



Summary Page, CT Freedom Trail Application

Judge Constance Baker Motley Preserve, Chester, CT

August, 2018

The Judge Constance Baker Motley Preserve at 99 Cedar Lake Road in Chester, CT honors a great American woman who advanced civil rights, women's rights, human rights and American jurisprudence. Her role as a preeminent civil rights attorney in the South for the NAACP Legal Defense Fund (1946-1964) and her service on the Federal bench in the Southern District of NY (1966-2005) are a testament to one person's extraordinary legal achievements on behalf of freedom, justice and equality. The subject of this application for the CT Freedom Trail—the 6.7-acre *Motley Preserve*—was an original part of the seasonal Motley homestead in Chester that was used regularly by the Motleys for 40 years (1965-2005).

Judge Motley Achievements: Between 1954-64, Motley was a key strategist and lead trial attorney enforcing the landmark 1954 *Brown vs. Board of Education*. She litigated over 200 desegregation cases across 11 southern states, integrating every major state university and hundreds of public schools. Motley's other civil rights work included the Montgomery Bus Boycott (1955), the Lunch Counter Sit-ins ('60), the Freedom Riders ('61) and several campaigns of Martin Luther King in Albany, GA ('62) and Birmingham, AL ('63). Her legal agency turned the tide for King and the civil rights movement at crucial moments, leading ultimately to the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act. As a NY Federal Court judge, Motley's rulings expanded the access rights of female sports reporters, the humane treatment of prisoners, the rights of workers, justice for litigants in unfair trade practices, and for the equality of women in job opportunity and pay equity, among many other advancements.

Judge Motley Firsts: Constance Motley's litany of "firsts" spans 59 years of public service and includes: the first female attorney for the NAACP-Legal Defense Fund, and the first African American woman to argue before the U.S. Supreme Court. She was the first female African American NY State Senator ('64) and the first woman to be elected President of the Manhattan Borough Council ('65). In 1966, she became the first African American woman to become a Federal judge, and its Chief judge in 1982, also a first.

Judge Motley Awards: Constance Baker Motley was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame in Seneca Falls, NY in 1993, and into the Connecticut Women's Hall of Fame in 1998. She was also awarded the Presidential Citizens Medal in 2001. With Honorary Doctorates from 31 universities, her remarkable life was chronicled in a 2012 PBS-aired documentary, *Justice is a Black Woman*. Her autobiography, *Equal Justice Under Law*, was published in 1998 (Farrar, Strauss and Giroux).

Judge Motley Connecticut Roots: Born and raised in New Haven, Constance Motley maintained deep roots in Connecticut. Between 1965-2005 she and her husband Joel Motley II and their son, Joel III, lived in their seasonal Chester, CT home at 99 Cedar Lake Road. Used for weekends, holidays and vacations, family reunions, destination point for civil rights leaders, and her own retirement location, the home in Chester had a significant place in her life. The new *Judge Motley Preserve* was purchased by the Chester Land Trust from the Motley family in 2016. It was dedicated in formal ceremony with the family and the Land Trust on June 24, 2017. It serves now as public open space for individuals to walk, relax and learn about a great American trailblazer. The *Preserve* is directly across the road from the former Motley home, now privately owned, and also designated for inclusion on the CT Freedom Trail. Together, the *Preserve* and the house make up the 140th site on the Freedom Trail in Connecticut. {END}