This paper focuses on the origin and operation of the Institute of Accountants and Bookkeepers established in New York City in 1882, one of the earliest recorded efforts to establish the accounting profession in the United States. This organization is often overlooked or confused with the American Institute of Accountants (the predecessor of the AICPA), so that little has been written about it. Periodicals published during the late 19th and early 20th centuries were used to reconstruct the history and contribution of this Institute. Its contributions were many, including forming and influencing the passage of the first CPA law, developing tests of fitness for membership 14 years before the first CPA exam, and setting standards for professionalism in the U.S. In addition, the Institute developed a foundation for treating accounting as a science which helped elevate the status of bookkeeping and public accounting during the late 19th century.

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