

## IRON MOUNTAIN

# Former mine now guards treasures

Iconic images, offsite data entrusted to underground vaults

BUTLER COUNTY, Pa. — Mine foreman Chuck Doughty steers his golf cart through a vast labyrinth of limestone tunnels, passing armed guards, bulging gray walls studded with dynamite holes, and storage vaults the size of Wal-Marts.

Squirreled away in this subterranean world 220 feet beneath the rolling hills of western Pennsylvania are some of the nation's most memorable photos: original prints and negatives of Albert Einstein sticking out his tongue, Harry Truman playing the piano for Lauren Bacall, and Ted Williams clowning with Joe DiMaggio before an All-Star game. They are stored along with cultural artifacts, such as master recordings of Michael Jackson and Elvis Presley, and sensitive data from Wall Street investment houses and top secrets of government agencies.

All of it is safeguarded in a

hidden 145-acre complex owned by Iron Mountain Inc., a Boston-based data protection and storage services company. Security here is so tight that the U.S. government classifies it just one level below the White House and Pentagon.

Since the 2001 terror attacks, financial firms, medical providers and other companies have sped up efforts to store important documents offsite. At the same time, as digital data have proliferated and cyber-attacks have increased, they have also been scrambling to back up their records at remote locations. And recently, pharmaceutical companies have looked to transfer digital data into physical formats, in case their computer networks are destroyed.

"We are entrusted with some one-of-a-kind collections, very valuable, irreplaceable documents," said Mr. Doughty, often called the complex's mayor. His domain is part of a former U.S. Steel Corp. mine north of Pittsburgh.

The site, believed to be the

world's largest document storage facility, boasts not only world-class security, but also a climate-controlled preservation environment ideal for protecting the country's critical data and artifacts.

Iron Mountain has quietly built a \$3 billion-a-year global business managing information for companies and organizations that are required by law to hold onto vital records, ranging from charters to deeds to patents. Some can eventually be disposed of — for that, Iron Mountain has a mammoth paper shredding plant in Jersey City, N.J.

The underground facility in Pennsylvania is the company's data storage mecca, attracting a roster of top-drawer customers such as digital image company Corbis Corp., Bertelsmann Music Group and Marriott International Inc.

Storing paper documents, digital tapes and microfilm — plus leasing space to customers such as Corbis, which manages its own storage here — is proving lucrative for Iron Mountain. Sales climbed 15 percent and operating income was up 11 percent in the three months ending June 30, as the company notched its 78th consecutive quarter of storage revenue growth.

*Robert Weisman,  
The Boston Globe*

