

Circuit Court



F. L. COVERT



GLEN C. GILLESPIE

JUDGES

Hon. FRANK L. COVERT Hon. GLEN C. GILLESPIE

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TERMS of COURT

{ February—First Monday June—Second Monday
April—Second Monday September—Second Monday
December—First Monday

IN point of time it is not long since the work of Sixth Judicial District then composed of Lapeer and Oakland Counties, was handled by one judge. It was customary to hold only four terms of court per year and practically no court at all during the summer months. The great industrial growth and development of Southeastern Michigan has not only brought an enormous increase in population and assessed valuations but it has resulted in a tremendous increase in the work of the Circuit Court. The extension of the north boundary of the City of Detroit to the Oakland County line has wrought a wonderful change in conditions so that but little farm land exists in the two southern tiers of townships which now consist of subdivisions and real estate development projects. During the past few years and since the addition of the second judge there has been an increase of over one hundred percent in the number of cases commenced in the Circuit Court, and there now remains on the docket the largest number of cases in the history of the County, and this too in spite of the facts that two and sometimes three courts have been in continuous session during the year. The following tabulation shows the number of cases commenced during the past four years:

No. of Cases commenced:	1922	1923	1924	1925
	1126	1099	1332	1776

The following tabulation shows the condition of the Courts for the first seven months in 1926:

	CASES COMMENCED	DISPOSED OF	INCREASE	DECREASE
January	157	04	63	
February	152	197		45
March	161	94	57	
April	178	221		43
May	179	127	52	
June	214	154	60	
July	187	134	53	
Total.....	1228	1021	285	88

Increase in cases for seven months, 207.

It is quite apparent, if the courts are to keep pace with the ever-increasing amount of litigation, that another judge must be provided at the next session of the Legislature.

In spite of the fact that it has been customary in our circuit for many years to impose jail or prison sentences for violation of the prohibition law, this class of cases has steadily increased. During 1925 ninety-four cases of this character were brought before the court none of which were released without payment of fines or suspended sentence. The average sentence imposed for such offenses was 115 days and during the past year much of the work on the county roads and in the county cement plant has been performed by violators of the prohibition law.

At the last session of the Legislature an amendment to the law was prepared to permit the presiding judge in any county having a population in excess of 75,000 to direct the returning of an additional number of names of petit jurors. Under the old law only 200 names could be returned in any one year, and, as five terms of court were held in each year, at which from sixty to ninety names were drawn in order to secure a sufficient number of qualified jurors, it was necessary to draw the same names several times during the year. Under the amended law 600 names of petit jurors are now available in the clerk's office and it will not be necessary to summon the same jurors to serve twice within the year.

An amendment to the statute providing for the establishment of a County law library was presented at the last session of the legislature, and under the provisions of the amended act, a start has been made on the establishment of a County Law library. The judges are permitted to spend not to exceed \$1,500.00 in any one year from money collected from forfeitures of bail bonds for the purpose of establishing and maintaining a law library for the use of the courts. We now have a fair working library of approximately 2,500 volumes which is steadily being added to as funds are available. We are sadly handicapped through lack of space and suitable quarters but there is apparently no means for relief until a larger county building can be provided.

During the past year it has been necessary to enlist the services of a number of outside judges at different times in order to dispose of cases in which the local judges were disqualified. The Board of Supervisors several years ago provided for the payment of \$5.00 per day to visiting judges, but this should be increased to \$10.00 to conform to other counties in the state.

The lack of adequate quarters for the courts has been much in evidence during the past year. There is no place where the jurors can assemble and it is necessary for them to remain around the court rooms or in the hall where they are thrown in direct contact with litigants, witnesses and persons interested in the outcome of pending litigation. There is no room where witnesses may be confined during the progress of the trial, as is frequently necessary, nor where attorneys may confer with their clients or witnesses. The jury rooms are wholly inadequate. Under the law where the jury consists of members of both sexes it is necessary that two jury rooms be provided. As we have only three rooms available, only two of which have toilet facilities, it is impossible to comply with the law and we frequently find it necessary to keep a mixed jury in one room until a verdict is arrived at. With the advent of a third judge other quarters must be made available but it is possible that arrangements can be made for temporary use of the assembly room in the basement until adequate quarters can be provided.

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