

History of The Mollies

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The history of the Molly Maguires goes much farther back than the practice of strip-mining or even Irish immigration to America. Their rebellion against the transplanted English and Welsh coal barons has strong roots in their five hundred year old revolution against the attempted invasion by England of Ireland. For centuries, the Irish have been fighting also the tyrannical practices of wealthy absentee English/Welsh landlords. The Mollies, who fought in Ireland against the landowners abuses, and fought in America against illegal and oppressive treatment in the anthracite/coal mines of Pennsylvania. They took their name from an Irish girl who led a revolt of poverty-stricken Irish farmers against these abusive landgrabbing tactics after being evicted with her child by her violently abusive landlord. These absentee landlords utilized English bailiffs to carry out their oppression.

The Irish have been resisting English rulership for over five centuries now. The English and Welsh Protestants have been brutal in not taking a hint. The Celts, who did forcefully take Eire from the Pictish natives who originally inhabited the continent, were descended upon by Anglo-Saxon forces from the areas of Norway and England. The crusades, which were initiated by the "apostle" Paul when he traveled up the coast breaking and entering, converting, and battering innocent people. Originally Ireland was a shamanic, primal culture, full of legends of the Lady of the Green, and Brigid, their patron Goddess. People are still trying to kill her off by assassinating the Catholics, who hang onto the Mother image in the form of Mary, virgin mother.

This bloody battle by British and Protestant forces often involves brutal attacks on women, children and other innocents. The predominant method used to punish Irish rebels was hanging. During the time of William Wallace's rebellion, the British enacted a law allowing their troops first rites to all new brides -- legalized rape. The British government is known for authorizing and withdrawing Irish landowner rights and sovereignty in order to gain the trust of the upper classes. During Queen Elizabeth I reign in England, she was known for initiating several murderous random attacks on the Irish farmers. The English also had a habit of appointing "Lord Lieutenants" in order to carry out their rape, pillage and plunder of the Irish.

In 1738, Pope Clement XII publicly condemned the anti-Catholic Protestant freemasons. The English were well known for setting rents way above the people's ability to pay. During the reign of Napoleon Bonaparte, he made overtures of peace and friendship between France and Ireland that never manifested. In the 1830's, an Irish group of rebels known as the Sons of the Shamrock initiated what later became known as the Molly Maguires, and also in America as the Ancient Order of the Hiberians. Because several of these people initiated the wearing of white sheets in 17th and 18th century Ireland (a druidic practice) and calling themselves the "whiteboys" to protest British tyranny, the freemason society adopted this symbol of rebellion (as happened with shaved heads, swastikas, pentagrams, and Native American/Celtic animal totems) to promote their tyranny. This story of systematically stealing land, money, livelihood, traditions, blood and finally peoples lives in order to break down cultural unification and Spirit, is an old tactic of the British hobby and machine of genocide and oppression. An odd form of paid slavery..... The British also have a strange habit of ignoring when they have lost wars.

The prejudice against Irish farmers and laborers goes back a long ways. Statements made during English attempts to force Ireland to accept its rulership were that the Irish were "lazy, ignorant, unwilling to work hard, and incapable of turning any improvement in conditions into a long term advantage." When many Irish immigrated to American soil after the 1846-1852 famine, Pennsylvania in particular, they found signs all over the place saying "No Irish Need Apply." The mines in and near Philadelphia were ran by wealthy English/Welsh Protestants. The big boss in the area was Franklin B. Gowen, of "Irish" descent, who owned "The Road" a large conglomerate of anthracite and coal mining property. Gowen also established the Reading railroad. He utilized child labor, and underpaid Irish laborers to establish his "kingdom." Employment conditions and prospects went downhill from the establishment of his industry. Many of the underpaid Roman/Irish Catholic laborers starved and lived in barely afforded ramshackle huts. Thousands remained unemployed, and winters were brutal.

Gowen continued using the same methods to oppress these people that the British have used for years. Between 1862-1872, several instances of oppressive treatment of the labor force occurred. In Hicksville, in December 1862, 200 Irish miners were blacklisted because they rioted in protest to unreasonable and dangerous working conditions. The Act of February 27, 1865 allowed the Coal and Iron Police to enter the homes of anyone they chose by force and put the selected "criminal" in jail. Search and seizure warrants were bypassed. On September 6, 1869 a "mysterious" fire in Avondale took the lives of 111 coal miners -- including 19 child laborers at the mine owned by Delaware, Luchawana, and Western railroad. According to the laws at the time, all physically fit children over the age of 12 had to work in the mines. The fire began in a pocket below the breaker fan and pumped poisons and toxic fumes into the mine. There was no escape from the mine and there were no survivors. This fire began approximately six days after Gowen established "The Road."

The Mollies, formed as a rebellion against these abuses, burned down the F.B. Gowen colliery in February 1872. Apparently Gowen, impressed with his own ability to be icy and ticked off at the same time, hired James McParlan, an employee of the Allan Pinkerton Detective Agency to investigate his own employees and what they did in their free time. In April of the same year, Henry Yiengst, boss carpenter of "The Road" was heard to say "I'd never hire an Irishman because they're all a bunch of g**damn Mollies" On April 26th, Yiengst was found with broken arms, a smashed skull, and a pulled out tongue. In 1874, the Mollies and other mine employees attempted to negotiate a fair labor agreement with Welsh supervisor Owen Jenkins. Because he refused to give an inch, the Newkirk colliery ended up destroyed. Jimmy "Powderkeg" Kerrigan appointed himself the leader of the Mollies around this time. McParlan described Kerrigan as "He was different. Of all the brothers, he was the one I feared the most, he was so damn shrewd. Many a time I was convinced he was suspicious. Every once in awhile, he'd say something like 'Wouldn't it be a terrible thing, now, if a detective ever got into the organization'" McParlan noticed that Kerrigan was prejudiced against the Jews. "I heard how Powderkeg fingered his Jauqua 'friends.' This man would've cut his mother's throat to save his own neck." In October, 1874, seven Catholic priests denounced the Mollies. Arthur Conan Doyle, after meeting Molly Maguire Will Pinkerton, wrote *The Valley of Fear*.

On December 4, 1874, John Siney, labor leader called a strike of the Mine Workers Benevolent Association. conditions did not improve, as a matter of fact the mine owners and operators

offered these terms for return to work - a 20% reduction in pay, no guaranteed minimum work, no additional safety precautions, and no protection from unjust docking by ticket bosses. On Christmas, 1874, Gowen gave the workers a bobtail check and cut off worker's credit at local stores. The Mollies sent John Taylor, inside foreman at Richardsons an unsigned note waning him to leave or die. the miners returned the lack of Christmas spirit by smashing scores of toolsheds, dynamiting several collieries and warehouses. They derailed hundreds of coal cars and hurled stones against the windows of company bosses houses. On February 1, 1875, armed men beat up the watchman at Graeber, Kemball and Company's Locust Gap., and tried to burn down the breaker. Unfortunately, they failed.

After thirteen years of oppressive working conditions, near starvation, and bigotry, the Mollies had had enough. On July 5, 1875, the Mollies went after freemason and civil war veteran Benjamin Yost. He was killed. Several murders of mine owners and bosses followed, including Thomas Grayther, Thomas Sanger, William Uren, Morgan Powell, John P. Jones, Edward Kelley. Most of the murders were carried out under Kerrigan's orders. Michael Doyle was heard to say "Well, me boyos, we got one English bastard and we nailed another just for good luck" William "Bully Boy" Thomas, friend of his repeat jailer, also a boxer who liked to knee people in the groin was on the Mollies list. He had be convicted of assault and mayhem several times. Though he was shot three times by the Mollies, he lived.

During the investigation, a group of thugs broke into Molly Maguire Friday O'Donnell's family home and beat up his mother Margaret O'Donnell and shot Ellen O'Donnell her daughter. Friday O'Donnell got away (perhaps because they let him go in order to make him look like a coward?)

Between 1875 and 1879 Charles Albright, prosecuting attorney for Lehigh and Wilkes-Barne Coal Company, purchased in 1875 by Gowen in a corporate takeover, convicted and hung the Mollies fingered by Kerrigan and "drunk scholar" Kelly the Bum: Pat Hestch, Pat Tully, Peter McHugh, Pete McManus, John O'Neill, James McDonell, Charles Sharpe, Michael Munley, James Caroll, James Boyle, Hugh McDuffy, Alex Cambell, Martin Bergen and Patrick Berg. Kerrigan denied any association with his partners Michael "Muff" Lawler, and others. Mollies imprisoned were John Donohue, Patrick McKenna, Michael Doyle. An 1879 list of fugitives reads: Billy Love, Tom Hurley, Friday O'Donnell, James McAllister, John Flynn, Michael Doyle, Jerry Kane, Frank Keenan, William Gavin, John REagan, Tom O'Neill and Pat Gallagher. Ringleaders Kerrigan, and Muff Lawler got off scot free. So too, did coal baron F.B. Gowen in spite of his murders of hundreds of men, women and children through "accidents" and starvation.

An anonymous clerk for Lehigh Valley Railroad (formerly a reliable, honorable company) had this to say about the corporate takeover:

Quickly following the Reading's coup
They cut off the dessert, and then the soup,
The warming broth, the cool ice cream
Are things as seen in a fleeting dream.

And now they will all have to go
(Officials high and Dinkey's low)

Without the nourishing consommé
For which they now will have to pay.

And missed along with loved tureen
Are pies, puddings, apples and cream
They all must go, their weight to lend
To help the guaranteed dividend.

Pennsy isn't in it
Reading made the scoop
Nani doesn't give a pin
And we are in the soup.

As usual, those responsible for the devastation are spared the consequences of their actions, and the innocents die. The ones who got away are viewed as "cowards." This story of oppression, violence and needless bloodshed in the name of industry, money and progress is an old one -- especially by the British. Significantly more of the oppressed than the oppressors died in this tragedy; very probably many of those subjected to death by hanging were innocent. I beg to differ with those who believe they can kill the Spirit -- they will always see the likes of us again.

Song of the Mollies –by William Bell

Pat Dolan, its my Christian name
Yes, and its my surname too, sir!
An' oft you've listened to me sthrane
I'll tell you something new, sir!
In Canan-town, where we sat down
Our Irish hearts to inspire
There's bould recruits an' undaunted youths
There's bould recruits an' undaunted yout's
And they're led by Molly Maguire.

Chorus: With me riggadum due, an' to hell wid the crew
Would'nt help to free our nation
When I look back, I count em slack
Wouldn't join our combination

Said Molly to her darlin' son
What tyrant shall we humble?
That filthy tribe, we can't abide
The rob both meek and humble
There is only one Bell, a child of Hell
An' a magistrate in station
Let lots be draw and see which av you
Will tumble him into damnation.

Chorus: With me riggadum due, an' to hell wid the crew
Would'nt help to free our nation

When I look back, I count em slack
Wouldn't join our combination

The lots been cast, the sentence passed
I scorn to tell a lie, sir!
I got my chance, it wur no blank
I were glad to win a prize, sir
At his brain I took me aim
Sayin' come down, you fien' of hell, sir!

Chorus: With me riggadum due, an' to hell wid the crew
Would'nt help to free our nation
When I look back, I count em slack
Wouldn't join our combination

Those orangemen, they gathered then
An' swore they'd kill us all, sir!
For their frien' Bell, who lately fell
An got a terrible fall, sir!
But Molly's sons, wid words an' guns
Wid pikes, pitchforks aglancin'
Those bould recruits an' undaunted you'
Stepped into the field just prancin'

Chorus: With me riggadum due, an' to hell wid the crew
Would'nt help to free our nation
When I look back, I count em slack
Wouldn't join our combination

Those orangemen, they all stood then
To fight, they thought it folly
They'd rather run then save their lives
An' leave the field to Molly!
Although I'm in a foreign land
From the cause I'll never retire
May heaven smile on every chil'
That belongs to Molly Maguire.

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