

ANTIQUE COLLECTIBLES

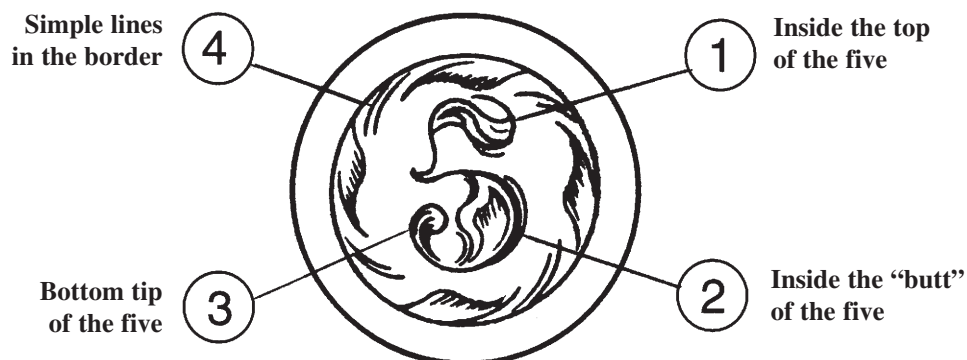
Identifying Ivory Numeral Chips

by Dale Seymour and Ken Craig

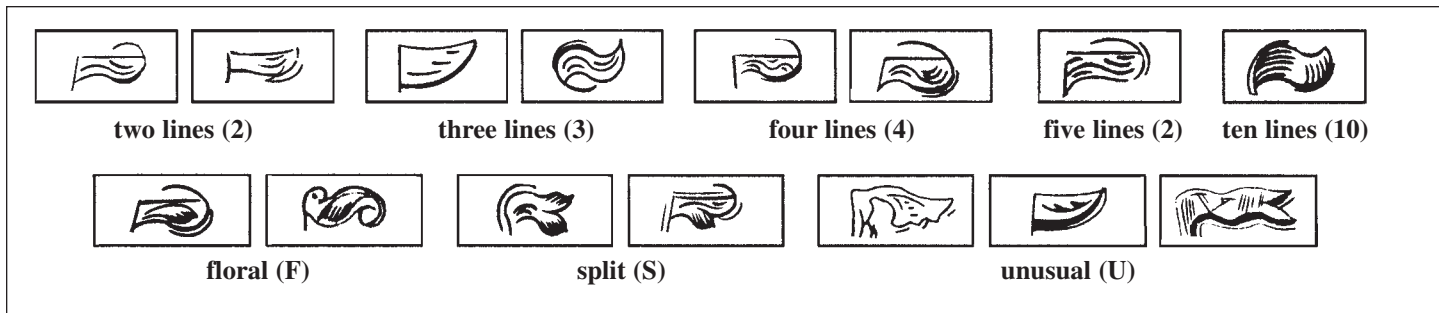
Many ivory chip collectors have had frustrating experiences trying to identify assigned codes of ivory chips. Casino chips are generally easy to identify, but not so with nineteenth century ivory gambling chips. The most difficult ivory chips to identify are the numeral “5” and “25” chips. Most of the more than 300 ivory numeral “5” chips look very much alike so it was necessary to come up with some system to differentiate them. Just look at the four chips shown below which are typical of the ivory fives. See how similar they appear. Could you describe their differences?



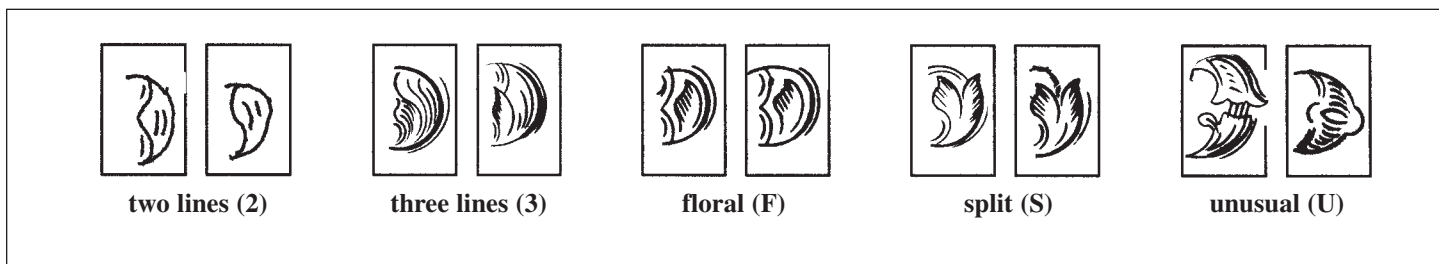
Dale Seymour, in his book, *Antique Gambling Chips*, has devised an identification system specifically for identifying ivory fives and twenty-fives. He calls it the “4-spot” system. The system is very helpful once a person understands how to use it. It seems that manufactures of ivory gambling chips made an effort to make the designs on each set of chips different. On the other hand, the designs of the five and twenty-five chips were, in general, very similar. Ivory numeral chip designs contained a number of design elements which could be engraved with slight modifications to make the designs different. Four of these more prominent design areas were chosen to help identify differences.



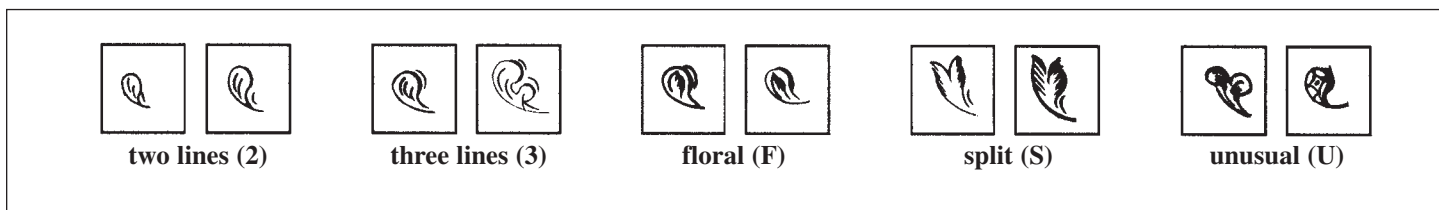
It is uncertain just how many different manufacturers of ivory chips existed. The chip designers seemed to copy one another's styles (as they did in manufacturing clay chips). Of the more than 300 ivory numeral five designs we know, the majority of these are very similar. Identification of design elements which appear at the four positions chosen and shown on the previous page are: a) the number of lines that appear (0-10); b) a floral rendering (F); c) a fish-tail or split (S); and d) anything different-unusual (U). Examples of each of these elements in each of the four chosen positions on the chip are shown below.



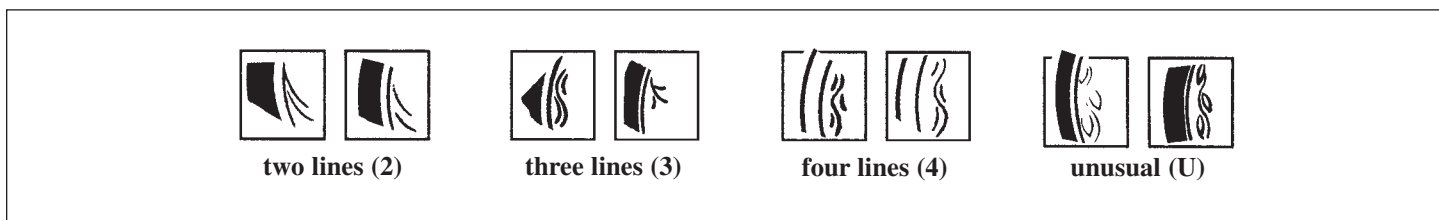
Examples in position #1 (top of the "5")



Examples in position #2 (butt of the "5")

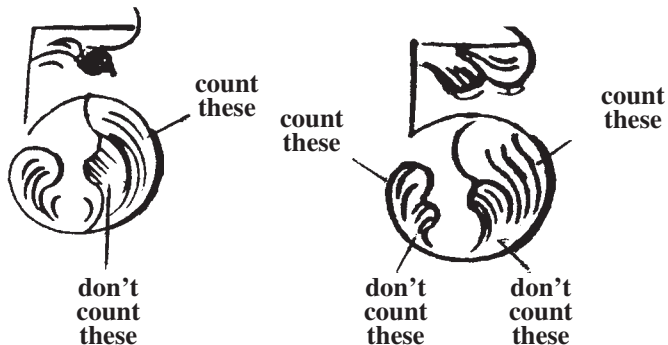


Examples in position #3 (tip of the "5")



Examples in position #4 (in border)

When counting the number of lines in spots 2 and 3, count only in the top sections of the area. The enlarged examples shown below will clarify what we mean.



Now let's put it all together and show some examples of chips coded with the "4-spot" identification system. The chips have been enlarged 29% to make it easier to see. The chip identification code is on the first line. The first four numerals or letters on the second line give the 4-spot identification. The value of the chip is given by "v" and a second letter. The value code will be given on the next page.



10-CV
F/U/4/2 / v:n

IN-YZ
S/3/2/4 / v:l



10-CN
10/3/S/2 / v:m

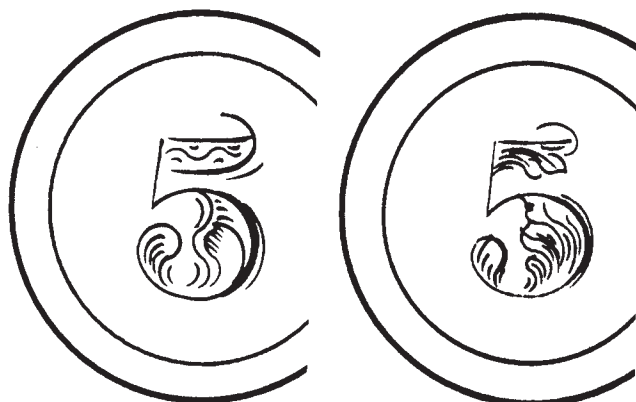
10-AV
3/2/S/2 / v:l



IP-GF
1/2/S/2 / v:n

IP-BH
3/3/3/3 / v:m

Several chips do not have a floral border, therefore the fourth spot is omitted from identification. Samples are shown below.



IN-FU
5/U/3 / v:l

IN-HQ
S/3/3 / v:l



IO-VP
S/3/3 / v:m

IO-XH
4/2/3 / v:m

The 4-spot identification system was designed to differentiate only those numeral 5 and 25 ivories that fit into the most standard ivory numeral design. It is not used on special border design chips and uniquely designed chips like those shown below. These chips are not common and consequently they are easy to identify.



IO-ON
v:m



IO-PL
v:n



IO-NX
v:m



IO-PT
v:p



IP-NL
v:o



IP-PL
v:o

4-spot ID is not used on these types of ivories

The system may seem a bit complicated, but, it isn't, once you understand it. Trying to sequence, compare or identify certain chips without this system is what is difficult.

The Antique Chips value rating code was designed for the first printing of *Antique Gambling Chips* book in 1983. The code has not been changed since that date. Many chips have increased in value. The range in the increase will vary from chip to chip, but probably will range from no increase to a value that is double the value given in the book. In general, these ratings have increased about 50%. As is the case with casino chips, the value of a chip depends on whether you are the buyer or the seller.

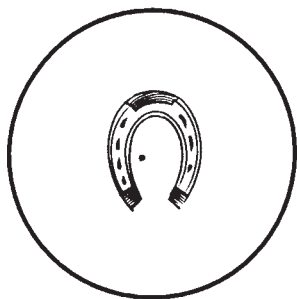
A big problem that collectors have with sets of chips is one where the seller wants to multiply the number of chips in a set times the stated value of a single chip. These people don't realize that to sell 200 chips out of a set to individual collectors is next to impossible. Even if there is that much demand, the time and effort to advertise, negotiate, package, and ship 200 sales is enormous. If an owner of a set of chips sees an individual value, he often expects a highly inflated price for the set. On the other hand, posted chip values are very helpful at times to collectors. Establishing and publishing chip values is certainly a "catch-22".

**Antique Chips
Value Rating Code***

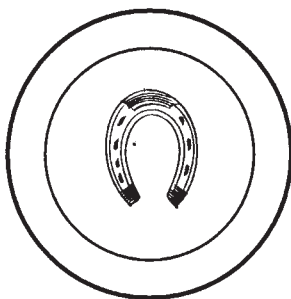
- a: 50¢ b: \$1 c: \$2-3 d: \$4-5 e: \$6-7
- f: \$8-9 g: \$10-14 h: \$15-19 i: \$20-29
- j: \$30-39 k: \$40-49 l: \$50-69 m: \$70-89
- n: \$90-109 o: \$110-149 p: \$150-199
- q: \$200-299 r: \$300-399 s: \$400-499
- t: \$500-699 u: \$700-999 v: \$1000-1999
- w: \$2000-2999 x: \$3000-3999
- y: \$4000-4999 z: \$5000 and up

* It is important to remember that the unit value of a single chip find will have a much higher value than the unit value of that chip in a set.

New Ivory Codes



ID-GE
Horseshoe / v:k



ID-GF
Horseshoe / v:k



IN-GH
F/F/3 / v:l



IN-WH
3/U/3/4 / v:l



ID-PN
Star / v:p



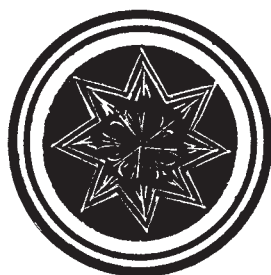
ID-PLa
Star / v:p



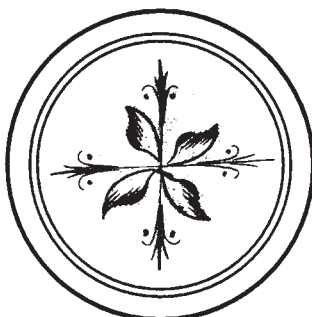
IO-HA
v:n



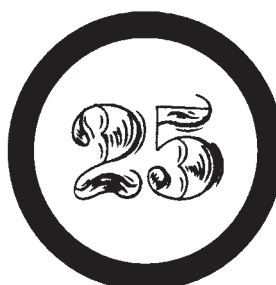
IO-HC
v:n



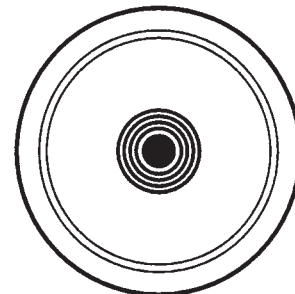
ID-QE
v:n



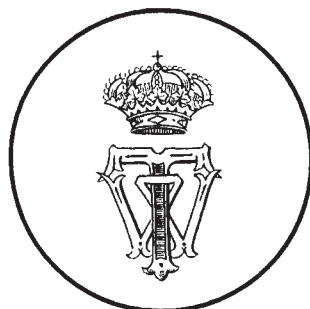
ID-ZC
Four Leaves / v:k



IO-RR
v:m



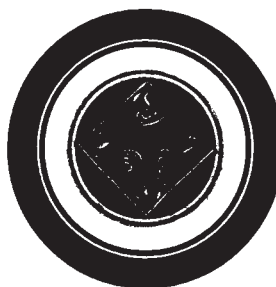
IY-GR
7B 7W (38/32) / v:l



IM-IN
TW / v:o



IN-EU
3/F4 / v:l



IO-HB
v:o

Your new find should appear here. Send us a photocopy.

New Ivory Codes - *continued*



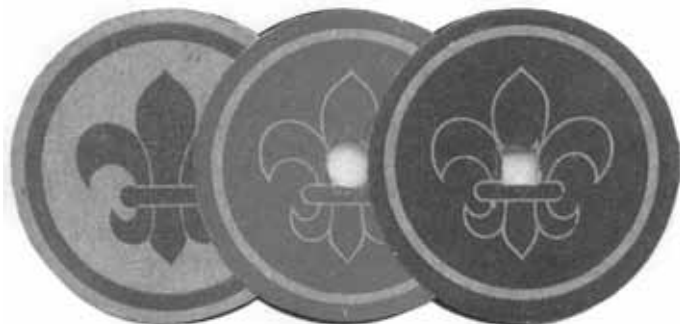
IZ-QZ
San Francisco



IZ-QZ
Reverse

The San Francisco \$50 ivory chip shown above is not engraved in a traditional design. The chip is walrus tusk, not elephant ivory. It is not scrimshawed like most of the fake chips. We are placing it in the “recent creation” category as a curious and interesting find. There are currently six pieces known to exist.

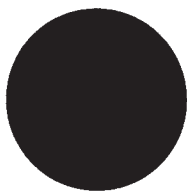
Other New Codes



PD-HB Fleur-de-Lis
Printed Paper / v:d

PD-HB Fleur-de-Lis
Variation Examples

The paper poker chips shown above submitted by Ralph Strandwold and Robert Eisenstadt, are rather unusual in that they are blank on the reverse side. The chips from left to right are green on beige, red on beige and royal blue on beige. The circular hole in the red chip and the square hole in the blue chip may have been provided by the manufacturer.



BY-BX Buss Fuses
engraved / v:f

A series of small clay advertising chips from Buss Fuses has been found. The 24 cm diameter chips contain slogans such as: “A safe bet”, “Stand pat on”, “Always good”, “Buss Fusses & Lights”, “Buss Fuses” and “Sure winners”. The chips have been found in red, white and blue colors. The embossed designs are not sufficiently clear to display here. We are giving all of these chips the code, BY-BX. Another Standwold find.

Carl Musgrove, a North Carolina collector found an interesting variation of the poker transportation chip, PT-EH (sailing ship). The chip is molded in transparent colors. It appears that the same mold was used on these chips as was used on the clay chips. It is probably post-1940, so we are not giving it a code.



PT-EH Sailing Ship
Embossed / v:c

A collector asked for a new code on a possible new find in an April e-bay auction. This chip is shown below. The chip design could be a design or it could be a fancy monogram for the letters M and W. We interpret it to be a monogram chip and have not given it a code.



Monogram or design?

Chip codes are from Antique Gambling Chips. Please send clear photocopies of your new finds to either Dale Seymour, 11170 Mora Dr, Los Altos, CA 94024 or Ken Craig, 3927-H Waring Rd., Oceanside, CA 92056. ♦