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"Jobb is a master of narrative nonfiction.  
MESMERIZING." —DAVID GRANN

A  
GENTLEMAN  
AND A THIEF



The Daring Jewel Heists  
♦ of a Jazz Age Rogue ♦

DEAN JOBB

Author of THE CASE OF THE MURDEROUS DR. CREAM  
AND EMPIRE OF DECEPTION

BOOK CLUB KIT

# A LETTER FROM THE AUTHOR

Dear Reader,

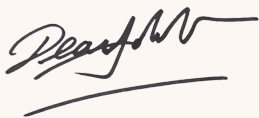
“The greatest jewel thief who ever lived.” The moment I spotted this line in a 1956 *Life* magazine profile of Arthur Barry, I knew I had to find out more. Who was this forgotten Jazz Age rogue? Whose gems did he steal and how did he pull off his heists? Did he deserve such acclaim or was this just media hype? I’m always on the lookout for my next true crime obsession, preferably a stranger-than-fiction tale filled with drama, surprising twists and turns, and larger-than-life characters. Arthur Barry’s exploits – and his amazing story of glamor and deception, crime and punishment, and love and redemption – delivered.

Here was a real-life gentleman thief who engineered scores of brazen burglaries, donned a tuxedo to hobnob with New York City’s elite as he cased their mansions, and fooled millionaires, socialites, and even a future king of England. Barry planned his heists with precision, slipped in and out of bedrooms unseen and unheard, and pocketed diamonds, pearls and other precious gems worth some \$60 million today. He prided himself on stealing only from the rich. “If a woman can carry around a necklace worth \$750,000,” he once said, “she knows where her next meal is coming from.”

*A Gentleman and a Thief* is a story with a backdrop of Jazz Age decadence. Many of the characters could have stepped from an F. Scott Fitzgerald novel. In a time of fast living and easy money, Barry lived large. He gambled away much of his loot, was a fixture in Broadway speakeasies, and befriended celebrities, crooks, and political powerbrokers. When he was finally caught, he confessed and went to prison to protect his wife, Anna Blake, from being implicated in his crimes. His story, however, was far from over – a daring escape, years on the run as a fugitive, accusations of involvement in one of the most heinous crimes of the era, and a final chance at redemption all lay ahead.

Arthur Barry had the charm of John Robie, Cary Grant’s character in the Hitchcock classic *To Catch a Thief*, the ingenuity of Arsène Lupin, the good-guy burglar of the Netflix series *Lupin*, and the chutzpah of Frank Abagnale, the slippery con man Leonardo DiCaprio portrayed in *Catch Me If You Can*.

I was hooked from the moment I met him. I hope you will be, too.



# QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Was Barry a born criminal, or do you think circumstances forced him into a life of crime?
2. What skills and methods made him such a successful jewel thief?
3. "I know he's terrible," said one socialite Barry robbed, "but isn't he charming?" What were some of the characteristics that made him so likeable?
4. Were you on Barry's side? If so, why do we root for polite, gentlemanly crooks like Barry?
5. Barry prided himself on stealing only from the rich and never resorting to violence during robberies. Do you think this lessens the seriousness of his crimes?
6. "It was that kind of time. Why not live well?" Barry said of his free-spending gambler's lifestyle. In what ways was he a product of the Roaring Twenties?
7. Why was it so hard for the police and private detectives to catch Barry?
8. What mistakes did he make that ensured he would be arrested and imprisoned?
9. Do you think Anna Blake knew at least on some level that her husband was breaking the law or was she an innocent victim? And if she didn't know, should she have at least suspected?
10. How do you feel about Anna risking arrest to help Barry after his prison escape, and living with him as a fugitive?
11. Why did Barry deserve a second chance after his release from prison?

# ARTHUR BARRY'S MAJOR HEISTS

## Westchester County, New York

1922

- **February 28** Margaret & Henry Graves III, New York Trust Company executive, Ardsley, \$62,000 (S)

1923

- **February 28** Ann & Duncan Fraser, heir to mining & steel fortune, Ardsley, \$25,000 (S)

1924

- **March 25** Clara & Henry Brooks, telephone company executive, Ardsley, \$1,000 (S)
- **November 11** Jessie & Marselis Parsons, president of Rye National Bank, Rye, \$6,000 (A)
- **December 3** Greta & Donaldson Brown, vice president of General Motors, Irvington, \$10,000 (A)

1925

- **May 13** Katherine & Dr. Joseph Blake, surgeon, Tarrytown, \$15,000 (A)

1926

- **January 8** Dorothy & Roy Allen, vice president of Life Savers, Port Chester, \$3,000 (A)
- **May 8** Charlotte & Frederick Wheeler, president of American Can, Rye, \$30,000 (A)
- **June 8** Coster Steers, broker, Port Chester, \$10,000 (A)
- **July 8** Madeleine & Alfred Berolzheimer, head of Eagle Pencil, Tarrytown, \$10,000 (A)
- **August 1** Mabel & John Stilwell, utility company executive, Yonkers, \$5,000 (A)

## Manhattan

1925

- **September 30** Jessie, Woolworth heiress, & James Donahue, stockbroker, Plaza Hotel, \$750,000 (A)

## New Jersey

1926

- **September 10** Mary & Matthias Plum, vice president of International Paper, Rumson, \$50,000 (S)

(C) Convicted

(I) Indicted

(A) Admitted

(S) Suspected

All dollar values  
are as reported in  
the 1920s.

# ARTHUR BARRY'S MAJOR HEISTS

## Nassau County, Long Island

1924

- **September 9** Nellie & Joshua Cosden, oil tycoon, Edwina & Louis Mountbatten, cousin of the Prince of Wales, Sands Point, \$170,000 (A)

1925

- **October 4** Eva & Harvey Shaffer, real estate broker, Great Neck, \$12,000 (S)
- **October 18** Thomas Hitchcock Sr., polo expert, Westbury, \$900 (A)
- **November 7** Margaret & August Flamman, former Brooklyn district attorney, Kensington, \$13,000 (A)
- **November 28** Margarita & John Phipps, businessman & lawyer, Westbury, \$12,500 (S)

1926

- **August 3** Kate & Brewster Jennings, Standard Oil executive, Glen Head, \$13,000 (S)
- **September 29** Margaret & Harold Talbott, Chrysler director, Manhasset, \$23,000 (I)

1927

- **Early April** Marion & John Greenleaf, architect, Hewlett Bay Park, \$10,000 (I)
- **April 2** Amelia & Robert Sealy, banker, Hewlett Bay Park, \$2,500 (S)
- **April 8** E. M. Richardson, Sherwin-Williams director, Plandome, \$4,500 (S)
- **May 5** Ada & William Tregoe, realtor, Great Neck, \$4,000 (S)
- **May 29** Dorothea & Jessie Livermore, Wall Street investor, Regina & Harry Aronsohn, silk manufacturer, Kings Point, \$100,000 (C)

## Connecticut

1926

- **September 25** Jane & Duane Armstrong, retired shoe manufacturer, Greenwich, \$30,000 (A)
- **October 25** Isabel & Percy Rockefeller, investor & nephew of Standard Oil founder John D. Rockefeller, Greenwich, \$25,000 (A)

(C) Convicted

(I) Indicted

(A) Admitted

(S) Suspected

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# ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Dean Jobb won the inaugural CrimeCon CLUE Award for True Crime Book of the Year in 2022 for *The Case of the Murderous Dr. Cream*, the story of a Victorian era poisoner who killed at least ten people in Canada, the U.S., and the U.K. His previous book on a 1920s Chicago con man, *Empire of Deception*, won the Chicago Writers Association and Crime Writers of Canada nonfiction prizes. Dean's monthly true crime column, "Stranger Than Fiction," appears in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* and he also writes for *CrimeReads*, *The Irish Times*, and the *Washington Independent Review of Books*. *A Gentleman and a Thief* is the newest jewel in his literary collection.

