

A Brief History of the Western District of Michigan

Congress created the District Court of Michigan with the Act of July 1, 1836.¹ At the time, Michigan was one judicial district and the court was to hold two sessions at the seat of the government which was then in Detroit. The Act of February 24, 1863,² divided Michigan into two districts with Grand Rapids designated as the judicial center of the Western District and Detroit as the center for the Eastern District. In 1878, the Western District of Michigan was divided into two divisions, Southern and Northern; Grand Rapids and Marquette were designated as the respective court seats.³ The term of court for the Southern Division of the Western District was held at Grand Rapids until 1954 when court was authorized to be held in Kalamazoo and Mason.⁴ It was not until 1961, that a session of court was authorized to be held in the state capital, Lansing,⁵ at which time the term in Mason was eliminated.

Western District of Michigan Succession of Article III Judges

First Seat

Solomon L. Withey
Henry Franklin Severens
George Proctor Wanty
Loyal Edwin Knappen
Arthur Carter Denison
Clarence William Sessions⁶

Second Seat

Fred Morton Raymond
Raymond Wesley Starr
Noel P. Fox
Richard Alan Enslin
Paul L. Maloney

Third Seat

W. Wallace Kent
Albert J. Engel, Jr.
Wendell A. Miles
Robert Holmes Bell

Fourth Seat

Benjamin F. Gibson⁷

Fifth Seat

Douglas W. Hillman
David W. McKeague
Janet T. Neff

Sixth Seat

Gordon J. Quist
Robert J. Jonker

1. 5 Stat. 62.

2. Act of February 24, 1863, 12 Stat. 660.

3. Act of June 19, 1878, 20 Stat. 177.

4. Act of February 10, 1954, 68 Stat. 11.

5. Act of May 19, 1961, 75 Stat. 83.

6. Clarence W. Sessions' death on April 1, 1931, created the first vacancy following the expiration of the temporary judgeship authorized by the act of February 17, 1925, 43 Stat. 949, and accordingly no successor was appointed.

7. Benjamin F. Gibson's retirement on January 31, 1999, created the first vacancy following the expiration of the temporary judgeship authorized by the act of December 1, 1990, 104 Stat. 5101, and accordingly no successor was appointed.

Western District of Michigan
Article III Judges and Appointing President
(listed chronologically)

<u>Judge</u>	<u>Appointing President</u>
Solomon L. Withey	Abraham Lincoln
Henry F. Severens	Grover Cleveland
George P. Wanty	William McKinley
Loyal E. Knappen	Theodore Roosevelt
Arthur C. Denison	William Howard Taft
Clarence W. Sessions	William Howard Taft
Fred M. Raymond	Calvin Coolidge
Raymond W. Starr	Harry S. Truman
W. Wallace Kent	Dwight D. Eisenhower
Noel P. Fox	John F. Kennedy
Albert J. Engel, Jr.	Richard M. Nixon
Wendell A. Miles	Richard M. Nixon
Douglas W. Hillman	Jimmy Carter
Benjamin F. Gibson	Jimmy Carter
Richard Alan Enslin	Jimmy Carter
Robert Holmes Bell	Ronald Reagan
David W. McKeague	George H.W. Bush
Gordon J. Quist	George H.W. Bush
Paul L. Maloney	George W. Bush
Robert J. Jonker	George W. Bush
Janet T. Neff	George W. Bush