



# Supreme Court Law Library

Newsletter | November 2025 | Volume 6, Issue 11

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### *Our Mission:*

*The mission of the Supreme Court Law Library is to provide and produce legal information for the judicial, legislative, and executive branches of state government, the legal community, and the public at large so they may have equal access to the law, effectively address the courts, make laws and write regulations, better understand the legal system, and conduct their affairs in accordance with the principles of law.*

## “LAW FOR A LAWLESS LAND” AND TERRITORIAL JUSTICE

By: Cassandra Wenzel

On September 24, 2025, the documentary [Law for a Lawless Land: New Mexico's Federal Judiciary](https://www.pbs.org/show/law-for-a-lawless-land-new-mexico-s-federal-judiciary) premiered on NM PBS. The documentary, about law and the Justices of New Mexico during New Mexico's territorial period, filmed partly on location in our Law Library and the Supreme Court's Robing Room, covers topics of relevance to the Law Library and the law. The Supreme Court Law Library's reference staff assisted with some of the research for this production and we briefly discuss here the documentary, related topics, and recommended titles for further reading.

Generally speaking, the documentary covers the efforts of Territorial Justices, appointed by the federal government, to apply United States law to the New Mexico territory. Between discussion of some of its topics, video of the Law Library's [New Mexico Reports](https://www.pbs.org/show/new-mexico-reports) with relevant cases can be seen. The opening of the documentary features the Taos Revolt and the roles that Justices

Joab Houghton and Charles H. Beaubien played in trying the men who played a part in that event. From there, discussion of the differing legal systems of early New Mexico, including Spanish, Mexican, and Pueblo law as they interacted with Anglo-American law, are discussed in terms of how they impacted the legal landscape of Territorial New Mexico and the jobs of the Territorial Justices.



Image of title: <https://www.pbs.org/show/law-for-a-lawless-land-new-mexico-s-federal-judiciary/>

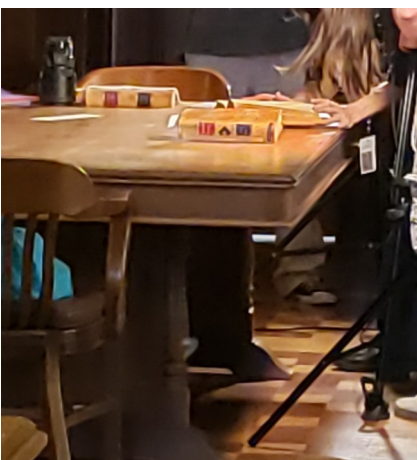
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Justice Kirby Benedict's life and work in New Mexico are discussed, as well as protests by Justices Benedict and Joseph G. Knapp on the treatment of the Navajo people at Bosque Redondo. Another influential pre-statehood Justice was Justice John P. Slough; during the section on Justice Slough, another of the Library's volumes of the New Mexico Reports made an appearance. After Justice Slough's death, the influence of the Santa Fe Ring became more apparent in New Mexico, and violence in Colfax County and other areas became an issue. Among these incidents of violence were the murders of Albert Fountain and his son, for which no person was ever convicted. New Mexico became a state in January 1912, and the Supreme Court of New Mexico became a statehood entity on January 10, 1912, marking the end of territorial justice and a transition to the Supreme Court of New Mexico as it is today.

The makers of *Law for a Lawless Land: New Mexico's Federal Judiciary* thanked the Supreme Court Law Library, Elizabeth Garcia, the Clerk of the Supreme Court, and the Law Library's own State Law Librarian, Stephanie Wilson, for assistance with the creation of the film. For more reading about the topics discussed in the documentary, [\*Kirby Benedict, Frontier Federal Judge: An Account of Legal and Judicial Development in the Southwest, 1853-1874, with Special Reference to the Indian, Slavery, Social and Political Affairs, Journalism, and a Chapter on Circuit Riding with Abraham Lincoln in Illinois\*](#) by Aurora Hunt devotes particular attention to Justice Kirby Benedict's role in territorial New Mexico. [\*Black-Robed Justice: A History of the Administration of Justice in New Mexico from the American Occupation in 1846 Until Statehood in 1912\*](#) by Arie W. Poldervaart is a title that discusses the period of territorial justice as a whole. For those interested in the Fountain murders, [\*Murder on the White Sands: the Disappearance of Albert and Henry Fountain\*](#) by Corey Recko or [\*Murder & Mystery in New Mexico\*](#) by Erna Fergusson may be of interest. [\*Chasing the Santa Fe Ring: Power and Privilege in Territorial New Mexico\*](#) by David L. Caffey provides more information on the Santa Fe Ring mentioned in the documentary. Finally, for more information on the history of the federal courts, including the territorial period in New Mexico, [\*The Federal Courts of the Tenth Circuit: a History\*](#) edited by James K. Logan with the assistance of J. Terry Hemming, Catherine McGuire Eason, Ruthann Rehnborg, and the Tenth Circuit's library staff may be a title to request from our government documents collection.


These titles are just a small selection of those that the Supreme Court Law Library holds. The Library's public Online Catalog is available to search for more items, and staff are available to assist if help is needed. Please [contact](#) the Reference Desk by phone, email, or by coming to the library in person if you have further questions. ♦





## ABOUT THE LAW LIBRARY

The Supreme Court Law Library has been providing legal reference services and access to legal information to the courts and people throughout New Mexico for 175 years. The Legislature established it as the Territorial Library in 1851 and as the Supreme Court Law Library in 1915. It is the state's public law library that is open to all.

- Our Reference team welcomes your questions! We can assist you by walk-in, telephone at (505) 827-4850, mail, or email at [libref@nmcourts.gov](mailto:libref@nmcourts.gov).
- Law Library hours are Monday – Friday 8:00-12:00 and 1:00-5:00. The Library is closed 12-1.
- The Law Library has books, forms, government documents, online resources, public computers, study alcoves, a public microfilm reader/scanner, a public copier and printer, document delivery services, and free internet access.
- Visit our website at <https://lawlibrary.nmcourts.gov>
- Follow us [@NM\\_LawLibrary](#) on .



## **CLE UPDATE: SUPREME COURT LAW LIBRARY ATTENDS COURT STAFF CONFERENCE**

By: Kendra Patlak



This past [June](#), the Supreme Court Law Library provided a brief overview of court education in New Mexico. As noted, the New Mexico [Court Education Institute](#) (CEI) has provided judicial branch education since its creation in 2023. As part of its educational programming, the CEI hosted its second annual Court Staff Conference in Albuquerque this October. Law Library staff were honored to be able to attend the Conference, in both the general session and attorney tracks.

Court staff from throughout the state attended sessions on a variety of topics, including ethics, legal research and writing, leadership, caseload management, and performance measures. Presenters came from the National Association for Court Management, the National Center for State Courts, the CEI, the New Mexico Supreme Court, and other judicial courts and divisions. Additional programs provided information about interpersonal communication, management, and assisting litigants.

The Law Library would like to express its gratitude to the New Mexico Supreme Court for enabling our participation in this informative, educational, and inspirational event. ♦

**Image Source:** publicdomainpictures.net



# SUPREME COURT SCRAPBOOK UPDATE & TRIVIA QUIZ!

By: Amy Schaefer

In our [February 2025 issue](#) of the Law Library Newsletter, we introduced you to our impressive *History of the New Mexico Supreme Court Scrapbook*. As we look toward the end of 2025, we want to provide an update as well as show you a little more of its contents. This also seems like a great time to play a little Supreme Court and Supreme Court Law Library trivia. Look for answers to the trivia questions at the end of this article, and good luck! 🍀

From the subtitle, “Volume 1”. on the inside page, it appears that this scrapbook was intended to be continued in subsequent volumes. However, this is currently a stand-alone book. In the images here, we have captured the front page and dedication page. The dedication reads, “To the hardworking judges and attorneys who have brought New Mexico courts and laws to their present form and who have made New Mexico Law what it is today.”

Within the scrapbook are some photocopied items from the New Mexico State Records Center and Archives dating from the mid-1800s, during the

Territorial Period of New Mexico’s history.

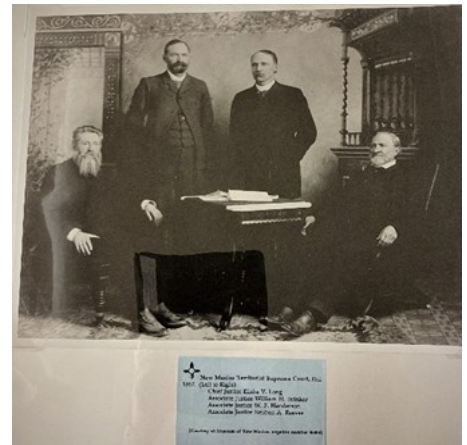
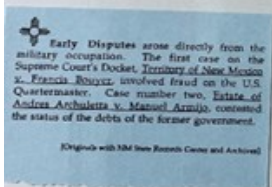
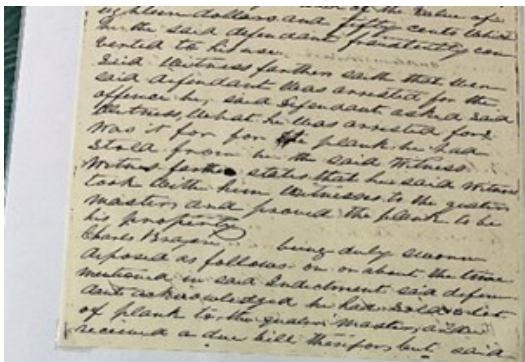
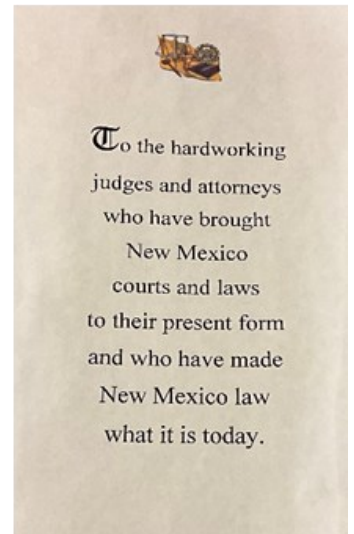
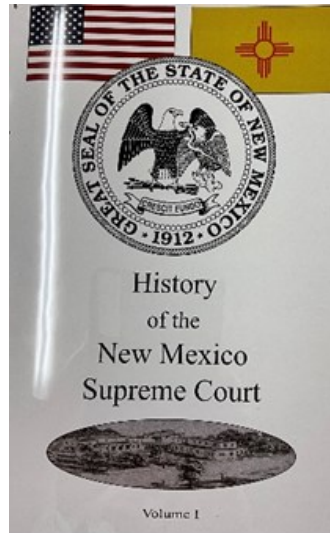
Pictured here are examples of some Territorial documents. These documents include the first and second cases on the Supreme Court’s docket, *Territory of New Mexico v. Francis Bouyer* and *Andres Archuleta v. Manuel Armijo*, respectively.

Other items in the scrapbook include a map, many newspaper clippings, an artist’s sketch of the Supreme Court Building, and numerous photographs. In these photos, we see the Justices of the Territorial Supreme Court in 1887, and in 1911, the final Territorial Supreme Court.

During the Summer of 2025, the Supreme Court Law Library was fortunate to have a library science graduate student intern with us for four weeks. Creating a [library catalog record](#) for this scrapbook was one of the projects she


tackled. Please visit our [online public catalog](#) to learn more about this book and the other fantastic and diverse items in the Law Library’s collection.

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The Law Library was established as the Territorial Library by the First Territorial Legislature in 1851. We are open to the public and are dedicated to providing legal information for the judicial, legislative, and executive branches of state government, the legal community, and the public at large so they may have equal access to the law, effectively address the courts, make laws and write regulations, better understand the legal system, and conduct their affairs in accordance with principles of law. To learn more about our services, visit our [website](#) and follow us on X @NM\_LawLibrary.

Now on to some trivia (you can find the answer key below ). 

**Question 1:** In 1984, she became the first woman to serve on the New Mexico Supreme Court.

**Question 2:** The Law Library has a rare book collection containing some English treatises. Among them is our oldest book. What year was it published? Bonus points if you can name the book.

**Question 3:** True or false? The Law Library's collection contains a work about witchcraft trials in Essex, England.

**Question 4:** True or False? The Law Library's collection contains items other than books.

**Question 5:** True or False? During the winter months, a snowman made entirely out of books has been spotted inside the library.

**Question 6:** True or False? You can sign up to request a tour of the Supreme Court Law Library and Supreme Court Building.

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**Answer 1:** Mary Coon Walters (1922-2001). Learn more at <https://www.nmhistoricwomen.org/new-mexico-historic-women/mary-coon-walters/> .

**Answer 2:** The book was published in 1629. Bonus points if you know the title, *Coke on Littleton*. Fun note: this book is inscribed with the Latin motto "non est mortale quod opto" which roughly translates to "I do not desire that which is mortal." A former owner of the Law Library's copy wrote the exact day he purchased this book in 1630 and from whom. "Non est mortale quod opto" seems to have been written by the first owner of the book. Learn more at: [November 2021 Newsletter](#)

**Answer 3:** True. The Law Library owns a copy of *Howell's State Trials* where one can read the case of the prosecution of the Essex witches of 1645. To read more visit: [October 2020 Newsletter](#)

**Answer 4:** True. Here is a great example: On May 19, 2023, the Supreme Court Law Library was incredibly honored to receive a reproduction of the Treaty of 1868 or Naaltsoos Sání, as a gift from the Supreme Court of the Navajo Nation. The Law Library has accessioned [this document](#) into our archival collection.

**Answer 5:** True, the book snowman is a frequent visitor to the Law Library.

**Answer 6:** True. We welcome visitors and love to give tours of our beautiful building. Find out more on our website at <https://lawlibrary.nmcourts.gov/about/tours/> .

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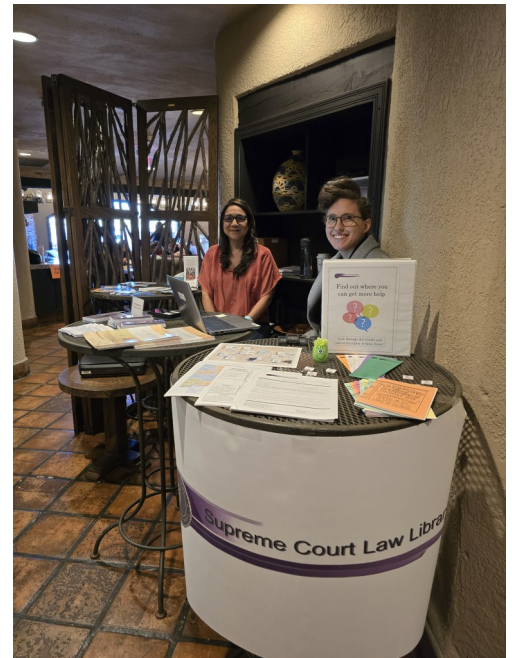
# THE SUPREME COURT LAW LIBRARY'S RECENT OUTREACH EVENTS

By: Kendra Patlak

Outreach to the public is a core objective of the Supreme Court Law Library. Promoting the Law Library's services and collections and engaging in community outreach, education, and public relations are some of the ways the library staff works to support this mission-central goal. This past Fall, the Supreme Court Law Library was busy with several outreach events to the public, which are highlighted below.

## Santa Fe Legal Fair

On Saturday, October 18, 2025, the Volunteer Attorney Program and First Judicial District Pro Bono Committee held a free legal fair at the Hotel Glorieta in Santa Fe. In addition to helping coordinate this event, Supreme Court Law Library staff attended to volunteer our time. We performed outreach and provided reference assistance to the volunteer attorneys and general public. During the four-hour fair, our staff had twenty-nine interactions with attendees. Events like this, outside the Supreme Court Building, offer us an opportunity to raise awareness of the Law Library and its many resources and services. As a reminder, the Law Library is open to the public and reachable by phone, email, or mail.



## Meow Wolf Archives Event

October is American Archives Month. As such, the New Mexico State Records Center and Archives coordinated a special event at Meow Wolf in Santa Fe—*Archives Oddities: Misfits & Mysteries in Collections*—on Monday, October 20, 2025.

For the second year in a row, the Supreme Court Law Library participated in this free public

event, along with several other organizations from throughout the state. At this event, the Law Library displayed a variety of items appropriate to the theme, including a reproduced page on the “Cutting out of Tongues” from *Coke on Littleton*, a seventeenth-century treatise. A few free resources, including pocket New Mexico Constitutions, were also provided.



In two and a half hours, staff recorded forty-six visitors to the Law Library's table. Readers may be unaware that they can schedule a research appointment with the Law Library's Reference Desk to view archival materials from our collection. Our online catalog is available [here](#).

**Photo:** Supreme Court Law Library table and staff (L-R): State Law Librarian Stephanie Wilson, Administrative Assistant Consuelo Archuleta, and Law Librarian Amy Schaefer.

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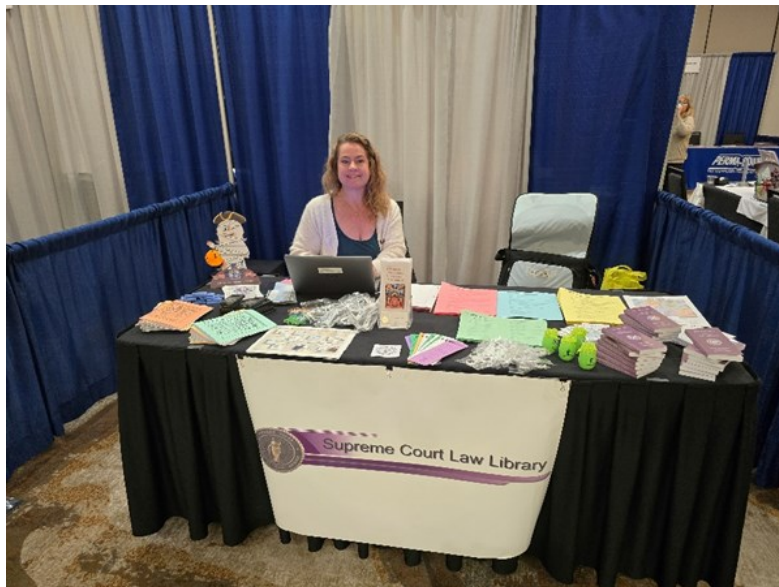
## New Mexico Library Association's Annual Conference

From October 22-24, 2025, the New Mexico Library Association (NMLA) held its Annual Conference at the Albuquerque Marriott Pyramid North hotel. The Supreme Court Law Library staffed a vendor booth, attended sessions, and presented an educational program to fellow attendees.

On October 23, 2025, the Law Library hosted a fifty-minute “vendor presentation.” State Law Librarian Stephanie Wilson and Law Librarian Cassandra Wenzel presented on the Supreme Court Building and the Supreme Court Law Library in particular.

Throughout the conference, our staff answered questions, provided information, and handed out numerous free resources. In the two days that staff attended, people visited the Law Library’s table 123 times.

Attending this Annual Conference is important to the Law Library in that it allows us to collaborate with the broader New Mexico library community and to inform other libraries about the many services we provide. We look forward to the possibility of attending next year. ♦



**Photo:** Supreme Court Law Library booth and staff: Law Librarian Amy Schaefer.





## BOOK DISPLAYS IN THE LAW LIBRARY— in November

Top Left: Veterans Day

Bottom Right: Fall Harvest—Food & Farming



## BOOK DISPLAYS IN THE LAW LIBRARY — in November

Top Left: Native American Heritage Month; Bottom Right: “Know-vember”



**Visit the Law Library:**

**Supreme Court Building  
237 Don Gaspar Avenue  
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501**



**Contact the Law Library:**

**Phone: (505) 827-4850  
Email: [libref@nmcourts.gov](mailto:libref@nmcourts.gov)  
Web: [lawlibrary.nmcourts.gov](http://lawlibrary.nmcourts.gov)**