

Ed Hertel sent me the BHS Hub mold chip about a year ago. I took one look at the lightning bolts and said to myself, "Self, that chip belonged to someone that will have a story to tell." I sent for the Mason record. It came back with record not found. I was very disappointed.

To be fair, most regular fonts in the Mason records are in alphabetical order. Special dies are all over the place and there are some 21,000 records. I tossed the chip in my "hope to get an ID someday" bag and forgot it. A couple weeks ago I was tossing another chip in the bag and the "Lightening Bolts" caught my imagination once again. I re-sent it.

Hoorah!!! It came back with an ID this time. <g> My hunch proved right.

Ed Hertel has traders of this little gem.

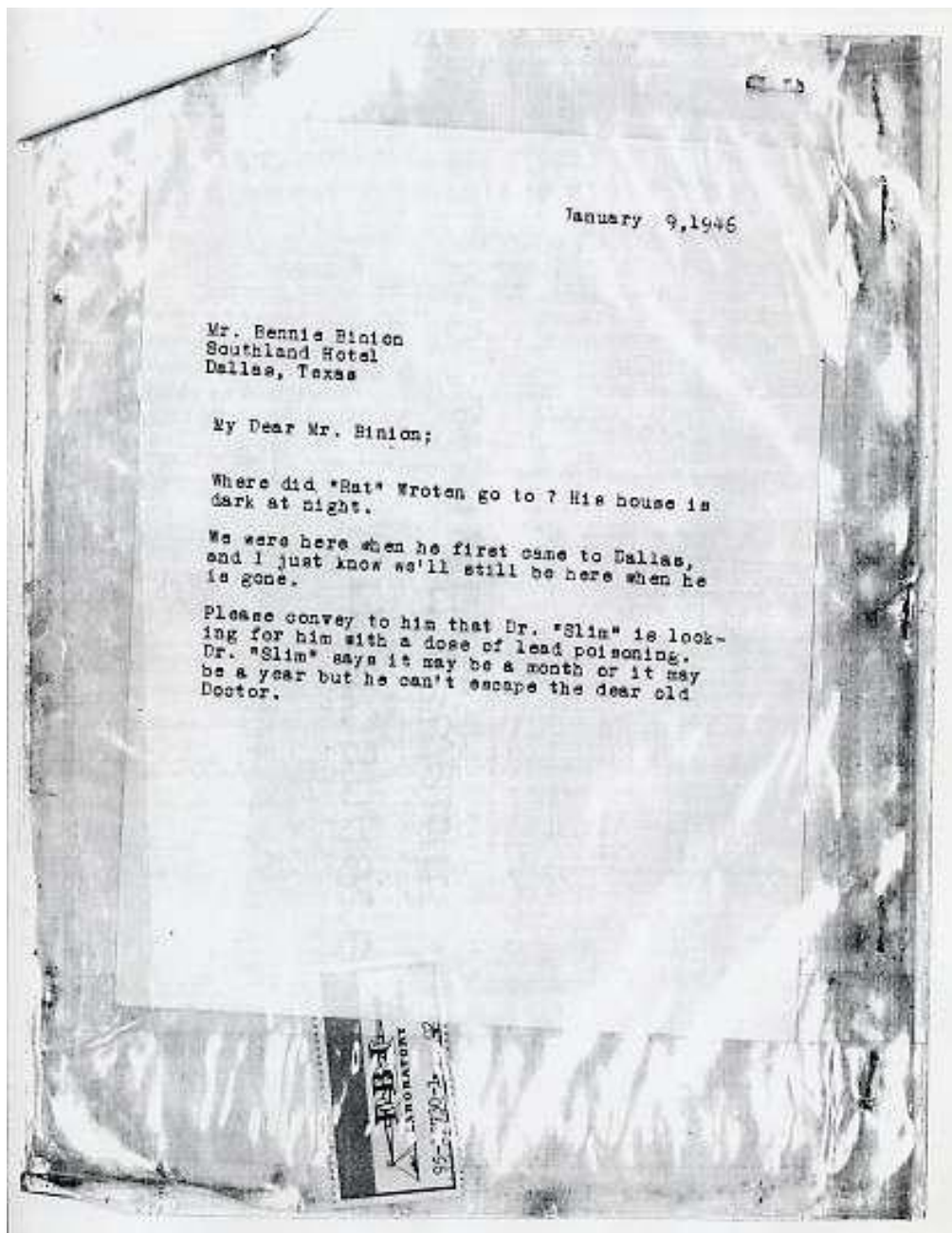
I have posted several "Illegal Of The Day" posts about the dozens of chip orders sent to the The Southland Hotel, The Campbell Hotel, and The Maurice Hotel all operations of the Dallas Mafia, Benny Binion, Ivy Miller, Herbert "The Cat" Nobel, Red Scarborough, James Worsham, and Eddie Wroten. We can now add Sam Murray and the Santa Paula Hotel to that list.

I used to talk to Amarillo "Slim" Preston back in the Binion's WSOP days as often as I could corner him up. He had many good stories to tell about the Texas and Oklahoma illegal joints. I've heard him mention Sam Murray a number of times. Now we have Sam's chips.

I was right! The lightning bolts had a story to tell.

Like the Shelton gang in Illinois The varying factions of the Dallas Mafia ruled their Dallas gambling empire with an iron fist without regard to life or limb.

From FBI files a death threat letter sent to Benny Binion concerning one of his boys, Eddie "Rat" Wroten. FBI evidence tag at the bottom of the scan.



Binion Death threat

letteratt2

Not sure who "Doctor Slim" was but my guess is Herb Nobel had something to do with it. <g>

As I have stated before without the history they are only "Little Pieces Of Clay." The BHS in my "hope to get an ID someday" bag, proves my point. <g>

Enough Of that:

Dallas, Texas:



chip18309att2

Delivery address: 1332 Kissler Pkwy, Dallas, Texas - Murray's home.

Sam Murray

Santa Paula Hotel

1710 1/2 Live Oak

Dallas, TX

2000 red, 1500 blue, 700 green, 500 yellow, 300 black

3/22/39

S=Sam Murray-H=Herbert "The Cat" Noble-Unknown who the B on the chip was.

I sent this ID to a Texas chipper and he came back with this info.

I doubt the B is for Binion though. Murray and Binion were rivals and a little over a year after the chip order Murray was shot dead by Ivy Miller in broad daylight on a crowded downtown Dallas street. From what I understand, Murray believed Miller to be the brains behind Binion's group and tried to get a killer to rub-out Ivy. The killer went to Ivy Miller and told him about Murray's plan. Murray ends up dead. Miller's murder charge was dropped by the DA on his last day in office.

Ed was gracious enough to send me a chip for our friend of the hobby.

And now: "The Rest Of The Story."

Enter our "Friend Of The Hobby."

My new favorite chip arrived, thank you. Here's some info:

Samuel Jackson Murray, Jr., a native Texan, was a bootlegger in Dallas during prohibition—an occupation which landed him in Leavenworth in 1933 (a year prior he managed to escape jail time for his involvement in a bootlegging related murder). A horseman who owned over 200 Palominos, Murray was described by a Dallas newspaper as a "colorful and near legendary figure in the annals of the local

gambling and sporting fraternity” —this statement was made a year after the chip order when Murray was only 32.

My note: Once again as in most “Illegal Of The Day” posts we see the out of work bootleggers looking for fresh money after prohibition ended in the early 1930’s. Legal whiskey, women, and gambling was a whole new money source waiting to be tapped. The “Era of the Illegals” sets out on its 20 plus year run.

1,000’s of Illegal casinos operated across the country. The Kefauver Commission closed the largest percentage in 1951. Thanks to Moe Dalitz the father of Las Vegas gambling and the deal he made with the Kefauver Commission his Newport, KY operation ran on until 1961 when Bobby Kennedy closed 150 (per the Saturday Evening Post) N.KY casinos. Alert to you KY boys. I have a lot of info on the Yorkshire and one of its many shareholders coming soon.

pic of Murray:



BHS1att2

The chip delivery address, 1332 Kessler Parkway, was Murray's residential address in 1939. There's a decent chance that the chips were used at a gambling operation located in a small two-story downtown hotel called the Santa Paula at 1710 1/2 Live Oak (the city block where the place was located no longer exists). A person could rent a furnished room at the place as well as have a Turkish Bath and Swedish Massage.

My note: What more could a Texan ask for gambling, a bath, and a Swedish Massage. I doubt Swedish Massage needs to be explained to most readers.

Here's a pic of the location taken about a decade after the BHS order (building on the lower left):



BHS2att2

Although the entrance was on Live Oak (far left), the building also fronted Elm (the large building behind the location is the Dallas Athletic Club):



BHS3att2

It's always an interesting challenge to try to put names to initials on old illegal chips. If we assume that the "S" on the BHS chip is for Sam Murray, then the "H" could very likely be for Herbert "The Cat" Noble. Noble was a partner of Murray's at the Santa Paula and is often referred to as being Murray's bodyguard or "muscle." In the mid 1940's 1710 1/2 Live Oak would become the site of Noble's Dallas Airmen's Club. Lot of possibilities for the initial "B"—although it probably doesn't stand for Benny Binion.

My note: I agree B is not for Binion. <g> Read on. <g>

Binion began his gambling career when he opened a policy wheel in Dallas around 1928. By 1936 he had become a dominant force in the local policy racket, a position he solidified when he shot and killed a rival policy operator named Ben Frieden (witnessed by many in the broad daylight, the murder charge against Binion was eventually dismissed).

My note: Murder dismissed and the leader of the Dallas Mafia begins his reign.

Here's a pic of Frieden's death car; although it's kind of hard to see, Frieden's lifeless bald head is visible leaning sideways against the passenger door window frame:





BHS4att2

A lean, mean, Benny Binion machine in 1936, age 32:



BHS5att2

My note: Reminds me of Harold Nason's picture in my Arrowhead Inn articles. Look at his eyes. I would not want to meet him in a dark alley. <g>



1936 was Texas' 100th birthday and Dallas was selected to host the official party. It was around this time that Binion decided to move into the operation of craps games and he partnered-up with Ivy Miller. Over the next few years the Binion-Miller group grew in power and influence and Binion decided it was time for him to challenge the position of the group which controlled gambling in Dallas, which was led by Ben Whitaker.

The Whitaker group had taken over in 1932 when Warren Diamond committed suicide and in the ensuing years Whitaker had become very wealthy, not only from gambling but also from oil well leases (he also owned a major downtown hotel). Whitaker decided to step aside and, it is said, went to extraordinary lengths to avoid an all out gambling war in Dallas between guys associated with him and the guys associated with Binion. It was around this time that the Binion group moved into the Southland Hotel and became known as the Southland Syndicate.

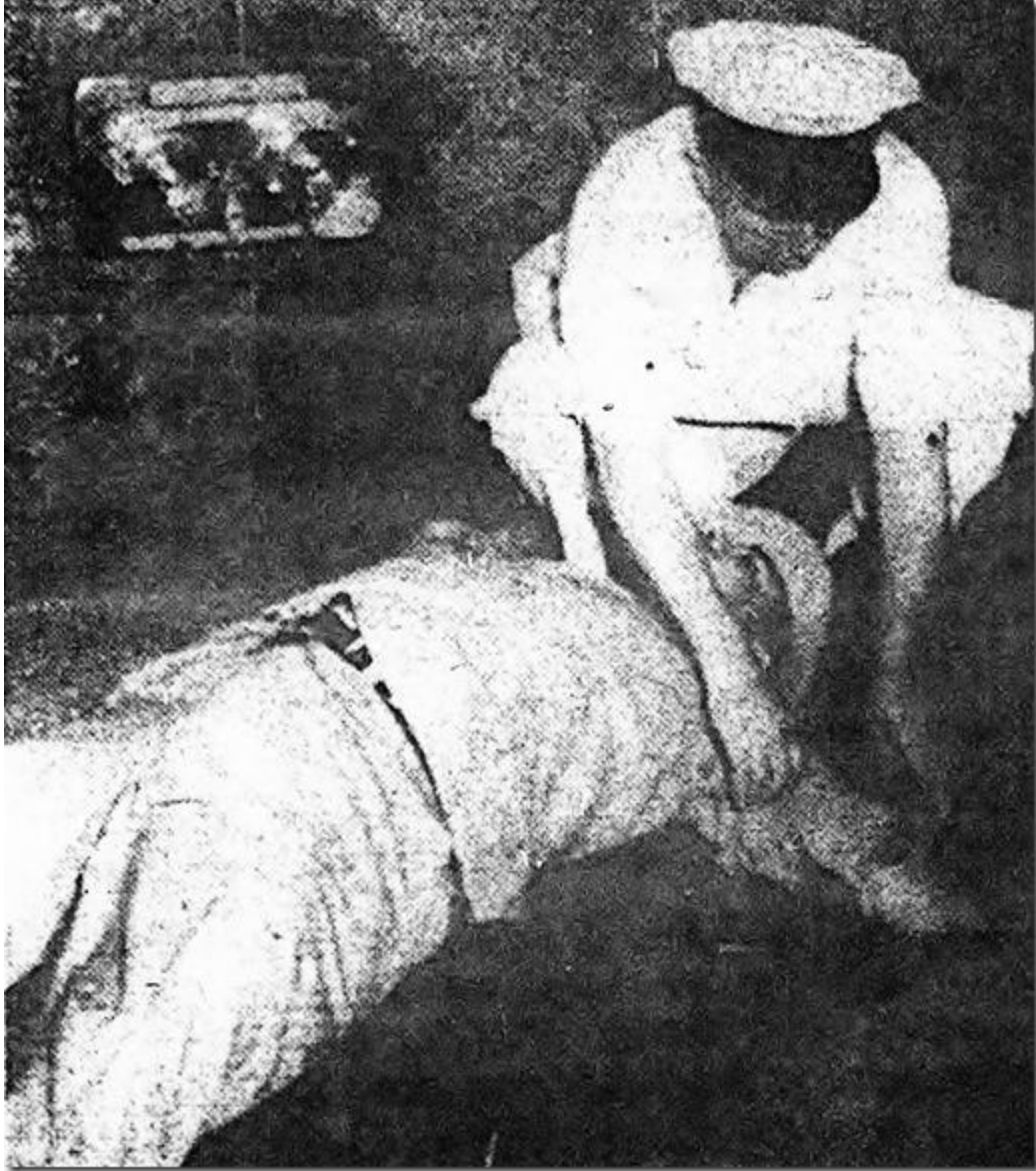
Sam Murray's group believed that they could operate independently of the new Binion setup and it didn't take very long before they were stepping on each other's toes. Murray felt that Ivy Miller was the brains behind the Binion group and contacted a killer to put Ivy six feet under. Unfortunately for Murray, Miller found out what he was up to and Murray ended up being the one pushing up daisies.

As the story goes, on the morning of June 18, 1940, Binion and Miller receive word that Murray is downtown and headed for the Dallas National Bank. The bank straddled a city block with a north side entrance on Main and a south side entrance on Commerce. Armed and ready for business, Binion took the north and Miller the south. As Murray approached the south side Miller met him with seven slugs from a .38 super-automatic and launched him into eternity before a crowd of stunned downtown pedestrians.

My note: Sounds like a Special Forces ops in Afghanistan. One squad north and one squad south and we will get the bad guy somewhere in between. Can you believe this happened on a downtown crowded Dallas street!!!! <g> Make no bones about it. The Dallas Mafia had a 20 year war and one of every chip collector's favorite Las Vegas casino owners was right in the middle of it, at least up to 8 days before the grand opening of Binion's Horseshoe in Las Vegas. <g>

Attended to by an ambulance driver (below), the 32 year old Murray spends his final moments on a Commerce street sidewalk.

He would be declared dead on his way to Parkland Hospital:



BHS6att2

Although he claimed self defense, Ivy Miller was charged with murder--a charge which would be dismissed 6 months later as one of the final acts of the outgoing Dallas DA. The killing of Murray put the Southland Syndicate into a dominant position in the Dallas gambling world which they would maintain through World War II. Murray's killing is also considered the beginning of the well known Binion-Noble feud, which would end when Noble was blown to smithereens at his ranch northwest of Dallas in 1951—8 days before the grand opening of of Binion's Horseshoe in Las Vegas.

My note: There were several attempts on Herbert "The Cat" Noble's life by Ivy Miller and Benny Binion before they finally got him. Pic below is Herb in a garage where he took his bullet ridden car for repairs after one such attempt. And you thought the "Wild Wild West" was just a Will Smith movie. <g>



Southlandbulletholesnobleatt2

Herb was lucky that day. All poker players know about lucky streaks and "Bad Beats." Herb's "Bad Beat" would come in a 1951 explosion and bring to an end a major part of the Dallas Mafia Wars.