

I. IDENTIFICATION

PROPERTY NAME: Old Dawson County Jail HISTORIC NAME: Dawson County Jail

STREET ADDRESS: Highway 53 (Jasper Street) CITY: Dawsonville

PRESENT OWNER: Mr. Joe Lane Cox
 Dawson County Commissioner MAILING ADDRESS: Dawson County Courthouse
 P.O.Box 192

CITY: Dawsonville, STATE: Georgia ZIP CODE: 30534

CURRENT USE: Antiques Store ACREAGE: Less than one acre

U.S.G.S. QUADRANGLE Dawsonville U.T.M. REFERENCE: Zone 16 E764660 N3812440

V.B.D. OR TAX MAP NUMBER: The nominated property is the small lot still associated with the jail. It is marked on the enclosed Tax Map D1 as parcel 4.

II. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND PRESENT CONDITION:

Attachment 1

III. HISTORY

ORIGINAL OWNER: Dawson County ORIGINAL USE: County Jail

ARCHITECT/BUILDER: M. B. McGinty, builder HISTORIC ACREAGE: City Lot

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1881 DATE(S) OF ALTERATIONS: 1931, 1974, & 1979.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE (FROM ORIGINS TO PRESENT):

Attachment 2

IV. SIGNIFICANCE

N.R. AREA(S) OF SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture, Politics/ Government LEVEL: Local

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL):

Attachment 3

V. SOURCES

FORM PREPARED BY: Dale Jaeger ORGANIZATION: Georgia Mountains APDC
 Preservation Planner

ADDRESS: P. O. Box 1720 TELEPHONE NUMBER: 404/536/3431
 Gainesville, GA 30503

REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS: "Historic Structures Field Survey"
 Georgia Department of Natural Resources

SOURCES OF INFORMATION:
 Attachment 4

Attachment One

DESCRIPTION

The Dawson County Jail is a red brick, two-story, Italianate-style structure with a hipped roof. Although the roof is now asbestos shingled, the original covering was of "good heart-pine shingles laid 5 inches to the weather", according to the 1881 specifications. Laid on a 22" brick foundation, the old 33' x 26' building has walls 13 inches thick, plastered inside; the 9 inch partition walls are laid on foundation 13 inches thick. Simple brick work decorates the old jail: brackets under the roof overhang and 4 inch thick pilasters, four each on the front and back walls, three on each of the side walls, and flat-arched brick work over the window lintels. All windows have 6/6 sashes and stone sills. Iron grates cover the windows on the upper story where the prisoners were kept, two windows on each side, three windows front and back. On the ground floor, only two of the original windows have survived, one at the right of the front door, and one on the west side of the building. The two back windows were converted to doors some years ago by a frame addition (1931) when two rooms were added to the jailer's quarters, one on each side of the back door which remains in place. On the east side of the building, a 1974 one-story wing has covered one of the original windows and another has been replaced by a doorway to the new addition. Although the 1881 specifications made no mention of a porch, across the front of the original building, there is now a one-story porch with a concrete floor rebuilt in 1979 to replace the porch shown in a 1972 newspaper picture with four simple doric columns. The wooden front door of the old jail is ornamented by a 4-light transom and by 3-light side lights above wooden panels.

On the interior, linoleum now covers most of the floors, but the stairway hall on the west exposes some of the old 4 inch planking of "good, clear yellow pine." The original central hall has been altered with the addition of a closet at the jail entrance and the addition of a bath at the rear. Mantels remain although the fireplaces have been bricked up and the chimneys torn from the roof, modern heating has been installed downstairs, and the ceilings lowered except in the front hall. A decorative bannistered stairway leads from the front hall to the prisoners' quarters on the upper floors.

There are two two-bunk cells for women on the west side and two four-bunk cells for men on the east side; both cell groups are metal. According to a plaque on the central-control box, the metal was manufactured by the Manly Jail Works of Dalton, Georgia and added to the jail during renovation work in 1931 as replacements for the original wood cells. The original wooden cells were separated by an 8-foot hallway, which has since been utilized for plumbing vents and pipes. A doorway in the 7-foot front corridor now separates the women's quarters from the men's, and a wall divides these in the 3-foot corridor on the other three sides. Originally this corridor extended continuously around the cell unit, presumably as an exercise hall.

The structure is situated on a city lot-sized tract in the commercial center of Dawsonville. The historic Dawson County Courthouse located on the town square is located within one block of the jail. The front yard has been graveled for

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use as parking. The rear yard contains a single evergreen tree and a one-story frame outbuilding which appears to have been a smoke house. A portion of the original lot at the rear was paved in the construction of the new county jail and courthouse. Only the undisturbed portion of this lot is proposed for nomination. The structure is in good to fair condition.

Attachment Two

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

The Dawson County Jail, constructed in 1881, was the third jail built by Dawson County. The first jail was built in 1858 on lot 8 or 9 of the original plan. This jail was constructed one year after the creation of the county. The oak logs cut from the streets of Dawsonville in the development of this new county seat were utilized in its construction. This jail was destroyed by fire, reputed to have been set by a prisoner, sometime between August 1865 and February 1866. Because the young county was so hard pressed for funds so soon after the war, the jails in the adjoining counties of Hall, Forsyth, and Lumpkin were used by Dawson County until 1871, when a second jail was built. This structure was built on lot 7 and consisted of large rocks at the base, eight "square logs for the floor," and logs and boards for the walls. By 1873, there was already dissatisfaction with the jail. The "criminal floor" was noted as being "fine", but the "debtor's floor was not secure."

By 1881, the county grand jury concluded the second jail was "wholly unfit for the purpose designed" and recommended that a "good and sufficient jail" be built. The new jail, which is the existing jail, was constructed on the same site by the McGinty Construction Company of Athens, Georgia at a cost of \$3,670, according to the contract dated July 9, 1881. The specifications called for the jail to be "of brick, 2 stories high, 33 feet front by 26 feet depth and 20 feet high from water table to top of walls." An octagon tower "12 feet in diameter" was planned at "one front corner, to carry the winding stairs, which give the approach to the 2nd or prison floor." The cells were noted as "on the second floor, two in number, each seven feet wide by 15 feet long, and separated by a hall 8 feet wide by 15 feet long." The cells were made with "1½ inch by 10 inch plank laid up on the flat" and "doors, windows, and one strong door 'Cook and Heath Patent'" were made by "Porter and Meskin, Atlanta." The cell doors were to be of "wrought iron with Scandinavian Jail Lock and also, a sliding bolt, to be operated by rods and lever from outside the prison." A change order, dated July 9, 1881, omitted the octagon tower and the cells were shortened to "12 ft. long inside thus giving the width" to allow for a "plain flight of stairs with return, landing in the front corridor near the main strong door of prison."

The change order also resulted in the hipped roof being built with an eight foot rise rather than the 13 foot rise, called for in the plans. The original cornice was planned as "dentil work of brick with a total projection of 27 inches, and the wood-work beyond this which is carried by 'look-outs' or projections of second story ceiling joist and a total projection beyond the face of wall of five feet." The change order resulted in the omission of the brick cornice and the lessening of the projection to three feet.

The specifications called for the first story to consist of "a central hall, 8 feet wide and three living rooms for use of the jailer" and the second story to serve as the "prison proper." The building was constructed to facilitate this concept. In 1931, records at the Manly Jail Works Builders of Dalton, Georgia, document that renovations were made to the jail. The Manly Company

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added new cells, in all probability to replace the original wood cells, and also added window guards. Local sources state that the two rooms were added to the rear and the bath was added in the central hall. The concrete block addition on the east facade was built in 1974. In 1977 after almost a century of service the old jail was vacated with the construction of a new jail. The structure has been leased to a private individual for use as an antique shop. The lessee made changes to the porch in 1979 and has otherwise only carried out minor maintenance on the structure.

Attachment Three

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Dawson County Jail is significant in the areas of architecture and politics/government. Architecturally, this structure is of Italianate design, a popular style for jail buildings of this period. The original plans which included an octagonal tower, high hipped roof, and wide overhang were quite ambitious for this small county. The executed plans which omitted the mentioned details are a modest interpretation of the original design and reflect the limited resources of this county. Brick was chosen as the material due to its fire proof quality. McGinty of Athens was the builder of the structure. His association with this structure adds significance since he constructed other public buildings in this area. Other works by McGinty include the 1879 Hall County Jail and the 1899 Union County Courthouse. A historic jail building company, the Manly Jail Works Builders of Dalton, Georgia, are also associated with this structure. This firm was employed in 1931 in the conversion of wood to steel cells.

In politics and government, this jail was the third jail for the county and served as such for almost a century. This structure reflects in several ways local and state practices in criminal justice. Brick was chosen to insure protection against fire. Living quarters for a jailer were introduced to the county through this structure. And, original wood cells were replaced by steel to insure security against prisoner escapes. The jail also represents coordination between county government since jails in adjacent counties were used during periods when Dawson County was without a jail.

Attachment Four

BIBLIOGRAPHY - DAWSON COUNTY

Dawson County, Georgia Bicentennial Committee. A Bicentennial Look at Dawson County ... Its Government, Its People. [1976].

"Dawson County Jail. Specifications". [c. 1881]

Dawson County, Georgia. Superior Court. Minute Book. "General Presentments of the Grand Jury", April Term, 1881.

Manly Jail Works Company, Dalton, Georgia (files).

Research assistance:

Lula Garrett, RSVP Worker, Dawson County.

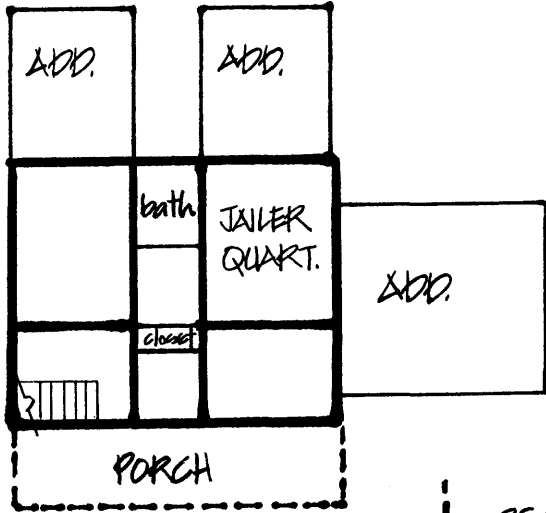
Rebekah Wilson, high school history teacher, Dawson County.

Description by Elma Beynon, RSVP worker.

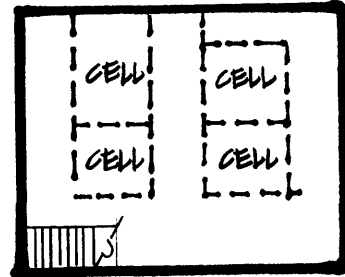
DAWSON COUNTY JAIL
DAWSONVILLE, GA.



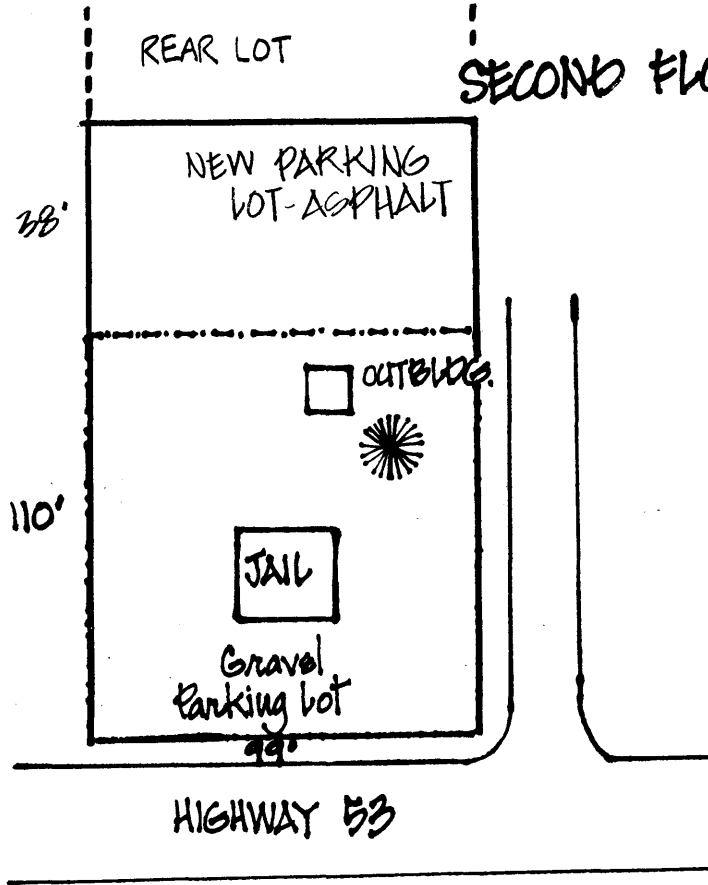
— ORIGINAL WALLS
— ADDITIONS



FIRST FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR



SKETCH MAP

SKETCH MAP/FLOOR PLAN

Dawson County Jail
Dawsonville, Dawson County, Georgia

Source: Drawn by Dale Jaeger

Date: 1984

Key: As marked on the map/plan.