



Newsletter February 2025

"Moving Forward"

Not Quite Saying Goodbye to SAAB

Due to some exceptionally cold weather and some related facility issues, the SAAB exhibit is being held over for a fourth month. In case you hadn't yet made it to the Forney Museum to see these unique automobiles, you still have a few more weeks, so don't miss out! Many thanks to the Rocky Mountain



SAAB Club and all the SAAB owners for agreeing to extend their exhibit one more month! Spanning from the first year of production in 1950, with the classic green 92 Deluxe as seen above, to 2008 with the Lynx Yellow 9-3 convertible at left, the exhibit encompassed over 50 years of this incredible manufacturer. With roots in aviation engineering, it is no surprise the SAAB automobile took off!



Pre-War Chevrolets

Starting March 6th, the Forney Museum will debut the “Pre-War Chevrolets” exhibit! This incredible exhibit will spotlight the first few decades of the company from 1914 through the merger with GM in 1918 and continuing until the shift to war-time production in the 1940s.



Ranging from a 1914 Model H, through a 1942 Fleetline 2-door, with so many in between, this exhibit will really spotlight the beginnings of this classic company. Don't miss the 1925 Touring, or the 1931 Roadster; a 1928 National Coupe or a 1933 5-Window. With all this history on display – and so much more! – you won't want to miss this exhibit!

This Month in Transportation History

February 20, 1792 – President George Washington signed into law the Postal Service Act of 1792. Spelling out Congress's constitutionally mandated role to create post roads and setting forth specific procedures to enlarge the scope of these routes well beyond their existing framework, the Act led to significant growth in post roads with the overall length of these routes expanding from approximately 5,600 miles to 114,000 miles between 1792 and 1828.

February 25, 1851 – The first passenger train of the Milwaukee & Mississippi (M&M) Railroad made its inaugural trip between Milwaukee and Waukesha in Wisconsin. This new service turned out to be a huge success; within a couple of months, the M&M was operating two daily passenger runs each way. Over the next several decades, this railroad continued to grow and expand its reach throughout the midwestern United States, eventually making its way into Iowa and South Dakota, as far west as Kansas City, and north to Michigan's Upper Peninsula. The railroad's pioneering contributions to transportation include long-distance electrification, construction of all-welded freight and passenger cars, and the operation of high-speed intercity trains.

February 22, 1861 – Edward Payson Weston began a 478-mile trip from the Massachusetts State House in Boston to Washington, D.C. to attend Abraham Lincoln's first presidential inauguration – doing so using only his two feet for transportation! Averaging about 50 miles per day, Weston arrived in Washington, D.C. at 5:00 p.m. on March 4. While missing Lincoln's swearing-in ceremony at the Capitol by just a few hours, Weston did attend an inaugural ball that evening. Weston's long hike, which he eventually wrote about in a pamphlet entitled *The Pedestrian*, earned him plenty of publicity, and Weston became known as the “Father of Modern Pedestrianism.”

February 24, 1909 – In Detroit, eight businessmen met to establish a company that would produce automobiles selling for less than \$1,000. Named after Joseph L. Hudson, a Detroit department store entrepreneur and one of those eight businessmen, this meeting marked the start of the Hudson Motor

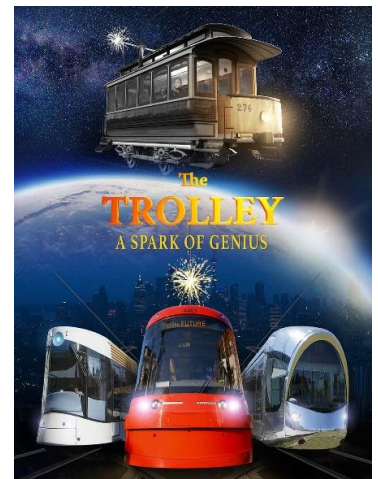
Car Company. A little over four months after that organizational meeting, the company's first automobile – the Hudson Twenty, selling for \$900 – was produced. Hudson remained in business until 1954, when it merged with Nash-Kelvinator to form the American Motors Corporation, commonly known as AMC.

February 22, 1956 – In Montgomery, Alabama, 80 participants in the three-month-old bus boycott voluntarily gave themselves up for arrest after an ultimatum from white city leaders. Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks were among those arrested. Later in 1956, the U.S. Supreme Court mandated desegregation of the buses.

February 20, 1962 - Astronaut John Glenn became the first American launched into orbit, and the third American in space. Traveling aboard the "Friendship 7" spacecraft, Glenn reached an altitude of 162 miles (260 kilometers) and completed three orbits in a flight lasting just under five hours.

Forney Speaker Series

Due to the aforementioned facility issues, February's Speaker Series presentation has been postponed. Sunday, March 30th, at 2 PM, the Forney Museum will be screening the documentary *The Trolley: A Spark of Genius*, all about the history and development of that wonderful exemplar of mass transit: the trolley! From its development in the 19th Century, through its explosive worldwide adoption; learn all about the trolley's use in both world wars and the collision with the automobile age in the 20th Century; to the trolley's role in our modern world, the fight against climate change, and the shifting transportation ideals that are coming to define our current age. As humanity's needs and demands have changed through the years, this extraordinary machine has proven again and again to meet them.



These presentations are free with paid admission, and make for a fantastic opportunity to learn more about some of the lesser known sides of history. So come join us on March 30th, at 2 PM, for the presentation of *The Trolley: A Spark of Genius*. Watch this space or check our website at forneymuseum.org for further updates.

Free Day

As a Science & Cultural Facilities District (SCFD) funded organization, Friday, February 14th, the Museum will be opening the doors for a Free Day, where all admissions are free! So come down, bring your friends, your family, or even your special Valentine and see all that the Museum has to offer.



Forney Vehicle Spotlight

1909 REO Runabout

In 1905, American inventor Ransom Eli Olds was at a crossroads. Recently separated from Olds Motor Works, the company he had founded and that still carried his name, Olds wasn't ready to give up on his passion for automotive design. With several decades of experience in the field – claiming to have built his first automobile, a steam-powered car, in 1887 – he knew his next venture could be even more successful than the first.

Olds had founded his company as Olds Motor Vehicle Company in Lansing, Michigan, on August 21, 1897. Seeking funding for this new venture, the company was purchased



by a copper and lumber tycoon, Samuel Smith, in 1899. The company was renamed Olds Motor Works and was moved to Detroit, Michigan, which was already becoming a hotbed of the early American automobile industry. Smith became president of the company, and Olds became vice president and general manager – as well as chief designer and engineer.

By 1901, Olds had produced several prototype vehicles when tragedy struck, the Olds Motor Works burned to the ground. All the prototypes had been lost, except for one: the Curved Dash Runabout. Almost as if selected by fate, the company put the Runabout into production and began to push for sales.

Costing only \$650, equivalent to about \$24,000 today, the 1901 Curved Dash Runabout (the Museum's 1903 Curved Dash Runabout was previously profiled in the October 2023 Forney Vehicle Spotlight) became a smash success, and made a name for Olds as a quality automobile.

The first year saw 600 runabouts sold, but production continued to ramp up along with

sales and over 2,500 were sold in 1902. Olds had hit upon a fascinating new idea for building vehicles that had enabled this increase in production: an assembly line.





Although often attributed to Henry Ford, the first progressively moving assembly line in the automotive industry was pioneered by Olds. The cars were either pushed by hand or moved from station to station using a rope and pulley system as sections were completed. Along with the use of subcontractors such as Henry M. Leland and the Dodge brothers for engine production, the technique allowed Olds Motor Works to produce over 4,000

cars a year by 1904.

Officially referred to as Olds automobiles, the name Oldsmobile quickly caught on. 1905 saw the hit song “In My Merry Oldsmobile” and the little runabout was the most famous car in America. Ford’s Model T was not yet on the market, and for a few years Oldsmobile was the largest automotive manufacturer in the country. With so much success, one would never guess the conflicts going on behind the scenes.

Company President Samuel Smith had brought his son, Frederic Smith, into the company. The younger Smith and Olds found themselves repeatedly at odds with each other over company decisions. Frederic began to question Olds’ production techniques and ability, and in 1904 Frederic was empowered to remove Olds from his



position as vice president of his own company. Similarly Henry Ford was forced out of the Henry Ford Company, and went on to found the new Ford Motor Company in 1903, so Ransom Olds decided to do the same and form a new company to build his vehicles.



The REO Motor Car Company was established in 1905 in Lansing, Michigan. Originally naming the company R. E. Olds Motor Car Company, threats of legal action from his old company caused him to change the name to REO. Sometimes spelled Reo in advertising materials, the name was pronounced “Rio” and was considered distinct enough from Olds Motor Works, which proceeded to change its

name to Oldsmobile a few years later.

To ensure a reliable supply of parts, Ransom Olds also formed subsidiary companies such as National Coil Company, Michigan Screw Company and Atlas Drop Forge Company, all based in Lansing, Michigan. In 1906, to ensure financing, Olds organized Capital National Bank, later called Lansing National Bank and Michigan National Bank. To ensure he didn't get find himself leaving yet another company named after himself, Olds held 52% of the stock of the company and named himself president and general manager.



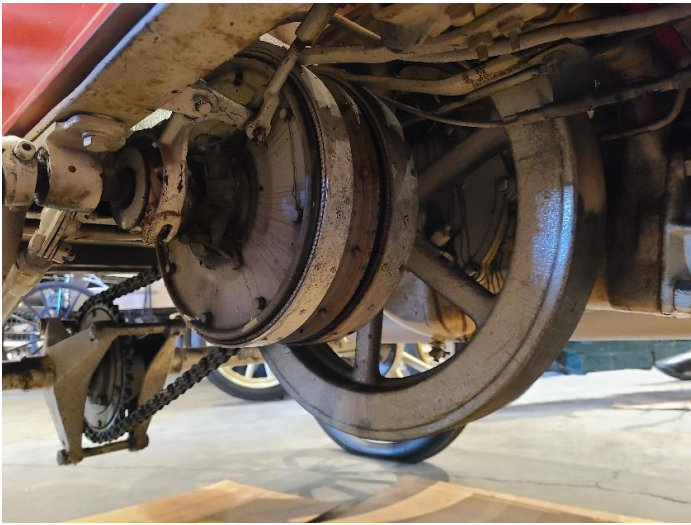
The first REO was introduced at the New York Automobile Show in January 1905 and was an instant sensation. This first car, a 16 horsepower 2-cylinder 5-seat tourer, was soon joined by a 7.5 horsepower, single-cylinder runabout. Olds declared the runabout "a chip off the old block" in reference to his beloved Curved Dash Oldsmobile. In 1906 a 4-cylinder car was offered, but the \$2,500 price tag displeased Olds, who thought greater success lay with more affordable cars.



To advertise the new car, Olds competed with his car in the Glidden Tour and other endurance competitions. In 1905, a REO crossed the country twice – the first double transcontinental. A lifelong racer of automobiles which he had designed and built himself, it came naturally to Olds to use these endurance trials to prove his car as reliable and trustworthy to the American public.

In 1907, just a few years after starting his company, with little more than his name and reputation, REO had \$4.5 million in sales, becoming the third most successful American carmaker after Ford and Buick. October 1908 saw the release of Ford's Model T and the rest of the industry soon found itself scrambling to keep up. Some consolidated, like William Durant's emerging behemoth General Motors while others went out of business





entirely. Olds simply designed an iconic new 4-cylinder REO to take on the Model T head-to-head.

This 1909 REO Runabout in the Forney Museum Collection represents the last model year before Ford transformed the industry, and is a great example of an early REO. A simple straightforward design, lightweight but sturdy on leaf springs, open bodywork with a two passenger seat in the

front and a small storage area in the rear (this example featuring a basket in this area) and minimal exterior trim are hallmarks of the design. A tonneau cover and windshield were extra options not seen on this example.

The engine is a single cylinder producing about 12 horsepower, good for a top speed around 25 miles per hour, with a two speed manual transmission. Chain drive transferred power to the rear wheels. Brass kerosene-burning sidelamps, wooden spoke wheels, hand-crank start and a leather bench seat were standard features. Simple construction, but an efficient design made this car a classic.

The REO Runabout was in production until 1910, but eventually the market pressure from Ford and GM forced REO to innovate their designs. Classics such as the REO Flying Cloud, the REO Royale and the REO Speedwagon (a name popularized decades later by the rock band of the same name) were introduced in later years. Ransom Olds retired in 1915, briefly returning in the 1930s to try to steer the company through the Great Depression, and passed away in 1950. His company withdrew from building cars in 1936 to focus on producing trucks, and continued building trucks until 1975 after being bought by White Motor Company in 1957. The rights to the REO name are currently owned by Volvo.



This 1909 REO Runabout can be seen on display as part of the collection at Forney Museum of Transportation.

Volunteer Birthdays

2/3 – Dana Holdaway

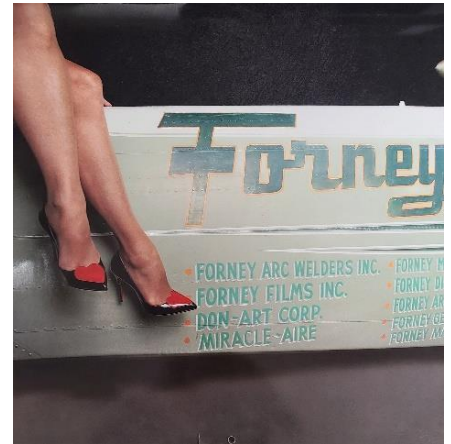
2/4 – Sonny Swarts

The Museum needs YOU!

Anyone interested in volunteering or donating please reach out to us at the museum or email volunteer@forneymuseum.org

Forney Museum Calendar

In addition to the many other wonderful items in the gift shop, the Forney Museum is selling our exclusive 2025-26 Pinup Calendar. Now only \$15, calendars can be purchased in the Museum Gift Shop or online at forneymuseum.org, and all proceeds benefit the Museum. Fun, flirty and for a great cause, get your calendar today and help out the Forney Museum! Special thanks to all the wonderful volunteer models who helped make the calendar possible.



Memberships

Become a Forney Museum Member TODAY! We have memberships in many different levels to fit your particular needs, with options available for as low as \$50, the right membership for you can be purchased in the museum gift shop or online at forneymuseum.org. Memberships are good for one year and make great gifts, so help support the Forney by buying a membership today!

General Museum Needs

We are putting out the call for several items that are needed here at the museum. If you see anything in this section that you think you would be able to donate to the museum to help us with our operations please reach out to our Assistant Director, Dan at asstdirector@forneymuseum.org, or call the museum at (303) 297-1113.

- 1) Diesel pickup in running, serviceable condition
- 2) Enclosed trailer (20-foot or longer) to transport Forney Museum vehicles safely & securely
- 3) Modern tire changing machine in working order
- 4) Modern wheel balancing machine in working order

Thank you to everyone who has already donated!

The Forney Newsletter team is:

Editor-in-Chief, Christof Kheim

Contributing Editor, James Hansen

Graphics and Design Assistance, Damion Cope

Research Assistance provided by: James Hansen, Jennifer Holm, Damion Cope, Dan Hays

Special Thanks to all of our readers!