

O.C. Hartley and R. K. Hartley: Pioneers in Texas Court Reporting

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In our ongoing research for the [Texas Legislators](#) database, we often uncover interesting bits of Texas legal history. Recently, two early legislators stood out for their pioneering role in the history of the Texas Supreme Court. Brothers [Oliver Cromwell Hartley](#) (House of Representatives, 4th Legislature) and [Rufus K. Hartley](#) (House of Representatives, 8th Legislature; Texas Senate, 9th-10th Legislatures) not only had legislative careers, but were involved as reporters of Texas Supreme Court decisions. In 1846, six years after the Supreme Court had its first term, the state began appointing court reporters to publish the decisions of the court. Oliver Cromwell Hartley was appointed that year as court reporter, and held the position until his death in 1859. Both brothers' names can be seen in early volumes of the [Texas Reports](#), which were the only source of Supreme Court opinions until the appearance of the Southwestern Reporter in 1886.

In addition to their work with the Texas Supreme Court, the Hartley brothers published [Digest of Texas Laws](#) in 1850. The digest comprised "all the public laws of the republic and state of Texas, which are now in force, except Acts for the incorporation of cities and towns, and the establishment of counties..." This compilation of Texas statutes greatly aided lawyers and legislators at the time, since no official collection of Texas laws had yet been published.

If you're interested in learning more about Oliver Cromwell Hartley or Rufus K. Hartley, you can view their member records in our [Texas Legislators: Past & Present](#) database.



Oliver Cromwell Hartley



Rufus K. Hartley