

Wide Open Town of Peoria Sadly Clamps Lid On For First Time In Its History

A STAFF CORRESPONDENT

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BULLETIN.

East St. Louis, Ill., Oct. 20.—(AP)—Four men arrested here early today in the investigation of the murder of Charles Phayer were identified tonight as participants in the murder of Mrs. Cora Garrison, wife of a Peoria, Ill., gambler last Friday, police said.

The prisoners are Thomas O'Connor, 33; Jack Britt, 38; John Moran, 33, and Thomas Wilders, 39. O'Connor, Moran and Wilders had revolvers in their possession when arrested.

BY A STAFF CORRESPONDENT.

Peoria, Ill., Oct. 20.—[Special.]—For the first time in its history Peoria today ceased to be a wide open town. State's Attorney Harry Pratt ordered the lid down on open gambling as an aftermath to the killing of Mrs. Cora C. Garrison Friday evening in a machine gun ambush which followed an attempt to kidnap her husband, Clyde Garrison, gambling house proprietor.

The investigation of the murder was given impetus early today with the finding of the body of Charles Phayer, alias Thayer, riddled with bullets near Madison, Ill. One police theory was that Phayer was the gangster wounded by Garrison in the ambush Friday. This theory was strengthened by the finding of blood stains in the gangsters' abandoned car and the release of information that Phayer was being sought in the investigation of the kidnaping of two Peoria gamblers, William Urban and Frank Dougherty, in the last five months. Urban and Dougherty paid money for their release.

Sheriff Grant Minor advanced the

theory that Phayer was slain by companions who feared that he might incriminate himself and them in the kidnapings.

Dice and Wheels Silent.

Meanwhile the dice ceased to clack and the roulette wheels were still in the city's many gambling houses. Card games and baseball pools were allowed to run apparently on the theory that Peoria cannot stand too much reform. The city and county officials are admittedly reluctant to disturb the existing order. State's Attorney Pratt said he had issued the closing command, not from a sudden access of virtue, but to silence rumors that he had a financial interest in the gambling resorts. The town has been ablaze with rumors ever since the Garrison killing. Reports of a crooked alliance between city and county officials and gamblers with newspapers snaring in the profits are widespread.

Apparently in answer to all this hubbub Mayor Edward M. Woodruff instructed Chief of Police J. Edward Wombacher to press the drive on slot machines

No Crusader, Says Mayor.

Both officials believe Peoria prefers to stay unreformed, and cite the city's record as a wide open town for many years. As an indication of its tolerant attitude a poll on prohibition here showed a vote of 20 to 1 against the 18th amendment.

"I don't know what to do," Mayor Woodruff said tonight. "If I were to come out on a reform platform at this time people would think I was a great humorist.

"I have, in my eighteen years in office, gone in for reform. I drove out the red light district. It was getting so that people said I had an interest in the resorts, where I merely let them run under regulation. The

closing was a mistake. It merely scattered our problem throughout the town. The same way with liquor. I drove the drink parlors out and now we have speakeasies all over town.

"No matter what I do I have my share of critics. I frankly say I like to let things be. I had my share of reforming and it reminds me of an invention of mine years ago. It was all right, but it didn't work."

State's Attorney Explains.

State's Attorney Pratt declared that the gambling house proprietors had been willing to close for some time, but delayed the step because they feared that one of their number might remain open and make a profit. All have complained that they are making nothing, he said.

"No one man is permitted to dominate any racket in the city," he explained. "This policy has kept any racket from raising to a position to defy authorities. This plan is the most successful in a tolerant community. Until these kidnapings we have had no serious problem. It is my opinion this is a new racket for criminals, who, unless they are checked, may proceed to kidnap merchants and wealthy men for ransom."

Editors stated that they are undergoing a period of public suspicion.

"I have been taking money from gamblers for 25 years, if you would believe rumor," said Seymour Oakley of the Evening Star. "And I hear the rumors from the best people in the city. We have frequently conducted drives on gambling, but did not receive popular support."

Carl Slane of the Journal and Transcript said that he, too, was implicated by rumor. His papers have also failed to rouse public opinion against gambling. This he attributed to popular approval of a wide open policy.