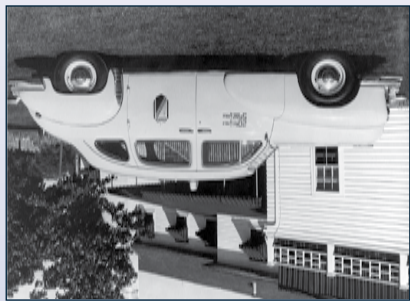


end of a century of automotive manufacturing in Kalamazoo. the removal of manufacturing equipment in 1991 marked the was not shuttered until July 2009, but the drama surrounding producing automobile parts for General Motors. The plant the greatest cab manufacturing facility in America began Production of the beloved Checker ended in July 1982 and discontinuation the day it was introduced.



date for the cars as GM set the Citation tests, could not use the test program and a costly crash- could not absorb The company Citation platform. front-wheel drive configurations, and General Motors Checker experimented with molded plastic components, mandated by the federal government in the 1970s. an-hour bumper standards and automobile crash testing not survive gas-consumption regulations, or the five-mile challenges to the industry. The company, however, could in the early 1930s, the World War II economy and post-war the E. L. Cord conglomerate in 1937 that had owned Checker World War I, the Great Depression of the 1930s, the demise of manufacturer in America. It survived the recession following 1982. Checker is the longest-lived independent automobile in Kalamazoo in July, continuing for 59 years until July Checker left Joliet in April 1923 and began cab production Illinois. Markin, president of Checker Cab Manufacturing of Joliet, Handley and Dort sold their respective plants to Morris Kalamazoo Truck was on the brink of bankruptcy, and both By April of 1923, Roamer production began its decline:

THE DEMISE

GILMORE CAR MUSEUM

is a truly remarkable experience in automotive history waiting to be discovered—by you!

Nestled on its 90-acre park-like setting only a short country drive north of Kalamazoo, you'll encounter nearly 200 extraordinary vehicles spanning more than 100 years of automotive heritage showcased in restored historic barns. Here you'll find exhibits ranging from an 1899 Locomobile



to the classic Duesenberg, the elusive 1948 Tucker, and the muscle cars of the 1960s. The exhibit "Kalamazoo—The Other Motor City" features the largest collection of Kalamazoo-built cars in the county, including examples of Barley, Checker, Roamer, Handley-Knight and Michigan autos dating from 1903 through the early 1980s. Besides the towering 19th century barns, visitors will find a re-created small town train depot, a replica 1930s gas station and a restored 1941 Blue Moon diner with an era appropriate lunch menu.

Open May 1–October 31, every day 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturdays and Sundays until 6 p.m. Admission charged. (269) 671-5089 • www.GilmoreCarMuseum.org



predicted in 1900. to become a center of the industry just as Maurice Blood had cars were being built in Kalamazoo. The city seemed destined Kalamazoo trucks as well as gasoline-powered Kalamazoo rail Barleys, Pennant Cabs, Handleys, Dorts, Roamer trucks and rolled off the line that summer. By January 1923, Roamers, powered by the renowned Knight sleeve-valve engine, in January 1920, and the first luxurious Handley-Knight, James Handley built a new factory on North Pitcher St. a speed record of 105.7 mph at Daytona in 1921.

Indianapolis in 1919 and Leland Goodspeed drove another to Hollywood and the European continent. Two Roamers raced at and race-tested engines to Kalamazoo. The car sold well in and brought the Roamer with its smart European styling, In 1917, Alfred Barley acquired the Michigan Buggy plant unemployed.

behind a broken community with hundreds of its citizens sending its treasurer, Victor Palmer, to Leavenworth, leaving bankruptcy in 1913, bringing scandal to the community, and car in this country. Sadly, Michigan Buggy imploded in years before Cadillac and was perhaps the first electric-lighted had electric lights two



It did not win but left a racing legacy. the 1915 Indianapolis 500, with Louis Chevrolet at the wheel. His light-car drew praise from Henry Ford and qualified for Howard Blood, Maurice's son, began designing the Cornelian. 1910 opened with the first gala car show in Kalamazoo and

WE TRY AGAIN

KALAMAZOO VALLEY MUSEUM

is a nationally accredited participatory museum of history, science and technology that features two exhibition galleries, the latest planetarium technology with the Digistar 4 Laser projection system, simulated space missions in the Challenger Learning Center, museum-like experiences for pre-schoolers, science and history galleries, and the Mary Jane Stryker Theater that hosts concerts, movies and documentaries. The downtown-Kalamazoo museum showcases three nationally touring exhibitions each calendar year and offers weekends full of hands-on activities for families.



Free General Admission. Open Monday—Thursday and Saturday 9–5; Fridays 9–9 (Oct.–May) and 9–5 (May–Oct.); Sunday and Holidays 1–5. Closed Easter, Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. (269) 373-7990 • (800) 772-3370 • www.kalamazoomuseum.org

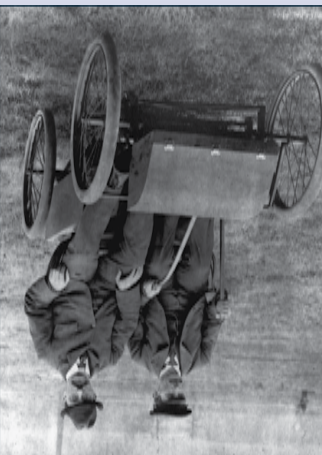


This project is funded in part by Michigan Humanities Council, an affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

he commented in 1910.

own machinery which ate up every cent of what is now profit?" auto manufacturer had to manufacture his own parts and his blamed the failure on the lack of industrial support. "Every that was drained off for the paper industry and Charles Fuller automobile manufacturing on the lack of investment capital transmissions and universal joints. Burt blamed the failure of manufacturing to build vehicle components, engines, 1907, all four of the early companies had ceased automobile amusements," noted a 1904 Michigan advertisement, but, by "Automobiling is the King of sports and the Queen of

car. Frank Burt also built the Cannon automobile at that time. Michigan car, but subsequently left to build their own Blood brothers joined with the Fuller family to manufacture the before Henry Ford sold his first Model A. Eventually the Blood the first gasoline-powered car in the city. They sold 150 cars



the Blood brothers built of 1900. And in June 1902, Kalamazoo in the spring Locomobile arrived in first steam-powered in Kalamazoo. The automobile manufacturing a 100-year period of ends on either side of events stand like book These two dramatic Kalamazoo had ended.

from the Checker plant. The age of the automobile in and surreptitiously took loads of manufacturing equipment In December 1991, trucks rolled down North Pitcher Street age of the automobile in Kalamazoo had begun.

In the spring of 1891, Jay B. Rhodes drove his steam-powered wagon down Rose Street and across the railroad tracks. The

THE EARLY YEARS

WELCOME to Kalamazoo...

and its rich legacy of early automobile invention, manufacturing, and promotion. More than 20 different automobiles were built in Kalamazoo and the surrounding area, and almost a dozen of the factory buildings survive. In addition there are the homes of those involved in automobile history, as well as other locations where the story unfolded.

This driving tour includes many of the sites, and begins at the Kalamazoo Valley Museum, taking you through the historic heart of the community, to end with a pleasant rural drive to the Gilmore Car Museum where many of the surviving cars are displayed.

We hope you enjoy this tour through a town that made great contributions to an invention that changed the world: the automobile.

1. KALAMAZOO'S FIRST CAR

Northeast corner of Water Street & N. Rose Street.

The Kalamazoo Valley Museum is located at 230 N. Rose Street, the same dirt road down which Jay B. Rhodes drove his steam wagon in 1891, making his invention the first self-propelled vehicle in Kalamazoo. To the south, at 112 N. Rose, stood the Blood brothers' bicycle shop. There, in June 1902, they built the first gasoline-powered horseless carriage to be manufactured in the city. The Bloods sold over 150 vehicles six months before Henry Ford sold his first Model A in July 1903.

2. KALAMAZOO CARRIAGES

Northwest corner of Water St. & N. Rose.

Across the street, the stately building at 207 N. Rose Street housed Cash & Supply, manufacturers of 150 different horse-drawn vehicles, from 1880 until the early 1900s. The site was purchased by the United Traction trolley car line in 1913, serving as an inter-urban station.



3. LELAND GOODSPEED'S RESIDENCE

From Water St. drive north on Rose St., .1 mile to the stop light at Kalamazoo Ave. and turn left and move to the right lane, driving west .6 mile to 921 W. Kalamazoo Ave.



This duplex is the former residence of Leland Goodspeed who set the 1921 world speed record of 105.1 mph driving a Roamer with a Rochester-Duesenberg engine on the sands of Daytona Beach. Goodspeed also served as the head engineer at Checker and was

responsible for bringing Checker Cab Manufacturing to Kalamazoo. He died in 1925 in an accident near Pittsburgh.

4, 5, 6. JAY RHODES RESIDENCE & FACTORY; FIREHOUSE #5

From the Goodspeed residence, drive .1 mile and turn right on Stuart Ave. Drive .1 mile to stop sign at North St. and turn left. Drive .1 mile to Douglas Ave.

The former Jay Rhodes factory stands on the s.e. corner of North and Douglas Streets and still carries "Rhodes—1911" at the top. Rhodes made a fortune by patenting an oil dispensing bottle. The house at 612 Douglas Ave., where he lived until his death in 1931 at the age of 66, is the first building as you turn the corner. A fire truck built on a Kalamazoo truck chassis was assigned to Firehouse #5 in 1920. It's located across the street on the s.w. corner of North and Douglas. (The factory where the Kalamazoo truck was built survives at the s.e. corner of Reed Blvd. & Fulford St.)

7. FULLER RESIDENCE

Turn left, driving south on Douglas Ave. staying in left lane. After the stop sign at Kalamazoo Ave., drive .4 mile.

The home at 227 Douglas Ave., on the n.w. corner of Douglas and West Main, is the former residence of Charles D. Fuller, president of Fuller Manufacturing. That company, famous for excellent transmissions, eventually became Eaton Transmission and is now located off I-94 at the Climax exit.

8. GAZETTE RELIABILITY TOUR

Turn left, staying in left lane, and driving east on West Main St. .1 mile to turn left on Woodward Ave.

This corner was the site of the accident with the 1910 Michigan automobile during the reliability tour from Kalamazoo to South Haven, sponsored by The Kalamazoo Gazette. George Sharker of the Cable-Nelson Piano Co. was the independent judge who was thrown from the car and killed when the vehicle skidded on the wet trolley tracks. This corner borders the Stuart Historic District.

9. BLOOD FAMILY HOME

Continue north on Woodward Ave., driving .2 mile to 435 Woodward Ave. (on the left).

Maurice Blood, head of the Blood family and founder of the Kalamazoo Bicycle Co. where the first car in Kalamazoo was built, lived in this home. Howard Blood, who built the very successful Cornelian light car and Indianapolis Cornelian racer, was raised here.



10. THE BLOOD FACTORY

Continue north on Woodward, less than .1 mile and turn right on Elmwood. Drive the short block and turn left on Elm St., then .1 mile to Ransom. Turn right, driving east .1 mile to the Blood factory at 635 W. Ransom St. (Sahr Building Supply).

Here, Howard Blood built the Cornelian light car and the Cornelian race car that competed at Recreation Park (now the Kalamazoo County Fairgrounds on Lake St.) on September 26, 1914. The Cornelian raced at Indianapolis in May 1915 with Louis Chevrolet at the wheel.

11. RAILWAY STATION

Continue driving east .3 mile. Turn right (south) on Rose Street, crossing the railroad tracks to the light at Kalamazoo.

Note the Michigan Central railroad station to the left and the brick street that was in place in October 1913 when Victor & Mary Palmer attempted to escape to New York to avoid the bankruptcy hearings of Michigan Buggy. Palmer was secretary/treasurer of the company and was sent to Leavenworth prison in June 1914 for using the mails to defraud the banks.



12. THE LANE CASTLE

Turn right on Kalamazoo Ave. and move to left lane, driving west .2 mile to the light at Westnedge Ave. Turn left, driving south .1 mile on Westnedge to W. Michigan Ave.

Henry Lane, president of the Michigan Buggy Company, built a \$75,000 mansion on the s.w. corner of Westnedge and Michigan Ave. around 1900. It was demolished in the 1950s.

13, 14, 15. PALMER, LAY, & HANDLEY RESIDENCES

Stay in the right hand lane and continue south .2 mile, passing the former site of Victor Palmer's residence at 320 S. West (Westnedge) St. At Lovell St. turn right, driving west .1 mile to Oak St., passing what remains of Frank Lay Jr.'s home on the right at 611 W. Lovell. Turn right on Oak St. driving .1 mile to the stop sign at South St.

The home at 617 South St. (s.e. corner of Oak and South) is the former residence of John Handley, owner of the Handley-Knight automobile company. He arrived in Kalamazoo in 1920 to build his Knight-powered car, but sold the factory in 1923 to Morris Markin of Checker Cab Manufacturing. Handley committed suicide on a train in Texas in 1931, presumably because of financial failures due to the Great Depression.

16 & 17. THE AUTOMOBILISTS—UPJOHN & LAY

Drive .1 mile east on South Street back to Westnedge.

The William Upjohn mansion (16) is at 530 W. South St., on the left. The Frank Lay mansion (17) is at 523 W. South St., on the right. Upjohn was the first "automobilist" in Kalamazoo and the first to use a "horseless carriage" for business ventures. Frank Lay moved into the home at 520 W. South St. in 1909 and was president of the Michigan Buggy Company in 1913 when the company was forced into bankruptcy.

18. THE KALAMAZOO TELEGRAPH PRESS

Cross Westnedge Ave. and continue driving east .2 mile on South Street. Crossing Park Street, Bronson Park is on the left. Cross Rose St. at the next light.

The left corner at 114 South St. (now the Miller Canfield building) was the former site of the *Kalamazoo Evening Press*, as well as the *Kalamazoo Daily Telegraph*, once owned by Victor Palmer and Henry Lane. The two papers were combined into the *Kalamazoo Telegraph Press* in 1912. With Edward Dingly as editor, it was at the center of the bankruptcy hearings and scandal surrounding Michigan Buggy in 1913 and 1914.

19. DEALERSHIP

Continue on South to the light at Burdick (current Kalamazoo Mall).

The first dealership selling Cadillac was on the northeast corner of South and Burdick Sts.

20 & 21. BURTT & BLOOD FACTORIES

Continue on South, curving left to the east and through the light at Portage Street .2 mile to Edwards Street. Turn left, and drive north

through the light at W. Michigan Ave. .1 mile to the block on the right.

This series of buildings is believed to have housed the early Blood brother's machine company factory, at 114 N. Edwards and the Burtt factory, at 124-130 N. Edwards, where the Cannon was built.

22, 23, 24. FULLER, HANDLEY-KNIGHT & CHECKER

Continue north on Edwards .2 mile. Cross Kalamazoo Ave. and Pitcher, then turn right on Ransom. Go east .2 mile to Porter St. (Note: sign is behind white building.) Turn left, driving .7 mile north to the light. The road jogs to the left and becomes Pitcher St. Continue north on Pitcher.

The Fuller plant stood .2 mile from Paterson, on the s.e. corner of Pitcher and Prouty. At this writing, the Handley-Knight and Checker plants survive .4 mile further, at 1850 N. Pitcher. The long building on the east side of Pitcher is the former Handley-Knight plant, sold to Checker in 1923, with additions designed by architect Alfred Kahn in 1930. The plant was sold in June 2010, and part of it razed, so its future is unknown.

25. MORRIS MARKIN HOME

Continue driving north on Pitcher, .4 mile from Checker factory to the stop sign at Mosel. Turn left, and drive west .5 mile to the stop light at Westnedge. Turn right on Westnedge and drive north 1.3 mile to Markin home at 5333 on the left (west) side.

The Morris Markin home was designed by Ray Dietrich, the famous automobile designer. Markin Glen Park is built on land to the east that once belonged to Markin.

26. A SCENIC TOUR TO THE GILMORE CAR MUSEUM

Continue north 2.6 mile on Westnedge to the stop at D Ave. Turn right on D, driving east 1.9 miles to the blinker at Riverview Dr. Turn left on Riverview, driving north 2 miles to B Ave. Turn right on B, driving east 1.5 mile to the stop at 24th St. Cross 24th St. and continue east on B, 1.2 mile to the stop at M-89. Turn right on M-89 EAST driving 3 miles to the stop at M-43. (Note the old inter-urban railway beds for trains serving the Gull Lake recreation area in the early 1900s.) Turn left at the stop at M-43. Drive north to M-43 EAST around Gull Lake, then 4.6 mile to Hickory Rd. and the Gilmore Museum. As you drive M-43, bear right at the first Y intersection, and then bear left at the second Y intersection just past the public access to the lake. The large red barns are on the right as you approach Hickory Rd. Turn right at Hickory Rd.; the museum entrance is on your right.

