



Boart Longyear

2009 Industry Partnership Award

In 1888, Edmund J. Longyear, a mining engineer from the first graduating class at the Michigan School of Mines, drilled the first diamond core hole in the famous Mesabi Iron Range in northern Minnesota. Shortly afterward, he formed a contract diamond drilling company to serve the rapidly growing U.S. iron ore mining and steel industry.

In 1903, Longyear and John E. Hodge formed a partnership called Longyear and Hodge to expand their contract drilling and provide shaft sinking services. In 1911, the Longyear and Hodge partnership merged with Longyear's separate contract drilling company to form the E.J. Longyear Company. The company's first price list in 1912 featured 19 drill models powered by steam engines capable of drilling from 750 to 5,000 feet.

The company expanded rapidly in the U.S. and overseas in the 1920s, providing diamond core rigs for Phelps Dodge to explore for copper in Arizona and drilling projects in Cuba and China. Robert Longyear (E.J.'s son) became president of the firm in 1924 preserving the chain of family ownership and management that would continue for another 40 years. In 1929, Longyear sold almost \$1.5 million worth of drilling equipment and contract services and signed its first contract for work in Africa. However, the stock market crash of October 1929 and subsequent Great Depression sent the company spiraling downwards to near ruin and sales fell to a historic low of just \$79,000 in 1933. In spite of the financial crisis, the 1930s saw great improvements in diamond drilling technology, including the use of industrial-quality diamonds mined in Africa that were called "boarts." In 1936, South Africa's Anglo American Corporation formed Boart Products South Africa (Pty) Limited, which was later named Boart International. The new company developed the first mechanically set diamond core bits, which proved cheaper than the hand-set core bits that used more expensive Brazilian diamonds.

Longyear's business gradually improved in the 1940s in response to expanding world-wide mineral exploration. In 1949, the company began a close, long-term general business and marketing relationship with Christensen Diamond Products (CDP). During the 1950's, the two firms jointly developed business ventures in Japan, France, Canada, Mexico, the Netherlands, Australia, Germany, the Philippines and Costa Rica. This growth fueled new technology, and in 1958 Longyear patented the first wireline core retrieval system, an innovation that revolutionized the diamond drilling industry.

After the death of Robert Longyear in 1970, Boart International acquired all outstanding shares of Longyear in 1974. Under Boart's leadership, Boart Longyear Company continues as a leading manufacturer and supplier of tools, equipment, and contracting services for the international exploration, mining, construction, quarrying, geotechnical, environmental, and industrial markets.