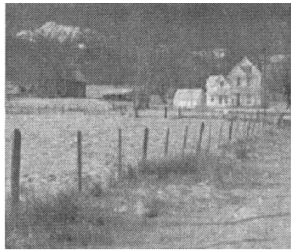


HISTORY OF CAMBRIA COUNTY



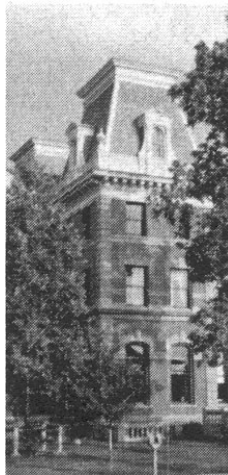
Cambria County, carved out of 700 square miles from portions of Somerset, Bedford, and Huntingdon Counties, was officially established by an Act of the State Legislature on March 26, 1804.

Incidentally, the name “Cambria” was a deviation of the ancient Celtic word for Wales, known as the “land of Compatriots.”

The County, however, was still rather sparsely populated at the time, so it was kept under the jurisdiction of Somerset County until the population was large enough and stable enough to justify autonomous political and judicial administration. It was not until March 26, 1807, that the Pennsylvania Assembly granted the young county its complete status; and, by November of that year, a full quota of county officials and judges was installed.

THE FIRST TWO COURTHOUSES

In 1808, the people of Ebensburg witnessed the construction of the first Cambria County Courthouse known as the "little red courthouse." It had just two floors -an upper story for the courtroom and a lower one for the jail. Because of disturbances from the inmates, there arose a need for two separate buildings. The new courthouse, situated on land donated by Rhees Lloyd, was built between 1828-1830 on the corner of Center Street and Lloyd Street.



THE CURRENT COURTHOUSE

From 1880-1882, a new courthouse was erected on the same site. The building was designed by M.E. Beebe of Buffalo New York and built by Henry Shenk at a cost of \$109,962. This “third” courthouse



was an imposing 3-1/2 story structure that is a significant example of Victorian Second Empire architecture. The building is in the form of a parallelogram and has a 120 ft. front on Center St. by a depth of 80 ft. toward the east. The building

measures from the ground to the eaves of the roof 48 ft. The outer walls are of Philadelphia pressed brick manufactured by Messrs. H & G Evans to the number of 80,000; the 20,000 bricks for the inner walls were manufactured onsite by Shenk.

The exterior facade of the building is most distinguished by its mansard slate roof with porthole dormers and elaborately projecting chimneys. Classical mouldings and pilasters together with a decorative bracketed cornice add to the highlighting of this more elaborate structure. The vertical dimensions of the courthouse are broken by three separate belt courses adding depth and scale to the building. The central pavilion adds additional highlighting with flanking pilasters which provide physical support for the classic portico above.

INITIAL RENOVATIONS

Major renovations to the 1880 courthouse were completed in 1923. The alteration consisted of three floors with courtrooms on two of them. The second floor was home to -three courtrooms, the district Attorney’s office and the Cambria County Law Library. In addition to the third floor, an elevator and three wings were

added because of the need for additional office and legal space. Hallways lead off the three wings to various offices and each wing is dominated by an elaborately decorated courtroom. The most amazing addition to the Courthouse was Courtroom 1 -a 500 seat auditorium setting" which is still one of the largest courtrooms in the United States. At the same time, a rotunda was designed as the central hub of the interior complex. A stained glass dome displaying the Cambria County seal allows sunlight to fill the rotunda.



RECENT RENOVATIONS

In 1992, it was decided that the 112 year-old edifice again needed restoration. The County commissioners wanted to enlarge the structure to accommodate disabled citizens and the expanding County government, while at the same time maintaining the historical integrity of the courthouse. However, they soon discovered that the projected reconstruction would cost ten times the original estimate. President Judge Gerard Long then recommended the use of prison labor to complete the project. The plan was put into action and Judge Long's idea saved millions of dollars for the County. When the new alterations were completed in 1995, the courthouse featured a new heated plaza, ramp, renovated offices and automated front doors for the disabled.

