

**Another American Myth Is Exploded**

# *Jesse James Was Piker Compared to British*

Herald Tribune News Service  
As every red-blodded American boy knows, or thinks he knows, the history of the Wild West is studied with the Robin Hood-like

exploits of lovable rogues who specialized in a peculiarly American pastime, robbing trains.

Largely due to the movies, men like Jesse James, the

Younger Brothers, and Bill La Trasse—cutthroats all, really—were courtly cavaliers in the rough who, working with smooth genius, deprived the railroads of fortunes.

Sorry, but this is mere myth. The American brand of train robber was a piker compared to the modern British variety.

America's first big train

robbery occurred not in the West, as the myth would have it, but near Stamford, Conn., in 1866.

Three men made off with cash, bonds and jewels valued at \$700,000. Caught later, they implicated seven others, including a train messenger.

Even at his luckiest, Jesse James seldom netted more than \$5000 from a train holdup, and his planning was appallingly non-existent. The Missouri outlaw and his followers picked up \$3000 in their first try in 1873—missing a train on the same line, a few hours later, that carried \$75,000 in gold.

The myth that great train robberies could happen only in America was broadened greatly by a 1903 movie that has become classic, entitled, unsurprisingly, "The Great Train Robbery."

Just how much the six thieves got in that robbery was not made explicit, but it is plain the robbers were crude chaps compared to the gang that made off with that historic haul in Britain yesterday.

In the movie, filmed 'way out west near Ft. Lee, N. J., the villains beat a telegrapher senseless (the Britons simply cut telephone wires to prevent a giveaway).

Once aboard the train, they bash in the head of the fireman, shoot the mailman, dynamite a tin box containing gold (those gentlemanly Britons didn't stoop so low as to carry firearms).

After relieving the passengers of their valuables—and killing one of them—the oldtime robbers force the engineer to uncouple the engine from the train and take them down the tracks to their getaway horses.

Here, the Britons seem to have taken a leaf out of the American train robbery book. They too uncoupled the engine and rode it, along with a railroad car loaded with loot, down the tracks to waiting getaway cars.

One of them must have seen that movie—and believed in the American myth.