

## "Carroll County Jail Best in State in 1948"

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By Jay A. Graybeal

When Carroll County was founded in 1837, one of the first public buildings erected was the stone jail, on Court Street in Westminster, which also served as the residence of the sheriff and his family. Fifty years ago this structure was still in use as described in the February 27, 1948 issue of the Westminster Democratic Advocate newspaper:

"What the 21st report of the inspection of the County Jails of Maryland has to say about Carroll County's Jail.

The Carroll County Jail is located at Westminster the County seat. The jail is located about two squares from the Court House. The population of the County in the 1940 census was 39,054.

The jail is under the direct control of the Sheriff who lives in a part of the jail. He is assisted in the operation by a deputy, who is appointed by him and is paid by the County. The Sheriff's wife also assists, serving as the cook but without compensation.

The building is of stone and brick construction located about 2 blocks from the Court House. There is no fence or wall around the building. There is a large barn alongside the jail. In the front part of the jail is the residence and office of the Sheriff. From the Sheriff's office a door leads to a room in which there is a steel cage which was formerly used for condemned prisoners, but is now used to store slot machines, etc., taken in gambling raids. From this door also rooms lead to quarters for female prisoners and for juveniles. Another door leads to a steel cell block in two sections, each having 3 cells, each with 4 beds facing the side windows. There is an example prisoners' corridor for each section and a keeper's corridor next to the windows. There are no wash basins or toilets in the cells, but there is a small table in each prisoners' corridor. At the rear of the jail there is a section with shower bath and toilet facilities. The only way in which this can be used, however, is to leave the cell doors open as well as the prisoner's corridor. If there are prisoners who need security confinement they must use night buckets. While the cell block is only one story high, the ceiling is about 20 feet high. In the cellar there are 6 cells of the dungeon type, but they have not been in use for some years except when there is a noisy drunk on hand.

There are 2 separate sets of rooms leading from the hallway beyond the Sheriff's office that can be and are used to house either female prisoners or youthful offenders. It is possible to place youthful males in both when there are no females in the jail, or females in both, or females in one and youths in the other. These sections are equipped with beds, toilets, tubs and wash bowls. There is complete privacy and while the quarters are not of the modern type they are adequate and safe from a security as well as a health standpoint.

The quarters available for youthful offenders are the same that are used for women prisoners.

The jail was in clean condition at the time of the inspection. Mattresses were in good order; there were pillows and mattress covers which were clean. There were a number of worn mattresses, but there was also a supply of new mattresses which had not been used. No bed bugs or other vermin were found the utensils used for serving food were found to be clean and sanitary. There was an accumulation of magazines and papers in the cells, otherwise the quarters of the prisoners were in good order.

Three meals per day are served. The food is purchased to the order of the County Commissioners and not contracted for on the fee system. Prisoners declared the food adequate.

Prisoners are not used on other than maintenance work at the jail.

At the time of inspection there were no prisoners 21 years of age or under."

The old stone jail was utilized for several decades after this report was written for a total more than a century and a quarter of use.

Photo caption: The original Carroll County Jail received high marks from a state review in 1948. Historical Society of Carroll County collection.