Whoever said "the past is prologue" appreciated the impact of history on our lives. We are all connected by the continuous thread of time. The ability to look back is a uniquely human trait that enables us to place our presence into a larger context of experience. Being able to look back connects us as families, as societies—even as nations. It also gives meaning to our lives.

It is with this in mind that this "historical" issue of the Plant Exchange was put together. We've taken a backward glance at Plant to give its people some idea about what they are connected to, and because—with every passing moment—we too become a part of Plant's history, just as surely as those who preceded us.

This is, however, just a glance. Far from being a comprehensive look, call it more of a snapshot.

We started by dusting off some old photographs that have hung in the Plant Personnel office. We found other photos in the Bentley Historical Library, and they've been reproduced here with the permission of the Library. Most of the photographs lack a caption. That's because information about the people portrayed in them, or the site that is pictured, wasn't available. We've added captions in those instances where we were able to find relevant data.

We were also fortunate to discover the monograph written by George J. Lutz, entitled Data on Campus Development and Reminiscences. Lutz penned his recollections of life on campus in 1935, after having served the University for nearly fifty years. We've provided excerpts from his reminiscences. They paint a rich portrait of the University as he knew it, and recall names and places that may be familiar to you. These too are reproduced with permission of the Bentley Historical Library.

We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of the gracious staff who patiently guided us through our Bentley Library research, answered our questions and allowed us access to the collections: Kathy Marquis and Karen Jania. We'd also like to thank Fred Mayer, and especially Julia Truetner, in the offices of Capital Planning and University Architect, for their valuable insights.

We have mentioned that many of the photographs lack captions. But if you look carefully, you can see their faces and hear them calling to you. They're leaving you their legacy. "Friend, cast not a cold eye upon us. Despite the years that separate us, we're really one. We've walked down the same paths, and through the same corridors; watched the seasons' colors change, from autumn red to winter white and back again to the verdant greens of spring. We've seen generations of students come and go. All this we've shared. Above all else, we've served this community called Michigan. So, leave a legacy, too. Make a difference, make your time worthwhile. Make Michigan a better place for everyone, and tie us even more strongly together."

"In the days when I first came to work at the university, it was more like one large family. The whole institution was located on forty acres, and everyone knew everyone else. Today the buildings extend from the campus to the hospital on the northeast and to Ferry Field and stadium on the southwest. This just about covers all that I can recollect of my connection for the past forty-seven years with the institution. I have enjoyed my work, have become acquainted with hundreds of men and women and know I have made some friends."

—George J. Lutz
Lutz's reminiscences add color to University of Michigan history

In 1935, L. M. Gram, director of Plant Extension, honored George Lutz: 

"...No man could be more faithful or loyal to his employer than he has been, and when the time comes for him to retire, he may be justly proud of a splendid service record, and of the esteem in which he is held by a host of friends on the campus and in the community at large."

After George J. Lutz applied for a job at the University in the fall of 1888, he interviewed with James B. Angell, President of the University; James H. Wade, Secretary; and Harrison Soule, Treasurer. Lutz recalls: 

"After having given me the third degree, Dr. Angell spoke up and said, 'You are not a very rugged looking man. Do you think you can do a good day's work?' Lutz replied: 'If I cannot fill the bill, you need not keep me.' 

That apparently satisfied President Angell, who said: "That is fair enough. You come to work. If you start here and make good, you will have a job for life.""

Lutz began work as a painter for 500 dollars a year. But, when he reported to work in November, he was told there was no painting work available. So, he was assigned to the General Library as a janitor. He alternated between painting and janitorial work for several years.

Since the University paid only quarterly, he had to work for three months before he got his first pay check for 125 dollars.

... an amusing incident about 1893:

Someone placed a beer bottle in the pocket of a statue of Ben Franklin (the statue had been a gift from the Law class of 1864). Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds Reeves told Lutz to fix it and, at the same time, to bore a hole in the statue's head and fill the entire piece with cement. But, because of the weather, the cement froze and one of the statue's arms fell off.

The question was: "What to do with Ben?" It couldn't be destroyed because the grads would ask questions about their gift. So, Ben was taken to the boiler room and placed on a shelf. He remained there for several years until one day when he was found in pieces.

"This made matters worse than ever," Lutz related, "and the question was what to do with the pieces. So we gathered them up, placed them in a two-wheeled cart and gave Ben a decent burial."

"The class, though they were lawyers, evidently had one put over on them because the statue which looked like bronze was only a metal as brittle as pewter."

"While attending the art gallery, I became acquainted with Professor Frieze. He was one of the most lovable men I ever met... To know him was to love him and it was with pleasure that I repaired many pieces of pottery for him."

... the Old Medical Building:

Erected in 1850, it faced East University. For years the cadavers were kept in the basement... a dissecting room on the first floor for women, and the second floor for men.

"One morning as I was going from one building to another, I noticed a horse and buggy coming into the grounds. The horse was all lather from driving with three men in the buggy. One man jumped out on one side, another man on the other side, and in an instant one of the men grabbed the middle man by the collar and pulled him out of the buggy, threw him into the basement and then drove away. Out of curiosity I walked over to the building but there was no trace of anyone. My suspicions were aroused and naturally I kept one eye on the building. It was not long before the

March 1840

The Building Committee reports that it has "caused the University grounds to be cleared of stumps for which they have paid $346.81." The committee also reports disbursing the handsome sum of $331.70 to have a well "dug and stoned and bricked."

May 1840

The Building Committee is authorized "to dispense with the planning and painting of so much fence around the University grounds in Ann Arbor as they may deem expedient."

December 1876

The Regents charge the Committee on Grounds to study the feasibility and expense of heating all of the University buildings by steam from one central boiler house, as well as "erecting gas works to light the buildings."

September 1894

The Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds is directed to "construct a cistern of 400 barrels capacity, and to conduct the water from adjacent buildings to the same for use in the boilers."

May 1910

The Regents move to appoint the Rev. L. N. Pattison as a custodian in Memorial Hall at a salary of 600 dollars per year.
In 1888 there was a small heating plant which was built in 1879. The coal was hauled by teams from the railroad tracks. Some of the buildings were at the time heated with wood and men did all the sawing of the wood used, by hand. In 1894 the building now used by the R.O.T.C. was the next heating plant. This also contained the first two dynamos used for electrical purposes. In 1915 the Power House on East Washington Street was built and a siding from the Michigan Central track connected. The boilers were outfitted with electric stokers to take the place of hand firing.

Until 1895 the buildings were all lighted with gas. There were about 400 gas jets in the Old Library and while doing janitor work there, very often on a cloudy day it was my job to take a lard oil torch, go through the whole building and before I could get around the sun might be out again. It was about 1895 when professor Carhart with some of his students put electric lights in some few of the buildings.

The first attempt to improve the grounds was about 1914 and under the supervision of Professor George Burns, after whom Burns Park is named, all the trees west of the West Medical building were planted with the exception of the oak that stands between Pharmacology and Chemistry Building and gradually other shrubbery was planted. There were both bark and whole plank walks on the campus and as a rule in those days the students got a great kick out of upsetting the wood walks. This was generally a job for Hallowe’en night.

About 1905 there was a well dug about 200 feet east of University Hall on the north side of the walk running east and west to see if it would be possible to procure some drinking water at about 120 feet. They did strike water but in such a small flow that it was necessary to carry a pail of water to the pump and prime it before you could get any out, and then this was given up.

In the rear of the Old Library building stood the old Carpenter Shop and employed two men. One was George Hayler who came to the University in 1858. He was foreman and all the tables, desks and book shelves used at the University were made by hand. Today the University has a fine equipped carpenter shop with all modern machinery to do any kind of work. A dry kiln and a stock of lumber and employees, from 15 to 20 men at times, making furniture and extra equipment for the university and hospitals, also blacksmith, plumber, steamfitting, tin, electric and paint shops all under one roof. When I first came here we had a two-wheel push cart to do our hauling of materials. Today it takes a fleet of trucks to do the necessary work.

“Appropriations for the running of the University and special appropriations for buildings have, for years with few exceptions, been a source of worry to those responsible to keep pace of other universities, and years ago it was the custom at each session of the legislature for the members of both branches together with their wives, and sometimes the whole family, to come to Ann Arbor to be entertained and shown about. On one of these occasions I was performing janitor work in the Engineering Shops and was pressed into service to run a large lathe. After the foreman put it into motion, and just about the time when some of the legislative body came to where I stood something went wrong with the machine. The steel flew in all directions and I was obliged to find the foreman to stop the machine but I was never asked to run another one.”

All reminiscences on pages 2 and 3 from Data on Campus Development and Reminiscences, by George J. Lutz (1935).
February 1922
The central shop is moved physically and administratively from the Engineering Shops to the Department of Buildings and Grounds.

March 1922
The Regents vote to have Buildings and Grounds employees perform trades mechanical work in the new addition to the Dental Building.

June 1922
Buildings and Grounds is authorized to perform heating and plumbing work in the new Field House on Ferry Field, provided it does not interfere with the work Buildings and Grounds ordinarily performs for the rest of the University.

June 1933
The Regents approve the recommendation of the Superintendent of the Buildings and Grounds Department, and the Secretary and Vice President, to pay “not in excess of a three day wage to members of the Department when absent from duty by reason of a death in the family.”

October 1940
The Regents approve the recommendation of the Committee of Labor Relations to grant up to seven days paid leave for Buildings and Grounds employees when “such employees are away from duty because of illness.”

November 1945
E. C. Pardon’s title is changed to Plant Operations and Maintenance Superintendent, from Plant Maintenance Superintendent, to coincide with the change in the name of the Building and Grounds Department to the Plant Department.
In the early years of the University, major expenditures consisted of professorial salaries, books for the library and “janitor service.” In the 1854-55 budget, for example, $16,900 were set aside for the salaries of professors and of the president of the University; $2,500 were designated for buildings and grounds and “contingencies.”

The Old Heating Plant, situated near the southeast corner of the central campus, was the University’s original heating plant. It was built of cut stone in 1894 for $57,000 and used until 1923. Its 125 foot tall smokestack was a University landmark for several years. The first utilities tunnel system extended from this site.

From 1840 to 1879, the facilities were heated by wood burning stoves. In 1879, two independent heating plants were erected to provide steam heat to small groups of buildings. One plant, for example, generated steam to heat the Law Building, University Hall, the Library, the Museum and the Dental Building. These structures were connected by steam mains which were buried in the ground and insulated by log coverings.

In July 1851, Dr. Edmund Andrews was appointed to the dual role of Demonstrator of Anatomy and Superintendent of Grounds. He developed a comprehensive plan for planting 1,640 trees on the mostly treeless campus and bordering streets.

Snapshots and snippets tell more…
The mechanical trades work in the Mosher-Jordan residence halls, which were completed in the 1930-31 school year, was performed by the Plant Department.

The central power plant, completed in 1914, served all of the central campus. Fueled by coal, it was purposely placed in the low lying area of the campus called the “Cat Hole,” to allow steam condensate to return to the plant by gravity flow. The plant generated 500 watts of AC electricity. In contrast, today it generates 45 million watts of power.

Campus forestry was an early problem, and most of the initial plantings of trees were unsuccessful. In 1840, the Regents of the University appropriated approximately 200 dollars to plant fruit trees and shrubbery in the gardens of the Professors’ Houses.
This edition marks the end of The Plant Exchange as you presently know it. Beginning with the next issue, it will have a new look. The Exchange has been redesigned and resized to allow us to publish it using desk top computer technology. The new size will also allow us to put the Exchange on the internet. The result will be an attractive and interesting publication which can be produced at considerable cost savings over conventional print technology.

The Exchange is also passing on to newer hands. Valerie Amo, Jim Christenson’s executive secretary, will assume responsibility for producing and editing the newsletter. Plant Human Resources will no longer manage its publication. Valerie intends to involve as many interested people as possible in the development of news stories and other special items. So, if you would like to contribute, call her at 764-3400.