

# TWENTIETH-CENTURY ENTREPRENEURS

Several of Ann Arbor's smaller-scale businesses remained in the same family for generations. **FLORIAN C. MUEHLIG** founded a funeral business that continues today. His son **ANDREW MUEHLIG** ran a successful hardware business. Andrew's daughter **BERTHA MUEHLIG** began working in 1891 at age seventeen as a bookkeeper for Philip Bach's dry goods store. In 1911 she bought the business and ran it until her death in 1956. Loyal customers depended on her to stock hard-to-find, old-fashioned items such as "Tillie Open Bottoms" (women's long underwear).

A few Ann Arbor enterprises became large manufacturing companies lasting into the twenty-first century. Entrepreneur **LEANDER HOOVER** founded the Hoover Steel Ball Company in 1913. When World War I broke out in Europe soon afterward, Hoover quickly became the only source outside Germany to produce top-quality ball bearings, which made him a fortune. He built a large mansion on Washtenaw but died in 1918 soon after moving in. His mansion, converted long ago to corporate offices, remains an Ann Arbor landmark. The company also survived and grew to become the largest in the city by 1984. It continues today as Hoover Precision Products, Inc.



**Horace King**



**H. H. Seeley**

Auto products sales manager **HORACE KING** and UM School of Engineering professor **H. H. SEELEY** were the first to invent a dashboard-mounted gasoline gauge for cars. With another UM faculty member, **JOHN AIREY**, as manager, the company started up in 1922. Within three years it moved into a former tannery on Second Street, expanding eastward to First Street with a five-story factory in 1928 and again in 1937. The company had \$10 million in sales and plants across the country and abroad by 1967 when it was sold and split up. The First Street factory remained in operation through 2004.



**Bertha Muehlig**



**Leander Hoover**



♣ *Artist's rendering of King-Seeley's Ann Arbor plant on First Street, from the 1947 King-Seeley annual report.*