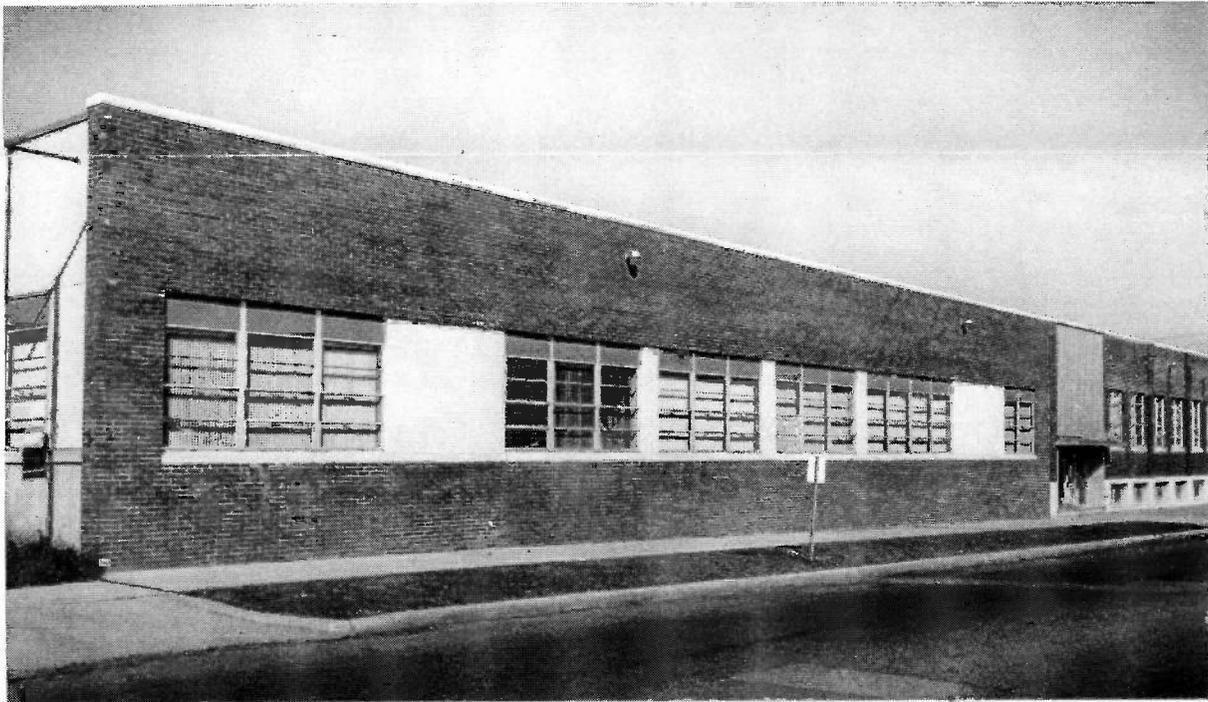




THE MUELLER RECORD

SUMMER 2008 NEWSLETTER

FIFTY YEARS AGO –
MUELLER CO. ADDS NEW ENGINEERING FACILITY



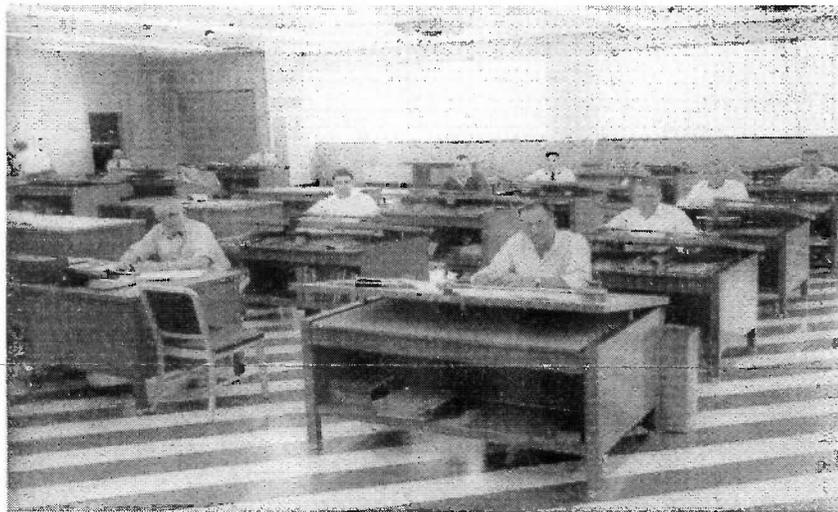
The July, 1958 edition of the company newsletter *Main Connections* reported that the move into the new plant addition on the west side of North Monroe Street was now complete. The new building added 64,000 square feet to Mueller's Decatur operation and was designed to house the Engineering Department, Research Engineering, Product Engineering, Tool Engineering, Plant Engineering, Standards, Personnel, Advertising and Sales Promotion, *Mueller Record* office, and the Credit Union. Also included in the new building were a Training Room, Hydro-test Room, Machine Shop, and a 13,000 square foot Heat Treat facility.

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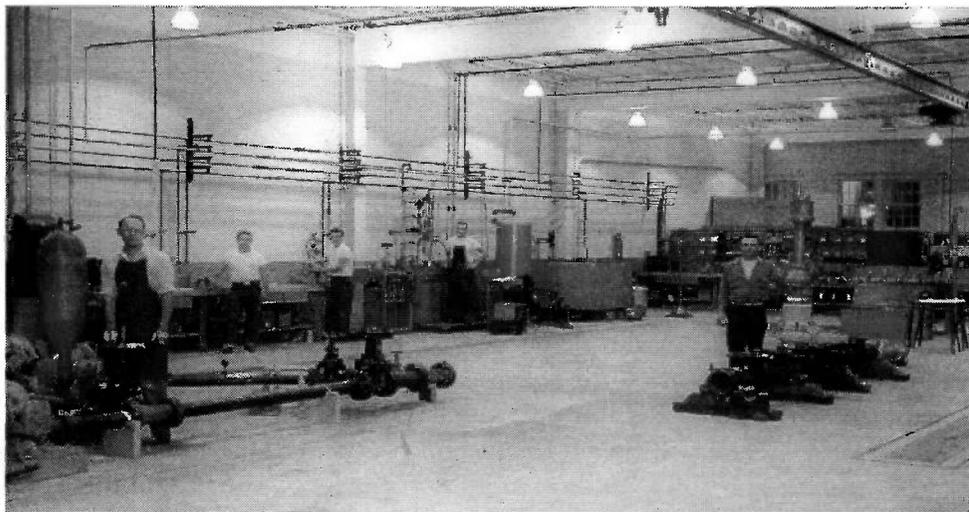
Cover story continued – Fifty years ago

Several interesting observations on how business has changed in 50 years can be found in looking at the “new” addition. The company was proud to provide air conditioning and fluorescent lighting in the office areas of the addition. Photos of the new office space show floors tiled in diagonal stripes that must have made the occupants dizzy. Today’s office workers get a small cubicle while in 1958 the managers worked in small cubicles while the staff worked in a large open space with the windows. Another reminder of how quickly times change is the absence of computers in the 1958 photos. Imagine an engineering facility or office today without computer screens and keyboards... but they got the job done and did it well in those days. Perhaps the absence of instant messaging and email wasn’t entirely a bad thing.

All of the departments in the Engineering Building were moved to the headquarters and main plant east of Monroe Street in 1998 as a part of a consolidation. During the same time period, Mueller Co. disposed of all its property west of Monroe Street.



Draftsmen at work in the new engineering building. Pictured are Donald Ferry, Ben Jones, Carl Higar, Dale Staley, Robert Chester, Lyle Woodward, Robert Brownlow, Bert Fenton and James Smith.



Testing facilities in new addition. Pictured are Lewis Bland, Norman Wilcox, Perry Ferral, John Hoffman and William Dunaway.

HIERONYMUS AND THE PRICE OF GAS

Hieronymus Mueller built some of the earliest gas guzzlers. A newspaper account of his 1895 trip from Decatur to Springfield claims that he made the 40 mile drive on 4.5 gallons of gas. That's about 9 miles per gallon – not bad for a motor home but most of us would hope to do better in a world of \$4 per gallon gas. The news article also states that Hieronymus paid about 10 cents per gallon for his gas so you might wonder if he really cared what kind of mileage he got. Well, making the adjustments for inflation, 10 cents in 1895 would be worth \$2.50 today or about the same as it was before the recent hikes in price. Of course, the real issue for Hieronymus was the cost of operating the car versus the cost of maintaining a horse. I don't know what it cost to keep a horse going in those days, but I am sure Hieronymus would point out that his automobile could be turned off when not in use while his neighbor's horse just kept on eating!

There are a couple of other interesting inflation issues to consider in the Mueller-Benz automotive history. Most of our readers are aware of the first American automobile race held in Chicago in 1895. The Mueller car won the first running but the Chicago newspaper sponsoring the event wanted a more competitive finish to publicize and offered Hieronymus a \$600 prize if he would agree to a re-running of the race the following month. That might seem like a poor bargain until you consider that \$600 in 1895 dollars is the equivalent of \$15,000. The chance to race again meant Hieronymus could put that money in his pocket and return to complete for another \$2000 prize (that's \$50,000 in today's dollars). As things turned out, the Mueller car finished second and was awarded \$1500 prize money or the equivalent of \$37,500 in today's currency.

Hieronymus likely was confronted by the same problem as the owners of today's E-85 fuel cars – where does one find the fuel? Gasoline was a natural and largely unwanted byproduct of the petroleum refining process. Petroleum was refined primarily for the tar and alcohol components in the 1800's and the highly explosive nature of the gasoline component made it of little use. Early internal combustion engines used an alcohol mixture as fuel. Karl Benz of Germany developed one of the earliest gasoline burning engines in 1885 and this was the forerunner of the engine Hieronymus received with his Benz auto in 1895. When gasoline was sold, it was usually found in a general store along with lamp oils, lubricating oils and the like. It may have been necessary for Hieronymus to make special arrangements to have the fuel carried in Decatur since there would have been little demand for it beyond his automobile. That could account for the outrageous price of 10 cents a gallon!

One interesting sidebar to this story – alcohol ceased to be used as a fuel in engines as a result of Prohibition. John D. Rockefeller of Standard Oil fame contributed large sums of money to the Women's Christian Temperance Union which fought successfully for Prohibition.

