



## Benjamin Edward Drew

11:08am Jun 22

Here's some info I found in news archives on the infamous Wash Ladd's store robbery. This store is about a mile or so west of Salem Crossroads on Highway 34 heading toward Newberry.

I had heard the older folks sometimes refer to Wash Ladd's store, and never knew that it was this mystery building that I had passed by so many times, and wondered what it was. Turns out it was the site of the largest robbery in the county at that time. Here's some info I found in the news archives. There might be more detailed info available, but searching news archives can be really hit and miss.

August 13, 1949: Wash Ladd's store near Salem Crossroads is robbed of \$41,500 :O as Ladd is preparing to close for the night :O

September 7: 36-year-old Charlotte, NC resident James Robert Pitts, a man with a criminal record going back to 1932, is arrested in Hickory, NC, his hometown. His accomplice, 34-year-old Harry Woodrow Russell, also from Charlotte, but originally from Kershaw [probably the town in Lancaster county?], is still at large. His criminal record dates back to 1935. In 1941, Pitts' fingerprints were noted to have been mutilated when he was picked up by Texas State Police.

November 19: Russell has since been found, and is in a Charlotte jail. Two accessories have been charged, Peggy/Jean King, and her brother Junior King, both from Charlotte.

Feb 25, 1950: Pitts is sentenced to 21 years. Russell gets 10, having turned state's evidence against Pitts. King gets either five years or one year and a \$3000 fine. King had also sent her sister-in-law and a friend to the courtroom with their hair dyed to match hers in an attempt to confuse the jury. No indication that Junior King was ever brought to trial.

March 1: Russell escapes.

March 6: Russell is recaptured.

1953: Wash Ladd died.

1968: Amelia Ladd (Wash's wife).

1980: Harry Russell died.

I haven't been able to find any further information on exactly how much time they served, or whatever happened to them afterwards. If the other two are still alive, Pitts would be 100, and King would be about 85.

I don't know when the store closed, but I don't remember it ever being open.

The money was never recovered.

