

Stuart Town Gaol

1909 – 1933

Other Names: • The Old Gaol

Details

The Stuart Town Gaol was opened by the government in Alice Springs, then called Stuart, in 1909. It housed male and female, adult and juvenile prisoners. The Stuart Town Gaol became known as the Alice Springs Gaol in 1933 when the town of Stuart was officially renamed Alice Springs.

The South Australian Government began building the Stuart Town Gaol in 1907 just before it handed control of the Northern Territory to the Commonwealth Government.

Located at 8 Parsons Street, the Gaol was built out of local stone. It had two cells. A small cell at the front of the building was for European prisoners. They slept on wooden benches. A large cell at the back was for Aboriginal prisoners. They slept on the floor on mats. The Aboriginal prisoners also had an exercise yard.

The Gaol was built when the town of Alice Springs, then called Stuart, had a European population of about 30. The Northern Territory at that time had a settled Aboriginal population of about 200 and central Australia had a nomadic population of about 5,000. When it was hot school children sometimes moved into the goal for their lessons.

The Gaol's first prisoners were transferred from the wooden police hut at Heavitree Gap in September 1909. One of the prisoners was a woman.

The gaol's longest serving keeper, Sergeant Robert Stott, ran the gaol for nearly two decades. During his time the gaol was rarely full. The number of prisoners increased sharply after the railway reached Stuart in 1929.

Of the six hundred or so prisoners who spent time in the Stuart Town Gaol, 24 were women and four were 17 years old. The Northern Territory put 17 year olds in adult gaols until 1 June 2000. Of the four juveniles in the gaol, three were charged with theft. They served sentences of between 3 and 6 months hard labour. One was sentenced to two weeks hard labour for being in a prohibited area. The prohibited area was the central business district of Alice Springs. It was declared 'a prohibited area for Aboriginals' from 1928 until 1965.

When the town of Stuart was renamed Alice Springs in 1933 the Stuart Town Gaol became known as the Alice Springs Gaol.

Gallery



Gaol

Description: The description states: Stuart (now Alice Springs) town gaol on Parsons street being built, Aboriginal rations store on the left was later converted to a school room by Sergeant Stott for the town's first school teacher, Ida Standley in 1914. He added windows and a verandah.



Stuart Town Gaol

Description: The description given about the building states: The oldest stone building in Alice Springs. It has associations with many aspects of central Australian history. The size and layout of the cells reflect the attitudes of authorities to Indigenous Australians as prisoners. [edited]



Stuart Town Gaol

Description: This image shows the inside of the gaol. The description given about the building states: The oldest stone building in Alice Springs. It has associations with many aspects of central Australian history. The size and layout of the cells reflect the attitudes of authorities to Indigenous Australians as prisoners. [edited]

More info

Chronology

- Heavitree Gap Gaol (1904 - 1909)
 - **Stuart Town Gaol (1909 – 1933)**
 - Alice Springs Gaol (1933 - 1938)
 - Her Majesty's Gaol and Labour Prison, Alice Springs (1938 - 1996)
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