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## ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE of PENNSYLVANIA COURTS

### NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Oct. 20, 2023

#### **Old Lehigh County Courthouse Dedicated as Historic Lehigh County Courthouse After Extensive Renovations**

**HARRISBURG** – After years of extensive renovations, the Old Lehigh County Courthouse, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, has reopened as the Historic Lehigh County Courthouse. The Court of Common Pleas of Lehigh County today held a dedication ceremony to celebrate the building's full restoration in Courtroom 1A.

"A walk through this building is a walk-through history," said Lehigh County President Judge J. Brian Johnson. "More than saving history by improving the structural and operational integrity of this building so that it can live on for another 200 years, we need the space it provides to conduct court operations."

"We appreciate the support and commitment of County Executive Phil Armstrong and the Commissioners to this significant project. Special thanks goes to former President Judge Edward D. Reibman for inspiring this project and to Director of General Services Rick Molchany whose dedication, creativity and perseverance got this project off the ground and completed."

Over the last several years, the Courthouse has undergone meticulous exterior repairs and historically accurate interior refurbishments to ensure its structural integrity and historical significance are preserved for generations to come.

The restoration project commenced in 2015 when the Courthouse, facing issues of overcrowding and deteriorating infrastructure, underwent a comprehensive audit that identified extensive requirements to meet modern building codes.

Since county officials committed funds in 2016, the building's systems and windows were replaced, roofs and stone walls were made water-tight, security and safety systems were added, lighting and handicapped access were improved and existing historic features were carefully curated and enhanced. Additionally, a second Magisterial District Court has been relocated to the building to provide better security and save the county the monthly rental expense of that office.

Serving as a testament to the dedication and expertise that the county has invested in this endeavor, the successful restoration efforts have been recognized by Preservation Pennsylvania – a prominent organization dedicated to preserving the state's rich history. The project has been selected as the recipient of the Construction Award (Rehabilitation) at the 2023 Pennsylvania Historic Preservation Awards on Oct. 19.

The dedication ceremony will be attended by distinguished guests and community members who have supported the project. It will serve as a platform to express gratitude to all those who contributed to the successful restoration efforts and feature a history presentation by the Lehigh Valley Heritage Museum.

To recognize this important milestone in the Courthouse's history, the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts released a [video](#) where key stakeholders involved in the restoration efforts sat down to discuss the project and to describe the building's historical significance.

Originally erected between 1814 and 1819, the Lehigh County Courthouse is a prominent and iconic county landmark. Over time, the building underwent several modifications and additions due to population growth, including a significant expansion in 1864, followed by further enhancements in 1914-1916. With the 1863 Courtroom's renovation in 1996 as a major step, former President Judge Edward Reibman's efforts led to the eventual full restoration of the Courthouse today.

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