Collecting the Samples, Boxes and Original Catalogs of the Manufacturers & Distributors of "Clay" or Composition Gaming Checks and Chips (and the information they yield)

by Howard W. Herz

In the more than 46 years that I have collected gaming checks, few collections have been as difficult to complete and yet have provided as much information about the history of gaming checks as the challenge of finding manufacturer's catalogs, boxes and chip samples. With around 100 known clay mold designs, it would seem that collecting one of each would be a snap. After starting in 1965 and giving considerable time, money and effort to the collection, I am still looking for samples and still learning about what exists.

The composition or "clay" gaming chips that we now know came into use before the turn of the 20th century. A number of companies manufactured and distributed poker chips to the general public and offered a variety of generic designs. Custom chips were fairly rare and were mostly produced for the wealthy. The United States Playing Card Company (USPC) offered some of the first customized clay chips around 1911. The company records include a number of sample books that start with custom orders of a plain mold inlaid chip. USPC records have a Hunt & Co. "chain mold" sample and a note "September 1927" in the record books. This would indicate that Hunt & Co. possibly produced the first chip that had a "mold" design embossed into the chip.

In September of 1928 USPC records have 9 color samples of a Hub" mold that was owned by Mason & Co. of Chicago, Illinois. On February 26, 1929, USPC made raised circle mold chip for A. Ball & Bro. of Chicago. A color set of 9 colors in the three ball mold was made in May of 1929 for Joe Trebal of Chicago. On November 27, 1929 a color set of 9 colors in a large crown mold was produced for T.R. King & Co. of Kansas City, Mo. The next mold in the USPC records was the diamond mold for Jack Todd with 9 color samples. On October 16, 1934 the first small Grecian key mold samples were made for B.C. Wills of Detroit. On September 28, 1938 USPC records show a large crown molded chip made for T.R. King in Los Angeles, CA.

Manufacturers vs. Distributors

Starting the in the 1920's, a number of gaming equipment suppliers began to offer custom gaming chips. Rather than invest in the production facilities for chip manufacturing, these suppliers developed a relationship with the United States Playing Card Company in which they could order custom chips that were made on a "registered" mold design that only they had the right to sell. As the number of suppliers increased, new and different mold designs were introduced. In several instances, when a supplier went out of business, his mold would become an "open" mold that was available to suppliers that did not want to invest in the considerable cost of a "registered" design.

The result of this agreement was that different suppliers could offer their "registered molds" to their customers and guarantee that they would be protected against outsiders producing their chips. Although the vast majority of the chips offered were produced in the same manufacturing facility (USPC and Burt Co.), this arrangement allowed each supplier to tout his chips as the best. The manufacturers tended to only sell to the distributors who had the rights to the mold and would not sell directly to any of the distributor's customers. This two tiered system gave the manufacturers a certain amount of protection from problems with customers who might seek to subvert their competition with "counterfeit chips" and provided the distributors with the necessary security of production.

The Primary Manufacturers

During most of the 20th century, only a hand full of companies actually manufactured custom gaming chips for casino operations. The first and oldest was United States Playing Card Company of Cincinnati, Ohio. The Burt Company of Portland, Maine also produced chips in the early part of the century, but primarily produced generic chips. Around the mid-1940's (probably 1946) the entire chip operation of the USPC was purchased by the Burt Co. who then became the largest producer of custom casino chips in the United States.

Hunt & Co. of Chicago, Illinois probably began molding chips in the 1920's under the ownership of E. M. Stockton who started the company in the late 1890's. Using hand plate molds and a steam press, Hunt & Co. produced the "Chain Mold" chips in several variations.

T.R. King & Co. began manufacturing casino chips in Los Angeles, CA after moving from Kansas City in 1931. T.R. King acted as a distributor for their chips.

The Paul-son Company of Las Vegas, Nevada was established in 1966 and began their own manufacture of custom casino chips in the 1970's after initially using the Burt Company.

"Clay" or "Composition" Molds of the Manufacturers and Distributors



A.B.P. (Casino Supplies) Ltd.

4-5 Academy Buildings
Fanshaw Street - London N.1
England
Distributor

Era: 1960's - 1980's

Mold: Scroll



Although this mold was developed for use in American style gaming checks, it is was primarily sold in Europe, Africa, Asia and not in the United States. This mold illustrated as a manufacturers sample from A.B.P.'s Spanish distributor.

Bowman Equipment

16 W. Illinois Chicago 10, Illinois Phone superior 8148 Distributor

Era: 1930's - 1940's

Mold: C Swirl



BOWMAN'S EXCEL SPEED CHECKS











Non duplicate C swirl pattern Bowman Excel Speed Checks—our exclusive design—Registered Monogram* Checks sold with monograms only. Your special design or initials are registered, and are not issued to anyone other than original purchaser, thoroughly protecting you against duplication.

Available in the following colors: red, blue, black, green, yellow, chocolate, white, orchid, pink, orange, light blue and gray—\$110.00 per M.

BOWMAN EQUIPMENT

16 W. ILLINOIS, CHICAGO 10, ILL.

PHONE SUPERIOR 8148

The Bud Jones Co.

2122 Industiral Road Las Vegas, Nevada 89104 Phone: 702-870-2782 (1965-)







Bud Jones developed the dice and cards mold almost immediately after the demise of Christy & Jones in late 1964. The mold was used for hot stamp issues along with the Nevada mold, that became the more common hot stamp mold of the Company. The dice and cards motif became one of the first molded metal center designs that was introduced by Bud Jones.

Bud Jones Nevada Dice Company

2122 Industiral Road Las Vegas, Nevada 89104 Phone: 702-870-2782

3668 So. Highland Las Vegas, Nevada 89104 (1965-1968)

3672 S. Highland Las Vegas, Nevada 89104 (address in 1968)





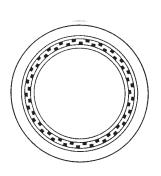


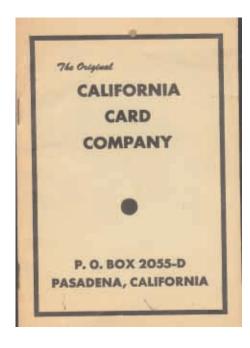


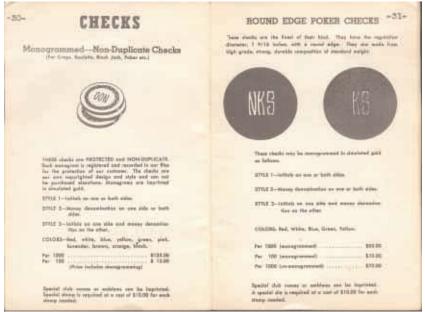
California Card Company

P.O. Box 2055-D Pasadena, California ZigZag Mold

Originally offered by the Noll Company of Pasadena, California Card Co. took over the ZigZag mold in the 1960's.

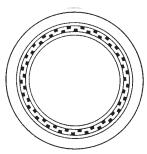






California Game Supply Company

837 E. Orange Grove Avenue Pasadena, California ZigZag Mold



CHIPCO International

P.O. Box 1495 Windham, Maine 04062 Unicorn Mold









AN INEXPENSIVE QUALITY GAMING CHIP



Yellow

Rayal Blue

White

CHIPCO Unicorn ¹⁰¹ Series chips offer a low cost solution for many needs. As stock items, they are available for immediate delivery. The non-slip, linen textured surface makes these chips popular and perfect for your various promotions, "Casino Nights" and "Charity Gaming" events.

Unicorn TH chips weigh 8 grams, are virtually unbreakable and are washable.

Unicorn™ embossed chips are stocked in 13 colors. These colorful chips may be ordered plain or hotstamped with your unique design or logo.

A variety of standard hot-stamp dies are available. Contact your sales representative for details.

ORDER YOUR Unicorns TODAY AND CAPTURE THE BENEFITS

QUALITY . BEAUTY . PROFITS



999 Roosevelt Trail • P.O. Box 1495 • Windham, Maine U.S.A. 04062 • Tel. (207)892-7123 Fax (207)892-7073

Christy & Jones Co. 1709 E. 31st. Street Kansas City, Missouri Phone: WAbash-4 7110 Hat & Cane Mold Diamond Mold (1962-)

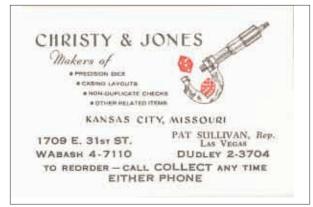


Originally Christy & Garrett, the company was renamed when William Chiristy & Bernard (Bud) Jones each purchased a 50% interest. They operated out of Kansas City, Missouri with a representative in Las Vegas. In the early 1960's Christy & Jones purchased the Jack Todd company from Todd's widow and thus gained the use of the Todd diamond mold along with their Hat & Cane mold. Bowing to pressure from national investigations into gambling by the McCellan committee of the U.S. Senate, both Christy and Jones deceided that it was better to move to Las Vegas than starve in Kansas City. They moved the company to Las Vegas in October of 1963.

Christy & Jones Co. 3123 Highland Ave. So. Las Vegas, Nevada Phone: 735-8969 Hat & Cane Mold - Hat Design Diamond Mold (1963-)



All of the Christy & Jones produciton was made for them by the Burt Company in Portland, Maine.



Pat Sullivan, their Las Vegas manager, originally had no stake in the company, but after lobbying for some ownership, Bill Christy and Bud Jones agreed to each give Sullivan, their manager a small stake in the company. Once the papers for the stock transfer were signed, Christy and Sullivan callled a stock holders meeting and voted Bud Jones out of the Comapny at the end of 1964. Shocked and angered by the move, Bud Jones was forced to rely on a few friends (pit bosses) who gave him some dice orders. Starting the Bud Jones company in his garage, Bud eventually expanded into a full line gaming supplier.

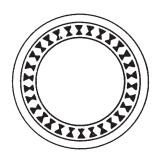
Bill Christy and Pat Sullivan played down the removal of Jones from the company. Sullivan had lobbied both Jones and Christy to make "special" dice and with Jones out of the picture, they

could proceed. In October of 1965, the ax fell on Christy and Sullivan when federal agents raided Bill Christy's home and found "crooked dice" that the company had shipped to Mississippi. With the original company gone, Pat Sullivan developed his own company under his name.



Cliff's Accurate Products 308 West Fourth St. Cincinnati, Ohio 45202 Hourglass Mold



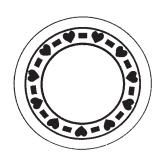


The sucessor to Rigdon & Co. located at the same address in Cincinnati

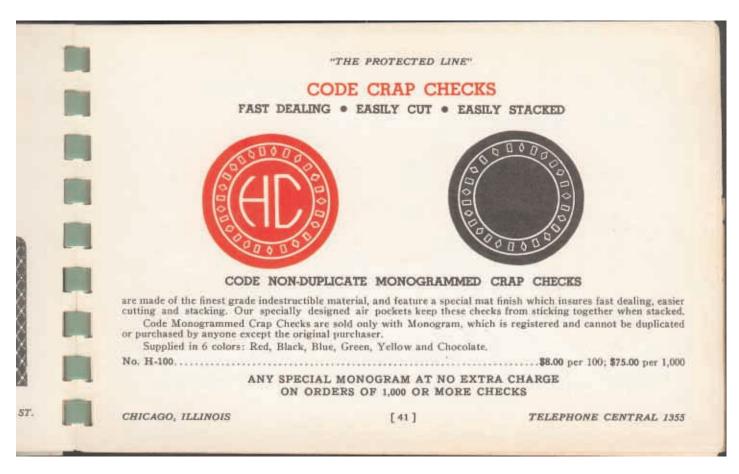
Code & Co. 234 S. Franklin Street Chicago, Illinois

Hearts and Rectangles Mold - Code's Super Speed Checks - Diamond Rectangle Mold - Code Crap Checks





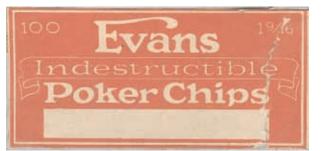


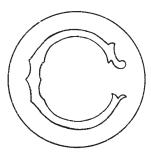


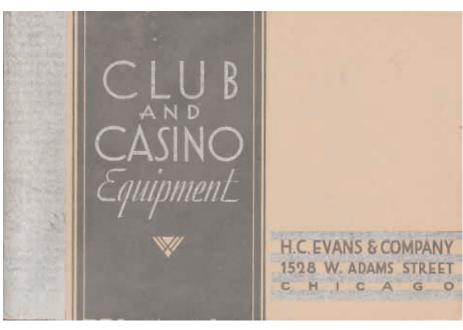
Code & Co. was an early supplier of gaming equipment. Their Diamond Rectangle mold became an open mold early on and was used by a large number of other companies over the years. Hunt & Co., Prioneer Club Supply, were just a few that used the original Code & Co. mold. Although the Heart Rectangle mold is not show in the catalog, a number of samples exist with the "Code's Super Speed Check" hot stamp.



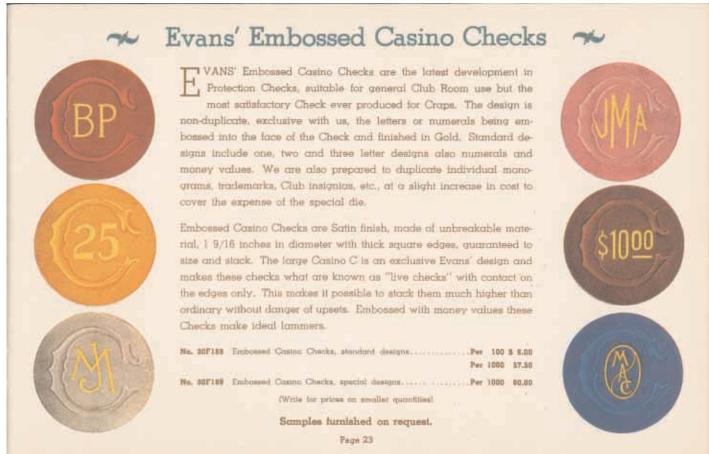
H. C. Evans & Commpany 1528 W. Adams Street Chicago, Illinois C Mold - Embossed Casino Checks







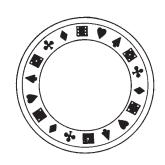


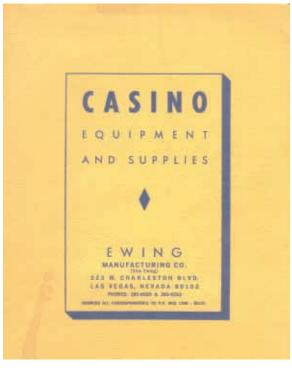


Ewing Manufacturing Co.

223 W. Charleston Blvd. Las Vegas, Nevada 89102 Dice & Pips Mold -Ewing's Superior Checks















George & Company 9 East Swain Street Buffalo, New York Floral Mold









CLUB ROOM EQUIPMENT - CATALOG BE



NON-DUPLICATE CLUB CHECKS

STYLE A - Mas. 2 lett



Our Exclusive FLORAL DESIGN

Our non-duplicating, club checks are ideally suited for dealing craps, roulette, black jack, poler, or any game where chips are used. Just compare these outstanding leaune of our club checks with

STYLE 8 - May, 5 letters



Size - Finished a hill 1-9/16" wide and a full 1/8" thick, with a square stips for easier handling. Weight - They are made of a feesy corpound which restens then the right weight for fast and accurate dealing. The acts weight permits easy piscensers in about which do not collapse seafly when his by dice.

Uniform Trickhees - These shears are uniform in

stre and interiess as that high stacks may be dot off evenly without errors. Lines Plaish - The lines finish which is embossed on the surface of the chip affects greater protection, requires no breaking in, and prevents stiding and skidding.

skidding.

Low Genter - The low panier greates a suction, seeps the wear to the outside edges, thereby stiminating gumminess and preventing a sucking stack which occurs when were takes place on the edges of small feet checks. The low center doubles the useable life of your checks.

Non-Duplicating Pestures - The Soral design embossed around the minogrammed senter belongs socializely to Salongs & Co. Your managam will nave be supplied to enjoye but yourself. It is registered under your name and appature, and any subsequent orders for your monogram must beet your signature.



Hunt & Co. 88 No. Wells Street Chicago, Illinois Softklick - Chain Mold (with outside ring) Softklick - Chain Mold (without outer ring) Victory Chain Mold Woodlawn Chain Mold Stackrite Mold New Era Mold

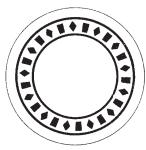






Hunt & Co.1736 So. Michigan Ave. Chicago, 16 Illinois *Diamond Square Mold*

Pull Tab License #PS4
2422 So. Michigan Ave.
Chicago, Illinois 60616-2323
U.S.A. TOLL FREE # 1-800-336-TABS







T.R. King & Company 617 Grand Avenue Kansas City, Missouri *Large Crown Mold*







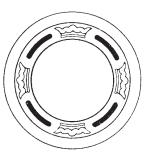
T.R. King's large Crown mold first appears in the records of United States Playing Card on November 27, 1929

T.R. King & Company 218 So. Broadway Los Angeles, California (1931-1935)

Large Crown Mold

123 East Sixth Street Los Angeles, California





-TELEPHONE TUcker 2188 LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA-

KING'S MERCURY SPEED CHIPS

50% MORE WEIGHT ADDED

This new HEAVY SPEED chip was developed especially for crap play where the action is fast. This extra weight and new etched

finish holds a stack firmly when shoved or when being cut to.

We are using our registered Crown Design and guarantee this chip to be non-duplicate. There are never two racks made alike or even similar. You have complete protection with this chip.

New Colors: We are making five colors in this new Heavy Chip which are NEW and DIFFERENT from any color made before. For description we call them Grey, Orange, Green, Crimson and Blue, We suggest the Grey for dollar value, the Orange for five dollar value, the Green for twenty-five dollar value, the Crimson for values over twenty-five dollars and the Blue for values under a dollar.

By suggesting the use of colors for values shown above and reserving this New Mercury Speed Chip for Chartered Clubs, Legal Casinos and permanent organizations, we eliminate the hazard of your club using one color for a twenty-five dollar value and another club using the same color for a dollar value. We expect cooperation in the use of colors.

THICK SQUARE EDGE — 50%ADDED WEIGHT — REGISTERED — NEW COLORS — NON-DUPLICATE — SPEED

Monogram, name or special designs are yours exclusively. Price includes monograming on both sides of chip using our regular managram designs or include managram one side and price on reverse side. There is a die charge of five dollars on special designs such as "S, S, Rex" and "Hanks" as shown above.

No 607 King's Mercury Speed Chip, monogramed both sides, per 100 \$8.00, per 1000 \$75.00 Mercury Speed Chips sold only by T. R. King & Co. and is the heaviest and fastest dealing chip made.

T.R. King & Co. moven to Las Angeles in 1931 under the ownership of M.C. Anderson who had purchased the company from Mr. King in 1926. Originally located on Broadway, the first know catalog from California shows an address on East Sixth street.



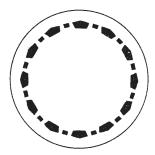






T.R. King & Company 1245 So. Hope Street Los Angeles, California





1035 So. Olive Street Los Angeles, California





400 W. Pico Blvd. Los Angeles, California









T.R. King & Company

Las Vegas, Nevada (The July 1967 Las Vegas phone book lists the company at their 1035 So Olive address in Los Angeles)





Samples from King's brief Nevada operations.

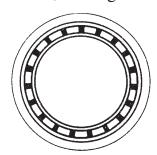




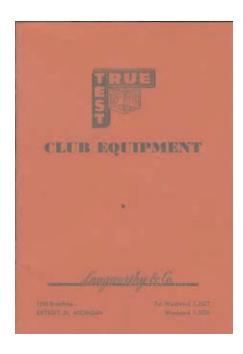




Langworthy & Co. 1346 Broadway Detroit 26, Michigan









(Western Club Supply) Arizona

We have a few samples of the Langworthy rectangle mold that have Western Club Supply hot stamped on the sample chips. One notes indicate that this was a short lived business in Phoewnix, Arizona conducted by Felix Devere. The note indicates that it was closed for selling "crooked gaming equipment".



Mason & Co.

192 N, Clark St. Chicago, Illinois

390 Frelinghuysen Ave. Newark, New Jersey

1118 McGee St. Kansas City, Missouri

133 E. Grand River Detroit, Michigan

711 8th Avenue New York, New York

120 Eighth Street San Francisco, California

