

# A LITTLE HISTORY ABOUT THE JAIL



It had been long lamented that there was no lock-up on the island. The increase in transient workers at the quarry and the increasing popularity of the island created a problem for the peaceful islanders. The first positive steps in building a jail were taken in early August 1885 when the County Commissioners announced they were going to have a jail built on Kelley's Island.

The advertisement went out in October 1885 and Nicholas Smith "of Kelleys Island being the lowest bidder and having his bond properly accompanying his bid, was accorded the contract."

Almost a year later on July 31, when "the County Commissioners went over to Kelley's Island... to inspect the jail being built on the Island by Mr. N. Smith. Mr. Smith was in the city this morning and accompanied the Commissioners to the Island. He states that the jail will be finished within a day or two and that when completed it will serve the Island for many years to come. The building is of stone with iron cages, or cells, and is fire proof. The contract price for its construction was \$1326."



The jail cells were built by the Van Dorn Ironworks Co. of Cleveland. While it is a popular belief that the cells came from the former Johnson's Island Confederate prison, this is not the case. The prison had already been disbanded and all the equipment sold 20 years before this jail was built. The U. S. Army decommissioned the prison in September 1865 and the following year, auctioned off all the surplus equipment, materials, buildings and walls.

The Van Dorn Iron Works was founded in Cleveland, Ohio in 1872, and specialized in ornamental iron work, but later became the country's largest producer of jail cells.

After its construction, various components of the jail were secured. Lewis Rhyne (Rhein) was directed to purchase material for the cells in the lockup and the following purchases were made: from Ruff Son & Keylor(?) - one pillow @ \$1.00; from Matern Bros. - one slop pail @ 80¢, and from Pourns & Zollinger - two blankets @ \$4.00; for a total of \$5.80.

A stove for heating the new building was purchased in October 1886, but in March of 1887, the stove was taken out of the jail and put up in place of the broken stove in the south side primary school. The school's broken stove resulted in a vacation of two weeks for the students. It was noted that it would be very unpleasant for anyone to be put in the 'cooker' during that time, as they would soon cool off.

In May 25, 1887, the Township Trustees began furnishing a new office in the jail and ordered desks and cases for books and papers. W. S. Ward, Justice of the Peace, was instructed to procure these as low a price as possible and that purchase was made from Jay C. Butler & Co. for a desk and a cupboard for books and papers, in the amount of \$132.07.

The building has just two rooms. The front room is used by police officers for dispatch and the rear is now used for storage as the cells no longer meet the requirements for holding prisoners. The jail did not get electricity until August 17, 1889 when the Village Council recommended the purchase of "one incandescent lamp, 63 candle power" for the jail which had just been built.