

## **Asa Bradshaw and the Mystery of the Missing Money**

By Chuck Mauro

The mystery remains: What did this well-liked and supposedly upstanding citizen do with the money he embezzled from the National Bank of Herndon?

In 1933, the National Bank of Herndon was the second largest bank in Fairfax County. Open since 1910, business was brisk. The bank served customers from a 25-square-mile area. In early January 1935, however, the bank closed abruptly and events unfolded in short order.

On January 10, Asa E. Bradshaw, the bank's mild-mannered 44-year-old cashier signed a full confession, admitting to embezzling "about \$60,000" over the course of 18 years—a huge amount in those days. Married with two children, Bradshaw had been considered a "model cashier and a leading citizen in the community." He had been employed at the bank for 20 years.

Bradshaw was arrested and taken to jail in Alexandria. He subsequently was moved to the U.S. District Court in Richmond for trial. On February 1, he pleaded guilty and was sentenced to four years in prison "as a bookkeeper in a transient camp" near Richmond. He specifically was charged with embezzling \$1,000 and \$495 from two separate accounts and with "making false entries with the intent to deceive the comptroller of the currency."

How did this happen? At that time the bank did not segregate cash handling duties from bookkeeping. Bradshaw got away with it because he was rarely if ever sick, thus not leaving his dual bookkeeping system open to possible discovery by others. Unfortunately for him, he did happen to be out sick when the examiners made their scheduled visit to the bank in early January so he was not able to "assist" with the audit.

Who was Asa Bradshaw? He was a well-respected and admired member of the Herndon community. From 1913 to 1915, he served as Town Clerk (then an elected position), and from 1923 to 1924 he was a member of the Town Council—during which time, ironically, he served on the Jail Remodeling Committee. He also was a member of the Democratic Executive Committee from Dranesville and a vestryman at St. Timothy's Episcopal Church. Later he was remembered as a well-liked person, and the attitude among many was, perhaps surprisingly, "better he got the money and pleasure from it than anyone else."

The bank was taken over by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation. Deposits were insured up to \$5,000 and were reimbursed within 10 days. Bradshaw's personal belongings were put up for sale at an auction in March and his house was subsequently sold.

It was never determined what Bradshaw did with the money, which was never recovered. He denied using it for gambling or investing in the stock market. It is possible that he simply lived beyond his means.

Bradshaw apparently never returned to Herndon after his incarceration, as there are no obituary notices or cemetery records for him or his wife, Ruth, in Fairfax County. The new Citizens National Bank, financed by local businessmen, opened on March 15, 1936, and served the area's financial needs for many years. The building still stands at 783 Station Street and is now the home of Hefler Performance Coaching, a training facility for endurance athletes.