

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Name of Property

County and State

Section number _____ Page _____

Name of multiple property listing (if applicable)

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 08001049

Date Listed: 11/12/2008

Property Name: Bledsoe County Jail

County: Bledsoe

State: TN

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

Patrick Andrews
Signature of the Keeper

11/12/2008
Date of Action

Amended Items in Nomination:

Section 8: Period of Significance

The period of significance is hereby changed to 1851-1958.

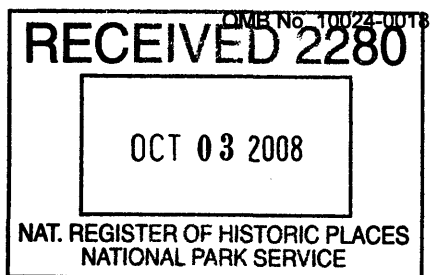
The period of significance begins with the construction of the jail in 1851. The original building has been remodeled and altered over the years, most notably in 1880 and 1937, but the original jail building is still in existence. It has functioned as a jail since its initial construction in 1851.

The Tennessee State Historic Preservation Office was notified of this amendment.

DISTRIBUTION:

National Register property file

Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

1049

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Bledsoe County Jail
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 128 Frazier Street N/A not for publication
city or town Pikeville N/A vicinity
state Tennessee code TN county Bledsoe code 007 zip code 37367

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set for in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

E. Patrick McHugh, Jr.

September 30, 2007

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State Historic Preservation Officer, Tennessee Historical Commission

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See Continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

entered in the National Register.

See continuation sheet

determined eligible for the National Register.

See continuation sheet

determined not eligible for the National Register

removed from the National Register.

other,

(explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Patrick Andrews

11/12/2008

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in count)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	1	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	1	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/Jail

GOVERNMENT/Jail

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

Other

foundation Stone

walls Stone, Brick

roof Metal

other Wood

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations N/A

(Mark "x" in all boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT

Period of Significance

Circa 1880-1958

Significant Dates

1851, 1937

Significant Person

(complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- Previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: Bledsoe County Library
TN State Library and Archives

Bledsoe County Jail
Name of Property

Bledsoe County, Tennessee
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre Pikeville, TN 110 SW

UTM References

(place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>16</u>	<u>664043</u>	<u>3941612</u>	3	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	4	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	See continuation sheet	

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Paul Archambault, Historic Preservation Planner
organization Southeast Tennessee Development District date June 4, 2008
street & number P.O. Box 4757 telephone (423) 424-4266
city or town Chattanooga state TN zip code 37405-0757

Additional Documentation

submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 Or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO) or FPO for any additional items

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Bledsoe County c/o Gregg Ridley, Bledsoe County Mayor
street & number P.O. Box 149 telephone 423.447.6855
city or town Pikeville state TN zip code 37367

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listing. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Bledsoe County Jail
Bledsoe County, Tennessee

Physical Description

The Bledsoe County Jail is located on 128 Frazier Street near the Bledsoe County Courthouse (NR 3/30/95) square in Pikeville (pop. 1,781) in southeast Tennessee. Built in 1851, the jail was originally constructed of brick with a stone foundation. It held 5 prisoners. In 1937, additions were made to the building and the exterior was changed to stone. The building has retained much of its circa 1880 interior wood doors, 2:2 windows, stairway, wood floors, and its 1937 exterior. Today, the two story building now can hold a maximum of 9 prisoners.¹

The two-story, stone jail is L-shaped, with a flat metal roof and a stepped parapet wall on the façade (west). The building sits on less than one acre of land with no landscaping. In 1851, its original dimensions were 40 feet x 20 feet, but additions were made to the rear and facade in 1937. Before the major exterior renovations in 1937, the brick jail featured a gabled roof, a full width shed roof porch covering the entrance, and three symmetrically spaced 2:2 sash windows on the second story. Along with the addition of the stone exterior, the south section of the porch was enclosed.²

Additional renovations to the jail, completed in the early 1970s, included first and second floor bathrooms, living quarters for the sheriff and his family (front section), and renovations to the jail cells on the rear addition on the first and second stories. Two exterior metal staircases and the fenced jail recreation area were added in 1973. The 13x18 concrete block storage building was constructed in 1980. Today, the square footage of the jail is approximately 2,100 square feet with the façade being 46 feet long and the south elevation 59 feet.³

The entrance faces west towards Frazier Street and features a one-story shed roof porch supported by 3 wood posts resting on stone piers.⁴ The west façade is three-bays wide with a projected bay at the southwest section of the building. The



Early 1930s photo showing current and former sheriffs in front of the Bledsoe County Jail before it was renovated.

¹ "Court Members Vote to Build New Jail." *The Bledsonian and Pikeville Banner*. 8 January 1937, Vol. XVIII, p. 1. The Crane Collection Folders 1975-1980 state that the jail was constructed of stone in 1876. However, evidence of the jail's construction can be found in Bledsoe County TN Deed Book L Page 109. The stone exterior was not present until 1937.

² "County Jail Undergoes Repairs, Improvements." *The Bledsonian and Pikeville Banner*. 11 June 1937, Vol. XVIII, p. 1.

³ Information attained from State of Tennessee Real Estate Appraisal Card for Bledsoe County Jail at 128 Frazier Street in Pikeville, Tennessee. See also, Tennessee Jails Folder (A-L): Various Newspaper Articles. Bicentennial Library: Local History and Genealogy Department, Chattanooga, Tennessee; Crane Collection 1975-1980, Bledsoe County Jail, Container List Box 3 (I-F-7, AC NO. 94-126, MF 1549), Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, TN; and Crane, Paul and Sophie. *Tennessee's Troubled Roots*. Earle-Shields Publishers: Old Hickory, TN, p. 5.

⁴ The porch was altered in 1937 when the major exterior renovations were performed. The porch was originally a full-width porch until the south section was enclosed in 1937.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

Bledsoe County Jail
Bledsoe County, Tennessee

façade features 2:2 sash windows on both the first and second floor. The windows are paired at the north and south ends of the façade. Centered on the stepped parapet wall, above the second story, is an engraved stone with the year that the jail's exterior was changed (1937). Three stone steps lead up to the jail office entrance, which is located between the first and second bay underneath the porch roof. The projected bay features the main entrance door on the south end of the porch. This leads into the office of the jailer and sheriff. Both single-leaf circa 1880 entrance doors are wood three-paneled doors with single pane transom windows.

The south elevation faces Cranwell Street and is four-bays deep. The first two bays include two, 2:2 sash windows and a replacement side entry on the first floor and two, symmetrically placed 2:2 sash windows on the second floor. The rear two bays were added in 1937. This section houses the prisoners and features one replacement door and a narrow vertical window opening (3 feet x 1 foot) on the ground floor, and one replacement door on the second floor that features a covered stairwell descending toward the fenced prisoner recreation area, all of which were added in 1973.

The rear elevation (facing east) faces Legion Circle and includes two vertical, narrow openings (3 foot x 1 foot) on the second story and one, horizontal opening and one, vertical opening with the same dimensions on the first floor. All of the narrow openings are sealed and cover the original, metal bars.

The north elevation is comprised of a two story flat roof section and a one story gable roof storage building (not attached, non-contributing building). There is a door on the second story and covered stairway (added 1973) descending from the second floor prison cells toward the rear of the building. Located directly to the north of the stairs, is a one-story, gabled, concrete block building, constructed in 1980. Used as a storage shed it features a window on its north elevation and wood paneled doors on the east and west. The storage building is located directly east of the original jail's middle bay, which is one-story and features two, 2:2 sash windows and an original 3-paneled door with a window on its east elevation.

The west bay on the north elevation is two stories and includes paired 2:2 sash windows on the ground floor of the two story section. The second story has one 2:2 sash window. There is a one story section that includes a parapet wall and a 2:2 sash window.

The jail's interior features original wood floors, 2:2 wood sash windows, wood paneled doors with wood surrounds, turned balusters, and a stone foundation, which is visible in the basement. Most of the interior renovations were completed in the early 1970s. The building's original 1851 brick appearance featured metal bars on all of the windows, until they were replaced with the present 2:2 sash windows circa 1880.

The jail's first floor includes the sheriff's and jailer's offices in the south section, prison cells in the eastern section, a central hallway featuring a restroom and L-shaped staircase, and staff offices and a kitchen in the north section. The ground level of the jail includes two entryways that may be accessed on the front porch.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3

Bledsoe County Jail
Bledsoe County, Tennessee

Originally, the sheriff's family lived in the front section of the jail on the first and second floor according to Bledsoe County Jail records.⁵

The main entrance to the jail and sheriff's office is accessible via the front porch's "side" entryway. It leads into a waiting room. The room, renovated in 1937, includes a set of 2:2 sash windows on the west, a 2:2 sash window on the south wall, and a large glass window and entryway in the sheriff's and jailer's office on the east wall. The room features a 2:2 sash window and replacement door on the south wall and a separate office for the sheriff located in the southeast corner of the room. A hallway is located along the northeastern corner of the offices leading to the first floor of the prison cells, which are divided by concrete block walls into three rooms and are approximately 10 feet x 25 feet each. Located along the north wall is an entryway into the central hallway that leads toward the offices and kitchen along the north wall and access to the central L-shaped staircase along the east wall. The staircase features a square carved newel post and turned wood balusters.

The secondary entryway on the front porch features an original wood door with a transom window above centered between two, 2:2 sash windows. It leads into an office for the jail's staff and includes a set of 2:2 sash windows on the west wall, a replacement door on the east wall, and an original, wood three-paneled door located on the south wall. The doorway on the south wall leads into the central hallway, which features two, 2:2 sash windows on the west wall and an L-shaped staircase. The central hallway on the first floor leads directly east toward a north and south hallway and a restroom on the east wall (added in 1970s).

The north-south hallway features the restroom on the east wall and the entryway into the basement on the west wall. The basement's entrance features an original wood paneled door with steps leading into the basement where the stone foundation and the jail's original brick wall are visible. The north section of the hallway leads into an office that features a 2:2 sash window along the north wall. It also features an entryway on the east wall that leads into the kitchen. The kitchen features a 2:2 sash window on the north wall and two, 2:2 sash windows symmetrically placed on either side of a wood paneled door with a single pane window that leads to the concrete block storage room addition.

The second floor of the jail is accessed by the L-shaped staircase with turned balusters. It features a central hall with a restroom on the east wall (added in 1970s), two office entryways with original wood paneled doors on the north wall, two, 2:2 sash windows on the west wall, and an office entryway on the south wall.

Two offices are located along the north section of the jail on the second floor. The office in the northwestern section features a set of 2:2 sash windows on the west wall and the office in the northeastern section includes a 2:2 sash window on the north wall and two, 2:2 sash windows on the east wall.

The south section on the second floor features an office with a set of 2:2 sash windows on the west wall, and two, 2:2 sash windows on the south wall. There is no entryway to the jail cells on the second floor. The

⁵ Crane Collection 1975-1980, Bledsoe County Jail, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, TN.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

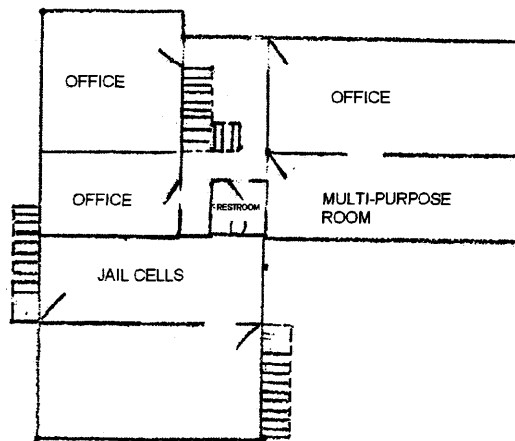
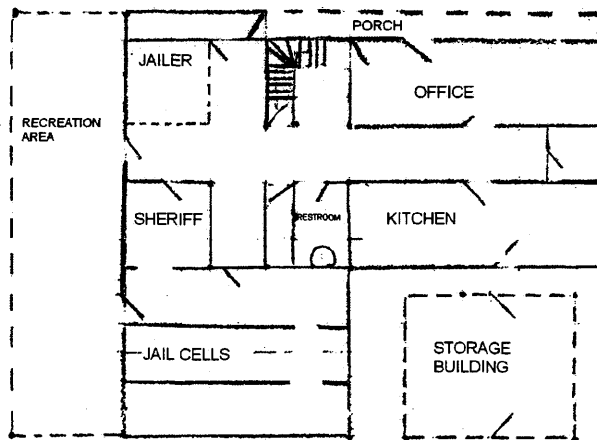
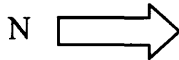
Section number 7 Page 4

Bledsoe County Jail
Bledsoe County, Tennessee

second floor prisoner cells are only accessible by the outdoor staircases and feature two prisoner cells that are approximately 15 feet x 25 feet.

Despite the renovations that occurred to the building throughout the twentieth century, the building retains most of its original integrity from 1937. According to the Tennessee Jail Inspector's Report in 1976, the Bledsoe County was ranked 92nd out of 102 county jails in the state. In 1977 and 1978, the jail was listed as non-certified due primarily to the age and design of the building.⁶

Sketch plan not to scale



⁶ *Ibid.*

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 5

Bledsoe County Jail
Bledsoe County, Tennessee

Statement of Significance

The Bledsoe County Jail, located in the county seat of Pikeville (2006 pop. 1,781), Tennessee, was constructed in 1851, to serve the local government and provide law-abiding civility among the early settlers in the county. It is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its role in government. This jail is one of the county's oldest extant buildings, the oldest operating jail in the state and represents the local government's efforts to maintain law and order. The jail underwent significant alterations to its exterior and interior in 1937 and the period of significance dates from then until 1958. These changes reflect the county's efforts to modernize the jail and continue to provide service to the community. The building retains much of its late nineteenth and historic twentieth century appearance and integrity.

Bledsoe County, located in southeast Tennessee, was established in 1807 from a section of Roane County and was named for Anthony Bledsoe, a Revolutionary Major and early settler in Tennessee. Selected as the county seat circa 1818, Pikeville is centrally located in Bledsoe County. The county is bounded on the north by Cumberland County, on the east by Rhea and Hamilton counties, on the south by Sequatchie County, and on the west by Van Buren County. Pikeville rests in the northern section of the Sequatchie Valley, nestled between Walden's Ridge (east) and the Cumberland Plateau (west). Pikeville, centrally located in Bledsoe County, was incorporated in 1830 and is the county seat.

After a treaty was signed with the Cherokee in 1805, many pioneers began settling in Bledsoe County and the Sequatchie Valley. They traveled to the area from Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. Among the first settlers, James Standefer and John Tollett selected Madison, located six miles north of Dunlap (now in Sequatchie County), as the first county seat of Bledsoe County in 1811.⁷ Farming and grist mills soon became abundant throughout the Sequatchie Valley with fertile soil and the access to the Sequatchie River and many creeks flowing into the valley from Walden's Ridge and the Cumberland Plateau.

John Kelly served as Bledsoe County's first sheriff in 1809 at the jail in Madison. One of Sheriff Kelly's first investigations involved a gentleman by the name of Mr. Cannon. He along with his horse apparently strayed into Cherokee territory while he was on his way home to Warren County (located west of Bledsoe County) from Virginia. In August 1809, two hunters in Bledsoe County discovered the human bones and clothes that were believed to be Mr. Cannon.⁸

In 1818, the county seat was moved from Madison to Pikeville because of its central location in Bledsoe County. Officially incorporated in 1830, Pikeville quickly became the county's center for manufacturing and trade. By 1833, Pikeville had five stores, two blacksmiths, four shoe makers, one cabinet maker, three tailors, one saddler, one wagon maker, and two cotton gins. Further, in 1834, Pikeville was the only stagecoach stop

⁷ Madison, TN, the former Bledsoe County seat in the early 19th century, is located near present day Mount Airy on the Bledsoe County and Sequatchie County line.

⁸ Robnett, Elizabeth P. *Bledsoe County, Tennessee: A History*. Mountain Press: Signal Mountain, TN. 1993, p. 15.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 6

Bledsoe County Jail
Bledsoe County, Tennessee

between Knoxville and Huntsville, Alabama. Weary travelers often spent the night at the Sequatchie Hotel, which was owned and operated by Dr. Samuel Story. John Bridgman (NR 6/24/93), a wealthy merchant and landowner, and James Whiteside, a prominent attorney, contributed greatly due Pikeville's growth. They constructed their elaborate brick homes in the 1820s and 1830s in the public square across the street from the courthouse.⁹

The first jail in Pikeville was constructed of log circa 1816 at the southwest corner of the public square near present day Main Street and Cumberland Street. The building was a crude building with no bars on the cell windows. A guard was not only required on the inside of the jail but outside as well. When the jail became outdated and inadequate, the Bledsoe County Court passed a motion for the construction of a new jail.

In April of 1850, Bledsoe County approved the purchase of a lot from Samuel Roberson and Eliza Bridgman, daughter of John Bridgman, for fifty dollars to build a 40 foot x 20 foot, brick jail on the corner two blocks south of the public square on present day Frazier Street. The cost to erect the two-story jail was \$1,500.00 in 1851. Sheriff Bird Thomas and Sheriff Nason Swafford served as the first two sheriffs in the new jail for its first two decades.¹⁰

According to early records of the Bledsoe County Court, debt, assault and battery, public drunkenness, and various property disputes were among the most common offenses. Non-violent offenders were held at the jail for a short period of time, especially due to the small confines of the jail cells. A simple lashing of the whip may have been the most extreme physical punishment for the prisoners. Murder was a rare charge in Bledsoe County. Most major offenders found guilty in Bledsoe County were sent to the prison in Dayton (Rhea County), Athens (McMinn County), Crossville (Cumberland County), or Cookeville (Putnam County).

Supposedly the only legal hanging to take place in Bledsoe County occurred in 1853. The site was near Pikeville along the east bank of the Sequatchie River often referred to as "Hangman Basin" and "Gallows Bottom." Apparently, the hanging of a gentleman by the name of Gaudsy was a public spectacle as families rode in their wagons from miles away. Mr. Gaudsy was found guilty of murder at the court in Pikeville and was placed in the jail until his day of execution.¹¹

From the 1890s until the 1930s, members of the Swafford and Tollett families often frequented the court in Pikeville and Bledsoe County Jail. A family feud that supposedly had its roots with divided loyalties during the Civil War escalated on Presidential election-day in November of 1892. Bill Tollett fired a shot at Aaron Swafford when the families met outside of the Old Hall in the community of Melvine, north of Pikeville (near Cumberland County line). Gunfire erupted leaving Aaron Swafford's son dead and several wounded from both sides. Bill Tollett was later found not guilty of the murder.¹²

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 13-18. Note: The John Bridgman House was placed on the National Register on June 24, 1993.

¹⁰ Bledsoe County Deed Book L Page 109. Robnett, Elizabeth interviewed by Paul Archambault, 22 May 2008.

¹¹ Robnett, *Bledsoe County, Tennessee: A History*, p. 20. Gaudsy's first name is not known. In an interview with Elizabeth Robnett, Bledsoe County Historian, she only recalled the last name.

¹² Swafford, Thomas V. *The Swafford-Tollett Feud*. Printing Partners County: Pikeville, TN. 2003, p. 63.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 7

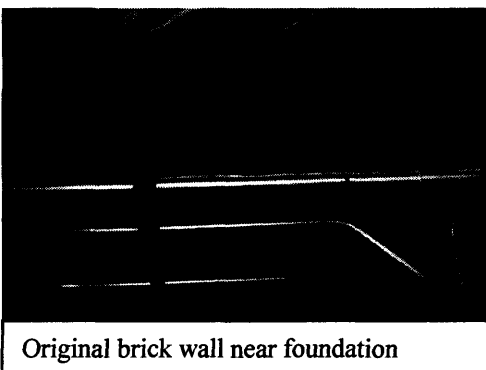
Bledsoe County Jail
Bledsoe County, Tennessee

After ten years of dormancy, the feud began again in 1904 and lasted throughout the 1920s. The Swafford brothers, Charley, Sam, and Ease, avenged the death of Aaron when they shot and killed Bill Tollet in 1905. The three brothers were sent to the Bledsoe County Jail for a brief time before being sent to a larger jail in Dayton, Tennessee. Charley Swafford was later found guilty and sentenced to life in state prison, but was released after 15 years. The feud continued throughout the 1910s and 1920s mostly in the courtroom with family land disputes.¹³

Outside of family disputes, some members of the Swafford Family continued to battle with the law. In 1915, Ease Swafford, Jr. and Bob Walker, who had three pending charges against them, were charged with the murder of Deputy Sheriff Wesley Dunn. A year later, they shot and killed Lee Price for testifying against them in court for the murder Wesley Dunn. They spent a short amount of time in the Bledsoe County before transferring to the prison in Cookeville.¹⁴

Two years later, Hugh and Burt Price, the brothers of Lee Price, sought revenge on the Swafford family. In April of 1918, the brothers shot and wounded Bob Swafford. Hugh and Burt Price were arrested, found guilty, and served time in the Bledsoe County Jail.¹⁵

Throughout the 1920s, Major Swafford, also known as the "King Bee," was arrested several times and served time in the jail for the production of moonshine. A raid on his moonshine operation in February of 1922 revealed a 90 gallon still and 1500 gallons of beer in north Bledsoe County. In the early 1930s, Major Swafford was arrested again with a 40 gallon still and 1000 gallons of beer in Peavine near Crossville, Tennessee.¹⁶



Original brick wall near foundation

In 1937, a rear two-story and one-story addition was constructed at the Bledsoe County Jail to accommodate more cells for the prisoners and office space for the jailers. With a 50% funding match from the Works Progress Administration (W.P.A.), the Bledsoe County Court Members approved a \$3,000 match to complete the \$6,000 project, which was necessary to update the facility. In addition, the exterior underwent renovations with the original brick covered with the present natural stone.¹⁷ A commemorative engraved stone was centrally located on the front elevation's parapet wall to dedicate the rehabilitation of the jail. In the June 11 edition of *The Bledsonian and Pikeville Banner* it was reported that the work to repair and

improve the jail began the week before. The county court appropriated \$8,000 and the "Old brick walls of

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 72-73, 76-77.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 87-88.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 90,94.

¹⁷ "Court Members Vote To Build New Jail," *The Bledsonian and Pikeville Banner*, 8 Jan. 1937, p. 1.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 8Bledsoe County Jail
Bledsoe County, Tennessee

the residential portion of the building are being torn away and will be replaced with an outer wall of natural stone, using the old brick for backing.”¹⁸ The paper reported that Judge Solin Robinson hoped the project would come in under budget. The jail again experienced interior renovations in the 1970s with the addition of restrooms, and 1994 for inadequate building conditions (i.e. wiring, lighting, plumbing, fire protection).

Approximately 20 people served as Bledsoe County Sheriff from 1809 until the 1960s. Besides Bledsoe County’s first sheriff, the more notable county sheriffs were the Swaffords and Farmers, J.H. and Lucille Greening, Carlton Nipper, and Craven Sherrill. Five Swaffords and five Farmers, descendants of Bledsoe County’s early settlers, served as county sheriffs throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Thomas Swafford, who served as county sheriff in the early 1930s, was brutally murdered in October 1932 by unknown individual(s).¹⁹

The only Bledsoe County sheriff to assume the post at the first jail and present jail in Pikeville was Craven Sherrill. He served as the county sheriff from 1838-1842 before leaving to work elsewhere in Tennessee, including serving in the state legislature. He returned as Bledsoe County sheriff in 1856 and served for one year.²⁰

J.H. Greening served Bledsoe County Sheriff from 1940-1943 when he left for military duty in Europe during World War II. His wife, the only female Bledsoe County Sheriff, served for one year during his absence. Carlton Nipper was the longest serving sheriff with 16 years or 7 terms of service.²¹

In the late 1970s, due to the age of the building, the state jail inspectors listed the property as “non-certified.” In 1992, a federal judge ruled that the Bledsoe County Jail was inadequate for housing prisoners. As a result, the jail underwent some work to update wiring, plumbing, lighting, and fire protection. The jail remains uncertified by the Tennessee Corrections Institute due to overcrowding. The multiple occupancy cells have been deemed too small and any more than 9 prisoners is considered overcrowding. The jail recently reduced the number of beds from 20 to 11 due to overcrowding in the facility.²²

Bledsoe County is presently expecting the construction of a new county jail facility to begin soon. The county often exceeds the number of prisoners it may hold and must use neighboring county jails to house their prisoners. The costs for necessary updates to the jail are far too costly for a jail that is outdated and inadequate. The newly proposed jail will cost approximately \$5 million and hold up to 120 prisoners. When a new facility is constructed, Bledsoe County wishes to create an historical attraction by converting the jail into a museum.²³

¹⁸ “County Jail Undergoes Repairs, Improvements,” *The Bledsonian and Pikeville Banner*, 11 June 1937, p. 1.

¹⁹ Robnett interview, 22 May 2008.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Tennessee Jails Folder (A-L), Jail-Related Newspaper Articles, Bicentennial Library: Local History and Genealogy Dept.

²³ Benton, Ben. “Bledsoe Jail readied to reopen.” *Chattanooga Times Free Press*. 18 January 2008.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 9

Bledsoe County Jail
Bledsoe County, Tennessee

IX Bibliography

Bledsoe County, Tennessee Deed Book L Page 109

Bledsoe County: Circuit Court Minutes, 1834-1841. Tennessee Historical Records Survey, Nashville, TN, December, 1940.

(The) Bledsonian and Pikeville Banner, 1937, various issues.

Crane Collection 1975-1980, Bledsoe County Jail, Container List Box 3 (I-F-7, AC NO. 94-126, MF 1549), Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, TN.

Crane, Paul and Sophie. *Tennessee's Troubled Roots.* Earle-Shields Publishers: Old Hickory, TN. 1979.

Robnett, Elizabeth P. *Bledsoe County, Tennessee: A History.* Mountain Press: Signal Mountain, TN. 1993.

Robnett, Elizabeth interviewed by Paul Archambault, 22 May 2008.

Swafford, Thomas V. *The Swafford-Tollett Feud.* Printing Partners County: Pikeville, TN. 2003.

Tennessee Jails Folder (A-L). Jail Related Newspaper Articles. Bicentennial Library: Local History and Genealogy Department, Chattanooga, Tennessee.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

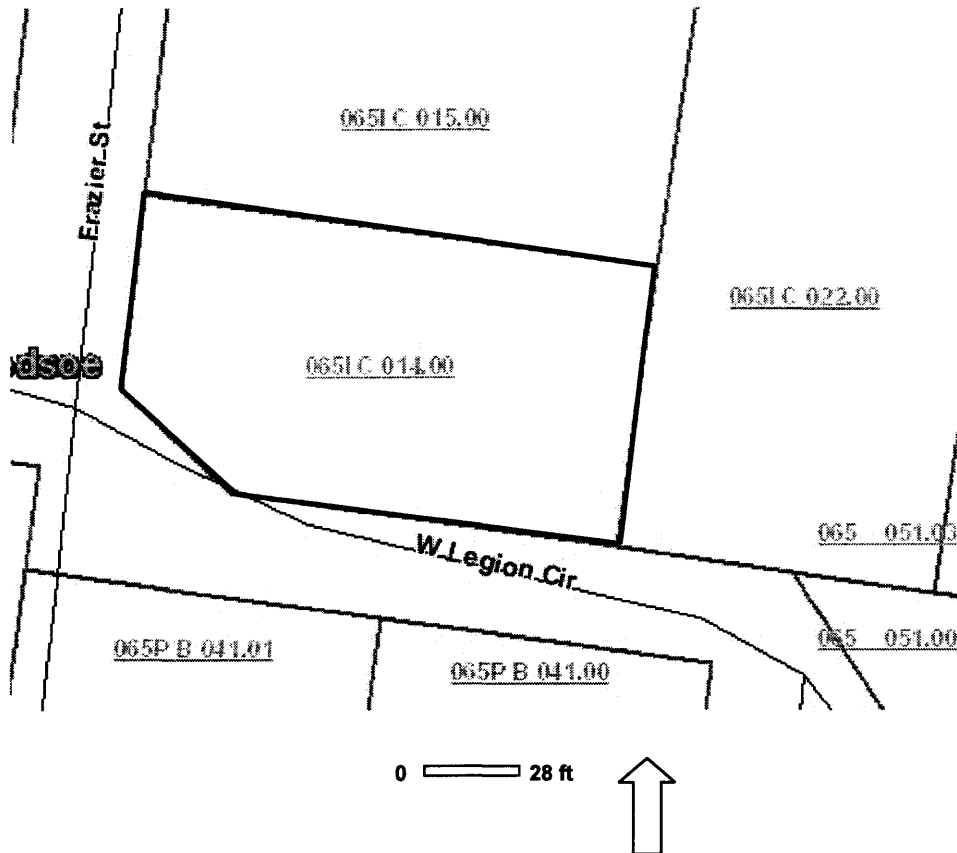
National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 10

Bledsoe County Jail
Bledsoe County, Tennessee

Verbal Boundary Description and Justification

The Bledsoe County Jail is located at the corner of Frazier Street and Cranwell Street, one block east of Main Street. The jail sits on a corner lot that is less than 1 acre. The property is listed in the Bledsoe County Tax Assessor's office as on Map 065I, Group C, Parcel 014.00. This is all the property associated with the Bledsoe County Jail.



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Photos Page 11

Bledsoe County Jail
Bledsoe County, Tennessee

PHOTOGRAPHS

Bledsoe County Jail

Hwy. 33 near intersection of Hwy. 25, Claiborne County, Tazewell, TN

Photos by Paul Archambault

Date: May 2008

Photo 1 of 11

West façade, facing east

Photo 2 of 11

West façade and north elevation, facing southeast

Photo 3 of 11

North elevation, facing southwest

Photo 4 of 11

East elevation, facing west

Photo 5 of 11

East and north elevations, facing southwest

Photo 6 of 11

South elevation, facing north

Photo 7 of 11

Detail of rear elevation, showing cell window opening

Photo 8 of 11

Interior detail, doors and hall

Photo 9 of 11

First floor stair

Photo 10 of 11

Second floor stair

Photo 11 of 11

Paneled door