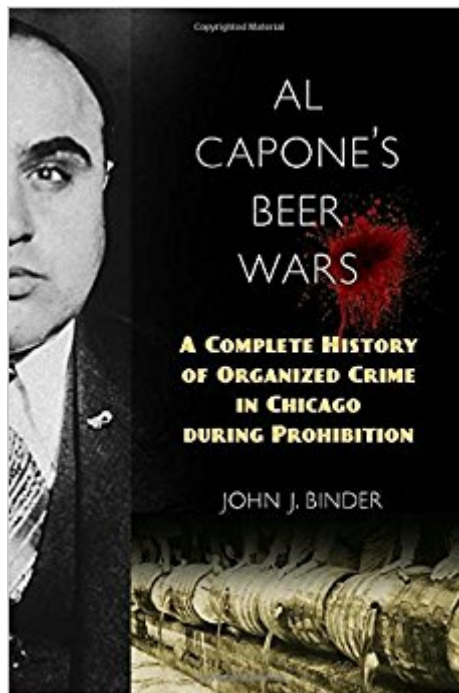




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Al Capone's Beer Wars: A Complete History Of Organized Crime In Chicago During Prohibition



Synopsis

Although much has been written about Al Capone, there has not been--until now--a complete history of organized crime in Chicago during Prohibition. This exhaustively researched book covers the entire period from 1920 to 1933. Author John J. Binder, a recognized authority on the history of organized crime in Chicago, discusses all the important bootlegging gangs in the city and the suburbs and also examines the other major rackets, such as prostitution, gambling, labor and business racketeering, and narcotics. A major focus is how the Capone gang -- one of twelve major bootlegging mobs in Chicago at the start of Prohibition--gained a virtual monopoly over organized crime in northern Illinois and beyond. Binder also describes the fight by federal and local authorities, as well as citizens' groups, against organized crime. In the process, he refutes numerous myths and misconceptions related to the Capone gang, other criminal groups, the St. Valentine's Day Massacre, and gangland killings. What emerges is a big picture of how Chicago's underworld evolved during this period. This broad perspective goes well beyond Capone and specific acts of violence and brings to light what was happening elsewhere in Chicagoland and after Capone went to jail. Based on 25 years of research and using many previously unexplored sources, this fascinating account of a bloody and colorful era in Chicago history will become the definitive work on the subject.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“At last, for the first time, we have a fully noted, comprehensive, clear and concise examination of the genesis of organized crime in Chicago and the entire Prohibition gang war era.

For the historian, researcher, or simple true crime buff, John J. Binder has done all a great service. —Mars Eghigian Jr., author of *After Capone: The Life and World of Chicago Mob Boss Frank "the Enforcer" Nitti* —"Al Capone's Beer Wars is an amazing tour de force, a comprehensively researched and completely sourced history of Prohibition in Chicago. John J. Binder and his relentless dedication to gang scholarship are remarkable Chicago treasures, bar none. If you want an accurate account of this period, run, don't walk, to buy this spectacular book. —William J. Martin, coauthor of *Crime of the Century: Richard Speck and the Murders That Shocked the Nation* —"This is a truly comprehensive history of crime in Chicago during Prohibition that will appeal to true-crime readerships and that will make an excellent addition to library collections for its coverage of an era. Extensive sources are a welcome feature for historians and the curious alike. —Foreword Reviews —"Prohibition was one of the most flamboyant periods of American history, and Binder brings it to vivid life through his meticulous research, his sound insights, and solid arguments. His book is sure to be an authoritative resource for many years to come. —Deirdre Bair, author of *Al Capone: His Life, Legacy, and Legend* —"A masterful and definitive picture of a time that has never before been so authentically documented. A compelling read and, I think, a work of art.... All the astonishing bits of information that Binder has gathered over years of exhaustive research create a vivid picture of a unique time in Chicago's colorful history that is nothing less than remarkable. Bravo! —Diane Capone, granddaughter of Al Capone —"Al Capone's Beer Wars does a masterful job of exploring the origins of organized crime in Chicago. John J. Binder sheds new light on the subject by exploring Chicago's frontier history leading up to the formation of the various gangs throughout the city, which paved the way for the future of Chicago's organized crime. His meticulous research draws out a rogues' gallery of crooks, corrupt politicians, and policemen, all of whom contributed to the ascension of Al Capone and the creation of the Chicago Outfit. Backed by a thorough analysis of the facts, this volume is a must for anyone interested in the subject. It's also essential reading for those familiar with the subject as this examination of the gang wars clarifies many misunderstood or misinterpreted events. Coupled with a stellar collection of rare photographs, this work is a tremendous accomplishment, which advances the study of Chicago's organized crime history. —Matthew J. Luzzi, author of *The Boys in Chicago Heights: The Forgotten Crew of the Chicago Outfit* —"So much has been written about Al Capone and Chicago's Prohibition-era gangsters one might suspect that there is nothing left to say. But

John J. Binder's fine new book actually achieves what so many earlier works have not. It provides context for understanding the history of vice, gambling, and corruption in Chicago before Prohibition that fostered the explosive growth of bootlegging after 1920. It is grounded in facts rather than conjecture, and it explores the complex relationships that fueled the Beer Wars in Chicago with clarity and focus. A truly valuable publication. My copy is sure to be dog-eared in short order.

• John Russick, vice president for interpretation and education at the Chicago History Museum

“The origins of the Chicago Outfit have been shrouded in myth and misconception. Using a wealth of empirical research, Binder separates fact from fiction to tell the story of the rise of the Torrio-Capone gang.”

• C. Alexander Hortis, author of *The Mob and the City: The Hidden History of How the Mafia Captured New York*

John J. Binder, Ph.D., is the author of two previous books on organized crime and has appeared in interviews on and served as an expert consultant for documentaries on the mob shown on the A & E and AMC cable networks and on the Discovery Channel and the History Channel. He has also given numerous interviews on the subject for newspapers, magazines, and radio and television news programs. He lectures frequently on organized crime in Chicago. He is associate professor emeritus of finance in the College of Business Administration at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Author John Binder has compiled what amounts to a doctoral dissertation in his book *Al Capone's Beer Wars*. This book is not a rehash of the high and low profile murders that you find in other books. The murders are mentioned but we are spared the numerous details leading up to them. Sometimes, myself included, the reader may feel he is being told more than he wants to learn regarding the beer wars. However, that is my problem and not the fault of the author. The book is neatly organized into eight chapters and photographs are spaced throughout the book. Many of the photos I have never seen before. Page 104 has a photo of the Murder Twins John Scalise and Albert Anselmi appearing as younger men which I have never seen previously. Page 262 contains a photo of the victims of the St. Valentine's Day Massacre with a number on each one to identify them. I have often wondered which two were the beneficiaries of the shotgun blasts to the face in addition to being peppered with machine gun bullets. Numerous books differ as to who the actual shooters were in this infamous incident and author Binder reviews each possibility and comes to the conclusion that Fred "Killer" Burke (Thomas A. Camp) was most certainly one of the shooters. Author Binder sums up by handing out grades to Jim Colosimo, Johnny Torrio, and Al Capone. A few "what ifs" are also mentioned that could have significantly changed the history of

prohibition in Chicago. This book is valuable as a reference as well as a history of the beer wars in Chicago during prohibition.

First off, the author and I have been friends for many years. This does not make the review biased in any way because the main reason we became friends was because of this subject field and it's interesting historic time and place. I first saw John on a documentary many moons ago and was hooked into this field of research because of it! I appreciated his candor and his historical accuracy in presenting the story to the masses. The right and correct story! Not the first story found in a newspaper or story handed down by an iffy relative / old gang member with the truth twisted through time. With John we get the one that is dissected and time lined for irrefutable truth, that or as seemingly as close as we can get. This book brings just that to the table. It's been many years of hard research that is finally brought to the surface for all to read. I know John has put his time in this book. Lots of blood, sweat and years to make sure it met the okay of all the experts, whether it be a seasoned researcher, a passing gangsterphile or with even the approval of Al Capone relative. In this book you get the straight dibs on what really happened, why it happened and the correct who is in this photo. You get charts, maps, gang affiliations and numbers as to how many were really killed, why they were killed. We finally find out who was really Louis Barko. We also find out that the boxer Jim Braddock was NOT the guy in the photo with Al Capone. We learn that Jack White had nothing to do with the massacre and that the simple answer is almost always the best and correct answer. The Chicago of the 1920's was an exciting era with characters and stories you could not invent any better. But the fact remains that the truth over the years has become over glorified and are now being made to Hollywood standards. With this new and exciting book the real gritty story of Al Capone's beer wars is brought to the forefront for all to get a glimpse of what the gang wars were really about and what it was really like back in the bad old days!.Mario GomesMyalcaponemuseum

John J. Binder is an academic who has studied America's most fabled gang war the way other scholars study economics or ancient history. This work tells the Torrio-Capone syndicate rose from one of twelve gangs to the omnipresent Outfit. I was delighted by his approach, which at last gave me an organized crime history with a minimum of speculation. What did I love the most? I loved chapter 3, centered around a map showing the major bootlegging gangs in Chicago, January 1, 1924, areas determined by police precincts. Binder describes every one of the gangs and their bosses, providing photographs of every one of them. I enjoyed reading how he argued points: demolishing Jonathan Eig's attempt to shift responsibility for

the St. Valentine's Day massacre from Capone to a nobody and proving that Black Hand gangs continued to operate throughout the twenties, being suppressed, not the police, but by the Outfit. I think his tables in the penultimate chapter illustrate his approach well. They include gangland killings per annum and by cause, numbers of members of major bootlegging gangs, occupation of the victim • all killings, occupation of the victim • by cause of killing and for members of the major bootlegging gangs, method of killing, one-way rides, number of drive-by shootings, location of the killing (by type of structure, etc.); also, a map of Gangland killings in Chicago, 1922-1933. Could you guess what he does in the final chapter? He gives the founders of the Outfit æ Jim Colisimo, Johnny Torrio, and Al Capone grades. One B, two A-s.

A Big Story about Big Al & Chicago ! My family experienced much of this story first hand in the 1920's and 1930's in Chicago and for me it is "personal". Binder fills in a lot of unknown, intriguing blanks. Many rare photos...well researched with facts well noted .I am a fan of his after reading and seeing other well written works in previous media. No disappointment here .This will be a best seller and I am looking forward to the movie!! Thanks Mr. Binder and Prometheus Books !!

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