

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES COURTS IN THE EIGHTH CIRCUIT

President: **Frances Ross**

A priority for 2006 was increasing publicity for the Society and its activities. The Eighth Circuit Bar Association agreed to include articles which met its publication criteria in its online newsletter. Each of the Bar Association's five newsletters this year included articles on historical topics submitted by Historical Society members and library staff.

The Society's officers continued their 2005-2007 service. Mr. Donald P. Knudsen of Gunderson, Palmer, Goodsell & Nelson in Rapid City replaced Mark Marshall as the South Dakota representative on the board of directors.

The Court History Group, a national organization seeking to promote court historical activities, met in Phoenix in conjunction with the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH). Archives Librarian Joan Voelker represented the Eighth Circuit in a panel discussion of court history program models. Ms. Voelker also worked with the Circuit Executive's Office to develop a permanent display on the 27th floor of St. Louis' Eagleton U.S. Courthouse honoring Judge Theodore McMillian, the first African-American appointed to the federal bench in the seven states of the Eighth Circuit.

The executive committee met three times via conference call. The board of directors did not meet in 2006, but the following activities were described by the branches in their written reports:

Court of Appeals

The branch's primary project has continued to be the preparation and publication of a full-length written history of the United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit. The book, authored by Professor Jeffrey Morris, is in the copyediting process. The University of Minnesota Press plans to include the book in its spring 2007 catalog, with publication likely in the summer of 2007. The branch obtained funding for this project from a variety of sources, including the Eighth Circuit, several district courts in the Eighth Circuit, and various law firms and several bar organizations located within the Eighth Circuit.

Arkansas Eastern and Western

The biographical essays for the Eastern and Western Districts are nearing completion.

Iowa Southern

Branch president Richard Lyford and Marc Harding are assisting the Friends of the Iowa Judiciary and have participated in videos of former Chief Justice Arthur A. McGiverin and Justices Robert Allbee and Mark McConnick. The branch is planning a retirement video of Judge George G. Fagg, who will be interviewed by Judge David Hansen. Judge Peterson, court historian for the district, will interview judges to update the court history, *No Person Is Above the Law*.

Minnesota

A display honoring Judge Rensselaer Nelson, the first Judge for the Minnesota territory, is being developed for the Minneapolis Courthouse lobby display case. The branch will seek funding from the district court to have the exhibit prepared professionally. The district's *Portraits of Justice* video series featuring oral histories of Minnesota's federal district judges will be updated to include interviews with Judges Joan Ericksen and Patrick Schiltz. The branch will look into converting the video series to DVD format. The branch also plans to update its court history published in 1989.

Missouri Eastern

The branch has continued to be very active with several subcommittees working on various projects. The subcommittee to publish a history of the district continues to search for an author. Candidates have been interviewed, and a prospect is being considered. The Oral History Subcommittee finished the video presentation of Judge William L. Hungate. The subcommittee to identify and prepare reports and video presentations on the 18 most significant cases in the history of the Eastern District has made assignments to authors.

Missouri Western

The branch continued to position itself to launch a significant three-to-five year campaign, to raise approximately \$750,000 to build a Learning Center and Museum in the Bell Room of the Charles E. Whittaker U.S. Courthouse in Kansas City. The branch has opened a fund for the receipt of contributions at the Greater Kansas City Charitable Foundation and has obtained a professional fund-raiser to offer guidance in aggressive, sophisticated fund-raising efforts in the community, particularly with foundations. One law firm has made a contribution of \$16,500 (out of a total pledge of \$25,000) and a member of the Society has made a \$1,000 contribution. To improve fund-raising success, the branch plans to develop a viable, workable theme for its project.

Nebraska

The branch continues with its project to publish a written history of the district court, from the territorial beginnings to the Wounded Knee cases. Dr. John Wunder, the court's historian and author, suffered a heart attack recently. While Dr. Wunder is recovering, Dr. Mark Scherer has been contacted to complete the first installment. The branch hopes the manuscript will be completed within a year or so. The branch is also working on an oral history project, with plans to interview Judges Beam, Shanahan, and Urbom. The branch will provide copies of the interviews to the Nebraska State Historical Society.

South Dakota

During the last year, the branch began obtaining oral histories of the senior district court judges. Partial funding for this project came from the Pennington County Bar Association. Judge Andrew Bogue's interview has been taped and copies distributed to the district court archives, former law clerks, and other interested parties. A committee of approximately eight of Judge Richard Battey's former and current law clerks met to discuss the parameters of his interview, and taping is scheduled. The next priority will be the oral history of Judge John B. Jones.

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