Sheriff Nall says

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Search for suspect in turmoil

LIBERTY, Ill. — The search for the mysterious man who robbed the Farmers Bank of Liberty is in a "turmoil," said Adams County Sheriff Robert Nall Tuesday.

The turmoil is the result of a mistaken identity.

Adams County State's Attorney Robert Bier said a man named James LaRue of Cicero, was questioned at his home and provided an adequate alibi.

Bier also said LaRue had a moustache and goatee — which witnesses said the robber did not have.

Nall released a re-touched picture of that LaRue — without the moustache and goatee — to the media late Monday afternoon, but had to recall the picture when the man was cleared.

A composite picture, drawn from descriptions provided by robbery witnesses, was released late Tuesday morning.

Bier, and Illinois Division of Criminal Investigation official Bill Collins, still believe a man named James LaRue or a man using that name is the robber.

Illinois State Police officials say they are discontinuing their foot search for the robbery suspect in the woods and fields west of Liberty and beginning a more routine investigation.

The bank was robbed of about $15,000 shortly after opening May 30. A satchel containing about $11,000 was recovered June 4 and identified as being stolen from the bank.

Persons who see a man resembling the composite picture — or any suspicious people in the Liberty-Adams area — are asked to call the sheriff's office at 223-6300.

Composite drawing of suspect

St. Louis chief criticizes silence on Ray escape

ST. LOUIS (UPI) — Police Chief Eugene Camp Tuesday criticized federal officials for failing to inform local authorities that John Larry Ray, brother of assassin James Earl Ray, had escaped from custody months ago.

Camp said local authorities were unaware that John Ray had escaped from federal custody in February while en route to a St. Louis halfway house until he was named in a bank robbery warrant issued Monday in Illinois.

"There should have been some mention made to local authorities," Camp said. "A guy with that name, I can't understand it."

John Ray, 47, was charged with the $15,000 robbery of the Farmers' Bank of Liberty, Ill., on May 30. Liberty is about 125 miles north of St. Louis, where the brothers formerly lived.

Ray had been due to arrive Feb. 4 at Dismas House, a St. Louis halfway house for convicts, but he failed to show up. He was scheduled to be paroled April 10 from an 18-year prison sentence resulting from a 1970 bank robbery at St. Peters, Mo.

"If he was supposed to report here in February, he's, for all practical purposes, an escapee," Camp said. "It shows a shortcoming in (federal) procedures."

A spokesman for the U.S. marshal's office in St. Louis, which had responsibility for Ray's transfer to the halfway house, said he did not know whether local authorities were told of Ray's escape.

Ray and his brother James, who pleaded guilty to the 1968 slaying of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., were considered suspects in a 1967 bank robbery in Alton, Ill. Investigators said money taken in that holdup may have been used to finance the King assassination.

Investigators said John Ray was believed to be involved in four other bank robberies, including a 1969 robbery of the bank in Liberty.

Several days after the latest Liberty holdup, a police officer chased a suspicious car in Liberty but the driver escaped on foot.