

American Association for State and Local History

Court & Legal History

THE NEWSLETTER FOR THE AASLH COURT & LEGAL HISTORY AFFINITY GROUP

Issue 1, May 2013

Welcome to the Court & Legal History Affinity Group Newsletter!



Thank you all for “tuning in” to the first AASLH Court and Legal History Affinity Museum Newsletter. The Committee became an official affinity group of AASLH last fall, but have been meeting at the AASLH Annual Meeting for several years.

The **Court and Legal History Group** of AASLH is designed for those working to preserve and promote legal and court history around the nation. Its members include university faculty, state and federal court historians and educators, law librarians/archivists/researchers, judicial assistants, a U.S. Supreme Court curator, and independent historical societies affiliated with courts such as the U.S. Supreme Court Historical Society and the Historical Society of the New York Courts. Our group hopes to help curators and educators at museums and other historic venues learn how to incorporate legal sources and resources into their exhibits and programming.

Another valuable function of our group is the development of a network of professionals working in comparable fields and sharing similar focused interests. Through the use of a List Serv provided by the Courts of Indiana, members of the group can seek

IN THIS ISSUE

[Welcome to the Court & Legal History Affinity Group Newsletter!](#)

[Welcome from the C&L Committee](#)

[Office of the Curator at the Supreme Court of the United States](#)

[About the AASLH Court & Legal History Affinity Group](#)

[News and Events](#)



News and Events

The [Supreme Court of Virginia](#) celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of judicial law clerks at the court with a reception at the Library of Virginia in November. More than a hundred former clerks attended, including a member of the first class, hired July 1, 1962. Senior Justice Elizabeth B. Lacy spoke about contributions of law clerks, and several former clerks spoke about their experiences serving as

information and advice from colleagues throughout the year.
Please join our ListServe by contacting Elizabeth Osborn at elizabeth.osborn@COURTS.IN.GOV

Welcome from the C&L Committee

The Court and Legal History Affinity Group was formed in the late 1990s at an informal meeting held at the Supreme Court of the United States. It was spurred by the movement of courts and other law-related institutions to provide information about their history and educate people about the vital role of the Rule of Law in our society.

Some of us are professionally trained historians, curators, archivists, and librarians, but many of us are professionals in other fields asked to fill this role at a court or non-profit associated with a court. Together, we bring together a wide range of experience that we hope to share with others in the wider history and museum field reached through AASLH. The group provides a friendly atmosphere to test out ideas and discuss common challenges as courts, court historical societies, and other law-related sites build their programs. (The History Office at the Federal Judicial Center has some excellent information about starting up a court history program on its [website](#).)

The law is woven into the fabric of American life, intersecting with the history of many local, state, and national sites. So we encourage anyone working at historical sites with legal content to join our group. Sites with historic courthouses, jails, police offices, etc., are a natural expansion for our group but we also welcome inquiries from others who may have a specific question that relates to the legal and court history.

Committee Members:

Elizabeth Osborn, Ph.D.	Indiana Supreme Court
(Chair)	
Rachael L. Drenovsky	Michigan Supreme Court
Matthew Hofstedt	Supreme Court of the United States
Doria Lynch	U.S. District Court
Marilyn Marcus	Historical Society of the Courts of the State of New York
Catherine O'Brien	Virginia State Law Library
Bruce Ragsdale	Federal Judicial Center
Kathleen Shurtleff	Supreme Court Historical Society

[Click here](#) to join the Court and Legal History Affinity Group.

Office of the Curator at the Supreme Court of the United States



By Matthew Hofstedt, Associate Curator

In each of our newsletters, we thought it would be nice to share a short profile a member

law clerks. A video recording of Justice Lacy's address and photographs from the event are available on the Supreme Court of Virginia web site.

~~~~~

In December, the Supreme Court of Virginia Historical Advisory Committee and the Virginia State Law Library opened a new exhibit in the Supreme Court building in Richmond. Titled "*Democratic Institutions are Never Done--They are Like Living Tissues, Always A-Making,*" the exhibit highlights the evolution of the Office of the Executive Secretary (court administrator) from its creation in July 1952 to the present and celebrates 60 years of service to the courts and citizens of the commonwealth. Justice Lawrence W. I'Anson quoted this phrase by Woodrow Wilson in his remarks to the annual meeting of the Judicial Conference of Virginia, held in Richmond sixty-two years ago last December. The exhibit draws on documents in the papers of two figures prominent in the effort to create the position -- Chief Justice Edward W. Hudgins, whose papers are at the Library of Virginia; and Richmond attorney Aubrey Bowles, Jr., whose papers are at the Virginia Historical Society.

~~~~~

In February 2013, the



site and where better to start than at the highest court in the land: the Supreme Court of the United States.

Since its creation under the Constitution in 1790, the Supreme Court has amassed a large collection of portraits, photographs, and archival material but it did not have staff to manage, exhibit, and interpret this collection until the mid-1970s. With the enthusiastic support of Chief Justice Warren E. Burger, the [Office of the Curator](#) was created at the same time as the non-profit [Supreme Court Historical Society](#). For nearly 40 years, they have worked together to collect, preserve, and educate the public about the important role of the Supreme Court in American history. Today, the Court's historical collection includes over 200 portraits, 100,000 photographs, and 5,000 objects from the Court's history and the justices who have served on it.

As one of the heads of the three branches of the federal government, the Supreme Court Building is one of the top tourist attractions in the nation's capital. Over 350,000 visitors come to the building each year, creating a unique situation unlike most other courthouses. The iconic building opened in 1935 and has become an historic site itself, associated with famous cases such as *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954).

The Office of the Curator provides hourly public lectures (when the Court is not sitting) in the Courtroom during [working hours](#) as well as historical and educational exhibitions. A staff of nine employees and a corps of volunteer docents and interns handle the duties of the office, including photographic services for the Court, collections management, exhibition development, and historical research. The Curator's Office can be reached at 202-479-3298 or via e-mail at curator@supremecourt.gov

Office of the Curator at the Supreme Court of the United States opened a new exhibition, [In War and In Peace: the Supreme Court and the Civil War](#). The exhibit examines four important legal issues that arose during the war and the related cases that reached the Supreme Court, including restrictions on civil liberties and the extension of war powers by the Lincoln Administration. In addition, historic documents and books illustrate the work of the Court. The judicial robe of Chief Justice Roger B. Taney, on loan from the Historical Society of Frederick County (MD), is displayed. It is one of only two Civil War era robes known to exist.

About the AASLH Court & Legal History Affinity Group

Please feel free to forward this e-mail to colleagues. [Click here for more Court & Legal History resources.](#)

To sign up to receive future issues of *Court & Legal History Affinity Group News*, join the AASLH Court & Legal History Affinity Group. **The Affinity Group is not a membership organization and there is no fee to join.** However, you will need to create a username and password and share your basic contact information. Go to the [court and legal webpage](#) and click on "Join the Court & Legal History Affinity Group" link at the top of the page and then on "Don't have a Login? Click here."

For more information about all of AASLH's programs and services, visit <http://aaslh.org/>



AASLH
American Association
for State and Local History

1717 Church Street, Nashville, TN 37203 - 2991 | 615-320-3203 | Fax: 615-327-9013
E-Mail: membership@aaslh.org | ©2010 AASLH