

CIRCUS BROUGHT FIRST AUTOMOBILE TO LA GRANDE

STEAM-DRIVEN
VEHICLE GAVE
CITY A SHOCK

"Horseless Carriage" Actually Caused More Excitement Than the Animals; Burning Desire to Own a Machine Born in Breasts of Many

First Automobile Owned by La Grande Came When Dr. N. Molitor Electrified Town by Bringing Home a One-Lunged Rambler; Whiteman and Son Made Their Own and It Ran; Other Machines Followed Rapidly as Interest Grew.

A circus brought the first automobile ever seen in La Grande—sometime in the late eighties or the early nineties, old-timers are uncertain which. It was a steam-driven vehicle so different in appearance from modern motor cars that the younger generation might meet it in a museum and never suspect that it bore them any relation.

The "horseless carriage" came on the train and after a good deal of patient coaxing was finally driven under its own power to the circus grounds amid the incredulous gasps of the lookers-on.

The scene must have rivaled Robert Fulton's first trip with the "Clermont."

One imagines the blazing posters that advertised the coming wonder from the side of the blacksmith shop; the arguments of skeptical fellows knotted in the saloons and the livery stable doors, and the marveling questions of small boys to whom the prospect was as good as "Arabian Nights" come true.

Throngs Viewed New Invention.

And at last when the great day came! Problem in any La Grande home that morning. Every one was out at daybreak and down at the tracks to see the circus unload. The monkeys, and even the elephant, languished for attention as men, women and children crowded around the spluttering mystery. Some of them shook their heads and labeled it another sword-swallowing trick. But here and there someone felt his blood tingle and his fingers itch at the sight and the sound and the touch of the machine, and he knew that he would never rest until he owned one of the things.

Most of the potential motorists born in that moment waited a long time to be satisfied. No automobiles were owned in La Grande until 1905, when Dr. N. Molitor electrified the community by bringing home a little one-lunged rambler, a seven-horse-powered rig that steered with a tiller.

Made Automobile.

Then Joe Whiteman and his son, Clarence, undertook to make them a machine. They bought parts of old gasoline engines, sending away for what they could not get around here, and piecing out with makeshift substitutions. Strongly enough, the result was a car that would run. In fact, it made one or two trips as far as Hot Lake and home.

James Smith and Claire Crawford, an attorney, brought some of the first Oldsmobiles into the country. The lawyer's car was a brilliant green.

"I never see a kid writing on someone's shiny automobile without remembering what I did to Crawford's emerald pride one day," laughs Chase Bohnenkamp. "It was standing in the barn, its polished back panel thickly coated with dust. So I picked up a broom and vigorously swept it off."

Dr. W. T. Phay's little four-cylinder Oldsmobile was one of the earliest motor spectacles. There were still no tops or doors on the cars in those days, but his was a natty outfit, with an artistically curved dash.

Electrified Community.

It finally fell into the hands of George Ruckman, a farmer who lived near Alsea. Ruckman electrified the community when he used to drive up and down the village streets 10 to 15 miles an hour, bounding recklessly over the wooden crosswalks. Footsteps would shake their heels—and probably someone's teeth—at him, declaring that he ought to be arrested for speeding.

There were no ordinances governing the operating of motor vehicles at first. Not even a license was necessary. But a little later the legislature enacted a law requiring the purchase of a license at the cost of one dollar.

In 1905 the W. H. Bohnenkamp family bought a Ford-Tribune two-cylinder car. They had the agency for the make, but never made any sales.

"A Good Little Boat."

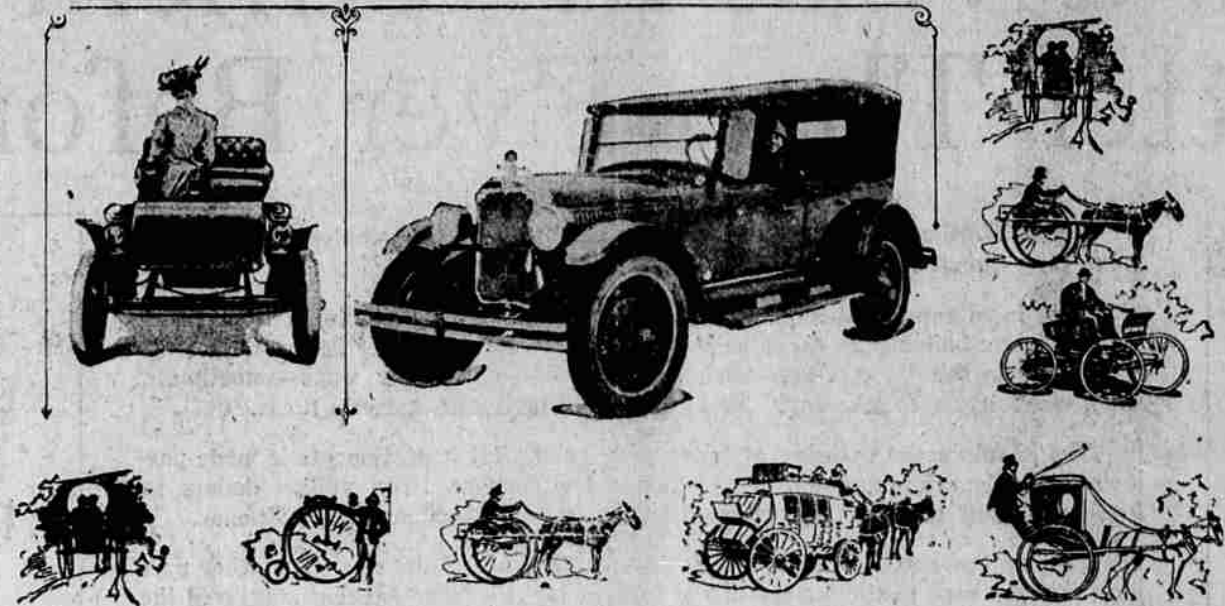
"It was a good little boat," the brothers recall fondly, "and always brought us back."

Jay Van Buren was the first automobile dealer in the vicinity. He had the agency for the Ford, and sold the first model of that make that ever came into Oregon to Bird L. Lewis.

When Mr. Lewis drew him a check for the full purchase price—people paid when they bought them in those days—Van Buren had it cashed in gold, and kept the \$225 in gleaming coins stacked on his counter all afternoon.

Farmers Hostile.

As automobiles became a little more practical and started ventur-

PROGRESS OF TRANSPORTATION HITS STRIDE;
QUARTER CENTURY CHANGES AUTO MODELS

It is a far cry from the automobile of 1900 to the modern, luxurious, high-powered, mile-eating machine of today and the advances have been rapid throughout the quarter of a century. Above is pictured one of the most stylish models of 1900 and alongside is one of the 1926 automobiles, representative of the average car. La Grande, like other cities in America, has kept pace with the development. In the early days the first primitive machines graced the county's dirt roads and nowadays the latest things that ingenuity and skill can produce roll in ever increasing numbers over the paved and macadamized highways of this district.

Carr's place. Once we went up in the tree for Christmas dinner, and talked about it for a week afterward."

Richley had the first four-cylinder car that came to La Grande. It was a Cadillac, and to most automobiles fans it represented the climax of motor possibilities. Admirers by the scores used to flock around it whenever it appeared on the streets.

L. C. Smith, after working for a couple of years in the Van Buren repair shop, started a place of his own in 1905—the first automobile shop to be established in this part of the country. He began selling Fords the next year, and has the longest sales record in Eastern Oregon, and with one exception, in the whole state.

Clarence Whiteman's place across from the Silver Grill was next. In 1911, Bird Lewis erected the first building ever put up here expressly as a garage. The Washington Avenue garage now occupies the location. The Ditterbrand brothers from Summerville, were the former operators.

New Garage Built.

Smith built his present garage on Fifth and Depot streets in 1912. The same year, B. W. Leighton opened an automobile establishment in the building now used by the Valley Creamery company. Others followed until the auto fraternity numbered quite a membership.

With Jan Van Buren working the Reos and Smith the Model T Ford, Mr. Bohnenkamp and his

sons entered the competition with Cadillac and Buicks. Bob Leighton took over the Chevrolet cars when they first came on the market, and also handled the Maxwells. The M. & M. company was representing the E. M. F. line, which later produced the Studebaker.

"Smith and his Fords used to give lots of worry when I was trying to sell Buicks," Chase Bohnenkamp recounts.

Stanley Bought a Ford.

"Once I started out to demonstrate a Buick to Lew Stanley, I had Stanley on the jump seat in the rear. Just east of town, Smith zipped past me about 25 or 30 miles an hour, laughing and challenging me to come on. I let my motor out to the limit, and hit the railroad tracks so hard that I shook most of the bolts loose, and nearly lost the back seat and Stanley with it. I did lose my prospect, Stanley bought a Ford."

In 1919, the dealers attempted to form an organization. Bert Hamilton, now a Nash distributor at Baker, was a leader in the movement. Others in favor of the idea were L. C. Smith, W. H. Bohnenkamp, Charles McFarley, John E. Anderson, the Union Motors company and the Island Motors company, headed by Ross Leslie, now in Joseph.

"It is time for our car dealers to get together," Hamilton is remembered as having told the group.

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25 Years Brings Great
Transportation Change

Pioneer Livery Stable Man Who Sells Gasoline Now Tells of "Stage" Days

WALLOWA, Ore. (Special)

The conveniences of modern travel and improved transportation facilities are no doubt better appreciated when compared with conditions that existed in years gone by. The vast changes which have been brought about along these lines can best be pictured through the relating of reminiscences of some of the pioneers who viewed and experienced the earlier hardships.

Twenty-five and 30 years ago the best thing in roads consisted of a common dirt stretch leading from the valley to Elgin, coming down the steep hill to Minam, and winding its course up the rugged Wallowa canyon, over narrow grades, and projections such as immense rocks and treacherous rocks.

Road Once Dangerous.

This section became dangerous to travel during the wet seasons, and, with constant passing of heavy stage coaches and well-laden wagons, deep ruts were often cut into which the rigs would drop axle

deep only to be drawn out and hauled to the other side into a similar rut.

Sometime before the completion of the branchline railroad into Wallowa valley, the travel between here and Elgin consisted of horse-drawn stages and wagons. The freight business at that time afforded many men a means of profitable employment.

Many of the pioneer farmers declare that they have hauled wheat to Elgin, sold it for 50 cents and less a bushel. But this is another story.

Horses' Motive Power.

Returning to the stage-coach days of a quarter of a century ago, Henry McElroy, one of the pioneer livery stable men of the Wallowa valley, recalls many vivid experiences.

McElroy came to Wallowa Nov. 6, 1895, and in 1902 was employed by the McCulley & Rumble stage company, which at that time had in use two eleven- and one eight-passenger stage coaches. When road conditions were good, the stages operated between Joseph and Elgin, leaving the former one day and arriving at the latter the following afternoon.

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La Grande-Pendleton Drive Ranks
With Best The Northwest Offers

There was a time, not so many years ago, when a motorist who desired to drive from Pendleton to La Grande faced an ordeal of bad roads, tortuous turns, deep dust in dry weather and heavy, sticky mud in the wet season. Several hours time and plenty of good luck were needed to successfully negotiate the trip.

But all that is changed.

Nowadays, a man can leave here about 6 o'clock in the morning and reach Pendleton several minutes prior to an 8 o'clock breakfast—and if any trouble is encountered it's the exception to the rule.

On an average, the 56-mile journey can be made in about an hour and 45 minutes, but many drivers go over the route in less than that.

Almost Perfect Macadam.

Instead of the conditions that existed prior to 1922-23, the road now is listed as one of the finest pieces of macadam in Oregon, and the state which is famous for its excellent roads. Ruts and mud holes are a thing of the past—like-wise the sharp, dangerous turns.

Like the La Grande-Wallowa Lake highway, the La Grande-Pendleton section of the Old Oregon Trail excels in natural beauty, scenery, comparable with any that exists along the highways in the northwest, is revealed between this city and Colliage Hill, where one begins the descent that winds up in the wheat country in Umatilla county.

Looking Back on the Valley.

Leaving La Grande the driver steers his car straight on up Adams avenue until he reaches the

hospital, where he turns to the right, going past Gangloff park, where an excellent view of the Grande Ronde valley is obtainable.

After passing the park, one skirts the hill until reaching the canyon between here and Perry, chiseled by the Grand Ronde river in a masterful fashion. On both sides of the road, rugged mountains greet the eye, set with rocks of every color under the sun. But the hills are not bare as places, fire and other species of evergreen and seasonal foliage clothe their slopes.

Perry, where the Grande Ronde lumber company mill has been located for many years, is but a scant four miles from La Grande. Midway between the two is the old country club house and golf links, which recently was sold.

After leaving Perry, the general conditions maintain until in the vicinity of Elgin, about eight miles along the road, when the river takes a course not followed by the highway. From that point on until the descent into the valley centered about Pendleton, the country is mountainous, but never bleak nor forbidding.

At Top of Elk Mountains.

Near Meacham, the place given little village where the redmen send their children to school, comes into view a few miles this side of Pendleton, the end of the drive.

The Round-Up City.

Pendleton, famous for its annual wild west show—the Pendleton Round-Up, which ranks with the Frontier Days in official importance—is a city of about the same

much prominence.

After leaving the mountainous region, the driver enters a valley famous in the northwest for its wheat raising qualities. On every hand one finds vast wheat ranches—hundreds of acres in size but extending over entire sections of land. A brilliant checker-board effect is produced with a portion of the land in winter wheat, another in spring wheat, and still another lying idle and storing up energy for its next crop.

Through the Reservation.

Before reaching Pendleton one passes through the Umatilla Indian reservation but if one is unobservant, ignorance of this fact is likely.

The first feeling of being in an Indian country comes upon seeing a modern, high-powered car whizz past, driven by a redskin. Maybe, if fortunate, one catches a glimpse of an Indian about one of their ramshackle homes, or driving a disreputable hack.

But all of the Indians' homes are not ramshackle. Some of the rich men in the Umatilla valley are native Americans and in many cases, their residences dwarf those of white farmers along other sections of the drive.

Mission, a well-kept, beautiful little village where the redmen send their children to school, comes into view a few miles this side of Pendleton, the end of the drive.

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OREGON TRAIL
SHORTEST AND
BEST ROUTE

World's Most Historic Highway, Blazed by Pioneers In Generations Passed, Now Stretches Invitingly from Eastern Points to Northwest

More Than 1,000 Miles of Paved and Macadamized Road Utilized by Thousands of Motorists—Was Instrument in Winning of the Oregon Country—Estimates Are That 17 Persons Paid the Price for Each Mile of the Trail.

The world's most historic highway, the Old Oregon Trail, which stretches across the broad expanses of five western states—beginning at Independence, Missouri and ending at Seaside, Oregon—is rapidly becoming one of the most popular routes to use in driving to the northwest from eastern points or vice versa. Not only is it growing in popularity because of its directness and distance-saving qualities, but also because its tributaries lead to many of the most renowned national parks—including the Yellowstone, Rocky Mountain, Crater Lake and others, not overlooking the majestic Wallowa Wonderland district.

The Old Oregon Trail, although in existence since early in the nineteenth century, was not officially designated as a modern highway until July 3, 1923, when Warren G. Harding, president of the United States, officially dedicated the trail at Emigrant Springs, an historic spot near Meacham, Oregon, 25 miles west of La Grande. Near the site of the Old Oregon Trail pageant which was held that day stands a memorial in memory of the chief executive's visit to Oregon just before his death in California.

The Shortest and Best Route.

The trail, after leaving Missouri, passes through Northeastern Kansas, Nebraska, Wyoming, Idaho before entering Oregon. From Rock Springs, Wyoming, it leads to Pocatello, Idaho, thence through Twin Falls, Boise, and Caldwell to Ontario, Ore. The next city of importance is Baker, and then comes La Grande, Pendleton, The Dalles, Portland, Astoria and finally Seaside. It is described fittingly as the shortest and best route to the Pacific Northwest.

Although the pioneer homeseekers of generations gone by blazed the trail, without aid of engineers or appropriations, it took the present day citizenry in Eastern Oregon to launch the movement that, taken up the length of the highway, eventually resulted in the modern Old Oregon Trail, the nucleus of thousands and thousands of automobile drivers the year round.

From Pioneer to Tourist.

Now, instead of bare wagon tracks, more than 1,000 miles of paved and macadamized stretches greet the tourist. What a far cry from its pioneering stage!

Ralph Pierson, in The New York Times, tells the story of the early hardships on the Oregon Trail in the following:

In the day of the wagon train, the pioneers made their dangerous and long-suffering trek over the same line of travel as the Oregon Trail goes today. The only Indians one may see today are peaceful. The first wagon train from old Fort Hall, near what is now Pocatello, Idaho, arrived in the Willamette valley in 1843.

The Old Oregon Trail association was founded in Baker, Ore., February 23, 1922. The aims of the organization are to perpetuate the name of the trail by having it designated by the states through which it passes and also designated by congress as a national highway, and so do honor to the memory of the pioneer men and women who faced the perils of a savage land to carve out new homes in the "Oregon country."

The route of the highway is from Rock Springs, Wyo., to Pocatello, Idaho, then north to Yellowstone park or south to Ogden, Utah. The western entrance to the Yellowstone or West Yellowstone in Montana is the northern terminus of the former branch. If one enters Yellowstone by this gateway, the circle drive of the park may be made from West Yellowstone to Madison Junction, Upper Geyser Basin, West Thumb, Lake Junction, to Cody and return the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone, Tower Falls, Mammoth Hot Springs, Norris Geyser Basin and then out the west entrance.

From West Yellowstone, the tourist hits the trail for St. Anthony, Idaho, then to American Falls, Boise, Idaho; Baker, Ore., then La Grande and through the Umatilla Indian reservation to Pendleton, Ore., the summer scene of the great Pendleton round-up, where the national championships for the bronco riders is held; then along the Columbia river to Portland, Ore. From the highway many branch roads take the camper and tourist to many scenic and historic points. The tourist may jump south of the Oregon Trail and hit the Pike's Peak, Victory and Lincoln highways that take him through marvelous country.

Early Trail Days.

Walter E. Meacham, president of the Oregon Trail association, says that the history of the old Oregon Trail is a story of the out of doors, of the hills, a story of human endeavor, privation, determination

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