



CURRENT EXHIBITIONS

INFORMATION SHEET



The Supreme Court Building: America's Temple of Justice

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. This exhibition documents the construction of the Supreme Court Building, completed in 1935, and explores the history and tradition which has made it 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.



In War and In Peace: The Supreme Court and the Civil War

Marking the 150th anniversary of the Civil War, this exhibition looks at the Supreme Court during this volatile period in American history and the conflict's impact on the institution. Facing an unprecedented rebellion, the President and Congress took extraordinary measures to preserve the Union. The controversial wartime actions were challenged in several cases that reached the Supreme Court. Four issues are examined through important cases, including *The Prize Cases* (1863) and *Ex Parte Milligan* (1866), in which the Justices faced difficult questions about the Union's actions during the war. In addition, individual Justices faced hardships as they maintained their loyalties while President Lincoln's five appointees changed the Court's membership for decades.

Objects like Justice Noah Swayne's handwritten "Authorities" ledger help illustrate how the Court worked during the Civil War era. Other rare documents include Chief Justice Salmon P. Chase's Commission, the "test oath" administered to him by Justice James M. Wayne, and an Allotment Order signed by President Abraham Lincoln assigning Stephen J. Field to the newly created 10th Judicial Circuit. Also exhibited is Chief Justice Roger B. Taney's judicial robe, on loan from the Historical Society of Frederick County, Maryland, one of only two known Civil War-era Supreme Court robes known to survive.





*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.*

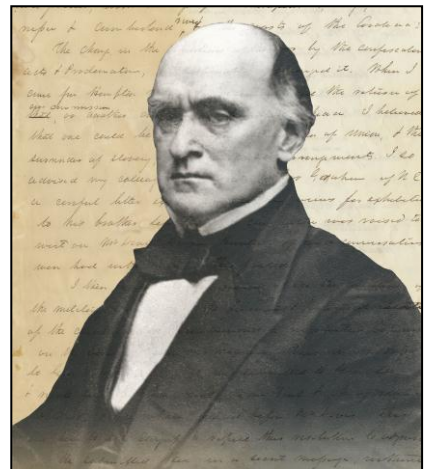
Sandra Day O'Connor, First Woman on the Supreme Court

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.

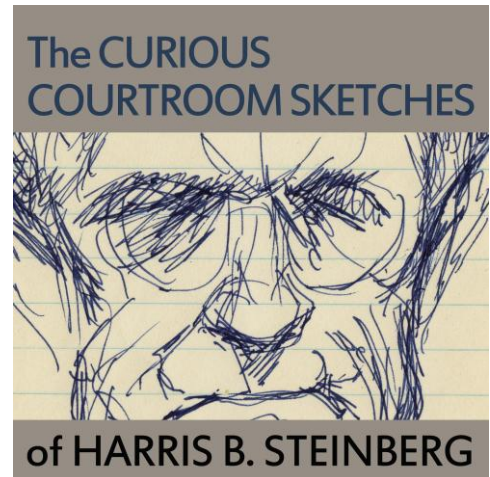
John A. Campbell: In Pursuit of Peace

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. Recently added to this exhibit are six additional prints donated by the estate of Yousuf Karsh.

