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## **SUPERIOR COURT COMMEMORATES 150<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY** **Public Educational Events and Programs To Be Major Focus**

To mark the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Massachusetts Superior Court in 2009, Chief Justice Barbara J. Rouse today announced that the Superior Court is planning a multifaceted, statewide commemoration throughout the year with activities and programs designed to raise the public's awareness of the work of the judiciary.

“The Superior Court’s historic milestone is an opportunity to reach out to young people and adults with educational events to enhance their understanding of the judiciary,” said Chief Justice Rouse. “We also want the public to join us in celebrating the many accomplishments of the court and its contributions to the Commonwealth.”

Judges, clerks of court, attorneys, legislators, historians, and educators from each county are involved in the planning and execution of the diverse activities. Events include educational programs with school children, forums on notable cases in public venues such as libraries, and discussions about the court on public access television. Static exhibits on issues such as the jury system and separation of powers will be installed in jury assembly rooms.

A highlight of the yearlong programming will be a statewide symposium that will explore the Superior Court’s origin, the impact of themes such as judicial independence in notable cases, and future challenges facing the court. The panels will be moderated by Professor Stephen Burbank of the University of Pennsylvania Law School and National Public Radio host Tom Ashbrook. The event, which is scheduled for September at the Boston Public Library, will be open to the public. U.S. Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer will be the featured speaker at an event following the panel discussion.

Other notable educational activities around the state include the following:

- People’s Law School – a six-week course on legal and judicial issues of interest to the public to be held in Middlesex County.
- Sacco & Vanzetti trial recreated at Norfolk Superior Court in the courtroom where the actual trial occurred.
- Jack and the Beanstalk mock trial for school children in Suffolk County.

- Vignettes depicting famous criminal and civil cases tried in Barnstable Superior Court to be performed by the Barnstable High School Drama Club.
- Staging of mock hearings on criminal and civil matters on Pittsfield cable television that will be distributed on a CD-ROM for classroom discussion.
- High School Debate Series at ten high schools throughout Hampden County. Finalists will debate before a large public audience at Western New England School of Law on Law Day in May.
- Symposia of notable cases in Bristol County including the last public hanging in 1894, Big Dan's trial, the Great Mill Fire, trial of Charles Cuffee and the New Bedford Teachers' Strike.
- Open House at the Worcester Trial Court with a reenactment of the trial of Bathsheba Spooner and other activities.
- Supplement in Hampshire Gazette about the history and work of the court including essays by judges.
- Discussion with students at Newburyport Superior Courthouse.
- Judges will hold discussions with high school students at Brockton High School on mock suppression hearing and other matters.

A detailed listing of the programs and activities in each county will be announced as the dates for the events are confirmed. Information will be posted and updated on the court's website at [www.mass.gov/courts](http://www.mass.gov/courts)

The Massachusetts Bar Foundation and judges of the Superior Court have provided funding for the planned activities. Technical assistance and support is being provided by the Social Law Library and Supreme Judicial Court Historical Society.

Established in 1859, the Massachusetts Superior Court has 82 authorized judges sitting in 14 counties of the state. It is one of the oldest common law trial courts of general jurisdiction in the country.