



CURRENT EXHIBITIONS

INFORMATION SHEET

The Supreme Court Building: America's Temple of Justice



The Supreme Court of the United States celebrates the 75th anniversary of the construction of the Supreme Court Building with an exhibition commemorating its history and sculptural program. For the first 145 years of the Supreme Court's existence, the head of the third branch of government lacked a permanent home of its own. Since the completion of the building in 1935, it has become a symbol of Justice in America.

Through the use of period photographs and objects relating to the early history of the Supreme Court, visitors will learn about the Court's "temporary" homes in various government buildings, the increasing need for the Court to have a home of its own, and Chief Justice William Howard Taft's role in the construction of the building.

In addition, the exhibition explores the evolution of architect Cass Gilbert's design, as well as the sculptural and symbolic treatment used throughout the building's architecture. Several original plaster models aid in the discussion of the symbolism of this iconic building.

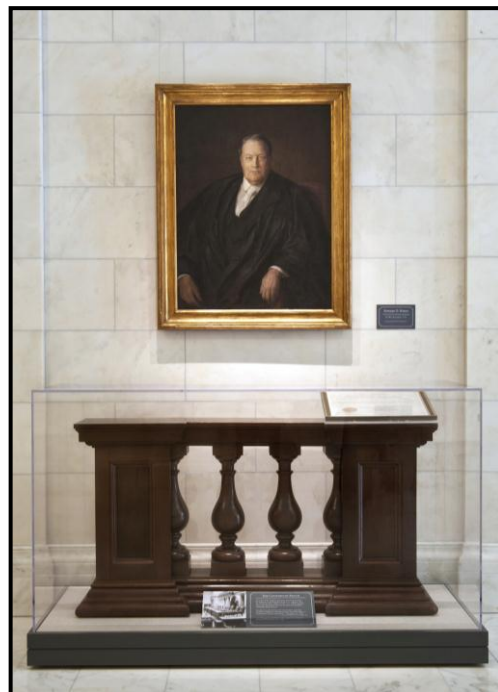


Court and Country in Transition: The Edward D. White Court

A century ago, America was a Nation moving from a localized, agricultural society to a more urban, industrialized world power. Confronted with a wide range of legal issues emerging from this modernizing culture, new regulatory laws were passed which often expanded the powers of the Federal Government. In turn, the Supreme Court, under the leadership of Chief Justice Edward D. White, was called upon to review the application and constitutionality of these laws.

The period from 1910 to 1921 was also a time of change among the members of the Court. Nine seats on the Bench turned over during this decade, with President William H. Taft appointing five Justices in one year. Included in this was his unprecedented appointment of a sitting Associate Justice, Edward Douglass White, to the position of Chief Justice. The exhibition focuses on the work of White and his colleagues and explores issues such as antitrust laws, labor rights, and civil liberties during World War I. Several cases raised unprecedented legal issues so the result of the Court's labors not only had immediate impacts for the Nation, but often established precedents that would influence the work of future Courts.

To highlight the work of the Court during this period, several objects are featured including: an oil portrait of Chief Justice White by Albert Rosenthal along with a segment of the original Bench from when the Court met in the U.S. Capitol and White's Commission (above). Also exhibited are Chief Justice White's Bench chair (below) and a replica of a Justice's Bench Desk.





*September 25, 1981
Justice Sandra Day O'Connor and Chief Justice Warren E. Burger walking down the front steps of the Supreme Court Building on the day of her Investiture.*

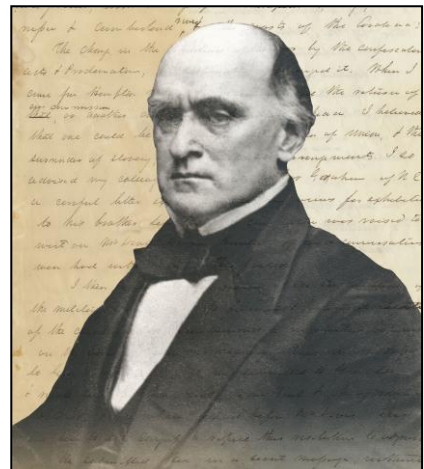
Sandra Day O'Connor, First Woman on the Supreme Court

Justice Sandra Day O'Connor was appointed to the Supreme Court by President Ronald Reagan, and served from 1981 until 2006. Beginning with her childhood growing up on her family's ranch, the exhibition recalls her life before joining the Supreme Court, her service and accomplishments on the Court, and her continuing legacy off the Court.

Following her retirement from the Court on January 31, 2006, Justice O'Connor has continued her judicial service by hearing cases in the United States Courts of Appeals. In recognition of her lifetime accomplishments, President Barack Obama awarded Justice O'Connor with the Nation's highest civilian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, on August 12, 2009. This medal, along with portraits, sculpture and personal items such as her Bench chair and judicial robe, help illuminate her story.

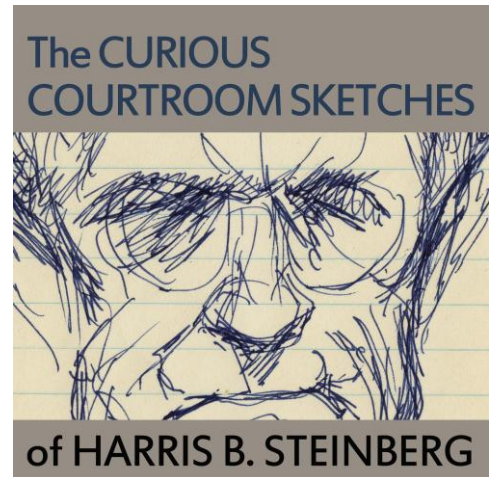
John A. Campbell: In Pursuit of Peace

Highlighting a letter from John A. Campbell to Benjamin R. Curtis, dated July 20, 1865, this exhibit explores the life of a Supreme Court Justice during the Civil War. Campbell resigned from the Court in 1861 and served as Assistant Secretary of War for the Confederacy. Writing from prison in Fort Pulaski, Georgia, Campbell thanks his former Supreme Court colleague for assisting in his release. Excerpts of the letter highlight Campbell's story. Beginning with the start of the Civil War, his work for the Confederacy and the operations of the Confederate government are described in great detail.



The Curious Courtroom Sketches of Harris B. Steinberg

On April 22, 1949, attorney and amateur artist Harris B. Steinberg sketched the Justices on the Bench while waiting for his case to be heard before the Court. At the end of the day the Marshal requested the sketches and they have remained unseen in the Court's archives until now. These are the only known drawings made of the Justices from the perspective of a lawyer about to participate in oral arguments.



The 1963 Warren Court in Photographs and Sculpture

As public figures, Supreme Court Justices are frequently depicted by artists and illustrators. In this exhibition the works of two such artists, photographer Yousuf Karsh and sculptor Phillip Ratner, are highlighted to portray members of the Warren Court in the early months of the Court's 1963 Term.

