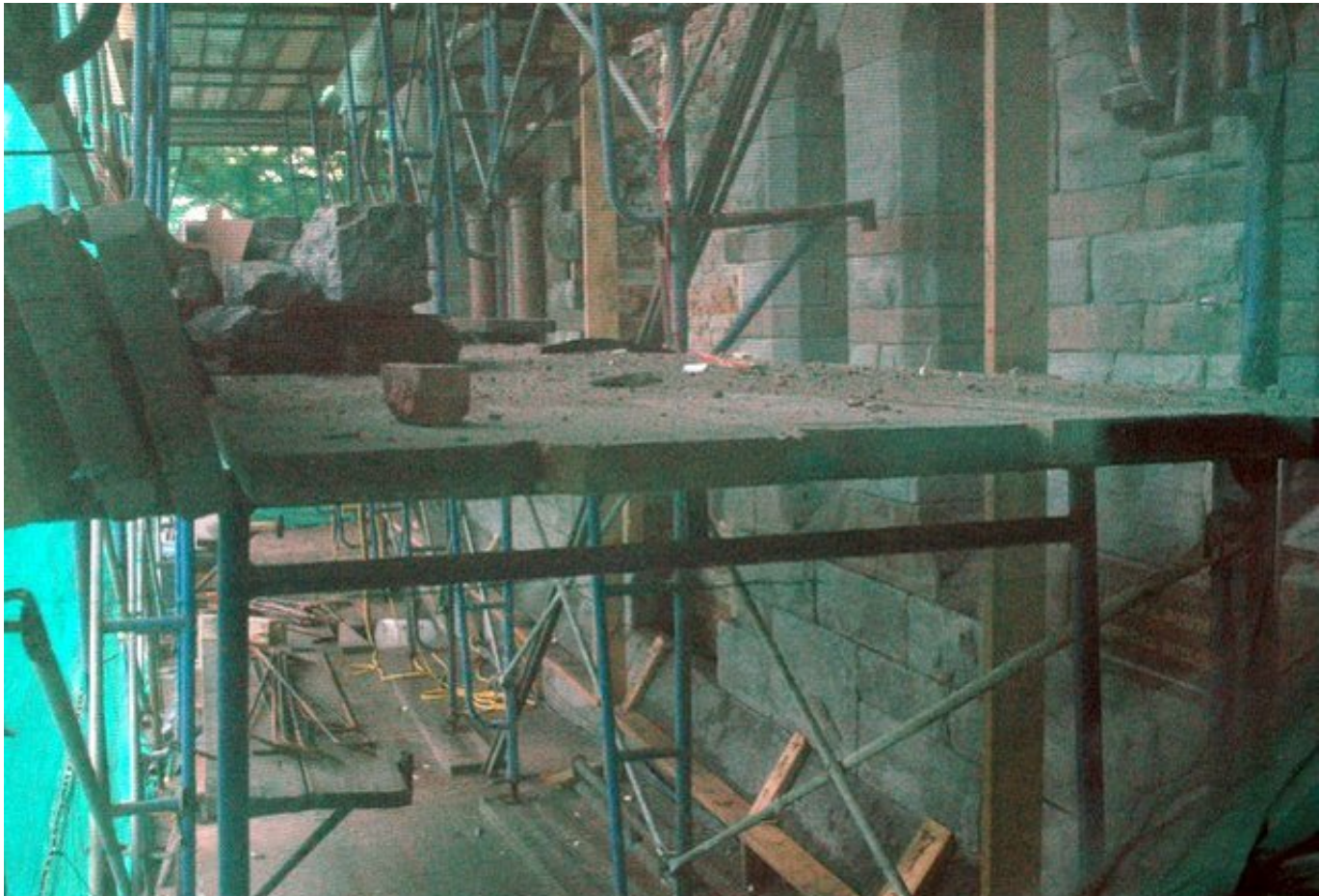


TOP STORIES AROUND THE COUNTY



The major work is being done on the exterior but other upgrades in mechanicals and accessibility are occurring inside.

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Preservation Officials Tour Berkshire Courthouse Restoration

By Joe Durwin
iBerkshires Staff
10:27AM / Saturday, July 19, 2014
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PITTSFIELD, Mass. — The \$2.8 million ongoing construction at the Berkshire Family & Probate Court is painstakingly preserving and restoring the landmark Park Square structure as near as possible to its original appearance, according to builders on the

job.

"When we're all done, this building is going to look a lot more like it did in 1876," Allegrone Construction's Michael Mucci said of the historic former Berkshire Athenaeum building that today houses the courts and Berkshire Middle Registry of Deeds.

The renovation work [began last fall](#).



Michael

Mucci offered a report on the 18-month state-funded project to a delegation of the Western Massachusetts

Mucci of Allegrone Construction meets with members of the Western Massachusetts Historical Commission Coalition to review what's being done at the historic Family & Probate Court building.

Historical Commission Coalition gathered at the newer athenaeum for their quarterly meeting this week, followed by tours of the exterior construction work on the project across the street. About 40 members of local historic commissions and planning officials from around the region attended the meeting, which included a video presentation.

Mucci said the project has involved 15 subcontractors, more than 50 skilled tradespeople, and an ongoing team of at least eight workers on any given day in the reconstruction of the building's north-facing front side, which comprises the majority of the contract.

"For some reason, this side of the building has failed more than others," Mucci said.

A variety of interior work to restrooms, offices, ventilation and elevators is confined mainly to requirements to bring these areas up to Americans with Disabilities Act and other building code requirements, while discussion with the visiting historical commissioners focused on the time-intensive, systematic preservation of the north facade.

Each stone of the wall and every individual piece of its stained-glass windows is being carefully removed, repaired and restored to recreate or closely duplicate its original appearance and condition.

Allegrone reported it is using "almost no new stone," instead patching and binding together broken existing wall stone with careful masonry as they rebuild the deconstructed facade. A new steel structure extending from the basement to the second story was erected to hold the rebuilt stonework from within.

A gift to the city from railroad magnate and U.S. Rep. Thomas Allen, the High Victorian Gothic-style building was designed by architect William C. Potter and built from 1874-76, and for a century served as the Berkshire

Athenaeum until its new Wendell Avenue facility was opened in 1976.

The last major renovation on the building was in 1980, though there was some masonry work as well as roof repair and window replacements in 2002 as part of a [larger renovation project](#) to the two adjacent courthouse buildings.

The current restoration is funded through a grant from the commonwealth's Division of Capital Asset Management.

"We're trying to get all of the stone done on the wall this before this winter," said Mucci, who said scaffolding would come down around Thanksgiving. "Most likely we'll have to come down next year and do some clean up."