

# PRISON MUSEUM POST

Volume IX, Issue II

April 15, 2009

## LAW DAY COMMEMORATION AT JAIL - MAY 2, 2009

The Prison Museum will be open for free on Saturday, May 2, 2009 in honor of Law Day. All our readers are urged to visit. Spread the word and post a copy of the enclosed flyer in your workplaces, churches, neighborhood centers, etc.

Law Day is on May 1. Many countries celebrate the day as May Day or International Workers Day. Law Day was created in the United States in 1958 by President Eisenhower to counterbalance those celebrations, which at the time were perceived as communist. The purpose of Law Day is to celebrate the ideals of equality and justice under law in our relations with each other and with other countries. In recognizing the first Law Day, just 13 years after a horrible war in which 56 million people perished, President Eisenhower, who led our forces in that conflict, said, "In a very real sense, the world no longer has a choice between force and law. If civilization is to survive, it must chose the rule of law."

We hope to have something of interest for everyone. Copies of the original plans for the Jail drawn by Robert Mills in 1808 will be on public display for the first time. The Plans include not only the architectural plans but also

Mills' ideas, written in his own hand, about how the Jail should be operated and what should be done to reform those incarcerated in it. The theory that the penal system should strive to reform inmates at all was revolutionary at the time.

Local author Dennis Rizzo will be on hand to discuss and sign copies of his books. Those who wonder if ghosts occupy our Jail will be able to talk to paranormal investigators. PMA members will be posted throughout the Jail to answer questions.

**Historic Burlington County Prison  
Museum Association ("PMA")**  
P.O. Box 483, Mt. Holly, NJ 08060  
PMA Office Phone and Fax: 609-518-7667  
Museum/Gift Shop Phone: 609-265-5476  
Email: [pma1811@verizon.net](mailto:pma1811@verizon.net)  
Website: [www.prisonmuseum.net](http://www.prisonmuseum.net)

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**Curator:** Marisa Bozarth  
**Jailkeep:** Ron Reed

**Prison Museum Post Editor:** Janet Sozio  
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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.

## TIME TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Please support the Prison Museum by joining or renewing your membership with the Prison Museum Association (PMA). For a mere \$10 per year, you get the *Post*, free admission to the Museum and a 10% discount in the Museum Gift Shop. It's a true bargain. Dues and other income are used to produce our publications, website, projects and events. One of our planned projects is the production of a booklet about the Jail authored by PMA member Dave Kimball and illustrated with wonderful photographs taken by a local art student.

## HISTORY SYMPOSIUM A SUCCESS

The Burlington County Historical Society and the Burlington County Division of Cultural Affairs and Tourism sponsored a conference of historical societies on March 14, 2009. This very informative symposium could not have been more timely. Many believe that in these hard economic times, people will seek things to do close to home. The purpose of the symposium was to help us find ways to let the public know we are here.

A highlight of the day was a presentation by Megan Giordano, the curator of the James and Ann Whitall House in Gloucester County. The Whitall House is an 18<sup>th</sup> century house located on a 44-acre site along the Delaware River known as "Red Bank". The park is also the historic site of Fort Mercer, which along with nearby Fort Mifflin guarded Philadelphia harbor and all communities north of Philadelphia along the river during the Revolution. The Battle of Red Bank started when the British attacked the fort in October of 1777. The patriots were victorious against the Hessian soldiers who were sent by the British General Howe to destroy the fort. The wounded were carried from the battlefield to the Whitall's home, which was used as a field hospital.

The Whitalls were prosperous Quakers who built their home on Red Bank in 1748. Ann Whitall, who had remained at her spinning wheel throughout the battle, emerged to tend the injured soldiers, American and Hessian alike. She went on to keep a diary that contains important historical insight into the lives of people in the Red Bank area in that period.

Ms Giordano has overseen the production of a wonderful interactive website about the Whitall House and the Battle of Red Bank. She and the other speakers were very interesting and informative, and gave us many good ideas which the PMA will explore in the coming year.

## IN MEMORIAM

Sincere condolences are extended to PMA member Eleanor Rich on the loss of her daughter, Gladys Danser. Ms Danser was a former Mt. Holly Council member, deputy mayor and mayor. She was admired and well-liked by many because of her deep concern for her community and her neighbors. She was highly respected for her devotion to the preservation of local history through her involvement with the Mount Holly Historical Society. This fine, civic minded woman will be sorely missed.

## THIS 'N THAT

It looks like we'll be putting on the Haunt again this year...Plans are underway for the refurbishing of the Warden's House...We have no details as we are pretty much out of the loop... Jailkeep Ron Reed's brother, Joe Reed, has graciously agreed to allow two of his Springfield Civil War rifles to be displayed at the Jail in our old gun rack. Jailkeep Reed has polished them up real pretty...We continue to attract visitors from far and wide, including guests in the last few months from Utah, Canada, Alaska, Florida and California...We hope all enjoy this issue's newspapers articles... To understand one of the ads, you'll have to know that "chilblain" is an inflammation of the hands and feet caused by exposure to cold and moisture... The article complaining about the cost of the court on the taxpayers is a hoot - if they only knew today's costs, they'd be dumbfounded... Actually, if *today's* taxpayers knew, *they'd* be dumbfounded, too....See you on May 2.

**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.

# **ROBERT MILLS' PLANS OF THE MOUNT HOLLY JAIL**

By Marisa Bozarth

A few years ago, the Prison Museum received a knock at its front door from someone with the Mount Holly Library. The original plans for the construction of the Prison had been found in a desk in the Library, and they wanted to sell them to the Museum or the County.

Someone had bequeathed the plans to the Library in the 1800s, and, surprisingly, they had apparently forgotten that they had them!

While the idea of displaying the original plans in the Prison Museum initially intrigued the County and the PMA, everyone agreed after much discussion and consideration that the plans should be sold to Philadelphia's Athenaeum, a non profit special collections library which would properly restore and preserve them. The Athenaeum would also provide the PMA and the Library with museum quality copies.

The Prison Museum recently received the copies of the plans from the Athenaeum. They were drawn by Robert Mills in 1808, as his first independent architectural endeavor. Mills later went on to design many other buildings throughout the United States (churches, courthouses, private homes, etc.). He was also appointed Federal Architect under President Andrew Jackson, and as such designed the National Monument in Washington, DC, the U.S. Post Office, the U.S. Treasury Building and the U.S. Patent Office. Throughout his life, Mills was also an innovator of things such as a rotary wheel, steam powered wagons and reapers, and city planning.

The plans consist of architectural drawings of the three floors of the Prison from various viewpoints, as well as Mills' ideas on penology. Included in the plans are detailed writings of how Mills believed the Prison should operate, and how his design would make certain operating principles feasible. These were very influential in the day to day operation of the Prison.

# Mount Holly Herald

November 29, 1873

Our Court expenses are a source of earnest inquiry among the taxpayers, and the question is often asked, cannot the expenses be loosened? We answer yes! In the first place, the Grand Jury is greatly to blame for finding bills of indictment against parties for petty squabbles in strawberry patches, cranberry bogs and sometimes in the street. Each one of these indictments cost the county one hundred dollars or over and what is the result? If the prisoner is convicted, he or she is sentenced to confinement in the county jail for 30 to 60 days or fined a nominal amount, and stand committed until the costs are paid. After the expiration of the sentence, and being unable to liquidate the costs, the prison liberating committee wisely releases them from the jail, thus saving a further expense to the county for board. In the second place, there is no earthly necessity for twenty-eight constables being on daily duty during the sessions of the courts, drawing their per diem pay. Our courts generally last from two to three weeks. One third of the constables might be detailed on the opening of the court for attendance on the court during its session and the remainder dismissed for the term. It is practiced in Monmouth and other counties with success. In the third place, our justices are too much given to committing old "bummers" and tramps to our jail for four days for drunkenness and vagrancy. Their sentence in many cases is no sooner out than they are again sent up for four days more and so on to the years' end, spending four-fifths of their time on short commitments, costing the county almost the sum of \$5.30 for each commitment, exclusive of board at the jail; the aggregate amounts to a considerable sum in the course of a year. For the benefit of future Grand Juries and particularly for the one that will meet in December, we give in round numbers the cost of running our last (September) term of court. Jury - \$1,000; Clerk's fees - \$500; Prosecutor's fees - \$500; Witness fees - \$500; Judges' fees - \$600; Justices' bills - \$300; Sheriff's fees - \$150; for trials and commitments before Justices between terms - \$300; making the cost of the court for one term **\$6000**.

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