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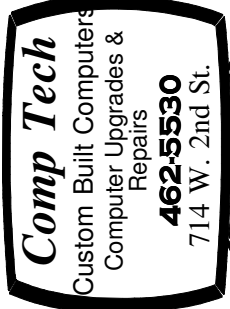


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# The Hastings Table Top Times™

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**"The Great Bank Robbery" of Hastings National Bank, Feb. 25, 1931**

## The Crime

Early in the morning three desperados jimmied a window and broke into the Hastings National Bank and waited for the employees to arrive. As they arrived, the robbers tied them up one by one in the basement. At 8:30, when the time lock on the safe was set to open, they took a bank employee up to open the vault. They escaped with more than \$27,000 in cash.

## The Getaway

The bank robbers left the bank in a new Chevrolet (unusual in impoverished depression-era Hastings). They apparently returned to their rented house on east Sixth Street in Hastings. Acting on a tip police surrounded the house at about 10 o'clock at night and three officers went to knock on the door. A man in pajamas holding a machine gun invited the officers in, then promptly took their guns. The gang then had a gun battle with the outside officers, before using the hostages as shields to disarm the remaining police, steal the keys to the police cars, and flee in two vehicles, the new Chevy, and a Ford.

## The Capture

The first robber to be captured was Jim Thomas who had been wounded in the shoot-out and was apprehended when seeking medical attention in Belvidere the next morning. Two and a half months later Jimmie Creighton shot and killed a man in Webb City, Missouri after a minor altercation on the street. Upon his arrest, he also confessed to the bank robbery in Hastings.

A full year later, in May of 1932, Sam O'Dell was arrested in Oklahoma and was transported to Montana to stand trial for a bank robbery there that had occurred one week after the Hastings robbery. He was identified as the third robber by Hastings police, but charges were never filed since he was incarcerated in Montana.

## The Police

Night Captain Frank Yetman was taken hostage and released in Kansas. He returned to Hastings by airplane and reported that flying was almost as scary as being kidnapped. Officer J.L. Wood was taken hostage and left tied to a telephone pole near Grafton. Nebraska Banker's Assn. investigator Volcott Condit was wounded in the shoot-out. Others were uninjured. At one point the police called this robbery "the most perfectly executed bank robbery ever staged in the Middlewest."

## The Wife, Money & Mattress

Velma Creighton (wife of one of the robbers) was about six months pregnant at the time of the robbery and with her infant son, fled the shoot-out with Jim Thomas and hostage Officer J.L. Wood. She was captured in Belvidere the next day with Thomas with \$850 in cash in her coat and \$260 in the baby's diapers.


Police brought the Chevy back to Hastings and searched it thoroughly but were unable to find any additional money. The mayor's 11-year-old son was given permission to search the car, and found \$8,740.

While out on bail awaiting trial Velma Creighton wrote a letter asking to have the bed from the rented house sent to her. A few months later it was reported that thieves broke into the house and stole the mattress. She was ultimately acquitted of being an accessory to the bank robbery, although a juror at her trial found an additional \$200 in cash in the lining of her coat.

Less than \$10,000 was ever recovered from the robbery, and most of that had been found by an 11-year-old boy who liked to read detective magazines.

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## The Jail Break

While awaiting trial, Jim Thomas escaped from his cell on May 8, 1931 by sawing away part of the cell door, but was found hiding on a shelf behind some boxes in another room in the Courthouse.

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