

Mike Vuolo saw these on ebay and emailed me if I had them or wanted them. They were new to me. I took one look at the Mason records and told Mike to get them at any cost. Fortunately the cost was minute. <g>

Over a 3 year span there were 2 different sets of denominated chips and what could be a set of 6 different colors of roulettes. The info screamed "Illegal casino" and a good sized operation. All I needed was a Club name for the B&E chips. As you will read, I was correct on my assumption.

The story starts in Memphis, Tennessee and crosses the state line into Desoto County Mississippi, then all the way to Benny Binion in Dallas, Texas. The chips involve 3 states and illegal gambling, the FBI freedom of information act, and pure out and out murder.

Most illegal chip collectors have the JJJ T molds and H mold chips that were sent to Desoto County, MS and used at the El Dorado Club on Billy Goat Hill by the 3 J's, Open 1955-60- Jake Silverstein, Jessie Shumaker, and Johnny Eichorn. We now have one of them, Jessie Shumaker tied to another operation in the 1940's in Desoto County and tied to one of Binion's guys 5 years before he joined or went back to Binion in Dallas.

Pure speculation on my part. Did "BIG" Bob take the B&E chips to The Silver Slipper? Did he take them to The Palace or The Delta Club in Desoto County, MS? Did Eddie "RAT" Wroten take them to Dallas, TX? No way to prove that but we know illegal operators did take their chips with them in other areas. Example: PJ Sullivan had chips delivered to the Elite Club in French Lick, IN that had initials on them for The Piping Rock in Saratoga Springs, NY. We know for sure he used them in NY. The point is none of these guys threw chips away, although they lost many to the cops and feds. <g>

The story winds up with William Faulkner, a Nobel Prize winning author.

When it comes to "GOOD" stories about illegal casino's, this one ranks close to the top of the list.

Enough of that:

Tennessee:



B&E1att2

B&E

Bob Berryman
87 So. 2nd. St.
Peabody Hotel

Today, a magnificent Forbes Four-Star, AAA Four-Diamond historic hotel.
Memphis, TN

3/12/34
200 choc - \$25
600 blue - \$5
1200 - White - \$1

7/7/34
800 orange - 25c
400 lt blue - \$1
300 pink - \$5

8/11/36
300 red, navy, white, yellow, pink, green all same both sides

Enter our "Friend Of The Hobby."

Robert Arthur "Big Bob" Berryman, a Memphis native, bootlegger, gambler and well known night club operator. In the 1920's Berryman was known to have operated games at the Gehring Hotel at 84 Union in downtown Memphis. In 1929 Berryman is said to have invested \$100,000 in a place outside Memphis called the "Silver Slipper" which was described at the time as "Memphis' most luxurious nightclub" (fine dining, dancing, valet parking and gambling). The Silver Slipper operated off and on from 1929 until it was destroyed by a fire in 1958 (closed during WWII).

My note: The Silver Slipper is a new one to me. Hopefully someday we will find the chips.

Five years after the opening of the Silver Slipper the chips were delivered to Berryman. I assume Berryman was still involved with the Silver Slipper at the time but was not able to confirm this. However, I think the B&E chips were probably used at Berryman's downtown gambling operations. When the chips were ordered Berryman operated games on the 2nd floor of a 3 story building at 85 South 2nd St. (the order card says 87). At that time he also operated dice and poker games across the street at the Memphis landmark and world famous Hotel Peabody (the place where the ducks march through the lobby twice a day <http://www.peabodymemphis.com/>).

My note: Read the "Duck" story. It is also a good one. <g>

Here's a current street view of 85 So.2nd and the 2nd St. entrance to the Peabody:



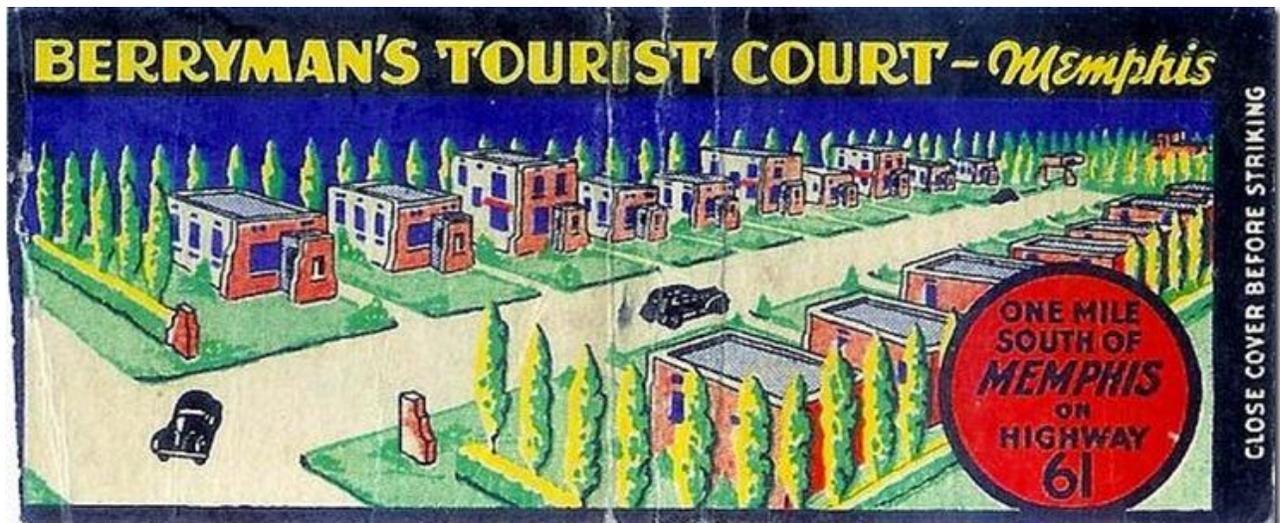
B&E2att2

Here's a pic of the Peabody from the late 20's showing the same 2nd St. entrance shown above:



B&E3att2

A year after the 1936 chip delivery Berryman opened a tourist court south of Memphis:



B&E4att2

In 1938 Berryman was operating a place called the "Paddock" just across the border from Memphis in Desoto County, Mississippi. The article below mentions Berryman and an associate of his named John Phillips:

City Studies Bill Against Gambling

MEMPHIS, Feb. 11. (AP)—Memphians who attend night clubs just south of the state line in Mississippi are watching with interest the progress of new anti-gambling legislation passed by the Mississippi house of representatives and now awaiting senate action.

The legislative action comes as an aftermath of the arrest of 10 Memphians on charges of operating gambling houses in Desoto county, Miss. The trials of the defendants, including Bob Berryman, operator of the Paddock, and John Phillips, operator of the Mississippi Club, are set for next week at Hernando.

Under the bill passed by the house, a gambling establishment could be abated as a public nuisance through injunction. Operators convicted could be required to post bond as a guarantee against further illegal activities.

"Desoto county citizens have made up their minds to kick out the roadhouses," said Rep. Gerald Chatham of that county. "We are asking for the necessary mechanics to give them the 'hoot.'"

B&E5att2

Two weeks later another Memphian went on trial for operating in DeSoto County: Eddie Wroten.

MEMPHIANS FACE TRIAL

HERNANDO, Miss., March 3. (AP) —Two Memphis residents, Albert Barrasso and Eddie Wroten, went on trial here today on charges of operating gambling establishments in De Soto county.

Selection of a jury began yesterday after Judge John M. Kuykendall overruled a demurrer filed by defense counsel to the court's overruling a motion to quash the indictments.

B&E6att2

Wroten, as you know, had the F&E hub chips delivered to the Campbell Hotel in Dallas in 1945. Wroten was a resident of Memphis during the 1930's when the B&E chips were delivered to Berryman--both were known gambling operators and poker players. I never saw evidence that they operated together, but I guess it's possible that B&E could be for Bob & Eddie???

My note" You should be familiar with Eddie "RAT" Wroten. He was featured in "Illegal Of The Day Texas 8" posted on 6/17/11.

F&E-Campbell Hotel

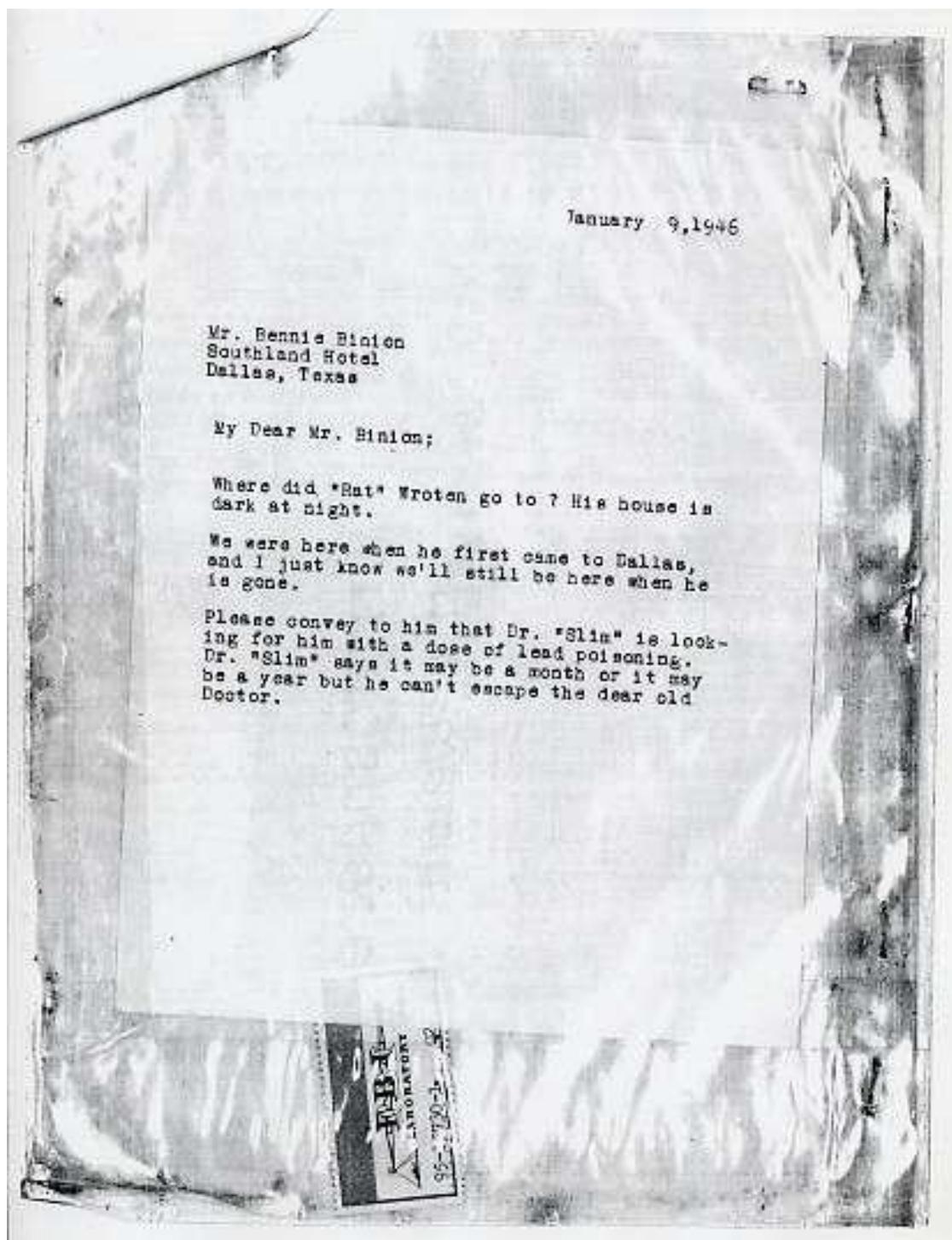
Dallas Texas

Delivered to Eddie Wroten at Campbell Hotel in 1945 - 11,000 pieces



B&E7att2

My note: In 1946 the Dr Slim, Eddie "RAT" Wroten" death threat letter was sent to Benny Binion. It was obtained under the freedom of information act from FBI evidence files. The FBI evidence tag is at the bottom of the scan.



B&E8att2

Here's another order card for Wroten. Another Memphis gambler named Jesse "Shoes" Shumaker gets chips with the same PALACE hot stamp as Wroten around the same time.

SPECIAL MONOGRAM								
Name _____				PALACE				
Address _____								
Town _____		State _____						
Per _____								
Amount	Color	Initials Both Sides	Style Type	Initials One Side	Other Side	Style Type	Monogram Color	Date Shipped
"Palace" check die to be used by two								
customers, Eddie Wroten with "Palace" alone								
on both sides, and Shumaker with "Palace" on								
one side and money denomination on other								
side.								
TAYLOR and COMPANY								
2242 SOUTH CICCERO AVENUE								
CICCERO ILLINOIS								

B&E8batt2

I need the Palace chips. Cough them up if you have traders. <g>

As you can see the Eddie Wroten Palace chips were sent to The Delta Club which appears to have been in Desoto County.

— The —

Delta Club

One Mile South of
CLEVELAND
On Highway 61—

**Invites You To
Enjoy A Glorious
Fourth!**



●

Don't wonder where to go . . . make it a point to visit The Delta Club . . . you'll enjoy the pleasant, cordial atmosphere and courteous service!

DINING! DANCING!

My note. The story turns back to John Phillips, "Big Bob" Berryman, and a brutal murder.

On a spring midnight in 1940, John Phillips, the associate of Berryman mentioned in the article above, was standing outside the entrance to a Memphis nightclub called Foppiano's when Berryman drove up and parked his car. Exiting his auto, Berryman pulled a sawed-off 20-gauge shotgun and scattered some serious lead in Phillips' direction. Phillips ducked into the club and made his way to the rear exit while Berryman, shotgun in hand, fighting off patrons who tried to stop him, followed close behind. Discovering the rear exit locked, Phillips turned to find Berryman and lead coming his way. Severely wounded, Phillips begged Berryman to shoot no more whereupon "Big Bob" pulled out a snub nose Colt and emptied it into Phillips' guts.

While being carted out of Foppiano's for a trip to the hospital which would do him no good, the dying Phillips' was heard to say that this was all about the clubs in DeSoto County.

Charged with murder, Berryman plead self-defense, claiming that Phillips was out to kill him: "Big Bob" got Phillips before Phillips could get "Big Bob." A Shelby County jury—two of whom had received phone calls threatening the "John Phillips treatment" if they gave a guilty verdict—didn't buy Berryman's story and sentenced him to life in prison.

My note: As you can see "Big Bob" was not above witness intimidation.

Five years later Tennessee's assistant penal institutions commissioner was standing in the lobby of a Nashville hotel when he saw a familiar face stroll by: Bob Berryman. The commissioner notified authorities and Berryman and his wife were picked-up in a room on an upper floor of the hotel.

Apparently Berryman had been such a model prisoner at the Tennessee Penitentiary that he had been given "special privileges" which included occasional trips to Nashville (the prison warden resigned over the scandal).

Four years after this incident, in 1949, the Governor of Tennessee, having been "persuaded" by Berryman's friends that Big Bob's health made him not long for this world, commuted his sentence and the 60 year old was released from prison after serving 8 1/2 years. Berryman died in Nashville in 1965 at the age of 76.

My note: "Not long for this world" appears to be 16 years. <g>

(a side note)--

Phil Stone, an Ivy-League educated attorney from Oxford, Mississippi, is known to have spent time in Berryman's gambling rooms in the 1920-30's. Stone was considered to be an expert poker player—good enough that three different gambling houses in Memphis offered him a job as the house player. Stone is known to have played poker with Berryman at the Hotel Peabody in the late 1930's. Stone's claim to fame is that he was a friend and mentor of fellow Oxford resident and literary giant William Faulkner.

Stone is credited with teaching Faulkner how to play poker, a game which makes its way into some of Faulkner's fiction and which Faulkner himself enjoyed playing throughout his life (although never at the skill level of Stone). Stone and Faulkner used to take trips up to Memphis together where they would visit gambling rooms and brothels. On one occasion in the late 20's, while Stone was in a back room playing poker with Bob Berryman, Faulkner lost \$300 playing roulette. In 1958 the Nobel Prize winning Faulkner answered questions at a symposium at the University of Virginia:

Q. You don't have any idea of [where you learned psychology]?

A. No sir, I don't. Only what I have learned about it from listening to people that do know. What little of psychology I know the characters I have invented and playing poker have taught me. Freud I'm not familiar with.