

Police Chief Michael F. Reilly (1844-1929)

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Greater Cincinnati Police Museum

Michael was born in New York City about 1844. We know nothing about his first 22 years other than, during the Civil War, he served under Generals Sherman and Hunter. After the war, in 1866, he came to Cincinnati. He left shortly thereafter but returned in 1869.

Michael, from 1870 to 1871, worked as a machinist or tinner and was living at 228 Sycamore Street. He married Margaret Walsh on April 10, 1871, witnessed by Roman Catholic priest, Fr. William J. Halley.

Michael later owned a "low concert saloon" on Fifth Street. It was a little, with a squeaky piano and cheap drinks, room and attracted the lowest characters. After "respectable" citizens in the community petitioned the mayor to close it up, he sold his share to his partner.

Michael joined the Cincinnati Police Force in 1873 under Mayor Johnson. By 1876, he was living at 436 Richmond Street. He was promoted to Lieutenant sometime before 1877. Police Board President Kinsinger swore in Charles Wappenstein as the new Chief of Police on January 1, 1879 and Lieutenant Reilly was sworn in as Inspector of Police, a captain.

Superintendent Charles Wappenstein resigned on December 12, 1879, was reduced to Inspector of Police, and Alex Sands was elected Superintendent. Captain Reilly was reduced back to Lieutenant to make room for Wappenstein.

On February 27, 1880, Mayor Jacob reappointed him to Inspector of Police. One month later, he transferred Reilly to Central Station to run with the new Inspector of Police Meyer. We do not know what happened to cause his demotion or Meyer's promotion and it was clear that he was transferred to assist Meyer in his new position.

During 1880, Lieutenant Reilly was living at 438 West Ninth Street with his wife, Maggie (29), and children, Blanche (6), Frank (4), and Edith (2).

On April 14, 1881, Mayor Means dismissed Inspector of Police Fred Meyer and reappointed Reilly. Mayor Means intended to name Reilly as Superintendent, but Reilly preferred to be Inspector. But, six months later, on October 27, 1881, Mayor Means accepted the resignation of Colonel Jacob Gessert and named Captain Reilly as the new Chief of Police. Chief Reilly named Lieutenant William H. Devine as the new Inspector.

Chief Reilly retired from public law enforcement in 1886, one of the longest tenures for a Chief of Police. He founded the Merchants' Police Company in 1886 and headquartered them at 73 West Third Street. He was living at 438 West Ninth Street. In 1888, he moved his family to 278 George Street. By 1890, they were living in Price Hill at 2713 Price Avenue. From 1896 to 1899, they were living at 417 Grand Avenue. And by 1914, they lived at 835 Considine Avenue.

On January 28, 1914, at 1:35 a.m., Colonel Reilly's wife, Margaret J. (Walsh) Reilly, died at the age of 62. The funeral was held from 453 Considine Avenue.

About 1919, he handed the business over to his son, Captain Adelbert I. Reilly.

After an illness, the duration of which lasted several weeks, Colonel Reilly died on February 11, 1929 at the age of 84. His funeral was also held from his residence at 453 Considine Avenue. A solemn requiem Mass was celebrated at 9 a.m. at Holy

Family Church on February 14, 1929 and he was buried in Section 6, Range 6, Lot 15 of St. Joseph (New) Cemetery.