



History

Our place in time, our contributions to history

Throughout our storied history, we have engaged in and embraced our changing society and have participated in some of the more significant events that have improved our communities.

Who We Are

- Patrick Henry Nelson II (1856-1914) of Camden and Columbia, S.C. founded Nelson Mullins in 1897.
- Nelson was the Fifth Circuit Solicitor, President of the South Carolina Bar Association (1911-1912), and member of the South Carolina House of Representatives (1885-1887). His son, William Shannon Nelson (1881-1939) ran the firm after his father, as did William's son Patrick Henry Nelson III (1910-1964).
- Patrick Henry Nelson became a key player in one of South Carolina's most famous criminal trials, *State v. Tillman*. Nelson defended Lt. Gov. James Tillman for the murder of the editor of The State newspaper in Columbia.

- Claude M. Scarborough, Jr. joined the firm in 1955 and became managing partner in 1964 after the death of Patrick Henry Nelson III.
- The firm began planning for growth in the 1970s with a goal of adding attorneys and diversifying its practices. The firm jumped from 18 attorneys in 1978 to 93 in 1990 to 250 attorneys in 2001 through expansion in six offices located in Columbia, Greenville, Myrtle Beach, Charleston, Atlanta, and Charlotte. The firm's growth was not just for growth's sake. Strategic growth was the keystone during the period of rapid growth that lay ahead.
- Edward W. Mullins, Jr. became managing partner in 1998 until 2001, when David E. Dukes became managing partner and continued the firm's growth nationally.
- In 2003, the firm expanded in North Carolina, opening new offices in Raleigh and Winston-Salem.
- By 2004, the firm established an office in the nation's capital. What had been a Southeastern firm began to make its move up the Eastern Seaboard. As new offices were being added, in 2004 the firm moved its Columbia operations to the Meridian Building on Main Street.
- In 2005, the firm reached a milestone with 350 attorneys. That same year, the firm was recognized for its pro bono service with the John Minor Wisdom Public Service and Professionalism Award from the ABA Litigation Section.
- The firm's East Coast presence took a leap forward in 2006 when the Boston Office opened at the historic Long Wharf location.
- The firm's growth led to new offices in Myrtle Beach and expanded space in Charlotte. Growth in Atlanta led to a move into a new office building at Atlantic Station.
- By 2008, the firm had grown to 400 attorneys in 10 offices. The firm formed [EducationCounsel](#) with nine education professionals. And the firm's commitment to diversity led to the development of a Diversity Strategic Plan.
- In 2009, 18 attorneys and government relations professionals joined the firm in Boston and Washington, creating significant growth in the Northeast. Meanwhile, Canadian Ambassador David Wilkins and his team joined Nelson Mullins. During 2009, the firm added more offices in Tallahassee and West Virginia.
- In 2010, Lahive & Cockfield, a top-ranked Boston intellectual property law firm, combined its resources with the firm, increasing the intellectual property team to more than 70 attorneys and technical specialists.

- The firm began 2011 with the addition of a new business unit, Encompass E-Discovery, which quickly became an industry leader.
- James K. Lehman became managing partner in 2012.
- In 2012, the firm entered Tennessee with the addition of an office in Nashville.
- In 2013, Nelson Mullins opened its second Florida office, this one in Jacksonville. Nelson Mullins grew to 15 offices in 2015 with the addition of an office in New York City.
- Then in 2016, the year the firm became AmLaw's 103 largest law firm in the nation based on revenue, the firm headed farther west with the opening of an office in Denver.
- The following year, in 2017, Nelson Mullins entered the West Coast market with an office in Los Angeles.
- The firm also debuted in the 100 largest law firms in the nation based on gross revenues as ranked by The American Lawyer.
- Broad and Cassel, a noted Florida full-service law firm, combined with Nelson Mullins in 2018. Founded in Miami in 1946, Broad and Cassel had grown from a one-office practice with a focus on banking and finance to a statewide firm with 170 attorneys in 10 cities by the time it transitioned to Nelson Mullins. [Click here for more on the history of Broad and Cassel.](#)
- Nelson Mullins is ranked the 68th largest law firm in the nation in 2020 with more than 850 attorneys and professionals by The American Lawyer.
- Firm names West Virginia partner Melissa Foster Bird and Winston-Salem Managing Partner Denise Gunter as the firm's first Diversity Partners in 2019 to lead the execution of actions to develop, mentor, retain, and promote diverse and female attorneys.
- Firm names Baltimore partner Mike Brown as Diversity Partner in 2021.
- Nelson Mullins expands its national litigation practice in 2022 with the opening of offices in Minneapolis, San Diego, Richmond, and Dallas, bringing the headcount to more than 930 attorneys and other professionals.

A Chronological History

- 1897 Patrick H. Nelson opens office in Camden, known as P.H. Nelson, Attorney
- 1903 Patrick H. Nelson defends Lt. Gov. James Tillman, on trial for shooting N.G. `Gonzales, editor of The State newspaper

- 1904 William Shannon Nelson, Patrick Nelson's son, joins the firm, now known as Nelson and Nelson
- 1920 Edward Mullins, Sr. joins the firm, now called Nelson, Gettys and Mullins
- 1924 Firm becomes Nelson and Mullins
- 1931 Patrick F. Barron Grier, Jr. joins the firm
- 1932 Patrick H. Nelson, grandson of the founder, joins the firm
- 1938 Firm changes its name to Nelson, Mullins and Grier
- 1939 Ed Mullins, Sr. becomes senior partner
- 1955 Claude Scarborough, Jr. joins the firm, bringing the number of attorneys to five
- 1959 Ed Mullins, Jr. joins the firm
- 1961 Claude Scarborough, Jr. and Ed Mullins, Jr. become partners. firm name is changed to Nelson Mullins Grier and Scarborough
- 1964 Claude Scarborough becomes managing partner
- 1978 Firm has 18 attorneys
- 1984 Firm opens Myrtle Beach office
- 1987 Firm opens Greenville office as Gov. Dick Riley and father Ted Riley join the firm, which becomes Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough
- 1990 Firm has 93 attorneys
- 1990 Firm opens office in Charleston
- 1992 Firm opens office in Atlanta
- 1995 Firm opens office in Charlotte
- 1998 Ed Mullins, Jr. becomes managing partner
- 2001 David E. Dukes becomes managing partner; firm has 250 attorneys
- 2003 Firm opens offices in Raleigh and Winston-Salem
- 2004 Firm opens Washington, D.C. office
- 2004 Firm moves into Meridian, a new high rise on Main street in Columbia
- 2005 Firm has more than 350 attorneys
- 2006 Firm opens office in Boston
- 2007 Firm moves into new office building at Atlantic Station in Atlanta

- 2008 Firm has more than 400 attorneys
- 2009 Firm opens office in Tallahassee
- 2009 Firm opens office in West Virginia
- 2010 Lahive & Cockfield, a top-ranked Boston intellectual property law firm, combined its resources with the firm
- 2011 Firm adds a new business unit, Encompass E-Discovery
- 2012 Nashville office opens
- 2013 Jacksonville office opens
- 2014 Firm has more than 500 attorneys and other professionals
- 2015 New York City office opens
- 2016 AmLaw ranks Nelson Mullins the 103rd largest law firm in the U.S. based on 2015 revenue
- 2016 Denver office opens
- 2017 Los Angeles office opens; American Lawyer ranks Nelson Mullins as the 88th largest law firm in the nation based on 2016 gross revenues
- 2018 Baltimore office opens; American Lawyer ranks Nelson Mullins as 87th largest law firm in the U.S.
- 2018 Nelson Mullins combines with Florida-based Broad and Cassel, adding 150+ attorneys in nine offices. Firm now has 785+ attorneys and professionals
- 2019 American Lawyer ranks Nelson Mullins as 69th largest law firm in the U.S.
- 2019 Firm names Melissa Foster Bird and Denise Gunter as the firm's first Diversity Partners to lead the execution of actions to develop, mentor, retain, and promote diverse and female attorneys
- 2020 Shanahan Law Group Transitions into Raleigh office, growing the office to more than 30 attorneys
- 2021 Nelson Mullins is ranked the 68th largest law firm in the nation with more than 850 attorneys and professionals by The American Lawyer
- 2021 Baltimore partner Mike Brown named firm Diversity Partner
- 2022 Firm adds offices in Minneapolis, San Diego, Richmond, and Dallas, bringing the headcount to more than 930 attorneys and other professionals.

Broad and Cassel office commencement dates:

1946 Miami

1975 Orlando

1979 Boca Raton

1983 West Palm Beach

1987 Fort Lauderdale

1987 Tallahassee

1994 Tampa

2013 Jacksonville

2017 Palm Beach