

FORD MOTOR COMPANY ARCHIVES

The dedication of the Ford Motor Company Archives on May 7, 1953, marks a milestone in research in the history of business in the United States. As far as the Editor of the *BULLETIN* knows, this is the first time a large American corporation has established a separate organization not only to preserve and handle its historical records but also to make them available to scholars for research. To one whose memory goes back to the days when it was nearly impossible to gain access even to old records of business concerns, this event has a very special significance.

Access by scholars to company records is, of course, not uncommon today. Several companies have deposited their historical records in public depositories, a notable example being the records of the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad in the Newberry Library in Chicago. Others have admitted scholars to their offices for research in their records. The Ford Motor Company has gone still further in that it has established a central depository, with a trained archival staff, which is open to accredited scholars.

The Archives are housed in the home of the late founder of the Ford Motor Company at Dearborn, Michigan. Fair Lane, with its spacious mansion and gardens, orchards, and woodlands on the Rouge River, was the home of Henry Ford from 1915 to the end of his life. It was fitting that it be made the historical center of the company he founded.

The Archives contains three distinct collections: a wealth of Ford photographs and photo-duplicated materials; a library of books and other publications; and the basic collection of primary documents.

The documents consist of two major collections. One is the private papers of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Ford; the other, the permanent non-current records of the Ford Motor Company.

A unique feature of the records collection is a considerable number of autobiographical memoirs prepared by the Oral History Section of the Archives. These include the recollections of associates of Henry Ford—friends, acquaintances in and outside business, and domestic employees—and of many individuals who held positions of respon-

sibility within the company or who had been employees of the company over a considerable period of time.

For the business historian the most valuable part of the Archives is, no doubt, the collection of original historical business records. These consist of personal papers of the executives, including a large amount of Henry Ford's own papers, and records of departments of the company. According to a publication of the Archives "Over 5,000 feet of records pertaining to finance, engineering, plant expansion, sales and advertising, manufacturing, production, industrial relations, purchasing and other major functions of the company contain the basic history of the Ford Motor Company's growth and development from 1903 to 1947."