

**TO: Professor Andrea Armstrong**  
**FROM: Bridget Wallis**  
**RE: “Better Know a Jail” Memo**  
**DATE: November 29, 2022**

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## **WINN PARISH JAIL MEMORANDUM**

This memorandum seeks to address the main factors and characteristics of the Winn Parish Jail located in Winnfield, Louisiana. A history of the current Winn Parish Sheriff, Cranford Jordan, is also a key part of this memorandum. This memorandum will also discuss the population living in Winn Parish and address any major news highlights about this jail.

### **DEATHS SINCE 2014**

Record requests made in 2019, 2020, and 2021 through the Louisiana Public Records Act indicate that no records are available for deaths that occurred within the Winn Parish Jail from 2014 to 2021. In 2022, records were received for 4 total deaths. One death occurred in 2017, and 3 deaths occurred in 2018.

### **JAIL CHARACTERISTICS**

The Winn Parish Sheriff’s Office handles the Winn Parish Detention Center. The Winn Parish Detention Center holds Winn Parish detainees as well as a small number of inmates from the Louisiana Department of Corrections.<sup>1</sup> The new Winn Parish jail was built in 2018 due to the limited space for inmates and the eroding property conditions. The previous facility was deteriorating and was located on the third floor of the Winn Parish Courthouse. Now, the jail is located on Thomas Mill Road in Winnfield, Louisiana. Information regarding the population data of the prison itself is not able to be found on the Sheriff’s website. However, a 2016 article discussing the plans to build the current prison stated the building was set to have a capacity of 150 inmates.<sup>2</sup> The article also stated the new jail building will feature modern technology such as an elevated command center in the middle of the building. This feature would allow employees to have a full view of all the sides of the jail.

In 2016, one article written by Brandon Lawrence discussed Winn Parish’s measures to build a new jail.<sup>3</sup> The article notes that at the time, Winn Parish inmates were being housed in a

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<sup>1</sup> [Winnsheriff.org/jail](https://www.winnsheriff.org/jail)

<sup>2</sup>

[https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwje7Ijz5c\\_7AhU2mmoFHVe6ByoQFnoECAwQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.m.yarklamiss.com%2Fnews%2Flocal-news%2Fwinn-parish-prepares-to-build-new-jail%2F339347992%2F&usg=AOvVaw2WI\\_xyeTbkSlp5yMTmlXxx](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwje7Ijz5c_7AhU2mmoFHVe6ByoQFnoECAwQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.m.yarklamiss.com%2Fnews%2Flocal-news%2Fwinn-parish-prepares-to-build-new-jail%2F339347992%2F&usg=AOvVaw2WI_xyeTbkSlp5yMTmlXxx)

<sup>3</sup>[https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwje7Ijz5c\\_7AhU2mmoFHVe6ByoQFnoECAwQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwje7Ijz5c_7AhU2mmoFHVe6ByoQFnoECAwQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.)

47-bed jail directly above the courthouse. Due to the low capacity, inmates had to be transferred to other parishes to do their time. Sheriff Jordan states in the article that “it costs the police jury twenty-four dollars and thirty-nine cents a day to house these inmates in other places. And by having our own facility big enough to house all of our inmates in the parish, it will save them money.” Plumbing, rust, and general wear and tear were some of the major concerns that led to the new Winn Parish Jail.

The current Winn Parish Jail is located at 460 Thomas Mill Road, Winnfield, Louisiana 71483. Winnfield is a small town located within Winn Parish. There were approximately 13,488 citizens living in Winn Parish in 2021 according to the United States Census Bureau.<sup>4</sup> The median household income in Winn Parish in 2020 dollars was \$37,764. In 2021, Winn Parish persons in poverty classified 22.6% of its total population. The Winn Parish Sheriff’s Office website can be accessed at the link: [winnsheiff.org](http://winnsheiff.org). The home page proudly mentions what the parish is known for.<sup>5</sup> They state Winn Parish is home to three former Louisiana Governors, Uncle Earl’s Hot Dog Trials, and the Louisiana Forest Festival.

Winn Parish Jail is currently led by Sheriff Cranford Jordan.<sup>6</sup> Sheriff Jordan’s career started in 1973 as a deputy at the Winn Parish Sheriff’s Office. Jordan was appointed as Chief of Police in 1979.<sup>7</sup> He was first elected as Sheriff of Winn Parish in 2012 and he is currently serving his third term.

Recently, there was a lawsuit against Sheriff Cranford Jordan and the Winn Parish Sheriff’s Office.<sup>8</sup> Legal documents filed on July 27, 2021 name Cranford Jordan and the Winn Parish Sheriff’s Office as defendants against a claim of “negligent security” brought by the heirs of former Winn Parish Sheriff’s office employee John Kerry. The heirs- Kimberly Bruce, Shani Fallis, and Michael Slayter- allege the defendants “failed to provide proper security for employees and to the public who visit the Winn Parish Sheriff’s Office Rifle Range located at 633 Old Alexandria Road Winnfield, LA 71483.” Further, the complaint states that John Kerry was assaulted on June 6, 2020 at the Rifle Range while on the job. The security cameras at the facility were reportedly not working at the time of the incident, and Mr. Kerry passed away on August 21, 2020 from the injuries sustained that day. The complaint argues that had the cameras been working properly, the police could have obtained identification of the assailant.

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[myarklamiss.com/news/local-news/winn-parish-prepares-to-build-new-jail/339347992?usg=AOvVaw2WI\\_xyeTbkSlp5yMTmlXxx](https://myarklamiss.com/news/local-news/winn-parish-prepares-to-build-new-jail/339347992?usg=AOvVaw2WI_xyeTbkSlp5yMTmlXxx)

<sup>4</sup> [Census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/winnparishlouisiana,LA/PST045221](https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/winnparishlouisiana,LA/PST045221)

<sup>5</sup> [Winnsheiff.org](http://Winnsheiff.org)

<sup>6</sup> [Winnsheiff.org](http://Winnsheiff.org)

<sup>7</sup> *In re Dismissal of Jordan*, 631 So.2d 57 (La. App. 2d Cir. 1994).

<sup>8</sup> [https://winnparishjournal.com/lawsuit-filed-against-cranford-jordan-and-the-winn-parish-sheriffs-office-for-negligent-security/?fbclid=IwAR2f8vahacsC2dgQ90KNUSNFVXsMpOiaiX2gQarRtqRFBKobPvFMHR\\_3zAc](https://winnparishjournal.com/lawsuit-filed-against-cranford-jordan-and-the-winn-parish-sheriffs-office-for-negligent-security/?fbclid=IwAR2f8vahacsC2dgQ90KNUSNFVXsMpOiaiX2gQarRtqRFBKobPvFMHR_3zAc)

An earlier point of controversy for Cranford Jordan arose in 1990 when Jordan was terminated from his position of Chief of Police for Winn Parish.<sup>9</sup> Allegedly, Jordan oversaw and participated in an illegal search of the home of a bootlegger named Robinson. After a hearing, an appeal with the district court, an appeal to the Civil Service Board, and another appeal to the district court, all named Jordan's firing as lawful. However, on oral argument with the Second Circuit Court of Appeal of Louisiana, the court finally reversed and held Jordan was, in fact, wrongfully discharged. He was then reinstated to his position and received backpay for his time apart from the Sheriff's Office.

### **EVIDENCE OF OVERSIGHT**

There is no evidence of oversight by other national associations, no evidence of audits, or hearings or judicial orders to ensure Winn Parish Jail is a safe jail for inmates. From the outside, it appears this is a small, rural facility that is not paid much attention to. Winn Parish Correctional Facility and Winn Parish Prison have received more attention in the news due to their larger capacities.

### **EVIDENCE OF TRANSPARENCY**

No findings of public briefings, availability of data on inmates, or other research about the jail results from a search of the jail's transparency. Interestingly, there is a link on the Sheriff's website titled "Transparency in Coverage". However, an attempt to open this link in any application format only results in coded language that is completely indecipherable.

### **NOTABLE CASES OR COMPLAINTS ON THE JAIL'S CONDITIONS IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS**

An attempt to search the dockets for "Winn Parish Jail" results in a number of civil lawsuits naming as defendants as the Winn Parish Jail, Cranford Jordan as Sheriff of Winn Parish, or the Warden of the Winn Parish Jail. Plaintiffs have alleged unsafe conditions, denial of medical care, and other similar claims, however, it appears nearly every complaint was dismissed.

In 2019, the town of Jonesboro started accepting ICE detainees into the Jackson Correctional Center.<sup>10</sup> Winn Correctional then started housing ICE detainees in May of 2019. The deals with ICE created higher pay for jail employees and supervisors received raises. Winn Parish Sheriff Cranford Jordan told the Associated Press that the deal with ICE was a "blessing" of jobs and funding.

In conclusion, it does not appear much controversy has surrounded Winn Parish Jail in recent years. This may be due to the small capacity of the jail itself or the rurality of Winn Parish. Regardless, attempts should continue to be made to gather death records and other documents to gain better insight into the internal workings of the jail.

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<sup>9</sup> *In re Dismissal of Jordan*, 631 So.2d 57 (La. App. 2d Cir. 1994).

<sup>10</sup> [https://www.nola.com/news/article\\_9927b374-f388-11e9-8eca-43ec3c782d9f.html](https://www.nola.com/news/article_9927b374-f388-11e9-8eca-43ec3c782d9f.html)