

Vol II Issue II

**HISTORIC BURLINGTON COUNTY PRISON MUSEUM ASSOCIATION**

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**MEETING: SATURDAY, MAY 24, 2003 AT 10 A.M.  
PLEASE RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP!**

April 16, 2003

Dear PMA Members:

The spring is finally upon us and it is time to renew our memberships to the PMA. Enclosed you will find your renewal form. Your continued support of the PMA is greatly appreciated. Membership bennies include free admission to the Jail and a 10% discount in the gift shop.

A general membership meeting will be held at 10 a.m., Saturday, May 24, 2003. We will enjoy coffee and danish in the exercise yard on our new picnic tables, weather permitting. We will discuss future activities and vote on any changes necessary to our constitution and/or bylaws, if in fact any changes are necessary or a vote need be had. We are well on our way to finally straightening out our organizational papers with the help of our accountants, Mazzucco & Company and our attorney, John Devlin of Parker, McCay & Criscuolo. The meeting will, as always, be brief; more fun and good conversation than business.

Many of you may wonder where we obtain our information about the Jail's history. Much comes from old newspaper articles. The PMA and the Freeholders are lucky to have bound copies of the Mt. Holly Herald and the Mt. Holly Mirror going back to the 1800s. One of the things that we want to do in the future is to hire someone to go through all of these newspapers and catalog into the computer all of the articles relating to the Jail and the Courts.

These newspapers are simply fascinating. I put my nose into them only when I have plenty of time, because I know that once I get into them, it will be hours before I can tear myself away.

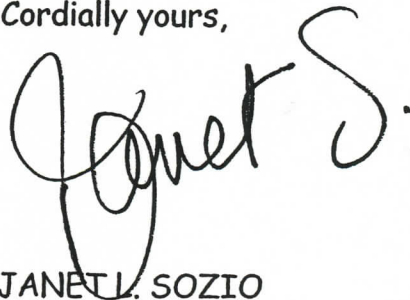
Most people find that the articles challenge many of their assumptions. First and foremost, the assumption that everyone who lived in the Victorian era was sexually repressed and staid appears invalid, at least as far as Burlington County residents were concerned! Outrageous behavior, alcoholism and related accidents and crimes, murder and other serious offenses, are nothing new.

While common (albeit tawdry) peccadilloes and foibles of county citizens were the stuff of much interest and headlines, much more heinous crimes were often barely mentioned. We in Burlington County were recently horrified when a Burlington couple was accused of murdering their infant and then incinerating the poor baby's body in a fireplace. The story was the topic of the first page headline. In December of 1882, a similar incident occurred in Jobstown when a young couple murdered their three month old baby. That incident, however, received little more than a blurb buried within the paper. The second sentence of the two sentence item matter-of-factly remarked that the parents, who were named Bowker, had apparently tried to smother the child previously!

Attached are a few excerpts that I have found which I think will interest you. Yes, children were routinely tried and incarcerated, as were women. If the woman was breast-feeding, the child went along, too. The "court men" on the first and second tiers (ground level and second floors) refer to those incarcerated for indictable offenses, as opposed to "tramps", i.e., those charged with drunk and disorderly offenses or vagrancy.

In my summer newsletter, I will enclose your membership cards, a list of our members and some newspaper excerpts about some of the many jailbreaks.

Cordially yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Janett S.", with a large, stylized initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

JANETT L. SOZIO



## MT. HOLLY HERALD

January 8, 1881 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 a 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 were 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      Some time 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 wile 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.