

# Pontotoc County Courthouse open house is April 23

April 18, 2006

Pontotoc County officials on Sunday, April 23, will hold an open house from 2 to 4 p.m. at the newly renovated Pontotoc County Courthouse. The public is invited.

Judges of the First Chancery Court District and the First Circuit Court District, retired judges, members of the Pontotoc County Board of Supervisors and other elected officials are expected to attend the celebration. Circuit Clerk Tracy L. Robinson and Chancery Clerk Reggie Collums will serve as masters of ceremonies.

Circuit Judge Sharion Aycock of Fulton, who presided over a term of court which started the first week of April, said the renovation restored the stately beauty of the old second floor courtroom. "It is a historic gem. It has a museum quality to it," Judge Aycock said.

The three-story brick courthouse at 11 Washington Street in downtown Pontotoc was built in 1915 after the original courthouse burned, Robinson said. Courtroom renovations in the 1960s had covered the windows, covered the balcony and lowered the ceiling. The most recent renovation restored those old features, including the balcony, ornate light fixtures, Palladian windows and the wooden rail that separates the court from the spectators.

Workers discovered little treasures as they did the restoration. When the materials that had sealed off the balcony were removed, a section of the old courtroom rail was found stored there. The piece was used as a pattern to recreate the woodwork.

Judge Aycock said, "When they found the rails, it was like gold. Nobody even knew they existed. Everyone just assumed they had been destroyed."

When workers pulled the paneling off the walls and started to apply primer to the stucco, the words "To thine own self be true" became visible over the bench, Robinson said. "It was not until they put the primer on that they knew it was there." The lettering has now been restored.

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