

PRISON MUSEUM POST

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

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THANK YOU!

Sincere thanks to everyone who joined the PMA, who renewed their memberships and who made additional donations. Letters of thanks and acknowledgement have gone out; contact us by email if you have not received yours. Your dues and donations are used not only to preserve the Jail's history through our publications and our website, but also to produce immersive activities such as the audio tour, escape game and spirit boxes that attract visitors and bring history to life for them. We have some special plans for immersive activities that will impress everyone in 2026 - the year that marks not only the 250th anniversary of our country, but also the 60th anniversary of the Prison Museum Association. Stay tuned!



Exercise Yard, Historic Burlington County Prison

Photo by Janet Sozio, July 18, 2025

TIME TO REMEMBER

How do you like the gorgeous picture on the preceding page? The Exercise Yard is a far cry from what it was at the time it closed in 1965:



We will be doing a lot of reminiscing over the next year as we celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Historic Burlington County Prison Museum Association, incorporated in May of 1966 by a group of Burlington County residents who twelve years earlier had lobbied the County Freeholders to abandon their plan to demolish the building. We devoted the November 30, 2020 issue of the *Prison Museum Post* to the story of their efforts to save the Olde Jail and the long and winding road to the building's designation as a National Historic Landmark in 1986. That issue, along with all issues over the last 24 years, are archived on www.prisonmuseum.net.

We are proud of our website, which we use as a repository of historical data relating to the Jail. We are particularly proud of the website's commitment book archive, and we are about to add the names of inmates from 1882 to 1884.

The last *Post*, featuring the psychopathic murderer Louis Lively, was pretty heavy. We are going to lighten it up a little with this issue, with some photos and few little ditties we hope you enjoy.

A SPARSELY POPULATED JAIL

Our commitment books go back to 1870. For the names of those incarcerated prior to 1870, we have to depend on census records, newspaper reports and other sources. It appears that in the early years, there were various times when the jail's population was quite low. This is from the January 16, 1858 issue of the *Monmouth Inquirer*:

“The whole number of commitments to the Burlington County Prison, during the year 1857, was 159. Seven persons were sent to State Prison during the year, viz: Charles Elberson, 2 years; N. Ranier, 6 years; J. Fullerton, 2 years; Lewis White, 2 years; J.C. Cawley, 2 years; A.S. Mendenhall and Phoebe Ann Friggin, each 2 years but pardoned out.”

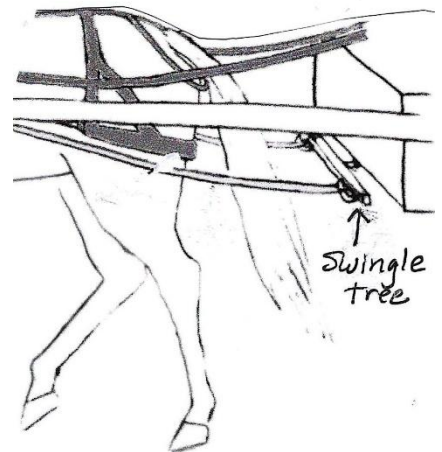
So far, the only one we could find any information about was A.S. Mendenhall. He was arrested in June of 1857 for forging a check on the Farmer's Bank of New Jersey and apparently spent six months the jail before being “pardoned out”.

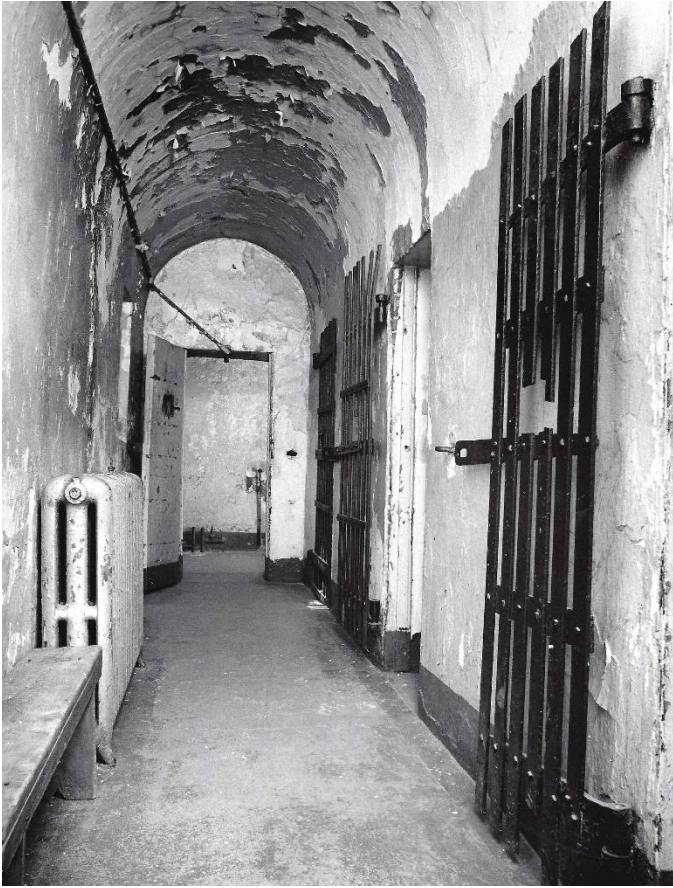
THE 19TH CENTURY CATALYTIC CONVERTER?

This isn't from our jail but we thought our readers would find it amusing. It's from right next door in Camden County. Many of you will remember the ring of thieves which a few years ago went around stealing catalytic converters. Well, it appears that people having been stealing parts from other people's means of transportation for a long time:

“Norman Simmons, the chief canine catcher, was given a hearing on Saturday night before Recorder Braker and Justice Tarr, on the charge of larceny preferred by Mardsen Barraclough, who accused Norman of stealing his swingle-tree. The chief admitted taking the article, but said it was a case of necessity with him, as the one on his dog caravan was gone, and he only borrowed it. The Justices imposed a fine on the chief.”
Courier-Post, Camden, July 28, 1890

(The swingle-tree is the bar behind a harnessed horse that is used to balance the pull of the horse when pulling a load on a cart or buggy.)





I HEARD A CREAK BEHIND ME AND NOBODY WAS THERE!

There's a tiny chill in the air. October is right around the corner, and with it comes the season that our paranormal enthusiasts like the best. Although we love the Jail as it is, we have to admit that before the major renovation of 2000, its dilapidated condition made it particularly fun and creepy on Halloween. Here's a picture from 1993.

Although the museum is now much sleeker, our visitors still find it conducive to paranormal interactions. People, especially our young visitors, let their imaginations run wild. We thought you might enjoy the adorable reports of two young men, Sam and Noah, who were brave enough to venture through:



The entire walk through, I
had a gut feeling that I
was being watched - Sam

While I was here I was walking
in the basement part and I
heard a creak behind me I looked
behind me and nobody there
wasn't steps and it was a hallway
with a door and - Noah

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

**NEXT BOARD MEETING: TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2025 AT 7 P.M.
AT PMA OFFICE - ALL MEMBERS WELCOME TO ATTEND**

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In Memoriam
 Jay Tomlinson 1893-1967
 David Kimball 1930-2021

**Prison Museum Post Editor,
 Researcher, Writer,
 Typesetter and Distributor:**
 Janet Sozio, Esq.

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.