



Deerpark Diary

Town of Deerpark 1863 Schoolhouse Museum

Town of Deerpark Historian, P. O. Box 621, Huguenot, New York 12746

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Overview *Springsted (Springsteen) Murder

* Please note that both of the above mentioned names are used during the trial.

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 of the 2010 Deerpark Diary relates the details of the murder of William Springsted (Springsteen) at Big Pond, Town of Deerpark and John C. Baldwin's arrest and indictment. If you missed these two issues they can be found online at 1863schoolhouse.org/diary (one word). This issue will be about Baldwin's trial in Goshen and its outcome, however the story does not end here. The final issue of 2010 will tell "The Rest of the Story".

In his personal diary, James Allerton wrote the following notes about his involvement with Baldwin prior to his trial.

(No date available)

James Allerton's Diary Notes

[Allerton had represented Baldwin as a child concerning his father's estate—see previous issue]

Years had passed and I had forgotten the boy that had made such an impression on my mind, on account of his lifelike appearance to me. On the morning of October 28th, 1877 I received a letter requesting me to come to the lock-up on business, signed John C. Baldwin. I went and to my surprise found my young client, now a large framed man, but still retaining his red cherry hair. He informed me that he had been arrested at Paterson N.J. and brought here charged with the murder of William Springsted at Big Pond in the Town of Deerpark on the night of October 8, 1877. He requested me to act as his counsel and conduct his case.

This I consented to do and commenced immediately to investigate the facts. I went to Big Pond the scene of the murder and conversed with all the people in that neighborhood. They were nearly all of one mind that Baldwin was guilty of the murder. There were two persons that were very bitter against him. Their zeal to have him hung was so great as to excite in me the idea that there were other motives that prompted that desire, other than justice.....

On my return from one of

my trips in search of evidence, I was called on by a gentleman—No that is a misnomer—I was called on by a man, named Ward, whose principle qualifications consisted of about 300 pounds of bone and muscle, backed up by any amount of cheek, ignorance and dishonesty. He informed me that he had been retained by Baldwin's mother. That he had received nothing and did not expect to receive anything and he was willing that I should remain in the case on the same condition—That he must have the entire charge of the case—That he had been to Big Pond and knew all about the defense—That he was satisfied of Baldwin's guilt. But he would go in for him and make as much fuss as possible and take the chances on the result. I told him that I would see Baldwin and if it were his wish, I would step out of the case.

The next day I went to Goshen jail and had an interview with Baldwin in which I learned that Ward had not only been retained by Baldwin's mother, but that he had been paid several hundred dollars.

That ended my connection with the case.



THE BIG POND MURDER

TRIAL OF J. C. BALDWIN BEGAN AT GOSHEN MONDAY

EFFORTS OF THE DEFENDANT TO POSTPONE THE TRIAL—ABSENT WITNESSES WANTED—THE JUDGE DECLARES THE CASE ON—IMPANELING A JURY—TRIAL—SUMMATION—CASE GOES TO THE JURY

The trial of J. C. Baldwin for the murder of William Springsteen at Big Pond, in the town of Deerpark, on Monday night, October 8th began at Goshen Monday morning in the court of Oyer and Terminer before Judge J. F. Barnard.

The prisoner was brought into court at the opening of the same.

The case for the prosecution is conducted by District Attorney Walter C. Anthony, Assistant District Attorney Theron N. Little and Messrs. D. F. & N. Godney. The defense is in charge of Zebulum W. Ward of Paterson, assisted by W. H. Cuddeback of Goshen and the Hon. Geo. W. Millspaugh of Goshen.

An unsuccessful effort was made by the defense to have the trial postponed until the April term of court, alleging the necessity of having present certain material witnesses who are unable to attend at this term of court. The Judge denied the motion and ordered the calling of the jury.

Eighty-five names were drawn from the jury box, and it was not until half-past four Monday afternoon that a jury was impaneled.

[The following is a summation of the evidence presented as reported in the newspaper.]

Except for a short adjournment for supper, testimony was heard

until 10:00 pm at which time the trial was adjourned until 9:00 am Tuesday.

THE PROSECUTION

John C. Baldwin had both opportunity and motive for killing William Springsteen. Baldwin and Springsteen were last seen when they went to the Van Inwegen barn to sleep on October 8th. Benjamin Van Inwegen testified that his ax was missing late in the day on October 8th and was returned to its rightful place on the morning of October 9th. This was probably the murder weapon used to crush Springsteen's skull. Baldwin was used to hard work and carrying heavy loads which made it easy for him to attack a bigger man and drag the body into the wooded area and bury it. The bottom of Baldwin's pants had the same yellow clay as the soil found at the gravesite. His pants and shoes had spots of blood on them. Baldwin's fingerstall was found near the grave. Baldwin's clothes were not besmeared with blood because, according to the testimony of Dr. Van Etten, all the blood had nearly drained from the body into the straw in the barn. When the body was discovered, the victim's shirt and jacket were pulled over his head so that blood would not leak out. The motive for committing the crime was robbery. Baldwin knew Springsteen had recently received money from Alonzo Smith for the sale of his share in a quarry. Supposedly Baldwin needed money for his woman, Mary McConnell. However, witnesses state that he spent the days after the murder visiting with neighbors, drinking and partying with women in Bolton Basin and Port Jervis before he traveled to Paterson, N. J. There were numerous contradictions between Baldwin's testimony and facts brought out during the trial: 1) He testified that he was walking about the streets of Pa-

erson every day, and was able to ride and walk to Newfoundland to see his mother; yet in the letter he wrote to Catherine Van Inwegen he stated that he was sick and could not get back on that account. 2) Baldwin was making inquiries about Springsteen the day after the murder; although he told others that Springsteen had told him that he was going to the canal after tobacco and probably to Monticello on October 9th. Baldwin's failure to inquire of the officers the reason of his arrest is certainly suspicious. The prosecution paints a licentious, debauched and drunken character leading a life that has been far from exemplary.

THE DEFENSE

Baldwin has always stated that he is innocent. On October 8th he and Springsteen went to Van Inwegen's barn, talked awhile and went to sleep. Baldwin stated that he had slept through the entire night and did not hear anything to wake him. Springsteen told Baldwin that if he wasn't in the barn in the morning, he would be getting some tobacco at the Canal and then maybe go up to Monticello. He knew nothing about any missing ax. It would be impossible for one person to have carried Springsteen's body away from the barn, through the small hole in the fence, dig a shallow grave and bury him. Baldwin was too light a man to carry a man of Springsteen's weight nor could he have cut those saplings that night, nor dug the grave at that time. The night in question was dark and stormy and Baldwin's clothes would have been wet and entirely besmeared with blood had he carried the body and buried it. The blood found on Baldwin's pants dated to the time when he hurt his finger and tried to stop the bleeding on his work pants. The shoes on which it was said there was blood were in the house the night of October 8th. The leather fin-

gerstall found at the grave was not found until days after the body was found. It must have been left at a later date. Baldwin never owned a leather fingerstall. The one he had made after his finger was injured was made of denim and he threw it away a week before the murder. There was no need for Baldwin to rob Springsteen because his source of money was satisfactorily accounted for. He had sold his share of the quarry to Alonzo Smith. His conduct was very different from that of a murderer in that he made no attempt to escape observation or to conceal himself from the officers of the law. He was actively socializing and visiting with friends and family, both in New York and New Jersey. His letter to Mrs. Van Inwegen informed her of his whereabouts and how much he cared for Mary Mc Connell. This made it easy for the authorities to find and arrest him. He never thought to question the police officer about his arrest because he thought that he was being arrested for breach of promise with Mary McConnell. Nowhere and at no time were his actions those of a man who had committed such a heinous crime.

At four o'clock, the examination of witnesses was completed and summation began.

Court adjourned at 7:00pm and the jury was instructed to assemble 9:30 Wednesday morning for their instructions.

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The Evening Gazette
Port Jervis, N. Y.
Thursday, January 24, 1878

BALDWIN FOUND GUILTY

THE JURY RENDERS A VERDICT OF MURDER IN THE FIRST DEGREE—THE JUDGE HAS NOT YET SENTENCED THE MURDERER

The jury assembled at half-past nine o'clock Wednesday morning and was charged by Judge Barnard. The prisoner when brought into court maintained the same air of stolid indifference that he has borne throughout the trial.

Judge Barnard in charging the jury said that there were four facts requisite to be proved:

First—that a man was killed,

Second—that the prisoner was the man who killed him.

Third—that the killing was deliberate and premeditated.

Fourth—that it was not excusable or justifiable.

Practically the first and last of these facts were out of this case so far as the jury was concerned, for the reason that it was not disputed that Springsteen was killed, nor was there any pretense that the killing was justifiable or excusable. With reference to the third proposition, design is shown by the fact that the murdered man's head was crushed in and the body concealed. There can be no reasonable doubt but that if the prisoner committed the act it was deliberate and premeditated. With reference to the other proposition, did the prisoner murder the dead man? You must first decide when the murder was committed. If you find that it was not committed on the night of Oct. 8th, you must acquit the prisoner; the whole case is a myth so far as the prisoner is concerned. You must give the prisoner the benefit of all reasonable doubts, but the facts in this case are almost undisputed. If you believe that the murder was committed at that time you must then determine whether the prisoner's story that Springsteen was killed by his side and the body removed without awaking him is worthy of belief. It has been hinted that Van Inwegen and his wife perhaps committed the crime. If you think there is any reason for thinking so place no credence in

their testimony. It makes neither difference when the body was disposed of, nor whether the prisoner was assisted or not. The judge charged that there were four verdicts that the jury could find: Murder in the first degree, murder in the second degree, manslaughter and not guilty. There is no evidence to warrant a verdict of manslaughter.

At ten o'clock the jury returned and asked for instruction.

At half-past five that evening the jury returned and rendered a verdict of murder in the first degree. The announcement seemed to make no impression on Baldwin. He maintained the same indifference manifested during the trial, and appeared less concerned than any of the spectators. The prisoner was then remanded to the jail to await the sentence of the Judge, which at the hour of our going to press had not been delivered. It is probable he will be sentenced tonight or Friday morning. It is understood the jury at one time stood four for murder in the second degree and eight for murder in the first degree.

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The Evening Gazette
Port Jervis, N. Y.
Saturday, January 26, 1878

SENTENCE OF BALDWIN

AN EFFORT TO BE MADE FOR A COMMUTATION OF SENTENCE—IT IS THOUGHT THE JUDGE WILL SIGN SUCH A DOCUMENT WHAT THE PRISONER SAID—THE JUDGE'S STATEMENT TO HIM.

Baldwin who was found guilty by a jury of willfully and deliberately murdering William H. Springsteen in a barn at Big Pond on the night of October 8th was on Friday morning brought into court and sentenced by Judge Barnard to be

hanged in Goshen on Friday, March 15th. The Judge's charge to the prisoner and other points connected with the case are found below. An effort is now being made to have the Governor reprieve Baldwin or commute his sentence to life. It is thought the Judge and several of the jurors will sign a petition for this purpose.

At about half-past eight o'clock Friday morning, Judge Barnard ordered the Sheriff to bring John C. Baldwin, convicted of the murder of William H. Springsteen, into court. When the prisoner was arraigned the judge ordered him to stand up and asked him what he had to say why the sentence should not be pronounced upon him.

The prisoner then said: "I stand up before you, gentlemen, and say, as I have said before, in the fear of God and of this court that I am not guilty of the murder of William H. Springsteen, but I am surrounded by circumstances over which I have no control; but I have no malice against the jury, nor the court, nor any officers of the law; that's all I have to say."

Judge Barnard's response, "It is not a part of our duty to comment upon your statement. I don't think it would be proper that we should, or that we ought to say what our views may be in reference to the sufficiency of the proof under which you are convicted. We are bound to accept the verdict of the jury. The verdict has found you guilty of having willfully, deliberately and with malice aforethought, killed this man, William H. Springsteen, at the time alleged in the indictment; of killing him in a cruel and brutal manner.

"Now, we have no liberty, given us to doubt the verdict of the jury. It is found under the forms of law. All the safeguards of innocence have been furnished which the law gives you. You have had able counsel. You have had a carefully selected and intelligent jury, and we have now

a painful duty, which the law imposes upon us to declare the sentence, which the law pronounces. The sentence of the court is that you be taken hence to the jail from whence you came, and that you be there detained until the 15th day of March next, and that upon that day, you be hanged by the neck till you are dead."

The prisoner, who had been visibly affected, and stood with bowed head quietly weeping during the delivery of his sentence, utterly broke down as the Judge concluded and cried like a child.

(To be continued in next issue)

UDC State Grant Improves Town of Deerpark Museum

UDC grant funding in the amount of \$8,125.00, secured by Senator John J. Bonacic, for the UDC's eight New York State member towns, enabled the Town of Deerpark to replace the old deteriorating cement steps with an authentic bluestone entrance way and to install safety lighting at the Museum.

The lighting improvements included a dusk to dawn light so that the American flag can fly everyday from the recently installed wooden flagpole created by Gary Flieger.

This project continues the restoration of the 1863 Schoolhouse which is on the National Register of Historic Places.

Deerpark Heritage Day— Saturday, September 18th.

Deerpark Heritage Day will be celebrated on September 18th at the 1863 Little Red Schoolhouse, 25 Grange Road, Huguenot, NY from 10:00-4:00. It will be a day of family fun. For children there will be games, contests, Macaroni, the Clown at 11:00, and "Everything Animals" with Jan Berlin at 12:00. For music lovers the Broome Street Band will play from 10:00-11:00, Orchestra of One with Mike Pacer will play from 11:30-12:30 and the S J P Jazz Band will perform from 1:00-4:00. There will be crafts, herbs, quilting, hand-made gifts and other activities. Picnic tables will be set up to enjoy the Pole Bridge Hunting Club famous roast beef sandwiches, The Creamery Ice Cream, home-baked goodies, hot dogs and lemonade. Local artists will demonstrate The Animals in Art Project. Tour the Schoolhouse and admire Animal Art, the decorated Deereest Deerpark Deer and learn about the One-room School.

This event will help provide much needed food for local Food Banks and the Humane Society. Admission is canned or packaged food donations. Please be sure that the expiration dates are current. Thank you. For additional information call: 845-856-2182 or 845-754-8070.



*Under the Young
People's Tent*

Jan Berlin

*Everything Animal
Demonstration
for children*

*Photo from 2009
Heritage Day*