

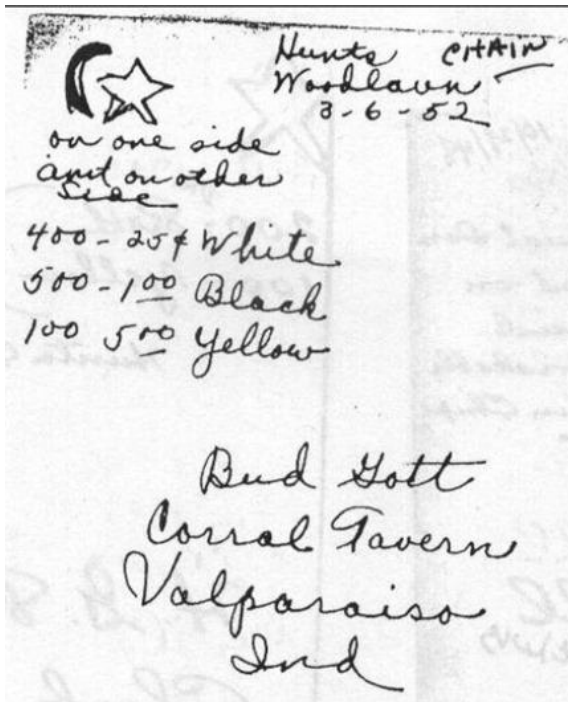
Club member and regular BB poster Steve Passalacqua found the Star and Crescent chips some time ago and put them on the BB recently. New Indiana illegals are hard to come by. The "Illegal Of The Day" team got a set and our "Friend Of The Hobby" went to work on the history of The chips. The operators son is 94 and still going strong. I talked to him. Without him we may never have known for sure where the chips were used.

star & crescent

The records of Hunt & Co. of Chicago show that the chips pictured below were delivered to Bud Gott at the Corral Tavern in Valparaiso, Indiana in March 1952:



Star andC1att2



Star andC2

pics of the exterior of The Corral from 1952:



Star andC3



Star andC4

Gerald Thad "Bud" Gott was a well known gambling figure in Valparaiso for many decades.

1952 Christmas greetings from Gott and The Corral:



Star and C5

The Corral opened its doors on September 9th 1948. It was located in downtown Valparaiso, across the street and a block west of the Porter County courthouse.



Star andC6

Guy Wellman and his family operated The Corral at the location for almost 10 years. Prior to The Corral, Wellman and Bud Gott had been involved in various enterprises together including the Palace Café in 1948 and The Club, which operated from the 1930's through the late 1940's.

According to Guy Wellman's son Bill in his 2006 memoir "It's Made to Sell—Not to Drink", the main activity at The Club was gambling: poker on the first floor and a horse book upstairs.

Circumstantial evidence would seem to suggest that The Corral would have offered activities similar to those found at The Club. However, this does not appear to be the case. In a phone conversation with Gene Trimble in April 2016 Bill Wellman stated that there was never any gambling at The Corral, it was a family restaurant and bar. Wellman, who worked at The Corral and knew Bud Gott well, said that at the time of the chip order Gott operated a "horse bookie" in the basement of a building directly across the street from The Corral which was known locally as "The Hole" (going down a stairwell located in the front of the building took you to The Hole's front door).

My note: Bill Wellman's exact words were:

"Never gambling at the Corral. The Corral was a family restaurant and bar. My mother would have thrown a "FIT" if we would have even mentioned having gambling there. *vbg* The chips were used across the street in "The Hole.

Without Bill's info we would have attributed the chips to the Corral. Classic case of "Big Time" gamblers bowing to a Mom pitching a "Fit." *vbg*

Bud Gott had operated a place at the location as far back as the 1930's when he opened "Bud's Billiards" there.

For many years Gott received and distributed race wire information from the basement.

ad from 1940:

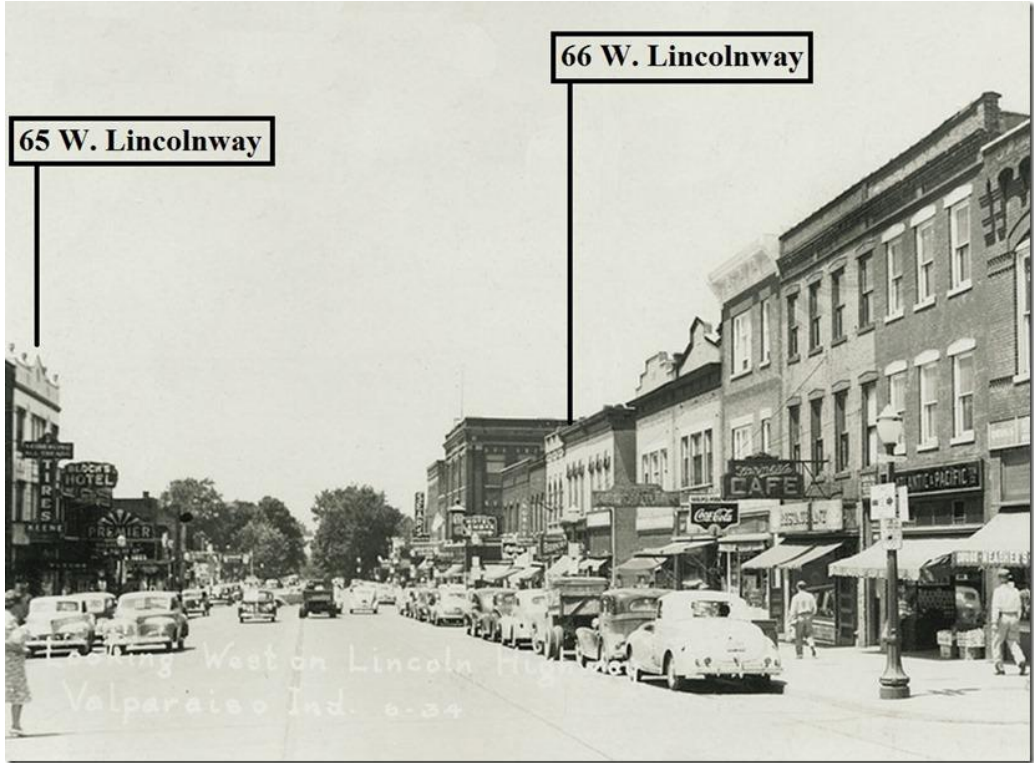


Star and C7

View looking west on Lincolnway from the 1940's--

Bud's and The Hole were located in the basement of the three story building at 65 (below Bloch's Hotel sign);

The Corral was at 66:



Star andC8

View looking east on Lincolnway from the 1940's--
the trees visible on the right side of the street are in front of the Porter County Courthouse:



Star andC9

A list put together by a 1950 U.S. Senate committee investigating the transmission of gambling information shows Gott as the sole Valparaiso subscriber to the racing information supplied by the U.S.A.'s principal distributor: Continental Press Service--described by Kefauver as "America's public enemy #1":

844

TRANSMISSION OF GAMBLING INFORMATION

- | | |
|--|--|
| R. Hambley, 49 East Washington Street, Shelbyville, Ind. | V. Ryff, 10 West Fulton Street, Rapids, Mich. |
| C. Huthsteiner, 331 Main Street, Tell City, Ind. | S. Elg, 3010 South Cedar Street, Lansing, Mich. |
| Clover Club, 832½ Wabash Avenue, Terre Haute, Ind. | Frank Meyers, 40 Water Street, Clements, Mich. |
| Bud Gott, 65 Lincolnway, Valparaiso, Ind. | F. O'Connor, 143 West Westport, Michigan, Mich. |
| J. Schmidt, 416½ Main Street, Vincennes, Ind. | T. Settle, 214 Broadway, Evansville, Ind. |
| A. Schwartz, 311 Monroe Avenue, Grand Rapids, Mich. | J. W. Smith, 315 West Front Street, Owensboro, Ky. |
| S. W. Starr, 323 East Michigan Street, Valparaiso, Ind. | E. T. Rouse, 313 West South Street, Owensboro, Ky. |

Star and C10

In 1951 when the Federal Government introduced the wagering tax stamp, four stamps were purchased in Porter County, three in Valparaiso--all for 65 W. Lincolnway. When this info was made public in December of '51, things heated up at Gott's basement location and he locked its doors. When law enforcement showed up at the place the local paper was able to report:

The Weather: Mostly cloudy with occasional showers tonight and Thursday, continued mild; see inside, 12-15; high Thursday 41 to 34.

The Vidette-Messenger

Farm Institutes: Today's Farm page (2) makes announcement of the farm institutes to be held in the county next week.

Vol. 25—No. 130 Telephones 13 and 14 Valparaiso, Indiana, Wednesday, December 5, 1951 The Home of Valparaiso University Five Cents

POLICE FIND NO HANDBOOK HERE

Star and C11

Yep, it's locked—a local newspaper photographer looking down into The Hole's entrance snapped this pic of Valparaiso's chief of police checking the front door:



Star andC12

Three months later the star & crescent chips are delivered to Gott across the street at The Corral. In addition to handbooks, Gott was known to run poker games in downtown Valparaiso.

In the late 1950's a reputed Cosa Nostra member from Gary, Indiana named Tommy Morgano—with backing from the Chicago syndicate—wanted to take over all gambling and prostitution in Porter County. To do so, he began by introducing himself to Porter County's new chief deputy sheriff Harold Rayder with the question: "How'd you like to make a fast buck?" Rayder, while pretending to show interest in brokering a deal with Porter County legal authorities, allowed himself to be wired for sound by a special investigator working for a U.S. Senate anti-racketeering committee. During a conversation recorded while sitting in Morgano's car Rayder expressed concern about how the new set-up would affect the local gambling fraternity and specifically asks about Bud Gott:

RAYDER. Well, now the other night I was down to the Elks a little while and Bud was down there. You know, Bud Gott?

MORGANO. That's right.

RAYDER. How is he gonna fit into the picture. He was hollering down there about running a bookie joint here, you know?

MORGANO. Yeah?

RAYDER. I didn't want to say anything to him see.

MORGANO. You say nothing to nobody. Just when we are starting over there and then I want to shut him off.

RAYDER. Then we are gonna shut him off too?

MORGANO. Shut 'em off: You're gonna shut him off!

RAYDER. OK.

MORGANO. Then I will get down and ask him does he wanta work. He'll run this book over here—50/50. First, shut him off and then I'll open him.

RAYDER. You gonna let him run on a 50/50 basis, huh?

MORGANO. You shut him off.

RAYDER. Yeah.

MORGANO. You shut him off—him and Lowia (phonetic)—every poker game. They gotta few poker games in here. Then I'll tell you what to do. You shut him off and I'll open him.

RAYDER. OK. All right. That's good enough.

Star and C13

The "Lowia" mentioned by Moragno is most likely Lewis Parker "Louie" Deck who, in partnership with Gott, ran poker games in Valparaiso at the time. Gott and Deck were partners in various gambling enterprises through the years and in the late 1960's were charged with being "professional gamblers." In 1970 when both were in their early 60's they plead guilty to Federal indictments charging that they were part of a multi-million dollar northern Indiana gambling ring.

A lifelong resident of Porter County, Gott died there in 1983 age 78.

This is "Illegal Of The day" #314.