

SAN FRANCISCO CARD COMPANY

by Sheldon Smith

Right off the bat let me say that I am not nearly as good a researcher as some, based upon the stories I have seen on this BB. I have had help in this endeavor. I am trying though and I thought I'd share the results so far of the SF CARD CO.

This starts with my good friend Al Bernstein showing me several boxes of chips with labels at the end saying SF CARD CO., 100 Fillmore St. with a Market phone exchange obviously placing this box fairly far back. The chips contained within the box had denominations and the same Chinese Pictograph symbol on all of them. I went so far as to purchase a Chinese-English Dictionary to try and find out what the symbol meant. Chris (wife) consulted with one of the engineers of Asian extraction who consults for the Department of Labor and I continued to look for the meaning of the symbol.

The incomplete consensus was that the Pictograph could be interpreted as "WUN" or "WEN" which might have several meanings, one of which could be: money or denomination

After much looking on the Internet and elsewhere I contacted several agencies in San Francisco regarding the company and the address and was rebuffed repeatedly despite my comment that the company was not in business and couldn't they just tell me....

I was able to contact the San Francisco Public Library and after

several polite back and forth emails I was directed to a person who ran a small research company called *My Librarian*. I contacted Ms. Donna Arrowood and after lengthy conversations and scans of the end of the box and the chip itself Donna went to work.

We found the SF CARD CO. in the 1953 SF business directory with a listing that included items such as:

- Club room equipment
- Perfect hand true dice
- Poker checks
- Layouts
- Duce boxes
- Plastic cards
- New card readers
- Chinese dominos

The SF CARD CO. continued to be listed in the SF business directory until 1974.

On June 13, 1973 Helen Artz Costello was pistol whipped during a purported robbery and died the following day. Her husband Mr. Manuel Costello sold off the assets to another company that we have yet to locate. Ms. Artz married Mr. Costello but we have no known offspring of Ms. Artz without Mr. Costello. We have subsequently discovered that Mr. Costello may have been murdered by his 3rd wife, was Helen his 1st or 2nd (don't know).

One of Mr. Costello's surviving children, Mrs. Helen Artz Costello's stepson, whose name we shall not produce here has told me some fascinating stuff.

Mrs. Artz Costello was asked on a number of occasions, according to her husband, as told to his son to produce counterfeit chips.

Mrs. Artz Costello was investigated by the FBI because of the possibility of producing counterfeit chips.

Was Mrs. Artz Costello rubbed out by those whose "names must not be mentioned" because she refused to make counterfeit chips or because she was making them and not sharing the pie with those whose "names must not be mentioned"? We will probably never know.

Mr. Costello's son remembers distinctly the day that his father sold the business to another company, purportedly nearby to the SF CARD CO. He did have, until not too long ago, a quantity of the chips and other stuff that his father gave him as the company was sold. Two of the son's siblings have died in recent times and the string to locate these records seems perilously thin. Thanks to Robert Eisenstadt's wonderful web site we know that these chips were made by Burt Co., and that this chip design is now owned by Atlantic Standard Molding Inc. (pokerchips.com.)

The chips were sent to S F CARD CO to be hot stamped according to orders received from various sources. We are continuing to research the S F CARD CO. in the hopes that their records are not lost. The scan shows the Asian pictograph chip in the middle surrounded by the blanks that Mr. Costello's son was kind enough to

send me. (I paid for them). He sent me all he had, although he admitted there used to be a lot more. They are gorgeous, the interiors of the DIAMONDS and the SQUARES are shiny just like the Christy & Jones / Hat & Canes.

I would like to hear from anybody who has corrections to what I have written and perhaps can direct me to other sources. I have emailed pokerchips.com in the hopes that they might have information about what they sent the S F CARD CO and perhaps for whom the shipments were intended.

Humbly submitted for your viewing pleasure, all bouquets and brickbats are welcome!

Sheldon Smith

