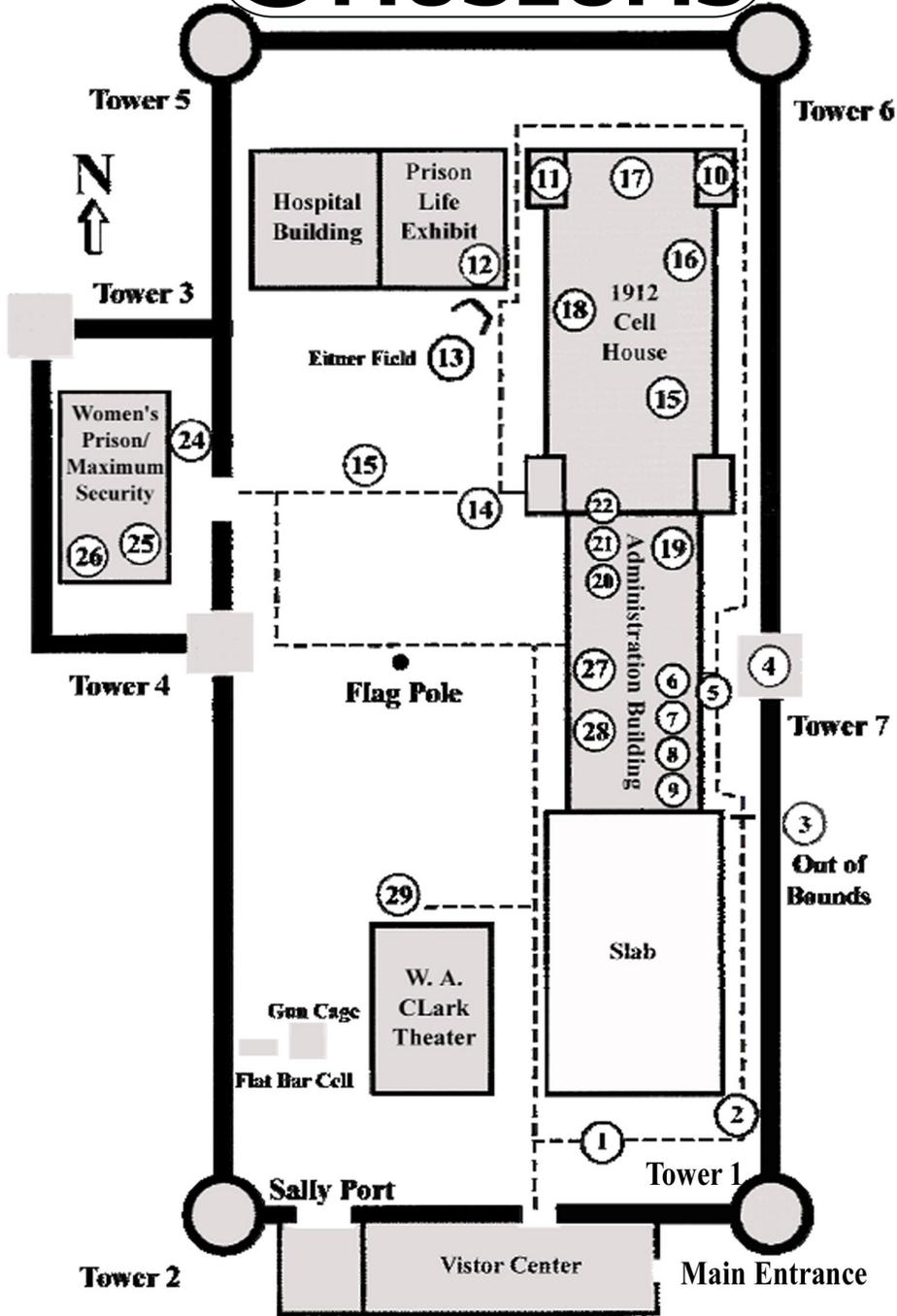
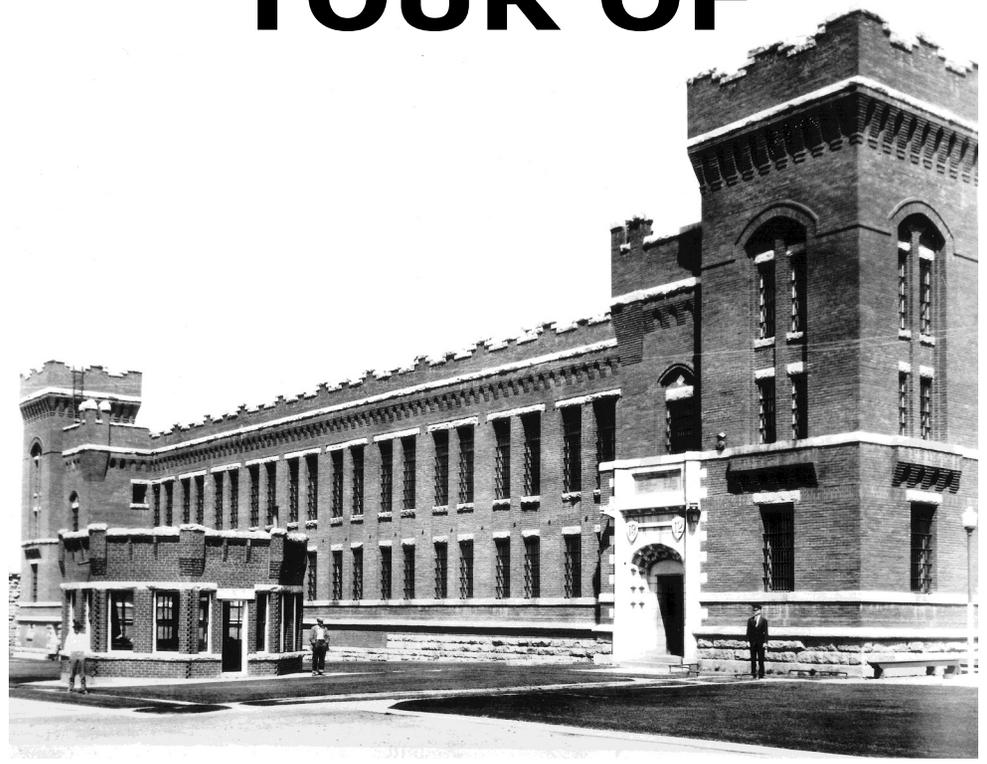


# OLD PRISON MUSEUMS



# A SELF-GUIDED TOUR OF



# OLD MONTANA PRISON

## DEER LODGE, MT

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# WELCOME

## NOTES:

**Bands of outlaws and Vigilantes roamed early Montana Territory leaving a path of destruction and death. In an attempt to tame the Wild West, a prison was established in Deer Lodge in 1871.**

**Constructed primarily with convict labor, Old Montana Prison was an active prison until 1979, when it was moved to a new site four miles west of town.**

**The Old Montana Prison is preserved and presented to you by Powell County Museum & Arts Foundation and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.**

- \* This tour will take 45 to 60 minutes to complete.
- \* This site is over 140 years old and some of the grounds are uneven. So please watch your step
- \* Please stay on the tour route.
- \* Do not mark or remove any property under penalty of law.



*You are standing next to the entrance just inside the prison yard. Turn right and follow the sidewalk along the Wall. Numbered markers will indicate the attraction that is described in the booklet.*



**There are more informational items about the prison on sale in the gift shop:**

**A History of the Old Montana Prison (DVD)**

**Powell County: Where it All Began**  
*by Powell County Museum and Arts Foundation*

**Jerry's Riot** *by Kevin Giles*

**Dark Spaces** *by Ellen Baumler*

**Also available online from**

**[www.oldprisonmuseum/store](http://www.oldprisonmuseum/store)**

**We hope you have enjoyed your tour.**  
**Thank you for visiting the Old Montana Prison!**

**Please enjoy our other attractions across the street from the Visitor Center.**  
**Yesterday's Playthings, Frontier Montana, Cottonwood City, Powell County Museum**

**Powell County Museum & Arts Foundation**  
**1106 Main St.**  
**Deer Lodge, MT 59722**  
**(406)-846-3111**  
**[info@pcmaf.org](mailto:info@pcmaf.org)**  
**[www.oldprisonmuseum.com](http://www.oldprisonmuseum.com)**



1896 Cell House

### **1. Location of 1896 Cell House**

An enormous red brick cell house with rounded towers loomed over the city of Deer Lodge until 1959 when it was damaged by an earthquake and torn down. In 1960, this slab was poured as a foundation for gymnasium and classroom buildings. Both buildings were later moved to the new prison.

The 1896 Cell House was divided into two sections by a two-foot thick wall, which ran from the roof to the floor. The smaller section held up to 32 youths, while the larger section held 258 men.

The Cell House did not have running water or sewer facilities. Each cell had two buckets, one for sewage and one for water.



*Continue to follow the sidewalk and turn left around the slab.*



## 2. The Wall- 1893

The oldest existing structure is the massive sandstone wall, built with convict labor and locally quarried stone. The wall replaced a twelve-foot-high wooden fence.

The wall is twenty-four feet high, three feet thick at the top, and four and a half feet thick at the bottom.

The wall extends four feet underground. No inmate was ever successful at tunneling under the wall, although quite a few tried.



Construction of the Wall in 1893

## Daily Schedule at the Prison Circa 1970

- 6:00 am Count and short line was run for breakfast. When all men were accounted for, short line was run. New inmates, protective custody inmates and the cell housecleaners (swampers) went to breakfast.
- 7:00 Main line was run. The remainder of the inmates went to breakfast.
- 8:30 Supervisors arrived to pick up work crews. Cell House Sergeant was responsible for cell shakedowns (searches).
- 10:30 Short line was run for lunch.
- 11:00 Work crews came in.
- 11:30 Count and main line was run for lunch. Mail and medication were distributed to the cells after lunch.
- 12:30 pm Work crews went out.
- 2:00 Change of shifts for guards. Count
- 3:00 Short line was run for dinner.
- 3:15 Work crews returned.
- 3:30 Afternoon yard (outside recreation).
- 4:30 Inmates returned to cells.
- 4:45 Count and main line was run for dinner.
- 5:30 Mail call and medication.
- 6:00 Outside recreation, television, hobby shop, self-help groups (AA etc.)
- 8:00 Showers after inmates came in from recreation. Clean clothes, cigarettes etc. were issued.
- 9:00 Count.
- 10:00 pm-12:00 am Everyone back in their cells, cells locked, shift change.
- 2:00 am Count.
- 4:00 Count.
- 6:00 Shift change and count.

Short line consisted of new inmates, protective custody inmates and the kitchen crew.  
Main line consisted of the main prison population.



## Convict Labor

The Depression of 1893 left the Territory of Montana without the necessary funds to make essential improvements on the prison. Facing overcrowded conditions and discipline problems, Warden Frank Conley instituted a program of convict labor for prison expansion.

Existing structures that were built with convict labor under Conley include the Wall, 1912 Cell House, the Maximum Security Building, and the W.A. Clark Theater.

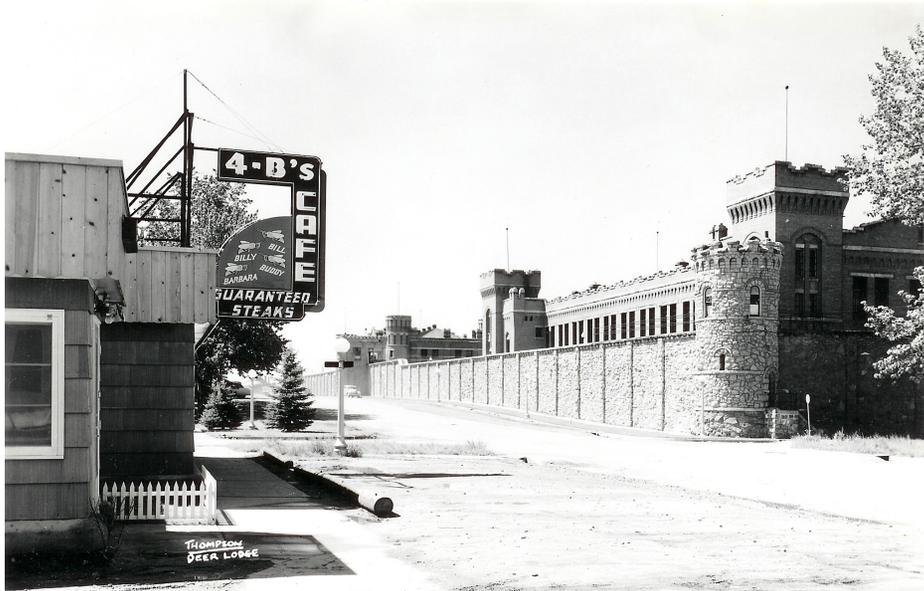
By contracting inmates for construction projects throughout the state, Conley provided income to run the prison and alleviated the overcrowded conditions by housing inmates at the job sites.

Prison crews built 500 miles of road at Flathead Lake, McDonald Pass, most of the roads around Deer Lodge, and roads in other counties throughout the state. They specialized in roadways along water.

Inmates also built eleven buildings at Warm Springs (Montana State Hospital), four buildings at Galen (Montana Tuberculosis Sanitarium) and a number of homes in the Deer Lodge area.

Conley leased or owned eleven ranches operated by inmates. He also provided inmates to local farms and ranches.

In 1916, 50% of all inmates worked and lived outside the prison wall.



A view down Main Street in front of the Old Montana Prison



Continue to follow the sidewalk through the first chain link fence & turn right into Tower 7.



### 3. Out of Bounds

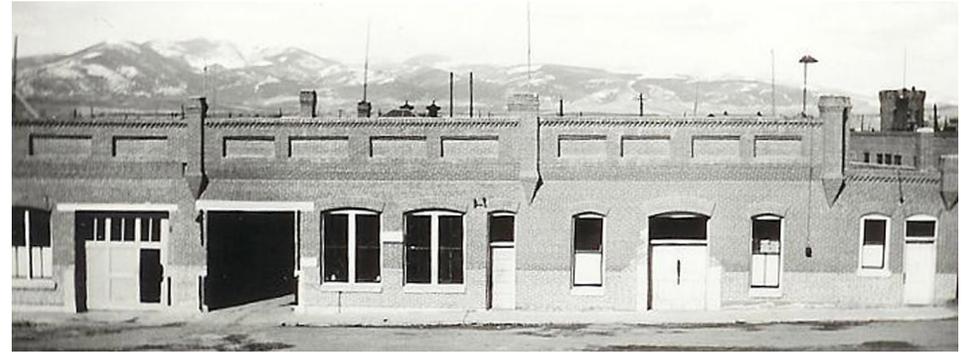
Inmates were not allowed to proceed beyond this area without a pass or being accompanied by a guard. If inmates crossed this line without authorization the guard posted at Tower 7 could shoot them.



A guard lowers a key on a rope

### Flat Bar Cell

Flat Bar Cells, such as this, were not used at this prison. These cells were built for brigs of ships. When those ships were scrapped out after World War I, various city and county lockups around the United States used these cells. This set came from the Powell County Jail.



The Montana Auto Museum is now housed in these former prison buildings

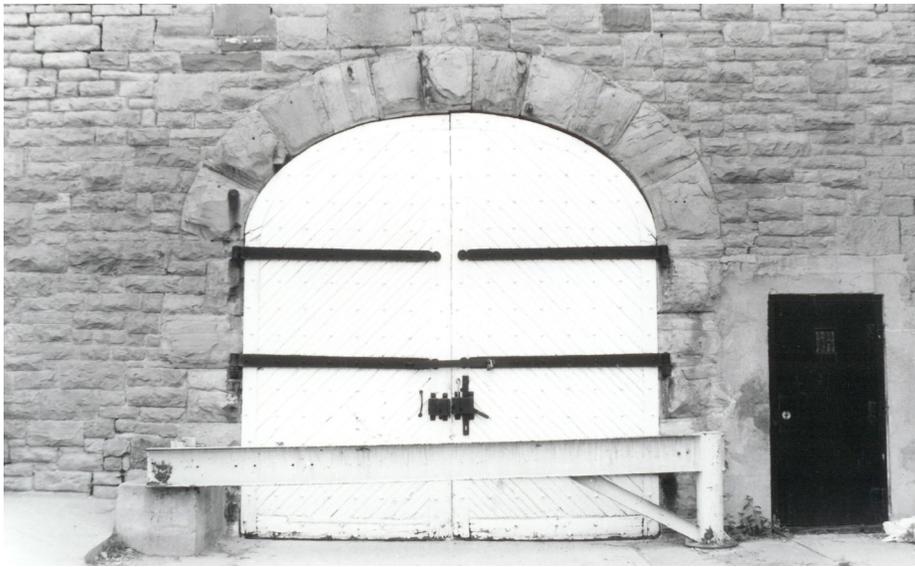
### Visitor Center and Montana Auto Museum

The buildings where the Visitor Center and Montana Auto Museum are located were originally part of the prison complex, as were the red brick buildings across the street from the prison.

From the early 1900s until 1960, the Visitor Center and some of the buildings, which house the Montana Auto Museum, had a variety of different uses. Some of the uses included trustee bunkhouse, carpenter and electrical shop, garage, storeroom, property controller's office, inmate waiting room and trustee visiting room.

When the 1959 earthquake damaged the 1896 Cell House, the Visitor Center building was converted into a dormitory. Later it became the laundry building.





Sally Port

### Dining Room Gun Cage

In front of the Sally Port, a large concrete box with a black top stands on a slab foundation. This is what remains of the metal kitchen/ dining room building, which was moved to the new prison.



The dining room showing the guard/gun cage at the back

### 4. Tower 7

When the Wall was extended north in 1911, Tower 7 became the main entrance of the prison. All inmates, guards, and visitors entered and departed through these doors. Directly above this room is the guard's station.

These doors were opened with a key which was lowered on a rope from the tower above. After unlocking and entering the tower and locking the door, the key was returned on a rope that was lowered through a hole in the ceiling. Then a second key was lowered to open the second door. (All three doors had separate keys).

The trap door in the floor of the lower room in Tower 7 (closest to the street) leads to surveillance tunnels. These tunnels provide access to the gun ports overlooking the kitchen, shower area, and dining hall, and provide the only access to the circular guard cage and the catwalks used by the guards in the Cell House. You will be able to enter the tunnel at stop #26.



The Tower 7 Entrance on Main Street



*Exit the tower and go up the stairs into the Administration Building*





The 1871 Federal Building

## 5. Federal Building- 1871

The Territory's first prison building was constructed on the site of the current Administration Building. The original three-story brick and granite structure had fourteen cells and no perimeter fence.

Two wings were added in the late 1800's to increase the capacity to 98. In 1908, a failed escape attempt from the Federal Building left Deputy Warden John Robinson dead and Warden Frank Conley with 103 stitches on his back and neck. The two inmates involved were George Rock and William Hayes. They were hung in the prison yard. Rock and Hayes were the only two men ever hung at the prison. There is a sign marking the spot between stops #8 and #9. This structure was demolished in 1931 and replaced with the current Administration Building.



The W.A. Clark Theater

*Exit the theater and turn left to see the Sally Port.  
To return to the visitor's center, turn right at  
the corner of the theater and follow the sidewalk  
along the side of the theater to the exit.*



## Sally Port

In the southwest corner of the prison wall (to the right of the theater) is the Sally Port. The double door, double lock system provided the only vehicle entrance to the prison.

A vehicle would enter the first door and be locked inside the Sally Port where the vehicle was searched before it was allowed in or out of the prison. Only one door was open at a time.



A steel I beam swung across the inside door to prevent a vehicle from ramming through it.



One of many yard activities

## 29. W.A. Clark Theater- 1919

Using money donated by W.A. Clark, Jr., son of the Butte copper king, the construction of the theater was Warden Conley's last great project. Since the privilege of going to the theater had to be earned, the theater became the center of the work incentive and prison discipline system.

The 600-seat theater was used for a variety of events including boxing, traveling theater troupes, movies, plays, concerts, meetings, prison band performances and religious services.

A library was located in the basement. The W.A. Clark Theater was gutted by fire in 1975. The fire was deliberately set, but no suspects were ever charged.



## The Administration Building- 1931

The Administration Building served as the hub of security and the heart of the prison operations.

Offices, visiting rooms, a library, classrooms, mailroom, and the infirmary were on the main floor.

The basement, originally containing the dining area and kitchen, later became a dormitory and showers, and finally became the chapel, hobby shop and recreation area.

*You are just inside the doorway of the Administration Building. Turn left into the medium/minimum security visiting room.*



## 6. Visiting Room

This area was used as a close-custody visiting area. Notice how the bottom of the partition is solid to prevent the passing of contraband.

*Proceed through the door at the far end of the visiting room and Continue into the open office area.*



## 7. Secretarial Pool

This central area was used by the secretaries for the social services staff, psychologist, chaplain and job placement officer.

Besides providing counseling for the inmates, the social services staff was responsible for the reception, evaluation and classification of inmates.

Soon to be released inmates were aided in finding jobs by the job placement officer.



To see more artwork made by the inmates, and available for purchase, please visit the Montana State Prison Hobby Shop located across the street from the Visitor Center.

*Proceed through the door to the right of the chaplain office, turn right and go down the corridor. The cases in the corridor contain contraband and inmate art. Notice the functional tattoo machines and radios fashioned by inmates from contraband materials. Continue through the barred doors into the lobby.*



*Please proceed with caution, as floors, ceilings, and walls are irregular. Exit the tunnel and go up the ramp to exit the building the same way you entered. Turn left and walk towards the large, red, brick theater building.*



## Prison Yard

Throughout the long history of this institution, the prison yard had many uses and supported a number of different buildings.

The yard was used as an exercise area and garden. Notice the various courts and horseshoe pits. Joggers would run along the west wall.

During World War I, Conley trained a unit of inmates in the yard in preparation for combat. The War Department rejected Conley's offer of assistance.



A victory garden in the prison yard

## 28. The Tunnel

An armed guard was posted in the tunnel to oversee the inmate population during meals. From 1932, when this building was constructed, until 1960, when a new dining hall was constructed next to the theater, all meals at the prison were served in this basement.

The guard was armed with tear gas canisters, which fired into the room in the event of a general disturbance. Unarmed personnel inside the dining room provided regular supervision. The design of the gun ports would not allow inmates to overpower guards and take their weapons.

The tunnel provided secure access to the catwalks around both the 1912 Cell House and the 1896 Cell House. Armed guards patrolled the catwalks. During the 1959 Riot, the catwalk security was breached. The security of the tunnel was never breached.

The public access hole into the tunnel was cut in 2002. It took the contractor, with modern equipment, three times longer to cut through than he anticipated.



The Tunnel



## 8. Deputy Warden's Office

For security reasons, the Warden's Office was located across the street from the prison. The Deputy Warden was in charge of the daily operations of the prison.

Deputy Warden Ted Rothe was shot and killed in this office by rioting inmates during the 1959 riot.

A painting of Frank Conley hangs on the far wall. He came to the community in 1886, transporting two convicted criminals to the Territorial Prison from Miles City. Conley stayed on at the prison as a guard. Conley was acting Warden between 1890 and 1909, and he was Warden until 1921. Conley also served as mayor of Deer Lodge from 1892 to 1929.

In the 1970s this room was also used for sentence review hearings.

## 9. Non-Contact Security Visiting

This area was used for non-contact visiting. Inmates were strip-searched before and after visits. More and more wire mesh was added over the years in an attempt to prevent the passing of contraband.



*Exit the building through the same door in which you entered. Proceed left down the sidewalk to the far end of the red Cell House.*



## 10. East Siberia

These cells in the northeast corner of the Cell House were used to isolate continually troublesome inmates from the general population.

In 1960, the rooms in the tower above these cells, and above West Siberia, were converted into educational facilities which included six classrooms, a library and a teachers' office.

*Exit the building and go through the doorway in the Wall and walk back into the yard. Follow the sidewalk back to the Cell House, turn right and walk to the Mess Hall sign on your left. Enter the building, turn right and follow the ramp.*



## 27. The Mess Hall

This area was the main dining room for the prison from 1932 until 1960. The entire room was one large mess hall.

This space was converted to a dormitory in the 1960s when a new dining hall was built.

In the late 1960s, the space was converted to a recreation room, TV room and hobby/craft area.



The dining room was originally the recreation area



*Proceed left around the corner of the Cell House to the far corner just before the second chain link fence.*



Turn right into the TV room and tunnel entrance



In order to control noise from disruptive inmates as well as prevent the passing of items from cell to cell, and provide the guards protection from the honey buckets, mesh and wooden doors were installed on the cells.

 Proceed to the back left corner of the building.

### 25. Restraining Cells with Slide Bars

The last two cells on the left were used as disciplinary cells, and they were also used to protect inmates who were suicidal. Inmates were handcuffed to the bar on the side of the cell.

Inmates received three slices of bread and a quart of water twice a day, and a hot meal every third day.

 Proceed around the corner.

### 26. The Black Box Cells

Complete and total darkness earned these two cells their name, the black box. Inmates were locked in these cells for a period of one to ten days and placed on a bread and water routine. Every third day, they were given a hot meal. They were provided a mattress, a wool blanket and a honey bucket.

### 11. West Siberia

Difficult prisoners were placed in these cells to isolate them from the rest of the prison population. After breakfast, the doors were unlocked and the inmates were allowed into the enclosed exercise yard for the entire day.



West Siberia



Proceed through the gate in the chain link fence, turn left and follow the sidewalk to the Prison Life Exhibit on the right.



## 12. Prison Life Exhibit

This photographic exhibit documents the daily activities and experiences of prison life during the 1960s.



Recreation activities in the yard



Women's Prison / Maximum Security

*Enter the building. Notice the cases in the center of the room containing information on some of the notable women inmates who were incarcerated at this prison.*

### Maximum Security

After the 1959 Riot, the Women's Prison was converted into a maximum security facility in order to separate the riot leaders from the rest of the prison population. The Maximum Security Building contained twenty high security cells and four disciplinary cells.

Most of the cells did not have a toilet, but were equipped with a bucket for human waste. Disgruntled inmates would sometimes toss their waste buckets (called honey buckets) on the guards.

*Return to the spot where you turned to come into the Prison Life Exhibit and look to your right. This is the Tag Plant / Hospital Building.*





Proceed across the yard and through the doorway in the wall into the Maximum Security area.

### 24. Women's Prison - 1907 Maximum Security - 1959

The first women incarcerated in Montana were housed on the third floor of the Federal Building. Men were housed on lower floors. The need for a separate women's facility outside the walls soon became apparent. Women were housed in this building from 1907 until 1959.

This facility allowed the women to have access, for the first time, to a small yard of their own and a female matron to oversee them. It consisted of two large dorm style areas, a kitchen, dining area, laundry room and matron's quarters. A hospital room was added in 1926.

In 1959, the women were moved to a building across Main Street, now the Powell County Museum, and later to Warm Springs. Montana's women's prison is now located in Billings.

The wooden structure beside this building was used as a visiting booth for maximum security. Inmates were allowed visitor privileges for thirty minutes per month.



Tag Plant and Hospital Building

### Tag Plant/Hospital Building- 1935

This building provided the prison with a modern medical facility that included an infirmary, surgical hospital, and dental and psychiatric care. Located at the west end of the building, the tag plant contained the auto license plate factory.



The Hospital in the 1930's





The Tag Plant

In the mid-sixties, the license plate factory was moved to its present location at the prison ranch.

Eight cells were constructed in the center of the building, including psychiatric cells, padded cells and four cells which at one time were used as death row.

After 36 hours of mounting tension, Warden Floyd Powell implemented a daring rescue attempt. The National Guard fired the bazooka at the tower where the ringleaders were headquartered. Meanwhile, a team of men burst through the door in the west wall, crossed the yard, and entered the Cell House, freeing the hostages.

Myles and Smart were found dead of an apparent murder-suicide at the top floor of the tower.

Although the riot focused attention on the overcrowded conditions at the prison, it was twenty years before the last prisoners were finally moved to the new prison.



The Tower that was damaged in the 1959 riot



Continue on the sidewalk to the entrance to Eitner Field





*Exit the Hole, turn left and go up the stairs to the Cell House lobby. Located up the metal stairs on the left is the Montana Law Enforcement Memorial.*

## 22. Montana Law Enforcement Memorial (open by appt.)

A memorial featuring law enforcement artifacts, memorabilia and historic accounts relative to Montana. It houses a memorial dedicated to officers slain from as early as 1863.

The prison last used this area as a library, school and teachers' offices.



*Exit the 1912 Cell House, and walk across the prison yard toward the open door in the wall. Stop about halfway across the yard.*

## 23. 1959 Riot

The visible damage to the northwest corner tower of the Cell House occurred when a bazooka was fired at it by the National Guard to stun rioting inmates during a successful rescue of twenty-three hostages.

On April 16, 1959, Jerry Myles and Lee Smart led twenty inmates in a riot which left Deputy Warden Ted Rothe dead.

Myles and Smart took eighteen prison employees and five "stool pigeon" inmates (inmates who had "ratted on" others) as hostages, soaked rags with flammable liquid and threatened to burn them alive.



## 13. Eitner Field

Inmates played baseball here at Eitner Field. Games between the prison team and community teams were regularly scheduled.



*Turn to your left and follow the sidewalk to the entrance to the cell house.*



Construction of the 1912 Cell House

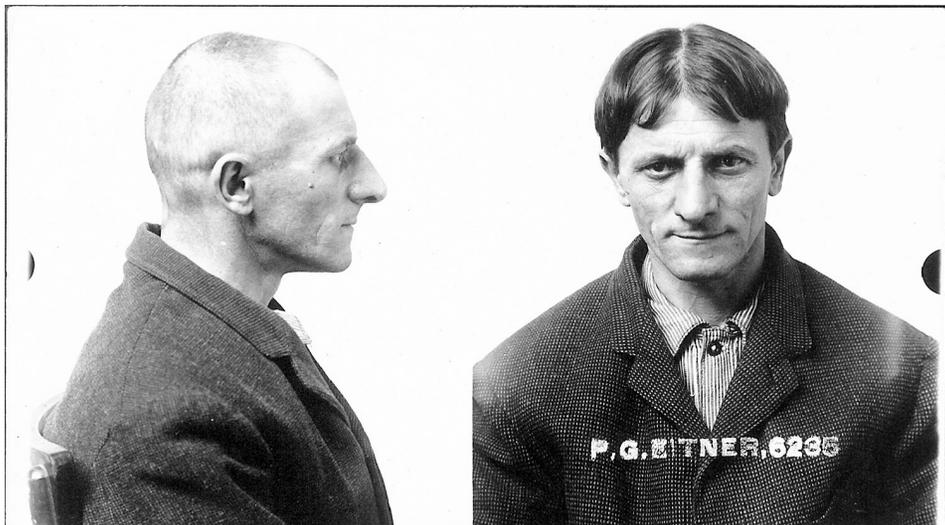
## 14. Cell House- 1912

Built in only eleven months using convict labor, the 1912 Cell House was a model facility in its day. Each cell had running water, flush toilets and good ventilation.

The Cell House contains eight galleries, four per side. Each gallery contains twenty-five cells, for a total of 200 cells. Single confinement to a cell was common practice during this era. Overcrowding eventually made it necessary to house two men per cell.



Enter the building and proceed into the lobby.  
Walk toward the guard's cage and  
turn left down the far corridor.



Paul "Turkey Pete" Eitner

## 15. Turkey Pete Cell Number 1

In 1918, at age forty, Paul "Turkey Pete" Eitner was sentenced to life in prison for murder. A model prisoner, he was assigned to tend the prison turkeys. As the years passed, reality slipped away from him. One day a man stopped to admire the turkeys and Eitner sold the man the entire prison flock for 25 cents apiece. This ended Eitner's farming days, but marked the beginning of his new fantasy career as an "entrepreneur and philanthropist."

The prison administration humored Eitner and allowed him to have printed checks from the prison print shop.



The prison kitchen was once located in the basement of the Administration Building, where the showers are now.

## 21. The Hole

The "Hole" was reserved for the obstinate inmates after other disciplinary measures proved inadequate. There was no light in the cell except for through the peephole. The inmates' diet in the Hole was bread and water.

There was a ten-day limit on the time in the hole, after which an inmate received an examination by a doctor. If he passed the examination, he could be returned to the hole for another ten days.

By the late 1960s, this type of incarceration was considered excessive and the practice was discontinued.





*Return to the Cell House lobby and go down the steps into the basement of the Administration Building. Please watch your step. Turn left at the bottom of the steps.*

**19. Chapel**

Originally the bakery, this area was last used as a chapel, classroom and meeting room. Inmates received "good time" (time off their sentences) for regularly attending church services and other self-help programs.

The gun port on the wall is connected to the surveillance tunnel which could be entered from the trap door in Tower 7.

During the 1959 Riot, the press was brought into the surveillance tunnel where they talked to the rioting inmates through the gun ports.

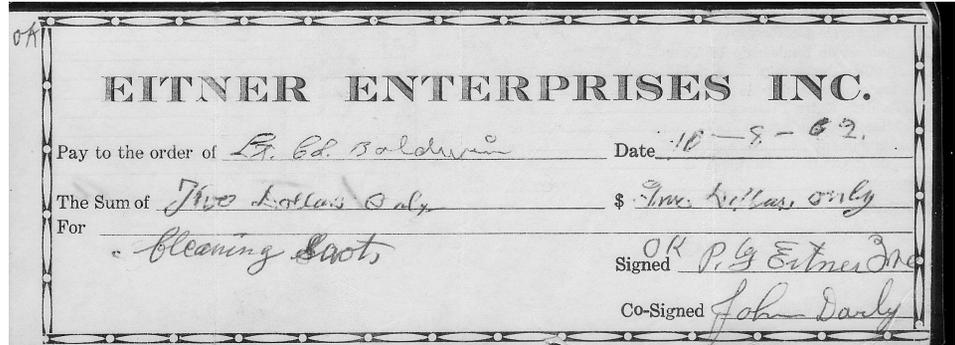


*Exit the chapel and proceed across the hall into the shower area. Please watch your step.*

**20. Shower Area- 1962**

The guards centrally controlled the amount and temperature of the water to these stalls.

Gun ports are located in a steel box overhanging the room at the far inside corner. This is part of the surveillance tunnel system.



A check written by Turkey Pete to the MSP Blue Ribbon Band

He "purchased" the prison and proceeded to "operate" it. He "paid" all the prison expenses and wrote checks to the guards for their salaries.

Eitner Enterprises saved Brazil's coffee crop, sold pink alligators, purchased alfalfa seed from Poncho Villa, sold grasshopper legs to Fidel Castro and sold ships to the Navy.

When Turkey Pete died in 1967 at age 89, his cell was retired and converted into a barbershop. His funeral was the only one ever held within the walls of the prison.



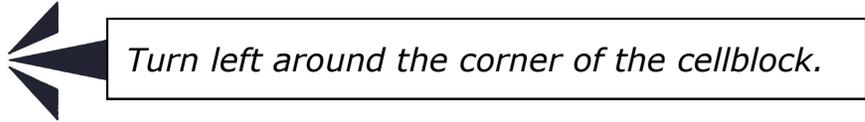
Paul "Turkey Pete" Eitner was laid to rest at Hillcrest Cemetery in Deer Lodge

*Continue down the corridor toward the end of the cellblock*



## 16. Temporary Lockup and Fish Row

The cells protected with wire mesh on the second tier were Fish Row. All new inmates were called "Fish." New Fish were housed here until they adjusted to prison life. Once they became used to the prison system they were moved into the general population. This area was also used to segregate inmates who needed protection from other inmates.



## 17. Bath/Shower Area

Originally, fifteen bathtubs with multiple rings occupied this location. The area was complete with lye soap and starched linen towels.

These three showerheads later replaced the tubs and served up to 400 inmates. Showers were required twice weekly. Inmates lined up and wet their bodies in the first shower, soaped up in the second, and rinsed in the third.

In 1962 new showers were constructed and the inmates who were in protective custody used these showers.

Notice the utility corridor running between the tiers of the cellblock. The utility corridor provided ventilation and access to plumbing. Guards occasionally eavesdropped on inmate conversations from the corridor.



*Turn left around the corner of the cellblock and walk along the cells on the west side.*



## 18. Cell Block

The top cells were hot, while the lower cells were cold. Inmates on the top tiers often threw objects at the windows in order to break them, allowing cold air in. The inmates who lived on the first tier were allowed to hang a drape over the lower part of their cell bars in order to keep the drafts out.



At one time a barber shop was set up in the corner of the Cell Block