

Fact or Fiction? Three Armed Bandits are Captured Here by Sheriff Berger

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

These stories from local history are sometimes so extraordinary it's hard to believe they actually happened. Check out 'fact or fiction' stories: they're actual Enterprise news clips reprinted from the past.

Three armed bandits were captured in Holyoke early Tuesday morning by Sheriff Frank A. Berger in an exciting chase during which Sheriff Berger crowded the bandit car to the curb, and covered the three men before they could recover from the crash. Only a short time previous the bandit trio had bound and gagged C.O. Olson, owner of the Shirley Hotel at Haxtun, and escaped with jewelry and cash in the amount of nearly \$1,000. The loot was recovered. The men gave their names as J.C. Riley, C.W. Riley and James Akers.

About 3 o'clock Tuesday morning, Mr. Olson was called from bed by two men who stated that they wished a room. One of the men produced a \$20 bill which he offered in payment of the hotel bill. Olson brought out his sack of change from its hiding place in the office remarking that he didn't know whether he could make the change or not. On looking up he was facing a pair of revolvers, and one of them remarked "We can change it for you."

Olson was promptly blindfolded, and his mouth stuffed with handkerchiefs.

After binding him hand and foot the bandits tossed him on a bed in his room. A third bandit appeared on the scene about this time, and assisted in the completion of the job.

After taking about fifty dollars in cash, a diamond ring valued at about \$800 and a watch, the bandits locked the door and fled. It required some little time for Olson to wriggle out of his bandages enough to begin to create a disturbance. With the gag once out of his mouth he began to yell for help, and soon had several in the hotel roused.

Sheriffs in all directions were notified. Sheriff Berger received his call about 3:00 a.m., and was in motion at once. Picking up Nightwatchman Brooks Mason as he went, Berger turned into main street just as the bandit trio entered Holyoke from the north in a Chevrolet roadster.

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On seeing the light from the sheriff's car the bandits headed down the tracks west between the two rows of boxcars. They soon discovered that they could not get by, and backed out into the highway just as Sheriff Berger arrived on the scene and the chase commenced.

Traveling south Berger forced the bandit car to turn west at the Holmes Motor company corner, but was unable to force the car to the curb. A little further west the sheriff again turned his car directly into the bandit car, and crushed it to the curb. Before the bewildered bandits could recover enough to get their guns in action Sheriff Berger had them covered, and with the assistance of Mason soon had the trio behind bars in the county jail.

Two large 38-calibre revolvers were found ready for action. Upon searching the trio at the jail the diamond ring could not be found. A search of the scene of the capture disclosed the ring trampled into the dirt where the bandits had thrown it away when they saw that capture was inevitable.

The bandit car was smashed up considerable, but the car belonging to the sheriff was but little the worse for the crash.

The trio was arraigned in the justice court of Elmer Harmon Wednesday forenoon. The first man brought before the court gave his name as George Thompson. Later he stated that his real name was J.C. Riley, and under this name he was booked. He waived preliminary hearing, and pleaded not guilty. He was bound over to the next term of district court on a \$2500 bond. He is alleged to be the third bandit who did not appear until after Olson had been bound.

He appeared in court clean shaven and well dressed. When accosted about his sudden changed of name by Deputy District Attorney Claude D. Walrod he smiled, and seemed to enjoy the joke along with the small crowd which hung around the court room.

The second man to answer the charges gave his name as C.W. Riley, but failed to say whether or not he was related to the other man giving his name as Riley. He, too, waived preliminary hearing and pleaded not guilty. He was bound over to the regular district court on a bond of \$5,000. While listening to the reading of the charge he stood in a dejected manner fumbling his hat, and appeared much more disturbed over the proceedings than his partner in crime. He, too, was well dressed.

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“James Akers” was the name given by the third of the trio. He was also a young man, short and of very slender build. His dark eyes shone out from beneath his black hair as he looked around apparently unconcerned while the charge was being read. He pleaded in a manner similar to that of the other two, and was bound over in the same manner on a \$5,000 bond.

No attempt has been made so far to obtain bond. Apparently none will be made as the trio refused the offer of legal council.

Since the next term of district court does not convene until the second Tuesday of December the trio will have some little time in which to prepare for their trial. Two other inmates are also confined in the county jail at the present time making it necessary to use the women’s ward in order to accommodate all of the prisoners.

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