

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

95 Years and Counting – the Legacy of the Nevada Bar¹



BY PAOLA ARMENI, ESQ., PRESIDENT, STATE BAR OF NEVADA

We had to start somewhere! In honor of this month's theme, I thought we could go down memory lane and learn how the State Bar of Nevada started.

On September 23, 1911, Nevada lawyers established the Nevada Bar Association. That year, attorneys from all over Nevada met at the Washoe County Courthouse. Their vision for the new organization was “to cultivate, and advance the science of jurisprudence; to promote reform in the law and in judicial procedure; to facilitate the administration of justice; to uphold and elevate the standard of honor, integrity, and courtesy in the legal profession; to encourage legal education and to promote a spirit of cordiality and brotherhood among members of the bar.” At the same time, Nevada attorneys adopted a constitution and bylaws, and elected officers – making Hugh H. Brown their first president.

Membership was voluntary and was dominated by Washoe County attorneys. In fact, by 1922, only three Las Vegas attorneys were members. At that time, a request was made that the Nevada Bar Association accept all members of the Las Vegas Bar as its own members. That proposal, made by A.H. Henderson, was approved in April 1922. But it was not until 1928 that then-president H.R. Cooke proposed that membership be required for all Nevada lawyers.

On January 21, 1928, in the afternoon session of the annual meeting, Sardis Summerfield submitted the following resolution to gain approval for Cooke's proposal:

RESOLVED BY THE NEVADA STATE BAR ASSOCIATION: It is the sense of the Nevada State Bar Association that it should be incorporated by special act of present special session of the Nevada legislature which shall be a copy of the present state bar act of the State of California with only such changes therein as are necessary to make the act an act of the Nevada state legislature.

In that same year, the Nevada State Legislature passed a bill to form what is now the State Bar of Nevada.

In compliance with the provisions of AB 12, Chief Justice Sanders named the members of the organizing commission, who would meet, elect officers, and formulate the rules of the State Bar of Nevada. The four commissioners named were Cooke, A.L. Haight of Fallon, Sardis Summerfield of Reno, and Senator Albert L. Scott of Pioche. Scott was unanimously elected as the bar's second president at a meeting in Reno on April 30, 1928. The districts and

number of members of the board were established by county groupings in AB 12, Section 9:

- one member from Clark and Lincoln;
- one member from Elko;
- two members from Ormsby, Eureka, Lander, Humboldt and Churchill;
- one member from Lyon, Douglas, Mineral, Nye, Esmeralda Pershing and Storey;
- and four members from Washoe.

In 1929, Leo A. McNamee became the first Las Vegas attorney to be nominated to the board. Over the years, the location of members has dramatically shifted. Clark County is now the home to most of the attorneys who practice in the state, and as a result representation on the board from that county has gone from one seat to nine seats. Washoe County still maintains four seats, while Carson City and the rest of the rurals make up the last two seats.

As discussed above, H.R. Cooke of Tonopah was the first official president of the current State Bar of Nevada. After him, 97 more presidents have followed.² Of note, Cooke was the first Washoe County bar president. A Clark County attorney did not become president until 1943, and that was A.W. Ham Sr. Further, cementing themselves in Nevada history, Margo Pisevich became the first female president in 1994 and Bryan Scott became the first African American president in 2016.

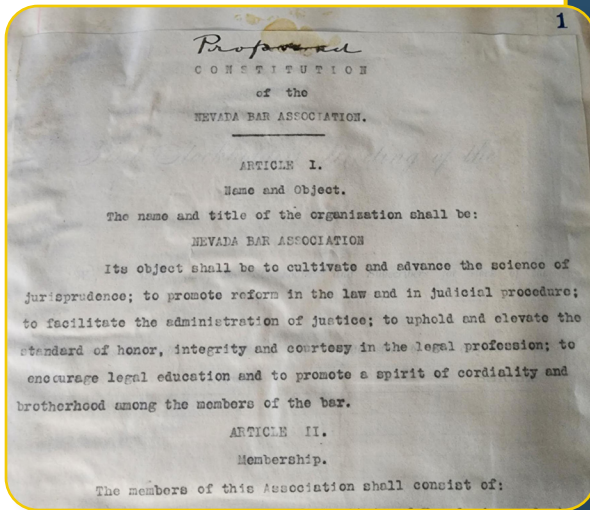
By the end of 1929, there were 345 active members of the bar. Today, we have 9,303 active members of the bar.

It is astonishing to realize that in just a few short years, we will be celebrating 100 years of the State Bar of Nevada's existence. The last several decades have shown how we as an organization have grown and simply keep getting better year by year. Cheers to more decades of a successful State Bar of Nevada!

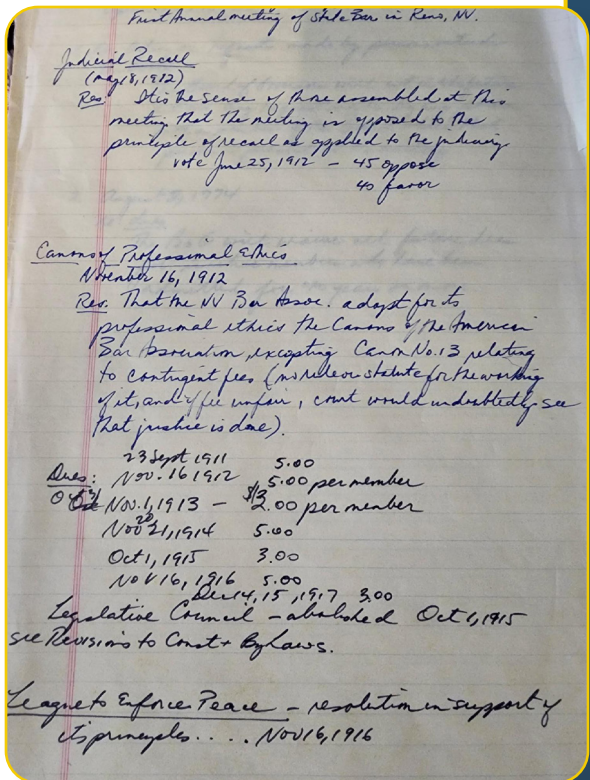
PAOLA ARMENI can be reached at president@nvbar.org. For weekly updates from the bar, follow “State Bar of Nevada - Board of Governors Updates” on Facebook.

ENDNOTES:

1. Johnston, Hon. Robert (Ret.), *State Bar of Nevada: Our Early Origins*, 6, Nevada Lawyer, June 2008.
2. Johnston, Hon. Robert (Ret.), *The State Bar of Nevada: How We Came to Be*, Nevada Lawyer, January 2003."



Proposed Constitution for the Nevada Bar Association, 1911



Minutes from the First Annual Meeting of the State Bar, stating that bar dues were \$5 in 1911.

MEET YOUR FINANCIAL HEROES

Annually, more than \$600 million is held in Nevada lawyer trust accounts. These financial heroes have agreed to pay favorable rates on all IOLTA accounts under deposit. Leadership institutions pay premium rates.

The Nevada Bar Foundation grants more than 97% of the interest earned on these dollars to statewide legal service organizations serving more than 37,000 Nevada families.

American First National Bank

- Bank of America
- Bank of George
- Bank of Nevada
- Bank of the West
- Chase
- Citibank
- City National Bank
- East West Bank
- Financial Horizons Credit Union
- First Citizens Bank
- First Foundation Bank
- First Independent Bank
- First Savings Bank
- First Security Bank of Nevada
- GenuBank

Heritage Bank

- Lexicon Bank
- Meadows Bank
- Nevada Bank & Trust
- Nevada State Bank
- Northern Trust Bank
- Pacific Premiere Bank
- Plumas Bank
- Royal Business Bank
- Silver State Schools Credit Union
- Town and Country Bank
- US Bank
- Valley Bank of Nevada (BNLV)
- Washington Federal
- Wells Fargo

