



Visitors' Guide to the Birch Bayh Federal Building and United States Court House

United States District Court for the Southern District of Indiana
Indianapolis, Indiana



Welcome to the U. S. Court House



The Judges of the Court

Welcome to the Birch Bayh Federal Building and United States Court House. This building has been home to the court for over one hundred years. Adorned with marble and mosaics, statues and friezes, and exquisitely detailed paintings, this imposing structure has provided a fitting background for the many important legal decisions handed down by the judges and juries in the district. Joined by our colleagues at the General Services Administration, which owns and manages the building, the court is proud to share a bit of its history and tradition with you, and we hope that you enjoy your visit.

November 2017

District Judges

Jane E. Magnus-Stinson, Chief Judge
Sarah Evans Barker
Richard L. Young
William T. Lawrence
Tanya Walton Pratt

Magistrate Judges

Tim A. Baker
Debra McVicker Lynch
Mark J. Dinsmore
Matthew P. Brookman
Craig M. McKee
Van T. Willis

Bankruptcy Judges

Robyn L. Moberly, Chief Judge
Basil H. Lorch III
James M. Carr
Jeffery J. Graham

History of the District Court in Indiana

For over two centuries, the United States District Court for the Southern District of Indiana and its predecessors have been called upon to resolve the most significant legal, political, and social problems of the day. The federal judicial presence in Indiana began with the creation of a territorial court in 1800. Seventeen years later, following Indiana's move to statehood, Congress established the United States District Court for the District of Indiana, and President James Monroe appointed Benjamin Parke as the court's first district judge. Sitting alone, Judge Parke exercised federal jurisdiction throughout Indiana. Indeed, a lone federal judge served the entire state until 1925, when Congress approved a second judgeship. Three years later, President Calvin Coolidge signed a law that divided the state into a Northern District and a Southern District. The Southern District was served by one judge until 1954, when Congress created an additional judgeship. Cale J. Holder then joined William E. Steckler on the court.



Judge Benjamin Parke

From its earliest days, the court has made its mark on the nation's judicial landscape. In 1818, Judge Parke upheld the constitutionality of the 1793 Fugitive Slave Act, permitting the return of fugitive slaves to the states from which they had fled. In 1863, Judge Caleb Blood Smith presided over the trial of six southern Indiana citizens who were sympathetic to the Confederate cause. These six men were accused of encouraging Union soldiers to desert and then firing on Union troops attempting to detain the deserters. Judge David McDonald played a preliminary but important role in the development of constitutional law in *Ex parte Milligan*, a case in which the United States Supreme Court held in 1866 that a military court may not try and sentence a civilian (Huntington lawyer Lambdin P. Milligan) when civilian courts are available. In the mid-1920s, the court presided over a series of Prohibition prosecutions, including the "Jack Daniels Case," which targeted a vast conspiracy that had drained 30,000 gallons of whiskey from 800 barrels. The conspirators then sold the whiskey on the black market.



The original District Court Courtroom, circa 1906.

Photo: Bass Photo Co. Collection,
Indiana Historical Society Library

The Southern District bench, whose members have included former Indiana Supreme Court justices, former members of the Indiana General Assembly, and a former member of the United States House of Representatives, was an all-male institution until President Ronald Reagan appointed the first female judge, Sarah Evans Barker, to the court in 1984. In 2010, Tanya Walton Pratt became the first African-American judge appointed to the federal bench in Indiana.

The present-day court has addressed such complex and divisive issues as busing, obscenity, school prayer, police brutality, prison conditions, civil rights, voting rights, and public corruption, in addition to many significant private lawsuits with national and international implications and effects.



Photo: Bass Photo Co. Collection,
Indiana Historical Society Library, Neg. 5036

The United States Court House at the southeast corner of Market and Pennsylvania Streets, erected in 1860, was turned into a bank after the court moved out in 1905. It was demolished in 1963.

The History of the Court House

Because federal court business in Indiana was infrequent during the first half of the nineteenth century, the first district judges conducted their proceedings in the Indiana Supreme Court's courtroom. In 1860, Indiana's first United States Court House and Post Office was erected at the southeast corner of Market and Pennsylvania Streets in downtown Indianapolis. This four-story stone building housed all federal agencies, serving Indiana's citizens until it was outgrown in the late nineteenth century. Plans were then made for the present United States Court House, which was one of 35 federal buildings constructed under the Tarsney Act of 1893.

The current Court House, which opened in September 1905, is an excellent example of the Beaux Arts-style architecture made

popular in the United States by the 1893 World's Columbian Exhibition in Chicago. John Hall Rankin and Thomas Kellogg, noted Philadelphia architects, secured the design contract, and the Treasury Department accepted New York-based John Peirce Company's low construction bid of \$1,300,000 (the final cost, however, reached nearly \$2,000,000). Begun in 1902 and completed in 1905, the new United States Court House and Post Office was massive, accommodating 925 employees. The U-shaped structure rose four stories and housed the federal courts, executive branch offices, and the main post office. The building's architectural style inspired designs for other buildings in Indianapolis, including City Hall (1910), the Indianapolis-Marion County Central Library (1917), and the Indiana World War Memorial Plaza (dedicated in 1927).



Photo: Bass Photo Co. Collection,
Indiana Historical Society Library

Cornerstone laying ceremony, 1903.



Photo: Bass Photo Co. Collection,
Indiana Historical Society Library

*United States Court House under construction,
February 20, 1904.*



U.S. Postal workers and vehicles along the north side of the building, circa 1905. This area was filled in with the 1938 addition.

Originally half its current size, the Court House was expanded in 1938, with the east and west wings of the building extended and connected by a new north corridor. After the expansion, the building filled the entire block, rose to five stories on the north side, and incorporated two portals at the northeast and northwest corners to allow access for postal vehicles.

Inside, each federal agency had its own space. The Post Office's sorting and customer service facilities occupied the first floor. The second story housed two monumental courtrooms, judges' chambers, the Court Clerk's Office, the United States Marshals Service, the United States Attorney's Office, and the court library. The upper stories accommodated various other federal offices,

and the fourth floor included dormitories and club rooms for railroad postal workers required to lay over in the city. The basement had additional postal space and storage rooms.

During the first half of the twentieth century, especially after the Great Depression, new federal programs increased the number of agencies and employees occupying the building. By the early 1970s, construction of the Minton-Capehart Federal Building and a new central postal processing facility relieved the crowded conditions in the Court House. The United States General Services Administration, the federal government's landlord, then remodeled vacant offices and restored many of the original architectural details, returning the Court House to its original beauty. In 2003, a celebration of the centennial of the laying of the building's cornerstone took place. That same year, the structure was renamed the Birch Bayh Federal Building and United States Court House.



Postal workroom, circa 1905.

The Southern District of Indiana Today



Photo: David Jaynes

The name, “United States District Court for the Southern District of Indiana,” tells much about the institution. It is a court of the United States, created by the federal government, not the state. The District Court is a trial court, one of 94 across the nation, and is the first of three levels of the federal judiciary (the others being the Courts of Appeals and the United States Supreme Court). The Southern District’s venue consists of the sixty southernmost Indiana counties, extending generally from Howard County on the north, to the state lines on the east and west, and down to the Ohio River.

Today, the court consists of five district judgeships, five full-time magistrate judgeships, two part-time magistrate judgeships, and four bankruptcy judgeships. One district judge is serving on senior status. District judges are appointed by the President, confirmed by the Senate, and serve for life, in the words of the Constitution, “during good behavior.” Magistrate judges are appointed by the district judges to eight-year terms, and work with the district judges to guide cases through the legal process.

Bankruptcy judges handle bankruptcy cases only and are appointed by the United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit to fourteen-year terms.



Photo: Timothy Yates

A hearing in progress.



Judges enjoy a chance to catch up with each other before a meeting.

between citizens of different states. Federal question cases can be either criminal or civil suits; diversity cases are all civil suits. In 2016, 4,547 new civil cases and 292 new criminal cases were filed in the Southern District. Generally, only about two percent of federal civil cases actually go to trial; the rest are settled, dismissed, or adjudicated by a judge's written ruling.

The District Court Clerk's Office processes the paperwork of the court, handling case filings and record-keeping.

The Southern District of Indiana has four divisions: Indianapolis, Evansville, New Albany, and Terre Haute. A district judge and a magistrate judge sit full-time in Evansville, and one bankruptcy judge sits full-time in New Albany. There is one part-time magistrate judge assigned to New Albany and another part-time magistrate judge serving in Terre Haute. All other judges sit full-time in Indianapolis and travel occasionally to the other divisions to assist with business as needed.

Federal courts have jurisdiction to hear two types of cases: federal question cases, which involve disputes governed by the United States Constitution or federal laws and treaties; and diversity of citizenship cases, governed by state law but which involve disputes



The District Court is also responsible for conducting naturalization ceremonies, through which immigrants become citizens of the United States.

The Court Family

The District Court is part of a family of federal agencies. The United States Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of Indiana has offices in each of the same locations as the District Court, but is a separate court with its own judges and clerk's office.

The United States Probation Office is a unit of the District Court. The Probation Office supervises criminal defendants before trial and at the conclusion of incarceration. The office also conducts investigations and prepares reports for the judges to use in determining sentences.

The offices of the United States Marshals Service are also in the building. The Marshals Service is a branch of the Department of Justice, but its duties include providing services to the judiciary. The United States Marshal and the deputy marshals provide protection to the judges, security during court proceedings, and serve and execute the court's writs and other processes. The Marshals Service is also responsible for transporting and guarding criminal defendants

and prisoners for court appearances. Some other duties include apprehending fugitives, transporting federal prisoners between correctional facilities, and protecting witnesses.

The United States Attorney's Office is no longer located in the Court House, but its staff of prosecutors are frequent visitors. The U. S. Attorney is the chief federal law enforcement officer in the district, responsible for federal criminal prosecutions and civil cases involving the United States government.

The Federal Community Defenders are also part of the court family, providing legal defense services to criminal defendants who cannot afford to hire counsel on their own.



Deputy Marshals escorting detainee.

Photo: Shawn Spence



Conference in chambers.

Photo: Timothy Yates

The Birch Bayh Federal Building and United States Court House functions today as a modern building housing important government agencies. However, the Court House is also listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is truly a work of art. Within its limestone walls, the past and present connect.

You are welcome to walk the halls of the building and see some of these features yourself. To arrange for a guided tour, please call the District Court Clerk's Office at 317-229-3700 or email tours@insd.uscourts.gov.



Photo: David Sundberg

Ohio Street facade.

Inside the Court House

Octagonal Rotundas

The two Octagonal Rotundas on either end of the Main Cross Corridor display some of the most colorful of the twenty-two different marbles from around the world that were used in the Court House.

Through the arched doorway you can see the coffered barrel-vaulted ceilings of the entrance vestibules, sculpted from Indiana limestone.

Look for the classical symbols such as the caduceus, sword and scales, and fasces, as well as the Roman initials "V.S." (for "United States") in the glass mosaic ceilings.



Photo: Shawn Spence

Main Cross Corridor

The Main Cross Corridor's original use as the public service hallway for the Post Office can be seen in the restored tellers' cages, writing desks, and representations of Post Office boxes. Today, the offices on either side of the corridor serve the Clerks' Offices of the District and Bankruptcy Courts. The vaulted ceilings are decorated with ceramic mosaics in floral designs and borders. In 1963, the floor was replaced with terrazzo flooring in the colors and designs of the original marble (the second floor above retains its original marble floors).



Photo: Carol M. Highsmith Photography, Inc.

Elevator Lobby

The vaulted ceilings in the first floor Elevator Lobbies and in the two Octagonal Rotundas are decorated with glass mosaics in a Roman style, including several classical symbols representing the powers and functions of the federal government. The bronze gates originally served to close access to the upper floors from the Post Office, which was open on weekends.



Photo: Shawn Spence

Lobby Mosaic

Detail of mosaic reclining figure on the east Elevator Lobby ceiling. She holds a sailing ship in one hand and in the other the Roman fasces, symbolizing strength, unity, and the concentrated power of the different classes of society. In the west Lobby, she is depicted holding a caduceus and a railroad engine.



Photo: Shawn Spence

Grand Staircases

Two marble, semi-circular, cantilevered staircases, with intricate bronze balustrades, run from the first to the third floors. The stairways feature white Italian marble wainscoting, restored handpainted garland borders around the plaster walls, and stained-glass windows between the second and third floors. The landings onto which the stairways open include marble walls, bronze balustrades, Doric columns on the first floor, Ionic columns on the second floor, and Corinthian columns on the third floor.

According to early newspaper accounts, a German stonemason, who also happened to be a prisoner at the Michigan City Penitentiary, designed and oversaw the construction of these staircases!



Photo: David Sundberg

Stained-Glass Domes

The Grand Staircases soar to semicircular domes, at the apex of which are fishscale and floral design stained glass skylights. The sections of the domes contain paintings of three classical symbols of the governmental functions historically carried out in the Court House.

The caduceus, two snakes entwined around a winged staff, was the emblem of Hermes, the Greek messenger god. The caduceus is also a symbol of peace, balance, and peaceful resolution of conflict. The sword and scales represent the authority and balance of law and justice. The center panel depicts Hermes carrying a letter.

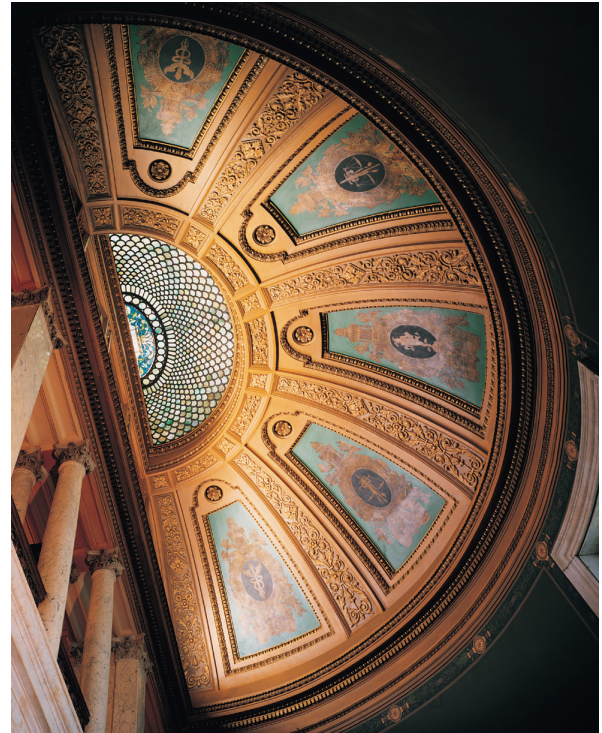


Photo: Carol M. Highsmith Photography, Inc.

The William E. Steckler Ceremonial Courtroom

The William E. Steckler Ceremonial Courtroom, on the second floor, features two stained glass windows by the New York firm of Heinigke & Bowen. The frieze murals along the top of the side and back walls depict the seals of the original thirteen colonies; the frieze murals across the front wall depict the seal of Indiana in the center panel, and allegories for agriculture and industry on the right and art and literature on the left. The painting over the bench is by Philadelphia artist W.B. Van Ingen and is titled "Appeal to Justice." The original skylight in the center of the ceiling has been closed and replaced with artificial lighting. Hanging on the south wall is Edmund Brucker's portrait of Judge Steckler, who presided in this courtroom during his 44-year career on the bench. The richly colored and molded coffered ceiling is decorated with Greek Key, egg and dart, and oak leaf garland borders, among other design elements.



Photo: David Sundberg



Photo: Shawn Spence

"Appeal to Justice" by W. B. Van Ingen



Photo: Shawn Spence

"Agriculture and Industry" by Nicola D'Ascenzo

The Sarah Evans Barker Courtroom

The Sarah Evans Barker Courtroom, named in 2016 in honor of Indiana's first female federal judge, was originally used by the Seventh Circuit Court, whose judges travelled to federal courts throughout Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin until 1912. At that time, all federal Circuit Courts became Courts of Appeals and were assigned to fixed locations; the Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit settled in Chicago.

With the absence of Circuit Court visits to Indianapolis, the courtroom fell into disuse. From 1912 until 1925, and again from 1928 until 1954, the courtroom was primarily used for storage. As a result, some of its original features were lost.

The frieze murals in this courtroom, created in the 1930s, list the names of six chief justices and seven associate justices of the United States Supreme Court. At some point, these murals were painted over and forgotten. During a renovation of the courtroom, they were rediscovered and restored.



Photo: David Sundberg

The Sarah Evans Barker Courtroom

W.B. Van Ingen also painted the bench mural in the Sarah Evans Barker Courtroom.

I do not know what to call this painting. The figure in back is a representation of justice who sits waiting to weigh in the balances of each case. The fore figure is appearing to persons not in the picture, telling them that justice is to be done. The judge who sits on that bench is merely a representative of justice and in the painting I tried to portray her position toward justice.

- W.B. Van Ingen, 1907



Photo: Shawn Spence

“Mail, Transportation and Delivery”

In 1935, Grant Christian, a 24-year old graduate of the Herron School of Art in Indianapolis, won a competition run by the Treasury Relief Art Project, a Depression-era program, to produce murals for the Court House. Located in the southwest corner of the third floor, the panels on the south wall are collectively titled “Mail, Transportation and Delivery.” From left to right, the individual panels are titled “The Capital’s First Railroad,” “Transportation and Communication,” and “Industry and Legislation.” The last panel shows Indiana Governor Paul V. McNutt (with document) and Indianapolis Mayor John W. Kern (behind the Governor) who were in office when Mr. Christian painted the murals. At the upper right of this panel, over the sleek modern train, is a depiction of the Indiana State House dome.



Photo: Shawn Spence

“Early and Present Day Indianapolis Life”

The murals at the northwest and northeast corners are titled “Early and Present Day Indianapolis Life.” The northeast murals depict progressive stages in the history of Indianapolis’ development from the frontier to the beginnings of urban life. From left to right, the individual panels are titled “Marion County Pioneers,” “Clearing and Building,” and “Backwoods Indianapolis.”

Opposite these murals, in the northwest corner of the vestibule, are panels titled, from left to right, “Culture and Education,” “Safety Patrol,” and “To Those Who Served.”



Photo: Shawn Spence

Murals by Robert Eagerton

In 2010, the Historical Society of the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Indiana commissioned murals for the southeast corner of the third floor, down the hall from Grant Christian's Depression-era paintings. In celebration of the 75th anniversary of the Christian murals, the Historical Society held an open competition for Indiana artists to submit their ideas. In the end, Herron School of Art Professor Emeritus Robert Eagerton's design was selected. Using a combination of photography, painting, and drawing, Eagerton's murals focus on the role of the court as well as the nature, industry, and technology that is found throughout the Southern District of Indiana.



Sculptures by John Massey Rhind

The four statues at the Ohio Street entrances to the Court House were sculpted by John Massey Rhind and installed in 1908. They are named "Industry," "Agriculture," "Literature," and "Justice."

The sculptures are carved in limestone and mounted upon granite plinths. "Agriculture," shown here, is personified as a neoclassical female figure holding wheat and a scythe.

John Massey Rhind (1860-1936), born in Edinburgh, Scotland, was a prolific creator of public monuments, fountains, and architectural sculpture. After studying at the Royal Scottish Academy, he came to America in 1889. He received the gold medal at the St. Louis Exposition in 1904, and numerous commissions for federal and municipal buildings.



Photo: Shawn Spence

Exterior Friezes

In 1939, Herron School of Art instructor David K. Rubins carved the limestone spandrels and keystones over the driveway entrance arches on the 1938 North Addition. He carved them in place. Mr. Rubins is also known for creating the statue of Young Abe Lincoln, which sits on the Indiana State House lawn, and the bronze cherub which graces the old L.S. Ayres & Co. clock at the corner of Meridian and Washington Streets every Christmas.



Photo: Shawn Spence



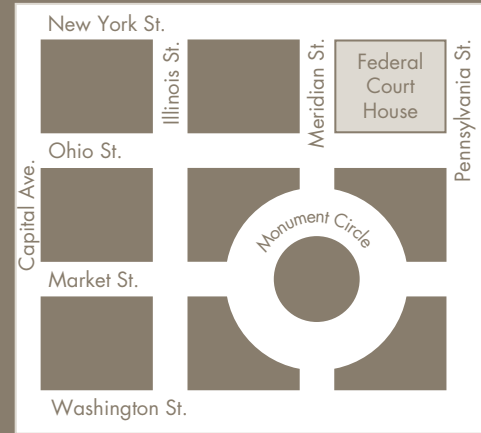
The United States Court House is owned and managed by the United States General Services Administration. The Court House is located in downtown Indianapolis, one block north of Monument Circle in the block bounded by Meridian, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New York Streets.

A valid, government-issued photo identification is required to enter the building.

Please note that no weapons, cameras, recording devices, or liquids may be brought into the building. Photography, video recording, and audio recording are not permitted in the building. Free guided tours of the Court House are available. Please call, write, or email for an appointment.

Membership in the Historical Society of the U.S. District Court is also available. Please visit www.insd.uscourts.gov for more information.

Court House Tours
United States Court House
46 East Ohio Street, Room 105
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204
Telephone (317) 229-3700
Email: tours@insd.uscourts.gov



Front cover image by Robert Eagerton

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