

Court loans Dred Scott documents for national Supreme Court exhibit

The St. Louis Circuit Court has loaned two original documents from the case file of Dred and Harriet Scott to the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia.

The documents — notices of depositions of each of the Scotts from May 1847 — will be included in the National Constitution Center's core exhibit, "The Story of We the People" during 2017. The exhibit documents and artifacts related to key U.S. Supreme Court cases.

Circuit Clerk Thomas Kloeppinger shipped the documents Dec. 20. Michael Everman, supervising archivist for the local records program under the Missouri State Archives, coordinated the loan.

The documents have been encapsulated between two Mylar sheets by conservators at the lab of the state archives in Jefferson City. They securely packed the documents for shipment by US Art, a fine arts shipping company, which will pick up and send the documents from the archives room the first week of January so they will be at the National Constitution Center in time for the exhibit opening on January 16, 2017.

For a precedent to this loan, the St. Louis Circuit Court loaned the original petitions of Dred and Harriet Scott to the National Constitution Center in 2005 to be displayed as part of their grand opening displays of key documents related to the constitution.

The entire case file for the Dred and Harriet Scott case is stored in a secure and climate-controlled safe in the archives room in the Carnahan Court House as part of the collaborative project begun in 1999 with the Missouri State Archives to preserve and make accessible the records of the St. Louis Circuit Court, 1804-1875. In addition to processing, microfilming, and digitizing more than 30,000 cases files for 1804-1835 and 1861-1868, state field archivists have preserved and digitized more than 300 other slave freedom suits which are stored in the archives rooms in Carnahan Room 245.