

“THE GOLD BAR” Deadwood SD 1940-1947

**By Steve Brock
(CC>CC #R 3200)**

The west was still wild and pretty much wide open when Jack Phillips came to Deadwood, South Dakota in 1939 from Iowa. He turned a former basement storeroom in the Franklin Hotel into the “Gold Bar.” The Gold Bar opened its doors May 14, 1940. The establishment was an instant hit in this former mining town tucked in the Black Hills where Wild Bill Hickock was shot in the back while gambling years before.

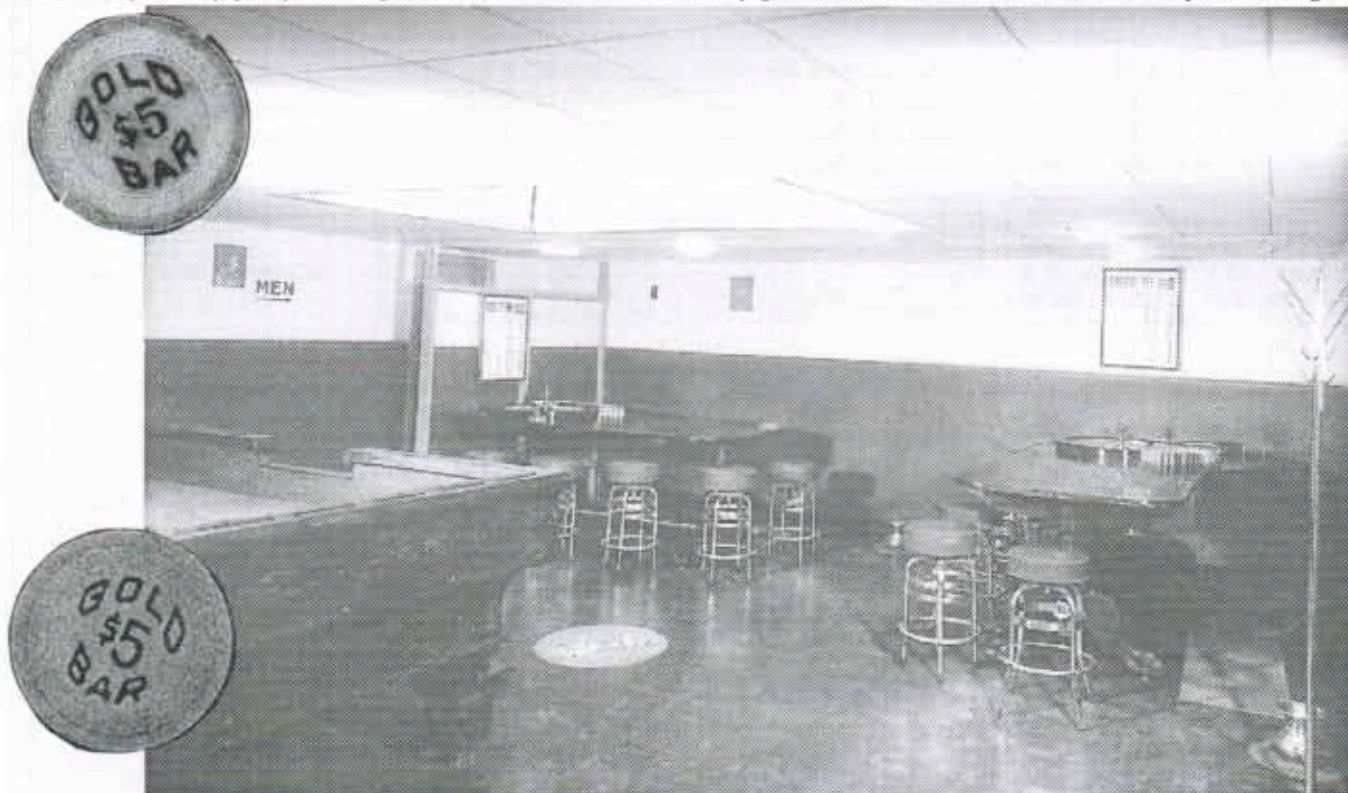
The military base in nearby Rapid City supplied a steady stream of young men looking for three things, whiskey, gambling, and girls. “and we had all of them!” said Jack. Busses would bring them up, we would cash their paychecks, and everyone had a good time.

“The young men were looking for three things Whiskey, Gambling and Girls.” “and we had them all! said Jack.

We would kind of look out for the boy's, try to let them know when they had lost enough money and when they had drank enough whiskey.

Jacks wife was the cigarette girl. To the best of her recollection there was a blackjack table and a craps table, and a poker game on occasion. The place was considered nicely decorated and equipped. “It was not the fanciest place in the country, but we thought is was nice” Mrs. Phillips commented. “We were one of 4 casino's in town at that time and the competition for the business was keen.”

In the old days, illegal gambling in Deadwood was “obvious and there was no question about it” Jack said. “The local people wanted it, and the state tolerated it.” “We had a pleasant relationship with the local law enforcement” Jack commented with a twinkle in his eye, “they pretty much ignored us.” In his words “Nobody got molested or bothered here, and everyone had a good time!”



He says the list of dignitaries, officials, and celebrities that visited the Gold Bar was quite lengthy, but his “lips are sealed!” Gaming operators knew that State officials would shut them down. They had been warned in writing, but they didn't know when. That question of when was answered on a busy Saturday night, June 28, 1947. The raid was engineered by then State Attorney Sigurd Anderson. “Authorities chased the people out, and started carrying out the gambling equipment and that was the end of it” said Phillips. He was fined \$250 for operating an illegal gaming operation.

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Jack left deadwood in 1949, returning to Iowa. Battles with the I.R.S. concerning the Gold Bar continued for years. Jack retired from his motel business in the early 80's.

In 1989 when he heard on TV that Deadwood wanted to bring gambling back, this time legally Phillips vowed, "I'll be there for the Grand Opening." He had no doubt that voters would approve the idea.

So on Wednesday November 1, 1989 the 81 year old man that doesn't drink, smoke, or gamble felt right at home in his surroundings at the Grand Opening of the new "Durdy Nellies" in the basement of the Franklin. Jack was back in the location that he had spent so many hours in almost 50 years ago. "See that back bar, the paneling and the cashiers cage?" "I put them in," he said proudly.

On Wednesday Nov 1, 1989 Jack felt right at home at the Grand Opening of Durdy Nellies, in the basement of the Franklin.

Jack Phillips died a few years later, but can say that he lived to see Deadwood alive with gambling again!

Authors Note: This story was developed from information gathered from interviews with Mrs. Jack Phillips and Jack's daughter and son-in-law. The information is believed to be accurate but is based in part on the recollections of an elderly woman about events that happened over 50 years ago. Other information has been passed down from Jack Phillips to his daughter and son-in-law. My thanks to the family of Jack Phillips. Thanks also to the Rapid City Journal for additional information.

