

## Fairport Blacksmith Shoes Horseless Carriage

By Bill Poray, Perinton Town Historian

A crowd gathered at Cleveland's City Hall early on a sunny Monday morning in May of 1899. Two men were perched anxiously on the leather seat of a horseless carriage, as they counted down the seconds on a pocket watch. At precisely 6:00 am, the contraption came to life, spit and sputtered, and they were off.

So began a historic journey from Cleveland to New York by inventor Alexander Winton, President of the Winton Motor Carriage Company, accompanied by a member of the press. The company sold twenty-two single cylinder Phaetons in 1898, making Winton the first commercially viable automobile manufacturer in the United States. The car used in this event was said to have been one of the first prototypes, with over 12,000 miles of testing prior to the Cleveland to New York time trial.

### DISPENSE WITH A HORSE



and save the expense, care and anxiety of keeping it. To run a motor carriage costs about  $\frac{1}{2}$  cent a mile.

**THE WINTON MOTOR CARRIAGE**

is the best vehicle of its kind that is made. It is handsomely, strongly and yet lightly constructed and elegantly finished. Easily managed. Speed from 3 to 20 miles an hour. The hydrocarbon motor is simple and powerful. No odor, no vibration. Suspension Wire Wheels. Pneumatic Tires. Ball Bearings.  Send for Catalogue.

**THE WINTON MOTOR CARRIAGE CO., Cleveland, Ohio.**

*Price \$1,000. No Agents.*

From Cleveland, the pair headed for Buffalo on primitive roads along the shore of Lake Erie. The Westfield Republican reported on the excitement in that town: "Main Street was lined with people to see the sight. As it reached the top of the hill the machine lit out again, and a whizz and a small cloud of dust was about all anyone saw."

The duo left Buffalo on the second morning, and before long passed through Batavia, and soon after, LeRoy, headed for Rochester. After a fine meal, they left the city and hoped to arrive in Lyons before nightfall. The pair piloted their machine along Rochester's stately East Avenue, and headed toward Fairport.

As word spread that the arrival of the Winton contraption was imminent, a crowd formed at the Fullamtown canal bridge, excited to catch their first glimpse of a horseless carriage. Soon the large group spotted the fast-moving carriage, as it swiftly climbed the steep approach to the bridge, a challenge it overcame with ease. The Winton left the bridge at full acceleration and raced down Church Street, when a rock in the road caused the right-front wheel to separate itself from the vehicle. The wounded contraption veered into a roadside ditch, minus two passengers, ejected onto Church Street.

Alexander Winton dusted himself off, and quickly contacted his factory in Cleveland. A new axle arrived at Fairport's New York Central station the next morning. Alfred Smith, a Perrin Street blacksmith, helped Winton repair his invention. It was no doubt a rare occurrence, that a horse was not remotely involved in the work of a Fairport blacksmith, for this was, after all, a horseless carriage.

The record-setting Winton continued on to New York without incident. The 707-mile trip was completed in just over forty hours running time over six days, including a memorable but unplanned stop in Fairport.



*By 1920, the horseless carriage had all but replaced the horse on Fairport and Perinton streets. In this photo, Fairport native Leland Seaman stands with his foot on the running board of a Ford service car, property of his employer, the American Can Company.*