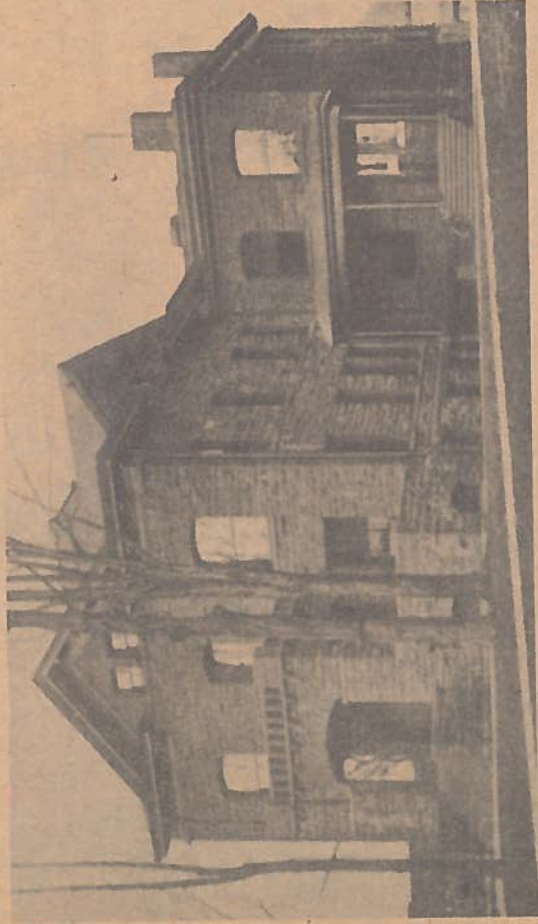


4-2-81

Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W.Lattin • County Historian



VOL. III

THE ORLEANS COUNTY JAIL

No. 13

According to laws enacted at the forty-ninth session of the State Legislature in 1826, the Orleans County Board of Supervisors were authorized to collect six thousand dollars for the purpose of erecting a Court House and gaol. The first gaol was made of hewn logs and used until 1838. At that time through laws enacted by the 61st session of the Legislature, the county borrowed \$4,000 at 6% from New York State for the purpose of erecting a more suitable jail. This second jail made of limestone in the Greek Revival style was situated in the same location as the original log gaol.

In December 1902 the State Prison Commission pronounced the jail unsanitary and not complying with the law and advised that a committee be appointed to consider plans for a new one.

On May 14, 1903 the Orleans County Board of Supervisors voted to build a new 26-cell jail and Sheriff's residence. A bond issue of \$65,000 was authorized of which \$50,000 was to be used for the jail and Sheriff's residence and the balance for a hospital at the County House. W. J. Beardsley was named architect and on June 19, 1903 the contracts were given to Dean and Havens for the plumbing, heating, carpenter work and masonry for \$27,499.00. The VanDorn Iron Works was awarded the contract for interior prison construction for \$19,933.00 and the contract for gas and electric light fixtures was awarded to George L. Irlbacher of Buffalo for \$375.00. The older jail was demolished and on its site was erected the Medina Sandstone jail pictured above. As a result of changes made in the plans the total cost of this jail and sheriff's residence was \$54,891.11. Slightly less than a year in construction it was opened for public inspection on May 6 and 7, 1904. But sixty-seven years later to those very days it all came tumbling down because it too had become obsolete. It was the third jail to be razed on the same site in order to make way for another in compliance with state mandates. I dare say that if proper maintenance and repairs had been kept up on the structure it might not have been in such a state of deterioration.

The present 75-cell jail was completed in a two phase operation by the Carl Petronio Construction Co., Inc. of Albion. It was designed by Bazemore & Grove of Niagara Falls and cost \$1.5 million dollars. The enactment of the county sales tax offset and paid for it. The actual construction began early in 1970 upon the demolition of the former Ralph E. Brodie residence which had been used for county offices and was located at the southeast corner of the Court House Square.

The jail is 163 feet long and has three main floors including a garage. Public inspection of it took place on November 27 and 28, 1971 and the first prisoners were moved in on December 1. It's impossible for me to end this story without injecting my opinion that I think the present jail is visually an incongruous monstrosity.