

## Some of Willie Sutton's Heists

**February 4, 1919:** A.M. Endner, Manufacturer of ship's spars, Beard Street, Brooklyn, NY

About 8:30 p.m. 16-year old Bessie Endner joined her sweetheart William Johnson and Willie Sutton as the trio burglarized her father's office. She had the combination for the safe, where they found \$16,000.00 and left town for upstate New York. They purchased a car in Oneonta, and eventually were caught in Poughkeepsie on February 16 with \$13,000 of the money left. After they were returned to Brooklyn to appear in court, Bessie's father dropped the charges and the youngsters were given a suspended sentence.

Source: New York Times

**February 16, 1923:** Sutton, using the alias of Leo Holland was working at the Edison Electric Appliance Company on Sixth Avenue in New York City. In the late evening hours the company's safe was broken into and \$500.00 cash stolen. When the Pinkerton agency investigated, they found that Leo Holland was really Willie Sutton and became a suspect in the burglary. Charges were dismissed as there was no proof to link Sutton to the heist.

Source: Pinkerton files

**1924 - 1925:** During this time period, Eddie Wilson and Willie Sutton worked in a burglary crew headed by Edward Tate. Known as Doc Tate to many, he was one of the premier safecrackers in his day. Willie became a willing student and learned a great deal about the art of burglary. Originally from Chicago, Tate lived in New York City, but his policy was to strictly work out-of-town. In Sutton's books, he writes that the first heist he participated in with Tate's crew was breaking into a drugstore near Scollay Square in Boston and cracking open the safe. He also writes about burglaries he participated in upstate New York and Pennsylvania.

**September 7, 1925:** First National Bank of Ozone Park, 101<sup>st</sup> Ave. & Woodhaven Blvd., Ozone Park, NY

Using a variety of burglary tools including drills and acetylene burners, Willie Sutton and Edward Wilson broke into the cellar of the bank and attempted to break into the vault

before the employees arrived in the morning. The process was taking longer than they estimated, forcing them to halt the attempt and leave their equipment behind.

**March 15, 1930:** Patrick L. Hardy Jewelry Store, 305 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Brooklyn, NY

Willie Sutton and Marcus Bassett smashed the store window and ran off with \$2,100.00 worth of jewelry.

Source: Pinkerton files

**March 22, 1930:** H&L Gross Jewelry Store, 164-05 Jamaica Avenue, Jamaica, Queens, NY

In the morning Willie Sutton entered the store posing as a customer. After drawing a pistol on store owner, Harry L. Gross, Marcus Bassett and one other unidentified man entered. The trio successfully fled with \$30,000.00 worth of gems.

Employees: Harry L. Gross, A.C. Moss, Leopold Coened.

Sources: New York Times, New York Daily News, Pinkerton files.

**April 15, 1930:** Prudential Life Insurance Company, 922 Flatbush Avenue, Brooklyn, NY

Around noontime, Willie Sutton, Marcus Bassett, and a third unidentified man entered the office drawing guns on the employees and Peter Sullivan, a customer who was paying a bill. The men left with \$3,000.00 cash in a vehicle driven by a fourth man.

Employees: May Grady, Emily Wehner, Florence Peters, Florence Cronin, Richard W. Goslin.

Sources: New York Daily News, Pinkerton files.

**April 26, 1930:** Weir's Florist Shop, 3360 Fort Hamilton Parkway, Brooklyn, NY

Willie Sutton and Marcus Bassett held up the store and got away with \$900.00 of the

store's payroll. No further details known.

Source: Pinkerton files.

**May 5, 1930:** London Character Shoe Store, 381 Fulton Street, Brooklyn, NY

At 8:05 a.m., manager, George Smith arrived five minutes late to open the store. Marcus Bassett was waiting in front and actually scolded Smith about his tardiness. Willie Sutton was standing nearby keeping lookout. After admitted into the store, Bassett drew a gun, forcing the manager to hand over the store's cash, and escaping with \$1,150.00. This was the fifth holdup of a similar manner that occurred on a Monday, resulting in the newspapers dubbing the suspect the "Monday Burglar."

Source: New York Daily News, Pinkerton Files.

**June 7, 1930:** Richmond Hill National Bank, 88<sup>th</sup> Street & Jamaica Avenue, Woodhaven, Queens, NY

Just prior to opening time three men and two women, all armed and wearing masks entered the bank and took porter John F. Whalen by surprise. After handcuffing Whalen and the next four employees to enter the bank, the robbers forced the manager, Albert M. Thorn to open the vault when he arrived. They drove off with \$19,000.00.

Bank Employees: John F. Whalen, Harry Schedinger, Mathias Then, Viola Seem, Madeline Heinlen, and Albert M. Thorn.

Robbers: Willie Sutton and Marcus Bassett. The identities of other man and two women have not been verified, although one of the women was called to an accomplice by the name of "Maggie" during the robbery.

Sources: New York Daily News, Pinkerton files.

**October 10, 1930:** National City Bank, 54<sup>th</sup> Street & 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Brooklyn, NY

Just before 8:00 a.m. Edward Ling, the bank guard, was forced at gunpoint to admit Willie Sutton, disguised as a Telegraph messenger and Marcus Bassett, wearing a gas

mask over his face. As employees arrived they were escorted inside and handcuffed. Also shackled were postman, Ira Bush and bank customer, William Rourke. When eleven year-old Mimi Saraniti walked in and saw the two men with guns, she ran out screaming. This foiled the robbery attempt as the duo left empty-handed.

Bank Employees: Edward Ling, Frank Mott, Theodore Stolman, Lewis Nelson, Henry Kunkel, Hugh O'Donnell, Robert McNally, and Pete Russello.

Robbers: Willie Sutton and Marcus Bassett. There are reports that two additional accomplices were stationed outside the bank, but this has not been verified.

Sources: New York Daily News, Pinkerton files.

**October 28, 1930:** J. Rosenthal & Son Jewelry Store, 1637 Broadway, New York, NY

About 7:45 a.m. Willie Sutton, disguised as a Telegraph messenger knocked on the front door of the jewelry store. When porter, Charles Lewis opened to receive the alleged telegram, Sutton drew a pistol and forced his way in. He was followed by his accomplice, Marcus Bassett. When the employees arrived they were bound and forced to sit on the floor in the back of the store. At 9:15 a.m., after forcing one of the employees to open the vault, the two robbers fled with jewelry valued at \$129,000.00.

Employees: George Lewis, George Woods, Charles Hayes, and Julius Fox.

Robbers: Willie Sutton and Marcus Bassett.

Sources: New York Times, New York Daily News, Court transcripts, and Pinkerton files.

**December 15, 1932:** Manufacturers Trust Company, 169<sup>th</sup> Street & St. Nicholas Avenue, New York, NY

At 9:35 a.m., four bandits armed with revolvers, tear gas bombs, and a machine gun burst into the bank After taking \$13,000.00 from the tellers cash boxes, the gang tossed a tear gas bomb as they left the bank. With a fifth accomplice behind the wheel the

gang fled as a police officer stopped a milk truck and pursued a car chase. Shots were fired but the robbers got away.

Bank Employees: Alice Torney, Letty Manning, Wilhelmina Hall, George W. Kuhnbaum, William McTavish, Andrew Ctucke, and Samuel Armo.

Robbers: Willie Sutton and John Egan were positively identified by bank employees. Just three days prior these two men escaped from Sing Sing Prison. The other three robbers were not positively identified.

**February 15, 1933:** Corn Exchange National Bank & Trust Co., 60<sup>th</sup> & Ludlow Streets, Philadelphia, PA

About 7:45 a.m. Willie Sutton, disguised in a postal messenger uniform knocked on the front door of the bank. When bank guard, Christian Madsen answered the door, Sutton stated he had a special delivery, prompting Madsen to open the door. Sutton pulled a gun and forced his way in, followed by John Egan. They tied Madsen to a chair, while waiting for the bank manager to arrive and open the vault. Madsen managed to free himself and released tear gas, forcing the duo to flee empty-handed. There are conflicting reports as to whether or not Edward Wilson participated in this robbery attempt.

Sources: Philadelphia Inquirer, Pinkerton files, Court Transcripts.

**February 1933:** Lafayette National Bank, 325 9<sup>th</sup> Street, Brooklyn, New York. In both of Sutton's books, he mentions an attempt made by him with Wilson and Egan. He never mentions that name of the bank, but indicates the bank is next door to a Keith Theater. After some research, the Lafayette National Bank is located next door to the Prospect Theater, which was part of the Keith group. The plan was for Sutton and Wilson to work the inside, and Egan was supposed to show up with a getaway car and wait in a back alley between the bank and theater. Willie wrote that he and Wilson were in position to carry out their tasks, but Egan never showed up with the car. Since it would have been too risky to attempt the heist with only two men, they decided to walk away empty-handed.

Sources: *I, Willie Sutton*, and *Where the Money Was*.

**July 8, 1933:** Corn Exchange Bank, 543-545 West 110<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, NY

About 7:40 a.m., three men, one disguised as a policeman forced porter George Smith to let them into the bank as he was about to open the front door. The “policeman” stood inside the entrance with his gun pointed at Smith. The subsequent employees, upon entering the bank were directed inside to the other two robbers. When Assistant Manager, Paul Miller arrived at about 8:40 a.m. he was forced to open the vault along with Head Teller, August Melicher, who possessed to second half of the combination. At 8:55 a.m. the trio escaped with \$23,835.00.

Bank Employees: J. Leslie Raymaster, William Merkle, Charles Johnson, August Melicher, George Smith, Mary Flynn, Margaret Kastner, Marion Matthews, Ethel Meehan, Agnes Owens, Catherine Walsh, Jacob Holm, and Paul Miller.

The Three Robbers were identified as: Willie Sutton, Edward Wilson, and Joseph Perlongo. There are also reports of a fourth associate who drove the getaway vehicle.

Source: New York Times, New York Daily News, Police Records.

**January 15, 1934:** Corn Exchange Bank & Trust Co., 60<sup>th</sup> & Ludlow Streets, Philadelphia, PA

Even though he failed in an earlier attempt, Willie Sutton was determined that this bank was a worthwhile target. In the early morning hours, Sutton, along with Edward Wilson, and Joseph Perlongo entered the bank through a skylight on the roof and waited inside. At 7:30 a.m. bank guard Christian Madsen entered the bank where he was surprised by Sutton pointing a machine gun and the other two men pointing revolvers. Wilson hid in the shadows as he forced Madsen to admit each employee, who were systematically led to the vault area and handcuffed. When bank manager, Clarence B. Munshower arrived, he was forced to open the vault. The trio escaped with \$21,140.00.

Bank Employees: Christian Madsen, Clarence Munshower, Harold L. Parker, Arlington W. Carmine, S.J. Mullens, C.S. Zimmerman, W.A. Schellenberg, S.J. Glenn, R.E. Saunders, and Edgar Gardner.

Sources: Philadelphia Municipal Archives, Court Records, Pinkerton files, Philadelphia Inquirer

**March 9, 1950:** Manufacturers Trust Company, 47-11 Queens Boulevard, Sunnyside, Queens, NY

At 8:30 a.m. Willie Sutton, Thomas Kling and John DeVenuta approached bank custodian, James Weston as he was opening the front door to the bank, forcing him inside at gunpoint. Sutton hid by a radiator in the vestibule with a gun on Weston. In Sutton's usual manner, he had Weston admit each employee, who was then ushered to the rear by DeVenuta, seated in a chair and guarded by Kling. The bank manager, Robert Hoffman finally arrived and was forced to open the vault. The men got away with \$63,933.09.

Bank Employees (not complete list): Robert Hoffman, Theodore Sands, James Brady, James Weston, Genevieve Helfer.

Sources: Too many to name!

**February 1952:** Manufacturers Trust Company, West 14<sup>th</sup> Street & 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue, New York, NY

At this busy intersection in Manhattan, banks were located on three of the four corners and one in particular interested Sutton. This bank was attached to an apartment building, where the bank porter lived. The building had a unique set up where one outside door led to the apartment building lobby where there was also an interior side entrance to the bank. This allowed the porter to enter the bank without having to go out to the street. Sutton's plan was to hide inside the lobby and wait for the porter to come down from his apartment. This holdup never materialized because the members of the crew were captured prior to the planned event. The bank, located on the southwest corner operates today as a health spa. If you walk by the apartment building entrance on West 14<sup>th</sup> Street and peek inside, you can see the old bank vault in the lobby!