



An American Tour: 163



Manitowish Waters' *Little Bohemia Lodge*

Little Bohemia Lodge is a rural vacation lodge and restaurant located off US Highway 51 in Manitowish Waters, Wisconsin. The lodge was built in 1929 by Emil Wanatka on land he acquired that same year. Little Bohemia gained fame and infamy as the setting of a botched raid by the FBI (then called the Division of Investigation) against the John Dillinger Gang. The historic rustic lodge remains as it was at the time of the federal raid and along with original bullet holes from the gun battle still in the walls and windows, Little Bohemia Lodge has a collection of memorabilia from the gun battle.

On the afternoon of April 20, 1934, Baby Face Nelson, John Dillinger, Homer Van Meter, Tommy Carroll, John Hamilton, and gang associate (errand-runner) Pat Reilly, accompanied by Nelson's wife Helen and three girlfriends of the other men, arrived at the secluded Little Bohemia for a weekend of rest. The following day, Wanatka's wife informed a friend, Henry Voss, that the gang was at the lodge, and the FBI was given the tip early on April 22. FBI agent Melvin Purvis and a number of colleagues arrived from Chicago. The agents moved in with little preparation. Eugene Boisneau was killed and John Hoffman, and John Morris, were wounded, alerting the gang members inside, who eventually escaped the lodge.

With a federal agent and a civilian dead, and four more severely wounded, including two more civilians, and the complete escape of the Dillinger gang, the FBI came under severe criticism, with calls for FBI director J. Edgar Hoover's resignation and a widely circulated petition demanding Purvis's suspension.

In 2008, some scenes from the Michael Mann film *Public Enemies* were filmed on location at Little Bohemia. Little Bohemia remains operational today as a restaurant and gathering place. A historic display of artifacts and memorabilia from the Dillinger gun battle is available for public viewing along with recent memorabilia and autographs from the filming of *Public Enemies*.

[Wikipedia]

