



PROTHONOTARY OF BERKS COUNTY
Jonathan K. Del Collo, Prothonotary

HIGHLIGHTS OF WHAT HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED
IN THE PROTHONOTARY OFFICE IN 2020

1. THE PROTHONOTARY'S OFFICE AND COVID-19

2020 was a year unlike any other. From March 17, 2020 when the Courthouse was closed to the public until the end of the year and into 2021, I am proud to report that the Prothonotary's Office **never closed**. Even in the dark early months of the pandemic when 75% of our staff was furloughed, we were still able to provide full service to the attorneys and other customers of our office with a dedicated group of deputy prothonotaries. Many of the projects we had planned in 2020 had to be curtailed or postponed. One project, our office renovation, was just getting underway when the pandemic hit, and we had to shut it down. We are hoping to get this critical project underway again in 2021.

2. IMAGING OF IMPORTANT GENEALOGICAL AND HISTORICAL RECORDS
CONTINUES

Despite COVID-19, I am very pleased to report that 175,625 more pages of our genealogical and historical records were digitized in 2020! It is wonderful knowing that these records, which are all in the new archivally preferred "PDF/A" format, will be preserved forever. The breakdown by record type for 2020 is as follows:

- **Naturalization Records** – These are our most frequently requested and researched records, especially by genealogists. In 2020, a total of **46,649** pages of naturalization records were digitized.

- **ALL Berks County Naturalization Records from 1798 – Current have now been digitized! This is a major accomplishment and one that we are proud of.**
- **Historical Prothonotary Records** – These are our oldest and most vulnerable records. They are also very historically significant. In 2020, a total of **128,976** pages of historical records were digitized. **More than 95% of ALL of our records from 1752 – 1900 are now imaged!** This is a major accomplishment, but our work is not done! Digitization of our historical records continues in 2021.

3. STAFF REDUCTION CONTINUES TO SAVE BERKS TAXPAYERS MONEY!

When I took office in January 2018, the number of positions funded in the Prothonotary's Office was 24, including my own position. Later in 2018, my management team and I were successful in creating efficiencies by beginning to cross-train our staff. As a result, we were able to eliminate 3 ½ staff positions through attrition. In 2019 and 2020, another 4 full time positions were eliminated leaving our staff at 16 full time positions, including my own at the start 2021. **The combined savings to Berks taxpayers through the end of 2020 was \$424,282! By the end of 2021 the savings to taxpayers will be over \$750,000!**

4. FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF OUR MOBILE APP!

One of my goals when I was elected Prothonotary was to use technology to communicate with as many Berks County citizens and customers of our office as possible. In June 2020, we celebrated the first anniversary of our mobile application. Our app allows customers, researchers, and genealogists to access mostly everything our office has to offer. The app is available for free in the Apple App Store (for Apple users) and the Google Play Store (for Android users). **And, in 2020 with the Courthouse and our office pretty much locked down, our mobile app was VERY useful in getting information out to our customers!**

Users can utilize our app to access general office information, search dockets, search historical and naturalization records, access our e-filing system, request historical records, schedule research appointments and more! Users can also send a message directly to me through our app.

Our app includes push notifications as well as links to our other social media platforms on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Our app and social media platforms will ensure that all Berks Countians and customers of our office will be able to stay up to date with

the very latest information from us. If you haven't already, please download our app today!

Download our app today!

Search: Berks County Prothonotary



5. Implementation of E-Filing of Arbitration Oath/Award

Our office was very pleased in June 2020 to implement e-filing of arbitration oaths/awards. Chief Deputy Prothonotary Ann Fitzgerald spearheaded this effort, working closely with Court Administration and the Berks County Bar Association, to implement an electronic procedure for Arbitration pursuant to Berks County Local Rule 1305. Important information including helpful hints for completing and e-filing of the arbitration oath/award are listed on our website. This is very efficient in that previously attorneys would have to visit our office to file the oath/award. Now, with e-filing of the oath/award, the attorneys can conveniently file the oath/award from their computers from the location of the arbitration or wherever they want.