HONORING OUR PAST.
EMBRACING THE FUTURE.

CELEBRATING 90 YEARS

ASPLUNDH®
name a few. Despite the challenges of a changing industry landscape and the pressure of expanding our services, we persevered, thanks to the hard work and dedication of our management and crew personnel.

The second generation leadership was determined to have the business continue to be family owned and operated. To ensure that the third generation was properly prepared to lead the growing company, the Family Management Development Program was created. In addition to a college degree, participants had to make a commitment of approximately seven years of training in the field before earning a corporate position.

As the second generation prepared for retirement, their industry knowledge was shared with the next generation who had successfully completed their field training and began to enter the executive ranks. During this time, Asplundh’s vegetation operations expanded overseas into New Zealand and Australia. There were also numerous acquisitions in the utility services sector, including electric utility construction, meter installation and maintenance, traffic signal and street lighting construction and maintenance, gas construction and more recently, electrical testing services. In 2004, these utility infrastructure companies were all organized under the umbrella of UtiliCon Solutions.

Increased use of technology at the crew level was first implemented with the Automatic Vehicle Management System, AVMS, in 2008. This vehicle locating system tracked company equipment through GPS technology and provided a dashboard of daily metrics to field and executive management in order to monitor crew efficiency. More recently, our vehicles have been equipped with Wi-Fi hotspots, allowing tablet computers or smartphones to send and receive information from customers and supervision.

The last 15 years have been an evolution in creating a safer work environment for our employees and the general public. This journey started with employee education and training around work practices and methodologies. Additionally, changes have come in the form of redesigned equipment and climbing tools. The commitment of all employees, at all levels, to take an active role in their own safety has truly made a difference.

During 2015, expansion into the commercial landscape and snow removal business took place. We presently operate in 22 states and look forward to continued growth in this industry.

Today, the family business has eight third generation members serving on the board. With the assistance of several non-family executives, we continue to grow the company in a safe, professional manner while investing in innovation to solve the challenges within the industries we serve.

As we look back to the founders and second generation family executives, it is clear that our philosophy of “The Better Way” is still a strong and guiding force of the company, along with those who have been a part of our successful 90 years!
The family’s connection to trees might almost be called destiny considering the fact that the family name Asplundh refers to a “grove of aspen trees” in Swedish.

In 1862, Carl Hjalmar Asplundh was born in Stockholm, Sweden and he emigrated to the United States in 1882. He met and married his Swiss immigrant wife, Emma Steiger, in Philadelphia in 1887. They settled in Bryn Athyn, a small Philadelphia suburb where they could be part of the Swedenborgian church community.

Carl died at the age of 41. Emma was left on her own with seven children, aged almost to 15 years old, and their last child, Carl Hjalmar, was born eight months later. The two eldest sons left school and went to work to help support their widowed mother and siblings. The second eldest son, Oswald or O.E., took up work as a gardener and later founded a landscaping and tree surgery business. By trimming trees during weekends and summers under the guidance of O.E., the three youngest brothers, Griffith, Lester and Carl Hjalmar gradually earned enough money for their college educations. It was these three brothers who would later join together to form the Asplundh Tree Expert Co.

Outside their first office in Glenside, Pennsylvania in 1929 (L to R): Lester, Carl and Griffith.

Griffith graduated in 1923 from the Pennsylvania State College (now Penn State University) Department of Forestry and started his own tree service. Lester graduated the same year, majoring in electrical engineering and earning notoriety as an All-American football player at Swarthmore College. Carl graduated in 1927 as a finance major at the University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School.

Combining their backgrounds in forestry, engineering and business, Griffith, Lester and Carl founded the Asplundh Tree Expert Co. on August 28, 1928, with approximately 30 trimmers and a fleet of second-hand stake body trucks. The brothers decided to specialize in trimming trees around electric and telephone lines—a choice that would eventually lead to the corporation’s long-term growth and success. Their first customers were Philadelphia Electric Co. (now PECO Energy), Public Service Co. of New Jersey (now PSE&G), Jersey Central Power & Light Co. (now FirstEnergy), Pennsylvania Power & Light Co. (now PPL Electric Utilities) and American Telephone & Telegraph (now AT&T). Asplundh still works for all five of these original customers.

An early crew photo with Lester’s first attempt at getting workers into the trees more quickly and safely—a hand-cranked platform.

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Asplundh stayed ahead of its competition when the Great Depression arrived due to its emphasis on training and innovative equipment to improve productivity. In 1929, a tree school on proper pruning methods and a demonstration of a new tractor-mounted saw was held.

In 1936, O.E. decided to leave his landscaping and nursery company to join his younger brothers in the line clearance business. He played a crucial role in expanding operations into the Midwest and beyond.

In the late 1930s, the invention of the power saw was a major improvement to productivity. Although the first saws were heavy, two-man operated machines, the speed and relative ease of cutting through large trunks was a boon. Several devastating storms on the East Coast ironically played an important role in helping the company grow. Storm emergency tree crews were in great demand and utilities were eager to hire Asplundh tree crews who were used to working around hot wires.

The first issue of The Asplundh TREE magazine was published in 1940 to help knit together crews who were now working throughout the Middle Atlantic states, the Midwest, parts of the Southeast and westward into Texas and New Mexico.

World War II rationing made it difficult to acquire fuel, tools and supplies, but more importantly, many experienced tree workers left for military service. As soldiers returned home in 1945, Asplundh prepared for new expansion by implementing new equipment, training and safety standards.

One military development that helped the company was herbicides. Soon after the war, Asplundh began to offer utilities “chemical brush control” for their rights-of-way.
Sadly, it was on Christmas Eve of this year that the company’s first president, Griffith Asplundh, died at the age of 53.

In January 1949, Lester was elected president and field testing began on the first Asplundh manufactured chippers. During the 1950s, seven sons of Griffith, Lester and Carl (the second generation) started to work in the field and the Home Office—Barr, Paul, Robert, Boyd, Edward, Carl, Jr. and Chris.

In 1952, Lester was sidelined with a severe respiratory ailment, so Carl was elected president.

In 1953, Asplundh coordinated a joint research project to study the use of herbicides on utility rights-of-way. Researchers from Penn State University evaluated the effect on wildlife of various vegetation management methods, including herbicide applications, on a section of newly cleared transmission line right-of-way which crossed Pennsylvania Game Lands 33. Asplundh is still actively involved in this ongoing research program.

To keep up with a rapidly expanding company and new technology, the first general foreperson training schools were initiated. Then in 1956, the company established a right-of-way clearing subsidiary, Asplundh Brush Control Co.

In 1958, after several years of experimenting with a variety of aerial devices, Lester designs the first fully-insulated, non-conductive lift boom by using “spiralloy” (a.k.a. fiberglass). This revolutionary material greatly improved safety. Asplundh ramped up manufacturing capabilities to first equip its field operations and later to sell to the utilities for line work. Soon after, a new utility-related service, pole treating and reinforcement, was offered.

Electric and telephone utilities began to be installed underground in the 1960s so Asplundh diversified more by offering underground utility construction services like trenching and cable laying.

In 1966, with several years of experience in helicopter herbicide applications and fixed-wing operations, Asplundh Aviation, Inc. was established. Always innovating, Asplundh pioneered commercial infrared inspection services to the utilities in 1967.

On July 2, 1967, Carl Asplundh died suddenly at the age of 63. Lester was elected chairman of the board and Barr, son of the late Griffith Asplundh, was elected president.
To support its growing fleet needs and to better serve its customers, in 1968 Asplundh bought its own GMC truck dealership. That same year, all seven second generation family members working for the company became members of the Board of Directors.

During 1971, while the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) and environmental activism threatened some line clearance contractors, Asplundh’s strict safety policies and ongoing participation in the Game Lands 33 research project gave it a competitive advantage.

In 1972, Asplundh began to offer utilities and municipalities street lighting and traffic signal maintenance services. Vegetation management services, primarily through herbicide applications, were expanded in 1975 to serve the railroad industry with the establishment of the Asplundh Railroad Division.

With more and more pipes and wires being installed underground, Asplundh opened its own one-call center in New Jersey to provide notification services between excavators and utilities.

On the company’s 50th anniversary in 1978, employees numbered over 9,000 and they were working in 47 states. In 1982, after 14 years as president, Barr was elected chairman of the board and Edward, son of the late Carl Asplundh, was elected president.

After 56 years of influencing and managing the company, the last of the original founders, Lester Asplundh, passed away on May 3, 1984 at the age of 83.

That same year, operations in Canada began with acquisitions in Ontario and Alberta. In addition, Asplundh Manufacturing Division operations in Pennsylvania moved to a brand new facility in Creedmoor, North Carolina and the Asplundh Municipal Division was established.

To accommodate future growth and diversification, Asplundh headquarters moved from Old York Road in Jenkintown to a modern building on 12-acres in nearby Willow Grove in 1974.
In 1987, after several years of working up the management ladder in the field, Scott Asplundh is the first of the third generation family members to earn an executive level position as sponsor and vice president. With a contract in Hawaii in 1988, Asplundh was officially operating in all 50 states. Crews also began working throughout Canada’s lower provinces with the establishment of Asplundh Canada, Inc. in Quebec and the Atlantic Provinces. In 1989, Asplundh further diversified by acquiring American Lighting and Signalization in Florida, a heavy electrical contractor, specializing in the construction and maintenance of traffic signal and highway lighting systems. The entire decade of the 1990s was marked by growth through acquisitions, including brief international forays into France, Ireland and England. However, a joint venture in New Zealand that started in 1990 led to successful operations that continue today. Our utility line construction operations were greatly expanded through the acquisition of a Long Island based firm, which is now Asplundh Construction. In 1992, in order to focus on its core business of vegetation management and other utility services, Asplundh sold off its lift and chipper manufacturing operations. After 10 years as president, Edward stepped down and his younger brother, Chris was elected to be the company’s sixth president. Growth continued as line clearance operations in Australia began and meter reading services were introduced. As a leader in the industry, in 1993, Asplundh became an associate member of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association and participated in the first “Trees and Utilities” conference. The start of deregulation of the electricity market in 1995 led to mergers and downsizing in the utility industry. Asplundh’s stability and resources appealed to many utilities and often led to longer-term, performance-based contracts. With a growing number of devastating hurricanes and massive ice storms in the late 1990s, Asplundh’s storm response expertise and nationwide resources experienced great demand.

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Asplundh jumped into the commercial landscaping market in 2015 with the acquisition of two companies and made significant improvements in safety measurement with the implementation of safety information management system software. The company also invested in a new Compliance Department, including facial recognition software and field agents for ensuring the hiring of properly documented workers. In 2016, Asplundh became the majority owner of Rotor Blade, a helicopter side trimming business that the company had partnered with for several years before. The commercial landscaping part of the company expanded significantly with five acquisitions and the establishment of a start-up in the Philadelphia area. A major deployment of over 5,000 tree and line workers responded to Hurricane Matthew in October. Significant executive level changes took place shortly before the August 10, 2017 passing of Chairman of the Board Christopher B. Asplundh, Sr., the last of the second generation executives to lead the enterprise. Scott Asplundh was elected chairman of the board, in addition to his CEO responsibilities. George Graham, Jr. was named president/chief operating officer of Asplundh Tree Expert, LLC with four presidents reporting to him. Gregg Asplundh as president of Asplundh East, Matt Asplundh as president of Asplundh West, Chris Asplundh, Jr. as president of Utility Vegetation Services and David Fleischner as president of Canadian operations. Steven Asplundh was named chief operating officer of UtiliCon Solutions, LLC and Brent Asplundh reports to him as president. David Fleischner also reports to Scott Asplundh as president of Five Seasons Property Management (FSPM), the original name of our commercial landscape management group. Also in 2017 were two more acquisitions for FSPM and four hurricanes that kept the field and Home Office operations humming. In addition, a big emphasis was placed on recruitment and mechanization due to the tight labor market. During the first five months of 2018, there were dozens of our tree and line repair crews deployed to Puerto Rico with hundreds of pieces of equipment, helping to restore power after two hurricanes in September 2017. In April, FSPM was renamed Aspen Grove Landscape Group, as a nod to the meaning of the Asplundh family name in Swedish – grove of aspen trees. With more than 35,000 employees and thousands of pieces of equipment in operation, Asplundh celebrates the company’s 90th anniversary using the tagline: Honoring Our Past. Embracing The Future.
Since 1928, Asplundh has helped thousands of utilities maintain reliable, uninterrupted service—whether in the name of routine maintenance or disaster recovery. The Asplundh/UtiliCon team has proven its commitment and unrivaled leadership through and beyond storm emergencies, as well as changes in the industry. When it comes to adapting our services to the needs of our customers, no other organization compares. Through partnering, alliances, and performance-based contracts, Asplundh has the strength to provide best-in-class service in a constantly changing environment.

We are excited about our recent entry into the commercial landscaping market through the companies that make up our Aspen Grove Landscape Group. We welcome these employees, their management teams and their customers to the family. The future of the Asplundh/UtiliCon/Aspen Grove organization depends on people—our employees, our management teams, and our customers—working together, sharing their expertise, and striving for success each and every day. Even a small improvement every day, whether it be in safety, productivity, or quality, adds up to a monumental achievement when compounded by all of our employees.

For the Asplundh companies, our 90th anniversary represents a great success story of honoring our past and embracing the future. It is our employees’ dedication to embracing safety and customer service that has made our corporate culture, a family culture. Thanks to all of our employees and customers who have supported Asplundh for these 90 years.
