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THE REEVES AUTOMOBILE BUILT AT COLUMBUS, INDIANA, IN 1893

The attached papers pertain to the building of the automobile by Mr. Milton O. Reeves of Columbus, Indiana, during the year 1892-93. This story is compiled from memory based on conversations which I had with various parties, and which has not been confirmed by Mr. Carl Fisher of Miami Beach, Florida.

Carl G. Fisher, Frank Wheeler, Reeves Automobile.

Mr. M. O. Reeves, Mr. Carl G. Fisher, and Mr. Frank Wheeler met in the office of Carl Fisher's bicycle store on Christmas Eve, 1893, which was at the close of a rather panicky year, to assist Mother Webb, who was taking care of delinquent children.

They were not able to give as much money as they would have liked to because new changes that had come into the country had resulted in a bad business year. Mr. Carl Fisher, who was then years of age, and the others were contemporaries, stated that in his bicycle business he was afraid that this "horseless buggy" monkey business was going to reduce the demand for bicycles.

Mr. M. O. Reeves stated that he did not fear anything like this since he had built one of them and had helped Elwood Haynes with his and the "fool things just wouldn't do."

Mr. Frank Wheeler, a very good mechanic, said that Mr. Reeves was right because they couldn't get any grease to lubricate them.

Carl Fisher thought differently, and said he wondered if they knew how many of these horseless buggys there were in Indiana. The other men said they didn't know.

He said, "I think there are eleven of them. I'd like to see whether they can run." He said why didn't they arrange to have a horseless buggy race in the Bartholomew County fair grounds at Columbus, Indiana, on July 4, 1894.

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The net result was that they invited the owners of these vehicles to compete. After they had had the race and counted up the gate receipts they found they had about three thousand dollars more than they needed to take care of Mother Webb. But unfortunately finding out that the so-called fool horseless buggy could actually run around a race track, which was quite a surprise to Mr. Wheeler and Mr. Reeves. The young men, having this so-called "easy money" were, like the modern youth, easy come, easy go, so they went to Mr. Carl Rost, who ran a jewelry store in Columbus and ordered three one thousand dollar stop watches, and in a short time received them from Switzerland. I understand that Mr. Doug Wheeler, son of Frank Wheeler now has his father's watch. I do not know if Mr. Carl Fisher has the other one or not. I knew Mr. M. O. Reeves, inasmuch as I was a son-in-law who had lost by death, the daughter of Mr. M. O. Reeves, Mrs. Reeves of 19½ North Fifth Street, Columbus, Indiana, who is now living, gave me, with the consent of the children, Mr. M. O. Reeves' watch, which is in my safety deposit box in the Indiana Trust Company, Indianapolis, Indiana. Each Decoration Day, after properly insuring it, I take it out to show to my good friend, Theodore (Pop) Myers, at the annual Speedway Races, where I take great pleasure in timing the drivers.

I believe that the automobile made by Milton O. Reeves probably ante-dated the one made by Elwood Haynes. The Reeves automobile is now stored in the warehouse of the Reeves Pulley Company at Columbus, Indiana.

I think it was Mr. M. O. Reeves who told me that Mr. Henry Ford came to Columbus after he heard of the automobile still being in existence, and wanted to buy it to store in the Dearborn, Michigan Museum, as it probably was the first automobile actually build in America.

Mr. Reeves told him that the automobile built by Elwood Haynes was in the Smithsonian Institute, and that he did not think it was just exactly the thing to do to take emoluments off of dead friends. And furthermore, Mr. Reeves did not think it advisable for him or any member of his family or friends to give any publicity to this fact.