



# THE OUTLAW TRAIL

From the Northfield Historical Society Museum, go south on Division Street to the stop sign at Fifth Street. Turn right and continue west on Fifth Street to the intersection of Highways 3 and 19. Continue west on Highway 19 to Forest Avenue. Turn right.

## 1. ODDFELLOWS GROVE

Now a city park, at Lincoln Street and Forest Avenue.

This is believed to be part of the woods where the eight outlaws rendezvoused that fateful Thursday morning, September 7, 1876, just hours before the raid. Traveling northeast from Mankato, the gang separated near the small town of Cordova. Cole Younger, Bob Younger, Charlie Pitts and Bill Stiles approached Northfield from Millersburg, 11 miles west. The others, Frank and Jesse James, Clell Miller and Jim Younger, had come from Cannon City, 10 miles south. They split into three groups to avoid suspicion. Although heavily armed, with revolvers concealed under their linen dusters, they carried no rifles.

Drive east on Forest Avenue about five blocks. As you drive, it becomes Third Street.

## 2. FORMER JOSEPH LEE HEYWOOD RESIDENCE

Southeast corner of Third and Plum (517 W. Third) — now a private residence.

Joseph Lee Heywood was the bank teller who lost his life protecting the funds in the First National Bank. He built this house in 1870 and lived there with his wife and daughter until his untimely death at the age of 39. His funeral was held in his home.

Heywood split his time between the bank, where he served as a bookkeeper, and Carleton College, where he was a treasurer. While the bank owners were out of town at the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, Heywood was left in charge as acting cashier. Despite repeated threats to his life, Heywood refused to open the safe for the outlaws. As the robbery attempt unraveled, a frustrated outlaw — probably Frank James — shot Heywood.

Heywood's courageous act is a revered chapter in Northfield's history. Tribute is paid to him each year during Defeat of Jesse James Days. The house structure is original, however, the stucco, decks and garage have all been added in recent years.

Continue east on Third Street for about two blocks.

## 3. JEFF'S DINER

Third Street, just north of the railroad depot.

The gang separated into three groups to avoid raising suspicion, but Cole Younger and three others made an impression on local residents at this spot, the former location of a railroad diner. He wagered \$100 that Minnesota would vote Democratic in the

November election. Considering Minnesota was an abolitionist Republican state and that John North, Northfield's founder, was influential in forming the Republican Party in this state, such a bet did not go unnoticed. It implied Southern sympathies and raised the curiosity of other diners. Next door, Mr. Trussel, an implement dealer, thought the visitors looked suspicious, but Elias Hobbs assured him they were only cattle buyers.

Drive east across Highway 3 to Water Street. Turn left on Water Street.

## 4. JOHN TOSNEY'S EATING ESTABLISHMENT

This restaurant was torn down long ago, but on September 7, 1876, two outlaws ate lunch here. According to accounts, both drank lightly before moving on.

Drive south on Water Street, and see the Ames Mill directly ahead.

## 5. AMES MILL

Now a Malt-O-Meal building, 319 South Water Street on the west end of the bridge.

The Ames Mill was owned by the Ames and Butler families. It was one of the finest mills in the country. In fact, while in Philadelphia visiting the Centennial Exposition, John Nutting, president of the First National Bank, received an award on behalf of the mill for the fine flour it produced.

As Adelbert Ames, his father and his brother were walking toward the mill on their way back from a board of directors' meeting at the bank that fateful day, they noticed men on horseback, wearing white linen dusters, riding across the bridge toward them. As the horsemen approached the Ames party, one of them reportedly doffed his hat and greeted Ames with a "Hello, governor." The salutation bothered Ames. He told his father, "No one here calls me governor." Moments later the bank raid began.

Proceed across the bridge to Division Street. From the stop sign at Bridge Square, you can look to your left and see:

## 6. EXCHANGE SALOON

This saloon probably occupied the space now located at 321 Division, next to the current First National Bank building.

Frank James and Bob Younger reportedly drank heavily here prior to their encounter with Governor Ames. They bought a quart of whiskey to take with them. Looking back, Cole Younger attributed the failed bank robbery to the gang's drinking. He said if he had known of it, the raid would not have gone forward.

Turn right and go south about one-quarter block to the Museum.

## 7. NORTHFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY MUSEUM

408 Division Street

At 2 p.m., the James-Younger gang made its move. Frank James, Bob Younger and Charlie Pitts rode their horses through Bridge Square and dismounted in front of the bank. As they strolled to the end of the block and casually lounged on dry-good boxes in front of Lee and Hitchcock's store, Cole Younger and Clell Miller approached the bank from the south. Their job was to watch the street. With their companions in place, the three walked back to the bank and entered.

Heywood's stubborn resistance proved to be the gang's undoing. Despite repeated threats of bodily harm, he insisted the safe could not be opened because of its time-lock. In fact, the safe door was already unlocked. As confusion reigned inside the bank, chaos erupted on the street. A merchant, J. S. Allen, had been turned away from the bank by Miller, and he sounded the alarm, "Get your guns boys. They're robbing the bank."

Townsperson ran for their weapons and what followed was a bloody, seven-minute gun battle. The outlaw rear guard — Jesse James, Jim Younger and Bill Stiles — now wielding their pistols, bolted into the fray to protect their comrades. The violent and bloody exchange shattered the town's familiar calm. Mayhem gripped the street in front of the bank. When the smoke cleared, Heywood lay dead in the bank. A Swedish immigrant, Nicholas Gustavson, unable to understand the outlaws' warnings to clear the street, suffered what proved to be fatal wounds. Two outlaws, Clell Miller and Bill Stiles (the gang's Minnesota guide), both were dead in the street.

Bloodied and battered, the surviving outlaws carried their share of lead, but no money, as they fled south out of town, six men on five horses. Northfield had courageously met the challenge of one of America's most notorious outlaw gangs.

Visit the Museum for more information on the James-Younger gang.

When you are ready to move on, THE ESCAPE ROUTE IS AS FOLLOWS: Follow Division Street south. The entire block on the left between Eighth and Ninth Streets was the site of the Ames Mansion. The central part of it remains at 811 South Division Street. There are two other sections — 807 South Division and 810 Washington Street.

Proceed to the intersection of Division and Woodley. Go west on Woodley for five blocks. Turn left on Poplar Street South and County Road 28 to the intersection of Highway 3. Turn left again, and go south for about 1/2 mile. Turn right at County Road 1 and follow it into Dundas.

## 8. HISTORIC DUNDAS VILLAGE BRIDGE

You may want to stop here to view the Cannon River and the remains of the Castle Mill in the historic old milling town.

Without Stiles to guide their retreat, the outlaws retraced their steps to Dundas. They rode abreast, like a squad of calvary. They stopped to clean their wounds in the Cannon River. A farmer happened by with a good span of horses. The outlaws commandeered one for Bob Younger, who had been riding behind his brother, Cole, and posing as officers of the law, "borrowed" a saddle from another farm and headed west toward Millersburg.

A posse was slow to form in Northfield, but word of the raid and the outlaws' escape was telegraphed to Faribault.

To continue the outlaws' blood-stained trail, turn left on Railway Street and proceed south to the stop sign. Then turn right on West Avenue which is County Road 1. Drive west four miles.

## 9. INTERSECTION OF COUNTY ROADS 1 AND 46

Near this point, the outlaws passed a local farmer, Charles F. Beylien, who was driving a wagon team west with flour from the Dundas Mill. He noticed Bob Younger's wounds and asked if they had taken a prisoner. They said they had and were taking him to jail. From his wagon, Beylien shouted that they were taking him the wrong way. One of the riders replied, "Oh, no! We're taking the right way."

They continued west, paused at a nearby slough for water and then resumed their escape, passing Beylien again at a full gallop headed west.

Continue west on County Road 1 to Millersburg. (If your time is limited, retrace the tour to Northfield.)

## 10. MILLERSBURG

By 4:30 that afternoon, the outlaws reached the Millersburg Inn, or Cushman Hotel, on the Old Dodd Road. They covered 11 miles in almost two hours. Cole and Bob Younger, Pitts and Stiles had stayed there the previous night. The proprietor recognized Younger and Pitts and noted the disheveled and weary condition of both men and horses. But word of the raid had not yet reached Millersburg and the gang rode on. No one had yet picked up their trail.

The balance of the tour is a scenic drive which takes 45 minutes to an hour. If you turn left on County Road 61, you are following the Old Dodd Road.

## OPTIONAL STOP — CHRISTDALA SWEDISH LUTHERAN CHURCH

Proceed west on County Road 1 about one mile west of County Road 61 to the historic little white church, Christdala Swedish Lutheran Church. Nicholas Gustavson, the new immigrant who spoke no English and was killed during the raid, was a member of this congregation. The frightened congregation gathered on a farm here and posted sentries for two nights. With only one shotgun among them, they fired hourly to keep the outlaws away.

Return to regular tour — go south on County Road 61.

## 11. OLD DODD ROAD

This road winds through the hills much as it did over a century ago. Originally a Native American trail, soldiers from Fort Snelling built the road in 1863, linking the fort with Mankato. This was the main thoroughfare of the time, named for Captain Dodd of Old Fort Snelling.

Follow the Old Dodd Road past Circle Lake. Continue southwest on County Road 61 about six miles to Highway 21. Turn left and continue about one mile and exit into the village of Shieldsville.

## 12. SHIELDSVILLE

Here history eluded members of the Faribault posse. Coming from the east, the posse arrived in Shieldsville ahead of the gang, but they dismounted and went inside a local saloon, leaving their guns outside. When the gang rode through, they took water and then fired a few rounds into the water pump to intimidate the defenseless posse. The gang rode on into the Big Woods. The posse paused briefly and bolstered its number before striking off in pursuit.

## 13. THE BIG WOODS

The outlaws rode west along the Dodd Road into this sprawling area of swamps, lakes and forests called the Big Woods. Four miles west of Shieldsville, near dark, there was a second confrontation with the posse. Shots echoed through the woods. An outlaw's horse was wounded in the exchange. Before long, the outlaws abandoned their horses and struck off on foot for Mankato.

Now the battered outlaws — chased by a posse that sometimes numbered 500 to 1,000 — were tested by nature and the elements as well. The rain came down. The mosquitoes were fierce. Exhausted and hungry, wounded and suffering from exposure, what was left of the notorious gang continued to elude the authorities as they made their way west.

Frank and Jesse James broke from the group and escaped on stolen horses to South Dakota. There, they picked up the Missouri River and followed it to the safety and comfort of their home state.

The Youngers and Charlie Pitts continued wandering on foot west of Mankato to Madelia. Two weeks after the raid, they were discovered in a Hanska slough by a local posse. After a fierce gun battle at close range, Bob Younger called out his surrender. Pitts was dead. Cole and Jim Younger were too wounded to respond.

The Youngers were taken back to Faribault for trial. They pled guilty to attempted robbery, assault and murder to avoid the death penalty. They were sentenced to life imprisonment at Stillwater Prison.

Return route to Northfield Area Chamber of Commerce Office and Northfield Historical Society Museum:

Take Highway 21 east to the airport at the intersection of County Road 46. Follow 46 north about seven miles to County Road 1. Follow County Road 1 into Dundas and out again to Highway 3. Turn left on Highway 3 and drive north. At the intersection of Highways 3 and 19 (at the Safety Center stop light), turn right to go to the Museum or continue straight for two blocks to the Chamber. The Chamber Office is located at 205 Third Street West, Suite A (in the West River Plaza), and the Museum is at 408 Division Street.

## EPILOGUE

On April 3, 1882, Jesse Woodson James, alias Thomas Howard, was killed by Bob Ford — "The dirty little coward that shot Mr. Howard, laid poor Jesse in his grave." (From a ballad composed in 1882 right after Jesse was shot.) Alexander Franklin James surrendered and was tried on several charges. No Southern jury would convict him. He died of a heart attack in 1915.

Bob Younger died in prison from his wounds and tuberculosis. Cole and Jim Younger were paroled in 1901. In 1902, Jim committed suicide when the Parole Board denied him permission to marry a young newspaper woman from the St. Paul paper. Cole traveled around the country preaching that crime does not pay. He died in 1916 of a heart ailment. Seventeen bullets were still in his body.

# THE OUTLAW TRAIL



# FOLLOWING THE JAMES-YOUNGER GANG