PRISON MUSEUM POST

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

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SPECIAL SEMI QUINCENTENNIAL EDITION

PLEASE 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 on 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!***

THE PMA AND THE COUNTY CELEBRATE THE 250TH



The Burlington County Parks Department put on a fine 250th Celebration in Mount Holly on Sunday, June 14. It was sunny, and though quite hot, not hot enough to keep people home. We used the day to unveil our new "alternate reality" James Wilson exhibit. Wilson was a signer of the Declaration and the Constitution, and was a sitting U.S. Supreme Court justice when he was jailed in Burlington County for debt.

The new flat-screen kiosk was placed temporarily in the doorway of the dungeon for the June 14 event, and will eventually have a permanent home in the "Wilson cell" on the top floor. Visitors will be able to select various prompts which will produce Wilson himself to tell them about his role in some of the most important events in our country's history. The next issue of the *Prison Museum Post* will feature more about this exhibit and our new "Alternate Reality" Ghost Tour.

The County's 250th Celebration attracted 1400 visitors to the museum. We believe this was a record.

PAST CELEBRATIONS

Have you ever wondered how our nation's founding was celebrated in the past and what was going on locally at the time?



GOLDEN JUBILEE – 1826 In many places, including Burlington County, the day started off with the firing of 13 cannons to represent the original 13 colonies that rose against the British crown. The mood was somewhat different at that celebration than it would be at later ones -- there was probably a general feeling of relief that the country had actually survived 50 years, let alone become prosperous. Whatever the nature of the celebratory mood, it was no doubt overshadowed when word spread that two of our most revered Founders, Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, had died, hours apart, on July 4, fifty years to the day that they approved the final draft of the Declaration of Independence. * Adding to the irony was that Adams' son, John Quincy Adams (pictured on the left), was the President of the United States at the time.

The population of Burlington County was about 30,000 in 1826. There were only 8 townships – Burlington, Chester, Evesham, Mansfield, Northampton, Springfield and Willingboro. There were no trains or trolleys. People got around on horseback and in horse-drawn carriages.



The 50th anniversary of the nation was celebrated with parades, public readings of the Declaration, and lots of banquets with enthusiastic toasts, dancing and music. One imagines bands playing Johann Strauss Jr.'s *Blue Danube Waltz*, which was the most popular tune of the day.

The Jail, only 15 years old, wasn't very crowded in July of 1826. A young woman named Margaret Glass had been jailed since April for bludgeoning her mother to death with an iron rod in Lumberton. Two men, Edward Anderson and Henry Moore, were incarcerated for the murder of a woman named Mary Cunningham in Evesham. One had been arrested in Washington, D.C. and one had been arrested in Warren County. We are still seeking information about the murder and about what happened to these two.

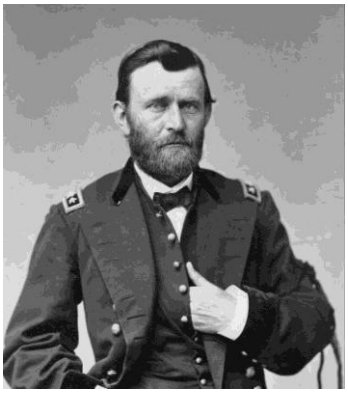
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*The Continental Congress officially voted to declare independence on July 2, with our boy Wilson casting the final, deciding vote. John Adams thought that July 2 should be celebrated. History, however, shifted the focus to July 4, the date that the Congress approved the final draft of the Declaration of Independence. On that day, John Hancock and Secretary Charles Thomson signed the original, to authenticate it, and sent it off to the printer. Most of the remaining 54 delegates signed it on August 2.



CENTENNIAL – 1876 Philadelphia was the site of a legendary extravaganza to celebrate America's 100th birthday. In 1866, an Indiana college professor contacted the mayor of Philadelphia to suggest that the Centennial be celebrated with an exposition in Philadelphia. One thing led to another, with committees being formed and bills being passed. In 1873, 450 acres of Fairmount Park were dedicated for the event. More than 200 buildings, many massive, were constructed and enclosed with a three-mile-long fence. On the left is Memorial Hall, which housed the art gallery. It is the only building still standing. (It now houses the Please Touch Museum.) Ten million people, including participants from 37 different countries, attended the great Centennial International Exhibition between May and November of 1876.

By then, travel was much easier than it had been in 1826, and it appears that most of Burlington County crossed the river to celebrate the 100th in the City of Brotherly Love. Those who stayed home celebrated mainly with private picnics and parties. J.B. Smith had a lively shindig at Smithville. The temperature was exactly the same as it would be 150 years later, on July 4, 2026 – 98°. Despite the fact that all the men wore suits and all the ladies wore corsets and long dresses, nothing got cancelled. (What would they have thought of the city's cancellation of the parade celebrating our 250th?) The heat did not prevent visitors from having quite a party in Fairmount Park in 1876. A new dance, called the "cake walk" was introduced. The most popular song was *My Grandfather's Clock*. Anyone interested in knowing what the dance looked like and what the song sounded like can find it on YouTube. Johnny Cash covered the song in the 1960s.



In 1876, the population of Burlington County was about 54,000 and there were about 30 towns and villages. The U.S. President was Ulysses Grant (see right). The County had about 50 or so Freeholders, two from each town. (We wouldn't have a county-wide elected Freeholder Board until 1915.)

We had two interesting criminal cases in 1876 in Burlington County. In the first case, both the victim and perpetrator had the same unusual first name – Elwood. Elwood Marter was a 45 -year-old father of five from Beverly when he went to Almeruth's hotel in Riverside to down a few on a Wednesday afternoon. There he met fruit peddler William Fox and a 17-year-old named Elwood Hill who had

apparently hitched a ride with Fox. The two Elwoods played a game of quoits outside. The game, fueled by a quantity of booze, turned into a wrestling match in which Hill got thrown by Marter, who was twice his size. Marter went inside to get another drink and was standing at an open window when Hill came up with a knife and slashed him through the window, almost cutting off his hand. Fox got the knife away from Hill, who then picked up a rock and chucked it through the window, fracturing Marter's skull. Marter died the next day. When his wife came to identify the body, she removed the money from his pockets and remarked that she was glad it had happened. Talk about cold. Within two months, Hill, who had a long criminal record including other knife attacks, was found guilty of manslaughter and sentenced to five years in state prison.

The second victim was Lizzie Wood, a tall, beautiful biracial woman worked for and boarded with a dentist named Adams on High Street in Burlington. She was extremely well-liked by everyone in town. Apparently, no one knew that she was actually Mary Tompkins from Easton, Pennsylvania, and had run off to escape an abusive husband, Warren Tompkins, who was an African American barber. Tompkins tracked Lizzie down in the summer of 1876. He entered Dr. Adam's home and slashed her with a knife thirteen times. Somehow, she got away from him, ran to the street and fell down. Tompkins chased after her and kicked her in the head, whereupon a group of men, both black and white, ran to Lizzie's aid and subdued Tompkins until the constable arrived. No one thought she would live. Tompkins had to be taken to our Jail under heavy guard, as the angry group of men who had rescued Lizzie had not dispersed. Miraculously, she survived. Tompkins was tried, convicted of attempted murder and sentenced to ten years in state prison.



SESQUICENTENNIAL – 1926 Organizers of the celebration of the country's 150th anniversary could not recapture the magic of the Centennial. Though the Sesqui-Centennial International Exposition in Philadelphia managed to attract 5 million people between May and November of 1926, it was generally considered a flop. New Jersey was the only state to have its pavilion fully completed for opening day. As in 1876, many Burlington Countians went to Philly to celebrate. Those who stayed on this side of the river partied. One imagines barns and firehouses throughout the county filled with young people dancing the Charleston, the women with their hair in bobs and flapper dresses swirling, and

the men going out back to imbibe in some moonshine, which had been illegal since the passage of the 18th Amendment seven years before. Calvin Coolidge was the President and Burlington County's population had reached 80,000.

Unfortunately, many of the Jail's records, including our commitment books, are missing for the 1920s. This was the period of Prohibition, and many upstanding County residents found themselves in trouble for violating the very ridiculous laws prohibiting the consumption of liquor. One has to wonder if these records were purposefully destroyed. What do you think?

BICENTENNIAL – 1976 Many of our members experienced this one in person. The country was still reeling from the Viet Nam War. The economy was lousy. Cities were decaying – think *Dog Day Afternoon*. There was a lot of political unrest. But in the end, most of us thought our country was worth celebrating. Philadelphia rocked. Most towns in Burlington County had parades and festivities. Lots of fireworks and sparklers. Gerald Ford was President. The BeeGees were singing *You Should Be Dancing*. Another big hit in 1976 was a disco version of Beethoven's 5th; Beethoven had still been alive in 1826. Burlington County's population had swelled to 360,000. The Old Jail had been closed for over a decade.



THE NEXT MEETING OF THE BOARD OF THE HISTORIC BURLINGTON COUNTY PRISON MUSEUM ASSOCIATION WILL BE HELD AT 7 PM ON TUESDAY, AUGUST 4, 2006 AT THE PMA OFFICE IN THE WARDEN'S HOUSE. ALL MEMBERS ARE WELCOME.

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

POSTSCRIPT ON AVILES CASE

The last issue of the *Post* featured the trial of Estaban Aviles for murder in 1966. An important fact we forgot to mention about Aviles is that he was the very last prisoner out the door when the Jail closed in 1965. He was handcuffed to PMA member Stan Fayer, who was a guard, and led with the rest of the inmates to the Armory on Grant Street, which had been retrofitted into a Jail.

OUR WEBSITE

In this issue we discuss James Wilson, Margaret Glass (who was incarcerated in our Jail in 1826), the murder case of Esteban Aviles, the Battle of Iron Works Hill and Prohibition. All these topics have been the subject of past *Prison Museum Post* articles. All past issues are archived on our great website, www.prisonmuseum.net. If you would like to look up any of these or other subjects, simply click the "Resources" tab and drop down to the "Prison Museum Post Archive". Type the subject you want to find in the search box. President Janet Sozio and website manager Lisa Kruczek continue to work to keep our website informative and accurate. Our goal is to make it a complete archive of everything we can know about the history of the Historic Burlington County Prison. Check it out! We welcome any and all suggestions and/or comments.

INTERESTING VISITOR

We recently had an interesting visitor. Robert Hartpence, an 88-year-old Burlington County resident, stopped by and told us that when he was a young car mechanic in the late 1950s or early 1960s, he had occasion to drive a guard to the Jail after the guard had left his car off for repair. The guard invited Mr. Hartpence to go on rounds with him. Mr. Hartpence was up for the experience, and distinctly remembers meters of some sort at various locations throughout the building into which the guard inserted "punch cards" to show that he had checked that area.

ST. ANDREW'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

The County's 250th Celebration events included an interesting talk given at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church on High Street in Mt. Holly by County Museum Curator Marisa Bozarth. The talk, about the Declaration of Independence, was followed by the ringing of the bell in the Olde Court House, right across the street.

The bell was originally cast in 1755 and was rung when the Declaration was signed in 1776. (At that time the County Court House, and the bell, were in Burlington City. Both moved to Mt. Holly in 1795, when Mt. Holly became the county seat and the Olde Court House was built.)



St. Andrew's Church is one of the most beautiful and historic churches in the United States. It is often overlooked, perhaps because the Quakers and St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Burlington City, the first Episcopal congregation (1703) in New Jersey and a National Historic Landmark, seem to suck all the air out of the room as far as our local religious history is concerned.

By 1737 there were enough people living in or near Mt. Holly who followed the Church of England to justify St. Mary's establishment of a mission church in the town. In 1742, the parish purchased two acres on Iron Works Hill, which at the time was on the outskirts of the town. They built a one-story frame church and started the cemetery. The cemetery is still there, on Pine Street. The church is gone, but there is a plaque on the ground where it stood.

In 1765, the parishioners petitioned New Jersey Colonial Governor William Franklin (son of Ben) to request a Royal Charter of Incorporation from King George III. The King granted the charter, which the parish has in its possession to this day.

In 1776, Mt. Holly would be the site of the "Battle of Iron Works Hill", which we have written about in several past issues. The "battle" took place on December 22 and 23, 1776, between 600 American Militia (mainly boys and old men), under the command of Samuel Griffin, and a force of 2000 Hessian mercenaries and British Army regulars under the command of Colonel von Donop. Our guys were camped out in St. Andrews Cemetery and exchanged some long-range fire with the Brits before retreating to Moorestown. Although not much of a battle, it was significant because the Patriots succeeded in diverting 2000 redcoats from

Trenton, making it possible for Washington to achieve victory there a few days later.

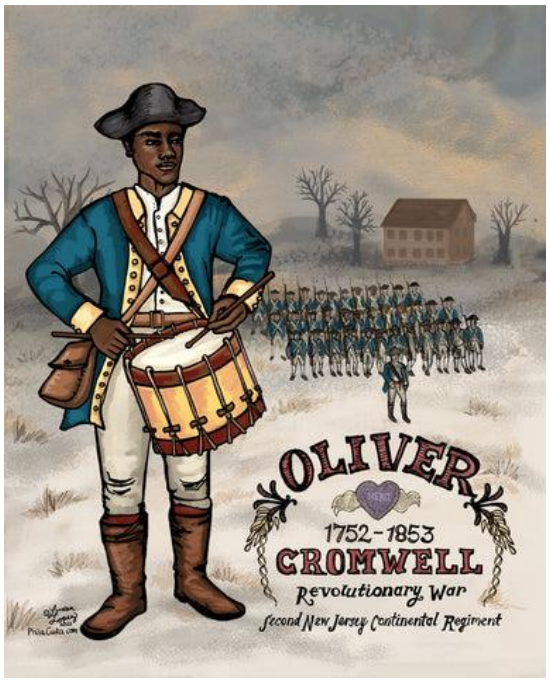
In 1776, the rector of St. Mary's and minister of St. Andrew's was a former physician named Jonathan Odell. He was paid 26 pounds per year and became unpopular because he prayed so frequently for King George. A notorious Tory, he fled from Burlington in 1777 and became a chaplain in the British army. After the war, he emigrated to Canada, where he died in 1811.



The Rev. George Morehouse became the rector in 1815, and served the parish for 44 years. In 1844, a lot on High Street was purchased from Mary Shinn and the present beautiful church was erected by contractor James A. Powell, who was a deacon of the Baptist church. It is said that he personally constructed the arches in the ceiling.

THE STORY OF OLIVER CROMWELL

Throughout 2026, we will include in each *Post* something about Burlington County people, places and things related to the history of the War for Independence. In this issue we will tell the story of Oliver Cromwell, an African American who served our country for 6 years during the war.



Most of the information we have about him comes from an application he made for a veteran's pension in 1818 and an interview he gave to the Burlington Gazette in 1852.

He was born a free black man in 1752 in Mansfield Township, Burlington County, on the farm of a tavernkeeper named John Hutchin. He grew up as a farmer. We do not know who his parents were. The 1850 census identifies him as a "mulatto", which has led to conjecture that he was bi-racial or perhaps even an

Indian. There is no evidence for that, however. He referred to himself as "colored", and Indians were not referred to as "mulatto".

Mr. Cromwell appeared before Judge Thomas Fenimore at the Olde Court House on April 2, 1818 at the hearing on his application for a federal veteran's pension. A copy of the transcript still exists. The judge noted that he had known Mr. Cromwell personally for 30 years. Mr. Cromwell testified that he had enlisted in the Continental Army in 1777 in the Company of Captain James Laurie (sometimes spelled Lowery or Lawrie) in the Second Jersey Regiment, which was commanded by Colonel Israel Shreve, who was also from Mansfield. Cromwell served in the Battle of Short Hills (June 2, 1777) where Laurie was wounded and taken prisoner. Laurie died shortly thereafter.*

In the 1852 newspaper interview, Mr. Cromwell claimed to have been in actions at "Trenton, Princeton, Brandywine, Monmouth and Yorktown, at the latter place, he told us, he saw the last man killed…he was also at the battle of Springfield, and says he saw the house burning in which Ms. Caldwell was shot at Connecticut Farms." **

The first two cited events occurred before his 1777 enlistment, so those claims are suspect, but he was almost certainly present at the other battles. He was thereafter transferred to Captain Nathaniel Bowman's light infantry company, in which he served from July 1777 to 1782. In January of 1783, he was transferred to another company which was disbanded in New York, a short distance from West Point. There his discharge papers were signed by none other than George Washington. Washington also bestowed upon him the Badge of Merit, a medal which Washington himself had designed.

After he retired, he bought a 100-acre farm outside Burlington***. He fathered 14 children****. Ultimately the farm failed and he moved to a rowhouse located

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*Laurie, a Quaker from Chesterfield, like many other Quakers, was thrown out of the Sunday Meeting for entering military service.

*This was Hannah Caldwell, wife of Rev. Caldwell, for whom the north Jersey town is named. She and her nine children were hiding in a bedroom during the battle on June 7, 1780, when some British officers broke in and shot her, perhaps by accident. It is an interesting story that our readers should google.

***This appears to contradict the often-repeated proposition that black people were not permitted to own real estate. The well-known and highly-respected Still family also owned real estate.

****We have no record of Cromwell ever marrying anyone.

at 114 East Union Street in Burlington City. In 1818, at age 66, he applied for a veteran's pension. In the application, he described his possessions as

> "two iron Potts one Tea Kettle – four chairs – 6 Plates – 6 knife & forks – and bed & bedding and wearing apparel". He also reported that he was "a common labourer but from age am not able to get a livelihood. I have one daughter Elizabeth who is a cripple & unable to work aged 25 years – a son aged 12 years named Isaac another named Robert aged ten years who are not able to contribute to my support – who reside with me."

He had some trouble applying for the pension because he didn't have his discharge papers* and because he could not read or write. He was well-liked and respected in Burlington, and local lawyers (particularly Joseph McIlwaine, Esquire), judges and politicians came to his aid, and he was granted a pension of $96 per year.



He died just shy of his 100th birthday in 1853 and was buried in the Broad Street Methodist Cemetery in Burlington. He had outlived most of his children.

In the 1850 census, he reported his occupation as "Drummer in the Revolution".

At the left is a picture of Oliver Cromwell's house on Union Street in Burlington City as it looks today. It's the one in the middle. The DAR put a plaque on it commemorating Oliver Cromwell's life and service.

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*Cromwell's discharge, like all the other discharges, specified that it was not effective until the Treaty of Paris, which formally ended the War, was ratified. Until then, servicemen were considered furloughed. The Treaty was not ratified until January 14, 1784. Discharges were kept on file in Washington pending ratification. It was probably for this reason that it was so exceedingly difficult for Cromwell, and other veterans, to get their papers.

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