

Here comes Ed, fresh back from his vacation. I think it's his 5th vacation this year. \*vbg\* Must be nice. I only get 1 vacation a year. But! It lasts all year. \*vbg\*

Texas has a long and storied history with illegal gambling clubs. Here is one more previously unknown set of chips to add to that story.

Enter Ed Hertel.

I've had the chips hot stamped "Oil Patch" for years and frankly I never gave it much hope in pinning them to any one club. When they first hit the scene they were said to be from south Texas coastal, specifically Corpus Christi or Brownsville. Of course this led many of the Galveston collectors to claim it as theirs, even though they could never place a location of anything resembling an Oil Patch in the area.



oilpatch1

On a whim I checked Corpus Christi, and immediately got a hit. It was actually so easy I can't believe nobody had even tried before. Not only was there a club called the "Oil Patch" in the 1950s, but it was sited a couple times for gambling. Seems a little too easy not to be connected.

The first mention of the Oil Patch was from May 1955 when the Corpus Christi Times reported the raid of five local clubs; the Oil Patch Club, 44 Club, Lucky Club, Coral Club and Western Club. The raid was led by the Liquor Control Board looking for illegal booze, but gambling equipment including dice boards, cards and poker chips were also confiscated. Because the equipment was not in use at the time, only liquor charges were issued.

Further raids conducted in 1956 and 1957 brought charges against the owners of the Oil Patch, who are now revealed to be Charles O. Scott and Enrique Sendejo – each with interesting pasts on either side of the law. Charles Scott had been a deputy sheriff of Corpus Christi during the 1940s whose job it was to enforce the gambling laws while Enrique Sendejo was an employee of the Dragon Grill, a notorious gambling club.

**The Dragon Grill**  
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 PHONE 8812

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 To the Music of

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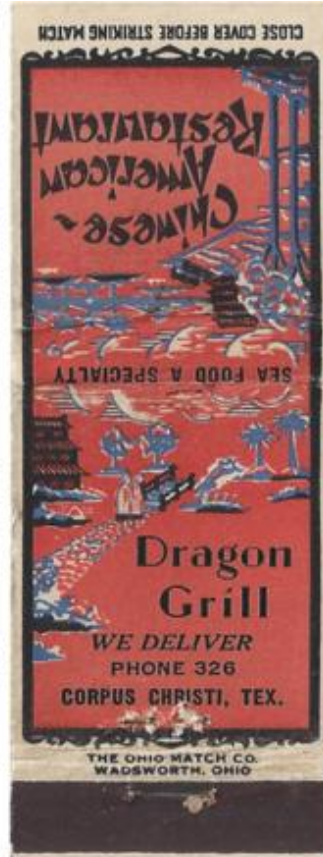
**Steaks,  
 Sea Foods,  
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 2.00 Per Person  
 Week Days  
 3.00 Per Person  
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 MONDAY**



oilpatch2

In Corpus Christi, there would have been no better place to learn how to run an illegal gambling club than the Dragon Grill. Despite their notorious reputation, raiders could never catch the club in the gambling act. Multiple raids were conducted, but in each one (as if they had been warned ahead of time) no gambling equipment could be found. Although the owners claimed they didn't have any equipment, a chip order from 1947 with the simple "M" hotstamp (probably for the owner Doc Mason) indicates otherwise.

Name		Address		Town		State		Per		SPECIAL MONOGRAM	
Thayer, Nicholas V. Dragon Grill		701 N. Water St.		Corpus Christi		Texas		T. Mason		M	
Amount	Color	Initials Both Sides	Style Type	Initials One Side	Other Side	Style Type	Monogram Color	Date Shipped			
700	Yellow	M	Bevel				Gold	2-19-47			
500	Black	"	"				"	" " "			
300	Black	"	"				"	" " "			

oilpatch3

My note. We need these chips. Cough them up if you have traders. \*vbg\* There are 2 different orders using the "M" with dots above and below. The other one is a 1954 Chicago in store pickup. This one says the color is scarlet, the other one says red. Not sure if they are different colors.

During the early 1950s, the Dragon Grill's luck was running thin. The heat was turned up in 1952 when it was discovered that a Naval Air Station disbursement officer went ahead and disbursed \$12,000 of government money at the Dragon Grill's craps table. Lawsuits and an investigation led authorities to send in an undercover officer to infiltrate the casino. He was upstairs when he witnessed the alarm go off and the gambling tables being broken down and hidden with precise efficiency. When his fellow officers entered the room, he revealed himself and the jig was up. The Dragon Grill was finally busted.

I would like to believe that the friendship of the future partners in the Oil Patch was sewn back in the days of the famous Dragon Grill. I imagine Deputy Sheriff Charles Scott dropping a dime to Enrique Sendejo at the Dragon Grill warning of an impending raid. Maybe even later exchanging amused glances as the raiding party busts in and finding nothing.

But we don't know that. What we do know is that one year after the devastating raid on the Dragon Grill, the two men were opening up the Oil Patch Club at 4428-1/2 Highway 9 (today Leonard Street). Not much information about the club is given from public sources. The fact it was upstairs from a Harley Davidson Motorcycle sales and repair shop might give an indication about its clientele.

Raids were frequent at the Oil Patch Club, but like the Dragon Grill a few years back, gambling was hard to pin on them. In one particular liquor raid in February 1957 it was stated that "no evidence of gambling found". For the article to implicit state this speaks volumes that it must have been a surprise to find none.

However, a little over a week later the police finally caught them in the act.

## **Oil Patch Raided, Dice Confiscated**

Sheriffs deputies last night raided the Oil Patch, 4428 Highway 9, confiscated dice game equipment and charged club operator C. O. Scott with operating a dice machine.

Charges against Scott were filed in the court of Justice of the Peace W. A. Gilleland. No other arrests were made. Deputies Ross Stephenson and Wade Hobbs made the raid.

oilpatch4

This was the last time I could find information about the Oil Patch's gambling. The club continued to operate for a few years; however in 1959 it changed ownership to someone named James B. Rathmell.

Today, the condemned building still stands (barely). Off on the side of the building you can see the stairs leading up to the second floor where the Oil Patch would have operated.



oilpatch5

As I had mentioned in the beginning, these chips were always attributed the Corpus Christi area, but without records it would be hard to say with 100% confidence. I think the idea that they were not originally claimed to be Galveston chips gives this a little legitimacy. After all, there aren't many people who collect Corpus Christi chips.

As a side note, the below chips have always been found with the Oil Patch chips. They too are supposedly from the Corpus Christi area, and the similarities of the chip style and colors cannot be overlooked.



oilpatch6

If I could somehow reconcile the shrimp boat design to something local I would, but unfortunately I cannot. Perhaps someday we'll find a home for these as well. Until then, back into the unknown box with them.

My note: I had never seen the shrimp boat chips before this post. Very interesting. I know Ed never gives up! Sooner or later I'm betting they show up in a future "Illegal Of The Day." \*vbg\*