



The building of lockup houses in Simcoe County began in 1852 when County Council had one constructed in Orillia and allotted a salary for a keeper or caretaker. Lockups were small scale, fortified buildings with cells designed for the temporary holding of prisoners. Part of the interior space often was allocated for justice administration and other municipal functions.

There is a local tradition that the lockup may be the work of

Hillsdale builder William John Davenport, however, there is no known evidence to support this attribution. Davenport's business account book (in possession of a descendant) contains the drawings and specifications for the cell doors which were ordered by Davenport from a specialty company. As Davenport was the local agent for a Toronto sheet metal company, the metal ceilings likely were supplied by him.

For several years, the lockup was used for its intended purpose of justice administration and temporary confinement of lawbreakers. The County allowed Medonte Township and Hillsdale the seemingly unqualified use of the building, in return for its upkeep. Starting in the 1920s, its primary function gave way to uses such as a home for transients, a meeting room for trustees, an electoral polling station, and storage for general supplies.

Architecture

The lockup is fabricated in an aggregate of stone, brick, and concrete, and measures about 20x28 feet. The hip (cottage) roof is clad in pressed metal sheets with folded and raised metal ridges. A chimney stack is placed slightly to the west of centre to serve a wood burning stove. The aluminum soffits and metal gutter system are not original. The exterior is plaster clad, and has been over-coated with similar materials and paint.

The main entrance is centrally placed on the east facade. The door is tongue and groove, V-jointed wood, clad on one side with metal sheeting, and secured by a surface mounted lock.

A flat window opening with a 1x1, double hung sash is on the north facade, at the east. It is not known if this sash is original. There is a similar window opening on the south facade, with a replacement sash.