

OUR CENTURY

1903

AT A GLANCE



PLAIN DEALER FILE

A streetcar at work.

Streetcar firms fight municipal ownership

There was war on the streets of Cleveland in 1903, and it wouldn't let up for the rest of the decade. It was the "streetcar war."

Tom L. Johnson — "Mayor Tom" to thousands of his loyal followers — had won election in 1901 on a platform of municipal ownership. The city easily took over garbage collection and bathhouses, but the streetcar companies put up a fight. As fast as Johnson awarded "grants" for new, low-cost lines, the streetcar companies blocked them with injunctions.

In July, the two private companies, Mark Hanna's "Big Consolidated" and a smaller one called the "Little Consolidated," merged to fight Johnson's efforts. The Big Con and the Little Con became the Con-Con.

Johnson was active on other fronts, fighting private companies that wanted to control the natural-gas pipeline (which reached Cleveland in 1903), and winning passage of a \$200,000 bond issue for a municipal lighting plant. The Illuminating Co. promptly got an injunction to block it.

Cleveland's baseball team — having changed its name from the Bronchos to the Naps in honor of its new star, second-baseman Napoleon Lajoie — was the pre-season favorite to win the American League pennant.

The Naps also were fan favorites, drawing as many as 20,000 to games at League Park. "Cleveland has gone baseball mad — actually raving mad," The Plain Dealer said.

Alas, the team faded in midseason and finished third.

But Cleveland did have a champion. The Case Scientists defeated Western Reserve, 56-0, on Thanksgiving Day to claim the Ohio college football championship for the second straight year.

Over the protests of preservationists, John D. Rockefeller razed the historic Weddell House hotel to make way for the million-dollar Rockefeller Building at Superior Ave. and Water St. (Water is now W. 9th St. and the Rockefeller Building still stands).

Rockefeller also came up with an early version of a golf cart. Tired of walking around his Forest Hills golf course, he hired two boys at 12½ cents an hour. One pushed him around the course on a bicycle while the other held a parasol over his head.

Cleveland's enterprising police chief, Fred Kohler, came up with another innovation — the "corner policeman." He took 17 officers off their beats and assigned them to busy downtown intersections.

They weren't there so much to direct traffic, which largely was horse-drawn, as to be "walking information bureaus." Citizens had complained they could never find a policeman when they needed one.



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One of Cleveland's finest — a "corner policeman" — helps out.

New this year: the A.B. Smythe Co., the city's oldest real estate company, which would become Smythe Cramer Co. in 1972; the Citizens Building; the accounting firm of Ernst & Ernst; Richman Brothers men's clothing; the Sportsmen's Show; a library for the blind, forerunner of Cleveland Public Library's "talking books."

The engine of progress

Alexander Winton helps lead city in horseless-carriage business

By Fred McGunagle

Cleveland was "the leading automobile manufacturing city in the universe," the Cleveland Leader crowed



Alexander Winton

when the first auto show opened in Gray's Armory on Feb. 1, 1903.

And Alexander Winton's cars went the farthest and the fastest.

One of them became the first car ever driven coast to coast when it arrived in New York on July 26, having left San Francisco 64 days earlier. Another, the Bullet No. 2, America's first eight-cylinder car, went a mile a minute — actually, a minute and 1.5 seconds — at the Glenville Race Track in September with the famous Barney Oldfield at the wheel.

Winton was far from the only Cleveland automaker. "Golden Wheels," a history by former Plain Dealer reporter Richard Wager, lists nearly 20 different automobiles produced in 1903 alone. They included the Baker Electric and the White Steamer, but it was the Winton that was to prove the superiority of gasoline motors.

Winton had come to Cleveland from Scotland in 1884; by 1893, his Winton Bicycle Co. was a world leader. Still, he was fascinated by the possibilities of hydrocarbon engines and began experimenting with them in the basement of his home at night.

By 1895, he had built one that he attached to a four-wheel vehicle, which actually moved. The Plain Dealer was amazed at the horseless carriage.



PLAIN DEALER FILE

Winton, closest to the building in the front row of one of his vehicles, always was happy to show off the cars. In the back seat, closest to the camera, is future Mayor Tom L. Johnson. In the center in back is Plain Dealer reporter Charles B. Shanks.



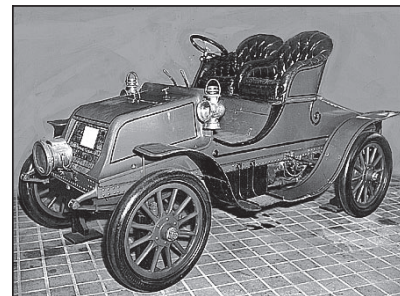
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This Winton Model K was built for five, but here, 22 of the "Woodland Chorus" members piled in.

"Alas, poor equine," was its tongue-in-cheek lament. "If the anticipations of Alexander Winton and the Winton Bicycle Co. will be ultimately realized, the horse will slowly but inevitably drop into oblivion."

The Winton Motor-Carriage Co. was incorporated in 1897. It became the first company to build cars without waiting for custom orders. It was the first to use steering wheels instead of rudders, multiple-disk clutches and self-starters (pneumatic rather than electric).

By 1903, Winton was building cars in an 11-acre factory complex on Berea Rd. and selling them from a seven-story garage and sales office on Huron Rd. downtown. The company was a pioneer in model changes: The 1903 model had a 20-horsepower engine, up from 15 horsepower in



PLAIN DEALER FILE

The famous red two-cylinder Winton, which belonged to Mayor Tom L. Johnson.

1902. The frame was made of ash, the body panels, poplar, and the door handles were solid brass. Price: \$2,500.

Cleveland had ready access to steel, glass and rubber, giving it advantages over other cities as the automotive age dawned. Still, it was pioneers like Winton, Rollin White and Walter Baker who turned Cleveland into the world's leader.

"It was an entrepreneurial city," says Cleveland State University economist Edward Hill.

Unfortunately, the Cleveland automakers didn't look as far forward as another entrepreneur in Detroit.

"Henry Ford wanted a car for the masses," Hill says. "The Cleveland auto firms aimed too high up the market."

Winton made his last car in 1924, abandoning the business to concentrate on diesel engines. His company eventually became the Cleveland Diesel Division of General Motors. GM closed the Cleveland plant in 1962.

The last of 80 locally owned automakers closed in 1932, when the final Peerless rolled off the assembly line. But auto-making went on. Ford had opened a Cleveland plant to assemble Model T's in 1914. And the parts makers, like TRW Corp. and Eaton Corp., maintained Cleveland as an automotive power.

Then, after World War II, all of the Big Three built plants in Cleveland, drawing hundreds of thousands of new Clevelanders from the South. Today, Cleveland is the nation's No. 2 auto city and the automotive industry remains the backbone of the economy, supporting suppliers and service industries and providing jobs to tens of thousands — perhaps mindful of their debt to Alexander Winton.

McGunagle is a Cleveland-area free-lance writer.

LOOKING AT A YEAR

Feb. 16: Suffragette Susan B. Anthony celebrates her 83rd birthday by donating to the United States her collection of books and papers on the fight for women's rights.

June 11: Serbian King Alexander and Queen Draga are murdered inside their Belgrade palace. The murders, apparently plotted by dissident army officers, are timed to coincide with the 34th anniversary of the killing of King Michael, Alexander's great uncle.

June 16: Henry Ford forms the Ford Motor Co. to manufacture his horseless carriages. Seven days later, the company sells its first automobile.

June 19: Swiss police begin investigating a young Italian teacher named Benito Mussolini for allegedly spending time with socialist friends and studying the works of Karl Marx.

July 20: Pope Leo XIII, pontiff for

25 years, dies in Rome. Fifteen days later, he is succeeded by Pope Pius X.

Oct. 13: Baseball's first World Series ends with Boston of the upstart American League beating the Pittsburgh Pirates.

Dec. 17: Scientists are skeptical of a report out of Kitty Hawk, N.C., that Dayton inventors Orville and Wilbur Wright have made four flights — the longest lasting almost a minute. The Wright brothers decline to provide

details of their aircraft, pending the filing of a patent application.

Born: Clare Boothe Luce, Bob Hope, George Orwell, King Olaf V of Norway.

Died: "Calamity Jane" Canary; Richard Jordan, inventor of the machine gun; American artist James Abbott McNeill Whistler, creator of "Whistler's Mother"; abolitionist Cassius M. Clay; former British Prime Minister Lord Salisbury.

THE WRIGHT BROTHERS WEREN'T THE ONLY ONES WHO GOT OFF THE GROUND IN 1903.



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