

Lives on Near North
in Chicago

CDN - Panorama
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Encyclopedia Badmeniana

BLOODLETTERS AND BAD-
MEN, by Jay Robert Nash
(Evans, \$16.95).

By Larry S. Finley

WE THE PEOPLE may erect statues to our heroes or name junior high schools and highways after them. But, at the same time, lurking in the darker reaches of our hearts is a special morbid love for the villainy and violence woven into the fabric of our history.

Such infamous Americans as Butch Cassidy and Billy the Kid have managed to come out of the shadows (with the help of Hollywood and Paul Newman) and dwell in a semi-heroic status in faked folklore.

And now, with loving care and much effort, Chicago author Jay Robert Nash has compiled "Bloodletters and Badmen," an encyclopedic tribute to "American Criminals from the Pilgrims to the Present."

While Nash does a fine job of chronicling the low points in the lives of some of the more contemporary hoods — primarily the Chicago mob — he is at his best shattering the myths of some of the Old West's bad guys and in digging out the fascinating stories of some evildoers who never quite made it.

IF THERE IS any overkill, it is Nash's enthusiastic use of superlatives in an attempt to elevate his evil entrants to a higher place in his lexicon.

"Nowhere in the annals of American crime has there been anyone so dedicated to the wholesale destruction of mankind" as Carl Panzram, Nash writes.

As a multiple murderer, robber, burglar, arsonist and en-

Brothers (Chicago, South Side) is sandwiched Hannah Ocuish, a Pequot Indian girl who, in 1786, killed 6-year-old Eunice Bolles in a tiff over some strawberries.

But those little flat spots can be skipped over easily for the fascinating biographies of such characters as Herman Webster Mudgett, who in the early 1890s built the famous "murder castle" on Chicago's South Side, where he butchered an estimated 200 young women.

NASH MANAGES to keep away from sermonizing, with

few exceptions, such as the case of James Earl Ray, who confessed to the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King only to recant and hint that others were involved. Nash contends that "shrouded in mystery, the King case deserves a full-scale investigation."

NASH ALSO revives his pet theory on John Dillinger, which he originally explored in great detail in his book "Dillinger, Dead or Alive?"

Nash offers a good deal of evidence that Dillinger did not die in 1934 in a hail of bullets

thusiastic molester of little boys during the 1920s, Panzram may well qualify for the accolade, but his actions speak louder than Nash's words, which frequently have the ring of a yellowing dime novel: Panzram was "an unreasoning monster of wrath who killed and pillaged without mercy, a malevolent demon."

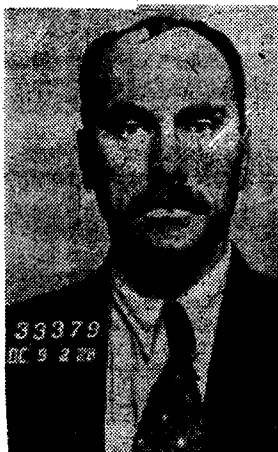
Today's proponents of capital punishment could embrace Panzram as their patron saint. As his execution drew near, a group of do-gooders clamored for mercy. His response to them, in part: "I wish you all had one neck and that I had my hands on it. . . . I believe the only way to reform people is to kill 'em."

THE WORK is filled with delicious anecdotes for the felon freak. Other entries seem to have little purpose other than to provide one more name in a certain alphabetical listing.

Between "Terrible Tommy" O'Connor and the O'Donnell

PANORAMA —

keep



Carl Panzram, multiple murderer, robber, burglar, arsonist and thoroughly disagreeable badman of the 1920s.

in front of Chicago's Biograph Theater. The dead man, he says, was James Lawrence, a small-time hood who was pawned off on the FBI by the underworld.

"The criminals portrayed in this book are memorable and do belong to all of us in one way or another," Nash says. "Their passion-evoking crimes

instruct, remind and once again horrify. Many produce in us a logical and collective disgust with our own species. All but a few are unsavory Hydes, but all of them require understanding."

Larry S. Finley of the Daily News staff has covered his share of badmen,