



Court Historical Society NEWSLETTER *Eastern District of Tennessee*



MAY 2011



JUDGE EDGAR DONATES HIS PAPERS--In preparing to move to Michigan, Senior U.S. District Judge R. Allan Edgar assembled documents in his chambers--filling more than 25 boxes--and donated them to the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Bicentennial Library. Shown here with the boxes in the background are Judge Edgar and Mary Helms, head of the library's Local History and Genealogy Department, who is holding the Deed of Gift signed by her and the judge.

PHOTO BY STEFANIE CAPETZ

The Papers

Judge Edgar's donated papers consist of his speeches, files from his tenure as the district's chief judge from 1998 to 2005, materials from his service on the Court Administration and Case Management Committee of the Judicial Conference of the United States, his notes from judges' meetings, personal notes from selected case files, pictures, two scrapbooks and other documents.

The Court Historical Society had a small role in the papers donation project. One of the missions of the Society is to assist judges or judges' families, if the judge is deceased, in donating their papers to special collections libraries so that they will be available for future researchers and historians. We have been instrumental in doing this in seven instances.

The Second Judge To Transfer

In transferring to another district within the U.S. Sixth Circuit, **Judge Edgar** becomes the second senior judge from the Eastern District of Tennessee to do so. **U.S. District Judge Charles G. Neese** transferred from Greeneville to Nashville in 1982.

Judge Neese was appointed in 1961 and served the Northeastern Division and the Winchester Division. He took senior status at the time of

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Our Civil War Judge

As the country observes the 150th anniversary of the beginning of the Civil War this spring, it's worth mentioning here the unusual circumstances involving the U.S. district judge who served the Tennessee District during those days--**West H. Humphreys** of Clarksville.

There were three district court jurisdictions in Tennessee at that time, with one judge presiding over all three--Judge Humphreys. When Tennessee seceded from the Union in June 1861, Judge Humphreys accepted an appointment as a Confederate district judge, but he did not resign from his federal judgeship like all federal judges of other seceded states did.

The U.S. Senate impeached Humphreys in 1862, barring him from holding future office in the United States government. Humphreys continued to sit on the Confederate bench in Knoxville until 1863, when the city was captured by federal forces. Humphreys fled to Alabama. He was captured there in December 1864 but was later exchanged as a prisoner of war.

In September 1865, he took an oath of allegiance to the United States and sought--and was granted--amnesty by **President Andrew Johnson**. Humphreys continued to practice law until his death in 1882.

The federal judgeship that Humphreys held was filled by Knoxville lawyer **Connally F. Trigg** upon Humphreys's impeachment. Trigg was appointed by **President Abraham Lincoln** and served until his death in 1880. ■

*[EDITOR'S NOTE--The above information comes from the U.S. Sixth Circuit History Office and from the book *Justice in the Valley* by Patricia Brake, which was written under the auspices of the Court Historical Society and published in 1998. A few copies of the book remain available and may be obtained from the Society at a cost of \$25 plus \$4 postage. Copies are also available at the intake counter in each division of the court.]*

his move and continued handling cases in the Middle District of Tennessee until his death in 1989. He moved to be near his earlier home.

Judge Edgar, who was appointed in 1985, likewise is moving to the place where he spent his early years. He was born in Michigan's Upper Peninsula and lived there until his teenage years. His father, a forester, took a job as Woods Manager with Bowater Southern Paper Co. in Calhoun, and the family moved to Athens. ■



SOCIETY RECEIVES AWARD--The U.S. District Court and Court Historical Society received an Award of Distinction from the East Tennessee Historical Society at the ETHS annual meeting on May 3. The recognition was for the joint effort by the court and the Court Historical Society in researching, compiling and documenting the history of the \$1 million artwork in the Howard H. Baker Jr. U.S. Courthouse. Shown here at the award presentation are, from the left, Judge Varlan; Judge Phillips; artist Barry Spann; Don K. Ferguson, executive director of the Court Historical Society; and Arthur Seymour, president of the Court Historical Society.

PHOTO BY JACK WILLIAMS

About the Paintings

The large paintings shown in the accompanying photograph are part of a group of eight such paintings that adorn the walls of what has been the cafeteria area on the fourth floor of the Howard H. Baker Jr. U.S. Courthouse. The eight panels make up one large painting.

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THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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The cafeteria area will soon be converted into office space for the U.S. Attorney's Office, and dealing with the paintings will be a challenge.

They were installed in 1991, when the building was being completed by the original owner and developer, Whittle Communications. A crane hoisted the two largest panels to the fourth-floor level and in through an opening made by removing windows. They measure about 15 feet by 7 feet. The other panels are not quite as large.

The paintings will remain generally where they are, but they likely will have to be removed during the remodeling. In this photograph, that's the artist, **Barry Spann**, pointing upward as he discusses the project with **Jane Archer** of the U.S. Attorney's Office and **Johnathan Sitzlar** of GSA.

There are a number of similar paintings not quite as large in the chambers area of the courthouse and three on the first floor. In all, Whittle paid Spann a \$1 million commission for the artwork project.

It was these paintings, a series of mountain landscapes, that were the subject of the award the court and the Court Historical Society recently won. **Judge Thomas W. Phillips** had suggested that we learn more about the artist and the background of the artwork.

Spann, a Knoxville resident, was invited to have lunch with the judges. At that time, he presented the court with a typewritten, detailed history of how the project came about and all that went into it, with a listing of all the paintings and their sizes. Copies of that history have been placed in the Court Historical Society archives. The paintings were acquired as part of the building purchase.

The court and the Court Historical Society have won three previous awards in the East Tennessee Historical Society competition: In 2000 for the publishing of *Justice in the Valley*; in 2004 for displaying historical memorabilia in cabinets placed in the district's four courthouses; and in 2010 for acquiring and preserving the mural study that was used in the painting of the mural *Allegory of Chattanooga* on the wall of the third floor courtroom in Chattanooga. ■

MOUNTAIN LANDSCAPES

PHOTO BY DR. BALDWIN LEE

