

A token tour of Wisconsin's Indian casinos

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By Fred J. Borgmann

The proliferation of casino gambling or "gaming" in Wisconsin and elsewhere in the United States has greatly broadened this numismatic niche. Because so much is occurring in a short span of time, it is important to add this information to the historical record for future collectors before it is lost.

Any adult can walk into any casino, buy a quantity of tokens, sort through the lot and then redeem the unwanted tokens without ever placing a bet.

Mints and mintmarks

CT: Casino Tokens Inc. of North Las Vegas, Nev.

GDC, g over d, gd monogram: Green Duck Corp. of Hernando, Miss.

HH: Hoffman & Hoffman of Carmel, Calif.

MM: Medalcraft Mint Inc of Green Bay, Wis.

NCM: Nevada Coin Mart of Las Vegas, Nev.

Obsolete tokens meaning discontinued designs are withdrawn from circulation and destroyed as required by state regulations.

Conditions of tokens: heavy nicks and scratches are common unless the token is removed from circulation almost before actual use. In my estimation, tokens in use for one year are already scarce in EF or better condition.

Black River Falls: Majestic Pines Casino



1 dollar 1992 CT copper-nickel 37mm, plain edge.

Obverse: ceremonial Native American figure between two groups of pine trees. "MAJESTIC PINES" above and "WISCONSIN WINNEBAGO NATION" below in small letters. All within a wide raised rim with the incuse legend "BLACK RIVER FALLS, WI. 1992 ONE DOLLAR GAMING TOKEN."

Reverse: large number "1" in center above mintmark. "ONE DOLLAR" above and "GAMING TOKEN" below. Wide rim with the incuse legend "SHARE THE MAGIC" above and "MAJESTIC PINES CASINO" below.

This casino is east of town on Highway 54 and not west of I-94 as listed by the Wisconsin Gaming Commission.

Bowler: Mohican North Star Casino



Generic token predating the current token. Copper-nickel 37.3mm, reeded edge. No date denomination or mintmark.

Obverse: cruise ship above "SITMAR CRUISES."

Reverse: six scenes depicting the good life on a cruise ship.



1 dollar no date GDC mintmark, brass, 37mm, plain edge..

Obverse: "MOHICAN NORTH STAR CASINO" in center above stacked tokens and two cards and below the North Star. Below in exergue "BOWLER, WI ONE DOLLAR GAMING TOKEN" above mintmark.

Reverse: the "Many Trails" symbol of hope, strength and endurance within the legend "ONE DOLLAR GAMING TOKEN" above and "MOHICAN NORTH STAR CASINO" below.

It was in this casino that I met the most helpful casino employee in Wisconsin. While examining each token as they came out of a video poker machine, she asked if something was wrong. I explained my difficulty in finding any nice unscratched tokens, and shortly after that she even had other staff members checking their tokens for "shiny new ones." Almost without exception I found the people staffing Wisconsin casinos to be very friendly and helpful but for me the North Star's Gloria Tischer sets the standard.



1 dollar no date or mintmark, copper-nickel, 37.15mm, reeded edge.

Obverse: encircled number "1" at left. Inscription "NORTHERN LIGHTS CASINO ONE DOLLAR CARTER, WISCONSIN."

Reverse: an ornamental circular design containing the name "POTAWATOMI" across the center above which is an eagle without feather detail and "ONE DOLLAR" in smaller letters. In the lower half is a stylized fire above "KEEPER OF THE FIRE."

Danbury: Hole in the Wall Casino



1 dollar 1992 CT, copper-nickel, 37.15mm, plain edge.

Obverse: "HOLE IN THE WALL" in an ornamental frame above "CASINO" in large fancy letters. Below "DANBURY, WISCONSIN" and mintmark in small letters. All within a wide rim with the incuse legend. "ONE DOLLAR GAMING TOKEN FOR USE BY PLAYER ONLY."

Reverse: "HOLE IN THE WALL" in ornamental frame across a large number "1". All within a wide rim with the incuse legend "ACCEPTABLE ONLY AT HOLE IN THE WALL CASINO. DANBURY WI. 1992."

Hayward: Grand Casino



1 dollar 1992 CT, copper-nickel, 37mm, plain edge.

Obverse: Indian portrait on the map of Wisconsin "LAC COURTE OREILLES" above and "HAYWARD WISCONSIN." All within a wide rim with the incuse legend "ONE DOLLAR GAMING TOKEN. FOR USE BY PLAYER ONLY. 1992."

Reverse: large "1" above "GAMING TOKEN" and mintmark in small letters. Wide rim with incuse legend "ACCEPTABLE ONLY AT GRAND CASINO. HAYWARD, WISCONSIN, 1992."

Keshena: Menominee Nation Casino



1 dollar 1991 no mintmark variety and another variety with a mintmark which may be the "GD" monogram in retrograde, copper-nickel, 37mm, reeded edge.

Obverse: Native American chief in full headdress. Wide rim with incuse legend "MENOMINEE NATION CASINO. ONE DOLLAR GAMING TOKEN."

Reverse: Menominee county map in circle with a spear pin pointing Keshena. Inscription "MENOMINEE CASINO KESHENA WISC. NATION." "\$1" below circle and the mintmark if any above circle. Wide rim with incuse legend "NOT LEGAL TENDER. REDEEMABLE BY PLAYER ONLY. 1991."



5 dollars 1992 GDC, brass, 44.35mm, plain edge.

Obverse and reverse: similar to the 1991 one dollar token except that the mintmark is below the portrait.

Keshena: Menominee Crystal Palace



Generic 1 dollar no date NCM, copper-nickel, 37.15mm, reeded edge.

Obverse: Liberty portrait modeled from the U.S. Peace dollar above "ONE DOLLAR GAMING TOKEN," and the artists initials "TGS."

Reverse eagle with ribbon. Legend "JACKPOT COIN ONE DOLLAR GAMING TOKEN."



5 dollar 1993 GDC, copper-nickel, 44.35mm, plain edge.

Obverse feather headdress in center. Legend "MENOMINEE CRYSTAL PALACE. FIVE DOLLAR GAMING TOKEN."

Reverse: center rays above inscription "MENOMINEE BINGO CRYSTAL PALACE \$5." Legend "NOT LEGAL TENDER. REDEEMABLE BY PLAYER ONLY. 1993"

While sorting through a pile of tokens in an open commons area with tables, I eventually noticed that I was being photographed by security personnel. They couldn't figure out if I was an inspector or a crook so just in case they wanted a photographic record of me. They were quite pleased to find out that I was just a collector. They were also a bit curious as to just how and what I collected.

Lac Du Flambeau: Tribal Casino



Type I 1 dollar no date, gd monogram mintmark, copper-nickel, 37.2mm, plain edge.

Obverse: stylized Native American portrait with peace pipe and city view in background. All within an ornamental circle. Legend "LAC DU FLAMBEAU TRIBAL CASINO."

Reverse Large number "1" between two dollar signs. All within a four-lobed border. Legend "ONE DOLLAR GAMING TOKEN NOT LEGAL TENDER."



Type II 1 dollar no date CT, copper-nickel, 37mm, plain edge.

Obverse and reverse: similar to Type I except that the legends are incuse and in a wide rim.

Milwaukee: Potawatomi Bingo Casino



1 dollar no date or mintmark, copper-nickel, 37.15mm, reeded edge.

Obverse: ornamental circle with "POTAWATOMI" across the center. "ONE DOLLAR" above an eagle in the top half and a stylized fire above "KEEPER OF THE FIRE" in the bottom half.

Reverse: a feathered baton across the center dividing "POTAWATOMI BINGO" and "CASINO." "ONE DOLLAR" at the top and "MILWAUKEE" at the bottom.

This is primarily a bingo hall with gaming machines around the bingo area making for some very cramped conditions. Hopefully this will change when the new addition is completed.

Mole Lake: Mole Lake Casino





1 dollar no date CT, copper-nickel, 37mm, plain edge.

Obverse: eagle head on a coiled background within a circle of stars. Wide rim with incuse legend "ACCEPTABLE ONLY AT MOLE LAKE CASINOS. MOLE LAKE, WISCONSIN."

Reverse: large "\$1" above mintmark in center with legend "SOKAOGON CHIPPEWA COMMUNITY." Wide rim with incuse legend "ACCEPTABLE ONLY AT MOLE LAKE CASINOS. MOLE LAKE, WISCONSIN."



Type I: 1 dollar no date, NCM mintmark on reverse only, copper-nickel, 37mm, reeded edge.

Obverse: Liberty Head design based on the U.S. Peace dollar. Legend at bottom "ONE DOLLAR GAMING TOKEN." Artist initials below neck truncation.

Reverse: slot machine above mintmark in center. Wide rim with incuse legend. "ONE DOLLAR GAMING TOKEN REGENCY RESORT CASINO."



1 dollar 1993 CT, copper-nickel, 37mm, plain edge.

Obverse: eagle head and a pot of gold. "RAINBOW" above and "CASINO NEKOOSA, WISCONSIN. WISCONSIN WINNEBAGO NATION" below. Wide rim with incuse legend "ONE DOLLAR GAMING TOKEN FOR USE BY PLAYER ONLY. 1993."

Reverse: a rainbow and pot of gold arched over "RAINBOW CASINO." "ONE DOLLAR" at top and "GAMING TOKEN" below. Wide rim with incuse legend "ACCEPTABLE ONLY AT RAINBOW CASINO, NEKOOSA, WISCONSIN."



5 dollars obsolete, brass, 44.4mm, plain edge.

Obverse: and reverse: same as the 1 dollar token except for the denomination. Thanks to Gene Johnson of Wisconsin Rapids for this one.



Type II: same as Type I but with the NCM mintmark on both sides. Every token of this type that I have seen has a "polished" looking surface.

Odanah: Bad River Casino



1 dollar 1989 gd, copper-nickel, 37mm, reeded edge.

Obverse: a large ship under full sail in the center below "ADMIRAL"

ASINO." Legend "ONE DOLLAR GAMING TOKEN FOR USE BY PLAYER ONLY. 1989."

Reverse: "\$1" in center above mintmark. Legend "ACCEPTABLE ONLY AT THE ADMIRAL CASINO. SINT MAARTEN N.A."

This is a token which claims to be from the Netherlands Antilles and is used exclusively by this Wisconsin Casino. This token was also used by the Isle Vista Casino before they got their own tokens.

Oneida: Oneida Bingo and Casino.



1 dollar 1991 HH, copper-nickel, 37mm, plain edge.

Obverse: "ONEIDA" across a large number one. Legend. "ONE DOLLAR GAMING TOKEN ACCEPTABLE ONLY AT ONEIDA BINGO. 1991."

Reverse: large "\$1" in center above mintmark. Legend "FIRST AMERICAN GAMES. FOR USE BY PLAYER ONLY."



1 dollar 1992 MM, copper-nickel, 37mm, plain edge.

Obverse: same design as 1991 but with finer lettering.

Reverse: "ONEIDA" across a large number one. Legend "FIRST AMERICAN GAMES. FOR USE BY PLAYER ONLY."

This is probably the largest Wisconsin casino in floor space and numbers of tables and machines.

Red Cliff Reservation: Isle Vista Casino



1 dollar no date NCM, copper-nickel, 37.2mm, reeded edge.

Obverse: portrait of a Native American chief in center. Inner legend "ISLE VISTA CASINO RED CLIFF RESERVATION." Incuse outer legend on wide rim "ONE DOLLAR GAMING TOKEN GOOD ONLY AT THE ISLE VISTA CASINO."

Reverse map of Northern Wisconsin's Lake Superior shoreline appropriately inscribed "LAKE SUPERIOR" and "ISLE VISTA CASINO." Wide rim with incuse legend "ONE DOLLAR GAMING TOKEN GOOD ONLY AT THE ISLE VISTA CASINO."

This casino is just north of Bayfield, Wis. on Highway 13.

Turtle Lake: St. Croix Casino



1 dollar 1991 HH, obsolete, copper-nickel, 37mm, plain edge.

Obverse: cattail plant growing in shallow water with a rising or setting sun background. Legend "ST. CROIX CHIPPEWA OF WISCONSIN, ST. CROIX CASINO."

Reverse: "ST. CROIX CASINO" across a large number "1" in center. Legend "ONE DOLLAR GAMING TOKEN ACCEPTABLE ONLY AT ST. CROIX CASINO."

(Courtesy John Kallman, Krause Publications)



1 dollar 1992 CT, brass, 37.2mm, plain edge.

Obverse: turtle on top of a pile of coins in circle with a ribbon inscribed "AT TURTLE LAKE." "ST. CROIX" above and "CASINO" below. All above "TURTLE LAKE, WI" and "CT" in small letters. Wide rim with incuse legend "ONE DOLLAR GAMING TOKEN FOR USE BY PLAYER ONLY."

Reverse: large number "1" in center with legend "ONE DOLLAR" above and "GAMING TOKEN" below. Wide rim with incuse legend "ACCEPTANCE ONLY AT ST. CROIX CASINO. TURTLE LAKE, WI. 1992."



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5 dollar 1992 CT, brass, 44.5mm, plain edge.

Obverse and reverse design same as the 1 dollar token except for the denomination.

The St. Croix Casino is the most impressive of the Wisconsin casinos. The combination of its friendly staff, restaurants, hotel and casino facilities is as nice as anything in Las Vegas but on a smaller scale.

Wisconsin Dells: Golden Nickel Casino



1 dollar no date GDC, copper-nickel, 37mm, plain edge.

Obverse: the stylized obverse design of a 1934-dated U.S. nickel with a large "\$1" over the edge at 4 o'clock. Legend "GOLDEN NICKEL CASINO WISCONSIN DELLS, WI."

Reverse: an eagle landing on a peace pipe above a large "\$1." Legend "WISCONSIN WINNEBAGO GAMING TOKEN."

It should be noted that this casino is not in Wisconsin Dells. The mailing address is Lake Delton and its location on Highway 12 is almost half the way between Lake Delton and Baraboo.