



# CATALOG

[View email in your browser](#)

[Share this email with a friend](#)

## United States of America v. Alger Hiss

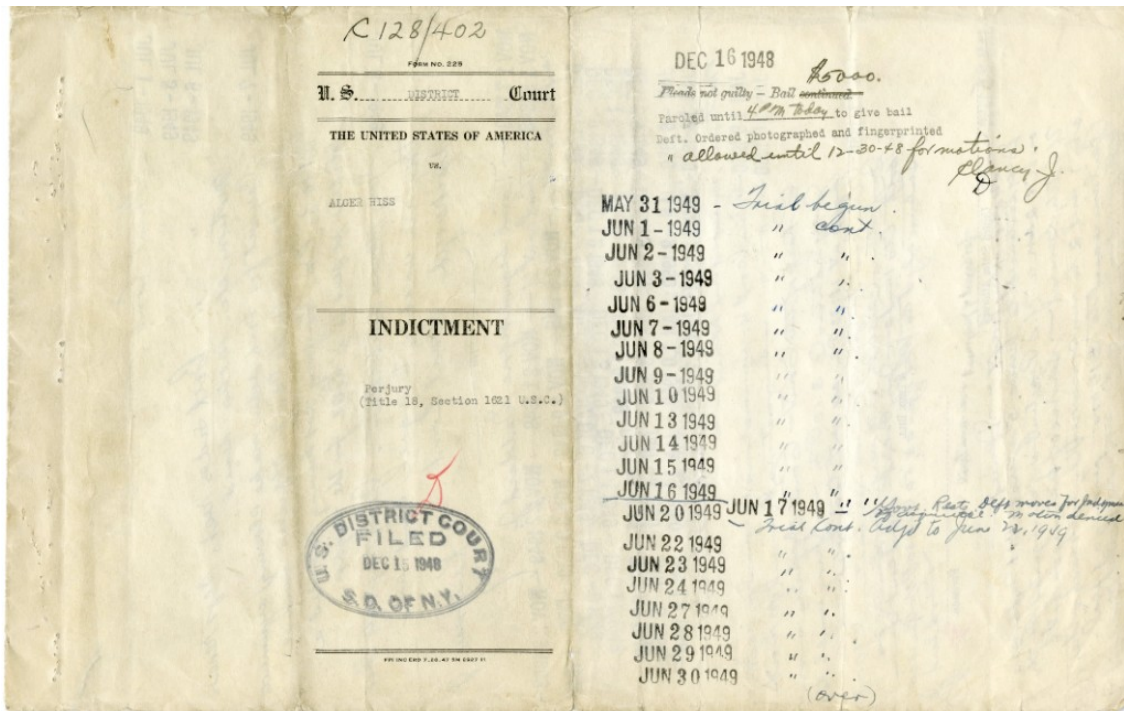
In September 1939, Whittaker Chambers, a defected communist spy, met with Adolf A. Berle, Assistant Secretary of State and disclosed a list of 18 government officials who were involved in the communist underground. One of the people listed was Alger Hiss, a State Department employee. Berle showed this list of people to the President but the accusations were not taken seriously and were dismissed. Berle also notified the FBI in 1940 and they interviewed Chambers in 1942 and 1945.



Alger Hiss (center), ca. 1/1945

Chambers was called to [testify](#) before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) on August 3, 1948 and again named Hiss as a member of the Communist Party. Two days later Alger Hiss [testified](#) in front of the HUAC denying that he was a communist. Further investigation and evidence that came to be known as the [Pumpkin Papers](#) led to a charge on December 15, 1948 of two counts of perjury in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York (SDNY).

The National Archives at New York City has custody of the SDNY case file as part of [Record Group 21: Records of District Courts of the United States, 1685 - 2009](#). The Indictment was filed on December 15, 1948. The perjury charges included lying under oath about handing over State Department documents to Whittaker Chambers, and a second count that he falsely testified that he had not seen Chambers after January 1, 1937.



Indictment, 12/15/1948

The trial started on May 31, 1949 and lasted until July 8, 1949 when the jury deliberated and reported that they were unable to come to an agreement. A second trial began on November 19, 1949 and lasted until January 21, 1950 when the jury decided on a verdict of guilty on both counts.

The case has been written about extensively and one thing that is often mentioned are some documents supposedly typed by Alger Hiss' wife [Priscilla](#) on a Woodstock Model 5 typewriter which is discussed in depth in the Stenographer's Minutes.

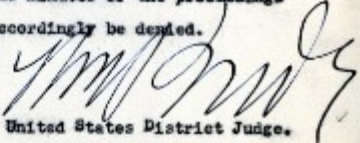
There is also a [memo](#) to the District Judge by the defendant requesting Grand Jury testimony given by Congressman Richard Nixon, a member of the HUAC, stating that he believed Hiss had testified falsely before the Committee.

Congressman Nixon's testimony before the jury on the ground that Representative Nixon was a member of the House Un-American Activities Committee and that at various times in public Representative Nixon had indicated his belief that Hiss had testified falsely before the Committee and that the Department of Justice was trying to clear Hiss of any guilt, that therefore there is reason to believe that an inspection of the minutes of Representative Nixon's testimony before the grand jury might show that he told the grand jury that Hiss was guilty of perjury and should be indicted, that such a statement would be highly improper and prejudicial and therefore sufficient ground for dismissing the indictment.

The minutes do not disclose that Representative Nixon suggested to the grand jury whether or not to indict Hiss or any other person and the court is of the opinion that a motion to dismiss based on his testimony would not have any reasonable chance of success. Therefore the motion to inspect the minutes of Representative Nixon's testimony is denied. See United States v. Cohen, 145 F. (2d) 82, 92, certiorari denied 323 U.S. 799; People v. Carver, 173 Misc. 71, 72.

The motion to inspect the minutes of the proceedings before the grand jury must accordingly be denied.

March 31, 1949.

  
United States District Judge.

*Memorandum, 3/31/1949*

Adlai Stevenson, who was at the time Governor of Illinois, [testified](#) on behalf of Alger Hiss as to his reputation for integrity, loyalty and veracity when they worked together at the State Department.



America, the complainant in said cause; pursuant to an order of the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York, entered on May 24, 1949, a certified copy of which order I now exhibit to you.

"Will you please therefore stand, raise your right hand, and be sworn.

"Do you, Adlai E. Stevenson, also known as Adlai Ewing Stevenson, solemnly swear that the testimony which you are about to give upon written direct and cross interrogatories in the above mentioned case of United States v. Alger Hiss, Defendant, will be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God?"

"Governor Stevenson: I do.

"DIRECT INTERROGATORIES IN BEHALF  
OF DEFENDANT ALGER HISS

"Q No. 1 State your name and address.

"A No. 1 Adlai E. Stevenson, Executive Mansion, Springfield, Illinois.

"Q No. 2 What is your official position at the present time?

"A No. 2 Governor of Illinois.

"Q No. 3 State the official positions which you have held in the past.

"A No. 3 I was special counsel to the Agricultural

*Stenographer's Minutes, 6/22/1949*

*This post was written by Carey Stumm, Archivist at the National Archives at New York. Thanks to Carey's hard work and dedication, this highly requested and historically significant case file, which includes 149 documents made up of 9,309 pages, has been digitized and is now available in its entirety in the [National Archives Catalog](#).*

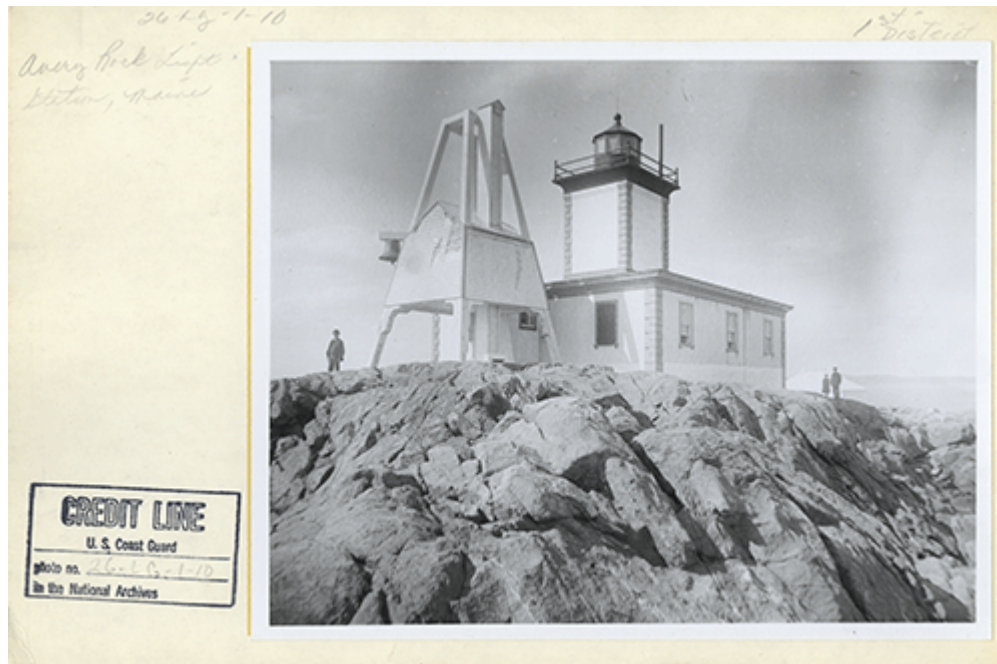
Are you interested in helping make these records more discoverable? Help us transcribe the Alger Hiss Criminal Case file!

**Get Started Transcribing!**

---

**Digitizing Lighthouse Photos**

Lighthouse fans and photography aficionados! Join us in the [William McGowan Theater](#) at the National Archives Building on Tuesday, August 7 at 2 PM - 3 PM for a presentation and discussion of a recently digitized series of [Coast Guard lighthouse photographs](#).



*Avery Rock Light Station, Maine*

Learn more about these incredible photographs in a presentation by Kelsey Noel, processing archivist in the National Archives Still Picture Branch. The photographs, originally taken by the Lighthouse Board and Lighthouse Service, document a fascinating period of U.S. Lighthouse history as well as the development of photographic technology. The process of creating digitized photographs is long, interesting, and sometimes difficult, but worthwhile when the images become available online. You can now view these photographs in the [National Archives Catalog](#).



*Muls Point Light, North Carolina*

We invite you to attend this [presentation in-person at the William G. McGowan Theater](#), National Archives Building, Washington, DC. Tuesday, August 7 at 2 PM - 3 PM. You may also watch the live broadcast of this presentation on our [YouTube channel](#).

---

## Citizen Archivist Road Trip Update!

Next stop, Chi-town! We've had a great week in Denver, and tomorrow we arrive in the Windy City. Visit our [Missions](#) page tomorrow as we bring you records from the National Archives at Chicago, IL. You can help us tag and transcribe records the criminal case file in the Al Capone tax evasion case, records from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Chinese Exclusion Act Files, Maritime records, and much more!

---



*Passengers and Luggage Make Their Way Between Trains in Chicago's Union Station, June 1974*

Since we began our virtual road trip, 3,844 pages of 905 records from National Archives field offices across the country have been enhanced with tags, transcription and comments. Keep up the great work, Citizen Archivists!

### **Get Started Tagging and Transcribing!**

---

Questions or comments? Email us at [catalog@nara.gov](mailto:catalog@nara.gov).



[Privacy policy](#)

[Subscribe](#) or [Unsubscribe](#)