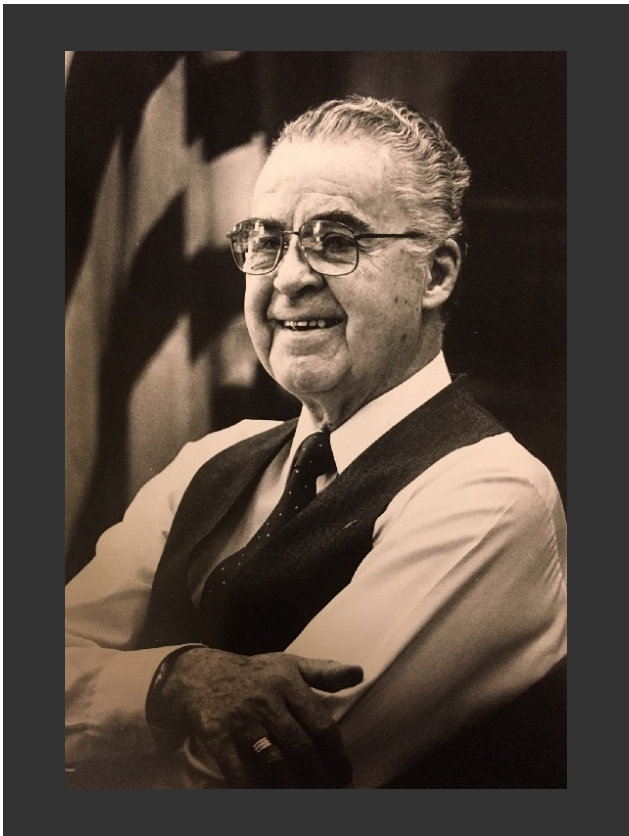


Judge Steckler Papers Project Update

The Court Historical Society recently funded a collaborative project with the Indiana Historical Society (IHS) to inventory the chambers papers of Judge William E. Steckler. An IHS archivist worked on-site at the courthouse for 10 weeks to review materials and determine which items fit the scope of the Indiana Historical Society's collection.

Following the completion of the inventory project, the Indiana Historical Society acquired approximately 20 boxes of Judge Steckler's papers. The documents are currently being processed, and will be available to researchers later this year. The items acquired by the IHS pertain to Judge Steckler's career, committee work, and important cases. The court also gained valuable historical records for its own collection, including newspaper clippings, biographical information on judges and staff, and documents related to the building preservation of the Indianapolis courthouse.

Judge Steckler had a tremendous influence on the development of the Southern District of Indiana, having served on the bench for 45 years, from 1950 until his death in 1995. For 28 years, he led the court as Chief Judge. Judge Steckler was the last lone judge on the bench. During his career, four additional Southern District of Indiana judgeships were created by Congress.



Changes Coming to Taney Mural in Sarah Evans Barker Courtroom

The Sarah Evans Barker Courtroom features murals bearing the names of six chief justices and seven associate justices of the United States Supreme Court. These murals were created in the 1930s by Sidney Newton Sanner. The murals were later painted over and forgotten, then discovered and restored in 1998.

One name that appears on these murals is Chief Justice Roger B. Taney (1777-1864), who is best known for his authorship of the majority opinion in the infamous Dred Scott case. This 1857 ruling stated that African Americans, whether slave or free, were not, and could never become, citizens of the United States. While the ruling in the Dred Scott case was nullified by the ratification of the 14th Amendment, Taney's name is viewed as a symbol of racism and oppression.

In 2018, a focus group was convened to discuss whether to remove Taney's name from the courtroom mural. In response to that discussion, the District Court and General Services Administration agreed to paint over Taney's name in a reversible manner and replace it with the name Marshall to represent former Supreme Court justices John Marshall (the longest-serving chief justice, 1801-1835) and Thurgood Marshall (the first African American justice, 1967-1991). The alteration will take place later this summer, pending approval from the Indiana State Historic Preservation Office.



Spotlight: Hidden Details Revealed in "To Those Who Served" Mural

The Grant Christian murals on the third floor of the Birch Bayh Federal Building & United States Courthouse were painted from 1935 to 1936 as part of the Treasury Relief Art Project. On the north wall, a panel titled "To Those Who Served" pays homage to the sacrifice of the First World War. In the foreground, an old man (likely a Civil War veteran) and a young boy dressed in a sailor suit watch a parade of soldiers march past. The soldiers represent the three branches of the military in existence at that time - Army, Navy, and Marines. Taken together, the five figures represent the past, present, and future of the American military. In the background stands the Indiana War Memorial, along with soldiers' graves and troops in the trenches.

The World War I army veteran depicted in the "To Those Who Served" panel tells a story as well. The three medals that he wears are, from left to right, the Distinguished Service Cross (USA); the Croix de Guerre (France); and the Distinguished Service Order (Great Britain). Each of these three medals were awarded during World War I for acts of bravery or heroism during combat, and Grant Christian likely used them in the mural as a way of representing the three primary allies during the war.

The soldier's uniform also shows a rainbow emblem on his sleeve and helmet. This indicates that the soldier served in the Rainbow Brigade, formally known as the 42nd Infantry Division, of the U. S. Army. The 42nd Division was activated in August 1917, just four months after the U.S. entered the war, and was among the first American divisions to join the battle on the Western Front. The men of the Rainbow Brigade fought in four major operations, including the Second Battle of the Marne and the Meuse-Argonne Offensive. In 264 days of combat, the division had 2,058 men killed in action and over 12,500 wounded.

The soldier in the mural himself appears to have been wounded- if you look closely, you'll notice he is missing his left hand.

This theme must have seemed particularly relevant to Mr. Christian at the time. In 1935, Adolf Hitler was in power, and many people were coming to fear the start of another World War. World War II started just two years after this painting was completed, when Hitler invaded Poland. Grant Christian went on to serve in the U.S. Army, achieving the rank of sergeant.



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. Further details to follow.

Visit Our Website:

www.insd.uscourts.gov/court-historical-society