

Court Records

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As elements of the federal court system by the Judiciary Act of 1789 (1 Stat. 76), September 24, 1789, pursuant to Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution, which granted to Congress power "To constitute Tribunals inferior to the supreme Court," and Article III, Section 1, which vested judicial power in the Supreme Court "and such inferior Courts as the Congress may from time to time ordain and establish." Individual district courts, minimally one for each state, established by specific legislation.

U.S. territorial courts were established by statute for organized territories of the United States. They had the form and jurisdiction of district courts, by which they were superseded when the territories became states.

U.S. circuit courts were established concurrently with U.S. district courts by the Judiciary Act of 1789. They shared with U.S. district courts original jurisdiction over criminal cases, tort suits by aliens, and all common law suits involving the United States. They had exclusive original jurisdiction over suits involving an alien, suits between citizens of different states, and suits in common law and equity where the disputed amount exceeded \$500. They had appellate jurisdiction over cases heard in U.S. district courts comprising each circuit, except those cases that by law were heard immediately by the U.S. Supreme Court. Appellate jurisdiction was transferred from U.S. circuit courts to newly established U.S. circuit courts of appeals by the Judiciary Act of 1891 (26 Stat. 826), March 3, 1891. U.S. circuit courts were abolished, effective January 1, 1912, by the Judicial Code of 1911 (36 Stat. 1167), March 3, 1911, with jurisdiction, records, and pending cases transferred from each circuit court to the appropriate U.S. district courts.

Confederate States district courts were successors to U.S. district courts within the states comprising the Confederate States of America, 1861-65. At the end of the war, U.S. district courts resumed jurisdiction.

Types of Federal Cases

Admiralty

In Rem (against a thing), usually against a ship, in which case the relief sought is confined to the thing, although the suit may have arisen out of transactions between persons; or

In Personam (against an individual) in which case relief is sought against a particular person.

- One of the significant features of maritime law is the limitation of liability.

Cases are argued in front of a judge

Equity

- not exercised in any case where a "plain, adequate, and complete remedy may be had at law."
- in 1911, jurisdiction over equity cases was transferred to the District Courts of the United States.
- The Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, effective in 1938 after their adoption by the Supreme Court, prescribed a uniform procedure for law and equity cases, with one form of action to be known as 'civil action.'

Law

- all seizures on land or on waters not navigable by boats of 10 or more tons, made under the laws of the United States; over suits for penalties and forfeitures incurred under Federal laws; over all suits at common law where the United States, or one of its officers, sued under the authority of an act of Congress; and exclusive original jurisdiction over suits against foreign consuls and vice consuls
- From time to time this jurisdiction was expanded by Congress to cover other types of cases, such as those arising under the postal laws of the United States and under civil rights legislation

Civil

- By an act of Congress dated June 19, 1934 (48 Stat. 1064), the Supreme Court could, at any time, unite the general rules prescribed by it for cases in equity with those in actions at law so as to secure one form of civil action and procedure for both.

Criminal

- Crimes charged include treason and conspiracy to overthrow the government; mutiny, murder, and assault and battery on the high seas; piracy and attacking a vessel with intent to plunder; smuggling; forgery; counterfeiting; carrying on business without a license or without paying a tax; desertion or enticing to desert from the armed forces; voting in the name of another person; obstruction of process; larceny; mail theft; and violations of neutrality.

Bankruptcy

- Under the constitutional provision that Congress shall have the power to establish "uniform laws on the subject of Bankruptcies throughout the United States, (art. I, sec. 8),

Act of 1800 followed the business disturbances of 1797;

Act of 1841, the Panic of 1837;

Act of 1867, the post Civil War period recession

Act of 1898, the Panic of 1893 and the following years of depression

Confiscation

- By the provisions of an Act of Congress of July 17, 1862, entitled "An Act to Suppress Insurrection, to Punish Treason and Rebellion, to Seize and Confiscate the Property of Rebels, and for Other Purposes" the Federal government was given power to take the land and businesses of those who served in the Confederate States Government.
- libels of information, orders for process, motions,

petitions, orders of the court, U.S. Marshal's orders to confiscate, proofs of public notice, notice of seizure, and time and location of trial.

Fugitive Slaves

- Fugitive Slave Act of 1850
- Typically consist of petition, affidavits, testimony, and documentation supporting ownership
- Records typically found in court of original petition and the court with jurisdiction over the area where the slave escaped to

Habeas Corpus

- Writs can be found in most case files
- Usually involves a petition, transcript, order, and the writ when ordered by the judge
- Used often during Civil war → soldiers under 18
- Runaway slaves

Most NARA facilities hold records of United States District Courts. The following is a list of facilities and the states they serve.

NARA ARCHIVAL CONTACTS

The National Archives at Anchorage

Holding Records from Alaska.

654 West Third Avenue
Anchorage, Alaska 99501-2145

907-261-7820 Email: alaska.archives@nara.gov

The National Archives at Atlanta

Holding Records from Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee

5780 Jonesboro Road
Morrow, Georgia 30260

770-968-2100 Email: atlanta.archives@nara.gov

The National Archives at Boston

Holding Records from Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

Frederick C. Murphy Federal Center
380 Trapelo Road
Waltham, Massachusetts
02452-6399

(781) 663-0130 E-mail: waltham.archives@nara.gov

The National Archives at Chicago

Holding Records from Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin

7358 South Pulaski Road
Chicago, IL 60629-5898

773-948-9001 E-mail: chicago.archives@nara.gov

The National Archives at Denver

Holding Records from Colorado, Montana, New Mexico, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, Wyoming

Physical Location: Denver Federal Center
Building 48

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 25307
Denver, Colorado 80225

(303) 470-5740 Email: denver.archives@nara.gov

The National Archives at Fort Worth

Holding Records from Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, and Arkansas

Locations: 2600 West 7th Street, Suite 162, Fort Worth, TX 76107

1400 John Burgess, Fort Worth, TX, 76140

817-831-5620 & 817-551-2051 Email: ftworth.archives@nara.gov

The National Archives at Kansas City

Holding Records from Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska.

400 West Pershing Road
Kansas City, MO 64108

Phone: 816-268-8000 E-mail: kansascity.archives@nara.gov

The National Archives at New York City

Holding Records from New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands

201 Varick Street, 12th Floor
New York, NY 10014
(Entrance on Houston Street, between Varick and Hudson.)

1-866-840-1752 or 212-401-1620 E-mail: newyork.archives@nara.gov

The National Archives at Philadelphia

Holding Records from Pennsylvania, Delaware, West Virginia, Maryland and Virginia

900 Market Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
19107-4292

215-606-0100 Email: philadelphia.archives@nara.gov

The National Archives at Riverside

Holding Records from Arizona, Southern California, and Clark County, Nevada.

23123 Cajalco Road
Perris, CA 92570

951-956-2000 Email: riverside.archives@nara.gov

The National Archives at St. Louis

Navy and Marine Corps enlisted personnel records prior to 1939, selected deceased VIPS

National Personnel Records Center
9700 Page Avenue
St. Louis, MO 63132-5100

314-801-0800 Status Check: mpr.status@nara.gov

Army, Air Force, and Coast Guard records; also, Navy and Marine Corps records other than those listed above

Individuals who wish to visit NPRC (MPR) because they have a strong interest in reviewing their own files rather than receiving document copies by mail are encouraged to write beforehand to save time. In your written request, include: the date of the desired appointment and your daytime telephone number. NPRC (MPR) will call you to confirm the appointment date. Provide at least two to three weeks for NPRC (MPR) to receive your request, process it, and retrieve the related records.

The National Archives at San Francisco

Holding Records from Northern California, Hawaii, Nevada, Guam, Pacific Trust Territories, and American Samoa

1000 Commodore Drive
San Bruno, CA 94066-2350

(650) 238-3501 Email: sanbruno.archives@nara.gov

The National Archives at Seattle

Holding Records from Idaho, Oregon, and Washington

6125 Sand Point Way NE
Seattle, Washington 98115-7999

206-336-5115 Email: seattle.archives@nara.gov

The National Archives at Washington, DC

700 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20408-0001

202-357-5000 or 1-866-325-7208 Email: archives1reference@nara.gov

The National Archives at College Park

8601 Adelphi Road
College Park, MD 20740-6001

301-837-2000 or 1-866-272-6272 Email: archives2reference@nara.gov
