

Business Legacy

It's More Than Just a Name



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Indianapolis was in the throes of the Civil War when two local attorneys opened a small law firm that would eventually grow to include more than 750 lawyers in offices across the U.S., United Kingdom and China. From helping establish the country's first union railroad depot in the 1860s to helping create UniGov a century later, Faegre Baker Daniels and its attorneys have contributed in myriad ways to the growth and success of Indiana, its institutions and its people.

The oldest law firm in Indianapolis, FaegreBD got its start in 1863 when Thomas A. Hendricks joined forces with Oscar B. Hord. Their first year in practice was especially hectic when – in addition to handling a full load of cases – Hendricks was elected to the U.S. Senate and Hord was completing a term as state attorney general. In 1867, the still-fledgling firm became Hendricks, Hord & Hendricks when Thomas Hendricks' cousin Abram joined.

Although Hord and the Hendricks' cousins were all prominent Democrats, the firm launched its longstanding bipartisan tradition in 1873 when Republican Conrad Baker joined. The former governor replaced founding partner Thomas Hendricks, who had run unsuccessfully against Baker in the 1868 gubernatorial election only to be elected four years later as Baker's successor.

The firm would continue to expand throughout the 1870s with the addition of Baker's son, Albert, and an up-and-coming young attorney named Edward Daniels. After the final founding partner died in 1888, Albert Baker and Edward Daniels changed the firm's name to their own – Baker & Daniels.

Through the years

For more than a century, Baker & Daniels grew as the city of Indianapolis grew, occasionally adding a third or fourth name to the letterhead as new partners joined. Then in 2012, Baker & Daniels merged with Faegre & Benson and became FaegreBD. But despite the name changes, one thing has remained constant – the commitment of the firm and its attorneys to the city where it all started.

As Indianapolis approaches its bicentennial, we reflect back in wonder on all that has happened during the 156 years since Oscar Hord and Thomas Hendricks opened their small law office at 23 South Pennsylvania Street. For example, two of the firm's significant contributions to Indiana and Indianapolis in the 20th century include assisting in the development of UniGov

in 1969 and overhauling Indiana's property tax law in 1973.

Spearheaded by Richard Lugar, then mayor of Indianapolis, UniGov consolidated Marion County government in an effort to stem the tide of urban decay and revitalize the local economy. The landmark legislation was drafted by Baker & Daniels' Charles Whistler, who also was instrumental in early efforts to redevelop the downtown area.

Four years after the UniGov legislation was signed into law, the firm and its venerated tax partner J.B. King led Gov. Otis Bowen's successful effort to restructure Indiana's antiquated property tax system. Both measures played a key role in transforming Indianapolis from a dying rustbelt city known as "Naptown" to a thriving, vibrant community.

Part of the community

FaegreBD, under one name or another, has been an Indianapolis institution for the better part of the city's near 200-year history. Our extensive client list ranges from the city's largest employers to promising new start-ups, and historical records suggest that has always been the case. Over the past 156 years, our Indianapolis attorneys have volunteered countless hours to help establish and sustain hundreds of civic, charitable and arts organizations. But even as we continue to expand our national and international footprint, the roots of our Indianapolis office have only grown stronger.

Change is the only constant in the modern legal landscape. But that's nothing new. Since the firm's founding in 1863, FaegreBD never stopped looking for opportunities to grow and better serve our clients. No matter what's in store for our Indianapolis office going forward and for the city of Indianapolis as it enters its third century, we embrace the changes head on. Because among all the change, there is one thing that will always be certain: Indianapolis is home.

AUTHORS: Kathy Obsorn is a partner and Indianapolis office leader for Faegre Baker Daniels, and Libby Cierzniak a partner and avid Indiana historian. The firm's Fort Wayne office has ties that date back to 1893. Learn more at www.faegrebd.com