A crowd of people gathered outside the courthouse in Tulsa, Oklahoma, in June 1957, to witness the burial of an unusual time capsule: a brand-new gold-and-white Plymouth Belvedere car. The city leaders explained: “In exactly 50 years time, this car will be unearthed to show the world who we were and how we lived in Tulsa in 1957.”

The automobile contained a flag, a city phone directory, an unpaid parking ticket, and the contents of a woman’s purse: bobby pins, a ladies’ powder compact, a plastic rain cap, several combs, a tube of lipstick, a pack of gum, a wad of tissues, $2.73 in bills and coins. Five gallons of gas were also included, in case the combustion engine became obsolete by 2007 and no fuel was available.