

The Mollman Nine Brothers Band

Gavin Holman, 20 October 2023

Antone Mollman was born in Raesfeld, Germany, marrying Augusta Dierkes in 1875. Their first son, Anton, was born in Germany, but the new family emigrated to the U.S.A. in 1880, setting up home in Coal City, Illinois, and taking up work in the mines. His sons later also followed him into the mining profession.



The Mollman Family Band was formed by Antone in the late 1890s and performed for a few years as the family ensemble. Its members were father, Antone Mollmann (b. 1845) and his sons Anton (b. 1877), Henry (b. 1880), Gerhardt (b. 1881), Herman (b. 1883), John (b. 1885), William (b. 1886), Fred (b. 1890), Frank (b. 1891) and Thomas (b. 1893).



The Mollman Family Band, c. 1900, in Coal City – the conductor is not known

By 1905, Antone had stepped aside from the band and the remaining brothers became the Mollman Nine Brothers Band, under which name they performed for the next few years. The brothers' first public engagement in this guise was on Saturday 17 June 1905, performing at the Miners' Picnic at Braidwood and leading the miners in their parade.



The Mollman Nine Brothers Band, c. 1905

This musical family were not only proficient on brass instruments. Some were also accomplished string players, and the family also performed as the Mollman Nine Brothers Orchestra.



The Mollman Nine Brothers Orchestra, c. 1905

The brothers played for a lawn social of the ladies of the Altar and Rosary Society in Coal City in July 1905; gave a performance entitled “*To Die at Dawn*” in Braceville in December 1906.

The band led the funeral procession of John Boggio in March 1907; promoted the play “*Her Ladyship’s Niece*” by playing at the New Opera House in the town in May 1907, following this with the brothers’ own dramatic club’s western comedy “*Borderland*” later that month and also in June 1907, together with great procession celebrating the Maroon Football team’s achievements.

The Nine Brothers Band played at the Independence Day celebrations at Morris, on 4 July 1907, and the Foresters’ Picnic at South Wilmington in August 1907.

In 1908 some of the older brothers moved to Hillsboro, Illinois, finding work in the coal mine there, and joining the town’s cornet band.

It was not long before the remaining Mollman family sold their home in Coal City and moved to Hillsboro to be near the other brothers. Their home had been on Garfield Street and the sale consisted of an 8-room house, summer kitchen, three lost, 50 grape vines, plenty of hard and soft water, a good barn, a good family horse and a buggy – ultimately being sold to Spirita Berta of Coal City.



The Mollman Nine Brothers Band, c. 1915

The brothers continued their playing together as an ensemble over the next few years, and it appears that they gradually ‘took over’ the Hillsboro Band, which became known as the Mollman Band from Hillsboro and was conducted by John Mollman. In 1915 there were twenty members in the band, and a special ‘tag’ day was arranged to raise funds to defray the expenses of the band concerts on behalf of the city. There were 22 members in the band by 1918.

Beyond this time, little more is known about the brothers' musical activities, other than the fact that Fred and Frank joined the U.S. Navy in May 1918, serving as musicians with the Naval Band at Great Lakes. They were discharged in March 1919.



Seaman Frank Mollman, 1919



Seaman Fred Mollman, 1919