

1880-1905: A foundation for integrity

To celebrate its 125th anniversary this year, *Ohio Lawyer* is pleased to present this new column that features some activities and interesting events that took place during the OSBA's history. This issue commemorates the important role the OSBA has played in the legal profession and showcases events that happened from 1880 to 1905—the beginning of the OSBA.¹

Formation of the Ohio State Bar Association

In 1880, leading Ohio lawyers felt a special urgency to reform the profession. The immediate cause for their concern was that an imperfect system of legal education and a lax admissions policy had resulted in a number of uneducated, unskilled and even unscrupulous persons being admitted to the practice of law.

Being firmly convinced that the establishment of an organized bar was essential to the improvement of the bar, the bench, and the administration of justice in Ohio, the Executive Committee of the Cleveland Bar

Association took action. At its meeting on March 6, 1880, it resolved to establish a state bar association and request the cooperation of various city and county associations in the state.

The purpose of the Association was described as follows:

The association is formed to advance the science of jurisprudence, to promote reform in the law, to facilitate the administration of justice, to uphold integrity, honor and courtesy in the legal profession, to encourage thorough liberal legal education and to cultivate cordial intercourse among the members of the bar.

The first OSBA President was Rufus P. Ranney, 1813-1891, a resident of Portage County.

Endnotes

¹Most information is taken from *Buckeye Barriers: A Centennial History of the Ohio State Bar Association* by William R. Van Aken.

Interesting facts:

In 1873, Nettie C. Lutes and Florence Cronise, Tiffin, were the first women to be admitted to the Ohio bar.

In 1881, the OSBA had 391 members, and annual dues were \$2.

In 1889, 19 local bar associations were active, operating out of 88 counties.

In 1891, the Legislature met for 60 days in regular session, and produced enactments sufficient to cover 944 pages in the book of sessions laws. These pages contained bills amending, repealing, supplementing or referring to no less than 441 sections of the statutes of Ohio.

In 1892, the Torrens System was established in Ohio.

The OSBA ranked third in the nation based on its accomplishments in 1895.

In 1890, Gabrielle Townsend Steward from Cleveland, was the first woman to join the OSBA.



1873

1905

Accomplishments 1880-1905

- Increase in the salaries of the Supreme Court justices and the construction of a better home for the Court, in the new Statehouse Annex;
- The establishment of circuit courts, to lighten the case load of the Supreme Court;
- An improvement in the way jurors are selected;
- A strengthened veto power for the governor;
- An increase in training required for law students, and a standardized bar exam;
- The codification of criminal law, as well as domestic relations and negotiable instruments; and
- The adoption of the municipal code.



The Statehouse Annex housed the Supreme Court and also housed the OSBA from 1905-1961 with a short break in 1919-20.

First Organizations in Ohio

The bar association movement took early root in Ohio, and first manifested itself in the formation of local bar associations.

- 1869: Franklin County Bar Association
- 1872: Cincinnati Bar Association
- 1873: Cleveland Bar Association
- 1875: Akron Bar Association
- 1878: Toledo Bar Association
- 1880: Ohio State Bar Association
- 1889: Butler County Bar Association
- 1892: Tuscarawas County Bar Association ■

1889



The Butler County Bar Association, established in 1889, was photographed here in 1897.