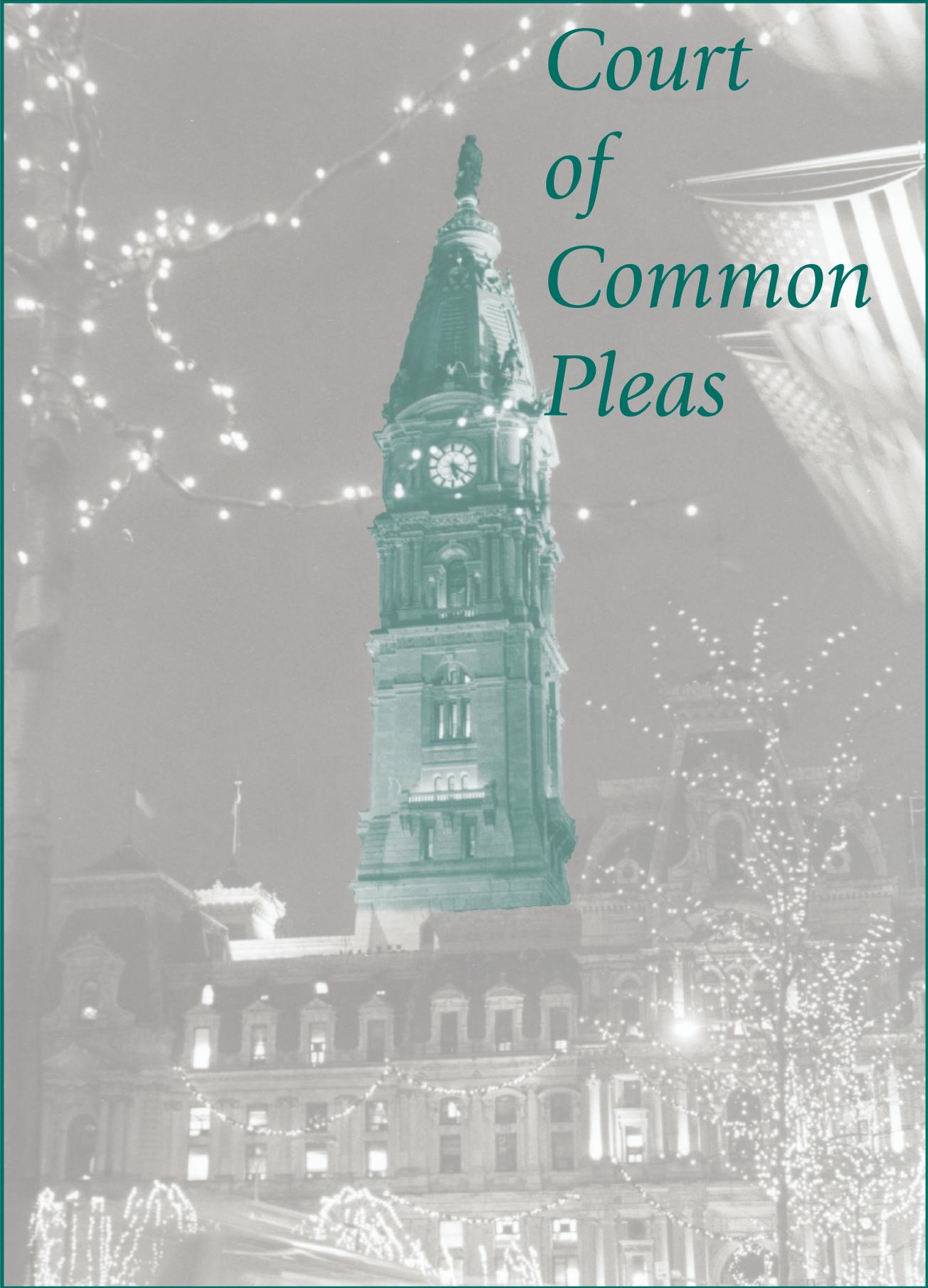


*Court
of
Common
Pleas*



Common Pleas Court

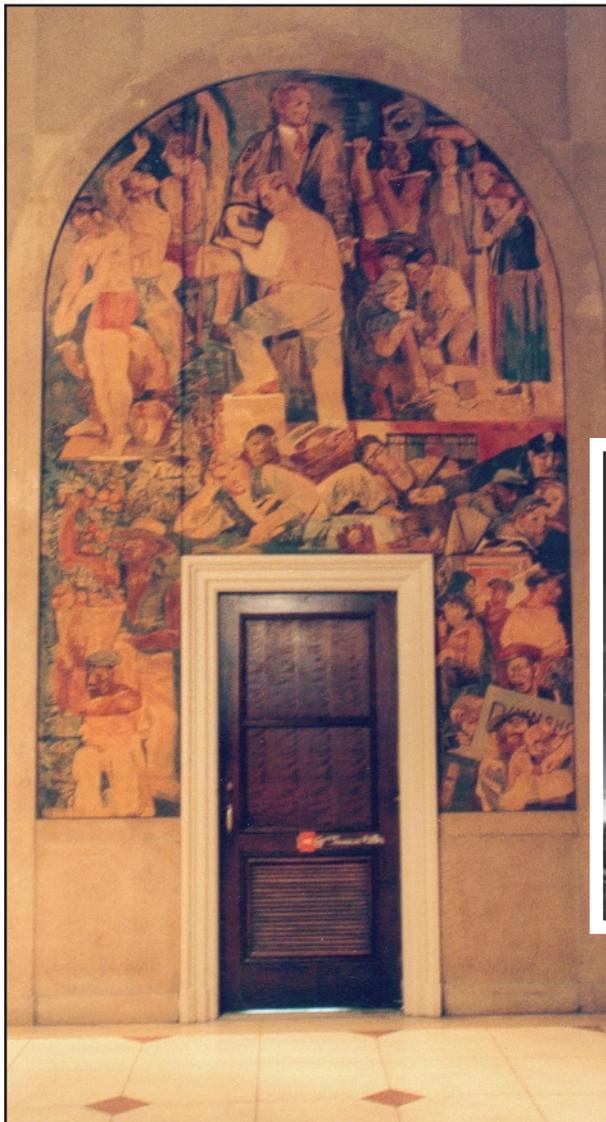
PURPOSE

Employees of the Court of Common Pleas support a complement of 90 judges in the largest Court in the Commonwealth. As a Court of general jurisdiction, the Common Pleas Court is distinguished from the two special limited jurisdiction courts that complete the organization of the First Judicial District – Municipal Court (A court of record) and Traffic Court. The Court of Common Pleas comprises three divisions – Family, Trial, and Orphans’ Court. The Family and Trial Divisions are each further delineated into separate sections: Family, with its Domestic Relations and Juvenile Sections; and the Trial Division with Criminal and Civil Section components.

RESPONSIBILITIES

In support of the judicial decision making process, employees receive filings, coordinate schedules, manage case flow, and aid in the disposition of hundreds of thousands of cases annually. In 1999, 197,445 filings were registered.

The Trial Division Civil Section has jurisdiction over civil cases where the amount in question exceeds \$10,000. For Criminal, adult felony cases make up the bulk of the work (appeals from the Philadelphia Municipal and Traffic Courts are also heard here). In the Family Division, the Juvenile Section treats cases involving delinquency, dependency, and adoption, and the Domestic Relations Section disposes of cases involving paternity, spouse and child support, custody, divorce, and protection from abuse. The Orphans’ Court Division administers matters involving the management and distribution of the property or estates of decedents, minors, and incapacitated persons.



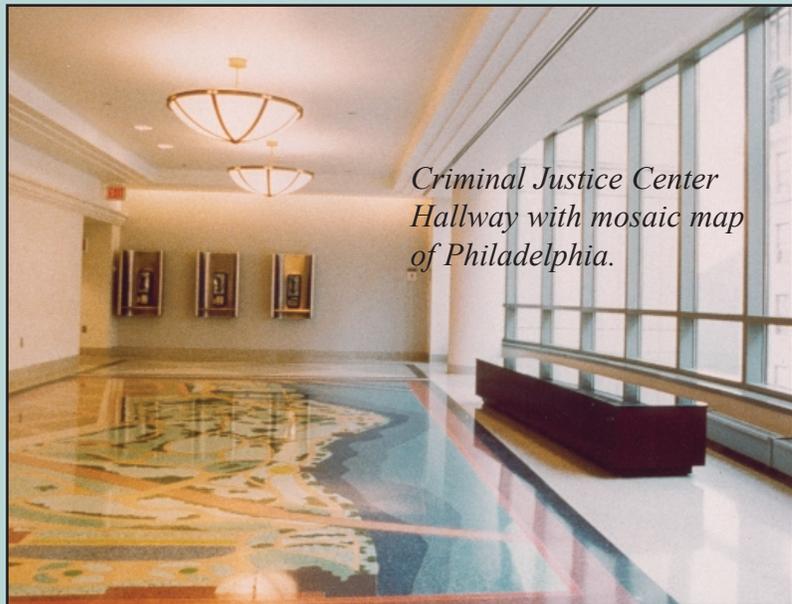
Above: The Orphans’ Court City Hall courtroom circa 1920.

Left: One of the many murals at the Family Court Building at 1801 Vine Street.

Common Pleas Court

In 1999 ...

- ◆ Court Administration and Pretrial Services participated in on-going preliminary arraignment system (PARS) upgrades and, through coordination with MIS, helped upgrade and install a new interface between PARS and PC Pretrial Plus.
- ◆ Pretrial Services increased electronic monitoring capacity by 100 units.
- ◆ The APPD was 99.4% compliant with the Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole Bureau of Probation Services' standards. Probation also increased collections maintaining its commitment toward the collection of a targeted \$300,000 in victim costs and fines.
- ◆ The Office of Criminal Listings initiated the collection of over \$92,000 in delinquent fines, costs, and restitution from violators at county prison Gagnon I hearings.
- ◆ The Accelerated Adoption Review Court (AARC) was implemented. It examines those cases where parental rights have been terminated but adoption has not yet been finalized, aiming for timely completion.
- ◆ The Model Dependency Court was established. This is an innovative approach to dependency case processing that features pre-hearing conferences among all parties before each hearing; time-specific hearing appointments; early appointment of counsel; and on-site assessments for immediate drug, alcohol and mental health problem intervention.
- ◆ Juvenile Court established a Victim & Community Services Unit to promote the implementation of the Pennsylvania Juvenile Justice System Balanced & Restorative Justice Model.
- ◆ The Philadelphia Court-Appointed Special Advocates Program presented Family Court Administrative Judge Paul P. Panepinto with its Marvin E. Wolfgang Award for his support of their work with families in the dependency courts.
- ◆ Truancy Court expanded its PROJECT START initiative, adding three additional cluster courts and enabling the entire School District of Philadelphia to be involved.
- ◆ The Trial Division Civil Section reduced the previous average wait of five to six years for a trial to the ABA recommended one year for simple cases, two years for standard cases, and three years for the most complex major jury cases.
- ◆ The 1994 28,000 case backlog of major jury Trial Division Civil cases was ultimately reduced to an absolutely current inventory of 6,000 major cases.
- ◆ The Civil Section credited employee efforts, a cooperative spirit between Bench and Bar, and a commitment by the judiciary to case management principles for civil program successes.
- ◆ The Trial Division Civil Section constantly monitored and revisited and altered procedures when necessary.
- ◆ The Family Division Domestic Relations Section again set a new record for Support collections: \$148,836,465 for an average annual increase of \$8.3 million.



*Criminal Justice Center
Hallway with mosaic map
of Philadelphia.*