

About one and one-half hours east of Phoenix, Arizona, are the towns of Miami, Claypool and Globe. They are reached via Route 60, more commonly known as the “Superstition Freeway”, which takes you past the fabled “Lost Dutchman’s Mine” located somewhere near Weaver’s Needle in the Superstition Mountain.

Danko Gurovich owned and ran a very successful hotel in the Globe/Miami Area. He was also a long time friend of John Wayne. Danko died in September 2000, shortly after I interviewed him for this article. Although Danko was almost 90 years old, he had vivid memories of “those days”, as he so often referred

The first “joint” to appear in Miami was probably “Fitzpatrick’s”. Others were the “Stark Club” which was owned by the mayor, Art Turner and another fellow named Stark. In addition there was “The Monte Carlo”, “Cowboy Johnnie’s”, “Ben Eldson’s Smoke Shop”, “Lester Quinn’s”, “Fred Hills”, “Ben and Rudy’s”, “Fred Whitton’s”, “Harold Montgomery’s”, “John Jakes’s”, “The Silver Front” and the “Keystone Rooms” which also offered prostitution. Although gambling was illegal in Arizona, places were clearly visible and gambling was tolerated, accepted, and profitable for all but the players.

Mining for Old Poker Chips

by John Long

Globe, Claypool and Miami are copper mining towns that at their peak, were home to approximately 40,000 people. Today Miami has a population of about 2,000 and Globe has about 7,000 people and Claypool doesn’t appear on most maps.

Many of the men who worked the mines came from Idaho and Montana. They would work in Arizona in the winter and return to their home state for the summer. Because these men had no families with them the only forms of entertainment were drinking, gambling and prostitution, which seemed to be tolerated in the local towns.

Most of the information that I learned about this area was told to me by local residents, one of them,

to the years from the 1920’s to the 1950’s. For a brief period, Danko worked for the local chief of police, “One-eyed John Welsch”, who served as chief from 1925 to 1958. John Welsch was one tough customer who on occasion had to shoot a man or two to maintain the peace. He was tried for murder three times but never convicted. The chief received his share of gambling profits by looking the other way or maintaining the peace when there were disputes. Tex Montgomery kept watch over the local whorehouses which, according to Danko, numbered around 20.

Danko stated that there were probably 15 “gambling joints” where a man could enjoy Roulette, Poker, Monte (Faro Bank) and the big wheel.

According to Danko most of these places had their own cheques with their name on them. I am at a loss to explain why we have not found a few more of these cheques. I was able to locate two owners who ran illegal games; both were very reluctant to talk with me. I can only guess that they were afraid Uncle Sam would be after them for not reporting gambling income. I was able to find chips from the “Monte Carlo”. They are a four-chip set of Large Crown Mold with the letters “MC”. The Monte Carlo was located in Claypool which is located between Globe and Miami. The building where the bar was located still stands today and is operating as a bar called the “Double J”. Originally, John Gay built the building as a bakery that was





run by his daughter. The Fodera family later bought the building and converted it to a bar and named it the Monte Carlo. The Foderas were one of the families that chose not to talk with me.

While reading a book about the history of Miami, I came across a line, which stated, “there was very little information available about the vice that took place in the area”.

There are still several people here who know all about the illegal gaming and probably have pictures of the interior of some of these places but I have not been able to get anyone to come forward with evidence to show what the activities look like. I will continue to seek information about these times.