

Westen Charles sent me The Cellar Club chips earlier this year. They were UFC's as far as we could tell. Weston started the research by contacting the seller who was the granddaughter of the owner of The Cellar Club. Over the following months I received a number of emails from Westen, Mike Spinetti, and our "Friend Of The Hobby" with bits and pieces of research. I called Mike Spinetti and we had lunch earlier this week. I hope I have cobbled the research together so the flow is readable. *vbg* As you will read Jackson, CA was wide open gambling. Newspapers called it "Little Reno," depending on who was in the California Attorney General's office.



Cellar1att2

Here is what we have so far.... I got the chips from the granddaughter of one of the owners. Turns out she used to date Mike Spinetti in the 60's. lol... Small world in Jackson. I'll send another email with a couple more clips.

The Amador County archives has these items as part of their collection:

photo--

All are black and white photographs of various sizes. Subject is a parade on Main Street in Jackson, circa 1950s.

8329.400.1 – Dale Vaira and girl marching in front of a crowd.

8329.400.2 – Red McKinnon dressed as rodeo clown, cleaning up horse dung on parade route.

8329.400.3 – Two children dressed as bears, holding banner "Keep California Green".

8329.400.4 – Boy and girl dressed as hobos.

8329.400.5 – Marching band in parade. Ed Richardson Jewelers, the 49er Club, and Raggio Bros. store can be seen in background.

8329.400.6 – Young boy dressed as a cowboy, riding a Shetland pony. "The Cellar" can be seen in the background.

Cellar2att2

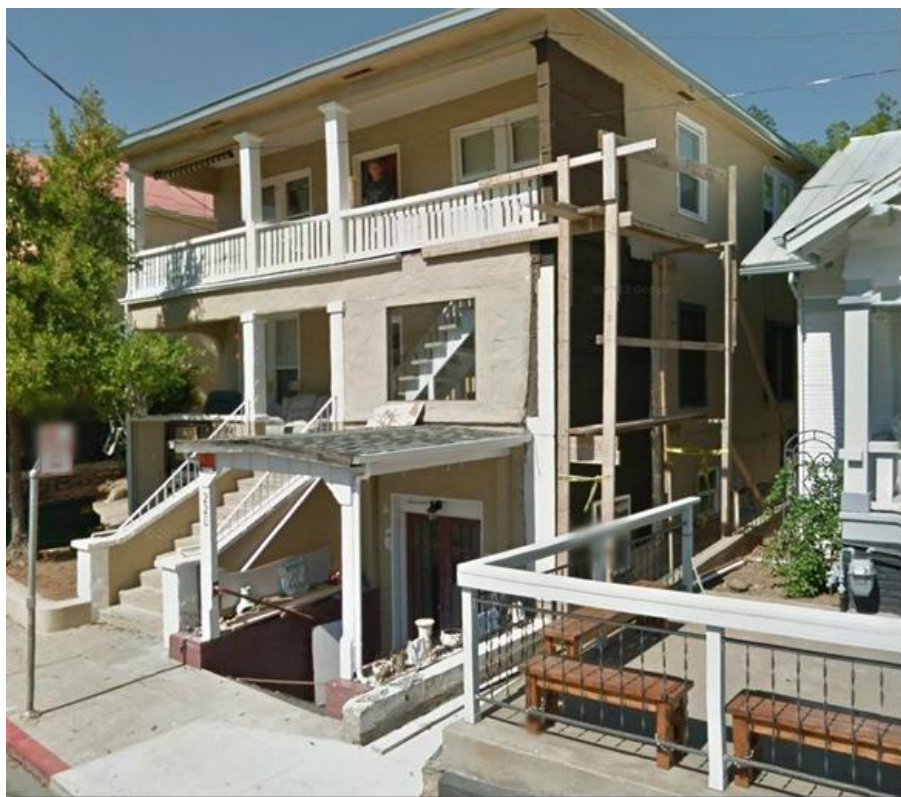
matchbook--

covered address book, Jackson, blank: .6.5 Bill Harvey, scoutmaster, 1972, woodburned wood; .6.6 three sheets (8 each) of matchbook covers, 1950s--1960s?: Sutter Liquor Store; Rex Pioneer Pool, Francis C Lindsay, Ed & Al's Union Service; Amador Stages, Cook's Station, Oneto Bros Garage, Larry's Drive-in, Sutter Creek, Tom's Village; Days of Kit Carson, Pioneer Club, Sutter Liquor Store (Mandich); Rite Place; Mel & Candee Kirby; Toye's Mobil Service, Sutter Creek Cleaners; The Cellar, Bridge Cabin, Wait Station, CH Beck, El Burrito, Drytown Club, Buck's Station, 6.7 postcards: .7.1 Jackson, "Dog On"

Cellar3att2



Cellar4att2



Cellar5att2

Here's a current aerial view of Main St. The red X is 220 N. Main; the red arrow shows the point where the photographer was located in the image of Main St. you sent.



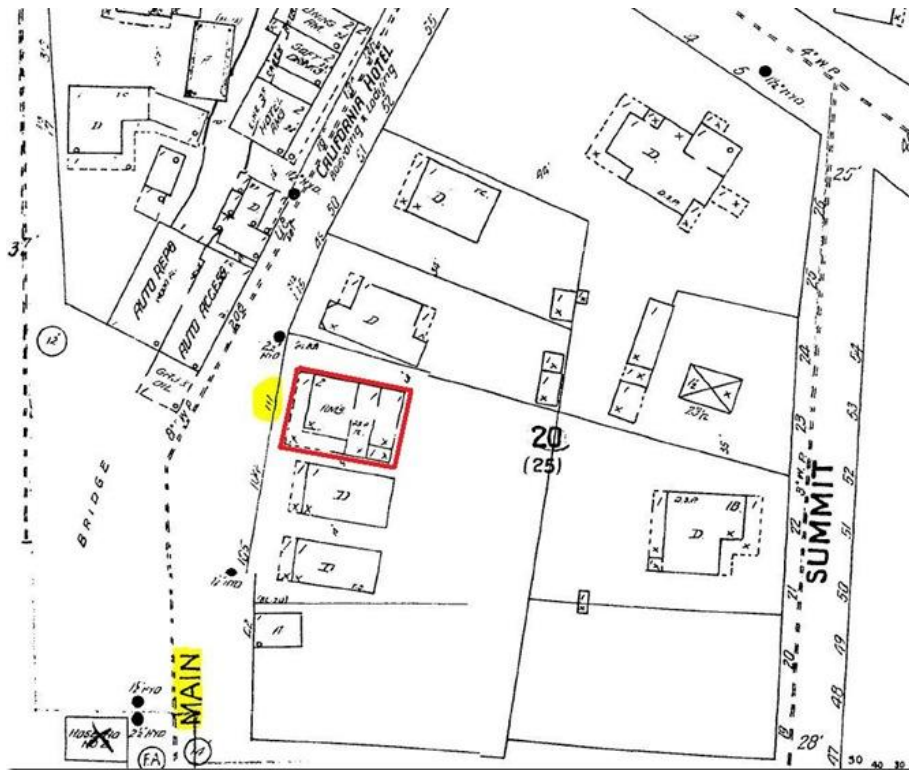
Cellar6att2

Heard back from the Amador County Archives. They sent a scan of the matchbook (they said they don't normally send scans, but they made an exception—lucky us *vbg*.

Matchbook says "Ray and Art" which would be Platz and Melanie. Gives the address as 111 Main St.--which is different than the 220 Main St. which we have as the address. However, I checked an old map of Jackson and what is today 220 Main used to be 111 Main.



Cellar7att2

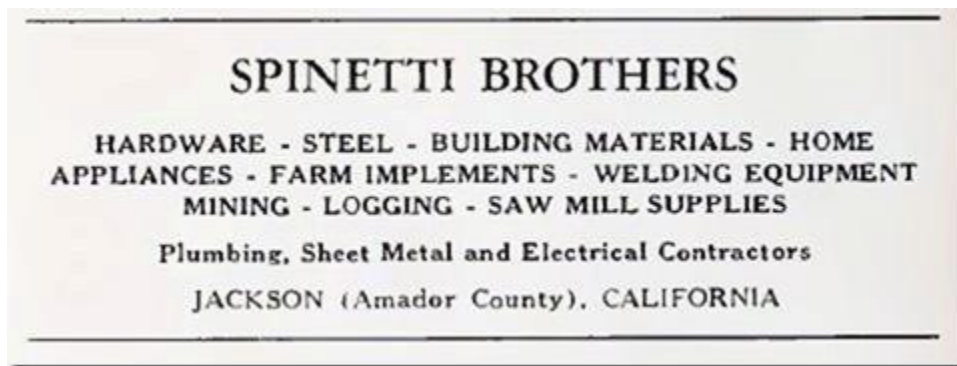


Cellar8att2



Cellar9att2

Also, when I was looking through some Jackson stuff I kept seeing the name Spinetti. Ad from 1949:



cellar10att2

It's kind of an unusual name and one I've seen on TheChipBoard and on eBay, belonging to Mike Spinetti of Spinetti's Gaming Supply. Turns out it's the same Spinetti family. Mike Spinetti was mayor of Jackson.

If you contact Mike he might be able to give you some good info.

Post on TCB:

<http://www.thechipboard.com/archives/archives.pl/bid/305/md/read/id/163458/sbj/yip-s-illegal-s-casino-s-and-more/>

Also, I saw a source say that the "Hair Cellar" was once located at 220 North Main St., right on the edge of downtown. Not sure if this is where the Cellar Club was located.

My note: I contacted Mike. He has helped me in the past with Jackson illegal chips.

Gene...just got home today from the summer in Jackson last couple months. Some of what is in the research is not correct. I don't type fast enough to write all the corrections. But the idea is correct, town was wide open, really didn't close down till 1958. I was born in 1949, and remember eating at most of these places so I know my date is much closer to be right. Will be around the next 4 months. Knee deep in crap for next couple days. But after that, will be wide open days if you want to do lunch sometime....mike

My note:

Mike was the Mayor of Jackson for 16 years from 1972-88. He still owns a number of properties there including several businesses. Most of the illegals of the era were nice family restaurants with swinging doors into the full blown gambling rooms. The term "Little Reno" was common in those days. In 2001 Mike came to the Palms for lunch with me. He brought me chips from The Bank Club and roulette chips The Louvre.

A few more Jackson illegals Mike could remember:

The R&R

Pioneer Rex

The Louvre

Bank Club

Club Mil-Mar - Dice depicted on the tray.

Appears nothing was hidden in Jackson.



Cellar 11att2

Thanks to Mike for the scan of the tray.

Back to the research.

I did find a little info on Melani and Platz. Arthur Augustus "Art" Melani was born in Italy in 1890 and was brought to California by his apparently widowed mother a few years later. Shortly thereafter his mother married Virgil Belluomini, the son of an early settler of Jackson, CA. Belluomini operated a saloon in Jackson as well as various other enterprises. By the 1930's Melani had moved to the Oakland area where he resided until the early 1950's when he returned to Jackson, dying there in 1977.

Around 1921 Raymond William "Ray" Platz (born 1896 in Oklahoma) moves to California and marries Elise Belluomini, Art Melani's step-sister. Art and Elise lived in Sacramento for most of the 1920's-1940's. Art operated a café called "Bridge Lunch" there for most of the 1940's. Around 1950 Ray and Elise appear to leave Sacramento and go to Jackson where Ray dies in 1982.

In 1948 a place called the "Cellar Recreation Club" was registered as a business in California, but I'm not sure if this is the one in Jackson.

I've attached a pdf file of a 1979 oral history interview of an old Jackson resident talking about the gambling places there. He doesn't mention the Cellar Club by name but he says there was a bar and gambling place down Main Street next to the Krabbenhof Building. The place that we think was the location of the Cellar Club was next to the Krabbenhof Building.

My note: If you want to read the interview email me and I will email it. poker4@cox.net.



Cellar12att2

a few more pics of Main St. in Jackson, both from 1947:

looking north:



Cellar13att2

looking south (at the end of the street is the National Hotel; I saw several references to John Wayne, while taking a break from shooting a movie, getting involved in a high stakes poker game there and losing big):

My note: I bet John Wayne "Losing Big" in a poker game was not depicted in the movie. *vbg*



cellar14att2

Article from 1951:

My note.

The 2 part article is a little hard to read but well worth the time.

The republican Attorney General closed the casino operations in Jackson pre 1951. Democrat Pat Brown took over the AG's office on Jan 8, 1951. That night the operators in Jackson started getting their operations ready and opened the gambling full bore on Jan 11, 1951. *vbg*

Jackson Wide Open—

Gambling in State's Famed 'Little Reno' Runs Rampant

By HENRY C. MacARTHUR
Capitol News Service

The bat-wing doors are swinging again in Jackson, Amador County, the fabulous "Little Reno" of California.

Gambling is wide open to the public-at-large and no questions are asked of an individual, man or woman, when money is laid out for roulette wheel chips, black-jack or the round silver dollars stacked high on the crap tables.

On Sunday night, Feb. 11, half a dozen establishments on Jackson's main street were operating openly, without look-outs of any kind and with no peep-holes in the gaming rooms.

Even the old stall that "I'm a friend of Joe's" isn't necessary in this Amador town, anyone could enter the gambling rooms and use as much money as he chose on the green felt tables.

According to information received in the Amador city, Jackson has been "open for about a month." It was closed tight last April, and had been closed intermittently for the past four years.

The re-opening is co-incident with the change of administration in the Attorney General's office.

Cellar15att2

It was on Jan. 8 that Edmund G. "Pat" Brown, San Francisco Democrat, took over the office from defeated Republican candidate Frederick N. Howser, Los Angeles, who was reported to have closed the town. And according to the reports in Jackson, it was on approximately Jan. 8 that the gambling houses removed the cloth covers from roulette wheels, dusted off the chips, broke out some new decks of cards, oiled up the bat-wing doors and readied themselves for business.

For in Jackson, gambling is a business. There are no houses devoted exclusively to roulette, cards and dice -- the gambling is conducted usually in a room alongside the bar or restaurant, with the swinging doors the only separation from the public.

In fact, in one of the establishments, entire families, father, mother and the children, were eating dinner not five feet from the gaming room where the clink of chips on the roulette table vied for noise with the rattling of knives, forks and dishes.

To understand the casual attitude citizens of the community take concerning the operation of the gaming rooms, it is necessary to go a long way back in California history.

Jackson since the days of '49, has been primarily a mining and lumbering community. It is off the beaten track of trans-continental highways, and has operated gambling establishments since the early days of the State when gambling was legal. Further, it has usually been zealous in operating its own affairs without outside interference.

Its citizens resent intrusion of State officials into its affairs, and when not bothered by the State, gambling continues as it did in the early days of the community with

no interference from the local gendarmes.

If you have never visited Spinetti's, I highly recommend it on your next visit to Las Vegas. You will not be disappointed. If it is gambling related, Mike will have it.

Mike has been a friend for many years. I've known him since the 1980's and my days at the Four Queens. He is a pretty good poker player and hopefully someday he will catch up with his lovely wife's poker playing skills. *vbg* She is a 2 time WSOP bracelet winner.