



Deerpark Diary

Town of Deerpark 1863 Schoolhouse Museum

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1863schoolhouse.org or townofdeerpark.org

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Introduction

The first issue of the 2010 *Deerpark Diary* was about the life of James Allerton, Esq. and his interest in John C. Baldwin. The second issue related details of the murder of William Springsted (Springsteen) at Big Pond, Town of Deerpark, and John C. Baldwin's arrest and indictment. The third issue dealt with Baldwin's trial, his conviction and sentence to be hanged. If you missed these issues they are available online at 1862schoolhouse.org/diary. This issue will tell "The Rest of the Story".

Baldwin's mother had hired Zebulum W. Ward of Paterson NJ to defend Baldwin, therefore Allerton ended his connection with the case. Allerton had done his own investigation of the crime and was convinced of Baldwin's innocence. In his personal diary, James Allerton wrote the following about the proceedings.

Allerton's Investigation

According to his diary he interviewed the people in the neighborhood where the murder took place.

"On questioning them closely, I found many inconsistencies in their statements. It was clear to me that they were overly zealous to tell all they could against Baldwin.

"I then examined the barn

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where the murder was committed. On the northeast side of barn floor, there was a hay mow in which the hay and straw was about four feet deep. This had not been disturbed since the murder. The place of the murder was plain to be seen. Large clots of blood remained on the hay as well as a newspaper on which the body must have lain when the fatal blow was struck.

"The paper was the New York Commercial Advertiser of October 9, 1877. And it will subsequently appear, that this paper showed that the murder could not have been committed by Baldwin the night charged--namely October 8, 1877 as it was printed in the city of New York the day after the alleged murder. On inquiry I learned that this paper was taken by but one person in that neighborhood and that some of that person's hired men had been to the Pond fishing the day after Baldwin left and had eaten their dinner in the barn. My theory was that their dinner had been wrapped in that paper. And the fisherman had thrown the paper on the hay mow, and that Springsteen had layed down on the hay mow on the paper. And in this way Springsteen's blood got on the paper.

"But right here comes in another circumstance that is in strict harmony with the blood on the NEWSPAPER already referred to. I found two quarrymen that said that they were acquainted with Springsteen and had worked with him in the same quarry. And they had seen him. And talked with him on the Plank Road about one mile from Bolton Basin on TUESDAY MORNING

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OCTOBER 9, 1877, the next morning after the alleged murder.

"I then went to a place called the Hook (short distance from Bolton Basin) and found a woman that was well acquainted with Baldwin and Springsteen. She informed me that Springsteen had been at her house on the forenoon of October 9, 1877 That she went upstairs with him. That when they came downstairs, Springsteen took out his pocketbook and paid her \$2.00. And that he showed her \$20.00 or \$30.00. She also informed me that soon after Springsteen left her house, Baldwin came and wanted some whiskey. And that she went and got it. And that she and another woman and Baldwin drank the whiskey and got drunk. And that then Baldwin and the other woman went to bed. When Baldwin got up he said he had lost his money and left the house and started for Port Jervis.

"I then found several persons that saw Baldwin going to Port Jervis and the barber that shaved him after he got to Port Jervis, I also found the conductor of the train he boarded at Port Jervis to go to Patterson.

"Now I had learned from Baldwin of his travels from the time he left Big Pond on Tuesday October 9, 1877 until he arrived in Patterson. And my investigation proved that he had told me the truth; and it was clear to my mind that he was innocent.... This part of the investigation establishes one important fact. That is, if Baldwin committed the murder, he must have done it on Monday night October 8th for every minute between the time he left Big Pond until he was arrested is accounted for. It was impossible for him to have done

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it after October 8th.

"The next important fact is. Was Springsteen seen alive after the night that he and Baldwin went in the barn together. If so then some person other than Baldwin killed him. I am satisfied that he was alive on the 9th of October for several reasons, some of which I state here:

"First--The blood on the paper printed in New York on the 9th of October. There was no possible way that this paper could have gotten in the barn until late in the evening of the 9th or the morning of the 10th.

"Second--Two quarrymen saw Springsteen about 11 o'clock on the 9th of October near Abers Quarry on the Plank Road.

"Third--Baldwin says (And this he is corroborated by the witness P. Van Inwegen) that Springsteen told him on the night of October 8th that he was going to the Canal the next morning after tobacco.

"Fourth--Springsteen was seen at the Hook (Canal) on the 9th of October.

"Now if these facts are true, Springsteen could not have been murdered on October 8. On referring to the evidence, it will be seen that the murder was not discovered or the body found until October 15th."

Allerton's View of the Trial **Editor's Note: Elsewhere in his diary Allerton wrote about the trial.**

"The trial commenced in my absence. In Fact I did not intend to be present. As I was satisfied there could be but one result. But Ward was determined that I should attend the trial and sent the Sheriff to subpoena me. I went down on the evening train. As soon as I got there, I found out that the members of the Orange County bar were disgusted with Ward and advised me to stay out of the case and let Ward have all the glory of HANGING HIS CLIENT. This was the advice of such men as Gedney,

Winfield, Green, Hirshburgh and others.

"Yet I was so well satisfied with Baldwin's innocence, that I could not help calling on Ward and offering him my services. I found him at the hotel, cracking his jokes and manifesting about as much concern for his client as he would had he been concerned in the trial of a horse case. He requested me to assist him in the defense. I told him that my assistance would depend on what theory he intended to try the case and asked him to state to me his theory. He replied that he had a theory and that he intended to keep it to himself.

"I told him that I did not intend to go it blindly and to wait for something to turn up. That I would not assume any responsibility. It was evident that the course he was pursuing would hang his client and bid him a very good night.

"I went to the courthouse and was a silent spectator to a JUDICIAL MURDER. For surely Ward's defense exhibited more of the brute and reckless disregard of a human than the real murderer of Springsteen. For he did stay long enough to give him Christian burial. Not so with Ward. He packed his valise and took the first train for Paterson.

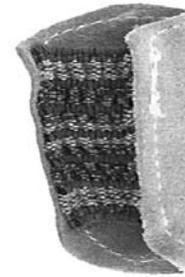
"Baldwin was convicted and sentenced to be hung. Then at the request of Baldwin I stepped into the case again with the aid of Judge Barnard, George W. Green, Millspaugh and others succeeded in getting the sentence commuted to imprisonment for life.

"There were two things that told heavily against Baldwin in the trial. One of which led to his conviction. A short time before the alleged murder, Baldwin had injured one of his fingers. A girl by the name of Utter made him a finger stoll out of bed ticking to wear on his finger. At the grave where Springsteen was taken out, a buck skin finger stoll was found. Several witnesses testified at

the trial that they had seen Baldwin wear this finger stoll.

"This evidence sealed his doom. It was certainly a strong circumstance. It was a circumstance that pointed directly to the person that had buried Springsteen and lost his finger stoll on the grave of his victim.

"But all these witnesses were prejudiced against Baldwin and jumped at conclusions ready in their zeal to say or do anything that would hang Baldwin.



A finger stoll is used to protect fingers from injury while doing heavy work or after an injury. It can be made of split leather or other heavy materials

"I write intelligently. I have the statement of Baldwin and the young lady that made Baldwin's finger stoll from bed ticking. But I have better and more conclusive evidence that all of these witnesses were mistaken. I have the sworn statement of Dr. Solomon Van Etten that he was at the grave when the body of Springsteen was removed; that he not only examined the wounds on the body, but he searched Springsteen's POCKETS and in his VEST POCKET he found the BUCK SKIN FINGER STOLL and threw it on the GROUND. And here it was found by some of the blood thirsty witnesses and held up before the court and jury as the property of Baldwin.

"I have no doubt that Springsteen was murdered on or after October 9, 1877. That he lay down in the barn with his finger stoll in his POCKET, where it remained until it was taken from his POCKET by Dr. Van Etten.

"Had the attorney known his business or had the least anxiety for the safety of his client he could and should have shown this fact for Dr.

Van Etten was a witness.

“The next point that told heavily against Baldwin in the trial was that he had some money and had exhibited it at the Hook. Yet I find by investigation that he had been in the habit of bringing fish to Port and selling them and received payment in small coins and then going to the First National Bank and getting five dollar bills for his small change. This accounts for the money.

“There are other things that I might record and other names I might mention, but I will forbear. The fate of Baldwin is sealed and sealed forever. And I only give this a place in the history of my life to be read and inquired about by my children and grandchildren. And above all to show them and others that when they are surrounded by circumstances over which they have no control not to get excited and make matters worse.

“Some may ask why was an attorney from another state that had but few opportunities to learn the facts, unacquainted with the jury and the witnesses was entrusted with this man’s life.

“It was the mistake of a mother. It was Baldwin’s mother that did this. Yes, the very person that would have given her life to save that of her child made this fatal mistake. She heard of his arrest. She heard that the charge was murder. To save her child she rushed to a lawyer. He made fair promises, took her money and robbed her and her son of their legal rights. Thank God there are but few such men in the profession and they should be frowned upon by every respectable person.

“I trust that the time may come when this wrong will be righted and justice be done. But he is numbered among the poor and lonely and their wrongs are seldom righted in this world. But my friend has a firm reliance that there is a tribunal beyond this vale of tears in which JUSTICE WILL BE AWARDED HIM.

Commutation

Evening Gazette
Thurs Mar. 7, 1878

BALDWIN NOT TO BE HUNG THE GOVERNOR COMMUTES HIS SENTENCE TO IMPRISON- MENT FOR LIFE.

The Governor has commuted the sentence of John C. Baldwin, who was sentenced to be hung on Friday of next week, to imprisonment for life. The petition for this purpose was circulated in this county through the instance of James M. Allerton. Esq. and was very generally signed. Having heard nothing from the Governor in regard to the matter, Mr. Allerton on Wednesday morning started for Albany. He stopped at Goshen to meet the Hon. G. W. Millspaugh, who was to accompany him, and there met the dispatch announcing the Governor’s action.

Of course Baldwin was greatly rejoiced at receiving the announcement. He says he has faith that the real perpetrator of the crime will soon be found out.

Mr. Allerton claims to have facts in his possession of a startling nature, and which will vindicate the character of Baldwin in reference to this charge.

Editor’s Notes: 1). Governor of New York was Governor Lucius Robinson 1877-1879. 2). On March 13, 1878 Baldwin was taken to Sing Sing Prison, just two days before he was to be hanged.

Baldwin Letter

After Baldwin was sent to prison he sent the following letter to Allerton asking him to represent him to get a new trial. This letter is a direct transcription from the original. The paper is in very poor condition, some of the writing is illegible and has been filled in with ellipses.

Mr. James Allerton, Attorney at Law

Port Jervis
Orange Co., NY
August 3, 1878

Sing Sing

Mr. James Alatone

Dear Sir And friend I now Im bi...this privlidge of Writing these few lines to you to let you Know That I am Well at this Present time and hope these few Lines may find you Well and enjoying the Blesing of God. that God home We must all Apeare Befor at the Fine all Judement Day it Will be Showne that I am Innosent. I am Getting Along By the help of God as Good as can Be Expected. you Saide in youre letter to my mother you Wanted \$100 hundred dolars down. I Got a letter from my mother last Weeak And She told me to Write to you and tell you the money is redy for you to (cross outs) to Comence to Work for A New trile for me..Mat Eserzon thinks Best to Be done to get me out of Prison there must Be (cross outs) Some one that has seene that man after thay Clame me and him Wase to Gethar and thay are in that Naborhood if thay Would Come forward and Give me the Benafit of thare Afadavit for thay Know that I Never done that dede Nor Would I Be Connected With Sutch a helish Crime. Hon. Mr. Alatone I Want you to take my Case and Get me a new trile if posable. Due Watever you think Best in my Case if It takes 2 years I due not Exspect \$100 dolars to pay you fuley But that Mother Will pay you Donne and firnish more as Sune as We can. you had Better go to Patterson and Get this money for if mother sends it it mite be lost and I don’t Want to lose it fore I neade every dolar. if you think it is safe for (cross out) mother to send it to you I will Give you her Address 445 Marshall Street Patterson.....Mrs. Lydia Cisco Wright and tell her wat.....it So you.....Will Get it Safely (cross out) that is if you thing you cane Due evey thing in my Be half. Give my kindes regards to all my old frindes. Write to me sune. yours With Re-

spect I put my hole trust in God and you Direct. Sing Sing NY State Prison J. C. Baldwin in Care of Chaplin sell 15

Give my regards Hon. Millspas and the Sherf

P. S. I have the utmost Confidence in you and the Evidence you have in your possession. you must take youre oone time to fetch it forward. I trust in you and if I had Had my way you should of had my case at first.

Baldwin's Pardon

Baldwin always claimed his innocence. In a letter from Sing Sing prison to Andrea Henzel, he wrote, "I am innocent...and I say emphatically it is outrageous and Inhuman to incarcerate and keep me in prison." Despite all the evidence he gathered proving Baldwin's innocence; Allerton was unable to secure a new trial.

Joseph Coburn, Esq. of Newburgh was recommended to Baldwin as someone who might be able to help him. In 1883, Coburn and Allerton worked together compiling documents and affidavits for a pardon. The petition for a pardon was submitted to Governor Grover Cleveland. It was denied.

Many people in Orange County were convinced Baldwin had not committed the murder. In 1886, when Dr. James J. Mills of Port Jervis heard the evidence, he also became convinced of his innocence. He took up the case and spent considerable time and money investigating the case. His efforts resulted in a new petition for a pardon which was submitted to Governor David B. Hill in 1888. Surprisingly, the petition was again denied.

Others continued to come to Baldwin's aid. Henry de Vries wrote to Allerton offering to add his influence to Allerton's efforts. Andrea Henzel from Port Jervis, A.H. Harshaw of New York City, and many others contacted Allerton offering

to help. In 1890, Allerton closed his practice, and John M. Pollock, general manager of the Harlem Local Report in NYC along with Newburgh Mayor John B. McCroskery took up Baldwin's case.

[The above information is from the diary and papers of James Allerton. The following information is taken from the January 2, 1900 issue of the Port Jervis Evening Gazette]

By 1892 Pollock and McCroskery had assembled all the information and resubmitted the petition to Governor Roswell P. Flower. Once again the application was denied.

Harry Moore, who had been a witness in the Baldwin trial, was employed at the Palatine stables of Major Weston in Newburgh. One day he told Weston's son, Ralph Weston, about the murder and Baldwin's trial. Major Weston became convinced that Baldwin was innocent. In 1897 he received a long letter from Baldwin who asserted that he was "...an innocent man, unjustly convicted, unjustly imprisoned and unjustly kept in prison, and this shall be my cry as long as God spares my life, because it is God's sacred truth." From that time Weston gave a great deal of attention to the case.

On Christmas Day, 1899, Major Weston traveled to Albany and met with Governor Theodore Roosevelt. After he made his presentation, Governor Roosevelt gave him to understand that if he could obtain the signatures of two Supreme Court Judges, namely Judge Dickey and Judge Hirschberg, on a paper certifying that their understanding of the case was the same as Weston's, he would grant a pardon. Weston got their signatures. Shortly thereafter, Weston received a telegram from the Governor's private secretary, William J. Youngs, reading as follows: "Will have Baldwin pardon in my pocket for you New Year's morning. Will you come up and get it?"

On New Year's Eve, Dr.

James Mills and Ralph Weston traveled to Albany. On New Year's morning they were cordially welcomed at the Governor's office by Mr. Youngs, who handed the pardon to Dr. Mills. Mills and Weston left immediately and took the train to Sing Sing.

When Baldwin's friends reached the prison, the prisoner was called into the Warden's office. Baldwin was known in prison as "Honest John" and for years his guards believed he was innocent and could not understand why he had not been pardoned; therefore Warden Johnson and three or four clerks stood about as Ralph Weston handed Baldwin the paper that made him free. "It's your New Year's greeting from the Governor," he said. "You can leave as soon as you like."

The "thank you" caught in the prisoner's throat as he tried to speak. Tears welled up in his eyes and rolled down his cheeks. There were tears in every eye in the group. Dr. Mills came to the rescue by grabbing Baldwin's hand. Everybody shook his hand and wished the newly freed man the best of luck. Then, after twenty-two years in prison, John Baldwin was hustled off to exchange his convict stripes for civilian clothes and given the small sum of money he had earned in prison.

EPILOGUE

John C. Baldwin and Dr. James J. Mills traveled together to Port Jervis. According to the 1900 United States Census, Baldwin was listed in the Mill's household as a servant.

Affidavits

Anyone, interested in reading the complete affidavits used in procuring Baldwin's pardon, can read them on line at:

1863schoolhouse.org/diary

Happy Holidays
Deerpark Tree Lighting
Town Hall--December 6th 7:00
Refreshments