

# HISTORY OF THE PEPIN COUNTY JAILS - 1858 to 1985

by  
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## Acknowledgments:

This history is based on minutes of the Pepin County Board of Supervisors (1858-to-present) researched and compiled by Benjamin Clark, Charity G. Moore, Robert Bell, Michael Shoup and Terry J. Mesch and on articles from the *Durand Times* (1871 -1872) and the *Pepin County Courier* (1874-1889) newspapers researched and compiled by Julie Rinholen and Terry J. Mesch.

The Wisconsin Legislature created Pepin County in February 1858 and designated the Village of Pepin as the first county seat. By 1868, following referenda by the citizens of the county, the county seat had been moved to Durand.

No formal county jail existed at the time, so the county rented space to serve as a jail. Law breakers were held in locked rooms or makeshift cells in the sheriff's office or his residence or in temporary holding cells located in each of the villages in the county. This system was used until the first county jail was built in Durand in 1872.

The county was responsible for paying the costs of incarcerating prisoners and the Pepin County Board of Supervisors faced several issues related to the existing jail system: how much money was being reimbursed to the villages for costs of incarceration; the inadequacy of locked rooms or makeshift cells; and the safety and security of the public. In 1871, the county board decided a formal county jail and sheriff's office should be built at the county seat. The county negotiated with Robert Morsbach for the purchase of a lot which had once been designated as a street in the village of Durand. This short portion of Wolcott Street dead ended at the foot of what was known as Morsbach's Bluff. Morsbach transferred the parcel to the county for the price of one dollar on 30 August 1871. The warranty deed described the property and set the terms and conditions of the sale, as follows:

...that parcel of land lying between Blocks Three and Four in Range Five West of Baseline ... being 60 ft. frontage on Prospect Street and 120 ft. back, the same formerly having been a portion of Wolcott St. This conveyance being made upon the express terms and conditions that said County shall erect on said premises a county jail within five years from the date hereof and shall keep and maintain the same thereon for the space of ten years.

The 21 November 1871 edition of the *Durand Times* reported, "The contract for building the county jail at this place [Durand] was ratified by the County Board of Supervisors and work on the structure is being pushed rapidly along."

Although no drawings, plans or accurate description of the new jail have

survived, this jail likely was a wood-framed structure resembling a typical 1½-story house, but modified to include several small rooms to serve as cells, an office and storage. The following February, the *Durand Times* reported, "Our County Jail building has been so far completed as to look quite habitable." Then in the 17 May 1872 edition, the *Durand Times* said:

The Pepin County Jail is completed, and the young Decker, the ox thief, is the first occupant [Decker had been held at the sheriff's residence from which he escaped earlier that month but was soon recaptured]. It is a good, strong and substantial building, and the contractors and builders - Joe Gazeley [who would two years later also build the county courthouse one block to the northwest] and R. R. Root - have completed it in good workman like manner. An institution that should have been built years ago, and saved the County hundreds of dollars thereby. We congratulate the people of the County on having as good a jail as there is in this section of Wisconsin.

Despite the "strong and substantial" construction of the building praised by the local newspaper, the jail began to deteriorate within just a few years and would eventually become the catalyst for one of the most controversial episodes in the county's history.

The 1872 jail, as with many similarly built structures of the day, was probably built on an at-grade rock foundation without footings that extended below the frost line. Consequently, the heave of the frozen ground in winter played havoc with the foundation and caused the building to sink or move in different areas. This movement in turn caused plaster in the walls and ceilings to crack and door- and window-frames to move out-of-square and malfunction. The jail quickly came to require more than routine maintenance.

By November 1877, the Pepin County Board of Supervisors received discouraging news about the county jail. A two-person committee assigned to examine the jail reported:

...one of the locks on an outside door of the jail broken, and a key of another of the same lost. ...none of the cell doors are fit for use nor can be closed owing to the settling of the building. ...the foundation is partly crumbled down. But it is our opinion that it will stand until next spring without repairs. ...the privy we consider is a nuisance, and would recommend that it be removed and a portable one substituted....

No action was taken. One year later, the Committee on Public Buildings found the jail:

...in reasonably good condition, except the stairs which need some repairing,

and two doors in the hall need locks repaired; the plastering is broken in several places; two cell doors need repairing; also the underpinning wall on the south end and southwest side we think should be taken out and rebuilt with hard stone. The outhouse is in bad condition.

Action was postponed another year until, at its November 1879 meeting, the Committee on County Buildings was authorized by the county board "...to repair or cause to be repaired the jail, in a good substantial manner for the safe keeping of prisoners." Despite these directives from the county board, after finding "...the jail in need of such extensive and expensive repairs in order to make it safe and comfortable..." the Committee on County Buildings determined it might be wiser to build a whole new jail rather than repair the old one. The committee decided again to defer action on repairs and focused on planning for a completely new structure.

At the November 1880 meeting of the Board, representatives from Jail Works of St. Louis and Jail Works of Cincinnati were present with models and plans for a new jail. On a five-to-four vote, the county board agreed to appropriate \$4,500 to build a new jail.

The meeting recessed and reconvened the following day and a resolution was placed before the board that "the Committee on County Buildings...be authorized and empowered to erect a suitable jail and dwelling at a cost not to exceed the appropriation made...." During discussion of the resolution, several members spoke against adoption citing that "...poor crops and the severe floods during the past two years had left people in no condition to pay an extraordinary tax." Proponents of the measure, meanwhile, stated that "...the old jail was unfit for use and that the county was as able now...as it would ever be, that hay, corn, meats and all farm products brought good prices and that the building material was cheap." The measure passed on a five-to-four vote.

The *Pepin County Courier* newspaper soon reported the county had closed a contract with Charles H. Sparks of Des Moines, Iowa for building a new jail and dwelling. The structure would be a two-story 25'-x-57' brick building and would include the jail proper plus apartments for the sheriff's office and residence. The jail proper was to be outfitted with iron and steel cells "...of the latest improved patterns and when completed Pepin County would have the finest jail of its size in northwestern Wisconsin." The newspaper described Sparks as being a gentleman who would give the county "...a good substantial building at very low figures."

This decision by the county board to build a new jail irritated many county residents, especially those on the west side of the Chippewa River. Local rumors inflated cost of construction to \$10,000 or \$15,000, but, corrections were posted in the *Courier*. The "West Siders" were not mollified and, although they understood the county needed a new jail, the extra tax was considered to be a hardship and should be postponed a year or two.

By the county board's meeting on 4 January 1881, opposition had fomented into a formal petition calling for a referendum on removal of the county seat from the Village of Durand to the unincorporated village of Arkansaw located three miles west of Durand on the west side of the Chippewa River. A committee was appointed to verify the signatures of those who signed the petition. Following verification that the petition contained an adequate number of legal signatures, the Pepin County Board determined:

That the question of said removal of said county seat from the Village of Durand in said County of Pepin to the village of Arkansaw in the Town of Waterville in said County of Pepin be, and is hereby ordered to be submitted...to the qualified electors of the County of Pepin to be voted thereon at the next General Election of the County of Pepin on Tuesday after the first Monday of November, A.D. 1881....

This action then caused the board of supervisors to decide that "...the erection of a jail and dwelling in and for the County of Pepin be and is hereby postponed until after the General Election to be held in November, 1881." The county board, fearing problems with contracts it had previously entered into, instructed the Building Committee to:

...take all legal action as may be necessary to protect the county from all expense from erection of a jail during the season of 1881, and if necessary to bring action in the name of the County of Pepin and employ counsel to prosecute said action, and also to defend any action brought against said county arising or growing out of the said jail matter.

The agreed upon contract with Charles Sparks of Des Moines to build the jail and dwelling in Durand was a problem. In May 1881, the county board was presented with a resolution stating that "...one Charles H. Sparks has neglected and refused to perform the conditions of said contract...and by reason of such failure said contract has become voidable." However, the resolution that the contract be "...declared by the county to be forfeited and void..." was rejected by a four-to-five vote of the board.

Due to fortuitous pre-negotiations between Mr. Sparks and the Building Committee, the county was able to escape the contract under the following conditions:

The present contract...he will annul and make void...in consideration that the county will purchase of him the Pauley Cell for the sum of \$2450. Said cells to be delivered and paid for by May 1, 1882. It shall be at the option of the County Supervisors to order the cells at any time prior to this date. In order to stay a future expenditure of money...until the county seat question is decided

and so long as the cells will be needed when the county seat question is decided, your Committee would recommend that such a settlement of the affair be entered into....

This report by the Building Committee was approved by a five-to-four vote. The very next action of the county board, also passed by a five-to-four margin; a resolution:

...to enter into a contract with P. J. Pauley & Bros. of St. Louis, Missouri through their agent Charles H. Sparks for two steel clad jail cells and other iron fixtures of a jail in accordance with plans and specifications now exhibited by the said Charles H. Sparks at a price not to exceed \$2450, said cells and iron works to be delivered at the county seat of this county on the 1st day of May, 1882...the said cells and iron work to be paid for when cells and iron work is set up and approved by the County Board.

On the Tuesday following the first Monday of November 1881, the voters of Pepin County decided to remove the county seat from Durand to Arkansaw effective 1 January 1882.

In January 1882, the board authorized payment to J. P. Pauley & Bros. of St. Louis for the purchase of the jail cells, which had arrived in Pepin County and were temporarily being stored in the Village of Pepin.

During the next five years, the county board paid little attention to its existing jail located in Durand, which continued to be used to house prisoners and the sheriff's office despite its deteriorating condition. The county board carried on its business at Arkansaw, but the new county seat quickly fell into disfavor of county citizens, especially those in and around Durand. The issue of county seat was once again forced to referendum in November 1885 when it was approved by voters to be moved back to Durand.

The next time the old jail appeared on the board's agenda was November 1885, when a proposal to sell the old jail for \$300 was referred to the Committee on County Property. The committee quickly met and brought to the board a resolution to offer for sale for two weeks the old jail and the real estate it stood on to the highest bidder for a sum not less than \$300. A week later the board resolved to offer the jail and land to the Village of Durand for not less than \$500. No one was interested in purchasing the old jail.

The jail would continue to house prisoners for another ten years. Entries into the county board minutes during that time show regular expenditures for the housing of prisoners, building materials for repair, stove and pipe, etc. The next board action related to the county jail occurred in November 1887 authorizing the Sheriff to continue occupying the building for living quarters and jail. Another seven years passed before the jail would be an

action item on the board's agenda.

At its November 1894 meeting, the county board was read the following letter:

Madison, Wis. Nov. 13, 1894

A. J. Wallace. Co. Clerk.

Durand Wis.

Dear Sir,

Will you please lay the following communication before your county board now in session. A recent inspection of the county jail of Pepin County by a member of the State Board of Control demonstrates its unfitness for use and unsafety. Believing that your county would much rather erect a new jail without resolving to condemnation proceedings but unless a new jail is provided for at this session of the county board, this board [State Board of Control] acting under its authority and duty will proceed to condemn as provided by Sec. 565a Chap. 218 law of 1889.

Hoping you will provide for a new jail at this session of your County Board I am yours respectfully,  
E. Janes, President.

The board, realizing its days of procrastination had finally ended, took the following action:

Resolved that it is the sense of this County Board that a new jail building [including a residence for the sheriff] be erected during the ensuing or coming year on the Court House Square (on the westerly side of the Court House) in the city of Durand according to such plans and specifications as shall be approved by the State Board of Control.

Resolved further that the sum of two thousand dollars be and it is hereby levied upon the taxable property of Pepin County to defray the expense of building said jail and the County Clerk is hereby directed and ordered to include this sum in the next tax levy or apportionment in order that the same be collected from and by the several towns in this county in the next ensuing tax rolls thereof.

A special three-person "Jail Committee" was appointed to prepare plans for a suitable jail and instructed to "...report the same to the County Board at its...meeting in January 1895." The committee got to work immediately and had drawings and specifications for a new jail and sheriff's residence completed by the board's meeting on 7 January 1895. The J.P. Pauley and Bros. jail cells and iron work purchased 14 years earlier and stored by the county would be installed in the new jail. The only change from the plans submitted by the Jail Committee was substitution of double brick walls in place of rock for the jail.

The board then authorized the Committee on Jail Building to borrow a sum not to exceed one- thousand dollars at a rate of interest not exceeding eight percent to use in addition to the two thousand dollars already allocated to pay for the construction. The board instructed the committee to have construction of the jail and sheriff's residence completed by 1 November 1895, in-time for the board's next meeting.

Within a month the Jail Committee had secured a contract:

This article of agreement made by and entered into on this 18th day of February 1895 by and between Pepin County...and Henry Bruenn of the city of Durand...Witnesseth:

That whereas: The County Board...has decided and voted to build a jail and sheriff's residence on the Court House square in the City of Durand...has furnished plans and specifications for the construction of the same and has received bids therefore; and the bid or offer of the said Henry Bruenn...having been on Feb. 8th, 1895 accepted by said Pepin County to do and perform or build and construct the same for the sum of \$2200.

Now therefore the said Henry Bruenn hereby agrees and undertakes to furnish the labor and material to build construct and complete the said jail and sheriff's residence according to said plans and specifications.... Said buildings to be completed by Nov. 1<sup>st</sup>, 1895.

Pepin County agrees to pay...such sums as the work progresses...not exceeding seventy five percent of the total cost to the time of such payment...and the balance due shall be paid when said buildings are accepted by the county board. It is expressly agreed and mutually understood that Pepin reserves the right to make such changes or additions to said plans and specifications as may be suggested or desired by the Building Committee...and to put a bath tub and connections in said building at its own expense.

On 13 November 1895, "The County Board, having inspected the new jail and sheriff's residence as a Committee of the Whole, report that they find that it conforms to the contract made with the county by the builders thereof and ... accepts the said building from Henry Bruenn and J.P. Fox as a completion of their contracts with the county." The board instructed the Committee on County Property to investigate the purchase of a stove for the new jail and authorized the committee to sell the old jail at the end of Wolcott Street to the highest responsible bidder. An offer to purchase the lot for one dollar came three days later, but was rejected by the board.

The county board also agreed to reimburse the Sheriff a rate of sixty cents per day or three dollars per week for the food and washing of each prisoner confined in the county jail.

However, the board made the caveat: "Provided that the county of Pepin will not be liable for any tobacco furnished such prisoner or for lights and bedding for the jail building. ...fuel for said jail building and residence to be furnished by Pepin County."

The following day, the county board formally declared the old jail closed for all jail purposes and the new jail "...open for use, as the county jail of the said County of Pepin...[effective] on the 15th day of November 1895 at the hour of 12 o'clock noon." The board also approved the purchase of a furnace for the new jail and sheriff's residence at a cost of \$195.

In January 1899, the county board approved "...the telephone in the jail and Court House to be retained in use provided the same can be had for a sum not to exceed \$12.00 per year in all." With the 20th century fast approaching, the county board decided that modern conveniences had become a necessity. In November 1899, the board finally resolved that "...the Committee on County Property be...instructed to have electric lights put in the Court House and Jail [and Sheriff's residence]. Not to exceed twenty lights and also a twenty light meter."

The sheriff was held responsible for paying the cost for electricity in the sheriff's residence. The sheriff likely felt this cost exceeded his ability to pay based on his salary and the revenues he was currently receiving from the county for operating the jail. In January 1901, the county board acquiesced and authorized the Committee on County Property to "...make such arrangements with the sheriff for lights in the jail and residence not to exceed \$12.00 per year expense to the County."

Improvements to Washington Square and the county buildings continued. A new furnace was approved for the jail and sheriff's residence in 1901 and in 1906 the board authorized the Committee on County Property to "...receive bids and let the contract for an artesian well to be drilled in the Courthouse Lot...and make proper arrangements to connect pipes with such well for sufficient water supply for all purposes in the County Court House and County Jail." In November 1912, the board approved construction of a new chimney in the residence part of the jail.

In 1925, the board authorized construction of a "...good fence to be put up around the Jail, also screens for the windows." The following year, the City of Durand asked for and received permission from the board to build a rest room on the courthouse grounds.

By 1927, the nation's economy had slowed and petty crime and the presence of transients were increasing in the county. The County Sheriff received permission from the board to begin charging prisoners and transients confined in the county jail up to forty cents per meal and forty cents per night for lodging.

The now three-decades-old jail had begun to show signs of wear-&-tear and, in November 1928, the County Property Committee was instructed to investigate needed repairs to the jail and to report back to the board at its January 1929 meeting. The topic was not mentioned in the January meeting minutes. Nor was the topic of the jail to appear again in

any significant way in the board meeting minutes for the next quarter century. However, when finally brought to the board's attention again in the early 1950s, history would repeat itself. The now seriously deficient jail would become the target of criticism by the state; the county board would procrastinate again and again; and, the jail would continue to house prisoners for another thirty years.

In April 1953, the condition of the jail, now nearly sixty-years-old, was brought to the attention of the county board. The county's jail failed once again to meet state standards. A letter from Bernard J. Collins, a detention inspector from the State Divisions of Corrections in Madison was entered into the board's meeting minutes. Collins had inspected the jail the previous February and stated:

...it was found in good condition with regard to cleanliness.

It was noted that the fire escape which has been previously recommended has not been installed. This is most important for the safety of those confined in your jail. If in case of a fire and men were trapped your county could be held liable. We trust this escape will be installed as soon as possible.

We are also recommending the following:

1. Replace or recover complete jail floor.
2. Replace wooden table and chairs with one piece metal and bench.  
The wooden tables and chairs now in use could be broken up and the legs etc., used as weapons.
3. As a sanitary measure, paper drinking cups and dispensers should be installed.

In response to the recommendations made by Collins, Sheriff Ceacil Seline presented the county board with a list of other repairs and materials needed at the jail, including painting and wallpapering and screens for the windows, plus a cot, two mattresses, two chairs, a pillow, a mop wringer and one toilet seat. The board took no action other than to refer the matter to the Property Committee. Little action would be taken on these issues for another two years.

The Division of Corrections was unhappy with the county's failure to comply with its recommendations and in March 1955 a tersely worded letter to County Clerk Eve Dickelman from Special Investigator for the Division, M.A. Skaff, stated:

On March 22, 1955 I met with you, Mr. Albert Rippley of the Property Committee and with Sheriff Seline in regard to our previous recommendations. At the time of my visit I was assured that another exit from the jail would be installed just as soon as the weather permits and that

a new floor would be put in the jail. We are recommending that the jail be painted during the time that this work is being done. The present wooden tables and chairs should be removed and replaced by a one unit metal table and bench that can be fastened to the floor for security reasons.

The Property Committee had already arranged for plans to be drawn for the additional jail exit door and these were approved by the state. This portion of the project was probably completed in 1955. The special one unit metal table and bench was also installed in the jail during the same year.

The Division of Corrections returned in July 1957 to inspect the improvements made to the jail and found:

The jail was clean, well kept, and in good appearance. However, the standards of management and maintenance by the sheriff and the sheriff's staff of the obsolete jail facilities do not make up for the lack of those facilities which meet the standards set by the Wisconsin State Department of Public Welfare.

It is strongly recommended that the County Board at its next meeting go on record as authorizing the sheriff, when necessary, to employ personnel to comply with Sections 53.41 and 53.42 of the Wisconsin Statutes pertaining to jailers and matrons. The Attorney General has ruled that a jailor or matron must be "present and on [duty] and awake" whenever prisoners are confined.

The Pepin County Jail does not meet even the minimum requirements of the jail standards; and the county officials [should] in the near future, take whatever steps are necessary to provide detention facilities which will meet the needs of the county, the requirements of the Wisconsin Statutes, and the Standards Representatives of this Department....

No immediate action was taken by the county board, but it would address the matter the following year.

In November 1958, a representative of the Division of Corrections of the State Department of Public Welfare appeared before the Board and advised that under Section 46.17 (2), some remodeling had to be done in the near future including: each cell must be at least 5.5 by 7.5 feet in size, have toilets and lavatories, and must be equipped with lights and sufficient ventilation. The board then discussed the conditions of the jail cells and the state's previous recommendations for repairs to the floor and the sink, sewer and water connections. It also discussed repairs and improvements needed in the kitchen and bathroom in the sheriff's residence. The board unanimously agreed to authorize the Property

Committee to make necessary repairs in the kitchen and the jail with money for this work to come from the General Fund.

It would be another two years before the county board's attention was once again forced to return to the deplorable conditions of the jail. A letter from R. J. Di Dalvo, Detention Supervisor with the Division of Corrections was entered into the February, 1960 meeting minutes:

... this Department would have no alternative but to request certain minimum requirements and improvements to the present facility in order to permit the Pepin County Jail to operate as a detention facility.

Since county officials have not acted to improve the facility, the following improvements to the Pepin County jail are requested.

1. Provide a heavy quarter-inch wire-mesh screen on the inside of all windows to which prisoners have access to prevent breakage and the passage of contraband.
2. Remove three of the bunks in the cell containing four bunks and remove two of the bunks in the cell now containing three bunks as now only single occupancy of cells can be permitted.
3. Provide protected light in the bull area and cells.
4. The flush box on the toilet is broken, and it is requested that this toilet be replaced with a new institutional-type toilet with a push-button operating mechanism.
5. Continue to transport all sentenced prisoners, females, and juveniles to an approved facility.

I should also like to point out that you cannot always be certain that adjoining counties will be able to accept prisoners, particularly if their facilities are likewise filled to capacity and also that this type of an operation does necessitate the absence of enforcement officers from the county during periods when prisoners are being transported. I must also point out that some jails who are not approved for the detention of females have experienced charges of over \$30 per day to hold a female in an approved facility. Considering a female who must be held at this rate for any length of time, this can run into a great deal of added expense. It is very unfortunate; however, several counties have experienced and are experiencing this situation at the present time.

It is not the intention of this Department to be demanding or arbitrary, however, as you know, the Department of Public Welfare, Division of Corrections, has statutory responsibility for the health, welfare, safety, and security of individuals who are confined in county or municipal jails or lock-

ups. Acting under these responsibilities, we have no alternative but to request that the aforementioned requests be complied with in the immediate future.

The letter was referred to committee.

By 1964, jail facilities and sheriff's administrative office had been determined to be inadequate and out-of-date. The sheriff's office had since 1895 been housed in a small room in the southeast corner of the sheriff's residence which adjoined the jail. After nearly 70 years, much of the administrative work was now spilling over into other rooms in the residence. The sheriff's department also had to rent a garage for its squad cars. In February, the Sheriff and Justice Committee were authorized to investigate the needs, siting and cost of a new office and garage. At its meeting in March, the county board authorized preparation of plans, specifications and costs of construction of a new 1,000 square foot office and garage adjoining the southwest side of the present residence and jail. Discussion continued and differences of opinion arose during the next several months about razing the old residence and building new. In November, the board authorized drawing plans for a new three-bedroom residence, a 12'x18' garage, a 10'x10' interrogation room and a public toilet, all of which would be attached to the existing jail. The following February, architectural plans were presented to the board with an estimated \$35,000 cost of construction. The project was tabled.

Sheriff Roger Britton continued to plead his case for an office separate from his living quarters in the sheriff's residence. In August 1965, he proposed remodeling the residence by moving the bathroom located on the first floor to the second floor and expanding the southeast corner room and bathroom space into a sheriff's office for an estimated cost of \$2,500. The board authorized the Property Committee to proceed with the remodeling project.

Pepin County's 70-year-old jail continued to concern state officials who had placed restrictions for detention of persons in the Pepin County jail because the present facility did not meet the requirements of the Wisconsin Statutes and established jail standards. In November 1967, the Division of Corrections strongly suggested, "Some action should be forth coming relative to instituting action for remodeling the present facility, or building a new one." This letter was read aloud to the board, but it took no action.

Another such letter from Corrections was received in February 1968 once again advising the county of restrictions imposed on the county jail:

... (1) the Pepin County jail is not approved for the detention of juveniles, nor for the detention of female adults. Persons in this category to be held must be transported to an approved facility; (2) also, sentenced prisoners are to be

transported to an approved facility; also all persons awaiting trial or disposition who must be held for periods of more than 72 hours must be transported to an approved facility.

It is interesting to note that similar restrictions were imposed as far back as 1948. In the course of 20 years nothing has been done except for cleaning, painting, and replacement of the mattresses. If your authorities are interested in maintaining a jail facility it is about time that some action is instituted.

This letter was read to the county board, which then passed a motion to accept it and place it on file.

The county board continued to resist the calls for major improvements and more room in the courthouse and jail for another seven years. The county's early neglect during the 1920s and 30s may have been perceived as simple non-compliance. But four decades later, the county's inaction had taken on an air of outright defiance of the state. Then, suddenly in 1975, the county board got the urge to spend money. The Sheriff had been petitioning the board for additional space for years and his wishes finally came true with a 24'x30' addition with a full basement to be attached to the existing sheriff's residence at a cost of \$15,000.

Spending slowed during the next several years. Sheriff Britton made a request in 1978 for construction of a three-car garage between the old courthouse and sheriff's residence, but it went nowhere.

During 1981, county staff and interested citizens nominated the Pepin County courthouse and jail for listing on the State and National Registers of Historic Places. Both properties were accepted and listed in March 1982.

In June 1982, the jail saga resumed; another presentation was made to the board by the State Division of Corrections about conditions of the jail. The Division of Corrections allowed the county to detain people only until their initial court appearance and bail was set. If a person could not post bail, the county had to move that person to a county which could provide adequate facilities. Only persons sentenced to work release could be housed in the Pepin County jail, which was "...allowed only because they are working and are not subjected to the extreme conditions of the facility 24 hours a day." The Law Enforcement Committee was instructed to study the matter and report back to the board in August.

The county board finally began to look more seriously for solutions; more specifically to look to the old hospital in Durand as a possible solution to the over-crowding and declining condition of all county facilities. Great Lakes Adventist Health System (GLAHS), which operated the hospital, wanted to build a new structure. The county and City of Durand co-owned the old hospital building and would have to do something once

GLAHS vacated it.

The Division of Corrections returned in October 1982 and advised the board that enforcement by the state of the restrictions on use of the county jail had been "loosely enforced during these [past] 20 years...[and]...that if something is not started now, they would have to enforce the restrictions." The state recommended a dormitory style addition to the existing jail and the board authorized the Sheriff and the Justice Committee to get additional information and estimates for construction of a jail addition. Later during the same meeting, a motion was approved to contact architects about the cost to rehabilitate the hospital building for use by the county. Within a month, an architect had examined the floor plans of the hospital building and concluded the county could make use of the building as a county government center and jail. Meanwhile, the sheriff took the initiative to inspect the old hospital property with Division of Corrections officials and concluded part of it had good potential for remodeling and renovation into a jail.

Efforts toward moving county government and jail operations to the old hospital accelerated. Funding budgeted for construction of a dormitory addition to the existing jail was redirected into remodeling the old hospital. The renovation of the old hospital proceeded and was completed by the summer of 1984.

Once the Sheriff's Department and jail had moved to their new facilities in the renovated and remodeled hospital, the question arose as to continuation of free lodging for the Sheriff in the residence on Washington Square. In November 1984, the Study Committee recommended to the county board that a monthly rent of \$250 not including utilities be set for the year 1985. The county board had the entire Washington Square surveyed and divided into four separate lots. Lot 1 (the front lawn) and Lot 4 (sheriff's residence/office/jail) were then put up for sale. Bids would be opened at the board's next meeting. The county received no bids on Lot 1 and just two bids for Lot 4 one for \$3600 and one for \$20,100 from the county sheriff. Both bids were rejected.

In the meantime, the county board agreed to lease the now vacant old courthouse to the Pepin County Historical Society (PCHS) for use as a county museum. The county also allowed PCHS to use the old jail as a featured museum exhibit.

Expenses for utilities and insurance for the former jail and sheriff's residence continued and the county was anxious to sell. Finally, in December 1986, Wilbert Weiss and Zita Stewart, owners of Weiss and Associates Realty, offered the county \$25,000 for the sheriff's residence and jail. The board unanimously approved the offer. The Historical Society and the new owners negotiated a lease agreement to allow the Society to continue using the jail.

Today, the former jail and sheriff's residence is owned by Gordy Weiss and Weiss Realty LLC, which continues to allow PCHS use of the jail.

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