

This is "Illegal Of The Day #300. IMO, it is a milestone in our quest for ID's and history of our chips. Illinois with 49 is the most IOTD's for any one state. Texas is closest with 39. There are way too many contributors to the IOTD series for me to try to name. I can tell you the series would not have happened without everyone helping with their expertise, when asked.

An old chip is just a "little piece of clay" without an ID. Many IOTD's had multiple ID's in them. I tried to count how many individual chips had Club names put to them. I gave up after 3 tries but the number is close to 600. All Id's we found have been sent to TCR and TGT.

Enter: Ed Hertel.

It was December 26, 1942, and the world was starting its transition back from the joys of Christmas to the reality of the Second World War. In Chicago, far from the front lines, another war was being fought between the city's rival gangs, and local tavern owner Robert McLaughlin was its latest victim. With three bullet holes in the head, his lifeless body was tossed from a passing vehicle like yesterday's garbage. It was a vicious, although predictable ending to a life filled with violence and mayhem.



RM1att2

Robert E. McLaughlin was no ordinary run-of-the-mill mobster. He was ambitious, smart and knew how to work the system. While others relied on muscle and guns, Robert used his intelligence and cunning. He preferred collusion to holdups and business infiltration to hijackings. That isn't to say he was against using violence if needed, but he had people to handle that – mainly his brother Eugene.

Robert's first big move into the high stakes rackets came in 1926 when he gained control of the presidency of the Checker Cab Company. It was during the 1920s in Chicago that the Taxi Cab War was in full swing between the Yellow Cab and Checker Cab. What started out as simple competition for fairs turned into an all-out brawl complete with gang fights, fire bombings and murder.



RM2

(Overturned taxi in the Chicago streets epitomized the fight between carriers.)

The Checker Cab Company needed someone strong at the helm, and Robert McLaughlin stepped up to take it. Of course his motives were not steered toward corporate good. Being the head of a Chicago union was notorious for corruption and kickbacks. Robert knew his skills would bring much wealth and he went after the presidency with fervor. He won, but his opponent cried foul – and cried a little too loudly for Robert's tastes. Only one week into his term, his opponent was murdered. With his last dying breath, the victim pinned the killing directly on Robert and his brother Eugene. Time however would prove beneficial to the McLaughlin's as a growing power base, and a deceased witness, caused the charges to be dropped.

Robert McLaughlin served as president for five years, during which time his wealth and power grew. His brother Eugene "Red" McLaughlin was also keeping busy doing his brother's dirty work, as well as many of his own side projects. One of these, a 1928 brutal assault, robbery and kidnapped landed him in jail. It was no doubt due to his brother's influence that led to Eugene's release after serving only one year.

Eugene's quick release however would prove to be anything but a blessing. On July 7, 1930, his body was found in a local drainage canal. He had been shot twice in the head and weighed down by an anchor. Rumors were numerous as to the reason he was killed, but anyone checking his social calendar might have seen it coming. His new girlfriend, Margaret Hamilton, a twenty-four year old beauty, had

been given the nickname “Death Lily” after her previous five boyfriends had all met violent ends in gangster assassinations. Eugene brought her count to an even half dozen.

In 1931 Robert McLaughlin hung up the presidency and purchased a tavern at 1958 North Avenue. From the start it was a success, earning enough revenue on Friday and Saturday to pay for all the week’s expenses, leaving everything else to profit. To add to the booming liquor sales, the tavern also functioned as a fully stocked casino. (Some reports say it was on the third floor, others say the basement. It’s possible it was both!) McLaughlin had finally found his passion.



RM3

(Drink token from McLaughlin’s Tavern)

Old habits die hard however, and occasionally he found himself in trouble. One instance, in August 1939, Robert and a rival tavern owner named Charles Hinkle got into a heated debate. McLaughlin, perhaps channeling his dead brother, finished the argument by shooting Hinkle in the leg. A complaint was issued and an arrest made. A confident Robert McLaughlin showed up for his court date and seemed not a bit surprised when the plaintiff was nowhere to be found. The charges were dropped.

McLaughlin’s Tavern was by no means a secret place for gambling. It was widely known and even occasionally raided. In February 1941, forty-eight people were reportedly arrested for gambling in the third floor of the tavern. In August 1942, eighty-eight patrons were chased out of a fully stocked casino in the basement of McLaughlin’s building.



RM4

(These chips – “RM” for Robert McLaughlin - along with the previous tokens, were all found together in McLaughlin’s estate.)

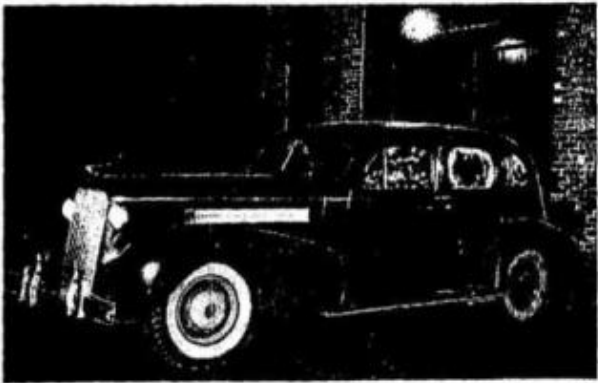
The tavern’s prosperity was starting to unravel as 1942 was closing out. It was reported sometime in the first week of December that McLaughlin’s Tavern received around \$20,000 in stolen liquor. One week later, a mysterious fire broke out, closing the place down while repairs were ordered. The liquor, unharmed, was loaded on a truck and sent away to destinations unknown.

Two weeks later, Robert McLaughlin, now 42, would be taken on his final ride and unceremoniously dumped onto the street. There were plenty of theories as to why he was killed and a long list of those who might have pulled the trigger. Most, of course, were convinced McLaughlin was the victim of a gangland assassination. Some believed it was a long overdue payback from Robert’s own retaliation against rivals after the killing of his brother twelve years earlier. Others thought it was the remnants of Capone’s gang who were frustrated with McLaughlin’s attempts to get into the bookie business. A third theory supposes it was nothing more than a common robbery. After all, he had been last seen intoxicated, waving a large wad of bills in bars across town. This theory is supported by the fact that when his body was discovered, he had nothing more than \$1.05 in coins on him.

Night Club Owner Slain



Chicago police said Robert E. McLaughlin, night club owner, who was slain yesterday, was last seen across the street from his tavern at 1958 North avenue (1). His automobile was found at 2033 Wabanaia avenue (2), and his body was discovered in front of 733 North Albany avenue (3).



Police said this is the automobile in which Robert E. McLaughlin, night club owner, was riding when he was slain.



Robert E. McLaughlin, night club owner and former president of the Checker Cab company, who was found shot to death yesterday.



Mrs. Joseph McLaughlin (left), a relative, and Mrs. Robert McLaughlin, widow of the shooting victim.



This hat and Christmas tree bulbs were found in McLaughlin's automobile. A piece of paper on which were listed some of the night club owner's belongings also was found in the car.

[TRIBUNE Photos.]

RM5

Whatever the reason, it seems Robert McLaughlin met his fate the same way he had lived. Autopsy reports showed he had struggled with his assailant and was clubbed on the head before being executed. Whether it was a premeditated mob hit or a robbery of opportunity, Robert McLaughlin would finally pay for a lifetime of sins and Chicago would lose another of its larger than life characters.

(For those of you who love reading old newspaper articles (I'm looking at you Gene), here is one from the investigation.)

Chicago Tavern Owner is Slain; Clues Are Vague

By United Press

CHICAGO, Dec. 26.—Detectives attempted today to link the gang-style slaying of Robert McLaughlin, tavern owner and former president of the Checker Taxicab Company, to an underworld dispute with remnants of the Al Capone gang.

After investigating for twenty-four hours, police had uncovered no definite clues to the identity of the men who took McLaughlin for a "ride" early yesterday and threw his body on a curbstone with three bullets in his head and neck. A discharged shell beside his body indicated the slayers had made sure he was dead with a final shot after dumping his body.

Police said they were investigating to determine whether there had been a dispute between McLaughlin and remnants of the prohibition era gangs. They heard that McLaughlin, who operated at least one handbook, had been attempting to invade the bookie business.

Detectives also reported that McLaughlin had been threatened by several men at his North Side tavern shortly after a large shipment of liquor was delivered to him recently. He left with the men and returned later to report that "it was fixed up."

Brother Slain in 1930

That liquor shipment was not destroyed in a fire at McLaughlin's tavern December 14, and it later was trucked away. Although the fire had been believed accidental at the time, authorities have begun an investigation to determine whether it might have been incendiary in origin.

Police reported that a young woman, whose name was not disclosed, told of seeing McLaughlin with three or four men leaving a restaurant near his tavern about 4 a. m. yesterday.

McLaughlin had survived Chicago's bloody taxicab wars, which occurred while he was president of the Checker Company between 1926 and 1931. Sluggings and some unsolved killings were blamed on the violent competition between taxicab companies.

McLaughlin's brother, Eugene (Red) McLaughlin, whose name was linked to several robberies and assaults in the twenties, was slain in 1930 after serving a brief prison term. He was shot in the head and his body dumped in a drainage canal tied to a heavy weight.

RM6

IMO, "GREAT ONE" Ed. Thank you.

Illinois and Texas represents close to one third of the total of 300 "Illegal Of The Day" posts to date.

Texas was no #1 and Illinois is #300. Next week #301 will be for you California boys. *vbg* It is a good one, don't miss it.

I got my 1st chip attributed to this CA illegal from Janice O'Neal back in January 1999 and a 2nd color in 2008.

I for one look forward to the next 300 "Illegal Of The Day" posts.

Once again "Thank You" and I "Salute" the dedicated team that makes them possible.