

L. C. SMITH IS PIONEER HERE IN AUTO GAME

Entered Automobile Industry as Repair Man 23 Years Ago

HAD FIRST GARAGE IN EAST OREGON

Planned Present Building, at Corner of Depot and Fifth Streets, Early in 1912.

In L. C. Smith, Dodge Brothers representative here, La Grande has the pioneer automobile dealer of Eastern Oregon. And probably no man in the has watched the unfolding of the automobile drama with a keener appreciation than he has.

The Modern Home of the L. C. Smith Garage



A view of the L. C. Smith garage building—where Dodge and Grammas are housed. Mr. Smith, the pioneer auto dealer in this locality, created this building more than 13 years ago and last year erected a new front.

new industry was first intrigued. That was sometime along in 1903. There were no garages in those days, and naturally it fell to the lot the bicycle mechanics to repair the new machines. And when, one day, he was called upon to change a tire on Dr. Mollitor's little one-wheeled lamplike, that simple action marked an epoch. A new era had never been put on an automobile in La Grande before.

Opened Repair Shop
In 1905, J. Van Buren, the proprietor of the bicycle shop decided to discontinue the repair business. So that year L. C. Smith opened an automobile repair shop in the building now occupied by the Cur-

roy press. Smith's was the first garage ever operated in Eastern Oregon, but the name "garage" was not applied to it until a number of years later. As the official automobile dealer in this part of the state, Mr. Smith was in constant demand both at the repair shop and on the highways. He used to answer calls as far west as Pendleton, and as far east as Baker.

Rode by Bicycle or Train
"I didn't have a car of my own," reminisces the automobile man. "I used to fix my repair tools on my bicycle and many a time I pedaled five or six miles over country to connect a battery or to perform some other minor operation. "Once I rode my bicycle eight miles to tell a new owner that his car would start if he'd turn the switch.

Five Portable Telephones
"Some automobilists used to carry portable telephones in their cars. When they got hung up along the road, they would throw the wire over a telephone line and summon help. Will French, a traveling salesman, was one fellow that did that."

During his first year as a garage man, Mr. Smith ran the business by himself, but the next year automobiles had become numerous enough that he had to have help.

In 1906, he enlisted himself as a Ford agent. His first customer was Will Stohard, and the car Smith sold him was a little four-cylinder machine known as model N.

"I suppose I got more kick out of the sale of that first car than I do out of delivering two or three in the same day now," comments the pioneer dealer.

Had Ford Agency for 10 Years
He kept the Ford agency for 10 years. The cars he sold wore mostly five-passenger touring models, with now and then a two-passenger runabout.

Early in 1911, Smith moved his garage over on Jefferson street, where the Union Motor company now is located. And about a year and a half later, he moved into a fine building of his own.

The automobile business was in a flourishing state in 1912, and promised a still rosier future. So Mr. Smith decided he ought to have a garage expressly designed to meet the demands of sales and service. That building, at the corner of Depot street and Fifth street houses the L. C. Smith garage. It was augmented, however,

with a good-sized addition on the Washington avenue side in 1917.

Sold First Dodge
A pioneer along so many lines of the automobile industry, it is only natural that Mr. Smith should have been the first dealer in this territory to sell a car of the make which he now handles exclusively.

"I bought my first order of Dodge cars before I knew whether they were four- or six-cylinder automobiles," he recalls. "Up to 1914, when the first Dodge cars came on the market, the Dodge Brothers had been making parts for most of the automobile manufacturers in Detroit. I had sufficient faith in their judgment and ability to contract for 50 of their new cars before I had seen one."

Added Two Agencies
During the war when the output fell far below the demand, Mr. Smith added the Cadillac and the Buick agencies in an effort to get deliveries enough to fill the increasing orders. He dropped them both, however, as soon as the manufacturers had adjusted themselves to the post-war output. And soon afterward, he quit the Ford company with the explanation that Henry had tried to dictate his business. But that is another story.

"I like the Dodge car for its stability," declares the dealer. "It is the best car money can buy for this country. When you start out on a hunting or fishing trip over the mountains, you like to know that you have a car that will bring you back. The Dodge is adapted to the demands of the sportsman, as well as being an ideal all-around car."

Customers Satisfied
Mr. Smith's customers seem to share his partiality. On his sales record books—he has kept the record of every sale since the first car left his shop—their names are repeated year after year in proof of their satisfaction.

Outside of selling automobiles, Mr. Smith has two pronounced hobbies: His radio, with its aerial strung from the tower above his garage, and his ranch at the east end of Adams avenue, where he grows he will raise pumpkins, melons and strawberries, next summer.

STEAM-DRIVEN VEHICLE GAVE CITY A SHOCK

(Continued from Page 7.)
"The automobile industry is the biggest in the community in point of sales, and is worthy of the dignity of an organization."

Plenty of Rivalry
Eighteen months later Smith and Bohnenkamp were the only members of the organization still operating. They kept up a keen rivalry, and used to plow up and down the muddy streets day after day demonstrating the merits of their respective motor lines.

"I was pretty proud of my second automobile," Chase Bohnenkamp observed, in recalling the early history of the auto business the other day. "And with one exception, it always came up to my boasts about it."

"That exception was my most embarrassing moment. It was one Sunday morning, and I had my girl along. I was all dressed up in a duster and gamutlets and one of those obsolete motoring caps. I came whirling down Adams avenue in great style until I got right in front of the Foley hotel. Several traveling men were sitting out in front and I was anxious to make a fine impression. Just as I speeded up my motor, I struck the high lead crosswalk. And off I dropped one of my front wheels.

"The only other time that car refused to go for me was once when I hit a pig."

A Trade That Failed
Al Andrews one time traded a four-cylinder Franklin to C. R. Hibbard for the finest pair of mules in Hibbard's stable. When he delivered the car and brought a man along with him to help pick out the mules, he was charged and dismayed to find that the only animals in Hibbard's barn were a couple of scrubby little pack mules.

Hibbard had had his fun, and let Andrews keep his Franklin.

Go buy a nice fliover. And then you won't shiver. For you'll be an ace in the pot—since it's catch-as-catch-can. With the speeding fan. It is better to "get" than be "got."

They'll soon have to build churches in the middle of the block. Filling stations have all the corners.

He—"I think I've got a flat tire." She—"Gimme a chance. The car's only in second."

Ball—"So you've cured your wife of the antique craze. How did you do it?" Crank—"It was easy. I gave her a 1908 model automobile for her birthday."

"About this hier the mourners kneel: He was holding his cutie instead of the wheel."

25 Years Brings Great Transportation Change

(Continued from Page One.)
The best horses available were used by the stage company and these often included nervous ones which became frightened easily—within many runaways the result.

"One morning while Harry Heifner was driving," relates McElroy, "we were hitching up the horses in front of the barn. Some became nervous and, as they were doing considerable rearing around, I told Heifner to get into the seat and hold the lines while I finished hitching."

Horses Runaway
"As we finished hitching the last of the traces and as Heifner was getting his lines ready, the horses all broke into a run. I managed to get onto the rig and got hold of three of the lines. I was unable to check their speed until they upset the stage at a sharp corner. No passengers were in the stage at that time."

McElroy tells of another incident where several passengers occupied the stage, driven by Frank Winston, when the horses bolted. "I got into a buggy and started out after the runaway," he said, adding that finally the horses were stopped without injury to the passengers although one woman was so badly scared that she fainted and a doctor had to be called to bring her to.

Besides Heifner and Winston, other stage drivers of that period included Bill Arnold, Billy McWilliams, Bill Wright, Ed Cullen and others.

Sells Gasoline Now
McElroy had the job of caring for and feeding the stage horses for six and a half years, after which the mail and passenger service was taken over by the new railroad which had just been completed. He continued to run his livery and feed business for several years until the automobile replaced the horse-drawn vehicles to such an extent that the business he longer paid. Keeping pace with the times, McElroy five years ago turned his stable into a service station and now sells gas instead of hay.

WALLOWA COUNTY STATISTICS SHOW 314 MORE AUTOS

ENTERPRISE, Ore. (Special)—The Year 1925 saw an increase of 314 in the number of automobiles running in Wallowa county, according to the Motor Register, compiled from records of Secretary of State Sam A. Kozar. The increase was from 1414 cars in 1924 to 1728 in 1925, or 23 per cent, and this after it was commonly thought everybody in the county had a machine already.

Registrations of each make of car for the last year were:

| | |
|----------------|------|
| Ford | 841 |
| Chevrolet | 236 |
| Dodge | 82 |
| Studebaker | 80 |
| Overland | 71 |
| Buick | 68 |
| Maxwell | 57 |
| Oakland | 33 |
| Star | 33 |
| Oldsmobile | 25 |
| Chalmers | 18 |
| Hupmobile | 18 |
| Willya-Knight | 16 |
| Yello | 15 |
| Emack | 11 |
| Chandler | 10 |
| Cordell | 7 |
| Cleveland | 6 |
| Franklin | 5 |
| Casa | 5 |
| Liberty | 5 |
| Gray | 4 |
| Chrysler | 4 |
| Premier | 3 |
| Haynes | 3 |
| Columbia | 3 |
| Jewett | 3 |
| Grand | 2 |
| Hudson | 2 |
| Marmon | 2 |
| Trickelbacher | 2 |
| Scripps-Booth | 2 |
| Miscellaneous | 36 |
| Total for 1925 | 1728 |
| Total for 1924 | 1414 |
| Increase | 314 |

When the car is being overhauled, examine the rollers and pins on the valve push rods. If there is a flat spot, a distinct valve tap will be heard. This is often mistaken for a loose tappet. When the tappet is adjusted to quiet it, in such a case the valve will not close, with a result that compression is lost and the valve is burned.

Pedestrian's Creed
To be free from death's toll, Don't go out for a stroll. When the juggernaut drivers are out, If you feel much like pacing, Just remember they're racing. And you haven't a chance if you're stout.

Still, the new model fliover looks suspiciously like a fliover.

LEIGHTON ONE OF PIONEERS

When R. W. Leighton, proprietor of Leighton's Welding and Machine Works, started into the garage business in 1902 there were seven automobiles in Union county. According to Mr. Leighton two other garages were operating before he started, one of them being owned by L. C. Smith, who with Mr. Leighton are the only men who started garages at that time and have continued to operate up until the present.

When Mr. Leighton first started out he had as a partner Jay Van Buren. Mr. Van Buren was agent for Franklin cars and Mr. Leighton did all of the repair work in the garage. They were located in the building now owned by R. F. Tyler on Fir street, formerly occupied by the Valley Creamery and later by the Peerless Creamery company.

Not Many Cars to Fix
"There was not enough automobiles to repair to make much of a living at that time," Mr. Leighton recalls. "When I first started into business I mended umbrellas, repaired bicycles, phonographs and sewing machines to help the business along. But I suppose we couldn't expect much with the few autos there were at that time."

Previous to going into the garage business Mr. Leighton worked for six years in the railroad shops here as tool maker, doing general overhauling and air work. When he left the railroad company to start a business of his own he had had about seventeen and one-half years of actual experience in machine work, including tool making.

Sold Chandlers, Maxwells
During the year 1911 he bought Mr. Van Buren's interest in the garage and at the same time he took over the sales agency for Maxwell cars, which he had until 1916. During that year and a part of 1917 he was agent for Chandler cars.

In 1912 Mr. Leighton obtained a battery charging outfit from L. C. Smith, which he operated in connection with his repair shop. Later he began carrying Exide batteries and added to his shop equipment to do all kinds of battery repair work.

During the same year he moved into his present location on Washington street, where he has since been operating. The building which he now occupies was built especially for him.

In the year 1917 Mr. Leighton added acetylene welding machinery to his repair shop. He specialized in this work for about four years, the end of which time he installed machinery for automobile cylinder grinding, crank shaft grinding. He has specialized in this work since then, doing many repair jobs that other garages are not equipped to handle.



R. W. Leighton, pioneer automobile repair shop proprietor of La Grande.

At present he employs two mechanics. The work of one is entirely separate from the other. One does all of the welding and general connecting rods and work of that kind and the other does nothing but the machine work. To handle this work to the best advantage, Mr. Leighton found it necessary to install a line of piston rings and pins. By adding the many parts to his shop the installation of a parts department was brought about and at the present he has what is known in connection with the welding and machine shop, as a parts store. Replacement parts for all makes of automobiles are carried in stock. His parts department stock is valued at \$12,000. It is no longer necessary to send to Portland or elsewhere for automobile parts, when they can be obtained locally. The parts department has in stock at all times new departure and Hyatt Linker roller bearings, front wheel bearings (special ball and cone-tight), Spicer universal joints, fan belts, Stewart speedometer parts, radiator hose, springs, connecting rods and connecting rod bearings, crankshaft bearings, ring gears and pinions, diamond fears valve, piston pins and piston pin locks, one ton of bolts and nuts, miniature lamps for automobiles, Mazda house lamps and many other things.

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