

# ***PRISON MUSEUM POST***

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

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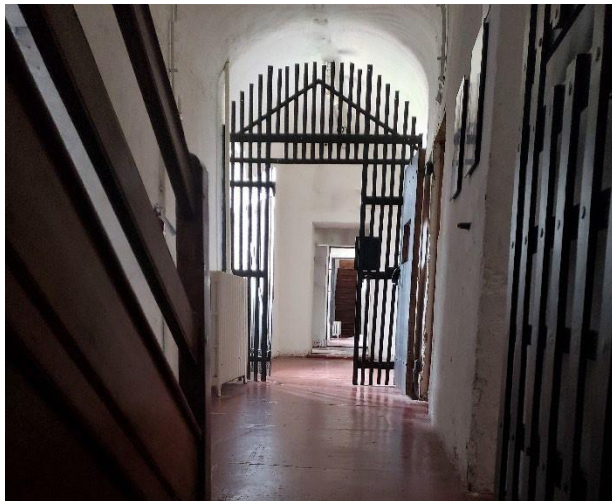
## **PLEASE JOIN OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP**

Please renew your PMA membership for the fiscal year starting July 1. If you are not already a member, please consider joining us in our mission to preserve the history of the Prison Museum, and all the local, state and national history that goes along with it. Your dues, along with donations and gift shop sales, make it possible for us to fulfill that mission. We call on all our members to bring at least one new history lover into the fold.



## **JAIL RENOVATIONS CELEBRATED**

County and state officials and PMA members celebrated the 2023 renovation with several of the contractors who worked on the project at a lovely soiree held on May 15 in the Exercise Yard. County Commissioner Allison Eckel, liaison to the Department of Resource Conservation and Parks, gave very well-received



opening remarks. Joining Ms Eckel were County Commissioner and long-time PMA member Dan O'Connell, State Senator Troy Singleton, State Assemblywoman Andrea Katz, County Administrator Eve Cullinan, NJ Historic Trust Board Chair Peter Lindsay, PMA President Janet Sozio, Resource and Parks Department head Mary Pat Robbie, experts from Jablonski Building Conservationists (who conserved our graffiti) and representatives from the general contractor John O'Hara Company. The contractors did a fantastic job.

The restoration project cost \$2.9 million, \$526,000 of which was a grant from the State Historic Trust. The project included a new cedar shake roof, repair

of the exterior stone walls and interior masonry, preservation of the graffiti, and replacement of gutters and downspouts.

Dan O'Connell noted that investments such as these by the County have yielded large returns. "Preserving and promoting this history is essential to the quality of life residents enjoy here, plus the dollars we invest to help create jobs, draw visitors and produce more business activity," Dan said. "We're proud of the restoration work done at the Prison Museum and our other historic sites and we want to encourage residents to take time to visit these places and learn about the people and circumstances that make them special."

## **THE JAIL IS A BLUE STAR MUSEUM**

The PMA is happy to announce that the Museum will again this year join museums nationwide in the Blue Star Museums initiative, a program that provides free admission to currently serving U.S. military personnel and their families this summer between Armed Forces Day (May 18) and Labor Day. Blue Star Museums is a partnership between the National Endowment for the Arts and Blue Star Families, in collaboration with the Department of Defense and participating museums across America.



### **OUR MOST FAMOUS (INFAMOUS?) INMATE- The Boston Strangler**

On January 3, 1955, a 23-year-old soldier stationed at Ft. Dix was arrested and brought to the Jail. He was lodged in Cell 7, at the east end of the top floor main hallway (last door on the left). The charge was "carnal abuse" of a minor child. The soldier obtained the services of a local lawyer named James Logan\*, whose office was right across the street from the jail. He was released to the military authorities the next day after having posted bail of \$2,500.

Mr. Logan got the case adjourned several times with the intention of wearing the victim's mother down. The strategy worked - she didn't want to keep taking her child out of school to testify. Without the victim's testimony, the matter had to be dismissed.

*\*James Logan, Jr. was a legendary Mount Holly lawyer who died in 2017 at the age of 96. He practiced law up to a few months before his passing.*

Everyone at the Burlington County Jail forgot about the soldier until November of 1973, when the infamous Albert DeSalvo, known as the "Boston Strangler", was murdered in a Massachusetts prison. His photo in the newspapers spurred the memory of one of the old guards. The soldier jailed in 1955 and the Boston Strangler were one and the same.

*De Salvo's 1955 Burlington County Jail intake sheet is on display in the Museum*



Two recent requests for information about DeSalvo prompted us to delve more deeply into his very complicated and creepy story.

Albert Henry DeSalvo was born in 1931 in Massachusetts. His father was a psychopathic alcoholic who abused his wife and five children in a most barbaric manner. DeSalvo was caught shoplifting and torturing animals when he was just a young child. He spent most of his teen years in what used to be referred to as "reform school" after having been arrested for robbery, battery and car theft. In 1949, upon his release from reform school, he enlisted in the U.S. Army. He was about 18 years old.

After basic training at Ft. Dix, he was stationed in Germany, where he served as a military police sergeant with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Squadron, 14<sup>th</sup> Armored Cavalry Regiment. There he married a woman named Irmgard Beck; they eventually had two children. The family returned to Ft. Dix in 1954 and were living on base when he was arrested in 1955. Discharged from the Army shortly thereafter, he and his family moved from Ft. Dix to Massachusetts.

There he took jobs in a shoe factory, a shipyard and as a construction worker. While he might have been attempting to stay on the straight and narrow, his sexual addiction and propensity for violence soon consumed him.

Like many sociopaths, he could be exceedingly charming and persuasive. At the same time, he was also known as an inveterate braggart. By 1960, he was using his charm to engage in a most bizarre crime. He would knock on the doors of attractive young women and introduce himself as a talent scout for a modeling agency. He offered them \$10 to let him take their measurements! And an extra \$5 if they would be measured in the nude. Remarkably, many of them fell for this. Some, though, complained to the

authorities, who started searching for "The Measuring Man", as they dubbed him. During this time, DeSalvo also became very adept at breaking and entering. Although he was arrested several times for B&E, he never received a jail sentence until March of 1961, when, while being arrested for burglary, he bragged to the police officers about his ability to dupe women into allowing him to measure them! The police were delighted with the unsolicited Measuring Man confession. DeSalvo was found guilty of burglary and assault, and served 11 months in prison before being released in April of 1962.



Two months later, in June of 1962, the first of 13 single women ranging in age from 19 to 85 were murdered in the Boston area. Most of them were sexually assaulted in their apartments in the most brutal manner imaginable before being strangled with articles of clothing. The oldest victim died of a heart attack and two others were stabbed to death. The string of murders terrorized citizens of the Boston area for the next 18 months. The last victim, Mary Sullivan, was murdered on January 4, 1964, almost nine years from the day DeSalvo molested the little girl in Burlington County.

Law enforcement experts and commissions appointed specifically to investigate the cases desperately tried, without success, to track the murderer down. Blocking their progress was the fact that DeSalvo was never a suspect, in part because he had never been convicted of a sex crime. Although charged with lewdness and assault in connection with The Measuring Man escapade, the Court decided to be lenient and dismiss the lewdness charge. Thus, his name did not appear on the list of former sex offenders who would have been considered suspects.

Amazingly, while he continued to sexually assault women throughout 1964, he stopped killing them. Now he would gain entry to their apartments by posing as a worker sent to repair the plumbing or utilities. Because he wore a green uniform, these were known as "The Green Man" crimes. Finally, in October 1964, one of his Green Man victims was able to provide police with a good description. DeSalvo was arrested, but only after a high-speed car chase during which he stopped and exited the car, and then fled on foot. He was thereafter identified in a line-up, after which he confessed to robbing hundreds of apartments and committing hundreds of sex assaults. His story seemed so incredible that law enforcement and the court thought he was insane. He was

hospitalized for 30 days for a psychiatric evaluation. The prison psychiatrists initially deemed him competent to stand trial, so he was sent to Walpole State Prison. Shortly thereafter, he claimed to have visions. At this point the Court found him to be mentally incompetent, appointed him a guardian and sent him back to the hospital, where he would spend the next two years.

*Tony Curtis played him in the movies. Here he is dressed as the Green Man.*



While awaiting trial under police custody in the hospital, he struck up a friendship with another murderer named George Nassar, who was also being held for observation in the hospital. During this time, DeSalvo told Nassar that he had committed the Boston Strangler murders. Nassar contacted his lawyer, the young F. Lee Bailey\*, who took DeSalvo's case. Bailey interviewed DeSalvo and was shocked to hear the details with which he described the murders - the clothing worn by the victims, the furniture in their apartments, etc. Bailey was convinced that DeSalvo was the Boston Strangler. When Bailey told DeSalvo's wife about the conversation, she returned to Germany with her children, never to return.

Although DeSalvo was able to recount 95% of the details of the murders to the authorities when deposed, he got 5% wrong. This failure, along with his propensity to brag, led law enforcement to conclude that he was not the Strangler. They were apparently unfamiliar with the old adage that if it waddles, quacks and looks like a duck, it probably is. The confession could not be used against him without the permission of the guardian in any event. Because there was no other direct evidence linking him to the crimes (remember, this is long before DNA evidence), he was never charged with the murders. All the cases except one remain open to this day.

The Green Man trial began in January of 1967. Bailey used a novel strategy in representing DeSalvo. He basically argued that DeSalvo did in fact commit all the Green Man and Boston Strangler crimes, and that he was so evil that he had to be insane and should be found not guilty by reason of insanity. Bailey went on to argue that DeSalvo should be kept in a hospital for the rest of his life, where he could be studied to find out how such a monster could be produced.

*\*Bailey was one of the most celebrated criminal defense attorneys of all time. He represented many high-profile defendants, including Sam Sheppard (whose story was the basis of The Fugitive TV show), Ernest Medina (the US Army captain accused of the My Lai Massacre during the Viet Nam War), Patty Hearst and O.J. Simpson. He practiced law in Massachusetts and Florida from 1960 until he was disbarred in 2001 for misusing a client's funds.*

It took the jury only four hours to conclude that it didn't matter how DeSalvo got to be so vile. They found that he was not criminally insane under Massachusetts law because he knew what he was doing, and knew it was wrong. They were not inclined to entertain the "he couldn't help it" defense. They wanted him off the streets. He was sentenced to life imprisonment and was ordered moved from the hospital to state prison.

A few days later, on February 25, 1967, he escaped from the hospital. He went to the home of his brother, Richard, who supplied him with clothes and a gun. Fear gripped the Boston area for the three days that he was on the loose. Finally, dressed in an old Navy uniform that he had found, he went into a shoe store and asked to use the phone. He called F. Lee Bailey. He waited while the police, called by the store owner, came to arrest him.

In November of 1973, he was stabbed to death in prison. A jury of his peers, consisting of fellow inmates, had finally found him guilty of the Boston Strangler murders and executed what many believed was an appropriate sentence. Some say prison personnel were involved. Some say he was dealing drugs below the going rate, causing angry prison drug lords to do him in. No one was ever tried for the murder, so like much of this story, no one will ever know for sure.

Twelve hours before he was murdered, he called his old psychiatrist and Bailey and said he wanted to meet with them to tell the "real story of the Boston Strangler".

Many continued to be charmed by him even after his demise. His brother and others who knew him persisted in claiming him innocent of the Boston Strangler cases. F. Lee Bailey and others touted the fact that in prison he promoted prison reform and made craft jewelry (his specialty was chokers - no kidding - on the right he models one). It was all sort of ridiculous in retrospect.



Finally, in 2013, DNA testing of his remains and that of his last murder victim, 19-year-old Mary Sullivan, proved without doubt that he had murdered her. 99.999% match. Perhaps he didn't commit every one of the other murders. What do you think?

**NEXT PMA MEETING - TUESDAY, AUGUST 20 at 7 p.m.**  
(Changed from previously-scheduled date of August 21)

### ***INTERESTING JAIL HISTORY***

We never tire of stories about jurors behaving badly in Burlington County. We had to have had one of the most colorful courthouses in the country. Here's a story that appeared in the papers on Friday, January 15, 1886:

In view of the recent complaints of drunkenness among jurors in the Burlington County Courts, it is said that an investigation will soon be made for the purpose of determining who is to blame. In a late panel where a jury was discharged after having been out two days, being unable to agree upon a verdict, it was learned that they had been supplied with liquor in considerable quantities and became very much intoxicated – so much so, in fact, that they broke up some of the furniture and had a general row. One of the jurors who refused to take part in the debauch was subjected to a regular course of hazing, being first tossed up and down in a blanket until he was almost helpless, and then compelled to go through a number of performances of a ludicrous nature, prominent among which was having his face smeared with shoe blacking and then shaved with a wooden razor. It is said that the Temperance Alliance will take the matter in hand and urge upon the sheriff the necessity of summoning none but known temperance men to serve as jurors.

Here's a good one supplied by Museum attendant Kyle Stickles and PMA Board member Carl Taraschi. The crime occurred on January 30, 1893. Wonder where he got the gun.

Francis Cosgrove was sentenced to five years' imprisonment at hard labor in state prison, for assault and battery with intent to kill William Brown, a war veteran. Both men were confined in the Mount Holly jail as tramps at the time, and Cosgrove shot Brown without the slightest provocation.  
*The Mount Holly News*, May 2, 1893

**Destroy not the ancient landmarks which the fathers have set. Proverbs 22:28**

A typical Thursday night in Mount Holly in 1882:

Two gay and frisky tramps were escorted up Main Street, last night, en route to the jail, by an officer supported by a large crowd of boys. The tramps said they hailed from Camden and were doing “the town”.

And a typical Wednesday in Burlington City in 1882:

USED TO BE HER HUSBAND

Annie Green, who admitted she was a tramp, was arrested yesterday at Burlington, as she was boarding the train for Philadelphia. Annie is pugilisticly inclined, and made it very interesting to officers Prince and Alcoth, who arrested her. She was charged by the Mayor with having stole \$40 from a man named Green, who was tramping with her, and another woman. She became indignant when the man insinuated she was a thief, and amused herself, and the court, by “knocking him out” a-la-Sullivan. She invited a search, which was

superintended by the man without success, and she probably would have been dismissed had not her female companion “given her away”. The bills were found inside the soles of her stocking, and the silver in a small bag concealed beneath her clothing. Annie then said that the man she took the money from “used to be her husband”. When asked if he was not her husband now, she said “we were married only a little while.” She was sent to Mount Holly for trial. *The Morning Post (Camden)*, August 10, 1882

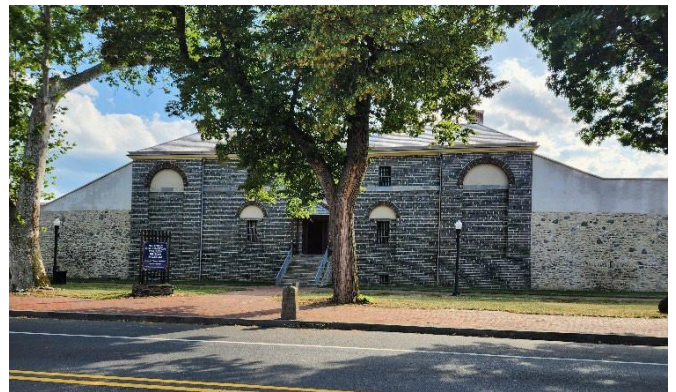
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Please help us preserve and promote the museum by joining the PMA. Annual dues are \$15(individual)/\$25 (family). Membership benefits include a quarterly newsletter, event updates and free admission to the museum. See website for application.



**The Museum  
June 16, 2024**



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