

Ingham County Courthouse



*Self-guided Tour
Brochure
2015*



Ingham County Courthouse History



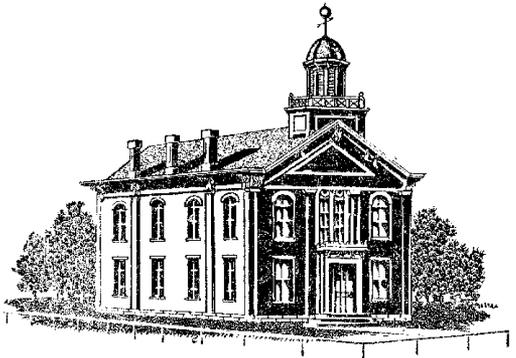
The First Courthouse

Built in 1843, at a cost of \$800.00, Ingham County's first courthouse was a structure to which here citizens pointed with pride, as it stood on the south side of Ash Street, opposite the present County Building. Here the first settlers

held their sessions of Court and transacted business matters; here they gathered for political rallies and other public meetings; and here, on Sunday, the early churches of Mason gathered for divine worship. Around the two-story frame building centered the activities of the little pioneer county seat, until the needs of a rapidly growing county made a larger courthouse necessary.

The Second Courthouse

Less than 15 years after Ingham County became the proud owner of the first courthouse, her rapid growth demanded a much larger and more complete building, and so, in 1858, we see an imposing brick structure, which cost the taxpayers \$12,229.19, gracing the public square of Mason. Built in the prevailing style of the period, its first floor boasted a wide hallway extending through the building and from this opened the county offices, while the second floor was occupied by the circuit court room. Trees were planted and the square graded and fenced with funds contributed by Mason citizens. Watering troughs at the two front corners of the block, an artesian well and bandstand in the front yard, a croquet ground at the side and large woodshed at the rear, complete the surroundings of the building which served the county for 45 years.



The Present Courthouse

Before the turn of the century, Ingham County again needed additional space, and the question arose, "Shall we enlarge our present building, or build a new one?" When presented to voters, the later plans were chosen. The present building was erected during 1902 to 1904. The architect, Edwin Bowd of Lansing, along with the construction company of Rickman and Sons, undertook the great task of building the structure. On May 5,





1903 the cornerstone was lowered into place and on May 9, 1905 the building was dedicated.

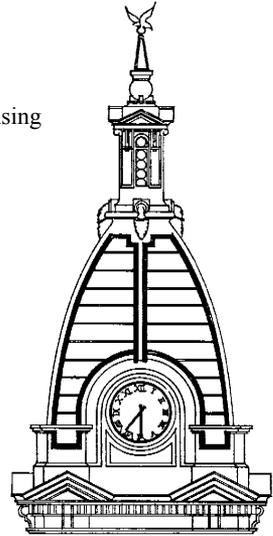
The courthouse has been the scene of many trials in the twentieth century. In January 1905, the first trial in the new courthouse concerned the murder of a White Oak Township farmer.

When the new courthouse opened it had offices for twelve people, including personnel of an insurance company and a janitor.

In 1971 the courthouse was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. In 1980 a renovation study was done to preserve the courthouse and to improve efficiency of operations. In 1995, after fifteen years of renovations and restoration work, the final work of decorating the public areas was completed by the County Commission on History.

Ingham County's Third Courthouse – A Timeline

Building Committee Formed:	October, 1901
Projected Cost:	\$ 40,000.00
Voters Approved:	April, 1902
Plans Approved:	Fall, 1902
Architect:	Edwin A. Bowd, Lansing
Construction Began:	Fall, 1902
Cornerstone Dedication:	May 5, 1903
Additional Funds Needed:	\$ 36,000.00
Additional Funds Approved:	November, 1903
Courthouse Completed:	Late 1904
Final Cost:	\$ 96,678.00*
* \$20,678.00 over the cost approved by voters	
Building Dedication:	May 9, 1905
National Register of Historic Places:	1971
Renovation Began:	1980
Renovation Completed:	1995
Cornerstone Opened:	October 26, 2004



Centennial Celebration:

May 7, 2005

Architectural Type:	Federal Style
Exterior:	Saw cut berea sandstone, quarried in Amhurst, Ohio
Roof:	Black buckingham slate
Courthouse Clock:	Purchased in 1912 from the Seth Thomas Clock Co., of New York and Chicago.
Courthouse Bell:	Purchased in 1912. Made by the McShane Bell Foundry near Baltimore, MD.
Eagle:	The "Golden Eagle" perched on top of the building is three feet tall and has a wingspan of over three feet.
First Judge:	Howard Weist, Circuit Court Judge from about 1898 until 1920.



Ingham County Courthouse

Self-guided Tour

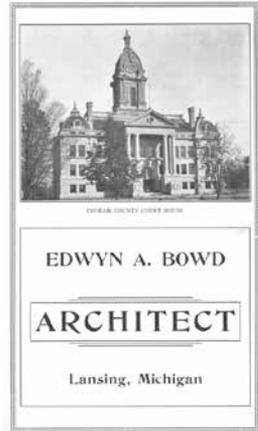
WELCOME – *The Ingham County Historical Commission invites you to participate in a self-guided walking tour of the beautiful and historic Ingham County Courthouse. This booklet divides the courthouse by floors and provides you with brief descriptions about the many different offices within the building.*

FIRST FLOOR

Entering the Ingham County Courthouse will take you back to the turn of the century when wood, plaster, marble, chandeliers, paintings and craftsmanship were used to build and decorate this historic building.

Edwin Bowd, the architect, designed the first floor for easy access to the offices. Originally the west main street entrance opened on both sides of the marble staircase that leads to the second floor. In the mid seventies, Circuit Court and the County Clerk separated into two offices and more office space was needed in the building. The northwest corridor was closed off and was made into new office space.

BOARD OF COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE: The Board of Commissioners is the legislative and policy oversight body of Ingham County either directly or through the appointment of various boards, commissions and county officials. The Board



A Brief History of Ingham County

The County of Ingham was designated and named after Samuel D. Ingham by an act of the Legislative Council of the Territory of Michigan on the 29th of October in 1829. Samuel D. Ingham was Secretary of the Treasury under President Andrew Jackson.

Nine Counties in Michigan were set off and named by the Legislative Act of 1829 for the President and his Cabinet. They were known as the "Cabinet Counties." These counties were: Barry, Berrien, Branch, Calhoun, Cass, Eaton, Ingham, Jackson and Van Buren. Samuel Ingham never saw the county which was named after him.

Ingham County is comprised of sixteen townships: Alaiedon, Aurelius, Bunker Hill, Delhi, Ingham, Lansing, Leroy, Leslie, Locke, Meridian, Onondaga, Stockbridge, Vevay, Wheatfield, White Oak and Williamstown.

Competition developed between Mason and Jefferson City for the location of the County Seat. The Village of Mason, located three and one half miles south of Jefferson City won and became the County Seat in March of 1840. In April of that same year, the Village of Mason conveyed to the County Board of Supervisors twenty-five acres on top of a large bluff-like hill. A log building which cost \$331.00 was constructed for County offices and became the County's first building.



Samuel D. Ingham



consists of 16 members each representing a district nearly equal in population. The Board determines the types and level of county services, adopts the County budget, as well as County ordinances and policies governing administration of County government, and approves the equalization of property values.

COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE: The County Clerk is the keeper of records of births, deaths, marriages, co-partnerships, assumed names, concealed weapons licenses, notary bonds and agent for passports. The Clerk serves as Chairperson for the Election Scheduling Committee, Clerk to the Board of Commissioners, Clerk of the Board of Canvassers, member of the Election Commission, Plat Board, Jury Board and Gun Board.

COUNTY CONTROLLER'S OFFICE: Under the direction of the Board of Commissioners the Controller is the chief fiscal and administrative officer for the County. Responsibilities include central administrative functions, providing a balanced budget to the Board of Commissioners and liaison between county officials, department heads and the general public. The following departments are under the Controller's supervision: Financial Services, MIS, Human Resources, Purchasing and Facilities, Budgeting, Development and Community Corrections.

Located in the main corridor are the original museum and display cases that house donated items given to the County. In the museum you will view items from a few years of age to 300 years old. New wall display cases have also been added to the main floor for short

term exhibits and traveling displays from outside sources. This area of the Courthouse contains numerous artifacts from the early days. There are displays of Native American points and tools. Included are traps that were used in the early 1800's, as well as clothing, household items, Bibles and prayer books.

We are fortunate to have a nice display of military relics including a dagger from the Revolutionary War, 1775 Bunker Hill battlefield. There is a bayonet from the War of 1812 in



the wall display many items from the Civil War 1861-1865, a flag and picture of Spanish American War troops from Ingham County and several helmets and other items from World War I and World War II.

The Civil War collection includes a copy of the Emancipation Proclamation, recruiting posters, playing cards, a canteen, a cup, a bar of soap, mirror, razor, pictures and framed posters.

There were more than 2000 troops from Ingham County among the 90,000+ troops from Michigan that served in the Civil War.

The officer's sword and belt were presented to L. H. Ives by the citizens of Stockbridge when he became a 2nd Lieutenant, Company B, 26th, Michigan Infantry Regiment on September 1, 1862. They were carried by him throughout the Civil War. The 26th Michigan fought in many campaigns and Ives was promoted to Major near the end of the war. In April, 1865 the regiment, commanded by Ives, was in hot pursuit of General Lee and his army. It was through its skirmish line at Appomattox Courthouse that General Grant operated with his flag of truce arranging the terms of General Lee's surrender.

In 1870, Colonel Ives donated these items and a confederate saber.

The beauty of the refinished wood from Michigan, marble from Vermont, new chandeliers and three new works of art, two plaques, eight donated paintings from the civil



war era, three donated portraits and nine donated antique photographs adorn the walls of the first floor.

SECOND FLOOR

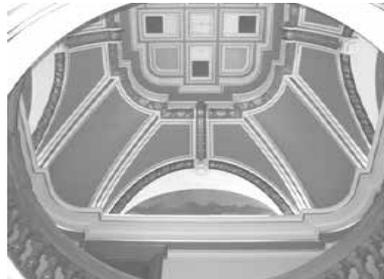
You can climb the grand marble staircase to the west or the two stairways to the east to reach the second floor of the building. These stairways are constructed of steel channel stringers with applied ornamentation, decorative steel railings with Michigan wood handrails. There is also an elevator making the building accessible to all offices. In the center of the second floor you will come to one of the original office desks used in this building. This large two sided desk sports the same craftsmanship on both sides and at the turn of the century, you would sit on one side, while the office clerk sat on the other.



REGISTER OF DEEDS OFFICE: All transactions relating to real estate, personal property, as well as tax lien information is recorded here. The Register of Deeds also serves as a member of the Plat Board.

EQUALIZATION/TAX MAPPING: The Equalization Department advises and assists the Board of Commissioners in equalizing property tax assessments on a County-wide basis. In conformance with state directives, Equalization conducts annual studies and surveys, and equalizes assessed values for each class in the local unit of government. This department assists local assessing officers in development and maintenance of property descriptions, discovery, listing and valuation of properties for tax purposes, and development and use of valuation standards and techniques for the assessment of property. Tax Mapping was established in 1974 when all units of the county went to permanent parcel numbering and a county-wide mapping system. It is charged with the responsibility of assigning permanent parcel numbers, maintaining property descriptions and updating section line Mylar's for the 92,028 parcels in Ingham County. The department gives aid to assessors and taxpayers in matters of description.

COUNTY TREASURER'S OFFICE: The Treasurer is custodian of all monies with the responsibility of investing idle funds and maintaining an adequate cash flow. This office settles with township and city treasurers for taxes that are collected for the County and State of Michigan; collects delinquent real property taxes and conducts the annual sale of delinquent taxes; maintains debt service accounts for bonded indebtedness of the county; collects and disburses hotel/motel accommodation taxes and is responsible for the sale of dog licenses. The Treasurer a member of the Plat Board, Elections Commission as well as the County Building Authority.



As you stand in the center of the second floor, you will see the floor above you through the rotunda opening and a spectacular



1859 Ingham & Livingston Counties Map

D.C. This map shows the states as they were in 1861 and also show Mexico and all of the Caribbean Islands. Inset on the map are fifteen portraits and drawings of Washington D.C., Mount Vernon and the U.S. Capitol. Also maps and information on: length of rivers, animal habitat, weather and geological maps, church denominations, time tables, mountain heights and ranges, water falls, ocean depths, mileage chart, and a globe of the planet can be seen in this rare map. These two maps were preserved and framed by the County Commission on History.

view of the dome. A landscape painting adorns the south wall and on the north wall we have two maps that are five by six feet in size. The first map is from 1859 and shows Ingham and Livingston Counties. Around the map are sketches of famous homes, buildings and landmarks. This topographical plat map shows the business districts and directories for each city as well as property owners of the time. The map was published by Geil, Harley and Siverd in Philadelphia. The second map is a rare George Washington map of the United States, published in 1861 by H. G. Bond for M. F. Maury, LL.D. Commander of the U.S. Navy and Superintendent of the U.S. National Observatory in Washington



1861 United States Wall Map

THIRD FLOOR

Arriving on the third floor brings you to the Thirtieth Judicial Circuit Court for the State of Michigan. By law, a Circuit Court has to be maintained in each County Seat. This



courtroom has maintained its original beauty throughout the twentieth century. The judge's bench, gallery chairs, employee stations, tables and woodwork have been refinished and are in their original locations. Portraits of the Honorable Sam Street Hughes and the first judge to preside in this courtroom, the Honorable Howard Weist are on display here. In 1919, the federal and state seals were painted on the walls by an artist during the first decoration of the building. The State Seal can be seen above the judge's bench

in its original condition. The Federal Seal was damaged and painted over decades ago and could not be restored. Carpeting covers the original wood floor and chandeliers have been added, to replace the original ones that were taken down many years ago.



A statue of justice can be seen sitting on top of the judge's bench. This statue was given to the County of Ingham by the Honorable William John Beer on June 16, 1969 after the Algiers Motel Murder Trial was moved here from Detroit.

As we leave the courtroom and enter the rotunda area, you can see the oil paintings that are inside the dome area. On the east wall is an early Indian scene with Chief John Okemos, a familiar character trading with settlers of this vicinity along the Red Cedar in the Okemos area. The south wall has an early Mason scene looking at the south side of Ash Street, between Jefferson and Barnes Streets. The scene



shows the first Courthouse on the far left, with a stockade fence and the first County Jail, built in 1848, in the background. The other buildings are businesses and stores of the period.



The west wall is an allegorical painting of the Civil War and World War I, the boys in blue from the Civil War passing on as the boys in khaki from World War I come to the front. Miss Liberty watches over them to keep them safe. The

north wall consists of a pioneer scene of Jefferson City that was three and one half miles north of Mason on what is now known as Hagadorn Road. The settlement was laid out and platted by Stevens T. Mason to be the Capitol and the County Seat. When Mason became the County Seat in 1840 the settlement went out of existence. There are no official records of this settlement; most of what is known comes from letters and diaries of that time. The settlement was purchased and made into farm land, to this date it remains farmland.

Displayed on the third floor are eleven portraits, three paintings, five judicial prints and eight restored antique photos, as well as the first telephone booth which located in the City of Mason. The telephone booth is made out of oak, when the oak doors are closed the inside of the booth lights up.

The Board of Commissioners' Meeting Room is in the northeast corner of the third floor. The Board of Commissioners were originally known as the Board of Supervisors, the name changed in 1969 when their positions went from appointed to elected. At the front of the room is a portrait of Samuel D. Ingham. In the past, Board meetings would last for days or until all business proceedings were completed. The meetings now are very well organized and most of the work is done at liaison committee meetings.



CIRCUIT COURT OFFICE: The Thirtieth Judicial Circuit Court has original jurisdiction over all criminal cases and civil cases involving \$10,000 or more, as well as superintending control over all inferior courts. The Circuit Court judges hear appeals of decisions of the District Court and keep records of bond monies and garnishments.



In addition to the Courtroom and Board of Commissioner's meeting room, this floor also consists of a separate prisoner holding area, a jury deliberation room, the Judge's Chambers, court reporter's office and a court clerk's office.

OUTSIDE THE COURTHOUSE

The 1980 restoration of the building began by installing new windows and the sandblasting of the berea sandstone which is what the exterior is made of. A new slate roof was added and a balustrade that is a replication of the original railing. Galvanized ridge caps and very ornate dormers with oval windows that were removed have been re-created and installed to the four corners of the courthouse. The four original chimneys and the main entrance vestibule were not replaced in the restoration of the building.



THE CORNERSTONE - At the southwest corner of the building, you will see a large stone with the dates 1902-03 carved into it. The marble stone was dedicated on May 5, 1903 and placed inside were documents, mementos, coins and publications of that time.

THE BUILDER'S PLAQUE - On the right side of the main entrance is a plaque commemorating the efforts put forth by the original building committee, contractors and the architect Edwin A. Bowd.

MEMORIAL PLAQUE - This plaque was dedicated on May 30, 1920 in memory of those who lost their lives in World War I. The names listed are from veterans from Ingham County who died between 1914 and 1918.



VETERAN'S MEMORIAL MONUMENT - This beautifully restored memorial was built in 1943 by Charles Monroe to honor those who gave their lives in World War II. In 1992, nearly fifty years after its dedication, local veteran's organizations, auxiliaries, businesses and residents wanted to memorialize the Ingham County Servicemen and Servicewomen who lost their lives in the Korean and Vietnam wars. These names have now been added.





The name of Sherrod Skinner, Jr. who is listed on the memorial is the only Ingham County resident to receive a Congressional Medal of Honor in our history.

THE CANNONS OF THE COURTHOUSE LAWN - The large cannon is from the Civil War and was presented in 1900 by the Steele Bros. Post, G.A.R. #441 to the citizens of Ingham County for those who fought in the War between the States.



The small cannon is from Company F, 31st Infantry of the Michigan National Guard and has a unique history. In April of 1898, Company F left Mason for Nashville, then Georgia for training, and then to Rodrigo, Cuba during the Spanish American War. Troops then were at Rembios, Cuba where they did some

fighting and also helped the villagers restore the buildings and roads in the area. When their job was finished and Commodore Dewey had destroyed the entire Spanish Fleet in Manila Bay, they were told to return home. The Cubans wanted to give them something to remember them by, but they were very poor and did not have much. They did not want the Americans to leave without a souvenir. In the mountains were some old cannons that were used to keep the pirates and enemies away from shore. They gave the company one of these cannons and cannon balls to take home. This 3 pound parrot gun and 40 cannon balls were sent to the Steel Bros. G. A. R. Post then later placed on the Courthouse lawn. The inscription reads: ***“Company F. 31 Mich Vol presented by the citizens of Rembios Cuba 1898-1899.”*** To end this story, the cannon balls do not fit either cannon.



HORSE TROUGH - On the southeast corner of the Courthouse, is a large cement trough filled with flowers every summer. A century ago it was originally located on the northwest corner where it was used as a watering trough for horses. This unusually shaped trough had running water for travelers coming to town for business or pleasure.



FINALE

As we finish the tour, the *Golden Eagle* is watching you leave this Historical Site. The eagle on top of the building is three feet tall and has a wingspan of over three feet. Purchased from a traveling salesman, taxpayers from around the county were outraged by this extravagant use of their taxes. A month later during a storm, it blew off and was put into storage. Years went by and a man doing odd jobs around the Courthouse found it in the basement and asked if he could repair it and put it back on top of the dome. Henry Verhelst and his son, using block and tackle replaced the golden eagle weathervane back to its place in history. A photograph of the eagle being held by his son can be seen in the museum.

