

LETTERS FROM THE LIBRARY

NEWSLETTER OF THE STATE LAW LIBRARY OF MISSISSIPPI

“There shall be ... a library ... known as the state library”

An Act to provide for a State Library – General Laws, 1838

August 2025

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State Library Hours

Monday – Friday
8am – 5pm

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COA History on Display

The Library gathered historical items to display during the recent celebration of the 30th Anniversary of the Mississippi Court of Appeals in January. While not exhaustive, the display aimed to showcase the Court’s early days and members, remember those Judges who have since passed, and honor those currently serving.



Below is a sampling of items (1993-1995) displayed along with links in the event you’d like to read further.

[Editorial: Appellate court for Mississippi is a necessity, Sun Herald](#), April 01, 1993.

[Back on the street: State needs a Court of Appeals, Scott County Times](#), March 31, 1993.

[Appeals court badly needed in state, says Justice Roberts, The Clarksdale Press Register](#), February 02, 1994.

[Lawmakers OK intermediate court, Clarion-Ledger](#), March 31, 1993

Appeals court badly needed in state, says Justice Roberts

Number of cases up for review has doubled since '60s

BY BILL FOSTER
Managing Editor
Relief is on the way for processing hundreds of cases that now clog the Mississippi Supreme Court.

A new, five-member court of appeals will begin service in January 1995 and is expected to ease the state supreme court’s workload, State Supreme Court Justice James F. Roberts said.

Mississippi’s supreme court now reviews between 800 to 1,000 cases each year, compared to 300 to 400 annual cases 30 years ago, Roberts said.

The new state appeals court was created by the 1992 legislature and will review cases assigned to it by the nine-member supreme court, thus lessening the supreme court justices workload.

“I hope this new court will help with the backlog of cases now pending in the supreme court,” Roberts said.

state’s judicial system and explanation of his duties on the supreme court, Roberts said that the judicial system is “perhaps the least understood of all branches of government.”

However, he noted, public interest in and awareness of the judicial system seems to be increasing.

“As a trial judge I formed the belief that an individual cares little about what judge is presiding unless it’s the judge that’s presiding over a case they are personally involved



Rotarian Joe Gibbs (left) introduced State Supreme Court Justice James Roberts at Tuesday’s meeting of the Clarksdale Rotary Club. Roberts discussed the new Court of Appeals that

Let's Be Right...

★

On June 7th cast your vote for
Roger H. McMillin, Jr.
 for the new position of Judge of the Mississippi Court of Appeals
 in the First Congressional District.

- Private Law Practice in New Albany since 1977
- New Albany City Attorney
- 3rd District Bar Commissioner, Mississippi Bar 1986-89

ROGER H. McMILLIN, JR.
JUDGE
 MISSISSIPPI COURT OF APPEALS
 First Congressional District



...Right From The Start.

Paid for by Campaign to Elect Roger H. McMillin, Jr.

The Winona Times, June 02, 1994

PAID ADVERTISEMENT

**VOTE FOR
 MARY LIBBY
 PAYNE**
JUDGE
 COURT OF APPEALS
 POSITION TWO
 3rd Congressional District
 NO PAYNE/NO GAIN



MARY LIBBY PAYNE
 The MOST QUALIFIED candidate.
 Your BEST choice.

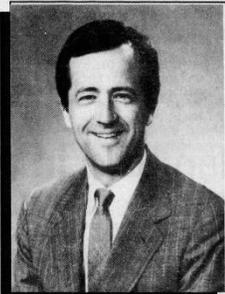
On November 8
VOTE FOR MARY LIBBY PAYNE
 Position TWO

Committee to Elect Mary Libby Payne Court of Appeals Judge / Lem Adams III, Brandon, MS Chairman / P. O. Box 6065 / Pearl, MS 39208 / 939-3194

The Clarion-Ledger, October 27, 1994

LESLIE SOUTHWICK

is a candidate for the
 Fourth District seat
 on the Mississippi
 Court of Appeals.



- **LESLIE SOUTHWICK** believes judges ought to **LISTEN!**
- **LESLIE SOUTHWICK** is **WALKING** the Fourth District so that he can **LISTEN** to **YOU!** He will walk from Magnolia to Jackson, and then from Natchez to Laurel.
- Come to the steps of City Hall at noon on Monday, August 22nd, and greet **LESLIE SOUTHWICK** as he walks through McComb. Talk to him about crime and other judicial issues.

LESLIE SOUTHWICK
Court of Appeals
Fourth District

Copy approved & paid for by friends to elect Leslie Southwick.

Enterprise-Journal, August 21, 1994

VOTE FOR

**Leslie D.
 KING**

**JUDGE OF THE COURT OF APPEALS
 2ND CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT**

Judges must be persons of learning and experience, who have the ability to apply the law with firmness and impartiality, while being fair and compassionate. They must have convictions and a willingness to fight for those convictions. I believe my training, experience and prior community service have demonstrated that I am suited to this task and I ask for your vote and support.

- A Greenville native, he has practiced law there since 1973 and has served continuously in the Mississippi House of Representatives since 1980 and is a former chairman of the Mississippi Legislative Black Caucus.
- He has served as Washington County Youth Court Counselor, Public Defender and Youth Court Prosecutor, and as Metcalfe Municipal Court Judge.
- He is a member of the Mississippi, Magnolia and Washington County Bar Associations; the Mississippi Trial Lawyers Association; the Association of Trial Lawyers of America; the National Council of School Board Attorneys and the Mississippi Council School Board Attorneys, of which he is currently a director.
- He was honored by the University of Mississippi (1994 Award of Distinction), Outstanding Young Men of America (1976 and 1985), Personalities of the South (1978) and numerous other organizations.
- He and his wife, the former Patricia Smith of Greenville, are the parents of two daughters and members of St. Matthew African Methodist Episcopal Church in Greenville.

Paid for by the committee to elect Leslie D. King, Judge of the Court of Appeals, 2nd Congressional District

The Vicksburg Post, June 06, 1994

THE CRIMINALS ARE ON THE STREETS...

*If you feel like a prisoner in your own home,
Oliver Diaz wants to do something about it!*

For seven years as a State Representative Oliver Diaz has listened and knows crime is our biggest concern.

As your conservative voice in Jackson, he has fought to abolish parole and plea bargains.

His strong stand against drug abuse, child abuse and white collar crimes has earned him the respect of the law enforcement community. Now,

Oliver Diaz wants to continue this fight against crime as your Judge on the Court of Appeals.



*On November 8th vote for Oliver Diaz and
take the criminals off the streets!*

OLIVER DIAZ
Judge Court of Appeals

PAID FOR BY THE COMMITTEE TO ELECT OLIVER DIAZ, JUDGE, COURT OF APPEALS

Sun Herald, November 06, 1994



**THOMAS A.
COLEMAN**
announces his candidacy for
**Mississippi Court of
Appeals Judge**
from the
1ST CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Thomas A. Coleman of Ackerman, Mississippi, a former District Attorney and Court Administrator for the Mississippi Supreme Court, has announced that he has qualified to run for Judge of the Mississippi Court of Appeals from the state's First Congressional District.

The Mississippi Court of Appeals was created last year to share the ever-increasing case load under which the Mississippi Supreme Court now labors by deciding those cases which the Mississippi Supreme Court would send to it. The new court is scheduled to begin work on January 9, 1995.

Dr. Felix Sutphin of Malthiston, Mississippi, former President of Wood College, serves as Chairman of the Coleman Election Committee; and Mrs. Jean Clark of Ackerman, Mississippi, widow of the late Steve Clark, former teacher at Amory High School and former principal of both Ackerman High School and Baldwin High School, serves as Treasurer of the Coleman Election Finance Committee.

A veteran of twenty years of private law practice in both his hometown of Ackerman and the state's capital city, Coleman served two years on active duty with the United States Army immediately after he graduated from the Ole Miss Law School, and in 1973 he received an Honorable Discharge from the Army Reserve with the rank of Captain.

From 1972 until 1976 he served as District Attorney for the State's Fifth Circuit Court District.

He served on the Mississippi Bar's Law Journal Committee in the late 1960's; and most recently he served for one year on the Mississippi Bar's Professionalism Committee by appointment from its then President, Alex A. Alston, of Jackson, Mississippi.

A member of the Episcopal Church of the Resurrection in Starkville, Mississippi, where he has twice served as its Vestry Clerk and has also served two three-year terms on its Vestry, Tom married Frances McLean of Jackson, Mississippi, on August 29, 1964. Frances has taught anatomy and physiology at Wood College, freshman math classes at Mississippi State University, and since fall of 1989, she has served as a teacher of computer assisted instruction in multiple subjects at both Ackerman and, later, Weir High Schools in Choctaw County.

They are the parents of five children, Jim, Robert, Dorothy, Dennis, and Lee, who range in age from 27 to 18 years.

A member of the Mississippi Bar since August 29, 1964, Coleman stated, "I offer my experience serving the Mississippi Supreme Court as its Court Administrator in 1992 and 1993. I fully appreciate the necessity for the organization of this new appellate court's support personnel to promote its efficient performance.

"As Judge I pledge to discharge this new Court's business by hard work dedicated to the fair but firm, impartial but strict, timely but not hasty, dispensation of justice in both civil and criminal cases. I will lay down the law - every time."

This political advertisement has been paid for by the candidate, Thomas A. Coleman.

The Webster Progress-Times, March 09, 1994

[10 judges sworn-in for new appeals court](#), *The Clarion Ledger*, January 04, 1995

[New Court of Appeals breaks up legal logjam](#), *Sun Herald*, February 24, 1995

[Court begins tackling task](#), *The Greenwood Commonwealth*, January 04, 1995

New court of appeals ready to tackle backlog of cases

BY GINA HOLLAND
Associated Press Writer

JACKSON -- The 10 members of a new court of appeals began its work Tuesday to help the state Supreme Court eliminate a backlog of cases.

In swearing-in ceremonies at the state Capitol, the new judges, elected last fall, pledged swifter justice and speedier appeals.

"We're going to speed up the process so that families, businesses see some finality to their problems," Judge Leslie King of Greenville said.

Two judges were elected from each of the state's congressional districts. They will serve staggered terms.

The appeals court will handle mostly appeals of civil cases and some minor criminal appeals. The state Supreme Court will keep jurisdiction over death penalty cases.

Cases appealed to the high court now face an average three-year wait.

Judge John Fraiser Jr. of Greenwood, who will be the chief of the court, promised the Supreme Court justices and a crowd of about 300 people that the appeals court will "bring our judicial system into the 21st Century."

Other judges on the court are: Thomas Coleman of Ackerman, Roger McMillin Jr. of New Albany, Billy Bridges of Brandon, Mary Libby Payne of Pearl, Leslie Southwick of Jackson, Frank Barber of Jackson, Oliver Diaz of D'Iberville, and James Thomas of Biloxi.

The Legislature set up the court but has not approved funding for staff. Lt. Gov. Eddie Briggs said he expects lawmakers this session to fund the court.



Members of the new Mississippi Court of Appeals raise their hands to be sworn in during the investiture of judges at the Mississippi State Capitol Tuesday. Judges visible with hands raised from left are: Thomas A. Coleman, John J. Fraiser, Billy G. Bridges, Leslie H. Southwick, Oliver E. Diaz Jr., and James E. Thomas. -AP Photo

[New court of appeals ready to tackle backlog of cases](#), *The Clarksdale Press Register*, January 04, 1995



Signing Ceremony For Historic 1993 Court Reform Act

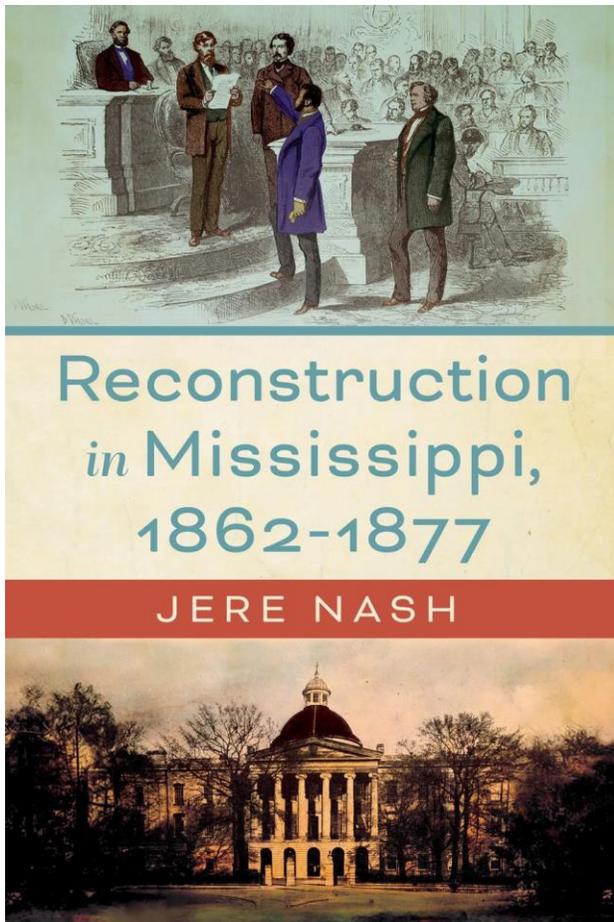
The Mississippi Lawyer, Vol. 39, No. 6, June-July 1993

	DECIDED FEB - 7 1995
<p>IN THE COURT OF APPEALS OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI NO. 91-KA-00726 COA</p>	95/001
STANLEY LAMAR AYERS	APPELLANT
v.	
STATE OF MISSISSIPPI	APPELLEE
<p>THIS OPINION IS NOT DESIGNATED FOR PUBLICATION AND MAY NOT BE CITED, PURSUANT TO M.R.A.P. 35-B</p>	
<p>TRIAL JUDGE: COURT FROM WHICH APPEALED: ATTORNEY(S) FOR APPELLANT: ATTORNEY(S) FOR APPELLEE:</p>	<p>Hon. George C. Carlson Jr. Tate County Circuit Court Robert M. Ryan Mary Margaret Bowers Assistant Attorney General Armed Robbery Convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment in the custody of the MDOC</p>
<p>BEFORE THOMAS, P.J., PAYNE AND SOUTHWICK, JJ.</p> <p>THOMAS, P.J., FOR THE COURT:</p> <p>Stanley Lamar Ayers was tried, convicted, and sentenced to life imprisonment for the armed robbery of the Northwest Branch of the Peoples Bank in Senatobia, Mississippi. Ayers appeals to this Court assigning six (6) alleged reversible errors:</p>	
<p>I. WHETHER THE TRIAL COURT ERRED IN ALLOWING THE PROSECUTOR TO INTRODUCE EVIDENCE OF OTHER CRIMES OF THE DEFENDANT.</p> <p>II. WHETHER THE TRIAL COURT ERRED IN NOT GRANTING A MISTRIAL DURING THE CROSS-EXAMINATION OF THE DEFENDANT WHEREBY THE PROSECUTOR INFORMED THE TRIAL JURY THAT THE DEFENDANT HAD COURT APPOINTED COUNSEL.</p>	

[First Opinion](#), issued February 07, 1995

New Publications acknowledge Library for its Assistance

Two books published within the last year include the State Law Library in their Acknowledgments for the Library staff's assistance in providing reference services.



Reconstruction in Mississippi, 1862-1877, by Jere Nash (2025). The Library's collection of legislative journals and older Mississippi Codes were utilized by Nash.

From [University Press of Mississippi](#):

"Throughout the ten-year period following the end of the Civil War, Mississippians responded to broader movements in the country, to changes in the national and international economy, and to congressional and presidential initiatives as they worked to recover from the devastation of war and pursue new expressions of freedom. *Reconstruction in Mississippi, 1862-1877* is a compelling account of how Black Mississippians embraced this freedom and how white Mississippians could not.

Recording the mechanics of how the Confederate states were allowed to resume representation in Congress, the restoration of civil governments, and the political freedoms the formerly enslaved people acquired, *Reconstruction in Mississippi, 1862-1877* documents the ways economic freedoms, such as the acquisition of land and the

negotiation of fair labor contracts, evolved. Jere Nash begins this exploration with how the formerly enslaved men and women changed the political landscape for Abraham Lincoln by taking matters into their own hands as the Union Army moved into Mississippi in 1862. Nash then traces the federal occupation of the state, the adoption of the infamous Black Codes by the state legislature in 1865, the drafting and approval of the new constitution in 1869, the selection of the first two Black men ever to serve in the United States Senate, and the use of terror and fraud by white Democrats to steal the election of 1875 and regain political power. *Reconstruction in Mississippi, 1862-1877* is a detailed and comprehensive history of this turbulent and eventful era in Mississippi."

Beyond the Green Widow: Consequences of the Piney Woods Creek Murders of 1921, by Juanita Green Hollinghead and Sherye S. Green (2024). Referred to the Library by former Justice Randy Pierce, Green, with the Library's assistance, researched the laws in place at the time of the Piney Woods Creed Murders.

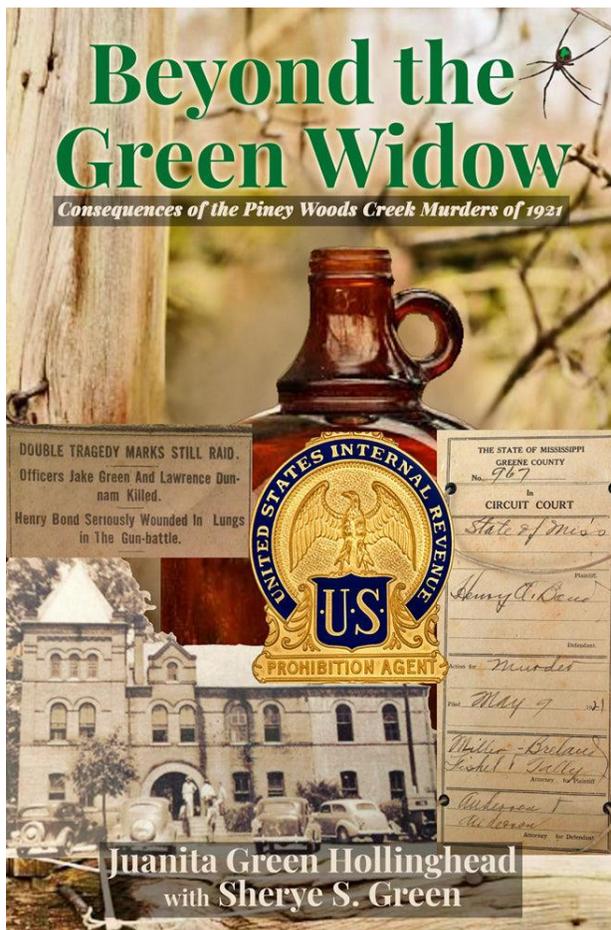
From [Sunbury Press](#):

“Prohibition began as a well-intentioned and earnest effort by politicians and temperance movement leaders to stem the tide of evils threatening Americans due to the use of alcohol. However, none could have envisioned how differently and disastrously the period would end. Former President Herbert Hoover referred to Prohibition as "the great social and economic experiment." The good intentions inspiring these thirteen years were juxtaposed with the rise of the very criminal acts that the Volstead Act sought to curtail.

The evils of the Prohibition period rocked the citizens of two sleepy little Mississippi towns, Leakesville and Richton, to their cores. U.S. Treasury Special Agent Jacob "Jake" Francis Green

and Richton Town Marshal Lawrence Dunnam were gunned down on April Fool's Day of 1921 when attempting to shut down an illegal moonshine still and arrest its operators. Little did the officers know that four men were waiting to murder them. Someone had tipped off the moonshiners. From that day on, the trajectory of the lives of members of these two families took a markedly different path.

As Jake Green's youngest grandchild, author Juanita Green Hollinghead's quest for the truth led her on a journey of discovery that became her life's mission. The facts she has uncovered are astounding as she brings to life this riveting account of the true-crime event that shaped her family's history. Perhaps other survivors want to understand better the process of how and where to find clues to the truth of their families' tragic events.”



Court Custom a Century Ago

As the United States Supreme Court's term winds down each June, ScotusBlog.com sees an uptick in web traffic on Opinion days. While oral arguments are livestreamed, SCOTUS has, for now, not adopted livestreaming of Opinion announcements. To hear the pronouncement of Opinions, one would have to be inside the Supreme Court chambers.

Our Mississippi Supreme Court, at one time, also announced Opinions from the bench. Here is an historical sketch from the *Clarion Ledger*, May 21, 1926.

SUPREME COURT A DIGNIFIED BODY

Some of the Customs of the Highest Tribunal in In Mississippi

"Oyez, oyez, oyez," the cry with which the Mississippi supreme court is called to order, is as ancient as English jurisprudence itself, and is a component part of the dignified assemblage. The cry was used by heralds of mediaeval times to draw the attention of the multitudes to an official announcement.

Its original meaning has been preserved from antiquity, and is equivalent to "hear ye" or "attend." The usage of this word is almost uniform in assembling courts throughout the English speaking world.

The sitting of the Mississippi supreme court is extremely dignified and appropriate for the important function it performs. Lacking the pomp and splendor of the royal assemblages of former times, the court is pervaded with an atmosphere of seriousness and importance, such as would be expected in the presence of the goddess Justice herself.

The supreme court justices enter just before the court opens. The marshal raps sharply and the assemblage stands while the judges enter from an ante-chamber and take their places on the bench. Attendants of the court remain standing until the justices are seated.

The marshal formally opens the court by his cry "oyez, oyez, oyez" (repeated three times) announcing that the court is now sitting.

W. J. Buck, clerk of the court, reads the list of decisions and then awaits the opinions and comments of the justices. Although not the case in all states, Mississippi supreme court judges read their opinions from the bench.

Reading of the decisions by the judges is always attended by quietness and attentiveness. Those who arrive at the court a few minutes late tip-toe to seats and make as little noise as possible. Those present are usually interested in some case before the court, although a number of non-interested attorneys are sometimes noted. The attorney general's office is usually represented, either by the officer himself or an assistant.

In important cases involving the constitutionality of laws or other grave questions, and in instances where the death sentence is imposed, the court sits en banc. Otherwise it is divided into two divisions, occupying the bench on alternate weeks.

In the event of an en banc sitting, the judges of the division that is not scheduled for the week leave the chamber after the en banc decisions are handed down and the other division continues with the work.

There is seldom a meeting of the court that some members of the state legislature are not noted among the attendants. Many of the legislators are lawyers and interested in cases. Almost all of them manifest interest in the construing of the laws which they aided in formulating.

Chief Justice Sidney Smith presides over the en banc sitting of the court and over Division A. Justices Cook and McGowan are members of Division A with the chief justice.

Justice J. B. Holden is presiding justice of Division B, with Justices G. H. Etheridge and W. D. Anderson as members.

The division of the court has done much to speed the work and has materially reduced the time between conviction and the actual serving of sentences. It almost amounts to having two supreme courts and has enabled the court to keep up with the large number of appeal cases.

The supreme court chamber occupies the east wing of the capitol on the second floor and is directly beneath the senate chamber. In the other end of the building are the private offices of the judges and the consultation rooms of the two divisions. These rooms are adjoining the state library and there is easy access to the state legal library, in which may be

found all United States supreme court decisions, all Mississippi reports and the reports from practically all of the states of the Union.

The prohibition laws and violations thereof bring many cases before the court today. Its functions are increasing and an efficient record for disposition of cases has been made this year.

Salaries of supreme court judges were increased by the legislature of 1926 from \$6,000 to \$7,500 per year.

Jimmy Robertson Collection

The family of the late Justice James L. Robertson has donated items to the Library. Items include pictures, correspondence, newsclippings, and much more from Robertson's time as editor of the *Daily Mississippian*, Harvard law student, Ole Miss law professor, and member of the Mississippi Supreme Court.

The Library plans to digitize certain items and make available online.

Right: Newly sworn-in Justice Robertson takes his place among his colleagues (1983).

Below: Members of the Mississippi Supreme Court in the Old Supreme Court Chambers, Mississippi Capitol.



Circa 1988 Joe Zuccaro Roble Griffin Arnis Hawkins Lenore Prather Jimmy Robertson



Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters

HOLY SPIRIT CONVENT
1133 CLOISTER STREET
JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI 39202
601/352-7298

January 14, 1983

Dear Mr. Robertson,

Congratulations!

*I was so happy to hear of your
appointment! The Governor could not
have chosen a better person for the job.*

*God's blessings in all your
deliberations through the years ahead!*

Sincerely,

Sr. Patricia Landreman

Above: Letter from Sr. Patricia Landreman congratulating Robertson on his appointment (1983).