

A Brief History of the Historic Sullivant Building and the Law Firm Connected to It



The Sullivant Building has served Gainesville, Texas, in a variety of roles for more than a century, including as a communications office, manufacturing space, laundry facility, and law office. This history traces the building's changing uses and the attorneys whose public service and professional partnerships shaped the law firm associated with it.

Early History of the Sullivant Building

The Sullivant Building was constructed in the early 1890s. It was first used by Western Union as a telegraph office and later served as a garment factory. During its use as a garment factory, electric cords hung from the building's 14-foot ceilings to power sewing machines arranged in rows from the front of the building to the back. The building was later used as a steam laundry, a use that also relied on the existing overhead electrical system.



Courtesy of Western Union



Public Domain, [Archival Reference: J83800 / PG 126]

C.F. Sullivant Purchases the Building

C.F. Sullivant purchased the building in 1950 and renovated it for use as a law office by lowering the ceilings and adding walls to create a front reception area, two offices, a library, and a bathroom. At that time, Mr. Sullivant was in partnership with George West.



Growth of the Law Firm

Herbert Muerer, who primarily served as vice president of Muenster State Bank, later became a partner, although he did not maintain an office in the building. Belvin Harris joined the firm directly after law school. C.F. Sullivan's son, William "Bill" Sullivan, joined the firm after completing active duty in the Army Reserve, and around that same time, an additional office and a second bathroom were added to the building. George West eventually left the firm and moved to Dallas. In 1965, William Sullivan left the firm to become County Attorney of Cooke County, Texas, leaving C.F. Sullivan, Belvin Harris, and Herbert Muerer as partners in the firm. Belvin "Bill" Harris would go on to hold various positions such as Cooke County Judge (during which time he established the Cooke County Court at Law), a criminal defense attorney and a family law attorney in private practice, the city attorney for Lindsay, Texas, and the city attorney for Gainesville, Texas.

Public Service and Firm Leadership, 1971–1981

In 1971, William B. Sullivan became District Attorney of the 235th Judicial District. In 1973, Mr. Sullivan left the District Attorney's office after being elected to the Legislature, where he served for eight years.

C.F. Sullivan died in 1978. After his death, his son, William B. Sullivan, became Managing Partner of the law firm, and ownership of the Sullivan Building passed to him. William continued serving in the Legislature while managing the firm until 1981, when he left the Legislature to practice law full-time with the firm then known as Sullivan, Sullivan, Underwood, Meurer, Shaw & Zielinski Law Firm. The partners at that time were William Sullivan, Larry Sullivan, Greg Underwood, Herbert Meurer, Tex Shaw, and Ed Zielinski, who went on to become the County Attorney for Cooke County, Texas.

Larry Sullivan and Judicial Transitions

In 1982, after serving as County Attorney for Cooke County, Texas, Jerry Woodlock joined the law firm and practiced there until 1988, when he was elected judge of the 235th Judicial District Court.

Larry Sullivan served as Cooke County Judge from 1970 to 1976 and as District Judge of the 235th Judicial District Court from 1976 to 1988. After leaving the bench in 1988, he entered private practice with the law firm, then known as Henry, Hatcher & Sullivan Law Firm.

Fire and Renovation

In 1993, there was a fire in the Sullivant Building that is believed to have been caused by a faulty shoe-shine buffer. It took approximately six months to complete extensive renovations after the fire. The staff temporarily relocated to the building that is now the Cooke County Annex.

Later Partners and Recent Firm History



Over the years, Edwin Wright III, Jason Brinkley, and Joshua Brinkley also served as partners. Ed Wright passed away in 2016. The firm was known as Sullivant, Wright & Brinkley Law Firm until becoming Sullivant Law Firm, LLP in 2019, with William Sullivant and Larry Sullivant as partners.

In 2025, William Sullivant retired from full-time practice and became Of Counsel to the firm. That same year, Barron and Jennifer Slack moved from Lubbock to Gainesville, Texas, and partnered with Larry Sullivant to form Sullivant Slack Law Firm.

Barron later became Assistant District Attorney for the 235th Judicial District, and Jennifer later became Assistant County Attorney for Cooke County, Texas. In 2026, Larry B. Sullivant became the sole proprietor of Sullivant Law Firm, PLLC.

Through each transition, the firm has remained connected to the historic building, the Cooke County community, and a continuing tradition of public service and legal representation. From C.F. Sullivant's purchase of the building in 1950 to the present-day Sullivant Law Firm, PLLC, the firm's history reflects continuity and adaptation across generations. The legal legacy that began with C.F. Sullivant in 1950 continues today in the same location: the Historic Sullivant Building at 209 S. Dixon Street in Gainesville, Texas.



All historical information is based on personal memories, online research, and newspaper articles. Any errors are completely unintentional.

R. LaSalle 9/2026