



MOTOR TRANSPORT MUSEUM NEWS

Volume XVIII No. 1

31949 Highway 94, Campo, CA, 91906 - Ph. (619) 478-2492

Spring 2016

Web Site: www.motortransportmuseum.org ♦ E-mail: motortransportmuseum@gmail.com

The Motor Transport Museum will hold its yearly membership meeting and open house on Saturday, April 16th. See the enclosed flyer for details.

The feature article for this quarter is a reprint of an article from the Spring MTM newsletter of 2007. The subject is Coleman trucks and one of the two mentioned in the article are still here at the Mill.

Coleman Trucks

by John W. Thomas

The Coleman Motor Company of Littleton, CO was formed in 1923 when Alfred E. Coleman and his brother George, two mining multi-millionaires from Oklahoma, bought controlling interest of the Plains Motor Corporation of Denver, CO. The driving force behind Plains Motor was Harleigh Holmes who had conceived and patented a four-wheel drive mechanism and had applied it to the manufacture of trucks. His trucks gained a solid reputation in the rugged snow covered mountains of Colorado where they could out pull any of the two-wheel drive trucks available at the time.

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1930 Coleman showing the large dish-like hubcaps that house the front wheel drive

of Denver. It was there that Harleigh Holmes had started manufacturing his trucks in 1920 and had built a manufacturing facility that was used by Coleman until 1987.

Mr. Holmes job with the new company consisted of visiting mining and lumbering camps of the Rocky Mountains to demonstrate his trucks and sell new ones. Coleman's entire advertising campaign was word-of-mouth spurred by Holmes' demonstrations and the practice of all the Coleman employees to stop at every opportunity and pull out other vehicles stuck in Colorado's mud and snow.

Coleman's basic model for the 1920s was a five-ton with a two-ton model added to the line in 1926. The five-ton was the platform for a fire truck built for the town of Littleton in 1925 and was used by the Colorado Highway Department as a mount for their first rotary snowplow in 1928. This rig proved very effective in keeping the passes around Denver open in the winter.

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Coleman also supplied equipment to the Army. A Coleman truck was purchased for evaluation in 1929 after an Army representative witnessed a spectacular demonstration on Ruby Hill, the steepest hill in Denver. This purchase was followed by another order for Colemans.

During World War II Coleman supplied hundreds of ten-ton trailers to transport tanks and several hundred special trucks on which the Army mounted a crane. Coleman also made a very successful kit to convert two-wheel drive trucks of other manufacturers to four-wheel drive

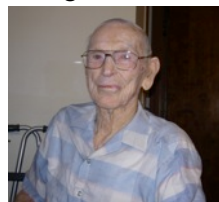
In 1948 Coleman merged with American Road Equipment Company and became American-Coleman. By this time both of the Coleman brothers had died but Harleigh Holmes and the Littleton plant soldiered on. In 1949 American-Coleman won a contract for aircraft towing tractors after a very successful demonstration at Carswell Air Force Base. This would become the mainstay of the company and the Littleton plant for years to come.

Harleigh Holmes died in 1963 at the age of 83, having been active in his truck building endeavors until the end. American Coleman was sold to Kansas City Southern Industries in 1968 and the Littleton plant continued to produce aircraft towing tractors and axles until 1987 when it was closed and its equipment moved to Kansas City.

The MTM has two Colemans, a 1929 and 1930 on display. Both belong to Ed Calvert. Stop and see these unusual trucks when you visit the Mill.

Charles McMahon at Age 100

Charles McMahon, a long-time San Diego resident and valued member and former director of the MTM has turned 100 years old. A self-trained mechanic, he has been a long time participant in automotive endeavors throughout the city, from gas station attendant to garage owner and founding



member of several car clubs.

Charles was born in Chicago and he and his family moved to San Diego in 1929, lured by tales told by a relative in the Navy of a land of eternal summer.

Between his junior and senior year at San Diego High School he took a summer job in a radio shop where he worked from 8 am until about 6 pm, six days a week

and was paid \$1 per day. At the end of the summer his boss offered him an old Model T Ford sitting out back for \$6. He accepted and his boss closed early that Saturday to help Charles tow it home.

Charles took a course in Auto Shop at school in his senior year, and, with that basic knowledge and with the help of a book on auto mechanics, he finally got his "T" to run. It had no body, just a hood and fenders: Charles sat on the gas tank to drive it and took it out at night while his parents were asleep and taught himself to drive.

After about a year he got interested in racing so he took off the body and installed a couple of bucket seats. Most of his racing was street racing around San Diego. Over the years he has owned at least half a dozen Model Ts.

His first real hot rod was a 1926 Chevrolet with a burned out connecting rod. He removed the engine and replaced it with an Olds six cylinder giving it a lot more power. This was followed by a 1933 Studebaker Rockne that had rear ended a truck and was totaled. He took the body off and put on a Chrysler convertible body. His next car was a 1936 Cord with stripped gears that he repaired.

By this time he was working for the gas & electric company as a mechanics' helper, washing cars etc. and was paid \$105 per month: not much, but enough to get married on and buy a house. He worked on his cars in the garage of his Lemon Grove house and soon was the neighborhood mechanic, fixing other peoples' cars in between his own projects.

World War II disrupted his life just as it had everyone's, but he spent it as a Private in the Marine Corps in the relative quiet of San Diego. When the war ended he rejoined the civilian work force, working for himself wheeling and dealing in war surplus equipment as well as repairing cars in his garage. Because of the increased activity, San Diego County made him move his business out of his residential neighborhood so he bought a shop on Broadway in Lemon Grove and hired a couple of helpers.

Over the years he started in the house moving business. The freeway system was expanding and houses in the way of the freeways could be purchased very cheaply. He would buy them and move them to a vacant lot, fix them up to sell them. He got to working with cranes and rigging and phased out his auto repair business.

In his 50s he changed the course of his life: earned three college degrees and went to work as a religious counselor for his church. Then heart trouble forced him to retire. Over the years he has become a member of a number of clubs. In 1941 he was a founding member of the San Diego Roadster Club which is still an active racing organization. He was also a long time member of the Board of Directors of the Motor Transport Museum.

Charles now lives in a retirement home on Bankers' Hill in San Diego. Throughout the years he has seen many changes in the automotive scene. We congratulate Charles on his long career in the automotive business and wish him well in his well-earned retirement.

New Members

Helen Ofield of Lemon Grove, CA has upgraded her membership to Life member since the last newsletter. New General members include **Christopher Boyce** of San Diego, **Dave Bostrom** of Chico, CA and **Verlynn Strellner** of Highland Park, IL. Also enrolling as new General members are **Norm Haly** of Altadena, CA, **Chuck Jones** of Willits, CA, **Harold Boswell** of Monterey, TN and **Montana Eastman** of Campo, CA. We welcome these new members to our Museum and thank them for their support.

Recent Donations

The Motor Transport Museum accepts donations of vehicles, tools, literature and miscellaneous items. The Museum is a 501 (c) (3) charitable organization and all donations are tax deductible.



The 1982 Buick and the Ford 600 farm tractor donated by Al Tom

Al Tom of San Diego donated a number of vehicles since publishing of the last newsletter. Among them was a 1982 Buick sedan and a Ford 600 farm tractor.

The MTM thanks Al for his generosity in helping the Museum to attain its goals.

Upcoming Events

The **Motor Transport Museum** will hold its annual membership meeting and Open House on April 16th. Please see the enclosed flyer for further information.

The **Antique Gas and Steam Engine Museum** will hold its **Festival of Fools** celebration on April 1 through April 3 at its facility at Vista, CA. There will be live steam engines, a mad science fair, food and entertainment. For more information please visit www.festivaloffools.org

The **Orange Empire Railway Museum** will hold its **30th Annual Antique Truck Show and Swap Meet** on Sunday May 1st. Besides an extensive collection of antique trucks there will be train and trolley rides. The MTM will have a booth at this event. For more information visit www.oerm.org

The **Antique Gas and Steam Engine Museum** will hold its **Spring Antique Engine and Tractor Show** on June 18th and 19th and June 25th and 26th at the museum grounds in Vista, CA. There will be antique equipment and tractor parade, blacksmithing, wheelwright demonstration and train rides. For further information please visit www.agsem.com

The **MTM Board of Directors'** meetings for the Spring quarter of 2016 will be held at the Horseless Carriage Foundation Library at 8186 Center Street in La Mesa, CA at 6:30 PM on the following Thursdays:

April 21st **May 19th** **June 16th**
Everyone is encouraged to attend.

Hours of Operation

The Museum facility at 31949 Highway 94 in Campo, CA is open to the public every Saturday from 9 AM to 5 PM. Admission is free, donations are accepted.

Wednesdays and Fridays are workdays and members are working on projects. Visitors are welcome to come in if the gate is open.

Members! Advertise Items for sale in the Newsletter!

The Motor Transport News is now offering a sales insert page for museum members. Got a vehicle, motor or some parts that you would like to sell? Are you in need of some vehicle parts or a particular type of equipment or truck? Now you can reach hundreds of buying and selling sources by advertising in our newsletter, and it's free! Check out our new sales insert for more information on how you can place your ad in our "For Sale" and "Items Wanted" section. Place ads before the 10th of March, June, September and December.

Get Your Newsletter by email

You can donate towards MTM's cause without spending a dime by simply receiving these quarterly issues of the *Motor Transport Museum News* by e-mail. This way MTM can save mailing costs and use the savings towards operating expenses. You will get an instantaneous PDF copy of the newsletter without the Museum spending money on printing and postage. Email us at motortransportmuseum@gmail.com and subscribe.

Remember

Experience keeps a dear school, yet fools will learn in no other.

Benjamin Franklin

MTM Officers and Directors

The officers and directors of the Motor Transport Museum are as follows:

Officers: Greg Long, President
Bill Fields, Vice President
John W. Thomas, Secretary

Carl E. Calvert, Chief Financial Officer

Directors: Jim Jensen, Bill Jellyman, Mike Anderson,
John Thomas, Carl Calvert, Bill Fields,
Bryan Butler, Sherman George and Mark Scudder

Many New Additions Are Coming To Your Museum and we would like you to be a part of it!

This year brings some exciting new additions to the museum and for our members. These additions will enhance our ability to promote awareness of the history behind trucks and the trucking industry, improve our ability to restore; maintain and display our collection and will bring exciting events for our member's participation.

Exhibit and Showcase Room

This will be a designated area where we can exhibit the technical and historical progression of transport vehicles and its industry as well as a rotational showcase of our collection. It will also provide a space for indoor events.

Restoration Shop

This will be a well-organized and equipped area to enhance our abilities towards the restoration and maintenance of our collection. It will allow the opportunity for members and students to participate in the process.

Reorganization of the Grounds

This will allow us a larger accessible parking area and visually improve the display of our collection.

Quarterly Members Events

To give our members an opportunity to get together and enjoy planned events including guest speakers, hands on training lessons, outings to special places of interest, movies and entertainment, which can include your friends and family. This will also give you an opportunity keep informed of your museums progress.

Yes, these are ambitious projects! And are projects which will require many more volunteers and manpower to accomplish! And so we are asking for your help. The help requires both a heavy and light workload, which can facilitate your personal physical abilities. We have a flexible work schedule and any amount of time you can supply is gratefully appreciated. Our immediate need is for volunteers at our Annual Open House on April 16th. If you are able to help us please call us at: 619 478 9424 or email us at: motortransportmuseum@gmail.com ASAP.

The work has already begun, as you will see at our Annual Open House. As a member this museum you also are investing in its well being and as such it is your museum as well.

MOTOR TRANSPORT MUSEUM
APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

New Renewal

Name _____ Spouse _____
 Street Address _____ City _____
 State _____ Zip _____
 Phone _____ eMail _____

GENERAL Membership	1 Yr \$ 20 _____	2 Yr \$ 40 _____	3 Yr \$ 60 _____
GENERAL-INTERNATIONAL Membership (Non USA mailing address)			1 Yr \$25 _____
CORPORATE Membership			1 Yr \$75 _____
LIFE Membership			\$250 _____
ENDOWING LIFE Membership			\$1000 _____
ASSOCIATE Membership - non-profit organization			1 Yr \$35 _____
JUNIOR Membership - children under 18 - non-voting			1 Yr \$1 _____
STUDENT Membership - full-time students 18-25 years old			1 Yr \$6 _____

I agree to comply strictly with the By Laws of the Motor Transport Museum; to conduct myself at all times in a manner which will support and promote the best interest of the Motor Transport Museum

Signature of Applicant _____ Date _____

MOTOR TRANSPORT MUSEUM
 81949 HIGHWAY 94
 CAMPO, CA 91906

PLACE
STAMP
HERE