

# CAPES SOKOL SUPPORTS FREEDOM SUITS MEMORIAL SCULPTURE

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Capes Sokol is proud to have donated to the Freedom Suits Memorial Sculpture, the [installation of which has now begun](#). This sculpture commemorates the roughly 400 slaves who petitioned the Missouri Courts for their freedom and the courageous individuals that assisted them.

*"This Freedom Suits Memorial will serve as a reminder and, in most cases, as a tribute of a snapshot in St. Louis where fairness, equity, and justice was possible for the enslaved,"*  
*[Adolphus Pruitt](#), President of the St. Louis Chapter of the NAACP.*

The Freedom Suits Memorial Steering Committee [selected sculptor](#) Preston Jackson to design the cast bronze statue featuring several illustrative lessons on the lawsuits and the times. This Memorial Sculpture will be placed near the steps on the east side of the Civil Courts Building in downtown St. Louis, next to the Old Courthouse, where most of the suits were tried. The [St. Louis Bar Foundation](#) is the 501(c)(3) corporation for the Freedom Suits Memorial Sculpture.

## About the Freedom Suits

Between 1812 and 1865, approximately 400 slaves sued in courts throughout Missouri to demand their freedom, assisted by anti-slavery lawyers from the St. Louis area working without pay. The most famous case, [Dred Scott v. Sandford](#), was heard in St. Louis' Old Courthouse. The Scotts and other enslaved people sued using a freedom statute, the [1807 Missouri Territorial Statute](#), which was created in the Louisiana Territory and reinforced in the [Missouri Laws in 1824](#).

*[From the National Park Service](#): The legal reasons a slave might sue usually fell into three categories. First, the slave had been taken to a territory where slavery was not allowed by law. Second, the person was being wrongly held as a slave after being legally freed in a will or by purchase. Third, that they could prove that the mother of a child being held in bondage was not legally a slave.*

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After winning at trial, Scott's case was stalled in legal complexities and not settled until 1852, when the Missouri Supreme Court overturned the lower court decision. His appeal in federal court led to defeat in the U.S. Supreme Court's infamous [1857 decision](#) that not only put an end to freedom suits but was one factor that led to the Civil War four years later.

Chief Justice Roger B. Taney delivered the majority opinion of the court. The justices in the majority contended that people of African ancestry—enslaved or free—were not and could *never* become citizens of the United States and, therefore, could not bring lawsuits. The decision also declared the Missouri Compromise of 1820, legislation which restricted slavery in certain territories, unconstitutional.

## **Additional Resources about the Freedom Suits:**

- [Louis Bar Foundation Freedom Suits Memorial Sculpture Page](#)
- [57 Years: A History of the Freedom Suits in the Missouri Courts](#)
- [Louis Freedom Suits / Legal Encoding Project](#)
- [The Freedom Suits Documentary](#)
- [List of Slave Suits for Freedom](#)

## **About Preston Jackson**

Jackson is a professor emeritus at the School of the Art Institute in Chicago, where he continues to teach foundry techniques. Since 1995, Jackson has served as owner of The Raven Gallery, home of the Contemporary Art Center in Peoria, Illinois. A specialist in cast bronze, his works include dozens of public sculptures, including a statue of Miles Davis in Alton, IL.; "Acts of Intolerance" in Springfield, IL., celebrating the 100th anniversary of the NAACP; and "From Cottonfield to Battlefield" in Decatur, IL., memorializing Abraham Lincoln's decision to permit African American soldiers to fight in the Civil War.

For additional information about the artist, please visit: [Preston Jackson Art](#).

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