

AMERICA'S ONLY GIRL BANDIT

Pearl Hart, Who Held Up Stage Coach, Now Sells Cigars.

PEARL HART, the only woman bandit who ever held up a stage coach in this country, is now keeping a little cigar store in Kansas City, and her customers do not know that the quiet, modest appearing little woman who waits on and chats with them was on a time as desperate a character as ever a Deadwood Dick of them all. She is living down a past colored with high lights and replete with experiences that rarely come to a woman.

Not many years ago Pearl Hart, dressed as a boy, was shining shoes in the down town district of Chicago. Her sister, a year younger than herself, was with her. These two young girls, then in their early teens, slept in the box cars out along State street, in the Wabash avenue livery barns, in lofts, or wherever they could sneak in unnoticed. In Chicago Pearl was arrested for the first time. It was here she was first sentenced for crime. Still, her history during the time she was here has always remained until now a blank.

This notorious young woman first sprang into public attention in May, 1899, when she held up the Globe, Ariz., stage. Until recently, when she was paroled, she has been serving time in the penitentiary at Yuma, Ariz. She confessed her crime to Francis Reno, and at the same time gave to him the history of her strange career.

Dressed in Men's Clothes.

Pearl Hart is a little woman, and, dressed in male attire, she appeared very small. At the time of her arrest after the stage holdup she tipped the scales at 101 pounds, but even though she was small she had the nerve of an old outlaw, and was all dare-devil. At first she was naturally a tramp. When she was thirteen years of age she ran away from her home in Lindsay, Ont., taking with her her sister. The two, dressed as boys, made their way by boat to Buffalo, N. Y., where they worked for a while in a factory where children were employed. After the sisters had been in Buffalo for about two months their parents got track of and finally recovered them.

Two years later the two girls again ran away from home. That time they came to Chicago. Pearl, the elder of the two, had the features of a boy, and, dressed as she was in boy clothes, was enabled to conceal her sex. The two sisters went to work as bootblacks. They worked first in the south end of the business district, and later, as they became acquainted with the other bootblacks, roved all over the down-town district.

One evening Pearl Hart saw a wagon load of watermelons standing near the corner of State and Harrison streets. Several of the melons had been taken from the wagon, and were piled upon the sidewalk. When no one was looking she stole one of the melons and ran down Harrison street with the heavy load. Before she had gone a block a policeman caught her, and both she and her sister were taken to the Harrison street police station.

Climbed From the Window.

After the two girls were arrested and sentenced to a boys' school their sex was discovered, and they were sent to the reform school for girls. Pearl was only a young girl, but she had been roving too long to content herself with life at the school. She and her sister had been locked up for almost three months and were apparently unusually tractable. Then one morning the matron awoke to find them gone. The two girls had made a rope of two sheets and a night gown and had lowered themselves from a window.

Pearl's sister climbed down first and without accident. Pearl followed, but being the heavier of the two she got a fall that knocked out her breath. Instead of tying the nightgown at the low-

er end of the rope she had tied one sleeve to the bed. Her weight ripped off the sleeve and she fell ten feet to the ground. This slight accident did not prevent her, however, from discarding her dress until she could scale the high, wire-bound fence and help her sister over.

When the sisters escaped they hastened away from Chicago as soon as they could secure two suits of boy's clothes. They made their way over the Northern Pacific railroad to Helena, Mont., and later to Victoria, B. C.

The two girls remained in Victoria for three months and then slowly made their way back to Chicago, the round trip being the most remarkable ever made by two girls of their age. When they arrived here the younger one became ill and soon grew homesick. As soon as she regained her strength Pearl took her back to Canada.

Becomes a Tramp.

By this time the elder of the two girls had become a confirmed tramp in everything except appearance. The long journey twice across the country had given her strength and a dare-devil disposition. Her parents knew she would not long remain at home unless she was placed under restraint. They sent her to a boarding school near Montreal, where it was supposed she would be closely guarded. She was closely guarded, too, but she found a way to elude her watchers. She met a man who lived in the town where the school was located, a Harry Bordeman, and before she had been at the school four months she eloped with him.

At that time Pearl Hart was sixteen years old. She and Bordeman came directly to Chicago, but she remained here but a short time. Following a quarrel one day she disappeared. She went directly to Trinidad, Col., but later came back to Chicago and patched up the quarrel with Bordeman. They remained here during the year of the world's fair, after which another quarrel against sent her flying to the West. She returned to Trinidad and later went to Phoenix, Ariz. She had been in Phoenix a week when she met Bordeman at a boarding house. A reconciliation followed and the two lived together until the beginning of the Spanish-American war, when Bordeman enlisted in McCord's regiment and left the territory.

When Bordeman left his wife she again donned men's clothes and went to Mammoth, Ariz., where she hired as cook in a mining camp on the banks of the Gila river. Soon after she went to Mammoth the largest mine there shut down, leaving her without work. She had saved a little money, about \$10, and with this was determined to pay her way to Globe, Ariz. She found two Mormon boys who were going by wagon to Globe and she paid them \$5 to allow her to ride with them.

Meets a Cobbler.

When the Mormon lads left Mammoth they had beside Pearl Hart another passenger, a former Chicago shoemaker, who had for some time been prospecting for gold in Arizona. Pearl looked the part of a young cow puncher, and the cobbler, who said his name was Joe, soon struck up an acquaintance with the young woman.

It is sixty miles from Mammoth to Globe, and the trip was made slowly. In the evening of the last day of the trip the party camped three miles from the latter place, and while they were there the Globe stage, containing several passengers, passed the camp. A hold-up did not suggest itself to Pearl at the time, but later the memory of the passing stage drew her into her one big crime and finally landed her in the penitentiary.

The next morning the party reached the mining camp and Pearl went to work as a cook and office "boy" in a sort of hotel. Before she had been there a week, Joe, her companion on the trip, went to her and told her he had a

gold mining claim not far distant. She was out of money, and declared she wished to return to Canada. The Chicago prospector's glowing picture of the claim led Pearl to believe the two could dig up enough gold in a short time to pay her way back to Canada, and she went with him. Several days' work failed to develop any trace of color in the dirt on the claim, and she grew disgusted with both her condition and her new friend.

She then thought of the Globe stage. She proposed a "stick-up" to her companion. The business was entirely new to him, and he strongly objected, but the young woman bandit insisted, until he finally gave in. She had a brace of pretty six-shooters and she could handle them with the greatest skill. She showed the ex-cobbler how well she could shoot and then cooked up detailed plans for carrying out the robbery.

Plan the Hold-Up.

Pearl Hart and the prospector left the mining claim and rode over the mountains until they struck the Globe trail. At a bend in the trail the two concealed themselves behind a big rock. The stage was due at that point during the day, but on account of the torturous path the stage must travel the driver could not see the roadway twenty feet ahead of his horses.

The two stage robbers waited for three hours before they heard the rattling coach. One was then concealed on one side of the road, the other on the opposite side. Just as the lead team got between Pearl and the prospector she leaped from her hiding place and, leveling one revolver at the driver's head and the other at the window of the stage door, yelled for the driver and passengers to throw up their hands.

The driver and the three passengers—two white men and a Chinaman—heeded the command. Pearl then ordered the prospector to keep a bead on the driver. She ordered the passengers out of the stage and took their firearms from them. When she was sure they had no weapons left she searched them all. From one white man she secured \$390, from the other \$35, and from the Chinaman \$5. The driver had \$8 in his pocket, but this she returned to him, with the remark that he had earned the money carrying three cowards across the hills.

When she was certain she had stolen all the money she gave each one of the passengers a dollar, and, at the point of two six-shooters, forced them to go on down the road. When they were out of sight the young woman bandit led the way into the mouth of a canyon and, by a circuitous route, she and her companion made their way back to their horses. They then rode through a long box canyon, where this notorious young woman had the one great fright of her life. She afterward confessed to a creepy feeling after the robbery, but a hideous noise in the box canyon was more terrifying to her. As she rode on, however, she discovered that the noise was merely the croaking of millions of frogs.

Surprised and Taken to Jail.

After riding for a mile or two the young woman turned her horse into a traversed canyon, which soon led them to an abandoned trail. She and the prospector, now become a desperado, rode to a point near Cane Springs. There they came across a mountain lion. The young woman, who could shoot as straight as a sharpshooter, quickly mounted her horse and chased the animal for two miles. The prospector followed her until she gave up the chase. They then rode on until they came within six miles of Mammoth. There the prospector and his horse fell into a river and both were nearly drowned.

About eight miles from Mammoth they lay down in some bushes to sleep during the rest of the night, expecting