

TO: Professors Andrea Armstrong and Nishi Kumar
FROM: Madison Tuck
RE: “Better Know a Jail” Memo
DATE: November 29, 2022

St. Mary Parish Law Enforcement Center

Introduction

St. Mary Parish is one of sixty-four (64) parishes in Louisiana. St. Mary Parish encompasses 555.8 square miles and has a population of 50,020.¹ According to census data, the parish is 52% white, 31% black, 7% Hispanic, 2% Native American, and 1% Asian.² Incorporated cities in St. Mary Parish include Amelia, Baldwin, Bayou Vista, Berwick, Centerville, Charenton, Franklin, Glencoe, Morgan City, Patterson, Siracusaville, and Sorrel.³ The St. Mary Parish Law Enforcement Center is located in Centerville.⁴ The Center is operated by the St. Mary Parish Sheriff’s Office and is under the supervision of Major Nick Rogers.⁵

Jail Characteristics

The St. Mary Parish Law Enforcement Center is a minimum-security facility located at 9311 Frontage Rd, Centerville, LA 70522.⁶ The Center was constructed to house 320 inmates.⁷ The facility holds Department of Corrections prisoners as well as meeting local municipal and tribal law enforcement agencies' inmate housing needs.⁸ According to the St. Mary Parish Sheriff’s Office website, “several cost-saving measures have been introduced to alleviate the burden of the rising price of inmate housing. New medical and food programs implemented at the jail streamlined services and reduced security risks.”⁹ The jail has a GED program and a Transitional Work Program.¹⁰ Tax credits are available to employers who hire qualified offenders.¹¹

The live jail database can be accessed via the homepage of the St. Mary Parish Sheriff’s Office website. The user can access the database by clicking one of the blue circles at the top of the website, specifically the blue circle on the far left with the handcuffs. Once the user clicks the icon with the handcuffs, they are taken to a page with a hyperlink to current inmates and a hyperlink to those released in the past 48 hours.¹²

¹ <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/05000US22101-st-mary-parish-la/>

² *Id.*

³ <https://louisiana.hometownlocator.com/counties/cities,cfips,101,c,st.%20mary.cfm>

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ <https://www.stmaryso.com/page.php?id=1>

⁶ <https://doc.louisiana.gov/location/st-mary-parish/>

⁷ <https://www.stmaryso.com/jail>

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² <https://www.stmaryso.com/roster-choose>

As of Wednesday, November 2, 2022, at 3 PM, the St. Mary Parish Law Enforcement Center has 231 men in custody.¹³ The inmate roster website makes it easy to see the name, booking date, charges, and bond for each inmate in list format, but in order to read race of each incarcerated person, you have to click “view profile” under each person’s name and wait for the webpage to load, making it a tedious process. Of the 231 men incarcerated at the Center currently, 96 of them are white, 134 of them are black, and 1 of them is “Indian.”¹⁴ For the white inmates, the facility does not differentiate between Hispanic and non-Hispanic. The men incarcerated at St. Mary Parish Law Enforcement Center are incarcerated for a wide array of reasons. The most common charges are drug offenses, including the possession of marijuana,¹⁵ failure to appear/probation violations, and domestic violence.¹⁶ Individuals are also housed at the Center for more serious charges, however, such as first and second degree murder, sex crimes, and crimes against juveniles.¹⁷ While the Center does hold some people in the facility long-term, the majority of the population is there short term.

Public Records Request and Inmate Mortality

There is nothing on the St. Mary Parish Sheriff’s website about public records requests, meaning that there is no public records request portal or contact information listed for the records custodian. However, based on emails sent by former students, I knew to contact the legal advisor for St. Mary Parish Sheriff’s Office, Eric Duplantis. He has responded to student requests in past years, though no records were ever actually provided previously. This year, however, he was able to forward my requests to Lieutenant First Class Samantha Poleder who provided me with a list of deaths at the St. Mary Parish Law Enforcement Center since 2014.

Based on the list provided by Lieutenant Poleder, there have been three deaths at the St. Mary Parish Law Enforcement Center since 2014– including the deaths of Clarence Clark, Sterling A. Scully, and Rodney P. Frederick.¹⁸

Clarence Clark III, a 46 year-old black man,¹⁹ was found unresponsive in his bunk at the Center on Saturday, October 25, 2014. He was discovered by a jailer conducting a count in a dorm.²⁰ Medical staff responded immediately and Acadian Ambulance was called to the location.²¹ Despite their efforts, the St. Mary Parish Coroner pronounced Mr. Clark dead at 8 a.m. that morning.²² Mr. Clark, a Department of Corrections prisoner, had been incarcerated since March of that year and was serving time on a five-year sentence for second degree battery.²³

Sterling A. Scully, a 52 year-old non-hispanic white man, reported he was ill on Saturday, August 20, 2016.²⁴ He was brought to medical and seen by medical staff who called an

¹³ <https://www.stmaryso.com/roster.php>

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ <https://www.banner-tribune.com/news-local-police-reports/more-marijuana-arrests-reported-st-mary-deputies>

¹⁶ <https://www.stmaryso.com/roster.php>

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ List provided by First Lieutenant Samantha Poleder.

¹⁹ *Id.*

²⁰ <https://archive.stmarynow.com/cops/sheriff-foul-play-not-suspected-inmate-death>

²¹ *Id.*

²² *Id.*

²³ *Id.*

²⁴ <https://www.theadvertiser.com/story/news/local/louisiana/2016/08/20/inmate-dies-st-mary-parish-jail/89061304/>

ambulance.²⁵ Soon, Mr. Scully became unresponsive. Resuscitation measures were implemented but they were unsuccessful and Mr. Scully was pronounced dead by the St. Mary Parish Coroner's Office.²⁶ Mr. Scully had been incarcerated since December of 2015 and was serving time on charges of illegal possession of a firearm by a convicted felon and for violation of felony probation.²⁷

On Wednesday, September 28, 2017, Rodney P. Frederick, a 59 year-old white non-hispanic man, was found unresponsive by a correctional deputy at the St. Mary Parish Law Enforcement Center.²⁸ Deputies and medical staff responded quickly and began rendering aid.²⁹ Acadian Ambulance was called and transported Mr. Frederick to Franklin Foundation Hospital.³⁰ Once at the hospital, Mr. Frederick was pronounced dead.³¹ Mr. Frederick had been incarcerated since March of that year on charges of aggravated crimes against nature and aggravated incest.³²

Since Lieutenant Poleder responded to my records request, an additional death occurred at the Center. Eric Charles, 32, was found unresponsive on October 19, 2022.³³ Correctional officers and nursing staff responded, as well as EMTs with Acadian Ambulance.³⁴ He was transported to Franklin Foundation Hospital, then on to Oschner Lafayette General Medical Center by helicopter.³⁵ His death remains under investigation with no evidence of foul play.³⁶ An autopsy is pending.³⁷

Jail Leadership

Sheriff Blaise W. Smith was first sworn in as Sheriff of St. Mary Parish on December 18, 2020 following the retirement of previous Sheriff Mark Herbert.³⁸ He is a U.S. Army Combat Veteran who served in the Vietnam War.³⁹ Sheriff Smith has a total of 47 years of law enforcement experience, including stints as a Reserve Officer, Part Time Officer, and Full Time POST Certified Officer.⁴⁰ He retired from the St. Mary Parish Sheriff's Office in 1994 at the rank of Chief Inspector.⁴¹ Sheriff Smith then served in the Chitimacha Tribal Police Department, working his way up to the Chief of Police.⁴² Sheriff Smith also held a Federal Commission

²⁵ *Id.*

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ *Id.*

²⁸ <https://www.daily-review.com/news/inmate-parish-jail-dies>

²⁹ *Id.*

³⁰ *Id.*

³¹ *Id.*

³² <https://www.wvlv.com/article/news/inmate-dies-at-st-mary-parish-law-enforcement-center/289-479274599>

³³ <https://www.klfy.com/local/st-mary-parish/inmate-death-in-st-mary-parish-under-investigation/>

³⁴ <https://www.katc.com/news/st-mary-parish/st-mary-parish-correctional-facility-inmate-found-dead-autopsy-pending>

³⁵ <https://www.klfy.com/local/st-mary-parish/inmate-death-in-st-mary-parish-under-investigation/>

³⁶ *Id.*

³⁷ https://www.thedailyiberian.com/news/st-mary-parish-inmate-found-dead-at-law-enforcement-center/article_f5874c48-5149-11ed-be78-83573e85848f.html

³⁸ <https://www.stmaryso.com/page.php?id=1>

³⁹ *Id.*

⁴⁰ *Id.*

⁴¹ *Id.*

⁴² *Id.*

through the Department of Interior for the Bureau of Indian Affairs.⁴³ Sheriff Smith is married to Karen McGoff and they have six children, fifteen grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.⁴⁴

Captain Nick Rogers was promoted to the rank of Major and became the Warden at the St. Mary Parish Law Enforcement Center in January 2020.⁴⁵ Major Nick Rogers began his career in law enforcement by joining the St. Mary Parish Sheriff's Office in 2002.⁴⁶ That same year, he graduated from the Louisiana P.O.S.T Academy and worked as a road deputy.⁴⁷ Then in 2006, he was promoted to the Narcotics Task Force.⁴⁸ In 2014, Rogers led operations at the St. Mary Parish Law Enforcement Center in Centerville before returning to the Marine Section.⁴⁹ In 2018, Rogers was promoted to command the Uniformed Patrol Section.⁵⁰ He was assigned to lead the Investigations Division in 2019.⁵¹

Jail News Coverage and Transparency

On May 4, 2017, pro se plaintiff William Charles Frederick filed a civil rights complaint pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983 in the United States District Court for the Middle District of Louisiana.⁵² Defendants named by Mr. Frederick included St. Mary Parish Law Enforcement Center, Officer Wanda Jackson, Deputy Moore, then-Warden Robyn Landry, and then-Sheriff Mark Hebert as defendants.⁵³ The suit related to an incident where following surgery at the Iberia Medical Center, Mr. Frederick returned to the Center and was placed in segregation instead of a medical dorm.⁵⁴ Mr. Frederick claimed he was denied any form of pain medication, that his segregation cell was "horribly unsanitized," that he was denied physical therapy, and that he had to stay in the cell 23 hours a day.⁵⁵ Frederick also claimed that he asked to go to the hospital for kidney stones and that he was in such pain he was laying on the floor, but correctional staff ignored him.⁵⁶ On February 20, 2020, the District Court for the Middle District of Louisiana dismissed all of his claims with prejudice on the basis that they were frivolous and failed to state claims upon which relief could be granted.⁵⁷ Mr. Frederick has been going through the appeals process with no success.

In June of 2018, a total of five inmates escaped from St. Mary Parish Law Enforcement Center.⁵⁸ At the beginning of the month, four inmates escaped together after "three deputies failed to follow property security protocol." The four individuals who escaped together were

⁴³ *Id.*

⁴⁴ *Id.*

⁴⁵ *Id.*

⁴⁶ *Id.*

⁴⁷ *Id.*

⁴⁸ *Id.*

⁴⁹ *Id.*

⁵⁰ *Id.*

⁵¹ *Id.*

⁵² *Frederick v. St. Mary Parish Law Enforcement Ctr.*, 2020 WL 1233748 (W.D. La. Feb. 20, 2020).

⁵³ *Id.*

⁵⁴ *Id.*

⁵⁵ *Id.*

⁵⁶ *Id.*

⁵⁷ *Id.*

⁵⁸ <https://www.wbrz.com/news/4-inmates-escape-st-mary-parish-law-enforcement-center/>

William Deans, Jamie Scarbrough, Tanner Scarbrough and Elias Todd.⁵⁹ William Deans was being held on domestic abuse by strangulation and Jaimie Scabrough was being held on illegal possession of stolen things, possession of a firearm by a convicted felon, and possession of marijuana.⁶⁰ Tanner Scarbrough was being held on illegal possession of a stolen firearm and possession of a firearm with an obliterated number.⁶¹ Lastly, Elias Todd was being held on theft of a motor vehicle, possession of drug paraphernalia, obstruction of justice, theft, and criminal damage to property.⁶² The four escaped individuals were captured and the three deputies responsible for the escape were fired.⁶³ Later that same month, Jeremy Anthony Perez escaped from the Center.⁶⁴ Perez was being held on charges including aggravated flight from an officer, no driver's license, careless operation, possession of marijuana, and possession of drug paraphernalia.⁶⁵ He was located three days after he escaped in Acadia Parish and transported back to the St. Mary Parish Law Enforcement Center.⁶⁶

In April of 2019, St. Mary Parish Sheriff's Office corrections deputy Deboni Rollins was fired and charged with simple battery.⁶⁷ She was arrested on April 22, 2019 after voluntary turning herself in.⁶⁸ The warrant stemmed from an incident on April 16, 2019, in which Rollins committed a battery upon an inmate.⁶⁹

In August of 2022, St. Mary Parish Sheriff's Office corrections deputy Abreante Jacole Harris was dismissed and criminally charged for an incident that occurred at the Center.⁷⁰ She was arrested on August 25, 2022, for simple battery and malfeasance in office.⁷¹ According to an internal investigation conducted by the Sheriff's Office, Ms. Harris entered a dorm and struck an inmate several times.⁷²

According to St. Mary Parish Council, for the year ending December 21, 2019, the budget for the jail operating and maintenance fund was \$1,500,000, if you add up the general fund and gaming receipt fund.⁷³ The Center claims that the contracted food services they implemented in 2013 save taxpayers approximately \$300,000 a year.⁷⁴

⁵⁹ *Id.*

⁶⁰ *Id.*

⁶¹ *Id.*

⁶² *Id.*

⁶³ *Id.*

⁶⁴ <https://www.wafb.com/story/38437924/inmate-who-escaped-from-st-mary-parish-jail-captured-jeremy-anthony-perez/>

⁶⁵ *Id.*

⁶⁶ *Id.*

⁶⁷ <https://www.daily-review.com/news-local-police-reports/sheriff-deputy-fired-charged-battery-inmate>

⁶⁸ *Id.*

⁶⁹ *Id.*

⁷⁰ <https://www.klfy.com/local/st-mary-parish/st-mary-parish-corrections-deputy-charged-with-simple-battery-malfeasance-in-office/>

⁷¹ *Id.*

⁷² *Id.*

⁷³ [https://app.lla.state.la.us/PublicReports.nsf/0/A616E8B20E32C3EA862585F900720CAC/\\$FILE/00021720.pdf](https://app.lla.state.la.us/PublicReports.nsf/0/A616E8B20E32C3EA862585F900720CAC/$FILE/00021720.pdf)

⁷⁴ <https://www.stmaryso.com/page.php?id=6>