



## **Panama City Courthouse Added to US Civil Rights Trail**

**Panama City, FL – January 21, 2019** – Today [Panama City's](#) Bay County Courthouse was announced as one of the first landmarks in Florida to be added to the [US Civil Rights Trail](#). The Bay County Courthouse was home to the court case *Gideon v. Wainwright*, which resulted in an expansion of civil rights in 1963 when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that legal counsel is a fundamental right and must be provided for defendants. A historical marker will be placed at the courthouse located in Downtown Panama City's Historic District.

Spanning 14 states, the US Civil Rights Trail features places where activists successfully sought equal access to public education, public transportation and voting rights. These special locations are all grouped under the U.S. Civil Rights Trail's theme "What happened here changed the world."

"We're proud to have played a role in bringing this historical marker to Panama City as a way to preserve and promote our area's rich history," says Jennifer Vigil, Destination Panama City president and CEO. "The Bay County Courthouse played a pivotal role in advancing social justice in the 1950s and 1960s, and we believe visitors and locals will enjoy seeing and learning about this significant site."

The Bay County Courthouse was originally built from 1914 - 1915, and is one of five original courthouses still in use in Florida. *Gideon v. Wainwright* began in June 1961 at the Bay County Courthouse and was heard by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1963. The case was one in a series of Supreme Court decisions that confirmed the right of defendants in criminal proceedings, upon request, to have counsel appointed both during trial and on appeal. Approximately 2,000 individuals were freed in Florida alone as a result of the Gideon decision. The decision created and then expanded the need for public defenders, which had previously been rare.

The courthouse is also listed on the Panama City Visitor's Center Downtown Panama City Historic Tour and a State Historical Marker is displayed at the site to commemorate the event.

For more information about Historic Downtown Panama City, visit [www.destinationpanamacity.com](http://www.destinationpanamacity.com).

For photos, visit <http://bit.ly/2HeBGJJ>.

### **ABOUT PANAMA CITY**

Embraced by beautiful St. Andrews Bay, Northwest Florida's Panama City offers ideal conditions for world-class sailing, year-round in-shore and off-shore fishing and a myriad of water sports. Nearby Shell

Island, an uninhabited barrier island with beautiful white sand beaches, features dolphin excursions. Off the water, visitors delight in the sunny destination's eclectic historic neighborhoods offering a thriving visual and performing arts scene, diverse shopping, a range of dining options and the Panama City Oyster Trail. To contact Destination Panama City directly call [850-215-1700](tel:850-215-1700). Please visit [destinationpanamacity.com](http://destinationpanamacity.com), and follow on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#). Join the conversation at #PContheBay.

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