Detroit News, 1936, 2010.14.154

Melvin Purvis was the son of a Timmonsville tobacco farmer and was born in Florence County, in 1903. After graduating from South Carolina College with a law degree in 1925, Purvis became a legal aid in Florence. In 1926, he applied for a position as investigator with the recently formed Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Before his 30th birthday, Melvin Purvis had become special agent in charge of the FBI's Chicago field office. He was American law enforcement's answer to the growing threat of gangsters and organized crime.

During his career with the FBI, Purvis captured and brought to justice the most notorious criminals of his day, including "Machine Gun" Kelly, "Pretty Boy" Floyd and "Baby Face" Nelson. Most famously, Purvis was credited for stopping the infamous bank robber John Dillinger, public enemy number one. In June, 1934, FBI agents under Purvis' command confronted and Dillinger outside of Chicago's Biograph Theatre, ending his reign of organized crime throughout the northern Midwest. Because of this, Melvin Purvis entered the public spotlight and quickly became a hero in 1930's pop culture.

"G-Man" radio programs, pulp novels, product endorsements and comic books quickly capitalized on, and contributed to, Purvis' celebrity status. He became a spokesperson for Dodge automobiles and Post Toasties cereal, while returning to civilian life in Florence as an attorney, newspaper editor and owner of WOLS radio station. In recent years he has been the subject of a best-selling biography and ETV documentary film. In 2009, actor Christian Bale portrayed him in the movie Public Enemies.

The Community Arts Program is part of an arts integration program through the Florence County Museum.

MAKE IT AT HOME!

Materials:
Pencil, Eraser
Paper, Colored Pencils
Fine-point Black Marker or pen

Things to Think About:
- Melvin Purvis was a real FBI agent, born in Timmonsville, SC. He became well known for bringing serious criminals to justice. Why do you think people liked hearing stories about Mr. Purvis' work? Why do you think they called him "G-Man"?

- G-Man is short for "Government Man", an American slang term for FBI agents.

- In a comic book, you must tell your story with images as well as words. How do you think this helps the to understand your story?

Create your Comic Book:
- Think of a person that you would like to use as the main character in your comic book.

- Write out a description of your character: What does your character wear? What is your character's name? Describe the personality of your character. Is your character funny, kind, happy, sad? What is something that your character is proud of, any accomplishments?

- Begin your comic book by making small "thumbnail" sketches of what your character looks like. Take one idea and develop it. Show your character from the front, side views, full body, close up.

- What is the plot of your story? Is there a conflict in your story and what is the most exciting event or the climax of the story?

- Now that you have thought about your character and your story, it is time to create your comic book. Draw your illustrations lightly in light pencil. Add lettering, details and color. Finish with a fine-point black marker outline.

- When your story is complete, think about the cover of your comic book. What will the title of the story be? How does your title relate to the story?

- Continue to work on your project, share your ideas, and read your comic book with the people in your home.