

## Willie Sutton's Accomplices

**William "Happy" Johnson** – Johnson, along with Bessie Endner (see Willie Sutton's Women) accompanied Sutton on February 4, 1919 in the burglary of \$16,000 from Endner's father's safe.

In Sutton's 1953 book *I, Willie Sutton*, he refers to Endner as Bessie Hurley, and states that Eddie Wilson joined in the burglary. In his 1976 book, *Where the Money Was*, Sutton uses the name Carrie Wagner for Endner and states that one Bill Lavin was his accomplice. No mention of Johnson is given in either book.

Sources: Daily News; NY Times.

**Edward "Doc" Tate** – Doc Tate was actually a mentor to Willie Sutton. Tate was an older gentleman who was a master safe cracker. Originally from Chicago, he eventually set up shop in New York City. In the early 1920s with Sutton in Tate's crew, they reportedly pulled off jobs in Pennsylvania, Connecticut, and Massachusetts. Sutton parted company with Tate in 1925. On February 2, 1928, Doc Tate was sentenced to Leavenworth Prison, where he died some years later.

Sources: Police Records; Prison Records.

**Edward Ritchie Wilson** – Eddie Wilson, a neighborhood pal of Sutton's also worked on Doc Tate's crew and left with Willie in 1925. Wilson was arrested in 1919 on a stolen goods charge and served 8 months in a New Haven, Connecticut jail. In 1923 his was arrested in NYC for possession of burglary tools for an earlier Breaking & Entering and Safe Burglary in Boston, but not convicted. He was first brought to Brooklyn for a homicide charge. After both the possession and homicide cases were discharged, Wilson was extradited to Boston, where he was not convicted for the crimes. In a Pinkerton report, it is indicated that Wilson was tracked down on information from Edward Tate, following Tate's arrest in Boston. In Sutton's books he indicates that Wilson married the daughter of a Bronx doctor in the early 1920s. After parting company with Doc Tate, Sutton and Wilson teamed up and on September 7, 1925 broke into the Ozone National Bank in Woodhaven and attempted to burglarize the safe. They were unsuccessful and because they left the acetylene burner behind, authorities were able to trace the purchase back to Wilson and Sutton. Eddie Wilson was arrested and sentenced to up to 10 years and released after 6. Wilson reunited with Sutton after Willie escaped from Sing Sing in December 1932. They pulled bank robberies in New York and Philadelphia. Wilson, assumingly divorced, was in the company of a girlfriend, Nina Miranda (see Willie Sutton's Women), and arrested on February 4, 1934 while driving in New York City. After Wilson pulled a gun, police fired shots, permanently blinding Wilson and hitting Nina in the hand. After serving 19 years, Wilson was released from Auburn Prison in NY on July 30, 1953 at the age of 51.

Sources: Several

**Marcus Gorham Bassett** – Born May 18, 1899, Bassett's first arrest was for vagrancy at the age of 13 in Fresno, California. Between 1914 and 1916, he was arrested in Buffalo, NY, Brookline Massachusetts, and New York City for automobile-related crimes and Petty Larceny. On August 4, 1917, Bassett escaped from the NY City Reformatory, was recaptured two days later and paroled June 24, 1918. In October 1918, he served in World War I, becoming a Corporal in the US Army. On February 3, 1919, he was arrested for Second Degree Grand Larceny and given a sentence of 2 ½ - 4 ½ years in NY State Prison. On October 16, 1920, he escaped from prison and was recaptured January 21, 1921 and given additional sentences of 7 years for Escape from Lawful Custody and 5 years for Second Degree Assault. While serving in Dannemora State Prison, he met Willie Sutton. Bassett was paroled on March 2, 1929. In 1930, he partnered with Sutton, where they pulled several robberies throughout the year. Bassett was reportedly married to Kathryn (Kitty) Clayton, but this is questionable (See Willie Sutton's Women). He was arrested in Buffalo, New York on November 26, 1930 in connection with the robbery of M. Rosenthal & Sons Jewelry Store in Manhattan. At the time of his arrest, he was in Buffalo with his mistress, Mildred Arlington (See Willie Sutton's Women), visiting his stepsister. Bassett was sentenced to 30 years, but released from Attica State Prison in January 1950. Marcus Bassett died in Brooklyn of natural causes on August 10, 1951. He was regarded as an educated man, and said to have been involved as a writer of short stories. He is buried at the Long Island National Cemetery in Farmingdale, New York.

Sources: Several

**John Egan** – On October 28, 1930, Egan, at the age of 31, entered Sing Sing Prison to serve a ten-year sentence for assault. This is where he met Willie Sutton, and on December 12, 1932, the two successfully escaped from the prison. Just three days after their breakout, Egan, Sutton, and two or three other accomplices were identified as robbers of the Bank of Manhattan Trust Company in uptown Manhattan. On February 15, 1933, John Egan, Willie Sutton, and Eddie Wilson attempted to rob a branch of the Corn Exchange Bank in Philadelphia. They fled empty-handed after the guard released a canister of tear gas. Egan was supposed to join Sutton and Wilson in another robbery in February, where his job was to show up with the getaway car at a branch of the Lafayette National Bank in Brooklyn. According to Sutton's account of the attempt, Egan failed to show up and once again they had to leave empty-handed. In Sutton's Sutton books, Egan is painted as unreliable, careless, and having a drinking problem. On February 20, 1933, John Egan was one of the victims of a triple murder. Along with Dorothy Miller and bartender Michael Griffin, Egan was shot dead in Porky Murray's Speakeasy at 265 West 52<sup>nd</sup> Street in Manhattan.

Sources: Several

**Joseph Perlongo** - Born in 1913, Perlongo was arrested three times in 1929 at the age of 16 for Burglary with the charges dismissed or receiving a suspended sentence. On April 10, 1930 he was delivered from Delaware County Prison in Media, Pennsylvania to NYPD and on May 14, 1930, sentenced to New York City Reformatory for Petit Larceny. He was released on April 28,

1931. In 1933 he joined up with Willie Sutton and Eddie Wilson as their third man, replacing the late John Egan. Perlongo was a known participant in the July 8, 1933 robbery of the Corn Exchange Bank on 110<sup>th</sup> Street in Manhattan, and the January 15, 1934 robbery of a Philadelphia branch of the Corn Exchange Bank. On February 4, 1934, the same day Eddie Wilson was captured, NYPD detectives arrested Perlongo at his home, 215 Chrystie Street in Manhattan. Perlongo eventually led the authorities to Sutton's address in Philadelphia, where Sutton was captured the following day. After pleading guilty for the New York robbery, Perlongo was sentenced 10 – 20 years in State Prison. After his release from Dannemora in 1944, he was turned over to Philadelphia authorities and sentenced 3 – 6 years, released in May 1947. In 1952, Joe Perlongo was employed as a presser at a dress company.

Sources: Several

**Frederick J. Tenuto** – Born in Philadelphia on January 20, 1915, Freddy “The Angel” Tenuto started getting into trouble with the law early on. In 1926 and 1929 he was sent to a Philadelphia Protectors and released in November 1930. In 1933, he was sentenced to the Pennsylvania Industrial School for Boys at Huntingdon, Pennsylvania for Burglary and released in late 1935. In June 1940, Tenuto was convicted for second degree murder and sentenced 10 – 20 years for the March 11, 1940 shooting of James DeCaro in the Buckeye Club in Philadelphia. On September 26, 1941, Tenuto escaped from Graterford Prison but was captured just two days later. After transferred to Eastern State Penitentiary, he participated in a 12-man masterful tunnel escape in April 1945, along with Willie Sutton. Ten of the escapees were captured within days, while Tenuto and James “Botchie” Van Sant remained at large for two months until they were caught in New York City. After a transfer to Holmesburg Prison, along with Sutton, the two inmates conspired with three others and busted out of Holmesburg in February 1947. Three of the escapees were captured within a day. Willie Sutton remained a fugitive for five years until his arrest in February 1952. Freddy Tenuto has never been heard from since. Although we can list Tenuto as an *accomplice* of Willie Sutton in two prison escapes, there are some vague reports of his participating in some robberies with Sutton after their 1947 escape. In a May 6, 1947 article in the Daily News, Tenuto was named along with Sutton as suspects in armed robbery of the Empire Trust Company, a jewelry firm in the heart of Manhattan's “Diamond District.” It was suspected as a “Sutton job” because one of the robbers posed as a Fire Inspector. However, no further proof was given to implicate either Sutton or Tenuto. On May 24, 1950, he was listed on the FBI Most Wanted listing and remained there until 1963. In March 1952, he was the initial suspect in the murder of Arnold Schuster, the young, Brooklyn man who spotted Willie Sutton riding the subway, but there has never been any concrete evidence to his involvement. There is also the account told by Joe Valachi, Organized Crime Informant that Albert Anastasia ordered Freddy Tenuto to murder Arnold Schuster simply because he didn't like snitches. Then to cover his tracks, Anastasia ordered Tenuto disposed of. Not much weight is given to this story. To this day, there is no public knowledge of what became of Freddy Tenuto after he climbed over the wall of Holmesburg Prison in 1947.

Sources: Several

**Thomas Kling** – Listed as born July 15, 1906 in Hoboken, New Jersey, Tommy Kling's criminal record dates back to 1919, where he appeared in Juvenile Court three times on Burglary charges. As an adult he continued his criminal career, appearing in court 17 times between 1922 and 1934 on charges for Burglary, Drunk and Disorderly Conduct, Assault and Battery, Larceny, Violation of Parole, and Robbery. On December 17, 1934 Kling received a 10 to 20 year sentence for Robbery and was sent to Eastern State Penitentiary, in Philadelphia. It was there that he met Willie Sutton. On March 25, 1945 he was sent to the Hudson County State Reformatory for Violation of Parole and released September 18, 1947. After that he was not arrested until February 20, 1952 for his participation in the March 9, 1950 bank robbery of the Manufacturers Trust Company Bank in Sunnyside, Queens along with Willie Sutton and John DeVenuta. On July 17, 1950, Thomas Kling was added to the FBI Most Wanted list. Following Willie Sutton's February 18, 1952 arrest, detectives located a girlfriend, Mary Margaret Moore, who led them to 306 East 18<sup>th</sup> Street in Manhattan as a rooming house where a Sutton's friend Tommy was living. When NYPD Detectives Thomas Walsh and Victor Shanley Jr. arrested him at home, he had a loaded 32-caliber revolver in the pocket of his bathrobe. Kling was tried along with Willie Sutton in Queens County. Witnesses of the 1950 bank robbery did not clearly identify Kling as one of the robbers. Several witnesses described the robber purported to be Kling as 5' 10" in height, whereas he stood only 5'4" being significantly shorter. Years later it was revealed that he wore platform shoes during the robbery. After found guilty, Kling, a fourth felony offender, was sentenced on April 2, 1952 for 30 years to life. Willie Sutton, convicted along with Kling, supported his pal and denied that Kling was involved in the robbery. In 1962, with the help of a crusading attorney, Katherine Bitses, Thomas Kling was resentenced as a third felony offender and given a reduced term. However, in Sutton's 1976 book *Where the Money Was*, he indicated that Kling did indeed participate in the 1950 Sunnyside robbery.

Sources: Several

**John DeVenuta** – Born March 29, 1914, DeVenuta spent time in jail for theft and at one time made an escape. It was in a Pennsylvania jail that he met Thomas Kling. In February 1950, Kling introduced DeVenuta to Willie Sutton and he was recruited to participate in the Manufacturers Trust Company Bank robbery in Sunnyside, Queens. Sutton already had the plan mapped out and on March 9, 1950, John DeVenuta, along with Sutton and Kling, left the bank with \$63,942. In February 1952, DeVenuta was going to participate in a Sutton-Kling bank robbery on West 14<sup>th</sup> Street and 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Manhattan. However, on February 20, 1952 his timing could not have been worse when he showed up at Kling's East 18<sup>th</sup> Street apartment with some sandwiches, while detectives were searching the place. He was promptly arrested and identified by two bank employees as one of the three robbers on March 9, 1950. Considering that he and his wife were expecting their first child, DeVenuta chose to cooperate with the authorities in exchange for an accepted plea to a lesser charge and leniency in sentencing. Since then, he did not have any major run-ins with the law. Working as a presser in the garment industry, he supported his family and was respected by his neighbors, who knew nothing of his

past. John DeVenuta passed away on December 15, 1993, having lived more than 41 years after the 1952 trial.

Sources: Several