



THE QUARTERLY JOURNAL

CHATTANOOGA CHAPTER OF THE FEDERAL BAR ASSOCIATION

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AN ENDURING SYMBOL OF HOPE, HISTORY, AND JUSTICE: THE JOEL W. SOLOMON FEDERAL BUILDING



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its courtrooms, it represents a culmination of effort offered, hopefully, in the name of some greater good.

But apart from its present-day significance, the Solomon Building stands for something

more. It is a proud centerpiece of a national architectural movement, and it embodies a forward-looking government, a belief in something greater than the sum of its parts, and the meaningful cooperation between the public and private sectors.

In 1930, the nation was mired in the depths of the Great Depression, and recovery seemed far from certain. In an effort to stimulate the national economy, the Office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury – colloquially known as simply “the Office” – set about developing an ambitious architectural program. The Office served as the federal government’s construction arm, and its federally-funded architects were directly involved in the design and construction of government facilities across the country. The Office was prolific, to say the very least: for a five-year period during the 1930’s “New Deal” era, federal architects oversaw construction that took place at a staggering average rate of well over one building *per day*.

In 1913, Congress passed legislation prohibiting the Office from engaging private firms to design major federal projects. But as the

To a casual observer, the Joel W. Solomon Federal Building might seem monolithic, a stark representation of federal power out of place among its more genteel neighbors. To the innumerable men and women subject to judgment within, it is a place of high drama, where lives can – and frequently do – change in an instant. To those who practice law in



Depression took hold, new building projects dried up, and many architects – like other Americans from all walks of life – found themselves struggling to find work. Conversely, the Office was rapidly expanding to meet the production demands of a legislature frantically attempting to rescue a faltering economy. Legislation passed in March 1930 permitted the Office to contract with private architects for direct appointments to design and construct federal buildings. These collaborative appointments proved to be a novel and successful way to develop a federal infrastructure.

Chattanooga’s U.S. Post Office and Courthouse (as the Solomon Building was originally called) was the product of one such appointment. In July 1930, the Office publicly solicited design proposals for the Courthouse, which would stand as a new and contemporary symbol of the federal government’s presence in the Tennessee Valley. Among others, Chattanooga native Reuben Harrison Hunt submitted a proposal for the new building. Hunt was one of the most productive American architects of his day, and he aggressively lobbied to ensure his selection. Known as much for his salesmanship as for his considerable architectural acumen, he even went so far as to write Adolph Ochs (publisher of the *New York Times* and the *Chattanooga Times*) in an attempt to secure public approbation of his bid. Although Ochs declined, citing a longstanding policy against such endorsements, Hunt prevailed in his efforts.

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He received the blessing of Louis A. Simon, the federal government's superintendent of architects, and on April 7, 1931, the R.H. Hunt Company contracted with the United States Government to design and construct the Courthouse.

Shortly before accepting his appointment, Hunt contracted with the New York architectural firm of Shreve, Lamb & Harmon. The precise depth of the firm's involvement is unclear, but it must have been significant, since Hunt agreed to a consulting fee of \$10,000 – nearly 25% of his own commission. The significant fee was no doubt informed by the firm's national reputation. Mere weeks after engaging themselves to Hunt, the New York consultants cut the ribbon on their most recent project, the Empire State Building, which stood for years as the tallest manmade structure in the world.

Despite the architects' widely divergent backgrounds, the Courthouse's general aesthetic goal was clear from the beginning: evoke classical themes, while simultaneously reflecting a modern spirit. Thanks in part to the influence of the out-of-town consultants, the building developed into an archetype of the *Art Moderne* style, a specific variation of Art Deco architecture that emphasized "streamlining" through long horizontal lines and broad curves. Simon complemented the private architects, ensuring that the Courthouse never lost its sense of purpose. It was, after all, a *federal* building, and any proposed ornamentation would either serve to welcome the public or to remind visitors of the solemnity of the proceedings they were about to witness.

A composite of Georgia marble and Midwestern metal, the Courthouse occupies half a city block and cost \$493,000 (equivalent to roughly \$8.5 million in 2012) to complete. Though it is imposing in stature, the Solomon Building is far from the solitary stone monument it appears to be at first glance. Approaching the west-facing main elevation, visitors will immediately notice straight, bold lines that form an uncompromising exterior. Thirteen recessed window bays call to mind the stripes on America's flag. Unbroken marble columns emphasize the building's height and are designed to recall a Roman colonnade. Above them, a band of eagles and stars carved into low relief reminds visitors of the federal presence within.

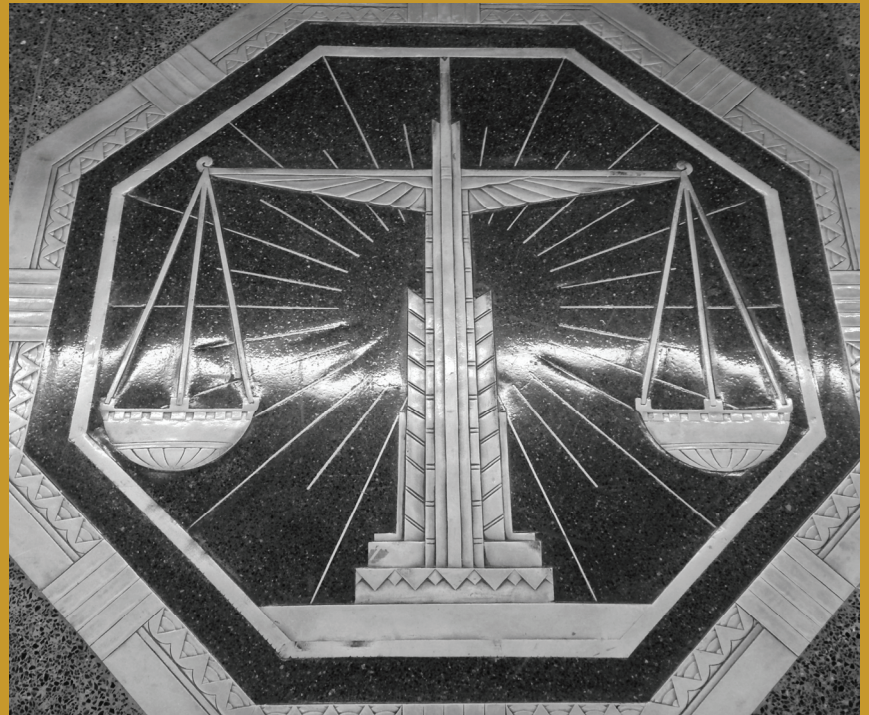


At the building's north and south ends, two towers – included over the objections of Shreve, Lamb & Harmon – stand sentinel over the entry pavilions. Their parapets are encircled with deep horizontal cuts known as "speed lines," meant to evoke energy and forward progress. Carved eagles look down on broad granite steps and prominently demonstrate the power wielded by a rapidly growing federal government. At the entryways, marble yields to aluminum, and authoritarian stone gives way to intricate metalwork. An awning above the doors is inscribed with metal roses so delicate they risk being overlooked. Elegant vegetal patterns snake down the curved window bay, echo into the fluted marble, enter the building, and finally terminate beneath four aluminum eagles, perched atop the interior doors.

The last emblem a visitor sees before entry is the Great Seal of the United States, emblazoned above the doors, situated alongside the seals of the Department of Justice and the Postal Service.

Some have speculated that responsibility for the Courthouse's external appearance belongs primarily to Hunt and Simon, perhaps accounting for the omission of Shreve, Lamb & Harmon from the facility's cornerstone. The New York consultants' participation in the building's exterior design may be muddy, but their impact on the interior is beyond doubt. One of the most interesting elements of the Solomon Building is the striking design similarity it shares with its New York cousin, the Empire State Building, which was completed just as its designers began work in Chattanooga.

The Empire State and the Solomon Buildings both feature strong chevron patterns inlaid in their respective lobby floors. The terrazzo in Chattanooga and the marble in New York reflect long metallic ceilings, each lit from below to articulate decorative themes. At Simon's insistence, however, the geometric frills in the Empire State Building were replaced in the Courthouse with simple stars and conical light fixtures, which he believed to be "more appropriate" for a federal building. Elevator bays pay homage to those in the Empire State Building, including block lettering that is nearly identical to that which is employed throughout the skyscraper. Perhaps most profoundly, the Manhattan icon itself is reflected in the Solomon Building's symbolic heart. Just outside the third-floor courtroom, a large medallion displays the scales of justice, which balance on a



RESEMBLANCE OF EMPIRE PROPORTIONS

A SIDE-BY-SIDE COMPARISON OF THE LOBBIES AND MEDALLIONS OF THE EMPIRE STATE BUILDING (IN GOLD) AND OF THE JOEL W. SOLOMON BUILDING (IN GREY) DEMONSTRATES THE STUNNING SIMILARITY AND STYLISTIC THEME.

stepped pillar. That pillar, set against a radiant black orb, bears a striking resemblance to the ascending profile of the Empire State Building. The similarity is drawn even sharper when the medallion is compared to a figure in the Empire State Building's lobby, which features an image of the skyscraper bearing a more-than-coincidental likeness to the scales depicted in the Solomon Building.

Setting aside other architectural and historical trappings, the Solomon Building's focal point is, and always has been, the third-floor courtroom. The space now known as the "ceremonial courtroom" features burlled-oak paneling throughout and hand-carved cabinetry surrounding the judge's bench. Artisans devoted many long hours to planning and hand-painting the lofty ceiling. Even the courtroom's doorknobs, gallery benches, and custom rope stanchions were designed to blend seamlessly with the "modern federal" theme the building typifies. Portraits on the wall tell the story of the district through its judges. The men depicted include: Judge David M. Key, a Confederate Civil War veteran who endured the public criticism of no less a figure than Mark Twain; Judge Edward Terry Sanford, the District's only Judge to be appointed to the United States Supreme Court; and Judge Frank W. Wilson, who famously presided over the 1964 trial of Jimmy Hoffa.

A highly stylized Sword of Justice hangs prominently behind the judge's bench. Its visible presence symbolizes the power of the law and its objective enforcement. As is traditional, the blade is double-edged to represent truth and reason, which may be brandished by or against any party before the Court. Courthouse legend claims that the sword's placement – directly above the presiding judge's head – deliberately alludes to the Sword of Damocles, reminding both the public and the judge of the responsibility attendant to the Court's power.

Approximately 1% of the Solomon Building's funding was dedicated to interior "embellishments." Drawing from these funds, the Treasury Department's Section of Painting and Sculpture commissioned the courtroom's most visible feature: a \$1,500 mural entitled *Allegory of Chattanooga* (the remainder of the fund paid for *The Mail Carrier*, the cast-aluminum sculpture adorning the Post Office lobby). Painted by J. Hilton

Leech in his Sarasota, Florida studios, *Allegory* was finished in 1937. At the time, the country's interest in murals was revitalized: large, sweeping panoramas conveyed emotionally charged visual messages radio could not.

Leech's studies for the mural, one of which has hung in the first-floor courtroom since 2010, give insight into the finished product. A content review removed some elements that were deemed to border on the offensive, at least as determined by standards prevailing in the 1930's. Originally, the mural's central figure was flanked by two African-Americans, a prisoner and a laborer, both bent at the waist from their exertions. The Treasury department disapproved, and Leech substituted an architect for the figure of the prisoner. The laborer, still stooped to retrieve his bale of cotton, remains the sole African-American represented in the mural.



The personal intervention of R.H. Hunt saw a second change. Hunt suggested the removal of a missionary dressed in the *Cappello Romano* and cassock typical of a Catholic priest. In his place, Leech substituted a bible-carrying clergyman attired in a suit, likely in homage to Samuel Worcester, a Christian minister whose remains are interred in Chattanooga's Brainerd Mission Cemetery. Worcester, a Caucasian activist for the Cherokee, fought the government's treatment of Native Americans, ultimately taking his case to the Supreme Court. Through John Marshall's 1832 decision in *Worcester v. Georgia*, he secured victory and nominal sovereignty for the Cherokee Nation, and he incited President Jackson's famous (though likely misattributed) quote mocking the Chief Justice: "John Marshall has made his decision; now let him enforce it!"

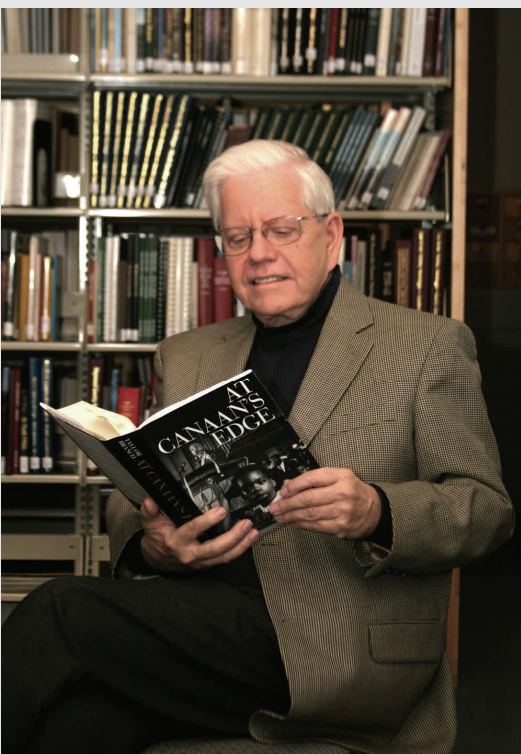
The remainder of *Allegory* was designed to illustrate historical and contemporary elements of the community. Civil War veterans pay homage to soldiers, and a cross marked "1863" likely refers to the war's costly Chattanooga Campaign. Power lines arc across the mural and connect to the Chickamauga Dam, which was under construction at the time *Allegory* was completed. A locomotive steams through the painting, signifying both Chattanooga's status as a prosperous rail hub and the city's irrepressible progress. The background action frames the mural's central figure: a woman clad in white, clutching an infant to her breast. The inclusion of mother and

child at the forefront of the mural suggests that the community depicted in *Allegory* is one of great promise and limitless possibilities.

On completion, the Courthouse's effect was immediately felt. Initially, it inspired regional designs, influencing such buildings as the Polk County Courthouse (another of Hunt's public works) and the U.S. Post Office in Nashville (now known as the Frist Center for the Visual Arts). Shortly thereafter, the Courthouse garnered significant national attention. Publications such as *Architectural Record* and *Architectural Forum* hailed it as typifying a new character of American design. The building was included alongside the Washington Monument, the Treasury Building, and other great landmarks in the 1938 murals *Architecture Under the Government, Old and New*, which hung for years in the Department of Treasury's Washington, D.C. Procurement Office. Ultimately, the Solomon Building was the

object of worldwide acclaim. In 1938, the Courthouse was selected to appear in an international exhibit sponsored by the American Institute of Architects. The touring exhibit showcased 150 American buildings, each selected "to show 'what is considered by architects as fine in design and representative of the best work in the United States.'"

As the years progressed, the Solomon Building underwent many changes. But throughout the decades, one thing remained constant: from the day it was completed, the Joel W. Solomon building has been a representative work with a distinguished legacy. Designed in a style that embodies progress and optimism, the Solomon Building stands as a monument to the spirit of Chattanooga. It is a reminder that cooperation and hope are aspirations shared across generations, as present and profound today as they were in 1933.



CHATTANOOGA CHAPTER ANNUAL MEETING JANUARY 15, 2013

The Chattanooga Chapter is excited to announce that it will hold its Annual Meeting on January 15, 2013, 12:00 p.m., at The Chattanooga. In addition to conducting a brief business meeting, highlighting its public service project and awards received, announcing its new officers, and recognizing its annual award recipients, the Chapter will host University of South Carolina Esteemed Emeritus Professor Dan T. Carter.

Professor Carter, who has been bestowed with the title of being one of the nation's leading authorities on race relations and American politics, will focus his talk on current trends in voting rights in the United States.

In addition to his professorial and academic prestige, Professor Carter is the author and editor of more than 40 articles and seven works of history, including *Scottsboro: A Tragedy of the American South* (1970); *When the War Was Over: the Failure of Self-Reconstruction in the South, 1865-1867* (1985); and *The Politics of Rage: George Wallace, The Origins of the New Conservatism and the Transformation of American Politics* (1995). Professor Carter has also been a frequent contributor on NPR's "Talk of the Nation," and "All Things Considered," as well as "The News Hour with Jim Lehrer" and ABC's "Nightline."

The event is open to the public. Cost for admission is \$30, which includes lunch at The Chattanooga. The Chapter has applied for CLE credit for this event.

For questions or to reserve a seat, please contact Katharine Gardner at carter_chambers@tned.uscourts.gov.

LABOR PAYNE

BRAIN OF THUMBS

Santa brought me a Kindle for Christmas, and then, even better, my wife gave me four days of bachelorhood by taking the kids out of town to her parents. My excitement was palpable. Even though Santa had come and gone without bringing me either a motorcycle or a flamethrower, having an empty house is good enough.

But I didn't sit down to read the Kindle until the end of day number four of my family-free stint. Even when I did sit, I felt uncomfortable. I should probably fix that upstairs window, sweep the living room, walk the dogs, do some yoga, gather the recycling, set a schedule for these activities, make a list...

You see what has happened to me? The simple act of concentration, which should be a lawyer's calling card, evades me more tenaciously every day. Every intentional thought is an obstruction to one hundred and ten other thoughts clamoring to get around it. I force myself to focus on the e-page of my Kindle. My chest feels tight. Then, my mind slowly starts inuring to the gentle ennui of the written word; I start to relax into the narrative... and boom, the backdoor cracks open with tiny voices! Too late.

Every 60 seconds, some young gunner in a job interview proclaims him or herself to be, above all else, a multi-tasker. Of course, this is what the partners need to hear. No one shows up to an interview and says, "Look folks, I'm gonna do but one thing a day, and, ah heck, I'm gonna do it well." No, no. It's better to say that you can walk, chew gum, drive while on the phone, and settle a case with opposing counsel while dictating a complaint . . . to yourself. The problem is, it's just not true. Recent studies of the brain's "executive system," reported in the *NYTimes*, the *Atlantic*, the *BBC*, and elsewhere, show that while we may be able to change activities in rapid succession, we simply cannot concentrate on two things at once without a bad result.

As attorneys, who are in the business of being convincing, we can easily convince ourselves that we are multi-tasking gurus nonetheless. I have observed myself, with help from my cohorts, come in on a Monday morning eager to zealously represent my client while zealously representing all my other clients too. The end result: half-composed emails, missed phone calls, circular conversations, cursory research, way too much coffee, and a day of six-minute increments most correctly billed to ADHD, Inc.

Though a day like this may make you feel exquisitely valuable as you stretch your abilities to meet everyone's needs, keep this in mind: you don't have a single client who values you because of your ability to divide your attention into paper-thin slices among all your other clients. No one pictures her attorney wearing a greasy apron, flipping legal pleadings over a steaming grill, and shouting out case numbers while taking on new disputes during the morning rush.

Bill Gates and the late Steve Jobs have failed thus far to create that "killer app" for the legal profession – as they have for seemingly almost every other profession – but they have managed to turn lawyers into the short order cooks of written discourse. I can now exchange pleasantries and unpleasantries via so many forms of media, I have come to think of my clients as a row of warning icons who appear at the top of my phone accompanied by a chime. Have you ever stopped typing an email message to start typing another email message on your phone, with your thumbs, while you are sitting in front a *computer*? That's a warning sign.

I submit that multi-tasking, especially digitized multi-tasking, is like high fructose corn syrup for the legal mind. You have to actually work to undo the damage and fit in your pants again. So, here are my 2013 New Year's recommendations for restoring your concentration, slowing down your squirrel brain, and thinking through the law: number one . . . Just kidding, I've got a ton of other stuff to do.

Chattanooga Chapter

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UPCOMING EVENTS & CLE

Annual Meeting	January 15, 2013
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day	January 21, 2013
Washington's Birthday	February 18, 2013

WE ARE ON THE WEB:

www.fedbar.org/chattanooga

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAPTER PRESIDENT By Christopher T. Varner



As my tenure draws to a close with the “fiscal cliff” having been avoided, meaning that we will continue to have civil trials, CJA panel attorneys, probation services, and courthouse security, among other things, I am reminded of the importance of not taking for granted the availability of various services provided by our local federal courthouse personnel. Our federal district has done an exceptional job from a budgetary standpoint, operating with a financial cushion in an attempt to avoid laying off employees in the event that cutbacks hit. What this means, though, is that the federal courthouse operates at lower than recommended staffing levels, and in some instances, such as with the law library, with virtually no staffing at all. One of the biggest reasons this is possible is the overall competence of the current federal courthouse personnel, who give the same (if not better) service offered at other federal courthouses only with fewer people. Because the budgetary issues have been handled so well and our federal courthouse personnel are so competent, very little attention is paid to our local federal court system. I point all this out because 1) the people responsible for the planning deserve kudos, 2) the federal employees providing the services deserve kudos, 3) we as a legal community should be cognizant of what we have in order to help preserve it, and 4) isn't this really how we would like to see government operate, careful budgetary management matched with capable employees, rather than throwing up our hands and taking the easy way out with sequestration (automatic, across the board cuts)? It is an unfortunate aspect of the human condition that we often don't appreciate what we have until it's gone. Perhaps the grease should be given to the wheels that aren't squeaky.



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UPCOMING EVENT

YOU ARE INVITED TO ATTEND THE CHATTANOOGA CHAPTER'S ANNUAL MEETING ON JANUARY 15, 2013, 12:00 P.M., AT THE CHATTANOOGAN. OUR FEATURED SPEAKER IS UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA ESTEEMED EMERITUS PROFESSOR DAN T. CARTER. PROFESSOR CARTER WILL SPEAK ON CURRENT TRENDS IN VOTING RIGHTS IN THE UNITED STATES. PLEASE SEE PAGE 5 FOR DETAILS.

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