

Old Freestone Jail (1967)

Marker #: 9879 – Archived Oct. 2024

OLD Marker Text:

Built 1857 to meet fortress-like specifications: interior walls are 18 inches thick, outer walls, 30 inches. Constructed of brick and oak timbers. Prison, upstairs, had floor of thick oak planks, with subfloor of iron. Jailer lived on ground floor. Folklore says the notorious gunman John Wesley Hardin once spent a night here. This was used as a jail until 1913. It became a museum in 1967. Recorded Texas Historic Landmark, 1967

Notes: The marker contains several errors; and an application was filed with the THC for a corrected marker in 2022. The new marker was installed and dedicated on Oct. 5, 2024. There was a jail by this description on this same site in 1857. However, the 1857 Jail was torn down and a new jail was built in 1881. It is thought that many of the bricks were reused in the 1881 jail. The 1881 jail was indeed used until 1913. It is possible that John W. Hardin spent the night in the 1857 jail, but not in the current jail on the site. The first Sheriffs of Freestone County were uncles of John Wesley Hardin, his mother's brother: Emanuel Clements in 1850 (when still Limestone County) and also brother, William Clements in 1851. So the connection again is with the 1857, jail not the 1881 jail.

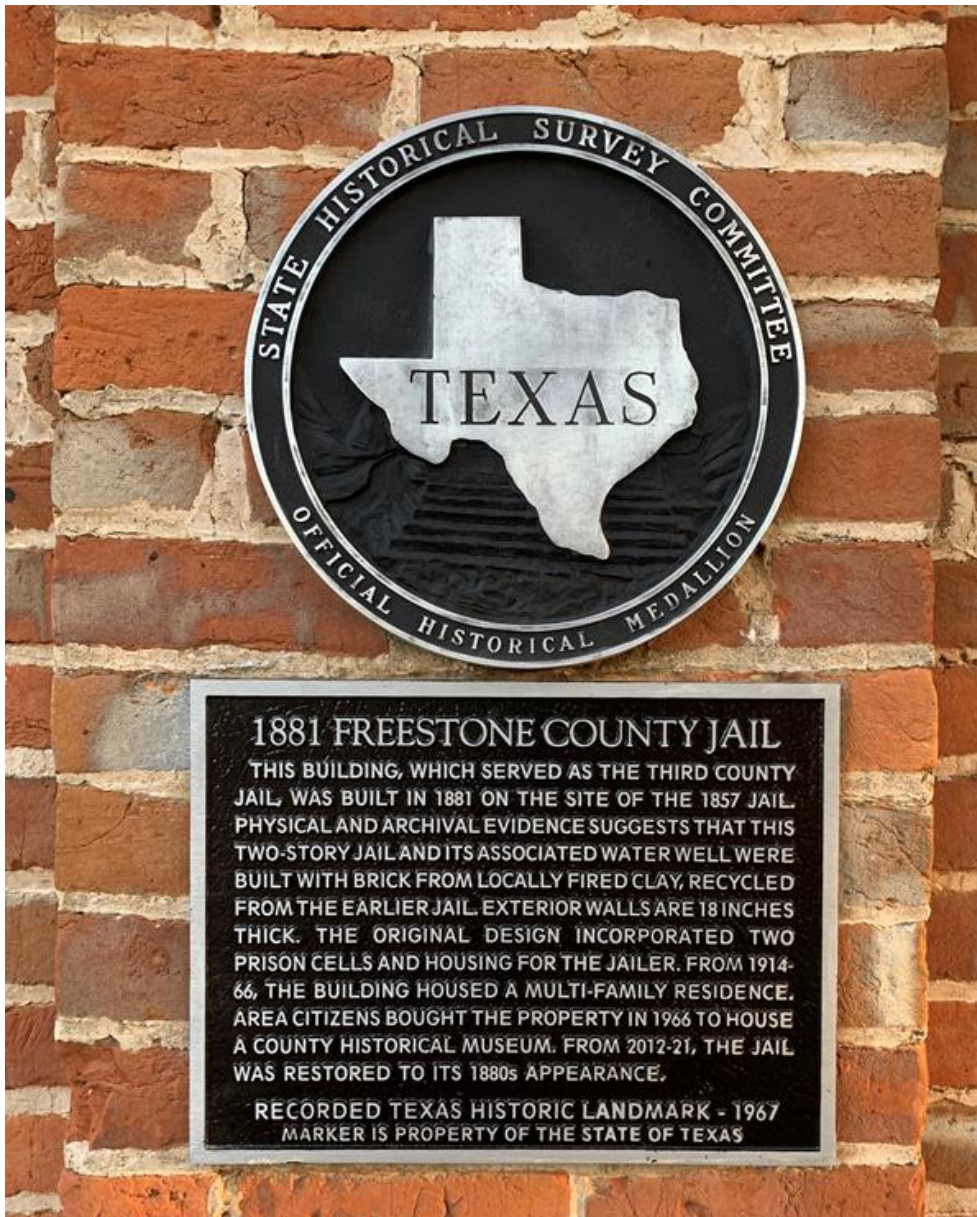
NEW Marker Text: 1881 Freestone County Jail – Marker #24138

THIS BUILDING, WHICH SERVED AS THE THIRD COUNTY JAIL, WAS BUILT IN 1881 ON THE SITE OF THE 1857 JAIL. PHYSICAL AND ARCHIVAL EVIDENCE SUGGESTS THAT THIS TWO-STORY JAIL AND ITS ASSOCIATED WATER WELL WERE BUILT WITH BRICK FROM LOCALLY FIRED CLAY, RECYCLED FROM THE EARLIER JAIL. EXTERIOR WALLS ARE 18 INCHES THICK. THE ORIGINAL DESIGN INCORPORATED TWO PRISON CELLS AND HOUSING FOR THE JAILER. FROM 1914-66 THE BUILDING HOUSED A MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENCE. AREA CITIZENS BOUGHT THE PROPERTY IN 1966 TO HOUSE A COUNTY HISTORICAL MUSEUM. FROM 2012-21 THE JAIL WAS RESTORED TO ITS 1880s APPEARANCE. RECORDED TEXAS HISTORIC LANDMARK – 1967

Directions: From the courthouse in Fairfield, heading East on Hwy 84/ Commerce Street, turn left onto Hall Street just before the Post Office. Go one block and the old jail sits on the corner of Hall and Main Streets. The jail is part of the Freestone County Historical Museum complex.

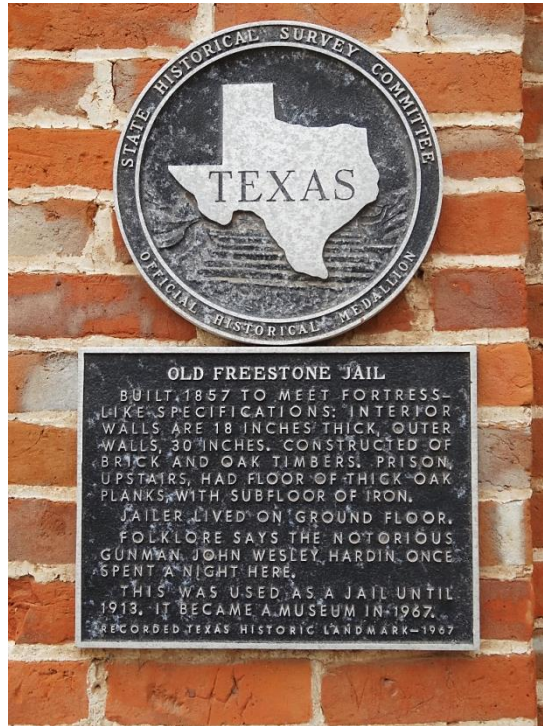
Address: 302 E. Main Street, Fairfield, TX 75840

GPS: 31° 43.586' N, 96° 9.476' W



Corrected Marker Installed and Dedicated on Oct. 5, 2024

Photo by Linda Mullen Oct. 5, 2024



Retired Jail Marker



Photos by Linda Mullen

Marker: 08.14.2017

Jail: 08.13.2021