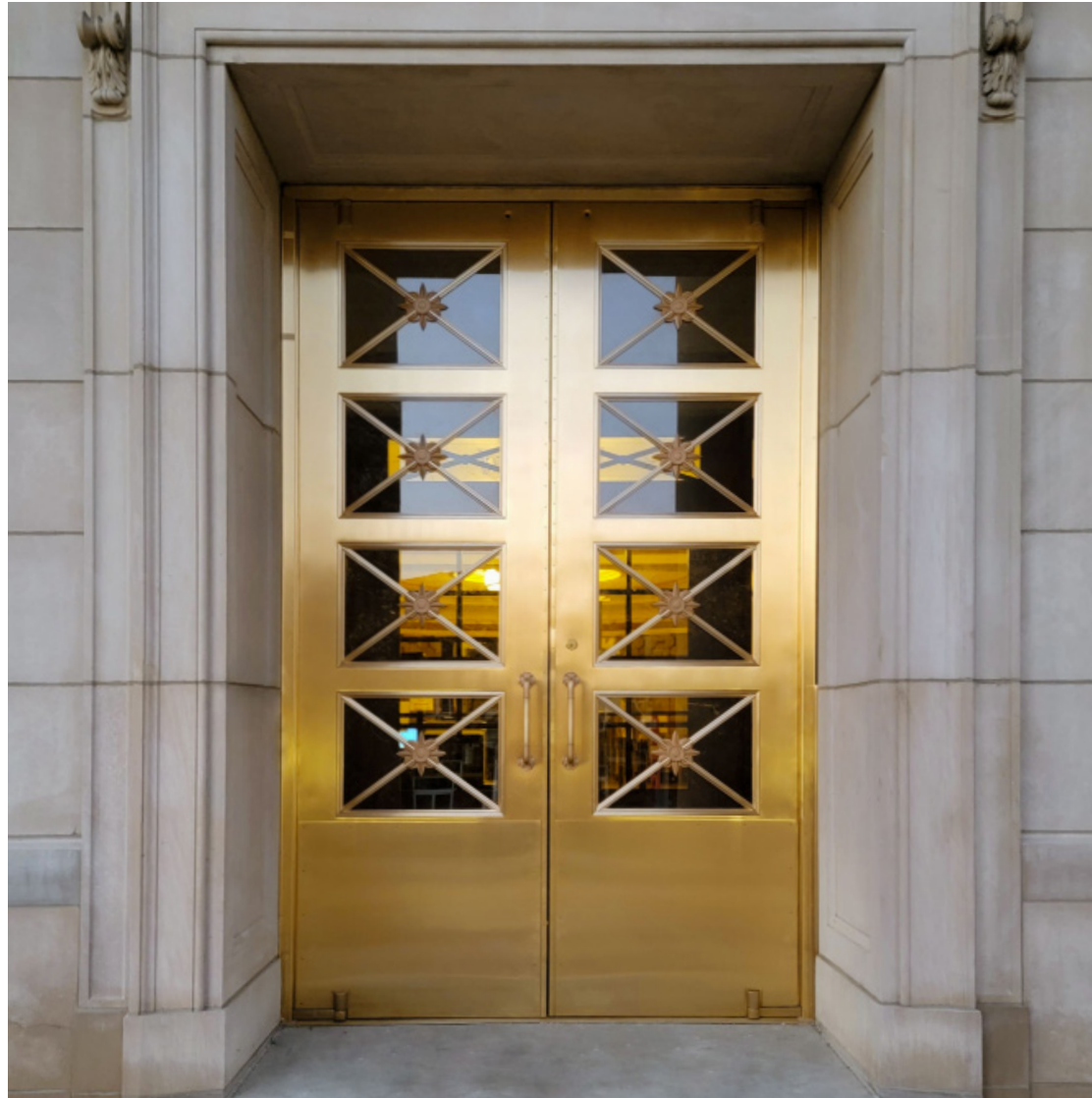


# The Case of the Balanced Doors at McKean County Court House

MCKEAN COUNTY COURT HOUSE – SMETHPORT, PA

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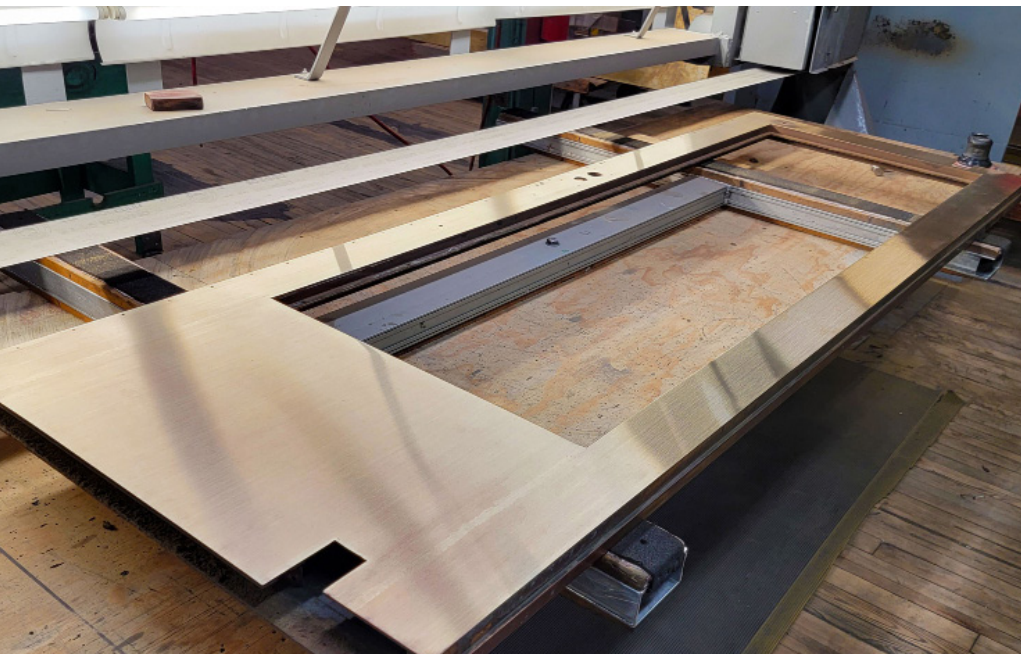
Ed Tronetti,  
Maintenance Director  
for McKean County



In February of 1940, the McKean County Court House suffered a devastating fire that destroyed the entire core structure and damaged both the east and west wings. Later that year, in August of 1940, construction of the new courthouse began with Thomas Hendryx selected as the architect, and it was completed by June 1942.

Prior to the fire, in 1937, Ellison custom balanced doors had been installed on the building. The doors were salvaged from

the effects of the flames and used on the new building in 1940, greeting guests and employees for another 80 years. Ellison and McKean County reconnected in 2020 to reinspect those same original bronze doors. As part of a larger capital improvements project at the courthouse, Ellison and the county began focusing on refurbishing the doors for yet another lifetime of use.



## Making the Case

In 2020, Ed Tronetti, maintenance director at McKean County, identified the manufacturer of the original doors as Ellison Bronze and initiated conversations focused on restoring the door closure hardware only. Fast forward to 2022, and McKean County had widened the scope of the project, committing to constructing a new roof, repointing the sandstone on the exterior, rebuilding the back patio, repaving an access street to the building, adding a heated sidewalk, and restoring both the clock tower and the entrance doors. That meant restoring all entrance systems in their entirety.

“The doors and the building are both architecturally significant, so it was important for us to uphold that integrity throughout the renovation process. Getting the green light on the capital improvements project allowed us to do a more comprehensive overhaul of the building,” said Tronetti.

## First-Time Collaboration

Instead of working with a contractor or separate installer, Ellison Bronze team members and door craftsmen removed the doors one by one, restoring them at its Falconer, NY, facility about an hour from the courthouse.

The Ellison team started with a rear employee entrance. The restoration process included deglazing the glass, removing the hardware and refinishing the frames with a sander, replacing any necessary hardware components, and then reassembling the doors to be installed once again at the courthouse.

The project was a true collaboration between Tronetti and McKean County and Ellison Bronze. Ellison removed and reinstalled the doors because no outside contractors or installers in the area had a familiarity with Ellison’s old-style hardware that debuted in the 1920s.



### Realizing the Vision

Capturing an architectural image of the past was important for McKean County and its historic courthouse.

“This is one of the most beautiful courthouses in the state,” said Tronetti. “Attorneys from all over the country are amazed by the large courtroom made from hand-carved walnut and the overall architectural aura of the building.”

The bold Ellison custom balanced door serve as a statement piece for the courthouse and harken back to the early days of balanced door design and 1940s architecture. However, durability was a priority as well. Hundreds of people walk in and out of the building daily, and the entry portals needed to be outfitted with doors that would last at least another 80 years.

“For us, it was a matter of both functionality and aesthetics, and these doors deliver on both fronts,” said Tronetti. “The Ellison entrance is the crown jewel of the building.”

The courthouse has five Ellison entrances in total – four double doors, and one single. The main front entry is 117" tall by 36" wide. Other doors, slightly shorter, stand 90" tall by 36" wide. Tronetti and McKean

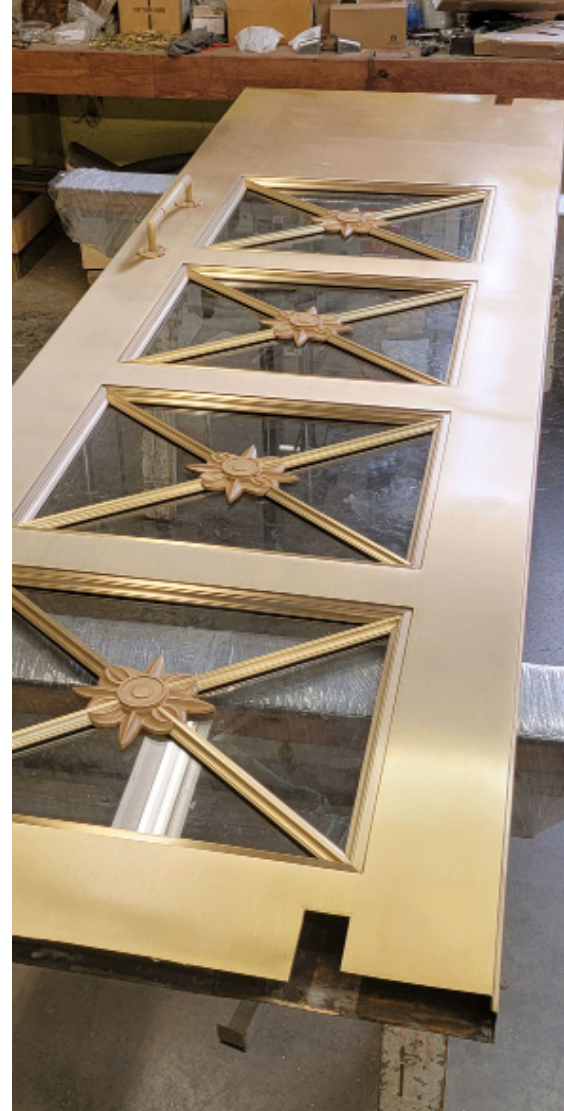
County selected a Bright Bronze finish for the doors, a tone that stands out while simultaneously getting effortlessly with the building’s historic design.

“I can’t even imagine these openings with different doors in them. They just match the architecture so well,” added Tronetti.

Performance-wise, the inset pivot point on all Ellison balanced doors allows air to pass on both sides of the frame, enabling them to operate with ease even under the harshest wind conditions or building stack pressures. In addition, the durable bronze materials used to create the doors are designed for heavy use and constant foot traffic. These heavy doors still open with ease thanks to the inset fulcrum location featured on all Ellison balanced doors.

“This project was a homerun for us,” said Tronetti. “The door restoration has been the number-one conversation around here since we started it, and we have been so impressed with Ellison’s dedication to driving the project across the finish line.”

The door refurbishment at the McKean County Court House is slated for completion by the summer of 2023.



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CUSTOM CRAFTED BALANCED DOORS

