

# ***PRISON MUSEUM POST***

*The Official Newsletter of the Historic Burlington County Prison Museum Association  
Incorporated in 1966*

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## ***PRISON MUSEUM ASSOCIATION TURNS 50! Celebration June 2, 2016 Membership Drive Underway***

This year marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Historic Burlington County Prison Museum Association. If there was ever a year to join the PMA, this is it! For a mere \$15 (individual) or \$25 (family), you get free admission to the museum and 10% off in the gift shop. You also get the satisfaction of knowing that you are contributing to a good cause: the dues along with donations and our gift shop proceeds are used to promote the museum and preserve the Jail's history through our website, publications, exhibits, artifacts and audio tour (more about that later). Also, members will be invited to the PMA's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration at Robin's Nest Restaurant on Thursday, June 2 at 6 p.m. (Save the date!)



### ***HISTORY OF THE PMA***

Incorporated in 1966, the Association actually started forming more than a decade earlier, when the old Prison still served as the County Jail.

In continuous use from 1811 until 1965, the Prison was, at the time it closed, the oldest continuously used jail in the country. In the 1950s, the Freeholders proposed a plan to raze it to make way for a combination office building and modern jail.



Several historic groups quickly mobilized in opposition. They included the Burlington County Historical Society, led by Moorestown resident Delia Biddle Pugh, and the Association for the Preservation of Historic Burlington County, led by Medford attorney Jay Tomlinson.



Mrs. Pugh and Mr. Tomlinson knew that the Jail was probably the most significant prison building in the country. It was designed by Robert Mills, one of our country's first native-born and native trained architects. Mills designed several federal buildings in Washington, D.C., including the Treasury Building and the Washington Monument. The Jail was one of our nation's first fireproof buildings and the first jail designed to promote the reformation of inmates.

A petition signed by 7000 county taxpayers finally garnered the Freeholders' attention. At their May 25, 1954 meeting, Freeholder Director Edwin L. Carpenter of Jobstown told reporters that the Jail would probably be renovated for continued use as a jail, or else be used as a bomb shelter, county museum or law library.

It would be another 11 years before the Jail would actually close. On November 23, 1965, the inmates were lined up and marched over to an armory building on Grant Street which had been converted into a Jail. The Old Jail was opened as a museum the following spring.

The group which had lobbied for the Jail's preservation morphed into the Historic Burlington County Prison Museum. Incorporated in 1966, its first president was Jay Tomlinson.

At least 12,000 visitors came to see the Old Jail in the first year. This great interest justified the Freeholders' initial engagement of a full-time curator. Interest levelled off by the time the curator retired in 1981, and the curator position was left unfilled.

The 1980s were tough for the old Jail. PMA members were left to solely man the museum after the curator's retirement. PMA Vice President Dave Kimball served as president in the late 1980s. Dave had the unenviable task of keeping the organization and the site alive as the building fell into disrepair. By 1990, the roof was leaking, the lead-based paint on the walls was chipping off and the exhibits and signage which the PMA had installed were looking pretty tired. In 1993, the Freeholders closed the museum until repairs could be made. For the next five years, Dave stored the PMA's records and artifacts and maintained its modest treasury.

Renovation planning finally commenced in 1998. Dave, along with long-time PMA members Janet Sozio and Carole Melman, resuscitated the PMA. Dave organized volunteers to conduct tours and dusted off our artifacts, Janet got our records and office together and Carole planned events. Janet became the president and started producing a quarterly newsletter which eventually evolved into the *Prison Museum Post*.

By 2001, the County had completed the renovations, including new exhibits and signage. The exhibits included the plaster inmates which are pictured in this issue. The Prison Museum came under the control of the newly-formed Parks Department, which maintains the building and mans the gift shop during hours of operation.



## TODAY'S PMA

Today's PMA strives to preserve the history of the Old Jail and to promote the site through publications, a website and artifacts. We produced a book written by Dennis Rizzo and Dave Kimball about the Jail - *The Burlington County Prison: Stories from the Stones* - which is sold in the gift shop. We are working on other publications as well, including publications about the nine inmates who were executed between 1832 and 1906. We search through old newspapers to find articles about the Jail, which we publish in the *Prison Museum Post* for our reader's enjoyment. We hope you like the articles we have attached to this issue. We scan and archive old newspaper articles and documents relating to the Jail.

We have created and maintain a very informative website, which includes a copy of Robert Mills' plans and his treatise on prison management which he presented to the Freeholders along with his plans. Prison graffiti and lesson plans for teachers are also contained on the website.

Our most recent project is an audio tour, which we will present at the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration on June 2. Our website creator and manager, Lisa Kruczek, is producing the audio tour, which was written by PMA member Dave Kimball with Janet Sozio's assistance.

The tour, which is approximately 45 minutes long, is narrated by award-winning actors Greg Wood and Susan Stevens, who appear regularly on Philadelphia stages and television. The headsets and related equipment are manufactured by Orpheo-USA Corp, whose equipment is also used for the audio tour at the Grand Central Terminal in New York City. More about the audio tour and future PMA projects in future issues.

Please renew your membership!

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**Prison Museum Post Editor:** Janet L. Sozio, Esq.

Please help us preserve and promote the Prison Museum by joining the PMA. Our annual dues are only \$15(individual)/\$25 (family).

Membership benefits include a quarterly newsletter, event updates, 10% off gift shop purchases, and free admission to the museum.

Go on the website for an application.

## MT. HOLLY HERALD

*January 8, 1882* Henry Foulks, a youth of 14 years, who pleaded guilty to stealing corn stalks and corn from Joseph Burtis, trembled in his shoes as he was ordered to stand up. The Court was disposed to deal leniently with the youthful offender and sentenced him to three months in County Jail. Walter Emmons, a companion of Foulks, and considerably younger, was given two months in County Jail. It was his first offense and he seemed very penitent, but was evidently glad to get off so easy.

*January 14, 1882* A great many persons who daily pass and repass the jail have no idea of the many interesting characters incarcerated inside the cheerless looking building and a great many persons do not want to know anything about them, further than that they are securely locked up out of harms way. A tour through the old fashioned structure on Tuesday revealed the fact that there were about 61 persons confined there at present, the great majority of them being tramps and ordinary drunks. The men were all confined in the South wing, the tramps being all quartered on the lower floor in a large cell and a hard-looking set of fellows they are. As they are not furnished with changes of clothing, they soon become very filthy and covered with vermin. At night they all strip off in order to get some relief from these pests, and as the large wood fire is burning in the old fashioned fire place, the men do not suffer from the cold. They do nothing but sleep and play cards in the day time, varied by an occasional fight. They are fed twice a day; in the morning at 9 o'clock and again at 2 o'clock in the afternoon. This generally lasts them all day and keeps them in good condition. The bill of fare includes good bread and molasses, coffee twice a day and beef three times per week, varied with occasional rations of bean soup. On Mondays and Fridays they are served with fresh fish, which seems to find favor with all, irrespective of creeds. When meal time is announced, the prisoners all file down to the lower floor and are handed their rations and as their appetites are generally good, there is very little wasted.

Nearly all of the court men are lodged on the first and second tiers and the tramps very seldom encroach on their domain. Some of them take pride in

decorating their cells with cheap cuts taken from the illustrated papers ...Forbes, the Burlington incendiary, has his quarters nicely decorated ... and whiles away his time in making crude sketches of piratical looking figures on a sheet of foolscap... In the cell adjoining his is Charles Heulings, of Evesham. He is a sort of kleptomaniac and has been detected in robbing a number of places around Marlton. He is undoubtedly insane and is always talking about the government owing him \$847,000 and wants Sheriff Hays to allow him to go out for a few days to enable him to get it.

His fellow prisoners say he keeps up a constant jabber day and night and annoys them exceedingly. Up in the second tier is Richard Martin, a resident of Jersey City, who was committed under the "Disorderly Act". He is a fine penman and possesses considerable skill as an artist, having decorated the walls of his cell with a number of representations of prominent individuals; but his taste inclines toward ballet dancers and a number of females of this class strike the visitor's eye as he enters ...

The women and children are confined in the North wing, apart from the men and appear to be perfectly satisfied if they can procure tobacco and without it they are miserable. As a general thing they are most degraded of any of the inmates and do not care for anything or anybody. Kate Huston is one of the regular occupants of this department. She has served time at Trenton and seems to glory in this fact. She was brought up in Mt. Holly, but went astray and has since been leading a vicious life. Although not yet 40 years of age, her face shows the ravages of dissipation and she looks at least 20 years older. She spoke very kindly of Sheriff Hays treatment, as did all the prisoners, but said she would prefer being in State Prison where she was better known.

*April 22, 1882*                      \$5,000 has already been spent to develop a flying machine at Smithville. There is so much confidence in this that they have pledged to spend \$20,000 more to develop what there is in the invention.

*October 1, 1882*                      The cranberry pickers on Major Reading Newbold's bog where a lively and jolly set on Friday last. Schenck Cranmer came to the bog with what he called sweet cider, but which turned out to be hard cider in a whiskey barrel. The Major treated a number of his pickers and

the consequence was that many of them were more than two seas over and could not see the berries. The Major was very indignant at Cranmer and the next day when he came to the bog the Major's blood was up and he drove him off.

*November 4, 1882* Sometime about the twelfth of the month, William Timmons, of Pemberton, pursued Lillie Sweet to elope with him. Lillie is the wife of John Sweet, but that made no difference, and she went along all the same. When John returned home and found what had been done, he made arrangements to have the pair arrested. On Monday, they were arrested by Constable Dave Hendrickson at Malaga, Gloucester County, and brought to Mt. Holly. Hendrickson formerly lived in the pines and himself served a term in the state prison for stealing wood; he stayed out his time and went down to Malaga where he was elected constable. Before going up to the jail, the party had several drinks, and one of the party remarked to the crowd that the constable was an old jailbird himself, and had no objections to their having a good time before he locked them up.

*November 11, 1882* It will be remembered that last week Constable Dave Hendrickson brought Lillie Sweet and William Timmons to Mt. Holly and had them locked up on a charge of adultery ... The idea of being arrested by an old jailbird was very galling to the couple and on Friday they had Hendrickson arrested for unlawfully cohabiting with Owley Lemon's wife. He waived a hearing and after considerable trouble found a citizen of Unionville who had enough confidence in him to go his bail.

*December 16, 1882* Ever since William Timmons has been in jail, he has been giving daily recitals on the accordion for the benefit of his fellow prisoners, who enjoy the entertainment exceedingly, as it helps to whittle away the monotony of their otherwise uneventful existence. Timmons is quite a good performer on this instrument and is well up on all the latest popular airs. He belongs in Magnolia, a suburb of Pemberton, and was locked up on a charge of bigamy, but this fact don't seem to worry him at all.