

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

November 12, 1965

The Old Jail

"Trenches for the outside wall are to be dug to the ledge, if reached without five feet, otherwise to that depth and three feet wide."

These instructions to the contractor are contained in the original specifications for the Monterey County jail next to Colton Hall, according to the plan submitted, the original of which is a prized possession of the Monterey History and Art Association.

The document was presented to the association by Robert Richards, a son of the builder of the jail. Robert Richards was born in Monterey in 1858 to Charles J. Richards and Camen Simbreros de Richards.

The specifications go on to state that the yard wall must be two feet wide and three feet deep or to the ledge, if reached before that depth. A wall was to be dug in the rear of the jail, deep enough for a sufficient supply of water. A privy was to be dug in the yard four feet in diameter and six feet in depth. The yard was to be leveled and all surplus earth and rubbish carted away.

The foundations were to be laid in Monterey granite and each stone used in the cell walls to be clamped and dowelled, with top of the cells arched with granite, to lap on each wall one foot and to be laid in pieces from two feet wide and upwards. The floor was specified to be granite blocks one foot thick and at least two feet square, and to lap on foundations at least one foot. The front and rear steps were to be of Monterey granite.

It was also made very plain in the specifications that all iron bars, eyes, loops, etc., required were to be built in the walls as the work progressed.

It was also interesting to note that the wall was to be built of the same kind of stone as the present courthouse (Colton Hall) or of granite, at the option of the court, round the lot on the south end of the courthouse and enclosed lot, or of the same dimensions in any other locality. This wall was to be built of good live lime and sand mortar, to be two feet thick and surface of the earth and one foot nine inches at the top, and to average nine feet in height. It was to be finished level on the top with a concrete of strong cement with broken bottles bedded in same.

It would be attractive and timely if that wall could be replaced around one of the West's most historic buildings.

Two chimneys were ordered built, one to each front room to start from the top of the wall, with apertures for stove pipes. Letters over the door were to be block letters, raised on the surface of the door lintel. Privy and well were to be built up with 12-inch brickwork, substantially laid in good lime and san mortar.

The bars for the cell windows were well specified in the plans. They were to be upright two inches square, and horizontal one-half inch by three and one half inches flat iron. The upright bars were to be built into the wall two feet above and two feet below the openings and horizontal bars to be built at least two feet into the wall on each side window. We wonder if any prisoner has even been able to remove a bar!

The debtor's room door, each cell door and other openings, the entrance to the cell, the rear door are all provided, according to the specification of 1854, with one closed iron door of three-fourth inch boiler iron. The same quality and description as then used on the county jail in San Francisco, was to be used on all locks and fastenings of all iron doors.

Redwood was specified under "carpenter work" for the rafters, for the roof and joist, for the ceiling, along the entire length of the building, to be three by eight inches. The roof was to be covered by inch redwood boards, and good redwood shingles in four-inch courses. The floor were originally one and one-fourth inch grooved and tongued yellow pine.

The privy was ordered built of redwood 3 by 4 inches framed, and clapboard with sound redwood boards planed. The roof was to be redwood and "well shingled." The floor was to be yellow pine and to have three seats, well covered, and a neat panel door.

All the inside of the jail was to receive two coats of lime mortar and all other inside walls to have three coats.

The specifications were signed W.S. Johnson