

JOHNNY NOLAN VS. CARRY NATION

By Bob Gaarder R-304

Recently, Johnny Nolan's Saloon and Gambling Emporium of Cripple Creek, Colorado issued a new series of \$1, \$5 and \$25 CHIPCO chips and a \$1 slot machine token with a date of 1993. These items, added to the original chip issues in the same denominations; plus the original slot token with a date of 1991, brings the total of collectible items from this casino to eight.



I wrote in a previous issue, the story of how this casino opened in October of 1991 in the same location which the old casino saloon did business 100 years earlier; and how Johnny's grandson, who is now an attorney in New York State, was present at the grand opening in 1991.

The original Johnny Nolan's Saloon was billed as a gentlemen's club and catered to the gold mine millionaires of the day. Johnny had a reputation as a sharp businessman as well as a philanthropist. His club offered poker, blackjack, roulette and faro. Carry Nation had built her reputation as one who opposed the "demon rum" and any establishment which sold it. She and her army of followers had destroyed many western bars with their clubs and axes.

When Carrie Nation came to Cripple Creek in the early 1900's, the bar owners had been forewarned and closed their establishments. As she began to walk up Bennet Avenue, Johnny Nolan kept his saloon open stating to his customers, "I will not let Carry Nation buffalo me!" Upon entering Nolan's saloon, Carry looked the place over and her eyes came to a rest on a nude painting located behind the bar, which was a copy of "The Birth Of Venus", by Sandro Botticelli. Raising her ax high in the air, she announced, "hang a blanket over that trollop, for if that naked wench ain't covered instanter, I'll chop her to shreds!" She did. At that point, legend has it that our hero, Johnny Nolan, jumped over the bar, picked up Carry Nation and threw her out the door onto the sidewalk. (No easy task as Carry Nation was big and mean.... and she held the ax).

Carry was then arrested by the Cripple Creek police. She was later charged with destruction of property and placed in jail as she was unable to post bond or pay a fine. Johnny Nolan later came forward with the necessary funds and Carry was released from jail on the condition imposed by Johnny that she take the next train to Denver. She did.

There is a happy ending to this story. 100 years later, Jim Beaman, a local and nationally known artist, painted another copy of "The Birth Of Venus". The four by seven foot mural was hung on the same wall where the one was destroyed by Carry. The painting was later moved to the poker room when the casino was remodeled last winter. There the "trollop" stands for all to see.

