

I got 2 colors of the WD chips back in 1999 and the other 2 colors last year from Westen Charles. Like Ed states below, I had all the information I needed from the Taylor card. Then he comes along and bursts my bubble! *vbg*


Link to 1,000's of old chip records.

<http://www.preservinggaminghistory.com/>

Enter Ed Hertel.

There are some chips that are dream to research, and at first I thought the below "WD" Taylor chips was going to be one of them. Information gleaned from chip manufactures is anywhere between a slam dunk and a brick. You get some cards with so much information that it leaves no doubt what-so-ever as to where those chips were used. I thought for a minute this was one of those lucky strikes.

NAME <u>W. D. DENNIS</u>		SPECIAL MONOGRAM							
Address <u>96 TROPICAL HOTEL</u>		WD							
Address <u>1225-23RD ST</u>									
Town <u>GALVESTON</u> State <u>TEXAS</u>									
Per									
Amount	Color	Initials Both Sides	Style Type	Initials One Side	Other Side	Style Type	Monogram Color	Date Shipped	
202	YELLOW	✓	SCRIPT	-	-	-	GOLD	1/27/55	
404	WHITE	✓	"	-	-	-	"	1/27/55	
303	ORANGE	✓	"	-	-	-	"	1/27/55	
100	BLACK	✓	"	-	-	-	"	1/27/55	



WD1att2

Just look at all that info. We have the name W. D. Dennis that coincides with the monogram. We have the Tropical Hotel and an address that checks out, along with a date of 1955. This should be no problem. Everybody mark your flips with Tropical Hotel and put them away, right?

Well...

I'm sure you can guess that I'm not swallowing this hook, line and sinker. I've learned to be cautious with chips sent to hotels. I don't know how it is today, but I know back then a lot of these gamblers were not the homeowner types. I assume their need to pick-up and leave town at a moment's notice was better suited to a hotel stay than a house. The first thing I think about when I see a hotel address on an order form is that it is going to a gamblers residents, not necessarily the place where they were used.

Now I know there are many exceptions to this. In places like Dallas and Houston there was a lot of illegal gambling happening in hotels. The most famous was the Southland Hotel in Dallas where Benny Binion ran numerous craps games. But Galveston was different. Although I wouldn't go out on a limb

and say it never happened, I don't know any Galveston hotels that had gambling. Most of the gambling happened right in the open in bars and night clubs.

So let's look at this Tropical Hotel and see what we can find. First off, the address of 1825 23rd St checks out as the Tropical. But W. D. Dennis wasn't a resident of the hotel, he was the owner. So now I'm reversing my thoughts a little. Dennis owned the hotel? Maybe he had a little card game on the side. But just because someone orders chips doesn't mean he conducted illegal gambling. Maybe they were personal chips. We need to next look at the man.

Any ideas I had that Dennis might be a guy who just liked playing cards with some buddies on a Saturday night were quickly squashed when I started digging into his past. In 1950 (five years before the chip order), Dennis was running the Imperial Tavern at 2319 Postoffice St in Galveston. The famous Postoffice Street was the place gamblers and revelers went to find gambling, cheap booze and cheaper women. Bawdy houses and rough bars lined the street. The Imperial Tavern, also called the Imperial Athletic Club, fit in nicely and earned its nickname "Bucket of Blood".



WD2att2

Raids and fines were just a part of doing business in 1950's Galveston. He was continually being cited for operating an open saloon. One particular article from 1951 tells of the company he kept when he was indicted along with seven members of the notorious Maceo family. Dennis' name was smack in the middle of such people as Rose and Sam Maceo, Vic and Anthony Fertitta, O.E. Voight and R.S. Fabj. They were the who's-who of Galveston gambling.

My note: For those of you that don't know, the Fertitta family owns The Station Casinos in Las Vegas, today.

The indictments stemmed from an effort to identify gambling in Galveston. One reporter stated to a crime committee that he entered the Imperial Athletic Club and ordered an illegal drink. When the panel asked if he saw any athletic equipment in the club he answered "no". The case went to court, but the state didn't make enough of an impression on jury and he was acquitted after a 28 minute deliberation.

During 1952 and 1953 the Imperial Tavern was hit many times, usually in the same raids that occurred with the Maceos. At the end of 1953 William Dennis' name was being replaced by his wife Polly's, giving some indication that he might be focusing elsewhere.

That focus seems to have moved from the Imperial Tavern to a place called the Band Box Club at the time the chips were ordered. Dennis would be raided in the latter half of 1955. Along with his new Band Box Club, the Imperial was also mentioned, but the owner then was Joe Hanson, so it's apparent Dennis was clear of that club. (Joe Hanson would later move to the Crystal Club – these guys certainly liked playing music chairs.)

For the next couple of years both William and his wife Polly were continually in the papers taking hits for their Band Box Club. Fines between \$150-300 were assessed and they continued like nothing ever happened.

And then came June 1957. It was to be the biggest raiding party and city clampdown of all time. Special agents of the famed Texas Rangers, along with some out-of-town reports, quietly built up a mass of information on most of the Galveston clubs. They spent months buying illegal drinks, getting propositioned by ladies of the night, and of course, many, many nights of playing roulette, shooting craps and pulling slot machines. By the end of their investigation they had the goods on 47 places and they were ready to bring the hammer down.

More than 100 lawmen secretly met in a school gymnasium and planned their attack. Their plan was to fan out throughout the city, closing clubs and seizing a fortune in equipment. If all went well, it would be the final blow to the open city of Galveston.

The men were equipped with guns and sledgehammers and were ready to roll when they received a phone call. The raid was off. The person on the other line said the clubs had all shut down for the night... every single one of them. Their attempt to remain secret didn't work and word got out and spread quickly. The raid of the century would not happen.

My note: BIG SURPRISE!!!! Someone leaked the info on the raid! *vbg* Surely not one of the cops. I bet it was more than one. *vbg*

Even without the raid, the information gathered was enough to bring down indictments on all the clubs.

<p>For Leisurely Dining VISIT CROW'S RESTAURANT 35th and Beach Finest Atmosphere Attentive Service Good Food in Quiet Surroundings</p>	<h1>The Galveston Daily News</h1> <p>Texas' Oldest Newspaper—In Its One Hundred and Sixteenth Year of Public Service to Galveston Island and the Mainland</p>	<p>W. L. MOODY & CO. BANKERS (INCORPORATED) ESTABLISHED 1863</p> <p><small>THE NEW YORK CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND FOREIGN TRADE ASSOCIATION HAS ADOPTED AS A BASIS FOR THE ISSUE OF CHECKS IN VARIOUS COUNTRIES THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES:</small></p>
ESTABLISHED 1842	GALVESTON, TEXAS, TUESDAY, JUNE 11, 1957	PRICE 5c

Wilson Goes to Court in Crackdown Against 47 Night Spots in the County

WD3att2

The indictment for the Band Box reads:

“William D. Dennis, 1825 23rd street, operator of the Bandbox Club, 802 North Boulevard. The affidavit, signed by Givens, alleges purchase of drinks of scotch and soda and loss of \$1 on a slot machine.”

These indictments proved pretty severe and it looks like the Band Box disappears after this date, although not William Dennis. In 1959 his name pops up as co-owner, with a Lee Woodson, of the Colony Club. Up to his old tricks, the Colony Club would take a few hits for its illegal activity.

So where does that leave us with our “WD” chips from the beginning of the article? It seems to me we have a few options.

The Tropical Hotel? The chips were delivered there, and Dennis did own the place. As I said earlier, I doubt the chips were used there as I found no evidence of gambling at the Tropical Hotel. The chips might have been delivered there, but it looks like even though he has a house in a neighborhood, he gave his address (like in the indictment) as the Tropical Hotel. I assume that was probably his office.

Imperial Club? It looks like Dennis left the Imperial right before the chips were ordered. The Imperial also already had chips, so why would he need them?

Colony Club? Maybe they were used there, but they obviously weren't originally intended for use there. He ordered the chips in 1955 and didn't start the Colony Club until 1960. Whether he brought them there or not is anyone's guess.

Band Box Club? This is where I'm putting my money. He started at the Band Box at the same time he ordered the chips. From raids and arrests we know there was gambling happening there so it stands to reason he would want chips. Why not “Band Box” chips though? Who knows. Maybe he learned after ordering the Imperial smkeys that chips with club names on them are only good until you leave that club. Chips with “WD” can follow you anywhere.

And of course there is always the chance that these chips were used at his home, with his friends, on a quiet Saturday night.

But who are we kidding? *vbg*

My note: When I first saw this research, I was quite surprised. For years, I really thought the Tropical Hotel was a good ID. The WD was one of the first Taylor cards that I paid \$5 for way back when. I am well aware that chips sent to a hotel address's were not always used there but this one felt right. When I started finding chips sent to Benny Binion's Southland Hotel in Dallas, the 1st thing I did was walk across the Street to the WSOP and corner up Doyle Brunson and Amarillo Slim and get the story to make sure that was the place they were used. Thank you Ed.