The illegal chip seminar at the convention was a lot of fun for Ed and I. Thank you to all attendees.

I've been researching chips for many years. Mostly through libraries, historical societies, UNLV, trips to other cities and by telephone. I remember one month my telephone bill was way too close to $1,000. <g> I tried the internet many times but I am old and usually came away frustrated.

You have to have a starting point. A name, a city or at least a state, maybe a matchbook. Found in Dallas usually won't be enough. There is an example of a good starting point that failed, at the end of this post.

One day after a few "Illegal Of The Day" posts had been posted and out of the blue I received an email offering to help me. Our "Friend Of The Hobby" was born. Bless him!

I asked him for some researching tips for our convention seminar presentation. I think Ed is already using them from the emails I have been getting from him. <g>

Take it away "Friend."

One tip for a chip researcher would be to check your local public library to see what databases they offer for free with a library card. If your local library doesn't have much, then check the largest public libraries in the state in which you reside.

Many large public libraries offer free library cards to people who reside in the state
in which the library is located. For example, if you reside or work anywhere in the state of New York you can obtain a free library card from the New York City Public Library. The card will give you free access to the large selection of online databases the library offers.

As you know, probably the two easiest to use and most accessible sources for illegal chip research are newspapers and city directories. A lot of both are online--some compiled at single sites and many scattered around the web at various locations.

As far as city directories are concerned, the easiest and most practical way to get info from them is to contact the local public library from the city you are researching. If a city had a directory made, then 99% of the time a copy of it will be deposited in the local public library. Most public libraries will do look-ups in the city directories free of charge. Simply email the library and ask for a look-up in the directory for the address or person during the year or years that the chip was ordered. Usually they'll give you an answer within a week; the best libraries will ask if there is more they can look-up for you (some will even scan copies and email them to you).

Some libraries have their city directories online at the library's website. A few examples:
Los Angeles: http://rescarta.lapl.org:8080/ResCarta-Web/jsp/RcWebBrowse.jsp
Cincinnati: http://virtuallibrary.cincinnatilibrary.org/virtuallibrary/vl_citydir.aspx
San Francisco: http://sfpl.org/index.php?pg=2000540401

There are a few pay sites which have a selection of city directories such as Ancestry.com and Fold3.com Ancestry.com's expensive annual subscription rate probably makes it impracticable for most researchers. The free site Archive.org has many city directories:
http://archive.org/search.php?query=publisher%3A%22Polk%22
Archive.org has a lot of other interesting info that's worth checking out. For example, it has the complete Kefauver reports:
http://archive.org/search.php?query=title%3A%28Investigation%20of%20organized%20crime%20in%20interstate%20commerce.%20Hearings%20before%20a%20Special%20Committee%20to%20Investigate%20Organized%20Crime%20in%20Interstate%20Commerce%29

Digitized newspapers make them useable in ways that the hard copy or microfilm format can't match.

Many old newspapers are digitized and available online; many are not. Like city directories, some websites have compiled collections of digitized newspapers from many locations and some have one newspaper from one location available; some are free some are pay.

Probably the best single website for newspapers is newspaperarchive.com. It's a pay site with a good collection of papers from the time period in which illegals operated. Another good pay site is genealogybank.com.

A good free site is Google's news archive:
http://news.google.com/news/advanced_news_search?as_drrb=a.
Google has many old newspapers available for free, but also has links to pay sites.   Google books is also a good resource: http://books.google.com/advanced_book_search

The Library of Congress has a good collection of free newspapers: http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/
The LOC collection only goes up to 1922. The LOC's digital collections are worth checking out:
http://www.loc.gov/library/libarch-digital.html

A lot of digitized newspapers are online and available for free but are scattered around on various websites.
Websites run by historical societies and universities often have digitized newspapers available for free.
A few examples:

Utah: http://digitalnewspapers.org/

Colorado:
http://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org/Default/Skins/Colorado/Client.asp?skin=Colorado&AW=1366300439450&AppName=2

Kentucky: http://kdl.kyvl.org/?f[format][]=newspapers

Texas: http://texashistory.unt.edu/explore/collections/TDNP/

Some digitized copies are available for the Daily Racing Form: http://athena.uky.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?page=boolean;g=drf

Here's a good list of digitized newspapers from both the US and around the world:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_online_newspaper_archives

Sometimes it pays to simply Google for what you are looking for—it might be online somewhere.

I would hope the tips and links gets a few more collectors researching our chips. Copy and paste them into a word document for future use.

Sometimes a starting point is a red herring. <g>

A friend sent me this scan asking if I knew the ID.

Circle Bar1att2

My reply was it is a "UFC."

Several months later he sent me this scan.

Circle Bar2att2

 Circle Bar3att2

Wow, a real "starting point. I was excited. A new to me illegal in Milan, IL.
In the matter of a few minutes our "Friend Of The Hobby threw a bucket of water on my high hopes. <g>

"It's tricky trying to ID the Circle Bar chip with any confidence because the name has been used for decades by lots of different businesses operating all over the place."

Peoria, Illinois in 1951:

st., bingo bowl and tip board.

Big 500 tavern, 517 S. Adams st., tip boards.

Nick's Pastime Club, 589 S. Adams st., punch and tip boards.

Henry Solomon's tavern, 201 S. Washington st., tip boards. -

Circle Bar, 501 S. Adams st., poker game in back room.

Deluxe Inn, S. Adams and Edmund sts., tip board. Empire ball tickets on sale.

Angle Inn, Loucks ave. and Hanssler place, punch and tip

Circle Bar4att2

Cicero, Illinois in 1949:

On Aug. 20 the Barton club had 85 customers and the Circle Bar, 5534 Cermak rd., was taking bets from 50 patrons, the investigators reported.

Let's say there was at least 1 Circle Bar in the other 49 states over the last roughly 90 years when clay chips started showing up. At "LEAST" 3 in Illinois, makes 52 Circle Bars. I bet there were more. It is a popular name. Please let me know if you run into another starting point. <g>

Research is fun and very satisfying even if you get a few misses. Give it a try!