



**0. Road to Perdition - Story Preface**

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Photograph depicting Chicago's State Street in 1907 (from the Detroit Publishing Company Postcards, Leonard Lauder Postcard Collection). Maintained by the New York Public Library, Call Number: MFY 95-29. Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

*If the Angel Gabriel  
came to Chicago,  
he would surely lose his character  
within a week.*

D.L. Moody

On the moral state of Chicago in the late 19th Century

The Potawatomi Indians had a special name for the place where the river (now known as the Chicago) empties into Lake Michigan. They called it *Chickagou*, which means "bad smell." It was the skunk cabbage, choking bogs that drained into the river, which gave the area its name.

But it was organized crime which gave Chicago its reputation as a lawless city. What was it about Chicago that allowed a person like Al Capone to build a crime syndicate so widespread it grossed about \$120 million a year by the mid-1920s?

- Some people say it was geography: Chicago just happened to be built in the right place at the right time.
- Other people say it was Prohibition: When the government outlawed alcohol, it opened the door to organized crime.
- Still others say it was corruption: Had it not been for politicians and police "on the take," guys like Capone would have been stripped of their power.

More likely than not, Chicago owed its late 19th/early 20th century reputation to all of those factors - and more. But it also owed its ultimate triumph to the moral courage of citizens who stopped their city's slide down a "road to perdition."

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Road-to-Perdition>

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## Media Stream



### D.L. Moody

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