

# THE PLOWSHARE

## News for John Deere Collectors



*Architect Eero Saarinen (left) discusses plans for the new Deere & Company World Headquarters, originally called the Administrative Center, with Chairman William Hewitt.*

## Deere & Company Chairman William Hewitt saw great possibility in the sprawling, hilly farm property covered in woods.

Ignoring those who told him Deere should move its administrative offices to Chicago, New York, or San Francisco, Chairman William Hewitt chose the rural site in Moline, Illinois, to build what is now the Deere & Company World Headquarters.

Originally called the Administrative Center, the facility opened 50 years ago, in April 1964, with a public introduction in June of that year. Industrial designer Henry Dreyfuss described the structure as having “the quality of timelessness.”

“And yet it is contemporary,” Dreyfuss said during the facility’s grand-opening ceremony. “It belongs to today and tomorrow.”

Dreyfuss, who worked on Deere’s “New Generation of Power” tractor models introduced in 1960, suggested Hewitt hire Finnish architect Eero Saarinen to design the building, according to transcripts of the speeches given at the ceremony.

“Henry (Dreyfuss) said if we were interested in an architect whose work will last and still be excellent 25 or 50 years from now,” Hewitt said, “we should seriously consider Eero Saarinen.”

Dreyfuss said he believed the Deere project was Saarinen’s finest work.

“For all its size and the daring use of site, this is a building that beckons and welcomes you,” Dreyfuss said. “The men and women who will work here will give it life and warmth. The design in steel and glass will give them and their work inspiration, will permit imagination, will inspire courage and conviction.

“No old or worn-out ideas can be tolerated within these walls – for somehow through the environment they provide, they foster and build the special qualities of individual initiative, imagination, and vision,” Dreyfuss said. “They will not merely shelter – they will silently but surely inspire and encourage.”

Saarinen died a few days after construction started on the building, but his wife, Aline, spoke at the event. She said Hewitt told her, “I do believe that if people work in a beautiful environment they will be happier, they will be more productive, that we will attract the best kind of people.”

Architect Kevin Roche, who worked for Saarinen and took over Saarinen’s many projects after he died, attended the event. Artist Alexander Girard, who created the three-dimensional mural on the display floor, also attended.

Deere acquired 700 acres that had been part of four farms for the new headquarters. The site is now closer to 1,200 acres.

Hewitt said in his speech that “the highway that bisects the site was not paved at the time. It was just a gravel road full of chuckholes and sometimes impassable in the winter, but we knew it was going to be paved so we went ahead with our building plans.”

## Symbols of tradition: leaping deer statues at Deere

The large metal deer statues that grace the lawns of several Deere & Company locations, including the World Headquarters in Moline, Illinois, may appear new, but they are late-1800s relics of company history.

Back when sheet-metal lawn ornaments and weathervanes were popular in the United States, the William H. Mullins Company began manufacturing larger-than-life copper deer statues. Deere & Company President Charles Deere acquired several of them between 1893 and 1896, placing them on rooftops of Deere facilities.



“Images made in the early 1900s show at least one statue on each roof,” company art curator Nathan Augustine said. “Some locations had one on each corner of the roof.”

Deere now owns 14 of the statues, all of which have been refurbished and painted for preservation. None of them are on rooftops, but they’re still familiar symbols to customers, employees, and guests.

The statues were handmade by pressing sheet copper into cast-iron molds up to 72-inches wide.

Sections were soldered or riveted together and braced internally with iron or copper skeletons, Augustine said.

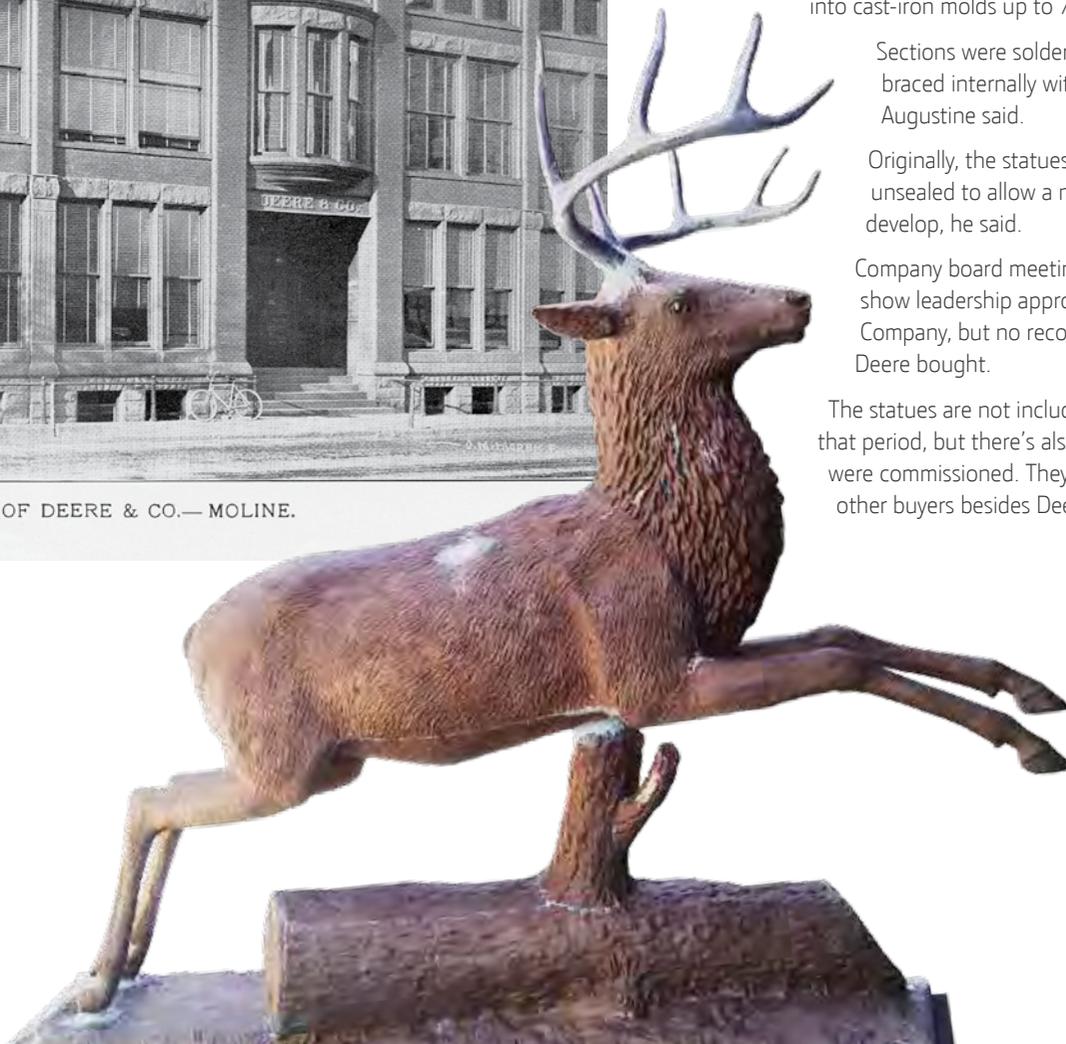
Originally, the statues were gilded or left unsealed to allow a natural copper patina to develop, he said.

Company board meeting minutes from 1897 show leadership approved payment to the Mullins Company, but no records show how many statues Deere bought.

The statues are not included in Mullins catalogs of that period, but there’s also no evidence that they were commissioned. They might have been sold to other buyers besides Deere, Augustine said.



OFFICES OF DEERE & CO.—MOLINE.



## Things you might not know about Deere & Company World Headquarters



**1.** Move-in day was April 17, 1964. About 900 employees who had worked in four separate buildings all moved into what is now the East Office Building. It took four moving companies to move 250 vanloads of supplies and files.

**2.** William Hewitt, then-chairman and CEO of Deere & Company, was one of three recipients of the Award of Merit from the Davenport, Iowa, Catholic Interracial Council (ICC). Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was also honored at the banquet.

**3.** Workers built a small mockup of the East Office Building on the grounds maintenance building. Hewitt and Saarinen used the mockup to test design ideas for the offices and details used on the building's exterior.

**4.** Artist Alexander Girard designed "Reflections of an Era," the mural on the display floor. Although composed of thousands of historical items, it's considered a single piece of art.

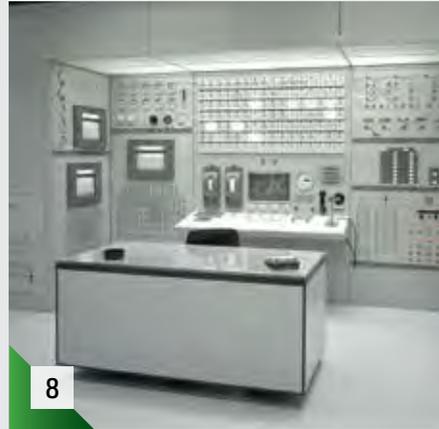
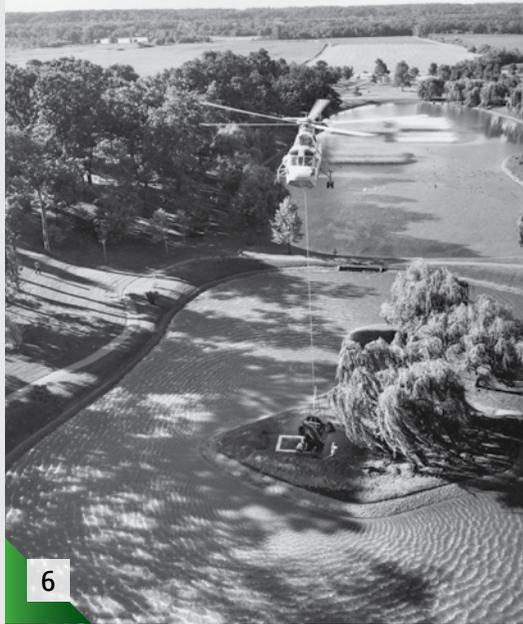
**5.** The imperial koi fish were a gift from Japanese visitors to Deere & Company in 1972.



JUNE 1978

### This month in history

Deere opened its new West Office Building, a 200,000-square-foot addition to the Deere Administrative Center in Moline. The building won the Administrative Management "Office of the Year" citation, the same award bestowed on the Deere Administrative Center when it opened in 1964.



6. Henry Moore's sculpture "Hill Arches" was brought to the site by helicopter and placed on the island by the lakes in 1974.

7. On the third floor of the East Office Building, framed historical photos show the construction of the headquarters in the 1960s.

8. The ground floor originally was filled mostly with computer equipment.

9. Former U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower visited the headquarters in 1965, and President Jimmy Carter toured the site in 1979.



## Finally I think we can say spring is here!

It's been a long winter, and that brutal season seemed as if it never wanted to release its grasp.

I was at a swap meet at the end of April and it was cold; I even saw some very light flurries. Frostbite and sunburn all in about three days – ah, yes, the joys of living in the Midwest.

With the summer in front of us, we're looking at a very exciting year. There are a couple of important John Deere anniversaries this year.

Deere & Company World Headquarters is celebrating its 50th anniversary. This building is a magnificent structure designed by Eero Saarinen, who also designed the Gateway Arch in St. Louis and other famous sites. For the Deere building to have been designed that many years ago and still be a very useful structure today says a great deal about Saarinen's vision for the future.

The other anniversary is special, too. The John Deere Historic Site in Grand Detour, Illinois, is celebrating 50 years of being a National Historic Landmark. Only through the vision of Deere's granddaughter, Katherine Butterworth, is this designation possible. If you don't know the entire story, you really need to stop by and take one of the tours to learn how the property was bought by Mrs. Butterworth in 1919, how she remodeled the home, and how she made arrangements for the site to be sold back to Deere & Company before her death in 1951.

This amazing story gets better. A University of Illinois archaeological team excavated the site in 1962 to find the exact location of John Deere's original blacksmith shop. That excavation identified and preserved this spot for all of us to learn from and enjoy today.

I encourage everyone to make the trip to see both of these locations and the other Deere attractions. You won't be disappointed.

Happy anniversary to both facilities, and I look forward to many more.

Until next time, keep your hand on the throttle and your plow in the ground.

**Brian Holst**

Manager, John Deere Heritage Marketing

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You have received this publication due to your relationship with John Deere. *The Plowshare* is free and is distributed quarterly. If you don't want to receive future issues, please call 515-267-3109, and ask to have your name removed from *The Plowshare* mailing list. We will then stop sending you *The Plowshare*, but you may continue to receive information about merchandise and upcoming events from John Deere.

## *Plowshare* readers help archives

Thanks to *Plowshare* readers who responded to a request for help, the Deere & Company Archives has received information that verifies the company did, indeed, stop manufacturing snowmobiles in 1983.

Archive staff members doing research for an article on the snowmobile line that ran in the winter issue of *The Plowshare* found conflicting information about when production of snowmobiles ended and asked *Plowshare* readers to send any information they had on the issue. Company historian Neil Dahlstrom said he appreciates the efforts of those who responded.

