

More Early Automobiles in Monroe

We left off in the August 29 column with Fred J. Karlen and E. L. Edelman planning to take Karlen's auto to Toledo and Buffalo to have it equipped with the latest improvements. The Monroe Evening Times of Wednesday, August 28 reported that Karlen and Edelman started at 8:40 that morning on their trip to Toledo, Ohio, with the automobile. They expected to make Toledo in about three days with good weather and no accidents. They were also considering the trip to Buffalo before they returned. Karlen wrote from Toledo, stating that he had arrived there with his automobile on Saturday.

Others in the area started purchasing vehicles as well. On Wednesday, September 4, G. W. Lewis, of Albany, was in Monroe, making the trip across the country on his motor cycle. The cycle was propelled by gasoline, weighed 110 pounds, and was capable of running at a speed of thirty-five to forty miles an hour.

Fred Clarke arrived in Monroe on Thursday of that week from Evansville with an automobile that he delivered to C. R. Schepley. It had been included in a sale of Lake Kegonsa property made by Mr. Shepley to Geo. H. Clarke, the insurance man formerly of Monroe. Mr. Schepley had purchased a different lot at the lake.

Fred Karlen, who had made the trip to Toledo with his automobile, arrived home on Thursday morning, September 12. But his auto was left at Rockford owing to the rain and heavy roads. E. L. Edelman, who accompanied him, was at Rockford with the machine. He had been at the exposition while Mr. Karlen remained at Toledo five days while his automobile was being equipped with the latest improvements. Mr. Edelman arrived here on the evening of the 16th from Rockford with Karlen's automobile.

Karlen had his automobile entered in the motorcycle races at Freeport on the 22nd, but decided not to compete because of the roughness of the country roads. He also shipped the frame of his automobile back to the factory in Toledo to repair a break near the rear axle on October 8. As one would expect with a new invention, these automobiles were not as reliable as one would like them to be.

Jumping ahead three years we'll find who some of the other people were that had invested in autos in those early days. It was on May 16, 1904 that E. L. Edelman, who had built his own automobile, gave it its initial trial. He ran it around several blocks and proved that the propelling power was without fault and that the gearing needed some minor changes. The trial run was made by Rudolph Schiesser and Joe Myers, which attracted a large crowd.

It was reported the same day that local parties who had gone to Belvidere on Saturday morning to make the trip home with automobiles bought by C. R. Schepley, C. S. Dodge, and Evan South were not able to land with all three machines. The first machine reached town at 11:30 the previous evening with C. S. Dodge, Lewis Dodge, and Fred J. Blumer aboard. The other machines were awaiting repairs seven miles the other side of Brodhead and planned to finish the trip the day of publication.

Mr. Dodge ran his own machine and a chauffeur from the factory was sent out with each of the Schepley and South machines. They left Belvidere Sunday morning at 9 o'clock and went to Rockford, covering the ten miles in an hour and 15 minutes. They stopped at Beloit for dinner and left there for Monroe at 2:00. When they struck the sand west of Brodhead, there was trouble which resulted in the loss of the cogs of the two high speed machines. Mr. Dodge was well pleased with his machine. He says it was put to a severe test and it stood the racket.



This photo of a 1904 Oldsmobile might have been similar to the ones driven in Monroe at that time.

Mr. and Mrs. C. S. Dodge took in the towns of Juda, Brodhead, Orford, Footville, Hanover, and Janesville and returned home on June 5. They had covered more than 80 miles and said the roads in Rock County were good. The run from Janesville to Brodhead was made in an hour and 53 minutes.

Dodge seemed to enjoy challenging his new vehicle. He and Evan South went to Monticello on June 15 to pick up his automobile that had been left there on Sunday. The auto became disabled due to the loss of minor parts in a hill-climbing feat that put the machine to a severe test. Dodge had been running his machine without incident before leaving Monroe on that Sunday. He found it to be a hard proposition when he attempted Burgy hill in Washington township on the way to Monticello. He continued the trip to Monticello, but thought it best to leave the machine there until the missing parts could be replaced.

Imagine taking an hour and 53 minutes to drive from Janesville to Brodhead or traveling from Belvidere to Rockford averaging eight miles an hour. We can be very thankful for the improvements that have been made to the roads and automobiles in more than a century since these articles were written.