AWESOME stories

JOHN AND CONNOR ROONEY

0. JOHN AND CONNOR ROONEY - Story Preface

1. CHICKAGOU

2. A DOMESTIC PROBLEM

3. POPULAR PROHIBITION-ERA SONGS

4. PROHIBITION BECOMES LAW

5. ORGANIZED CRIME BEGINS IN CHICAGO

6. CHICAGO'S EARLY CRIME BOSSES

7. GANGSTER ASSASSINS

8. MOONSHINE AND BOOTLEGGERS

9. AL CAPONE AND THE OUTFIT

10. A SMOKING GUN

11. CAPONE GOES DOWN

12. FRANK NITTI - THE ENFORCER

13. JOHN AND CONNOR ROONEY

14. PERDITION, MICHIGAN

15. WHAT ABOUT THOSE GUNS?

John Looney—the historical figure on whom Paul Newman's character "John Rooney" is based (in the film, "Road to Perdition")—once lived in this stone mansion not far from the Mississippi River. It is located at 1635 20th Street, in Rock Island, Illinois.

In the film version of *Road to Perdition*, two key characters have had a last-name change.

- John Looney, an actual Irish gangster from Rock Island, Illinois (whose real-life escapades, although a decade earlier, are part of the story) is known as "John Rooney."

- Looney's real-life son, "Crazy Connor," is known as Connor Rooney in the film.

(The name changes are a departure from the graphic novel by Max Allen Collins who used the names of the historical gangsters in his original tale.)

Michael Sullivan (known as Michael O'Sullivan in the original book) and his tragic tale were invented by Collins. In the underworld of the early 1930s, however, such a tale is completely believable.

It is fair to ask of those times: How did a devoted husband and father square his work (as a killer) with the deep love he had for his own family? And ... how could a young boy, who adored his father, separate the knowledge of who his father was to *him* and who he was to *others*?

It is not just the Sullivan father/son relationship that makes the story interesting. On a deeper level, what does a gangster father (like John Rooney) do when he learns his son has put business before family? Is there retribution that ought to flow from such an act? If so, against whom?

The historical John Looney seems less conflicted than his on-screen counterpart. Turns out Looney actually had a hold on Rock Island (located across the Mississippi River from Davenport, Iowa) even before Prohibition. But *after* liquor was banned, Looney's business really flourished - at least for awhile.

It is reported he controlled about 150 saloons, brothels and gambling houses. Nearly 200 merchants, who were also running illicit businesses, paid him protection fees.

Looney owned a newspaper (the *Rock Island News*) in which he printed awful things about people - unless they paid him not to. And he actually *did* have a beautiful stone mansion near the Mississippi River. It's still there, at 1635 - 20th Street in Rock Island's Highland Park area.

It is said that Al Capone did not interfere with Looney's "business" interests. But other gangsters did.

On 6 October 1922, John and Connor Looney were ambushed in front of Rock Island's Sherman Hotel. Connor was killed in the shoot-out. Soon thereafter, Looney's brothels and saloons were shut down and his stills

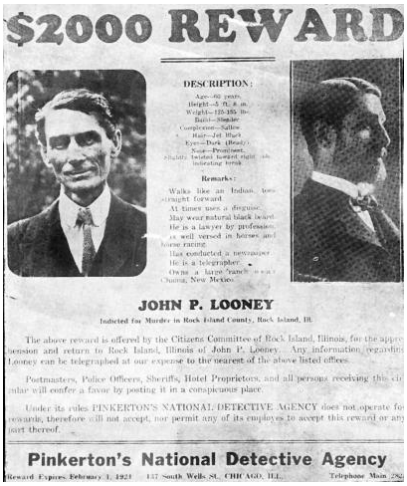
destroyed.

Things would get worse for him, however. He was convicted of murder in 1925 and sentenced to 14 years. He was released from prison nine years later, at age 68.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:
http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/JOHN-AND-CONNOR-ROONEY-Road-to-Perdition

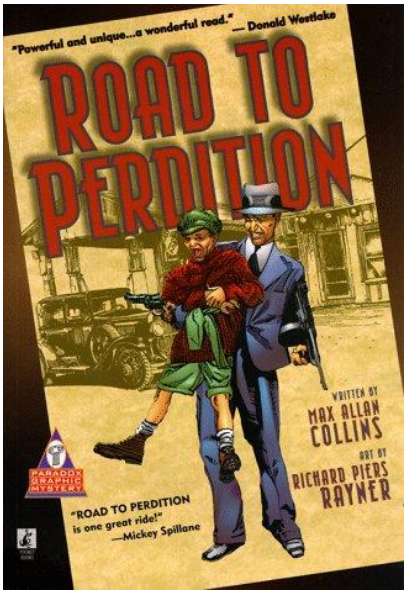
See Learning Tasks for this story online at:
http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/JOHN-AND-CONNOR-ROONEY-Road-to-Perdition

Media Stream



John Looney
Image online, courtesy Wikipedia Commons.
PD
View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/John-Looney

Rock Island, Illinois - Map Locator
Image online, courtesy Google Maps website.
View this asset at:
http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Rock-Island-Illinois-Map-Locator



Road to Perdition - by Max Allan Collins
Image online, courtesy amazon.com website.
View this asset at:
http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Road-to-Perdition-by-Max-Allan-Collins

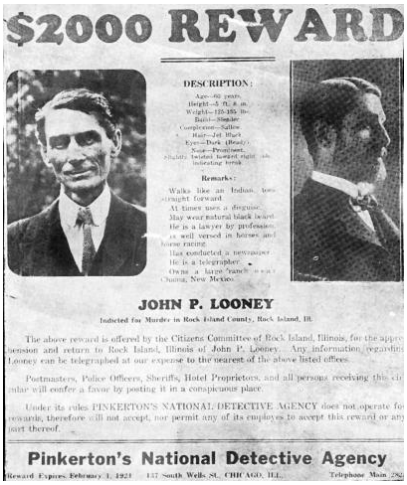
Mississippi River - Map Locator

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

License: CC BY-SA 3.0.

View this asset at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Mississippi-River-Map-Locator



John P. Looney - Reward Poster

Image online, courtesy Wikipedia Commons.

PD

View this asset at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/John-P.-Looney-Reward-Poster

JOHN AND CONNOR ROONEY

View this asset at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/JOHN-AND-CONNOR-ROONEY