

Law and Morals in the Industrial Age
The People v. Beardsley (1907)
150 Mich. 206

In *People v. Beardsley*, the Michigan Supreme Court overruled the manslaughter conviction of Carroll Beardsley. Beardsley was married, but with his wife away he spent the weekend with Blanche Burns,. At some point during the weekend, Burns took an overdose of morphine, and, neglected by Beardsley, died.

The Oakland County Circuit Court found Beardsley guilty of manslaughter because of a failure to perform his legal duty to care for and protect Ms. Burns. The Michigan Supreme Court, in a unanimous decision authored by Chief Justice McAlvay, overturned the conviction and found Beardsley not guilty of manslaughter. While the high court agreed with the previous decisions that manslaughter can arise out of negligence where a legal duty to another person exists, they found no such legal duty between Beardsley and Burns.