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It was extremely hot in Chicago on the 22nd of July, 1934. One of the city's theaters—the Biograph—boasted that it had "ICED Fresh AIR" and that its interior was "COOLED by REFRIGERATION." It was to this theater that John Dillinger, Polly Hamilton and Ana Sage paid a visit the evening of July 22, 1934. Image online via the FBI.

Melvin Purvis agreed to meet Ana Sage on the 21st of July, 1934. Although he could not guarantee what she wanted—to remain in America instead of being deported to Romania—he promised to do what he could. That was enough for Ana. She agreed to give details about Dillinger's whereabouts.

The next evening, Johnnie invited Polly and Ana to see a movie with him. They planned to watch a show at either the Marbro or the Biograph (in Chicago's Lincoln-Park neighborhood).

Ana called Purvis. After giving him the details, she described the clothes she'd wear: a white shirt and an orange skirt.

If he properly managed the situation, Purvis could get past the Little Bohemia fiasco. If his "G-men" didn't make mistakes, they could refocus the public's attention on their wins, not their losses.

It wasn't until 8:36 p.m., on the evening of July 22nd, that Purvis knew Dillinger and the women were going to watch "Manhattan Melodrama" at the Biograph. A gangster film (starring Myrna Loy, William Powell and Clarke Gable), the movie would last ninety-four minutes.

Purvis looked for Dillinger inside the theater but did not see him. If the feds were going to capture Johnnie at the Biograph, they'd have to do it after the show—if Dillinger didn't decide to leave early.

At 10:40, people started to exit the building. Intently watching the crowd, Purvis spotted Dillinger—about five feet away. The men had never previously met, but their eyes briefly locked this night.

Purvis lit a cigar—his pre-arranged signal, alerting his agents that their prey was in sight.

No one was sure where Johnnie would go after he left the theater. If he went straight home, he'd walk south. Thinking that was likely, Cowley and Purvis positioned Charles Winstead (the experienced Texan) and Clarence Hurt to cover that area.

Four men waited in the alley, in the event Dillinger left through a side door.

Heading south, after he left the theater, Johnnie and the two women were in a group of about six or seven others. Purvis began to follow them. As the crowd dispersed, Dillinger walked faster. He passed the doorway where Winstead and Hurt were waiting. Another agent, Ed Hollis, was nearby.

As the agents slightly changed their positions, Dillinger saw Winstead take a forward step. Across the street, Jack Welles, a rookie agent, watched Dillinger. He "appeared to realize that he was trapped; there was a tense look on his face."

As Johnnie reached for his .38, from the pocket of his trousers, Winstead pulled-out his own .45. Hollis and Hurt drew their weapons, too. No one said a word as Dillinger broke away from Polly and Ana. It looked like he might make a run for the nearby alley, but he never had a chance.

As soon as Winstead saw Johnnie reach for his gun, the Texan from Grayson County fired three times. Hurt got off two shots and Hollis fired once.

Four of the six bullets struck Dillinger. Two merely grazed him; one struck his side; one hit him in the back of his neck where it smashed a vertebra, severed his spinal chord, entered his brain and left his body near the right eye.

Before falling face-first at the alley's entrance, Johnnie staggered for a step or two. When he fell to the ground, his lips were moving—according to Jack Welles—but no one heard what he said.

Dillinger was dead, but for decades only a few people knew who had actually killed him. Purvis, Cowley, Winstead and other agents agreed not to disclose who fired the fatal shot. Hoover, however, wrote a letter to Charlie Winstead the day after Dillinger died. Among other things, the director said:

I have been advised by Mr. Purvis and Mr. Cowley that it was you who shot and killed John Dillinger. I wanted to write and to express to you not only my official, but my personal congratulations and commendation for your fearlessness and courageous action in this matter.

Dillinger's body was treated with much less dignity.

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

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/DEATH-at-the-BIOGRAPH-Public-Enemies>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/DEATH-at-the-BIOGRAPH-Public-Enemies>

Media Stream



Polly Hamilton and Anna Sage

Photo online, courtesy FBI.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Polly-Hamilton-and-Anna-Sage>



Biograph Theater - Dillinger's Last Visit

Photo of the Biograph online, courtesy FBI.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Biograph-Theater-Dillinger-s-Last-Visit>



Dillinger Squad - Special Agents on the Team

Compilation photo online, courtesy [Historical G-men](#).

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Dillinger-Squad-Special-Agents-on-the-Team>



Dillinger - His Colt .380

Photo online, courtesy FBI.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Dillinger-His-Colt-.380>



Dillinger - Died at the Biograph Theater

Photo online, courtesy FBI.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Dillinger-Died-at-the-Biograph-Theater>



Biograph Theater - Crowds Gather

Photo of the Biograph, post-shooting. Online, courtesy Chicago Tribune.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Biograph-Theater-Crowds-Gather>

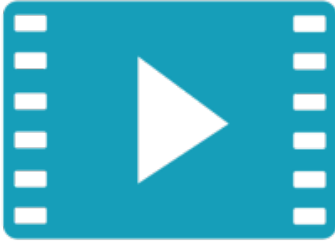


Dillinger's Body - At Cook County Coroner's Office

AP photo of Dillinger's body at the Cook County Coroner's office. Online, courtesy Library of Congress.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Dillinger-s-Body-At-Cook-County-Coroner-s-Office>



Dillinger - Killed at the Biograph Theater

Clip from *Gangster File - The Sensational Truth: Bonnie & Clyde / Al Capone / Dillinger*.
Online, courtesy yakidk89's channel at YouTube.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Dillinger-Killed-at-the-Biograph-Theater>