

# STARK CLUB HISTORY

**613 Monmouth Street**

**Newport, Kentucky**

Researched by Jim Linduff

There has been considerable discussion about the 613 Monmouth address, including recent “discoveries” of Stork Club chips claimed to be from the club. I have researched the history of the club by compiling all the addresses listed in the Newport and Cincinnati phone books, retrieving all newspaper accounts listed in Northern Kentucky and Cincinnati NEWSDEX summaries and talking to five associates who frequented the Newport scene as early as the late 1940’s.

The following is the data in chronological order:

**1940** The address was listed as W.L. John’s Real Estate, Andrew Kappas owner

**1942** The restaurant was listed as Claude Jones Restaurant

**1946** Gus Wadsworth operated as the Jolly Café

**1949** Listed as vacant, the joint was opened in August and named the Stark Club. A September, 1949 ad described the Stark Club as the newest cocktail lounge with Chester Bielski and Teddy Raymore entertaining. It was at this time Jim Harris was known to be the owner, but his name did not appear on the club listings. While conjecture, the name Stark vs. Stork was thought to be so to avoid the legitimate Stork Club name.

In October 1949 several contractors sued the club for non payment of construction loans. Glenn Hughes was listed as the operator and the club was identified as the Stark Club. Harris was not listed probably because he was by then a convicted felon.

**1950** On February 14, 1950 the joint was busted along with the 316 Club owned by Joseph Farley, for having two slot machines. Glenn Hughes was listed as the operator of the Stark Club. The club was fined \$400 for having the slots.

In June of 1950, Harris was involved with charges of prostitution and pandering juveniles at the 19 Club located at 19 Licking Pike in Wilder, soon to become the HI-De-Ho Club.

**1952/53** The club was listed as the Stark Club in the Newport phone book.

On August 7, 1952 police were called to the Stark Club because of a brawl involving Jim Harris and two customers. Harris claimed to be knifed by one of the customers.

**1954/55** The club was listed as the Stark Club in the Newport phone book.

On January 11, 1954 charges against Detective Pat Ciafardini, made by James Harris were dropped in Newport Police court because Harris failed to appear. Harris had alleged Ciafardini had acted in an abusive manner when a confrontation took place at the 316 Club. Harris was upset that his Stark Club had been cited by Ciafardini for violation of the 2:30 am closing law in a separate incident earlier that week.

In May of 1955 the Stark Club was given a 10 day suspension. The club, listed as being owned by the Monmouth Corporation employed two juveniles as “hostesses” who were runaways from the Kentucky Youth Authority.

**1956/57** The club was listed as the Stark Club in the Newport phone book. In the Cincinnati phone books of 1954/55 and 1956/57 the joint was listed as the STORK CLUB, the only written reference to the location under that name.

On June 8, 1956, an ad ran in the Cincinnati Times Star announcing new ownership of the Stark Club, Art Wirth and Ed Connelly with continuous entertainment and dancing nightly. Tiny Levine was listed as the General Manager. Connelly had previously run the Columbia Café, a bust out whore house on 4<sup>th</sup> Street in Newport, and was considered a front for Jim Harris. Tiny Levine was a local character who ran several Newport joints then fled to Los Vegas in the early 1960's.

In August of 1956, the Stark Club was raided on a charge of possession of gambling equipment, a dice table. The game being played was said to be “26”. Of interest, this helps authenticate the Stark Club dice that Larry Trapp owns. Cash was thought to be used in this game.

**1958** The joint was listed as the Club Bongo in the Newport phone book.

**1959** The Newport phone book listed the joint as vacant. During 1959 the club was called the Stardust and the Silver Slipper.

On March 10, 1959, the Post Times Star reported a fire at the Stardust Club and an arsonist was almost caught, but fled by jumping through the front window. Monmouth Corporation was still listed as the owner, Melvin Eisner, president. Just the previous week, the Stardust was given a 30 day suspension for prostitution, gambling and violations of the closing laws. Jim Harris was listed as being associated with the club, and Eisner was from a family that included Sammy Eisner, the owner of the 202 Bar and several strip joints in Newport.

On December 7, 1959, an ad in the Kentucky Enquirer named the club as the Silver Slipper featuring continuous entertainment, a euphemism for strippers.

**1960** The Newport phone book listed the club as the Silver Slipper.

**1961** The Newport phone book listed the club as the Frolics Club.

On October 8, 1961 the place was raided. No gambling was found, but police arrested the “owners” Jack and Cookie Eviston for operating two bars while licensed for only one bar. Jack Eviston once served as a Campbell County sheriff.

**1962, 1963** The Newport phone book listed the club as the Frolics Club.

**1964** The Newport phone book listed the location as vacant.

On May 16, 1964 the club was ordered closed by the State ABC because John Sweeney, the club’s license holder had died the previous January and the permits were not transferred. Jim Harris was listed as the club operator and fought the closing. Several other indictments were issued by Sheriff George Ratterman concerning B-girl operations.

**1964-1974** The Newport phone book listed the location as the Galaxie Club.

On March 19, 1970 the Galaxie burned, but was reopened later that year.

**1975** the Newport phone book listed the location as the Brass Ass/brass Mule.

The original Brass Mule was located at 301 Monmouth and was owned by Vance Raleigh. In 1973 Raleigh was killed in a gunfight at a Newport parking lot and four months later, the Brass Mule was torched by an arsonist. Vance Raleigh’s sister Bess bought the 613 Monmouth location from Dick Matrella with help from Hustler publisher Larry Flint and reopened the joint as the Brass Mule, the name to this day. The entire shooting of her brother, her subsequent purchase of the 613 Monmouth location is very murky, but not likely to be clarified. A close friend of mine knew Bess when she worked at Equitable Bag and he thought the circumstances around the shooting involved some racial problems, but didn’t know the details.

Given what we know, it is likely that Jim Harris owned the joint in some form or another from 1949 until the early 1970's. He could not hold the liquor license having been a convicted felon as early as 1937, but his finger was in the operation throughout the period.

There is no issue that gambling took place at the Stark and it's various other names. The dice found from there appear to be legitimate and consistent with the raids made and the gambling tables confiscated. We also consider the chips from the Stardust and the Silver Slipper to be from the club, but it's likely that, particularly in the case of the Silver Slipper chips, they were used as a promotion gimmick and/or for buying hookers in the joint.

There is NO evidence that the place was ever called the STORK Club, except when mispronounced by the locals. No one we interviewed and no written evidence supports the name. Any chips found with the name Stork Club have not been authenticated and are likely to be another example of fitting the name/initials to a given club.

Having frequented this sewer several times during the late 1950's/early 1960's, I can personally attest that all forms of illegal activity occurred there, but it was purely a bust-out-cash only operation. They didn't take checks or markers and the thought of the use of chips isn't consistent with the operation.

In date order then the club name seems to be as follows:

|              |                     |
|--------------|---------------------|
| 1946         | Jolly Cafe          |
| 1949-57      | Stark Club          |
| 1958         | Club Bongo          |
| 1959         | Stardust Club       |
| 1959/60      | Silver Slipper Club |
| 1961-1963    | Frolics Club        |
| 1964/65      | Vacant/Galaxie Club |
| 1966-Present | Brass Ass/Mule      |

April 26, 2008