

A Judge on Record, Plus Paths to the Bench *12th Annual Court History & Continuing Legal Education Symposium Announced!*



The Five Judge Court c. 1978. From left to right - Gene E. Brooks, James E. Noland, William E. Steckler, Cale J. Holder, and S. Hugh Dillin

On Friday, November 1, 2019, the Court Historical Society for the United States District Court for the Southern District of Indiana will present its 12th Annual Court History & Continuing Legal Education Symposium. This year's symposium will feature a look back at two major initiatives recently completed by the Historical Society, plus an exploration of the paths to the bench of past and present judges of the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Indiana.

The court's historian, Doria Lynch, will provide a brief synopsis of the Chief Justice Roger B. Taney mural alteration project, which was completed in July. Taney's name was replaced with Marshall in keeping with the broader national trend to remove inappropriate historical symbols from public spaces. The Court Historical Society also recently inventoried the chambers papers of Judge William E. Steckler, with the goal of making them available to

researchers through a partnership with the Indiana Historical Society. Alysha Zemanek from the Indiana Historical Society and Mary Giorgio, the court's public outreach coordinator, will discuss the process and offer a sneak peek at the collection.

After a short break, Doria and Mary will present "Paths to the Bench: Southern District of Indiana Appointments from William E. Steckler to Gene E. Brooks." The presentation will look at the historical process of judicial nominations and appointments in the Southern District of Indiana, and the career paths of each judge that ultimately led to their appointments.

Finally, to provide insight into the modern judicial nomination and appointment process, several past and present judges of the Southern District of Indiana will participate in a round table discussion about their own experiences and paths to the federal bench. The session will be moderated by Inge Van der Cruysse, J.D., Lecturer in Law and Director, Externships and Clerkship Placements at Indiana University Maurer School of Law. The Hon. Sarah Evans Barker, the Hon. Richard L. Young, the Hon. James Patrick Hanlon, and the Hon. David F. Hamilton will serve as panelists.

Space is limited and registration is required. CLE credit is pending approval. For more information on how to sign up, click [HERE](#).

Mrs. Geraldine Oeth Turns 100!

When Judge Richard L. Young began practicing law before the judges of the United States District Court for the Southern District of Indiana, a memorable figure helped young attorneys in Evansville navigate through their first experiences filing cases in federal court. On September 2, 2019, that woman, Mrs. Geraldine Oeth, turned 100 years old!

Mrs. Oeth was a fixture in the clerk's office of the Evansville division of the United States District Court for the Southern District of Indiana from 1952 to 1982. As Deputy Clerk in Charge of the Evansville Division, she successfully managed the division's operations for thirty years. Mrs. Oeth was the first woman to receive the James Bethel Gresham Freedom Award from the Evansville Bar Association for her distinguished work as Deputy Clerk - one of the highest honors bestowed by the organization.

To celebrate her milestone birthday, Mrs. Oeth was invited to the Evansville courthouse to receive an official proclamation from Judge Young. Even at 100, she vividly recalls her days working at the courthouse and enjoyed reminiscing about old times.



Judge Young and Mrs. Geraldine Oeth,
September 2019

Spotlight: Monkeys in the Federal Courthouse?

Yes, it's true. For one day back in 1954, there were indeed monkeys in residence at the United States Courthouse in Indianapolis. In the former Customs' Warehouse once located in the building's basement, three ailing monkeys took refuge among the crates of goods confiscated by the United States Collector of Customs.

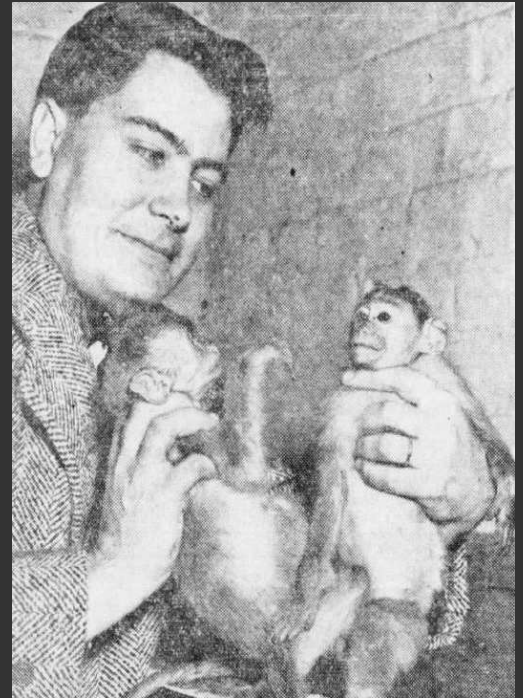
The monkeys were imported from India by Rev. James W. Jones, pastor of the Christian Assembly of God on Indianapolis's south side. Years before he became an infamous cult leader remembered for killing his followers in a mass suicide at their commune in Jonestown, Guyana, Jones dabbled in the import of exotic animals here in Indianapolis. His animal-importing project was a fundraiser for his congregation.

When Jones attempted to collect his latest shipment of monkeys on Friday, April 9, 1954, he found that only three of the original seven monkeys had survived their journey. Outraged at being assessed an \$89 air-freight fee on all seven monkeys, Jones abandoned the three surviving monkeys rather than paying the fee.

That left United States Collector of Customs Harry D. Youse with a conundrum. His basement warehouse in the federal building was hardly a suitable home for three ailing baby monkeys, who had apparently not been fed during their six-day journey from New York's port of entry to Indiana. To save the monkeys, Youse cracked open a bottle of confiscated German apple-jack and sent a colleague on an urgent quest for bananas.

After feeding the starving monkeys, Youse began calling state and federal agencies, looking for someone to take charge of the animals over the weekend. After being refused by several agencies, Youse eventually found a temporary home for the monkeys at the municipal dog pound.

Sadly, one of the three baby monkeys did not survive the ordeal. The *Indianapolis Star* reported that the remaining two monkeys would be sold at auction after they had been "fattened - and sobered-up."



Jim Jones poses with 2 of his imported monkeys. Photograph from the *Indianapolis Star*, April 10, 1954

Mural Changes Unveiled!



The completed mural alteration, showing the Marshall name change

The Court Historical Society's [Summer 2019](#) newsletter profiled the mural alteration project planned for the Sarah Evans Barker Courtroom. In June 2019, the court received approval from the Indiana State Historic Preservation Office to remove Chief Justice Roger B. Taney's name from the mural in a reversible manner and replace it with the name Marshall. Taney authored the infamous Dred Scott ruling in 1857, stating that African Americans were ineligible for United States citizenship.

The alterations were made in July by art conservationist Mary Yeager. In just three days, Ms. Yeager covered Taney's name and, using a hand drawn stencil, added the name Marshall, representing both John Marshall and Thurgood Marshall. Ms. Yeager did a beautiful job matching the colors and lettering style of the original mural.

Save the Date - November 1, 2019

The Court Historical Society will be hosting its 12th annual Court History and Continuing Legal Education Symposium on Friday, November 1, 2019, in the William E. Steckler Ceremonial Courtroom. For information on how to register, click [HERE](#).

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