

This is "Illegal Of The Day" #232. I am old and memory is sometimes not kind to me. I think this is the 1st woman to be "featured" in an IOTD. Leave it to Ed Hertel to find the "Bonnie Parker" of illegal gaming history. *vbg* No she did not kill a bunch of people but it appears she loved and thrived on the notoriety.

Take it away, Ed.

So much of the history of illegal gambling pertains to men. It seems that all the clubs were run by men, and most of the gambling was done by men. Every once in a while there is mention of slot machines in the corner to busy the wives and girlfriends while the men shot craps, but beyond that, you would think the fairer gender was completely left out of gaming history.

Well today we're going to buck that trend and discover one woman who did play a part in illegal gambling and the sometimes comical way it was reported. Today we are going to pre-war Kansas City, Kansas, and will visit a Mrs. Mildred Metzger.



TJM-MO1att2

My note: I need the TJM chip. Cough it up if you have a trader! *vbg*

The above chip is one of those that we usually get the identification and stop there as it's more than enough for most collectors:

State Line Tavern
3130 Southwest Blvd
Kansas City, KS
1937 – 300 chips ordered

However, sometimes digging below the name of the club brings up some fun information. The chips were ordered by Thomas J. Metzger (the "TJM" of the chips), owner of two Kansas City, Kansas, taverns – both named State Line Tavern. One was at the address of the chip order at 3130 Southwest Blvd and the other was at 510 West Sixth Street. Both of these, as the names imply, straddle the border between Kansas and Missouri.

A newspaper ad from 1937 shows that the State Line Tavern had more than just drinks, it was a full out club complete with an orchestra and floor shows every night. (The chips would also imply there was something else happening out of sight.)

★ STATE LINE TAVERN ★
3130 S. W. Blvd. VA. 0286
Presents
Forest Wyatt and His Orchestra
MISS VERBA KELLEY, Songs
FLOOR SHOW EVERY NITE
¾ CHICKEN SANDWICH, 15c
TIM METZGER, Manager

TJM-MO2att2

1937, the year the chips were ordered, would prove a bad year for Tim Metzger. At the young age of 36 years, he would pass away, leaving no will. Although the cause of death is not **stated**, taking a look at his wife might lead one to believe his body just couldn't keep up.

Enter the widow – Mrs. Mildred Metzger. When Thomas passed, she was a 25 year old blond beauty with a reputation for partying and living life in the fast lane. Her antics continually made the papers, including one high speed police chase where she barely escaped over the state border. It was reported that she was fleeing to get out of a traffic ticket, but I'd like to think she did it just for the kicks.

As mentioned above, poor Thomas failed to leave a will but Mildred had no doubt that she was the one to inherit the clubs. Unfortunately Thomas' mother Nora thought differently and sued Mildred for half ownership. By 1939, Nora and Mildred had called a truce and mother was paid in an out-of-court settlement. All this was news to the lawyers who were told their services were no longer needed – and oh yea, since we did this ourselves, we see no point in paying you.

Troubles have piled up rapidly for Mrs. Metzger since the death of her husband, Thomas J. Metzger. The husband owned two taverns, known as State Line tavern No. 1, and State Line tavern No. 2. He left no will and the widow took over the operation of the two places.

TJM-MO5att2

February 1939 was the start of Mildred's problems with the State Line Taverns and the media's love affair with the club owner. Both of the State Line Taverns were raided by federal agents for serving drinks without a federal stamp. Mildred claimed it was a mistake and she would never purposely defraud the government. Taking pity, the judge fined her \$400 and sentenced her to two years probation. In a February 2, 1939 article in the Kansas City Star, she was described, "It appeared today Mrs. Metzger, as well as her troubles, had doubles, for the dazzling blonde in a bizarre fur coat who

posted a \$1,000 bond last Thursday had become a definite brunette and wore a conservative black coat."

It did not take long, just one month in fact, until Mildred was again found in court answering the same charge of serving liquor without a stamp as well as "keeping a gaming device." The judge was not as lenient this time and revoked her probation and sent her to a municipal farm for 30 days. For those of you needing to know, it seems she had again changed her hair back and was described as the "blond tavern operator."

The below picture from the March 8, 1939 Kansas City Star gives the readers a look at the tavern owner, who was now going by the name Mrs. Mildred Metzger McCoy (I believe her maiden name).



—Kansas City Star Photograph.

TWO INDICTMENTS WERE RETURNED YESTERDAY BY THE COUNTY GRAND JURY AGAINST MRS. MILDRED METZGER, INDICTED AS MRS. MILDRED METZGER MCCOY, IN KEEPING A GAMBLING DEVICE AND SELLING LIQUOR WITHOUT A LICENSE. SHE FURNISHED A \$4,500 BOND TODAY AFTER PLEADING NOT GUILTY BEFORE JUDGE ALLEN C. SOUTHERN, AND IS SHOWN WITH HER ATTORNEY, FRANK BROCKUS.

TJM-MO3att2

Seeming to learn nothing from these past experiences, Mildred's State Line Taverns were once again raided, along with three other clubs, in April 1939, and this spelled the end for her ownership in the clubs. The padlocks were applied and Mildred was forced to give up her tenure as the operator of some of Kansas City's more notorious clubs. And yes, I know the question that is burning... according to the April 25th newspaper, Mildred's hair color was described as "blond-brunette." *vbg*

For those interested, the three other Kansas City, Kansas, clubs shut down with the State Line Taverns were the Perkins Club (2860 Southwest Blvd; R.G. Perkins, operator), the Chesterfield Club (320 East

Ninth St; (Gus "Skinny" Gargotta, operator) and the Reno Club (602 East Twelfth St; (Sol Stibel, operator).

By the next year, the State Line Tavern was to reopen under new management. As far as I can see, the tavern under Joe Stevens was run clean (although quite a bit more boring) and stayed out of the gossip columns.

An ad from April 2, 1940:



TJM-MO4att2

I found no mention of Joe Steven's hair color. *vbg*

My notes. Stateline was a strip right on the Kansas City, Kansas and Kansas City, Missouri state line. Per the Kansas City Star newspaper, police from both cities would raid the clubs but never at the same time in a coordinated raid. Both states claimed jurisdiction.

Ed and I have gone over a Kansas City Star article and research done on the Stateline joints back in 1990 attributing the EOS diamond mold chips found in the basement of The Jack Todd Company building to Eddie Osadchey, Stateline Tavern, Kansas City. We think this is a bad ID and recommend it be removed or at least marked "Questionable" in TGT.

Ed is correct. When an ID on a new to us illegal chip comes back with a "Club" name on it, we tend to file it unless it is from one of the big hubs of illegal joints like Chicago, Jeffersonville, IN. or Newport, KY. The "Illegal Of The Day" team has gone a long way in obtaining the history of our chips with and without "Club" names. I wish I had kept track of how many new "Club" names we have added to TGT database. Hopefully many more to come.