular ways to display chips is in a frame that you hang on the wall.

There are several suppliers that have ready made displays that all you have to do is place your chips or tokens into precut inserts, put it back into the frame and presto, you’re ready to hang it. These same suppliers can also do custom orders. (They can be reached at www.cassidyframes.com and www.tinytreasures.com)

If you want to be more hands on, creating a display is fairly easy. Many hobby stores have the materials and the know how to help bring your ideas to life. I’ve made several chip displays myself and let me tell you, it is very satisfying seeing the fruits of your labor on the wall for all to see. A unique display is often more visually appealing than a standard one, so be creative.

It is important to keep in mind when placing your display to keep it out of direct sunlight and be sure to use clear acrylic sheets with an ultra violet filter built in to protect your collectibles from fading. Lastly, take into account security when placing items into your displays. It would be unwise to place high end or scarce items in easily removable displays. Show them off, but keep them safe as well by putting them in locking cabinets and/or using security hangers.

It is my hope that I’ve inspired some of you to get your chips and strikes out and exhibit them proudly as the works of art that they are. Who knows, you may get someone who actually sees your collection into the hobby you love so much!

First Convention, make the most out of it - Mike Pasternack, LM-1283-33

It's a rather overwhelming sight when you first enter the convention floor, and very easy to become disoriented, tired and to blow all your money at the first table at which you stop. If that happens, it's akin to running out of money in a casino...you can still walk around and stare at the slot machines, you just can't play them. With that in mind, I'm offering some tips to a first-timer for maximum convention enjoyment, budgeting and safety.

The first thing a "newbie" should do is to pre-register for the show. This way you do not get shut out of the banquet or the tournaments if you want to play in them. Also, every pre-registered attendee receives a "goodie bag" with some souvenirs, a convention guide and some coupons for use at various dealers' tables. Upon arrival, your first stop should be to locate the registration area and pick up your credentials- your ID badge and your "goodie bag." Make sure you have a proper photo ID to be able to pick up your things. This is also a good time to speak to the person(s) running the registration, as they can handle almost any question you might have to ask. It's also a good time to meet other chippers, and the registration is usually handled by a very prominent chipper and wife team. Don't be shy; take the time to say hello and introduce yourself. A bit of idle chatter goes a long way and can secure a longtime friendship or business relationship.

Don't go rushing into the show right away. Instead, sit down with your pre-registration pack and see what's inside it. You should take the time to peruse the convention schedule and the book also includes a floor plan that indicates the locations of all the exhibits, dealer tables and membership tables. Also, see what coupons you have received: discounts, free drawing tickets and other freebies are to be found, so go through the packet carefully. This is also a good time to transfer everything except for the schedule book/map into whatever you have brought along to carry your purchases. A shoulder bag is a good idea, and you will even see people with rolling suitcases. In any case, you will need something stronger than a shopping bag to carry your newfound treasures in, and until you enter that show, you have no idea what exactly you will be buying, so try to consider that when choosing what to carry along with you. Then you can connect your neck chain to the ID badge; they check these at the door, and there are different-colored badges that allow varying levels of access to the floor (member, dealer, volunteer, exhibitor, club officer, to name a few). And right before you throw yourself into the lion's den, there is also a table set up containing leaflets, free magazines and other useful items. Make that a priority stop as well.

A specialized want list is also a good idea; create one long before the show date. Once inside, it is truly an overwhelming experience. You will see more chips and gaming-related exnomia together in one place than you had dreamed possible. Some tables have hundreds of binders of chips, which require a lot of looking through. Others have display cases as well and this is where you will see the better items locked up for sale. Take the time to walk around the floor at least once, see who is at what location and make mental or written notes.

Do not run up to the first table in view and spend all your money. You owe it to yourself to peruse the bourse floor and become familiar with it. In that way, you see what is available and where you're preferred dealers are located. Also, if you jump right in and spend big bucks on the first chip you see, chances are that you will see an identical one for sale at another table later in the day. So take the time to look around. As far as prices, some will be organized, with all the prices listed, others will have no price. Most dealers are willing to bend a bit (except for very rare items), so don't be afraid to make offers.

While you are looking around, you will most likely run into members, dealers and club officers whose names you recognize from reading the magazines and/or the chipboard. Make friends! Here's where you get to see and speak to all the people in person, and everyone is approachable- dealers, members, club officers. Just be polite and don't jump into a conversation if you see a dealer in the middle of a thousand dollar transaction. Almost everyone is in the mood for some light conversation, and this is one of the few times you will be in a room with like-minded chippers who don't think you are a madman for your collecting interests, so take advantage and do a "meet and greet." This is also a good way to judge personalities and decide who you want to deal with and who you'd rather avoid.

Locate and visit the club membership table. You can purchase a listing of current club members there, and it's always a friendly pit stop. The club promotions table should also be on your agenda. Buy a couple of raffle tickets, and support the club by purchasing logo items, donating to the building fund and perhaps even bidding in the club auction.

There are numerous meetings and educational seminars. Try to attend as many as interest you. Granted, some of the good ones are very early in the morning, but they are worth getting up for. Perhaps the most important meeting you can attend (and everyone should go to this but the turnout is usually less than spectacular) is the club's business meeting, the one that is open to the general membership. There, you can hear what is going on with the club and you have the chance to voice your opinions and receive live feedback from the officers and other members.

Trade sessions are also great ways to network and possibly acquire some great pieces for your collection. There are several, but remember that these are for trading, not for buying and selling. The dealers have spent good money renting tables, so it's considered bad form (not to mention prohibited) to exchange cash at trade sessions. This also goes for buying and selling in the hallways. This is not to say that private sales do not take place (they do), but they are better handled privately in hotel rooms and nowhere near the actual convention area.

Finally, as always, safety and security is a concern. Take time to note where the fire exits are and also where the security guards are stationed. Probably there will be no troubles, but better to be safe than sorry. Remember, the show is open to the public as well as the membership, so watch your bag and your wallets/purses. When not in actual attendance, remove your membership credentials; it's like walking around with a sign that says "I may have valuable chips...please rob me."

This is especially true when returning to your room or your car. A giant wheeling suitcase full of chips can also be a liability in this situation. Be aware of your surroundings and those who surround you. If you purchase high end items, lock them in the room safe or secure them at the hotel's safety deposit box. And NEVER leave chips in your car; aside from the easy risk of theft, the temperature inside a motor vehicle in Las Vegas can be high enough to warp or melt your treasured possessions.

Follow the advice above, use common sense and a "game plan," and you will experience one of the most rewarding times that chipping has to offer: the annual convention!

“Illegal” Club Chip Collecting – Jim Follis, LM3872-53

Casinos, gambling clubs, and card rooms proliferated from the 1920’s through the 50’s & 60’s across the country. The highest concentration was in the Midwest and South. Most of these, while technically illegal, operated under the “protection” of local law enforcement. Often referred to as “illegal” operations, the correct term would be “unlicensed”.

Chips from these clubs are called “illegals”. Some will show a name, but most only have initials or numbers. The initials could be, but not necessarily, those of the owner and the numerals may, or may not be the street address. By not clearly identifying the ownership on the chip, the clubs could not be linked to the chips in case of a raid.

Most common chip molds were Small Crown, Large Crown, Hourglass, Small Key, Lazy S, Cord, Hub, and HCE, among others. Until a chip can be positively identified, it is classed as an “unknown”. Many chips can be found at flea markets, garage sales, and antique shops. There are also many older chips with initials that were only manufactured for home games and have no connection to an illegal casino operation. These may remain as unknowns forever.

The fun in collecting illegals comes in the research to establish an identity. Digging thru old legal records, city directories, phone books, library and newspaper archives, historical societies, or tracking down building owners can provide immense enjoyment when your work leads to putting an unknown chip with a known club. Some manufacturer records are available to help identify those that ordered the chips.

Have fun collecting!

Thoughts of a New Chip Collector - Mark Russell, R-7282

Last year I was considering a variety of options for upgrading my home poker game chip set. The flood of the Dunes Casino golf course series chips penetrated the periphery of the home chip market, being affordable for those wanting a top end set (but out of my price range, for sure). I thought they were incredibly sharp looking, so I ordered a sample set. Those were a lot nicer than the chips I had played with in the numerous casinos I had visited. I decided to hit eBay to see what else was out there in the 'classic casino' style. Uh oh. Six months later, I sit here typing out this article, the proud owner of 300 chips and counting, all nestled in their plastic flip covers in binders. As I keep explaining to my wife, I am not actually spending money. I am just diversifying our retirement savings into a new commodity...

So, what has this first year taught me that may be of (am)use(ment) to other newish collectors? Here are a few.

Be aware of why you want to collect. Me? I like playing card games for money, appreciating attractive and thoughtful design, doing things with a sense of structure, learning of history and new places, owning scarce things, and experiencing variety. As each of these preferences worked their way into my chip collecting, my focus shifted from home poker chips, to nice house mold & shaped inlay Paulson-style casino chips (which pointed me to Las Vegas) to older picture inlay/hot stamp chips (which are predominantly Nevada). Now I am satisfied having one of each inlay or hot stamp I like, preferring to get another style over getting a 2nd denomination of one I do have. If I had reflected on why I started collecting a bit more, I think I would have thrashed around less, and gotten more chips that are still in line with my current interest. On the other hand, that thrashing sure is fun, and it is part of the process for every new (or not so new) collector, anyway. And my focus is likely to continue to shift just like everyone else, and that will be fun, too. Enjoy the ride!

Understand and Appreciate the Sources for Collecting Chips. There are many great places to pick up chips. You should choose among them, realizing that each method has some specific implications. You will be trading off convenience, time, price, condition, and risk. This is neither bad nor good – simply economics. And most sources behave with honor and occasionally generosity, especially if you are a newer collector.

Dealer Websites and Chip Show Tables: For the privilege of browsing scans, handling samples, ensuring condition, having a wide selection (including hard-to-find chips), getting to chat with some of the most knowledgeable chippers around, and having the peace of mind that comes from a more formal business transaction, expect to pay a higher price.

Ebay & chip auction sites: This source can offer among the lowest prices due to the sheer volume of competing chips. But, with the potentially great price comes a need for you to be at least as informed as the other bidders, willing to wait for hard-to-find chips to be listed, able to find the time to monitor the listings, and willing to tolerate increased risk on chip condition and eventual receipt of the chip.

Chip community outlets: Whether it is an online discussion forum (like TheChipboard.com), local CC>CC club meetings, convention/chip show trading sessions or any other aggregation of like-minded collectors, there will likely be some deals struck between motivated sellers and collectors looking to pick up some chips. While the time and convenience of these events are less than ideal (witness travel costs, limited frequency, limited selection, or collection sales which contain chips you like and don't like), seller motivation can be high, and price can be very attractive and the risks extremely low.

Established relationships with other collectors: This can be the best scenario, but establishing the relationships and keeping in touch is a product of time, shared interest, and friendship. But, when seller has the buyer's best interest at heart, and the buyer feels the same way about the seller, then any deal cut is truly win/win.

Value, Schmalue... The price of anything (including chips) is determined by who is willing to pay what amount for a given item at a given time. Chips are not 'worth' what the guides say they are. We trust that the guides' authors have the expertise to estimate a range of likely values at the time of publication, but that can change due to many reasons like casino closure announcements, an unanticipated surge in quantity of previously rare chips, or a growing fascination with certain casinos, chip styles or geographical regions. And of course, price is just one trade-off factor we face as we acquire new chips for our collections, as explained above. Like me, you will wind up going for a chip you like at a fraction of the price listed in the guides, only to discover that the market is starting to be flooded with these chips. Today that chip I bought is worth less than 10% of the guide price and much less than 50% of what I paid for it. On the other hand, I was able to land a nice Stardust chip at an auction for 1/3 of guide price, and now it is going way above the guides. Just be smart and be as informed as you can, and it will even out... and then some.

Enjoy the great things about this hobby!

Adventure: Take a trip to collect a few chips, or to connect with a place that has chips you really like. I know someday I will work in a road trip to Winnemucca, NV. It will be great.

Combine interests: If you like roulette, collect roulette chips. If you like architecture, collect chips with pictures of buildings. If you like cars, collect car chips. Horse chips. Scantily clad hottie chips. Whatever.

People: To paraphrase a popular poker saying ... Some people collect chips with friends, others collect friends with chips. Do both.

Giving back: I have gotten so much great advice and learned so much from other collectors – all because these collectors wanted to share a bit of what they know to someone who could use it (just like someone did for them in the past). I have also gotten free chips offered by collectors on TheChipboard.com for no other reason than to ‘pay back’ the hobby for kind things done for them. Chips like a nifty mafia-era illegal, a uncirculated obsolete Flamingo NCV hotstamp, and an old ‘mystery chip’ with the collector-written article tracing its origins. I’m already thinking of what I can do for the next new collector (like writing this article!).

See you at a chip trading session, soon!

Roulette Chip Collecting – Barry Hauptmann, R4196

Roulette chips differ from other types of chips used in a casino. The difference is that roulette chips don't have any values printed on them. For that reason roulette chips are not allowed to leave the table. What can happen is someone buys in and places a one-dollar value on each chip. They return later and buy in and make that color chip a higher denomination. That's why these chips are closely watched. Each roulette table has several different colored chips. When you buy into a roulette game you tell the dealer what you want the value of the chip to be. The dealer then takes one of the colored chips that you are using and places it off to the side with a marker telling them what value you have bought in at.

Most casinos have several roulette tables. They may use the same color pattern on all the tables, so what differentiates the chips from one table to another is a letter, number, or a design pattern. So Table A will have the same color chips as table B, C etc.

The collecting of roulette chips has been a controversial matter for some collectors. Because these chips are not allowed to leave the table some people look at it as stealing when obtaining these chips. One of the reasons people collect roulette chips is because there are fewer chips made than house chips or Ltd. Editions. If you look at any NGC approval list you will see for roulette chips approximately 300 of each are made. There are a few ways to collect them. One way is to buy them from a dealer. Another way is to "harvest" them yourself.

Harvesting is an art. Every harvester has his own style. Some just take one chip for their collection. Others take a whole stack and then have traders. When harvesting a stack of chips it is less likely to be noticed missing than just a few.

Swizzle stick collecting - Ron Clewell, R-5536

Swizzle sticks were patented by Jay Sindler in 1935. Sindler's idea was to stamp swizzle sticks out of wood and imprint the swizzle sticks with an establishment's name/logo. It wasn't until the late 40's before the "mass produced" plastic swizzle stick was introduced. Swizzle sticks come in many shapes and sizes. The average swizzle stick is 6 inches long but can be as short as 4 inches. Swizzle sticks can also be plain straight sticks or have a figure on the top of the stick (these are more sought after by collectors).

Swizzle sticks can have a tapered "spear" end, a ball end or a spoon end. It is very hard to determine the age of most swizzle sticks since they are not stamped with dates. The best way to determine their date is by logo/name of the casino. Most of today's swizzle sticks are produced by Spirit Brands (Spir-it) and Royer Corporation. Other companies that made swizzle sticks include Seabury & Co, Beacon Signstir, W C Newman and Mi Ko. Unfortunately there are many sticks that have no company markings or are just marked "Hong Hong".

The value of a swizzle stick is based on "emotional" value. Currently there is no price guide for casino swizzle sticks and most swizzle sticks sell between 10 – 50 cents when bought in bulk on Ebay. There are a few antique dealers who try to charge \$1 - \$4 per single swizzle stick.

If swizzle stick collecting becomes your passion, you can always join the International Swizzle Stick Collectors Association. For more information on the ISSCA their website is <http://members.fortunecity.com/veray/>

What are Win Cards and Win Cards Chips? By Jim Follis, LM 3872-53

I would have to suspect that Win Cards chips have evolved from the earlier days when casinos first developed the match-play concept. Match-play is where a no cash value (NCV) marker, issued for a specific unit (1, 5, 25, etc., sometimes with a "\$" sign, but often times not) is given to a customer as an enticement to get that person involved in a game of chance. Basically, the marker(s) is used as a "free" bet in a game of blackjack, craps or roulette, but they have also been good for sporting events betting and the myriad of newer, live-action table games (3-card poker, pai-gow, Caribbean stud, etc.). If the bet is won, then the dealer will match the amount of the NCV marker(s) in live-action chips. Depending on the rules of the specific casinos, when the bet is paid off the NCV markers may be removed from play by the dealer, or they may be left in-play for subsequent bet(s) by the holder. However, a losing bet will cause the removal of the NCV marker(s) from the table, i.e., they get dropped into the "drop box" (the slot where cash is deposited) as opposed to being placed into the chip rack tray.

Over the years many NCV markers have been put into use by a number of casinos around the World. They exist in many different forms and wording. Some were printed on paper as chits or coupons, some onto wooden, plastic or metal rounds, often called tokens and quite a few were made in the likeness of live-action gaming chips. While many of these chips are plentiful, some are very unique and quite collectible.

Over the years an enterprising individual decided that he could market the concept of match-play markers to the casinos as a for-profit business, thus Win Cards and Win Cards Chips were created.

For a fee, Gaming International would provide a casino operation with its Win Cards program. Other than some earlier twists and turns, the Win Cards program still consists of a casino offering 3 different Win Card devices to a customer and giving the customer 15 units of match-play markers for \$10. The match-play markers (chips) were free and the \$10 was for the Win Cards devices. The three different Win Cards devices pertained to how to bet and play craps, roulette and blackjack. Each device was a plastic printed card with a turnable plastic disk to line-up with options on the card and view different betting and playing recommendations. In Nevada and New Jersey, gaming regulations permitted the use of the cards (a sort of crib sheet) which plays into the advertising of Win Cards; "Gaming Approved!".

Armed with the cards, a new player could enter a craps, roulette or blackjack game and be better prepared to know the play of the game. But as an enticement, the whole package included 15- 1 NCV chips, or 3- 5 NCV chips, so that the buyer could get involved with a game and practice with "play money". Although the 15- 1 NCV chips are standard, some casinos even permitted a purchaser to have other 1 and 5 NCV combinations totaling 15, i.e., 10- 1 and 1- 5 NCVs, or 5- 1 and 2- 5 NCVs. Each package also include a "Dealer's Tip Chip". If given to a dealer, he/she could turn it in to the casino for \$1 in return.

In the early days of the Win Cards program, a Dealer's Tip Chip (in the form of a plastic round) was included in the package and could be used to tip your favorite dealer. The tip chips were not compression-molded chips, but were of the same diameter and thickness of a casino chip. Most depicted the Win Cards trademarked silhouette of a couple jumping for joy on one side and "Non Negotiable" and "No Cash Value" on the opposite side. Later on (currently) the "Dealer's Tip Chip" was replaced with the "Dealer's Tip Chip Coupon" a paper chit meant to perform the same dealer tip action for \$1.

While the Dealer's Tip Chips were generic (they did not depict the casino name), the newer Dealer's Tip Chip Coupons do reflect the name of the casino. Most, but not all Win Cards programs are administered by a casino's slot club department and typically require a customer to be signed-up in the slot club in order to be eligible to buy Win Cards. This is often done with a Gaming International provided application form. A completed form is then offered to the slot club promotions desk person, who in turn writes up an authorization form (again, a form furnished by Gaming International). The authorization form is then carried to the casino's main Cashier Cage, where it and \$10 are exchanged for the Win Cards package. Most Win Cards packages consist of a tall zip-lock bag containing the 15 units of NCV chips, a Dealer's Tip Chip Coupon, three tri-fold Win Cards brochures, each holds a specific Win Card (craps, roulette and blackjack) and provides instructions for use of the applicable Win Cards device. Most of the zip-lock bags also have a sticker affixed to the outside of the bag denoting the "Win Cards" program and the name of the casino. Some casinos limit a purchase to once only, while others limit you to once each month for the duration of the program.

The original Win Cards chips were Paulson, Hat and Cane molded chips with printed inlays. The inlays reflected the casino name/logo and also the familiar silhouette of the jumping for joy couple. More recently, Win Cards chips are Unicorn molded (Chipco), hot-stamped chips with a casino name and the familiar "Win Cards" and "No Cash Value" printed on both sides. For a brief period of time, Win Cards chips were also Paulson, Hat and Cane, hot-stamps, reflecting casino name, "Win Cards" and "No Cash Value".

However, there are also some very distinct, different and unusual Win Cards chips in existence. The Tahoe Biltmore had chips made from the same material as the earlier issued Dealer's Tip Chip chips, which allowed for better graphics. The Flamingo Hilton, Reno, NV had several, very similar looking hot-stamped issues with six (3 sets of split) inserts, as did the Rail City Casino, Sparks, NV, all from RTP (Gamblers General Store, Las Vegas, NV). The Dunes, The Virginian and The Flamingo Hilton, Reno (yes, a third version) had a hot-stamped, clover leaf molded chip. And The Four Queens, Las Vegas, NV has two, specially made Win Cards chips for a 1 and 5 NCV. Both are ¼ pie chips with printed inlays in a house mold. The 5 NCV is white and green on one side and white and red on the other side, while the 1 NCV is white and blue on one side and white and pink on the other. Both of these examples are very nice looking chips.

As an interesting aside, there must have been a delay between the time that the Win Cards program was started at the Four Queens and the time they received their Win Cards chips from PaulSon. During that period, the Four Queens substituted their pre-existing, in-house 1 and 5 NCVs as Win Cards chips. Specifically, they used the yellow, Bud Jones, 4-suits, plastic, hot-stamped “1 No Cash Value” chip for the Win Cards 1 NCV and hot pink, PaulSon, H/C, hot-stamped “5 No Cash Value” chip for the Win Cards 5 NCV.

A similar substitution was also done at the Lady Luck, Las Vegas, NV, however the pre-existing in-house chips they used were not replaced by actual “Win Cards” branded chips. The Lady Luck used two different versions of NCV chips, both are hot-stamped “Lady Luck Las Vegas” “Special Events” “No Cash Value”. One is grey in a TRI-CLUB mold, while the other is beige in a HHR mold.

Win Cards chips are but a sub-category in the sub-category of NCV/match-play chips in the arena of collecting casino chips. However, in addition to collecting that sub-sub-category, I also collect “Win Cards” branded items, like the three different brochures included in the Win Cards package for craps, roulette and blackjack. As well as the cards themselves (craps, roulette and blackjack), paper Dealer’s Tip Chip Coupons and other such similar items. My collection includes a “Win Cards” branded wrist watch that is a bonus offering to a casino executive when they agree to market the Win Cards program at their casino. I also have a “Baccarat” Win Card device, which to my knowledge has not been packaged into a Win Cards promotion set-up, and a green, unicorn molded, hot-stamped chip printed as a business card for Gaming International.

Gaming International maintains a webpage, as a portal to sell their Win Cards program to casinos World-wide. Their webpage can also be used to view a listing of what casinos are currently offering Win Cards and Win Cards chips. Check them out on the web at: www.wincards.com.

While on the web, also check out my commercial-free site of collectible Win Cards items, which includes front and back scans of many Win Cards chips, at: <http://www.gamingore.com/wincards>.

Collecting California Chips - George Dmitrevsky LM-125-125.

Collecting chips from California is a fascinating area .It can be a sideline or your specialty. I find it fascinating, enjoyable, and affordable. One can buy a whole collection for less money than some individual Las Vegas chips sell for. One of the most gratifying things one can do is to research and attribute a previously unknown chip to a location, owner and card room.

The earliest chips used in California date to the early 1850's. It all started in 1854 when the Woodruff Hotel and Saloon opened its doors and offered alcohol, women and gambling. The games have been going ever since and NOW the California Grand Casino has the right to brag about owning the longest continuous poker action in history.

Since that time, there have been at least 2,000 cardrooms in existence; most of them small saw dust 1-5 table operations. Today, one of the largest has over 200 tables. Some knowledgeable collectors believe the total number of different chips that have been used at nearly 10,000.

Gambling began in the USA in the 1600's. An upsurge in the gambling industry was during the gold rush in California. The apex of California gambling was between 1849 and 1855 and San Francisco becoming the biggest gambling city, surpassing Los Angeles.

During this time, poker and blackjack were relatively obscure games. Until the late 1870's, FARO was by far the most popular and prolific game played in the old West saloons.

In 1860, all banking games were banned in California.

California law allows player banked games, whereby one player can act as the banker and play against the other players at the table. The room has no stake in the outcome of any of these games. Players play against each other and pay a fee for use of the facilities. This format is also used in the Asian games and the Blackjack type games. Today, the three main types of games are variations of poker, Asian games, and different versions of Blackjack.

California chips are fairly inexpensive, there is a large supply from closed card rooms, some chips have been used in a different number of places since the owners took their chips with them and reused them at a new location.

Denominations vary from 5 c, 10c, 25c, 50c, \$1, \$2, \$3, \$4, \$5, \$10, \$20, \$25, \$50, \$100.

The molds most often used are the 'L' mold, Large Crown, Small Crown, Horses Head Left (HHL) and Hat and Cane (H&C). Chipcos have been the latest mold used.

In 2005 there were 96 active licenses for card rooms in the state.

There are two excellent sources of information for California chips. The first is "Armin Pfaender's Guide to California chips"; Armin Pfaender, 2006. The second is "Eastman's Illustrated Guide to California Card Room Chips & Checks", Lawrence R. Eastman, 1998.

I can be contacted at - claychip@mindspring.com

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