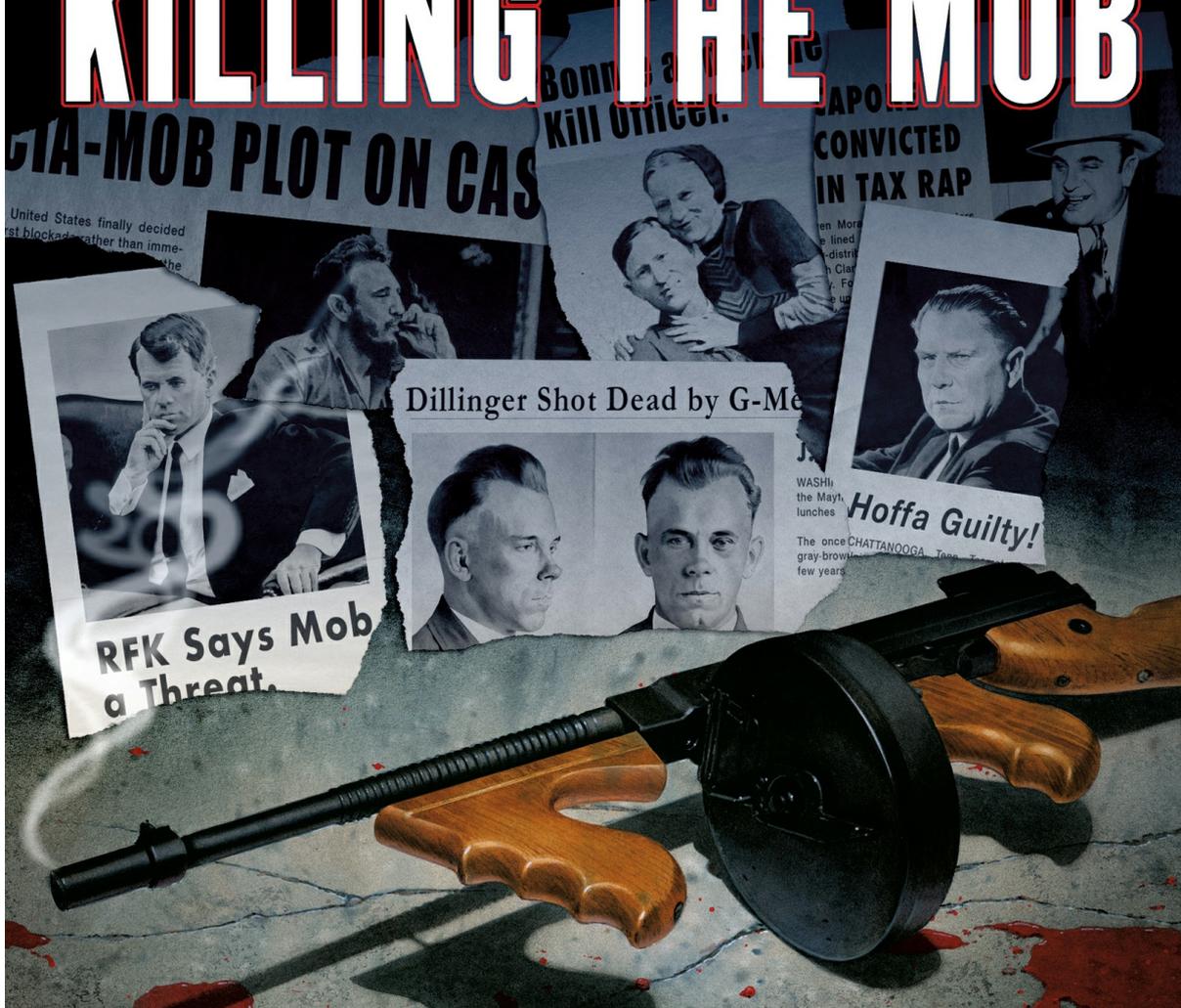


AUTHORS OF SIXTEEN #1 BESTSELLERS

BILL O'REILLY

— & MARTIN DUGARD —

KILLING THE MOB



**THE FIGHT AGAINST
ORGANIZED CRIME IN AMERICA**

KILLING THE MOB

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Crime in America**

BILL O'REILLY

AND

MARTIN DUGARD



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This book is dedicated to my late father and mother, who always obeyed the law and passed that dedication on to their children.

PROLOGUE

MARCH 3, 1934

LAKE COUNTY JAIL

CROWN POINT, INDIANA

9:15 A.M.

The man with four months to live is about to bust out of jail.

This is a cold and rainy Saturday morning. Thirty-year-old John Dillinger, America's most famous bank robber, has finished his meager prison breakfast and now mills around with fourteen other inmates in a jailhouse corridor. He enjoys his only "exercise" of the day but has much more on his mind.

Dillinger is a charming celebrity inmate, standing five feet, seven inches, with a crooked smile, trim athletic build, and thinning brown hair. He is well known as a ladies' man. A career criminal from Indianapolis whose only legitimate job was a short stint in the U.S. Navy, Dillinger has spent his adult life in and out of prisons. Nevertheless, he has become famous. Such is Dillinger's notoriety that the prosecuting attorney and sheriff in his current court case both demanded to have a picture taken with their arms around his shoulders.

It has been five weeks since authorities in Tucson, Arizona, arrested Dillinger and his gang. The four gangsters had committed eight bank robberies throughout the Midwest in the previous year and had gone farther west to escape the law. Additionally, state police arsenals were brazenly raided to steal machine guns, pistols, and ammunition.



John Dillinger (1903–34), a prominent bank robber in the midwestern United States during the 1930s.

“The Dillinger Gang,” as they are known, plans heists with great sophistication, utilizing detailed getaway maps and high-horsepower vehicles to outrun law enforcement. They also brandish Thompson submachine guns. Each man plays a specific role in the robberies, whether as a driver, lookout, or vault man, but it is the self-assured Dillinger who strides into a bank, opens a leather case containing his Thompson, and yells, “This is a stickup,” to the tellers and bank customers. Dillinger makes no attempt to hide his handsome face, and as the numbers of robberies mount between June 21, 1933, and January 15, 1934, his legend grows.

It is bad luck that gets Dillinger and his band captured in Tucson. Two of the men are staying at the Hotel Congress when a broken furnace leads to a fire, forcing an evacuation of all rooms. Rather than let their belongings burn, gang members Russell Clark and Charles Makley bribe firefighters to climb back up the ladders to retrieve their luggage. Tucson is a small town with a population of just over thirty thousand. The suspicious behavior of these strangers catches the attention of firefighter William Benedict, who identifies Makley and Clark from a photo he

remembers in *True Detective* magazine. Benedict then notifies the Tucson police, and over the course of the next four days the gang is carefully tracked and eventually captured.

John Dillinger is the last man arrested. He is carrying \$7,000 in cash, some of which can be traced to a recent robbery in East Chicago, Indiana. There, police officer William Patrick O'Malley was killed in cold blood, shot dead with eight bullets to the chest by Dillinger himself. So when it comes time for Tucson prosecutors to extradite the gang to the scenes of their many crimes, Makley, Clark, and Pete Pierpont are first flown in handcuffs to Ohio—there to stand trial for a deputy murdered while the three were breaking John Dillinger out of a small town jail in October 1933.¹

But Dillinger does not go to Ohio. He is extradited here to Crown Point, located fifteen miles south of Lake Michigan, where he will be tried for the killing of Officer O'Malley.

The electric chair looms if he is convicted.

But John Dillinger has no intention of standing trial.

* * *

The second floor of the Lake County Jail is considered “escape proof.” Since his arrival in early February, Dillinger spends most days alone in his barred cell, with its simple bed and small bucket for a toilet. On those occasions when Dillinger’s jailers allow him to step outside, it is either to eat, exercise, or empty “slop jars” of human waste from his cell and those of other prisoners. The wardens and deputies take great pride in making the legendary John Dillinger perform this grim duty—a way of reminding the famous captive that he is now powerless.

Dillinger plays along, pretending to be unbothered. “I played the good fellow with all the guards at the jail,” Dillinger will later recall. “I patted them on the back and told them what fine fellows they were. I volunteered for all the distasteful jobs that had to be done.”

In this way, Dillinger convinces the guards that he is no longer a threat. His daily habit of whittling a piece of wood has not drawn suspicion. Instead, the guards have made this another point of mockery, calling him “John the Whittler.”

But on this Saturday morning, as sixty-four-year-old jailhouse trustee

Sam Cahoon slips into the exercise area carrying soap for the showers, the end result of Dillinger's whittling becomes quite obvious. The block of wood has been carved into the shape of a small pistol. Now, before Cahoon can close the prison door behind him, Dillinger presses the fake weapon hard into the trustee's torso. "I'll blow you apart," the bank robber snarls, any vestige of sweet disposition now vanished.

Using Cahoon as a shield, Dillinger works his way through the jail, not only convincing his guards that he possesses a gun but ordering them to lock themselves inside cells. Finally, Dillinger arrives at the warden's office, where one of the guards sleeps soundly in a desk chair. Gliding quietly across the room, Dillinger removes an automatic weapon from a gun rack and presses the barrel into the back of the guard's head.

"This is Dillinger," says the bank robber. "If you move a muscle, I'll blow your head off your shoulders."

Dillinger then leaves the jailhouse a free man, stealing the sheriff's personal vehicle to make his getaway. The jail is affixed to the sheriff's house, so the theft is an easy one. There is no two-way radio in the car, or in any other law enforcement vehicle, so the Crown Point sheriff has no way of alerting police officers on the interstate that a wanted criminal is heading their way. Thus John Dillinger drives at a furious pace toward Chicago.

Roughly ten miles after fleeing the redbrick building housing the Lake County Jail, Dillinger drives the stolen vehicle across the Indiana-Illinois state line. In so doing, he violates the National Motor Vehicle Theft Act. To this point in his bank-robbing career, Dillinger had only broken state and local laws. But by committing an offense against what is also known as the Dyer Act, John Dillinger has violated a federal law for the first time.



J. Edgar Hoover, head of the U.S. Bureau of Investigation, addresses the National Crime Conference in Washington, D.C., on December 11, 1934.

Unbeknownst to him, a special unit from the Department of Justice will now take control of the hunt for John Dillinger. It was first known as the Bureau of Investigation—BOI for short—and then Division of Investigation, or DOI. Its leader is a thirty-nine-year-old lawyer named J. Edgar Hoover.

And Hoover will stop at nothing to catch his man—no matter how long it takes.

PART I

THE GUNNERS

CHAPTER ONE

MAY 26, 1934

ASPIN HILL MEMORIAL PARK

SILVER SPRING, MARYLAND

MORNING

Violence is plaguing America.

Throughout 1933 and the first half of 1934, dozens of vicious and heavily armed gangsters are creating carnage in rural parts of the United States. It is the middle of the Great Depression. The average national individual income has been cut in half. The nationwide unemployment rate is 21.7 percent. The homicide tally is the highest of the century due to rampant poverty and the clash of immigrant and traditional cultures as America becomes increasingly urban.

In addition, half of all home mortgages are delinquent, and more than one thousand home loans are foreclosed every day. As more and more American families are evicted, the banks are viewed as predatory villains—more intent on making a dollar than helping poor people survive.

So it is no surprise that some criminals in the United States are actually becoming popular public figures, especially the handful of men and women who rob banks for a living. The Division of Investigation calls these people “Public Enemies,” but to many they are Robin Hoods, exacting revenge on bankers and fat cats from Portland, Maine, to Portland, Oregon.

On this warm Saturday morning, the man who has just been handed the enormous responsibility of stopping the Robin Hoods is momentarily unconcerned about fighting crime. John Edgar Hoover is in a state of deep mourning as he watches his beloved dog lowered into a grave in this

Washington suburb.

Hoover has lived in the District of Columbia his whole life. He began his career of public service at eighteen, a high school class valedictorian who landed work as a clerk at the Library of Congress while attending college and then law school. Hoover's employment ended when he passed the bar in 1917. He took a job with the Justice Department the very next morning. Within two years, the young lawyer's work ethic saw him promoted rapidly. By 1924, at the behest of President Calvin Coolidge, twenty-nine-year-old J. Edgar Hoover was placed in charge of a corrupt federal agency known as the Bureau of Investigation.¹

The promotion appears to be a career dead end for the hard-charging young lawyer with the receding hairline, permanent scowl, and the habit of talking too fast in order to hide a stutter. Founded in 1908, the Bureau of Investigation is America's first national law enforcement agency. However, there is widespread fear in Congress that the BOI might become a secret police—"spying upon ... the people, such as has prevailed in Russia."

So Congress has intentionally limited the BOI's power. The original thirty-four agents are forbidden to carry a weapon—and even prevented from making arrests. When it comes time to take a suspect into custody, the agents have a choice: either call in U.S. Marshals or the local police.

Hoover devotes himself to his new job, eschewing any semblance of a personal life in favor of complete commitment to law enforcement. Immediately, the new director cleans house, firing any agent accused of taking bribes. He sets up a rigorous training program to ensure that his agents are mentally and physically fit. Also, his investigators are expected to be of high moral character, with training in accounting or law. There is no such thing as paid overtime. Hoover raises the BOI's profile by establishing the first nationwide database for fingerprints.

And yet, the BOI is powerless to prosecute the bank robberies and the random murders plaguing America during the Great Depression. State and local police have complete authority in such cases, despite the frustrating reality that these agencies do not communicate with one another, nor can they chase criminals across state lines. John Dillinger has made an art of escaping this way.

★ ★ ★

There is no question that J. Edgar Hoover is a strange man. He has few friends and lives at home with his seventy-five-year-old mother, Anna Marie.

The director's most trusted confidante is his Airedale terrier, Spee De Bozo. It is Spee who fetches the paper each morning and eats the soft-boiled egg that Hoover gives him for breakfast. J. Edgar loves Spee so much that he not only keeps the animal's framed photo on his office desk but also hangs a painting of the Airedale on a wall at home. Hoover may be a tough boss with his agents, but he never disciplines his dog.

Spee De Bozo passes away on May 24 at the age of eleven, and now his shroud-covered body is being lowered into the grave at this pet cemetery. "This is one of the saddest days of my life," the grief-stricken Hoover explains to a groundskeeper. His display of emotion is unnerving to the three DOI agents who have been asked to accompany him to the burial, for Hoover is normally a closed vault of privacy.

At the same time, the director is actually becoming one of the most powerful men in the country. On May 18, Congress recognizes that state and local law enforcement agencies are powerless to stop the bank-robbing epidemic. This is a reaction to the 1933 Kansas City Massacre, where criminals led by a robber known as "Pretty Boy" Floyd shot and killed four federal agents in cold blood. Thus, the Crime Control Acts of 1934 were passed—now if a person kills or assaults a federal officer, transports kidnapped persons, or robs a bank, they are subject to federal law. They will be charged with federal crimes.