

0. CHICAGO, THE PLAY - Story Preface
1. CHICAGO IN THE TWENTIES
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4. THE REAL VELMA KELLY
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Maurine Watkins' play, "Chicago," was also made into a silent film which was released in December of 1927. Produced by Cecil B. DeMille, and directed by Frank Urson, it stars Phyllis Haver (as Beulah Annan a/k/a Roxie Hart) and Julia Faye (as Belva Gaertner a/k/a Velma Kelly). The image depicts a film poster advertising the movie.

Two months after her trial, Beulah (who was married before) divorced her husband Albert and married a young publicist named Harbit. Within months she also divorced him.

Four years after her murder acquittal, Beulah (using an assumed name) checked into a sanitarium. She had tuberculosis. Before the end of 1928, she was dead. Her body was returned to her family home in Owensboro, Kentucky.



Watkins, meanwhile, had returned to Yale. She wrote her play *Chicago* for a class assignment with the famous Professor George Pierce Baker. (Eugene O'Neill had also been his student). Belva and Beulah became Velma and Roxie, but their crimes remained the same.

On 30 December 1926, Watkin's play opened on Broadway with George Abbot directing. It ran for 172 performances and helped to make Maurine a wealthy woman.

She refused to sell the rights to *Chicago* - even to Bob Fosse who approached her in the 1950s - because she never wanted the play performed again. It is said she thought her *Tribune* articles had helped to set two killers free.



In later years, Watkins (be sure to check out this linked resource) often left home with a heavy veil over her face. Because of that, people thought she was eccentric. The truth is the writer had cancer which had deformed her nose and one cheek. She died of lung cancer on 10 August 1969. She was 73 years old and left a fortune worth about \$2.33 million.

After her death, Bob Fosse negotiated with Watkins' estate and was able, with his colleagues, to buy the rights and turn the play into his famous musical. *Chicago*, the movie, is based on Fosse's musical.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:
<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/CHICAGO-THE-PLAY-Chicago-The-Movie>
 See Learning Tasks for this story online at:
<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/CHICAGO-THE-PLAY-Chicago-The-Movie>

Media Stream



Owensboro, Kentucky - Map Locator

Image online, courtesy the [epodunk.com](http://www.epodunk.com) website.

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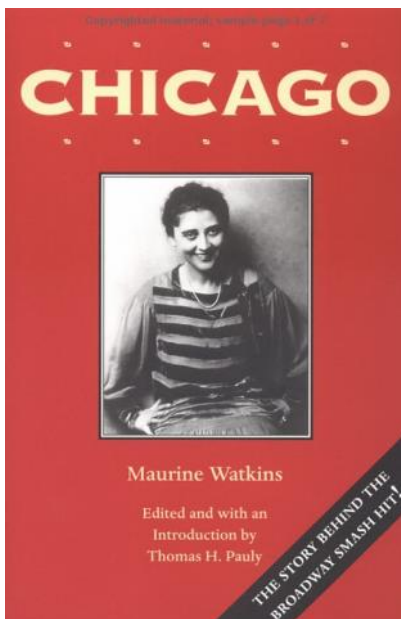
Maurine Watkins Reports in the Tribune

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Beulah Annan Dies

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Chicago - by Maurine Watkins

Image online, courtesy amazon.com website.

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CHICAGO, THE PLAY

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