

## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

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CORNELL, HOWLAND, HAYES & MERRYFIELD  
*Consulting Engineers*  
CORVALLIS, OREGON



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CORNELL, HOWLAND, HAYES & MERRYFIELD



**What's in a name?** For CH2M HILL, it's a reflection of business history.

The story of CH2M HILL began in 1945, with two men working at a drawing board and desk in one room. They were Holly Cornell, structural engineer, and Fred Merryfield, professor of civil engineering at Oregon State College. The firm at that point was simply called "Cornell & Merryfield."

In 1946, Jim Howland and Burke Hayes, two classmates newly returned from World War II, joined the firm. The four formed a partnership as "Cornell, Howland, Hayes & Merryfield."

The burning question at that time, as Holly Cornell remembers it, was whether they should rent one room or two for their first office. They decided on two rooms and got their first furniture on loan from the Siuslaw National Forest office.

Nobody can remember how it happened, but someone, somewhere, began abbreviating the company name "CH2M."

Although the abbreviation was convenient, "It kind of embarrassed us at first," says Jim Howland. "It seemed unprofessional in those rather straight-laced days."

So the firm continued to use "Cornell, Howland, Hayes & Merryfield" on office stationery. "It looked fancier," says Jim. In spite of this attempt, the acronym "CH2M" stuck, and the abbreviation began to be used interchangeably with the full name.

In 1949, with the 200<sup>th</sup> engineering project completed, the firm began construction of a new office. A year later, it was finished and occupied; that same year, the Boise office was opened.

By 1951, the firm had 41 employees. Nine years later CH2M opened an office in Seattle and, two years after that, established a planning-oriented office in Portland.

As the firm changed, its letterhead changed, too. Sometimes the CH2M logo was used, accompanied by a compass to symbolize engineering. Sometimes the name "Cornell, Howland, Hayes & Merryfield" appeared, accompanied by the figure of a man, representing planning.

Economists joined the staff in 1968, becoming the third major specialty of the firm. Shortly thereafter, the firm opened offices in Washington, D.C. (1969) and San Francisco (1970). The logo by this time had evolved to three globes under the name "CH2M." Drawn inside the circles were a compass, a man and a graph.



**BLACK, CROW & EIDSNES, INC.**  
CONSULTING ENGINEERS



Then, in 1971, the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of CH2M, the firm opened an office in Denver and merged with Clair A. Hill and Associates of Redding, California. The question arose: What will the new corporation be called? "We had an awful time with this," says Jim. "Nobody could agree." An obvious choice was "CH3M." But nobody liked that. Then "CH2M/C.A. HILL" was proposed, but that was too awkward. Finally, the name "CH2M HILL, INC." received the most support and was adopted. With that settled, the company logo was redesigned by adding "HILL."

Soon environmental scientists were added to the firm. The complicated logo, already difficult to reproduce, simply couldn't take another globe and figure, so a fourth circle was added to represent scientists, while the designs inside each circle were dropped. The four-part concept was born, but it clearly needed refining.

The circles were reshaped into four squares, and placed within a large square to graphically symbolize the four specialties of the firm. The lettering was moved outside the squares to meet both practical and aesthetic needs.

The bicentennial year, 1976, was the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the firm, and acquisition of Black, Crow & Eidsness, Inc. (BC&E) began. Purchase of this consulting engineering company based in Gainesville, Florida, was completed in early 1977. This time, the difficulties over the corporate name took a different twist. CH2M HILL was new in the Southeast, and Black, Crow & Eidsness already had an established reputation.

"We thought that 'Black, Crow & Eidsness' was a very valuable name in the southeastern United States," says Holly, "so we wanted to maintain the BC&E name and corporate identity for a while." Consequently, BC&E remained simply "BC&E," but as a division of CH2M HILL. And the BC&E letterhead incorporated the four-square design used in the CH2M HILL logo.

By mid-1978, the consolidation of the two firms had progressed well. It seemed an appropriate time to complete the integration with a formal name change to "CH2M HILL" alone.

Throughout the firm's history, strength has come from the quality of its people, whether they started under the umbrella of "Cornell, Howland, Hayes & Merryfield," "Clair A. Hill & Associates," or "Black, Crow & Eidsness." From a small beginning in 1945, CH2M HILL is now consistently ranked



among the top design firms in the United States in terms of dollar volume of business, according to annual rankings of *Engineering News-Record* magazine. In 1983 the “rhombic” logo reflected a new slant in the company’s identity and direction.

Growth continues in the 1990s with the formation of OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT INTERNATIONAL, INC. (OMI) and INDUSTRIAL DESIGN CORPORATION (IDC) in the family of CH2M HILL companies. Nearly 120 offices serve clients in the U.S. and abroad. Because of these expanded, global opportunities, a new logo was chosen in 1996 to symbolize the firm’s new directions and continued growth. The “square” represents the firm’s stable platform of quality services and technologies. The “sphere” communicates the global focus and our desire to help clients build a better world. These considerations and new business strategies drove the desire for a fresh look to carry the firm into the 21st century and beyond, one which continues to identify the CH2M HILL standards of excellence that began more than five decades ago.

