

Long Grove History

LONG GROVE LIVING
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MOST-REQUESTED TALE • BOOTLEGGERS IN LONG GROVE

The *Flagpole* Story

How a 100-foot signal-flag rigged by a Public Enemy on Long Grove Road ended up — its top forty feet, anyway — saluting a Civil War veteran on Towner Green.

By **Aaron Underwood** · Long Grove Historical Society



TOWNER GREEN · THEN & NOW William Umbdenstock at the foot of the Long Grove flagpole — a Civil-War tribute he raised on July 4, 1954, using the top forty feet of a flagpole that, until shortly before, had belonged to a Chicago gangster.

One of the most-requested tales of old Long Grove is the story of the flagpole on Towner Green in the historic downtown. The story starts not in Long Grove but in pre-Prohibition Chicago — where a young Irish-American teenager known as "Terrible Terry" Druggan was a member of the Valley Gang.



The Valley Gang, the Volstead Act.

The gang was led by Paddy "The Bear" Ryan and specialized in pickpocketing and armed robbery. When Prohibition began in 1919, Chicago gangs adapted their craft to the more profitable enterprise of bootlegging. The higher stakes ratcheted up the violence: Walter "The Runt" Quinlan knocked off "The Bear" and took control of the Valley Gang in 1920 — and was quickly done in himself by "The Bear's" son, Paddy "The Fox" Ryan. In the ensuing organizational chaos, Terry Druggan stepped forward with his partner Frankie Lake and assumed control. They made millions in the 1920's.

With his disposable income, Druggan acquired a mansion in Miami and took up an interest in horses. As a retreat away from his Chicago activities — and as a place to raise his horses — he bought property in Long Grove and Kildeer. His connections and money enabled him to skirt the law during most of the 1920's, and when he did end up in the clink, it was *manageable*.

In 1925, he cut a deal with the up-and-coming Al "Scarface" Capone: he would pay Capone 40% of his beer profits in exchange for protection from other gangs. The *St. Valentine's Day Massacre* in 1929 is an example of this type of protection — Capone killed seven members of the Bugs Moran gang in a turf war.

In 1930, the oft-forgotten "echo" of the St. Valentine's Massacre occurred in Fox Lake — sometimes called the *Fox Lake Massacre*. Perhaps in retaliation for Valentine's Day, Bugs Moran associates ambushed five Capone associates in a bar that had recently switched from Moran beer to Terry Druggan beer. Terry's brother was badly wounded in the attack.



PRESS PHOTO · C. 1925

Druggan & Lake — partners and joint heads of the Valley Gang. "He's out at the moment, tending to his horses," a reporter was told on visiting Druggan in jail in 1924. He would be back, the deputy added, by sundown.

THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE · APRIL 23, 1930

Public Enemies



No 7
Terry Druggan
"Terrible Terry"

BOOTLEGGING · BEER



1931
"The Public Enemy"
Jimmy Cagney, Warner Bros.

LOOSELY BASED ON DRUGGAN

By 1930, the violence and outright flaunting of the law had turned public opinion negative — and in response, *The Chicago Tribune* published a "Public Enemies List," which included Capone as number 4 and Druggan as number 7. The term caught on, and Warner Brothers released the famous Jimmy Cagney movie, *The Public Enemy*, in 1931. The movie is loosely based on Terry Druggan.

In 1932, Druggan and his partner Lake were both convicted of tax evasion, had much of their fortune seized, and could no longer effectively manage their gang — it was absorbed into Capone's empire. With Prohibition ending in 1933 and his assets dwindling, Druggan relocated into a house on Long Grove Road — approximately where Middleton intersects today. He had previously acquired the house for his mother, which was one of his tactics in trying to shield his assets from seizure.

A signal flag, visible from Rand Road.

Still needing some protection from old rivals and law enforcement, Druggan erected a large flag pole – reportedly **100 feet tall** – on the property. The pole was visible from Rand Road, and his associates used the flag to signal danger. As he returned from the city, if he saw *no* flag, he knew to stay away.

Terry passed away in March of 1954. He had lost his fortune and was not in good health the last years of his life. Local stories report that he spent considerable time in an *iron lung*. His nurses, it was said, were much younger and much more attractive than he was. The Long Grove barbershop was reportedly frequented by Terry and his associates.

1954 **Spring.** Druggan dies. Norma Sales, longtime proprietor of the Long Grove Village Tavern, acquires Druggan's Long Grove Road property. Shortly thereafter, a lightning strike cuts the flagpole in half.

July 4, 1954 **William Umbdenstock** wants to honor his father, who fought in the Civil War, by erecting a flag in downtown Long Grove. William lives in the house directly behind Towner Green (now shops – most recently *Wine Splash*).

That morning Norma offers up the **top forty feet** of Druggan's old flagpole. It is installed across the street from her tavern – in front of William's house, on Towner Green, where it stands today.

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