



# American Legends: The Life of Eliot Ness

*Charles River Editors*

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\*Chronicles Al Capone's rise in Chicago and the efforts of Eliot Ness and the Untouchables to bring him down.

\*Includes pictures of Ness and important people, places, and events in his life.

\*Includes a Bibliography for further reading.

"Unquestionably, it was going to be highly dangerous. Yet I felt it was quite natural to jump at the task. After all, if you don't like action and excitement, you don't go into police work. And, what the hell, I figured, nobody lives forever!" – Eliot Ness

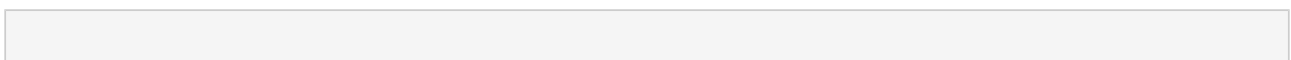
A lot of ink has been spilled covering the lives of history's most influential figures, but how much of the forest is lost for the trees? In Charles River Editors' American Legends series, readers can get caught up to speed on the lives of America's most important men and women in the time it takes to finish a commute, while learning interesting facts long forgotten or never known.

The early decades of the 20th century featured a series of growing pains for the United States as the nation entered a new century, a rapidly changing world, and a new stage in its own evolution. All at once, it seemed, American society was attempting to deal with the excesses and injustices of a rapidly industrializing and increasingly centralized economy, a wave of immigration changing the ethnic make-up of the country, and the emergence of new social movements fighting for causes like women's right to vote.

It was also the era of the American gangster, during which men like Al Capone famously and infamously strutted their stuff. The Brooklyn born kid with Italian roots would become the face of a multi-ethnic urban America, an early innovator in an almost corporate approach to organized crime, and a savvy manipulator of big-city politics. His mixture of sophistication and savagery mirrored that of a nation trying to harness its considerable but sometimes unruly energies. It was America's brief and disastrous attempt to outlaw the sale of alcohol—an experiment that in so many ways seemed at odds with a decade some have called The Roaring Twenties—that allowed gangsters to garner the tremendous wealth and wield the outrageous power that made them almost mythical, larger-than-life historical figures. And it was another of Progressivism's reforms, the establishment of a Federal Income Tax, which would in the end provide for Capone's downfall. The man most famously associated with Capone's downfall, of course, is Eliot Ness, thanks in large measure to his own sensationalized version of the events that became the basis for the book *Eliot Ness and the Untouchables*. That work in turn spawned the memorable television series "The Untouchables", in which Robert Stack plays an intrepid Eliot Ness who has both seemingly omniscient detective skills and the ability to fight tommy-gun wielding gangsters in street battles.

That portrayal of Ness was a mythological creation made for TV, but it has also cemented his legacy as the man who brought Al Capone down. "The Untouchables" has mostly obscured what the real man and his real work was like during that critical period, but it has also overshadowed the rest of Ness's life and career, which saw him mostly try and fail to parlay his success against Capone into success elsewhere. By the time Ness died, he was mostly down and out, and he had no clue that the book he was working on with writer Oscar Fraley would make him one of the most famous law enforcement officials in American history. Some have even dubbed him the patron saint of today's ATF.

*American Legends: The Life of Eliot Ness* looks at the life and career of Eliot Ness, but it also humanizes the man who refused Capone's bribes and never flinched. Along with pictures of important people, places, and events, you will learn about Eliot Ness like you never have before, in no time at all.



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