

## Ross School's Past Unearthed While Building for the Future

6/28/2006 —

*Time capsule is retrieved from cornerstone in Davidson Hall demolition.*

ANN ARBOR, Mich.—Six decades have passed since the Ross School of Business built what were then state-of-the-art facilities to accommodate the needs of its students, faculty and staff. William Davidson Hall, one of the University of Michigan's first post-World War II construction projects, was completed in 1948 and marked a major turning point in the growth and development of business education at U-M.

In an effort to continue improving upon and building the learning community of the future, the Ross School is undergoing major construction to be completed in 2008—a 270,000-square-foot structure, most of which will stand six stories tall, with a lower level at its L-shaped center and a three-story portion around its perimeter along Tappan and Hill streets.

Recent demolition uncovered a piece of the school's past when, on May 4, construction workers retrieved a time capsule from a cornerstone in Davidson Hall. The rusty copper box, placed in the cornerstone during a special ceremony on May 24, 1947, held only a pictorial record of the business school on microfilm and was ruined by water.

Julie Truettner, lead planning assistant with the U-M Department of Architecture, Engineering & Construction, was present when the box was extracted. The cornerstone was placed on the retaining wall instead of the building, which allowed water to flow in through the mortar joints.

"It's a real shame that the capsule was subjected to water for decades, which ruined the film," she said.

"Usually cornerstones are placed on a building itself and water flows off the face without getting inside the stone. They look like they are meant to be true cornerstones. I'm not sure why the one at the Business School was placed on the retaining wall instead of the building."

Truettner determined the contents of the microfilm by visiting the University's Bentley Historical Library. Among the items captured on film and documented in a printed program marking the ceremony were excerpts from Board of Regents meetings pertaining to the business school development, annual reports, business school announcements, a record of graduates, a salary study of the progress of early MBA graduates, a chart of the growth of the business school library, new building plans, photos of construction progress, documents about business school participation in the training programs of the armed services during World War II, photos of housing facilities in 1946, a 17th annual alumni conference program, a 1947 group faculty photo, and bylaws of the Board of Regents pertaining to the school.

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Truettner said placing memorabilia inside a cornerstone was very popular during the 19th and early 20th centuries.

“Most of our early buildings on campus have cornerstones with boxes of goodies in them,” she said. “The laying of the cornerstone was a major event, usually with big crowds and speakers. This tradition seems to have faded in the last few decades.”

Truettner explained that buildings today rarely have special cornerstones and if they do, they are simply veneer stone with a date on them.

“Even rarer today would be placing a box of memorabilia inside, and cornerstone laying ceremonies seem to be rarer still,” she said.

For more information, contact:

Heather Thorne

Phone: (734) 936-8421

E-mail: [hthorne@umich.edu](mailto:hthorne@umich.edu)