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Scarface Al and the Crime Crusaders: Chicago's Private War Against Capone

Dennis E. Hoffman

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Dennis E. Hoffman reveals for the first time how a handful of private citizens brought Al Capone to justice by outsmarting him rather than outgunning him.

Hoffman reconstructs privately sponsored citizen initiatives directed at nailing Capone. These private ventures included prosecuting the gangsters responsible for election crimes during the Pineapple Primary; establishing a crime lab to assist in gang-busting; underwriting the costs of the investigation of the Jake Lingle murder; stigmatizing Capone; and protecting the star witnesses for the prosecution during the pretrial period of Capone’s income tax evasion case.

Hoffman effectively debunks the myth that Eliot Ness and the Untouchables defeated Capone by marshaling superior firepower, proving conclusively that the small group of Chicago businessmen triumphed over the gangster because of their affluence, fortitude, creativity, and civic pride. Hoffman suggests that because our society is again threatened by illegal drugs, gangs, and widespread violence, it is important for us to remember that the organized crime and political corruption of Prohibition-era Chicago were checked through the efforts of private citizens.

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