

Dillinger and Hoover - II

Lead: Like two combatants, John Dillinger and J. Edgar Hoover circled around each other during Dillinger's year-long crime spree in the 1930s. They used each other for publicity and public relations.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: In 1917 Edgar Hoover was hired as a file clerk by the Department of Justice. Within two years he had secured a position as Special Assistant Attorney to Attorney General Mitchell Palmer. It

was in this capacity that Hoover oversaw deportations and arrests of many Bolsheviks during the Red Scare of the 1920s. By 1924 he was temporary head of the Bureau of Investigation and was confirmed several months later. Gradually, Edgar Hoover transformed the agency into a professional powerhouse. Agents were recruited on the basis of merit, the world's largest fingerprint file assisted in the apprehension of criminals, the FBI labs provided law enforcement agencies with world class forensic assistance, and the FBI National Academy trained top cops from around the country.

Yet, there was a dark side to J.

Edgar Hoover. He had an obsession with radical groups and pursued them with only token regard for first amendment rights. He led the FBI in attacks on individual criminals, such as John Dillinger, but after the repeal of prohibition in the 1930s, left organized crime almost to its own devices, uninvestigated by the FBI. Dillinger, one of the first to receive designation as “Public Enemy Number One,” was a useful way of attracting attention to the FBI’s work and to Hoover’s heroic leadership. He kept a death mask of the bank robber on his office wall for the rest of his life, but their rivalry was an artifice, a means of attracting support for the FBI and its leader.

At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.

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