

The image shows a historical courtroom interior. In the foreground, there is a large wooden table with several chairs around it. On the table, there are various items including a bottle, a quill pen, and some papers. In the background, there is a judge's bench with a wooden railing. On the bench, there is an American flag, a sign that reads "JUDICIAL BRANCH", and several chairs. To the left, there is a large window with a wooden frame. A chandelier hangs from the ceiling. The entire scene is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter.

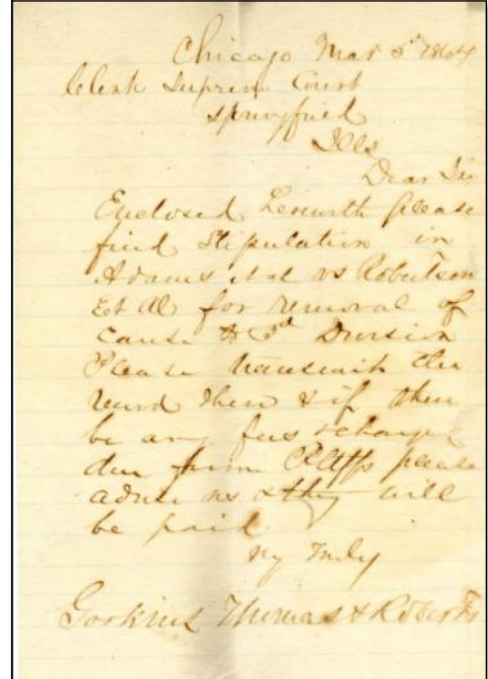
# Annual Report 2024

Illinois Supreme Court  
Historic Preservation Commission

# 2024 HIGHLIGHTS



The Supreme Court Building saw increased visitation due to last year's opening of the Learning Center.



The grant-funded project to digitize Illinois Supreme Court case files has largely concluded with publication forthcoming.



The Supreme Court held oral arguments on the road to a record crowd at Northern Illinois University in March.

Staff members gave numerous presentations to various organizations about the history of the judicial branch and the Commission.



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Transmittal Letter .....	2
Mission .....	3
Supreme Court of Illinois .....	4
Outreach .....	10
Administrative .....	14
Fiscal .....	16
Looking Ahead.....	19

Illinois Supreme Court Historic Preservation Commission  
231 South Sixth Street  
Springfield, IL 62701  
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[Illinoiscourthistory.org](http://Illinoiscourthistory.org)

# ILLINOIS SUPREME COURT HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

231 South Sixth Street, Springfield, Illinois 62701 ♦ Tel: 217-670-0890 Fax: 217-670-0944  
www.IllinoisCourtHistory.org

January 9, 2025

Hon. Mary Jane Theis, Chief Justice  
Supreme Court of Illinois  
200 East Capitol Avenue  
Springfield, IL 62701

Hon. JB Pritzker, Governor  
State of Illinois  
207 Capitol Building  
Springfield, IL 62706-1150

Hon. Don Harmon, President  
Illinois Senate  
327 Capitol Building  
Springfield, IL 62706

Hon. Emanuel Chris Welch, Speaker  
Illinois House of Representatives  
300 Capitol Building  
Springfield, IL 62706

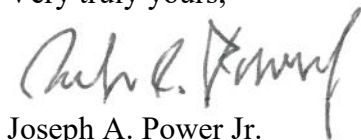
Dear Chief Justice Theis, Governor Pritzker, President Harmon, and Speaker Welch:

Enclosed is the Annual Report of the Supreme Court Historic Preservation Commission (Commission) filed in accordance with Section 25 of the Supreme Court Historic Preservation Act (705 ILCS 17). The Annual Report reflects the activities undertaken by the Commission in calendar year 2024 to further its mission as articulated in the Supreme Court Historic Preservation Act.

This year saw the Commission complete the two-year federal grant to digitize Illinois Supreme Court case files. These will be published on the Commission's website this coming year. Preserving case files remains an important mission as the Commission hired a new conservator to assist with this project. The Commission assisted the Supreme Court in organizing its oral arguments "Riding the Circuit" program at Northern Illinois University, bringing in an audience of more than 700. The Supreme Court Learning Center continues to be a draw for tourists and large groups.

Looking forward to 2025, the Commission plans to host another History on Trial production, expand tour group opportunities at the Supreme Court Building, manage an MCLE program, and publish the digitization project. Any questions or comments can be directed to me or to the Executive Director, John Lupton.

Very truly yours,



Joseph A. Power Jr.  
Chair



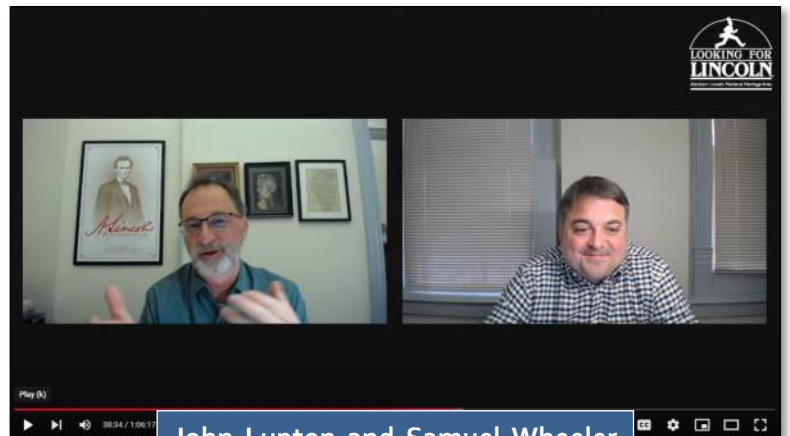
# MISSION

The Supreme Court Historic Preservation Commission was created in 2007 by an Act of the General Assembly (705 ILCS 17) to:

assist and advise the [Illinois Supreme] Court in regard to the acquisition, collection, documentation, preservation, cataloging, and related matters with respect to historic aspects of buildings, objects, artifacts, documents, and information, regardless of form, relating to the Illinois judiciary.



Samuel Wheeler appeared on WTTW to add context to Ken Burns's *The Civil War* series.



John Lupton and Samuel Wheeler discuss Abraham Lincoln's *Effe Afton* case for Looking for Lincoln.



The Supreme Court heard oral arguments at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb.



John Lupton takes a selfie before talking about the Illinois Judicial System to the Leadership Springfield program in the Illinois House of Representatives.

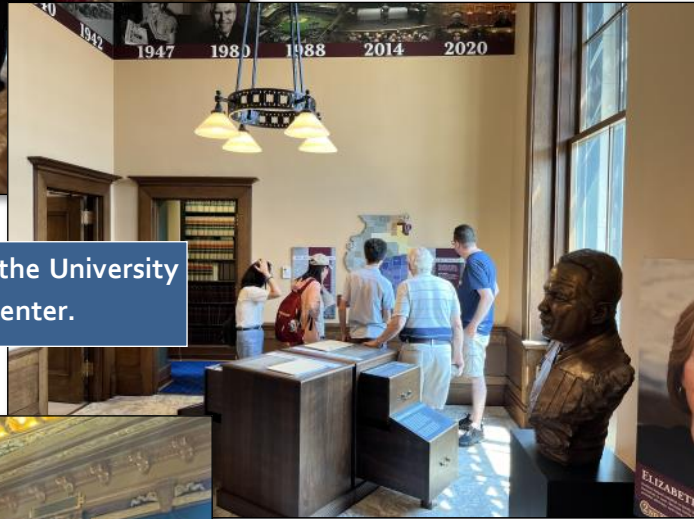
# SUPREME COURT OF ILLINOIS

## Learning Center

The Supreme Court's Learning Center opened in September 2023. It is designed to enhance the visitor experience at the Supreme Court, providing an opportunity to learn what the judicial branch does and how it operates.



The Supreme Court Building saw more than a 50 percent increase in attendance from last year, largely due to the Learning Center and increased awareness.



International students from the University of Illinois tour the Learning Center.



Samuel Wheeler talks to students from Chicago's Mollison Elementary School





The public is invited to visit the Learning Center at the Illinois Supreme Court Building during its Monday through Friday hours of 8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m. For larger groups, reservations are necessary. For more information, please contact Samuel Wheeler at 217-670-0890 or [samuel.wheeler@illinoiscourthistory.org](mailto:samuel.wheeler@illinoiscourthistory.org).



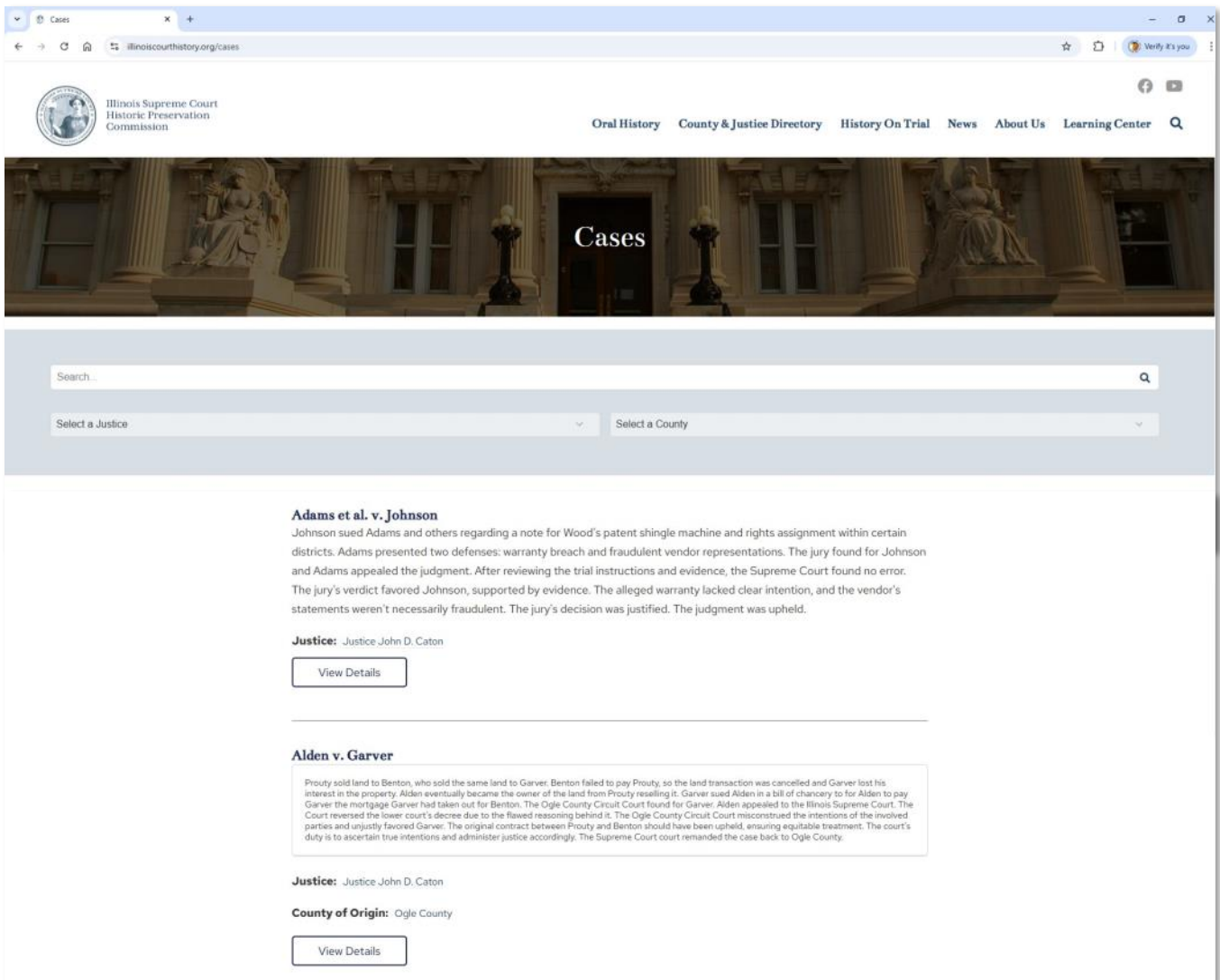
# Digitization Project

The Commission completed a two-year \$135,000 grant to digitize Illinois Supreme Court case files from 1818 to 1865 and to make them freely available on the Commission's website. The National Historical Publications and Records Commission awarded the grant in 2022. Staff technicians Shanta Thoele and Kathryn Powell scanned 3,720 case files consisting of 103,590 images. Matt Burns, along with Powell and Thoele, worked with technology firm Levi, Ray, and Shoup to upload the case files, metadata, and printed opinions on the Commission's website (see image below). During this process, the Commission discovered another 3,881 case files within the project's scope. These new case files will be scanned in the upcoming months. Additionally, the Commission is working to finalize the case summaries in order to publish the material online.



NATIONAL ARCHIVES

NATIONAL HISTORICAL PUBLICATIONS & RECORDS COMMISSION





Case Details

illinoiscourthistory.org/county-and-justice-directory/cases/adams-v-colton/case-details

Illinois Supreme Court  
Historic Preservation  
Commission

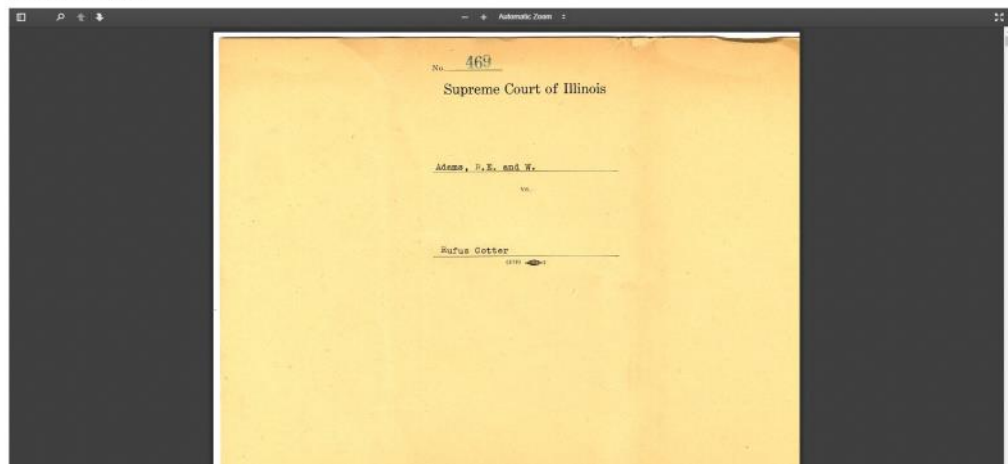
Oral History County & Justice Directory History On Trial News About Us Learning Center

## Case Details

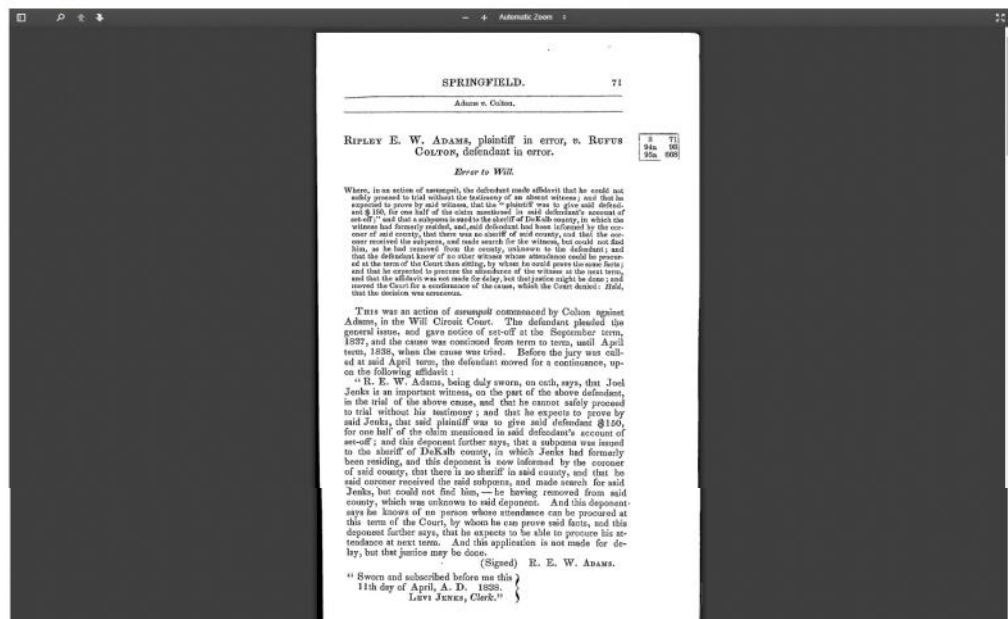
<p><b>Adams v. Colton</b></p> <p>Case # 469</p> <p><b>Appellant/Plaintiff</b> Ripley E. W. Adams</p> <p><b>Appellee/Defendant</b> Rufus Colton</p>	<p><b>Appellant/Plaintiff Attorneys</b> John C. Newkirk, Justin Butterfield</p> <p><b>Appellee/Defendant Attorneys</b> Uri Osgood</p> <p><b>County of Origin</b> Will County</p> <p><b>Justice</b> Justice Thomas C. Browne</p>	<p><b>Terms of Court</b> December 1839</p> <p><b>Type of Case</b> Assumpsit</p> <p><b>Disposition</b> Reversed</p> <p><b>Citation</b> 3 Ill 71</p>
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### Case Summary

Colton sued Adams in an action of assumpsit to recover a debt. The circuit court overruled the motion for a continuance, despite Adams's affidavit to present a witness who could testify to a set-off of the debt. A jury found for Colton, and Adams appealed. The Supreme Court reversed and remanded the case for a new trial because the circuit court's refusal to grant a continuance based on the absence of a crucial witness was an error.

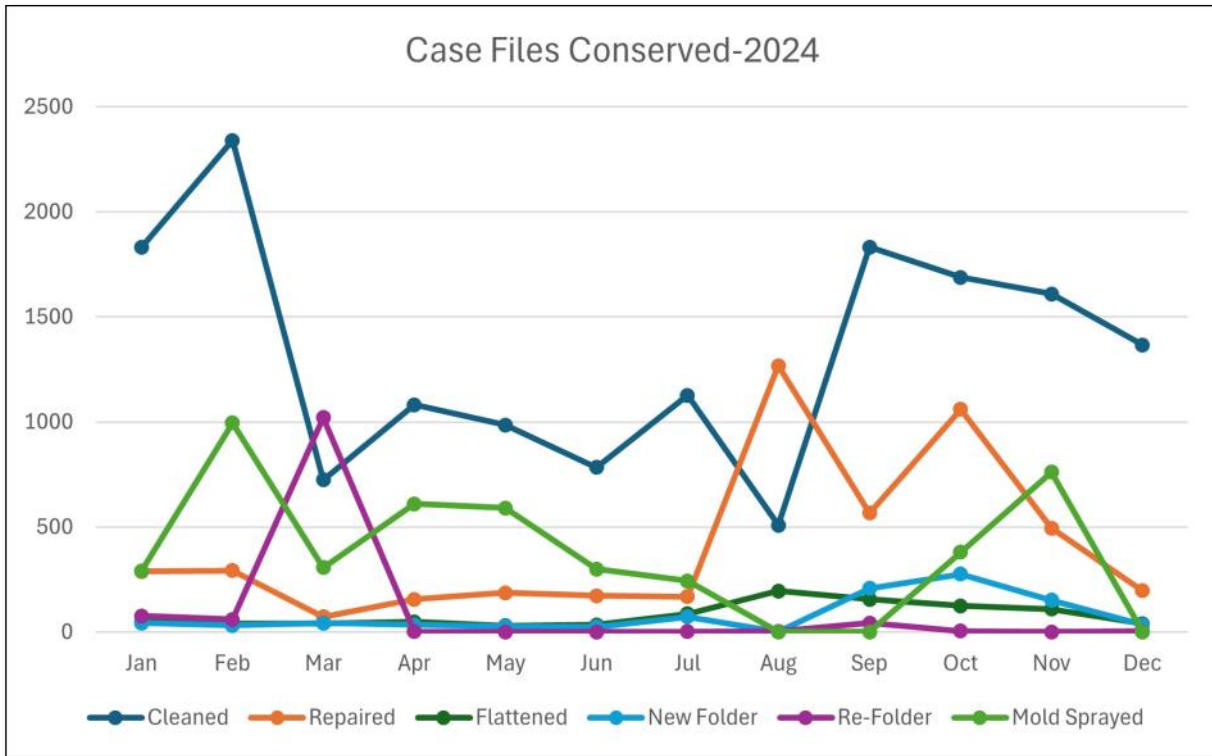


### Illinois Reports File



## Supreme Court Case File Conservation

Since July 2021, conservator Jason Blohm has been working to hydrate, flat-file, repair, clean, and deacidify Illinois Supreme Court case file documents housed at the Illinois State Archives. In July 2024, the Commission hired Kathryn Powell to work with Blohm.



Jason Blohm (far left) and Kathryn Powell (far right) at their Illinois State Archives workstations. Archives conservators, Alex Dixon (left) and Bill Lear (right), are on-site to assist the Commission’s conservators .





Illinois Supreme Court justices visited the Illinois State Archives to examine progress of the digitization project, to see the conservation lab, and to understand better the Commission's great working relationship with the Archives.

Right: Justices examine their attorney oaths from when they received their law licenses.

Bottom: Jason Blohm explains the importance of flat-filing case files.

Bottom right: Jason Blohm demonstrates the process of conserving case files.





# OUTREACH

## Public Presentations

Commission staff made more than 70 presentations for various civic, educational, bar, and historical organizations.

- Samuel Wheeler was a speaker at the Jim Edgar Fellows Program at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.
- John Lupton spoke at a Gilder-Lehrman teachers institute.
- Wheeler was one of the main presenters for 5 separate Lincoln Land Community College Road Scholar programs. Lupton also spoke at the Road Scholar programs.
- Wheeler was a featured speaker at the Adams County Historical Society.
- Lupton presented a paper at the Conference on Illinois History.
- In a webinar, Lupton and Wheeler discussed Lincoln's famous *Effie Afton* case for Looking for Lincoln.
- Wheeler gave a presentation on slavery in Illinois at the Lincoln Home.
- Lupton and Wheeler presented at the Illinois Council for the Social Studies spring meeting.
- Lupton and Wheeler spoke on legal cases concerning the Underground Railroad in Illinois.
- Commission staff led more than 40 tours of the Illinois Supreme Court Building.



Samuel Wheeler and John Lupton attend The Gettysburg Forum with Brian Mitchell, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum (ALPLM); Michelle Miller, ALPLM; Jacob Friefeld, Center for Lincoln Studies; and Christian McWhirter, ALPLM.



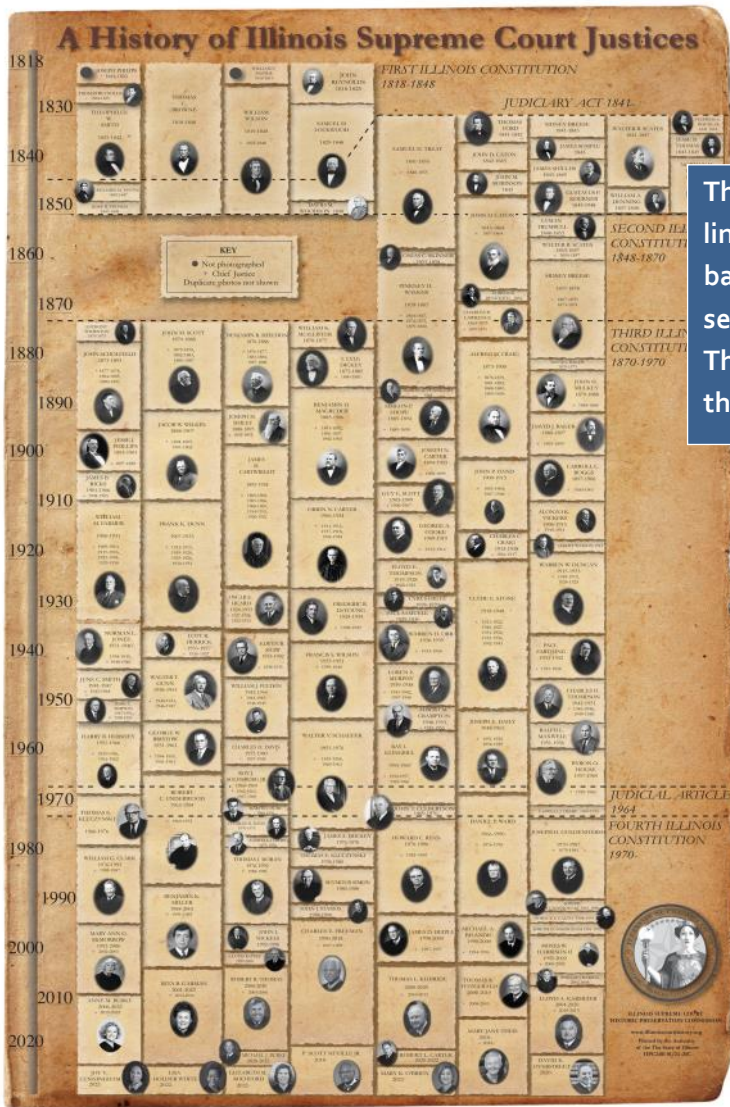
Samuel Wheeler speaks at the Illinois Council for the Social Studies Conference.

# Publications

The Supreme Court Communications Office publishes *Illinois Courts Connect*, an online monthly newsletter that provides information about the judicial branch to the public. The Commission contributes an article for each issue highlighting the history of the Court. Articles written by Commission staff in 2024 can be found at <https://www.illinoiscourts.gov/media/media-news>.

**Illinois Courts Connect articles in 2024**

January: A. Morris Williams	July: McLean County Tax Case
February: Myra Bradwell	August: Clarence Darrow and Russell McWilliams
March: Election Integrity	September: The Court House
April: Prohibition	October: Nomaque
May: Jilted Brides	November: NHPRC Grant Concludes
June: John Doe/Richard Roe	December: Ferris Wheel



The Commission created a poster, showing the lineage of each Illinois Supreme Court seat dating back to statehood. Alex Kozar, an intern from several years ago, designed the 24 x 36 poster. The poster is on display in the Attorneys Room in the Supreme Court Building.



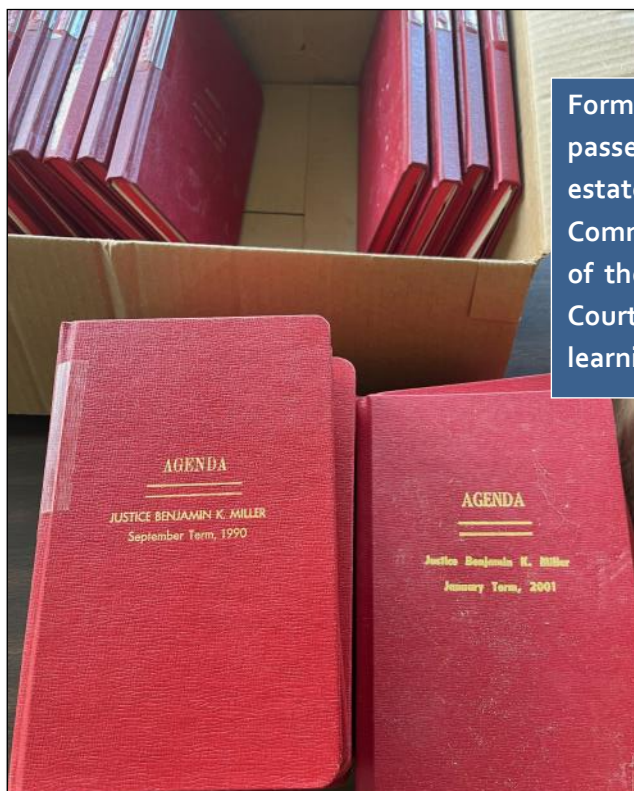
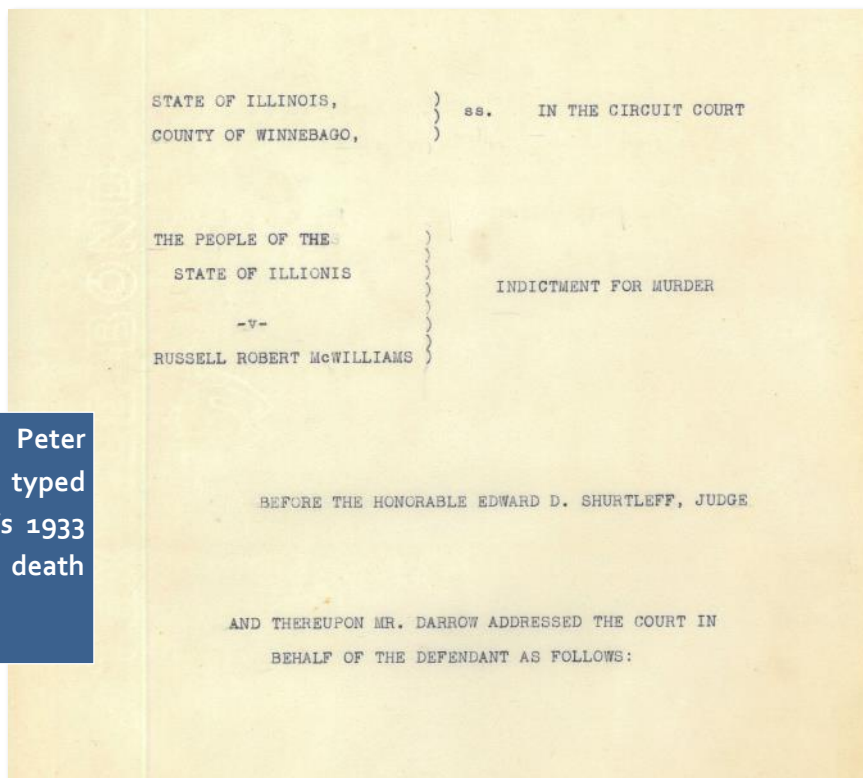
## THE LINCOLN FORUM BULLETIN

Samuel Wheeler became the editor of *The Lincoln Forum Bulletin*, a full-color magazine of The Lincoln Forum.

## Collections

Benjamin Belzer, the Commission's part-time Collections Manager, continued responsibility for managing the archival collection. The Commission received several new donations in 2024.

McHenry County attorney Peter Carroll donated a 26-page typed transcript of Clarence Darrow's 1933 argument to prevent the death penalty for Russell McWilliams.



Former Supreme Court Justice Benjamin K. Miller passed away in February 2024. The executor of his estate donated Miller's agenda books to the Commission. These books contain Miller's notes on all of the cases he heard while sitting on the Supreme Court. These books will be invaluable to researchers learning about how the Court operates.



## Information Source and Impact

The staff of the Commission are experts in the fields of legal and judicial history. Outside entities and media outlets frequently solicit the Commission for information on the history of courthouses, justices, the legal profession, and court cases. In 2024, the Commission received 435 queries about legal-related topics.



John Lupton will appear in an upcoming documentary on Abraham Lincoln's law circuit travels.

Beginning in 2025, the Commission will manage the successful MCLE program, "Abraham Lincoln's Legal Legacy." Retired Judge Ron Spears and Champaign attorney Steven Beckett organized six annual programs that gave modern attorneys an opportunity to learn from Lincoln's law practice. The Illinois State Bar Association will continue to sponsor the MCLE credit. The program takes place on the Friday closest to September 9, which was the day Lincoln received his license to practice law in 1836.

## Website & Social Media

Matt Burns, Director of Administration, manages the Commission's website and social media presence. The social media outlets are primarily used to make announcements and to direct users to the website, where more detailed information is available. Samuel Wheeler and John Lupton operate LinkedIn pages that also advertise the Commission's work.

Website: [www.illinoiscourthistory.org](http://www.illinoiscourthistory.org)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/judicialhistory/>

X (Twitter): <https://twitter.com/judicialhistory>

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/john-lupton-69ab9535/>

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/spwheeler/>

# ADMINISTRATIVE

## Commissioners

Joseph A. Power Jr., Chair  
Hon. Vincent F. Cornelius  
Hon. Kirk W. Dillard  
Martin Green  
Thomas Q. Keefe  
J. William Roberts  
John “Jay” Rock  
Dr. David M. Sokol  
Marcia M. Meis, *ex officio*,  
Director, Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts



*Joseph A. Power Jr.*

## Supreme Court of Illinois Liaison

Justice Joy V. Cunningham is the Commission’s liaison to the Illinois Supreme Court. In addition to her role as liaison, Justice Cunningham also serves as Chair of the Associate Commissioners.



*Hon. Joy V. Cunningham*

## Associate Commissioners

The Associate Commissioners serve as the operational body, in support of the Commission, which serves as the governing body. Associate Commissioners attend meetings and provide input into the Commission’s programmatic activities.

Hon. Joy V. Cunningham, Chair  
Hon. Anne M. Burke (ret.), Emerita  
Hon. Rita B. Garman (ret.), Emerita  
Matthew R. Carter  
Hon. Neil H. Cohen  
Hon. Margarita Kulys-Hoffman (ret.)  
Hon. Margaret McBride  
Hon. Aurelia Pucinski  
Scott J. Szala



Commission staff from left: John Lupton, Jason Blohm, Shanta Thoele, Matt Burns, Kathryn Powell, Hunter Hocking, Virginia Geiger, Ben Belzer, Samuel Wheeler.

## Staff

Benjamin Belzer, Collections, Oral History, and Research  
Jason Blohm, Conservator  
Matt Burns, Director of Administration, Director of Outreach  
Virginia Geiger, Administrative Assistant  
Hunter Hocking, Graduate Public Service Intern  
John Lupton, Executive Director  
Kathryn Powell, Conservator  
Shanta Thoele, Research Technician  
Samuel Wheeler, Ph.D., Director of History Programs

## Meetings

The Commission met four times in 2024 as required by statute on March 8, June 6, September 6, and December 6. Meeting agendas and minutes are available upon request to the Executive Director.

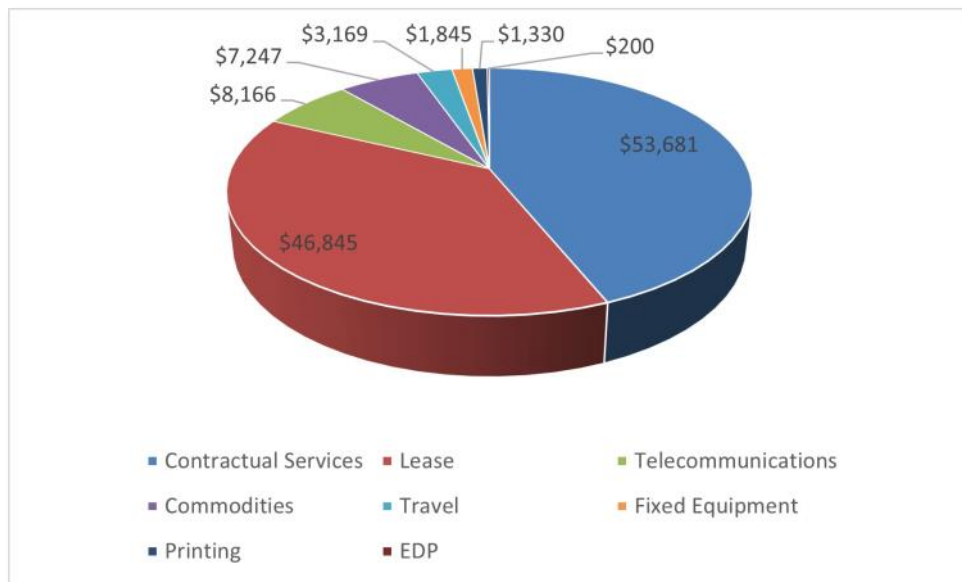


# FISCAL SUMMARY

In FY2024, the Commission decreased its expenditures by 9 percent from the previous fiscal year. This was principally due to the completion of the Learning Center and the completion of the federal grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission to digitize Supreme Court case files from 1818 to 1865. Regular positions increased slightly due to the conversion of one grant-funded staff member to full-time status. The Commission expects to maintain level expenditures for the near future.

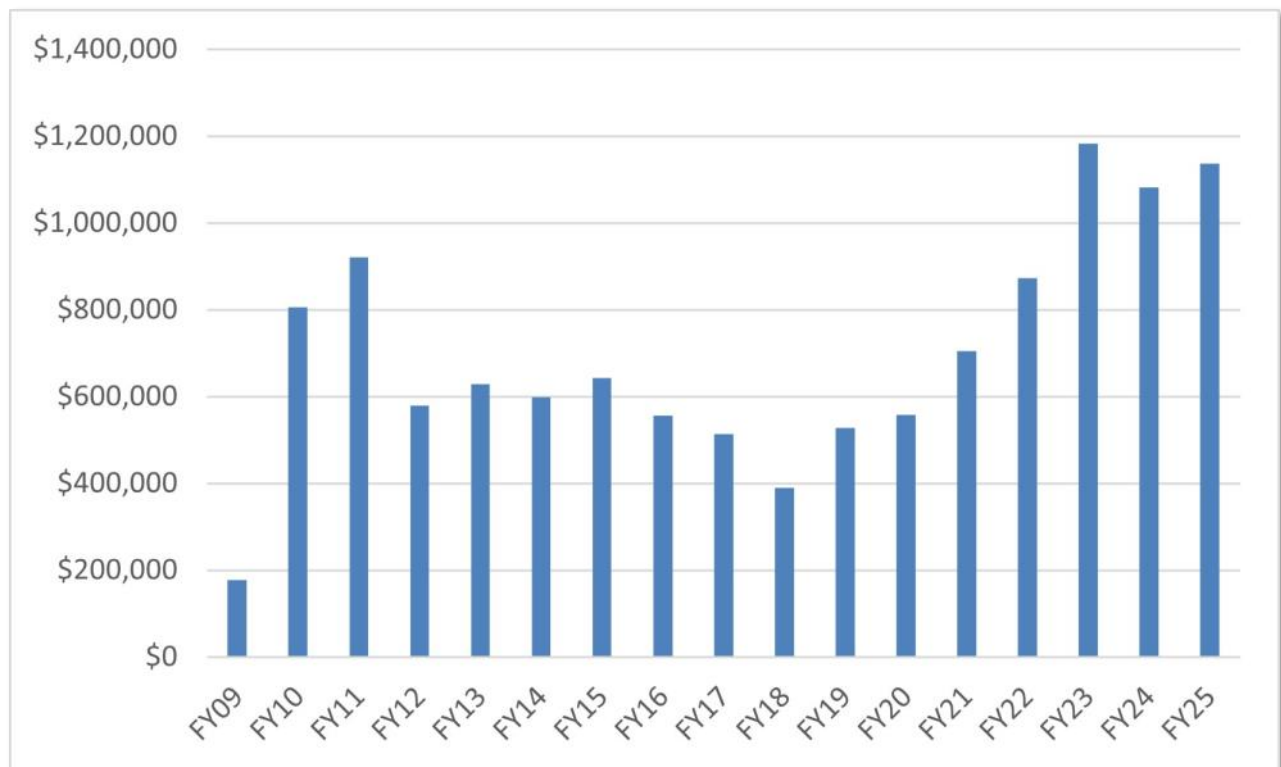
## FY24 Expenditure Detail (July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024)

<i>Item</i>	<i>Expenditure</i>
<i>Regular Positions</i>	\$513,435
<i>Benefits</i>	\$445,629
<i>Contractual Services</i>	\$53,681
<i>Lease</i>	\$46,845
<i>Telecommunications</i>	\$8,166
<i>Commodities</i>	\$7,247
<i>Travel</i>	\$3,169
<i>Fixed Equipment</i>	\$1,845
<i>Printing</i>	\$1,330
<i>EDP</i>	\$200
<i>Total</i>	\$1,081,548



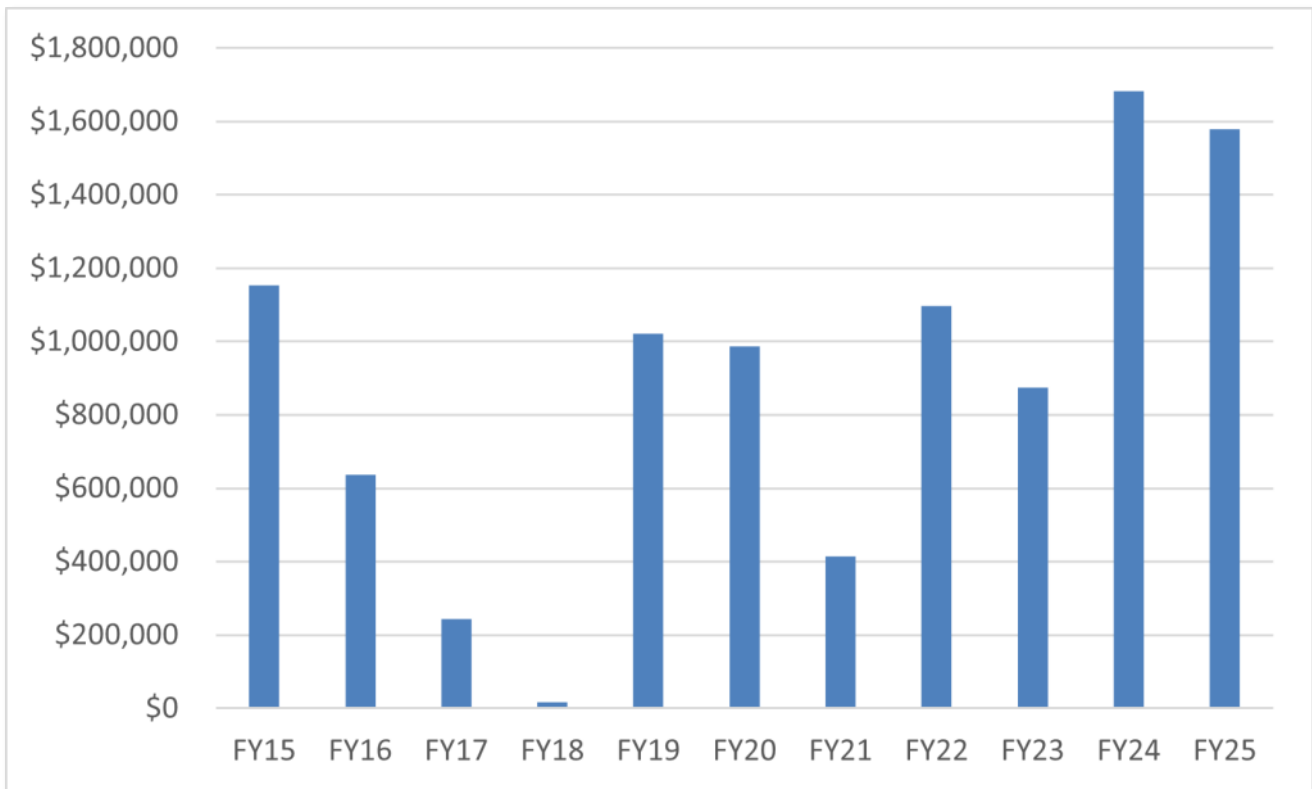
## Appropriations and Expenditures (Supreme Court Historic Preservation Fund)

<i>Fiscal Year</i>	<i>Appropriation</i>	<i>Change</i>	<i>Expenditures</i>	<i>Change</i>
2010	\$10,000,000	0%	\$805,400	354.3%
2011	\$10,000,000	0%	\$919,800	14.2%
2012	\$10,000,000	0%	\$579,300	-37.0%
2013	\$10,000,000	0%	\$628,800	8.5%
2014	\$10,000,000	0%	\$598,100	-4.9%
2015	\$10,000,000	0%	\$643,100	7.5%
2016	\$10,000,000	0%	\$556,100	-13.5%
2017	\$10,000,000	0%	\$514,300	-7.5%
2018	\$4,500,000	-55%	\$390,000	-24.2%
2019	\$4,500,000	0%	\$526,800	35.1%
2020	\$4,500,000	0%	\$557,000	5.7%
2021	\$4,500,000	0%	\$703,859	26.4%
2022	\$4,500,000	0%	\$872,510	24.0%
2023	\$4,500,000	0%	\$1,182,519	35.5%
2024	\$4,500,000	0%	\$1,081,548	-9.1%
2025	\$4,500,000	0%	\$1,137,500 (est.)	5.2%



## Cash Balance Supreme Court Historic Preservation Fund

<i>Date</i>	<i>Amount</i>
<i>December 31, 2010 (FY11)</i>	\$3,929,711
<i>December 31, 2011 (FY12)</i>	\$3,207,802
<i>December 31, 2012 (FY13)</i>	\$2,568,486
<i>December 31, 2013 (FY14)</i>	\$1,749,061
<i>December 31, 2014 (FY15)</i>	\$1,152,920
<i>December 31, 2015 (FY16)</i>	\$636,960
<i>December 31, 2016 (FY17)</i>	\$243,347
<i>December 31, 2017 (FY18)</i>	\$17,057
<i>December 31, 2018 (FY19)</i>	\$1,021,695
<i>December 31, 2019 (FY20)</i>	\$986,463
<i>December 31, 2020 (FY21)</i>	\$415,337
<i>December 31, 2021 (FY22)</i>	\$1,096,622
<i>December 31, 2022 (FY23)</i>	\$874,654
<i>December 31, 2023 (FY24)</i>	\$1,682,299
<i>December 31, 2024 (FY25)</i>	\$1,579,611







## LOOKING AHEAD

For 2025, the Commission continues to plan for activities and events.

- Organizing the Supreme Court’s “Riding the Circuit” program
- Managing tours of the Supreme Court Building
- Producing the next History on Trial program
- Managing webinars and in-person talks to reach new and diverse audiences
- Managing the ISBA MCLE program on Abraham Lincoln’s Legal Legacy
- Continuing work on conserving Supreme Court case files
- Applying for additional sources of funding
- Expanding the collections of the Commission
- Expanding the Collections Room of the Commission
- Publishing new material on Illinois judicial history
- Working with circuit clerks statewide to digitize historic case files
- Continuing to digitize case files and publishing them on its website



Illustration Credits:

Cover: Supreme Court Courtroom (1836-1838) in the Illinois State Capitol Building in Vandalia, Illinois

All photos courtesy of Supreme Court Historic Preservation, with the exception of Inside Cover and P. 3: NIU oral arguments courtesy of Supreme Court of Illinois

P. 9: Group photo courtesy of Illinois State Archives

P. 13, Photo courtesy of Looking for Lincoln

P. 14: Joseph A. Power Jr., courtesy of Power Rogers; Joy V. Cunningham, courtesy of Supreme Court of Illinois



