

The Bicentennial of the United States District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania



1818-2018

The Bicentennial of the United States District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania

In 2018, the United States District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania hosted a four-part series of events presented in honor of its bicentennial.

Established in 1818, the courts of the Western District have been the battleground of disputes reflective of an evolving Western Pennsylvania. Societal, technological, and economic issues affecting the development of the region have been decided by the District Court's fifty-nine commissioned judges and the Bankruptcy Court's eleven appointed judges, as well as the District Court's magistrate judges, bankruptcy registers, and bankruptcy referees.

In celebration of its 200th anniversary, the Honorable Joy Flowers Conti, Chief U.S. District Judge, called for the development of a series of programs worthy of the occasion. Chief Judge Conti, along with the Honorable Jeffery A. Deller, Chief U.S. Bankruptcy Judge, and the rest of the Historical Committee for the District Court, spearheaded the planning of the events. Below is the membership of the Historical Committee:

Chief District Judge Conti • Chief Bankruptcy Judge Deller • U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Thomas P. Agresti • U.S. District Judge Maurice B. Cohill, Jr. (retired) • U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Judith K. Fitzgerald (retired) • Joshua C. Lewis, Clerk of the District Court • Michael R. Rhodes, Clerk of the Bankruptcy Court • John Kroto, Chief Deputy Clerk of the Bankruptcy Court • Barbara Alexander-Klein • Robert L. Byer, Esq. • Sean Fox • Juliann L. Haynes-Held, Esq. • Valerie Kish • Eric Knaus, Esq. • Joe Martin • Michael Palus • Blaire Patrick, Esq. • John Poglinco • Glenda Terrell • Amy Tonti, Esq. • Joseph Ventresca • Dennis Watson, Esq.

Contained in this pamphlet is an overview and photo compilation of the four Bicentennial Series events:

“Race Relations and Civil Rights Cases in the Western District”
“A Celebration of Liberty and Justice for All”
“The Pittsburgh Baseball Drug Trials — A Look Back to 1985”
“A Celebration of the First Federal Lawyers in the Western District”

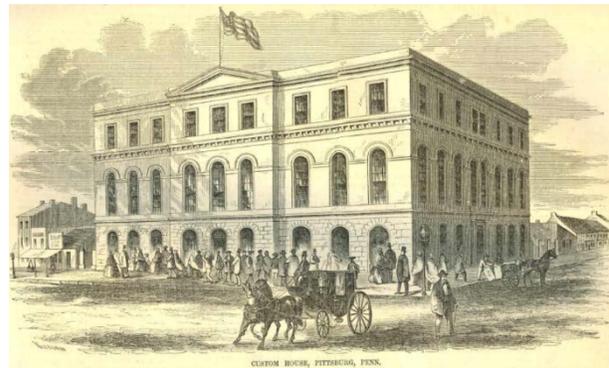
Federal Courthouses in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Right: Courthouse and market in Market Square, Downtown Pittsburgh. Built in 1794, the Market Square Courthouse housed all sessions of the United States District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania from its first session on December 7, 1818 until 1841. The building was razed in 1852.



Left: The State Courthouse on Grant's Hill, located on the corner of Grant, Fourth, and Ross Streets. The District Court occupied space on the second floor of the building from 1841-1853.

Right: The first Federal Building in Pittsburgh located at Fifth Avenue and Smithfield Street. Known variously as the "Custom House," "Pittsburgh Postoffice" and "Federal Government Building," this building was the first federal home for the United States Courts in the Western District of Pennsylvania and sessions were held there from 1853 until July 1891.



Left: The United States Postoffice and Courthouse Building located at Fourth Avenue and Smithfield Street. This building was home to the District Court from July 1891 until the current Courthouse at Grant Street and Seventh Avenue opened on November 7, 1934.

Although razed in 1966, many of the elegant decorative features and architectural details of the old building have been preserved at various sites throughout the city. Much of the decorative ironwork and decorative carving that adorned the building can be seen at the headquarters of the Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation located in Station Square. The collection of items preserved by the Foundation include carved Federal Eagles and granite statues of the Goddess of Justice.

Front Cover: The current Courthouse at Grant Street and Seventh Avenue which opened on November 7, 1934. On November 20, 2015, the Courthouse was named the "Joseph F. Weis, Jr. Courthouse" in honor of the late Third Circuit Court of Appeals Judge.

Federal Courthouses in Erie & Johnstown, Pennsylvania



In 1866, Congress provided that the United States District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania should also hear cases in Erie, Pennsylvania. The first session of the District Court held in Erie took place in January 1867.

In 1887, the first United States courthouse in Erie (left) was opened. This building was home to the United States Circuit Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania from 1887-1911, and the United States District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania from 1887-1938.

Right: The current United States courthouse in Erie, Pennsylvania as it appeared in the year of its opening, 1938 (top).



The courthouse is now part of a complex (right, bottom) of interconnected buildings including the Erie Public Library (built in 1899) and the Isaac Baker and Son building (built in 1946). The buildings are joined by a glass atrium. Renovations were completed in 2004.



Left: In 1989, the District Court began holding sessions in Johnstown, Pennsylvania. Sessions are held in the historic Penn Traffic Building.



In celebration of the 200th anniversary of its founding, the United States District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania presents:

Race Relations and Civil Rights Cases in the Western District

Wednesday, February 7th | Joseph F. Weis, Jr. U.S. Courthouse

Opening Remarks & Screening of Documentary “Wendell G. Freeland: A Silent Soldier” begins at 2 p.m.

Panel Presentation (2 CLE Credit Hours) begins at 3 p.m. Reception to follow.

Race Relations and Civil Rights Cases in the Western District

On Wednesday, February 7, 2018, the District Court hosted the first in its Bicentennial Series of events titled “Race Relations and Civil Rights Cases in the Western District.” The program featured a panel discussion of significant race-related cases adjudicated by the District Court, including *Hoots v. Commonwealth* (CV 71-538), a desegregation case that resulted in the formation of the Woodland Hills School District.

Also discussed were notable civil rights cases including *Mahone v. Waddle* (CV 76-1377/8) and *United States v. City of Pittsburgh* (CV 97-0354). Panelists for the event included the Honorable Timothy K. Lewis, former Judge for the Third Circuit Court of Appeals and District Court Judge for the Western District of Pennsylvania, Mark T. Fatla, Esq., Executive Director of the Northside Leadership Conference, and Witold “Vic” Walczak, Esq.,



Top of Page: Flyer for the program

Above: Chief U.S. District Judge Joy Flowers Conti

Left: Glenn R. Mahone, Esq.

Legal Director of the ACLU of Pennsylvania. The panel was moderated by former Duquesne Law Professor, Tracey McCants Lewis, J.D.

Preceding the panel presentation, the District Court held a screening of a documentary about local Civil Rights icon Wendell G. Freeland, Esq., titled “Wendell G. Freeland: A Silent Soldier.”

Remarks at the event were delivered by then presiding Chief U.S. District Judge Joy Flowers Conti, Glenn R. Mahone, Esq., and Tony J. Thompson, Esq.



Above: Attendees watch “Wendell G. Freeland: A Silent Solider.”



Left: Panelists Hon. Timothy K. Lewis, Witold “Vic” Walczak, Esq., and Mark T. Fatla, Esq. (not pictured) speak to attendees. Pictured in background from left to right: U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Carlota M. Böhm (now Chief Bankruptcy Judge), Chief U.S. Magistrate Judge Maureen Kelly, U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Gregory L. Taddonio, U.S. District Judge Cathy Bissoon, and U.S. District Judge Nora Barry Fischer. Right: Attendees listen to the panelists.



Far left: Tony J. Thompson, Esq., Chair of the Homer S. Brown Division of the Allegheny County Bar Association.

Left, top: Hon. Timothy K. Lewis



Left, bottom: Witold “Vic” Walczak, Esq.



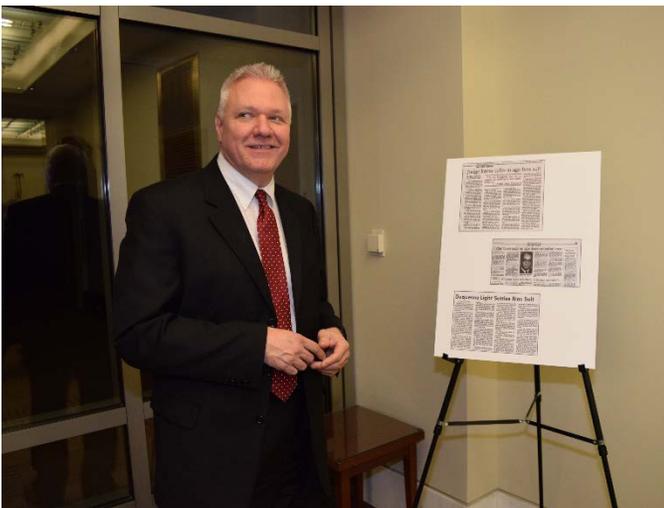
Left: Tracey McCants Lewis, J.D.

Above: Mark T. Fatla, Esq.



Left: Attendees gather for a post-program reception in the Honorable Gary L. Lancaster Atrium.

Right: Chief U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Jeffery A. Deller, who organized the program, speaks with Hon. Timothy K. Lewis and Paul Titus, Esq.



Michael Palus (left) and Chief District Judge Conti (right) examine displays of newspaper clippings and historical District Court artifacts created for the Bicentennial celebrations.





A Celebration of Liberty and Justice for All

Anchoring the Bicentennial Series, on June 1, 2018, the District Court hosted a full day of programming featuring panel discussions, historical presentations, and a celebratory luncheon.

The festivities were opened with a welcome statement by Chief U.S. District Judge Joy Flowers Conti and a video message by U.S. Senator Patrick J. Toomey recorded for the occasion. Chief U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Jeffery A. Deller and his Senior Law Clerk, Juliann L. Haynes-Held, Esq., read proclamations drafted in celebration of the day by Governor Tom Wolf.

Chief U.S. Magistrate Judge Maureen Kelly moderated the first panel of the day, “Reflections on the Western District of Pennsylvania,” which addressed the judicial appointment process, the responsibilities of a federal judge, the evolution of the District Court’s workload and divisional offices, and what it is and has been like to be a federal judge in the Western District of Pennsylvania. Panelists included Chief Third Circuit Court of Appeals Judge D. Brooks Smith, Third Circuit Court of Appeals Judge Thomas Hardiman,



Above (from left): Chief Bankruptcy Judge Deller, Joni Deller, Chief District Judge Conti, and Pittsburgh Mayor Peduto pose with the Eagle Capital.

Right:
Circuit
Judge
Thomas
Hardiman



Left: Hon. David J. Hickton, former U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Pennsylvania

U.S. Senior District Judge Donetta Ambrose, U.S. Magistrate Judge Robert Mitchell, and retired Clerk of the District Court Robert Barth.

Delving into the historical cases of the Western District, the second panel, titled “Protectors of the Constitution: The Civil Liberties Cases,” discussed some of the notable civil rights cases of the region. Cases included those concerning the conditions of the Allegheny County Jail, free speech, and religious liberties. The second panel was moderated by U.S. District Judge Mark R. Hornak (now Chief District Judge). The panel was comprised of U.S. District Judge Cathy Bissoon, retired U.S. District Judge Maurice B. Cohill, Jr., Federal Public Defender for the Western District of Pennsylvania Lisa B. Freeland, Esq., Legal Director of the ACLU of Pennsylvania Witold “Vic” Walczak, Esq., First Asst. County Solicitor for Allegheny County George M. Janocsko, Esq., Asst. County Solicitor for Allegheny County Dennis Biondo, Esq., and Jon Pushinsky, Esq.

Taking on notable criminal cases, the third panel of the day, “Trials of the Century: Notorious Criminal Cases,” led by moderator, Beaver County Common Pleas Judge James J. Ross, discussed select criminal prosecutions including organized crime cases of the 1970s and 1980s, the Major League Baseball drug trials, RICO cases of the 1990s, and cyber-crimes. Panelists were former U.S. District Judge Robert Cindrich, former U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Pennsylvania David J. Hickton, Bruce J. Teitelbaum, Esq., and Sam Reich, Esq.

Rounding out the day, the fourth panel, “The District’s Financial Courts: Bankruptcy and the Economy of Western Pennsylvania,” addressed the evolution of the Western District’s



Above: Erie Mayor Joseph Schember presents Chief District Judge Conti with his proclamation while (from left) Juliann L. Haynes-Held, Esq., Judge Hornak (now Chief District Judge), and Chief Bankruptcy Judge Deller look on.



Above: Portion of a display highlighting the construction of the Joseph F. Weis, Jr. United States Courthouse.

Below: The “Reflections on the Western District of Pennsylvania” panel speaks to the crowd.



Bankruptcy Court and its predecessors. Significant bankruptcy cases discussed included the mega-cases of Allegheny International and Wheeling-Pittsburgh Steel, the Westinghouse receivership in 1907, Pittsburgh Brewing, Jeanette Glass, and other cases which affected (or reflected) the financial conditions of the Western District. Chief Bankruptcy Judge Deller led the discussion by panelists Chief District Judge Conti, U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Carlota M. Böhm (now Chief Bankruptcy Judge), retired U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Judith K. Fitzgerald, Douglas Campbell, Esq., and Ronald Schuler, Esq.

A luncheon was held which featured the unveiling of the historic Eagle Capital now on display in the Honorable Gary L. Lancaster Atrium. The Eagle Capital adorned the ceremonial courtroom of the former District Courthouse at its Smithfield Street & Fourth Avenue location from 1891-1934. After the District Court's relocation to Grant Street in 1934, the Eagle Capital remained in the old courthouse until the building's demolition in 1966. Luncheon remarks were given by Chief District Judge Conti (who read from a celebratory letter from James C. Duff, Director of the Administrative Office of the United States Courts, and a commemorative plaque sent by Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court John G. Roberts, Jr.), Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald, Mayor of the City of Pittsburgh William Peduto, and Chief Circuit Judge D. Brooks Smith. In conjunction with the unveiling of the Eagle Capital, Chief Bankruptcy Judge Deller spoke, as did Arthur Ziegler, President of the Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation—the entity from which the Eagle Capital is on loan.



Top (from left): Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald speaks while Chief District Judge Conti and Pittsburgh Mayor Peduto listen.

Above: The Unveiling of the Eagle Capital



Above: Attendees enjoy the luncheon. Over 220 people registered for the event.

Following the luncheon, Professor John Q. Barrett, Esq. of St. John’s University School of Law gave a presentation (“Courthouse Memories: Justice Jackson & the Trial of Andrew Mellon”) on the trial of Andrew Mellon for tax fraud which was held in the District Courthouse.

Proclamations were offered throughout the day by the Mayor of the City of Erie Joseph Schember, U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Thomas P. Agresti (who read the proclamation of Erie County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper), and a representative of State House Representative for the 19th District of Pennsylvania Jake Wheatley. Remarks were offered by Allegheny County Bar Association President Hal D. Coffey, Esq., Pennsylvania Bar Association President Charles Eppolito, III, Esq., and the Honorable Michael Turzai, State House Representative for the 28th District of Pennsylvania and Speaker of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives.



Above: Attendees listen to the “Protectors of the Constitution: The Civil Liberties Cases” panel.

Below: U.S. Representative Conor Lamb (18th (now 17th) District, PA) speaks with Chief Bankruptcy Judge Deller, Joni Deller, and Hayden Deller.



Below: Robert Barth speaks with Susan Schwochau, Esq.



Above, left: Judge Ambrose and Judge Hornak (now Chief District Judge) speak with the Hon. Maureen Lally-Green, Duquesne Law School Dean. Below: The “Reflections on the Western District of Pennsylvania” panel. From left: Chief Magistrate Judge Kelly, Chief Circuit Judge Smith, Judge Hardiman, Judge Ambrose, Judge Mitchell, and Robert Barth.





Left: Judge Hornak (now Chief District Judge) (standing) speaks to panelists (from left) Lisa B. Freeland, Esq., Judge Cohill, Jon Pushinsky, Esq., and Judge Bissoon.

Below: Judge Ross moderates the “Trials of the Century: Notorious Criminal Cases” panel.



Left: Posters displayed at the program containing historical newspaper clippings and images.



Above: Attendees listen to the program. In the jury box: (from left, back row) U.S. District Judge Nora Barry Fischer, U.S. District Judge Marilyn Horan, Geri Paulisick, Esq., Judge Böhm (now Chief Bankruptcy Judge), Alexandra Zottola, Esq. (from left, front row) Judge Mitchell, U.S. Magistrate Judge Cynthia Eddy, Clerk of the District Court Joshua C. Lewis, Chief Circuit Judge Smith, and Judge Ambrose.

Below: “The District’s Financial Courts: Bankruptcy and the Economy of Western Pennsylvania” panel. (from left) Chief Bankruptcy Judge Deller, Juliann L. Haynes-Held, Esq. (non-panelist), Chief District Judge Conti, Ronald Schuler, Esq., Judge Fitzgerald, Judge Böhm (now Chief Bankruptcy Judge), and Douglas Campbell, Esq.





Above: Some of the panelists for “Protectors of the Constitution: The Civil Liberties Cases.” (from left) Jon Pushinky, Esq., Judge Cohill, Lisa B. Freeland, Esq., Dennis Biondo, Esq., George M. Janocsko, Esq., and Witold “Vic” Walczak, Esq.

Right: The Honorable Gary L. Lancaster Atrium decorated for the luncheon.

Below, left: Chief District Judge Conti speaks at the luncheon.



Above: Eagle Capital

Right: Bookmark favor distributed to attendees.



Jury to decide if 'uncreative' chemist made China White
 By Janet Williams
 A federal grand jury has indicted a chemist on a charge of manufacturing and distributing heroin in the Allegheny Valley. The indictment, returned last week, charges the chemist with manufacturing and distributing heroin in the Allegheny Valley. The chemist, who is accused of manufacturing and distributing heroin in the Allegheny Valley, is charged with manufacturing and distributing heroin in the Allegheny Valley.

China White chemist, accomplice convicted
 A North Side man pleads guilty to drug charges involving heroin. The man, who is accused of manufacturing and distributing heroin in the Allegheny Valley, is charged with manufacturing and distributing heroin in the Allegheny Valley.

Sharon Steel seeks bankruptcy protection
 Sharon Steel Corp. has filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection. The company, which is accused of manufacturing and distributing heroin in the Allegheny Valley, is charged with manufacturing and distributing heroin in the Allegheny Valley.

Steelmaker's bankruptcy is deja vu
 Wheeling-Pitt's second filing comes almost 10 years after first. The company, which is accused of manufacturing and distributing heroin in the Allegheny Valley, is charged with manufacturing and distributing heroin in the Allegheny Valley.

J&L deal collapses; 115 jobs lost
 The deal between J&L and another company has collapsed, resulting in the loss of 115 jobs. The company, which is accused of manufacturing and distributing heroin in the Allegheny Valley, is charged with manufacturing and distributing heroin in the Allegheny Valley.

Chrysler's Iacocca
 An illustration of a man carrying a large bundle on his back, likely representing a person in financial distress.

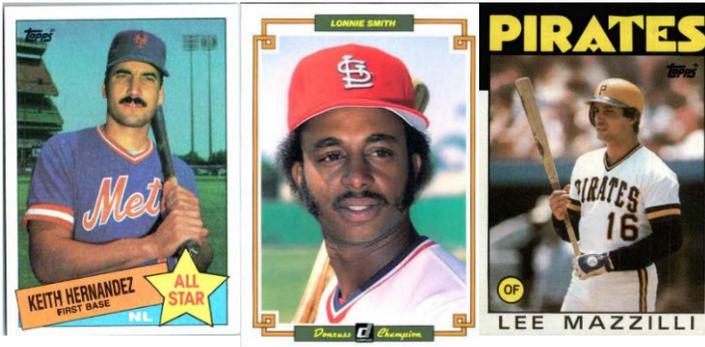
How major steelmakers fared in 1985
 A table showing the performance of major steelmakers in 1985. The table includes columns for company name, production, and other financial metrics.

U.S. OWNS US FUND PENSION AND BENEFITS WE WORKED HARD FOR IT
 A poster with a graphic of a person and text regarding pension and benefits.

Left: Posters displayed at the program containing historical newspaper clippings and images.

Right (from right): Judge Cindrich speaks with attendee.





**The Pittsburgh Baseball Drug Trials:
A Look Back to 1985**

On October 11, 2018, the third installment of the Bicentennial Series of events was held at Duquesne University School of Law.

For this event attendees filled the seats of the Charles J. Dougherty Ballroom where, just across town from the site of the former Three Rivers Stadium, the tale of one of Major League Baseball’s most notorious scandals was on display—the 1985 cocaine drug trials. However, unlike typical MLB events, the lineup for the program, titled “The Pittsburgh Baseball Drug Trials – A Look Back to 1985,” was not comprised of the stars of the baseball diamond. Instead, attendees came to hear what could be described as the “Lumber Yard” of legal professionals involved in the cocaine trials discuss the investigation, prosecution, and lasting impact of the cases.

These professionals included retired U.S. District Judge Gustave Diamond (who presided over one of the trials), Beaver County Common Pleas Judge James J. Ross (who served as an Assistant U.S. Attorney on the cases), retired FBI Agent Wells Morrison (who investigated the drug allegations against MLB players and implicated dealers), and Samuel J. Reich, Esq., (defense attorney for several MLB players).

Above, left & bottom, right: Assorted baseball cards of players implicated in the scandal.



Above (from left): Sam Reich, Esq., Wells Morrison, U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Jeffery A. Deller, Judge Diamond, and Judge Ross.



The panel was moderated by retired Duquesne University School of Law Professor Mark Yochum.

The program was followed by a reception at which attendees were able to view displays of baseball cards of implicated MLB players and compilations of newspaper clippings.



Above: Display of baseball card memorabilia and enlargements.

Left (from left): Duquesne University President Ken Gormley, Hon. Maureen Lally-Green, Dean of the Duquesne University School of Law, and Chief U.S. District Judge Joy Flowers Conti give opening remarks for the event.



Below (from left): Judge Deller, former Governor of Pennsylvania Tom Corbett (second row), former U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Pennsylvania J. Alan "Jerry" Johnson, and former U.S. District Judge Robert Cindrich laugh during the presentation.



Above: Wells Morrison, Judge Diamond, and Sam Reich, Esq.

Below: Professor Yochum (left), Judge Ross (right)



Below: Event Posters of compiled newspaper clippings.





A Celebration of the First Federal Lawyers in the Western District

Concluding the Bicentennial Series, on Tuesday, December 4, 2018, the District Court transported attendees back to December 1818 with “A Celebration of the First Federal Lawyers in Western Pennsylvania.” The event was organized by a steering committee consisting of Chief U.S. District Judge Joy Flowers Conti, Barbara Alexander-Klein (scriptwriter), Clay Kilgore, Valerie Kish, Blaire Patrick, Esq. (scriptwriter), and Joseph Ventresca.

The program explored through a historical lens the formation of the United States District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania and practice in the court, including: the Act establishing the court, issues of first impression with respect to criminal judgment in the court where the indictment was filed in the predecessor court, the genesis of legal practice in the area, initial holdings of court in locations within the community and eventual creation of a separate court facility, the selection and nomination of the first judge, the selection and requirements of the clerk of court, the opening of court, and qualifications of the first six lawyers to be admitted and sworn to practice on December 7th & 8th, 1818.

The cast included: Blaire Patrick, Esq. as the Narrator, Joseph Ventresca as Town Crier, U.S.

Above (from left): Jill Locnikar, Esq., Dan Booker, Esq., John Paul Putney, Esq., Chief District Judge Conti, Martin Dietz, Esq., Kezia O. L. Taylor, Esq., Joshua C. Lewis, Esq. (back row), Valerie Kish, Blaire Patrick, Esq., Judge Hornak (now Chief District Judge), Judge Fisher, Juliann L. Haynes-Held, Esq., Joseph Ventresca, Barbara Alexander-Klein, and Clay Kilgore.



Above (from left): Joshua C. Lewis, Esq., Judge Hornak (now Chief District Judge), and Judge Fisher. Photo Credit to ACBA.

Below: Kezia O. L. Taylor, Esq. as John M. Chaplin. Photo Credit to ACBA.



District Judge Mark R. Hornak (now Chief District Judge) as the first District Judge Jonathan H. Walker, Clerk of Court Joshua C. Lewis, Esq. as the first Clerk of Court Duncan Walker, Clay Kilgore as Robert J. Walker, Asst. U.S. Attorney Jill Locnikar as John McDonald, John Paul Putney, Esq. as Richard Biddle, Martin Dietz, Esq. as James S. Craft, Kezia O. L. Taylor, Esq. as John M. Chaplin, Dan Booker, Esq. as Alexander Brackenridge, and Third Circuit Court of Appeals Judge D. Michael Fisher as Samuel Douglas. Chief District Judge Conti, Juliann L. Haynes-Held, Esq., and Valerie Kish also played the roles of Tavern Owners.

The event featured a musical prelude entitled *Town of Pittsburgh*. Following the program attendees were treated to a reception where food and drink of the period (circa 1818) was enjoyed.



Above (from left): Juliann L. Haynes-Held, Esq., Valerie Kish, and Chief District Judge Conti. Photo Credit to ACBA.

Below (from left): Joshua C. Lewis, Esq., Judge Hornak (now Chief District Judge), and John Paul Putney, Esq. Photo Credit to ACBA.



Left (from left): Chief District Judge Conti, Clay Kilgore and Courtney Dennis. Photo Credit to ACBA.

Right: Local musician Sgt. Richard Manning serenaded attendees during the reception. The reception was held in the foyer just outside of Courtroom 8A of the Joseph F. Weis, Jr. U.S. Courthouse. Photo Credit to ACBA.



Right: Clay Kilgore, Executive Director of the Washington County Historical Society, and Courtney Dennis pose with early 19th century beverages typical to the Western District of Pennsylvania. Photo Credit to ACBA.

