

# ANTIQUE COLLECTIBLES

## Chip Mystery Remains

by Dale Seymour and Ken Craig

When I (DS) found my first clay poker chips in the 1960's, I was intrigued and curious about them. How old were they? How rare were they? Who made them? How many different designs were made?

Today, we know that American clay poker chips date back to the 1890's. We know that several hundred different designs were made available so that poker players might have their set of chips different from their card-playing friends. We learned a lot from finding old manufacturers catalogs. Our collecting experience and trading has revealed which of these chips are most common and which are the rarest. Most of the mysteries of poker chip history have been solved. One mystery, however, still remains. WHO MADE THE UNDERSIZED CHIPS?

Sometime around 1980. I purchased a set of about 30-35 chips from a lady in the Chicago area. Their size was different from any clay chips I had seen before. Instead of the usual 1 1/2" (38mm) diameter common dimension, they measured 1 1/4" (32mm). Nearly all of them, however, were designs used on previously-known, standard-size chips. I put these chips into my collection and coded them for the *Antique Gambling Chips* book, thinking that this was a new find and that other similar chips would show up later and possibly someone would come up with their origin and reason for being. To my knowledge no other collector has ever found any of these chips. Were they an experiment by the U.S. Playing Card Co.? Were they possibly intended for a smaller carrying case to be used to play poker on a train or ship like the smaller plain clay chips?

In any case, the lesson to be learned from this for the collector is: If you come across any unusual find, learn as much about it as you can. at the moment. If you don't, you may have a mystery forever.

Mystery Chip

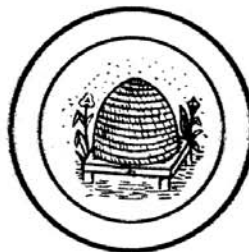


PA-DZ Bull Dog

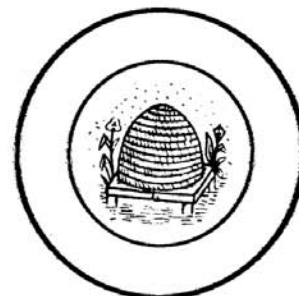
Counterpart



PA-ED Bull Dog



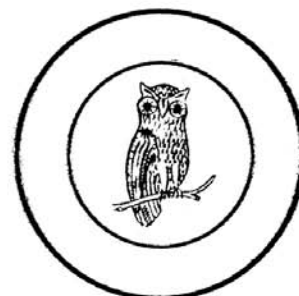
PB-AN Beehive



PB-AV Beehive



PB-OA Owl



PB-OE Owl



PB-WA Swan



PB-WH Swan

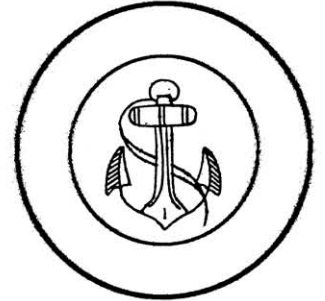
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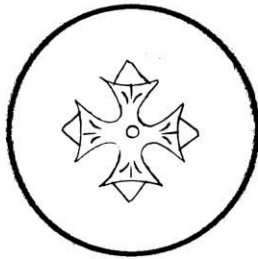
Mystery Chip



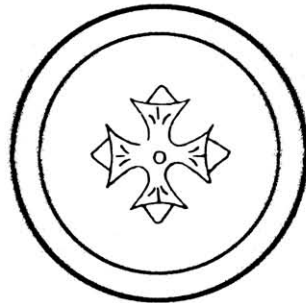
Counterpart



Mystery Chip



Counterpart



PM-AH Anchor



PM-AN Anchor

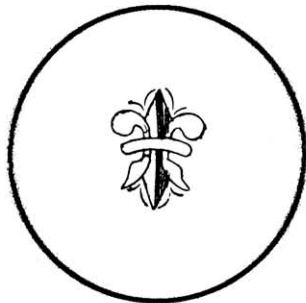
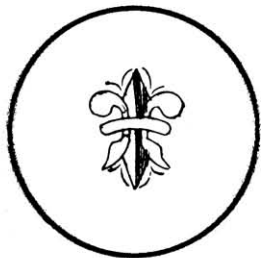


PD-FM Maltese Cross

PD-FP Maltese Cross

PM-AV Anchor

PM-AZ Anchor



PD-GJ Fleur-de-Lis

PD-GL Fleur-de-Lis

PM-DJ Crown

PM-DN Crown

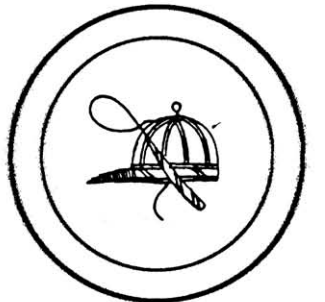
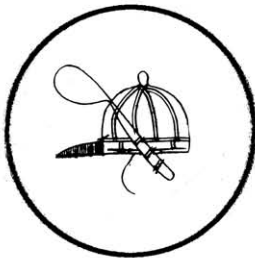
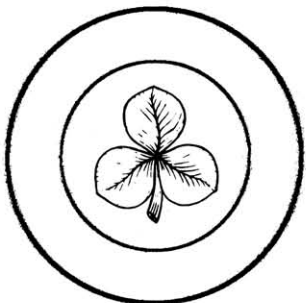
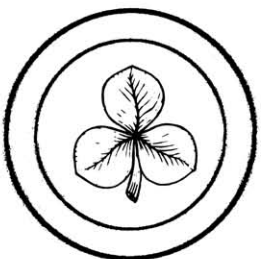


PL-AK Acorn

PL-AO Acorn

PM-JA Lighthouse

PM-JE Lighthouse



PL-CA Clover

PL-CC Clover

PS-GL Cap & Whip

PS-GR cap & Whip

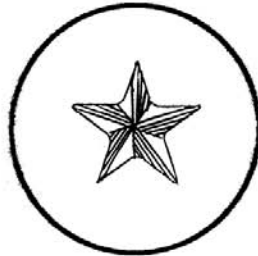
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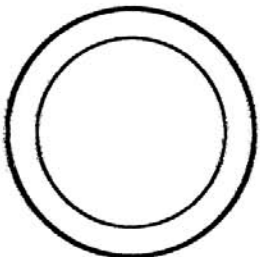
The 12 “mystery chips” shown on this page can’t currently be matched with larger chips having an identical design. It may be that the larger chips have not yet been discovered by chip collectors or maybe they never existed. If you have any information that would help solve this mystery, let us know.



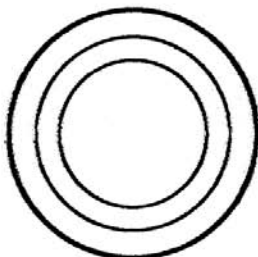
PC-LR Flush Hnd



PD-LL New Star



PD-SA One Circle



PD-ST Two Circles



PL-FN Rose



PL-FR Rose



PL-KH Tulip



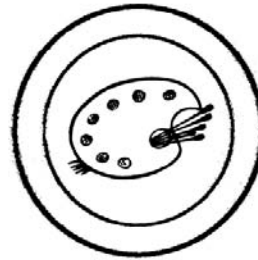
PL-LF Flower



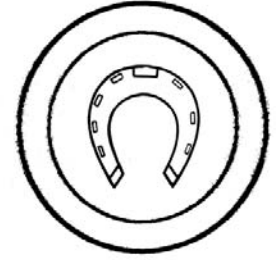
PL-MO Three Leaves



PL-MO Three Leaves  
(variation)



PM-PA Palette



PS-SW Horseshoe

The vast majority of antique gambling chips created in the United States are pictured and coded in the 1998 edition of the book, *Antique Gambling Chips*. Clay chips with designs which were made for public use are the only clay chips assigned a code. Clay chips that were custom-made for individuals or clubs are not coded. Ivory chips were all custom designed and are all coded in the book.

More than 200 clay and ivory chip designs have been discovered by collectors in the past seven years. Coding errors and finds of more legible known designs are reported through this column along with new chip finds. Collectors are grateful to their fellow collectors who send in new information on chips. The more we know — the more interesting the hobby.

Steven Gould, a new CC&GTBCC member from Ohio, has identified an ivory chip as having been used in the Madison Square Club in New York. Steve has a set of the ivories which were salvaged from a raid on the club run by the famous gambling operator, Richard Canfield.

Canfield owned houses in Newport, RI, Sarasota Springs, NY, and New York City.

Steve tells us that in Alexander Gardiner's biography of Canfield, Gardiner describes a break-in and search of a Canfield house by authorities. The police were reported to have carried off gaming paraphernalia including thousands of ivory chips. Some of these chips were initialed MSC for the club in which they were used. These chips, coded IM-HZ and IM-IA are identified incorrectly in the chip book as MPC initials and should be MSC (for Madison Square Club).

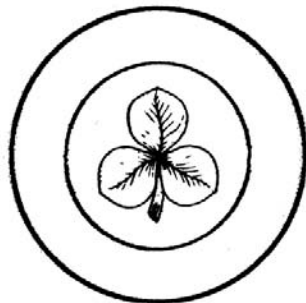
The following pages show new finds in clay and ivory chips and their assigned codes. It is interesting to note that the ivory chips coded IO-LZ and IP-OH were manufactured in an unusual sequence. Generally, the colored rim of a 5 or 25 chip was created first by dyeing the whole chip and then scraping out the dye in the center. On these two chips the dye was added after the engraving of the wreath. This was probably done because the owner found the set of chips without borders made it too hard to tell the chips apart. Some collectors of these chips have removed the colored border to reveal the attractive wreath.

Thanks to Nancy Olson (OR), Steve Caparatta (CA), Rich Hanover (NJ), Dave Burns (FL), Steve Bowling (CA), Robert Eisenstadt (NJ) and John McKinnon (IL) for their finds.

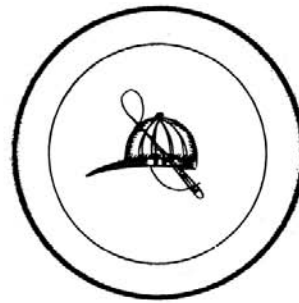
**New Clay Codes**



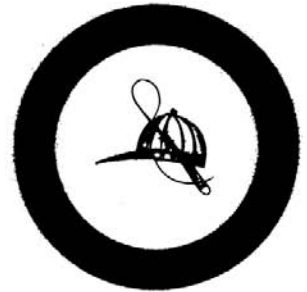
**PA-KZ Horse Head**  
Engraved / v:g



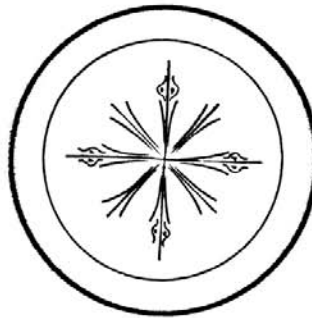
**PL-CC Clover**  
Engraved / v:h



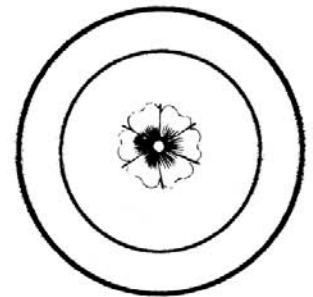
**ID-HB**  
Cap & Whip / v:m



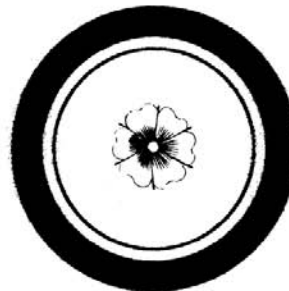
**ID-HBa**  
Cap & Whip / v:m



**IE-CU**  
Straws / v:k



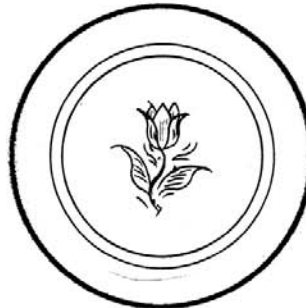
**IE-OW**  
Blossom / v:k



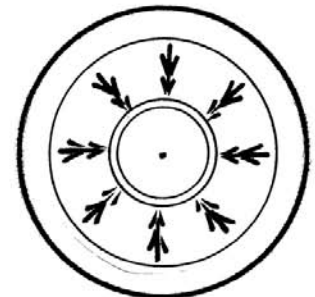
**IE-OWa**  
Blossom / v:k



**IE-TJ**  
Flower / v:l



**IE-WQ**  
Tulip / v:l

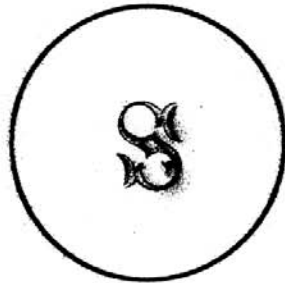


**IF-CL**  
Eight Straws / v:l

New Ivory Codes



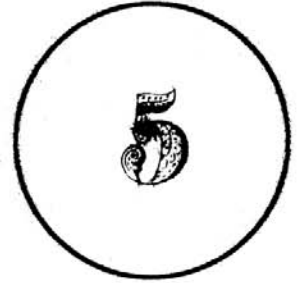
**IF-EI**  
Floral Border / v:k



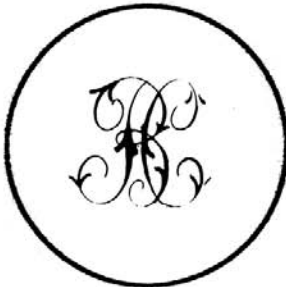
**IM-IJ**  
S / v:l



**IN-JW**  
U/U/U / v:l



**IN-JS**  
U/U/U / v:l



**IM-BT**  
BC / v:m



**IN-BK**  
v:p



**IN-WI**  
4/5/4/F / v:n



**IN-XY**  
F/F/3/2 / v:l



**IN-IY**  
U/U/U / v:l



**IN-JG**  
U/U/U / v:l



**IN-YK**  
F/F/F/4 / v:m



**IO-LZ**  
v:m



**IN-JT**  
U/U/U / v:l  
formerly code IN-CM



**IN-JV**  
U/U/U / v:l



**IO-OR**  
v:m  
better graphic  
or old code



**IP-DZ**  
3/F/3/3 v:m

New Ivory Codes



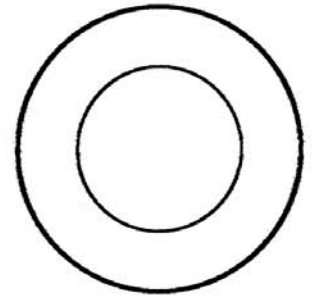
**IP-FA**  
F/F/3/2 / v:m



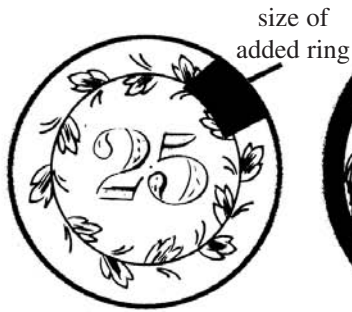
**IP-HR**  
3/F/2/2 / v:m



**IQ-GB**  
v:m



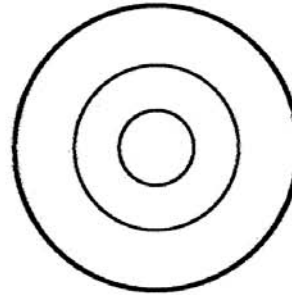
**IX-GRa**  
1B 1W (38/22) / v:i



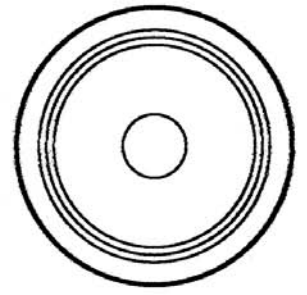
**IP-OH**  
v:n



**IP-PF**  
v:r



**IX-QC**  
2B 2W (38/22) / v:i



**Ily-DI**  
4B 4W (37/31) / v:i

Send new chip finds and inquiries on antique gambling chips to;  
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or Dr. Ken Craig, 3927-H Waring Road, Oceanside, CA 92056 (drkenny@cox.net)