

An Abbreviated History of the Aladdin Hotel

by Howard W. Herz

The history of the Aladdin Hotel begins with a man named Milton Prell and properly includes a portion of the history of several other Las Vegas properties. Mr. Prell had previously operated the "30 Club" in Butte Montana when gaming was legal in that western state. Prell came to Las Vegas and opened the Club Bingo located on the Los Angeles Highway 91 in 1947. With a bingo room that seated 300, the club prospered. In 1952 Prell demolished the Club Bingo (the Club Bingo operations were moved to downtown at 23 E. Fremont St.) and began construction of the Sahara Hotel on the site.



Directly across the street from the El Rancho Vegas, the Sahara Hotel prospered and soon plans were made for an extensive development. The Del Webb corporation was hired to build the expansion. By 1961 Del Webb had purchased the Sahara Hotel property from Prell and others in satisfaction of the construction debt. Prell had formed Perwin, Inc., to operate the Club Bingo and the Sahara Hotel.

In early 1962 three New York investors built a deluxe country club in the English tutor style at 3667 Las Vegas Blvd. South and named it the Tally Ho Hotel. It opened in February of 1963 without a casino and subsequently failed in October of the same year. In 1964 the property was sold to a number of investors from Indiana, and renamed the Kings Crown Tally Ho Hotel. Operating without a casino the, the property again failed.



A group of Nevada investors leased the property, built a casino area complete with gaming tables, and ordered gaming checks with the name Kings Crown. The only catch was that they did not have a gaming license. The Nevada Gaming control board refused to license the property and once again the hotel failed. (The unused checks were sold to Sharkey Begovich, [Sharkey's Nugget - Gardnerville, Nevada] who had the inlays removed and replaced by a locally printed inlay for Sharkey!)



In early 1966 Milton Prell purchased the Tally Ho property and opened it as the Aladdin Hotel on April 1, 1966. Thus was born Milton Prell's Aladdin. The property's luck however did not seem to improve and in 1968 it is reported that a young Greek gambler won more than 10 million dollars in an unlimited baccarat game, effectively bankrupting the casino! Shortly there after the baccarat game was given a limit of \$2,000, but the damage was done.

The Parvin-Dorman corporation was formed with Milton Prell as a stockholder and the Aladdin was sold to the new corporation, infusing new cash into the operation. In July of 1968 the hotel gaming was licensed to the Fremont Hotel Corp. dba Aladdin Hotel. Delbert Coleman was listed as the 100% owner of the operation.



Starting on July 1, 1970 the Aladdin Hotel gaming was licensed to the Prell Hotel Corp. and approved to operate slots, keno, craps, 21 and a big 6. On January 1, 1972 the license for gaming at the Aladdin was transferred to a group of investors headed by Sam Diamond. Among the member of this group was John H. Moss who held a 100% interest in the poker games only. Moss was considered as one of the finest poker players in the world.

Milton Prell's place in Las Vegas history was well established when he died in 1974, but the Aladdin Hotel would continue to have a rocky history. In 1975 the owners began an extensive remodeling and expansion program. The newly redecorated operation was considered by many to be the most beautiful in Nevada.

The Aladdin was not yet free of controversy and on March 16, 1979 the casino operation was taken over by the State of Nevada when members of the Aladdin Hotel Corporation were convicted on racketeering charges in Federal court in Detroit Michigan. Although the state wanted to close the casino, U.S. District Judge Harry Claiborne prevented the closure. In one of the most unusual moves ever taken, the state then picked Mr. Leo Lewis to operate the casino. Judge Claiborne and others felt that by continuing the casino operation they could protect the investors, construction lien holders and the more than 2,000 employees of the operation. The temporary operating arrangement was to continue until the hotel was sold.

The order to keep the Aladdin Hotel open was overturned in 1980 and the state was forced to close the operation for eleven weeks until the hotel was sold. The Casino opened on October 1, 1980 with a new set of owners, but not with a much better luck.



Carson Wayne Newton purchased the hotel & casino with part of the operation in the name of Edward Torres and DarLar irrevocable trust with Valley Bank of Nevada as the trustee. By 1981 Edward Torres was named as the president of the operation although Wayne Newton continued to have an active part in the operation.

On January 21 of 1986 the Aladdin Hotel was once again forced to close its gaming operations and was for sale. On April 1, 1987 the Ginji Corporation received permission to operate the hotel and casino with Ginji Yasuda as president of the corporation. From 1987 to 1989 the hotel operation continued to operate on a temporary basis as the Nevada Gaming control board repeatedly extended limited licensing until September, 1989. On September 5, 1989 the board granted one of the first licenses to a foreign national to operate a Nevada casino and the Ginji corporation continued to operate under a special waiver of NRS regulations until May 31, 1992.

The present ownership of the Aladdin Hotel is held by JMJ, Inc. At the time of the purchase from Ginji, this corporation was headed by Joseph Burt, now deceased. JMJ, Inc. continues to operate the Aladdin property.



Despite a bumpy ride through history, the Aladdin Hotel has held on to a substantial place in Las Vegas history. Its convention facilities recently hosted the Miss Universe contest seen around the world. Talk of renovation and major changes continue to fuel speculation that this Las Vegas landmark will go the way of the other great early Las Vegas Hotel / Casinos. As the Nevada home of the CC>CC annual convention, the Aladdin Hotel will always have a place in the history of check collecting as a hobby. The Aladdin Hotel checks, chips and tokens over the years have also contributed their share of gaming history.

