



Heist!: The \$17 Million Loomis Fargo Theft

By Jeff Diamant

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The audacity of the act was breathtaking.

On October 5, 1997, FBI agents gathered at the Loomis, Fargo & Co. warehouse in Charlotte, North Carolina, to watch a security videotape of a man loading stacks of cash into a pushcart and wheeling them from the vault. The cart held about \$2 million, and the thief made multiple trips.

They already knew who he was—David Ghantt, a Loomis Fargo employee. And the company soon calculated how much was missing—\$17 million. But the FBI had scant clues as to where Ghantt had fled and who might have helped him.

As the people of the Carolinas would soon learn, discretion was not the hallmark of the heist's perpetrators.

Word trickled in to the FBI that Ghantt had a romantic interest in a former coworker, Kelly Campbell, who one day visited a Toyota dealership to purchase a minivan with twenty-dollar bills. Accompanying her was Steve Chambers, who, though unemployed, had recently moved from his mobile home into a \$635,000 mansion. A wiretap of Steve's phone later unearthed a plot to murder David Ghantt, who was hiding in Mexico.

When the FBI arrested those involved in the heist and its aftermath, the public frenzy began. People were enthralled by the reckless extravagance, poor judgment, and peculiar taste of the perpetrators—through stories of a \$43,000 diamond ring, breast implants, a faux tiger-skin stair runner, and a wooden Indian, all purchased with the stolen money.

Heist! is the account of an unlikely crime destined to be remembered less for its sophistication than for its colorful cast of true-life characters. The theft has been featured on ABC's *20/20*, *America's Most Wanted*, and the *Today* show and was the subject of the Discovery Channel's *Unperfect Crime*.

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Heist!: The \$17 Million Loomis Fargo Theft By Jeff Diamant Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #2924923 in Books
- Brand: Brand: John F Blair Pub
- Published on: 2005-10-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: .68" h x 5.70" w x 8.60" l, .68 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 242 pages

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Jeff Diamant covered the heist for the *Charlotte Observer*. He has been a staff writer for the *Star-Ledger* in New Jersey since 2000.

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