

“Only Capone kills like that.”

By R. Marc Kantrowitz//January 31, 2025//¹

The seven men gathered early in the large, dank warehouse and garage at 2122 North Clark Street in anticipation of a good payday. A shipment of discounted bootleg liquor was headed their way. Money paid, more money to be made with the distribution of booze to the ravenous inhabitants of Chicago, who, like many throughout the nation, eagerly gulped down the contraband despite Prohibition.

As the men waited for the arrival of both the alcohol and their boss, George “Bugs”



George “Bugs” Moran

Moran, many perhaps thought about how they were going to spend their share of the ill-gotten gains, it after all being Saint Valentine’s Day. Albert Kachellek, alias James Clark, the #2 man in the organization thanks to some brains and being married to Moran’s sister, and Adam Heyer, the organization’s business manager, pondered the monetary aspect. The murderous Gusenberg brothers, Frank and

Peter, provided the muscle. Joining the group were two outsiders John May, an occasional mechanic, who toiled away on a car, and a former dentist Reinhardt Schwimmer, a degenerate

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gambler who basked in his association with gangsters. The seventh and last soon-to-be victim of the crew was Albert Weinshank who managed several seemingly legitimate businesses.

Weinshank fatally resembled Moran, even dressing like him. Clearly, the lookouts were fooled when they gave the word.

Turbulent times

Despite the best efforts of Chicago crime boss Johnny Torrio who tried to broker peace, it wasn't to be. Indeed, he was shot for his efforts in 1925, and seeing the writing on the wall, decided to retire and leave the empire to his young protégé, Al Capone. The Italian South Side was his along with the vicious six Genna Brothers who also in 1925 saw three brothers murdered and the remaining three fleeing the area.

The North Side belonged mainly to the Irish- first to Dean O'Banion, who met his end in 1924 while tending his flower shop that he used as a front. There, three men entered his establishment and killed him. A triumvirate followed him leading with Earl "Hymie" Weiss (born Henryk Wojciechowski), who was killed in 1926 at the age



Al Capone

of 28; Vincent "The Schemer" Drucci (born Ludovico D'Ambrosio), who was killed in 1927 at the age of 29; and George "Bugs" Moran (born Adelard Leo Cunin in 1893).

During the brutal Capone-Moran civil war over control of vice, prostitution, gambling, and mainly Prohibition-banned alcohol, thousands of shots were fired in the hope of knocking off a hated rival. Each side came close to achieving its goal.

It all culminated on February 14th, 1929- Saint Valentine's Day. In the end, nothing would ever be the same.

“The killers calmly walked out.”

At 10:30 in the morning, a Cadillac sedan, a vehicle frequently used by the police, stopped in front of the garage on North Clark Street. Moran, walking toward the garage, saw the vehicle and quickly changed direction, ducking into a coffee shop.

Four (or some say five) men- two dressed as police officers and armed openly with shotguns and two (or three) well attired civilians wearing long winter coats covering their firepower- emerged from the sedan.

They entered the facility and ordered the men inside to line up against and face the rear



The scene of the Massacre

brick wall. May probably protested, arguing that he was merely working on a car, gesturing to it as well as his pet German Shephard, Highball, who was chained nearby. Ignoring his pleas, he was moved along with the others, who obeyed, probably thinking that this was an ill-timed

police raid by cops who either weren't already being bribed or those who hoped to be.

After a few seconds, the civilians quietly pulled out Thompson sub-machine guns and opened fire, spraying a blizzard of bullets into the unsuspecting victims. As Highball howled, two shotgun blasts ended the slaughter, obliterating the faces of Clark and May.

With that, the killers calmly walked out, the two dressed as police officers behind the civilians who seemingly were being arrested. Their car sped off.

Difficult investigation

The Saint Valentine's Day Massacre ignited a city used to gunfire and violence and a nation tired of brutality. It even made international news. As clues were sought, few materialized. As Capone was the obvious suspect, he was conveniently in Florida at the time being questioned by prosecutors. Other theories proliferated, from the cops doing it to avenge a murder to fellow bootleggers who were tired of having their stocks highjacked. Finally, though, a breakthrough.



Fred "Killer" Burke

The sedan used in the assassination was located on February 22 and traced to a member of Egan's Rats, a powerful St. Louis criminal gang aligned with Capone. The Egan's Rats connection continued with two witnesses identifying mugshots of Fred "Killer" Burke as one of the phony cops. Despite diligent efforts, Burke was nowhere to be seen - until December 14th.

Police officer Charles Skelly was patrolling the streets of St. Joseph, Michigan when he witnessed a car rear-end a parked vehicle. Skelly activated his lights and siren and approached, thinking he was about to encounter a drunk driver. Instead, the car sped off.

Skelly gave chase and forced the car to stop. When he confronted its driver, he was met with fatal gunfire. The police quickly arrived and searched the area, finding the abandoned vehicle, which was traced to Burke.

Searching for Burke at his residence, they didn't find him, but they did recover a bullet proof vest, more than \$300,000 in stolen bank bonds, and an arsenal of weapons, including two Thompson submachineguns used in the Massacre.

One of the weapons was also used to murder Brooklyn gangster Frankie Yale (born Francesco Ioele) on July 1, 1928, seven months before the Massacre. The elegantly dressed, colorful, and highly violent Yale was also mentored by Johnny Torrio and travelled to Chicago to help murder Dean O'Banion. He later fell from the graces of Capone and was killed for his transgression.

Epilogue

Burke was eventually captured, tried for Skelly's killing, and sentenced to life in prison where he died in 1940.

Capone got his wish with Moran's gang obliterated and Moran leaving Chicago while giving his thoughts as to the culprit: "Only Capone kills like that."

Capone's victory was short-lived though as the feds zeroed in, leading to his conviction in 1931 for income tax evasion. He was sent to Alcatraz. When he emerged in 1939, his brain was addled by untreated syphilis. He slowly continued to waste away in Florida.

Moran meanwhile died in 1957 at the federal prison at Leavenworth, Kansas, while serving a lengthy prison sentence for robbery.



"Machine Gun" Jack McGurn

No one was ever convicted of taking part in the Massacre, whose once bloodied bricks now stand in the Mob Museum in Las Vegas. One strongly suspected of planning it was "Machine Gun" Jack McGurn (born Vincenzo Antonio Gibaldi). On February 15, 1936, seven years and one day after the notorious killings, he, having fallen on tough times, was gunned down by three assassins in a bowling alley. His slayers placed a nickel in his left hand

and a Saint Valentine's Day card with a short poem in his right one. It read:

"You've lost your job, you've lost your dough,
"[y]our jewels and cars and handsome houses.
"But things could still be worse you know ...
"At least you haven't lost your trousers!"

He was 33.