

This is "Illegal Of The Day" #318. Texas #41. IMO that's a pretty good run! <g>  
This is the first IOTD in quite a while. Ed Hertel has been busy at work and I am just getting old. <g>  
Ed found both chips and the write up is mostly his.  
Take it away Ed!

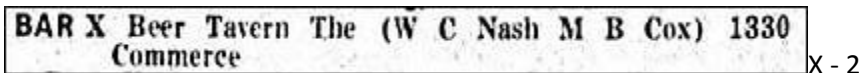
Speculation was immediately abounded when this chip with its unusual monogram was discovered.



X - 1

Found along with other illegal chips from Dallas, Texas, the original seller suspected that it probably represented a brand from a local ranch – maybe the "Dash X" or the "X Minus". I knew there was only one way to find out, and checked the Mason records.

The chip was ordered by M.B. Cox in 1937, and delivered to 1330 Commerce St, Dallas, Texas. This would not only be enough to decrypt the symbols on the chip, but also open up a whole history on one of Dallas' more colorful gambling characters.



X - 2

The address for the chip in 1937 was to a place called "The Bar X" and is listed as a beer tavern owned by partners W. C. Nash and the M.B. Cox from the chip order. It seems the owners were not only good gamblers, they were pretty smart business men as well. Instead of paying for "Bar X" to be stamped on their chips, they got away "- X". That's a 50% savings in characters!

Joking aside, I'm not sure how smart these guys really were. If their goal was to keep a low profile with their illegal activity, they were actually pretty bad at it. Will C. Nash, the first partner of record, was known to keep some questionable company. In 1937, he was a key witness in a murder trial where a gangster friend of his was gunned down in the back room of a local club. Under cross examination, Nash's own reputation seemed to be on trial as he repeatedly denied operating gambling halls, both in Dallas and previously in Kilgore, Texas. He was also accused of, and subsequently denied, involvement in the Dallas "cigarette racket". If, as the saying goes, "where there's smoke, there's fire", then Nash was no innocent bar owner. The chips for the Bar X are a pretty good indication that something was happening under his watch.

What cannot be argued is the involvement of the second partner on the Bar X Tavern – M.B. Cox. Known by the colorful nickname “Rat” Cox, our second player has a history that closes out the 1930s in the most dramatic of ways.

In the same year “Rat” is ordering the –X chips, he is fighting for his freedom after a gambling session gone horribly wrong. After a particularly poor morning of shooting dice at the Waterfront Tavern, Rat Cox suggested to owner Homer Gaines that he be allowed to win back some of his money by playing a little blackjack. When the cards turned sour, Cox’s mood soon followed. Then, in front of witnesses, Cox pulled out a small pistol and shot Gaines right between the eyes. Game over.

## *Jailed After Shooting, Suspect Reads Account Of Victim's Condition*



**M. B. (RAT) COX.**

Reading a newspaper account of the shooting of Homer Gaines early Saturday, M. B. (Rat) Cox is shown here at the county jail shortly after he was booked on a charge of assault to murder in connection with the shooting.

Remarkably, and lucky for both men, the bullet failed to penetrate the skull and Gaines would eventually recover. Rat Cox, however, was now high on the police's radar. He was able to beat the attempted murder charge, but the heat was raised on his gambling empire.

In August 1937, one of Cox's gambling establishments on South Pearl street was raided. The police found a craps and poker table and rounded up the men inside. Large stacks of currency found indicated the high stakes of the games. Then, a few months later in November, an undercover agent penetrated his bookie operation at 1812-1/2 Main and placed some bets.

## **Dozen Men Jailed As Sleuths Raid Downtown Games**

**Six 'Arrested Gambling  
at Hotel in Shadow of  
Police Headquarters**

X - 4

The heat was definitely being felt in Dallas as it seemed bookie joints were being taken down nightly. One of Cox's fellow associates, Pete Blaine, was also feeling the heat. The two men would find themselves raided on the same night and brought before the judge. The case was cleared when the chief witness didn't show up, opting instead to go deer hunting.

In 1938, the Feds were turning up the heat on the city's gambling. They passed a new law that made landlords liable for the actions of the gamblers on their properties. Now they too could be charged, and possibly given a penalty up to one to five years in jail, for allowing gambling to take place. This raising of the stakes in Dallas made many property owners more than a little worried.

Despite the new rules, Rat Cox was not deterred. For his past gambling charges he was given a two year sentence, but was released on appeal. While out, he was picked up, along with his wife, in April 1938 on bookmaking charges.

His biggest bust however occurred in September when his immense horse booking establishment, taking up an entire floor at a building at Main and Poydres, was raided. The guard at the door mistook a police uniform for a utility worker and opened the door right up. It was a disaster that Rat Cox would not easily bounce back from.

From then on, Cox's interests seem to get smaller as his operations went from the very big to the small. He was now in very poor health and working out of houses. He would still manage to get busted every once in awhile, but the glory days of M.B. "Rat" Cox were now clearly in the past.

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Dallas Bonus!

I mentioned in passing above the bit about Pete Blaine, another local bookmaker. He and Cox were busted in separate raids in late 1937, and it is here that I believe some, if not all, of the chips I found were gathered. In the mix was a new find – stamped "PB" which was sent to Pete Blaine, 301 S. Beckley St, Dallas, Texas, in 1936.



X - 5

The address for the chip order was the Red Cross Pharmacy located in Oak Cliff, a neighborhood outside of downtown Dallas. The pharmacists' owners were Pete's brothers Dayton and Moses Blaine. But before you go thinking poor Pete was the black sheep of the hard working clean Blaine boys, we need to look a little deeper.

In 1936, the police cracked down on a massive auto theft ring and alleged that pharmacist Dayton Blaine was the master mind. During the trial, it came out that not only was Blaine involved in the auto thefts, but that the upstairs of the Red Cross Pharmacy was also a local hangout for shooting dice.

In 1938, further charges were lobbied against brother Pete Blaine for operating a dice table upstairs and again in 1939. It's obvious that the address of the Red Cross Pharmacy was not just a drop-off, it was the location for illegal gambling.

## **Bookie Suspect Faces Dice Table Charges**

**Charges of operating a dice table were filed Monday against Pete Blaine in Justice Tom King's court in Oak Cliff following a raid by city police Saturday at 307½ South Beckley.**

**Blaine is under indictment for bookmaking on a horse race.**

X - 6

But if stolen cars and gambling wasn't enough, the Blaine boys also had a hand in liquor too. During Prohibition, Pete paid off local physicians to write phony medicinal whiskey prescription and their family pharmacy eagerly filled them. Even after the repeal of Prohibition, Dallas County remained dry, but the Red Cross Pharmacy was known to be a place where a pint could be bought. In 1938, an undercover liquor agent would find out just how easy it was.

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I was very lucky to find the -X and PB chips, along with a few others, which provided a wealth of knowledge and a few new finds. To me there is nothing better than to find a new name or place and start to research, only to find a whole new story I'd never heard before. I look forward to diving into the rest of the chips I found!

Special thanks to our "Friend of the Hobby" who tracked down some information on Blaine while I was busy buried in the history of Rat and the Bar X.

My note: 80 years since the -X and 81 for the PB chips, were delivered. It always has amazed me; how much history can be put together after all that time has passed. The history of the old illegal casinos lives on.

Ed will be along to sell some extras he has.