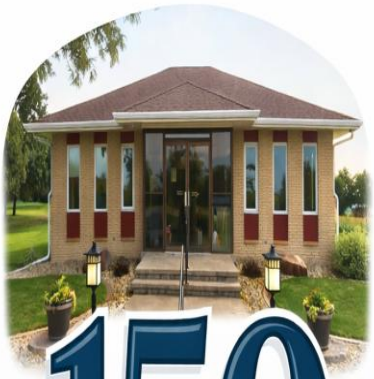


150 ANNIVERSARY

FARMERS MUTUAL INSURANCE COMPANY

1876 - 2026

150 Years of Service, Stability, and Community

Farmers Mutual Insurance Company of Manchester 1876–2026

A Legacy Begins (1876)

Farmers Mutual Insurance Company of Manchester was founded on December 7, 1876, at a meeting held in the Central (Middle) Church of the Freeborn Norwegian Lutheran Congregation. Organized for the protection of farmers against fire and lightning, the company was built on principles of honesty, mutual responsibility, and neighbor helping neighbor—values that continue to guide the company 150 years later.

The men who founded Farmers Mutual were respected community leaders, many holding public office and deeply involved in township affairs. The early meeting minutes reflect their intelligence, integrity, and genuine concern for their fellow citizens. From the beginning, Farmers Mutual was intended not as a profit-seeking enterprise, but as a mutual organization dedicated to fairness and service.

The Founding Officers

Ole Peterson Slette – First President

Born in Norway in 1832, Ole Peterson Slette immigrated to America in 1852 at the age of 20 with his mother, five brothers, and one sister. As the eldest of seven children, Ole quickly became a leader within his community. Though his surname was Slette, insurance records commonly list him as Ole Peterson.
Remarkably, as of June 18, 2026—150 years later—Farmers Mutual still insures members of the Slette family.

Iver A. Rodsater – First Secretary

Iver A. Rodsater was born in Sogn, Norway, in 1845 and graduated from Balestrang Teachers College in 1864. He immigrated to the United States in 1866, married Ingeborg Anderson, and settled in Manchester Township. A farmer, teacher, and township clerk, Rodsater was deeply engaged in community life.
His son Arthur served as a director of Farmers Mutual from 1913 to 1914, continuing the family's connection to the company.

Ole Narveson – First Treasurer

Ole Narveson was born and raised in Norway and later settled in Bancroft Township with his wife and young son. A farmer and family man with nine children, Ole served as treasurer until 1900. He was succeeded by his son-in-law, B. E. Bottolfson, who held the position for nearly three decades, until 1929.

A Family Tradition: The Stensrud Legacy

Hans H. Stensrud – Original Director

Born October 11, 1835, in Telemarken, Norway, Hans H. Stensrud served in the Norwegian Army and the King's Guard before immigrating to the United States in 1866. After enduring the hardships common to early settlers, he established a farm near Freeborn Village and became a prominent civic leader.

Hans served as Chairman of the Freeborn Village Board of Supervisors, Director of the State Bank of Freeborn, and was a charter member of West Freeborn Lutheran Church. He remained active with Farmers Mutual until his retirement in 1901 and lived to the age of 92.

Four Generations of Service

- **Carl Stensrud**, Hans's son, served on the Board of Directors from 1902 to 1950, holding positions as Vice President and Treasurer.
- **Henry Stensrud** followed, serving from 1950 to 1965.
- Upon Henry's death, the agency passed to **Bert McKean**, married to Henry's cousin, Myrna Stensrud—Hans's great-granddaughter.
- Bert McKean later retired from the board in 1998, and his daughter-in-law, **Marcia McKean**, led the McKean Agency and served on the board until her retirement in February 2023.

The Stensrud family has represented Farmers Mutual in Freeborn Township throughout the company's entire history. As of June 18, 2026, members of the Stensrud family remain insured with Farmers Mutual—an extraordinary testament to generational trust.

Guided by Principle

From its earliest years, the company faced challenges that remain familiar today—claims disputes, expense concerns, and assessment collections. The minutes reveal a thoughtful balance of compassion and responsibility:

"It hurts us when we have to deny claims… but if this company is to exist, it is our duty to maintain law and order in the company."

These principles ensured long-term stability while protecting the interests of all members.

Growth and Territorial Expansion

From its founding in 1876, Farmers Mutual Insurance Company of Manchester grew steadily through careful management, conservative underwriting, and the confidence of its policyholders. The company's expansion reflects both changing insurance needs and the strength of its mutual foundation.

Early Years: Township-Based Protection

At its inception, Farmers Mutual insured property in nine townships: **Manchester, Bancroft, Riceland, Hayward, Albert Lea, Bath, Hartland, Carlston, and Freeborn**. The company began operations on February 10, 1877, with **102 members** and **$135,172 in insurance in force**.

Within ten years, Farmers Mutual had expanded to **17 townships**, demonstrating strong member confidence and a growing need for reliable, local insurance protection. By the early 1880s, membership had increased to **338 policyholders**, with **$375,000 insured**.

Measured Growth Through the Early 20th Century

For many decades, Farmers Mutual focused on strengthening its presence in southern Minnesota rather than pursuing rapid expansion. Growth occurred gradually as additional townships were added, agents were appointed, and internal procedures were refined. Election of directors by township ensured local representation and maintained the company's close ties to the communities it served.

The company operated without reinsurance until 1934, relying only on prudent assessments and disciplined financial practices. In 1932, annual assessments were authorized, allowing the company to build reserves and improve long-term financial stability.

Mid-Century Expansion and Modernization

Significant growth occurred beginning in the **1960s**, driven by broader policy offerings and organizational modernization.

- **1962** – Introduction of the **Package Policy**, which expanded coverage options and increased the company's appeal beyond traditional farm risks.
- **1963** – Expansion of writing territory into **Faribault, Waseca, Steele, Dodge, and Mower Counties**, marking the company's first major multi-county growth.
- **1966** – Implementation of a formal **inspection program** for all insured properties, strengthening underwriting consistency and risk management.

Merger with Farmers Mutual Fire Insurance Company of Bath (1967)

On July 1, 1967, Farmers Mutual Insurance Company of Manchester merged with the **Farmers Mutual Fire Insurance Company of Bath**, which had been organized in 1878. This merger added **$12,233,432 in insurance in force** and expanded the company's geographic reach and membership base.

The Bath Company's board members at the time of the merger joined in ensuring a smooth transition and continuity of service for policyholders.

Continued Expansion and Reinsurance

As the company grew, it strengthened its financial protections. Although reinsurance planning discussions began in the 1920s, a formal reinsurance program was established in **1934**. Today, the company maintains a comprehensive reinsurance structure to support stability during catastrophic loss events.

Late 20th and Early 21st Century Growth

- **1975** – Coverage extended to include **fire on growing crops and standing grain**, addressing evolving agricultural risks.
- **2007** – Major territory expansion into **Blue Earth, Le Sueur, Rice, Goodhue, Olmsted, Fillmore, Houston, Winona, Wabasha, Dakota, and Scott Counties**, as well as **Cities of the Second Class** within the authorized territory.
- **2007** - Added an agency within Farmers Mutual to help agents that could not write auto policy directly with North Star & RAM, to be able to bundle auto and home policies.

This expansion represented a significant milestone, allowing Farmers Mutual to serve a broader population while maintaining its mutual structure and local service model.

Growth with Purpose

Throughout its history, Farmers Mutual has grown deliberately—balancing expansion with financial responsibility, community representation, and personalized service. Each increase in territory and coverage has been guided by the same principle established in 1876: to provide dependable, affordable protection through a mutual organization owned by and operated for its policyholders.

**From the Kitchen Table to a Modern Office:

The Myran and Troe Families**

For nearly a century, the heart of Farmers Mutual Insurance Company of Manchester was not a commercial building—but a family home. From the company's earliest days until 1972, the office of Farmers Mutual operated out of the home of the company secretary. This arrangement reflected the deeply personal and community-centered nature of the company's mission, where business was conducted face-to-face, often around a kitchen table, accompanied by a cup of coffee and a slice of homemade cake.

One of the most significant chapters of this era belongs to the Myran family, whose service to the company spanned multiple generations and more than six decades. In 1899, Gunder O. Myran became secretary of Farmers Mutual,

and the company office was established in his farmhouse. From that point forward, the Myran farm became synonymous with the operations of the company. Policyholders, agents, and directors alike knew that a visit to the office also meant warm hospitality and personal conversation—an embodiment of the mutual spirit (owned by the policyholders) on which the company was founded.

When Gunder Myran passed away in 1935, his son, Richard Myran, stepped in to carry on his father's work. Richard was elected secretary and continued operating the company from the same farmstead. In 1951, Richard built a new home on the northwest corner of the farm, and the company office simply moved "down the road" with him—maintaining continuity not only in leadership, but in place and tradition.

Upon Richard Myran's unexpected passing in March of 1962, the responsibility of maintaining the company's daily operations fell to his son-in-law, Duane Troe, who had been hired to assist Richard and was scheduled to begin work just days later. Duane and his wife Sonja purchased the Myran home, ensuring that the company office remained in familiar hands and surroundings during a time of transition.

As the company continued to grow, so did its needs. In 1967, the Troes finished the basement of their home to create additional office space, adapting once again to meet the demands of an expanding policyholder base and increasing administrative responsibilities. This period marked a bridge between the deeply personal, home-based operations of the past and the more formal structure required for the future.

Finally, in 1972, the Board of Directors made the decision to construct the company's first dedicated office building. Built by Wayne Construction of Geneva, Minnesota, the new office was located on the southwest corner of the original Gunder O. Myran farm, along Highway 13 in Manchester—a symbolic continuation of the company's roots. The move into the new building on April 21, 1972, marked a milestone in Farmers Mutual's history. An open house held on July 15, 1972, drew more than 600 visitors from the community.

Duane Troe remained Manager of the company until his retirement in 1995, guiding Farmers Mutual through the transition from a home-based operation to a modern insurance organization. Even after stepping down from day-to-day management, his commitment to the company continued. He remained on the Board of Directors until 2000, offering experience, continuity, and trusted guidance. That connection continues today through his son, James Troe, who currently serves on the Board of Directors.

The Troe family's long-standing relationship with Farmers Mutual also remains strong, with several family members still insured with the company—reflecting a legacy of trust that spans generations.

As the company moved from kitchen tables to a modern office setting, the values established by the Myran and Troe families—personal service, hospitality, dedication, and trust—remained at the core of Farmers Mutual Insurance Company. Their stewardship during critical years of growth ensured that progress never came at the expense of principle.

Serving Beyond Insurance

Farmers Mutual has long believed in supporting the communities it serves. Over the decades, the company has:

- Sponsored fire prevention programs
- Supported FFA and 4-H initiatives
- Participated in youth education and livestock auctions
- Assisted fellow mutual companies during times of disaster, including northern Minnesota forest fires in 1918–1919
- Started a scholarship program in 2003 and have awarded Sixty-one, $500.00 scholarships since.

Celebrating Milestones

- **2001:** 125th Anniversary celebration with 550 meals served
- **2026:** Celebrating **150 years** of mutual protection, community trust, and enduring relationships

Looking Ahead

From handwritten Norwegian meeting minutes to modern underwriting systems, Farmers Mutual Insurance Company of Manchester has evolved while remaining true to its founding purpose: people protecting people.

As we celebrate 150 years, we honor the founders, directors, agents, employees, and policyholders who made this legacy possible. Many families have entrusted Farmers Mutual with their insurance needs for several generations, a testament to enduring relationships built on trust and service. We are deeply grateful to each and every one of them for their continued loyalty and dedication—and we look forward to continuing this tradition for generations to come.

Insurance in Force – 150 Years

1877	$ 135,172
1880	$ 230,046
1885	$ 668,980
1890	$ 1,208,564
1895	$ 1,897,693
1900	$ 3,268,836
1905	$ 4,288,934
1910	$ 5,598,753
1915	$ 7,604,750
1920	$ 12,355,219
1925	$ 16,725,025
1930	$ 19,301,957
1935	$ 17,309,647
1940	$ 19,359,700
1945	$ 24,472,020
1950	$ 36,165,215
1955	$ 49,001,689
1960	$ 56,500,443
1965	$ 62,090,590
1970	$ 90,583,794
1975	$ 163,696,903
1980	$ 304,142,321
1985	$ 343,114,921
1990	$ 411,567,165
1995	$ 473,521,193
2000	$ 519,376,475
2005	$ 688,128,503
2010	$ 774,080,629
2015	$ 903,763,840
2020	$1,084,743,749
2025	$1,754,275,373

Office Employees
Managers:

Name
Richard Myran
Duane Troe
Doug Iverson
David Pederson
Sandra Walstrom
Rhonda heilmann

Office Staff:

Name
Ramona Myran-Peterson
Sonja Myran Troe
Ardelle Knutson
Donna Mendenhall
Cora Kvale
Jan Prescher
Sandra Walstrom
Lynnette Rasmussen
Karen Lunberg
Brenda Cords
Rhonda Heilmann
Trisha Kvenvold

Inspectors:

Name
Chris J Wayne
Bill Geemsn
Chester Peterson
David Pederson
Richard Wichmann
Troy Newman

Adjustors:

Name
John Sorlie
Troy Newman

Board Presidents:

Name	Term Years
Ole Peterson Slette	1876-1883
Rollef Thykeson	1883-1910
H.C. Nelson	1910-1929
B. N. Anderson	1929-1936
John G. Johnson	1936-1950
Charles Nelson	1950-1951
Bernhard Johnson	1951-1968
George Wasmoen	1968-1980
Wilfred J. Hanson	1981-1984
Bert V Mckean	1984-1993
Bill Geesman	1994-1995
Allen Rohne	1996-2005
George Wichmann	2006-2017
John Sorlie	2018-2019
Gary Geesman	2020 - present

Board Secretaries:

Name		Term Years
Iver A Rodsater		1876-1895
B.N. Anderson		1895-1899
Gunder 0. Myran		1899-1935
Richard Myran		1935-1962
Duane Troe		1962-1975
Duane Troe	Sec/Tres	1976 -1999
Doug Iverson		2000-2010

Secretary/Treasurer Combined in 1976 to 2000, then separated in 2001

Marcia Mckean	2011-2023
Michelle Hansen	2024-Present

Board Vice President
(The office of VP was started in 1909):

Name	Term Years
H.C. Nelson	1906-1910
A.O. Bakken	1910-1912
0. C. Johnson	1912-1913
James J. Hove	1913-1914
0. C. Johnson	1914-1917
Henry Steele	1917-1918
James J. Hove	1918-1920
C.A. Schneider	1920-1921
C. A. Stensrud	1921-1923
B. N. Anderson	1923-1929
John L Johnson	1929-1931
John G. Johnson	1931-1936
Charles Nelson	1936-1950
Bernhard Johnsrud	1950-1951
Victor H. Sorlie	1951-1954
George O Wasmoen	1954-1968
Wilfred J. Hanson	1968-1980
Bert V Mckean	1981-1984
Earl Geesman	1984-1986
Bill Geesman	1987-1993
Bert V Mckean	1994-1997
George Wichmann	1998-2005
Allen Rohne	2006-2012
John Sorlie	2013-2017
David Pederson	2018-2019
Sandra Walstrom	2020 - Present

Board Treasurers:

Name:	Term Years
Ole Narveson	1876-1900
B. E. Bottolfson	1900-1929
Carl Stensrud	1930-1950
John Ellingson	1950-1963
Victor W. Sorlie	1963-1975

(Secretary/Tresurer combined in 1976 to 2000, than separated in 2001)

Gary Hansen	Sec/Tres	2000-2001
James Troe		2001 - present

Original Officers & Board of Directors from startup:

Name	Term
Ole Peterson Slette	1876-1883
Iver A Rodsater, Sec	1876-1895
Ole Narveson, Tres	1876-1900
R. Fodnes	1876-1878
Erik C. Johnson	1876-1886
Andrew Teslow	1876-1889
Ingebrigt Hammer	1876-1879
Hans R Fossum	1876-1877
Andrew O. Styve	1876-1877
Johannes Madson	1876-1892
Hans H. Stensrud	1876-1901
Knut Ingebritson	1876-1889

Current Board of Directors 2026:

Name	Term
Gary Geesman	1996-2026
James Troe	2000-2026
Sandra Walstrom	2018-2026
Scott Morreim	2018-2026
Michelle Hansen	2020-2026
John Knutson	2020-2026
Jamie Jerdee	2020-2026

Other Directors:

Names	Terms
Carl G Johnsrud	1879-1892
Rollef Thykeson	1883-1910
Iver Sorlie	1886-1888
Ellend Erickson	1886-1901
Halvor C. Sibilrud	1888-1900
Ole Henry	1889-1892
H.C. Nelson	1889-1929
C. E. Johnson	1890-1892
L.O. Esse	1890-1893
Enoch C. Johnson	1893-1899
Ole O. Styve	1893-1899
Martin Christopherson	1893-1904
L. O. Braaten	1894-1897
B. N. Anderson	1894-1938
Ole A. Hammer	1899-1900
Erik Flaskerud	1899-1920
Gunder O. Myran	1899-1935
John G. Johnson	1899-1950
B. B. Reindal	1900-1902
A. O. Bakken	1900-1924
B.E. Bottolfson	1900-1936
A. J. Stadheim	1901-1905
Halvor K. Fodnes	1901-1909
Ole I. Opdahl	1902-1903
T. A. Vandergrift	1902-1903
Carl Stensrud	1902-1950
William Schwemmler	1903-1911
Andrew Hemry	1903-1918
Hans Eid	1905-1923
Ed Open	1906-1914
Charles Gleason	1909-1911
O. C. Johnson	1911-1917
Henry Stub	1911-1918

Directors Continued:

Henry Hanson	1912-1913
Ole M. Olson	1912-1913
James J. Hove	1912-1920
Victor H. Sorlie	1912-1956
Arthur E. Rodsater	1913-1914
C.A. Schneider	1918-1921
Charles R. Knudson	1919-1933
Erick Lindeman	1920-1921
A. O. Storvik	1921-1922
K.A. Overland	1921-1923
N. P. Sorenson	1921-1928
Louis Opdahl	1923-1924
M. J. Harty	1923-1954
John Henderson	1924-1926
John L. Johnson	1924-1931
Ben Bridley	1924-1933
L.O. Opdahl	1926-1932
L. A. Gilpin	1928-1942
Charles T. Nelson	1929-1951
Enoch Peterson	1930-1931
Soren Moen	1931-1932
A. J. Opsal	1931-1949
L. J. Helland	1933-1948
Richard Myran	1935-1962
Bernhard Johnsrud	1937-1970
Maynard Amundson	1942-1975
George O. Wasmoen	1948-1980
Wilfred J. Hanson	1949-1984
Henry Stensrud	1950-1965
John Ellingson	1950-1966
Frank C. Gillard	1954-1981
Victor H. Sorlie	1956-1987
Duane Troe	1962 -2000
August Wichmann	1965-1987

Directors Continued:

Martin Rohne	1966-2012
Chris J. Wayne	1967-1976
Herman D. Jensen	1967-1980
Martin Rohne	1977-1983
Bill Geesman	1977-1995
Luverne Wayne	1981-1993
Charles Gillard	1981-1994
Allen Rohne	1983-2012
Steve Jerdee	1985-2017
George Wichmann	1988-2017
Gary Hanson	1994-2000
John Sorlie	1994-2019
Doug Iverson	1995-2010
Doug Iverson	1995-2010
Gary Geesman	1996-2026
Marcia McKean	1998-2023
Daniel Otten	2001-2001
David Pederson	2002-2019

Farmers Mutual's Current Agents

Americana Insurance Group	Wells, Ellendale, Albert Lea
Sterling State Agency	Austin, MN
First American	Stewartville, MN
Jerdee Ins Agency	Hayward, MN
Lightly Ins Agency	Hayward, MN
Rohne Ins Agency	Glenville, MN
Hartland Ins Agency, LLC	Hartland, MN
M&M Ins Agency	Wells, MN
Hometown Agency	Blooming Prairie, MN
Cafourek Insurance Agency	Albert Lea, MN
Intego Ins Services	Albert Lea, MN
Bricelyn Ins Agency	Bricelyn, MN
McKearn Riess Ins. Agency	Kasson, MN
Laury Insurance Agency	Austin, MN
Hubbard Agency	Albert Lea, MN
Fortress Ins Services	Rochester, MN
Mundo Ins Services	Rochester, MN
Harmony Ins Agency	Austin, Rochester, Harmony
Sparks Ins Agency	Rochester, MN
Eagle Prairie Ins Agency	Austin, Blooming Prairie, MN
Polipnick Ins Agency	Wells, Sauk Center, MN