

PRISON MUSEUM POST

Official Newsletter of the Historic Burlington County Prison Museum Association

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THE HAUNT IS UNDERWAY!

Hard as it is to believe, Fall is upon us, and here at the Jail that means just one thing - The Haunted Prison. Our biggest fundraiser, it has also become one of the most popular Burlington County traditions. We need volunteers to man the ticket booth and concessions. Its easy and its fun, and does not require costumes, acting or standing outside. Call us at either of the numbers listed below. In the next year, we'd like to publish a small book with photos of the Jail, create a virtual DVD tour, assemble an historical account of the PMA using old newspaper clippings and continue to employ a part-timer. None of that would be possible without the money raised at this event. Enclosed is a flyer - - please post it somewhere. Spread the word! We also need sponsors; enclosed is information on that as well.

WEBSITE UPDATE

We are in the process of updating our website, www.prisonmuseum.net. The site will now include a shopping cart, where we hope to sell lots of our nifty tee-shirts, interesting books and other gift shop items. The shopping cart will also make it possible for us to sell Haunt tickets on line. We expect the site to be up and running shortly after this issue goes to press.

**Historic Burlington County Prison
Museum Association ("PMA")**
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Jailkeeper: Ron Reed

Prison Museum Post Editor: Janet Sozio
Associate Editor: Marisa Bozarth

Please help us preserve and promote the Prison Museum by joining the PMA. Our annual dues are only \$10. Membership benefits include a quarterly newsletter, event updates, 10% off gift shop purchases, and free admission to the museum. For an application, call the PMA office.

PMA MEMBERS IN THE NEWS

We congratulate Prison Museum Curator **Marisa Bozarth** and her husband, Tim, on the birth of their extremely adorable daughter, Abigail Susan, on August 14, 2008. Parents, baby and new big sister Sara Elizabeth are all doing well...

Laura Hicken has graduated from American University in Washington, D.C. Laura, a history major, interned at the Jail a couple of summers ago and wrote her senior thesis on Joel Clough, who was incarcerated here for murder in 1833. We are almost as proud of her as are her parents, **Robert Hicken, Esquire**, of the Mt. Laurel Law Firm of Capehart and Scatchard, and **Dr. Betty Hicken**, who are also PMA members. Laura's summary of her paper is attached... **Kevin Walker, Esquire**, has been appointed Public Defender of Burlington County... PMA Board Member **Gary Woodend, Esquire**, is a candidate for Clerk of Burlington County... **Dr. Robin Plumer**, an emergency room physician, has taken a position with a hospital in New Zealand for the next year. We hope she will report to us if she runs across any prison museums there... PMA Vice-President **Dave Kimball** has completed the first draft of a book about the Jail. We hope to publish it within the next year... We welcome several new members, including **Alicia McShulkis** of Main Street Mount Holly, **Paul O'Brien**, **Carrie Valenti**, Arc of Burlington County, **Drew Parker, Esquire**, **Mary Ann Rivell**, Carpenters Local 1489 and the Law Firm of **Parker, Young & Antinoff** of Marlton.

ANIMAL NEWS

In the last issue we reported the story of Rocky, the squirrel who broke into the Jail. The issue before that featured the mice who met their doom in our trap in the Warden's House. We continue to be a veritable nature preserve. Jailkeeper Ron Reed captured a bat in the Warden's House tunnel last month, and a groundhog has taken up residence in the Exercise Yard. Something has been pooping in the basement, but we're not sure what it is yet. If the critter surfaces before the next issue, we'll let you know what it is.

PMA ANNUAL GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Saturday, November 22, 2008

The Annual Membership Meeting of the Prison Museum Association will be held at 9:30 a.m. on Saturday, November 22, 2008 at the Wardens House. Coffee and donuts will be served.

**IRON WORKS HILL REENACTMENT
BURLINGTON COUNTY HISTORY DAY
Saturday, December 13, 2008**

The Revolutionary War Battle of Ironworks Hill will be reenacted again this year on Saturday, December 13, 2008 on High Street in front of the Prison Museum. The Prison Museum and other historical sites in town will be open for free. Later in the day, there will be a candlelight tour. This will be a great day for families, school groups, Scout groups, etc. Further information will be provided on our website.

THIS N' THAT

As you will recall, the original plans of the Jail by architect Robert Mills were sold by the Mt. Holly Library to the Athenaeum in Philadelphia. The Athenaeum is a special collection Library which has been preserving important American documents, particularly architectural drawings, since 1814. As part of the deal, the Athenaeum agreed to produce museum quality digital copies of the Plans for the Prison Museum. They have arrived and are quite impressive. Call if you would like to stop by to see them. We will display them at the meeting on November 22... Several people who were unable to attend this summer's showing of the Secret of Freedom (see the last issue of the *Post*) have asked for an encore. We'll plan another show soon... The Freeholders have started plans to fix up the Warden's House. It's all in the very preliminary stage at this point, but needless to say, we are quite excited about it! We will of course keep you all informed of further developments.

**DON'T FORGET TO VOLUNTEER FOR THE HAUNT
OCTOBER 17, 18, 24, 25, 26, 31 and NOVEMBER 1**

Museum Hours: Wednesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., and Sunday noon to 4 p.m.
(No admission after 3:30 p.m.)

Admission Fee: \$4 for adults, \$2 for students and seniors over age 55, and free for children under age 5
The tour is self guided. Guided tours and groups rates are also available. Call for further information

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Board Meeting 7/24/08
Top, from left: Tom Faile, Carole Melman, Susan Dargay,
Dave Kimball, Michael Bright
Bottom, from left: Janet Sozio, Joan Boas, Kay Kline



Curator Marisa Bozarth
and daughter Sara



Sara with doll at the Front Door



Dave Kimball and Gary Woodend



Tom Faile, Jalkeeper Ron Reed
and Dave Kimball

Murder, Mayhem and the Media: The Execution of Joel Clough **A Summary**

By Laura Hicken

In a field near the town of Mount Holly, New Jersey, thirteen thousand people gathered on a balmy July day in 1833. Reports of the event described a lively scene; clusters of gossiping girls, wagons full of children and parties of picnicking people sitting on blankets which made it difficult for the standing thousands to maneuver through the crowd. The rows of tents to accommodate the long distance visitors stretched on for almost two miles. (1) Several bands played, encouraging spontaneous sing-alongs, while the less wholesome minded gambled or drank. Some did both. The area was decorated in crepe paper and the visitors who had taken the ferry from Philadelphia hoped their ten mile journey would be worth it. It was a scene like any other midsummer fair except for one morbid detail: they were all there to see the murderer Joel Clough hung by the neck until dead.

Infatuated with the young widow Mary Hamilton from the time he moved into her mother's boarding house, Clough made his affection for her known any way he could. Despite his passionate gestures, Hamilton spurned his advances and burned his love letters. Clough was hopelessly in love with Hamilton but beginning to realize she would never feel the same way. In the spring of 1833 Clough suddenly and without explanation closed up his business affairs, packed up all of his belongings and left for New York. (2) Once in New York, Clough proceeded to spend all of his savings on alcohol and prostitutes. Broke and worse for the wear he returned to the boarding house. On the morning of Saturday April 6, 1833, the household had breakfast together and Mary Hamilton went into the drawing room to work on her sewing while Clough went up to his room to lie down. At eleven o'clock that morning Clough called Hamilton under the pretense of needing medicine for a headache. (3) Hamilton left her work and friends in the drawing room; the next time anyone saw her would be moments before her death.

It was Hamilton's thirteen year old sister who walked in on Clough committing the murder and alerted the household of the crime. Hamilton's mother and the other boarders arrived upon the scene to hear Hamilton's last words: "Oh Mother, why didn't you come? I screamed and I screamed and Clough's murdered me. Because I wouldn't say I'd have him, and you know I couldn't, Mother. I was in his room, he sent for me, and has killed me." (4) Within a matter of minutes Mary Hamilton was dead and the physician determined she had been stabbed eleven times, "any one of the three wounds in the heart must certainly have produced death." (5) Clough would have been hard pressed to come up with a more brutal way of murdering the woman who had disappointed him in love.

Clough was found guilty for the murder of Mary Hamilton and sentenced to death by hanging. His days on earth were numbered but his fame in newspapers, magazines and church pulpits had just begun. Rather than sit quietly in his cell, Clough gave the papers plenty to write about. After the murder Clough attempted to kill himself by swallowing a vial of laudanum, but was saved just in time to be arrested. He managed to escape from Burlington County Prison for twenty-four hours after picking his shackle lock with a pen and bending the bars of his cell window. Clough even found time before his execution to convert and be baptized. Having become so engrossed with these sordid details on top of Clough's spree in New York and his brutal stabbing of Hamilton, the public found his execution to be the final part of the story that was left for them to experience as it was happening. For the avid reader, Clough's execution was an opportunity too good to miss. Clough's first trial in court made him a condemned man. His second trial on paper made him a tragic celebrity.

Just a little past noon on July 26, 1833 Joel Clough, dressed in white, was brought from his cell and escorted by Sheriff Hollingshead and five clergymen in a carriage and driven two miles to a field where a gallows had been built specially for him. Clough's noose had been placed around his neck at the prison and that weight would rest on his shoulders for the next two hours leading up to the hanging. The town was strewn with black crepe paper and from his Dearborn carriage Clough would have seen a sea of tents slowly turn to a sea of people. A

battalion of infantrymen five hundred strong framed the gallows which were elevated and dead center, like a macabre outdoor theatre. Clough's five clergymen, representing three different denominations, would accompany him on the gallows and give him support until the end. His presence would ensure that the infantry was on full alert lest someone should start a riot in an attempt to free Clough. After assisting the sheriff in adjusting the noose, a hood was placed over Clough's head and he "with joyful anticipation was launched into eternity." (6) Clough's body was left to hang for half an hour before it was taken down and placed in a mahogany coffin. He was buried in the prison courtyard, the same one he had escaped from less than a week prior.

Neither the first public execution in New Jersey nor the last, the Clough execution is significant because the chaotic event served as one of the main arguments used by opponents of public execution in the Pennsylvania Legislature. Less than a year later Pennsylvania became the first state to officially outlaw public execution. Many states followed, echoing the fear that the events were no longer serving their intended purpose. Ideally, the public execution was to be a somber and cautionary experience, but by 1833 events show that more often than not public executions had turned into communal spectacles that blended morbid fascination with frivolity. Joel Clough's hanging exemplified this. Newspaper and magazine articles dramatized the murder and trial, creating frenzy over the case that inspired even the most moral of citizens to go and witness a man's death. The media portrayal turned the trial and execution into entertainment rather than justice. By the time of his execution, Joel Clough had become a victim and the woman he murdered was the cause of his turmoil.

On December 12, 1833, the Pennsylvania Legislature met to hear from the Committee on the Judiciary System. The committee had been instructed to question laws about execution and determine if a change should be made. At the time, public execution was legal in Pennsylvania as well as the neighboring states of New Jersey and New York. The committee addressed how capital punishment was being rethought not only in Pennsylvania, "but throughout the Union, and in Europe; particularly in the character and description of the punishment, and the manner of inflicting it." (7) The committee made the argument that a private

FOOTNOTES

³ Barnes, Elizabeth. "Communicable Violence and the Problem of Capital Punishment in New England, 1830-1890." *Modern Language Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 1.(Spring, 2000), pp. 14. JSTOR.