Court House Fire in 1884

In 1884 and the preceding decade there were no homicide convection in Hamilton County, the most was felonious assault, and in 1884 there were 125 felonious assault convections.

William Burner and Joseph Palmer killed their employer, cut his body up and through it into the Mill Creek. Burner was the first to go on trial, and was convicted of felonious assault. The residence of Cincinnati and Hamilton County were so outraged over the verdict, given the circumstance of the crime, they felt they had to do something.

Approximately 1,000 men meet at Music Hall and formed a plan to march on the jail, get both suspects and hang them. By the time they reached the jail the crowd had increased to approximately 5 to 6 thousand. They stormed the jail only to find Burner, who had been convicted of manslaughter, had already been transported to the state prison at Columbus. This left Palmer who was awaiting trial. When the mob reached his cell, Palmer convinced the mob he was not who they thought he was, and they passed him buy.

A fire was set in the tunnel which ran between the jail and the courthouse in hopes the jail would burn down. The fire had a mind of its own and burned the court house rather than the jail.

The riot lasted 5 days, since police did not carry firearms the National Guard was called in. the riot was finely quelled once the Guard opened with their Gatling Gun and killed 50 people. For a while that ended the corruption at the jail.

Joseph Palmer was eventually tried and convicted of murder and hung.