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"FOR A BIGGER AND BETTER BIRMINGHAM"

PART THREE

Oakland County's Greatest Weekly Newspaper

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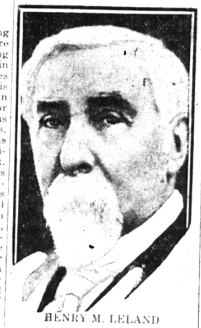
Henry M. Leland's Name Linked With Evolution of Automobile

By George R. Averill



HENRY M. LELAND

Real Crusaders

One of the penalties of being a really great person is to endure hardship while you are putting across the ideal that fills you; in most cases the one who achieves greatness has almost lived out his span of earthly existence, or—in the case of great reformers or men and women of letters—has been dead,lo! these many years. The kind of greatness that wins the adoration of people is the direct result of creative work. Thinkers of great ideals, crusaders of fine reformations, and inventors of mechanical contrivances, as well as discoverers of natural laws, move in a world of their own making; in most such cases, too, their empire is unknown and untraversed by the howling mob. The real crusader of a new art or science must wear his dreams upon his sleeve, for his heart probably long since was plucked out and placed on the highest pinnacle of the temple, there to be devoured by the fowl of the air. Yet, even though they walk, at times, through the darkened valleys of suspicion and a seeming fanaticism of purpose, genius is happy "in the mere thinking of interesting things." One man can do much to change the course of millions of lives. Such a man is Henry M. Leland, of Detroit, who spoke in Birmingham last week at the annual banquet of the Birmingham Real Estate Board.

A Fine Picture

Henry M. Leland would be a fine picture for an artist to paint. His eighty-three years of creative effort in the mechanical world have touched his countenance lightly; his skin is wrinkled less than the average man of forty, his hair is plentiful and white, his shoulders are broad and his back slightly stooped, and his manner is most friendly, yet vigorous. To meet Mr. Leland and to hear him talk immediately gives one the impression that here is a man who has something to say about life and living, and who can back up his talk with personal reminiscences. The man who, probably more than any other single individual in the world, has conceived and promoted the modern motor car industry is—as far as we can learn—Henry M. Leland, of Detroit, Michigan.

Haymarket Riot

Way back in 1890 Henry M. Leland paused in his little Providence, Rhode Island foundry, and wondered if he could not better his fortunes in the West. Labor troubles that were always brewing along the Atlantic seaboard were raising havoc with the business of manufacturing in all lines. The Middle West, thought Mr. Leland, had made sufficient headway in the agricultural field to afford the location of another foundry in Illinois, Indiana, or Michigan. So it was thus that Mr. Leland, on the day of the famous Haymarket Riot in Chicago, arrived in the Windy City to look around for a site for a foundry. But a glimpse of the riot convinced Mr. Leland that Chicago was a poor place to engage the services of labor in; there were too many anarchists there, believed Mr. Leland, it was enough for a manufacturer to have to fight for raw materials, let alone human labor. No, Chicago was too anarchistic, thought the eastern foundryman, so he came to Detroit, instead, and that little riot in Chicago was the chief cause of Detroit's present world dominating position in the motor car industry.

Came To Detroit

Thus it came to pass, in 1890, that the Leland family moved to Detroit, where the leadmwinner built a small foundry, engaging in the manufacture of mechanical contrivances kindred to the agricultural and a few distantly related enterprises. At that time Old Dobbin still reigned, (and was reined) over the streets of Detroit and the rest of the world; cobblestones were fashionable, a few holes in the street were welcomed by the barefoot kiddies during the rainy season, and concrete pavements were still unknown from the inventive archives of mankind. The internal combustion engine had been born, but was used only as a means of propelling small boats and ferrys.

How It Started

One day a then middle-aged Detroit foundryman was invited to ride across the Detroit River in a small launch. Several times on the way over the little naptha engine stopped, to the disgust of the man who owned it, and to the interest of the foundryman. "That's a mighty poor, very unpependable motive power, to get us across this river; it's a good thing we brought a pair of oars," declared Henry M. Leland to his host. "I'll agree with you," replied the owner of the boat, "but it's the best I can buy. Do you think you can build a better one?" Mr. Leland believed he could and subsequently did. For some time he built internal combustion engines for boats, perfecting them as new and practical conceptions came to his mind.

The Day Of Dobbin

History records, stated Mr. Leland in his talk here last week, that new developments in science and philosophy appear at about the same time in many parts of the world. Somehow or other, it seems, that an All-Wise Providence projects into the minds of men and women, in scattered sections of the civilized world, the flicker of an idea that may be added to the happiness and well-being of the human family. This, in the last part of the 19th Century, the mechanical geniuses of the world turned to means of transportation that were an improvement over the sometimes faltering footsteps of Old Dobbin. The fist electrically driven "horseless carriage" appeared in 1896, according to Mr. Leland, and in the same year Selden obtained his patent on a transmission gear that would connect the power of an internal combustion engine with the wheels of a carriage. In 1898 R. E. Olds came to Detroit from Lansing with a plan for a gasoline car, and Mr. Leland's foundry made certain parts for the Oldsmobile of that time. In the same year Duryea, Stevens, and Winton each started their own automobile factories, and then began the crusade to sell the American public on a new and faster means of travel.

First Oldsmobile

The first Oldsmobile was a hesitating, palpitating, and enormously inefficient generator of power, said Mr. Leland. When, after the factory in which Olds made his engines burned down, and Leland opined that he could build the motors, Olds consented, but would not allow Leland to make any improvements in the design of the engine. "I've been working on this engine for 16 years," said Mr. Olds, "and I believe that I know more about it than you do, Mr. Leland." However, Mr. Leland went to work quietly and did build another engine, one that weighed 100 pounds less and gave three times the power. When the opportunity arrived, he showed it to Mr. Olds and it was adopted by him for his car. In this way, you see, Mr. Leland's foundry—because of his restless creative ingenuity—was really made over into an embryonic automobile factory. So, the next year, in 1899, Mr. Leland built the first Cadillac car, "a putting, rasping, one-lunger."

Hard To Get Money

Mr Leland had his troubles in financing the Cadillac car. He interested four Detroit millionaires to the extent of $75,000 each, or a total of $300,000.00. Immediately the public welcomed the Cadillac automobile. Every month the four millionaires received a ten per cent stock dividend, and then some, but for more than a million profit each at the end of five and one-half years to W. C. Durant, who started the General Motors Corporation. Mr. Leland remained with Durant for some years, his own boss. "I agreed to stay with Mr. Durant only on the basis of building the Cadillac car as I wanted it built," related Mr. Leland. "I engaged my own assistant engineers, decided how many cars to build, fixed the selling price, and created my own selling and service organization. I believe that the world was waiting for the motor car, and I decided to give it one that would run. I always remembered the faltering naptha engine in the motor boat on the Detroit River, and determined to make an automobile that would always bring the driver home."

Loved His Work

Henry M. Leland, like Thomas Alva Edison, and other great inventive minds, loved his work more than the money connected with it. He holds that there are four major virtues which, if applied to one's life or one's business, will bring success; these virtues are industry, economy, honesty, and kindliness. He says he has used them to advantage; he says they were reflected in the Cadillac and Lincoln automobiles which he first created, and since which others have carried on. He loves fine tools; he takes credit for being the father of inter-changeable part manufacturing, the direct result of which has given the world its industrial production records. Mr. Leland, in his talk here, also paid tribute to inventors and manufacturers who, though not interested in internal combustion engines, had aided in the growth of the automobile business. He cited the case of Dunlop, who first designed and patented a pneumatic tire. "Without pneumatic tires the automobile would never have made the progress it has," declared Mr. Leland.

"Saturation Point"

When will the "saturation point" be reached in automobile production? "Never, believes Mr. Leland. "Grandma, Grandpa, Mother, Father, Sister and Brother all want an automobile," said Mr. Leland. "Then, when they get one, they want a better one. That's the answer, isn't it?" An English newspaper reporter once asked me when the so-called 'saturation point' would be reached. I told him 'never, sir.' And then he said, 'But, Mr. Leland, what about the crowded condition of our highways?' 'But you did not ask me about the streets,' I replied."

Discarded Pride

"The best job I ever did was done 60 years ago," went on Mr. Leland. "It was to put my pride in my pocket and buckle down to work. The sooner you put your pride in your pocket the quicker you will get some place in life. Lots of hard work is the secret of a worthwhile life. I pity the children of the rich who take no active part in the labor of the world. Work is all we are here for—work and some play, but never complete idleness. Lucky, indeed, the boy or girl, man or woman, who gets into a part of the work of the world that he or she can love."

Symbolizes Character

Such is part of the story of the man who, when he was nearly fifty years old, began his career in the automobile industry. In about a quarter of a century he saw his dreams applied in terms of industrial manufacturing; he was a leader in putting over an idea that has revolutionized society. He is, too, very happy. Early in life he decided that, above all else, he would BUILD HIS CHARACTER; he believed that a CHARACTER ought to be one's FIRST consideration in life. He knew that, having won a victory with himself, he could win out in the world, because he easily understood that nothing out in the world can resist CHARACTER. Mr. Leland's life and his work are symbolical of real CHARACTER VALUES. He has proved his right to a place upon this earth and a trust in the hearts of men.

THE DAYBOOK OF A NEW YORKER

Exclusive Central Press Dispatch to The Eccentric

NEW YORK, Oct. 26.—It is not unusual for people in this harried town to ask to be sent to jail. They do it every day and understanding magistrates grant, their requests. There are a great many reasons which explain this phenomenon. One of them is that jail at least, is a refuge from the fast flowing and often exhausting life hereabouts. Those without homes, without money are unable to find anywhere a quiet spot in which to rest—except in a house of punishment.

A well-dressed man appeared in a city court arrested on a charge of drunkenness. His clothes were expensive, he carried quite a bit of jewelry, and yet he was a beaten man, tired, uninterested, phlegmatically despairing. In a curiously empty voice he explained that he had been drinking "smoke," a mixture of denatured alcohol and water. He was a bit incoherent about the matter but on one thing at least, his mind was clear; he wanted to go to jail, where he would not only be cared for, but where he would be beyond temptation. The magistrate obliged with a sentence of twenty days.

In another court the same request was heard. This was a man who had broken his neck while driving a truck, two years before. Although a steel brace supported his head, he was in no condition for heavy labor, and so he became an elevator operator. Then he broke his arm. He was sent to Bellvue where it was set. But the city hospital is crowded, and there is no room for those who can walk about. He was discharged. No elevator job for him now, with a broken arm, he had no money to support himself in the meanwhile. And so he appealed to the court to be sent to the workhouse, until his arm had healed. The request was granted.

* * *

Another diabolic invention is to swell the already great list of those attendant on first-run movie openings. The other night, Al Jolson's first picture, "The Jazz Singer" opened. In addition to the usual battery of spotlights, flashlight explosions, and howling mobs, Ben Bernie and his jazz band stood in front of the theater and frighted pedestrians two blocks away with the cacophony that is "Ain't She Sweet" and other ditties. The band attracted so many more curious, that it was a lucky first nighter who was not pushed in the face by a vigilant cop, on the lookout for gate crashers and loungers. And inside, Al had a policeman all to himself, as protection against enthusiastic back-slappers, autograph hounds and like nuisances.

BOWLING

With one merchant bowling league having played its first games and a second league about to start, interest in the game here is on the increase, according to George Blackmer, owner of the Birmingham Recreation and Bowling rooms in the new theater building.

Standings for the first league after their playoff Monday night are as follows:

Recreation, No. 2—2403
Gray Sweet Shop—2538
Birmingham Cleaners—2375
Dodge-Packard—2219
Birmingham Department store—2155
F. J. Mulholland—2122
Tracy & Cotton 1951—
Bell Brothers Garage—1811

A banquet will be given the teams in the league at the end of the season in April and prizes awarded the first three winners, Mr. Blackmer said. The second league, to start next week, will bowl on Tuesday evenings.

Considerable American news is picked up by radio and published in newspapers of South Africa.

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NOW! Musical Comedy - and - Photo Plays

Screen
SUN. to WED.
"THE TIRED BUSINESS MAN"

A COMPLETE CHANGE OF PROGRAM SUNDAY AND THURSDAY
POPULAR PRICES

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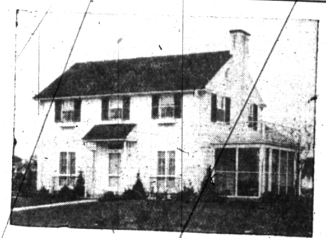

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Polishes as It Cleans

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Mr. Frank Willey — Mr. G. E. Cook

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Lehigh Anthracite
Ford's and Solvay Coke
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THAT PICTURE MUST BE GOOD!
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Awkward Wallace!

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