

This is "Illegal Of The Day" #250. A small milestone for the series. The first one was Texas on 7/28/2010. We are 3 months away from 4 years of IOTD posts. They started out with mostly info and research from my database from many years of collecting illegal chips. I am not sure when the research team started to chime in but they took us to a new level of information. More than I ever dreamed was out there and available. I am not listing names as I will surely forget some. BUT! We know who you are. *vbg* Thank you.

Enough of that:

This is the second 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 2

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.

1955-1960 Captain in Command Battery #6 Illinois State Police-District #13 East Saint Louis- 27 counties
- 105 Troopers.



SCC1att2

The question?

250 Stateline Country Club chips actually taken in an Illinois illegal club raid. How did they get there?



SCC2att2

Rack actually taken in the raid. The scan was taken with a camera phone and the chips look blue. I have been assured they are the SCC chips. Originally 250, Some have been sold. Many generic chips in the rack also. Close up scans in a later post.

Taylor order card.

Amount	Color	Initials Both Sides	Style Type	Initials One Side	Other Side	Style Type	Monogram Color	Date Shipped
10,065	Orange	Spec	with four Green Inlays					(5.00)
3038	Black	"	"	Two yellow				(25.00)
505	Light Blue	"	Plain					(0)
1031	White	Crest or Seal	with work	(100.00)				2/1/54 per Burt Records
5019	Green	Spec	with four Orange Inlays					(1.00) 3.15.56
504	Light Blue	"	"	four Red Inlays				(1.50) 3.15.56
Delivered								
ATTN Sam Murray								Open - 6/1/53 - 9/1/56
								Per Fuller

SCC3att2

When I bought the copy of the Taylor records years ago, this one had 2nd header (only) attached. It was cropped for uploading to Preserving Gaming History. This leaves open the possibility there was more orders.

3,019 green \$1 chips were delivered 3/15/56, 5 1/2 months before the SSC closed.
The 3 typed notes on the card are mine.
2/1/54 Crest and seal chips made at the Burt Co sent to the SSC per Burt records.
SSC open 6/1/53 - 9/1/56 per Harvey Fuller's book.
All chips delivered ATTN Sam Murray per Taylor customer list.

One more time: How did they get to an Illinois illegal club?

Enter: Our "Friend Of The Hobby."

When you talked to the trooper's grandson did he have information about when and where the Stateline CC chips were confiscated? It might be easier to find a connection from the Illinois side back to Nevada rather than the other way around.

My note: Most of the confiscated illegal chips in Elza Brantley's files did have notes on where they were taken. The SCC did not but we have dates. In Part 3 of this series I will make a best guess on where they were used and the reasons for that guess..

Here's some info on the Stateline Country Club in Nevada (probably more than you want to read. *vbg*

My note: I bet the "Tahoe Boys" will want to read it. *vbg*

At the time of the chip orders on the Taylor card the SCC was owned by the Sahati family, who were from the San Francisco Bay area. In 1953 the Sahati family signed an agreement with two Bay area guys named Paul Venturi and Anthony Grech which gave these two guys the lease on the SCC from October 1953 through September 1958 (the lease also contained an option to buy the SCC). Venturi and Grech became the lease holders and the holders of the gaming license. The new lease holders would have opened for business in the Spring of 1954, which coincides with the Feb. 1954 date on the Taylor chip card.

Within a year of this agreement Venturi bought Grech's 50%. Venturi then sought investors to buy into the SCC.

In August 1954 Nevada gaming approved five guys and put their names on the license—all were from the Bay area. Venturi then owned 55% and the remaining 45% was split between these five:
--15% Frank M. Gardella of Livermore, CA
--10% Chauncey A. Bengiveno of San Jose, CA
--10% Robert E. O'Neil of San Mateo, CA
--5% Ree O. Casentini of San Francisco, CA
--5% Aquilino J. Giorgetta of San Jose, CA

My note: A lot of vowel's on the end of those names. *vbg*

In 1955 gaming approved Emanuel J. Mingoia of Livermore, CA for 15% and Rocci Bassile of Redwood City, CA for 3%. Not sure whose % these came out of, probably Venturi's 55%.

In July 1956, about four months after the last date on the Taylor order card, Bill Harrah purchased the remainder of the 5 year lease from the lease holders. The manager of the SCC at the time was Frank Gardella, one of the guys who bought-in back in August of 1954.

Gardella was described as 1 of 8 stockholders when Harrah purchased their lease—not sure if all 8 of the guys listed above where the same 8 when Harrah bought the lease (also not sure if they might not have been fronting for someone else).

A few months later, on September 25th 1956, Harrah exercised the lease's option to buy and purchased the SCC outright from the Sahati family.

Shortly afterwards Harrah closed the SCC and the place was extensively remodeled, reopening several months later on May 30th 1957 as "Harrah's Stateline Country Club."

I guess the short version would be: at the time of the SCC chip order from Taylor, the SCC was owned by the Sahati family, who leased it to several guys from the San Francisco Bay area, who then sold their lease to Bill Harrah, who then bought the SCC from the Sahati's.

My guess is that Harrah's probably got rid of all the old gaming equipment during the renovation and that's when some of the chips made their way to Illinois.

I think the Sam Murray on the order card was probably a guy named Sam F. Termini. Termini was originally from Kansas City, MO where he was involved with gambling before moving west in the 1930's. Termini operated gambling places in the Bay area as well as Lake Tahoe, where he often used the alias Sam Murray. Here's an example from 1949; "Mr. Sam Murray" is Sam Termini :

Lake Tahoe's Finest
the new
TAHOE BILTMORE
Hotel and Casino
NOW! STARTS JULY 14

THE COOPER SISTERS "Sophisticated Hillbillies" AND JIMMIE VEY "Youth On A Spree"	BEDELL & MATSON Lake Tahoe's Favorites AND Marian Callahan "New Ideas in Taps"
--	--

GARWOOD VAN and His Orchestra

EXTRA! SUNDAY ROUND-UP BREAKFAST
All You Can Eat For \$1.25
MIDNIGHT BUFFET-NIGHTLY
All You Can Eat For \$1.50

Hotel and Casino—Direction of Mr. Sam Murray

THE New TAHOE BILTMORE HOTEL
For Reservations Phone CRYSTAL BAY 357

SCC4att2

In the early 1950's Termini served time on a Federal tax charge but was out by the time of the Taylor chip order. He died at Reno in 1972.

Just about all the people I'm seeing as having an involvement with the SCC at the time that the Taylor chips were in use seem to be from the San Francisco Bay area.

My notes:

Several possibilities but no real answers, on how the chips made it to Illinois.

Could Sam Termini (Murray) have returned to his roots in Kansas City with them?

I have seen several references to the Sahati's being organized crime out of San Francisco. Did they have a connection to Illinois? No connection found. In today's Nevada neither the Sahati's nor Murray could get a gambling license.

Did Bill Harrah sell off the rack when he closed it in 1956?

Was there a reorder that never shipped because the SCC closed?

Did the Taylor Company produce an overrun in 1956? It was not uncommon for the older distributors to produce and sell overrun's at a later date or sell non delivered chips.

There are some clues and my best guess will be in "Raiders Of the Lost Illegal's" Part 3 which will post in 2 or 3 weeks. Where is Indiana Jones when you need him? *vbg*

I have 2 good new IOTD's for next week to choose from.

One Texas from Ed Hertel.

One Kansas City from our "friend."

It will give us a little break from the Illinois series. *vbg*

BTW, the Kansas City one will have an example of hub chips made for an illegal operation in New Orleans, went undelivered, over stamped, and shipped to a different illegal operation in Kansas City. I have the chip but I called it a "floor sweeping" until this research. *vbg* This post will make us rethink what we call a "floor sweeping."