



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## **HISTORY COMES ALIVE IN HEUVELTON: RITCHIE JOINS COMMUNITY FOR UNVEILING OF PICKENS HALL OPERA HOUSE**

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May 2, 2016



State Senator Patty Ritchie joined community members recently at a ceremony held to mark the completion of renovations at Pickens Hall, a historic downtown Heuvelton landmark that underwent major improvements over the course of the past 12 years. Final stages of the project—which included redoing the building’s opera house—were made possible in part through \$100,000 in state budget funding secured by Senator Ritchie.

“Not too many years ago, a lot of people thought that our community would eventually have to tear Pickens Hall down—they said a small group of volunteers would never be able to save this historic downtown landmark,” said Senator Ritchie, a Heuvelton resident.

“But, our community is very lucky to have a group of volunteers who believe in the future of Heuvelton, and believed also that Pickens Hall couldn’t just be fixed up, it could be restored to its former glory. I’m so proud of the work the community has accomplished, and cannot wait to see Pickens Hall once again become the hub of Heuvelton.”

Built in 1858, Pickens Hall first contained a post office, a meeting hall, the original Pickens General Store, an opera house and was home to the Heuvelton Bee newspaper. Decades later in 2001, after learning of plans to demolish the building, the Heuvelton Historical Association began work to save the historic structure. Since then, the group has worked with community members to raise funds to restore building, which is part of the State and National Historic Registers.

Commonly known as the “opera house,” the third floor of Pickens Hall was once used for music and cultural performances. Now fully-restored, the opera house is expected to again host musical performances, as well as meetings and other community events.

*(Senator Ritchie is pictured in the above photo at Saturday’s grand opening with Heuvelton’s Historical Association President David Kingsley)*