

Sansberry, Dickmann, Freeman & Builta

Founded: 1898

Location:

James W. Sansberry, Sr.'s practice: Original location unknown, Anderson; Odd Fellows' Block, southwest corner of square (–1875); Odd Fellows' Block, northwest corner of Meridian and Washington Streets (1875–1886)

Charles T. Sansberry's firm: 307–309 Union Building (1898– ); 309–311 Union Building; 309–311 Farmers Trust Building; 369 Citizens Bank Building; 938 Meridian Street; 1001 Jackson Street; 300 Anderson Loan Building; First Savings Tower, 33 West Tenth Street; 1001 Jackson Street (1997)

In 1898 Charles T. Sansberry, graduated from the Indianapolis Law School and returned to his hometown of Anderson; following in the steps of his father, James W. Sansberry, he established a law practice. Charles inherited the clientele and reputation of his father, who had been a leading member of the Anderson bar. The elder Sansberry was born in Ohio in 1824. Orphaned at the age of six, he came to Anderson with his uncle, Daniel Sherry. Determined on a career as a schoolteacher, James saved enough money to attend the Delaware County Seminary in Muncie. While there, however, he began to study the law, reading Blackstone in his spare time. In the years after graduating, he taught school but also continued his legal studies, reading the law with Judge Joseph F. Buckles in Muncie. James returned to Anderson and with Judge Buckles's permission established a practice under the name Buckles & Sansberry in 1851.

Sansberry maintained a practice in Anderson for thirty-five years. From 1867 until 1878 he was in partnership with Eli B. Goodykoontz. In 1875, their law office on the west side of the town square burned down. After Goodykoontz accepted an appointment as a circuit court judge, Sansberry entered into partnership with Marcellus

A. Chipman. Sansberry was eventually joined in this partnership by his son, James W. Sansberry, Jr. Sansberry, Sr. was a prominent local politician, serving one term in the state legislature. He was renowned for his oratorical gifts and gained his greatest fame as a criminal defense attorney, acting at one point as co-defense counsel with Benjamin Harrison of Indianapolis on an 1874 murder trial. Because Sansberry studied the personal histories and prejudices of his fellow townsmen, he was a master at manipulating the jury. He retired from his law practice in 1886 as a wealthy man and became president of the Exchange Bank (later National Exchange Bank). He later backed Anderson's efforts to locate and harness natural gas fields. Sansberry came out of retirement in 1888 to defend a friend's son on murder charges and won an acquittal after delivering a three-hour heartfelt speech, which held the jury spellbound and left the courtroom's women spectators in tears.

Charles T. Sansberry continued his father's legacy upon establishing his own practice. James Sansberry, Sr. died in 1901 but seems to have helped his son establish himself in the years before his death. Charles Sansberry attended Wabash College from 1894 to 1896. Prior to entering law school, he briefly worked in the wholesale plumbing business of his brother-in-law I. M. Macy. While studying law in Indianapolis, he wrote articles on politics for the *Indianapolis News*, befriending its editor and publisher Harry S. New. Sansberry served as Anderson's city attorney from 1910 to 1914. He later helped establish the Madison County Historical Society, became active in the Indiana Historical Society, and pushed to have Mounds Park made into a state park. Charles Sansberry practiced corporation and general civil law until spring 1930, when he became seriously ill with heart disease. Upon news of his father's illness, James C. Sansberry, a

structural engineer who had worked on Soldier Field in Chicago and was in Australia at the time, returned to Anderson and read law with Charles over the course of the summer. After Charles's death in September, James continued his practice.

In 1953 James C. Sansberry entered into partnership with Charles H. Dickmann. A World War II veteran, Dickmann earned his law degree from Indiana University. James E. Freeman, Jr., joined the firm in 1973. He was followed by Jonathan R. Builta in 1981 and Samuel D. Taylor in 1991. James C. Sansberry died in 1981. In 1991 Dickmann, who had been senior partner for many years, became counsel to the firm, and Freeman became senior partner.