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The Ceremonial Courtroom of
U.S. District Judge Algenon L. Marbley
of the Southern District of Ohio

The Ceremonial Courtroom of Hon. Algenon L. Marbley

U.S. District Judge, Southern District of Ohio

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Hon. Algenon L. Marbley

Courtroom dedication, May 16, 2003



building occupants at that time included one U.S. district judge and one bankruptcy judge. Today, the courthouse houses two circuit judges and their staffs, seven district judges and their staffs, three magistrate judges and their staffs, the Office of the Clerk of Court, the U.S. Marshals Service, the U.S. Probation Office, and the U.S. Pre-trial Services Office, as well as satellite offices of the library of the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals, the U.S. attorney, the federal public defender, and the property manager for the General Services Administration.

A ceremonial courtroom is located on the third floor of the building, as was the bankruptcy judge's courtroom. The judges who presided in the district court's ceremonial courtroom were District Judges Benson Hough (1934–1936), Mell Underwood (1936–1967), and Joseph P. Kinneary (1967–2001).

Judge Joseph P. Kinneary, after whom the courthouse was named in September 1998, is a legend in the federal judiciary. At the age of 60, Judge Kinneary was appointed as a U.S. district judge by President Lyndon B. Johnson. The judge previously served as the U.S. attorney for the Southern District of Ohio from 1961 until his appointment

By Toni Alkire

Photos by Jim Shively, Larry Phillips Photography

The Joseph P. Kinneary U.S. Courthouse in Columbus, Ohio (Eastern Division), is one of three seats of court for the Southern District of Ohio. (The Western Division is made up of seats of court in Cincinnati and Dayton.) The courthouse, originally named the Columbus Federal Building/U.S. Courthouse, was dedicated on Oct. 17, 1934, with the Post Office Department as its primary tenant.

The courthouse remained largely untouched during the 33 years in which the Post Office Department occupied the building. In addition to the Post Office Department,

to the federal bench. Taking senior status at the age of 81, Judge Kinneary remained active in the district, shouldering a 100 percent draw of criminal cases and an 80 percent share of civil matters; he continued to do so until a few days short of his 96th birthday, when on Aug. 31, 2001, Judge Joseph P. Kinneary retired. Judge Kinneary died on Feb. 14, 2003.

In September 2001, the courtroom was assigned to Hon. Algenon L. Marbley, who was appointed to the



H. Wright. The team worked together to design and implement a vast array of projects that would modernize the chambers and courtroom.

Preserving the historical features of the courtroom, while installing the latest technology for use in the courtroom and a state-of-the-art sound system, proved a challenging task. Floor boxes that provide access to the infrastructure conduit were installed throughout the well of the court by sawing out sections of the existing con-



This page: a speaker; the jury box; spectator benches; and detail of the judge's bench. Following page: Judge Marbley's bench.

federal bench on Nov. 7, 1997, to fill the vacancy created when Judge John D. Holschuh took senior status. Prior to his federal court appointment, Judge Marbley was a partner in the law firm of Vorys, Sater, Seymour & Pease. In addition to his work as a federal judge, Judge Marbley serves as an adjunct professor and instructor of trial advocacy at Capital University Law School, Ohio State University College of Law, and Harvard Law School. Judge Marbley's extensive outreach to the community includes service as a member of the board of trustees of both Children's Hospital Inc./Children's Hospital and the King Arts Complex. He is also a member of the boards of directors of the African-American Leadership Academy, First Tee of Columbus, Saint Philip Episcopal Church, and Big Brothers/Big Sisters Association for Franklin County. The judge has previously served as counsel for Project Linden Inc. and the Salesians Boys and Girls Club, as well as special counsel for Franklin County Children's Services.

Judge Marbley was interested in updating the chambers and courtroom from a technological standpoint while at the same time preserving the unique historical and artistic features of these spaces. Planning began with the assistant circuit executive for space and facilities, Barbara Wieliczka; GSA's director of facilities, James Lyons; GSA's regional historic preservation officer, Regina A. Nally; the state historic preservation officer, Amos J. Loveday Jr.; the history review manager in the Resource Protection and Review Office of the Ohio Historical Society, Justin M. Cook; and members of the Administrative Services Department of the clerk's office, Hector Maldonado and John

crete floor. Speakers for the amplification of pink noise were installed in the floor of the jury box, thereby keeping them out of sight.

In addition, the jury box was enlarged to provide seating for 14 jurors, instead of the 12 for which it was originally designed. The original design was maintained by enlarging the box from the back so that matching wood from the original back wall of the box could be used at the front of the box.

The windows throughout the chambers and courtroom were replaced. The original heavy, dark, red velvet window coverings in the courtroom were replaced with ones made of lighter-weight, off-white fabric. The new window treatments are fitted with tiebacks and an automatic remote-control shade system. The lighter, open-design draperies helped to brighten what had previously been a heavily shaded, somber courtroom. The original suspended ceiling light fixtures in the courtroom, made of white bronze and featuring opal glass diffusers, remained; however, increased bulb wattage improved illumination in the room. Padded cushions were added to the spectator benches.

The technological improvements included a conduit for phone and data connections throughout the courtroom; installation of phone and data connections for the judge and courtroom deputy; infrastructure for development of an evidence presentation system; flush-mounted floor boxes; and a state-of-the-art audio system that features the following:

- “pink noise” brought in through speakers that are mounted in the floor of the jury box and therefore retain the original look of the jury box;
- audio controls to permit sound to be directed to specific speakers throughout the courtroom;
- an infrared wireless assistive listening system;
- updated microphones;
- an on-site interpreting system that allows the interpreter’s translation to be directed to the headphones of the defendant(s);
- audioconferencing capability;
- wood-encased EAW, model LS832, tower speakers;
- a headset for the court reporter that brings sidebar conversations to the reporter without the need to move to the bench;
- additional microphones on the bench for ceremonial occasions; and
- a multitude of floor box configurations to accommodate various events.

The renovation began on Aug. 1, 2002, and was completed on Nov. 2, 2002. As the photographs show, the historical elements in the room remain intact and the groundwork infrastructure can support developing technology. The courtroom accommodates the highest levels

of professionalism, competence, and advocacy while preserving the grandeur expected of federal courtrooms across the nation. Frederick Benton Jr., a defense attorney who practices in Columbus, reflected on the true mission of a federal courthouse when he spoke at the dedication ceremony of the renovated courtroom: “I am reminded that the significance of the court is not in its grandeur, but in the faithful discharge of justice for all who come into this room. Historically, the federal court has been a beacon of light for all who have sought refuge in pursuing the guarantees of due process, equal employment, fair housing and a quality educational system.”

At the dedication ceremony, Judge Marbley shared his views regarding the renovated courtroom:

I am proud to be a member of that group who have had this as their court home. Judges Hough, Underwood, Kinneary, and I are a diverse group, but we share a significant commonality: We all hold this office in trust for the next jurist who is fortunate enough to preside here. We don’t own it. We don’t possess it. We aren’t the embodiment of the law. We aren’t the embodiment of all that the law represents. When we are in this room, when we sit at this bench, we simply do our best to interpret the law and to dispense justice. Though from vastly different backgrounds, those judges and I have committed and do commit ourselves to honoring the ideals for which this pantheon of justice was built. Indeed, for me, these portraits on the wall serve as a constant reminder of the rich tradition I am duty-bound to follow.

Judge Marbley’s former law clerk Allison Leotta described her mentor as a teacher: “Judge Marbley taught us the finer points of civil procedure. He taught us to always look hard, go the extra mile to find the right decision.” Expressing the confidence of all Judge Marbley’s law clerks, she continued, “As his law clerks, we know that this will not only be a courtroom; it will be a classroom. ... Not only a place where Judge Marbley will see that justice is done, but a place where he will sit and train generations of young lawyers to go out and see that justice is done in the rest of America.”

Chief Judge Walter Herbert Rice concluded the May 16, 2003, ceremony marking the rededication of this magnificent courtroom: “May this wonderful courtroom last for at least 100 years as a temple, as a monument to justice and to the rule of law, and may Judge Marbley preside during each and every day of those 100 years, and may he continue to do that which he has always done, in the words of the prophet Micah: “To do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God.” **TFL**

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