

1: Gangsters and Gold Diggers by Jerome Charyn

*Gangsters and Gold Diggers: Old New York, the Jazz Age, and the Birth of Broadway [Jerome Charyn] on www.enganchecubano.com *FREE* shipping on qualifying offers. In this rousing tribute to an unforgettable time and place, Jerome Charyn picks up where Gangs of New York left off and transports readers back to a swaggering.*

It was a to-hell-with-it-all decade of flapper girls, gangsters, illegal booze and speakeasies. They smoked and danced, petted and voted and drove cars. The book is primarily, although not exclusively, the decade of the twenties. So many delicious characters! Call it the first full-length feature with synchronized dialogue, the film that drove a dagger into the heart of the silent film era. The Jolsen presented in this book is much more than an actor in blackface, speaking. He had a long career as a singer, film actor, and comedian, and at the peak of his fame, he was big, really big. Still, we see the Babe, striding like a colossus over Broadway, hell, over all of New York and America. It took a while, Johnson was a tough cookie, and not just inside the ring. The author draws an apt analogy between Johnson and a later heavyweight champ, Muhammad Ali. Another analogy would be with Vic Power, the black, Puerto Rican-born baseball player who might have become the first black Yankee, ahead of Elston Howard, except Power was no more accepting of second-class status than was Johnson, and like Johnson, Power had an affinity for white women. Muggsy McGraw was a part of the Broadway crowd, expounding the intricacies of baseball even as he indulged in marathon card games with shysters and bootleggers. Take that, Pete Rose. New York, Broadway, in the twenties, was made for the garrulous Babe, but as the decade closes with the onset of the Great Depression, the exuberance fades. The Babe fades too on the ball diamond, not in life, never in life and the flapper girls go away. The gangsters manage to hang around. The new decade, with its legal booze is, in some ways, more sober than the previous decade. Joe was a fabulous ballplayer but he was no Babe Ruth off the field. And another black heavyweight champion steps onto the stage, the more compliant outside of the ring Joe Louis. Thank you, America, for having had the audacity to outlaw booze. What about Capone, you ask? Scarface was Chicago although Brooklyn-born and this is a book about Manhattan. What sparkles most throughout the book are those Ziegfeld girls. Call them the sun around which the rest of Broadway revolved. All the male characters, ballplayers, writers, hooligans, even the cops, drooled over the chorus line. Onstage every night, the girls were tall, leggy beauties, dancing, sometimes wearing six-foot headdresses, often scantily dressed, sometimes nude. They were a shocking sensation. The kick line was one route to marriage with a wealthy man, and sometimes it was the route to money and fame without the man. In the final chapter of the book, the author takes us on a twenty-first century spin around the old haunts. The street and most of the buildings remain, but the exuberance, the pizzazz, the audacity, the violence and the raw sexuality, are gone. Broadway meets Disney, Disney wins, and having spent a few hours with the characters of old Broadway, we ache for the loss. On May 11, , the last surviving Ziegfeld girl, Dorothy Eaton Travis, who was also the youngest Ziegfeld Girl, strutting and kicking at fourteen, dies at the age of one hundred and six, and the book is closed, reluctantly, on an era.

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In Gangsters & Gold Diggers, Jerome Charyn transports readers back to a swaggering, golden era in American life-the Roaring Twenties-when Broadway suddenly exploded into Broadway. Damon Runyon was the first chronicler of the Big Street.

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