



**Lehigh County Historical Society
Lehigh Valley Heritage Museum**

432 West Walnut Street

Allentown, PA 18102



PRESS RELEASE

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**Historic Lehigh County Courthouse to Celebrate with
Frederick Douglass Reenactment**

Saturday, November 8th, 1:00 pm

FREE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Allentown, Pennsylvania—The Historic Lehigh County Courthouse will celebrate its history and the upcoming 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, formerly known as the United States Semiquincentennial, with a live performance by Darius Wallace, one of America’s premier Frederick Douglass scholars and historical reenactors. Wallace will deliver an oration portraying Douglass titled “The Self Made Man.” The announcement was made today by James Higgins Ph.D., Executive Director of the Lehigh County Historical Society, which is facilitating the event in cooperation with President Judge J. Brian Johnson and the Court of Common Pleas of Lehigh County.

Since its founding in 1762, Allentown has attracted numerous historical figures including Booker T. Washington, Theodore Roosevelt, and several other U.S. Presidents. Among the greatest historical figures and orators to address an audience in Allentown was **Frederick Douglass (1818-1895)**. A friend of Abraham Lincoln’s and a leading abolitionist in American history, Douglass was also a major advocate for women’s rights. Douglass spoke in Allentown on the evening of April 8, 1870 at the Historic Lehigh County Courthouse in the “Gold

Courtroom” to a capacity crowd, all of whom paid admission for the privilege of listening to a man who was an international icon. That courtroom, which is still in existence, looks much as it did when Douglass delivered his speech 150 years ago.

An 1870 story in an Allentown newspaper stated in part: “Frederick Douglass has been pronounced one of the greatest living orators. In the Court House on Friday evening April 8th he will address the people of Allentown. Crowded audiences everywhere throughout the United States have been listening with delight to his eloquent utterances. Tickets have been sold in large numbers and only a few remain. Everyone should hear him who has the opportunity....”

The Lehigh County Historical Society, in conjunction with President Judge J. Brian Johnson and the Court of Common Pleas of Lehigh County have made this event possible. Darius Wallace, one of the nation’s premier Douglass scholars and reenactors, has portrayed Douglass in Hollywood movies and TED Talks. Wallace will portray Douglass to the audience, in the very courtroom that Douglass illuminated in 1870. He will deliver a lecture that Douglass frequently offered; the importance of “The Self Made Man.” Wallace’s interpretation of Douglass is considered one of the very best. This is a seminal opportunity to step back in time, visit the Historic Courthouse, and hear the stirring words of an American icon. The audience will be elevated and inspired by the captivating words of Frederick Douglass, a giant on the tapestry of American history!

The program begins at 1:00 pm and will last approximately one hour. This event is made possible by grant funding from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Department of Community and Economic Development. Event admission is **FREE** to everyone, seating is limited on a first come, first serve basis.

The Lehigh Valley Heritage Museum is a teaching institution that attracts a diverse audience. Its collections of historical Americana, located primarily at its headquarters, the Lehigh Valley Heritage Museum, 432 W. Walnut Street in Allentown, include over 35,000 three-dimensional objects, 3 million documents and more than 200,000+ vintage photographs. Regular Museum hours are Tuesday-Saturday 10:00 am-4:00 pm. Regular admission is **FREE** to members, non-members \$10 adults, \$3 children, FREE under age 3. For more information, contact James Higgins, Ph.D. Executive Director at 610-435-1074.

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Approved JEY