

# Spotlight on the Colorado IP American Inn of Court

BY JAMES JUO

The Colorado Intellectual Property (IP) American Inn of Court was honored to be featured in the November/December 2023 issue of *The Bench*, the flagship magazine of the American Inns of Court. The article, titled “Roots in Raising Colorado’s IP Community,” discussed the formation and evolution of the Colorado IP Inn and how it reflects the traditions of the English Inns.

Inspired from the English Inns of Court, the American Inns of Court is an association of lawyers, judges, and other legal professionals dedicated to professionalism, ethics, civility, and excellence. The American Inns of Court arose from discussions in the late 1970s among lawyers and judges, including US Supreme Court Chief Justice Warren Burger. Today, there are about 400 chartered American Inns of Court,<sup>1</sup> with nearly 30,000 active members nationwide, including federal and state judges, lawyers, law professors, and law students.

With more than 100 members from Denver and Boulder, the Colorado IP Inn proudly continues this tradition by promoting civility in the legal profession and mentoring law students and young lawyers in IP law along the Front Range. This is its story.

## Founded in 2010

The founding of the Colorado IP Inn began with John Posthumus and Michael Drapkin, two patent attorneys who were in the leadership rotation for the IP Section of the Colorado Bar Association. Both wanted to raise Colorado’s profile in IP law and had been advocating for the US Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) to establish a regional office in Denver.

While working on bringing the American Intellectual Property Law Association’s (AIPLA)

Electronic and Computer Law Summit to Denver, Michael and John were introduced to Judge Richard Linn of the US Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit, who was seeking to have at least ten American Inns of Court focused on IP law formed by 2010.

Believing that the involvement of judges contributes to the long-term success of an Inn, Judge Linn offered to contact Chief Judge Wiley Daniel of the US District Court for the District of Colorado about forming an IP-focused Inn in Denver. Judge Daniel suggested that Judge Philip Brimmer and Magistrate Judge Kristen Mix help with founding the Inn. Both agreed to be judicial cofounders for the Colorado IP Inn and have actively supported the Inn ever since.

Judge Brimmer, now Chief Judge, says, “The Colorado IP Inn of Court came charging out of the gate in 2010 and has not slowed down.” He is proud that “the Inn has done a great job in filling the demand in the Colorado IP bar for mentoring, educational, and social opportunities.” For his many contributions over the years, Judge Brimmer received the 2016 American Inns of Court Professionalism Award for the Tenth Circuit.

Magistrate Judge Mix established the Colorado IP Inn’s mentoring program, including its popular “Lunch with a Judge” program. She was awarded the Linn Inn Alliance Distinguished Service Medal in 2016 for the success of the Colorado IP Inn mentoring program as well as the Inn as a whole. For Magistrate Judge Mix, “Being a part of the IP Inn is one of the highlights of my career. The quality of the dialogue and commitment to mentoring and professionalism is unparalleled, and it was also just lots of fun to hang with these folks.” She retired from the bench in August 2023

but remains involved on the Inn’s executive committee.

Judge Linn also suggested having law professors involved with the Colorado IP Inn. Professor Bernard Chao from the University of Denver Sturm College of Law and Professor Harry Surden from the University of Colorado Law School both agreed to be founding members for the Colorado IP Inn. Professor Chao currently is the co-director of DU’s IP and Technology Law Program and the chair of its Hughes Committee, which supports faculty conducting empirical research. Professor Surden currently is serving as the interim executive director of CU’s Silicon Flatirons Center for Law, Technology, and Entrepreneurship. They both have been forceful advocates for law student participation in the Inn.

Next, George Matava, a longstanding Denver IP attorney, was recruited to help lead and grow the newly formed Inn as its first president. George previously served as the chair of the CBA IP Section in 1999.

Finally, Doug Sawyer was recruited to be the Colorado IP Inn’s first vice president to help establish the Inn in the Denver IP community. Doug in turn recruited his assistant, Cecily Winmill, to be the secretary and treasurer of the newly formed Inn. This arguably was his greatest contribution to the Inn; Cecily has been an amazing asset and mainstay. She is the reason why the Colorado IP Inn regularly achieves Platinum status. Cecily was awarded the 2018 Linn Inn Alliance Distinguished Service Medal for her dedication and “contagiously positive attitude.”

Judge Linn welcomed the Colorado IP Inn to the American Inns of Court in 2010 at a ceremony held at the Federal Circuit’s courthouse in Washington, DC. The Colorado IP Inn was the thirteenth Inn to join the Linn Inn Alliance with its focus on IP law. Over two dozen Inns are now part of the Linn Inn Alliance.

In 2012, the Colorado IP Inn was part of the Federal Circuit/Colorado Coalition that invited the US Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit to Colorado and hosted the group during their visit. The Federal Circuit held oral argument hearings in Denver and participated in panel discussions and other associated events.

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The Colorado IP Inn also works closely with the Rocky Mountain Regional Office of the USPTO in Denver. A number of patent examiners and administrative patent judges are among the Inn's membership. And the director of the USPTO's Denver regional office, Mollybeth "Molly" Kocialski, is a past president of the Colorado IP Inn.

In 2019, the Colorado IP Inn, in conjunction with the CBA's IP Section, sponsored an event at the Wings of the Rockies to commemorate the fifth anniversary of the opening of the USPTO's Denver regional office.

### Mentoring and Outreach

The Inns of Court have a tradition of mentoring young attorneys, and the Colorado IP Inn follows that tradition. This includes having about 20 student members each term to foster interest in IP law and grow the IP community.

In addition to matching law students and young attorneys with more experienced Inn members as mentors, the Inn's Mentoring Committee also organizes mentoring events throughout the year, including the aforementioned Lunch with a Judge program. Stephanie Vu joined the Colorado IP Inn as a student and participated in the Inn's mentoring program both as a student and a young attorney and now sits on the board as chair of the Mentoring Committee.

J.T. Lomenick, the Colorado IP Inn's outgoing president, also had joined the Inn as a student member. J.T. said it is an "extraordinary opportunity to interact and work with a diverse range of legal minds, from esteemed professors to fresh-faced new lawyers, as well as seasoned veterans from various firms." He has made "invaluable connections that have resulted in lasting friendships and trusted colleagues."

The Colorado IP Inn also reaches out to nonprofits and other legal organizations and promotes pro bono legal services. The Inn works closely with the Mi Casa Resource Center, which provides pro bono patent services in association with the USPTO in Denver. Members of the Colorado IP Inn regularly present IP law seminars through Mi Casa. Many attendees are from underserved segments of the local population with limited means to otherwise obtain professional legal guidance.

## The Inn continues to welcome all professionals who work with IP, including patent agents who are registered to practice patent prosecution before the USPTO but who are not attorneys.

Inn members also have assisted the public through the District of Colorado's Pro Bono Panel and Federal Pro Se Clinic (Magistrate Judge Mix established the Federal Pro Se Clinic because "justice is better served by helping pro se litigants make legally informed decisions"). Two members, Rod O'Dorisio and Kammie Cuneo, were highlighted for their pro bono efforts in the June 2022 issue of *Colorado Lawyer*.<sup>2</sup>

### Open and Welcoming


Recently, in an effort to accommodate the busy professional and personal schedules of its members, the Colorado IP Inn began

having two lunch meetings in addition to its regular evening meetings each term. The lunch meetings, held at the District of Colorado's Alfred A. Arraj Courthouse, typically have a higher attendance of judges and their clerks.

While the Inn has always had a strong emphasis on patent law, its members also practice in other areas of IP such as trademark law. Indeed, the Colorado IP Inn's current vice president, Amy Kramer, is a trademark attorney. The Inn continues to welcome all professionals who work with IP, including patent agents who are registered to practice patent prosecution before the USPTO but who are not attorneys.

One of the things that makes the Colorado IP Inn special is that, in addition to the traditional Inns of Court interaction between the bench and the bar, the Colorado IP Inn also provides a regular forum for members of the local IP community, including law students, to meet socially. It serves as a hub for collaboration, mentorship, and professional development to nurture and cultivate community.

The Colorado IP community has traditionally been very open and welcoming, and the Colorado IP Inn seeks to foster and continue that tradition with its focus on mentoring younger lawyers while promoting diversity and outreach within the Colorado IP community. Anyone interested in IP law is encouraged to join, or can attend one of the Inn meetings as a guest.<sup>3</sup> Come and raise a glass to the Inn.

As the Colorado IP Inn evolves, its commitment to fostering excellence, mentorship, and camaraderie remains unwavering. 



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### NOTES

1. Colorado's Doyle Inn was featured in last month's issue. Connaughty, "Doyle Inn CLE Program Continues to Be Open—and Free—to All in Honor of Award-Winning Member Randy Bramer," 52 *Colo. Law.* 52 (Nov. 2023), <https://cl.cobar.org/departments/doyle-inn-cle-program-continues-to-be-open-and-free-to-all-in-honor-of-award-winning-member-randy-bramer>.
2. Juo, "Federal Pro Bono Programs in Colorado," 51 *Colo. Law.* 14 (June 2022), <https://cl.cobar.org/departments/federal-pro-bono-programs-in-colorado>.
3. For more information about the Colorado IP Inn, contact James Juo, president, at [jjuo@thowardlaw.com](mailto:jjuo@thowardlaw.com) or Cecily Winmill, secretary/treasurer, at [cecily.winmill@wilmerhale.com](mailto:cecily.winmill@wilmerhale.com).