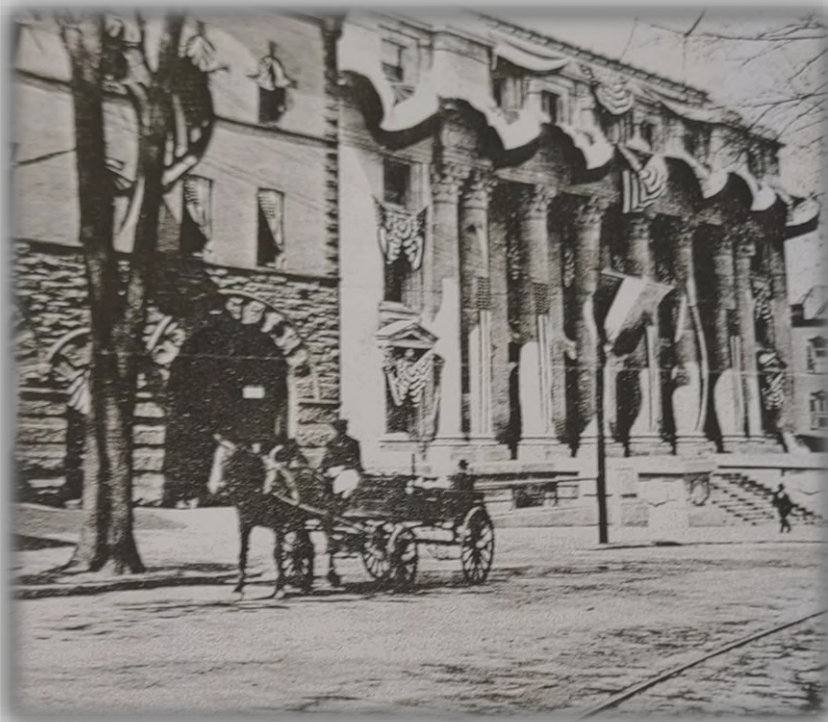


**The Historical Society of the New York Courts
County Legal History**

Schenectady County

Hon. Mark L. Powers¹



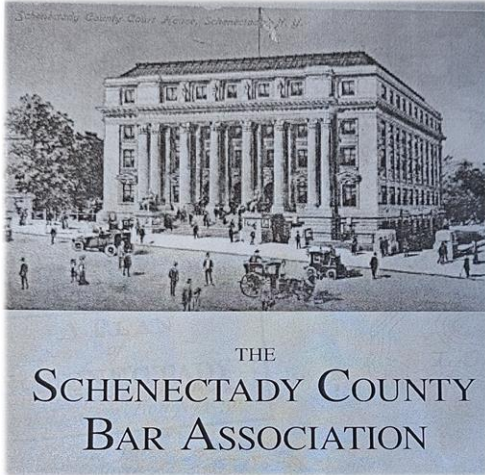
The celebration of the new courthouse in 1913

¹ Supreme Court Justice, Schenectady County. Special thanks to Bill Buell, Schenectady County Historian, and John F. Gearing, Esq., for their insightful comments and Kathryn McCary, Esq., for her editorial assistance.

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Introduction

The year was 1916, when the Schenectady County Bar Association was incorporated, only 38 years after the American Bar Association was born in nearby Saratoga Springs, New York. It was established at a time when Woodrow Wilson was President, the Boy Scouts of America was incorporated, and Louis Brandeis was appointed to the United States Supreme Court. The Association was created to foster competence, collegiality, civility and professionalism.

In its earliest days, the Association provided representation to those who could not afford it, long before the establishment of county offices such as Public Defender or assigned counsel. At a meeting of the Association in February 1969, then President, Arnold Gordon, noted that nearly 100 percent of its members offered their services free of charge to “those persons who were found to be in need of legal services and advice and who, because of their modest circumstances, qualified them.”² In 1971, 125 of the 260 members of the Association (excluding those employed in state or local governments and as “in house” counsel) indicated they were “active” in providing legal representation to the indigent.³

The Association remains committed to providing meaningful access to justice for all. During the First World War, the Association assisted prospective draftees in filling out questionnaires required by the local draft board. In the Second World War, the Association conducted blood drives and assisted soldiers with legal matters.



In 1919, a committee of the Schenectady County Bar Association served as “Four-Minute Men” who gave brief speeches, promoting sale of liberty bonds in support of the allied cause in World War I.

During the Vietnam era, the Association offered to draft Wills and Powers of Attorney documents for soldiers who were to be deployed. When the Gulf War commenced, also known as Operation Desert Storm, members of the Association joined with the New York State Bar Association to assist deployed service members complete their Wills and Powers of Attorney before going overseas. To this day, the public good remains a key component of the Association. The Association

² Times Union, “Poor are Given Advice, Bar Association Asserts”, November 5, 1970.

³ Times Union “Schenectady County Legal Aid Expanding”, March 23, 1971.

conducts legal clinics, provides pro bono representation, offers scholarships to deserving students, coordinates the high school mock trial competition, and provides arbitrators for fee disputes and grievances. It also administers the John Alexander Memorial Scholarship Fund. Students enrolled in a New York State law school, who are residents of Schenectady County, are eligible. The scholarship was established in 1980 under the testamentary trust of Elizabeth M. Alexander, widow of John Alexander, Supreme Court Justice of Schenectady County from 1932 to 1953. The income from this trust provides over \$25,000 annually.

In a newspaper editorial from 1988, it was noted: “[T]he local bar association has sought to convey very clearly the idea to the citizens that it is interested in community welfare and improvements, that it is not merely a social organization as a group cooperating with the sole idea of benefitting itself.”⁴



In 2011, the New York State, “Loving Education at Home” (LEAH) home school team of Schenectady County won the New York State Bar Association High School Mock Trial competition defeating the Bronx School of Science in the Federal Courthouse in Albany, New York. Faculty advisor, Tom Trouwborst; legal advisors, John Lockwood, Esq., and Lauren Mack, Esq.; presiding judge, Magistrate Judge Randolph F. Treece.

In past years, the Association commemorated “Law Day” a national day to recognize the importance of law in society — with a luncheon which during the 60’s and 70’s drew as many as 400 people and featured keynote speakers such as Senator James C. Buckley,⁵ Manhattan District Attorney Robert Morgenthau,⁶ Dr. Harold C. Martin, President and Chancellor of Union University⁷ and other prominent state officials and industry leaders.

In the fall of 2016, the Association celebrated its 100th anniversary with a gala, featuring remarks from David Miranda, President of the New York Bar Association, Judge Leslie Stein of the Court of Appeals, Judge Howard Levine, formerly of the Court of Appeals, Judge Christine Clark, Appellate Division Third Department Justice, and Judge Vito Caruso, Administrative Judge of the Fourth Judicial District.

The Association continues to adapt during the COVID-19 pandemic, by working with the Office of Court Administration (OCA) to develop “Help Centers” which provide virtual and in-person assistance to those filling out documents for an

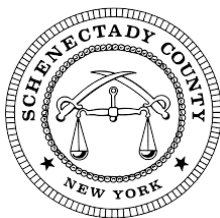
⁴ Daily Gazette Editorial, 1988.

⁵ Times Union, “*Second Revolution is Coming Over Texas*” Buckley warns, May 1, 1971.

⁶ Times Union, “*Politics Scored by Morgenthau in Court*”, May 2, 1970.

⁷ Times Union, “*Bar Unit Luncheon to be Feature of Law Day U.S.A.*”, April 30, 1996.

uncontested divorce; by the creation of a “Modest Means Panel” to provide legal representation in matrimonial actions to those with reduced income who do not qualify for indigent representation; and by sponsoring an annual golf tournament to benefit charity. In recent years, the golf tournament has supported Dr. Tom Catena, (brother of Hon. Felix Catena, Fourth Judicial District Administrative Judge) who operates the only hospital for over one million people within war-torn Sudan. His work was the subject of a CNN documentary “The Heart of Nuba”. Dr. Catena is the 2017 recipient of the Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity, a laureate honoring those who preserve human life at great personal risk.



I. County Origins

a. General Narrative

Schenectady is a difficult name to pronounce for those unfamiliar with it, owing to its roots in the language of the Onondaga and Mohawk people, the original inhabitants of the area. At one time, the Mohawk people of the Iroquois Nation extended from north and west of the intersection of the Mohawk and Hudson Rivers (Cohoes, New York) as far west as Utica; as far east as Vermont and as far north as the St. Lawrence River, in the Canadian provinces of Quebec and Ontario.⁸

The first European settlers to the area were Dutch, who first came in 1609, after Henry Hudson sailed up the river that now bears his name. Hudson, an Englishman, was sent by the Dutch West India Company to find a new route to Southeast Asia. Although he never found that passage, the land along the river was claimed by the Dutch West India Company and referred to as “New Netherland.” A trading post was established in 1614, known as Fort Nassau, near Albany, but was abandoned due to flooding. It was replaced by the permanent settlement of Fort Orange in 1624, south of the intersection of the Hudson and Mohawk Rivers, which ultimately became the City of Albany.⁹

Arent Van Curler is recognized as the driving force and founder behind the creation of Schenectady. He was a cousin of Kiliaen Van Rensselaer, whose Dutch patroonship – Rensselaerswyck – comprised the counties of Albany and Rensselaer, and parts of Columbia and Greene counties. Van Curler served as an aide to the patroonship. The patroon system was established by the Dutch West India Company to encourage settlement of New Netherland. The company gave large tracts of land to men, who were later referred to as Patroons. In turn, the Patroons brought in settlers who paid, as rent, a tenth of everything they produced. It was Van Curler who wrote to the Governor of New Netherland, Peter Stuyvesant, at its capital, New Amsterdam

⁸ Yates, A. *History of Schenectady County, New York* (New York History Co., 1902) p.1. “The Mohawks were the eastern most tribe in the United States of the Iroquois Nation, the others being, the Seneca, the Oneida, the Cayuga, and Onondaga and the Tuscarora. Yates described the Mohawks as “the bravest, the brightest, the most eloquent, warlike and cruel of all the Indian organizations. The Mohawks were yet the only nation that ever came to the white man steady, firm and faithful friend.” Id; see Veeder, M. *Door to the Mohawk Valley* (Cromwell Printery, Inc., 1947) p.2-3.

⁹ Hart, L. *Tales of Old Schenectady, Vol. 1: The Formative Years* (Old Dorp Books, 1975) p.15, 17.

(known today as Manhattan), seeking to start a new colony, which was to become Schenectady. In his letter, Van Curler described the flatland as “the most beautiful land that the eye of man has ever beheld.”¹⁰ Stuyvesant’s response came on June 18, 1661, authorizing settlement of the fourteen (14) miles west of Albany. It was premised upon an understanding that the land would belong to the Dutch West India Company and the acquisition sums paid by Van Curler and the settlers reimbursed. After receiving approval, Van Curler had the land surveyed and divided for settlement. The new settlers were prohibited from commerce with Indian natives, since their closer geographical proximity would otherwise pose a threat to the fur trade. The original settlers -- fifteen families -- were farmers. They resided within a stockade compound, from which that section of the City derives its’ name, with their farmlands adjoining.

Van Curler had persuaded the Mohawk people to sell their land when they were not so inclined. He adeptly allayed the fears of the neighboring colonists in Beverwyck (now Albany), assuring them that the creation of another colony would not encroach on their monopoly of the fur trade. Concurrently, Van Curler assuaged the concerns of the new settlers that, having paid for their land, they would take possession without restrictions. Van Curler’s peaceful approach stood in contrast to the skirmishes among the various factions. He was skilled with settling disputes among the French, English and Mohawk people, and frequently called upon to negotiate the release of captives. In July of 1667, on a trip to Canada to broker peace, Van Curler drowned in Lake Champlain under suspicious circumstances, possibly at the hands of the Mohawk people, some of whom resented his overtures of peace toward the French.¹¹

The origin of the name of Schenectady is not known. It was likely “Sgachnectatic,” from the language of the Onondaga or Mohawk people, meaning “Dutchman” or “Hollander”¹² (but pronounced “Scanectati” or “Skanectady” by the English who dropped the “ch”); or “Schonowe” which has been translated to mean “The Door”; it could also mean “beyond the pines” (a reference to its location beyond Albany). There were as many as 79 different early versions, but the final spelling – Schenectady – appears to have come from a written edict of Peter Stuyvesant in 1664, three (3) years after sanctioning its settlement, and despite Dutch leaders, including Stuyvesant, having referred to it as “Schaenhectede” or “Scanecthade.”¹³

The Stockade is the oldest neighborhood in the city, continuously inhabited for over 300 years. It has “the highest concentration of historic period homes in the

¹⁰ Veeder, *supra* at 5-6.

¹¹ See Buell, *supra* at 20.

¹² Buell, *supra* at 4.

¹³ See Veeder, *supra* at 31, showing a map of “The Fort of Scanecthade,” 1695, by Rev. John Miller. This is believed to be the first known map of Schenectady.

country” with over 40 homes dating back more than 200 years.¹⁴ Notable residents include Elizabeth Gillette, a physician and the first woman from upstate New York elected to the New York State Assembly; and Joseph C. Yates, the 7th Governor of New York State, first Mayor of Schenectady (1798), State Senator (1805), Supreme Court Justice (1823), and founding trustee of Union College.¹⁵ The house of his birth at 26 Front Street still stands.



Yates' house

The Dutch were not the only Europeans to settle in Schenectady; the English, French, Scotch, Germans and others also arrived. From the beginning, Schenectady was a culturally diverse American community, not a Dutch community in an American setting.

The most notable early conflict was the Schenectady Massacre on February 8, 1690, in which approximately 114 French and 80 Mohawk people attacked, killing 60 residents in the stockade section of the city. The raid was in retaliation for the Lachine Massacre (near Montreal), where Mohawk people launched a surprise attack against the French, arising from their growing frustration with the encroachment and control of the fur trade. While there was always concern of an Indian attack, Schenectady residents generally had friendly relations and goodwill with their Mohawk neighbors, due, in part, to the influence of Van Curler.¹⁶

After the Schenectady Massacre, local members of the Mohawk people encouraged the settlers to rebuild. One in particular “Lawrence” was immortalized in 1887 with a monument erected at the intersection of Front, Green, and North Ferry Streets. Today, a patch adorning the uniforms of the city’s police force depicts a portrayal of the massacre with Lawrence in the foreground. On a campaign stop in

¹⁴ Vanderlipp-Manley, Doris, National Register Information System, National Register of Historic Places, National Park Service. April 15, 2008. Stockade Historic District (New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation).

¹⁵ Yates, *supra* at 457; See also Rittner, D. *Schenectady, Frontier Village to Colonial City* (The History Press, 2011) p. 72-73 entitled “Public Life of Joseph C. Yates, Town Clerk in 1792 and Mayor 1798”, by Efner, William B., City Historian.

¹⁶ See Buell, *supra* at 7.

1960, President John F. Kennedy recalled the Schenectady Massacre of 1690 by the French and the Americans as “too great a feeling of security among the people.” He noted that Schenectadians did not anticipate the attack or prepare for it “I don’t believe that history repeats itself, but sometimes there were lessons to be learned from history,” Kennedy said.



“Lawrence the Indian”



Shoulder patch of Schenectady Police Officer



Congressman Sam Stratton with President John F. Kennedy

Van Curler’s legacy is present today: The Hotel Van Curler, built in 1925 is now Elston Hall of Schenectady County Community College; Van Corlear Elementary School, built in 1914 on Guilderland Avenue, is part of the Schenectady City School District; and Corlear Avenue in the City of Schenectady. The birthplace of Van Curler -- Nijkerk, Netherlands -- is acknowledged as the sister city of Schenectady.¹⁷



Arendt Van Curler

Van Curler’s contributions remain memorialized on a marker at the site of his former residence at Church and Union Streets (formerly known as the Mohawk Club and the Stockade Restaurant), inscribed as follows:

“To honor the name of Arendt Van Curler Acknowledged leader of the fifteen original settlers of Schenectady Born at Nijkerk Holland, 1620 came to New Amsterdam, 1638 to Schenectady, 1662 resided here until death

¹⁷The City of Schenectady has recognized Nijkerk, Netherlands as its sister city since 1986.

Home lot, south-east corner of this block Cousin of Patroon Kilian Van Rensselaer; often consulted by Governor Nicholls; highly respected by the Governors of Canada; and rescued many Christians from the hands of Mohawks. He was an adventurous, enterprising leader among the pioneers of the western world, who with wisdom, justice and humanity administered the affairs of an important colony, and as ambassador to the Indians, cemented the relations of friendship, and shaped the wilderness of New Netherlands for uses of advancing civilization. Drowned in Lake Champlain, July 1667 while on his way to visit De Tracy, viceroy of Canada upon his invitation.”¹⁸

b. Timeline: *The Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: A Timeline*

- 1664 The English take control of New Amsterdam (the government center of New Netherland) and rename it “New York” after the Duke of York, who was granted a charter for the administration of government over Long Island and New York.
- 1668 The Netherlands relinquishes control of New Netherland to the English under the Treaty of Breda.
- 1746 The French, together with Mohawk people from Canada, engaged in a series of skirmishes, at a point east of Scotia, which became known as the Beukendaal Massacre, shattering the false sense of security that had arisen from the peaceful co-existence during the 56 years since the Schenectady Massacre.¹⁹
- 1754 The French and Indian War begins between England and France, giving George Washington his first experience in battle, fighting for the British. It also gave Christopher Yates, the son of Joseph Yates, and the father of Joseph C. Yates, the first mayor of Schenectady and the only governor of New York from Schenectady, a prominent reputation.
- 1763 The French and Indian War reached its end with the Treaty of Paris in February of 1763 and Christopher Yates would later figure

¹⁸ Veeder, *supra* at 132.

¹⁹See Buell, *supra* at 10.

prominently as a Lieutenant Colonel in the Schenectady militia, assisting General Schuyler in negotiations with Mohawk people.²⁰

- 1777 Christopher Yates is regarded as “Schenectady’s leading patriot” in the Revolutionary War, as commander of the Schenectady militia. He was instrumental in slowing the advance of British General John Burgoyne in the battles of Saratoga during the Revolutionary War. As Burgoyne proceeded southward from Canada, Yates slowed his advance by “felling trees and otherwise rendering impenetrable the wilderness.” Yates is also acknowledged with assisting General Thaddeus Kosciuszko to secure a site for the American encampment at Bemis Heights, where the first battle of Saratoga was fought in September of 1777. He is further credited with defending the Schoharie Valley against loyalists and their Indian allies and was responsible for transporting supplies up the Mohawk River to the Sullivan and Clinton campaigns. He was eventually named Deputy Quartermaster for the Northern Department of the Continental Army.²¹
- 1781 The hostilities of the Revolutionary War end in October of 1781 when the British surrendered to General Washington in Yorktown.
- 1782 In June, Washington visits Schenectady, accompanied by Philip Schuyler, for a public dinner.
- 1798 Schenectady becomes a city, the third in the state to become incorporated. Joseph Yates was made Mayor at the age of 30. Several streets were renamed during his office. Niskayuna Street became Union Street; Albany Street became State Street; Maiden Lane was changed to Center Street; North Street was named Jay Street, among others. Yates established the first newspaper in the City, it was to be called the Schenectady Gazette and Mohawk Intelligence.
- 1851 Schenectady Locomotive Works was formed. Five locomotives were produced the first year; the tenth locomotive was called “Schenectady.” John Ellis was the first president, whose sons succeeded him for fifty (50) years. In 1901, ten locomotive plants merged into one corporation, known as “The American Locomotive

²⁰Buell, *supra* at 12.

²¹Buell, *supra* at 17.

Company” in which the Schenectady plant was the largest. During World War I, hundreds of locomotives were manufactured for the government; and in World War II, over 2,000 locomotives were supplied to the War Department.²²

- 1886 Thomas Edison expands the Edison Machine Works into Schenectady, which ultimately became the General Electric Company. Edison builds early dynamos and other equipment for the first electric power plants in the country. After the General Electric Company was organized from Edison Machine Works, Charles P. Steinmetz made contributions to the study of electricity for use with transformers. In 1913, Dr. W.D. Coolidge develops the x-ray tube to diagnose disease.

c. Legal Beginnings

There were two Albany attorneys who were influential in the incorporation of the City of Schenectady in 1798: Abraham Van Vechten and Peter W. Yates. The Schenectady Committee on Incorporation sought the “best legal talent it could find in the area.”²³ Van Vechten had been a district attorney for the 5th District, encompassing several counties in the state, and would later be a Regent of the University of the State of New York. Yates, a prominent practicing attorney, was “known far and wide in what is now the Capital District.”²⁴ Peter W. Yates and John C. Yates were second cousins and practiced together with Peter W. Yates acting in a mentorship role.

In 1798, the City of Schenectady was chartered. At that time, John Adams was President and John Jay was Governor. The State’s political scene was dominated by factions in conflict. John Jay, Philip Schuyler, and his son-in-law Alexander Hamilton, supported federalist principles, whereas former Governor George Clinton, his nephew Dewitt Clinton (who later became governor), Robert Livingston²⁵ (known as the Chancellor), along with Thomas Jefferson, Roger Sherman, and Aaron Burr, all supported anti-federalists, opposing a strong central government. Schenectady was not particularly involved in the state politics of the day, as it was said that “the voyage to Europe was comparatively more comfortable and more regular than the voyage from New York to Albany.”²⁶ Moreover, not many Schenectady residents owned the required

²²Buell, *supra* at 45-46.

²³See Rittner, *supra* at 68, Two Noted Albany Lawyers Had Large Part in Incorporation, by Gregg, Arthur B., Author.

²⁴Rittner, *supra* at 69.

²⁵Robert Livingston held high New York State legal office for 25 years and was a member of the committee that drafted the Declaration of Independence. He had been called “the Cicero of America” by Benjamin Franklin.

²⁶Rittner, *supra* at 67, Charter Year Finds Nation a Land of Rural Peoples and Political Turmoil, by Dr. Frederick L. Bronner, Professor.

\$250.00 in real property that was necessary to vote for governor. In contrast, Schenectady residents qualified to vote for members of the assembly, with only \$50.00 worth of real estate.²⁷

II. Early Judiciary and Court Structure

In the early Eighteenth Century, Schenectady was vibrant and bustling, second only to Albany in terms of its significance to other settlements in the upper Hudson Valley (the territory along the Hudson River from Westchester County to Albany).

In 1809, the County of Schenectady was officially formed from the westernmost part of Albany County; the City of Schenectady was its County seat. The Bar of Schenectady County was organized immediately after the formation of the County in March 1809. Its members had belonged to the Albany Bar, but formed their own association upon the birth of Schenectady County.²⁸

At the time of New York's first constitution in 1777, the Judiciary was comparatively rudimentary. Each Judge had the final word in controversies before him and there was little available in the way of appeal.²⁹

The Supreme Court had been established in 1691.³⁰ Judges of the Court were appointed by a Council of Appointment, consisting of the Governor and four members of the Senate selected by the Assembly. Trials for matters pending in Supreme Court were heard by eight Circuit Judges, one of whom was appointed from each of the eight judicial districts in which the state was divided.³¹

The Court of Common Pleas heard civil cases, including divorces, child custody, support matters, and minor criminal matters, until the Constitution of 1846, when it was abolished, except in New York City, where it remained in existence until 1895. The first judge of the Court of Common Pleas, for Schenectady County, was Gerrit S. Vedder, who had previously acted as District Attorney and City Court Judge.

²⁷Rittner, *supra* at 67.

²⁸Yates, *supra* at 451.

²⁹The Court of Assize and the Court of Oyer and Terminer consisted of a Supreme Court Justice and two or more judges of the Court of Common Pleas with jurisdiction to hear all felony cases including those punishable by life imprisonment or death.

³⁰Chester, Alden, *Courts and Lawyers of New York, A History 1609-1925*, (The American Historical Society, Inc., 1925), Volume III p.1119.

³¹Bloustein, Marc: *A Short History of the New York State Court System*. (Presented as a seminar of the Unified Court System of the State of New York (December 5, 1985).

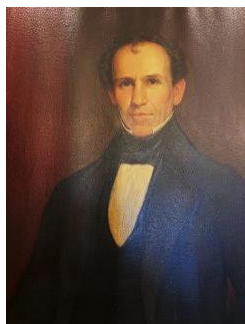
The first Court session held in Schenectady County was on Tuesday, May 9, 1809. By the year 1830, the bar membership remained small, with only twelve members. By 1840, they had added six members for a total of eighteen members of the bar. The principal trial courts immediately prior to 1846 were the Court of General Sessions; the Circuit Court (civil actions only); the Court of Oyer and Terminer (criminal jurisdiction – which held its first trial in Schenectady County in 1810.)

The Constitution of 1846 dramatically altered the structure of the state court system, much of which remains at present. Specifically, the state was divided into eight judicial districts; the appointment of Supreme Court Justices was replaced by election; the Court for the Correction of Errors was abolished in favor of the Court of Appeals; and a County Court (which also heard Surrogate matters) was founded throughout the state. The new structure also abolished the Court of Chancery and the Circuit Courts. However, the origination of the four Appellate Division departments would wait another 48 years until the Constitution of 1894.³²

a. Early Supreme Court Justices



Joseph C. Yates, the first judge of the Supreme Court from Schenectady County, appointed by Governor Tompkins in 1808. He became Governor in 1822 and, in 1828, was elected president of the electoral college. He was very influential in the founding of Union College and was one of the Trustees named in the Charter by the Regents of the University in 1790. He served as Mayor of Schenectady when he was only 30 years of age.



Alonzo C. Paige was admitted to the Bar in 1818. He was a graduate of Williams College. He initially took up the study of theology but came to Schenectady and studied law. He served as Justice of the Supreme Court, Schenectady County from 1847 to 1851 and 1856-1857. He was a member of the New York Assembly from Schenectady County in 1827, 1828, 1829, 1830; and the New York State Senate in 1837, and from 1839 to 1842. He was a delegate to the New York State Constitutional Convention 1867-68. He served on the Court of Appeals in 1851 and 1857.

³²The Third Constitution of New York State, 1846.



Platt Potter was admitted to the Bar in Schenectady in 1824. He studied in the office of Alonzo C. Paige. He was Schenectady County District Attorney from 1839-1845. He was elected to Supreme Court in 1857 and again in 1865. He was a Justice of the Supreme Court, Judge of the Court of Appeals, and a trustee of Union College. He also served as President of the Mohawk National Bank of Schenectady. He was considered an exceptionally able jurist who authored “Potter’s Edition of John Willard’s Equity Jurisprudence” and “Potter on Corporations,” both recognized treatises in the profession.



Judson S. Landon was admitted to the Bar in 1856. He served as Schenectady County District Attorney from 1857-1862; County Court Judge from 1865-1869; a delegate to the State Constitution Convention of 1867; City Attorney in 1872; and a Justice of the Supreme Court from 1874-1901. He served on the Appellate Division, Third Department from 1896-1899; and on the Second Division of the Court of Appeals (a Court established by a Constitutional amendment in 1888 to help the Court of Appeals deal with its backlog). He was appointed by Governor Roosevelt as an Associate Judge of the Court of Appeals in 1900-1901. He resumed private practice in 1902. He studied law for one year at the Yale Law School (1854). He received a degree from Union College in 1855 and an L.L.D. from Rutgers College in 1885. Judge Landon was for 28 years a trustee of Union College and for 27 years a trustee of Albany Law School (he also served on the law school faculty). He was president of Union College from 1884 – 1888. He is the author of “The Constitutional History and Government of the United States”, published by Houghton Mifflin & Co. of Boston.

b. Elected Supreme Court Justices of Schenectady County

Alonzo C. Paige
1846 – 1857

Platt Potter
1858 – 1874

Judson S. Landon
1874 – 1900
1900 – 1901, Court of Appeals

Edward C. Whitmyer
1912 – 1931
(1927 – 1931, Appellate Division)

John Alexander
1932 – 1953

Charles M. Hughes
1954 - 1966
Morris Marshall Cohn
August 4, 1955 – January 1, 1956
(appointed by the Governor to fill a vacancy)

D. Vincent Cerrito
1967 – 1984

Guy A. Graves
1969 – 1986

William J. Quinn
1975 – 1981

Howard A. Levine
1981 – 1982
Appellate Division, 1982 – 1993
Court of Appeals, 1993 - 2002

Robert E. Lynch
1987 - 2000

Vito C. Caruso
1995 – 2021

Vincent J. Reilly, Jr.
2001 – 2017
Barry D. Kramer

2010 – 2018

Christine M. Clark

2013 – 2014

Appellate Division, 2014 – present

Thomas D. Buchanan

2013 – present

Mark L. Powers

2017 – present

Michael R. Cuevas

2000 - Present

c. Early County/City Judges

Alexander J. Thompson

Police Justice from 1868 to 1876

Lectured at Union College on legal topics

First Surrogate Judge

William J. Teller

First Children's Court Judge

William M. Nichol

First Family Court Judge

Duncan S. McNab

First Schenectady County Court Judge

Samuel R. Jones

d. Yates Law Firm

Joseph C. Yates initially entered legal practice with his father's cousin, Peter W. Yates, one of the most influential attorneys of his day. The Yates family enjoyed singular prominence. Robert Yates, a second cousin of Joseph C. Yates, had been a member of the State Constitutional Convention with John Jay, the latter of whom was the first

Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court. Robert Yates was a well-known voice against adoption and ratification of the federal Constitution both in Philadelphia and in Poughkeepsie, when New York voted to ratify the constitution. He ran unsuccessfully for governor against George Clinton. In 1777, Robert Yates was appointed to New York's Supreme Court and, in 1790, was appointed its Chief Justice.³³

In 1800, Joseph C. Yates opened what would become the most well-known law office of its day in the City of Schenectady. During its 57-year existence, it produced a remarkable succession of partners, a governor, three state senators and three supreme court justices.³⁴ Joseph C. Yates also served as President of the Schenectady Savings Bank.

In 1807, following his election to a state senate position, Joseph C. Yates took his brother, Henry Yates, Jr., into partnership at the law firm. Henry Yates Jr. would later become a twice elected to the state assembly, three-time state senate, mayor of the city, trustee of Union College and Treasurer of Union College. In 1808, when Joseph C. Yates was appointed a judge of the Supreme Court, Henry Yates Jr. took another brother, John B. Yates, as a partner in the firm. John B. Yates would later serve as a member of the assembly, member of Congress, and the first judge of Madison County. After John B. Yates was elected to Congress in 1816, his position was filled by Harmanus Peek and the firm was renamed "Yates and Peek." Harmanus Peek would later be elected as both a member of the assembly and congress.

In 1821, Peek was elected to a position in Congress and his position at the firm was filled by Edward Yates, the son of Henry Yates Jr. and was renamed "Henry and Edward Yates." In 1826, Alonzo O. Paige filled the position of the newly retired Henry Yates, Jr., and the firm was once again renamed "Paige and Yates." Alonzo O. Paige would later become a three-time elected member of the assembly, three-time state senator, appointed reporter of the Court of Chancery, district attorney of the county, trustee of Union College, and a justice of the supreme court. Following the death of Edward Yates in 1833, Platt Potter took over co-partnership and renamed the firm "Paige and Potter." Platt Potter would later become a Master and Examiner of the Court of Chancery, a member of the assembly, district attorney, and a justice of the supreme court. In 1847, when Alonzo Paige was elected to the Supreme Court, remaining partner Platt Potter brought in his brother, Benjamin F. Potter, and Clark B. Cochrane to fill the position thus renaming the firm, "Potter and Cochrane." Benjamin F. Potter would later become a master of chancery, district attorney, and Mayor of Schenectady. Clark B. Cochrane would become a member of congress and a trustee of

³³Rittner, *supra* at 63, Notable Persons, by Dr. Frederick L. Bronner, Professor.

³⁴Daily Union, Schenectady Newspaper, September 22, 1888. The Daily Union was published in Schenectady in the late 1800's and early 1900's.

Union College. In 1856, Cochrane was elected to Congress and his position was filled by Albert Hough, renaming the firm once more as “Potter and Hough.” Finally, in 1857, the firm was dissolved when Platt Potter was elected as a Justice of the Supreme Court.³⁵

e. Founding of Union College

Union College, founded in 1795, is among the oldest colleges in New York (the second institution of higher learning to be chartered by the New York Regents behind Columbia University) with its early history interwoven with the members of the bar: Justices Joseph C. Yates, and Platt Potter, served as trustees, and Judson S. Landon served as President of the college.

Formerly known as the Schenectady Academy, Union College was founded by Rev. Dirck Romeyn three years before Schenectady became incorporated as a city with Joseph Yates as mayor in 1798. The name was selected to reflect an openness to different religious and national groups coming together to learn. It was to be non-denominational. Although Romeyn and Yates were instrumental to Union’s creation, Eliphalet Nott became identified as the one most responsible for its growth and formation. Nott devised a plan to finance the new college through a state lottery and purchased the approximately 250 acres of land on which the college now stands. He became the longest serving college president in American history, serving from 1804-1866.

Nott was a renaissance man, whose vision shaped the college, taking it from a traditional curriculum offering Greek and Latin studies, to engineering and the sciences. He held over thirty patents. From 1829-1845, Nott also served as President of RPI. Union College became the first liberal arts college in the nation to offer engineering in 1845.

Nott’s friendship with Moses Viney, a runaway slave, who became his servant, coachman, and constant companion for 22 years and a fixture on the campus for 70 years, is an indelible part of Union College lore. Nott, an early opponent of slavery, hired Viney in 1842.

Born into slavery in Maryland, the oldest of 21 children, Viney worked as a butler on a plantation, and left when he feared he might be sold. Taking the underground

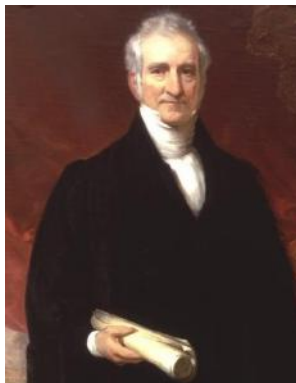
³⁵ Id.

railroad, he settled in Schenectady because his funds had run out. Viney was not only Nott's constant companion, servant, messenger and coachman but provided him with nursing care during his last days. He also became a legend on campus, interacting with students, including Chester A. Arthur, who would become President of the United States.

After the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act in 1850, Viney's life was in danger, after he saw his former master in Schenectady. Nott attempted to negotiate for Viney's release, with his former master, but he demanded an exorbitant price of \$1,900. Nott then sent Viney to Canada while he continued to bargain for Viney. He was able to secure Viney's release for the reduced sum of \$120. Viney returned to Schenectady, lived with his wife, Anna, on the Union campus and continued to serve Nott's widow, until her death in 1889. He operated a livery carriage service on campus and in the community until he was 84. He was noted for his integrity, intelligence and temperament and was respected by members of the Union College community. He died in 1909. Both Moses Viney and Eliphalet Nott are buried in Vale Cemetery.³⁶



Moses Viney



Eliphalet Nott



Nott Memorial

III. 20th Century – Schenectady: *The Modern Bar*

The advent of the 20th Century was a time of progress and prosperity for Schenectady. The General Electric Company (GE) was formed in 1896 from a merger of Edison General Electric, owned by Thomas Edison, and Thomson-Houston Electric Company. The American Locomotive Company (ALCO) was created in 1901, from the merger of several smaller locomotive manufacturers. Schenectady became known from these two industries alone as “the City that lights and hauls the world.” In 1917, 20,000 people worked at what was then called “GE Schenectady Works”; in 1907, 6200

³⁶ “A Bonded Friendship: Moses and Eliphalet,” by Gretchel Hathaway.

workers built 942 locomotives out of Schenectady.³⁷ Ellis Hospital was established in 1903, in part from a bequest of Charles Ellis in memory of his father, John Ellis, the founder of ALCO.

a. Founding of The General Electric Co.

Thomas Edison is recognized with the creation of the General Electric Co., which involved a merger of many of his companies at the time, The Edison Lamp Co., The Edison Machine Works, and the Edison Electric Light Co., among others. He was supported by the leading financiers of the day, J.P. Vanderbilt and the Vanderbilt Family. In 1893, The General Electric Co. acquired the business of Rudolph E. Eickemeyer of Yonkers, New York, which employed Charles Proteus Steinmetz, whose work with transformers and electric power utilizing alternating current, greatly advanced the understanding of lighting. Steinmetz was an inventor with over 200 patents and was recognized as an engineering giant; and was chair of the Electrical Engineering Department of Union College from 1902-1913. He was a member of the Schenectady School Board for six years, including four years as President. He received an honorary doctorate from Harvard University in 1901 and a doctorate from Union College in 1903. Although only four foot tall, he had a prodigious work ethic. His former home on Wendell Avenue in the GE Plot is now a park in his honor. He is buried in Vale Cemetery.



*Edison and Steinmetz Statue
Erie Blvd.*

³⁷Buell, *supra* at 72.

During the Second World War, The General Electric Co. had 40,000 employees working in Schenectady and became a forerunner in the television and radio industry. In 1922, WGY (W stands for Wireless; G for General Electric; and Y for Schenectady), The General Electric Company's pioneering effort at radio, went on the air as one of the first stations in the country. The first television broadcast in the United States occurred from the home of Ernst Alexanderson from his home in the GE Realty Plot in the early 1920s.

This increase in growth made Schenectady an entertainment venue with the creation of Proctor's Theatre in 1925.

The boom in housing construction, and the availability of employment provided fertile ground for the increase in growth of the legal profession. The Schenectady County Bar Association (SCBA) was ultimately incorporated on February 21, 1916, when a Justice of the Supreme Court signed the Certificate of Incorporation to approve its formation. Forty-five attorneys signed the Certificate, they represented the existing Bar of Schenectady County at that time. The Certificate itself appears to have been prepared by Harold E. Blodgett, who was only 25 years of age.

Blodgett was a renowned attorney who served as District Attorney and member of the State Assembly, as well as Bar Association President. At the time of his death on July 8, 1979, the Daily Gazette newspaper referred to him as "the Dean of Schenectady attorneys and as a 'power' in republican county politics." He owned multiple properties, including the Fort William Henry Hotel and Conference Center near Lake George, New York, and he served as Chair of the Republican Party. He was close friends with Dan O'Connell, the controller of the Albany Democratic "machine" which supported Mayor Erastus Corning. In addition to his Schenectady law practice, Blodgett had a separate partnership in Albany with O'Connell's niece's husband, Donald Lynch.³⁸ He practiced law until his death in 1979.³⁹

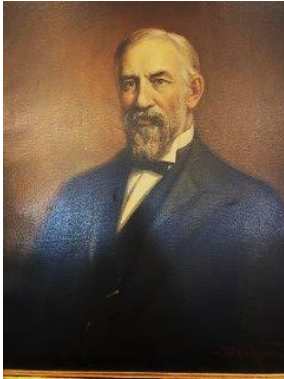
One of the signatures on the original Certificate of Incorporation is John D. Miller, who served as Schenectady Corporation Counsel. He was also SCBA's first President.

³⁸ The nephews of Donald Lynch are the Hon. Peter Lynch, Supreme Court Justice, Albany County, and the Hon. Michael Lynch, Justice of the Appellate Division, Third Department.

³⁹Schenectady Gazette, Blodgett, 85, Dies; Dean of Attorneys, July 9, 1979.

IV. Notable Schenectady County Attorneys

Edward C. Whitmyer: He was admitted to the Bar in 1887 and practiced in the City of Schenectady. He was a delegate to the Constitutional Convention in 1894. Judge Whitmyer served as Schenectady County Surrogate from 1903-1909, and as County Court Judge from 1909-1912. He was elected to the Supreme Court, Fourth Judicial District in 1912 and was re-elected in 1926. He was appointed to the Appellate Division, Third Department in 1937, and retired in 1941 after reaching the mandatory age of retirement at 70. He was a graduate of Union College and was admitted to the practice of law after serving a clerkship. The former City Court library was named after him, which was eventually closed to create additional space for the Court.



Harold Blodgett: In 1913, Harold Blodgett graduated from Albany Law School, which he attended on a tuition-free scholarship as an honors graduate of Union College. He practiced law in Schenectady for 66 years. He served in the first World War in France and then returned to Schenectady. Harold Blodgett served a single term in the New York State Assembly in 1920-1921 and then served as Schenectady County District Attorney from 1925 – 1928. He was a judicial delegate for the Fourth Judicial District for many years. He was a former President of the Schenectady County Bar Association. In addition to his Schenectady law office, he was senior partner in the firm of Blodgett, Kamph and Lynch in Albany County. He was known as a “power-broker” in republican party politics in Schenectady; yet had influence in Albany democratic politics. Schenectady attorneys Vince Capasso and Wayne Smith had their start in this firm.



Thomas W. Wallace: He was admitted to the Bar in 1923. He is a graduate of Albany Law School. He was elected District Attorney in 1928 and served until he was named Corporation Counsel of Schenectady in 1935. In 1937, he ran again for District Attorney and was elected; and re-elected in 1940. In 1942, he was elected Lieutenant Governor to Governor Thomas E. Dewey. He took office on January 1, 1943, but died less than seven months into his only term.



Oswald D. Heck:



He was admitted to the Bar in 1928; a graduate of Union College. He attended Albany Law School for one year; but was admitted to practice through a clerkship. He was elected to the New York State Assembly in 1932; he became its majority leader in 1936; and speaker of the assembly in 1937, a position he held until his death in 1959. His 22 years as speaker of the assembly is the longest of anyone to hold the position. He was acknowledged for his ability to build support for controversial measures and was influential in

helping New York State to become the first state to pass civil rights legislation that banned employment discrimination. A strong proponent of education, he increased financial assistance for education by five times in Schenectady County from 1942 to 1959 at the time of his death. Speaker Heck Island, a state-run campground in Lake George and the O.D. Heck Development Center in Niskayuna were named in his honor. In 2015, the O.D. Heck facility was closed as part of a downsizing measure of institutions for the developmentally disabled.

Nicholas Grasso:



In 1947, Nicholas Grasso graduated from Albany Law School and began practicing law with his uncle, Alex Grasso. After five years, he opened his own law office where he continued to practice 72 years later, until his death in January 2022 at 99 years of age. He was a prominent trial lawyer who conducted over 400 jury trials. In the 1960s, he won the largest verdict in the County for \$3,000,000 and earned several criminal acquittals in high-profile cases. At that time, he had 38 employees, including a full-time photographer and investigator. During this time, he, together with Arnold Gordon and Chris Kouray, conducted many of the jury trials in the County. The

three met monthly and maintained a jury profile of approximately 4,000-5,000 individuals which they exchanged among themselves. It was a time before the no-fault insurance law and modern-day discovery demands. He is a recipient of the Dan Mahoney Award from the New York State Trial Lawyers Association and the Schenectady County Bar Association's Lifetime Achievement Award. Many prominent area lawyers had their start in his office: Lawrence Gordon, Richard Walsh, Phil Rodriguez, Michael Cuevas, Charles Mango, Ralph Nocera, Michael Basile, Frank Putorti, Lawrence Zyra.

Owen Begley:



In 1972, Owen Begley served as SCBA President. The Association launched arbitration panels for civil matters and advocated for a law library in the courthouse. In addition to his work in and for the legal profession, Owen Begley had a history of public service. He was a World War II veteran, Mayor of Schenectady in the late 1940's, a State Senator in the mid 1950 -1960s, and a founder and board chair of the Schenectady County Community College, established in 1967. The college's library is named in his honor.

Robert M. Carney:



He was elected Schenectady County District Attorney in 1989. He is in his ninth term and has served 32 years in that position, having been re-elected eight times. He is believed to be one of the longest serving District Attorney in New York State history (Robert Morgenthau, New York County District Attorney served 35 years; William Grady, Dutchess County District Attorney will have served 40 years at the end of his present term). Carney is a hands-on prosecutor who routinely handles grand jury presentations and has personally tried dozens of cases, including eight murders, and the notorious case of Steven Raucci, who terrorized his enemies with explosives and repeated acts of vandalism. Carney's office investigated the fire at 104 Jay Street, in 2015, convening a grand jury which criticized the city's code enforcement department, finding that failures to address code violations directly contributed to the blaze. His office assisted in constructing a comprehensive network of 400 wireless public cameras installed throughout Schenectady, that have been instrumental in solving crimes from bank robberies and shootings to a murder-for-hire. He has been honored by the New York State Bar Association for outstanding delivery of prosecutorial services in 2003 and as lawyer of the year by the Schenectady County Bar Association in 2000. He has also been honored by the New York State Humane Society for outstanding leadership in the enforcement of animal cruelty laws, Remove Intoxicated Drivers for DWI polices, the Rape Crisis Service for outstanding service to victims of sex crimes, and Governor Mario M. Cuomo for his role in Operation Crackdown. In 2017, the YWCA of North Eastern New York in Schenectady named him its first-ever Champion for Women Award recipient for his long commitment to combating domestic violence. On January 27, 2017, the District Attorneys Association of the State of New York presented Mr. Carney with its highest award, the Frank S. Hogan Award, named for the legendary DA of Manhattan. Before becoming District Attorney, Mr. Carney was an assistant district attorney in Schenectady County, and then an associate and a partner in the Schenectady law firm of Higgins, Roberts, Beyerl and Coan. He is an honors graduate of Union College and received his juris doctor degree from Albany Law School.

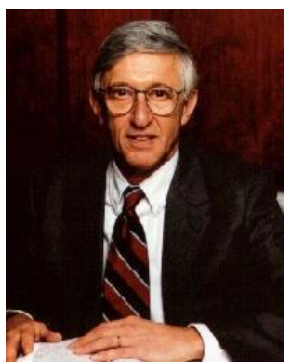
Philip Mueller:



He is a graduate of Union College and Cornell Law School, class of 1979, where he served as editor-in-chief of the Cornell Law Review. Following law school, he was an attorney in private practice with the Boston firm Foley Hoag, one of the nation's most prominent law firms, and served as clerk to U.S. District Court Chief Judge, James Burns in Portland, Oregon. In 1990, he joined the Schenectady County District Attorney's Office.

An accomplished trial lawyer, he served as lead prosecutor in many homicide cases during his time as an Assistant District Attorney, until his retirement in 2016. He tried over 30 homicide cases. He argued complex cases before the New York State Court of Appeals. He was known for his integrity, pursuit of justice and tireless work ethic. He often gave summations lasting more than three hours, and so thoroughly investigated a case that he would uncover facts not even known to the defendant. Schenectady County District Attorney, Robert M. Carney, noted "when handling a case, he leaves no stone unturned to ensure that the right thing is being done for the victim, the defendant, and the county." He is the author of "The Right Thing – Ethical Guidelines for Prosecutors" published by the District Attorney's Association of New York and given to every new prosecutor. He is the recipient of the Robert M. Morgenthau award for the New York State District Attorney's Association, recognizing prosecutors who combine exceptional accomplishments with honesty, integrity and the highest ethical standards. He was a recipient of the Schenectady County's Bar Association's Lawyer of the Year. In 2016, he was named a Patroon by Mayor Gary McCarthy.

Howard A. Levine: From 1993 to 2002, Howard Levine served as Associate Judge of



the New York State Court of Appeals. He was previously an Associate Justice on the Appellate Division, Third Department, from 1982 to 1993. His appointment to the appellate bench came only one year after his election as Supreme Court Justice for the Fourth Judicial District, where he served from 1981 to 1982. Judge Levine was a Schenectady County Family Court Judge from 1971 to 1980. He held the position of Schenectady County District Attorney from 1967 to 1970. Judge Levine was active with the New York State Bar Association (NYSBA), serving for many years as chair of its committee on juvenile justice. The Association created and annually presents the "Howard A. Levine Award for Excellence in Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare." In 2000, Judge Levine received the Association's Distinguished Public Service Award and, in 2003, he was bestowed the Gold Medal Award, for "distinguished service

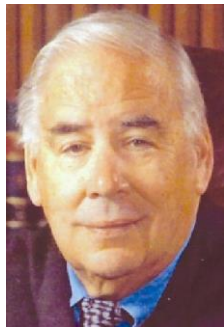
in the law.” Now retired, he remains a member of the Schenectady County Bar Association, in the tradition of his parents, both of whom were members.

Vito Caruso:



In 1994, he was elected Supreme Court Justice in the Fourth Judicial District; re-elected in 2008. In 2004, he was appointed the Chief Administrative Judge for the Fourth Judicial District, an 11-county area extending from Schenectady to the Canadian border. On July 1, 2019, he was appointed Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for the Courts Outside of New York City; the appointment was made by Chief Administrative Judge Lawrence K. Marks, with the consultation and approval of Chief Justice Janet DiFiore and the presiding justices of the Second, Third and Fourth Appellate Division departments. In that capacity, he was responsible for managing the day-to-day operations of all trial level courts in the 57 counties outside of New York City, which includes nearly 700 judges and over 7,000 non-judicial employees. Judge Caruso is active in the community. He was past District Deputy of the Benevolent Protective Order of the Elks and currently serves on the national organizations’ Grand Forum as Chief Justice of its five (5) judges. He is the recipient of the Pro Bono Distinguished Service Award of the Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York; the Lawyer in Service to the Community Award, (2008); the Lawyer of the Year (2013) from the Schenectady County Bar Association; and the Felix Aulisi from the New York State Trial Lawyers Association. In 2018, he received the Hon. Anthony V. Cardona Award for Judicial Excellence from the Italian American Bar Association as well as the Golden Lion Award from the Roma Intangible Lodge.

Vincent J. Reilly, Jr.: He was elected in 2000 to Supreme Court, Fourth Judicial District;



re-elected in 2014. From 1985 to 2000, he was Family Court Judge and from 1977 to 1984, he was the Town Justice for the Town of Niskayuna. He also presided over the Schenectady County Drug Treatment Court for many years. Vincent Reilly served briefly as an Assistant District Attorney. He was recipient of the New York State Bar Association’s Howard A. Levine Award for Excellence in Juvenile Justice; the Edward S. Conway Judicial Excellence Award; the Harold E. Koreman Award for Commitment to the Administration of Justice with Fairness and Compassion; and the Ray of Hope Award for his contributions to professional wellness among the bench and bar. He chaired the New York State Bar Association’s Lawyer Assistance Committee and was dedicated to its programs. Judge Reilly was instrumental in establishing the Schenectady County High School Mock Trial Competition. The trophy that is awarded to the winning high school each year is named “The Reilly Cup” in his honor.

Barry Kramer:



He was elected in 2009 to Supreme Court, Fourth Judicial District; and served until 2018. He was appointed Surrogate Court Judge by Governor Mario Cuomo in 1993 and was elected that same year and re-elected in 2003. Prior to his legal career, he had been a standout athlete at Linton (now Schenectady) High School. He was named a first team Parade All-American in 1960; a first team All-American at New York University; and was the sixth pick in the 1964 NBA Draft. At one time, he was the second leading scorer in the nation, playing for the San Francisco Warriors (now the Golden State Warriors) and the New York Knicks during his NBA career. He graduated from Albany Law School in 1968 as a Salutatorian.

Christine Clark: In April of 2014, she was appointed by Gov. Andrew Cuomo to the



Appellate Division, Third Department as an Associate Justice. Judge Clark was elected to Supreme Court, Fourth Judicial District in 2012. Prior to that, she served as Schenectady County Family Court Judge from 2011 – 2012. She was appointed by Mayor Brian U. Stratton, as Schenectady City Court Judge in 2004. She won election from that position to a full ten-year term. Earlier in her legal career, she served as an Assistant District Attorney in the Schenectady County District Attorney's Office. She was sex crimes/child abuse prosecutor, DWI prosecutor and Bureau Chief of the Special Victims Unit. Prior to attending college at Columbia University, School of General Studies, she danced at the Alvin Ailey School and performed with several small modern dance companies. Judge Clark is the recipient of the Kate Stoneman Award from Albany Law School; the Hon. Judith Kaye Award from the Capital District Women's Bar Association; and the Lawyer of the Year Award from the Schenectady County Bar Association. She was the second woman to win election to Supreme Court in the Fourth Judicial District.

Antonio Delgado: He was appointed Lieutenant Governor by Governor Kathy Hochul



in May of 2022, after having been elected to Congress from New York's 19th Congressional District in 2018 and re-elected in 2020. He was the first person of African American and Latino descent to be elected to Congress from the upstate New York area.

Delgado grew up in the Hamilton Hill neighborhood of Schenectady, New York; both his parents worked at the General Electric Company. He attended Notre Dame – Bishop Gibbons High School, where he was a talented athlete named by the Daily

Gazette to its Capital District region's second team in basketball. He graduated from Colgate University in 1999 and was selected as one of 32 students nationwide to earn a Rhodes Scholarship to study at Queens College in Oxford, England, where he earned a Master of Arts Degree. He is a 2005 graduate of Harvard Law School and was admitted to practice in the First Department on July 2, 2012. Following law school, he worked in the music industry and recorded an album as a rap artist. Delgado was an associate at the law firm of Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld, LLP in New York City, where he was in the litigation department.

V. Attorney in Controversy

Armand Riccio: He was a controversial criminal defense attorney frequently called upon by mobsters and racketeers for representation in the 60's and 70's. He was infamous, talented and often theatrical in his presentations before juries. Born and educated in Schenectady, he was a graduate of Nott Terrace High School, Siena College, and Albany Law School, class of 1955. He was a member of the Albany Law Review. A talented musician, he played saxophone in his own 13-piece orchestra called "Armand Riccio and the Midnight Serenaders".



Riccio had a number of favorable dispositions for his clients. He was skilled at cross-examination and bombastic in his approach. His name appeared often in newspapers associated with high profile cases. In the early 70's, he represented a court clerk for County Court Judge Clark Wemple, accused of soliciting favors for the issuance of gun permits, and retaining guns that had been confiscated, of which he had approximately 30 in his desk. After a jury trial, the defendant was acquitted of most charges, except possession of certain guns found in his desk. Riccio alleged that the defendant's possession was not intended to deprive the owner. Judge Crangle presided and Dennis Englert prosecuted the case.

During oral argument on one occasion, Riccio climbed on a chair to emphasize his point and began addressing the court in a loud voice until he was admonished. On another occasion, during summation, he lay prostrate on the floor to demonstrate the position of his client while giving his closing remarks to the jury.

In January of 2014, columnist Marv Cermak recalled an incident in the 70's involving Paul "Legs" DiCocco and Carmine Galente who jointly owned property at Broadway and Liberty Street and were attempting to secure a Binghamton development firm to build senior housing. Councilman Howard Carpenter was recruited to wear a wire at a closed-door city council meeting with the developers to investigate possible nefarious activity. The Binghamton firm was legitimate and pulled-out of the transaction. Cermak recalled being one of the first reporters to investigate organized crime in the region. He recalls the following exchange which appeared in the paper:

"I rejected the bribe delivered by Armand Ricco, a noted mob lawyer. I recall telling Riccio and DiCocco there was nothing personal in my coverage of racketeering. That I was just doing my job. 'You're doing too good of a job,' was Riccio's response."

Riccio was eventually disbarred and believed to be suffering from substance abuse issues at the time of his death. Toward the end of his career, he became a sad caricature of the once colorful and zealous advocate.

In Matter of Riccio, June 29, 1987, the Appellate Division, Third Department, noted: "What is most disturbing is an apparent pattern of behavior by which respondent willingly enters into a lawyer-client relationship and then becomes seriously dilatory and neglectful, failing in some cases even to serve routine pleadings or appear in court as required."

VI. Women of the Bar

The first women to practice law in Schenectady County appear to have been Ida V. Sacharoff (the only female appearing in the bar composite photograph of 1928) and Kathryn O'N. J. Butler, both graduates of the Albany Law School Class of 1921. A Schenectady Gazette newspaper article, published in 1922, reporting on a business dispute case, offered the following observation: "An unusual feature of the court session yesterday was the appearance of two women lawyers: Miss Kathryn O'N. J. Butler appeared for the defendant, while Miss Ida Sacharoff, of the office of Gordon and Start, appeared for the plaintiff. The appearance of the young women, both of whom are local residents, was unique in the fact that both were graduated from Albany Law School in the same class."

Cecilia Agnes Levine, mother of Court of Appeals Judge, Howard A. Levine, practiced in Schenectady for more than 50 years. In the 1960 bar composite photograph, three women appear: S. Diamond, C.C. Ferrucci and Athena Kouray.

The first woman to serve as a judge in Schenectady County was Louise Smith. She was appointed by Mayor Karen Johnson in 1985. Judge Smith was elected to a full six-year term in 1986. The first woman to serve as a county level judge was Kathleen DeCataldo, who was appointed by Governor George Pataki in 2000, as Family Court Judge. The first elected county level judge was Joanne Assini, who was elected as Family Court Judge in 2000. In 2004, Karen A. Drago was elected County Court Judge, and began serving a ten-year term in 2005.

Teneka Frost was the first African American woman to serve as a judge in Schenectady County. She was initially appointed to the City Court by Mayor Gary McCarthy in 2018 and then elected to a ten-year term.

In 2004, the firm of Cioffi, Slezak Wildgrube, P.C., emerged as the first exclusively female law practice. This coincided with the retirement of its original founding partner, Howard Carpenter, Esq., under whose leadership the firm had been known as Carpenter & Cioffi, P.C. As of 2022, the firm is the largest within the county, comprised of seven female attorneys, one male attorney, and sixteen support staff.

In 2020, the bar association had approximately 300 members, of which 30% were women.

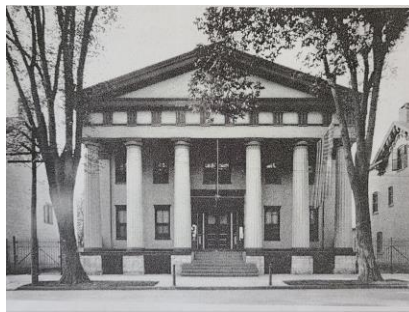
VII. Schenectady's Oldest Law Firm

The oldest existing law firm in Schenectady is Higgins, Roberts & Suprunowicz (formerly Higgins, Roberts, Beyerl & Coan). The firm opened in 1837, when its founder, David Cady Smith, was admitted to the Bar. It has remained in continuous operation to the present day. David Cady Smith, was a graduate of Hartwick Seminary and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and studied law under Judge Alonzo C. Paige. Smith served as counsel to the Schenectady Savings Bank; his son, Everett Smith, was the bank's president, and his son, Gerardus Smith, was an operating officer of Schenectady Trust Company (now Trustco) as well as the Schenectady Gazette newspaper (now the Daily Gazette). The firm concentrated in banking and real estate law and was tied to the former Schenectady Savings Bank, which ultimately, through mergers, became Bank of America. The firm practiced in a wide range of legal areas. Former Supreme Court Justice and Surrogate Barry Kramer, and Robert Carney, Schenectady County District Attorney, practiced at the firm.

On August 12, 2022, the law firm voted to dissolve due to planned retirements, market forces and a changing legal market.

VIII. Courthouse

The first Schenectady Courthouse was built in 1831 and was situated at 108 Union Street in the Stockade neighborhood of the City of Schenectady. From its inception until 1881, the Courthouse also served as Schenectady City Hall. The building with its six columns remains on that site today and is currently owned by MVP. It is in the Greek Revival style, and the architect was John Teller.



As part of its centennial celebration, Schenectady commissioned the construction of a new courthouse, which took three and a half years to construct. The present Courthouse was completed in 1913 and stands at 612 State Street. The architectural firm was Stoddart & Weathers; the contractor, John McDermott. Built in the classical revival style, the courthouse is in use today.



IX. The Joseph F. Egan Memorial Library

The Joseph F. Egan Memorial Library is located on the third floor of the Schenectady County Courthouse and is named in honor of Joseph Egan, an attorney who served as a combat pilot in the United States Marine Corps during World War II.

He was a member of the New York State Assembly from 1960 until his death on March 22, 1964, at age 46, as a result of a heart attack. The library is open to the public and staffed by a full-time librarian.

X. Notable Cases in Schenectady

People v. Marybeth Tinning

Perhaps the most sensational trial in Schenectady County was *The People v. Marybeth Tinning*. Tinning was a serial killer believed to be responsible for the deaths of eight (8) of her nine (9) children, although she was convicted only of the murder of her ninth child, TamiLynne. Tinning confessed that she smothered the baby with a pillow due to incessant crying. Prosecutors maintained that Tinning craved the attention from the deaths of her children in a manner consistent with Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy. All eight (8) children died before their fifth birthdays. The trial spawned at least two (2) books and television documentaries on HBO and the Discovery Channel. The case received national attention. Although indicted for three (3) of the children's deaths, prosecutors pursued only TamiLynne's case. After her conviction for the murder of TamiLynne, Tinning was indicted for the deaths of two of the other children. However, that indictment was dismissed for charging errors to the Grand Jury and the case was not further pursued.

Tinning served more than 31 years of her 20 to life sentence before being granted parole in August of 2018. The case was tried before the Honorable Clifford T. Harrigan, County Court Judge, and prosecuted by District Attorney John Poersch and Associate District Attorney Allan Gebell. Tinning was represented by Paul Callahan, Esq.

People v. Steven Raucci

In February of 2009, the defendant was charged in a 26-count indictment (of which he was tried on 22 counts) with various crimes of arson, criminal mischief, and possession of a weapon, after he vandalized the homes and vehicles of individuals who offended him in the workplace - - the Schenectady City School District.

After a lengthy jury trial, in which the People presented 62 witnesses, and the Defense only two (2), the defendant was convicted on 18 counts and sentenced to a prison term of 23 years to life and the payment of restitution.

The case received national attention stemming from the school district's indifference to Raucci's intimidating supervisory behavior over several decades. Raucci cultivated relationships with district administrators and school board members, and

served as union representative for district employees, an apparent conflict of interest. In his 30-year career, he was promoted from laborer to department head in charge of 21 buildings and 110 employees.

Raucci threatened and harassed subordinates who challenged him. He slashed tires, planted explosive devices in cars and private residences, spray-painted “RAT” on an employee’s home, bullied employees into working on board member campaigns and otherwise engaged in a pattern of belittling staff. He single-handedly made sure that no labor grievances were filed against the district.

Raucci’s un-doing came when an explosive device failed to detonate as the cigarette he used for a fuse went out prematurely. His DNA, left on the cigarette, was matched to a fork he had used at a local restaurant. The police thereafter enlisted a former friend of his as an informant, to whom Raucci freely admitted many of his crimes.

The case was tried before the Honorable Polly Hoyer and prosecuted by District Attorney Robert Carney and Assistant District Attorney, Peter Willis. Raucci was represented by Ronald DeAngelus, Esq.

The case was discussed on National Public Radio. This American Life, a weekly public radio program and podcast, featured a segment entitled “Petty Tyrant – the story of a virtuoso tyrant and bully.”

A television/movie series may yet be planned.

People v. Lemuel Smith

Convicted serial killer, Lemuel Smith, had already murdered four (4) people, without detection, before murdering a Schenectady County legal secretary, Marilee Wilson, in 1976. Wilson’s mutilated body was found near Schenectady’s downtown train tracks, just after Smith’s release from prison for lesser crimes. Shortly thereafter, Smith kidnaped another legal secretary in Schenectady - - Marianne Maggio - - who was rescued when police stopped Smith’s vehicle in response to a radio transmission among motorists, one of whom observed the abduction and another of whom spotted its egress. In 1977, Smith was criminally charged as to Maggio abduction, as his murder of Wilson remained undiscovered at that time. However, his counsel, Sanford Rosenblum, Esq., sought to interpose the insanity defense at his non-jury trial before then-presiding Schenectady County Court Judge, George Stroebel. Although unsuccessful, it was the preparation of that defense that brought to light Smith’s culpability for Wilson’s murder, prompting then Schenectady County Assistant District Attorney, John Poersch, Esq. to have Wilson’s body exhumed.

Notwithstanding Smith's 1978 confession to five (5) murders, his Schenectady County sentence of 25 years to life was solely upon conviction of kidnapping and robbery. In consideration of companion life sentences handed down in neighboring counties, his indictment for murder in Schenectady County was dismissed.

Smith's psychopathology captured national attention and garnered high-profile lawyers, William Kunstler, Esq. and C. Vernon Mason, Esq., when, in 1981, he killed Corrections Officer Donna Payant, while housed at Green Haven Correctional Facility. She was the first ever on-duty female Corrections Officer in the United States to be killed by an inmate inside a maximum-security prison setting. The death sentence he received in 1983 was commuted to yet another life sentence on appeal after the death penalty statute was held to be unconstitutional.

As of December 2022, Smith, age 81, remains in 23 hour a day isolation at Five Points Correctional Facility.

People v. Paul "Legs" DiCocco

Schenectady resident, Paul "Legs" DiCocco, was renowned in the community for the Italian cuisine he served at the restaurants he owned, such as Anthony's on State Street, and The Luncheonette on South Street in the City of Schenectady, which he operated with his brother, Jake DiCocco. However, it was his connection to underworld figures, gamblers, and racketeers that drew him notoriety. He was affiliated with Harry "Harryship" Shapiro, a known bookmaker affiliated with the Bonanno Family, Carmine Galente, an underworld boss, Elmer J. Smith, a known bookmaker in the upstate area, Rocco Marrone, an associate of Salvatore Facone and Salvatore Giglio, a mafia soldier in the Bonanno Family, among others.

DiCocco and those he associated with in the Schenectady area were frequent targets of gambling raids and arrests by the Schenectady Police Department and the New York State Police. Among his more notable arrests was in the 1940's for disorderly conduct at the Saratoga Racetrack, where he and others, believed to be known gamblers, were arrested, alleged to be congregating for criminal purposes. In 1962, the IRS conducted highly publicized nationwide raids against various gambling networks in which DiCocco and others were charged by federal tax agents with failing to buy \$50 gambling tax stamps, that were required at the time, and failing to register as gamblers with the District Director of the Internal Revenue Service. DiCocco was frequently represented by Armand Riccio and Harold Blodgett.

Investigations of DiCocco with regard to racketeering and illegal gambling operations were often fruitless, since he frequently invoked his Fifth Amendment rights, and was alleged to have bribed City of Schenectady police officers.

After a two-year probe conducted by the Organized Crime Task Force, DiCocco was indicted in 1977, for perjury and criminal contempt. A mistrial was declared by then County Court Judge George Stroebel, after a hung jury. Manhattan-based defense attorney, Barry Slotnick, Esq., who years later represented subway vigilante Bernhard Goetz, secured a plea deal reducing the charges to misdemeanors with DiCocco paying a \$1,000 fine and receiving three years' probation.

DiCocco died of natural causes in 1989, at the age of 65. His funeral procession brought out a cavalcade of Schenectady residents paying homage, in a scene characterized by the FBI officials as "incredulous." Funeral director, Henry S. DiLegge, said it was "the most flowers I've ever seen for a funeral"⁴⁰ with 150 arrangements, despite the family's request that in lieu of flowers, donations be made to a heart transplant fund. Among the mourners attending were the mayor, former mayor, city council president, city council members, local assemblymen and local lawyers, doctors, judges and people of all walks of life. A city police officer directed traffic in front of the funeral home.



Paul "Legs" DiCocco walking out of the main Court Room



Paul "Legs" DiCocco leaving the courthouse with Attorney Harold Blodgett

XI. Schenectady County Bar Association Awards

The Schenectady County Bar Association honors attorneys and others, bestowing awards for legal proficiency, ability, ethics, pro bono work, community

⁴⁰ Daily Gazette, "Thousands pay their respects to DiCocco. Many remember crime figure fondly", August 4, 1989.

contribution and the advancement of the profession. Recognition categories include The Young Lawyer Award (age 35 or younger); The Lawyer in Service to the Community; The Lawyer of the Year; Lifetime Achievement; the President's Award; Excellence in Service; and the Liberty Bell Award.

XII. Conclusion

As the Schenectady County Bar Association begins its second centennial, at a time when Joseph Biden is President, the Covid-19 pandemic subsides, the Country appears politically divided, the Association remains committed to its core values of meaningful justice to all, collegiality within the profession, and professionalism in the practice of law.



Hon. Alberto M. Rosenblatt (ret.)



*Hon. Elizabeth A. Garry and
Hon. Howard A. Levine (ret.)*



Hon. Michael J. Garcia

On September 22, 2021, the Association, in conjunction with the Schenectady County Legislature, jointly participated in a ceremony to recognize the Hon. Howard A. Levine, by the dedication of the main courtroom of the courthouse in his honor. The occasion was marked by tributes from the Hon. Vito C. Caruso, Master of Ceremonies, Cory Dalmata, Esq., President of the Association, Gary E. Hughes, Majority Leader of the legislature, the Hon. Albert Rosenblatt, former justice of the Court of Appeals, the Hon. Thomas E. Mercure, former justice of the Appellate Division, Third Department, and Michael J. Garcia, Associate Judge of the New York Court of Appeals. Additionally, the Hon. Christine M. Clark, presented a video of an interview she conducted with the Judge.

The Hon. Howard Levine remains the only modern-day jurist appointed to the state's highest court from Schenectady County in over 100 years (the last being Judson S. Landon, 1900-1901).

Today, the Association stands strong, and looks forward to meeting the challenges of its second centennial.

XIII. Former Schenectady County Bar Association Presidents

Peter G. Abbey	B.B. Johnson
John Angerosa	William Killeen
Charles Aussicker	Christian X. Kouray
Michael Basile	Robert Landon
Leo W. Begley	Jasper Levine H.
Owen Begley	Richard Lewis
James W. Bendall	James Liddle
Harold E. Blodgett	Raymond Loucks
Homer Bornt	Emmet Lynch
Charles Ward Brown	Robert E. Lynch
J. William Burke	John Mauriel
I. David Burke	William Maynard
William Campbell	Walter McNab
Vincent J. Capasso, Jr.	Kelsie Mead
Cristine Cioffi	John D. Mead
Peter Coffey	Edwin Miller
Frank Cooper	William Nicoll
Charles Daly	Thaddeous Ognowski
Eleanor DeCoursey	Roy Peters
Thomas DeLorenzo	Mathias Poersch
W. Albert DeMatteo	Mark L. Powers
Karen Drago	Thomas Pritchard
Dennis Englert	Frank Putorti
Albie S. Ferrucci	Vincent F. Reilly, Jr.
Maurice Flinn	Louis Rinaldi
Harold Friedman	I.F. Heaward Robinson
Richard Gershon	Patricia L.R. Rodriguez
Kenneth T. Gibbons	Phil Rodriguez
Arthur Golden	Hyman Sacharoff
Arnold M. Gordon	Del Salmon
Alexander Grasso	J. Teller Schoolcraft
Clifford T. Harrigan	John Seebold
Andrew Healey	Hyman Sevits
Gerald Hennessy	Robert Siegel
Max Hershkowitz	Donald Smith
Samuel Hesson	J. Vincent Smith
Dudley Hill	William Wemple
Robert Hoffman	Jenifer Wharton
James Houlihan	William Willig
Charles M. Hughes	

XIV. District Attorneys

John K. Paige
06/11/1818

Alonzo C. Paige
09/03/1823

Platt Potter
01/15/1839

Benjamin F. Potter
06/07/1847

Samuel L. Baker
11/05/1850

James Fuller,
appointed in place of Baker, resigned 08/22/1851

John Van Santvoord
11/04/1851

Samuel T. Freeman
appointed in place of Van Santvoord 01/07/1853

Samuel T. Freeman
11/08/1853, resigned January 7, 1856

Simon Calkins
01/10/1856

Judson S. Landon
11/04/1856

Judson S. Landon
11/08/1859

John G. McChesney
11/04/1862

John L. Hill
11/07/1865

Austin A. Yates
11/03/1868

Austin A. Yates
11/07/1871

Alonzo P. Strong
appointed in place of A.A. Yates, 12/24/1873

David C. Beattie
11/03/1874

Charles E. Palmer
11/06/1877

J. Teller Schoolcraft
11/02/1880

J. Teller Schoolcraft
11/06/1883

Alexander M. Vedder
11/02/1886

Daniel Naylor, Jr.
11/05/1889

William W. Wemple
11/08/1892

William W. Wemple
11/05/1895

William W. Wemple
11/08/1898

Walter W. Briggs
11/05/1901

Walter W. Briggs
11/08/1904

Walter W. Briggs
11/05/1907

Alexander T. Blessing
11/08/1910

Alexander T. Blessing
11/04/1913

John R. Parker
11/07/1916

John R. Parker
11/04/1919

Alexander T. Blessing
11/07/1922

Harold E. Blodgett
11/03/1925

Roy W. Peters
11/06/1928

Roy W. Peters
11/03/1931

Leo W. Begley
11/06/1934

Thomas W. Wallace
11/02/1937

Thomas W. Wallace
11/05/1940

William M. Nicoll
01/02/1943

William M. Nicoll
11/05/1946

William M. Nicoll
11/08/1949

Emmet J. Lynch
01/02/1951

Emmet J. Lynch
11/06/1951

Emmet J. Lynch
11/02/1954

Morris Marshall Cohn
11/05/1957

D. Vincent Cerrito
11/08/1960

D. Vincent Cerrito
11/05/1963

Howard A. Levine
11/08/1966

Howard A. Levine
11/04/1969

Elbert H. Watrous, Jr.
12/29/1970

Elbert H. Watrous, Jr.
11/02/1971

Elbert H. Watrous, Jr.
11/05/1974

John B. Poersch
11/08/1977

John B. Poersch
11/03/1981

John B. Poersch
11/05/1985

Robert M. Carney
11/07/1989

Robert M. Carney
11/02/1993

Robert M. Carney
11/04/1997

Robert M. Carney
11/06/2001

Robert M. Carney
11/08/2005

Robert M. Carney
11/03/2009

Robert M. Carney
11/05/2013

Robert M. Carney
11/07/2017

Robert M. Carney
11/02/2021

XV. Surrogate Court

William Teller
1809 – 1813, also served as Surrogate in 1815

Robert Hudson
1813 – 1815

John Yates
1816 – 1821

Giles F. Yates
1821 – 1840

John Sanders
1840 – 1844

David Cady Smith
1844 – 1848

Edward C. Whitmyer
1903 – 1908

Alexander M. Vedder
1909 – 1927

James C. Cooper
1927

William W. Campbell
1928 – 1957

William F. Hahn, Jr.
1958 – 1973

George E. Severson
1974 – 1986

Neil W. Moynihan
1987 – 1992

Barry D. Kramer
1993 – 2009

Vincent W. Versaci
Appointed May 4, 2010
Elected 2011 – present

XVI. County Court

Gerrit S. Vedder
1809

Gardiner Cleveland
1812

David Boyd
1820

James V. S. Ryley
1828

Samuel W. Jones
1828

Roscome Potter
1828

John Titus
1828-1843

George McQueen
1833-1848

Harmanus Peek
1835

Cornelius S. Conde
1838

Abraham Pearse
1839-1844

Archibald L. Linn
1840-1845

Abraham Warner
1843-1848

Peter B. Noxon
1844-1849

Ira Amy
1846-1851

Samuel R. Jones
1847-1851

Stephen H. Johnson
1851-1855
1860-1865

John Sanders
1855-1859

Judson S. Landon
1865-1869

Walter T.L. Sanders
1879-1873

Austin A. Yates
1874-1879

David C. Beattie
1880-1889

Edward D. Cutler
1889-1896

Alonzo P. Strong
1897-1902

Alexander M. Vedder
1903-1908

Edward C. Whitmyer
1909-1911

Daniel J. Naylor, Jr.
1912-1918

John J. McMullen
1919-1924

John Alexander
1925-1931

James C. Cooper
1931-1932

James W. Liddle
1933-1956

Archibald C. Wemple
1956-1975

George W. Stroebel, Jr.
1976-1984

Clifford T. Harrigan
1985-1994

Michael C. Eidens
1995-2004

Karen A. Drago
2005-2014

Matthew J. Sypniewski
2015 – present

XVII. Supreme Court Justices

Hon. Joseph C. Yates
1808 – 1822

Hon. Alonzo C. Paige
1847 - 1868

Hon. Platt Potter
1859 - 1879

Hon. Judson S. Landon
1847 - 1901

Hon. Edward C. Whitmyer
1912 - 1931

Hon. John Alexander
1932 - 1953

Hon. Charles M. Hughes
1954 - 1966

Hon. Morris Marshall Cohn
1955 - 1955

Hon. D. Vincent Cerrito
1967 - 1984

Hon. Guy A. Graves
1969 - 1986

Hon. William J. Quinn
1975 - 1981

Hon. Howard A. Levine
1981 - 1993

Hon. Robert E. Lynch
1987 - 2000

Hon. Vito C. Caruso
1995 – 2021

Hon. Vincent J. Reilly, Jr.
2001 - 2017

Hon. Barry D. Kramer
2010 - 2018

Hon. Christine M. Clark
2013 - present

Hon. Thomas D. Buchanan
2013 - present

Hon. Mark L. Powers
2017 - present

Hon. Michael J. Cuevas
2020 – present

XVIII. Children’s/Family Court

William M. Nicoll
1951-1962

Duncan S. McNab
1963-1973

Howard A. Levine
1971-1980

Leonard J. Litz
1973-1984

G. Douglas Griset
1981-2000

Vincent J. Reilly, Jr.
1985-2000

Kathleen R. DeCataldo
2000

Eli I. Taub
2001

JoAnne Assini
2001-2010

Mark L. Powers
2002-2016

Christine M. Clark
2011-2012

Kevin A. Burke
2014-present

Jill S. Polk
2015-present

Mark W. Blanchfield
2018-present

XIX. Appellate Court

Robert Yates
Supreme Court 1777-1790
Chief Justice 1790

Joseph C. Yates
Supreme Court 1808-1822
Governor of NY 1823-1824

Alfonzo C. Paige
Supreme Court 1847-1851, 1856-1857
Court of Appeals 1851, 1857

Platt Potter
Supreme Court 1857, 1865
Court of Appeals

Judson S. Landon
Appellate Division 1896-1899
Court of Appeals 1900-1901

Edward C. Whitmyer
Appellate Division 1927-1931

Howard A. Levine
Appellate Division 1982-1993
Court of Appeals 1993-2002

Christine M. Clark
Appellate Division 2014-present

XX. Present and Retired Judges

Joanne A. Assini
Family Court 2001-2010
Utica College, B.A.
Albany Law School, J.D.

Mark W. Blanchfield
Family Court 2018-present
Harvard University, B.A.
Cardozo Law School, J.D.

Kevin A. Burke
Family Court 2014-present
Boston College
Syracuse University Law School

Thomas D. Buchanan
Supreme Court 2013-present
J.D., Albany Law School
B.A., SUNY, Albany

Mark J. Caruso
City Court 2015-present
Union College
Albany Law School

Vito C. Caruso
Supreme Court 1995-2021
BA, S.U.N.Y. New Paltz

Karen A. Drago
County Court 2005-2014
Providence College
Western New England Law School

Michael C. Eidens
County Court 1995-2004
Albany Law School
Wesley College

Robert W. Hoffman
City Court 2016-present
J.D., Stetson University Law School

Carl G. Falotico
City Court 2020-present
St. John's Law School
Sienna College

Teneka E. Frost-Amusa
City Court 2018-present
M.P.A., SUNY Albany
Albany Law School

G. Douglas Griset
Family Court 1981-2000
Syracuse University, B.A.
Boston University School of Law, J.D.

Barry D. Kramer
Supreme Court
New York University 2009-2018
Albany Law School

Guido A. Loyola
City Court 1991-2013
SUNY Albany
Albany Law School

Bruce Martin
City Court
Union College
Albany Law School, J.D.

Jill S. Polk
Family Court 2015-present
Albany Law School, J.D.

Mark L. Powers
Supreme Court 2017-present
State University of New York at Albany, B.A.
Western New England Law, J.D.
Albany Law School, L.L.M.

Louise Smith
City Court
University of Houston Law School

Matthew J. Sypniewski
County Court 2014-present
Union College
Albany Law School, J.D.

Vincent W. Versaci
Surrogate May 4, 2009-present
University of Rochester
Albany Law School, J.D.

XXI. County Resources

a. Bibliography

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Staffe, S., PhD, Schenectady Genesis: How a Dutch Colonial Village Became an American City, ca 1681 – 1800, Volume I (Purple Mountain Press Fleischmanns, NY 2004)

Yates, A. History of Schenectady County, NY (New York History Co., 1902)

Sanders, J., Early History of Schenectady, Its First Settlers, (Van Benthuysen Printing House, 1879)

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Rosenblatt, A., History of the Dutchess County Bench and Bar (the Historical Society of the New York Courts, 2015)

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Gearing, J., Volume II: The Creation of an American City from an Anglo-Dutch Town, ca. 1760-1800 (Colonial Schenectady Project, LTD, 2020)

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b. Law Review Articles

Anton-Hermann Chroust, Legal Profession in Colonial America, 33 Notre Dame L. Rev. 350 (1958).

William E. Nelson, Legal Turmoil in a Factious Colony: New York, 1664 – 1776, 38 Hofstra L. Rev., Vol. 38, Iss. 1, pgs 69-162 (2009).

c. Newspapers

Daily Union, “A Remarkable Law Firm – A Memorandum of Past Days,” September 22, 1888.

Times Union, “Poor are Given Advice, Bar Association Asserts,” November 5, 1970.

Times Union, “Schenectady County Legal Aid Expanding,” March 23, 1971.

Times Union, “Sexual Revolution is Coming Over Texas,” May 1, 1971

Times Union, “Politics Scored by Morgenthau in Court,” May 2, 1970.

Times Union, “Bar Unit Luncheon to be Feature of Law Day USA,” April 30, 1996.

d. County Historian

Bill Buell

Schenectady County Historical Society

32 Washington Avenue

Schenectady, New York 12305

e. County Legal Records

Court records are maintained by the Schenectady County Clerk.

The earliest records date from 1809, the year Schenectady became a County. All records prior to that are in the Albany County Clerk’s Office.

There are certain early miscellaneous records; for example a subpoena from 1771 directing an individual to appear before the Supreme Court of Schenectady or face a fine of 100 pounds. The subpoena is dated in the “eleventh year of the reign of our sovereign lord, King George the Third.” There is a petition from 1763 made to Governor Robert Monckton requesting a charter for the township of Schenectady to become a county town corporation (City). The

petition was the result of lawlessness and disorder occurring at the trading port on the Mohawk River west of the township of Schenectady. By incorporating, Schenectady would be able to govern the trading areas on the Mohawk and bring order to the ports. The petition was signed by the justices of the Township of Schenectady as well as Mayor Joseph R. Yates.

There are “gaps” in the courthouse records, periods of time in which there are no records, either because they were lost or destroyed. For many cases, there is only a clerk’s entry as to the disposition of the case.

An excellent source of secondary materials can be found at the Schenectady Historical Society. Much of the information about the early justices of the Courts was found there. Researchers can find the personal papers of OD Heck (notable attorneys), various treatises, doctoral dissertation(s) about early Schenectady, and the works of local authors, Don Ritter, John F. Gearing and William Buell, among others, relied upon extensively for Schenectady’s early years.