



# Annual Report 2023

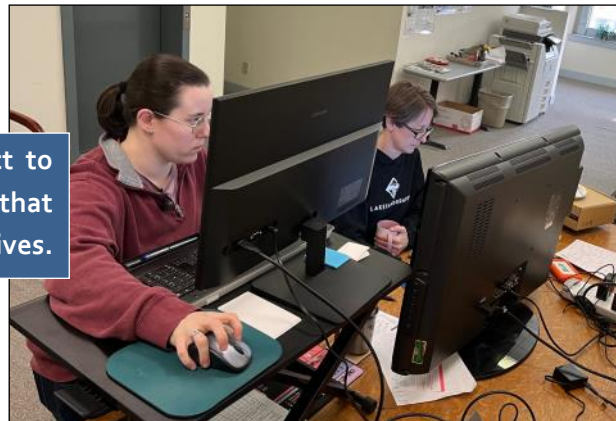
Illinois Supreme Court  
Historic Preservation Commission

# 2023 HIGHLIGHTS



The Supreme Court's Learning Center opened during the Court's September Term with media and dignitaries in attendance.

Work continued on a grant funded project to digitize Illinois Supreme Court case files that are housed at the Illinois State Archives.



The Supreme Court held oral arguments on the road for the first time since COVID, visiting Chicago State University in May.

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



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# 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 18, 2024

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

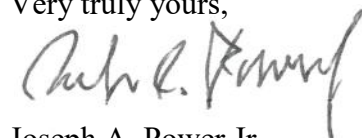
Dear Chief Justice Theis, Governor Pritzker, President Harmon, and Speaker Welch:

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 2023 to further its mission as articulated in the Supreme Court Historic Preservation Act.

This year saw tremendous accomplishments. The Commission assisted the Supreme Court in organizing its oral arguments “Riding the Circuit” program at Chicago State University. The Supreme Court Learning Center finally opened to the public with plans to include the Governor’s Mansion and the Capitol in future grant-funded school-group tours. The federally funded grant project to digitize Supreme Court case files completed its first year. In the second year, the Commission will see the publication of cases and images on our website.

Looking forward to 2024, the Commission plans to host another History on Trial production, expand tour group opportunities at the Supreme Court Building, and complete the digitization project. Any questions or comments can be directed to myself 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.



John Lupton and Illinois State Archives Director David Joens at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum's Home Exhibit featuring Lorraine Hansberry's father's lawsuit over redlining in Chicago.



Matt Burns hangs portraits of recently retired justices in the Illinois Supreme Court Building's Attorneys Room .



Sam Wheeler appears on Fox Nation in the Illinois State Capitol rotunda.

The Supreme Court heard oral arguments at Chicago State University.



# 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. This educational component will improve civic knowledge as studies consistently show that civic education increases civic engagement.

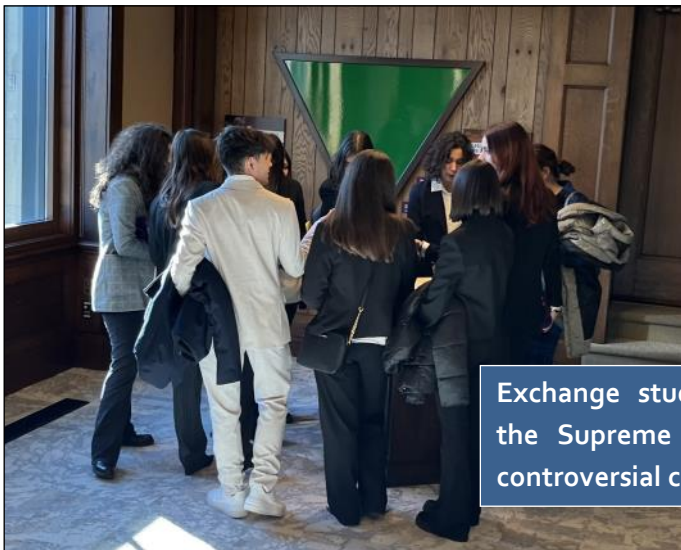


Commissioner Vince Cornelius, Associate Commissioner Scott Szala and John Lupton admire the timeline.



Commissioner Kirk Dillard and Justice Joy Cunningham talk at the Learning Center opening.

The space also highlights a number of significant cases, including the country's first fingerprint case, a case involving movie censorship, and a controversial case involving prayer in public schools. The controversial case, *McCollum v. Board of Education*, concerns whether religion should be taught in publicly funded schools. After reading the summary, visitors can vote with a marble whether they agree or disagree with the decision.



Exchange students from Italy debate the Supreme Court's decision at the controversial case display.



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).



Retired Justice Benjamin Miller visits the Learning Center.



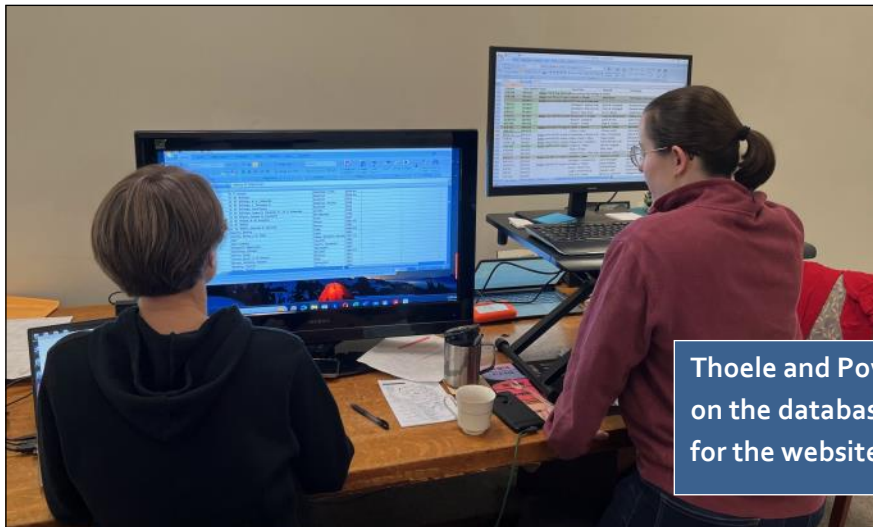
More than 50 dignitaries and media crowd the Learning Center on opening day.



Sam Wheeler talks about the Learning Center to new judges in Illinois.

## Digitization Project

Last year, the Commission received a \$135,000 grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission to digitize 3,600 Illinois Supreme Court case files from 1818 to 1865 and to make them freely available on the Commission's website.







## Case Details

### Bell and Bell v. Aydelott

Case # 4

**Appellant/Plaintiff**  
James Bell, John Bell

**Appellee/Defendant**  
Zadock Aydelott

**Appellant/Plaintiff Attorneys**  
Jephtha Hardin

**Appellee/Defendant Attorneys**  
Samuel Lockwood

**County of Origin**  
Gallatin County

**Justice**  
Justice John Reynolds

**Terms of Court**  
December 1822

**Type of Case**  
Not Listed

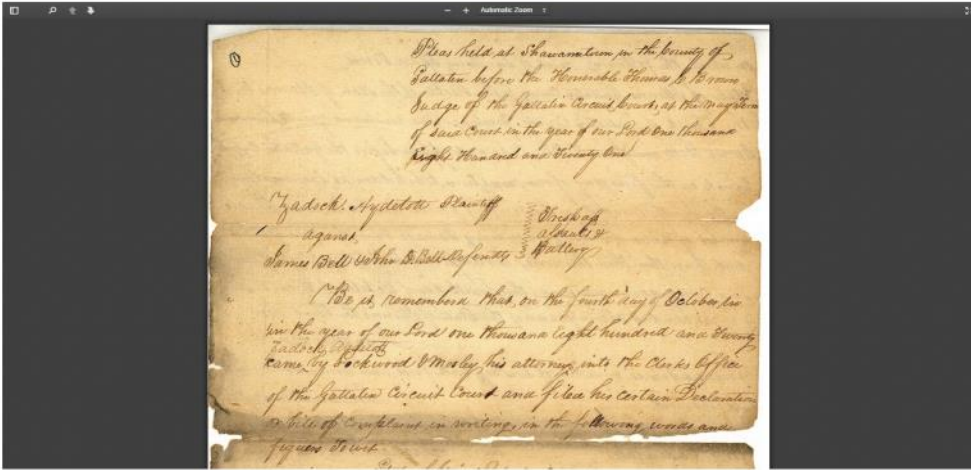
**Disposition**  
Affirmed

**Citation**  
131 45

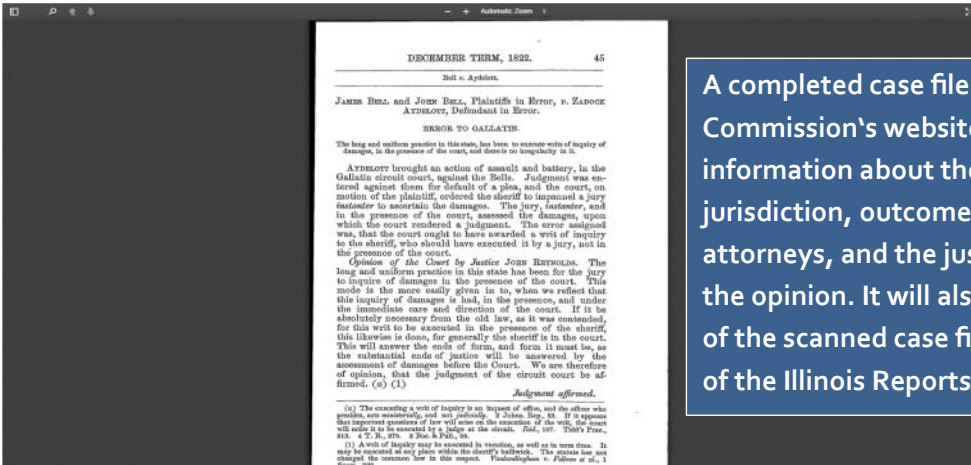
**Subject(s)**  
Not Listed

### Case Summary

Aydelott sued Bell and Bell for assault and battery in the Gallatin Circuit Court. The Bells defaulted, and the court ruled for Aydelott and impanelled a jury to assess damages. The Bells appealed because the court failed to issue a writ of inquiry to the sheriff separately to assess damages. The Supreme Court affirmed the decision because long-standing practice in the state involved assessing damages in the court's presence, and the sheriff was in the court room.



### Illinois Reports File



A completed case file entry on the Commission's website will contain information about the case, including jurisdiction, outcome, litigants, attorneys, and the justice who authored the opinion. It will also provide the pdf of the scanned case file as well as a pdf of the Illinois Reports opinion.

## 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.

	Cleaned	Repaired	Flattened	New Folder	Re-Folder
Jan 2023	571	236	33	21	160
Feb 2023	989	350	51	53	0
Mar 2023	1210	328	54	62	0
Apr 2023	1024	328	42	52	0
May 2023	677	197	38	16	217
Jun 2023	1540	697	98	49	0
July 2023	1223	520	6	27	119
Aug 2023	948	162	45	31	918
Sep 2023	1889	255	36	48	47
Oct 2023	1239	214	57	45	50
Nov 2023	1411	191	42	58	24
Dec 2023	1381	165	42	43	30
Total	14,102 pages	3,643 pages	544 files	505 files	1,565 files



Before and after photos demonstrate the importance of flattening and conserving Illinois Supreme Court case files.



# OUTREACH

## Public Presentations

Commission staff made more than 81 presentations (our highest total to date) for various civic, educational, bar, and historical organizations.

- Sam Wheeler was a speaker at the Jim Edgar Fellows Program at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.
- John Lupton appeared on WABC-radio in New York.
- Jason Blohm led a workshop at the Illinois State Library on repairing books.
- Wheeler was one of the main presenters for the Lincoln Land Community College Road Scholar program in Springfield. Lupton also spoke at the Road Scholar program.
- Wheeler traveled to Kansas City, Missouri to speak at the Harry Truman Presidential Library.
- Lupton presented a paper at the Midwest History Conference in Grand Rapids, Michigan.
- In a webinar, Lupton and Wheeler discussed Lincoln's famous Almanac Trial for Looking for Lincoln.
- Lupton and Wheeler presented at the Conference on Illinois History in Springfield.
- Lupton and Wheeler spoke in breakout sessions at the Lincoln Forum in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.
- Commission staff led more than three dozen tours of the Illinois Supreme Court Building.



Matt Burns leads a tour for Associate Commissioner Scott Szala's University of Illinois law school class.



John Lupton speaks at the Conference on Illinois History.



## 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 2023 can be found at <https://www.illinoiscourts.gov/media/media-news>.

January 2023	Hon. Albert George, First Black Judge
February 2023	Women and Juries
March 2023	Forgotten Supreme Court Home
April 2023	Substitute Judges
May 2023	Digitizing Case File Update
June 2023	Illinois Supreme Court Among Most Diverse
July 2023	Council of Revision
August 2023	Internal Improvements
September 2023	Learning Center Opens
October 2023	Technological Improvements
November 2023	Blindfolded Justice
December 2023	Changing Membership of the Court

## Collections

Benjamin Belzer, the Commission's part-time Collections Manager, continued responsibility for managing the archival collection.



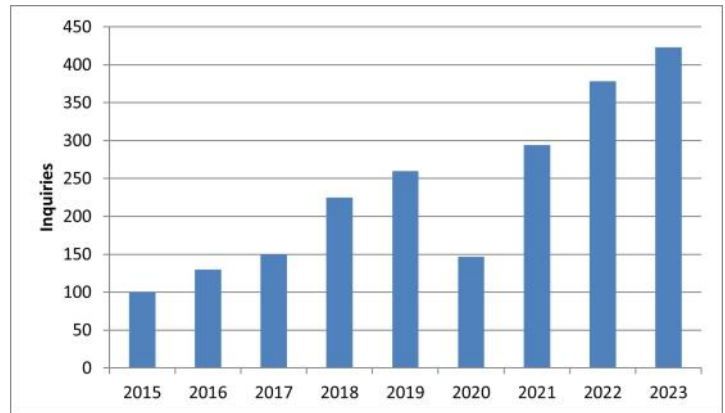
The Commission received several new donations in 2023, including a number of documents and artifacts from the family of Appellate Justice Dorrance Dibell (1844-1922), donated by Dibell's great grandson David and Cindy June.

## Information Source and Impact

The staff of the Commission has become 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 2015, the Commission began monitoring inquiries. In 2023, it received 423 queries about legal-related topics.



John Lupton visited the Calhoun County courthouse with Illinois State Archives staff Michael Hall, Alex Dixon, and David Joens to discuss proper storage of legal records.



## 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. John Lupton operates a LinkedIn page that also serves to 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/>

# 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

The Illinois Supreme Court named Justice Joy V. Cunningham to be the liaison to the Commission. Justice Cunningham has a long history with the Commission, serving as Chair of the Associate Commissioners since 2009.



*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, Matt Burns, Kathryn Powell, Ben Belzer, Virginia Geiger, Jason Blohm, Shanta Thoele, Sam Wheeler.

## Staff

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

## Meetings

The Commission met four times in 2023 on March 10, June 9, September 15, and December 1. Meeting agendas and minutes are available upon request to the Executive Director.

# FISCAL SUMMARY

The Commission increased its expenditures by 35 percent from FY2022. This was principally due to the costs associated with two large projects. 1) The Commission obtained a federal grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission to digitize Supreme Court case files from 1818 to 1865 and to create a freely accessible website to access the cases and images. 2) The Commission contracted with Taylor Studios, a museum design company, to create and install a Learning Center at the Illinois Supreme Court Building. Staff members also increased travel expenses to give presentations primarily in-state but several out-of-state conferences as well.

## FY23 Expenditure Detail (July 1, 2022-June 30, 2023)

<i>Item</i>	<i>Expenditure</i>
<i>Regular Positions</i>	\$474,425
<i>Benefits</i>	\$405,529
<i>Contractual Services</i>	\$219,149
<i>Lease</i>	\$45,233
<i>Fixed Equipment</i>	\$12,575
<i>Travel</i>	\$9,148
<i>Telecommunications</i>	\$8,011
<i>Printing</i>	\$4,206
<i>Commodities</i>	\$4,063
<i>EDP</i>	\$180
<i>Total</i>	\$1,182,519

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

<i>Fiscal Year</i>	<i>Appropriation</i>	<i>Change</i>	<i>Expenditures</i>	<i>Change</i>
2009	\$10,000,000	--	\$177,300	--
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%	\$1,060,000 (est.)	-10.4%

## Cash Balance (Supreme Court Historic Preservation Fund)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Amount</i>
<i>December 31, 2009 (FY10)</i>	\$4,775,722
<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





## LOOKING AHEAD

For 2024, the Commission remains involved in planning for activities and events.

- Organizing the Supreme Court’s “Riding the Circuit” program
- Managing tours for the Supreme Court
- Producing the next History on Trial program
- Managing webinars and in-person talks to reach new and diverse audiences
- Continuing work on the federal grant to digitize Supreme Court case files
- Continuing work on conserving Supreme Court case files
- Applying for additional sources of funding
- Expanding the collections of the Commission
- Publishing new material on Illinois judicial history
- Working with circuit clerks statewide to digitize historic case files

Illustration Credits:

Cover: Supreme Court Courtroom (1878-1907) in the Illinois State Capitol Building, courtesy of Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum

Inside Cover: Courtesy of Kari Bedford, Supreme Court Historic Preservation, Illinois Supreme Court

P. 3 Supreme Court Historic Preservation

P. 4: Courtesy of Kari Bedford, Supreme Court Historic Preservation

P. 5: Supreme Court Historic Preservation, Illinois Supreme Court

P. 6: Supreme Court Historic Preservation

P. 7: [illinoiscourthistory.org](http://illinoiscourthistory.org)

P. 8: Supreme Court Historic Preservation

P. 9: Supreme Court Historic Preservation, David Joens

P. 10: Supreme Court Historic Preservation

P. 12: Joseph A. Power Jr., courtesy of Power Rogers; Joy V. Cunningham, courtesy of Illinois Supreme Court

P. 13: Supreme Court Historic Preservation

