

The American

Thompson®

Association

"**THE THOMPSON LEGEND**"

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On The Side Of Law And Order

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GREAT TIME!



SOMETIMES YOU TAKE WHAT YOU THINK IS A GOOD PHOTOGRAPH, THEN LATER YOU NOTICE SOMETHING ELSE IN THE BACKGROUND YOU DIDN'T NOTICE. PHOTOSHOP WOULD NOT HAVE HELPED!

SEEKING THE HISTORY**(21st S&S Lecture)****BY****SIG**

While doing some research on the history of Colt Thompsons having served on the “Side of Law and Order” in Michigan, an intriguing find was made. It was discovered, that the Jackson County Sheriff (JCS) in Michigan, arrested a Richard Burke in late 1930. There was not much information other than the arrest and that Richard Burke was arrested with a Thompson submachine gun, among other things. The Thompson submachine gun was noted as being without a serial number, a clear intention on someone’s part to avoid discovery. Immediately, those with some familiarity to the Saint Valentines Day Massacre (SVDM) might try to connect the name Fred Burke and justifiably wonder what if any relationship there might be to the Richard Burke.

Many questions were now begging to be answered. Who was Richard Burke? Was there any connection to Fred Burke of SVDM fame? Why was Richard Burke arrested? How did he get a Colt Thompson? More importantly where was this Colt Thompson now and if found could we determine the original serial number?

The research described below ultimately not only located this Colt Thompson’s serial number, but provides an extremely rich insight into the history of the criminal side of what is probably the most infamous of all American firearms.

Step number one was to solicit the support of Mike Wank who resides in Michigan. He in turn requested the efforts of a friend Melissa Mercer-Tachick, who knows her way around a library. Starting with the lead on the name Richard Burke and the time late in 1930, an effort was begun to uncover the answers.

Further research found a photo of Richard Burke on the front page, of “The Jackson Citizen Patriot,” published December 26, 1930. Richard Burke had been arrested in the early morning hours of December 24, 1930 after crashing his large Studebaker sedan into trees on Highway US-127, four miles north of Jackson, Michigan. Richard Burke threatened a tow truck driver who was called to the scene, and the tow truck driver summoned the Jackson County Sheriff Department.

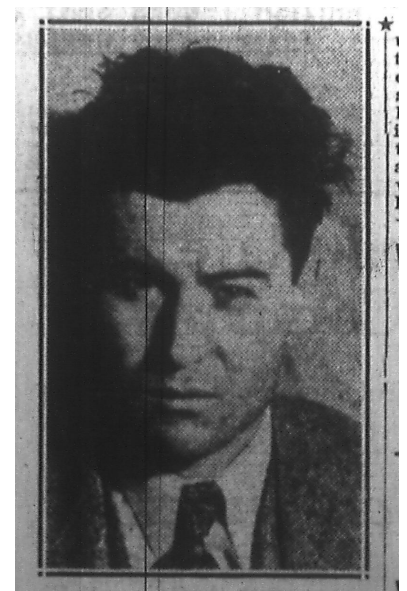
Richard Burke apparently was drunk at the time of the crash. After his arrest at gunpoint Richard Burke attempted to bribe the Deputy Sheriffs to no avail. He was believed to be a gangster and skilled safe cracker.

In his car was found numerous safe cracking and burglar tools including nitroglycerine fuses. On his person were 2 loaded .38 caliber Colt special revolvers strapped in shoulder holsters.

Other items found included a Deputy Sheriff Badge from an officer that had been shot from St. Joseph County in Indiana, a Private Investigator badge, and handcuffs. Most interesting was the Thompson submachine gun with the serial numbers ground off, a drum magazine, stick magazine and ammunition for it.

Richard Burke, first identified himself with an alias Richard Burns. Further investigation proved that he was Richard Burke. His criminal record started in 1917, in California; he had two prior felonies and had served in prison several times.

There was interest in Richard Burke by authorities from Detroit, Toledo, Chicago,

***RICHARD BURKE***

South Bend, Grand Rapids, Saginaw and Wisconsin for a variety of crimes. It would be safe to say Richard Burke was a habitual criminal and all around bad guy. Subsequent to his arrest and conviction on various firearm charges, Richard Burke was incarcerated in the Michigan State Prison at Jackson.

Mike Wank made initial contact with Undersheriff Christopher Kuhl at the Jackson County Sheriff's office. Undersheriff Kuhl and was able to confirm that the Colt Thompson was still in their possession. A direct inspection was graciously arranged for Mike and I in October 2011. The Sheriff's office believed the history of the Thompson was attributed to a 1920 hold up at Grass Lake, which was not correct based on our information and Melissa's library research.

In December 2011, Undersheriff Christopher Kuhl allowed a second inspection, this time to remove the barrel and look under the grip mount. Arrangements were made by Undersheriff Christopher Kuhl to do this at Schupbach's, a popular firearms and sporting goods dealer nearby the JCS office. After first gathering at the sheriff's office Undersheriff Christopher Kuhl, Mike, Melissa and I were off to Schupbach's. There we used their vise and proper Doug Richardson tools to remove the barrel and grip mount to find the original serial number 5518!!



Now elated to have this number 5518, we shared our find with Gordon Herigstad for his extensive database. Gordon was able to point out that this particular Thompson was identified in the very famous Coroners investigation for the St. Valentines Day Massacre (SVDM) and initially shipped to Von Lengerke & Antoine (VL&A), a Chicago sporting goods store.

SVDM Coroner testimony records show that number 5518 was later shipped to Gopher State Mines Company Minneapolis, Minnesota, along with 6 others. Police investigations by both the Minneapolis and Chicago departments indicated that Gopher State Mines Company (GSMC) was a non-existent corporation. Later, newspaper articles stated that it was believed all

Thompsons shipped to GSMC, including number 5518, were received by the Touhy gang. The Touhy gang was a rival gang to the more famous Capone gang and no small feat survived.

So we have been able to answer most of the original questions and more. On how Richard Burke obtained the Colt Thompson, we can infer, but not prove a connection to the Touhy gang. Although there is no known and more likely no relationship to Fred "killer" Burke of SVDM fame, there was a slight crossing of the paths within the coroners investigation.



Here are a series of photos that show the Colt Thompson as found on our October 2011 visit. On the left side upper

where the serial number was ground off there appears to be evidence of an effort to raise the serial number with some acid etching.

Inspecting the rear lower area where the original serial number was also ground off, Mike and I were surprised when we removed the rear stock to find a hand stamped number 11573.



LEFT IS AN EXAMPLE THE VL&A CATALOG FROM 1927.(COURTESY OF MARIO GOMES)

Further, the Colt Thompson was found complete with original wood stock set. In contrast with the published photograph of the items seized that day, which do not show a buttstock or foregrip. The rear butt stock was also missing it's slide latch release button.

The original L drum and XX magazine, found that day in 1930 are still in the Jackson County Sheriff Department's possession. A winding key was missing for the L drum.

An effort to determine if this Colt Thompson was registered proved fruitful. We have determined it was registered in 1934 using the hand stamped 11573 on the lower.



The inspections and investigations have proved very interesting in that it confirmed the Colt Thompson was still intact, with new information on a "lost" serial number, and is located in Jackson County Sheriff's Dept as a registered firearm with a very interesting history.



BOX AND DRUM MAGASINE FOUND WITH S/N 5518

THE SHOW AND SHOOT

IF YOU WEREN'T THERE YOU REALLY MISSED COOL STUFF AND FRIENDS!





REALLY RARE AND INTERESTING DIFFERENT ITEMS







THE SHOOT WINNERS

MORNING 5 STAGE

- 1.) JACK MEADOR
- 2.) TOM JAMES



AFTERNOON STEEL PLATE

- 1.) DAVID ALLEN
- 2.) C.J. ROBERTS (CJ - I FOUND YOUR "PRIZE")



**SHOW AND SHOOT PHOTOS THANKS
TO TOM DAVIS AND RON BROCK**

WANTED INFORMATION



WHAT YOU SEE HERE IS A WINDOW DISPLAY FROM WINNSBORO, LA, A DISPLAY DONE BY DIAMOND-HAWTHORNE POST OF THE AMERICAN LEGION. THE USMC PICTURED WITH THE TSMG IS JESS WILLARD DOUGHTY.

THE FAMILY IS ASKING ALL MEMBERS FOR ANY INFORMATION ON THE PHOTO OR IF POSSIBLE TO GET A COPY OF THE CARDBOARD CUT OUT. PLEASE HELP. CONTACT TRACIE AT 740-587-0755 OR tca101@windstream.net.