MusickPeeler

One of the things Musick, Peeler & Garrett has always been known for, is their depth and breadth of practice necessary to handle nearly any legal matter.

Steve Elie
Co-Managing Partner

The Founding Fathers

Musick Peeler traces its origins to the 1920s when its three founders, Elvon Musick, Joseph Peeler, and Leroy Garrett, organized individual firms in Los Angeles. Elvon Musick's firm specialized in real estate and land use. Joseph Peeler's focused on tax and estate law. Leroy Garrett's delved into corporate antitrust law and academic institutions. In the 1950s these three exceptional men saw the advantage of merging their honed intellects, different fields of legal knowledge, and professional contacts. Their fusion forged the formidable firm of Musick, Peeler & Garrett.

In the 1920s Elvon Musick founded the law firm, Musick & Burrell, with about twenty attorneys practicing real estate law. During the post-Depression and post-War years as California's population grew, Musick & Burrell focused on real estate development, representing owners and developers in such well-known projects as Tejon Ranch, Westchester, and the infamous Hollywoodland Development, which would lend its name to the world's entertainment capital.

Leroy Garrett began his practice with Wright & Garrett, an antitrust firm, famous for its hand in the break-up of the Twentieth Century Fox monopoly. Wright & Garrett also represented the Mudd family's interests and in later years, the University of Southern California. As legal counsel to that University, Garrett worked closely with its board of directors where he met board member, Elvon Musick.

Joseph Peeler began practicing law with the firm of Peeler & Wilson, one of the first Los Angeles firms to specialize in tax law. As personal counsel to J. Paul Getty, Peeler oversaw Getty's vast holdings and designed the current structure of the Getty Estate and the Getty Trust. As a member of the Getty Museum's Board of Trustees and numerous other philanthropic organizations, Peeler helped found the Los Angeles Civic Light Opera. He also served as counsel and board member for the Music Center.

Since none of the established downtown firms had their own tax departments at that time, many of Los Angeles' oldest and most prestigious partnerships like O'Melveny & Meyers, and Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher frequently retained Peeler for his tax law expertise. In 1950 when Musick & Burrell faced a transaction with significant tax consequences, the firm called upon Peeler's services. This interaction led to the founding of Musick, Peeler & Garrett.

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Elvon Musick *(circa 1926)*
Palos Verdes Homes Association Photo Collection



621 Hope Street *(circa 1925)*
Security Pacific National Bank Collection/Los Angeles Public Library

Growth and Adaptation

In 1950 one of Garrett's largest clients, Great Lakes Carbon Corporation of Pittsburgh, wanted to purchase the north side of a Palos Verdes hill for mining. Garrett, general counsel to the University of Southern California, approached fellow board member, Musick, about Great Lakes' interest in Palos Verdes. Peeler was hired to delve into the tax consequences of Great Lakes' purchase. The work of both Musick and Garrett impressed Peeler, as did the exceptional quality of their practices. Talks of a three-way merger began and in 1954 Musick, Peeler and Garrett LLP was established.

In the 1960s and 1970s Musick, Peeler & Garrett experienced a growth spurt. A Labor and Employment practice, focusing on labor relations, collective bargaining, and contract administration, was formed.

In 1979, R. Joseph DeBriyn joined the firm as a litigation associate. DeBriyn became the managing partner in 1985 and led the firm until March 2024. As Managing Partner during that time, among many other accomplishments, he developed its Litigation Department by expanding its client base until it became the firm's largest practice.

Focusing on general business and civil litigation, Musick, Peeler & Garrett gained a reputation for defending clients in professional liability cases involving healthcare providers, accountants, architects, engineers, lawyers, agents, brokers, officers, directors, and trustees.

In recent years, Musick Peeler has expanded its offerings to meet the needs of its clients involved in the global economy by adding offices and practices focused on international arbitration, cross-border transactions, infrastructure and transportation projects, and complex insurance and risk management issues. Today, as California leads the way in the energy transition, Musick Peeler professionals are regularly asked to assist developers, suppliers and investors involved in the growing renewable and clean energy sectors.

With over 70 years of experience working with complex and evolving legal challenges, the professionals at Musick Peeler look forward to assisting the firm’s clients as they navigate the modern business and regulatory environment.

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