

Lafayette's first jail

Researched by Doug Conarroe
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There is evidence that the nondescript garage on the alley of 500 E. Cleveland is Lafayette's first jail and town hall. The current building is 15-feet wide on the gable end and appears to be constructed of soft bricks that are covered with stucco. It has a corrugated roof placed on top of cedar shingles. There are anti-splay bolts showing on the exterior near the eaves on the north and south side. Anti-splay bolts are common in brick buildings that are/were showing signs of instability.

The front door and a side window of the two-room jail faced west onto Michigan Ave., now an overhead garage door. The interior has a ceiling and wainscotting on the wall, items not normally installed in garages.

Mary Miller's grandson, Frank Miller (1893-1973), has extensive narratives about the local bricks made at the Dutch Colony east of Lafayette prior to 1900. It was not a factory per se, but rather a small scale, craft operation that produced soft bricks using wood molds. Horses powering a "whim" pressed the clay into the molds. The soft bricks were fired in coal-fired kilns, but were not vitrified. Because of this, Frank Miller states that the inferior-quality bricks absorbed water and were therefore vulnerable to the freeze-thaw cycle. That meant that buildings constructed using the soft bricks needed a coating of stucco so that the bricks wouldn't melt away in the weather. This stucco mitigation method is found on the Metcalf house, and appears to be the case at the former jail structure at 500 E. Cleveland.

(BTW Frank Miller's comments would indicate that the Pascoe home at 103 E. Simpson wasn't built using the soft bricks fired locally. It's pretty clear the Pascoe house has vitrified bricks that were machine made using a mechanized extrusion process, probably made at the Boulder Brick Co.)

The few remaining structures using local brick include the Angevine house, the Metcalf house at 207 E. Simpson, and (I believe) the old jail building at 500 E. Cleveland.

Evidence of the jail building's significance

• County clerk

Lot 6, Block 11, today's 500 E. Cleveland, purchased by town from Mary Miller 4/15/1893. The town's first property purchase in the incorporated town limits.

• Sanborn maps

1900: Shows brick structure, 15-feet wide, on the alley of 500 E. Cleveland, building with slate or metal roof overhangs property line by about a foot. Labeled "Calaboose" which means "town jail." Openings to the structure face west onto Michigan Avenue. A roughly 15-feet by 30-feet stable, a wood structure, is shown near the brick building.

1908: Shows same structure at 500 E. Cleveland with overhang/encroachment on west side. Labeled as "dwelling."

1937: Shows same structure at 500 E. Cleveland with no overhang/encroachment on west side. Labeled as "accessory building" (but not configured as a garage) to the main dwelling.

• Published accounts of the jail

Verda A. Lewis Morton from "Lafayette, Colorado History: Treeless Plain to Thriving City," 1990:
"There were two lumber yards...(one was) the Mcallister at 501 E. Cannon. Across the alley north was the small jail building."

Emily O. Smith remembering Llewelyn Davies from "Lafayette, Colorado History: Treeless Plain to Thriving City," 1990:
"The old two room jail was located in our backyard at 500 East Cleveland Street."

Carol Piserchio remembering Percy Brillhart from "Lafayette, Colorado History: Treeless Plain to Thriving City," 1990:
"(Percy Brillhart) was the first clerk of Lafayette and his office was located in the jail house." (I tried to verify that Percy Brillhart was the first town clerk but town board minutes indicate that he was clerk number 7 or 8; appointed to the office in 1906.)

• Town of Lafayette trustee minutes

June 6, 1898 Trustee Simpson reports calaboose fixed up with bunks, new bedding, chairs & tables and in fine condition.

March 1, 1899 Police committee (of the board of trustees) requested to have calaboose fixed & cleaned up.

July 5, 1899 Trustee Simpson reports that Marshal had the pound enlarged and improved, water put in. (At the time the town had no ordinance forbidding dogs or livestock from running loose. Residents could literally have a cow tied up in their front yard and let it graze around town during the day. So this would not have been a reference to a dog pound.)

March 15, 1905 Motion to put before voters a measure to sell Lot 6, Block 11 and issue bonds for \$5,000 to construct town hall offices and a jail.

Nov. 15, 1905 Motion by Knill and seconded by Yates that the front room of the jail be fixed up and put into condition so that the Town Clerk, J.M. Morgan, make use of it for his office; telephone added Dec. 1905. (Brillhart appointed clerk in 1906.)

Dec. 1905 Residents request to town board that a billboard on Lot 6, Block 11 be designated a nuisance and be moved 40-feet south of its present location. (Included simply because it's interesting.)

Nov. 21, 1906 Request for bids for new town hall; including 7-foot by 7-foot steel jail cell.

Town hall opens spring 1907 at northeast corner of Harrison and Simpson. Prior to this date, town board minutes show that meetings were held at three locations: "Goodhue's Barn," the United Mine Workers of America union hall or the Lafayette Bank.

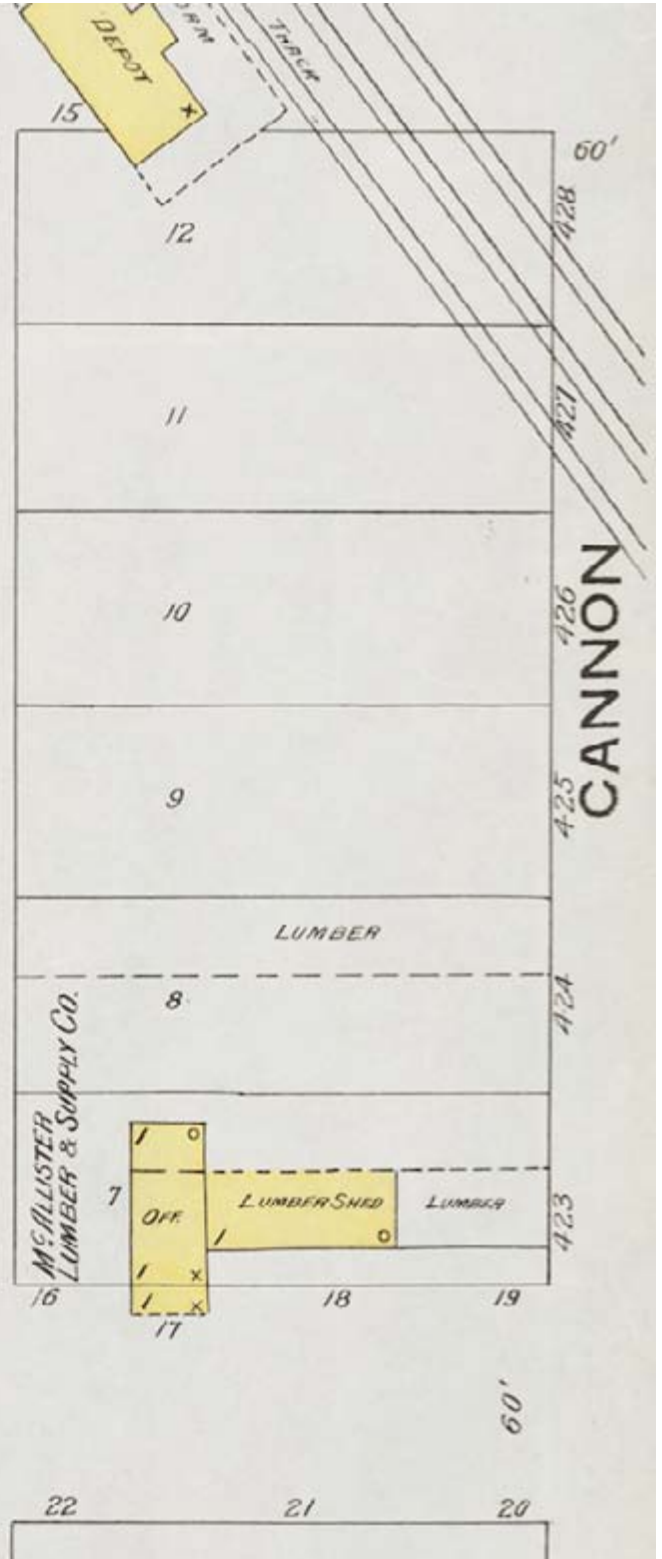
Lot 6, Block 11 sold by town to John J. Thomas on 4/9/1907 for \$500, after special election April 14, 1906, where electors voted in favor of selling the lot.

1900 Sanborn fire insurance map

CLEVELAND

KEY

NO. OF STORIES 3	FIRE WALL 6 IN. AB. ROOF
SHINGLE ROOF x	" " 12 " " "
COMPOSITION R.F. ○	" " 18 " " "
SLATE OR METAL R.F. ○	
B-BASEMENT	FRAME PARTITION
STEAM BOILER	OPENING & IRON DOOR
	OPENING & DOUBLE IRON DOOR
E-ELEVATOR	WINDOWS & IRON SHUTTERS
	STABLE
COUNTING FROM LEFT TO RIGHT WHILE LOOKING TOWARDS BUILDING (DOT REPRESENTS OPENING)	WINDOW IN 1ST STORY
	" " 1ST & 3RD STORY
	" " 2ND & 4TH STORY
BUILDINGS COLORED YELLOW ARE FRAME	
" " " " RED " BRICK	
" " " " BLUE " STONE	
" " " " GREY " IRON	
" " " " GREEN " SPECIALS	

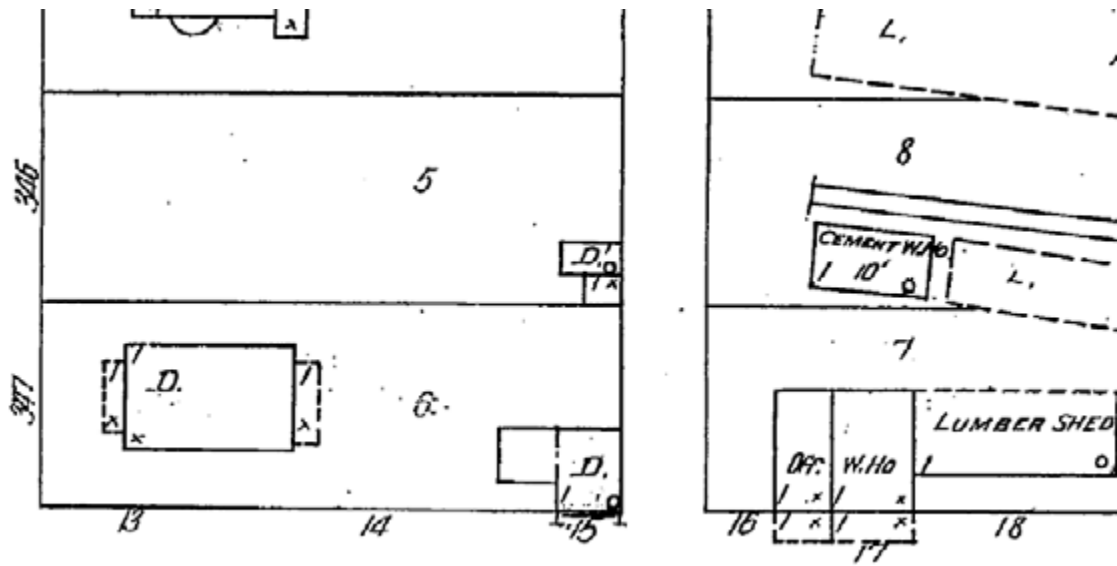


D.H.

Michigan

60'

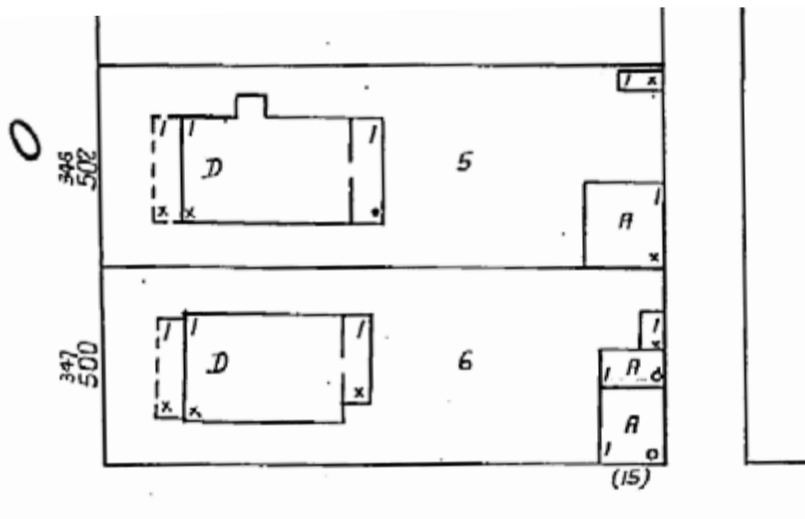
1908 Sanborn fire insurance map



1919 Rocky Mountain Fuel Co. map



1937 Sanborn fire insurance map



PROCEEDINGS TO BE TAKEN BY THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF LAFAYETTE, AND
TO BE MADE PART OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF APRIL 18, 1906.

The Recorder of the Town presented to the Board of trustees
the abstract of the votes cast at the special election, held in said
Town on April 14, 1906, for the purpose of determining whether
or not the Board of Trustees should be authorized to sell the
Town property described as lot six (6) Block eleven (II) in the
Town of Lafayette, known as the town jail, in words and figures
following:

STATE OF COLORADO)
COUNTY OF BOULDER) SS.
TOWN OF LAFAYETTE)

Abstract of the votes cast at the special election,
held in the town of Lafayette, Colorado, on April 14, 1906, for
the purpose of determining the question of whether the Board of
Trustees should be authorized to sell the town property described as
lot six (6) Block eleven (II), in the town of Lafayette, known
as the Town Jail. The whole number of votes cast, as shown by the
certificates of the judges of election, attested by the clerks of elec-
tion and by the poll books for the only voting place at said election
in said town was 84 votes of which 53 votes were for the selling
of said lot 6, Block II, in the town of Lafayette and 31 votes were
against the selling of said lot 6, Block II in the Town of Lafayette.
The said returns of the Judges of Election were opened by J. M.
Morgan, town clerk and recorder in the presence of the mayor and
this abstract was made out April 17, 1906 at the Town of Lafayette,
Colorado.

Certified to by me April 17, 1906.

J. M. Morgan
Town Clerk and Recorder.

Thor J. Bryman
Mayor of the Town of
Lafayette, Colo.



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