

**MURDERS AND OUTRAGES COMMITTED IN  
WATONWAN COUNTY  
(1916)**

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**FOREWORD**

**BY**

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The following article contains stories of several murders committed in Wantowan County between 1872 and 1916. The editor probably was correct in believing that readers would be interested in crimes motivated by lust or jealousy or committed under the influence of alcohol.

A lengthy excerpt from the reminiscences of Cole Younger, one of gang that robbed the Northfield bank in 1876, occupies the last two-thirds of this chapter. As the editor grudgingly acknowledges, there is only a slender thread connecting Watonwan County to the most famous bank robbery in the state's history: the Younger gang bought horses in the county and raced through it while attempting to escape. They were eventually apprehended by a posse led by Sheriff James Glispen. Nevertheless, it is worth reading because two remarkable men emerge from it: Sheriff Glispen and Sheriff Ara Barton of Rice County, both of whom stood firm against rumors and threats of vigilantes.

It appeared first as a chapter on pages 556-569 of a joint, two volume history of Cottonwood and Watonwan Counties published in 1916. Though reformatted, the chapter is complete. Page breaks have been added. The author's spelling and punctuation are not changed. The title of the article—a slight variation of the original—has been added by the MLHP.

This article supplements “The Bench and Bar of Watonwan County,” which is posted separately on the MLHP. ■

**“MURDERS AND OUTRAGES  
COMMITTED IN THE COUNTY”**

in

**HISTORY  
of  
Cottonwood and Watonwan  
Counties  
Minnesota**

**THEIR PEOPLE, INDUSTRIES AND INSTITUTIONS**

**JOHN A. BROWN**  
Editor-in-Chief

**With Biographical Sketches of Representative Citizens and  
Genealogical Records of Many of the Old Families**

**VOLUME I**

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

### MURDERS AND OUTRAGES COMMITTED IN THE COUNTY.

While it is not the object of this chapter to deal in detail with all of the crimes committed in this county, yet the following cases are thought to be of sufficient importance to give them space in this connection.

Perhaps the most sensational murder trial in the history of Watonwan county was held in the May term of court, 1874, in which Andrew Johnson was charged with the murder of Lais Johnson, of Long Lake township. On May 12 the jury found a verdict of guilty against the accused, whereupon Judge Waite pronounced the sentence of imprisonment in the state penitentiary at hard labor for life.

A brief history of the case is as follows: It appears that the parties, Andrew Johnson, Lais Johnson and wife, were acquainted before coming to this county and the two men were sometimes at variance. They both came to this county and settled near Kansas Lake. Lais's claim was three-fourths of a mile from the lake and Andrew's house three-fourths of a mile from Lais. Their acquaintance was kept up after they settled on their claims. Lais was a small man and not very energetic and the evidence went to show that his wife used to go out and work for the neighbors, especially in the harvest fields when she could get highest wages and generally Lais did not go with her. They had three children at the time. Among those for whom Mrs. Lais Johnson worked was Andrew and on account of some suspicious circumstances Lais became jealous of Andrew. This jealousy soon led to contention between Lais and his wife and he forbade her going out to work. About this time Lais got a gun with the supposed intention of protecting himself. This was in 1872.

There were stories circulating that Lais was insane and it was found that they were mostly started by Andrew. He went to Madelia, with an interpreter, to get an order of the probate judge to send Lais to the asylum and received a summons for that purpose and had Doctor Neill, of St. James, to examine Lais. A short time previous to this Lais and Andrew had a fight at the house of the former and Andrew, being much the larger, gave Lais a beating and badly injured his head. While

in this condition [557] the Doctor had made an examination and decided that Lais was partially insane, but did not order him sent to the asylum. This was in October. On November 8 Lais mysteriously disappeared and his wife said he had gone begging, although at the time he had a comfortable house, with some crops they had raised and some cattle. Suspicions were aroused; Andrew Johnson and Lais's wife were arrested, a preliminary trial held and sufficient evidence produced to prove that Lais had been murdered, but as the body had not been found they could not be indicted and were released. Early in the winter Lais's wife went to live with Andrew (although it was stated that she made application to another family first). The next April Andrew went away and in a few days Lais's wife also. On May 25 the body of Lais was found at Kansas Lake. On his head over the right ear was a large wound, the face badly gashed and the cheek bone broken. His shirt and vest were wrapped about the head and he had on no shoes. The coroner's inquest was held and a verdict reached that he came to his death by the hands of Andrew and Caroline Johnson. In the meantime a letter was received by Andrew's brother from Omaha, signed Jan Jensen, asking how the "land lay." Communication was at once had with officers at Omaha and a person found, answering the description. Upon going to Omaha the sheriff found them living together as man and wife. They were brought back to Madelia, committed to jail and married therein. In the February term of court Andrew was indicted by the grand jury. His lawyer was Hon. M. J. Severance.

#### FOUR MURDERED IN A FAMILY.

Just twenty years ago, at the Goblinski farm in South Branch township, occurred an awful crime by which the father, two sons and a daughter were murdered.

On December 22, 1896, as seen by the files of the *Madelia Times* of about that date, the citizens of the neighborhood were horrified by the report that about the creamery in South Branch township an awful crime had been enacted. The *Times* said: "This report was brought in by P. Gillespie, who had been at the house and just come to town. He saw some of the neighbors there at the house. There was much excitement and it was difficult to ascertain the circumstances. He heard from them that a man named Fred Becker, who had run a

thresher engine for Mr. Goblinski two or three seasons, was living with the family. The father had been to St. James and after his return he and Becker had trouble about the conduct of [558] his daughter, Anna, with Becker, and reproved her. Thereupon Becker drew a revolver and shot at the man several times, one taking effect, killing him instantly. He shot at August, the eldest son, the daughter and another one. He saw the dead body, but he could get but little of the details of the tragedy.

“Smith Keech, who lives at St. James, came down from there in the afternoon. He and several others had driven out to the scene of the murder at morning. Sheriff Forsyth had been notified and, accompanied by Deputy Bird and Coroner Rowe, had got there a short time previous and were examining the bodies. They found one, that of the murderer, who, after killing the girl, shot himself fatally, and they lay in one room and the father and August, killed while running, lay in another room. Another boy, Carl, who was shot twice and dangerously hurt when going upstairs, had been taken to a neighbor. It was a horrible sight and enough to make one’s blood run cold.

“A representative of the *Times* was there Tuesday afternoon. The inquest had been held and the house cleaned up some, but the bodies lay waiting the arrival of the undertakers. The daughter’s body had been placed in the kitchen beside her brother, Charles, who was the one killed, and August hurt. The murderer lay in the front room, where he fell, and brain had oozed from the wound in the top of his head, where the bullet passed out. He was closely shaved, well dressed and seemed prepared to go away. He had acted somewhat strange, and some even thought him insane. He was about twenty-five years of age, and his name was John Kable. The father was forty-eight, Charles, twenty, Anna, thirteen and August, twenty-two years of age. The affray occurred at about six o’clock the morning. The mother and two younger boys were out in the barn milking, and did not know of the awful murder until it was all over. No witness of it is alive. August was upstairs. Coming down he was shot when he opened the chamber door, which he closed and went upstairs and jumped out of the window, followed by the youngest brother, who ran to neighbors and gave the alarm. For a time people were afraid to go the house till they learned the assassin was dead.”

## OTHER CRIMES.

In the last week of June, 1916, at the usually quiet and law-abiding village of Madelia, a shooting affray took place between one "Bill" Jones, [599] commonly called "Sporty Jones," and a horse buyer named Jess Marsh. The two men had returned from New Ulm, where they had been drinking too freely of spirits and trouble ensued. At Madelia at eleven o'clock, Saturday night, June 24, they had a fist encounter in which Jones got the worst of it. On Sunday afternoon following, still under the influence of the liquor's effect, Marsh and a horse buyer were standing beside an automobile, in front of a drug store, when Jones came up the sidewalk from the west. When he saw Marsh he stepped down from the walk and went around the car, as Marsh was standing on the side of the street by the machine. A few words were exchanged and then the report of a revolver was heard, and Leo Jacobson, an innocent bystander, turned and entered the drug store, saying that he was shot. He was soon hurried away to Mankato to the hospital. The shot was evidently intended for Marsh, missed its mark and struck young Jacobson. Jones deliberately picked up the revolver and put it into his pocket and walked to his room. Marshal Jacobson arrested Jones and placed him in jail, but at the time of the arrest the revolver could not be found. Later, it was discovered in Jones's trunk. Marsh was also arrested and held as a witness and placed under five hundred dollars bond. Jones claimed that it was accidental and that Marsh hit the gun with his cane and fired it off. At the hospital it developed that the ball passed through the young man's body, cutting the intestines in ten places.

## A SUICIDE.

The last week in June, 1916, the people of South Branch township were horrified at hearing that an attempted murder and suicide had taken place in that township at the home of William Luptke, a respected resident. It appears that a young man named Henry Goblinski had been keeping company with Luptke's daughter, and his attentions had become very distasteful to the girl's father, who ordered the young man off the place. The man Goblinski is about thirty-six years of age. He armed himself and went to Luptke's farm some time Saturday night, and concealed himself in the hay mow of the barn. It was

between six and seven o'clock on Sunday morning that the girl's father went to the barn, and as he was climbing up the ladder of the hay-loft, Goblinski opened fire on him. He shot twice, one bullet taking effect in each shoulder and plowing its way through the body downward. Luptke dropped to the floor and then Goblinski turned the gun on himself and sent a bullet through his heart. He died instantly. [560]

#### VISIT OF NOTORIOUS BANDITS—NORTHEIELD ROBBERY.

In 1876 took place the much-talked-of Northfield bank robbery, at Northfield, Minnesota, the Younger brothers, notorious Missouri bandits, taking the lead in that raid. While Northfield is not in Watonwan county, but in Rice county, there was a connection with this county from the fact that the raiders purchased horses at St. Peter and trained them partly there and partly in Madelia of this county, and Cole Younger, in his autobiography written in 1903, makes considerable mention of himself and others of the raiding band stopping at various places in Watonwan and Cottonwood counties. Much general interest has always been had by the people in this part of Minnesota in this bold daylight bank robbery. Hence the following portions of the narrative concerning it are here inserted, as written by Cole Younger, who served, with others, a term in the penitentiary at Stillwater:

When we split up in St. Paul, Howard, Woods, Jim and Clell Miller were to go to Red Wing to get their horses, while Chadwell, Pitts, Bob and myself were to go to St. Peter or Mankato, but Bob and Chadwell missed the train and they had me in a stew to know what had happened to them. We watched the papers but could find nothing about any arrests, and Pitts and I bought our horses at St. Peter. I was known as King and some of the fellows called me Congressman King, insisting that I bore some resemblance to Congressman William F. King, of Minneapolis. I bought two horses, one from a man named Hodge and the other from a man named French, and while we were breaking them there at St. Peter, I made the acquaintance of a little girl, who was afterwards one of the most earnest workers for our parole. A little tot then, she said she could ride a horse too, and reaching clown I lifted her up before me and we rode up and down. I asked her name and she said it was "Horace Greeley Perry," and I replied: "I wonder you're such a little tot with such a great name." "I

won't always be little," she replied. "I am going to be a great big girl and be a newspaper man like my pa." [Her father was a St. Peter journalist and a great admirer of Horace Greeley and insisted on naming his daughter after Greeley—hence the masculine name.] "Will you still be my sweetheart then and be my friend?" And she declared she would, a promise I was to remind her of years later under circumstances of which I did not dream then.

Many years afterward, with a party of visitors to the prison, came a girl, perhaps sixteen, who registered in full, "Horace Greeley Perry." I [561] knew there could not be two women with such a name in the world and I reminded her of her promise, a promise that she did not, remember, though she had been told how she had made friends with the bold, bad man, who afterwards robbed the Bank of Northfield.

Very soon afterward, at the age of eighteen, I believe she became as she had dreamed in childhood, "a newspaper man," editing the *St. Peter Journal*, and to the hour of my pardon she was one of the most indefatigable workers for us.

A few years ago failing health compelled her removal from Minnesota to Idaho and Minnesota lost one of the brightest newspaper writers and one of the best and truest women and staunchest friends that a man ever knew. Jim and I had a host of earnest advocates during the latter years of our imprisonment, but none exceeded in devotion the young woman who as a little tot had ridden unknowingly with the bandit who was so soon to be exiled for life from all his kin and friends.

### THE NORTHFIELD RAID.

While Pitts and I were waiting for Bob and Chadwell we scouted about, going to Madelia and as far as the east part of Cottonwood county, to familiarize ourselves with the country. Finally, a few days later, the boys joined us, having bought their horses in Mankato.

We then divided into two parties and started for Northfield by somewhat different routes. On Monday night, September 4, 1876, we were at LeSueur Center and court being in session there we had to sleep on the floor. The hotel was full of lawyers and they, with the judge and



other court attendants had a high old time that night. On Tuesday night we were at Cannon City, a little village in LeSueur county, and Wednesday night in Millersburgh, eleven miles west of Northfield. Bob and his party were then at Cannon City, to the south of Northfield, west of the Cannon river. We took a trip into town that forenoon and I looked over the bank. We had dinner at various places and then returned to the camp. While we were planning the raid it was intended that I should be one of the party to go into the bank. I urged on the boys that whatever happened we should not shoot anyone.

“What if they begin shooting at us?” one suggested “Well,” said Bob, “if Cap is so particular about shooting, suppose we let him stay outside and let him take his chances.” So at the last minute our plans were [562] changed and when we started for town Bob, Pitts and Howard went in front, the plan being to await us in the square and enter the bank when the second detachment came up with them. Miller and I went second to stand guard at the bank, while the rest of the party was to wait at the bridge for the signal—a pistol shot—in the event they were needed. There were no saddle horses in evidence and we calculated that we would have a considerable advantage. Wrecking the telegraph office as we left, we would get a good start and by night would be safe beyond Shieldsville and the next day could ride south across the Iowa line and be in comparative safety. But between the time we broke camp and the time they reached the bridge, the three men who went ahead drank a quart of whisky and there was the initial blunder at Northfield. I never knew Bob to drink before and I did not know that he was drinking that day till after it was all over.

When Miller and I crossed the bridge the three were on some dry-goods boxes at the corner, near the bank, and as soon as they saw us went right into the bank instead of waiting for us to get there. When we came up I told Miller to shut the bank door which they had left open in their hurry. I dismounted in the street, pretending to tighten a saddle girth. J. S. Allen, whose hardware store was near, tried to go into the bank, but Miller ordered him away and he ran around the corner shouting: “Get your guns, boys, they are robbing the bank.” Dr. H. M. Wheeler, who had been standing on the east side of Division street, near the Dammier House, shouted “Robbery, robbery,” and I called him to get inside, at the same time firing a pistol shot in the air

as a signal for the three boys at the bridge that we had been discovered. Almost at this instant I heard a pistol shot in the bank. Chadwell, Woods and Jim rode up and joined us, shouting to the people in the street to get inside, and fired their pistols to emphasize their commands. I do not believe they killed anyone, however. I have always believed that the man, Nicholas Gustfuss, who was shot in the Street, and who it was said did not go inside, because he did not understand English, was hit by a glancing shot from Manning's or Wheeler's rifle. If any of our party shot him it must have been Woods. A man named Elias Stacey, armed with a shotgun, fired at Miller, just as he was mounting his horse, filling Clell's face full of bird shot. Manning took a shot at Pitts' horse, killing it, which crippled us badly. Meantime the street was getting uncomfortably hot. Every time I saw anyone with a bead on me I would drop off my horse and try to drive the shooter inside, but I could not see in every direction. I called to the boys to come out of the [563] bank, for I could not imagine what was keeping them so long. With his second shot, Manning wounded me in the thigh and with his third he shot Chadwell in the heart. He fell from the saddle dead. Doctor Wheeler, who had gone upstairs in the hotel, shot Miller and he lay dying in the street.

At last the boys who had been in the bank came out. Bob ran down the street toward Manning, who hurried into Lea & Hitchcock's store, hoping in that way to get a shot at Bob from behind. Bob, however, did not see Wheeler, who was in the hotel upstairs behind him, and Wheeler's third shot shattered Bob's right elbow as he stood beneath the stairs. Changing his pistol to his left hand Bob ran out and mounted Miller's mare. Howard and Pitts at last came out of the bank. Miller was lying in the street, but we thought him still alive. I told Pitts to put him up with me and I would pack him out, but when we lifted him I saw that he was dead and I told Pitts to lay him down again. Pitts's horse had been killed and I told him that I could hold the crowd back while he got out on foot. I stayed there pointing my pistol at anyone who showed his head until Pitts had gone perhaps thirty or forty yards and then putting spurs to my horse I galloped to where he was and took him up behind me.

"What kept you so long?" I asked Pitts. Then he told me they had been drinking and had made a box of it inside the bank. Instead of carrying

out the plan as originally formed of seizing the cashier at his window and getting to the safe without any interruption, they leaped right over the counter and scared Heywood at the very start. As to the rest of the affair inside the bank I take the account of a Northfield narrator:

With the flourish of his revolver one of the robbers pointed to Joseph Heywood, head bookkeeper, who was acting as cashier, in the absence of that official, and asked:

“Are you the cashier?” “No,” replied Heywood, and the same question was put to A. E. Bunker, teller, and Frank J. Wilcox, assistant bookkeeper, each of whom made the same reply. “You are the cashier,” said the robber, turning upon Heywood, who was sitting at the cashier’s desk. “Open that safe—quick or I will blow your head off.”

Pitts then ran to the vault and stepped inside, whereupon Heywood followed him and tried to shut him in. One of the robbers seized him. and said: “Open that safe now, or you haven’t a minute to live.” “There is a time lock on,” Heywood answered, “and it can’t be opened now.”

Howard drew a knife from his pocket and made a feint to cut Hey-[564] wood’s throat, as he lay on the floor, where he had been thrown in the scuffle, and Pitts told me afterwards that Howard fired a pistol near Heywood’s head to scare him. Bunker tried to get a pistol that lay near him, but Pitts saw his movement and beat him to it. It was found on Charley when he was killed; so much more evidence to identify us as the men who were at Northfield.

“Where is the, money outside the safe”? Bob asked. Bunker showed him a box of small change on the counter, and while Bob was putting the money in a grain sack, Bunker took advantage of the opportunity to dash out of the rear window. The shutters were closed, and this caused Bunker an instant delay that was almost fatal. Pitts chased him with a bullet. The first one missed him, but the second went through his right shoulder. As the men left the bank Heywood clambered to his feet and Pitts, in his liquor, shot him through the head, inflicting the wound that killed him.

We had no time to wreck the telegraph office, and the alarm was soon sent throughout the country. Gov. John S. Pillsbury first offered one thousand dollars reward for the arrest of the six who had escaped, and this he changed later to one thousand dollars for each of them, dead or alive. The Northfield Bank offered seven hundred dollars and the Winona & St. Peter Railroad Company five hundred dollars.

### A CHASE TO THE DEATH.

A little way out of Northfield we met a farmer and borrowed one of his horses for Pitts to ride. We passed Dundas on the run, before the news of the robbery reached there, and at Millersburg, too, we were in advance of the news, but at Shieldsville we were behind it. Here a squad of men, who, we afterward learned, were from Faribault, had left their guns outside a house. We did not permit them to get their weapons until we had watered our horses and got a fresh start. They overtook us about four miles west of Shieldsville and shots were exchanged, without effect on either side. A spent bullet did hit me on the "crazy bone," and as I was leading Bob's horse it caused a little excitement for a minute, but that was all. We were in a strange country. On the prairie our maps were all right, but when we got into the woods and among the lakes we were practically lost. There were a thousand men on our trail, and watching for us at fords and bridges where it was thought we would be apt to go.

That night it started to rain, and we wore out our horses. On Friday we moved toward Waterville, and Friday night we camped between Elysian [565] and German lake. On Saturday morning we left our horses and started through on foot, hiding that day on an island in a swamp. That night we camped all night and we spent Sunday about four miles south of Marysburg. Meantime, our pursuers were watching for horsemen, not finding our abandoned horses, it seems, until Monday. We spent Tuesday in a deserted farm-house close to Mankato. That day a man named Dunning discovered us and we took him prisoner. Some of the boys wanted to kill him, on the theory that "dead men tell no tales," while others urged binding him and leaving him in the woods. Finally, we administered to him an oath not to betray our whereabouts until we had time to make our escape, and he agreed not to. No sooner, however, was he released than he made post

**haste into Mankato to announce our presence, and in a few minutes another posse was looking for us.**

**Suspecting, however, that he would not do so, we were soon on the move, and that night we evaded the guard at the Blue Earth river bridge, and about midnight made our way through Mankato. The whistle on the oil mill blew and we feared that it was a signal that had been agreed upon to alarm the town in case we were observed, but we were not molested.**

**Howard and Woods, who had favored killing Dunning, and who felt we were losing valuable time because of Bob's wound, left us that night and went west. As we afterward learned, this was an advantage to us as well as to them, for they stole two horses soon after leaving us and the posse followed the trail of these horses not knowing our party had been divided. Accordingly, we were not pursued, having kept on a course toward Madelia to a farm where I knew there were some good horses, once in possession of which we could get along faster.**

#### **RATIONS SCARCE.**

**We had been living on scant rations, corn, watermelon, and other vegetables principally, but in spite of this Bob's arm was mending somewhat. He had to sleep with it pillowed on my breast, Jim also being crippled with a wound in his shoulder and we could not get much sleep. The wound in my thigh was also troubling me and I had to walk with a cane I had cut in the brush. One place we got a chicken and cooked it, only to be interrupted before we could have our feast, having to make a quick dash for cover. At every stopping place we left marks of blood from our wounds and could have been easily trailed, had not the pursuers been led in the track of our recent companions. [566]**

**It seems that from what I have read since, however, that I had myself, left with my landlord, Colonel Vought, of the Flanders House, at Madelia, a damaging suggestion which proved the ultimate undoing of our party. I had talked with him about a bridge between two lakes near there, and accordingly when it became known that the robbers had passed Mankato, Vought thought of this bridge and it was**

guarded by him and others for two nights. When they abandoned the guard, however, he admonished a Norwegian boy named Oscar Suborn to keep close watch there for us and on Thursday morning, September 21, just two weeks after the robbery, Oscar saw us and fled into town with the alarm. A party of forty was soon out in search for us, headed by Capt. W. W. Murphy, Colonel Vought and Sheriff Glispen. They came up with us as we were fording a small slough and unable to ford it with their horses they were delayed somewhat by having to go around it. But they soon after got close enough so that one of them broke my walking stick with a shot. We were in sight of our long-sought horses when they cut us off from the animals and our last hope was gone. We were at bay on the open prairie, surrounded by a picket line of forty men, some of whom would fight. Not prepared to stand for our last fight against such odds on an open field, we fell back into the Watonwan river bottoms and took refuge in some bushes. We were prepared to wait as long as they would, but they were not of the waiting kind, at least some of them were not, and soon we heard the captain, who we later learned was W. W. Murphy, calling for volunteers to go in with him and rout us out. Six stepped to the front, Sheriff Glispen; Col. T. L. Vought, B. M. Rice, G. A. Bradford, C. A. Pomeroy and S. J. Severson. Forming in line, four paces apart, he ordered them to advance rapidly and concentrate the fire of the whole line the instant the robbers were discovered.

#### AT BAY.

Meanwhile, we were planning, too. "Pitts," I said, "if you want to go out and surrender, go on." "I will not go," he replied, game to the last. "I can die as well as you can." "Make for the horses," I said. "Every man for himself. There is no use to stop to pick up a comrade here, for we can't get him through the line. Just charge them and make it if we can."

I got up as a signal for the charge and we fired one volley. I tried to get my man and started through, but the next I knew I was lying on the ground bleeding from my nose and mouth and Bob was standing up shouting: "Coward!" One of the fellows in the outer line too brave, himself, to join the volunteers who had come in to beat us out, was not disposed to believe in the surrender and had his gun leveled on

Bob in spite of the handkerchief which was waving as a flag of truce. Sheriff Glispen, of Watonwan county, who was taking Bob's pistol from him, was also shouting to the fellow: "Don't shoot him or I will shoot you."

All of us but Bob had gone down at the first fire. Pitts, shot through the heart, lay dead; Jim, including the wound in the shoulder, he received at Northfield, had been shot five times, the most serious being the shot which shattered his upper jaw and lay embedded beneath the brain and a shot that buried itself underneath his groin and which gave him trouble until the day of his death. Including those received in and on the way from Northfield, I had eleven wounds. A bullet had pierced Bob's lung, but he was the only one left on his feet. His right arm useless and his pistol empty, he had no choice

"I surrender," he had shouted. "They are all down but me. Come on, I will not shoot" And Sheriff Glispen's order not to shoot was the beginning of the protectorate that Minnesota people established over us. We were taken into Madelia that day and our wounds dressed and I greeted my old landlord, Colonel Vought, who had been one of the seven to go in to get us. We were taken to his hotel and a guard posted. Then came the talk of mob vengeance we had heard so often in Missouri. It was said a mob would be out that night to lynch us. Sheriff Glispen swore we never would be mobbed as long as we were his prisoners. "I don't want any man to risk his life for us," I said to him, "but if they do come for us, give us our pistols so we can make a fight for it." "If they do come and I weaken," he said, "you can have your pistols." But the only mob that came was the mob of sightseers, reporters and detectives.

### TO PRISON FOR LIFE.

On Saturday we were taken to Faribault, the county seat of Rice county, in which Northfield is, and here there was more talk of lynching, but Sheriff Ara Barton was not of that kind either, and we were guarded by militia until the excitement had subsided. At Faribault a policeman, who thought the militia guard as a bluff, bet five dollars he could go right up to the jail without being interfered with. He did not halt when challenged, and was fired upon and was

killed. The coroner's jury acquitted the [568] militiaman who shot him. Some people blamed us for his death, too. Chief of Detectives McDonough, of St. Louis, whom I had passed a few months before in the Union depot at St Louis, was among our visitors at Faribault.

Four indictments were found against us. One charged us with being accessory to the murder of Cashier Heywood; another with assaulting Bunker with intent to do great bodily harm, and the third with robbing the First National Bank of Northfield. The fourth charged me as principal, and my brothers as accessories, with the murder of Gustafson. Two witnesses had testified before the grand jury identifying me as the man who fired the shot that hit him, although I know I did not, because I fired no shot in that part of town. Although not one of us had fired the shot that killed either Heywood or Gustafson, our attorneys, Thomas Rutledge, of Madelia, and Bacheldor and Buckham, of Faribault, asked, when we were arraigned, November 9, that we be given two days in which to plead. They advised us that as accessories were equally guilty with the principals, under the law, and as by pleading guilty we would escape capital punishment, we should plead guilty. There was little doubt, under the circumstances, of our conviction, and under the law as it stood then, an accused murderer who pleaded guilty was not subject to death penalty. The state was new, and the law had been made to offer inducement to murderers not to put the county to the expense of a trial.

The excitement that followed our sentence to state prison, which was popularly called "cheating the gallows," resulted in the change of the law in that respect. The following Saturday we pleaded guilty, and Judge Lord sentenced us to imprisonment for the remainder of our lives in the state prison at Stillwater, and a few days later we were taken there by Sheriff Barton. With Bob it was a life sentence, for he died there of consumption on September 16, 1889. He was never strong physically after being shot near Madelia.

#### **NORTHFIELD BANK ROBBERY — BOUNTY DISTRIBUTION.**

The following is an exact copy of an article that appeared in the *Madelia Times* in September, 1877: "Pursuant to the provisions of



chapter one hundred and seventy-four of the laws of Minnesota, passed in the year 1877, notice is hereby given that at the court house in the village of Madelia on Tuesday, the twentieth day of September, 1877, at nine o'clock [569] in the forenoon, I will hear evidence for the purpose of determining who are entitled to share in the distribution of the state bounty, awarded by the act above referred to, for the capture of the Northfield Bank robbers. Signed, D. A. Dickinson, Judge of Sixth Judicial District.”

There were nearly one hundred applicants who asked to share in the reward, but of this number only forty-two were successful. The average amount to each man was forty-five to forty-eight dollars. ■

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