

- 0. DILLINGER IS SET-UP - Story Preface
- 1. PUBLIC ENEMIES in the GREAT DEPRESSION
- 2. JOHN DILLINGER AND HIS FRIENDS
- 3. DILLINGER THE BANK ROBBER
- 4. DILLINGER AND BILLIE FRECHETTE
- 5. HOOVER and the FLEDGLING BUREAU
- 6. MELVIN PURVIS
- 7. DISASTER at the LITTLE BOHEMIA
- 8. DILLINGER IS SET-UP**
- 9. DEATH at the BIOGRAPH
- 10. DILLINGER BODY ON DISPLAY



Image of Wilhelm Loeser, aka Ralph Robiend, was the doctor who performed extensive reconstruction work on Dillinger's face. Image online via Wikimedia Commons.

He could dye his hair red, and glue a fake moustache above his lip, but Dillinger couldn't get rid of his most distinctive facial feature without help. A doctor would have to remove the dimple from his chin.

On the 28th of May, 1934, Wilhelm Loeser (a doctor with his own criminal record) performed plastic surgery on Dillinger and Homer Van Meter (one of Johnnie's gang members). In a Chicago safe house (owned by Jimmy Probasco), the physician (also known as Ralph Robiend) removed three moles from Johnnie's face, eliminated his wrinkles with a facelift and filled-in that notorious chin dimple.

Because his facial alterations were so extensive, Dillinger needed a month to recover. Hoover, meanwhile, was building his "Get Dillinger" team.

Humiliated by stinging national news coverage of events at Little Bohemia, the director needed help for his Bureau's young agents. Even after completing crash-courses in weapons handling, the "College Boys" (as they were sometimes called) were insufficiently skilled to confront the country's toughest gangsters.

Hoover called in more mature people - like Charles Winstead—from bureau offices in Southwestern states. He also dispatched Sam Cowley, from Washington, to assume control of the Dillinger Squad.

Purvis knew what was going on. Doris Rogers, Melvin's assistant, tells us what it was like on the 19th floor of the Bankers Building (where the bureau's Chicago office was located) when the power-shift happened:

You could see the strain on their faces. I felt sorry for Cowley. He was just doing his job. He was as ill at ease as Purvis. When you looked at Cowley, and you looked at Purvis, we all knew the fix was in. There was a sense Melvin had been betrayed. We all felt betrayed, defeated. You could see it by the way [Purvis] walked, by the way he wore his hat. A little hunched, a little bit shoulders. We all felt under siege. The enemy was moving in. The friends we had [in Washington] had all turned to enemies.

When Dillinger resurfaced, in late June, he was confident he could move about publicly. But in addition to his altered face, he had a new title. On the 22nd of that month—Dillinger's 31st birthday—Hoover designated Johnnie as America's first "Public Enemy Number One." With the title came a reward: \$10,000 for his capture and \$5,000 for information leading to his arrest.

Ana Sage (a woman facing deportation to her native Romania) took the bait.

Her friend, Polly Hamilton, was smitten with a new boyfriend named Jimmy Lawrence, and both had moved into Sage's apartment. It wasn't long before Sage (whose birth name was Ana Campanas) figured-out the real identity of her new tenant. It was John Dillinger who had recently robbed another bank - this time Merchants National in South Bend, Indiana.

According to some accounts, Dillinger and Sage had a connection beyond their living space. In *Public Enemies*, Bryan Burrough provides the background:

By all accounts [Sage's] closest benefactor was a flamboyant, and flamboyantly corrupt, detective [from East Chicago, Indiana] named Martin Zarkovich - the same Martin Zarkovich to whom, Dillinger hinted, he had paid protection money. (Burrough, *Public Enemies*, page 389.)

On the 21st of July, "Zark" (as the detective was known) gave his captain (Timothy O'Neil) some important news. Ana Sage would give-up John Dillinger if the federal government dropped her deportation case. O'Neil gave Purvis the news around 4 o'clock that Saturday afternoon.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/DILLINGER-IS-SET-UP-Public-Enemies>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/DILLINGER-IS-SET-UP-Public-Enemies>

Media Stream



Wilhelm Loeser - Dillinger Plastic Surgeon

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Polly Hamilton - Dillinger Girlfriend

Image online, courtesy *Duluth News Tribune*, Duluth Minnesota.

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Martin Zarkovich - East Chicago Detective

Image online, courtesy the findagrave.com website.

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