

# Long-Form Legacy

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Sadly, we do not currently provide a gigantic, six-volume manufacturing series on the history of gears, bearings, couplings, brakes and motors with descriptions and details that would make the likes of Leo Tolstoy or J.R.R. Tolkien jealous with envy. One day, at the very least, I'd like to put down on paper a travel narrative about the gear and bearing shops I've visited since 2008 and the impact each has had on U.S. manufacturing.

I've been thinking about this quite a bit as we celebrate America's 250th anniversary this summer. Big stories like Henry Ford's assembly line, our manufacturing ingenuity during World War II, the various NASA mission programs and the future of electrification, automation, and robotics.

Every machine shop has its own unique story.

One recent example was my visit to KA-Wood Gear & Machine Co. located in Madison Heights, MI. KA-Wood began in 1920 by Joseph J. Klocka and Alfred Underwood, with the last syllable of their last names comprising the KA-Wood company name. The company started in Detroit in a two-car garage.

By 1941, the company moved into a 3,300 sq. ft. building in Detroit and then to a 9,000 sq. ft. building located in Madison Heights in 1981. KA-Wood built a new state-of-the-art facility in 1994 which expanded into a 23,000 sq. ft. facility by 2008.

History slaps you right in the face, the second you step on the shop floor. From the large section of working Barber-Colman hobbing machines right down the aisle from an advanced Reishauer RZ-550 CNC Gear Grinder. Visitors will find a couple of Pfauters set up for hobbing worm gears not too far away from a row of innovative Mitsubishi GE15A hobbers.

The company works across industrial sectors including automotive, aerospace, mining, printing, packaging, machine tools and more. Visitors often stop by off the street and ask if the company can work on a specific gear

for a lawnmower application or help with a gear for a classic muscle car.

Many U.S. manufacturing stories begin the same way: "We started the business in a two-car garage."

Over the years, we have been fortunate enough to capture this history and share it with *PTE* and *Gear Technology* readers. Our editorial team remains committed to preserving and celebrating the legacy of gears, bearings, couplings, and motors while continuing to cover the innovations and technologies shaping their future.

Some examples:

**Revolutions:** Our *PTE* Revolutions articles examine historical manufacturing stories from companies like Philadelphia Gear, Carlyle Johnson, The Hillard Corporation, Maxon and more: [powertransmission.com/topics/revolutions](http://powertransmission.com/topics/revolutions)

**My Story:** Our former *Gear Technology* blogger Charles Schultz requested colleagues to submit their gear origin stories back in 2019 and we have a nice library of blogs on how people first became interested in gear manufacturing: [geartechnology.com/search?query=my+story](http://geartechnology.com/search?query=my+story)

**Gear Expo/Motion + Power Technology Expo:** With the 40th anniversary of Gear Expo/MPT Expo taking place in 2027, now is a wonderful time to look back at how the trade show has evolved over the years: [powertransmission.com/a-history-of-motion-power](http://powertransmission.com/a-history-of-motion-power)

Please continue to share your stories about how you became involved in mechanical power transmission and we will continue to provide "Long-Form Legacy" stories online and in print to celebrate these achievements.

Imagine for just a moment what the NEXT 250 years could look like here in America from a manufacturing and engineering perspective. Robots building robots to manufacture robots and one engineer sitting on a couch controlling it all with their "Mind Phone 17."

Truly boggles the brainwaves.



**PTE**