

Gaming Check

by **Howard W. Herz**

Beginning in the late 1800's, a number of manufacturers in the United States produced gaming checks and chips. Several of these manufacturers sold their products through distributors who would offer their customers a "custom" mold that was reserved by the manufacturer for that specific distributor. Other manufacturers sold directly to customers. The history of manufacturing in the U.S. is fairly simple as the number of companies that actually produced gaming checks and chips was quite small. For the sake of future collectors, I believe that the history of these companies should be preserved while it can still be recorded. One of the companies that made its own chips was Hunt & Co. of Chicago.

Based on an interview with the present owner of Hunt & Co.

Hunt & Co.



Hunt & Co.'s location in 1999

The founder of Hunt & Co., Eugene M. Stockton, began the company in the 1890's. As a producer of gaming equipment, the company advertised nationally in a number of the pulp magazines such as the *Police Gazette*. Hunt & Co. featured items such as magic dice, magic cards and a limited amount of gaming furniture. They had their own poker chip that was manufactured in house as well as a number of items that followed the "Blue Book" line of other companies.

Between 1930 and the early 1960's, Hunt & Co. produced their own chips using three types of "chain" molds. The checks were molded in an arcane set-up that consisted of a press, an ordinary press jack for pressure and a top and bottom apparatus that contained hot and cold water. By diverting the water alternately the chip cavities could be heated and then cooled allowing the pressed material to be molded to the design and then released. The resulting chips had to



Hunt Chain Molds

have their outside perimeter flash shaved off before being hot stamped. None of the chain mold checks used normal inlays with the exception of a star shape inlay (B201) and a clover leaf inlay (B202) that were used on two separate orders.

Checks were hot stamped in several different type styles using mostly gold and metallic green foil. Ten different colors were offered for regular orders. A number of checks were made in “mottled” colors that produced a “marbled” type of color effect. None of the checks produced had inserts. Hunt & Co. also used their “generic” mold “Stackrite” chips for hot stamping in several instances for private customers. Although some chip orders were in the thousands, most orders were in the mid-100’s and in some instances orders were for less than 50 chips.

As the checks were ordered by customers, a sample would be kept in a manila envelope with the order information written in ink. This information would generally include the mold type, quantity and colors ordered, customer name and address and the date of the order.

Although the manufacturing method used could produce a large quantity of chips, it was not suitable for the excessively large casino orders of the time. Most of the orders were for a moderate number of chips with generally three to four colors. Custom dies were used in a moderate number of instances, but the majority of the chips stamped were from die combinations of the standard hot stamp letter dies.

The records indicate that a vast majority of the chain chips were made before the mid-1950’s. Although several orders were filled in the early 1960’s, the chain mold can essentially be dated from 1930-1960. Orders were received from almost every state including Nevada. A few orders were sent to Canada and one to Puerto Rico. In a very few instances, hot stamps were duplicated for different customers - primarily in the “value” only checks. Several orders were repeated with a change of mold, but not dies.

The Hunt & Co. Molds...

Hunt used four varieties of the “Chain Mold”. The record envelopes would include the name of the mold. Over the years some of the molds were described by different names and in some instances just “chain” was used. During the early 1940’s, the “chain” became the “victory chain” as a supporting propaganda move to support the spirit of World War-II. In 1960 Hunt & Co. purchased Taylor & Co. (T-mold and “Harp”-mold), and began to use the generic diamond-square mold provided by the Burt Company. In several instances Hunt used their “Stackrite” poker chips for monograms as well as the New Era mold from Ball & Co. In one instance a customer provided chip blanks that were monogrammed.

Gaming checks were weighted when requested and the hot stamping could be up-graded to heavier gold when requested.

**Hunt & Co. “Softclick”
(light weight)**

A classic relief chain design with very high relief in the chain and a inner ring just outside of the chain. This mold was used through the 1930-60 period and was manufactured in-house by Hunt & Co. With most of the colors normally hot stamped in gold, colors of white, lavender and yellow were almost always stamped in metallic green.



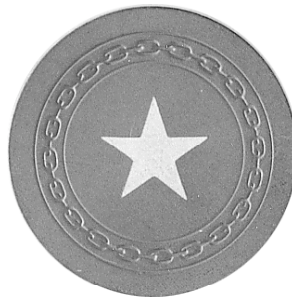
**Hunt & Co. “Softclick”
(heavy weight)**

The same classic relief chain design with very high relief in the chain but no inner ring just outside of the chain. This mold was used through the 1930-60 period and was manufactured in-house by Hunt & Co. With most of the colors normally hot stamped in gold, colors of white, lavender and yellow were almost always stamped in metallic green.



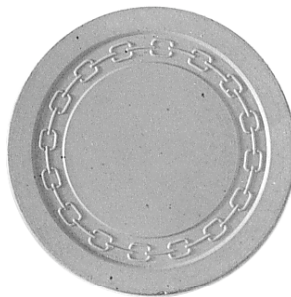
**Hunt & Co. “Hunt’s Chain”
(Victory Chain) mold**

This check featured the chain design incused into the rim of the check. This mold was used through the 1930-60 period and was also manufactured in-house by Hunt & Co. With most of the colors normally hot stamped in gold, colors of white, lavender and yellow were almost always stamped in metallic green. Checks were issued in both dull and shellac finishes.



Hunt & Co. “Woodlawn” mold

A later chain design with lower relief in the chain and a broad rim. This mold was used through the 1940-60 period and was manufactured in-house by Hunt & Co. With most of the colors normally hot stamped in gold, colors of white, lavender and yellow were also stamped in gold.



**Hunt & Co. “Woodlawn” mold
(variation)**

A later chain design with very low relief in the chain and a very broad rim. This mold was used through the 1940-60 period and was manufactured in-house by Hunt & Co. With most of the colors normally hot stamped in gold, colors of white, lavender and yellow were also stamped in gold.



Hunt & Co. “Stackrite” mold

This simple design features a raised ring with a center area for hot stamping. Hunt & Co. advertised this mold for “poker chips” and rarely used it for monogrammed checks. This mold was made in-house by Hunt & Co. and was offered the the standard colors.



Balls “New Era” mold

This single ring mold was developed for Ball & Co. and was used in several instances by Hunt & Co. for orders. Note the differences from the “Stackrite” mold.



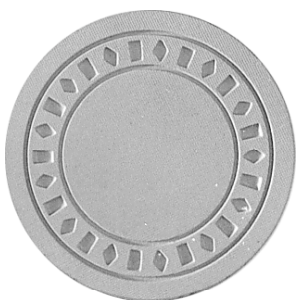
“Star in Rings” mold

Hunt & Co. offered these “indestructible Poker Chips” in ten colors. We know of one instance where they were monogrammed.



“Code” (diamond-square) mold

In the 1950’s and 1960’s Hunt & Co. used this mold that was a “generic” mold offered by the Burt Co. to distributors. The name “Code” may have been from the original owner of the mold (Code & Co.) before Burt made available to other distributors.



Hot Stamp Type Styles ...

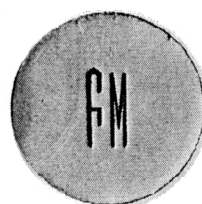
Hunt & Co. used a number of letter sets to create the monograms. The records do not show distinct names for these styles so we have used generic terminology. Our descriptions include a style comment in { } to indicate what type of lettering was used. We have used the following abbreviations:

- {bk} = block lettering
- {bkl} = large block lettering
- {bks} = small block lettering
- {cus} = custom lettering
- {lo} = logo
- {mg} = monogram
- {mgs} = small monogram
- {sc} = script lettering

Hunt & Co. was purchased in 1955 from E.M. Stockton by Carl Stahl and his son. In 1960, The Stahl family purchased Taylor & Co. and merged the two entities. After the acquisition of Taylor, the combined companies primarily used the T and Harp molds that were owned by Taylor and the Chain molds were discontinued. Both the T and Harp molded checks were produced for Taylor by the Burt Co., of Portland Maine. Hunt & Co.’s contribution to gaming history was long and significant. Their chain checks were sold throughout the United States with the majority of sales in the Mid-West and specifically the Chicago area. The preservation of Hunt & Co.’s records has added a significant piece to the puzzle of American Gaming History.



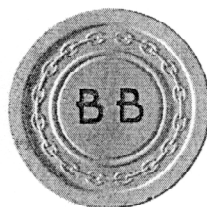
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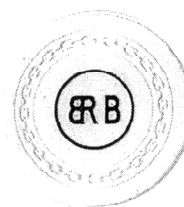
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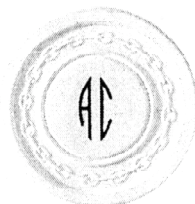
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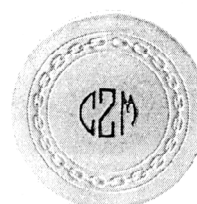
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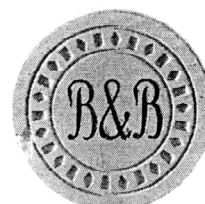
{lo}



{mg}



{mgs}



{sc}