

# Dodge items 'return' to Meadow Brook



A plant protection and fire box device with Dodge Brothers ID is inspected by Paul McDowell (left), assistant managing director of Meadow Brook Hall. James Birch (right) restored the box with the help of three Chrysler fire marshals.

Brook Hall. James Birch (right) restored the box with the help of three Chrysler fire marshals.

Story: KATHY PARRISH  
Photos: DAVID FRANK

Each time Dodge Main was renovated for new car production, parts of the Hamtramck assembly plant disappeared into workers' offices and family rooms.

Now, many of those historic items have been brought to Meadow Brook, the Avon Township estate once owned by car pioneer John F. Dodge.

"Workers had been collecting things here and there over the years. They didn't want to see them destroyed," explained James Birch, who presented the items to Meadow Brook Hall's John Dodge Archives on behalf of Chrysler Corp.

"Then, when we found a place to store them, they all generously came forward with their little goodies."

The Hamtramck Assembly Plant, which produced its first models in 1914, became part of Chrysler Corp. in 1925.

Birch said 20 to 30 employees "dug around in their corners" to put together the collection, which was accepted enthusiastically by the Meadow Brook Hall staff.

Catherine Light, archives Committee chairman, said the items are valuable additions to the room.

"There are no duplications. That's why this is so thrilling," said Mrs. Light. "They've come home. This is where they belong."

DONATED to the archives by Chrysler Corp. were a wooden model of the Dodge plant in 1925 with additional pieces for plant changes up to 1940; a brass emblem taken from the main gate when the plant was shut down in 1979; and handcuffs given to John Dodge and his brother Horace by the Detroit Police Department.

Also added to the room were a 1922 Dodge plant badge which belonged to press operator John C. Mangrum; a three-foot fire nozzle; and a plant protection and fire box device with Dodge Brothers ID.

Photos donated were a tortoise-framed portrait of the Dodge brothers, a photo of a 1917 Dodge truck converted to a Red Cross ambulance and an aerial view of the plant.

Birch, who works on a problem-solving task force based in Highland Park, said employees began saving items on

their own several years ago. "They felt it was a shame to throw them out. So when office areas were moved to production and production to office they held onto some things."

After a management party in 1977, he and other employees visited Meadow Brook Hall and discovered the archives. "We were thrilled to find a place existed where people could come and see the items," he recalled.

BUT GETTING the items turned over to Meadow Brook wasn't an easy task.

"They weren't productive material; they weren't useful. The hardest job was finding an avenue and means of paperwork," said Birch.

By working with the engineer in charge of plant deactivation and

Chrysler's Highland Park Historical Library, they were able to get the items released. On hand for the presentation was Roger Monast of Rochester, a Chrysler staff executive and historical administrator.

"Other things are happening to Chrysler that are more important than this," said Birch.

As other historical Dodge Main items turn up, they will also be given to the archives. "We appreciate Meadow Brook giving us an opportunity to have a place to put them," said Birch, who only regrets that more items weren't saved.

"A terrible number of things were lost. It's just a shame," said the Roseville resident. "If we had begun a couple years earlier we would have had so much more."



A portrait of John (left) and Horace Dodge, recovered from Dodge Main, now can be found in the John Dodge Archives at Meadow Brook Hall.

## Choir sings farewell to 23-year tradition

When the lights dimmed on stage in North Farmington High School's auditorium last weekend, a tradition ended in Farmington.

Last weekend marked the final performance of the O.E. Dunckel Junior High choir. The school will be part of the district's conversion to middle school next year and the junior high choir with its trademark rendition of "You'll Never Walk Alone" will fade into memory.

The spring program, "The Best of the Best" marked the end of a 23-year tradition which began when choir instructor Eddie Ellegood put his class into a school recital.

At the same time he decided on the song "You'll Never Walk Alone" as the show's finale. It became a tradition as much as the performances. Parents and alumni joined the choir on stage in singing the song at the end of spring performances.

Last weekend the choir, led by Linda Combes, finished its spring concert with the same song. Students were joined by alumni, in some cases the sisters or brothers of the choir members.

"At the end of our Christmas concert, when we end with the 'Hallelujah Chorus,' one of our 1976 graduates came back to sing with the choir," said Ms. Combes.

"MY FOUR brothers are alumni. They get up and sing with the choir."

"I went to my high school reunion last year," said Ms. Combes, a 1969 graduate of North Farmington High School.

"And one of the girls I went to school with is organizing a group to come up and sing 'You'll Never Walk Alone' with us."

Half of the children in one of her choir classes have brothers or sisters who were once in the same group.

"I guess people in Farmington don't move around that much," she said.

Children she once babysat are now in her singing class. Her best childhood friend's sister is one of her students.

In addition to knowing the families of some of her students, Ms. Combes acceptance seven years ago of the teaching post at Dunckels was something of a homecoming.

"Mr. Ellegood was my teacher. I sat in the second row all section.

"I used to tease him and tell him I would grow up and take his job from him," she said.

"I student taught from him."

*"It's fun to be part of a group, to appreciate the feeling of belonging to a group even if you're one of many."*

—Linda Combes

After graduation in 1973 from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, she taught English for one year at Warner Junior High School in Farmington Hills.

WHEN ELLEGOOD retired the following year, his former student took over his classroom and continued the annual concerts.

Next year, Ms. Combes will teach music and German in her other alma mater, North Farmington High School.

A middle school choir composed of older voices with lower tones just wouldn't be the same.

But last weekend the 70 boys and 200 girls in Ms. Combes' classes sang their farewell to the junior high by performing songs from the '20s, '30s, '40s and '50s.

"I think the credit should go to the students," she said.

"They get a big kick out of the old songs like 'Bye Bye Blackbird.'"

Teaching junior high school students to come in on cue and stay in tune has its high and low moments.

"Teaching junior high is like that first line in Dickens ('A Tale of Two Cities'): It was the best of times, it was the worst of times."

"Teaching junior high is hard but rewarding. The kids open up and give you more. They accomplish way beyond what they should accomplish."

Students plan much of the show, down to writing the scripts and choosing the songs.

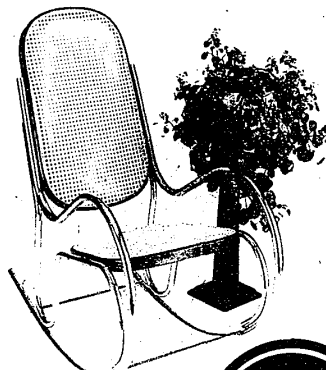
"IT'S unbelievable — the scripts, the costumes," said Ms. Combes.

And the feeling they get when they stand on stage and sing the finale is familiar to her as well.

"It's fun to be part of a group, to appreciate the feeling of belonging to a group even if you're one of many."

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