

David Spragg got the following 5 chips off ebay a couple weeks ago. I got the first set. Wonder why? <g>

Turns out to be 2 new to me Texas Illegal operations in the 1950-60's. That should make the Texas Boys happy. The first one is an easy one. <g>

Enough of that:

City Club

Billy Gene Warford

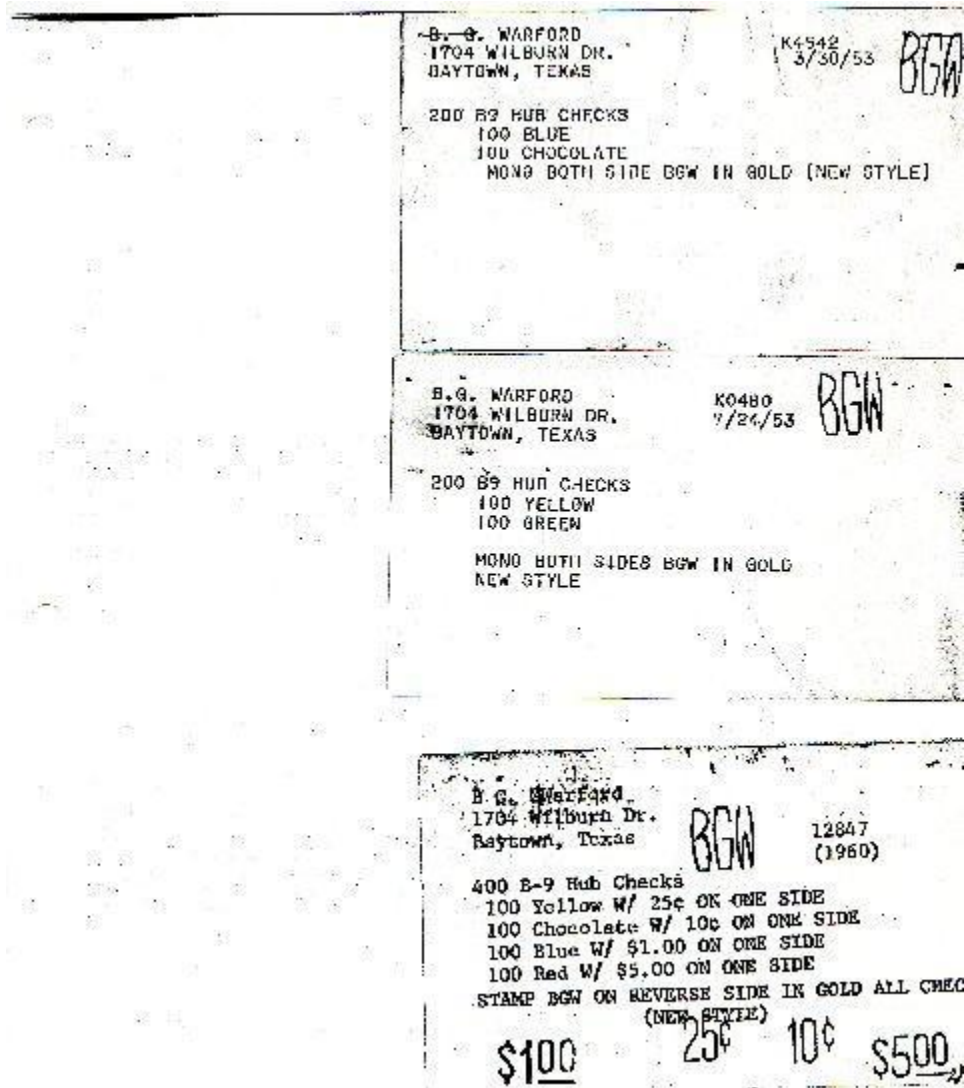
12 South Ashbel and 108 West Pearce

Baytown, Texas

Chips in 1953 and 1960



chip18202 att2



The BGW blue chip shown is from the 3/30/53 order. I would trade for or buy the chocolate, green, or yellow chips. Same for the denominated chips in the 1960 order.

**BGW**

Billy Gene Warford, died at Baytown 2006, age 83. 1704 Wilburn Dr. was his residential address.

Photo of Warford in the 1940's:



BGW1

When the chips were ordered, Warford was the proprietor of a recreation club and bar called the “City Club.” It was located at 12 South Ashbel until it moved around the corner to 108 West Pearce in 1962. Warford had the City Club until around 1983.

The place seems to have been in business at the West Pearce location until a few years ago.

Here’s a recent view of the intersection of Ashbel & Pearce showing both locations—the brick structure on Ashbel has since been demolished:



BGW2

City Club—Cocktails (small white sign to left of building: City Club Parking):



BGW3

The 2<sup>nd</sup> set of chips in the same ebay lot gets a little more complicated.

I made contact with the ebay seller and his wife. We did not see any connection between the 2 different chips and wondered how he happened to have both. BTW, the 2<sup>nd</sup> chips in this post are Fraternal Order Of Eagles, similar to Elks, Moose, Knights Of Columbus, and other fraternal lodges. Most are not considered illegals. I think you will see and understand why I am calling FOE 3125 an illegal operation. <g>

Email from the ebay seller:

Wow this is very interesting. We have had these old chips lying around for several years since my father-in-law died. I had no idea they were worth anything. After I posted the chips on EBay I actually had someone email me wanting to buy individual chips. I couldn't do that since I had listed them all in the add.

My wife's father was an interesting guy. He was an avid poker player (and a very good one) since the 1930's. His name was William Woodrow Gann. Everybody called him Woody. He told me lots of stories of the wild old days in Baytown (Goose Creek).

I first met Woody in 1982. At that time they had a running poker game at the Elks Club in Baytown. I played with them a few times but he and all his old buddies were way too good for me. He was also in the Eagles Club. The area where the Elks and Eagles club were in Baytown was called Pelly. I know the Elks club has since closed and I also think the Eagles club is gone but I'm not sure. In Woody's later years he traveled to Las Vegas and Tahoe a lot to play Texas Hold-em. My wife and I lived in the Bay Area of California at that time and he would come out there and he and I played together in a lot of poker clubs out there. One of his nephews was sort of a student of his in the game of poker and the nephew still plays today. I'm not sure how he acquired the chips but I know he and several of his poker buddies had running games all over town. I think the President of the local Citizen's Bank, Hugh Eckels, was one of his poker buddies as well. They not only played poker, they ran a dice game too. I still have some of the old Christy and Jones dice from his stuff that are still unopened. (My Note: The dice are plain CJ dice. No initials or name on them.) I'm sure he would be quite happy that someone is interested in those days.

I'm not sure what else I can tell you but I'm sure my wife could tell you more. If you have other questions just let us know.

Thanks,

Jack & Dana

The name Woody Gann means something to me but have not dug it out of my foggy brain to date. I think I know him from poker tournaments.

OK no ties between Woody and Billy Gene Warford except, they both belonged to Baytown Fraternal Clubs.

From my "Friend Of The Hobby:

Interesting email from the eBay seller of the BGW & 3125 chips. I came across several references to Gann but none which seemed relevant. Gann died at Baytown in 1991, age 81. He died 15 years before Warford, yet had Warford's chips. Like Gann, Warford was an Elk (Warford was also a member of the VFW and American Legion). Never could find evidence that either were Eagles, but it wouldn't surprise me.

Warford's son Stephen (born 1947) still resides in Baytown:

My note: I left a message for Stephen, no reply to date.

FOE 3125

My note: Still no ties except Gann's had both the BGW and FOE 3125 chips when he died in 1991 and more than likely used them in poker games.

Ok let's get down to these ILLEGAL FOE chips. <g>

My understanding is Fraternal organizations were chartered under state laws. State laws vary but most allowed card games poker, gin, bridge, etc as long as the house did not cut the pot. If the house cut the pot they were violating state law, end of story.

Not exactly the end. <g>

Many Fraternal organizations upped the ante by having house backed blackjack, craps, slots, etc. Most fraternal organization had the town council, mayor, and sheriff as members. It was pretty certain the members would keep the local heat off of them. <g>

The Federal Government and the Treasury Department got together and came up with the "Federal Gambling Tax Stamp." It was designed mostly for race wires, bookies, pinball machines and slot machines. If the tax stamp was purchased the "Feds" would leave them alone. The onus was back on the local cops. Local cops could not buck the fraternal membership if they wanted to keep their jobs. <g>

FOE 3125

3300 Minnesota

Baytown Texas

Chips delivered in 1956.



chip18201 att2

Chips delivered to C&L Distributing Company in Houston. Owned by Henry "Binks" Womble. Our friend "Binks" will be the reason; I am calling FOE 3125 an ILLEGAL operation. <g> Read on.

C & L DIST.CO.  
2202 1/2 WAUGH DRIVE  
HOUSTON, TEX.

F.O.E  
3125

9-19-56  
91743 (1956)

1000-B-9  
200-BLUE \$10.00 ONE SIDE 25¢  
300-RED 5.00 " " 25¢  
300-WHITE 1.00 " " 25¢  
200-YELLOW 25¢ ONE SIDE \$100

FOE  
3125 REVERSE SIDE ALL CHECKS

\$1000

\$500  
100

As you can see all 4 colors of the chips delivered were in this find.

Turns out Aerie #3125 was located a little south of Ft. Worth. It was at Baytown, Texas—a suburb of Houston. It was chartered in 1955 and was still around in the early 90's.

Baytown Sun—14aug1956:

**Fraternal Order  
Of Eagles**  
AERIE 3125

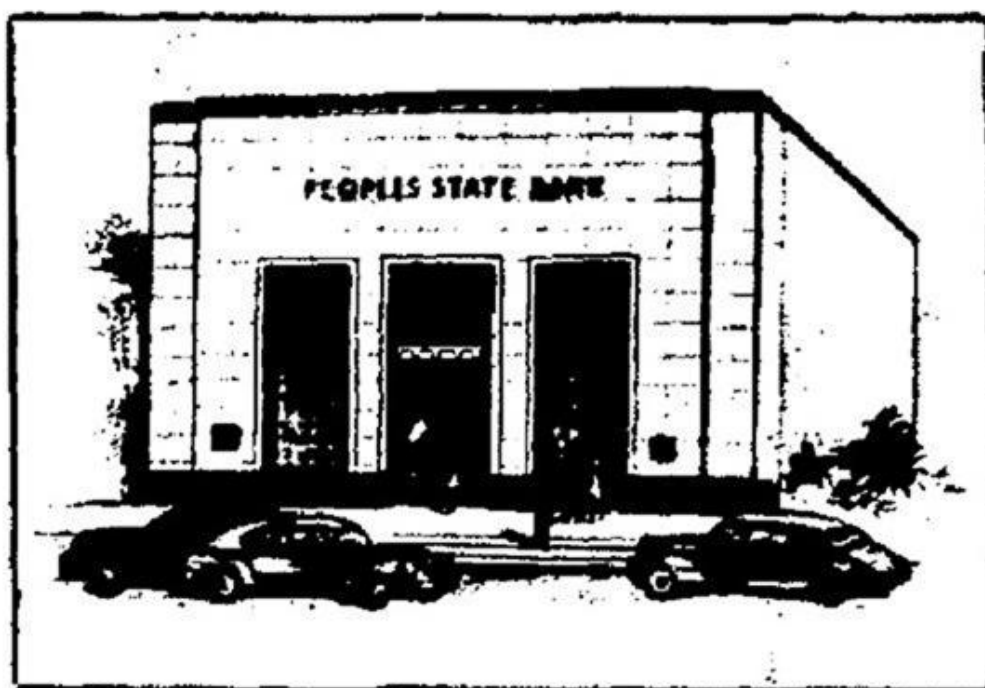
**NEW LOCATION  
NOW OPEN**  
8 A.M. to 12 MIDNIGHT  
3300 Minnesota  
(Old People's State Bank Bldg.)

●

**MEETINGS  
WEDNESDAY  
8:00 P.M.**

FOE 31251 att2

Here's a drawing of the place when it was a bank in the 1940's:



**3300 Minnesota**

FOE 31252 att2

Here comes old "Binks: part in this story.

"Binks" not only furnished the chips for FOE 3125, he furnished slot machines on a 50-50 deal. He also had the same deal with The Moose Lodge and Knights Of Columbus in Baytown. Only problem is old "Binks" forgot to buy the Federal Tax stamps. The Feds filed tax liens and sold the property at auction. The best part is the Feds made the local sheriff serve the papers and close the joint.

The sheriff Robert Forche had to resign because the City Council, mayor, etc fraternal members were harassing him for enforcing federal gambling laws. <g>

Talk about the old proverbial "Rock and a hard place." <g>

Baytown Sun—1oct1964 (uh oh—somebody didn't pay-off *the* man):



# Result Of 1963 Raid -- IRS Seizes Eagles Club On Tax Lien

The U.S. Treasury Department has closed the Baytown Fraternal Order of Eagles club at 3300 Minnesota and seized the building, including all contents, to satisfy a federal gambling tax lien.

The lien was filed against the fraternal organization on Dec. 13, 1963, and involves more than \$1,000 in taxes, penalty and interest on seven slot machines which were in operation at the club.

Robert L. Webb, an Internal Revenue officer stationed in

Baytown, said the building will be offered to the highest bidder at 11 a.m. Oct. 14.

The contents, including such items as an ice maker, refrigerator, card table, a rocking chair, 82 straight chairs, 20 tables, nine bar stools, a large mirror, adding machine, a bar and a sink, will be auctioned at 12 noon on Oct. 15.

The building auction will take place at 3300 Minnesota and the contents will be sold at Hasty Transfer and Storage Co., where they are now impounded.

Webb would not discuss the Treasury Department's action.

Federal taxes on such machines are \$250 per year and the law requires that a stamp be affixed to each machine.

When Baytown police raided the Eagles club on August 18, 1963, they found electric slot machines in operation there and none of them had federal gaming stamps showing that the \$250 had ever been paid.

Also raided on that date were two other fraternal organizations — the Knights of Columbus and the Moose Club at 515 W. Main. A total of 16 machines were taken in the raid which was ordered by former Baytown Police Chief Robert L. (Bob) Forche, who later resigned. He said he had been harrassed as a result of such raids.

Subsequent investigation revealed that the machines were the property of Henry (Binks) Womble of Houston. Criminal charges were filed against Womble.

Baytown police department has the machines in storage, awaiting outcome of those cases.

A similar lien in the amount of \$5,000 is pending against the Moose Lodge.

Here are a couple newspaper ads C&L Distributors.

**WANT TO BUY**  
**BALLY - - EUREKA**  
*NEW OR USED*  
**C & L AMUSEMENT CO.**  
324 West Alabama St. Phone Lehi 9908 Houston 6, Tex

FOE 31254 att2

Mills slot machines for \$12.50? <g>

**FOR SALE**  
**Like New—Lock Bar Type**

50 Mills Single Slot Stands, Ea. ..	\$ 12.50
1 Mills Single Safe Stand .....	49.50
1 Mills Double Safe Stand .....	74.50
1 Mills Triple Safe Stand .....	134.50
5 20' Valley Shuffle Boards, Complete, Ea. ....	100.00

**C. & L. DIST. CO.**  
324 W. Alabama St. Houston 6, Tex.  
Phone: LY 9908—LY 8711

FOE 31255Att2

I know many other fraternal organizations violated Federal and state gambling laws. Many local illegal operators had deals to operate illegal games under the banner and cover of fraternal clubs. It was a good gig for both the club and the operators. They very seldom had problems because the membership protected them. In this case we have documented proof of "ILLEGAL" gambling and the Feds stepping in to close them down. If that isn't an "ILLEGAL" operation under illegal chip collector's definitions, then I don't know what would be. <g>

My guess is David will be along soon with a sales post for the 5 chips in this story.