



It's All About the Values

by Sheldon Smith



This column is devoted to understanding the values of gaming memorabilia.

This is a tough time to be a collector of almost anything! Many, but not all, collectors are happy to just collect and the prices they pay may in fact, be a secondary issue to acquiring and maintaining forward momentum in their collections. There are, however, aspects of collecting which any sensible collector needs to consider

Significant issues facing collectors today are: What is the current value of my collection? Which way is it heading and, do I care? What can I do about it?

There are some areas of collecting that do not appear to have suffered much fluctuation in value under the current cloud of economic conditions in the USA as well as elsewhere. For example: RARE comic books. These have maintained most, if not all, of their values and, in many cases, have increased in value. Also, RARE works of art appear to have actually increased in value in the last 5 years. Because of the increasing wealth of the Chinese (specifically on the mainland and Taiwan), Chinese artifacts have increased in value.

The same cannot be said about collections of gaming memorabilia, which has had difficulty maintaining its relevance in the collection world. Much of this type of collecting is focused in the USA where, despite the expansion of casino gaming, there has been no commensurate increase in interest in collecting casino memorabilia. I believe this is partially caused by the introduction of electronic and internet gaming along with the introduction of alternate forms of entertainment in the major gaming markets.

That is not to say that the market for RARE (I dislike that word!) gaming memorabilia is not there, it's just that the high end items have lost a significant portion of their value. But, this is a double edged sword. A decrease in assigned value has worked well for many newer collectors. Items that were once out of reach no longer are! Items in the lower value area are still avid-

Harolds Club
\$500 chip



Two \$1 Gaming tokens



Wynn Las Vegas TITO (ticket-in/ticket-out).

ly collected and some items that appear to have no collectibility have captured the imagination of gaming memorabilia collectors.

An example of the shift in value range is the \$500

Harolds' Club chip (Reno, NV, 1935-1995). As recently as 24 months ago, it had a value range of \$600-\$699. In today's guide book (called the CHIP RACK), its value is now listed in the \$300-\$349 range; and, in fact, recently sold for as little as \$165.00!

An item that has recently become a gaming collectible at the lower end of the value spectrum is the paper record of payouts from slot machines and video poker machines, called the TITO (ticket-in/ticket-out). Unfortunately, with the introduction of the TITO we lost the true collectibility of the \$1 gaming TOKEN that used to ring in our ears with a wonderful, CLANG-CLANG-CLANG sound as we collected our winnings or merely stopped our losing! With the elimination of the TOKEN by all but a few gaming manufacturers, the TOKEN as a collectible has fallen on hard times. However, the really nice tokens (in excellent condition) or those that are really RARE are still sought; but, much less so these days.

So, where does that leave us? I do NOT believe that gaming memorabilia items will go the way of Beanie Babies and Franklin Mint Plates! Those items were created to be collectibles. That is not the same thing as an item that was actually created to be used in a casino! Casino items are historical in nature and invoke all that existed in those casinos including the emotions present in a casino – the gambling, the entertainment, the fine dining, the color, drama, intrigue, etc. I contend that, as the economy rebounds and more people visit casinos, IF they are collectors of anything they will revisit their favorable experiences and new gaming memorabilia collectors will be created.

Sheldon Smith is the Vice-President of the Casino Chip & Gaming Token Collectors Club, Inc. and is the club's Publicity Director. He and his wife Christine specialize in collecting Nevada Casino's \$1 chips. They currently have over 1400 of them!





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Lakewood 400 Antiques Market Holds Annual Show

Cummings, GA - The Lakewood 400 Antiques Market is holding its annual Antiques and Gift Show December 6, 7, and 8th, 2013. "Holding the Show on the first weekend, instead of the usual third weekend, is new for Lakewood, and is exciting as it puts our vendors and shoppers earlier in the decorating and gift buying season", says Ed Spivia, owner of Lakewood. In addition to antiques, home décor and collectibles, the December Antiques and Gift Show offers upscale and unique gift items and has been quite successful in the previous years. Over the past three years, Lakewood 400 has seen a steady growth in dealers, attendance and quality of merchandise. In 2014, the Show resumes its third weekend schedule, beginning January 17, 18 and 19, 2014.

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