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Public Enemies Close in on Oshkosh Public Museum

The Oshkosh Public Museum's original exhibition, *The Era of Public Enemies: A Wave of Crime in a Troubled Time*, is slated to open on Saturday, June 27. The blockbuster exhibit, a clever combination of history and Hollywood, is on display until Sunday, October 18.

Oshkosh, WI – June 10, 2009 - This summer history and Hollywood merge when some of the most notorious gangsters of the 1930s take over the Oshkosh Public Museum in its summer exhibit, *The Era of Public Enemies: A Wave of Crime in a Troubled Time*. The exhibit opens Saturday, June 27, the week before the release of the highly anticipated *Public Enemies* movie, and runs through Sunday, October 18.

"Oshkosh and surrounding communities are eagerly awaiting the release of the *Public Enemies* movie," forecasts museum director Brad Larson. "The exhibit recreates the scene of the 30s and invites visitors to relive those few days of Hollywood in Oshkosh, while delving deeper into the history that mapped out the storyline of the movie."

The Era of Public Enemies aims to educate visitors on the circumstances that led to the 1933-34 crime wave and inspired the filming of *Public Enemies*. A background of the Dust Bowl, Great Depression and the end of Prohibition set the stage for one of the most tumultuous economic and criminal times in American history. This interactive exhibit invites visitors to revisit the string of Midwest bank robberies that captivated America and experience the conditions and circumstances that led to the infamous crime wave and allure of gangsters.

Various settings throughout the exhibit create an immersive and authentic 1930s experience. Visitors can socialize in an Art Deco nightclub, complete with a vintage back bar from a local yacht club. In stark contrast to the uppity nightclub, a reproduction jail cell examines life behind bars and features a 200 pound steel door from an actual jail.

Interactive devices and repeater boxes bring back the sights and sounds of the era. Visitors can take a seat in a movie theater and watch reels of a John Dillinger biography or pick up a 1930s telephone and listen to one of Franklin D. Roosevelt's illustrious fireside chats.

Displays document the rise of the FBI and structured law enforcement as the feds attempted to take down American gangsters and the booming crime wave of the 1930s. Featured artifacts include historic items from the Oshkosh Police Department, a 1930s bullet proof vest and a collection of Junior G-Men toys.

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The exhibit also explores the competitive edge that V-8 engines and powerful weaponry granted criminals. A collection of 1930s car paraphernalia and hood ornaments are on display, along with several gangster-era firearms, including a Thompson submachine gun and a Browning automatic rifle. Additionally, the exhibit features an Airsoft Tommy Gun shooting gallery where museum guests can experience the force behind firing the weapon.

Living historians will role play in the galleries and interact with museum visitors on select days throughout the exhibit. These actors will portray many different characters, including gangsters, FBI agents, bartenders and bank tellers.

A special community-curated section of the exhibit focuses on Wisconsin's 2008 filming of *Public Enemies*. Assorted movie props, pieces of set design and a slideshow of images illustrate what went on in front of and behind the cameras during the production of the summer blockbuster. Among featured movie props is the vintage fedora worn by Johnny Depp during filming.

And visitors won't go home empty handed. Along with a deeper understanding of the social, economic and criminal aspects of the time, visitors can take home a copy of the Oshkosh Public Museum's reproduction newspaper, *The Troubled Times*, along with some "money" from the exhibit's bank teller window. Museum guests also receive a complimentary copy of the *Gangster Getaways* tour guide and coupon booklet. This booklet explores the hangouts and haunts of gangsters throughout the state and reveals the secret deals of Wisconsin's most notorious visitor attractions.

The exhibit is scheduled to open with a bang on June 27 when gangster re-enactors and a vintage Packard car kick off the exhibit opening. This original exhibition is on display only at the Oshkosh Public Museum.

About the Oshkosh Public Museum

The Oshkosh Public Museum was founded in 1924 and is accredited by the American Association of Museums. The museum houses artifacts, photographs, film and archival materials that represent the material culture, ideas and values of Oshkosh and the Lake Winnebago Region. It is dedicated to bringing history and heritage to life through creative, quality exhibitions, programs, publications and other educational experiences. The museum is a center for the preservation of local culture and encourages citizens to discover their community and its heritage. The Oshkosh Public Museum is located at 1331 Algoma Boulevard. For admission, hours and more information on *The Era of Public Enemies* and the Oshkosh Public Museum, call (920) 236-5799 or visit www.oshkoshmuseum.org.

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