It was standing room only as hundreds of family, friends, colleagues, and admirers gathered to honor former Justice James H. Brickley at the dedication of his official court portrait on January 14, 2003. The crowd, which included Governors Jennifer M. Granholm, John Engler, and William G. Milliken, joined the Justices of the Michigan Supreme Court to celebrate the life and career of the Justice Brickley. The event, which was hosted by the Historical Society, was held in the Supreme Court courtroom on the sixth floor of the Michigan Hall of Justice in Lansing.

The program began at 3:30 p.m. and included remarks by Chief Justice Corrigan, Society President Wallace D. Riley, former Justice and Court of Appeals Judge James L. Ryan, Governor Jennifer M. Granholm, Justice Michael F. Cavanagh, and former Governor William G. Milliken. The program concluded at approximately 4:30 with a response by Joyce Braithwaite-Brickley. A short reception followed.

Judge Ryan honored Justice Brickley in remarks entitled “Remembering a Friend.” Discussing Justice Brickley’s distinguished career in public service, even before he served on the Supreme Court, he noted that “...the name Brickley was becoming synonymous with personal and professional integrity, administrative efficiency, dedication to public service - not as a political
James H. Brickley was born on November 15, 1928, in Flint, Michigan. He was raised in Detroit and received his bachelor’s and law degrees from the University of Detroit. Brickley received a master’s degree in law from New York University.

Brickley’s career in public service has extended through all levels of government, from Special Agent with the FBI, to Chief Assistant Prosecutor for Wayne County, and from United States Attorney for Eastern Michigan to Lieutenant Governor of Michigan. It is clear that he has dedicated his professional life to public service.

Brickley has also served the academic community with his knowledge of the law. From 1975 until 1978, he was the President of Eastern Michigan University.

Throughout his career, he has served as an adjunct professor at several Michigan universities lecturing on the government and law.


The portrait, by artist Frederick T. Petroskey of Lake Leelenau, Michigan, became the 79th portrait in the Court’s collection and was hung for display in the Supreme Court courtroom at the Hall of Justice.

To read the full transcript of the dedication or specific speeches from the event, go to www.micourthistory.org and go to Resources and Special Sessions.
Justice Dorothy Comstock Riley To Be Honored With the Legal History Award

In an effort to recognize those members of Michigan’s legal community who have greatly impacted Michigan’s legal history through their support of historical pursuits, their outstanding support of the Society and its efforts, or through their work in the law, the Michigan Supreme Court Historical Society established the Legal History Award in 2002. The first Legal History Award was presented to Governor John Engler at the Society’s 2002 Annual Luncheon in recognition of his work in making the dream of a Supreme Court building a reality.

This year, the award will be presented to former Chief Justice Dorothy Comstock Riley in recognition of her outstanding effort in the building of the Hall of Justice, her creation of the Michigan Supreme Court Historical Society in 1988, her generous financial contributions to the Society and its pursuits, and her many other contributions to Michigan law.

Award Criteria

This Legal History Award will be presented periodically to commend one or more of Michigan’s citizens for their ongoing support of and interest in Michigan’s legal heritage. The award may be given in recognition of a single significant contribution to the preservation of Michigan’s legal history or to honor an individual’s long-term support of the efforts of the Society and the preservation of the history of the Court. An individual may also be recognized for significant contributions to Michigan’s legal heritage and as a “historic figure” in Michigan’s legal system.

Individuals will be honored for their unselfish, outstanding, and unique service to and on behalf of the Michigan Supreme Court Historical Society, the legal profession, and the public. The award signifies unusual and extraordinary help and assistance to the Society and the pursuit of the preservation of Michigan Supreme Court history, as well as significant contributions to the Michigan judicial system.

Presentation of 2003 Legal History Award

In 1988, while serving as Chief Justice of the Michigan Supreme Court, Justice Riley recognized a need for better documentation of historical events in which the Court was involved, better collection and maintenance of artifacts and memorabilia related to the Court, and for the production of information with which to educate Michigan students and citizens about the work of the Michigan Supreme Court. Realizing that Court staff and their time were limited, Justice Riley undertook the creation of the Michigan Supreme Court Historical Society, which was incorporated as a nonprofit organization in 1988.

In addition to working to create the Society, Justice Riley took the lead in garnering funding for the Society and its efforts and in appointing strong leaders for the Society who would carry out her vision.

Since her retirement from the Court in 1997, Justice Riley has continued to serve the Society as its Honorary Chair and has continued to contribute to the work of the Society both with her involvement and with her generous contributions.

Luncheon Program

A social and cocktail reception is scheduled to begin at 11:30 a.m. in the main dining room of the Detroit Athletic Club. Lunch will be served at 12:00 p.m. The program will feature the presentation of the Legal History Award to Chief Justice Riley. Wallace D. Riley will also be presented with the American Judicature Society’s Herbert Harley Award. The program will conclude with a presentation by Justice Marilyn Kelly. For information or reservations for the Luncheon, please contact Angela Bergman or Allyson Miller at 517-373-7589 or abergman@micourthistory.org.
Order the Michigan Supreme Court Historical Reference Guide

The Michigan Supreme Court Historical Reference Guide tells the stories of each of Michigan’s first 100 Supreme Court Justices, from 1805 to 1998. Illustrated with photos of each Justice, this fascinating, 273-page volume also contains an index of special sessions of the Michigan Supreme Court, sorted both by honorees and speakers, as well as a factual chart of the Court by years that lists the Court’s composition each year since 1805.

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