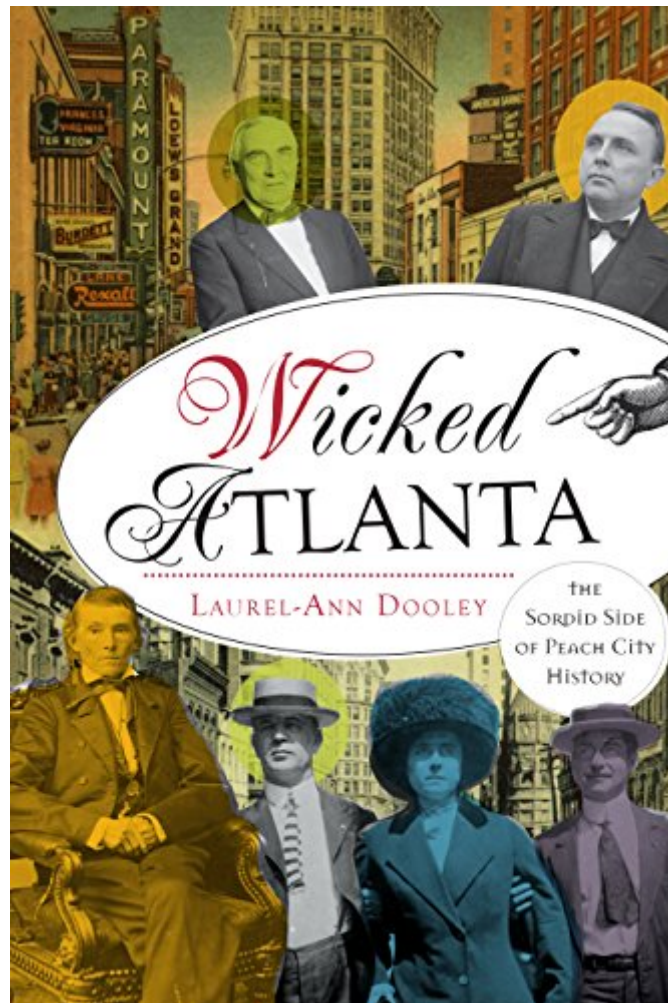


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# Wicked Atlanta: The Sordid Side Of Peach City History



## Synopsis

Atlanta is the only American city to have been destroyed by fire as an act of war, and it has its share of salacious stories. Wealthy felons hosted elaborate parties inside the federal penitentiary. Billionaire bootleggers and murderous rich boys practiced corruption that reached all the way to the White House. Fast and fearless drivers, complete with glamorous reputations and criminal careers, gave rise to auto racing. Join author Laurel-Ann Dooley as she navigates the underworld of Atlanta's past filled with kidnapping, bribery, wives hiring hit men and all sorts of criminal debauchery.

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## Customer Reviews

As short as it is (only 111 pages), this book dredges up several fascinating but long-forgotten crime stories from Atlanta's distant past from the town's founding as a rough-and-tumble railroad village in the 1830s to its Prohibition-era reign as the bootleg capital of America. The author says in those Prohibition days -- which in Georgia, as a result of state-level Prohibition, lasted much longer than it did in the rest of the nation -- more moonshine whiskey allegedly flowed through Atlanta than in any

other American city. In Georgia, Prohibition lasted a mind-boggling 30 long years from 1908 until just before World War Two in 1938. The author's stories of moonshiners from the hidden stills in the hills around Dawsonville racing the cops in souped-up Ford V-8s down the Roswell Road through Buckhead and down the Marietta highway to downtown Atlanta's illegal, hidden speakeasies is a real eye-opener. Her description of how those early-day Atlanta bootleggers morphed into the beginnings of NASCAR is likewise an eye-opener. Her description of the 1933 John Ottley kidnapping from his fancy country estate in Buckhead that later became the upscale Lenox Square shopping mall is a well-timed revival of a totally forgotten chapter of Atlanta history. But most fascinating of all is her account of how four wealthy, totally bored, and thoroughly spoiled young students from Oglethorpe University in the Brookhaven section of Buckhead (including the scion of a family that then owned a controlling interest in the Atlanta Journal and WSB radio station) dreamed up a series of armed robberies as "thrill crimes" to relieve the boredom. One of those robberies by the so-called "polite bandits" went tragically wrong and ended up in murder. The story bears a chilling similarity to the famous Loeb and Leopold case where two similarly bored and wealthy youngsters planned a murder just for the thrill of seeing if they could get away with the perfect crime -- the crime that was depicted in the 1948 Alfred Hitchcock movie, "Rope." Thanks to this short book, perhaps someone will make a movie of the Buckhead "thrill" crimes. My only complaint is that this book brushes off early-day Atlanta's notorious underground "Prostitution Row" with just a few short paragraphs. I had expected to learn much more about the details of this part of Atlanta's soft underbelly. And the author devotes way too much space to various state-level political scandals at the State capitol building. Political scandals probably aren't what one expects to read about in a book about "Wicked Atlanta." I'm also surprised that the author totally ignores Atlanta's decades-long reputation as the gay capital of the South. Since, in earlier days, the city's hidden gay bars were only whispered about in a polite society that pretended they didn't even exist, how could a book about "Wicked Atlanta" totally ignore that once-scandalous aspect of the city's life? How did Atlanta's gay bars manage to survive in earlier repressive days? Who protected them and why? Where were they? What went on there? Who went to them? Did many of the city's prominent citizens carry on a secret life there? That omission leaves a huge gap in any book about supposedly "Wicked Atlanta." Gay bars are no longer considered wicked by most people -- but they sure were in earlier days.. The book likewise fails to include the famous vandalism of the "Pink Palace" mansion on Atlanta's ritzy West Paces Ferry Road at the end of World War Two by bored teenage boys from some of Buckhead's upscale families -- a vandalism that touched off frantic fears in the city's upper-crust of a supposed juvenile crime wave. Bottom line: This book is an excellent, fast-paced

read, well worth purchasing. But it does have some glaring omissions.

Dooley is a wonderful storyteller. She brings little known scandals from Atlanta's past to rollicking life and gives the city a sense of character often obscured by its glass office towers and eager self-promotion as the "city too busy to hate." There is plenty of hatred here, and even more skulduggery. Some of Dooley's best stories are of the bootlegger drivers who turned their prodigious skill at outrunning revenueurs in the hills north of Atlanta into the nascent rise of stock car racing and of the ring of bored, wealthy Oglethorpe University students who dabbled in armed robbery to lift their ennui. Throughout "Wicked Atlanta" is a playfulness with language and a dry sense of humor that gives the reader the feel of sitting down with a master storyteller and nursing a fine old bourbon to while away a warm Southern evening.

just ok. nothing too new or different in book. title about the best thing about book.

Enjoyable read

great

Great information

Growing up in Atlanta there are so many names to the streets and buildings that I have no clue who they are. I am often reading about Atlanta's history and am fascinated of the cast of characters that built our fair city. In *Wicked Atlanta* by Laurel-Ann Dooley, you are introduced into some saucy characters. Beautiful written and rich in detail it chronicles some of the best cronies Atlanta had to offer. The city rose up from a row of brothels and speakeasies that made up the red light district where Grady Hospital sits today. There bootleggers, corrupt politicians, and prostitutes came together at the start of the city of Atlanta. Dooley's chapter on the details about the early bootleggers is fascinating, making moonshine not illegal but not paying the tax was. Another chapter on the three Georgia governors at one time tells about the factions claiming the Governor's office and paints a detail picture of this rough and tough political gambit. All this resulted from the untimely death of Eugene Talmadge who was the people's advocate and proudly proclaimed, "Sure, I stole, but I stole for you!" I especially like the John Ottley kidnapping that occurred where modern day Lenox Square Mall sits. The first of its kind and the

appendix has a first hand account by Ottley's son. This book is perfect for any Atlantan who wants to learn about their city or any history buff who wants to have the right morsel to share on the cocktail circuit.

This was a great book. I give tours at Historic Oakland Cemetery and this has given me some new insight into Atlanta and its founders. Every story was so fresh and new that the only problem was there wasn't more to it! I found Atlanta's connection to NASCAR particularly interesting, as well as Mr. Oxxley's kidnapping. We have a friend who used to ride his horse on Mr. Oxxley's land before they built Lenox Mall. I'm curious now to know if he knew the Oxxleys!

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