

## Amanda Parker

**Title:** “Behind Every Bad Man Stood an Even Worse Woman: Female Criminals of the Depression Era”

**Faculty Advisor:** Professor Christine Erickson

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Amanda Parker is currently a Senior at Indiana-Purdue Fort Wayne, majoring in Women’s Studies and History. She enrolled at IPFW in January 2007 as a returning student. She grew up on a family farm in Noble County, Indiana where her and her family raised grain crops and livestock. She is an Honor Student at IPFW. She was invited to lecture on this subject at the 2008 Annual Reunion of the Auburn Cord Duesenberg Club (a group that is interested in the ACD era of the 1920’s & 1930’s). She also presented at the IU Women’s Studies and Gender Studies Undergraduate Conferences held in 2008, 2009, and 2010 and is a returning presenter at this conference. She is a co-founder and newly elected President of the Women of the World Student Organization at IPFW.

## Abstract

For a few years in the early and mid 1930s several outlaws and outlaw gangs ran wild in the American Midwest. They robbed banks with machine guns, kidnapped the rich for ransom, engaged in furious shootouts with lawmen, and when apprehended, often made spectacular jailbreaks. Everything they did was considered newsworthy. It was exciting: cops and robbers entertainment for the public in the grim 1930s. A few of these criminals are known today by their colorful names and bloody reputations such as John Dillinger, Machine Gun Kelly, Clyde Barrow, and the Barker Gang. Yet many were supported by women who were equally devoted to the cause. The Lady in Red, Kathryn Kelly, Bonnie Parker, Ma Barker, and other strong women influenced their men throughout the Depression Era, so much, that some became criminals themselves. Due to the determined tactics of the newly formed FBI and its leader, J. Edgar Hoover, these women were marked as molls, and thus they were degraded. Although the women criminals of the Depression Era appeared to be doting wives, girlfriends and mothers, some of them were also masterminds of some of the criminal activities to which they are attached.