

The Bank Robber That Never Was

Written by Walton Burns
Bella Bartner, illustrator

In the middle of the night, police answer a report of an intruder in the bank. Arriving, they see a figure through the window. And yet, when they enter the bank, they find no one inside!

Can you figure out what happened and why?

Examine the evidence, analyze the facts, and solve the mystery!



Find more mysteries at
ClueByClue.com



Thimbleberry Police Department Incident Report

Incident: #2025-2216

Date: 11/07/2025

Officer Badge: #3126

Name: Chen, Carmel

Partner Badge: #6581

Name: Blackstone, Holly

SUMMARY

On 11/05/2025 at approximately 21:00 hours, I responded to a call reporting a civilian sighting of a figure in the Thimbleberry Bank at 126 East Main Street. I arrived at approximately 21:15 hours and confirmed that it appeared there was a person in the bank. I made numerous attempts to communicate with the person. None were successful. At 21:57 hours, I entered the bank and found no one inside.

Telephone Call Transcript

From: Unknown (203) 555-1111

To: Thimbleberry Police Department, main number (203) 555-4321

November 5, 2025 20:58:33

DISPATCHER: Thimbleberry Police Department. How can I help you?

CALLER: Yes, I was walking my dog past the bank, uh, Thimbleberry Bank, and it looks like there's a person inside. But the bank is closed, so I don't know...

DISPATCHER: Does the person appear to be an employee?

CALLER: It's hard to really see because it's pretty dark inside. '

DISPATCHER: And what is the person doing?

CALLER: Well, that's the weird part. They aren't moving. I haven't seen them do anything.

DISPATCHER: When you say they aren't moving, you mean they're standing still?

CALLER: That's what it looks like. It is dark, like I said. But I haven't seen them move an arm or turn their head or anything. I thought maybe they saw me and froze so I wouldn't see them. Or think it's a statue.

DISPATCHER: OK, We'll send someone to investigate. Can you stay at the location and wait for them?

CALLER: Sure. I guess.

DISPATCHER: OK. I have a car on the way, ETD 7 minutes. But if you feel you are in danger, move away from the building as fast as possible and call 9-1-1.

Dashboard of the Thimbleberry Bank Security System

		Alarm Report		
WATCHDOG 5000		Alarms: ALL Date Range: 11/05/2025 - 11/06/2025		
	ID	Location	Status	Time Tripped
MENU DASHBOARD ALARMS CAMERAS SYSTEMS USERS REPORTS Settings Log Out SUPPORT@BRANTECH.COM	PA001	Main Door	Working	—
	PA002	Clerk	Working	—
	EA001	Manager Office	Working	—
	EA002	Back Door	Working	—
	RA001	Vault Foyer	Working	—
	RA002	Vault	Working	—
	PA003	Safety Deposit Boxes	Working	—
	PA004	Front Window	Working	—
	EA003	Back Window	Working	—
	MA001	Vents	Working	—

Thimbleberry Police Department

INCIDENT REPORT

Incident: #2025-2216

Date: 11/07/2025

Upon arrival and confirmation of the existence of a figure, Officer Blackstone and I made the decision to find all the exits to the building and secure them. Officer Blackstone walked around the perimeter of the bank and confirmed that there was a back door, the only exit besides the front. She examined the door. It was closed and locked. There were no signs that it had been forced open or interfered with in any way. Officer Blackstone stationed herself at the back door and reported that no one exited the bank through that door.

The next day, the bank manager gave us access to the

system for the bank. From the dashboard

Thimbleberry Police Department INCIDENT REPORT

Incident: #2025-2216

knocked on the door. I also tapped on the glass and called out, identifying myself as a police officer and requesting the person open the door and provide a kind of identification. When this did not elicit a response, I used the PA system in my vehicle. The person did not respond in any way. In fact, it appeared that the person was still the entire time we were there. This is speculation.

Thimbleberry Police Department

INCIDENT REPORT

Incident: #2025-2216

knocked on the door. I also tapped on the glass window and called out, identifying myself as a police officer and requesting the person open the door and provide some kind of identification. When this did not elicit a reaction, I used the PA system in my vehicle. The figure did not react in any way. In fact, it appeared that the figure did not move at all the entire time we were there. The resident who called the station speculated that the intruder was trying to stay invisible by not moving.

At this point, I called the bank manager to find out if

Telephone Call Transcript

From: Unknown (203) 555-1111
Thimbleberry Police Department, main number (203) 555-1111
November 5, 2025 20:00



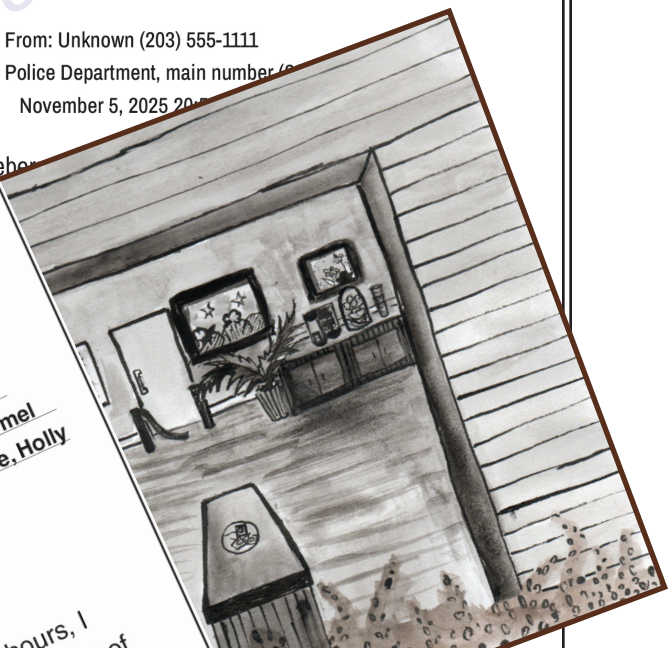
Thimbleberry Police Department
Incident Report

Date: 11/07/2025
Name: Chen, Carmel
Name: Blackstone, Holly

Incident: #2025-2216
Phone: #3126
Badge: #6581

SUMMARY

hours, I of



Telephone Call Transcript

From: Officer Chen, cellphone (203) 555-1234

To: Thimbleberry Bank, main number (203) 555-2121

November 5, 2025 21:40:11

BANK PHONE LINE: [ring]...[ring]...[ring]...[ring]...[ring]...Hello. You have reached the Thimbleberry Bank, Main Street branch....Have you heard about our new high-interest savings account? It's a real steal! Pick up a flyer at our new display in the lobby or talk to a bank manager today....We are currently closed. To access our automated information system, press 1 now. [call terminated]

BANK PHONE LINE: [ring]...[ring]...[ring]...[ring]...[ring]...Hello. You have reached the Thimbleberry Bank, Main Street branch...Have you heard about [call terminated]

BANK PHONE LINE: [ring]...[ring]...[ring]...[ring]...[ring]...Hello. You [call terminated]

Telephone Call Transcript

From: Officer Chen, cellphone (203) 555-1234

To: Thimbleberry Bank, main number (203) 555-2121

November 5, 2025 21:40:11

Officer Chen: Good evening, Mr. Shawmut. This is Officer Chen of the Thimbleberry Police Department. I need to ask you a few questions about the bank.

Shawmut: Is everything ok?

Officer Chen: There appears to be a person in the bank right now, and we need to follow up with you on that.

Shawmut: Wait, is the bank being robbed?

Officer Chen: As of now, it doesn't look like that is the case. Can you please confirm that there is not supposed to be anyone inside of the bank at this current time?

Shawmut: No. Not at all. The clerks left at about 4:30, and I left around 5:00pm.

Officer Chen: Could there be a cleaning crew or maintenance being done tonight?

Shawmut: No, the cleaners come in the morning. We got a late delivery after hours, but that was two nights ago.

Officer Chen: Does that mean delivery people have the keys to enter your bank?

Shawmut: Oh, no. They left the package at the door. No one would steal that. It was an ad for our new high-yield savings account. It's a life-size cut-out of a....

Officer Chen: Sir, please. There may be an intruder in your bank. Let's stay focused. Now, when you left at 5:00 pm, was the bank empty?

Shawmut: Yes! The customers were out by 4 o'clock. Last clerk, Jane, was out just after 4:30. She had trouble balancing her drawer. Had to count bills twice.

Officer Chen: And did you see everyone leave?

Shawmut: Well, no. I guess not. I had a lot of paperwork to do and I was trying not to dilly-dally. My partner and I had reservations at the new steakhouse downtown. It was really good by the way. A little pricey, but worth it.

Officer Chen: [audible sigh]: Focus, please sir. Could an employee have hidden in the back?

Shawmut: Well, I didn't see anyone. But I didn't go into the safety deposit room or peek to see if anyone was crouching down behind the counter. [laughter] I did go into the employee lounge. Well, it's supposed to be a lunch room but we usually go to...

Officer Chen: Sir! Please?

Shawmut: Sorry. Uhm, yes, I guess it's possible an employee hid away, but I can't imagine anyone in my branch doing that. They're good people.

Officer Chen: Thank you for your help. Is there a direct phone line into the bank?

Shawmut: Yes, the number is 203 555-1212. Are you going to call?

Officer Chen: Yes, I'll place a phone call and if that doesn't establish contact we might need to force the lock and enter the building.

Shawmut: Please don't do that! I can be down in 15 minutes with the key. Let me just get my coat!

Appendix to Incident Report

PHOTO 1/2

Incident: #2025-2216

Taken 11/05/2020, 9:16 pm by Officer Chen



Your Turn

.....

Why did the police think someone was in the bank even though there was no one there when they entered?

.....

Not for Sale or Reproduction
Test Copy

Hints

1. Did anyone leave the bank through the front door while police were there?
2. Did anyone leave through the back door while police were there?
3. Is there any evidence someone broke out through a different exit?
4. Look at the photo. Do you see anything that could be a person?
5. Did Officer Chen note anything unusual about the intruder in his report?
6. What else might you find in a bank that looks like a person?



Solution

The police saw an advertisement, a cardboard cut-out in the form of a person. This was the cut-out ad that the bank manager was referring to. The bank phone message also talked about it.

That explains why the figure never moved the entire time the police were there, and why no alarms were tripped.

Fun fact: This mystery is based on a real incident that occurred in New Jersey!



I hope you enjoyed your adventure through this zine, the newest incarnation of my Clue by Clue mysteries. I call them Clue by Clue because you get the information one clue at a time! I would deeply appreciate your feedback, so please send any and all thoughts to walton@cluebyclue.com.

Find more mysteries at ClueByClue.com.

Visit me on Instagram or Threads [@cluebycluegames](https://www.instagram.com/cluebycluegames)

