

by Steve Piccolo

KILLER CHIPS

From the Las Vegas Strip

In this era of “specialization”, I’ve tried to put together what I think is a “Top Ten” list of must have chips from the Las Vegas Strip which happens to be one of my specialty areas to collect from. What I tried to do here was include chips that collectors have a chance to obtain for their collections if they are so inclined to follow my specialty area of the “Strip”. There are quite a few that would be on the list if they were readily available for purchase but while they may be known, they are practically impossible to obtain and only become available when a long time collector feels it’s time to sell which is once or twice every few years.

The list was compiled not by price (although most on the list are expensive) but by what I felt were historic and, most important, were simply GREAT looking chips! Some may agree, some will disagree but here’s the list anyway. See how many YOU can check off!

1 Flamingo “Bugsy Siegel” First Issue chips

Far and away the #1 Strip Chip to have in your collection! The aura of the Mob and “Benny” make this chip a must have. It’s not cheap, even in drilled condition expect to pay over \$1000 for one of these puppies but worth every cent!



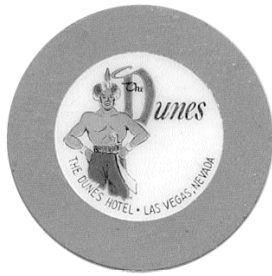
2 Desert Inn “Wilbur Clark” Portrait chips

Another “classic” due to the popularity of the “owner” Wilbur Clark. You can get one of these chips with Wilbur on it from Havana, Cuba for under \$100 but expect to pay \$500+ for a Vegas example.



3 Dunes “Standing Sultan” chips

Great inlay of the Dunes sultan. Forget about the first two issue \$5’s and any of the \$25’s as they are impossible to get and even if you could expect to pay thousands for any example. You can however get the third issue \$5 for well under \$1000 and the \$1 for less than \$200. If all else fails, a hoard of roulettes with the same great logo were recently discovered and can be had for around \$50!



4 Sands "H.N.O." series chips

Out of all the Sands chips, why do I pick this one? Simple, Howard Hughes is credited with taking Las Vegas out of the "Mob Era" and starting the Corporate Era in casino ownership. While there are many Hughes ownership chips documented, this series of chips is the only one to have a Hughes 'stamp' on them as H.N.O. stands for Hughes Nevada Operations.

5 El Rancho Vegas

No Strip collection can be without at least one chip from the casino credited with being the first strip 'resort'. Opened in 1941 and burned to the ground in 1960, many of the chips from most series are readily available to add to your collection at a reasonable price. There is also some mystery attached to the ERV story...how the fire started and why the resort was never re-built are two of the most compelling.



6 Caesars Palace "Caesar on Couch" chips

The first real 'class' joint and perennial "high-roller" establishment built on the Strip. A classic logo just adds to the beauty of these chips.



7 Aladdin "Milton Prell" chips

Another popular person in the history of Las Vegas to have his name on chips ala Wilbur Clark. Another great inlay!



8 Flamingo "Pre-Hilton" chips

These chips, while very desirable, had to be separated from the Bugsy chips as they are a few notches below that particular series of chips from the most famous name on the Strip! Just about any one of these chips command a price of at least \$100.

9 New Frontier "Building" chips

Second on the strip, just behind the ERV opened as the Last Frontier, chips from this casino usually get "no respect" as Rodney Dangerfield would say. These name change chips issued in the late 50's have one of the best hotel picture inlays ever produced! Best part is you can still

add them to your collection at a reasonable price!



10 Landmark "Tower" chips

While technically NOT on the Strip, many collectors add this casino as well as the International (LV Hilton) to any Strip collection. Highly sought after chips probably because of the Hughes connection and the great inlay on the chip! Not impossible to obtain but expect to pay at least \$400 and that's for the \$1 chip!!





As I said earlier, there are many other chips and chip series that could have been on the list. Any "first issue" chip from any of the strip casinos would qualify as must have but many are unavailable at any price.

I also failed to include any early chips that were issued under the ownership of Kirk Kirkorian who, in my opinion, had as least as much if not MORE of an influence on the shape and look of the Strip as any other individual is given credit for having done. Bugsy had the Flamingo, Hughes only bought existing casinos and finished building only one and NONE of these individuals are still an influence as Kirkorian's MGM-Mirage still is. He built the International, original MGM and present MGM hotels and owned at one time or another just about every other major strip hotel. In my book he's surely and individual worthy of induction to the Legends Hall of Fame.

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