

Tokens and Chips offer an insight to the expansion of Reno Gaming



Forty years ago MGM's mighty lion symbol reflected the expansion of gambling in northern Nevada. Complete with a massive showroom and an impressive review "Hello Hollywood" the MGM lion represented growth and a change in the Reno skyline and gambling. The nature of gambling had changed from the vibrant and intensive play at small local clubs to the expansive casino resort hotel scene.

Nickel slot machines were still to be found, but the expanding use of high denomination gaming tokens predicted higher wagering to come. Today collectors seek the historic tokens of this bygone era with enthusiasm.

In Nevada's early days of legalized gambling a \$20 bet was considerable, considering that a full steak dinner for two people could be had for under \$10! Gamblers thought of high stakes play as being anything over \$5 and often set table limits at \$100. A \$500 gaming check was a rarity until the concept of high stakes gaming became an accepted level of play in casino resort hotels. High value checks were introduced as baccarat and sports book betting became popular, first in Las Vegas and then in Reno and Lake Tahoe. Today a high stakes blackjack table might have \$1,000 gaming checks or higher values.

Starting in the mid-1960's coin collectors began to collect gaming tokens and gaming chips (checks). Today the hobby is well established. The most prized collectible tokens and chips are those from clubs that have the strongest and most interesting history.

The Nevada Historical Society hosts its "Chip-Dig" collector's show at the NHS Museum located at 1650 No. Virginia Street on May 12th. The show features collectors and vendors of Gambling Collectibles from 10am to 4pm.