



NEWS RELEASE

INDIANA LAW ENFORCEMENT MEMORIAL

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Gangs Who Have Been Responsible for Indiana Law Enforcement Line of Duty Deaths The Dillinger Gang and its Leader, John Dillinger, Had Strong Ties to Indiana

From as early as 1897 to as late as 1938, five criminal gangs have been responsible for or suspected of the line of duty deaths of 11 Indiana law enforcement officers. A total of 15 offenders ranged in age from 20 to 37 and resulted in seven being killed by police; six being sentenced to life in prison; and two being sentenced to death and executed by electrocution.

In this News Release, the notorious Dillinger Gang, who killed the most law enforcement officers in their 11-month bank robbery crime spree, will be highlighted. Its leader, John Dillinger, has the most ties to Indiana of all the members of these five gangs. Last month, the **Boo Gang**, **Foggy Dean Gang**, **Brady Gang** and **Easton Gang** were summarized.

The **Dillinger Gang** consisted of nearly a dozen men who operated in the Midwest from 1933 to 1934 and were responsible for 14 law enforcement line of duty deaths: one officer each in Illinois, Michigan, Tennessee and Texas, two in Ohio, three federal agents and five in Indiana. They committed 13 bank robberies in five states totaling a reported heist of \$330,768: one each in Iowa, South Dakota and Wisconsin, four in Ohio and six in Indiana.

After their first bank robbery at the New Carlisle National Bank in Ohio of \$10,000 on June 21, 1933, six banks in Indiana were robbed of a total of \$156,268: The Commercial Bank in Daleville (\$3,500 on July 17), Montpelier National Bank in Montpelier (\$6,700 on August 4), Massachusetts Avenue State Bank in Indianapolis (\$21,000 on September 6), Central National Bank and Trust Co. in Greencastle (\$74,802 on October 23), First National Bank in East Chicago (\$20,376 on January 15, 1934) and their last at Merchants National Bank in South Bend (\$29,890 on June 30).

The four incidents involving Dillinger Gang members in Indiana resulting in the line of duty deaths of five law enforcement officers included:

Indiana State Trooper Eugene Orville Teague, 24, was accidentally shot and killed on December 20, 1933 in Paris, Illinois, during a gunbattle while attempting to arrest Edward Willis Shouse Jr., 28, who had escaped from the Indiana State Prison in September where he was serving a 25-year sentence for auto banditry from Vigo County. His two female accomplices were Ruth Spencer, 24 of Chicago and Francis Brehman, 28 of Fort Wayne. It was determined Indiana State Police Lieutenant Chester Butler fired the fatal shot with his .45-caliber revolver.

East Chicago Patrolman William Patrick O'Malley, 45, was shot and killed during the armed robbery of the First National Bank of East Chicago on January 15, 1934 before John Dillinger, John "Red" Hamilton and a getaway driver fled the scene. This was the first bank robbery by the gang in which a law enforcement officer was killed. Dillinger and Hamilton were indicted on January 26 for first-degree murder in perpetration of a robbery and although never proven, this was the only murder charge ever filed against Dillinger. Hamilton, 34, died three days after being captured and shot by police on April 23 in Hastings, Minnesota.

East Chicago Patrolmen [Francis Lloyd Mulvihill](#), 29 and [Martin John O'Brien](#), 45, were shot and killed on May 24, 1934 by men believed to be part of the gang. O'Brien was driving when they stopped next to a parked car with four occupants. The suspects opened fire with machine guns, killing both officers before fleeing the scene. Their bodies were found inside their squad car by a night watchman walking to work at a nearby business. It was alleged Homer Virgil Van Meter, 28, had killed both officers. Mulvihill was one of the responding officers to the First National Bank robbery four months earlier.

[South Bend Patrolman Howard C. Wagner](#), 29, was shot and killed as Dillinger, Van Meter, Lester Joseph Gillis (aka "Baby Face" Nelson) and a fourth member fled from the armed robbery of the Merchants National Bank on June 30, 1934 and marked their last bank robbery. Van Meter, who acted as the lookout and killed Wagner, was killed by police in St. Paul, Minnesota on August 23. Gillis, 25, was killed by federal agents in the Battle of Barrington in Illinois on November 27, resulting in the line of duty deaths of [Special Agent Herman Edward Hollis](#), 31 and [Inspector Samuel Parkinson Cowley](#), 35.

John Herbert Dillinger Jr. was born on June 22, 1903 at 2053 Cooper Street in Indianapolis to John Wilson Dillinger Sr. and Mary Ellen "Mollie" (née Lancaster) who had one daughter, Audrey Mae. His father remarried in 1912 to Elizabeth C. "Lizzie" (née Fields), with whom they had three children and moved the family to Mooresville in 1921. After being dishonorably discharged from the United States Navy, he returned home and married Beryl Ethel Hovious until she divorced him five years later in 1929. While incarcerated at the Indiana Reformatory and Indiana State Prison after being sentenced to 10-to-20 years for assault and battery in 1924, he honed his criminal lifestyle until being paroled in 1933.

When Dillinger, 31, was captured in Tucson, Arizona for the bank robbery in East Chicago 10 days earlier, he was extradited and held at the Lake County Jail in Crown Point where he made his infamous escape on March 3 with 15 other prisoners. Acting as an informant, Ana Cumpănaș (aka Anna Sage), told authorities she, Dillinger and his girlfriend Rita "Polly" Hamilton would be at the Biograph Theater at 2433 North Lincoln Avenue in Chicago the evening of July 22. Upon exiting after the movie *Manhattan Melodrama* ended, he was shot four times by federal agents and taken to Alexian Brothers Hospital at 1200 West Belden Avenue where he was pronounced dead at 10:50 pm and buried on July 26 at Crown Hill Cemetery in Indianapolis.

Dillinger's half-brother, Hubert Morris Dillinger, served as a mechanic with the Indiana State Police for 21 years from 1946 until his retirement in 1967. Hubert's wife, Ethel Etta (née Schooling), served as an executive secretary to Indiana State Police superintendents for 22 years and staff secretary for Governor Roger D. Branigin.

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About the Indiana Law Enforcement Memorial

Founded in 2017, the Indiana Law Enforcement Memorial is a nonprofit organization dedicated to honoring all of our state's fallen officers. Its mission is to honor law enforcement officers who have made the ultimate sacrifice; provide support to their surviving family members and affected agencies; and conduct research into and foster public awareness of Indiana line of duty deaths.

Each of these over 500 officers are memorialized through a website maintained as an exclusive resource to our state with the most comprehensive details to preserve the history surrounding their incidents and an extensive compilation of statistical data.