

# ***PRISON MUSEUM POST***

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

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## ***PLEASE RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP***

Our fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30, so this is the time of year when we ask our members to renew and when we solicit new members. For only \$15 per year (\$25 for family), members get our unique newsletter (issued approximately four times per year) and free admission to the museum. They also get the satisfaction of knowing that they are supporting a National Historic Landmark. We get visitors from all over the country and from many foreign countries. During the week of June 21 alone, we had visitors from Rhode Island, California, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Massachusetts, Texas, Minnesota, New York, Washington, D.C., Ohio and Virginia. The County Freeholders, through its Parks Department, maintains the 207-year-building, and the Prison Museum Association preserves its history and promotes the site through research, the website, publications, exhibits and public relations. Your dues, along with donations, admissions and gift shop sales, pays for all that.

## ***DOROTHEA DIX VISITS OUR JAIL***

The mid 1800s was a time of many social reform movements in our nation. The



major movements were to abolish slavery, to promote abstinence from alcoholic drink ("temperance") and to obtain the right of women to vote. Dorothea Dix was a social reformer who founded a movement to promote the decent care of the indigent mentally ill.

Born in Maine in 1802, she was raised by her wealthy grandmother in Boston. At age 19 she opened a school for poor and neglected children. At age 22 she wrote a book for children called *Conversations on Common Things*. It was one of the most popular books of its time, and reached its sixtieth edition by 1869.

In 1841 she was asked to assist a minister in teaching Sunday School to female inmates in a Boston prison. There she was horrified to find two indigent mentally ill women confined in cages with no heat. The jailer explained to her that "lunatics"

didn't feel the cold. Appalled and outraged, she launched a campaign to get stoves installed and set out to conduct an extensive systematic investigation of conditions in which indigent, mentally ill persons were kept in jails and mental asylums. This investigation led her to every state in the country, where she lobbied the legislatures to pass legislation to ensure that the mentally ill would receive humane and moral treatment in state asylums and jails.

She investigated jails and mental hospitals in New Jersey in 1845. Her 50 page report to the New Jersey Legislature can be found on the US National Library of Medicine website ([collections.nlm.nih.gov](http://collections.nlm.nih.gov)). We want to thank PMA member Dorothy Wright, Esquire, for finding the report for us.

Dorothea visited every county in New Jersey, including Burlington County. An excerpt of her report ("memorial") concerning the Burlington County Jail and Poor house is attached. The good news is that our Jail passed with flying colors. The bad news is that she wrote only two sentences about us. She had a lot more to say about our poor house (or "almshouse") in Pemberton.

In one county's almshouse (not ours) she found an old man, feeble, depressed and helpless, lying on a bed in the basement with no necessary comforts. It turned out that he was a retired legislator and judge who most of the legislators had known. They were shocked to find out what had happened to their old colleague. On March 25, 1845, they passed a bill for the establishment of a state facility in Trenton and asked Dorothea to select the location and help design the building. This was the first time that one of her "memorials" resulted in the erection of a new building. She selected the spot on a high hill with a view of the Delaware River. Originally called the New Jersey State Lunatic Asylum (pictured), the name was later changed to the New Jersey State Hospital at Trenton. It burned down in the 1970s and was rebuilt. Today it is called Trenton Psychiatric Hospital.



The New Jersey Legislature set aside an apartment in the building for Dorothea's use, and she did in fact return to live there from 1881 until she died at age 85 in 1887.

At the outbreak of the Civil War, she was appointed Superintendent of Army Nurses by the Union Army, beating out Elizabeth Blackwell, the first woman doctor in the U.S.

Many wonder if Fort Dix is named for Dorothea Dix or any of her relatives. The answer is no. Fort Dix was established in 1917 as Camp Dix in honor of Major General John Adams Dix, a veteran of the War of 1812 and the Civil War, and a former U.S. Senator, Secretary of the Treasury and Governor of New York.

She is also not to be confused with Dorothy Dix, the first newspaper advice columnist, who lived from 1861 to 1951. She was America's highest paid and most widely read female journalist at the time of her death, with an estimated 60 million readers. Her real name was Elizabeth Meriwether Gilmer.

## **NEWSPAPER EXCERPTS**

Back by popular demand are some excerpts from the Mt. Holly Herald. We like the one where the man who assaulted his mother got off with a \$50 fine because he didn't smack her that hard... And the bridegroom who took a "French leave" - that means leave without permission... Some of you from the Riverside area might wonder what the Riverside Turngemeinde is - that's the Riverside Turners Club. Turngemeinde means "turn community" in German; this is what Germans called their athletic clubs. When we declared war on Germany in 1917, they changed the name to Turners... "viand" means food, or victuals... and finally, when the postmaster says that his political bosses gave him the "slabby" hand, that means "greasy".

**IN THE NEXT ISSUE** - Interview of Fred Schildkamp (jail guard from 1953 to 1965), interview of Stan Fayer (jail guard in 1965), website updates and new "adventure quest" game for your added enjoyment when visiting the Old Jail.

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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.

**MEMORIAL**  
**SOLICITING A STATE HOSPITAL FOR THE INSANE**  
**SUBMITTED TO THE LEGISLATURE OF NEW JERSEY,**  
**JANUARY 23, 1845**

To the Honorable the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey

Gentlemen:

I come to solicit your attention to the condition and necessities of Idiots, Epileptics, and the Insane Poor, in the State of New Jersey.

I ask your consideration of the claims of this large and much neglected class of sufferers, and such effective legislative action as shall check that tide of misery, the destroying force of which, each year witnesses the increase. I do not come here to quicken your generous impulses, and move you to emotion, by showing the existence of terrible abuses, revealing scenes of almost incredible sufferings. I come to ask justice of the Legislature of New Jersey, for those who, in the providence of God, are incapable of pleading their own cause, and of claiming redress for their own grievances. Be patient with me – it is for your own citizens I plead; it is for helpless, friendless men and women, in your very midst, I ask succor – into whose broken minds hope and consolation find no entrance – the foul air of whose dreary cells still oppresses my breath – the clanking of whose heavy chains still sounds upon my ear. Have pity upon them! Have pity upon them!” for their light is hid in darkness, and trouble is their portion;” – have pity upon them! Their grievous, forlorn estate may be shared by yourselves or your children. A solemn responsibility is intrusted to you: it is for you to put a termination to evils and miseries which may yet be remedied or alleviated; - it is for you to surround these unfortunate beings with such protecting influences, as their incapacity for self-care demands, and to guard against the aggravation of like evils and miseries for the future.

Within the last few months, I have traversed a considerable portion of your state, and have found, in jails and poor-houses, and wandering at will over the country, large numbers of insane and idiotic persons whose irresponsibilities and imbecility render them objects of deep commiseration. These, whether the subjects of public bounty or of private charity, are appropriately treated for recovery, or injudiciously managed, through ignorance or limitation of suitable means; thus they are left to exposures and sufferings, at once pitiable and revolting, and however in detail strongly

represented, incapable of being exaggerated. I appeal to the public to sustain this strong assertion, and I appeal to medical men, whose professional duties conduct them amidst every form of painful disease, to unite their testimony with mine, and to aid in showing how great is the need, how important the demand, for a State Asylum for Insane Persons...

I proceed to show the actual condition of those jails and poor-houses which I have visited...

**BURLINGTON COUNTY JAIL, at Mount Holly,** was in thoroughly good order, clean throughout, and evidently conducted by persons who understand how to maintain discipline. There were several prisoners.

**BURLINGTON COUNTY POOR-HOUSE, near Pemberton,** contained, in November, one hundred and thirty-four inmates: no school for children; religious meetings sometimes. This establishment is directed by very respectable persons, qualified for the difficult place they fill. The house is well ordered, all the apartments very neat, well scrubbed and white washed. Ventilation, as in almost every crowded dwelling, entirely insufficient, especially in the cold season, when stove fires are kindled. I found here twenty-two insane – ten of those were occupants of the cells in the cellar, “or low basement.” Here was a strange and woful contrast to the rooms above; the dreary confined cells, insufficiently lighted, insufficiently warmed, and pervaded with foul air to an intolerable degree, offer scenes at which humanity revolts. Here is a want of competent “care-takers”, and a want of all, that to a humane mind appears necessary for the helpless and debased insane paupers. Here they are left to acquire or confirm brutal and brutalizing habits, which without control, exercise their destructive and offensive influence. “We have no other place for such as these,” replied the master of the house, to my remarks upon the unfitness of the cells for those crazy men and women: “we need a State Hospital.” Some feeble and incompetent persons were beginning to perform necessary duties of arranging and cleansing the cells; a crazy woman was attempting to light a fire, for the morning was cold, and the place below somewhat damp. The mistress, who accompanied me to these dismal abodes admonished some loiterers to be more alert in performing their tasks, but it seemed little likely these would be properly accomplished. I cannot hastily censure the superintendents of this establishment, for what was much amiss in this department of the otherwise highly creditable institution, and I shall be very slow to blame the visiting physician for neglect in prescribing for some cases evidently needing medical care; for I much doubt if prescriptions under such untoward outward circumstances would be of any avail, if even they would not be positively injurious. I cannot complain, either, that the county does not build a hospital; but there is a sin of omission somewhere.

## MOUNT HOLLY HERALD

October 30, 1897 After a brief illness, the wife of Dr. Branin died on Saturday night of Typhoid fever. She was a very estimable woman and her untimely demise has called for many expressions of regret... A Mill Street heavyweight was seen on the front row at a Philadelphia theater a few nights ago, watching with open mouth admiration the antics of a lot of dancing girls attired in lampshade skirts.

On Saturday morning, there was a short session of court at which Judge Gaskill presided. Frank Downs, of Bass River, pleaded guilty to an indictment charging him with having committed assault and battery on his mother. A statement in his behalf was made to the court by Jerome Grigg, who said that the case was not as bad as it appeared to be. The house in which the defendant lives, formerly belonged to his father, but was sold under foreclosure and bought in by the defendant, who had since given his parents a home there with him. His father, however, labors under the impression that he still owns the property, and orders the family around as he likes. Although the old folks have a property of their own, they cannot be induced to occupy it, and this has led to several family quarrels in one of which the defendant stroke his mother with a light blow. The defendant is a good citizen and has always made proper provisions for his family. Prosecutor Budd says in reply that from what he could learn, the facts were substantially as stated by Mr. Grigg, and that the woman was not seriously hurt by the blow. Judge Gaskill said in passing sentence that he had received good reports of the defendant's reputation for industry, etc., and would, therefore, merely impose a fine of \$50 without cost.

Bordentown: Last Thursday night, Mrs. Ellla Reed, of Virginia, aged 55 years, was married to Matthew Cunningham, of Nova Scotia, age 30 years. Justice Van Nest tied the knot. The moment the ceremony was ended, the bridegroom took French leave. The bride of 55 followed, shouting "Stop him!" but he escaped on a train just leaving the railroad station.

Lumberton: A disaster in one section of the country is often more far reaching in its effects than people are apt to suppose, and proved that an injury received by any part of the body politic affects nearly everyone to a greater or less extent. Take, for instance, the yellow fever outbreak in the South. Few would suppose that it would have the slightest bearing on business in Burlington County, but it

has, never the less, and you do not have to go outside of this town to find it. The shutdown of Reid's Shoe Factory was due directly to it. This firm has a large Southern trade, in fact the bulk of its business comes from the South, but since the yellow fever outbreak, many orders have been cancelled and no more will be received until the malady is stamped out. This has thrown a number of men out of employment, and this not only affects Lumerton, but many other adjoining towns.

Saturday, November 6, 1897, local affairs: Miss Mary Kimball, of New York City, is visiting friends in Mount Holly...an oyster saloon has been opened at the corner of King and Water Streets by Durand and Robertson...Sheriff Fleetwood will renew his bond on Tuesday, next, as required by Law. The same bondsmen will serve... It is said that the Supreme Court has decided that Trespassing poultry can be legally killed by the person upon whose ground the trespass occurs...The rumor that a man was patrolling Main Street with a shotgun has a tendency to keep most of the Hallow 'Een skylarkers away from that thoroughfare on Saturday night...a thoroughbred bulldog belonging to Charles Folwell, of the "Mirror", was poisoned a few days ago. He was of more value to the community than the person who administered the poison...A black cat entered the Presbyterian Church with some of the worshippers on Sunday evening and created quite a stir by solemnly walking about and eyeing the objects in a business way... A half grown Mt. Holly boy recently secured a good job in a Philadelphia factory. He worked long enough to get a number of paychecks. Last week he returned home, and seeing the boys playing at marbles, entered into the sport and became so interested that he stayed over his time and the consequence was that he lost his job and like many others has become a burden to his poor parents for the winter.

Captain Elton Smith and M.J. O'Byrne, of Savannah GA, have been in Mount Holly off and on for several days. They expect to take full charge of the shops and other property at Smithville next week, the property having been transferred by the trustees. On Saturday last, Captain Smith had the heavy iron safe that has been undisturbed in the mansion at Smithville broken open. The combination was lost, and this was the only way to discover what it contained. The job was not an easy one by any means. Even if the safe was not of late date, it was thoroughly well constructed, and defied the efforts of B.W. Story and his assistants to drill it open. Heavy sledges were finally used, and after several hours of hard work the door was forced off. The result was somewhat of a disappointment. All the safe was found to contain was a quantity of table silver, diamond stud, a number of gold and silver medals awarded to H.B. Smith

Machine Company, a small sum of money and the title deeds to the property. A handsome gold watch and chain, a cluster diamond pin and other things were missing. What has become of them will probably never be known.

Prosecutor E. P. Budd and Samuel W. Beldon are members of the board to examine candidates for admission to the bar at the present term of the Supreme Court.

Recently several wagonloads of cats have been brought to Mount Holly from some of the nearby towns, and turned loose, to find new homes, much to the annoyance of our residents.

When the members of the Riverside Turngemeinde gathered at their hall on Wednesday evening for their banquet, they found that thieves had entered the place and pried open the ice chest and carried away 400 oysters, a case of rhine wine, and several boxes of beer. No clue to the thieves have been found yet.

A few opinions: A number of leading citizens throughout the county have been interviewed at considerable expense this week for the purpose of ascertaining their views on the result of the election. Here are a few of them: Evan Benners, Moorestown: "The people, as a rule, are all right, provided sufficient endorsements are offered. You cannot, as Abraham Lincoln said, 'fool the people all the time unless you have the money'. I am satisfied with the results because there is no getting away from them. While I may have the fatal gift of beauty, I'm none the less a philosopher, you'll observe." Ex-sheriff Hays, Burlington: "I am not surprised at the results. I have seen a good many campaigns in my day and they all have one particular characteristic, which is that the man who receives the most votes is generally declared elected. This is a very commendable feature of our republican form of government. We had a hard fight and did the best we could." Postmaster George Wimer, Palmyra: "I'm one of the boys who got in out of the wet. I got my office and it's good for 4 years. If I had to wait until after the election, the chances are I wouldn't have been in it. Some of the bosses give me the slabby hand because I will not do anything they want, but I guess by this time they realize I have a mind of my own. One of them said I was like oatmeal – no good without sugar and cream, but I ain't that kind of republican, I work for my party whether I get any reward or not. It takes a hard shower to drive me away from the poll, and I can sell postage stamps as cheap as any of them."

Saturday, November 13, 1897: M.E. Matlack is confined at his home with dyptheria. Margaret P., wife of Stephen Hankins, died at her home in Mount Holly on Saturday of cancer. The M.E. Church supper on Friday and Saturday evenings was well attended, and the viands were of the most tempting character. A shooting match will be held at Centreton on Thanksgiving day, on which occasion the crack shots are expected to be out in force. An exhibition of the projectoscope was given in the opera house on Wednesday evening, under the auspices of the Mount Holly Athletic Association. Albert H. Darnell passed a satisfactory examination before the examiners of the Supreme Court last week, and was admitted to the bar. He tried his first case in court on Tuesday, and won it. A German farm hand in the employ of Samuel S. Potts, of Springfield Township, was arrested on Monday for having threatened the life of Mrs. Potts. He was committed to jail by Justice Hagaman. On Tuesday, Deputy Sheriff George C. Whomsley resigned his position and will return to Burlington. His successor is Joseph B. Fleetwood, Jr., son of the sheriff. During his stay in Mount Holly, Mr. Whomsley has made many friends who will regret his departure.

When a Barnegat citizen refuses to pay poll tax, they lock him up in the County Jail until he experiences a change of heart. Last week, Samuel Joslyn, was given a taster of that sort of treatment. He positively refused to pay his tax, so he was landed in jail at Toms River, but he soon became convinced that the time there did not agree with him, and sent word to a friend to sell one of his horses and pay the amount of the tax, together with cost. When this was done Joslyn was released, and it is safe to say that he will hereafter pay his poll tax on the day it due, as the bill-of-fare at the Tom's River jail is not as good as it might be.

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