

The History of Iron Mountain

"Herman Knaust Finds New Use for Old Mine: Anti-Atomic Storage"

~ Front page, Wall Street Journal, October 24, 1952

Iron Mountain was founded in 1951 in Livingston, NY, 125 miles north of New York City. The Company's founder, Herman Knaust, was known by his Hudson River valley neighbors as the "Mushroom King" because he made his fortune growing and marketing mushrooms. In 1936, he purchased a depleted iron ore mine and 100 acres of land for \$9,000 because he needed more space to grow his product. But by 1950, the mushroom market shifted and Mr. Knaust was looking for alternative uses for his mine, which he had named "Iron Mountain."

After World War II, Mr. Knaust sponsored the relocation to the United States of many Jewish immigrants who had lost their identity because their personal records had been destroyed. During that same period, the world was embroiled in cold war apprehension about atomic security. Both factors impressed upon Mr. Knaust the need to protect information from the havoc of wars or lesser disasters.



In 1951, Iron Mountain Atomic Storage, Inc. was founded. Mr. Knaust opened the first "vaults" inside Iron Mountain and put a sales office in the Empire State Building. Having a knack for publicity, he persuaded luminaries such as General Douglas MacArthur to visit Iron Mountain. The attendant publicity was the extent of the new venture's marketing program. Iron Mountain's first customer was East River Savings Bank, who brought microfilm copies of deposit records and duplicate signature cards in armored cars for storage in the new mountain facility. Other corporate customers soon followed as New York-based companies began to see the need to protect their vital records.



Iron Mountain continued to grow in the New York City market, expanding beyond the original facility into a depleted limestone mine closer to the city. The empty mine was a natural place to build an underground storage facility. Iron Mountain was now the premier vital records protection company.

Clients trusted the Company with their vital records and soon wanted Iron Mountain to store their high volume of paper records as well. In 1978 the Company opened its first aboveground records storage facility in New York to store and service paper records. It expanded beyond the New York City market in 1980, when it opened a site in New England to service the emerging need to protect backup computer data. In 1983, the Company expanded further in New England with the purchase of New England Storage Warehouse in Boston. This was Iron Mountain's first acquisition and it gave the Company a strong entry into the medical and legal records management markets in New England.

By then, Iron Mountain had accumulated all the product lines that are the foundation of the current company. The Company offered paper records storage and management services (including major operations in the medical and legal vertical markets), off-site data protection services, and vital records protection services in the New York and New England markets.

In 1988, Iron Mountain took a major step forward with the acquisition of Bell & Howell Records Management, Inc., a subsidiary of Bell & Howell Corporation and four times its size. Bell & Howell Records Management, then the industry leader, served 12 major US markets, none of which were being served by Iron Mountain. As a result of that acquisition, Iron Mountain became the first national service provider in the industry.

The focus was on internal expansion and the Company grew to exceed \$100 million of annual revenues in 1995. By then the stage was set for the records management industry to consolidate. In February 1996, Iron Mountain became a public company, raising capital, in part to initiate the consolidation.

A decade later Iron Mountain celebrates its 10 year anniversary as a public company. Along the way the company made major milestones in aspects of growth from revenue to geographic footprint and an expanding portfolio of services.

Since its inception the Company has assembled as the industry leader in all service lines, through the acquisition of more than 150 companies in 166 markets worldwide. Though the motivation for managing records may have shifted and risks have expanded the core problems its customers seek to solve today have not changed. However, the technologies used to create and manage information have proliferated.

Iron Mountain has been the leader in developing new solutions to meet its customers' changing needs, and expects to manage the current media forms (paper, film, magnetic, etc.) for many years to come. In addition, the Company offers new solutions to take advantage of emerging digital technologies, which create a whole new set of challenges for customers and opportunities for Iron Mountain.

Today, with \$2.1 billion in revenues and the broadest service platform serving the most global markets, Iron Mountain is the "world's trusted partner for information protection and storage services." Herman Knaust displayed great foresight in 1952 when he said...

["This business will mushroom"...](#)

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