

Timothy O'Brien Murder

- 1849 - Sep. 3 Timothy O'Brien (~1826-1871) and Margaret Kelley, both Irish-born, are married in Syracuse, New York. They eventually have five children.
- 1855 ≈ The O'Briens and their first child move to Michigan.
- 1860 - Aug. 23 The 1860 US Census lists the family in Gaines Township, Genesee County
- 1863 ≈ Margaret dies after Timothy, Jr. is born (27 Dec. 1862)
- 1864 - Sep. 26 Timothy Sr. marries Mary ____, widow of Michael Maurice.
- 1869 The O'Briens sell their land in Gaines Township (sec. 28). Afterwards, Mary gives her residence as Argentine Township, just south of Gaines.
- 1870 - Aug. 19 At the time of the US Census, four of the O'Brien children are living with other families in Michigan. There is no record of the parents or the fifth child.
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- 1871 - Feb. 28 The Chicago & Michigan Lake Shore Railroad¹ is complete to Grand Junction. Timothy O'Brien works for the C&MLS and runs a boarding house for railroad men at Sherman's Mill² (8 miles north).
- (same day) After drawing \$40 in pay from the C&MLS office in Holland, O'Brien walks eleven miles to Richmond³, where he takes a room at a tavern⁴ and has dinner. After dark, he leaves with two men and is not seen again.
- Mar. 1 A shanty a few feet from the railroad tracks near Richmond is discovered smoldering at 4:00 AM. Human remains are found among the wreckage.
- Mar. 1-4 A deputy sheriff takes the remains to Sherman's Mill.
- A postmortem by Dr. Henry Stimson of Saugatuck fails to provide a cause of death. Gustavus Meyer, Manlius Township Justice of the Peace, conducts an inquest and has the body buried.
- O'Brien's wife recognizes items found at the scene, including a knife with an odd break in its blade, confirming that the body is Timothy's.
- The initial suspects are James Hogle, Charles Hayward, and Pat Hogan.⁵
- Mar. 4 The first newspaper report appears in the *Lake Shore Commercial*.⁶
- Mar. 24 Judge Charles Brown of Allegan County Circuit Court approves payment of \$149.53 to Gustavus Meyer to cover the inquest and burial costs.
- Aug. 15 Timothy left no will. Judge George Gold of Genesee County Probate Court appoints Mary O'Brien to administer her late husband's \$1000 estate.

¹ The C&MLS opened from New Buffalo to St. Joe on 1 Feb. 1870. It ended in Montague on 1 July 1871.

² Located in Clyde Township, six miles south of Fennville, Sherman's Mill is now Bravo (BRAY-voh).

³ Richmond became New Richmond in 1872.

⁴ O'Brien could have stayed at Joe Roe's tavern or the Richmond House, which opened in 1871.

⁵ There is no record of a trial or anyone serving prison time for this crime.

⁶ There are no newspaper accounts of any resolution of the case.