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WITH GALLERY AND VIDEO: Ann Arbor memorabilia collector uses his finds to document changes in city

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One local landlord with a passion for both **Ann Arbor** real estate and history found an outlet for both when he launched a search for some vintage photos more than a decade ago.

Now **Jeff Hauptman** of [The Oxford Companies](#) owns a significant and growing collection of historical memorabilia of Ann Arbor that chronicles many of the city's structural changes since the mid-1800s.

For a landlord of several properties on South State Street and in other areas of the city, the books, maps and images play a key role toward restoration and understanding history.

“If you want to know what was in a building and what that building may have looked like, we can research that,” Hauptman said.

The collection started when Hauptman bought a house on Oxford in the mid-1990s and launched its restoration as a grand home, in contrast to its then-more recent life as a fraternity house.

He sought help from historian Louisa Pieper, who “immediately went to yearbooks.”

They found a photo of the house in the 1950s, “and it was in better shape than when we bought it,” Hauptman said. “I thought the whole process was kind of neat.”

At the same time, he said, an antique shop near his office was closing and the dealer had about 30 discounted yearbooks. Hauptman bought them all.

They were scattered among many years, but went back to the 1920s. He found a photo of the professor who’d build the house on Oxford in 1897 - and lived there until 1937.

He filled in the missing years by buying more yearbooks on Ebay and in stores. Eventually, he could see how the professor aged over the years.

That was not quite 10 years ago, Hauptman said, “and he finally finished the collection.”

Hauptman turns to his shelves and pulls volumes out to how how U-M once had three yearbooks, including the law school’s Res Gestae.

An 1896 Castalian is a general yearbook, but with no photos of individual students.

An 1981 Palladium is “super-rare,” Hauptman said. They go back to 1860, but they’re “very, very hard to get a hold of,” he adds. Despite that, he has about 60 percent of the published editions.

And the Ensian started in 1897, representing a consolidation.

There are other collections: RL Polk City Directories list residents and businesses by address. Ann Arbor high school yearbooks. Plat maps of Ann Arbor. At least 1,000 postcards of the city, with State Street scenes the most interesting to him.

“Once you start a collection like this, there are a lot of offshoots,” Hauptman said. “It takes restraint not to get into sports.”

But he will delve into one area: U-M football history that involves legendary coach [Fielding Yost, who built both the Big House and the home](#) Hauptman on Stratford in Ann Arbor Hills that he now shares with his wife, CJ, and four children.

“We have a variety of Yost pieces,” Hauptman said, including original photographs and a painting by Yost’s wife, Eunice.

He keeps much of his collection in a basement room that he created among renovations to the Yost house, carving a lower basement level out of the hill the home rests on for an office and wine cellar.

Up one flight of stairs is the previous lower level, containing what Yost called “the pine room” and where the [legendary coach](#) conducted many of his coaching - and later athletic director - meetings.

There he keep a letter from Yost to the athletic director of Ohio State and a photo of Bucky Yost playing football.

“I’m really a caretaker for Yost’s house,” Hauptman said. “Yost was something really special to the university.

“I feel an obligation to carry on the Yost collection.”

There are some things that don’t have a place in his historic collection: Items from the last 20-30 years. Newspapers and magazines. Most sports items.

He’s still looking for original photographs of people and buildings of Ann Arbor, and he still needs Palladium yearbooks from 1858 and 1859, along with a few others. One recent find involved the purchase of many original Detroit News prints of Yost.

Hauptman is one of about a dozen intense Ann Arbor collectors who work with **Karl Lagler** of Ann Arbor’s Antelope Antiques.

Lagler says finding city directories can be a challenge, “since people threw away the olds ones when the new ones arrived.”

But he says on the hunt for entire collections for customers like Hauptman, who, Lagler says, “has some fun stuff.”

Hauptman said he looks forward to adding to the collection, since it’s large enough now that a new find likely is rare.

It also would be something that can help define the city’s evolution and used as a tool for the future.

“I tend to collect anything that can give a historic perspective of Ann Arbor,” Hauptman said. “That’s part of the passion.”

It makes sense, given his plans to stay.

“I’ll never be leaving Ann Arbor,” Hauptman said. “I’ve been here my whole life. My friends are here. My family is here. It’s an amazing city.”

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wdR55-eob18>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WoUbWue27vQ>

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