

## Con Jones and the Don't Argue tokens of Vancouver, B.C.

by Ronald Greene

Con Jones was a flamboyant sportsman, tobacconist, club and pool room operator in Vancouver, B.C., from 1904 until 1929. He issued a number of tokens and gaming chips over that time. It is an interesting and diverse group of tokens.

Con Jones was born in Australia in 1869 of Irish parents. He brought his wife and young children to Vancouver in 1904, where he was to spend the rest of his days. He obtained his first business licence in July of that year, for a pool room with nine tables. By 1912 he had licences for 60 tables. In 1919 when Jones had 62 tables, the next largest pool room operator in the city had only 12 tables.<sup>1</sup>

His first billiard parlour was known as Con's Billiard Room at 320 Cordova St. West. In 1908 he took over the Toolles Billiard Parlour location at 47-49 Hastings St. East, changing the name to the Limit Pool Room. In late 1914 Con Jones installed a bowling alley at 330 Cordova St. West, which he gave up by 1919. By 1909 he had added the Brunswick Pool Room at 58 Hastings St. East. The Brunswick Pool Room, moved in 1912 to 26 Hastings Street East and was still running until 1936 when it became the Brunswick Sports Club. Over the years Con Jones operated at a dozen different locations and at each of these locations he sold tobacco and candy.

Con Jones is famous – at least in Vancouver – for his slogan “Don't Argue,” which he started using in his regular newspaper advertising August 25, 1914. The ad read, “Don't Argue! Con Jones sells fresh Tobacco.” Some time later he registered “Don't Argue” as a trade mark. From September 1911 until August 24, 1914, Con Jones had been running a regular ad in the *Vancouver Province* which read, “Go with the Bunch to the Brunswick Pool Rooms.”

From the time that he arrived, Con Jones was involved with association football (soccer) and field lacrosse. He was the manager of the Vancouver lacrosse team in 1911 when they defeated the defending Minto Cup champions, New Westminster to take the Cup. In those days the Minto Cup was emblematic of the Senior Lacrosse Championship of Canada.<sup>2</sup>

Another of Con Jones' involvements, the National Sports Club, was incorporated in 1901 as the English Bay Bathing and Athletic Club. On October 31, 1906 it changed its name to the National Sports Club. Con Jones was its secretary treasurer for a number of years. In 1909, he tried to obtain a liquor licence for the club but the licence was declined as “not in the interest of the public,” the standard reason for a licence refusal.<sup>3</sup> The club operated a card room at 320 and later at 330 Cordova Street West for some years, and it is probably where the gaming chips described below were used. While gambling was illegal the club avoided prosecution by charging the players for use of the cards and tables and not taking any part of the stakes. According to the city prosecutor this made it impossible to obtain a conviction.<sup>4</sup> The club was last listed in the 1913 city directory and was dissolved in 1924 for failure to file annual returns.<sup>5</sup>

In 1918 Con Jones arranged a three year lease from the Parks Commission for the Brockton Point athletic grounds. He agreed to pay \$700 a year rent and to spend \$5,000 to put the grounds into the best possible condition. For this he would have exclusive use of the grounds on Saturdays, public holidays and some other days.<sup>6</sup> In September 1920 he bought a two-block tract of land opposite Hastings Park (the site of the Vancouver Exhibition, later the Pacific National Exhibition) from John Callister which became known as Con Jones Park. He used the site for professional baseball and Pacific Coast League soccer. After Jones died, mortgage

payments stopped and the property reverted to Callister. His heirs donated it to the city and today it is known as Callister Park.<sup>7</sup>

In May 1929 Con Jones incorporated a company, Con Jones Limited, to take over his business. The transfer was effected May 17, 1929 and just two weeks later he suffered a brain hemorrhage, which led to his death June 3, 1929, two months short of his sixtieth birthday.<sup>8</sup> He was survived by his wife, four sons, a daughter, and a brother.

At various times Con Jones and his successor company, Con Jones Limited, operated at the following locations:

|                       |                                                                                                                                                                                           |                       |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 320/330 Cordova St. W | by 1906 to 1919 <sup>1</sup><br>(Con's Billiard Room 1906-1910), (possibly from 1904)<br>(National Sports Club 1907-1908, 1910-1913)<br>(Con Jones' Bowling Alley 1914-1919) <sup>9</sup> |                       |
| 601 Granville         | 1926 to 1932                                                                                                                                                                              |                       |
| 622 Granville         | 1925                                                                                                                                                                                      |                       |
| 698 Granville         | 1931                                                                                                                                                                                      |                       |
| 718 Granville         | 1921 to 1930                                                                                                                                                                              |                       |
| 898 Granville         | 1933                                                                                                                                                                                      |                       |
| 26 Hastings St. E.    | 1912 to 1938                                                                                                                                                                              | (Brunswick Pool Room) |
| 47 Hastings St. E.    | 1908                                                                                                                                                                                      | (Limit Pool Room)     |
| 58 Hastings St. E.    | 1909 to 1912                                                                                                                                                                              | (Brunswick Pool Room) |
| 612 Hastings St. W.   | 1920 to 1955 <sup>10</sup>                                                                                                                                                                |                       |

### Advertising pieces



U4530a

A:R:35



U4530b

A:R:35

This encased cent was issued in 1909 or early 1910 when Con Jones was already operating at several locations, but had not yet adopted the “Don’t Argue” slogan. All known piece contain 1909 Lincoln Head cents. We have record of six of these pieces.

There is a 1927 Jubilee of Confederation piece struck by H. Barnard Stamp & Stencil Co. Ltd. of Hamilton, Ontario. This advertising token is a close copy of that piece, but differs in some minor details. There is a good possibility that it was also struck by Barnard. This piece has been the most commonly encountered Con Jones/Don’t Argue piece, but a recent discovery of a hoard of the Don’t Argue gaming chips will probably change that.

## The 6 for a 5 cent candy series:

Type 1 plain border, “A” of “Argue” over “CH” of “Exchange”



U3060a

A:O:26



U3060b

A:C:33



U3060c

A:Sc:30½



U3060d

A:Sn:26½

In the early 1980's the dies from the above pieces came up for sale by the successor firm to Joseph Mayer Manufacturing Inc., of Seattle.

Type 2 beaded border, “A” over “CH”

We do not know who struck the type 2 or type 3 pieces



U3060e

A:O:27



U3060f

A:C:33



U3060g

A:Sc:31



U3060h

A:Sn:26



A:O:27



U3060k

A:Sc:30<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>

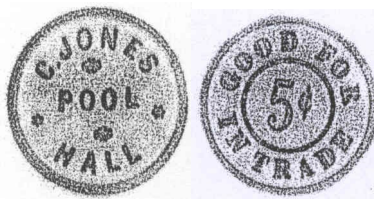
U3060/

A:Sn:26

The four token issuing locations were only operating simultaneously from 1926 to 1930. This would argue (and Don't Argue!) for their period of issue starting with 1926. No Type 3 token for 718 Granville Street is known. This might indicate that the Type 3 tokens were made after that location in the Birks Building was closed (1930) but before 601 Granville closed in 1932.

For what must have been a large issue surprisingly few of the tokens have survived. The rarity of these pieces runs from twelve known, Type 1, 612 Hastings St. W., down to one known, Type 3 26 Hastings St. E.

Leslie C. Hill had a maverick in his collection (now in the author's collection) which may have been issued by Con Jones. There are some reservations about this as the wording is C. Jones Pool *Hall*, whereas Jones ran various billiard and pool *rooms*. Also the 5 cent reverse is unlike anything else used in B.C. However, if it was issued by Con Jones, then the obvious period would be between 1904 and 1910 when he was operating Con's Billiard Room.



B:R:24

## The gaming chips



U3060p 5  
C:R:38½



U3060q 5  
Fbr: R:38½



U3060r 25  
A: R:38½



U3060s 100  
Fk: R:38½



U3060t 500  
Fgy: R:38½



U3060u 500  
Fta: R:38

Ever since they were discovered by numismatists the Don't Argue gaming chips were rare, no more than 2 or 3 of each type being known. This changed in 2004 when a trunk once belonging to Con Jones came up at an auction sale in Vancouver. Inside there was a large quantity of gaming chips. There were no new denominations discovered, but there was a new colour variation, the tan 500 chip (U3060u). All the Don't Argue gaming chips are bifacial. The 5 in copper and the 25 in aluminum are nicely struck. Unfortunately the fibre pieces (U3060q,s,t and u) do not strike up well and have no colour contrast so they are hard to read even in good light, but are similar to U3060p (copper) and U3060r (aluminum).

<sup>1</sup> Vancouver City Archives, Business Licence Registers 383, location 126-A-2, et al

<sup>2</sup> *Vancouver Province* September 11, 1911, p. 10. gives a full account of the final game, but no mention of Mr. Jones.

<sup>3</sup> GR0095 Provincial Police files, Vol 1, 413

<sup>4</sup> *Victoria Colonist*, November 28, 1936, "Gambling is big menace, Vancouver Inquiry told ...."

<sup>5</sup> GR1438 Attorney General, Registrar General, (Registrar of Societies) S0087, on microfilm B04406

<sup>6</sup> *Vancouver Sun*, April 27, 1918, p. 3

<sup>7</sup> [www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/parkfinder\\_wa/index](http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/parkfinder_wa/index)

<sup>8</sup> *Vancouver Sun*, June 3, 1929, p. 1, Death Certificate 1929-09-417156, microfilm B13136

<sup>9</sup> In 1920 the bowling alley at 330 Cordova W has become the Vancouver Bowling Alley operated by Patrick Keough and A. Morgan, but the Jones listing still shows a bowling alley at this address. Possibly the listing was inadvertently left unchanged from 1919

<sup>10</sup> Con Jones Ltd., tobacconists were listed in 1955, but not 1957