**Article of the Week #2**

**Read the three articles. This week you will not be talking to the text.**

**In a written response of a ½ page or more, discuss your thoughts about one or more of the articles.**

**Possible ideas include:**

* **how would you feel living during this time period (1920s)**
* **what new information did you learn,**
* **correlation between past and present gangs**
* **romanticizing gangs and gangsters (past and present)**
* **Response of your choice**

**Written response due at the beginning of the hour on Wednesday, 2/12/14**

Article #1

This is an article from the time period regarding the infamous 20’s Detroit gang called The Purple Gang

**12 Injured by Bomb ‘Planted’ in Detroit**County Building Shaken, Windows Shattered and Hundreds Panic-Stricken.  
**‘Purple’ Gang Suspected**Darrow Attending Court Case Is Jarred—Jokes With Judge About Blast.

Detroit, June 18. — A devastating blast which injured twelve county employes, two seriously, shattered the Wayne County Building to its foundation this afternoon is believed by police to have been another attempt at intimidation of the courts by sympathizers with the “Purple” gang, nine members of which are now on trial on charges of conspiracy to extort.  
“The dynamite bomb evidently was intended for the Municipal Courts Building, where the ‘Purples’ are on trial,” Police Inspector John T. Doyle of the First Precinct declared, “but as usual in such cases some stranger was hired to plant the bomb and probably mistook the county building for the City Courts building.  
“It is a miracle no one was killed. The bomb was a powerful one. If it had exploded in the confined space of the rest room instead of in the courtway, I believe it would have wrecked the building and killed many persons.”  
The explosion occurred at about 2:50 o’clock. The bomb was left in a the men’s room on the first floor and was found by Frank Stolpa, a constable, who tossed it into the areaway in the centre of the building and was trying to extinguish it with water when it exploded.  
**ONE MAY LOSE AN EYE.**Stolpa and Arthur Vercrusse, another constable, who also helped in the efforts to extinguish the bomb, were struck in the face by flying glass and bits of iron from the bomb and taken to Receiving Hospital for treatment. Vercrusse, according to the physicians, may lose the sight of his right eye.

<http://www.cthulhulives.org/toybox/propdocs/1920snews.html>

Article #2

This is a modern article on the general history of Detroit’s Purple Gang

**The Purple Gang's bloody legacy**

**By Susan Whitall** / *The Detroit News*

June 9, 2001

They are unlikely souvenirs from the bloody Purple Gang portion of Detroit's history: European porcelain so delicate you can see through it, fine-cut glass, and a teapot painted with pink roses and lined in gold.

The porcelain and china, handed down to Carol Long of Washington Township from her grandparents, was gang barter, what the Purple Gang sometimes used to pay her grandfather George VanInwagen to fix their bullet-ridden Fords. He was a mechanic at the Keystone Garage on Larned Street in downtown Detroit.

"He did good work, and they'd bring their cars to him," Long says. "That's partly how he made his living. My grandmother said he got along with them because he didn’t ask any questions."

In the annals of crime, Detroit's Purple Gang didn't have a long ride, but it was colorful enough to inspire books, get them name-checked in an Elvis song ("Jailhouse Rock") and even prompt a Hollywood movie in 1960 starring actor Robert Blake, who ironically is a suspect in the murder last month of his wife, Bonny Lee Bakley.

The fact that the Gang dominated the flow of liquor in Detroit for most of the 1920s, were judged responsible for some 500 murders by the Detroit police and were largely Jewish has helped hone their mystique some 70-plus years later.

Look around Detroit and there are fading remnants of gang history.

This includes the still-vibrant shvitz (bathhouse) on Oakland Avenue the Gang used to frequent; the former blind pig in the basement of the Woodbridge Tavern; and a slew of hollow-eyed mugs shot by Detroit News photographers on file at Wayne State Universityâ€™s Reuther Library.

Other cities had bootlegging gangs in the '20s, but there were few American cities as "wet" as Detroit, which got a jump on the production and distribution of bootleg liquor when all nonmedicinal alcohol was banned in 1919, a year ahead of most states. Instead of prohibiting the flow of alcohol into Detroit, it instead opened up the floodgates and created a new sort of gangster to swagger around Hastings Street and Oakland Avenue on the city's east side.

The young men who came to be known as the Purple Gang lived in the Jewish neighborhood near Eastern Market. They earned the nickname the "Third Avenue Navy" or the "Little Jewish Navy" from their nighttime excursions back and forth across the river carrying booze from Canada, or just as frequently, hijacking the booty of other bootleggers.

The Bernstein brothers; Abe, Ray and Izzy; Harry Fleisher, Abe Axler and Phil Keywell were just a few of the names that became infamous to Detroiters during the years when most of America was forced by the 1919 Volstead Act to buy wine, beer and liquor from the underworld.

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| Police mug shots of Purple Gang members Sammy Millman, from left, Phillip Keywell and Harry Keywell.  **Police mug shots of Purple Gang members Sammy Millman, from left, Phillip Keywell and Harry Keywell.** |

**Prohibition provides opportunity**

While Detroit in the early '20s was starting to stir with its first automotive boom, it was a different story in the back alleys and crowded tenements of the east side.

The near east-side neighborhood the Gang sprang from was an incubator for trouble, teeming in the period between 1910-1920 with just the right mix of poverty, ethnic rivalries and the business opportunity created by Prohibition.

The youngsters who came to be known as the Purple Gang started out bullying Eastern Market fruit and vegetable merchants. Soon, they graduated to providing thug services for an older gang that ran the Oakland Sugar House at Oakland and Holbrook avenues.

The Sugar House was a legitimate business on its face, providing corn sugar for home brewers who were still allowed to make a set amount of liquor for personal use. The sugar houses were a valuable resource for illegal stills and breweries, and the Oakland Sugar House was controlled by mobsters. The men known as the Purple Gang were younger, but came to assimilate a portion of the older Sugar House Gang.

The Purple Gang moved on to start up and take over alley breweries and stills, and wrested control of the alcohol flowing into blind pigs in many areas previously controlled by Italian gangs.

On the river, Purple Gang members would tow rowboats filled with liquor behind their speedboats. If they saw government agents, they could cut the rope and take off, free of the illegal stash.

However, the gang became arrogant, even sloppy to the point where they were terrorizing Detroit with street executions of their enemies, killing a police officer and in bloody 1930, murdering a well-known radio personality Jerry Buckley right in the lobby of a downtown hotel.

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| Joe Newman, 99, of Southfield, knew two Purple Gang cohorts and grew up in the same neighborhood near Eastern Market with the nucleus of the Purple Gang.*John T. Greilick / The Detroit News*  **Joe Newman, 99, of Southfield, knew two Purple Gang cohorts and grew up in the same neighborhood near Eastern Market with the nucleus of the Purple Gang.** |

**Who's left to remember?**

The Purple Gang's brief, but vivid reign of terror -- Al Capone traveled from Chicago to import his liquor from them -- was so long ago that it's hard to find Detroiters who remember the days when gang shootings and murders were commonplace.

One who remembers is Joe Newman, 99, who grew up in the same neighborhood as many Purple gangsters. He can pinpoint the site of the Oakland Sugar house and many other gang hangouts. He knew Purple Gang mentor Harry Shorr as well as Solly Levine, a bookie who worked for the gang. Newman also remembers frequenting countless speakeasies as if it were yesterday.

"They were all my favorites!" Newman jokes of the speaks, or blind pigs that in some neighborhoods numbered 150 to a block. While 1,500 Detroit saloons were closed by Prohibition, by 1923 there were 7,000 blind pigs, and by 1925 the number had grown to 15,000.

Adding to that number were neighborhood stills stashed away in bathtubs, basements and garages, and in candy stores or confectionaries. If you asked the right question, a bottle of whiskey would be brought out from the back room.

Newman also remembers "a conflict between the bootleggers," when the Italian and Jewish gangs started fighting over territory, and that when anyone was shot, newsboys would hawk a special edition of the former daily newspaper the Detroit Journal with extra pages devoted to details of the killing.

In 1931, during the height of the Gangs' reign, Detroit Mayor Chester Bowles dismissed the killings as just gangsters helpfully eliminating each other, but Detroiters weary of being caught in the crossfire disagreed, and recalled him from office.

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| A crowd quickly formed outside the Collingwood Apartments at 1740 Collingwood in Detroit, where three men were shot by Purple Gangsters in 1931 in one of their most daring crimes yet.  *Detroit News file photo*  **A crowd quickly formed outside the Collingwood Apartments at 1740 Collingwood in Detroit, where three men were shot by Purple Gangsters in 1931 in one of their most daring crimes yet.** |

**Feds target Purple Gang**

The flouting of Prohibition was so blatant that federal agents targeted the city and the Purple Gang for prosecution. According to Robert A. Rockaway's book on Jewish gangsters, "But He Was Good To His Mother," FBI agents dressed as Hasidic Jews attended a service at B'Nai David on the Day of Atonement, hoping some wanted Purple gangsters would show up. The feds cover was blown when they stepped outside to smoke cigarettes, which is strictly forbidden on the holiday.

The demise of the Purple Gang began when government agents enlisted the help of the Italian mafia. Another turning point came when one of the gang's acolytes testified against the organization following the Collingwood Apartments Massacre, one of the most-daring Purple Gang murders in 1926.

Bookie Levine had been asked by Purple Gang boss Joe Bernstein to bring three Jewish gangsters from Chicago -- Herman "Hymie" Paul, Joseph Lebovitz and Izzy Sutker -- to a meeting at Apartment 211 in the Collingwood Apartments on Detroit's west side.

The three were imported to Detroit to work hired hands in the gang's bootlegging operation. Once they decided to bypass the gang's authority and go into business for themselves, their Purple bosses decided they had to go. It was during the meeting in Apartment 211 that all three were shot and killed. Although bullets whizzed by his nose, Levine was spared.

Believing that he had lived only to be knocked off at a later date, Levine agreed to testify against the three Purple gangsters who were charged in the murders. After his testimony, Levine set up residence in Detroit police headquarters.

Newman remembers Levine's mother lived upstairs from him at the Cordoba Apartments. But there was no sign of Solly.

"She said he moved to Chicago," he says.

**Just a memory**

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| *David Coates / The Detroit News*  **Marcia Cron shows the narrow, short door in the basement of the Woodbridge Tavern, which led to a speakeasy run by her grandparents during Prohibition. The speak was a hangout for members of the Purple Gang.** |

Today there is little evidence left of the Purple Gang's bloody heyday.

Downstairs from the shuttered Woodbridge Tavern in Rivertown, owner Marcia Cron shows the basement room where her grandparents ran a blind pig when their legitimate bar, Dick's, had to close.

On the wall behind what was the bar is a faded painting of a flapper lounging in a seductive pose, as well as a more demure view of a flapper's bobbed hairdo. The blind pig was just yards from the river and served as a frequent watering hole for Purple gangsters, Cron says. "My mother would drive a car to go pick up the liquor (from gangsters) when she was just 12," she says. "She would deliver it here to the back cellar door."

Today, Hastings Street is just a memory, the ghosts of its jazz musicians, gangsters and wild women lying under the concrete of I-75. While the Sugar House is gone, a rickety nearby commercial garage is almost surely the one that figures in Purple Gang history. And farther down Oakland Avenue, the Shvitz, a bathhouse used by Purple gangsters, is still open for business, circled by a barbed wire fence.

Newman remembers all the addresses for the Oakland Sugar House, Henry the Hatter (where his oldest brother worked), plus every address and phone number where he ever lived.

He can remember when Detroit was a bloodier and yes, a more colorful place, with characters like blind pig owner Lefty Clark walking down the street with a monkey on his shoulder and the German shepherds brought in by gangsters running the Ackmu Club to guard their liquor.

"The Irish, Jewish and Italians didn't get along," says Newman, modestly describing his former east-side neighborhood.

http://www.webcitation.org/6466SUSXj

Article #3

Modern article on gangsters were viewed in the past and present.

**Chicago's Jazz Age gangsters were covered like celebrities**

August 04, 2013|By Ron Grossman, Chicago Tribune reporter

Some Tribune headlines of the 1920s and 1930s — like "6 Wounded in 4 Gun Affrays; Gangs Fight Running Battle" — could be recycled today, drive-by shootings being a common denominator of Chicago then and now.

Yet while today's coverage of gang violence is appropriately sober, crime reporters of the Jazz Age felt no need to emotionally distance themselves from their subject matter. They would parse the style of a murder like drama critics analyzing a theatrical production: "Two killings of the traditional 'ride' variety occurred yesterday in Chicago," the Trib observed on Oct. 20, 1932. Poetic allusion prevailed over straight reporting, as in a 1930 account of a mobster who "came to the end of gunman's trail last night."

http://articles.chicagotribune.com/images/pixel.gif

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Some of the dialogue from Prohibition-era crime stories reads like a script of a gangster movie, as when a cop tried to get a stricken racketeer to finger his assailant. "'I'm going for good. Let me die in peace,' he whispered," the Trib reported of the 1930 bedside plea of James McManus, a beer runner. And above all else, the Tribune felt an obligation to keep the reading public fully informed of the bad guys' nicknames. Tribune clips are dotted with colorful monikers like "Mossy," "Big Steve," "Little Hymie, "Dutch," "Spike" and "The Scourge."

Once again, Chicago is confronted by a seemingly intractable problem of gang violence, just as it faced in the 1920s. But back then, the forces of law and order were handicapped by a popular-culture romanticization of the gangster. Hollywood and the media made household names of mobsters who held huge swaths of the city in their deadly grasp, and reduced elected officials to being their lackeys. For the Tribune, it was an era of journalistic civil war between its Editorial page and its news columns — the former decrying lawlessness, the latter feeding the public's seemingly inexhaustible hunger for tales of tough guys with blazing guns.

In a 1925 editorial, the paper noted: "Why should the criminal worry? If he's caught, there's the grand jury. If he's indicted, there's the trial. If he's convicted, there's the Supreme Court. If his sentence is upheld, there's still the board of pardons and parole and a governor widely heralded for his benevolence. And through all these vicissitudes the constant aid of shrewd and unscrupulous lawyers, lax bail laws, and the sort of help that can be bought with crooked money."

Almost as if to make the Tribune's point, when South Side mobster "Diamond Joe" Esposito celebrated his son's christening that year, the guests included two sitting judges, a former judge, the clerk of probate court and a U.S. senator. "My fren's are de beegest an' highest men in the ceety," Esposito bragged, according to the Trib's report. Three years later, Esposito was killed in a drive-by shooting while sitting on his front steps. The day he died, U.S. Sen. Charles Deneen publicly praised Esposito as a loyal and generous friend. The day of the funeral, the senator's house was bombed, the most high-profile event from the infamous Pineapple Primary that pitted Deneen's camp against corrupt Mayor William "Big Bill" Hale Thompson.

Of course many Chicagoans, unlike Esposito's A-list guests, declined to make their peace with the mobsters' hold over the life of the city. In July 1925, the Trib reported a meeting at Senn High School of neighbors angered by the reign of lawlessness on the city's streets. As the meeting let out, a motorist was shot and his car was stolen just a few blocks away. In Chicago Heights, residents formed an anti-mobster vigilante group. And when gangs shot it out on the Boul Mich, a police captain complained: "It used to be a shot in the dark upon some remote prairie, with a dead man or two found the next morning. But Michigan Avenue at noon, and sixteen shootings at once — that's going a little strong."

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Still, editorial writers, concerned citizens and indignant cops were fighting an uphill battle in trying raise the public's ire against mobsters, as Page One stories and movies were making them celebrities. A gangland funeral, especially if the guest of honor hadn't died of natural causes, got the kind of gushing coverage usually reserved for a society wedding. "Sammy (Samoots) Amatuna will be laid away, barring police interference, in a festival of death probably as elaborate as that funeral of funerals, that of the late Dean O'Banion," the Trib predicted on the eve of a 1925 funeral.

O'Banion, a mobster who doubled as a florist, was the victim of an assassin who cased his shop pretending to order flowers for another mobster's funeral. Of Amatuna's passing, the Trib noted that he was mortally wounded by two gunmen in a Roosevelt Road barber shop "where he had just been manicured and shaved preparatory, as he then supposed, to an evening at the opera." Winding its way through the Little Italy neighborhood, the paper noted, the funeral cortege passed "Death Corner," the Near North Side site of many gangland slayings.

When the Cabrini-Green housing development subsequently was built nearby, the neighborhood experienced another wave of gangland killings. In both generations, the economic engine driving the violence was the money to be made dealing in an illicit product — drugs in recent times, booze during Prohibition. The profit margin encouraged mobsters to try to grab as much market share as possible via "men with quick revolvers," as the Tribune put it in 1925.

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Of the Jazz Age gangsters, one of the most ruthless was Al Capone, who methodically eliminated rival bootleggers. When seven of his gang were machine-gunned in a North Side garage on St. Valentine's Day 1929, George "Bugs" Moran promptly retired, reportedly observing, "Only Capone kills like that."

These bootleggers met the public's thirst for alcohol during the widely unpopular Prohibition years, enabling the press to make quasi-heroes of mobsters or simply fascinating fodder with which to sell newspapers.

In late December 1922, Edward Gorman, a minor league hoodlum, ran off with Lillian Ginsberg, the 17-year-old daughter of a prominent Chicago bondsman, which led to a race between her father's clients and the police to find the couple. When they surfaced, Eddie tried to square things by claiming they'd gotten married. The alleged bride said she could neither affirm or deny his excuse. "I must have been drunk," she said, "because I don't remember marrying Eddie."

Gangsters' family lives were steady fodder for slow news days, as in the story of Florence Murphy Oberta. A "Gun Widow," as the Tribune dubbed her, she married and buried two ill-fated mobsters in rapid succession: "Love, in the span of twenty short months made her a connoisseur of coffins," the paper noted.

Gangsters' mothers were another standby subject, especially if they stood by their offspring. When one took the witness stand pleading for her son to be spared a hangman's rope, a Tribune reporter pulled out all the stops. His description of Angelina Vinci could have gone straight to the working script for Hollywood movie, without the slightest editing: "In black dress, black crepe shawl over her smooth hair, she looked the classic mother of the poor, the figure that kneels before comforting saints in dim cathedrals the world over."

<http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2013-08-04/news/ct-per-flash-gangland-killings-0804-20130804_1_gang-violence-mobster-tribune>