

# My Cousin the Gangster!

## How to Navigate Among Too Many Sources

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### Outline

- Family Lore
- Documents
- Newspapers
- Books
- Websites

Due to the “mystic” of crime and the gangster world there is an **overabundance** of information

### About Mike

- Has given about 300 presentations on genealogical techniques
- Has written 5 family histories
- President of Jewish Genealogical Society of Illinois
- Has researched gangster era Chicagoans and their family history

### Triangulation of Data

- Find *at least 3 credible sources* that agree
- If you can't, *be suspicious!*

Source: 21cif.com

### Mike's Rating System

- \* Needs to be checked out
- \*\* May be ok?
- \*\*\* Credible

\*\*\*\* Very credible

### Family Lore

\* or \*\* Stories passed down

\*\*\* or \*\*\*\* First hand vivid recollections

### Frank Frost's Family

- My mother's first cousin
- Comes from Bucharest, Romania
- Arrived in US around 1900
- Settled mostly in Chicago

### Family Lore: Per Uncle Lew

- My uncle Lew “first cousin Frank worked for **Capone**” \*\*
- Lew's Bar Mitzvah
  - January 1930 (during prohibition)
  - The limousine pulled up and a large box of booze was delivered. \*\*\*
- Cousin Frank showed Lew his car \*\*\*
  - Nice car
  - The glove compartment opened and it was all guns!

### Met Frank's sister Sally and Ira

- Frankie Foster was Frank Frost's professional name \*\*\*
- Sally vividly recalled \*\*\*\*
  - Passing newsstand
  - Headline: “Frankie Foster Indicted for Murder”

- He had to earn big money to support his widowed Mom and 6 younger sisters \*\*
- Was somehow involved in St. Valentine's Day massacre? \*

- Murder probably
  - ordered by Capone.
  - Lingle had pocketed \$50,000 for protection of an illegal dog track.

## Documents

- Secondary Sources \* or \*\*
  - Mother's age on birth certificate
  - Background material in newspaper articles
- Primary Sources \*\*\* or \*\*\*\*
  - Date of Birth on birth certificate
  - Facts of yesterday's events in newspapers

## Three Main Questions

- Was the infamous "Frank Foster" really my mother's first cousin Frank Frost?
- Was he involved in St. Valentine's Day Massacre on 14 February 1929?
- Was he involved in the murder of Tribune reporter Jake Lingle on 9 June 1930?

## Documents

- FBI files
- Chicago FBI/NARA
- Vault.fbi.gov
- Circuit Court of Cook County
- Chicago Police Department

## St. Valentine's Day

### Massacre:

14 February 1929

- North Side controlled by Moran.
  - South Side by Al Capone
  - Moran's gang arrived at the garage.
  - Two men dressed as policemen.
    - entered the garage.
    - police on a routine investigation?
  - Moran diverted to a coffee shop.
  - 7 Moran men turned backs and were killed in gangland fashion
- It was the "Crime of the Century"**

## Newspapers

- "In the absence of solid information both the police and the press rushed to fill in the gaps with speculation and guesswork"
- After countless retellings magazines, books, and movies now accepted as gospel

## Murder of Jake Lingle

9 June 1930

- Lingle was reporter for Chicago Tribune
- Was reporter of limited kind.
  - Did not write himself.
  - Gathered facts.
- Murdered on his way to the racetrack.
- Tribune posted \$25,000 reward.

## Talked to Librarians about Books

- Deerfield Library (my local library)
  - Does author states his/her sources?
  - Reviewed by NovelistPlus (libraries only), Amazon (editorial reviews)
  - Google the author
- Newberry Library (Chicago)
  - Publisher is University/Academic Press
  - Good footnotes/endnotes/credits
  - What do reviews say
    - ▶ Kirkusreviews.com (web)
    - ▶ Jstor.com (libraries only)

## Rationale for Killing

- Lived an extravagant lifestyle.
- He was a political fixer who bribed police on behalf of Capone.

## Book Criteria

1. Does author states his/her sources?
2. Look at author's biography/google author

3. Credible review
4. Academic Publisher

One \* for each of above  
Need 3 or 4 \* to be credible

### **Accuracy of Webpages**

1. Who wrote the page?
2. What is the purpose of the document/why produced?
3. Is this person qualified to write this document?
4. E-mail or a contact address/phone number.

Note: Know the distinction between author and Webmaster.

Give one star for each criteria passed.

Cornell University Library  
<http://olinuris.library.cornell.edu/ref/research/webcrit.html>

Webpages change and even disappear over time!

### **Was Frank Foster really Frank Frost**

1. Frank's sister Sally's vivid recollection
2. FBI file
3. Family/newspaper photos

### **Involved in St. Valentine's Day Massacre?**

1. Newspaper reports had him dead.
2. Harry Harris remembers
3. Cousin Ira/Arthur Bilek

### **Involved in Lingle murder?**

1. FBI File (cousin Ira)
2. Grand Jury Indictment
3. "Mr. Capone"
4. myalcapone.com

### **But he was good to his mother**

- 14 Feb 1929: St Valentine's Day Massacre
- January 1930: Uncle Lew's Bar Mitzvah
- 9 June 1930: Jake Lingle murder

All family members attest to the fact that he single handedly supported his mother and 6 younger sisters for many years

### **Was This Talk Credible?**

- State Sources?
- Good Bio?
- State Purpose of Talk?
- Reliable host society or organization (publisher)?

## References

- Documents
  - Ancestry.comgov
  - Vault.fbi.gov (changed from 2011)
  - FBI ([foiparequest@ic.fbi.gov](mailto:foiparequest@ic.fbi.gov)), Record/Information Dissemination Section  
Attn: FOIPA Request, 170 Marcel Drive, Winchester, VA 22602-4843
  - Chicago FBI: [Chicago@ic.fbi.gov](mailto:Chicago@ic.fbi.gov)
  - Office of Clerk of Circuit Court of Cook County, Richard J. Daley Center, Room 1113, Chicago, IL, 60602
- Newspapers
  - Chicago Tribune Historical Archive (via Library paid subscription)
  - Ancestry.com
  - Newspapers.com
- Book Reviews
  - Kirkusreviews.com (web)
  - NovelistPlus (via libraries)
  - Amazon.com reviews
- Books
  - *Mr. Capone: The Real—and Complete—Story of Al Capone*, by Robert J. Schoenberg, William Morrow and Company, Inc., New York, 1992
  - *The Dry and Lawless Years*, by Judge H. Lyle, Prentice-Hall, Inc. , Englewood Cliffs, N. J. , 1961
  - *Capone: The Life and World of Al Capone*, G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1971
  - *Pork City* by Howard Browne, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1988
  - *Scarface Al and the Crime Crusaders: Chicago's Private War Against Capone* by Dennis E. Hoffman, Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale and Edwardsville, 1993
  - *Return to the Scene of the Crime* by Richard Lindberg, Cumberland House, Nashville, Tennessee, 1999
  - *The St. Valentine's Day Massacre* by William J. Helmer & Arthur J. Bilek, Cumberland House, Nashville, Tennessee, 2004
- Websites
  - PrairieGhosts.com (now forwards to American Haunts)
  - Myalcaponemuseum.com (now restructured)
  - Crimemagazine.com (now need Security Verifier???)
  - Wikipedia.com

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