



### Bristol County

- "Justice: The Bristol County Superior Court, 1859-2009" at the Old Colony Historical Society, 66 Church Street, Taunton ~ February 19 through July 31
  - The exhibit will offer among other attractions, visual and written illustrations of the Superior Court's establishment at Taunton in 1859, notorious trials in the Superior Court such as the "Bicycle Bandit" in 1896 and the 1923 trial of a serial killer as well as a look at the construction of the original and standing Superior Courthouses.
- High School Students Visit the New Bedford Superior Courthouse ~ March 12
  - Teamed with an assistant district attorney or defense attorney, Fall River High School students will have an opportunity to watch a trial or motion hearing, to question a lawyer about the proceedings, and to discuss with the lawyer what it takes to become a member of the bar. The program will end with a discussion among the bench, bar, and students about the use of language and skills in winning legal arguments.
- Symposium on the Last Public Hanging in Bristol County ~ March 12 from 6:30 - 8:00 PM at New Bedford Superior Courthouse
  - In December of 1894, Daniel Robertson was put to death by hanging, the last public hanging in Bristol County. Paul Cyr, Curator of Special Collections at the New Bedford Public Library,

will bring us back to those times by dramatically re-enacting the case and chronicling the county's strong sentiments against capital punishment; of 435 executions in Massachusetts from 1630 to 1947, only five occurred in Bristol County.

- Symposium on Great Mill Fire ~ April 15 at Bristol Community College
  - On the morning of September 19, 1874, fire broke out in Granite Mill # 1 that had been built with a pitched barn roof. The fire trapped many of the young workers in the attic who were unable to reach the stair towers. They were therefore forced to choose between burning to death or jumping five stories to the ground. Subsequent lawsuits were dismissed by the Bristol County Superior Court. On appeal of the "test case," the Supreme Judicial Court stated the applicable law: an employer had no duty "to provide means of escape or to ensure the safety of the servant." This symposium will go back to that time, exploring the court's response to the case and examining how the law has changed since that time.
- Lecture by Dr. William Hanna on the exhibit at the Old Colony Historical Society in Taunton ~ April 16 at 7 PM
- Symposium on Selected Issues in the "Big Dan's" Trial ~ May 7 from 5-7 PM at Fall River Superior Courthouse
  - Judge Lloyd Macdonald will lead a panel made up of trial participants, including the trial judge and representatives of the press, to discuss their thoughts on what administrative, logistical, and strategic adjustments were necessary for the simultaneous trial of two complex cases. The panel will also discuss the competing claims of free trial/free press and what impact the trial had on an evolving understanding of gender and ethnic stereotyping.
- Symposium on Trial of Charles Cuffee at Southern New England School of Law ~ May 13 from 4-6 PM
  - In May of 1871 at the New Bedford Superior Courthouse, Charles Cuffee, a fourteen-year-old African-American, was convicted of the first-degree murder of Benjamin Howard, a white man. The symposium will examine the clashing currents of the times in New Bedford whose people were known for their strong abolition sentiments and

whose population also numbered many families with racial antagonisms springing from the loss of sons, brothers, and husbands in the Civil War. A panel led by Carl Cruz will examine the trial of Charles Cuffee, with particular attention paid to Cuffee's lawyer, William Henry Johnson, the first African-American lawyer in Bristol County, a man born to slavery, bred to be a jockey, and a runaway slave who escaped, eventually settling in the City of New Bedford.

- Primer on the Law for Young People ~ May 1 at 9am
  - A team of local attorneys, experienced educators, and law students from the Southern New England School of Law will design a middle school/high school teaching unit on the 1871 trial of Charles Cuffee.
  - This trial was chosen because it presents a unique teaching opportunity to address the evolution of jurisprudence over the past 150 years in the area of civil rights, defendant's rights, and race relations. The teaching unit will address a variety of legal issues including juvenile justice, the Fifth Amendment right to counsel and right to remain silent, and race relations.
- Symposium on New Bedford Teachers' Strikes ~ June 11 (location and time to be announced)
  - In 1969 and 1975, the Bristol County Superior Court responded to strikes by the New Bedford Teachers' Union. While the first teachers' strike was resolved without incarcerating teachers, in the 1975 strike, teachers went to jail. Through the eyes of those involved in the labor negotiations and court proceedings, including a teacher who went to jail, this symposium will explore the court's response to the strikes and assess the impact the strikes had on community relations and upon the lives of both educators and students.
- Symposium on Watuppa Water Rights cases at Bristol Community College ~ September 17
  - In 1889, the City of Fall River depended entirely on the prosperity of its fifty-seven cotton mills located below the 130-foot falls of the Quequechan River. From 1883 to 1891, the Superior Court and ultimately the Supreme Judicial Court, would face three cases known as Watuppa 1, 2, and

3, that sought to resolve the competing claims of the City of Fall River and mill owners on use of the Quequechan River. This symposium will consider that trio of cases in the context of a broader examination of public and private rights. Panelists will also discuss new debates and ideas on use of the Quequechan River.

- Lizzie Borden, Redux ~ Multiple dates and locations
  - New Bedford Superior Courthouse ~ September 24
  - Fall River Superior Courthouse ~ October 22
  - Taunton Superior Courthouse ~ November 19
  - Ms. Borden was acquitted of the murder of her father and mother and no other suspect was ever identified. The trial, which took place in 1893 in the New Bedford Superior Court, continues to interest and intrigue the public. Not a re-enactment but in a mock trial, Ms. Borden will be tried again with two lawyers serving as team prosecutors and two lawyers as team defense. The audience will vote a verdict.
- Symposium on Future of the Superior Court at Taunton Superior Courthouse ~ October 15
  - Fifty years from now, what will the Massachusetts Superior Court look like? What kinds of cases will dominate its docket and how will the court utilize the technology of our modern world in transacting its business? These questions will be a focal point for the symposium that will also closely explore the challenges the court faces in maintaining its independence in an age of rapid information dissemination through a vast array of media outlets.
- Lizzie Borden C.S.I. (Crime Scene Investigation) ~ Date to be announced
  - This program, which will be held at the Greater New Bedford Regional Vocational Technical High School, will bring practical understanding of this piece of local history into the classroom. State police investigators will re-create the blood soaked homicide scene. Detective Lieutenant Kenneth F. Martin, Commanding Officer, Crime Scene Services Section of the Massachusetts State Police, will show high school students how such a scene would be examined today.