

The End of Nowhere

A History of The Albritton
Law Firm in Andalusia,
Alabama



Prologue

Hal Albritton has a drawing in his office which was given to one of his forebears by a client and which is inscribed, “To those litigatin’ sons of guns in Andalusia”. For over 100 years, the “Albrittons of Andalusia” were known as some of the toughest, most honest, and, simply, best lawyers in Alabama. While the history and legacy of the Albritton family in Andalusia, Alabama is broad, the law firm was always at the center of the story. Established in 1887 by the first Albritton in Andalusia, the firm included 8 members of the family over 5 generations and, when the doors closed for the final time in 2019, was the oldest continuing law firm in the State of Alabama. Members of the firm were recognized as local, state, and national leaders in not only the practice of law, but also in the Church, in politics, in service to the legal community, in legal education, and in service to their fellow man. It is a truly unique story and one from which all members of the family draw a great sense of pride.

Through the years, it can be fairly said that the Albritton lawyers all attempted to

approach the practice of law in a common fashion. This approach is perhaps best exemplified by an anecdote: In 1927, Bill Albritton was struggling with his decision whether to attend law school and pursue a career as a lawyer. His father, Harold, with the eloquence for which he was widely known, expanded on a famous saying attributed to U.S. Supreme Court Justice Joseph Story¹, when he wrote to his son, saying:

The Law is a most jealous mistress – she claims your all; she makes you starve and slave for many, many early years of practice, apparently spurning your advances, but, if perseverance remains, ultimately giving a radiant smile of approval, and admitting you a King. But for this, you must pay by constant, unending toil and endurance, and when you do finally merit her smile, you will have drawn around you real men who think, strive,

¹ I will not say with Lord Hale, that "the law will admit of no rival, and nothing to go even with it;" but I will say, that it is a jealous mistress, and requires a long and constant courtship. It is not to be won by trifling favours, but by a lavish homage. *A Discourse Pronounced upon the Inauguration of the Author, as Dane Professor of Law in Harvard University on the Twenty-fifth Day of August 1829* (1829), p. 29.

play the game fairly and intelligently – who admit you their superior because dependent on you to keep perfect the business structures for which they have given their lives. And then you do not see, and are able to forget, the sordid, impure and unhappy crucible through which you have been made into pure gold. This is a price you must pay for success as a lawyer, and in the end be poor in this world's goods, but able to look all men in the face and say: "I am your equal and your peer".

While the prospect of "many, many" years of starvation and slavish work ultimately resulting in a career which would leave him "poor in this world's goods" must have been daunting to young Bill, he nonetheless ended up in Andalusia and became the embodiment of his father's vision. Bill and his brothers, their father, grandfather, and their descendants did their best for over a century to "keep perfect the business structures for which (their clients) (gave) their lives". They worked hard, were honest, smart, and fair-dealing, and could

indeed “look all men in the face and say I am
your equal and your peer.”



Edgar Thomas Albritton

The Beginning

Early in 1887, a young North Carolina lawyer named Edgar Thomas Albritton was heartbroken and about to give up. Born on July 27, 1857, in Goldsboro, Wayne County, North Carolina amid the turmoil that led to the outbreak of violence in the War Between the States, Ed grew up in the poverty and uncertainty which were the immediate aftermath of the War. His father, Jesse Tignor Albritton, had fought for the Confederacy and the War had shattered his family financially. Nevertheless, family is family, and Ed was privately tutored by his father's twin brother, John Thomas Albritton, a widely known Baptist minister and educator². He received from his uncle a strong foundation in Latin, Greek, English, French, and mathematics. Ultimately, he attended and was graduated from Judge Strong Law School in Raleigh. He

² The Albritton Lecture at Wake Forest University is named after the Rev. John Thomas Albritton who was graduated from Wake Forest in 1857. He was a Baptist minister in Eastern North Carolina and taught in the schools there until his death in 1906. In 1919, his children endowed the "Chair of the Bible" position at Wake Forest. In 1920, the religion department adopted the name "The John T. Albritton School of the Bible" and used it until 1928.

joined the Bar of North Carolina on June 3, 1878, opened a legal practice in Snow Hill with the firm of Edwards & Albritton, and began to build a life.

From an early age, Ed had a strong interest in literature and the arts which would prove to be a source of pleasure for him throughout his life. He was particularly fond of literature, poetry, and music, and became an accomplished violinist. His active interest in public education resulted in him being named Superintendent of Greene County Schools at the age of twenty-one. In 1880, he married Apsilah Best Daniel. Ed and Appie, as she was known, were active members in an artistic and intellectual group in Raleigh, with Ed contributing his violin playing and Appie her singing.

Over the next three years, they had a son, William Harold, born on April 19, 1881, followed two years later by a daughter, Elizabeth Natalie. Life was good and this happy young family seemed poised for success. However, tragedy would soon intervene and twist the Albrittons in ways which would reverberate through the generations. In 1884, Ed became very ill with typhoid fever. Appie nursed him back to health, but the long hours

of caring for him with two small children who also needed much attention, proved too much for Appie. She contracted typhoid fever herself and died on August 28, 1884, at the age of twenty-four, a month after her fourth wedding anniversary. She left behind a husband who had just celebrated his twenty-seventh birthday, a three-year-old son, and a ten-month-old daughter.

Appie's mother took the children, Harold and Natalie, to her home, but, tragically, she too died in October of that year. A maiden aunt who lived in Washington, DC then took the children there to live while Ed recovered. Before he and his children could be reunited, though, Natalie was stricken with diphtheria and died at the age of three. In less than a year, Ed had lost almost everything he held dear.

In the depths of despair, Ed decided to leave his young son with his aunt in Washington, DC, close his law practice and join his little brother in Alabama in the fruit import business. Mathew, who had gone to work for United Fruit Company out of Mobile, Alabama, traveled by boat to pick up fruit from various countries in South America for import into the United States. Ed boarded a

train bound for Mobile, intent on leaving his old life behind. Again, though, fate intervened. On the way through Alabama, his train was sidetracked in Greenville, where a circus was being unloaded on the way to their winter quarters in Florida. Ed got off the train to stretch his legs, and, while visiting the circus, met another young lawyer and circus aficionado by the name of Dempsey Powell who had just been admitted to the Alabama Bar and had begun his practice in Greenville. During the course of conversation, Ed told his new acquaintance about his despair and said that, although he had set out to meet his brother in Mobile, what he really wanted was to go to a place at the “end of nowhere” and start a new life. Powell told him, “If you want to go to the end of nowhere, I have a suggestion.” He told Ed about a small-town south of Greenville called Andalusia that was just getting started and needed a lawyer. Ed re-boarded the train and rode it to Georgiana, where he got off, bought a buggy and horse, and drove to Andalusia – the end of the road, and the end of nowhere. He brought with him his violin, the complete works of Shakespeare, his knowledge, his profession, and his dreams of a new life.



Edgar Thomas Albritton

Ed. T. Albritton, Lawyer 1887 -1903

From the “end of nowhere,” Ed Albritton started a law practice which was to become one of the most prominent of its day. In 2010, when he was posthumously inducted into the Alabama Lawyers’ Hall of Fame, the Alabama State Bar noted that,

Honesty, integrity, and square dealing were the hallmarks of the life of Edgar Thomas Albritton. If the proof is in staying power, then he has certainly met that burden of proof. His approach to the practice of law and to public service would be the foundation and inspiration for those who followed him through the years in the law firm which he founded in 1887 and which continues without interruption with family member descendants to this day.

Ed was admitted to practice law in Alabama on January 12, 1887 and hung his

shingle, "Ed. T. Albritton, Lawyer," on the Chapman Building, which was on the location of the present Covington County Courthouse.

By the following year, his practice was growing, and his life had been put back in order. He married Eddie Maria Allen ("Muddy" for "Mother Dear" to the family) and sent for his son, Harold, who was brought to Andalusia by Ed's sister, Jessie Allen Albritton. Jessie stayed to teach at the school at Rose Hill, where Harold, then seven years old, was enrolled in grammar school.

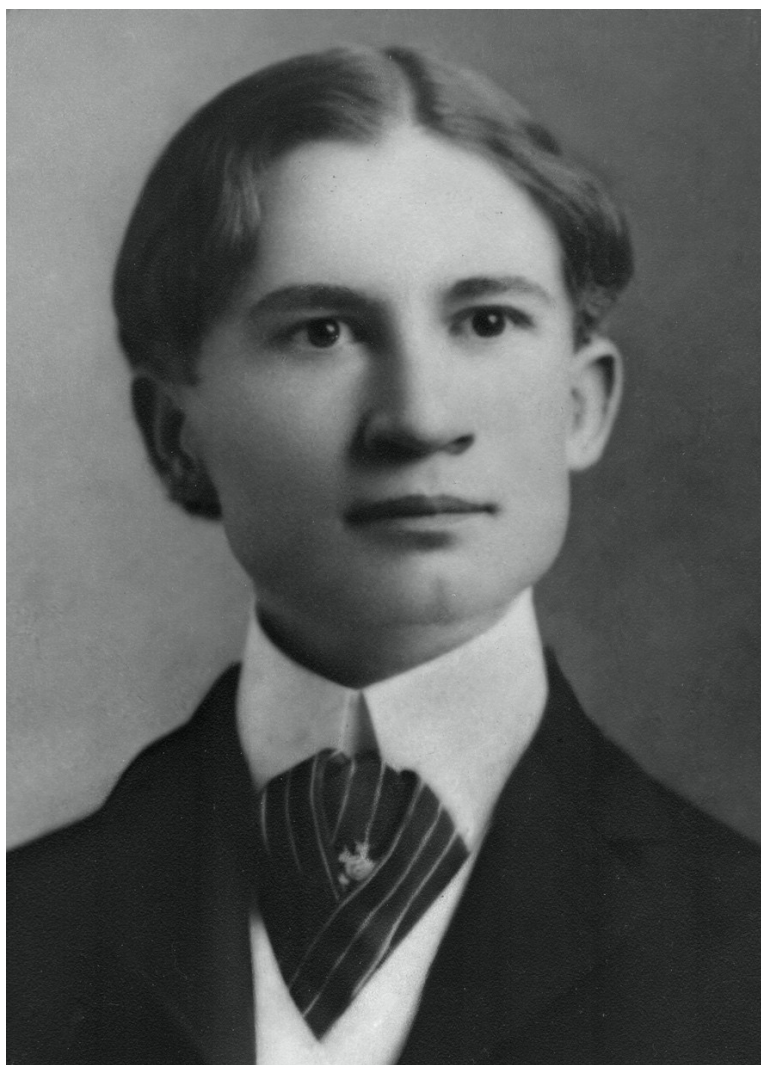
Ed embraced his adopted home on the frontier with enthusiasm, and Andalusia responded. In 1888, he became Andalusia's first elected Mayor, an office he held for 11 years until 1899. He later served as its City Attorney. In addition to his growing law practice, he was also for a time the Judge of a court no longer in existence, the Andalusia City Court of Law and Equity. This service caused him to be referred to customarily as Judge Albritton for the rest of his life. His children and grandchildren would call him "Foddy" (Father Dear).

Andalusia began to grow, and the law practice grew along with it. Ed's was a general practice which encompassed a full range of

legal skills from the organization of new business enterprises to the defense of accused criminals.

Ed's son, Harold, attended the public schools in Andalusia until it was time to attend Marion Military Institute followed by the University of Alabama, where he was graduated from the law school in 1903. He was a member of Sigma Nu social fraternity. An indication of what was considered at that time to be essential in the education of a lawyer was an early semester's schedule written in the front of one of Harold's books: Shakespeare, Old Testament, Latin, Contracts, and Torts.

While in law school, Harold married Annie Rebecca Mashburn, and the University of Alabama yearbook, *The Corolla*, quoted him as saying, "Married is the best state of man in general; and every man is a worse man in proportion as he is unfit for the married state." The *Corolla* also noted that William Harold Albritton was "conspicuous by his scholarly appearance." Upon graduation, Harold and Annie returned to Andalusia, where Harold became the second generation of the family to join the firm.



William Harold Albritton

Albritton & Albritton

1903 -1905

Ed and his son, Harold, began practice together as Albritton & Albritton in 1903. They moved their office from the Chapman Building to the Henderson Building on the east side of Court Square in Andalusia.

At an early age, Harold had reflected on his long and lonely childhood years in Washington with a maiden aunt who provided him with only cats for regular companions and had vowed that when he grew up, he would never be lonely again. He and Annie enjoyed glorious success in this endeavor, ultimately having 11 children, beginning with the birth of Charles Edgar, in 1903 shortly after returning to Andalusia, and a second, Robert Bynum, on February 1, 1905.

With an ever-growing practice and an interest in expansion, the Albrittons soon began to look for another lawyer whose talents would complement their own. They found him in a man who was there at the beginning, a fellow lover of the law, and of the circus, Dempsey Powell, of Greenville.

Powell, Albritton & Albritton 1905 -1925

Dempsey Monroe Powell had maintained professional as well as social contacts with Ed through the years before formalizing their relationship in a partnership. Dempsey, who would eventually practice law with three generations of Albrittons over the next forty-four years, was born on March 16, 1863, in Wilcox County, Alabama, making him younger than his friend Ed by 6 years. He was educated in the common schools of Wilcox County and at the Greenville Collegiate Institute.

Powell had just begun his practice in Greenville when he and Ed met, having been admitted to the Bar on August 23, 1886. In 1889, he married Eugenia Hennant Dudley, of Russell County, and they would have five daughters.

Dempsey was well-known and widely acknowledged to be an outstanding trial lawyer. He served in the Alabama State Senate from Greenville for the 1901 to 1903 term and maintained his residence in Greenville all of his life. Like the Albrittons, Powell was also active

in his church and his community. He served for many years as a member of the First Baptist Church Board of Deacons and the Greenville Board of Education. As was common at that time, Powell practiced through the years in partnership with other lawyers in Greenville and Luverne in addition to the firm in Andalusia, but his presence in the Andalusia practice facilitated an expansion of that practice throughout South Alabama and Northwest Florida during this 20-year period of the firm's existence.

Many clients and their families who came to the firm during this period remained clients of the firm for the remainder of its existence. In addition to its many individual clients, the firm developed further its representation of banks, insurance companies, railroads, timber interests, and other various business organizations. The members of the firm also continued to be active in governmental affairs, with Harold following his father as City Attorney and Dempsey Powell serving as an Alabama delegate to the Democratic National Convention of 1912 in Baltimore, which nominated Woodrow Wilson for the presidency.

The Albrittons became members of the

First Presbyterian Church of Andalusia, which was established in 1905, and both would serve the church as deacons. The family remained members of First Presbyterian for many years, and members would serve as deacons and elders for generations to come.

In 1908, Ed's second wife of 20 years died. They had had no children. Four months later he married Mary Leah Norman (Mamie Lee), a friend of his second wife, who had urged this union shortly before her death. Mamie Lee, born in 1884, was three years younger than Ed's son, Harold. The new couple lost no time in establishing a new family. Over the next four years, they had three children, Edgar Thomas, Mary Leah, and John Norman. These children grew up more as brothers and sister than as uncles and aunt to the children of Harold and Annie, some of whom were older and some younger than they. Everyone referred to Mamie Lee as "Little Mother".

Harold and Annie's family continued to grow with the addition of William Harold Albritton, Jr., on June 10, 1907, Annie Rebecca in 1909, Apsilah Daniel in 1911, Mary in 1913, James Marvin in 1915 (after whose name in the family Bible Harold

mistakenly wrote “Finis”), John Thomas and Jesse Tignor, twins, in 1917, Dempsey Powell in 1920, and Margaret in 1923. All of these Albritton children made for large and frequent family gatherings, and many would tell of early childhood memories of Foddy playing the violin and reciting from Shakespeare.

An early brush with wealth occurred during this period and illustrates what would become a recurring theme with the family which was apparently not destined for wealth. The event came to be known as the “Mexican Venture” in the family. As part of his increasingly sophisticated and growing practice, business took Harold to Mexico on several occasions during the early part of the century³. No doubt with dreams of fortune in his head, he joined a rather large group of Americans who made substantial investments in land there for purposes of mining opals and other gems. It should have been a good investment, but the financial independence which the Albrittons hoped for was not to be. As it happened, the Albrittons’ Mexican Venture was launched at about the same time

³ It is unlikely that anyone would guess that the head and shoulder's picture of him shown above, which hung in the firm's office, was taken from a photograph of him astride a Mexican burro made on one of his trips.

that Pancho Villa launched his own venture – a revolution which had as one of its goals the expulsion of foreign interests from these mineral rich lands. The land was confiscated by the Mexican government, and after years of legal entanglements, the Americans saw almost no recompense for the seizures and no return of their investments. This disappointment surely contributed to Harold's pessimistic conclusion that the practice of law, if pursued with honor, would, "in the end, [leave a man] poor in this world's goods" if, perhaps, rich in other ways.

On June 1, 1925, when he was just 68 years-old, Judge Albritton was returning to Andalusia from a short stay at his cottage in Florida Town. He had been ill for several days and was being brought home in a motorcar by his son, John, with a chauffeur driving. As they passed Baker, Florida Ed remarked that he felt drowsy and leaned back in the corner of the rear seat with his coat for a pillow. They had just driven across the Alabama State line when they were met by Harold Albritton and his son, Robert, who were going to Florida Town after hearing of Ed's illness. When Harold got to the car, he found his father dead. The founder of the firm had died quietly in his

sleep. Newspaper reports of his death quoted a popular prayer of the day, a clipping of which was found, yellowed and frayed in his billfold, as typifying the man who was Judge Ed. T. Albritton:

Teach me that 60 minutes makes an hour, 16 ounces one pound and 100 cents one dollar. Help me so to live that I can lie down at night with a clear conscience without a gun under my pillow and unhaunted by the faces of those to whom I have brought pain. Grant that I may earn my meal ticket on the square, and that in earning this meal ticket I may do unto others as I would have them do unto me. Deafen me to the jingle of tainted money and to the rustle of unholy skirts. Blind me to the faults of other fellows but reveal to me my own. Guide me so that each night when I look across the dinner table at my wife who has been a blessing to me, I will have nothing to conceal. Keep me young enough to laugh with the little children, and

sympathetic enough to be considerate of old age. And, when comes the day of darkened shades and the smell of the flowers, the tread of soft footsteps and the crunching of wheels in the yard—make the ceremony short and the epitaph simple, ‘Here Lies a Man.’

The firm’s founder, Andalusia’s first mayor, the man who was looking for the end of nowhere, had found it and helped transform it from that to a vital town. He left a legacy which would echo for a hundred years.

Powell & Albritton 1925 – 1929

After Ed's death, Dempsey Powell and the then 34-year-old Harold Albritton continued to practice under the name of Powell and Albritton. They moved their offices to the imposing new First National Bank building on the square, Andalusia's first (and still only) skyscraper.



First National Bank Building

Trial and appellate work were the principal areas of Mr. Powell's practice. He was a successful litigator and was well known in courtrooms all over the state. He had a reputation as a hard loser, and it was generally expected that any case he lost would probably

end up on appeal to the Supreme Court. Harold handled most of the firm's extensive corporate and business practice.

Harold continued to be active in most civic activities. He worked hard to pursue industrial development for the area and joined the newly formed Rotary Club. He was a Mason as well as a member of the Knights of Pythias and Woodmen of the World. As one might expect, this father of eleven children had a strong interest in youth; however, his efforts to support the youth of the community extended far beyond his own family. He served for many years on the Andalusia Board of Education and took a personal part in school activities - particularly athletics. His rousing halftime speeches to the Andalusia High School football team were long remembered by those who heard them. A lover of knowledge, he accumulated a very large and well used personal library.

After being graduated from Andalusia High School, Harold and Annie's sons, Robert Bynum (Bob) and William Harold, Jr. (Bill) both went to the University of Alabama, where they were members of Kappa Sigma social fraternity. They were both interested in law and would eventually begin the third

generation of the family business. However, at the time, neither was sure whether to make a career of it for entirely different reasons. This was the “Roaring” ‘20s and it must have seemed that riches lay around every corner. However, echoing Harold’s “Mexican Venture”, it became apparent that earthly riches were not in the cards for the Albritton boys. Bob left college and spent a year in Palm Beach, Florida, trying his hand at real estate during the land boom there, but the bottom fell out of the market in 1928 about a year before “Black Tuesday” and the start of the Great Depression. Instead of amassing a financial fortune in the Florida real estate market, Bob returned to Alabama to marry Carrie Veal, of Tuscaloosa, and continue with law school.

Bill had been torn between journalism and law as a profession, but finally decided to enter law school. After a year, however, he determined that, although he did want to be a lawyer, the structured routine of law school was not for him. At the time, a law degree was not necessary in order to obtain a law license. If a candidate for the Bar essentially apprenticed for a period of time at the end of which he could demonstrate a mastery of the subject matter, he could be admitted to

practice. Consequently, Bill returned to Andalusia in 1928 with an appointment as the Circuit Court's Register-In-Chancery, a position he held while he “read the law” in the Powell & Albritton firm under the tutelage of Dempsey Powell.

Again, fate was about to intervene and present a huge challenge to the Albrittons. In the winter of 1929, four years after Ed’s death, Harold fell ill with the flu, and subsequently with pneumonia after a business trip to Washington, D.C. He had experienced a long and tiring return, partly by steamship and partly by train. On February 20, he died. He was forty-seven years old at the time. The Andalusia Star reported that, “As a mark of special respect, business in every establishment in the city was suspended during the funeral hour.” In an editorial the Star said of him:

As a lawyer Mr. Albritton served a large clientele and his ability in his chosen profession which he adorned was so generally recognized that his clientele was not confined to his home city and county but extended to many sections of this state and to other

states.

Mr. Albritton was a man of very definite and firm convictions, yet a man most tolerant of the opinions of others. He was a man of honor and of the highest integrity, and bound to himself many, very many warm personal friends. He delighted in his friendships.

In the death of this good citizen all who knew him intimately feel a deep sense of personal loss, and the grief because of his going is a common grief in this city.

The funeral service, which drew mourners from far and wide, included a musical selection played on the violin by Anne Kirtley Long, a young music teacher who had moved to Andalusia, and who would marry Bill Albritton the following year.

Dempsey Powell, with Bill Albritton's help, held the practice together while the third generation readied itself. He continued to instruct Bill in the law until Bill was admitted to practice in his own right on August 1, 1929.

Two months later, the stock market crashed. Eight months after that, in May of 1930, Bob was graduated and returned to Andalusia with Carrie to join the firm with Dempsey Powell and Bill under the name, once again, of Powell, Albritton & Albritton. These two young brothers, one twenty-five and the other twenty-three, began this phase of the firm's history with a solid family name, a large and wide law practice that their father and grandfather had built, and innate talent. However, as the country fell deeper and deeper into the Great Depression, and the world edged closer to war, many of their clients faced legal problems far more complex than those usually entrusted to such young practitioners. Fortunately, loyal clients and friends of the family were willing to stay with the firm and give these young lawyers a chance to prove themselves. That they did so while also caring for a widowed mother and their eight younger siblings along with their own young families speaks to the men they were. By the end of their lives, their names were familiar to lawyers all over the United States, and they, along with their brother Marvin, who would join the firm years later, had the highest reputations for skill, integrity,

graciousness, and tenacity.



Robert Bynum Albritton



William Harold Albritton, Jr.



James Marvin Albritton

Powell, Albritton & Albritton 1930 -1952

As their husbands struggled to meet the professional challenges in front of them, and as they all struggled to cope with the ever-worsening economic depression, Carrie taught school, Anne taught music, and the two couples lived together with Bob and Bill's mother, Annie (known within the family as "Mamaw") and their younger siblings. It is hard for later generations to imagine the sleepless nights all of this must have induced in the brothers. Money was very tight. During a business trip to New York City, Bill received word that his bank in Andalusia had failed. Only the firm's pass on the L&N Railroad and a small amount of cash in his pocket got him home.

In what must surely have seemed to be a mocking gesture from Lady Fortune, riches remained evasive to the Albrittons. As it happened, one of their clients, the Henderson family, was struggling to pay its legal fees and gave the firm an option to take a one-mile strip of Florida gulf coast property as a fee instead of money. Unfortunately, white sand

could not be eaten, and it was necessary to let this opportunity pass. This strip of land would eventually become known as Henderson Beach, Florida, a state park outside of Destin.⁴

Bob and Bill, with Dempsey Powell's guidance and help, stuck at it, worked hard, and, exhibiting a true entrepreneurial spirit, held on to the business their father and grandfather had built. Soon, they slowly began to expand it further. In 1934, James Marvin Albritton (Marvin) was graduated from Andalusia High School and enrolled at the University of Alabama. After a year, he left school to work at the A&P in Tuscaloosa to earn money for continuing his education. In 1936, he was one of the first class of recipients of the W.O. Parmer Scholarship⁵, and was able to re-enroll at The University.

While still bleak, economic conditions had steadily improved and prospects for the future brightened. In the spring of 1936, Bill pursued an intellectual dream. Taking a three month's sabbatical from practice, he and Anne

⁴ This white sand was sold to the state of Florida in 1983 for \$13.1 million by Burney M. Henderson, a Pensacola businessman. The Henderson family had continued to be represented by Bill on various matters all through the years and he handled this transaction.

⁵ Established by Nashville businessman, W.O. Parmer, the Parmer Trust still awards scholarships to outstanding students at the University of Alabama, Auburn University, and Vanderbilt University.

sailed to Europe where he studied under the German philosopher, Count Herman Keyserling, at his School of Wisdom in Darmstadt, Germany. This fed a lifelong love of philosophy and Bill developed a friendship with Count Keyserling and his family which would be maintained through correspondence for the rest of the Count's life and would be renewed by a visit with the family on a return trip which Bill and Anne would take to Germany in 1982.

In September 1936, Bill and Anne's first son was born and they named him Robert Bynum Albritton, II after Bill's brother. They called him Bob, and he was known in the family as Bobby. Three months later, on December 19, 1936, Bob and Carrie's only surviving child was born, a son whom they named William Harold Albritton, III after Bob's brother (and father). They called him Harold. Harold was destined to be the fourth generation of the family to join the firm in the coming decades.

Marvin was graduated from The University in 1940 and went to work for Retail Credit Company. In 1941, he married Frances Ophelia Adams, of Red Level, and the following year he entered the U. S. Navy. He

remained enlisted until the end of World War II. Bill and Anne's second son, William Leonard, was born in 1941. He was called Bill.

Bob served as City Attorney for Andalusia from 1937 to 1948 under Mayor J. G. Scherf and developed as a trial lawyer, working closely with Mr. Powell, while Bill became one of the first lawyers in Alabama to specialize in taxation. Both spent a very large amount of their time as general counsel for Alabama Textile Products Corporation (Alatex), handling the company's legal affairs from its early years, through its growth and expansions in South Alabama and Northwest Florida, to its sale to Cluett-Peabody & Co. in the 1960's. Bill served as a member of the State Board of Bar Commissioners from 1939 to 1943, and as a member of the Andalusia City Board of Education.

In 1945, a new lawyer joined the firm - Albert Lamar Rankin, Jr. Albert was born and reared in Andalusia where his father was a lawyer. He was graduated from Andalusia High School and earned an engineering degree from the University of Alabama. He was graduated from the University of Alabama School of Law in 1934. From there he went to West Palm Beach, Florida, where he practiced

law until entering the U.S. Army Engineering Corps in World War II. He was fresh out of the Army when he returned to Andalusia and married Carolyn Raborn, of Andalusia, in September of 1945. In January of 1947, they had their only child, Charles, who was called Chuck.

In the 1940's and 1950's, Bob pursued an active interest in politics, was elected to the State Democratic Executive Committee and would serve on that committee for twenty years. He was a leader of the "States' Rights Faction" of the party which advocated political independence from the National Democratic Party. During this period of Alabama history, the States' Rights' Faction engaged in a continuous struggle with the "Loyalist Faction" for control of the State party machinery. In the presidential election year of 1948, the States' Righters took control, and Bob was elected one of the State Democratic Party's eleven candidates for Presidential Elector on the platform that they would be independent from the National Party. In the Fall, with Harry Truman the Democratic candidate for a full term and Thomas E. Dewey the Republican candidate, Bob stumped the country with his fellow electors in support of

similar minded States' Rights slates of elector candidates in other states to come up with a strategy of defeating Truman, who was unacceptable to many in the South due to his views on race.

Eventually, these various slates of elector candidates, concentrated in the South and dubbed "Dixiecrats" by the national media, had united in pledging support to the presidential candidacy of South Carolina Governor Strom Thurmond as the candidate of the States' Rights Party. The election was extremely close. The national press was reporting until the very early hours that it appeared that neither Dewey nor Truman would receive the necessary number of electoral votes to win outright because of states going for Thurmond. It was reported that, in that case, the election would be thrown into the House of Representatives. In the end, however, Truman carried enough states to win the very close race. Thurmond carried four Southern states⁶. One of Bob Albritton's

⁶ It was generally thought that the States' Rights Party's efforts, if successful in keeping either Democratic or Republican candidate from receiving a majority of electoral votes, would throw the election into the U. S. House of Representatives where one of those candidates would be elected president. Actually, the real intent of these men was far more dramatic,

staunch allies in the States' Rights Movement, and a fellow presidential elector in 1948, was State Senator Walter Givhan, of Safford, who would hold his position as a member of the Alabama State Senate longer than any person in the history of the state. This was a connection that would play a part in the future of the firm when his nephew, John, would join.

Bill followed a different political route.

but, since it was not successful, has not been widely known. If enough States' Rights electors had won, it was their intention not to cast their States' electoral votes for Thurmond, but to attempt to persuade presidential electors from throughout the country that they were now constitutionally free and independent to cast their vote in the electoral college for whomever they chose. The "Dixiecrats" hoped to thereby achieve a national political realignment with Southern influence, denial of the presidency to either Truman or Dewey, and election in the electoral college of a coalition choice for president who would be acceptable to the South. The most widely discussed possibility as a coalition choice was General Dwight D. Eisenhower. It should be noted parenthetically that this issue has never been definitively decided. A related issue was recently argued before the US Supreme Court in May of 2020 in the consolidated cases of *Chiafalo v. Washington* and *Colorado Department of State v. Baca*. There, the Court upheld a state's legislative right to require electors to vote for the candidate to which they are pledged, but the cases did not present the issue of whether electors from a state which had not passed a law so binding its presidential electors would be constitutionally free to exercise their independent judgment.

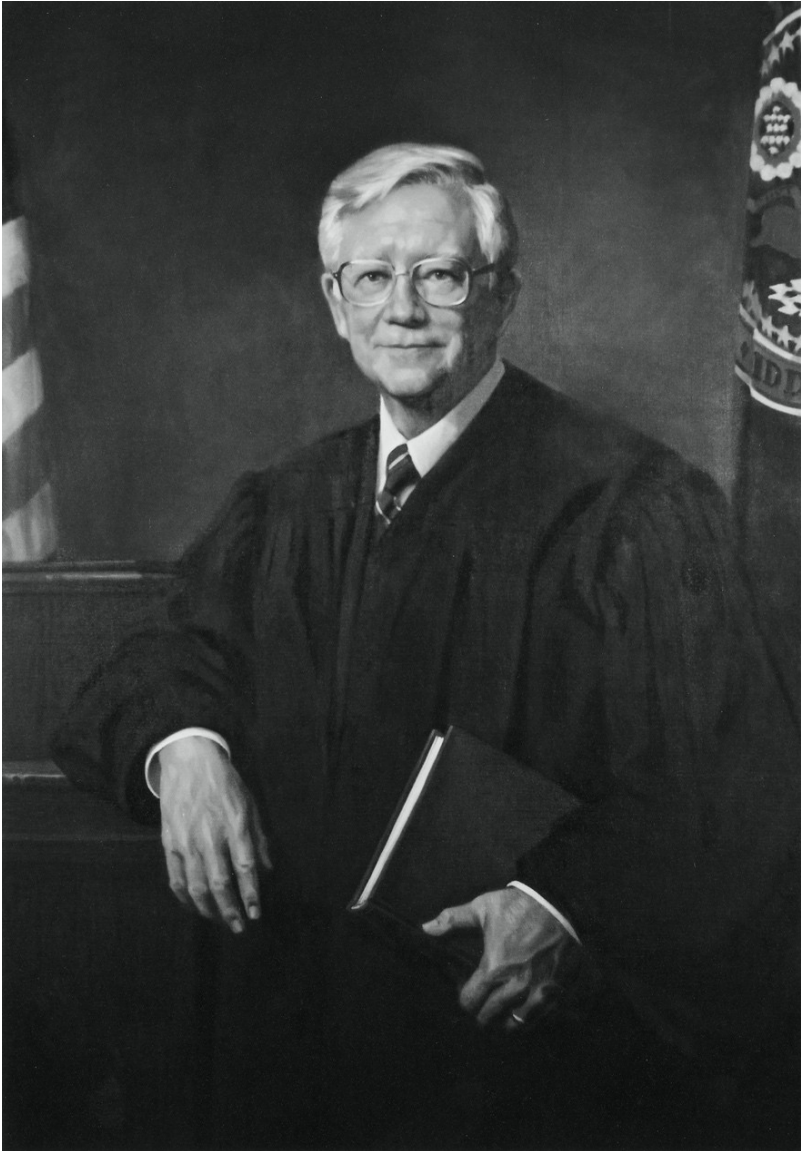
He became one of the few people in the county at that time affiliated with the Republican Party. He served as county chairman and was an Alabama delegate to the 1952 Republican National Convention which nominated Dwight Eisenhower for the presidency. Bill supported Robert Taft.

Dempsey Powell died in 1949 at the age of 86 after practicing law for sixty-three years. His death was noted with sorrow throughout the state. The Albrittons owe much to Powell's support and guidance. Had it not been for his love of the circus, his interest in and willingness to strike up a conversation with a depressed traveler looking for the end of nowhere, and his sage advice as to where the end of nowhere actually was, this story may well not have happened at all. Thus, in 1949, 62 years after that fateful meeting in Greenville, the Albritton law firm was looking to the future with bright eyes, optimism and energy, confident that the best was yet to be. And, help was on the way.

After being discharged from the Navy with the rank of Lieutenant, Marvin Albritton returned to work for Retail Credit Company before turning to law. He entered law school at the University of Alabama where he

compiled an outstanding academic record. Marvin and Ophelia's only child, Emily Alice, was born in 1949. Marvin was graduated from law school in 1950, admitted to the Bar, and returned to Andalusia to enter the firm with his brothers and Albert Rankin.

The firm expanded to two floors of the bank building which had now become the location of a long-standing client, The Commercial Bank, and approached its seventh decade of existence.



William Harold Albritton, III

Portrait Hanging in the Frank M. Johnson, Jr. Federal Courthouse in
Montgomery Alabama

Albrittons & Rankin 1952 –1976

In 1952, with three Albritton lawyers in the firm, the partners decided to pluralize the family name and change the name of the firm to Albrittons & Rankin. The firm continued with its general practice, organizing and representing numerous corporations and business interests, planning estates and handling probate, advising and representing individuals on all types of matters, and handling a growing volume of litigation. During this period, the legal landscape changed somewhat on both a national and a local basis. Both the volume and complexity of lawsuits increased, and many local businesses were merged with national concerns. As a result, by the end of this era, the firm, although still a general service firm with a large estate, corporate, and business practice, became widely known as the “go to” civil litigation and insurance defense firm in the area.

Bill Albritton’s special expertise in all aspects of taxation, gained through intensive private study and attendance at various short courses such as New York University’s

Institute on Federal Taxation, brought him a reputation as not only one of Alabama's first tax lawyers, but as one of its best. He attracted clients from all parts of Alabama and Florida. He was a frequent lecturer at tax seminars and was instrumental in organizing the Federal Tax Clinic for Lawyers and Accountants. Bill served as one of its first chairs, and the event became an annual function at the University of Alabama. He was active in statewide business organizations, such as Chamber of Commerce and Associated Industries, and contributed to business related legislation, including authoring the State's Unemployment Compensation Act. In the latter part of this period, he was a member of the Board of Bar Examiners, giving the examination on taxation to all applicants for admission to the Alabama Bar. He remained very active in the First Presbyterian Church, the Andalusia community at large, and he was a member of the Board of Directors of one of the firm's long-standing clients -- The Commercial Bank.

Bob Albritton continued with an active trial practice, while at the same time handling general corporate matters and probate work. He was a charter member of the Alabama Defense Lawyers Association, devoted

primarily to civil “insurance” defense, and a member of the Association of Insurance Attorneys. Dempsey Powell's tutelage had developed Bob's skills in appellate advocacy and he especially enjoyed that work. His ingenuity in advancing new theories for appellate relief provoked his close friend, Alabama Supreme Court Chief Justice J. Ed Livingston, to comment from the bench as Bob stepped forward to begin an argument: “So. Here you are asking for the unusual, as usual.” He had a particular interest in the state's probate laws, served for several years as chairman of the State Bar's Committee on the Revision of the Probate Code, and was elected as a Fellow in the American College of Probate Counsel.

Albert Rankin became recognized particularly in the fields of litigation, banking, and corporate work. He was also a charter member of the Alabama Defense Lawyers Association, was an active member of the National Association of Railroad Trial Counsel and was elected a Fellow in the International Society of Barristers. He was a lecturer on various aspects of banking and corporate law at Continuing Legal Education Seminars throughout the state. Albert was also a

recognized expert on municipal law and served as City Attorney under two mayors, William H. Baldwin and Howard Ham. Additionally, he served as the attorney for Andalusia's Industrial Development Board. As legal counsel to the Andalusia Board of Education, he was instrumental in developing the desegregation plan by which the City's schools were peacefully integrated without the necessity of court intervention.

Marvin Albritton was another charter member of the Alabama Defense Lawyers Association and became an active trial lawyer, involving himself in all aspects of civil defense work. He developed a special expertise in workers' compensation law and would handle these cases across the state. Real estate was another field of special interest to him and this area of the firm's practice became primarily his.

In 1953, William Harold Albritton, III (Harold), on his way to becoming the fourth generation of the family to join the firm, followed his grandfather's footsteps from the Andalusia public schools and enrolled at Marion Military Institute, where he was graduated in 1955 as the high school's valedictorian.

In 1954, Bob ran for the Democratic

nomination for State Senator from Covington, Conecuh and Butler Counties. Still a member of the party's States' Rights faction, he thought that he would be unopposed, but, at the last moment, the Loyalist faction fielded another candidate – Tully Goodwin of Florala. Governor Jim “Big Jim” Folsom was the leader of the Loyalist faction of the Alabama Democratic Party, and Bob's race, like similar races across the State, was a battlefield in this larger war. Bob, who was anti-Folsom, lost in an election which saw the political pendulum in Alabama swing to elect the populist Folsom and most of his supporters who were loyal to the National Democratic Party. The loss ended Bob's active involvement in politics.⁷

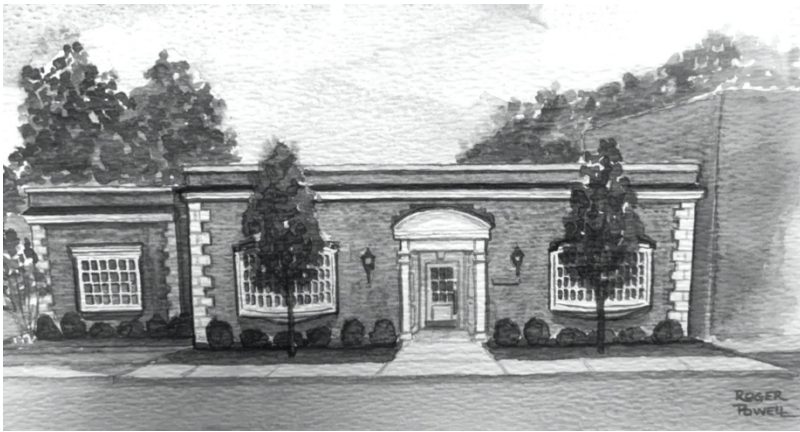
Harold entered the University of Alabama in 1955 and his first year there was selected as the University's Most Outstanding Freshman. He was a member of Alpha Tau Omega social fraternity and involved in numerous extracurricular activities. He was a member of the University's Varsity Debate

⁷ Interestingly, this race occurred just before the United States Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*. The States' Righters' views on this touchstone issue were probably more aligned with the majority of Alabamians than the Loyalists. This election remains a sterling example of Alabama's historic fondness for populism.

Team and served as Vice President of the Student Government Association. He was elected to several honorary organizations, including ODK, Jasons, and Phi Beta Kappa. During his freshman year in law school at the University, he married Jane Rollins Howard, of Tusculumbia, whom he had met on a blind date during their freshman year as undergraduates. Jane taught high school to make ends meet. On March 21, 1960, William Harold Albritton, IV “Hal”, the first of Harold and Jane’s three sons, and destined to become the fifth generation of the family to practice law in the Andalusia firm, was born in Tuscaloosa. In August 1960, Harold was graduated from law school having served on the Alabama Law Review and qualified for Order of the Coif. He entered the U.S. Army, as a Second Lieutenant in Infantry through R.O.T.C., but transferred to the Judge Advocate General’s Corps to spend two years as an Army lawyer upon entry. He, Jane, and Hal travelled to JAG school at the University of Virginia prior to going to his station at Fort Hood, Texas.

Harold and Jane's second son, Benjamin Howard “Ben”, was born in 1962 at Fort Hood, Texas where Harold was stationed. In

October 1962, Harold was discharged from the Army with the rank of Captain and returned to Andalusia, spurning interest in the large Birmingham firms, to begin his practice. That year, the members of the firm bought property located at 109 Opp Avenue and built the building which would house the firm for the



Offices at 109 Opp Avenue

remainder of its existence.

The church was always an important part of Bill's life. He was an Elder in the Presbyterian Church from a young age. During this period, he served a term as Moderator of the Synod of Alabama and was an active member of several church boards and committees on the national level. He organized, and for the most part ran, United Christian Services, a cooperative effort of

several Andalusia churches to provide assistance to indigent transients. He and Anne devoted several years to serving as advisors to the local church's Youth Fellowship, and he was never too busy to spend substantial time each week in preparing and teaching a small Sunday school class. Bill was active in civic matters as well, organizing through the years various organizations designed to better the community, including the Scherf Memorial Foundation, the Friends of the Library, the Andalusia Hospital, Andalusia Health Services, and the Covington Historical Society. He served as President of the Andalusia Rotary Club.

Bill was a voracious reader all of his life. While few current best sellers found their way to his shelves, the study in his home was piled high with the most esoteric volumes on philosophy, history, and politics, in addition to the classics. On the wall behind Bill's desk in his office, he kept three plaques which spoke eloquently of what he deemed to be important: the Lawyer's Canons of Ethics, the Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi, and the story of Old Storm Along, who "larned the sea to sing Yankee Doodle" and was a symbol of American self-reliance and man's

determination to be skipper of his fate.

Bob also served a term as President of the Andalusia Rotary Club and was a Deacon in the Presbyterian Church. Higher education was a special interest of his. He helped organize and for many years served as a member of the University of Alabama Law School Foundation and was a member of the President's Cabinet at the University under Dr. David Mathews. He organized and was the first President of the Lurleen B. Wallace Junior College Foundation, which was designed to provide financial assistance to the local junior college. Bob devoted a great deal of time to Bar Association activities, serving as President of the local Bar and as a member of numerous State Bar committees for many years. In 1970, he was honored by being chosen President-Elect of the Alabama State Bar and he served as State Bar President for the year 1971-72. His leisure time interests included hunting, deep-sea fishing aboard his boat, the Mimi, and growing camellias in his beautiful yard on Albritton Road.

Like his partners, Albert was a Presbyterian Deacon. He was a leader in the Kiwanis Club, serving as local President and as District Governor. An avid alumnus of the

University of Alabama, he was active in recruiting athletes (and was involved in recruiting Bear Bryant to coach at his alma mater) and served as President of the National Alumni Association. He worked hard for the establishment of a junior college in Andalusia, and when one was secured, he taught a course in Business there at night. He was an enthusiastic fisherman and organized a long weekend fishing trip to Lake Panasoffkee in Central Florida with a group of friends which was a major event each year for several years. One activity through which Albert made a tremendous contribution to others was his work with Alcoholics Anonymous. Before returning to Andalusia to practice law he had become a recovering alcoholic, and for the rest of his life he helped others seeking recovery. No matter how busy he was with other things, Albert would drop everything, day or night, to answer a call for help.

Marvin, too, was very active in the community. He served as a Deacon in the Presbyterian Church, became a Rotarian, and was elected President of the Andalusia Country Club. He was appointed and served as a charter member of the Alabama Commission on Higher Education. Marvin

was interested in horses and was active in organizing horse shows through the Covington Saddle & Bridle Club. An avid deer hunter, he helped organize Little Pine Hunting Club and for a number of years enjoyed running with the dogs on nearly every hunt of the season. He served a term as President of the Covington County Bar Association, three terms as a member of the Alabama Board of Bar Commissioners, and as a member of the Grievance Committee of the State Bar.

Harold's first few years were spent in all phases of work, but with an emphasis on working under Bill in taxation and corporate law. He moved more and more into litigation, however, and this proved to be the area in which he would concentrate most of his practice. He became active in Bar related activities, including the Alabama Defense Lawyers Association, and served for several years as a member of the Executive Committee of the Young Lawyers Section of the Alabama State Bar.

Like Bob, Harold had an active interest in politics, and he was attracted to the movement in the 1960's to establish a real two-party system in Alabama through the building of a strong Republican Party. 1966

was expected to be a watershed year in this effort. In 1964, Barry Goldwater had carried Alabama in the presidential race and Alabama had elected five Republican congressmen. Governor George Wallace was legally prohibited from succeeding himself and things seemed right for a political realignment in the state. The Republicans fielded a strong candidate for governor, Congressman Jim Martin, and recruited candidates all over the state for legislative races. Harold was the Republican candidate for the State Senate from Covington, Crenshaw, Butler and Lowndes Counties. The hope for a Republican sweep was not to be, however. Maybe, George Wallace thought, he could not run but his wife Lurleen sure could, and George promised to be her “Number One Advisor.” Thus, Harold’s race, like the others across the state, became a proxy for the single issue of being for or against Wallace, and Harold joined the other Republican candidates in defeat.⁸ This ended his interest in elective

⁸ By then, Alabamians were more ideologically aligned with the Republican Party. However, it would not be until Ronald Regan’s election almost 20 years later, that the populace would realign. This was largely due to Wallace’s personal popularity, but it was a popularity born from a populist agenda showing once again Alabama’s attraction to that particular Siren’s song.

office, but he served for ten years on the State Republican Executive Committee and was chosen as Republican County Chairman for Covington County.

During the 1966 campaign, Harold attended a Republican political rally where the featured speaker was a returned Vietnam war hero and aide to Congressman Glen Andrews, named John Givhan – the nephew of Bob's old political ally, Walter Givhan. Harold and John met, compared notes on their families' continuing political alliances, and parted with a pledge to keep in touch. This pledge would soon yield great fruit.

Harold and Jane's youngest son, Thomas Bynum "Tom", toured the district with them during the campaign and on February 1, 1967, he was born. Harold and Jane's family was now complete, and all three boys would go on to become lawyers – continuing the family's legacy in Andalusia and beyond.

In addition to his political activities, Harold was active in community and civic affairs. He joined the rest of the family as a Deacon in the Presbyterian Church, served as President of the Andalusia Jaycees, and in 1967, was President of the Andalusia Chamber of Commerce.

On April 4, 1970, Albert died suddenly from a cerebral hemorrhage at the age of sixty. His death was a blow to his many clients and friends. Although he had been a vigorous and successful advocate for his side in countless controversies and negotiations, including some of the most sensitive and combative issues of the day, he had the unusual ability to fight without creating personal animosity with the opposition. The most frequently heard comment after his death would have made a fitting epitaph: "Everybody liked Albert Rankin".

Albert's death removed a unique combination of talents from the firm and necessitated the search for another lawyer. In 1972, that search ended with the renewal of old acquaintances in the signing of a senior at Cumberland School of Law - John Givhan.

John Brandon Givhan was born on September 19, 1940, in Dallas County, Alabama, where his father, John A. Givhan, and his uncle, State Senator Walter Givhan, were associated in the family farming interests at Safford. He attended Orrville High School and then Marion Military Institute, where he was graduated in 1958 as Best All Around Cadet and Valedictorian of the High School Class. In

1962, he was graduated from Auburn University with a degree in agricultural administration. While at Auburn he was active in ROTC affairs and was a member of Alpha Gamma Rho social fraternity.

John entered the U. S. Army following graduation from Auburn, was trained as a helicopter pilot, and was sent to Vietnam in 1963 as the war there was beginning to escalate. He flew 317 combat assault missions before being shot in the leg through the bottom of his aircraft during a fight deep in the Mekong Delta. A main artery was severed, and John's life was saved only by the battalion's surgeon, Dr. Jim Ralph, climbing aboard the helicopter that was ferrying him to a hospital and holding the severed artery closed with his fingers for the three-hour trip. John's right leg was amputated below the knee the next week. Through courage, pride and determination, he took his first steps on an artificial leg three months later. During his seven and half months in Vietnam, John was awarded the Bronze Star, Purple Heart, and Air Medal with nine oak leaf clusters. He was discharged in October 1964, with the rank of First Lieutenant.

After leaving military service, John spent

two years working as district secretary to Congressman Glen Andrews. He married Martha James of Birmingham in 1966 and worked for South Central Bell Telephone Company in Montgomery for three years before deciding to go to law school. He was graduated cum laude from Cumberland, where he was associate editor of the Law Review, and with Martha and their one-year old son, John, moved to Andalusia to join the firm.

In 1974, Harold applied for and was selected as one of fifteen lawyers from all parts of the country to participate in a pilot project of the National Endowment for the Humanities. He and his family spent a month in Millbrook, New York, as he participated in the Humanities Seminar for Lawyers, a program of extensive reading and discussion on the theme, "Law and Liberty," under the leadership of Columbia University Philosophy Professor, Dr. Charles Frankel.

John was actively involved in all aspects of the firm's practice from corporate work to litigation but became focused on litigation. He was admitted to the Florida Bar – a first for members of the firm, although during the more relaxed days of the past, the firm had always had substantial business interests and

clients in Florida. He joined the Lions Club and was active in the Baptist Church and the American Legion. John and Martha's daughter, Endsley, was born in 1974. In 1975, John was chosen as one of five young businessmen from South Alabama to participate in a Rotary Club sponsored Group Study Exchange to England. He spent six weeks in Southern England, living in the homes of several English Rotarians and learning about the English legal system, business, and way of life. He became a popular speaker at patriotic, civic, and social functions. In 1976, John became a partner in the firm and the firm changed its name to Albrittons & Givhan.



William Harold Albritton, IV

Albrittons & Givhan 1976 –1986

The firm's name may have changed, but its core values and business focus remained constant throughout this period, which was to see perhaps the most significant transition since Harold's untimely death in 1929.

While Bob provided valuable counsel to the younger members of the firm, as well as to clients, failing health caused him to curtail his activities in the early 1980s. Bill continued with a heavy workload in the service of his large clientele, while devoting many hours to his church for the remainder of his life, including service for a term as Moderator of John Knox Presbytery. On January 19, 1983, Bob died following a lengthy decline. He was soon followed by his brother, Bill, who died a few days after a sudden heart attack. Bill's death came, appropriately for this tax attorney, on April 15. As was the case with their father's death, the legal community across Alabama joined in mourning their loss. In a memorial resolution passed by the Alabama State Senate, Bill was referred to as a lawyer who "was one of the first attorneys in Alabama to concentrate

in the legal area of taxation and (who) was to become acknowledged as one of our state's leading experts in this field.” The Alabama State Bar in assemblage at its annual meeting adopted a resolution mourning the death of its former President, Bob. A section of the resolution which he would have especially appreciated referred to him as a lawyer who “showed a special kindness toward and patience with young members of the Bar, so many of whom are grateful for his tutelage and his contribution to their development.” Within three months’ time, these two brothers, who had taken over the firm in their early twenties, had held it together through the Great Depression and World War II, and had seen it flourish during more than fifty years of their leadership, passed from the scene. Through their ability, dedication, and character, they had left their marks on their community, their state, and their profession.

Harold concentrated most of his time in the defense of civil litigation during this time, becoming one of the most prominent litigators in the State. He lectured at various seminars in the State on trial techniques and served as President of Alabama Defense Lawyers Association. In the summer of 1976, he took

his family with him to San Francisco where he spent a week as a member of the faculty of the annual College of Advocacy at Hastings College of Law. He served as President of the Covington County Bar Association, a member of numerous State Bar Committees, two years as Chairman of the Insurance Services Committee of the State Bar, was elected to the Board of Bar Commissioners, and served three years on the State Bar's Disciplinary Commission. He became a member of the International Association of Insurance Counsel, National Association of Railroad Trial Counsel, Association of Insurance Attorneys, Alabama Law Institute, and took his father's place on the Board of Directors of the Alabama Law School Foundation. He remained active in civic affairs, serving as President of the Andalusia Rotary Club and the Andalusia Country Club, and helping organize and serving as a member of the LBW Community Arts Council. He was elected an Elder in the Presbyterian Church and served as President of the Board of Trustees of Community Hospital of Andalusia.

One of the firm's most fun traditions began in 1976 -- the annual Dove and Bull Shoot. For more than 20 years, on the opening

day of dove season, the firm, under the direction of Hunt Master John Givhan, invited clients to an old-fashioned barbeque followed by a dove shoot at the Givhan family farm at Safford. Lawyers, judges, clients, politicians, and friends all looked forward to this event each year with great anticipation.

In 1978, Hal, who was to begin the fifth generation's presence in the firm, was graduated from Andalusia High School, where he had been President of the local Key Club, as well as Key Club Lieutenant Governor, class president, and National Honor Society member. He enrolled as a freshman at Davidson College where he became a member of Kappa Alpha Order social fraternity. After two years, he transferred to the University of Alabama, where he majored in history and was named the outstanding history undergraduate at The University. He was graduated with high marks and entered the University of Alabama School of Law in 1982.

Upon Bob and Bill's deaths, Marvin moved into the position of Senior Partner, where he continued the firm's tradition of providing leadership in the profession. Long active in State Bar affairs, he had been elected as a delegate from Alabama to the governing

body of the American Bar Association, the House of Delegates, and served two terms. He was a member of the International Association of Insurance Counsel and was elected as a Fellow of the American Bar Foundation.

In the summer of 1984, Harold was chosen to serve as a faculty member at the Insurance Counsel Trial Academy held at Boulder, Colorado⁹. He was elected to a second term on the Board of Bar Commissioners and served as Vice President of the Alabama State Bar for 1985-1986.

John was City Attorney during the administration of Mayor Ben Williams. He served as President of the Covington County Bar Association and President of the Andalusia Area Chamber of Commerce. He was President of the National Alumni Association of Marion Institute and in 1984, he was honored by being named to the Board of Trustees of Samford University. He also taught a Sunday school class at the First Baptist Church.

Bill's death left huge shoes to fill in the

⁹ In 2008, Hal served as a faculty member at the same school, now known as the International Association of Defense Counsel Trial Academy, at Stanford University. This is one of the very few, if not the only, case of a father and a son both being asked to teach at this school.

area of estate and tax representation. In 1984, a search was launched for a new lawyer to do that work. Following short stays in that position by Clyde Harr, who continued to practice in Andalusia, and Reuben Cook, who returned home to Tuscaloosa, an ideal match was made with James Richard (Rick) Clifton, who was then a partner in an old and highly respected firm in Bessemer.

Rick was born on October 23, 1948 in Tarrant, Alabama. He grew up in Birmingham and was graduated from Banks High School, where he was President of the Student Body and a member of the National Honor Society and the basketball team. He enrolled at the University of Alabama in the School of Commerce and Business where he received an Air Force scholarship. Rick earned a degree in accounting in 1971 and was graduated in the top ten per cent of his class, with membership in Beta Gamma Sigma. While at the University, he married Judy Carol Martin, of Birmingham. He then attended Cumberland School of Law, where he was associate editor of the Law Review, Associate Justice of the Moot Court Board, a member of Curia Honoris, and was graduated cum laude in 1974. Entering the Judge Advocate General's

Corps of the U. S. Air Force, he served as a military lawyer for four years, being discharged with the rank of Captain in 1979 to join the firm of Stone, Patton and Kierce. He was made a partner in 1981 and the firm's name was later changed to Stone, Patton, Kierce & Clifton. Rick had a special interest in taxation, and after devoting two years of evenings and weekends to the University of Alabama's graduate tax program, he obtained the degree of Masters of Law in Taxation in 1981. It was his desire to devote more of his time to Tax matters and related fields which attracted him to this new opportunity in Andalusia. In September of 1984, he, Judy, and their children, Martin and Audra, moved to Andalusia where he became an associate in the firm. He quickly became involved in the firm's practice, he and his family joined the Presbyterian Church, and he became a Kiwanian.

In the summer of 1980, while working in Washington, D.C. as a summer intern to Congressman Bill Dickinson, Hal met Lucy Smith, of Mobile, who was an aide in the same office. Lucy moved to Tuscaloosa and they were married in July of 1983 while Hal was in law school. Their daughter, Elizabeth Rollins,

was born in December of 1984. He was graduated from law school in May 1985. Like Harold, Hal passed up an opportunity to join a large firm in Birmingham, answering instead the call of home. He returned with his family to Andalusia where he became the fifth generation of his family to enter the law firm founded by his great, great grandfather.

Albrittons, Givhan & Clifton 1986 – 1992

1986 was a busy year for the firm and all of its members. Marvin was honored by being chosen as one of two practicing attorneys to serve as a member of the Alabama Court of the Judiciary. Harold was one of two Alabama lawyers to be elected as a Fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers and was inducted in formal ceremonies at the Waldorf-Astoria in New York City. He was chosen as President-elect of the Alabama Law School Foundation. John went on the lecture circuit, giving continuing legal education programs in insurance law. Rick worked hard to get his arms around the firm's large estate, tax, and corporate practice, and Hal started down the long road of learning how to try a lawsuit, losing his first jury trial to a *pro se* plaintiff. He was also tasked with conducting a review of the firm's technological equipment and coming up with a plan for the implementation of computers, digital phones, etc. Everyone was feeling the excitement of preparing to move into the firm's second century.

In October of 1987, the firm celebrated its 100th Anniversary with a reception at the firm's newly expanded office and a dinner at the Andalusia Country Club. The partners' extended families attended, toasting the past and the future. The past century was one in which the lawyers, their families, and all the Albrittons could, should, and did derive a huge sense of pride and accomplishment. However, while the firm remained strong, inexorable forces in the business and legal community were working a profound change on the very nature of the practice of law in small towns across America, and, in retrospect, local defense law firms were becoming increasingly anachronistic.

Marvin maintained an active trial practice, worker's compensation practice, and real estate practice for the remainder of his life. He served as a member of the Board of Directors of John Knox Manor and he and Ophelia devoted a great deal of their leisure time to visiting with their daughter, Emily, their son-in-law, Dr. Kenneth Hill, and their grandchildren, Alice and Ben, who lived in Pensacola. Marvin passed away on March 26, 1987 – just six months after the firm's centennial celebration. He was fondly

remembered by everyone who knew him as a gentle man (and gentleman). With his death, a truly remarkable generation of lawyers and men was completely gone from the firm.

Harold, by this time, had developed a heavy state-wide litigation practice. He served on the Board of Directors of The Commercial Bank and was an Elder in the First Presbyterian Church. He was elected to two terms on the Board of Bar Commissioners and served as Chairman of the State Bar's Supreme Court Liaison Committee. He was elected President of the Alabama State Bar in 1990, assuming the position that his father had held 20 years before him. The following year, Harold was nominated by President George H.W. Bush as a federal judge for the United States District Court for the Middle District of Alabama. He and Jane moved to Montgomery in 1991, and at his formal investiture, Hal swore him into office. They continued to enjoy weekends at their townhome in Bluewater Bay, Florida, and on their sailboat there, the Joyful Noise, as well as with extensive foreign and domestic travel.

John became a member of the Association of Insurance Attorneys and continued with a heavy litigation practice. He

served President of the Covington County Auburn Alumni Association and was active in the Bulldog Booster's Club. Increasingly, John became contemplative of his time in Vietnam and began working on a memoir of the time which was eventually published as Rice and Cotton: South Vietnam and South Alabama, Xlibris Corporation, 2000.

Rick took full charge of the firm's tax, estate planning, and corporate work, but also spent considerable time with banking matters. He was a Major in the Air Force Reserve, which took him to Maxwell Air Force Base on a regular basis.

Hal concentrated his practice on litigation. He had been mentored by Marvin in workers' compensation and assumed that practice in addition to a portion of the firm's insurance defense practice. Upon his father's appointment to the bench, he assumed responsibility for the bulk of that business as well. He became a member of the International Association of Defense Counsel and attended their trial school in Boulder, Colorado. He lectured around the state, and was published, on the growing use of technology in the practice of law. Continuing the firm and family's tradition of service to the

organized Bar, he served on many State Bar committees and task forces, including forming and serving as the first Chair of the Bar's Small Firm and Solo Practitioners' Section. He also served for nine years as Chair of the Bar's Character and Fitness Committee which is tasked with passing on the suitability of candidates to sit for the Bar Exam. He served as President of the Presbyterian Men of the Church and was ordained an Elder like so many other members of his family. He joined the Kiwanis Club, where his Key Club experiences were an asset, and served on the Board of Directors for the Andalusia Area Chamber of Commerce. He was a member of the Andalusia City Schools' Foundation. He was County Attorney, and successfully oversaw the political landmine of the construction of a new jail for the County. In 1989, Hal was appointed to the position of City Judge for the City of Andalusia – a position he would hold for the next eleven years. During his personal time, Hal became an accomplished SCUBA diver and he and Lucy spent most weekends with friends on his boat in Destin spearfishing and hunting for lobster. He also began riding motorcycles, and he and Lucy enjoyed riding all over the country on

their separate bikes, ultimately riding in more than 30 states.

In 1990, anticipating Harold's taking the bench, the firm began a search for a lawyer who could help assume some of the workload that Harold was leaving behind. The search ended with William Bruce Alverson, "Bill", a graduate of Auburn University and the University of Alabama School of Law, who came to Andalusia from Montgomery where he practiced with an insurance defense firm there. In 1992, Bill became a partner in the firm and the firm's name was changed to Albrittons, Givhan, Clifton and Alverson.



Thomas Bynum Albritton

Albrittons, Givhan, Clifton and Alverson 1992 –1996

In 1985, Thomas Bynum Albritton “Tom”, who would later become the second of the fifth generation to join the firm, was graduated from Andalusia High School where he had been President of the Junior and Senior classes, as well as the Student Government Association. He then attended the University of Alabama where he was a member of ODK, Jasons, and the University’s Who’s Who, among other campus activities. While in law school he married Amanda Riggs from Camden. Thus, he joined his brother, father, grandfather, and great grandfather as students who were married while in law school. Obviously, the first Harold’s opinion, quoted in The Corolla while he was in law school, that “Married is the best state of man in general” was one more idea all the generations agreed on.

In 1992, Tom was graduated from the University of Alabama School of Law. Like his brother and father, Tom declined the opportunity to work at a large Birmingham

law firm and chose instead to come home and join Hal as the fifth generation of Albrittons to practice law in the family's Andalusia firm.¹⁰ As had other family members, Tom quickly became active with the organized Bar and was elected as President of the Young Lawyers Section of the Alabama State Bar.

John continued to try cases during this period, but increasingly spent his time writing and being active with veterans' groups.

Rick became active in economic development in Covington County and spent much of his time representing and giving advice to the Industrial Development Board in addition to his continuation of the firm's business, estate, and taxation practice.

Hal continued the firm's workers' compensation work during this period but began to develop a specialty in healthcare law which would sustain him for the remainder of his practice in Andalusia. By the early 1990s, Andalusia developed a deep and vibrant

¹⁰ Tom was joined in law school by his big brother, Benjamin Howard Albritton, "Ben," Harold and Jane's middle son. After having been graduated from Auburn University with a degree in Building Science and working for three years in the construction business, Ben decided that he "really did want to be a lawyer." He took a different route after law school and is now a highly respected Assistant Attorney General for the State of Alabama in Montgomery.

community of physicians and other healthcare professionals. The Albritton Firm (as it had been commonly known for years) had organized the hospital and set up the practices of most of the doctors in town, and Hal enjoyed a close business relationship and friendship with the hospital and doctors. During this period, the filing of medical malpractice lawsuits dramatically increased and Hal spent the better part of the next 10 years defending doctors, hospitals, nurses, and other health care entities in these cases throughout South Alabama. Although Hal won virtually all of these cases for his clients, forces within the insurance industry and the legal community were working to make this depth of representation virtually impossible for small town law firms in the future.

With Hal increasingly occupied with healthcare litigation, the firm looked to hire another lawyer to help shoulder the workload. This time, the firm hired its first female lawyer, Julie Sorrells Moody, “Julie”, a graduate of Auburn University and Cumberland Law School who grew up in Opp, Alabama. This hire had the multiple benefits of adding another outstanding lawyer, increasing the firm’s diversity, and expanding the firm’s

footprint to the eastern part of the county.

Albrittons, Clifton, Alverson and Moody 1998-2001

John retired from practice in 1996 and the firm changed its name briefly to Albrittons, Clifton and Alverson (1996-1998) before making Julie a partner and changing the name to Albrittons, Clifton, Alverson and Moody in 1998. Although the workload was being handled adequately by Rick, Hal, Bill, Tom, and Julie, an opportunity to hire a truly outstanding lawyer and friend came along and the members of the firm just didn't think they could pass it up. Ben Bowden, a native of Brundidge, Alabama, and Tom first became friends at AlaFlo Boy Scout camp as young boys, attending camps and a National Jamboree together. They remained friends while attending the University of Alabama as undergraduates, and their friendship continued through law school where Ben served as managing editor of the Alabama Law Review and qualified for membership in Order of the Coif. After graduation, Ben served in the Air Force active service as a JAG officer in Bitburg, Germany and later at Aviano Air

Force Base in Italy where he was extremely active in trial work. When his commitment ended, Ben had multiple opportunities. He was offered a position with the Air Force in which he would have been in charge of litigation all along the East Coast of the United States. Also, he was courted by all of the large Birmingham firms to join them. He wanted to join a small-town practice, though, and the firm was glad to have him. He began to take on litigation matters, became a partner in 2001, and the firm's name changed to Albrittons, Clifton, Alverson, Moody and Bowden.

Tom's practice was varied but focused on litigation for both individuals and businesses throughout his career. He did trial work for these clients in state and federal courts, from Montgomery to Mobile and in all points in between. His favorite memory from his time at the firm, however, was a case in which he represented his former High School English teacher in a case involving her family's homeplace in Conecuh County. After successfully winning what ended up being a very contentious case between feuding family members, his client and good friend had a marker placed in their family cemetery

recognizing his work in the case. He often said that it was best fee he was ever paid.



Tom and his family with special clients

As Tom grew in his practice, he increasingly focused on representing public sector clients such as counties, municipalities, elected officials, and public boards. This practice area was not only rewarding work but also served to provide a career change for him a few years down the road.

In 2001, Hal saw that, due to consolidation in the insurance industry and a related contraction of the lawyers who were able to represent defendants as lead counsel in

complex litigation, it was unlikely that he would be able to continue to handle the kinds of cases that had become his preference. He did not want to take the route of most other small-town lawyers and start suing people, but he also did not relish the prospect of not being able to compete for high level complex litigation. Reluctantly, he and Lucy discussed moving and he was offered a position with the law firm of Bradley, Arant, Rose and White. Bradley, Arant was and is Alabama's largest law firm and one of its most prestigious. Bradley, Arant and the Albritton firm had a long history and many close friendships, and Hal, Lucy and Rollins moved to Birmingham in the Summer of 2001. Hal is a partner at Bradley, Arant, and his practice is centered around litigation with an emphasis on healthcare litigation, the practice area he most enjoyed in Andalusia. He has and does actively represent the University of Alabama at Birmingham system and Encompass Health for which he manages malpractice litigation nationwide. Hal and Lucy's daughter, Rollins, is married to Bannon Thorpe, and they have three sons, John Bannon, Charles, and Anderson.

Albrittons, Clifton, Alverson, Moody and Bowden 2001-2009

In 1996, Judge Harold Albritton designated the use of The Albritton Fund, a fund established by Bob Albritton and contributed to by several members of the family, to establish the Albritton Lecture Series at The University of Alabama School of Law. He took the lead in recruiting the speakers. That lecture series grew into one of the most prominent of its kind and has to date hosted two Chief Justices and ten Associate Justices of the Supreme Court of the United States as well as Chief Justices of three foreign countries (Israel, Australia, and Canada) as Albritton Lecturers.

Tom and his family found time for ski trips, as well as camping and back country backpacking trips in the Rocky Mountains and other locations out West. Tom was an avid runner and achieved his goal of running a marathon before he turned 40. He completed his second marathon at 45. Tom served three terms as a member of the Alabama State Bar's Board of Bar Commissioners, making him at

the time the only member whose father and grandfather had also been members of the Board of Bar Commissioners. He also served as a member of the State Bar's Disciplinary Commission. As with other members of the family, he was heavily engaged in civic activities where he served as a member and President of the Andalusia Rotary Club, and President of the LBW Foundation. He also served as City Attorney under two Mayors. During this time, Tom also served multiple terms as an elder of the First Presbyterian Church and later served as the Moderator of the Presbytery of South Alabama of the Presbyterian Church in the USA.¹¹

Ben Bowden, who at this point was a Lt. Col in the USAF, was called to active duty in Iraq in the aftermath of Operation Iraqi Freedom, which ultimately removed Saddam Hussein from power. Upon returning, Ben left the firm upon his appointment as Probate Judge for Covington County by Governor Bob Riley, a position he held until successfully running for and winning a position as Circuit Judge for the 22nd Judicial Circuit of Alabama.

¹¹ Tom and his family would later leave First Presbyterian and began attending St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Andalusia. Later, when they lived in Montgomery, they attended St. John's Episcopal Church.

Bill left the firm during this period of time as well and began practicing by himself in the areas of domestic relations and criminal defense. He also developed a “hobby” which would later provide him with a second career as a much sought-after personal coach and celebrity.

Albrittons, Clifton and Moody 2009-2019

As partners left the firm, the remaining lawyers absorbed their clients and continued the practice areas which had sustained its lawyers throughout the firm's history. These years were some of the most productive of the firm's history as the firm's members worked heavily with public entities and were actively involved in local industrial recruitment and development. The firm also continued a robust worker's compensation defense practice that took the members to all corners of the state.

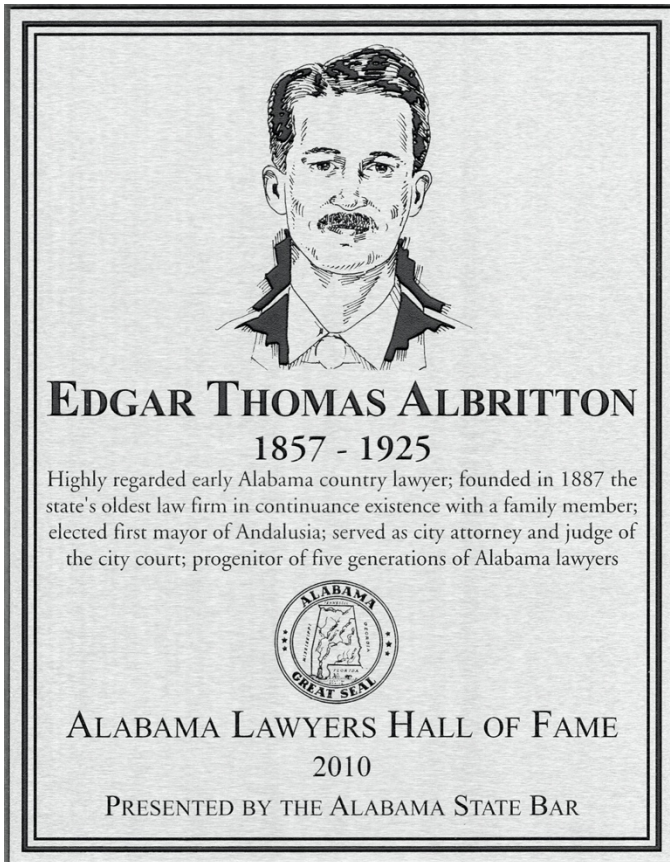
One of the proudest moments in the firm's history occurred in 2011 when the Alabama State Bar created the William Harold Albritton Pro Bono Leadership Award in recognition of Judge Albritton's establishment of the Alabama State Bar Volunteer Lawyers Program during his presidency. Judge Albritton was the award's first recipient, and it is presented each year to an individual attorney who has shown outstanding leadership and commitment to improving pro bono legal services to Alabama's low-income citizens, cementing for all time Judge Albritton's

commitment in particular, and the Albritton family's commitment in general to service as a vital part of what it means to be a lawyer. One can only imagine the pride with which the first Harold would have felt to have his words so solidly embodied by his descendants.

In 2014, Tom was selected to be a member of that year's class of Leadership Alabama and in 2013 was one of the state's lawyers to be inducted as a member of the Alabama Law Foundation. Tom's son, James, is a graduate of the University of Texas at Austin and is employed by Dell Technologies as a software engineer. Tom's daughter, Hunter, is also a graduate of the University of Texas at Austin and is in her final year at Duke Law School. She is interested in practicing in a large city and has accepted an offer to join the prestigious firm of Vinson and Elkins in Houston. She will become the 6th generation of the family of Edgar Thomas Albritton to become a lawyer. Poetically, she is studying just a few miles from where her great-great-great grandfather studied, lived and worked before moving to Andalusia. In many ways, things have come full circle.

The firm's founder, Edgar Thomas Albritton, was posthumously inducted into the

Alabama Lawyers Hall of Fame in 2010, becoming one of just 30 lawyers in the history of the Alabama State Bar to be so honored up to that date.



Plaque Hanging in Alabama Supreme Court Building

In 2012, Rick left the firm to become the President and CEO of the Covington County Economic Development Commission.

In 2014, Julie left the firm to become the District Judge for the 22nd Judicial Circuit.

In March 2015, Tom left the firm to accept the position of Executive Director of the Alabama Ethics Commission in Montgomery, effectively ending the firm's years of active practice. Tom continued for the next four years to resolve cases, and, with his wife Amanda's help, to review and archive the firm's files as well as formally conclude the 132-year practice. Given the number of years the firm had existed, as well as the firm's refusal to discard any file of even possible future relevance, it is certainly no surprise that it took this long to wrap things up. The firm was officially dissolved on December 13, 2019. The firm's building was sold to a kidney specialist who converted it into a medical clinic. The barrister bookcases now in the Covington County Courthouse and in Hal Albritton's home came from the firm's library.

The End

Isolating an exact cause for the end of something special is often impossible, and that is certainly the case here. 132 years after Ed. T. Albritton ended his practice in North Carolina to come to the “end of nowhere”, much had changed in society, in the practice of law, and in the world of business. Gone was the fledgling town in need of a lawyer and its first mayor. Gone, too, was the business boom which had produced a number of large and successful local industries. The world had become smaller and smaller with the advent of better and faster communication. What used to take weeks to accomplish now took seconds, and the need for most business to be conducted face to face was eliminated. Electronic research virtually eliminated the firm’s need for the extensive law library amassed over the century which, at one time was the largest in South Alabama and which gave the firm a decided edge in legal scholarship. Indeed, much had changed since the firm had the first fax machine and then the first computer among Andalusia lawyers. Most local businesses of any size were bought out by

national concerns who did not feel the need for “local” lawyers. With the increasing cost of litigation and the popularity of alternative dispute resolution, the art of trying cases fell into disuse and the need to have a lawyer known to and trusted by the local population lessened. The insurance industry, long a mainstay of business for the firm, began a steady contraction in the 1980s and came to rely on a smaller and smaller group of lawyers to provide their representation. Indeed, many companies moved this function entirely in house. Too, lawyer advertising, anathema to “reputable” lawyers for many years, began to be not only allowed, but accepted and popular. This had, and continues to have, a profound effect on the lawyer’s role and status in society. Suddenly, the first Harold’s promise to his son Bill that at the end of the day, “you will have drawn around you real men who think, strive, play the game fairly and intelligently – who admit you their superior because dependent on you to keep perfect the business structures for which they have given their lives ... and in the end be poor in this world’s goods, but able to look all men in the face and say: ‘I am your equal and your peer’” seemed far less likely to be true. While large scale change had come to

the legal industry and to the Albritton firm before, the changes which happened during the latter part of the 20th century wrought a complete re-thinking of what it meant to be a “local” lawyer to the members of the firm. Once a staple of almost all small towns, the existence of general all-purpose business and defense firms all but disappeared across the country. Faced with the uncomfortable reality that continued practice in Andalusia would require a redefinition of who they were as lawyers and men, and that they were likely to need to begin advertising and suing local businesses and people to stay afloat, the members of the firm began to contemplate doing something else.

By the time the end came, the partners had moved into other important positions. Ben Bowden is presently serving his second term as Circuit Judge for Covington County while Julie Moody is serving as District Judge for Covington County. Rick Clifton is President of the Covington County Economic Development Commission, a job he was well suited for given his years of industrial recruitment and representation of businesses in Covington County and elsewhere. He continues to serve in that role, being

responsible for helping Andalusia and Covington County grow and expand. Bill Alverson, in addition to his law practice, has made his mark nationally in what began as a hobby -- coaching girls to compete in beauty pageants using the skills he learned throughout his legal career to help them specifically with interviews. Bill was teased about this hobby by his partners but had a good sense of humor about it and ultimately was recognized by several national publications as the premier beauty pageant coach in America. He secured a national reality TV show about his coaching, and later became an executive producer for an original Netflix series based on his life which became that service's most popular show. Bill now splits his time between Andalusia, his home in Florida, and Los Angeles and enjoyed the last laugh about his "hobby". Tom Albritton, as Executive Director of the Alabama Ethics Commission supervises a staff of 15 in Montgomery. He has earned respect for his leadership there as well as nationally among leaders in other states. Hal Albritton is still heavily involved in private practice on a national basis with Bradley. He and Lucy live on their farm in St. Clair County, and Harold continues in Senior status as a United States

District Judge for the Middle District of Alabama. He and Jane live in Montgomery.

In 2019, Tom formally dissolved the firm.

132 years from beginning to end, with a lasting and proud legacy and an unbroken, direct line of Edgar Thomas's descendants. Very few businesses of any kind can say as much. The story began with one lawyer taking a chance on a new place to live and a new career, and it ended just as it began with one lawyer — the founder's great, great grandson. In the intervening years, the firm and its partners helped grow Andalusia, forming and advising its businesses and representing its banks and other institutions. When things changed, the firm represented its citizens and produced some of the best courtroom lawyers known in the state in a county known for outstanding lawyers. When things changed again, the firm again focused on representing Andalusia's institutions and helped Alabama's public entities serve its citizens better. It produced two presidents of the Alabama State Bar, and the only father and son pair. It produced a federal judge and other jurists. Its members served the legal profession through service on the Alabama Board of Bar

Commissioners as well as the American Bar Association Board of Governors. They were always active in civic affairs outside of the profession, coaching ball teams, leading Boy Scouts, and serving as leaders in our churches. The firm was exceptionally stable throughout its history. No partners left the firm until Harold was appointed to his judgeship, and each partner who left thereafter went with the blessing, continued support, and continued friendship of the remaining members. Wherever situated, these lawyers continue to serve the profession and their communities. Throughout its history, the firm's lawyers thought, strove, and played the game fairly and intelligently. Harold Albritton wrote the following in 1987 in contemplation of the firm's 100th anniversary and it is just as true today as it was then:

As the firm looks to the future,
time might well be taken to also
look to the past, and to
contemplate things which have
contributed to the firm's success
and long life.

From the desperation of a young

lawyer at a circus in South Alabama who found the “end of nowhere” and changed his despair into resolve to build a new life, through wars and depression, hard times and good times, to the enthusiasm of five lawyers in taking a still growing practice into its second century, from Ed. T. Albritton’s horse and buggy to Hal Albritton’s computer, certain thoughts suggest themselves as being important lessons for the future.

Tradition is a great strength. A tradition of flexibility which reveres the past but is not bound by it and which adapts to change when change is for the better is a particular strength. Knowledge, competence, skill, and ability are all important assets to success as a lawyer; hard work is essential.

A lawyer will be more than a mere technician, to the lasting benefit of himself, his clients, and his fellow man, if he places importance not

only on dealing with the day to day duties of a law practice, but also on personal integrity, intellectual pursuits, social awareness, civic participation, service to the profession, and service to God.

To these thoughts and to lessons to be learned from the past, let future generations take heed.