

ELMWOOD PLACE



A recent find of the pictured memorabilia caused me to review what I know about the source of the chips and cards and of Elmwood Place, Ohio in general.

As background, my wife grew up in Carthage, the next town north of Elmwood Place and her father was the manager of the Elmwood Eagles and booked horses there from the early 1950s through the early 1980s. I visited and gambled in several of the Elmwood Place joints including the Turf Club, the Belmont Club and the Linden Bar beginning in the late 1950s.

Much of my early learning came from Gene Trimble's excellent five part articles written about the Arrowhead Club and published in Gambling Times magazine in 1999. In his articles about the Arrowhead Club, located in another Cincinnati suburb, Branch Hill, Ohio, he chronicled the spread of gambling by the Nason family and the Cleveland Syndicate from the early 1930 Arrowhead Inn to the Walk-A-Show, the Blade Café and the 5911 Club, all in Elmwood Place.

I interviewed Dick Ellison, current mayor of Elmwood Place and a lifelong resident who is now in his mid-70s, several old friends who “were in the game” in the late 1950s-early 1960s and read all articles from the Cincinnati newspapers that mentioned gambling. Of course, most of the people who had first hand information about the gambling days are now gone since the major gambling period in Elmwood Place was during the period of 1933-1960. As is the case in most of our studies, the real story may be lost to the ravages of time.

In the early 1950s, there were at least 15 bars and 3 service clubs in Elmwood Place ranging from Syndicate joints like the Walk-A-Show, Blade Café and the 5911 Club, to the large independent joints like the Belmont Club, Turf Club, Valley Cigar Store and the Linden bar, and including small neighborhood joints like Stein’s, the Elmwood tavern and several pool rooms and chili parlors, most with slots and a race book. Some also had cards and dice.

VALLEY CIGAR STORE

In the picture above, the betting slips, the matches and the Valley Cigar chip obviously came from Ike Hyams’ Valley Cigar Store located at 6117 Vine Street in Elmwood Place.

LINDEN BAR

The Linden Bar chips are thought to be from the club of the same name in Elmwood Place located at 5912 Vine Street, but to my knowledge the chips have not been authenticated. The Linden Bar was a large building with a back room called the Hideaway and managed by Sam Coleman. I remember horse boards there and sometimes bet at the Linden Bar, but don’t remember first hand, gambling tables, chips.

EVA...ELMWOOD VETERANS ASSOCIATION

The EVA chip and the Elmwood Veterans Association membership card also appear to be from Elmwood Place and, based on my conversations with the mayor and others, may have been one of Ike’s schemes to issue cards for entrance to his gambling locations, thus keeping out people he did not know.

On the other hand, one of my old friends remembers the EVA but thinks it was associated with Charlie Dwyer, a major Elmwood player who worked for the Nason/Cleveland Syndicate operation. Charlie ran the 5911 Club located behind a second hand furniture store at 5911 Vine Street. Charlie was also one of the original managers of Ezzard Charles along with Max Elkus, George Rhein and probably Ike Hyams, although Ike couldn’t be listed because of his criminal record.

While the EVA could be part of the 5911 Club, I remember the joint as a race book and cash operation, not a formal gambling room. Also, in Gene’s article, Danny Nason stated that only the Arrowhead Inn had chips in their various operations. Other joints, including The Blade Café and the 5911 Club worked on a cash only basis.

The bottom line based on what I have found, is that the EVA was an Ike Hyams operation and the EVA chip in the above came from Elmwood Place.

Jim Linduff