



The Society of Automotive Historians — Wisconsin Chapter
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THE SPARK

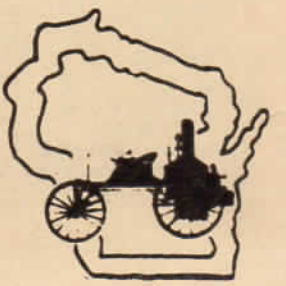
The Society of Automotive Historians
 Wisconsin Chapter

JUN 27 1984

IOLA '84
 OLD CAR SHOW • SWAP MEET
JULY 7-8



19



ROBERT J. GARY
 1316 Fourth Avenue
 Stevens Point,
 Wisconsin 54481

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JUN 27 1984

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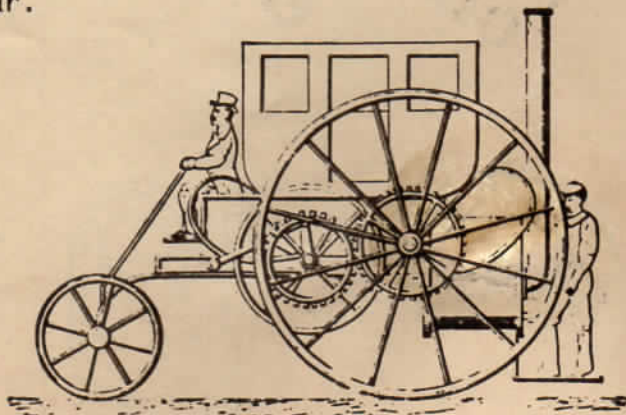
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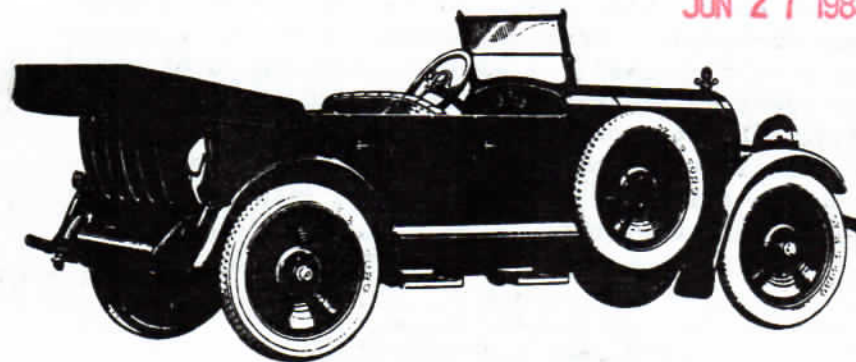
- ANNUAL MEETING -
WISCONSIN CHAPTER
SOCIETY OF AUTOMOTIVE HISTORIANS

The annual meeting and election of officers of WSAH will be held in the Krause Publishing Company main building at 1 PM Saturday, July 7th as one of the many highlights of the Iola Annual Car Show and Swap Meet. The Board of Director's meeting will precede the election of officers and general business meeting which -as in the past- is open to all members, prospective members and guests.

Featured speaker will be Beverly Rae Kimes, internationally known as one of America's foremost automotive researchers, writers and editors. Presently a freelancer, she has authored hundreds of articles as well as numerous books. Prior to freelancing, Beverly was associated with AUTOMOBILE QUARTERLY for eighteen years, having started her career there upon graduation from college. Currently, Beverly is executive editor of publications for the Classic Car Club of America and is working on another book in addition to several research assignments now well on their way to completion.

Ms. Kimes will stress the importance of recording and publicizing the contribution the State of Wisconsin has made to the automobile industry, including a detailed history of cars built in this state. Everyone interested in automotive history is urged to attend.

JUN 27 1984



MUMBLINGS AT THE TOP
 -- also known as --
 PRESIDENT'S PARAGRAPHS

Summer is upon us, the Mid-winter is history, and once again Midwest car hobbyists thoughts turn to Iola. Your officers are putting together a program that we hope will stir your interest. Our meeting will be held at the main Krause Publications building at 1:00 PM, July 7th.

There are some important matters to be discussed and I draw your attention to the brief review of the Mid-winter business meeting which concludes this column as a guide for your thoughts. Our discussion revolved around what is right and what is wrong within WSAH and ways of strengthening the organization, increasing our member base and improving our ability to serve our membership. It is my hope that at Iola we will be able to further discuss the future of WSAH and take affirmative action. Once again, I implore each of you to make your feelings known, to expand upon or add to the results of the Janesville meeting and, most of all, to let your officers know what you want WSAH TO BE.

Members attending the Janesville business meeting expressed the previously noted concern regarding how WSAH can best serve its member's interests and needs. These goals seem best served by retaining, maintaining and expanding the membership. Communication and inter-action seem to be excellent tools to this end.

Not being a driving club, we are somewhat hampered in publicizing WSAH. We're not visible enough at car functions. Several methods of becoming better known were discussed. A logical starting point would be to approach existing bodies of historians, including submitting WSAH news to the Wisconsin Historical Society's publication. This would tend to expose the existence of our group to interested people within the state.



There are also many factories within the state with some degree of automotive contact, many of which may have official or unofficial historians, all of whom should be made aware of our existence. They and interested acquaintances with company or area interests may find us a valuable resource, and vice versa.

The above are pretty much things that should be handled at officer level, but we do not pretend to know of all such individuals or groups, companies, etc., to be added to a mailing list. You can help greatly in compiling such a listing, or go out and make the contact yourself.

Our membership should also be encouraged to explore possible potential members on their own, as many of you have done. Iola is a unique opportunity to get others involved, so why not plan to "bring a new member to Iola!"

Plans are also underway to provide a flyer to be included in the Iola "goodie bag" provided to car show patrons. Announcements on the PA system are also planned.

One other item needs mentioning at this time, it is again time for our elections, and I have appointed Matt Joseph (7728 Martinsville Rd., Cross Plains, WI 53528) to chair a nomination and election committee to coordinate and conduct them. Remember that we were all newcomers to WSAH not so very long ago, so don't rule yourself out of the running just because you may be a newcomer or have not yet served as an officer. Those are the best reasons in the world to step forward, in fact! Why not contact Matt and nominate yourself (or another member) for an office?

Wishing you all a happy hobby season, and looking forward to seeing you all at Iola, I am

Your humble servant,

Wally
 Wally Wray, Pres. WSAH

BY

PHIL HALL

This year the annual mid-winter meeting of the Wisconsin Chapter of the Society of Automotive Historians was moved to spring in hopes of attracting more members and prospective members. It was held April 27 and 28 and featured a tour of the GMAD Janesville plant, where Chevrolet Cavaliers, Cadillac Cimarrons plus Chevrolet and GMC full-sized trucks are built.

Those present thoroughly enjoyed the tour and the panel discussion that followed, but unfortunately, attendance was well below projected levels and the already endangered chapter treasury took a severe blow. All the bills have not been tallied yet, but losses were well over the \$100 mark.

The spring meeting was organized by Wally Wray, Matt Joseph and Phil Hall and for the most part went off as scheduled.

The first activity was a meeting at the main entrance on a warm, windy, Friday afternoon at the GMAD plant on the south side of Janesville.

A small, but enthusiastic group gathered and were met by G.M.'s Phil Gottschalk, who took time off from his busy schedule as public relations director of the plant to personally guide the extended tour, which concentrated on the modernized passenger car production.

He began with an interesting talk on the history of General Motor's operations in Janesville, going back to the time when it was announced in 1918 that a Samson tractor plant was to be built. In 1923 it was converted to Chevrolet cars and trucks and remained that way ever since, with many changes along the way.

Production was of course interrupted for World War II. Oldsmobile took it over and made cannon shells. Car and truck production resumed in 1946. A second shift for cars was made in 1953 and a truck second shift was added ten years later.



GMAD (General Motors Assembly Division) took over the plant in 1968. In 1981, production of the full-sized Chevrolets, the plant's mainstay, stopped and the plant that produced them was closed between October of that year and June of 1982 while it was converted over to the highly automated production of the Cavalier and Cimarron.

As demand for the Subcompact cars was not great at the start, only one shift was called back. Since then, however, the Cavalier has become the most popular Chevrolet and the plant now is at full production on two shifts plus Saturdays and may set an all-time production record in 1984.

Truck production continued during the passenger car shutdown and it was just announced that GM is spending \$50 million to convert the truck production over to a new model that will be introduced in 1988.

The tour began with Phil Gottschalk escorting the group through the passenger car side. The production is run by computers and there is much automation. In some areas, robots and computerized machines handle the body production and there is not a single worker around, only maintenance personnel.

Gottschalk pointed out that the automation was completed without any significant loss in the number of personnel at the plant. He noted that the skill level rose with more emphasis on technically trained maintenance personnel. The main benefit of the increased automation was exact quality, which has been raised significantly with the change.

The plant is extremely clean and is operated under the "just in time" system where parts arrive just before they are needed. Janesville's plant does not manufacture parts, it is strictly assembly.

Members noted that the Cavaliers and Cimarrons came mixed down the assembly lines, with seemingly no special attention given to either, although the

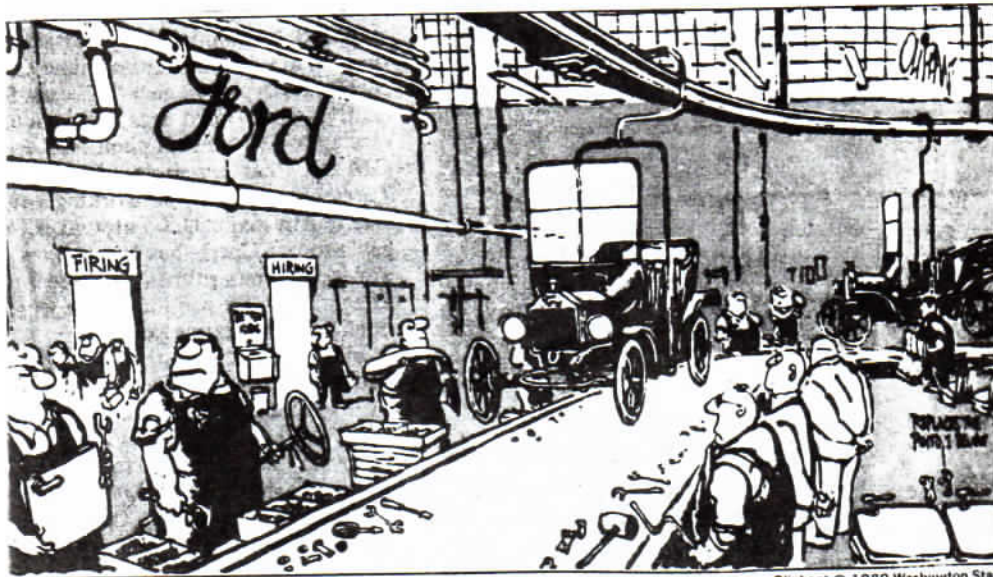
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Cimarron had nicer touches in many areas, most notably the interior.

The tour concluded just as the first shift was getting out, but all members had little trouble blending with the rush hour traffic that coincided with their departure.

Stormy weather was forecasted, but all Janesville got was wind. However, it was learned that tornadoes hit the eastern part of the state and did considerable damage. It was probably the reason new member, Roger Lalk and his wife, left for home in Oshkosh and missed the rest of the weekend.

The second part of the weekend took place at Brittany Square, on the northeast side of Janesville, Manager Walter Bancroft was very understanding, despite having a turnout only a small fraction of what was originally discussed. He cancelled a band for Friday night and turned his gigantic ex-A & P converted food store over to our small group.

After dinner a panel discussion was held discussing the future of the American Automobile, based on information we saw at the plant and other input.



Oliphant © 1980 Washington Star

er, smaller, competitive, fuel-efficient... I think Research and Development may have done it again!

9
On the panel was Professor Andy Frank of the University of Wisconsin, Phil Gottschalk, WSAH's Bob Gary, who is an automotive consultant and WSAH board member Matt Joseph, who chaired it.

Andy Frank led things off with an interesting presentation on autos of the future, concentrating on use of energy in a fuel-tight situation, which he indicated is inevitable. He detailed his past projects which included a hybrid car with a small engine and electric motor in 1971 and extensive work with a fly-wheel propulsion system which was adapted to a small car, a 1976 Pinto.

Gottschalk, who has been with the Janesville plant since May of 1963, used his extensive experience to show how quality on domestic cars had improved over the years, especially with the advent of the new automated production line.

Bob Gary dealt with other changes going on at GM and noted it shut down its new Lake Orion plant when quality did not come up to standards.

After the discussion ended, there were questions, which ranged to the task of catching up with the Japanese, some less than good domestic cars of the past and how robotics have not speeded up the production of cars, but rather slowed it down.

The meeting broke up just before 10 P.M.

Some of those attending returned for Saturday morning's meeting, which was to proclaim the Chapter's decision on the future of the domestic car. Well, that conclusion was never reached, as the discussion was far ranging and never really concentrated on the subject. David Babb's arrival in a 1958 Edsel was a show stopper and after the car was looked at, attention turned to a business meeting.

The meeting broke up around 11 A.M. and it was agreed to meet again in Iola at the car show in July.

From MATT JOSEPH - WSAH Board Member

At the April meeting in Janesville, WSAH member Tony Hossain told me that he had taken a new job as Associate Editor of Collectible Automobile. Tony had, for many years, worked on various publications of the Krause group in Iola, Wisconsin.

Well, I hadn't heard of Collectible Automobile and when Tony told me that it was new, my first reaction was a yawn. There are a lot of new car publications these days. Then Tony showed me a copy of the premier issue of this new publication. It's stunning. The graphics are good, the articles well-written, and the topical selection is great. It was hard to believe that I was looking at the first issue of a publication. Of course, Tony is someone you would expect to be involved with a quality publication.

As Tony and I discussed this new venture for him and for the Consumer Guide publishing people, he was kind enough to offer to extend the WSAH members an offer of a free-plus-postage copy of Collectible Automobile. We have, with his permission, reproduced an advertisement and coupon with this offer in The Spark. We are not doing this as advertising, but to make a great offer available to our members. By the way, Collectible Automobile is available for subscription at an introductory rate of \$17.00 for six issues a year.

We wish Tony good luck in his new connection. From the look of things, he is already enjoying good luck.

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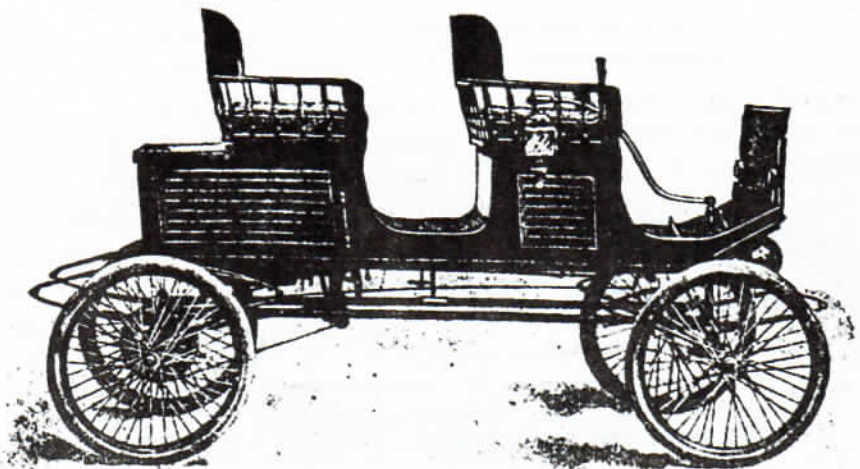
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1900 - 1902
MILWAUKEE STEAMER
MILWAUKEE AUTOMOBILE CO.
by- Walter E. Wray

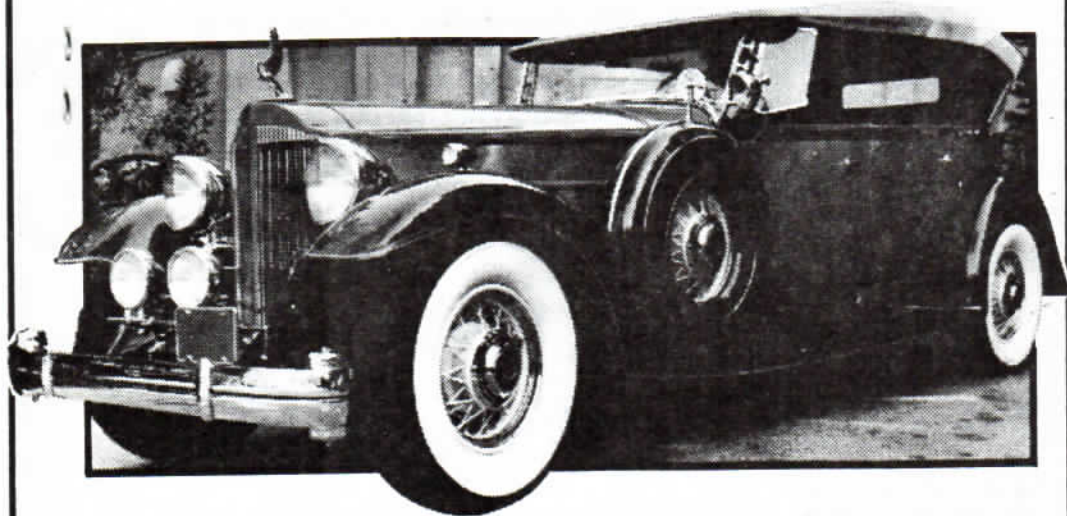
Most turn-of-the-century steam cars were near carbon-copies of the Stanley and the Locomobile. The Milwaukee Steamer, Wisconsin's only native mass-produced steam car, didn't stray from the pattern. Unlike some, however, one of its creators went on to become known in other automotive ventures: W. H. McIntyre who later became the power behind the Kiblinger high-wheeler, the McIntyre auto and the Imp cyclecar.

During the Milwaukee company's short life-span, five models were offered, ranging from the typical light-weight Stanhope of Stanley type, also known as the runabout style, to larger versions with increased seating capacity. Prices ranged from \$750 for the basic transportation model to \$1300 for the larger units. Larger boilers seem to have been used as vehicle size increased, and all tools and equipment were apparently included in the list price.

The light buggy-like bodies were mounted on three full-elliptic springs, one transverse, one in front, which were in turn secured to the running gear. The latter was composed primarily of 1½" seamless steel tubing, with forged joints riveted and brazed in place. Front and rear axles of the same material were of truss design, and quite strong. All the steering mechanism, plus differential and brakes were mounted on this unit.



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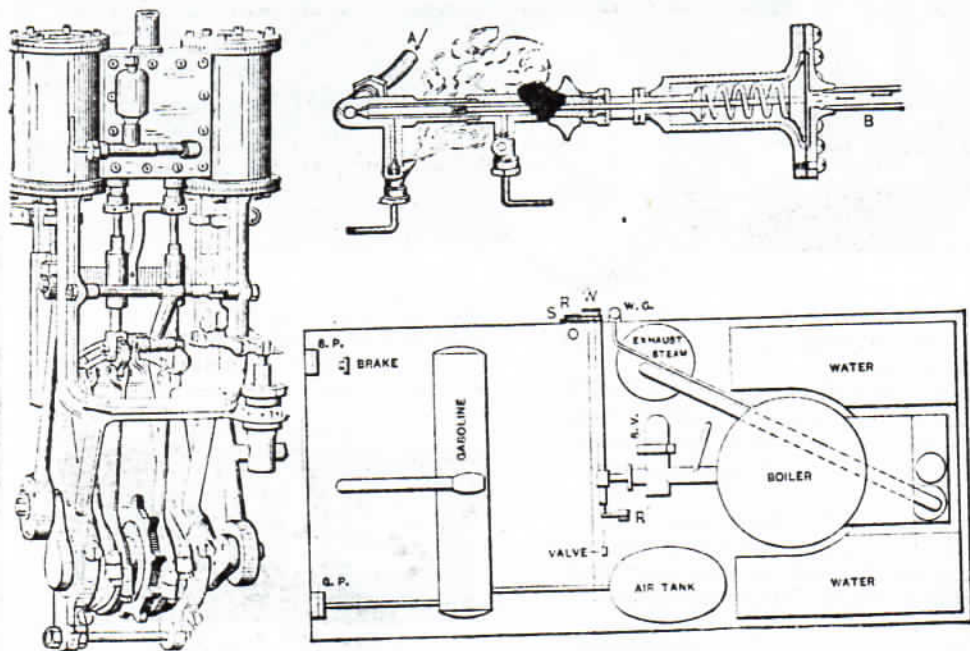
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14 To the casual observer, it might appear that plenty of luggage space was available within the boxy body. Not so, as every inch was crammed with machinery. Directly under the seat was a marine style vertical 2-cylinder double-acting engine that drove the rear axle via chain. A single brake drum occupied the same housing as the open differential. By calculations of the day, the $2\frac{1}{2} \times 3\frac{1}{2}$ inch B & S engine turned out 6-7 HP at 400 RPM at approximately 180 lbs. steam pressure. Top speed was in the area of 25-30 MPH.



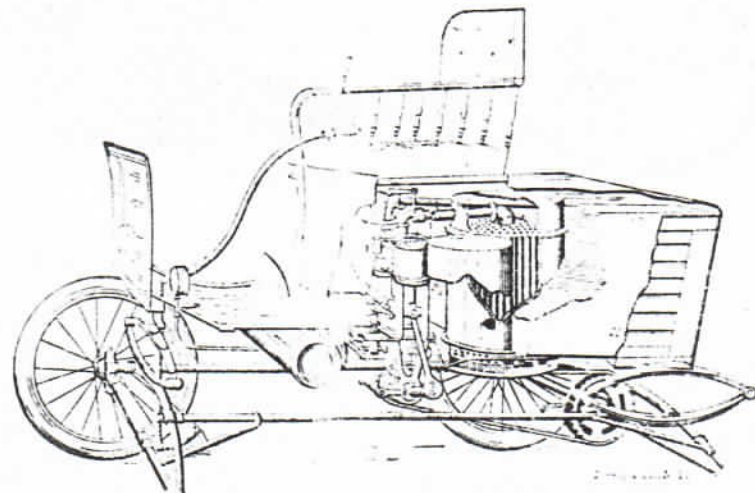
Nestled behind the engine was a boiler 18"x12" high, which was partially surrounded at the rear and sides by a semi-horseshoe shaped water tank. A self regulating gasoline fired burner was below, an air tank to one side, a steam muffler on the other, and controls, plumbing, etc., all around. The gas tank was below the footboards. Fuel economy wasn't spectacular by today's standards at 10-12 MPG. But gas was cheap, and gas engines weren't at this point very efficient either.

Steam power was considered the norm at the turn of the century, and most laymen found it easier to understand than the simplest of internal combustion engines.

Perhaps a few words here would help today's reader understand such a car's power system.

The boiler, known as a "locomotive type" generated steam by passing hot combustion gases through hundreds of small tubes running top to bottom through the water. This type boiler was able to store a great deal of power for reserve use, but took quite a while to make steam from a cold start. Flash type boilers, as used on the White steam cars, used a steam-on-demand system, by passing water through a long coiled single tube exposed to the burner's heat. It reaches a point where it bursts into steam, and then passes into the engine as needed. Chief disadvantage to this type is the extra control complexities such a system demands, plus a slight lag between throttling and acceleration.

Engines of the type used in the Milwaukee had been in use for many years in small steam launches - hence the "marine type" designation. Double acting refers to the fact that steam enters first one end of the cylinder, and then the other. In this way the piston is pushed back and forth, and with the addition of a second cylinder at 90° phase, is always self-starting. No flywheel is needed either, though in operation, the vehicle's inertia acts to smoothen the power pulses.



Because there is no "Otto cycle" to worry about - the steam engine doesn't "breathe" like an internal combustion engine - every stroke in a double-acting type is a power stroke. A two-cylinder engine therefore, yields as many power impulses per revolution as an 8 cyl. internal combustion engine. The valve design allows one end of the cylinder to exhaust as the other takes in steam.

As might be suspected, this combination of power in a light vehicle produced astounding acceleration; that is, until the steam reserve is used up, at which time speed drops dramatically. The potency of steam was demonstrated by a Stanley racing car in 1906 when it set a world speed record of better than 127 MPH.

But the Milwaukee Steamer didn't last long. First produced in 1900, the company folded in 1902.

Note: The illustrations used in this article are of the almost identical Locomobile steam car of the same time period as similar material on the Milwaukee Steamer was not available and is probably non-existent.



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THE WISCONSIN BUILT COMMANDER NE' OGREN •
CONTINUING SPARK'S REPORTS ON WISCONSIN BUILT
VEHICLES

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-COMMANDER-
STILLBORN SCION OF THE OGREN

Keith Marvin

What's in a name?

When Shakespeare coined this poser it is more than likely that he was unable to envision its popularity through the ages. The question is at once thought-provoking and ever presents a challenge for some sort of answer.

When directing the phrase into automotive channels, we can become selective as to the thousands of names which have graced motor cars over the last three-quarters of a century and ponder the relative value of a name in selling the product. Take Maxwell. The car sold well enough under its original name. It sold even better after it became the Chrysler Four and better still after its rebirth as the Plymouth. Kenosha, Wisconsin's bid for a slice of the market seemed to fare nicely regardless of whether its product was marketed as a Rambler, Jeffery, Nash or the innocuous "American Motors" label. Essex weathered the storm after becoming the Terraplane and there are many others. It is doubtful whether Rolls-Royce would have sold as well under a different name, although, to the contrary, Klink, Koppel, Kolowrat and Neskov-Mumperow all seem to have had their coterie of satisfied owners.

If then we follow the hypothesis that euphony is an important factor in the sales of motor cars judging from such names as Rolls-Royce and Hispano-Suiza, what about such cars as Rickenbacker or Studebaker? The names seem awkward. Yet, they did well enough in their own time.

The Commander is a case in point. Some five years before the Studebaker boys in South Bend adopted the name as a model designation, the Commander was announced in Chicago as a make of its own quite devoid of any Studebaker connections. It was announced quietly with a minimum of fanfare but this is understandable as its logical parent, the Ogren, was broke, badly bent and nearly out of the automobile picture after a checkered and highly uneven career of manufacturing a beautifully designed and high priced assembled luxury car. That the Commander was probably the most lavishly equipped and probably the best bargain on the automobile market at the time mattered little. It was simply a case of too little too late.

To understand why the chemistry of successful nomenclature metamorphosis—the Ogren to the Commander in this instance—failed, we must study the history of the Ogren automobile itself and the man who spawned it.

Hugo W. Ogren was a born designer and engineer who combined his love of racing with precision, quality and a flair for aesthetic design. Unlike Ford or Olds, he felt that there was ample room in the contemporary automobile roster for a car which would be the best, regardless of price, and for sale to those who recognized such worth and buy accordingly.

And for a time Ogren was right. A former maker of racing bicycles and a bike racer himself, he began building cars by hand. These included not only "high class family cars of individual character," according to a factory prospectus of the time, "but also powerful speed cars."

"These cars were built as individual, high character jobs, for men who could afford a high class car of individuality," ran the copy. It didn't say anything about women!

In 1911, Ogren became affiliated with the Colby Motor Company of Mason City, Iowa and designed the car bearing that name. A year later he assumed the post as manager of the Chicago branch.*1 At the same time he began building a series of one-off racing cars which carried his initials as their name.

The Colby failed in 1913 but at the same time Ogren was actively engaged in setting up his own business completely divorced from the exclusive building of "H.W.O." racers and in the summer of 1914 set up the Ogren Manufacturing Co. at Chicago.*2

For more than four years the operation must have been carried out as a hit or miss business. Apparently racing cars constituted almost the entire production although an Ogren touring car was illustrated in the automotive press in 1915 and both a touring car and a roadster were discussed with illustrations in similar coverage two years later.*3

In January 1916, the company was reorganized as the Ogren Motor Works and its base of operations was moved to Waukegan, Ill. At this time it was announced that production would be increased.*4 The writer has been unable to ascertain that such was the case.

Came January 1917 and a small announcement by the company stated that Ogren had been building about 50 cars per year since 1912.*5 Since the company hadn't been organized until the Fall of 1914 this seems doubtful but it is also true that in those days most automobile magazines printed whatever material was sent to them.

By 1919, it was reported that the All-American truck was being built in the Ogren factory.*6 The All-American was probably not the only other motor vehicle being built there, although I'm hard put to name any other cars or trucks which might have been using Ogren's facilities. It appears that Ogren was already having a hard time making ends meet and that other lines of motor vehicles were using the factory on a subleasing basis. If this is true, it may explain how Ogren lasted as long as it did, at least on paper.

How long All-American assembled trucks in the Ogren factory is a moot point but for that matter so is All-American. According to THE WORLD'S COMMERCIAL VEHICLES by G. Nicholas Georgano (Temple Press, London 1965), the company was in existence between 1918 and

1927. THE AMERICAN CAR SINCE 1775 (Automobile Quarterly, 1971) lists the dates as 1918 to 1923 and BRANHAM'S AUTOMOBILE REFERENCE BOOK for 1924 listed the make as failing in 1921. Be that as it may, although the truck listed its Chicago address as 6501 Grank Avenue, there seems to be little doubt that the actual assembly was being carried out in Waukegan. Not long afterward, All-American's operations shifted to the Fremont Motors Corp., of Fremont, Ohio, which built, or was supposed to have built, the Fremont automobile for export. *7

In August, an announcement with a Milwaukee dateline, appeared, heralding the gladsome news that Ogren had been incorporated in that city as the Ogren Motor Car Company with \$500,000 capital and would build a factory to "manufacture the Ogren passenger car,"*8 the implication here being that any previous pleasure cars bearing the Ogren emblem were few and far between. "Details are not ready to be divulged," the squib concluded.

One month later, it was stated that regular production was expected by October 1st *9 and in December the company announced that the entire output for 1920 was contracted for and that full capacity production would be 400 cars.*10 At least one source believes that some 50 units were put together before the end of 1919 and that this marked Ogren's largest production in a given year. *11

But if these cars were built in 1919, for some unexplained reason it must have been felt at the Ogren headquarters that such didn't constitute "production" as in July 1920 the company was reorganized with H. S. Ogren, president; Elmer Freolk, vice-president, and Fred G. Smith, secretary and treasurer. The "first 'made in Milwaukee' car will become a fact when production is started," said the announcement.*12 This, apparently applied to the 'new' Ogren car as no reference was made to either Chicago or Waukegan operations.

Despite all this, there WAS production at Ogren in 1920 and cars were being sold. Specifications included a 132-inch wheelbase, Beaver 6-cylinder engine with a 3½ x 5½-inch bore and stroke and a cubic inch

displacement of 303 inches. The L-shaped engine developed 65 brake horsepower. Carburetor and ignition were by Rayfield and Bosch respectively. Wheels were optional with wooden artilleries generally gracing the closed models and wire or disc the open ones. Tires were 33 x 5.00 and the four-passenger touring car sold for \$3,500, other models included a roadster, coupe and sedan.

The line was unchanged for 1921 excepting a two-inch increase on the wheelbase and a jump in price, due to the recession, which placed the seven-passenger touring-car at \$3,900. In May, readers of automobile publications were regaled by an illustration of the current model *13 and about the same time a handsome catalogue was published.

The clouds were gathering though, whether because of insufficient production and sales, the result of the recession or just plain lack of demand, possibly a combination of all three. In August the creditors met and shortly thereafter the company was in their hands. *14

One might deduce from all this that the handwriting was on the wall and probably it was, although the officials at Ogren were ignoring it as much as possible.

In 1922, the company published another lavish and complete catalogue, actually a sort of revamped 1921 issue. A number of specification changes were also announced including the substitution of a Continental 6-T engine which upped the brake horsepower to 70 @ 2400 revolutions per minute. This substitution of engines was not so much the abandonment of one and adoption of the other as it was the phasing out of the early Beaver in favor of the Continental as, indeed, the Continental had been listed as early as the 1921 catalogue. It is the opinion of the writer that the Continentals were ordered after the supply of Beavers on hand became exhausted. An interesting sidelight to the replacement of the power plant was that the engines were contracted by Ogren with the agreement that the engine could not be used in any automobile selling

for less than \$4,000.*15 This is particularly interesting as the lowest priced touring models sold for less than that figure.

In June, what was probably the last bit of Ogren promotion appeared showing a truly handsome disc-wheeled touring-car.*16 It was all Ogren- of that there could be no doubt. What made the car unusual was the presence of the "Whyte Motorcontrol", a unique gadget which placed the instrument cluster in a container within the steering column. The advantage of this, crowed the promotion, was that it enabled the driver to gaze at and have access to the spark and throttle levers, horn button, clock, speedometer, motometer, oil gauge, ammeter, ignition switch and starter without turning his head.

If this seems daringly innovative for Ogren, I suppose it was - in a way, but the Whyte Motorcontrol wasn't exclusive with the make at all. Actually, it was being sold at the time as an accessory and, if the truth be told, it simply never caught on to the public fancy. We may give Ogren full credit, I think, for marketing its car with the Motorcontrol as standard equipment.

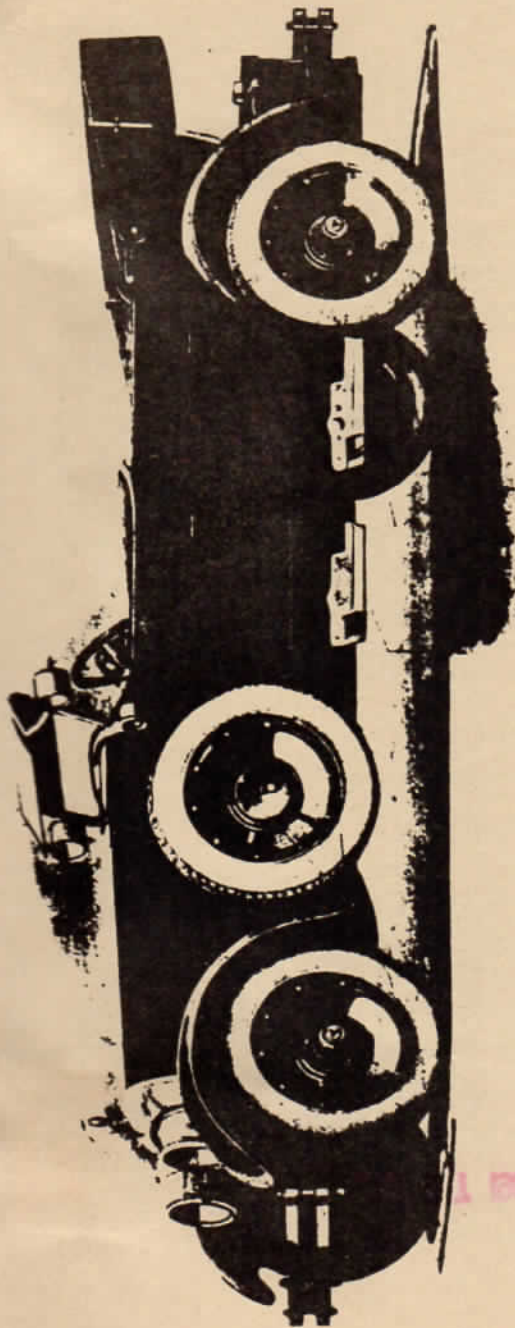
I say "its car" literally because I think it highly probable that this device was attached to only one car and equally probable that this one Phaeton may have been the only complete car the Ogren promoters had on hand at the time.

At this stage of the tale it is time to leave Ogren and turn to Commander and things happened fast.

It became apparent that the time had come to phase Ogren, or the Ogren name at least, out of the picture and strike out for a new image. Consequently, the decision was made to once again reorganize the company - or what was left of it - and attempt to start anew under a new name. Commander Motors was therefore formed to take over the Ogren and build the Commander car. Contemporary promotion played up the fact that the Commander was also designed by H. W. Ogren. It needn't have used the word 'also' for the Commander was nothing more than the Ogren car with another name.

To be continued in our next issue

COMMANDER MOTORS CORPORATION
FORTY-NINE WALL STREET
NEW YORK



The Automobile Without an Equal
The Most Completely Equipped Car on the Market