

# Governor Engler To Be Honored With the First-Ever 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 has established the LEGAL HISTORY AWARD.

## Award Criteria

This 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.

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## The Award

The actual award to be presented will vary by honoree. The award will be some item of historical value and significance that is specific in some way to the contributions of the honoree.

## Presentation of 2002 Legal History Award

In April of 1988, John Engler was majority leader of the Michigan State Senate and Dorothy Comstock Riley was serving as Chief Justice of the Michigan Supreme Court.

The Michigan Supreme Court Historical Society had just been formed and one of its first activities was the rededication of the Old Supreme Court Chambers in the Capitol Building where the Supreme Court sat until 1970 when it moved to its present location in the G. Mennen Williams Building.

On that occasion, the Chief Justice lamented that Michigan was one of the few states that did not have a state supreme court building. Senator Engler replied, “Perhaps someday we can change that.” That day will be October 8, 2002, when Governor Engler, the Legislature, and the Supreme Court will dedicate the newly constructed Hall of Justice at the end of the mall opposite the Capitol.

In recognition of his efforts in promoting the building of the new Hall of Justice, the Society will present the first-ever LEGAL HISTORY AWARD to Governor John Engler at the Annual Membership Luncheon of the Michigan Supreme Court Historical Society to be held on April 18th, 2002, at the Detroit Athletic Club in Detroit.

## Other Honories

In addition to the Legal History Award, two former board members will also be honored at this year’s Annual

Membership Luncheon. Former directors Thomas A. McNish, who passed away last year, and Roger F. Lane, who will retire from the board on April 18th, will be honored with proclamations thanking them for their service to the Society.

A social and cocktail reception is scheduled to begin at 11:30 a.m. in the main dining room of the Club. The luncheon will begin at 12:00 p.m. The program will begin at approximately 12:45 p.m. and is scheduled to conclude by 1:30 p.m. For information or reservations for the Luncheon, please contact Angela Bergman at 517-346-6419 or [abergman@micourthistory.org](mailto:abergman@micourthistory.org).

## LUNCHEON TICKETS STILL

AVAILABLE:

PURCHASE YOURS AT THE DOOR

APRIL 18, 2002

DETROIT ATHLETIC CLUB

12:00 NOON

## MARK YOUR CALEDARS TODAY!

HALL OF JUSTICE BUILDING DEDICATION

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2002

10:00 A.M. TO 1:00 P.M.

LANSING, MICHIGAN

CELEBRATING FOUNDATIONS OF JUSTICE

A FUND RAISING DINNER FOR THE LEARNING CENTER

SATURDAY EVENING

OCTOBER 12, 2002

MICHIGAN HALL OF JUSTICE

LANSING, MICHIGAN

## In Recent News....

### Society Projects Progressing Nicely

Several on-going Society projects are progressing and are on schedule to be completed by the fall of 2002.

In January of 2002, Cooley Law student Juria Jones completed her assignment to compile information on former Justices Levin and Boyle. In addition to compiling biographical information, she collected newspaper articles and compiled lists of opinions and dissents written by the two Justices. She also wrote summaries of several key cases to help familiarize the oral historian with the work of the Justices.

In February, oral historian Glenn Ruggles received the research packets and began developing questions for the Justices' interviews. A pre-interview has been conducted with Justice Levin and the oral history interview is scheduled to take place late in the spring.

In addition to the new histories that are being conducted, work by the Coleman Intern dividing the existing histories into searchable segments is progressing as scheduled. Eleven of the twelve text files have been formatted and divided according to broad subjects such as early history, education, law school and training, career, and judicial philosophy. The next step of the project is segmenting the audio files to match the text divisions and formatting them to become available online.

Last but not least, the Society's pilot Education Program is continuing to progress. Nearly 30 copies of each lesson plan have been delivered to teachers throughout the state and feedback has already begun to filter in. Early feedback indicates that the plans are a big hit and are proving to be quite useful to teachers of Government and law-related subject.

### Hall of Justice Construction Continues

The Hall of Justice remains on schedule and under budget. This progress reflects the outstanding efforts of the Justices of the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeals, The Christman Company, Albert Kahn Associates, and the Department of Management and Budget. Anyone who has passed near the building site (925 West Ottawa Street in Lansing) has been able to observe the steady rise of this important building.

The interior will reflect the highest levels of functionality, without compromising the necessary dignity of this courthouse. A Learning Center will educate all of Michigan citizens, including its youngest, regarding the nature of our system of justice. A Conference Center will allow gatherings of trial judges and others to explore the best ways to deliver justice. Two remarkable courtrooms will serve as fitting sites for the appellate branches of our One Court of Justice.

The Hall of Justice will be dedicated on October 8, 2002. The State Bar of Michigan will host a fundraising dinner for the Learning Center on October 12, 2002. We hope to see you on both occasions.

# In the Spotlight... Two Former Governors

## Justice Epaphroditus Ransom

Epaphroditus Ransom was born on March 24, 1798, in Shelburne Falls, Massachusetts, the first of twelve children. He received a good education at various New England academies and by 1823 he had opened his own law practice in Townsend, Vermont. Ransom was elected to the Vermont Legislature but decided instead that he wanted to move his wife, Almira, and their children to the Territory of Michigan.

The family established themselves in what is now known as Kalamazoo. He began practicing law in the area as well as involving himself in various business and agricultural ventures. It was not long, however, before he was drawn back into politics.

Ransom served in the State Legislature prior to being appointed a Circuit Court Judge and Associate Justice of the Supreme Court by Governor Stevens T. Mason in 1837. He maintained his service on the Court until 1848 when he resigned after being elected Governor of Michigan. Ransom was the first governor to be inaugurated in the new state capitol of Lansing. After his term as Governor, however, his luck with politics and business began to change.

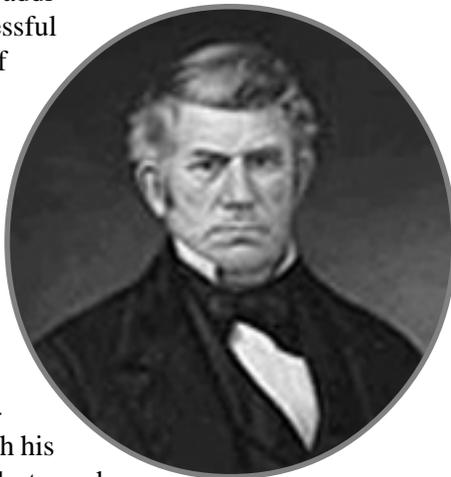
Ransom was not renominated for governor by the Democratic Party due to his strong anti-slavery position. Yet his constituents in Kalamazoo still valued his work and elected him once again to the State Legislature in 1853 and 1854. In addition, he was successful

as the President of the Michigan Agricultural Society and as Regent for the University of Michigan.

However, his private endeavors began to falter.

The business partnership he had with his son, Wylls, was destroyed

by the panic of 1855. "Faced with his financial losses and broken health, Ransom was grateful when President James Buchanan appointed him receiver of the public monies for the Osage land office at Fort Scott, Kansas, in 1857." Epaphroditus Ransom died at Fort Scott on November 11, 1859.



## Justice Alpheus Felch

Alpheus Felch was born on September 28, 1804, in Limerick, Maine. Felch was an orphan by the time he was two years old and his primary guardian from that point on was his paternal grandfather.

Poor health plagued Felch during his youth, yet he still managed to excel in school. After completing his studies in law and being admitted to the Bar, he began practicing law in Maine. However, his ill health again intervened and forced him to relocate to a warmer climate.

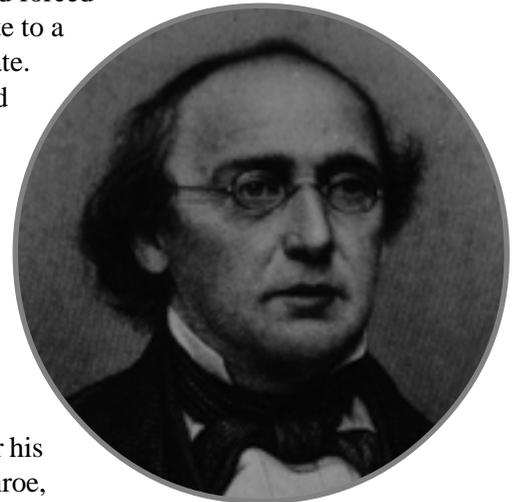
Felch intended to move to Mississippi, but got as far as Michigan when he stopped his travels and settled in Monroe.

Shortly after his arrival in Monroe,

Felch took the position of village attorney. His career as a public servant continued when he was elected to the State Legislature. Felch was also appointed to the State Bank Commission and the position of Auditor General. In 1843, he was appointed to the Michigan Supreme Court. He remained on the Bench until he was elected Governor of Michigan in 1845. Felch left this office before his term expired to run for the United States Senate. He was elected to service, and while in the Senate President Franklin Pierce appointed Felch as the Commissioner to negotiate Spanish and Mexican land claims under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Felch's investigations as Commissioner were completed in March of 1854; the testimony of all the cases heard by Felch amassed forty volumes.

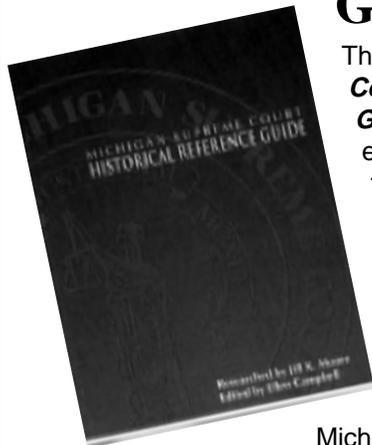
Following his service in the U.S. Senate, Felch returned to practice law in Ann Arbor but retired in 1874. Felch was a Tappan Professor of Law at the University of Michigan for five years and also served on the Board of Regents of the University.

Alpheus Felch died in 1896.



*Biographies taken from the Michigan Supreme Court Historical Reference Guide pages 29 and 35.*

# 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.

Call 517-346-6419 to order your copy!

## Mission Statement

The Michigan Supreme Court Historical Society is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) corporation dedicated to preserving documents, records, and memorabilia relating to the Michigan Supreme Court. The Society produces publications, special events, and other projects to achieve its goals in education and restoration. Current officers and directors are:

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*Society Update* is published quarterly by the Michigan Supreme Court Historical Society. Writing submissions, article ideas, news and announcements are encouraged. Contact the Society at: 306 Townsend Street, Lansing, MI 48933; Ph. (517) 346-6419; Fax (517) 372-2716; E-mail [MSCHS@MICOURTHISTORY.ORG](mailto:MSCHS@MICOURTHISTORY.ORG); Web site: [WWW.MICOURTHISTORY.ORG](http://WWW.MICOURTHISTORY.ORG)



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