

The Standard Democrat
Friday, February 22, 1935

Hearing For Leonard Fisher On Saturday

**Lawyers Enter Case, Change His Plan to Plead
Guilty to Second Degree Murder**

Leonard Fisher, implicated with Reinhold Fleuker in the Honey Creek Robbery and H. W. Schenning killing, will have his preliminary hearing in Racine Saturday.

When first arrested on the burglary charge the preliminary hearing was set for Tuesday. After the death of Mr. Schenning a new warrant was issued on a first degree murder charge. The hearing on the charge was set for February 23.

District Attorney Brown and county and Burlington police officials last Wednesday secured a confession from Fisher and it was understood he was to appear before Judge Belden to plead guilty to a second degree murder charge which would carry a penalty from 14 to 25 years.

Judge Belden was holding court in Kenosha and he made a quick trip to Racine to hear the case. However, before he arrived Fisher's friends had secured Attorney L. D. Potter, Louis Hardy and Joseph Steinlin to represent Fisher. A conference was held with the result that they were given a few days in which to make an investigation. They showed they had only recently entered the case and had no opportunity of examining the facts and the law and would be unable to state just what they desired to do for several days.

There have been many wild stories afloat as to the Fisher confession and as to the stories he told. When it became known he wasn't to plead guilty the district attorney and police refused to give any further information as to the confession, preferring to save them as evidence in case Fisher goes to trial.

Enough information was given to reveal that Fisher and Fleuker had been together in several hold-ups and they had discussed and planned other robberies as well as revengeful tactics on Burlington parties.

The Hartford City, Indiana, News last week carried an account of the Schenning-Fleuker shooting in this city and gave the following account of Fleuker's activities in that vicinity:

News of the slaying of Reinhold Fleuker, 35, self styled Burlington butcher, in a running gun battle with Burlington officers Friday night, was received in Hartford City by Sheriff Ira Mannix and other local officers with much interest.

Fleuker was alleged to have been the "trigger man" in the \$7,940.20 robbery of the Citizens State bank here on October 2, 1931, at which time the yeggmen kidnapped Elmer Lucas, assistant cashier, to protect their get-away. He was released north of the city unharmed.

Fleuker was charged with complicity in the robbery of the local bank after the confession and conviction of Ira Barton, former Blackford county sheriff, to bank robberies here at Montpelier and Dunkirk. Barton is now serving a twenty year sentence at the state prison at Michigan City for his

part in the Dunkirk robbery.

Fleuker was arrested at Burlington by Chicago officers who assisted local officials in running down the bank banditry gang, and Fleuker was "kidnapped" into Illinois. Fleuker was tried for an Illinois robbery and was acquitted and then fought extradition to this city to face local charges. After considerable court action Prosecutor James Emshwiller succeeded in extraditing him and brought him here to face the bank banditry complicity charge.

Later Fleuker gave bond and gained his release, pending trial, which was started on June 2, 1933. Fleuker was represented here by Attorney O. A. Pursley.

During the heated court battle at Fleuker's trial the court ruled favorable to Fleuker's counsel, barring evidence that would have allegedly connected Fleuker with the November, 1931, robbery of the Montpelier First National Bank and the December 24, 1931, robbery of the Dunkirk State bank. This court ruling resulted in the prosecution dismissing the charge against Fleuker for the local robbery. He was then permitted his freedom.

In the meantime, however, a part of his bond had been deposited in the First National bank here by Sheriff Mannix, and when the bank failed to re-open after the bank moratorium in 1933, Fleuker could not recover the bond which was for \$2,000. He then caused a suit to be filed against Sheriff Mannix to recover the money. About 45% of the bail money has been released to Fleuker in bank payments. Suit for the balance is still pending.

After escaping the charges here, Fleuker frequently visited in Hartford City for periods of two or three weeks at a time and made many friends here. However, he was kept under close surveillance by local officers at the instigation of Prosecutor Emshwiller

On these visits, however, Fleuker made no act that could be criticized and conducted himself in a thorough gentlemanly manner. Later he was instrumental in aiding another Burlington man to open a women's apparel shop here. The shop, known as the Betty Mae shop, closed shortly after Christmas.

Fleuker represented himself here as being a Burlington butcher. He was a musician of some note and was athletically inclined. He could play a piano with marked ability. At all times Fleuker denied vehemently that he was in any way connected with any of the local bank robberies.

However, local officers assert they had evidence to show that Fleuker was one of the men who carried a machine gun in the October 2, 1931, robbery of the local bank.