

An Added Chapter in the

History of the Eagle Diamond

by Alice Baker

Most of the life of the Eagle diamond has been one of long, static, hidden existence. Transported by the Labrador ice sheet, or more exactly the Delavan lobe of that glacial feature, 16,000 years ago, it lay forty feet under the surface down in yellow clay until pulled out one day in 1876 in the village of Eagle, Waukesha county, by some well diggers in the employ of Thomas Devereaux. The new well was being dug at the instigation of Devereaux's renters, the Charles Woods. The diggers saw the "pretty pebble" and gave it to a little girl, a relative of the Woods who were caring for her. The moppet didn't cherish the pebble as she left it with the Woods when she no longer shared their home, and not till hard times pressed the Woods did they try to sell the stone.

The Woods took it to a jeweler, Col. Boyington, in the city of Milwaukee. He called the stone a topaz and bought it for one dollar. He then tested it for hardness and classed it "diamond". Next he formed a corporation selling shares in the stock. Later, he planted nest-egg diamonds. To keep the prying public from disposing of any diamonds they might find, he surrounded the lot where the gem was found with an enclosure of black cloth several feet high. Soon the nest-egg diamonds were found, examined by gem authorities, and proved to be South African in nature.

When the deception was exposed, Boyington sold the diamond to Tiffanys in New York City for \$850. The Woods instantly brought suit for money of which they had been cheated. The litigation continued for years.

Tiffanys never cut the diamond because they could never prove possession, hence it remained uncut in their store till after the first World War. Then they transferred it to the American Museum of Natural History where it was placed in the J. P. Morgan exhibit along with the Star Sapphire of India and the de Long Ruby, the world's most perfect and beautiful ruby. This placement caused its theft.

After eons of unawareness of its existence and after eighty-eight years of only casual interest, on October 29, 1964, the Eagle diamond fairly burst into headlines and scintillated with news-worthiness. The Star Sapphire of India, 563 carats, a stone the size of a golf ball, the deLong Ruby, and twenty-one other jewels, one of them the Eagle diamond now valued at \$25,000, were stolen from the fourth floor of this famous museum.

The value of the gems placed the robbery as one of the richest in all time record of theft, an estimated \$41,000 makes this robbery equal to the theft of crown jewels.

All the elements of a TV thriller were present in the telling —a play-boy, a clown surf diver, an ingenue, and a beachnik comprised the actors. One man let himself down from the fifth floor to a narrow ledge under an open window on the fourth floor story with Venetian-blind webbing, climbed through the open window and grabbed some of the most precious jewels in existence.

But the play-boy was too lavish with his yacht, his Cadillac, his tips, his parties, and his pals, and his ingenue was too artless; hence arrests in New York City and Miami, Florida.

What now of the Eagle diamond? Is it hidden with the Star Sapphire of India and the crimson ruby in some underwater grotto? With them, will it be washed out to sea and lost? Or will it be cut, the only part of the loot insignificant enough to preserve the identity of the robbers, and the only part of the heist to bring them money?

?? How Now ??

Do you have a question, or do you know an answer to a query appearing here? Send your letters to the Editor.

1. What is a "cant hook"? How do you use it?
2. Who went prospecting on Prospect Hill?
3. How did Christmas come about?
4. What are the 12 days of Christmas?
5. Why did the fancy "Sunday-go-to-meetin'" cutters tip over so easily?

Answers to questions in Autumn issue:

1. A "hand" in measuring horses is four inches.
2. Carroll College was named for Charles Carroll of Carrollton, a Catholic signer of the Declaration of Independence. He gave \$1,000,000 to the American cause . . . according to the old *Waukesha Democrat*, November 8, 1854.
3. "Nashotah" means "twins", the Potawatomi name used in identifying the upper and lower Nashotah lakes.
4. "National Poison" which many folks referred to back in the 1850s was the abominable cast iron stove invading respectable houses heretofore heated by fireplaces. "Stoves that are now (1851) used are a national curse . . . the secret poisoners of that blessed air bestowed by kind Providence. But we ungrateful beings reject and breathe instead the air that passes over the surface of hot iron, and becomes loaded with all the vapor of arsenic and sulphur which that metal, highly heated, constantly gives off."
5. The Junction House, a stage coach inn run by John P. Storey, was located in Brookfield "on the Watertown Plank Road at the junction with the Waukesha-Milwaukee United States roads to Madison." Storey put it up for sale in 1855.