

# Great Expectations

## Law Firm Adapts, Thrives for 150 Years

By **Symone C. Skrzycki**

**E**very business has a story. This is the tale of Faegre Baker Daniels. When Thomas Hendricks (future vice president of the United States serving under Grover Cleveland) and Oscar Hord (former Indiana attorney general) established the Hendricks & Hord law firm in 1863, they laid the foundation for a legacy.

Among the various names that identified the firm over the years, the one that endured was Baker & Daniels (in honor of attorneys Conrad Baker and Edward Daniels), starting in 1888 and once again in 1944.

For 150 years, no matter the name, one constant has remained: a commitment to quality and integrity. As the world changed around them, its leaders adapted and embraced new opportunities. That's just the beginning.

Baker & Daniels' Jan. 1, 2012 merger with Minneapolis-headquartered Faegre & Benson (founded in 1886, it has a rich history of its own) ushered in a new era of growth. Today, Faegre Baker Daniels serves businesses throughout the United States, Europe and Asia.

Attorneys from Faegre Baker Daniels' Indiana offices reflect on the firm's legacy – and what it means to them:

- Tim Haffner, partner (Fort Wayne)
- Angie Kelper Hall, partner (South Bend)
- Dan Lechleiter, partner (downtown Indianapolis)
- Mary Lisher, partner (downtown Indianapolis)
- Andrea Roberts Pierson, partner (downtown Indianapolis)
- Norm Tabler, counsel, health and life sciences (north side of Indianapolis)

### The 'it' factor

Diversity, dedication to clients and an atmosphere of respect are among the qualities that attract attorneys to Faegre Baker Daniels.

Haffner started his career at the Fort Wayne office nearly 30 years ago shortly after graduating from law school.

"I wanted to come back to my hometown, enjoy my practice and make a difference in my community," he recalls. "I thought I could do that here (at Faegre Baker Daniels) and it turns out that was the case."

Lisher joined the firm in 1975. She was one of the first two women hired as lawyers and the first female partner.

"I felt like I could maintain a personal life that was a bit separate from my work life, which was important to me given the fact that I was going to be the first woman in the firm," she

relates. "When I interviewed, I felt comfortable here. I felt relaxed, and I felt like being a woman wasn't going to make a difference one way or the other."

Tabler established the firm's first health care group. In that capacity, he helped oversee the consolidation of Methodist Hospital, Riley Hospital for Children and IU Hospital into what became the Indiana University Health system.

He left Baker & Daniels in 1996 after a 25-year stint to become general counsel of the new health system.

"For 16 years, I was one of the firm's major clients," he comments. "I used virtually all of the groups, practices and specialties – and through that experience, I felt an even stronger connection than when I was here."

He rejoined Faegre Baker Daniels on Jan. 1, 2013 – one day after retiring from IU Health.

**Mary Lisher joined Baker & Daniels in 1975 and was its first female partner. "When I interviewed, I felt ... like being a woman wasn't going to make a difference one way or the other."**



## Making it personal

Faegre Baker Daniels may be a large firm – it boasts 750-plus legal and consulting professionals – but leadership concentrates on the small things in creating a unique work environment.

“It’s a very ‘human’ culture,” declares Lechleiter, who joined the firm in 2005 after spending two summers there as a law student. “I think it boils down to the fact that our culture looks at everybody as an individual. I think the culture reflects everyone’s need to be human despite all the pressures we’re under as lawyers.”

Tabler interjects, “You can feel it. It’s palpable. If you walk around the firm, you recognize that there’s a friendliness, a warmth, a mutually supportive attitude.”

Haffner agrees.

“You always know there are others who have your back if you get caught in a time crunch or need help,” he shares. “You could pick up the phone at eight at night and half a dozen partners are there to help you. That collegial support is what sets the firm apart.”

In addition, the firm strives to provide equal opportunities to all employees.

“Being a working mom, what really stands out for me is the firm’s commitment to women in leadership and to making it a place where women with families can succeed,” states Hall, who has been with the organization since 2007. “I think the firm has made a commitment to putting the policies in place that will support women as they rise in their careers.”

Pierson concurs.

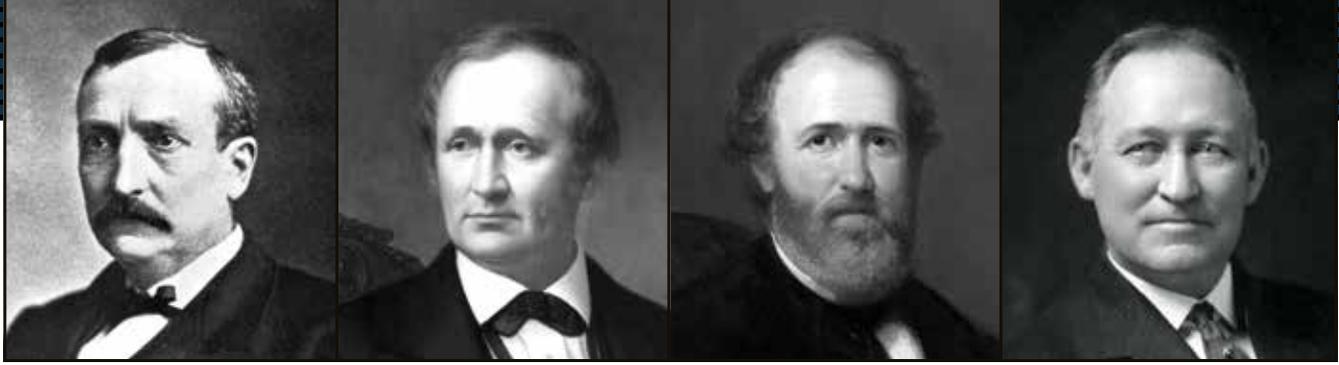
“I can’t think of very many careers or firms where a woman can accomplish as much as this firm gives me the platform to do,” she stresses. “It’s a great place to work regardless of gender, but for women in particular, I think it offers enormous opportunity.”



**Norm Tabler played a key role in the consolidation that created Indiana University Health. He calls the experience the highlight of his career.**



**A focus on teamwork, leadership and camaraderie are staples of Faegre Baker Daniels’ legacy. Joseph Daniels (at right in top left photo), firm partner beginning in 1914 and son of namesake Edward Daniels, shares a laugh with 1940 Republican presidential nominee Wendell Willkie.**



**Baker & Daniels’ founders who paved the way (from left): Oscar Hord, Thomas Hendricks, and namesakes Conrad Baker (joined the firm in 1873 after serving as governor of Indiana from 1867-1873) and Edward Daniels (beginning in 1879).**

Lechleiter shares another example.

“In my career here and probably well before that, the firm – and a lot of firms like ours – began a positive and important push to diversify beyond just gender diversity. I think we have, over the years, gotten really good at ensuring that we have a diverse population of lawyers, paralegals, staff – everyone on down to the mail room,” he observes. “That’s imperative for us as (it’s) the world that we live and work in. That’s the world that our clients do business in.”

### Next chapter

Leaders at Baker & Daniels and Faegre & Benson emphasized during the merger that preserving the legacy of each would remain a top priority.

Pierson contends that, despite initial challenges, Baker & Daniels’ culture hasn’t changed.

“Are there some logistical issues we have to deal with because we’ve doubled in size? There are. There are more of us. It’s a little trickier to communicate sometimes. It’s important to meet our colleagues and work well together cross-office – but the culture is no different today than it was when I joined the firm in 1999,” she asserts.

Lechleiter takes it a step further, asserting that the merger has enriched the culture.

“We have a new diverse array of skill sets. We’ve met wonderful new clients who have new challenges for us,” he offers. “At the end of the day, I think that’s why we’re all here doing this day in and day out: It’s challenging and it’s fun.”

Tabler describes how one small, kind gesture helped unify employees.

“Last night (on March 10) – five minutes after Indiana University clinched the Big Ten (regular season) title – the managing partner of the entire firm, who is located in Minneapolis, sent an email of congratulations to every lawyer in Indiana saying, ‘Great win! It’s nice to see the Big Ten championship back where it belongs.’

“That (camaraderie),” he emphasizes, “is typical of the Baker & Daniels of old and the Faegre Baker Daniels of today.”

### Leading the way

The firm’s long line of distinguished “alums” includes former Indiana governors Mitch Daniels and Evan Bayh and others who have made lasting contributions to the community.

“Public work has always been an essential part of Baker &

Daniels,” Tabler notes. “We don’t know what the big case was in 1865, but we know when one of our former partners was a senator or a governor or struck a blow for racial equality or did something profoundly helpful in the rebirth of Indianapolis. We relish it and we see that as a standard to which we’re all held.”

As part of its 150th anniversary celebration, Faegre Baker Daniels will host a community service project in Indiana.

The firm’s history – both internal and in the community – is passed down in a variety of ways.

“There is a good culture of storytelling, a recounting of past victories and losses,” Hall explains. “That’s demonstrative of how proud our attorneys are to work at our firm. We make a point to pass those stories down and make sure they’re remembered.”

Attorneys didn’t hesitate when asked to describe what it’s like to be a part of such an esteemed organization.

“Humbling,” Haffner declares. “We’ve had some pretty incredible people come through this place and it leaves you with a sense of responsibility.”

Lechleiter remarks: “I think one of the hallmarks of this firm in terms of helping to pass the culture along and instill that in everyone is leadership by the senior lawyers.

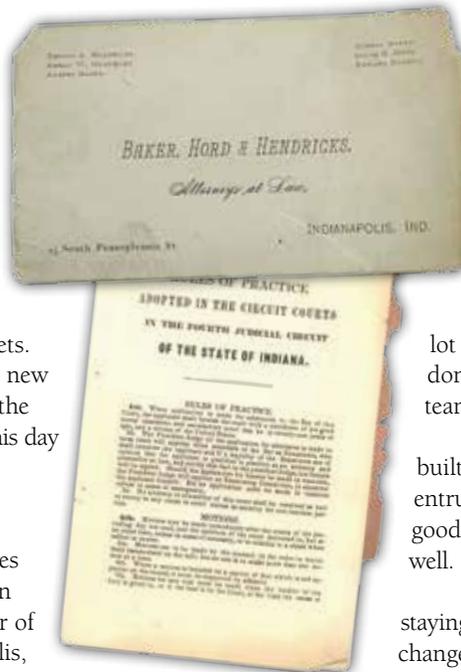
There is on paper a hierarchy here, but from a day-to-day perspective, I think a lot of us – if not all of us – would say you don’t see or feel that. You work together as a team to achieve the clients’ goals.”

Pierson chimes in, “The lawyers before us built a great legacy and we’re fortunate to be entrusted with it. We’re working hard to build good lawyers who can be entrusted with it as well. I think they’ll value it as much as we do.”

Lechleiter attributes much of the firm’s staying power to, putting it simply, embracing change.

“In an era where we see venerable names going away because they failed to adapt, it’s amazing and quite an honor to be part of an institution that has maintained such a positive culture and the ability to look inward and say, ‘What do we need to do tomorrow to make sure we’re on the right page?’” he proclaims.

“It’s not just a survival story. It’s really a story of flourishing at all different times for 150 years.”



**An old business card and rules of practice provide a glimpse into the firm’s early days.**

### INFORMATION LINK

**Resource: Faegre Baker Daniels at [www.FaegreBD.com](http://www.FaegreBD.com)**