

No Suspects In Bank Theft; Heist Amount Set At \$10,000

BARTON — The search for four Barton bank robbers who took approximately \$10,000 from the Howard Bank office here Friday was intensified Saturday after a statewide series of roadblocks Friday night failed to turn up any clues.

Howard Bank security officer John Curran of Burlington said Saturday night that the amount taken was "not too far off" from \$10,000.

He said that because of the short time in which the post-robbery audit was done, the amount could fluctuate up or down slightly.

Barton branch manager Edward S. Alexander declined to confirm the amount taken, saying that he was asked not to release any information about the amount.

The robbery occurred Friday about 3 p.m. A large black car with Massachusetts license plates rolled into the center of town and stopped in front of the bank, witnesses said.

An apparently unarmed man walked into the bank and demanded money. He was followed by two men carrying either shotguns or rifles. Both were disguised, and, according to police, one wore dark glasses and a fake goatee.

A teller in the bank said the men ordered everyone in the bank to lie down before they took the money.

"It was a pretty frightening experience," she said Saturday. "It's never happened to me before, and I hope it never happens again."

Police said the unmasked robber had short black curly hair, a pale complexion, a slight build and was between 5-foot-7 inches and 6-feet tall.

He was wearing a Navy blue windbreaker and a "dark-colored," flat-type cap, police said.

Police said the escape vehicle was an older black Oldsmobile Toronado that had been stolen in Boston.

A spokesman from the Lyndonville Police Department said that in addition to efforts by state police and the FBI, local and county police from Caledonia and Orleans counties are keeping a sharp watch for the men.

The spokesman said the Caledonia County Fair, which attracted 10,000 people Friday, was being watched with an extra careful eye.

An FBI spokesman in Albany, N.Y., said agency involvement is required by law in any bank robbery case because banks are insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp., a federal agency.

He said the agency is not actively involved in the case, however, and referred questions to the Vermont State Police.

A spokesman at the state police outpost in Derby said Saturday night that beyond the description of the unmasked robber, there was nothing new to report.