May 12, 1950 was the 1st Illinois State police raid on illegal casinos in 10 years. Ezra Brantley was on that raid. Five years later Captain Brantley and his raiders wrecked havoc on the Illinois illegal casinos 1955-1960. Today we will take a look at the 200 Club also at times called the Annex in Madison, Il. I feel very fortunate to have many of the actual chips confiscated in the raids in my collection.

Special "Thank You" to our "Friend Of the Hobby" on this one.

Enough of that:

This is the fifth in a series of mid and southern Illinois "illegal Of The Day" posts.

I am calling this series of posts "Raiders Of the Lost Illegal's" in honor of Captain Elza Brantley and the troopers that served with him.

"Raiders Of the Lost Illegal's" Part 5

The grandson of Captain Elza Brantley sent me 150 scans of raid pictures, notes on the raids, newspaper articles, official documents, and confiscated chips from 500 (300 in one month) raids on Illinois illegal's, conducted by his grandfather. Some of the chips we have never seen. Also raids on clubs we have never heard of.

Elza Brantley 1913-1999

Graduated from the first class at the Illinois State Police Academy.


Actual chip taken in raid on The 200 Club/The Annex. This chip would have been taken in the first state police raid in 10 years, before Brantley became Captain In Command.
Here’s some stuff on the 200 T-mold chip which you said was part of the Illinois trooper’s cache. It’s sort of a companion chip to the JPC T-mold which was the subject of an IOTD Illinois 9, last year:


The JPC and the 200 T-molds were used around the same time in two different places run by different people in Madison County, but both places were almost always mentioned in the same breath and both share the same fate.

200—T mold

The 200 chips were delivered in 1947 to Charles M. Davis, a well known gambling operator on the Illinois side of the St. Louis metropolitan area. In the early 1940’s Davis was running a place in the city of Madsion called the 205 Club, located at 205 Madison Ave. Very late in the evening of April 8th 1945 the fresh corpse of a St. Louis man was found at the bottom of a outdoor basement stairwell next door to the 205 Club. An investigation revealed that the man, who’s skull was fractured, had been gambling earlier in the evening at the 205 Club where he reportedly was beaten and tossed from the place. The dead man’s body never resulted in any charges but the stink of it resulted in the closing of the 205 before the summer of 1945.

A few months after the closing, Davis, with partners Harry Wrest and Robert Leu, opened a place around the corner from the 205 Club at 200 State Street and called it the 200 Club or sometimes the 200 Club Annex. It was here a few years later that the 200 T-molds were shipped to Davis. Here’s a current street view:
During the late 1940's the 200 Club in Madison and the Hyde Park Club in Venice were the biggest gambling operations in Madison County, both places machines making dollars by the millions (the Chicago Tribune claimed at the time that the Hyde Park Club was "one of the largest gambling houses in the USA"). While Davis was operating the 200 Club he was sued numerous times by people who had played there and lost.

Here's one example from Feb. 1949; it gives a nice description of what was going on in the place:
Sues to Recover Gambling Loss

Alleging that he lost $1,056.76 by betting at the dice tables of Club 200 in Madison, a Pine Lawn Missouri man filed a suit in Madison county circuit court here today for recovery of that amount.

The plaintiff, John W. Carpenter of 7109 Woodrow avenue, names as defendant Charles Davis, doing business as Club 200 at 200 State street, Madison.

According to the suit, Carpenter incurred the loss between Aug. 25, 1948, and Feb. 15, 1949, when he 'visited the defendant's establishment for the purpose of betting at the dice tables.'

Describing the place as a gambling casino, Carpenter states in the suit that Davis 'placed and accepted bets on horses, operating what is commonly known as a 'book shop,' operated tables for the playing of poker for money or other valuable things and operated several tables for the playing of that certain game known as 'dice' or 'craps'.

Carpenter seeks recovery of his loss on the grounds that Illinois statutes make it 'illegal and unlawful for any person to own or operate a gambling casino' and that under the law he is entitled to recover from the defendant.

Such cases usually are settled before being brought to trial.
My note: I am always amazed at these types of lawsuits. They still happen today in legal casinos. You gambled-you lost. Live with it dummy!!!! *vbg*

By the summer of 1949 Davis appears to have sold his interest in the 200 to his associate Harry Wrest. During that summer the heat began pouring in upon the gamblers of Madison County. Several Madison County newspapers continually lamented the wide open gambling there. In August an editor who had been particularly vocal about the 200 Club was threatened over the phone. This incident, along with other factors, led to the temporary closing of the club by the sheriff.

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200 Club Closes After Threat to C. Townsend

(Granite City Press-Record)

"You will print no more stories about the 200 Club (Madison's notorious gambling joint at 200 State street) if you know what's good for you," an anonymous telephone caller warned C. E. Townsend, editor of the Press-Record, last Monday night.

The call, which was received at 10:35 p.m., at the editor's home shortly after he arrived there from the office, was made from a local telephone and could not be traced. The man's voice was well-modulated and clear.

"You're connected with the Press-Record, editor or something?" were his first words. On receiving an affirmative reply, he issued his threat.

"Just what do you mean?" Townsend asked.

"I mean that you'd better not print any more stories about the 200 Club," the anonymous caller repeated.

"Who is this?" the editor cut in.

"Never mind who this is. You will see. You'd just better not print any more stories about the 200 Club." "Are you threatening me?" was Townsend's next question.

"Take it any way you want, but you'll print no more stories about the 200 Club if you know what's good for you," the caller warned again.

After a brief pause, he said goodbye and hung up.

My note: This type of threat to a newspaper is a terrible move and always back fires. *vbg*
The work of editor Townsend and another small Madison County newspaper editor, Paul Simon, was praised by their big brother on the other side of the Mississippi, the St Louis Post-Dispatch. Simon, who was only 20 at the time, would go on to become a US Senator from Illinois and make an unsuccessful bid to be the Democrat Party candidate for President in 1988 (he lost to Dukakis; Simon was the horn-rim glasses and bow-tie wearing candidate—his activities against gambling in Madison County launched his career).

My note: One more time we see a future presidential candidate involved with either closing or keeping illegal joints open. 

"...intervention of the long, strong arm of Springfield" of course meant this guy:
My note: One more time we see a future presidential candidate involved with either closing or keeping illegal joints open. Two different in the same story,*vbg*

On May 12th 1950 the “strong arm” was put in motion when Illinois Governor Adlai Stevenson ordered the state police to raid both the 200 Club and the Hyde Park Club. It was reported that this was the first time state police had been used in gambling raids in over a decade and the move made headlines:
here's the full story from the paper:
2 Lavish Dens Downstate Hit By Governor

Nab 58 Employees, Grab Equipment

Madison, Ill., May 32 (Special) — A packed deal of state police, acting under the direct orders of Gov. Stevenson, today began a state-wide crackdown on gambling by raiding two of Illinois' most famous resorts, the Hyde Park Club at nearby Venice and the 200 Club here in Madison. The clubs draw a heavy trade from St. Louis, just across the Mississippi river.

The detail of 30 troopers from Springfield, most of them recent recruits, burst into the two clubs simultaneously at 3:30 p.m. Barricaded the doors with squad cars, and trapped inside an estimated 800 customers and 58 employees.

At the Hyde Park club the police seized $1,563 in the cardroom cash, but word of the raid apparently had preceded them to the 200 Club, where Henry West, the operator, had locked the cash in the safe. West, who refused to open the safe, said it contained about $5,000.

Handicaps and Games

In both places handbook operations for all races in the country were in full swing, while blackjack games were operating for those who wished to gamble between races.

Late today police removed a moving van laden of gambling equipment from the Hyde Park club and took it to Allen, presumably for use as evidence. A smaller quantity of gaming devices was removed from the 200 club, after which the police wielded slip saws on the remaining equipment and the interior, including the large blackboards where race results were posted.

Arrested at the operator of the Hyde Park club was Gregory Moore, a former deputy in sheriff John Dougherty of St. Louis, a Democrat.

Employees Seized

Some 40 employees of the Hyde Park club were seized, and another 18 at the 200 club. All were taken to Allen for booking on gambling charges.

In Springfield, meanwhile, Gov. Stevenson announced that he and Atty. Gen. Elliott had ordered today's raids after more than a year of attempting to halt organized gambling that appears to local authorities to suppress it.

Governor's Statement

The governor's statement followed:

"I have today, in association with Atty. Gen. Elliott, used the state police against commercial gambling in Madison county.

"For more than a year Atty. Gen. Elliott and I have attempted to stop commercialized gambling (Continued on page 5, column 6)"

Two Raids Open State Drive on Gambling Dens

(Continued from first page)
My note: Looks like the troopers made a big mess in the 200 Club. *vbg* This article was in Captain Brantley’s files.
Neither place reopened after the raids. The "van loads" of gambling equipment taken in the raids would be destroyed two years later:
Seized Gaming Equipment Goes Up in Smoke

EDWARDSVILLE. — Gambling paraphernalia confiscated by state highway police in raids two years ago at the Hyde Park casino at Venice and 200 Club in Madison went up in smoke Thursday afternoon at the rear of the county jail.

The equipment, seized in simultaneous raids May 12, 1950, was burned under final orders entered recently by County Judge Michael Kinney in the Hyde Park and 200 Club cases.

Horse race wallboards, betting tabs, “scratch sheets,” dice and blackjack tables, and other gambling paraphernalia were removed from storage in the county jail garage by jail trustees under supervision of Sheriff James T. Calahan and County Judge Michael Kinney, and piled in a vacant area.

Shortly before 2:24 p.m., after five gallons of oil had been poured over the inflammable equipment, Deputy Sheriff Joseph F. Kellerman touched a match to the litter and a crowd of spectators witnessed the fiery ending of a two-year legal controversy over disposition of the seized articles.

(fortunately some chips from both places managed to escape the inferno)
Ten years after the raid politicians were still making hay out of the 200 Club and Hyde Park Club. Here's a political ad from 1960:
My note. "Honest Government" There is one of the most dishonest ads I have ever seen. *vbg* Many of the Illinois illegals were still running in 1960.

From Captain Brantley's notes 1955-1960.

About 2/3rds down.

"search warrants almost impossible to obtain as the "State's Attorney's" were usually paid off by the gamblers."

Could the candidate for State Attorney that ran the above ad be warning the operators to pay up or suffer the same results as the joints depicted in the ad? *vbg* Just wondering! *vbg*

Stay tuned. Still more from Captain Brantley's files on the Illinois illegal casino raids to come. What I call the "Era Of The Illegals" comes to an end in 1961. One year after Captain Brantley left the Illinois State Police. Bobby Kennedy finished them off in late 1961 when he forced the closure of Newport, KY illegals after close to a 100 year run. River pirates and bootleggers had started illegal gambling in Newport in the last half of the 1800's.

Do you have any illegal casino chips in your collection? If not, IMO you are missing out on one of the best parts of our hobby. Little pieces of clay and history.