

Peoria, Illinois was a large cluster of illegal gaming clubs. In the newspaper articles below you will read how the Shelton Gang ruled the city with brutal tactics to extract their pound of flesh for protecting the Clubs. The Shelton's did not start the illegal clubs in Peoria.

They were originally farmers that saw a big bootlegging opportunity during prohibition. They became the "No 1 BIG" bootleggers in Peoria and oversaw a bloody era in Peoria's history.

They saw the same opportunity in "The Era Of The Illegals." They came out of retirement and ruled a 2nd bloody era in Peoria's history.

It was "The Shelton's way" or "The Hospital." <g>

As stated in previous "Illegal Of The Day" postings the history of "The Era Of The Illegals" repeats itself all over the USA. From Newport, KY, Detroit, MI, Upper NY State, East St Louis, Kansas City, MO, Oregon City, OR, to San Francisco, CA. The stories are all the same, bootlegging, bribery, killings, and blood, all in the name of the almighty \$. <g> Sound familiar?

Sort of like the drug gangs of today without AK 47's. <g>



JA5

Att2

If you don't collect illegal chips, at least from the area you live in, you are missing out on some great history.

I got a grey Jack Adams Sportsmen's Club chip from Janice O'Neal back in 2006. As usual we fought over her taking anything for it. I lost as usual. <g> Rest easy dear friend.

Since there was a Club name on the Taylor Record card, I did not look further into it. Mike Vuolo found the pink ones on ebay last week. When I took a 2nd look at the Taylor card and noticed how big the order was, I decided to try and find some info on it. Big orders normally translate to big history. I was not disappointed. <g>

Enough of that:

And now "The Rest Of The Story."

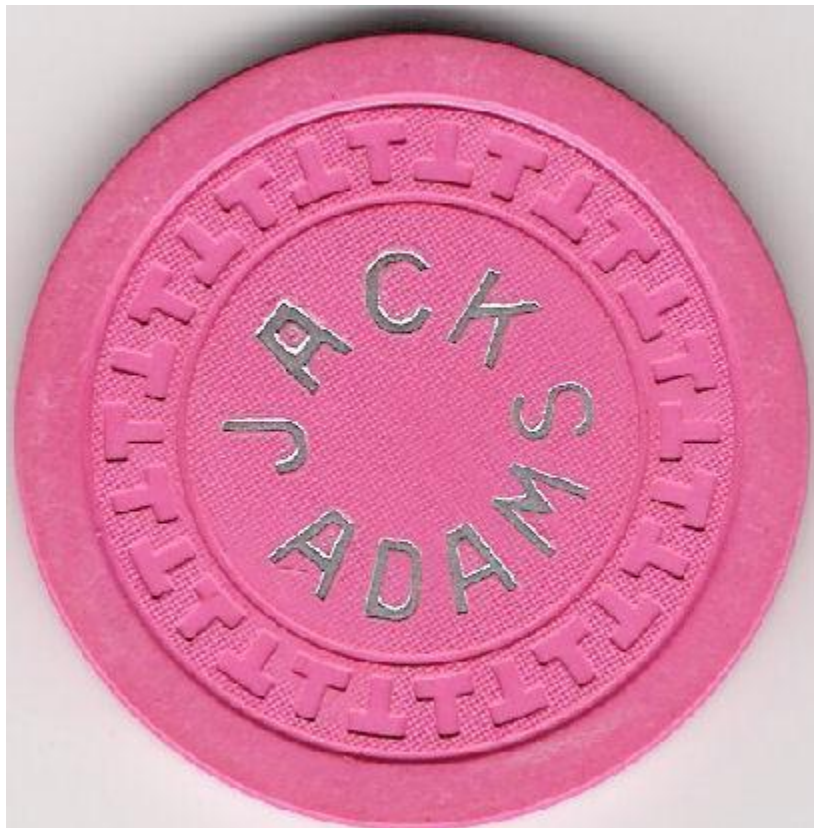
Jack Adams

Sportsmen's Club.


416 Fulton St

Peoria, IL

Chips delivered 1945-51



Jackadams1 att2

Name <u>Jack Adams of Sportsman's Club</u>					SPECIAL MONOGRAM			
Address <u>416 Fulton Street</u>								
Town <u>Peoria</u> State <u>Ill.</u>								
Per <u>"T" design</u>								
Amount	Color	Initials Both Sides	Style Type	Initials One Side	Other Side	Style Type	Monogram Color	Date Shipped
4500	Gray	✓	Spec.				Gold	8-31-45
1000	Yellow	✓	✓				Silver	" " "
100	"	✓	✓				"	9-1-45
1100	Gray	✓	✓				Gold	" " "
100	Yellow	✓	✓				Silver	9-10-45
400	Pink	JACK ADAMS	Spec.				"	5-21-51
1000	Gray	✓	"				Gold	5-21-51
300	Choc.	✓	"				Gold	5-21-51

Enter my "Friend Of The Hobby."

Jack Adams

John C. "Jack" Adams--not 100% sure, but there's a good chance he's the same Jack Adams who died in Las Vegas in 1967 age 67.

416 Fulton was the location of a bar/tavern as far back as the 1890's. Adams was running a place there as early as the mid 1930's. In the early 40's he started calling his place the Sportsman's Club and by the late 40's he changed the name to the Clover Club. He also had a place called the Sportsman's Country Club located at 1001 Farmington Rd. In Dec. 1953 he was described as "the former owner of a Peoria nightclub" and in June 1954, 416 Fulton was described as "formerly the Clover Club."

The Sportsman's Club was described as "ornate and tastefully furnished, offering about any sort of action the gambling man could desire." Taylor records also have this chip:

Name Jack Adams (Sportsmen's Club) SPECIAL MONOGRAM
Address 416 Fulton St.
Town Peoria State ILL.
Per _____

The
SPORTSMEN'S
Club

Amount	Color	Initials Both Sides	Style Type	Initials One Side	Other Side	Style Type	Monogram Color	Date Shipped
2.25	DK Red	YES	Spec.					
2.00	CHOC.	"	"			"	Gold	2/13/42
2.00	DK. RED	"	"					" " "
1.00	DK. RED	"	"				"	4/18/42
2.25	CHOC.	"	"				Gold	7-17-42
		"	"				"	7-17-42

I need The Sportsmen's Club" chip, if anyone has a trader.

Chicago Tribune—11aug1948; article about Shelton's and Peoria, mentions Adams:

PEORIA KNOWN AS OPEN TOWN FOR MANY YEARS

(Chicago Tribune Press Service)

Peoria, Aug. 10—This has been a "wide open town" since the days when river traffic on the Illinois waterway was the most important transportation in a new and rough frontier country.

The history of the Shelton gang here is but one interlude in a series of rises by one hoodlum group after another to leadership in the gambling and vice worlds that produced enormous illicit profits.

In the heyday of their power the Sheltons were collecting the major cut from more than 4,000 slot machines—scattered thruout the county's saloons, restaurants, clubs, and roadside dining spots. They also were "muscle" partners in a dozen or more openly operated gaming palaces which packed in the players in Peoria, Tazewell, and Fulton counties.

May Be On Way Out

Little if any of this underworld empire was developed by the Sheltons. It was functioning when they arrived here—lured out of their retirement as Fairfield, Ill., dirt farmers after a bloody but profitable era as the chief bootlegging gang in southern Illinois. And now that they apparently are on their way out as "important" people here, new leaders move in.

There are several stories concerning their first entry into this county. One has it that Carl Shelton was summoned here as bodyguard and partner in a punch board business run as a sideline in 1938 by one of the automobile agency owners. Another is that Carl and several of his henchmen came up at the invitation of Clyde Garrison, a gambler who wanted their assistance against the Capone mob from Chicago.

Garrison gradually withdrew from local leadership and Carl Shelton took over. He then sent for Bernie Shelton. Carl told Peorians that Bernie always was getting into trouble and that only

he (Carl) could control the younger man. Ray Walker and John Kelly were the other major figures in the Shelton group here.

Some Glossy Places

Initially the Sheltons claimed only rights over slot machines. In downtown Peoria, however, there flourished such glossy places as the Lyceum, where there were dice tables and roulette; the Empire, a cards and dice palace; the Mint, a bookie joint, and the Palace Arcade, with a bar downstairs and craps and "a wheel" on the second floor.

There also was the Clover club, run by Jack Adams; The Wilight inn, at Orchards Mines, within Peoria county, and the Para-Dice inn, just across the Illinois river in Tazewell county. Most of these were so-called "independents," banded together only to provide a pay-off kitty which left them all more or less undisturbed by police or sheriffs.

Demand Their Cut

With the slot machines in their grasp, the Sheltons moved in on owners of gambling places. The usual technique was to arrive at a gambling house in company with three or four gun toting "boys." Owners were told the Sheltons were taking a 30 to 40 per cent cut and a daily look at the books. The Sheltons boasted that they slapped their enemies silly instead of killing them and "bringing down the heat." One beating usually sufficed.

The Sheltons had little success in Tazewell county, however. Authorities there "closed down the county." This is the state of affairs today. The Para-Dice has been closed for three months because of a brawl, according to gossip, that developed when the Sheltons tried to collect their partnership take.

Bars Or Night Clubs

Today the Lyceum and the Palace Arcade are gone. The others are bars or night clubs but the gambling is soft pedaled.

Aside from their Golden Rule farm, the Shelton holdings in Peoria are only the plot of ground and the rough concrete block building housing their Parkway inn, a shabby little place where Bernie also kept his books and papers. Even here he had no liquor or official title. The inn was closed for several days after Bernie's murder on July 26, but it has reopened.

Peoria *Journal Star*—17feb1992; 18 years ago a guy who lived in Peoria during the wide-open days gave his recollections; mentions several gambling places and Adams; at the bottom of the article it shows that in the original hardcopy there were photos of 416 Fulton both as the Sportsmen's and Clover Clubs:

WHEN IT WAS 'ROARING PEORIA'

Journal Star (Peoria, IL) - Monday, February 17, 1992

Author: BILL ADAMS

My, how times change! Here we are, with our town celebrating its 300th anniversary with yearlong festivities, a town that's often used as the standard by which other American towns are compared ("Will it play in Peoria?"). For the second time in recent years, Peoria has been chosen an All-America City, and this past fall, the Par-A-Dice riverboat, one of the largest attractions for bringing visitors to our town, began plying our Illinois River with its floating casino.

But gambling and ah... er... other means of entertaining visitors, isn't anything new to our town. It's just that gambling has been legitimized and is now looked upon as an industry rather than a vice.

Well, that isn't the way it was back in the 1920s, '30s and well into the '40s, when Peoria was infamously known as "Roaring Peoria," and gambling was the king-pin of it all.

In 1956, the *Journal Star* ran a series on that "Old Peoria," referring to it with the headline, "As Wide Open as the Gateway To Hell."

The Peoria Charisma

Now, I was a product of the 1920s and I recall much of that period as a child and young adult. Call it being naive if you must, but as I look back on it, I was unaware of the hoodlum element under the surface of it all. But I agree with the newspaper's description of it as a "bawdy town, but always with a twinkle in its eye," and, good or bad, Peoria has always had a certain charisma.

Those Depression days after 1929 were difficult times, when more people were out of work than working. Gambling and prostitution were easy ways to make a buck for some, with men controlling the former, and women the latter.

At one time a madame who ran a "home" at Fayette and Washington conducted "Miss Fern's Midnight Cotillon" each Saturday night in her grand ballroom. It was said to be as well-known from coast-to-coast as New Orleans' famous Quadroon Ball.

Prairie Alley, one of Peoria's three "red light" districts, was also well-known nationally, while practically every house near North Washington and Eaton became a brothel.

A Gambler's Paradise

But, most of all, Peoria became a town where gambling joints were more common downtown than banks, restaurants and churches. The best known, and probably most lucrative, was the Empire at 139 S. Jefferson. It offered various types of gambling, but was best known as the home of the baseball pool. It was said to take in as much as \$75,000 a month, and frequently paid off jackpots of \$5,000 or more. And I'm here to tell you that \$5,000 back then was some hunk of change! Its proprietor, Bill Urban, was a kidnap victim in 1930, and the manager of his Alcazar, Frank Dougherty, also was kidnapped a few weeks later. It's believed that Urban paid \$80,000 before he was released.

In the same block as the Empire was the Saratoga. It was a cigar store with bowling alleys upstairs, but it also had a short gambling career before Peoria's reform mayor, Carl O. Triebel, was elected in the mid-'40s and put a lid on it. The Saratoga's gambling operation lasted less than a year.

Urban's Alcazar was around the corner from the Empire on Fulton Street, across from City Hall. It also sold baseball pool tickets, and featured slot machines. In that same 400 block of Fulton was the old Sportsmen's Club, which later became the Clover Club and operated by Jack Adams.

Also in the 400 block of Fulton was the Mint, but its gambling was done on a smaller scale. It is said its operators refused to deal with the mob.

Unlucky To Be Too Lucky

Across Madison Avenue from City Hall was the Palace Club, which became the headquarters for the Shelton gang. It was sometimes unlucky to be too lucky at the Palace Club. Winners often wound up with a busted head and their pockets picked after they left the premises with too big of a winning roll.

In the 100 block of South Madison was the Palace Arcade, not to be confused with the Palace Club. It also featured gambling, with a horse-betting operation on the second floor.

Further down Fulton Street, in the 300 block, were the Lyceum and the Windsor. The Lyceum was originally established by Pete West before the turn of the century, but was now strictly a gang operation. It also featured horse betting but was held in somewhat low esteem by the city's other gamblers.

The Windsor offered roulette and faro, in addition to other games of chance. As featured in this column recently, its proprietor, Clyde Gamison, was wounded and his wife, Cora, killed in a kidnap attempt in 1930, shortly after those of Urban and Dougherty.

A Tough River Town

Yes, our town certainly had a bold tradition as a tough river town back in those "Roaring Peoria" days. The vice and rackets flourished, and it's said a well-placed bribe could be more effective than a well-aimed bullet.

That's no doubt why so many of those kidnappings and murders were never solved. Of all the stories I've read about those days, the only one I'm aware of that was solved was the kidnapping of Dr. James W. Parker in 1932. And that was probably only because the job was done by amateurs who weren't aware (nor had the money) to pay off the local officials who always seemed to have their hand out.

Yep, our town had charisma all right, but not the positive kind it has today... and it seems like only yesterday!

CAPTION: In the mid-1930s, the Alcazar "cigar store" (with the street light in front of it) at 414 Fulton St. stood across the alley from the Sportsmen's Club, the white-faced building on the left. "photo returned". The Clover Club at 416 Fulton St. formerly operated as the Sportsmen's Club. "photo returned".

I believe the writer of the above article Bill Adams is Jack Adams son. We got the pink chip from a seller that said they came from Jack's son.

Here's a map showing the locations mentioned. None of the structures which housed these gambling locations exist today.

E=Empire **S**=Saratoga **A**=Alcazar **SC**=Sportsmen's Club **PC**=Palace Club **PA**=Palace Arcade
L=Lyceum **W**=Windsor



Jackadams4 att 2

More Taylor order cards from Peoria including the B&C Palace Club, Bernie & Carl Shelton chips. Both The Palace Club and Lyceum are on the above map.

Name <i>B. Shelton 40 Palace Club</i>					SPECIAL MONOGRAM			
Address <i>205 1/2 Madison St</i>					<i>B&C</i>			
Town <i>Peoria</i> State <i>Ill</i>								
Per <i>T. Design</i>								
Amount	Color	Initials Both Sides	Style Type	Initials One Side	Other Side	Style Type	Monogram Color	Date Shipped
1000	Orange	B & C					Blue	10-8-47
1000	Scarlet	B & C	script				Yellow	10-8-47
500	Dark Blue	B & C					Yellow	10-8-47

B&C 2



16470 att2



16907 att2

I think Mike Vuolo has B&C chips for trade.

Michael Vuolo [mike@pokergurus.com]

Name <i>H. Kelly 40 Lyceum Bldg</i>					SPECIAL MONOGRAM			
Address <i>318 DuPont St</i>					<i>Lyceum Peoria Ill</i>			
Town <i>Peoria</i> State <i>Ill</i>								
Per <i>Harp</i>								
Amount	Color	Initials Both Sides	Style Type	Initials One Side	Other Side	Style Type	Monogram Color	Date Shipped
3000	Gray	Spec					Gold	6-26-46
1000	Yellow	"					Black	" " "
500	Lavender	"					Gold	" " "



82 att2

Name <u>R.O. Maddy</u>					SPECIAL MONOGRAM			
Address <u>4. Saratoga Cigar Store Co.</u>								
Town <u>Peoria</u> State <u>Ill</u>								
Per <u>Karp design</u>								
Amount	Color	Initials Both Sides	Style Type	Initials One Side	Other Side	Style Type	Monogram Color	Date Shipped
<u>300</u>	<u>Gray</u>	<u>ROM</u>	<u>Block</u>				<u>Gold</u>	<u>4.11.46</u>

I need the R<>M if anyone has a trader.