

Archives

Corporations keeping better track of their history

By Sharon Dargy
Staff writer

Lana Ferrari once sent a New York economics teacher 30 pictures of old "Bugs."

John Conde recorded all of the speeches made by former Michigan Gov. George Romney.

Susan Stepek has collected a room full of outdated advertisements and sales brochures.

Call them corporate pack rats. They're among the growing numbers of business archivists who keep track of company history.

"Most major corporations now have some kind of archives program. They spring up for a variety of reasons," said Warner Pflug, administrative assistant for the Wayne State University archives.

"Often they're approaching a major anniversary. They may have found it's economically a good

idea. It ensures preservation of the records of the corporation."

And it shelters the company from legal disputes.

Archives and historical libraries of corporations in Oakland County vary in size, the kind of memorabilia collected and the storage facility used.

GENERALLY THE archives are kept under the auspices of the public relations or communications department and may be open only to company employees, scholars and the press.

Some, like the research center at Campbell-Ewald, Warren, or historical files at Volkswagen of America, Troy, respond to inquiries from the public.

"I got this call — get this — from a woman who's doing a collage for her boyfriend," said Ferrari, corporate communication

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— Warner Pflug
WSU archivist

specialist for VW.

"His birthday is in December. She asked if we had a picture of an orange and green VW bus from 1978. There's got to be some book somewhere that has it."

Stepek maintains a resource library of both company memorabilia

and client history at Campbell-Ewald.

"We have a really old record that was used in dealer showrooms in the 30s. It was something a Chevy dealer would have used to entice people," Stepek said. "We have a lot of things like that. They tell the history of the company."

The collection at Federal-Mogul Corp., Southfield, includes everything from old company baseball photos to advertisements. The company hired a historical consultant to sift through the material and write a book on the corporation's history.

"This man did interviews with retirees," noted David T. Snyder, communications spokesman. "Some people here go back to the '20s."

The priority a company places on its historical collection also varies from business to business.

"When times get bleak economically, the archives position is not directly contributing to production, so it tends to be one of the first positions cut back," Pflug said.

THAT'S WHAT happened at American Motors.

Conde, a Bloomfield Township resident, founded the historical archives in 1948 for AMC world headquarters, Southfield. Although the archives still exist, no one replaced him as unofficial (and volunteer) keeper of historical files when he was retired from the public relations staff in 1978.

The extensive files, located in Detroit, include photographs, advertisements, parts and service booklets dating back to 1904, recorded speeches, letters, and preliminary plans.

Rambler

SURREY, TYPE ONE
18 horse power, \$1350
With top, water proof side curtains, etc. \$150 extra

This vehicle can be operated with such freedom from repairs that the pleasure of touring in it is not marred by expense and waste of time. All working parts are easily inspected by removing the hinged floor and seat in 10 minutes without crawling under the machine. Other models \$750, \$850, \$2000 and \$3000. Full information on request.

THOMAS B. JEFFERY & COMPANY,
Main Office and Factory: Kenosha, Wisconsin
Branches: Boston, Chicago, Philadelphia, New York Agency: 130 West Thirty-eighth Street
Representatives in all other leading cities

A page from American Motors' past: The 1935 Rambler had 18 horsepower and a \$1,350 price tag.

"There was a lot of stuff I collected that many archivists wouldn't even have a chance of knowing about, like preliminary sketches."

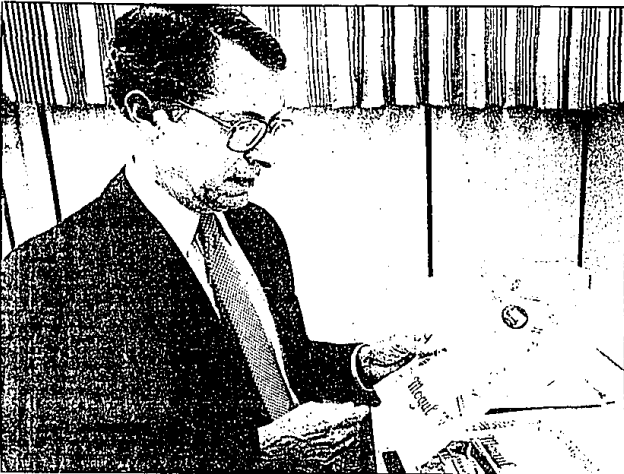
"We kept a tape recording of every speech George Romney ever made when he was with American Motors. Many people thought we did it so that he wouldn't be misquoted. But the reason was because it's history," Conde said.

"I used to tell my secretaries that history is made every day. The minute a new car is out, get hold of every piece of literature you can about it and put it in a file — today. Because they may decide to revise it in a month."

Conde collected items from executives — who initially weren't interested in maintaining historical memorabilia — to job foremen.

Their attitudes changed as car restoration and historical car clubs became more popular, although Conde noted that corporate archives are often established — and demolished — at the whim of company honchos.

"LET'S SAY some executive approves and maintains archives. He retires or is transferred and the next person may come along and say 'what the hell are we doing spending time on this?' And it goes out the window."



Dave Snyder looks over some photos and other historical material at Federal Mogul Corp. in Southfield.

Telegraph debated again

By Dave Varga
Staff writer

The Oakland County Road Commission is again asking the state to widen Telegraph Road to four lanes in each direction as it passes through Bingham Farms and Bloomfield Township.

It's not a new request and it's not expected to be welcomed with entirely open arms.

The issue of how wide to widen the busy Telegraph Road thoroughfare from Northwestern Highway in Southfield up to Square Lake Road in Bloomfield Township was hotly contested during the mid-1970s.

Supporting the change, at that time, was the road commission, Bloomfield Township and Southfield. In opposition were Franklin, Bingham Farms and residents who live along the road from Franklin, Bingham and Bloomfield Township.

CAUGHT IN between on the issue was the Michigan Department of Transportation. Officials there studied the issue and committed millions to expand U.S. 24 from four total lanes to eight lanes.

Then, after storms of protest, state officials changed their stance and approved a compromise of six lanes, except at the intersections at 12 Mile, Maple and Long Lake roads where it is eight lanes.

This time around things might be easier with some local officials. After almost a decade of dramatic growth in Oakland County, rush hour traffic on one of its main arteries has become a series of bottlenecks and backups, especially where the roadway narrows from four to three lanes on each side.

"The widening of this road is urgently needed," said John Grubba, managing director of the county road commission, in his letter to DOT director James Pitz.

THE LETTER requested the state to study Telegraph Road as state officials promised to do five years after the 1976 decision to put in six lanes.

In response to the letter, Pitz told the county that a study on Telegraph had been recently completed and it was determined that additional lanes were needed. However, the study also suggested that all major work be delayed until the I-696 Highway project is completed.

"It seems to me to be a pretty goofy position," Grubba said. "Opening



'It seems to me to be a pretty goofy position. Opening I-696 is not going to result in a lessening of traffic on Telegraph.'

— John Grubba
OCRC chief

I-696 is not going to result in a lessening of traffic on Telegraph. All he's doing is delaying it. They've got a program and this isn't it."

Grubba said the commercial boom along Telegraph in Bingham Farms might diminish the negative reaction from residents there. And it would stop the constant traffic jams.

"I think we could expect some support from them," Grubba said.

Copies of the letter requesting more lanes were sent to local communities.

IN BINGHAM FARMS, the council discussed the matter but did not take a position. They will wait to see what the state's study shows, according to Richard Holloway, Bingham Farms president.

"I think we would be very concerned about the widening of Telegraph Road," Holloway said. "It is not possible for the state to construct this sort of thing with any concern for the residents."

At this point, Holloway said if he had to guess he would say Bingham would oppose the widening.

Village officials had discussed alleviating the traffic backups on southbound Telegraph at 13 Mile with traffic signals, rather than widening the road, Holloway said.

FRANKLIN OFFICIALS have made the issue a high priority, according to President John Verdon. Trustee F. Barry Abrams said the state should do more study on the area. One objective should be to find out if, for instance, an extra lane on both sides of Telegraph "would al-

leviate traffic flow on Franklin Road," Abrams said.

Abrams said he had not taken a position and was keeping an open mind on the issue.

"I think there's so much traffic (on Telegraph)," Verdon said, "that adding a lane in each direction is not going to relieve traffic on Franklin Road. Traffic, like water, is going to travel in the path of least resistance."

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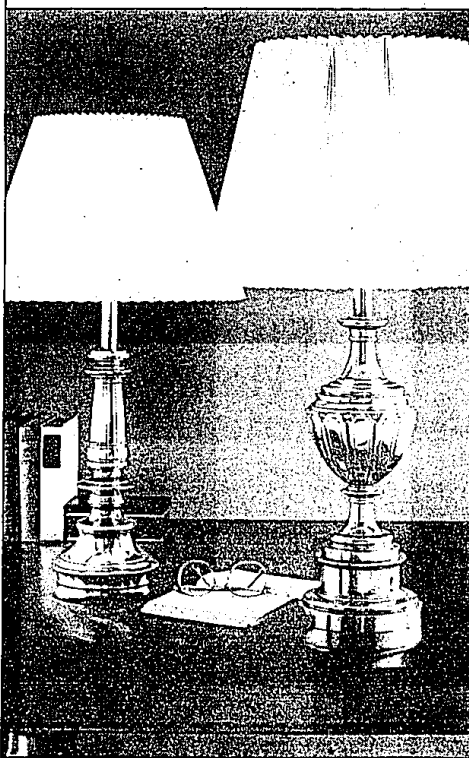
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