

I got this chip at the convention in June 2011. The Mason record intrigued me as it was a new Florida chip but disappointing as no Club name, no date, and no quantities on card. Also it is not in Lighterman's great Florida book. Thanks to Mark Lighterman, I have added the Club name to the info along with the date. The story takes us through 25 years of the gambling business, murder, pool halls, gambling boats, the Chicago crime syndicate, and Al Capone. What more could you ask for if you collect Illegal Club chips? <g>

Enough of that:

Florida:



LJCatt2

LJC

L J Copeland

Miami, FL

Chocolate, Orange, Blue, Yellow, Pink, White

No quantities. No date.

Looks like a very old card

Mark's research added:

1932

Halcyon Hotel

Miami, FL

I sent the info on the card to our resident Florida expert Mark Lighterman. He found 2 full pages, 8 column story on a huge gambling bust in Miami. There are a ton of names and businesses in the story. It appears to be a transcript of testimony from inside informants. I have the full article and intend to enter the names in a spread sheet as somewhere along the lines we will find other names associated with chip finds. If anyone wants the full article email me.

Miami Daily News

May, 31, 1932 – The same year he bought the LJC chips.

Excerpt of the article with info on LC Copeland and The Halcyon Hotel.

MIAMI DAILY NEWS, TUESDAY, MAY 31, 1932

WORKINGS OF DADE SLOT MACHINE RACKET BARED

Q. Were you interested in a place over Bobby's garage a year ago last winter?

A. Yes. It later moved to the Halcyon hotel.

Q. That place was run by a combination of nine men, you told the grand jury. Please name them.

A. Kingsley Fink, George Skeet Downs, William Mayer, Leo Helft, L. J. Copeland . . . At this point Mr. Hawthorne interrupted to ask if the L. J. Copeland the witness mentioned was the same Copeland who lives here.

Judge Barns answered: "Everybody knows who Copeland is. Go on with the examination."

Q. Who are the others?

A. Charlie Thomas, Paul Green and myself.

Q. That is only eight. Who was the ninth?

A. I don't know.

Q. Was it Bob Knight?

A. He was not interested.

Q. Did he put any money into it?

A. Only what he loaned me.

Q. How much did he let you have?

A. A bunch. He has loaned me money several times.

Q. Wasn't Knight a one-ninth owner?

A. No.

Q. What was the original investment.

A. \$20,000.

LJC1att2

I showed the chip on the board and mention the story was coming in an Illegal "Of The Day" post.

Fellow Illegal chip collector, Jim Linduff saw it and was in Florida and decided to look further. He sent me the following.

George " Skeet" Downs is mentioned in the above article and later took 6 slugs from The Chicago crime boys. Al Capone would have been running it in these years. He also sent a picture of the Halcyon Hotel.

DOWN'S AWARE DEATH HOVERED, — OFFICIALS TOLD

Informed Friend Day of
Killing He Was
on Spot

George "Skeet" Downs saw the finger of death point him out days before he was taken for a one-way gangster ride that ended with his bullet-riddled body under a clump of bushes on the city's outskirts Wednesday midnight.

This information was made known to authorities last night as they pursued a fruitless investigation of his death.

In a conversation with a friend at 4 p. m. on the day of his death, Downs confided his fears. He believed the dread "finger" of gangdom's killers had been pointed his way because he wouldn't "play ball." He died that night as five bullets ripped through his habitually natty sports coat and another through his head.

Fear of possible reprisals by local gamblers against the so-called "Chicago syndicate" supposed to be in control of Miami district gambling still agitated law-enforcement authorities, although they were reluctant to discuss this possibility. From an unofficial source came word that a committee would call informally on Safety Director S. D. McCreary by Wednesday and insist upon more intensive police activity.

Meanwhile State Attorney N. Vernon Hawthorne has entered the investigation in a determined manner. His day yesterday was consumed with conferences on the Downs killing. He spent some time closeted with a member of the grand jury, but what his course of action will be is not known.

High city officials interested themselves in the gangster threat yesterday when Mayor E. G. Sewell and Commissioner C. H. Reeder called Safety Director S. D. McCreary and his detective chiefs to conference behind closed doors. Upon conclusion of the conference, Mayor Sewell announced he would seek a joint conversation with Miami Beach officials on the subject of underworld activities in the district.

LC2att2



LJC3att

I had no idea the size of the place. Now we have a much bigger operation in my mind. It was time to try and get more info. Enter our “Friend of the hobby.”

And now, “The rest of the story.”

LJC

Louis Jackson Copeland was born in 1882 in Arkansas, just north of the Louisiana border. By 1911 he had somehow made his way to Miami, Florida—population 5,471—where he immediately became active in gambling enterprises and established himself as one of the early “sportsmen” in a city with a long history of them.

In 1914 he opens a pool hall:

The Manhattan Pool Room

L. J. COPELAND, Prop.

THE COOLEST AND BEST VENTILATED PLACE IN TOWN

GIVE US
A CALL

POOL

Spend A
Pleasant
Hour

Cigars---News Stand---Soda Water Fountain

1003 Avenue D, between Tenth and Eleventh Streets.

L. J. COPELAND OPENS POOL PARLOR 1003 AVE. D.

The new Copeland Pool Parlor, located on Ave. D. between Tenth and Eleventh streets, which L. J. Copeland has just opened, possesses every feature desirable for the playing of the popular game. The parlor is well ventilated, with the entire front removed, and a soda fountain, cigar stand, barber shop and news stand will be run in addition to the Pool and Billiard Parlor, so that patrons will find everything needed to make their enjoyment of the game complete. Mr. Copeland is well known in the city and has a large following of friends and patrons who are glad to see him established in the fine new parlor.

LJC5att2

COPELAND MAKES BOND.

L. J. Copeland, against whom two indictments were returned by the Dade county grand jury Thursday afternoon appeared at the Sheriff's office yesterday morning and furnished \$2,500 bail for his appearance at the next term of the criminal court of record which convenes on June 12 next.

Copeland maintains a billiard hall on Avenue D, near Tenth street, and was indicted for permitting minors to enter his place and play pool and also for permitting minors to gamble.

All of the other pool room men who were indicted along with Copeland furnished bail with the exception of Yancy, who operates a pool room at 1219 avenue D.

LJC6att2

My note: I wonder what that large following of patrons and friends think about him starting that fine new pool hall, after this article. <g>

In the early 1920's Copeland starts operating on a houseboat which gets raided numerous times. The Claude Copeland mentioned in the article below is Louis' brother; another brother Leonard also moved to Miami from Arkansas and operated pool halls and cigar stands in Miami as late as 1939.

March 1921:

ALLEGED GAMBLING BOAT IS RAIDED IN MIDSTREAM

Sheriff Allen's forces raided what is alleged to have been a gambling den on a boat in the Miami river, arresting three men on warrants issued by A. W. Washbish, private detective. Deputies Pinder and Clark made the raid.

L. J. Copeland, Claude Copeland and Sergeant Plato Grate were arrested in the raid and placed under bonds of \$1,000 each, which were immediately furnished.

It is understood that other raids on alleged gambling houses were planned to be carried out last night.

LJC7att2

Activities on Copeland's boat present a dilemma for the law in April 1922:

IS STEALING POKER LOSSES A CRIME?

County Judge Called on to Make Ruling
In Case of Alleged Houseboat
Holdup.

Preliminary hearing of William Hilt, charged with robbery in connection with an alleged holdup at the houseboat owned by L. J. Copeland several nights ago, began yesterday in the county court before Judge W. F. Blanton, and brought to the front a question of whether or not a man has committed an offense if he is recovering property lost in an illegal operation.

In his own behalf while on the witness stand Hilt asserted that at the time of the alleged offense he was merely recovering money which he had previously lost. The question was then brought forth that, if such was the case, Hilt did not commit a crime.

Authorities to that effect were cited by the law firm of Taylor & Taylor, who represented Hilt. J. W. Watson, Jr., special prosecutor, maintained it was a question for the jury to decide, and as a result of the point and the necessity for additional authorities on the subject, the hearing was postponed until 11 o'clock this morning by Judge Blanton.

Hilt's story was to the effect that he had lost heavily in a poker game. After once leaving the houseboat he returned and at the point of a revolver relieved the dealer of the money.

According to Copeland's testimony, Hilt returned to the houseboat about 11:15 at night armed with a revolver and demanded that he turn over the money. Copeland said he took a roll of bills containing \$600 out of one pocket, and that Hilt made him take another \$600 out of another pocket. Witnesses said Hilt made no attempt to rob anyone but Copeland.

Hilt said that \$1,306 represented his part in the game. He lost, he said, \$800 during the afternoon, and in the evening went to the home of a friend and procured \$513, which he had previously entrusted to his care.

When arrested at his houseboat near Lemon City by Deputy Sheriff Starling, Hilt had \$1,306 in bills under his pillow, it was said.

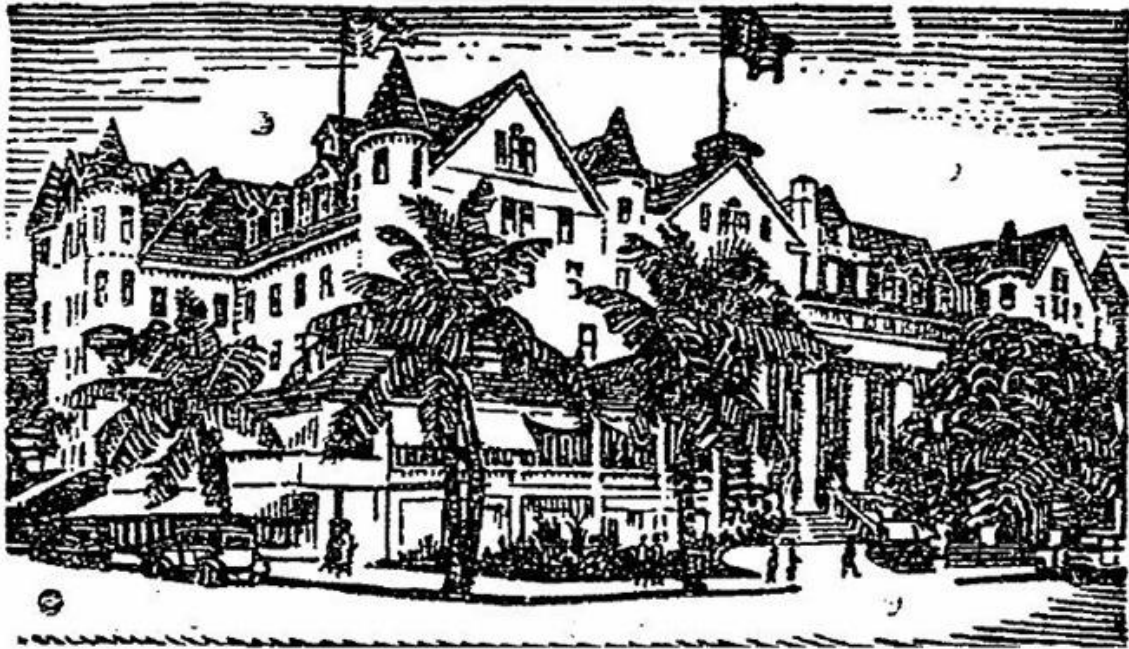
Raided again later that year in December 1922:

Poker chips, playing cards, dice boxes and numbered pieces of cloth used in certain dice games were found when the raiders visited the houseboat of L. J. Copeland, who was placed under arrest on a charge of having gambling devices in his possession. He was released on his own recognizance, pending a preliminary hearing today.

LJC9att2

The article you sent from 1932 shows that Copeland was still involved with gambling enterprises two decades after his arrival in Miami. In that time Miami had grown from 5,471 to over 110,000 and had become a popular resort destination. The Hotel Halcyon, where the 1932 article shows Copeland was involved with several others in a gambling operation, advertised around the country

including this ad from the New York Times in 1930:



Enjoy Miami at HOTEL HALCYON

The Hotel Halcyon again extends its cordial invitation to all who enjoy the comfort and relaxation of the old south. Its social rooms and verandas are spacious and hospitable. The Halcyon is located on Miami's central corner, yet is only two blocks from the waterfront; just completely renovated and refurnished; 200 very large rooms, 150 baths; rates in keeping with present-day conditions. Now under management of Van C. Duncan and Gus Muller, Jr.; European plan.

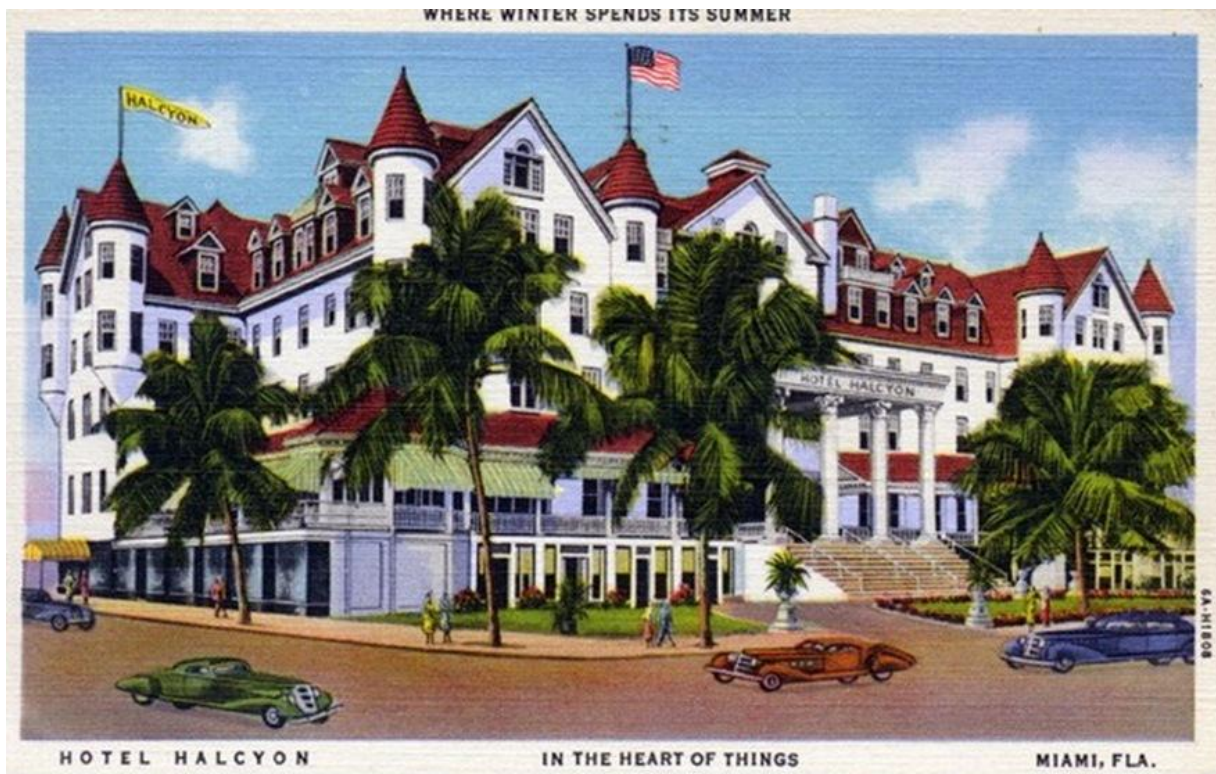
LJC10att2

pic from 1932:



LJC11att2

postcard:



LJC12att2

In addition to new residents and vacationers arriving in droves, Miami attracted plenty of underworld figures from all over the US. One of the guys who was involved with Copeland at the Halcyon, George "Skeets" Downs, was murdered in 1934. Downs' death was thought to have been the result of outside gamblers trying to muscle in on some of the long time Miami gambling operators

Downs reportedly didn't want give in to what was described as mainly a Chicago gangland effort to boss the gambling.

Chicago Tribune—28dec1934:

Miami Gaming War Disclosed by Slaying

Miami, Fla., Dec. 27 (AP).—The slaying of George "Skeets" Downs, 48, today revealed what authorities described as a conflict between Miami and Chicago "operators" for control of gambling concessions here.

The body of Downs, long-time professional gambler known as "the man who defied Al Capone," was found sprawled beside a lonely road on the outskirts of the city late last night. He had been shot in the back six times.

LJC13att2

Supposedly Downs became known as the "man who defied Al Capone" because several years prior to his murder Capone, while vacationing in Florida, tried to muscle-in on Downs' operations without success.

I'm not sure what Copeland was up to over the next several years. He seems to be in and out of Miami, perhaps even spending some time in New York (his wife and kids appear to stay in Miami). Copeland died in Dade County, Florida in 1959 at the age of 77.

Copeland had a son Louis, Jr. who died at Miami in 1981. Louis, Jr. had a son Louis, 3rd, born 1943.

Louis, 3rd currently resides in Jupiter, Florida; he would've been 16 when his granddad died; maybe he knows something about his granddad's activities.

Louis J Copeland
18680 134th Way N
Jupiter, FL 33478
(561) 745-1945

LJC14att2

wife's FB page: <http://www.facebook.com/people/Thereselle-Copeland/639968426>