

Port Arthur Mysteries

ALIEN SMUGGLERS RUN IN TRAP SET BY POLICEMEN TO CATCH 'EM IN ACT

Sleuths Lie in Wait With Tug's
Lights Out—Accused Are Re-
manded Till July 23

CHARGE WILL BE TREASON

BELL, RENSHAW AND VOLKMAN SET FREE BY JUDGE O'LEARY

WAS NOT ESTABLISHED THAT
AUSTRIANS THEY WERE
TRANSPORTING HAD INTEND-
ED TO JOIN ENEMY ARMIES.

TREASON

On the evening of July 13, 1915, the Port Arthur City Police and the Ontario Provincial Police arrested three men in a cooperative sting operation which captured the attention of the Lakehead. Barney Bell, Fred Volkman and Benjamin Renshaw were all charged with treason as they attempted to transport enemy aliens across the border into the United States. Using a motorboat which left the Fort William Harbour, the transport carrying eleven Austrian enemy aliens was apprehended after the being chased by police. After police fired a warning shot across the motorboat's bow, the driver realized that there was nowhere to go, surrendered and the boat was towed back to Port Arthur. Twin City newspapers differ in telling the tale of exactly who was driving the boat; the Port Arthur News Chronicle reported that Volkman was driving the motorboat while the Fort William Daily Times Journal stated that Renshaw was in charge of the boat with Volkman and Bell being arrested after police returned to Port Arthur. Both newspapers do agree however that Barney Bell was not in the boat transporting the Austrians at the time and was subsequently arrested later that evening. Bell and Volkman, both Port Arthur residents, and Renshaw, a Cloud Bay resident, were charged with treason by endeavoring to assist enemy aliens out of country. Thankfully for the trio, the charge of treason, which is punishable by death, was reduced two weeks later to 'assisting enemy aliens at war with His Majesty to leave country without consent of the crown'. On August 6th, Volkman pleaded guilty to the charges while Bell and Renshaw maintained a not guilty plea. This was to be for nought though as Judge O'Leary dismissed the charges against all three men four days later. The judge reasoned that there was no evidence which showed that the Austrians being transported into the United States actually intended to join and fight for enemies of Britain. As the judge dismissed the case against the three, he lectured that they had narrowly escaped serious trouble and he was unsure if the right thing was letting them go free. The judge also interned the eleven Austrian aliens who were initially charged with attempting to leave Canada while under parole as enemy aliens.