

In a small town such as Valley City, the sounds of sirens aren't often heard. In 1910, though, the first of two crime-driven brothers was born. Clarence and Orelle Easton, sons of Carl and Martha Easton, were two of the most notorious criminals to come from our beloved, quiet town.

Clarence Easton was two years older than his brother. The boys grew up in Valley City and attended a year of college. It was impossible to predict that the boys' plans for their future was a life of crime. On June 9, 1938, Clarence and Orelle told their parents that they were going to Chicago, Illinois to find careers and create lives. However, this was not the plan. The brothers arrived in Minneapolis, Minnesota in Orelle's car, which proved to be old and unreliable, prompting them to steal a new one. This would reportedly be the first of many extremely condemning crimes the boys would commit.

The boys east through Wisconsin with their sights set on Chicago, where they had no intention of looking for work. Before arriving, the brothers ambushed and robbed motorists and a gas station. They also stole cars throughout Wisconsin, making stops in Cameron and Stevens Point, WI. Both of these hijackings resulted in exchanges of gunfire with police.

After being on the road for nearly three weeks, Clarence and Orelle stopped outside LaPort, Michigan due to car trouble. A policeman by the name of Ray Dixon stopped to help the boys, not knowing the dangerous situation he was putting himself in. The boys opened fire and shot Dixon three times. Due to his injuries, Officer Dixon died the following day.

Roadblocks were then put up in Michigan, Indiana, and Illinois, in an attempt to find and arrest the criminals. Two deputies from Porter County in Indiana had been taken hostage by the brothers after arriving at the scene of the shooting. After eight hours of driving at gunpoint, the deputies were released and robbed near Cook, Indiana.

Sheriff Freeman Lane of Porter County, along with Chief A. C. Witter and Captain Charles Gilliland of Valparaiso city police had began trailing the Eastons. Capt. Gilliland opened fire using a shotgun, which prompted Clarence Easton to exit his vehicle and fire his rifle at the officers. Orelle followed suit, firing his rifle from inside the car. After all parties had run out of ammunition, the Eastons took off, driving a short distance before stopping and running into a cornfield. This would prove to be the beginning of the end for the Easton brothers' crime spree.

All officers were supplied with ammunition. Clarence Easton emerged from the cornfield opening fire. Taunting the officers to shoot him, Clarence continued shooting his rifle until one of the officers did just that, planting a bullet in his heart. Clarence died within a few minutes. Meanwhile, Orelle was retreating to a near-by house that had been evacuated of residents. Firing a shotgun from the kitchen, Orelle was no match for the amount of police force that were surrounding him. He was shot in the shoulder. Bullets also grazed both his ears, and his lip, at which point Orelle gave himself up. He was taken to county jail at Kankakee and died a year later.

Both boys were returned to their roots and buried in Woodbine Cemetery right here in Valley City. The story of the Easton brothers proves that any town, no matter the size or story, is capable of housing and raising fugitives in life, and in death.