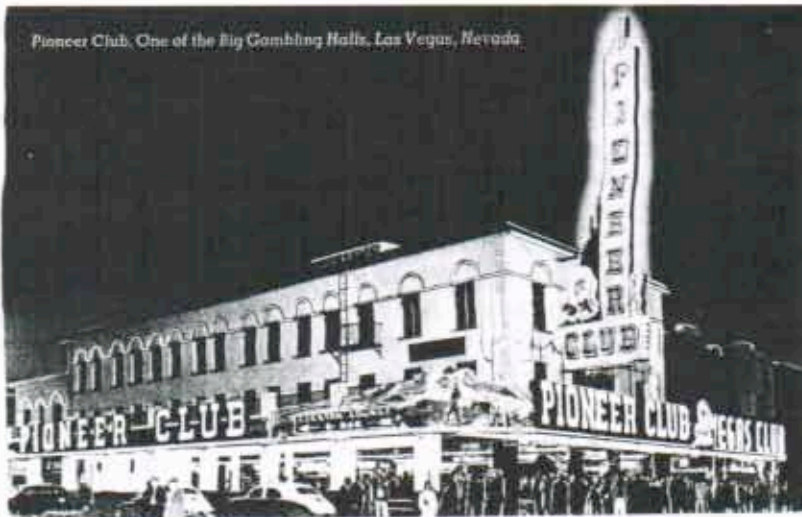


The Pioneer Club

25 E. Fremont Street
Las Vegas, Nevada



Pioneer Club. One of the Big Gambling Halls, Las Vegas, Nevada.

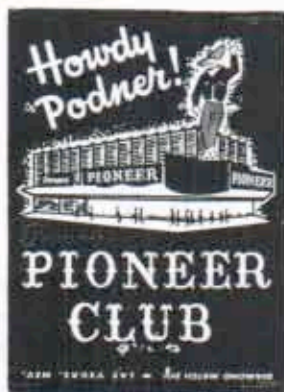
One of the landmarks of Glitter Gulch has been the large neon sign of Vegas Vic standing over the corner of the Pioneer Club. Since 1951 the sign has symbolized the heart of Las Vegas and is probably one of the most recognized pieces of neon in the world.

The sign was the brainchild of Luther B. (Tutor) Scherer, one of the original owners of the Pioneer. The building that housed the Pioneer was Beckley's clothing store. In 1942 the building was leased and two owners opened a new club - the Pioneer. Tiny Biggs was the floor manager, Jimmy Wadsworth managed the cocktail lounge and the owners Charles "Chuck" Addison and Luther B "Tutor" Scherer supervised the entire operation.



As the years went by the ownership included a variety of different people, but the constant factor was "Tutor" Scherer. Luther B. Scherer had gained his nickname "Tutor" by virtue of the fact that he had a comprehensive knowledge of cheating techniques for slots and table games. Scherer would "tutor" his dealers, floor managers and pit bosses in the fine arts of cheating so that they could apprehend any crossroaders and cheats that might try their "manipulated" luck at his games.

Over the years from 1947 to 1956 besides Scherer, the ownership included William Curland, Milton B. Page, Edward Crawford, Clifford A. Jones. In 1956 the club became the New Pioneer Club under the ownership of Milton Prell, A.F. Winter, Joe Hall and of course L.B. "Tutor" Scherer. In July of 1958 New Pioneer Club, Inc. took over operations with the ownership of Thomas Callahan, Harvey S. Morse, Harry Goldman, Abe Nabat, Oscar Agron and Sam Diamond.



In 1967 the club again changed names and ownership. Mrs. Margaret Elardi purchased the property, converted it to a slots only casino and called it the Famous Pioneer Club. Operations as a non-restricted slots only casino ended in 1983 when the club was purchased by a group of investors who also owned the Gold Strike Inn near Boulder City. By purchasing the adjoining Club Bingo the Richardson group was able to enlarge the property and put live gaming back into the club. The name was changed to the Pioneer Club Casino and another era of the club's history began. By 1995 the landscape of Glitter Gulch had changed. The Golden Nugget was expanding and dominated the downtown area. Movements were afoot to modernize the downtown and change its image.

In July of 1995 the Pioneer Club Casino closed its doors - purchased by Steve Wynn and his Golden Nugget. Vegas Vic still dominates the front of the club and his neon still blazes, but the "action" is gone from the Pioneer.

Over the years I never considered the Pioneer as a symbol of Las Vegas in the same way that the Golden Nugget was. Glitter Gulch always seemed to be the glowing sign on the corner of the Nugget. But when I thought of Las Vegas, I always thought of Vegas Vic standing tall and pointing to - yes - the Pioneer. I guess Luther B. "Tutor" Scherer had created an image that went far beyond his small club - it became the symbol of America's gambling mecca.



Artwork approved for a new gaming check in 1959
Courtesy of Dale Seymour

Author's Note: I would like to thank Harvey Fuller, America's foremost Nevada gaming historian for preserving the part of Nevada history that so many would have neglected. Dale Seymour - Thank you for your continuing efforts to preserve the artifacts of gaming.