

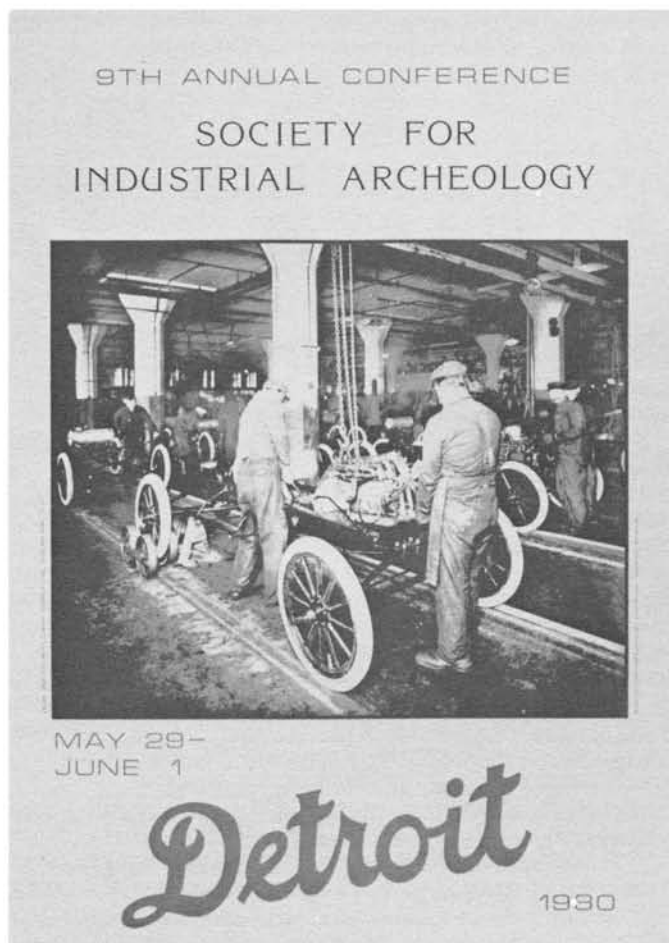
# SOCIETY FOR INDUSTRIAL ARCHEOLOGY

## NEWSLETTER

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### THE NINTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE: DETROIT



*The following account of the 1980 annual conference was prepared by Craig Morrison. Photographs are by Robert M. Vogel.*

If "Last night I went to sleep in DEEtroit city" went through the minds of some participants in the SIA's Ninth Annual Conference, held May 29-June 1, it most definitely was *not* followed by a chorus of "Lord, how I want to go home." The weekend came to an end all too soon for both hosts and guests as the Society's first conference to be held in the Midwest was more than a match for any that have preceded it. Although not a record, the attendance of 179 reflected the intense curiosity that is felt nationwide about this widely publicized but too rarely complimented city. Throughout the weekend, participants had an opportunity to see a fair sampling of the city itself as well as its industrial buildings and to gain at least an introduction to Detroit's complex social, ethnic, and architectural character. Some of the sites visited were legendary in the history of

the American automobile industry, but there were enough surprises to show that there is much more to Detroit than "by day to make the cars and by night to make the bars."

Headquarters for the conference was the Dearborn Inn. During the late 1920s, Henry Ford built and operated an airport (it remains usable but is rarely used) near his headquarters and immediately adjacent to his growing Greenfield Village complex. To accommodate visitors arriving at the airport, he built the Dearborn Inn, a stately Colonial Revival building that remains a bastion of elegance amid the plastic of modern hotels. Among the unique features of the inn is a series of guest cottages behind the main building that replicates the homes of several famous Americans and speaks to Ford's intense interest in the artifacts of American history.

The gratitude of the Society must be extended to the officials of the Edison Institute, the parent organization of the Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village, for their hospitality throughout the meeting and for the time spent by several of their staff members in planning the event. Each conference participant was extended free admission to both the Museum and the Village for the duration of the weekend, several special events were held there, and the group was treated to a special nighttime opening of the Ford Museum—more of that later.

For those who may not be acquainted with it, the Edison Institute was dedicated to the honor of Henry Ford's most admired friend on Oct. 12, 1929, the Golden Jubilee of Light. For that occasion, Edison, working in his Menlo Park Laboratory which had been moved to Dearborn and restored, recreated the invention fifty years earlier of the incandescent light bulb. Visitors to Greenfield Village now can see the laboratory complex exactly as Edison left it that night, as well as nearly one hundred buildings assembled by Ford to illustrate, in his words, American life "as it was lived." Behind the Independence Hall facade of the adjoining Henry Ford Museum are an elegant decorative arts gallery nearly an eighth of a mile long and the fourteen-acre Hall of Technology, in which the artifacts of American industry are assembled in incredible quantity and quality. The objects range from washing machines to radio tubes, milk cans to articulated locomotives, and include a great automotive collection as well as a major collection of early steam engines, all maintained in operating condition.

#### OPENING EVENTS

Conference proceedings began on Thursday evening with the dedication by the American Society of Mechanical Engineers of two Natl. Historic Mechanical Engineering Landmarks located in Greenfield Village: the "Jumbo" Dynamo No. 9 (1882) from Edison's Pearl Street Station in N.Y.C.; and an 1891 triple-expansion engine-generator from Edison's Duane St. Station, also in N.Y. [see "ASME Landmarks," in a future issue]. Following this, participants gathered for cocktails in Lovett Hall, a grand ballroom in the Colonial style constructed on the Edison Institute grounds as a center for the study and performance of early