

FIRST AUTOMOBILES IN WAUPACA

That Waupaca was growing into an “auto town” was noted June 3, 1909 in the Republican Post. “That this community has been seized by the fast riding wave is evidenced by the growing list of those who have purchased auto carriages, cars and demis within the past six months as given in [the following] list: A.M. Hansen, Rambler touring car and Maxwell runabout; Dr. Christofferson, Rambler touring car; Dr. John Pelton, Mason roadster; Dr. Delano, Buick runabout; Matt Jensen, Buick runabout; Nathan Cohen, Reo touring car; Cohen Bros., delivery car for store; John Gordon, Reo touring car; Andrew Larson, Ford runabout; George Faulks, Ford runabout; James Jenson, Cadillac runabout; John Doerfler, Orient runabout; Tom Salverson, Reo touring car and runabout; Frank Hoaglin, Mason touring car; Charles. Hanson, Cadillac “Thirty” five passenger touring car; [and] Dan Downey, Cadillac “Thirty” demi tonneau roadster, for a total of eighteen vehicles in the city.

The Record on May 5, 1910 reported there were now twenty-five cars in Waupaca. “Six years ago an automobile was a curiosity in Waupaca. For two years we boasted of one. The number has grown in the last four years to 25.” It listed the owners and which model car they owned. There were seven Fords, five Reos, four Cadillacs, four Buicks, two Ramblers, two Masons and one Maxwell.

In the book, *We Remember*, by Sophelia Kurkowski’s class, JoAnne Penney interviewed Etta Slater. According to Etta, “I remember when my husband, Harry Slater, was the proud possessor of the first automobile in Waupaca in 1902. It was a small two passenger Ford. In 1903 we exchanged the Ford for a larger, four passenger Oldsmobile.”

In another project by Miss Kurkowski’s class Jean Anderson collected the memories of Mr. and Mrs. Dell Anderson. “Matt Jensen had one of the first cars in Waupaca. It had no top. The back seat was made out of cane (like in rocking chairs). One Sunday he was taking the pastor to one of his country churches. Karen Anderson and Emma Nelson, members of the choir, went along to furnish the music. They were driving along, when all of a sudden the back fell of the car. Jensen kept on going and the girls were left sitting in the middle of the road laughing.”

In the same project Betty Call wrote about a time recalled by Anton Hansen when there were only two cars in Waupaca. “The driver of one car, my father, wore a long, yellow duster and a straw hat and gloves. The car was one of the first red Ramblers. Tiny wheels – a crank on the side – of course no top or windshield. The seats were built high and no doors were needed.”

Written by J. J. Johnson
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