

Patrolman Martin Kunkel | Cincinnati Police Department

Age: 32

Served: 5 years

1873 to January 24, 1878



OFFICER

All we know of Martin Kunkel is that he was born about 1846 in Ohio, probably in Cincinnati, to German immigrants, John and Mary Kunkel. He married Mary Shietheim and about 1869 they had a son, William Kunkel. During 1870, Martin worked for the Bristle Combs Company. He joined the Cincinnati Police Department about 1873.

MURDERERS

Dick Travis

Tom Rowland was born in 1830 in Harland, Kentucky and became most widely known as "Dick Travis." He also had nicknames of "Train" and "Travers". He became a Confederate Army war hero and promoted to Captain while fighting General Grant in Columbus, Kentucky. He was badly wounded and left to die on the field but survived. From there he took command of a company of Texas Rangers and performed spy duty.

At the end of the war, he took on a criminal career, much like – and for a brief time with – Jesse James. We have no idea how many crimes he committed or deaths with which he was involved. We know a few and that the punishment he received for them was miniscule.

During fall 1868 Travis and another man robbed a bank in Galena, Missouri. Snow started falling and they were easily followed. The posse caught up to them in three days, killed his accomplice, and shot him in the leg. He was hung three times in an effort to find the location of the stolen money, but he did not reveal it. Though gangrene set in while he was in a jail cell, he survived and bribed his doctor for his release. The money, as it turned out, was bound under his shirt.

Later that year, Cincinnati Detectives Hazen and Carry attempted to arrest Travis as he boarded a train at the Little Miami Depot. Travis got the drop on them and escaped to Louisville, Kentucky.

In Louisville, he committed several burglaries and robbed a man of a diamond stick. He assaulted the Louisville officers who arrested him and was subsequently sentenced to eleven years in the Kentucky penitentiary. As soon as he got to prison, he was livid with the actions of a contractor, smashed his head with a heavy weight nearly killing him. For that, he was flogged and placed for three years in a cell without privileges and on a diet of bread and water. He was finally released from solitary confinement by order of the Governor. He then escaped – twice – and recaptured. Still, he was pardoned after less than three years in 1871.

During April 1872, Travis and an accomplice stole \$25,000 (more than half a million dollars in 2020) from a bank in Indianapolis. While the accomplice engaged the teller, Travis crawled around the teller stand, reached into the vault, and took the cash. The two split the money and were never caught.

From there, he went to New Orleans and stole \$67,000 (\$1.4 million in today's dollars) from a man by cutting off his money belt. Travis was caught and tried, but the only witness was driven from town by his friends and he escaped prosecution.

In 1877, Travis went to Elmira, New York, to burglarize a bank. With two accomplices, they cut through the top of the vault from a YMCA reading room above. They were caught in their attempt, convicted, and sentenced to four years in the Albany Penitentiary – from which he escaped.

He then robbed a bank in Tioga County, Pennsylvania, netting \$27,000.

Travis then teamed up with a Colonel Rowland (no relation) to rob a bank in Lebanon, Pennsylvania. Colonel Rowland was captured, imprisoned, and died in prison. Travis escaped.

On December 5, 1877, Travis, along with Kid Dougherty, Frank Weaver, and a man named Carr (a friend of Dan Flannigan) were arrested in the Over-the-Rhine area. Travis was armed, but the officer failed to search them until they reached the Bremen Street stationhouse. By then, the officer found the revolver in his own coat pocket. All four gave false names at the time and they were released on the next day.

Frank Weaver

We know little about Frank Weaver before 1878. He had been a brakeman on the Cincinnati, Hamilton, and Dayton Railroad and lived in Glendale and in Middletown. On May 28, 1864, he paid commutation in lieu of serving in the Civil War.

At some point, he spent four years in an Indiana penitentiary, across from Louisville, Kentucky, and learned the trade of making stoves. It is unlikely that he ever put his training to use.

Dan Flannigan

James Dougherty

We know nothing of Dan Flannigan or James Dougherty before 1878, other than Dougherty was variously known as "Kid Dougherty", "The Kid", "Doherty", and "Daugherty".

BACKGROUND

Two of the gang were drinking in a saloon at Marshall Avenue and Colerain Pike during the afternoon of January 22, 1878. Two more joined them later in the afternoon and they drank until evening. After they left, and after the bar closed, they returned, broke a window, and ransacked the business, taking cigars and liquor. Heading south toward the City, they broke into another bar on Colerain, taking more liquor and cigars.

They then broke into a malt house behind the Brighton House. An employee of the Commercial happened by and they chased him off while firing shots at him, though none took effect.

About 3:30 a.m. on January 23, 1878, George Walker, a Cincinnati Enquirer employee, noticed a suspicious man standing in front of a physician's residence at 30 Everett Street. Patrolmen James Farley and John Meyers, of the Oliver Street Station, ran that beat. Mr. Walker found the officers and reported his suspicions.

The patrolmen approached the suspicious man from opposite ends of Everett Street. Meyers arrived first with his revolver in hand, down at his side, when he heard a voice from behind a tree tell him, "Stand back or I'll blow your brains out." Meyers froze and the man came from behind the tree, walked up to him with the muzzle pointed at his face and said, "If you move your hand, I'll shoot you dead." Two other men ran from

30 Everett Street with pistols cocked. One of the three was almost certainly Frank Weaver.

Soon, Patrolman Farley arrived and was similarly surprised when two revolvers came from the darkness and appeared under his nose. The patrolmen were given a choice – flee or die. They fled.

When they were a distance away, they blew their whistles for assistance. Patrolman Hunneman and Haller heard the call and responded, but too late to capture the burglars.

Later that day, the Board of Police Commissioners, in executive session, charged Patrolmen Farley and Meyers with Cowardice and summarily discharged them.

Before Patrolman Kunkel went into work on the night of January 23rd, his wife told him to be careful in how he carried on. She reminded him of the incident on Everett Street. He told her that he knew fear and would do his duty manfully. He was a brave man who never shirked his duty; indeed he was considered one of the bravest men in the Oliver Street District.

INCIDENT

Just before 4 a.m. or 5:30 a.m. the next morning, January 24, 1878, four men, believed to be Dick Travis, Frank Weaver, Dan Flannigan, and James Dougherty, were attempting to break into a home at 153 Dayton Street (now possibly 453 Dayton Street). A neighbor saw them and threw a flowerpot to the ground from a 2nd floor window which alerted other neighbors. When a few men ran to see where the noise had come from, they were confronted by the armed burglars who fired at them. The citizens ran for their lives west toward Linn Street.

A private watchman, J.C. Powell, residing at 172 Charlotte

Street, ran the beat in that area. He was making his rounds about 5:30 a.m. when he saw three suspicious characters coming out of a place near Baymiller and Dayton Streets with another man walking ahead of them. He met with Patrol Davis and Dougherty and told them of the four. They began to follow the four and then met with Patrolman Kunkel who joined in the pursuit and got out in front of the three officials. When he got to Linn and Dayton Streets he was shot and fell. The gas lamps where not lit in the neighborhood and it was very dark. Watchman Powell, after Patrolman Kunkel was shot, ran to get a doctor.

Doctors C. L. Armstrong and C. S. Muscroft conducted the postmortem examination. They found the bullet had penetrated the abdomen, passed through the liver, and lodged in the spine. The bullet had been fired from a Colt Army revolver.

Patrolman H. C. Davis testified that it was about 4:50 a.m. when he and Patrolmen Dougherty and Kunkel were standing on the corner of York and Baymiller and heard a noise emanating from Dayton Street. They went there and found five or six men standing on the corner of Dayton and Baymiller. As they came close to the group, men from the group fired on them some 10 or 12 shots. The officers returned fire and chased them and when they got to Linn and Dayton Streets, Patrolman Kunkel fell. Davis stopped the pursuit in order to help get Patrolman Kunkel to Dr. Armstrong. He advised the lights where not lit and it was rather dark in the neighborhood.

Patrolman T. J. Dougherty testified that he was with Patrolmen Davis and Kunkel at York and Baymiller when they heard a cry for help from the Dayton Street area and immediately responded and found there Watchman Powell. They asked him if he had yelled for help, and he denied doing so and then he pointed to four men near Linn and Dayton. When they approached the men, they shot Patrolman Kunkel and he tried to return fire, but his gun misfired. Patrolman Dougherty took charge of Kunkel's pistol. None of the bullets had discharged.

At this time, Patrolman Kunkel, also of the Oliver Street Station, had been patrolling the east end of his beat which ran between Bank and York Streets from Linn Street to the Mill Creek. At Linn Street he met Sub-Patrolman T. J. Daugherty (no relation) and Patrolman H. C. Davis who patrolled the east side of Linn Street. While they were talking, they heard the yelling and gunshots and saw the two men running toward and past them.

The officers ran to the source of the commotion on Dayton Street with Patrolman Kunkel in front by a short distance. The four burglars fired at the patrolmen and the patrolmen fired back in a running gun battle that continued eastward. Patrolman Kunkel's .22 caliber Hopkins and Allen revolver misfired all three times as he pulled the trigger. Patrolman Daugherty fired all his shots.

Though both were now effectively unarmed, they continued the pursuit of the heavily armed burglars. When Kunkel arrived at No. 82 Dayton Street, P. B. Armstrong's residence, one of the burglars, we believe Dan Flannigan, raised a Colt Army .45 Caliber revolver, deliberately aimed, and shot Patrolman Kunkel in the abdomen. Patrolman Kunkel threw up his hands and yelled, "My God! I'm shot!" and fell to the ground. The bullet had penetrated his abdomen and a lung and lodged in the spinal column.

The other two officers went to his aid and the shooters fled west on Dayton Street. Patrolman Kunkel was taken into the Armstrong residence and medical aid was requested.

DEATH

Patrolman Kunkel died before help could arrive. He was removed to his home at Riddle and Garden Streets.

He was predeceased by his partner, [Patrolman Anthony Kemper](#),

murdered two years prior, and his brother-in-law, Patrolman John Schneider. Patrolman Schneider had recently died leaving his wife and five children destitute, so Patrolman Kunkel moved his wife and son in with his sister's family at No. 2 Riddle Street and provided for both families. Patrolman Kunkel was survived by his parents (names unknown); wife, Mary Kunkel (32); son, William Kunkel (9); and the Schneider family. His funeral was held at 2:30 p.m. on Sunday, January 27, 1878, at St. Augustine's Church, 923 Bank Street. Mourners crowded Bank Street from Linn Street to Baymiller Street in a pelting rain. Patrolman Kunkel was then escorted to St. John's Cemetery in St. Bernard and is buried in Block 26, Lot 0.

INVESTIGATION

The murder investigation immediately focused on the "Everett Street Gang," originally named after what was thought to be their first crimes on the 23rd. Further investigation revealed they were likely responsible also for previously reported burglaries in Mt. Auburn and at the northern end of Broadway.

For the entire day of the murder, the Police Department went out in force to canvass Cincinnati, Covington, and surrounding areas in order to locate the gang. They also sent notices to railroads. Several suspects were detained for investigation. One was Dan Flannigan of 225 W. 6th Street.

During the morning of January 25, 1878, Coroner Stich held an inquest at 10 a.m.

During the next morning, January 25, 1878, three men matching the description of the other three wanted for the Kunkel murder were found by a conductor on a train bound for Indianapolis. They had boarded the train fifteen miles outside of Cincinnati. After leaving Lawrenceburg, Indiana

the conductor assigned a brakeman to sit and make conversation with them. The brakeman sat with Travis who, by the time they made it to Indianapolis, lamented the death of the officer in Cincinnati. Several times during the trip he mentioned Kunkel's fate and it seemed to be a burden on his mind. But he did not actually admit to being involved in the killing.

The conductor summoned Indianapolis City Marshal Manning who boarded the train. Having no idea what the trouble was on the train, nor that it might involve three armed murderers, Manning brought no one with him. He quickly gathered volunteers to assist in the capture which he planned when they arrived at Indianapolis.

The train stopped at the Car Shop in Indianapolis and the three, including Weaver and Dougherty, attempted to leave the smoking car. They found the front door locked and became suspicious. They rushed to the rear and found Manning there. He caught Dougherty, but when Travis pulled a revolver, he released Dougherty and struggled for the weapon, which discharged into the floor. Weaver then fired a shot at Manning. Fleeing passengers forced Manning through the door and all three suspects escaped and ran to a streetcar a few blocks away. The passengers and train-men opened fire as they ran and the three returned fire. About 100 shots were fired and the only bullet to take effect was a stray that killed a farmer's dog.

They hijacked the streetcar, then another, and drove that car out of the city until the horses dropped from exhaustion. The sheriff, police chief, and militia all responded and surrounded them in a barn six miles from that point. The gang had thrown away their weapons, and every scrap of evidence that might identify them, and gave up.

Under questioning, they all related different stories.

The Indianapolis authorities agreed to postpone charges for

trying to kill Marshal Manning until Patrolman Kunkel's case was resolved in Cincinnati. Upon their return to Cincinnati, they registered as John Davis, Frank Weaver, and Joseph Davis.

During the morning of January 28, 1878, at the Bremen Street Stationhouse, former Patrolman Meyers identified Frank Weaver's voice as the one that said, "Shoot the son of a bitch!" on the morning of the 23rd. By the 28th, it was determined that Weaver was using an alias of "John Ryan" and had been imprisoned for stealing cattle in Richmond, Indiana four years earlier.

On February 4, 1878, a Coroner's jury returned a verdict that Patrolman Kunkel's death was caused by a pistol ball wound and implicated "Travis, Weaver, and Dougherty." Further investigation focused on Flannigan as the actual triggerman. Ultimately, the prosecutors determined that there was insufficient evidence to prosecute any of the gang.

Cincinnati Patrolmen Ritter, Murray, Brazell, and Knox transported Travis, Weaver, and Dougherty back to Indianapolis to answer for the assault on Marshal Manning. They were incarcerated for months, but eventually only convicted of carrying concealed weapons and fined.

EPILOGUE

Mary remarried two years later to Bernard Willinger, a Cincinnati Workhouse Guard. She died two decades later and was buried in St. Mary's Cemetery in St. Bernard.

After the Kunkel Murder, the Everett Gang came to be called the Dayton Street Gang. Over time and after other exploits, it became known as the Travis Gang. The four were responsible for numerous thefts, burglaries, murders, and felonious assaults on and murders of law enforcement officers.

Dick Travis

Travis was still in Indianapolis in mid-March 1878 and stole \$7200 from a bank there.

He then went to Cleveland where he married and attempted to settle down. By May 30, 1878 he and Dougherty were seen together in North Bend, Ohio. Nothing more was heard from him for three years.

In the fall of 1881 Travis garnered \$24,000 in a Clarion County, Pennsylvania robbery. Two innocent men were imprisoned for the robbery. Travis was captured in Cleveland but could only be charged with carrying concealed firearms. Also during 1881, Travis was arrested for burglaries in Dayton, Ohio.

He and another accomplice attempted a robbery in a small town in Michigan. He escaped, but his accomplice was killed.

On November 29, 1883, Travis and three new companions blew up a safe in New Washington, Ohio. The next day, on November 30, 1883, they blew up another in Shelly, Ohio and shot the Shelly Marshal in the leg when he pursued them. The Marshal continued the pursuit, returned fire, and killed the youngest of the four. Travis and the two remaining burglars shot back, hitting the Marshal in the leg again and in the chest. The whole populace gave chase and the leader of the posse was shot through the heart and killed. All three desperados were separately captured. One died from a bleeding and festering leg wound. We assume the remaining two were convicted and imprisoned as we cannot find him mentioned in any publication.

Their sentences were probably shortened by parole or commutation. On August 17, 1893, 63-year-old Travis and Rube Smith were locked up in Louisville for Robbery. They pulled up planks from the jail floor and escaped. We can find no accounting for Travis thereafter.

Dan Flannigan

Flannigan was found guilty of a burglary in Cincinnati during 1878 and sent to prison for four years.

After he was released, he was almost immediately imprisoned in Tennessee for another burglary in 1882. He escaped.

Flannigan was back in Cincinnati in 1884 and told at least two people that if an officer tried to arrest him, he carried a revolver and would shoot him. He then robbed a grocery store at 3rd and John Streets. A lieutenant and three detectives investigated the offense, determined Flannigan was the robber, found him, and arrested him after a short struggle. Flannigan told the investigators that he didn't have his pistol with him; else there would have been bloodshed. He was sentenced to fifteen years of hard labor. His "hard labor" was making tobacco plugs. During January 1892, less than eight years into his sentence, Governor Campbell commuted his sentence.

By October of that year, Flannigan was arrested in St. Louis for another robbery. It is assumed that he was charged, convicted, and imprisoned. We cannot find mention of him for almost 18 years thereafter.

At 53 years old, on March 24, 1910, he was arrested at a restaurant at 1013 Vine Street where he held people at gunpoint for not laughing at his jokes. We do not know what happened to him after that.

Frank Weaver

Weaver apparently admitted to his involvement in the Kunkel murder to a cellmate in Columbus in 1879. He may have possibly even been charged as discussed later.

Within months of the Kunkel Murder, on November 5, 1878, Weaver was in Middletown with his brother "Shanty" Weaver. Middletown Policeman Moyer responded to a quarrel between

Shanty and another man. Frank Weaver shot the officer and left Middletown on the run. There are two conflicting reports in the Cincinnati Enquirer, one day apart. One states that he shot and grazed the officer's ear and another states that he was shot in the chest.

On January 20, 1879, Butler County Sheriff Deputy Williams called Colonel Wappenstein and informed him that Weaver was arrested in Columbus, Ohio for Highway Robbery. Though it was reported that Deputy Williams and Colonel Wappenstein would travel to Columbus, it was Patrolman Kushman who came back on January 22, 1879 and reported that Weaver had apparently admitted his guilt in the Kunkel Murder to his cellmate, was indicted in Columbus for Highway Robbery, and was charged in Middletown for the shooting of Policeman Moyer.

The Cincinnati Enquirer reports that on February 18, 1879, Weaver was in a Cincinnati Court for some charge and that the case was continued. It is not known if he was charged with the Kunkel Murder or how he got from Columbus and/or Middletown to Cincinnati. But, on May 22, 1879, Weaver committed suicide by morphine overdose on May 20, 1879.

James Dougherty

On May 30, 1878 he and Travis were seen together in North Bend, Ohio. Nothing more was heard from him for two years.

Dougherty was convicted of and imprisoned for a Burglary in Xenia, Ohio, but we do not know exactly when that occurred.

Dougherty and Tom English were arrested on suspicion on March 16, 1880 when they were caught carrying a bundle of clothing at the Court Street Market. They were taken to the Hammond Street Station and charged on March 17. Both were convicted on March 24, 1880. English's sentence was suspended, but Dougherty was sentenced to two years and sent to the Cincinnati Workhouse.

He was in the Cincinnati Workhouse on January 22, 1882 when he tried to escape from there with Bill Quinn. A shot from a guard dissuaded them at the wall. Assuming he was released within a year thereafter, we find no mention of him using these names for 17 years.

During 1899, he was imprisoned in the Ohio Penitentiary for a September 1899 burglary in Akron, Ohio. After that, we do not know his whereabouts.

FIREARMS NOTE

During the first report of the incident in the Cincinnati Enquirer, the disparity in arms was noted by the reporter. Patrolmen were not issued firearms at the time. Nor, with the 2nd Amendment being adhered to, were they dissuaded from carrying arms. Probably most patrolmen carried a firearm most of the time. Since the officers were not paid very well, few purchased for themselves quality firearms. The burglars in the Patrolman Kunkel murder clearly had fully functional, quality firearms. Probably, all four had .45 caliber Colt revolvers – the largest caliber and highest quality revolver available in 1878. The patrolmen, at least Davis and Kunkel, had cheap, small-caliber, ineffective pepperbox revolvers. Quality revolvers, Merwin Hulbert, were finally standardized in 1884 for Cincinnati Police patrolmen; but they still bought their own.

FAMILY TRADITIONS

Martin Kunkel's older brother, David, worked as a Constable for the Hamilton County Superior Court. As is mentioned, his brother-in-law was a Cincinnati Patrolman and his widow married a Workhouse guard. His great grandson, Robert S. Kunkel, was a Reading Police Officer in 1954 and rose to the

rank of Lieutenant and Acting Police Chief in 1983. From 1985 to 1990 he was the Chief Dispatcher in Springfield Township, finally retiring after 46 years of service.

If anyone has information, artifacts, or images involving this officer or incident, please contact the Greater Cincinnati Police Museum at Memorial@Police-Museum.org.

This narrative was researched and revised on August 9, 2021 by Cincinnati Police Lieutenant Stephen R. Kramer (Retired), Greater Cincinnati Police Historical Society President, with new research product from Cincinnati Police Sergeant David R. Turner (Retired), Greater Cincinnati Police Museum researcher, and assistance from Patrolman Kunkel's great, great granddaughter, Debbie Kunkel Judd. All rights are reserved to them and the Greater Cincinnati Police Museum.