

LAW OFFICES
GRIM, BIEHN & THATCHER

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A PROFESSIONAL CORPORATION

SUCCESSOR TO
GRIM & GRIM AND BIEHN & THATCHER
ESTABLISHED 1895 AND 1956, RESPECTIVELY
100TH ANNIVERSARY 1895-1995

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HISTORY OF GRIM, BIEHN & THATCHER

The law firm of Grim, Biehn & Thatcher is the product of the 1989 merger of the firms of Grim & Grim and Biehn & Thatcher.

Webster Grim (born August 11, 1866), after teaching school in Bucks County for five years, graduated from Keystone Normal School, Kutztown, Pennsylvania in 1887. He studied law with Nathan C. James and was admitted to the Bar in 1889. His brother, Harry, (born October 21, 1869) and Harry's wife, Minnie Moyer Grim, both graduated from Keystone Normal in the same class and taught school in Bucks County. Harry studied law with Webster and was admitted to the Bar in 1895, and the law firm of Grim & Grim commenced its existence.

Webster continued to practice in Doylestown where he became active in politics, losing a race for District Attorney, but being elected to the school board in 1900 and to the State Senate in 1902 where he



became chairman of the Democratic caucuses and achieved a state-wide identity. In 1910 he was nominated to run for Governor of Pennsylvania. The Republicans were caught up in scandal over construction of the Capital in Harrisburg. A coalition might have overcome their registration edge, but the Prohibitionists refused to accept Webster and he was defeated. While State Senator, he introduced a bill for the first state-wide regulation of automobiles which established a speed limit of eight miles per hour in cities and twenty miles per hour elsewhere.

Harry became the first lawyer to practice in Perkasio. He opened his office in 1895 in the J. G. Moyer building the year it was built. It was featured on the front cover of the *Saturday Evening Post* in the John Falter picture of the Fourth of July 1945 Parade, but was destroyed in the great Perkasio fire of 1988.

In September 1904 Harry acquired the building at Sixth and Chestnut Streets that has been continuously used as a law office to the present and as a family residence until



1998. Harry ran for Congress in 1914 "at large", meaning he campaigned throughout the entire state. His slogan was, "For Peace and Prosperity, Against War and Calamity," but he lost.



Harry Grim - 1914

Harry developed a balanced clientele. He was Solicitor for the First National Bank of Perkaspie at its founding in 1901, and his brother, Dr. G.W. Grim, was a Director. He became Trust Officer, Director and Lawyer for the Quakertown Trust Company at its founding in 1904 and was a Director of the Perkaspie Trust Company at its founding in 1922. He was a very able trial lawyer

and known as a "silver-tongued" orator. He was active until his death in 1934.

Webster continued to practice until 1945, serving as President of the Bucks County Bar Association from 1936 to 1943 and as Chairman of the Board of Directors of Cedar Crest College, Allentown. He died in 1947 at age 81. His office was opposite the Court House at the corner of North Broad and Main Streets. The firm reopened a Doylestown office in the 1980s and relocated and resized it several times since.

The second lawyer to practice in Perkaspie was Hiram H. Keller, although he never resided or maintained a full-time office. He became President Judge of Bucks County.

The third lawyer to practice law in Perkaspie was Mark Thatcher (born November 18, 1891), who opened an office in 1921 in the Fretz Shoe Store building diagonally opposite the J.G. Moyer building. Prior to that he had worked with C. William Freed, an early (admitted to the Bar in 1908) Quakertown lawyer, having been born and raised in the Village of Thatcher, just east of Quakertown. In 1924 he built a home and office at 26 South Fifth Street. A Republican, he found it easy to attract clients. He served as an Assistant U.S. Attorney and as Solicitor for the County of Bucks. He incorporated Grand View Hospital and was its first legal counsel. He raised a large happy family including twin sons, William and Thomas, who both became lawyers. Thomas served as clerk to Pennsylvania Superior Court Judge Flood and practiced in Florida before retiring. William became a partner with Claire G. Biehn in the firm of Biehn & Thatcher of

Quakertown. Mark was, in the words of Jacob Lawrence Grim ("Jake"), a "capable, resourceful and excellent attorney." He died March 23, 1937 from a heart ailment.

The fourth lawyer to practice in Perkaspie was Robert H. Grim ("Bob"), who joined his father, Harry, in 1926. A former U.S. Attorney, he represented all the banks which were clients of his father and added the Dublin National Bank and several savings and loans to the family practice. Bob was tall, good-looking, elegant, popular and too smart to run for office, but he did serve as Chairman of the Bucks



Bob Grim - 1923

County Democratic Committee and as a delegate to the National Convention at which F. D. Roosevelt was nominated to run for President of the United States. He died in 1945 at age 45 just after V-J Day. Bob's brother, Jake, was admitted to practice in 1931, but, because the Perkaspie practice could not support a third lawyer, he opened an office in Morrisville.

Donald B. Smith ("Don") was the fifth lawyer to practice in Perkaspie. A Republican, he came at the suggestion of Oscar O. Bean, a Doylestown lawyer and confidant of the powerful Republican leader, Joseph Grundy, and leased the offices of Mark Thatcher on March 7, 1938. He was inducted into the U.S. Navy in 1944 and asked Bob to watch over his pending litigation matters. In January of 1946 he reopened offices, and in 1953 he acquired the historic Hendricks-Bissey building at Seventh and Market Streets, directly opposite the J. G. Moyer building. In 1952 he was joined by Robert M. Mountenay. Later Harriet M. Mims joined the firm as the first woman lawyer of upper Bucks County. Don was quickly able to cultivate a clientele. He represented numerous townships and took turns with Jake representing Perkaspie Borough--depending on which party had control.

Mountenay and Mims both went on to become very able and popular Bucks County Judges. Don had a series of associates including his son, Donald B. Smith, Jr., who earned a Masters in Taxation. However, the son decided to settle in Ohio, and the Smith practice was absorbed by Grim, Biehn & Thatcher. Other associates of Donald B. Smith

included Victor Jaczun and Francis X. Grabowski, who left to form Jaczun & Grabowski with offices on Fifth Street. At Victor's death the firm became Grabowski & Associates, and John B. Rice and Mary C. Eberle participated in it until relocating to Grim, Biehn & Thatcher in 1995. William C. Roeger, Jr. and James C. Walker were also associated with Don before establishing their own firm in Perkaspie on Walnut Street.

When Jake opened his office in Morrisville, the firm of Grim & Grim included Webster, Harry, Robert and Jake, the first of three eras when four Grims practiced together.



Jake Grim - 1953

He became a part-time Assistant U.S. Attorney (1937-1942) and became Solicitor in 1933 and a Director in 1937 of The Morrisville Bank. Because of his Democratic connections and a trip to Washington D.C., he was able to keep its doors open during the depression. Jake married Marian Baum, a daughter of Sellersville artist, Wal-

ter Emerson Baum, the founder of the Baum School of Art and the Allentown Art Museum. Marian decorated the law offices with her father's work. Reproductions of originals hang today where she placed originals. Her daughter, Ellen Harter, (Yale University B.F.A., M.F.A.) contributed art and art skills to the firm. Ellen's son, Peter Harter, was the first of Jake's grandsons to become a lawyer and was with the firm in 1994 before relocating to California.

When Bob took ill and died in 1945, Jake returned to Perkaspie to represent all the banks and savings and loans that Bob had represented. In an effort to hang on to his growing Morrisville practice, he formed the firm of "Grim, Cadwallader, Darlington & Clarke," but after ten years he withdrew and practiced as a sole practitioner until 1960. The event that triggered his withdrawal was being sued along with the other partners as a result of a young Morrisville associate of the firm signing an agreement for a client who then disappeared. He hired Arthur M. Eastburn, Jr. to represent him, and the case was settled. He vowed and recommended to his sons, "Never get involved in a large law firm as you never know what the other lawyers are doing!"

In 1948 Jake hired James C. Bowen, a Perkaspie

native, as an associate. This was fortunate as soon thereafter a horse Jake was riding stumbled under him. He broke a vertebra in the fall and was in a body cast for two months. Jim became his driver. Jim left to form a partnership with Jake's cousin, William Power, and Jim's law school friend, Robert Valimont. Power had succeeded to the practice of Webster Achey in Doylestown. Achey tried cases in Pennsylvania Dutch and English before Judges Boyer and Keller, who both spoke Pennsylvania Dutch also, as did many jurors. This skill won Achey many insurance carriers, and the firm of Power, Bowen and Valimont developed the ability by representing the major carriers to tie-up and control the trial list. They opened the first law office in Sellersville. Jim's brothers-in-law, William and Samuel Moyer, practiced there with a succession of other lawyers.

The second law firm in Sellersville was started by Jake's first cousin once removed, William Hart Rufe III, who was later joined by his brother, John J. Rufe. Both later became Judges of the Bucks County Court of Common Pleas.

During Jake's Presidency of the Bar Association, 1953-1954, several controversial issues arose: (1) on court house relocation he appointed a committee to investigate and report to the members of the Association who voted 30 to 13 to move it to a new location in Doylestown. (The Commissioners kept it where it was.) (2) He reported at the 1943 Association annual meeting, with praise to a committee that deserved the credit, that proposed Supreme Court rules for state-wide practice had been "killed." (3) When John Eckleberry, an Ohio corporate lawyer, was appointed to the bench in 1954, Jake was incensed that a choice from a panel of three (I. Louis Rubin, John P. Fullam and Claire G. Biehn) was not made and was a leader in Rubin's defeat of Eckleberry in the election in 1955.

In 1955, as the only lawyer for the First National Bank of Perkaspie, Quakertown Trust Company, Perkaspie Trust Company and Dublin National Bank, Jake consolidated those institutions into the Bucks County Bank and Trust Company and served as Director. The savings and loans that he represented then included First Federal Savings and Loan Association, Perkaspie Savings and Loan Association, Pennridge Savings and Loan Association, Sellersville Savings and Loan Association and Savings and Loan Association of Bucks and Mercer Counties.

J. Lawrence Grim, Jr. ("Larry") joined his father in 1960, and the firm name of Grim & Grim was reinstated. John F. Grim ("John") joined the firm in 1967, and in 1971 Allan K. Grim, Jr. ("Allan"), a former Berks County Assistant District Attorney, joined the firm. Thus began the second era when four Grims practiced law together. To make room for Allan, the firm leased space in the building across the street at Sixth and Chestnut Streets that has been known as the "Meredith" building after its owner during Harry's era, former Bucks County Sheriff and

prominent Republican, Charles M. Meredith, whose son and grandson owned and own the building in Quakertown which the firm leases. The Merediths and Grims have been best friends for four generations. The lease was revised repeatedly over the next decade to increase space until the firm purchased the building. Then it acquired the next-door Brager building and connected them, giving the firm the two opposite corners at the intersection of Sixth and Chestnut Streets.



Jake made an effort to mentor Larry, John and Allan. For Larry, he had a list of things he wanted Larry to do, including try civil and criminal jury trials, brief and argue appellate cases in Pennsylvania Superior and Supreme Courts, merge banks, prepare marital deduction Wills, handle domestic relation cases, etc., etc., and Larry dutifully did it all. The press of real estate business excused John from much of the same list, though he was made to go to Court. Jake accompanied Allan on one matter in Court to coach him.

Mark B. Weber left Power, Bowen & Valimont to establish his own office as the third law office in Sellersville in 1968. He became a partner of Ian A. Abarbanel, and in 1972 they moved to Perkasie. The firm is now Weber, Kracht & Chellew with offices on West Market Street.

In the late 1970s the Bucks County Bank and Trust Company began a growth spurt enhanced by its acquisition of the Chalfont National Bank in 1978. Jake died in 1979, and John joined Larry on the Board of The Morrisville Bank. It merged into the Bucks County Bank and Trust Company in 1980. That bank formed Independence Bancorp, Inc. ("IBI"), a bank holding company, in 1981, and in the 1980s it acquired as bank subsidiaries, in addition to Bucks County Bank and Trust Company, the Lehigh Valley Bank, Cheltenham Bank, Freedom Valley Bank and Third National Bank and Trust Company of Scranton. Larry was General Counsel to IBI, a registrant with the SEC, and Grim & Grim became expert in securities law. Larry prepared all the merger agreements, registration statements, proxy material and related work on these projects. It was a time of big changes for our clients and us. Not every hire was to be long term. A number

of lawyers came and went when it became apparent to them or to us that departure was best. The firm converted from a partnership to a corporation with shareholders instead of partners. We continue to call the boss "Managing Partner," the Corporation the "firm" and sometimes shareholders "partners."

In 1975 Dennis Helf joined the firm after a first career in teaching. Dennis was an excellent student who began working at the firm while in Villanova Law School. A versatile lawyer, he became the firm's Managing Partner. He started and watched over our very successful retirement plan. In 1982 at the urging of Judge Kenneth G. Biehn, his excellent law clerk, Jean M. Keeler, ("Jean") joined Grim & Grim. Then, in 1987 Wallace H. Bateman ("Skip"), a former Bucks County Assistant District Attorney, joined the firm, beginning its first trial department.

Larry served as principal lawyer-organizer or fundraiser or both for the following Bucks County judicial candidates: Mountenay (1971), Rufe and Walsh (1973), Mims (1975), Biehn, Biester, Jr. and Sokolove (1981) and Garb and Kelton (1987). All were successful. Rufe and Walsh were challenged by Republicans Peter Glascott and Daniel Lawler. The Garb retention election was hotly contested by political activist, Abbie Hoffman, in the "dump the pump" campaign. Treasurer Larry raised \$90,000, mostly from lawyers, and it was more than could be spent on the race. Larry says his "bi-partisan" efforts for judges had nothing to do with his appointments as solicitor for the Bucks County Water and Sewer Authority and Bucks County Housing Authority.

In 1989 Claire G. Biehn ("Claire") approached Larry about the possibility of a merger with Biehn & Thatcher. Claire became a Director of the Bucks County Bank and Trust Company the same day Larry did in 1967, and they were good friends, as Claire and Jake had been. Claire wanted to retire, and the merged firms could make that possible.

William Thatcher ("Bill") had always been close to Jake,

Larry and John because of his Perkasio origin and through common friends. Although originally styled as

"Grim, Biehn, Thatcher & Helf," the firm became "Grim, Biehn & Thatcher" in 1995.

Claire was admitted to the Bar in 1938 and took over the practice in Quakertown of Charles H. Ort, who had been admitted to the Bar in 1915. Bill was admitted to the Bar in 1955, and, soon thereafter, Biehn & Thatcher was formed. Their practice was similar to Grim & Grim in that their specialty was estate planning, estate administration and real estate, with some trial work. Bill was a former Bucks County Assistant District Attorney. Claire's



Claire Biehn - 1983

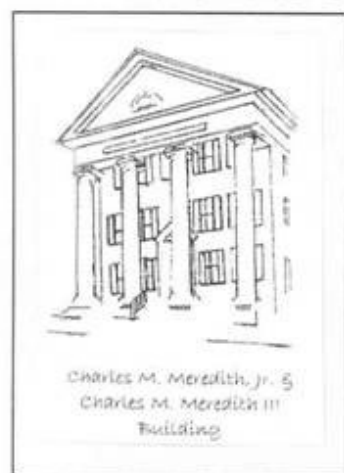
son, Kenneth G. Biehn, was with the firm until he decided to become an Assistant District Attorney. He became District Attorney of Bucks County, a Judge and then President Judge of the Court of Common Pleas of Bucks County. Claire worked at introducing his best clients to the merged firm, enjoyed a happy retirement with lots of golf and died in 1995.

In 1989 Stephen P. Moyer ("Steve") joined the firm. Steve displayed an incredible versatility as a lawyer, specializing in real estate, lending and general business law. By hindsight, he was and is one of the very best lawyers ever hired to practice with the firm.

From Harry Grim's early practice, real estate transactions were the bread and butter of the firm. As the banks and savings and loan clients prospered, the activities increased. Webster, Harry, Bob, Jake, Claire, Bill, Larry and John all personally searched titles or did bring-downs, recorded papers and handled settlements.

In the 1950s title insurance began to replace lawyer's searches. By the 1970s the firm formed Laurel Abstract, Ltd. to delve further into the title insurance business, although we had acted as attorney agents for Berks Title Insurance Company from the late 1950s. John became Laurel's President. He had been a Director of the Dublin Building and Loan Association, and, when it was acquired by the First Federal Savings and Loan Association, now "First Savings Bank of Perkasio," he began attending its board meetings although not as a formal member. From this vantage point he is on top of the real estate market.

In 1987 Jeffrey G. Trauger joined the firm. A scion of a Plumstead Republican farming family with



*Charles M. Meredith, Jr. &
Charles M. Meredith III
Building*

pre-Revolutionary War roots, he was a burly star football player at Central Bucks West and Brown University. He became a versatile well-rounded lawyer, specialized in commercial and civil litigation and became Managing Partner in 2001.

In the late 1980s, IBI fell on hard times due in part to a real estate depression and loans going sour and, in part, to personnel problems. This led to its acquisition by CoreStates in 1993, and the fun era of big banking was over. But, as bankers left IBI, several decided to start *de novo* banks. Larry became a Director and lawyer for FirstService Bank that achieved stunning success from its start in 1996 until it merged with National Penn Bank in 2003, where it continues as a separate division. Larry's son, Gregory, ("Greg") became a Director and lawyer for HomeTowne Heritage Bank of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania in 1998, and that bank followed its mentor FirstService Bank through great initial success to merge with National Penn Bank on similar terms.

Greg, who was born 100 years after Harry, was admitted to the Bar in 1995, 100 years after Harry's admission. Marian died in 1993, and Greg moved into the apartment over the law office and stayed there as the last Grim resident until 1998 when he was asked to leave to make room for the expanding firm. He proceeded to obtain a Masters in Taxation and help in the estate planning and administration department. He moved to East Rockhill, married in 2001 and had a son named Jake in 2002, just 98 years after Jake was born.

In 1995 Dennis resigned as Managing Partner. He continued to practice until 1997 when he retired from the firm and the law to begin his third career as an investment advisor.

In 1995 after Steve became in charge, Mary C. Eberle ("Mary") and John B. Rice ("John B.") joined the firm, bringing with them an impressive stable of municipal clients including East and West Rockhill, Bedminster, New Britain Townships, and that base has been expanded by the addition of Horsham, Plumstead, Warwick, Upper Makefield Townships and Bedminster Municipal Authority to become the largest municipal practice of any one firm in Bucks County. Ironically, the firm had become by this time composed of more than a majority of Republicans. The firm continues to represent Silverdale Borough which, though overwhelming Republican, had the Democratic Grims as lawyers since the 1920s and Bill's clients, the Quakertown General Authority and The Bucks County Community College Authority.

David P. Caro, a CPA and lawyer, joined the firm in 1997 and took over Dennis' tax practice, and Dale E. Caya joined at about the same time, bringing significant skills and clients in the domestic relations field. Both are our most recent shareholders.

Jean, whose super-sharp intellect had enabled her to play many roles in the firm, had gradually taken over the big job of doing Grand View Hospital's legal work. Initially, when Mark Thatcher, Bob, Jake and Larry did the hospital's legal work, it was pro bono or free. But in the 1970s the volume and complexity increased to where the firm began to charge, although at a reduced rate. After several years on our payroll, Jean switched to being on the Hospital payroll as their employee, but she still is Counsel to the firm.

In 1999 Dianne Magee joined the firm, bringing with her significant experience as Judge Sokolove's Orphans' Court Clerk and Administrator, and Peter L. Reiss followed in 2000, armed with a Master's in Taxation and significant experience in New York and the New Hope area.

Allan retired in 2000 for a career as a handwriting analysis expert.

Colby Grim joined the firm in 2000 in the litigation department. This marked the third era when four Grims (Larry, John, Greg and Colby) practiced together. In 2003, Colby switched fields to the real estate department and is currently practicing with his father, John.

Skip had a steady career from his arrival in 1987, handling all the firm's major trial matters. He was and is frequently called upon by the Bucks County Judges to handle criminal matters when the Public Defenders have conflicts.

The municipal practice of Mary and John B. continues to grow. H. Peter Nelson (2000) and Jonathan J. Reiss (2001) have become established fixtures there.

In 2002 Daniel J. Paci left the Fox, Rothschild Doylestown office to join us. Dan, a lawyer and a CPA, has a Masters in Taxation. His extensive career includes time in accounting and practicing law in the big business field.

Diane M. Sodano is our newest addition, returning to the practice of law in 2002 after motherhood to help our litigation department organize personal liability cases for trial. Her prior legal career was with a major insurance carrier as in-house counsel.

Grim & Grim, Biehn & Thatcher and Grim, Biehn & Thatcher owe much of their success to the secretaries (including "paralegals") who enhanced the

performance of the lawyers. Harry Grim had Della Mengal, and Bob had I. Esther Christine. Jake was a genius in that he befriended Natalie Nichols, the head of the Commercial Department at Pennridge High School, who, in return for free legal advice, sent him her best students. He had four secretaries working for him as a sole practitioner when Larry joined him in 1960. Shirley Wolfe (40 years of service), Janice Myers (36), and Linda Ott (40) were early recruits from Pennridge. Kathleen Walter (34), Ellen Kastner (29), Patti Goepfert (28) and Joan Keating (27) followed, all weathering the storms of 25 years or more. In Quakertown, Claire and Bill had Sarah Funk (47), Betty Cain (30) and Joyce Stauffer (38). Other employees of more than 20 years duration are Melanie Drumbore (25), Linda Gerhart (23) and Cheryl Good (22).

As the firm grew, management became more complex. The person in charge of payroll had to worry about accounts receivable and became the office manager. Mary Koenig had this responsibility. Then Jane Grim, John's wife, had this job. Jane suffered through the large growing pains of the firm in the 1980s and in the 1990s, working countless hours for what was proven to be a pittance when interview time came to select her successor. She was followed by her assistant, Diane Wenner, and now Deborah Faulkinberry struggles with the task, assisted by a team of helpers which includes Mary Koenig, back after motherhood to handle accounts receivables and computer timekeeping.

Many members of the firm have been active in the Bucks County Bar Association. Like Webster, Claire's predecessor, Charles H. Ortt (1946-1997), Jake (1953-1954), Claire (1959-1960), Bill (1973-1974) and Larry (1977-1978) all served as Presidents. Thomas E. Mellon, Jr., who had a brief but happy relationship with Grim & Grim in 1981 and 1982, is the present President. Claire was Secretary from 1950 to 1957, and Bill was also from 1957 to 1963. Skip and Jeff are currently on the Board of Directors. Dianne has also served as a Director, Editor-in-Chief of the Bucks County Law Reporter, President of the Bucks County Estate Planning Council and is Editor-in-Chief of "Putting on the Writs," the Bar Association's quarterly news publication.

This history is written as a century of continuous occupancy of the building Harry purchased in 1904 comes to a close and the 150th anniversary of the organization of the Bucks County Bar Association, the 120th anniversary of its incorporation and the 320th

anniversary of the holding of the first courts in Bucks County are being celebrated with the publication of a book about the Bucks County Courts and the Bar Association of Bucks County. Bill had agreed to help

write this history, but with sadness we record his death on June 28, 2003. As a former editor of the University of Pennsylvania Law Review, his contribution would have been significant. He was 77 years old, but was an alert, active lawyer and participant in the firm's activities to the end. We will not forget his



steadfast leadership, his wisdom, his mentoring of young associates and his many other contributions.

We dedicate this history to his memory and to the memory of our other deceased partners.

Sketches by Ellen Harter