

The Chalmers Automobile Newsletter

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This issue features a brief history of the Saxon Motor Company and how it was related to the Chalmers Motor Company. Also included is a newsletter subscription reminder.

A SPECIAL OFFER

Ted Beebe (#37) wrote to me recently about how he plans to make his 1911 Model M "30" easier to steer. Ted says: *"I intend to make new gears for the steering box, changing the ratio to make the car easier to steer"*. He learned that Henry Sorensen (#54) had done this several years ago for a few owners and all were very pleased with the result. Ted asked that I include this information in the newsletter because other members may be interested in doing the same thing. He welcomes any member who wants to join in on his order - the more sets that are made, the lower the price will be. Anyone interested in easier steering should contact Ted.

CHALMERS CLASSIFIED

The Chalmers Classified listing is intended as a service for members to advertise Chalmers cars and parts that are for sale and/or wanted. Please contact me regarding items that should no longer be listed and pass-on your new wanted and for sale items.

WANTED:

- 1922/1923 hubcaps (posted 4/2000) - contact Bob DuBois (#9).
- 1912-1914 Chalmers Model 12/18 "Six" (also 1910-1912 Model "Forty", 1912-1914 Model "36", or 1914-1915 Model 24/29 "Master Six") (posted 4/2000) - contact John Lehnert (#35).
- 1914 Chalmers Model 24 "Master Six" shop manual (posted 4/2000) - contact Jim and Donna Stamper (#52).
- Model T Splitdorf magneto for 1912 Chalmers Model 11 (posted 12/2000) - contact Al Shaw (#25).
- 1911 Chalmers Model "30" Pony Tonneau complete rear axle assembly (or any parts for it) (posted 7/2001) - contact Fred Hoch (#38).
- 1910-1912 Chalmers Model 11 "30" exhaust manifold gaskets (posted 3/2001) - contact Al Shaw (#25).
- 1908-1909 Chalmers-Detroit Model F "30" radiator (posted 10/2001) - contact Alan Leclair (#42).
- 1923 Chalmers Model "Y" Jaxon disc wheels (one or more) for 24" tires (posted 2/2002)- contact Alan Maris (#56).
- 1913 Chalmers Model 36 front wheel hub and left side bail handle sidelight (kerosene and electric) or a matching pair (posted 2/2002)- contact Lloyd Elliott (#26)
- 1912 Chalmers Model 11 "30" rear spring and running board toolbox (posted 2/2002)- Mike Morris (#65)

FOR SALE:

For Chalmers Automobile Registry and Newsletter correspondence, write to: D. C. Hammond, 110 Sourwood Dr., Hatboro, PA 19040 or e-mail to: dchamm@worldnet.att.net	Page 1 of 3
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- 1916 Model 35-A "Six-30" parts and some sheet metal (posted 4/2000) - contact Don Ohnstad (#19).
- 1909 Model F "30" engine cooling fan assembly (includes fan, hub, pulley, and bracket) in good painted condition with no rust for \$95 or best offer (posted 9/2000) - contact Chuck Fanucci (#45).
- 1917 Model 35-A "Six-30" described as a diamond in the rough that is drivable but needs some restoration for \$5,000 (see it at <http://www.AlternateFuels.com/1917.htm>) (posted 3/2001) - contact Glenn DeRosa (#58).

THE CHALMERS AND SAXON CONNECTION

There is a little known connection between the Chalmers Motor Company and the Saxon Motor Company, which involved Hugh Chalmers and some of his Chalmers executives. Saxon was started in 1913 as a direct result of the cycle-car craze. Cycle-cars were little more than a motorcycle with four wheels, chain drive, and tandem seating for a driver and one passenger. They represented the first serious attempt at building a small lightweight car in the U.S. Saxon was a little more sophisticated than a typical cycle-car; having an automobile type engine and side-by-side seating. The price, however, was like a cycle-car at \$395.

Hugh Chalmers along with an old N.C.R. colleague and Chalmers Secretary and Advertising Manager, Harry W. Ford, agreed to take advantage of the craze by building the small lightweight Saxon, so named for the lowland Scottish people. A prototype, built in August of 1913, generated much interest. Through the efforts of Hugh, Harry, and eight others, \$100,000 was secured to form the Saxon Motor Company in November 1913. Total capitalization was \$350,000, with \$250,000 subscribed in stock. Harry Ford was appointed president and general manager; George W. Dunham, vice-president; L. R. Scafe, secretary and treasurer; and R. E. Cole, chief engineer. By December of 1913, production was ready to start in a small three-story factory leased from Demotcar (Detroit Motor Car).

From the onset, Saxon was a success. For only \$395, the Saxon owner got a well-designed 96-inch wheelbase automobile, that was lightweight, had low maintenance, and a good looking streamlined body. The water-cooled 12 HP engine consisted of a four-cylinder cast en bloc design having a bore and stroke of $2\frac{5}{8}$ x 4 inches. Later improvements included a 6-cylinder 20 HP engine placed on a 112-inch wheelbase chassis. It was a left-hand drive car with pedals on the floor for accelerator and brake, dash mounted spark advance, and control levers located centrally. The transmission, located at the rear axle (connected to the engine via a drive shaft/universal joint) was a sliding gear type with two forward and one reverse gear selections. This was upgraded later to three forward gears. Two sets of brakes at the rear wheels consisted of the service brake plus an emergency brake. Some cycle-cars sold for a lot more than the Saxon, which was classified as an automobile; so one can appreciate from this description what a good value it was!

Harry Ford developed a reputation as the "boy president". His efforts in starting and organizing the Saxon Motor Company were recognized as exceptional. Production started in the old 50,000 square feet Democar plant early in 1914. Soon, the factory was turning out 40 cars per day and a second shift was needed. Sales were strong and Saxon earned considerable notoriety when it demonstrated excellent reliability and gas mileage during the transcontinental exhibition to christen the new Lincoln Highway. Car sales, some from cooperating Chalmers dealers, were booming and near the end of 1914, Ford realized that he needed more manufacturing space.

In early 1915, he leased more space in the old Abbot factory in Detroit allowing car production to reach 12,000 by the end of that year. Harry Ford was becoming very successful and in late 1915, he bought Hugh Chalmers' Saxon shares and re-organized the company into the Saxon Motor Corporation. This re-organization included a Canadian branch setup in Windsor, Ontario. Located at 99 Pitt Street West, it served as the headquarters for all Canadian operations and was managed by K. W. Macrae.

A new 6-cylinder 5-passenger model with a wheelbase of 112 inches was added to the production line in 1916. By the end of 1916, he doubled the previous years production and Saxon Motor Corporation earned an 8th place ranking in U.S. automobile production. Harry Ford was coming on big time and the automotive press started to compare his success to that of Henry Ford (no relation).

Saxon's peak year was 1917 when they produced 28,000 cars. A large capital investment had been made in parts and material inventory for this increased production. Then disaster struck, the old Abbot factory burned down. Harry Ford decided to build a new larger and more modern plant. Suddenly, with the huge inventory investment combined with the unforeseen need for construction funds, Harry Ford realized he had made a major mistake; he had no operating cash. Additionally, Harry had become ill, he was struck by the influenza epidemic coursing through Detroit during that time.

Harry Ford resigned in December of 1917 for health reasons and Benjamin Gotfredson was installed as president. Harry never recovered and he died within a year. Records for the 1918-1919 period are sketchy, but at best, production was sporadic and limited to about 3,000 of the 6-cylinder model. This was partly due to Ford's mistake as well as material shortages brought about from World War I. During 1919, Gotfredson resigned and was replaced by C. A. Pfeffer (a former Chalmers executive).

Pfeffer began a re-organization of the company, but the stockholders' indifference to the situation slowed the process. In 1920, Saxon introduced a new overhead valve 4-cylinder model called the Duplex, but the company financial turmoil continued. The new unfinished factory, still unpaid for, was sold to the Industrial Terminal Corporation who completed it and sold it to General Motors. The 6-cylinder model was dropped in 1921 and the Saxon parts business, known as Puritan Auto Parts Company, was sold for \$550,000 with \$485,000 of that going to pay off debt. Finally, in 1922 with very limited resources, Pfeffer leased the former Ace factory in Ypsilanti Michigan to continue production of the Duplex. However, financial problems worsened and only a pilot line was installed. C. A. Pfeffer resigned and with no new president stepping in, Saxon went bankrupt within a year. Some 1923 models were offered, but they were merely leftovers from 1922 production.

SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL REMINDER

Your personalized subscription status key has been printed on the envelope for this newsletter. It is located in the upper right corner of the address block and shows your subscription status/expiration date. If the date is 4/30/02, it means your subscription will expire on that date and you should renew it to continue receiving the Chalmers Automobile Newsletter for another year. Renewal is not necessary if your subscription status key has a different (future) date or the words "Life Member" (for pre-2001 members). To renew, please send \$5 (cash or a check made payable to D. C. Hammond) to:

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