



## DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### CEREMONY HELD TO REMEMBER OLD HILO COUNTY JAIL, SET FOR DEMOLITION

HILO – A ceremony was held today in Hilo to remember the Old Hilo County Jail building which is set to be demolished in the coming weeks. Several local lawmakers, law enforcement officials and government representatives were on hand to mark the occasion. Senator Lorraine Inouye, Hawaii County Managing Director Wil Okabe, and Chief Court Administrator Lester Oshiro attended today's ceremony, along with Public Safety and Department of Accounting and General Services (DAGS) representatives, plus representatives from project contractor Heartwood Pacific.

Demolition and abatement of the Old Hilo County Jail is targeted to begin next week. The contractor and engineers will start with removing the plumbing and electrical wiring before moving on to material salvage. The take down of the building is currently scheduled for mid-February. New electrical wiring, top soil and grass will be put in after that. The project is expected to be completed by July.

"This was a long time coming. I'm sad to see it go but I know that this now opens up more space for future jail redevelopment," said HCCC Warden Peter Cabrerros.

#### OLD HILO COUNTY JAIL HISTORY

The old jail occupies a large square next to the current Hawaii Community Correctional Center (HCCC). It was designed by architect O.G. Traphagen and built by John Cook in the late 1890's and cost \$13,895 to build. The two-story rectangular, red brick building had 11 cells that are 6-feet wide by 8-feet long.

There was no mess hall, storage room, kitchen or toilet facilities in the original design. All of these things were added at a later date and located in what is described as a wooden shed on the back side of the building, which collapsed around 1999. This shed and other wooden structures joined by the old brick jail was part of the perimeter of a recreational yard where inmates were released for daily activities.

The building stopped being used to house inmate in 1978. Warden Peter Cabrerros can remember a time when the old jail was still in use.

“It brings back a lot of memories. When I started working as a jail officer in 1975 the jail was under the management of the Hawaii County Police Department. On my first day of work I participated in my first headcount. The total count was one inmate. Within a year the jail was turned over to the State Department of Social Services and Housing,” said Cabrerros. “We eventually moved all inmates into the Punahale Housing Unit in 1978 with a count of 32. Things were a lot simpler back then.”

The jail was turned into HCCC’s Business Office and Maintenance unit until it was condemned in the early 2000’s.

Over the years the Department of Public Safety has made efforts to find a group willing to relocated and preserve the building, but no groups came forward due to the extensive cost of moving and renovating such a large and heavy structure.

Check out the attached pictures for a glimpse of what it was like inside an 1890’s jail.

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