

SAL SAGEV

by Gene Trimball

I have done a little research on two previous unknown or at least un-attributed chips. "I believe the chips are from the casinos names in this article". Can I be 100% sure? That is a big qualified, "YES!" I have weighed the stories and evaluated the people that told the stories. I firmly believe, that they believe, what they are saying. I am not going to name the 20 or so old timers involved in the search. Most of them have nothing to gain. The owner of the 2nd chip to be mentioned does not care if he sellsx them or not. The owner of the 1st chip mentions say's "they are not for sale". They have been kind enough to share their memories and knowledge with me. I see no reason to subject them, to what could become, overbearing and repetitive questioning. I found them with little effort and of course anyone else could. The day is fast approaching when there will not be any old timers to give us this information.

First a little background on the times. Special thanks to Harvey Fuller and two other un-named contributors. Around 1947 and 48, there was a lot of talk about banning gambling in Nevada. It was corrupt. The powers that be, got together and started to form, what became the Gaming Commission and Gaming Control Board. I am not sure the date all of this finally came about, but it was in the early 50's. Before the GBC came into being, if you wanted a gambling license in Clark county, Glen Jones was the man to see. He was the sheriff and Chairman of the Clark County Commission of Liquor and Gaming Board. It was not un-usual for Sherill Jones to be called to an already operating casino. He would fill out the papers on the spot, and you would have an instant license. In one case, he told the operator "go ahead" and no papers were filled out. I have spoke to two men that operated casinos after a visit from Jones. One ran a casino at the Westerner. Most records were destroyed in a fire at the White Horse Hotel in Carson City in 1960 per Harvey. He did find some old Clark county records in Washoe County.

Sal Sagev! A few years ago, I would have thought someone uttering these words to me was saying aloha, adios, or just plain Ta Ta. In case you haven't heard the words, it was the name of a Las Vegas Hotel. Sal Sagev is Las Vegas spelled back

wards. This is the property most chippers know as the Golden Gate Casino. There was no known gaming license there until 1955 when the Golden Gate opened a casino. The Sal Sagev hotel was opened in 1906 by Abe Miller.

Abe Miller did run a casino at the Sal Sagev. Roulette and BJ for sure. I am not sure when he opened the casino or if he had a license. Everything I have been told about Abe, leads me to believe he did have a license. For some unknown reason, Abe became disenchanted with gambling and in the last week of October 1934, he closed his casino. Abe told people, he was finished with gambling. He carefully wrapped an Albert Pick roulette wheel and 5 color set of SSC roulette chips in paper. Then re-wrapped the whole thing in a tarp. It was stored at the SS until 1956.

In the late 1940's it was the place the railroad workers stayed. There was a poker table at the Sal Sagev. Why did Abe allow a poker table? I do not know. In 1946 a young 21 year old BJ dealer working at the Last Frontier was hired to open downtown's newest casino, The Golden Nugget. He was quite experienced as he started in gaming several years before at the Showboat in Louisiana. This was located across the Texas state line from Orange, Texas. He watched many poker games at the Sal Sagev through the early 50's.

When showed a picture of the SSC chips, he immediately identified them. I also talked to a 2nd person that confirms a poker table with chips, in the SS, in the late 40's. I believe this was a second set of SS chips with denominations. Possibly the ones used on the BJ tables prior to 1934. I can safely say, the roulettes were still in storage at this time.

In 1955, four men, Picardo, Curante, Ghelfi, and Massaro made a deal to open a casino in the SS. The Golden Gate was born. In 1956, Abe told one of the men that he had something for him. He told the gentleman, it was a souvenir of the early days of the SS. Abe gave him the Albert Pick and chips still wrapped in the tarp. I have been told Albert Pick of Chicago, stopped making wheels about 1950. I did not have time to confirm this.

The new owner took the package home and he and his wife unwrapped it. It became a coffee table. It sits today, were they put it, in 1956. It has 681 SSC chips in 5 colors. Brown will be the rarest color by far, with only 5. There are also, 200 white, 162 yellow, 162 blue, and 157 green. I think there were 1,000 to

begin with, in the 30's. I met the lady that un-wrapped this package. She was gracious enough to invite me to see it. This very nice lady, then made a startling statement. She said " I saved the paper it came in, do you want to see it?" When she unpacked the wheel, she had carefully folded the paper around some old paper, but, why not? When she opened this package saved from 1956, I was stunned to see 5 days of the Los Angeles Examiner newspaper, dated October 22, 23, 24, 25, and 26, 1934. Tears came to my eyes. They were yellowing and raggedy, but to me, they were beautiful. I believe Abe stopped gambling in the SS on October 27, 1934. If not, then the L.A.E. for October 27 should have been wrapped around the Albert Pick. Just a hunch, but all of my other hunched on this one, have proved to be true. I had a good feeling from day one and could not wait to find the next old timer on the path to the Albert Pick. I knew it existed the 1st time it was mentioned to me.

Will the chips ever come into the market? Your guess is as good as mine. Heirs do sell things, but some heirs keep the mementos of lost loved ones. If the wheel is ever sold, Abe's daughter has asked for the 1st change at purchasing it. Are the SSC chips from the Sal Sagev? You bet your sweet bippie.

I regret that space keeps me from relaying all the stories I heard while researching the SS. Thank you to all of the old timers, that took the time to share the past with me. Especially the lady that unwrapped the Albert Pick in 1956. She is a real lady, and a preserver of Nevada gaming history. Thank you Ma'am, for being so nice and sharing with us. The Sal Sagev chips can now take their place in the Gaming Table, where they belong.

The chips are the small key mold, made by the Burt Co. in Portland, MA and distributed by B.C. Wills. Gold hot stamp, SS is stamped over an oblong C. All B.C. Wills chips are hard to trace as there are no records from this Co. The Burt Co. did not do the hot stamping, so again there are no records.

I am out of space! My 2nd research project, will have to wait until December.

