

## *A Detective's Story*

### *The Greatest Express Robbery Ever Perpetrated in Missouri*

#### *The \$62,000 Haul from the United States Express Company in 1863—How the Company Got Its Money Back*

From the *Sedalia* [MO] *Bazoo*

Last week we gave in the Sunday morning *Bazoo* the particulars of the great express robbery in 1853. The story has been extensively copied, and has attracted the attention of many old expressmen, detectives, etc., some of whom were well acquainted with the details. One night last week it was our good fortune to meet with an old and well-known St. Louis detective, who was on his return from Texas, where he had been "on business." We suppress his name from prudential reason, and will only say that he had a reputation second to none in the West.

Having been intimately acquainted with him for years, we were soon talking over old times and [events] long since forgotten by many who were contemporaneous with and cognizant of them. During our conversation he abruptly said:

"By the way, I saw that you wrote up that old express robbery of 1853 last Sunday."

We replied in the affirmative, and asked him if the details were not correct, as we were aware he was perfectly acquainted with them.

"Yes," he replied, "you were correct in the main; but I can give you

#### A STORY OF AN EXPRESS ROBBERY

that happened in our own State in 1863 that lays that entirely in the shade."

As the reader may well imagine, were all ears and attention, and knowing our man, though usually reticent, when "the fit" was on him he would unlock the rich store of his experience and talk fluently and freely with friends. So we patiently though eagerly waited while he ruminated in silence over the past. Suddenly he broke out with:

"Ain't there a United States Express agent in this town named George Faulhaber?"

We assured him there was.

"Well," said he, "I thought so; and it was through your townsman, George Faulhaber, that the clue was obtained to the thieves who perpetrated the biggest express robbery that ever occurred in the State of Missouri, and I'll bet you have never heard a word of it, either."

We told him we had not, although we were well acquainted with the gentleman to whom he referred.

“It’s a long story,” said the old detective, “but as the way the thieves were caught has never been published, I will tell you about it, and you can write it up if you want to.”

The robbery I speak of happened in August, 1863, when, in one night, the United States Express office, corner of St. Charles and Fourth streets, in St. Louis, was robbed of \$62,000.

#### GEORGE FAULHABER

was an express messenger then, and ran from St. Louis to Macon City, on the North Missouri Railroad. At that time most of the messengers left St. Louis on their runs on the early morning trains, and consequently made a practice of sleeping in the office the night previous, in order to be certain to be on hand at the proper time.

The robbery occurred on Sunday night. Faulhaber had come in on his run on Friday night. He had a lay-over on Saturday and Sunday, but was to go out at 4 o’clock on Monday morning, and, according to custom, he came down to the office Sunday evening and slept there.

It is necessary now that I should tell you something about the office, and those who were connected with it, and also those who figured in the robbery.

Charles Hart was the night clerk. It was his duty to receive the money bags of the messengers who came in at night on the various roads, and issue to them those which they were to take out during the night and morning. These money bags were kept in a very large safe in the office, and in the room immediately in the rear of this Hart had a lounge where he slept. The safe was locked by one of the old-fashioned combination, which no one but those familiar with could unlock. Hart, although a good business man, was a gay youth and rather fast. He kept a mistress, drove the best livery stock, and was a man of the world.

Among his boon companions and intimate friends was a man named Charley Noyes. He was, or pretended to be, a detective, and was sometimes employed as such. He, too, was a fast man and the constant shadow of Hart.

Chas. Noyes had a brother named Friend Noyes. He—well he didn’t do much of anything, but looked on at the rest.

The last, but not the least, of this quartet was a Capt. Smith. He, in the early part of the war, was a Captain in the notorious 18<sup>th</sup> Missouri Infantry, but afterward became connected with Parker’s Southern Express Company. At the time I speak of, however, he had been discharged, and was laying about town doing nothing. The four men I have mentioned were constantly together out of office hours, though only one (Hart) was in the employ of the United States Express Company. As I have said,

#### HART WAS THE NIGHT CLERK,

and was heartily hated and detested by all the messengers. The robbery occurred on Sunday night, and it was well planned.

The large safe contained all the money that was brought in by the messengers on Saturday night, and also all the money that had been received from business men in the city for transportation Sunday morning, making a total of \$62,000, most of which was to be sent away the next (Monday) morning.

When Faulhaber came down Sunday evening, he sat outside, as the night was hot, talking with Hart, the clerks and messengers until about 10 o'clock, when they all went to bed, except Hart and Faulhaber. The latter had a letter to write, and went to a desk that stood near the large safe to write it. As Faulhaber moved toward it for this purpose, Hart exclaimed:

“George, you musn't go there to write!”

“Why not?” inquired Faulhaber, a little astonished.

Hart: “Because McMasters (the official whose desk it was) told me not to let anybody go to it. If you want to write go to some other desk, and I will give you paper and envelopes; but you musn't go to that desk.”

“All right,” said Faulhaber, “it don't make any difference to me,” and he went to a desk in another part of the room, some distance from the safe, where Hart brought him the stationery. Immediately after this, Hart, contrary to the usual custom, turned out all the gas-lights except the one that Faulhaber was writing by; and then earnestly and repeatedly told him (Faulhaber) to be sure and turn out his light when he got through writing.

Faulhaber was again astonished, and asked Hart why this was to be done, contrary to the usual custom.

“Oh, it's the orders,” said Hart, “Ford (the agent) has been quarreling about the gas bills, and has issued orders that the lights be turned out at night.”

Hart then retired to bed. His room, as we have stated, was in the rear of the office, on the first floor, and the window fronted on St. Charles street. The night was hot, and the window, situated four or five feet from the pavement, was open. The head of his lounge was drawn close to the window, and over it was a frame supporting a mosquito bar.

Faulhaber wrote till about 11 o'clock, when he turned out his light, according to instructions, and groped his way in the dark to the basement where the messengers slept, and was soon asleep.

Between 1 and 2 o'clock in the morning, the porter heard

#### HART GROANING IN AGONY

and went to where the messengers were sleeping and awoke one named King, whom he told that Hart was groaning as if he was very sick. King instantly replied:

“Let him die and be d—d!” and turned over to sleep again.

The porter then awoke Faulhaber, who, thinking the porter had made a mistake in waking him up to go out on his run too early, at first refused to get up. Just then he heard Hart groan, when he jumped up and went to see what was the matter.

When Faulhaber entered Hart’s room and lit a light, it was filled with some oppressive odor, and the first thing he noticed was a sponge on the mosquito bar, directly over Hart’s head, and another on the floor, with a bottle of chloroform. Hart appeared to be suffering terribly, and his muscles were so contracted that his fingers were drawn backwards over his hands.

He recognized Faulhaber, however, and said excitedly:

“George, is that you?”

Upon being answered in the affirmative, he quickly asked:

“Look under my pillow and see if the keys of the safe and my pistol are there?”

Faulhaber did so, but finding nothing, informed him they were gone.

“My God!” said Hart, “then we have been robbed!”

In an instant all was excitement and alarm. A rush was made to the big safe, only to find the doors wide open and perfectly empty.

Faulhaber then awoke King, called the porter and sent for the police. They then sent down to Barnum’s Hotel for Division Superintendent Anderson and ex-Superintendent Andrews, and Mr. Parker, another express officer, went up too. On his way up, Parker stopped at Charley Noyes’ room, the so-called detective, and found him apparently sound asleep.

#### A COUNCIL

of these officers was held in the office, and they sent for the then Chief of Police, J.E.D. Couzins, to assist them. Everything was carefully investigated, and everybody who stayed there that night was carefully and closely interrogated. Faulhaber, especially, keenly felt the delicate position he was placed in, for he was the last man that left the room where the safe was, and he was the first man to enter it, at two o’clock. He had to go out on his run at four o’clock, and in the meantime he was questioned and badgered until he got worked up into such a state of excitement that he was almost inclined to believe he had committed the robbery in a fit of somnambulism.

Hart’s story was, that he awoke in the night and found three men working over him with sponges saturated with chloroform. He was perfectly powerless, but nevertheless he could distinctly see

the man and was conscious until the anesthetic overcame him and he relapsed into insensibility. He was certain there [were] three men, and that they had gained access to his room through the window.

The hour of Faulhaber's departure (4 o'clock) on his run was drawing near, and he prepared to go on duty. Before doing so, however, he had the presence of mind to go and examine the window sill at the head of Hart's bed. Every day at least half an inch of dust accumulated on the sill, from the street, which was swept off by the porter every morning at 7 o'clock. When Faulhaber examined the window sill, he found that

NOT A PARTICLE OF DUST HAD BEEN DISTURBED!

but some one had scraped up a handful of mud from the gutter and laid it on the sill, on top of the dust. He was too confused to think, much less say anything of the fact. Just before he started, Chas. Noyes, who had that very morning been employed by the officers as a detective, came to Faulhaber and questioned him very closely, and in fact intimated that he (Faulhaber) must have had a hand in the robbery. He followed Faulhaber to his car on North Market street, and closely inspected every parcel that he had to take out with him, and seemed to be very officious and vigilant.

All day Monday the officers of the company, the Chief of Police and Charley Noyes worked hard to get a clue to the thieves, but failed. Superintendent Colvin, agent at Chicago, Division Superintendent Cone, of Buffalo, and Ham Best, the company's detective, at Buffalo, were sent to assist in working up the case, and they all promptly answered the call with their presence.

Hart quickly recovered from the effects of the chloroform and went to work. When the above-named officer arrived Charley Noyes informed them that he had struck a clue. He said that he had ascertained that a noted New York burglar had called at the express office three days before the robbery for a watch, and that he (Noyes) had met him on the street, and that there was no doubt in his mind but that he had put up the job, and fled with his confederates to New York with his booty.

In the meantime, after Faulhaber went out on his run, his mind began to think over the important events that had transpired the night before. He thought of

HART'S STRANGE CONDUCT

in not allowing him to go near the safe to write a letter; he thought of the unusual order to turn out all the lights, about which Hart had showed so much anxiety; he thought of the chloroform business and what Hart had said about the three men coming in through the window; and then he thought and wondered how these three men, or any man, could come through that window without disturbing a particle of dust on the sill! He could not drive these thoughts out of his head, so when he returned to St. Louis from his run, he informed one of the clerks privately of his examination of the window sill, and that no dust had been disturbed. Also about Hart's turning out the lights, etc.

“My God! George,” said the clerk, “have you not told anybody of this?”

“No,” said Faulhaber, “I was so confused at the time and had to depart immediately on my run.”

“Then come right with me and tell Mr. Ford what you told me.”

So saying, the clerk led Faulhaber to Mr. Ford’s (the agent) desk, and to him he related his story. Ford was both thunderstruck and overjoyed, for he saw in an instant the clue to the whole affair. Faulhaber was taken immediately to a private room, and the officers of the company, the Buffalo detective (Best) and the Chief of Police Couzins were sent for. To all of whom Faulhaber told his story, and all of whom agreed that Hart, the night clerk, was the principal thief. The next thing was to ascertain his confederates and recapture the money.

Hart, who had been nervously watching events, went to Faulhaber and said:

“George, what do all these fellows want with you? I know you did not commit the robbery!”

Faulhaber gave him some evasive answer, and Hart went away.

During Faulhaber’s absence the detective ascertained that Hart and Charley Noyes, the present detective, had for years been old chums, and were constantly together. When Faulhaber made his revelation, Noyes, too, was instantly suspected of being his confederate. So the officers agreed upon a plan to get Noyes out of the way while they worked on Hart.

Noyes was sent for, and the officers told him that they had come to the conclusion that his theory about the New York burglar was correct, and that he would have to go to New York in company with Messrs. Cone and Parker, and arrest him. Noyes didn’t like this move, and tried to get out of it; but it was of no avail—go he had to, and go he did.

The officers had the trap arranged as follows: Cone and Parker were to take Noyes to New York on the plea of hunting the burglar. As soon as Noyes was out of the city Colvin, Ford, Couzins and the Buffalo detective, Best, would work on Hart. If Hart confessed, they would telegraph to Cone and Parker to bring Noyes back, as Noyes was the sharpest of the two, while Hart would never confess while Noyes was around him.

As soon as Noyes had departed Hart was arrested and taken to a private room in the Lindell Hotel. As soon as the door was locked, Colvin presented a cocked revolver at Hart’s head, and, looking him sternly in the eye, said:

“Hart, you’re a thief—we know you’re a thief. But if you don’t tell us instantly who your accomplices are in this robbery, I’ll blow your head off, so help me God!”

Hart instantly broke down and wept like a child. As soon as he could recover from his agitation, he made

A FULL CONFESSION.

Hart stated there were four concerned in the robbery—himself, Charley Noyes, Friend Noyes, brother to Charley, and Capt. Smith. On Sunday night, after Faulhaber had gone to bed, he (Hart) had got up and went to the safe and took all the money and put it into a bag. He then took the bag and went to the door, where Charley Noyes was waiting by agreement. He unlocked the door, handed Noyes the bag, and went back again to his room. Here he himself fixed up the chloroform business, but he overdid it and came near killing himself. Noyes took the bag to his room, hid it under his bed, and feigned sleep when Parker entered.

The next day Friend Noyes removed the stolen money from his brother's room to a vacant house on Christy avenue, where Hart had formerly kept his mistress, and who still had the key. After it was hid there a day or two, the money was again moved to a house of Capt. Smith, and placed in a new trunk. And there, Hart said, it was yet.

This much accomplished, the grand object was how to get the money. A warrant for Smith's arrest was at once procured, and steps taken to arrest him. In the meantime, by some means or other, Smith discovered that Hart had been arrested and had "squealed." He immediately took the trunk which contained the stolen money and checked it as baggage to Albany, New York, to which point he also bought a ticket, and took his seat in the railroad omnibus to cross the ferry to the depot in East St. Louis. But Superintendent Cone was close on his heels. He found Smith had just left his house, followed him to the ferry, and arrested him in the omnibus while he was crossing the river. When Smith saw the game was up, he threw the duplicate check into the river. But Cone went right ahead to Albany on the same train that Smith would have gone on, and there he found the trunk with the treasure. He brought the trunk back to St. Louis, where it was opened and all the money found except

#### ONE PACKAGE OF \$18,000

As soon as Hart confessed, a telegram was sent to the officers who accompanied Charley Noyes to New York to bring him back. And back he came, in irons.

Friend Noyes, as soon as he heard of the arrest, fled the city and has not been seen since.

Hart turned State's evidence against Smith and Noyes, and then left the city forever.

Charley Noyes was tired, convicted and sentenced to ten years in the Penitentiary. While his counsel were endeavoring to get him out of the scrape, he broke—or rather walked—out of the St. Louis Jail and cleared. He was next heard of as being on Gen. R.E. Lee's staff. In 1867 he again turned up in St. Louis, and was endeavoring to get a situation with the Merchants' Union Express Company, when Mr. Richard Ivers dropped on him and broke up his little game. The police got after and arrested him, when he pulled a pardon from Gov. Thos. C. Fletcher out of his pocket.

Smith was sentenced to four years in the Penitentiary. Gov. Fletcher very kindly pardoned him too, before he got inside its walls. The last heard of him he was running a whisky still in the southeastern part of the State.

The \$18,000 was never recovered, but it was thought Smith removed it from the trunk before it left his house.

Capt. Ford afterwards became a revenue officer, but is now dead. His name was brought into prominence during the whisky ring excitement.

H.D. Colvin is still with the company in Chicago.

Cone is still a Superintendent of the company in Toledo, and is a terror to thieves.

And George Faulhaber is also in the employ of the company in your city as agent, and I expect you and your people know more about him than I do," said the old detective.

"And now I've told my story, I've got some business to attend to before I go home tonight. So, good-by!"

And the grim old thief-taker buttoned up his coat and stalked off toward East Sedalia, and as his stalwart form faded away in the evening shadows, we thought over his strange story, and, reader, here it is.

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