

ABOUT THE MICHIGAN LEGAL MILESTONES

The State Bar inaugurated the Michigan Legal Milestones program in 1986, based on an idea from a former SBM president, George Roumell. The aim is to educate the public about the law and the legal process, and to remind people of the unique role that lawyers play. It also gives the Bar an opportunity to join forces with affiliated local bars, and to reach out to other community groups and organizations to involve them in the process. This is done through the placement of plaques to commemorate important cases and events in Michigan's rich legal history.

Currently, the State Bar's Public Outreach Committee, under the chairmanship of Miles Postema, is responsible for overseeing this program, which won an unsolicited Award of Merit from the Historical Society of Michigan in 1989. In April 1992, The Public Relations Society of America presented the State Bar with a first place Crystal Award for outstanding community service for the Michigan Legal Milestones program.

Jeffrey Paulsen, a Bloomfield Hills attorney from Dykema Gossett PLLC has been involved with the planning of almost 20 milestones. He is coordinating Freedom Road and says that over the years, milestone candidates have been suggested by many groups, including local bar associations, State Bar Sections, individual lawyers and judges, and even by those outside the profession. Members of the Public Outreach Committee review these suggestions, considering if the subject matter, person, place, or event would make an appropriate milestone topic. [See sidebar list of milestones to date.] Paulsen notes that the strength of the program lies not only in the enthusiasm and volunteer commitment of the attorneys participating, but also with the strong involvement of Michigan communities and organizations. "While the subject matter and events being recognized by Michigan Legal Milestones often involve tumultuous events in Michigan's legal history, and sometimes involve continuing debate as to the facts and outcome of the events, the Milestone program has been a win-win cooperative program and continues to generate an enormous amount of goodwill towards the State Bar and lawyers across the State of Michigan."

M I C H I G A N LEGAL MILESTONES

**The Michigan Legal Milestone Program recognizes significant
legal cases in Michigan's history, and places bronze plaques
at featured sites to document the historical significance.**

1. Ossian Sweet Trial—In 1925, Dr. Sweet was arrested and charged with murder after a member of a white mob attacked his home and was shot and killed. Clarence Darrow defended Dr. Sweet, who was acquitted. Dedicated and placed inside the Frank Murphy Hall of Justice in Detroit, MI on May 2, 1986.

2. Baseball's Reserve Clause—A 1914 decision in a Grand Rapids courtroom "bound a player to his team for as long as the team chose to keep him." Dedicated and placed at

the Grand Rapids Art Museum in 1986. Rededicated and placed outside on June 20, 1996 at Old Kent Park (West Michigan Whitecaps Minor League Baseball stadium) in Grand Rapids, MI.

3. Cooley Law Office—The career of Thomas M. Cooley is recalled in this milestone. Dedicated and placed outside at Thomas M. Cooley’s first law office on Maumee Street in Adrian, MI, 1986.

4. Roosevelt-Newett Libel Trial—A much-celebrated 1913 trial involving former President Theodore Roosevelt (he prevailed as plaintiff, but was awarded 10 cents in damages). Dedicated and placed at the Marquette County Courthouse in Marquette, MI in May of 1986.

5. Justice William Fletcher—The first chief justice of the Michigan Supreme Court. Dedicated and placed outside on the University of Michigan campus. Placed in Felch Park (intersection of Fletcher and Washington streets) in front of the Power Center for the Performing Arts in Ann Arbor, MI on September 9, 1987.

6. Sojourner Truth—Her life as a crusader for justice is recalled in the city she called home. Dedicated and placed at the Battle Creek Hall of Justice in 1987. Rededicated inside at the First United Methodist Church in Battle Creek, MI. Placed at the Calhoun County Justice Center in Battle Creek, MI on May 29, 1997.

7. Augustus Woodward—Brilliant but eccentric, the first chief justice of the Michigan territorial court is recalled at the site of his law office. Dedicated and placed inside in the Millender Center Atrium of the Omni Hotel (by the “up” escalator), corner of Randolph and Jefferson streets in Detroit, MI on May 3, 1988.

8. Public Access to Public Water—Legal affirmation of the public’s right to the recreational use of rivers and streams began with a trout fishing trip on the Pine River in 1925. Dedicated and placed outside on June 7, 1988 at the Peterson Bridge Landing’s canoe access (at the intersection of M-37 and M-55) along the Pine River, west of Cadillac, MI.

9. Ten Hours or No Sawdust—Michigan’s largest labor strike of the 19th century, although unsuccessful, paved the way for later workers’ rights legislation. Dedicated and placed outside in Morley Plaza in Saginaw, MI on August 31, 1988.

10. 1961–62 Constitutional Convention—The Michigan Constitution we live under today was written at the Lansing Civic Arena. Dedicated and placed inside the Lansing Civic Arena (corner of Walnut and Washtenaw streets) on May 1, 1989 in Lansing, MI.

11. Eva Belles’ Vote—An early but important victory for women’s suffrage was won in Flint. Dedicated and placed inside the lobby at the Genesee County Courthouse in Flint, MI on July 11, 1990.

12. One Person, One Vote—In one of the famous U.S. Supreme Court redistricting cases of the early 1960s, labor leader Gus Scholle assured that rapidly growing Oakland County would have proportional representation. Dedicated and placed outside the Oakland County Courthouse’s South Plaza in Pontiac, MI on August 29, 1990.

13. Improving Justice—The idea for the American Judicature Society was born in Manistee during a boat ride on Lake Michigan, shared by founder Herbert Harley and benefactor Charles Ruggles on a hot summer day. Dedicated and placed on a boulder in a corner of the Manistee City Marina on River Street in downtown Manistee, MI on May 30, 1991.

14. The King’s Grant—One of the most celebrated cases of the 19th century involving a dispute over land granted by French King Louis XV in 1750. Dedicated and placed at Brady Park (along Water St.) at the site of Fort Brady and Fort Repentigny in Sault Ste. Marie, MI on July 16, 1991.

15. The Uninvited Ear—Judge Damon Keith’s decision in a 1971 case upheld the right of Americans to be free from unreasonable government intrusion. Dedicated and placed inside the Penobscot Building on December 18, 1991 in Detroit, MI.

16. Laughing Whitefish—The Michigan Supreme Court in 1889 recognized the legal validity of Native American tribal laws and customs. Dedicated and placed at Michigan Iron Industry Museum in Negaunee, MI on August 25, 1992.

17. Protecting the Impaired—An act of the Michigan legislature providing for forced sterilization of the mentally impaired was held unconstitutional by the Michigan Supreme Court. Dedicated and placed outside at the Old Lapeer County Courthouse on April 29, 1993.

18. Rose of Aberlone—The classic contracts case involving Hiram Walker & Sons, Rose the cow, and the principle of rescission based on mutual mistake. Dedicated and placed outside in Kellogg Park in Plymouth, MI in September of 1993.

19. Emelia Schaub—Michigan’s first woman elected prosecutor. The first woman in the United States to successfully defend a murder trial, and the woman responsible to a great degree for protecting the rights and tribal existence of Native Americans in northwest Michigan. Dedicated and placed outside at the Leelanau County Courthouse in Leland, MI on May 26, 1994.

20. Mount Clemens Pottery—Michigan’s Justice Frank Murphy in 1946 authored an important labor law decision of the United States Supreme Court interpreting the Fair Labor Standards Act, arising out of a case involving employee working time. Dedicated on September 1, 1994 at the Riverfront Gazebo by the Municipal Building in Mt. Clemens, MI. Placed at the Macomb County courthouse in Mt. Clemens, MI (along the wall by the statue of General Clemens).

21. Pond's Defense—Michigan Supreme Court Justice James Campbell authored an important decision about self-defense and defense of others in 1860 in *Pond v People*, and overturned a lower court decision finding Augustus Pond, an Upper Peninsula fisherman, guilty of manslaughter. Dedicated and placed outside City Hall in Mackinac Island, MI on June 10, 1995.

22. Ending Jim Crow—Keith's Theatre in Grand Rapids discriminated against patrons on the basis of race (Jim Crow), but that practice was found to violate Michigan's Constitution by the Michigan Supreme Court in a major civil rights decision. Dedicated outside on September 8, 1995 in the Old Kent Bank Plaza in downtown Grand Rapids, MI. Placed in the wall along the street beneath the Old Kent Bank clock tower in Grand Rapids.

23. Conveying Michigan—Much of the land in southwest Michigan was conveyed out of the White Pigeon Land Office, built in 1831 and still standing. Dedicated on April 30, 1996 and placed inside the land office (on the south side of US-12) in downtown White Pigeon, MI. The building is now a museum operated by the St. Joseph County Historical Society.

24. Murphy's Dissent—Michigan's U.S. Supreme Court Justice Frank Murphy wrote an impassioned dissent in *Korematsu*, protesting the decision to uphold exclusion orders imposed upon persons of Japanese descent during World War II. Dedicated and placed in front of the Frank Murphy home in Harbor Beach, MI on August 16, 1996.

25. Striking Racial Covenants—The United States Supreme Court rejected racial restrictive covenants that would have prevented Orsel and Minnie McGhee and their family from living where they chose to in Detroit. Dedicated inside on August 12, 1997 and placed outside the Museum of African American History in Detroit, MI.

26. Milo Radulovich and the Fall of McCarthyism—In 1953, two Michigan attorneys, the Hon. Kenneth N. Sanborn and Charles C. Lockwood, assisted Milo Radulovich, a resident of Dexter Michigan at the time, in his fight against the United States Air Force. The Air Force attempted to strip Mr. Radulovich of his treasured commission for associating with his allegedly subversive father and sister. Taking the case pro bono, his attorneys prevailed and the Air Force reinstated Mr. Radulovich's commission. Dedicated and placed outside at the Detroit College of Law at the Michigan State University Building in East Lansing, MI on September 2, 1998.

27. Judge Henry Hart's No Passing Zone Pennants "Committee of One"—Retired 75th District Court Judge Hart of Midland set a personal goal to improve highway safety in Michigan and led a "one-man campaign" for the uniform placement of yellow "No Passing Zone" signs on the left side of Michigan roads. The signs, shaped in the form of a pennant, have decreased the number of traffic accidents in no passing zones and is credited with saving thousands of lives in Michigan. Dedicated on May 24, 1999 at the Midland County Courthouse in Midland, MI. The permanent plaque will be displayed in the lobby of the courthouse.

28. Mary Coleman: Pioneer, Advocate, Woman—Mary Coleman, the first female Michigan Supreme Court Justice and Chief Justice, made a lasting impact on Michigan’s judicial system. Her success in the profession, her devotion to juvenile justice issues, and her work on the advancement of court reorganization are just a few examples of this remarkable woman’s accomplishments. Dedicated on October 20, 2000 at the McCamly Plaza Hotel in Battle Creek, MI. The permanent plaque will be displayed at the Battle Creek courthouse.

29. Gerald R. Ford: The 38th President of the United States—Before becoming the country’s 38th President, Gerald R. Ford, Jr. was a Michigan lawyer practicing in Grand Rapids. Throughout his years in the U.S. House of Representatives, Ford was a member of the Grand Rapids Bar Association and maintained close ties to the Grand Rapids legal community. He took the oath of office as the 38th President on August 9, 1974, shortly after President Nixon resigned. Dedicated on September 20, 2004 at the Gerald R. Ford Museum in Grand Rapids.