

JUDGE LEON SONFIELD
(1865-1934)

The honorable Leon Sonfield was born April 21, 1865, was ordained to the Ministry of the Methodist Church at the age of 18 and came to Texas to ride the Methodist circuit in East Texas, including Palestine and Nacogdoches. He found his way to Galveston as pastor of St. James' Methodist Church, which he built from a small congregation to the largest Methodist church in Texas. In 1897 he began reading law in the Galveston office of Spencer and Kincaid and, after eight months of study, he was admitted to practice as an attorney and counselor before the Fifth Circuit Court of the United States on the 19th day of March, 1898.

In April 1917, when the U.S. entered World War I, Gov. James E. Ferguson appointed Judge Sonfield a member of the Texas State Council of Defense.

October 7, 1918, Judge Sonfield took a leave of absence from the firm, where he was the senior member with his oldest son, Robert Leon Sonfield, Sr., to accept appointment by Gov. William P. Hobby as Presiding Judge of the newly created, Section A of the Commission of Appeals, an auxiliary of the Supreme Court of Texas, where he served until 1921 when he rejoined his firm. The Commission of Appeals functioned as the Supreme Court of Texas until 1945 when the Supreme Court was expanded to nine justices that included the members of the Commission of Appeals.

February 19, 1921, Judge Sonfield resigned from the Court and resumed his private practice of law. Judge was senior partner with his youngest son, George McNeil Sonfield, until the Judge's death December 15, 1934 at the Touro Infirmary in New Orleans, Louisiana.