

The BAMA chips came from a friend. I have 2 to trade. They will be in my trader box at the convention and "Illegal Seminar Of The Year," Ed Hertel and myself are hosting.

The date is January 1959. A green teenaged "Know it all" enlists in the US Army. They ship him to Ft Knox, KY for processing and in a few weeks he is sent to FT Benning, GA for 6 full months of boot camp and helicopter assault training. The US Army was preparing the last of the "Gyro" units to rotate to Germany to replace the 10th Airborne. It only took our "Know it all" a few days at FT Benning, to realize he did not "Know it all." <g> He had to grow up pretty quick if he wanted to survive.

Six months later we were prepared and had a big parade for the generals. We had 30 days to get the unit and its equipment ready to board ships at Savanna, GA for the "Gyro." But 1st there was a 3 day pass! <g>

For those six long months we had heard all sorts of stories about Phenix City, Alabama. It was the "Sin City" of the south. The stories that interested us centered on "GIRLS-GIRLS-GIRLS." The only problem was Phenix City was "Off Limits" to US Army personnel. We figured there was 1,000's of us getting leave at the same time and there was not enough MP's in the world to catch all of us. The odds were in our favor and this was our last chance to see it. <g> That might have been my 1st gamble.

Early August 1959 a few days after my 17th birthday and I am standing on a corner in Phenix City in awe of what I saw. The thought never occurred to me I was about to enter a world that would influence the rest of my life. **I was moments away from stepping foot in my "1st illegal casino."** <g> I wish I could remember the name of the 1st one we entered. It did not seem important at the time.

I was born and raised in Covington and Newport KY but way too young to know what went on, on Monmouth St. Three years after my visit to Phenix City, I stood on Monmouth St (once again in awe) and saw the same things I saw on Dillingham St in Phenix City. This was in April 1962. Fresh out of the army, a friend wrangled me an invite to a private poker game at the Merchants Club. Later that night I knocked at a rear door and Martin Miller let me in. A 50 year odyssey in the world of poker had begun.

Phenix City was raided by the Alabama National Guard in the mid 1950's. This is the 3rd state I know of that the National Guard was brought in to shut down the illegal casinos. Hot Springs, Arkansas and Newport, Kentucky were the other 2. Twice the guard was brought into Newport and twice they failed to shut it down. The mindset of the locals in the area beat the guard both times.

The girly joints were running wild in Phenix City, 1959. Some had hustlers outside hustling gambling but the girls are what concerned us. No one asked for ID's or proof of age. We were in a lot of joints and I feel certain we were in the Bama Club but the names of the joints are lost in this old memory. 53 years is a long time.

Enough of that:

Alabama:



BAMA1att2

The Bama Club and Corral'

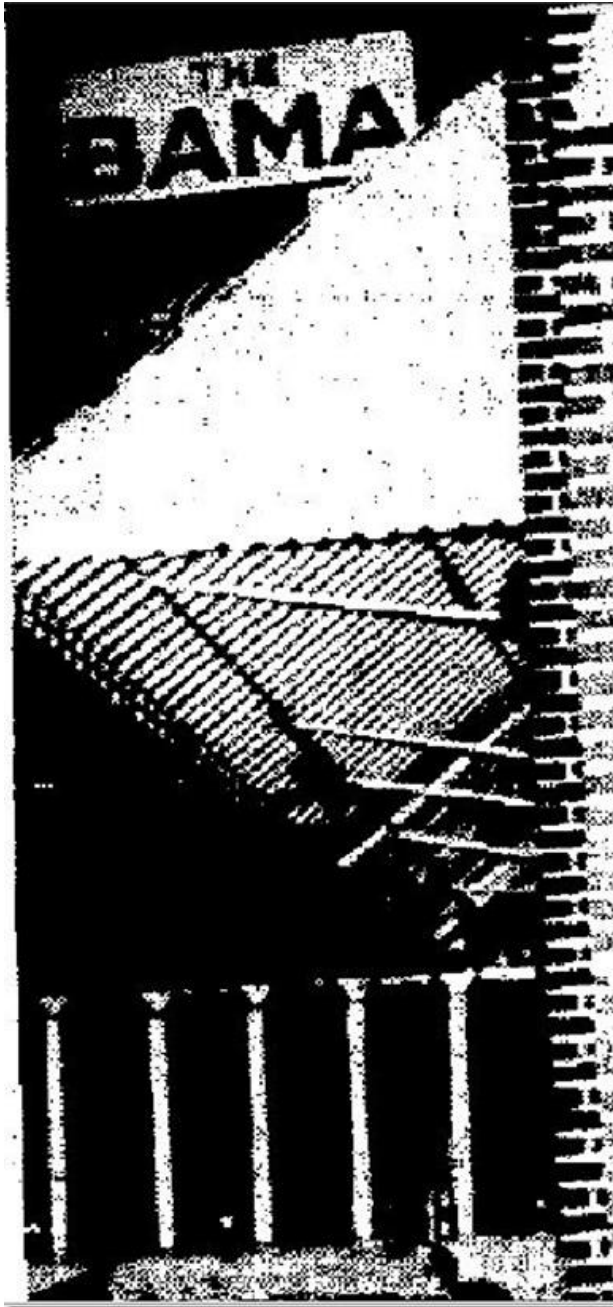
Phenix City, Alabama

Tons of stuff has been put together about the story of Phenix City—articles, books, movies, documentaries, etc. The Bama Club--located at the corner of Dillingham and 5th, just across one of the bridges over the Chattahoochee from Columbus, Georgia—was one of the best known places in town. Here's a pic looking west down Dillingham from the bridge. Bama sign visible on far right:



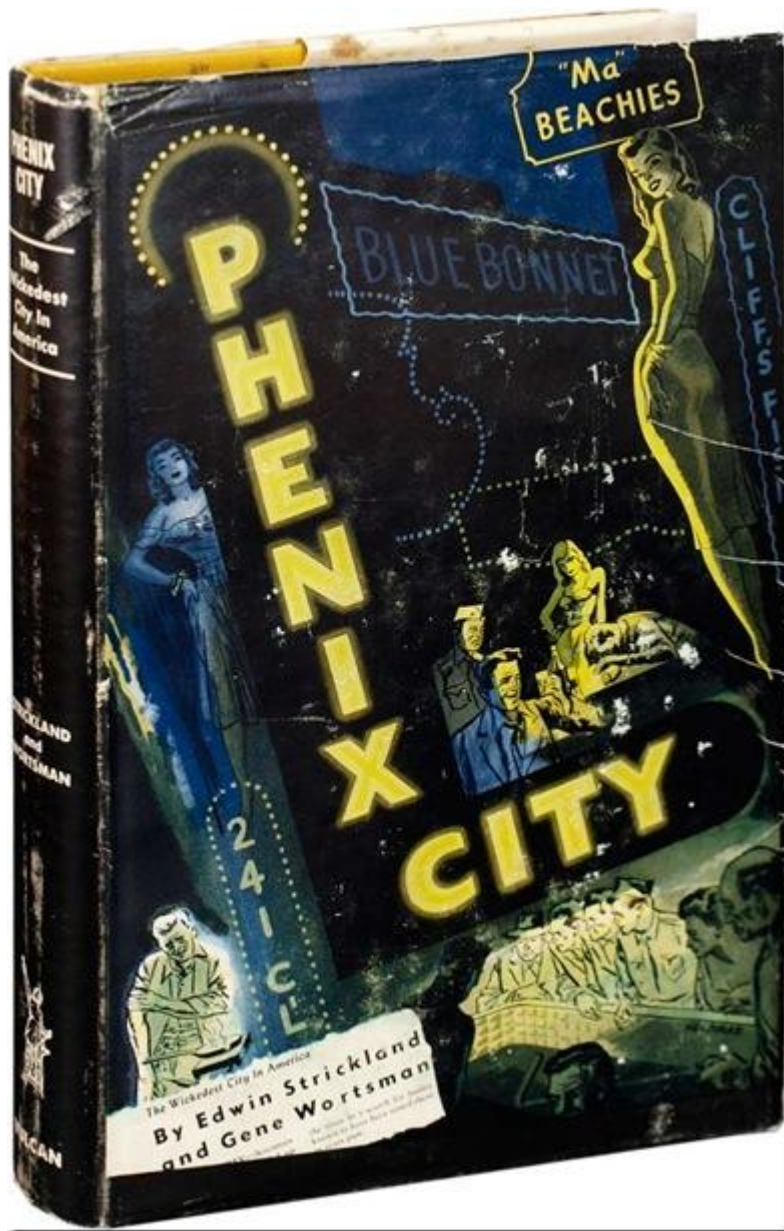
BAMA2att2

another pic showing the sign and front entrance:



BAMA3att2

This book, *Phenix City: The Wickedest City in America* was published in 1955 and written by two reporters from Birmingham:



BAMA4att2

They give this description of the Bama Club:

VII

GAMBLING WAS NO GAMBLE

ONE REMARKABLE FACT STANDS OUT in the story of Phenix City. Nobody ever gambled there. Its famous old Dillingham Street has been mis-named the "Gamblingest Street in the World." While it's true that a dozen places along a single block of this street annually took in sums from dice tables and slot machines that would rival the operating budget of a city like Birmingham or Miami, nevertheless if gambling is defined as the staking of money on the hope of a return of more money, the Phenix City brand couldn't qualify. The sucker who entered a gambling house had almost no chance at all of coming out with his roll intact, much less of carrying away any house money.

There seemed to be only one exception to that rule in Phenix. Old time gambling figures say that a straight dice game could be had at the Bama Club when it was operated by J. Hoyt Shepherd and Jimmy Matthews, partners in the old S & M Amusement Company.

It was in the Bama Club that the biggest games were held. Witnesses report seeing over one hundred thousand dollars cross the dice tables in a single evening. One of the co-authors of this book has seen thousands of dollars on the dice tables there at one time. After Shepherd and Matthews became established as the gambling kingpins of the city, having amassed fortunes, they apparently decided that honesty was the best business policy for a gambling house. They knew, at least, that in order to attract the big money from the north and east, they would have to give the customers a fair shake for their money.

Riding with only the regular house odds, Shepherd and Matthews operated "no limit" games of crap and high dice. The "pallet" or bank which they put up as a target sometimes amounted to fifty thousand dollars, with an almost

unlimited reserve fund behind it. The house sometimes won huge sums, as on VJ night in 1945 when a gambler from nearby Columbus, Georgia, dropped his roll of sixty-four thousand dollars within a few hours.

On the other hand, the house was hit for large sums on occasion, dropping about thirty-five thousand one slow afternoon when there were only three persons at the dice table.

The Bama Club attracted big-time gamblers from New York, Chicago, Miami, Birmingham, Boston and other major cities. After the place was closed by National Guardsmen following the murder of Patterson, General Hanna checked air traffic from the major cities to Columbus and found that it was off by about fifty per cent. Many of the big gambling figures flying down for the lush pickings in Miami during the winter season, would stop off in Phenix for a warm-up at the Bama. Many of them got no further, having been picked clean on the green dice fields of the club on Dillingham.

The Bama offered gambling in almost any form the customer might choose. It had slot machines, roulette, blackjack and poker, as well as a modern horse-room where you could bet on the nags or buy a parlay on football or baseball. Drinks and food were on the house to good customers, and for their entertainment while they gambled, a big-time orchestra and floor show were offered.

About two years before Patterson was killed, Shepherd and Matthews announced with much fanfare that they were quitting the rackets. They surrendered more than five hundred thousand dollars worth of slot machines, and turned the management of the Bama Club over to new hands.

The new operators were Stewart McCollister, a protégé of Shepherd and Matthews, J. D. Abney, Clyde Yarbrough and J. D. (Frog) Jones. The new management did not hold strictly to the idea of giving the customer an even break, and there was a substantial decline in the business coming in from the north and east. But they still offered gambling of every type, including lottery, and sold fireworks as a side line. All types of fireworks are illegal in Alabama.

BAMA5att2

My note: Hoyt Shepherd and Jimmy Matthews ran the Bama Club. As you can read above they took on all comers with honest games. It may have been the only joint in Phenix City that had games with the true odds.

Phenix City had the usual rules that were the norm for other large illegal hubs we have read about, bribery, bootlegging, fixed games, mayhem, and murder. <g>

Here's a pic of J. Hoyt Shepherd, the original owner of the Bama:



BAMA6att2

another pic of Shepherd and his partner Jimmy Matthews:

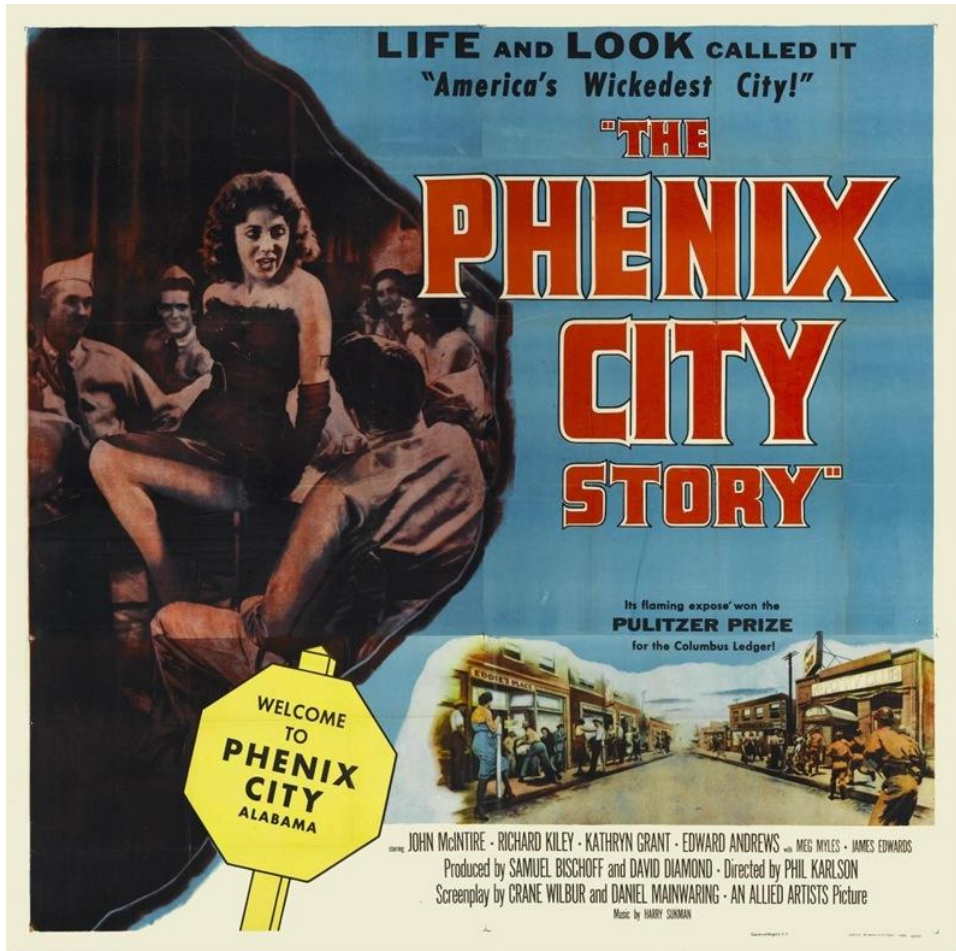


ARRESTED POLITICAL BOSS, Hoyt Sheppard, signs his bond after his arrest on charge of leasing property to gamblers. Sheppard's partner Jimmy Matthews waits at left to sign his own bond.

BAMA7att2

My note: How old do you think the National Guardsman in the picture is? <g> I'm betting he is a teenager.

In 1955 this film was released:



BAMA8

Turner Classic Movies is showing the movie this Thursday, May 10th at 8 PM Eastern Time. Here's a link to their promotion:

<http://www.tcm.com/mediaroom/video/485129/Now-Playing-Ben-s-Pick-Movie-Promo-May-2012.html>

Here's a list Phenix City's "houses of fun and frolic" from *Phenix City: The Wickedest City in America* (1955):

TOURISTS' GUIDE

AS A SPECIAL SERVICE TO READERS, herewith is recorded the official blue-ribbon, almost all-inclusive, Alabama National Guard listing of Phenix City's houses of fun and frolic. You could enter them, before the clean-up, at your own risk. Get on the roller coaster now and take a trip through what was the "business" district of America's wickedest city.

North side of Fourteenth Street, as though crossing from Columbus:

RIVERSIDE CAFÉ: Owned and operated by Glenn Youngblood. Soldiers were rolled and drugged. B-girls were bought off for prostitution. B-Girls were instructed to take drunk GIs to the Oyster Bar for gambling.

OYSTER BAR: Downstairs under the Phenix Finance Company. Owned and operated by Glenn Youngblood.

YARBROUGH'S CAFÉ: Owned and operated by Clyde Yarbrough and Stewart McCollister who also had interests in the Bama Club. Plenty much gambling.

BOONE'S CAFÉ: High knocker was E. V. Boone. Specialized in knockout drinks, rolling dogfaces, and running the B-girl pawn racket. Unconsumed beer was re-bottled and re-sold. B-girls could be bought for whoring.

HAYTAG: Glenn Youngblood was proprietor. Customers were drugged. B-girls could be hired for other purposes.

COFFEE POT: E. V. Boone and Glenn Youngblood were joint owners.

GOLDEN RULE CAFÉ: France Knighton, a gent whose motto was Do Unto Others Before They Do Unto You. This "café" actually was around the corner from Fourteenth Street on Fourth Avenue.

South side of Fourteenth Street, as though crossing from Columbus again:

DAVIS SPORTING GOODS & PAWN SHOP: William (Bubba) Davis was commander in chief.

MANHATTAN CAFÉ: Owned by the Davis' Enterprises.

SILVER SLIPPER: Owned by Davis' Enterprises, it was no place for a queen, offering gambling and prostitution.

MANHATTAN CLUB: Upstairs over Manhattan Café and Silver Slipper. Here was headquarters for the National Lottery.

SILVER DOLLAR: Rudene Smith and H. C. Edwards served tasty dishes of bed-bouncing, dice, and poker.

CURT'S CAFÉ: Operated by Curt Daugherty, who ran slot machines, poker, dice, lottery, prostitution, and rolled soldiers. (Not much left to do, was there?)

BLUE BONNET CAFÉ: Gambling, prostitution and tatooing while you wait. Your genial host: Frank Gullatt.

Now let's jump down to the Dillingham Street Bridge and start across from Columbus once more and look at the North side of the street:

BAMA CLUB and CORRAL: This was big-time stuff. It was widely advertised and attracted suckers from distant points. Reservations in advance often were necessary. Almost every type of gambling known to man (and Phenix City) which included poker, lottery, slots, blackjack, and parlays on football, baseball and basketball. Maintained a large stock of fireworks. Clip joint specialists were Stewart McCollister, J. D. Abney, Clyde Yarbrough, and J. D. (Frog) Jones.

YELLOW FRONT CAFÉ: Run by W. C. Roney and his son, Lawrence, who also operated the

514 CLUB: Both houses contained slot machines, dice tables, and were lottery headquarters. The buildings were owned by State Legislator Ben L. Cole, a silent partner to the Roneys for years. Next door was

GIRARD CLEANERS which served as a pickup station for lottery.

Crossing over to the South side:

BRIDGE GROCERY: Headquarters for C. O. (Head) Revel and George T. Davis Sr. of the Metropolitan Lottery. Inside

were roulette wheels, lottery equipment, business machines and an elaborate inside warning device.

NEW BRIDGE CAFÉ: Gambling under the sponsorship of David Griggs.

RITZ CAFÉ: Fat A. B. (Buck) Billingsley gypped the customers here with lottery and gambling.

602 CLUB: This was behind the Ritz. Andy Cook was in charge of gambling.

ABC STORE: Building leased to the state by Hoyt Shepherd and Jimmy Matthews.

ORIGINAL BARBECUE: Assorted gambling and command post for E. L. (Red) Cook's lottery.

BENNIE'S CLUB: Dice tables, slots, lottery records.

Hit Highway 431 and 80 for more festivities:

DIAMOND HORSESHOE: This pickup station for prostitutes was owned by Ernest Youngblood.

JACK'S CAFÉ: Jack Hunt ran a dice table and slot machines.

SUNNY LANE CAFÉ: Nobody was really "sunny" here except R. M. Lane, the big cheese of the joint.

241 CLUB: Gambling and prostitution for sale by "Buck" Bush.

HILLBILLY CLUB: Prostitution.

VETO'S TRAILER PARK: Prostitution on wheels.

SKYLINE CLUB: More bedroom enjoyment as well as gambling under the baleful eye of H. C. Hardin, Jr.

ELDORADO CLUB: William Henry Clark was in charge of gambling and fornication.

BAMBOO CLUB: A nice atmosphere in which to lose at gambling. W. T. (Bud) Thurmond, Jr., major domo.

RED TOP CAFÉ: Gambling.

SQUARE DANCE CLUB: Names and numbers of each and every whore posted on outside walls with semi-nude pictures.

CLIFF'S FISH CAMP: Should have been called a "cat" house, or possibly "catfish" house. Cliff Entrekin in charge of entertainment.

Time now to roll along Seale Road:

PHENIX CITY CARD COMPANY: Dice loaded, cards marked by the expert, Horace T. Webster.

431 CLUB and THE CIRCLE MOTEL and CAFÉ were field headquarters for Rudene Smith's prostitution racket.

CLUB AVALON: J. D. Abney furnished gambling for Negro customers.

NEW YORK CLUB: This was two blocks west on Stevens Street in the Negro section. It was owned by those merry men of make-believe, Stewart McCollister and J. D. Abney.

COTTON CLUB: For Negro trade, reached by dirt street South of exclusive residential section. Fanny Green, "The Queen of Hearts," MC'd the gambling and other activities.

Numerous other houses of ill repute, entertainment and gambling, such as "Ma" Beachie's, existed throughout the area but you have taken only the quick tour through the most heavily settled section of the county.

BAMA10att2

Take the time to read the list and some of the author's comments. I especially like this one.

Vero's Trailer Park: Pro\$titution on wheels. <g>

I bet there are Club names on the list that are not in TGT.

Note: Some of you old timers will noticed I enlisted in the US Army at the ripe old age of 16 ½ and question my story. I assure you it is true and will tell the "Rest Of That Story" another day.