

Adventures in Canada

by John A. Bollinger

The CC>CC annual convention in Las Vegas is over, and what an event that was. All those wonderful tokens and chips available, plus the many friendly faces of the member who attended and shared experiences with... What does one do for an encore? Why make a trip to Canada of course!

Actually the seed of the trip was planted some months earlier while I was reviewing some old issues of our quarterly journal. The Chipco company used to send pictures of new chips that were released by them to our magazine and in one of them I noticed that the Halifax Sheraton had a \$5 chip illustrated. Could it be possible that there were gaming tokens to be obtained at the Halifax Sheraton?

Having exhausted the possibilities of the other provinces; Ontario and Quebec (Casino Windsor, Hull, Niagara, Rama, Montreal and Charlevoix), it is now Nova Scotia's turn.

Before setting out on a possible wild goose chase, I telephoned the Sheraton on its 800 toll free number to see if they did have tokens or if they used the paper print-out machines. Indeed, the casino had gaming tokens of

various denominations up to and including the \$100.

However, the girl then informed me that the Sheraton no longer ran the casino operations. The casino was now run by the province of Nova Scotia and the name has been changed to Casino Nova Scotia.

Another obsolete set of tokens and chips to deal with. No more Sheraton Halifax...(sigh)

However, rather than dwell on lost opportunities, here is a chance for new opportunities – a brand new casino with new chips and tokens.

After picking up my rental car, I immediately set out for Bar Harbor, Maine to catch the catamaran car ferry to cross over to Yarmouth, Nova Scotia. This is the type of vessel that skims over the water at 50 miles per hour, unlike the conventional car ferries. During the 2 1/2 hour ride, I amused myself by playing the

25¢ and \$1 slot machines onboard. Each token has the design of a cat on one side (the name of the ferry-boat) and the other side has the Golden Anchor Casino logo and denomination.

At Yarmouth, I went through customs and then headed for the nearest money exchange to obtain Canadian funds. Now on to Halifax...

On the way I passed through the town of Liverpool which is the hometown of one of my favorite country western singers, Hank Snow. But since it was Sunday, I figured the museum would be closed and passed through without stopping. Also along the way I noticed unusually heavy traffic flow going in the opposite direction. I learned later that the day I decided to visit Halifax was also the day 2 1/2 million people decided to visit Halifax. However, they were not going to the casino, but instead came to see the tall ships as they departed for Europe.



The Cat Tokens

As you can imagine, the streets were clogged and many were designated one-way to handle the traffic chase. I'm sure glad I am not a traffic policeman. It took me probably three times the usual time to finally locate the casino where I rested and unwound.

On entering the casino, I immediately headed for the \$1 machines and quickly hit \$50 on the second spin. Now off to the \$2 machines where I wound up \$6 ahead after several tries. Boy, this is fun! I'm not so lucky on the \$5 machines and go through my \$50 winnings fairly quick. Now it's on to serious token collecting and I pick up a nice example of their \$10, \$25, \$50 and \$100 tokens for my collection. No, I did not play them.

Before leaving the area, I asked the girl in the cashier cage if she had any of the old Sheraton Halifax casino tokens lying around. She told me she did not have any \$1 tokens, but had 4 \$5 tokens she would sell to me and how many did I wish? I started to say only one, but realized immediately that "Sandy" Sanderson (of the traveling Sandersons) would personally strangle me with his bare hands if he ever found out I left an obsolete \$5 token he needed, so I replied I would take them all.

Then I mustered up the courage to ask if she had any \$25 or \$100 tokens. She told me that these would have to be obtained at the main cashier cage on the central



Nova Scotia Tokens

casino floor, she did not have any. So, with pockets bulging with new \$1, \$2, \$5, \$10, \$25, \$50, and \$100 tokens plus the 4 \$5 obsolete tokens, I waddled across the

casino floor to the main cashier cage. Can you imagine the sight I must have presented to anyone who may have been watching me?

I was fortunate, for the cage was not busy and when I made my request to the young girl in the cage, again I was told there were no \$1 available, but she would sell me the one \$5 token she had. I did not really want another since I already had 4 of them, but since they are obsolete now, maybe I can use them for trading purposes.

Then I asked if she had any of the Sheraton Halifax \$25 and \$100 tokens. She said she would have to ask her supervisor, as these would be kept in the back storage space if indeed there were any. Then she excused herself to talk with an older lady at the rear of the cage.

The lady she was conversing with had all of the charm and compassion of a Marine Corps boot camp drill instructor. She icily informed the young cashier that these tokens are obsolete, are property of the casino, and are not to leave the premises. The expression of her stern face and the set jaw told me there would be no appeal from this hanging judge.

Thoroughly deflated, I sagged my shoulders, tucked my tail between my legs, and slinked away to the gaming area to try to retrieve some dignity.

I must have been winning at the blackjack and Caribbean Stud tables for it was about 3 hours later I overheard one card dealer

mention to another that he had been bawled out by his pit boss for clocking in 2 minutes late for work.

That is when the proverbial “light flashing in the head” struck me. A different shift, a different cage supervisor. Not wanting to stretch my luck, (the cage supervisor may stay later or have a staggered shift), I played another 1 1/2 hours before getting up the nerve to try again.

Before approaching the cage, I scouted around a bit lurking near some of the slot machines. Sure enough, there were different faces in the cage, so I made my second college try.

Again, when I asked the young girl if there were any stray obsolete \$25 or \$100 tokens, she told me she would have to check with her boss.

This time, instead of a gruff rebuttal, the older lady came over herself and asked how she could be of help. I explained that I collect tokens from different casinos, and needed some of the Sheraton tokens for my collection.

She appeared thoughtful, said she believed she saw a \$25 token in the back and would check. I didn’t want her to have time to change her mind so I forwarded \$25 to her. She smiled and took the money, and a short while later returned with the token. I was ecstatic, but totally unprepared for what she said next. She said that was the only \$25 she had, but she also noticed a \$100 token and would I be interested in that also?

I was out of Canadian funds, but in no way was I going to let this opportunity slip by. I quickly pulled out a U.S. \$100 bill and the lady gave me the currency transfer slip to fill out, and then handed me \$142 Canadian. I then gave her the \$100 Canadian bill, she gave me the token and the transaction was completed. Mission accomplished. She then stated that there were several chips available from the Sheraton, but since I collect only tokens, I declined the offer. I then tipped the young cashier \$5 (Canadian) and made my departure figuratively walking on clouds.

There is a lesson to be learned from this experience, and that is to not be discouraged by the first



Sheraton Tokens

failure. Always try a second time. However, I would not encourage a third or subsequent try, for there is a fine line between a determined collector and a “pest”. Believe me, cage personnel do talk to each other and if someone seems too arrogant or too demanding, then they have worn out their welcome.

All in all, it was a very enjoyable trip for me and will always be remembered with good vibes. ♦