

New England Mutual Life Insurance Company / Shirk & Associates

Founded: Indiana agents–1859; 1835 (Boston)

Located: 1 Blackford Block, Indianapolis (Locke & Brother) (1859); corner of Washington and Meridian Streets, Indianapolis (J. J. Hayden); 17 North Meridian Street, Indianapolis (David E. Snyder); 11711 North Meridian Street (1993)

Judge Willard Phillips founded the New England Mutual Life Insurance Company in Boston, Massachusetts, in April 1835. It was the first mutual insurance company in the United States. The company commissioned agents to sell its policies, and by at least 1859 it had agents in Indiana, including Locke & Brother in Indianapolis and F. J. Waldo in Vevay. By 1863 New England Mutual Life had agents in Indianapolis, Madison, and Lafayette. In 1865 the company began to name regional “general agents,” who dealt exclusively in New England Mutual Life insurance. M. J. Wheeler of Terre Haute was the state’s first general agent. Another early general agent was David E. Snyder, who had an office in Indianapolis in the late 1860s. In the 1980s Michael Shirk was president of New England Financial Advisors, the general agent of New England Mutual Life in Indiana. In the 1990s his firm was known as Shirk & Associates.