

The Gaming Tokens of 1965

(not Issued by the Franklin Mint)

by Howard W. Herz

Nevada's casinos faced an unprecedented coinage shortage starting in 1964 as the price of silver approached the government's set price of \$1.29 per ounce. With a value in excess of \$1.29, silver dollars would have a melt value that would exceed their face value and hoarding of the silver cartwheels would be the natural result.

Most of the silver dollars used in the country circulated in the Western states with the vast majority in Nevada. Since the legalization of gambling in 1931, Nevada casinos has used the dollars on the gaming tables rather than \$1 gaming checks.

By the summer of 1964, the U.S. Treasury was running out of the bags of silver dollars that it had stored since the 1880's. With the last shipment of one million coins to Harolds Club in 1964, the treasury shipped shipments.

With the supply of dollar coins stopped and the demand dramatically increasing, casinos faced a shortage of dollar coins. The U.S. Treasury was also forced to confront an impossible situation. An attempt to design a 1964 Peace dollar (from the design last used in 1935) met with failure. Caught between the legal requirements of minting a full weight dollar in silver that would have an intrinsic value above face value and not having the legal authority to mint non-silver coinage, the government legislated the private use of dollar tokens to resolve the problem.

Desperate to find a replacement for the silver dollars that had long been in use on gaming tables, the casinos went to great lengths to stop customers from walking with the coins. Harrah's Club defaced bags of dollars in hopes of discouraging collectors. Harvey's Resort Hotel watched as the daily loss of coins went from 25,000 pieces per day to 45,000. Both Harvey's and Harrah's had to finally stop the use of dollar coins until replacements were found.

By the time the full impact of the loss of the dollar denomination coins was being felt, a number of small private mints were tooling up to meet the demand. Desperate for coins, a number of casinos ordered dollar tokens from the first mint representative who walked through the door. By early 1965 a number of private mints were striking or casting dollar tokens for casinos.

By the end of 1965, a newly formed private mint, The Franklin Mint, had come to dominate the market place. Using traditional coinage standards from the U.S. mint and applying the most modern technology and sales techniques, The Franklin Mint eclipsed its competition so thoroughly that by 1966, it was producing almost all of the gaming tokens in use in Nevada.

Today collectors find that the Franklin Mint tokens are readily available, but the other private mint issues can be elusive. With few publications to guide collectors, the non-Franklin Mint issues are easily neglected. The following listing and commentary covers the non-Franklin Mint issues and includes regular issues, trial pieces and other associated strikes.

Issues from the private mints were made in a number of metals. The Osborne Mint featured a token in "Silveen". This was a surface treatment on brass that resulted in a dark surface. As the coins were circulated they would begin to look like a tarnished silver piece.

The Mints

Michigan Tool Co. - San Jose, California

Michigan tool produced some of the early issues of 1965. With limited coinage experience, they produced a rather crude die struck coinage in copper. They produced a number of patterns of excellent quality, that were machine engraved. Their standard production did not live up to these patterns.

Osborne Coinage Co. - Cincinnati, Ohio

One of the oldest and most professional private mints that started in the early 1850's. This mint struck high quality coinage. Their gaming tokens featured a surface treatment called "Silveen". This treatment produced a dark gray surface and was a distinct product of this mint.

Norwalk Powdered Metals, Inc.

This company produced cast metal tokens. They tried to imitate the color and surface texture of a circulated silver dollar. A number of trial pieces were produced for Felix's (Lovelock, Nevada), but the mold broke after only 20 pieces were cast. The temperature requirement to produce the "silver dollar" surface was not compatible with the casting process and the process was abandoned.

Product Engineering Co., Inc. - Portland Oregon

This machine company produced cast powdered metal tokens with a number of plated surface types. Using mostly chrome plated surfaces, these tokens proved to be unpopular.

Wendell's - Minneapolis, Minnesota

A private mint that produced high quality tokens. This mint only produced a limited number of tokens in 1965.

Half Dollar Gaming Tokens - A note:

Although the federal government had allowed the production of dollar gaming tokens in 1965, a number of private mints produced half dollar tokens to ease the massive coin shortage that was occurring in 1965 as the silver coinage disappeared. Shortly after these half dollar tokens were issued, the U.S. Treasury ruled them to be illegal as the half dollar denomination was not obsolete. In most instances a small number of samples were made and sent to the casinos for trial.

Diamond Jim's Nevada Club

Las Vegas, Nevada - USA
Half Dollar Gaming Token
OSBORNE COINAGE CO.
Date/Mintmark: 1965-(O)



Golden Bronze Trial Piece

Note: This piece has been previously listed as being issued in silveen.



Obverse & Reverse Lead Die Trials

Liberty Belle Saloon

Reno, Nevada - U.S.A.
Half Dollar Gaming Token
OSBORNE COINAGE CO.
Date/Mintmark: 1965-(O)



Regular mint issue - silveen

Pioneer Club

Las Vegas, Nevada - USA
Half Dollar Gaming Token
OSBORNE COINAGE CO.
Date/Mintmark: 1965-(O)



Regular mint issue - silveen

Sahara Hotel

Las Vegas, Nevada - USA
Half Dollar Gaming Token
OSBORNE COINAGE CO.
Date/Mintmark: 1965-(O)



Regular mint issue - silveen

Dollar Tokens

Barney's Casino

Stateline, Lake Tahoe, Nevada - U.S.A.
Dollar Gaming Token
WENDELL'S
Date/Mintmark: (1965-W)



Regular mint issue - brass

Known Samples:

- Nickel-silver Trial
- Nickel-silver Trial "Void Sample"
- Golden Bronze Trial
- Golden Bronze Trial "Void Sample"
- Antiqued Brass Trial
- Antiqued Brass Trial "Void Sample"
- Copper Trial Strike
- Copper Trial Strike "Void Sample"
- Antiqued Copper Trial
- Antiqued Copper Trial "Void Sample"
- Burnished Copper Trial

Bill & Effies Truck Stop

- Verdi, Nevada - U.S.A.
- Dollar Gaming Token
- WENDELL'S
- Date/Mintmark: (1965-W)



Regular mint issue - antiqued brass.

Cactus Pete's Casino

- Jackpot, Nevada - U.S.A.
- Dollar Gaming Token
- OSBORNE COINAGE CO.
- Date/Mintmark: (1965-O)



Regular mint issue. - silveen

Known Patterns:

- Trial in Silvery Lead
- Copper Center Trial (cut)
- Trial in White Lead
- Obverse Trial Strike in Lead
- Reverse Trial Strike in Lead

Carson City Nugget

- Carson City, Nevada - U.S.A.
- Dollar Gaming Token
- WENDELL'S
- Date/Mintmark: (1965-W)



Regular mint issue - brass

Known Trial Pieces:



- Brass Trial "Void Sample Only"
- Antiqued Brass Trial
- Antiqued Brass Trial "Void Sample Only"
- Copper Trial
- Copper Trial "Void Sample Only"
- Antiqued Copper Trial
- Antiqued Copper Trial "Void Sample Only"
- Polished Copper Trial
- Polished Copper Trial "Void Sample"

Casino 93

- Jackpot, Nevada - U.S.A.
- Dollar Gaming Token
- OSBORNE COINAGE CO.
- Date/Mintmark: (1965-O)



Regular mint issue - nickel-silver.



Long Leg "R" In "Players"
Regular mint issue - nickel-silver.

Club Cal-Neva

Reno, Nevada - U.S.A.
Dollar Gaming Token
NORWALK POWDERED METALS, INC.
Date/Mintmark: (1965-NPM)



Bright Chrome Finish

Known Trial Pieces:

Nickel Plated Finish
Unplated Powdered Metal Sample
Trial Strike in Medium Dark Metal
Trial Strike in Dark Metal
Trial Strike in Metal, Nickel Plated (Dull)
Trial Strike Bright Nickel Finish
Trial Strike in Copper & Lacquer Plated
Trial Strike White Nickel Plated
Trial Strike Satin Nickel Plated

Known Varieties:

Short Leg "R" In "Redeemable"
Normal Lettering

Crystal Bay Club

Crystal Bay, Nevada - U.S.A.
Dollar Gaming Token
MICHIGAN TOOL & ENGINEERING
Date/Mintmark: (1965-MT)



Regular mint issue - copper

Felix's Bank Club

Lovelock, Nevada - U.S.A.
Dollar Gaming Token
PRODUCT ENGINEERING CO., INC.
Date/Mintmark: (1965-PE)



Regular mint issue.

Commercial Hotel

Elko, Nevada - U.S.A.
Dollar Gaming Token
OSBORNE COINAGE CO.
Date/Mintmark: (1965-O)



Short Leg "R" In "Players"

Known Trial Pieces:

Trial Finish in Satin Nickel
Trial in special alloy dull nickel.

Harold's Club

Reno, Nevada - U.S.A.

Dollar Gaming Token

PRODUCT ENGINEERING CO., INC.

Date/Mintmark: (1965-PE)



H/Dollar-Reeded Groups-Dot swirl-Bright Finish

Known Trial & Pattern Pieces:

H/Dollar-Reeded-Dot swirl-Bright Dip

H/Dollar-Reeded-Dot swirl-Unplated

H/Dollar-Reeded-Dot swirl-Satin Plated Brass

H/Dollar- Reeded-Dot swirl-Unplated Brass

H/Dollar-Plain Edge-Dot-swirl-Unplated Brass

H/Dollar-Cast Edge-Dot swirl-Unplated Brass

H/Dollar-Reeded-Dot swirl-Plated Zinc

H/Dollar-Reeded-Dot swirl-Satin Plated Zinc

H/Dollar-Reeded Groups-Dot swirl-Zinc



Small H-Fun Token-Reeded-Solid swirl-Bright Plated

Known Trial Pieces:

Small H-Fun Token-Reeded-Solid swirl-Satin Plated

Harold's Club

Reno, Nevada - U.S.A.

Dollar Gaming Token

PRODUCT ENGINEERING CO., INC.

Date/Mintmark: (1965-PE)



Large A-Fun Token-Reeded-Solid swirl-Bright finish

Harold's Club

Reno, Nevada - U.S.A.

Dollar Gaming Token

PRODUCT ENGINEERING CO., INC.

Date/Mintmark: (1965-PE)



Large H-Fun Token-Reeded-Dot swirl-Bright Plated

Harvey's Resort Hotel

Stateline, Lake Tahoe, Nevada - U.S.A.

Dollar Gaming Token

MICHIGAN TOOL & ENGINEERING

Date/Mintmark: (1965-MT)



Regular mint issue - copper

Harold's Club

Reno, Nevada - U.S.A.

Dollar Gaming Token

PRODUCT ENGINEERING CO., INC.

Date/Mintmark: (1965-PE)

Known Patterns -

Engraved Pattern, without Circle, Reeded Edge



Engraved Pattern,with Circle,Plain Edge
Struck Pattern,with Circle,Reeded Edge
Struck Pattern,without Circle,Reeded Edge
Struck Plain Edge Trial



Regular mint issue - copper.



Obverse Engraved Die Trial

Honest John's

Las Vegas, Nevada - U.S.A.
Dollar Gaming Token
PRODUCT ENGINEERING CO., INC.
Date/Mintmark: (1965-PE)



Regular mint issue.

John Ascuaga's Nugget

Sparks, Nevada - U.S.A.
Dollar Gaming Token
MICHIGAN TOOL & ENGINEERING
Date/Mintmark: (1965-MT)



Regular mint issue - copper.

Horse Shu Club

Jackpot, Nevada - U.S.A.
Dollar Gaming Token
OSBORNE COINAGE CO.
Date/Mintmark: (1965-O)



Regular mint issue- brass.

Nevada Club/Nevada Lodge

Reno & Crystal Bay, Nevada - U.S.A.
Dollar Gaming Token
MICHIGAN TOOL & ENGINEERING
Date/Mintmark: (1965-MT)



Regular mint issue - copper.

Joe Mackie's Star Broiler

Winnemucca, Nevada - U.S.A.
Dollar Gaming Token
MICHIGAN TOOL & ENGINEERING
Date/Mintmark: (1965-MT)

Pioneer Club

Las Vegas, Nevada - U.S.A.
Dollar Gaming Token
OSBORNE COINAGE CO.
Date/Mintmark: (1965-O)



Regular mint issue - nickel-silver.

Known Special Strikes -
Silver Presentation Token

Sahara Tahoe

Stateline, Lake Tahoe, Nevada - U.S.A.
Dollar Gaming Token
MICHIGAN TOOL & ENGINEERING
Date/Mintmark: (1965-MT)



Regular mint issue - copper.

Sonoma Inn

Winnemucca, Nevada - U.S.A.
Dollar Gaming Token
OSBORNE COINAGE CO.
Date/Mintmark: (1965-O)



Regular mint issue - brass.

Known Trial Pieces:

Obverse Lead Die Trial
Reverse Lead Die Trial

Stockmen's Motor Hotel

Elko, Nevada - U.S.A.
Dollar Gaming Token
OSBORNE COINAGE CO.
Date/Mintmark: (1965-O)



Regular mint issue - silveen.

Thunderbird Hotel

Las Vegas, Nevada - U.S.A.
Dollar Gaming Token
MICHIGAN TOOL & ENGINEERING
Date/Mintmark: 1965-(MT)



Without Birds



With Birds

Regular mint issues - copper.

Known Varieties:

Weak Birds
Die Break with Birds