

The Prohibition and Al Capone

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I. Lesson Plan Summary

Summary

This lesson begins with reading the section of any American History textbook on Prohibition. Continue with a class discussion on the causes of prohibition and the rise of organized crime that followed. Students will view segments from the A&E video series "Prohibition" or the United Streaming videos on Organized Crime and Prohibition. Another great place to get videos on this topic is You-tube. There are some really neat history project/skits from students all over the country, just view them for accuracy before presenting them to your students. The class will create an entry for their History Alive notebooks (or other notebook) a chart defining the causes and effects of Prohibition. Then the students will read a brief biography of Al Capone and his organization and give presentations in groups of various aspects of his career. The unit concludes with a DBQ on Al Capone's criminal life.

Objectives

The students will be able to:

- 1.) Discuss the factors that led to Prohibition.
- 2.) Describe how the average American felt about the 18th Amendment.
- 3.) Identify the consequences of Prohibition.
- 4.) Summarize the rise and fall of Al Capone as a Chicago crime boss.

U.S. History Event or Era

The events of Prohibition carried on for most of two decades. The early days of the 1920s through the after-effects well into the 1930s were full of stories about bootlegging and mobsters. Al Capone was just one the most famous.

Grade Level

Middle or High School

Materials

American History textbook

Video on Prohibition

Blank transparencies and markers for notebook entry (one for each pair of students)

Chart of causes and effects of Prohibition (Appendix: A)

Class set of the Bio of Al Capone (Appendix:B)

Transparencies of cartoons/quotes by and about Al Capone (Appendix:C)

Student copies of the DBQ- Al Capone (Appendix:D)

Lesson Time

This lesson will take two or three 90 minute class periods, depending on the ability level and work pace of the students and the length of your video.

II. Lesson Procedures

Procedure

Day One

- 1.) Read the section or chapter in an American History that covers Prohibition and Organized Crime.
- 2.) Class discussion on the material read; check for student comprehension of the causes of Prohibition.
- 3.) View the video on Prohibition- I like the series from A&E because it has the most information. Tell the students to take notes
- 4.) Create an entry for the student's notebooks (History Alive notebooks) based on the notes from the video

Day Two/ Three

- 1.) Review and check for student retention of day one material. Look at political cartoons and quotes to analyze their meaning.(Appendix:C)
- 2.) Pass out and complete the chart on the causes and effects of Prohibition w/ teacher assigned partner. (Appendix: A)
- 3.) Give the students the outline biography of Al Capone. (Appendix:B)
- 4.) In groups of four assign each group a different aspect of Al Capone's life and have them develop a presentation for the class. Poster, speech, notebook entries and sketches are all appropriate forms of a presentation. Allow students to pick their type of presentation.
- 5.) The DBQ is the culminating activity and it can be done as homework or during class time depending on whether the students have done a DBQ prior to this one and understand how to use it. (Appendix:D)

Causes of Prohibition	Effects of Prohibition

Outline Bio

Key events in bold face

1891 - Gabriel Capone (age, 26) marries Theresa Raiola (21) in Castellammare, Italy. Vincenzo (Jimmy) born the following year

1893 - Capones immigrate to America, Theresa pregnant with Raffalo (Ralph), settle in Brooklyn. Salvatore (Frank) born, 1895. Gabriel a barber.

1899 - Tuesday, January 17 **Al Capone born**, baptized "Alphonsus" on Feb. 7. In fairly rapid succession, Theresa bears three more sons, Amadeo Ermino (John, nicknamed "Mimi"), Umberto (Albert John), and, in 1908, Matthew Nicholas (so baptized), then two daughters, Rosalia (Rose) and Mafalda.

1909 - Johnny Torrio goes from Brooklyn to Chicago at request of his cousin, Victoria Moresco, whose husband, "Big Jim" Colosimo, needs help against Black Hand extortionists. Torrio, born 1882 in Osara di Puglia, 60 miles east of Naples, brought to the U.S. at age 2, mentored in New York's Five Points by Paul Kelly (Paolo Antonini Vaccarelli), establishes himself in Brooklyn in the early 1900s when gang wars interrupt "business" in the Five Points.



1910 - (Approx.) Francesco Uale Americanizes his name to Frankie Uale. Born 1893 in Calabria, brought to the U.S. age 9, becomes a power in the Five Points gang, and rules the rackets in Brooklyn. About 1917, begins calling himself "Yale" and opens the Harvard Inn, a large dive in Coney Island, making his young protege, Al Capone, the bouncer.

1917 - (Approx.) In the Harvard Inn, small-time hood, Frank "Galluch" Galluccio, drunk, scars Capone's face with three slashes of his knife over an insult to his sister, Lena.

-(Approx.) Capone commits first of four personal murders when a stick-up victim threatens to ID him to police.



1918 - Capone meets Mary (Mae) Coughlin, marries her 18 days after Mae gives birth to their son, Albert Francis (Sonny) on Dec. 4, 1918.

1919 - Capone beats Irish "White Hand" gang member to pulp in saloon. **Yale sends him to Torrio in Chicago** when word circulates that gang lieutenant Bill Lovett, a psychotic killer, is looking for the Italian kid with the scars who beat up his subordinate Artie Finnegan.

CHICAGO - BACKGROUND

1670s - Area's first bootlegger under protection of first corrupt official, establishing two Chicago traditions.

1779 - First permanent settler, Jean Baptist Point du Sable.

1837 - Incorporated as city.

1873 - Mayor Joseph Medill promises reform; saloonkeepers, gamblers and thieves combine to beat him for re-election.

1893 - "Bathhouse John" J. Coughlin (33) elected alderman; with Michael "Hinky-Dink" Kenna, they rule the First Ward, Chicago's red-light, gambling, anything-does district, "the Levee."



1900 - William Hale Thompson, Jr. wins key aldermanic seat on a dare and a \$50 bet. "Big Bill" Thompson, scion of a rich, prominent family, would give new meaning to the word "corrupt" as applied to city government.

1902 - "Big Jim" Colosimo, bag man for Bathhouse John and Hinky-Dink, marries Victoria Moresco, owner of two brothels; establishes a modest vice and political empire.

1909 - Torrio arrives (see above).

1910 - Big Jim opens Colosimo's Cafe on the edge of the Levee, soon becomes center of Chicago cafe society nightlife.

1915 - Swedish immigrant Fred Lundin maneuvers Thompson into the Republican nomination for mayor; **Thompson wins** - and the lid's off in Chicago!

1919 - Thompson wins re-election.

CAPONE ARRIVES - quickly becomes Torrio's protege.

1920 - Eighteenth Amendment kicks in at midnight, January 16, after one year of temporary "wartime" Prohibition.

- Robert E. Crowe wins first term as state's attorney (DA), backed by Thompson.



- Colosimo divorces Victoria to elope with singer Dale Winter; refuses Torrio's pleas to move into bootlegging, fearing the consequences. Torrio turns over "arrangements" to Capone, who calls Frankie Yale.

- Yale comes to Chicago and kills Colosimo in the foyer of the cafe, Torrio now in charge.

- Gabriel Capone dies of heart attack, Al brings entire family to Chicago, buys a 15-room duplex at 7244 S. Prairie, near Torrio's 7011 S. Clyde apartment.

1921 - Thompson falling-out with Lundin over patronage; possibility of reform candidate in '23 election impels Torrio to open operations in the Chicago suburbs.

- Political/gang killings over challenge by Anthony D'Andrea to Alderman John Powers further convinces Torrio of need for gangs to cooperate, stick to own territories, pool political clout to weather reform.

- **The Gangs of Chicago:**



Torrio (South Side)

O'Banion (North Side)

Genna Brothers (Little Italy)

Druggan & Lake (the Valley)

O'Donnell Brothers (West Side)

Ralph Sheldon/Ragen's Colts (Richard J. Daley a member)

Joseph ("Polack Joe") Saltis ("Back of the Yards"-i.e. stockyards)

Edward J. ("Spike") O'Donnell (South of Torrio)

Miller Brothers (far West Side)

Plus two minor gangs, far north: Claude Maddox & Martin Guilfoyle

1922 - Despite later myth of his "relative obscurity" (see [Myths](#)), Capone now Torrio's second-in-command.

1923 - Thompson withdraws from mayoral race when Lundin is indicted for crooked land deal (next year defended by Clarence Darrow, acquitted).



- **William E. Dever elected mayor**, appoints as police chief honest Captain Morgan A. Collins; attempt at reform, showing wisdom of Torrio's plan for gang cooperation.

- **Start of "Beer Wars"** when Spike O'Donnell gets out of Joliet, refuses to go along with Torrio's plan; many killings, but Torrio's combine wins.

- Three seemingly minor and unrelated events will later hugely impact Capone: O'Banion pal Nails Morton killed in freak horseback riding accident; Harry and Alma Guzik pardoned by Governor Len Small for white slavery conviction as favor to Torrio; Torrio convicted and fined \$2,500 for owning an illegal brewery: a second conviction will carry mandatory jail time.



Torrio sends Capone to establish **operations in Cicero**, which starts at Chicago's western city line.

1924 - Torrio takes leisurely trip to Italy, Capone in charge until return in late spring.

- Capone moves headquarters to Hawthorne Hotel in Cicero to avoid heat from Dever and Collins.

- Frank Capone killed by police in Cicero election shoot-out.

- Capone commits second personal murder: small-time hood, Joseph L. Howard, who had beaten-up Jack Guzik.

- O'Banion and Gennas scrap over territory; only Torrio and Mike Merlo, head of Unione Siciliana, keep Gennas from war; O'Banion claims to want to retire, sells Torrio Sieben brewery, a double-cross since he knows Collins plans raid; Torrio caught, faces jail for second conviction; Merlo still forbids killing O'Banion.

- When Mike Merlo dies, in November, Capone again calls Yale who - with the Gennas' top gunmen, John Scalise and Albert Anselmi - **kills O'Banion** in his flower shop.



1925 - In January, Torrio sentenced to nine months in county jail; before he surrenders to serve sentence, three of O'Banion's closest associates - Hymie Weiss, "Schemer" Drucci and "Bugs" Moran **ambush Torrio** outside his apartment, leave him for dead; but Torrio recovers and goes to jail in February. In March, tells Capone that when released, **he will quit**, turning everything over to his protege.

- The combination falls apart, Capone now battles the Gennas, lures Scalise and Anselmi away from them, and has two of the brothers killed (the cops get a third), the other three fleeing to Sicily; all the gangs are battling each other.
- First use of Thompson submachine gun in Chicago - by Frank McErlane, killer for Saltis.
- Capone takes Sonny to New York for mastoid operation; returns favor to Yale by orchestrating Brooklyn killing of Richard "Pegleg" Lonergan, White Hand gang chief, plus Lonergan's two best gunmen.

1926 - Killings on the South Side and in Little Italy make "Klondike" O'Donnell (West Side) think Capone has lost control and that his West Side gang can move in; Capone personally leads assault meant to kill Klondike and Myles O'Donnell; instead they **kill** two top O'Donnell gunmen and - by mistake - **William Harold McSwiggin**, star assistant state's attorney, who was partying with the O'Donnells; outrage (briefly) shuts down all Chicago vice.



- Hymie Weiss, O'Banion's successor, sends caravan of 10 sedans past Capone's HQ in Cicero's Hawthorne Hotel, Tommy guns and shotguns blazing; Capone, lunching in the restaurant next door, narrowly escapes harm largely thanks to his bodyguard Frankie Rio.

- Peace talks with Weiss break down when Capone refuses to let him kill Scalise and Anselmi, who pulled the trigger on O'Banion.
- Capone sets up signature **ambush of Weiss**, perfectly planned and executed.
- Schemer Drucci succeeds Weiss, agrees to peace conference that re-establishes gang territories; all agree to cooperate.

1927 - Big Bill Thompson runs again for mayor, beats Dever with support of Capone and State's Attorney Crowe; Drucci picked up in pre-election sweep, killed in police



custody; George "Bugs" Moran succeeds him as head of North Side gang.

- Capone on top, gets national and international press
- Joseph Aiello leader of new gang in the far North, with remnants of Genna gang, and the backing of Bugs Moran, starts gunning for Capone, in part for helping install Tony Lombardo as Unione chief, a post Aiello craves; "Machine Gun" Jack McGurn, Capone's ace, kills most of the Aiello gunmen; Aiello flees town.
- Thompson, deluding himself into hope for presidential nomination in '28, has Capone leave town as PR gesture; Capone visits California and Los Angeles cops run him out of town; he returns briefly to Chicago; gets off train in Joliet to avoid press, arrested on weapons charge, fined; leaves for Miami.

1928 - Buys Palm Island estate, returns for contested "Pineapple Primary" in April; Thompson's candidates, including Crowe, lose, ending Thompson's (to be sure, nonexistent) chances for presidential nomination. Capone leaves Frank Nitti in charge, back to Miami to refurbish estate.

- Frankie Yale, furious at Capone's choices as Unione heads, starts hijacking Capone liquor; Capone sends McGurn and others to **kill Yale** in Brooklyn.
- Capone returns to Chicago, moves **HQ** from Metropole to **Hotel Lexington**, contracts **sypilis** from a teenage blond hooker.
- Frank J. Loesch, head of Chicago Crime Commission appeals to Capone to help keep the election clean; his own favored candidates having lost the primary, Capone agrees: result, says Loesch, "the only honest election that we had had in thirty years."
- Joe Aiello has Tony Lombardo murdered.



1929 - With Capone back in Florida, Aiello murders Lombardo's successor Pasquino "Patsy" Lolordo, also Capone's friend and choice.

- Moran is the key; from Florida, Capone plans and sets in motion another signature killing - the St. Valentine's Day Massacre - but evidence suggests the "massacre" aspect of it was a mistake; seven are killed, but Moran (who arrived late) escapes; Chicago vice is really shut down for a while.
- Just after New Year's, in Miami, Capone contracts pneumonia; using that as an excuse not to return to Chicago while heat was still raging, he sends a doctor's affidavit that he is still too sick to answer a federal subpoena in March.
- Capone discovers Scalise and Anselmi plotting with Joseph "Hop Toad" Guinta, new Unione head, to kill Capone and take over; he personally bludgeons each at a banquet, then three or four gunmen shoot them.

- Capone attends gang summit conference in Atlantic City, is convinced to lie low in Philadelphia on a set-up concealed weapons charge; fix isn't quite in, and Capone gets a one year sentence instead of expected maximum of 90 days. - Ralph Capone, Druggan and Lake **indicted on tax evasion charges.**



- **Eliot Ness starts operations**

1930 - **Nitti and Guzik indicted on tax charges**; IRS investigating Capone, but can't develop case yet.

- Capone released from Eastern State Penitentiary; starts trying to settle tax issues with help of Torrio's tax attorney, Lawrence P. Mattingly, who proves incompetent, writes disastrous "**Mattingly Letter**" to IRS.



- Power elite of Miami hypocritically try to run Capone out of town; fail in a couple of comic-opera trials.

- *Chicago Tribune* legman (and secret gang figure), **Jake Lingle murdered** with mysterious aftermath (the wrong man is convicted) and consequences for Capone - though he had nothing to do with it; to cool the heat, he must arrange murder of man responsible, Jack Zuta.



- About one a.m., IRS agent Frank Wilson **discovers a forgotten ledger**, seized in a raid on a Capone gambling joint after McSwiggin killing: it leads to finding Leslie Adelbert "Lew" Shumway, a Capone bookkeeper, and is the key to getting Capone on tax charges.

- Capone finally catches up with Joe Aiello, has him killed in usual elegant set-up.
- Capone opens soup kitchens, feeds 3,000 a day.

1931 - Beats vagrancy charge, brought by "nutty" municipal Judge John H. Lyle, but convicted on federal contempt-of-court charge when doctor's 1929 affidavit is shown to be phony; sentenced to six months, deferred pending appeal.

- IRS puts together tax case, **government indicts Capone.**

- His lawyers arrange a **plea bargain** with U.S. Attorney George E. "Q." Johnson.

- Judge James H. Wilkerson, stung by press reports that 2 1/2-year sentence was

done-deal, indicates that he will not be bound by sentencing agreement; Capone withdraws guilty plea, will stand trial.

- Just before trial, evidence suggest bribery of jury panel; Wilkerson switches panels with another judge at last moment.

- Tommy Nash, the courtroom wizard half of Capone's usual law team is mysteriously absent, leaving only his backroom, brief-writing partner, Mike Ahearn, and recruit, Albert Fink; they botch defense.

- Of 23 counts, **Capone found guilty** of three felony evasion counts and two misdemeanor counts of failing to file returns, not guilty of all others-a puzzle it takes the prosecution 15 minutes to figure out.



- Wilkerson sentences Capone to a total of ten years on felonies, extra year on each misdemeanor, plus the earlier 6-month contempt conviction, all concurrent; total 11 years.

- Bail denied during appeal

1932 - Supreme Court denies appeal, Capone starts sentence in Atlanta; corruption permits him to practically run the place.

- Transferred as one of first group of prisoners to new federal pen, **Alcatraz**; no more privileged status.

1939 - Transferred to Terminal Island (Long Beach, CA) for misdemeanor sentence on January 6; released November 13, train east, turned over to family and doctors in Gettysburg, November 16; treatment for tertiary syphilis.

1947 - Spends last years mostly on Palm Island and Wisconsin summer home; dies in bed at 7:25, Saturday, January 25, of cardiac arrest; buried in Mount Olivet cemetery, on Chicago's far South side, next to Gabriel and Frank.

1950 - All three moved to family plot, discretely shielded by bushes at Mount Carmel, far West side. Inscription:

All photos for [Alphonse Capone](#) from google.com images

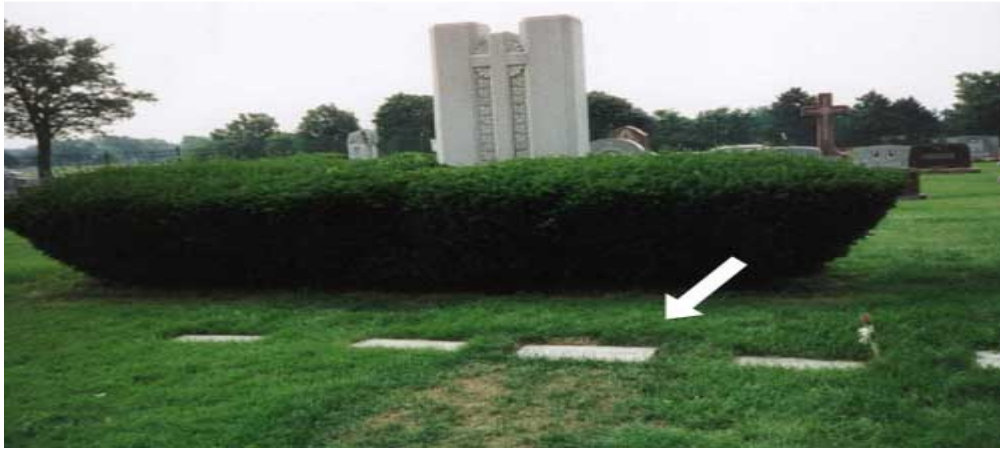


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9/24/2002



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7/30/2008



All photos for [Alphonse Capone](#)



Appendix C

QUOTES by and about Capone

To set the scene, former president William Howard Taft said this about Prohibition:

"No tendency is quite so strong in human nature as the desire to lay down rules of conduct for other people."

Myth: Quite recently Capone has been widely "quoted" as saying "You can get a lot farther with a smile and a gun than you can with just a smile." No source is ever given for this-understandably, because there is no reason to think he said it. It does not reflect how he demonstrably thought. Not that he ever hesitated to use a gun-but always as a last resort, when appeals to self-interest failed. Torrio had taught him "the value of a bland smile and a ready handshake," as newspaperman Fred D. Pasley, who knew Capone well, put it in 1930. Capone adopted Torrio's signature remark as his motto: "We don't want any trouble." The spurious "smile/gun" quote sounds gratifyingly tough, cynical and wise; but Capone realized that, in fact, you get farther when associates cooperate because of that self-interest he appealed to rather than fear.

The following quotes are authentic, in some instances from stenographic records, in all others confirmed by two or more newspaper accounts of what he said.

Asked if he was a bootlegger: "Sure, and some of our best judges use my stuff."

"They call Al Capone a bootlegger. Yes, it's bootlegging while it's on the trucks, but when your host at the club, in the locker room, or on the Gold Coast hands it to you on a silver tray, it's hospitality."

"All I ever did was sell beer and whiskey to our best people. All I ever did was to supply a demand that was pretty popular."

"Public service is my motto. Ninety percent of the people of Cook County drink and gamble and my offense has been to furnish them with those amusements. My booze has been good and my games on the square."

On his reputation: "Today I got a letter from a woman in England. Even over there I'm known as a gorilla. She offered to pay my passage to London if I'd kill some neighbors



she's been having a quarrel with."

"They've hung everything on me except the Chicago fire."

"Every time a boy falls off a tricycle, every time a black cat has gray kittens, every time someone stubs a toe, every time there's a murder or a fire or the marines land in Nicaragua, the police and the newspapers holler 'get Capone.' "

On the stock market crash of '29: "I deny absolutely that I am responsible."

On corruption: "I got nothing against the honest cop on the beat. You just have them transferred someplace where they can't do you any harm. But don't ever talk to me about the honor of police captains or judges. If they couldn't be bought they wouldn't have the job."

"A crook is a crook, and there's something healthy about his frankness in the matter. But any guy who pretends he is enforcing the law and steals on his authority is a swell snake. The worst type of these punks is the big politician. You can only get a little of his time because he spends so much time covering up that no one will know that he is a thief. A hard-working crook will-and can-get those birds by the dozen, but right down in his heart he won't depend on them-hates the sight of them."

On loyalty: "Nobody's on the legit. Your brother or your father gets in a jam. What do you do? Do you sit back and let him go over the road without trying to help him? You'd be a yellow dog if you did. Nobody's really on the legit when it comes down to cases."

On the need for gang peace: "I don't want to die. Especially I don't want to die in the street, punctured by machine gun fire. That's the reason I've asked for peace. I've begged those fellows to put away their pistols and talk sense. They've all got families, too. I know I've tried since the first pistol was drawn in this fight to show them that

there's enough business for all of us without killing each other like animals in the street. Competition needn't be a matter of murder, anyway. But they don't see it." So much for "smile/gun"

On his gambling habit: I've lost a million and a half on the horses and dice in the last two years. And the funny part is, I still like 'em, and if someone handed me another million I'd put it right in the nose of some horse that looked good to me."

When Capone established a milk distributor, Meadowmoor Dairy, after learning that the profit margin was higher than on booze or beer: "Honest to God, we've been in the wrong racket right along!"

When run out of Los Angeles by the police after a few days visit: "I thought that you folks liked tourists. I have a lot of money to spend that I made in Chicago. Whoever heard of anybody being run out of Los Angeles that had money?"

After reading a biography: "I'll have to hand it to Napoleon as the world's greatest racketeer. But I could have wised him up on some things. [His trouble was a swelled head; Elba should have been a warning.] "But he was just like the rest of us. He didn't know when to quit and had to get back in the racket. He simply put himself on the spot."

When he thought he had a deal to spend only 2 1/2 years in jail for tax evasion: "If the United States government thinks it can clean up Chicago by sending me to jail, well, it's all right with me. I guess maybe I owe the government this stretch in jail, anyway."

About Capone

By a lifelong Chicago resident of Italian extraction who was 16 in 1927: "You can say what you want about Al Capone. If people were desperate and needed help, he was there to help them. As long as you were on the up-and-up. He didn't expect anything in return and he never expected you to pay him back."



By her son, a Chicago police sergeant:"My people thought of Capone as Robin Hood."

By Capone's favorite newspaper photographer, Anthony Berardi: "He was no hero to me. He hurt the Italian people."

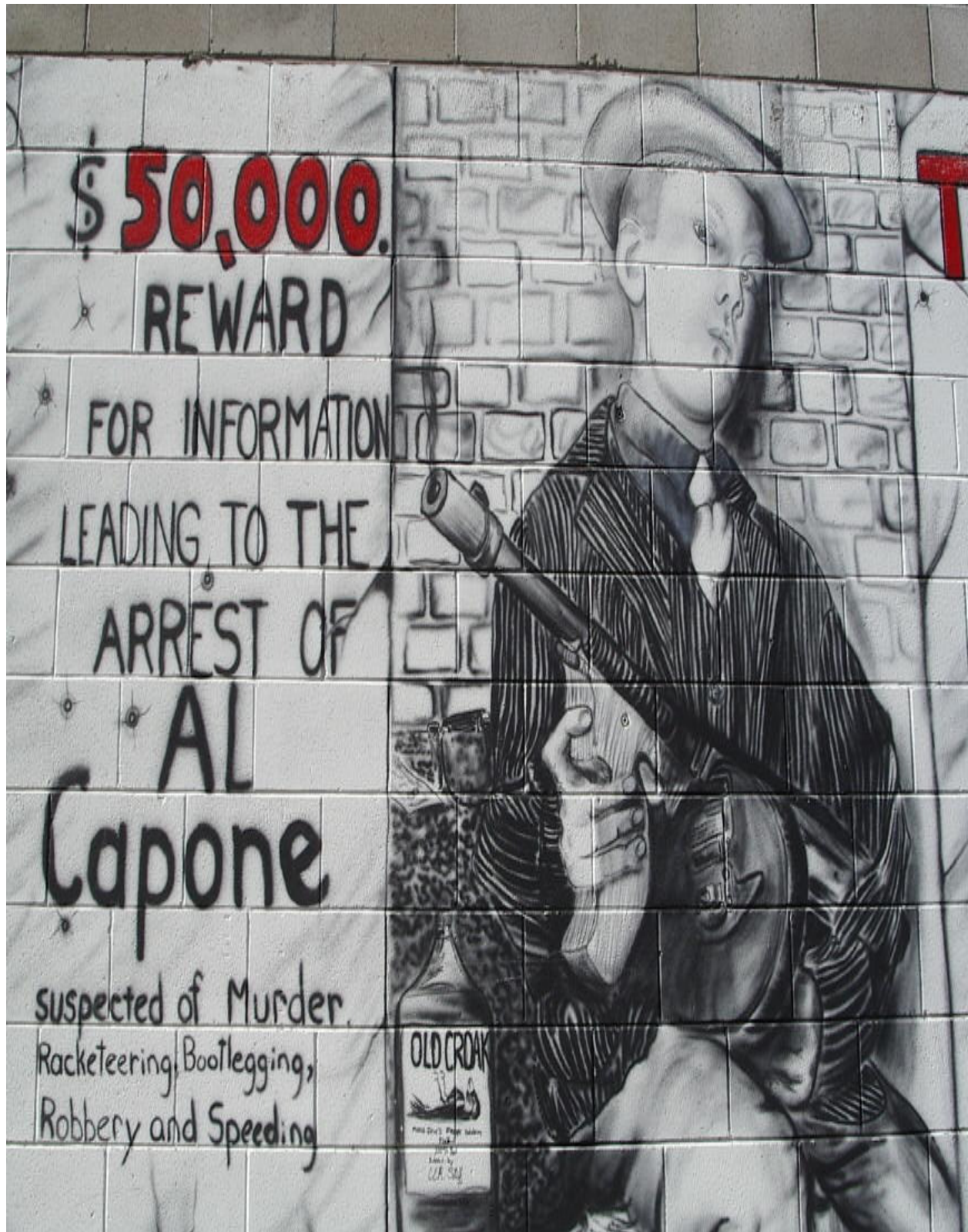
By James O'Donnell Bennett, Chicago newsman, otherwise sharply critical of Capone in a 1929 book: "If he gives you his word, you can believe him." Bennett also wrote, "With no conscious effort he emanated menace while saying please."

By Eleanor Medill Patterson, newswoman, interviewing Capone:"Capone's eyes are 'dime novel' gangster's eyes. Ice-gray. Ice-cold. I could feel their menace." In fact she liked him.

By Morris Becker, dry cleaner, who enlisted Capone as a partner to fight extortion by the Master Cleaners Association: "Al Capone was scrupulous in living up to his bargain. If I had it to do over again I would never ask a more honest partner in any business."

By magazine writer Katherine Geroud in 1931: "It is not because Capone is different that he takes the imagination; it is because he is so gorgeously and typically American."

PHOTOS Top Row: NYPD mug shot, age about 18; the "Big Fellow"; giving "the Look"; the scars; late '20s; in car after release in '39.



Artist Unknown- found through Google.com