A photograph of the Supreme Court of Rhode Island building. The building is a large, multi-story structure made of red brick with a prominent clock tower. The clock tower has a white face with black hands and numbers, and a gold-colored top section with a weather vane. In the foreground, there are white flowering tree branches on the left and a stone building with columns on the right. The sky is clear and blue.

The Supreme Court

OF RHODE ISLAND

Front cover and back cover photography by Holly Hitchcock.



Supreme Court of Rhode Island
Frank Licht Judicial Complex
250 Benefit Street
Providence, RI 02903

December 2021

Dear fellow citizen,

Founded by Roger Williams in 1636 as a haven of religious freedom, Rhode Island has a rich history and lasting tradition of equal justice for all. Williams was one of the earliest advocates for complete separation of church and state, a doctrine that provided the foundation of our American system of government today. Long before he sailed to the Colonies, Williams as a young man came to the attention of Lord Edward Coke, a brilliant lawyer and Chief Justice of England. Lord Coke took an interest in Williams' education, steering him toward distinguished schools that included Cambridge University. Today, high above the Rhode Island Supreme Court bench are inscribed Lord Coke's words to the King of England, *Non Sub Homine Sed Sub Deo Et Lege*, or "Not under man but under God and law." The story behind this quotation can be found in these pages. Its spirit is tightly woven into the fabric of Rhode Island justice. Only through law and its fair application are we a free, just and secure people.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Paul A. Suttell". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Paul A. Suttell
Chief Justice of Rhode Island

Rhode Island Judicial History

The first era: 1636 to 1647

Roger Williams settled Providence in 1636, and the town's first judicial system relied on arbitration to resolve disputes. Dissatisfied petitioners could appeal arbitration decisions in a "trial" before a general town meeting.

The town meeting functioned at all levels of government during this period, including judicial matters.

Settlements followed in Portsmouth, Newport and Warwick, rounding out the four original towns of the new colony. Each established its own laws and methods for adjudicating them. Portsmouth and Newport elected a judge as their highest government official. Elders were elected in Portsmouth to assist the judge, but in all towns the officials ultimately were accountable to the general town meeting.

The second era: 1647 to 1663

Under a charter obtained by Roger Williams in 1644, the four original towns united to standardize certain governmental and legal practices among the settlements. By 1647, they established a code of laws and a Constitution based largely on English precedents. These were among the most detailed in 17th century Colonial America. They included a remarkably advanced "bill of rights," which scholars today say were even more advanced and liberal than the Magna Carta of England. Under the new Constitution, a president and four assistants, one from each town, comprised the general officers of the new colonial government. These same officials were the judges that made up the General Court of Trials, the precursor of today's Rhode Island court system. While the towns were permitted to have their own courts to deal with local matters, the General

Court of Trials was empowered to hear the most serious crimes and issues, as well as appeals from the local courts. The General Court of Trials held sessions in each town as necessary. This system existed until King Charles II issued a new Royal Charter in 1663.

The third era: 1663 to 1842

Under the Royal Charter of 1663, a governor, deputy governor and ten assistants were elected to fulfill the dual roles of General Assembly members and judges on the General Court of Trials. The latter became the Superior Court of Judicature, Court of Assize and General Gaol Delivery. The court met exclusively in Newport, which at the time was Rhode Island's preeminent town.

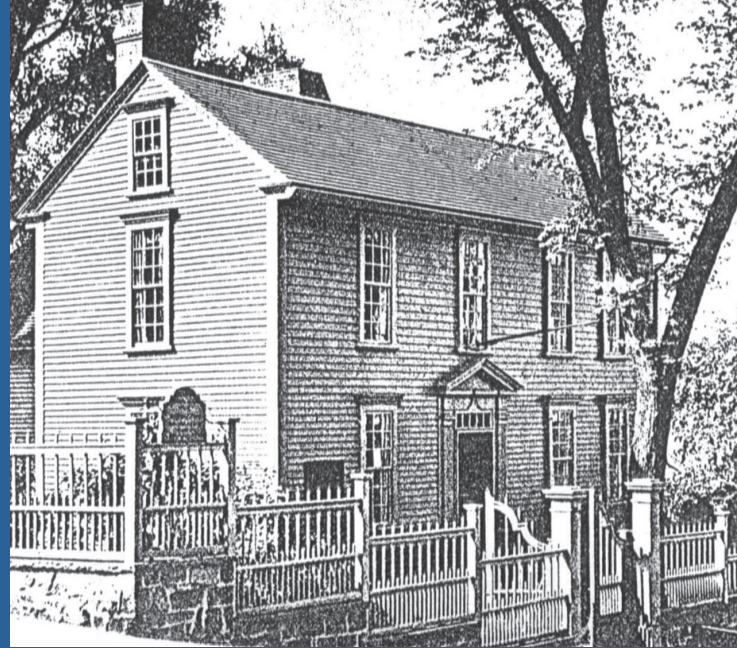
In 1729, the General Assembly divided the colony into three counties – Newport, Providence and Kings. Courts of Common Pleas were established to hear civil matters and General Sessions of the Peace were established to hear criminal cases. Judges were elected from the counties they served. Appeals from these county courts were heard in Superior Court, which, in effect, was the General Assembly. As populations grew, it became impractical for the Superior Court to sit only in Newport. In 1747, the General Assembly selected five judges – a chief and four associates – to hold court twice a year in each county. In 1790, the General Assembly passed a law preventing political office holders from simultaneously serving as judges. The awkward name of the Superior Court of Judicature, Court of Assize and General Gaol Delivery remained until 1798, when it was changed to the Supreme Judicial Court.

STEPHEN HOPKINS: *Chief Justice, Governor, Signer of the Declaration of Independence*

Directly across Hopkins Street from the Licht Judicial Complex, at the corner of Benefit Street, lies the Stephen Hopkins House. It was purchased around 1743 by Stephen Hopkins (1707-1785), who was Rhode Island's third Chief Justice, Royal Governor, member of both Continental Congresses, signer of the Declaration of Independence and the first chancellor of Brown University. While representing the Town of Scituate in the General Assembly, he was elected Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Hopkins served as Chief Justice from 1751 to 1756 and again from 1770 to 1776, the year in which he became one of 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence in Philadelphia.

After buying the house, Hopkins added on to it and pursued his life as public servant, shipbuilder and merchant. George Washington stayed in the house in 1776 and 1781. The house has been moved twice from its original location at the bottom of the hill at Hopkins and South Main streets. It was first moved halfway up the hill to land that is now occupied by the Licht Judicial Complex. When the courthouse was built from 1928 to 1933, the Stephen Hopkins House was moved to its current location, where it stands in a state of dignified restoration. It is maintained as a museum, owned and managed by the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America. It was declared a National Historic Landmark in 1978.



The fourth era: 1842 to present

This period began with passage of a new “people’s constitution.” Under this document, full and final adjudicatory power, which had been the domain of the General Assembly, was established as a court function. The new Constitution, for the first time, also clearly divided state government into executive, legislative and judicial branches. Until then, the General Assembly had exercised almost unlimited power, unencumbered by the safeguards of checks and balances that exist today. The General Assembly not only enacted laws, established courts and elected judges, but it also had the power to review, revise or reverse any judicial opinion or decision. In short, until 1842, the concept of an independent and co-equal judicial branch of government was nonexistent in Rhode Island. In 1843, the Supreme Judicial Court’s name was shortened once again to simply the Supreme Court.

In 1856, a major blow for judicial independence was struck in the historic decision in *Taylor v. Place*. With that decision, all judicial power was “vested in one supreme court, and in such inferior courts as the general assembly may, from time to time, ordain and establish.” From that decision forward, the General Assembly could not lawfully review, revise or reverse judicial decisions.

The Supreme Court during this period consisted of six Justices – including the Chief Justice – and later seven Justices, whose work was split into the Appellate Division and the Common Pleas Division. In 1905, Rhode Island’s comprehensive Court and Practice Act created the Superior Court for general trial jurisdiction and it recast the Supreme Court as a five-member appellate court, which it remains today.

Rhode Island’s District Court had its roots in 1886, when the General Assembly divided the state into 12 judicial districts and appointed part-time judges to decide certain limited civil and criminal cases without juries in each of those districts.

Family Court was established in 1944 as Rhode Island Juvenile Court. It dealt exclusively with matters relating to minors. In 1961, however, the authority of this court was extended to include divorce and all other domestic matters. To reflect this broader mission, its name was changed to the Rhode Island Family Court.

As part of a sweeping reform of the workers’ compensation system in 1990, the General Assembly created the Worker’s Compensation Court to hear and decide disputes.

In 1999, the legislature revamped the state’s traffic court system, creating the Rhode Island Traffic Tribunal and moving jurisdiction from the Executive Branch to the Judicial Branch.

While the courts have enjoyed judicial independence as the third branch of government, they did not have true independence on administrative matters until enactment of Budget Article 45 in 2004. Prior to its passage, Rhode Island’s Governor was able to modify the Judiciary’s budget before passing it along to the General Assembly, the appropriating authority. Budget Article 45 ensured that the Judiciary could determine policy and spending for court priorities within its appropriated amount.



THE FIRST PROVIDENCE COUNTY COURTHOUSE

Designed by Providence architects Stone and Carpenter, the courthouse was built from 1875 to 1877 at the corner of Benefit and College streets, site of the Old Town House. It was built of brownstone, brick and granite. Because it was the first structure erected for court use, Chief Justice Thomas Durfee remarked at the dedication that “this edifice marks a new era in the forensic history of the state.” It housed the Supreme Court and the Court of Common Pleas until the need for space forced the Supreme Court to temporary quarters a block away. The county courthouse was demolished in 1930 as its replacement was being built.

The first Providence County Courthouse, dedicated December 18, 1877

What then-Supreme Court Chief Justice Thomas Durfee called “the first house ever built exclusively for the courts” was erected on historic ground at the southwest corner of Benefit and College streets from 1875 to 1877. The structure signified that the courts had outgrown their “ancient accommodations” and that court business had greatly and permanently increased.

The site, known as the Old Town House lot, covers parts of four of the original group of “home lots” turned over to the first proprietors of Providence by grant or deed from Roger Williams, founder of Rhode Island. It was in this neighborhood that Roger Williams, known for his sense of justice and love of freedom, served essentially as its first judge. He settled disputes between his fellow townsmen, between them and the Indians, and between the Indians themselves.

Before the courthouse was built, the site had been used for public purposes for more than a century. A Congregational Church built in 1723 was purchased by the town in 1794 and used as a town house and police station. An act of the General Assembly condemned the structure for construction of the new courthouse, and ground was broken on July 30, 1875. The cornerstone was laid by the Grand Lodge of Masons on May 15, 1876, and a bronze chest was placed inside.

The structure was based on the modern French Gothic order of architecture and building it into the hill

presented construction difficulties. It was considered one of the finest examples of the architectural style in its time. The building’s cost, including furniture, was \$253,253.70. It was completed within budget.

Seldom, said Chief Justice Durfee during his remarks at the 1877 dedication, had justice had a worthier temple. He expected it to “endure for ages” and imagined aloud what memories, traditions and events would be chronicled within its walls over the next century or two.

It was not to be. Among the many spectators gathered at the dedication that day was a 10-year-old boy named Theodore Francis Green, whose grandfather, Walter S. Burgess, was a Justice of the Supreme Court. Almost 56 years later in 1933, that boy was Governor Theodore Francis Green, who presided over the dedication of a new and much larger Providence County Courthouse on the very same site.

The second Providence County Courthouse, dedicated September 28, 1933

In remarks at this dedication, Governor Theodore Francis Green recalled being present when the first Providence County Courthouse was dedicated in 1877. He was “a mere boy” at the time, the grandson of Supreme Court Justice Walter S. Burgess. Governor Green noted that the former building “was considered not only adequate for that time but fit to last indefinitely.”

But as the years passed, the inadequacy of the first courthouse became increasingly evident. Additional judges were appointed to accommodate the growing congestion in the courts, but courtrooms were scarce. The priceless collection of the State Law Library was housed in cramped quarters on the top floor. The Supreme Court had long been forced into a separate building a block away at Angell, Benefit and Waterman streets.

A commission selected a block of land that stretched behind and around the old courthouse, bounded by

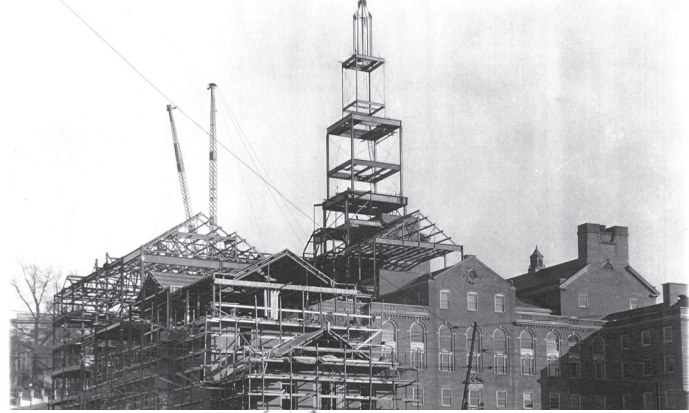
South Main, College, Benefit and Hopkins streets. The additional land cost just under a half-million dollars. The Providence architectural firm of Jackson, Robertson & Adams was chosen for the design. Construction lasted from 1928 to 1933, with the building erected in two phases – north and south – so that one half could be built before demolition of the old courthouse took place.

Renamed the Licht Judicial Complex after former Superior Court Associate Justice and later Governor Frank Licht in 1987, shortly after an extensive rehabilitation, the courthouse is considered one of the

TEMPORARY QUARTERS

When space was needed at the Providence County Courthouse, the Supreme Court moved to this temporary location, seen in a postcard, a block away at the intersection of Benefit, Waterman and Angell streets. The building no longer stands. When the second Providence County Courthouse was finished, the Supreme Court moved in.





THE SECOND PROVIDENCE COUNTY COURTHOUSE

The current structure was built in phases, south to north, from 1928 to 1933. The first courthouse was demolished midway through construction, when part of the new building was completed.

outstanding examples of neo-Georgian architecture in the United States. It is often studied and visited by students of architecture and preservationists. It was extremely unusual at the time to construct a building of that size into a hill. It was one of the first buildings in the country in which people could enter at ground level on five different floors. Today, public entry has been restricted to South Main Street on the first floor and Benefit Street on the fifth floor due to security considerations.

The exterior of the building is comprised of more than thirty types of stone and marble brought to Rhode Island from the finest quarries in the United States and from numerous foreign countries.

The interior of the courthouse features granite mined in Westerly, Rhode Island. The courthouse has more than 200,000 square feet of office and courtroom space. There are courtrooms and chambers for the Presiding Justice of the Superior Court and 16 Associate Justices and Magistrates, plus the Supreme Court courtroom and chambers for each of the five Supreme Court Justices. Each of the Superior Court courtrooms is unique in design and décor.

“We now admire the unique beauty of this new building,” Governor Green said at the 1933 dedication. “Its modern New England colonial architecture is not only picturesque but impressive. It, too, will be regarded as one of the best examples of its style. We believe that it will be so considered and that it will endure for generations; but who can tell? The former courthouse which it replaces was expected to last for much longer than it did.”

Nearly 90 years after its dedication, the second Providence County Courthouse – now the Licht Judicial Complex – stands as evidence of the excellence of the choices made by those charged with that task. Rhode Islanders have reason to feel proud of the facilities, which to this day are regularly maintained and upgraded under the direction of Chief Justice Paul A. Suttell, for the administration of justice provided to the public.



Exterior views of the Providence County Courthouse, with the World War II monument in the foreground, top. Above, from left, columns at the South Main Street entrance, the Benefit Street entrance, and the South Main Street courtyard.

The Supreme Court courtroom

The courtroom in the Supreme Court on the seventh floor of the Licht Judicial Complex is considered one of the most elegant in the country. The beautiful wood paneling is made of hand-carved Philippine mahogany. The columns that grace its walls are classic Roman-Georgian columns that mirror those at both entrances of the building. The columns in the Supreme Court make the courtroom unique, because it was intended to be the showpiece of the courthouse.



The Supreme Court bench with the Chief Justice's chair in the center.

The architects placed this room so that through its north windows was seen a striking vista of the State House topping its distant hill, symbolism that links the building where Rhode Island laws are enacted and the building where those laws are sometimes tested.

The Chief Justice occupies the center of the five chairs on the Supreme Court bench. Seating for the other four Justices is by seniority, with the senior Justice sitting to the immediate left of the Chief Justice as you face the bench. The remaining Justices alternate to the right and left by seniority, with the newest member of the court sitting on the far right as you face the bench.



◦NON SVB HOMINE SED SVB DEO ET LEGE◦

Above the bench where the five Justices of the Supreme Court sit, the following words are engraved: Non Sub Homine Sed Sub Deo Et Lege. This Latin phrase is translated as “Not under man but under God and Law.”

This phrase was spoken in an exchange between Lord Edward Coke, Chief Justice of the English Court of Common Pleas, and King James I of England in the early 17th century.

Lord Coke had angered the king by issuing writs of prohibition against the Ecclesiastical Church Courts such as the Court of Star Chamber and the Court of High Commission. The king ordered all of the judges in England to appear before him to discuss the writs. The judges felt that the writs were necessary to prevent the Church from deciding civil or secular cases.

The king in exasperation asked the group in Latin, “Do you contend the king is subject to the law?”

This notion was so radical at that time that all the judges simply fell to their knees. Lord Coke, however, raised his head and answered, “Non sub homine sed sub deo et lege,” indicating that the king was subject to God and to the law. As we would say today, no man, not even a judge or king, is above the law.

Lord Coke, incidentally, was a patron and mentor for American theologian and dissident Roger Williams, founder of Rhode Island, and assisted with his education. American patriots John Adams and Patrick Henry argued from Coke treatises to support their revolutionary positions against England in the 1770s.

In the middle of the courtroom, there is a mahogany rail that divides the room in half. This rail or bar exists in all courtrooms. Members of the public are welcome to watch court proceedings but they must remain behind this bar. The area in front of the bar is reserved for those individuals admitted to practice law. Hence, licensed attorneys are said to have “passed the bar.” There are two separate tables located in front of the bar and those are reserved for lawyers or, in rare cases, persons who may be representing themselves before the Supreme Court.

Just behind the bar in the gallery is a narrow table with five chairs, which mirror the five chairs for the Justices of the Supreme Court. These are reserved for representatives of the news media, often described as the fourth estate. The bar is pushed forward a bit in that area so that the media are closer to the bench than the rest of the gallery. The design was intentional, signifying the importance that the justice system itself places on the role of a free and responsible press.

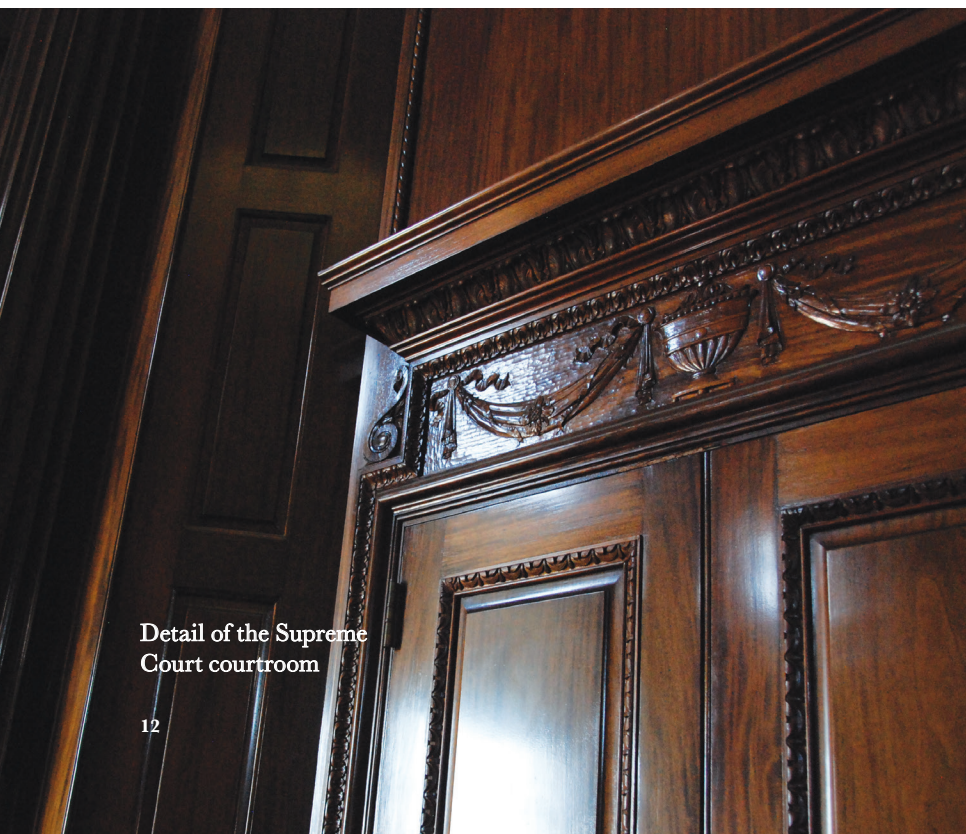
At the rear of the courtroom is Rhode Island’s statue of Lady Justice, variations of which frequently adorn courtrooms and courthouses around the world. Lady Justice represents the moral force that underlies the legal system. In her left hand, she holds a scale to weigh the strengths of a case’s support and opposition. In her right hand, she carries a double-edge sword representing reason and justice. She wears a blindfold to indicate that justice is meted out objectively, regardless of a person’s identity, power or weakness.

Adjacent to the rear of the courtroom is the John J. Bourcier Conference Room, named for a late Justice of the Supreme Court. The room is reserved for lawyers and litigants on the mornings of oral arguments, and is used on other occasions for meetings and receptions.

Behind the Supreme Court bench and the green curtain is a pair of large, wooden pocket doors that open to the judges’ conference room. Here the Justices of the Supreme Court meet privately after oral arguments to take votes on the cases they have just heard. The Justices also meet here periodically to take up emergency motions, admissions to the bar and disciplinary matters.



The Supreme Court courtroom, as viewed from the bench, with Lady Justice in the background.



Detail of the Supreme Court courtroom





Detail of the
Supreme Court
conference room



The Supreme Court of Rhode Island: Seated, left to right, Justice Maureen McKenna Goldberg, Chief Justice Paul A. Suttell, and Justice William P. Robinson III. Standing, left to right, Justice Erin Lynch Prata and Justice Melissa A. Long.

The Supreme Court

The Supreme Court consists of a Chief Justice and four Justices. By state statute, the Chief Justice is the executive head of the Judicial branch of government. In selecting Justices of the Supreme Court, the Judicial Nominating Commission publicly submits three to five names to

the Governor. The Governor appoints the Justice from the names received, and the appointee must receive the advice and consent of both the Senate and the House of Representatives.

The Supreme Court today

The Rhode Island Supreme Court is the state's court of last resort. The Supreme Court has absolute appellate jurisdiction over questions of law and equity, supervisory powers over other state courts, and general advisory responsibility to the Legislative and the Executive branches of state government concerning the constitutionality of legislation. The Supreme Court is also responsible for regulating admission to the Rhode Island Bar and disciplining its members.

The Supreme Court generally sits en banc (with all five members together) for several days each month, except for the summer months, to hear oral arguments. During oral argument weeks, the court hears the cases that are scheduled for each day, one after the other.

In full cases (also known as plenary cases) each side has 30 minutes to verbally argue its position. The side challenging the lower court decision presents its oral argument first and may reserve 10 minutes for rebuttal. In cases on the show cause calendar for which oral argument is allowed, each side will be entitled to 10 minutes for presentation of argument, and the plaintiff will be allowed 2 minutes for rebuttal.

Once oral arguments have concluded, the five Justices begin the task of deciding the cases that they have heard and then writing opinions. The process usually takes four to six weeks, which includes intensive research with lengthy discussions preceding the writing of opinions.

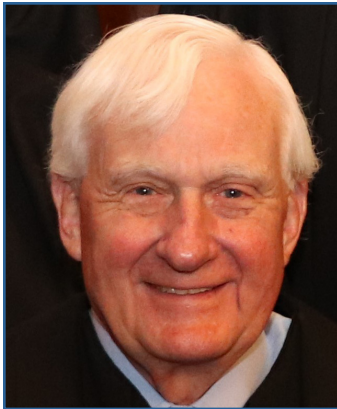
Between oral arguments and the rendering of opinions, the five Justices meet in private conferences closed even to their staffs, to discuss the cases and take preliminary votes on the outcome. Cases are discussed by each Justice. One Justice is randomly assigned to write the opinion. If the proposed author is in the minority, a Justice from the majority will be assigned to write the majority opinion. The dissenting Justice or Justices draft the dissenting and/or concurring opinions. Draft opinions are circulated privately among the Justices and revisions are made until an agreement is reached for a final draft.

Written decisions are made public when the court files them with the Clerk's Office of the Supreme Court. The Clerk's Office then distributes copies of the decision to the attorneys in the case and makes copies available to the public.



‘As judges, we have the opportunity to make a difference in people’s lives and we must never forget what a sacred trust that is. It is essential that people have confidence in their courts.’

- Chief Justice Paul A. Suttell



Chief Justice Paul A. Suttell

Paul A. Suttell was appointed by Governor Donald L. Carcieri as Chief Justice of the Rhode Island Supreme Court, effective July 16, 2009. Governor Carcieri appointed him as an Associate Justice of the Rhode Island Supreme Court on July 9, 2003. Previously he was an Associate Justice of the Rhode Island Family Court for thirteen years. He is a member of the American, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and Newport County Bar Associations, the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges and the American Academy of Adoption Attorneys.

Justice Suttell is a graduate of Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, and Suffolk University Law School. He began his legal career in Pawtucket with the firm of Crowe, Chester & Adams, and then as an associate with Beals & DiFiore in Providence from 1978 to 1990. He served as legal counsel to the House Minority Leader in the Rhode Island House of Representatives from 1979 to 1982.

In 1982, he was elected as a state representative from a district that encompassed Little Compton and portions of Tiverton and Portsmouth. In his second term, he was elected by his colleagues as Deputy Minority Leader and served in that capacity until 1990. During his tenure in the Rhode Island General Assembly, he served on the House Committees on the Judiciary, Corporations, and Special Legislation, the Joint Committees on the Environment and the Arts, the Agricultural Land Preservation Commission, the Newport County Convention and Visitors Bureau, and the Lottery Commission. In 1988, he was elected as a delegate to the Republican National Convention in New Orleans.

Chief Justice Suttell was appointed by Governor Edward D. DiPrete as an Associate Justice of the Rhode Island Family Court on July 9, 1990. During his years on the trial bench, he presided over the juvenile wayward and delinquency, child abuse and neglect, termination of parental rights, and domestic calendars.

He serves on numerous community and nonprofit organizations. He is moderator and former chairman of the Trustees of the Little Compton United Congregational Church and a past president of both the Little Compton Historical Society and Sakonnet Preservation Association. He is currently a director of the Historical Society.



Justice Maureen McKenna Goldberg

Justice Maureen McKenna Goldberg was appointed to the Rhode Island Superior Court on July 9, 1990 and the Rhode Island Supreme Court on May 30, 1997. An honors graduate in the first class of women at Providence College in 1973, Justice Goldberg graduated with honors from Suffolk University Law School in 1978. She has received honorary degrees from Suffolk University, Providence College, Johnson & Wales University, Roger Williams University School of Law, and Bryant University.

Justice Goldberg began her professional career as a prosecutor in the Rhode Island Office of Attorney General and rose to the rank of Administrator of the Criminal Division.

In 1984, she entered private practice of law with her husband, Robert D. Goldberg, but remained active in public service. She was the town solicitor for the towns of South Kingstown and Westerly and worked as Westerly's acting town manager at a difficult time in the town's history – a pro bono position that was especially gratifying.

As a Justice of the Superior and Supreme Courts, Justice Goldberg has worked toward the improvement of the law and the legal profession. She is the recipient of several awards and honors, including the Ada Sawyer Award of Excellence from the Rhode Island Women's Bar Association, Citizen of the Year by the Rhode Island Trial Lawyers Association, "Women We Admire" from the Big Sisters of Rhode Island, the Judicial Merit Award from the Rhode Island Association for Justice, and the Florence K. Murray Award from the Rhode Island Bar Association.

Justice Goldberg serves on the Board of Directors for Phoenix Houses of New England. She also served on the Board of Trustees for St. Mary Academy-Bay View, her alma mater, and was on the Board of Directors of the Rhode Island Foundation. She was Acting Chief Justice from December 31, 2008 to July 16, 2009.



Justice William P. Robinson III

William P. Robinson was appointed to the Rhode Island Supreme Court by Governor Donald L. Carcieri, and his appointment was unanimously confirmed by the Rhode Island General Assembly on July 30, 2004.

Justice Robinson is a native of East Providence. He received his early education in that community and then attended high school at La Salle Academy in Providence.

After receiving degrees from the University of Louvain in Belgium and from the University of Rhode Island, Justice Robinson's great interest in foreign languages and literature led him to the University of Connecticut, where he earned a doctorate in French and Spanish literature. After teaching at the University of Connecticut and serving in administrative capacities for the university both in this country and in France, Justice Robinson decided to attend law school.

Before embarking on a legal career, Justice Robinson had lived in Western Europe for several years; he actually took his Law School Admission Test in Mannheim, Germany. Upon graduation with honors from Boston College Law School, Justice Robinson served for two years as a law clerk with the United States Court of Appeals in Boston. He then joined the firm of Edwards & Angell in Providence, where he became a partner and served in the litigation department for over 27 years. Justice Robinson was perhaps best known among members of the bar for his frequent involvement in First Amendment and other media law cases.

Prior to his nomination to the Supreme Court, Justice Robinson served as chairman of the Federal Board of Bar Examiners for the District of Rhode Island. In addition, Justice Robinson served for eight years as an elected member of the East Greenwich School Committee, and he also served as a member of the Rhode Island Board of Governors for Higher Education. He has long been active in the Boston College Law School Alumni Association, and served for several years as a member of the Alumni Council. In addition, Justice Robinson frequently participates in academic programs organized by the University of Connecticut's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.



Justice Erin Lynch Prata

Erin Lynch Prata of Warwick was nominated to the Supreme Court by Governor Gina M. Raimondo, confirmed by the General Assembly, and sworn in on January 4, 2021. Justice Lynch Prata graduated from Boston College in 1997 and The Catholic University of America Columbus School of Law magna cum laude in 2000.

Following her graduation from law school, Justice Lynch Prata served as a law clerk to the Honorable Maureen McKenna Goldberg of the Rhode Island Supreme Court. After finishing her clerkship, Justice Lynch Prata began her practice as a general litigation attorney in Warwick, with a focus on family law. She became an experienced litigator and handled hundreds of cases in the Family Court throughout her 20-year legal career. In addition, Justice Lynch Prata represented clients before both the Rhode Island Superior and District Courts.

Justice Lynch Prata was elected to the Rhode Island Senate and began serving in January 2009, representing the people of Warwick and Cranston in District 31. During her tenure in the Senate, Justice Lynch Prata served as chairwoman of the Senate Judiciary Committee and was a member of the Senate Committee on Rules, Government Ethics & Oversight, and the Senate Committee on Special Legislation & Veterans' Affairs. After serving in the Senate for twelve years, Justice Lynch Prata did not seek reelection.

Justice Lynch Prata is the recipient of several awards and honors, including the Ada Sawyer Award of Excellence from the Rhode Island Women's Bar Association, Lawyer of the Year by the Kent County Bar Association, the Civic Leadership Award from the National Association of Secretaries of State, and the Equal Justice Award from Rhode Island Legal Services.



Justice Melissa A. Long

Melissa A. Long was appointed to the Rhode Island Superior Court on October 12, 2017 and the Rhode Island Supreme Court on January 11, 2021 by Governor Gina M. Raimondo. In the Superior Court, she was assigned to the Formal & Special Cause Calendar in Providence County, and to assist with the Daily Criminal, Costs & Fines and Miscellaneous Criminal, Trial/Pre-Trial and Pre-Arrestment Calendars in Providence County.

Justice Long chairs the Supreme Court Committee on Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Courts.

Justice Long received her Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Virginia and earned her law degree at the George Mason University School of Law. She served as a law clerk to the Honorable Marcus D. Williams of the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit Court of Virginia and thereafter devoted her legal career to public service and public interest law, including nearly three years as Rhode Island deputy secretary of state.

A Washington, D.C., native, Justice Long is the daughter of two U.S. Army veterans who married six months before the Supreme Court decided *Loving v. Virginia*. Justice Long grew up on and near military bases in El Paso, Texas; Alexandria, Virginia; Schweinfurt, Germany; and Seoul, South Korea.

She and her family have resided in Providence since 1999.

Chief Justices of the Supreme Court of the State

Gideon Cornell 1747 - 1749	Jabez Bowen 1781 - 1781
Joshua Babcock 1749 - 1751	Paul Mumford 1781 - 1785
Stephen Hopkins 1751 - 1755	William Ellery 1785 - 1786
Stephen Hopkins 1755 - 1756	Paul Mumford 1786 - 1788
Francis Willett 1756 - 1756	Othniel Gorton 1788 - 1791
John Gardner 1756 - 1761	Daniel Owen 1791 - 1795
Samuel Ward 1761 - 1762	Peleg Arnold 1795 - 1809
Jeremiah Niles 1762 - 1763	Thomas Arnold 1809 - 1810
Joshua Babcock 1762 - 1764	Peleg Arnold 1810 - 1812
John Cole 1764 - 1765	Daniel Lyman 1812 - 1816
Joseph Russell 1768 - 1769	James Burrill, Jr. 1816 - 1817
James Helme 1767 - 1768	Tristram Burges 1817 - 1818
Stephen Hopkins 1770 - 1776	James Fenner 1819 - 1819
Metcalf Bowler 1776 - 1777	Isaac Wilbour 1819 - 1827
William Greene 1777 - 1778	Samuel Eddy 1827 - 1835
Shearjashub Bourn 1778 - 1781	Job Durfee 1835 - 1843

Chief Justices under the Rhode Island Constitution

Job Durfee 1843 - 1848	Edmund W. Flynn 1935 - 1957
Richard W. Green 1848 - 1854	Francis B. Condon 1958 - 1965
William R. Staples 1854 - 1856	Thomas H. Roberts 1966 - 1976
Samuel Ames 1856 - 1866	Joseph A. Bevilacqua 1976 - 1986
Charles S. Bradley 1866 - 1868	Thomas F. Fay 1986 - 1993
George A. Brayton 1868 - 1875	Joseph R. Weisberger 1993 - 2001
Thomas Durfee 1875 - 1891	Frank J. Williams 2001 - 2008
Charles Matteson 1891 - 1900	Paul A. Suttell 2009 - present
John H. Stiness 1900 - 1903	
Pardon E. Tillinghast 1904 - 1905	
William W. Douglas 1905 - 1908	
Edward C. Dubois 1909 - 1913	
Clarke H. Johnson 1913 - 1917	
C. Frank Parkhurst 1917 - 1920	
William A. Sweetland 1920 - 1929	
Charles F. Stearns 1929 - 1935	

Justices of the Rhode Island Supreme Court

Organized by who was Chief Justice on facing page at the time of their appointment

1747 - 1749
Stephen Hopkins
Joshua Babcock
Josiah Arnold
John Howland

1749 - 1751
Jonathan Randall
William Hopkins
William Hall
John Walton
William Richmond
Benjamin Hazard

1751 - 1755
Joseph Russell
Joseph Clarke

1756 - 1761
Joseph Lippitt

1761 - 1762
Thomas Wickham
John Burton

1762 - 1763
Nicholas Easton
Samuel Nightingale

1762 - 1764
Thomas Cranston
John Cole
Thomas Greene
Silas Niles

1764 - 1765
Job Bennet, Jr.
Stephen Potter

1765 - 1767
William Hall
Job Bennet
Gideon Comstock
Benoni Hall

Henry Harris
Metcalf Bowler
Nathaniel Searle

1770 - 1776
James Helme
William Greene
Joseph Russell

1776 - 1777
Shearjashub Bourn
Jabez Bowen
Thomas Wells

1777 - 1778
Perez Richmond

1778 - 1781
Paul Mumford
Christopher Lippitt

1781 - 1781
William Ellery (declined)
Peter Phillips
Rufus Hopkins

1781 - 1785
Thomas Tillinghast
Pardon Gray
Ambrose Page (declined)

David Howell
Jonathan Jenckes
William West

1785 - 1786
Thomas Arnold
Joseph Hazard

1786 - 1788
Gilbert Devol
Walter Cooke

1788 - 1791
Simeon Clarke, Jr.

Daniel Owen
Sylvester Robinson
Ezekiel Gardner, Jr.

1791 - 1795
Carder Hazard
William Taggart
Joshua Bicknall

1795 - 1809
Joseph Hoxsie
George Brown
Thomas Holden
John Allen
Joseph Reynolds
Henry Remington
William Marchant
William Anthony
Benjamin Johnson

1810 - 1812
Jeffrey Hazard
Joseph Cundall
Charles Brayton
Thomas Westcott

1819 - 1819
Isaac Wilbour
Daniel Champlin
John D'Wolf
Thomas Buffum

1819 - 1827
Dutee Arnold
John DeWolf
Luke Drury
Wheeler Martin
Samuel Randall
Isaac Fiske
Nathan Brown
Samuel Eddy

1827 - 1835
Job Durfee
Levi Haile

William R. Staples
George A. Brayton

1854 - 1856
Alfred Bosworth
Sylvester G. Shearman

1856 - 1866
J. Russell Bullock
Thomas Durfee

1868 - 1875
Walter S. Burgess
Elisha R. Potter

1875 - 1891
Charles Matteson
John H. Stiness
Pardon E. Tillinghast
George A. Wilbur

1891 - 1900
Horatio Rogers
William W. Douglass

1900 - 1903
Benjamin M. Bosworth
Edward C. Dubois
John Taggard Blodgett

1904 - 1905
Clarke H. Johnson

1909 - 1913
C. Frank Parkhurst
William H. Sweetland
Darius Baker

1917 - 1920
Charles F. Stearns

1920 - 1929
Walter B. Vincent
Elmer J. Rathbun

John W. Sweeney
Chester W. Barrows

1929 - 1935
J. Jerome Hahn
John S. Murdock

1935 - 1957
William W. Moss
Antonio A. Capotosto
Hugh B. Baker
Francis B. Condon
Jeremiah E. O'Connell

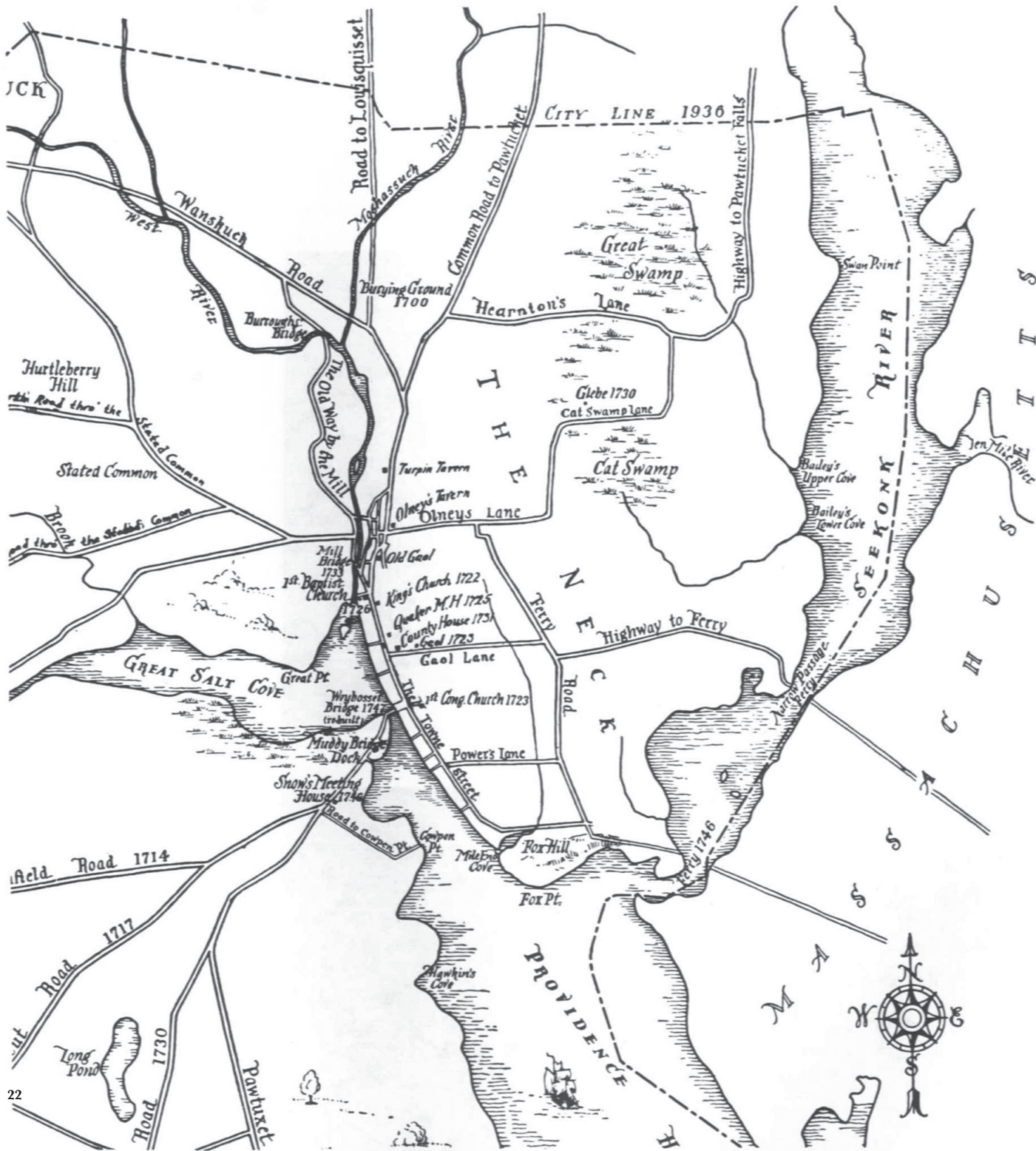
1966 - 1976
F. Frederick Frost
William E. Powers
Thomas J. Paolino
Alfred H. Joslin
John F. Doris
Thomas F. Kelleher

1976 - 1986
Joseph R. Weisberger
Florence K. Murray
Donald F. Shea

1993 - 2001
Maureen McKenna
Goldberg
John J. Bourcier
Robert G. Flanders, Jr.
Victoria Lederberg

2001 - 2008
Francis X. Flaherty
Paul A. Suttell
William P. Robinson III

2010 - present
Gilbert V. Indeglia
Erin Lynch Prata
Melissa A. Long



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Page 24 map, East Side of Providence as it was around 1750. Courtesy of The Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission



Justice ◉ Independence ◉ Honor

Rhode Island Supreme Court
Licht Judicial Complex
250 Benefit Street
Providence, RI 02903