

HISTORY

The first Ontario County Jail was erected in 1789 immediately after the organization of the County. It was a log structure located on the site of the present Canandaigua City Hall. It had one door, two small windows on each side, and a couple of great chains for securing prisoners. Early offenders included drunken Indians, the insane man, and the man who could not pay his debts. For some, poverty was their only crime.

A new Jail, built of fieldstone, was constructed on Ontario Street in 1815. The structure, which included wards and cells for prisoners, and a walled yard for exercise, was considered a model Jail, the most secure in the State. Several Jail structures have set on the old site since, with the most recent having been constructed in 1961, with several modifications, including the installation of a temporary facility in Hopewell in 1961.

The new Ontario County Jail has a capacity of 276, which includes double occupancy in 36 cells. The core is built to accommodate 500 inmates; the construction will accommodate five additional POD's. Annually, there are approximately 2,000 commitments to the Jail. These include males and females, aged 16-86. This facility accommodates both pre-trial and sentenced individuals.

Jail administrators have joined with architects and psychologists to study the way institutions affect human behavior. The principles they have learned have been applied to new Jails. This body of knowledge has produced a new generation of Jail operations known as Direct Supervision. This idea places the Correction Officer in the housing unit with the inmates, controlling privileges, setting standards providing leadership. An inmate who challenges an Officer's authority is immediately removed and re-classified to a higher security unit. Inmates have the opportunity for exercise, job training, treatment, and education.

The Ontario County Jail is part of the community, and the community is part of the Jail. In addition to the support provided by volunteers, the Jail "partners" with Ontario County Public Health, Ontario County Mental Health, BOCES, Cornell Cooperative Extension, FLACRA, Pioneer Library System, Literacy Volunteers, Planned Parenthood, Veteran's Administration Outreach, and various religious organizations. The Jail is also supportive of and enhances some popular Alternatives to Incarceration.