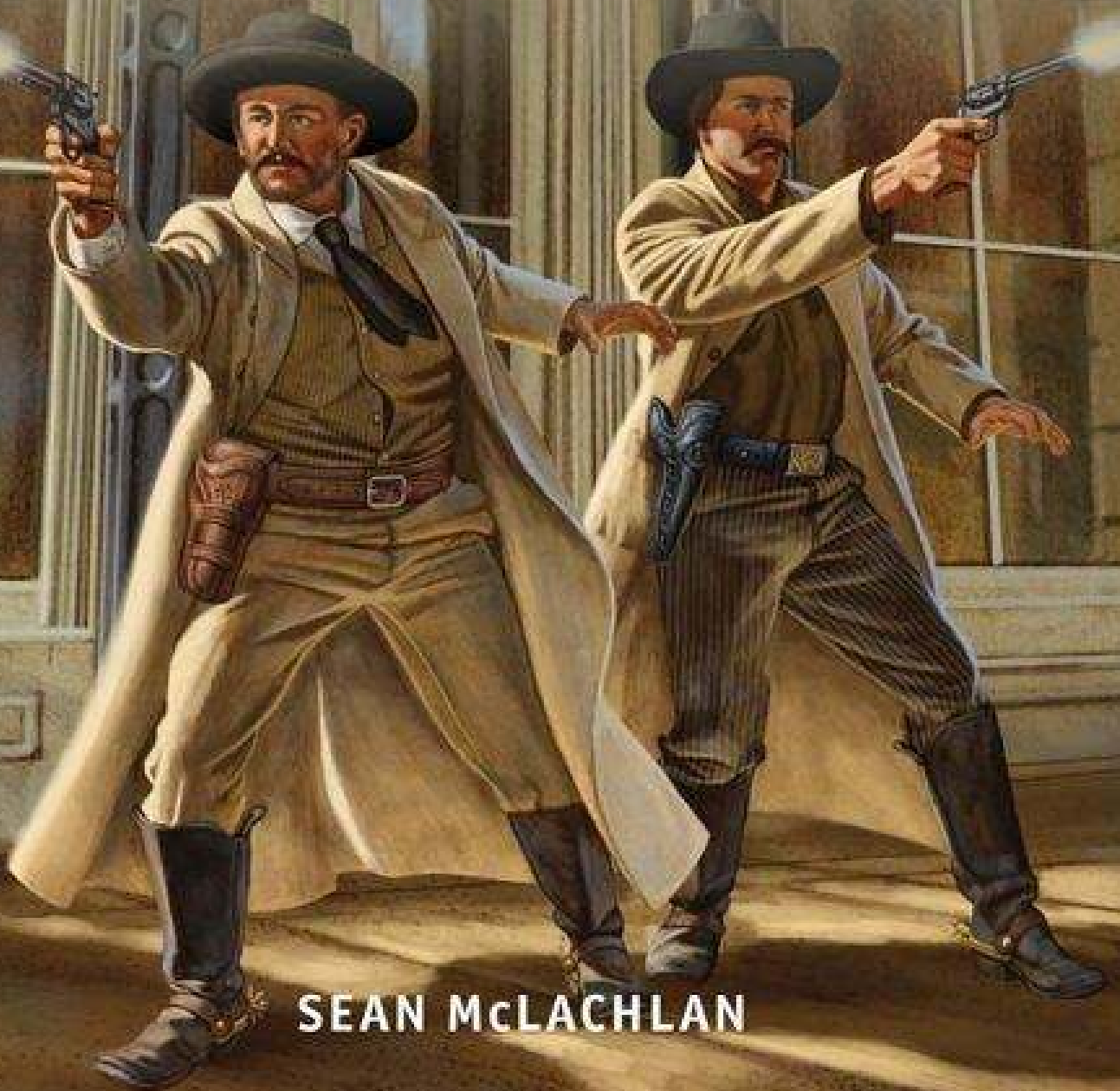


**RAID**

# THE LAST RIDE OF THE JAMES-YOUNGER GANG

Jesse James and the Northfield Raid 1876



**SEAN McLACHLAN**

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# INTRODUCTION

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It is common when discussing famous people to say they need no introduction. In the case of Jesse James this is both true and false. Jesse James is the most famous outlaw in history, but most of what the public “knows” about him is fable. Here is a brief overview of his life, along with the life of his older brother and fellow outlaw, Frank.

Frank and Jesse James were born in 1843 and 1847, respectively, on a farm near Kearney, western Missouri. Their father was a preacher who left for California’s gold fields while they were still children and died there. Their mother, Zerelda, a strong frontier woman, raised them on her own, with only minimal help from her second and third husbands. The third was the mild-mannered Dr. Reuben Samuel, who, while never quite a father figure to the boys, was loved by them.

Western Missouri in the mid- to late 1850s was a region at war. The question of whether the neighboring territory of Kansas would become a free or slave state led to violent action from the opposing factions. Missourians crossed the border en masse to rig territorial elections. This war eventually stopped, but the conflict grew ever more violent. Free-State guerrillas called Jayhawkers raided Missouri, killing slave owners and bringing their slaves back to Kansas and freedom. Missouri bushwhackers crossed the state line, killed Free-Staters, and destroyed abolitionist newspaper offices. The war between Jayhawkers and bushwhackers was the first chapter in the American Civil War and one of the main factors that led to the larger war. While the James family, being slave owners living close to the border, were lucky they didn’t lose their property, they certainly knew people who suffered.

Once the war started in earnest in 1861, Frank was quick to enlist, joining the rebellious Missouri State Guard that May. He saw action at the Confederate victory at Wilson’s Creek on August 10 and again during the successful siege of Lexington, Missouri, from September 11 to 20. The State Guard was then forced to retreat in the face of a superior Union force back to southwestern Missouri. Along

the way Frank fell ill, got left behind, and was captured and paroled. In return for swearing not to take up arms against the Union, he was allowed to return home. He might have farmed peacefully for the rest of the war if it were not for General Order No. 19, enacted in July of 1862, which forced all able-bodied men, including paroled Confederates, to join local Union militias. Frank, like many others, couldn't bring himself to don a Union uniform and fled. He joined the guerrilla band of William Quantrill.



Jesse James as a teenaged Confederate guerrilla or “bushwhacker” in Missouri. This picture, taken July 10, 1864, shows him wearing a loose “guerrilla shirt” and wielding three Colt Navy revolvers, a favorite weapon among the bushwhackers and used by many outlaws after the war. This image is reversed and has led to the persistent misunderstanding that Jesse was left-handed. He was, in fact, right-handed. The photo was taken in Platte City, Missouri, when Jesse and other guerrillas raided the town to support a mutiny of the local Union militia. Three hundred militiamen changed sides and raised a rebel flag. (LoC)

Quantrill's band was making a name for itself with its lightning hit-and-run tactics, ability to elude pursuit, aggressive fighting style, and its ill-treatment of Unionist civilians. To join, one had to show ability with a gun and horse and answer “yes” to the following questions, “Will you follow orders, be true to your fellows, and kill all those who serve and support the Union?”



The Lawrence Massacre of August 21, 1863 by Quantrill's group of bushwhackers was the worst atrocity against civilians in the war. The band descended on abolitionist Kansas, gunned down nearly 200 mostly unarmed men and boys, and burned the town. Frank James and Cole Younger were there that day, but showed little remorse in later years. (LoC)

It soon became known that the James family farm was a rest area for Quantrill's guerrillas. The local militia (the same one Frank was supposed to have joined) showed up at the farm and demanded to know where Frank and his friends were. The soldiers beat Jesse, who was only 15, and tied a rope around his stepfather's neck. They then hauled Reuben Samuel up, let him drop, then hauled him up again. Eventually he broke and revealed Frank's hiding place. A brief skirmish ensued but the guerrillas got away. Samuel is believed to have suffered permanent brain damage as a result of his near hanging.

This incident instilled in Frank and Jesse a burning hatred of the North. Jesse was still too young to join the guerrillas, however, and they were probably not impressed when he shot the tip of his finger off while reloading a pistol. Being a good Baptist boy, he didn't swear even under these trying circumstances and instead shouted out, "Dingus!" Dingus became his nickname for the rest of his life.

Meanwhile Frank was getting his revenge. Quantrill's band rode roughshod over the region, raiding Lawrence, Kansas, on August 21, 1863, where they killed almost 200 mostly unarmed men and boys and torched the town. Frank was there that day, as was future outlaw Cole Younger. The massacre shocked both North and South and even some of the guerrillas didn't like Quantrill's methods. The band broke up that winter, some thinking Quantrill was too bloodthirsty and others thinking he was too much of a disciplinarian. These latter coalesced around Quantrill's lieutenant, Bloody Bill Anderson. Frank went with Anderson, and Jesse, now 16, joined him in the spring of 1864.

Memories of the massacre lingered with Cole Younger. He joined the Christian Church on August 21, 1913, the 50th anniversary of the massacre. Explaining his actions long after the war he said:

My father was opposed to the war and had friends on both sides but was shot down in cold blood and robbed by a gang of federal freebooters as he was driving home from Kansas City. That day changed my whole life. The knowledge that my father had been killed in cold blood filled my heart with lust for vengeance.

This statement is only partially true. Cole had, in fact, joined the guerrillas before his father was killed by Union troops. This is only one of the many instances where publicity-hungry Cole tried to make himself look better for the press.

Jesse was shot through the lung that summer while trying to steal a saddle from a civilian. He recovered under the care of his cousin Zerelda. The two soon fell in love and he started calling her “Zee” so as not to have to use the same name as his mother. Within a month or two he was back in the saddle, in time to take part in Anderson’s bloody raid through central Missouri in support of the Confederate invasion led by General Sterling Price. Price moved up from Arkansas with 12,000 men in an ill-fated attempt to take St. Louis. Anderson’s raid left scores dead, including many civilians and unarmed Union soldiers, but Price’s invasion was repulsed.

As Price’s mangled army staggered back to Arkansas, Bloody Bill was killed by a plucky Union militia. Riding with him that day was future James–Younger gang member Clell Miller. He was only 14 at the time and was captured in the skirmish. Miller claimed he had been kidnapped by Anderson’s men and had only been with them for three days. This has been questioned by historians, but the support of several prominent neighbors and his tender age secured his release.



Gen. Sterling Price led Missouri Confederate forces on numerous campaigns. Guerrillas such as the James and Younger brothers supported his actions behind Union lines. (LoC)

At this point Frank and Jesse rejoined Quantrill. The guerrilla leader decided to lead his men to Kentucky to continue the fight; he even claimed he wanted to ride to the capital and assassinate Lincoln. Jesse, perhaps seeing the war was coming to an end, decided not to follow and remained in Missouri with some other guerrillas. Frank did follow, as did future outlaw Jim Younger, brother of Cole. Quantrill’s group was dogged by Union detachments. In one skirmish Jim Younger was captured but later escaped. On May 10, 1865 Quantrill’s band was run to ground by Unionist guerrillas as fierce as themselves. Quantrill was mortally wounded and at least two of his followers were killed. Frank and James was lucky to get away with his life. Seeing the war was now truly at an end, Frank gave up on July 26.





These bushwhackers from Quantrill's group were Frank James' and Cole Younger's comrades-in-arms. Dave Poole, is shown standing, and seated are Arch Clements (left) and Bill Hendricks (right). The photo was taken while they were wintering in Texas. They didn't like the image and trashed the photographer's equipment. Clements rode with the James-Younger gang in their first heist, the Liberty bank robbery. He was gunned down later that year by the state militia while resisting arrest. (LoC)

Jesse had been riding with the remnants of Anderson's old band in Missouri in the spring of 1862 but as the major Confederate armies laid down their arms, the hardcore bushwhackers began to give up hope. Some surrendered and found to their delight that they weren't lynched. Others fled to the Far West. Jesse and a group of comrades tried to surrender at Lexington, Missouri, on May 15 and were fired upon by some jumpy Union soldiers. Jesse was shot through the same lung as before, and again nearly died. He formally surrendered on May 21. Again in the care of his family, he and Zee became secretly engaged.

Life for former Confederates was hard in Missouri. The state government banned them from voting, holding public office, or serving in several professions. Many returning Confederates, especially in the Ozark region, found their land had been taken from them for failure to pay taxes and was being now farmed by Unionists. Some ex-bushwhackers, unable to put the killing behind them, used their persecution as an excuse to turn to outlawry.

The first heist by the James-Younger gang was less than a year after the war, on February 13, 1863, when some ten to 13 men robbed the Clay County Savings Association Bank in Liberty, Missouri. The bank was owned by staunch Unionists, which made it more attractive to the former rebels than Liberty's other, politically neutral, bank. The robbers got about \$57,000 in what was the first American daytime bank robbery in peacetime. It's unclear who made up the gang, but Cole Younger and Frank James are commonly believed to have been there. Despite popular tradition, Jesse probably wasn't, because he was still laid up with his gunshot wound.

It is commonly believed that Jesse was in charge of the gang. He was certainly better known, than the other brothers, to his letters to various newspapers proclaiming his innocence. The more daring and better looking of the brothers, it is he who has become a legend, but it might have been Frank who was really in charge.

Gang member George Shepard told a newspaperman, “Frank is the most shrewd, cunning, and capable; in fact, Jesse can’t compare with him. Frank is a man of education, and can act the first gentleman on all occasions. Jesse is reckless, and a regular dare-devil in courage, but it’s Frank who makes all the plans and perfects the methods of escape. Jesse is a fighter and that’s all. Why, he can hardly read or write, and these stories about his writing to the Kansas City papers and the *Nashville Banner* is all stuff. If any letters were ever written, *Frank wrote them.*” [16–17]

Shepard added that Frank didn’t mind Jesse stealing the show because Frank, “would rather not be known, so he directs Jesse and Jesse directs the crowd. He [Jesse] likes notoriety and always takes care to let the people on trains know that he is the leader, and he always enjoyed the reading of his exploits in the papers.”

## THOMAS COLEMAN “COLE” YOUNGER (JANUARY 15, 1844 – MARCH 21, 1916)

The oldest of the three outlaw Younger brothers, Cole grew up on a wealthy farm in western Missouri. He joined Quantrill’s guerrillas shortly after the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861. While he claimed he joined to avenge the murder of his father at the hands of a Union militia, in fact he joined months before that, although the murder certainly gave him a lingering hatred of the North. He also claimed he was a captain under the famous Confederate cavalry raider Brigadier General J.O. Shelby, but other than Cole’s own account, there is no evidence for this.

After the war, he helped found the James–Younger gang and participated in its first robbery, that of the Clay County Savings Association in Liberty, Missouri, in 1866. Cole went on to commit a series of robberies, both with the James brothers and independently with one or more of his brothers and other outlaws. While his main area of activity was Missouri, he may have participated in two bank robberies in Kentucky, another in West Virginia, a stagecoach robbery in Arkansas, and a train robbery in Iowa.

His age and greater wartime experience made him the dominant of the three brothers. Cole was said to have been level-headed, cool under fire, and didn’t like the more showy and hot-headed Jesse James. Cole could be showy himself, though. After his capture at Hanska Slough, he gave numerous and often contradictory interviews about his life, often stating he was sorry about the robbery, trying to clear his name of many crimes, and justifying the Lawrence Massacre.

After serving a 25-year sentence, he held various jobs including selling tombstones, running a Wild West show with Frank James, and going on the lecture circuit talking about how crime doesn’t pay. In 1903 he wrote the book *The Story of Cole Younger by Himself: An Auto-biography of the Missouri Guerrilla, Confederate Cavalry Officer, and Western Outlaw*. It’s a fascinating if unconvincing read. He is not known to have committed any crimes after his release.



Cole Younger was the most experienced of the outlaw Youngers and reportedly had doubts about the wisdom of the Northfield heist before, during, and certainly after the raid. Here he is shown shortly after his capture at Hanska Slough. The wound to his temple that knocked him out is clearly visible. (Northfield Historical Society)

On October 30, another bank was robbed in Lexington, Missouri, although the four robbers only got a little more than \$2,000. On May 23, 1867, a dozen men robbed a bank in Richmond, Missouri. The robbers bagged some \$3,500 but had to shoot their way out and left the mayor, the local jailor, and the jailor's son dead.

In the meantime Cole Younger had been developing a reputation as a robber with a string of heists put to his name. He worked with both the James gang and his own people. Both gangs had a fluid membership and were only the "James-Younger gang" on certain jobs.





The interior and the vault of the Clay County Savings Association, Liberty, Missouri – robbed by the James–Younger gang in their first heist. (Sean McLachlan)



Jesse James captured the public imagination with his ability to fight off the law. This struck a chord with many rural Americans and former secessionists who mistrusted lawmen and anyone who represented the government or moneyed interests. While many of the stories about him were true, many more were invented or adapted from tales of earlier outlaws such as Dick Turpin and Claude Duval to embellish his exploits. Jesse encouraged this by sometimes signing his letters to the press using these names. (LoC)

Cole was born to a prosperous family near Lee's Summit in Jackson County, Missouri, on January 15, 1844. A large, muscular man, he stood six feet, four inches, which was considered quite tall for those days. He was bright and friendly, yet easily aroused to volcanic anger. One man who worked with him in his later circus years said, "During my years on the frontier, and later in the Oklahoma fields, I have known many men with a command of profanity – freighters, cattle drovers, muleskinners, bullwhackers, and pipeliners. But none could approach Cole Younger's brand of invective. Nor was there anything lacking in his personal courage."

Like many former bushwhackers, Cole claimed that he was persecuted for his wartime activities. This seems to be an exaggeration, since the Youngers and Jameses at first lived openly at their family farms. The bushwhackers-turned-outlaws don't seem to have suffered any worse than anyone else. In fact, being relatively prosperous, the Younger and James families were better off than many Unionists in a state where both sides suffered from the devastation of war.

Whether Cole Younger really tried to live within the law after the war is a mystery. He was involved in a bank robbery just one year after the war, but in 1868, he and another man captured two horse thieves and brought them to jail in Independence. Jesse James also struggled with his conscience. In September of 1869, Jesse asked to have his name struck from the membership of the Mount Olive Baptist Church "for the stated reason that he believed himself unworthy."

On December 7, 1869, the gang struck the bank at Gallatin, Missouri, killing a bank employee. The robbers bragged that they'd shot Samuel P. Cox, the militia commander whose unit had killed Bloody Bill Anderson. It turned out they got the wrong man, but this shows there was some political motivation beyond just grabbing easy money. A horse left behind was traced to Jesse. The law converged on his family farm but the brothers shot their way out.

It was at this time that Jesse began his letter-writing campaign to the Missouri papers, especially the *Kansas City Times*, where John Newman Edwards was editor. Edwards had ridden with Confederate cavalry raider J.O. Shelby during the war and saw the young ex-bushwhacker as the perfect new hero for the unreconstructed South. More robberies followed, with the gang expanding into Iowa and Kentucky. Their greatest escapade was robbing the cashbox of the Kansas City Exposition on September 26, 1872. This was done in front of a huge crowd and this daring act, along with Edwards' glowing newspaper account of the robbery, did much to create their fame.



Group picture of the Younger family. Clockwise from left: Robert Younger, Henrietta Younger, Cole Younger, and James Younger. Henrietta was one of the outlaws' sisters and worked as a schoolteacher. (LoC)

Their notoriety increased on January 3, 1874, when they robbed a train at Gads Hill, Missouri. The hamlet had only 15 citizens. Five members of the gang, all wearing hoods, rounded up the entire population and put them under guard while they robbed the only store. As the train approached, one outlaw flagged it down with a red flag. The train stopped, the gang pulled out their revolvers, and made off with about \$4,000 from the express mail and a few hundred dollars from the passengers. The technique of rounding up the locals to keep them from causing trouble and using a red signal to get the train to make an emergency stop was a signature of the gang. It is thought that one or more of the Younger brothers rode with the James brothers on this heist because the outlaws fled to St. Clair County, where the Youngers often hid out.

The James–Younger gang was not the first to rob a train in peacetime. That dubious honor goes to the Reno gang of Indiana, whose first train heist was on October 6, 1866. Gads Hill was Missouri's first peacetime train robbery, however, and predictably made headlines across the state.

The Younger brothers – Cole, Jim, John, and Bob – were treated as prime suspects. John Younger was already wanted over the 1871 killing of a Dallas lawman who had been trying to arrest him over a shooting. Now two Pinkerton agents and their local guide went to the Youngers' neighborhood to track them down over the Gads Hill affair. They were bushwhacked by Jim and John Younger. John Younger, one of the Pinkertons, and the guide were all killed in the ensuing gunfight. Another Pinkerton tried to catch the James brothers by foolishly showing up at their farm posing as a laborer.

looking for work. His body was found by a road many miles away.

The James and Younger brothers moved around constantly, Jesse and Frank keeping in contact with their family by letters written in code. Despite the price on their heads, the Jameses often visited home, their frightened neighbors not daring to report them to authorities. On the night of January 2, 1875, a group of agents surrounded the James farm and threw a firebomb through one of the windows. It exploded, killing Archie Samuel, Frank's and Jesse's half-brother, and destroying their mother's hand. The James brothers were not at the farm that night, and the attack drew widespread condemnation against the Pinkertons and fueled the James legend even more. The Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad, which had transported the Pinkertons on a special train that night, gave Mrs. Samuel a free lifetime pass for her and her companions. It was never robbed by the gang.





The James farm and (above) the window through which the Pinkerton bomb was thrown. This attack, which killed Frank and Jesse's half-brother and maimed their mother, did much to bring national sympathy to the "James boys." (Sean McLachlan)



# ORIGINS

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The origins of the Northfield raid go back to someone who at that time wasn't even a member of the James–Younger gang – Hobbs Kerry. A coal miner with dreams of riches, he became friends with three members of the gang's outer circle: the Younger brothers' half-uncle Bruce Younger, Charlie Pitts, and Bill Stiles. Pitts' real name was Sam Wells but his only claim to fame is what he did under his alias Charlie Pitts and that is how he is known to history. Pitts was a neighbor of the Youngers in Lee's Summit, and may have done some work with them before. Bill Stiles went under the name Bill Chadwell and several other aliases. He'd been involved in many crimes ranging from selling liquor to the Indians to stealing a bottle of perfume from a drug store. Stiles had done some time in jail for horse thievery.

In the spring of 1876, Hobbs Kerry decided to use these secondhand connections to gain fame and fortune. He proposed that they hit Granby, Missouri, where a bank in the rich zinc-and-lead mining region promised good takings. It's unclear how far planning went, but word leaked out and plainclothes policemen were soon prowling around the mining camps hoping to nip the robbery in the bud. They did; word of their investigation somehow got back to the robbers and they abandoned the plan.

Kerry, Pitts, and Stiles went in search of the Younger and James brothers, still wanting to be in the gang. Stiles may have met Jesse before this and convinced him of the possibilities of a bank heist in Minnesota. Frank James met them and, suspicious, pulled a gun on Stiles, saying he thought Stiles was a detective and that he had a notion to shoot him. Eventually he remembered the man and took the three to see Jesse and Cole. They soon met up with Bob Younger and Clell Miller.

Kerry later said Cole had mentioned that the James brothers had come up with the plan. Jesse had convinced Bob that Minnesota would make a good target, and Bob convinced his older brother Cole. Bob had settled on a farm in Missouri with a woman and wanted to make some money before going straight. Cole was reluctant at first, but when he realized Bob would go regardless, he decided to go along. Another story has it that it was all Bill Stiles' idea. This seems more likely since he was the only one familiar with Minnesota. He apparently filled the gang members' heads with visions of peaceful, compliant citizens, and rich, unguarded banks.

## WILLIAM STILES (MANY ALIASES, INCLUDING BILL CHADWELL) (UNKNOWN–SEPTEMBER 7, 1876)

An obscure outlaw, Stiles grew up in Monticello, Minnesota, and played a key role in convincing the gang to attempt a robbery there. Stiles had a long record of crime, including petty theft, passing counterfeit currency, and stealing horses. He spent some time in jail for this last offense. Stiles was a latecomer to the gang, only being involved in the Otterville and Northfield hold-ups.

The November 4, 1876 edition of the *Blue Earth City Post* reported, “Chadwell [aka Stiles], one of the men killed while attempting to rob the Northfield bank, is undoubtedly the same man who worked in the tin and lead mines near this place two years ago. He was regarded as a desperate character. To illustrate his recklessness and daring it is related that on one occasion he, in company with another miner, got on a spree, and while standing around a fire Chadwell's partner picked up a full keg of blasting powder and deliberately threw it on the fire. Chadwell very coolly slapped him over, and then snatched the keg of powder from the flames and threw it in the ditch. This circumstance is well known to many of our citizens.”

Stiles was killed outside the bank at Northfield by A.R. Manning. His body was taken for dissection by Henry Wheeler.

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Frank, Jesse, and Cole were all experienced robbers and former bushwhackers. Clell Miller's wartime record wasn't impressive but he had ridden along on some of the gang's jobs. He'd also shown a talent for getting out of tight spots. On March 26, 1875, Clell was in Carrolton, Missouri recovering from a leg wound. Three Pinkerton agents and Sheriff John Clinkscales tried to arrest him. He hid in a house and the Pinkertons threatened to burn it down. Clinkscales entered the house to reason with Miller but the outlaw captured him and, using the poor sheriff as a crutch, hobbled to a getaway horse and safety.

Bob Younger was less experienced, as was Bill Stiles. Bob was a trusted brother, though, and Stiles was important for his knowledge of the many small roads and villages of southern Minnesota. By September the wheat harvest would have already been sold at market, so the farmers would have deposited plenty of money in the banks. The bushwhackers must have worried about being so far from home with only one local guide and no friends, but the temptation proved to be too much.

Canada was also suggested as an option, the assumption being that Canadians wouldn't fight like Americans, but since none of the gang members were familiar with the country they decided to go with Minnesota. While far from Missouri, its very distance from the previous robberies would make the people easier to surprise. Or so their reasoning went.

The gang didn't take any chances, though, and went heavily armed. Jesse James liked to use the Smith & Wesson Schofield .45. He preferred single-action revolvers such as this model because with the hammer cocked, it only took a light pull on the trigger to fire. Double-action revolvers needed a harder squeeze on the trigger that could affect a gunman's aim. Jesse carried several weapons. One gun retrieved at the scene of the robbery and said to have been carried by Jesse was a Colt M1860 round-barrel Conversion Pocket Navy. This was a .38 rimfire weapon.



Jesse James in a photograph taken in 1874 or 1875. He grew out his beard before the Northfield raid. (LoC)

Several members of the gang liked the M1851 Colt Navy revolver, an old favorite among bushwhackers. This .36-caliber weapon only weighed 42oz, so many bushwhackers carried several. They also carried the Colt M1873 Army revolver. Dubbed the “Peacemaker,” this .45 revolver was single-action and weighed 1.05kg (37oz). Cole Younger carried at least one, as it was recovered from him after he was captured.



Bloody Bill Anderson gave Frank and Jesse James a long lesson in brutality and fighting during the Civil War. Here he is shown in death, killed in action by a Union force. He wears a typical “guerrilla shirt” favored by Missouri bushwhackers. (LoC)

# INITIAL STRATEGY

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## Funding the operation

The plan was a simple one, but required some serious preparation. They'd be going into territory unfamiliar to all but one of them and it was a long ride from Missouri. They needed provisions, horses, and spending money. Earning it was out of the question, so the gang decided to raise funds by robbing a train.

On July 7, 1876, the gang rode in groups of two westwards from California, Missouri, and met around 2pm about two miles east of the Missouri Pacific Railroad Bridge across the Lamine River. The gang at this point included Frank and Jesse James, Bob and Cole Younger, Hobbs Kerry, Clell Miller, Charlie Pitts, and Bill Stiles.



Shortly after sunset, at about 9.30pm, they approached the bridge and captured the watchman. They then proceeded half a mile westward along the track to Rocky Cut, a manmade canyon cut through a hill two miles east of the town of Otterville. They were waiting for the Missouri Pacific No. 4 Express going from Kansas City to St. Louis. It had the engine, two sleepers, three coaches, a baggage car, and an express car of the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railroad containing two safes – one of the Adams Express Company and the other of the United States Express Company.

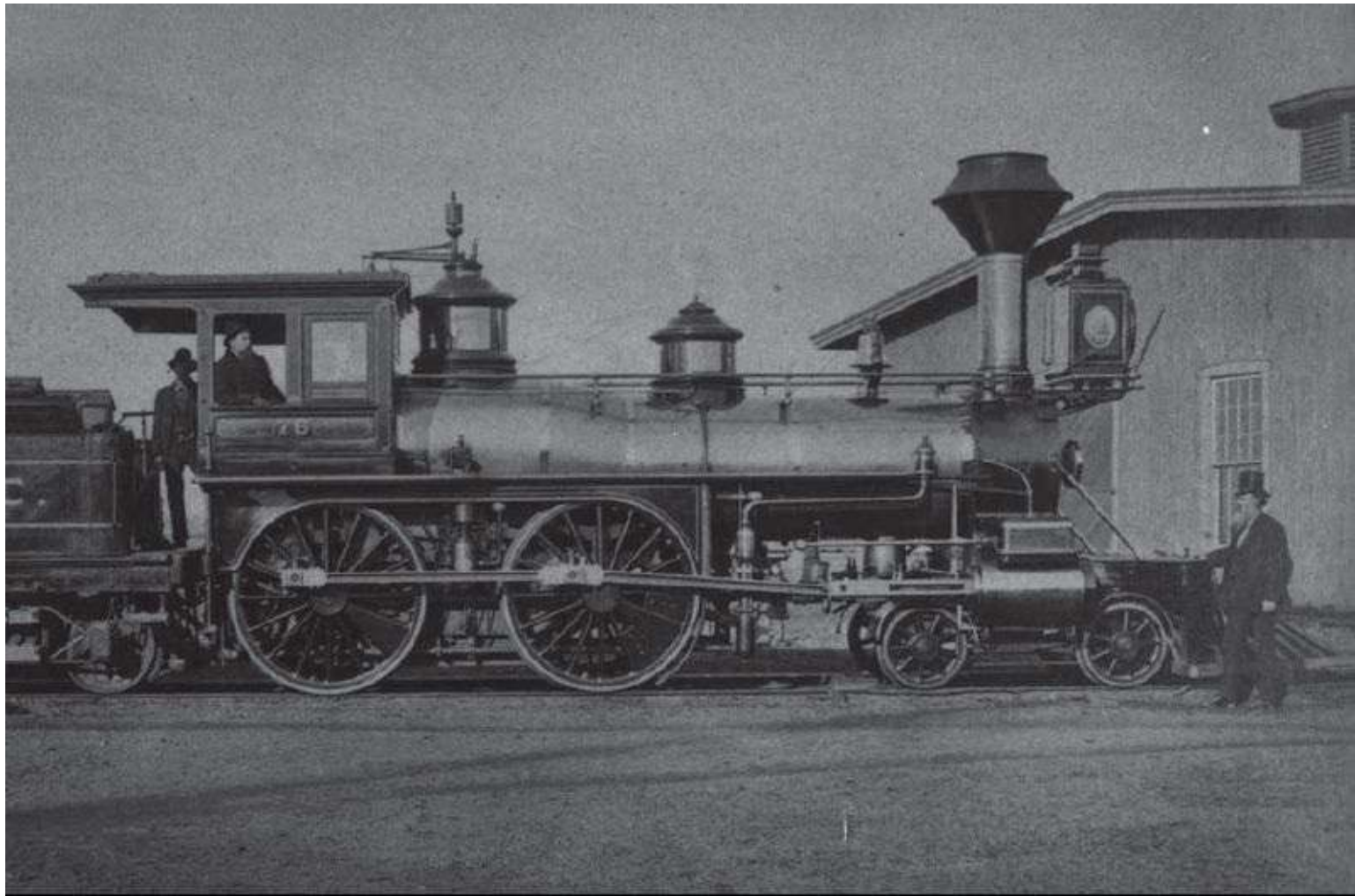
The train reached Rocky Cut at around 10.30pm. The bandits had piled railroad ties on the tracks in case the train didn't stop. As the train approached, the watchman was forced at gunpoint to flag down with a red lantern while some members of the gang stood nearby and others stayed on the side of the cut. The engineer didn't brake in time and the "engine climbed up on the ties, rising fully ten inches off the track, and then stopped and of its own weight settled back on the track." Kerry and Stiles hurried up behind the train and placed a barrier there too.

To intimidate the passengers and crew, the bandits whooped and fired shots in the air. They kept up such a fusillade that most witnesses estimated the gang at twice or three times their actual number. Anyone foolish enough to stick their head out the window to see what was going on was told in uncertain terms to put it right back in again.

Two bandits boarded the engine and captured the engineer and fireman. Three others entered the express car side door, which was open in the hot summer evening. All but one of the robbers wore masks. The baggage master, a man named Conkling, was in the car and got captured. The express agent, J.B. Bushnell, had already fled to one of the sleepers where he convinced a brakeman to hide the keys in his shoe. Bushnell then sat down and pretended to be a passenger. Conkling was le

through the train at gunpoint until he came to the agent and pointed him out. The guns swiveled from Conkling to Bushnell and the agent quickly pointed to the brakeman. The guns swiveled again.

The bandits marched all three back to the express car. They opened the United States Express Company safe and dumped the letters and packages into a wheat sack. None of the keys fit the Adams Express safe, however, because it was a “through” safe, meaning none of the packages were being delivered to any waystations. All were going to St. Louis and that’s where the key was. One of the bandits retrieved the fireman’s coal hammer (a short-handled combination pick and hammer) and knocked a hole through the side of the safe. A bandit tried to reach through the jagged hole and only managed to scrape himself. One of his comrades with smaller hands plucked out the contents and put them in the sack.



No images of the Missouri Pacific No. 4 Express are known to exist. This is the No. 76, built in 1875 at the cost of \$6,600. It is a Type 8800 class, the same type as the No. 4. (Missouri State Archives)

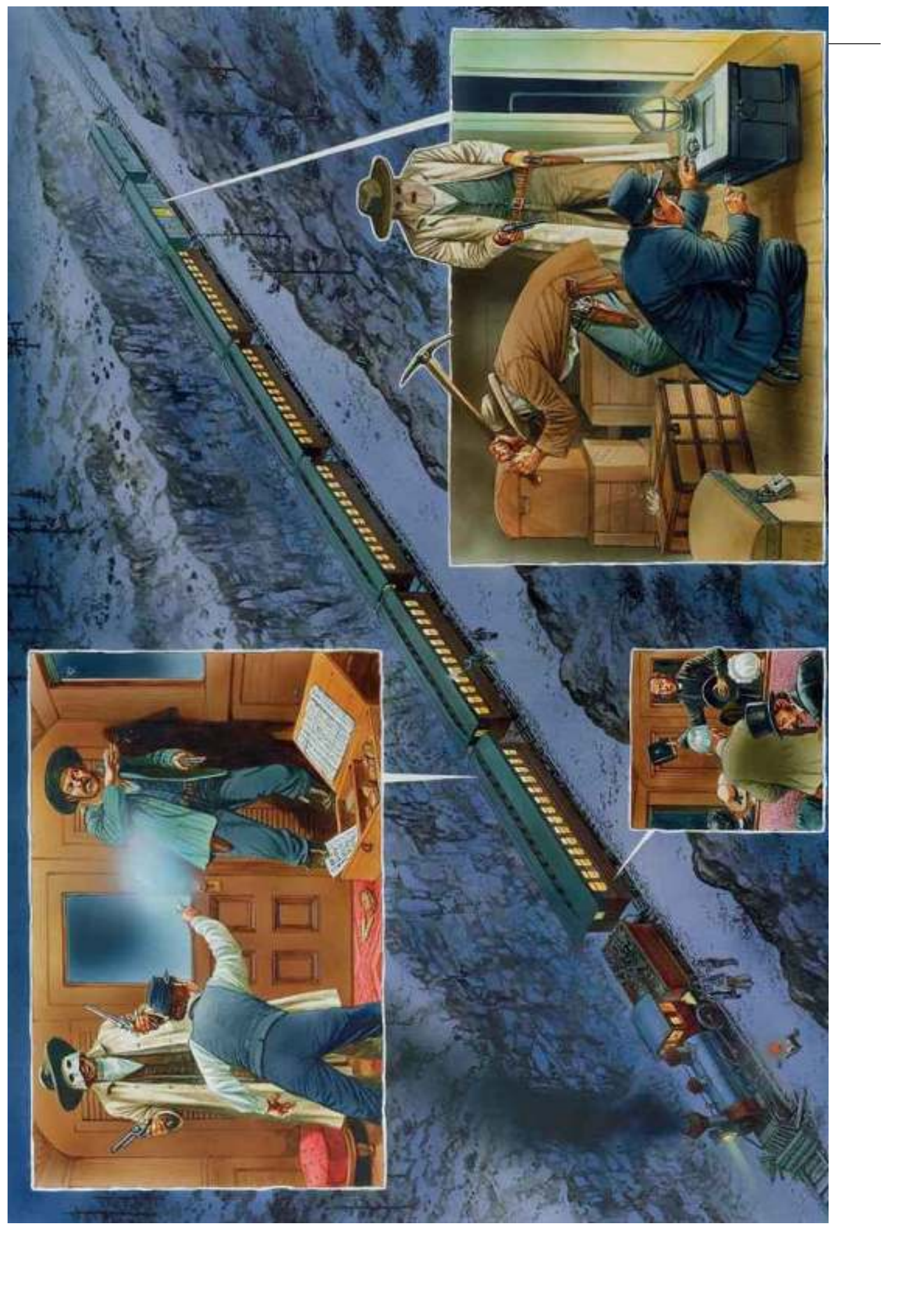
The passengers, meanwhile, were in a state of panic. Some hid under their seats, others joined prayer service led by a preacher, while the more practical hid their valuables. A woman began to cry and a male passenger reassured her that he’d protect her with his life, to which another passenger suggested, “Why, then, don’t you go fight those fellows in front?” The lady’s self-proclaimed knight in shining armor had no response to that. One of the robbers was overheard suggesting that they rob the passengers too, but another robber who appeared to be the leader said they’d already been there an hour and needed to go.

They did rob the newsboy’s concession chest and its stock of snacks and cigars. An eyewitness account said, “The way the candy disappeared would have done credit to any seven-year old.” The

cigars disappeared at a similar rate. One hungry robber greedily munched one of the newsboy's pieces, smearing the filling all over his face. Incensed at this robbery, the newsboy set off his pistol, possibly a Derringer. Nobody was hurt and the robbers laughed. "Hear that little son of a bitch bark!"

The detectives who foiled the Granby heist heard that Kerry had returned to that town after a long absence and was now flashing a bundle of cash. They put two and two together and arrested him on July 31. By that time he only had \$20 left, having lost the rest of it gambling. In exchange for a mild sentence (four years) he named all his accomplices and told the whole story of the Rocky Cut train robbery, also known as the Otterville robbery.

The gang then said "good-bye boys" to the crew, warned them of the blockage behind the train, and untied the watchman, who had been left bound and gagged beside the track during the entire affair. No passengers were robbed and nobody hurt, not even the newsboy who shot at them. This chivalrous behavior was in stark contrast to some of their other robberies and the bloodbath that was to come at Northfield. The gang rode off with about \$15,000 in cash, bank drafts, and papers. The local United States Express agent claimed that much of the paper would be unredeemable and thus the bandits really only got about \$8,000 or \$9,000. Kerry later claimed his share was about \$1,200, which supports the agent's assertion. On the other hand, given that Kerry was only a friend of a friend and claimed to have only stood lookout during the actual robbery, his share may have been smaller. The gang broke up into groups of three and crossed the Osage River near Warsaw to elude pursuit.





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