

John Garrett Penn Papers
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Manuscript Division, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
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Prepared by Connie L. Cartledge
with the assistance of Sherralyn McCoy and Tammi Taylor

Finding aid encoded by Library of Congress Manuscript Division, 2017

Collection Summary

Title: John Garrett Penn Papers

Span Dates: 1918-2007

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1971-1999)

ID No.: MSS85429

Creator: Penn, John Garrett, 1932-2007

Extent: 50,000 items

Extent: 170 containers

Extent: 68 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

Location: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

LC Catalog record: <https://lccn.loc.gov/mm2008085429>

Summary: Judge. Correspondence, memoranda, bench books, orders, opinions, briefs, motions, exhibits, trial transcripts, depositions, notes, appointment books, reports, speeches and writings, clippings, printed matter, and other papers relating chiefly to Penn's career as a superior court judge and a federal district court judge.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the LC Catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically.

People

Griffin, William E. 1932-2012--Trials, litigation, etc.

Hinckley, John W. (John Warnock), Jr.--Trials, litigation, etc.

Jenrette, John W.--Trials, litigation, etc.

Kelly, Marguerite--Trials, litigation, etc.

Kelly, Tom, 1923 August 2-2010--Trials, litigation, etc.

Marshall, Thurgood, 1908-1993.

Nixon, Richard M. (Richard Milhous), 1913-1994--Estate.

Penn, John Garrett, 1932-2007.

Reagan, Ronald--Assassination attempts.

Sherman, Robert J. (Physician)--Trials, litigation, etc.

Organizations

Boston University. School of Law--Students.

District of Columbia. Superior Court.

Judicial Conference of the District of Columbia Circuit.

Judicial Conference of the United States.

United States. District Court (District of Columbia)

Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs.

Subjects

Abortion--Law and legislation--United States.

Abscam Bribery Scandal, 1980.

African American History Month.

Civil rights movements--United States.

Courts--Washington (D.C.)

District courts--Washington (D.C.)

Firearms--Law and legislation--United States.

Physicians--Malpractice--United States.

Political corruption--United States.

Products liability--Firearms--United States.

Property tax--Law and legislation--United States.

Trials (Bribery)--Washington (D.C.)

Watergate Affair, 1972-1974.

Occupations

Judges.

Provenance

The papers of John Garrett Penn, judge, were given to the Library of Congress by his wife, Ann Penn, in 2008-2009.

Transfers

Sound recordings and one videocassette have been transferred to the Library's Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Division where they are identified as part of the John Garrett Penn Papers.

Copyright Status

Copyright in the unpublished writings of John Garrett Penn in these papers and in other collections in the custody of the Library of Congress is reserved. Consult reference staff in the Manuscript Division for further information.

Access and Restrictions

The papers of John Garrett Penn are open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting. Many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, John Garrett Penn Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

Date	Event
1932, Mar. 19	Born, Pittsfield, Mass.
1954	A.B., University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Mass.
1957	LL.B, Boston University School of Law, Boston, Mass.
1958-1961	Served, United States Army, Judge Advocate General's Corps
1961-1970	Attorney, General Litigation Section, Tax Division, Justice Department, Washington, D.C.; assistant chief, 1968-1970
1966	Married Ann Elizabeth Rollison
1967-1968	Attended the Woodrow Wilson School of Public Interest and International Affairs, Princeton University, Princeton, N.J.
1970-1971	Judge, District of Columbia Court of General Sessions
1970-1979	Judge, Superior Court of the District of Columbia
1979-2007	Judge, United States District Court for the District of Columbia ; assumed senior judge status in 1998
1992-1997	Chief judge, United States District Court for the District of Columbia
2007, Sept. 9	Died, Washington, D.C.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of John Garrett Penn (1932-2007) span the years 1918-2007 with the bulk of the material dating from 1971 to 1999. The majority of the papers document Penn's career as a judge for the Superior Court of the District of Columbia, 1970-1979, and the United States District Court for the District of Columbia, 1979-2007. The papers are in English and are organized into the following series: [Correspondence](#), [Superior Court File](#), [United States District Court File](#), and [Miscellany](#).

The [Correspondence, 1979-2007](#), consists primarily of incoming letters, memoranda, postcards, and email to Penn from colleagues, friends, family, court staff, and the public. Most of the correspondence relates to Penn's activities as a superior court judge and a federal district court judge.

The [Superior Court File, 1970-1979](#), chronicles Penn's service as a judge for the Superior Court of the District of Columbia. The bulk of the series is comprised of bench books and a file of orders, opinions, and other rulings of the local court. The bench books contain Penn's handwritten notes about the cases that came before him. Files in the orders, opinions, and other rulings document his judgments on a variety of issues including civil, criminal, family, and tax matters. The series also includes substantive files pertaining to two cases, *Kelly v. District of Columbia* (property tax case) and Robert J. Sherman (a medical malpractice abortion case).

The files in [United States District Court File, 1918-2007](#), document Penn's tenure on that court from 1979-2007, and his service as chief judge from 1992 to 1997. [The United States District Court File](#) is arranged into four groups: bench books, cases, office file, and opinions, orders, and other rulings. The majority of the district court papers relate to a few cases. The largest amount of material pertains to *Griffin v. United States*, the suit by Richard Nixon's estate to recover the value of White House records taken by the federal government after the Watergate Affair. Other substantive files feature the ABSCAM case (*United States v. Jenrette*), the political corruption case of John W. Jenrette, and cases brought by the victims of the Reagan assassination to recover damages from John Hinckley and gun manufacturers. Penn's handwritten notes about cases he heard from the bench are documented in his bench books, including the cases referenced above.

The office files in the [United States District Court File](#) relate to Penn's administrative and professional duties as a district judge. The majority of the office files chronicle his activities with the Judicial Conference of the District of Columbia Circuit and the Judicial Conference of the United States. Files in the orders, opinions, and other rulings are comprised of a chronological file documenting Penn's findings on a variety of issues including civil and criminal matters falling under federal jurisdiction and originating in the District of Columbia.

The [Miscellany series, 1954-2006](#), includes notebooks from Penn's tenure as a law student at the Boston University School of Law and his participation at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University. Also represented in this series are some of Penn's speeches located in the speech and engagement files. In a speech for Black History Month in February 1993, Penn discusses the impact that Thurgood Marshall had on him and the civil rights movement.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in four series:

- [Correspondence, 1979-2007](#)
- [Superior Court File, 1970-1979](#)
- [United States District Court File, 1918-2007](#)
- [Miscellany, 1954-2006](#)

Description of Series

Container

Series

BOX 1-9

Correspondence, 1979-2007

Chiefly incoming letters, memoranda, postcards, and paper copies of email to Penn from colleagues, friends, family, court staff, and the public relating mainly to Penn's professional activities.

Arranged in two groups: chronological file and email and therein chronologically by date.

BOX 9-39

Superior Court File, 1970-1979

Correspondence, memoranda, bench books, orders, opinions, briefs, motions, notes, appointment books, clippings, and printed matter.

Arranged alphabetically by type of material or topic and therein alphabetically or chronologically.

BOX 39-165

United States District Court File, 1918-2007

Correspondence, memoranda, bench books, orders, opinions, briefs, motions, exhibits, trial transcripts, depositions, reports, testimony, notes, clippings, printed matter, and other material.

Arranged alphabetically into four groups: bench books; cases; office file; and opinions, orders, and other rulings, and therein alphabetically or chronologically.

BOX 165-170

Miscellany, 1954-2006

Correspondence, memoranda, speeches and writings, biographical material, business cards, and notebooks.

Arranged alphabetically by topic or type of material.

Container List

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BOX 1-9	Correspondence, 1979-2007 Chiefly incoming letters, memoranda, postcards, and paper copies of email to Penn from colleagues, friends, family, court staff, and the public relating mainly to Penn's professional activities. Arranged in two groups: chronological file and email and therein chronologically by date.
BOX 1	Chronological file 1979-1992 (19 folders)
BOX 2	1993-1996 (18 folders) 1997 Mar.-July (2 folders)
BOX 3	Aug.-Dec. (5 folders) 1998-1999 (16 folders)
BOX 4	2000-2003 (21 folders) 2004 Jan.-Feb.
BOX 5	Mar.-Dec. (4 folders) 2005-2007, undated (9 folders) Email 1993 Feb.-Oct. (4 folders)
BOX 6	Nov.-Dec. (4 folders) 1994 Jan.-Mar. (8 folders)
BOX 7	Apr.-Aug. (14 folders)
BOX 8	Sept.-Dec. (9 folders) 1995 Jan. (3 folders)

Correspondence, 1979-2007

Container	Contents
BOX 9	Feb.-Apr. (6 folders)
BOX 9-39	Superior Court File, 1970-1979 Correspondence, memoranda, bench books, orders, opinions, briefs, motions, notes, appointment books, clippings, and printed matter. Arranged alphabetically by type of material or topic and therein alphabetically or chronologically.
BOX 9	Advisory Committee on the Rules of Federal Service, 1973-1976 (4 folders)
BOX 10	Appointment books 1970-1972 (3 folders)
BOX 11	1973-1974 (2 folders)
BOX 12	1975-1976 (2 folders)
BOX 13	1977-1979 (3 folders)
BOX 14	Bench books 1970, Nov.-1971, Nov. (4 folders)
BOX 15	1971, Nov.-1972, Dec. (4 folders)
BOX 16	1973, Jan. and 1975, Dec. 1973, Jan.-July (3 folders)
BOX 17	1973, July-1974, Feb. (2 folders) 1974 Feb.-July (2 folders)
BOX 18	Sept.-Dec. (2 folders) 1975, May-Dec. (2 folders)
BOX 19	1975, Dec.-1976, Dec. (4 folders)
BOX 20	1977, Jan.-1978, Feb. (4 folders)
BOX 21	1978, Feb.-Oct. (4 folders)
BOX 22	1978, Oct.-1979, Mar. (2 folders) Cases Kelly v. District of Columbia, 1973-1979 (4 folders)

Superior Court File, 1970-1979

Container	Contents
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BOX 24	(2 folders) Miscellaneous, 1977 Sherman, Robert J., 1976-1979
BOX 25	(4 folders) (5 folders) Washington Teacher's Union Local 6, 1973-1974 Judicial conferences 1971-1977 (2 folders) 1978-1979
BOX 26	Ledger for tracking cases, 1973-1975 Notes and printed matter, 1970-1973, undated Opinions, orders, and other rulings Chronological file 1971 Civil (4 folders) Criminal Family Tax 1972 Civil (2 folders) Criminal Family (4 folders) Tax 1973 Civil (4 folders) Criminal (3 folders) Family (3 folders) Tax 1974 Civil (2 folders) Criminal (3 folders) Family Tax
BOX 27	1975 Civil (2 folders)
BOX 28	1975 Civil (2 folders)
BOX 29	1975 Civil (2 folders)

Superior Court File, 1970-1979

Container

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	Tax Apr.-Oct. (2 folders)
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BOX 31	Nov.-Dec. Criminal (2 folders)
	Family
	Tax (4 folders)
	1977 Civil Jan.-July (4 folders)
BOX 32	Aug.-Dec. (3 folders)
	Criminal (3 folders)
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	Family
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Superior Court File, 1970-1979

Container	Contents
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BOX 35	1974-1978 (3 folders) Divorce and support notes, 1971-1976 (2 folders) Divorce judgments, orders, and related papers, 1971-1979 (9 folders) Family trial findings, 1971-1978 Felony bond review 1971-1973
BOX 36	1974-1978 (3 folders) Felony memorandums and orders 1973-1978 (9 folders)
BOX 37	1979 Juvenile orders and notes, 1971-1978 (5 folders) Landlord and tenant opinions, 1971-1977 (3 folders) Neglect, 1972-1978 (3 folders) Reciprocal support, 1971-1975 Show cause orders, 1971-1978 Small claims 1971
BOX 38	1972-1978 (2 folders) Tax orders 1971-1977 (11 folders)
BOX 39	1978-1979 (6 folders)
BOX 39-165	United States District Court File, 1918-2007 Correspondence, memoranda, bench books, orders, opinions, briefs, motions, exhibits, trial transcripts, depositions, reports, testimony, notes, clippings, printed matter, and other material. Arranged alphabetically into four groups: bench books; cases; office file; and opinions, orders, and other rulings, and therein alphabetically or chronologically.

United States District Court File, 1918-2007

Container

Contents

BOX 39	Bench books 1979, Aug.-Dec. (3 folders)
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BOX 42	1981, Sept.-1983, Mar. (4 folders)
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United States District Court File, 1918-2007

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BOX 68	(2 folders) Sept. 22-25 (7 folders)
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BOX 74	Franklin, Carl Mason, 1998 Grele, Ronald J., 1998 Grimes, David P., 1998 Kirshbaum, Laurence J., 1998 Nesbitt, John R., 1998 Nixon, Richard M., 1975 (2 folders)

United States District Court File, 1918-2007

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United States District Court File, 1918-2007

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	(3 folders)
	Sept.
	(3 folders)
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BOX 136	1990-1993 Jurisdiction issue, 1918, 1936, 1950, 1958, 1965-1984 (4 folders) Miscellaneous 1979-1982 (5 folders)
BOX 137	1983-2007 (6 folders) Office file Anniversary dinners celebrating Penn's federal judicial appointment, 1989, 1999 Bryant, William B., 1984, 2006

United States District Court File, 1918-2007

Container

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	Bill of Rights Bicentennial Conference, Williamsburg, Va., 1991
	Conference of Chief District Judges, Naples, Fla., 1991
	Conference of Chief District Judges, Washington, D.C., 1993-1996
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	Seminar for Court History Programs, Washington, D.C., 1990
	Thirteenth Annual Judicial Conference of the United States Court of Appeals for the
	Federal Circuit, Washington, D.C., 1995
	United States Courts Design and Construction Seminar, San Diego, Calif., 1992
	Workshop for Judges of the District of Columbia and Second Circuits, Cooperstown, N.Y.,
	1994
	Court reporters, 1992-1995
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	(7 folders)
	Egypt, judges participating in exchange program, 1994
	(1 folder)
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	Invitations
	1992
	(4 folders)
BOX 142	1993
	(5 folders)
	1994
	(3 folders)
BOX 143	(3 folders)
	1995
	(4 folders)
	Judicial Conference for the District of Columbia, 1992-1995
	(2 folders)
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	(2 folders)

United States District Court File, 1918-2007

Container	Contents
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BOX 147	Vol. 2 (3 folders) General (5 folders)
BOX 148	1993 Mar. 15-16 (6 folders) Sept. 20-21 Agenda Vol. 1 (1 folder)
BOX 149	(2 folders) Vol. 2 (4 folders) General (2 folders)
BOX 150	(3 folders) 1994 Mar. 15-16 Agenda (5 folders)
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United States District Court File, 1918-2007

Container	Contents
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BOX 158	Portrait ceremony for Penn, 2003 (2 folders) Security and emergency plans, 1991-2000 (2 folders) Sentencing guidelines, departures from, 1991-1996 Telephone log book, 1980-1990 Telephone messages, undated United States Bankruptcy Court for the District of Columbia 1988-1991 (3 folders)
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United States District Court File, 1918-2007

Container	Contents
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	1984 Jan.-May (3 folders)
BOX 161	June-Dec. (5 folders)
	1985 (7 folders)
BOX 162	1986 (9 folders)
	1987 Feb.-May (3 folders)
BOX 163	June-Dec. (4 folders)
	1988 Jan.-June (7 folders)
BOX 164	July-Dec. (6 folders)
	1989 Jan.-Apr. (4 folders)
BOX 165	May-Nov. (6 folders)
	1990
BOX 165-170	Miscellany, 1954-2006 Correspondence, memoranda, speeches and writings, biographical material, business cards, and notebooks. Arranged alphabetically by topic or type of material.
BOX 165	Biographical file, 1992 Boston University School of Law, Boston, Mass., notebooks Administrative law, 1956-1957 Bills and notes, 1956 Business organization, 1955
BOX 166	Conflict of laws, 1957 (3 folders) Contracts, 1954-1955 Corporation, 1956-1957 (2 folders) Criminal law, 1954-1955 Damages, 1956-1957 Domestic relations, 1957
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	Federal juris, 1957 (2 folders)
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	Miscellaneous items, 1978-1997
	Speech and engagements 1980-2002 (11 folders)
BOX 170	2003-2006, undated (4 folders)
	Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Princeton University, Princeton, N.J., notebooks, 1967 (3 folders)
	Writings By others, 1980, 1991-1993 (2 folders)
	By Penn, 1998