

Newsletter

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METAMORA ASSOCIATION FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

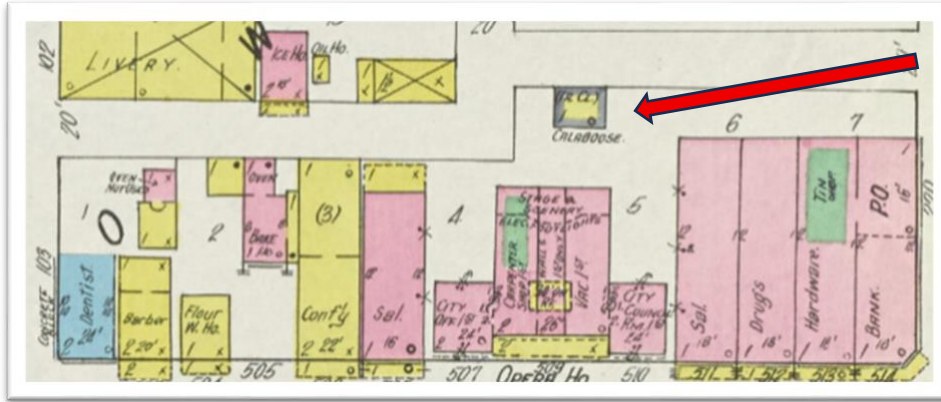
Did You Know that Metamora Once Had a Calaboose?

Most Metamora history buffs know about the old Woodford County jail (still standing on East Partridge Street). Built in 1852, it served Woodford County until the county seat was moved to Eureka in the 1890's.

But did you know that Metamora also had a calaboose?

We found the story below in the 1891 *Evening Peorian*. Accompanied by Metamora native, attorney Sam Page, the *Evening* editor visited Metamora and submitted this story. Although it doesn't identify the location, the description seems to point us to the old calaboose behind the Courthouse. Calaboosees were used to lockup its guests for short term violations such as being intoxicated, minor offenses, being a vagrant, etc. Their stay was normally just overnight.

The Stanford Fire map shows the old log structure – later covered with bricks – in the 1893 and 1910 village map.



Here's the report..."the Andersonville of Illinois"

We next visited the county jail, and can not resist the temptation of giving to the people of Central Illinois a brief description of that structure. It is a fair looking building, looking at it from the street, but when you come to examine the interior, it fills one with disgust and loathing, and makes a man feel as though he would sooner suffer a thousand deaths than be confined in such a prison, and we do not wonder at Sheriff Wilkinson being loath to show a newspaper man through the Andersonville of Illinois. It is without a doubt the poorest excuse for a jail east of the Mississippi. It is a relic of bygone days, and we think that if one of

the circuit judges would in some way the supervisors who oppose a new jail to be incarcerated there a week, a new jail would soon be erected there. From the interior it presents a very primitive appearance, having been formerly an old log jail, and when the present brick building was put up it was built around the old logs. There are only two cells, one above the other, and on the floor in the center of them we noticed a relic of barbarism, which is required there for the safe keeping of

criminals, while it is a disgrace to the county. We refer to the chain with which we suppose they chain down prisoners who could not be kept in any other way, as any crook of any experience could easily work out of such a corn crib. The sanitary condition is anything but enviable, and if in Peoria would be declared a nuisance. Lack of space prevents any further mention of this beastly bastille, but at some future day we expect to again visit that town and will continue this exhortation with the powers that be.



Former Home of Milo Ranney – 1920 across from Kirby Foods



Milo's Wife Ruth, Eloise, Brooks, Richard 1920 (Barn Behind)



Nicolas Baker Built for his New Bride but died before getting married

Creative Math Used in the Vote for the Courthouse Location in 1883 – Maybe Deja vu?

The *Chillicothe Independent* newspaper reported that “out of a voting population of less than 4,500 in the county, 5,024 of them are in favor of removal” of the Courthouse from Metamora.”

The folks in Metamora voted for Roanoke as the new county seat because they thought it would be easier to defeat Roanoke in the final vote than to defeat Eureka. Also “Metamora folks claim that Roanoke and Eureka had a combination for their undoing.”

What’s the Difference between a Log Cabin and a Log Home?

The guide on a recent New Salem tour explained that a log home featured square-cut logs – ie the round edges were removed with a whipsaw. The result was straight walls – both on the interior and exterior. This was important so cladding could be affixed to the exterior to make the home more air tight. On the interior, some type of plaster-like material could be added to make the home even more air tight. These steps also helped reduce the need to repair any gaps between the logs each year. And by using straight edged sawn timber, the gaps were greatly reduced. Log cabins used uncut logs and were mainly used for barns and storage.

Debates and Court Cases of Emancipator Recalled



At the 1932 Old Settlers that celebrated the reconstruction of the Courthouse, these 8 persons were the only survivors who remembered either knowing Lincoln or heard him speak. L to R: Peter Sommer, 84, Metamora; Miss Emma Scott, 87, Washington; Dr. R.J. Radford, 93, Eureka; T.W. Stevenson, 81, Hudson; John Noirot, 81, and Mrs. Noirot, 79, Peoria; W.A. Davidson, 95, Eureka, and Joseph Martin, 80, Metamora. Mr. Stevenson is the brother of Adlai Stevenson. He was present when his brother took his oral bar examination, Abraham Lincoln being one of the examiners, and it was Mr. Lincoln who recommended that Mr. Stevenson start his practice of law at Metamora.

Lincoln Trial Scene Re-Enacted at Metamora



At the same celebration, a reenactment of a Lincoln trial was featured in the Courthouse. Judge George T. Page of Peoria is presiding at the same desk used there when Lincoln pleaded his cases, 1847 to 1857. Other actors were C.S. Holman of Eureka, clerk swearing in the witness, who is L.J. Freese, president of the Woodford Historical Society Judge W.H. Foster of Eureka who portrayed Lincoln and Charlse Williams, Sheriff F.O. Pifer, J.C. Snyder, Peter Shepherd, Frank Giehl, M.J. Ranney, W.K. Briggs, Charles Conad, W.H. Brubaker, J.A. Minger, F Ridge, Frank Leonard, Frank Wagner, Amos Marshall, J.P. Sheid, and Earl Mason. R.M. Barnes of Lacon served as an attorney and Dr. George Zeller was the bailiff.

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