

Horseless Carriages

By Ernest D. Wichels

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This past week we learned that another American-made automobile passes from the scene. Studebaker has been a by-word for over 60 years. But this has happened to automobiles in America just about 5,100 times in the past 65 years! We are indebted to Manager Charles Monahan of the local Calif. State AA Office for an informative pamphlet on American-made automobiles—from Abbott (1909) to Zust (1908).

We do not intend to list 5,000 names in this small column, nor is it possible to list all early Vallejo car owners. Today's car market—domestic-wise—is dominated by four major producers. Many, especially the younger generation, will certainly not recognize some 90 per cent of the automobile names which have covered the field.

FIRST ADVERTISEMENT

Vallejo's first newspaper ad for automobiles was in 1909, when the Vallejo Carriage Works, 739 Marin St., agents for Studebaker, said they had a Chalmers to sell. In the same year, J. S. Brereton of 214 Georgia, advertised "7-passenger Thomas Flyers for rent."

The blacksmith shops began giving way to honest-to-goodness garages by 1913, with such names as Freudenberg & Kennedy, Hellerman Bros., Star Garage, and T. D. Jones.

By 1923, 40 years ago, local dealers included Rump & Kennedy; Model Garage; Vallejo Garage; Kern Motor Co.; C. P. Hughes, Acme Garage; Coronado's, Dodgin & Dalwigk, and H. L. Freudenberg.

In the early days, with the unpaved highways and mechanical defects in cars, something happened to these go-devils every week, but the first serious wreck is recorded on May 15, 1910, when W. W. Weir with Henry Jamison as a passenger, hit a pole at the "5-mile House," the place on the Napa Highway where the 4-lane divided road commences.

The first sanctioned race in Vallejo was a feature of the 4th of July Celebration in 1918. The route was on York, from the top of the stairs, over the hill to Monterey St. Robert Brownlie drove a Stearns, and George "Happy" Dahlwigk drove Irv Whitthorne's Hudson. Brownlie won; perhaps the weight handicap did it, because Whitthorne's

Hudson was the first bona-fide sedan in Vallejo.

EARLY OWNERS OF OLD CARS

Some of the “early-birds” are still here and running. Mrs. J. G. McPherson has an S-G-V; William Elliott Jr., a Model T. Ford; A. G. Freudenberg, the first Buick ever sold in Vallejo. It was in 1910 that H. L. Freudenberg, the deal of all local dealers when the firm retired in 1954 after 45 years of service, sold his first Buick from a catalog. In later years he repurchased it as a museum piece.

Early buyers included Model T's, Buicks, Studebakers, Chevrolets, etc., but we'd like to pass on to little-known names of today. The first Navy car on Mare Island was an electric Autocar (1913). We think of push-button operation as something recent, but Comdr. Paul Fretz USN, Mare Island, had an Owens Magnetic (1914) which did just that. Capt. See USN, Mare Island, had an air-cooled Franklin, as did Dr. J. C. Magill and many others in Vallejo. Clarence Knott, a Briscoe.

A Pope-Hartford was owned by Fireman Jake Stiltz; Al Ryder, Rose Massey, and scores of others had Maxwells. William Elliott, Sr., had a Velie, and White Bros. Jewelers operated one of several Stanley Steamers. Harry Aden had Stutz Bearcat, and T. V. Collins an Apperson Jack Rabbit. William Best had a Columbia; Frank Carr one of the many EMF's running around town, while Louis Claus had a companion car, the Flanders. Vic Sikora drove a Cleveland, and Eddie Rehn a Chandler; Carlisle Roe was a staunch advocate of the Haynes. Jim Forbush and Bert 'Diamond were early owners of the Stephens, and Pete Kaarsberg was one of many Auburn owners. The status-cars of the yesteryear included the Winton Six, Pierce Arrow, Stevens-Duryea, Case, Kissel, Locomobile and Packard.

The roll-call of automobile makes has interesting sidelights. Between 1900 and 1910 the following were produced: Perfect, Dependable, Safety, O.K. and Hazard. Some early manufacturers must have had visions of cars taking off into space, hence these names: Rocket, Sun, Star, Astra, Moon (very popular in Vallejo), Comet, Lone Star, Mars, Orion, Meteor.

There was a Rotary car (1904-05) and a Rotarian (1921). In 1905 there was an Annhauser-Busch, and a little later a Sears. Bird names have always been popular—like the Lark and Thunderbird of today. Such names as Eagle, Oriole, Finch, Bird, Bluebird, Duck, Black Crow, Petrel. Likewise, autos were named for animals—Lion (there were several here). Fox, Wolf, Wolverine, Beaver, Buffalo, Bull Dog, and others.

PRESENT DAY VETERANS

Names not so rare, which represent cars driven by hundreds of Vallejoans now living, are Dorris, Dort, Reo, Jewett, Whippet, Cole, Saxon, Sterling-Knight, Dixie, Graham, Hupmobile, Lafayette, Brush, Triumph, Thomas, Stoddard-Dayton, Ferris, Cort, Flint, White Steamer.

Most of today's cars bear names which go back to the beginning. In many, but in not all cases, the names have belonged to the same car over the years. A Ford was marketed in 1893; Cadillac, 1902; Buick, 1903; Chevrolet, 1912; Rambler, 1900, Dodge, 1906. There was an Imperial in 1900, and a Mercury in 1904. An Oldsmobile electric sold in 1896. Someone made a Plymouth in 1907 and a Continental in 1906.

There isn't enough space for the other 5,018 names!

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