

## OLD JAIL CHAINS ...

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**Source:** Crawfordsville Journal Review unknown date (but likely in 1946-50ish as talking about during WWII on page above)-- *thanks so much, Connie W :)*

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Relics of chains evidently used many years ago in holding prisoners in the old Montgomery County Jail have been found in the basement of the building being remodeled at 132 W. Main St. Hall's Emporium, now at 124 S. Washington, will occupy the remodeled building next month. Mrs. Ina Hall and her son, Hubert operate the Emporium. Several hinges have been found in the basement wall of the building. These possibly were once used as anchors for the chains. And several chain links were also found by Kenneth McCollum, who was on duty while the basement was being cleaned out. These chains, it is believed, could have been parts of the chains used on prisoners.

Gould Westfall, who vacated the room after Mrs. Hall and her son had purchased the building a few weeks ago, found in the basement a chain about 3' long, at each end of which was attached a ring, forming a pair of shackles. Handcuffs could have been attached to these rings, thus preventing a prisoner from working to remove any obstacles in the way of his escape. Or, the shackles could have been used in locking together the feet of a prisoner.

It is reported that other workmen with George Smith and Company, contractors for repairing the building, have found evidence that chains were used, presumably in the old jail. A Crawfordsville businessman, now in his late 70s, recalled Friday that when he was a lad six or seven years old, he and another youth were taken to the jail because a well known resident of those days reported they stole some watermelons from his patch. A prisoner in the jail, evidently feeling sorry for the two boys, broke a window and helped them escape. Pioneer days in the history of Crawfordsville are recalled in the deed for the property Mrs. Hall and her son will occupy. The ground on which the present building stands was deeded by the US to Ambrose Whitlock, pioneer

resident of the village of Crawfordsville, on Nov 8, 1822. Previously, the copy of the patent which had been issued, bore the date of Jan 21, 1813. (sic)

In the original plat for the town of Crawfordsville, made March 1, 1823, the location was known as Lot No. 50, according to records in the Security Abstract & Title Company. These records show that Mr. Whitlock gave a number of lots, those bearing even numbers, to the new village to help it financially.

Lot No. 1 in the original plat is now occupied by the residence on the northeast corner of Wabash and Grant Avenues. The old jail was built around 1830 or 1831 to replace an older jail which had burned. The original jail, destroyed in 1827, consisted of a few ceels in the county office building on the public square. After the old jail burned, the commissioners negotiated for a lot upon which to build a new jail. It was then that Mr. Whitlock deeded Lot no 50 to them.

The jail, a combined stone and brick structure, had a small dungeon where the worst criminals were kept. The present Montgomery County Jail on North Washington Street was built in 1882. The old jail was built some 50' back from the sidewalk. It was in this front yard that the hanging of a Mr. Coffee took place more than 3/4 of a century ago. The rope used broke twice before Coffee was finally hanged after being found guilty of murder. The brick building constructed on the site was built by John M. Schultz. He purchased the old jail property when it was sold at auction Aug 26, 1882, by the commissioners of Montgomery County after the present jail had been built. Mrs. Hall and her son are planning to have their opening in the new location on Jan 21, which day will mark the beginning of their 20th year of business in Crawfordsville.

Mrs. Hall and the late Mrs. Florence Canine started the business in the old Graham Building, just a few doors east of the present structure where the office of Township Trustee Fred Houlehan is now located. Within a short time, Mrs. Daisy Flannigan took over Mrs. Canine's interests. Then in the following year, her son, Hubert, a student at Wabash College, gave up his studies to enter the business. - *typed by kbz*