

OUR FOUNDERS

The firm's founders were Robert Lassiter, Jr., James O. Moore, and William K. Van Allen.

Robert Lassiter, Jr.

Following a prep career at Woodberry Forest, where he was Senior Prefect and football captain, Bob enrolled at Yale. There, while performing academically at the Phi Beta Kappa level, he also captained the football team - this at a time when Yale, Harvard and Princeton were college football's "Big Three."

Lassiter graduated from Yale in 1934 and after a year of postgraduate study at Cambridge, enrolled at the Harvard Law School. He received his law degree in 1938 and after working for a brief time in Washington with the Treasury Department, he came home and practiced law with two highly regarded Charlotte lawyers - Claude Cochran and Frank McClenaghan. This engagement was interrupted by World War II.

Lassiter, already a licensed pilot, joined the Navy and was assigned to the Naval Air Station in Pensacola as a multi-engine flight instructor. As part of his own Navy training, he went through the American Airlines School for captains in Texas and flew commercial airliners between Fort Worth and Chicago.

In 1949 and again in 1951, Lassiter was elected from Mecklenburg to the State House of Representatives. He led the ticket in both elections. In 1954, U.S. Senator Clyde R. Hoey died. Bob Hanes, CEO of Wachovia, former president of the American Banking Association and one of the founders of the Research Triangle, asked his nephew, Bob Lassiter, if he would like to be among those considered by Governor Umstead for appointment to Hoey's seat. Lassiter declined. The appointment went to Judge Sam Ervin.

In 1949, Lassiter opened his own office in the Johnston Building in uptown Charlotte - a radical move at the time. Shortly thereafter, he teamed up with James O. Moore. They were in agreement on two principles: (a) they would practice business law in close proximity to the businessmen and banks, and (b) they would not bring clients with them from their former firms. The following year, they persuaded Lassiter's friend from Harvard Law, Bill Van Allen, to join them and, after Van Allen was licensed in 1951, the firm became Lassiter, Moore & Van Allen.

In 1963, Winston-Salem's P. H. Hanes Knitting Company and Hanes Hosiery Mills were planning to merge. The CEOs of those companies, P. Huber Hanes and Gordon Hanes, were first cousins of Lassiter and of each other and they believed that the new entity would run more smoothly with Lassiter on their team. Lassiter accepted their invitation and left the law firm. Starting out as Chairman of the Board of P. H. Hanes and Vice-President and General Counsel of Hanes Hosiery, he later chaired the Executive Committee of the merged entity, Hanes Corporation.

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In 1968, Lassiter left Hanes and returned to Charlotte to open an office in the first NCNB Building at Tryon and Fourth. He soon became heavily involved in activities which supported UNCC and its Foundation, which he served as Trustee and as a member of its Executive Committee for ten years. He also served for a time as Chairman of the Foundation.

In collaboration with David Taylor – who chaired the UNCC Foundation for a lengthy period – Lassiter helped formulate a plan to convert a large tract owned by the University between I-85 and U.S. 29 into an asset that would produce income for the school and help to create more of a college town feel for UNCC’s fairly isolated location in north Charlotte. Lassiter chaired the Planning Committee and was named president of the corporation formed to implement the plan. The corporation borrowed money from six banks and bought additional strategically important nearby land. UNCC and its administrators and its geographers – principally E. K. Fretwell, Jim Clay, and Doug Orr – were studying successful “new town” developments from all over the world. An experienced developer – Carley Capital, from Madison, Wisconsin, was selected and the result was University City and University Place as we know them today.

An important ally and neighbor in all of this was the fast growing University Research Park, a non-profit research and technology park, which was led by CEO Seddon “Rusty” Goode (father-in-law of Ernie Reigel, former chairman of the Moore & Van Allen management committee) and Board Chair, David Taylor.

Bob Lassiter also served with distinction as:

- A director of CSX and its predecessor, Seaboard Coast Line Railroad.
- A member of the Committee which built Charlotte’s first civic center.
- A member of the State Board of Higher Education; and
- A director of both the Mint Museum and the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce.

He died June 20, 1995. He was survived by his wife, Beth, a native of Seattle, whom he met while attached to the Navy’s Flight School at Pensacola, and by his daughter, Lorne and her two children. A highlight of Beth’s youth was her selection in the early 1940’s in Pasadena’s Rose Bowl Festival.

James O. Moore

Though Jim Moore was reared in Wellston, Ohio (his father was a railroad man), he was a direct descendent of James Moore, the first colonial governor of the Carolinas, and of General James Moore, the hero of the Revolutionary War Battle of Moore’s Creek Bridge in the southeastern tip of the State. Jim’s wife, Jane Morrison Moore, was the great granddaughter of the Reverend Robert Hall Morrison, the first president of Davidson College. The “Morrison House” in Charlotte’s Fourth Ward belonged to members of this family.

At the time of Jim Moore’s graduation from high school in Ohio, his father suffered a severe stroke. After caring for his father for a time in Ohio, Moore brought him to Charlotte where they shared a house with Moore’s aunt, Mrs. Frank Shannonhouse (grandmother of Charlotte lawyer Jim Shannonhouse). Moore went to work here for the Merchants & Farmers Bank until his father’s death two years later. He enrolled at the University in Chapel Hill as an undergraduate in 1928. Five years later, he had worked his way through college and the University’s law school. He had served as an Associate Editor of the Law Review and worked almost

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full-time in the law library.

Moore opened his own law office in Charlotte in the depths of the Depression. He roomed with attorney Ed Stukes, who later became Clerk of Mecklenburg County Superior Court and boarded with his cousin, Francis Clarkson, who later became a Superior Court Judge.

Moore and Jane Morrison married in 1936. They built their first house on Tranquil Avenue with an FHA loan and Moore took on any legal work that came his way.

In the late 1930s, Plummer Stewart, one of Charlotte's most prominent lawyers invited Moore to join his practice which became Stewart & Moore. Stewart had previously practiced with two of Charlotte's most illustrious judges, William Bobbitt and John J. Parker.

During World War II, Moore received a commission in the Navy as a Lieutenant (jg) and served in the Pacific as Signal Officer on the aircraft carrier *Bennington* in Admiral Bull Halsey's fast carrier task force. Moore was in combat on the *Bennington* from the earliest air strikes on Tokyo until his ship participated in the surrender ceremony in Tokyo Bay.

After the War, Moore became a partner in the firm of Whitlock, Dockery & Moore, where he concentrated in real estate law. Moore eagerly joined forces with Bob Lassiter with the objective of becoming a business lawyer.

In his spare time, Moore unselfishly served various children's causes. He was president of the Family and Children's Service Bureau and for years was Chairman of the Board of Managers of the Thompson Orphanage. The Orphanage owned the property on King's Drive where the Charlottetown Mall was later built as well as the property between Third and Fourth Streets where St. Mary's wedding chapel and the Vietnam War Memorial are currently located. Moore was a primary negotiator of the transaction with the Rouse organization which bought the property and developed the Mall. The financial terms were very favorable to the orphanage as it phased out its orphanage operations and moved into its Thompson Children's Center on the eastern edge of the City. In 1986, Thompson celebrated its Centennial year. Commemorating this special occasion, a history of Thompson entitled "A Century's Child," was dedicated to Jim Moore for his years of "faith, leadership and vision."

In 1978 the North Carolina Child Care Association chose Moore as the first recipient of its Trustee of the Year award. Those eligible for this honor were the more than 500 board members of 31 child care agencies throughout the state.

Over the years, Moore held a number of Diocesan offices in the Episcopal Church and served many times as a vestryman at St. Peters and at Christ Church here in Charlotte. In 1969, he was presented with the Bishop's Award by the Diocese of North Carolina.

Moore was a member of the North Carolina Society of the Cincinnati and a permanent member of the Judicial Conference of the Fourth Judicial Circuit.

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Jim Moore died on September 1, 1988 and was survived by Jane, his wife of 52 years, and by three daughters, a son, and twelve grandchildren.

William K. Van Allen

Albion, a very small town in western New York eight miles south of Lake Ontario, is probably not a place you would expect to find a founding partner of a Charlotte law firm. Nevertheless, that's where Bill Van Allen was born in 1914. His father, Everett, started out as a school-teacher, was promoted to principal and eventually became the superintendent of the school system in Seneca, New York. The elder Van Allen then decided he wanted to be a lawyer and obtained his license by "reading the law" and being tutored in the office of a judge. He practiced solo in Rochester until age 92.

The younger Van Allen, after graduating (and earning a Phi Beta Kappa key) at Hamilton College in 1935, decided that he too would be a lawyer. He enrolled at Harvard Law School where he and classmate Robert Lassiter soon became friends. When the two of them completed law school in 1938, they, with several other classmates, went to Washington - Van Allen to take a job with a law firm and Lassiter to work in the Treasury Department. The two, along with two other classmates and two friends who had just finished their studies as Rhodes Scholars, moved into a rented house at 1913 S Street. When the number of Harvard Law friends looking for a place to live continued to increase, it was time to look for a larger house.

In early 1941, as the drumbeat for U.S. involvement in World War II grew louder, Van Allen went on active duty as a Naval officer. After a rudimentary education in seamanship, navigation, shiphandling, naval warfare, etc., he was assigned first to several small vessels - including a converted yacht - and in May 1943 was made executive officer of the *USS Eldridge* which was still under construction in Newark. He was ordered to Norfolk for several months to train the ship's crew. The *Eldridge* was a 1,240 ton, 306 foot long, destroyer escort. Its crew would be comprised of around 20 officers and 190 men. The ship was launched in July 1943 and commissioned in August under the command of Lt. Charles R. Hamilton. After more training, sea trials and a shakedown cruise, the ship sailed out of Norfolk with the first of nine convoys it would shepherd across the Atlantic to ports like Casablanca, Oran and Bizerte in support of the Allied invasion of North Africa. His last two years on the *Eldridge*, Van Allen served as captain of the ship. As the War wound down, the ship was ordered to the Pacific where it served until hostilities ended several months later.

After the war, Van Allen returned to Washington and resumed practice there - primarily in labor law. He reconnected with Bob Lassiter in Washington during the time when Lassiter was travelling there on a fairly regular basis lobbying for more commercial air service for Charlotte. On one of these visits in 1948, Lassiter suggested that Van Allen come to Charlotte and start a practice. In the summer of 1950, Van Allen agreed to come to Charlotte, but not before consulting Chief Fourth Circuit Judge John J. Parker, who assured him that the move was a good idea. After Van Allen took the bar exam and got his North Carolina license in 1951, the firm of Lassiter, Moore & Van Allen was created. Some principles that were agreed to were that the firm would concentrate on business law and would not do personal injury work, insurance defense or collections work. By 1962, the total revenue of the firm had soared to \$210,000. Expenses, including salaries, totaled \$108,000. Reaching this milestone had taken over ten years. On two occasions, the law firm has been the largest in Charlotte; now - with nearly 400 lawyers - and in 1955 when there were five.

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Van Allen developed a strong corporate practice with clients such as the Cato Corporation, Wrenn Brothers and North Carolina National Bank. He also had an exemplary career in public service serving on the Board of Visitors of Johnson C. Smith University, the Mint Museum of Art, the United Way, the Mercy Hospital Foundation, and the UNCC Foundation. He also chaired the Charlotte Symphony League. In recognition of the tremendous civic and cultural contributions made by the Van Allens, the firm has named its annual award for *pro bono* work and civic accomplishment as the "Sally and Bill Van Allen Public Service Award."

Bill Van Allen died on February 3, 2011, at the age of 96. He is survived by Sally, his wife of 66 years, three sons, and eight grandchildren. A ceremony was held in Mr. Van Allen's honor on November 10, 2011 at the Mecklenburg County Courthouse. Sally Van Allen and other family members were in attendance, as well as his close friends and colleagues. The Resolution and Memorial in honor of Mr. Van Allen was filed with Mecklenburg County and can be viewed in its entirety [here](#). An audio recording of the ceremony can be found [here](#).