

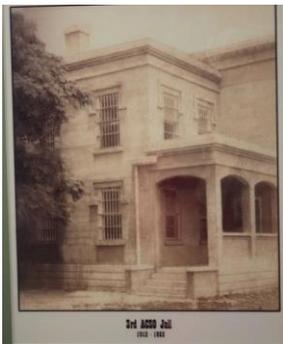
Department of the Jail - History

The current jail in use by Alachua County is an expansion of the fifth incarnation of the Alachua County Jail. The **first jail** existed from 1858 through sometime in the 1870s. The first jail was ordered built during the tenure of Sheriff S.W. Burnett and was created out of double walls of ten-inch logs. It also had a floor of flint rock covered with sealed two-inch planks.

Interestingly, the building also had a second floor.

The **second jail**, known as the “Hotel de Ramsey” for Sheriff Perry Ramsey existed after the demise of the first jail in the 1870s. The jailer from 1904 through 1945 was Warren McRae Torlay, Sr. He was from Melrose, Florida and he suffered from a limp left over from a childhood paralysis. As the jailer, Torlay was solely responsible for running the jail and served every role from director to detention officer. His wife was responsible for the meals served to the prisoners housed in the jails.

Unfortunately, security was poor due to the dilapidated nature of the construction and Torlay had his hands full dealing with escape attempts over the years. During one such attempt, Torlay was shot in the head and back. Two brothers-in-law who had been jailed on forgery charges were smuggled a firearm by one man’s wife. When Torlay entered the cell room, they shot him and escaped. However, Torlay quickly recovered and Sheriff Ramsey recaptured the fugitives and restored them to the jail. On another occasion, Torlay was locked in one of his own cells by an escaping inmate and had to wait for Sheriff Ramsey to come and let him back out again.



In 1911, a grand jury convened and declared the old jail to be unfit for habitation by prisoners and ordered a new jail, **the third jail**, to be built. The new jail would be in use for about forty years. However, the old jail was not torn down. It was recycled for use by the employees, something that was to become a common theme in the future. In this particular case, the old jail became the living quarters for the jailers. The new jail was set to cost the county approximately \$20,000. While that sounds like a bargain in today’s age, in 1912, it was quite a princely sum for a modernized jail with eight iron-barred cells under automatic control. The old jail was kept in use as living quarters for Torlay and his family as well as the kitchen for preparing the inmates’ food.

Jailer Warren Torlay remained a constant in the jail through the late 1930s and early 1940s, even though by then he was no longer the sole jail employee. He remained in charge, assuming primary responsibility for jail operations and security in a role we would consider to be jail director now. In his late sixties, he and two trustees were overpowered by three inmates and beaten severely, but again, Torlay recovered and returned to work. He was thwarting yet another jail escape in 1944 at the age of 71, when he shot and killed one of two escapees. He retired the next year in July, 1945, after 41 years of service to the Alachua County Sheriff’s Office.

By the time Torlay retired, the county’s population and crime had exploded to the point that overcrowding was already a problem. In 1946, Florida State Prison inspectors cited Alachua County for overcrowding, leaving County Commissioners with no choice but to do something about it; although even then they delayed discussions and plans for a new jail until 1950.

The **fourth jail** had a much larger price tag: \$200,000. It opened under Sheriff Frank Sexton in April of 1952. It was much larger than the previous facilities and was considered to be more clean and modern than the old jail. The new facility included space for records and identification on the jail site. These operations had previously been conducted from the courthouse. Yet again, the arguments were not silent for long. This time, only a decade passed before the jail came under fire and plans were being drawn for yet another facility.

This might seem odd, but the new facility was plagued with issues from opening day, including construction, plumbing and even overcrowding problems. A *Gainesville Sun* article from Sheriff Crevasse's time quoted then Chief Deputy Lu Hindery, who started his career as a jailer under Sheriff Sexton, recalling the opening day of the jail saying, "the upstairs plumbing was leaking into the punch in the kitchen below as it was being served to dignitaries present for the grand opening and dedication of the jail."

In 1964, after a rapist escaped from the facility, the County Commission authorized \$45,000 to improve the security of the jail. In 1968, a local group calling themselves the "Society of Friends" submitted a list of demands to the County Commission including that the jail be staffed with a full-time nurse and that two or more blankets be issued to each inmate. They also asked that regular toilet soap instead of lye be issued to inmates, access to regular laundry facilities be added to the cell blocks; and that jail staff take additional measures to exterminate the rats and mice present in the facility. The Commission's response was this: "It is not a Howard Johnson's or anything like that. We do not believe in inhuman treatment, but it is a jail." Commissioner Edgar Johnson's reply to complaints about lumps in the mattresses was, "it is not our desire to make people want to return to the jail." No action was taken in response to the Society's demands.

An independent study was released in 1968, which recommended the merging of the city and county jails and building an entirely new jail facility. However, no action was immediately taken on this until 1974.

In 1969, the plumbing system in the jail, which had not worked right since the day it was installed, was back in the public eye thanks to the *Gainesville Sun*. They published an article of which this is a short excerpt: "Water stands in the boiler room, kitchen drains back up and black slime oozes into the food preparation area, faucets leak everywhere and toilets swarm everywhere with wetness-bred cockroaches." By this time, Sheriff Joe Crevasse had come to office. He called upon the County Commission for assistance with the jail's problems because all of the plumbing issues were eating up ACSO's maintenance budget; not to mention that there was not a plumbing contractor in the region who wanted to get involved in the mess. The Commission pledged to inspect the jail, but stated they thought the plumbing system might cost thousands of dollars to rebuild and that those repairs might have to be spread over several fiscal years. Sheriff Crevasse turned to the Florida Department of Corrections in frustration and demanded a special investigation of the county jail. The inspection was conducted on January 28, 1969, by K.D. Conner, prison investigator and inspector for the State of Florida and J.H. Rozelle, an architect. The inspection resulted in 13 recommendations which were reported in the *Gainesville Sun* on Feb 2, 1969:

1. Locking devices and operators on cells need maintenance and repair by manufacturer.
2. All screens in cell blocks need a hasp and lock at the top and bottom on the side opposite the hinges
3. Provide forced ventilation in all cell areas.
4. The radiant heat in the floor needs work on the control system to prevent interior temperature rise as the outside goes up.
5. Provide a continuous supply of hot water to all lavatories and showers
6. The plumbing wall in many cells has rusted away due to pipe leaks in the pipe chases. Redesign all piping in the pipe chases and replace it. Replace rusted cell walls and reset plumbing fixtures.
7. Relocate the barred door and grille to take in two cells containing six beds to be used for juveniles. Cover door and grille to provide separation from the two areas.
8. A general maintenance man is indicated to handle the routine maintenance problems as they arise.
9. Replace all the open bulbs in the cell areas with new lighting fixtures.
10. Relocate jail entrance to the south end of the first floor with a new control system. A vehicle loading dock is needed in this area.
11. Enclose rear of communication room.
12. Provide communications from all cell block areas to control desk.
13. Begin planning for new addition.

The County Commission finally authorized \$20,000 to \$30,000 in funds to repair plumbing and heating systems of the jail in 1969, but Sheriff Crevasse was forced to take the majority of the money from his own operating budget. The following summer, July 1970, Sheriff Crevasse requested \$600,000 from the Commission to build a new wing capable of housing an additional 50 inmates and to add security windows. When Sheriff Crevasse made this request, the jail's capacity was 92 inmates but regularly averaged approximately 102 inmates. The extra inmates slept on the floor, a practice strictly against Florida Department of Corrections regulations. Yet, Sheriff Crevasse's pleas and regular media coverage about severe overcrowding in the jail did not appear to be a budgetary concern for the County Commission, at least until tragedy struck. When 25 year-old William Baugher, a young man arrested for smoking pot on University Avenue, was tortured and murdered by his cell mate on September 22, 1970, the Commission had no choice but to turn its attention to the overcrowded conditions at the jail it had largely ignored for the previous 22 years. Indeed, on November 10, 1970, the Grand Jury convened to investigate William Baugher's death ordered the County Commission to report to them on the overall conditions on the jail and what measures were being taken to improve the situation and to have that report done in the hands of the Grand Jury by March 31, 1971. A *Gainesville Sun* article is quoted as saying, "This report took Sheriff Crevasse off the hot seat and laid all the blame for jail conditions in the county commissioners' laps."

Unable to ignore the problems of the jail any longer due to the Grand Jury's demand, the County Commission formed a blue-ribbon committee consisting of Circuit Judge John Murphree, County Judge John Connell, State Attorney Ted Duncan, Public Defender R.A. Green, State Senator Bob Saunders, Sheriff Joe Crevasse, Bar Association President David Anderson, Parole and Probation Commission Supervisor Harold Martin, Enid Mahon, a member of the Government Study Committee Task Force investigating the jail and judiciary and Chairman of the Alachua County Commission, Jack Durrance. Meanwhile, Sheriff Crevasse was granted funds to hire five additional jailers to patrol the cell blocks of the jail and is quoted as saying, "It will be implemented before the sun sets this afternoon." Prior to new deputies being hired, Crevasse paid existing deputies overtime.

By December of 1970, the blue-ribbon committee returned these recommendations:

1. A totally new jail be built as soon as possible.
2. The new jail should be designed to serve the needs of the county and all the cities in the county.
3. That an additional judicial administration facility be constructed or otherwise provided as soon as possible.
4. That should additional judicial facilities be constructed, they should not be combined in a single building with the new jail facility.
5. That every possibility of financing such new judicial administration and jail construction through federal funding be explored before a bond issue is presented.
6. That the operating budget of the jail be separated from that of the law enforcement agency. An additional four recommendations were made to legislators since they could only be accomplished through a special act of legislation:
 1. That an additional trial judge be provided to handle the ever-increasing felony case load in the county.
 2. That procedure be adopted to avoid unnecessarily long confinements in jail awaiting court action. These would include but not be limited to:
 - a. An institution of pre-trial investigation program for recognizance releases and/or bond reductions
 - b. Assignment of priority to trial prisoners confined in jail as opposed to those prisoners out on bond
 - c. Designing computer systems and/or new procedures to eliminate bottlenecks to provide automatic scheduling of court action and eliminate duplication of effort and paperwork.

3. Additional staff be acquired for the Office of Florida Probation and Parole Commission
4. That achieving solutions to the problems identified by the committee, consideration should be given to the existing financial limitation of counties, and the need for the state legislature to either:
 - a. Assume the financial responsibility for funding such suggested changes, or
 - b. That the proposed changes be coupled with the new funding sources being made available to local government.

The County Commission accepted the report; however, Commissioners Durrance and Martin were very vocal on their stance that a new jail not be built without further study. They also felt that if a new jail was built, Sheriff Crevasse should not be involved in the running of it and that henceforth, corrections and law enforcement should remain separate. Edwin Turlington differed, saying, "Consolidating all government, including law enforcement is going to happen whether you want it or I want it. Economics will force it."

However, the County Commission's plans to take over were not acted upon immediately. Sheriff Crevasse told a citizen's group in September of 1971 that he had added five guards to the cell blocks, inmates were now segregated by their age and by the severity of their crimes, and that another trial judge had been added, shortening the time inmates spent in the jail prior to going to trial. As far as Sheriff Crevasse was concerned, all of this meant that citizens "would be safer in the Alachua County jail than walking the streets of a big city."

Plans were put in motion for the new jail facility. Voters received a bond issue to fund the building of a new jail on March 14, 1972, which they approved. Yet another committee was set up to study jail needs. On May 8, 1972, tragedy struck in the jail again, this time in the form of a suicide. Joseph Trent, a 29 year-old male was discovered hanging in a cell less than an hour after he had been booked into the facility. Unfortunately for Sheriff Crevasse, it was later discovered that the regular corrections deputy had called in sick and an inexperienced deputy had been put in his place to cover the shift. This event was the last straw for the County Commission – and for Sheriff Crevasse.

The County Commission announced on September 26, 1972 that it would assume command and operation of the jail just as soon as a penologist could be located and hired. The announcement followed a closed-door meeting between Jack Durrance, Chairman of the County Commission and Sheriff Joe Crevasse. Sheriff Crevasse believed that law enforcement and corrections were two entirely different operations that could and should be separated. Durrance and his fellow commissioners said that the Baugher murder and resulting lawsuits, and the other tragedies had nothing to do with their decision to take over the county jail; however, Sheriff Crevasse disagreed, saying that those things did indeed play their part in the decision-making process.

The County Commission hired Floyd R. Alsbury to take over administration of the jail in January of 1973. The county commission took full responsibility for the jail, but used Sheriff's deputies as corrections officers up until 1977. The new jail, the **fifth county jail**, was built in 1975 and opened in 1976. It was called the Alachua County Adult Detention Center and cost the taxpayers approximately \$2.5 million dollars. It was supposed to handle the county's jail population through the year 1995, but was cited by the *Gainesville Sun* as being unsanitary and overcrowded within four years of opening.

Alsbury only stayed until 1981, when he was replaced by Sandra Blount. Under her tenure at the jail, corrections officers went from patrolling the hallways outside the pods to working in the same areas where the inmates live, resulting in more direct supervision of the inmates. Unfortunately, Blount was not popular with the public. Jane Hiers and Vernon Maxwell of the Citizen Board both went before the County Commission and submitted their resignations, publicly denouncing both Director Blount and County Administrator Jerry Maxwell for not allowing the Citizen Board to have any meaningful voice in the governing of the jail.

Towards the end of Blount's tenure, she exchanged jobs for one year, from September 1984 to September 1985 with Nate Caldwell under an employee exchange program. Caldwell was a federal Department of Justice employee who had studied jails for a period of eight years but who had not run one. He was a correctional program specialist with the Department of Justice National Institute of Corrections. While he worked as the Director here in Alachua County, Blount took his job as a division chief for the U.S. Department of Corrections' National Institute of Corrections in Boulder, Colorado.

On January 29, 1984, six inmates climbed out of a broken second story window. Three of the inmates, 37 year-old Sharif Sharif, 20 year-old Randall Dean Brownett, and 21 year-old Othel Curry were all caught the same night. Terry Lynn Beck, 19, was found hiding in a mobile home two days later. Dennis Richard Biehle was arrested in New Mexico on August 11 of 1984. The final escapee, 30 year-old Ted Keith Shaw, who had been in the jail for attempted first-degree murder and kidnapping for his involvement in a failed kidnap-for-ransom scheme, remained on the lam for nearly two years. Finally, on Monday, January 27, 1986, he phoned Captain Bubba Roundtree of the Alachua County Sheriff's Office and told him he was tired of running and turned himself in.

Sharif Sharif, one of the above escapees, was originally charged with rape in March of 1983 and convicted in January, 1984. In May 1992, Sharif had only served six years of his 14 ½ year sentence when a local citizen provided then Gainesville Police Department Captain Sadie Darnell with information about an additional rape conviction in North Palm Beach County, Florida, from 1981. Captain Darnell began deportation proceedings against the Egyptian-born Sharif based upon the 2nd conviction. Sharif however, did not wish to return to his native land and fled the United States for Mexico where he found asylum in May, 1994. Sharif continued his felonious ways in Mexico and was convicted of murder and sentenced to a Mexican prison for 30 years, where he eventually died of natural causes. Sharif remains a suspect in over 50 cases of rape and homicide involving young girls and women in the area of Juarez, Mexico, as well as unsolved cases in New Jersey and Texas.

A second escape occurred on June 2, 1984 when a trusty named William Glen Bass crawled under a perimeter fence and escaped. He was recaptured in Tennessee on June 21, 1984. The precedents were not good ones. However, Blount resigned her post shortly after returning from Colorado and after a selection process; Caldwell was chosen as the new Jail Director. He took command of the Alachua County Adult Detention Center on June 16, 1986. He stayed until January 26, 1989 when he was promoted to Director of Public Safety at the county level and then later to Assistant County Manager. The battle that Caldwell and Byrd faced throughout the eighties and early nineties until the new detention center was built was the same problem that all of Alachua County's jails had faced up until that point — overcrowding. A *Gainesville Sun* headline from November 9, 1986, reads "Suspects freed to battle jail overcrowding." This was followed in April of 1987 by a lawsuit from the Department of Corrections. The tone was basically fix it or else. Nate Caldwell's response to the lawsuit was quoted in the *Gainesville Sun*, "The state is quick to come down and tell you about your problem" he said, "but they're not so quick to give you funds to solve the problem." At the time, the jail's inmate population was averaging 308 souls instead of the 250 the jail was built to hold. In 1988, the County Commission voted to spend \$52,500 to renovate four buildings, each containing thirty beds. This action increased the jail's capacity to 378 and stalled the Department of Correction's lawsuit. However, on February 9, 1989, Judge Chester Chance set a 1994 deadline for officials to either expand the existing jail or to build a new one or he would set a mandatory cap on the number of prisoners allowed in the jail.

Another escape occurred on July 19, 1991. This time, 22 year-old Dennis Botsko climbed an eleven foot fence to escape the Alachua County Adult Detention Center. He would have been much better off had he stayed put since he was only in for civil contempt charges. Instead he took off for unknown reasons to Vero Beach in Indian River County. There, he was arrested on felony local charges, not to mention the escape charge, nine days later on July 28.

Towards the end of the summer of 1991, the county commission made the ill-thought out decision to close the jail's library because of the drain on the County's coffers. However, the State of Florida requires jails and prisons to permit inmates access to a law library. The price tag to restore the jail library was going to come to a total of \$66,000. However, thanks to an agreement made with the Alachua County public library system in February of 1992, the County Commission did not have to pay for the entire amount on its own: the library's governing board chipped in a portion of the cost.

Proving that 1991 was simply a bad year for the jail and for the commission, attorney Bob Rush filed suit that year on behalf of a young woman named Lynn Wyly who had been arrested on DUI charges and illegally strip searched. To add insult to injury, the event occurred on Ms. Wyly's 20th birthday, May 11, 1989, and the jail officials who searched her knew the search was illegal beforehand and performed it anyway. The event cost Alachua County taxpayer's \$400,000 to settle with Ms. Wyly out of court. The story is bad enough without adding that the taxpayers had already settled a sum of \$2,000 with 19 year-old Kimberly Rickus only a couple of years earlier in 1988 for the same offense. The reason given by Major Steve Garrahan, chief of jail security at the time was jail overcrowding. Since the jail staff was forced to house misdemeanants with felons due to a severe shortage of space, they felt they had no choice but to infringe upon the civil rights of a few to maintain the safety and security of all. It was a grim time with no good answers for anyone. Unfortunately, it cost the taxpayers some money and a few people their jobs. Jail Director Walter Byrd left the jail at this time and was replaced by his boss, Nate Caldwell, who returned to the jail from his former lofty position as Assistant County Manager.

In June of 1992, court officials wowed by the example set by the Marion County court system started searching for federal grant monies to bring a video uplink system to the Eighth Judicial Circuit. Such a system, they argued, would save the county money by eliminating the need for the daily transport of inmates between the jail and the courthouse and have the added bonus of cutting down on all of those pesky escape attempts as well. Deputy Court Administrator Grant Slayden envisioned a time when the entire Circuit Court would be tied together by video link. The Eighth Circuit consists of Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Gilchrist, Levy and Union Counties.

July 1, 1992 witnessed the groundbreaking of the jail expansion. A brand new jail facility would have cost the taxpayers upwards of \$59 million dollars. However, a renovation and expansion of existing facilities, including the addition of new buildings, could be kept to a more modest \$27,417,200, financed with existing sales tax and bond issues. The "new" jail, when opened in 1994, was supposed to hold 918 inmates but could be used to accommodate up to 1500 and be expanded in the future to hold upwards of 2,000.

A meeting into the health care that jail inmates were receiving at the Alachua County Adult Detention Center left a bad taste in the mouths of the attendees in May of 1993. Some of the problems that came to light included issues with keeping nurses staffed, expired drugs left strewn around the jail infirmary pharmacy, and inmate medical records being lost or simply being incomplete. At the briefing, county corrections authorities urged commissioners to consider privatizing medical and mental health care at the jail through an outside vendor, specifically Prison Health Services of New Castle, Delaware. The contract with the company would cost the county approximately \$2.5 million dollars, but would prevent any more horror stories of poor inmate care from escaping into the public.

In 1993, Commissioners approved a \$493,000 spending project for new IBM computers. The computer network was destined for an integrated financial system, computers for the county clerk's office and last, but not least, a new network for jail management operations. The previous mainframe had been in use for nine years.

March 3, 1994, saw the next big breakout of the jail, the first since the expansion opened. This time,

though, the citizens of the county had had enough. Twenty-seven year-old Richard Anthony Meissner was incarcerated at the ACADC for brutally stabbing University of Florida student Gina Marie Langevin to death. His attack also critically injured Ms. Langevin's roommate Jena Hull, who along with a third roommate who was not at home during the attack, was placed in protective custody as soon Meissner's escape was confirmed.

Meissner was not discovered missing from the jail until 5 a.m. on Thursday, March 3, 1994. However, it is believed that he escaped closer to 10:00 p.m. on Wednesday evening because a disturbance was reported in his pod that may have been a decoy set up to draw notice away from his escape. Meissner climbed a fence out of the exercise yard, which did not have surveillance cameras installed. The lieutenant in charge of that section of the jail, Alfred Dickerson, was demoted to detention officer by Jail Director Nate Caldwell, after it was found that inexperienced detention officers were posted on the shift. He was later reinstated to sergeant after an appeals process. Meissner was recaptured in Waldo on March 30, four weeks later.

Meissner's escape ignited a firestorm of controversy both in the commission and in the public eye. The public started writing editorials wanting to know why Sheriff Steve Oelrich was not running the jail. On Tuesday, June 13, 1994, County Commission Chairman Charles Chestnut stormed out of the County Commission meeting because he was so angry with County Manager Bob Fernandez. The subject of the argument: the county jail. Specifically, allegations that Fernandez may have suppressed a memorandum from the jail director requesting an independent investigation into Meissner's escape and the resulting disciplinary actions that Caldwell took. Another Commissioner, Kate Barnes, claimed at the commission hearing that she did not receive the memo, but did state at the time that Fernandez had briefed her and the other commissioners on the request.

The jail was in need of money again by the beginning of 1995. A mistake by the architectural firm in charge of the heating and air conditioning resulted in a humidity problem which was affecting the jail's air quality. In January, it was not a huge issue, but by summer time, only a few months away in Florida, it would be. The price tag to fix it was \$750,000 for a cooling system that had already cost the jail \$1 million. Commissioner Leveda Brown stated that she was hopeful that the County would be able to recoup some if not all of the cost of repair back from the architectural firm – Orlando's Hansen Lind Meyer, since it was their design flaw.

The next major controversy to overcome the jail came from a surprising source – its own director Nate Caldwell. In 1995, Caldwell's past came back to haunt him in a public way. Prior to his spotless record with the Department of Justice and his career with Alachua County, Caldwell had a troubled youth. His mother sent him into the Marine Corps at seventeen to escape the street culture of Brooklyn, but he was quickly thrown out with a bad conduct discharge. He landed squarely amid the gangs and drugs that she had tried to keep him from. In 1962, he went to prison for five years on a manslaughter conviction. When he got out, he was able to turn his life around and change things for the better. However, nothing could erase his past completely – a past he failed to mention on his application for employment with Alachua County, although he did discuss it in his interview with County Manager Bob Fernandez. Trouble started when he was arrested for voluntarily turning in two firearms that he had illegally in his possession – one of them a county-issued weapon – when his past came to light.

Perhaps the controversy would not have been quite so vehement on the part of the populace if another man, a well-liked civilian, had not been also arrested on the same charges – possession of a firearm by a convicted felon – around the same time. The other man was charged by the federal authorities because it was believed he knew something about a case. The man, Frank Palazzi, was a local business owner and had been a model citizen for 20 years. Like Caldwell, he too had overcome his past and turned his life around. But unlike Caldwell, he was not a county official. Frank Palazzi was sentenced to 15 years in federal prison for his crime. Caldwell was offered a deferred prosecution agreement and allowed to keep his job. Dan Hargrove, an Alachua County citizen, wrote in a letter to the editor of the *Gainesville Sun*:

“the morale of the employees at the Alachua County jail is at an all time low. If one wanted to work at \$4.25

per hour as a uniformed guard in the private sector, or in our county jail, the background check exceeds that of the jail director.”

County Manager Bob Fernandez came out in defense of his subordinate saying that prior to hiring Caldwell, he had spoken with then State’s Attorney Eugene Whitworth and Gainesville Police Department’s Chief Wayland Clifton who both agreed with him that Caldwell’s past was irrelevant when stacked against his ten year spotless service record with the Department of Justice and his glowing reference from them.

Fernandez and the commissioners felt that this should have quieted the public’s concern, but it did not. The flood of editorials in the *Gainesville Sun* pointing to the mismanagement of the jail, including the escape of eight inmates as far back as 1973, the illegal strip searches of the 1980s and the recent lawsuits illustrated the public’s discontent. The public was not the only entity who had finally had enough. Certain members of the commission were finally fed up as well. On Monday, October 9, 1995, Commissioner Bobby Summers proposed that Sheriff Oelrich and private companies should get their shot at running the jail. He is quoted as saying, “I just see us doing nothing. We need to move forward on this.” He made the comment after it came to light that jail staff had misplaced several fuel cards that were supposed to be used for the county cars that were assigned to them. Summers considered the fuel cards simply more evidence of mismanagement to be laid at Nate Caldwell and his staff’s feet. When added to the one million dollars of overtime monies that the jail was spending, time was past to let someone else try in Summer’s opinion. However, he was not the only commissioner and others disagreed, specifically Leveda Brown who believed that allowing the entity that arrests the prisoners to also guard the prisoners to be a fundamental conflict of interest despite the fact that at the time 58 out of 67 Florida counties had exactly that arrangement – with the Sheriff also in charge of the county jail. Sheriff Oelrich let it be known in a statement to the *Gainesville Sun* that he was ready with a management plan detailing how he could transform the jail using fewer managers and offering more accountability to the taxpayers.

On January 3, 1996, the Grand Jury returned its report on the jail precipitated by Meissner’s escape. Fernandez is quoted by the *Gainesville Sun* as saying, “There were no findings of malfeasance, misfeasance or other wrongdoing, which had been a subject of continuing accusations.” He went on to reiterate that he was completely satisfied with and confident in Nate Caldwell’s ability to run the jail. The following were the Grand Jury’s findings:

1. The jail should develop a complete policy and procedure manual “with all due haste.”
2. Development of an internal affairs division.
3. Establish an overall mission for the jail that addresses both security and treatment of inmates.
4. Strict auditing procedures. The Grand Jury expressed concern about missing or misused county property and inmate property.
5. Staffing needs must be addressed to reduce the use of overtime.
6. Improve communications. A breakdown in communications and failure to report significant shortcomings has been “allowed to become dramatically exaggerated” at the jail.
7. County government should establish a monitoring system to ensure effective jail management.

As far as Fernandez and his cohorts on the commission were concerned, the fact that the Grand Jury found no criminal wrongdoing was cause for celebration and meant that the public outcry would be silenced. His hope was not to be. By mid-February of 1996, F.E. Bunnell III of Hawthorne wrote, “Wanted: 3 new Alachua County commissioners, 1 new county manager, 1 new jail director, plus new top administrators. Wanted: The Alachua County Sheriff to run the county jail...the time has come.” Bunnell was not alone. The editorials were filled with angry citizens who were fed up with Fernandez and Caldwell, fed up with the county commissioners who supported them and kept them in office and fed up in general. They wanted change and 1996 was an election year.

While the public debate raged, the jail was also at the heart of no less than four lawsuits, one for the sexual harassment of a female employee, one for the improper demotion of employees involved in the Meissner escape, one for excluding an activist from a hearing and yet another against Hansen Lind Meyer, the Orlando company for the heating and cooling air quality installation errors they made in the jail construction. All of

this was on top of an ongoing criminal investigation into the missing fuel cards. The Grand Jury had hardly been released when it was reconvened on September 30, 1996, to begin a new investigation into jail problems. The new allegation – jail employees came forward with complaints that they were harassed and retaliated against for providing statements and cooperating with the previous Grand Jury investigation.

In November, however, the citizens of the county spoke. They voted out of office those commissioners that did not support their wishes for improvement. Bobby Summers became the new Chairman of the County Commission and he wasted no time at all letting it be known that he was for privatization of the jail. The companies up for consideration were Wackenhut and Corrections Corporation of America, but in the end, the Commission chose to go with Sheriff Oelrich's proposal and the jail passed into the control of the Alachua County Sheriff's Office a year later in January of 1998 on a four-year contract. For the duration of the four-year contract, the Sheriff's Office would run and operate the jail, but the county would still own and maintain it.

Proving that they are equal opportunity critics, the public and media only gave Sheriff Oelrich and his new jail director, Major Robert Chapman, a few months before they began to criticize their new management practices as well. A May 24, 1998, *Gainesville Sun* article indicated that the Alachua County Sheriff's Office was spending huge amounts on overtime and that position vacancies were at an all-time high since the Sheriff had taken over operation of the jail. Then Public Information Officer Sgt. Troiano was quoted as defending the ACSO by indicating that 14 of the jail's previous employees had either been fired or left voluntarily after the transition to Sheriff's Office control and that overtime monies had been needed to properly staff the jail in their absence until new employees could be hired and trained. However, Sheriff Oelrich did have the last word on the matter when he was able, some eight and half months later, to turn over a symbolic check to the County Commission for \$483,670 for monies not spent at the jail – fulfilling the promise he had originally made to the Commission that he could save them a half million dollars on jail operations.

By the end of the year, in mid-December, 1998, Sheriff Oelrich was before the Commission again. This time though, the refrain was a familiar one. The jail was overcrowded. The daily inmate count was averaging 820 and the jail's capacity was only 782. Space was badly needed. Sheriff Oelrich's request was for the county to terminate their lease with The Gainesville Bridge, Inc., a substance-abuse treatment center that operated out of two buildings adjacent to the jail. Using the buildings would provide approximately 60 more beds for low security inmates and ease the population crunch until more long-term solutions could be developed. Commissioners were not immediately receptive to the idea, as they were hesitant to disrupt the drug treatment program fearing that those individuals would only become inmates themselves.

Wednesday, August 11, 1999, saw the first real tragedy under Sheriff Oelrich's rule of the jail. An inmate, housed alone in his cell in the early morning hours, tied a bed sheet to a steel rail in his cell window and hung himself. He was accused of date rape, specifically sexual battery and possession of the drug rohypnol. His name was David Patrick Urbancik.

Sheriff Oelrich was able to fulfill another promise in September of 1999. His original promise was that he

would bring up the standards of the jail. The mark of this promise fulfilled came when the jail was awarded national accreditation by the Commission on Accreditation for Corrections.

In 2000, the jail was finally able to put some of its sordid past behind it. The lawsuit resulting from the employee, Alfred Dickerson, who was improperly demoted after the Meissner escape and alleged racial bias as the motivating factor, finally settled his case with the county. The case cost the taxpayers \$250,000. Two high-ranking jail employees also lost their jobs for allegedly lying on the federal witness stand in the case.

Unfortunately, resolving the ugly details of the past did not give the jail a free pass from trouble. In July 12, 2000, Gainesville Police officers arrested John Tennyson Smith after he told his wife and a family friend that he was going to —put a bullet in their heads and blow their faces off. Smith had just been released from the Department of the Jail the day prior on other domestic-related charges. However, that night, Smith was transported from the jail to Shands at Alachua General Hospital where he underwent surgery for a massive blood clot in his brain. He never regained consciousness and died on Tuesday, July 18, 2000. His wife, Margaret Smith, and a family friend, Roger Boyd, maintained that a Gainesville Police Officer Cooper told them that Smith was beaten by jail officers for “smarting off.” Cooper denied ever making the remark. When the true events of the night in question were brought to light, it was revealed that Smith had rushed a detention officer in a threatening manner. When the officer shoved Smith back, Smith slipped and fell on the jail’s tile floor, hitting his head and causing the fatal injuries. The Grand Jury found that the detention officer used justifiable force and found no evidence of criminal conduct, but it was certainly not the first or last time that the jail or its employees would come under the scrutiny of the court.

Another in-custody death occurred in mid-2001. Mark Burkett was a 6’02” 245lb teenager whose mother had called the Gainesville Police Department for assistance in transporting the boy to the crisis stabilization unit at Meridian Behavioral Health Unit because the boy was acting, “alternatively irritable, restless and non-communicative.” She wanted Burkett evaluated psychiatrically. During the struggle to place Burkett in the squad car, one of the officer’s fingers was severely bitten by Burkett. Later, at the jail, Burkett’s further struggles resulted in detention officers being forced to Taser the teen to get him under control long enough for his First Appearance before the judge, who ordered a blood sample drawn because of the bite suffered by the GPD officer. In the afternoon, a jail nurse injected Burkett with a sedative cocktail in preparation for the blood draw at 3:00 p.m. However, when detention officers entered the cell at 3:00 p.m., Burkett rushed them, resulting in the use of measures to restrain Burkett. Once they had Burkett pinned to the floor, the detention officers noticed that he was no longer moving and they summoned medical assistance. Burkett was transported to the hospital where he was pronounced deceased. Burkett’s mother sued the Alachua County Jail and Sheriff Oelrich, alleging the use of excessive force and inadequate training had resulted in the death of her son. Sheriff Oelrich moved for summary judgment, which was awarded on July 27, 2006. The court found that the detention officers acted properly within the scope of their employment. The exact cause of Burkett’s death was never decided either, with experts arguing between blunt force trauma from the struggle, to acute overexcitement related to schizophrenia.

Thankfully, 2002 was a quiet year for the jail. The next year, 2003, however, was marred when inmate Randolph Jackson assaulted his 19 year-old cell mate, a University of Florida student serving time for minor drug charges. The student had allegedly been placed in Jackson’s cell in administrative housing due to overcrowding at the jail. The case stirred up a firestorm of controversy toward the jail and Sheriff Oelrich and resulted in the termination of two detention officers who had reportedly given Jackson unprecedented favoritism and privileges that contributed to not only the student’s assault, but possibly up to four more. Jackson was sentenced to 15 years in prison for the attack.

In 2004, Commissioner Rodney Long, spurred by the Randolph Jackson incident the previous year, decided that the jail needed a study of the culture of the jail employees. Long believed that the proposed \$149,600 study was needed to determine if a subculture existed that was allowing for dangerous incidents to occur while preventing or discouraging inmates and staff from divulging those activities. The County Commission did not go ahead with the study until 2005 at which time Sheriff Oelrich vehemently opposed it. He considered the study to be a complete waste of the county taxpayers' money and, "an affront to the dedicated men and women who serve as detention officers." Incidentally, the assessment team did not find a subculture.

Also in 2004, the jail returned to a familiar battleground – one against the County Commission for money needed for expansion to relieve the ever present overcrowding before another disaster could strike. When the proposed 2005 county budget was released, one of the big arguments was whether to expand the jail by building a new pod or to expand diversionary programs to keep people out of the jail altogether. Some of the commissioners had toured the jail to find people sleeping on the floor due to crowded conditions. Rodney Long commented to the *Gainesville Sun* on August 20, 2004, "They deserve some dignity." However, Commissioner Long believed that a remodeling project and diversionary programs were better than spending the \$10.4 million dollars that would be required to build a new jail pod. His fellow commissioner, Mike Byerly, was also against spending money for expansion. He is quoted in another article in the *Sun* on the same day saying:

"Housing people at the county jail is very expensive. I will not support the proposed \$9 million expansion of the county jail until all other options have been exhausted. We must give our judges sentencing options by adequately funding programs that provide cheaper and more effective ways to punish or treat minor, non-violent offenders like substance-abuse and mental health counseling, teen court, drug court, work release and electronic monitoring."

While the price tag for the diversion programs was not nearly as high as the new jail pod would have been at only \$227,141 to start and \$536,840 to run annually thereafter, the commission's proposal was still to take it from Sheriff Oelrich's jail budget. Sheriff Oelrich argued that this was not fair, as the only breathing room in his budget was from the lapsed salaries of the employees who were currently serving in Iraq, but who would be returning to their jobs. The Commission eventually ordered County Manager Randall Reid and Sheriff Oelrich to meet and find a way to fund the remodeling project and diversionary programs. A remodeling project that added 60 beds would be completed in 2007.

The fight over whether to expand or remodel the jail became moot however when the high profile murders of Carla Brucia in February of 2004, and then Troy Victorino's massacre of six people in Deltona over a video game system in August of 2004 led to a zero-tolerance policy for probation offenders. The change in the law meant that a failed drug test was suddenly enough to have someone on probation arrested and brought to the jail immediately. The already overcrowded jail swelled to impossible conditions, sometimes reaching just over 1,000 inmates, well over capacity. The County Commission no longer had a choice. They either had to build a new barracks or face a lawsuit if someone decided to sue over the conditions at the jail – a repeat of history that the Commission did not wish to endure.

The election of Sadie Darnell at the end of 2006 to the post of Sheriff added new impetus to the stalled construction plans. In mid-2007, County Commissioners allocated \$5.4 million for a dormitory-style jail addition designed to have 256 beds. However, Sheriff Darnell requested that the designs be changed to allow for cells. This would bring down the number of beds to 168 inmates, 40 of whom could be housed in cells. The new arrangement would allow for the sometimes necessary housing segregation of some inmates from the general population. The new design, though it would house less, was still estimated to cost approximately the same amount of money and was estimated to require two years to build. Sheriff Darnell

also requested temporary housing for the inmates to ease overcrowding until the new pod could be built, but the Commission did not wish to vote on the request immediately as it would require an additional \$2.8 million dollars from the county coffers. Instead, the plan was to examine every aspect of the judicial system to see if any prisoners could be released or diverted from the jail to ease the burden of a jail routinely packed with 1,000 or more on a daily basis. Groundbreaking for the new addition occurred on September 25, 2007. The project was scheduled to be completed in Fall of 2008.

December of 2007 saw the creation of the Inmate Work Crew. The work crew was made up of eight to 10 inmate trustees. These individuals are non-violent sentenced inmates serving time for mostly misdemeanor crimes. They can not be sex offenders or be considered an escape risk. The work crew members are volunteers who participate in the program to perform work for non-profit and governmental agencies such as washing school buses for the School Board of Alachua County or painting the Gainesville Fire Rescue offices. The inmates earn time off, called gain time, from their sentences for the time worked. All jail inmates earn gain time for good behavior. The usual rate is five days per every 30. For a trusty, gain time is earned at a rate of 10 days for every 30 days served. The program encourages inmates to strive for good behavior and to be productive while incarcerated. As an added bonus to taxpayers, the program also saves money by using inmate labor for projects that would have otherwise been paid for at rates of at least minimum wage. As of September 1, 2009, the Inmate Work Crew has saved the Alachua County taxpayers approximately \$130,000.

Although chosen for the position in September of 2007, the new jail director took command of the jail officially in January of 2008. Director Robert Woody accepted the reins from Interim Jail Director Captain Charlie Lee. Major Chapman left the agency in May, 2007 and was replaced by Captain Tony Canchola until his retirement in August of 2007. Mr. Woody came to the Department of the Jail with 30 years of experience in the Department of Corrections Probation and Parole. He holds a B.S. degree from the State University of New York and a M.A. from Rollins College in Winter Park, FL. Prior to accepting the job as Department of the Jail Director; he was the Bureau Chief of Community Relations for the Department of Corrections, serving under the DOC Secretary Jim McDonough. Sheriff Darnell and Director Woody proved to be a good match for the Department of the Jail as several developments over the course of 2008 proved.

A Criminal Justice Mental Health Substance Abuse Grant was awarded to the county and implemented in July of 2008. This allowed the Sheriff's Office to hire a Jail Diversion Specialist, a grant funded position, to specifically screen for the Forensic Diversion Team, identifying those inmates who are eligible for other diversion programs. This serves the two-fold purpose of freeing space at the jail while allowing these inmates to receive the services they desperately need.

On July 24, 2008, the Florida Corrections Accreditation Commission, Department of the Jail Accreditation Onsite was concluded, and in October 2008 the jail received reaccreditation status for the next three years. The assessors interviewed more than one hundred people to include employees, contract employees and inmates during the three-day process. The assessors were very impressed with the cleanliness and how quiet the entire facility was during their inspection. They commended all ACSO employees interviewed noting that the employees were very knowledgeable of their specific job duties and responsibilities, the day-to-day operations and how well the employees interacted with the Assessors. This positive interaction was displayed from all levels of the chain of command and made everyone's efforts through the accreditation process a much more enjoyable experience.

The Sheriff, working with a collaborative group of attorneys, judiciary, law enforcement, the Department of the Jail and public defenders effectively reduced the jail population in 2008 for the first time in over eight years. A major component of this collaborative group, the Intensive Case Management Work Group, identified the top 24 inmates with high recidivism and recommended possible release options to the

judiciary. Ten of the inmates were not monitored due to death or other factors, but of the remaining 14, 71% reduced their annual jail days by a total of 371 days, an average of 30% in the year following the implementation of the program. Another 43% reduced the severity of their charges.

Other programs aimed to keep the numbers of inmates in the jail down are re-entry programs geared towards giving inmates a positive start in the community upon release. These programs include Life Skills, Adult Education, Construction and Culinary Arts. In 2008, 37 adult inmates and six juvenile inmates passed their GED exams. Thus far, the jail has graduated four inmates from its Culinary Arts program and four from its Construction program. From an historical standpoint, it is interesting to note that with these two programs, the jail has come full circle. In January of 1969, Sheriff Crevasse is quoted in the *Gainesville Sun* praising the new Rehabilitation program started in the Alachua County jail that taught courses to the inmates in short order cooking and mechanics. "Our program," Sheriff Crevasse said, "has shown us that to confine any man and then just leave him to brood and build up energies just contributes to the problem." Unfortunately, the early program ended quickly, when the federal grant that funded it was cut January 1, 1970.

On December 16, 2008, a ribbon cutting was held for the new 168 bed addition that will house female inmates as soon as construction is completed. This will increase the total number of beds to 1,148; and, with the 15% classification factor, the optimum number of inmates which can be housed will become 975.