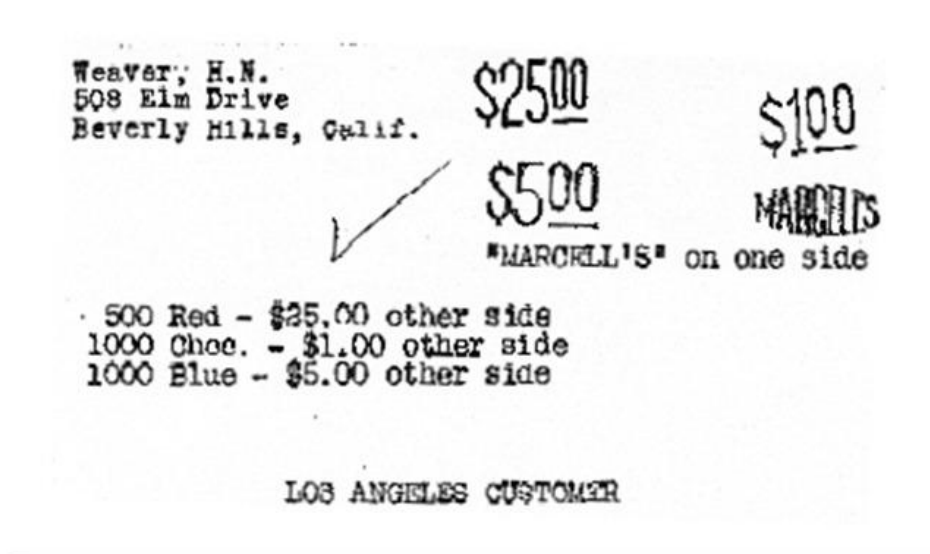


"Illegal Of The Day" #301 is for you CA boys. Our "Friend Of The Hobby" has gone all out for you on this one. Janice and Jerry O'Neal stopped by the Fiesta for lunch back in 1999. She gave me the red Marcell's and several other illegals she had picked up over the years. I got the blue one in a trade in 2008. Never knew much about them except they were more than likely CA illegals. If you are not prepared for a very good and long read, it is time to hit the back button. *vbg* If you are interested in the history of your chips, you will love this one. Some of the "BIG" names in Hollywood including John Wayne and Shirley Temple are mentioned.

Enter: Our "Friend Of The Hobby."



Marcells1att2



Marcells2

My note: I need the chocolate \$1.00. Cough it up if you have a trader. *vbg*

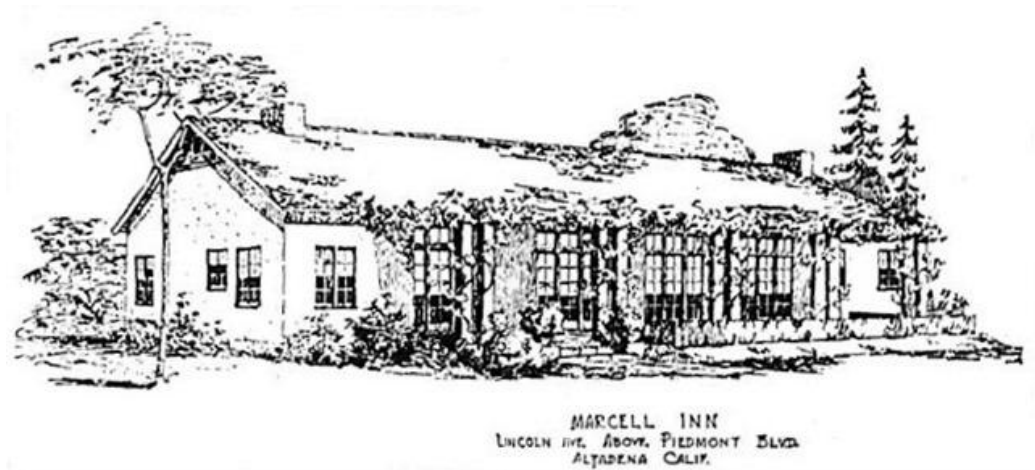
Unfortunately the order card has no date. However, an LA gambler named Harry Nelson Weaver moved into the residence at 508 Elm Drive sometime between 1933 and 1934 but was no longer a resident there by July 1936. During this time period in the LA suburb of Altadena there was a popular restaurant and night club formally known as the "Marcell Inn" but commonly referred to as "Marcell's." In the mid 1930's Marcell's was run by a prominent LA

gambler named Homer "Slim" Gordon and was described by the LA Times as "outstanding among nightclubs where dame fortune may be tickled in the ribs."

Side note: the total cash value of the Marcell's chip rack is \$18,500; that amount in 1934 is roughly equivalent to \$330,000 in 2015.

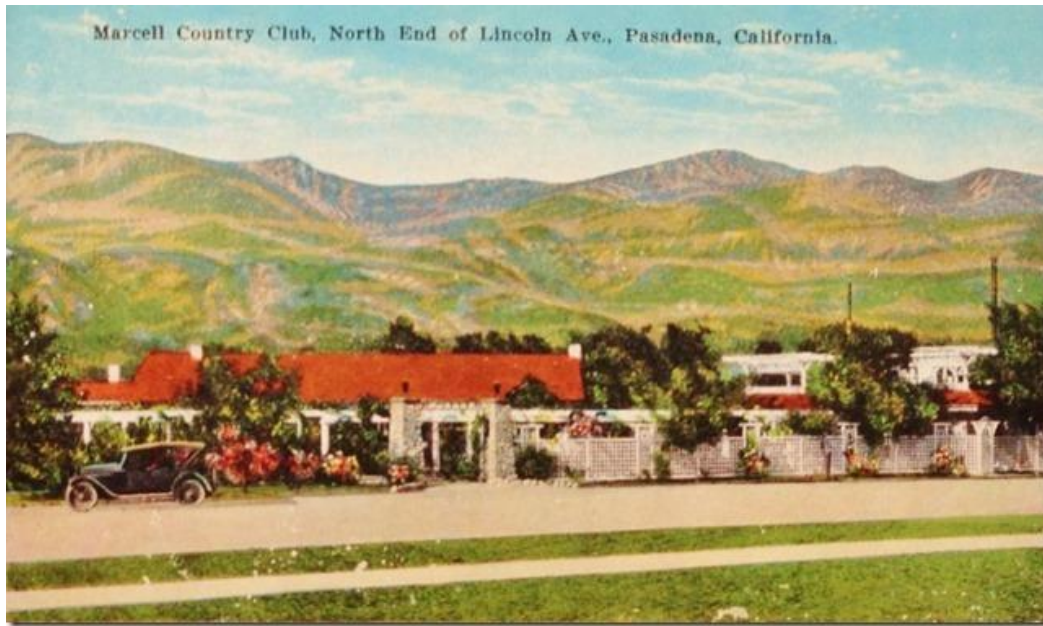
Marcell's got its name from a well known LA restaurateur and Italian immigrant named Joe Marcell Annechini. In the 1910's Annechini operated a popular restaurant in downtown LA which was known by several different names including "Marcell's", "Maison Marcell" and "Terrace at Marcell's" (it was at this restaurant that Annechini is credited with first introducing Zucchini to US cuisine). Shortly after Prohibition became law Annechini closed his downtown LA restaurant and in 1922 opened the Marcell Inn in Altadena on property which formerly had been his private estate.

architectural rendering from 1922:



Marcells3

postcard showing the building and trellised garden entrance:



Marcells4

the building is long gone but the two stone entrance pillars visible in the postcard above still stand:



Marcells5

postcard views of the interior from the 1920's:



Interior, Marcell Country Club, North End of Lincoln Ave., Pasadena, California.

Marcells6



Interior, Marcell Country Club, North End of Lincoln Ave., Pasadena, California.

Marcells7

[early on Marcell's was occasionally referred to as the "Marcell Country Club"; also, its location was sometimes said to be in Pasadena, Altadena's southern neighbor]

Under Annechini, Marcell's became a hangout of the Hollywood film crowd and the place was raided several times for Prohibition era liquor violations. In the mid 1920's Annechini began splitting his time between LA and New York City where he operated a place called the "Marcell Restaurant" or "Marcello's Restaurant."

**When You
Travel East**
*visit MARCELL'S new
restaurant. 10 East 52nd
St., New York City,
which maintains best
traditions.*
*While at home
don't forget*
MARCELL-INN
in Altadena
*Where you can also dine of the
best the market affords*
Ph. Sterling 2262

Marcells8

While at New York in 1932 Annechini passed away at the age of 53. Not long afterwards Marcell's in Altadena became the property of one of LA's leading gambling figures: Homer "Slim" Gordon. The years in which Gordon ran Marcell's are pretty much concurrent with the years in which Weaver resided at 508 Elm and placed the Marcell's chip order, circa 1933-1936.

In 1933 Marcell's was renovated and re-opened in October. On the property was a giant searchlight which was supposed to help guide patrons to the location through the dark Altadena night; directions to the place were often given as "get to Lincoln Avenue and follow the searchlight":

ONCE AGAIN THE SEARCHLIGHT OF
HAPPINESS and PLEASURE IS LIGHT-
ING THE SOUTHLAND SKY

We Take the Greatest Delight in Announcing
the Re-Opening of the Famous

MARCELL INN

THE Nth DEGREE in CUISINE and
ENTERTAINMENT

The Rendezvous of the Smart Set
DINNER, \$2.50 PER PLATE

2900 No. Lincoln Ave.

Pasadena

For Reservations Call ST. 2262 or ST. 4347

(Watch for the Searchlight)

Marcells9

A month later in November 1933, according to the LA Times, Marcell's was one of four places that stood out among the LA gambling scene:

OUTSTANDING CENTERS

Outstanding among the night clubs where Dame Fortune may be tickled in the ribs are the Club Airport Gardens, near the city limits of Glendale; the Clover Club on Sunset Boulevard, just outside the city limits; the Marcell Inn in West Altadena and the New Colony Club inside the city limits, near the Rancho Golf Club.

Marcells10

About a year later in October 1934 a weekly magazine called the "Hollywood Filmograph" characterizes Marcell's:

MARCELL INN WINS ATTENTION OF ELITE AT ALTADENA PLAY SPOT

When society wants to play they like their fun and amusement in the right kind of environment, and from all appearances, they have labelled the Marcell Inn, at Altadena, the play spot that they like best, for nightly you will find the Southland's best people, who like to dine and dance, enjoying themselves to their heart's content amid the most romantic setting one can find this side of Caliente, or even Monte Carlo.

Marcells11

A survey of the playspot will also reveal many pastimes and pleasure that are rarely seen in cabarets, but can only be found in certain centers like Caliente and Monte Carlo.

Marcells12

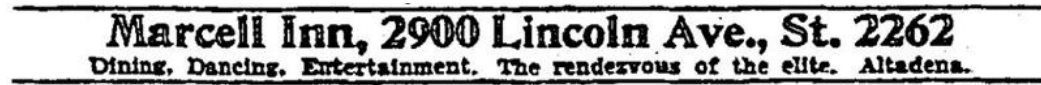
That same month Marcell's is raided by LA County vice officers:

A final county raid occurred at the Marcel Inn in the Altadena foothills, where the officers assertedly found dice and poker games in progress. H. (Slim) Gordon and Walter Lipps were ordered to appear in Pasadena justice court today and three dealers were booked on gambling charges.

Marcells13

My note: I think CA collectors do not realize how many of their chips were actually used in illegal gambling clubs.

ad from 1934:



Marcells14

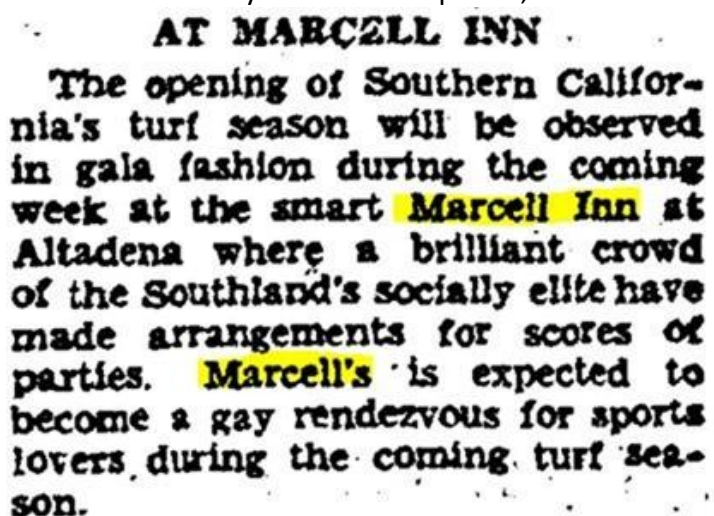
In June 1933 California voters approved a proposition legalizing pari-mutuel wagering at horse tracks.

A year and a half later, on Christmas Day 1934, the Santa Anita Racetrack opened north of LA. Described at the time by Life Magazine as the "handsomest, most lavishly appointed track in the world," Santa Anita was owned by a group of investors led by Hollywood producer Hal Roach (Laurel & Hardy; Little Rascals). Marcell's was located near Santa Anita and it quickly became a popular stopping place for those going to and coming from the track.



Marcells15

article from the day Santa Anita opened, December 25th 1934:



Marcells16

Jan 19th 1935:

INN DRAWS TURF FOLKS

Santa Anita's racing season has been the incentive for numerous parties at **Marcell Inn** in Altadena, with scores of society and film folk gathering to hear the singing of Tommy Lyman, internationally known songster.

Marcell's, situated a few miles from Arcadia and the track, has been the scene of many parties of lovers of the turf sport when they have finished a day at the races.

Marcells17

Feb 8th 1935:

Marcell's has proven the gathering place for turf fans and almost every night notables of the Santa Anita track may be seen in either the dining-room or the cocktail lounge of this gay spot.

Marcells18

One of the Hollywood "film folk" who patronized Marcell's was a young up and coming star named Dorothy Dell. Dell's quick rise to fame was due in part to her role alongside Shirley Temple in a film based on a Damon Runyon short story called "Little Miss Marker." In the movie, a gambler with a "sure thing" tip on a horse goes to an illegal bookie joint to place his bet but he has no cash and the bookmaker isn't taking markers. With the race about to begin, the bookie is talked into taking the gambler's young daughter, played by Temple, as a marker while the gambler takes off to find cash. When the gambler doesn't return, the little miss marker is taken in and cared for by the bookie and a cabaret singer/"moll" played by Dell.

Dell with Temple and Adolphe Menjou, who plays the bookmaker:



Marcells19

Little Miss Marker was released on June 1st 1934 and a week later on June 8th Dell spent the evening at Marcell's. After a night of dining and dancing, the 19 year old actress who was on her way to being a bone fide star, the next Mae West, stepped out of Marcell's into the cool Altadena night and the sublime Wheel of Fortune which separates all that can be from that which is clicked into place and the young, beautiful Ms. Dell never made it back to Hollywood.



Marcells20

Dell's male companion, speeding down a dark curve on Lincoln Avenue just east of the Rose Bowl, lost control of his car and, after smashing into several impediments, including a few palm trees, the wreckage finally rested upon the lifeless body of Dell (in the photo above the car has been flipped over to extricate Dell).

When the 6 year old Shirley Temple was informed of her friend and fellow actress' death she is said to have fallen prostrate and wept--inconsolable. Years later Temple said the emotional distress over her friend's death made its way into some of the crying scenes of the film she was working on at the time called "Now and Forever" (for the next four years Temple would be the world's number 1 box office draw, just ahead of Clark Gable).

In January 1935, as Marcell's was establishing itself as a Turf HQ and continuing its role as a celebrity playground, Los Angeles County convened a grand jury to investigate the possible corruption of public office holders by gamblers seeking protection from the law. Several well known LA gamblers were summoned to appear, including Marcell's owner Slim Gordon (also summoned were future Las Vegas pioneers Nola Hahn and Milton "Farmer" Page).

pic of Gordon at the grand jury proceedings:



Marcells21

As he left the grand jury room Gordon was met by reporters and he informed them of the substance of what he was asked and what he answered:

"Are you a gambler?"
"I try to be."
"Are you operating a cafe in Altadena?"
"Yes."
"Do you conduct gambling there?"
"Well, I try to but the police won't let me."
"Have you ever made any pay-offs?"
"Never."
"Any officials have any interest in your place?"
"I should say not. If any did, I guess I'd be able to keep going."

Marcells22

Gordon kept going at Marcell's for several months until June of 1935 when he took a little trip to sample the turf south of the border:

Slim Gordon has closed the Marcell Inn for the summer to make the "ring" at Caliente.

Marcells23

(according to the LA Times, Agua Caliente was the only horse track in the Americas to offer both a bookmaker betting ring and pari-mutuel wagering)

Gordon continued to operate Marcell's into 1936 but by April of 1937 it was closed for good and became the Marcell Military Academy.

classified ad from April 1937:



Marcells24

A few years after Marcell's closed Gordon opened a club in Hollywood on Sunset Boulevard called the "Club Marcell" (perhaps the Marcell's hub chips followed him there??). The place was raided for both liquor and gambling violations. During a raid of the Club Marcell in 1941, after battering down the front door, raiders found a room filled with "members of the motion picture colony, Hollywood café society, night life characters" as well as "drunken patrons and defiant employees."

In the pic below, taken during the raid, one well known member of the "motion picture colony" is seen sitting at the bar (and perhaps drunk and defiant):



Marcells25

You're killin' my buzz, Pilgrim.... The guy standing to the left of Wayne in the pinstripe jacket, his face obscured, appears to be Slim Gordon.

Gordon operated clubs in the LA area for several more years and passed away there in 1970 at the age of 74.

Harry Nelson Weaver, the guy who ordered the Marcell's hubs, also continued working illegals in the LA area, including some time spent on gambling boats anchored off the coast. In 1948 a place calling itself the Sea Villa was raided at Long Beach. Weaver was arrested and described as being "in charge of the establishment" but, according to the Long Beach Independent, the place was the "brain child" of Tony Cornero:

CORNERO GAMBLING SETUP RAIDED HERE

Five Cents Telephone 6-9641

LONG BEACH INDEPENDENT

LONG BEACH'S ONLY MORNING NEWSPAPER

Vol. 10—No. 237 Long Beach 12, Calif. Thursday, April 22, 1948



Registrations Here Up 17 Pct.

Voting registration in Long Beach has gone up 17 per cent since the books closed for the February 24 charter election. Registration as of April 1, the last day for the May 11 city primaries, was 118,643, the county registrar of voters has notified Clyde G. Roseberry, city clerk. Qualified to vote at the February charter election were only 101,684. The gain has been 16,961. Today is the last day to register for the June 1 state primaries and city general election, June 1.

Dealers, Lookouts Arrested

An elaborately equipped gambling setup, believed to be the brain child of Tony Cornero, formerly gambling ship operator, was raided early this morning at 5454 East Ocean boulevard.



TONY CORNERO
Trying Again?

Woman, Baby Killed

Mrs. Dorothy Chisholm Elwell, 26, formerly of Long Beach, and her 13-month-old daughter, Denise, were killed early Tuesday near Weed, Calif. This information was phoned to Long Beach yesterday by her husband, Robert, 28. He is the son of Larry F. Elwell, of 1964 Pacific avenue, Long Beach policeman. Young Elwell has been located (Continued on Page 4)

Marcells26

My note: "Sea Villa was raided at Long Beach" Any of you guys ever heard of or seen chips from the Sea Villa? I haven't.

Some of the dealers arrived in town yesterday from Las Vegas, and **Weaver** once worked on the SS Lux, gambling barge owned by Tony Cornero before it was seized by federal agents off Long Beach two years ago, police said.

Marcells27

pic from the raid showing (l to r) a dealer, police officer and Harry Weaver:



Marcells28

By the 1950's Weaver had left LA for Las Vegas where he died in 1973 age 75.

Here's a scene at the bookmakers place of business from Little Miss Marker:

<http://www.tcm.com/mediaroom/video/378323/Little-Miss-Marker-Movie-Clip-No-Dolls-For-Security.html>



Marcells29

We have seen several excellent "Illegal Of The Day" posts from California. IMO, this one is in the top 3.