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**JOINT SECRETARY OF STATE & SUPREME COURT RESTORATION PROJECT OF
ILLINOIS ATTORNEY OATHS COMPLETE**

Leads to historically significant discoveries

A long-term restoration project between the Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White's office and the Supreme Court of Illinois has led to the discovery of some rare, historic documents involving famous and infamous Illinois attorneys.

"I am pleased with the results of this project, which sought to restore and preserve a unique facet of our state's history," said White, who also serves as State Archivist. "Since 2010, the State Archives Department has been restoring attorney oaths for the Supreme Court. Approximately 142,000 oaths, some preceding the Civil War, have been restored."

Illinois Supreme Court Chief Justice Lloyd A. Karmeier said, "The Court recently had the opportunity to tour the State Archives and see, firsthand, the efforts being made there to conserve these important documents. Attorney oaths offer scholars, educators and students a very tangible, but very fragile connection to the lawyers who have helped shape our laws and the legal profession over the past two centuries. The Court is extremely grateful to the Archives for everything it has done to ensure that this irreplaceable record of the legal profession's history is preserved and protected for future generations. The work done by the Archives' staff has been nothing less than extraordinary."

Signing an oath is the final step an attorney must take before practicing law in Illinois. The oath stipulates that the newly minted attorney will support the Constitutions of the United States and of Illinois and faithfully execute the duties of an attorney.

"In 2009, the Supreme Court was preparing for a complete restoration of its building and Juleann Hornyak, then clerk of the Court, began the task of determining where court records would be stored during the restoration," said Carolyn Taft Grosboll, current clerk of the Court. "Among the records were these historic oaths, so we contacted the State Archives. The State Archives graciously agreed not only to store the oaths for the Court, but also to restore them."

The oaths had been kept in the basement of the Supreme Court Building and while most were in good condition, some had deteriorated or had been affected by mold or water damage. Archives' conservators were able to restore almost all of the damaged oaths while also flat filing the rest of the oaths and placing them in Archival folders and boxes.

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Among the oaths in the Supreme Court's collection are those for famed attorney Clarence Darrow, former President Barack Obama and first lady Michelle Robinson Obama, former U.S. Supreme Court Justices John Paul Stevens and Arthur Goldberg, 12 U.S. Senators, 12 Illinois governors, 59 Illinois Supreme Court justices and five Chicago mayors. Oaths from attorneys licensed before the Civil War, such as Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas, were incorporated into the law license itself; therefore, no separate oaths for Lincoln and Douglas are included in this collection.

Additional oaths that were discovered and restored are associated with the first person killed in the Civil War, a long-term speaker of the United States House of Representatives and a presidential assassin.

"In 1860, Elmer Ellsworth began the study of law in the law offices of Abraham Lincoln and William Herndon," said John Lupton of the Illinois Supreme Court Historic Preservation Commission. "He became a favorite of both Abraham and Mary Lincoln. When the Civil War broke out his military unit moved to Washington, D.C. In May 1861 he was killed while removing a Confederate flag from the Marshall House in Alexandria, Virginia, right across from the District of Columbia. Ellsworth is often considered the first major Union casualty of the Civil War."

The oath is dated February 14, 1861. Until the oath was discovered, there had been no evidence that Ellsworth had completed his legal studies or had become a lawyer prior to leaving for the war.

While Ellsworth is considered a 19th century hero, another oath restored was for a 19th century villain. Charles Guiteau, who would gain notoriety for assassinating President James Garfield in 1881, signed his Illinois attorney oath in 1868. Guiteau's file includes a certificate attesting to Guiteau's good moral character and fitness to be an attorney.

Also located in the severely damaged oaths is an oath for Joseph Cannon of Danville. Cannon served as U.S. speaker of the House from 1903 to 1911. He is considered the most powerful speaker in American history, and the Cannon House Office Building in Washington, D.C., is named after him.

White noted that all of the restored oaths will be stored in the temperature and humidity controlled Margaret Cross Norton Archives Building in the Capitol Complex in Springfield.

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