Patrolman William Bond | Cincinnati Police Department

Age: 54
Served: 31½ years
September 10, 1892 to April 20, 1924

OFFICER

William was born December 14, 1867 in New Richmond, Ohio to Mississippian James A. and Georgian S. A. (Williams) Bond.

By 1880, at thirteen years old, he was the oldest of three children living on James's 35-acre farm in Ohio Township near New Richmond. Their mother, we believe, died sometime between 1872 and 1880. His younger siblings were George Bond and Grace Bond.

About 1886, he had a daughter, Belva. We have found no information regarding his first wife.

In the evening of June 20, 1892, William (24) married Mary C. (Bigelow) Adams (20) at the residence of Squire Johnson. He was working as a brick layer. In 1897 they were living at 1631 Dudley. By 1901, they were living at 1645 Freeman Avenue.

On August 26, 1892, he was nominated by six men of good reputation for the position of Substitute Patrolman on the Cincinnati Police Department. The Public Safety Commission approved the nomination on September 2nd, and he took the oath of office on September 10, 1892. As a substitute patrolman, William was on probation and served in any district as needed. On February 17, 1893, he was nominated for regular Patrolman and

approved on February 28, 1893. At that time, he would have been assigned to a specific district. We believe it was District 4 (754 W. Fifth Street).

On July 1, 1895, during a shakeup of the Department, Patrolman Bond was transferred from the Fourth District to the First District (City Hall). Then, three months later, the young patrolman was transferred in another shakeup to the Fifth District (Oliver and Linn Streets). At some point he transferred to the Ninth District (north of Eighth and State) and on June 1, 1897 to the Tenth District (north wing of the Cincinnati Work House). By 1908 he was working out of the Fourth District again.

By 1910, Patrolman and Mary Bond were living at 812 Court Street with their daughter, Belva Herzig, and brother-in-law, Albert Bigelow. By 1920, they had moved to 588 Grand Avenue where they would live the rest of their lives. Also living with them was their grandson, Jack W. Herzig. Again, we do not know what happened to Belva's husband, John A. Herzig.

By 1924, Patrolman Bond had served the citizens of Cincinnati for 31 years. He had long since earned for himself an inside job at the Fourth District and served as Stationhouse Keeper and keeper of Central Station. However, in his final year before retirement, he requested and was granted a transfer back to patrol. He was back on the beat and working in the Fourth District with his good friend, Patrolman Lawrence Klump. Neither would make it to retirement.

MURDERER and ACCOMPLICE

Wesley Elden Belcher was born July 10, 1898 in Russell, Virginia, the sixth of twelve children born to farmers Ulysses Grant "Asa" and Mary Alice (Shepherd) Belcher. By June 1900,

the family was living in Cook’s Mill, Russell County, Virginia.

On December 20, 1917, he married Mary Stevenson in Tazewell County, Virginia. By September 1918 they were living in McDowell County, West Virginia and he was working for the United States Coal and Coke Company. They had two children together, a girl in 1919 named after Mary’s mother, Minnie, and a boy in 1919 named Ira Thomas.

Belcher’s younger brother, Roy Belcher, killed his sister’s husband in the fall of 1922. He was arrested near Boyle County, Kentucky, 120 miles south of Cincinnati, in January 1924. At the same time, Wesley Belcher moved to Cincinnati and was living at 653 Carr Street with his cousin, also named Ira Belcher. There are no indications as to what happened to his wife and children.

Ferd “Two Gun Jim” Honaker, also known as James Honaker, was born about 1902, the sixth of at least nine children born to Oscar and Mary Ann (Thompson) Honaker. Ferd and his family in 1910 were living on their father’s farm in Newgarden Magisterial District in Russell County, Virginia. Nothing is known about him after 1910.

INCIDENT

During the afternoon of April 20, 1924, Belcher or Honaker threw a wet ball of paper at Oliver Tabor (22) of 732 Clinton Street and Luther Foley (19) of 907 West Ninth Street while they stood at Fifth Street and Freeman Avenue. Belcher then poked Foley in the ribs with a revolver. He lost the grip of his revolver and it fell to the ground, but he quickly recovered it and struck Foley over the head with it. Either Tabor or Foley pulled their own weapon and Belcher and Honaker ran north on Freeman Avenue as two shots were being fired at them.

Patrolman Bond was patrolling his beat on Fifth Street when he heard the two gunshots and ran toward them. Two witnesses (probably Tabor and Foley) advised him that the two suspects were running north on Freeman Avenue and Patrolman Bond left in that direction. Foley and Tabor went to a drug store at Clark Street and Freeman Avenue to tend to Foley's wound.

Bond lost the trail at an alley on Baymiller Street, but a citizen, Jacob Regner of 1027 Baymiller Street, showed him where the two ran up the rear steps to the third floor of 918 Richmond Street.

When Patrolman Bond got to the third floor, he found Belcher and Honaker in the kitchen of an apartment. Patrolman Bond advanced on them demanding, "Who's got the revolver. Give it to me." Belcher whipped out his revolver and shot him twice, in the chest and abdomen. Patrolman Bond stumbled forward, pulled his own revolver (which currently is on display at the Greater Cincinnati Police Museum) returned one shot that missed, then grappled with Belcher for his gun. Mr. Regner, who had heard the shots, ran up the stairs to assist. Between the two, Belcher was punched in the head multiple times before he released the revolver. Glover Ruth, also of 918 Richmond, heard the scuffle and called Police Communications. Honaker, known then only as "James," ran when Mr. Regner entered the room.

Mr. Regner held Belcher at bay until Patrolmen Elbert, Hammel, and Brissie arrived and took Belcher into custody. Patrolmen Brockmann, Ebbers, Stath, and Von Dohre, at Clark Street and Freeman Avenue, arrested Oliver Tabor and Luther Foley.

Patrolman Bond was transported by a patrol wagon to General Hospital at 3:22 p.m.

DEATH

Patrolman Bond requested his wife, Mary, be brought to the hospital, but died at 4:40 p.m., two minutes before his wife and daughter arrived.

Besides his wife, Patrolman Bond left a widowed daughter, Belva Herzig, and grandson, Jack W. Herzig. His funeral was held at 2:30 p.m. on April 24, 1924, at his residence at 588 Grand Avenue. Services were officiated by Rev. Robert Kennedy of Price Hill M. E. Church. Pallbearers including Lieutenant William Krumpe, Sergeant James Brahany, and Patrolmen Harry Luebbe and Thomas Coleman. He was buried in Spring Grove Cemetery.

INVESTIGATION

Before he died, Patrolman Bond identified Belcher as his assailant. Mr. Regner also testified to that effect and Belcher admitted to Detectives Schaefer and Diers and Sergeant O'Neill that he shot Patrolman Bond.

Sitting in his cell, under the influence of alcohol (even though it was during Prohibition), Belcher told those listening, "Oh, God, forgive me. Oh, pray for me. I shot the officer because I thought he was going to hurt me." Later, he changed his tact to, "Why are you holding me? What did I do? I don't know what I did. Tell me, what did I do?"

Detectives William Sweeney and Lewis B. Bell were assigned the case of tracking down Honaker. Honaker ran to Belcher's home dressed in women's attire and carrying his own clothes in a bundle. Belcher's cousin, Ira Belcher, refused him admittance and he ran from the home. He was last seen in Cincinnati on foot in the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad yards near Carr Street. The

female clothing that he was wearing was found in a Baltimore and Ohio coal bin on April 22 by Walter Menning of Budd and Harriett Streets.

Honaker fled to his hometown in Virginia. One week to the day after officer Bond was shot, on April 27, 1924, a Sheriff's posse in Russell County was searching for Honaker. Residents of the neighborhood informed them that he was possibly holed up in an old, abandoned house in the mountains near there. When the posse surrounded the house, they found three men inside. None were Ferd Honaker, but in the confusion, the posse fired on the occupants killing Bert Wilson, mortally wounding Charles "Charlie" Dye, Ferd's cousin, and seriously wounding Nathan Honaker, Ferd's brother. The three of them had gone hunting and when darkness arrived, they decided to stay the night in the house.

JUSTICE

Belcher was arraigned in Municipal Court on April 24, 1924 on a charge of First-Degree Murder. Belcher, when asked to plea, answered, "I don't know. I was unconscious." Judge Samuel W. Bell bound him over to the Grand Jury without bond. Tabor and Foley were also brought before the judge and put under a bond of $1000 as material witnesses. On May 9, 1924, Belcher pleaded "not guilty" at his arraignment in front of Judge Fred L. Hoffman, and selection of a jury began the next day.

Belcher's trial began June 9, 1924, with Assistant Prosecutor Nelson Schwab prosecuting and a new, and now famous, murder trial attorney, William Foster "Foss" Hopkins defending. In the ten years between 1918 and 1927, most cop-killers were being sentenced to death. Hopkins would consider anything less to be a victory. He first pleaded Belcher incompetent to stand trial. At

the beginning of the trial, the defense added an attorney, Marshall B. Wood, and Prosecutor Charles S. Bell joined Schwab.

On June 11th, the trial was delayed when Judge Hoffman took ill.

It resumed on the 12th and the State rested on the 13th after 9-year-old Alma Ruth testified to seeing Belcher running with a gun in his hand while being pursued by Patrolman Bond.

Belcher took the stand in his defense on the 14th and acted as a wide-eyed, gaped-mouth lunatic answering most questions with, "I don't remember."

The jury returned a verdict on the next Monday, and it was read aloud in court on Tuesday, June 17th. He was found guilty of First-Degree Murder with a recommendation of mercy, ergo life imprisonment, and a "victory" for Foss Hopkins.

EPILOGUE

Within five days of the murder, Fourth District officers recommended a Carnegie medal (for valor) for Jacob Regner. Plans were made for Fourth District Patrolmen John Franken, George Sands, and Joseph Sweeney to organize a testimonial for Regner, but no Carnegie medal was apparently issued.

Ferd Honaker was finally tracked down at his parents' home on June 29, 1924 by the Sheriff's posse and he was also shot and killed.

On the same day Honaker was shot, a third Fourth District officer in less than one year was shot and killed, Acting Detective Anthony Tekulve.

Belva died six years after her father and was laid to rest next

to him.

Wesley Belcher at some point was able to work himself into being a trustee at the Ohio prison in London. This allowed him the opportunity to walk away and escape on April 30, 1939, at the age of 42. He made his way to Carter County, Tennessee where he remarried and started a new family under the assumed name, Patric Ernest Rhyne. He later moved to Trumbull County, Ohio where he was killed in an automobile accident on September 21, 1967, at the age of 70. He is buried under his alias at Newton Township Cemetery, Newton Falls, Ohio.

Mary lived to 75 and died on July 4, 1945. She is buried with her husband and daughter in Spring Grove Cemetery.

If you know of any information, archives, artifacts, or images regarding this officer or incident, please contact the Greater Cincinnati Police Museum at Memorial@Police-Museum.org.

© This narrative was last researched and revised on March 13, 2022 by Cincinnati Police Lieutenant Stephen R. Kramer (Retired), Greater Cincinnati Police Historical Society President, with copious information provided by a distant relative of Belcher and Honaker, Silverton Police Lieutenant Michael Dye (Retired). All rights are reserved to them and the Greater Cincinnati Police Museum.