

Tricky Vic and His Final Con

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One spring day in 1935—about two years after America had abolished Prohibition by passing the Twenty-First Amendment—Victor Lustig made a very bad mistake: He betrayed his girlfriend.

Angered because he'd been seeing another girl, she called the police to let them know where they could find her straying beau.

That call led to the end of Lustig's conning days. With the scar he bore on his left check, from a fight over a girl many years before, the "Count" was fairly easy for the police to identify.

Victor, however, still had at least one more trick up his sleeve—even after the police took him into custody.

Awaiting trial, which was scheduled for the 2nd of September in 1935, the "Count" was held in a third-floor cell at the Federal Detention Headquarters in New York. Showing officials that the facility was not as "escape-proof" as they thought, Lustig crafted a departure plan.

On the day before trial—still wearing his prison clothes—Victor used some bedsheets to make a rope. Lowering himself, to the street below, he pretended to be a window washer. Many people saw him in action but they, too, must have bought one of his last, best cons.

THE COUNT' ESCAPES "THE COUNT' FLEES JAIL ON SHEET ROPE

International Crook Drops 50 Feet to Street in Sight of Hundreds on West Side.

BOASTED HE WOULD FLEE

Had \$51,000 in Counterfeit Bills When Arrested-Faced Trial Tomorrow. Jepe 2,1936

Victor (The Count) Lustin, the dignified 65-year-old confidence man whose money-making schemes have kept the police of two continexts busy for twenty-seven years, escaped from the Federal Deten-tion Headquarters at 427 West Street shortly before I o'clock yeaterday afternoon.

He made his exit in full view of perhaps a hundred persons via a rope of nine bedsheets knotted together, sidding fifty feet from a third-floor dermitory window into cobblestoned West Eleventh Street, in Greenwich Village.

The Count had been in the detertion prison under \$50,000 ball since May 12, when secret service agents caught up with him at Seventy-fourth Street and Broadway, and with a key they said they found on him, opened a locker in the Times Square subway station that con-tained \$51,000 in counterfelt banknotes and the engraved plates from which they were made. He was to have been brought to trial tomorrow for possession of the notes.

Boasted He Would Escape.

JAIL ON SHEET ROPE

Continued From Page One.

in almost frightened the witness away, but he summoned up his courage, "Mister," he said, "did you know

that a man just escaped from the third floor?"

The wicket slammed shut, and a few moments later the swinging rope of sheets was hauled back into the jail, Detective Frank Camp-bell of the Charles Street police Victor (The Count) Leading station responded to the call for police. He said later that the pris-oner apparently had cut his way through a wire notting with a sharp the saved his way out of Lake through a wire notting with a sharp the same jail that John Dillinger instrument. The bed sheets, col- escaped from with a wooden plated.

police. He said take that the prisoner apparently had out his way through a wire netting with a sheet. collected from sine of the forty bearing the transparent. The bed sheets, collected from sine of the forty bearing in the dormitory, were fastered to a brace inside the window.

Beginning at 1:07 P. M. the fallowing police alarm was broadered from the police made between and over the police made between and over the belief made prevents at intervals over the police made prevents at intervals over the police made prevents at intervals over the police made prevents and over the belief made prevents and vertical to the fortype made avenues, of escape from the city).

"Escaped from the Poleral Deletion to the Collett W. Miles, alias Count Lesting, and the origine as a confidence and West Street, N. Y. C., Robert V. Miles, alias Count Lesting, and the origine was a confidence and West Street, N. Y. C., Robert V. Miles, alias Count Lesting, and the origine was a confidence and west street, N. Y. C., Robert P. He forty and that the police advanced the theory was as a confidence and picked him to have brought about his capture by the first patrolana he met if the had tried to escape further afoot, and that one of the count's friends had picked him up in an automobile on West Street. They and that the blue dusgarnes and slippers that constitute the prison garb would have brought about his capture by the first patrolana he met if the had tried to escape further afoot, At the juil a voice told inspire that constitute the prison garb would have brought about his capture by the first patrolana he met if the had tried to escape further afoot, At the juil a voice told in the mean of the forty of the dozen of brunhes with the police had not be related about his applied his trade all over Europe and the United States since 106, seen of the police have not been about the police have not been also to getter in the state of the police have not been about the police have a many placed his trade all cover Europe and the United Stat



been the count mentioned in the coarser of Jules W. (Nicky) Am-

stein.

The counterfelling equipment found in the Times Figure looker in May was responsible for a flood of hearly perfect \$100, \$10, \$10 and \$15 bills throughout this country and Canada, according to the surhandian.

This time, however, he did not remain free for long. He was caught, in Pittsburgh, nearly a month after his New-York escape.

During the trial, Victor realized the evidence against him was overwhelming. He pled guilty to the charges from which he'd fled—a counterfeiting claim—and was sentenced to a fifteen-year term at Alcatraz. The Judge imposed an additional five-year sentence for Lustig's New York jail break.

Victor Lustig joined Al Capone as a prisoner at "The Rock." It was a place from which he could not escape.

The "Count" contracted pneumonia there, so he was transferred to the Medical Center for Federal Prisoners in Springfield, Missouri. He died, at that medical center, on March 11, 1947.

Tricky Vic's death certificate reportedly notes his real name—Robert V. Miller—and states that he'd worked as ... an "apprentice salesman."

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

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Media Stream







Federal Prison at Alcatraz Island

The federal prison at Alcatraz Island, near San Francisco, is also known as "The Rock." Some of America's most-notorious criminals served their time here.

Among those prisoners was "Count Victor Lustig," whose birth name was Robert Miller. Tricky Vic died at Alcatraz on March 11, 1947.

Image of Alcatraz, online via Wikimedia Commons.

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Victor Lustig - Tricky Vic Goes Down

When his girlfriend told New York police where to find Count Victor Lustig, his con-man days were nearly over. Nearly ... but not quite.

This photo, taken in the spring of 1935, depicts Lustig going through the court process which would ultimately put one of the 20th-century's most notorious con men behind bars forever.

Image online via Wikimedia Commons.

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Victor Lustig and His Escape from Detention

A notorious con man, during the first part of the 20th century, Count Victor Lustig had scammed many people.

In the spring of 1935, however, he was caught by police in New York City.

The story of his arrest was big news, but the story of his escape—from federal custody—was just as big.

This image depicts a news article about his escape, from New York's Federal Detention Headquarters, in early September of 1935.

Article about Victory Lustig's arrest, online via Wikimedia Commons.

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