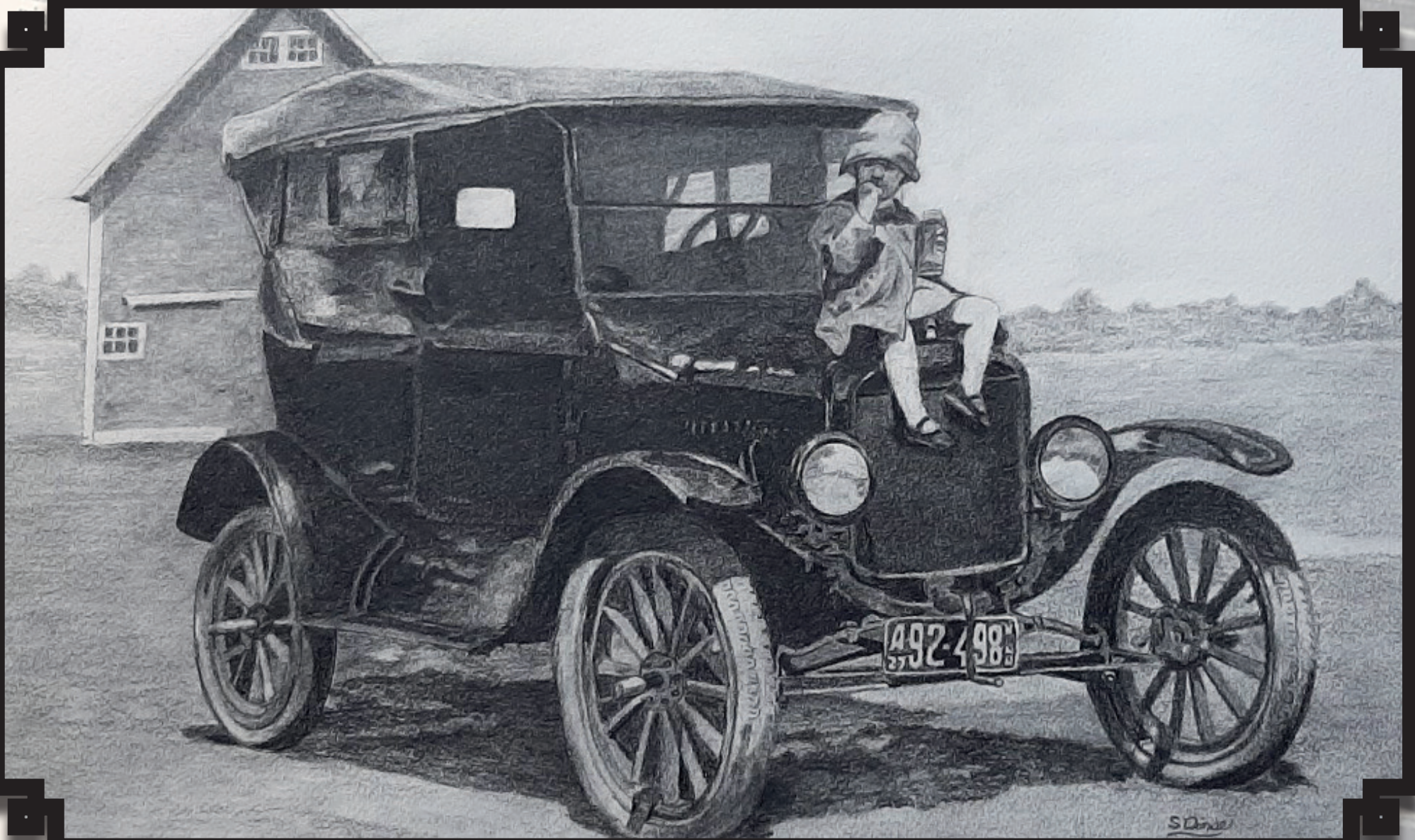


MODEL T FORD INTERNATIONAL TOUR

July 20-25, 2025 • Owatonna, MN



Produced by Steele County Times

68th Annual Tour of the

The Model T Ford Club

International Inc.

July 20-25, 2025

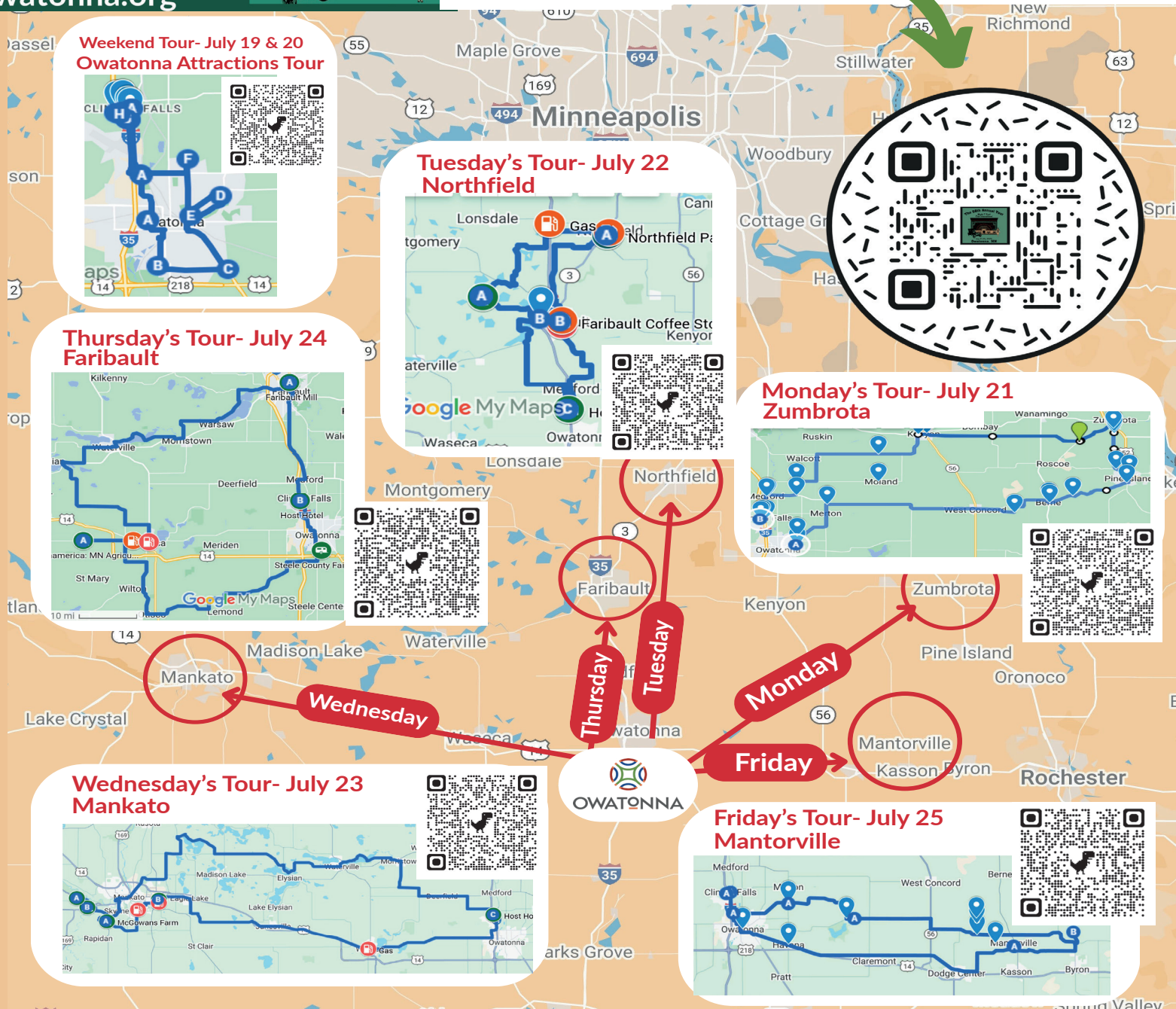
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For more about the tour and the event, follow their facebook page:



Tour organizer focuses on engaging the public

BY RICK BUSSLER

When 230 Model Ts from all over the country converge on Steele County, one of the most notable changes to this year's Model T Ford International Tour will be public engagement.

"The opportunities for the public to see cars is much greater at this tour than any of the others," said Mark Cameron, the organizer of this year's tour in the Owatonna area. "We've done this on purpose so that anybody can show up."

This year's tour will be hitting six communities across southern Minnesota, stretching from Mankato to Zumbrota. During each of the specific tours throughout the week, the Model Ts will be winding through many communities for a total of 500 miles.

The tour kicks off in Owatonna on July 19-20. As an extra bonus, there will be a special Downtown Thursday on July 24 where all the Model Ts will be on display. Aprons will be shown on the vehicles to indicate they are associated with the tour.

This is the third time the international tour has taken place in Minnesota. Previously, it had been held in Rochester in 2011 and Park Rapids in 1999. Last year's event was in Cadillac, Mich. Canada will host next year's tour.

See **TOUR** on 12 ►



A special Downtown Thursday is planned for July 24. All 230 Model Ts registered for the tour will be on display, like this one that was featured at Downtown Thursday in June.

STAFF PHOTO BY RICK BUSSLER

PENCIL ART

Owatonna-area artist crafts special Model T art from old photo

BY RICK BUSSLER

Shirley Schley was only 4 years old when her parents captured a photo of her sitting on the hood of a Model T. Now, almost 100 years later, that image has come to life, with the photo featured as pencil art.

While many of the Model Ts are long gone, Schley is not. The 102-year-old still lives in Owatonna in her own home, with the Model T art prominently displayed in her living room. (It's also featured on the cover of this special section.)

"Anyone who stops by, she loves to show it to them," said Schley's daughter, Pat Ptacek. "She was so tickled to receive it. She is proud of it."

The pencil art came as a gift from Owatonna-area artist Sandy Dinse, who is a long-time friend of Ptacek's. Dinse saw the photo at Schley's 100th birthday party two years ago and decided she wanted to try her hand at turning it into pencil art.

"I hope they can see where it stirs up some memories for them."

Sandy Dinse
Model T Artist



STAFF PHOTO BY RICK BUSSLER

While many of the Model Ts are long gone, Shirley Schley of Owatonna is not. The 102-year-old still lives in her own home with the Model T art prominently displayed in her living room.

Ptacek said the photo was taken in 1927. While the family is not sure what happened to the Model T, the memory of having a revolutionary vehicle of the 1920s is still vivid on their minds, thanks to the photo and now Dinse's art.

Dinse was awestruck when she saw Schley's Model T photo. "Who would have thought of taking a picture of her sitting on the hood?" Dinse wonders. "I thought about that little girl sitting

on the Model T and all the things she has seen during her lifetime, including living through the Great Depression."

The Model T art has earned Dinse awards on the local level. Last year, she won a blue ribbon at the Steele County Free Fair, Minnesota's largest county fair.

Dinse's art is often featured at the Owatonna Arts Center as well as the Austin Arts Center.

She travels to Burnsville twice a month for art workshops. "It's a wonderful atmosphere to go up there," she said.

Her interest in art began in high school, but then she took time off to



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Sandy Dinse is an Owatonna-area artist that loves to focus on history with her art. She created the pencil art of Shirley Schley sitting on top of a Model T that's featured on the cover of this special section.

raise her three sons on the family's farm in the Meriden area. She got back into art about 30 years ago.

When asked what she hopes people will take from the Model T art, Dinse responded: "I hope they can see where it stirs up some memories for them."

For Dinse, being an artist is a release from the realities of life. "I can get lost in it," she said. She added that so much of the art she does triggers memories for her. "It takes me

right back to that age and to the special people in my life," she added.

In her art, Dinse focuses on history. She likes to focus on the past because it often brings out the best years that she lived. "Life was so simple and so much less complicated. So much more peaceful," she said.

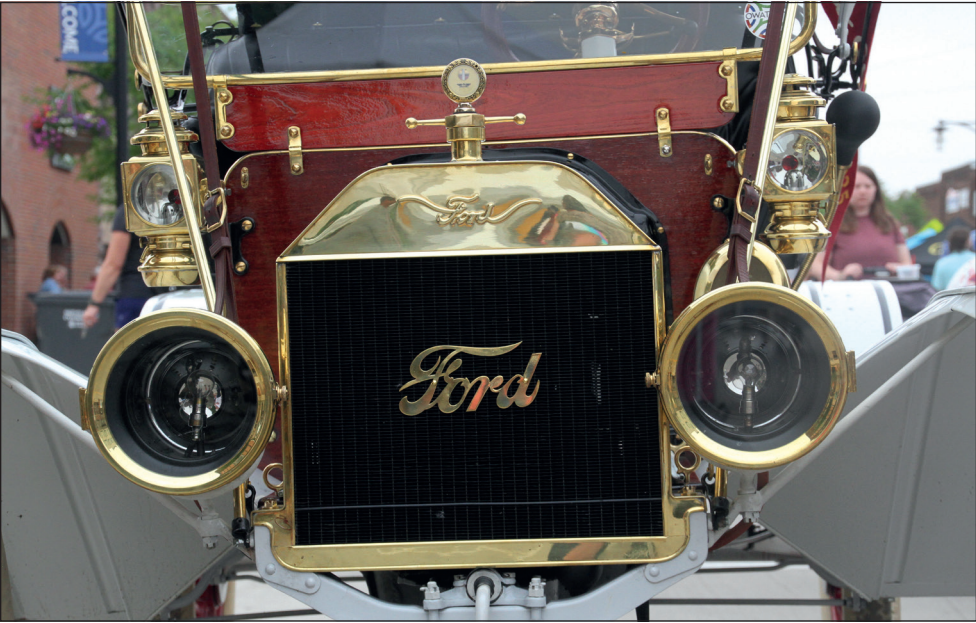
Most of the art she does today comes from photographs. "I keep asking for people to look through their photos," she said.

Dinse has done three sculptures of area church-

es that have burned down over the years, including St. Paul's Lutheran in Meriden, St. John's Lutheran in Claremont and another church in Shieldsville. In each case, she rummaged through the rubble to find remnants that could be used in her art pieces.

"I love history," said Dinse. "I love all the things that stir up memories."

And certainly, Dinse's Model T art is stirring up memories for a woman whose life has spanned more than a century.



Chamber helps with planning for Model T International Tour

BY ALEX MALM

In September 2023, the Owatonna Area Chamber of Commerce was approached by Mark Cameron and others from the local Model T Ford Club about bringing the 2025 International Tour to town.

At that time, Director of Conventions & Tourism Glenda Smith didn't know much of anything about them.

"It was not something I was familiar with at all," she said.

But over the course of months, the organizations worked together and



Glenda Smith

landed the bid to host the annual week-long tour, which begins on July 21.

"We're excited for them to be here in July," Smith said.

The bid

Cameron is no stranger to Model T Fords; he has been restoring and touring them for over 30 years. He has been involved with the international Model T Ford Club the entire time.

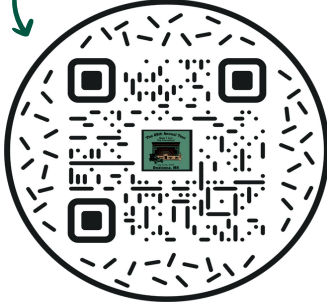
Cameron said he has participated in two previous Minnesota tours, in 1999 at Park Rapids and the 2011 tour in Rochester.

The successful Owatonna bid was approved about two years ago, he said, and Model T owners and the Chamber have been planning ever since.

See CHAMBER on 11 ►



Scan here for updates!



Welcome Model T's!

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July 19 & 20
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- Steele County Historical Society & Village of Yesteryear

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July 22, 6 PM
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 Steele County History Center's Village of Yesteryear



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PUBLICATION OF STEELE COUNTY TIMES

No brakes on this Model T lover's passion

BY RICK BUSSLER

While the Model T blazed the way for the motor industry in the early 1900s, the classic vehicle has fueled a life-long passion for Mark Cameron and his wife, Sheri, of Owatonna.

Mark Cameron developed an interest in Model Ts as a kid, after watching his cousin restore them. But it wasn't until Cameron turned 30 and saw an ad in the newspaper that he took the plunge and bought his first Model T from a collector in South Minneapolis.

He chuckles about his first experience with a Model T. "The first time we drove it, we killed it at a stop sign," he said, adding he had bumped a switch with his foot, shutting off the vehicle.

Now 33 years later, the Camerons continue their love for Model Ts by owning five of them. He also enjoys helping others get their Model Ts running at his shop on their acreage in rural Steele County. He spends several hours each day working on various Model Ts.

In recent years, he has focused on repairing his own Model Ts. "My cars were in bad shape because I was fixing everyone else's," he said.

"Once you've got one, more find their way to you," said Cameron. "These are pretty special. They changed the world."

Among the Camerons' fleet is one that took him 15 years to restore. Contrary to misconceptions, not all Model Ts are black. Cameron plays that out by owning a red one. He had to search near and far to find parts for his red relic, which he cherishes the most. "The hunt is the biggest part of it," he said. "It's fun to take something that looked like it needed a hug and get it back."

Cameron's red Model T was one of the first ever made; he uncovered registration documents showing its factory number was 1,001 and originated from Biscay, a tiny village in McLeod County.

Besides restoring Model Ts for himself and others, Cameron helped build a fleet of Model Ts for the Ford Motor Company's Model T Museum in Detroit, where the public



STAFF PHOTO BY RICK BUSSLER

At his shop south of Owatonna, Mark Cameron shows off his red Model T, which was one of the first made. He uncovered registration records showing its factory number is 1,001.

"It's fun to take something that looked like it needed a hug and get it back."

Mark Cameron
Model T Collector

can ride Model Ts. The Camerons also have done work for other museums around the country.

Over the years, the Camerons owned several kinds of old cars, including Oldsmobile, Chevrolet, and Ramblers. But they soon gave way to the Model Ts.

"Immediately you found out it's different (with a Model T)," he said.

"The Model T pushed the others out of the way. Each summer, we make sure they are running, because we don't want to be without them."

He has found that many people claim they can't afford a muscle car or hot rod, but he said it's different with Model Ts because they are pretty affordable. Cameron said Model Ts can



STAFF PHOTO BY RICK BUSSLER

Mark Cameron points out his Model T indicated on Motor Vehicle records from the early 1900s. One of his Model Ts originated from Biscay, a tiny village located in McLeod County.



be found for around \$5,000. Model Ts cut across all demographics, with rich and poor people owning them.

“They are beautiful and ugly at the same time,” he said. “They just look like fun and it’s easy to operate.”

Model Ts have become something both Mark and Sheri enjoy together. He said his wife is amazing and has become very knowledgeable about Model Ts. In fact, he said, she “knows more about Model Ts than most guys do.”

They are members of the T-Totalers Model T Ford Club of Minnesota, which was founded in 1985. Members get together for coffee every week and work on their cars.

Looking back on the past three decades, Mark Cameron said, “it has become a part of who we are.” He admitted it has, perhaps, become a hobby that has gotten out of control.

“It’s an obsession and sickness,” he said.

Added Sheri, “It’s a different kind of vibe that you get with these.”

The Camerons are also involved with music, in the



STAFF PHOTO BY RICK BUSSLER

This is another one of Mark Cameron’s Model Ts equipped with a crank starter.

five-piece Mark Cameron Band. Mark is the lead vocalist and guitarist for the blues band, while Sheri plays saxophone, flute, and percussion.

But Model Ts will be their primary focus over the next week as they host the Model T International Tour in Owatonna.

It’s something they have worked hard on over the past two years, with about 30 other people.

If last year’s tour in Michigan is any indication, the Model Ts will be wildly popular.

“When we got to Michigan, we were rock stars,” he said.



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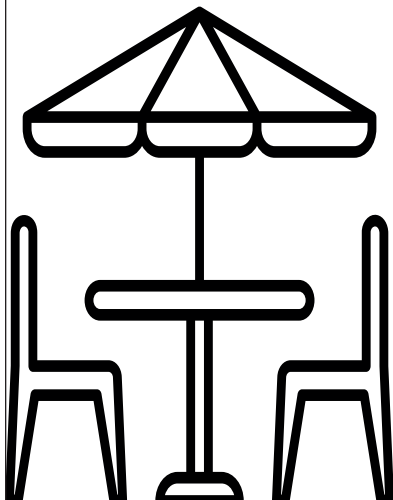


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Thursday: Car Cruise Ins.



License #00333

Look! It's a car! It's a truck! It's ... both?

BY KAY FATE

When members of the Model T Ford Club International puff and chug into Owatonna this weekend, there will be several treats for them.

"The 1926 Ford will be in the atrium at the (Steele County) History Center," said Jerry Ganfield, "and we'll have the other (vehicles) visible at some point during the convention, too, either at the Village (of Yesteryear) or the history center."

Ganfield, a board member at SCHC and a longtime docent at the facility, also hopes to have a 1918 model up and running – a vehicle that Mark Cameron calls "probably the most historic car that's survived."

Cameron would know. He, along with his wife Sheri, are coordinating this year's 68th annual tour, which will include about 250 antique Model T cars. Known as the Alexander Lumber truck, it "started life as a 1918 model T Ford car," Cameron said.

McIndoe Alexander, who started the business in 1883, embraced technology, according to the company's history, and owned one of the first automobiles in Owatonna.

He also brought the town its first delivery truck – formerly a car.

"They sold kits to turn it into a truck," Cameron

said, "and it's been in continuous running order for the entire time."

The kits, from the Smith Form-a-Truck Company, allowed a Model T owner to extend and reinforce the car's frame, then connect the rear axle and rear wheels with a chain drive. The kit also included heavier rear wheels with solid tires to replace the T's pneumatic tires.

"Model Ts were converted into all kinds of things, because they were so durable and plentiful," Cameron said. "They were used for plowing or filling silos or cutting ice on lakes. That was part of their reputation – they're just absolutely indestructible."

The lumberyard used the truck until the 1930s, when it ended up on a farm. It returned to Alexander Lumber in the 1960s, where it was kept in the showroom until it was donated to the Village of Yesteryear at the SCHS.

"The only (other) alteration is that it probably had a crank up front only, then they put in a floor starter," Ganfield said. "There are three (foot) pedals and a hand brake" that must be in neutral. The three pedals are a "forward" pedal, a reverse pedal and a brake.

"I was given a lesson, so I drove it years ago in the Medford Sesquicentennial Parade in 2003," Ganfield said of his history behind



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Supporters of the Steele County Historical Society, including SCHS Board Member Jerry Ganfield, far right, and SCHS Executive Director Jennifer Thiele, far left, pose with a 1918 Model T that was retrofitted to become Owatonna's first delivery truck. It hauled lumber for the Alexander Lumber Company for years, and has since been donated to the Village of Yesteryear at the SCHS.

the wheel. "I drove it from the Village up to Medford."

Now, the vehicle is taken by trailer to wherever it is used.

The truck was driven in Medford's Straight River Days parade on June 13 and has been at Owatonna's Downtown Thursdays this summer, but an issue cropped up last week.

"We found a gas line leak, so we're not run-

ning it right now," Ganfield said.

Mark and Jim Miller "have been helpful in getting them worked on," he said. Jim owns a Model T of his own; Mark does vehicle restoration.

"We hope to have them all running, but historic automobiles – it's expensive to get a license and drive it," Ganfield said. The insurance is also a fac-

tor for driving the vehicles.

"You always have a sense of wonder that it's going to continue to drive," he said of piloting the 107-year-old truck.

As Amy Lowery, who is archives and collections manager at the history center, drove it back to the Village of Yesteryear last summer from downtown Owatonna, the engine caught fire.

"I got a call, saying she was on the corner of Grove and Main," Ganfield said. "So I went there, and what had happened was, the wires that attach to the spark plugs had touched each other, created a spark and caught the coating of the wires on fire."

He was able to separate the wires so they didn't

See **LOOK!** on 11 ►



STAFF PHOTO BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS

Jim Miller stands in his garage workshop in front of his two Model T vehicles. The front vehicle is the one Miller purchased from an auction in 1987.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Owatonna's Jim Miller stands with his Model T vehicle on the day he first purchased it back in 1987. He began focusing on his Model T restoration 32 years later in 2019 and recently finished his project.

Miller's Model T is more than a machine

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS

Owatonna's Jim Miller recently finished restoring his 1917 Ford Model T automobile in his garage workshop, finalizing a shared dream with his father, Andrew, that began in 1987.

After seeing the run-down vehicle sitting in a field at an auction, his father lent him the money to purchase it with the hopes that he would one day restore it to its original glory.

"I was 27 years old, and life got busy. I didn't get to restoring the Model T until 32 years later in 2019. I

actually joined two Model T clubs and decided to get busy on this car... Now my goal is to be a great Model T mechanic," said Miller.

The work has become his passion.

After retiring from his job as a manufacturing engineer three years ago, Miller has spent "every day" working on Model Ts and even lends his services and expertise to club members who are in the midst of their restorations.

According to Miller, the process of getting his vehicle into pristine condition was far more challenging than he had initially anticipated.

"The car was a lot

worse off than what I thought it was sitting there in my shed all those years. I had to completely rebuild and restore the car from the bottom up. I've had this car completely apart. Brand new wood, metal, engine, upholstery... everything," said Miller.

Countless man-hours of work might dissuade the average person from tackling such a task, but the grueling work was never an issue for Miller.

"It's been a lot of fun. A lot of 12-hour days working on this car. A wise man once told me the best way to learn about a Model T is to restore one. And that is so true," said Miller.

He credits his 40-year career in engineering as a major leg-up during his process.

Miller's garage is equipped with all of the necessary machines for the job and has allowed him the ability to complete his job from the comfort of his home.

He's taken pride in restoring his vehicle to as close to its original marks as possible – even earning the respect of Model T historians who have inspected his work.

"I've always loved fixing things – ever since I was young. Taking them apart and figuring out how they work. I grew up

on a farm just south of Owatonna, so it's in my blood. I've been working on solving problems my whole life," said Miller.

Nearly 40 years after purchasing his dream car, Miller finally got to reap the rewards of his labor.

He recalled the excitement of one of his first drives by describing how he took part in a unique race.

"I was taking it down the road by the train tracks and I saw the train coming, so I tried to race it. (The conductor) sounded the horn, and I hit mine, too. I got a real kick out of that," said Miller.

Miller's father unfortunately passed away in

2012, before the restoration process began, but their dream continues to live on into the next generations.

"He used to get upset with me that I wasn't working on the car back then because he was going to get old and couldn't help me, but I know he's watching me from above really proud... I have six grandkids, and every one of them have driven Model Ts. Their first vehicle to drive is the Model T. They love it," said Miller with a laugh.

Miller plans to bring his vehicle to the Model T Ford Club International 68th Tour on July 20-25 to showcase his car and provide his expert knowledge.



Chamber helps with planning for Model T International Tour

◀ **CHAMBER** from 5

As part of the bid, Cameron said, the Minnesota Club had to make a presentation to the Board of Directors that included the specific site and activities they had planned.

"When we showed them the historic buildings and the very antique car friendly roads in Steele County, it didn't take them long to accept our bid," he said.

Chamber, club partnership

When the Club approached the Chamber of Commerce about bringing

the Tour to Owatonna, Smith said, they were excited about having a chance to show off the southern Minnesota community to Model T Ford enthusiasts from all around the world.

"We were super excited that they approached us with it," Smith said. "It's been fun to plan it, it's such a good way to showcase a lot of different places in Owatonna."

Early on, the Chamber helped with the club's presentation, showing what the host community could offer.

Smith said the Chamber suggested different attractions and businesses that Club members may not have known or thought to include.

"It's definitely been a partnership planning this," Smith said, explaining they have the community experience, while the Club understands what the International organization wants to see.

Smith said the Chamber has also been working with other communities where day trips will be taking place, including Zumbrota, Kasson-Man-

torville, Northfield, and Mankato.

On Sunday, before the official schedule begins, Smith said participants can do a self-guided tour around Owatonna, to see what the community has to offer.

For Smith, it's been a learning experience she didn't expect.

In fact, she is now an official Club member and had her first Model T driving lesson.

"It's been really fun to be with this group, they are really passionate about what they do," Smith said.

Look! It's a car! It's a truck! It's ... both?

◀ **LOOK!** from 9

touch, then drove the truck back to the Village.

"Since then, we've replaced those wires, of course, but now it has the leak in the ... line," he said.

The 1926 Model T, which will be on display inside the history center, is also experiencing some overheating issues, as is a 1919 Dodge car that was purchased new from the Zamboni dealership in Owatonna.

Jerry Lewison is working on the Alexander truck, Ganfield said, "trying to find the right fitting.

"It's expensive to buy those parts," he said. "They're not at your local NAPA."



SUBMITTED PHOTO

This photo, dated 1966, shows the Alexander Lumber truck on a local farm, before it was sold back to the company by the Klecker family.

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Tour organizer focuses on engaging the public

◀ TOUR from 3

During the tour in 2009, the Model Ts cut across country from New York to Seattle rolling on 4,300 miles.

"You thought nothing of it," Cameron said of the cross-country tour. "It's a good car. You hop in it, and you do," he added.

Cameron, along with his wife Sheri, have been planning this month's tour with 30 other people on the committee. Jim and Sue Miller have also been extremely active in planning with the Camerons.

Through the planning over the past two years, Cameron found a pleasant surprise with support from Glenda Smith, director of Conventions and Tourism for Owatonna. "We could have done it on our own, but it would not have been the same," Cameron said, adding Smith has been phenomenal to work with.

The Camerons have been on many international tours over the past few decades. He said they have learned from attending other tours how to put on



STAFF PHOTO BY RICK BUSSLER

Mark Cameron, who has had a love for Model Ts for the past 30 years, is the organizer of this year's Model T International Tour coming to Owatonna next week. He lives in rural Steele County.

"You will not see this many 100-year-old cars in one place again."

Mark Cameron

Model T Tour Organizer

this one. "This is better planned, and we have more going on," he said, noting it has become an entire week-long event. He added there are more activities jammed into the week than ever before.

The tour will attract 500 people from all over the country. Included in that total are 60 kids under the age of 18. Trailers for the Model Ts will be parked at Cabela's in Owatonna, according to Cameron.

There are many reasons why southern Minnesota, Cameron said, is a great location for the Model T tour. "This is a rural and historic area," he said. And he loves the close proximity of every-

thing in Owatonna.

"We wouldn't want to do this in Minneapolis," he said. "Owatonna is the perfect size community for this event. We won't be sitting in traffic in Owatonna."

Cameron said they focused on finding "weird and quirky stuff" to incorporate into this year's tour. For example, on July 22, the tour will be in Northfield where there will be the Jesse James Bank Robbery enactment. The Mankato stop will feature bison.

"We want people to come out to see us," Cameron said. "Figure out the routes, come out and wave. You will not see this many 100-year-old cars in one place again."



STAFF PHOTO BY RICK BUSSLER

Aprons will be outfitted on all the Model Ts registered in this year's tour.

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