

FROM 1925 TO THE PRESENT

Kane County Farmers Mutual Fire Insurance Company received their Charter on March 17, 1925, and commenced business on June 1, 1925. The word "Farmers" was dropped from the name in 1946 as the company began insuring property in towns and villages in addition to farm property. The word "Fire" was dropped from the name in 1987 as the state statutes changed and the company was able to write wind coverage in addition to fire and extended perils.

The company has always been located in Geneva. The first office was in the Farm Bureau Building at 324 East State Street. In the early years the company shared office space with the Farm Bureau. The office was moved to 19 South Fourth Street in 1956. The company operated out of two tiny rooms at this location until June of 1979 when the office moved to 910 Stevens Street. We outgrew this space and moved to our current location at 417 Williamsburg Drive in October of 2014.

A Board of Directors consisting of nine policyholders governs the company. The original board consisted of fifteen directors, one from each township in the county. The number of directors was reduced to twelve in 1964 and in 1987 was reduced again to the current number of nine. The annual meeting of policyholders has always been held on the 4th Tuesday in January at the home office in Geneva. The policyholders who are present at the annual meeting elect the directors. One third of the directors are elected each year to serve three-year terms.

The board elects the officers of the company each year in January. Henry McGough, from Burlington Township, was the first president. He served from 1925 until 1936 when Clarence Tanner, from Aurora Township, became president. Mr. Tanner held the office for 36 years until Robert Getzelman, from Elgin Township, was elected in 1972. Our current board president is Richard Dickson from Bristol, IL who was elected in 2004. He succeeded Robert Peterson from Maple Park who served as president from 1986-2003.

The board hires a person to manage the affairs of the company according to the procedures set by the directors. That person holds the office of Secretary of the company but is not a voting member of the board of directors. W.C. McQueen served as Secretary from 1925 until his retirement in 1930 when William Lye was elected. Mr. Lye held this office until his death in 1943. Lois Anderson had been working in the office for ten years at the time of Mr. Lye's death and she was elected Secretary. She served as Secretary for 30 years. Clara Wilson served from 1974 to 1978. John Harker served from 1978 to 1979 when Ralph Alvarado was hired for a period of four months. Darlene Biggs was elected secretary in January of 1980 and resigned in April of 1980. Rose Mell replaced Darlene in 1980 and retired at the end of 2002.

Cindy Hiltenbrand began working for the company in November of 1997 and became Assistant Secretary in 2000. Cindy assumed the position of Secretary/Treasurer on January 1, 2003 until her retirement at the end of 2014. The current Secretary/Treasurer, Kathleen Rice, was hired in 2008, was named Assistant Manager in 2013, and succeeded Cindy on January 1, 2015.

When the company was chartered in 1925, there were thirty-six policyholders and the total value of the property insured by the company was \$194,200. The state statutes in 1925 limited the company to insuring farm property located within Kane County. By the year 2000 there were twelve hundred sixty-five policyholders and the value of the property insured was \$306,651,715. Currently, the company has over 2,600 policyholders and insurance in force at the end of 2014 was nearly \$1,100,000,000. State statutes have changed, and the company has increased its territory to twenty-two counties and also insures property in towns and villages.

During the period from 1925 until 1968 the directors served as the agents for the company. When the state began requiring agents to be licensed, two of the directors obtained their agent's license and purchased all the business from the other directors. Clifford Russell and Peter Peterson became agents in 1968 and were joined by David Werdin in 1971. They were the only agents for the company until 1977 when the company began signing contracts with independent insurance agencies.

The company formed Kane Mutual Insurance Service, an independent insurance agency, in 1971 to meet the expanding needs of the policyholders for types of insurance coverage that could not be provided by Kane County Mutual. The company and the agency shared the same office until 1991 when the company expanded into the office next door at 910 Stevens Street. Until moving to our present location in 2014, we were operating out of adjoining offices and sharing some pieces of office equipment. The agency changed their by-laws in 1996 to become totally independent of the company so they no longer share staff or board members.

Presently we have fifteen independent insurance agencies representing Kane County Mutual. They are Kane Mutual Insurance Service of Geneva, First Insurance Group of Plano (formerly Castle Insurance Services), Batavia Insurance Agency of Batavia, BMC Insurance Agency of Hinckley, Resource Insurance Agency of DeKalb, HBT Insurance (formerly American Midwest Insurance) of Sycamore, Fox Valley Insurance Center of Sugar Grove, Woellert Insurance of Spring Grove, Calfa for Insurance of Algonquin, Hometowne Insurance of Oswego, Complete Insurance Service of Joliet, Allison-Lauritzen Insurance of Gardner, Turk Financial Services of Elgin, All Insurance Services of McHenry, Insurance Counts of Montgomery and Millenium Insurance Agency of Libertyville.

Kane County Mutual joined the Illinois Association of Mutual Insurance Companies in 1926 and the National Association of Mutual Insurance Companies in 1928. Over the years the company secretaries have been active on committees and served on the board of directors for both organizations. In 1986 the company received the IAMIC Company Achievement Award. Kane County Mutual was honored to have Rose Mell serve as chairman of IAMIC during the 1994-1995 year and former Secretary/Treasurer Cindy Hiltenbrand served as IAMIC Secretary/Treasurer from 2006-2009.

The company became affiliated with Rockford District Mutual Tornado Insurance Company in 1925 to provide policies to cover wind damage and with Northern Illinois Farmers Mutual Insurance Company in 1969 to provide liability coverage. Rockford merged with Northern Illinois Farmers and became a multi-line insurance company known as Rockford Mutual Insurance Company. Kane County Mutual and Rockford Mutual have written a combined policy since 1955. In 2017, Grinnell Mutual became the company's reinsurer and liability insurance provider.

Technology was not a word that was used much in 1925 when the company was formed. The company began operating with nothing more than a manual typewriter. The first adding machine was purchased in 1947, the first photo copier in 1960, and the first calculator in 1966. That calculator was a large machine and cost \$874. It could not perform many of the functions handled easily by the handheld give-away calculators of today. The office became computerized in 1987 and started using a fax machine in 1990. During the 75th anniversary year the company obtained an Internet connection and an e-mail address. The company website—kanecountymutual.com—was developed in 2005. Changes are continually being made to the way the company uses technology to do business. We are sure our founding fathers would be amazed at the way a policy is issued today. In 2015, the company rolled out an online quoting system, Vector, for the agents.

The board of directors has operated the company in a conservative manner over the years, which enabled the company to be financially strong even though it remained small. The past several years has brought many changes as family farms began disappearing from the landscape of Kane County. The board of directors and management has been progressive and changed to meet the needs of the community in which it operates.

In 2003, Kane County Mutual merged with Nunda-Algonquin Mutual of McHenry, Illinois. The company Secretary of Nunda-Algonquin—Sandra Freels—had decided to retire, and conditions in the reinsurance market led the board of Nunda-Algonquin to look for another farm mutual company to continue to serve the needs of their policyholders. Nunda-Algonquin was founded in 1872 and continued until 2003 to be a small but financially strong company. Two Nunda Algonquin board members joined the Kane County Mutual Board of Directors as a result of this merger. Former company Secretary, Sandra Freels, and board member David Gieseke are currently serving as directors.

The foundation of mutual insurance has always been the Golden Rule, and the company will remain faithful to that concept as it moves forward through the 21st century.