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TEXAS' ACE GAMBLERS

For these poker players,
no game is penny ante

When Benny Binion moved from Dallas to Las Vegas in 1947, he left behind a rap sheet that included theft, carrying a concealed weapon, bootlegging, gambling and two murder charges.

One murder charge was dismissed as self-defense; the other resulted in a two-year suspended sentence.

Legend has it — and Benny actively promotes the legend — that he pulled into Vegas with the trunk of his Cadillac full of \$100 bills. He then bought a club on Fremont Street in the downtown area (later to be known as Glitter Gulch) and renamed it Binion's Horseshoe Hotel and Casino.

Other high-stakes Texas gamblers have gravitated to Binion's casino over the years. What started as a go-for-broke two-man game eventually evolved into the World Series of Poker. And at every juncture, Texas gamblers were prominent among the players.

From his early days in Grayson County, Benny liked a good game of poker. "We used to gamble in the damndest places and with a lot of people you wouldn't invite home to Sunday dinner," he says.

One of those who never received a dinner invitation was Nick "The

Greek" Dandalos. Nick won and lost more than \$500 million in casinos around the world before dying broke at the age of 83.

In early 1949, Nick approached Benny, looking for a game to suit his enormous appetite for gambling: no-limit poker, head to head with a single opponent. The Greek would settle for nothing less than "the biggest game the world could offer."

With an eye for publicity, Benny agreed to arrange for such a match, provided that it be played in public right at the entrance to his casino. He then called an old friend in Dallas, Johnny Moss, and asked him to take on The Greek.

Born in 1907 in Marshall, Moss was raised in downtown Dallas. In the summer after second grade, he sold newspapers for a penny on Akard and Commerce streets and delivered telegrams, at 3 cents each, for the Mackey Postal and Western Union Telegraph Co. on Main Street.

He also discovered a domino parlor, some back alley craps games and the Otter's Club, Dallas' exclusive (illegal) private card room, where draw poker was the most popular game. Intrigued — and skilled — at these games, Moss