

Attorneys have been a part of the history of Smith County since 1847. They have been an important part of the accomplishment and successes of the community that continues today. There are no known records of the early days of the Smith County Bar Association other than a engraved plaque of President's in the Smith County Courthouse. That plaque began in 1933 with Edwin P. Price as President. A comprehensive two part article that listed known Smith County lawyers was published in the Smith County Historical Society's *Chronicles* by Alex Beall. This account is a narrative of the highlights of those articles.

Early history shows that the first Smith County attorney was * in 1847.

Between 1900 and 1929 agriculture was the main occupation of the county. The population increased from 28,234 to 46,46,769. There were 25 to 35 attorneys practicing from 1900 to 1930. Those men had a great influence in the county by their involvement as elected and appointed officials including City and County Attorneys, School Board members, State Representative, State Senator, District Judge, Supreme Court Judge, U.S. Attorney and US. Congressman. Robert G. Storey, Sr. was appointed Chief Trial Counsel in the first war crimes trials in Nuremberg, Germany. He also served as Dean, SMU Law School and President of both the Texas State Bar and the American Bar Association. Mastin G. White's education included attendance at the University of Texas; a Master of Laws, Columbia University; Doctor of Laws from Harvard. He was an Associate Professor University of Texas Law School and served in several positions with the federal government including Solicitor to Department of Agriculture (1935) and Department of Interior (1946). Attorneys were also involved in the financial development of Smith County as bank organizers, Vice President, and Chairman. Thomas B. Ramey, Sr. organized the Texas Rose Festival and County Judge S.A. Lindsey organized Gulf State Telephone Company.

The population of Smith County in the 1930's had grown due to the discovery of the Boggy Creek and Van oil fields in the late 1920's. That growth continues with the discovery of the East Texas oil fields. The population of the county grew from 53,123 to over 60,000. The number of attorneys practicing in the county was 80. They included those who read and studied the law and those who graduated from Cumberland, University of Texas, Baylor University, Southern Methodist University, and University of Arkansas. They continued to serve in both elected and appointed roles including Judge Joe W. Sheehy who was appointed U.S. District Judge by President Truman in 1951. Ned Price, son of Edwin P. Price, the first President of the SCBA was elected State Representative, County Judge and appointed to both the Industrial accident Board and the State Insurance Commission. Other notable attorneys from the 1930's include Jack W. Flock who practiced at Ramey and Flock until his death in 2007*. Charles F. Potter was the name partner at the Potter Minton firm. Otis Dugan served as State Representative, 7th Judicial District Court and on the 12th Court of Appeals. Murph Wilson was a member of the Tyler School Board, Mayor of Tyler and Chairman of the Board of Southside Bank.

The population of Smith County grew to 74,701 in the decade of 1940 to 1950. However, due to World War II, the number of attorneys decreased to 67. Many attorneys

were veterans of WWII and served in the Army, Air Corps, Marines, and Navy. Graduates of University of Texas, Southern Methodist University, Baylor and Harvard practiced in Tyler. Notable accomplishments in this decade include Charles E. Coleman who graduated from Lincoln University and became the first black attorney to practice in Tyler in 1946. James A. Hankerson, Jr was the author of legislation for mentally handicapped children. Robert E. Henry attended Southern Methodist Law School and was a Certified Public Accountant with Henry & Peters. Allen E. Pye practiced with the IRS in Washington and Ben Franklin Johnson was a member of the FBI. Connally McKay was District Attorney, Bankruptcy Referee, District Judge of the 114th Court and Judge of the 12th Court of Appeals. Bill Durward Wood was elected both State Representative and State Senator. Many of those practicing in Smith County including Wilton H. Fair were involved in the Oil & gas business.

The number of attorneys in Smith County was stable at 68 but the county saw a population increase from 74,701 to 86,350 during the decade of the 1950's. Industrial growth was an important development as both the GE and Kelly plants were established. Attorneys educated at University of Texas, Baylor and Southern Methodist University still dominated Smith County but Harvard graduate Lemuel C. Hutchins practiced at Ramey & Flock for over 50 years. Galloway Calhun, Jr was elected State Senator and served as Judge of the 114th Judicial District Court. Judge Donald Carroll was Judge of the 7th District Court. W.E. "Bill" Coats was District Attorney, Municipal Court Judge, Judge of the County Court at Law #2 and of the 7th District Court. Ben B. Ferrell served as State Representative and as a JAG in the Marine Corps. Clyde W. Fiddes was general counsel of the Cotton Belt Railroad and his wife Alice Fiddes was licensed to practice in Minnesota. J. Donald Guinn was a member of the Tyler School Board and President of the East Texas Fair Association. Roby Hadden was U.S. Attorney and Judge of the 12th Court of Appeals. Lee Lawrence was founder of both the East Texas and Smith County Historical Associations. He was appointed to the Texas State Historical Survey Committee and implemented the Texas Historical Marker program. Harry Loftis was District Attorney, County Judge and Vice-President of Tyler Bank & Trust. Peyton McKnight was State Senator and before living in Tyler was elected a State representative. John Minton was Assistant Attorney General and senior member of the Potter Minton Firm. Glenn S. Phillips was involved in Magnolia Oil, was elected Municipal Judge and District Judge. Tom B. Ramey, Jr. attended Harvard University and University of Texas. He was elected to the 12th Court of Appeals, where he served as chief justice and was President of the State Bar of Texas. William M Steger was U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Texas, candidate for Governor and U.S. District Judge from 1970 until his death in 2008. The Federal Building in downtown Tyler was named the William M. Steger Building in his honor. Byron Tunnell was Assistant District Attorney, served four terms as State Representative including Speaker of the House, and appointed to State Railroad Commission.

Steady growth and economic development saw the growth of the population from 86,350 to 97,096 and an increase of attorneys to 86 in the decade of the 60's. Graduates of Baylor Law School practicing in Smith County increased in this era. Notable attorneys

include Houston C. Abel who was Assistant U.S. Attorney, Magistrate of the U.S. Eastern District Court and Judge of the Bankruptcy Court, Eastern District of Texas. William Wayne Justice was U.S. Attorney and appointed U.S. District Judge by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1968. Billy H. Williamson was elected State representative and Smith County Judge.

The decade of the 1970's saw Smith County develop as a regional center of East Texas. The population of the county increased to 128,366 and the number of attorneys increased almost 200% to 230. Although the first women is not noted, the 1970's also list the first women attorneys practicing in Smith County. Officers of the Smith County Junior Bar Association were pictured a June 11, 1969 photograph in the Tyler Morning Telegraph. While the University of Texas and Baylor continue to be the prevalent law schools, other such as St. Mary's School of Law and Texas Tech University are also noted. Attorneys are also shown as Board Certified in Family Law, Criminal Law, Real Estate, Personal Injury, Estate Planning & Probate and other specialty areas. Attorneys of distinction during this decade include Honorable Diane V. DeVasto who served as Municipal Judge, Judge of the County Court at Law #1, Judge of the 241st District Court, and Judge on the 12th Court of Appeals. Judge DeVasto retired from the bench to private practice with the Potter Minton firm. Leonard Davis was elected to the 12th Court of Appeals and appointed Federal District Judge for the Eastern District of Texas. John H. Hannah Jr was elected State Representative from Lufkin, appointed US Attorney, Secretary of State and appointed Federal District Judge of the Eastern District of Texas.

Smith County population increased to 151,660 from 1980 to 1990. Three major medical complexes aided the sustained growth of the area. The number of lawyers increased to 335. Baylor is the most popular law school with graduates from UT, SMU, St Mary's, * and South Texas. Board Certifications continue to show the specialization of the legal field. Louis B. Gohmert, Jr served as Judge of the 7th District Court and was elected U.S. Representative. Judge Cynthia Stevens Kent was elected Judge of the County Court at Law #2 and served as Judge of the 241st District Court from 1989 to 2008. Judith K. Guthrie was appointed as the first woman Magistrate Judge in the Eastern District of Texas.

Between 1990 and 2000 the population of Smith County continues to grow to over 175,000. Once again continued economic progress sustains growth. The number of lawyers increases to 456. Ruth Yeager was elected the first woman President and Andy Navarro was first Hispanic President of the Smith County Bar Association. The "Barristers Ball" was held in 1994 and again in 1995. In 1996 the Smith County Bar Association negotiates with the County to permit the Law Librarian to assist the Association with administrative tasks. Cristy Arscott Keul adds Smith County Bar Association Executive Director responsibility to her duties as law librarian.

On November 22, 2008 the Smith County Bar Association celebrated their 75th Anniversary with a Gala that benefited the Smith County Bar Foundation. Over 300 attorneys and their guests enjoyed dinner and dancing at Hollytree Country Club. Former Congressman Charlie Wilson was the featured speaker and the inaugural speaker in the

Honorable John Hannah Lecture Series. Donations to the event raised over \$100,000 for the Smith County Bar Foundation.