

Society Honors Justice Dorothy Comstock Riley With LEGAL HISTORY AWARD

At the Michigan Supreme Court Historical Society’s 12th Annual Luncheon, former Chief Justice Dorothy Comstock Riley was presented with the Society’s second LEGAL HISTORY AWARD.

The award, which may be given to recognize ongoing support of and interest in Michigan’s legal heritage, in recognition of a single significant contribution to the preservation of Michigan’s legal history, to honor an individual’s long-term support of the efforts of the Society and the preservation of the history of the Court, or in recognition of an individual as a “historic figure” in Michigan’s legal system, is the Society’s highest honor.

Undoubtedly, Justice Riley exemplifies all of these characteristics and the Board of Directors of the Historical Society voted unanimously to present her with the Award.

Justice Riley was chosen to receive the LEGAL HISTORY AWARD primarily for her role in creating and leading the Historical Society. 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.

PRESENTATION OF 2003 LEGAL HISTORY AWARD

Society Treasurer Lawrence P. Nolan presented the award to the Justice on April 24, 2003 at the Detroit Athletic Club. Mr. Nolan’s presentation remarks began with a summary of the Justice’s early life and career:

Dorothy Comstock was born in Detroit, Michigan on December 6, 1924. Her father, Charles A. Comstock, was of Irish decent. Her mother, Josephine Grima, was Hispanic, having been born in Mexico. Her mother, who was a nurse, met her father at the hospital where he was recovering from injuries suffered in the War. Dorothy is a born and raised Detroit native.

Dorothy attended Detroit Public Schools, graduating from Detroit Northwestern High School. She married Wallace D. Riley and had one child, Peter

in this issue



Society Honors Justice Dorothy Comstock Riley With LEGAL HISTORY AWARD.....	1-3
Michigan Political History Society Survey.....	3
Society Celebrates Its 15th Year.....	4-5
Society Aids in Renovation of Flint Courtroom.....	5
Images from the 12th Annual Luncheon.....	6-7

Comstock Riley. She was graduated from Wayne State University with a Bachelor of Arts in 1946 and from Wayne State University Law School with an LLB in 1949. She was admitted to practice before the State Bar of Michigan in 1950. The rest, as they say, is history.

Mr. Nolan continued his presentation by focusing on



*Society Treasurer Lawrence P. Nolan presents the
LEGAL HISTORY AWARD.*

the high esteem in which Justice Riley is held by her peers.

“On October 7, 1997, at the presentation of the portrait of Justice Riley, Governor John Engler stated: *Certainly there is no group of individuals who hold Justice Riley in higher regard than her colleagues on the Court... They knew that no one worked harder, no one was more thoughtful, no one was more incisive, and no one had a better understanding of and respect for our Constitution.*

“Justice Charles Levin, when asked to speak on that same date stated:

There can be no doubt regarding Dorothy’s abiding respect for and love of the Supreme Court as an institution. Dorothy’s mark will be long lasting through her outstanding, meticulous opinions and strong administrative contributions and leadership. She brought the Court’s relationship with the Legislature to a new and higher level of understanding and cooperative effort.

Dorothy wrote clearly and forcefully. She was an exemplary jurist. Her vision for the judiciary, explored through the twentieth century commission and now being implemented, takes Michigan’s One Court of Justice a number of steps forward in the administration of justice.

“Justice Levin continued by saying:

Dorothy has been recognized as a trailblazer for women in the legal profession. Her intellect and her quiet strength and determination helped her pry open doors that she then held open for others to pass through.

“Justice Thomas Brennan, in paying tribute to Justice Riley stated:

The chronicle of Justice Riley’s professional activities, associations, and awards is far too voluminous to recite this morning. It is enough to observe that she has labored mightily in the vineyards of the law, and has earned the universal respect and admiration of her professional peers.

“Justice Cliff Taylor praised Dorothy’s most difficult hour, stating in part:

It is, of course, a great sadness to all of us that Justice Dorothy Comstock Riley has had health difficulties which necessitated her resignation. As I have mentioned on other occasions, I believe her to be one of the great justices of this century. She has written with cogency, has manifested intellectual integrity, and has displayed steely courage in upholding the law in the face of intense pressure from those who would ask the Court to depart from its proper role. We all owe her a great debt.

“Justice Patricia Boyle, in a most fitting metaphor, described Dorothy in a speech to the Women Lawyers Association of Michigan in the following words:

She is like bone china, elegant and delicate in appearance, but strong and enduring in composition. I know Dorothy as a comrade in arms with the courage to confront every challenge. Indeed, it was her sense that in the future she might not measure up to her own standards of responsibility to the Court that led her to make the bravest decision of all.

Mr. Nolan continued by quoting the Justice herself: “Dorothy may have stated it best upon acceptance of her portrait being hung in the Michigan Supreme Court chambers when she stated in part:

As many of you here this morning are aware, I have been struggling with the effects of Parkinson’s Disease for a year and a half. Parkinson’s has severely impacted my ability to walk and to talk and has seriously affected my handwriting, and in recent months has begun to affect my eyesight. But Parkinson’s has not affected my mind or my heart, my ability to think or to feel subconsciously and deeply.



Justice Riley is presented with framed images of the Hall of Justice.

“And so you can see and understand why I have enjoyed every minute that I have had the opportunity to share with Dorothy. I cannot think of anyone more deserving of this award nor can I think of anyone being given this award in the future that could ever be more deserving.

“Chief Justice Conrad Mallett may have summed it up best when he said:

This is an extraordinary woman. We are grateful for her participation in the life of this Court.

“Thank you Dorothy, for blessing all of our lives.”

Justice Riley was then presented with a frame contain-

ing photographs of the Hall of Justice, including an outside view, a view of the 1st and 6th floor lobbies, and a photograph of the Michigan Supreme Court chambers.

Justice Riley offered brief remarks accepting the award and thanking the board members for the honor.



Justice Riley thanks the Society for the LEGAL HISTORY AWARD.

To read the full text of the speech given by Mr. Nolan, go to www.micourthistory.org and click on the Recent News link “Society Honors Justice Riley With LEGAL HISTORY AWARD”.

Michigan Political History Society Picks “Greats” of Past Half-Century

In a recent survey of its membership, the Michigan Political History Society sought to determine “the ‘predominant’ actors who have strutted and fretted on the stage of Michigan politics during the past half-century.” Here are some of the results, which were published in *Inside Michigan Politics*:

Category:

Governor
Democratic State Senator
Democratic State Representative
Republican State Senator
Republican State Representative
Other Elected Statewide Official
Federal Official

African-American Political Leader

Female Public Official

Political Lawyer

Jurist

Association Leader
Political Journalist

Winner:

John Engler
Bill Faust
Bill Ryan
Joe Schwarz
Paul Hillegonds
Frank Kelley
Gerald Ford

Dennis Archer

Debbie Stabenow

Tom Downs

Dorothy Comstock Riley

Jim Barrett
Bill Ballenger

Runner-Up:

George Romney
Basil Brown
Gary Owen
Emil Lockwood
Bob Waldron
Richard Austin
Robert McNamara

Morris Hood

Mary Coleman

Richard McClellan

T. John Lesinski

Mike Franck

Tim Skubick

The Society Celebrates Its 15th Year

This year's Annual Luncheon marked the 15th year of existence for the Michigan Supreme Court Historical Society. The luncheon program, which began at 12:45, featured two award presentations and remarks by two Michigan Supreme Court justices.

The program began with Society President Wallace D. Riley welcoming the luncheon attendees and thanking them for their on-going support of the Society and its activities. He then reported on the Society's recent events, including the May 8, 2002 close of the Michigan Supreme Court Chambers in the G. Mennen Williams Building, the dedication of the Hall of Justice and the fundraising reception for the Learning Center in October 2002, and the dedication of the official Court portrait of James H. Brickley in January.

Mr. Riley then thanked the members of the Board of Directors of the Historical Society and called on them to rise and be recognized. He announced that directors Eugene Driker and Justice John W. Fitzgerald had resigned from the Board and that Leonard D. Givens and Judge Avern L. Cohn had been elected to fill the vacancies.

Mr. Riley then introduced Justice Stephen J. Markman who addressed the audience on behalf of Chief Justice



Justice Markman speaks on behalf of the Michigan Supreme Court.

Maura D. Corrigan. Justice Markman remarked:

Chief Justice Corrigan, who has family commitments outside of Michigan this week, has asked me to share a few thoughts with you. In particular, she wanted to extend her, and the entire Court's, appreciation to Wally Riley and to all of those here who have been involved in the work of the Supreme Court Historical Society. The Society remains the indispensable institution in recording and preserving the history and traditions of Michigan's judicial

branch.

Justice Markman continued his address by summarizing the work of the Court over the past year. He concluded by introducing those of his colleagues who were in attendance: Justice Marilyn J. Kelly, Justice Clifford W. Taylor, and Justice Elizabeth A. Weaver. To read the full text of Justice Markman's remarks, go to www.micourthistory.org and click on Recent News.

The program continued with the presentation of the American Judicature Society's Herbert Harley Award to Society President Wallace D. Riley. The award, which was presented by Judge Avern L. Cohn, is named after the founder of the American Judicature Society and is one of the organization's premier awards. It is generally awarded annually and is given to persons who have made an outstanding contribution to the improvement of justice in the state in which they work and live.

Judge Cohn reminded the audience of the award's past recipients, which have included Henry L. Woofenden, Jason L. Honigman, William G. Milliken, Thomas Giles Kavanagh, John S. Clark, Leo A. Farhat, and Michael Franck. "Last year," he added, "the award went to George Googasian."

In presenting the award, Judge Cohn detailed Mr. Riley's accomplishments and contributions:

Wally, as we all know, is a past-president of the State Bar of Michigan and the American Bar Association. He currently serves as president of the Michigan Supreme Court Historical Society.... Wally has been the driving force in memorializing the history of the justice system in our State. Wally has served as president of the Society since 1988. We all know of the significant accomplishments of the



Wallace D. Riley accepts the Herbert Harley Award.

Society these last 15 years and there is no need for me to relate them.

Wally is dedicated to our profession. He has a deep appreciation of Michigan's legal history. He exemplifies all that is good in being a lawyer. He is a role model not only for younger lawyers, but for all lawyers.

Wally is persistent but diplomatic. Wally is intelligent but not arrogant. Wally loves our system of justice and constantly seeks ways to improve it.

To read the text of the award, go to www.micourthistory.org and click on the Recent News Announcement "Wallace D. Riley Honored by the American Judicature Society."

After accepting his award, Mr. Riley then introduced Society Treasurer Lawrence P. Nolan, who presented the LEGAL HISTORY AWARD to Justice Dorothy Comstock Riley (see cover story).

The Luncheon program was concluded by Justice Marilyn J. Kelly, who presented a PowerPoint tour of the Hall of Justice. Justice Kelly concluded her presentation with these words:

So, there it is, a magnificent new building that makes us proud to be part of the legal system in Michigan, that symbolizes our dedication to Truth and Justice.

As I see it, the challenge for the Supreme Court, now, is to ensure that truth and justice are brought

into the Hall of Justice every day it is in existence. That includes not only the content of the Court's decisions on the cases that come before it, but the content of its administrative decisions.

As Sir Winston Churchill one said, "We shape our buildings, and forever after, they shape our feelings and thoughts."

For the full text of Justice Kelly's presentation, go to www.micourthistory.org and click on Resources and then Speeches & Vignettes.



Justice Kelly presents a PowerPoint tour of the Hall of Justice.

Society Aides in Renovation of Flint Courtroom

The Genessee County Courthouse Square Project in Flint, Michigan, began in earnest in 1998. The building project included the construction of a 60,000 square foot addition to the existing neoclassical courthouse and extensive historic renovation of the 1926 structure. The overall plan provides for the divisions of the circuit and probate courts and their immediate support staff and services to be located in one building. The courtroom displayed in the photograph on the left was the original probate courtroom. The American eagle over the bench was an original appointment to the space. Over the course of the decades, additional features were added to the wall behind the bench. These included individual pictures of the Big Four justices of the Michigan Supreme Court, President Thomas

Jefferson and U.S. Supreme Court Justice John Marshall. These enlarged photographs were grainy and of poor quality. The beauty of the

courtroom was further compromised by the installation of suspended ceilings and fluorescent lighting in the late 1960s. As part of the Courthouse Square Project, the eagle was gold leafed. Due to the poor condition of the enlarged photographs behind the bench, it was decided that they would not be returned. Two artistic expressions of Lady Justice, by artist Stefan Davidek, were added. The Michigan Supreme Court Historical Society provided digital images of the official court portraits of the Big Four justices. These were enlarged and framed. The ceilings were returned to original heights. Capital Lighting of Grand Haven, Michigan, created replicas of the early electric lighting fixtures. The original decorative painting finishes, including the application of gold leaf panels, were also restored. The dignified majesty of these historical courtrooms has returned.



Images from the 12th Annual Membership Luncheon



Thursday, April 24, 2003 — Detroit Athletic Club



Pictured: (1) Nancy Diehl, Kimberly M. Cahill, and Jeffrey Rogg (2) Hon. Joseph M. Impastato, Marian Impastato, and Society Secretary Charles R. Rutherford (3) Hon. William J. Giovan, Society boardmember Hon. Wendy L. Potts, and Justice Clifford W. Taylor (4) Norton A. Gappy and John P. Jacobs (5) Hon. Joseph M. Impastato, Society Treasurer Lawrence P. Nolan, Marian Impastato, Society President Wallace D. Riley, and former Chief Justice Dorothy Comstock Riley (6) Society boardmember Eugene Mossner, Myzell Sowell, and Joseph Hardig (7) Freeman Farrow and Todd Holleman (8) Evanne Dietz, Thomas Rombach, and Linda Rexer (9) Thomas Ryan, David Potts, and Frederick Harris (10) Society boardmember Hon. Denise Langford Morris and Eunice Jeffries (11) Former Justice Patricia J. Boyle, Justice Marilyn J. Kelly, Justice Elizabeth A. Weaver, and former Chief Justice Dorothy Comstock Riley

Your Two Cents Worth

This year's Coleman Intern is working on a project to summarize the most important cases in Michigan Supreme Court history. We are seeking input from our members to help us determine which cases should be included.

To nominate cases, write the case names in the space below and mail or fax this form to:

Michigan Supreme Court Historical Society
1st Floor Hall of Justice
925 W. Ottawa Street
Lansing, MI 48915
Fax: 517-373-7589

Have you paid your 2003 Dues?

For your convenience, the Society accepts Visa, MasterCard, and American Express. Please call (517) 373-7589 to make your payment by phone, or complete and mail or fax the following information to the Society

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

Zip _____ Phone _____

* Individual Membership: \$100

* Corporate/Law Firm Membership: \$1000

Total Payment _____

Check enclosed

Credit Card (Circle one)

Visa MasterCard American Express

Name on Card _____

Acct. No. _____

Exp. Date _____

Signature _____



1st Floor, Hall of Justice
925 W. Ottawa Street
Lansing, MI 48915