



County jail cupola comes home at last

Original jail cost \$23,856 in 1858

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need to be removed again, the legs would be unbolted. Those who helped rebuild it included Belden and Michael Morse, Arthur Moore, Dawn Davis, Douglas Sprague and Earl Anthony.

The Thomas DiCenzo Construction Co. of Calais provided a 100-ton capacity crane with a 140-foot boom to lift the tower back to its perch Saturday. The tower's eight sturdy wooden legs were dropped down into eight copper-lined pockets in the jail's roof. Two representatives from the Bangor Roofing Co. of Bangor sealed the legs into the copper pockets. Before the end of the week, a weather-proof skirt will be attached to the bottom of the tower and the top of the roof to fill what might seem to be too large a gap.

It was Holmes's opinion that the commissioners might not have needed to remove the tower in 1974 to repair the roof leaks. "It could have been repaired up there," he said.

In July 1974, when Hollis Fickett was chairman of the county's Board of Commissioners, he said that he and other commission members carefully weighed the monetary and historic values of the cupola together with the cost estimated to refurbish the watchtower and secure it back to the roof.

Before determining that the cupola should stay earthbound, the commission also considered the anticipated long-range serviceability of the jail. Also considered were architectural changes being made at that time in the jail's exterior under

a \$42,274 contract with E.L. Shea of Ellsworth. Shea repaired the copper and slate roof.

The commissioners agreed with engineer Niran C. Bates of Augusta, who recommended that the cupola and two chimneys be taken down. Bates estimated the cupola project would cost \$10,000 to \$15,000 in 1974. Shea did not recommend placing the cupola back on the roof.

Robert Watts of Roque Bluffs, who was custodian of the county buildings at that time, recovered documents from the basement of the county courthouse that revealed that the jail was started under a construction contract dated March 3, 1858. The building was completed for occupancy Dec. 1, 1858. The original cost of building the entire jail was \$23,856.05.

Saturday, when the cupola was restored to its lofty position, former county Sheriff David R. Clemons of Machias looked up at the gold, green and white tower and smiled. He said he remembered standing in the tower and looking west across the rooftops of Machias to watch the forest fire that threatened to burn Machias years ago. A wind change turned the fire toward the Kennebec district and to the sea.

The interior architecture and design of the original jail has been completely swallowed up by the \$3 million new jail project. Clemons said he had not been inside the new jail.

It was Holmes's opinion that the cupola project had been successful because "it restores the jail's exterior architecture."



THE WASHINGTON County Jail building's 130-year-old cupola and weathervane were restored to the rooftop Saturday. The Machias-based Sunrise Research Institute sponsored the project. With the weathervane are (top left photo, from left) Lyman Holmes, project director for SRI and his 2-year-old son, Martin, of Machias; contractor Belden Morse of West Kennebec, Machias; John Bodger, secretary for SRI, Whitneyville; and Michael Morse of Roque Bluffs. The 3½-ton observation tower (upper right photo) that had been restored by Belden Morse of the Steeple People at West Kennebec, Machias, was lifted from the county's Center Street parking lot at about 11 a.m. by a 100-ton crane owned by Thomas DiCenzo Inc. of Calais. In a photo taken from the belfry of the county courthouse, across the mall from the jail (lower right photo), the cupola's eight legs are lowered into their individual roof sockets by the crane's 140-foot boom.

NEWS Photos by Clayton Beal