

Fremont Street

Downtown, Las Vegas

by Pam Goertler

Assisted by Brian Cashman

Have you ever taken a walk on Fremont Street, in Las Vegas, and found yourself wondering about the past? Perhaps you knew that there had been gambling in Las Vegas for 10 years before the first hotel was built on the Strip, but you weren't sure where. Perhaps you'd heard of the Northern Club, or you have chips from The Boulder Club or The Silver Palace, and you've wondered where the clubs were located. Let's take a trip down Fremont Street and see if we can answer some of those questions.

1 Fremont Street

Sal Sagev Casino, ?-1934: This building was constructed in 1906, and opened as the Hotel Nevada. In 1907 the first phone in Las Vegas was installed here, with the phone number "one". In 1931, the year that gambling was legalized in Nevada, the Hotel expanded and changed its name to Sal Sagev. Sal Sagev is Las Vegas, spelled backwards, and is pronounced "Sal-Sagy". In the 1990's club member Gene Trimble researched gambling at the Sal Sagev, and learned that there was roulette and black jack until October of 1934. Gene saw 5 colors of SSC chips and the roulette wheel that they were played on. Gene also reported that there were poker games here in the 1940's.



The Sal Sagev Hotel in 1933.



The Golden Gate Casino. This postcard is unusual, in that you can see part of the sign on the Lucky 13 Club.

Golden Gate Casino, 1955-present: On October 7, 1955, the Golden Gate Casino was opened by a group of men from San Francisco. Symbols of San Francisco--the Golden Gate Bridge and trolley cars, were used on chips, dice, matchbooks, place mats and many other items used in this casino. Some of the early items, including chips and ashtrays, used the name Golden Gate Club. The Golden Gate Casino was smaller than it is now, as there were other businesses located within the building. In 1959 The Golden Gate served their first shrimp cocktail, on September 26, 1991 they celebrated the sale of 25 million shrimp cocktails! The Golden Gate is still open, and still selling shrimp cocktails.



13 Fremont Street

Lucky 13 Club, 1955-1957: This small club, located in the Sal Sagev Hotel building, was licensed for slot machines and 21. As far as I know, no chips or ashtrays have shown up from this club, but there are some very cool feature matches out there somewhere—we saw them on ebay. The Golden Gate Casino has expanded into the Lucky 13 Club's space. Next time you go into the Golden Gate, use the Fremont Street entrance that's next to the alley on the east end of the building and you'll be walking into the Lucky 13 Club.

15 Fremont Street

Northern Club, 1920's-1943: This is one of the most historic buildings in Las Vegas. The Northern Club opened in the 1920's, supposedly as a soft drink parlor. Apparently the name "Northern" was widely used to indicate a place that served liquor during prohibition, and the Las Vegas Northern Club was no exception. However they only served mixed drinks, so any drinks found on the tables during a raid would have to be analyzed to prove that they contained alcohol. That was usually more trouble than it was worth for a \$200 fine. You could also get into a poker game at the Northern Club in the 1920's. Mayme Stocker owned the Northern Club, and when gambling was legalized in 1931 she received the first Clark County gaming license. The Northern Club closed in 1943.

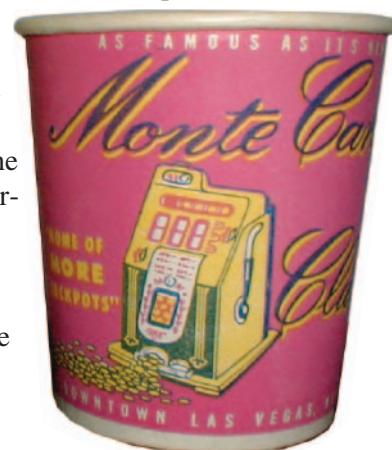
Turf Club & Bar, 1943-1944: The 1944 phone book shows Dave and Sam Stearns as the proprietors.



Another 1943 postcard, this time shows the short-lived Turf Club & Bar at 15 Fremont Street.

Club 15, c.1944?-c.1945?: Reference guides show that the Club 15 was located at this address in the 1940's, but no specific years are listed. I've listed it here, because of the small gap in the timeline. However, if the club was only open for a short period (a few weeks or a few months), it could fit in elsewhere.

Monte Carlo Club, 1945-c.1956: Wilbur Clark moved to Las Vegas, from Reno, in 1945 and opened the Monte Carlo Club as his first Las Vegas venture. With the profits he got from the sale of the Monte Carlo Club, he began building the Desert Inn. Though ownership changed a couple of times, the Monte Carlo operated at this location until c.1956 (sources range from 1955-1966).



This 1943 postcard may have been the last professional photograph taken of The Northern Club. It also shows the original Las Vegas Club and the Pioneer Club.



This card, showing the Monte Carlo Club, dates to 1946. The Las Vegas Club and the Pioneer Club appear the same, but across the street and down the block you can see that the



The Coin Castle Casino was open for nearly 30 years.

Coin Castle Casino, 1970-1999: After the Monte Carlo closed, non-gaming businesses, including Sam's Roast Beef and Denny's Restaurant, occupied the property until the Coin Castle Casino opened in 1970. Blackjack was played at the Coin Castle until 1977, when it became slots only. The term "slot joint" fit the Coin

Castle. There were hawkers out front screaming at you to come in and play the machines, they gave out free "Mardi Gras" beads and coupons for free drawings. They had tin bowls under the slot machines, so that all wins paid off with the maximum amount of noise, and there was always someone with a microphone encouraging you to play, Play, PLAY!

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La Bayou, 1999-present: In 1999 the Coin Castle Casino was transformed into La Bayou. Though the name and the decor changed, there's still girls giving out beads and trying to get you into the casino to play. Other than the Golden Gate, this small joint is the only gambling left in this block, on this side of the street. The rest of the block is souvenir stores.



La Bayou is the current tenant of this historic property.

17 Fremont Street

Bank Club 1938-1945: licensed for slots and 21.

21-23 Fremont Street

Las Vegas Club, 1931-1949: In 1930 the Las Vegas Club opened at 21-23 Fremont Street as a "smokeshop". In 1931, when gambling was legalized they received one of the first Las Vegas gaming licenses. Joe Morgan and Mayme Stocker were among the first owners of the club, though there have been many different owners over the years. In 1940, the Las Vegas Club claimed to be the largest club in the world's busiest little city. They offered roulette, 21, craps, racehorse keno, keno, faro bank, wheel of fortune, pan, poker, and direct wire to all major racetracks. In 1949 the Las Vegas Club moved across the street, to its present location.





The Las Vegas Club, in its original location, in 1940.

The Westerner, 1950-1960: In 1950 Texan Benny Binyon opened The Westerner at the location previously occupied by the Las Vegas Club. Wait a minute...



"Binyon"? I thought Benny B's name was Binion? Well, it was! Though he never attended school, no one could say that Benny Binion was dumb, his education came from the streets. He knew that he needed a license to operate a casino in Las Vegas. He also knew that applying for a

license meant there'd be a background check. He also knew that he had a murder conviction in his background (2 year suspended sentence, the victim had a very bad reputation). Benny "Binyon" didn't have a record. In 1951 Benny sold The Westerner to Emilio Giorgetti, who retained ownership until 1954. Benny moved across the street and down a block to open his famous Horseshoe Casino.



When The Las Vegas Club moved, The Westerner opened in their old location.



This Club Bingo card is postmarked 1970.

Club Bingo, 1962-1983: Club Bingo advertised itself as "one of America's most luxurious bingo parlors". They also offered Roulette, slots, 21, a snack bar, and free parking...at the Las Vegas Club!! If you are lucky enough to have a 12 cent chip from Club Bingo, this is where it was used to pay off a blackjack on a quarter game. In 1983 an expansion of the Pioneer Club took over this location.



25 Fremont Street

Pioneer Club, 1942-1995: One of the best known symbols of Las Vegas, the tall neon cowboy known as "Vegas Vic", was mounted on the Pioneer Club in 1951. I'd love to tell you a little story about the Pioneer Club, but I can't think of one! I played there, but all of my memories are just moments in time, like one photo from a roll of film. For example, the Pioneer was the only place I ever played Caribbean Stud and I remember getting \$75 for a full house. I remember get-



ting something to eat from the Carl's Jr. in the back of the club, and it was awful! I remember searching for my boyfriend (now husband) one time, and I found him at a craps table on the sidewalk in front of the Pioneer. I remember playing the Sigma Derby there. I remember going to the Pioneer one time and noticing that they'd taken out a few banks of slot machines. In place of the machines, they'd put up a rail fence around some cases that were filled with old chips and matches and dice and other stuff





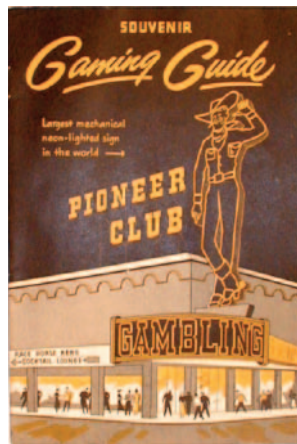
The Pioneer Club opened in 1942, next to the Las Vegas Club.

like that. I remember wondering why anyone would want to look at that junk, when they could be playing slot machines! The Pioneer Club closed in 1995. (New Pioneer 1956-1967, Famous Pioneer 1967-1983).

Go across 1st Street...

101 Fremont

Slot Machine Arcade, 1941-c.1951: Licensed for slots and craps. In 1938 Guy McAfee fled from LA to Las Vegas to avoid possible legal action for his involvement in gambling, drugs and prostitution. The Slot Machine Arcade was one of several Vegas casinos that he was involved with.



This early to mid-1940's postcard shows the seldom seen The Slot Machine Arcade located next to The Arcade/Fremont Arcade.

California Club, 1951-1970: The California Club opened on Christmas Eve, 1951. The club operated, under different owners, until 1970. Various owners had their name, along with the club name, imprinted on various club

items. From 1951-1954 it was Phil Copley's California Club. From 1954-1964 was Phil Long, and from 1964-1970 was Frank Schivo. This club used bears as their logo. The bear on their sign and some of their dice was on all 4 legs, he's standing on 2 legs on a .25 chip and some of the dice. The key chains have a cartoon bear sitting at a bar with a drink, several of the ashtrays have a cartoon bear happily dancing among piles of coins...presumably another lucky slot winner!



The Friendly Club, 1978-1983: Licensed for slots, 21, roulette and big-6.



The Friendly Club was open from 1978-1983.

105 Fremont

The Arcade or The Fremont Arcade, 1944-1952: slots only

109 Fremont

White Spot Café, 1932-1951: J.M. Pappas opened the White Spot Café in 1932. Did they have gaming from the



The White Spot Café.

beginning? I'd guess not. They had a full-page ad in *The Las Vegas* dated October 28, 1949, and it advertises a "Gala New Opening" and "Liberal 1950 Slot Machines". In the publication is a small paragraph advising that the White Spot Café has changed their name to the White Spot Arcade, and that Jim and George Papas have had over 50 of the latest slot machines installed.

49er Club, 1951-1952: Licensed for slots, 21, craps and poker.

Fortune Club, 1952-1955: From a magazine called "This is Las Vegas" published in 1959, by the Nevada Club: "The Nevada Club itself was established in 1952. The original club, which is now the central portion of the Nevada Club, was opened in December 1952 and was known then as the Fortune Club. Three years later the room to the east was added and in 1957 the former Western Union building adjoining on the west was purchased for \$300,000—more than the 1905 sales price of the entire city of Las Vegas. In July 1957 the three clubs were combined as the Nevada Club under one 75-foot marquee and the name Fortune Club was dropped and rights to it released."



Nevada Fortune Club, 1955-1957

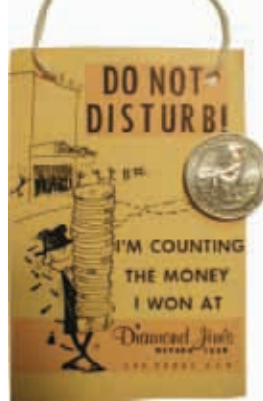


The Nevada Club and the Fortune Club were eventually combined, along with the Western Union Building (seen to the right of the Fortune Club).

Zodiac Club, 1957-1958: The Zodiac Club was one of three adjoining buildings that were owned and managed by the Nevada Club. The Zodiac club did not have a bar, depending instead on the bar in the Nevada Club to serve the customers. But there were 16" concrete walls between the clubs, and the law prohibited the waitresses from walking into the street with the drinks. While waiting for the legal and engineering problems to be resolved so the

walls could come down, holes were cut into the ceilings of the clubs and the waitresses carried the drinks across the rooftops to serve the thirsty customers.

Diamond Jim's Nevada Club, 1962-1969: Thousands of happy (and a few not so happy) tourists had their pictures taken, and printed on postcards, while playing the slots at Diamond Jim's Nevada Club.



Lucky Nevada Club, 1967-1969: There's two schools of thought on the Lucky Nevada Club. 1. There was a casino that operated from 1967-1969 that was named the Lucky Nevada Club. 2. During the period of 1967-1969, the Nevada Club was trying to convey to the customer that the club was Lucky. There are Lucky Nevada Club chips, ashtrays and glasses in collectors hands.

113 Fremont

Nevada Club, 1932-1962: In 1932 Joe Morgan, who was also a part owner of the Northern Club and the Boulder Club, opened the Nevada Club. In 1956 Bob Van Santen, Art Grant and Eunice Mason, who owned the Fortune Club next door, purchased The Nevada Club. By 1959 the expanded Nevada Club had over 400 employees. The employees plus their families totaled over 1000 people, which was more than 2% of the entire population of Las Vegas. Not bad, especially since none of the three owners came from a casino background.



In July of 1957 the name Fortune Club was released, and a colorful 75 foot marquee was added to the Nevada Club.



This shot of the Frontier Club is from the early 1940's. Starting in 1943, photos show a "Turf Club; Race Betting" sign hanging near the entrance to the Frontier Club. (From 1963-1967 the Lucky Casino occupied this location).

Santa Anita Turf Club, 1948-1952: Apparently the Santa Anita Turf Club leased space from, and operated in, the Nevada Club.

117 Fremont

Frontier Club, 1935-1953: The 1944 phone book lists former LAPD vice squad commander Guy McAfee as the proprietor of the Frontier Club, which opened in 1935 on the site of a former general merchandise store. While heading the vice squad, McAfee also allegedly owned saloons and brothels, operated gambling houses, and had ties to organized crime. There was a "Ladies Welcome" sign on the Frontier Club. Men did most of the gambling in the early days of Las Vegas. Most of the women that were found in the casinos...well, they weren't "proper" ladies. So, which kind of "ladies" was the Frontier Club welcoming?

Frontier Turf Club, 1943-1953: The Frontier Turf Club operated inside of the Frontier Club. The 1944 phone book shows that M. Sedway was the manager of the Frontier Turf Club.

Lucky Strike Club, 1954-1963: The club was open for nearly 10 years. It shows up in postcards, there's matchbooks, ashtrays, key chains and napkins out there. Harvey Fuller's Index says their gaming license allowed 21, craps and roulette, but no chips or dice have been found. Bingo was prominently advertised on the club's marquee, their ashtray advertises bingo and slot machines.



The Lucky Strike Club operated for 10 years.

Lucky Casino, 1963-1967: The Lucky Casino was licensed for slots, 21, craps and roulette. The Pioneer Club had Vegas Vic, the Lucky Casino had...Mr. Lucky! Mr. Lucky was tall and lean; a dapper dresser with striped trousers, a coat with tails, a string tie, boots and a hat. Mr. Lucky can be found on ashtrays and glasses from the Lucky Casino but, unlike Vic, he was never portrayed on a chip.

129 Fremont

Mission Casino, 1938-1939: Licensed for slots, 21, craps and roulette.

Kiva Bar, 1944-c.1945: slots only



The Mission Casino was open, across from the Apache, from 1938-1939.



This late 1940's postcard of the Golden Nugget says it's a place of mahogany bars and crystal chandeliers.

Golden Nugget, 1946-present: When former Los Angeles police officer Guy McAfee opened the Golden Nugget Gambling Hall on the corner of Fremont and Second Streets, there was just a casino, no hotel. Over the years the Golden Nugget expanded, and by the middle of the 1970's it filled the entire block between 1st and 2nd Streets and had added two hotel towers. When you're downtown, stop at the Golden Nugget to see "The Hand of Faith". It's the largest gold nugget on public display, weighing over 61 lbs.



This early 1960's postcard shows The California Club, Diamond Jim's Nevada Club and the Lucky Casino on the south side of Fremont Street. By the middle of the 1980's the entire block will be covered by the Golden Nugget.

Cross 2nd Street....

202 Fremont

Four Queens, 1964-present: The Four Queens is listed at 202 Fremont Street in Fuller's Index, in The Gaming Table, and in phone books. They all agree, so there's no problem...right? But, it's an even number...on the odd numbered side of the street!? The White Cross Drug Store, which was at that location before the Four Queens, had the address of 201 Fremont Street. Only in Vegas?

In 1964, Ben Goffstein, formerly the president of the Riviera Hotel, opened the Four Queens Hotel & Casino. He named it in honor of his four daughters Michele, Benita, Faith and Hope. Ben was assisted by Vice President Tommy Callahan, whose name appears on some early issue Four Queens dice. In 1964 the casino was 20,000 square feet. In 1976



The Four Queens was "Casino Center's newest addition" when this postcard was issued.

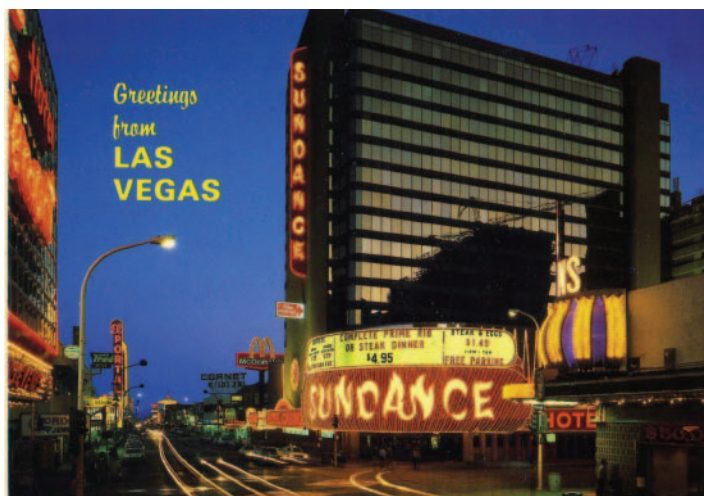


the casino was expanded to 30,000 square feet. The next (but not the last) expansion took place in 1977 enlarging the casino to 40,000 square feet, which took up the entire block between Third Street and Casino Center. In the 1980's, the Four Queens had a Ripley's Believe it or Not! exhibit. I can still remember a huge ship that was on display,

built entirely of matchsticks!

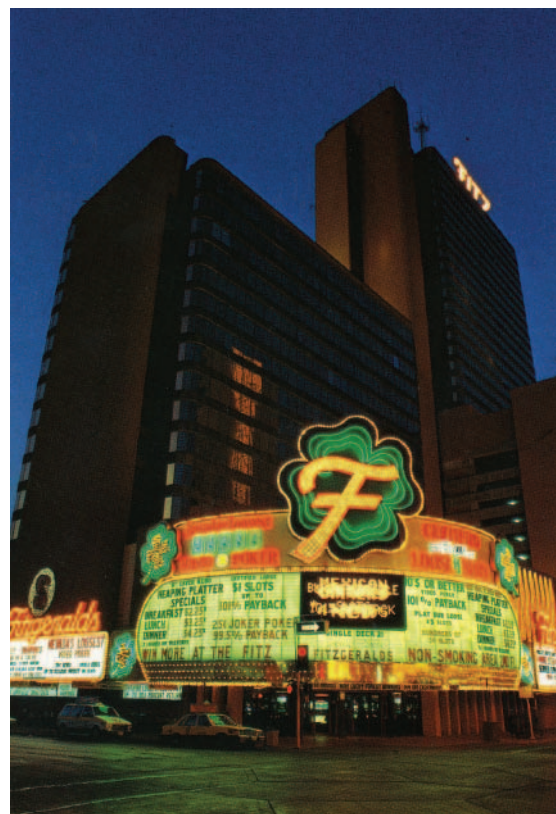
301 Fremont

Sundance Hotel & Casino, 1980-1988: Licensed for slots, 21, craps, roulette, keno and poker. When it was built in 1980, the Sundance was the tallest building downtown.



For most of the 1980's, the Sundance Casino was across the street from the Four Queens.

Fitzgeralds, 1988-present: Lincoln Fitzgerald, and his wife Meta, came from a background of operating illegal games in Detroit, Michigan. In 1945 they moved to Reno, Nevada where they operated several casinos over the years including Fitzgeralds Casino-Hotel. In 1981 Fitzgerald was named to the Nevada Gambler's Hall of Fame. He passed away later that year. After his death, Fitzgerald's casinos were sold to the Lincoln Management Company. Lincoln Management bought the Sundance and in 1988 they changed the name to Fitzgeralds.



Fitzgeralds replaced the Sundance on the corner of Third and Fremont Streets.

And on the north side of Fremont Street, starting at Main Street, across from the Golden Gate:

2 Fremont Street

Chatterbox, c.1952-?: In the early days of Las Vegas, the Overland Hotel building occupied a corner of Main and Fremont Streets. The Chatterbox was one of the businesses that operated in the building. The former location of the Chatterbox is now the corner entrance to the Las Vegas Club.



The Chatterbox occupied the corner of the Overland Hotel building in the early 1950's. The entire building is now the Las Vegas Club.



This 1950 postcard shows the Las Vegas Club shortly after they moved to this location, from across the street.

18 Fremont Street

Las Vegas Club, 1949-present: Originally opened in 1931, the Las Vegas Club has undergone several ownership changes over the years. In 1949 they moved from their original location to occupy part of the Overland Hotel building. As time passed, the Las Vegas Club expanded to fill the entire building. In 1961 Jackie Gaughan and Mel Exber bought the Las Vegas Club and made some changes, which included adding two hotel towers. They added a large collection of sports memorabilia, and other sports-theme items such as bleachers in the sports book and “spectator” murals on the walls.

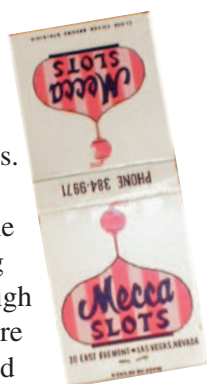
On a personal note, this is the first casino where I hit 2 royal flushes on the same day! And it was the day we got married! And they gave us a suite for the night...it was huge, had a Jacuzzi, and whatta’ view of the city! The comp policy has changed, because of new owners, but back then if you hit the top jackpot on any machine they gave you a “gold” comp that covered dinner for two at the Great Moments Room. It included drinks, appetizers, dinner and dessert. We used one of the comps, but I saved the other as a wedding day memento. J

20 Fremont Street

Buckley’s Jackpot Club, 1952-1960: Their awesome feature matchbook proclaims: “Where anyone can win a jackpot” and “So simple ANY 3 of a kind wins a jackpot”. Slots only.

Mecca Slots, 1973-1973: The only thing we’ve found from this small, short-lived, slots only club is a book of matches.

Golden Goose Casino, 1975-1980: The mascot for this casino was a goose laying golden eggs. The goose is still perched high on the pile of golden eggs, but now they’re on a girlie joint. I’m pretty sure we visited



When this picture was taken, Buckley’s Jackpot Club was for sale, probably dating the photo to around 1960. The next casino at this address was Mecca Slots, in 1973. Cecil Lynch’s Fortune Club is next door.

this casino on my first trip to Las Vegas. I don’t actually remember the casino, why would I remember a small unostentatious casino among all the neon and large casinos that I was seeing for the first time? What I remember is that I used to have a Golden Goose key chain, with my initials on it. I wonder where that went?



The goose that laid the golden eggs for the Golden Goose Casino can still be seen above the Glitter Gulch girlie joint.

22 Fremont Street

21 Club, 1931-1934: Licensed for slots and 21.

Barrel House Club, 1934-1938: This popular nightclub had a full orchestra for dancing. It was located next to the State Café, and Barrel House patrons could order food through a hole in the wall between the businesses. During prohibition, if they knew the right people, they could also order a pitcher of drinks.

Golden West Club, 1956-1958: The Golden West Club and the Golden Slot Club are both listed in Fuller's Index of Nevada Gaming Establishments in operation at the same address and at the same time. Perhaps a corporate name and an operating name?

Golden Slot Club, 1956-1958: This was the coolest looking building in town! It was built to resemble a Jennings slot machine including a large handle on the side of the building. Could this have been considered the first "theme casino" in Las Vegas?



Before Cecil Lynch's Fortune Club moved in, the Golden Slot Club occupied the building that looks like a giant Jennings slot machine, complete with the handle.

Cecil Lynch's Fortune Club, 1958-1966: In 1958 the owners of the original Fortune Club (across the street), released the rights to the name "Fortune Club" when they opted to use the Nevada Club name for their business. That allowed Cecil Lynch to use the Fortune Club name when he opened his club. As was the Golden Slot Club, Cecil Lynch's Fortune Club was a slots only casino.

Goldie's, 1966-c.1973: I've seen one postcard where, with magnification, I could make out "die's" on the front of the building. The phone book confirmed the spelling of Goldie's Casino, the postcard confirmed that the building façade no longer resembled a slot machine. Slots only.

Mr. Reeds Casino isn't listed in the usual reference guides. But it's in the January 1978 and January 1979 Las Vegas phone books at this address, in the yellow pages, under "Casinos". Perhaps it never opened, perhaps it didn't get licensed, perhaps the phone books are wrong, perhaps it's missing in the guides, perhaps...?

Glitter Gulch, 1980-c.1991: (Bob Stupak's, 1980-1981) The sexy cowgirl perched on the Glitter Gulch building has been nicknamed Vegas Vickie, to go with Vegas Vic



Bob Stupak ran the Glitter Gulch as a casino from 1980-1981. It still uses the Glitter Gulch name, but now it's a girlie joint.

across the street. The Glitter Gulch is still there, and there are still "girls" outside the door inviting the customers in...but now it's a girlie joint

32 Fremont Street

Silver Palace, 1956-1964: In the 1940's and early 1950's the Las Vegas Pharmacy was at 32 Fremont Street, on the corner of First Street. Around the corner, on First Street were the Silver Café and the Silver Club. These all closed down so a casino could be built, and it must have seemed like a good idea to keep silver in the name...because the new casino was named the Silver Palace. In 1959 the Silver Palace offered Craps, 21,



The Silver Palace.

roulette and slots...including the “Wild Thunderbird” slot machines. You could get a choice top sirloin dinner for \$1.79, and the cocktail hour was from 5 p.m. ‘til 8 p.m.

Carousel, 1965-1974: (McLaney’s, 1965-1967) Around 1967, Marty Kuzens had chips, matches and ashtrays made for “Marty’s Carousel”, but apparently was denied a gaming license. There’s a good shot of the Carousel at the end of a car chase scene in the James Bond movie “Diamonds are Forever”.



After the Silver Palace came the Carousel. McLaney operated it from 1965-1967.

Gambler’s Hall of Fame, 1974-1976: It’s not surprising that I can’t find pictures of every casino that operated on Fremont Street since gambling was legalized in March of 1931. Some of the clubs were briefly open 75 years ago, before there were shutter-bugs darting around snapping pictures of everything they saw. A few of the clubs were located in the 3rd, 4th, or 5th block of Fremont between drugstores, bakeries and dry cleaners, not popular spots from a postcard photographer’s point of view. It is surprising (to me, anyway) that I’ve never even seen a photo of the Gambler’s Hall of Fame! The “70’s weren’t THAT long ago (I’m dating myself, aren’t I?), and the location was smack dab in the middle of two blocks that have had thousands of pictures taken of them. So where are the pictures? What are the stories?



Sundance West, 1976-1980: Hmmm, Sundance West is another casino that I don’t have a picture of, and I don’t remember hearing any stories about it. After the Carousel closed, did this corner become the Bermuda Triangle of downtown Las Vegas?

Sassy Sally’s, 1980-1999: When we go to Las Vegas, we usually stay at the Las Vegas Club, and we’ve stayed at the Plaza several times. The coffee shop at The Horseshoe (before Becky) was our favorite place for breakfast, and we’ve eaten a lot of dinners at the Golden Nugget. Going from one to another of those places, we’ve walked past Sassy Sally’s hundreds of times. I’ve probably gone in the door about 3 times. So what I remember best are the hawkers outside the door, trying to get the customers in the door. They handed out plastic leis for awhile, then they switched to beads. They went through a few different costumes over the years. My favorite was the giant sponge-rubber cowboy hat and the sponge-rubber horse that slipped over the head, and was worn around the waist. Hard to describe, you probably had to be there.



In June of 1981 Sassy Sally’s had been open for nearly a year, but still had the “Grand Opening” banners hanging. Down the block you can see the Glitter Gulch Casino.

Mermaids, 1999-present: When Sassy Sally’s became Mermaids, the tacky Western décor was changed to tacky Island décor. They still have the hawkers, but they added a new feature to draw the customers in...a camera. You have your picture taken on the sidewalk, then you go in and (they hope) play while they’re printing it. In May of 2000 my guy and I “eloped” to Las Vegas. I’ve never been fond of having my picture taken, so when we were making the wedding arrangements at the Little Church of the West, they asked about a photographer and I shook my head no. My wishes were honored. So, while most people have wedding albums, we have a scrapbook. We didn’t even have a camera with us, so there’s very few actual

photos in the scrapbook. There are three pictures of me and one of my husbands, taken by the Las Vegas Club when we hit royal flushes throughout the week. There's just one picture of the two of us, and we're not exactly together. My husband is standing on the sidewalk in front of Mermaids, looking at the camera, and I'm trying to back out of the picture. Of course it says "Mermaids" on it! Vegas—ya' gotta' love it!!



Mermaids replaced Sassy Sally's.

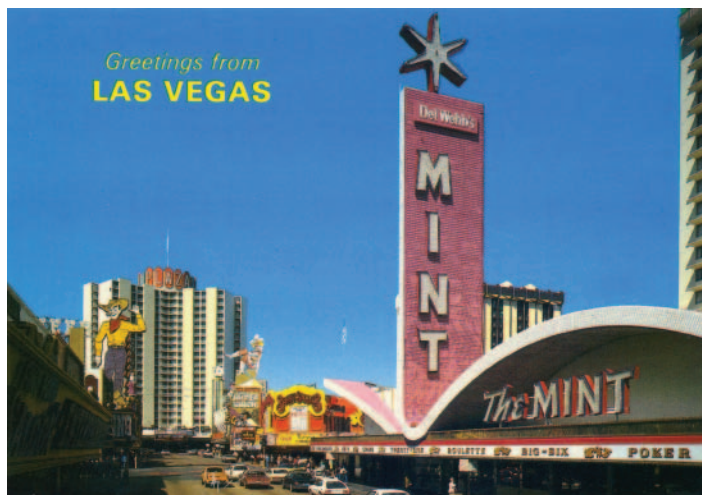
Cross 1st Street....

100 Fremont Street

Birdcage Casino, 1958-1959: When it comes to games of chance, even the casinos lose sometimes. The Birdcage Casino was forced to close when two keno players hit \$25,000 jackpots. After the Birdcage closed, the Mint expanded and built a new entrance, on the corner.



The Bird Cage Casino was only open for about a year on the corner of First and Fremont.



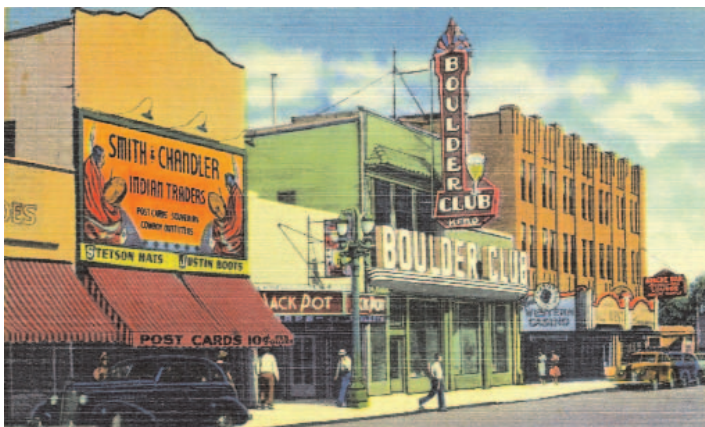
The Mint expanded into the space vacated by the Bird Cage.

The Mint, 1957-1989: (Del Webb's, 1966-1989): If only we could go back in time, to 1970. This ad was in one of the tourist papers from July: "Don't go home without seeing the Mint 'Behind the Scenes' Tour that a half-million viewers thrill to annually. Right past the guard into the Money Counting Room (more than \$1-million processed daily), an inside look at the famed "one-armed bandits" and down through the Eye-In-The-Sky for a candid peek at casino players and dealers in action below. Even a 25-story scenic ride in the Mint's glass outside elevator to the Top of The Mint food and fun spot." We've taken the glass elevator up to The Top of The Mint for dinner, it would be fun to take the rest of the tour, too!

104 Fremont

21 Club, c. 1940's:
Licensed for slots and 21.





The Jackpot Club, with their slot machine sign, is visible in this early 1940's postcard. Also visible, on the other side of the Boulder Club is the Western Casino which was only open for a year or so.

116 Fremont

Jackpot, 1941-1945: Licensed for slots, 21, craps, roulette, faro and keno.

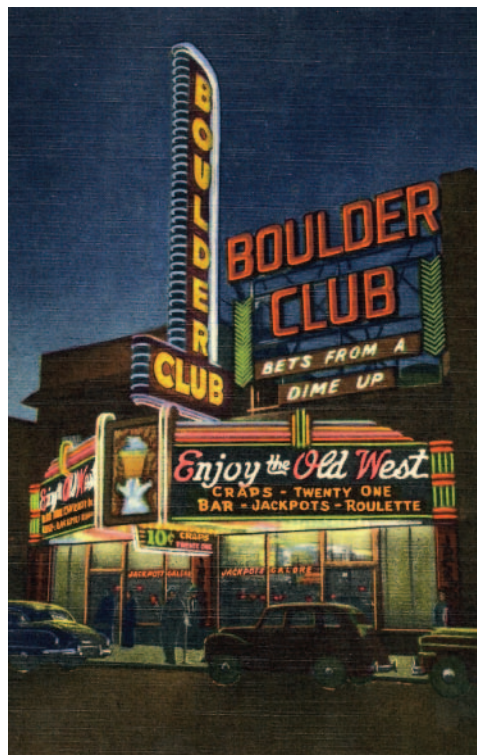
Club Savoy, 1945-1953: (Khoury's, 1949-1953)
Licensed for slots, 21, craps and roulette.



The Club Savoy was available to any thirsty spectators during this Helldorado Parade.

118 Fremont

Boulder Club, 1929-1960: The Boulder Club opened in 1929. On some old matchbooks, the club advertises itself as a "gentlemen's club" and on another book it's "a club for ladies and gentlemen". In January of 1956, the Amante Brothers took over the Boulder Club. Then, in April of 1957, the original owners repurchased the Boulder Club. An ad in the March 22, 1958 Fabulous Las Vegas Magazine states "The 'OLD' Boulder Club; The same Old Partnership with the addition of... 'Farmer' MILTON B. PAGE" and it lists Jim Young, J. Kell Houssels, Ross Page, Larry Hezzelwood, Connie Hurley, Margo Goumond Hines and Lillian Witcher as the other owners, and Morris Pinkerton as the bar manager.



In this 1952 photo The Boulder Club advertised "Bets from a dime up", which is why we have some cool .10 cent chips.

Hmm... kind of sounds like there might have been a "hostile" take over, that got taken back!? The ad also lists craps, roulette, "21", faro, keno, poker, pan and bridge as the available games. Liberal slot machines--3 bars any position--\$5.00 jackpots. The ad mentions that ladies are welcome, could that be because some of the owners were ladies?



124 Fremont

Apache Casino, 1932-1941: The Apache Casino has been described as the first plush casino in Las Vegas, and it was the first hotel to install an elevator. The Apache Casino was on the ground floor of the Hotel Apache, along with other small businesses including the Apache Café and the Apache Bar. There is a marvelous article about The Apache, written by John Yee, in the Spring 2002 issue of the Casino Chip & Token News.

Kiva Club, 1932-1934: (in Apache Hotel) Licensed for slots, 21, roulette, craps and keno.

Western Casino, 1941-1942: Licensed for slots, 21, craps, roulette, big-6 and chuck-a-luck.



This 1935 card shows the Apache Casino, as well as the Apache Café and Hotel Apache.

New Western Casino, 1942-??: Licensed for slots, 21, craps and roulette.

128 Fremont

SS Rex, 1945-1946: “Admiral” Tony Cornero had been a bootlegger, and when prohibition was repealed he ran gambling ships off the coast of California. Tired of the heat from the California authorities he headed for Las Vegas. He opened the SS Rex in 1945, and named it after one of his gambling ships. He even took a light fixture from the ship and had it installed in his Las Vegas casino, where it still hangs. Look over the bar in the oldest part of Binion’s, and you’ll see it. Tony’s notoriety meant that the officials of Las Vegas didn’t want him in their town, so within months after he received his gaming license it was revoked. An ad in a September 1945 business directory shows that the SS Rex Club was owned and managed by the Frontier Club, supervised by Ted Shorie.



Tony Cornero named his second Las Vegas Casino the SS Rex, after the gambling ship that he’d had off the California Coast.



In 1942, the New Western Casino replaced the Western.

Rex Club, 1946-1946: Once Tony Cornero’s license was revoked, control of the SS Rex reverted to P.O. Silvagni, the original owner of the Apache Hotel Building. Within a month or so, he sold the club to Guy McAfee who retained control for about 6 months. Fuller’s Index shows that the next owner’s name was Bernstein, and that’s when the name was changed from the SS Rex to the Rex Club. Only 3 months later the ownership changed again, this time to Sedway, and that only lasted a month or so until June of 1946.



The Eldorado Club came after the Rex Club.

Eldorado Club, 1947-1951: After June of 1946, the next information that I find for this property isn’t until July 8, 1947. That’s the date that Fuller’s Index has for the opening of the El Dorado, and it’s showing Sedway as the owner. So, what happened from June of 1946 until July of 1947? This is when I start looking for something besides names and dates. “The Las Vegan” from October 28, 1949, published by Boots Van Horn, had these bits of gossip: “The poker-joker man of the Eldorado, Duke Reamer, is still going with blonde Apache cocktail gal Stevie; however he still has a yen for Jo-Ann Kerr”. Also “Still thinking he is King of the Pit Bosses & the greatest thing since Coca-Cola, is the Eldorado Club pompous,

would-be wolf, Alabam. (Some people never realize they're too old to be bold)". That doesn't explain what occurred between 1946 and 1947, but every now and then it's neat to get a glimpse of the real people that lived and worked at the clubs.

Clover Club, 1951-1951:

According to Fuller's Index, this club was licensed for slots and 21. According to price guides, some dice were found that were attributed to this club.

Horseshoe Club, 1951-2006: (Binion's Horseshoe Club) In 1951 Lester "Benny" Binion opened the Horseshoe Club. Benny's philosophy was "If ya wanta get rich, make little people feel like big people." Putting that thought into practice, the Horseshoe was the first casino to offer free drinks to slot players. Under Benny's leadership, the Horseshoe prospered. While the other casinos preferred to keep betting limits low, the Horseshoe would accept any size bet—as long as it was the first bet made. In 1949 Benny hosted a poker game between Johnny Moss and "Nick the Greek" Dondolos. After five months, Johnny Moss finally won the game and an estimated \$2 million. Benny trained his sons, Jack and Ted, to follow in his footsteps. Due to his unfortunate choice of friends, Ted lost his gaming license and was later murdered. Jack successfully ran the Horseshoe for many



years, and opened more Horseshoes in other gaming jurisdictions. In 1998 Jack sold most of his interest in the Las Vegas Horseshoe to his sister Becky Behnen. After years of apparent financial problems, in 2004 the IRS closed the Horseshoe. A few months later the Horseshoe was sold to a group that included MTR Gaming and Harrah's. Harrah's managed the Horseshoe for a year, then sold their shares to MTR Gaming, but Harrah's retained the right to the Horseshoe name and to the World Series of Poker.

Joe W. Brown's Horseshoe Club, 1953-1957:

When Benny Binion was serving time in Leavenworth, for income tax evasion (while still in Texas), he turned his Horseshoe Club over to his friend Joe W. Brown. Brown put his name on nearly everything...matches, dice, ashtrays, casino signage, and even the million-dollar display. Chips were the one thing that his name wasn't on. There was a series of hot stamped chips that were ordered from the HC Edwards Company with Binion's name on them. These chips had "inion" scratched off, leaving "B----s", and these were the chips used during the Joe W. Brown era of the Horseshoe.



Binion's, 2005-present: When Harrah's left the downtown market, they took The Horseshoe name with them. After 55 years The Horseshoe is now known as Binion's.



This is The Horseshoe in 1951, shortly after it opened.



When Joe W. Brown ran The Horseshoe Club, his name went on everything—including the marquee.



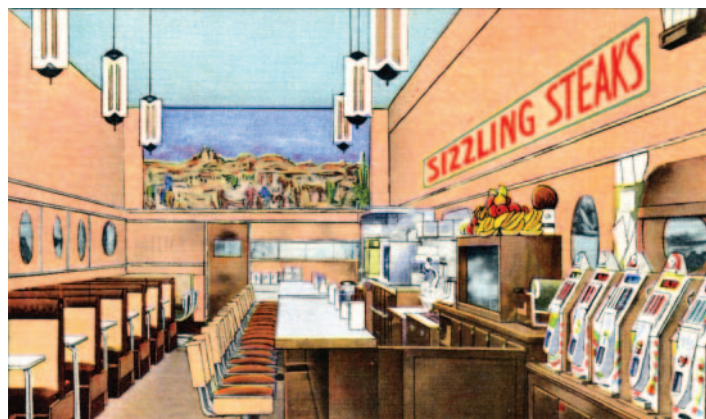
Cross 2nd Street...

200 Fremont

Fremont Hotel & Casino, 1956-present: When it opened in 1956, the 15-story Fremont advertised itself as the tallest, newest and finest hotel in Las Vegas. KSHO-TV had their studios at the Fremont, and their transmitter was located on the roof. Wayne Newton first appeared at the Fremont in 1959 when he was only 15 years old, so he couldn't linger between or after his shows. There was a White Cross Drug Store across the



The Fremont Hotel & Casino c. 1972.



Like many other cafes and restaurants in Nevada, Sam's Café had some slot machines.

street from the Fremont where, between shows, Wayne would go to sit and have a soda.

234 Fremont

Red Garter Casino, 1972-1975: Licensed for slots, 21, craps, big-6 and poker.



Cross 3rd Street...

320 Fremont

Sam's Café, circa 1945: Many restaurants, grocery stores and other businesses in Las Vegas have slot machines. Sam's Café was one of them, as is seen on their post card. An ad for Sam's says "Open night and day, BUT Closed Wednesdays until victory".



326 Fremont

Foxy Dog, 1964-1975

Go a couple of blocks further...

600 Fremont

El Cortez Hotel & Casino, 1941-present: If you love the mega-resorts on the strip, and you love 5 star hotels and dining rooms, and you're willing to pay the price, then the El Cortez probably won't interest you. If you love the history of Las Vegas, the El Cortez has plenty! She was built by Marion Hicks, who later built the Thunderbird. Her early owners included Bugsy Siegal, Dave and Chickie Berman, Moe Sedway and Gus Greenbaum. In her heyday, celebrities were often seen at the El Cortez. JK Houssels, a well-known name in Las Vegas history, bought the El Cortez which got rid of the mob ties (except for the mobster in the penthouse...but that's another story). Jackie Gaughan, another Vegas gaming pioneer, is the current owner. The El Cortez has been remodeled and refurbished several times since it opened in





You still have to walk a few blocks up Fremont Street to get to the El Cortez Hotel & Casino.

1941 but, if you look at an old postcard while you're looking at the building, you can still see much of the original building. Yep, the casino is smaller than the casinos that are built today, and it's darker and a bit dingy...it's also 65 years old! If the walls could talk, I'd love to listen.

Note: All of the authors and editors of our reference guides have done an outstanding job in providing us with invaluable research tools, and I thank them. Early records weren't always detailed or accurate, many records were destroyed in a 1960 fire, and Harvey Fullers research notes were written on the backs of Keno tickets! (Thank you Howard Herz for deciphering them for us.) Using a variety of sources, I've sometimes come up with discrep-



In her day, the El Cortez had some class.

ancies in the dates of operation. When that has happened I've tried to use old phone books, date codes on postcards, or whatever other source I have available to be as accurate as possible, but there could be errors.

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