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**Al Capone and the St. Valentine's Day
Massacre - II**

Lead: In the 1920s the United States tried to stem the flow of liquor. Gangsters like Al Capone kept it going.

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

Content: The parents of Alphonse Capone migrated from Naples, Italy in 1893. The fourth son among nine children, Al quit his Brooklyn, New York school at the age of 14, bummed his way through various odd jobs, and

finally attracted the attention of John Torrio, a rising young force in the New York mob. Torrio became Capone's mentor and recruited him into the gangs. They were an interesting contrast. Torrio was reserved and calculating, Capone, a powerful physical creature, ready if not eager to use his fists or a baseball bat against anyone who got in his way. Sometime during his teen years Capone caught syphilis from a prostitute in one of his organization's brothels. The disease as it often does went into hibernation only to emerge during his most prosperous years producing erratic and sometimes cruel behavior.

By 1919, Torrio had moved on to the Midwest and sent for Capone. Together these two vied for control of the rackets in South Side of Chicago. It was a good time for crime in the Windy City. Prohibition had just shut down the legitimate market for booze. Mayor William Hale Thompson, corrupt and always short of cash, looked the other way. Torrio and Capone were ready to supply the eager and thirsty public with liquor, gambling and prostitution.

By 1925, when Torrio retired, he and his partner had largely taken over the South Side rackets and Capone was anxious to take on the rest of the City. From his headquarters at the

Lexington Hotel, Scarface Al, who acquired that nickname after being sliced in an ancient barroom brawl, reached out to absorb the territory of rival gangs. If they failed to cooperate, then Capone's ruthless and efficient organization would pay them a visit. Next time: the Massacre on St. Valentine's Day.

At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.

Resources

Kobler, John. *Capone: The Life and World of Al Capone*. New York, NY: Putnam Publishing, 1971.

Mitchell, John G. "What the Public Wanted, It Seemed, Was a Vice and Bootleg Business Netting Sixty Million Dollars a Year - and Many Gangland Funerals," *American Heritage* (February, 1979): 84-93.

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