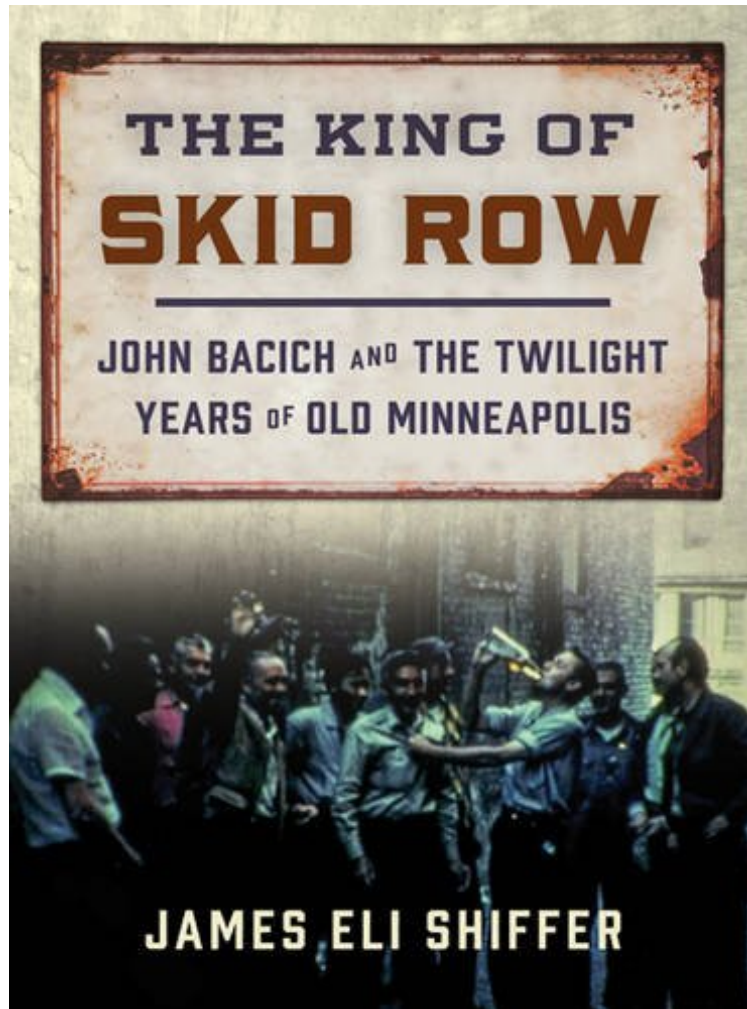


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The King of Skid Row: John Bacich and the Twilight Years of Old Minneapolis

James Eli Shiffer

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James Eli Shiffer : The King of Skid Row: John Bacich and the Twilight Years of Old Minneapolis before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The King of Skid Row: John Bacich and the Twilight Years of Old Minneapolis:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Well-conceived and well-written By Frederic Love I didn't expect to read this from cover to cover in one sitting but I did. Shiffer has created a remarkable historical document, while telling a moving story that sheds light into the darker corners of a world populated by the despondent and mostly vulnerable. We travel in time with the author to a disrespected place, a lost city that well-meaning citizens ultimately chose to raze

rather than transform. There are lessons to be learned in this book, some about our vain need to renew or reinvent ourselves, other about the futility of saying good riddance to things we despise. Highly recommended! 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Stayed up all night to finish. By JoAnn D. Having watched the PBS program that showed Mr Bacich's home movies of Minneapolis skid row I immediately purchased this book. A forgotten history of a more, in the eyes of some, embarrassing chapter in the history of Minneapolis. John Bacich owned flop houses, liquor store and a bar that served the many indigent, railroad workers and those just passing through the city. He was an interesting man who made a lot of money on alcohol but also had a heart, often burying these men, many who were veterans, out of his own pocket. The pictures were great giving the reader a visual of the Gateway District of downtown Minneapolis when this was thriving. Although one can imagine some of the deplorable conditions, the flop houses did provide a cheap housing for the homeless. Something we would call a wet house now. Highly recommended. 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. ... book a few days ago and it was phenomenally good. It is not that often that I read ... By Paul R. Gold I just finished reading the book a few days ago and it was phenomenally good. It is not that often that I read books more than one or twice, but this book will undoubtedly be an exception. This book was a particularly well-written history of the Gateway district and the men that lived there in the 1950's - it is a particularly lively history that could interest many generations of readers including those who typically do not read books belonging to the local history genre!

City blue laws drove the liquor trade and its customers hard-drinking lumberjacks, pensioners, farmhands, and railroad workers into the oldest quarter of Minneapolis. In the fifty-cent-a-night flophouses of the city's Gateway District, they slept in cubicles with ceilings of chicken wire. In rescue missions, preachers and nuns tried to save their souls. Sociology researchers posing as vagrants studied them. And in their midst John Bacich, aka Johnny Rex, who owned a bar, a liquor store, and a cage hotel, documented the gritty neighborhoods last days through photographs and film of his clientele. *The King of Skid Row* follows Johnny Rex into this vanished world that once thrived in the heart of Minneapolis. Drawing on hours of interviews conducted in the three years before Bacich's death in 2012, James Eli Shiffer brings to life the eccentric characters and strange events of an American skid row. Supplemented with archival and newspaper research and his own photographs, Bacich's stories re-create the violent, alcohol-soaked history of a city best known for its clean, progressive self-image. His life captures the seamy, richly colorful side of the city swept away by a massive urban renewal project in the early 1960s and gives us, in a glimpse of those bygone days, one of Minneapolis's most intriguing figures spinning some of its most enduring and enthralling tales.

"In its final years, Skid Row was avoided by everyone except the police, storefront Bible-thumpers, slumming sociologists, and the occasional entrepreneur such as John Bacich. Johnny Rex to the drunks, drifters, and down-and-outers he served as publican and hotelier. James Eli Shiffer recalls the life and times of Johnny, Polack Wally, Moon Face Mary Ann, and other late-stage denizens of that dingy corner of Old Minneapolis with insight, wit, and compassion. *The King of Skid Row* is terrific urban history, beautifully told." William Swanson, author of *Stolen from the Garden: The Kidnapping of Virginia Piper* and *Dial M: The Murder of Carol Thompson* "The King of Skid Row brings to boozy life the alcohol-sodden, corruption-filled era when Minneapolis lost Gateway District harbored flop houses, slop joints, cage hotels, brothels, and raunchy speakeasies filled with B-girls and gandy-dancers. Exceptionally literate, relentlessly humane, Shiffer peels back the veil from a dark and often violent past that, until now, had been literally paved over and believed forgotten. *The King of Skid Row* is a deft book that stirs together memoir, mystery, and history with the heartbreaking drama of how a city treats its most despondent and destitute. Moving and fascinating." Paul Maccabee, author of *John Dillinger Slept Here: A Crooks Tour of Crime and Corruption in St. Paul*