

Warning Will Robinson! This is a long one. It will take a few minutes to read it.

Some weeks ago Dan Kaley daniellkaley@yahoo.com posted for info on these chips. Several of us purchased a set from him. He still has more. Email him if you are interested.

He posted the 2 hubs upside down and called them WOD. The 1st place we looked in the Mason records was WOD. There was actually a card with WOD on it. The only thing written on it was "See OOM" <g> we have never seen a Mason record like that. A card telling you that you can't read one of their fonts. My guess is the Mason people were also having trouble reading and finding it in the records. <g>

Info from Dan:

"My uncle Harvey Osborne was on Kenosha, WI police dept in the 1930's - 50's
Chips found at 4208-79th Street, Kenosha, WI, 53142. It was my grandfather's house. His name was Charles Dering. He was a police mechanic for the Libertyville, IL police department 1930's-50's."

It appears policeman Harvey Osborne took the confiscated chips from raids home with him and stored them at his relative's house. I wonder if they had police only poker games with the chips. <g>

Once again they give us a story that includes the Kefauver Crime commission, payoffs to local politicians, and something new in our quest for history of our chips.

The 1949 World Series, opening day at Dodger stadium 1981, the oldest living Dodger, roommate of Casey Stengel, and striking out in the 1916 World Series. Add the little fact that he was a teammate of Ty Cobb, Detroit Tigers, in 1912, also the kingpin of Kenosha gambling in 1948. All one and the same guy, Ollie O'Mara.

It is going to be tough to top this one for history in the "Era Of The Illegals. <g>

Enough of that:

Wisconsin:



OOM1att2

Mason records for OOM Hub molds.
Ollie O'Mara
"Brass Ball Tavern and Brunswick Billiards"
Kenosha, WI
11/22/35 – 4 colors-3475 chips
Big operation! 3475 chip count is for the hubs only.

BO cord is Bob O'Mara – Ollie's brother.
The OM Cord comes in 4 colors BO in 2 colors.
No telling how many Cords or Rect/Hearts were made.

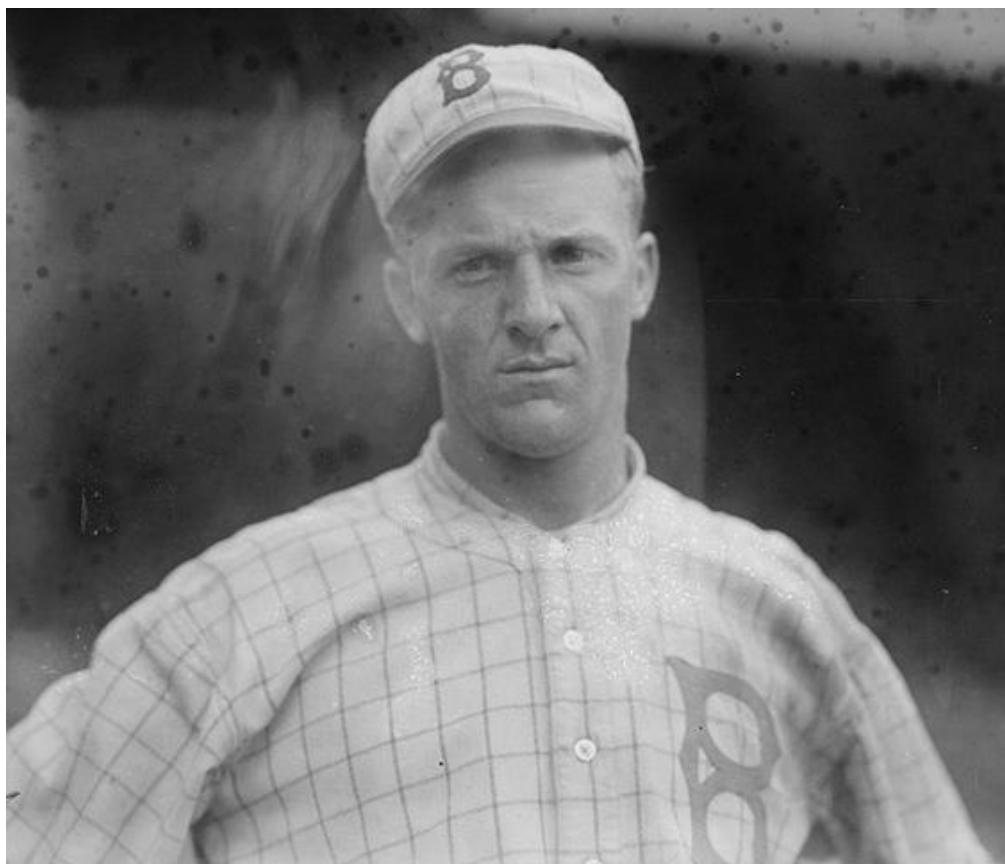
GE plain mold - George "Big George" Ebner. I believe the E on the S&E/Clover Cord also stands for George Ebner,
National Billiards
614 56th
Kenosha, WI
1930's

Mason record for WRC hub
J Lockwood
"Waukegan Recreation Company."
"123 Club"
802 N Ridgeland Ave
Waukegan, IL 12/22/36
More than likely also used at the Kenosha Athletic Club in Kenosha as the chips were confiscated in a Kenosha raid.

OOM OM BO GE

Oliver Edward "Ollie" O'Mara, when a young man in his native St. Louis, displayed a talent for playing baseball which landed him a position on the Detroit Tigers in 1912 (he was a teammate of Ty Cobb). After a brief stay at Detroit and a year in the minors O'Mara ended up in Brooklyn where he was a teammate of Casey Stengel (also his roommate). O'Mara was with Brooklyn when they participated in the 1916 World Series, losing to Babe Ruth and the Boston Red Sox. O'Mara had one at bat during the series, a pinch hit strike out in the 7th inning of game 4 (O'Mara's gambling activities aren't what's keeping him out of the Hall of Fame). <g>

pic of O'Mara in 1916:



OOM2att2

In 1920 O'Mara was sent down to a minor league team in Indianapolis but decided after a year there to enter one of the "outlaw leagues" and accepted a position on a team in Kenosha, Wisconsin sponsored by the Nash Motor Company, which was HQ'd there. For several subsequent decades O'Mara was involved with baseball related activities in the area—as a player, manager, owner, scout and all-around promoter of the game (he even had his own ball park in Kenosha).

When the OOM chips were ordered in November 1935 O'Mara was most likely the operator of a roadhouse called the Brass Ball Tavern which was located a few miles west of Kenosha at the crossroads town of Brass Ball Corners. The tavern existed at the time of the chip order and O'Mara was certainly involved with the place a year later:

Chicago Tribune—19nov1936:

Jeff Pfeffer, former Brooklyn pitcher, and Ollie O'Mara, who used to play third base for the same club, are operating a tavern at the junction of Routes 50 and 83, just over the Illinois state line in southern Wisconsin.

OOM3att2

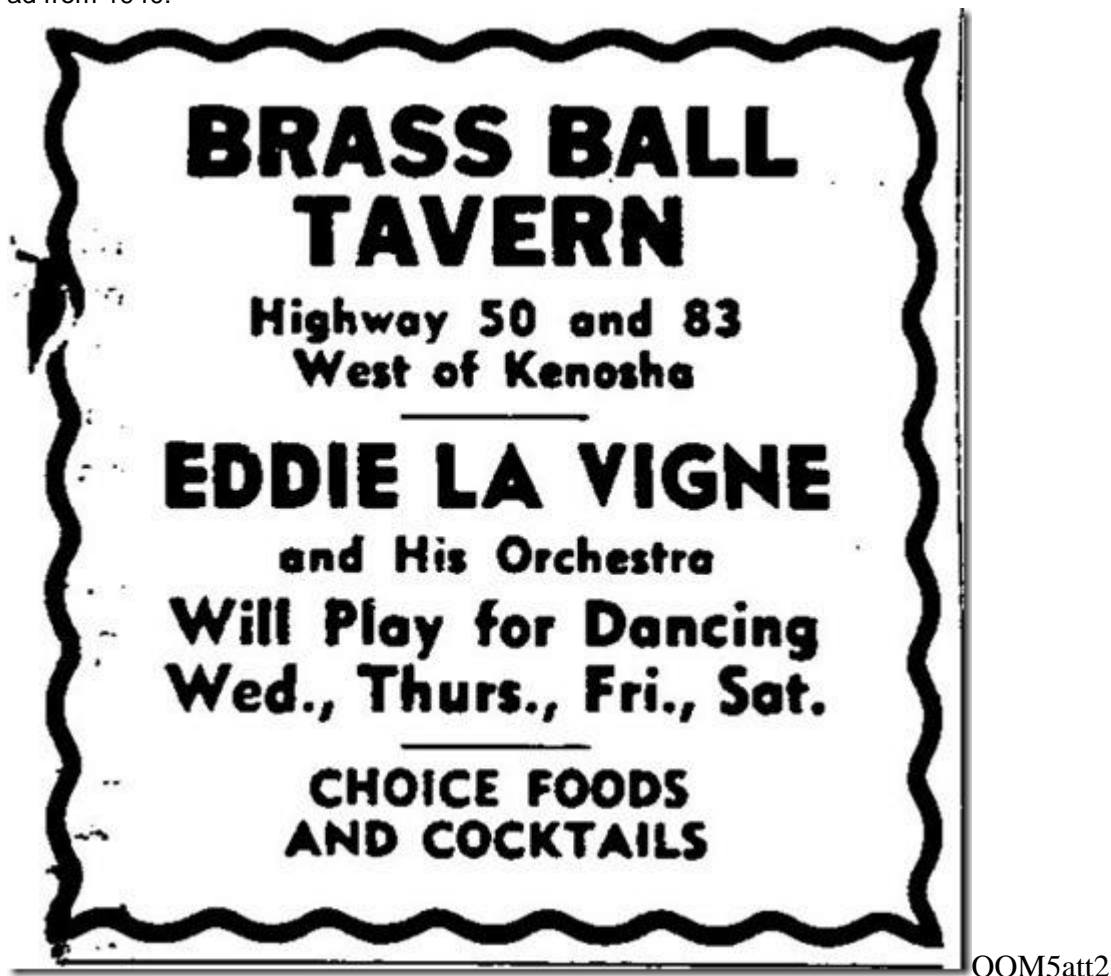
1937 Kenosha city directory:

O'Mara Oliver E (Mabel) ball player h1315 75th

OOM4att2

O'Mara was associated with the tavern into the 1940's.

ad from 1940:



**BRASS BALL
TAVERN**
Highway 50 and 83
West of Kenosha

EDDIE LA VIGNE
and His Orchestra
**Will Play for Dancing
Wed., Thurs., Fri., Sat.**

**CHOICE FOODS
AND COCKTAILS**

OOM5att2

pic from 1942 showing slot machines in the tavern:



OOM6att2

In the late 1930's O'Mara set up his headquarters in downtown Kenosha at a place called Brunswick Billiards which was located at 520 58th street. It was from this location that O'Mara controlled the race wire in the Kenosha area. Below is a pic of the location from 1942. The entrance was where the covered walkway extends to the street between the two autos in the lower right of the photo. The billiard hall was in the building's basement (building still exists).

My Note: The race wire was by far the biggest boon for operators in the "Era of The Illegals" They protected it at all costs. The Chicago mob actually gave info to the FBI on John Dillinger because he was bringing to much scrutiny to the Chicago area.



OOM7att2

In 1940 a reporter from the Milwaukee Journal visited several gambling locations in Kenosha including O'Mara's Brunswick Billiards:

Another downtown basement houses, the best equipped "pony parlor" Here, too, there were six pool tables and a soda fountain. A blank faced guardian of the inner sanctum sat at the end of the fountain next to an inconspicuous door. A steady stream of people flowed in and out. Sometimes the door was left open and persons playing the pinball machines could see the lighted race board and hear the bark of the announcer over a loud-speaker. The reporter walked past the guard and joined the crowd inside.

Here one table was doing business but the game was blackjack. Another was empty. There were about 40 seats with wide arms, convenient for studying racing sheets. Four tables piled with dope sheets stood before the lighted board that covered an entire wall and parts of two others. A baseball ticker fed a scoreboard on another wall. This place, too, had a sign in the inner sanctum announcing "100% co-operation for a successful legion convention." Here there were no faked runnings. Only the results were put on the loud-speaker. They were available only from 30 to 45 minutes after the race was run and prices followed still later. A direct wire runs from this place to a west side pool hall where the horses also exercise. Both places are owned by the same man.

OOM8att2

In addition to black jack, Brunswick Billiards offered craps, poker and on Saturday nights, roulette. The "west side pool hall" mentioned above was located at 6220 23rd Ave. and was operated by Ollie's brother Robert (place was known both as Brunswick Billiards and West Side Billiards). Ollie had a couple of brothers and several sons who were involved with various gambling operations in Kenosha. The OM on the OM chips could stand for any of the O'Mara's. The BO on the BO chip could stand for Ollie's Brother Robert=Bob or his son Bartley.

Excerpt from a book review added at the last minute: A fellow collector found it.

O'Mara, who died in 1989 as the oldest living MLB player at 98, however, was also involved in the gaming business and was the subject of a major 1950 crime investigation along with gangster Al

Capone's brother, Ralph. In 1950, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* went as far to call him the "gambling king" of Kenosha, Wisconsin. O'Mara experienced an assortment of arrests through the 1940s and in 1950 he was indicted in Kenosha as part of the Kefauver crime investigation. According to reports in the *Milwaukee Journal* in 1966, O'Mara fled Kenosha in 1950 and was a fugitive from justice for fifteen years until he was located by a *Milwaukee Journal* reporter in Las Vegas

When Ollie's Brunswick Billiards was raided on September 24th 1948 he was the reputed kingpin of Kenosha gambling.
(chips were confiscated during the raid)

Stop Kenosha Gambling Ring

Biggest Ring Cracked In Raid On Pool Room, 21 Persons Arrested

Kenosha, Wis. — (UP) — Police said today they believe they have cracked the city's biggest gambling ring with the arrest of two pool room operators and 20 patrons.

Police, led by Chief Stanley Haukedahl, battered their way into the pool room of Ollie O'Mara, Sr., late yesterday. A loud speaker, relaying horse race results from around the country, was still blaring. The customers allegedly were actively engaged in placing bets.

Police Lieutenant Leo Buchman read a search warrant to the alleged gamblers and booked them on various charges on the spot.

O'Mara, who police charge is the No. 1 gambling figure in Kenosha, and his son, Ollie, were accused of keeping a gambling establishment. They were released after posting \$500 bail each.

Put Up Bond

The customers, including one from Milwaukee and one from Racine, were charged with gambling and released on \$25 bail each. The O'Maras furnished the bonds.

Haukedahl said every precaution was taken to secure evidence and leave no loopholes. He said the pool hall had been watched for a long time.

Haukedahl has been criticized for failing to clean up gambling in Kenosha. He answered his critics by declaring that other law violations required more immediate attention.

Seized in the raid were playing cards, poker chips, a gaming table, a loud speaker apparatus, two wall boards with track results and betting scratch pads.

Haukedahl indicated more raids were in the wind. He said he would confer with the district attorney today to go over details in the case.

A year after the raid Ollie made a trip to Ebbets Field in Brooklyn where he and several members of the 1916 Brooklyn team were formally introduced to a cheering crowd of 33, 934, prior to game 4 of the 1949 World Series between the Brooklyn Dodgers and the New York Yankees. The introductions were made by their former teammate and manager of the Yankees Casey Stengel. As the old timers marched off the field they were serenaded to the tune of "Auld Lang Syne." Joe DiMaggio and the Yankees beat Jackie Robinson and the Dodgers in the series 4 games to 1.



OOM10att2

The following year, 1950, Ollie O'Mara and the gambling situation in Kenosha started to come under severe scrutiny. The Wisconsin Attorney General's office had begun an investigation into what was going on in Kenosha and in December the Kefauver Commission held hearings in Chicago and wanted to talk to Ollie—but Ollie was nowhere to be found. Unable to locate Ollie, Kefauver got Ollie's brother John. John's testimony about payoffs of thousands of dollars made to Kenosha public officials in order for gamblers to operate sparked a Kenosha grand jury investigation into local corruption. The grand jury subsequently indicted Kenosha's three biggest gamblers: Ollie O'Mara, George Ebner and Frank Greco.

Among the O'Mara chip find was a plain blue chip with the hot stamp "GE." There's a good chance that the GE stands for George "Big George" Ebner.

Ebner operated at several different places in Kenosha during the 1930-40's. In the late 30's he had a place called National Billiards which was located in the basement of 614, 56th Street. He also had a cigar store at this time located at 6311 14th Av.

Around 1942ish he no longer seems to have either of those places but has opened a place at 5507 6th Ave. called Ace Cigar Store. Ebner operates at this location until around 1948 when he opens a place in the basement of a building which he had constructed. This gambling room was sometimes referred to as Ebner's Place and was located at 618 55th St.

Frank "Ditchey" Greco had a couple of Taylor Co. chip orders:

Name <u>Frank Greco</u>					SPECIAL MONOGRAM				
Address <u>c/o Bargin Hotel</u>					DB				
Town <u>Kenosha</u> State <u>Wis.</u>									
Per <u>Superior Checks</u>									
Amount	Color	Initials Both Sides	Style Type	Initials One Side	Other Side	Style Type	Monogram Color	Date Shipped	
1000	Red	D.B.	Black				Black	8-14-43	
200	White	"	"				"	"	

OOM11att2

Greco's not mentioned by name on this card but the Kenosha Athletic Club was his place:

Name <u>KENOSHA ATHLETIC CLUB</u>					SPECIAL MONOGRAM				
Address <u>612 - 56TH ST.</u>					KAC				
Town <u>KENOSHA</u> State <u>WIS.</u>									
Per <u>HARR DESIGN</u>									
Amount	Color	Initials Both Sides	Style Type	Initials One Side	Other Side	Style Type	Monogram Color	Date Shipped	
1,500	YELLOW	KAC	Black	—	—	—	Black	3-11-46	
500	BLUE	"	"	—	—	—	Gold	"	
200	BLACK	"	"	—	—	—	"	"	
200	Yellow	"	"	—	—	—	Black	6-13-46	

OOM12att2

Greco's Kenosha Athletic Club was raided October 1st, 1948--the same week as O'Mara's Brunswick Billiards mentioned in the article above.
(chips confiscated)

Gaming Raid Traps Greco

12 Other Men Seized by Kenosha Police at 'Athletic Club'

Kenosha, Wis.—Dist. Atty. Urban Zievers said Friday that he would wait until Tuesday to decide on charges to be made against Frank L. (Ditchy) Greco, 32, and 12 other men caught by police Thursday in a gambling raid.

Police Chief Stanley Haukedahl asked for warrants charging Greco, prominent Kenosha gambler, as operator of a gambling house and the others as inmates. All were released after Greco provided \$500 bail for himself and \$25 each for the others.

The raid was made by seven policemen in plain clothes during the noon hour Thursday on a downtown basement place called the Kenosha Athletic club.

In the second gambling raid by Kenosha police in a week, officials confiscated \$3,614, tables, chips, dice, cards and horse racing and football tickets.

Police said that John C. Buttera, 40, was the lookout and that Joseph Mazzei, 37, was employed by Greco in the club. Both were charged as inmates.

In the main room, Chief Haukedahl said, was a long counter. A counter was not operating. There were four telephones, a television set and a Western Union baseball ticker. Chairs were lined in rows facing one wall. In the smaller room was an oval shaped table surrounded by eight chairs.

A dice table and scores of unopened packages of dice were among the equipment seized, the chief said. He said several packages of football parlay tickets also were found.

Parking Meter Service

On the counter in the big room were four signs. They read:

"Attention. Poker game every Sunday night."

"Attention, car owners. Park your car in this block and we will take care of parking meters for you. Leave license number and make of car at counter."

"Attention. We pay round trip railway fare to out of town guests. Present your railway ticket at counter when you are ready to leave. Chicago, \$3; Milwaukee, \$2; Waukegan, \$1.50; Racine, \$1."

"Parlays, 100 to 1, \$1,000 limit. Daily double, 100 to 1, \$1,000 limit. We pay according to track rules. Throw tickets in box on counter and win our weekly prize. Keep tickets off floor, please. Thank you."

My note: A little perk for gamblers. The joint kept nickels in your parking meter to avoid parking tickets.
<g>

As suggested in the article above, Greco's KAC seems to have attracted out of town guests from Waukegan. Greco's Waukegan connection is interesting because I think it may offer a clue about how the WRC chips, which were delivered to Waukegan, ended up in a basement in Kenosha with a bunch of Kenosha chips.

The WRC chips were sent to John J. Lockwood at his residential address in Waukegan in 1936. Lockwood, a Boston, Kentucky native who made his way to Waukegan in the late 1920's, was a well known gambler. I think the WRC on the chips probably stands for Waukegan Recreation Company. Although I didn't find any evidence that Lockwood was associated with the place at the time of the chip order, there is some evidence that he was in the early 1940's.

from 1937:

WAUKEGAN RECREATION CO (Matt T. Shiel, George M. Hahn, Joe Lama), Bowling, Billiards, Soda Fountain, Shower Baths, Ice Cream, Cigars, Tobaccos, Luncheonette, Bowlers' Equipment 125 Water, Tel Ontario 2828

OOM14att2

also from 1937:

MATT SHIEL

GEORGE HAHN

JOE LAMA

The Waukegan Recreation Rooms

ON THE BRIDGE

16 Bowling Alleys -- 11 Billiard Tables

Brunswick's Finest Equipment

Soda Fountain—Luncheonette—Candies—Cigars—Smokers' Articles
Bowlers' Equipment — "Shower Baths"

Baseball and Sports Results

By Western Union

125 WATER ST. TEL. ONTARIO 2828

OOM15att2

In 1950 a Federal gambling tax stamp was purchased for a place in Waukegan called the 123 Club located at 123 Washington St. The proprietors of the club listed on the stamp purchase include John Lockwood and the Kenosha gambler mentioned above, Frank "Ditchey" Greco (as well as Greco's associate John C. Buttera). So I guess if Greco and Buttera operated with Lockwood in Waukegan, then

it's possible that Lockwood operated with them in Kenosha at some point and he took some of the old WRC chips up there with him.

Lockwood was on the Taylor Co. Kefauver customer list:

J. Lockwood
602 Ridgeland Ave.
Waukegan, Ill.

OOM16att2

When the Kenosha grand jury began its investigation into local corruption in the spring of 1951, O'Mara, Greco and Ebner had all disappeared. Later when the indictments were handed out none of the three were anywhere to be found. However, within a year of the indictments both Ebner and Greco showed-up in Kenosha and faced the charges against them—but not O'Mara. Years past—no Ollie. A decade—still no Ollie.

Then, in December of 1966, a reporter from the Milwaukee Journal happened to be in Las Vegas and there he was: Las Vegas resident Ollie O'Mara. Word got back to Kenosha and the local authorities weren't quite sure what to do about the charges, some of which were about crimes Ollie had committed 20 years prior. They decided to dismiss all the charges but one: "conspiracy to engage in gambling and bookmaking." Ollie plead guilty through his lawyer, paid a \$500 fine and that was that.

Around the time O'Mara paid his fine in 1967 he moved from Vegas to Reno to be near his son who was a practicing attorney there. He is said to have spent most of his time in Reno hanging out at turf clubs and watching baseball. Ollie died at Reno 22 years later in 1989 at the age of 98 (buried Kenosha).

Eight years prior to his death, at the age of 90, Ollie was the oldest living Dodger and as such he was invited to throw out the first pitch on opening day 1981 at Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles. After Ollie's ceremonial pitch, Dodger rookie Fernando Valenzuela pitched the first of many shutouts in a season where he would become the only pitcher in MLB history to win both Rookie of the Year and the Cy Young Award.

That year "Fernandomania" would help propel Steve Garvey and the Dodgers to a World Series victory over Reggie Jackson and the New York Yankees.

pic of Ollie from around 1950:



OOM17att2

Ollie is gone and more than likely the rest of the “good old boys” in this story are also gone. The chips turned up in a basement of a police mechanic, who is also gone.

And now thanks to a very good “Friend Of The Hobby” you know “The Rest Of The Story.”

If you don’t like Ollie’s story, simply put, you don’t like the history of the “Era Of The Illegal’s.”