
LINDEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

1919 FLASHBACK FORD TRUCK HAS 100 YEAR CONNECTION TO LINDEN



*This Ford truck is part of the Parish family. Left to right: Carmen, Matt, Ella and Tina.
Photo by Stan Cutler*

A century old Ford Model T one ton truck owned by Matt and Tina Parish is a true time capsule of Linden history. Dickie Smith, of Linden, bought the truck new which at the time Ford sold only as a chassis, engine, running gear, steering wheel and firewall. New owners were required to be do-it-yourselfers to finish the job

It is believed that both the dump box and the cab were added by workmen in Linden. The dump box appears to be recycled from a former wagon box pulled by horses. The hinges on the box are old horse hoof rasp files that, no doubt, a local blacksmith had handy to re-use on the box.

The wooden cab was probably made by a Linden carpenter. The curved forward roof and exterior gives it almost a victorian era look and is different from other truck cabs of the period that were simple and squared off. The well crafted interior wood appears to be like something out of a house.

The truck is titled as a 1919 vehicle but Matt notes that the engine serial number shows it was made June 4, 1921. He added, "The headlights have green visors that were only used for six months in 1921 and the steering wheel and controls are from 1921."

FLASHBACK FORD, CONTINUED

It is possible this is a 1921 truck or a replacement engine was installed if for example the original one froze up over winter. The steering wheel and controls could have been upgrades, either way Matt said there is no way to find out so this will remain a mystery.

Matt said, "Dickie Smith did not drive the truck because his feet were too big and the pedals were so close together. Freddie Varcoe was the one who drove it."

Matt did get the opportunity to talk with Fred before he passed away. It is known that the truck was used to haul mine tailings to Edmund for construction on Highway 18 and no doubt for other projects. Inside the cab on the wood panels are a large number of lead pencil roman numeral markings to indicate the number of loads delivered.

This Ford truck sat quietly for 55 years in a shed behind the Linden feed mill. Matt's great uncle Melvin Rickard bought it from Dickie Smith's grandson in 1984. When pulled out of the shed the license plate on the truck was dated 1929 and is displayed on the truck today.

It was love at first sight for Matt when he went with his dad and great uncle to bring the hidden treasure out into daylight. Matt remembers, "I rode with dad and Melvin, I was sitting in the middle of the seat, looking out the back window when they were hauling it on a trailer. I thought it was the neatest truck when he bought it."

After the truck was trailered to Melvin's home in Dodgeville, Matt's great uncle

knew a mechanic in Spring Green who was very familiar with Model T engines who came to look at it in the hopes of getting the vehicle running. Remarkably within 10 minutes the Model T fired up from its 55 year nap and ran smoothly.

As he was growing up Matt and his parents would visit Melvin at Christmas and on other occasions. Adjacent to the Rickard house was a shed with the truck and other collector vehicles. Matt recalls with a laugh, "The truck was always sitting in the back corner of the shed and I always had to go look at that truck."

As Matt grew older Melvin agreed to sell the truck to him on one condition. Matt explains, "The only way he would sell it to me was if I put a starter on it, so I didn't break my arms trying to crank it."

The truck came with one glitch, it overheated after running for ten or fifteen minutes. Matt discovered the problem when he took the head off the cast iron block. He said, "I took the head off and the water passage coming out of the head to the radiator was plugged with rust so the water couldn't circulate. I got all the rust cleaned out of the block and head and then everything worked fine."

The inline four cylinder engine has a top speed of just over 20 MPH, the rear end was geared to move heavy loads. Matt said the truck shakes and vibrates when driven over the 20 MPH.

FLASHBACK FORD, CONTINUED

Starting and driving the truck is more of a learning curve than vehicles today. Inside the cab are three pedals and no clutch. You press down the first pedal and hold it down for low and let off on it for high, it is two speed. The middle pedal is for reverse and the other pedal is a brake. There is a lever on the steering wheel for a throttle and another one to advance the spark.



The last license plate on the Ford Model T when it was parked, shows 1929.

Starting the truck isn't difficult after you have learned how, but still there is no danger of a novice just jumping in and taking off with it. The truck can be started with either the starter or the magneto. Matt showed me how he does four quick cranks and runs back to the cab and uses the starter to engage the engine. There is no charging system. A large hand operated lever easily dumps the payload from the box.



Instead of glass where normally is a rear window a canvas curtain rolls down to keep out rain

FLASHBACK FORD, CONTINUED

The 1919 (or 1921?) Ford is a fixture at recent Linden Frolic Days parades and Matt gets it out on the roads in his neighborhood of rural Linden every once in awhile. He took me for a ride and it really gave the feel of a century ago with a breeze blowing through the open windows and doors. The front fenders are dimpled all over with dings and dents from years of faithful service and the faded black paint is an honest patina of a survivor vehicle.

Rasp files from a blacksmith came in handy for brackets and hinges on the dump box.



LEAD CITY MOTORS SOLD FORDS AND BUICKS

A Linden auto company briefly sold Ford and Buick vehicles here just prior to the American entry in World War I. Clayton Combellick and Thomas Weir were partners of the fledgling concern.

When WW I involved the United States both men dissolved the company and enlisted to serve their country. Weir enlisted in the Platteville company of the Wisconsin National Guard. He previously was a member of the Texas National Guard.

Corporal Thomas Weir was on a transport ship sunk by a German submarine, but was one of the survivors. He did not return to Linden after the war.

Clayton Combellick died of pneumonia at Camp Grant after he enlisted in the Army.



You could also buy a new Chevy in Linden circa 1920 from the Burton's.

LOOKING BACK 100 YEARS TO THE START OF A NEW DECADE FULL OF HOPE AND PROMISE

The country was about to embark on the roaring '20s with abundant prosperity and excess for some. What was the dawn of a new decade for Linden like and how did it play out? We could easily ask the same question in 2020.

As New Year's day dawned in 1920 the outlook for the year ahead was mixed. The Great War, the war to end all wars was over. Linden servicemen returned and organized the Linden Township Post No. 241 of the American Legion. The horrible Spanish flu epidemic was ending, which had taken the lives of numerous Linden area residents of all ages. Women were attaining the right to vote. The economy was strong and the country was spared the devastation Europe was experiencing. For some people the date of January 16, 1920 signaled a decades long victory, the start of prohibition.

In January, 1920 the business community was diverse and strong. In the downtown area existed two clothing stores, a hardware store, lumber company and feed mill, telephone exchange, bakery and restaurant, the Linden auditorium theatre showed movies every Wednesday and Saturday evening, the bank was strong, butcher shop, funeral home, Chevy dealer, barber shop, grocery store, pharmacy and others.

Linden's two biggest industries and employers—mining and farming were showing beginning signs of distress. The wartime zinc boom was over, prices had plunged and then came back some. It was believed that the demand from a booming economy would lift lead and zinc prices back to profitable levels. However, the quick profits were gone and local mines controlled by a board of directors in Milwaukee or elsewhere closed down several of the large mines. A few other mines continued to operate throughout the decade of the 1920's but the market prices tended to be on a roller coaster. The largest operating mine, The Badger mine on the Fama Rule farm North of Linden employed over 50 miners into the early 1930's. It also featured the first flotation mill in the entire lead-zinc district. It would go bankrupt as the great depression deepened.

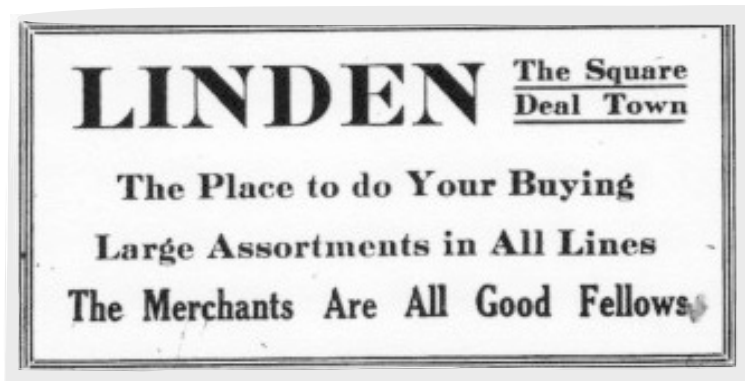
Linden area agriculture was in a somewhat similar situation. Expenses were going up but prices farmers received for their products and livestock not as much. When the economic depression hit, prices received were at rock bottom and an extreme drought only made a bad situation worse.

The start of Prohibition had profound influences on Linden as the new year of 1920 was ushered in. The taverns became billiard halls and sold tobacco, candy and soft drinks. Prohibition did not stop the flow of alcohol here it only made it illegal and off the main street. Prohibition increased the workload for the Iowa County Sheriff and court system. Raids were made at numerous homes and farms in the Linden area during the entire decade of 1920.

LOOKING BACK 100 YEARS, CONTINUED

In the spring of 1920 another attempt for Linden to have its very own newspaper was launched. The Linden Enterprise featured local news and ads and local reporter Harley Hicks ran the paper. He had returned to Linden after serving in WW I. Unfortunately the Enterprise met the fate of previous Linden papers and would end its run in November of 1920.

Transportation in 1920 was in the transition stage from horse drawn wagons and buggies to cars and trucks. Linden because of mining still had passenger and freight service on the Mineral Point and Northern railroad. However, as each year went forward in the roaring '20s, cars and trucks became more dominant. The Mineral Point Zinc company owned the MP & N and they started closing their mines especially at Highland around 1928. The days of rail service ended in the early 1930s here, with Edmund continuing their rail until about 1980.



The Linden Lumber company received its shipments by rail from the Mineral Point & Northern depot here.



GIFTS RECEIVED BY THE LINDEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

WILLIAM AND LOIS RALPH, \$1,500

JUDY VIVIAN, Samuel Buckett's pension file from the Civil War.

WILL MILLHOUSE, monetary donation for postage

JANEAN FAULL, Linden photo and postcard

CORRECTION:

In our last newsletter in the article, "Old Linden Truck New Centerpiece", a mention was made of the "Golman" family. It should be the Goldman family. The surname flourished in the Linden area going back to at least the 1880's.

IN MEMORIAM

CAROLE E. RULE, age 90, of Linden township passed away on November 23, 2019. She was born in Dodgeville to her parents Everette and Joyce (Terrill) Potterton. Carole loved her community and was an active and important cornerstone for many in the area. She always had a smile and word of encouragement for everyone. She retired as a realtor at the age of 77 but remained busy and active in many volunteer roles. She was preceded in death by her husband Norm Rule; a son Brad; a brother William Potterton; her parents; four sisters-in-law and four brothers-in-law. Carole is survived by three children, Terry (Cheryl) Rule of rural Mineral Point; Lana (James) Dobson of Frankfort, IL; and Jana (Tom) Deery of Ormond Beach, FL; eleven grandchildren; thirteen great-grandchildren; sister-in-law, Marlene Potterton on Green Valley, AZ; sisters-in-law, Elsie Masters, Fama Rule and Donna Ralph as well as nieces, nephews and many friends. A Celebration of Life was held at the Mineral Point Methodist Church, inurnment in Bloomfield cemetery.

CARLOS R. SCHROEDER, age 91, of Mineral Point died on December 12, 2019 after complications from an automobile accident. He was an award winning cheesemaker and left a rich legacy of four generations of cheesemakers. His love for the business started early and he had his own cheese factory at the age of 16. He is also remembered when he operated the Bloomfield cheese factory in Linden township and the Linden cheese factory in the village of Linden. Carlos and his wife Jeann had nine children including Lloyd (Beverly) of Linden. Funeral services were held at Grace Lutheran Church in Dodgeville with burial in East Side cemetery.

ROBERT O. RALPH, age 91, of Cobb died December 27, 2019. He was born December 7, 1928, a son of Robert and Arlene Ralph. He graduated from Cobb High School and enlisted in the U.S. Army. He married Dorothy Yearous in 1950 and they lived in Gays Mills where he worked as a telephone technician for Richland Grant Telephone Cooperative until his retirement. Dorothy preceded him in death in 1983. In 1989 he married Donna Rule and they resided in Cobb. Bob is preceded in death by his wife Dorothy, his son Mike, his sisters Lois Ralph, Kathryn Ruzicka and Gwen Baker. Bob is survived by his wife Donna, his children June Williford of Texas, Mark (Kim) Ralph of North Carolina, Douglas (Lisa) Ralph of Florida; Kevin (Laurie) of Boscobel, and Dawn (Robert) Silvers of Muscoda; his step children Will (Paula) Rule ; Charles Rule and Rhoda Rule. Memorial service was held January 3, 2020 at the Gorgen-MicGinley Funeral home in Dodgeville.

LILA MAE (RULE) MEYER, age 85 died December 31, 2019. She was born in Linden, daughter of Elwin and Matilda (Prohaska) Rule on Feb. 16, 1934. Lila is survived by her husband Ralph; daughter Joette; son Paul (Laurie McAllister). A mass of Christian burial was held on January 4, 2020. She was buried at Resurrection Catholic Cemetery in Madison.

***** PHOTO AND DOCUMENT DONATIONS ALWAYS APPRECIATED *****

If you have any photos or documents on Linden area history we would love to make a copy for our archives. Photos and documents can be scanned and returned to you if desired. Contact either the President or Vice-President listed below. Membership in the Linden Historical Society is \$10 per year, lifetime membership \$100. Make check payable to Linden Historical Society and send to Treasurer Robin Lindner.

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