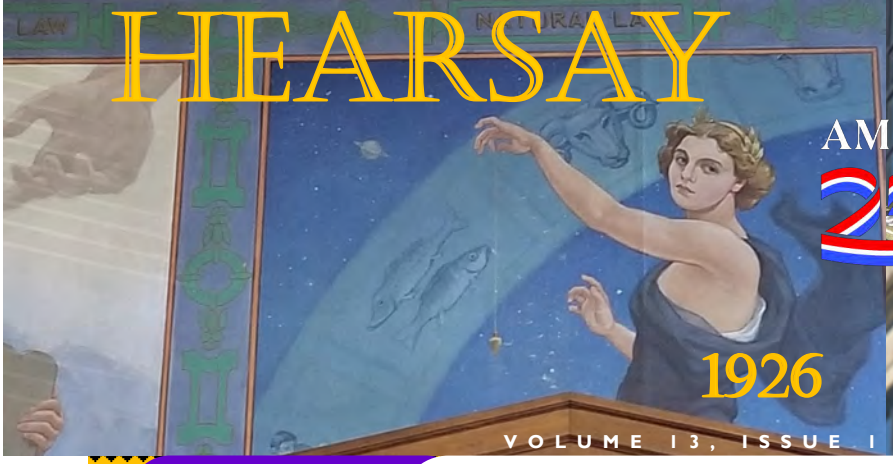


HEARSAY

AMERICA 250

1926

2026

VOLUME 13, ISSUE 1

OCTOBER 2026

GENESEE COUNTY CIRCUIT AND PROBATE COURTS E-NEWSLETTER

a quarterly publication

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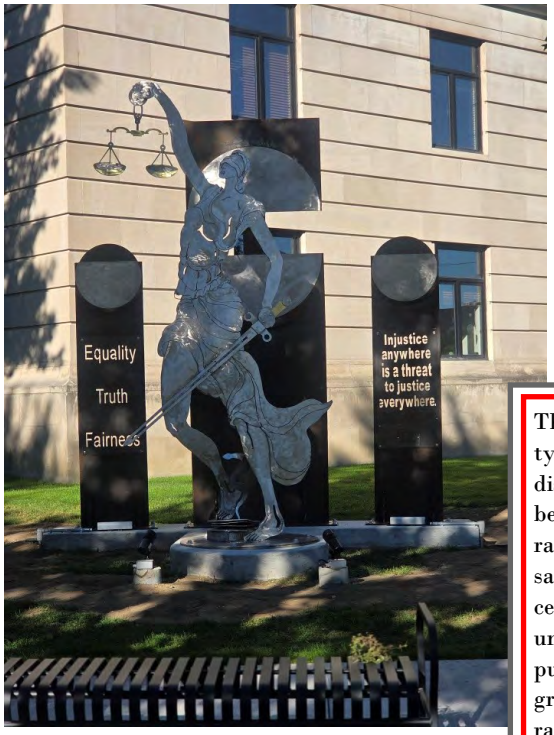
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– A Day To Remember –

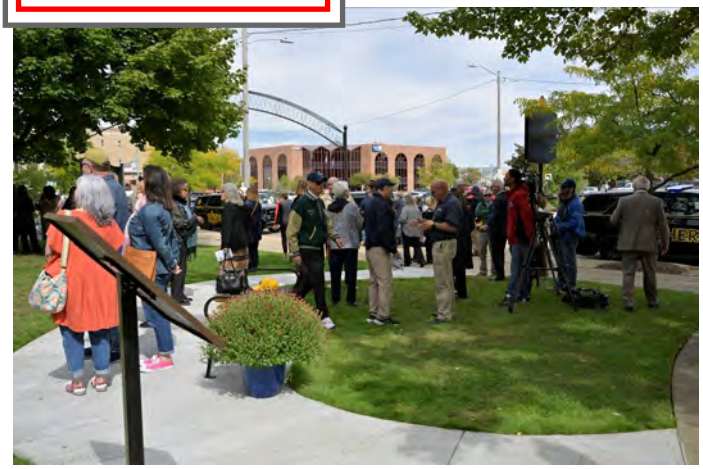




The Historic Genesee County Courthouse was on full display on Friday, September 25, 2026, in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the historic site. The centennial event featured an unveiling and dedication of public art on the courthouse grounds, a viewing of murals and tours of the original courtrooms, followed by a reception at the Greater Flint Arts Council. It was truly a beautiful day and wonderful event for the courts and community. This edition of *Hearsay* is dedicated to the event, with images from the festivities.







The Chief Speaks

Excerpts from the remarks delivered by Chief Judge David J. Newblatt at the Centennial Event.

Thank you for being here to commemorate the centennial anniversary of our beloved courthouse.

I'm going to begin by maybe doing something a little unconventional. After all, Halloween is upon us.

A haunted house is a house inhabited by a spirit. We picture dark Gothic architecture and creepy interiors. Old portraits. Candelabras. But while those things create a spooky atmosphere, they are not what makes a house haunted. The haunting is done by the ghost who won't leave. Technically, a ghost doesn't need Gothic architecture or candelabras in order to haunt a house. But I ask you this: how scary can a haunted house really be if it looks like an Ikea?

A courthouse works the opposite way. It is a building that is supposed to be inhabited—not by a ghost, but by a different presence. Justice. Indeed, that's what makes it a courthouse. But the fact that justice is supposed to reside here doesn't mean that it necessarily will. A courthouse can produce justice. Or it can produce injustice. Justice, in other words, is contingent.

And appearances matter. What a courthouse looks like can help create an atmosphere in which justice feels present. If architecture and interiors can help us feel the presence of a ghost in a haunted house, can they also help us feel the presence of justice in a courthouse? Or put another way: how just can a courthouse feel if it looks like an Ikea?

Thankfully, 100 years ago our civic leaders did not build an Ikea. They built something ambitious: a five-story Neo-Classical courthouse, framed in concrete, faced in Indiana limestone, and fronted by Ionic columns. This was not intended to be merely functional. It was designed to command attention and to convey seriousness, permanence and public duty.

And the ambition did not stop with the architecture. The creators of this courthouse did something wonderful. They commissioned murals that covered the walls behind the courtroom benches. The original murals were painted by Edgar Spier Cameron, an accomplished muralist and former art critic for the *Chicago Tribune*. Our courthouse was his final project. Much later, Flint artist Stefan Davidek restored the surviving murals, recreated one that had been lost, and added a new mural on the fifth floor.

There is something I like about that history. One gen-

(Continued on page 14)

The Withdrawal of Guilty and No Contest Pleas



67th District Court Judge Mark C. McCabe writes "*Ask the Judge*" for the *Tri-County Times*.

The Withdrawal of Guilty or No Contest Pleas appeared in the August 12, 2026 edition.

The name Bryan Kohlberger is in the news again, as he filed a motion last month in a Utah court to withdraw his 2025 guilty pleas to the brutal 2022 stabbing murders of four University of Utah students.

I won't go into further details (much more information is available on the internet), except to say the legal remedy of attempting to withdraw a plea is available in all 50 states.

The procedures differ, and in Michigan there are court rules which govern how it must be done.

Guilty or no contest pleas may not be accepted unless the court is convinced that they are understanding, voluntary, and accurate.

If a defendant wants to withdraw their plea there are three possibilities.

If a motion is made before the court accepts the plea, the defendant has the absolute right to withdraw it.

A motion to withdraw a plea after the plea is accepted, but before sentencing is the second possibility.

In such cases, the plea may be withdrawn in the interest of justice, only if it doesn't substantially prejudice the prosecutor because of reliance on the plea.

Additionally, the plea may be withdrawn if (1) there was a sentence agreement between the prosecutor and the defendant that the court couldn't allow; (2) the court, before or during the plea proceeding, indicated it would give the defendant a particular sentence and was unable to do so; (3) the court didn't advise the defendant of the possibility or necessity of a consecutive sentence in multi-count pleas; (4) there was an error in the plea taking itself.

There's a special rule that if the defendant commits misconduct between a plea and sentencing, no withdrawals are allowed for reasons 1 and 2.

After sentencing a defendant has six months to file a withdrawal motion for a variety of reasons including ineffective assistance of counsel, coercion, newly discovered evidence, the plea being illusory because the defendant received no benefit, misinformation about the plea terms, prosecutorial misconduct, the court not being able to abide by a sentence agreement or statement, and procedural irregularities during the plea proceedings.

An important caveat, "be careful what you wish for".

If the motion is granted, all plea agreements and sentence bargains disappear, and the case returns to pre-plea status.

Court Talent

There is some new talent that will be showcased at Circuit Court.

Kristina Andrews is a Court Operations Specialist in the Circuit Court Legal Records Division. Kristina previously worked for Livingston County.

Declan Beaton is the Judicial Law Clerk for Judge B. Chris Christenson. Judge Christenson has a criminal/civil docket in the Circuit Court. Declan earned his bachelor's degree from Michigan State University and went on to earn his Juris Doctorate degree from the University of Toledo College of Law. Declan is currently studying for the February 2027 bar exam.

Patrick Chatterton II is the Judicial Law Clerk for Judge Mary A. Hood. Judge Hood has a family docket in the Circuit Court. Patrick graduated from the University of Toledo College of Law. He graduated Summa Cum Laude from Central Michigan University in December of 2022. Patrick sat for the July 2026 bar exam and is currently awaiting the results.

Jake Desotelle is the Judicial Law Clerk for Judge Mark W. Latchana. Judge Latchana has a criminal/civil docket in the Circuit Court. Jake earned his Juris Doctorate degree at the University of Toledo College of Law. He completed his undergraduate studies at Michigan State University. Jake sat for the July 2026 bar exam. He found the exam challenging and is now anxiously awaiting his results.

Kirsten Piliste is the Judicial Law Clerk for Judge Brian S. Pickell. Judge Pickell has a criminal/civil docket in the Circuit Court. Prior to Kirsten beginning her legal career, she was a Chief in the United States Navy, serving her country for over twenty years. While in the Navy she earned a B.S. degree in business operations and a M.B.A. in human resources from Excelsior College. After leaving the Navy she pursued a legal career, earning a Juris Doctorate degree at Michigan State University College of Law. Kirsten sat for the July 2026 bar exam and is currently awaiting her results.

Jake Riem is the Judicial Law Clerk for Judge Elizabeth A. Kelly. Judge Kelly has a criminal/civil docket in the Circuit Court. Jake attended the Honors College at Michigan State University for his undergraduate degree in Criminal Justice. He then went on to graduate from the University of Toledo College of Law. Jake sat for the July 2026 bar exam and is currently awaiting his results. He is enjoying learning more about the court process and meeting new people.

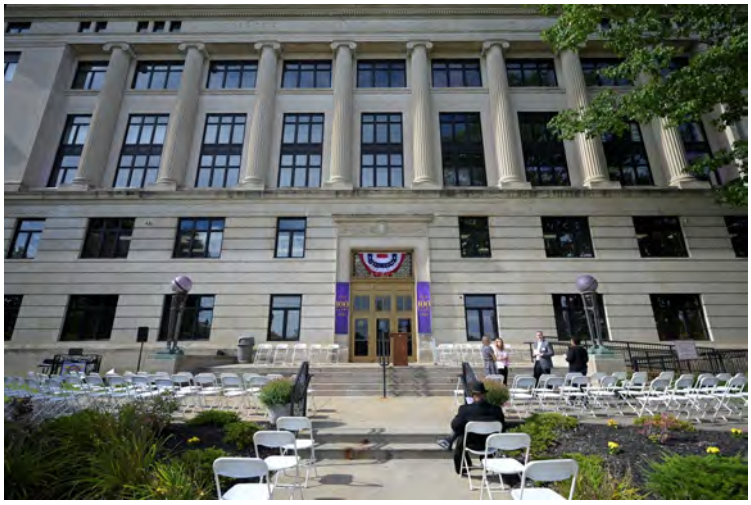
Welcome to the Circuit Court!

We are delighted to have all of you work at the Court. –js



Left to Right: Kirsten Piliste, Kristina Andrews, Jake Desotelle, Patrick Chatterton II, Declan Beaton, Jake Riem

A Day To Remember



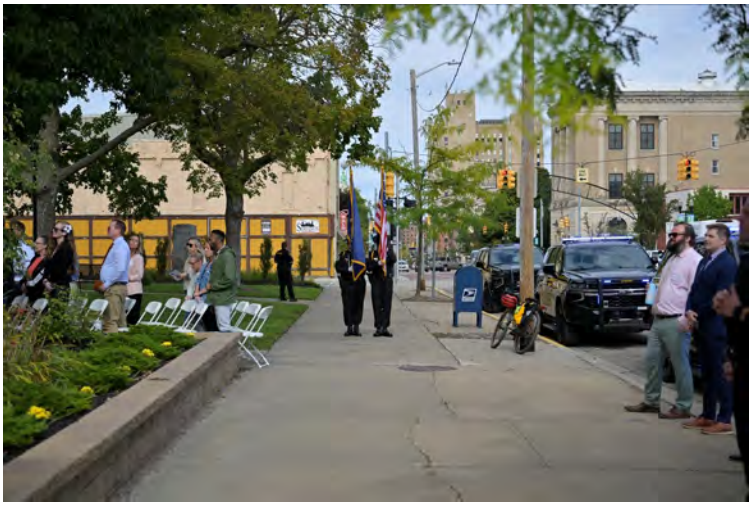






Harry Shinn, Judicial Law Clerk, to Judge David J. Newblatt, calls the centennial session of the Circuit and Probate Courts to order, while ringing the bell that was said to have been used at the first session of the Genesee County Circuit Court.





The Circuit and Probate Judges process out to their seats for the special event.

A Day To Remember







Robert Barnum, artist, reflects on his artwork.



Barnum met with small groups of guests to answer questions and share his vision for the *Scales of Justice*.





Master of Ceremonies, Attorney Jeremy Piper, represented the Genesee County Bar Foundation and its successful fundraising effort to present the artwork to the Courthouse Square.

A Day To Remember













A Day To Remember

The Greater Flint Arts Council hosted a well-attended reception at their newly renovated facilities. The live music was presented by The Roger Jones Jazz Trio, food was from The Cork on Saginaw St. and commemorative cookies by the MCC Culinary Institute.















The Scales ofJustice - Equality,Truth,Fairness
Robert L. Barnum, artist



The Genesee County Bar Foundation collaborated with the Greater Flint Arts Council to seek proposals from Michigan artists to commission a public art installation on the Courthouse Square in honor of the 100 years of continuous service of the 1926 Genesee County Courthouse.

After a juried review of proposals, the commission was awarded to Robert L. Barnum. His vision to create a more contemporary Lady Justice, less static in gesture and more forcible by pose, presented an opportunity to depict a new level of strength, purpose and determination. On each side of Lady Justice, are pillars with content selected by the Genesee County Bar Foundation to underscore enduring legal principles.

About the Artist

Robert L. Barnum is an accomplished Michigan artist, the R L Barnum Studio is located in Mecosta, Michigan. His works include public art murals, sculptures, paintings and functional sculpture. He graduated from Southern Oregon State University (B.S.) and holds a Master of Fine Arts Degree (M.F.A.) from Idaho State University.

Barnum was a professor at Ferris State University(FSU) for over 20 years and created the Michigan ArtWalk concept at FSU which resulted in a 20 year plan to develop a campus-wide art museum dedicated to Michigan artists. His career also included teaching at Columbia College, Chicago, Illinois, Saint Francis College, Fort Wayne, Indiana and Idaho State University, Pocatello, Idaho.

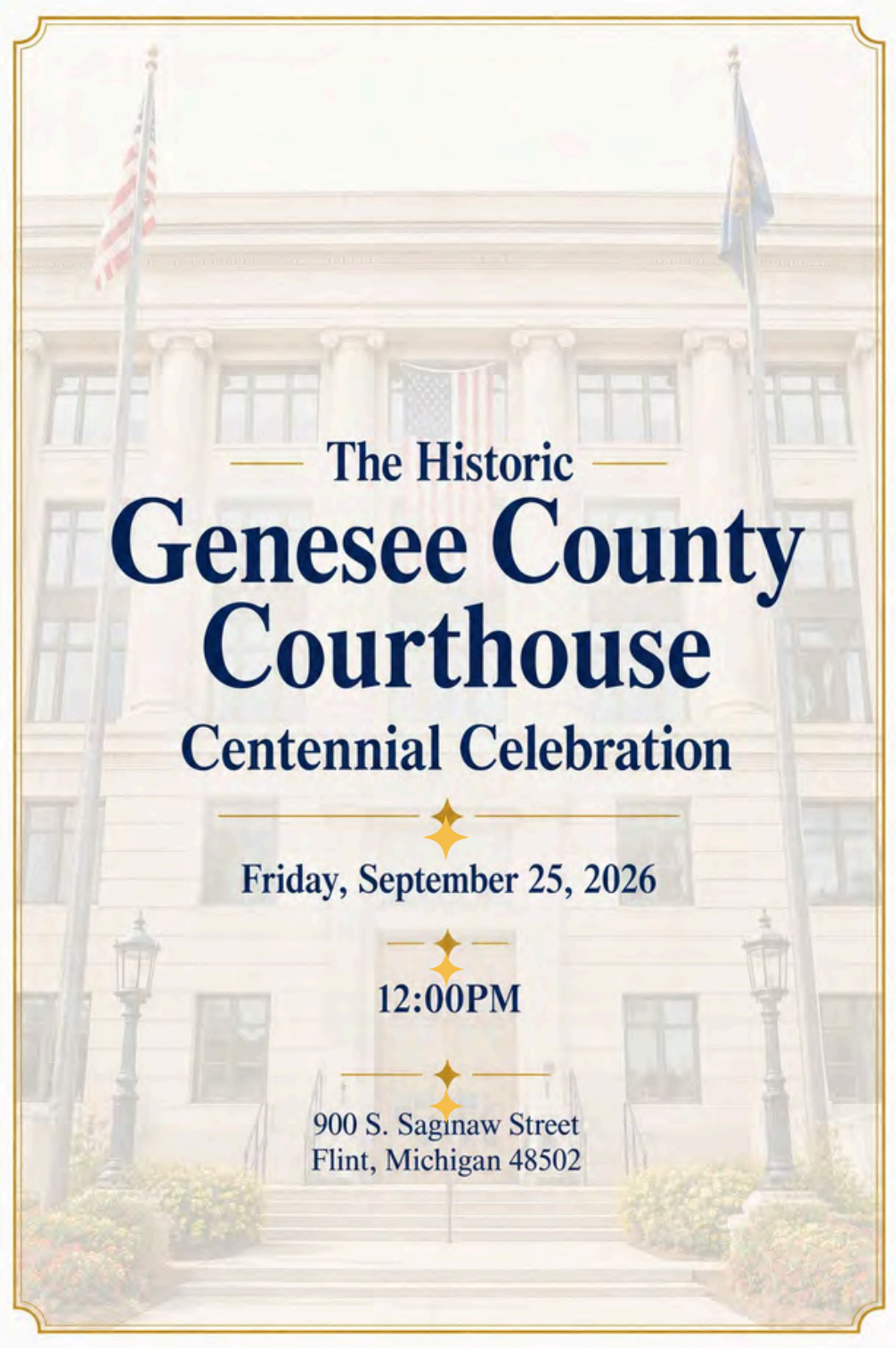
He has installations in 11 states. In 2003, Barnum was awarded the Michigan artist of the year by ArtServe and has received over 30 awards in National and International Juried Competitions. His work has received Congressional Recognition for 2 memorial designs.

Acknowledgments

Special Thanks to the Genessee County Facilities and Operations Department, Ray Zanke, Director, William Chapman, Deputy Director, and their team for exemplary service at all times to support the Genesee County Courthouse and the Courthouse Square. The court administrator medal of service goes to Izak Gracy, George Shead, Steve Sowa and Rich Srda!

Conservation of the canons and war memorials, Courthouse Square
Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, Gov. Crapo Camp No. 145

Scales of Justice Viewing Path
Sorensen Gross congratulates the Historic Genesee County Courthouse on their Centennial Celebration. With our own 100-year tradition of integrity, quality, and excellence in construction, we are proud to have worked with the County in this and other facilities and look forward to a promising future in our community for the next century.



Genesee County Courthouse Square

The land currently occupied by the Genesee County Courthouse has been the site of the center of justice in the county since 1838. A 2 acre parcel of land, originally owned by early settler John Todd, was deeded to the county by Wait Beach with the restriction that it must be used for a Courthouse and public square. Starting with an oak log structure, 5 courthouses have stood on the property.

The 1926 Courthouse is one of only a small number of neo-classical revival county courthouse buildings in Michigan. The architect was Frederick D. Madison of Royal Oak, Michigan. The project was completed in 16 months at a cost of $710,000.

The building is a reinforced concrete-frame structure with an exterior faced in Indiana limestone. Other important building materials include marble wainscoting, wrought iron handrails, American Walnut interior appointments, millwork ornamentation of European origin and courtroom murals. The murals depict local history and legal concepts.

The structure is on both the state and national registers of historic sites.

Docket for the Day

Call to Order	*Harry Shinn* *Judicial Law Clerk*
Judicial Procession	*Genesee County Probate Judges* *Genesee County Circuit Judges*
Welcome and Opening of Events	*Jeremy R.M. Piper* *Genesee County Bar Foundation*
Posting of the Colors *(all rise)*	*Genesee County Sheriff* *Chris Swanson* *Sheriff Color Guard*
The National Anthem	*Jerome Threlkeld*
Remarks and Acknowledgements	*David J. Newblatt, Chief Judge* *Genesee County Probate and Circuit Courts* *Dale K. Weighill, Chairperson* *Genesee County Board of Commissioners* *Eric J. Mead, President* *Genesee County Bar Association* *Duncan M. Beagle, Circuit Judge (retired)* *Genesee County Bar Foundation, President*
Artist Introduction and Undraping	*Barbara A. Menear, Circuit Court* *Genesee County Bar Foundation*
Adjournment *(judges recess)*	*Jeremy R.M. Piper*

1:00–2:30

Guided tours of the 3 original courtrooms, 3rd floor

2:30–4:00

Reception:	Greater Flint Arts Council
Refreshments:	The Cork & MCC Culinary Arts
Music:	Roger Jones Jazz Trio

Edgar Spier Cameron (1862-1944)



Cameron was born in Ottawa, Illinois. He received his earliest art training during two summers at the Chicago Academy of Design. In 1882, he traveled to New York City to study at the Art Student's League. Shortly thereafter, he traveled to Paris to study at the Ecole des Beaux Arts and the Julian Academy.

The public exhibition of Cameron's work came initially in 1888 at the Paris Salon. In the 1880's, Cameron exhibited works at the Chicago Art Institute. During this time period he was also an art critic for the Chicago Tribune.

He was one the artists who worked on the Chicago Fire Cyclorama for the 1893 World's Fair. His Illinois murals include the Illinois Supreme Court Library in Springfield representing the ideals of Justice, Precedent, Jurisprudence and Knowledge. In 1911, he completed a cycle of large oil paintings for Chicago City Hall depicting the twelve epochs and events in the history and evolution of Chicago.

Cameron also received several awards for his works over the years. France bestowed upon him the Paris Expo Silver Medal (1900) and the Palmes Academiques (1920). At the Art Institute of Chicago, he received the Grower Prize (1909), the Butler Prize (1914), the Carr Prize (1917) as well as the Chicago Galleries Association (1927).

Stefan Davidek (1924-2016)



Davidek was born in Flint, Michigan, the son of an immigrant Czechoslovakian trade painter and guildsman.

As a youth he exhibited his father's artistic inclinations. He received artistic instruction at the Flint Institute of Arts, the Art Student's League in New York and at Cranbrook Academy in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. During his career he was known as a painter, muralist, printmaker and mosaic artist.

Mr. Davidek was a major contributor to the local artistic scene. His works are exhibited at several Michigan museums including the Detroit Institute of Arts, the Flint Institute of Arts and the Hackley Art Gallery, (Muskegon Museum of Art). There are additional works displayed at Albion College, the Women's League at the University of Michigan (Ann Arbor) and McLaren Hospital.

The artist established himself as an accomplished muralist. His commissions include the murals at Zehnder's and Saint Lorenz Lutheran church in Frankenmuth and Saint Paul's Episcopal Church in Flint.

Notably, he was commissioned to re-create the mural in courtroom No.1. Numerous awards and prizes have been bestowed upon Davidek. These include the Founders Prize from the Flint Institute of Arts, the Lou R. Maxim Prize from the Detroit Institute of Arts, the Purchase Award, Alma Print Show. He was also a founding member of DAS, an artistic group that features serigraphs of famous Flint landmarks and locations.

The Davidek family includes generations of artists. The tradition of buildings adorned with public art to inspire and instruct was often cited by Mr. Davidek during his time at the Courthouse.

The Murals

Murals are a tribute to the undeniable ability of art to serve as a powerful record of people, time and place.

When the Courthouse opened in November 1926, there were 3 circuit courtrooms on the 3rd floor. There was 1 probate courtroom on the 5th floor.

Each circuit courtroom included a monumental size mural, either depicting the development of Genesee County or the evolution of the law. All were painted by *Edgar Spier Cameron*.

The mural in Courtroom No. 1 was removed in the 1960's when air conditioning was introduced into the courthouse. It was accurately recreated in 2003 by *Stefan Davidek* from limited access to its original content and painstaking effort to remain true to the intent of the original artist.

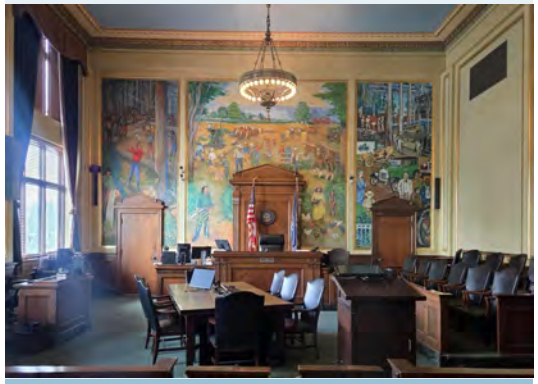
The recreation was commissioned by the Genesee County Bar Foundation, its members and other generous donors. No public tax dollars were used for the mural re-creation.

The judges who were serving in the 3 original circuit courtrooms at the time of their retirement are included in these materials.

Courtroom No. 1

Judges

James S. Parker	1925-1937
Phillip Elliott	1938-1960
Louis D. McGregor	1960-1964
Elza H. Papp	1965-1972
Ollie B. Bivins, Jr.	1972-1982
Harry B. McAra	1973-1986
Robert M. Ransom	1977-2005
Archie L. Hayman	1996-2017
Celeste D. Bell	2018-2025



Courtroom No. 2

Judges

Fred W. Brennan	1917-1929
Paul V. Gadola	1929-1960
Donn D. Parker	1960-1966
Donald R. Freeman	1967-1997
Richard B. Yuille	1997-2019



Courtroom No. 3

Judges

Edward D. Black	1917-1939
Clifford A. Bishop	1939-1952
Stephen J. Roth	1952-1962
Stewart A. Newblatt	1962-1970
Thomas C. Yeotis	1971-1998
Geoffrey L. Neithercut	1995-2019



geneseeLIVING

October events from www.exploreflintandgenesee.org

Oct01



[Born in the USA: American Studio Glass]
Recurring every week day until October 16, 2026
[Flint Institute of Arts Museum + Art School (FIA)]

Oct01



[Change Starts Here - Sloan Museum Celebrates America 250]
Recurring weekly on Sunday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday until December 30, 2026
[Sloan Museum of Discovery]

Oct01



[Chili Nights & Village Lights Crossroads Village and Huckleberry Railroad]

Oct01



[Cooking with the Chiefs]
Mott Community College Event Center

Oct01



[Get Lost in Our Corn Maze]
Recurring daily until November 8, 2026
[Flushing Farms]

Oct01



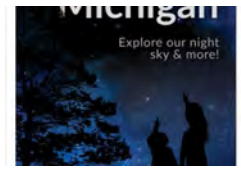
[Melter 2]
Recurring daily until November 2, 2026
[Flint Institute of Arts Museum + Art School (FIA)]

Oct01



[Porter's Orchard Fall Fun]
Recurring daily until October 31, 2026
Porter's Orchard Farm Market & Cider Mill

Oct01



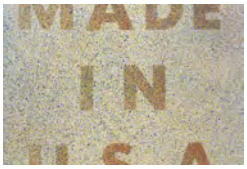
[Skies Over Michigan]
Recurring weekly on Sunday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday until October 3, 2026
[Longway Planetarium]

Oct01



[Spicer Orchards Corn Maze]
Recurring weekly on Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday until October 30, 2026
[Spicer Orchards Farm Market, Winery & Tasting Room]

Oct01



[Spirit of Independence]
Recurring daily until October 18, 2026
[Flint Institute of Arts Museum + Art School (FIA)]

Oct01



[The Rocket Man Show]
[FIM Whiting Auditorium]

Oct02



[Davison Township Museum]
Recurring weekly on Friday
[Davison Township Museum]

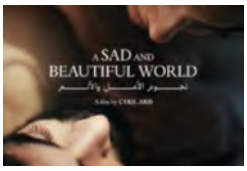
Oct02



[Eddie and the Getaway]

[The Machine Shop Concert Lounge]

Oct02



[FIA Friends of Modern Art films - A Sad and Beautiful World]

Recurring weekly on Sunday, Friday, Saturday until October 4, 2026
[Flint Institute of Arts' Film Theater]

Oct02



[First Fridays at Longway Planetarium]

Recurring monthly on the 1st Friday
[Longway Planetarium]

Oct02



[Flint Repertory Theatre presents August Wilson's Ma Rainey's Black Bottom]

[Flint Repertory Theatre]

Oct02



[Laser Pride]

Recurring weekly on Friday, Saturday until October 3, 2026
[Longway Planetarium]

Oct02

(Continued on page 13)

geneseeLIVING (Cont'd)

(Continued from page 12)



[Spooky Hayride & Corn Maze]

Recurring weekly on Friday, Saturday until October 31, 2026
[Porter's Orchard Farm Market & Cider Mill]

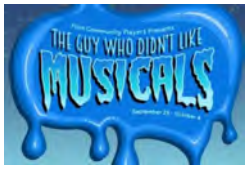
Oct02



[Spooky Trails Haunts]

Recurring weekly on Friday, Saturday until October 31, 2026
[Spooky Trails Farm]

Oct02



[The Guy Who Didn't Like Musicals]

Recurring weekly on Sunday, Friday, Saturday until October 4, 2026
[Flint Community Players Theatre]

Oct02



[The Hunchback of Notre Dame]

Recurring weekly on Sunday, Friday, Saturday until October 4, 2026
[Clio Cast and Crew Community Theatre]

Oct03



[10th Annual Lucky Pumpkin 5K Walk/Run]

Lake Callis
Oct03



[2026 Flushing Harvest Fest]

Flushing's Downtown Entertainment District
Oct03



[3rd Annual Gothic Garden Party]

[Glenwood Cemetery and Certified Arboretum]

Oct03



[5K on the RUNway]

Genesee Career Institute
Oct03



[Davison Farmers Market Craft Show & Flea Market]

[Davison Farmers Market]

Oct03



[Flint Firebirds OHL Hockey]

[Dort Financial Center]

Oct03



[Food Truck Friday at Montrose Orchards]

[Montrose Orchards]

Oct03



[Halloween Hoop-A-Rama]

[Lake Callis Recreation Complex]

Oct03



[Halloween Hoop-A-Rama]

[Lake Callis Recreation Complex]

Oct03



[Harvest Day at Applewood]

[Applewood Estate]

Oct03



[Jesse McCartney]

[FIM Capitol Theatre]

Oct03



[Pumpkin Patch & Hayrides at Montrose Orchards]

Recurring weekly on Sunday, Saturday until October 25, 2026

[Montrose Orchards]

Chief Speaks (Cont'd)

(Continued from page 2)

eration created the artistic vision. Another preserved it and added to it. And now our generation gets to decide what it means. So here is my interpretation: taken together, the murals offer a theory of justice for a community.

In Courtroom No. 3—my courtroom—the mural depicts Flint's mythical founding, when Jacob Smith met Chief Neome on the banks of what would become the Flint River. It presents the beginning of a community: Flint as a city united for the future.

On the fifth floor, behind Judge Weier's bench, the mural presents the people of Flint. Famous citizens such as Billy Durant and C.S. Mott appear alongside ordinary, unnamed figures. So the community is represented not only by its celebrated names, but by its people—people like you and me.

In Courtroom No. 1, the mural shows Flint's history—from trapping, to lumber, to manufacturing, to the automobile industry. Vehicle City in all its glory.

A founding. A people. A history. All are necessary. But a community needs something more.

That brings us to Courtroom No. 2. Its mural contains two Latin words: J-U-S—pronounced yoos— and L-E-X, *lex*. Justice and law. A city must be oriented toward justice through law. And the courthouse is where that commitment encounters the reality of human conflict—where law must be interpreted, applied and given meaning in the lives of actual people.

Taken together, the murals express a mission for this courthouse: to orient Flint and Genesee County toward justice through the law.

So yes, today we celebrate the architecture and the art of this courthouse—both the original building and its addition. But architecture can only create the mood, and art can only articulate the mission. Neither can guarantee that justice will actually live here. Justice cannot be consecrated once and then preserved forever. It doesn't work that way.

Whether justice resides here depends on what takes place here—day after day, case after case—by the people who actually occupy these rooms. By judges struggling to get difficult decisions right. By lawyers pouring their blood and sweat into the representation of their clients. By jurors setting aside their own lives to sit in judgment of their fellow citizens.

By witnesses taking an oath and telling what they know. By clerks, deputies, probation officers, and court employees doing the daily work necessary to turn the promise of justice into an operating institution. And by the people of this community who, at some of the hardest moments of their lives, walked through these doors and entrusted their problems to the law.

Think of all that has happened within this courthouse over the past century. Some of the most important episodes in our community's history have been litigated within these walls: the early days of General Motors, the Sit-Down Strike, the Civil Rights struggle, economic hardship, the Flint Water Crisis. And alongside those public events have been countless private ones—criminal cases, civil disputes, custody battles, estate contests—moments of enormous consequence in individual lives.

And for all that has happened, we have to be honest about the fact that we don't always get it right. How could we? After all, we're only human. And our system—as great as it is—isn't perfect. But here's the thing: perfection isn't required; orientation is. We must always—always—be oriented toward justice. That is the mission expressed in the murals. And that is how justice resides here.

Not because it was guaranteed by the architects or declared at a dedication ceremony. Not because it is perfect. It resides here because generations of people have honestly tried to make it real.

Now, that is something worth commemorating.

Many of you know that I walk during my lunch hour. Sometimes, when I come back from those walks, I look up at our courthouse and get goosebumps. Why? Not because ghosts live here.

I get goosebumps because I am reminded of the weight of our mission: to provide justice for our community.

For one hundred years, generations of people have tried to fulfill that mission within this courthouse. May we—and those who come after us—continue to do so for another hundred years and beyond. – cjdjn

Read All About It

Hearsay is now available on the Circuit Court website www.7thCircuitCourt.com/hearsay-newsletter

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