

# Meyersdale Commercial

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NO. 24

## Identity of Prisoner ESTABLISHED as Member of Notorious FLATHEAD MOB

A complete confession has been obtained by a detail of State Police and the High Sheriff of Somerset County from John Misičerk, alias Frank Kraus, and one of the bandits wounded and captured after staging a bold robbery last Thursday morning at the Central City National Bank, who confessed after a lengthy grilling at the county jail here that he is Felix Fertak, of Cleveland, O., known as the brains of Paul Jawarski's "Flathead Mob," which committed a number of bold holdups in Western Pennsylvania.

### Makes Confession

Fertak confessed his implication in three payroll robberies perpetrated in Allegheny County and two guard murders and also a murder in Westmoreland County during a robbery at the Bolivar Citizens' National Bank. The confession from Fertak was secured by Lieut. Thomas F. Martin, and Sergeants J. U. Buckley and F. J. Gleason, of the State Police, Greensburg, and Sheriff Lester G. Wagner.

Fertak had refused to give even a little information to the police concerning himself or the identity of his two companions who made a getaway after the Central City bank robbery. He was captured a short time after the holdup at Central City along with his companion, John Wozniak, of Detroit, Mich., who also was wounded during a gun battle. Wozniak will be questioned later. Fertak told the police in his confession that the Central City bank robbery was the first that Wozniak had worked with him.

Charges of robbery, assault with intent to kill and breaking and entering with intent to commit a felony were made in this county against Fertak and Wozniak and both waived a preliminary hearing and were held for court by Justice of the Peace Mulcahy, of Central City.

Following the capture of the two bank bandits in Central City, bank officials from Bolivar called to see the prisoners in an attempt to connect them with the Bolivar robbery, but they were unable to identify the prisoners.

Fertak will be kept under heavy guard in the Somerset County jail awaiting further developments in his case.

Identification of Fertak as being one of the Jawarski gang was made from a photograph by Allegheny County Detectives John Geisler, Michael Ford and Albert Shedlock, it is claimed. They had positively identified Fertak as the long-sought planner of the \$104,000 Coverdale payroll dynamiting March 11, 1927.

### Jawarski Forfeits Life

Jawarski, the gunman leader of the mob, forfeited his life to the State a few months ago as the killer of one of the two payroll guards, shot and killed during the coal company payroll holdups at Beading and Mollenauer in 1923 and 1925. The electric chair ended a series of thrills that Paul Jawarski had given local county and jail officials from the time he was caught within 24 hours of the Coverdale dynamiting.

### Jawarski Furnished Thrills

The thrills were led by Paul Jawarski's daring escape from the county jail in August, 1927. In this Paul was aided by his brother, Sam Pallas, which surname is the correct one of the family. Sam smuggled five revolvers into the jail, handed a brace of them to Paul, who gave one to John Vasbinder, a drug addict and convicted murderer, and then began shooting.

Paul later was captured in Cleveland after he had killed a policeman there in a gun battle which followed the arrival of police, who were summoned by a boyhood chum of Jawarski, who had recognized the bandit-gunner in a Cleveland restaurant and sought a \$5,000 reward posted for his capture.

Neighbors of Mrs. Joe Weckoski, Washington County, at whose farm was the bandits' rendezvous, positively identified a police photograph of Fertak as the man who had made his home with the Weckoski family. A child of the Weckoski family also identified the photograph.

Chief Murren conferred with Lieutenant Martin a few minutes after the detectives notified him of Fertak's identification. Fertak immediately

## Members of the Class of 1929 of Berlin High School

PHOTO TAKEN AT MT. VERNON, ON WASHINGTON TRIP



Back Row, left to right—Donald Hillegass, Samuel Forber, Donald Fogle, Charles Davis, Harry Krouse, Glenn Hentz, Ben Donner, Ralph Smith, James Engle, Wayne Reiman, Ernest Dively, Mr. Grove, Lillian Deitz, Carl Delbrook, Ruth Menges, Bernice Lane, Marie Flamm.

Front Row—Hazel Troxell, Mary Shaw, Harriet Ruth Hay, Olive Harrison, Evelyn Fogle, Marie Walker, Annette Shelbaer, Aldine Long, Bertha Eckman, Anna Platt, Ruby Werner, Dorothy Burkhardt, Ida Kimmel, Pauline Glessner, Mary Lowry, Verdine Wilson, Annie Gondek.

confronted and told how he and "Polish John" had lived at Weckoski's farm during the four years operation of the Jawarski-Flathead mob, so-called from the police allusion to all of Paul's nationality because of the flat crown of their heads.

### Looked Up Lay of the Land

Fertak and "Polish John" rode daily through the mining districts, learned the paydays, observed the method by which the payroll was taken to the mines and then watched the operation six to 12 times again, to see if ever there were a variation.

Fertak admitted having planted the dynamite used in blowing up the armored automobile used in transporting the \$104,000 payroll of the Pittsburgh Terminal Coal Company to Coverdale. He admitted having observed and planned the Beading and Mollenauer robberies of the same company in 1923 and 1925. Ross Dennis, guard, was shot and killed in the Beading holdup and Isaiah Gump, a guard was shot and killed in the Mollenauer holdup.

Jawarski had implicated both Fertak and "Polish John" in his different confessions to Chief Murren, and had given Fertak the additional alias of Steven Stanko. Jawarski's version of his gang's operations always attributed the planning and laying out of the holdups to Fertak, although Jawarski would assign the men he believed more capable to handling the different phases of the holdup.

When Fertak had decided that the plans he was formulating were fairly certain of not being frustrated by a change in method of carrying the payroll, Jawarski and his gang of gunmen were notified in Detroit or Hamtramck and came to Pittsburgh a day or so before the scheduled robbery, so they could have ample time for final discussion of the holdup.

### Trailed to Somerset County

Fertak was trailed to within a short distance of Somerset County boundary lines soon after the capture of Jawarski, but days of intensive search throughout that county and Cambria County failed to strengthen various underworld tips that came to them from stool pigeons or informers, and rivals of the Flathead gang.

Fertak also was trailed by Chief Murren and Detective Geisler to Flint, Mich., and to Mt. Royal, Canada, where a rendezvous was maintained for border gamblers and bootleggers who sought refuge from American police departments. Definite trace of Fertak was lost, however, at Flint.

The identification of the Somerset prisoner as Fertak leaves only one member of the Jawarski gang, "Polish John" to be accounted for. Stanley Bodjikowski, captured in Canada upon his return from a trip to Poland and other European countries, is serving 10 to 20 years in the Western Penitentiary for his part in the Coverdale robbery.

Joe Weckoski, Washington County farmer, who maintained a rendezvous for the bandits, is serving five years in the workhouse. He was believed to have profited little in comparison to the actual bandits and was believed to have feared Fertak and Jawarski. His wife is seeking his parole.

About \$40,000 of the \$104,000 loot in the Coverdale holdup was recovered at the Weckoski farm, after Chief Murren had obtained a confession from Jawarski through a ruse, showing him a faked telegram that a member of the gang had been captured in

## MISS DOROTHY YOUNG BRIDE OF REV. SIGLER

Miss Dorothy L. Young, daughter of the late Rev. Dr. Levi P. Young of Elk Lick, and the Rev. Samuel D. Sigler, pastor of the Salisbury Lutheran Church, were married at noon on last Friday, June 7th in Grace Lutheran Church, Morrellville, by Rev. W. I. Good, the pastor and the Rev. Dr. H. C. Michael, pastor of the Moxham Lutheran Church. The ceremony was witnessed by Mrs. Young, mother of the bride, and by Mrs. Good and Mrs. Michael. Following the ceremony the newlyweds and Mrs. Young left the city by automobile for Lewisburg, Pa., where Mrs. Young will visit relatives and friends. The Rev. and Mrs. Sigler will spend their honeymoon in the New England States. Mrs. Sigler was for a number of years a teacher in the public schools in the vicinity of Berlin, Pa. Mrs. Sigler's father was the Superintendent of Missions in the Allegheny Synod of the Lutheran Church for a long time before his sudden death at Salisbury, Pa., early last February. The Commercial joins in wishing this happy couple all the success and happiness in the world.

## Rev. T. R. Coffman Is Conducting Services At Summit Mills

The Rev. T. R. Coffman, pastor of the local Church of the Brethren, is conducting a series of evangelistic meetings in the Church of the Brethren at Summit Mills, three miles west of Meyersdale. At the conclusion of these meetings the Rev. Coffman will leave to attend the annual conference of the church to be held in Indiana the latter part of this month.

The Rev. Coffman is an active and efficient worker in the church in Western Pennsylvania, being a member in an official capacity of the Home Mission Board of Western Pennsylvania, besides being elder in charge of the congregation at Cumberland, Md., Hyndman, Conneville and other points in the brotherhood. He has been pastor of the local church for nearly 15 years and has met with great success in the ministry.

Detroit and had confessed.

The Westmoreland County job to which Kraus admitted occurred three years ago, when the Citizens National Bank at Bolivar was robbed. On this job the bandits gained entrance to the bank through a coal chute and lay in wait for the arrival of F. R. Hammond, the Cashier, and other bank employees. In making their escape the bandits beat John O. Johnson over the head as he stood outside the bank and attempted to halt their flight. The man, a veteran of the Civil War, died later from the effect of his injuries.

Sam Pallas, brother of Paul Jawarski, is serving eight years in the penitentiary for his part in Paul's escape from the county jail, and although he never has been definitely implicated in any of the Jawarski holdups, detectives believe that he was a member of the gang in some capacity.

The detectives hunt for "Polish John" never was intensive because of the absence of any surname or alias of the man, the absence of a police photograph of him, and the absence of an authentic description. Fertak confirmed Jawarski's inclusion of "Polish John" as one of the gang, admitting to State Police Sergeant Haddock that "Polish John" always had acted as chauffeur for the Jawarski gang and was chauffeur in the Central City holdup.

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## NEVADA C. PHILLIPS IS CLAIMED BY DEATH

Nevada C. Phillips, wife of Charles P. Phillips of Salisbury street, Meyersdale, Pa., passed to the great beyond on last Saturday morning at 5 o'clock. Mrs. Phillips was 49 years, 9 months and 2 days of age at the time of her death.

The deceased was at the time of her death President of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union of this place. Mrs. Phillips was an ever ardent worker in the local Methodist Church, and took part in all of its various branches of work. She will be sorely missed by her friends and all who ever came in contact with her. Mrs. Phillips was a very likeable person, and was always very charitable to a just and needy cause.

The funeral which took place on Monday afternoon at 2:30 P. M. was one of the largest funerals ever held in Meyersdale. The floral tributes were very numerous and beautiful and spoke for themselves as to the large circle of friends of Mrs. Phillips. The floral tributes were carried to the Union cemetery in three cars.

Funeral services were conducted from the late home of the deceased at 2:30 P. M. on Monday afternoon with Rev. C. C. Fisher, former pastor of the local Methodist Church, having charge of the services, assisted by the Rev. W. C. Marquis, pastor.

Mrs. Phillips had been very ill for the past five months, and had been taken to John Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore, and to a hospital in Pittsburgh, Pa., from where she was brought home.

The deceased is survived by her husband and the following sons: James, John, Bruce and William. The pall bearers were: H. D. Martin, William Gnagey, Mr. Stanton of Grantville, Md., Mr. Dailey of Uniontown, Pa., John Lichter of Salisbury, Pa., J. H. Bowman and J. E. McCartney.

The following relatives and friends were in attendance at the funeral: Mr. and Mrs. Walter Dickey, son and daughter of Cumberland, Md., Mr. and Mrs. Wilber Hare, son and daughter of Cumberland, Md., Mr. and Mrs. Robert Powell and daughter of Cumberland, Md., Mr. Bruce Dicken, Mr. and Mrs. E. A. Poland and son William, Mr. James Phillips, Mr. Milton Phillips, and Mr. and Mrs. Harry Phillips, Mrs. Olive Phillips, Miss Fannie Thomas, Misses Edith and Anna Williamson, Miss Sarah Thomas, Mrs. Fannie Gordon and son Harry, Mrs. Thomas Weller, Mr. and Mrs. William Williamson and son and daughter, Miss Gertrude Anderson, Sallie Morgan and Dr. Twig and Mrs. Dailey.

William C. Price of Meyersdale had charge of the funeral arrangements.

## A Life Saved

A short time ago while Mrs. William Yutzky of Garrett was looking after a colony of young chicks she accidentally stepped on one with sufficient weight to rupture its abdomen so that its entrails protruded. She picked up the chick, pushed back the entrails and sewed up the wound. The chick was cared for in the house for several days, and the wound healed without leaving any apparent evil effects. It is now with the rest of the flock and as lively as ever. "Watch your step" when among chicks, but if you have a similar accident, call on Mrs. Yutzky at once.

## Peter Landis, 78, Claimed by Death

Peter Landis, aged 78 years, retired, died at 5:30 o'clock Thursday evening at the home of his son, William Landis, residing in Trans-Meyersdale. Death caused by infirmities incident to old age.

The deceased is survived by six children: Mrs. Minnie Fike, of North Dakota; William, mentioned above; Mrs. Nettie Schrock, of Meyersdale; Mrs. Annie Flat, of Canton, Ohio; Raymond Landis and Mrs. Grace Mathias, both of Meyersdale. He also leaves several brothers and sisters.

Funeral services were held Sunday afternoon at 2 o'clock, conducted by Rev. Willis Ronk, pastor of the Brethren Church. Funeral arrangements were in charge of Undertaker J. L. Tressler, of Meyersdale.

## Two Flyers Are Killed In Airplane Crash

Scores of people visited the scene of an airplane crash, which occurred Sunday afternoon about four miles west of Frostburg, many from this section being attracted by the tragic accident. The bodies of the two flyers were found dead in the plane, burned beyond recognition.

The pilot was caught in a fog and is said to have become entangled with the branches of a tree and the plane caught on fire as it crashed. Letters found upon the person of one of the flyers was the means of identifying him as Lieutenant Harry A. Saunders, of Fairfield, Ohio. The second is thought to be Sergeant E. S. Woodward, of Waynesville, N. C., but his identification was delayed by reason of the fact that he bore on his person no means of identification.

It is thought that the plane was one of the group that recently flew from Langley Field, Va., to Dayton, Ohio, and the two flyers were returning to Langley Field, following the recent war maneuvers in which a number of army planes took part.

## Joseph Thomas Completes Course in Pharmacy

Mr. and Mrs. Frank B. Thomas were present at the graduation exercises which took place at the University of Pittsburgh on Thursday, June 6th, their youngest son, Joseph Nathan Thomas, being one of the graduating class. This is the second son of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas to graduate in Pharmacy from the University of Pittsburgh, Frank Thomas, Jr., being a graduate of the same place.

Following is the program that was carried out at the graduation exercises:

Processional—University of Pittsburgh Band  
The Star Spangled Banner  
Invocation—Carl Wallace Petty, D.D., L.L.D.  
Address—The Honorable Ray Lyman Wilbur, A.B., M.D., Sc.D.—Secretary of the Interior  
Selections from "Robin Hood"—University of Pittsburgh Band  
Conferring of Degrees  
Presentation of Commissions—Major Walter H. Kelly, U. S. A.  
Alma Mater—Band and Audience  
Benediction—William J. Holland, D.D., L.L.D.

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## Firemen's Sixth Annual CONVENTION Will Be Held At CENTRAL CITY

The Central City firemen are making lavish preparations for the sixth annual Convention of the Somerset County Firemen's Association which will be held at Central City during the week of July 22nd to 27th, and from all indications at this time the Central City boys are going to prove themselves a most capable band of entertainers while they are serving this year in the capacity of host to the firemen of the county.

An elaborate program for the week has been arranged, comprising all or the usual events held at a convention of this kind, with a number of extras worked in in such a manner as will provide plenty of amusement and entertainment for all of the firemen and their friends who attend the convention.

According to information recently given the News by the Convention committee programs and entry blanks will be mailed all of the fire companies in the county in the next few days. Below we give a detailed idea of the program as will be carried out each day of the convention.

Wednesday, July 24th, will be the opening day. Convention meeting will be held at 7:30 P. M. in the Municipal Building.

Thursday, July 25th, will be Firemen's Day. Parade will start at 1 P. M. instead of 10 A. M. as previously announced.

Friday, July 26th, will be Boy Scouts Day.

Saturday, July 27th, will be Merchants, Farmers and Miners Day.

The list of contests, for which no entry form will be required is as follows:

Largest and best appearing band in line of parade.  
Largest and best drum corps in line of parade.  
Largest uniformed company in line of parade.  
Best appearing company in line of parade, 24 or more men.  
Largest Ladies Auxiliary in line of parade.  
Best appearing Ladies Auxiliary in line of parade.  
Tallest fireman in line of parade.  
Shortest fireman in line of parade.  
Heaviest fireman in line of parade (in service).  
Best appearing motor driven pump.  
Best appearing motor driven apparatus, other than pump.  
The list of contests for which an entry blank or form is required are:  
Hose race, Ladder race, Hub and Hub race, Pumping contest and Tug of War. (Ten men).  
An invitation is extended to everybody to attend the convention and a good time is assured for everybody.

## George Halle Killed Near Brownsville, Pa.

Funeral services for George Halle, Jr., aged 23 years, who was killed in an automobile accident last Sunday evening near Brownsville, Greene County, were held Wednesday afternoon at the home of his father, George Halle, Sr., residing at White Oak. The Rev. Mr. Thomas had charge of the services. Interment was in the Dogwood Cemetery, in charge of Undertaker J. L. Tressler. The deceased was not married. He is survived by his father, one sister and 11 brothers. His mother died five years ago. Mr. Halle had been working in a mine near Brownsville.

## It Was Grand Hog Day for Garrett Boys

One day last week Sam Yutzky, of Garrett, accompanied by a bunch of other boys went hunting for ground hogs. It seems Sam knew where to find the ground hogs and how to get them. The boys by following his instructions were able to bag one animal apiece, and all returned to town carrying a ground hog except Sam. It was not learned whether the boys had a feast and called in their friends and neighbors.

FOR SALE—Farm of 120 acres, 60 acres good farming land, balance pasture and timber, good sugar camp, plenty of good spring water, good barn, silo 10x26, crops out. C. L. FLEEGLE, R. 3, Stoyestown, Pa., one mile from Lambertville, Pa.

## Central City Bank Is ROBBED and Two Robbers Are CAPTURED

Gaining entrance into the Central City National Bank during the night and hiding in the cellar awaiting the opening of the vault by bank employees, three masked bandits staged a bold hold-up last Thursday morning, making a getaway with between \$2,000 and \$3,000 in cash. Two of the robbers, shot by a posse, later were captured.

While the bandits were looting the bank shortly before the bank doors were thrown open for business, Ernest L. Cook, assistant cashier, who was in the vault when the robbers came up through the cellar entrance, heard the command given to the cashier and another employee to lay flat on the floor and he sounded the burglar alarm from inside the vault. Hundreds of citizens gathered in front of the bank and, fearing capture, the bandits quickly gathered up the money in sight and escaped through the cellar way.

Securing a riot gun, which the bandits had overlooked in ransacking the bank during the night, James M. Miller, cashier, gave chase and a gun battle ensued. Fortunately Mr. Miller escaped injury, though bullets from the bandits' gun whizzed close by him.

Men of the town quickly secured rifles, shotguns and revolvers and, forming a posse, gave chase after the bandits, who were forced to flee into the woods when an accomplice waiting outside in an automobile became panic stricken and drove away, deserting his companions. The auto driver, it is said, later abandoned the machine and fled afoot, but no trace of him has been found.

During a hot gun battle two of the bandits were wounded, one seriously, and both were placed under arrest. They were lodged in the lockup and are under heavy guard. The third bandit, who was in the bank, escaped into the woods and it is believed that he has most of the money stolen from the bank.

State, county and local police arrived on the scene soon after an alarm of the robbery had been sent out and they joined the posse in the search for the missing bandits. It is expected that the third bandit who participated in the robbery will be captured, as it is believed he is in hiding in the woods above Central City.

Before staging the robbery, the bandits, it is said, had pulled the electric switch in the bank, believing that this would knock out the burglar alarm system. They also unloaded several revolvers kept in the banking rooms for protection of employees, but overlooked the riot gun. There was also another revolver kept in the vault.

When the two captured bandits were searched \$889 was recovered from one of the bandits and \$217 was taken from the other. The money recovered was in currency and was blood-covered. The third bandit's loot is said to have consisted of about \$4,500.

Formal charges of robbery, breaking and entering with intent to commit a felony and assault with intent to kill have been made against John Wozniak and John Misičerk, alias Krank Kraus, the two bandits wounded and captured after staging a bold holdup last Thursday morning at the Central City National Bank. Information against Wozniak and Misičerk were made by County Detective Bert F. Landis before Justice of the Peace F. J. Mulcahy, of Central City. The two bandits, who are now prisoners in the county jail at Somerset, recovering from buckshot wounds, waived a preliminary hearing and were held for court without bail.

So far the State Police have failed to find any trace of the two accomplices of Wozniak and Misičerk, one of whom participated in robbing the bank and made a getaway with about \$4,500 in cash. The State Police have combed the woods surrounding Central City and also searched for the missing bandits in nearby towns, but no clues have been uncovered.

WANTED—Plastering, patch work. First class work guaranteed. Inquire JOHN W. DIVELEY, Keystone street, Meyersdale, Pa.

FOR SALE—1 Chevrolet Sport Roadster, in first class condition. Cheap to quick buyer. Newly painted. Tires in good condition. Inquire at 509 Salisbury street, Meyersdale, Pa.