

THE INFORMATION BOOTH

Michael Knapp

Welcome to "The Information Booth": the column that belongs to the members! It is here that you may submit unidentified chips (UFC's) for identification or questions about casino history and the like.

As we always do, we'll begin with some answers to previous UFC questions. Also, we repeat our request for participation by club members. This column is only of value if you take time to write to your columnist with identifications of chips you recognize here in the column, and if you send *legible* photocopies or samples of chips you'd like identified.

You will notice that few of the chips which appear in this column are simply photocopied. That's because many older chips do not have enough contrast to photocopy well, and if they will not photocopy once, they certainly will not photocopy a second time when the magazine is produced. As a result, we hand-illustrate most of the chips pictured here. It's a painstaking process, because we make every effort to make sure that each chip illustration is as close as possible to its original version. That way, recognition identification may be possible.

Please realize, though, that *if you cannot read what is printed on a chip clearly after you photocopy it, neither can your columnist, and illustrating it will be impossible*. In such a case, you may send the chip to us, *with return postage* if you would like the chip sent back to you after the illustration process is completed.

Also, please realize that if you recognize a chip published here as a UFC, you have information that other fellow collectors do not have. Please share it! That's the whole point of this column. What is common knowledge in one part of the country, or in one area of collecting is completely unknown to others. For those of you with answers or questions, please share your information by writing to us at P. O. Box 340345, Columbus, Ohio 43234.

Now for identifications of past UFC's:

Q. 9: This is one of the first chips published in "The Information Booth," but it has never been identified. The chip has a small greek key rim and bears the hotstamp **Pirate Cafe** and the denomination. We recently read an article forwarded to us by Texas member Vernon Blanck which referred to a Pirate Club in Galveston, where many illegal gaming establishments existed during the 1930's, 1940's and 1950's. We are currently looking for verification, but it may be that the Pirate Cafe and the Pirate Club were one and the same.

Q. 145: Again, we need verification, but this chip, hotstamped **BB**, may well have been used at the Basin Street Club in Reno.

Q. 256: Howard Herz, who collected one of these from the club himself back in the early 1960's, tells us that this **CLAB** chip was used at the 93 Club in Caliente, NV.

Q. 371: We are told that the **Broadwater Inn** was an illegal gaming club in Biloxi, MS in the days long before legalized riverboat gaming there.

Q. 418: Similarly, the **East Side** was an illegal club in Biloxi.

Q. 706: As do many illegal club chips, the numerals on this chip represent the address of the club. The **239** chips were made for Paul Green and Charles Thomas in 1936, and were shipped to them at 239 1st Street, N.E., Miami, Florida. Perhaps one of our Florida members can give us more information about the names, the address, or the area.

Q. 726: Steve McLendon has given us some terrific background about this **P&C** chip. The initials stand for Pat and Charlie's card room, which operated in the 1960's. It became JD's, which was owned, Steve tells us, at least partly by Merle Haggard. JD's closed in 1984.

Q. 729: This chip, showing a picture of a **spur**, is in fact from the Silver Spur in Carson City, NV.

Q. 731: The **Presidential Casino** was located in Nairobi, Kenya. Henry Garrett tells us that it was open only during the 1970's, and is now closed.

Q. 734: The **Jewish Warvets** chip is from Philadelphia, PA. It was listed in the Philadelphia phone book in 1974.

Q. 739: At about the same time this illustration was published, we learned of its origin from the Gaming Archaeology auction catalog we received. According to Howard Herz's description, **Tommy's Victory Club** was founded by Thomas Victor Pardini at 406 N. Carson St. in Carson City in 1932. The club moved to 302 N. Carson St. in 1937, and had only limited gaming. From the mid-1940's until it closed in 1954, The Victory Club had a full complement of games. The club was purchased and became the Lucky Spur, closed since 1978.

Q. 752: Although we aren't certain, one of our California club historians, Steve McLendon, suggests that this **Big Al's** chip might be a casino night chip from the Sacramento area.

Q. 760: As sometimes happens, we inadvertently published an illustration of this chip which had already appeared as UFC 410. The identification of 410 still holds: the **Fremont Club** is located in Nipomo, CA, and is still open as a card room.

Q. 61 and 62: *A correction.* These ornate, silver filigreed inlay European plaques were among the first UFC's submitted to "The Information Booth" for identification. In Vol. 5, No. 2, we wrote a rather lengthy explanation of why the plaques are *not* from Monte Carlo, and speculating as to their origin.

We were convinced at that time that the plaques and chips which were part of the same set came from the Casino Elysee Palace in Vichy, France. After some additional research by one of our foremost experts in foreign chips, John Benedict, we now believe that the pieces were probably not made for the Vichy location.

John has sent us a number of color photocopies of chips and plaques known to have come from the Casino Elysee Palace, and none resembles the plaques and chips illustrated as UFC 61 and 62. Nor has he been able to find one of his European contacts who can identify the pieces. John's suspicion is that the pieces were made for a wealthy private party, or for a private (perhaps illegal)

club which could afford the ornate filigree work in the center inlays.

We remain fairly certain that the pieces were not made for use in Monte Carlo, for the same reasons explained in the article in Vol. 5, No. 2.

Now for some new questions and UFCs for identification! As usual, chips which bear a denomination on the reverse side are indicated with the symbol "\$."



UFC 767 was sent to us by a member who indicated that it is an ivory chip, and who asked what casino it was used in. From time to time we also receive copies of "generic" design chips with no casino identification on them whatever. In most instances, it is impossible to tell whether these chips were ever used in casinos at all, or whether they were used in many different casinos as roulette chips.

The 767 ivory chip, though, is a good illustration of why some casino chips may not be identifiable as such.

Ivory chips date back about 100-200 years. They were most common during the mid to late 1800's and early 1900's. Some found their way to wealthy city-dwellers and were used in gentlemen's games. Some were used in England, some sets were carried by sea captains. Often, sets of ivory chips were carried by professional gamblers who plied their trade on riverboats and in frontier saloons and gambling halls. Very few of these gambling halls were permanent enough to purchase their own sets of chips, and either leased out faro tables and poker tables to professional gamblers who brought their own, or simply made their facilities available to whomever wished to use the tables.

Many frontier gambling halls were actually elaborate tent buildings, and lasted only for a few years in any one location. They were, however, easily portable. During the building of the transcontinental railroad, for example, tent saloons were set up at each rail head. Once the track was laid up to the rail head, and the railroad offices moved to the next construction point, the tent cities would be folded and moved along with the railroad personnel. That, after all, was where the action was!

Although a few ivory chips have been attributed to specific owners or specific gambling halls, that's an extremely rare occurrence. Most often, ivory chips have no specific attribution.

If you'd like to read more about the frontier gambling era, there's an excellent book called *Knights of the Green Cloth* (1982) by Robert DeArment, which is available from Gamblers Book Club in Las Vegas, and perhaps a local bookstore can order it.

Robert Eisenstadt sent us the copy of 768, and also sent us copies of photographs of the ornate, carved rack made for 500 of the chips. It's a beautiful case, and bears the owner's initials. Unlike

some of these monogrammed chips, we now know the correct order of the initials in the monogram: WIE. We suspect the chips were made for private use, not for any other purpose.



769 is a chip which we have also seen in other variations. It is known with a hat and cane rim as well. One story has it that the chip was a training chip and never used in a casino. Another story says that the chips were used as roulette chips at the Paddlewheel in Las Vegas (1972-1991). Can someone verify one of these stories?



UFC 770 was used at the Cherry Hills Country Club in Denver, CO in the 1930's and 1940's. We assume that the game was a members-only private game.

771 came with the indication that it might be from the Silver Dollar Club in Reno. Sorry, but that doesn't ring true to us; we have seen other Silver Dollar Club chips from the Reno club, and none are similar to this one. We suspect this is from a California card room. The center inlay is a bit difficult to photocopy well on UFC 772, but it says Cavanaugh's Motor Inn. Does anyone know where the motel is, and whether this is a calling card chip or a gambling chip? We are told that the Par 3 chip, UFC 773, may have been used at the Broadmoor Hotel Resort in Colorado Springs, CO in the 1940's and 1950's. Does anyone know anything about the chip or the resort?

774 was one of a group of similar chips in several colors purchased in the Chicago area. It appears to be a lantern or coach light with

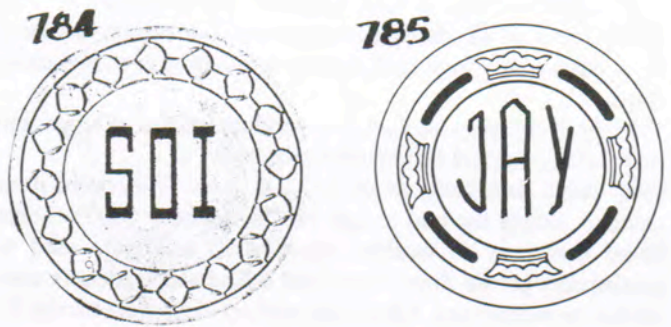
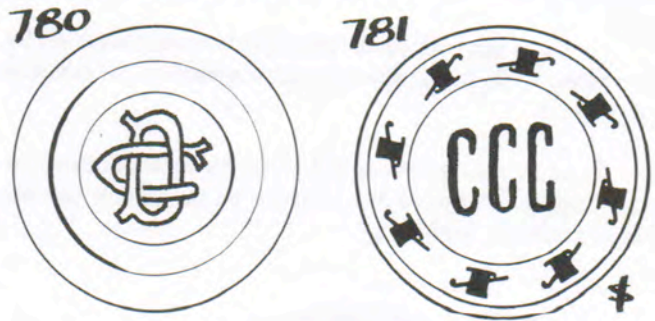
the letter C superimposed. Does anyone know the origin of this chip?

The Florida Casino from which UFC 775 came is clearly not a casino in the United States. It was located either in England or in a British possession: the denomination is in Shillings, a unit of British currency.

776 has been floating around for a long time! It's one of those "permanent" UFC's, we're afraid. Usually shown as WIZ, this chip might also be ZIM. Can anyone tell us what it is?

We understand that there was a 49ER Club (no apostrophe) at Lake Tahoe, but virtually all known L-mold chips were used in California, not in Nevada. Can anyone identify 777?

historians help with UFC's 782-786?



UFC 787 may be from Sacramento, CA. Anyone recognize it? The next chip, 788, is a black \$10 chip which is suspected as being a Nevada chip, but its attribution is unclear.



778 is a real puzzler! Your columnist literally doesn't know which way is "up" with this chip! Does anyone have any idea what it is? It's possible that the FC on this chip (779) stands for Fortune Club. But *which* Fortune Club?!

The interlocking DC on UFC 780 bears a resemblance to the Diamond Club logo from UFC 684. Unlike that chip, however, which was an inlaid lithographed center, 780 is hotstamped in white. Can anyone identify it?

Before you suggest that UFC 781 is from the California Commerce Club, we should point out that it is a Christy & Jones "shiny hat" chip, production of which ended before the Commerce Club opened.

Gary Fitzgerald tells us that he obtained all of the next group of chips from a past owner of the Yreka Inn in Yreka, CA (1924-1976). He believes that all of the chips were in play in the Yreka area, but doesn't know at which clubs. 782, he says, may be from the Jolly Club. Although Gary's contact knows that the "Vick" referred to on 783 was known as "dirty shirt Vick," he didn't know what club might have used the chip. Can one of our California

The remaining chips are all unidentified, and we have no hints to give about their possible identity. If you recognize any of them, please drop us a note and share your knowledge with other collectors.

Thanks to those who contributed information or questions for this issue: John Benedict, Archie Black, Larry Boyles, Paul Brown, Ken Craig, Robert Eisenstadt, Gary Fitzgerald, Henry Garrett, Steve Goodrich, Robert Maisch, Steve McLendon, Allan Myers, Jim Myers, Michael Petty, Nate Pincus, and Al Zaika.

788



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