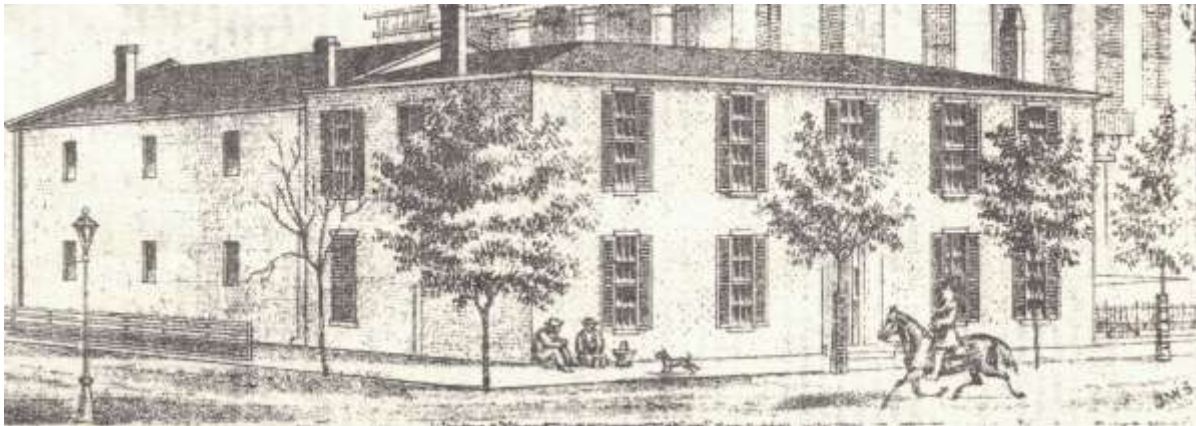


Daviess County Jail

By Jerry Long



An Illustrated Historical Atlas Map of Daviess County, KY.
(Leo McDonough & Co., 1876, p.19:



Daviess County Jail



History of Daviess County, Kentucky,
Inter-State Publishing, Co., Chicago, IL, 1883, pp.295-296:

JAIL.

The first jail was a log building, spiked and finished in the usual way, erected about 1819-'20. Its location was on the corner of the public square near the present jail.

The second jail was built of brick, by Mr. Feldpausch, contractor, and was located within twenty feet of the south line of the present court-house.

The third and present jail building was commenced early in 1861. The contract was let the previous year; in 1861 the first story was put up, and the next year the second story was built, and the whole structure finished. The jailer's house was built during the war.



Semi-Weekly Messenger & Examiner, Owensboro, KY, 5 July 1881, p.3:

The City Station House

Last Sunday we had occasion to call around at the station-house and found twelve prisoners, both male and female, confined within the walls of this filthy den. It is a shame that Owensboro, a city that boasts of its intelligence and wealth, should permit such a hell to be located within its limits. The place fairly teems with filth, and there is hardly sufficient ventilation to preserve life. Because a man or woman happens to trample upon the laws of the city, it is neither humane nor proper that they should be placed in such a hole until their trial. The city council should at once take proper steps to abate this nuisance, and if they cannot afford to build a new station-house, should at least have the old one cleaned up, and a little more means of ventilation supplied. A little white-wash about the premises would go a long ways, and, if clean bedding could not be supplied, a little fresh straw, added at least once in a while, would afford the prisoners much greater comfort. [Note: The city maintained the station house lockup and the county maintained its jail.]



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, 13 February 1886, p.4:

A LOCAL TEWKSBURY.

**Disgraceful Condition of the Daviess County Jail as Told by
the Grand Jury – The City Prison Deservedly Noticed, Also.**

After a session of nearly four weeks the grand jury adjourned Thursday, having returned remarkably few indictments, but they did a righteous act when they truthfully detailed to the court the condition of the county jail, and mentioned a little matter connected with the city prison, to which the Messenger has had occasion to repeatedly allude.

The question of indicting the county court for the condition of the jail was considered, but it was concluded only to give this public and emphatic notice at this term.

The truth is, Daviess county has out grown her jail and must have a new one.

It seems cruel, indeed, that the poor unfortunates, who are put the lock-up at night after shoveling mud on the streets all day, should have to sleep without a particle of bedding or covering, during the bitter cold weather of the present winter. How their poor bones must ache in the morning when they resume their hard labor on the streets!

THE GRAND JURY'S REPORT

The grand jury reported that they found on inspection that the ventilation in the county jail is very poor, and the rooms and cells filled with bad air and obnoxious odors; that these odors are caused in part from fumes rising from vaults which are almost without drainage, and are a nuisance; that the lower floor which is intended to be occupied by prisoners is wholly unfit for that purpose and has been abandoned for a long time; that the walls and floors of this room are very damp; that the upper room where the prisoners are now kept is also damp, cold and almost without ventilation; that the bedding is very dirty and filled with vermin and ought to be taken out and burned; that the jail is totally unfit for a prison, and they condemned it as such; that the prisoners, so far as is possible, are well and humanely treated, except that some of them are poorly clad; that the city prison, which they also inspected, is in very good condition and well-kept, except that it is without proper bedding for parties who have to work out fines on the streets and stay in this prison at night, which they condemn.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, 27 February 1886, p.4:

The New Jail.

County Attorney Yewell is engaged in the preparation of a bill to authorize Daviess county to raise a fund with which to buy a site and build a new jail and jailer's residence – a long-felt want. There seems but little disposition among the people to favor the issuance of bonds, there being a decided preference for paying for the new jail by direct taxation. The county court is now authorized, by the general law, to levy a tax of 15 cents for jail and court-house purposes, but this will not be sufficient, and there is a desire to make the class of people for whom jails are necessary share, if possible, the expense of building the jail, and this cannot be done by an advalorem tax. It is therefore proposed to ask the Legislature to authorize a capitation tax of \$2 as well as an advalorem tax of 25 or 30 cents. It is thought the new jail will cost about \$30,000, When the present eye-sore is removed from the public square there will be occasion for general rejoicing,



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, 1 May 1886, p.4:

The Court of Claims

The court of claims remained in session Thursday and Friday.

M. S. Yewell, county attorney, was allowed at the rate of \$1,000 a year for his services.

J. D. Atchison, county judge, was allowed at the rate of \$1,000 a year for his services.

On motion a new jail was ordered built, to be secure and sufficient for the needs of the county, at a cost not to exceed \$30,000, and it was ordered that, if another suitable situation can be found, it shall not be built on the public square. J. D. Atchison was appointed a commissioner to purchase a lot not to exceed three-fourths of an acre, and to superintend the construction of the jail. The commissioner was authorized to use railroad bond and coupon funds deposited in the Deposit bank for this purpose, except such portion as is necessary to meet usual demands on that fund, and directed to draw orders on the jail tax to replace the amount used.



Daviess County, KY Deed Book 44, pages 350-351:

On 7 June 1886 W. H. Frey, and his wife, Martha A. Frey, sold to Daviess County for \$1,500 a lot, in the city of Owensboro, on the west side of St. Elizabeth Street, between Main Street and the old ravine. The same lot was conveyed to W. H. Frey by J. A. Munday, commissioner, by deed recorded in Daviess County's Commissioners Deed Book A, page 379. The party of the second part (Daviess County) was empowered by an act of the Commonwealth of Kentucky and approved on 19 April 1886 to acquire ground for a jail and jailer's residence.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, 24 June 1886, p.4:

THE NEW JAIL.

A St. Louis Firm Gets the Contract at \$17,000

Description of the New Structure.

Judge Atchison closed a contract yesterday with the well-known Pauly Jail Building and Manufacturing Co., of St. Louis, through their agent W. L. Landrum, for the new jail and jailer's residence. This firm furnished plans and specifications, and will do the entire work, inclusive of drainage to the ravine, plumbing and steam heating apparatus.

The cost of the structure will be \$ 17,000. From this is to be deducted twenty cents for every cubic foot of stone and \$5 per thousand for the old brick taken from the old jail and jailer's residence, which are to be gradually torn away as the new building is erected. This will lessen the cost \$1,500 or \$2,000. The work is to be commenced within twenty days and completed by the 1st of November and the money is to be paid when the jail is ready to be used.

The price for which the work was undertaken is very much lower than the company expected to receive, and is the result of three days of wrangling and wrestling with Judge Atchison. It will be remembered that the appropriation for the new jail was \$30,000, and the fact that it will be erected for little more than half that amount, is another evidence of Judge Atchison's financiering ability.

The plans, which are now lodged in the county judge's office, show that the new structure will be imposing in appearance from the street, and most complete in interior arrangement.

The jailer's residence will present a fine appearance, and will be of modern style of architecture, with mansard roof and a broken front, which will lend to its proportions a pleasing effect. The first floor consists of a parlor, sitting room, cook and dining room and jailer's office. These rooms are to be separated by a hall, which will lead from the front entrance to jailer's corridor in the rear, and are to be entirely secluded from the main jail room. The entrance to the jailer's office will be from a side door and through a heavy iron door.

From the jailer's office will be an entrance through another iron door to the jailer's corridor on the first floor. From this corridor will be an entrance to the corridor of the stone cells through a steel grating. The doors of these cells are all to be controlled by a lever lock that will be operated by the jailer from the outside of the corridor, and all the doors, or any number of them, can be operated at the same time, thus enabling the jailer to handle his prisoners without coming in contact with them. These stone cells will be well ventilated and fitted with the best sanitary arrangements, and are only intended for prisoners confined for misdemeanor offences.

In the jailer's corridor will be a staircase made of iron, which will lead to the main cell room above, where is placed the celebrated Pauly cages made of five-ply curved-edge Kinsey bar, which is saw and file proof and cannot be broken by heavy sledging. These cells will also be entered through a corridor of steel and iron combined, and the doors will be operated by the celebrated Pauly lever lock. These cells will be in what will be known as the main cell room, and are constructed with a special view to sanitary arrangement and ventilation, at least six feet from the stone wall on every side. The jailer will have ample room to walk around the cells and examine them each day, and the jail will be comfortable as well as secure. Each cell will be provided with a swinging hammock.

Besides these cells in the second story of the jail, there will be cells for the insane, females and juveniles, of modern construction and much more secure and comfortable than any now in use in this section, which will be located over the jailer's office in the residence portion of the building.

The upper story of the jailer's residence will consist of these cells and three bedrooms, provided with closets, etc.

The most novel thing about the whole jail will be the lever box, which will contain the locks of all the cells, and on this box will be a combination lock, which can only be worked by the jailer, or a person having the secret of the combination. The jailer after locking up at night, therefore, could hand to each prisoner the key of his cell and sleep soundly. There will be three locks on each cell, and between the prisoners corridor and the outer door of the jailer's office, which will be the only mode of egress, are heavy iron doors. It would appear from this plan that escape from the jail, or entrance of it by a mob, would be simply impossible.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, 23 January 1887, p.2:

When the contract for the new Daviess county jail was let, it was stipulated that it should be finished by November 1, 1886. The old jail was promptly torn down and the prisoners sent to adjoining counties, but on November 1 the work on the new jail had hardly begun. The progress on it since has been very slow and it will apparently be two or three months more before it is completed. The cost of transportation of prisoners will probably be by this delay, not less than \$200. In addition to this the jailer has been, since September, without a residence and deprived of the main profits of his office, dieting the prisoners. Judge Atchison made an exceedingly favorable contract for the construction of the jail. We trust he will succeed in making the proper kind of settlement with the contractors.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, 19 February 1887, p.4:

Mr. W. J. Landrum, agent for the Pauly Jail Building Co., who are building the new Daviess county jail, is in the city. He says the jail will be completed by May 1.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, 10 May 1887, p.4:

THE NEW JAIL BUILDING.
RECEIVING THE FINISHING TOUCHES.

The 'Formidable, Fine, Looking. Complete and Cheap Structure
that is to be Turned Over to the County To-morrow.

The new jail building will be completed to-morrow and formally turned over to the county authorities. In view of this interesting fact a Messenger representative yesterday took the opportunity afforded by the politeness of Mr. John A. Scott, superintendent of the Pauly Jail Building and Manufacturing Company, of looking through the building, although for two days visitors had been rigidly excluded.

The contract for building the jail was awarded by the commissioner appointed for the purpose to the Pauly Jail Building and Manufacturing Company, at \$17,000. By the terms of the

contract such material as could be used from the old jail was to be taken and paid for. The lot cost \$1,500 and it is estimated that the material from the old jail was worth about this sum and the total cost to the county of the new structure is therefore to be placed at about the net amount of \$17,000.

The building is one of the most magnificent that could have been conceived of within the limits of the contract price or indeed, outside of them for less than a much larger sum. The jail proper is built of blue limestone from the quarries at Russellville, lined and faced with white stone from Memphis Junction and is two stories high, 35 feet in width and 41 feet 10 inches in length. The cells for females, two in number, are in the brick portion of the building, as are also one juvenile and one insane cell. The latter are of iron with concrete floor and iron ceiling. There are twelve cells in the jail building, six on each floor. These are made of the best material and are so tempered as to be saw and file proof. The floor and ceiling are of the same material, all put together in the most substantial manner. The cages rest on an I beam of iron three inches from the floor, thus insuring it against corrosion and giving perfect ventilation. The cage-room is entered by double doors, both of the hardest steel, and the cell doors are all locked at once with a single lever from the outside. Each cell in addition has a strong padlock and outside of all is a day or night combination lock entirely inside a heavy steel box which locks the lever so that only the jailer can open even the outside door.

The floor of the jail is of stone, covered with concrete, and the ceiling is of corrugated iron, arranged in a series of short arches, covered above with concrete, so that the roof of the building might be burned off and the prisoners need never know it. A corridor four feet wide extends around the cages above and below so that access may be had from the outside to any cell. The cells are seven by nine feet and seven feet in height, each furnished with canvas hammocks and foul-air boxes. The corridors within the cages contain the lavatory and water supply as well as the steam-heating coils.

The steam heating apparatus has all been put in except the boiler, which will arrive to-day. It is complete in every respect and is extended to the female department, which was not contemplated in the contract. The water supply is furnished and controlled by an ingenious arrangement of flow and waste pipes, so arranged that damage by freezing and other causes is impossible.

The residence portion of the building contains six large and fine rooms, besides the halls and an elegant double attic. The steps to the building are of stone instead of wood, as called for in the contract.

Altogether it is a formidable and fine-looking structure and is as nearly perfect in every detail as skill, experience and money can make it. It is a marvel of cheapness when everything is taken into consideration and the county is in remarkable luck with it.

This is a brief and incomplete account of the building. The outside fence is to be of an ornamental character while an inner fence, ten feet from the building, made of steel spikes and ten feet high, will prevent ready access to the building from the outside.

Mr. John A. Scott, the superintendent of the work, has performed his duties well and his obliging disposition has won him many friends, particularly among the newspaper people.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, 14 May 1887, p.4:

The new county jail being now finished, the Daviess county prisoners in the Henderson and Hancock county jails will be brought home.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, 15 May 1887, p.4:

RECORD OF THE COURTS.
County Court.

At a special term of the Daviess county court held in the clerk's office of said court Saturday, May 14, 1887, present, J. D. Atchison, judge, it was ordered that Y. L. Ford, collector pay out of the jail tax collected for 1886.

To the Pauly Jail Building and Manufacturing Company, payable to Will J. Landrum, agent for the said company, balance in full for budding jail and jailer's resilience, \$15,939.50.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, 11 October 1888, p.1:



Photograph by Cornelius T. Cain, a professional photographer



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, 19 February 1939, p.1B:

Messenger Camera Takes A Trip Through Daviess County Jail



Antiquated and suggestive of days gone by, the Daviess county jail is due to be remodeled if the Works Progress Administration approves an application for funds with which to construct a new courthouse and give the jail a thorough working over. The need for work is clearly shown in some of the pictures on this page, particularly that at the [bottom] left. The upper bunk is an iron folding cot which has been made secure. The folding legs remain on it.



Left: What do prisoners do when they are in Carl Harrison's Daviess county jail? There is really very little to do, so many of them read as does this one in one of the cells in the bull pen. As might have been expected, the magazine being read is one of detective stories. Right: Heavy iron bars are monotonous for prisoners, but quite often they may be found standing peering through them. In front of this prisoner is the hall through which all persons incarcerated must pass.

[Seven other pictures are on the page – faces of inmates are blurred to conceal their identity.]



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 30 October 1955, p.1D:

**Tour Through County Jail
Shows Archaic Remains Of '86**

In 1886 Daviess County built a jail at 110 St. Elizabeth St. Owensboro had a population of 3,400 in those days, and the jail was planned to accommodate a maximum of 30, prisoners.

History holds no record of the number of prisoners actually kept in the jail in those days, but the population of Owensboro has increased more than 750 per cent in the 69 years which have ensued, and the population of the jail has increased to an average of 80 prisoners.

At one time 125 prisoners were more or less accommodated with present facilities.

During those seven score years the jail has not been enlarged, and most of the modernization which has taken place has consisted of adding a layer of concrete, over the cells and lining the second floor ceiling with corrugated steel to prevent "digging out." '

Practically non-existent are laundry facilities, and there is no space where they can be added.

James M. Tinius, who has been jailer since 1954, and J. Emery Taylor, who has been there 10 years,- say that prisoners would keep their personal and bed clothing much cleaner if there was some provision whereby they could do their laundry.

No storage space exists for cleaning equipment. The prisoners scrub the floors every morning before going on work detail, and wash down the walls at frequent intervals. But when mops, brooms and scrub buckets are no longer in use the only storage place for them is in the downstairs toilet room, which also includes two commodes, a slop sink, a shower head, and a garbage can.

Jailer Tinius, who takes his work conscientiously and, according to other county officials, is doing an excellent job, is quick to commend the Fiscal Court for full cooperation.

The court backs him up, he says, on any request he makes in an effort to improve the jail, except for the one great need which is beyond its scope: more space.

Grand juries for years have condemned the present jail. The grand jury of the September, 1955, term made the following report:

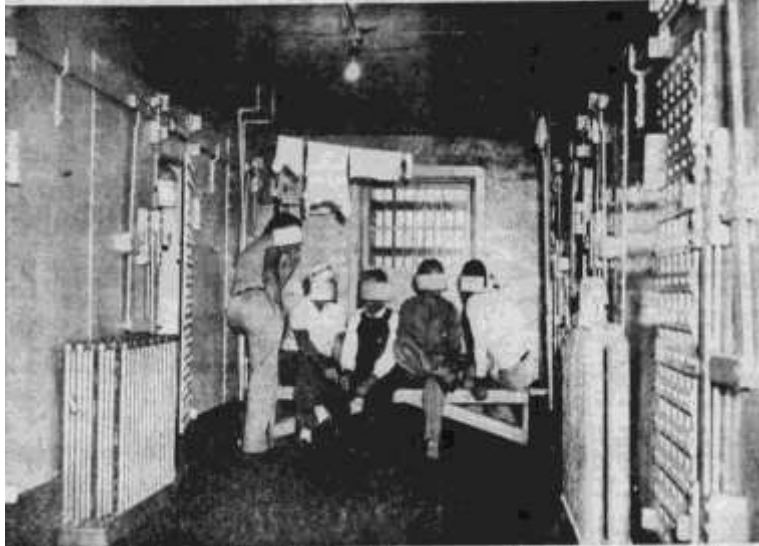
"We did as a body visit the Daviess County jail and wish to report that we found the jail totally and wholly inadequate for me present-day purposes; that the jail does not have sufficient cell rooms and accommodations for the number of prisoners both state and federal now confined in same. We also found that the compartment set aside for the women is in a deplorable condition and is not suitable to confine women prisoners.

"We further found that the jailer is doing a good job in keeping the premises in a clean and orderly condition in spite of the present condition of the old obsolete building. We believe for the best interest of all the citizens that Daviess County should construct a new and modern jail to meet the purposes of its present needs."

The jail has been condemned by the Federal Bureau of Prisons, whose prisoners are taken from Owensboro to Bowling Green. This represents a minimum, loss of \$8,000 , a year in revenue for this county.

In recent weeks the jail has been condemned by the Daviess County Health Department and inspectors from the State Department of Health, not because the jail was not clean, but because present facilities are so far from adequate as to be a farce.

Voters of the county will have opportunity to say on Nov. 8 whether bonds will be issued for the construction of a proposed new courthouse with a modern, well planned county jail on its upper floors.



ALL PURPOSE ROOM – This corridor in the Daviess County jail is the scene of church services two times a week, is the drying room for the small amount of personal laundry the prisoners are able to do with limited facilities, is dining room and lounge for the jail. The prisoners have built additional wooden benches since Jailer James M. Tinius moved to the jail in 1954.



BULL PEN ANNEX – This corridor around the "bull pen" on the second floor, where felony cases are confined, is used as sleeping space when the jail which – was built to accommodate 30 prisoners and now has an average population of 80 – has at times housed 125. Rumor has it that mattresses have been placed on top of the bull pen once or twice because of exceedingly crowded conditions.

The article has five other pictures that have the following captions:

- 19th CENTURY RELIC – The county jail was built in 1886 and has had very little modernizing since that date. The plumbing was judged by county and state health officials recently to be in a deplorable condition. Cells which sleep four men are 6 x 8 feet.
- PLUMBING SUPPLEMENT – The pipe suspended from the ceiling in the downstairs toilet room has been the nearest to a satisfactory solution which could be found to a continually leaking drain from the second floor. Plumbers have stated that nothing short of tearing up the concrete floor upstairs would correct the trouble, and they feared the jail would not survive reconstruction of that nature.
- ISOLATION ROOM – This room is the only space in the jail for solitary confinement. It is used as an isolation room for contagious diseases, for confinement of lunatics – when there are two or more mental cases in the jail the worst case is put into this room – and has been used as the only space available for baptism of prisoners.
- TOILET ROOM – This room, which also contains a slop sink, a shower head, three mops and two brooms – the jail's only storage place for cleaning equipment – offers anything but adequate facilities for laundering the prisoners' personal and bed clothing.
- WOMEN'S BLOCK – This is one of three adjoining cells where all female prisoners, juveniles to prostitutes, must be kept together. Last week a 15-year-old girl was confined there until she could be sent to Children's Authority.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 16 March 1958, p.2D:

House Nobody Wants Into, Becomes Stepchild

..... The Daviess County fiscal court has had plans drawn for an addition to the jail that would go a long way toward solving the most pressing problems. The new facilities, to be built south of the present building, are designed to provide space for 48 prisoners.

The first floor has four separate compartments, each of which can be used to keep six juveniles or women.

The second floor has a new maximum security cell block for 20 prisoners, and a four-man isolation room.

Construction of the proposed addition would give the jail a capacity of 108 prisoners, with all separate and isolation facilities filled. The present structure is full when 52 men and 8 women have been locked up in it.

The addition will allow closer supervision of prisoners and will provide for them a more jail-like atmosphere.

The ground floor of the addition will have space for a kitchen and a dining room that can also be used for church services. Holding these services is one of the greatest problems in the Daviess County jail, chiefly because there is no suitable place to have them. All available space in the building is used for prisoners.

Each of the two upper floors will have a consultation room that can be used by those persons who need to discuss matters with prisoners lawyers, probation officers and the like. Their work is hampered now by a lack of space, quiet and privacy.

Visiting facilities will be better for prisoners, visitors and jailers. There will be a standard-type visiting arrangement, with prisoners separated from their visitors by a steel mesh partition. Prisoners presently meet their visitors in the hallways of the jail – one at a time – not a good arrangement for safekeeping of prisoners.

Preliminary estimates place the cost of such an addition between \$80,000 and \$100,000. The fiscal court has shown its interest in the project by authorizing Roberts and Johnson, architects, to go ahead and draw up detailed plans and specifications. These are expected to be presented to the court Tuesday.

Tentative plans for financing the construction of the building call for dividing the cost between this fiscal year and the next one, using existing revenue sources.

As far as Jailer Tinius has been able to determine, the jail has had in its 70 years only one major modification – the addition of some kitchen storage space.

Tinius said chances look better now than at any time in his four year career as jailer for getting more and better facilities to keep his prisoners locked up tight.



ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT – James Tinius looks upon the solidly built stone walls of the Daviess County Jail, erected in 1886. The county has outgrown the jail, and the fiscal court is planning, a three-story addition to be located where Tinius is standing south of the present building.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 10 May 1958, p.1A:

Construction Of Addition To Daviess County Jail To Start Within Week

Members of the Daviess County fiscal court accepted Friday a bid of \$104,655 on a three-story addition to be built on the south side of the present jail.

Successful bidder was R. R. Williams, Inc. an Owensboro firm. Williams' original bid of \$104,890 was the lowest of four submitted. It was brought down a bit farther by substituting a separate bid on a dumbwaiter to carry food from the kitchen on the basement level up to the top floor.

Bidder on the dumbwaiter was F. Grote Manufacturing Co., Evansville. His bid of \$3,425 was substituted for the \$3,659 bid included in Williams' overall bid.

Other bidders on the addition were Hartz Brothers, \$107,652; Clark Construction Co., \$105,636.20; Hartz and Kirkpatrick, \$107,850.

Walter Scott Roberts, of Roberts and Johnson, architects, said construction should start within a week.

The addition will be joined to the present jail by a corridor at the east end.

Its ground floor will contain a kitchen designed to serve this addition, the existing jail, and a future addition contemplated for the north side of the jail. A dining and assembly room will take up the rest of the basement.

On the first floor are four, 6-bunk compartments. Completely separated from each other, these facilities are planned to provide detention facilities for juveniles. Roberts and Jailer Jim Tinius have told the court the design is such that one can be used for boys, one for girls, and a third for women. The fourth is available for overflow from any of the first three, or when not needed for this, could be used for men prisoners.

Top floor is designed around 20-man maximum security section separated from the outside walls by a jailer's corridor. An isolation room on this floor contains four bunks.

Capacity of the addition will be 48 prisoners. Capacity of the existing jail is 60, and it is usually full.

Financing plans for the addition call for paying part of the cost out of receipts from this fiscal year, and part out of the year that begins July 1.

County Judge T. B. Birkhead has said the court expects to pay the addition without raising taxes.

Williams' bid includes \$42,718 for general construction; \$15,485 for plumbing and heating; \$3,960 for electric wiring; \$39,077 for jail equipment; and \$3,425 for the dumbwaiter.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 8 February 1959, p.1D:



New County Built Annex Doubles Capacity Of Jail

Jailer Jim Tinius opened up the new annex to the Daviess County Jail for public visitors yesterday, then locked it up tight.

Built by the county to provide facilities lacking in the 72-year-old jail next door, the annex cost more than \$100,000. Much of the cost is in special jail steel and in equipment designed particularly for jail use.

Notable features of the three story building are a 20-man maximum security section, an isolation cell, conference rooms, separate units for juveniles and women, a larger kitchen, and an assembly room.

The maximum security section in the old jail is a six-cell, 24-man block so designed that prisoners can not be locked in their cells without denying them access to plumbing. In the new one, each cell has its own plumbing.

In the old jail, prisoners have access to their bunks all day long, because there was no place else to put them. Now they can be locked away from their cells in an exercise room during the day.

The isolation cell on the top floor provides a place, lacking in the old jail, for a prisoner who needs to be kept apart from the rest.

Conference rooms on each of the cell-block floors will give lawyers and probation officials an opportunity to talk quietly and privately with prisoners. Cramped quarters in the old jail prevented this sort of conference.

Six-bunk cells on the first floor are completely separated from each other by block walls. Four of these will provide the long-sought-for separate facilities for juveniles, as well as suitable quarters for women prisoners.

The kitchen has been removed from the back of the jailer's living quarters into the jail proper, where it can better serve both the annex and the old jail.

Behind the new kitchen on the ground floor of the annex is a room suitable for assembling prisoners for church services or for meals. These activities have been carried on in hallways and on stairways of the old jail, a practice which made handling and control of prisoners difficult, Tinius said.

With the annex in service, the Daviess County jail has a capacity of just over 100 prisoners when all separate and isolation facilities are filled.

Frequently, Tinius had to jam 90 prisoners into the old jail, which was considered to be full when 52 men and eight women were locked up in it.

[Article has five other pictures of the inside of the new jail addition.]



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 5 September 1964, p.16B:

Those Who Have Served

Jailers

(County court order books for 1815 to 1837 have been lost or destroyed, and these, apparently contained the only source of information about the earliest jailers of Daviess County. The record is complete from 1837, except for one or two omissions in the mid-nineteenth century.)

Alfred Grissom	1837?-1838
Jefferson Walbridge	1838
Isaac Hiatt	1838-1840
Robert F. Miller	1840-1849?
William T. Sharp	1849
Orpha Sharp	1849-1850
Arthur W. Wallace	1850-1862?
B. D. Mitchell	1862-1866
J. B. Mitchell	1866-1870
J. W. Slaughter	1870-1878
Elisha Adams	1878-1882
W. J. Lucas	1882-1886

N. M. Lancaster	1886-1894
John Ashby	1894-1906
R. C. Calhoon	1906-1914
J. D. Howard	1914-1922
Forrest L. Taylor	1922-1926
Henry Starks	1926-1930
H. S. "Bob" Weikel	1930-1938
C. B. "Carl" Harrison	1938-1946
Albert C. Reisz	1946-1954
James Tinius	1954-1962
William Pence	1962-



History of Owensboro and Daviess County, Kentucky, Hugh O. Potter, Herff Jones-Paragon Publishing, Montgomery, AL & Louisville, KY, 1974, p.241:

The Daviess county jail remained in 1973 one of the oldest public buildings in use in Owensboro and indications were it was destined for even longer life. It was constructed and turned over to the county in May of 1888. It cost \$18,796, which was \$1,796 more than the contract amount specified the previous year. Daviess county prisoners were kept in Hancock and Henderson county jails while it was under construction.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 19 July 1975, p.1B:

Jail rated ‘good’ by state’s chief inspector

Daviess County’s newly-renovated was rated ‘good’ by the state’s chief jail consultant following an inspection yesterday... [etc.; approximately \$65,000 has been spent on the renovations...]



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 4 July 1976, Bicentennial Section Part III, p.29:

Calls for renovations at jail nothing new

In 1819-20, when Daviess County's population was less than 4,000, a log jail was built at the settlement of Yellow Banks.

By the time of the Civil War, a solid stone jail with heavy iron cells and a brick jailer's residence had been in use on the southeast corner of the courthouse square for several years.

It was, however, an easy jail from which to tunnel out. In March 1866, prisoners were discovered in a tunnel already three feet deep.

Apparently the jail had seen better days by 1866, when several citizens suggested that it be razed and county prisoners sent to Evansville.

And there was also talk of moving both the jail and the courthouse to a four-acre tract outside the city limits. It was said that the courthouse square could be sold for \$100,000.

In 1877, the county court of claims was asked to build a new jail. It refused, citing the expense involved, but agreed to spend \$3,000 to repair the old one.

The need for a new jail was underscored in August 1878, when nine prisoners escaped in one day from the jail which was considered one of the safest in the state. Among the escapees were a murderer, a burglar and some horse thieves.

On Sept. 15, 1885, the Messenger called the old jail "an eyesore on the public square and a stench in the nostrils of all who enter it."

The paper noted that the old jail was small and poorly ventilated with a lack of sewerage. "Let us abandon the railroad tax for a year or two," the Messenger suggested, "and have an act passed authorizing a tax to create a fund for a new jail."

And, the paper said, build the jail away from the public square.

In February 1886, the grand jury agreed with the Messenger and came close to indicting the county court for allowing such conditions in the jail. It also noted that bedding was very dirty, filled with vermin and "ought to be burned."

In April, court members voted to spend no more than \$30,000 to build a new jail. Bids were called for in June.

Pauly Jail Building and Manufacturing Co. of St. Louis won the contract for \$17,000 less materials salvaged from the old jail.

Construction was slow and prisoners were taken to Hawesville and Henderson. By May 1887, it was complete and prisoners were returned to Owensboro.

Total cost of the facility (including \$1,500 for the land) was \$18,796. The jail itself was constructed mainly of blue limestone from quarries near Russellville.

The jail was little changed until 1958 when the county built a new addition to it now used to house felons, women and juveniles.

The old section was renovated in 1975, but an April 1976 grand jury called for a new jail.

Fiscal court members rejected the idea, saying it was too expensive. Today, the old jail and jailer's residence is the oldest public building in Daviess County.



The Daviess County Jail, completed in May 1887, is the oldest public building in the county. It was renovated in 1975.





Daviess County Jail, 110 St. Elizabeth Street, Owensboro, KY.
The former Executive Inn Rivermont is in background on the right.



Daviess County Jail, 110 St. Elizabeth Street, Owensboro, KY.
Picture made on 8 August 1993 by Jerry Long



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 30 September 1999, p.1A:

County picks U.S. 60 East jail site

By Steve Vied, Messenger-Inquirer

Daviess Fiscal Court ended weeks of controversy over where to build a jail Wednesday with a unanimous decision to put a 423-bed, \$9.4 million lockup on U.S. 60 East.

Wednesday's vote came after more than a hour and a half of public comment on the matter, almost all of it against the location that eventually was approved. In the end, Judge-Executive Reid Haire and county commissioners Jim Lambert, Mike Riney and Bruce Kunze settled on the location because they said they believed it to be the most financially feasible and most practical of the 19 locations they evaluated.

The vote was a victory of sorts for many east county residents who objected to building a 487-bed jail on Pleasant Valley Road. However, many of those people also were opposed to the U.S. 60 East site.

One week ago, the court was poised to vote in favor of the 60 East location but delayed action while county officials evaluated an 8-acre site on Ellis Smeathers Road. But Haire told the crowd Wednesday, the parcel would require spending \$260,000 to connect it to municipal sewers. Also, the owners of the property wanted much more for the land than it was valued, according to two appraisals.

Wednesday's decision is an about-face from mid-September, when Haire said county officials were leaning toward building the jail on one of two sites on Pleasant Valley Road near the East Wastewater Treatment Plant.

But opposition to the Pleasant Valley Road site exploded, and fiscal court turned its attention back to the more than six-acre U.S. 60 location, which the county already owns and where

three detention facilities - two for juveniles and a restricted custody program for adults - already sit. Daviess County Jailer Harold Taylor has long backed the U.S. 60 site as the most financially feasible.

At the last moment, however, the site on Ellis Smeathers Road near Green River Steel emerged as a possible location. Kunze asked that a vote on a site be delayed one week while it was investigated. On Monday, Haire said the site was no longer an option.

Haire made the motion to put the jail on U.S. 60 East, and Riney seconded it.

Haire said county officials tried to avoid the 60 East spot and thought they had found a suitable location on Pleasant Valley Road.

"Then the dam broke and the uproar was significant," he said. "Apparently, whatever location we found would be protested."

At that point, Haire said he decided the U.S. 60 East site was the most practical.

"I'll do whatever I can to assure that safety is our No. 1 concern," he said, responding to the many who objected to the site because of its proximity to residential areas, three churches, Bishop Cotton Elementary School and a child care center.

"If that land was vacant and no facilities were there, we wouldn't be discussing it, but that is not the case," Haire said.

Riney said it was a tough decision for him. He said he would not vote to put the jail on 60 East if he thought for a minute that it would jeopardize children.

"It's not just an economic decision," he said. "No matter where we put it, it will upset somebody. I think this court has gone overboard to try to find other sites and try to be fair. ... I don't apologize. This group here has worked for the best decision for everybody."

Like Riney, Kunze said he would never vote for the 60 East site if he thought it would endanger a child.

Lambert said he understood the feelings of those who objected to the site, but his decision was in the best interest of everyone.

Prior to the vote, Haire allowed as many people to speak as desired. But before that, he invited about 20 Bishop Cotton students to gather around him for a talk about the jail. At one point, he asked them if they had ever visited the Barbecue Festival or the Executive Inn Rivermont. Nearly all of them raised their hands.

"Did you know we have a jail down there, and people walk along there all the time and there's never been a problem?" he asked.

Riverbend Cove resident A.C. Stanley has opposed the 60 East site from the beginning. He returned Wednesday for one last plea.

"If you gentlemen vote to relocate the present jail to the highway 60 East site, you will be branded as the group that turned their back on the people of Daviess County," he said.

Stanley said using the land for what he called a penitentiary violates the spirit of the 1919 will of Theodore J. Levy, who left the 21-acre tract to the county with the stipulation the property be used for the betterment of needy children. The county opened the Levy Home for Boys in the mid-1950s and it operated until 1985.

A 1987 court case determined that the county could sell the land if the proceeds benefited children. In the late 1980s, the old Levy Home began to be used for community service inmates.



See Also:

- “Vote looming on where to build”, by Steve Vied, Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 21 September 1999, p.1A.
- “Daviness Jail Decision: Proposed site near Green River Steel”, by Steve Vied, Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 25 September 1899, p.1A.
- “County wants building to begin soon”, by Steve Vied, Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 4 October 1999, p.1A.
- “Taylor says new jail is virtually complete”, by Steve Vied, Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 1 Jun 2001, p.1A.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 18 July 2001, p.1A:

Move to jail on U.S. 60 goes smoothly

By Mike Baggett, Messenger-Inquirer

There are finally heads in beds at the new Daviess County Detention Center.

About 300 inmates were moved Tuesday from the old jail at 110 St. Elizabeth St. to the \$7 million, 423-bed facility on U.S. 60 East, Jailer Harold Taylor said.

Starting about 4 a.m., inmates were moved 30 at a time without incident in Daviess County Detention Center vans as well as cruisers from the different area law enforcement agencies.

Taylor said the transition was smooth. Each transport of inmates took about 45 minutes, with two to three shuttles going back and forth at a time.

The last inmates were booked into the jail about 10:20 a.m., Taylor said.

Jail administrative assistant Deborah Taylor said the transfer took less time than expected.

"I thought it would take at least 12 hours," she said.

Thirty-nine female inmates were the first to be transferred. Other inmates were transferred based on the security risks they posed. High-risk inmates were the first to be transferred, while low-risk inmates were the last.

Deborah Taylor said inmates were booked, given new uniforms and bed linens, then placed into their cells.

To ensure security, jail deputies received assistance from Kentucky State Police, the Daviess County Sheriff's Department, Owensboro Police Department and Yellow Ambulance Service.

Taylor said he and other staff members were to begin providing inmates Tuesday with rules and regulations of the new facility.

He said inmates appear to be pleased with the jail.

"They're coming out of a facility where there was 15 to 16 to a cell, now they all have their own beds," Harold Taylor said.

Now, Harold Taylor and employees will begin adjusting to the facility, he said.

"It's going to be a lot of trial and error," Taylor said.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 16 May 2003, p.1A:

County approves sale of old jail: Bays will be encouraged to preserve 1886 section

By Steve Vied, Messenger-Inquirer

Daviess Fiscal Court voted 3-1 Thursday to sell the old Daviess County Jail to Executive Inn Rivermont owner John Bays for \$75,000.

Commissioner Bruce Kunze cast the no vote.

Bays, who made his offer more than year ago, is not bound to preserve any part of the jail under the conditions of his bid, not even the original portion built in 1886 and considered historically significant.

But Daviess County Judge-Executive Reid Haire, who made the motion to sell the property at 110 St. Elizabeth St. to Bays without stipulations, pledged that he would ask and encourage Bays to preserve the oldest section of the jail.

"I will talk to John and try and work out an arrangement to preserve some or all of that building," Haire said. "I'd like to do that if at all possible."

Kunze encouraged the court to either reduce the price to Bays in exchange for a stipulation to preserve the jail or give the property to the city of Owensboro. But commissioners Jim Lambert and Mike Riney quickly sided with Haire.

"While I'm concerned about preserving the facade, we need to move on," Riney said.

Lambert said he doubted the public supports spending additional money on the old jail.

"I wish some group would step forward to preserve the building, but that hasn't happened," Lambert said.

Gary Adams, secretary of the Preservation Alliance of Owensboro-Daviess County, read a list of 10 reasons to stipulate preservation of the historic portions of the jail, including the fact that it meets criteria for listing on the National Register of Historic Places and its Second Empire architecture style makes it unique in the downtown area.

"We do not object to the sale," Adams said. "We know Mr. Bays has expressed sensitivity to the issue of preservation of the oldest portion."



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 8 July 2003, p.2A:



From inside his recently purchased but yet to be restored 1957 Chevrolet, George Paulin of Owensboro takes a break from his day to watch as the north wing of the old Daviess County Detention Center was demolished Monday morning on St. Elizabeth Street. The structure is being razed by Billy Joe's Excavating to make way for an expansion of the Executive Inn Rivemnont's convention center. Daviess Fiscal Court voted in May to sell the property to hotel owner John Bays.



Preservation Alliance of Owensboro – Daviess County Inc.



Saga of the Old Jail

Preservation Alliance had worked since the 1980s to emphasize the significance of this building to the architectural and cultural history of Owensboro-Daviess County. Several county government administrations were "onboard" with wanting to preserve the 1886 building. The "last public hanging in the United States" took place nearby in 1930.

PA contributed to a study to determine the building's condition and possible uses to which it could have been adapted. Read the Old Jail Study [here](#).

The original 1886 portion of the Old Jail was built in the Second Empire style of architecture. Beginning in the 1950s, several undistinguished additions were made to the original building.

The Kentucky Heritage Council (State Historic Preservation Office) had found that the Old Jail met established criteria for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, although it had not been listed formally.

Chronology

On April 18, 2002, Daviess County Fiscal Court opened only three sealed bids for the purchase of the Old Daviess County Jail. Bids were made under two options, one requiring preservation of the historic 1886 portion of the complex under a restrictive covenant, the other option with no stipulations of any kind – meaning the Old Jail could be demolished, if the purchaser desired.

John Bays, owner of the Executive Inn, bid \$75,000 with no preservation required. Harrold Barrentine of Keller, Texas, bid \$5,000 with preservation required and \$30,000 without.

On May 15, 2003, more than a year after seeking bids, Daviess Fiscal Court voted 3-1 to accept John Bays' \$75,000 bid with no stipulations. Fiscal Court previously had stated its interest in preserving the historic front of the building. Ideas mentioned were to incorporate it into expanded exhibition facilities at the Executive Inn or to make it the focus of a city riverfront plan to add new street-front commercial space adjoining the Old Jail.

At the May 15, 2003, Fiscal Court meeting, PA presented a list of ten reasons for Daviess County Fiscal Court to stipulate preservation of historic portions of the Old Jail:

1. The Old Jail is a very important piece of the architectural and cultural history of Downtown Owensboro.
2. The Second Empire architecture of the 1886 structure is unique in the downtown area.
3. In 1977, the Kentucky Heritage Council found that the Old Jail meets established criteria for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.
4. The Downtown Design Guidelines adopted by the City of Owensboro state that: "Renovation work on these [National Register eligible] buildings should preserve all important elements. In addition... the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation should be used.
5. Daviess County Fiscal Court has adopted an objective in its Comprehensive Plan to "preserve historic buildings...."
6. The General Land Use Criteria of the community's Comprehensive Plan state: "Historical buildings should be assessed for their architectural or other historical significance, and when found significant, should be maintained and reused through sensitive adaptation."
7. In public forums held during preparation of the Riverfront Master Plan, citizens repeatedly called for preservation of the Old Jail.
8. In keeping with community sentiment for preservation of the Old Jail, riverfront planners incorporated it as a featured focal point of the urban design plan.
9. A private owner would be eligible for federal investment tax credits based on the costs for renovating a National Register eligible structure.
10. Having current possession of the property, Fiscal Court has a prime opportunity to implement the above objectives by deeding the Old Jail with a covenant that stipulates the historic portions be appropriately preserved.

On June 12, 2003, the Owensboro Metropolitan Planning Commission considered the county's proposal to dispose of the Old Jail property. The OMPC "found no conflict with the Comprehensive Plan with the recommendation that the deed stipulate the preservation of the historic portion of the building."

On July 1, 2003, the City of Owensboro Community Development office issued a demolition permit for the Old Jail.

As of July 9, 2003, demolition was underway.



Daviess County Detention Center website:



The original 1886 portion of the old Jail was built in the Second Empire style architecture and was located in downtown Owensboro. Beginning in the 1950s, several additions were made to the original building. However, on July 9, 2003 the old jail was demolished as all jail operations had moved to the current facility, which is located at 3337 Highway 144, Owensboro, KY.

The Commonwealth of Kentucky is the only state in the country that has the position of Jailer. In all other states, the county sheriff is responsible for managing the jail. The Jailer is a constitutional officer elected every four years along with other county offices. The Kentucky Revised Statutes identify the Jailer, and their deputies, as sworn peace officers.