



Society Update

The Official Publication of the Michigan Supreme Court Historical Society

Summer 2011

The Legacy of Isaac Christiancy Lives On...

On June 7, 2011, the Society was pleased to present a reproduction of the portrait of Justice Isaac Peckham Christiancy to Senate Majority Leader Randy Richardville at the Hall of Justice in Lansing.

With the original portrait hanging over his shoulder, MSC Chief Justice Robert P. Young, Jr., painted a portrait in words of the 23rd justice—"the poor boy who made a masterpiece of his life".

Early Life

Christiancy was born in New York state on March 12, 1812, to a family of limited means. At the tender



Chief Justice Robert P. Young, Jr., Senate Majority Leader Randy Richardville, and Society Vice President Charles R. Rutherford pose with the reproduction portrait of Justice Christiancy. Over the shoulder of Mr. Rutherford hangs the original portrait, painted in 1884.

age of 13, Christiancy began teaching school to support his family.

When he was 24 years old, Christiancy moved to Monroe, Michigan, and began "reading" the law in the office of future Governor Robert McClelland.

Many years later, in his 1860 address to the first graduating class of the law department at the University of Michigan, Christiancy noted "the difficulties

and embarrassments" of reading the law "in the office of some practical lawyer" as he had done.

Political Life

Christiancy established his own law practice in

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Monroe in 1836 and practiced from 1838—1857. He served as the prosecuting attorney for Monroe County from 1841—1846 and in the State Senate in 1849.

Christiancy was a vigorous opponent of oppression and felt that no man could belong to another. He left the Democratic Party over the issue of slavery and became part of the anti-slavery Free Soil Party. Christiancy served as a delegate to the Free Soil Convention in Buffalo, New York, in 1848, and consented to be their candidate for Governor of Michigan in 1852, knowing that he would not be elected. Christiancy was one of the leaders of the movement incorporating the Free Soil Party into the Republican Party in Jackson in 1854.

Big Four

Christiancy was elected to the Michigan Supreme Court in 1857 to serve with Justice James V. Campbell. They were joined on the Court by Thomas M. Cooley in 1864 and Benjamin F. Graves in 1868. Together,

After the Court

Justice Christiancy left the Court on February 27, 1875, upon his election to the U.S. Senate. He served the citizens of Michigan in Washington, D.C., until his appointment by President Rutherford B. Hayes to serve as Minister to Peru in 1879. He left Peru on August 2, 1881, and returned to the practice of law in Lansing. He died September 8, 1890.

It was noted at the memorial of Justice Christiancy on October 14, 1890, by his friend and associate S. L. Kilbourne that, “Our human existence is made up of the past and the present. The events of today become the history of tomorrow. The current of our lives is continually flowing into the vast ocean of the past.”

The Society exists to record these moments and to ensure that the historic events of the Court, and the significance of their occurrence, are not lost to future generations. For this reason the Society was gratified

“Our human existence is made up of the past and the present. The events of today become the history of tomorrow. The current of our lives is continually flowing into the vast ocean of the past.”

Campbell, Christiancy, Cooley, and Graves became known as the Big Four, men of exceptional scholarly attainments who possessed to a high degree the fair-mindedness essential to a jurist. The Big Four was instrumental in determining the course of Michigan’s judiciary in the early years of our statehood, sharpening judicial procedures, and resolving constitutional issues.

The Big Four served together from 1868—1875. The Michigan Supreme Court, under the influence of the Big Four, was recognized throughout the U.S. as a strong judiciary and one of the “best in the land.” To this day, the Big Four continue to be honored for their significant contributions to Michigan’s legal heritage.

The Big Four is depicted notably in the mural on the side of Cooley Law School in downtown Lansing and on the State Bar of Michigan’s April directory issue.

to participate in this project, that highlights the individual life of one of the justices of the Big Four.

Senate Majority Leader Richardville, who was born and raised in Monroe County and has represented the 17th District in the Senate since 2006, noted that he had attended Christiancy Elementary School as a child. It was not until he was an elected official, however, that he began to learn the important history of this notable citizen.

The reproduction portrait is now hanging in the Senate Majority Leader’s office in Lansing. Senator Richardville plans to present the portrait to the Monroe County Historical Society upon leaving office. The original portrait can be seen in the first floor rotunda of the Hall of Justice. The building is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

About the Portraits

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Dedicated June 3, 1884

The original portrait of Isaac Peckham Christiancy is an oil on canvas, measuring 44 1/2 inches by 34 1/2 inches. It was painted by L.T. Ives, a Detroit attorney with a passion for painting. L.T. and his son Percy were prolific late nineteenth century painters, and their signatures can be seen on a great number of the portraits of early justices.

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Dedicated June 7, 2011

The reproduction portrait is a high-quality digital photo printed onto canvas. The canvas is certified to exceed standards for pH and lightfastness, thus ensuring its archival quality. It was produced by Capital Imaging of Lansing.

Big Four Reprints



ORDER FORM

The Society is pleased to offer 8x10 inch reproductions of the Big Four painting for sale. They cost \$10.00 each.

Checks should be made payable and mailed to MSCHS at 1st Floor Hall of Justice, 925 W. Ottawa St, Lansing, MI 48915.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

To pay by Visa / MasterCard / American Express

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Exploring Careers in the Law



Exploring Careers in the Law participants pose for a group photo in the MSC Courtroom. Learning Center Coordinator Rachael Drenovsky is on the far right. Justice Mary Beth Kelly is in the center back.

For one week earlier this summer, teenagers who aspire to become attorneys and judges had an opportunity to participate in deciding a Michigan Supreme Court opinion.

Exploring Careers in the Law is a week-long half-day summer camp program offered by the Michigan Supreme Court Learning Center. It is held at the Hall of Justice in Lansing. This year's program for students entering the tenth through twelfth grades ran from June 20–24.

Activities that the students participated in during the week included learning how to read a court opinion, visiting the Law Library at the Library of Michigan, meeting with the Court Crier Dave Palazzolo and Justice Mary Beth Kelly, and learning both how the justices develop their questions and how attorneys prepare to answer them.

The week culminated in moot court oral arguments in the real-life case of *People v. Slaughter*. The students discussed the Fourth Amendment and the emergency and community caretaker exceptions in relation to the case.

According to one student, the best part of the week was “getting to discuss and form your own ideas about the case we’re studying.” And what better result can one hope for than that?



The Learning Center is once again participating in the Passport to Adventure, a program geared toward students entering third, fourth, and fifth grades. Students visit Lansing area attractions and answer questions about each site in an educational/cultural-type Scavenger hunt. They are then eligible to win fun prizes such as iPads, digital cameras, and movie and baseball game tickets.

Crime Victim Rights Exhibit



Former Senator William Van Regenmorter is seen in front of the new Learning Center exhibit on Crime Victim's Rights.

In cooperation with the Prosecuting Attorneys Association of Michigan (PAAM), the Michigan Supreme Court Learning Center unveiled a new permanent exhibit on Crime Victim's Rights in April.

The event was attended by Chief Justice Young, Attorney General Schuette, legislators, representatives from PAAM, the Governor's legal counsel, and former Senator William Van Regenmorter, who wrote Michigan's Crime Victim's Rights Act in 1985; it was added to the constitution three years later.

Senator Tonya Schuitmaker noted at the exhibit opening that many of us take for granted that the rights now accorded to victims have always existed. These legal rights include being notified about progress in a criminal prosecution, being able to address the court at sentencing, and to receive compensation and services, among other things.

The four-panel interactive exhibit asks visitors to:

1. Put the steps of a criminal case in chronological order.
2. Match defendant rights and victim rights.
3. Create a victim impact statement.
4. See how victim advocates assist

victims through a maze-like board game.

Law Student Prize: University of Michigan



Rob K. Smith of the University
of Michigan Law School

The 2011 law student prize winner from the University of Michigan Law School is Robert K. Smith. He was recognized by the Society for exemplary legal history scholarship in U.S. Legal History as a third year law school student. Rob graduated in May of this year.

Rob is originally from Cape Town, South Africa. He lived in Europe for three years before moving to the United States in 2000. Rob received his B.A. in History from Yale University in 2006, and worked for two years in New York before law school.

Rob has a keen interest in colonial legal history, and in particular the transmission of common law morals regulation from Britain to the American colonies in the 17th and early 18th centuries.

He will begin working as an associate at WilmerHale in Boston this fall, and is considering a return to school to pursue his PhD within the next few years.

The Society's Law Student Prize was created in 2008 as a means to reach a new generation of people with a passion for legal history, and to recognize the exceptional legal scholarship of one student at each of our state's five law schools every year. Each winner receives a \$500 cash prize. The prize program is funded through membership donations.

2011 Society Member Contribution Form

Please use this form if you would like to renew your annual membership or make an additional financial contribution to the Society for 2011. We are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization so all contributions are tax-deductible for federal income tax purposes. Thank you for your support!

Name _____

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Please detach this form and mail to: Michigan Supreme Court Historical Society, 1st Floor Hall of Justice, 925 W. Ottawa Street, Lansing, MI 48915.

You may also fax it to (517) 373-7592.

Individual membership \$100.00

Advocates Guild membership \$150.00

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Life After the Michigan Supreme Court: Maura Corrigan and Michigan's Children



In January, Justice Maura Corrigan stepped down from the Michigan Supreme Court after twelve years as a justice, including two terms as Chief Justice (2001, 2003).

After taking office, Governor Rick Snyder appointed Justice Corrigan to serve as the director of the Michigan Department of Human Services.

Her longstanding dedication to children's issues was a primary factor in the choice, including her years of service as the child support and child welfare liaison for the Supreme Court.

On July 18, 2011, Justice Corrigan and the national advocacy organization Children's Rights announced changes to the settlement of the 2008 federal class-action lawsuit. The modified agreement establishes new benchmarks for reform, strengthens support for families and children in foster care, gives DHS greater flexibility to make changes, and sets a new timeline for reform.

The number of children awaiting placement with a foster or adoptive family has dropped dramatically (from 1,100 children in April to 349 in July). Since Justice Corrigan has taken over as director, the department has taken steps to "remove barriers that left too many children waiting too long for a permanent home."

There are currently an estimated 14,700 children in Michigan's foster care system. About 3,200 of them will be adopted once a court terminates parental rights following abuse or neglect.

The department has hired nearly 1,000 employees since January—recruiting recent college graduates through an innovative partnership with six colleges

and universities—thus reducing the number of cases each worker is responsible for overseeing.

Beginning this fall, child protective services workers will have twelve cases each; foster workers will have fifteen cases each. At one point leading up to the federal lawsuit, workers had as many as 50–75 cases per person.

The department is also fast-tracking a new data management system to be launched by October 2012. Caseworkers are being given more time to provide direct services rather than filling out forms and filing reports.



What color will this year's tile be?

Last year, the Advocates Guild unveiled its member

Save the Date!

For Upcoming Society Events

Clifford W. Taylor's Portrait Dedication

Wednesday, September 14, 2011 * 3:00 p.m.

Hall of Justice * Lansing, MI

Portrait by Patricia Hill Burnett

Advocates Guild 2011 Dinner

Tuesday, October 4, 2011 * 6:00 p.m.

Hall of Justice * Lansing, MI

Cocktails in the Justices' Conference Room

Dinner in the Sixth Floor Rotunda

Conrad L. Mallett's Portrait Dedication

Wednesday, November 16, 2011 * 3:30 p.m.

Hall of Justice * Lansing, MI

Portrait by Simmie Knox

Mission Statement

The Michigan Supreme Court Historical Society, a non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation, collects, preserves, and displays documents, records, and memorabilia relating to the Michigan Supreme Court and the other Courts of Michigan, promotes the study of the history of Michigan's courts, and seeks to increase public awareness of Michigan's legal heritage. The Society sponsors and conducts historical research, provides speakers and educational materials for students, and sponsors and provides publications, portraits and memorials, special events, and projects consistent with its mission.

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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: 1st Floor Hall of Justice, 925 W. Ottawa Street, Lansing, MI 48915 Phone: (517) 373-7589 Fax: (517) 373-7592

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