From modest beginnings in 1925 to modern advances of the 21st century, ERIE’s timeline unveils the company’s most memorable people, events and ideas of the past 90 years. Don’t wonder about ERIE’s history—discover it.
1925—The Pennsylvania Insurance Department issues a license to the Erie Insurance Exchange, and operations begin on April 20, 1925. H.O. Hirt is Secretary and General Manager. O.G. Crawford is Vice President. H.O.’s 1920 Dodge is insured on the new company’s 11th policy, effective on ERIE’s first day of business. The annual premium charge per auto is $34.

1926—Twenty days before its one-year anniversary, ERIE is $67,000 short of the new Guarantee Fund requirement of $100,000. A 90-day extension, $25,000 loans from two banks and other financial assistance end the crisis. To help the effort, ERIE Cofounder O.G. Crawford is said to have set a world record by writing 243 auto insurance policies in 30 days.

1927—Sam P. Black Jr. joins The ERIE as the new company’s first full-time adjuster and claims manager. Sam lives up to ERIE’s promise of 24-hour service with the use of an office phone extension in his room at the YMCA.

1928—After only three years in business, ERIE expands outside of Erie, Pa., opening an office in Pittsburgh.

The Erie Insurance Exchange offers the highest type of service at the lowest possible cost on all classes of automobile insurance.

Company Announcement 1925
Erie Insurance was only four years old when the stock market crashed, plunging the country into the Great Depression. The young company that had survived the Guarantee Fund crisis dug in its heels to face the national crisis. ERIE continued to grow in marked contrast to the 85,000 business failures in the United States between 1930 and 1932.

**TENACIOUS TIMES**

**HISTORIC TIMELINE 1925–2015**

1929—The ERIE reaches $172,000 in net premiums.

1930—H.O. Hirt introduces the “Above All in Service” pin.

1931—The first App-a-Week Bulletin is published, beginning a weekly run which continues to this day. H.O. Hirt, “your old Editor” of *The Bulletin*, becomes President of The ERIE in addition to General Manager.

1933—O.G. Crawford retires, signaling the start of the company’s reputation as a one-man operation which followed it for years to come.

1934—ERIE develops the “Super Standard Auto Policy,” offering many extra coverages at no additional cost. Some of these “Xtra features” (such as “Drive Other Car” coverage) later became part of a standard auto policy in the United States while some (such as waiving the collision deductible in an accident involving two ERIE-insured autos) have been adopted by individual companies over the years.

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*Don’t be a goose. Be a wise owl.*

*Insure your automobile with The Erie Insurance Exchange.*

**Company Brochure**

1920s
1938—ERIE moves from its original location in the Scott Block Building at 10th and State Streets to the newly remodeled former C.F. Adams Company headquarters at the southeast corner of Sixth and French Streets in Erie, Pa. (Today, the building is known as the Achievement Center.) The new facility comfortably houses ERIE’s 30-member staff. The same year, ERIE’s chief competitor, the Pennsylvania Indemnity Company, goes out of business.

1939—G.W. “Doc” Reed opens the Allentown Branch in his home, a tradition that continues into the 1990s in Peoria and Knoxville.

1940—The company adds a new line—fire insurance—allowing independent agents to more fully depend on ERIE to fulfill the insurance needs of their customers.

ERIE prospered during difficult times. Franklin Delano Roosevelt spoke to the ailing nation in “Fireside Chats,” reassuring us that we have nothing to fear but fear itself. The New Deal, the Social Security Act, the first national minimum wage, and the Works Progress Administration were all introduced. Abroad, Hitler and Mussolini increased their power and influence. In 1939, Nazi Germany invaded Poland, starting World War II.

Day and night, I pray for the restoration of peace in this mad world of ours.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt
U.S. President
Radio Address May 1940
H.O. Hirt saw some of his employees and his own son, Bill, go off to war. During the war, no automobiles were manufactured, gasoline was rationed, and shortages of essentials and luxuries alike became the norm. In 1945, ERIE's 20th anniversary in business, President Roosevelt died, Harry Truman became president, the Nazis surrendered, the United States dropped the first atomic bombs, and World War II came to an end. On the home front, Congress passed the McCarran-Ferguson Act, which reasserted state regulation of insurance and provided limited exemption from federal anti-trust laws.

**1941—H.O. Hirt begins holding weekly meetings to teach Agents and Employees about ERIE policies.**

Encouraging members of the ERIE family to solve problems by good judgment, not rules, is the hallmark of H.O.'s management style.

**1943—ERIE offers Comprehensive Personal Liability coverage for the first time.**

The bonus, based on ERIE's continued profitability, has been approved annually ever since.

**c. 1941—An Employee who had been an auto salesman locates a sizable number of tires through old friends. ERIE keeps its own supply of tires until the war is over so they are available when adjusters need them to settle claims.**

**1941—The Erie Indemnity Company Board of Directors approves the first profit sharing bonus for Employees. Although not guaranteed,** the bonus, **based on ERIE's continued profitability, has been approved annually ever since.**

H.O. Hirt saw some of his employees and his own son, Bill, go off to war. During the war, no automobiles were manufactured, gasoline was rationed, and shortages of essentials and luxuries alike became the norm. In 1945, ERIE's 20th anniversary in business, President Roosevelt died, Harry Truman became president, the Nazis surrendered, the United States dropped the first atomic bombs, and World War II came to an end. On the home front, Congress passed the McCarran-Ferguson Act, which reasserted state regulation of insurance and provided limited exemption from federal anti-trust laws.

**All honor to these live heroes!**

*Founder H.O. Hirt Honoring Employees and Agents serving in World War II June 1945*
**BUSINESS IS BOOMING**

**HISTORIC TIMELINE 1925–2015**

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**1946**—The ERIE reaches $1 million in annual premiums. It takes ERIE only two more years to reach its second million.

**1949**—Bill Hirt joins his father's company as an accountant after earning his MBA from the University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School of Business.

**c. 1950**—Bill Hirt takes his master’s thesis topic—the adaptation of a punch card system to insurance accounting—and applies it to Erie Insurance. This is the first step toward mechanizing ERIE's accounting, claims and policy processing systems. In due time, Bill also spearheads the massive project of microfilming ERIE's policy files.

**1953**—For the first time, ERIE expands its operations outside of Pennsylvania, opening an office in Silver Spring, Md.

**1954**—ERIE adds another line of insurance, Inland Marine, making the company's lines more accommodating for the rapidly growing agency force.

**1955**—ERIE experiences a tremendous leap in net premiums from $755,080 in 1945 to $7,729,114 in 1955.

**1955**—By this time, space is tight at the Home Office. Desks are so close together that women have to take off their crinolines and hang them in the coatroom in order to navigate the narrow maze of desks and file cabinets.

After the war, cars, tires and gasoline were plentiful. As suburbs and the interstate highway system developed, there was a boom in drivers and a battle over compulsory auto insurance. Auto owners were buying insurance in record numbers. ERIE's continuing financial growth was reflected in a growth in Agents and Employees. The ERIE participated in the Veterans Administration hiring program in which private industry hired veterans and the government subsidized their salaries. By 1955 ERIE had more than 400 Employees.

Now insurance is the most important thing a person buys because it protects him against the loss of everything he has in the world...

*Founder H.O. Hirt*

1954
As ERIE continued to expand, Alaska and Hawaii became the 49th and 50th states in the Union. Television was well on its way to becoming one of the most influential technologies of the 20th century. A new era began for race relations: Jackie Robinson played major league baseball; Brown vs. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas, made segregation in public schools illegal; and the Montgomery, Ala., bus boycott led to the successful repeal of the segregated bus ordinance.

In 1960, John F. Kennedy was elected president of the United States.

Success in business is not a matter of tricks or gimmicks ... it is just a matter of simple common sense, mixed with just plain decency.

Founder H.O. Hirt
1960
ERIE started the new decade by surveying the insurance market to determine the total needs of its Policyholders. The result was the real beginning of ERIE’s move toward a multi-line insurance company. At the same time, Americans soared into a new frontier: space. Alan Shepherd became the first American in space. John Glenn became the first American in orbit to circle the earth three times. Envisioning a new frontier of equal rights, Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his “I Have a Dream” speech. And an era ended with the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

NEW FRONTIERS
HISTORIC TIMELINE 1925—2015

1961—Founder H.O. Hirt still interviews and hires most of ERIE’s Employees, both for the Home Office and field offices. He uses a test consisting of 90 math problems, 50 multiple-choice vocabulary questions and 60 filing problems.

1961—ERIE introduces the Pioneer HomeProtector program.

1962—ERIE purchases its first computer, a central processor valued at $70,000.

1963—ERIE introduces the Pioneer Business Protector Policy.

1964—Recognized for steady hiring practices and a record of no layoffs, ERIE receives the Greater Erie Area Chamber of Commerce “Job Maker of the Year” Award. The number of Home Office Employees reaches 300.

1965—H.O. Hirt addresses a conference of the National Association of Independent Insurers in Las Vegas. The title of his speech is “It Pays to Be Ignorant, or Why the Greatest Benefactor of Man—The Insurance Industry—Is the Most Depressed and Hated Institution on Earth Today.”

1961—1965

1925—1928 1929-1934 1935-1940 1941-1945
2000-2005 2006-2010 2011-2015 BACK TO MAIN

I have a dream that one day...

Martin Luther King, Jr.
1963
While ERIE prospered from its sterling reputation, conflict was growing between government, insurers and the public on the regulation of auto insurance. President Lyndon Johnson authorized a $2 million investigation of the insurance industry. The nation likewise saw its share of triumphs and turmoil. Medicare was established. Thurgood Marshall was sworn in as the first African-American U.S. Supreme Court Justice. Neil Armstrong became the first man to walk on the moon. But violence broke out during Vietnam War protests. And Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy fell to assassins’ bullets.

One small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind.

Astronaut Neil Armstrong 1969
In contrast to ERIE’s overall success in 1975 and a heyday for sales in the life insurance industry, the property/casualty industry saw its worst underwriting results in its 225 year history with a record $3.9 billion in losses.

In the early 1970s, the country experienced two milestones in history: the establishment of diplomatic relations with the People’s Republic of China and the unfolding of the Watergate scandal and subsequent first time resignation of a U.S. president, Richard Nixon.

1975—ERIE celebrates its 50th anniversary, ending the year with $108.4 million in net premiums, $10 million in dividends to Policyholders and 808,000 Policyholders.

1971—ERIE expands the Independence Hall-inspired building, adding 32,000 square feet of office space. When that building opened in 1956, management thought that it would accommodate ERIE’s growth at the Home Office for the next 50 years.

1972—In the aftermath of Hurricane Agnes, ERIE responds to massive flooding in Pennsylvania, particularly in the Harrisburg, Wilkes-Barre and Allentown/Bethlehem areas. ERIE sends additional adjusters to help staff in the affected areas. ERIE Employees contribute to an Erie Family Flood Fund for Employees who lost their homes and autos in the flood.

1975—Home Office expansion continues with the conversion of a former Volkswagen dealership into a modern office space. In 1996, the building is dedicated as the John M. Petersen Center.

1975—Pennsylvania’s No-Fault Auto Insurance Plan goes into effect.

The gem cannot be polished without friction, nor man perfected without trials.

Chinese Proverb
1976—H.O. Hirt retires as President and Chief Executive Officer, being named “Founder and President Emeritus” by the Board of Directors. Bill Hirt becomes President. ERIE is collecting well over $1 million in premiums every three days, netting more than $143 million in annual premiums for 1976.

1976—ERIE establishes a human resources function, developing a salary administration program with performance assessments and major enhancements in Employee benefits, personnel policies, and a new organizational structure, including job descriptions.

1977—ERIE becomes the largest Pennsylvania-based auto insurer in the state.

1977—The first Agents Advisory Council is held.

1980—Susan Hirt Hagen succeeds her father, H.O. Hirt, as a Board Director of the ERIE companies, the first woman to hold that office.

1981—Bill Hirt is named Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer of Erie Insurance Group. The same year, he presides at groundbreaking ceremonies for the Perry Square Building on ERIE’s 56th anniversary.

1982—H.O. Hirt, “one of the giants in the insurance world,” dies at age 95.

1982—Erie Family Life, now 15 years old, reaches the $1 billion in force mark.

The ERIE joined other bayfront area businesses and institutions in 1977 to form the Bayfront East Side Taskforce to revitalize Erie’s east bayfront area. A $7.3 million federal grant made it possible for ERIE to obtain the land necessary for expansion. The grant was also used to improve neighborhood streets, sewage systems and street lighting, helping to restore an area which was once known as the “combat zone.” ERIE continued branching out into new states. By 1982, 14 of ERIE’s current 23 field offices were serving 6 of our current 11 states and the District of Columbia.

I don’t want people who want to dance. I want people who have to dance.

George Balanchine (1904-1983) Choreographer

In 1986, the nation experienced the tragedy of the Challenger explosion. In 1989, the Berlin Wall fell, reuniting East and West Germany for the first time since World War II.

1983—ERIE hosts the grand opening of the Perry Square Building and buries a time capsule behind the date stone on the front of the building.

1983—The Policy Management System (PMS) goes live, revolutionizing policy handling at ERIE through a complete property and liability insurance processing system.

1984—The ERIE is listed in the best-selling book, The 100 Best Companies to Work For in America, and will be listed in each subsequent edition as well as in Fortune magazine listings through the end of the century. The same year, ERIE is named Office of the Year by Office Administration and Automation magazine for the design of the Perry Square Building.

1985—ERIE meets one of its biggest challenges to date—the Albion, Pa., tornado. Adjusters are on the scene within three hours. ERIE establishes claims centers and sets standards for handling claims in catastrophes. ERIE pays $20.1 million in claims.

1987—The Employee service award program is introduced.

1987—ERIE’s Home Office begins its partnership with Pfeiffer-Burleigh Elementary School in the Adopt-a-School program.

1990—Agents and the Home Office are joined electronically through the Data Sharing System.

1990—Bill Hirt retires; Tom Hagen becomes Chairman and Chief Executive Officer.
The ‘90s were a decade of prosperity for most Americans—but the decade in which 8 of the 10 most costly insured catastrophes, like Hurricane Andrew, occurred. The property/casualty industry saw new strategies such as direct sales (including through the Internet), sophisticated niche marketing, saturation advertising and the necessity of value-added services for survival. In the midst of change, ERIE continued its commitment to the independent agency system, to “The Promise of Service” that the company was built on, and to the delivery of service that has made it grow.

**1991—ERIE introduces a new corporate logo.**

**1993—Erie Indemnity Company stock becomes available for sale to the public.**

**1993—President John Petersen is named Chief Executive Officer.**

**1994—Erie Indemnity Company is first registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission. The following year it becomes listed on NASDAQ as “ERIE.”**

**1996—Steve Milne is named President and Chief Executive Officer.**


**1996—Erie Family Life reaches the $10 billion mark in individual life insurance in force.**

**1997—Erie Indemnity Company stock is made available to Employees through the 401(k) Employee Savings Plan.**

**1997—ERIE Agents College holds its first classes.**

**1998—ERIE reaches the milestone of one million personal property policies (other than auto) in force. ERIE’s property/casualty operations reach $2 billion in direct written premium.**

**1999—ERIE introduces the Pioneer Experience Rating Credit (PERC).**

We’ve come a long way to get to 75 years.

Stephen Milne former President & CEO 2000
Despite the “millennium bug” scare as the calendar turned over to 2000, ERIE’s Y2K rollover was a success and as much of a non-event as it was for the rest of the country. In contrast, on that fateful day, Sept. 11, 2001, four commercial airplanes were hijacked by terrorists and crashed into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and in a field southeast of Pittsburgh. The insurance industry’s financial losses were extensive but not as significant as the loss of thousands of lives and a lost sense of security for the nation. During these first years of the new century, ERIE experienced continued growth and expansion. The new decade brought the company national award recognition for customer satisfaction and a place on the Fortune 500 list.
As the first global recession since World War II pushed many financial institutions to the brink, the property/casualty insurance industry proved itself a resilient business within the financial services sector. In 2008—despite financial market turmoil, high weather-related losses and a soft sales market—Erie Insurance again received an A+ Superior rating from A.M. Best Company, the leader in ratings for financial strength of insurance companies. ERIE’s rating placed it in the top 10 percent of its peers.

2006—Erie Indemnity Company announces its inclusion in the new NASDAQ Global Select market.
2006—Quick Quote for Auto, a new online quoting feature for private passenger auto, makes its debut on erieinsurance.com.
2007—Chairman of the Board and retired Chief Executive Officer Bill Hirt dies.
2007—Tom Hagen is elected Chairman of the Board.
2007—John Brinling Jr. becomes President and Chief Executive Officer.
2008—ERIE recruits its 2,000th agency, the Suzanne Stoner Pullion Insurance Agency in Irwin, Pa.
2008—ERIE ranks highest in customer satisfaction with the auto insurance purchase experience, according to a report by a global marketing information services company.
2008—Terry Cavanaugh is named President and Chief Executive Officer.
2008—Hurricane Ike becomes the second-largest CAT in company history, causing 13,000 claims—about half in southwest Ohio—after slamming into the Gulf Coast. In two months, ERIE has settled 90% of the claims.
2009—ERIE reaches milestone of holding more than 4 million policies in force.
2010—For the third consecutive year, ERIE ranks highest in customer satisfaction with the auto insurance purchase experience, according to a report by a global marketing information services company.

The time to take charge of our future is here.

President Barack Obama
Address to Joint Session of Congress
February 24, 2009
The 2010s ricocheted between heartbreak and hope. Violent acts of terrorism hit Moscow, Boston and Paris; the Ebola pandemic afflicted western Africa; and the worst oil spill in history occurred in the Gulf of Mexico. Apple introduced the ground-breaking iPad® and the internet reached 2 billion users globally. ERIE responded to world and local needs by establishing the Giving Network and ERIE Service Corps. ERIE’s claims’ teams braved a polar vortex with cyber-ready Sprinter vans and mobile, quick-response call centers. The company introduced Rate Lock protection and opened a state-of-the-art training center that would propel its standing among competitors.