

UNDERWORLD - WOMEN

November 13, 1875 — Prodded into action by the good people of the town, Mayor John Warner and Chief of Police Martin Daily today personally led the police force in sweeping raids against a dozen disorderly houses where they arrested 28 inmates and 15 patrons. Adaline Cole, owner of the fine two story brick place at Hamilton and Washington streets, stuck out her tongue and said mean things to the officers who tried to persuade her to put on her clothes for a ride to the jail. Finally she was carried out in her nightgown on the shoulders of a brawny cop and taken to the city hall where she spent the night under glass. In the morning Adaline, who was reputed to be wealthy, tendered the police a \$1,000 bill to pay her fine of \$28.05.

November 13, 1875—The law went out in force last night to rout the ladies of the underworld from their usual haunts and to see if they could collect a few fines to pep up the city treasury and satisfy the righteous folks who were deploring at great length the activities of the little sisters of the shadows.

Mayor John Warner and Chief of Police Martin Daily called in their standing armies of bluecoats from all corners of the city and armed them with axes, ladders, night sticks and dark lanterns for the big putsch. The peelers all piled in the horse-drawn patrol wagon and began their drive for law and order. They visited twelve houses down in the districts and arrested 28 employes and 15 visitors.

Only Adaline Cole refused to go along peacefully and pay her assessments to the police judge. She told the police who called at her fine two-story brick building at North Washington and Hamilton that she had retired and didn't

care to be bothered and would they please come around and she would see what she could do for them. To support her argument she appeared in her nightgown. But the police were not to be foiled this time and they grabbed Adaline, nightgown and all, and piled her into the patrol wagon with the others.

When they reached the jail, of course, the police judge was waiting for them and he spared Adaline any further inconvenience by holding court on the spot and plastering a fine of \$28.05 on her. Adaline reached down in her stocking and brought out a \$1,000 bill in payment. No change could be made so she was allowed to go home after inviting all those present to come up and see her sometime.

October 22, 1901—The annual Corn Carnival had just closed in Peoria and the send off by the Mahito (Ill.) Express said in part:

"The fact remains that the most objectionable feature of the Corn Carnival has been that it has been a fake, pure and simple. A jargon of licentious, immoral, low-down, rotten shows in full swing were calculated to draw crowds from the surrounding country. Operating under the high sounding name of a Corn Carnival, the hoochie-cooches and the lazy hounds from the Orient paraded their female attractions (?) to a crowd of old men and boys who are ashamed to take their wives and sisters with them. If Peoria business men and carnival management in particular think that these are the proper attractions to draw country trade, they are badly fooled."

September 14, 1884—Biddy McAnally's notorious bagnio on Water street was taken to a good cleaning today when one of the volunteer fire companies pulled its hand pump engine up to the door, laid a line of hose down to the river and started the stream beating on the doors and windows. When the windows cracked in, Biddy and her girls fled out the back door and landed for the city hall to complain to Mayor Jacob Gale.

The enthusiastic firemen smashed the windows and doors and thoroughly soaked the inside. A policeman who interfered was set upon, beaten and chased down the street. Mayor Gale arrived in short order with Police Chief Vanbusch and several officers. The mayor indignantly described the attack on Biddy's place as "an outrageous attack upon poor, defenseless women" whereupon the firemen stopped their pumping and accused the mayor of being a friend to Biddy. The mayor threatened to cut the hose but was pushed aside. His police guard stood mute. Finally the hose burst of its own pressure and the show was over.

The next day one of the firemen was brought to trial before Squire Stebbins. The jury of eight men heard the evidence and retired to consider their verdict. Six hours later they reported they were unable to agree and asked to be discharged. The squire sent them back with the admonition that he would keep them locked up all night unless they reached a verdict. Several hours later the jurymen pounded on the door again. They made a startling report.

A JURYMAN HAD JUMPED OUT OF THE WINDOW AND ESCAPED!!!

This was a mess for the honorable court. An officer sent to the missing juror's home reported that that peer had gone to the country and could not be reached. The defendant's lawyer would not agree to allow the other seven jurors to return a verdict so they were discharged and the case continued.

May 25, 1876—Ad Cole went to jail again today this time for appearing in public in her nightgown. She was released after an hour of questioning in the mayor's office.

July 21, 1876—Adaline Cole went on a bender again and drove her team of stylish blacks through the streets at breakneck speed until her carriage hit a rut and tipped over. Police called a cab to take her to jail and she seized the reins from the cab driver and was continuing her wild ride when the bluecoats put her under control.

September 28, 1930—Diamond Lil, Guyette, the colored queen of the underworld, in whose teeth sparkled inlaid stones alleged to be diamonds, was in jail today, charged with slaying a visitor at her Eaton street black and tan resort.

Diamond Lil said the visitor became offensive and attacked her. Her handy man came to the rescue and the guest was shot to death. One of the weapons used was a gift of a political supporter to the dusky Diamond.

A jury decided the killing

February 23, 1901 — Another claimant to the \$40,000 estate left by Adaline Cole was exposed as a fraud. This time the pretender was a woman who claimed to be a daughter of the spectacular madame who for a quarter century ruled the city's underworld.

The estate had been escheated to the county when Ad Cole died leaving no known heirs. An attempt by Dick Welch to claim it on the grounds that he was a common law husband was turned back. The county could well use the money and had no intention of giving it up without good cause.

So when Mrs. Mary E. Neikirk came forward claiming to be the daughter about whom so many fanciful stories had been told in the past, the county viewed her entrance with alarm. When she came in court and offered to bring witnesses to testify that they had seen Ad Cole publicly acknowledged her as her daughter and only heir, Sheriff Kimsey set out to investigate her claims.

The sheriff sent Detective H. C. Lincoln, former chief of police to pry into the woman's past. The detective did his job in good shape. He ransacked records, copied inscriptions on tombstones and talked with old timers until he had collected a batch of affidavits and certificates that proved the claim was false and that more than a dozen persons were involved in the plot to collect the estate.

Confronted with this mass of evidence and threatened with criminal prosecution if she dared go farther, Mrs. Neikirk faded.

March 15, 1939 — The Bradley Tech, student newspaper, had made an editorial demand for a cleanup of vice conditions in Peoria that was receiving serious consideration among the reform elements. The Peoria Ministerial association met and pondered whether to put on a crusade for purity but reached no decision. A spokesman said the association was not anxious to go ahead unless it saw a possibility of ultimate victory.

May 14, 1905 — Billy White, the sepia gentleman who tended bar in Ad Cole's building on North Washington at Hamilton before someone discovered he could play a cello like nobody's business, was back in town all dressed up fit to kill with calling cards advising people he was now "William White, Premier Cellist of the Great Williams & Walker Theatrical Company." His colored troupe was one of the best on the boards this season and was honored by an invitation to play before King Edward at Windsor Castle during a tour of the Continent.

June 28, 1874 — The police spent a busy day today raiding the bagnios and honkytonks. They brought in 32 prisoners, including Lish Jones, alias White, alias Carrie Davis, Ad Cole and seven employees and customers, Mrs. Farren and four, Dan McAllister and seven, Nell Harris and four and the proprietor of the St. Charles hotel and seven hangers arounders.

August 2, 1888 — The McGinnity House was a mad place that offered wine, women, song, cards and live to visitors to the Fair Grounds. But it overreached when a group of hoodlums from the shadows stepped and pulled a lady from the buggy of her escort and tore a portion of the garments from her person.

Hearing of this dastardly act, the good people at the Fair Grounds, banded together and advanced on the McGinnity House. After removing the furniture and driving the occupants out, they set fire to the place and burned it to the ground.

Peoria's underworld is marked by a certain stillness, hopelessly in the shadowed folds of the city. Prostitution and gambling flourish on a "weak" and there still are easy to buy and sell back frequently a dark shadow. But the old morality which lingers of "good" high-ups, has crumbled. There is no virtue than what else is in this regard. It is, however, possessed of a disconcerting thing that of "involved" involving killings.

All is all to win outsiders, but in an interesting town, very busy, cultured and refined. The "better element" far outnumbers the underworld but the latter element does not make interesting headlines and before all was heard about Peoria — it's a good town's growing town, and even then — "We haven't heard the half of it."

Frank Dougherty is a prisoner shot to death in jail here. . . murder in Peoria 1874.

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June 26, 1899—The evangelist E. J. Colborn—called by the city's nonevangelical elements the Jerusalem Threshing Machine—revealed to police that his latest tilt with sin had cost him \$65.

He explained that he had accompanied a friend from Grove-land out to take in Wallace's Circus, leaving their horse and buggy moored to a hitching rack on Eaton street. When they came to drive away, they were surrounded by sirens. The Jerusalem Thresher said he called on them to cease and desist and to flee from the wrath to come. They fled, not before one had snatched the Thresher's poke with contents.

The evangelist also told the police that he believed it was a frameup by persons who were seeking to drive him and his gospel from town.

July 20, 1876.—Adaline Cole, queen of the night lifers, broke into the public prints again by racing her stylish black carriage through the main streets until one of the wheels struck a rut and overturned the rig. Adaline was unhurt and continued to entertain the crowd. A policeman hustled her into a cab with intent to put her in jail for her wickedness. Crawling out on the seat beside the driver, Adaline seized the reins and gave a policeman and cabbie a merry ride before she was again subdued.

October 10, 1878—The Reds, Peoria's great baseball team, were playing the Unbeatable from Milwaukee and heavy bets were out on both sides. The grandstand and bleachers were filled and hundreds of other spectators dotted the field.

Among those present was Adaline Cole, that well-known woman about town, who sat in her carriage far out in the field. The score stood at 3 to 2 in favor of the Reds in the eighth when a long drive was sent out to Outfielder Alvaretta of the Peorias. Alvaretta started to make the easy catch when he saw Adaline's horses bolt and run. He saw the danger of the frenzied horses stampeding in the crowded field. Turning from the ball, he seized the horses' bridles and stopped the runaway.

The ball rolled away for a hit and two runs came in to win the game for Milwaukee 4 to 3. The local boosters lost their money but they stayed to cheer Alvaretta for stopping the runaway.

September 12, 1880—There was a benefit dance at Pfeiffer's Hall tonight for Tim Haley, a young tough who had just been released from prison and who needed money to pay his lawyer. The underworld of the city attended in great numbers and drank 15 kegs of beer with hard liquor to match. At 8 a. m. the music stopped and the fighting started. Police broke up the festivities.

March 17, 1878 — Maggie Leonard, one of the little sisters of the shadows, took a shot at Ad Cole, underworld empress, today as the latter was driving down Washington street in her elegant turnout, drawn by sleek black horses and with one of her girls at her side. She missed. Police blamed jealousy over a circle.

May 15, 1867—The Fulton House, a resort at 35 South Jefferson avenue, burned to the ground today to the great enjoyment of the town's nice people, who refused to help the firemen in the bucket brigade. Joss greeted the women vermouths as they were driven from their rooms by smoke and fire.

The hotel had been built more than a quarter century before to serve as a boarding school for young ladies. Later it became a hotel, operated by Thomas Duggan and finally fell into evil ways from which it was purged by fire.

June 22, 1874—The police spent a busy day today raiding the bagnios and honky tonks. They brought in 22 prisoners, including Lish Jones, alias White, alias Carrie Davis, Ad Cole and seven employes and customers, Mrs. Farren and four, Dan McAllister and seven, Nell Harris and four and the proprietor of the St. Charles Hotel and seven hangers-on.

July 3, 1888—News notes from today's papers: "G. W. E. —, of Princeton, this morning reported to police that he had been robbed by an Auburn-haired siren who lured him to a room on the corner of South Washington and Liberty

streets and there extracted \$50 from his pocketbook. E. — discovered his loss and hurried after the woman but she rode away on a bicycle."

March 2, 1864—Tansey's disorderly house on South Water street just below Fulton was cleaned out today when the boys about town experienced a pang of morality and quietly ran the town fire engine to the river bank, laid a line of hose to the front door of the resort and poured a stream of cold water in on an orgy in which 30 men and women were taking part. After driving the party from the house, the attackers wrecked the place.

September 19, 1872—Captain of Police Dunlea and a couple of blue-coats made a foray up the river in a power boat today and captured that popular palace of sin and iniquity commonly known as "The Duggan's gunboat." The policemen took five men and four women from the floating resort and brought them to the calaboose.

September 22, 1879—The promoters of the Great Central Illinois Fair and Exposition opening today at Jefferson Park had given their gate keepers strict orders to keep out anyone of questionable character lest their presence offend the good people. Ad Cole, of the North Washington street Coles, announced publicly that she would get in or know the reason why. Today she attempted to pass, disguised with a heavy cloak and a veil. The gateman recognized her and turned her away. Later the dauntless Adaline got by dressed as a man.

was not entirely a matter of self protection. Diamond Lil and her handy man were sent to state's prison for many long years.

The affair might have been passed off as only another sordid underworld shooting had it not been for the prominence of Diamond Lil, notorious far and near to playboys and girls who had visited her dive on slumming trips.

Some say that Mae West took the name for her famous stage play from the Peoria character.

Dr. C. G. Taylor, chief of the division of social hygiene of the department of public health of the state of Illinois, has just issued a report which will close his work as head of the division, as he has resigned.

In this report the doctor dwells interestingly on the achievement of his department in Peoria. He says:

"For many months the division of social hygiene has labored in an effort to induce Peoria officials to clean up and abolish the vice district in that city.

"An investigator who visited Peoria last September, found fifty-seven open houses of prostitution, located in three different districts. The city officials acknowledged the report true, but expressed themselves as perfectly able to govern the city without outside assistance or interference."

"Peoria women became aroused and indignant. A number of lectures by Dr. Rachelle S. Harce and Miss Harriet Cornstock contributed much toward the rebellion which re-

sulted in the defeat of the mayor when he came up for re-election at the close of his seventh term of office.

"Vice conditions in Peoria were in the main responsible for the election of Victor P. Michel as mayor. At his invitation, division employees assisted in the biggest clean-up with which they have had to do.

"On June 3 and 4, a total of 143 public prostitutes were examined at the Peoria venereal disease clinic. Of this number, 130 or 91%, were found infected; 91 or 68% had gonorrhea, and 20 or 14% had syphilis.

"Cases of syphilis with open lesions were removed to St. Francis hospital and placed under treatment immediately. All other infectious cases were placed in quarantine. Keepers and hangers-on were ordered to move out and 'advised' to

disappear from public life. The districts were closed. Mayor Michel and Chief of Police Martin have earned the thanks of the respectable citizens of Peoria and the state at large. The Peoria clean-up marks the passing of the last big 'red light' district in Illinois.

"During the war, vice conditions in Illinois were not worse than in other states. Following the armistice, districts opened with startling rapidity. City officials were 'fed up on high-brow stuff.' The situation was humiliating to say the least. The writer is pleased to be able to walk out of the division on July first, with his head up." 7/10/21

September 15, 1897 — Adaline Cole, queen of the underworld for quarter or a century, died at her North Washington street resort three days ago and coniving for the fortune she was reputed to have left was already underway in the probate court. In fact there were some who said her expensive rings and other jewelry were stripped from her before the undertaker came. Rumors that she had been murdered for her money were called unfounded by the attending physician.

Chief claimant to the estimated \$100,000 estate was Dick Welsh, who as common law husband for ten years sought to have a saloonkeeper friend appointed administrator. A daughter was said to be living in Ohio and there was talk that relation in France would try to get a share of what was left.

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August 7, 1879 — News item from the Daily National Democrat: "Central Park was visited by a large number of people Sunday. As in the palmy days of old the band played and beer was sold but unlike the palmy days of old all disreputable women were excluded from the park although many of them applied for admission."

Down Jackson to Washington and on the left is the vacant lot where stood Diamond Lil's place, familiar to night life. Lil was a colored woman with flashing stones she called diamonds sparkling from her teeth. She met a visitor with a booming shotgun one night and the law took her away.

Adaline Cole, once the colorful queen of Peoria's half world, had a fondness for spectacular displays featuring herself. One of her principal showoffs was to drive her elegant open carriage, drawn by a handsome team of horses, through the main streets with herself and girl friends, all dressed fit to kill, in the seats of honor. One day the stable in which her fine horses were quartered caught fire. Filling a hat with coins, Ad Cole ran up and down the street offering the money to anyone who would go in and rescue the animals.

April 10, 1879—Quite an excitement was raised at the depot last night when a delegation of good citizens accosted Sallie Purple and six local cuties whom she had enlisted to work as dance hall girls in her new \$3,000 amusement palace in the gold mining camp near Leadville, Col. The citizens looked over the bevy of entertainers, and found that one was a young girl with no previous experience at entertaining. While they were planning to take steps toward keeping her at home, the girl slipped away and disappeared.

April 4, 1901—Orders were out from the Chief of Police that hereafter women living downtown must never go into the neighboring saloon for a can of beer wearing only mother Hubbards. They should dress as their own mothers would not be ashamed to meet them when they passed those swinging doors, the Chief said.

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