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Spilman Thomas & Battle offers law firm's 150-year history, recent expansion in new book

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The roots of law firm **Spilman Thomas & Battle** run deep in Charleston, W. Va., where the firm was founded 150 years ago.

And the future of the firm, which has tripled in size during the last two decades, lies in offices like that in Winston-Salem, now the 140-attorney firm's second-largest.

That past and future come together in a new book commissioned by the firm and written by journalist [Elizabeth Jill Wilson](#) to mark the firm's 150th anniversary this year.

Partner Jeff Patton, member-in-charge of the Winston-Salem office, said this book was born out of the desire to preserve what had largely been an oral history of the firm.

About 25 years ago, when the firm still had fewer than 50 attorneys, the partners began the preliminary work to compile the early history of the firm that was started in 1864 in Charleston by [Benjamin Harrison Smith](#) and [Edward Boardman Knight](#).

"We had the black-and-white photos of the founding members, and over time, as we moved into second and third generations, the history was a verbal history," Patton said.

Those efforts to collect the firm's history picked up during the last five years, with Wilson, a former reporter and press secretary for former West Virginia Gov. [Gaston Caperton](#), with an eye on producing the book during the firm's 150th year.

Several thousand copies of the book, in hardback and paperback versions, [along with a free electronic edition](#), have been produced, primarily for clients, Patton said.

Patton, who joined the firm about 10 years ago, said what stood out for him within the firm's history is how the firm has evolved in partnership with its clients, and how it's undergone an

dramatic expansion during the past two decades.

"Twenty years ago, we were a West Virginia firm that had 46 lawyers," Patton said.

Along with the Winston-Salem office, which opened in 2006 and is the 14th largest in the Triad, the firm now has offices in Pennsylvania and Virginia.

"That expansion and evolution of Spilman is a partnership with our clients to handle their work regionally and nationally to get to where we are today," Patton said. "This book is a reflection of where we have come from, and what we are looking forward to next."

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