

Chicog-Then and Now for March, 2025 JoAnn Malek

Some big names visited the Chicog area in 1938: Charles S. Ross, 72-year-old retired president of the George S. Carrington Greeting Card Manufacturing Company; John Henry Seadlund, considered the most vicious criminal in America at the time; J. Edgar Hoover, director of the FBI from 1924 to 1978.

Early in August of 1937, Seadlund and accomplice James Atwood Gray plotted to kidnap baseball great Joe Dimaggio, expecting club owners would pay high ransom for a star player. After discovering that sports locker rooms were heavily guarded they changed their plans. On September 25 the two stopped an expensive-looking Lincoln sedan on a Chicago street and abducted Charles Ross at gunpoint.

Seadlund had previously prepared two underground caves, one in Emily, MN and another near Chicog. A ransom message was sent, with photo of Ross at the Emily hideout holding the Chicago daily newspaper. A phone call confirmed that he was alive and being treated "all right". He encouraged that the ransom be paid.

After two weeks, Ross was brought to the dugout in Chicog and chained to the wall. The vault was lined with boards to prevent a cave-in. The roof was complete with a trap door. Located in an overgrown swale surrounded by high ground and pine trees, it was near the confluence of Casey Creek and the Namekagon River.

Seadlund drove back to Chicago to set the ransom in motion. He demanded \$50,000 in \$5, \$10 and \$20 unmarked bills with no consecutive numbers. To deliver the money a driver was instructed to rent a Harley Davidson, dress in white, leave Oak Park on a designated road at 6pm on October 8, toss the bag of cash when he saw flashing lights, then walk away. Seadlund believed it to be an ingenious scheme for payment of the ransom. He called it the perfect crime.

After receiving the ransom money, Seadlund killed both Ross and Gray on October 10, leaving their bodies buried in the Chicog tomb. He headed west, dispersing a trail of bills. Lists containing the ransom serial numbers had been forwarded to sources throughout the nation. For four months the kidnapper was tracked in one of the most widespread and intensive manhunts ever conducted by the FBI.

A carefully planned trap under the direct supervision of Hoover was set into motion at the Santa Anita race track on January 14, 1938. FBI agents were

placed behind betting wickets as change carriers. When payment for a two-dollar bet proved to be part of the ransom Seadlund was detained. He denied participation in the kidnapping case until questioned at length by Director Hoover.

Seadlund led agents to the Emily cave where ransom money was found, and then to the vault near Chicog where the two bodies were located.



John Henry Seadlund, center, surrounded by deputy U.S. marshals and FBI agents, as he was brought to federal court in Chicago for a hearing in

connection with the kidnap-murder of Charles S. Ross. He received the death sentence and was executed by electric chair on July 14, 1938, just days before his 28th birthday.

Do you have memories of the Ross kidnapping? Have you heard stories? Write me at jojmalek@yahoo.com. soon. I'm working on a follow-up column

IMPORTANT MARCH DATES

Thursdays, 11-3, Walkabouts, town hall

Wednesday 3/12, 6pm, monthly Chicog meeting

Wednesdays 3/12&26, Namekagen Transit Service

Thursday 3/13, 11-1, Bibliodragon, town hall

Wednesday 3/26, 10:30-12, Books&Bread, Beaverbrook

Town Website: www.townofchicog.com

CHICOG FUN FEST: Save the date-Saturday, August 23.

Contact Darcie with ideas: townchicogmail@yahoo.com

Thank you for reading Chicog-Then and Now