Blacks in the Law II

Michigan Black Lawyers’ “Firsts”

1. Unidentified Photo
   There were two black graduates from the University of Michigan in 1870 (the class had only one unnamed photo of a black man). Gabriel Franklin Hargo graduated from the Law Department and was Michigan’s first law graduate; second in the U.S., Hargo was admitted by degree to the State Bar of Michigan in 1870.

2. Thomas R. Crisup
   Early law graduate (with Albert Burgess), University of Michigan, 1877; in private practice, 1877–1895.

3. David Augustus Straker
   Appellate attorney in Ferguson v Gies (1890), a renowned civil rights case; Wayne County Circuit Court commissioner (judicial), 1892; legal scholar/writer of six books and numerous articles.

4. William W. Ferguson
   Elected to the Michigan House of Representatives, 1892 and 1894; University of Michigan Law School, 1897; plaintiff in Ferguson v Gies (1890).

5. Francis M. Dent
   President of the Wolverine Bar Association, 1937–1939; co-counsel (with Willis Graves), Sipes v McGhee, companion to landmark case Shelley v Kraemer, 334 US 631 (1948).

6. Judge Charles W. Jones
   Appointed to the Detroit Recorder’s Court, July 29, 1950; Michigan’s first black judge.


8. Judge Victoria A. Roberts

9. Judge Elvin L. Davenport
   Appointed to the Detroit Common Pleas Court, 1956; elected 1957.

10. Professor Charles W. Quick
    First black law professor in Michigan, Wayne State University, 1958.

11. Justice Otis M. Smith
    Appointed to the Michigan Supreme Court, 1961; first black justice on a state supreme court since reconstruction; elected 1962; general counsel and vice president, General Motors, 1977.

12. Judge Geraldine Bledsoe Ford


14. Barbara F. Keene
    Law graduate, Detroit College of Law, 1922 (first black female).

15. Judge Lucille A. Watts
    Elected judge of the Wayne County Circuit Court, 1980 (first black female).

16. Judge Myron H. Wahl
    Appointed to the Michigan Court of Appeals, 1982; elected to unexpired term, 1982.

17. Justice Dennis W. Archer

18. Professor Edward J. Littlejohn
    Professor, Detroit College of Law, 1970; law school associate dean, 1970 (Wayne State University); earned doctorate of law (SJD), 1982, Columbia University; director/founder, Damon J. Keith Law Collection, Wayne State University, 1993.

19. Judge Anna Diggs Taylor
    Appointed to the U.S. District Court (ED Mich), 1979 (first black female); chief judge, 1997.

    Chief justice, Michigan Supreme Court, 1997.

    Partner at Goodman, Crockett, Eden & Robb, the first racially integrated law firm in the U.S., 1950.

Not pictured:
- John C. McLeod—First black lawyer to practice in Michigan before 1870.
- John T. Lets—First black judge elected in Kent County, Grand Rapids Municipal Court, 1959; elected to the Kent County Circuit Court, 1967.
- Ollie B. Bivens Jr.—Appointed to the Genesee County Municipal Court, 1968; Genesee County Circuit Court, 1972.
- Charles A. Pratt—Elected to the Kalamazoo District Court, 1968.