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Iowa Prison Keys For Sale On eBay

Prison Spending \$6,000 To Change Locks

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DES MOINES, Iowa -- A key to the Anamosa State Penitentiary ended up on eBay.

Now the state is spending thousands of dollars to change the locks.

The 135-year-old prison is halfway between Cedar Rapids and Dubuque and is home to some of Iowa's most violent criminals. "It certainly is technologically behind the times, but many of the old technologies still work remarkably well," said prison warden Jerry Burt.

Many of the facility's vintage cellblocks are still used today.

"We do know there were a number of keys and it's a possibility," he said.

An eBay seller claims he has the keys that once opened locks at the state prison. The warden said he is not sure, but he said it's not out of the realm of possibility.

"We don't know exactly how many keys were sold. We don't know where they went. We don't have any information on that," he said.

The eBay auction said the keys belonged to a jailer who retired in the 1970s. When he died, a collector bought them at an estate sale. This week someone bid \$12 on the keys.

"We don't have any information that says any particular key that fit any particular lock may have been compromised," Burt said.

Prison officials aren't taking any chances. The prison is spending about \$6,000 to change its locks.

Burt said that one of the inmates said he wishes he could go on eBay to bid on the keys.

The warden insisted that the public was never at risk and isn't even sure if the key works on any current locks.

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