

“Armed Robbery of Cranford Motorists”

(From the Cranford Citizen and Chronicle of Jan. 13, 1921)

“Sunday evening three hold-up bandits stopped six machines on Walnut Avenue in Clark township about a quarter mile over the Cranford line, getting from the occupants of the cars – cash and valuables. The car of the first victim, Felix Difabio, proprietor of the Venice Shoe Shop, was used to block the roadway and as other machines came along they were stopped and the occupants robbed. Johnnie Gabbett of Cranford spoiled the picnic the holdup men were having by turning his car around quickly in front of the robbers and getting away back to Cranford where he gave the alarm, bringing police from Cranford, Rahway and Westfield on the run. Johnnie, who is quick-witted and has nerve, did not stop on command or for the bullets, several of which hit his car and windshield. When he got away, the holdup men lost no time making their escape in the machine. Difabio, the first victim, stated he saw a red lantern and sensed a holdup, but when he put on speed two shots through his car changed his mind. The old man whose car the bandits escaped in, was the second victim.

The list of those held up so far as known:

Felix Difabio lost \$100.00 and a watch. Henry Tomlinson and John Osterbury of Cranford. Tomlinson lost \$20.00 but the robbers returned plunder taken from Osterbury after learning he had lost both legs in the war. This robbery is the most daring yet perpetrated in the series of holdups in this section and compares for audacity with the trolley holdup in Union some time ago. It may be the same three men. The first machine was held up about 7 o'clock, and the bandits held the road, stopping all machines that came along until Johnnie Gabbett appeared and got away to give the alarm. The Police report shows Johnnie got back to Cranford at 9:50, so the holdup party continued almost three hours. Officer Massa, Leavy and Bell were the first police on the job. There appears to be no substantial clues as yet."

From the Cranford Citizen and Chronicle, March 3, 1921

"Three bandits who some time ago held up cars on Walnut Avenue were caught when one was shot in the holdup attempt of a Morris County Traction Trolley. They were traced by blood in the snow to a

home in Kenilworth. They admitted to a number of holdups. Within 72 hours of their capture, two are now in Trenton State prison with 50- year terms, the other is in serious condition in St. Elizabeth Hospital."