

It Happened in Sherburn. . .

“Sherburn, the scene of the most dastardly crime in the history of Minnesota, one of the blackest deeds in the annals of crime,” was reported in the Martin County Sentinel on October 16, 1896. Following is an account from the Martin County Sentinel of that robbery, and the events leading up to the capture of the robbers.

Two men entered the Bank of Sherburn one October day in 1896 and without warning shot and killed two men in the bank. Killed were the assistant cashier, George Thorburn, and Olof J. Oestern of Luverne. One eyewitness, Mrs. George R. Browning, gave the following account of the crime: “I was on the sidewalk opposite the bank and saw two young men about twenty-five years of age walk briskly across the street and enter the Bank of Sherburn, which was on the west side of the street. I was standing where I could see through the front window to the back window. I heard two shots in quick succession, and saw the flash of revolvers, and saw one man fall at the same time. I saw a man leap through the paying window over the counter and in an instant saw the back window raised and two men jump out the back window. They cut the screen that was on the outside and dropped the knife used to cut it.”

The robbers headed west and then northwest out of town riding bicycles. An estimated \$1,000.00 to \$2,000.00 was taken from the bank, although the robbers dropped \$2,000.00 while leaving the bank. Over \$2,000.00 in gold and silver in the till was not touched

They were pursued by Sheriff Hill and Deputies Miller and Peddie. Citizens of Fairmont and surrounding towns turned out in force to try to find the robbers, and Sheriff Dunn of Jackson had a posse of 200 men scouring the area from Jackson to Estherville, Iowa.

“Sensation follows sensation in the now famous Sherburn double murder and bank robbery,” states the Martin County Sentinel as the pursuit of the criminals continues in southern Minnesota and northern Iowa. At a farmhouse about fourteen miles east of Elmore, one of the men implicated in the robbery was surprised by a posse. The robber opened fire, killing Sheriff William Gallion, Marshal of Bancroft, Iowa. The robber, although wounded twice, tried to escape on his bicycle. Deputy Sheriff E. E. Ward of Martin

County again wounded the fugitive. At that point, the robber put his weapon to his head and killed himself.

The second robber, a brother of the fugitive killed near Elmore, was captured in Lake Mills, Iowa. He was recognized by Marshal Ruby of Lake Mills as he walked past his residence. Upon being captured, he made a complete confession to the robbery while stating that his brother killed the two people in the Bank of Sherburn.

This ended what was at that time considered to be one of the worst crimes in Minnesota's history according to the October 16, 1896, edition of the Martin County Sentinel.

By
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