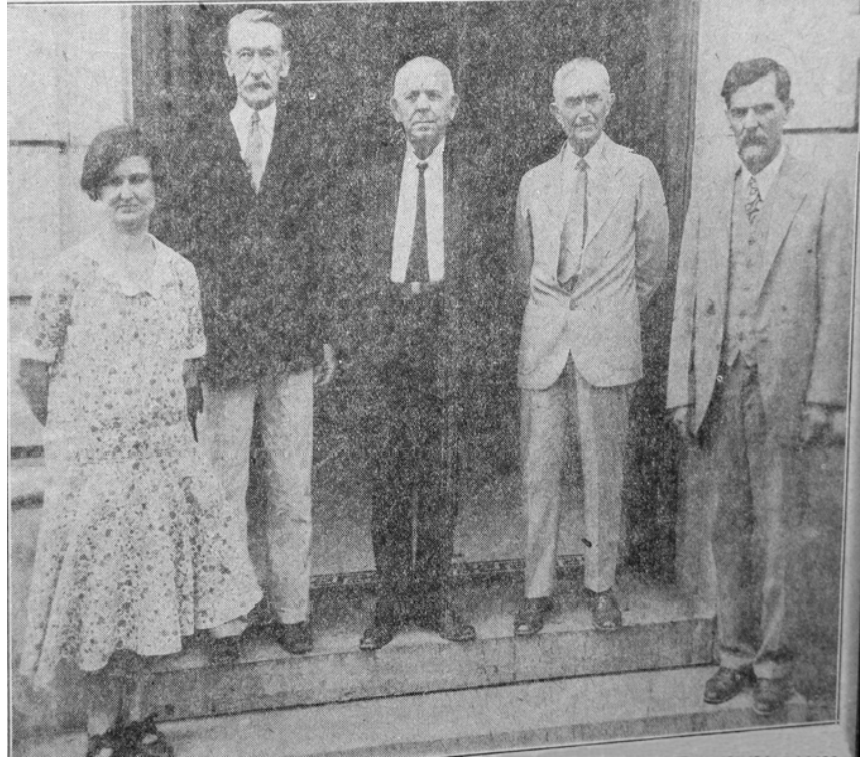


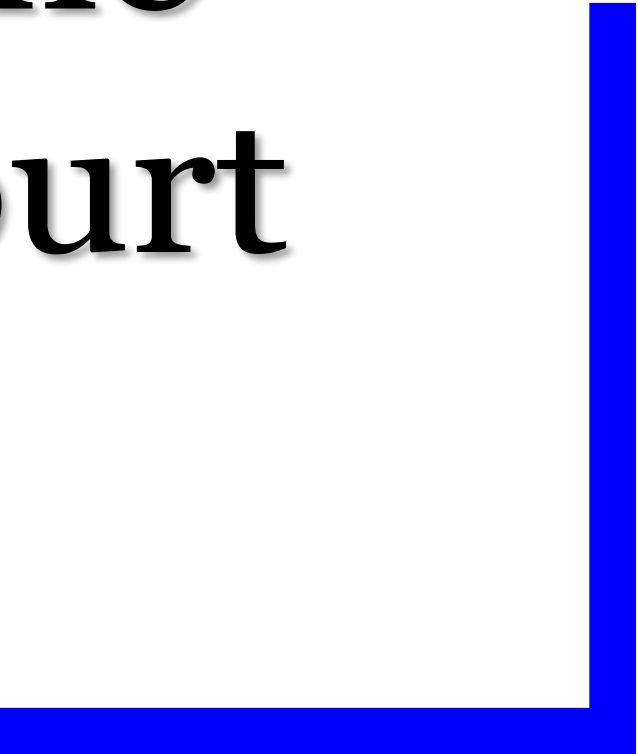



# Court of Appeals

6th Judicial District

Texarkana, Texas







# History Of The Court

# HISTORY OF THE SIXTH COURT OF APPEALS

Orig. by Donald R. Ross, Justice (Ret.)

(Revised December 2024)

## Creation of the Court

The Court of Civil Appeals, Sixth Supreme Judicial District, was created by an act of the Texas Legislature in April 1907. That act begins by stating that this court “shall be held in the City of Texarkana.” Why Texarkana was chosen as the home base for this appellate court is a matter of speculation.

One possibility is that Texarkana was chosen because of its political influence at the time. The presence of an appellate court in the community would have been prestigious and economically advantageous. Other towns in East Texas undoubtedly competed for this court. Texarkana’s success in this competition would certainly speak well for her political influence in the Texas Legislature in the year 1907. Bowie County was represented at that time by Senator J. M. Terrell and Representative J. A. Dodd. These individuals were probably influential in Texarkana being chosen as home for this new appellate court.

A more practical reason for locating the court in Texarkana was the presence of the railroads. Considering what transportation was like in 1907, it was a wise decision to locate this court, serving eighteen counties, at a place accessible by some form of good public transportation. In 1907, most people traveled by horseback or by horse, mule, or oxen-drawn conveyances. One can only imagine how long it would take a lawyer to travel to Texarkana from Bonham, in Fannin County, by any of these conveyances—it takes two to three hours to make that trip in a good automobile today. Production of the Model T automobile did not start until 1908, the year *after* this court was created. The train was the only rapid means of long-distance travel. So, it makes sense that access to Texarkana by train from all points in the district was an important consideration in the decision to locate the court in that city.

Although Texarkana is the court’s home base, the act creating this court has been amended to allow the court to transact its business in “any county in the district as the court determines is necessary or convenient.” The court has taken advantage of this provision and has held court in every county in the district.

## Facilities

The specific location of the court’s facilities in Texarkana when it started operations in 1907 is also, to some extent, a matter of speculation. We know it was in an old City Hall, but we are not sure of the exact location of that structure. According to Texarkana historian and lawyer, Carroll Wheeler, City Hall in 1906 was located on Maple Street (now Texas Boulevard), somewhere between Broad Street and 3<sup>rd</sup> Street. In 1908, the year after the court was organized, the Polk City Directory showed City Hall to be at the northwest corner of 3<sup>rd</sup> and Maple, which is the same location as the present Municipal Building. According to J. Q. Mahaffey, long-time editor of the *Texarkana Gazette*, the Court of Civil Appeals was housed on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the old City Hall at this location. In 1924, the city completed the current Municipal Building and the court then moved into facilities located on the fourth floor of that building. That was home for the court until 1985, when it moved to the second floor of the Bi-State Justice Building at the corner of Broad Street and North State Line Avenue.

## **The Counties in the District**

When the court was created, its district consisted of eighteen counties. Two of those, Smith and Cherokee, are no longer in the district. The original district *did not* include Delta, Hunt, Rains, or Wood counties. Those four were added in 1927, making a district of twenty-two counties. Legislation passed in 1934 provided for the Sixth Court of Civil Appeals to share Hunt County with the Fifth Court of Civil Appeals in Dallas. In other words, Hunt County was (and continues to be) located in both the Fifth and Sixth districts.

A major change of the counties in the Sixth District occurred in 1963 when the Twelfth Supreme Judicial District was created and located at Tyler. According to long-time Texarkana lawyer, Howard Waldrop, the birth of this new appellate court in Tyler was the result of an effort to relocate the Sixth Court from Texarkana to Tyler. This switch in location of the Sixth Court was met with strong resistance by the good citizens of Texarkana who lobbied hard and long to keep the court. Their perseverance was successful, and Mr. Waldrop gave much of the credit for saving the Texarkana court to the good offices of the late Senator A. M. Akin. The competition ended when the Legislature gave Tyler its own intermediate appellate court. But, it also gave that court three of the counties that had been in the Sixth District, namely Smith, Cherokee, and Rains, and provided that the Texarkana and Tyler courts would share Hopkins, Wood, Upshur, Rusk, Panola, and Gregg counties. This established the Sixth District at its present number of nineteen counties.

In 2005, the Legislature removed Hopkins and Panola counties from the Twelfth District (Tyler) and gave those counties to the Sixth District (Texarkana), exclusively.

## **The Cases Heard**

As reflected in the court's original name, it was created to hear appeals in civil cases only. This was consistent with the jurisdiction for all other intermediate appellate courts in the state at that time. These courts exercised jurisdiction in only civil cases until 1981, when the Legislature expanded their jurisdiction to include criminal cases. That is when the word "Civil" was dropped from the court's title.

The first case decided by the Texarkana Court of Civil Appeals was styled *L.M. Jesse vs. H.L. DeShong*. This was an appeal from the District Court in Lamar County. DeShong, defendant in the trial court, had executed a bond authorizing him to engage in the sale of "spirituous, vinous and malt liquors and medicated bitters capable of producing intoxication, to be drunk on the premises, in quantities of one gallon or less, at the Northeast corner of the Square in the City of Paris, Lamar County, Texas." This bond was conditioned that DeShong would not sell, nor permit to be sold in his place of business, nor give nor permit to be given, any "spirituous, vinous, or malt liquors or medicated bitters, capable of producing intoxication to any person under the age of twenty-one years" and provided for certain monetary penalties for any violation. The plaintiff, L.M. Jesse, sued DeShong for violation of his bond by selling or giving Jesse's eighteen-year-old son "certain spirituous and intoxicating liquor, to-wit: whiskey, in a mixture commonly called Tom and Jerry," and by knowingly permitting his minor son "to loiter and tarry in said place of business for the space of about thirty minutes." The defendant, DeShong, filed a general demur and special exception to the plaintiff's original petition, contending he should be

let off the hook for selling Jesse's young son a "Tom and Jerry" because the law enforcing the bond he allegedly breached had been repealed by the Baskin-McGregor law (the so-called "local option" law), and pursuant to that law, the good citizens of Lamar County had voted to prohibit the sale of intoxicating liquors in Lamar County. The trial court sustained the defendant's general demur and special exception and dismissed the plaintiff's case. Jesse appealed, and the Texarkana court, in its first decision, delivered on November 7, 1907, reversed the trial court and held that the Baskin-McGregor law did not repeal the law in force before that enactment authorizing the recovery of penalties on the bonds of retail liquor dealers, and remanded the case for a trial. Interestingly, one of the lawyers for the plaintiff—who lost in the trial court, but won on appeal—was William Hodges, one of the first three justices appointed to sit on the Sixth Court of Civil Appeals. However, the writing justice noted at the end of his twelve-page opinion that Justice Hodges did not participate in the deciding of that first case.

## **The Justices**

Twenty-eight justices have served on the court in its 117 years of existence. That sounds like a small number for such a long time. Longevity, however, is a tradition on this court. The original three justices stayed for twenty-three years! Three others served twenty years or longer, and five served more than fifteen years. The longest time served by any one justice is twenty-nine years. The shortest time served is two months.

Of the twenty-eight justices who have served on the Sixth Court, eight came from Bowie County, five from Harrison County, four each from Gregg, two from Hopkins County, two from Rusk County, and one each from Cherokee, Wood, Marion, Lamar, Titus, Upshur, and Cass Counties. More than half served as district judges before serving on the appellate bench. Three were elevated to the Texas Supreme Court, and one resigned to become the Attorney General of Texas.

The first three justices were appointed by Governor Tom Campbell and were sworn into office on August 5, 1907. Samuel Priest Willson, from Cherokee County, was appointed Chief Justice. Richard B. Levy, from Gregg County, and William Hodges, from Lamar County, were appointed Associate Justices. The court's entire staff consisted of one clerk, Eli T. Rosborough, from Harrison County, and one stenographer, Mary DeLoach, from Texarkana. These five individuals—the three justices and their two staff members—served together for more than 23 years. However, after this long tenure together, each of the original justices was defeated in three successive elections.

Justice Hodges was the first to go. He was defeated in the election of 1930 by Grover Sellers, from Hopkins County. After leaving office, Justice Hodges opened an office on the second floor of the Municipal Building and practiced appellate law. His successor, Justice Sellers, resigned shortly after the start of his second term and was then elected as the Attorney General of Texas. Following that service, he was appointed a justice on the Twelfth Court of Civil Appeals at Tyler and served on that court for a number of years. Until very recently, Grover Sellers was probably the only justice in the history of Texas to serve as a regular justice on *two* separate courts of appeals.

When Justice Sellers resigned from the Texarkana court in February 1937, Governor James V. Allred appointed Isaac N. (“Ike”) Williams, District Judge from Titus County, as his replacement. Justice Williams was the grandfather of Josh R. Morriss, III, seventh Chief Justice of the court. Upon his retirement in 1954, a banquet was held in his honor at which his pastor made these remarks: “Ike Williams [is] a bewildering confusion of maturity and youth. He [is] old as a [man], yet ever young in heart. The youth in his heart still shines in his eyes, and comes out through his remarkable sense of humor and keen wit.”

When Justice Williams retired, he was replaced by Matt Davis, a former Justice of the Peace and State Representative from Upshur County, and one of most colorful justices to serve on the court. Justice Davis took great pride in his humble beginnings. He once recused himself in a case and wrote an opinion on why he considered himself disqualified. To write such an opinion was within itself somewhat unusual. That recusal opinion was kind of a summary of the events in his life that had made it possible for him to become a lawyer. For example, he wrote:

When I decided it was impossible for me to attend college, I decided to get my law degree by home study. I traded two frying size chickens and a mess of turnip greens for my first law book.

Justice Davis died in office, and it is said that, in keeping with his instructions, he was buried in a pine box and wearing overalls. Upon his death, Governor Dolph Briscoe appointed William J. Cornelius, a District Attorney from Jefferson, Marion County, as his replacement.

Justice Cornelius served on the court as an associate justice for four years and was then elevated to the position of Chief Justice, a position he held until his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday, June 6, 2002. Chief Justice Cornelius served on the court for twenty-nine years, longer than any other justice in the history of the court. In addition to being highly respected for his scholarly opinions, Justice Cornelius has served in many positions of distinction with the State Bar Association, has authored numerous articles for various law journals and periodicals, and has written a book concerning our criminal justice system. In 1999, he received the Outstanding Jurist Award, the highest award any judge in Texas—state or federal—can receive.

When Justice Cornelius was elevated from Associate Justice to Chief Justice, a prominent member of the Texarkana Bar, Stephen Oden, was appointed to Justice Cornelius’ former position. Justice Oden resigned after only one year on the bench and was replaced by Bowie County District Judge, Bun Hutchinson.

Justice Hutchinson was from DeKalb and had served as a district judge *twice* before becoming an appellate judge. He first served two years as judge of the 102<sup>nd</sup> Judicial District and later served five years as judge of the 5<sup>th</sup> Judicial District. He was an associate justice on the Texarkana appellate court for seven years. Upon his retirement in 1985, his old law school classmate, Harry Friedman, was quoted as saying that Justice Hutchinson was a great appellate justice, due to “his sense of ethics, his love of work, and his scholarly abilities.” Governor Mark White replaced Justice Hutchinson with the appointment of Harrison County District Judge, Ben Z. Grant.

Judge Grant brought a wealth of experience to the court. Not only had he served as a district judge for five years, he also had been a member of the Texas Legislature for ten years, six of which he served as Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee. Justice Grant's writing ability—both legal and literary—is well known. He retired from the appellate bench in 2002 after more than seventeen years' service. He ran unsuccessfully for Lt. Governor of Texas in 2006.

Judge Jack Carter was elected to succeed Justice Grant and took office on January 1, 2003. Before ascending to the appellate bench, Justice Carter served with distinction as District Judge of the 5th Judicial District Court of Bowie and Cass Counties for more than twenty-one years. Justice Carter retired in 2014, after his second term with the court.

Justice Ralph Burgess took office on January 1, 2015, after being elected to succeed Justice Carter. Before being elected to the appellate bench, Justice Burgess served as District Judge of the 5th Judicial District Court of Bowie and Cass Counties for twelve years. He was elected for a second term on the appellate court. After serving seven years, he decided to retire and go back into private practice in Texarkana.

Charles van Cleef of Longview, Texas, who practiced trial and appellate law for almost thirty years throughout Eastern Texas and numerous federal courts, was appointed in 2022 by Governor Greg Abbott, then subsequently elected, to finish out Justice Burgess's term of office and is currently on the court.

The first Chief Justice of the Sixth Court of Civil Appeals, Samuel Priest Willson, was the great-uncle of J. W. Summers, second Chief Justice of the Twelfth Court of Appeals in Tyler. Chief Justice Willson died in office after his defeat in the election of 1932, but before his term expired at the end of that year. He had served as Chief Justice for twenty-five years and was defeated by Bowie County District Judge George W. Johnson. Although Judge Johnson had won the election, the governor appointed Myron W. Blalock, a prominent citizen of Harrison County who was active in national politics, to serve the two months remaining on Chief Justice Willson's term. Chief Justice Blalock holds the record for serving the shortest period of time of any justice on the court.

George W. Johnson served almost two terms as the court's third Chief Justice when he too died in office, *literally*—the newspaper reported that he was “seized” with a heart attack while in his court chambers. Chief Justice Johnson's grandson and namesake is George L. McWilliams, another outstanding member of the Texarkana Bar.

Justice Reuben A. Hall, an Associate Justice on the court at the time of Chief Justice Johnson's untimely death, was elevated to the Chief Justice's position. Chief Justice Hall was from Harrison County and was the brother of Sam Hall, Sr., a long-time District Judge of Harrison County, whose son, Sam Hall, Jr., served in Congress for a number of years and was then appointed a United States District Judge. Before Sam Jr. went into politics, he practiced law in Marshall and regularly appeared in his father's court. Some lawyers in Marshall lamented about the serious disadvantage they felt when they had to appear in court opposite Sam Jr. with Sam Sr. presiding. It has been said that Sam Jr.'s response to this whining was, “If you don't like it, you can appeal to Uncle Rube in Texarkana.” That recourse probably was not much consolation. “Uncle Rube” served as the Chief Justice for thirteen years and retired in 1957.



His replacement as the Chief Justice was T. C. Chadick. Chief Justice Chadick was fond of saying that he was born at a place called Peckerwood Flat in Wood County. At the time of his appointment as the Chief Justice, he had served as the County Attorney of Wood County, as a State Senator, and as District Judge of Wood County. He had served with distinction as the Chief Justice of the Sixth Court for more than twenty years when he was appointed to the Texas Supreme Court. Chief Justice Chadick was replaced on the Court of Civil Appeals by Justice William J. Cornelius, who was moved up to the position of Chief Justice from his position as an Associate Justice.

When Chief Justice Cornelius was forced into retirement by the mandatory retirement age rule, Governor Rick Perry appointed Josh R. Morriss, III, a Texarkana native and grandson of former Justice I. N. Williams, to serve as Chief Justice until the next General Election. Chief Justice Morriss won that election to serve the remainder of Chief Justice Cornelius' term.

Chief Justice Morriss was then elected, without opposition, to a full term of his own. He went on to serve two more terms as Chief Justice and retired in 2022.

Chief Justice Morriss was replaced by Scott E. Stevens, who moved up to the position of Chief Justice from his position as an Associate Justice. Prior to joining the court, Chief Justice Stevens, a Longview native and member of the Gregg County Bar, handled litigation matters in both state and federal courts throughout East Texas for twenty-four years. He ran unopposed to fill the vacant Chief Justice position. Chief Justice Stevens currently holds this position with the court.

The third of the original three justices was Richard B. Levy, whose tenure on the court for more than twenty-seven years is second only to that of Chief Justice Cornelius. He was defeated for re-election in 1934 by Reuben Hall, District Judge from Harrison County. After Justice Levy's defeat, he returned to Longview where he practiced law. Justice Levy had been a Captain in the Spanish-American War, and immediately preceding his appointment to the Court of Civil Appeals, served as Judge of the Fourth District Court in Gregg and Rusk Counties. His father served as the first District Clerk of Gregg County and was Secretary of State under Governor James Stephen Hogg.

When Reuben Hall, Justice Levy's successor on the Court of Civil Appeals, was moved up to the Chief Justice position, his replacement as an associate justice was Ralph Hicks Harvey, Judge of the 5<sup>th</sup> District Court from Cass County. Justice Harvey served as an associate justice for five years and was then appointed to the Texas Supreme Court but served only one year on the high court.

Justice Harvey was replaced on the Court of Civil Appeals by Elmer L. Lincoln who had been District Attorney in Bowie County. Justice Lincoln served less than five years before he died in office in 1953. He was replaced by William J. Fanning from Hopkins County. Justice Fanning was a former Assistant Attorney General of Texas and a former County Attorney of Hopkins County. He served on the Court of Civil Appeals for sixteen years before retiring at the end of 1970.

C. L. Ray, from Harrison County, was elected to succeed Justice Fanning. Justice Ray had served as County Judge of Harrison County and as a member of the Texas House of Representatives before his election to the appellate bench. At the time of his election, he was practicing law in Marshall with Ben Z. Grant, who later also served as Justice on the Sixth Court. Justice Ray served on the Texarkana court for almost ten years before being elected to the Texas Supreme Court. When he resigned from the Court of Civil Appeals at the end of 1980, he was replaced by Bowie County District Judge Charles Bleil.

Justice Bleil sat on the Texarkana appellate court for more than fourteen years and resigned in 1996 to become a United States Magistrate Judge in Fort Worth. Governor George W. Bush then appointed District Judge Larry Starr from Gregg County to succeed Justice Bleil. Justice Starr served for six months and was replaced in the next General Election by Fourth District Judge, Donald R. Ross, from Rusk County. Justice Ross had also served as the County/District Attorney of Rusk County. Justice Ross also served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Thailand. He retired from the Sixth Court of Appeals in 2006 and is now practicing law with Haltom & Doan in Plano, Texas.

Bailey C. Moseley, of Marshall, was elected to succeed him. At the time of his election, Justice Moseley had practiced law for many years and was a prominent member of the Harrison County Bar Association. Justice Moseley ran and was elected for two more terms of office. He retired at the end of his second term and was succeeded by Scott E. Stevens.

On November 30, 2022, Jeff Rambin was appointed by Governor Abbott to finish out the two-year term of Justice Stevens. Justice Rambin currently holds the position as an associate justice. At the start of his career, Justice Rambin received his oath as an attorney from Justice Donald R. Ross, who was then on the district court bench in Rusk County. A photo of that ceremony is in his office today. Also in his office is a file-marked copy of his first appellate brief from 1996. It was submitted to the Sixth Court of Appeals. Upon appointment, Justice Rambin moved to Bowie County.

## The Staff

In the court's 117-year history, it has had eleven chief clerks. The first one, Eli T. Rosborough, served for twenty-seven years. Mr. Rosborough left the court at the same time the last of the original three justices left. Before Justice Richard Levy left office, he was instrumental in selecting Mr. Rosborough's successor, Robert Blanchard Hollingsworth. Mr. Hollingsworth had been the District Clerk of Red River County, and Justice Levy had apparently been impressed by the records the appellate court received from that county. When Mr. Rosborough let it be known he was retiring, Justice Levy enticed Mr. Hollingsworth to become the court's second chief clerk.

Mr. Hollingsworth's eleven-year tenure as the clerk came to a tragic end. Early on the morning of July 9, 1945, the janitor at the Municipal Building found him hanging at the end of a rope attached to the top of a ladder in a closet of the court's conference room. His death was ruled a suicide. The write-up about his death that appeared in the Texarkana paper had this to say:

Only recently [Mr. Hollingsworth] had figured in the news when state auditors discovered he had spent \$2,618 of his own funds for the support of the court of civil appeals during the past six years. This unselfish act was unknown to the members of the court and was not discovered until the auditors found that state appropriations for the court were insufficient and that Mr. Hollingsworth had been making up the difference at the rate of \$400 a year from his own pocket.

Although he willingly gave the facts of his expenditures on behalf of the court to a newspaper reporter, his associates said the published story was a great source of embarrassment to him inasmuch as he was a more or less timid or unassuming individual. He begged members of the court to forget about the incident. They, however, immediately began taking steps for sufficient state appropriations for the court and a refund of Mr. Hollingsworth's money.

Mr. Hollingsworth's successor was Marvin E. ("Stokes") Merrill. After those first three male clerks, all the remaining clerks have been females, beginning with Mary Louise Gilmer, appointed in 1961. The second female clerk was Lonnie E. Jones, mother of Craig Henry, a judge on the County Court at Law of Bowie County.

One well-known clerk in recent times called herself "the old warhorse," Louise Waldrop Lohse. Ms. Lohse was replaced in 1990 by one of her deputy clerks, Tibby Thomas Hopkins. Ms. Hopkins served faithfully and efficiently until she retired at the end of 2000 and was replaced by her daughter-in-law, Autumn Thomas. Ms. Thomas served only three months and resigned to return to school administration at Texas High School in Texarkana. She was replaced by Chief Justice Cornelius's long-time legal assistant, Linda Rogers. Ms. Rogers retired on December 31, 2005, and was replaced by the Court's long-time financial officer and former legal assistant and deputy clerk, Debra K. Autrey.

In 2006, the Court created the position of executive assistant and appointed former legal assistant, Diana Tucker, as the first to occupy that position. Ms. Tucker retired in 2012. Paul Caver was hired to replace her.

The court has also employed eleven legal assistants and seventeen deputy clerks over the years. Six of those employees were previously employed with the Atchley Russell Waldrop & Hlavinka law firm.

Funds to employ lawyer assistants were not made available to the appellate courts until the mid-1970s. The Sixth Court of Appeals hired its first law clerk (briefing attorney) in 1975, Roy N. Hearne. Including Mr. Hearne, the court has had a total of some 84 law clerks over the past 31 years. Those attorneys were hired their first year out of law school on a temporary basis, for one or two years.

Beginning in the mid-1980s, the court started hiring permanent staff counsel and has employed twenty-one such lawyers since that time. Seven of the court's staff counsel were first employed as law clerks and continued with the court for a time as permanent staff counsel. They were: Winonia Griffin, Sharon Sund, Stacy Stanley, Lisa Shoalmire, Justin McEwen, Carrie Simpson, and Bryce Runkle.

In 2006, having law clerks changed to having permanent staff attorneys, who included: Kristi McCasland, Shivali Sharma, Michael Skotnik, James Smith, Randy Goodwin, and Leisa Pearlman. The current staff attorneys are: Leisa Pearlman (chief staff attorney), Michael Skotnik, Shivali Sharma, Randle Smolarz, Christie Adams, and Alyssa Racca.

Four other lawyers now practicing in Texarkana also started their careers as law clerks for the Sixth Court of Appeals: Robert Weber, Troy Hornsby, Lisa Shoalmire, and Jessica Dupree. Two former law clerks, Carly Slack Anderson and Scott Dolin, went on to serve as clerks for U.S. District Judge, David Folsom, in Texarkana. At least two former law clerks, Lauren Parrish and Gena Slaughter, served as district judges: Judge Parrish in Gilmer and Judge Slaughter in Dallas. Five lawyers from the community served as summer interns at the Sixth Court of Appeals: Jeff Fletcher, JoAnn Howard, Erin Dinsmore, Jessica L. Powers, and Eric Marks.



# Justices & Staff

## SIXTH COURT OF APPEALS—TEXARKANA

### CHIEF JUSTICES\*

1	Samuel P. Willson	Cherokee	08/05/1907 to 10/16/1932	25 years
5	Myron G. Blalock	Harrison	10/26/1932 to 12/31/1932	2 months
6	George W. Johnson	Bowie	01/01/1933 to 01/08/1944	11 years
7	Reuben A. Hall**	Harrison	01/20/1944 to 01/12/1957	13 years
13	T. C. Chadick***	Wood	01/12/1957 to 10/05/1977	20 years
15	William J. Cornelius**	Marion	10/06/1977 to 06/05/2002	25 years
22	Josh R. Morriss, III	Bowie	06/11/2002 to 12/31/2022	20 years
26	Scott E. Stevens**	Gregg	01/01/2023 to present	

### JUSTICES – PLACE 2\*

2	Richard B. Levy	Gregg	08/05/1907 to 12/31/1934	27 years
7	Reuben A. Hall	Harrison	01/01/1935 to 01/19/1944	9 years
9	Ralph Hicks Harvey***	Cass	01/20/1944 to 03/01/1949	5 years
10	Elmer H. Lincoln	Bowie	03/01/1949 to 12/21/1953	4 years
11	William J. Fanning	Hopkins	01/09/1954 to 12/31/1970	16 years
14	C. L. Ray***	Harrison	01/01/1971 to 11/24/1980	9 years
18	Charles Bleil	Bowie	01/12/1981 to 05/03/1996	15 years
20	Larry Starr	Gregg	06/17/1996 to 12/06/1996	6 months
21	Donald R. Ross	Rusk	12/07/1996 to 12/31/2006	10 years
24	Bailey C. Moseley	Harrison	01/01/2007 to 12/31/2018	12 years
26	Scott E. Stevens	Gregg	01/01/2019 to 12/31/2022	4 years
28	Jeff Rambin	Rusk	01/01/2023 to present	

### JUSTICES – PLACE 3\*

3	William Hodges	Lamar	08/05/1907 to 12/31/1930	23 years
4	Grover Sellers****	Hopkins	01/01/1931 to 02/01/1937	6 years
8	Isaac N. Williams	Titus	02/01/1937 to 12/31/1954	17 years
12	Matt Davis	Upshur	01/01/1955 to 02/06/1973	18 years
15	William J. Cornelius	Marion	02/20/1973 to 10/05/1977	4 years
16	Stephen Oden	Bowie	10/06/1977 to 10/05/1978	1 year
17	Bun L. Hutchinson	Bowie	10/06/1978 to 06/30/1985	7 years
19	Ben Z. Grant	Harrison	08/21/1985 to 12/31/2002	17 years
23	Jack Carter	Bowie	01/01/2003 to 12/31/2014	12 years
25	Ralph K. Burgess	Bowie	01/01/2015 to 01/31/2022	7 years
27	Charles van Cleef	Gregg	05/04/2022 to present	

\*Listed in order of succession; chronological order is shown by the number in the left-hand column.

\*\*Served as Justice before becoming Chief Justice.

\*\*\*Also served on the Supreme Court of Texas.

\*\*\*\*Also served as Justice on the Twelfth Court of Appeals of Texas.

### CHIEF STAFF ATTORNEYS

Dwight A. Brannon	1984 to 1986
James R. Gallman	1986 to 1998
Stacy Stanley	1999 to 2015
Kristi McCasland	2015 to 2023
Leisa Pearlman	2024 to present

### STAFF ATTORNEYS

Winonia Griffin	1981 to 1985
Jim Gallman	1985 to 1986
Sharon Sund	1987 to 1988
Stacy Stanley	1988 to 1999
Lisa Shoalmire	1998 to 2000
George Lang, II	1999 to 2002
Steve Fagen	2000 to 2003
Andy Porter	2002 to 2009
Justin McEwen	2003
Carrie Simpson	2003 to 2010
Bryce Runkle	2004 to 2009, 2010 to 2014
Michael Skotnik	2004 to present
Jessica Selinkoff	2006 to 2008
Shivali Sharma	2008 to present
James Smith	2009 to 2024
Kristi McCasland	2009 to 2015
Randy Goodwin	2014 to 2024
Leisa Pearlman	2015 to present
Leah Golden	2024
Randall Smolarz	2024 to present
Christie Adams	2024 to present
Alyssa Racca	2025 to present

### BRIEFING ATTORNEYS

Roy N. Hearne	1975 to 1976
James S. Robertson, Jr.	1975
David Lee Rosenberg	1976
Mark P. McMahon	1977
Robert H. Renneker	1978
Robert W. Weber	1979
Ann S. Fritts	1979
Steven W. Hoffman	1980
Mark G. Morris	1980
Kathryn A. Snapka	1981
Joe W. Crawford	1981
Cora Lynn Meyer	1981
Sheila Wharton	1981
John R. Mercy	1982
Deborah Kaye Wright	1982
Susan Trull	1982
Lauren L. Parish	1983
John D. Talley	1983
Susan G. Taylor	1984
Cheryl Ellen Gist	1984
Edward M. Carstarphen, III	1984
Harvey Joseph	1985 to 1986
Sharon Sund	1985 to 1986
Robert Ray	1985 to 1986
David Waddill	1986
Jonathan Ernest	1986 to 1987
Evelyn Pulliam	1987
Stacy Stanley	1987 to 1988

David Quan	1987 to 1988
Julie Hatfield	1988
Joan Chachere	1988
Kelly McClendon	1988
Lou Ann Langdon	1988
Steve Conder	1989
Tim Moore	1989
Robert Santos	1989
David Colley	1990
Kim Phelan	1990
Susan Miller	1990 to 1991
Shawn St. Clair	1991
Dennis Sullivan	1991
David Read	1991
Madison Jechow	1992
Drew Coats	1992
Steve Carter	1992 to 1994
Jack Elrod	1993
Carol King	1993 to 1995
Tom Jones	1994 to 1996
Troy Hornsby	1994
Kraig Powell	1995
Pam Linberg	1995
Walter Romano	1996
Johnny Carter	1996
Kami Nedbalek	1996
David Johnson	1997
Patty Carter	1997
Belynda Ortiz	1997 to 1998
Lisa Shoalmire	1997 to 1998
Evan Farrington	1998
Mel Koehler	1998
Jeff Rusthoven	1998
Shelly Skeen	1998
Tania Hepfner	1999
Judy Pace	1999
Molly Davis	1999
Gena Slaughter	1999
Carly Slack Anderson	2000
Scott Dolin	2000
Mandi Matlock	2000
Michael Massiatte	2000
Stuart Newsom	2001
Marta McLaughlin	2001
Will Rogers	2001
David Armendariz	2001
Jessica Dupree	2002
Jessica Brown	2002
Carrie Simpson	2002
Bart Rankin	2002
Justin McEwen	2002 to 2003
Bryce Runkle	2003 to 2004
Brent Alldredge	2003
John Perkins	2003
Jigna Dalal	2004
Don Biard	2005



### CLERKS

Eli T. Rosborough	08/05/1907 to 01/31/1933	26 years
Robert Blanchard Hollingsworth	01/01/1934 to 07/09/1945	11 years
Marvin E. Merrill	07/11/1945 to 01/31/1961	16 years
Mary Louise Gilmer	02/01/1961 to 01/04/1971	10 years
Lonnie Jones	01/04/1971 to 07/15/1974	3 years
Bonnie O'Neill	07/15/1974 to 02/28/1976	2 years
Louise Waldrop Lohse	03/01/1976 to 02/18/1990	14 years
Tibby Thomas Hopkins*	03/15/1990 to 12/31/2000	10 yrs., 9 mos.
Autumn Thomas	01/01/2001 to 04/24/2001	3 mos., 24 days
Linda Rogers**	04/25/2001 to 12/31/2005	4 yrs., 8 mos.
Debra K. Autrey***	01/01/2006 to present	

### EXECUTIVE ASSISTANTS

Diana J. Tucker	01/01/2006 to 10/31/2012
Paul Caver	10/15/2012 to present

### ACCOUNTANTS

Debbie Autrey	1994 to 2005
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### LEGAL ASSISTANTS

Bonnie O'Neill	19__ to 1974
Rebecca Anne Haltom	1974
LaJohn Patterson	1981 to 1985
Sandra L. Talent	1984
Linda Rogers	1984 to 2001
Debbie Autrey	1985 to 1986
Susan Bishop	1985 to 1999
Diana Tucker	1986 to 2005
Carol Pope	1999 to present
Shera Morgan	2001 to 2022
Sandra Luna	2023
Marshelle Helms	2023 to present

### DEPUTY CLERKS

Edna F. Garner	1953
Edna G. Richmond	1955
Betty Graves	1971
Marilyn Myers	1971
Frances C. Murdock	1971 to 1972 (Chief Deputy)
Beverly J. Terry	1971 to 1974
Louise Lohse	1971 to 1976
Lynda Poore	1976 to 1998
Joyce Kastler	1976 to 1984
Lillian Powell	1983 to 1986
Tibby Hopkins	1985 to 1990
Debbie Autrey	1986 to 1994
Ann Hoover	1990 to 1992
Patty Carter	1992 to 1994
Tania Bailey	1994 to 1998
Kim Robinson	1998 to present
Molly Thornton	1998 to present

### STENOGRAPHERS

Mary DeLoach	1907 to 1930
Inez Bentley	1953

\*Deputy clerk who later became Clerk of the Court.

\*\*Legal assistant who later became Clerk of the Court.

\*\*\*Long-time financial officer, former legal assistant, and deputy clerk who later became Clerk of the Court.

SECURITY OFFICERS

J. W. Johnson 1993 to 2003

PORTERS

Aaron Thouston 1965

CUSTODIANS

Aubrey C. Day 1975 to 1985

Betty James 1985 to 1995

Lillie Monroe 1995 to 2015



# 2023 Court



## Scott E. Stevens

Chief Justice 2023–Present

Position:	Twenty-sixth justice; eighth chief justice
How first selected:	Elected
Dates of service:	January 1, 2019, to December 31, 2022 (Associate Justice) January 1, 2023, to Present (Chief Justice)
Home county:	Gregg
Comment:	First Chief Justice from Gregg County

## Charles van Cleef

Justice 2022–Present

Position:	Twenty-seventh justice; Place 3
How first selected:	Appointed by Governor Greg Abbott
Dates of service:	May 4, 2022, to present
Home county:	Gregg



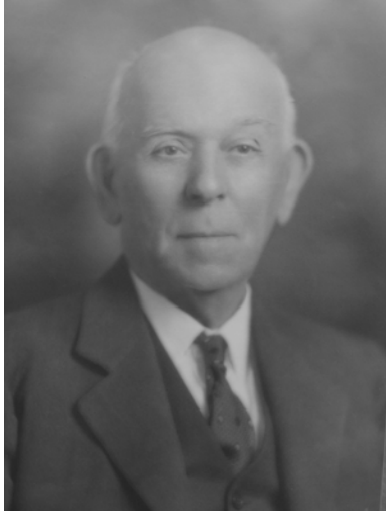
## Jeff Rambin

Justice 2023–Present

Position:	Twenty-eighth justice; Place 2
How first selected:	Appointed by Governor Greg Abbott
Dates of service:	January 1, 2023, to present
Home county:	Rusk



Chief  
Justices  
&  
Justices



# Samuel P. Willson

Chief Justice 1907–1932

Position:	First chief justice
How first selected:	Appointed by Governor Thomas Mitchell Campbell
Dates of service:	August 5, 1907, to October 16, 1932
Home county:	Cherokee
Notes:	The great uncle of J. W. Summers, second Chief Justice of the Twelfth Court of Appeals in Tyler.

# Myron G. Blalock

Chief Justice 1932

Position:	Second chief justice
How first selected:	Appointed by Governor Ross S. Sterling
Dates of service:	October 26, 1932, to December 31, 1932
Home county:	Harrison
Other public service:	Member, Texas House of Representatives





## George W. Johnson

Chief Justice 1933–1944

Position:	Third chief justice
How first selected:	Elected
Dates of service:	January 1, 1933, to January 8, 1944
Home county:	Bowie
Other public service:	County Attorney; District Judge

## Reuben A. Hall

Justice 1935–1944  
Chief Justice 1944–1957

Positions:	Seventh justice; fourth chief justice
How first selected:	Elected
Dates of service:	January 1, 1935, to January 19, 1944 (Associate Justice) January 20, 1944, to January 11, 1957 (Chief Justice)
Home county:	Harrison
Other public service:	District Judge





## T. C. Chadick

Chief Justice 1957–1977

Position:	Fifth chief justice
How first selected:	Appointed by Governor Allan Shivers
Dates of service:	January 12, 1957, to October 5, 1977
Home county:	Wood
Other public service:	County Attorney; Member, Texas State Senate; District Judge; Justice, Texas Supreme Court

## William J. Cornelius

Justice 1973–1977  
Chief Justice 1977–2002

Positions:	Fifteenth justice; sixth chief justice
How first selected:	Appointed by Governor Dolph Briscoe
Dates of service:	February 20, 1973, to October 5, 1977 (Associate Justice) October 6, 1977, to June 5, 2002 (Chief Justice)
Home county:	Marion
Other public service:	County Attorney; District
Attorney Notes:	Served longer than any other Justice (29 years); Outstanding Jurist Award (1999)







## Josh R. Morriss, III

Chief Justice 2002–2022

Position:	Twenty-second justice; seventh chief justice
How first selected:	Appointed by Governor Rick Perry
Dates of service:	June 11, 2002, to December 31, 2022
Home county:	Bowie
Comment:	Grandson of former Justice Isaac N. Williams

## Scott E. Stevens

Chief Justice 2023–Present

Position:	Twenty-sixth justice; eighth chief justice
How first selected:	Elected
Dates of service:	January 1, 2019, to December 31, 2022 (Associate Justice) January 1, 2023, to present (Chief Justice)
Home county:	Gregg
Comment:	First Chief Justice from Gregg County





## Richard B. Levy

Justice 1907–1934

Position:	One of the three original justices
How first selected:	Appointed by Governor Thomas Mitchell Campbell
Dates of service:	August 5, 1907, to December 31, 1934
Home county:	Gregg
Other public service:	Captain, Spanish-American War; District Judge

## William Hodges

Justice 1907–1930

Position:	One of the three original justices
How first selected:	Appointed by Governor Thomas Mitchell Campbell
Dates of service:	August 5, 1907, to December 31, 1930
Home county:	Lamar
Other public service:	Member, Texas House of Representatives





## Grover Sellers

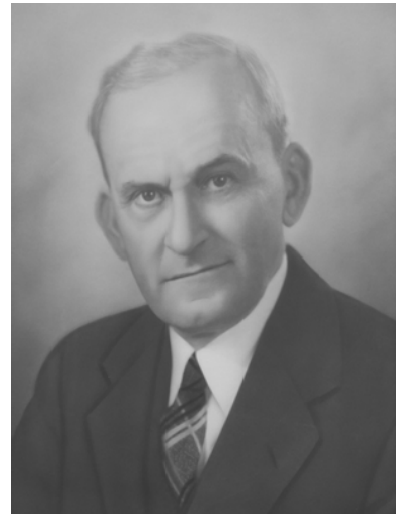
Justice 1931–1937

Position:	Fourth justice
How first selected:	Elected
Dates of service:	January 1, 1931, to February 1, 1937
Home county:	Hopkins
Other public service:	Attorney General of Texas (1944-46); Justice, Twelfth Court of Civil Appeals at Tyler

## Isaac N. Williams

Justice 1937–1954

Position:	Eighth justice
How first selected:	Appointed by Governor James V. Allred
Dates of service:	February 1, 1937, to December 31, 1954
Home county:	Titus
Other public service:	District Judge
Note:	Grandfather of Josh R. Morriss, III, seventh chief justice





## Ralph Hicks Harvey

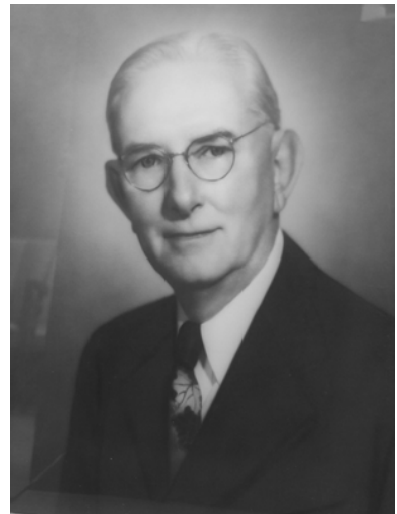
Justice 1944–1949

Position:	Ninth justice
How first selected:	Appointed by Governor Coke R. Stevenson
Dates of service:	January 20, 1944, to February 28, 1949
Home county:	Cass
Other public service:	District Judge; Justice, Texas Supreme Court

## Elmer H. Lincoln

Justice 1949–1953

Position:	Tenth justice
How first selected:	Appointed by Governor Beauford H. Jester
Dates of service:	March 1, 1949, to December 21, 1953
Home county:	Bowie
Other public service:	District Attorney





# William J. Fanning

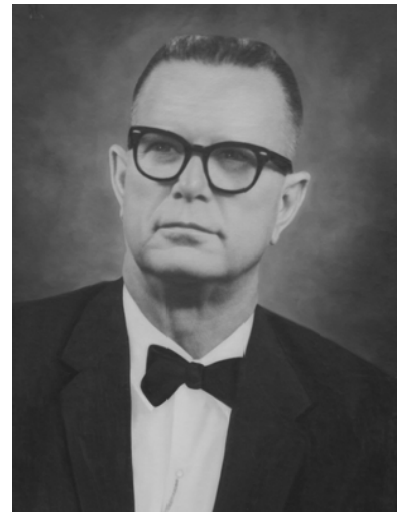
Justice 1954–1970

Position:	Eleventh justice
How first selected:	Appointed by Governor Allan Shivers
Dates of service:	January 9, 1954, to December 31, 1970
Home county:	Hopkins
Other public service:	County Attorney; Assistant Attorney General of Texas

# Matt Davis

Justice 1955–1973

Position:	Twelfth justice
How first selected:	Elected
Dates of service:	January 1, 1955, to February 6, 1973
Home county:	Upshur
Other public service:	Justice of the Peace; Member, Texas House of Representatives





## C. L. Ray

Justice 1971–1980

Position:	Fourteenth justice
How first selected:	Elected
Dates of service:	January 1, 1971, to November 24, 1980
Home county:	Harrison
Other public service:	County Judge; Member, Texas House of Representatives; Justice, Texas Supreme Court

## Stephen Oden

Justice 1977–1978

Position:	Sixteenth justice
How first selected:	Appointed by Governor Dolph Briscoe
Dates of service:	October 6, 1977, to October 5, 1978
Home county:	Bowie





## Bun L. Hutchinson

Justice 1978–1985

Position:	Seventeenth justice
How first selected:	Appointed by Governor Dolph Briscoe
Dates of service:	October 6, 1978, to June 30, 1985
Home county:	Bowie
Other public service:	District judge

## Charles Bleil

Justice 1981–1996

Position:	Eighteenth justice
How first selected:	Appointed by Governor William P. Clements
Dates of service:	January 12, 1981, to May 3, 1996
Home county:	Bowie
Other public service:	District Judge; United States Magistrate Judge





## Ben Z. Grant

Justice 1985–2002

Position:	Nineteenth justice
How first selected:	Appointed by Governor Mark White
Dates of service:	August 21, 1985, to December 31, 2002
Home county:	Harrison
Other public service:	Member, Texas House of Representatives; District Judge

## Larry Starr

Justice 1996

Position:	Twentieth justice
How first selected:	Appointed by Governor George W. Bush
Dates of service:	June 17, 1996, to December 6, 1996
Home county:	Gregg
Other public service:	County Court-at-Law Judge; District Judge







## Donald R. Ross

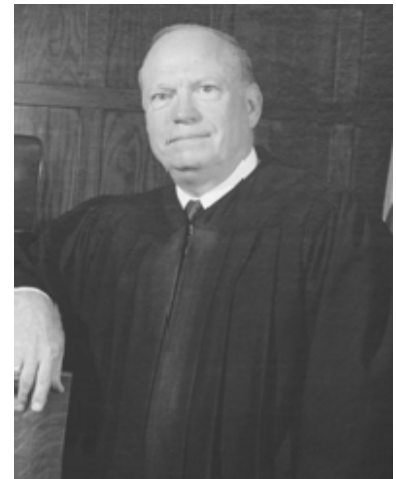
Justice 1996–2006

Position:	Twenty-first justice
How first selected:	Elected
Dates of service:	December 7, 1996, to December 31, 2006
Home county:	Rusk
Other public service:	Peace Corps Volunteer; County/District Attorney; District Judge

## Jack Carter

Justice 2003–2014

Position:	Twenty-third justice
How first selected:	Elected
Dates of service:	January 1, 2003, to December 31, 2014
Home county:	Bowie
Other public service:	District Judge





# Bailey C. Moseley

Justice 2007–2018

Position: Twenty-fourth justice  
How first selected: Elected  
Dates of service: January 1, 2007, to  
December 31, 2018  
Home county: Harrison

# Ralph K. Burgess

Justice 2015–2022

Position: Twenty-fifth justice  
How first selected: Elected  
Dates of service: January 1, 2015, to  
January 31, 2022  
Home county: Bowie  
Other public service: District Judge





# Charles van Cleef

Justice 2022–Present

Position:	Twenty-seventh justice
How first selected:	Appointed by Governor Greg Abbott
Dates of service:	May 4, 2022, to present
Home county:	Gregg

# Jeff Rambin

Justice 2023–Present

Position:	Twenty-eighth justice
How first selected:	Appointed by Governor Greg Abbott
Dates of service:	January 1, 2023, to present
Home county:	Rusk

