



Molly Justice Timeline



Introduction

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This timeline is meant to be a companion aid to the book *Molly Justice* by Steve Varonka, illustrated by Leslie Young.

The timeline is based on the one created to keep the book in historical order. The book is a work of fiction and some liberties were taken. The most prominent being the moving of the excommunication of the secret societies.

Enjoy the book and come back here for a history check.

May 26, 1875

James (McParlan) McKenna visits John Kehoe and discovers that Mahanoy City is in a bad state. There was an attempt to kill Dan Dougherty in the beginning of May. Kehoe wants an all out street war. Dan Dougherty was acquitted of killing George Major in Lebanon when the bullet from his skull was removed and it was shown not to be from George Major's gun. The real killer was John McCann who fled back to Ireland.

June 1, 1875

The Mollies meet in Mahanoy City to hear Dan Dougherty's case against William M. (Bully Bill) Thomas and William and Jess Major. The Major's were working in Tuscarora. County Treasurer Chris Donnelly and John Donahue of Tuscarora would take care of the Major brothers. Mike O'Brien, James Roarity and John Kehoe would take care of killing Bully Bill Thomas.

June 4, 1875

James (McParlan) McKenna, Thomas Hurley, Michael Doyle and John Gibbons journey to Mahanoy City to attempt to kill Bully Bill Thomas. McParlan decides to postpone the job since there is a big union march

from Shenandoah to Mahanoy City and the state militia is there to keep order.

June 27, 1875

McParlan learns that Bully Bill Thomas is to be attacked the next day.

June 28, 1875

Morris, Gibbons and Hurley attack Bully Bill Thomas but are not successful.

July 5, 1875

Benjamin Yost is murdered in Tamaqua. This is a pivotal event. One that, arguably, leads to the formation of vigilance committees.

July 15, 1875

James McParlan goes to Tamaqua to investigate the Yost murder.

Bully Bill Thomas is attacked again and is shot at while going home to Shoemakers on a Lehigh Valley train. He jumps from the train as the shots narrowly miss him.

July 17, 1875

James McParlan returns to Shenandoah where he sends a report to Pinkerton boss Franklin outlining a plot to kill John P. Jones, mine superintendent.

July 25, 1875

James McParlan goes back to Tamaqua to see Jimmy Kerrigan and meets Mary Ann Higgins, Kerrigan's sister-in-law. McParlan spent \$2.65 on drinks

Alec Campbell sets up McGehan in a tavern business as a reward for killing Yost in a clean job. The tavern opens 8/14/1875.

August 14, 1875

Pay day at the mines in Girardville, Shenandoah and Mahanoy City. the Miner's Journal of August 20 reported on what they termed a spree of drunkenness.

- William Love shot Squire Gwyther of Girardville. Constable John Kehoe arrests William's brother Thomas allowing William to flee.
- A drunken Bully Bill Thomas gets into a street shot out with James Dugan in Mahanoy City. Many shots are fired by both men, one lodging in Thomas' cheek. One shot went wild and killed German miner Christian Zimmerman who was waiting for his wife outside a store while she shopped. Another man was shot in the leg and another stabbed. Thomas was arrested for the attack on Dugan but no charges were ever filed for the killing of Zimmerman, it was written off as an act of God.
- Gomer James, acquitted of the murder of Irishman Edward Cosgrove in 1873, was shot and killed at the picnic of the Rescue Hook and Ladder Company of Shenandoah. The picnic was held at Glover's Grove and James was tending bar. Thomas Hurley did the shooting. Hurley had also been involved in the first Bully Bill Thomas shooting.

August 25, 1875

The Mollie convention was held in Tamaqua with over 100 attending. One member was expelled for tipping off Jess and William Major to the attempt on their life in Tuscarora.

Captain Linden warns McParlan that the Welsh and English are planning their revenge on him.

August 31, 1875

McParlan wakes up and finds Mike Doyle sleeping next to him. Doyle has a Smith and Wesson pistol which he borrowed from Ed Monaghan. Doyle tells McParlan that he was going to Raven Run to shoot mine boss Sanger. James Friday and Charles O'Donnell and James McAllister from Wiggins would assist with the job.

Body master Frank McAndrews calls a meeting to shoot mine boss Reese. He needed a deal with Kerrigan to do the job so he sent John

McGrail, Mike Darcy and Thomas Munley to Summit Hill to kill Jones. He sent McKenna along to make things right with Kerrigan.

September 1, 1875

Hurley and McParlan were in Muff Lawler's Tavern at 8:30 in the morning when Doyle, the O'Donnells, McAllister and Thomas Munley came in after the murder of Sanger and Unger at Heaton's colliery.

September 2, 1875

Shenandoah Herald editor Thomas Foster comes out strongly in support of vigilance committees.

September 3, 1875

John P. Jones shot at Lansford by Edward Kelly and Michael Doyle (not the same Doyle that stayed with McParlan) both of Mt. Laffee. The job was arranged by Kerrigan. They were arrested by a Tamaqua Posse led by William Parkeman.

Captain Linden returns to Shenandoah to find out that one of his officers tried to question a suspicious man and was fired upon. The officer returned fire and killed the suspect.

September 4, 1875

The Tamaqua Courier comes out in favor of Vigilance Committees.

September 6, 1875

Father McAvoy, founder of St. Canicus church in Mahanoy City, dies at St. Theresa's in Philadelphia at the age of 46.

September 20, 1875

McParlan goes to New York and completes the list of all known Mollies in Luzerne, Northumberland, Columbia, Carbon and Schuylkill Counties. The listing showed residence, occupation, standing in the society and crimes committed. The list was then published in the major newspapers, 347 AOH names were listed. A mysterious handbill was also circulated marked "Strickly Confidential." It outlined all the acts from Bully Bill Thomas to John Jones and listed all the participants

and towns. It appeared to be a Pinkerton publication but no proof was ever given.

September 29, 1875

McParlan contributes \$2.00 to the Kerrigan, Kelly and Doyle defense fund. They hire James B. Reilly and Len Bartholomew as defense attorney's.

October 4, 1875

McParlan goes to Wilkes-Barre to avoid the Vigilantes and pretends to raise money for the defense fund.

October 9, 1875

Payday Saturday results in incidents all over the region.

In Shenandoah, an English miner was shot. In a different tavern a Welshman, John James, had his throat cut and was robbed of \$500 and his watch. Both survived but no arrests were made.

October 19, 1875

McParlan goes to Mauch Chunk to the trial. The defense witnesses were readied but the trial was postponed until the January, 1876 term.

October 29, 1875

McParlan is back in Shenandoah making tavern rounds with McAndrew. Muff Lawler tells them that all the Mollies were known and the next time someone was killed they would make it hot for the Mollies. He also said that there was a screw loose somewhere, implying an informer.

Thomas Hurley is arrested for the attack on Billy Bill Thomas and the throat slashing of John James.

November, 1875

The early days of November were marked by uneasiness in the ranks of the Mollies and increased activity by the Coal and Iron police. They were searching and arresting many, including the local constables.

There was also speculation on the origin of the handbill that had been circulated. Was it Pinkerton or was it from the "Vigilance Committee of the Anthracite Coal Region"?

McParlan raises bail for Thomas Hurley, who promptly flees.

Molly distrust runs high and many are expelled in internal AOH trials.

November 2, 1875

General John F. Hartranft incumbent Republican governor was re-elected. It was reported that the Mollies had secretly sold their vote in anticipation of favors.

November 30, 1875

Archbishop Wood's papers contained a copy of a memo written by him from Benjamin Franklin to Franklin Gowen. It lists all the murders from 10/20/1874 to 10/30/1875 and is dated 11/30/1875

December 8, 1875

McParlan reports that Mollies from Gilberton and Wiggans beat rival clan Irishman Quinn from Gilberton near St. Nicholas.

December 10, 1875

Friday 3:00 A.M. - Massacre at Wiggans Patch

Present were the widow Margaret O'Donnell mother of James Friday O'Donnell, Charles O'Donnell, Ellen O'Donnell pregnant wife of Charles McAllister, their infant child and four paying guests; Tom Murphy, John Purcell, James Blair and James McAllister (Charles' brother).

Ellen McAllister is shot dead.

James McAllister is shot in the arm but escapes.

James Friday O'Donnell escapes.

Charles O'Donnell is dragged outside and shot 15 times in the head. His clothes were set on fire burning him from hips to chin. He was then shot 10 more times in the torso.

Others were let go. It would seem that they wanted the O'Donnell's since a note was found at the house the next morning that said, "You are the murderers of Uren and Sanger."

That morning Dr. Phaon Hermany, the Mahanoy City coroner, arrived at the scene. He examined the bodies and empanelled a jury at the scene and began questioning Mrs. O'Donnell. He asked her if she recognized any of the men in the attack. Then John Kehoe arrived and interrupted, ordering her not to answer. He said this would be handled another way. Kehoe's wife was Mrs. O'Donnell's daughter, making him a brother-in-law to both Ellen McAllister and Charles O'Donnell.

Later in the day after the coroner's hearing Mrs. O'Donnell identified Frank Wenrich, a highly respected butcher, councilman and former Chief Burgess of Mahanoy City, with assaulting her with a gun butt. Kehoe pressed the charge and Wenrich was arrested and sent to Pottsville the next day for his protection from a highly excited crowd.

The Tamaqua Courier and the Shenandoah Herald were appalled by the action of what they had heretofore encouraged.

December 11, 1875

McParlan reports that the Mollies want vengeance. McParlan was so distressed over the killing of a pregnant woman that he tenders his resignation at 8:00 A.M. the same day. Kehoe states that he is sure Frank Wenrich was involved but will wait and handle it when things calm down. Shenandoah Herald editor Foster is condemned.

December 12, 1875

The case against Frank Wenrich falls apart when Mrs. O'Donnell states that John Kehoe told her to identify him. Wenrich returns to Mahanoy City where he is greeted by over 300 cheering supporters wishing to shake his hand.

Much speculation followed regarding the perpetrators of the Wiggans attack. Some thought it a rival clan action since Quinn was beaten, there had been other fighting between the Gilberton and Wiggans families. However, the incident was well organized, all with masks and oilcloth coats. Some even thought Kehoe did it because Charles O'Donnell was becoming a security risk.

December 15, 1875

Archbishop Wood issues his excommunication of the secret societies intended for the Mollies. The Mahanoy Plane priest was Daniel O'Conner, Father Ryan in Mahanoy City and Father Reilly in Shenandoah.

February 1, 1876

Doyle is convicted of the Jones murder and is sentenced to hang on 2/23/1876. Jimmy Kerrigan turned informer on 1/28/1876.

February 4, 1876

Carroll, Duffy, Roarity, McGeehan, Boyle and Campbell are arrested and taken to Pottsville based on Kerrigan's testimony. The Mollies are stunned.

February 10, 1876

Thomas Munley arrested in Gilberton. Charles McAllister wrongly arrested in Wiggans.

February 16, 1876

James McParlan learns from Mary Ann Higgans (Kerrigan's sister-in-law) that he is suspected of being an informant.

February 23, 1876

The habeas corpus hearing for Munley and McAllister.

Frank McAndrew tells McParlan that they are taking bets that he will testify as a detective. Kehoe warns others to beware of McParlan.

McParlan goes to Girardville to see Kehoe to ask for a trial. Kehoe sets the trial dates for March 1st or 2nd in Ferguson's Hall, Shenandoah.

March 7, 1876

McParlan leaves the coal fields only to return as a detective to testify at the trials.

April 13, 1876

Edward Kelly sentenced to hang for the murder of Jones.

May 6, 1876

McParlan announced as a witness in the first Yost trial. He testifies for four days.

May 14, 1876

Franklin Gowen sends a letter to Archbishop Wood stating that he will vindicate Father O'Conner. O'Conner was accused of telling Kehoe that McParlan was a Pinkerton.

June 21, 1877 – The Day of the Rope

Alexander Campbell **Hanged at Mauch Chunk for killing Morgan Powell and John P. Jones**

Michael J. Doyle **Hanged at Mauch Chunk for killing Morgan Powell and John P. Jones**

John Donahue **Hanged at Mauch Chunk for killing Morgan Powell and John P. Jones**

Edward Kelly **Hanged at Mauch Chunk for killing Morgan Powell and John P. Jones**

James Boyle **Hanged at Pottsville for killing Benjamin Yost**

James Carroll **Hanged at Pottsville for killing Benjamin Yost**

Thomas Duffy **Hanged at Pottsville for killing Benjamin Yost**

Hugh McGeehan Hanged at Pottsville for killing Benjamin Yost

Thomas Munley Hanged at Pottsville for killing Thomas Sanger and William Uren

James Roarity Hanged at Pottsville for killing Benjamin Yost

Miscellaneous Dates

March 25, 1878

Patrick Hester Hanged at Bloomsburg for killing Alexander Rea

Peter McHugh Hanged at Bloomsburg for killing Alexander Rea

Patrick Tully Hanged at Bloomsburg for killing Alexander Rea

March 28, 1878

Thomas Fisher Hanged at Mauch Chunk for killing Morgan Powell

June 13, 1878

**Dennis
Donnelly** **Hanged at Pottsville for killing Thomas Sanger
and William Uren**

December 18, 1878

John Kehoe **Hanged at Pottsville for killing Frank W. Langdon**

January 14, 1879

**James
McDonnell** **Hanged at Mauch Chunk for Killing George K.
Smith**

Charles Sharp **Hanged at Mauch Chunk for Killing George K.
Smith**

January 16, 1879

**Martin
Bergin** **Hanged at Pottsville for killing Patrick
Burns**

October 9, 1879

**Peter
McManus** **Hanged at Sunbury for killing Frederick
Hesser**