Trying to find information on this company has taken several hours of research, going from one source to another and then back and forth again and again to confirm dates, etc. So, here's what we do know:

The Michigan Crown Fender Company was founded on February 3rd, 1915, with works in Ypsilanti, Michigan at 101 E. Cross Street, (currently the home of The Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Museum and National Hudson Museum) by brothers Charles and Frederick Bennett of Plymouth, Michigan.

A little background on the Bennett's. Charles was head of the sales force at Plymouth's Daisy Manufacturing Company, which made the famous Daisy Air Rifle, and Frederick was the Superintendent. This was at the turn of the 19th century. Things were going well for the Bennett's financially. On a spring morning in 1903 Charles was off to Detroit to visit his tailor and to purchase a new Oldsmobile automobile. While at the tailor's someone in the adjoining fitting room over heard the conversation between the tailor and Charlie about the car purchase. The individual approached Charlie and told him that he should hold off because he had a cousin, Alex that had a better product coming.

The next day a meeting was arranged with Alex Y. Malcomson, Charles Bennett and a man named Henry Ford. Henry took Charlie for a ride in the prototype with the vertical engine and they had a chat. Ford had previously failed to gain any real attention with two prior companies. The next day Henry came to Plymouth with a much bigger proposition than the advanced quadricycle. He wanted to know if Daisy would tie-up and take a 49% interest in the Ford Motor Company. The Daisy name could open-up financing sources for Ford. But the Board declined the invitation and Charlie took it on his own to become one of the 12 initial investors of The Ford Motor Company. The other 11 (all from Detroit) were Henry Ford, 255 shares; Alex Y. Malcomson, a coal magnate, 255 shares; John S. Gray, a banker and confectioner, 105 shares; John W. Anderson, attorney, 50 shares; Horace Rackham, attorney and philanthropist, 50 shares (law partner with Anderson and they drew up initial papers for the corporation); John F. Dodge, manufacturer, 50 shares; Horace E. Dodge, manufacturer, 50 shares; Vernon C. Frey, Malcomson's cousin, 50 shares; Charles Woodal, Malcomson's bookkeeper, 50 shares; James Couzens, worked for Ford, 50 shares; Albert Strelow, one of the largest building contractors in Detroit who had the only equipment available to erect buildings more than two stories in height and owned the building that Ford used for the first factory, 50 shares; and Charlie Bennett, 50 shares. The total amount that this group invested was $28,000.

On August 24, 1914 and Charles Bennett and his brother Frederick, with some prodding from Henry Ford I'm sure, chartered The Michigan Crown Fender Company with Ford being their main customer. They opened their shop at 101 E. Cross Street, Ypsilanti where the Comstock Sash and Lock Company was previously operating. Comstock manufactured various kinds of stamped metal goods besides sash locks. They also opened an office in the Kerr
Building, Detroit, in 1916.

The company remained manufacturing fenders at the E. Cross location until July 6, 1916, when they moved into their new plant with machinery in operation and a force of 45 employees at work turning out the completed crown fender (with exception of the enameling). The building of the new plant was 302 feet long by 60 feet wide and of brick construction. An addition running at right angles to the main building, was 105 feet long by 56 feet wide, and was designed for the enameling ovens.

Supposedly, the city of Ypsilanti assisted in financing the construction of the facility. The location was listed as being at the corner of Lowell and Huron in the July 8th, 1916 issue of Chilton’s Automobile Directory. Ypsilanti city directories also have this “address” listed in addition to a Jarvis and Lowell corner. If you were to drive by this area, today, you would see a group of buildings that quite possibly may have been the fender company location. It looks like the buildings increased in size over the years with additions.

The Michigan Crown Fender Company was successful for about 10 years. Charlie Bennett, besides being President of the company, was also President of The Daisy Company during the same time period. Ford had his Rouge foundries up and running and making their own body and fender parts, thereby reducing the need for Michigan Crown Fenders. They needed some other form of income to keep the company afloat, so Brother Frederick came up with the idea of manufacturing a small stove. Unknown if it was successful or if it was the reason that Michigan Crown Fender was taken over by The United Stove Company in 1925.

Charles Bennett became a world traveler and traveled for months at a time throughout the world. Mr. Bennett lives in Plymouth his entire life and became a bank president and a prominent businessman and philanthropist. He passed away in 1956 at the ripe old age of 93. He was called “Mr. Plymouth”.

Frederick F. Bennett there is no information about him being a world traveler. He was probably too busy managing the operation of the company. He lived in Ypsilanti during the duration of the Michigan Crown Fender Company. The 1930 U.S. Census lists his occupation as “none” and living on Elm Street, so he must have done well financially, after The United Stove Company took over the facility. Passed away in 1936 at the age of 70.
The Best First-Time Corvair?

BY PETE KOEHLER

Corvairs and Ypsilanti have had a common bond since the Summer of 1959. Nearly two million Corvairs were produced by General Motors and most of them were built right here at the Willow Run Assembly Plant. In the Old Car Hobby today the Corvair is still a relative bargain. Many people ask me what would be the perfect first-time Corvair for a prospective hobby enthusiast. The answer is somewhat complicated.

Corvairs were produced from July 1959 all the way up through May of 1969. There were other assembly plants that contributed to the total including one in Ontario, Canada. Some Canadian produced Corvairs were built into “CKD” units, or Completely Knocked Down. These partial vehicles were shipped overseas to several ports to be completed for local markets. Assume that since you are reading this you might be looking for a Corvair here in the Western Hemisphere. Okay?

The Corvair lineup included several body styles. Coupes, sedans, convertibles, station wagons, passenger vans (room for nine people!), pickup trucks and commercial panel vans. In addition other manufacturers used Corvair engines to power Motor homes, boats and even airplanes! But for the sake of this article stick with the passenger car side of the Corvair story.

Corvair enthusiasts can be grouped into two camps: the Earlies and the Latest. Early model Corvairs begin with the introduction year of 1960 through 1964. A major body redesign along with an improved rear suspension design in 1965 ushered in the late model Corvairs and production of them continued up through the last car produced on May 14, 1969. So which group is best for the novice collector?

The answer to that question is very much a matter of taste. But I’ll go out on a limb and say that first time money might best be spent on a late model coupe or sedan with a two-carb engine. Of course that comment begs the question; How many carbs can a Corvair engine have? The answer: one, two or four. One carb Corvairs had a very early version of a turbocharging system for added power and performance. Starting in 1965 you could get more performance with an engine that had four carbs installed at the factory. While more power is great these cars come with special needs that if not addressed could lessen the “fun factor” for the newbie Corvair owner. So to keep it...
**The Best First-Time Corvair, Continued**

Simple I suggest a two-carb late model Corvair that would have either 95 or 110 horsepower. The advantage of the base 95 HP engine over the 110 is a lower compression ratio that might allow the owner to use a lower grade of fuel. Yes, the 110 and higher horsepower engines require premium grade fuels. Failure to use the correct octane level of fuel will either result in engine damage from pre-ignition, or the engine timing will have to be retarded to the point that you are back down to 95 HP or less. So keeping it simple stay with the two-carb version and save some money at the pump.

As for body style, of course the convertible has open air appeal. Prices would be higher for a drop-top 'Vair so it just depends on how many of your collector car dollars you want to spend. A coupe or sedan should require a smaller investment on your part. Prices for Corvairs vary widely. Sometimes asking prices vary even more widely! My suggestion would be to buy the best condition Corvair that you can find in your price range. I really enjoy finding Corvairs that need a friend and a hefty influx of cash to return them to road duty. This might prove to be a bad decision for the first-time buyer. If the car is running and driving well and there is no major body damage or signs of rust (or previous rust repair done badly) this could be your ticket to join the fun.

For even more fun joining a local club would be a smart move. There is also a national organization for Corvair enthusiasts - the Corvair Society of America, or CORSA. There are many local chapters here in the USA as well as Canada and even several overseas. Check them out at www.Corsa.org.

Parts availability is excellent for the Corvair hobbyist. The largest supplier of parts is Clark's Corvair Parts (www.Corsa.com). Cal and Joan Clark are located in Western Massachusetts and have been helping the hobby for many, many years. There are other Corvair parts vendors as well as several repair shops that specialize in these cars. In short you would have a source for parts and service and help if needed if you decide to buy a Corvair.

And last but not least how about the connection with our Museum? The Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Museum owns two Corvairs and has several others on loan and on display for you to check out. There are many Corvair artifacts and lots of pictures and other info available at the Museum. On odd months on the second Sunday afternoon the local Corvair club chapter meets at the Museum. Check with the Museum Staff for more information and updates.
President’s Report

This issue we have a story about one of the first businesses Crown Fender that was started in our Hudson side of the museum. We also have an article about the Willow Run Assembly plant along with a Corvair story.

Upcoming Events – We start our weekly Thursday Night Cruise Nights June 6th (weather permitting of course) through August 29th. We close the streets at 5:00 pm and start at 6:00 pm until 8:00 pm. This year our Orphan Car Show will be September 15th featuring the Corvairs.

The Corvairs are celebrating their 50th/60th anniversary. Sixty years since production of July 17th, 1959 and Fifty years since the last one rolled off the assembly line May 14th, 1969. The club is very excited about us having them as our feature.

The registration forms for the Orphan show have not been mailed out as of yet but if you would like to add your name to our mailing list for the show please call the museum at 734-482-5200.

Thank you for supporting the Ypsilanti Automobile Heritage Museum and hope to see you soon.
The Willow Run Assembly Plant
1956–1992

The Willow Run Assembly building, located on Tyler Road in Ypsilanti Township has been known under a variety of names, has had a storied history.

It was constructed in 1942 to store parts used in the production of the B-24 Bomber airplanes being built next door at the Willow Run Plant. After the war, Kaiser-Frazer bought the plant and used it as an administrative center for their design and engineering departments.

General Motors Corporation (GM) purchased the facility in 1954 and made it a part of the Chevrolet Truck Division. Trucks, as well as school buses, were there from 1956-57. The plant was expanded in 1958 to include two plants in one – Fisher Body and Chevrolet Motor Division. The Chevy Corvair began production in 1959 and was produced until 1969. Other Chevy brands like the Chevy 2 and Nova were produced through 1971. In 1974, Fisher Body and the Chevrolet Motor Division were combined and was called the GM Assembly Division.

The plant underwent an extensive makeover to produce the all-new front-wheel drive 1980 X-body automobiles. 1984 saw the Buick-Oldsmobile-Cadillac Group or BOC take control of the building and produced the Buick Skylark, Oldsmobile Delta 88, Pontiac Bonneville and Bonneville SSE auto for the next five years. The Chevrolet-Pontiac-Canada Group or CPC took over and began producing the Chevrolet Caprice that many police departments purchased.

GM upper management decided to move all Caprice production to its Arlington, Texas plant; and all vehicle production ended on May 27, 1992.
April 2019

The museum would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our Friends and Supporters. This past year your support has helped us to continue to enhance the Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Museum. As you may know it is a continuous process to maintain, improve the displays and the facility.

This past year we have been very busy with events and moving things around. The Tucker Car Club came earlier in the year and removed their movie prop vehicle to place on display at the AACA Museum in Hershey, PA. We now have a million dollar 1952 Hudson Hornet on display also known as “Doc” Hudson to the children. The Hornet was sold at auction in August and we are fortunate that the owner will continue to display it here. The Hudson Essex Terraplane Historical Society continues to support the National Hudson Car Company Museum.

We have also been host to several events. Thursday Cruise Nights from June thru August were great; this year we usually had 50 to 100 vehicles lined up on E. Cross Street. Thanks to Dwight Henderson our DJ each week playing the crowds favorite tunes. This year E. Cross Street was named one of the 5th Greatest Street in America from the American Planning Association. We were host for the presentation. In November Santa Claus came and had 125 children sit on his lap to make sure he knew what they wanted for being good this year.

Your generous donation in any amount will enable us to continue to upgrade, educate and preserve the automotive history of this community. Remember that we area a Federal 501c3 organization and your donation is tax deductible to the extent of the law. We wish you all a wonderful year and hope to see you in soon.

Sincerely,

Ron Bluhm
President of the Board
YAHM Board, Staff and Volunteers
MEMBERSHIP/CONTRIBUTION FORM

Join YAHM’s Circle of Friends Enjoy the following benefits
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Donations made to The Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Museum are tax deductible to the extent of the law.