

# LESSON 3 – Lecture Notes

Grade Level & Subject: High School Social Studies (History or Government)

Unit: Discovering the Rich History of the Michigan Supreme Court

Lesson: The “Big Four” of the Michigan Supreme Court

- I. Legend status
  - A. Known as legal scholars
  - B. National recognition
  - C. While on Court, the Court was known as one of great intellectual leadership
  - D. Cooley is known internationally
- II. Justice Isaac P. Christiancy
  - A. Life
    - 1. Born in Johnstown, NY
    - 2. Popular political personality
      - a. Anti-slavery Democrat
      - b. Prime mover in formation of Republican Party in 1854
  - B. Service to the Court - Served for 27 years
  - C. Philosophy - “(He) was neither self-seeking nor self-asserting, - evidence of true greatness, - but, in sustaining a position taken after mature deliberation, he was most forcible, and his reasoning difficult to be met and overcome. He apparently little appreciated the high position actually held by him in the opinion of the profession or people. “ – Mr. Taggart of Grand Rapids
- III. Justice James V. Campbell
  - A. Life

1. Born in Buffalo, NY
  2. Lived in Detroit
  3. Professor at the University of Michigan Law School
- B. Service to the Court - Served for 32 years
- C. Philosophy - “He loved the common law of England...he loved its principles, its pleadings, its practices, its juries, its judgments...He was a staunch defender of the sanctity of the person and his domicile, and was never so happy in his opinions as when vindicating his immunity from arrest without warrant, and his right to a trial according to the ancient form of the law” – Judge Henry D. Brown of Detroit

IV. Justice Thomas M. Cooley

- A. Life
1. Born in Attica, NY in 1824
  2. Busy professional life
    - a. Law professor at the University of Michigan
    - b. Editor of the *Adrian Watchtower*
- B. Service to the Court
1. Court Reporter for six years
  2. 1864-1885 as Justice
- C. Philosophy/Personality
1. Stayed busy writing and lecturing until his death in 1898
  2. Wrote a number of law manuals

3. One Andrew J. Sawyer had this to say about Cooley: “The lowest and humblest of his neighbors were at home in his presence [...] gentle treatment of every one in distress was ever present with him, even upon the bench.”

V. Justice Benjamin F. Graves

A. Life

1. Born in Gates, NY
2. Worked his way up from private practice to civil magistrate to master in chancery to circuit court judge

B. Service to the Court

1. Served for 16 years
2. Least known of the four

C. Philosophy - The least is known about Graves as he was the last to join the bench, but he was a man of integrity. He refused renomination in 1884, at the age of 66, because he feared his age would bring a disintegration of his faculties and would impair his ability to perform the duties required.

VI. How they “stack up” against one another

- A. Campbell was the only one with a college degree
- B. All four were born in New York
- C. Graves was the least flamboyant

D. Christiancy was a tragic figure

Married a woman he met in Washington. She mistook a statement he made for a marriage proposal and threatened him with a lawsuit if he did not marry her. To avoid the suit, he married her. She left him the day after the wedding. He was so embarrassed that he resigned from his Senate seat and took an appointment as the U.S. Ambassador to Peru. He did not divorce her until two years later.

E. Campbell was the only one whose father was not a farmer - his father was a prominent Detroit businessman, justice of the county court, and president of a bank

F. Rivalry between Cooley and Campbell

1. Cooley and Campbell were both law teachers
2. Campbell, not Cooley, was the first dean of the University of Michigan Law School
3. Campbell was an aristocrat and Cooley was a “workaholic”