

PRISON MUSEUM POST

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

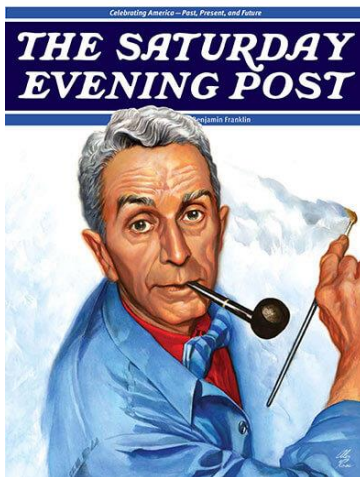
Volume XXII, Issue I

January 26, 2023

BOARD MEETING - Thursday, February 9 at 7 p.m.

The first of this year's quarterly Board meetings will be held on Thursday, February 9 at 7 p.m. Meetings are held at the PMA office. PMA members are welcome to attend.

TIDBITS ABOUT OUR NEWSLETTER



Ever wonder about the history of *The Prison Museum Post*? The *PRISON MUSEUM POST* banner, first featured in 2007, was intended to be an homage to Norman Rockwell, whose art graced the covers of the old *Saturday Evening Post*. We like to believe that Mr. Rockwell, whose work so poignantly and amusingly preserves our country's culture and history, would appreciate what we are trying to accomplish here.

We started using the Comic Sans typeface in 2002. The print had been designed eight years earlier by Microsoft engineer Vincent Connare for use in word balloons of a cartoon character Microsoft was using to introduce younger users to computers. It was basically an updated version of the print that was used in cartoons in the 1930s and 1940s.



PMA President Janet Sozio, who has served as editor of the *Post* since its inception, was drawn to the mirthful quality of Comic Sans. Moreover, she found it not only easy to read, but also, inexplicably, easy to write - the words seemed to come out easier when typing with Comic Sans than with Times New Roman. It turns out that a 2010 Princeton University study confirmed that students

consistently retained more information from material displayed in fonts perceived as “ugly”, like Comic Sans. It is frequently used now for dyslexic students and some people report that typing in it helps to clear writer's block.

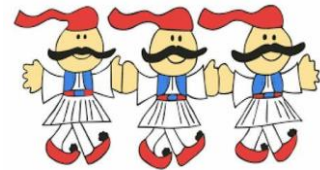
Like so much in our world today, Comic Sans has been the subject of controversy. Some people have objected to its use, arguing that it is too informal or “inappropriate” in some signs and documents. Here are some examples:



- In 2010, the owner of the Cleveland Cavaliers was criticized for using Comic Sans in a letter he wrote in response to LeBron James' resignation from the team.

- In 2015, a faction of a Greek political party split off and formed a new party.

They were criticized for resigning from the party in a letter written in Comic Sans.



- In 2019, President Trump's lawyer penned a letter to the House Intelligence Committee in Comic Sans.

- In 1999, two Indianapolis graphic designers started a website called “Ban Comic Sans” in protest when an employer insisted that they use it for a children's museum exhibit. (In their defense, the typeface's suitability for dyslexic children was not known at that time.)

- In 2019, the British Conservative party tweeted “MPs must get together and get Brexit done” in Comic Sans. Those who ridiculed the Tories for using the print apparently didn't realize that it was used get the message out to a wider audience.



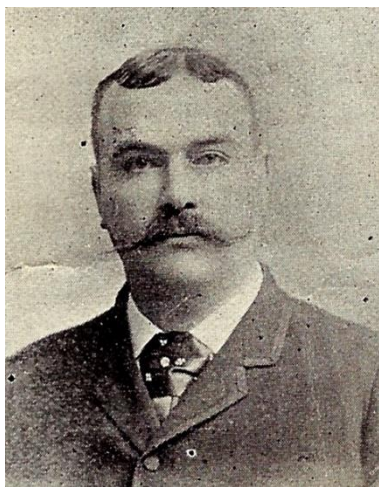
All of our newsletters are archived on our website, www.prisonmuseum.net. Click on the “Resources” tab and scroll down to the “Prison Museum Post” archive.

Destroy not the ancient landmarks which the fathers have set. Proverbs 22:28
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THE CASE OF ALFRED CLYMER

The Freeholders' minutes for the November 12, 1895 meeting note that Sheriff William A. Townsend was reimbursed \$162 in costs connected with the "death watch of Clymer", and that a George Greenwald was paid \$1.15 for "shaving Clymer". On February 12, 1896, the sheriff received an additional \$252 for the "death watch" and Greenwald was paid \$2.40 more for "shaving Clymer". Obviously, he must have been a dead man walking, for usually only those sentenced to death were assigned special guards to make sure they didn't kill themselves and only they were shaved by barbers hired by the County for that purpose. We wondered, though, if there was anything particularly interesting about his story. Here's what we found.

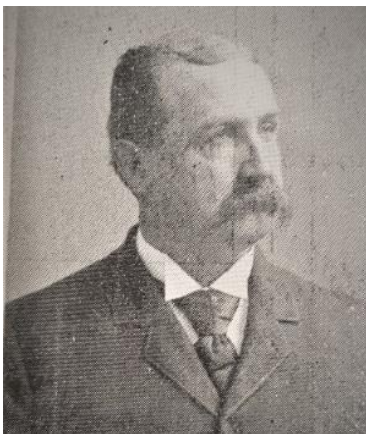
On December 12, 1894, 25-year-old Alfred Clymer attempted to rob the Burlington City home of widow Bridget Doyle. Newspaper reports, always sketchy and often contradictory, indicate that he may have lived there with her, may have worked in her store, may have been drunk, and apparently thought she was out or in bed when he attempted to rob the place. In any event, Clymer came upon her as she was kneeling in prayer and stabbed her in the lung. She died 12 days later, on Christmas, 1894. Clymer was convicted of first-degree felony murder on October 17, 1895. He was represented by attorneys Charles E. Hendrickson and Micajah E. Matlack. The prosecutor was Eckard P. Budd. New Jersey Supreme Court Justice Charles Grant Garrison presided along with Burlington County Judge Joseph Gaskill and two lay judges named Glasgow and Lippincott. Justice Garrison sentenced Clymer to death by hanging, to be carried out on January 16, 1896.



Pictured on the left is the prosecutor, Eckard P. Budd. Mr. Budd was born in Medford in 1861. A year later, his parents moved to Mount Holly, where he would live until his death in 1912. He was admitted to the bar in 1886 and in 1890 was appointed prosecutor by Governor Leon Abbett. In 1895 he was appointed to another 5-year term by Governor George Werts. A prominent Democrat, he did not seek re-appointment in 1900 because by then New Jersey had started electing Republican governors. He returned to private practice and was a successful, well-liked community leader. He was all things Mt. Holly - a member of the Mt. Holly Elks, the Mt. Holly Masons, St. Andrews Episcopal

Church and the Good Intent Fire Company. He lived on High Street. He represented the Farmers' Trust Company and was a director of the Camden and Burlington County Railroad. On Saturday, June 1, 1912, he and some buddies took his automobile on an outing to Haddonfield and on the way back stopped for ice cream on Washington Street in Mt. Holly. Afterward, his friends got in the car while he walked to the front of the "machine" to turn the crank. As he started doing so, he was felled by a fatal stroke. He left a wife and five children, the youngest of whom was only three. He was 51. He is buried in Mt. Holly Cemetery.

The judge who sentenced Clymer to death is pictured on the right. New Jersey Supreme Court Justice Charles Grant Garrison was born in Swedesboro to a prominent clergyman and attended a prep school in Princeton. He graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 1874 with a medical degree and then read law for a few years before being admitted to the bar in 1878. He was appointed to the Supreme Court in 1888 at age 39. By then he had taken up residence in Merchantville, where he lived until his death in 1924. Chancellor of the Southern Diocese of the Protestant Episcopal Church of New Jersey from 1882 until his death, he comes off as somewhat hoity toity. Upon his demise, it was discovered that he had cut his wife and three children out of his will, leaving everything to his housekeeper, Winifred.



Our readers will remember that until 1947, first degree murder and other felony cases in New Jersey were heard by Supreme Court justices who rode the circuit from county to county. This worked out fine up to about the middle of the 1800s. By then, there were many more felonies, and the justices found themselves continually on the road. They started pushing for some of these cases to be sent back to the county judges (called "law judges"). Most counties had one judge who was a lawyer and two lay judges. As noted above, the county judge in 1894 was

Joseph H. Gaskill. One of the lay judges was Samuel Glasgow, whose picture is on the left.

The Clymer case is interesting because it started off with a dust-up between Prosecutor Budd and Justice Garrison in which Budd suggested that the justice's pay should be docked. Under the headline "Prosecutor Budd Says Justice Garrison Neglects His Duty", the *Jersey City News* reported that:

A sensational scene occurred at the opening of the trial of Clymer yesterday...Judge Garrison was absent, and it was understood that he had handed the case down for trial to Judge Gaskill... Counsel for the defense (Mr. Hendrickson) wished a record to be made of the fact that Judge Garrison had given no reason for his absence, nor had it appeared that he was out of state. At this juncture Prosecutor Budd entered an emphatic protest on the part of the State. At the last term, he said, Judge Garrison had intimated that he wanted the case to be tried before the law judge; but he (Mr. Budd) had then objected and still objected. It was a question whether the law judge could try a case of this character, and there was no use to putting the county to the expense of testing the legality of it, particularly when it was Judge Garrison's duty to be in attendance. He had only been in court one day this term and it was time for the people of the county to know whether or not he could draw his salary and then delegate someone else to perform his duties. Prosecutor Budd's remarks created a sensation, and were approved by many members of the bar. *The Jersey City News, Wednesday, May 22, 1895*

Judge Gaskill adjourned the trial so that he could consult with Justice Garrison. The result was that the matter was rescheduled for October 14, 1895 - with Justice Garrison presiding. The trial lasted four days, but the jury was out only two hours. They came back with a verdict of guilty of first-degree murder on October 17. Justice Garrison sentenced Clymer to hang on January 16, 1896.

Clymer's attorneys immediately jumped into action to persuade the Board of Pardons to commute the sentence to life imprisonment. The Board refused the request on January 2. The attorneys doggedly applied for reconsideration on January 13, just three days before the date set for the execution. This time, the Board changed their mind. Various newsmen mused that the Board might have been influenced by the fact that Hendrickson was a former county prosecutor and that Matlack was an Assemblyman from Burlington, or that they were swayed by defense counsels' arguments that Clymer was young and didn't intend to kill the victim. One newspaper reported that defense counsel even implied that the victim and her late husband had mistreated Clymer, who lived with them.

It seemed that the locals had a mixed reaction to Clymer's conviction. Of course, most were horrified at the murder of their fellow townswoman. Others, however, appear to have been sympathetic to the young felon. Within a few months of his conviction, a group from Burlington endeavored to obtain a pardon. One newspaper opined:

The citizens of Burlington who are engaged in trying to get a pardon for Alfred Clymer, who murdered a woman while she was on her knees engaged in prayer, could be engaged in more creditable work. Strange how maudlin sympathizers overlook the families of victims of murder!
The Morning Post (Camden), Saturday, January 14, 1896

Another petition for a pardon was circulated in 1904. This time the proponents alleged that the victim's death was due to the physicians puncturing her lung with a probe, and that before she died, she "begged" that Clymer not be prosecuted, it being her firm belief that he did not intend to kill her. This effort was abandoned.

Clymer was by all accounts a model prisoner. The *Mt. Holly News* reported in its November 23, 1897 issue that Joseph Kiner, the superintendent of the "shoe cutting" department at Trenton State Prison, found Clymer to be "quite contented" and the "most valuable man in the cutting room". Kiner complained that all the other prisoners -- especially the "Mount Holly contingent" -- constantly griped about the work, the food, the discipline, etc.

Clymer was finally released on parole in 1912 after 16 years in Trenton State Prison.

Clymer was the most popular prisoner in the institution. There was not a discredit mark of any kind against him and he was beloved by prisoners and keepers alike. When he left the prison there was real sorrow. Clymer had neither relatives nor friends, but the other prisoners started a fund and with contributions of 5 and 10 cents each made a purse of \$20 for him out of their meagre prison earnings. The keepers raised a much larger sum for the man...he was placed aboard a train for New York City. There he will be taken care of until he gets his bearings."
Penns Grove Record, February 2, 1912

Another newspaper reported that Clymer had a job waiting for him in New York City. We don't know what happened to him after that.

INCIDENTAL FACTS OF INTEREST

- It would appear that all of Clymer's family members died during his incarceration. Newspaper reports indicated that his parents were alive and concerned about him during the trial.
- His brother, *George*, spent four days in the Burlington County Jail on a drunk and disorderly offense in September of 1897.
- Justice *Garrison*, who had spoken out against the death penalty, was apparently instrumental in getting Clymer's death sentence commuted. He indicated that he had handed down the death sentence only because it was mandatory in felony murder convictions.

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**Prison Museum Post Editor, Researcher, Writer,
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Janet L. Sozio, Esq.

Please help us preserve and promote the museum by joining the PMA. Annual dues are \$15(individual)/\$25 (family). Membership benefits include a quarterly newsletter, event updates and free admission to the museum. See website for application.

- We started off this story with Freeholders' minutes showing Clymer as the subject of a death watch. Ironically, while awaiting trial, Clymer himself was assigned by the Warden to the death watch of *another* inmate.

The inmate was Samuel Burr, age 53, who lived with his wife on a cranberry bog in Pointville (a village near Ft. Dix). On Tuesday, May 28, 1895, Burr and his wife set off for Shamong to do some business. On the way back, on "the road between Tabernacle and Flyatt", he bludgeoned her to death with a club. A posse captured him in the woods a couple of days later.

No one who knew the Burrs could have been that surprised by what happened. Burr was known as an alcoholic lunatic

who was jealous of his wife, despite the fact that she was "of middle age" according to one newspaper account.

Burr's behavior in the Jail confirmed his mental incapacity. In late July, two other inmates heard a commotion coming from Burr's cell. They ran to the cell, which had a big chain fastened to the floor. Burr was laying there with the chain wrapped around his neck. His face was discolored and his tongue was hanging out. The inmates called for the guards, who removed the chain. This would be the first of three suicide attempts.

One of the inmates who ran for help was Clymer, who was thereafter directed by Sheriff Townsend to keep an eye on Burr. Later that day, Clymer reported that Burr had taken all the straw out of his bed and piled it up in the corner of his cell. Burr explained that he intended to set the straw on fire and immolate himself. The guard removed Burr's pipe and matches and told him to behave. The next morning, Clymer and his cellmate found Burr trying to strangle himself with his wife's stocking. They couldn't get into his cell, so Clymer ran for the guards while the other inmate threw water through the bars to distract Burr until they came. The next morning, Burr, Clymer and the other inmate were walking back to their cells after breakfast when Burr stopped in front of his cell, stripped naked, and said, "The world is coming to an end. Do you want me to spit fire at you? I am going to show you something. I am going to take you all out of here in three minutes." Then he put his clothes back on.

So how come inmates were able to walk freely outside their cells? How come inmates (especially suicidal ones) were allowed to have pipes and matches? How come Burr was allowed to have his murder victim's stockings with him in the cell? All good questions.

We find out what finally happened to Burr in this newspaper article:

Samuel Burr, the 54-year-old Piner of Shamong who murdered his wife, died recently in the State Insane Asylum...He was never tried for murder, but was pronounced insane by Dr. Ward of the State Asylum, and removed from the Mt. Holly jail to the asylum in February last. Confinement weakened both his mind and body – being used to the open air of the pines – and hastened his death.

Monmouth Democrat (Freehold, New Jersey), Thursday, May 7, 1896

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