

SECRET OF THE MARQUEE CARD PREDICTION

- by Harry Evry

Most Castle members have probably seen the new digital marquees that materialized in the Castle shortly after the Castle reopened from 2011's fire. Many have noticed the evolutionary changes that have swept through the marquees on an almost continuous basis since they appeared. You may remember the original changing portraits beautifully designed and animated by Castle member and television art director Kendall Bennett or the spooky Halloween monster images punctuated by lightning strikes that haunted the castle during our Monster Mansion Halloween.

Recent visitors might have noticed that the marquees displayed their very own new year's countdown or enjoyed the subtle fireworks display that ran continuously in the background from midnight on New Year's Eve through the entire 50th Anniversary Founders Day celebration.

The marquees continue to evolve and hopefully improve with every passing month, and so many members have contributed their thoughts, ideas and creative suggestions that it is impossible to acknowledge them all by name. However, at each step and iteration we have tried to listen, adapt and continue to make improvements on a regular basis.

One of the least-noticed features of the marquees is the small line of text at the bottom of every screen that displays the name of a particular playing card and changes throughout the night.

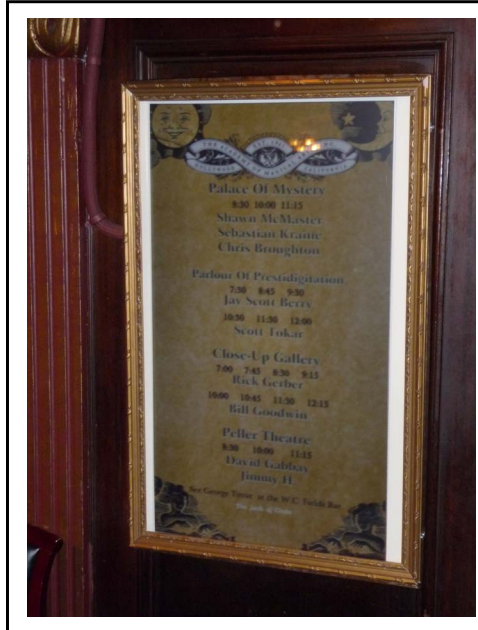
This subtle feature was designed to serve two purposes. From the start, we wanted to offer magician members another magical way to reveal a selected playing card. To bring this to life required an easily predictable card display pattern. The sequence must be obvious to the magicians and others in the know, yet seem somewhat random and ever-changing to the unknowing audience.

If you enjoy puzzles, then you might want to stop reading now, go stand in line at the Castle, stare at the marquees for a few hours and see if you can figure out the card progression yourself. If you keep reading on, though, I am about to reveal the secret, so now is your last chance to look away and solve the mystery yourself.

Once you understand how it works, you can easily predict the card that will be displayed at any given moment of the day or night and, if you know how to read it, you will always know the general time down to a quarter of an hour.

The featured card line changes very predictably every 15 minutes.

It accomplishes this with the use of a simple clock. The card value or denomination changes with every passing hour, and the card value is simply the hour itself. For example, at 1:00 the hour is 1 so the card is an Ace. At 6:00 the card turns to a Six, and at midnight or noon the card becomes a Queen, since that is the 12th card in any suit. Of course, there is no King because, unless you are in The Haunted Mansion, clocks never strike 13.



Now that we know the value of the card, let's take a look at the suit. The suits change every 15 minutes, within a minute or two of the precise quarter of the hour.

I originally invented a very clever and somewhat more complicated method for determining the card suit, but thanks to a lot of perplexed looks and some very practical advice from newsletter editor and Director Rich Cowley, I quickly simplified the marquees to follow a very easy clubs / hearts / spades / diamonds pattern (easily remembered as the word "chased" - CHaSeD).

For the first quarter of the hour, the suit will be Clubs. Between 15 and 30 minutes into the hour, the card is a Heart. In the third quarter of the hour, it will be a Spade and, at quarter till, it will always become a Diamond.

When we designed this system, we hoped that magician members would find many innovative ways to put this knowledge to good use, and I look forward to seeing it applied in many creative and magical ways.

Of course, for non-magicians, associate members and other clever muggles, it can serve a more mundane, yet very useful and practical purpose as well. When you consider that all of our Castle showrooms are scheduled to start at even quarters of the hour, members

without watches can, at a glance, quickly determine from the featured card line which shows have already begun or may be just about to begin.

Now you know the secret of the marquee card prediction. Of course, like every mystery of magic and every secret of The Magic Castle, it is incumbent upon us all to carefully and discretely protect, use and maintain this arcane knowledge.

Don't worry, though. As with so many other aspects of the Castle, the marquees have still more secrets to reveal. Keep watching, keep observing, and you can expect them to continue evolving, improving, maturing and hopefully getting ever better, more useful, more magical and more informative. 🐾

