



In Their Own Words

Curated by Gina Neist, eaglehistoricalsociety.org

Louise Hyland was a telephone operator in the fall of 1921 in Eagle when the phone office was above the bank. It was not a job without excitement, especially when she became involved in stopping a bank burglary. She was the night operator, and after 10 pm everything would become quiet, and she would go to bed on a cot in the switchboard room. There was a big metal door that could be closed to make her room secure.

Louise Hyland, Telephone Operator

One night after I went to bed, I woke up with a bang – a loud noise. I looked into the big room where the girls worked in the bank and saw nothing. I thought maybe one of the statues had fallen over in the bank. Then I heard voices. I thought there must be something wrong.

I looked out the window and saw a man walking back and forth in the street.

I was new on the job, and I thought I must call someone for help. The first one I thought of was Mr. Mealy, the undertaker. He was used to receiving calls at night. I called him, and he went and looked out his front window. The man walking in the street saw him and fired at him.

The second one I called was Frank Thieman, the troubleshooter. He then called Frank Van Rueden, the marshal. I tried to call others but got no answer. They had cut all the telephone cables that were attached to the big pole across the street.

Mr. Mealy and Frank Thieman had private lines, and their lines did not go out to the pole. Anyway, Mr. Mealy and Frank got about 40 men together. There were several explosions, and Frank Von Rueden started walking across the park directly towards the bank.

When the man outside saw him, he yelled to his partners that they had to get out of there. Frank then fired a shot. There were five robbers and they got out of the bank and started running toward their car which they had parked in the Methodist Cemetery on Highway 67 outside of town.



One headed in the direction of the Juedes farm, and money was later found there. They were running, and the men from Eagle were chasing them and firing at them. They think they hit one as he fell. They got away, were never caught.

They did not get to the main safe, but they did get to the safety deposit boxes.

The next morning as word got out, the farmers and other people came to see what they had lost. My mother and dad lost their war bonds. I suppose the robbers were not worried about me because they had cut the phone lines and felt that I could do nothing.

No one expressed concern about me the next day. They were just concerned about the money they had lost. A few months later, Mr. Loibl, who owned the bank, gave me a very pretty watch for my efforts. It is engraved with The Bank of Eagle.

After reading Louise's story in the EHS newsletter in 2009, local veterinarian Jack Crawley contacted us with some startling news.

I know who robbed the bank in Eagle.

Back in 1956 (some thirty-five years after the robbery), my father, Earl, was in the hospital and shared the room with another patient. When the other man heard that dad was from Eagle, he said, "I'm one of the guys who robbed the bank in Eagle."

He went on to explain that he and his friends worked for the railroad back in 1921. They were working on the tracks by day, and they slept in the boxcars by night. They devised a scheme to rob the bank, because Eagle seemed like a quiet village, with little law enforcement.

This seems to be a plausible story, and the man knew the details. However, since we have no "corroborating evidence" we cannot attest to its veracity. We leave it to you to decide for yourself. And that, we believe, is the rest of the story.