

# ***PRISON MUSEUM POST***

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

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## ***POT POURRI***

For our first issue of the year, we offer our readers a *pot pourri* of recently discovered items relating to the Prison. Most of them are interesting tidbits that don't warrant an entire issue. Others are items which supplement stories we have previously reported: no matter how hard we try to thoroughly research a topic for a publication, more information always seems to pop up after we go to press.

Although *pot pourri* sounds like such a pretty French word, one that makes you think of flowers, it actually means "putrid pot". Hoping you don't find our offerings here "putrid", we will proceed:

## ***INMATE WHO ROBBED THE SHERIFF BEFORE HE ESCAPED***

It must take a lot of nerve to escape from Jail. The February 28, 1939 issue of Camden's *Morning Post* reported on an escapee who took that nerve to a new level:

A prisoner who escaped from the Burlington County Jail 17 years ago with \$24 belonging to the sheriff returned today. Frank Meservery, 46, of Lambert Street, Trenton, was arrested at Bordentown for disorderly conduct and was given a term in the county jail. When he reached here, a warden recognized him as the man who escaped after serving two months of a nine months sentence. Sheriff F. George Furth will press an additional charge of larceny against him for stealing the money.

## ***AN EMPTY JAIL***

Here's a ditty reported on February 12, 1848 in newspapers in Louisville, Kentucky, Baltimore, Maryland, Alexandria, Virginia and Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania. We wonder if it was true or fake news:

The Burlington County (N.J.) jail, being without a prisoner, has been converted into a butcher's shop.

## ***FAT OFFICIALS***

The January 24, 1884 issue of the *Monmouth Inquirer* reported that:



Burlington County claims to have the heaviest court officials in the State. Judge Parker weighs 290 pounds, and his associates will all tip the beam at considerable. County Clerk French carries 200 pounds around with him all the time, and Surrogate Howell weighs as near 200 as he wants to, while Sheriff Hays brings up the rear with about 130 pounds, when in his normal condition, but when excited weighs half a ton.

Our readers will remember that Judge Joel Parker presided at the trial of Barclay Peak in 1887. He died a year later at age 71. In the 1860s, he served as governor of New Jersey. Here's a picture of him in his leaner days.

All of our past Prison Museum Posts are now archived on our website, [www.prisonmuseum.net](http://www.prisonmuseum.net). If you would like to read the Prison Post issue about Barclay Peak, click on "resources" and enter "Post\_052621".

## ***UNREQUITED LOVE LEADS TO SUICIDE IN THE JAIL***

Our paranormal enthusiasts flock to the Jail for investigations because they believe that the spirits of those who die in unnatural ways haunt the places where they die, and many unnatural deaths occurred in the Jail. Seven men perished on the gallows, but there were other deaths as well, including murders and suicides.

One such suicide happened on January 20, 1879. On that day, Henry Prickett, a 23-year-old Mt. Holly resident, was arrested for drunkenness and locked up in the Jail. The warden found his lifeless body the next day. It was concluded that he had taken his own life by ingesting arsenic.

The first question that occurred to this writer, how Henry got the arsenic in the first place, was not investigated by the newspaper reporters who wrote about the incident in Camden's *Morning Post* and the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. They focused rather on the situation that drove him to the act. While alcoholism has long been a very serious societal problem, there was not as much help then as now for people who suffer from the problem. Temperance organization workers tried to help.

One such "Christian worker" was a young lady from Medford, "Miss Bessie B", who induced Harry to join the organization and counseled him to lead a "higher and better life". Unfortunately, poor Henry fell in love with Bessie. Bessie did not reciprocate his feelings, and was in fact engaged to a Trenton man. When Henry learned that she had actually married the man, he fell off the wagon.

In reporting the incident, the *Morning Post* writer pulled out all the stops known in Victorian romance literature:

It was love for the right and for humanity, not the wounds from Cupid's darts that actuated Ms Bessie, for Trenton contained the happy young man, for whom the amorous little god had done successful warfare, and to him she was engaged to be married. Of this Harry was ignorant, and can it excite surprise, loved the noble woman with that ardor begotten of gratitude, and a due appreciation of qualities so good. Bessie was not aware of this, and hence, last week when her affianced came from Trenton and took her to the new home, which she is so qualified to adorn, she took the step without a thought of Harry. But Harry! It was the hope of being worthy of the woman who had given him strength to combat the evil that was in him, and when that hope was gone – when she whom



he adored was in the possession of another – all aspirations for good died in him. The demon again assumed mastership of his soul. With wild recklessness, Prickett embraced his enemy with despairing clutch. He was arrested in Mount Holly, locked in a cell

during the night, and yesterday morning was a lump of lifeless clay – the judgment having the next claim on his soul. During the night having nothing more to live for – the bright light of his life having become another's, arsenic stayed the beatings of a heart which could only beat for good in the presence of a pure life his no longer to hope for.

## ***PMA MEMBERS' CONNECTIONS TO THE KING STORY***

Speaking of unnatural deaths in the Jail, one of the most horrible was the murder in 1920 of Warden Harry King. We wrote about it in the July 12, 2021 issue (see the issue on our website under "Post\_071221"). We have also produced a nifty booklet on the subject which is on sale for \$4 in our gift shop. After publishing the booklet, we were delighted to hear from three PMA members who actually have connections with characters mentioned in the booklet.

King had been the day warden for ten years when inmate Harry Asay beat his brains out with the stoker from the jail's coal furnace. The night before the murder, the night warden, Job Collins, found Asay in the basement with an ax. Collins' life was undoubtedly spared only because he was accompanied by Charles Carslake. It turns out that Charles Carslake was the grandfather of PMA member Janet Aaronson. Born in 1872, Mr. Carslake had been a justice of the peace in Columbus and also an undersheriff in Burlington County before Prohibition (1920-1930), when he worked as a federal agent. He played a major role in the capture of liquor-laden barges on the Rancocas and the smash-up of a \$2,000,000-rum ring.

The Honorable Harold Wells presided over the trial of Asay, who pleaded guilty during the trial. PMA member Henry Reeves contacted us to advise that as a very young man, he took a part-time job as chauffeur to Judge and Mrs. Wells. Henry's charming reminiscences include: *"I drove Mr. and Mrs. Wells to the Union League several times in Philadelphia. We went on nostalgia rides around Princeton and Mr. and Mrs. Wells would sit in the back seat and sing. It was fun driving that big 1949 Buick Road Master with Number 1 on the license plate."* Some of us are old enough to remember the wonderful time when families would amuse themselves by singing.

King was replaced as day warden by Mt. Holly resident Clarence Horner. Only after the booklet was published did we learn that Warden Horner was the great-grandfather of PMA member Michael Hurley, who provided us with this marvelous photograph of Clarence and his family. Michael's grandmother is second from the left.



## ***MORE ON THE RIDER MURDER***

We wrote about the Rider Murder in the July 12, 2021 issue (again, you can look it up on our website - Post\_071221). Cranberry bog owner Andrew Rider was on his way to pay his workers in October 1916 when the car in which he was riding was attacked by nine gunmen who turned out to be his workers. He, his foreman, his daughter (who was driving) and his brother, Henry Rider (who was visiting from Michigan) were all shot; Henry died. One of the gang, Giovanni Iraca, was caught, tried and sentenced to death. While awaiting execution, Iraca escaped from the jail by boring a hole through the old stone walls with a kitchen spoon. Warden King was on duty when he escaped. County Detective Ellis Parker tracked him down and returned him to the jail. He was later executed in Trenton. The last of the gang, Luigi Pinto, was captured in 1931. We recently came across a magazine article about the capture of Pinto. Unfortunately, we don't know the name of the magazine in which it appeared. We are re-printing it on the next page.

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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.  
Go on the website for an application.

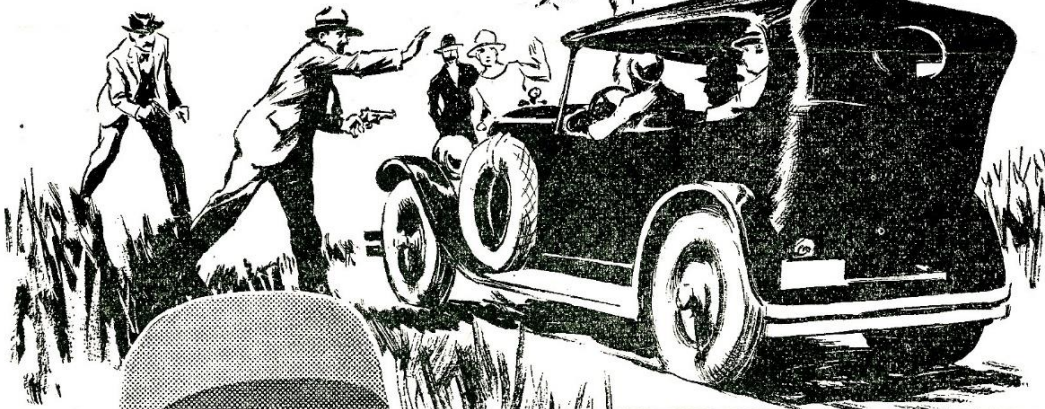


# SOLVED A CRIME 15 YEARS OLD BY A CHASE AROUND THE WORLD

IF Ellis H. Parker, chief of detectives for Burlington County, New Jersey, doesn't hold some kind of a world's record for sleuthing, it isn't his fault. He has just landed a fugitive after trailing him for 15 years—and this despite the fact that the man went around the world during the chase.

In 1916 a group of eight gunmen—several of whom were disguised in women's clothing—held up an auto near Atsion, N. J., in which several men were carrying a \$4000 payroll. In the shooting that ensued one of the men in the auto, Henry Rider, was killed.

Parker got on the trail immediately. One of the gang, Giuseppe Iraca, was caught and was electrocuted in Tren-



Above the sketch of the 16-year-old ho'dun are two photographs of Luigi Pin'o, arrested after a 15-year chase. . . . At the lower left is Detective Ellis H. Parker, who engineered his arrest.

ton, N. J., in 1917. Raffaella Puccinatti was seized in Italy and sentenced to life imprisonment. Another member was killed in a gun battle, and another was caught in Pennsylvania not long ago. But Luigi Pinto, whom Parker sought as a moving spirit in the crime, seemed to have made a completely successful escape.

First Parker traced Pinto to South America. Then, through correspondents in the consular offices, he learned he had gone to Spain, from which country he went to Italy. Reports came to Parker, at intervals, showing that Pinto had gone through Africa, India and China. In 1918 he was reported in San Jose, Calif. Then, for a long time, his trail vanished.

At last, this fall, Parker's habit of sending descriptions of Pinto to authorities everywhere bore fruit. The Los Angeles police revealed that they had a man answering Pinto's description—a man who had been arrested on a charge of passing bogus checks.

Parker at once sent an officer to Los Angeles by airplane. The fugitive was identified, and arrangements were at last made to bring him back to New Jersey for trial.

Through the years since the crime, Parker sent out uncounted numbers of letters, telegrams and circulars. In the end, this dragnet got his man.

Parker has been a detective since 1894.

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