

Baker & Daniels

Founded: 1863

Location: Aetna Building, Indianapolis (1863– ); 24 ½ East Washington; 23 South Pennsylvania (1881–83); 9–11 Ingalls Block; 611–614 Newton Claypool Building; 803 Fletcher Trust Building (–1989); 300 North Meridian Street (1989– )

When Thomas A. Hendricks established a law practice in Indianapolis in 1860, he was already a distinguished figure in Indiana politics. Born near Zanesville, Ohio, in 1819, Hendricks and his family moved to Madison early in his life. His family was prominent in Indiana. His uncle, William Hendricks, was the state's third governor; his father was a Shelby County pioneer, upon whose land, in part, the county seat of Shelbyville was built. Thomas Hendricks graduated from Hanover College in 1841 and established a law practice in Shelbyville. He gradually worked his way up to a position of national prominence in the Democratic party, serving in the state legislature, as a key member of the 1851 Indiana Constitutional Convention, in the House of Representatives, and as commissioner of the General Land Office under President James Buchanan. During the Civil War he was elected to the United States Senate and led the Democratic minority.

A peace Democrat, Hendricks won favor from southern-leaning Hoosiers, but he supported the Union war effort once hostilities began. After the war he opposed congressional Reconstruction measures and constitutional amendments designed to guarantee political and civil rights to the former slaves. As early as 1868, he was a prominent candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination. Hendricks was the Democrats' candidate for vice president in 1876, on a ticket headed by Samuel J. Tilden. In 1884 Hendricks won the vice presidency, serving under Grover Cleveland.

While Hendricks was building his political career, he continued to practice law. In 1863 he established a partnership with state attorney general Oscar B. Hord. Originally from Kentucky, Hord was noted for his broad knowledge of the law and had authored, with his law partner James Gavin, an influential digest of state statutory law. Between 1865 and 1866 Hord's father-in-law, Samuel Perkins, a judge on the Indiana Supreme Court and law professor at Northwestern Christian University, briefly joined the firm.

In 1867 Abram W. Hendricks, the cousin of Thomas Hendricks, entered the firm. Abram was born in Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania, and studied law in Madison, Indiana, with his uncle, William Hendricks. Abram also studied in the law department of Transylvania University in Lexington, Kentucky, and was well respected for his knowledge of the law. Thus, the firm of Hendricks, Hord & Hendricks was graced with legal expertise and potent political connections, and it established a large and lucrative practice, attaining a wide and favorable reputation. Differences in partisan affiliation or political philosophy do not seem to have inhibited the growth of the law firm, as was apparent in the firm's decision, in 1872, to accept Conrad Baker, Hendricks's primary political rival, into the partnership.

Originally from Pennsylvania, Baker studied law there with Thaddeus Stevens, who later became a leader of the Radical Republicans during the Civil War and Reconstruction, and Judge Daniel M. Smyser. Baker settled in Evansville in 1841 with his family, established a practice, and began a political career, serving in the state legislature and unsuccessfully running as the Republican nominee for lieutenant governor in 1856. During the Civil War Baker commanded cavalry volunteers in Missouri,

Arkansas, and Mississippi and served as assistant provost marshal for Indiana. He was elected as Gov. Oliver P. Morton's lieutenant governor in 1864, assuming the governorship when Morton was elected to the senate in 1867. The 1868 gubernatorial contest pitted Baker against Hendricks, both popular figures. Although the entire Republican slate was elected, Baker defeated his Democratic challenger by the narrow margin of 961 votes. Democrats accused the Republicans of electoral fraud, but Hendricks declined to challenge the results. Four years later Hendricks won the governorship, and Baker replaced him in the law firm, which then became Baker, Hord & Hendricks.

Hendricks returned to the firm in 1876, following his term as governor, but the firm remained Baker, Hord & Hendricks. At the same time, a new generation entered the firm. Conrad Baker's son Albert studied law at the firm both while attending Wabash College and after his graduation in 1874. In 1876 he was admitted to the bar and to Baker, Hord & Hendricks. In 1877 Edward Daniels, a fraternity brother of Albert who had studied law at Columbia University, joined the firm as a clerk. In 1881 Albert Baker and Daniels struck out on their own, establishing an independent partnership in a building adjoining the offices of Baker, Hord & Hendricks at 23 South Pennsylvania Street. In 1883, however, the younger Baker and Daniels returned to the older firm as junior partners. With the death of the firm's senior partners—Thomas Hendricks and Conrad Baker in 1885, Abram Hendricks in 1887, and Hord in 1888—Baker and Daniels inherited the practice. The two young lawyers brought Ferdinand Winters, a prominent Indianapolis attorney, into the firm, which became Winters, Baker & Daniels. Winters resigned by the end of 1889, and the firm once again became Baker & Daniels.

Edward Daniels was with the firm until his death in 1918. Albert Baker remained active in the firm until 1940, two years before his death. Joseph J. Daniels, Edward's son, joined Baker & Daniels after graduation from Harvard Law School in 1914. Joseph was a successful corporate lawyer, becoming general counsel to many well-known corporations and helping the firm build a list of national corporate clients. Joseph also became a power in state and national Republican politics; he declined the opportunity to serve in the Department of Justice under President Dwight D. Eisenhower. He retired from active practice in 1966.

The firm remained Baker & Daniels except for the period from 1938 to 1944, when it operated as Baker, Daniels, Wallace & Seagle. Beginning in the 1970s it began to expand, opening an office in Washington, D.C., in 1976 and merging with two established Indiana firms in the 1980s: Shoaff, Parker & Keegan of Fort Wayne in 1986 and Parker & Jaicomo of South Bend in 1990. The South Bend firm absorbed Knoblock & Hall, one of the city's oldest patent, trademark, and copyright firms in 1993. Baker & Daniels also opened an Elkhart office in 1993. In 1989 the law firm expanded beyond strictly legal services with the acquisition of a legislative consulting firm based in Washington, D.C. That same year, it moved from offices in the Fletcher Trust Building to 300 North Meridian Street. By the 1990s Baker & Daniels had a staff of 250, which was organized into eighteen "practice teams" specializing in various legal fields, ranging from international law to utilities to real estate. The Baker & Daniels tradition of bipartisan political connections continued when former Democratic governor Evan Bayh joined the firm in 1997.