

PRISON MUSEUM POST

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

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PLEASE RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

For only \$15 per year (\$25 for family), members get our unique newsletter and free admission to the museum. They also get the satisfaction of knowing that they are supporting a truly significant National Historic Landmark. Thousands of visitors from all over the U.S. and from many foreign countries find their way to our museum each year. The County Freeholders, through its Parks Department, maintains the 208-year-building, and the Prison Museum Association preserves its history and promotes the site through research, the website, publications, exhibits and public relations. Your dues, along with donations, admissions and gift shop sales, pays for all that. Within the last year, your dues helped to pay for our new mobile-friendly website and for a great escape game which we expect will bring many more visitors to the museum.

TRY OUT THE NEW ESCAPE GAME

The escape game is now up and running on Saturdays. We are open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The games will be available until 3 pm. (It generally takes about an hour to complete the game.)

Our escape game is a take-off on the real-life, daring escape of safecracker Eddie Adamsky. Players step into the shoes of this colorful character, who managed to break out in 1933.

The clues to the game are contained in a locked case which players carry with them. Once you figure out the combination to open the case, you are off on an

adventure through our historic building to find other clues leading to your ultimate "escape"! Our, game guide, Cameron, will be available for those who need help.



A team of up to four people can work from one "escape box".

During this summer, we are offering a special introductory price of only \$10 per box plus the cost of admission (\$5 for adults, \$3 for those over 55 years old and in the active military, \$2 for students).

JOEL COUGH MYSTERY CONTINUES



In the last issue, we told you about a letter we purchased at auction last summer. Written on July 23, 1833 by Mt. Holly resident Maurice Browning to his father, Abraham Browning of Camden, it describes the escape of convicted murderer Joel Clough as described by Clough himself to Maurice and the other men who captured him and brought him back to the Jail. He said that he used a steel writing pen to cut through his chains, stripped naked and rubbed soap on his shoulders so he could slip through the window. We showed you a picture of the two windows from which he might have escaped and asked for your thoughts. So far nobody believes that he escaped through either window and everyone who responded thinks he escaped

with the help of the warden (with whom he had in fact been friendly) or someone else in the Jail. Looks like we are a lot more cynical than people were in 1833.

1902 MURDER TRIAL SHEDS NEW LIGHT ON COUNTY COURT AND JAIL HISTORY

We have a real treat for those of you who like a good crime story. This one is straight out of *Law and Order*. Only instead of the Big Apple in the 1990s, this story takes place in Burlington County in 1902. It's particularly sad, as it involves the abuse and death of a toddler by her own stepmother. But it's a great example of how good lawyering can save the guiltiest of souls from penalty, at least in this world if not the next. Moreover, the sensational story was widely reported in papers all over the country, and the articles are a treasure trove of information about our court and jail at that point in time.

CRUELTY CHARGES TO WHICH MRS. HAINES MUST ANSWER.

Woman on Trial for Alleged Murder of Her 2-Year-Old Stepdaughter,
Gwendolyn, Is Charged With Holding the Baby's Head Under
Water Until It Was "Black in the Face" and of
Kicking and Beating the Child.



MRS. HAINES AND HER 2-YEAR-OLD BOY, HOWARD.

The protagonist of the story was Mabel Fenton Haines, whose physical abuse of her stepdaughter over a period of 15 months undoubtedly caused little Gwendolin's death at age 2 years 9 months. Represented by court-appointed counsel, former prosecutor Eckard Budd, Mabel was acquitted. The twelve men who comprised the jury were no doubt swayed by compassion for the attractive 32-year-old mother who was permitted to bring her own two adorable children with her to the trial. These children were her two-year-old son and her infant daughter, who was born in the Jail as her mother awaited trial.

We want to thank museum attendant Dennis McDonald and PMA Vice-President Dave Kimball for the research they did for this article. The internet holds all sorts of material that we never before dreamed existed, but it takes money to get access to those materials and to in turn get them out to you. Again, that is what your dues pay for, and so we truly appreciate all your renewals.

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Please help us preserve and promote the Prison Museum by joining the PMA. Annual dues are \$15(individual)/\$25 (family). Membership benefits include a quarterly newsletter, event updates, 10% off gift shop purchases, and free admission to the museum.

Go on the website for an application.

THE TRIAL AND ACQUITTAL OF MABEL FENTON HAINES

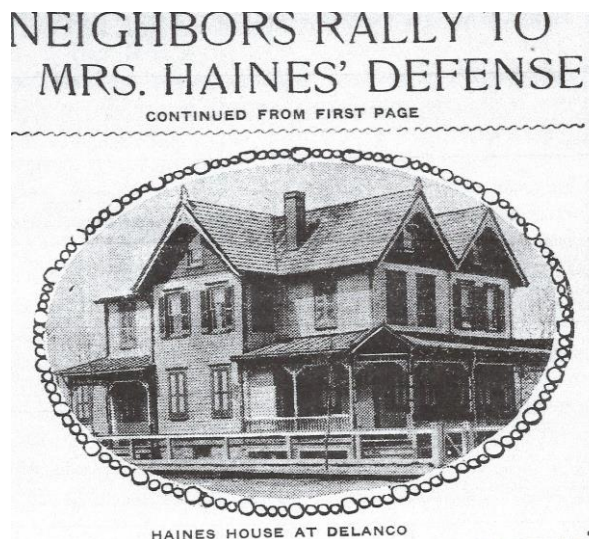
Born in 1870 in Beverly, Mabel Fenton was one of ten children. Though her parents were poor, Mabel was ambitious and hard-working. Determined to become a teacher, she walked four miles a day to get to high school and borrowed from a “rich” uncle to attend the normal (teacher’s) school in Trenton (now The College of New Jersey).

In 1896 she was teaching in Haddonfield and became friendly with another teacher, Minnie Franks. Minnie lived with her affluent uncles, John and Andrew Doughty, in their Haddonfield mansion.

Both girls met Howard Haines in December of 1896. Haines, who was visiting a friend in Haddonfield, was something of a mystery. All he told anyone about himself was that he was from Philadelphia and travelled for a living.

In 1897, Minnie married Howard. They had one child, Gwendolin, in June of 1898. They lived in Baltimore a short while before returning to Haddonfield and again taking up residence with the Doughtys. At that time, Minnie resumed her friendship with Mabel, who often stayed at the house, sometimes for days. Mutual friends of Minnie and Mabel told newspaper reporters that Howard walked Mabel home from these visits so often that they were compelled to tell both Minnie and Mabel that it looked “bad”. After this, the visits stopped.

Minnie died in May of 1899. Howard had rarely been home during the entire time they lived in Haddonfield, and was away when Minnie took ill. Friends told reporters during the trial that Minnie called Mabel to her bedside shortly before her death. Though no one claimed to know what was said, it was believed that Mabel said something to upset Minnie, and that Minnie told her to leave. Howard arrived home just before Minnie passed away. According to the friends, as she drew her last, she made Howard promise to take good care of Gwendolin.



On July 9, 1899, only six weeks after Minnie’s death, Mabel and Howard were married and moved to a rented home in Delanco. The large home was a double, with a family named Clark living on the other side.

Upon Minnie’s death, the Doughty brothers told Howard that they couldn’t care for Gwendolin while he was away “working”. Arrangements were therefore made for Gwendolin to live with a Mrs. Zeigenfurst, of Camden, who received \$5 per week from the Doughtys.

Although Mabel and Howard were married in July, Gwendolin did not come to live in the Delanco home until December of 1899. She was about 18 months old at the time.

On April 16, 1900, Mabel gave birth to Howard's child, a son they named Howard, Jr.

Gwendolin died on March 31, 1901. She was two years and nine months old at the time. Howard was, as usual, away. Dr. Weiler, the Haines' family doctor, testified that Mabel had called him a few hours before the child died (apparently, they were two of the million or so people in the country who had telephones in 1901). The doctor testified at the grand jury hearing and at the trial that Mabel said only that the child had a cold. He prescribed medication. A few hours later, she called him again, this time saying that the child was unconscious. He went to the home and found the child on the floor, covered with a wet blanket. Her head was cut and bruised through the scalp. Her lip was cut open, her ear torn, and her nose crushed. Mabel said that the injuries were caused when the child went into convulsions and fell. The doctor concluded that the injuries, and not a convulsion, caused the child's death, and that the injuries could not have all been caused by falling from one seizure. He refused to sign a death certificate. The coroner, however (a man named Wells), came to the house and signed a death certificate stating that the child's death was due to convulsions.

The child's corpse was embalmed and buried in a little grave next to her mother's at Harleigh Cemetery in Camden on April 4.

The day before the burial, Minnie's uncle, William Doughty, had attended the child's viewing. Alarmed at the condition of the body, he filed a complaint with local Judge Ziegler, who on April 6 ordered Mabel's arrest and denied bail. Mabel was taken to the Burlington County Prison. Because her husband travelled, and there was no one to take care of Howard, Jr., the child, then twelve months old, went with her. There was soon to be a second baby in the Jail – Mabel was pregnant with her second child.

Judge Zeigler also ordered that Gwendolin's body be exhumed and autopsied.

Mabel was arraigned on April 15, 1901. Judge Charles Garrison presided. The County Prosecutor was Samuel Atkinson. Judge Garrison appointed former prosecutor Eckard Budd to represent Mabel.

Mabel and little Howard were assigned the last cell on the main hall of the second floor. The cell was originally designed by architect Robert Mills to house debtors. After the passage of bankruptcy laws in the early 1800s, debtors were no longer incarcerated. It is unclear why she was not assigned to the women's wing downstairs. At the time of her initial incarceration, there were four others on that floor awaiting trial for the murder of Washington Hunter of Delran. The area became known as "Murderers' Row". Mabel occupied the cell next to that of John Youngman, one of three men who were ultimately convicted and hanged for the Hunter murder. During her stay at our Jail, Mabel Haines watched him and one of the others walk to the gallows to be executed.

The St Louis Republic described the Jail in an article dated April 15, 1901: "It is an old, old building – the jail – not at all repellant, covered with ivy, sunny and surrounded by attractive grounds. When the coo and prattle of baby's talk come down the corridor, followed by the mother's tender responses, it is difficult to fancy that the building is not of another character."

The locals did not share the author's obvious empathy for Mabel. Basically, everyone wanted her head, especially after the grand jury testimony was publicized. (In those days, grand jury proceedings weren't secret, as they now are.)

The coroner testified that he found 7 1/2 grains of arsenic in the body. Although the defense argued that this was from the embalming fluid, the undertaker, John C. Belton, testified that he didn't use arsenic. Confusion at trial over this issue was one of the main factors that ultimately led to an acquittal. In retrospect, it is frustrating to ponder why the prosecution felt the need to allege that the child had been poisoned *and/or* beaten, when it was obvious that she had been beaten to death.

Detective Ellis Parker testified that he visited the house twice, the second time for two hours. He found a towel at foot of garret (attic) steps and a handkerchief in a closet in Mrs. Haines' room -- both with spots of blood. A rug in Gwendolin's room also had blood stains. Both he and Constable Shinn testified they found no arsenic in the house.

The Times reported on May 16, 1901: "Dr. Richard H. Parson, of Mt. Holly, acting in conjunction with Dr. E. A. Small, of Riverside, made a post-mortem, next took the stand. 'The body,' he said, 'was that of a child said to be 2 years and 9 months old, well-formed and poorly nourished. The chin was bruised, nose broken, a torn ear, bruise on forehead, left eye discolored, bruise on back of head and several bruises on the body. The bruise on the head extended through the scalp. All organs and the base of the brain were normal and well preserved.'" Both doctors testified that the cause of death was meningitis, that is, an infection of the brain caused by injury.

The testimony of Nellie Richards, a servant girl who worked for Mabel from July to October of 1900, was the most damaging. She said that she had seen Mabel take the child by the head with both hands and pound it on the floor. She saw Mabel wipe the child down with witch hazel to conceal bruises. She had the child stand in corner with her hands tied behind her until she dropped from exhaustion. She locked her in a closet and beat her daily. Nellie said that when Mr. Haines asked her to be nice to Gwendolin, Mabel refused to speak to him for hours.

Although Nellie's testimony was challenged by her admission that she had been arrested eight times, and jailed twice, due to "drink", it was corroborated by Albert Clark and wife Isabelle, who lived in the other side of the double house. They and their two teenage children all testified that they heard Mabel whipping Gwendolin on a regular basis.

Coroner Wells testified that when he went to the home the night of the child's death, Mabel begged for a burial certificate and was upset that Dr. Zeigler refused to sign one.

She appeared relieved when the coroner signed it. (It was unclear from the newspaper reports why the coroner signed if he thought the child had been killed.)

Mabel was indicted by the grand jury in May of 1901. Howard did not appear.

Although justice was usually swift in those days (generally no more than a few months passed between the commission of a crime and the entry of a verdict), it would be almost a year before this matter saw the inside of a court room. That was probably no oversight. Budd was a smart lawyer, and no doubt knew that with public sentiment strongly against Mabel, it couldn't do any harm to let some time pass, especially until after the infant was born.

On August 12, 1901, Mabel gave birth to her second child. The little girl was not named until the trial ended in April of 1902. In the meantime, the infant was simply called "Baby". As Budd had hoped, sentiment against Mabel softened after the birth.

The trial finally started on Tuesday, March 25, 1902.

Isabella Palfrey, who identified herself as the wife of Mr. Haines' deceased brother, Walter Haines, testified that she visited the Haines home in Delanco in the fall of 1900 to discuss family business with Mr. Haines. She said that Mr. Haines was not home when she got there. She said she witnessed Mabel strike and kick the child in the next room. She said that when she rushed in to intervene, and Mabel grabbed her by the hair.

Ellis Parker, Coroner Wells and Dr. Zeigler all testified. Budd tried to put a dent in Zeigler's testimony on cross examination by accusing him of being drunk and trying to kiss Mabel. Zeigler strongly denied the allegations, which appear not to have impressed anyone who witnessed the trial.

One person who did not testify at trial was the servant girl, Nellie Richards, who died four months after giving her damning grand jury testimony. In a real blow to the defense, Judge Garrison ruled that the testimony could be presented to the jury any way.

The prosecution rested on March 27 and the defense started its case the next day, March 28. The first thing Mabel's attorney did was to attack the prosecution's weak allegation that the child had been poisoned. Experts on both sides argued for three hours about

STORK VISITS A COUNTY JAIL

Mrs. Mabel Haines, Accused of
Killing Stepdaughter, Gives
Birth to a Child in Prison

Special to The Inquirer.

MOUNT HOLLY, N. J., Aug. 13.—Shortly after 8 o'clock last evening Mrs. Mabel Haines gave birth to a girl baby in the County Prison, where she has been confined since last March, on a charge of having administered such cruelty to her stepdaughter, Gwendolin, as to cause its death. Dr. W. P. Melcher was the physician in charge, and he says the mother and baby are doing nicely.

the presence of the arsenic found in the body at the autopsy, getting the jury confused (and probably bored) as all get out. It turned out that arsenic was in fact from embalming fluid, though the coroner was unaware of this at the grand jury hearing. During this testimony, Budd had his expert, Dr. S. Solis-Cohen of Philadelphia, taking notes on “foolscap” (legal sized paper) and feeding him questions for the defense witnesses.



Several people testified as character witnesses on Mabel's behalf. One of them, Louis Lehern of Riverside, said he noticed the child had a black eye, which Mabel explained was caused by a fall down the stairs. Luncinda Hackney, a dressmaker, said she never saw Mabel assault Gwendolin, but said when she saw the child's body at the viewing, her nose looked like it had been flattened by a blow.

Harry Cook of Delanco, known as the “Shoemaker Evangelist”, testified that he and a few other people visited Mabel on night child died to discuss “religious topics”. She told them that the child was upstairs with cold and didn't mention any of the other injuries.

Mabel testified in her own behalf for four hours. She testified that she did not meet her husband until April 24, 1899, the date of Minnie's funeral, even though it was established that she had met him over two years earlier. Most surprisingly, she said that her husband had no brother and that Isabella Paltry never came to her home in the fall of 1900. She explained the blood Ellis spoke of on the handkerchief and floor as being

her own; she said she cut herself on a bottle that Gwendolin had broken. She had an answer for everything, including all Gwendolin's injuries: She bruised her chin when she fell on Howard's baby carriage. She broke her nose when she fell between two chairs. The bruise on her head was from falling down the stairs.

The Inquirer reported on March 28 that 90% of the crowded court were women and that "Mrs. Haines came into the court room with that composure of one entering the drawing room. She took a seat within the railing, with her mother on her right and her husband and counsel on her left. With her were the prison-born baby and little Howard, now delving into the recesses of Lawyer Budd's grip, now toddling towards the witness stand, now begging his mother for the lead pencil with which she kept notes for her attorney."



The Inquirer on March 29 reported that "One feature of the trial that appeals strongly to the curious spectators, who daily throng the stuffy little court room, is the osculatory exhibition given by the fair defendant and her husband. The first thing on the program every morning is the now celebrated kiss exchanged between husband and wife. Whether this show of affection between the two is for the sole edification of the jury or not is a hard matter to determine. Certainly Mr. Haines partakes of this dainty greeting as if it were the nature of a task."

Howard Haines never testified at the trial and remained a mystery to the end. Mabel actually testified that even she did not know what he did for a living.

Both attorneys gave their closing arguments on April 3. When the prosecutor said that baby Gwendolin was looking down from heaven with "a bloody face and blackened eyes, looking for justice", Mabel's mother fainted and was carried from the room. The papers reported that "his closing remarks, dealing with the tragic death of little Gwendolin, affected the women spectators to such an extent that handkerchiefs were produced and the sound of weeping echoed through the courtroom."

Judge Garrison charged jury the next day, April 4. The first thing he did was declare that the prosecution did not prove death by arsenic poisoning and instructed the jury to disregard all evidence of same. The only question, he said, was whether the child's death resulted from the blows. He said that if the jury found the blows intentional, it was murder, and if not, it was manslaughter. He mentioned the child's lacerated ear and in so many words told them that her ear could not have been torn off in a fall. He all but ordered them to come back with a manslaughter verdict. But the 12 men of the jury came back in only an hour with a verdict of not guilty.

Ellis Parker's diary notes that he questioned the "whitnesses" (sic) in the Haines case in January of 1902, including the Doughtys. He noted that the jury was out for only 80 minutes. He never mentioned the case again in his diary. No doubt he was stunned and disgusted by the verdict.

The Times reported on April 4 that as soon as the verdict was rendered, "Mabel and her husband wept together for a moment and then with the lawyer started across the lawn to the jail...at this moment a number of prisoners appeared in the upper windows of the jail...waved their hands and cheered. Then the party, joined by Mabel's mother, entered the jail and sat down to dinner.... The street in front of the old stone building was crowded, but there was no demonstration. Sentiment against the woman, although almost entirely confined to her own sex, seemed unreasonably conspicuous. Most men in the crowd received the verdict with satisfaction.... In midafternoon Mr. Budd conducted the newspaper men to the cell which his client was soon to leave. It is on the main corridor of the second floor. Twice the size of the ordinary prison apartment, clean and sun-lighted. It resembled the sitting room of a small house. A dainty, white enameled bed occupied half of it. Three small tables, covered with growing plants and cut flowers, stood about on the carpeted floor. A tiny organ was in one corner and a mandolin and graphophone lay in another. Mrs. Haines' playing and singing had endeared her to the other prisoners. Howard and his tiny prison-born sister, who is not yet named, played just outside the door."

NEIGHBORS RALLY TO MRS. HAINES' DEFENSE

Effort to Offset Damaging
Testimony Against Woman
Accused of Child Murder

Horrible Story of Dead Serv-
ant Girl Is Admitted in
Evidence



MRS. HAINES AND HUSBAND
LISTENING TO THE TESTIMONY.

What Counsel for the Fair
Prisoner Will Endeavor to
Prove—To Take the Stand



A STUDY OF MRS. HAINES.

PAVING WAY FOR
RECOGNITION OF

The Times also reported that one of the jurors said: "When I looked at that little woman, and her little boy romped over near my chair, it was all I could do to resist taking him in my arms, kissing him and telling him to tell his mother we knew she was innocent. Our verdict was unanimous on the first ballot."

It was reported that after the trial, Mabel was approached by a theatrical manager to take the show on the road in which little Howard would be billed as the "Little Boy in Blue". She declined the offer. Or at least told the newspapers reporters that she did.

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