

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES COURTS IN THE EIGHTH CIRCUIT

President: **Honorable Richard G. Kopf**

The Eighth Circuit Historical Society hosted the 2004 annual meeting of the State and Federal Court Historical Societies, a national organization which seeks to promote court historical activities. The meeting was held in St. Louis from September 30 to October 2, 2004. This group meets annually in conjunction with the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH). Events included an opening reception, a day of programs, and a tour in the Thomas F. Eagleton U.S. Courthouse. Senior Judge Edward L. Filippine, Eastern District of Missouri, led the tour and served as keynote speaker for the State and Federal Court Historical Societies' AASLH luncheon. Ann Fessenden, circuit librarian, and Joan Voelker, archives librarian, served on the planning group for local arrangements and program and spoke on a panel discussing the role of librarians in court historical programs. Appeals Branch President Tom Boyd secured a donation from St. Louis law firm Armstrong Teasdale LLP for the reception.

In July, the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts issued a memorandum, and the Judicial Conference Committee on Codes of Conduct an advisory opinion, both of which dealt with various legal and ethical aspects of historical societies and learning centers and their relationships to the courts. These documents included a strong recommendation that court staff not serve as treasurers of historical societies. Therefore, the parent Historical Society and branches sought non-court persons to serve as treasurers. The Executive Committee appointed St. Louis attorney Sheila Greenbaum to serve as treasurer of the parent organization, replacing Ann Fessenden, who had been secretary-treasurer. Ms. Fessenden will continue to serve as secretary. Other aspects of the memorandum and advisory opinion are under review and could lead to some future changes in the Historical Society's operations.

Court of Appeals

The new written history of the Eighth Circuit continues to move forward. The appeals branch received authorization from the parent executive committee to enter into a contract with the University of Minnesota for publication. Branch President Tom Boyd is gathering and seeking authorization for photos for the book, while the author, Professor Jeffrey Morris, is working with the university on preparing the manuscript for publication. Also in 2004, the branch completed transfer of the Dillon Essay Competition at the University of Iowa College of Law to the John F. Dillon Inn of Court in Davenport, Iowa. The Dillon Inn will now be the sponsor of this project.

Arkansas Eastern and Western

The Eastern and Western Districts continue work on the biographical essay project, with 16 of the 17 essays turned in. When all of the essays are completed, the essays will be edited in preparation for publication. The judges of the two districts tentatively authorized use of attorney admission fee funds for projects as they may come up. The amount would be determined at the time the project is approved.

Iowa Southern

Videotaping of retirement videos of Judges Hill and Stageman has been completed. A number of the Eighth Circuit courthouse sketches have been sold but a supply still is available for sale. Branch President Richard Lyford was working with Judge Hill to get his portrait completed for presentation in the courthouse.

Missouri Eastern

The branch had an active year with several subcommittees working on various projects. The video interviews group has prepared a questionnaire for submission to each senior and retired judge. After appropriate research has been completed, a professional quality video will be produced for each qualified judge. The publication subcommittee has been contacting potential authors to write a book on the history of the district. The notable cases subcommittee is researching to identify 20 of the most significant cases generated in the eastern district. The education center subcommittee is working on plans for the learning center in the Thomas F. Eagleton U.S. Courthouse in St. Louis. The architecture of courthouses and the famous personalities subcommittees will compile information for use by both the publication and education center subcommittees.

Missouri Western

The branch's main goal is development of an interactive and part-traditional museum on the second public floor of the Kansas City courthouse. Several proposed architectural renderings have now been completed and the Society has formed two fund-raising committees to begin raising the \$350,000 - \$400,000 it will take to fund and maintain such a project.

Nebraska

The Nebraska Branch annually presents the Van Pelt History Prize for the best paper on a matter of legal significance submitted by an undergraduate or law student at any of Nebraska's colleges, universities, or law schools. The reach of the Van Pelt History Prize has been expanded to include high school students participating in the state finals of "Nebraska History Day," which is the state competition in the National History Day contest. The winner of the Van Pelt Prize this year was Chavonn Davis, representing Loup County High School at Taylor, Nebraska. Ms. Davis made a dramatic presentation about Frances Farmer, a movie star incarcerated against her will in a mental hospital in the State of Washington during the 1930's. The presentation included full stage make-up. Efforts by reformers ultimately led to the passage of the federal Mental Health Act of 1983 which makes it unlawful to restrict the liberty of the mentally ill without due process. Work on the written Nebraska history continues. The author, Dr. John Wunder, will now be assisted by a former lawyer who has recently completed his Ph.D.

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