

For the 2nd time in a few weeks Ed Hertel shows us what researching the history of our chips is all about. A weak starting point, a hunch, and a personal tie to Galveston brought this one home.

Take it away Ed.

My last IOTD was a dream. I started with a name, address and date and with a couple hours of research, I was able to come up with a biography of the life of a gambler and solidly identify a previously unknown chip. Unfortunately that is not always the case. Actually, it's usually the opposite.

Today's IOTD is a little different. In placing this chip with a home, we cannot rely on straight research and connecting the dots. We are given clues as to its origin and perhaps in the end you might be convinced by my overall picture. In a way, I might be the only person able to do this chip because I have a personal history tied to it that I believe plays an important link in connecting this chip and club.

Let's get started.

I might not look it, but I consider myself one of the old-timers in illegal collecting. I've been hunting these chips consistently for almost 20 years and still love it. In 1996 I was a young pup just starting out professionally and although I had an enormous love for chips, I didn't have the pocketbook to match. (Those were the days before I could buy hundreds of chips only to end up giving them away at seminars! It's easier now, but was much more interesting back then.) I was lucky that a friend of mine in Dallas had the pocketbook, but not the time nor contacts to find Galveston area chips (he grew up in those clubs). I was given the opportunity to buy some chips (with his money) and would be rewarded with being able to keep some for myself. It was perfect.

During this time I made a few scores, but one in particular was incredible. I received a call from a friend of mine named Anthony Maceo. Anthony was a nephew of Sam and Rose Maceo, godfathers of Galveston and owners of clubs such as the famous Balinese Room. He knew I was fascinated with illegal gaming history and he introduced me to his family and friends. Most of the original characters had passed, but family members had opened up their histories to me which I really appreciated.

So Anthony calls me and says a friend of his has a hoard of illegal Galveston area chips that he would like to sell. He described some of them and I at first I was not impressed – mostly chips from Dickinson with "EE" and "SSS" monograms. These are common and nothing to get terribly excited about. But then he listed a few which I had never heard of. He mentioned such names as Kemah Club, Silver Moon, Reno Club, and others. I made the trip down to Galveston (about an hour's drive from Houston) and made the purchase. When I got home, I sorted the ordinary from the extraordinary, took what I wanted for myself and sent the rest off.

Included in the newly discovered hoard was this interesting beauty:



PFC1att2

This was long before Gene, David, and KMW made the Taylor records free to the public, so I sent my \$5 for the ID (along with another \$50 for other IDs – how much money did I spend for IDs back then?!) and in a couple months I got this back:

My note: I found the copy of the Taylor records. Michael Knapp, Allan Myers, and Ernie Wheelden authors of TCR and TGT in those days, put up the money. David Spragg and I got them ready and put up the money to get them on Preserving Gaming History.

My note: I will take a stab at how much we spent on ID's back in those days. Like Ed, I used to send \$50 to pay \$5 each in advance for Hub and Taylor chip ID cards. Ed, Steve Goodrich, Allan Myers (TGT), and I would get the ID's and share them among us once we figured out that sometimes we were all paying for the same ID's. David Spragg joined this little clique in later years. I have well over 1,000 ID's we paid for, well over \$5,000 between us.

Back to Ed and what he paid \$5 for:

NAME <u>Reno Club</u>		SPECIAL MONOGRAM							
Address _____		PFC							
Town _____ State _____									
Per _____									
Amount	Color	Initials Both Sides	Style Type	Initials One Side	Other Side	Style Type	Monogram Color	Date Shipped	
404	Red	PFC	Block				Gold	3/22/54	
707	Yellow	PFC	Block		LIGHT CHECKS		Blue	3/22/54	
1211	Dr. Blue	PFC	Block				Gold	3/22/54	

PFC2att2

It was strange that there was no name or address. At the time, I wrote it down as “Reno Club, Galveston, TX” with a “???” and never looked back. It was only in the last week that I pulled out this chip and started to seriously look at the evidence that it truly belongs to Galveston. And since this is Illegal of the Day TEXAS, you might guess where I ended up. But it might not be so obvious for everyone, so I need to lay out my case.

REASON 1: The Reno Club was without a doubt an illegal gambling club in Galveston.

The Reno Club was raided on numerous occasions and ticketed for illegal gambling each time. It was located at 2106 Avenue D (Market St) and was a popular spot for music, illegal liquor and of course gambling. The club and its front man owner Charles Bernard were fined in 1951, 1952, 1953 and finally listed amongst the 47 clubs which were raided in the massive shutdown in June 1957.

Below is a rare postcard of the band area as well as a matchbook.



PFC3&4att2

Charles Bernard was a repeat customer to Taylor and shows up for other clubs as well. Today we are concentrating on only this one.

REASON 2: The blank Taylor cards might tell a story

Gene discussed this in the Paul Harris “clock” hotstamp in his IOTD Texas

<http://www.marlowcasinochips.com/links/genetrimble/illegaloftheday/PaulHarrisTX.pdf>

Some of the records from the mid-1950s seem to have been “sanitized”. It looks like some of the Taylor cards have been replaced with type-set cards with the address and names removed (for examples see the cards for AJG, BJS, CRL). Very little information is given. I think this was done for other Galveston chips ordered around this time, and I believe the “Reno Club” 1954 card is a clue that this should be in the same group.

My note. If you followed the link above you read my thoughts on the sanitized Texas Taylor chip records.

More on that:

I have both, the chip customer list and the customer list for dice and other gambling devices, both have been sanitized for Texas customers. Texas sales do not exist on the two lists. IMO this was done after the Kefauver hearings in the early 1950's on the illegal casino's across the country. IMO once they were over, the Texas Rangers or Texas State police started making inquiries at Taylor and Taylor made it so they could not comply. The "BIG" Galveston raid in 1957 was several years after Kefauver.

REASON 3: The chip was found with other Reno Club chips from Galveston

Yes, I know, chips travel. I actually bought "Los Angeles Club" harp mold chips in an antique shop in Los Angeles, CA, and had them on my website as California chips for years. I felt like an idiot when we found the Taylor record and it was in E St Louis, Illinois. Just because the chips are found somewhere doesn't mean they are from there!

But this was different. In with the "PFC" chip was the "Reno Club" smkey and a new find, the green "Reno Club" Taylor T-mold chip.



PFC5&6att2

The smkey chips were already known and claimed as being used in both Galveston and Hot Springs, Arkansas. Over the years I have believed less in the Arkansas attribution, and it comes from my own experience. The orange smkey has only been found in Galveston (this hoard) leaving only the yellow that was supposedly found in both cities. Research has turned up no link between the two clubs and I'm sticking with Galveston.

The only lock we have is the T-mold Taylor chip found with this hoard:

Name Charles Bernard
 Address c/o Reno Club
 Town Galveston State Tex.
 Per T. Deane

SPECIAL MONOGRAM
**REN
 CLUB**

Amount	Color	Initials Both Sides	Style Type	Initials One Side	Other Side	Style Type	Mono-gram Color	Date Shipped
600	Red	abc					Yellow	5-27-47
600	Green	abcd					"	5-27-47
300	Black	ijkl					"	5-27-47
400	Black	"					"	7-25-47
800	Red	"	Reno Club				"	8-15-47
1500	Red	"	"				Gold	2-22-49



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PFC7&8att2

So we know in 1947, Charles Bernard ordered these chips for the Reno Club in Galveston, Texas. They are the only ones with good paperwork for the club. Although the chips were ordered seven years apart, they all ended up in the same group of chips.

REASON 4: The owner's names

To me, I was convinced by them being found together with Reno Club chips, however, I still couldn't get over the fact I couldn't figure out the "PFC" monogram. Usually a "C" at the end of a monogram is begging for a "Club", but this one didn't work for the Reno Club. What the heck was "PF"?

I did some digging and came up with this article from the Galveston Daily News, July 31, 1957 (the article is hard to read, so feel free to skip to my partial transcript after):

54th Restraint Order Granted In Crackdown

Judge W. E. Stone as acting judge of 10th District Court Tuesday granted the petition of Atty. Gen. Will Wilson for a temporary injunction restraining and enjoining operation of the Reno Club, 2106 avenue D, for any illegal or unlawful purpose.

The injunction specifically restrains and enjoins Frank Pinachio, Charlie Bernard and Pasquale De Carlo from operating the Reno Club for the purpose of gambling or as an open saloon where whiskey is sold by the drink.

This is the 54th temporary injunction to be granted in the two district courts since Attorney General Wilson launched his cleanup campaign against local clubs, bistro parlors and hawdy houses on June 10.

Attorney General Wilson was represented in court by special Assl. Atty. Gen. James P. Simpson and Asst. Atty. Gen. J. L. Smith.

The temporary injunction was granted by Judge Stone "in line with the agreement of the parties made in open court," as in all the previous injunction cases.

On Tuesday afternoon Smith and Simpson, who have, with other assistant attorneys general, been active in obtaining the 54 injunctions, went before the grand jury.

PFC9att2

The article hasn't aged well, so the important part says "The injunction specifically restrains and enjoins Frank Pinachio, Charlie Bernard and Pasquale De Carlo from operating the Reno Club for the purposes of gambling..."

So, how about that? Three years after this chip is ordered by the "Reno Club":



PFC1att2

We have an article saying the operators of the Reno Club are:

(P)asquale De Carlo

(F)rank Pinachio

(C)harlie Bernard

Love it!

So, in summary, even though the Taylor card is incomplete, in my mind this is most definitely a chip from the Reno Club in Galveston, Texas, because:

- 1) The Reno Club definitely had gambling
- 2) The chip was ordered for a "Reno Club" and the Taylor card had consistent blanks as other Galveston chips from the same year
- 3) It was found with other Reno Club chips – one with an order card for Galveston.
- 4) The initials on the chip match the first letter of the three owners of the club as evidenced by the newspaper article written three years after the chip order.

Alone, these four reasons are circumstantial and I would not pin my identification on them. If I had found this chip by itself in an antique store or in an auction I might not feel so confident. I bought these chips from a guy who had them for 50 years and there was not one single chip in all those hundreds which we can identify as coming from anywhere other than the Galveston area.

Unfortunately we are sometimes forced to make some leaps of faiths when identifying chips. I would like to think I am pretty conservative when it comes to attributions but if we don't make some educated assumptions we will never definitively be able to connect the dots.

If only Taylor & Co had put the stupid city on the order card it would have saved me a considerable amount of time!

Ed Hertel July 2013

My note: I am elated that Ed Hertel has chosen to post his research under the "Illegal Of The Day" banner. "Illegal's Of The Day" are about the history of our chips and are for all the illegal chip collectors

of the world. We invite you to join us in collecting and researching the most fascinating branch of our hobby.

One final note: I need the orange Skey, the T molds, and the PFC's. If you have traders, cough them up!
<g>