

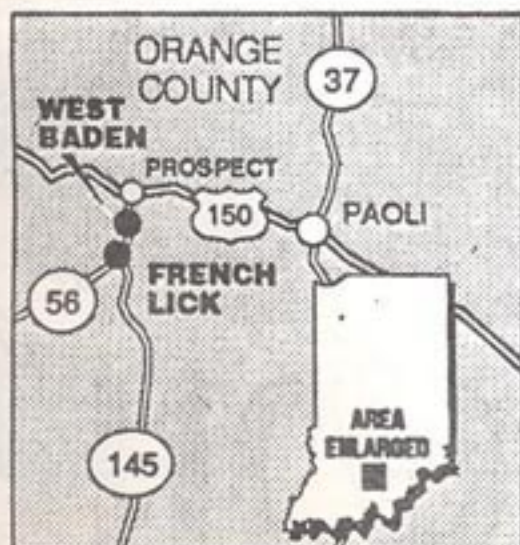
'SOUTHERN INDIANA GAMBLING'

By Dr. Allan Myers (CH-027)

Gambling in Southern Indiana during its hey-day was centered in two regions. They were the French Lick/ West Baden area about 60 miles north of the Ohio River, and the adjoining towns of Jeffersonville and New Albany, which lie on the Ohio River across from Louisville, Kentucky.

French Lick and West Baden were a gambler's mecca from the late 1890's until 1949 when they and all of the other gaming casinos and clubs in the state were closed. The downtown French Lick casinos were *The Brown Casino*, *Elite Club* and the famous *French Lick Springs Hotel*. The Gorge was a ritzy country cousin at the edge of town. A few miles down Hwy. 145 was the *West Baden Springs Hotel* in West Baden. These luxurious Orange County resort hotels were visited by high rollers from throughout the midwest and brought tourism and convention business to the area. For the first half of the 20th century, the towns and their hotels were popular with the well-known and the well-heeled. They bathed the visitors inside and out with the sulphuric wash of their mineral springs, then entertained them with golf and games of chance.

The state closed the Orange county casinos in 1949 after influential French Lick hotel owner Tom Taggart, Sr. died and a local political feud became too disturbing. Visitors still came to town but in diminished numbers. The French Lick is now a Sheraton Hotel and still draws many tourists for their fine dining and beautiful yet demanding golf courses. Many of the putting greens are on four foot plateaus and the rough is similar to Scottish courses. Some sandtraps are 6 to 10 feet deep and you need a ladder to get in and out of these monster bunkers. It would be cost prohibitive to build a course of such magnitude today.



The Brown Casino



Elite Club



West Baden Springs Hotel

Jeffersonville was founded in 1802. Shortly after, in 1819, gambling was established at *Jefferson Springs*, a mineral water resort near 11th and Spring Streets. A century later, Jeffersonville and its environs boasted popular gambling houses such as *Phipps' Roadhouse* near Dead Man's Hollow on Blackiston Mill Road and *Beach Grove Roadhouse* near the Pennsylvania Railroad tracks on the edge of Claysburg.

These and similar establishments were subject to occasional police raids during the 1920's, but the raids nearly always resulted from alleged violations of the prohibition laws. Gambling equipment rarely was seized and local police apparently made little effort to interfere with gambling operations. A majority of the gaming patrons came from Louisville, crossing the mile wide river on The Blue Line ferry boats operated by the Yellow Cab Company. In 1922 the Clark Municipal Bridge was erected and ferry traffic ceased. Many years later, in 1937, the *Municipal Bar* opened at the north end of the bridge. It was never really a bar, rather it was just another downtown gambling spot.

The first major gaming club to open in Clark County was the *Log Cabin*, built in 1926 by Claude Williams in Jeffersonville. It was a first-class operation and offered entertainment by some of the "Big Bands" of the era such as Tommy Dorsey's, Lawrence Welk's and Glenn Miller's. The *Log Cabin* consisted of a large main building and about 50 small circling cabins. It burned in 1929 and was rebuilt by Tom O'Neil, opening in time for New Year's Eve, 1930. This building still stands and is used by the Silgas Company off I-65.



Beach Grove Roadhouse



Municipal Bar



Log Cabin

In 1929, Joe Adams a Kentucky born Florida based dog racing promoter opened the Jeffersonville Dog Mart near Hgwy 131 on what is presently Eastern Blvd. Constructed at a cost of \$75,000, the track seated 3,000 for greyhound races. The racing track closed in 1936. Directly behind the track was probably the best known casino in Jeffersonville. This was the original *Greyhound Club*, built in 1932 by Weezer Gavin, his brothers Jim and Tom, and Dean First, all of Dayton, Ohio. This club was also destroyed by fire in 1934.

It was rebuilt nearby and was renamed the *Club Greyhound*. This club was on par with some of the larger Las Vegas casinos of its day. Gaming consisted of blackjack, craps, roulette, poker, chuck-a-luck and birdcage. *Club Greyhound* did not evoke a "speak-easy" atmosphere. There were no windows in the door in which to whisper "Joe sent me!" The gambling rooms were not hidden. They were clearly visable upon entering the club. Patrons could enjoy gourmet dining and entertainment by Al Jolson, The Andrew Sisters, Wee Bonnie Baker, Helen Morgan and other top stars. They could dance to the sounds of Guy Lombardo, Tommy Dorsey, Glenn Miller, Harry James and others. The club was closed in 1939 by local politicians but reopened soon after when the Gavins moved their operations on a much smaller scale to Court Avenue over Antz Cafe. It was then known as *The Little Greyhound* until it was closed in 1949.

Official Greyhound Racing Form and Program

• 15¢ •

10 Races Nightly-except Sunday
America's fastest Racers!

WED.
May 23

Post Time
8:15 p.m.

Jeffersonville Dog Mart
Jeffersonville, Ind.

Staff file photos

Jeffersonville's Dog Mart held 10 races nightly in 1934.



Greyhound Club



Club Greyhound



The Little Greyhound

Another posh club in Clark County was the *Silver Creek Country Club* on old Hwy. 62. It was owned by Walter Maddox, a former Chicago hood with reputed ties to Al Capone's mob. One of the first visitors when the club opened in 1933 was David "Cockeyed Mulligan" Albin [love those names], Capone's chief bodyguard. Numerous machine-gun murders were comitted here. The last was that of Maddox himself.



119 - 125 Court Avenue in the 1940's

The *Seville Club* was on Hwy. 131 near the *Silver Creek Country Club*. Another early club (1928) on the banks of Silver Creek was *Club Lido Venice*. It was originally owned by a Dr. Deware of Louisville and was destroyed by the "Great Flood" in 1937. It was rebuilt in 1945 by Dominic Mortacelli, also from Louisville. It was again hit by a flood in 1945 and never reopened.

Gambling was not limited to the major casinos. There were many smaller ones downtown on Court Avenue, the Main Street, U.S.A. of Jeffersonville. The "numbered" clubs on Court Ave. were The 110 Club, 117 Court Club, 119 Club, 121 Club, 121 1/2 Club (a still smaller club/horse-book in the rear of 121), 1-2-3 Club, 125 Club (over Antz Cafe where the Club Greyhound became the Little Greyhound) and The 322 Club.



117 Court Club



119 Club



121 Club



121 1/2 Club



1-2-3 Club

Other downtown Jeffersonville clubs were The Turf Club, Court Club, Indiana Club, Black Diamond, Casino X and Walter's Place.



The Turf Club



Court Club



Indiana Club



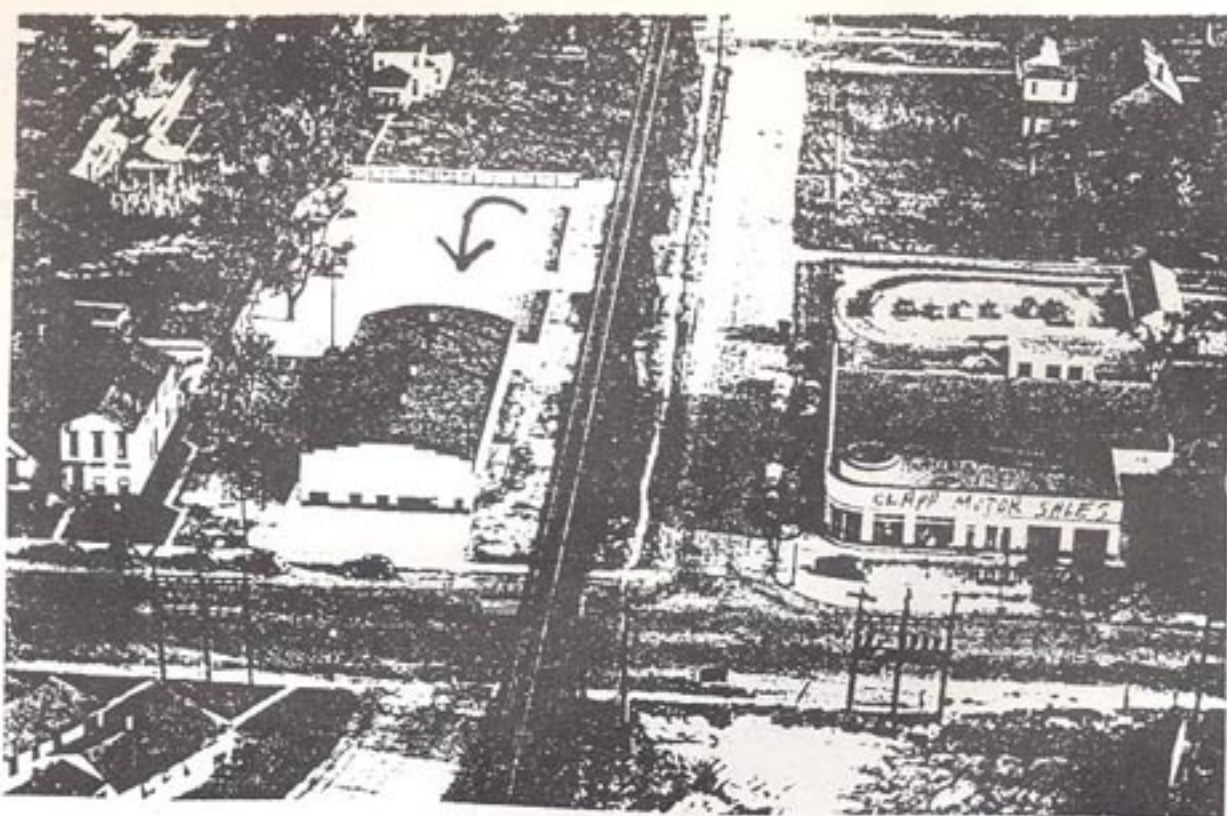
Casino X



Black Diamond

Walter's Place, also owned by Maddox, was the site of one of the most notorious incidents in the area. On July 2, 1937, three gunmen entered Walter's Place searching for Walt Maddox. Among the patrons were Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Amster of New Albany. Mistaking Amster for Maddox, the intruders opened fire, hitting Amster with a fatal wound to the right shoulder. Maddox was charged with frightening away witnesses and was later convicted of perjury in the case. He was the only person prosecuted after the killing of Clarence Amster.

The shooting triggered a public outcry over gambling and led to the closing of the Club Greyhound for about five weeks. A 1937 Grand Jury investigation had failed to produce evidence of gambling in the club.



Casino X 1947

There are many local stories surrounding the Club Greyhound. One involves the famous jockey, Eddie Arcaro, who lost \$2,500 playing craps on the night before riding Lawren in the 1938 Kentucky Derby. His 10% share of the purse in this, his first of four Kentucky Derby victories, more than covered his losses from the night before! Another local legend recounts Clark Gable losing \$68,000 in twenty-seven minutes...Talk about "Gone With the Wind"...Wow!!! And these were 1939 dollars!!

The Pines was a magnificent plush club on Hwy 150 about two miles north of New Albany in Floyd County. It sat on the top of Floyd Knobs where there was only one road entering or leaving the club. In the rear, there was an eighty foot drop straight down the knobs. The club sat back a piece from the road which was made up of seven hairpin curves. This road could be seen from a restroom window where a henchman sat on the commode with a high-powered rifle. He would sound the alarm if the club was in danger of being raided or he would rush into the main room if a commotion arose. He liked to be known as the only gunman who made his living sitting on the john.



The Pines

During a raid on The Pines in 1931, The Jeffersonville Evening News reported that federal agents destroyed \$2,500 worth of equipment including 12 slot machines, 3 crap tables and a roulette wheel. The owners, Tom Bailey, Gus Kramer, Auggie Bauer and Walt Wolford were arrested, and were sentenced from 30 days to four months each. They were not convicted for gambling or selling liquor but for violating the Prohibition Law of selling ice and set-ups

After the Clarence Amster slaying in 1937, the authorities in Clark and Floyd counties began to crack down. James L. Bottorff was elected as the Clark Circuit Court judge in 1938. Upon taking office in January 1939, he announced that gambling would no longer be tolerated. He ordered all clubs to comply with the law. The order, he said, was permanent and would be enforced as long as he was on the bench.

Under Bottorff's pressure, the major casinos closed. They remained closed until the end of World War II when gambling began to reappear in downtown Jeffersonville. In 1947, local operators constructed a fancy gambling parlor called Casino X. It opened shortly before Christmas, 1947. Judge Bottorff, true to his word, contacted Col. Robert Rossow, Chief of the Indiana State Police. They then planned the largest gambling raid in Clark County history. On January 2, 1948, 75 state troopers simultaneously hit Casino X, 119 Club, 125 Club (Antz Cafe), Indiana Club and the 322 Club. Thousands of dollars worth of gaming equipment was destroyed and 63 persons were arrested. About \$12,000 in confiscated cash was given to charity.

A rather humorous incident occurred that night when a well-known gambler, Paddy Hogan, rushed to the men's room when he saw the authorities come in. He won \$1,500 in a few fast throws of the dice on the tile floor before the casino was closed. "Gettin' out of town money," Paddy said with a grin.



Judge James L. Bottorff, above left, and Col. Robert Rossow, above right, of the Indiana State Police, were instrumental in closing gambling operations.



FILE PHOTO

An Indiana State Police officer dismantled a roulette table seized in a gambling raid in Jeffersonville in 1948.

The Casinos tried to reopen several months later but were again raided by the state police. All of the Southern Indiana clubs were then closed and their era as "Little Las Vegas" was over.

Over the past few years, areas in Southern and Northern Indiana, in particular Gary, near Chicago, have been economically depressed with more than 8% unemployment rates. A bill was proposed in the 1991 legislature to authorize casino gambling in French Lick, West Baden and Gary as well as riverboat gaming on the Ohio River. It was narrowly defeated this spring but is certain to be brought up again.

A LISTING OF THE GAMING CHIPS OF SOUTHERN INDIANA
(Known by the author)

	<u>Value</u>	<u>Color</u>	<u>Rim</u>	<u>Design</u>
<u>French Lick</u>				
The Brown Casino	---	Yellow	Smooth	Inlaid
Elite Club	---	Mustard	LCrown	HS
<u>West Baden</u>				
West Baden Springs	\$5.00	Green	LCrown	HS
<u>Jeffersonville</u>				
117 Court Club	---	Red	RctHrt	HS
117 Court Club	\$5.00	Green	RctHrt	HS
117 Court Club	\$25	Violet	RctHrt	HS
119 Club	---	Yellow	T's	HS
121 Club	---	Brown	RctHrt	HS
121 (Club)	---	Yellow	SmKey	HS
121 1/2 (Club)	---	Yellow	Hub	HS
1-2-3 Club	.50	White	SmKey	HS
Beach Grove [BG]	---	Green	SmKey	HS
Beach Grove [BG]	---	Pink	SmKey	HS
Black Diamond [BD]	\$1.00	Blue	Harp	HS
Black Diamond [BD]	\$5.00	Green	Harp	HS
Black Diamond [BD]	---	Red	SmDiamnd	HS
Black Diamond [BD]	---	Green	SmDiamnd	HS
Black Diamond [BD]	---	Rose	SmKey	HS
Casino X [X]	---	Beige	SmKey	HS
Court Club [CC]	---	Yellow	SmKey	HS
Greyhound Club [G]	---	Blue	Diamnd	HS
Greyhound Club [G]	---	Green	Diamnd	HS
Greyhound Club [G]	---	Brown	Diamnd	HS
Club Greyhound	---	Red	Cord	HS
Club Greyhound	---	Yellow	Cord	HS
Club Greyhound	---	Black	Hub	Inlaid
Little Greyhound [G]	---	Orange	Harp	HS
Indiana Club	---	Red	T's	HS
Indiana Club	---	Yellow	T's	HS
Indiana Club	---	Black	T's	HS
Log Cabin	---	White	OChain	HS
Municipal Bar	---	White	Hub	HS
Municipal Bar	---	Mustard	Hub	HS
The Turf (Club)	\$10	Blue	SmKey	HS
<u>New Albany</u>				
The Pines	---	Blue	Hub	Inlaid
The Pines	---	Brown	Hub	Inlaid

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Chips That Appeared in Michael Knapp's "Information Booth"

UFC #4	Elite Club, French Lick
UFC #48	Municipal Bar, Jeffersonville
UFC #72	121 Club, Jeffersonville
UFC #118	Little Greyhound or 125 Club (Antz Cafe), Jeffersonville
UFC #119	Greyhound Club, Jeffersonville
UFC #190	Black Diamond, Jeffersonville
UFC #199	The Pines, New Albany (Floyd Knobs)
UFC #210	Club Greyhound, Jeffersonville