

Both Ed Hertel and our "Friend Of The Hobby" contributed to this "Illegal Of The day."

Finding chips in clusters doesn't always mean they belong together. However, every so often, we find a group of chips that can be assumed to be from the same source. An example is a recent find of the below chips:



GG1att2

We are lucky that at least one of the chips had a pedigree we could track. According to the Taylor and Company records, the harp mold chip with the "GG" hotstamp went to:

W. J. Hurley
344 Proctor St
Port Arthur, Texas
1943

With this information we can deduce that all the chips are probably from the same source. The "GG" and "G" in the rectangle mold correspond to the "GG" harp chips, and the "WJH" smkey chips match up nicely with the "W. J. Hurley" on the Taylor card.

We've visited the Beaumont/Port Arthur area over a year ago with the Showboat and Walter Sekaly. <http://www.marlowcasinochips.com/links/genetrimble/illegaloftheday/ShowboatTX.pdf>. As a refresher, Port Arthur is on the eastern side of Texas, close to the border with Louisiana on the Gulf Coast. As an oil/shipping town built from the Spindletop oil strike, it was flush with money and plenty of good-old boys to spend it.

In 1941, the address on the chip order was for a place called the Yukon Club. Advertised as “The Sportsman’s Headquarters”, it offered “all sports returns, pool, dominoes, beer, wine, cigars...” or in other words, just about everything a betting man could want.

SPORTS RETURNS

YUKON CLUB

“The Sportsman’s Headquarters”

ALL SPORTS RETURNS

BEER AND WINES

POOL AND
DOMINOES

DRAFT BEER

MAGAZINES
NEWSPAPERS

CIGARS — CIGARETTES — CANDIES

344 PROCTERPHONE 7033

GG2att2

Unlike most people spotlighted in an IOTD, William Jerome Hurley was not the typical gambler with a long rap sheet. He was mostly known around town as a good golfer who “played fast, almost at a run, and thrives on a friendly wager.” His proclivity for wagers, and his apparent association with the Yukon Club, makes it clear this golfer was working on more than just his swing.

The Yukon Club had a reputation for gambling that spanned decades. In the 1940s it was in the center of a fight between the city and Western Union Telegraph Company when a restraining order was issued to stop Western Union from supplying horse racing results around Texas. Specifically singled out in the order were the bookmaking operations at the Yukon Club.

Its notoriety continued throughout the 1950s and finally in the early 1960s, the city of Beaumont/Port Arthur got serious about their pressure. In December 1960, city officials hammered down the doors of the Yukon Club and five other local gambling establishments. It was proclaimed that anyone in one of these illegal casinos would be arrested, “regardless of social status.”

A couple weeks later, an investigation into the local sheriff’s finances found some inconsistencies and he was called in to testify about vice in the city. He admitted to knowing that prostitution and gambling flourished, outing the Yukon Club specifically. And what about that large election war chest he accumulated? He answers innocently, “I never knew who the donors were but money was just left in my office.” At last count, that was \$85,000 of found money.

This seemed like enough for the good citizens of Port Arthur. Private donors donated \$2,500 to local police so they could make bets at the local clubs and accumulate evidence. As a result, the Yukon Club was once again hit with a massive raid in late 1961. The era of the clubs’ greatness was firmly behind it.

Going back to the chips, it's difficult to find the meaning behind the "GG" and "G" initials. One tantalizing clue might be in the charter of incorporation that Hurley entered into in 1940. It was registered as a "library" and set-up by Hurley and two associates, none of which were librarians, and called the "Gem Club".

CLUB CHARTERED
Listed as a "library," the Gem club of Port Arthur was chartered by the secretary of state in Austin, the Associated Press reported today. There is no capital stock. Incorporators are listed as C. E. Wade, W. J. Hurley and A. B. Langley.

GG3att2

It's my guess these guys incorporated themselves as protection for a partnership in business (perhaps gambling) ventures. Remember, Hurley wasn't your typical gambling hustler who learned his trade on the streets. He was a golfer turned gambler and probably had different priorities and concerns when doing business. Whether the "G" stands for "Gem" or something else, I'm not sure. All I know is I am glad to add a few more chips from my home state of Texas.