

SERIAL STORY—

GHOST DETOUR

By OREN ARNOLD

CAST OF CHARACTERS
ROSELEE DALE and CHRISTINE PALMER—Partners in a summer tourist venture at Goldcrest.
DICK BANCROFT and FRANKLIN LARAWAY—They also found an interest in Goldcrest.

Yesterday—Christine and Roselee buy the ghost town, Goldcrest. They ride down its main street, walk into its old bank. And the safe is locked. A strange voice says, "I've been wondering if you came to open it."

CHAPTER TWO

A LOT of women in history have fainted—fainted—for effect. They wanted to impress somebody with their frailty, which was stylish back in the buggy-and-bustle era.

But it is physically possible for thoroughly modern and self-reliant young women to faint in absolute reality, and Christine Palmer and Roselee Dale almost did so. Only their abounding curiosity, plus an inability to flee, caused them to remain standing. Finally they let out a concerted yell.

"Gosh!" said the man, himself startled now. They saw his head then, a fine-looking head above the half wall of what had been a bank teller's cage.

"Say, I'm sorry!" he went on affably. "I guess I scared the daylight out of you. I should have shown myself sooner."

He was a big fellow, bareheaded and in shirt sleeves, tieless with collar open. He had black hair, quite unghostly.

"Did you expect somebody else?" Roselee pointed at him oddly. Christine could only swallow.

"Well, yes," he admitted. "There have been tracks here, and I was curious. I still am."

"Tracks?" Roselee echoed, still wide-eyed. "Fright made Roselee's large blue eyes larger and more beautiful still. The young man appeared to discover them."

"Yump. But they were men's tracks. Here in the dirt and dust of the bank, leading to the vault. I saw you riding up in the distance. I thought you'd be—they. So I hid in here to see who you—who they—were. See?"

Roselee couldn't disperse the thought that something about him looked familiar.

"You—uh—live here?" Christine asked.

"Yes."

"On business, no doubt?" Christine was prone to speak a little loftily at him, now.

"Oh, yes. That is—well, important business. You see—well, the fact is, what's your names?"

THE girls looked at each other. They were still flushed with excitement. Roselee took up the conversational reins again.

"You're doubtless the crazy old hermit of Goldcrest," she declared. "Every ghost town has one. Well, old hermit, I'm Roselee Dale, and may I present my friend Christine Palmer. So there!"

The old hermit smiled again. He had fine teeth, the girls noted. And well-chiseled lips.

"My name's Bancroft," he bowed a little. "I'm happy to see you, even though I—"

"So are you both?" He looked stern. "I could go to the owners and have you thrown off the property. Or I—I could throw you off myself!"

The girls gasped, and looked significantly at each other. The young man was big enough to do as he threatened.

"Do we have to fight?" he asked then with a new smile. "I'd rather invite you to dinner. Honest, I can scrape up enough for all three. It's pretty lonesome here. I—I keep batch over yonder in the Ace High Hotel."

"Waiting for Franklin. He's due tonight or tomorrow."

"Um. Another crusty old hermit, no doubt?"

"Franklin's my roommate in college. Franklin Laraway. Frank's going in study. And I have a serious job. I've loafed some because I've been curious about that vault since I found it locked and saw the tracks here. I have opened every other door in Goldcrest. This one defies me, and I can't stand it."

"Naturally."

"I'll skip over for my flashlight and show you what I mean," he said, boyishly. "Wait a sec."

HE ran swiftly out and all at once the girls were alone again with the bank ghosts of yesterday. They didn't like it.

They saw him hastening back, and his pocket light was a blessing.

"We've a long ride home," Christine remembered. "Let's hurry."

"All right," said he, pointing with the light beam. "See what I mean? Here's flaky rust and dust everywhere except along the crack where the vault door opens, and on the knob and handle. They've been turned. I tried for an hour to work them myself, but—"

"I have the combination," Roselee suddenly put in.

"You have?" Say, who are you, anyhow?" he demanded anew.

"I told you my name. Here—you turn, and I'll read off the combination." She was opening the letter she had taken from a pocket of her blouse. He looked very seriously at her, hesitating, confused.

"Go on, turn it," Christine urged. The mystic numerals worked—12-14-16-18-13-18-8. He strained at it and the massive door inched open tantalizingly. Instantly three young people looked like phantoms high-lighted feebly but theatrically in the gloom.

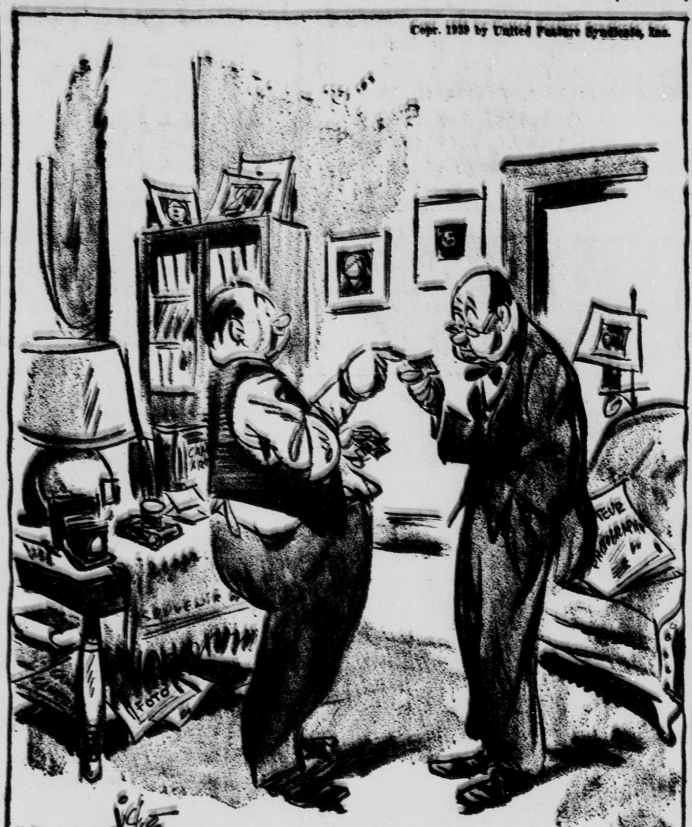
"It's money!" he whispered. In awed tones. "Together they stooped to inspect it, handle it, count it, currency and specie alike. They were extremely quiet, almost furtive, as if suffused with a sense of guilt. Neither girl spoke; both stared wide-eyed."

"Clor-ree!" the man murmured at length. "There's nearly \$12,000 of it! Sa-a-a-ay!" Mr. Bancroft sat back on his heels to stare up at fresh wonder and amazement at Christine Palmer and Roselee Dale.

(To Be Continued)
(All events and characters in this story are wholly fictitious.)

GRIN AND BEAR IT

By Lichty



"That's a miniature shot I took of the Grand Canyon at 250th of a second—couldn't quite get it all in, of course."

HOLD EVERYTHING

By Clyde Lewis



"How do you like our garden, dear? I made a salad out of it."

FLAPPER FANNY

By Sylvia



"...sunburn lotion, snake serum, poison ivy salve, mosquito netting—yep, that's all. Gee, I wish you were going, too!"

THIS CURIOUS WORLD

By William Ferguson

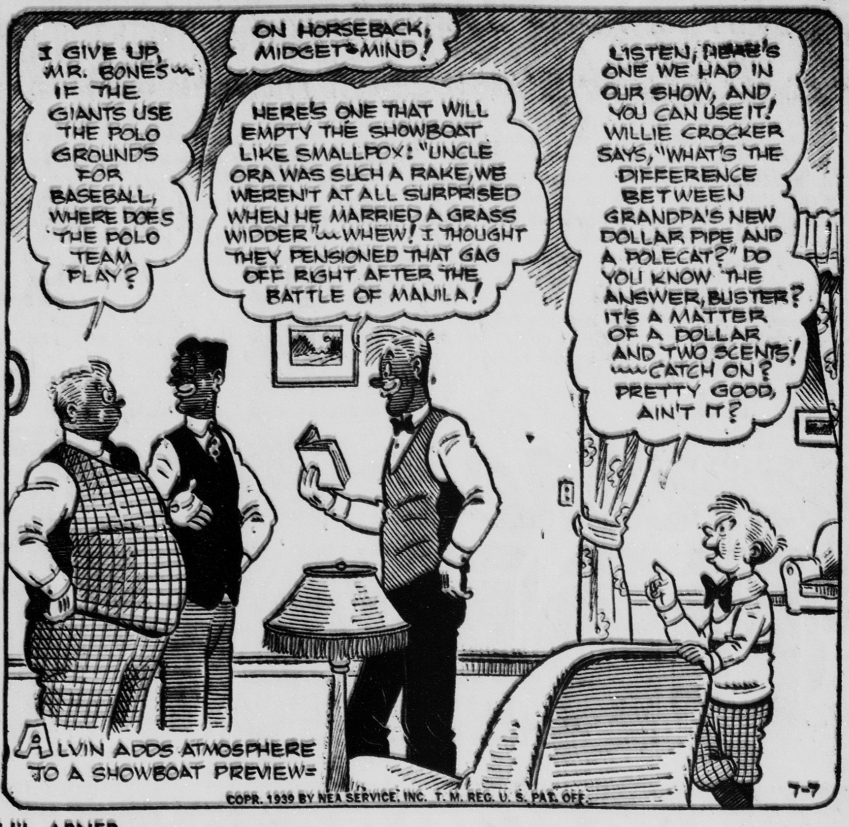


LOOK FOR this Sign and this Bottle

TOM JOYCE 7UP COMPANY

OUR BOARDING HOUSE

With Major Hoople



"I GIVE UP, MR. BONES! IF THE GIANTS USE THE POLO GROUNDS FOR BASEBALL, WHERE DOES THE POLO TEAM PLAY?"

L'I' ABNER



"PANSY, AN' HERE SHOT IT FOR HIM! FUM TH' OLE BLACKHEART PLACE."

RED RYDER



"I THINK I GOT IT FIGURED OUT, EASY—THIS MR. SQUEEZE IS PROBABLY ONE OF THE BIG COSMETICS MANUFACTURERS. HE'S GOING TO HIPPA-HULA TO GET THE SECRET OF THAT BEAUTY TREATMENT, TOO."

WASHINGTON TUBBS II



"I IMITATE THINGS—LIKE FIRE SIRENS FOR WHISTLES, ROOSTERS, CROWNS, AND AIRPLANES WITH ONE CYLINDER MISSIN'!"

BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES



OUT OUR WAY

By Williams



"NO, I AIN'T GOT IT DONE, YET. TOLD YOU TWENTY TIMES THAT I'LL FIX THAT WHEN I GET TIME—I HAFTA DO THAT STUFF DURING 'TH' LUNCH HOUR, 'WHILE I EAT WH' 'TH' OTHER!"

RYE MAN



"OH, THAT'S ALL THAT, DICK—TAKE YOUR TIME, TAKE ANOTHER YEAR—TWO! DON'T THINK I'M TRYIN' TO HURRY YOU!"

DOES THEY ADVANCE ONE



"WE WILL SEE, WE WILL SEE! DOES THEY ADVANCE ONE? AM SHOOTIN' 'EM DOWN!"

CLANG



"BUT LITTLE BEANER IS UNAWARE THAT HE IS BEING WATCHED BY THE MORGAN MAN WHO SHOT RED."

WHEE-EE!



"I CAN MAKE NOISES LIKE DOORS, SLAMMING, CORKS BEING PULLED, AND I CAN EVEN IMITATE A TIRE GOIN' FLAT!"