Banner Witcoff is 100!

Banner Witcoff is proud of our rich, 100-year history but more importantly, we are proud of our client relationships. More than anything, we value the trust we have earned from our clients by protecting their business assets for a century.

We are also proud of the role we have played in shaping IP law by representing clients in groundbreaking cases before courts across the country, including the U.S. Supreme Court, Federal Circuit and ITC. We celebrate 100 years of excellence in IP as we look toward the future, providing sound legal guidance and inventive solutions to power business for start-ups, Fortune 500 companies, and everything in between.

From Crops to Patents and Trademarks

Though we have been known as Banner Witcoff since 1997, the firm's beginnings date back to 1920 when we were Bair Freeman. Then, many of our early clients were farmers and paid for their legal services in crops and produce. Our Chicago office opened in 1937, where we began to represent clients like Lenox, Honeywell and Meredith Publishing. Our Washington, D.C. office opened in 1960 and an office in Boston followed in 1985. Our fourth office, in Portland, Oregon, opened in 1997.

In 1978, name founder Don Banner was appointed Commissioner of the United States Patent and Trademark Office, kicking off a tradition of deep knowledge in USPTO policies among firm attorneys. This experience has been widely recognized by legal and industry organizations.

A Role in History

In 1980, we won verdicts for defendants in the history-making case Diamond v. Chakrabarty, which established that the bacterium a General Electric engineer developed to break down crude oil — and living, genetically-altered organisms in general — could be patented. We made history again in 2001 with New York Times v. Tasini, in which the court ruled that publishing articles by freelance journalists, that were licensed specifically for print editions of the New York Times and other print publications, in electronic databases such as LexisNexis or University Microfilms International was a violation of those journalists' copyrights.

Computer Pioneers

True to our values, Banner Witcoff stands at the forefront of innovation and has a special history in the field of computer technology. Name founder Sheldon Witcoff was the first examiner of patent applications for electronic computers for the U.S. Patent Office in 1949. In 1973, we participated in a nine-month trial, one of the longest in history at the time, to prove that John Atanasoff was the first inventor of the electric computer, the ENIAC. In the late 1960's, we also pioneered the use of computers in courtroom pre-trial discovery and document management.

Making and Breaking Records

Banner Witcoff broke our own record for the most design patent grants in a single year. According to USPTO records, the firm procured 1,032 U.S. design patents in 2016. The firm set the prior record with 959 U.S. design patents in 2008. Also, for 16 consecutive years, we have obtained more U.S. design patents than any other law firm in the United States. We continue to lead in procuring design patent portfolios. In addition to direct design filings around the world, we have filed hundreds of design registrations in the World Intellectual Property Office.

Our attorneys lead the way in all areas of IP. Banner Witcoff has been recognized as one of the best performing and most active law firms in inter partes review (IPR). And, in 2019, Banner Witcoff received industry recognition and an "Impact Case of the Year" award for our work representing Converse in its trademark battle against entities selling knock-off versions of the company's iconic Chuck Taylor All Star sneaker. We are excited to share more of our history as we celebrate our centennial.