

U. S. Bureau of Investigation

Department of Justice
1900 Bankers Building
Chicago Illinois

May 2, 1934

Director,
Division of Investigation,
U. S. Department of Justice,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Sir:

Re: JOHN DILLINGER, with aliases -
FUGITIVE, I.O. 1217; JOHN HAMILTON,
with aliases, I.O. 1220; HOMER VAN
CLETER, with aliases, I.O. 1222; et al
NATIONAL MOTOR VEHICLE THEFT ACT
OBSTRUCTION OF JUSTICE.

The following longhand note was given to Inspector W. A. Rorer on the morning of April 23, 1934, by some unidentified person at Little Bohemia:

"Henry - You can go to Rhinelander and call as planned. Not one word to anyone about it. Tell them to line up the highways. There will be more here tomorrow and don't let anyone know where you are going or why. We want to be protected by them as best as they can. Tell them that."

Agent J. L. Madala exhibited the above note to Mrs. Wanatka, and she identified same as the message she wrote on the morning of April 22, 1934. In this connection she advised that on Saturday afternoon, April 21, 1934, she and her husband, Emil, had a discussion about notifying the authorities of Dillinger's appearance at Little Bohemia. They finally decided to direct a letter to Edward A. Fisher, Assistant United States Attorney, Chicago, with whom they were well acquainted, advising him of the above, and with the request that he relay this information to the proper authorities. She further stated that Emil wrote the letter, and that she left the lodge at 7:00 P.M. that night for the purpose of driving to Mercer, Wisconsin to mail it. She advised that none of the gang attempted to stop her, and when she arrived at Manitowish, Wisconsin, which is only a few miles from Mercer, she picked up her brother Lloyd LaPorte, at his home, and asked him to go with her. He accompanied her to Mercer where she deposited the aforementioned letter, and then Lloyd drove her, at her request, to her other brother's home, George LaPorte, at Manitowish, who was giving a birthday party for his son.

They arrived at George LaPorte's home at 8:00 P.M. and she immediately informed Henry Voss, who was there at the time, about Dillinger and his gang being at Little Bohemia. She stated that she was very much afraid, and was anxious to know what to do. According to Mrs. Wanatka, Henry Voss suggested that the police at Milwaukee, or the Federal authorities in Chicago, be immediately notified, as he thought that the sheriff's office here was inadequately equipped to cope with that gang.

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In this connection they tentatively agreed to have Henry Voss drive to Rhinelander the next morning for the purpose of having him telephone some one in Chicago concerning Dillinger and his mob's appearance at Little Bohemia. This plan, of course, was pending the approval of Emil Wanatka.

Mrs. Wanatka went on to relate that on the following morning, April 22, 1934, she and Emil went over the situation, and it was agreed upon that the above plan be carried out. However, the next question was - how to get word to Henry Voss informing him to notify authorities as originally planned. Mrs. Wanatka stated that they dared not phone him at his home, for fear that their wires were tapped. They finally agreed to notify him by messenger, and in this connection Mrs. Wanatka wrote the above quoted letter and gave same together with a package of cigarettes to Lloyd LaPorte, brother of Mrs. Wanatka, who was in the place at that time. All this transpired before the gang got up that morning, which she estimates to be around 7:30 A.M.

Mrs. Wanatka continued that Lloyd delivered the message to Henry Voss without any difficulty; that she later heard that Mr. Voss had driven to Rhinelander, and there phoned Mr. Laubenheimer, in Chicago. She stated that she was very much afraid and nervous all that day, and towards late that afternoon she heard about the place that the mob was going to leave, immediately upon the arrival of Pat Reilly and Pat Cherrington from Minneapolis. She stated that she left the lodge at about 4:30 that afternoon, and proceeded to Voss's place, where she informed Mrs. Voss that the gang was leaving right after dinner that evening; that in view of Mr. Voss being at Rhinelander waiting for the Federal authorities to arrive, she (Mrs. Voss) drove to Rhinelander to relay the above information to Mr. Voss.

The above mentioned longhand note written by Mrs. Wanatka and delivered to Henry Voss by Lloyd LaPorte, is being retained in the Chicago Division Office files.

Agent John L. Madala interviewed Lloyd LaPorte, Manitowish, Wisconsin on April 27, 1934, and furnished the following information. He stated that on Friday, April 20, 1934, he stopped at Little Bohemia at about two P.M. for a glass of beer; that he remained there for approximately 15 or 20 minutes, and then left; that as he was starting his car, he noticed a Ford V8 Sedan, bearing Minnesota license plates, stop at a point about ten feet to the right side of his car. LaPorte stated that he did not pay any particular attention to the car, as he thought it contained customers going to Little Bohemia, and as he was starting his car, the driver of the other car got out and asked, "Is this Emil's place?" LaPorte replied, "Yes", and drove away. As he was leaving, he noticed that there were three occupants in this car, including the driver, and further noticed that the first three numbers of the license plate were "216". Agent exhibited to Lloyd LaPorte numerous photographs of the Dillinger mob, and he positively identified the photo of Homer Van Meter as the likeness of the man with whom he talked. He was unable to identify the

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other two occupants, giving the reason that he did not get a very good look at them. He stated, however, that one of the three was a woman.

LaPorte continued that he did not visit Emil's place again until early Sunday morning; that on Saturday night, April 21, 1934, at about 7:15 P.M. his sister, Mrs. Emil Wanatka, drove to his house and asked him to accompany her to Mercer, Wisconsin to mail a letter; that as they were proceeding to Mercer, she told him that Dillinger and his gang were at their place, and that she was sending a letter to some Federal official in Chicago, advising him to notify the proper authorities. LaPorte stated that upon their return they stopped at his brother's place, who was giving a birthday party for his son; that Mr. and Mrs. Voss and other relatives were there when they arrived. He stated that Mrs. Wanatka immediately called Mr. Voss to one side and told him about Dillinger's presence at Little Bohemia. LaPorte advised that he does not know the details of their conversation, but that after a while, he, Henry Voss, and Mrs. Wanatka discussed the best possible method of notifying the authorities; that in this connection, Henry Voss was afraid that Mrs. Wanatka's letter to Chicago would not be received in time, as the gang already had intimated to Emil that they were going to leave immediately upon the arrival of the other members of the gang (Pat Reilly and Pat Cherrington) from Minneapolis. LaPorte stated that Henry Voss suggested driving to Rhinelander that night for the purpose of calling Chicago or Milwaukee, but Mrs. Wanatka argued against that, as she wanted to confer with Emil first. They finally agreed to wait until morning; that is, until Mrs. Wanatka talked with Emil, and it was arranged that Lloyd LaPorte should go to Little Bohemia early the next morning, get Emil's decision on the matter, and then relay the information to Henry Voss, who was to act in accordance with their plans.

LaPorte stated that on the following morning he asked his mother to accompany him to Little Bohemia in order to divert any suspicion which they might create because of their appearance there. He stated that they arrived at Emil's place at about 7:15 A.M., and that the man, who he identified as Homer Van Meter, was the only member of the gang seen about the premises; that while he, LaPorte, was in the kitchen, he observed through the window, Van Meter walk about the yard and look over LaPorte's car on the inside and outside. He further stated that neither Emil nor Mrs. Wanatka talked to him, as they were afraid that their actions might arouse some suspicion. He stated that he remained there for about thirty minutes, when Mrs. Wanatka deftly handed him a package of cigarettes, together with a note, and whispered to him that he should give the note to Henry Voss. LaPorte stated that he discreetly left the premises and drove to Voss's and turned the note over to him; that Voss read same and immediately asked his son, Lloyd Voss, and him, Lloyd LaPorte, to accompany him to Rhinelander; that when they arrived there, Henry Voss called Mr. Laubenheimer in Chicago, requesting him to notify the proper authorities of Dillinger and his mob's appearance at Little Bohemia. LaPorte

stated that he and Lloyd and Henry Voss remained at Rhinelander until the Agents arrived from Chicago and St. Paul in airplanes, and then proceeded with them to Little Bohemia.

Henry Voss, upon being interviewed by Agents M. C. Falkner and M. B. Rhodes, stated that he and his wife attended a birthday party about 9:00 P.M. April (29) 1934 at the home of his brother-in-law, George LaPorte; that Mrs. Emil Manatka and Lloyd LaPorte were there also; that during the course of the party Mrs. Manatka told him the Dillinger gang was at their place and had been since Friday, April 20th, and that she had, on the evening of April 21st, mailed a letter to the Federal authorities, names not recalled, at Chicago giving information of the above fact; further, that Emil had taken the license numbers of the men's cars and had given them to Mrs. Manatka to give to him, Voss. The above conversation took place in a bedroom at George LaPorte's home during the course of the party. George LaPorte was not present but his brother Lloyd was. After learning the above, he, Voss, talked to George LaPorte. Voss could not recall that George LaPorte wanted to organize a posse. However, he, Voss, does remember that he told George that local citizens should do nothing in the matter until the arrival of the Federal officers inasmuch as he had been reading in the paper that Agents of the Department of Justice were handling such cases and he thought that the local authorities should wait until they arrived on the scene and obtain the benefit of their experience in the matter.

A. B. ?

Sometime around ten P.M., Sunday, April 22, 1934, Voss tried to get in touch with United States Marshal Laubenheimer, Chicago, by telephone and report the above news to him, but he was unsuccessful. He then was able to reach Mr. Laubenheimer's son, name not recalled, but who is in the real estate business in Chicago, on the telephone, and he reported the situation to him. Subsequent thereto he received a telephone call from Mr. Purvis at Chicago, advising that his Department was handling the Dillinger case and that he would be pleased to receive what information he had relative to Dillinger's presence in the vicinity; that he gave the information, related above, to Mr. Purvis. He was unable to state the approximate time that he talked to Mr. Purvis, but said it was shortly after he had reported the situation to Mr. Laubenheimer's son.

George LaPorte, Manitowish, Wisconsin, upon being interviewed by Agents Madala, Melvin and Rhodes, stated he is a brother-in-law of Emil Manatka and Henry Voss of Manitowish; that sometime during Saturday morning, April 21, 1934, his sister, Mrs. Manatka, sent her son to his, LaPorte's place with some clothes; that he, LaPorte, suspected from the above incident that something was wrong over at Emil's place, but thought nothing more of it in view of the fact that Emil and his sister do not get along well together and are constantly having family quarrels.

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LaPorte stated that along about 9:00 P.M. Saturday, April 21, 1934, he gave a birthday party at his home for his son; that Mrs. Manatka, his sister, Mrs. Henry Voss and her husband Henry, together with his brother Lloyd LaPorte were there; that Mrs. Manatka called Henry Voss and Lloyd LaPorte into a bedroom in his home during the course of the party and told them about Lillinger and his party being at their place; that Emil was not present at the above conference. George LaPorte was not present in the bedroom when Mrs. Manatka gave the above information, but subsequently learned of it from Henry Voss. In addition to the above, Mrs. Manatka told Henry and Lloyd of the fact that she had just mailed a letter to the Federal authorities at Chicago reporting the above incident from Mercer, Wisconsin.

George LaPorte stated that when he learned of the above news from Henry Voss he favored the immediate organization of a posse of local citizens and proposed surrounding Emil's place at once and attacking the lodge from all sides. Henry Voss was against this procedure and said "Wait until the Federal men get here". LaPorte stated that in view of the fact that Henry Voss has more influence in this community than he, he yielded to Henry's judgment and talked no more of organizing a posse.

George LaPorte denied that he had gone to Mercer, Wisconsin after receiving the above news to endeavor to organize a posse. He stated that Henry Voss was afraid if a local posse was organized at once and started shooting at the lodge, Emil and his help might be killed.

Very truly yours,

M. H. Purvis
M. H. PURVIS, *per vwp*

Special Agent in Charge.

JLM:FWV

cc St. Paul

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