

California 2 – Reno – Las Vegas.

A little confusing? Let me try to clear that up a little. <g>

This is kind of a long story but a good one. Documents the bribing of a county sherriff, bootlegging, and a gambling empire associated with Chinese gangs going back to the 1920's.



1 ABC att2

Can any of you experts translate the Chinese Chars?

Email from a Chinese translator.

The red one took a bit of doing as the characters were compound and copied from handwriting. Both top and bottom look like two separate characters but each two-character set is actually one word.

Top: Ngan - Silver

Bottom: Wun - Bowl

SILVER BOWL: Probably the name of the gaming establishment or possibly the name of the game. There is a game with which I'm not familiar that employs a bowl filled with small smooth, round stones. The players guess how many stones are left in the bowl, as the croupier removes them bit by bit and then bet on the number removed. I don't know the rules.

On neither chip is there any indication of locality. That's common for practically all Chinese chips.

You need to know in case anyone asks. The characters on the chips are what is called "Traditional" which is what was and is being used by Chinese in Calif., actually the whole West Coast. You might hear about "Simplified" which is a similar system considerably reduced and introduced in the 1950s or 60s - not well known here in the States. All of the chips will be in Traditional.

The written dialect I use is Cantonese, the main southern dialect, and which is what has been spoken here since the Gold Rush. However, as more Chinese come over from the mainland they are bringing Mandarin, the major and now official dialect in China. So you might get static on that score.

New info added on 11/19/10.

My friend of the hobby saw the Chinese Char translation sent to us by MR S and his friend. In my opinion the ABC chips finally have a Club name.

Chinese Char Translation:

Top: Ngan - Silver

Bottom: Wun - Bowl

The Silver Bowl Club.

Broderick, CA

This one has probably been the longest and most fascinating research I have ever been involved with. Many people jumped in and just kept adding to the story of the ABC chips. I am beginning to wonder if the story will ever end. <g> If you read the entire article the story started with a bad ID in Reno, NV and wound through Sacramento, CA and Las Vegas, NV, back to Reno, NV, and now ends in Broderick, CA.

I bet I left something out of that statement. <g>

And now what might be "The End Of The Story." Maybe! <g>

ABC

Saw your post about the Chinese on the chips translating into "Silver Bowl." In the 1930's there was a popular nightclub in Broderick called the Silver Bowl Cabaret. Broderick, just across the river from Sacramento and in a different county, was where the gambling house Pechart and Bottaro were associated with in 1927 was located.

The Silver Bowl Cabaret closed around 1938, "but around 1946, at the same location, the Silver Bowl Club opened (around the same time the chips were ordered)."

Don't know if the chips have any connection with the place, but I thought I'd throw it out there as a possibility.

My note, in my opinion, he nailed it.

Its location was not far from Argonaut Liquor--drive a few blocks west on Eye St., cross the bridge and you're there. Below is an ad from 1934.

After the Silver Bowl Cabaret closed in the late 30's, one of the proprietors, Frank Farrell, moved to Reno and opened a place called "The Colombo" in 1938.

My note: I think the Colombo in Reno must have been a cabaret also. I can't find anything in Fuller or TGT that suggests a gaming license in 1938-39 or so.



Gala Formal Opening
of the New

SILVER BOWL CABARET

Broderick—Yolo County

Thursday Nite, Dec. 27th

THE NEW SILVER BOWL HAS BEEN
ENLARGED AND REMODELED AT A
COST OF SEVERAL THOUSAND
DOLLARS

On Opening Night—Entertainment Galore—3 Peppy
Shows, Dancing, Fun-Makers, Serpentine, Pretty Girls,
Finest of Liquors, Unexcelled Italian Dinner, Fine
Dance Floor, and Sparkling Jazz Music.

NEW SILVER BOWL CABARET ORCHESTRA

Phone Your Reservations NOW for Opening Night and
New Year's Eve.

Capital 7765

Main 9559

Silver Bowl Cabaret

Frank Farrell

Broderick

Joe Beltrami

My note: This ad is from the Silver Bowl Cabaret 1930's, not to be confused with the Silver Bowl Club that opened on the same spot in 1946 and is the ABC chip attribution, I am making.

Las Vegas:

No way too soon in this post, read to the end. <g>

Reno: NOT!!!

The ABC chips both a \$5 and \$10, were sold into the hobby a few years ago as The Allan Boyd Club, Reno, NV. Why not? The monogram matches the name of the club. DUH! <g>

They were listed in TCR 11.

The new authors of TCR had the Mason record card pulled on the ABC chip. They are California chips. They are no longer listed in TCR 12. Kudos to the new authors.

There is also a small crown chip with chinese writing only listed for The Allan Boyd Club in TCR 12. The new authors of TCR had the TR King record card pulled on the chip. It is a California chip. It will not be listed TCR 13 . Kudos to the new authors.

They did this on their own and I had no knowledge this had happened.

Along comes Gene! <g>

I got the red \$10 ABC in a trade and sent for the Mason ID. It could not be found but I was made aware of the above history.

Ok I was drawing dead on the ABC ID but it dawned on me I had never heard of The Allan Boyd Club. I decided to look into it. Never had a gaming license. I could find no proof the club ever existed. No chips ever found with that name on them. There are 4 more SqSqRt chips with chinese chars only listed for the club.

I got this email:

Hi Gene,

I have immensely enjoyed your illegal stories, personal remembrances, etc.

I just have a question about one chip.

The best Reno Historians Dwayne Kling, Guy Rocha and Al Moe all say there was no Allen Boyd Club in Reno. Yet it shows up as a legit attribution in the chip books.

When I first proposed the question Dwayne and Guy spent weeks in the city offices looking at how the land was plotted. Nothing.

I think it would be helpful if the buck stopped with you. You have the records and knowledge but it would be nice to know the story.

Thanks for your stories. Please establish somewhere where it's all available.

Hope all is well.

Mark Englebretson

Wait a minute the 4 best Reno historians associated with our club Dwayne Kling, Mark Englebretson, Guy LaRocha, and Al Moe say The Allan Boyd Club did not exist. I needed a 2nd opinion, ok a 5th opinion. <g>

I called Phil Jensen CCGTCC Hall of Fame who spent a lot of time in Reno. He more or less said the attribution was BS! It never existed.

That's 5 and good enough for me. I started lobbying the authors of TCR to remove The Allan Boyd Club from our book. They are probably tired of my emails by now. <g>

In the mean time the ABC chip languished in my large pile of UFC chips for several months.

Enough of that:

OOPS! Good news the Mason record for the ABC chips was found.

Las Vegas:

No too soon in this post, read to the end. A little torture never hurt anyone. <g>

California:

ABC

Argonaut Liquor Company

and

Bing Kong Tong



1 ABC att2

JOHN J. "BABE" BOTTARO
 517 EYE STREET
 SACRAMENTO 6, CALIF.

K 10262

100 WHITE WITH \$5.00 ON ONE SIDE
 100 RED WITH \$10.00 ON ONE SIDE
 100 BLUE WITH \$20.00 ON ONE SIDE

MONOGRAM ABC IN GOLD ON REVERSE SIDE ALL CHKS.

COMPLETED: 11/31/46

ABC
 \$500
 \$1000
 \$2000

K-10262
 300-Check Clubs

100 - white with \$5.00 on side
 100 - Red " \$10.00 " "
 100 - Blue " \$20.00 " "

MONO ABC reverse side.

Rec. - 11-27-46 Completed - 11-30-46

ABC \$500
 \$1000
 \$2000

My note: Chinese Char was put on after delivery of the chips from Mason Co. Not sure what or how it was put on but the ink won't smear. Seems to be on there to stay.

John Joseph "Babe" Bottaro, a Sacramento native of Italian immigrant parents, died in his home town in 1951 age 57. He was a well known sportsman who was a bootlegger during prohibition and tavern owner and liquor dealer after the repeal of the 18th amendment.

When the chips were ordered, 517 Eye (or I) St. was the location of Bottaro's liquor business, Argonaut Liquor Company. The Chinese char on the chips are interesting since Bottaro was reportedly the only "Caucasian" member of the Bing Kong Tong. The Bing Kong Tong was located about a block away from the Argonaut Liquor Company (I St., between 2nd & 6th, was the heart of Sacramento's Chinatown).

Here's a pic of Bottaro around 1936:



Bottaro and his wife Dixie around 1950:



1938 pic of Argonaut Liquor Co. at 517 Eye St.:



3

1927 ad:

Babe Bottaro

Buys A Half Interest In The

SACRAMENTO BAIL BOND CO.

Babe Bottaro, one of Sacramento's best known sporting men, has secured a half interest in Sacramento Bail Bond Company. Babe wants the public to know they can secure bail bonds in any amount at any time.

Big Enough and Strong Enough
to Furnish Bail in Any Amount

909 Sixth Street
DREAMLAND BUILDING

BABE BOTTARO and C. F. O'CONNOR, Owners

4

1936 ad (lot of Italians at Argonaut; the top three guys in the company held the same positions when the chips were ordered in 1946—ABC could be constructed from their first names; (maybe a bit of a stretch)

My note: Maybe not a stretch! <g>

ARGONAUT WINE and LIQUOR CO.

J. J. (Babe) Bottaro, Pres.

Charles Lazzarone, Vice Pres.

A. Tony Violetti, Treas. and Mgr.

1017 4th Street, Sacramento

Phones: Main 287 and Capital 531

The following former employees of the Capital Liquor Co. are now associated with the Argonaut Wine & Liquor Co., where they will be pleased to serve their old customers.

Nicholas J. Di Napoli, Credit Manager

Alfred Tognotti, Shipping Clerk

Archie Micheli, Salesman

5

1947 ad:

ARGONAUT LIQUOR CO., INC.

IMPORTERS

Wholesalers—Distributors



517-523 Eye St.

Phone 2-2933

6

Oakland Tribune—1Dec1926 (chips become part of a legal issue):

Use of Card Game Chips Is Law Point

WOODLAND, Dec. 1. — Whether draw poker and panguy, card games, can be played legally with chips in Yolo county will be determined by the justice court of R. W. Harrison, December 28, according to announcement made today.

Judge Harrison set for that date the trials of W. M. Pechart, Baber Bottaro and Joe Fabro, all arrested on gambling charges in Broderick, where they are said to conduct an establishment in which these games are played. The three have requested jury trials to determine their rights.

Oakland Daily Tribune—28Dec1926

Bottaro, Pechart and the Yolo County Sheriff all under Federal indictment and out on \$10,000 bail (a few months later Bottaro goes into the Bail Bond Business).

THIRD ARREST IN RUM NET

SACRAMENTO, Dec. 28.—John J. "Labe" Bottaro, proprietor of several resorts in Broderick, Yolo county, just across the river from here, and one of the seven Sacramento valley men named in federal indictments in connection with the big Guinda distillery, has surrendered to Deputy United States Marshal W. M. Ahern and has been released on \$10,000 bail. Bottaro is charged with conspiring to violate the Volstead act.

Bottaro's arrest makes the third here in connection with the big plant which was destroyed several weeks ago. Sheriff J. W. Monroe of Yolo county surrendered on Thursday and W. M. Pechart, former proprietor of the Blue Bird Inn in Yolo county, was arrested Friday. Both Monroe and Pechart are at liberty on \$10,000 bail.

ABC 10 att2

This was close to 20 years before the ABC chips were delivered.

Broderick's was one on the Chinese buildings on the Thomas O'Connor property in Sacramento. May be the 1st clue why the Chinese Char was put on the ABC chips.

Woodland Daily Democrat—12Jan1927 (the Federal Indictment mentioned was for violation of the Volstead Act):

FINES PAID BY GAMBLERS

Although prohibition enforcement officers were unsuccessful in Woodland Friday and Saturday and reported no arrests, detectives operating under instructions from District Attorney Neal Chalmers early Saturday evening brought in 124 men who had been taken in a raid on a gambling house at Broderick.

Fines aggregating \$1,600 were collected and gambling equipment valued at \$500 was seized.

Seize Money

Table stakes amounting to \$618 in cash were confiscated and then returned after the fines had been paid to Justice of the Peace R. W. Harrison.

Wm. Pechart, under indictment by a federal Grand Jury in San Francisco on the charge of conspiracy to violate the Volstead act, was arrested as the operator of the gambling establishment at Broderick. He paid all of the fines.

Four Operators

Arrested as game operators with Pechart were J. J. ("Babe") Bottaro, Leeto Castello and Moxie Goeldstein. Pechart paid \$250 fines each for himself, Bottaro, Castello and Goeldstein, and \$100 each for six accomplices.

According to statement given out today by District Attorney Neal Chalmers, the Pechart place had just opened Saturday morning in one of the Chinese buildings on the Thomas O'Connor property.

Gets Table Stakes

In addition to the \$1600 in fines, Pechart paid \$120 to Western and Curson for having their automobile stages transport his 120 "guests" back to Broderick. The \$618 in table stakes was given to him to be distributed to his "friends."

The gambling paraphernalia was brought here from a storage house at Sacramento today.

Chalmers stated that his detectives, working under orders from John Duffy of Sacramento, had spent about two weeks investigating conditions at Broderick.

County Cost Small

The cost to the county, Chalmers stated, would not exceed \$500.

Only two inside officers and three outside guards were required to effect the arrests. Robert Litsch of Woodland was one of the assistants.

Sheriff J. W. Monroe was here to help care for the prisoners while they were being held under a blanket complaint sworn to in Justice Harrison's court Saturday night.

Lottery, "21", Craps

A lottery game was in full swing and "21" and craps were being played when the officers made the raid.

One prominent Woodland man missed being caught by only a minute.

Again Warned

Pechart and others said to be interested in gambling activities at Broderick were notified again today by District Attorney Chalmers that further arrests will follow if attempts are made to resume operations.

Gambling Cases Are Dismissed In Justice Court

Dismissal of charges of gambling placed against William M. Pechart and John J. "Babe" Bottaro, by Sheriff James W. Monroe in the court of Justice of the Peace Wade Harrison, was asked by District Attorney Neal Chalmers Wednesday. Grounds of insufficiency of evidence was given as the reason for the county officer's action.

Pechart and Bottaro, who are under a federal indictment in San Francisco were arrested last November by Sheriff James W. Monroe as a test as to whether the use of 'chips' in parlor or poker game, was within the state law against gambling. Monroe in his complaint contended that the chips had a value, known to each of the players and that Pechart and Bottaro were aware of these values.

9

Email from a reader of "Illegal Of The Day" posts, concerning the ABC chips and the above story.

"Enjoyed reading the Chip Board post which busted the ABC chip's Reno attribution—what a complete fabrication. I can see someone trying to make a chip fit into an attribution that they want it to be, or to tie a chip to a place where it might make sense even without evidence, but to fabricate an attribution out of whole cloth like that—yikes."

"I consider myself a disciple of the Trimble school of skepticism when it comes to chip attributions 😊"

My reply: You can't go wrong subscribing to the Trimble school of skepticism. <g>

Trust But Verify: Ronald Reagan.

Ok the torture is over. <g> At long last we have a real "Illegal" Las Vegas Casino.

Las Vegas 1930:

The Hideaway Inn can not be associated with the ABC chips but one of the guys that used the ABC chips in 1946 ran an illegal casino in LV 16 years prior to the ABC chips being made.

Gambling was made legal in NV in 1931.

I feel certain there was a lot of illegal casino's in LV prior to 1931 but this is the 1st time I ever saw an operators name, a Club name, and an arrest record for illegal gambling. <g>

I did not even know there was a Nevada gambling statute forbidding gambling. I guess I thought we were the Wild Wild West prior to 1931. <g> Can you imagine someone being charged with Felony Gambling in LV. <g>

Ok who has chips from the Hideaway Inn? <g> Maybe Pam has pictures of it.

Pechart, who shows-up in these articles, was considered a kingpin of Sacramento gambling for many years. In 1930 he spent some time in Vegas operating a place called the Hideaway Inn. It was raided by the Clark County DA in Sept.1930 and Pechart was charged with felony violation of the Nevada gambling statute.

Thank you Pam.

Pam sent me a page from Dwayne Kling's "The Rise of the Biggest Little City" concerning Walter Pechart Al Moe also mentions Walter Pechart in his book "Roots of Reno".

Walter Pechart shows back up in Reno, NV.

Nevada State Journal.

Short Version:

Pechart had several run in's with authorities including The Estes Kefauver Crime Commission 1950. He was held in contempt for refusing to answer questions about gambling in several California cities. He was also involved with a shooting in Las Vegas during the Boulder Dam construction days.

March 1955- Pechart is hired by Charles Mapes as credit manager to watch his money at Mapes Casino.

The State Of Nevada said Mapes could have the license only if Pechart was gone. <g> I guess they had the 1930 arrest record. <g>

They later relented and allowed Pechart to work for Mapes as the credit manager but he was not allowed to enter the pit gaming area or count rooms.

In 1963 the state relented further and allowed Pechart to become Casino Manager.

In September 1965 Pechart had a heart attack and died while on duty as casino manager at the Mapes.

It looks like Pechart operated illegal from the 1920's thru 1955. He then made an attempt at going legal.
<g>