

# The Detroit True Crime Chronicles

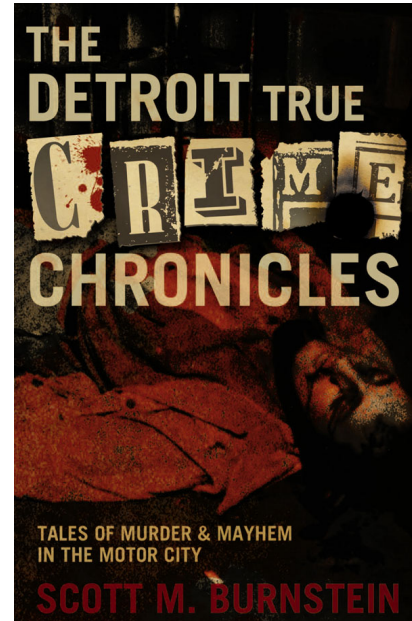
Tales of Murder and Mayhem in the Motor City

Scott M. Burnstein

## Foreword by Carl S. Taylor Ph.D.

*The Detroit True Crime Chronicles: Tales of Murder and Mayhem in the Motor City* is a unique and special book that balances street culture, organized crime and social ecology. I am indebted to this book and the body of work that Scott M. Burnstein has done over the past decade. As an urban ecologist and sociologist, I rely on information from different sources. Scott is an expert resource, someone who knows the current and latter-day state of affairs of organized crime in the Motor City like very few others I have ever encountered. I have relied on his knowledge extensively in my recent work and will continue to do so. My scholarship and fieldwork are significantly based on observations and participation within a matrix of people, places and professions in different worlds. There are only a few genuine experts like Scott Burnstein, who can connect the history to the present state of organized crime and do it in a way that is fun and exciting as well as informative. Even fewer experts have a full understanding of the complex mix of ethnic groups involved in the diverse cultural network that is Detroit and the Greater Detroit area. Scott clearly does and he imparts his understanding in this book.

A wide array of criminal organizations have played a long-standing role in the social fabric of the Motor City, and *The Detroit True Crime Chronicles* gives a thorough documentation of the relationships between these groups and the overall impact made by gangs and their leaders on the local culture. Organized crime has had a rich history in Detroit. To this day, the city represents an important part of criminal enterprise within the complicated and thorny web of both the national and international underworld.



My study of Detroit over the past four decades has revealed a hidden culture that I call the Third City. It is here that I have learned about and conceptualized an America that is not part of the mainstream. This Third City harbors the marginalized underground of people struggling to enter the middle-class social and economic community. *The Detroit True Crime Chronicles* shows how immigrants from Europe and many homegrown Detroiters refused to accept the social engineering that defined them in terms of poor employment, housing and education throughout the 20th century, and instead used ingenuity and ambition to survive and thrive, climbing through the social strata by any means necessary. This Third City also shows how local organized crime provides a blueprint for Detroit's youth to learn from, emulate and challenge a society that does not see them as equal, capable or desirable.

The criminal organizations created in the early days of Prohibition evolved into the illicit narcotics commerce that came to dominate the local underworld in the second half of the last century. It was an epic awakening, the birthing of a new set of players on the streets, marking a new day where African-American drug lords were no longer dependent on their Italian Mafia counterparts for their supplies or their way of life. This new independence in the city created new rules and in effect a new urban street culture.

Within these pages, Detroit is explored not only historically, but also in terms of the evolution of the postindustrial city. This is critical in understanding what Detroit is like today compared to the hometown of the young Jewish gangsters of the Purple Gang, practically all of them immigrants from Eastern Europe, who ruled the city during Prohibition.

Lastly, this book gives an accounting of tales and dynamics not always mentioned in mainstream gangster lore. We read the story of how those in the Italian Mafia have often crossed paths with African-American street culture, as well as other powerful underworld factions, making for an interesting mix of criminals sharing the same business landscape. We learn about the always-complicated relationships between the city's most infamous gangland leaders and their respective organizations through time—relationships that would ebb and flow and quite often result in bloodshed and brutality.

The vast group of characters and experts that Scott Burnstein has assembled for this project is simply amazing. It is one that presents a thorough dissection of every nook and cranny of Detroit's criminal world. The stories in these chapters jump off the pages. The book is sure to have historical significance, too. Until now, there has been nothing else like this available for researchers and academics hoping to learn or teach about the full history and compelling intricacies of the Detroit underworld. I can promise that those who read *The Detroit True Crime Chronicles* will be well rewarded.