



MAIN ST. in Delta looks like this today. Things are peaceful enough now—and they have been most of the time in the village's history, but May 20, 1920, was very different. That's when Cowboy Hill's gang robbed the Peoples Savings Bank, in the middle of this quiet block.

Turned A Sleepy May Day In 1920 Into In Village History



FRED LONGNECKER, son of the president of the bank, was among the first to alert police in nearby Wauseon of the holdup.



WHILE four gunmen were inside the bank keeping employees covered and clearing

out tills and the vault, two members of the gang stood guard outside. **Blade photos**



SEVERAL STORES, a theater, a restaurant and a savings and loan association are across the street from the bank

now. In 1920 there was a bakery where one of the employees was wounded by the gang's wildly sprayed bullets.

Blazing Chapter In Delta's History

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Bloomer. "Luckily the bandit didn't think I was flirting."

The fourth man in the bank already was scooping up money from the teller's cage. Then he emptied the vault of more cash and some Liberty bonds.

All the time this was going on, the burglar alarm outside the bank was merrily clanging an alarm. The quartet asked the bank employees to shut it off; they replied they didn't know how.

Villagers near the bank went to their doors and windows to see what was the matter. Several started to walk toward the bank itself.

Fred Longnecker, son of the bank president and a manufacturer who had his offices in the Lincoln Hotel, a few feet east of the bank, went to the window to see what was the matter.

In front of the bank he saw a parked car with a man standing beside it, another one at the wheel. Nothing suspicious about that he thought and prepared to turn away when suddenly the man standing on the sidewalk, reached into the car, produced a rifle and shouted something to a man who had started across the street toward the bank. Mr. Longnecker then realized it was a holdup he was witnessing. He hurried to his telephone and notified Sheriff John McQuillen at Wauseon.

Roy Chamlin, a cook in the nearby Lincoln restaurant, also heard the bell clanging. Jokingly he remarked: "I got to save my 50 cents," and started for the bank. As he reached it, he was hit on the head by the man standing beside the car and promptly lost interest in the proceedings.

By this time people were peering out of windows, peeking around corners or trying to reach advantageous places. But they did not dare cross the street to reach the bank—anytime anyone got adventurous and took a shot at the two bandits outside the bank, the fire was returned.

Some of the shots fired by the gunman were pretty wild—maybe intentionally so. One hit the sidewalk and ricocheted into a bakery across the street wounding James Warren slightly. Another bullet grazed the cheek of Carl Sargent. Mark Morris later discovered a bullet had smashed a pipe he had in his pocket.

As the four gunmen emerged from the bank carrying their loot, Erskine Chase, a Toledoan, opened fire on them as did Otto Smith, a bakery employee and a former Toledo policeman. Down the street George Everett hid in some bushes with his .22 caliber rifle to blaze away as the gunmen's car careened by him Toledo-bound.

As the getaway automobile roared out of the village, it seemed as if all the holdup men opened fire. Bullets sprayed in all directions. It was as if the robbers wanted to give the sleepy little village a final salute they always would remember.

Down the macadam Chicago Pike the robbers' car fled, finally turning north at Richfield Center Rd. Later it was discovered the gunmen made their way into Toledo by back roads. There was no radio network in those days to alert police to throw up roadblocks.



MISS JESSIE BLOOMER was clerk-teller in Peoples Savings Bank the day of the holdup. Although told to keep her eyes closed, she had to peek—blinking her eyes rapidly so she wouldn't be noticed.

Back at the bank there was excitement galore. Mr. Casler had to go home, but not before he had arranged for a fresh supply of money from the Farmers Bank across the street.

Seemed about everybody in Fulton County suddenly had business to transact in the bank; the restaurants did a thriving business. Everybody was telling everybody else just where he stood, where the robbers stood, what he did and what they did and — — —.

The Delta Atlas, the village newspaper, was just going to press when the robbery occurred. It remade its first page and issued an extra. For the first and only time newsboys went up and down the streets crying "Extra, all about the bank robbery." What a day for Delta!

It didn't take long to round up the gang that robbed the bank. Eddie O'Neill was captured a couple of weeks later and sent to the penitentiary.



COWBOY HILL was captured in this house at 2220 Franklin Ave. after a gun battle with police in which another member of his gang, Archie Dennison, was killed.

Cowboy Hill fled to Algonac, Mich., in a classy speedboat. Posing as a South American rancher, he entered his boat in a race there on Labor Day and won a trophy. The cup donor fainted when he learned the identity of the winner some weeks later.

Hill finally was shot and captured in a gun battle with Toledo police at 2220 Franklin Ave. and sentenced to prison. Later he developed cancer and was released. He died in 1937 in a Toledo hospital. Archie Dennison, another accomplice, was killed in the gun battle. The other members of the gang ultimately were captured and given long prison terms.

Delta has had exciting events before and since that May day in 1920, but old-timers still declare the foray of the Cowboy Hill gang topped them all. ★ ★ ★