Old Peoria? As Wide Open As The Gateway To Hell

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Washington and Ealon st., became a brothel.

Cedar and Walnut st., in part were taken over by dives. Peoria Alley, portions of what is now South Jefferson ave., and other portions of the city became "districts.

HUSTLERS ROAMED THE DOWNTOWN BARS, offering a quick trip to a hotel room or even an alliance in the rear seat of a parked automobile. One downtown eating place even provided the parked cars in a lot at the rear. Usually it was patronized by young girls eager to earn half a dollar.

Narcotics were quick to reach the hands of those impulsive and gullible kids. The addict population of Peoria today acquired much of its habit at that time.

Across Fulton st., the city bar hall were two buildings dedicated to gambling. One, neat and tastefully furnished, offered about any sort of action the gambling man could desire. It also was understood that no one need be lonely while losing his money at the old Sportsmen's Club which later became the Clover Club.

AT THE OTHER, THE ALCAZAR, baseball post offices and similar institutions of chance were on open sale. Slot machines were available, but the real action was gambling where a stiff-hating poker game was in nightly session.

Also in the 100 block Fulton st., was the Mini. Gambling was carried on in a back room, but only on a small scale. Operatives refused to deal with the mob, and most gambling always took place outside these doors.

Around the corner, in the 200 block S. Jefferson ave. was Peoria's best known establishment, the Empire. At various times, the Empire offered all types of gambling, but always it was the home of the "baseball pool" which frequently paid off jackpots of $1,000 or more.

THIS WAS THE MOST MUGGISH SPOT in Peoria. Its proprietor, Bill Urban, was one of the most pitiful wino's, showing his release only after paying $50.00.

In the same block, the Savoy had a short career in big time gambling. For almost a year, before Mayor Carl C. Michel pushed down the lid and kept it down, a cajun flourished in the rear. Real cajun poker was available in an upstairs room.

Also across from the city hall, but this time across Madison ave., was the House gang's headquarters, The Palace club. Gambling of all sorts was available here, too. It was stubborn to be lured here. Too large a winning might result in a broken hand and a quick drinking after the patron left the club. Eventually the club was sold, and a respectable tavern operation now is conducted nearby.

The old Palace club is not to be confused with the Palace Arcade, in the 300 block N. Madison ave. The partners here ran a gambling and horse betting operation on their second floor. When the bar was closed they simply closed their doors. They were gamblers of the old school.