

## Women Behind Bars - Mary Coffay Lee and Mary Coyle Manion

The women of Grasshopper hill were not immune to problems. Our ancestor, **Mary (Coffay) Lee** was born in Cloontimullan, Roscommon, Ireland, the **oldest daughter of John and Catherine Coffay**, and half-sister of William Manion. Mary Coffay married Thomas Lee, an Irish immigrant laborer of Grasshopper Hill. They had several children and by 1880, Thomas Lee was paralyzed due to an accident. Based on these records, it appears that Mary had a problem with alcohol and even her own family members felt she was better off in prison. Unfortunately, this was not an uncommon solution for people who suffered from alcohol addiction in the 1880s

William Manion and Mary Lee were both arrested on Oct. 18, 1884 at 1:35 a.m:

**1884 Oct. 18, Baltimore City Police Record, Northwestern District 1:35 a.m.**

**William Manion**, Charged with being **drunk & disorderly** on the street.

Officer: Bailey, Fine: \$1.00 + costs. **Committed** in default of payment of fine and costs.

**AND:**

**Mary Lee**, Charged with being **drunk and disorderly**. Officer: Brown, **Dismissed**

**Mary Lee**, Charged on the acct. of **Michael Coffay** with being a **habitually disorderly person** (not insane.)

**Committed to the Maryland House of Correction for three months.**

Officer: Brown.

Witness: **Michael Coffay**, Boundary (North) Ave. near Falls Road.

**William Manion and Mary (Coffay) Lee** were arrested at the same time on the same day, 1:35 a.m.

William Manion, on this police record, was either Mary Lee's half-brother or her nephew, both having the same name.

At the time of her arrest, Mary was raising five children at home. Her crippled husband may have been dead by this time.

At the police station, William Manion was committed to jail. Mary was charged with being drunk and disorderly, then dismissed.

It appears that **Michael Coffay** (Mary Lee's younger brother & William Manion's half-brother) charged his sister with being a "habitually disorderly person" which resulted in a three-month sentence in the Maryland House of Correction.

*Night-October 18<sup>th</sup> 1884*

*Wm. Manion 7<sup>th</sup> St. W. No. 1000* } *Each charged with being*  
*Emily Jane Manion 11<sup>th</sup> St. W. No. 1000* } *Drunk and Disorderly on*  
*Wm. Manion 1<sup>st</sup> Ave. W. No. 1000* } *the street, each fined \$1.00 &*  
*for Wm. Fadden & Wm. E. Hughes costs. Wm. Manion & Wm. Fadden*  
*Frederick Berger 1<sup>st</sup> Ave. W. No. 1000* } *on payment of fine & costs.*  
*Engel* } *Committed in default of*  
*payment of fine and costs.*

*Mary Lee 1<sup>st</sup> Ave. W. No. 1000* } *Brown charged with being Drunk*  
*Disorderly, dismissed.*

*Mary Lee* } *Brown charged on the acct. of Michael*  
*Michael Coffay with being a habitually*  
*disorderly person (not insane)*  
*Boundary Ave. Committed to the Maryland*  
*near Falls Road House of Correction for three*  
*off Brown months.*

Below is from Mary (Coffay) Lee's prison record.

No.	Name of Prisoners.	Place of Nativity.	Age
4126	Joseph Gussner	Strasburg, Md.	2
4127	James Thomas	Calvert Co. Md.	3
4128	Mary Lee	Ireland	41
4129	Samuel M. Laine	Wilmington Del.	42
4130	Lloyd Bell	Leesburg Va.	43

The complete record is transcribed below:

**Oct. 1884 Maryland House of Correction, Anne Arundel County, Maryland**

Name: **Mary Lee**, Number: 3009

Place of Nativity: Ireland, Age: 41, Stature: 5'1

Place of Residence: N. 74 Charles St. Ave.

Crime: Drunk and disorderly

Date of Reception: Oct. 21, 1884 (*Comment: Mary was arrested and charged on Oct. 18, 1884*)

How Occupied in Prison: Laundry

When Discharged: Jan 9, 1885

Mary Lee returned to the Maryland House of Correction in 1886 for another three-month sentence on a similar charge:

**March 29, 1886 Maryland House of Correction, Anne Arundel County, Maryland**

Name: **Mary Lee**, Number: 4128

Place of Nativity: Ireland, Age: 45, Stature: 5'1

Place of Residence: 148 Boundary av.

**Crime: H. Dis. (habitually disorderly)**

Date of Reception: Mar. 29, 1886

How Occupied in Prison: Laundry

When Discharged: Jun 19, 1886

While Mary Lee was serving her second three-month sentence in 1886, her sister-in-law, **Mary (Coyle) Manion**, was also sentenced for three months in the Maryland House of Correction. She joined her husband's sister, Mary Lee, in the prison's laundry room. Mary Manion only had to serve two weeks of her sentence, though, and was released three days before Mary Lee.

4218	Daniel Diggs.	Cumberland, Mo.	68	H. Gray	Blue	55	Open Air
4219	Daniel L. Willet, sr.	Prince George's Co. Md.	45	Mul. Bell	Brown	57	10th Royal Batt.
4220	Mary Manion.	Ireland.	48	H. Gray	Blue	58 1/4	St. Louis, Mo.
4221	Thomas Beard.	Ohio.	33		Dark Hazel		Batt.

The complete record is transcribed on the following page:

**May 31, 1886, Maryland House of Correction, Anne Arundel County, Maryland**

Name: **Mary Manion**, Number: 4220

Place of Nativity: Ireland, Age: 48, Stature: 5'1"

Place of Residence: **Mt. Royal**, Balto. Co.

**Crime: H. Dis. (*habitually disorderly*)**

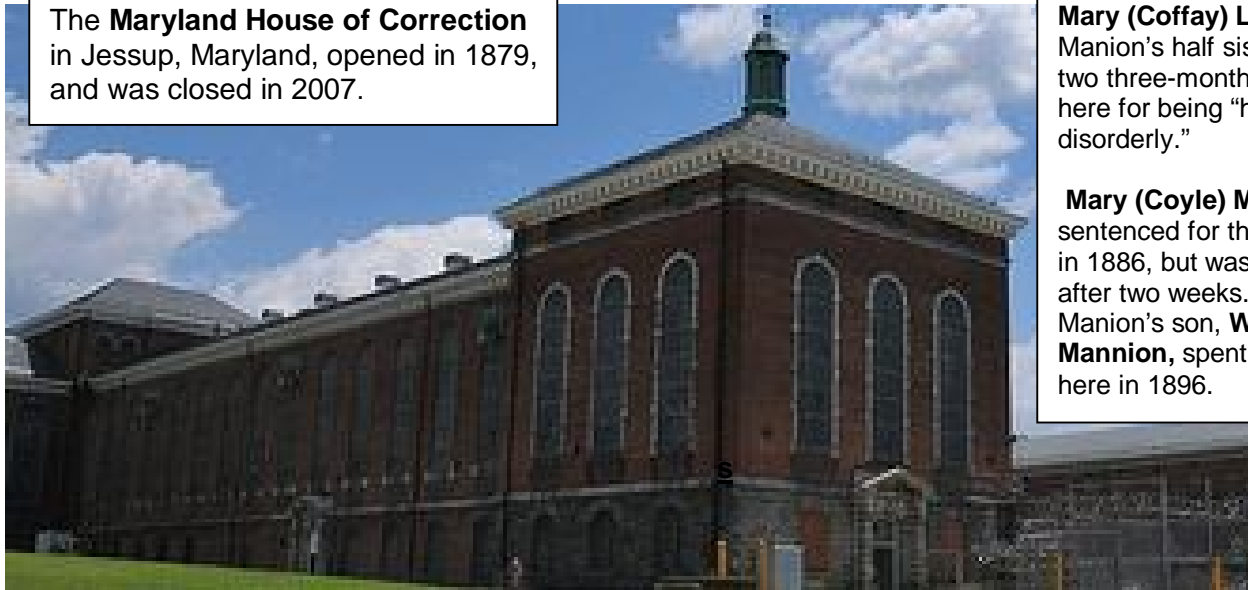
Date of Reception: May 31, 1886

How Occupied in Prison: Laundry

When Discharged: June 16, 1886, By Writ

Mary's family must have worked hard to obtain a writ for her release after two weeks in prison.

The **Maryland House of Correction** in Jessup, Maryland, opened in 1879, and was closed in 2007.



**Mary (Coffay) Lee** (William Manion's half sister), served two three-month sentences here for being "habitually disorderly."

**Mary (Coyle) Manion**, was sentenced for three months in 1886, but was released after two weeks. Mary Manion's son, **William Mannion**, spent 30 days here in 1896.