
In the Corridors of the Supreme Court: Historic Photographs

On the walls of the Supreme Court's private hallways are hundreds of framed photographs and images. In addition to 114 formal portraits — one of each justice — there are group photos of the justices (in chambers and on the bench), and photos memorializing special sessions held throughout the state. Intermixed with these are scenes from San Francisco and Los Angeles in

the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, copies of the original architectural plans for the court's current headquarters at 350 McAllister Street in San Francisco, maps, and memorabilia. Most of these items are never seen by members of the public. In this and future issues, we will share a representative sampling of the court's historic hallway images and photographs. ★

THE JUSTICES AT SPECIAL SESSIONS HELD IN COLTON HALL, MONTEREY, 1959 AND 1970



The court is pictured at a special session held September 1-2, 1959, commemorating the 110th anniversary of the signing of the first California Constitution at Colton Hall. LEFT TO RIGHT: Raymond E. Peters; Homer R. Spence; Roger J. Traynor; Phil S. Gibson, C.J.; B. Rey Schauer; Marshall F. McComb; and Thomas P. White.



At this May 1, 1970 special session commemorating Law Day at Colton Hall are shown, LEFT TO RIGHT: Louis H. Burke, Mathew O. Tobriner; Marshall F. McComb; Donald R. Wright, C.J.; Raymond E. Peters; Stanley Mosk; and Raymond L. Sullivan. According to the minutes of the court, immediately prior to the session, "[o]n the balcony of historic Colton Hall, in view of many persons, Acting Chief Justice Mosk administered the oath of office to the Honorable Donald R. Wright as the twenty-fourth Chief Justice of California."

IN THE CORRIDORS OF THE SUPREME COURT



THE JUSTICES AT SPECIAL SESSION HELD IN COLTON HALL, MONTEREY, 1979

At this October 17, 1979 special session at Colton Hall are shown, LEFT TO RIGHT: Wiley W. Manuel; William P. Clark, Jr.; Mathew O. Tobriner; Rose Elizabeth Bird, C.J.; Phil S. Gibson, former C.J.; Stanley Mosk; Frank K. Richardson; and Frank C. Newman. According to the minutes of the court, "The Chief Justice announced that this session would be dedicated to former Chief Justice Phil. S. Gibson."



THE STATE BUILDING, SAN FRANCISCO, 1924

In 1923 the court moved to its current home and headquarters, depicted here — 350 McAllister Street, San Francisco. Later renamed the Earl Warren Building, it is part of the present Ronald M. George State Office Complex.



CLEMENCY HEARING, *IN RE BILLINGS*, COURTROOM, STATE BUILDING,
SAN FRANCISCO, JULY 21–AUGUST 20, 1930

This photo depicts the justices during the Billings clemency hearing (see accompanying description), in the courtroom at 350 McAllister Street. Sitting immediately below the bench and without robes, are LEFT TO RIGHT: John W. Preston, John W. Shenk, Emmet Seawell, unknown, William H. Waste, C.J., W.H. Langdon, and Jesse W. Curtis. (John E. Richards, also a member of the court at that time, is not pictured.) In the foreground are witnesses, their counsel, and members of the press and public.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SAN FRANCISCO HISTORY CENTER,
SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY.



San Francisco Police Officers guarding entrance to the Supreme Court courtroom during the Billings clemency hearing. The site looks very much the same today.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SAN FRANCISCO HISTORY CENTER,
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**THE “PREPAREDNESS DAY” BOMBING
AND THE BILLINGS HEARING**

Labor leaders Tom Mooney and Warren K. Billings were tried, convicted, and sentenced to death for the 1916 dynamite bombing that killed ten and injured many at San Francisco’s “Preparedness Day” parade on Market Street. The convictions aroused national

attention, resulting in a commission, appointed by President Wilson, which concluded that the prosecution’s verdict was “discredited.” Thereafter the sentences were commuted to life imprisonment, and both Mooney and Billings requested pardons from a succession of California Governors.

Under the California Constitution, a Governor may not pardon a twice convicted felon unless four members of the Supreme Court recommend such a pardon. Billings (but not Mooney) had a prior conviction as a felon, and Governor Young exercised his discretion to forward Billings’ request to the justices of the court, who “sitting as a non-judicial fact-finding Commission,” held an extraordinary session in the courtroom both at 350 McAllister Street, and also in Folsom Prison, from July 21 to August 20, 1930. The hearings, comprising nearly 2,000 pages in three volumes of reporters’ transcripts, featured questions by the justices and testimony by Billings and numerous other witnesses.

The justices voted 6-1 to withhold the recommendation for a pardon. Their published response to the Governor’s request generated numerous and extensive separate opinions. (*In re Billings* (1930) 210 Cal. 669-785.) Mooney was ultimately pardoned by Governor Olson in 1939. Billings was released from prison that same year, and finally pardoned in 1961. ★