

Division of Investigation

U. S. Department of Justice

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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

DIRECTOR

FILE

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

JUN 2 - 1934

Dear Sir:

Re: JOHN DILLINGER, with aliases,  
I. O. 1217, et al. NMVTA.  
HARBORING FUG. FROM JUSTICE.  
St. Paul file No. 26-2434.

At approximately 2:00 p.m., Sunday, April 22, 1934, I received a telephone call from Special Agent in Charge Purvis of the Chicago office requesting that Mr. Rorer, Mr. Hanni, and myself, with all available agents and equipment, proceed immediately by chartered plane or otherwise to Rhinelander, Wisconsin, as definite information had been received relative to the location of Dillinger, and that the Director had instructed that we arrive at Rhinelander where we would meet Mr. Purvis at the airport. A plane was chartered at a cost of 35¢ per mile; and as soon as a pilot could be reached, we took off from St. Paul with the following group in addition to myself: Inspector W. A. Rorer and Special Agents John E. Brennan, S. W. Hardy, and G. T. Melvin. Mr. Hanni gathered together the equipment, and such portion of it as could be carried by airplane was carried in that manner; and gas gun equipment, which was not acceptable for transportation by airplane, and other portions of the equipment were carried by automobile by Special Agent in Charge Hanni, who was accompanied by Special Agents O. G. Hall, G. F. Hurley, and T. J. Dodd.

The preparation for the trip was made hurriedly as the urgency was not definitely known except that Mr. Purvis stated it was necessary to get to Rhinelander as soon as possible.

The St. Paul plane was the first to arrive on the scene, and we were greeted by three individuals in two automobiles, one of whom introduced himself as a Mr. LaPorte who asked whether I was looking for a man with a white handkerchief around his neck. Not having heard of this means of identification before, I informed him that I was; whereupon he introduced me to a Mr. Voss. Mr. Voss stated that his daughter, Mrs. Wenetka (?) was married to an individual whose name was Emil Wenetka, who operated an inn fifty miles north of Rhinelander. He stated that he had personally called at this inn on two or three occasions since Friday and had been informed by his daughter that a group of thugs was there and she believed that John

Dillinger was included among them. By this time, a crowd of people were assembling to view the arrival of an airplane in that small town, so we walked to a place where we could confer, in an adjoining wooded area, and I exhibited to Mr. LaPorte and to Mr. Voss photographs of a number of the individuals for whom we were looking. He stated that he had seen only two of the men. He had not seen anyone who looked like Dillinger, but there was a flat-nosed individual who had some resemblance to Tommy Carroll, and he thought that perhaps the girl whose photograph I showed him, i.e., Pat Cherrington, was probably one of those who were there. He stated that there had been six men and four women present, the first couple having arrived Friday with word from Louie, who runs Louie's Place just north of Chicago, that Louie had sent this couple to Emil's place, i.e., the Little Bohemia Lodge. Later that evening, the additional members of this mob arrived.

Emil and Emil's wife communicated to Mr. Voss and also to Mr. LaPorte, who is a brother-in-law of Emil Wenetka, that it was believed that the guests were mobsters and they entered into some discussion as to what should be done about this. The group stated that when the mobsters arrived on the premises, there was someone from upstairs who watched them and an eye was kept on them all the time while they were in the house; and whenever the telephone rang, there was someone downstairs belonging to this group who would listen to the conversation over the telephone. Mrs. Wenetka expressed the opinion that Dillinger was in the group. Finally it was decided that some sort of message should be sent out to Mr. Voss; and there was an understanding between them that in the event authorities were notified, Mr. and Mrs. Wenetka and their child would at 4:00 o'clock in the morning slip down to the basement so that the officers could raid the place.

Mr. Voss then prepared a diagram of the building and the seven or eight outhouses, including a cabin, a closed garage, and an open garage. We were informed both by the diagram and by his oral description that there was a lake to the rear of the house and that there was no means of escape by this lake; that there was no boat there; that the lake was covered partially with ice, and that it would be impossible for anyone to make an escape by any means across the lake, and that there was but a narrow margin of space between the house and the lake.

Although the identification of the gangsters for whom we were searching was not positive, the enthusiasm of Mr. Voss was of such a character that it was recognized that he was at least sincere. He stated that by means of sticking a note in a cigarette package, it was possible for him to get word from Mrs. Wenetka that they were prepared that night to have a raid; and in accordance with the understanding, they were to go to the cellar at four o'clock, which would be

the first sign of daybreak. The raid was to be made at that time.

Upon learning that it would be necessary to obtain transportation from Rhinelander as there were no automobiles in the party, and Mr. Hanni's group was not expected to arrive until late and his car was full, I proceeded to town immediately; and in an effort to keep discreet the fact that we were Federal officers and that we had a raid in mind, I decided to contact only one automobile agency, and learned that the agency having the most cars available was the Ford agency, the owner of which was considered reliable. I went to the garage and sales offices, looked over the stock, most of which consisted of new cars, and called the manager to his office. I explained to him that we were Federal officers and that we had some business in that vicinity and needed cars. He stated that he had no license to rent automobiles and that he did not want to rent his new cars and that he had only one coupe that he could let us have, and he refused to let us have that if we were in any way interested in liquor law violations as he stated that he had to sell his cars to the residents of that section and obviously, he did not want his name connected with rendering aid against liquor law violators. I assured him that this was not our purpose. He inquired whether we were looking for Dillinger, and I told him that it was reasonable to assume that all law enforcement officers were interested in finding Dillinger, but did not disclose our purpose at any time. I did inform him, however, that it was absolutely necessary that transportation be obtained, and he agreed that we might take two additional cars which salesmen were then out demonstrating, and the salesmen would be back later in the evening. He stated that it would be from one and a half to two hours before these cars would be available, and I also informed him that it would be necessary for us to have still another automobile, which he agreed to get by one means or another.

Having seen an airplane come into the port at a distance, and not knowing the number of men Mr. Purvis had with him, I returned to the airport and found that Mr. Purvis and party had arrived in two planes. It was then that Mr. Voss and Special Agent Suran were instructed to proceed to Mr. Voss's home in advance of the regular party so that Mr. Voss could obtain information from his relatives as to whether the party of gangsters had made any different plans or whether they were still at this place. After approximately fifteen minutes, Mr. Voss and Agent Suran drove back to the airport hurriedly and announced that Mrs. Voss or Miss Voss had driven from her home fifty miles away and Agent Suran and Mr. Voss had met her on the outskirts of Rhinelander and she informed them that the parties at the inn were planning to make their departure immediately after dinner.

It became necessary to take hurried action, and the car of one of the spectators was commandeered to drive three agents into the town of Rhinelander to the Ford agency to bring back automobiles and they brought back some cars, which were, they stated, the best available; and the arms and equipment were transferred to the cars immediately and we proceeded to the garage section of the Ford dealer's establishment, who closed the garage and turned off the lights in his office, and we were able to load the guns and the machine gun drums under this cover and by approximately 7:30 we were enroute to the Little Bohemia Lodge in a total of five automobiles. The roads were very bad but a great deal of distance was covered in a rather short period of time.

The original plan had been for the house to be surrounded very cautiously during the night so that at daybreak we could enter the house, as the hosts on the inside of the house would at four o'clock seek safety in the basement. Upon receipt of this hurried information, however, feeling that time was of the essence, we proceeded with all haste from Rhinelander to the inn fifty odd miles away. With the exception of the rough penciled chart drawn by Mr. Voss and the information furnished by Mr. Voss and Mr. LaPorte, we had no other information as to the layout. Enroute, two of the automobiles broke down and had to be abandoned on the way, and the last fifteen to twenty miles were covered with Special Agents hanging on to the running board in terrifically cold weather.

Upon arriving at a point about two miles from the Little Bohemia Lodge, the party stopped and it was explained by Mr. Voss that there were two bends in the road and then a straight-away before we would arrive to the detour leading to the inn. At this point, we learned that Mr. Voss had been informed that Mrs. Wenetka and her child had left the inn and were at Mr. Voss's house. I returned with Mr. Voss to the Voss home, about half a mile away, and we learned that the guests had not checked out up to thirty minutes previous to that time. We were informed by Mr. Voss that the only other occupants of the inn were Emil Wenetka and two or three assistants who were employed by Emil. We also were advised as to the location of the garage in which the gangsters' cars were located.

The plan was then to proceed with lights turned off to a point close enough to the house so that the surroundings could be clearly observed, and immediately an organization would be arranged whereby the house could be surrounded and raided since Mrs. Wenetka and her child were absent.

At about 9:00 p.m., as we approached the house, we could see that the lights were on in a goodly portion of the building; and the car in which I was riding was in front. We stopped the car at a point of vantage; and upon opening the doors, we heard dogs barking around the house. I had not previously been informed that there were any dogs about the house. Of course, the barking of the dogs would be interpreted as a signal of the arrival of outsiders at the inn; therefore, upon hearing the dogs barking, we all immediately got out of the cars and began surrounding the house, Mr. Rorer leading one group to one side of the house, and other agents took the other side of the house; and Mr. Purvis, Special Agent Baum, and myself were approaching from the center. Suddenly, an automobile parked in front of the house started up and we gave orders for it to stop. Several of us called in a loud pitched voice for the car to stop, and the words "Federal officers", "police", "officers of the Federal law" were all repeated loudly and distinctly; and the car, instead of stopping, put on a burst of speed, and I believe that both Mr. Purvis and myself simultaneously shouted orders to shoot at the tires of the car. It was felt that since this car was parked near the garage in which we were informed the guests' cars were parked, the first group of the Dillinger gang was trying to make a get-away; and shots were fired at the tires of the car with machine guns.. By this time, those of us in front of the house guarding the only exit to the highway and at the same time approaching the garage in which the cars were supposed to have been parked, heard some shooting with machine guns in the rear of the house. In addition to machine guns, it was believed that some single shots were fired; and my personal feeling was that Mr. Rorer had made a very rapid arrival to the rear of the house on the lake side and perhaps had cornered the gang trying to make a get-away in that direction. The automobile in front continued its efforts to make a get-away but then suddenly stopped and the motor was running. An elderly looking man got out of the car, which was the first time anyone had been seen, and sat down beside the car for a few minutes and he was ordered to stick his hands up and approach the officers. When definitely informed that we were officers, he sat down by the garage for a few moments, and reached into his hip pocket and took out his flask and took a drink. We continued to exhort him to come to us, but he did not do so and walked into the house. He offered no resistance, and orders were issued for no one to shoot at him unless he made some attempt to take the offensive. It appeared that he was either drunk or hurt. He went back into the house and could be seen through the windows walking back and forth.

Mr. Rorer then returned to the front and informed me that agents had been stationed all the way to the lake. Immediately after the first shooting at the automobile tires, some shooting from the roof of the building occurred; and Mr. Rorer stated he returned the fire of some men on the roof. One man jumped off the roof, and Mr. Rorer

believes this man went back into the house. Mr. Rorer stated that he had seen one man running around the edge of one of the cabins and that the man was firing in the direction of the automobile in which the CCC workers (later identified as such) were, which likewise would have been in the direction of Mr. Purvis, Mr. Baum, and myself. Mr. Rorer stated that upon seeing this man, he opened fire on him. The next morning, bullet holes were found in the ground surrounding this cottage as evidence of this fact. Unless this man had been shot, it was felt that he had been able to make a get-away from some place, not, however, from the inn itself. It was believed that all the others were in the house, and I continued to hold this view, particularly because of the rapidity with which Mr. Rorer and the other agents reached the rear of the house on the lake front. Some time later, the elderly man who had been in the house, after making several appearances at the door and treating indifferently all entreaties to approach us with his hands raised, with full assurance he would not be hurt if he kept his hands up, this particular individual, followed by Emil Wenetka and two employees, came out of the house and were kept constantly covered. Their hands were kept raised until they came to Mr. Purvis and myself, where we immediately searched them and found them to be unarmed. By this time, an individual identifying himself as a Deputy Sheriff had arrived and he identified the entire group.

In the meantime, an ambulance arrived, and <sup>a</sup>the man who had made a get-away returned, saying he was shot both in the arm and in the leg. He was one of the CCC workers, as was the elderly man, John. They were placed in the ambulance and Special Agent McIntire was to accompany them to the hospital. In the event their identities were not definitely established, he could find out more particulars concerning them.

Prior to the arrival of the ambulance and within a few moments after the shooting in front of the inn, a car came down the road leading off the highway, with headlights burning. The car was ordered to stop, the occupants were ordered to get out; but instead, the agents who were covering the road from the rear advised me, the car proceeded to leave the premises and several shots were fired at this machine. I was informed on April 24th by telephone from Mr. Rorer that a car which had had a tire shot off arrived at the service station about a mile away and a new tire was put on, and it is believed that the woman occupant of the car was Pat Cherrington, while it was possible that her associate was Pat Reilly.

After the shooting had subsided, and Mr. Rorer had inspected the guards on the left of the building, and I had inspected those on the way to the lakeshore on the right, Special Agents Newman and Baum were sent to Mr. Voss's residence two miles away to telephone the airport at Rhinelander, leaving word as to how Mr. Hanni and his party should contact a guide left there with Agent Suran in order to reach us. They made the telephone call and returned; and in view of the amount of shooting, it was then decided it would be well for Special Agent Newman to return to telephone the Sheriff to the effect that the raid was being conducted by Federal officers so that any complaint reaching him, either from inside the house which we had surrounded or from any resident in the neighborhood, would not lead to the result that the Sheriff would make an attack on us from the rear. Mr. Newman asked that Agent Baum be permitted to accompany him, and I agreed that this should be done.

Subsequently, Emil, the owner of the inn, had been permitted to go to the home of his father-in-law to get his coat as he was in his shirt sleeves. He returned several minutes later with information that somebody was holding up a house in which there was a telephone, about one and a half or two miles away, and that the members of the family in the house, as well as our own Special Agents, were being held up by this bandit. Agents equipped with machine guns were immediately dispatched to the scene, and they returned with the information that Special Agent Baum had been killed and Special Agent Newman injured; and that Mr. Hanni had arrived shortly after the shooting and had made arrangements, and already Agent Baum's body was being carried to the CCC Camp Hospital for examination and treatment, if he were still alive, although Agent Hall, who had arrived with Mr. Hanni, stated that Agent Baum was positively dead. Mr. Hanni took Agent Newman and a constable who had been wounded to a hospital at Ironwood, Michigan, several miles away. The agents who returned stated that there was absolutely nothing further to be done and we needed all our men to keep those believed to be inside the house from making an escape, as we felt sure that they would attempt to do so before daylight.

Fearing that someone had escaped from one of the garages or outhouses and might seek reinforcements among the outlaws, one of the agents was placed in a position between the house and the entrance to the roadway leading off the highway to the house, while another agent was placed rather deep in a wooded area, to prevent any surprise attack from the rear.

We held our positions, keeping the house under constant observation, until daylight; and the only sign of life in the house was on one occasion when a light went out in one of the rooms on the first floor. At just before daybreak, we were informed that the Sheriff with a posse were stationed about a mile away, waiting for daybreak, and they expected to come to join us. This information was brought by Emil, the owner of the inn, and we informed Emil that they might approach, if they cared to. Just at daybreak, the posse began approaching and I went down to meet them and inquired as to their identities and aided in distributing them and see that they would be able to approach our agents on each side in such a manner that our agents would not mistake them for some of the bandit gang. The Sheriff was in charge of the group, although there were several individuals who were rather hot-headed and wanted to either burn down the house or blindly walk into it; and the Sheriff asked me our plans and I told him that we planned to immediately begin throwing gas into the house in order to gas out the occupants, which would be preferable to our going in and give the bandits the advantage. He agreed that this was wise. Several gas shells were fired at the house but were not successful in penetrating even the glass of the windows, when the accuracy of the guns was such as to cause the shells to hit the windows. They bounced back after striking the glass. Some gas, however, was introduced after continued firing in this manner; and later, one of the agents threw gas grenades into the building. Some rifle shots were fired through the windows, these shots apparently having been fired by some of the Deputy Sheriffs.

At this time, a woman's voice came from the building, asking them to quit firing, and we told them to come out with their hands up, and three girls came out. These are the three girls who are now being held in the Madison, Wisconsin, jail.

We had to wait a considerable time before the gas subsided enough for us to make an examination of the inside; and no one was found to be occupying the premises when it was examined.

I then proceeded with Mr. Purvis, leaving an ample detail at the house, to the home of Mr. Voss to telephone the Director such information as I had personally observed, as well as such information as had been furnished me concerning the shooting of Agents Baum and Newman.



*J*squadron was organized into details, one group to make the investigation concerning the shooting of Agent Baum, and the other to conduct investigation and collect the facts and evidence relative to the shooting around the inn, and a group of three men to begin the location of the equipment, automobiles, etc.

Upon receipt of advice from the Director to cause agents to proceed promptly to the St. Paul and the Chicago offices, and on being informed that one of the individuals who had stolen an automobile had been heard to make inquiries concerning the location of Highway No. 8 leading towards St. Paul, I left Mr. Rorer with Agents Melvin and Hardy of the St. Paul office, together with the agents, whose names were furnished the Director by telephone, from the Chicago office, to continue the investigation and to look after the body of Agent Baum, as well as another agent to look after Special Agent Newman, who was injured. Mr. Rorer was left in charge.

When Emil came out of the house with his hands raised, he was shown photographs and he identified Van Meter, Dillinger, Carroll and Hamilton as the occupants of the premises; and he stated that he believed at that time that these four men were occupying a certain room in the building in which the lights were not burning.

Very truly yours,

  
H. H. CLEGG,  
Inspector.

HHC:HVS

Air Mail