

THE STORK CLUB

Helen Morgan and a small-time Broadway gambler are the babies to whom the Stork owes its present existence. When Billingsley—after an exciting career in the real estate business whose only memento is a street named after him—opened his dwindling resources. A few days before it was scheduled to close, Miss Morgan took over the entire room for one evening to celebrate the production of her first movie. The check for that party amounted to \$4,000—a boon to the fast-fading cafe. And that's why Helen Morgan never will receive a check at the Stork Club, forevermore.

Some months later, when Billingsley again was about to retire from the cafe field for lack of finances, a Broadway gambler delivered \$2,500 into his hand, for safekeeping. "I'm going out of town for a while," he explained, "and I want you to hold this money for me."

Billingsley used that money to satisfy the wolf-creditors who had taken their station at his door. The gambler later returned to Broadway and received his \$2,500.

The Stork Club, first established downstairs on E. 55th St., and then upstairs at E. 51st St., was the first cafe to be confiscated by the Federal Government during the Prohibition era. The violation had been a flagrant one, for Billingsley's speakeasy, unlike any other then operating in the city, featured a canopy over the entrance and carpeting over the floor. With the advent of Repeal, Sherman closed his quarters and moved the Stork Club to its present site at 3 E. 53rd. And here, when the stock market has attained new highs, Billingsley has netted as much as \$25,000 a month.



THE BIGGEST SPENDER at the Stork Club is Billingsley himself (right). He gives away each week as much as the average New York night club goes. Three years ago Billingsley's accountants reported an alarming "leakage" in the liquor supply. Sherman studied the mystifying report, and decided that someone must be stealing. He

therefore retained investigators. After a four-week check-up they submitted their report. Yes, they had found the culprit responsible for this "leakage." He had each night ordered free drinks supplied to the patrons and expensive wines sent to their homes—and then he'd walk out, without paying. The culprit was Mr. Sherman Billingsley.

"If you were at the Stork," Ernest Hemingway once wrote in an introduction to "All the Brave," "you would not have to think. You would just watch The People, and listen. . . ."

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To watch them would be to see Bea Lillie, hunting under the table for a small emblem Grace Moore had pinned upon her, somewhat carelessly. Bea discovered, too late, that this was the decoration presented to the opera star by the Republic of France, when she became Chevaliere of the Legion d'Honneur.

Dr. Roy Allen Dufos, escorting Ethel Merman, sat himself at a table occupied by three Broadway columnists—after signing a contract to write articles about babies—and told the newspapermen, "I'm sitting in. Now I'm one of you."

The stars of Broadway and Hollywood, the foremost industrialists of our time, members of the President's Cabinet—all come to the Stork Club.

I've seen all the fights in the Stork Club and not one of them merited the publicity it attracted. The Georg White-Sidney Solomon "hatcuffs" had an suspicious audience. When White merely slapped Solomon's face—an event which, like the others, would have been forgotten had it taken place somewhere else—Tallulah Bankhead and her Aunt Marie were ring-side observers. "Now I have lived," Aunt Marie sighed, after it was over. "I've been to New York, I've seen the World's Fair, I've been to the Stork Club, and I've seen a fight there. Now I'm going back to Alabama and can truthfully say, 'Friends, I've seen EVERYTHING!'"



HELEN MORGAN, piano-sitting singer, spent \$4,000 at Billingsley's when he needed it most.



ERNEST HEMINGWAY, celebrated writer of war stories, finds "peace" at the Stork Club.



TALLULAH BANKHEAD'S father is Speaker of the House, she the Speaker of the Stork.

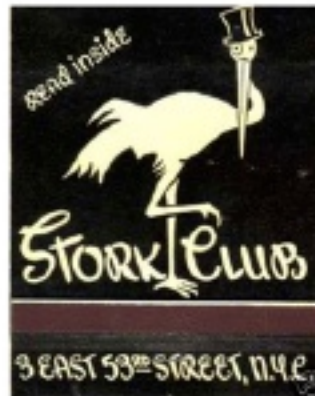
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