

Influence and Initiative: 150 Years of Advocacy

*Miller & Martin celebrates an impressive
history in 2017*

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“The success of a firm is about the clients,” says Jim Haley, chairman of Miller & Martin law firm in Chattanooga. Sitting in a corner office once used by the quiet attorney and philanthropist, Burkett Miller, Haley reminisces about his early days with the firm. Long before Haley’s time, Miller’s uncle T.M. Burkett, had founded the practice in 1867, just after the Civil War.

The firm grew in response to the growth of the city, once known only as Ross’ Landing. Why was it growing? An influx of “immigrants,” or as they were more commonly called—carpetbaggers, was being absorbed by Chattanooga. The newcomers established manufacturing businesses that responded to the post-war demand for goods in a country where expansion was exuberant. The following advertisement appeared in the *Chattanooga Republican* in 1868.

Wanted Immediately

Any number of carpetbaggers to come to Chattanooga to settle

The people of Chattanooga, no longer wishing to stay in the background, and feeling the necessity of immediately developing the vast mineral resources surrounding them, by which they can place themselves on the high road to wealth, prosperity and power, extend a general invitation to all carpetbaggers to leave the bleak winds of the North and come to Chattanooga.

Those who wish to come can be assured they will not be required to renounce their political and religious tenets.

Persons wishing to immigrate will be furnished detailed information concerning any business, by addressing Box 123, Chattanooga, Tennessee.

—Gilbert E. Govan and James W. Livingood, *The Chattanooga Country, 1540-1976*, 3rd ed. (Knoxville 1977), p. 287 (quoting from the *Chattanooga Republican*, Dec. 8, 1868).

Eventually and somewhat ironically, the small river landing began touting itself as the Dynamo of Dixie, with the first Coca-Cola Bottling plant, Dixie Industries (later known as The Dixie Group), American National Bank (now SunTrust), Krystal, Chattem and a slue of



left: (left to right) **April Holland, Jim Haley, Christie Kizer Burbank, Lowry Kline, Jimar Sanders, Laura Ketcham** right: (left to right) **Evan Allison, Scott Parrish, Leah Gerbitz, Roger Dickson, Meredith Lee, Jonathan Kent.** The lawyers pictured here are a cross-generational representation of the firm.

mid-sized foundries that supported Detroit's car industry. These were the companies Miller & Martin represented as those entities acquired land, built facilities, employed thousands and created contracts with the outside world.

In 2017, the company will celebrate its 150th anniversary. It has developed a commemorative logo to be used throughout the year and will launch an all-new website. There will be an event at the Hunter Museum for the clients and partners of Miller & Martin. One project from each decade of existence will be highlighted to give contemporary celebrants an idea of the depth of the firm's influence in the community.

The icing on the birthday cake may be a remarkable book on the firm by Thomas Hayes, former Miller & Martin attorney and current general counsel for McCallie School. It will share some of the most important aspects of the city's development through photos, text and memorabilia.

Some of Haley's first memories of when he went to work there, over 41 years ago, include riding up in the elevator of the Volunteer building with an older man who drove a six-year-old Pontiac. The unassuming man turned out to be Cartter Lupton, wealthy owner of the Coca-Cola Bottling Company in Chattanooga. His distinctively more flamboyant son, Jack, had an office on the ninth floor. Haley remembers working with T.A. Lupton on one of the highlight residential projects from that decade—Heritage Landing. "We thought it would be a three-year project, but it became a 12-year process," says Haley of the riverfront development.

More recently, the BlueCross BlueShield campus in downtown Chattanooga has been another interesting project, since Haley and his associates had to "work under the radar" to acquire the property on Cameron

Hill. Discretion and the ability to adapt and respond quickly to the needs of the firm and its clients are skills Haley has learned over time. Being prepared for anything helps, too.

In fact, on his first day of work one of his mentors told him he was going to Dallas that very day to get papers signed for the merger of Coca-Cola Thomas, a 15-state territory; its post-merger name was Coca-Cola Enterprises.

The merger documents were to be signed at the airport, but plans changed and he was told to go downtown. "So, I got a cab and went downtown, using up all my cash," says Haley with a grin. "I had the papers signed, but I had to borrow money to get back to the airport." The mild-mannered young advocate was on his way to a bright career.

Lately, Haley reflects on Guy Beatty, a mentor and managing attorney for Miller & Martin who often told him, "The key to success is to do good work and return your clients' calls." Little did Beatty know then, that the world of business would be so completely changed and vastly complicated.

"Now we have more than 30 specific practice areas."

—Jim Haley, Chairman

"In those days our 17 lawyers were considered generalists," says Haley. "Now we have more than 30 specific practice areas in which our attorneys focus." Haley mentions as examples—mergers & acquisitions, commercial finance, real estate and crisis management. Some crisis management cases in the past have included product contamination and problems stemming from stolen hard drives. These sudden critical problems, often international in scope, require a rapid response and often overlap data security issues and workplace


violations. The implications are broad.

The firm is a member of the World Law Group and specific attorneys are invited to its prestigious meetings. Each year Miller & Martin lawyers are invited to the conferences held in various cities, from Shanghai to The Hague. "This is a great network in which to facilitate legal services around the world," says Haley. "It's been a great organization which enables us to offer our clients worldwide legal representation."

Director of Practice Development, Robyn Charles believes Miller & Martin's uniqueness lies in its relationships. "This firm does an outstanding job of building trust and confidence between its attorneys and their clients," Charles says. Charles moved here a year ago from a Midwestern law firm. She looks forward to helping grow and develop the firm through strategic innovative approaches to practice growth that align with the firm's core values and the client experience that so many have grown to expect through our 150 years.

Haley says steady growth in Chattanooga is to be expected. The firm continues to expose law students to the city through vigorous summer programs, drawing new talent to "our beautiful Mid-South city" each year.

Often the lawyers go on to become integrated in the larger business world, launching creative companies of their own, like restaurateur Allen Corey, co-founder of Craftworks and co-owner of STIR. Or they take positions in well-established corporations, as did former Miller & Martin Partner, Lowry Kline, now-retired CEO of Coca-Cola Enterprises.

"We are a training ground for lawyers that aspire to do more," says Haley. "But more importantly, the firm has been integral to Chattanooga's growth and is a part of its fabric." 

Watch for announcements about the anniversary celebration at millermartin.com