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An exterior view of the type of money box which Victor Lustig used to scam fellow passengers on luxury liners sailing between France and America. Online via [The Bygone Days](#).

Victor Lustig made a small fortune convincing people that he'd created a money box which was capable of producing ... money.

American dollars, to be exact.

American One-Hundred Dollars bills, to be more exact.

It is actually surprising how many intelligent people Lustig could swindle with his money-box scams.

At one end of the money box was a blank sheet of paper. On the other end was a \$100 bill. After the "Count" turned a few cranks and knobs, the blank paper became a "C Note" (which, he said, could be retrieved from the box, and used, six hours later after the ink dried).

When Victor announced he'd sell his money-making box to the highest bidder, during his transatlantic crossings between France and America, his fellow passengers started bidding against each other. Near the end of the cruise, Lustig would accept the highest bid, exchanging his box for cash.

By the time a duped buyer realized the box contained real hundred-dollar bills, made by the U.S. Mint, and the blank paper was still blank paper, not currency, the Count was gone—with the purchase price of the money box in his hands.



With lots of gullible people traveling on cruise ships, Lustig was making a good living. Then World War I erupted, and the cruise industry could no longer send pleasure boats across the Atlantic. Lustig had to find another place to run his scams.

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Media Stream

Victor Lustig and His Money Box Scams

This image depicts an exterior view of the type of "money box" which Victor Lustig used to con fellow passengers on luxury ships traveling between France and America. Inside the box, Lustig would hide real money—\$100 bills—about which his intended victims had no clue.



Never revealing the truth, Lustig pretended to turn blank paper into \$100 bills by operating some cranks and knobs on his money box.

Gullible people did not guess that the blank paper always remained blank paper and the "C Notes," which Lustig showed them, were real dollars, made by the U.S. Mint, not \$100 bills which Lustig's box could produce.

Lustig made sure that he was long gone before the highest bidder figured-out the scam. How did he do that? By relying on what seemed to be a legitimate reason for a six-hour delay in retrieving the newly created bills from the box.

After all, it took a while for the ink to dry ... didn't it??

Exterior of a Victor Lustig money box, online via "The Bygone Times."

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Interior View of a Victor Lustig Money Box

Count Victor Lustig conned countless people with his money-box scams.

Whether his "marks" were passengers on luxury cruise liners, crossing the Atlantic between France and America, or people tempted in other circumstances (like an American sheriff), Lustig turned a swindle into cash for himself.

This image depicts the interior of a money box like Lustig used. Notice the real dollars inside the box, together with the blank paper. Lustig's scheme was to convince gullible people that his box could turn blank paper into real money.

Of course ... the money box could do no such thing.

Interior of a Victor Lustig money box, online via "The Bygone Times."

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