

Automobiles in 1930

Recently, while scrolling through the microfilm files of *The Winsted Evening Citizen*, my eyes caught sight of a headline that read: "Future of Autos and Their Engines Causes Guesses." As the date of the paper was May 1930, I couldn't resist finding out just how well our parents and grandparents could foresee the future. Here is what I found:

"Whether the automobile of tomorrow will run on high priced gasoline or low priced fuel oil is a question millions of motorists are pondering as a result of significant developments in aviation. If the aeroplane has 'gone diesel', many are asking, can the motor car be far behind?" The article went on to say that a few years before, Diesel motors were considered impractical for automobile purposes because it seemed to be essentially a low speed proposition. The idea was viewed as probable for heavy-duty trucks, impossible for aviation purposes. By 1930, there were experimental aircraft as well as a test auto using a fuel oil burning Diesel engine. This information led the author of this piece to write:

"What is the significance of this development to the automotive world?"

Contrary to popular belief, the automobile industry does not visualize the end of the reign of gasoline as motor fuel for land craft. In fact, the consensus seems to be that aviation and automobile needs with respect to fuel do not parallel. Fire, an outstanding hazard in aviation, is not even so seriously considered in automobiling, according to one view."

It appears that they had their facts pretty well on course. The primary invention that they did not factor into their prognostications was the jet engine.

The article went on with a paragraph or so on the various local automobile agencies and the virtues of the new models being offered; here are a few of those written about:

"A finer De Soto Six – with a bigger engine and more power, smarter styling and a body constructed on entirely new principles – is being exhibited by the Berkshire Motor Sales of this city. The models represent the first major change in design of this car. For 22 months it enjoyed continuous manufacture without alternation, a noteworthy achievement for the original model of any car, and set a new first-year sales record for the industry."

"To meet the demand for Ford trucks with longer chasses, the Ford Motor Co. announces the introduction of a one and one-half ton truck with 157 inch wheel base, [a little over 13 feet] two feet longer than the present models. The longer chasses are used with bodies designed to carry loads of a bulky nature. It is particularly useful in hauling furniture and livestock. It is designed also for bus bodies. W. B. Pinney handles the Ford."

Martin B. Dodd had the Packard agency for Litchfield County. The most significant item in their ad was the announcement of a \$400 reduction in price over last year's price.

New adjustable front seats, controlled by a device whereby the entire front seat (in closed models) may be easily moved to suit the driver, are another feature of Cadillac and LaSalle, sold by Roscoe Benjamin. [Located where the Fleet Bank is now.] Other features are the completely harmonized steering system, by means of which the slightest

movement of the hand, done by the aid of pneumatic controls, may control the direction of the car. Especially noticeable in the Cadillac and LaSalle models is their unusual inside width. Rear seats are now wide enough to permit three adult passengers to ride without crowding.”

H. V. Johnson of Winsted sold the Victoria Coupe, the featured model for Hupmobile.

“A revolutionary improvement in the new Erskine, sold here by Sandisfield Motor Sales, is the new Burgess Acoustic Muffler. Its walls, lined with steel wool, absorb sound waves without obstructing the passage of the exhaust gasses. In adopting this feature in its lower priced cars, Studebaker again leads in progressive engineering.”

Chevrolet had introduced a new type of brake, both front and rear. The length of service these brakes give were touted as “second to none”. Barreuther Bros. exhibits the Chevrolet.

A new type of tinted glass was being introduced on the Marquette. Also a new improvement is offered in upholstery material used in all closed models. This material, a soft but exceedingly strong plush mohair, is impregnated under a new process with a rubber solution. Winsted Motor Sales handles the Marquette.

Cornelio Motor Sales had this to say about their new Oldsmobile: “A new rust proofing process is being applied to all small parts such as nuts, bolts and washers, as well as running boards, head lamps, fenders and dust aprons.”

“The Hudson Motor Car Co. has notified the Winsted agency, Chapin Motors Inc., that a Hudson Great Eight roadster and a New Essex Challenger roadster were awarded highest honors at the nine-day Tour de France, the most celebrated and grueling of the annual automobile tests staged on the continent.”

“The reserve power provided by a big V-type engine of simple design which develops a full 85-horsepower, is largely responsible for the two outstanding characteristics of the new Oakland eight – performance and reliability, says A. D. Trotter, local agent.”

“Fender headlamps, long a distinguishing Pierce-Arrow characteristic, appear in a new modernized dress on the company’s new array of straight eights. Created years ago, this unusual lamp design has remained one of the landmarks of the auto industry. Although beauty inspired their design, they serve a double purpose of utility, for they provide wider illumination, better guide for steering and a factor that makes for safety. Carl Moore has the Pierce-Arrow agency for this county.”

Today, most autos look alike to me. I honestly can’t tell the difference between quite a few different makes and models, whereas when I was a young man, I could not only tell the make and model, but the year as well.

The first car I ever owned was a 1931 Chevy coupe that my father had purchased from young Izzy Jasmin. I was able to do most engine repairs on that car. The enjoyment that young people derived from working on old cars is a thing of the past, unless they get their hands on something at least 30 years old. Today the owner needs an automotive engineering degree once he lifts the hood! It is the price we pay for comfort and safety.