At the time the government for the Nevada Territory was being formed, the First Territorial Legislature passed "An Act adopting the Common Law." The State Constitution, in turn, accepted the laws of the Territory, subject to amendment, repeal or expiration (Art. 17, sec. 2). The Nevada Revised Statutes at 1.030 states, "The common law of England, so far as it is not repugnant to or in conflict with the Constitution and laws of the United States, or the Constitution and laws of this state, shall be the rule of decision in all the courts of this state." This means that Nevada courts would not be making decisions in a vacuum, but would follow the long line of judicial precedent established in England and largely carried over to the new United States.

Article 6, section 1 of the Nevada Constitution vests the judicial power of the state in a court system comprised of the Supreme Court, the district courts and justices' courts. In addition, the legislature has established municipal courts as courts of limited jurisdiction in incorporated areas.

The other courts of limited jurisdiction are the justices' courts, staffed by justices of the peace and hearing only minor civil and criminal matters. The district courts are courts of general jurisdiction, trial courts hearing civil and criminal matters of a more serious nature. The Supreme Court is the court of last resort, reviewing appeals from the decisions of the district courts. The Supreme Court must consider all cases filed.

The Supreme Court selectively publishes the opinions of each of its annual sessions in the Nevada Reports. Decisions of the lower courts are not published.

Supreme Court Justices and District Court Judges are elected to six-year terms, assuming office on the first Monday in January after their election. The Governor fills mid-term vacancies by appointment from nominees submitted by the Commission on Judicial Selection (established by Constitutional amendment in 1976. Art. 6, sec. 20). Appointments are effective the day the appointee takes the oath of office. Justices, judges and justices of the peace can be removed from office by recall, impeachment*, legislative removal*, or by the Commission on Judicial Discipline, which was established by Constitutional amendment in 1976 (Art. 6, sec. 21). *Apparently no judge has been impeached in Nevada, but in 1921 the Assembly voted to remove Frank P. Langen from office. The Senate failed to get a required two third's majority to pass the resolution.

Originally, the Supreme Court consisted of three justices, the chief justice and two associate justices, with staggered terms two years apart. The legislature could increase the number of justices to five, which it did in 1967. The chief justice is the justice most senior in commission, but if two or more justices' commissions bear the same date, the chief justice is chosen by lot. An amendment to Article 6, section 2 of the Constitution in 1976 permits the legislature to increase or diminish the number of justices and allows the creation of panels if the court consists of more than five justices.

The terms of the Supreme Court are to be held in the state capital, although it may hear oral arguments at other places in the state. The court holds several sessions a year in Las Vegas and has heard oral arguments for educational purposes in Reno and in Elko. The court has had chambers in several locations in Carson City. Initially, the court shared quarters with other state offices on the second floor of Abraham Curry's Great Basin Hotel, at the corner of Carson and Musser Streets, now the site of the Carson City Courthouse. It moved to the newly-built Capitol Building in 1871, where it remained until its own Supreme Court and Library Building was constructed in 1937. (The "Library" was the Nevada State Library, an executive branch agency whose Law Division became the Supreme Court Library in 1973). This structure now houses the Office of the Attorney General at 198 South Carson Street. In 1992, the court moved to its current building at 201 South Carson Street.

Supreme Court Case Files, 1862-1937

Justices of the Nevada State Supreme Court

Name	Years
Lewis, James F. (Rep)	1864-67*
Beatty, Henry Oscar (Rep), resigned November 9,1868	1864-68*
Brosnan, Cornelius M. (Rep), died April 21, 1867	1864-67*
Lewis, James F. (Rep)	1867-73
Johnson, John Neely (Rep), appointed to Brosnan's vacancy until election following.	1867-69
Johnson, John Neely (Rep), elected to Brosnan's unexpired term	1869-71
Whitman, Bernard Crosby (Rep), successor in office, appointed to Beatty's unexpired term	1868-69
Whitman, Bernard Crosby (Rep)	1869-75
Garber, John (Dem), successor to Johnson's term, which expired first Monday in January 1871, resigne	1871-72
Belknap, Charles Henry (Dem), appointed to Garber's vacancy until election following	1872-75
Hawley, Thomas Porter (Rep)	1873-79
Earll, Warner (Rep), elected to Garber's term, which expired first Monday in January, 1877	1875-77
Beatty, William Henry (Rep)	1875-81
Leonard, Orville Rinaldo (Rep)	1877-83

Hawley, Thomas Porter (Rep)	1879-85
Belknap, Charles Henry (Dem)	1881-87
Leonard, Orville Rinaldo (Rep)	1883-89
Hawley, Thomas Porter (Rep), resigned September 27,1890	1885-90
Belknap, Charles Henry (Rep)	1887-93
Murphy, Michael Augustus (Rep)	1889-95
Bigelow, Rennselaer R. (Rep), appointed December 2,1890 to Hawley's vacancy, elected November	1890-97
Belknap, Charles Henry (Dem)	1893-99
Bonnifield, McKaskia Sterns (S-D)	1895-1901
Massey, William Alexander (S-D), resigned September 1, 1902	1897-1902
Belknap, Charles Henry (Dem)	1899-1905
Fitzgerald, Adolphus Leigh (S-D)	1901-07
Julien, Thomas Van Camp (S-D), appointed September 15, 1902 to Massey's unexpired term	1902-03
Talbot, George Frederick (S-D)	1903-09
Norcross, Frank Herbert (Rep)	1905-11
Sweeney, James G. (S-D)	1907-13
Talbot, George Frederick (Rep)	1909-15
Norcross, Frank Herbert (Rep)	1911-17
McCarran, Patrick Anthony (Dem)	1913-19
Coleman, Benjamin Wilson (Dem)	1913-21
Sanders, John Adams	1917-23
Ducker, Edward Augustus	1919-25
Coleman, Benjamin Wilson	1921-27
Sanders, John Adams	1923-29
Ducker, Edward Augustus	1925-31
Coleman, Benjamin Wilson	1927-33
Sanders, John Adams	1929-35
Ducker, Edward Augustus	1931-37
Coleman, Benjamin Wilson	1933-39
Taber, Errol James Livingston	1935-41
Coleman, Benjamin Wilson, died February 25, 1939	1939
Orr, William Edwin, appointed March 2,1939 to Coleman's vacancy until election following, elected No	1939-45
Taber, Errol James Livingston	1941-47
Ducker, Edward Augustus, died August 14, 1946	1943-46
Orr, William Edwin, resigned October 10,1945	1945
Horsey, Charles Lee, appointed October 10, 1945 to Orr's vacancy, elected November 1946 to unexp	1945-51
Eather, Edgar, appointed September 18,1946 to Ducker's vacancy, elected November 1946 to unexp	1946-49
Taber, Errol James Livingston, died February 6, 1947	1947
Badt, Milton Benjamin, appointed March 26,1947 to Taber's vacancy, elected November 1948 to une	1947-53
Eather, Edgar	1949-55
Merrill, Charles M.	1951-57
Badt, Milton Benjamin	1953-59
Eather, Edgar, resigned December 15, 1958	1955-58
Merrill, Charles M. resigned October 1, 1959	1957-59
McNamee, Frank, appointed December 15, 1958 to Edgar Eather's unexpired term	1958-61
Badt, Milton Benjamin	1959-65

Pike, Miles N., appointed October 1, 1959 to Merrill's vacancy until election following	1959-61
McNamee, Frank, disabled February 17, 1965	1954-65
Zenoff, David, appointed May 17, 1965 to McNamee's unexpired term or until McNamee no longer disa	1965-67
Pike, Miles Nelson, elected to Merrill's unexpired term, resigned June 5,1961	1961
Thompson, Gordon Rufus, appointed June 5, 1961 to Pike's unexpired term	1961-63
Thompson, Gordon Rufus	1963-69
Badt, Milton Benjamin, died April 2,1966	1965-66
Collins, Jon R., appointed June 5, 1966 to Badt's vacancy, elected November 1966 to four-year unex	1966-71
Zenoff, David	1967-73
Mowbray, John Code**, appointed to new position October 1, 1967	1967-69
Batjer, Cameron McVicar**, appointed to new position October 1,1967	1967-69
Gunderson, Elmer Millard	1971-77
Mowbray, John Code	1969-75
Thompson, Gordon Rufus	1969-75
Batjer, Cameron McVicar, elected to four-year term, 1968	1969-73
Batjer, Cameron McVicar	1973-79
Zenoff, David, resigned May 31, 1977	1973-77
Mowbray, John Code	1975-81
Thompson, Gordon Rufus	1973-77
Manoukian, Noel Edwin, appointed to Zenoff's vacancy May 2, 1977	1977-79
Manoukian, Noel Edwin	1979-85
Gunderson, Elmer Millard	1977-83
Batjer, Cameron McVicar, resigned November 4, 1981	1979-81
Steffen, Thomas L., appointed April 26,1982 to Batjer's vacancy until election following, elected to un	1982-85
Mowbray, John Code	1981-87
Springer, Charles E.	1981-87
Gunderson, Elmer Millard	1983-89
Steffen, Thomas L.	1985-91
Young, C. Clifton (Cliff)	1985-91
Mowbray, John Code	1987-93
Springer, Charles E.	1987-93
Rose, Robert E.	1989-95
Steffen, Thomas L.	1991-97
Young, C. Clifton (Cliff)	1991-97
Springer, Charles E.	1993-
Shearing, Miriam C., first woman justice	1993-
Rose, Robert E.	1995-
Young, C. Clifton (Cliff)	1997-
Maupin, William (Bill)	1997-

*The first three Supreme Court justices took office on December 5, 1864.

**Statutes of 1967, Chapter 293, provides for the appointment of two additional justices.

Clerks of the Supreme Courts

Name	Years
Helm, Alfred (Rep)	1864-67
Relm, Alfred (Rep)	1867-71
Helm, Alfred (Rep)	1871-75
Bicknell, Charles F. (Rep)	1875-79
Bicknell, Charles F. (Rep)	1879-83
Bicknell, Charles F. (Rep)	1883-87
Bicknell, Charles F. (Rep)	1887-91
Josepha, Joe (Rep)	1891-95
Howell, Eugene * (S)	1895-99
Howell, Eugene (S)	1899-1901
Douglass, William C. (Rep)	1903-07
Douglass, William C. (Rep)	1907-11
Josepha, Joe (Dem), died January 21, 1915	1911-15
Mighels, Henry R. "Hal" (Dem), appointed January 22,1915, until election following	1915-17
Kennett, William (Dem), elected 1916 to serve unexpired term	1917-19
Kennett, William (Dem)	1919-23
Kennett, William (Dem)	1923-27
Hatton, Eva (Rep)	1927-31
Hatton, Eva (Rep)	1931-35
Brodigan, George (Dem), died February 28, 1938	1935-38
Brodigan, Margaret I. (Dem), appointed March 5, 1938, to serve unexpired term	1938
Brodigan, Margaret I. (Dem)	1939-43
Brodigan, Margaret I. (Dem)	1943-47
Turner, Ned A. (Dem)	1947-51
Turner, Ned A. (Dem)	1951-55
Turner, Ned A. (Dem)	1955-59
Turner, Ned A. (Dem), resigned, July 31, 1959	1959
Davenport, Charles R., appointed September 1, 1959	1959-86
Fountain, Judith L., appointed September 28, 1983, resigned November 4, 1988	1983-88
Bloom, Janette Marie, appointed November 21, 1988	1988

Statutes of 1957, Chapter 76, p.109. made the office of Clerk of the Supreme Court appointive. effecti

* Statutes or 1893, Chapter XXXV, p 32 consolidated the offices of Secretary of State and Clerk of the S