'TEMPO

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 2, 2008 | SECTION 5

'I don't smoke much, and I drink very little. I guess my only bad habit is robbing banks.'

— John Dillinger



Still WANTED after all these years

The life – and death – of the infamous gangster is a natural for the cinema. And who better than a pirate and murderous barber to play the role?

By Charles Leroux | TRIBUNE CORRESPONDENT

Filming for the movie "Public Enemies," with Johnny Depp as John Dillinger and Marion Cotillard as his girlfriend Evelyn "Billie" Frechette, has begun with scenes scheduled to be shot in Wisconsin, Indiana and Illinois. Dillinger, 74 years after his death, is back where he belongs — in the Midwest and, soon, up on the silver screen.

John Herbert Dillinger's life of crime began at age 12, stealing coal from railroad cars in Mooresville, Ind. It ended in a hail of bullets on a sticky July night in 1934. Dillinger had just emerged from the movies at the Biograph Theater on Chicago's Lincoln Avenue. Government agents had been tipped off and were waiting for him.

As a crowd gathered around the outlaw's corpse lying in an alley just south of the theater, women dipped their handkerchiefs in his blood. Later, at the coroner's office, 1,000 people stood in line to view the remains. According to the American Folkloric Center, Dillinger's violent life and death inspired 13 songs — "Dillinger's Doom," "Dillinger's Fate," etc. Shelves of books were written about him.

Long after his death, rumors would persist that Dillinger, in fact, wasn't dead. Like Elvis decades later, Dillinger was the subject of sightings by those of the public reluctant to accept that he was gone. In a crime spree lasting only a year, this Hoosier holdup man took far more than cash. He captured the imagination of the nation.

Dillinger's exploits played out against a backdrop of the Great Depression, when banks foreclosed on many homes and farms and bank failures gobbled up life savings. When banks were robbed, there was little public sympathy. At the same time, the outlaw with the sly smile became something of a folk hero. He and his gang swept through — instead of Sherwood Forest — Midwestern town squares. Sometimes, when robbing a bank, they burned mortgages the bank was holding too.

He could be gallant. After relieving the Mason City, Iowa, First National Bank of $52,000, Dillinger forced hostages to stand on the running boards of his getaway car as human shields. As he drove out of town, a woman hostage said: "Let me off. This is where I live." He did.

He thumbed his nose at authority. Once, while on the lam, he asked an unwitting policeman to take a photo of him with a girlfriend. While under arrest in Crown Point, Ind., a photo was taken of Dillinger with his right arm draped over county prosecutor Robert Estill's shoulder. Dillinger shot a knowing smile at the camera while his right hand seemed to be

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- Myths surrounding Dillinger. **PAGE 2**
- The jailbreak that Crown Point can't live down. **PAGE 3**
- Dillinger's yearlong crime spree — and the money it netted. **PAGE 3**

THE WORLD IN 1934

- America is in the midst of the **Great Depression**.
- An ecological catastrophe, the **Dust Bowl**, devastates the Great Plains.
- **Adolf Hitler** and his Nazi party are on the rise in Germany.
- The Oscar for best picture goes to **"It Happened One Night,"** which also wins best actor (Clark Gable), best actress (Claudette Colbert), best director (Frank Capra) and best screenplay adaptation (Robert Riskin).
- In a scene from "It Happened One Night," **Gable** takes off his shirt and reveals, in a departure from the norm of the time, he isn't wearing an undershirt. **Undershirt sales plummet**.
- Three future **Hall of Fame athletes** in three separate sports are born — quarterback **Bart Starr**, slugger **Hank Aaron**, basketball center **Bill Russell**.
- The price of gold is fixed at $35 per ounce. (Gold hit a record $1,000 an ounce last month).
- **Brookfield Zoo** opens.
- **Alcatraz** opens as a U.S. federal penitentiary.
- Blackhawks win **Stanley Cup**.
- **The Dionne quintuplets**, the first fraternal quints to survive infancy, are born in Canada.
- Agatha Christie's **"Murder on the Orient Express"** is published.
- Outlaws **Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow** are killed by a Texas Ranger-led group of lawmen in Louisiana.
- **Some average costs** in 1934 (and restated in today's dollars):
  New house: $5,970 ($94,313.97)
  Gallon of gasoline: 10 cents ($1.58)
  Movie ticket: 23 cents ($3.63)
  New Hupmobile coupe: $895 ($14,139.20), according to an ad in the Chicago Daily Tribune on the day Dillinger died.

— C.L

» DILLINGER

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

held in the shape of a gun — a request, some speculated, to his gang.

The photo ended Estill's political ambitions.

Bill Helmer, a former senior editor at Playboy, has written extensively about Dillinger and, in a telephone interview, noted the bank robber's appealing qualities: "He had a cocky and good-natured personality. He wasn't violent like some of the members of his gang. I've always said he was crooked, but he wasn't twisted.

"My father, who lived through the Depression, was a Dillinger fan. He used to say, 'I don't approve of what he did, but you've got to give him credit.' "

Billie Frechette, sent to prison for helping to hide Dillinger from authorities, said pretty much the same thing: "I always figured that what he did was one thing and what he was was another," she wrote from her jail cell. "I was in love with what he was. Oh, maybe I was wrong, but you can't argue yourself out of falling in love!"

America fell for him too. During Dillinger's robbery spree — from the National Bank in New Carlisle, Ohio, June 10, 1933 to the Merchants National Bank in South Bend, Ind., on June 30, 1934 — Warner Brothers newsreels depicted the Bureau of Investigation (later renamed the Federal Bureau of Investigation) manhunt for the notorious criminal. Movie audiences in darkened theaters across the nation cheered when Dillinger's image appeared on the screen. They hissed when BOI special agents were shown.

Growing up, Dillinger went to the movies (not yet the talkies) where he would watch John Barrymore in films such as "Raffles, the Amateur Cracksman," a 1917 film about a gentleman thief, or Douglas Fairbanks Sr. swashbuckling through "The Mark of Zorro" in 1920 and "Robin Hood" in 1922.

Dillinger's later life would seem to mimic the definition of such heroes — "swaggering, flamboyantly reckless and boastful," and after his death outside a movie theater, his story would be told over and over on the screen.

There was "Dillinger" in 1945; and, in 1973, another film of the same name starring Warren Oates. A TV series in 1971 called "Appointment With Destiny" devoted one episode to "The Last Days of John Dillinger."

A 1991 made-for-TV movie, again called "Dillinger," with Mark Harmon as Dillinger featured Milwaukee portraying Chicago. A documentary, "Public Enemy #1" appeared on PBS in 2002. That same year, Variety reported a deal that would have David Mamet write a script for a Warner Brothers film about Dillinger. That project seems to have been sidetracked.

Mark Wolper was the producer of the Harmon film and checked out a story about Dillinger that he ended up not filming.

"It would come across as too unbelievable," he said then.

It seems that, during one of the gang's robberies, some people happened to walk into the lobby of the bank. "What's going on here?" one asked. Dillinger turned and smiled. "We're making a movie," he said.

Tribune reporter Robert K Elder contributed to this package of stories.

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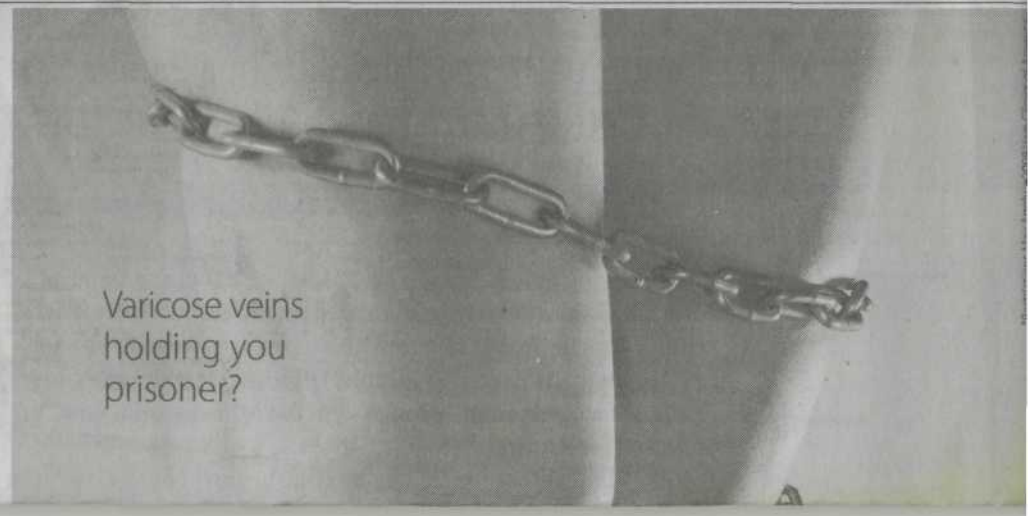
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Dillinger: The man, the myths

John Dillinger left behind not only depleted assets in banks across the Midwest but also a rich mythology. Here are a few of the things widely believed about him that aren't or probably aren't true.

Where's Johnnie's?

No. 43 on the list of the National Museum of Health and Medicine's Frequently Asked Questions is, "Do you have 20th Century gangster John Dillinger's penis in the collection?" This institution, the only Washington museum showing body parts, got so many calls about Dillinger, it included the question on its Web site. The answer, by the way, is "No," though it does have Eisenhower's gallstones.

The question probably arises from a photo of Dillinger's sheet-covered body lying on an autopsy table at the morgue in Chicago. The sheet rises to enormous heights at about the midpoint of the body. The autopsy report, however, has no mention of Dillinger's netherland, which, if it were what the photo seemed to imply, would have been difficult to overlook. Historians tend to say it was either his arm, stiffened by rigor mortis, or the tilt-control lever for the table that hoisted the sheet.

Dillinger is buried intact in Crown Hill cemetery in Indianapolis, also the final resting place of 11 Indiana governors.

The 'Lady in Orange'

Anna Sage, a Romanian immigrant and operator of a house of ill repute on Chicago's North Side, has gone down in history as the "Lady in Red." A movie was made with that title in 1979 with Louise Fletcher as Sage. She had befriended Dillinger's most recent girlfriend, Polly Hamilton, a waitress and prostitute who had worked for Sage, and offered to trade information about the outlaw's whereabouts to authorities in exchange for not being deported over her activities as a madam. Federal agent Melvin Purvis said he'd see what he could do but made no promises.

When she, Hamilton and Dillinger attended a movie at the Biograph Theater that fateful night, the artificial lights of the marquee made her orange skirt appear deep red. Sage got a $5,000 reward for her role, but not the deal she wanted. She was deported to Romania in 1936 and died there 11 years later.

Buried treasure

Dillinger wasn't alone in surviving a federal agents' raid on the Little Bohemia Lodge in northern Wisconsin where he and gang members were lying low. A myth came out of there as well. It was widely said that, as authorities were shooting up the front of the lodge, Dillinger slipped out the back, ran 500 yards into the woods, dug a hole near two pines and an oak, and buried a suitcase containing $200,000 in small bills obtained from the sale of stolen securities.

The thing is, the outlaws didn't have shovels. There were similar stories told about several suitcases buried in a pasture on one of the gang member's family farm in Leipsic, Ohio. Also, there was supposedly $150,000 in hot jewelry stashed somewhere at the Dillinger family farm in Mooresville, Ind.

No one ever has claimed to have found any Dillinger hidden assets, but then again, why would they?

The 3 faces of a fake gun

Dillinger escaped from the jail in Crown Point using a gun that was:

- Carved of wood and colored with black shoe polish; or ...
- Carved from soap; or ...
- Carved from soapstone, a soft, easily shaped stone.

It was:

- Smuggled into the jail by Dillinger's gang after he signaled to them in a notorious photo; or ...
- Carved by the prisoner himself.

Bill Helmer, who co-wrote "Dillinger: The Untold Story," says his research has left him convinced that it was wood and, because the barrel was drilled out, requiring a tool Dillinger wouldn't have had, must have been made outside the jail. One wonders why, if you're smuggling in a fake gun, you wouldn't smuggle in a real one? Some historians claim that, no matter what it was made of or where it came from, the gun was just a prop in an inside job in which bribes had been paid to let Dillinger escape.

Report: Dillinger seen talking on his cell phone

Dillinger's sister Audrey told authorities that she could positively identify her brother by a scar on his leg.



Photo courtesy of Everett Colle

Some speculated John Dillinger (right) held his hand in the shape of a gun to send a messa to his gang as he posed for this famous photograph with county prosecutor Robert Estill.

She looked at the scar and said, "There is no question in my mind. Bury him." Chicago crime writer Jay Robert Nash, who wrote "Dillinger: Dead or Alive," did, however, have questions. Nash claims that the man killed was a minor crook named Jimmy Lawrence, who had been set up. Other sources say Jimmy Lawrence was the name Dillinger gave Hamilton before she found out who he was.

Nash cites slight differences in Dillinger's height and weight from the corpse; also, the body was reported to have an incisor Dillinger lacked. There was a discrepancy in eye color. The body showed signs of a rheumatic heart condition not in line with a prison doctor's report on Dillinger. The gun Dillinger supposedly drew as lawmen closed in on him outside the Biograph and later displayed in FBI headquarters was shown to have been manufactured several months after his death.

Nash also claimed to have gotten a letter, many years after the Biograph shooting, from someone purporting to be Dillinger and containing

a photo of someone lookin somewhat like the outlaw. an online collection called "Hoosier myths," a man claims he saw Dillinger at the Indiana State Fair in t late '30s. He was demonstrating a canning machir The most famous sighting have been ghostly apparitions in the alley near the Biograph.

There are counter-arguments to many of the inconsistencies, but rather than go into them here, let just note that, had Dillinge survived, he'd be 104 today

Dillinger's 1-year crime



= Bank robbery

TOTAL TAKE: $295,700
= $4.8 million today

13 **MARCH 6, 1934:** Sioux Falls, S. D. **$49,500.**

14 **MARCH 13, 1934:** Mason City, Iowa. **$52,000.** Dillinger is wounded.

15 *To St. Paul, Minn.*

MARCH 31, 1934: St. Paul, Minn. Dillinger and Evelyn Frechette shoot their way through a police trap at the Lincoln Court apartments.

19 *To Manitowish Waters, Wis.*

8 **NOV. 20, 1933:** Racine, Wis. **$27,000.** Two people are wounded and three taken hostage.

APRIL 22, 1934: Manitowish Waters, Wis. Dillinger and g shoot through a police trap Little Bohemia Lodge, killing one officer and wounding two. Authorities wound two bystanders and kill one.

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9 **JAN. 15, 1934:** East Chicago, Ind. **$20,000.** A gang member is wounded. A policeman is killed.

17 **APRIL 9, 1934:** Chicago. Dillinger evades the Bureau of Investigation, but Evelyn Frechette is caught and later charged with harboring a fugitive. She is sentenced to two years in prison.

20 21 17 23 **FINISH**

22

9

11 12 Crown Point, Ind.

18

6

ILLINOIS

AUG. 4, 1933: Montpelier, Ind. **$10,000.**

3

INDIANA

2

7 5 16

JULY 17, 1933: Daleville, Ind. **$3,500.**

OCT. 23, 1933: Greencastle, Ind. **$75,000.**

SEPT. 6, 1933: Indianapolis. **$25,000.**

APRIL 5, 1934: Mooresville, Ind. Dillinger takes Evelyn Frechette home to meet his family.

11 **JAN. 30, 1934:** Crown Point, Ind. Dillinger is extradited to Lake County Jail on the charge of murdering Officer William O'Malley in East Chicago.

12 **MARCH 3, 1934:** Crown Point, Ind. Dillinger escapes using a fake gun and flees in Sheriff Lillian Holley's car with two hostages. The pursuit becomes a federal case when they cross the state line in the stolen car.

SEE STORY ▶

JAN. 25, 1934: Tucson, Ariz. A fire in a hotel where gang members are staying leads to Dillinger's arrest when a fireman who was an avid reader of pulp crime magazines recognizes them.

10



Evelyn Frechette, girlfriend of John Dillinger, confers with lawyer Louis Piquett of Chicago as her trial on a charge of harboring criminal John Dillinger opened in St. Paul, Minn., on May 16, 1934.
AP photo

Still standing: His haunts, then and now



4506 N. SHERIDAN RD.

THEN: McCready funeral home, where Dillinger's body was embalmed after being released from the morgue. The body was then taken to Indiana.

NOW: A residence.



4310 N. CLARENDON AVE.

THEN: Large, stylish, yellow-brick apartment building where Dillinger hid out in a third-floor apartment.

NOW: Same.



3925 N. SHERIDAN RD.

THEN: Sheridan Billiard House where Dillinger used to hang out.

NOW: Part of the Lakeview Ace Hardware store.



1060 W. ADDISON ST.

THEN: Wrigley Field, where Dillinger attended several Cubs games in 1934 while hiding out from police.

NOW: Same.

File photo



3512 N. HALSTED ST.

THEN: Apartment building where the sister of Dillinger's girlfriend, Evelyn Frechette, had an apartment that Dillinger used as a hideout.

NOW: Same.

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18 **APRIL 13, 1934:** Warsaw, Ind. Dillinger loots a police station for guns and ammunition.

20 **MAY 27, 1934:** Chicago. Dillinger has the first of two plastic surgeries to disguise his features.

21 **JUNE 22, 1934:** Chicago. Dillinger marks his 31st birthday at a North Side club with new girlfriend Polly Hamilton. He has exactly one month to live.

22 **JUNE 30, 1934:** South Bend, Ind. **$30,000.** One officer is killed. Four bystanders are wounded.

23 **FINISH JULY 22, 1934:** Chicago. Dillinger is gunned down as he exits the Biograph Theatre with Polly Hamilton and Anna Sage, alias Anna Miller, known as the "Lady in Red."

CT. 14, 1933: Auburn, Ind., police station. Takes 10 eapons, 1,245 cartridges and two bulletproof vests.

4 **AUG. 14, 1933:** Bluffton, Ohio. **$2,100.**

OHIO

1 **START**
JUNE 10, 1933: New Carlisle, Ohio. **$10,600.**



Dillinger at a family reunion.
AP photo





ABOVE: Anna Sage

RIGHT: People view the body of gangster John Dillinger in a Chicago morgue.
AP photos



Hideouts, hangouts and shootouts

KEY ✕ Buildings torn down

2420 N. HALSTED AVE.
The apartment of Anna Sage, 43, known as the "Lady in Red." Sage was with Dillinger when he was fatally shot. It was his last hideout with girlfriend Polly Hamilton. Replaced by a pavilion of Children's Memorial Hospital.

4175 W. IRVING PARK RD.
The office of Charles O. Eye, outside of which Chicago police laid an ambush for Dillinger. He got away, even though police fired hundreds of shots at his car. Now headquarters of a security company.

G

CHIC

2509 N. PULASKI RD.
The home of James Probasco, where plastic surgery on Dillinger's face was performed in May and June of 1934. Probasco committed suicide after being arrested. Replaced by a parking lot.

L



F

858 N. CLARK ST.
HEN: Building where nna Sage had an apart- ent frequented by illinger and girlfriend olly Hamilton.
OW: Same.



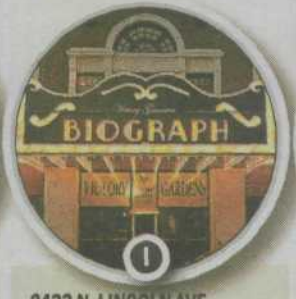
G

2649 N. KEDZIE AVE.
THEN: Four-story apartment building that Dillinger used as a hideout.
NOW: Same.



H

2402 N. LINCOLN AVE.
THEN: Seminary Restaurant, where Dillinger frequently dined.
NOW: A McDonald's.



I

2433 N. LINCOLN AVE.
THEN: The Biograph Theater, where Dillinger was fatally shot on July 22, 1934.
NOW: Home of Victory Gardens Theater.

File photo



J

416 N. STATE ST.
THEN: State and Austin Tavern, where police tried to trap Dillinger. He escaped, but Evelyn Frechette was arrested.
LATER: Site of a hot dog restaurant.
NOW: 7-Eleven store.



K

431 N. RUSH ST.
THEN: Bert Kelly's Stables, a night club where Dillinger saw t floor show with frien
LATER: Riccardo's re taurant.
NOW: Phil Stefani's 4 Rush steakhouse.



Dillinger (center) in court in Crown Point, Ind.
AP file photo



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TRIBUNE GRAPHIC
Charles Leroux, Patrick T. Reardon, Sue-Lyn Erbeck and Stephen Ravenscraft

Sources: Tribune reporting; PBS; archives; "Dillinger: A Short and Violent Life" by Robert Cromie and Joseph Pinkston; "Dillinger: The Untold Story" by Russell Girardin and William Helmer

Outlaw puts town on map

By Patrick T. Reardon
TRIBUNE REPORTER

CROWN POINT, Ind. — This modest Midwestern city of 23,000 has been atwitter over the recent visit by movie star Johnny Depp.

But, after nearly three-quarters of a century, it's still embarrassed about the reason.

Depp, playing the storied gangster John Dillinger in the Michael Mann-directed film "Public Enemies," was in town in late March to shoot scenes at important buildings in the hoodlum's legend — the old Lake County Jail, the sheriff's home and the Criminal Courts building, all now in private hands.

In the winter of 1934, Dillinger was locked up in Crown Point's "escape-proof" jail.

Then, he escaped.

Dillinger fled to Illinois in a car belonging to County Sheriff Lillian Holley. By driving the stolen car across the state line, he violated a federal law and brought the Bureau of Investigation — later known as the FBI — on his trail. Four months later, BOI agents shot Dillinger to death in a Chicago alley.

The gangster's escape in Indiana "was national news," says Gayle Van Sessen, the executive director of the Greater Crown Point Chamber of Commerce.

It was also a major embarrassment for Crown Point.

At the Lake County Historical Museum, there's only a small exhibit about Dillinger in a back room far from the entrance. "We don't make a big thing about that, but everyone who comes into the museum asks about Dillinger," says director Bruce Woods.

He shakes his head in disbelief over the Dillinger mystique — "he was a killer" — and wishes visitors would focus on other displays that put Crown Point in a more positive light.

Such as the century-old buggy made by the Hack Buggy Works.

Or the Letz feed mill. "It was sold around the world," says Woods. "And it was made right here in Crown Point."

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431 N. RUSH ST.

THEN: Bert Kelly's Stables, a night club where Dillinger saw the floor show with friends.

LATER: Riccardo's restaurant.

NOW: Phil Stefani's 437 Rush steakhouse.



115 N. PARKSIDE AVE.

THEN: Four-story apartment building that Dillinger used as a hideout.

NOW: Offices of Circle Family Healthcare Network.

Photos by Patrick T. Reardon

collegiate basketball.
MARYLAND
a standout. All those