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Leelanau Lessons: Emelia Schaub

She was a legal pioneer

A 6-ton granite boulder outside the county building in Leland bears her name. Emelia Schaub. But who was she and what did she do?

Born in a log cabin in Centerville Township in 1891, Schaub was a maverick, breaking social and gender barriers locally, state and nationally. The daughter of

Provemont pioneers Simon and Freida Schaub, she attended St. Mary School and went on to graduate from the Detroit College of Law in 1924.

Among the groundbreaking accomplishments to her credit, Schaub:

- Was the first woman from Leelanau County to practice law in Michigan;
- Was the first female attorney in the country to successfully defend a murder suspect in 1926 Detroit trial;
- Was the first woman in the state to be elected to serve as a prosecutor.

She was elected in 1936 to the first of five 2-year terms, followed by a sixth term from 1952-54.

During her first stint in office, Schaub arranged for the return of Ottawa and Ojibwe from the state to the county that was provided in federal treaties, laying the foundation for federal recognition of the Grand Traverse Band reservation near Peshawbestown. As a result, she was made an honorary tribal member in 1942.

In addition to her time in public office, Schaub also ran a private law firm for several years and was involved in numerous civic projects in the county. In 1940, she helped organize and served as secretary for the Leelanau Township Community Foundation based in Northport.

Schaub was also among the founders of the Leelanau Historical Society in 1957, later serving as president, museum director and a member of the society's board of directors until 1986.

Other state awards presented to Schaub include election to the Michigan Women's Hall of Fame in 1990, and her selection for the State Bar of Michigan's "champion of justice" award the following year. In 1994 Schaub was given the state bar's "legal milestone" award recognizing her lifetime achievements. A plaque on the granite stone commemorates the milestone.

At the time of her death in April 1995, Schaub, at 103, was the oldest living alumna of the University of Detroit, having received a master's degree from the school in 1930.

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This entry was written by [Amy Hubbell \(amy@leelanaunews.com\)](mailto:amy@leelanaunews.com) and posted on June 23, 2007 at 9:00 am and filed under [Diversions](#). Bookmark the [permalink](#). Follow any comments here with the [RSS feed for this post](#). [Post a comment](#) or leave a [trackback](#): [Trackback URL](#).

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