

Romanticization of “Clip Joints” in the 1930s

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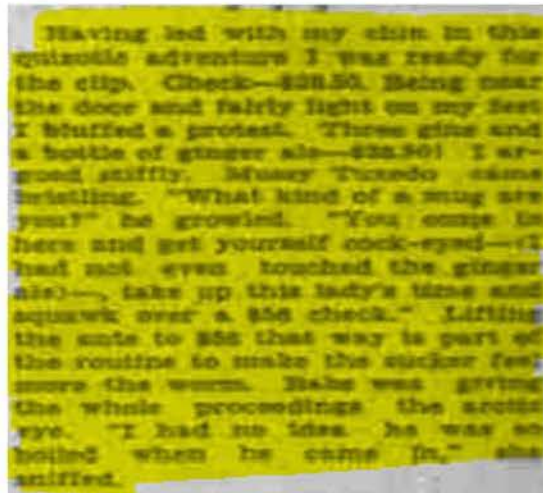


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What Are Clip Joints?

During the 1920s and 1930s the prohibition would not allow alcohol which caused more crime to grow throughout the United States. During this time is when “clip joints” started to become relevant. A “clip joint” is an establishment that scams their customers out of money. Quite literally the word “Clip” refers to the shear of wool or shearing of cash from someone. The word “joint” was slang for a place. The “clip joint” would use all different tactics to trick customers for as much money as possible. For example, these clubs would use women to attract male businessmen in the establishments and spend time with them to have them spend as much money as possible throughout the night, without offering or giving sex for money.

Although these “clip joints” were taking advantage of customers they were still growing with police not doing much to intervene. However, the media began to spread the news and one man named O.O.McIntyre delved into the story and wrote to all the United States about it.



“Having led with my chin in this quixotic adventure I was ready for the clips. Check-\$28.50. Being near the door and fairly light on my feet I bluffed a protest. Three gins and a bottle of ginger ale-\$28.50! I argued swiftly. Messy Tuxedo came bristling, ‘What kind of a mug are you?’ he growled. ‘You came in here and got yourself cock-eyed-(I had not even touched the ginger ale)-,take up this lady’s time and squawk over a \$50 check.’ Lifting the ante to \$50 that way is part of the routine to make the sucker feel more the worm. Babe was giving the whole proceedings the [illegible] eye. ‘I had no idea he was so behind when he came in ,’ she sniffled.”

O.O. McIntyre, “New York Day by Day,” *The Pensacola Journal*, August 6, 1935.

O.O. McIntyre

Oscar Odd McIntyre was one of the most famous journalist for a newspaper during the 1920s and 1930s. People throughout the United States read his “New York Day by Day” articles. He stresses the fact that “clip joints” are rampant around New York and taking advantage of many tourists in the areas. Most importantly he discusses that the women of the dance schools who graduate in New York can not find work in Broadway so are immediately forced to work as a hostess for these seedy places. Americans reading his stories are truly interested in New York and begin enjoying the stories for the crime and not the issues of that crime.



Jim McDermott, “Portrait of O.O. McIntyre,” Creative Commons Attribution.

Hollywood’s Popularization

Although the newspapers were now covering “clip joint” stories it gained traction all the way to Hollywood. A movie was release called “Marked Woman” which was about the racket of the “clip joints” and discusses the woman’s side of the establishments. It is overexaggerated and creates more of a romanticization with the detective falling in love with the “hostess” of a “clip joint” who he is trying to save. The movie saw fair reviews and helped push the thrill of crime.

