

BUFFALO Law Journal

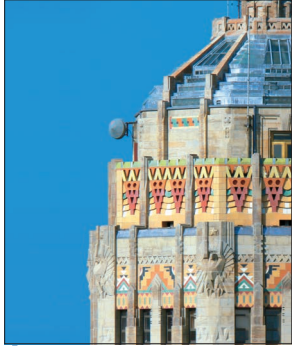
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SPECIAL REPORT HODGSON RUSS BICENTENNIAL

1817: Law firm is started in Buffalo by attorney Asa Rice

1825: Its lawyers help in completing the Erie Canal and bringing the Western Terminus to Buffalo



1832: Assists in drafting and obtaining from the Legislature the Buffalo city charter

1836: Becomes Fillmore, Hall & Haven, which includes future President Millard Fillmore



1838: Aids in establishing in Buffalo the first public school system statewide



1846: Obtains charter for University at Buffalo

1850: Fillmore is the first of two former lawyers there to become U.S. president

1851: Solomon Haven elected to U.S. Congress

1852: Nathan Hall appointed U.S. District Court judge

1852: Firm embarks on new era as Rogers & Bowen

1855: Future President Grover Cleveland joins the firm



Storied firm celebrates past while focusing on future

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People often ask Hugh Russ III if he is part of the lineage behind Buffalo law firm Hodgson Russ LLP.

celebrating its bicentennial this year. The firm, which is a descendant of a law business started locally by Asa Rice in 1817, now has more than 200 attorneys in six offices: Buffalo, Albany, New York City, Saratoga Springs, Toronto and Palm Beach, Fla.

It's headquartered in the historic Guaranty Building and

and Buffalo mayor.

The firm also has been engaged in important civic and commercial aspects of the region.

Kennedy said he doesn't like to use the word "old" when describing the firm because leadership is forward thinking. Kennedy, who practices in complex environmental



His answer is yes, it is a family business — but not for the reason many think.

His grandfather, Hugh, who was born in 1900 and admitted to the Bar 25 years later, is the Russ in Hodgson Russ. His name became part of the firm's moniker in 1939.

Hugh Russ III is a third-generation attorney there, following in the footsteps of his grandfather and father, Hugh Russ II, a partner from 1963-75. So in that sense, it is a business that's in his blood.

But when Russ III answers with a yes, it's because he sees the firm as a representation of a family business that for 200 years has been tied to the community, the clients and to all who work there.

"It is an incredible opportunity for all of us to be part of this firm, but while it may be personally gratifying, it's also a real responsibility," he said. "I think those of us who have been here for a number of years recognize that we are very fortunate, and with that comes an obligation to take care of us, our clients and community."

Hodgson Russ, one of the nation's oldest law firms and Buffalo's longest continuously running business, is

older than critical institutions in the community including the Erie Canal, city of Buffalo, M&T Bank, University at Buffalo and Buffalo General Hospital. The law firm also played a role in the city's development as a major player in the railroad, steel, banking, health care and manufacturing industries. And it's just as involved in the city's future, aiding work on the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus and the revitalized waterfront.

"The significance of our anniversary celebrates our history but also positions us for a very fortunate and prosperous future," said Russ, who has been with the firm for 30 years.

It is difficult to look at the future of Buffalo's largest firm without examining its legacy, said President and CEO Rick Kennedy. That heritage includes not just providing legal services over two centuries but also featured noteworthy, even legendary, lawyers for many generations.

Two of its lawyers, Millard Fillmore and Grover Cleveland, were U.S. presidents. Others went on to serve in governmental roles such as the president's cabinet, the U.S. Treasury Department, Congress and as New York governor

matters and the law governing lawyers, joined in 1983 and became a partner seven years later.

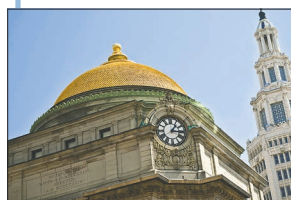
"Being able to look back 200 years and find some of those common elements to our heritage and legacy really provides pretty specific guidance to me in trying to lead us forward," he said. "We are celebrating our heritage and looking to it to provide our guiding principles, but we are also looking forward. The city is in a great renaissance and we are involved in it and want to lead in it."

Being part of a 200-year-old business challenges attorneys to conduct themselves with the utmost propriety, Kennedy said.

"It's not about you," he tells attorneys there. "First and foremost, it's about the clients and then it's about the firm. That's the kind of thinking you have to have when you get to be part of something this enduring."

In 53 years at Hodgson Russ, the former managing partner and chairman, James Wadsworth, has seen a commitment from the partners to put the firm ahead of personal gain and to recruit and hire the best young legal minds. Leadership wants the next generation to be as good or

1856: Begins partnership with Buffalo's M&T Bank



1879: Starts representing railroads and manufacturing companies

1885-93: Cleveland twice elected U.S. president



1895: Louis H. Sullivan designs Guaranty Building, the law firm's future headquarters

1903: Helps to found the predecessor to General Mills

1911: Represents John Rockefeller in U.S. Supreme Court



1917: Firm becomes Locke, Babcock, Spratt & Hollister

1946: Renamed Hodgson, Russ, Andrews, Woods & Goodyear

1945: Former partner Charles Sears presides over Nuremberg Trials of German war criminals after World War II



1959: Assists in forming Western New York Public Broadcasting

1964: Defends insurance companies in major lawsuits against Power Authority



1989: Becomes first area law firm to open office in Canada

1998: Partner Dianne Bennett elected chair; first woman to lead major AmLaw 250 firm



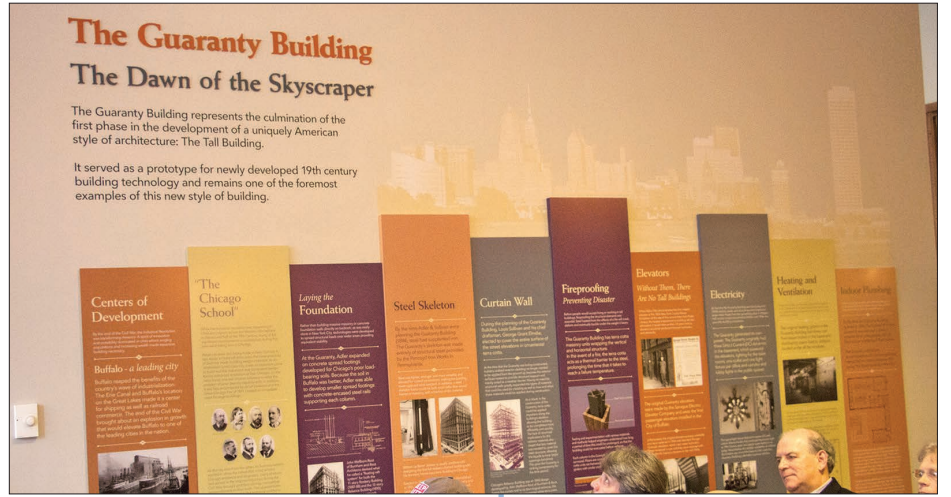
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2001: Renamed Hodgson Russ LLP



2005: Acquires New York City firm, adding 21 attorneys

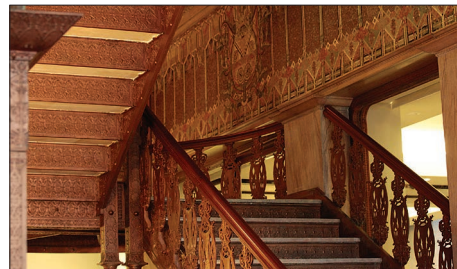
2007: Moves Florida office to Palm Beach



2002: Guaranty Building purchased for headquarters



2013: Opens Saratoga Springs office



2006: Renovation of Buffalo headquarters in Guaranty Building



2017: Marks bicentennial

better than the current generation, he said.

Wadsworth, who now resides in Florida, focuses on estate planning for high-net-worth individuals and their families. He's also director of The John R. Oishei Foundation, which disburses more than \$15 million a year in community grants.

"The old-timers have been good attorneys and made sure to get better people to follow them," Wadsworth said. "And now I can say the same thing. The young people I'm working with are extraordinary and I'm very proud to work with them."

Even the best lawyers that have ever set foot inside Hodgson Russ have prioritized the firm over personal interests, according to Russ.

"If someone like Jim Wadsworth is personally sacrificing for the good of the firm or to accomplish something, it inspires others to do that, too," he said.

A similar example came from Richard Heath, who made partner in 1962 and at one time was one of the nation's most well-known corporate attorneys. Yet his focus remained on the firm and his clients. Heath died earlier this year.

"I would say a lot of our success is owed to the perspective of 'Us first, not me first,'" Russ said.

Becoming the modern-day firm

The firm was renamed approximately 20 times before it became Hodgson Russ Andrews Woods & Goodyear in 1946. As partners moved on and different attorneys teamed up in the legal community, the firm's leadership would change hands. That name succeeded Babcock Newbury & Russ, which was part of the predecessor firms dating to 1817.

When Wadsworth arrived at the firm in 1964, it had 33 lawyers and a single office in Buffalo. He never could have imagined it would reach more than 200 lawyers.

"As these bright young people came on-board, you can see that it was just going to get better and better," said Wadsworth, a Buffalo native who joined fresh out of Stanford Law School.

The firm named 20 partners in the 1960s, including Wadsworth in '69, and 20 more in the 1970s. In the following decade, it became one of three U.S. firms to become foreign legal consultants in Ontario.

In 1989, the firm was the first from Western New York to open an office in Canada. Wadsworth said that connection has been invaluable in promoting its cross-border practice and helping Canadians expand their businesses on this

side of the border.

An Albany office, which gave the firm a presence close to state government, was added in 1990 and the firm saw a flurry of activity from 2005-13. In 2005, Hodgson Russ purchased a New York City firm and had its 21 attorneys start a new office there; in 2007, the firm moved its Florida office to Palm Beach; and in 2013, it opened in Saratoga Springs. The Canadian office moved to Toronto in 1999.

In that time, Donald Lubik, a partner since 1955, and Dianne Bennett, the first woman to run a major U.S. law firm, helped expand its reach. They wound up in Washington, D.C., where they worked for the U.S. Treasury Department. Lubik eventually came back to the firm and, at age 90, is still involved in the business of Hodgson Russ.

Said Wadsworth: "(These moves) were really starting to expand the breadth of the firm. As I saw it happening and was involved in some of those decisions, I was very proud of where the firm was going."

The modern-day firm was renamed Hodgson Russ in 2001. Hodgson Russ Andrews Woods & Goodyear was its longest-running name at 55 years.

Patrick Long, a former attorney there who now is a writing and research program coordinator and lecturer at the University at Buffalo School of Law, wrote "A Law Firm And A City" about the history of Hodgson Russ up until 1981. He is now updating the book.

Embracing diversity and new ideas

Kennedy said a law firm can't continue without understanding fundamental principles such as a commitment to discipline, client service and colleagues, as well as providing support to enterprises that serve the community.

As a young lawyer, Wadsworth said he was encouraged to get involved in community goings-on. That commitment from the firm, attorneys and staff is as strong as ever, Hodgson Russ officials say.

Just as important is the ability to change and adapt, according to Kennedy.

The firm has embraced diversity internally while providing clients various payment arrangements, he said. There's also recognition that younger attorneys have a different way of doing things and bring to the table fresh ideas and innovative ways of channeling their passion and interests.

"Leadership's job is to both stay out of their way and give them the freedom and resources that they need to pursue it," Kennedy said. "There are certain fundamentals where we say, 'That's not how we do it around here,' But you can't possibly be around this long as a firm unless you were will-

ing to let each succeeding generation assume responsibility and leadership and do it the way they see fit."

For Russ, even after being part of high-profile cases such as Continental Flight 3407 litigation (he was plaintiffs' lead counsel and represented seven families of people killed in the crash) his favorite part of the job is when a young lawyer asks for advice on a case.

"The best thing I do every day is talk to our young people about what they're doing," he said.

Celebrating the past; eyeing the future

The firm kicked off its bicentennial celebration in January by inviting public officials and community leaders to the unveiling of the Guaranty Building Interpretative Center, which offers a museum-quality experience that highlights the history of the firm and the building's restoration.

The center notes Buffalo's preservation and historic initiatives and is dedicated to Louis H. Sullivan and Dankmar Adler, the visionary architects who designed the building.

The firm purchased the building for its headquarters in 2002 and several years later embarked on a two-year, \$15-million restoration project.

Mayor Byron Brown presented a proclamation declaring Jan. 26 as Hodgson Russ LLP Day in Buffalo.

Said State Sen. Tim Kennedy: "It's a law firm older than the city in the heart of the city and part of the fabric of the city, and over the last two decades Hodgson Russ has played an instrumental role in it. I know as our community grows and we continue to move forward and see extraordinary progress that Hodgson Russ is going to continue to be a driving force for that progress."

Russ, the bicentennial chair, said there will be celebrations throughout 2017 for the community, clients and the Bench and Bar to show the firm's gratitude, as well as a party for attorneys and staff in the fall.

He said the continuing redevelopment of Buffalo will play a role in moving the firm forward. As the community embraces the biotech world, growth at the Buffalo waterfront and startup businesses, expect Hodgson Russ to follow a similar direction.

"It's almost as if we are partners with our clients in that we're in there getting our hands dirty with them and trying to figure out where we're going in the future," he said. "We really try to do the right things, and as a result we have been financially successful and have endured for 200 years. And I think we all project that we'll be around for 200 more."