

Charitable Casino Chips of North Dakota

by John K. Kallman

An Overview:

Gambling takes on many forms, from the friendly Friday night poker game to the mega casinos found on the strip in Las Vegas. There are perhaps as many different ways to gamble as there are people willing to make and accept a wager. Many gaming related activities revolve around charitable organizations, with the most common being Bingo and Pull tabs. While both of these exist in South Dakota, they have added another option, that being Charitable Casinos. These are not to be mistaken with their much larger counterparts located elsewhere in the country with many being no more than a single blackjack table located in the back of a bar. From the few “casinos” that I have been able to visit so far, the only two games being offered are the above mentioned black jack, and another game usually, but not always referred to as a paddle wheel (more on that later).

Location, Location, Location!

As mentioned above, many of these places are small, and sometimes out of the way. No massive advertising campaigns here, with sometimes nothing more than a small neon light hanging in the window. I recall one time while driving from Salt Lake City to Wendover Nevada that the closer one got to the Nevada border, the number of billboards related to the various places that one could part with their money increased accordingly. In North Dakota, you have to be somewhat of a detective, have a

good road map, be willing to get lost, get misdirected, and other wise, and just plain ask!!! While the internet is a wonderful source of information, it is only as good as the person responsible for keeping the information up to date. Places close down, change owners, or the operators just decide that location B is better for business than location A, and move! While the Official State Web site has a rather extensive list of those organizations registered as charitable, the address given is that of their headquarters, not necessarily where the games take place.

What is in a name?

Having a chip in hand that is new to a collector always brings to mind where was this chip used and what for? With the charity chips of North Dakota, this is not always an easy task. The chips are sometimes not plainly marked with the organization that is running the games, or if it is marked, sometimes only with its initials. Thus, after finding a place that has a casino, that is open when you get there, and are willing to let you leave with their chips, you better be taking pretty good notes or else by the time you get home, you will be scratching your head as to exactly a chip with the initials of NDAD stood for! As a result, these chips are often misidentified, and I am as guilty as the next collector in adding to the confusion of what a chip represents. This article is in part to help relieve some of that miss-information.

Part of the confusion is the various

information that a collector is confronted with when gathering information concerning a chip. As an example, chips with the above mentioned NDAD where at one time found on the Black Jack tables in Spirit’s Lounge located in the Holiday Inn in Fargo North Dakota. Now, they use chips that read “Team Maker”, but these are for the same charitable organization as the previous mentioned chips.

Does one identify the chips by the name/initials on them, the bar that the games take place in, or the Hotel that they are located in? For now, until I can think of a better arrangement, I am going to use the Charitable Organization that is running the games. On my first trip, I found at least two separate locations that had table games for the same organization. Thus, it makes little sense to use anything BUT the charitable organization. As another example, one of the places listed on the internet that had gaming in fact had not had gaming for over a year as the organization decided to change locations. Thus, the location, especially if there is more than one, the chips generally do not list locations, and organizations do change locations. Another example is chips from the Blue Wolf Casino, located in the Bun Lounge in the Express Way Inn. The charity? The Plains Art Museum!

Being broad minded (in more ways than one)

Being civic minded is, I guess, one of those things we would list on a survey as being a good thing.

Donating money to such organizations, likewise, would also go in the same column as the above. But at what lengths would you go to support such an organization? Sounds like a relative simple question with what would seem to be a reasonable simple answer. So, for those moralists, does gambling for a good cause cross the line? Does having that gambling in a bar cross the line? Ok, how about an organization that has it's casino in a "Gentleman's Club"? (And if you need some explanation as to what that is, just skip this section – you are too young to collect chips!) While this may seem a stretch, one such organization, the has one black jack table located inside the Northern Gentleman's Club in Fargo!

When is a roulette chip not a roulette chip?

It looks like a roulette chip, it feels like a roulette chip, it perhaps even taste like a roulette chip (but in this case, I would highly recommend washing very well before consumption). The answer is when it is a Paddlewheel chip! In addition to your standard blackjack table which was the norm, a few of the organizations visited also have a Paddlewheel table. This is a cross between a roulette table and a big-six wheel. While the state web site has a very detailed description on the operation of this device, it is rather, shall we say, technical. Thus, I present for you, "borrowed" from one of the establishments, the official Paddlewheel Rules:

- A Player May Not Bet Chips That Exceed a Value of Twenty Dollars For One Spin.
- If a player's total bet exceeds a value of twenty dollars or exceeds an organization's maximum wager on a spin, the ENTIRE bet is VOID and, only a player's chips in excess of the limit are forfeited.

- A player may not place a tip bet for a wheel operator.
- A player must bet by placing a betting chip properly on the betting layout. No payout or twenty-one chips can be used to place a bet.
- A player may not touch a betting chip after the wheel operator announces "BETS CLOSED", and may not obstruct the view of the playing surface until after a wheel operator pays off all winning wagers.
- A Player may not take a betting chip away from the table and must be at the table to win otherwise, the player shall forfeit the betting chip.
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- If a player stops playing and has an unused betting chip, the player must exchange the betting chip for a payout chip through the wheel operator before the player leaves the table.
- The Paddlewheel must make at least four revolutions.
- If a pointer stops on top of a peg, the number preceding the peg is the winning number.
- A winning odd or even bet is determined by a winning number of only the designated colored circle. However, a player loses all odd and even bets if the pointer stops on a designated house number.
- It is the player's responsibility to track their wagers.

And of course, perhaps even more important, the betting! The Paddlewheel Payoffs:

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|---|-------------|
| Exact Number or Pig | \$39 to \$1 |
| Any Pig in exact Color, Two Number Split, Split Bet | \$19 to \$1 |

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| Any Pig, any color | \$7 to \$1 |
| "A" – "D" Line bets, Ten Number Row Bet | \$3 to \$1 |
| "E" – "N" Line bets, Four Number Corner Bet | \$9 to \$1 |
| Eight Number line bets, "8 Ball" | \$4 to \$1 |
| One to Twenty, first twenty numbers | \$1 to \$1 |
| Eleven to Thirty, middle twenty numbers | \$1 to \$1 |
| Twenty-one to forty, last twenty numbers | \$1 to \$1 |
| Odd or Even | \$1 to \$1 |

Sounds like roulette you say? Very much indeed. The only difference is that the chips, despite the fact that they have no denominations, have a set value, and instead of rolling a ball around, they spin a wheel. But perhaps the most important difference, in some cases, they will allow you to purchase the chips at face value and walk out with no questions asked, no security guard escort, and no lectures involved!

An affinity for Bud Jones Suite Pip molds

As any researcher will tell you (but very few politicians), that you should not draw any conclusion from a small sample. But, you also need to report your findings, no matter how small the sample. Does 100 plus chips from 5 different locations count? Probably not, but so far, the results would suggest that the primary source for these chips are the Bud Jones company, and the chip design of choice is the suite pip mold. Every chip that I was either able to garner, or in those rare cases where they would not permit a chip to "walk", each and every chip was a Bud Jones suite pip mold chip.

Color is everything

If you are looking for pristine chips, North Dakota Charity Chips are perhaps not for you. To say that many chips are well worn would be an understatement. And even those that are not well worn simply do not have any denomination on them what so ever, or if they do are equally worn that it is often hard to tell what denomination they are. Thus, in most establishments, along with a large poster explaining the rules, the do's and don'ts, is an equation chart explaining that color A equals value X, and so on.

The chips, the details

Ah yes, the chips, what they are, where they were used, etc. Well, while I will show you one or two this time around, that rest will have to wait until next time. Like they say, leave them wanting more, next time. So study hard, come up with your best guesses as their will be a quiz with the next installment. Your task, is to try and determine, to the best of your ability what organization the following chips are used for. The only clues you will have are in this article and your own resources. They are all from North Dakota Charitable Casinos located in Fargo. Good luck!

