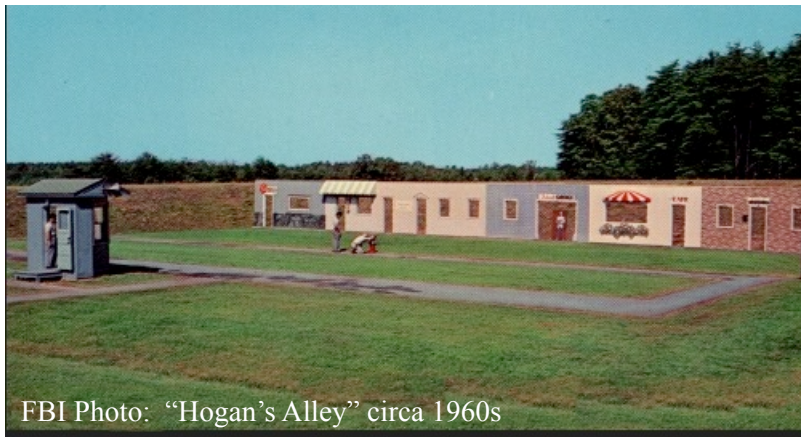


From Sunday's Comics To Pop-Up Targets: Origin Of The FBI's Original "Hogan's Alley"



FBI Photo: "Hogan's Alley" circa 1960s

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Questions about the name and origin of the FBI's "Hogan's Alley" surface often with law enforcement personnel, gun enthusiasts and history buffs. Within FBI circles, it's mentioned that the alley obtained its name based upon an 1800s comic strip having the same name. The comic

strip's alley was in a rough neighborhood and the name fit the "neighborhood" of the FBI's training area. That's the short answer.

The longer answer follows the progress of law enforcement training from the 1920s through the 1950s, beginning at Camp Perry, Ohio and ending at Quantico, Virginia.

The Sunday comics edition of "*Hogan's Alley*," had its beginnings in New York City:

"Cartoonist, illustrator, and artist, Richard F. Outcault, was born in Lancaster, Ohio and studied art at the Cincinnati University School of Design. In December, 1890 he married and moved to New York City. In November, 1894, he became the founding father of comic strips with *The Origin of a New Species*. He then created *Hogan's Alley* featuring the immensely popular character, Micky Dugan, later known as the Yellow Kid." ¹

Debuting in 1895, the Yellow Kid was an Irish urchin living and playing in the rough neighborhood of "Hogan's Alley" within the sometimes dangerous slums of New York City. Online samples of the Sunday comic show the dilapidated row homes, complete with characters in and out of doorways and windows along with a variety of store fronts, vendors, local thugs and mixed nationalities.

With Outcault* having his original roots in Ohio, it's not surprising that twenty or so years after the popular comic's distribution, elements within that state would be the first to adopt the comic's name. In this case, law enforcement took the lead during the 1920s at Camp Perry, Ohio. According to a 2010 article in the *American Rifleman*:

"The first reference found with the use of *an operational "Hogan's Alley"* occurred at the Nat'l Guard's Camp Perry, Ohio during the 1920s. The NRA, in close conjunction with the National

Board for the Promotion of Rifle Practice (NBPRP), overseer of the Civilian Marksmanship Program (CMP), established at Camp Perry the Special Police School in 1926 under the Small Arms Firing School, which included a tactical course called “Hogan’s Alley.” It consisted of makeshift buildings with reappearing silhouettes to simulate urban shoot-outs.”²

Subsequent to the Kansas City Massacre in June, 1933 the FBI entered the “war on crime” with additional firearms acquisition and organized training being at the forefront. Bureau files show that through the efforts of Hoover Committee Members, Assistant Director Hugh Clegg, SA Frank Baughman, and others the FBI began training agents in firearms with U. S. Army assistance nationwide. This was before the FBI’s relationship with the US Marine Corps. Clegg, who majored in education, would eventually become Assistant Director of Inspection and Training and would play a key role in the founding of the FBI Academy.

One early firearms expert who assisted with FBI training, and was *also familiar with Camp Perry, Ohio* was Major Julian S. Hatcher, Ordnance Department, U. S. Army. Hatcher wrote several books in the late 1920s and mid 1930s about firearms and during the period he was Ordnance Officer and Ordnance Representative for the National Matches at Camp Perry. In writing a “Foreword” to Hatcher’s book in 1935, *Firearms Investigation, Identification & Evidence*, FBI Director, J. Edgar Hoover praised Hatcher

mentioning his service as a member of the Bureau’s training school faculty.

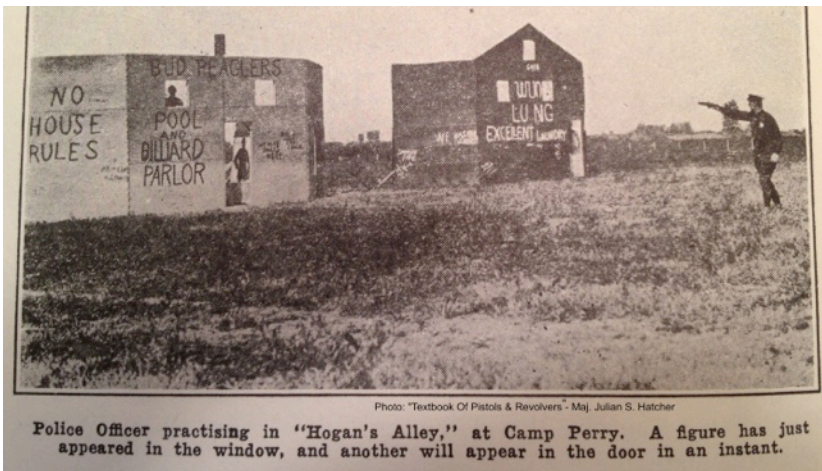


Photo credit: J. S. Hatcher’s “Textbook Of Pistols & Revolvers” (1935)

Importantly, Hatcher’s book, *Textbook Of Pistols & Revolvers*, (1935) provides us with a visual of the layout and purpose of “Hogan’s Alley” at Camp Perry. He writes:

“Something on this general order is found in the so-called “Hogan’s Alley” range which is part of the great Police School

conducted by The National Rifle Association at Camp Perry each year. ‘Hogan’s Alley’ consists of several sham buildings erected on the target line, to represent a street in a slum section of a town. There are, of course, numerous doors and windows, and there are chimneys, etc. behind which gangsters might be supposed to be lurking. The officer then walks down the street, with his gun loaded.As each figure appears in some unexpected place, the officer fires at it.”³

With a variety of matches as well as the police school, many competitors and police departments no doubt had knowledge of the Alley at Camp Perry. Some like Hatcher were already associated with the FBI. We can add to that list legendary FBI agent Walter Walsh (and possibly others) of the 1935 FBI pistol team who shot at Camp Perry. Vanderpool (p. 83) reminds us that Walsh's competitive shooting days at Camp Perry actually go back to the late 1920s⁴ and Skelton (p. 12) revealed that by 1941, Walsh was serving as a small arms instructor there as well.⁵

Walsh's time as an instructor at Camp Perry would overlap with his role in a newly formed FBI Academy. His association with Camp Perry continued until he left the Bureau in 1942, enlisting in the U. S. Marine Corps.

At the beginning of World War II, Camp Perry closed and was used as a prisoner of war camp. The Camp reopened in 1956 sponsoring National Matches but no evidence could be found that "Hogan's Alley" ever reappeared as part of a Special Police School.

"Hogan's Alley" And The FBI Academy

The details of the FBI's construction of its original Academy in 1939 are found in many internal documents and/or FBI publications. According to the FBI's internal publication, *The Investigator*:

"Construction of the Academy began in the fall of 1939 on Barnett Avenue on the Marine base....The first FBI range was opened in December, 1940....Kenneth Logan was the first Special Agent in Charge of the Academy. His assistants were Walter Walsh, W. H. Epsy, James C. Kennedy, Joseph Lynch, George Fitch, and Henry L. Sloan.....In 1942, 'Hank' Sloan was appointed SAC of firearms training and in March, 1954, he was placed in charge of all FBI facilities at Quantico."⁶

"Hank" Sloan, above, had become a special agent in 1935 and trained at the US Army facility at Ft. Washington, Maryland. Until Walsh left for the US Marine Corps in 1942 and if not earlier in their careers, it's clear he and Sloan crossed paths at a minimum at the new FBI Academy.

Two sets of SAC Sloan's construction notes and an internal memorandum we examined reveal enlightening evidence about the birth of the FBI's "Hogan's Alley." If the knowledge of Camp Perry's Alley was mentioned by Clegg, Walsh or Hatcher (or others known or unknown) during the 1939 construction, it didn't show. *There is no mention of any "Hogan's Alley"* in Sloan's notes of the original FBI Academy, and we know no such Alley ever appeared. His planning documents for the construction did offer a clue to what would become the FBI's "Hogan's Alley" of later years, mainly as a result with construction of a "surprise target range" consisting of electronically controlled pop up

targets. Sloan's 1940s notes, page two, show that the construction of a "surprise target range" received authorization in 1944 from the Bureau and the US Marine Corps with work starting on it in 1945. The estimated cost was \$3,000.

In the early 1950s, on receipt of advice of the U.S. Marine Corps, and as a result of the influx of special agents in 1951 it was necessary to relocate (and expand) the FBI ranges at Quantico, Va. Although we do not see any wording of "Hogan's Alley" in Sloan's four pages of hand written construction notes of that period, a later FBI memorandum shows the morphing process of the ranges.

In Sloan's 1952 memo to Assistant Director, Hugh Clegg he describes the recommended layout of the relocated and newer ranges. We finally see the new "Hogan's Alley" name on pages one and two. On page one under "Ranges" it reads: "The ranges are to be located side by side....a surprise target and "Hogan's Alley" range..."⁷

On page two of the same memorandum, section D reveals more detail shown here:

Surprise and "Hogan's Alley" Ranges:

"This range will combine the present surprise target range using life size photos for reaction training and false front row of houses 120 feet long and 10 feet high for trainingan advanced course of proven value."

According to *The Investigator* article above, "Construction [of all ranges] was completed in 1954, and SAC Sloan fired the first shot on April 14, 1954."

For both Camp Perry and the FBI, the Sunday comics supplied the name. Early Ohio law enforcement followed by the FBI provided the rest. The "Hogan's Alley" of the FBI Academy bears the similar description to the Camp Perry "Hogan's Alley" Hatcher wrote about in 1935. If there were any influences on Sloan's Alley, they could have come from multiple sources who knew of, experienced, or wrote about the Perry Alley; all of it over a span of some twenty years. (By 1952, both Walsh and Baughman were retired)

There's no doubt that Sloan solicited the abilities and expertise of those who surrounded him in those early range development years. The Clegg memo on page one reinforces this by describing the needs: "they [ranges] are required as to number and size *based on conferences* with the firearms instructors, experience, and anticipated needs for the future." According to Hank's son-in-law we spoke to:

"Hank's search for a perfect Academy consisted of receiving plans and information from all the Military Academies and various Universities when planning everything from the

size and layout of classrooms, dormitory rooms to all the most efficient support entities and their layouts within the academy.”

“Hogan’s Alley” was one part of that perfect Academy; “Hank” Sloan and others recognized the need for it. After all, it was “*an advanced course of proven value*” and had been since the 1920s.

Bibliography:

With special thanks to the Sloan family, retired FBI Special Agent, Chuck Stern and the current FBI Historian, Dr. John Fox.

* Outcault was also the creator of the comic strip Buster Brown and in later years licensed his creation to many companies most notably for Buster Brown shoes. [source: *Artists In Ohio*, below]

¹ Haversack, Mary. *Artists In Ohio*. p. 657. 1787-1900: A Biographical Dictionary. Kent State University Press, Kent State, Ohio. 2000

² McClellan, Angus. "The NRA Law Enforcement Division celebrates its 50th Anniversary." *American Rifleman Mobile*. April 13, 2010.

³ Hatcher, Julian S. Major. “*Textbook Of Pistols & Revolvers*” 524 & 525. Small Arms Technical Publishing Company, 1935.

⁴ Vanderpool, Bill. "Walter R. Walsh; An Amazing Career." p.83. *American Rifleman*. November 2010 issue.

⁵ Shelton, Skeeter. “Hipshots” (Walsh Interview) p. 12. *Shooting Times*, April 1986.

⁶ *The Investigator*. pp 2& 3. June, 1960 edition. “FBI Academy, 20th Anniversary.”

⁷ Sloan to Clegg Office Memorandum, “FBI Ranges - Quantico - Relocation,” October 15, 1952.

Permission required to reprint. Retired FBI SA Larry Wack maintains a website dedicated to the FBI and the G-Men of the 1930s. It's located at: <http://historicalgmen.squarespace.com>